

## **Weekly Media Updates** **(1-7 January, 2018)**

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## Africa

- **Israeli Deadline Fosters Fears among African Migrants<sup>1</sup>**

The Israeli Population, Immigration and Border Authority has launched a controversial campaign to call on Eritrean and Sudanese asylum seekers to either leave to a third country or face indefinite time in jail in Israel. They must make their decision by the end of March.

At a cabinet meeting on Wednesday, 3 January 2018, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu praised the plan. He said "infiltrators have a simple choice," "either cooperate with us and leave voluntarily, respectfully, humanely and legally, or we will have to make use of the other means at our disposal." Although the scheme had already been widely criticized by human rights groups, Netanyahu also issued instructions to look into the possibility of forced expulsion, due to concerns over high costs and overcrowding in prisons, according to a report in the Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz. Officials however have called such plans "unrealistic."

- **Sudan Turns Out Over 100 Tons of Gold in 2017<sup>2</sup>**

Sudan's Ministry of Minerals announced Wednesday that the country produced over 100 tons of gold in 2017 worth around 400 million U.S. dollars.

Sudan's Minerals Minister Hashim Ali Salem in a statement said that in the past year we produced over 100 tons of gold worth of around 400 million dollars, which is equivalent to the country's oil revenues before the separation of South Sudan. He said 80 tons of gold were produced by the traditional mining sector.

He added his ministry is working to remove barriers of investment in the gold mining sector and combat gold smuggling. Sudan is seeking to make gold a major source of foreign currency after losing three quarters of its oil revenues due to the separation of South Sudan in 2011.

- **Politics Comes of Age as Mnangagwa Visits Morgan Tsvangirai<sup>3</sup>**

In a rare show of political maturity in the politically-divided nation, Zimbabwean President, Emmerson Mnangagwa, on Friday visited ailing opposition leader, Morgan Tsvangirai.

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<sup>1</sup> Africa Updates, 26 Decemebr2017, <http://africaupdates.info/sudanese-president-vows-to-remove-trade-barriers-for-turkey/>

<sup>2</sup> Forum on China – Africa Cooperation, 5 Jnuary2018, [http://allafrica.com/stories/201801050020.html?utm\\_campaign=allafrica%3Aeditor&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=facebook&utm\\_content=promote%3Aaans%3Aabkgta](http://allafrica.com/stories/201801050020.html?utm_campaign=allafrica%3Aeditor&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&utm_content=promote%3Aaans%3Aabkgta)

<sup>3</sup> Caj News, 5 January 2018, [http://allafrica.com/stories/201801060078.html?utm\\_campaign=allafrica%3Aeditor&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=facebook&utm\\_content=promote%3Aaans%3Aabkgta](http://allafrica.com/stories/201801060078.html?utm_campaign=allafrica%3Aeditor&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&utm_content=promote%3Aaans%3Aabkgta)

Mnangagwa's deputy, Constantino Chiwenga, another longtime rival of Tsvangirai's, accompanied the president to the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) president at his residence in Highlands.

Mnangagwa assured the nation of Tsvangirai's recovery from colon cancer and disclosed the latter would soon return to neighbouring South Africa for assessment.

Nelson Chamisa, the MDC deputy president, welcomed the visit by the head of state. He said "This is the new politics we want to see, the politics of peace, the politics of working together, the politics of feeling for one another. "

Social media was abuzz with Zimbabweans around the world praising Mnangagwa's gesture. They called on the same spirit to prevail ahead of elections scheduled for August.

Mnangagwa's predecessor, Robert Mugabe, was hostile to the opposition and ever lampooned Tsvangirai as a Western puppet. The military, then headed by Chiwenga, spearheaded a violent campaign against opposition supporters after Tsvangirai defeated Mugabe in the 2008 elections.

Mnangagwa was alleged to be the brains behind the crackdown. Armed forces are on record vowing never to recognize a president without liberation credentials, in reference to Tsvangirai.

- **Ethiopia to Release Political Prisoners, Says Prime Minister<sup>4</sup>**

In a surprise move, Ethiopia's prime minister has announced the release of political prisoners and the closure of a notorious detention centre, allegedly used as a torture chamber. Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn told a press conference that the move was designed to allow political dialogue. But it is unclear exactly who will be released - or when it will take place. This decision comes on the heels of a meeting between the parties which make up the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) coalition. Over the past months, infighting within the coalition, which has been in power for more than 25 years, has led the prime minister to acknowledge the need for change.

- **Chinese-built Ethiopia-Djibouti Railway Begins Commercial Operations<sup>5</sup>**

The Chinese-built 756-km electrified rail project connecting landlocked Ethiopia to Djibouti officially started commercial operations on Monday with a ceremony held in Ethiopia's capital Addis Ababa. Contracted by two Chinese companies, the first 320 km of the rail project from Sebeta to Mieso was carried out by the China Rail Engineering Corporation (CREC), while the remaining 436 km from Mieso to

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<sup>4</sup> BBC News, 3 January 2018, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-42552643>

<sup>5</sup> Xinhua Net, 1 January 2018, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-01/01/c\\_136865306.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-01/01/c_136865306.htm)

Djibouti port section was built by the China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation (CCECC).

- **12 Perish in Democratic Republic of Congo Protest<sup>6</sup>**
- **The death toll from a crackdown on New Year's Eve protests in Democratic Republic of Congo has risen to 12, protestors said on Tuesday.** Catholic and opposition groups on Sunday defied a ban on demonstrations demanding that President Joseph Kabila leave office. They were met with a deadly crackdown by authorities, who fired tear gas into churches and bullets in the air to break up gatherings. The protests took place on the first anniversary of a deal under which Kabila was scheduled to leave office in 2017 after fresh elections – a vote that has since been postponed until December 2018. In contrast to the toll given by the protestors, the United Nations said in a statement Tuesday that "at least five people" were killed, adding that several others had been wounded and more than 120 arrested. On Sunday, a UN source said eight were killed and 123 arrested, including priests.

- **Sudan Bread Protests Spread, Opposition Leader Detained<sup>7</sup>**

Protests over rising bread prices broke out in Sudan's capital and spread across cities to the south on Sunday, witnesses said, as authorities arrested a prominent opposition leader and confiscated newspapers in a drive to curb growing unrest. The demonstrations followed a similar protest in the southeastern city of Sennar on Saturday, after bread prices doubled in recent days following a government announcement late last month that it was eliminating subsidies in its 2018 budget. The removal of subsidies is part of austerity measures as the country struggles in the face of inflation running at about 25 per cent and an acute shortage of hard currency that has sapped import activity.

- **Sudan Officially Closes Eastern Border with Eritrea<sup>8</sup>**

Sudan, on Saturday, officially announced closure of its eastern border with Eritrea following deployment of thousands of Sudanese troops in Kassala State on the border with Eritrea, official SUNA news agency reported. Kassala State Governor Adam Jamma issued the decision of closing all border crossings with Eritrea, attributing the reason to the state of emergency earlier declared in the state, the report said.

- **New Fighting near South Sudan capital, Violating Cease-fire<sup>9</sup>**

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<sup>6</sup> New Vision, 2 January 2018, [https://www.newvision.co.ug/new\\_vision/news/1468368/perish-dr-congo-protests](https://www.newvision.co.ug/new_vision/news/1468368/perish-dr-congo-protests)

<sup>7</sup> Eyewitness News, 7 January 2018, <http://ewn.co.za/2018/01/07/sudan-bread-protests-spread-opposition-leader-detained>

<sup>8</sup> Xinhua Net, 6 January 2018, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-01/07/c\\_136876957.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-01/07/c_136876957.htm)

South Sudan's warring sides are blaming each other for new fighting outside the capital that violates a recent cease-fire. The fighting erupted on Thursday evening between government and opposition forces less than 20km outside Juba. The US Embassy on Friday issued a travel warning for staffers barring unofficial movements in the capital after 19:00 until on Monday morning. Neither side made claims of deaths in the new fighting. The United States and others have warned against further violations of the December 24 cease-fire, which was broken within hours.

- **Angola Scraps Dollar Peg as Foreign Reserves Fall<sup>10</sup>**

Angola's central bank said on Thursday that it had been forced to scrap its currency peg to the dollar because of falling foreign reserves as the country grapples with an economic crisis triggered by low oil prices. The loosening of the exchange rate, which analysts said could lead to a 20 per cent fall in the kwanza, is the latest sign of the new government's strategy to shake up Africa's third-biggest economy. The move may also result in the eventual renegotiation of the country's roughly US\$40 billion in external debt, said Jose de Lima Massano, governor of the National Bank of Angola. Much of Angola's foreign debt is held by China and other bilateral creditors. The relatively small amount of Eurobond debt, at about US\$1.5 billion, may not be immediately affected.

- **Zambia Capital Records 2,000 Cholera Cases<sup>11</sup>**

Cholera cases have now reached 2,000 in Zambia's capital Lusaka, health authorities said on Monday. Stanslous Ngosa, Head of Communications and External Relations at Ministry of Health, said 42 people have since died since the outbreak of the waterborne disease last October. He said cumulative cases were now close to 2,000, a situation that has forced authorities to come up with stringent measures to curb the rising cases.

## North Africa

- **Former Egyptian Prime Minister not to contest 2018 Presidential election<sup>12</sup>**

Mr. Ahmad Shafiq, former prime minister of Egypt has announced that he would not contest the forthcoming presidential election in Egypt. He, in a face book message, said that he was in a great dilemma for a long time but he finally realized that he had been away from the country for more than five years that makes him completely unaware of the ground realities in Egypt. He also stated that he would not be an ideal person to lead the nation. He also wished good luck to all contenders for the post for the president who would be contesting for the highest

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<sup>9</sup> News24, 5 January 2018, <https://www.news24.com/Africa/News/new-fighting-near-south-sudan-capital-violating-cess-fire-20180105>

<sup>10</sup> Financial Times, 4 January 2018, <https://www.ft.com/content/cf585bc6-f158-11e7-b220-857e26d1aca4>

<sup>11</sup> Xinhua Net, 1 January 2018, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-01/01/c\\_136865070.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-01/01/c_136865070.htm)

<sup>12</sup> Rail-Yum, an Arabic daily, <http://www.raialyoum.com/?p=808621>

post in the country. It is worth mentioning her that in a recent past, he had announced that he would also contest the presidential election which is scheduled to take place in between March and May.

- **Egyptian companies to participate in reconstruction of Syria.**<sup>13</sup>

The high-level sources in Egypt have informed that the Egypt would participate on a large-scale level in the reconstruction of Syria which has been completely ruined due to seven years of civil wars. The source also informed that tens of construction companies and enterprises have already begun working there and it is expected that Egyptian companies would get around 25 % of total construction share in Syria that would create job opportunities for thousand of Egyptians. In recent months Egypt has played a very constructive role in bringing the warring factions on the table and implementing the ceasefire on the ground. The sources also informed that some of the Egyptian companies have already reached Syria and started preliminary works. But some unidentified source also expressed apprehension about the security issues in working there and the government in Egypt is silent on this and so far they have not assured security to the workers and the employers. But some section of the Egyptian housing companies are seeing great hope in Syria and they are of the views that Egyptian construction companies would see a different level of boom in coming months and years.

## China

- **Ice Silk Road**

At a recent forum in China, scholars said the “Ice Silk Road” will strengthen cooperation and infrastructure connectivity in Eurasia and boost the development of the Arctic.

Under the theme “Northeast Asia Regional Cooperation within the Framework of the ‘Belt and Road’ initiative,” the first Northeast Asia Silk Road Forum was held on December 16, 2017 in Changchun, capital of Northeast China’s Jilin Province. It was co-hosted by Jilin Provincial Research Center for Northeast Asian Studies and the Trilateral Cooperation Studies Center.

The Ice Silk Road stretches from the northern coast of northwestern Europe in the west to Vladivostok in the east by way of the Barents Sea, Kara Sea, Laptev Sea, East Siberian Sea and the Bering Strait. The shortest sea route connecting Northeast Asia and Western Europe, it is one-third the distance of traditional routes. It mainly passes through the relatively stable environment of northern Russia, which reduces the threat of political turmoil and terrorism.

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<sup>13</sup> Asharqal-Awsat, An Arabic daily, <https://aawsat.com/home/article/1136606/%D9%85%D8%B5%D8%B1-%D8%AA%D8%B3%D8%B9%D9%89-%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B4%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%83%D8%A9-%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%B9%D8%A9-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A5%D8%B9%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A7>

Scholars said that the development of the Ice Silk Road will provide a new route for connecting the eastern and western ends of Eurasia and contribute to the exploitation of oil and gas in the Arctic.

China has paid much attention to the Ice Silk Road. In 2015, the joint communiqué for the 20th regular meeting of Russian and Chinese heads of government proposed strengthening cooperation in the development and utilization of the Northern Sea Route. Then the two sides reached a series of agreements on the issue.

