

Weekly Media Updates **(22-28 January, 2018)**

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Africa

- **AU Heads of State Summit in Addis¹**

The 30th ordinary session of the assembly of heads of state and government of the African Union (AU) in Addis Ababa kicked off on 28 January 2018, Sunday, attended by regional leaders.

The theme of this year's Summit is "Winning the Fight Against Corruption: A Sustainable Path to Africa's Transformation," and Africa's 55 Heads of State and their ministers have to show their records in fighting corruption and design new ways of fighting graft.

The summit will revisit the AU Convention on Prevention and Combating Corruption, which came into effect in 2006.

Member countries are expected to formulate a common penal policy that protects citizens against the effects of corruption.

Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari will be leading the war against corruption on behalf of other leaders.

The AU estimates that 25 per cent of the GDP of African countries is lost to corruption every year. Five per cent of the resources are lost through illicit financial flows, with 65 per cent of outflows drawn from commercial activity by multinationals, and 30 per cent from criminal activities.

The summit will consider the report of the 32nd Ordinary Session of the Executive Council, as well as adopt Assembly decisions and declarations in a closed session.

On Saturday, President Kenyatta urged Africa to play its part in funding an aggressive reform agenda to grow the continent and improve the lives of its people. At a summit of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), which he has chaired for the past two years, the President said Africa was making progress in improving its governance structures and institutions, but countries needed to up their game in funding continental initiatives. President Kenyatta told fellow leaders in Ethiopia that member states should remit their annual contributions on time and pay up arrears.

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

- **Kagame Assumes AU Chair, Launches Single Africa Air Market²**

President Paul Kagame of Rwanda started his reign as African Union Chairperson on 28 January 2018, Sunday by announcing the launch of a Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM).

In his acceptance speech at the opening of the 30th annual African Union Summit in Addis Ababa he said that “today we launch the Single African Air Transport Market, a major step forward for transportation. We are nearly ready to adopt the Continental Free Trade Area. It needs to be done this year.”

The Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) is a flagship project of the African Union Agenda 2063, an initiative of the African Union to create a single unified air transport market in Africa, the liberalization of civil aviation in Africa and as an impetus to the Continent's economic integration agenda.

Eligible airlines of the 23 countries are effective this season, entitled to conduct their business into the markets and fully operate the traffic rights provided for in the Yamoussoukro Decision.

The launch event in Addis Ababa brought together the aviation industry in Africa and airline manufacturers to forge ahead the effective implementation of SAATM.

The Yamoussoukro Decision of 1999 provides for full liberalization in terms of market access between African States, the free exercise of traffic rights, the elimination of restrictions on ownership and the full liberalization of frequencies, fares and capacities.

To date, the number of member states that have adhered to the new commitment has reached twenty-three (23): Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Swaziland, Togo and Zimbabwe.

- **Rwanda Showcases Drone Technology at WEF 2018**

Rwanda, on the first day of the World Economic Forum (WEF) 2018 showcased its advancements in drone technology, being the first country to adopt performance based drone regulation.

To achieve the feat, the government partnered with the World Economic Forum to co-design policy frameworks that could increase the country's competitiveness in the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Speaking at the forum, Rwanda's Minister for ICT Jean de Dieu Rurangirwa, said that Rwanda is aiming at nurturing the drone industry and put in place infrastructure and policy framework to accelerate its adoption.

² The Independent, Kampala 28 January 2018, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201801290001.html>

Murat Sonmez, Head of the Center for the Fourth Industrial Revolution, said that Rwanda's leadership in co-designing policy frameworks around drone use could be a model for other countries that want to accelerate adoption of the technology.

- **Israel's plan to force out African migrants³**

A large protest near Tel Aviv took place against a choice to take a \$3500 (£2600) payment and a plane ticket, and leave the country by March – or face jail.

It comes amid reports that the Israeli Immigration Authority has begun handing out notices to migrants whose asylum requests have been rejected.

Israel's government says there are about 40,000 people – mainly from Eritrea and Sudan – who've entered the country illegally.

- **Uganda SGR Boss Drives Local Content Campaign⁴**

Uganda has set a high bar on local content for the Chinese contractor picked to build its standard gauge railway as it seeks dividends for industries and workers from the \$2.3 billion investment.

The government official in charge of the project that will be financed by the China Export Import bank said the government expected nearly a third of the project sum - \$700 million - to be used to spur the local economy, especially the building materials sector. The government also targets to have one foreigner for every 10 technical staff working on the railway. He said that “we are going to have all the cement for the project procured locally. We have met them (steel rollers) and they are ready to supply the steel.” Among the companies that will benefit from the affirmative action are Hima Cement, Roofings Uganda, Steel and Tube, and Madhavani Steel.

In Uganda only Japan which is building East Africa's first cable bridge at Jinja, has procured steel locally from the time the project began.

The China Communications Construction Company Ltd which built the SGR from Mombasa to Nairobi in Kenya said about 40 per cent of the \$3.27 billion contract (\$1.3 billion) was awarded to local firms. The beneficiaries included 2,946 local security personnel and 1,234 suppliers during its two and half years of construction. It also said 46,000 local workers were deployed.

³ BBC, 24 January 2018, http://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-42808311/israel-s-plan-to-force-out-african-migrants?ocid=socialflow_facebook

⁴ The East African

http://allafrica.com/stories/201801200109.html?utm_campaign=allafrica%3Ainternal&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&utm_content=promote%3Aaans%3Aabafbt

- **South Africa's Cape Town to Activate Disaster Operations Center as Water Crisis Worsens⁵**

City of Cape Town announced on Sunday that it will be activating the Disaster Operations Center (DOC) next week to prepare for the worst scenario that would result from a deepening water crisis. The DOC, headed by water expert Richard Bosman, will be responsible for executing the city's Water Disaster Plan designed for Day Zero when dams supplying water to the city run dry, water taps are switched off and residents have to collect water at designated points, the city said in a notice. It will be the task of the DOC to manage the water collection points (WCPs), according to the notice. Day Zero is predicted to arrive on April 12.

- **African Leaders Join Hands to Counter Terrorism⁶**

African governments still face pressing need to enact counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency measures to protect their homelands. Leaders attending the 30th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union agreed they have made some progress in dismantling terrorist networks, but the war is far from over. UN secretary-general Antonio Guterres, AU PSC chairman, who is also Egypt's President, Abdel Fattah el-Sisi and AU Commission chairman Moussa Faki called for a comprehensive approach to combat terrorism in Africa.

- **South Africa in 'New Era', Ramaphosa Tells Davos⁷**

Mr. Cyril Ramaphosa promised pro-business reforms and tough justice for those guilty of state corruption, as he wooed investors on Thursday at the World Economic Forum in Switzerland. Ramaphosa, who could replace Jacob Zuma as president within weeks, told investors in Davos that "a new mood" had emerged in South Africa. He said that international investors had welcomed his message that a "new era that has been unleashed in South Africa." He earlier told AFP that the transition of political power in South Africa would be handled "delicately, very carefully", without giving any timeline.

- **Over 2,000 Congolese Flee to Western Tanzania over Past Week⁸**

More than 2,000 Congolese have fled the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) to Tanzania's western region of Kigoma seeking asylum for past one week. Emmanuel Maganga, the Kigoma regional commissioner, told that 800 of the asylum seekers were received on Friday and Saturday at the region's port town of Kibirizi. "Most of the fleeing Congolese claim that they are running away from

⁵ Xinhua Net, 28 January 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-01/28/c_136931740.htm

⁶ Daily Nation, 28 January 2018, <https://www.nation.co.ke/news/African-leaders-join-hands-to-counter-terrorism-/1056-4282532-12rfan8/index.html>

⁷ Times Live, 25 January 2018, <https://www.timeslive.co.za/politics/2018-01-25-south-africa-in-new-era-ramaphosa-tells-davos/>

⁸ Xinhua net, 28 January 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-01/28/c_136929931.htm

political upheavals in the eastern part of the country," said Maganga, adding that 1,600 of them were received at Manyovu, Kigage and Nyarugusu areas in the region. "The situation is appalling as hundreds of the Congolese are flocking into the region using boats that ply along Lake Tanganyika," said the official.

- **US\$8 Billion Investment Set to Return Mozambique to Growth⁹**

An approximately US\$8 billion investment in Mozambique's Coral Floating Liquefied Natural Gas (FLNG) development marks Mozambique's first step as a regional and global offshore natural gas producer and supplier. The landmark energy deal is the first of its kind in the country and is widely expected to transform Mozambique's growth prospects. Standard Bank from South Africa and its 20 per cent shareholder, the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) are collectively the largest lenders to the project – reflecting the power of their partnership in driving African growth. ICBC plays a critical role in this transaction by acting as the Pathfinder Bank, K Sure agent, Chinese tranche agent and one of the facility account banks. Standard Bank acts as commercial facility agent, onshore account bank and security trustee in respect of the project.

- **China Donates Funds to Help Zambia Tackle Cholera Outbreak¹⁰**

The Chinese government on Wednesday donated about two million yuan (US\$314,000) to help Zambia tackle a cholera outbreak that has ravaged especially Lusaka, capital of the southern African country. Chinese Ambassador to Zambia Yang Youming said during a ceremony at the Ministry of Health that the Chinese government has also sent a team of experts to work with authorities in Zambia on how to contain cholera. Apart from the donation from the government, the Chinese embassy also donated a further 50,000 Zambian Kwacha (about 5,000 U.S. dollars) towards the fight against cholera, while Chinese enterprises have so far provided over one million Kwacha (about 100,000 U.S. dollars) in cash donation, Yang added. He further said the Chinese enterprises have promised to sink new boreholes as a way of helping communities have access to clean water.

