

Weekly Media Updates **(06-12 November, 2017)**

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Africa

- **Head of East Africa's regional bloc condemns ICC Burundi investigation¹**

Two East African Presidents on Saturday, 5 November, condemned a decision by the International Criminal Court to open a war crime investigation into Burundi, saying it undermined regional peace initiatives. The court ordered a formal investigation on Thursday, 3 November 2017 into crimes committed in Burundi from April 2015 to October 2017. In a Statement on Saturday, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni has condemned the decision of the International Criminal Court (ICC), which ordered its prosecutor to launch an investigation into the Burundi conflict. Museveni is the current chairman of the East African Community (EAC) regional economic bloc comprising Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, Burundi, Rwanda and South Sudan. The Statement was issued after Tanzanian president John Magufuli ended a three-day visit to Uganda where he held talks with Museveni on Burundi and other matters.

Burundi plunged into violence in April 2015 after President Pierre Nkurunziza said he would seek a third term in office, triggering protests and a crackdown by security forces. He won re-election that July, but most opponents boycotted the vote, saying his decision to stand violated the constitution and the terms of a peace agreement that had ended a war in the central African country.

Government forces are suspected to have killed more than 1,000 people and displaced 400,000 during a crackdown after the election, although rights groups say the number killed could be higher. The court is investigating crimes against humanity that include murder, torture, rape and persecution. Tanzania, which hosts thousands of Burundian refugees, and Uganda have been engaged in months of diplomatic efforts aimed at restoring peace in Burundi. So far, there has been little progress.

In his statement Museveni said that the ICC is interfering in EAC affairs without consulting regional leaders, which is a wrong move that undermines previous peace-making efforts in Burundi. Tanzania's Magufuli also criticised the ICC investigation. He said the move (by the ICC) was going against efforts already taken by the East African Community, which include appointing a mediation committee for the Burundi peace process led by former Tanzanian president Benjamin Mkapa. The mediators of the Burundi peace talks are expected to hold another round of talks on Nov. 23.

Magufuli said security concerns in Burundi have been exaggerated, citing a recent voluntary repatriation of Burundian refugees from Tanzania. Last month Burundi became the first nation to withdraw from the court, amid growing criticism from African leaders who complain prosecutors are excessively targeting Africans

¹ The East African, 14 October 2017, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201710140159.html>

- **East Africa: Museveni, Magufuli Break Ground for Oil Pipeline in Masaka²**

Tanzanian President John Magufuli visited Uganda on Thursday, 19 November 2017. During the state visit President Magufuli together with President Museveni, laid the foundation stone to symbolise start of the construction of the proposed East African Crude Oil Pipeline (Eacop).

The 1,445-kilometre duct is planned to run from Hoima District in mid-western Uganda to Tanzania's southern Tanga Port on the Indian Ocean coast.

The first foundation stone for the \$3.5b (Shs12.6 trillion) project was laid by the two Heads of State at Chongoleani Marine Terminal at Tanga Port in August.

Officials from both countries are currently evaluating possible financing options for the project. Tanzania and Uganda, backed by the French oil giant Total E&P, which supported the Tanga route, plan to raise 70 per cent of \$3.5b capital expenditure. The 30 per cent capital will be mustered through equity by the Joint Venture partners and national oil companies of the two countries; Tanzania Petroleum Development Corporation and Uganda National Oil Company.

For Uganda, the Uganda National Pipeline Company subsidiary will take the lead in securing funding for the pipeline.

Actual construction is expected to start early next year and to be completed by 2020, if all goes according to plan, including timely securing of financing from the international lenders.

- **Kenya: Eyes on Chief Justice as Fresh Presidential Election Disputed³**

It is the second time in three months that the seven-judge bench led by Chief Justice David Kenani Maraga is being called upon to decide the validity of a repeat presidential election. On Wednesday, 9 November 2017 the CJ gave directions on timelines for the hearing of the three petitions filed at the court, which is set to rule on the matters by November 20.

The country's top judge won admiration and criticism in equal measure when the Supreme Court nullified the August 8 victory of President Uhuru Kenyatta and ordered a fresh presidential election held within 60 days. The incumbent had been declared winner, but the court, by a majority decision, nullified it, citing irregularities and illegalities after his main challenger, National Super Alliance (Nasa) leader Raila Odinga, petitioned.

²The Monitor, 7 November 2017, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201711070910.html>

³Daily Nation, 8 November 2017, http://allafrica.com/stories/201711090001.html?utm_campaign=allafrica%3Aeditor&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&utm_content=promote%3Aaans%3Aacblp

Mr Odinga pulled out of the October 26 fresh election, saying the electoral reforms he had demanded to level the field had not been effected. The veteran opposition leader described the fresh election -- won by Mr Kenyatta -- as a sham but refused to challenge it in court. Instead, he has called for street protests and a "People's Assembly" to resist the Kenyatta administration and pave the way for fresh elections within 90 days.

The three petitions were filed by former Kilome MP Harun Mwau and human rights activists Njonjo Mue and Khelef Khalifa. Mr Mwau, Mr Mue and Mr Khalifa argue that the withdrawal of Mr Odinga from the race meant that the poll was void. They have also cited numerous irregularities in the vote tallying, as well as violence that prevented voting in 25 constituencies, as grounds for quashing the election result.

North Africa

- **Egyptian parliamentary delegation visited United States**⁴

Last week a high-level Egyptian parliamentary delegation visited United States and met senior members of the US Congress and both sides discussed several important issues of mutual concerns. Nine-member Egyptian delegation was headed by the speaker of the Egyptian parliament, Mr. Abdel Aal and the delegation discussed NGOS law, human right issues, and religious freedom for Coptic Christians and growing religious extremism in the Arab world.

The delegation was also hosted by Middle East Institute, a well-known think tank of the US in Washington where the visiting members talked of transparency in the NGOs in the country and the speaker said that Egypt wanted the NGOs to follow the transparency in their mission and work and maintain the financial regularity. He also said that these NGOs should follow certain rules so they do not land up in trouble or find themselves implicated in funding terrorism or harming national interest of Egypt. Speaker Abdel Aal mentioned that country has recently passed certain set of new rules which in recent months have facilitated the construction of new churches and another law has been made to fight illegal migration. The sources also reported that Egyptian side conveyed its concern to the US authority about the funding of terrorism by Qatar and they meanwhile explain their position on cutting of ties with Qatar in last June.

- **Egyptian armed forces thwarts fresh attempt to target its western borders**⁵

⁴Ahramonline English, an Egyptian daily <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/280783/Egypt/Politics-/Egyptian-parliamentary-delegation-in-Washington-di.aspx>

⁵Al-Hayat Daily

<https://aawsat.com/home/article/1080531/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%88%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B5%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D8%AF%D9%85%D8%B1-10-%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%85%D8%AD%D9%85%D9%84%D8%A9-%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%A9-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%AF%D9%88%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%BA%D8%B1%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A9>

A fresh bid by a terror group to target the Egyptian western border has been foiled by the Egyptian armed forces. The forces have reportedly destroyed tens of armored vehicles belonging to the terror outfits in the western part of Egypt who were reportedly trying to inflict a heavy damage to the property and deployed forces in the region. The source in the armed forces said that it has been able to foil the bid by its continued borders surveillance and good intelligence network. The armed forces last week took a special measure to check the penetration of terror elements and chase them out of the border with Libya, which in recent years has become very vulnerable. The move on the part of armed forces was to destroy the vehicle that was located after an intelligence input, informed about the movement of some unidentified vehicles carrying some explosives and ammunitions. During the operation some members of the terrorist groups were nabbed and they are being interrogated.

Central Asia

- **First Cargo Train from Central Asia Arrives Turkey via New Eurasian Rail Link**

Giving a fillip to connectivity, a cargo train from Kazakhstan reached Turkey in November 2017 using the recently inaugurated Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway line. The container train with grain started from Kokshetau station in Kazakhstan and reached Mersin in Turkey in 10 days covering about 5400 kilometres. The train had 30 containers of 20-foot size and it was operated by the Kazakhstan national rail company KTZ.⁶ The new route has the potential of 10 million cargo transportation per year and connects landlocked Central Asia to international markets.

On 30 October 2017, President of Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev, Presidents of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Prime Minister of Georgia Giorgi Kvirikashvili, along with Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev of Kazakhstan and Prime Minister Abdulla Nigmatovich Aripov of Uzbekistan, participated in inaugural ceremony of Baku – Tbilisi – Kars railway corridor near Baku. The 849 km⁷ trilateral Baku – Tbilisi – Kars (BTK) railway line not only connects Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey but reduces transportation time between Asia and Europe.

- **Saudi Arabia to support TAPI natural gas pipeline project**

Saudi Arabia has reportedly expressed readiness to support the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) natural gas pipeline. The construction of the Turkmen section of TAPI started in 2015 and is slated to finish by the end of 2018. Saudi Arabia's interest was announced on the sidelines the Turkmen-Saudi intergovernmental

⁶ The Times of Central Asia, "Kazakhstan's first container train arrives in Turkey along Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway," 9 Nov 2017, <https://www.timesca.com/index.php/news/18901-kazakhstan-s-first-container-train-arrives-in-turkey-along-baku-tbilisi-kars-railway>

⁷ Railway Gazette, "Baku – Tbilisi – Kars railway corridor inaugurated," 30 October 2017, <http://www.railwaygazette.com/news/infrastructure/single-view/view/baku-tbilisi-kars-railway-corridor-inaugurated.html>

commission meeting on 8 November in Riyadh.⁸ Saudi Arabia Minister of Energy, Industry and Mineral Resources Khalid Al-Falih said that the kingdom “supports” the TAPI pipeline and the project will receive materials made in Saudi Arabia.⁹

The Saudi Minister also informed that the Kingdom has invited Turkmenistan to join the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries as an observer, which has been accepted by Ashgabat and the country would also join the World Energy Forum hosted by Riyadh.¹⁰

China

- **China Will Level Playing Field for Foreign Financial Firms¹¹**

China on Friday laid down a blueprint for creating a more level playing field for foreign firms in the country’s sprawling financial sector. Foreign companies will be allowed to own up to 51% of any joint venture in the securities, funds and future industries, Vice Finance Minister Zhu Guangyao was cited by the state-owned Xinhua News Agency as saying.

The report did not say from when the new limit will be effective, but added that whenever it comes into force, the 51% cap will be phased out in the following three years. Zhu was cited as saying that this blueprint was agreed upon by China and the U.S. during Trump’s visit that ended on 11th November.

- **Lending Tightens in China¹²**

Several of China’s largest state-backed banks used up their full-year quota to lend in the first three quarters as government efforts to deleverage the financial sector deepened. Lenders don’t expect the credit situation to ease next year. Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) and the Agricultural Bank of China both ran out of their loan quotas for this year of 850 billion yuan (\$128 billion) and 800 billion yuan, respectively, in the first nine months. They both have had to ask the central bank to lift their caps and are expecting new loans issued by each of them to hit around 900 billion yuan this year. China Construction Bank and Bank of China are facing similar problems, according to sources close to the senior management of the banks.

Looking ahead, banks widely expect their loan quota, decided by the People’s Bank of China, to stay similar to this year’s in 2018 if the central bank doesn’t change its stable and neutral monetary policy stance. That would mean new loans to be handed out by each of the large banks will be around one trillion yuan next year, while smaller banks will still have a tight time.