In July 2017, when meeting Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev in Moscow, Chinese President Xi Jinping urged the two countries to carry out the Northern Sea Route cooperation to realize an Ice Silk Road and implement various connectivity projects.<sup>14</sup>

- **New Chinese rules on visa to attract top talent**

It is now easier for top overseas talent to spend time in China getting to know the country before having to apply for a work permit, government officials said.

Under regulations on issuing R visas that took effect on 8 January, foreign experts whose skills are in urgent demand would be allowed to stay in China for up to 180 days at a time, with multiple entries on a visa valid from five to 10 years. The policies would also apply to the expat's spouse and children.<sup>15</sup>

- **Cross-border trade boost for Renminbi**

China will allow foreign investors to freely remit their Yuan-denominated profits and dividends and pledged to remove all barriers in cross-border trade and investment, the central bank said on January 5. The People's Bank of China said the use of Renminbi for cross-border trade and investment will help create a sound business environment and support the country's Belt and Road Initiative.<sup>16</sup>

- **AIIB eyes first USD bond issuance as early as June 2018**

The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) said on 6 January that it may issue its first U.S. dollar-denominated bond as soon as the end of June this year.

Soren Elbech, treasurer of the Beijing-based multilateral development bank, said in a statement that the earliest issuance window will be "toward the end of the first half of 2018," with time required for certain procedures, including the Board of

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<sup>14</sup> [http://english.cssn.cn/topstories/201801/t20180108\\_3807016.shtml](http://english.cssn.cn/topstories/201801/t20180108_3807016.shtml)

<sup>15</sup> <http://en.people.cn/n3/2018/0105/c90000-9311782.html>

<sup>16</sup> <https://eng.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/qwyw/rdxw/42804.htm>

Governors' approval of AIIB's 2017 financial statements as well as borrowing and swap documentation.<sup>17</sup>

- **China searches for missing people after vessels collide off east China coast**

China has dispatched several vessels to search for and rescue crew members after a Panama-registered oil tanker and a Hong Kong-registered bulk freighter collided on 6<sup>th</sup> evening, a Foreign Ministry spokesperson said on 7 January.<sup>18</sup>

- **Senior CPC official requires better publicity of Xi thought**

A senior official of the Communist Party of China (CPC) on Wednesday (3 January) called for better dissemination of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era. Wang Huning, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, made the remarks at a national conference on communication and publicity.

Wang told the Party's publicity officials to take Xi Jinping thought as the guide of their work and focus on the study, promotion and implementation of the spirit of the 19th CPC National Congress. He attributed the "historic achievements" made in the Party's publicity sector since the 18th CPC National Congress to the "strong leadership" of the CPC Central Committee with Xi at the core and the guidance of Xi Jinping thought. Publicity work should guide the people to safeguard Xi's core status and uphold the authority and the centralized, unified leadership of the CPC Central Committee in a more committed manner, Wang said.<sup>19</sup>

- **Xi says senior officials "crucial" in Party, state governance**

Chinese President Xi Jinping on 5<sup>th</sup> January said that members of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and provincial and ministerial-level officials are "crucial" to the sound governance of the Party and the country. Xi, also general secretary of the CPC Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, made the remarks at the opening of a workshop attended by newly-elected members and alternate members of the CPC Central Committee, as well as provincial and ministerial-level officials. Xi called on such officials to raise their political awareness, adopt a historical perspective, reinforce theoretical thinking, think in big-picture terms and improve their knowledge and intellectual attainments to think and understand major theoretical and practical issues with a broader perspective.<sup>20</sup>

- **Commentary: In 2018, Xi leads China on new journey**

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<sup>17</sup> <https://eng.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/qwyw/rdxw/42806.htm>

<sup>18</sup> <http://en.people.cn/n3/2018/0108/c90000-9312503.html>

<sup>19</sup> [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-01/03/c\\_136869758.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-01/03/c_136869758.htm)

<sup>20</sup> [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-01/05/c\\_136874622.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-01/05/c_136874622.htm)



The year 2018 will be an important one for China as the country's new leadership charts the course for the new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Xi Jinping announced at the 19th Communist Party of China National Congress that socialism with Chinese characteristics had entered a new era. He was reelected general secretary of the CPC Central Committee at the first plenary session of the 19th CPC Central Committee.

In the new era, China will embark on a new journey towards its two historic centenary goals: building China into a moderately prosperous society in all respects when the CPC celebrates its centennial anniversary and a great modern socialist country by the middle of the 21st century, when the People's Republic of China celebrates its centennial anniversary. In 2018, China will celebrate the 40th anniversary of the reform and opening up, a policy that has led to China's rise to the world's second largest economy.<sup>21</sup>

## European Union

### Poland

- **Poland Joins Security Council as non-permanent member**

Poland has joined UNSC as a non-permanent member for two years. It has officially assumed the position on 1st January 2017. Poland has become non-permanent member for the sixth time.

### France

- **New Law against Fake News Proposed in France**

French President Emmanuel Macron proposed a new law to fight online fake news. The President said, "We are going to develop our legal means of protecting democracy against fake news." He added, "If we want to protect liberal democracies, we must have strong legislation." The President said that press would be consulted on the law and new law would only be enforced during election campaign.

### Turkey

- **Germany-Turkey Relations**

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu called for a 'fresh start' with his country's relationship with Germany. The relationship between the two countries strained in the wake of Turkey's crackdown on civil society in 2016. In an op-ed written in a German daily, he opines that both countries should come together 'as equal partners'. As reported, more than 240 people dead, and at least 50,000

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<sup>21</sup> [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-01/04/c\\_136871424.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-01/04/c_136871424.htm)

people detained and 150,000 were suspended from work for suspected links to Fethullah Gulen after failed military coup in Turkey.

- **Turkish President Erdogan Visit to France**

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan travelled to Paris on 5 January 2018 for talks with French President Emmanuel Macron. President Erdogan's visit was aimed at improving relations with European countries. During the press conference, French President Macron said, "Our democracies must be strong standing up to terrorism . . . But at the same time our democracies must completely protect the rule of law." He also suggested a partnership between the EU and Turkey, instead of full member of the EU.

## France

- **French President Macron Visits China**

French President Emmanuel Macron has started his three-day official visit to China. The President first visited the northern city of Xian. President Macron will travel to Beijing with his delegation. Reportedly, China and France would discuss political and economic issues of global and regional importance.

## South-East Asia

(ASEAN, Malaysia, Cambodia, Indonesia, Phillipines)

- **US-Thailand Defence Strategic Talks**

The 4<sup>th</sup> US-Thailand Defence Strategic Talks were held on December 20, 2017, at the Pentagon, Washington DC. Acting Assistant Secretary of Defence for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs David Helvey hosted Thailand's Permanent Secretary for Defence General Theppong Tippayachan. The two officials reviewed the broad range of U.S.-Thai defence cooperation and discussed ways to enhance the alliance's contributions to a free and open Indo-Pacific, including through maritime security cooperation and exercises such as COBRA GOLD. They also discussed ways to continue strengthening the defence trade relationship.<sup>22</sup> According to sources from the Thai military, the US wants to open a military arms maintenance centre in Thailand to supply and fix US armaments purchased by the Thai military. This move by the US comes after China, Russia, and Ukraine has also expressed an interest in doing the same. Thailand sees the maintenance centres to

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<sup>22</sup>See; <https://media.defense.gov/2017/Dec/22/2001860613/-1/-1/1/Readout4thUSThailandDefenseTalks.PDF>, accessed on January 5, 2018.

be advantageous for each of these countries, especially during negotiations regarding arms purchases.<sup>23</sup>

- **11 battalions of the Philippines Military back in Sulu**

The Philippines military has redeployed 11 battalions to Sulu to go after the Abu Sayyaf and its leaders, according to Lt. Gen. Carlito Galvez Jr., Chief of the Western Mindanao Command. Lt Gen Galvez said that the troops aim is to get ranking terrorist leaders such as Radullan Sahiron and Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan by the end of the first quarter of 2018. Galvez said the operation to crush the Abu Sayyaf was almost completed last year but units had to be deployed to Marawi against the Maute and Abu Sayyaf terrorists that laid siege to the capital of Lanao del Sur from May to October. Galvez further added that addressing the security problem in Sulu is very important in order to allow government development programmes to go on full swing.<sup>24</sup>

- **ASEAN's New Secretary-General, Mr Dato Lim Jock Hoi**

Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Brunei Darussalam, Mr Dato Lim Jock Hoi, assumed office as the 14<sup>th</sup> Secretary General of ASEAN on January 5, 2018, for a term of four years. The new ASEAN Secretary-General called on all member states to stay united as different challenges lie ahead, saying the grouping must ensure it advances towards inclusive growth and sustainable development. Further, it was stated that the constantly evolving global and regional landscape means that the challenges and opportunities facing the association today are different compared to its early days. As a consequent the 10 members association have occasionally had a hard time in finding a common voice on sensitive national issues. But the principle of non-interference has been useful glue towards maintaining unity amid any disparities that arose from time to time. Mr Dato Lim Jock Hoi, also stated that the world is looking at ASEAN and will measure the success based on the association's resilience and how it stays on course in its integration efforts, while responding to emerging issues.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>“US seeks to build military service depot”, *Bangkok Post*, January 3, 2018, <https://www.bangkokpost.com/news/security/1389266/us-seeks-to-build-military-service-depot>, accessed on January 5, 2018.

<sup>24</sup> Roel Pareno, “11 Battalions back in Sulu to go after Abu Sayyaf Leaders”, *Phistar Global*, January 5, 2018, <http://beta.philstar.com/nation/2018/01/05/1774891/11-battalions-back-sulu-go-after-abu-sayyaf-leaders>, accessed on January 5, 2018.

<sup>25</sup> “New ASEAN chief Lim Jock Hoi calls for unity in evolving global landscape”, *The Straits Times*, January 5, 2017, <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/new-asean-chief-lim-jock-hoi-calls-for-unity-in-evolving-global-landscape>, accessed on January 5, 2018.

## North America

### Canada

- **Issue of Sikh radicalism is not as big in Canada as is projected in India: Punjab-origin MP**

A member of the Canadian parliament, Shamsher Singh 'Bob' Saroya of the opposition Conservative Party, said that the issue of Sikh radicalism in his country is "not as big as is projected in India". Saroya is a native of Mohan Patti near Mukerian in Hoshiarpur district, and had migrated at the age of 21 in 1974. He represents Markham-Unionville segment of Ontario state in the House of Commons, and is also the 'shadow minister' — a system by which the opposition assigns duties, issue-wise — for immigration, refugees and citizenship (associate). He was here to pay obeisance at Golden Temple. Commenting on Punjab government's statements that radical elements in Canada are behind target killings of Hindu right wing leaders here, he said such persons against whom the state government is making such statements are few in Canada.<sup>26</sup>

- **Proposed Canada border security watchdog will 'not enhance' accountability: experts**

A federally commissioned blueprint for a new watchdog to review Canada's border agency has some worried it lacks the necessary bite to ensure true accountability. A report produced for Public Safety Canada says the government should establish an independent body to handle public complaints about the Canada Border Services Agency. The report, released under the Access to Information Act, also recommends the watchdog be able to look into trends and any systemic problems at the border services agency. The power to conduct systemic reviews would be positive, said Josh Paterson, executive director of the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association, which was consulted for the report. The border agency collects, analyzes and distributes information concerning people and goods at border points, air terminals and seaports. Border officers can stop travellers for questioning, take blood and breath samples, and search, detain and arrest citizens and non-citizens without a warrant. The border agency has come under pressure in recent years to be more forthcoming about its role in immigration detention following in-custody deaths.<sup>27</sup>

- **Conservatives demand Trudeau appear before ethics committee after Aga Khan vacation**

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<sup>26</sup> Hindustan Times, 'Issue of Sikh radicalism is not as big in Canada as is projected in India: Punjab-origin MP,' <http://www.hindustantimes.com/punjab/issue-of-sikh-radicalism-is-not-as-big-in-canada-as-is-projected-in-india-punjab-origin-mp/story-ht7mNkDnLC228aRz9cTpnI.html> Accessed on 08 January 2018.

<sup>27</sup> Jim Bronskill, "Proposed Canada border security watchdog will 'not enhance' accountability: experts," <https://globalnews.ca/news/3942698/cbsa-watchdog-accountability/>, Accessed on 08 January 2017.