- **South Sudan Rebels Show Peace Gesture¹¹**

The rebels of the Sudan People's Army in Opposition (SPLA IO), loyal to Riek Machar, said they handed over 15 South Sudan government soldiers to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) at the KoloPach airstrip in the Jonglei state.

SPLA IO deputy military spokesperson Col. Lam Paul Gabriel said Sunday that 11 other government soldiers refused to go to Juba for fear of persecution from their commanders. "The SPLA IO welcomes their decision and gave them the freedom

⁹ The Herald, 23 January 2018, <http://www.herald.co.zw/8-billion-investment-set-to-return-mozambique-to-growth/>

¹⁰ Xinhua Net, 25 January 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-01/25/c_136921914.htm

¹¹ Voice of America, 28 January 2018, <https://www.voanews.com/a/south-sudan-rebels-show-peace-gesture/4228567.html>

to live among the displaced people in the state. This is the third time the SPLA IO is showing compliance with the Cessation of Hostilities agreement signed in December last year, while other partners have not yet complied,” Gabriel said. The ICRC did not confirm or deny the handover but said it is not in a position to comment on its confidential dialogue with the parties or on any other related development.

- **U.S. Pushes for Imposition of Arms Embargo on South Sudan¹²**

The United States on Wednesday called for an arms embargo on South Sudan after its warring parties failed to honour a ceasefire agreement signed late last year. Addressing the United Nations Security Council, the US ambassador Nikki Haley to the world body criticized the President Salva Kiir-led coalition government of failing to lead efforts to end the civil war. “The time has come to acknowledge the hard reality – that the leaders of South Sudan are not just failing their people, they are betraying them,” she told a council meeting on South Sudan. The 15-member Security Council considers the revitalization of the peace process initiated by the regional bloc (IGAD) as an opportunity to end the conflict that has killed tens of thousands of people.

- **Ethiopia Rejects World Bank Mediation in Nile Water Dispute¹³**

Ethiopia’s Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn has rejected a call by Egypt for World Bank arbitration in a dispute over a hydroelectric dam Addis Ababa is building along its share of the Nile. The two countries are at odds over the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, with Cairo fearing the project would restrict waters flowing down from Ethiopia’s highlands and through the deserts of Sudan to its fields and reservoirs. The Horn of Africa country, which aims to become the continent’s biggest power exporter, says the US\$4 billion-dam will have no such impact.

- **Central African Republic Hits New High in Displaced People¹⁴**

Conflict-torn Central African Republic is seeing the highest number of displaced people since fighting erupted there in 2013. The United Nations refugee agency says more than 688,000 people were displaced inside the country as of the end of 2017, a 60 per cent jump from the year before. In addition, more than 540,000 people have fled the impoverished nation where sectarian violence continues. U.N. spokesman Adrian Edwards told reporters in Geneva on Tuesday that “for a country whose population is estimated at around 4.6 million, these two figures combined represent an astonishing level of suffering.” Central African Republic

¹² Sudan Tribune, 25 January 2018, <http://sudantribune.com/spip.php?article64569>

¹³ Africa News, 22 January 2018, <http://www.africanews.com/2018/01/22/ethiopia-rejects-world-bank-mediation-in-nile-water-dispute/>

¹⁴ ABC News, 23 January 2018, <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/central-african-republic-hits-high-displaced-people-52545500>

saw new fighting in its southeast early last year. Now violence has erupted in the northwest, sending more than 17,000 people fleeing to neighboring Chad.

Central Asia

- **India Restores Kazakh Hero's Grave in Kashmir**

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and Embassy of Kazakhstan in India restored the grave of famous medieval Turko-Mongol personality Mirza Haidar Dolati (Doghlat) in Kashmir. He is claimed to have Kazakh origin, belonging to the ancient tribe of Dulat.¹⁵ He was a military commander, ruler and historian and also served under Mughal ruler Humayun. His famous book is 'Tarikh-e Rashidi' in Persian.

A ceremony was organized in Kashmir to formally open the restored site for the public. It was attended by Ambassador of Kazakhstan to India Mr. Bulat Sarsenbayev and other delegates from Kazakhstan. The site is expected to attract tourists from Kazakhstan and strengthen cultural linkages by greater people to people to interactions.

China

- **China's Arctic Policy**

The State Council Information Office of the PRC published a white paper titled "China's Arctic Policy" on January. 26, 2018. The White Paper on China's Arctic Policy is the first Arctic policy document issued by the Chinese government. It identifies China as a "key stakeholder in the Arctic affairs", decides the four policy goals of "understanding, protecting, utilizing and participating in the governance of the Arctic", sets forth the four basic principles of "respect, cooperation, win-win results and sustainability" and expounds five specific policy proposals.¹⁶ Further, China hopes to work with all parties to build a "Polar Silk Road" through developing the Arctic shipping routes, according to the white paper.

Following is the conclusion of the white paper:

The future of the Arctic concerns the interests of the Arctic States, the wellbeing of non-Arctic States and that of the humanity as a whole. The governance of the Arctic requires the participation and contribution of all stakeholders. On the basis of the principles of "respect, cooperation, win-win result and sustainability", China,

¹⁵ ANI, "Grave of 16th century Kazakh politician, historian restored in Kashmir," 26 January 2018, <https://www.aninews.in/news/lifestyle/culture/grave-of-16th-century-kazakh-politician-historian-restored-in-kashmir201801261644450001/>

¹⁶ http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/t1529397.shtml

as a responsible major country, is ready to cooperate with all relevant parties to seize the historic opportunity in the development of the Arctic, to address the challenges brought by the changes in the region, jointly understand, protect, develop and participate in the governance of the Arctic, and advance Arctic-related cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative, so as to build a community with a shared future for mankind and contribute to peace, stability and sustainable development in the Arctic.¹⁷

- **China donates army vehicles to Cambodia**

General Tea Banh, Defence Minister of Cambodia on 28 January confirmed that China is to provide the army with tanks and Armoured Personnel Carriers (APCs) to strengthen relations between the two militaries. He said the tanks and APCs would arrive in Cambodia in March, when the two countries will hold their second joint “Golden Dragon” military exercise. According to a report on BTV television (a Cambodian News Channel) on 28 January, China will provide about 100 tanks and APCs to the Defence Ministry’s Brigade 70. General Banh declined to confirm the number of vehicles being given, but said the tanks and APCs would arrive in the country soon.¹⁸

- **Pakistan, China improve military cooperation under SCO’s platform**

Pakistan has assured that its military will actively participate in the defence and security cooperation at the regional and international level within the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). This assurance was given by a Pakistan’s representative while attending here the recent meeting of leaders of the international military cooperation departments of defence ministries of the SCO member states. Wu Qian, Spokesman for the Chinese Ministry of National Defense told the reporters that Pakistan as a new member of the SCO wishes to play its leading role to improve the security situation in the region. The meeting reviewed and summarized the military activities jointly held within the SCO framework in 2017 and discussed activities to be held under the SCO framework in 2018.¹⁹

- **China, Japan agree to hold China-Japan-ROK summit**

China and Japan agreed to hold a new round of China-Japan-ROK leaders’ meetings as soon as possible, and foster the proper environment for the trilateral summit. The agreement came as Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi held talks with visiting Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono on 28 January in Beijing.²⁰

¹⁷ http://english.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2018/01/26/content_281476026660336.htm

¹⁸ <http://www.khmertimeskh.com/50104978/china-donates-army-vehicles/>

¹⁹ <https://nation.com.pk/28-Jan-2018/pakistan-china-improve-military-cooperation-under-sco-s-platform-spokesperson>

²⁰ http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-01/28/c_136931518.htm

- **PLA publishes new military training outline, highlights combat**

The People's Liberation Army (PLA) recently published a Central Military Commission-approved outline for military training.²¹

- **China determined to remove institutional barriers through reform**

China will target institutional barriers and deeply embedded interests in reform this year, said a statement from a Communist Party of China (CPC) reform leading group on Tuesday, 23 January. Priority should be given to reforms in key areas including state-owned enterprises and state-owned assets, monopoly sectors, finance and taxation, property rights protection, rural revitalization, social security, opening up, and ecological conservation, according to the statement issued after the second meeting of the Leading Group for Deepening Overall Reform of the 19th CPC Central Committee.

President Xi Jinping, also general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, chairman of the Central Military Commission and head of the group, presided over the meeting and delivered a speech. Xi highlighted the importance of reform in 2018 and called for new breakthrough with strengthened innovation and concrete efforts. Reform should be more systematic, holistic and coordinated to seek material progress in fundamental areas, the statement said.²²

- **Xinjiang plans 'Great Wall' against militants**

China's violence-prone far-western region of Xinjiang will build a "Great Wall" along its borders to prevent infiltration of militants from outside the country, state media reported on 23 January, citing the regional governor. Governor Shohrat Zakir said Xinjiang would step up border measures to create a "Great Wall", the official China Daily reported.

Technology along the border would be improved and roads and other infrastructure increased, he said at the opening of the regional assembly's annual session, adding: "The overall situation was stable in 2017... We won't allow separatism to stage a comeback, and will ensure religious extremism never rises again from the ashes and terrorist attacks are doomed." The "Great Wall" comments are similar to those President Xi Jinping made last year when he told Xinjiang lawmakers of the need to build a "great wall of iron" to safeguard stability.²³

²¹ http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2018-01/29/content_7923971.htm

²² <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1086278.shtml>

²³ <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/xinjiang-plans-great-wall-against-militants>

- **Politics and trade will remain separate, says Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi**

China will not politicise trade issues, even when its foreign trade potentially enters an era of overall deficits, Foreign Minister Wang Yi said on Tuesday (Jan 23). "As time goes by, fundamental changes will sooner or later take place in the structure of China's trade with the US and other countries," Mr Wang said at the opening ceremony of the China-Latin America Economic and Trade Cooperation Forum in Santiago, Chile. Many countries including the United States will see their exports to China outweigh imports from China in the future, the minister said. Speaking on how to handle such a change, Mr Wang said the country will tackle new situations resulting from natural laws of the market with a positive perspective. The world's second-largest economy will further boost its economic and trade ties with other countries by "making the cake bigger", Mr Wang said.²⁴

European Union

- **Greek Parliament Approved Bailout Reforms**

Greek parliament has approved a package of reforms for fresh bailout funds. Reform measures were demanded by the international lenders. However, it was opposed by many Greeks and they protested against the reform measures.