⁸ “The Nation, Saudi Arabia supports TAPI gas pipeline project ,” 11 November 2017, <http://nation.com.pk/11-Nov-2017/saudi-arabia-supports-tapi-gas-pipeline-project?show=preview>

⁹ Al Arabiya (English), “Saudi Arabia eyes investments in Turkmenistan, including gas, says Falih,” 8 November 2017, <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/business/energy/2017/11/08/Saudi-Arabia-eyes-investments-in-Turkmenistan-including-gas-says-Falih.html>

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ <https://www.caixinglobal.com/2017-11-10/china-will-level-playing-field-for-foreign-financial-firms-101169005.html>

¹² <https://www.caixinglobal.com/2017-11-11/lending-tightens-in-china-101169292.html>

- **Xinjiang Authorities Jail Uyghur ‘Religious Extremist’ For Scolding Son For Drinking¹³**

Authorities in northwest China’s Xinjiang province have sentenced a 67-year-old ethnic Uyghur Muslim to 10 years in prison for “religious extremism,” more than a decade after he scolded his son for breaking Islamic custom by drinking alcohol, according to the man’s wife. Tursun Memet was arrested on May 18 by police in Kashgar (in Chinese, Kashi) prefecture’s Yengisar (Yingjisha) county, 13 years after he admonished his son Memetimin Tursun for drinking in the lead up to his wedding day, his wife Heyrinsa Qasim recently told RFA’s Uyghur Service. Memet’s three sons, including the one who had drunk alcohol, were also arrested by authorities in Egus township’s No. 4 village, in Yengisar, for the incident between February and June this year, she said.

- **Xi advances ties with Vietnam¹⁴**

China and Vietnam signed documents to boost cooperation in such areas as the economy, investment, finance and cultural exchanges on Sunday 12th November during President Xi Jinping’s state visit to the neighboring country. The signing ceremony was witnessed by Xi, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, and Nguyen Phu Trong, general secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam Central Committee. The two countries will boost cooperation in building the Belt and Road, the economy and trade, as well as developing renewable energy and training officials.

Xi’s visit marks an unprecedented level of exchanges between the top leaders of the two nations following Trong’s visit to China in January and Vietnamese President Tran Dai Quang’s visit in May. It is also Xi’s first trip overseas since the CPC’s 19th National Congress. The congress elected a new CPC Central Committee.

- **“Start-up India” Investment Seminar in Beijing¹⁵**

To give impetus to the ‘Start-up India’ Initiative launched by the Government of India, the Embassy of India in Beijing co-organized and hosted a ‘Indian Start-up Investment Seminar’ bringing together around 20 Indian start-ups and more than a hundred Chinese investors under one roof at the auditorium of the Embassy. Organizing partners for the event included Start up India Association, Venture Gurukool and Sino Global Capital Limited. The main objective for organizing this event was to highlight the potential of Indian Start-ups and the investment opportunities presented by the rapid growth of Start-ups in India.

Speaking on the occasion, Charge d’Affaires Mr .Amit Narang highlighted the big jump of 30 places achieved by India in one year in the Ease of Doing Business Ranking released by World Bank recently. Calling this achievement the spirit of a ‘New India’, he called-on to Chinese investors to look at India as an unrivalled economic opportunity. He urged the Indian Start-ups to also look eastwards towards China not just for capital, but for innovation and experience-sharing to realize future growth.

¹³ <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/drinking-11082017154732.html>

¹⁴ http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2017-11/13/content_34460526.htm

¹⁵ <http://indianembassybeijing.in/overwhelming-response-7-nov-2017.php>

- **China eyes more civilians working with its military**¹⁶

China has revised a regulation on civilian personnel in the military in a bid to attract more talented people to work for the country's armed forces. The revised regulation, made public on 10 November, was jointly issued by the State Council and the Central Military Commission (CMC). The regulation states the duties, status, assignments and treatment of relevant personnel. According to the revision, civilian personnel in the military refer to those who work in management or professional technical posts. They would perform their duties in peace time and would work on active service if necessary.

The State Council and the CMC first issued a regulation on the issue in 2005. "The revision of the regulation is aimed to expand the scope of posts of civilian personnel, optimize the personnel structure, save human resource costs and attract more talented people to the military," according to a statement issued by the military and civilian personnel bureau under the CMC Political Work Department. The revised regulation is also expected to help build a high-quality and professional talent pool for the military.

- **Regional cooperation on agenda for Premier Li's Philippines trip**¹⁷

Cooperation in East Asia and regional economic partnership will be high on the agenda for Chinese Premier Li Keqiang's Philippines trip. The Chinese premier left Beijing on 12 November for an official visit to the country and a series of high-level regional meetings, including the 20th China-ASEAN (10+1) leaders' meeting, the 20th ASEAN-China, Japan and Republic of Korea (10+3) leaders' meeting and the 12th East Asia Summit, as well as the leaders' meeting on Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)

Premier Li will brief on China's policy on cooperation in East Asia, and propose nearly 30 new initiatives to deepen practical cooperation on interconnectivity, food security, poverty reduction, tourism and anti-corruption.

- **Foreign Minister Wang Yi Meets with Special Secretary of Ministry of External Affairs of Pakistan and Deputy Foreign Minister of Afghanistan**¹⁸

On November 7, 2017, Foreign Minister Wang Yi met in Beijing with Special Secretary of Ministry of External Affairs Tasnim Aslam of Pakistan and Deputy Foreign Minister Hekmat Khalil Karzai of Afghanistan, who were in China for the China-Pakistan-Afghanistan trilateral vice-ministerial consultation on counter-terrorism and security. Wang Yi noted that as important forces for international counter-terrorism, both Pakistan and Afghanistan have made great contributions to international counter-terrorism campaign, particularly to the cause of counter-terrorism in South Asia.

¹⁶<http://en.people.cn/n3/2017/1113/c90000-9291757.html>

¹⁷http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-11/12/c_136746873.htm

¹⁸ http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/

European Union

- **France Supports Lebanon**

It was reported by Lebanon's state-run National News Agency that French President Emmanuel Macron called Lebanese President Michel Aoun. They discussed the latest political developments. French President Macron, reportedly, expressed his country's commitment to Lebanon's "unity, sovereignty and independence."¹⁹ It was also reported that President Macron has promised to help Lebanon in maintaining its security and political stability.²⁰

- **EU Reiterated its Support for Iran Nuclear Deal**

Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, said that the nuclear deal was "a major achievement of European and international multilateral diplomacy." She added, "The European Union will make sure it will continue to be fully implemented by all, in all its parts."²¹

- **Poland to Send More Troops to Afghanistan under NATO-led Resolute Support Training and Advisory Mission**

Security situation in Afghanistan deteriorates, NATO has decided to enhance troops there. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said the total number of troops would be enhanced from 13,000 to 16,000. Poland would increase its number of troops from 200 to 300. Antoni Macierewicz, Defence Minister of Poland said that Polish troops support in Afghan army and police in training.²²

- **French President Macron's Visit to Riyadh**

French President Emmanuel Macron visited Saudi Arabia on 9 November 2017. He was on visit of the United Arab Emirates, which was his first visit to the Middle East. The French President went to Riyadh from the United Arab Emirates. The French President met Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, Mohammed bin Salman. Reportedly, they discussed the regional issues and political developments. French President Macron said, "I've heard some very hard positions." He added that it was important to talk to all sides.²³

¹⁹ US, France express support for Lebanon amid crisis, France 24, 11 November 2017, <http://www.france24.com/en/20171111-us-france-express-support-lebanon-crisis-hariri-saudi-arabia-diplomacy>

²⁰ Macron to Aoun: France Supports Lebanon's Sovereignty, Independence, 11 November 2017 <https://english.almanar.com.lb/384294>

²¹ EU and Iran defend nuclear deal, under fire from Trump, Reuters, November 10, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-eu-iran-nuclear/eu-and-iran-defend-nuclear-deal-under-fire-from-trump-idUSKBN1DA0JV>

²² Poland among NATO states to pledge more troops to Afghanistan, Radio Poland, November 9, 2017, <http://www.thenews.pl/1/10/Artykul/334416,Poland-among-NATO-states-to-pledge-more-troops-to-Afghanistan>

²³ Macron visits Riyadh as Saudi-Iran tensions soar, France 24, November 10, 2017, <http://www.france24.com/en/20171110-macron-visits-riyadh-saudi-iran-tensions-soar>

East Asia /South-East Asia

Korean Peninsula and Japan

- **US President Donald Trump Visits Japan²⁴**

On November 7, 2017 US President Donald Trump concluded his three day state visit to Japan. U.S. President Trump during the visit emphasized America's "solidarity" with Japan against "the North Korean menace," but at the same time made no secret of his dissatisfaction with what he considers an unfair trade relationship with Japan. President Trump was in Japan on the first stop of his five-nation trip to Asia, including South Korea, China, Vietnam and the Philippines. After the summit, two high-ranking Japanese officials called the overall outcome a success, with one noting that Trump had not, as feared, pressed Abe too hard on the trade front. The prime minister, for his part, said the two leaders "completely agreed" that the allies must continue to take a hard-line approach to nuclear-armed North Korea, a strategy that involves heaping "maximum pressure" on the regime.

- **Japan adopts New Sanction on North Korea²⁵**

On November 8, 2017 Japan announced a set of unilateral sanctions on North Korea in response to the continuing threat posed by its missile and nuclear programs. The new sanction will freeze the assets of nine organizations and 26 individuals. The organizations are North Korean banks, several of them based in China, while the individuals are based in a number of nations, including China, Russia and Libya. In response, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying reiterated that China opposed unilateral sanctions imposed outside of the framework of the U.N. Security Council.

- **US President Donald Trump Visit to South Korea²⁶**

US President Donald Trump was in South Korea for a two day state visit on November 7-8, 2017. Trump has become to first American President to make a state visit to South Korea in the last 25 years. During the visit President Trump address South Korean National Assembly, where he delivered a sharp warning to North Korea by saying "do not underestimate us. And do not try us." On the first day of his trip President Trump had signalled a willingness to negotiate as he urged North Korea to "come to the table" and "make a deal" over its nuclear weapons program. During the Summit, Seoul and Washington agreed to the procurement of American strategic weapons by South Korea, such as surveillance assets and nuclear-powered submarine. Regarding trade and economic cooperation between the two countries, Moon and Trump agreed to speed up the ongoing renegotiation of the South Korea-U.S. free trade agreement (KORUS FTA), which Trump has claimed is disadvantageous to his country.

²⁴ "Trump touts solidarity with Japan but refuses to shy away from trade", The Japan Times, November 6, 2017, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/11/06/national/politics-diplomacy/trump-touts-solidarity-japan-refuses-shy-away-trade/#.WglBHmiCyM9> (Accessed on November 13, 2017)

²⁵ "Japan to impose additional sanctions on N. Korea", The Asahi Shimbun, November 8, 2017, <http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201711080013.html> (Accessed on November 13, 2017)

²⁶ "ROK to purchase strategic arms from US", The Korea Times, November 8, 2018, http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2017/11/205_238939.html (Accessed on November 13, 2017)

- **Japan-China Summit Meet**²⁷

On November 11, 2017 Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe met Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in the Vietnamese resort city of Danang. Following the meeting Prime Minister told reporters that "at the end of the meeting, President Xi said this is a meeting that marks a fresh start of relations between Japan and China. I totally feel the same way." He also added that, "With the North Korea situation at an important phase, the role China ought to play is very big." At the meeting China and Japan have agreed to accelerate talks for an early implementation of a communication mechanism between their military forces. Prime Minister Abe also proposed that Japan and China cooperate in doing business in third countries.