The Conservatives are demanding the prime minister answer more questions about his ethics-code breaking vacation on the Aga Khan's island. A meeting will be held this week to discuss whether the government's ethics committee should invite Justin Trudeau to testify before its members. The gathering comes at the request of Conservative ethics critic Peter Kent, who made the demand for an "extraordinary meeting" in a letter to Bob Zimmer, the Conservative chair of the House of Commons committee on access to information, privacy and ethics. Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner Mary Dawson found that Trudeau breached multiple aspects of the federal ethics code by accepting a vacation on the spiritual leader's island during the 2016 holiday season. The source says they want to find out who else was on the island at the time of Trudeau's vacation, and if the prime minister will reimburse taxpayers for the full cost of the trip.<sup>28</sup>

- **Trade between India and Canada up by 30%: Canadian envoy**

Highlighting on bilateral co-operation to promote and foster trade and multilateral relations between Canada and India, its envoy to India said trade between the two countries was up by 30 per cent. High Commissioner Nadir Patel was speaking at an event where an MoU was signed between the Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC) and the Indo Canadian Business Chamber (ICBC) in order to further enhance bilateral co-operation to promote and foster trade and multilateral relations. Patel said that bilateral relation is booming with two-way trade up by 30 per cent. Canadian investment in India has also exceeded by \$15 billion. While there are about 400 active Canadian companies in India, many more have serious plans of investing in India, he said. While three non-stop flights are already plying between India and Canada, there has been a major boost to tourism and educational ties between the two countries, he said.<sup>29</sup>

- **14 gurdwaras in Canada ban entry of Indian officials**

In an unusual move, fourteen gurdwara management committees in Ontario province of Canada have imposed a ban on the entry of Indian government representatives to gurdwaras under their control, using a local law against trespassing. The decision was taken at a meeting at Jot Parkash Gurdwara in Brampton on December 30. However, there will be no ban on any Indian official paying a personal visit to any gurdwara run by these committees. When contacted, Akal Takht Jathedar Giani Gurbachan Singh said he had no information about such a decision. He said no one could be stopped from entering a gurdwara. But a spokesman of the concerned gurdwara committees in Canada, Amarjit Singh Mann, said: "We have just made it official. Indian officials were not allowed to speak or organise any function in any of these 14 gurdwaras even in the past. But

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<sup>28</sup> Katie Simpson, "Conservatives demand Trudeau appear before ethics committee after Aga Khan vacation," <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/trudeau-ethics-committee-aga-khan-report-1.4473531>, Accessed on 08 January 2018.

<sup>29</sup> IANS, "Trade between India and Canada up by 30%: Canadian envoy," [http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/trade-between-india-and-canada-up-by-30-canadian-envoy-118010501357\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/trade-between-india-and-canada-up-by-30-canadian-envoy-118010501357_1.html), Accessed on 08 January 2018 002E

that was a kind of unwritten understanding within the community. But now we have made it official as we found that Indian government officials were trying to interfere in our functioning. But our decision will nullify all such attempts by Indian government.” In recent years, the Indian High Commission in Canada has been making attempts to improve ties with the Sikh diaspora there, which had been affected since Operation Blue Star in 1984. The latest development has come as a setback to these efforts.<sup>30</sup>

## The United States

- **US Ambassador Discusses Pakistan Aid Cut With India**

US ambassador to India Kenneth Juster met with the Indian foreign secretary S. Jaishankar for the first time after Washington indicated that it has decided to withhold at least \$900 million in military aid to Pakistan. The meeting between Jaishankar and Juster discussed latest developments, including the US move to cut military aid to Islamabad for not acting against the Haqqani network and Afghan Taliban. There has been no official statement about the meeting, neither has there been any response from the Indian government on the US announcement about suspension of military assistance to Pakistan. While US administrations have used harsh words in the past, officials here remain cautiously optimistic that there is now greater willingness in Washington to follow through on their threat to cut assistance to Pakistan. At the same time, there is also awareness that the US decision has to do mainly with President Donald Trump’s frustration over the continuing deployment of US troops in Afghanistan. Trump had been keen to withdraw American troops from Afghanistan; therefore, he had only reluctantly agreed to increase their numbers under pressure from his generals. Interestingly, the US official said that while public pronouncements have focussed on safe havens for the Haqqani network and Taliban, conversations with Pakistan have also included “concerns about their nuclear program... the ability of anti-India groups like Lashkar-e Tayyiba and Jaish-e Mohammed to fundraise and operate; and Hafiz Saeed, the head of Lashkar-e Tayyiba, who was recently released from house arrest.” US officials had indicated that the aid suspension would impact the State Department’s foreign military financing (FMF) and the Department of Defense’s Coalition Support Funds (CSF)<sup>31</sup>

- **New US rules may prevent H1B visa extension**

The U.S. is considering new regulations aimed at preventing the extension of H-1B visas, predominantly used by Indian IT professionals, as part of President Donald Trump’s “Buy American, Hire American” initiative, a media report has said. The move could directly stop hundreds of thousands of foreign workers from keeping

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<sup>30</sup> Kamaldeep Singh Brar, “14 gurdwaras in Canada ban entry of Indian officials,” <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/14-gurdwaras-in-canada-ban-entry-of-indian-officials-5009419/>, Accessed on 08 January 2018.

<sup>31</sup> The Wire Staff, “US Ambassador Discusses Pakistan Aid Cut With India,” <https://thewire.in/211076/us-ambassador-discusses-pakistan-aid-cut-india/>, Accessed on 08 January 2018.

their H-1B visas while their green card applications are pending. The proposal which is being shared between the Department of Homeland Security Department (DHS) aims to impose new restrictions to prevent abuse and misuse of H-1B visas, besides ending the provision of granting extension for those who already have a green card. The US is well within its rights to make amendments to this law.<sup>32</sup>

- **How U.S. Intelligence Agencies Underestimated North Korea**

At the start of Donald Trump's presidency, American intelligence agencies told the new administration that while North Korea had built the bomb, there was still ample time — upward of four years — to slow or stop its development of a missile capable of hitting an American city with a nuclear warhead. The North's young leader, Kim Jong-un, faced a range of troubles, they assured the new administration, giving Mr. Trump time to explore negotiations or pursue countermeasures. Within months, those comforting assessments looked wildly out of date. At a speed that caught American intelligence officials off guard, Mr. Kim rolled out new missile technology — based on a decades-old Soviet engine design, apparently developed in a parallel program — and in quick succession demonstrated ranges that could reach Guam, then the West Coast, then Washington. And on the first Sunday in September, he detonated a sixth nuclear bomb. After early hesitation among analysts, a consensus has now emerged that it was the North's first successful test of a hydrogen weapon, with explosive force some 15 times greater than the atom bomb that leveled Hiroshima. The C.I.A. and other American intelligence services had predicted this moment would come, eventually. For decades, they accurately projected the broad trajectory of North Korea's nuclear program. Yet their inability to foresee the North's rapid strides over the past several months now ranks among America's most significant intelligence failures, current and former officials said in recent interviews. That disconnect — they saw it coming, but got the timing wrong — helps explain the confusion, mixed signals and alarm that have defined how Mr. Trump's untested national security team has responded to the nuclear crisis.<sup>33</sup>

- **Trump Says U.S. Open to North Korea Talks at the Right Time**

President Donald Trump said the U.S. was open to joining discussions with South Korea and North Korea at “the appropriate time,” and that he would be willing to speak directly with Kim Jong Un under the right conditions. Trump's openness to talks recalled his more accommodating approach during the 2016 campaign, when he said he could negotiate with Kim over a hamburger. More recently, he had dismissed diplomatic efforts, even publicly chiding U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson in October for “wasting his time” by pursuing them. In August, Trump vowed to unleash “fire and fury” if North Korea threatened the U.S. and on

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<sup>32</sup> PTI, “New US rules may prevent H1B visa extension,” <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/new-us-rules-may-prevent-h1b-visa-extension/article22358750.ece>, Accessed on 08 January 2018.

<sup>33</sup> David E. Sanger and William J. Broad, “How U.S. Intelligence Agencies Underestimated North Korea,” <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/06/world/asia/north-korea-nuclear-missile-intelligence.html>, Accessed on 08 January 2018.

Tuesday warned Kim on Twitter that his nuclear button was “much bigger and more powerful.” Trump argued that talks wouldn’t be possible without his tough rhetoric. Ms. Haley said while Trump’s tweet may make people nervous, it’s important to maintain pressure and remind Kim that the U.S. has the power to destroy North Korea if he decides to use nuclear weapons.<sup>34</sup>

- **AP Interview: Tillerson says fix sought to law on Iran deal**

The Trump administration is working with key lawmakers on a legislative fix that could enable the United States to remain in the Iran nuclear deal, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said in an interview with The Associated Press. The changes to the U.S. law codifying America’s participation the 2015 agreement could come as early as next week or shortly thereafter, Tillerson said. President Donald Trump faces a series of deadlines in the coming days about how to proceed with an accord he describes as terrible and too soft on Iran. While the talks involving the White House, the State Department and Congress wouldn’t increase restrictions on Iran’s nuclear activity, as Trump also wants, they could strengthen the way the U.S. enforces the agreement, perhaps persuading Trump that it’s worthwhile for the U.S. to stay in it. He suggested Trump might be inclined to preserve the deal by waiving sanctions again on Jan. 12 if there were signs Congress would act in short order.<sup>35</sup>

## Mexico

- **Mexico presidential favorite puts himself at heart of security plan**

The left-wing frontrunner to win this year’s Mexican presidential election said that he would personally take a central role in restoring order after years of violence that has claimed tens of thousands of lives. Sketching out his plans to end the bloodletting, former Mexico City mayor and presidential contender Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador presented a team of security advisers that drew both on previous governments and the private sector. He said he wanted to create more opportunities for the rural population in order to disincentivize crime, adding that the military-led approach in place for the past 11 years needed to end. Harking back to his experience as mayor from 2000 to 2005, Lopez Obrador said he would hold daily meetings “from an early hour” with the heads of the armed forces, the attorney general and interior minister to discuss security. He did not address the contentious suggestion he has made of exploring an amnesty for criminal gangs,

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<sup>34</sup> Margaret Talev and Bill Allison, “Trump Says U.S. Open to North Korea Talks at the Right Time,” <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-01-06/trump-says-u-s-open-to-north-korea-talks-at-appropriate-time>, Accessed on 08 January 2018.

<sup>35</sup> Matthew Lee And Josh Lederman, “AP Interview: Tillerson says fix sought to law on Iran deal,” <http://nationalpost.com/pmn/news-pmn/ap-interview-tillerson-eyes-fix-to-keep-us-in-iran-deal>, Accessed on 08 January 2018.



leaving that to aide Alfonso Durazo, who he has tapped as his head of public security.<sup>36</sup>

- **Mexico's Trumpian populist could mean trouble for Donald Trump**

Andrés Manuel López Obrador's campaign rhetoric can make him sound like a Mexican Donald Trump. The left-leaning front-runner in Mexico's presidential race is overtly nationalistic, pushes "Mexican people first" policies and peppers his speeches with anti-establishment slogans that thrill the working-class Mexicans who flock to his rallies. But while his style might be distinctly Trumpian, his policy prescriptions could not be more different. Indeed, the election of the former mayor of Mexico City could be disastrous for Trump and his administration, creating an even more charged relationship between the two countries that could reduce cooperation on border security, trade and immigration. That worries U.S. politicians and business leaders, including House Homeland Security Chairman Mike McCaul (R-Texas), who was not shy about expressing his disdain for López Obrador at an event hosted by the U.S.-Mexico Chamber of Commerce. McCaul and others fret that Trump himself could help put López Obrador over the top by following through on his threat to pull out of NAFTA — a development likely to produce more voter frustration that López Obrador could capitalize on. The Morena party platform recognizes that the trade pact has benefited the auto and electronics industries but argues that it has left small- and medium-size businesses, which make up the majority of the Mexican private sector, out of supply chains.<sup>37</sup>

- **Mexico missile order totals US \$98 million**

The U.S. State Department has approved the sale of US \$98.4 million worth of missiles and other military equipment to Mexico. According to the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA), the Mexican government had requested to buy six RGM-84L Harpoon Block II surface launched missiles, 23 Block II RAM tactical missiles and six MK 54 Mod 0 lightweight torpedoes and related equipment. The DSCA said in a press release that "this proposed sale will support the foreign policy and national security of the United States by helping to improve the security of a strategic partner. Mexico has been a strong partner in combating organized crime and drug trafficking organizations." The purchase will strengthen the maritime capabilities of the Mexican Navy, which will use the equipment to expand its existing support of national security requirements and combat criminal organizations. The State Department said the sale was advantageous for the United States because it would "increase the Mexican Navy's maritime partnership potential and align its capabilities with existing regional navies," noting that the

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<sup>36</sup> Lizbeth Diaz, "Mexico presidential favorite puts himself at heart of security plan," <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mexico-election/mexico-presidential-favorite-puts-himself-at-heart-of-security-plan-idUSKBN1ET2E8>, Accessed on 08 January 2018.