- **Romanian Prime Minister Mihai Tudose Resigned**

Romanian Prime Minister Mihai Tudose has resigned on 15 January 2015. Prime Minister Tudose resigned after an internal power struggle in Social Democratic Party (PSD). Prime Minister Tudose said, "I did not want to break the party. They named me, they removed me. I take responsibility for my deeds and I do not regret anything in my actions (as premier)."

- **Czech President Miloš Zeman Reelected**

President of the Czech Republic, Miloš Zeman has been reelected. The President received around 52 per cent vote and his opponent Jiří Drahoš got 48 per cent vote, and voter turnout was 66.5 percent. Jiří Drahoš won support in the most of the main cities, while President Zeman was supported in smaller towns and the country.

²⁴ <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/politics-and-trade-will-remain-separate-says-chinese-foreign-minister-wang-yi>

- **Green Party Elected New Leaders**

German Green Party has elected new leaders. Robert Habeck and Annalena Baerbock were elected at a national party convention in Hannover on 27 January 2018. Traditionally, the party elects two leaders on the national level.

- **Grand Coalition Talks in Germany**

Talks between conservatives and the Social Democrats for forming a grand coalition were adjourned and negotiators from both sides are working to find solution. Reportedly, there are some differences over the refugee issue. Chancellor Merkel is negotiating for forming a coalition government with SPD after she could not succeed to form the government with Free Democrats (FDP) and opposition Greens.

- **Finland Elections**

Finnish President Sauli Niinisto has been reelected in the first round of elections on 28 January 2018. He received 62.7 percent of the votes. He said, "I am very surprised at this kind of support. I must think hard how to be worthy of it."

East Asia /South-East Asia

Korean Peninsula and Japan

- **Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono visits Beijing**

On January 28, 2018, Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono made his first visit to Beijing. During the visit Minister Kono met Premier Li Keqiang, State Councilor Yang Jiechi and Foreign Minister Wang Yi. During the visit, Japan and China agreed to resume reciprocal visits by their leaders, underscoring that Asia's two biggest economies are eager to mend ties in the year marking the 40th anniversary of the signing of a bilateral friendship treaty. Foreign Minister Taro Kono said he asked Chinese Premier Li Keqiang during their talks in Beijing to visit Japan as soon as possible to participate in a trilateral summit including South Korea that Tokyo wanted to host last year. Kono said Li replied "in a positive manner."²⁵

²⁵ "Japan and China agree to have their leaders resume reciprocal visits", Japan Times, January 28, 2018, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/01/28/national/politics-diplomacy/japanese-foreign-minister-taro-kono-arrives-beijing-aiming-improve-ties-china/#.Wm7LZYhuaM8>

- **Prime Minister Sinzo Abe announced to visit South Korea during Winter Olympics**

On January 24, 2018, Japanese Prime Minister announced that, “if the circumstances permit, I would like to attend the Opening Ceremony (Pyeongchang Winter Olympics in South Korea)”. Prime Minister Abe’s decision to visit South Korea comes in a context where Japan-South Korea relations has strained following Seoul’s new position regarding “comfort women” that effectively negated a December 2015 agreement between Japan and South Korea. Abe told reporters that he would seek a meeting with Moon to directly explain Japan’s position of not implementing any additional measures above and beyond the 2015 bilateral agreement.²⁶

- **US imposes more sanction on North Korea**

On January 24, 2018, United States announced new sanctions aimed at stopping North Korea’s nuclear weapons development. In doing so Washington urged China and Russia to expel North Koreans raising funds for the programs. The new sanction targets nine entities, 16 people and six North Korean ships. It also includes two China-based trading firms involved in exporting millions of dollars worth of metals and other goods used in weapons production.²⁷

- **Defense Secretary Jim Mattis Meets South Korean Defense Minister Song Young-moo in Hawaii**

On January 26, 2018 US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis had a meeting with South Korean Defense Minister Song Young-moo in Hawaii. The meeting took place amid growing concerns that the South may abandon the global coalition to put pressure on the North as it focuses on inter-Korean dialogue over the North’s participation in the PyeongChang Winter Olympics. Mattis said the United States welcomed the talks between the two Koreas, while also “remaining steadfast that the international economic pressure campaign can denuclearize the Korean Peninsula.” “Diplomacy should repose reason on Kim’s reckless rhetoric and dangerous provocations,” he said. “So we do not lose sight of the fact that the Olympics talks alone do not address over-arching problems.” Song responded that the inter-Korean talks will not affect the economic sanctions campaign against the North. “And Secretary Mattis and I will also be exchanging our opinions on President Moon Jae-in’s statement that the inter-Korea dialogue is a dialogue ultimately to draw out North Korea to a dialogue with the United States,” he said.²⁸

²⁶ "Abe plans to attend Opening Ceremony in Pyeongchang", Asahi Shimbun, January 24, 2018, www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201801240032.html

²⁷ "US imposes more North Korea sanctions; urges China, Russia expulsions", Nikkei Asian Review, January 25, 2018, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics-Economy/Policy-Politics/US-imposes-more-North-Korea-sanctions-urges-China-Russia-expulsions>

²⁸ "Defense chiefs confer at meeting in Honolulu", Korea JoongAng Daily, January 29, 2018, koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/Article.aspx?aid=3043913

- **North Korea's army founding day shifted to eve of Olympics**

On January 23, 2018, North Korea announced that it would celebrate February 8, 2018 as its army founding day and hold "diverse events" - on the eve of the PyeongChang Winter Olympics. North Korea's state-run Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported that the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the ruling Workers' Party made the decision to change the foundation day for the army from April 25 to February 8. February 8, 1948 is the date on which North Korea's founder Kim Il Sung founded the Korean People's Army (KPA). Its predecessor, the Korean People's Revolutionary Army, was established on April 25, 1932 by Kim to fight Japanese colonial rule of the Korean Peninsula.²⁹

(ASEAN, Malaysia, Cambodia, Indonesia, Phillipines)

- **US Secretary of Defence Jim Mattis visit to Indonesia**

US Defence Secretary James Mattis in a statement after his meeting with President Jokowi stated that, "I'm here to listen to your leaders and understand what it is we can do to assist you.... One democracy to another, you who are so important here in the Indo-Pacific region...." The former commander of the US Central Command has also had meetings with Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs Wiranto, Defence Minister Ryamizard Ryacudu, armed forces chief Hadi Tjahjanto and Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi. Mr Mattis was in Jakarta as part of a week-long tour of Asia, while the visit was widely seen as a counter to China's growing military presence and influence in the region, it was also in line with a key part of a new US national security strategy, which centred on building partnerships and strengthening alliances. Thus, the visit is seen as a bid to reinforce defence relations between the United States and Indonesia, which is South-east Asia's largest nation. Mr Mattis said the US wants to work with Indonesia, the maritime fulcrum of the Indo-Pacific, to ensure that the rule of law and freedom of navigation is upheld in the region. "The maritime fulcrum of the Indo-Pacific area is critical and as we can help in maintaining the maritime domain awareness in the South China Sea, the North Natuna Sea, this is something that we look forward to do," he added.³⁰

- **US seeks to enhance Military cooperation with Vietnam**

The US Defence Secretary held talks with his Vietnamese counterpart, General Ngo Xuan Lich, to discuss defense ties between the two nations during his visit to

²⁹ "North's army founding day shifted to eve of Olympics", Korea JoongAng Daily, January 24, 2018, koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/Article.aspx?aid=3043713

³⁰ "US, Indonesia stepping up cooperation", *The Straits Times*, January 24, 2018, <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/us-indonesia-stepping-up-cooperation>, accessed on January 24, 2018.

Hanoi on January 25, 2018. The officials reviewed cooperative defense initiatives between Vietnam and the U.S. over the past few years and agreed on measures to further promote bilateral military ties in the future, based on a memorandum of understanding on defence cooperation signed in 2011, a Joint Vision Statement on defence ties signed in 2015, and an action plan for 2018-2020 which included in area of maritime security with both officials agreeing to asked their country leaders to approve the visit of a U.S. aircraft carrier to the central city of Da Nang in March.³¹

- **ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit**

The ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit (AICS) to celebrate 25 years of India-ASEAN partnership was held on January 25, 2018, at New Delhi. During the Opening remarks of the Summit Prime Minister Narendra Modi, stated that the relations since 1992 has evolved from a sectoral dialogue to strategic partnerships which is based on India's shared ASEAN vision of peace and prosperity. In the Retreat Session prior to the Summit, the leaders of ASEAN and India had the opportunity to discuss ASEAN-India cooperation in the maritime domain which according to the Indian Prime Minister is one of the key focus areas for growth and development of the Indo-Pacific region. India seeks to deepen partnership in the areas of connectivity that includes infrastructural as well as digital connectivity while enabling capacity building amongst its partners. The PM also laid out the importance of building India-ASEAN historical bonds and proposed to declare 2019 as the ASEAN-India Year of Tourism during which efforts would be made to further promote tourism such as initiating the Buddhist Tourism circuit to promote tourists and pilgrims.³²

The Delhi Declaration of the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit reaffirmed India-ASEAN commitment to further strengthen and deepen the ASEAN-India Partnership for mutual benefit, across the whole spectrum of political-security, economic, socio-cultural and development cooperation. The declaration laid out the importance of maintaining and promoting peace, stability, maritime safety and security, freedom of navigation and over flight in the region, while resolving disputes based on the international laws including the 1982 UNCLOS. Cooperation towards other security challenges such as combating terrorism – through information sharing, law enforcement cooperation, and capacity building – smuggling, trafficking of drugs, cybercrime, and piracy, would be strengthened. On the economic front there would be the full utilisation and effective implementation of the ASEAN-India Free Trade Area, and intensify the efforts in 2018 towards the conclusion of the RCEP. Further, there would be the cooperation

³¹“US aircraft carrier to visit Vietnam in March”, *Tuoi Tri News*, January 26, 2018, <https://tuoitrinews.vn/news/politics/20180126/us-aircraft-carrier-to-visit-vietnam-in-march/43816.html>, accessed on January 29, 2018.