- **President Moon-President Xi Summit in Vietnam**²⁸

On November 11, 2017 South Korean President met Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit. Their bilateral summit came after the governments of South Korea and China struck an agreement on October 31 to end the diplomatic row over a U.S. Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) battery deployed in South Korea. Moon accepted Xi's invitation to visit China next month, while Xi said he will "make efforts" to come to the Winter Olympics, slated for Feb. 9 to 25, 2018, in PyeongChang, Gangwon Province. The two leaders also agreed to bolster efforts to resolve the North Korea nuclear crisis, something Xi had refused to discuss with Moon over the past few months.

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

- **Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), Da Nang, Vietnam, November 6-11, 2017**

The 29th APEC Ministerial Meeting held on November 9, 2017 at Da Nang, Vietnam, saw the participation of APEC Ministers and representatives of the ASEAN, the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC), the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), and the APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC). The Director General of the World Trade Organisation Roberto Azevedo also attended the meeting. Speaking at the inaugural session Vietnam's President Tran Dai Quang, stated that APEC is at a crucial juncture in which there is a rapidly changing world and a transforming Asia-Pacific which presence an unprecedented opportunities and challenges. President Quang further adds that the Fourth Industrial Revolution, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate change have laid important foundations for sustainable, inclusive, and equitable global development. Yet, the confluence of prolonged economic stagnation, new waves of protectionism, terrorism, regional conflicts, and climate change, amongst others, ever more complex and interrelated non-traditional security challenges are

²⁷ "Abe hails "fresh start" to Japan-China ties after Xi meeting", The Asahi Shimbun, November 12, 2017, <http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201711120006.html> (Accessed on November 13, 2017)

²⁸ "Moon, Xi agree to put Seoul-Beijing ties back on track", The Korea Times, November 12, 2017, http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2017/11/120_239107.html (Accessed on November 13, 2017)

exerting far-reaching impacts on each and every economy, business and individual across the world.²⁹

At the conclusion of the 29th Ministerial Meeting, the Ministers reaffirmed their commitments to sustaining momentum on regional cooperation, reinforcing APEC's role as the premier regional economic forum, and upholding APEC's ability to adapt, transform and provide leadership in the region. The Ministers emphasised the need for continued efforts in emergency preparedness and disaster management, and building resilience for APEC communities; and stressed the importance of capacity building to further enhance APEC economies' ability to participate in RTAs/FTAs.³⁰

Following the 25th APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting on November 11, 2017, the 21 APEC member economies issued the Da Nang Declaration titled; "Creating New Dynamism, Fostering a Shared Future". The Leaders reaffirmed their long-standing commitment to APEC's mission of supporting sustainable economic growth and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific. These included the promotion of innovative growth, inclusion, and sustainable employment, while providing new drivers for regional economic integration. Further, the Leaders also pledged to strengthen the capacity and innovation of micro, small, and medium enterprises while enhancing food security and promoting sustainable agriculture in response to climate change.³¹

- **President Duterte to Address President Xi on Arms build-up in the SCS³²**

After the release of a map by a Washington-based think tank which showed the Philippines within range of Chinese warplanes and missiles being deployed to the SCS, President Duterte said he would address this issue to President Xi when he meets him on November 11 at the APEC Summit. President Duterte stated that he will carry the voice of ASEAN being the Chair of ASEAN, and while he intends to remain a friend to China will address the sentiments of ASEAN.³³ President Trump, who arrived in Manila on November 12, for the ASEAN and the East Asia Summit, would seek to re-energise its relationship with the Philippines, according to a senior White House official. Further the US official stated that counter-terrorism efforts would be discussed between the two leaders. On the South China Sea, the US official stated that there has been a very clear and consistent message from President Trump on the freedom of navigation in the South China Sea, while the President would express his concern on the militarisation in the South China Sea.

²⁹ "Message by H.E. Tran Dai Quang, President of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on APEC Vietnam 2017", *APEC*, <https://www.apec2017.vn/ap17-c/press-release/message-he-tran-dai-quang-president-socialist-republic-viet-nam-apec-viet-nam-2017>, accessed on November 10, 2017.

³⁰ "The 29th APEC Ministers Meeting Reaffirmed the Forum's Role as a Driver for Regional Growth and Economic Integration", *APEC*, <https://www.apec2017.vn/ap17-c/press-release/29th-apec-ministerial-meeting-reaffirmed-forums-role-driver-regional-growth-and>, accessed on November 10, 2017.

³¹ "APEC Economic Leaders Issue Da Nang Declaration", *APEC*, <https://www.apec2017.vn/ap17-c/press-release/apec-economic-leaders-issue-da-nang-declaration>, accessed on November 13, 2017.

³² "Trump to re-energise' Philippines-US partnership", *The Philippines Star*, November 13, 2017, accessed on November 13, 2017.

³³ "Duterte to press Xi on arms build up in the South China Sea", *The Straits Times*, November 10, 2017, <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/duterte-to-press-xi-on-arms-buildup-in-south-china-sea>, accessed on November 10, 2017.

- **President Trump meets Vietnam’s Party Chief, President, and Prime Minister in Hanoi**³⁴

During his State visit to Vietnam on November 12, 2017, President Trump met with his counterpart President Tran Dai Quang, Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc, and the General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam, Nguyen Phu Trong. Trade was one of the major agenda for President Trump visit to Vietnam as he believes it would thrive in the years to come. President Trump also offered to mediate in the issue of the East Vietnam Sea with China, while speaking at a news conference with Vietnamese President, where he stated that “...I’m a very good mediator and arbitrator. I have done plenty of it from both sides. So if I can help you, let me know”.

Myanmar

- **Ministry vows speedier info release on Rakhine crisis**³⁵

The information Ministry vowed on 12th November to provide faster information about the on-going conflict in the northern Rakhine, where hundreds of thousands of Muslim residents have fled to the nearby Bangladesh to escape the recent eruption of violence in the area. Minister of Information U Pe Myint, said that the Ministry would hasten the release of details about the programs and activities of the private-government initiative Union Enterprise For Humanitarian Assistance Resettlement and Development in Rakhine (UEHRD). The pledge came during the weekend’s meeting between the Rakhine State government and U Pe Myint.

- **Anti-coal power plant protesters stopped in Kayin**³⁶

Authorities on 7th November blocked residents from demonstrating at the site of a proposed coal power plant in Hpa-an township in Kayin State, to express their opposition to the facility. The protesters, carrying placards inscribed with “We don’t want, No coal”, were not allowed to go near the plant, according to Saw Eh Doe Soe, one of the demonstrators. “Toyo Thai Power Myanmar Co Ltd will invest US\$3 billion in the coal-fired factory which will be built in WuttKyivillage ward, Hpa-an township, Kayin State. It will operate for 30 years. The plant has a capacity of 1,280 megawatts.

- **At least 8000 Kachin refugees can return home, group says**³⁷

At least 8000 Kachin refugees who fled from clashes between government troops and ethnic armed fighters six years ago can now return to their villages as violence has abated, a church-based group told The Myanmar Times on 7 November. The Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC) said about 8000 displaced people from about 30 villages can return

³⁴“US President Trumps meeting with Vietnam Party chief”, TuoiTre News, November 13, 2017, <https://tuoitrenews.vn/news/politics/20171113/us-president-trump-treasures-meeting-with-vietnam-party-chief/42610.html>, accessed on November 13, 2017.

³⁵ Ministry vows speedier info release on Rakhine crisis, 13 November 2017, <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/ministry-vows-speedier-info-release-rakhine-crisis.html>

³⁶ Anti-coal power plant protesters stopped in Kayin, 10 November 2017, <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/anti-coal-power-plant-protesters-stopped-kayin.html>

³⁷ At least 8000 Kachin refugees can return home, group says, 8 November 2017, <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/least-8000-kachin-refugees-can-return-home-group-says.html>

home as the Tatmadaw and the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) fighters have left their areas. "We can't confirm data for now. There are other religious organisations so we don't know about data from places where they have collected," said U Hka Li, a KBC official.

- **Burma Campaign UK plans new 'Dirty List' of human rights violators**³⁸

Burma Campaign UK is planning to revive its 'Dirty List' strategy of naming and shaming companies linked to human rights violations in Myanmar, the London-based activist group said on November 8. The new list would be published early next year and updated regularly, BCUK said in a statement. The group first published the 'Dirty List' in 2002 to identify companies linked to either the junta or to human rights violations. It said more than 100 companies ended their involvement in Myanmar after being named on the list, including British American Tobacco, PWC, WPP and P&O Cruises.

- **Amid Rakhine crisis Malaysian MPs call for Petronas to quit Myanmar**³⁹

A group of lawmakers in Malaysia has called for state-run energy giant Petronas to withdraw from Myanmar in protest at what they say is the treatment of Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine State, media reported. A non-partisan petition signed by 47 MPs calls for Petronas to cease all operations in Myanmar by the end of the year, the New Straits Times online edition reported on November 8.

- **China Says it Will Keep Talking to Myanmar over Stalled Dam Scheme**⁴⁰

China said on 8th November that it will continue to talk to Myanmar about a controversial stalled dam project, after Myanmar's new energy minister cast doubt over the scheme. Valued at US\$3.6 billion, the Myitsone dam project in the north of Myanmar has been a sticking point between the two countries since the previous military-backed government suspended work in 2011.