<sup>37</sup> Sabrina Rodriguez, "Mexico's Trumpian populist could mean trouble for Donald Trump," <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/01/07/mexico-trump-populism-209089>, Accessed on 08 January 2018.

military balance of the region would not be altered if the transaction is certified by the U.S. Congress.<sup>38</sup>

## Latin America and Caribbean Countries

### Brazil

- **Brazil finished 2017 with a record trade surplus of US\$ 67bn**

Brazil's road to economic recovery has passed another milestone with official data showing on January 2, 2018, that the country finished 2017 with a record trade surplus 40.5% higher than in 2016. The US\$67 billion surplus was in line with market projections and within the US\$65/70bn range forecast by the government. Brazil's economy is projected to grow 2% in 2018, according to an annual report by the United Nations-backed Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL) released in December 2017. That is unspectacular but solid -- and far better than the 0.2% expected for 2017, or the two years of its worst-ever recession preceding that. The government's own projections are slightly more optimistic: 3% in 2018 and 1.1% in 2017. Economy Minister Henrique Meirelles said in December 2017 that the improvement was owed to better "fiscal control, the approval of a freeze on public spending and reforms in general." The country's key interest rate is now at a record low of 7%, half of what it was in late 2016. Inflation is now considered a minimal risk. Brazilian government data also showed that oil exports rose nearly 25% to 51.96 million tons in 2017 compared to 2016. Brazil's conservative president, Michel Temer, has spearheaded austerity cuts, looser labor laws and a big privatization program to boost the economy, Latin America's largest. But Temer remains unpopular with voters, clouding the political outlook ahead of presidential election in 2018.

- **Mayor Requests Army Against 'Invasion' During Ex-President Lula's Trial**

Porto Alegre's mayor, Nelson Marchezan Jr. (PSDB), has requested the presence of the Brazilian Army and of the National Force to president Michel Temer, on the day of the trial of former Brazilian president, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, at the TRF-4 (Federal Regional Court of the 4th Region), scheduled for January 24, 2018. The President's office requested the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Justice to review the official letter, on January 4, 2018. The Brazilian Worker's Party (PT) has organized protests countrywide in the event Lula's conviction is upheld. Marchezan's request for troops, sent on January 3, 2018, stated that "there is an imminent danger to public order and the integrity of citizens" of Porto Alegre, as well as the risk of an "invasion". "Due to political leaders calling for Porto Alegre's invasion, I took this measure to protect citizens and public assets", stated the mayor in social media networks. However, Minister of Defense, Raul Jungmann, stated he "personally" does not consider "the possibility of involving the Armed

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<sup>38</sup> Mexico News Daily, "Mexico missile order totals US \$98 million," <https://mexiconewsdaily.com/news/mexico-missile-order-totals-98-million/>, Accessed on 08 January 2018.

Forces [in this case]". "If required, I will reassert it is unnecessary", said the minister.

- **Brazil's Industry minister steps down, likely to run for Congress**

Brazilian Industry minister Marcos Pereira resigned on January 3, 2018, becoming the third cabinet minister to quit in a month. A few hours after Pereira stepped down, the leader of the government-allied Brazilian Labor Party, Roberto Jefferson, said his daughter, federal Congresswoman Cristiane Brasil, would become the next Labor minister. Pereira, who posted his resignation letter on his verified Facebook page, is expected to run for Congress in October 2018 for his Brazilian Republican Party. In his resignation letter he cited "personal and party" reasons for leaving the job and thanked President Michel Temer for the posting. Under Brazilian electoral legislation hopefuls must step down six months before the election, which are scheduled for next October. The Brazilian people will vote for a president, the renewal of the Lower House, 513 seats, and a third of Senate benches. More ministers are expected to step down before April 2018, since thirteen of the current 28 cabinet members have aspirations to return to Congress.

## Chile

- **EU and Chile discussions to renew association agreement**

The European Union and Chile have started negotiations in Brussels for the renewal of the Association Agreement. The first round was held in November 2017 and the Commission subsequently launched a consultation aimed at the sectors affected in order to find out their opinions on the issue. This process is planned to conclude on 19 February, 2018. The objective of the negotiations is to modernise the Association Agreement signed fourteen years ago. According to the European Trade Commissioner, Cecilia Malmstrom, "Chile is the oldest EU trade partner in Latin America and a key ally. In fact, the current agreement has led to a substantial increase in trade flows between both parties over the last decade and a half." According to FEPEX, the opportunities offered by Chile to the entire fruit and vegetable sector have been very limited, with minimal export flows, despite the fact that the production schedules complement one another. In 2016, the export of fruit and vegetables from Spain to Chile amounted to 21 tons worth 32,000 Euro, according to data from the Department of Customs and Special Taxes of the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness. The US is the biggest market for the Chilean fruit and vegetable exporting sector, followed by the EU. Spain accounts for between 7% and 8% of all Chilean exports to the EU and stands behind the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Italy, which are Chile's main importers in the EU.

## Peru

- **Peru enters UN Security Council**

Peru and five other countries have formally joined the ranks of the non-permanent members of the United Nations Security Council “to make a difference,” the body’s president said on January 3, 2018. Equatorial Guinea, Ivory Coast, Kuwait, Poland and the Netherlands are the other countries. “Peace and security are difficult to achieve,” Kazakh envoy Kairat Umarov, who took the rotating presidency in January, told council members at a special ceremony. “You are going to have a real chance to make a difference.” One after the other, ambassadors representing the council’s six new member countries – five men and a woman, Polish envoy Joanna Wronecka – placed their flag among those of the body’s nine other members. The UN Security Council has 15 members, including five with permanent seats who have the power to veto resolutions – Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States. Three women and 12 men are among the 15 ambassadors who will soon be seated at the U-shaped table in the center of the Security Council’s chamber. In addition to Wronecka and US envoy Nikki Haley, Karen Pierce will take her seat later this month as Britain’s new ambassador. The six countries who left the UN Security Council on December 31 are Egypt, Italy, Japan, Senegal, Ukraine and Uruguay.

- **Peru ex-president Fujimori walks free after medical pardon**

Alberto Fujimori, the former authoritarian leader of Peru, left hospital in the capital Lima a free man on January 4, 2018, days after being granted a presidential pardon. The 79-year-old waved to supporters outside the hospital from his wheelchair, reigniting anger over a pardon he secured from President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski on Christmas Eve. He had been serving a 25-year sentence for human rights abuses during his time in office in the 1990s. The pardon has polarized Peru, triggering anti-government protests and political resignations that have shaken Kuczynski’s already-weak government. Kuczynski said last week of December 2017, he would unveil a new cabinet soon, but has announced no details yet. Last week, a group of Peruvian writers condemned the decision by the authorities to pardon him on health grounds. The writers, among them Nobel Prize-winning author Mario Vargas Llosa, called it a disgrace for Peru. Earlier in the week, thousands of people took to the streets in Lima and other cities to protest against the pardon. Mr. Fujimori’s critics consider him a corrupt dictator but to his supporters, he was the president who saved Peru from the twin evils of terrorism and economic collapse.

## **Venezuela**

- **OAS Chief Calls for Stronger Sanctions against Venezuela to Force Fair Elections**

President of Venezuela Nicolás Maduro has demonstrated little seriousness in progressing a political dialogue in the Dominican Republic. As a result, Organization of American States Secretary General Luis Almagro called for more sanctions against the dictatorship to force “serious negotiations” that will lead to legitimate elections. Almagro, who has closely followed the human rights

violations in the country, called on the international community to take “tougher” economic measures against the Venezuelan government. He said sanctions by the international community are the only diplomatic method of forcing Maduro to accept elections that are observed by third-party, international organizations. For Almagro, the way out of the crisis in Venezuela comes down to an increase in sanctions against members of the regime, and against the “economic and financial apparatus” that keeps it afloat. The Maduro regime has shown that international sanctions are its weakness, and demanded that they be lifted during dialogues with the opposition. “Venezuela will not have an election nor will it sign any agreement with the Venezuelan opposition until the gross sanctions that the Venezuelan right-wing leadership requested from the Treasury Department of Donald Trump and from the Canadian, Spanish and other authorities are lifted,” Communication Minister and spokesman for the regime in the negotiations, Jorge Rodríguez, said.

## Cuba

- **EU Official Criticizes US Embargo on Cuba**

The European Union and the United States do not see eye-to-eye on a continued embargo against Cuba. This week, the EU’s High Representative to the Foreign Affairs and Security Policy said such an embargo is “obsolete and illegal.” Federica Mogherini, who recently completed her third trip to the island, said the sanctions against Cuba only worsen the quality of life of Cubans. She said sanctions are unacceptable because unilateral measures don’t allow economic and commercial development on the island. According to her, the solution is “to build bridges and open doors through cooperation and dialogue.” Her trip to the island is part of a Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreements between Cuba and the EU that went into effect last November. Now, the diplomat is seeking to negotiate with Cuba and define how their agreements will be carried out. She insisted that Cubans are not alone in facing those who isolate them, claiming that despite the political changes against Cuba by the United States, the EU will continue to maintain a “solid, stable and reliable relationship” with the island. Mogherini said the EU has differences with the Cuban regime but that they will continue working through dialogues and try to “put an end to the blockade.”

## Russia

- **Russia and It’s Presidential Election**

Aina Gamzatova from Dagestan, has made it official. She wants to run against Russian President Vladimir Putin in the March 2018 election. Gamzatova heads Russia’s largest Muslim media holding - Islam.ru - comprising television, radio and print outlets, writes books on Islam, and runs a charity. Some see her campaign - irrespective of its results - as a way to boost the image of Muslim women in Russia and to attract attention to the needs of impoverished, overpopulated and multi-

ethnic Dagestan. It is something of a given that Gamzatova has no chance of winning, even if every one of Russia's 20 million Muslims votes for her in a country of more than 140 million people. She may receive a high number of votes in Dagestan and the Northern Caucasus - something that will ruin Putin's image in the unemployment-addled region that heavily depends on federal subsidies and where - according to election monitors - officials routinely resort to vote rigging and coercion of voters. She wrote in her Facebook account that "Our country, Russia, is our home, and if we divide ourselves into Muslims and Christians, Caucasus natives and Russians, our country's government will not exist." Her candidacy "should not be seen within a clerical context or an attempt of Muslims to create a competitor to Vladimir Putin", she wrote in a piece published on 29 December 2017 on Islam.ru. "It is a desire to publicly announce and support on the federal level a harsh anti-Wahhabism stance that both local authorities and some federal officials responsible for the region have tried to silence in recent years." On 1 January, she submitted required documents to Russia's Central Election Commission for her self-nomination for Russian presidency. Gamzatova was nominated as a candidate for the presidential run by an initiative group of 542 citizens. Vladimir Putin submitted documents to the Central Election Commission for his nomination in the 2018 presidential election on December 27, 2017. Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, the Leader of the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, became the first candidate to be registered as a presidential contender by the Central Election Commission (CEC) on December 29, 2017. Other high-profile hopefuls include Grigory Yavlinsky, co-founder of the Yabloko Party, business ombudsman and head of the Party of Growth Boris Titov, TV host and journalist Ksenia Sobchak, who was nominated by the Civil Initiative party, and CEO of Lenin State Farm agricultural company Pavel Grudinin, nominated by the Communist Party of Russia. In addition, a number of other candidates have also submitted their nomination papers to the Central Election Commission.

- **Russia and India**

On 3 January 2018, Russian President Vladimir Putin had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi at the Indian side's initiative. Mr Putin and Mr Modi exchanged New Year greetings. Development of bilateral relations and current international issues were discussed. The two leaders confirmed their commitment to further developing the privileged strategic partnership between Russia and India, and agreed to continue top-level contacts. Mr. Modi discussed the intensification of Indo-Russia ties with Mr. Putin, as the two sides agreed to strengthen the bilateral special and privileged partnership.

- **Russia and its Armed Forces**

On 26 December 2017, Russian Defence Minister General of the Army Sergei Shoigu stressed that positive momentum for development of the Russian Armed Forces had been gained in 2017. According to him, the Armed Forces have been rearmed with modern armament for 59.5%. More than 3,000 various samples of

armament have been introduced in the troops. Military infrastructure has been developed in 2017. In total, 3,000 facilities has been erected, reconstructed and recovered. Combat training has been intensified over the last year. In total, six unexpected inspections and some 15,000 events took place within the combat training programme. The Zapad 2017 Russia-Belarus strategic exercise was the main event of combat training. The two armed forces confirmed their readiness to defend the US.

- **Russia and the US**

Konstantin Kozlovsky, a jailed Russian hacker, on 27 December 2017, said that he hacked into the Democratic National Committee computers on the Kremlin's orders to steal emails released during the 2016 U.S. presidential election campaign now claims he left behind a data signature to prove his assertion. He said that it was a hacking operation led by the Russian intelligence agency known by its initials FSB. Among them, Kozlovsky said he worked with the FSB to develop computer viruses that were first tested on large, unsuspecting Russian companies, such as the oil giant Rosneft, later turning them loose on multinational corporations.

On 27 December 2017, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova accused the US of a "direct interference in our electoral process and internal affairs" following the State Department's criticism of Russia's decision to bar opposition leader Alexey Navalny from running in the upcoming presidential election against Vladimir Putin.