³² “Opening Remarks by the PM at the Plenary Session of the India-ASEAN Commemorative Summit (January 25, 2018)”, *Ministry of External Affairs*, January 26, 2018, http://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/29390/Opening_remarks_by_the_PM_at_the_Plenary_Session_of_the_INDIA_ASEAN_Commorative_Summit_January_25_2018, accessed on January 29, 2018.

towards the conservation and sustainable use of the marine resources in the Indian and the Pacific Oceans while addressing the issues of IUU, loss of coastal ecosystem, and other negative impacts to the ocean's health, by exploring cooperation in the field of the blue economy. In the area of socio-cultural cooperation there would be enhanced cooperation in the area of health care and various development programmes relating to it. Efforts would be made towards promoting cultural tourism, cooperation in disaster management and humanitarian assistance while also strengthening cooperation in the education and youth sectors; in the form of establishing training centres, ASEAN-India networks of universities, while also extending scholarships for students. On the developmental front connectivity in the form of physical and digital which is in line with the MPAC 2025 and the AIM 2020, was reaffirmed by all parties, while India's continued support towards ASEAN's effort in narrowing the developmental gap amongst the ASEAN states was welcomed and appreciated.³³

- **President Jokowi meeting with PM Modi**

President Jokowi, who met with PM Modi during the sidelines of the ASEAN-India Summit, while stating that India-Indonesia relations are getting stronger ever since their meeting in December 2016, he conveyed the importance of the efforts needed towards increasing economic cooperation, such as removing the various trade barriers, as bilateral trade between the two nation's has enormous potential. On the issue of building architecture for the Indo-Pacific region, President Jokowi stated that he would invite the key countries in the region to discuss the Indo-Pacific concept, which according to him should be based on openness, inclusiveness, and based on the spirit of cooperation. President Jokowi also stated that India's participation in the IORA has strengthened it and seeks India's cooperation in the proposed maritime cooperation in the EAS, proposed by Indonesia. While extending an invitation to the Indian Prime Minister to visit Indonesia later this year, President Jokowi stated that the details of the bilateral cooperation would be discussed during the visit.³⁴

Myanmar

- **State Counsellor Attends 25th ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit**

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi attended the 25th ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit in New Delhi on 25 January together with leaders of ASEAN. "There still exists ample room for deepening the existing cooperation between ASEAN and India and further strengthening ASEAN-India Strategic

³³ "Delhi Declaration of the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit to mark the 25th Anniversary of the ASEAN-India Dialogue Relations", *ASEAN*, January 25, 2018, http://asean.org/storage/2018/01/Delhi-Declaration_Adopted-25-Jan-2018.pdf, accessed on January 29, 2018.

³⁴ "President Joko Widodo Met Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, to improve Indonesia-India Strategic Partnership", *Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Indonesia*, January 26, 2018, <https://www.kemlu.go.id/en/berita/berita-perwakilan/Pages/President-Joko-Widodo-Met-Prime-Minister-of-India,-Narendra-Modi,-To-Improve-Indonesia-India-Strategic-Partnership.aspx>, accessed on January 29, 2018.

Partnership in the future,” said Daw Aung San Suu Kyi at the plenary session of the summit. “The peoples of ASEAN member States and the people of India have close traditional ties and share cultural affinities that go back to historic times. The civilizations of ASEAN and India have been enriched by cross cultural exchanges over the decades,” she said. “I would like to claim that my own country, Myanmar, has the strongest cultural and historical linkages with India. The struggle to free ourselves from colonial rule established solid ties between us³⁵.

- **State Counsellor meets Indian PM**

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi met Mr. Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India, at Hyderabad House, the state guest house, in New Delhi on 24th January. Discussed at the meeting were matters relating to increased bilateral cooperation, completing ongoing border demarcation works, cooperation to overcome cross-border terrorism, cooperation in building road links and transportation, opening of border gates to increase contact between peoples of both countries and assistance from India for Rakhine State development³⁶.

- **US politician quits Rakhine body, government says ‘no problem’**

Former New Mexico governor Bill Richardson announced his resignation from a board advising the government on the implementation of projects and policies to address the northern Rakhine crisis, but Myanmar is not losing sleep over it and accuse the veteran US politician of pursuing his own agenda. The Myanmar State Counsellor’s Office said in a statement that Richardson was pursuing his own agenda and had exceeded the mandate of the Advisory Board on Rakhine State³⁷.

- **Over 1000 refugees flee amid fighting in northern Kachin**

Intensified clashes between the Tatmadaw and the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) in Sumprabum township forced over 1000 villagers to flee their homes, a member of a non-government organisation told The Myanmar Times on 24th January. Father Vincent Shanlong, an official of the Justice and Peace Commission, said the almost daily fighting between the Tatmadaw and the KIA started on January 17³⁸.

- **Government fears sabotage in refugee repatriation**

A senior Myanmar official expressed concern some groups are deliberately discouraging refugees from returning, as government staff waited in vain for the first batch of the displaced people to arrive at reception centres in northern

³⁵ STATE COUNSELLOR ATTENDS 25TH ASEAN-INDIA COMMEMORATIVE SUMMIT, 26th January 2018, <http://www.statecounsellor.gov.mm/en/node/1662>

³⁶ STATE COUNSELLOR MEETS INDIAN PM, 26 January 2018, <http://www.statecounsellor.gov.mm/en/node/1654>

³⁷ US politician quits Rakhine body, government says ‘no problem’, 26th January 2018, <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/us-politician-quits-rakhine-body-government-says-no-problem.html>

³⁸ Over 1000 refugees flee amid fighting in northern Kachin, 25th January 2018, <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/over-1000-refugees-flee-amid-fighting-northern-kachin.html>

Rakhine. “In my view there are some groups that are discouraging the return to Myanmar [of the refugees] and some people are worried if this issue will be resolved,” U Kyaw Tin, minister for International Cooperation, said in a news briefing in Nay Pyi Taw.³⁹

- **Russia to sell six fighter jets to Myanmar**

Russia will sell six Su-30 fighter jets to Myanmar, Russian Deputy Defence minister Lieutenant General Alexander Fomin said. The deal was reached during the visit of the Russian Minister of Defence General of the Army Sergei Shoigu to Myanmar at the weekend, according the Facebook page of the Russia’s Defence Ministry. The Sukhoi Su-30 is a twin-engine, two-seater “super manoeuvrable” fighter jet manufactured by Russia’s Sukhoi Aviation Corporation.⁴⁰

- **New Mon State Party, Lahu Democratic Union to sign ceasefire**

The New Mon State Party (NMSP) and the Lahu Democratic Union (LDU) will be signing the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), the office of National Reconciliation and Peace Centre in Nay Pyi Taw said in a statement. Representatives of the two groups, led by NMSP chair Nai Htaw Mon and LDU chair Kyar Khun Sar, met separately with State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and Commander-in-Chief Min Aung Hlaing, in Nay Pyi Taw on 23rd Janury, to discuss the signing of the NCA.

The State Counsellor hailed the decision of the two groups to sign the NCA and join the peace process.⁴¹

North America

Canada

- **Canada sees ‘encouraging’ signs as U.S. set to reply to key NAFTA proposals**

NAFTA renegotiations have reached a critical juncture, with Canada set to learn Monday whether the U.S. is willing to consider Ottawa's proposed compromises on three of the most serious sticking points in the talks. And Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is insisting that – despite his willingness to work with President Donald Trump on the pact – he is fighting for "a better deal" in the negotiations. In a

³⁹ Government fears sabotage in refugee repatriation, 24th January 2018, <https://www.mmmtimes.com/news/government-fears-sabotage-refugee-repatriation.html>

⁴⁰ Russia to sell six fighter jets to Myanmar, 23rd January 2018, <https://www.mmmtimes.com/news/russia-sell-six-fighter-jets-myanmar.html>

⁴¹ New Mon State Party, Lahu Democratic Union to sign ceasefire, 24th January 2018, <https://www.mmmtimes.com/news/new-mon-state-party-lahu-democratic-union-sign-ceasefire.html>

strategic shift, Ottawa decided this time to offer up compromises in a bid to parry American accusations of intransigence and get talks moving. The goal is to find things that Mr. Trump could plausibly claim as victories but without damaging the open market between the three countries. As previously reported by The Globe and Mail, Canada this week threw down new ideas on autos, dispute settlement and a NAFTA amendment process. Canada's auto proposal would jack up the amount of North American content required in vehicles produced in the NAFTA zone and create incentives for auto makers to build new plants or upgrade existing ones. The aim is to get Washington to drop its demand that all cars and trucks made in Canada and Mexico contain at least 50 per cent U.S. content. Canada's proposed NAFTA review process would allow for the deal to be regularly modified with the agreement of all three countries, as an alternative to Washington's demand for a "sunset clause" that would terminate the pact in five years unless the countries agreed to extend it. And Ottawa's pitch on Chapter 11, which allows corporations to sue governments in front of special tribunals, would allow the U.S. to opt out of the system – as Mr. Lighthizer has demanded – but would mean American corporations could no longer use the process to sue the other two governments.⁴²

- **India, Canada defend free trade at Davos forum as Trump imposes tariffs**

Just hours after President Donald Trump approved new tariffs on imports, the leaders of Canada and India came out forcefully against a drift toward protectionism in the global economy. While Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said new barriers to trade could pose a danger on a par with climate change and extremist attacks, his Canadian peer, Justin Trudeau, revealed that his country and the 10 remaining members of the Trans-Pacific Partnership have revised their trade deal in the wake of the U.S. withdrawal. Modi's message came after Trump's signing off on the new tariffs on imported solar-energy components and large washing machines in a move he hopes will help U.S. manufacturers.