North America

Canada

- **We weren't ready' to close deal: Trudeau defends Canada's actions on TPP**

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is defending Canada's actions on the Trans-Pacific Partnership, asserting the country simply was not ready to put pen to paper on a final agreement because of lingering concerns around culture and the automotive sector. Prime Minister Trudeau said he didn't snub other TPP leaders when he skipped a planned meeting to discuss the deal, as there would have been little point in having such talks when there was still so much distance between the countries on certain chapters. The 11 countries still party to the deal reached an agreement late Friday on a series of "core principles," importantly a pledge that each member would uphold strict environmental

³⁸ Burma Campaign UK plans new 'Dirty List' of human rights violators, 9 November 2017, <https://frontiermyanmar.net/en/burma-campaign-uk-plans-new-dirty-list-of-human-rights-violators>

³⁹ Amid Rakhine crisis Malaysian MPs call for Petronas to quit Myanmar, 8 November 2017, <https://frontiermyanmar.net/en/amid-rakhine-crisis-malaysian-mps-call-for-petronas-to-quit-myanmar>

⁴⁰ China Says Will Keep Talking to Myanmar Over Stalled Dam Scheme, 9 November 2017, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/china-says-will-keep-talking-myanmar-stalled-dam-scheme.html>

and labour standards, and that they would dump intellectual property provisions initially demanded by the former Obama administration.⁴¹

- **Amid 'deep concern' for Rohingya refugees, Trudeau meets with Myanmar leader Suu Kyi**

Prime Minister Trudeau and his special envoy to Myanmar, Bob Rae, met with Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi before the start of APEC trade talks in Da Nang, Vietnam. During the 45-minute meeting, they talked about Suu Kyi's perceived inaction on the Rohingya refugee crisis, which has seen hundreds of thousands of Rohingya flee from Myanmar's Rakhine state into neighbouring Bangladesh in the face of violence at home. Mr. Rae told reporters after that Trudeau was forthright about the level of violence and the extent of the problems causing people to flee. The meeting comes as Myanmar faces allegations of large-scale human rights abuses against the Rohingya Muslim minority population in the predominately Buddhist nation. Last month, Trudeau announced Rae would visit Myanmar on a fact-finding mission and report back on what role Canada can play in ending the humanitarian crises in the Southeast Asian country.⁴²

- **Liberals to offer equipment, training for peacekeeping but no mission commitment**

Canada is ready to offer the United Nations a list of high-end equipment and troops who could train peacekeepers from other countries for dangerous deployments. The pledge, does not involve a long-awaited commitment to a specific mission, nor will it see large-scale boots on the ground, said multiple sources. The Liberal government pledged over a year ago to deliver up to 600 troops and 150 police officers to UN-mandated peace operations. The goal is still relevant, said one official who spoke the condition anonymity, but it is something the government "is committed to build up to." The sources say the UN will be given an inventory of Canadian military and police "capabilities" — options for them to choose to support ongoing operations. That would, in effect, involve smaller deployments of higher-skilled Canadian troops on an intermittent basis in the future, the sources said. It would be a departure from the traditional concept of peacekeeping — involving battalions of infantry soldiers. Among other things, Canada also wants to develop better methods to share and co-ordinate commitments between countries, said sources with knowledge of the file. The sources say the Liberal government's contribution will also highlight the need for institutional reform.⁴³

The United States

- **Trump Tells APEC the U.S. Won't Accept 'Unfair' Trade Any More**

U.S. President Donald Trump set out a strong message on trade at a meeting of Asia-Pacific countries in Vietnam, saying the U.S. could no longer tolerate chronic trade

⁴¹ John Paul Tasker, "We weren't ready' to close deal: Trudeau defends Canada's actions on TPP," <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/justin-trudeau-tpp-canada-not-ready-apec-1.4398824>, Accessed on 13 November 2017.

⁴² CBC News, "Amid 'deep concern' for Rohingya refugees, Trudeau meets with Myanmar leader Suu Kyi," <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/trudeau-meeting-aung-san-suu-kyi-vietnam-1.4396538>, Accessed on 13 November 2017.

⁴³ Murray Brewster, "Liberals to offer equipment, training for peacekeeping but no mission commitment," <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/un-canada-peacekeeping-1.4398508>, Accessed on 13 November 2017.

abuses and would insist on fair and equal policies. Trump said the U.S. is ready to make a bilateral deal with any country in the region, but only on the basis of “mutual respect and mutual benefit.” President Trump arrived in Vietnam from China on the fourth leg of a 12-day trip to Asia. Redressing the balance of trade between Asia and the United States is at the center of an “America First” policy which Trump says will protect U.S. workers. The difference between Trump’s and China’s approaches was made more stark by comments in a later speech from Chinese President Xi Jinping, who said globalization was an irreversible trend and voiced support for multilateral trade deals. While China has by far the biggest trade surplus with the U.S., Vietnam is also on the list of those surpluses the Trump administration seeks to reduce.⁴⁴

- **Trump, Putin issue joint statement on fighting ISIS in Syria**

President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin informally met on the sidelines of a regional economic summit in Vietnam and agreed to an extensive statement on the conflict in Syria. The statement, which reaffirms the leaders' commitment to defeat ISIS in the country, stresses the need to keep existing military communications open and agrees that the bloody conflict does not have a military solution. According to the joint statement, Trump and Putin "agreed to maintain open military channels of communication" between the two countries on Syria and said their efforts would continue "until the final defeat of ISIS is achieved." "The Presidents agreed that there is no military solution to the conflict in Syria," the statement said, adding that the two agreed to find an "ultimate political solution" to the conflict. While the statement mostly addresses long-accepted areas of agreement between the United States and Russia, it comes after Trump and Putin spoke casually at least three times at the ocean-side summit in Da Nang.⁴⁵

- **Democrats sweep in Virginia, New Jersey**

Democrats have won key races in Virginia and New Jersey, their first major wins during the tenure of President Donald Trump and a boost heading into the 2018 midterms, when control of US House and Senate will be up for grabs. The blue wave along the East Coast saw Ralph Northam winning the governor's race in Virginia and Phil Murphy victorious in New Jersey. Democrats are also on pace to capture control of the Virginia General Assembly, and several liberals, including New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio won their mayoral elections. The Virginia race carries national importance as a gauge of how voters are reacting to Trump a year into his presidency -- and also because the state is a proving ground for both parties' approaches in the 2018 midterm elections, when Democrats hope to take control of the House and Republicans seek to expand their 52-48 Senate majority. The election takes place with Trump overseas on a 13-day Asia trip. The President had thrown his political capital heavily behind Sen. Luther Strange in an Alabama Republican

⁴⁴ Fortune Editors and Reuters, “Trump Tells APEC the U.S. Won't Accept 'Unfair' Trade Any More,” <http://fortune.com/2017/11/10/trump-apec-speech-trade-vietnam/>, Accessed on 13 November 2017.

⁴⁵ Dan Merica, “Trump, Putin issue joint statement on fighting ISIS in Syria,” <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/11/11/politics/us-russia-syria-isis-trump-putin/index.html>, Accessed on 13 November 2017.

Senate primary in September -- but Strange lost to former judge Roy Moore, and Trump has been much less involved in subsequent races.⁴⁶

Mexico

- **APEC a chance to strengthen VN-Mexico ties**

President Peña Nieto stated, “Mexico has a special friendship with Việt Nam: Its ancient culture, kind people and economic potential show us that greatness can live through the past, the present and the future. I will be honored to be in Đà Nẵng and I am convinced that this will be an excellent opportunity to strengthen the ties between our nations. Even though Mexico has consolidated an important trading network, we are committed to deepening our commercial ties with the Asia-Pacific region. We will work, along with Việt Nam and other partners in the region, to put into effect the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP11) as soon as possible. We are certain that it will bring greater trade integration among the 812 million people living in this economic bloc. Likewise, the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation Forum (APEC) is a priority initiative for my country. Seven of its members are already among our ten largest trade partners. Around 88 per cent of Mexico’s exports and 80 per cent of our imports come from APEC members. We are also an important supplier for the region: nearly 80 per cent of APEC economies’ imports are intermediate products processed in Mexico....”⁴⁷

- **Mexico Says Bad Nafta Outcome Could Hurt Cooperation With U.S. on Security**

If the renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement encounters trouble, it could impact other areas of cooperation with the U.S. such as security and immigration, according to Mexican Foreign Minister Luis Videgaray. Mr. Videgaray told reporters earlier this week that Mexico is prepared for the end of Nafta if it can’t reach a deal with the U.S. and Canada that benefits the nation.⁴⁸

- **Independent candidates threaten to break grip of Mexico’s parties in next election**

Next year’s Mexican election will host a broader and more diverse group of presidential hopefuls than ever before. For the first time in the country’s recent history, independent candidates without a party affiliation are allowed to participate. It’s an innovation some observers say is badly needed, as Mexico’s traditional political parties have been deeply discredited by corruption scandals and cronyism. Others, however, believe independent candidacies will do little to change the country’s dysfunctional democracy. Much will be at stake when Mexicans go to the polls on July 1, 2018. They will vote for a new president, Chamber of Deputies and Senate, as well as for hundreds of other elected officials at the

⁴⁶ Eric Bradner, “Democrats sweep in Virginia, New Jersey,” <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/11/07/politics/2017-us-election-highlights/index.html>, Accessed on 13 November 2017.

⁴⁷ Enrique Peña Nieto, President of Mexico, “APEC a chance to strengthen VN-Mexico ties,” Read more at <http://vietnamnews.vn/opinion/416486/apec-a-chance-to-strengthen-vn-mexico-ties.html#rub4cP7A5vqLtOzQ.99>, Accessed on 13 November 2017.

⁴⁸ y Rosalind Mathieson and Eric Martin, “Mexico Says Bad Nafta Outcome Could Hurt Cooperation With U.S. on Security,” Accessed on 13 November 2017.

state and municipal levels. The election is expected to be one of the most hotly contested since the country's transition to democracy in 2000. Voters are looking for alternatives to national politics they feel is badly tainted by big-spending parties that seem to deliver only more corruption. Voters are looking for alternatives to national politics they feel are badly tainted by big-spending parties that seem to deliver only more corruption.⁴⁹

Russia

- **Russia and Foreign Media**

The Russian State Duma may pass a law restricting foreign media in Russia in response to the same restrictions imposed on Russian media in the United States. According to State Duma Speaker Vyacheslav Volodin, such measures are necessary as a balanced response to the requirements of the US Justice Department to register RT TV channel as a foreign agent. The State Duma will consider appropriate issues on the subject on November 15. In the United States, there is a law on foreign agents, which allows to restrict freedom of speech and dissemination of information.⁵⁰

Russian President Vladimir Putin said on 11 November that Russia would respond in kind to what he said were Washington's measures to restrict the freedom of speech of Russian media organizations operating on U.S. soil. Putin said however that possible plan to retaliate by declaring U.S. media operating in Russia as foreign agents may be "a little too harsh," and that the Kremlin was still formulating its exact response.⁵¹

- **Russia and India**

Russia, which is building the 6,000-mw Kudankulam nuclear plant, plans to raise localisation to more than 50 per cent for the upcoming units at the Tamil Nadu plant from the present 20 per cent levels. Rosatom, the Russian partner for state-run Nuclear Power Corporation (NPCIL), is supplying the water-water energetic reactors (VVER reactors), for the Kudankulam nuclear plant, which currently generates 2,000 mw (2x 1,000 mw). Moscow has signed an agreement with New Delhi for the units 5 & 6, which will begin after the ongoing units 3 & 4 are completed. Currently, the units have around 20 per cent localisation. The fifth and sixth units will cost about Rs 50,000 crore with half of it being funded by Russia as loan. The third and fourth units began last year and will cost Rs 39,747 crore. Russia has also offered India the latest "generation 3-plus" nuclear reactors - the VVER-1200-powered by advanced fuel -- for the yet-to-be designated site in parallel to the ongoing 6,000-mw Kudankulam project. Consul general of Russian Federation in

⁴⁹ Jan-Albert Hootsen, "Independent candidates threaten to break grip of Mexico's parties in next election," <https://www.americamagazine.org/politics-society/2017/11/03/independent-candidates-threaten-break-grip-mexicos-parties-next>, Accessed on 13 November 2017.

⁵⁰ "Russia to restrict foreign media before November 17", *Pravada*, November 10, 2017. http://www.pravdareport.com/news/russia/politics/10-11-2017/139151-media_foreign_agents-0/ Accessed on November 13, 2017.

⁵¹ Denis Pinchuk, "Putin: restriction on Russian media is attack on free speech", *Reuters*, November 11, 2017. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-usa-media-restrictions/putin-restriction-on-russian-media-is-attack-on-free-speech-idUSKBN1DB0BR?il=0> Accessed on November 13, 2017.