According to documents and two whistleblowers, fingerprint-analysis software used by the FBI and more than 18,000 other US law enforcement agencies contains code created by a Russian firm with close ties to the Kremlin. The allegations raise concerns that Russian hackers could gain backdoor access to sensitive biometric information on millions of Americans, or even compromise wider national security and law enforcement computer systems. In recent years, Russian hackers have gained access to everything from the Democratic National Committee's email servers to the systems of nuclear power companies to the unclassified computers of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, according to US authorities. In September 2017, the Department of Homeland Security ordered all federal agencies to stop using products made by the Moscow-based company Kaspersky Lab, including its popular antivirus software.

- **Russia and Iran**

Russia's Embassy in the US has warned against foreign interference in Iran as anti-government protests there have turned deadly. In a tweet on 1 January, U.S. President Donald Trump said Iran is "failing at every level" and called for change in the country. Moscow has so far remained silent on the topic other than issuing a travel warning, as Russia has ground to a standstill during a week of New Year's celebrations. But on 2 January, the Embassy in the United States on Twitter cited

Russia's Foreign Ministry as saying "This is Iran's internal affair. External interference destabilizing the situation is inadmissible."

- **Russia and North Korea**

According to two senior security sources in Western Europe said that Russian tankers have transferred fuel to North Korean ships several times in recent months, serving as a "lifeline" to the regime that has been hit with crippling United Nations sanctions. At least three transfers of petrochemicals occurred at sea in October and November.

- **Russia and Uzbekistan**

On 29 December 2017, Russia's Rosatom State Atomic Energy Corporation and Uzbekistan have signed a nuclear-cooperation agreement that Rosatom says will pave the way for bilateral cooperation "in many aspects of civil nuclear energy." "The collaboration could include creation and development of infrastructure in Uzbekistan, training, construction of nuclear power plants and research reactors, as well as operational and maintenance support during their life cycle," the Rosatom statement said. "It could also cover exploration and mining of uranium, handling of uranium waste, and the production of radioisotopes for use in medicine, agriculture, and academic research," the state-owned firm said. Likhachyov said Rosatom was ready to build a two-unit nuclear power plant in Uzbekistan and has offered to start training Uzbek nuclear experts-to-be at Moscow's expense beginning in September 2018.

- **Russia and Syria**

On 26 December 2017, Russian Defence Minister General of the Army Sergei Shoigu said that the successful completion of the military operation in Syria is considered to be the main event for the Russian Armed Forces. Sergei Shoigu highly appreciated contribution of the Russian military police to the Syrian operation. Minister of Defence pointed out that the fight against terrorists had been one of the key missions for the Aerospace Forces, military police, Marines, UAVs and the Navy. According to Sergei Shoigu, having defeated the ISIS terrorists in Syria, main part of military contingent returned home with victory. In a tweet, the minister also confirmed the structure and staff of the main basing points in Tartus and Khmeimim. He said that Russia proceeded to form a permanent grouping. The agreement will allow Russia to keep 11 warships at Tartous, including nuclear vessels, for 49 years, although the deal allows for an extension. But the Hmeimim airbase can be used indefinitely.

On January 7, Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia said in his Christmas interview with the Rossiya-1 TV channel that Operation of Russia's Aerospace Forces in Syria helped to protect the Christian minority from persecution and killings.



## South Asia

### Afghanistan

- **Over 60 Suicide Attacks Hit Afghanistan In 2017**

In the last year, Afghanistan witnessed over 60 deadly suicide attacks carried out by Taliban and Daesh across the country, with the majority of hits in Kabul, Nangarhar and Herat provinces. Of the 63 attacks, Taliban has claimed responsibility for 48 of and Daesh 15 others. In 2017, the Taliban changed its war tactics and mostly used group attacks seizing Humvees for carrying out attacks against major military bases. Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) has meanwhile said in most of the suicide attacks mainly the civilians' have lost their lives and that re-emphasized targeting civilians is a war crime. In the Daesh suicide attacks, mostly civilians were targeted in Afghanistan. Shia's mosques and religious places were the main targets of such attacks.<sup>39</sup>

- **ETWA Expresses Concerns on the Process of Appointing a New IEC Commissioner**

The Election and Transparency Watch Organization of Afghanistan (ETWA) is closely observing the process of appointing a new Commissioner for the Independent Election Commission or IEC. ETWA is concerned with the process, which moves forward in contradiction with the president's decree on electoral laws, would further undermine IEC's independence and limit opportunities to establish a political consensus on elections among politicians. Since re-establishment of the Selection Committee and its working results clearly opposes the electoral law, thus, the individual being selected as the member of IEC through this process, would lack legal legitimacy. Involvement of representatives of independent institutions such as the Supreme Court, ICOIC, AIHRC and women support institutions as members of the Selection Committee in an illegal process could affect people's trust on these institutions, especially in ensuring the principle of separation of powers, respecting the Constitution, human rights and the democratization process in the Afghanistan. ETWA calls on NUG leaders to stop the work of Selection Committee as soon as possible and seek legitimate ways to the selection of new Election Commissioner through consultations with civil societies, political parties and other political elites.<sup>40</sup>

- **Kabul, Ankara Discuss Military Cooperation, Ties**

Interior Minister Wais Ahmad Barmak has discussed military cooperation with his Turkish counterpart during a meeting in Ankara on 01 January 2018. Barmak

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<sup>39</sup> Sharif Amiri, "Over 60 Suicide Attacks Hit Afghanistan In 2017", *Tolo News*, 01 January 2018. <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/over-60-suicide-attacks-hit-afghanistan-2017> accessed on 03 January 2018.

<sup>40</sup> "ETWA Expresses Concerns on the Process of Appointing a New IEC Commissioner", *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, 08 January 2018. [http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national\\_detail.php?post\\_id=19861](http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=19861) accessed on 08 January 2018.

arrived in the Turkish capital at the head of a high level delegation on 31st December 2017. Barmak and his Turkish counterpart Süleyman Soylu discussed bilateral cooperation and strengthening friendly relations between the two countries. They also talked about cooperation in increasing higher educational facilities for Afghan police officers pursuing bachelor's and master's degrees, the source said. Technical cooperation in improving MoI detective organs' capacity and dealing with cyber crimes were other issues discussed in the meeting. The two sides also talked about counternarcotics, treatment of injured Afghan police and establishing a major police hotline center in Afghanistan.<sup>41</sup>

- **UK Plans to Ramp up Military Presence in Afghanistan**

The United Kingdom plans to ramp up its military presence in Afghanistan to about 600 personnel, reports the Forces Network. The additional British military personnel would join NATO's Resolute Support Mission training and mentoring Afghan forces. Britain has repeatedly been urged by NATO and the United States to send more troops and step up assistance to Afghanistan. According to the website, Britain has promised deploying an additional 85 personnel to join the mission this year.<sup>42</sup>

- **Noor Warns of Daesh Movements In North**

The executive director of Jamiat-e-Islami party and ousted Balkh governor, Atta Mohammad Noor, on January 1, 2018, expressed his grave concern over the Daesh expansion in the north of the country and warned of the group's movements in rest of the country. Addressing a gathering in Balkh province, Noor told residents of north and north-east provinces that Daesh's activities are terrible. He said the increase in the group's activities in the country is worrying.<sup>43</sup>

- **Pakistan Has Played Double Game For Years: Nikki Haley**

The Trump administration on January 2, 2018 accused Pakistan of playing a "double game" with the US for years, a behaviour that was no longer acceptable. "The administration is withholding USD255 million in assistance to Pakistan. There are clear reasons for this. Pakistan has played a double game for years," US Ambassador to UN Nikki Haley told reporters in New York.

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<sup>41</sup> "Kabul, Ankara Discuss Military Cooperation, Ties", *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, 02 January 2018. [http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national\\_detail.php?post\\_id=19812](http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=19812) accessed on 04 January 2018.

<sup>42</sup> "UK Plans to Ramp up Military Presence in Afghanistan", *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, 06 January 2018. [http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national\\_detail.php?post\\_id=19835](http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=19835) accessed on 08 January 2018.

<sup>43</sup> Karim Amini, "Noor Warns of Daesh Movements In North", *Tolo News*, January 1, 2018, <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/noor-warns-daesh-movements-north> (accessed on January 8)

“They (Pakistanis) work with us at times, and they also harbour the terrorists that attack our troops in Afghanistan. That game is not acceptable to this administration,” Haley said.<sup>44</sup>

- **Noor Ready to Run for President**

Atta Mohammad Noor, the ousted governor northern Balkh province says he would consider running for president in the 2019 presidential elections if the leadership of Jamiat-e-Islami party of Afghanistan asked him to. “If the leaders of Jamiat and members of Jamiat and our allies ask me to accept this responsibility, I will be a candidate,” Noor said on January 7, 2018. In an interview with Reuters, Noor who also serves as the chief executive of the party said that the leadership of national unity government has lost the trust of the Afghan public.<sup>45</sup>

- **More than 2,000 Afghans killed in Syria conflict**

More than two thousand Afghan nationals fighting in the ranks of the Fatemi young brigade in Syria have been killed, it has been reported. According to a cultural official of Fatemiyoung brigade Zohair Mujahid, around eight thousand Afghans have also been wounded in the conflict. This brigade has given more than 2,000 martyrs and 8,000 wounded for Islam,” he said in an interview with the reformist Shargh newspaper published January 6, 2018.”<sup>46</sup>

- **Gailani Moves to Bring Inclusive Peace Talks**

The Chairman of Mahaz-e-Milli party, Sayed Hamid Gailani, said on January 6 that he, along with religious scholars, will soon form a delegation to engage in talks with the leaders of the Taliban. That will be followed by meetings with countries that have been involved in the Afghanistan situation to talk about bringing peace and stability in Afghanistan, Gailani said addressing a gathering of religious scholars in Kabul.<sup>47</sup>

## **Bangladesh**

- **Political situation heats up over Jan 5 poll anniversary**

The political situation in the country has suddenly become heated surrounding the fourth anniversary of the January 5 general election. The Awami League (AL) has planned a countrywide celebration, while the BNP will be organising black flag processions across the country. The AL will observe January 5 as ‘Victory Day for

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<sup>44</sup> “Pakistan has played double game for years: Nikki Haley”, *The Pashtun Times*, January 4, 2018, <http://thepashtuntimes.com/pakistan-has-played-double-game-for-years-nikki-haley/> (accessed on January 8)

<sup>45</sup> Anisa Shaheed, “Noor Ready to Run for President”, *Tolo News*, January 7, 2018, <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/noor-ready-run-president> (accessed on January 8, 2018)

<sup>46</sup> “More than 2,000 Afghans killed in Syria conflict”, *Khaama Press*, January 7, 2018, <https://www.khaama.com/more-than-2000-afghans-killed-in-syria-conflict-04206> (accessed on January 8)

<sup>47</sup> “Gailani Moves to Bring Inclusive Peace Talks”, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, January 7, 2018, [http://outlookafghanistan.net/national\\_detail.php?post\\_id=19849](http://outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=19849) (accessed on January 8)

Democracy” by holding meetings and cheer rallies in the city and elsewhere in the country. In the capital, the AL will hold two rallies—one at the Bangabandhu Square and another at the Rajuk ground at Banani. The BNP will observe the occasion, what the party terms it, as “Murder of Democracy Day” and bring out black flag processions at city, district and upazila levels, protesting against “lopsided January 5 polls”.<sup>48</sup>

- **Rohingyas keep coming**

Rohingya refugees from Myanmar's Rakhine State are still crossing into Bangladesh though the two countries are expected to start the repatriation of the Rohingyas, who have already taken shelter here, in weeks. On an average, four to five Rohingya families are entering Bangladesh through different border points every day, said aid workers. The refugees said they had to leave home as they had been facing a severe food crisis.<sup>49</sup>

- **There's no election on 5 Jan: BNP**

Contesting prime minister Sheikh Hasina's claim that the 5 January 2014 elections were not 'voter-less', the BNP on Sunday (January 7) said the people hardly voted in the one-sided polls. BNP standing committee member Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain told a protest rally that Sheikh Hasina made an 'untrue' statement on 5 January 2014 general elections to mislead people, reports UNB. "We would like to say no one gave vote in 153 seats while only 5-10 per cent people cast votes in the rest 147 seats. So, how did people elect you?" the BNP leader said. "You (PM) are claiming that you were elected by people while there was no election at all."<sup>50</sup>

- **Countdown for 'govt removal' starts: BNP**

Terming rhetoric Awami League general secretary Obaidul Quader's comment that the next election will be held under Sheikh Hasina, BNP yesterday said the countdown has begun for the 'removal' of the current government, reports UNB. "The year 2018 will be the year of bringing back people's rights under the leadership of Khaleda Zia removing stigma as the countdown has begun for the ouster of the regime elected without people's votes," said BNP senior joint secretary general Ruhul Kabir Rizvi.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> "Political situation heats up over Jan 5 poll anniv," *The Independent*, January 5, 2017, <http://www.theindependentbd.com/post/131250>, accessed on January 5, 2017.