Without directly referring to Trump or the U.S., Modi said the "negative impact of this kind of mindset cannot be considered less dangerous than climate change or terrorism."⁴³

- **Canada reaches deal on revised Trans-Pacific Partnership**

Canada has agreed to a resurrected version of the Trans-Pacific Partnership and will sign on to the deal. The deal, renamed the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, comes after talks in Japan this week with the 11 countries still committed to the deal. Canada was seen as the main holdout

⁴² Adrian Morrow And Laura Stone, "Canada sees 'encouraging' signs as U.S. set to reply to key NAFTA proposals," <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/canada-sees-encouraging-signs-as-us-set-to-reply-to-key-nafta-proposals/article37763589/>, Accessed on 29 January 2018.

⁴³ Tim Sullivan and Pan Pylas, "India, Canada defend free trade at Davos forum as Trump imposes tariffs," <http://www.chicagotribune.com/business/ct-biz-davos-world-economic-forum-trade-20180123-story.html>, Accessed on 29 January 2018.

during talks in Vietnam last November. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau sparked an international controversy when he didn't sign an agreement in principle, arguing Canada had concerns about the pact's culture and the automotive sectors. Sources say Canada made "real gains" on the pact's labour and environment chapters, and suspended what the government saw as a problematic dispute settlement provisions and an intellectual property section. In November, Canada pushed to change provisions relating to culture and French-language rights. It said the other 10 countries did "affirm the right of each party to preserve, develop and implement its cultural policies. Canada wrangled a bilateral arrangement with Japan to resolve non-tariff barriers, including a binding dispute settlement mechanism, an official told The Canadian Press. The deal also includes a bilateral agreement with Malaysia to adjust auto rules-of-origin, and another agreement was being finalized with Australia, they added.⁴⁴

- **Trudeau to talk trade — but thinking politics — in state visit to India next month**

Trade might be on the agenda but politics won't be far from his mind when Justin Trudeau makes his first trip to India as prime minister next month. Trudeau is scheduled to be in India Feb. 17-23, with stops planned in Agra, Amritsar, Mumbai and New Delhi. The state visit is being billed as a chance to make business connections and expand trade, as well as to promote the rights of women and girls. Canada and India have been working on trade agreements for more than seven years, with the 10th round of negotiations towards a comprehensive economic partnership taking place last summer in Delhi. Still, it seems such a deal is a long way off. But for Trudeau, a good visit to India is about more than expanding trade. About a dozen Indo-Canadian Liberal MPs are expected to join Trudeau on the trip and the attention it will receive in Indian media both in Canada and elsewhere could be helpful come election time in 2019.⁴⁵

The United States

- **Trump, in Davos, Mends Split With Britain and Widens One With Palestinians**

President Trump sought to repair one diplomatic rift while widening another as he smoothed over months of friction with Britain but threatened to cut financial aid to the Palestinians after they withdrew from peace discussions. Separate meetings with the prime ministers of Britain and Israel showcased the wide disparity in Mr. Trump's ties with key counterparts. His session with Prime Minister Theresa May

⁴⁴ CBC News, "Canada reaches deal on revised Trans-Pacific Partnership," <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/tpp-champagne-deal-1.4499616>, Accessed on 28 January 2018.

⁴⁵ Mia Rabson, "Trudeau to talk trade — but thinking politics — in state visit to India next month," <https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2018/01/22/trudeau-to-travel-to-india-for-state-visit.html>, Accessed on 29 January 2018.

of Britain was tense as they tried to put the relationship back on track, while his sit-down with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel was warm as the two agreed on what they cast as Palestinian intransigence. The Trump administration this month already withheld \$65 million from the United Nations agency that aids Palestinian refugees. The United States also provides aid through its own government agency that could be cut. The Trump administration this month already withheld \$65 million from the United Nations agency that aids Palestinian refugees. The United States also provides aid through its own government agency that could be cut.⁴⁶

- **Trump warns Davos on unfair trade, says U.S. 'open for business'**

U.S. President Donald Trump took his “America First” message to the world’s elite, telling a summit of business and political leaders that the United States would “no longer turn a blind eye” to what he described as unfair trade practices. Trump became the first sitting U.S. President to address the annual conclave of the rich and powerful at the Swiss ski resort of Davos for 18 years, closing the summit with a mostly upbeat speech that declared the United States “open for business”. He said he would always promote “America First”, as he expected other world leaders to do on behalf of their own countries, but added: “America First does not mean America alone. When the United States grows so does the world.” But he swiftly turned to a theme of demanding tougher enforcement of trade rules, accusing unidentified countries of unfair practices, including stealing intellectual property and providing state aid to industry. Despite Trump’s tough trade talk, those in the audience mostly noted the upbeat tone of his speech.⁴⁷

- **Trump Cabinet member Sessions interviewed in U.S. Russia probe**

U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions was questioned last week by the special counsel’s office investigating potential collusion between Russia and President Donald Trump’s 2016 presidential campaign, the U.S. Justice Department said. The interview marked the first time that Special Counsel Robert Mueller’s office is known to have interviewed a member of Trump’s Cabinet, and is another milestone in an investigation that has hung over Trump’s year-old presidency. Discussions between Trump’s personal lawyers and Mueller’s team have been under way about the possibility of an interview with Trump and what the scope of it might be, according to a person familiar with the talks. Mueller’s office also interviewed former Federal Bureau of Investigation Director James Comey shortly after Trump fired Comey in May 2017, a person familiar with the matter said. Comey’s firing led to Mueller’s appointment to take over the FBI’s Russia investigation. Mueller wants to question Trump himself in coming weeks about

⁴⁶ Peter baker, “Trump, in Davos, Mends Split With Britain and Widens One With Palestinians,” <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/25/world/europe/donald-trump-davos-trade.html>, Accessed on 28 January 2018.

⁴⁷ Steve Holland, Yara Bayoumy, Noah Barkin, “Trump warns Davos on unfair trade, says U.S. 'open for business',” <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-davos-meeting-trump-speech/trump-warns-davos-on-unfair-trade-says-u-s-open-for-business-idUSKBN1FF0X3>, Accessed on 28 January 2018.

decisions to fire national security adviser Michael Flynn - who had lied about contact with Kislyak - and Comey, the Washington Post said in a report.⁴⁸

- **Tillerson to spotlight crisis in Venezuela on Latin America trip**

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson is set to underscore U.S. concerns about the mounting crisis in Venezuela on a six-day trip across Latin America next week, the State Department said. The tour will begin Thursday at the University of Texas at Austin, where Tillerson is expected to deliver a speech outlining the Trump administration's policy priorities in the Western Hemisphere, before leaving the country for Mexico City. There he's expected to meet with Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto, Foreign Secretary Luis Videgaray and other Mexican officials. The visit comes as President Trump prepares to unveil a sweeping immigration framework, which is expected to offer a path to citizenship for nearly 2 million young immigrants in the country illegally, but will also demand tens of billions of dollars for the construction of his long-promised wall between the U.S. and Mexico. Tillerson will then crisscross South America, making stops in Bariloche and Buenos Aires in Argentina, as well as in Lima, Peru, and Bogotá, Colombia, where he's expected to make a plea for increased regional attention to the crisis in Venezuela. The trip is set to end in Kingston, Jamaica.⁴⁹

- **Mattis: Diplomacy should impose reason on North Korea's Kim Jong Un**

U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis stressed diplomacy as the way to deal with the North Korean crisis on Friday during talks with his South Korean counterpart in Hawaii, a day after Seoul's top diplomat said a military solution would be unacceptable. He added that the response to the threat remained "diplomacy led, backed up with military options available to ensure that our diplomats are understood to be speaking from a position of strength." The administration of President Donald Trump has said all options are on the table when it comes to North Korea's pursuit of a nuclear-tipped missile capable of striking the United States. But Mattis has consistently stressed non-military actions, including international sanctions. He renewed that message as he met South Korean Minister of Defence Song Young-moo at the U.S. Pacific Command headquarters in Hawaii. Song said he expected to discuss North Korea with Mattis, but noted firm coordination between the two militaries.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Sarah N. Lynch, "Trump Cabinet member Sessions interviewed in U.S. Russia probe," <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-russia/trump-cabinet-member-sessions-interviewed-in-u-s-russia-probe-idUSKBN1FC219>, Accessed on 29 January 2018.

⁴⁹ Max Greenwood, "Tillerson to spotlight crisis in Venezuela on Latin America trip," <http://thehill.com/policy/international/370961-tillerson-to-spotlight-venezuela-outline-western-hemisphere-policy-in>, Accessed on 29 January 2018.

⁵⁰ Reuters, "Mattis: Diplomacy should impose reason on North Korea's Kim Jong Un," <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/01/26/mattis-diplomacy-should-impose-reason-on-north-koreas-kim-jong-un.html>, Accessed on 29 January 2018.