Mumbai Andrei Zhiltsov said for a fast-growing economy like India there will be no substitute for nuclear power and Russia will participate in the Indian growth story.⁵²

To increase the relationship between India and Russia, two premier think tanks (VIF and RIAC) have jointly urged India and Russia to look beyond bilateral engagements and do more on the global arena through tripartite partnerships, including one with the US. A joint report by both these two think tanks reported that “The two countries should not limit their relations just to the bilateral aspect, but look at doing more on the global arena through trilateral partnerships – for example Russia–India–China (RIC), India–Russia–Israel, India–Russia–USA, etc. As a starting point, Track 2 dialogues serve well for discussing such interactions.” The report, interestingly suggested that India and Russia could use the Russia-India-China (RIC) format to oppose “Western civilisational attacks on all three RIC members through NGOs, specifically human rights and religious conversions.” The report also suggested third country cooperation in what could be a first for New Delhi and Moscow in some of the countries. “India and Russia can profitably cooperate with each other in economic projects in third countries, primarily in Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, as well as in Central Asia.” While New Delhi and Moscow coordinate in Central Asia, India is involved in developing a nuclear power plant in Bangladesh. It also advised closer India-Russia-Iran cooperation against terrorism in Afghanistan.⁵³

Russia has accused India of committing an “unfriendly act” by granting the US officials access to the Russian nuclear submarine of Project 971I, operated by the Indian Navy since 2011.⁵⁴ According to *Kommersant*, the Russian newspaper, Moscow suspected Delhi of admitting US Navy representatives to the Russian nuclear submarine of Project 971I, which since 2011, under the name Chakra, is operated by the Indian Navy. The incident threatens to seriously complicate the negotiations both on the lease of the second nuclear submarine, and on other projects in the field of military-technical cooperation (MTC).⁵⁵ Another newspaper, *Pravda* said that the Russian military officials believe that their Indian partners committed an inadmissible action by allowing Americans on board Chakra nuclear submarine (formerly Nerpa), which India leases from

⁵²“Russia eyes over 50% localisation for new Kudankulam reactors”, *Economic Times*, November 12, 2017. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/power/russia-eyes-over-50-localisation-for-new-kudankulam-reactors/articleshow/61614019.cms> Accessed on November 13, 2017.

⁵³Dipanjan Roy Choudhury, “Premier think tanks urge India and Russia to look beyond bilateral engagements”, *Economic Times*, November 11, 2017. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/premier-think-tanks-urge-india-and-russia-to-look-beyond-bilateral-engagements/articleshow/61600724.cms> Accessed on November 13, 2017.

⁵⁴“Russia Miffed With India For Letting US Navy Officials Onboard 'Chakra' Submarine”, *Defenseworld*, November 9, 2017. http://www.defenseworld.net/news/21213/Russia_Miffed_With_India_For_Letting_US_Navy_Officials_Onboard_Chakra_Submarine Accessed on November 13, 2017.

⁵⁵“Chakra opened to the wrong side”, *Kommersant*, November 11, 2017. https://translate.google.com/translate?depth=1&hl=en&prev=search&rurl=translate.google.com.bh&sl=ru&sp=nmt4&u=https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3461277%3Ffrom%3Dother_read Accessed on November 13, 2017.

Russia since 2011.⁵⁶The news reports that the visit of US servicemen to the Chakra submarine may eventually affect the defence cooperation between Russia and India. Presently, the Russian side is "dragging out the decision about repairing the nuclear submarine, which was damaged on a mission in late August. Moscow suspects that despite the leasing conditions prescribed in the contract, Delhi allowed representatives of the US Navy to the Chakra submarine, who got acquainted with its internal systems. Several sources of Kommersant in Russian state structures have confirmed that recently the Indian partners have actually committed several "unfriendly acts towards the Russian Federation".⁵⁷

On 7 November, Russian envoy Nikolay Kudashev said that Russia was not concerned over the growing Indo-US ties, but had apprehensions over Washington's "agenda" as it "does not look constructive" for Moscow. He expressed hope that this would change in the near future and the three countries would work together for the Eurasian community. He said the Indo-Russia relations had a huge potential for a further expansion, considering the level of cooperation the two countries had seen in different areas in the past. Seeking to assuage India's concerns over the growing engagements between Pakistan and Russia, Kudashev asserted that Moscow's relations with New Delhi were "second to none". Kudashev said countering terrorism was the substance of the relationship between Russia and Pakistan.⁵⁸

- **Russia and Asia**

Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Pankin that Russia provided assistance to the countries of Central Asia in the amount of more than \$6 billion over the past ten years. Russia's investments in the region amount to about \$20 billion. According to him, peculiarities of the geographic location of the countries of Central Asia provide for the need to ensure their transport and energy connectivity with the Asia-Pacific region, South Asia and Europe. Therefore, Russia participates in all projects on cooperation with the region, Pankin concluded.⁵⁹

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte thanked Moscow on 10 November for its "timely assistance" in defeating pro-Islamic State militants who took over a southern city for months, expressing his willingness to buy Russian weapons. "I want to build a strong armed forces and a strong police and the reason is very important for you to know that we are eyeing - we are buying arms from Russia this time," Duterte told Russian President

⁵⁶"Russian-Indian defence cooperation in danger after India commits inadmissible act", *Pravada*, November 9, 2017. http://www.pravdareport.com/russia/economics/09-11-2017/139141-russia_india-0/ Accessed on November 13, 2017.

⁵⁷"Chakra opened to the wrong side", *Kommersant*, November 11, 2017, op.cit.

⁵⁸"Not concerned over Indo-US ties, apprehensive about Washington's agenda: Russian envoy Nikolay Kudashev", *Economic Times*, November 7, 2017. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/not-concerned-over-indo-us-ties-apprehensive-about-washingtons-agenda-russian-envoy-nikolay-kudashev/articleshow/61551084.cms> Accessed on November 13, 2017.

⁵⁹"Russia announces amount of support for Asian states in ten years", *Pravada*, November 10, 2017. http://www.pravdareport.com/news/russia/economics/10-11-2017/139152-russia_asia-0/ Accessed on November 13, 2017.

Vladimir Putin on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in Vietnam. On October, Manila and Moscow signed a military deal on logistics, including a contract with a state-owned company for the supply of equipment.⁶⁰

South Asia

Afghanistan

- **Foreign Troops In Afghanistan To Increase To 16,000: NATO Chief**

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said on 07 November 2017 that NATO and its allies will be sending in more troops to Afghanistan to tackle what he described as the threats of the Taliban and other insurgents. According to him, the new level will be around 16,000 with the focus on training. This came just a few hours after insurgents, reportedly associated to Daesh, launched a coordinated attack on Afghanistan's Shamshad TV station, killing at least two people and wounding 20 staff members. Stoltenberg strongly condemned attack on Shamshad TV and said it was yet another example of attacks on civilians – “which is unacceptable”. He said NATO and its partners will review the Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan together.⁶¹

Further, addressing a press conference on the second day of the ministers of defense meeting in Brussels on 09 November 2017, NATO Secretary General said the United Arab Emirates and Qatar are seeking to contribute to NATO's Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan. Their presence is a strong symbol of global support for Afghanistan.⁶²

- **Kabul-Jakarta Pledge to Expand Bilateral Ties**

Indonesia's Foreign Affairs Minister Retno L.P Marsudi on 06 November 2017 met with President Ashraf Ghani in Kabul where the two sides pledged to further enhance bilateral ties in all spheres between the two countries. At the meeting, Ghani also stressed the need for closer ties between religious scholars from the two Muslim nations. In addition, Ghani expressed his gratitude over what he described as Indonesia's support and cooperation with Afghanistan and said Indonesia has great expertise in a number of fields involving economic development and women empowerment, adding that his government hopes that Indonesia shares these skills with Afghanistan. In turn, the Indonesian minister voiced her appreciation for the hospitality she received in Afghanistan.⁶³

- **Ready to Participate in Next Year's Polls: Hekmatyar**

⁶⁰“We'll buy arms from Russia, Philippines' Duterte tells Putin”, *Reuters*, November 10, 2017.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-apec-summit-philippines-russia/well-buy-arms-from-russia-philippines-duterte-tells-putin-idUSKBN1DA1K7> Accessed on November 13, 2017.

⁶¹ Syed Zabiullah Langari, "Foreign Troops In Afghanistan To Increase To 16,000: NATO Chief", *Tolonews*, 07 November 2017. <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/foreign-troops-afghanistan-increase-16000-nato-chief> accessed on 09 November 2017.

⁶² Syed Zabiullah Langari, "UAE, Qatar Ask to Contribute to NATO's Resolute Support Mission", *Tolonews*, 09 November 2017. <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/uae-qatar-seeks-contribute-nato%E2%80%99s-resolute-support-mission> accessed on 09 November 2017.

⁶³ "Kabul-Jakarta Pledge to Expand Bilateral Ties", *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, 07 November 2017. http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=19379 accessed on 09 November 2017.

The Hezb-i-Islami Afghanistan leader Gulbadin Hekmatyar said on 11 November 2017 that the only way to resolve the current crisis were elections and his party was ready to participate in upcoming parliamentary and district council polls. Addressing the HIA central council's gathering in Kabul here, Hekmatyar said the next year's elections were important for the HIA and asked supporters to be ready for the democratic exercise. Hekmatyar asked the HIA supporters to elect individuals they deemed honest, God-fearing, responsible and brave who had the will to serve the people and the country. Hekmatyar said his party condemned terrorist acts that led to the killing of innocent Muslims and non-Muslims.⁶⁴

- **Indian Wheat Makes History, Arriving in Afghanistan Via Iran**

Afghanistan has received an inaugural consignment of wheat from India through an Iranian port, opening a new trade and transit route for the landlocked nation. The strategic sea route, officials say, will help improve trade and transit connectivity between Kabul and New Delhi. It will also potentially give India access to Central Asian markets through Afghanistan. The shipment of almost 15,000 tons of wheat dispatched from India's western port of Kandla on October 29 reached the Iranian port of Chabahar on November 1. It was then loaded on trucks and brought by road to the Afghan province of Nimroz, which borders Iran.⁶⁵

- **Bahrami Reports On NATO Meeting, Says Insurgent Attacks Up By 13%**

Acting Defense Minister Gen. Tariq Shah Bahrami said on Sunday (November 12) that in the past seven months insurgent attacks have increased by 13 percent. He also stated that the casualty toll among insurgents in this time has risen by 11 percent. Addressing a press conference in Kabul, after returning from last week's NATO defense ministers meeting in Brussels, Bahrami said that although the number of attacks have increased, the casualty toll among insurgents was much higher than that sustained by the Afghan security forces. He reiterated NATO secretary general Jens Stoltenberg's announcement that the organization would also be sending in more troops, in addition to the United States' troop surge of about 4,000.⁶⁶

- **Taliban key impediment to Afghan settlement: US**

A top American diplomat has told lawmakers the Taliban are key impediment to a negotiated political settlement in Afghanistan, adding the US wants the Taliban on the table as early as possible.

"The key impediment to achieving a peaceful negotiated settlement is the unwillingness of the Taliban to engage directly with the government of Afghanistan," acting assistant secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs and Acting Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Alice Wells told lawmakers during a Congressional hearing this

⁶⁴"Ready to Participate in Next Year's Polls: Hekmatyar", *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, 11 November 2017.http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=19413 accessed on 13 November 2017.