<sup>49</sup> "Rohingyas keep coming," *Daily Star*, January 6, 2017, <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/rohingyas-keep-coming-1515634>, accessed on January 6, 2017.

<sup>50</sup> "There's no election on 5 Jan: BNP," *Prothom Alo*, January 7, 2017, <http://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/news/169145/There's-no-election-on-5-Jan-BNP>, accessed on January 7, 2017.

<sup>51</sup> "Countdown for 'govt removal' starts: BNP," *The Independent*, January 7, 2017, <http://www.theindependentbd.com/post/131532>, accessed on January 7, 2017.

## Pakistan

- **President Trump and Pakistan**

US President Trump tweeted on January 1 accusing Islamabad of being a liar. He wrote that “The United States has foolishly given Pakistan more than 33 billion dollars in aid over the last 15 years, and they have given us nothing but lies & deceit, thinking of our leaders as fools.” On January 1, the US ambassador was summoned to the Foreign Office and a strong protest over Mr Trump’s remarks was lodged with him.<sup>52</sup> Rejecting US President Donald Trump’s anti-Pakistan tweet as “unwarranted”, the country’s top civil and military brass on January 2 vowed not to act in haste, while agreeing to remain committed to the peace process in Afghanistan.<sup>53</sup> Turkey expressed solidarity with Pakistan over the tweets.<sup>54</sup> The Trump administration announced on January 4<sup>th</sup> that it is suspending its entire security assistance to Pakistan until it proves its commitment to fight all terrorist groups operating in the region. The cut-off is not permanent and only affects military assistance. It has been cited in Pakistani media that the proposed plan does not call for “a total cut-off”. Instead, it suggests a “condition and issue-based approach”.<sup>55</sup> Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif has said that Pakistan does not have an alliance with the United States. “We do not have any alliance... This is not how allies behave” stated Minister Asif during an interview on January 7.<sup>56</sup>

- **Ousted PM Sharif in Saudi Arabia**

While on a two day tour, Initially ousted PM Sharif could not meet King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman due to ‘unknown’ reasons, though his brother met the Crown Prince as well as the Saudi intelligence chief on January 1.<sup>57</sup> Nawaz finally managed to get a meeting with Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman late on January 1, and both returned back to Pakistan on January 2. Not much detail was provided regarding the intention of the visit or its outcome.<sup>58</sup> Nawaz on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, in a press conference called for “putting our house in order”, rising above self-deception and understanding why the world had such a negative perception about Pakistan.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Anwar Iqbal & Iftikhar A. Khan, “Trump’s tweet on Pakistan sparks war of words”, *Dawn*, January 2, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1380174> accessed on January 8, 2018

<sup>53</sup> Iftikhar A. Khan, “Civil-military brass won’t ‘react in haste’ to Trump tweet”, *Dawn*, January 3, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1380454> accessed on January 8, 2018

<sup>54</sup> “Turkey expresses solidarity with Pakistan”, *The Nation*, January 4, 2018, <https://nation.com.pk/04-Jan-2018/turkey-expresses-solidarity-with-pakistan> accessed on January 8, 2018

<sup>55</sup> Anwar Iqbal, “America suspends entire security aid to Pakistan”, *Dawn*, January 5, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1380876> accessed on January 8, 2018

<sup>56</sup> “Pakistan, US are no longer allies, says FM”, *Dawn*, January 8, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1381548/pakistan-us-are-no-longer-allies-says-fm> accessed on January 8, 2018

<sup>57</sup> Zulqernain Tahir, “Ex-PM awaits audience with king, crown prince in S. Arabia”, *Dawn*, January 2, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1380172> accessed on January 8, 2018

<sup>58</sup> Zulqernain Tahir, “Sharif’s return from ‘mysterious’ trip to Saudi Arabia”, *Dawn*, January 3, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1380451> accessed on January 8, 2018

<sup>59</sup> Iftikhar A. Khan & Malik Asad, “Time to put our house in order, says Sharif”, *Dawn*, January 4, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1380664/time-to-put-our-house-in-order-says-sharif> accessed on January 8, 2018

- **Pakistan and India**

Pakistan handed over to the Indian High Commission in Islamabad on January 1 a list of 457 Indian prisoners held in the country. A list of Pakistani prisoners was also given to the Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi by India. It was consistent with the Consular Access Agreement between Pakistan and India, signed on May 21, 2008, under which both countries are required to exchange lists of prisoners in each other's custody twice a year, on Jan 1 and July 1, respectively.<sup>60</sup>

- **Pakistan and Japan**

Pakistan and Japan on January 4 pledged to reinvigorate their ties, especially in economic and security spheres during a two day trip of Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono to Pakistan, which was the first in nine years by a Japanese foreign minister.<sup>61</sup> Japanese minister said that Pakistan, with its geopolitical importance, had played a prominent role for stability in the region and that it was important vis-a-vis stability and prosperity of the international community.<sup>62</sup>

- **Pakistan and Iran**

Pakistani and Iranian defence ministers on January 4<sup>th</sup> agreed to hold "frequent discussions" over the evolving situation in the region. The consensus was reached during a telephonic conversation between Defence Minister Khurram Dastgir Khan and his Iranian counterpart Brig Gen Amir Hatami.<sup>63</sup>

## Indian Ocean Region

- **China's third indigenous aircraft carrier likely to be deployed in Indian Ocean**

Referring the sources close to the People's Liberation Army, South China Morning Post reported that China is building its third aircraft carrier at Shanghai shipyard.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> "Pakistan, India exchange lists of prisoners", *Dawn*, January 2, 2018,

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1380226/pakistan-india-exchange-lists-of-prisoners> accessed on January 8, 2018

<sup>61</sup> "Pakistan, Japan pledge to reinvigorate ties", *Dawn*, January 5, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1380888> accessed on January 8, 2018

<sup>62</sup> Amin Ahmed, "Pakistan vital for world stability: Japan", *Dawn*, January 5, 2018,

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1380880/pakistan-vital-for-world-stability-japan> accessed on January 8, 2018

<sup>63</sup> "Pakistan, Iran ministers discuss unrest in region", *Dawn*, January 5, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1380874> accessed on January 8, 2018

<sup>64</sup> China has started building its third aircraft carrier, military sources say, 04 January 2017,

<http://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2126883/china-has-started-building-its-third-aircraft-carrier> (accessed on 08 January 2017)

The carrier will have hi- tech launch system, South China Morning Post mentioned. According to ANI, " China's indigenous third aircraft carrier is close to completion and may soon to be deployed in the in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean."<sup>65</sup> According to media report, "the destroyer will be equipped with new air defence, anti- missile, anti ship and anti- submarine weapons."<sup>66</sup>

- **China's Indian Ocean strategy: China to invest \$1 billion in mega Sri Lanka project**

China is planning to invest \$ 1 billion in the mega project - construction of three 60 storey buildings at Colombo port.<sup>67</sup> The deal is followed by earlier Chinese investment of \$ 1.4 billion for reclamation work for the wider Colombo International development.<sup>68</sup> Sri Lanka hopes that like Singapore the project will create another financial centre in the Indian Ocean. And also provide greater opportunities for foreign investment and jobs. The contract of the project has given to China Harbour (company). In fact, the project was formally launched in 2014 but the work was suspended by resumption of new government in 2015.<sup>69</sup>

- **Japan and Maldives agree to join hands on Tokyo's Indo-Pacific strategy**

Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono and his Maldivian counterpart Mohamed Asim have agreed to cooperate in promoting Japan's Indo-Pacific strategy. "I would like to further strengthen the cooperative relationship to realize the strategy," visiting Japanese Foreign Minister Kono during the meeting with Sri Lankan Foreign Minister on 06 January in Male."<sup>70</sup> To contribute to stability in the Indo-Pacific region Japan is keen to cooperate with countries of Indo- Pacific region having similar values such as rule of law and democracy.<sup>71</sup> Mr. Kono also stressed the need of cooperation between Maldives and Japan to combat terrorism in the Asian region.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> China's third domestic aircraft carrier likely to be deployed in Indian Ocean, 06 January 2018, <https://www.aninews.in/news/world/asia/chinas-third-domestic-aircraft-carrier-likely-to-be-deployed-in-indian-ocean201801061340550001/> (accessed on 08 January 2017)

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Eye on Indian Ocean: China to invest \$1 billion in mega Sri Lanka project, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/international-business/china-to-invest-1-billion-in-mega-sri-lanka-project/articleshow/62342666.cms> (accessed on 08 January 2017)

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Japan and Maldives agree to join hands on Tokyo's Indo-Pacific strategy, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/01/07/national/politics-diplomacy/japan-maldives-agree-join-hands-tokyos-indo-pacific-strategy/#.WIRKk6iWYb4> (accessed on 08 January 2017)

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.



## West Asia

### Turkey

- **We're not afraid of your courts or police: CHP head**<sup>73</sup>

Main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu has slammed ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) for putting pressure on the judiciary to oppress the CHP, expressing the party's aim to sweep the big cities in the upcoming local elections despite recent investigations.

"Neither your judges nor your prosecutors nor your police nor anyone else scare us. Because our struggle is for our rights," Kılıçdaroğlu said on Jan. 6, speaking at the CHP's Congress at Ankara.

He first criticized the Board of Judges and Prosecutors (HSK) for recent changes to the judges in the ongoing MİT trucks case, in which CHP Istanbul lawmaker Enis Berberoğlu is being tried.

"If you change the judges in the middle of the night, those judges' decisions will not be just. Do not transform the Board of Judges and Prosecutors into the Board of Palace Judges. Be fair," Kılıçdaroğlu said. The head and judge of the Istanbul Regional Court of Justice where Berberoğlu is being retried for "leaking state secrets" were changed by the HSK on Dec. 28.

- **Turkish and German foreign ministers stress importance of 'dialogue' to mend fences**<sup>74</sup>

Ankara's differences with Berlin can be overcome through dialogue, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu said on Jan. 6 during a visit to Germany to meet his German counterpart Sigmar Gabriel.

"We, as two foreign ministers, believe our disagreements will be overcome through dialogue," Çavuşoğlu told reporters at a joint news conference with Gabriel at the Kaiserpfalz Imperial Palace in Germany's Goslar.

"We do not need to agree on Turkey's EU membership process, but both sides need to overcome issues such as updating the Customs Union agreement," he said.

Despite not being a member of the EU, Turkey has been part of the Customs Union agreement since 1995, though the mutual trade deal does not cover agriculture, services or public procurement. Ankara has been pushing the EU to include it in an updated agreement, but Turkey's tense ties with Germany have stalled the process.

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<sup>73</sup> <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/were-not-afraid-of-your-courts-or-police-chp-head-125357>

<sup>74</sup> <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkish-and-german-foreign-ministers-stress-importance-of-dialogue-to-mend-fences-125350>



For his part, Gabriel said that “despite differences of opinion” it is their duty to overcome all difficulties in relations between Berlin and Ankara. “We have a serious will in this regard. Together with my colleague we see it as a common duty to overcome this tension,” he said.

- **“Turkish Cypriots” head to polls in snap parliamentary elections<sup>75</sup>**

Turkish Cypriots on Jan. 7 voted in a snap parliamentary election overshadowed by last year's failure to reach a peace deal for the divided island in UN-backed talks.

More than 190,500 people are registered to vote in the Turkish Cyprus. The vote comes ahead of presidential polls later this month in the internationally recognized Greek-majority Republic of Cyprus with peace efforts on hold until both sets of elections are over.

Polling stations opened at 0600 GMT and are to close at 1600 GMT. The election in Turkish Cyprus comes six months after efforts to reunify the island collapsed at a UN-hosted peace summit in Switzerland over a number of disputes, including the withdrawal of Turkey's 45,000 troops.

Turkish Cyprus is currently governed by a coalition of the right-wing National Unity Party (UBP) and its junior partner the Democratic Party (DP).

Analysts say the DP of Serdar Denktaş -- son of late Turkish Cyprus founder and leader Rauf Denktaş - could fall under the five percent threshold due to intra-party disputes, Agence France-Presse reported. The UBP and the pro-solution Republican Turkish Party (CTP) are the other major parties in the election, followed by the Peoples' Party (HP) of Kudret Özersay -- a former negotiator in peace talks with the Greek Cypriots.

The election, originally planned for July, were brought forward after tensions in the ruling coalition and the opposition pressed for snap polls. Analysts say a coalition government is the most likely outcome because no one party is likely to win an absolute majority in the 50-seat parliament.

- **Turkey's main opposition CHP reveals priorities of its economic program<sup>76</sup>**

Turkey's main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) revealed the main priorities of its economic plan in a press meeting on Jan. 5, during which it also demanded an end of state of emergency rule in the country to encourage foreign direct investment.