Mexico

- **Chile, Mexico threaten to withdraw from Venezuela mediation over unilateral election call**

Chile has conditioned its permanence as a guarantor in the negotiations that take place between the government and the opposition of Venezuelan in the Dominican Republic, after the Constituent Assembly decided to advance the presidential elections, which will be held before April 30. For his part, Mexico's chancellor Luis Videgaray announced that his country will withdraw from the negotiations in which it participated as a guarantor country along with Chile, Nicaragua and Bolivia, in protest of the early call for elections.⁵¹

- **Gun battles may have changed travel plans**

President Enrique Peña Nieto has canceled a trip to Tamaulipas but his office is not saying why, raising speculation that gun battles in downtown Reynosa triggered the move. Narco-blockades, burned vehicles and gunfire put the city on red alert. the president's office said a Tuesday visit to Reynosa had never been confirmed, so it was not actually canceling it. State officials said otherwise. The president, they said, was scheduled to open a new highway project and his security people had already been in contact with the state's Public Security Secretariat to coordinate. Meanwhile, a report by the newspaper El País suggested another factor. The National Action Party (PAN)-led state government is at odds with federal justice authorities over the case of an ex-governor of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) who is wanted in the United States.⁵²

Latin America and Caribbean Countries

Argentina

- **Macri and Macron agree in most issues, but not in the EU/Mercosur talks**

Argentine President Mauricio Macri ended on Friday (26 January 2018) his European tour in Paris, where he addressed the business community and potential investors, and later held a private meeting with President Emmanuel Macron. During a media conference following the meeting both leaders expressed their coincidences regarding a world open to trade and multilateralism, combating climate change and Argentina's soon to the formalized OECD membership. But

⁵¹ ----, "Chile, Mexico threaten to withdraw from Venezuela mediation over unilateral election call," <http://santiagotimes.cl/2018/01/26/chile-mexico-threaten-to-withdraw-from-venezuela-mediation-over-unilateral-election-call/>, Accessed on 29 January 2018.

⁵² Mexico News Daily, "Gun battles may have changed travel plans," <https://mexiconewsdaily.com/news/gun-battles-may-have-changed-travel-plans/>, Accessed on 29 January 2018.

differences also surfaced regarding difficulties to advance trade talks between the EU and Mercosur, particularly beef and ethanol. The French farm lobby is particularly strong and rejects point blank negotiations on any of the two issues. Macri underlined the “production talks” held with Macron and insisted that a Mercosur European Union agreement is a great opportunity for both sides. But Macron said France was concerned about beef, and the sensitivity of the issue for French, and other European countries farmers. However “I’m persuaded that our negotiators will find the technical path to allow us to arrive to a reciprocal understanding”. But the French leader said there were red lines which Paris is not willing to trespass, and “we will not be engaged in agreements which favor farming or manufacturing interests, thousands of kilometers away, and with another social and environment model, different to those imposed on similar sectors in Europe”.

The Argentine head of state ratified the primary objective of his administration to achieve greater development and increase employment, given the wide possibilities offered by the country through its natural and human resources. Likewise it announced Argentina will be building an atomic research reactor for the medical industry in Holland, which underlines Argentina's technology leadership and the fact it can be trusted in nuclear development for peaceful purposes. Macri made the announced in Davos during a meeting with Holland's prime minister Mark Rutte and the Netherlands Argentine born queen Maxima, following the signing of the contract between Dutch and Argentine officials in The Hague. The Argentine reactor should replace the one Europe has in Holland, which is coming to the end of its useful life, and provides the EU of 60% of radioisotopes.

- **Macri and Putin in Moscow reaffirm Argentina/Russia strategic relationship**

Argentine President Mauricio Macri and his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, signed on January 23, 2018, a declaration aimed at strengthening bilateral cooperation during a press conference at the Kremlin. Macri told Putin that he hoped this marked the first of many visits to the Russian capital and highlighted their countries’ mutual interests. “Since we got to know each other a year and a half ago, we have once again confirmed the importance Argentina places on this strategic relationship,” said Macri, after he signed the joint declaration with Putin, adding that there was much potential for further development. A memorandum of understanding signed between Argentina and Rosatom could allow the Russian state’s atomic agency prospect for uranium in the South American nation, with a reported potential investment of US\$250 million. This could be followed by Rosatom building a nuclear station in Argentina. Argentina is one of Russia’s leading trade and economic partners in Latin America, and president Macri is interested in Russia’s participation in its infrastructure projects and the sides are also studying the opportunities of cooperating in energy, space and resource development.

Brazil

- **Upheld Verdict for Brazil's Lula May Keep Him From Presidency**

Three Brazilian judges from a regional court in Porto Alegre maintained on Wednesday (January 24, 2018) the conviction of former president, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, raising his sentence from the original nine and a half years in prison to twelve years and one month. After the hearing supporters and opposition spoke about sentence and the former leader's chances of being allowed to run in this year's Presidential race. "The result of the trial of Lula's defense in court, with clearly arranged votes of the three judges, constitutes a judicial farce," said PT (Workers Party) president, Senator Gleisi Hoffman. Hoffman criticized not only the maintenance of the conviction but also the decision to increase the sentence imposed by Judge Sergio Moro in July of 2017. According to Lula's lawyer Cristiano Zanin the defense will now use all legal means to challenge the sentence handed down, including more appeals both to higher courts and even to Brazil's Supreme Court. For Zanin, the appeal hearing did not reflect the truth of the facts. "The mark of this trial is that Lula has been convicted without having committed a crime," he concluded. With the maintenance of the sentence Lula's chances of being eligible to run in October's Presidential elections has diminished significantly. According to the Ficha Limpa (Clean Slate) bill, persons convicted of major crimes are not eligible to run for public office. And although Lula has the option to appeal further his sentence, there is some question if the hearing would be over by August 31st, the deadline for political parties to register their candidates for the election.

- **Brazil and Mercosur Negotiate Possible Trade Accord With UK**

In addition to being close to closing an agreement with the European Union, the South American Trade Agreement Bloc (Mercosur) is also discussing a possible trade agreement with the United Kingdom, according to Brazilian Finance Minister, Henrique Meirelles. "[The agreement] could take effect after the Brexit, but negotiations are under way." Meirelles told journalists in London after a meeting with UK's Finance Minister, Philip Hammond. Due to Brexit, the UK will be excluded from the trade agreement between Mercosur and the European Union, and will have to negotiate a separate trade agreement with the South American nations. Negotiations of a free trade agreement between Mercosur and the European Union (EU) have been going on since 1999. At the end of 2017, the two parties advanced in the discussions, but the signing of the agreement was postponed for this year. The European Commission presented on Monday (January 22nd) the most recent advances achieved in the negotiations for a trade agreement with Mercosur partners. Some have been strongly resisting opening up their markets to the South American countries. According to those following the negotiations those in the ethanol and beef sectors have put up the greatest resistance to the trade agreements.

Chile

- **CELAC Forum 2018: Chile all praise for China**

Chile's foreign minister welcomed Chinese representatives to a meeting with Latin American and Caribbean countries and praised Beijing for rejecting protectionism as the United States backs away from global trade. Foreign Minister Heraldo Muñoz, who has criticized U.S. President Donald Trump in the past, told a news conference that Latin America could do a lot more to stimulate trade with China and called on its nations to take advantage of the talks to improve ties. China has sought a bigger role overseas since Trump was elected, presenting its Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership trade agreement as an alternative to the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which was abandoned by the United States. Representatives from China and the 33 members of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) are holding meetings in the Chilean capital, Santiago. China sees it as "natural" to expand its westward infrastructure drive – the "One Belt, One Road" initiative – to Latin America, China's foreign minister said. Proposed in 2013 by President Xi Jinping, the project promotes a vision of expanding links between Asia, Africa and Europe, with billions of dollars in infrastructure investment. China is already testing U.S. dominance in Latin America, offering the region US\$250 billion in investment over the next decade. It is the top trading partner of many countries in the region, including Brazil, Chile and Argentina. In recent years, Chinese companies have moved away from merely buying Latin American raw materials and are diversifying into sectors like auto manufacturing, e-commerce and even technology businesses like car-hailing services.

Venezuela

- **Chile, Mexico threaten to withdraw from Venezuela mediation over unilateral election call**

Chile has conditioned its permanence as a guarantor in the negotiations that take place between the government and the opposition of Venezuelan in the Dominican Republic, after the Constituent Assembly decided to advance the presidential elections, which will be held before April 30, 2018. This was confirmed by Chile's Foreign Minister Heraldo Muñoz, who led the meeting of the so-called Lima Group at the Sheraton Hotel, where representatives from 14 countries met to analyze the situation in Venezuela and condemned the decision to schedule the elections for the first quarter of the year, when it was expected to be done by the end of 2018. "The situation that has arisen with the government's unilateral call for presidential elections in the first four months and without the minimum guarantees of transparent democratic elections according to democratic standards means a serious questioning of Chile's participation in this process," he said. In this regard, he stressed that "if this situation is consolidated, Chile will review its participation in the group of accompanying countries. We hope that this decision

will be reversed so that we do not have to move away from the negotiations in the Dominican Republic.”

- **Venezuela expels Spanish ambassador after EU sanctions**

Venezuela has declared Spain’s ambassador to Caracas “persona non grata,” accusing Madrid of committing “continuous aggressions” against President Nicolas Maduro’s Socialist government. The move to expel Jesus Silva Fernandez came a day after Caracas recalled its own ambassador to Spain following the European Union’s adoption of sanctions against seven senior Venezuelan officials, including a freeze on their assets and a ban on traveling to the EU. The EU announced sanctions on seven members of President Nicolas Maduro’s socialist government on Monday for alleged abuses of rights and democracy. Maduro’s government accuses Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy of being one of the masterminds behind the sanctions, saying he was acting on instructions from the United States. Spain and Venezuela have suffered from tense diplomatic ties since the late Socialist leader Hugo Chavez came to power in 1999. He was succeeded on his death in 2013 by Maduro.