⁶⁵"Indian Wheat Makes History, Arriving in Afghanistan Via Iran", *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, November 12, 2017, http://outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=19418 (accessed on November 13, 2017)

⁶⁶"Bahrami Reports On NATO Meeting, Says Insurgent Attacks Up By 13%", *Tolo News*, November 12, 2017, <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/bahrami-reports-nato-meeting-says-insurgent-attacks-13> (accessed on November 13)

week. “We have to change that calculus of the Taliban using both military and political means.”

Wells said the Trump administration has always set no preconditions to negotiations but “in conditions”. The in conditions have been a cessation of violence, cessation of ties to terrorist networks and respect for the Constitution including the provisions for women and minorities and that continues to be the case”, she added.⁶⁷

Bangladesh

- **Bangladesh with India in creating ‘peace area’: PM**

Sheikh Hasina on Thursday (November 9) said Bangladesh wants to cooperate with India and other neighbouring countries for creating a 'peace area' in South Asia. She said this while jointly inaugurating the end-to-end Immigration and Customs of Maitree Express, flagging off Bandhan Express (Khulna-Kolkata) and launching of train communication on newly-built 2nd Bhairab and 2nd Titas Railway Bridges with her Indian counterpart Narendra Modi and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee through a video conference from Prime Minister's official residence Ganobhaban.⁶⁸

- **End to end customs service launched**

Authorities on Friday (November 10) officially launched end to end customs and immigration service for the passengers of Maitree Express to make rail journey between Dhaka and Kolkata more comfortable and cutting down the duration of the trip. The Maitree Express train runs between Dhaka-Kolkata six days a week now with Thursday as weekly holiday. According to railways authorities, all the 456 seats were sold out on the first day of launching of the end to end customs and immigration service.⁶⁹

- **Sinha was forced to quit: BNP**

BNP senior leaders Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain and Moudud Ahmed on Saturday (November 11) alleged that Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha was forced to resign by mounting pressure on him in many ways. It's a stigmatised incident for the judiciary and the independence of the court. He (Sinha) was forced to resign. The government has obliterated the remaining independence of the judiciary through it," Moudud told in a discussion.⁷⁰

⁶⁷“Taliban key impediment to Afghan settlement: US”, *Pajhwok*, November 12, 2017, <https://www.pajhwok.com/en/2017/11/12/taliban-key-impediment-afghan-settlement-us>(accessed on November 13, 2017)

⁶⁸“Bangladesh with India in creating ‘peace area’ in S Asia: PM,” *The Independent*, November 9, 2017, <http://www.theindependentbd.com/post/122883> (accessed on November 9, 2017)

⁶⁹ “End to end customs service launched for Maitree Express,” *ProthomAlo*, November 10, 2017, <http://en.prothom-alo.com/economy/news/166041/End-to-end-customs-service-launched-for-Maitree> (accessed on November 10, 2017)

⁷⁰ “Sinha was forced to quit: BNP,” *The Independent*, November 11, 2017, <http://www.theindependentbd.com/post/123162> (accessed on November 11, 2017)

- **Chief justice steps down**

Amid flak from the ruling quarters over different issues including the 16th amendment verdict, Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha resigned yesterday (November 11). Now abroad, he sent his resignation letter to the Bangabhaban, the official residence of President Abdul Hamid, in the morning, President's Press Secretary Md Joynal Abedin told *The Daily Star*. What reason Justice Sinha cited in the letter was yet to be known as the press secretary could not give details or say how it was sent.⁷¹

- **No election under Hasina**

BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday (November 11) reiterated her call to the government to hold the next general elections under a neutral government to restore the voting rights of the people. "There will be no election under a political government. The government must try to understand the pulse of the people. An impartial poll is not possible under a political government. And it's certainly not possible under the Sheikh Hasina administration," she said while addressing a mammoth rally at Suhrawardy Udyan.

Indian Ocean Region

- **India has been working with like-minded countries to preserve the integrity, inviolability and security of maritime domain": Foreign Secretary S Jaishankar**

Foreign Secretary S Jaishankar called on Indian Ocean littoral states to secure interests of maritime security and enhance regional cooperation.⁷² Delivering the key note address during the Second IORA (Indian Ocean Rim Association) Meeting of Experts for Maritime Safety and Security in New Delhi on 7-8 November, Foreign Secretary highlighted the issues of maritime security cooperation, freedom of navigation, and the need to respect integrity.⁷³ He said, "India has been working with like-minded countries to preserve the integrity, inviolability and security of maritime domain, much of which is a global concern. Recognising this growing importance of maritime trade in an increasingly globalised world, India supports freedom of navigation and over-flight, and unimpeded commerce, based on the principles of international law, particularly UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea) that serves as a constitution for the oceans."⁷⁴

Reminding the Prime Minister strategic vision for the Indian Ocean region- outlined as SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region), he said that safeguard India's territories (mainland and islands), ensure safe and secure and stable Indian Ocean,

⁷¹ "Chief justice steps down," *Daily Star*, November 12, 2017, <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/chief-justice-steps-down-1489819> (accessed on November 12, 2017)

⁷² India calls on Indian Ocean nations to secure interests of maritime security, regional cooperation, November 8, 2017, <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/indian-ocean-nations-maritime-security-china-japan-unclos-indo-pacific-region/1/1084931.html>, (accessed on 13 November, 2017)

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

enhance economic and security cooperation with maritime neighbour and enhance their capabilities, collective action and cooperation to maintain peace and security, and integrated and cooperative approach for sustainable development are key elements of the vision.⁷⁵

- **Quadrilateral Coalition in Indo- Pacific: India, Australia, US and Japan hold first meeting**

Officials from India's Ministry of External Affairs, Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs, Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and United State's Department of State met in Manila on November 12, 2017 to hold their first official level talks to keep the Indo-Pacific region free, open, prosperous and inclusive.⁷⁶ MEA Press release issued after the meeting read, "the discussions focused on cooperation based on their converging vision and values for promotion of peace, stability and prosperity in an increasingly inter-connected region that they share with each other and with other partners."⁷⁷ The officials from the four countries also share their views on "challenges of terrorism and proliferation linkages impacting the region as well as on enhancing connectivity."⁷⁸

- **UN Security Council on Somali piracy**

Although incidences of piracy have decreased substantially in recent years, the United Nations Security Council is interested to see a comprehensive response to combat the piracy and tackle the underlying cause.⁷⁹ UN Security Council states is "working in conjunction with relevant international organisations, to adopt legislation to facilitate prosecution of suspected pirates off the coast of Somalia."⁸⁰ The Council also praised the efforts taken by European Union Naval Forces (EU Nav For) Operation Atlanta, Combined Maritime Forces' Combined Task Force 151, counter-piracy efforts of the African Union and the naval activities of the Southern Africa Development Community to suppress piracy in the region.⁸¹

Sri Lanka

- **Sri Lanka's envoy in Canada rejects allegations on Army**

Sri Lanka's High Commissioner to Canada Ahmed A Jawad has rejected allegations raised against the Sri Lankan Army. The Ambassador said that the Government's commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights; ending impunity; upholding the rule of law; strengthening good governance and democracy; fostering reconciliation and sustainable peace; and ensuring equitable and inclusive development, for the benefit of

⁷⁵Eye on China, India urges world for stability in Indian Ocean region, November 09, 2017, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/eye-on-china-india-urges-world-for-stability-in-indian-ocean-region/articleshow/61569045.cms> (accessed on 13 November, 2017).

⁷⁶India-Australia-Japan-U.S. Consultations on Indo-Pacific (November 12, 2017), http://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/29110/IndiaAustraliaJapanUS_Consultations_on_IndoPacific_Manila_November_12_2017,

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid

⁷⁹UN Security Council on Somali piracy, November 8, 2017, http://www.defenceweb.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=49799:un-security-council-on-somali-piracy&catid=108:maritime-security&Itemid=233 (accessed on 13 November, 2017)

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹Ibid.

all citizens, is firm. The Ambassador was responding to an article titled Sri Lanka's military aren't ready to be peacekeepers by Canadian Member of Parliament Gary Anandasangaree, published in the Toronto Star of 3 November 2017⁸².

- **Rameswaram fishermen suspend strike over Sri Lanka**

The Mechanised boat fishermen association members in Rameswaram withdrew from a three-day-old strike over Sri Lanka and other issues, following talks with a state minister. Tamil Nadu-Puducherry fishermen's association secretary N.J. Bose said the minister assured them about taking up a demand to release state fishermen from Sri Lankan prisons.⁸³

- **More worries for the TNA**

A new political front is likely to be mooted against the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) in the Northern Province ahead of the elections to the local authorities, EPRLF leader Suresh Premachandran said. The TNA, made up of four political parties is facing an internal struggle after the Eelam People's Evolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) led by Mr. Premachandran decided to quit the alliance. Since its inception in 2001, the EPRLF has contested elections under the 'House Symbol' of the Ilankai Tamil Arachu Katchchi (ITAK), which is the TNA's main constituent party. He said the people gave a mandate to the ITAK to work out a political solution to the national question and secure the merger of the Northern and Eastern Provinces but the ITAK was only rubbing shoulders with the government with no solution in sight⁸⁴.

- **Maldives MP alleges SL of aiding opposition coup plots**

Maldives MP Riyaz Rasheed has accused Sri Lanka of assisting alleged opposition efforts to overthrow the Maldivian government. Speaking at a press conference Riyaz said he was concerned that neighbouring countries were allowing exiled Maldivian politicians to plot attempts to oust President Abdulla Yameen, the Maldives Independent reported. "Every Maldivian citizen has the right to believe that the efforts of opposition figures in Sri Lanka today have the possibility of disrupting our future and our independence," the deputy parliamentary group leader of the ruling Progressive Party of Maldives said⁸⁵.

- **Fuel crisis: Modi pledges all possible assistance**

In the wake of the crisis surrounding the issuance of petrol in the country, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi telephoned President Maithripala Sirisena and assured him that his country would provide every assistance needed to help Sri Lanka at this challenging time. He gave this assurance in response to a request made to him by Sri Lanka. It was

⁸²Sri Lanka's envoy in Canada rejects allegations on Army, 12th November 2017, <http://colombogazette.com/2017/11/12/sri-lankas-envoy-in-canada-rejects-allegations-on-army/>

⁸³Rameswaram fishermen suspend strike over Sri Lanka, 11 November 2017, <http://colombogazette.com/2017/11/11/rameswaram-fishermen-suspend-strike-over-sri-lanka/>

⁸⁴More worries for the TNA, 13-11-2017, <http://www.dailymirror.lk/article/More-worries-for-the-TNA-140217.html>.

⁸⁵Maldives MP alleges SL of aiding opposition coup plots, 9-11-2017, <http://www.dailymirror.lk/article/Maldives-MP-alleges-SL-of-aiding-opposition-coup-plots-140090.html>

noted that a stock of 21,000 kilo litres of petrol was dispatched from India to Sri Lanka on 9th November⁸⁶.