“Ensuring a much fairer distribution of wealth, enhancing development country-wide that also includes healthy growth and boosts environmentally friendly

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<sup>75</sup> <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkish-cypriots-head-to-polls-in-snap-parliamentary-elections-125342>

<sup>76</sup> <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkeys-main-opposition-chp-reveals-priorities-of-its-economic-program-125311>

projects will be our three main economic priorities ... Our main aim is to enable our people to have much better living conditions through a fairer wealth distribution,” CHP Deputy Chair Aykut Erdoğan said at the meeting in Istanbul.

Erdoğan noted that increasing wages and salaries would be key for the party in order to achieve fairer wealth distribution. “In addition to raising workers’ living conditions, the maintenance of democratic standards is also crucial” he said.

Erdoğan stressed the importance of combining the “Industry 4.0 revolution” with a labor-centered policy, which the CHP called “Labor 4.0.” He also said various policies to raise Turkey’s democratic standards should be prioritized in tandem, which he called “Democracy 4.0.”

On the continued migration from rural to urban areas, with its attendant pressures on services and infrastructure, Erdoğan said a deliberate development strategy should be pursued and less emphasis should be placed on the construction sector.

CHP officials said the party will continue to stress the importance of the education system, saying that an economy growing and developing in a healthy manner is impossible without a highly qualified labor force.

“A significant boost in Turkey’s educational policy will play a key role in our economic program. Our aim is to make Turkey’s educational system free of charge, high quality, and accessible for everyone,” Erdoğan said. He noted that recent government policies had damaged Turkey’s education system, particularly citing the “abnormal increase” in the number of imam-hatip religious schools.

Turkey must also change its tax system in order to increase its financial resources, Karabiyik noted, warning about skyrocketing private debt.

“While the tax burden per capita was around \$600 in 2002, this has risen to \$1,945 today, most of which is due to indirect taxes ... We have also seen a huge increase in household debts,” she said.

- **Macron suggests 'partnership' with EU for Turkey, not membership<sup>77</sup>**

At a press conference with Turkish President in Paris, Emmanuel Macron said Friday that political developments in Turkey were blocking the country's EU accession bid, suggesting a "partnership" instead of full membership.

French President Emmanuel Macron suggested Friday that the European Union develop a partnership with Turkey after its leader said he was "seriously tired" of waiting for the bloc to decide if it wants Turkey as a member.

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<sup>77</sup> <http://www.france24.com/en/20180105-french-president-macron-suggests-partnership-deal-turkey-eu-not-membership-erdogan>

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was in Paris for talks with Macron, part of efforts to improve his government's strained relationship with Europe. Macron confirmed that Turkey's wait for EU membership was far from over and suggested a partnership instead in the meantime.

The current process "does not allow for an outcome in the coming years," Macron said during a joint news conference with Erdogan, adding that he thought stringing Turkey along was hypocritical.

Erdogan made it plain that Turkey would not wait forever.

"One cannot permanently implore and wait to be finally included," he said, adding that frustration over the EU stance might tempt Ankara to turn its back to Europe.

Ties between Turkey and Europe worsened last year amid mass arrests and firings carried out by Erdogan's government following a July 2016 coup attempt. Relations deteriorated further after authorities in several countries prevented Turkish ministers from holding political rallies to court expatriates' votes in a referendum to expand the president's powers.

Erdogan unleashed a series of insults at NATO allies, accusing European officials of racism, harboring terrorists and behaving like Nazis.

The Turkish president was less bombastic, but just as emphatic, on Friday while discussing his country's decades-long pursuit of Europe's acceptance.

"Unfortunately, we did the first steps in 1963. And it's now been 54 years that Turkey has been waiting in the antechamber of the EU," Erdogan said.

Macron said the two leaders held "frank" talks on Turkey's bid for EU membership and the human rights situation in Turkey a major sticking point.

"We should ... see if we cannot rethink this relationship, not in the framework of the (EU) integration process, but perhaps a cooperation, a partnership," he said, adding the main goal must be to keep Turkey a NATO member "anchored" in Europe and its "future ... built looking toward Europe and with Europe."

Macron and Erdogan also discussed the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the fight against terror and the war in Syria. France and Turkish officials also signed defense, banking and commercial deals, including the planned sale of 25 Airbus A330s to Turkish Airlines.

The trip was Erdogan's first to France since his government strongly cracked down on suspected opponents following a failed coup in July 2016. About 50,000 people have been arrested and 110,000 others removed from public sector jobs in Turkey. Many have protested they are innocent.

Protests over deteriorating press freedoms and human rights abuses in Turkey greeted Erdogan upon his arrival.

About 30 activists from Reporters without Borders held images of jailed journalists outside the Turkish Embassy. A dozen demonstrators, mainly ethnic Kurds, later tried to reach the presidential Elysee palace, but police pushed them back.

The French Communist Party and several left-wing parties have criticized Erdogan's visit to France, which came the day before the fifth anniversary of the slayings in Paris of three Kurdish women activists.

"The French judicial system has pointed out Turkish secret services' involvement in this crime," the Communist Party said.

Macron said he raised the issues of media freedom and fundamental human rights with Erdogan, giving the Turkish leader a list of journalists and non-governmental workers he thinks were wrongly targeted during the post-coup crackdown.

"We will find concrete and real solutions that will allow the few cases to be settled, and to settle what has sometimes been a misunderstanding, a harmful misunderstanding," Macron said.

Erdogan responded that some "columnists and opinion leaders are the gardeners of terrorism."

## Israel

- **Iran Protests** - A classified memo assessing the unfolding Iran protests distributed by the Foreign Ministry reportedly determines that the demonstrations have weakened the regime in Tehran and may threaten its stability if they continue. While the protests initially focused on economic issues, they have since turned to Iran's support for Syria, Lebanon's Hezbollah terror group and Yemen's Houthi rebels, the document stated as per Israeli media. While the protests do not currently pose a threat to the regime, the Foreign Ministry states that they do sap its legitimacy, and could undermine it in the long term.<sup>78</sup>
- **Trump and Palestine** - Acknowledging his push to broker peace in the Middle East has stalled, US President Donald Trump on January 2<sup>nd</sup> threatened to cut off aid to the Palestinian Authority, asking why Washington should make "any of these massive future payments" when the Palestinians were "no longer willing to

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<sup>78</sup> "Israel assesses Iran protests could come to threaten regime — report", *The Times of Israel*, January 1, 2018, [https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-assesses-iran-protests-could-come-to-threaten-regime-report/?utm\\_source=The+Times+of+Israel+Daily+Edition&utm\\_campaign=021d42b1a4-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2018\\_01\\_02&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_adb46cec92-021d42b1a4-55556173](https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-assesses-iran-protests-could-come-to-threaten-regime-report/?utm_source=The+Times+of+Israel+Daily+Edition&utm_campaign=021d42b1a4-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_01_02&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_adb46cec92-021d42b1a4-55556173) accessed on January 8, 2018

talk peace.”<sup>79</sup> US Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley stressed on January 2<sup>nd</sup> that Trump was prepared to cut aid to UNRWA if the Palestinians refuse to return to peace talks.<sup>80</sup> Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas’s office said Wednesday that Jerusalem is “not for sale” after US President Donald Trump threatened to cut annual aid of more than \$300 million to force them to the negotiating table.<sup>81</sup> According to the US consulate in Jerusalem, the aid has totaled around \$600 million annually in recent years, and can be roughly divided into three categories: USAID, economic support for law and order in the Palestinian Authority and US support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, or UNRWA.<sup>82</sup> Senior US officials on January 5 denied reports that \$125 million in aid to the UN’s Palestinian refugee agency had been frozen over Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas’s refusal to enter US-led peace talks with Israel which was meant to be transferred by January 1.<sup>83</sup> The Palestinian Authority’s Foreign Affairs Ministry condemned a “vicious US-Israeli campaign” targeting the UN’s Palestinian refugee agency on January 5.<sup>84</sup> Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on January 7 urged the United States to gradually reduce its support for the UN’s aid agency for the Palestinians by transferring that aid money to the UN’s other

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<sup>79</sup> “Trump threatens to cut off US aid to Palestinians over Jerusalem dispute”, *The Times of Israel*, January 3, 2018, [https://www.timesofisrael.com/trump-israel-was-to-pay-for-jerusalem-recognition-pa-showing-no-respect/?utm\\_source=The+Times+of+Israel+Daily+Edition&utm\\_campaign=35b9484891-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2018\\_01\\_03&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_adb46cec92-35b9484891-55556173](https://www.timesofisrael.com/trump-israel-was-to-pay-for-jerusalem-recognition-pa-showing-no-respect/?utm_source=The+Times+of+Israel+Daily+Edition&utm_campaign=35b9484891-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_01_03&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_adb46cec92-35b9484891-55556173) accessed on January 8, 2018

<sup>80</sup> Alexander Fulbright, “US warns it won’t fund UN refugee agency if Palestinians reject talks”, *The Times of Israel*, January 2, 2018, [https://www.timesofisrael.com/us-warns-it-wont-fund-refugee-agency-if-palestinians-reject-talks/?utm\\_source=The+Times+of+Israel+Daily+Edition&utm\\_campaign=35b9484891-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2018\\_01\\_03&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_adb46cec92-35b9484891-55556173](https://www.timesofisrael.com/us-warns-it-wont-fund-refugee-agency-if-palestinians-reject-talks/?utm_source=The+Times+of+Israel+Daily+Edition&utm_campaign=35b9484891-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_01_03&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_adb46cec92-35b9484891-55556173) accessed on January 8, 2018

<sup>81</sup> “Rebuffing Trump aid threat, Palestinians say Jerusalem ‘not for sale’”, *The Times of Israel*, January 3, 2018, [https://www.timesofisrael.com/pa-official-we-wont-be-blackmailed-by-trumps-threat-to-cut-funding/?utm\\_source=The+Times+of+Israel+Daily+Edition&utm\\_campaign=35b9484891-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2018\\_01\\_03&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_adb46cec92-35b9484891-55556173](https://www.timesofisrael.com/pa-official-we-wont-be-blackmailed-by-trumps-threat-to-cut-funding/?utm_source=The+Times+of+Israel+Daily+Edition&utm_campaign=35b9484891-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_01_03&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_adb46cec92-35b9484891-55556173) accessed on January 8, 2018

<sup>82</sup> Dov Lieber, “How much aid does the US give Palestinians, and what’s it for?”, *The Times of Israel*, January 3, 2018, [https://www.timesofisrael.com/how-much-aid-does-the-us-give-palestinians-and-whats-it-for/?utm\\_source=The+Times+of+Israel+Daily+Edition&utm\\_campaign=5ab6eb016f-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2018\\_01\\_04&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_adb46cec92-5ab6eb016f-55556173](https://www.timesofisrael.com/how-much-aid-does-the-us-give-palestinians-and-whats-it-for/?utm_source=The+Times+of+Israel+Daily+Edition&utm_campaign=5ab6eb016f-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_01_04&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_adb46cec92-5ab6eb016f-55556173) accessed on January 8, 2018

<sup>83</sup> “US said to freeze \$125 million aid for UN Palestinian refugee agency”, *The Times of Israel*, January 5, 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/us-said-to-freeze-125-million-aid-for-un-palestinian-refugee-agency/> accessed on January 8, 2018; Eric Cortellessa, “US denies freezing millions in aid to Palestinian refugee agency”, *The Times of Israel*, January 6, 2018, [https://www.timesofisrael.com/us-denies-freezing-millions-in-aid-to-palestinian-refugee-agency/?utm\\_source=The+Times+of+Israel+Daily+Edition&utm\\_campaign=29b7bc8029-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2018\\_01\\_05&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_adb46cec92-29b7bc8029-55556173](https://www.timesofisrael.com/us-denies-freezing-millions-in-aid-to-palestinian-refugee-agency/?utm_source=The+Times+of+Israel+Daily+Edition&utm_campaign=29b7bc8029-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_01_05&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_adb46cec92-29b7bc8029-55556173) accessed on January 8, 2018

<sup>84</sup> “PA raps ‘vicious Israeli-US campaign’ targeting UNRWA”, *The Times of Israel*, January 6, 2018, [https://www.timesofisrael.com/pa-raps-vicious-israeli-us-campaign-targeting-unwra/?utm\\_source=The+Times+of+Israel+Daily+Edition&utm\\_campaign=29b7bc8029-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2018\\_01\\_05&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_adb46cec92-29b7bc8029-55556173](https://www.timesofisrael.com/pa-raps-vicious-israeli-us-campaign-targeting-unwra/?utm_source=The+Times+of+Israel+Daily+Edition&utm_campaign=29b7bc8029-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_01_05&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_adb46cec92-29b7bc8029-55556173) accessed on January 8, 2018

refugee agency, UNHCR, which supports all other refugee groups. Ultimately, he said, UNRWA should be shut down altogether.<sup>85</sup>

## Cyber Security

- **Need to review cyber security<sup>86</sup>**

There has been rise of online fraud cases in India. Monitoring cyber situation in India, the Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT) warned government departments and RBI and asked them to reassess their cyber measures. Officials at the IT Ministry said, “We send communication to central ministries, departments and state organisations to implement Cyber Crisis Management Plan (CCMP) for countering cyber attacks”. Amidst of malicious cyber attacks, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance recently published a report on “Transformation towards digital economy” and viewed, “In India, while we do have a national cybersecurity policy, enforcement is primarily done by sectoral regulators and national security agencies. Rising number of guidelines, sectoral cyber security frameworks, policy initiatives are an indicator to proactively mitigate cyber security threats and to curb cybercrimes. There needs to be better coordination on cyber security matters among all stakeholders”.