Russia

- **Russia and India**

In an interview, Sergey Chemezov, CEO of Rostec Corporation on 25 January said that even as Russia has started delivery of the S-400 Triumf air defence missile to China, negotiations for the sale to India of the multi-barrel system with a range of between 40 km and 400 km are at an "advanced stage" and should not be hurried up. He said that it is a very complex contract with many technical specifications and variables, as well as pricing conditions, production and delivery schedules. Everything must be carefully coordinated .

- **Russia and Ukraine**

Russia’s presidential aide, Vladislav Surkov, said after a meeting with the US Special Representative for Ukraine Kurt Volker on 27 January that "Dubai Package" of the US suggestions on deploying a UN mission in Ukraine’s southeast looks quite doable, Russia will study it and will give a response in due course. He said that the talks’ key topic was once again a discussion of the Russian initiative to deploy in Ukraine’s southeast a UN mission. Surkov said. "This time, the U.S. has brought more constructive suggestions. The U.S. "Dubai Package", unlike the "Belgrade" suggestions, seems quite doable, at least at first glance." He said that “the main part there is a rather detailed plan of a step-by-step deployment of a mission along with implementation of the Minsk agreements’ political items. It is a balanced approach, on which we have insisted”.

- **Russia and Vietnam**

During his visit to Vietnam, Russian Defence Minister General Sergei Shoigu on January 23 stated that Russia and Vietnam are developing a Plan of cooperation in the military field as well as holding joint exercises for the next three years. According to him, cooperation between two states is strategically important. As he noted, the bilateral political dialogue at the highest level has been developing. The Russian defence minister also said that Russia is ready to share with its Vietnamese colleagues the experience of testing military hardware in combat conditions. He said that it was one of Russia's foreign policy priorities to maintain close and trust-based relations with Vietnam. According to Sergei Shoigu, Russia views Vietnam country as a strategic partner, a long and reliable friend. Vietnam is one of the most important partners in ensuring security in the Asia-Pacific Rim.

- **Russia and Laos**

During a meeting with visiting Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, Lao Prime Minister Thongloun Sisoulith said on 22 January that Laos hopes to continue military technical cooperation with Russia. Russian Defence Minister General Sergei Shoigu visited Laos on January 22 and said that military and technical cooperation is a vital part of the Laos-Russian relations. He stressed that there has been an intensive work on implementation of reached agreements, including those of military sphere.

- **Russia and Myanmar**

Russia is ready to share with Myanmar its experience of fighting against long-range unmanned aerial vehicles used for attacks by terrorists in Syria. This was announced on 20 January by Russian Defence Minister General Sergei Shoigu during a meeting with the Commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces of Myanmar, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing. The Russian defence minister was in Myanmar for a working visit. Both the countries are also planning to implement large scale plan for bilateral military cooperation between Russia and Myanmar. The two sides also entered into an inter-governmental agreement on simplified procedure for calls of warships to the ports of Russia and Myanmar was reached on 20 January. On 22 January, Myanmar announced that Russia will supply the Myanmar military with six Su-30 fighter jets.

South Asia

Afghanistan

- **Indonesian President Arrives In Kabul On State Visit**

Indonesian President Joko Widodo has arrived at the Presidential Palace where he was met by President Ashraf Ghani on 29 January 2018. This is the first state visit of an Indonesian president to Afghanistan since that of former President Soekarno in 1961. Ghani and Widodo discussed a wide range of issues. During his trip to Islamabad two days ago, Widodo told President Mamnoon Hussain that his country could play a key role in the Afghan peace process. He suggested the formation of a committee of religious scholars from Indonesia, Pakistan and Afghanistan to promote peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan.⁵³

- **China Denies Plan to Build Military Base in Afghanistan**

China's Defence Ministry on 25 January 2018 denied that it was planning to build a military base in Afghanistan, branding such reports "groundless". Russian news agency Ferghana News, which focuses on Central Asia, has reported that China will build the base in northern Afghanistan. The report was picked up last week by U.S. magazine *The Diplomat* and then in Chinese state media. Speaking at a regular news briefing, ministry spokesman Wu Qian said that the two countries had normal security cooperation and that China like other countries was supporting Afghanistan in defense and counter-terrorism. The ministry has also previously dismissed reports that Chinese military vehicles were patrolling inside Afghanistan.⁵⁴

- **Taliban Inaugurate Township in Takhar's Durqad District**

The Taliban constructed township has been inaugurated in the Durqad district of northern Takhar province. Police spokesman Col. Khalil Aseer said the Taliban inaugurated a township in the Shour Arab area of Durqad and people had started their business there. He said 20 shops had been constructed in the hotel and work on the construction of other shops was underway. The township has residence, hotels, parking, health centres and other facilities. He said the Taliban had been trying to expand the township and attract investment to the project. Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said the Umraitownship had been constructed in line with the wishes of people and people had begun investing in the township.⁵⁵

⁵³ "Indonesian President Arrives In Kabul On State Visit", *ToloneWS*, 29 January 2018. <http://www.toloneWS.com/afghanistan/indonesian-president-arrives-kabul-state-visit> accessed on 29 January 2018.

⁵⁴ "China Denies Plan to Build Military Base in Afghanistan", *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, 27 January 2018. http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=20031 accessed on 28 January 2018.

⁵⁵ "Taliban Inaugurate Township in Takhar's Durqad District", *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, 25 January 2018. http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=20016 accessed on 27 January 2018.

Bangladesh

- **Quader rules out BNP demand for dialogue**

AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader on Saturday (January 13) ruled out BNP's demand of holding dialogue with the ruling party ahead of the next election. Quader said there is no complexity in holding the election as the country's constitution has given clear reference about holding of national election. "Had there been any problem regarding holding the election, dialogue would have been needed. As there is no complexity, so there is no need to hold a dialogue," he added.⁵⁶

- **PM's speech disappointed people: BNP**

The BNP yesterday (January 12) claimed that Sheikh Hasina's speech disappointed the people as it had no indication of reaching an understanding to hold a free and fair election. "Prime minister's speech will rather take the country towards a further crisis," BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said in an instant reaction to Hasina's speech.⁵⁷

- **Meaningful solution still possible: BNP**

Though the party is 'upset' about the Prime Minister's statement on the next general election, BNP on Saturday (January 13) said it is still confident that a meaningful solution to the crisis over the polls can be found through talks in a congenial atmosphere. In her address to the nation on Friday (January 12), Prime Minister said that the next general election will be held as per the Constitution, and expressed her high optimism that all the parties registered with the Election Commission will take part in the polls for upholding the country's democratic process.⁵⁸

- **Bangladesh, Myanmar meet amid doubts over Rohingya repatriation**

Officials from Myanmar and Bangladesh will on Monday (January 15) to discuss how to implement another deal, signed on 23 November, on the return of more than 650,000 Rohingya who have escaped an army crackdown since late August. The meeting in Naypyitaw will be the first for a joint working group set up to

⁵⁶ "Quader rules out BNP demand for dialogue," *The Independent*, January 13, 2018, <http://www.theindependentbd.com/post/132528>, accessed on December 13, 2018.

⁵⁷ "PM's speech disappointed people: BNP," *Daily Star*, January 13, 2018, <http://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/pms-speech-disappointed-people-bnp-1519207>, accessed on January 13, 2018.

⁵⁸ "Meaningful solution to 'political crisis' still possible: BNP," *The Independent*, January 13, 2018, <http://www.theindependentbd.com/post/132518>, accessed on January 13, 2018.

hammer out the details of the November repatriation agreement. The group is made up of civil servants from both countries.⁵⁹

- **Bangladesh, Germany sign agreements worth €337.2m**

Bangladesh and Germany have signed three bilateral agreements on Sunday (January 14)– Technical Cooperation-2016, Financial Cooperation-2016 and Financial Cooperation 2016 (Saidabad-III) at the Economic Relations Division (ERD) at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar. Germany will provide €337.2 million for the implementation of these projects. Economic Relations Division (ERD) Secretary Kazi Shofiqul Azam and German Ambassador to Bangladesh Dr Thomas Prinz signed the agreements on behalf of their respective governments.⁶⁰

नेपाल

नेशनल एसेम्बली के चुनाव के लिए :उम्मीदवारों ने पर्चे भरे 83

इसमें .उम्मीदवारों ने पर्चे दाखिल किये है 83 फरवरी को होने वाले नेशनल एसेम्बली के चुनाव में 7 सीटों के लिए चुना 43 उम्मीदवार 66 उम्मीदवार निर्विरोध चुने गये है और 17व लड़ेंगे 59 .सदस्यीय नेशनल एसेम्बली में राष्ट्रपति द्वारा सदस्यों का चुनाव गुप्त मतदान से होगा और तीन सदस्य 56 .मनोनीत होंगे⁶¹

ओली ने कहा देउबा के गलत कदमों को सुधारेंगे:

एमाले अध्यक्ष के पी शर्मा ने चेताया कि शेर बहादुर देउबा (आगे बनने वाले प्रधानमंत्री)की सरकार के कदम को ये और उनके नेतृत्व में बनने वाली सरकार "अविधिक और राष्ट्र विरोधी है ,असंवैधानिक" ओली ने कहा कि देउबा सरकार देश की अर्थव्यवस्था और सरकारी तंत्र को कमजोर .स्वीकार्य नहीं होंगे उन्होंने आगे कहा कि यह सरकार वाम गठबंधन करने का प्रयास कर रही हैधन की सरकार न बनने की भी पुरजोर कोशिश कर रही है.⁶²

स्वराज मध्य फरवरी में नेपाल भ्रमण कर सकती है:

भारत की विदेश मंत्री सुषमा स्वराज मध्य फरवरी तक नेपाल की यात्रा पर जा सकती है और वे बीरगंज इंटीग्रेटेड चेक पोस्ट को नेपाल को हस्तांतरित करेंगीअभी यात्रा की त .िथि तय नहीं हुई है

⁵⁹ "Bangladesh, Myanmar meet amid doubts over Rohingya repatriation plan," *Prothom Alo*, January 14, 2018, <http://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/news/169496/Bangladesh-Myanmar-meet-amid-doubts-over-Rohingya>, accessed on January 14, 2018.