Maldives

- **US, UK condemn Nazim's 1000-day detention**

The detention of former Maldives defence minister Mohamed Nazim, who has been behind bars for 1,000 days, has been condemned by the US and the UK. Nazim was found guilty of weapons smuggling in 2015 and sentenced to 11 years in prison. A UN rights panel found that Nazim was not afforded a fair trial and backed the retired colonel's assertion that the police had framed him in the troubled honeymoon destination. On 7th November the US and UK's top diplomats in Colombo decried Nazim's incarceration, taking to Twitter to express their concerns after his family denounced the justice system⁸⁷.

- **Political differences should not pave way for national divides**

Political differences should not lead to national divides, declared president Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom on 11th November night at the ceremony of the Maldives' 49th Republic Day. In his address, Yameen proclaimed that "no one will be excluded from nation building" but stressed that "political differences between us should not pave the way for national divides". Emphasising the importance for all Maldivians to take part in nation building, he called on the people to stand against political differences creating strife within the country⁸⁸.

West Asia

GCC & Saudi Arabia

- **Resignation of Lebanon's Prime Minister and its Consequences in the Region**

The resignation of Lebanon's Prime Minister Saad Hariri is seen as the latest short in the regional crisis.⁸⁹ On November 4, the Lebanese Prime Minister received a phone call and all of a sudden he left the lunch in the mid hosted for the French Cultural Minister and departed to Saudi Arabia and within hours he announced his resignation from Riyadh. In his statement he not only blamed Hezbollah for interfering and making the running of the government tough but also felt threatened to his life.⁹⁰ Here, it is important to underline that his father Rafiq Hariri, the then Prime Minister of Lebanon, was

⁸⁶Fuel crisis: Modi pledges all possible assistance, 9-11-2017, <http://www.dailymirror.lk/article/Fuel-crisis-Modi-pledges-all-possible-assistance-140067.html>

⁸⁷US, UK condemn Nazim's 1000-day detention, 8 November 2017, <http://maldivesindependent.com/politics/us-uk-condemn-nazims-1000-day-detention-134070>

⁸⁸Political differences should not pave way for national divides, 12 November 2017, <http://en.mihaaru.com/political-differences-should-not-pave-way-for-national-divides/>

⁸⁹<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/nov/11/lebanon-saudi-arabia-iran--power-struggle-saad-hariri-resignation>

⁹⁰<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-41961058>

assassinated in February 2005 and under UN investigation Hezbollah was found complicit.⁹¹

However, the other side of the resignation of Lebanon's Prime Minister produces a different story. Saudi Arabia is allegedly accused of forcing Hariri to resign and declare Hezbollah as a rouge element, responsible for creating instability in the country. The explanation of Saudi involvement in Hariri's forced resignation runs like this: with the defeat of Kurds in Kirkuk by the Iraq forces and conquering of the last bastion of the ISIS by the Syrian forces with active involvement of Hezbollah fighters has just created a new dynamics of the growing influence of Iranian in Saudi suburb such as Yemen, Syria, Iraq and finally, in Lebanon. This has squeezed Riyadh in the region. Consequently, to many people, Saudi Arabia deliberately seems expanding the theatre of conflicts, involving more players as well as seeking the attention of the global community just to contain Iran and Hezbollah. Already, in an interview, the Saudi foreign minister has accused Iran of triple violations, terrorism and backing of proxies, proliferation of ballistic missiles, especially when the rebel Houthis fired allegedly technically improved Iran made missile on Riyadh, which is 700 km away from Yemen border, and the nuclear ambition of Iran, which under the sunset law would automatically allow Tehran to use as much centrifuges as it wants after 12 years.

The resignation of Saad Hariri has sent some terrifying geo-strategic signals. Expert view it as a beginning of a new conflict in Lebanon but at a larger scale, involving more players such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, Hezbollah and Israel. Already, Saudi Arabia and Iran are locked in Yemen since March 2015. Similar to Yemen both Saudi Arabia and Iran seems ready to test their might in Lebanon as well. However, in Lebanon, the modus operandi seems different, first, to expand the conflict zone by engaging Israel, which is also feeling the heat of the growing power of Hezbollah; second, to nominate the US involvement in Lebanon more than what it was having in Yemen; third, to ultimately contain Iran by making the Lebanon conflict relatively more dangerous to the regional peace and stability than Yemen. Thus, experts believe that the resignation of Lebanese Prime Minister is a well calculated geo-political attempt to start a fresh conflict in the region with a wider implication.

Escalation of Tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia

The week under review saw further escalation of tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia. The bitterness in their relations was exacerbated by two successive events of November 4, 2017. The first event was the surprise resignation of Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri in a peculiar way announced from the Saudi capital Riyadh and blaming Iran for meddling in the region and creating chaos. On the same day, within hours after this announcement, a long range missile was fired from Yemen territory by Houthi rebels towards Riyadh. This missile was intercepted and diffused by the Saudi forces before landing near the Saudi International Airport.

On November 6, 2017, in an interview⁹² with *CNN*, Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia Adel bin Ahmed al-Jubeir blamed Iran for this missile attack. He said, "It was an Iranian

⁹¹<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/feb/23/syria.comment>

missile, launched by Hezbollah, from territory occupied by the Houthis in Yemen.” Giving further details of the missile, al-Jubeir said that the missile, which had been made in Iran, had been smuggled in several parts into Yemen and was later assembled with the help of Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps and Hezbollah before being launched.⁹³

Saudi Foreign Minister said that Saudi Arabia sees this as “an act of war”⁹⁴ by Iran against Saudi Arabia. In his opinion, “Iran cannot lob missiles at Saudi cities and towns and expect us not to take steps” and cited Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, suggesting that Saudi Arabia can now act militarily. He also added that Saudi Arabia reserved “the right to respond in the appropriate manner at the appropriate time” without giving further elaborations.⁹⁵

Iran has rejected⁹⁶ such claims of Saudi Arabia that Iran was behind this missile attack. Iran’s Foreign Ministry Spokesman Bahram Qassemi said on November 6, 2017 that such allegations against Iran were “false, irresponsible, destructive and provocative.”⁹⁷

The cold war between Iran and Saudi Arabia is gradually taking a bitter turn with successive events that indicate towards the threat of direct military confrontation between the two neighbours.

Terrorism and Counter Terrorism

Pakistan

S. No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	November 6	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP)	Two Policemen, identified as Head Constable Farhad Ali and Constable Nawaz, were shot dead by unidentified armed assailants during a routine check at the Shagocheckpost in Tahkht-e-Bahitehsil (revenue unit) of Mardan District. ⁹⁸	2	0
2	November 10	Sindh	The Sindh Rangers killed three suicide bombers who were planning to target the Bab-e-Karbala <i>Imambargah</i> (place of	3	0

⁹²CNN, “Missile attack ‘an act of war’ by Iran, Saudi Foreign Minister says,” November 6, 2017, <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/11/06/middleeast/saudi-foreign-minister-interview/index.html>, accessed on November 13, 2017.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶Tasnim News Agency, “Saudi-Led Coalition’s Allegation against Iran Provocative: Spokesman,” November 6, 2017, <https://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2017/11/06/1566913/saudi-led-coalition-s-allegation-against-iran-provocative-spokesman>, November 13, 2017.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ali Akbar, Two policemen shot dead in Mardan, *Dawn*, November 6, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1368763/two-policemen-shot-dead-in-mardan>, accessed on November 13, 2017

			commemoration for Shias) in Rohri town of Sukkur District. According to details, the “suspicious men” were signalled to stop by Rangers personnel at a checkpoint. “An exchange of fire took place when the suspicious men tried to escape,” read a statement issued by the paramilitary force, adding that the three men were killed in the gunfire.. ⁹⁹		
3	November 12	FATA	Jama’at-ul-Ahrar (JA), a splinter group of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), is showing signs of internal rifts after its active commanders and fighters announced the establishment of HizbulAhrar, with Omar Khurasani (alias Mukkaram Khan) as its head. In his first video message released to media, Khurasani claimed that JuA was involved in anti-Islamic acts committed in the name of <i>jihad</i> , thus compelling them to start their own group. ¹⁰⁰	New Terrorist outfit HizbulAhrar formed	
4	November 12	Karachi	A suspect, identified as AmjadHussain, who was arrested on October 24, 2017 from Manghopir area of Karachi, confessed to his involvement in the assassination of social activist Parveen Rehman in March 2013, and informed the Joint Interrogation Team (JIT) that local leaders of Awami National Party (ANP) had hired Taliban militants to assassinate Rehman. ¹⁰¹	Confession of collusion between ANP and Taliban	
5	November 12	KP	Three security personnel and three civilians were injured in a	o	6

⁹⁹Imtiaz Ali, 3 suicide bombers killed as Rangers foil 'terror attack' in Rohri, *Dawn*, November 10, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1369635/3-suicide-bombers-killed-as-rangers-foil-terror-attack-in-rohri>, accessed on November 13, 2017

¹⁰⁰ShamimShahid, HizbulAhrar takes birth as internal rifts tear JamaatulAhrar apart, *Pakistan Today*, November 12, 2017, <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2017/11/13/hizbul-ahrar-takes-birth-as-internal-rifts-tear-jamaatul-ahrar-apart/>, accessed on November 13, 2017

¹⁰¹Imtiaz Ali, Local ANP leaders hired Taliban militants to assassinate ParveenRehman, suspect tells JIT, *Dawn*, November 12, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1370071/local-anp-leaders-hired-taliban-militants-to-assassinate-parveen-rehman-suspect-tells-jit>, accessed on November 13, 2017

			motorcycle bomb explosion near a bridge in Bannu District. ¹⁰²		
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Afghanistan

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	November 6	Ghazni	At least 15 Taliban militants were killed and 16 others were wounded during separate clashes with security forces in Deh Yak, Qarabagh, Andar and Gilan districts. ¹⁰³	15	16
2	November 9	Nangarhar	ISIS claimed responsibility for the killing of Pakistani diplomat, Rana Nayyar Iqbal, in Jalalabad. Iqbal was shot dead on November 6, 2017, near his residence. ¹⁰⁴	ISIS	claims responsibility
3	November 10	Kapisa	Kapisa Police claim that at least 35 Taliban militants, including the group's 'deputy shadow governor', Ahsanullah, were killed in an Afghan Air Force strike in Shaloti village of Tagab District. ¹⁰⁵	35	NS
4	November 12	Several provinces	At least 19 Taliban and ISIS militants were killed in latest airstrikes conducted in various provinces, including Nangarhar (2), Kapisa (8), Herat (5 dead, 7 injured) and Kunduz (4), as part of the ongoing counter-terrorism and clearance operations. ¹⁰⁶	19	7
5	November 12	Kabul	The Acting Defense Minister General Tariq Shah Bahrami during a press conference, after	Statement/Report	

¹⁰² Three security men injured in Bannu blast, *Dawn*, November 12, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1370126/three-security-men-injured-in-bannu-blast>, accessed on November 13, 2017

¹⁰³ 15 Taliban Killed in Overnight Ghazni Clashes, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, November 8, 2017, <http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/assets/epaper/November%2008,%202017/Main%20Page.pdf>, accessed on November 13, 2017

¹⁰⁴ Daesh Claims Credit for Pakistani Diplomat's Murder, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, November 9, 2017, <http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/assets/epaper/November%2009,%202017/Main%20Page.pdf>, accessed on November 13, 2017