- **ISIS might have lost Caliphate but is expanding elsewhere: Intel agencies<sup>87</sup>**

The growing threat of ISIS and its radicalisation of youth through social media was the main agenda of discussion at the annual DGP meeting organised by the Intelligence Bureau in Tekanpur in Madhya Pradesh on 6-8 January 2018. Taking a view of the current internal security threats, it has been noticed that ISIS through the use of Internet had been gradually propagating their agenda across the world in particular India. The intelligence community reported that over the years, the minority community in the country has been radicalised to the ideals of Jihadism, a grave concern for national security. The DGP meet of all states and chiefs of paramilitary forces planned to create an effective strategy to crack down terrorist activities in cyber space along with other issues such as left wing extremism, security in northeast, modernisation of police and so forth.

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<sup>85</sup> “Netanyahu wants UNRWA gradually shut down, backs US cuts”, *The Times of Israel*, January 7, 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/netanyahu-back-us-cuts-to-unrwa-but-says-they-should-be-gradual/> accessed on January 8, 2018

<sup>86</sup> Indian Express, 8 January 2018, <http://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2018/jan/08/need-to-review-cybersecurity-1747421.html>

<sup>87</sup> The Week, 4 January 2018, <http://www.theweek.in/news/india/ISIS-might-have-lost-one-territory-but-threat-over-indian-intelligence-agencies.html>

- **Winter Olympics targeted by hackers says security firm<sup>88</sup>**

The cyber security firm McAfree reported that cyber warriors have been constantly trying to steal important information with regard to Winter Olympics to be held at Pyeongchang, South Korea in February 2018. The security firm viewed that malicious emails containing Singapore IP address and Korean text documents had been sent to several number of organisations associated with providing support to Winter Olympics. McAfree said that hackers tried to manoeuvre the organisers by sending them emails in the name of South Korea's National Counter-Terrorism Center that looked into anti-terror activities in the region. Earlier there have been reports from researchers of University of California on attacks of major sporting events by hackers.

- **Cyber is the new black: Australia's cyber security strategy<sup>89</sup>**

Australian government has spent nearly \$230 million on Cyber Security Strategy for the year 2018. Australia wanted to have a greater say in the Indo-Pacific region through enhancement of multilateral ties and distributing the benefits of Internet in the region. Issues of cyber security, cyber crime and international security, digital economy, cooperation in human rights and democracy dominated the country's cyber policy, aiming to promote sustainable development agenda in the Indo-Pacific region. In an era of spread of misinformation and cyber espionage, Australia wanted to develop offensive cyber strategy like U.S, Russia and China. Australia's cyber policy would provide a new dimension to the security agenda in Indo-Pacific region. With a robust cyber framework, the country can regain its position in the region effectively by protecting and distributing the benefits of Internet.

## Terrorism and Counter Terrorism

### Pakistan

S. No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1.	January 2	Balochistan	At least six Frontier Corps (FC) personnel were injured in a blast occurred near an FC checkpost located in the Baleli area of provincial capital Quetta. <sup>90</sup>	0	6
2.	January 3-4	Khyber	Two Tehreek-e-Taliban	2	0

<sup>88</sup> BBC, 8 January 2018, <http://www.bbc.com/news/business-42600250>

<sup>89</sup> Foreign Brief, 5 January 2018, <https://www.foreignbrief.com/asia-pacific/cyber-black-australia-cyber-strategy/>

<sup>90</sup> Syed Ali Shah, Six security personnel injured in blast near FC checkpost in Quetta, *Dawn*, January 3, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1380362/six-security-personnel-injured-in-blast-near-fc-checkpost-in-quetta>, accessed on January 8, 2018

		Pakhtunkhwa	Pakistan (TTP) militants, who were involved in November 22, 2017 attack that killed Major Ishaq of the Pakistani Army, were killed in an Intelligence-Based Operation (IBO) in Dera Ismail Khan district. <sup>91</sup>		
3.	January 4	FATA	Unidentified militants from across Afghan border fired four missiles into the border area of Mohmand Agency. However, no casualties were reported. <sup>92</sup>	Cross-border attack	
4.	January 6	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	Afghanistan's Kunar province's Deputy Governor, Qazi Muhammad Nabi Ahmadi, abducted in Peshawar on October 27, 2017, was freed by his captors and returned home on January 6, 2018. Ahmadi is a member of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hezb-e-Islami (HI).  No outfit had claimed the kidnapping, and it's still unclear who abducted him. <sup>93</sup>	Abducted Afghan official released	
5.	January 7	Sindh / Balochistan	According to a report, 'Pakistan Security Report 2017', released by Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS), 'Footprint of the Islamic State (IS) is continuously on the rise in the country, especially in northern Sindh and Balochistan regions, as over	IS on rise in Pakistan	

<sup>91</sup> TTP militants involved in attack on army major killed in DI Khan operation: ISPR, *Dawn*, January 4, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1380769/ttp-militants-involved-in-attack-on-army-major-killed-in-di-khan-operation-ispr>, accessed on January 8, 2018

<sup>92</sup> Four missiles land in Mohmand area, *Dawn*, January 5, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1380933/four-missiles-land-in-mohmand-area>, accessed on January 8, 2018

<sup>93</sup> Afghan deputy governor abducted in Peshawar is released, *Dawn*, January 6, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1381195/afghan-deputy-governor-abducted-in-peshawar-is-released>, accessed on January 8, 2018



			the past one year responsibility for as many as six attacks, in which 153 people were killed, was claimed by this outfit. <sup>94</sup>	
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### Afghanistan

S. No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1.	January 1	Uruzgan	Colonel Rahmat Shah Qimati, Afghan National Army (ANA) commander for 4th ground brigade said that militants were targeted by air strikes in Sula and Chapa Khak areas of Terinkot, killing 40 of them, including three 'commanders'. <sup>95</sup>	40	NS
2.	January 1	Jawzjan	At least 26 ISIS militants, including four French and three Uzbek citizens, were killed in joint Afghan and foreign forces airstrike in Alkhani village of Darzab district. <sup>96</sup>	26	NS
3.	January 2	Laghman	At least three Taliban militants and one Afghan National Army (ANA) soldier were killed during a clash in Basram locality of provincial capital Mehtarlam. <sup>97</sup>	3	0
4.	January 5-6	Across country	At least 33 Taliban militants were killed and 18 others were injured in security operations in different parts of the country, said the Ministry of Defence. The operations were conducted in Nangarhar, Kunar, Ghazni,	33	18

<sup>94</sup> Ikram Junaidi, IS footprint on the rise in Pakistan, claims report, *Dawn*, January 8, 2018,

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1381533/is-footprint-on-the-rise-in-pakistan-claims-report>, accessed on January 8, 2018

<sup>95</sup> 40 Militants Suffer Casualties in Terinkot: Officials, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, January 2, 2018,

<http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/assets/epaper/January%2002,%202018/Main%20Page.pdf>, p.2, accessed on January 8, 2018

<sup>96</sup> French, Uzbek Daesh Militants Killed in Jawzjan Air Operation, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, January 3, 2018,

<http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/assets/epaper/January%2003,%202018/Main%20Page.pdf>, p. 2, accessed on January 8, 2018

<sup>97</sup> 4 Rebels, 1 ANA Soldier Killed in Laghman Gun-Battle, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, January 4, 2018,

<http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/assets/epaper/January%2004,%202018/Main%20Page.pdf>, p.2, accessed on January 8, 2018

			Logar, Maidan Wardak, Uruzgan, Zabul, Faryab and Helmand provinces. <sup>98</sup>		
5.	January 7	Helmand	At least eight Taliban militants and two civilians, including a woman, were killed during operations in Nawzad district. <sup>99</sup>	10	0

### Iraq

S. No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
6.	January 3	Muqdadiyah	Head of Muqdadiyah City Council Adnan al-Tamimi warned of a new Islamic State threat in the province's Muqdadiyah district. "The northern and eastern parts of Muqdadiyah have recently witnessed movements for Islamic State terrorists and some reports claimed that the militant group has hotbeds there," he said. <sup>100</sup>	Warning	
7.	January 3	Mosul	At least 11 IS militants were killed and six others were arrested during a joint operation in al-Jazra region of Mosul after a tip-off about that the militants had sneaked in the region. <sup>101</sup>	11	0
8.	January 5	Tikrit	Three IS militants, including a suicide attacker, were killed when the troops of Salahuddin Operations Command carried out a wide-scale campaign to inspect an island in west of Tikrit. This came after information showed presence of	3	0

<sup>98</sup> 33 Taliban Killed, 18 Wounded & 2 Caught Alive: MoD, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, January 6, 2018, <http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/assets/epaper/January%2006.%202018/Main%20Page.pdf>, p.2, accessed on January 8, 2018

<sup>99</sup> Civilians Among 10 Killed in Helmand Operations, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, January 8, 2018, <http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/assets/epaper/January%2008.%202018/Main%20Page.pdf>, p.2, accessed on January 8, 2018

<sup>100</sup> Mohammed Ebraheem, Provincial official warns of new Islamic State threat in Muqdadiyah, *Iraqi News*, January 3, 2018, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/provincial-official-warns-new-islamic-state-threat/>, accessed on January 8, 2018

<sup>101</sup> Nehal Mostafa, Seventeen Islamic State members killed, arrested, in operation south of Mosul, *Iraqi News*, January 3, 2018, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/seventeen-islamic-state-members-killed-arrested-south-mosul/>, accessed on January 8, 2018

			group of militants in villages of al-Jouza and al-Shiha. <sup>102</sup>		
9.	January 5	Baghdad	At least 12 people were killed and wounded in two bomb blasts in north and west of Baghdad. In the first incident, at one civilian was killed and six others were injured in a blast near a popular market in Sabaa al-Bour region in al-Taji district.  Separately, in the second incident, a bomb exploded near a market in al-Radwaniya region, west of Baghdad, injuring five civilians. <sup>103</sup>	1	11
10.	January 7	Baghdad	One person was killed and four others were injured in a bomb blast near a café at al-Saheroon neighbourhood. <sup>104</sup>	1	4

### Syria

S. No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1.	January 7	Dara'a	A high ranking Free Syrian Army (FSA), Radad Tameh Abu Nabout, was assassinated after unidentified assailants opened fire on his home in Dara'a City's Tareeq Al-Sad District. <sup>105</sup>	1	0
2.	January 7	Idlib	At least 23 persons, including seven civilians, were dead and many others were injured after a large explosion in Thalatheen district. <sup>106</sup>	23	NS

<sup>102</sup> Nehal Mostafa, Three Islamic State members, including suicide attacker, killed in Salahuddin, *Iraqi News*, January 5, 2018, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/three-islamic-state-members-including-suicide-attacker-killed-salahuddin/>, accessed on January 8, 2018

<sup>103</sup> Nehal Mostafa, Twelve people killed, injured in two bomb blasts in Baghdad, *Iraqi News*, January 5, 2018, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/twelve-people-killed-injured-two-bomb-blasts-baghdad/>, accessed on January 8, 2018

<sup>104</sup> Mohammed Ebraheem, Five people killed, injured in bomb blast near Baghdad café, *Iraqi News*, January 7, 2018, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/five-people-killed-injured-bomb-blast-near/>, accessed on January 8, 2018

<sup>105</sup> Leith Fadel, High ranking FSA commander assassinated in southern Syria *Al Masdar News*, January 7, 2018, <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/high-ranking-fsa-commander-assassinated-southern-syria/>, accessed on January 8, 2018

<sup>106</sup> Syria war: Explosion reportedly kills at least 23 in rebel-held Idlib, *BBC*, January 7, 2018, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-42599696>, accessed on January 8, 2018

3.	January 7	Idlib	Syrian government troops and allied forces are advancing in an offensive to gain ground in Idlib, the largest remaining rebel-held territory. The push has forced thousands of civilians to flee towards the border with Turkey. The operation's main target appears to be the rebel-held airbase of Abu Zuhour on the southeastern edge of Idlib. <sup>107</sup>	Syrian troops advancing in Idlib
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<sup>107</sup> Thousands flee as Syria forces press further into Idlib, *Al Jazeera*, January 7, 2018, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/01/thousands-flee-syria-forces-press-idlib-180107173521457.html>, accessed on January 8, 2018