¹⁰⁵ Taliban Suffers Heavy Casualties In Kapisa Airstrike, *Tolo News*, November 11, 2017, <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/taliban-suffers-heavy-casualties-kapisa-airstrike>, accessed on November 13, 2017

¹⁰⁶ Taliban and ISIS militants suffer heavy casualties in latest airstrikes, *Khaama Press*, November 12, 2017, <http://www.khaama.com/taliban-and-isis-militants-suffer-heavy-casualties-in-latest-airstrikes-03828>, accessed on November 13, 2017

			<p>returning from last NATO Defense Ministers meeting in Brussels, said that in the past seven months insurgent attacks have increased by 13 percent, with a rise of 11 percent in insurgent casualties.</p> <p>He said that although the number of attacks has increased, the casualty toll among insurgents was much higher than that sustained by the Afghan security forces.¹⁰⁷</p>	
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Iraq

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	November 8	Anbar	IS militants are holding 10,000 civilians at their very last holdout in Iraq: Anbar's western town of Rawa. The Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights expressed its "concern for the fate of innocents besieged inside Rawa", adding that "according to the detecting sources at the commission's offices in Anbar, Daesh (Islamic State terrorists are still holding nearly 2500 families (10,000 individuals) to use them as human shields and hamper the advance of Iraqi forces". ¹⁰⁸	IS holding 10,000 people	
2	November 9	Anbar	<p>The number of remaining IS militants is estimated at no more than twenty members at the group's stronghold in western Anbar.</p> <p>"The families that remained in Rawa are around 300 families.</p>	20 IS militants remaining in Anbar	

¹⁰⁷Bahrami Reports On NATO Meeting, Says Insurgent Attacks Up By 13%, *Tolo News*, November 12, 2017, <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/bahrami-reports-nato-meeting-says-insurgent-attacks-13>, accessed on November 13, 2017

¹⁰⁸ Mohamed Mostafa, IHCHR: Islamic State holding 10,000 people in last bastion in Anbar, *Iraqi News*, November 8, 2017, <https://www.iraqnews.com/features/ihchr-islamic-state-holding-10-000-people-last-bastion-anbar/>, accessed on November 13, 2017

			News that mentioned that they are besieged to be used at human shields is untrue as the militants are in defeated,” said Hussein al-Okaidi, Mayor of Rawa. ¹⁰⁹		
3	November 9	Erbil	Number of Yazidi survivors, who were kidnapped by Islamic State, has reached up to 3,191, said KhairiBozani, the head of the Yazidi Affairs Office of the Kurdistan Regional Government. “The recent figures indicate that 6,417 Yazidis are held by IS,” Bozani said, adding, “Number of kidnapped women reaches 3,547, while 2,870 Yazidi men are abducted.” ¹¹⁰		
4	November 12	Baghdad	One person was killed and five others were injured in a bomb explosion in al-Hamamiyat village located in the al-Taji region, north of Baghdad. According to the monthly release by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), 114 Iraqi civilians were killed, while 244 others were wounded as result of terrorism, violence and armed conflicts. ¹¹¹	1	5

Syria

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	November 7	DeirEzzor	Nearly 252,000 Syrian refugees have fled from the eastern and western countryside of DeirEzzor	Refugee fled	

¹⁰⁹NehalMostafa, Twenty Islamic State militants remaining in last stronghold in Anbar: Official, *Iraqi News*, November 9, 2017, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/twenty-islamic-state-militants-remaining-last-stronghold-anbar-official/>, accessed on November 13, 2017

¹¹⁰NehalMostafa, Over 3,000 Yazidis survive Islamic State’s abduction: Official, *Iraqi News*, November 9, 2017, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/3000-yazidis-survive-islamic-states-abduction-official/>, accessed on November 13, 2017

¹¹¹NehalMostafa, Bomb blast leaves six people killed, injured in northern Baghdad, *Iraqi News*, November 12, 2017, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/bomb-blast-leaves-six-people-killed-injured-northern-baghdad/>, accessed on November 13, 2017

			due to the military operations. They fled toward the villages located east of the Euphrates River. ¹¹²		
2	November 11	DeirEzzor	The US-led international coalition carried out airstrikes on a village near the Iraqi border in DeirEzzor, killing 10 civilians. ¹¹³	10	0
3	November 12	DeirEzzor	Led by the Tiger Forces, the Syrian Arab Army (SAA) attacked ISIS positions and scored a large-scale advance inside the southeastern countryside of the DeirEzzor, pushing their way along the strategic Mayadeen-Albukamal Road. ¹¹⁴	SAA Liberates 30 kilometres Albukamal	
4	November 12		Israel signalled that it would keep up military strikes across its frontier with Syria to prevent any encroachment by Iranian-allied forces, even as the United States and Russia try to build up a ceasefire in the area. ¹¹⁵		

International Economic Issues

- **G20 countries introduced fewer trade restrictive measures, despite economic uncertainties¹¹⁶**

The WTO's eighteenth monitoring report on Group of 20 (G20) trade measures, issued on 9 November, shows that G20 economies introduced fewer trade-restrictive measures compared to the previous review period. G20 economies applied 16 new trade-restrictive measures during the review period (mid May 2017 to mid-October 2017), including new or increased tariffs, export restrictions and local content measures. This equates to an average of just over three restrictive measures per month compared to six during the

¹¹²Loaa Adel, 252,000 Syrian refugees flee countryside of DeirEzzor due to ongoing battles, *Iraqi News*, November 7, 2017, <https://www.iraqinews.com/arab-world-news/252000-syrian-refugees-flee-countryside-deir-ezzor-due-ongoing-battles/>, accessed on November 13, 2017

¹¹³Ten reportedly killed in US-led Coalition shelling of village in eastern Syria, *Al Masdar News*, November 12, 2017, <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/ten-reportedly-killed-us-led-coalition-shelling-village-eastern-syria/>, accessed on November 13, 2017

¹¹⁴Leith Fadel, Syrian Army scores big advance towards Albukamal, 30 km liberated, *Al Masdar News*, November 13, 2017, <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/syrian-army-scores-big-advance-towards-albukamal-30-km-liberated/>, accessed on November 13, 2017

¹¹⁵Dan Williams, Israel signals free hand in Syria as U.S., Russia expand truce, *Reuters*, November 12, 2017, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-israel/israel-signals-free-hand-in-syria-as-u-s-russia-expand-truce-idUSKBN1DC0HY>, accessed on November 13, 2017

¹¹⁶World Trade Organization (WTO), "G20 countries show restraint in new trade restrictions, despite economic uncertainties", November 9, 2017, https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news17_e/trdev_08nov17_e.htm (accessed on November 13, 2017)

previous review period. G20 economies also implemented 28 measures aimed at facilitating trade over this review period, including eliminated or reduced tariffs and simplified customs procedures. At almost six trade-facilitating measures per month, this remains broadly equivalent to the previous period and to the trend observed for the whole of 2016. Commenting on the report, Director-General Roberto Azevêdo said:

“G20 members have shown restraint in implementing trade-restrictive measures, despite continuing economic uncertainties. This is positive news and it shows again that the global trading system is working. Nevertheless, the threat of protectionism remains and so I urge G20 countries to redouble their efforts to avoid implementing new trade restrictions and to reverse those measures that are currently in place. The G20’s continued support for open and mutually beneficial trade is essential and I hope that we will see this leadership once more at 11th WTO Ministerial Conference in December.”

- **APEC summit Concludes with Trump and Xi offer competing visions for trade¹¹⁷**

US President Donald Trump and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping have set out starkly different visions for the future of global trade in speeches at the APEC summit in Vietnam. On November 10, 2017, in a speech in the Vietnamese port city of Da Nang, President Trump railed against the World Trade Organization, which sets global trade laws, and said it “cannot function properly” if all members do not respect the rules. He complained about trade imbalances, saying the US had lowered market barriers and ended tariffs while other countries had not reciprocated. “Such practices hurt many people in our country,” he said, adding that free trade had cost millions of American jobs. He said America would make bilateral agreements with “any Indo-Pacific partner here who abides by fair reciprocal trade”, but only “on a basis of mutual respect and mutual benefit”.

On the contrary, and speaking minutes after his American counterpart, Chinese President Xi Jinping held that globalisation was an “irreversible historical trend”, but the philosophy behind free trade needed to be “more open, more balanced, more equitable and more beneficial to all”. In contrast to President Trump, the Chinese leader defended multilateral trade deals. He said, “We should support the multilateral trading regime and practise open regionalism to allow developing members to benefit more from international trade and investment.”

- **Pacific trade deal reached, sans U.S.**

Ministers from 11 Asia-Pacific countries agreed on November 11, 2017 to go ahead with the major trade deal of Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) without the U.S. In a joint statement, the remaining countries —the TPP-11 — said they had “agreed on the core elements” of what is now called the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) at the sidelines of the APEC summit in the Vietnamese city of Danang. It further stated that the ministers maintained “the high standards, overall balance and integrity of the TPP while ensuring the commercial and other interests of all

¹¹⁷ “Apec summit: Trump and Xi offer competing visions for trade”, BBC News, November 11, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-41937426> (accessed on November 13, 2017)

participants and preserving our inherent right to regulate, including the flexibility of the parties to set legislative and regulatory priorities.”¹¹⁸

Meanwhile, and as leaders of the 16 member countries of Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) meet in Manila on November 14, 2017, at the sidelines of the East Asia Summit, China’s foreign ministry said that the TPP trade deal will not impact prospects for the China-backed Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) pact.¹¹⁹

- **The ASEAN–Hong Kong, China Free Trade Agreement and ASEAN-Hong Kong, China Investment Agreement signed**

Economic Ministers from ASEAN Member States and the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development of Hong Kong, China (HKC) signed the ASEAN – HKC Free Trade Agreement (AHKFTA) and the ASEAN – HKC Investment Agreement (AHKIA) on 12 November 2017 at the sidelines of the 31st ASEAN Summit in Pasay City, the Philippines. The negotiations of AHKFTA and AHKIA were concluded three years after their commencement in July 2014. The Ministers noted that the AHKFTA is ASEAN’s sixth free trade agreement with external partners, after China, Korea, Japan, India, and Australia-New Zealand. It consists of fourteen chapters covering broad areas of market access liberalisation, trade facilitation, rules to promote confidence in trade, and co-operation aimed at facilitating trade in goods and services in the region. The AHKIA complements the AHKFTA by covering the protection, promotion and facilitation of investment.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Oliver Holmes, “Trans-Pacific trade pact revived despite Trump withdrawal”, *The Guardian*, November 11, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/nov/11/trans-pacific-trade-deal-salvaged-despite-canada-u-turn-reports-say> (accessed on November 13, 2017)

¹¹⁹ Michael Martina, “China says TPP trade deal will not impact RCEP”, *Livemint*, November 11, 2017, <http://www.livemint.com/Politics/mgZdFUN2YSBQ3qfZ73fpLN/China-says-TPP-trade-deal-will-not-impact-RCEP.html> (accessed on November 13, 2017)

¹²⁰ Association of Southeast Asian Nations, “The Signing of The ASEAN–Hongkong, China Free Trade Agreement and ASEAN-Hongkong, China Investment Agreement”, November 12, 2017, <http://asean.org/the-signing-of-the-asean-hongkong-china-free-trade-agreement-and-asean-hongkong-china-investment-agreement/> (accessed on November 13, 2017)