⁶⁰ "Bangladesh, Germany sign agreements worth €337.2m," *Dhaka Tribune*, January 14, 2018, <http://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/foreign-affairs/2018/01/14/bangladesh-germany-signs-agreements-worth-e337-2m/>, accessed on January 14, 2018.

⁶¹ Priyvi Man Shrestha, "83 file nominations for upper house polls", *The Kathmandu Post*, 25 January 2018, <http://epaper.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2018-01-25/1>

⁶² Tika R Pradhan, "'PM -in -waiting' Oli vows to right Deuba's 'wrong' moves", *The Kathmandu Post*, 26 January 2018, <http://epaper.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2018-01-26/1>

इसे आगामी वाम गठबंधन सरकार के गठन के अनुसार निर्धारित किया जायेगा को दोनों इस यात्रा .
.देशों के रिश्तों में प्रगाढ़ता बढ़ाने की कड़ी माना जा रहा है⁶³

नेशनल एसेम्बली के चुनाव के लिए दलों ने नाम जारी किये:

फरवरी को होने जा रहे नेशनल एसेम्बली के चुनावों के लिए सभी दलों ने अपने उम्मीदवारों के नाम जारी कर दिए हैमाओवादी केंद्र से 14 एमाले से और 29 जिसमे ,दवार हैउम्मी 43 वाम गठबंधन के .
.उम्मीदवार है 16 नेपाली कांग्रेस से इस चुनाव में मात्र .है⁶⁴

Pakistan

- **US Drone Strike in Pakistan**

Pakistan on January 24th condemned a US drone strike deep inside its territory targeting an Afghan refugee camp, killing two men, and warned Washington that such 'unilateral' steps would be detrimental to cooperation between the two countries in fight against terrorism. "Pakistan condemns a drone strike in Kurram Agency carried out by the Resolute Support Mission (RSM) this [January 24] morning, which targeted an Afghan refugee camp," the FO statement said.⁶⁵

- **Indonesian President in Pakistan**

Indonesian President Joko Widodo on January 27th hoped that the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) might resolve conflicts involving the two countries (India and Pakistan) through dialogue. Addressing a joint sitting of the parliament, President Widodo called for supporting freedom struggle of Palestine but did not mention Kashmir.⁶⁶ Pakistan and Indonesia agreed on January 27th to redress their trade imbalance and revitalise their defence and counterterrorism cooperation, while Indonesian President Joko Widodo to Pakistan on a two day visit. There was also agreement on increasing two-way investments and diversifying and expanding economic ties. The two countries would, meanwhile, set up a joint committee to oversee their bilateral defence cooperation agreement. Moreover, training of defence personnel and cooperation between their respective defence educational institutions was also agreed. Similarly, both countries would intensify counterterrorism cooperation and help each other in building their respective antiterrorism capabilities. Indonesia reiterated its support for Pakistan's

⁶³ Anil Giri, "Swaraj Likely to visit Nepal before mid- feb", The Kathmandu Post, 27 January 2018, <http://epaper.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2018-01-27/1>

⁶⁴ "Parties ready names, mostly, for National Assembly", The Kathmandu Post, 24 January 2018, <http://epaper.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2018-01-24/1>

⁶⁵ Baqir Sajjad Syed & Syed Hassan Mehmood, "Pakistan condemns 'unilateral' US drone strike", *Dawn*, January 25, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1385171> accessed on January 29, 2018

⁶⁶ Syed Irfan Raza, "Only talks can resolve conflicts, says Widodo", *Dawn*, January 27, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1385569> accessed on January 29, 2018

bid for Full Dialogue Partnership with ASEAN and Indian-Ocean Rim Association.⁶⁷

- **China and Pakistani Senate**

The controversial duty and tax exemption given to M/s China State Construction Engineering Corporation Limited set off alarm bells in the Senate on January 27th, with members warning that it could severely affect the local industry. The company has been exempted from paying federal excise duty and sales tax on imported construction material and goods which will be used for the Karachi-Peshawar Motorway (Sukkur-Multan section). Members of the Senate also asked that if a project was based on loans — would it increase the loan if the company was charged federal excise duty and sales tax.⁶⁸

- **Pakistani peacekeeper Killed**

A Pakistani soldier working for the United Nations peacekeeping mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), was killed and another was wounded in an ambush by an armed group in the eastern part of the strife-torn African country on January 27th.⁶⁹

Sri Lanka

- **Sri Lanka detains 12 Indian fishermen, impounds 3 boats**

The Sri Lankan Navy arrested 12 Indian fishermen and confiscated three mechanised fishing boats on the alleged charges of fishing in the Exclusive Economic Zone of the Island Nation on 28th.

- **Sri Lanka achieves highest ever FDI in 2017**

The Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into Sri Lanka has grown to over USD 1.63 billion in 2017, doubling the USD 802 million achieved in the previous year. The Board of Investment (BOI) reported that this is the highest ever FDI surpassing the USD 1.61 in 2014, with solid growth across key sectors.

The strong growth is a direct consequence of the Government's reorientation of economic policy towards investment and export driven growth, rather than debt-funded public infrastructure spending. Among the highest growth sectors were export-oriented Manufacturing (+27%) and Services which includes Tourism and

⁶⁷ Baqir Sajjad Syed, "Pakistan, Indonesia to boost anti-terrorism cooperation", *Dawn*, January 28, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1385760> accessed on January 29, 2018

⁶⁸ Iftikhar A. Khan, "Senators upset over Chinese company's tax and duty exemptions", *Dawn*, January 27, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1385582> accessed on January 29, 2018

⁶⁹ "Pakistani peacekeeper killed in DR Congo", *Dawn*, January 29, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1385957/pakistani-peacekeeper-killed-in-dr-congo> accessed on January 29, 2018

IT (+50%) and Infrastructure (+190%). The highest FDI came from China, followed by Hong Kong, India and Singapore.⁷⁰

- **Indonesia pledges more assistance for development**

Indonesian President Joko Widodo has pledged assistance to upgrade Sri Lanka's train service when he met Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe at Temple Trees on 25th January. He has also stated that arrangements should be made to strengthen the friendship between Sri Lanka and Indonesia based on historical relationships. The Indonesian President also expressed his willingness to contribute towards infrastructure development activities in Sri Lanka⁷¹.

- **S'pore and Sri Lanka signed FTA to facilitate greater trade flows,**

The Republic of Singapore and Sri Lanka have signed a bilateral free trade agreement (FTA) — the first modern and comprehensive one for the South Asian nation — to boost commerce, trade, and investments between the two island nations. The FTA will give companies in Singapore and Sri Lanka greater access to each other's markets across various sectors, including services, e-commerce, telecommunications, and government procurement. Key benefits, once the agreement enters into force, include the elimination or lowering of tariffs that would allow Singapore exporters to save about S\$10 million a year⁷².

- **MR rejects President's offer**

Former President Mahinda Rajapaksa said that his successor President Maithripala Sirisena's proposal for combining the SLPP and SLFP to form a government was only a trick. Asked to comment on President Sirisena's invitation for the SLPP to join forces with the SLFP to form a government, the former President said: "It is a trick. If we agree to join the SLFP under his leadership we will certainly lose a lot of votes as people are fed up with the SLFP under his leadership. He is making this proposal as he fears an ignominious defeat come Feb. 10."⁷³

Maldives

- **Opposition to top court to impeach Maldives president**

The opposition on 28th January filed a motion at the Supreme Court to impeach President Abdulla Yameen, who is under fire over multiple graft allegations. Former president Mohamed Nasheed announced in a tweet that he had filed the

⁷⁰ Sri Lanka achieves highest ever FDI in 2017. 28th January 2018, <https://news.lk/news/world/item/19379-sri-lanka-achieves-highest-ever-fdi-in-2017>

⁷¹ Indonesia pledges more assistance for development, 26th January 2018, <https://news.lk/news/sri-lanka/item/19368-indonesia-pledges-more-assistance-for-development>

⁷² S'pore and Sri Lanka signed FTA to facilitate greater trade flows, today, 23rd January 2018, <https://news.lk/news/sri-lanka/item/19336-s-pore-and-sri-lanka-signed-fta-to-facilitate-greater-trade-flows-today>

⁷³ MR rejects President's offer Forming an SLFP-led govt, 28th January 2018, http://www.island.lk/index.php?page_cat=article-details&page=article-details&code_title=178958

corruption case jointly with former president Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, Jumhoory Party leader Qasim Ibrahim, and Adhaalath Party's deputy leader Ali Zahir. "We requested [the Supreme Court] to impeach [President Yameen]," he said. The opposition has not disclosed further details on the case yet⁷⁴.

- **US questions fair play in Maldives politics after Faris' arrest**

The US Ambassador to the Maldives, Atul Keshap, has voiced concerns after the second arrest of opposition lawmaker Faris Maumoon on 27th January. The son of former President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom and lawmaker of Dhiggaru constituency, Faris had spent six months in jail after he was first arrested over allegedly offering bribes to a parliamentarian, to garner support to impeach the parliament speaker. He was arrested again less than two days after the Criminal Court had released him from prison on 25th and now accused of bribing lawmakers with money and conspiring to topple the current government. Ambassador Keshap raised concerns over the arrest, declaring in a tweet that "A 4am warrant issued by a judge with less than a week's tenure on the bench to search for evidence and arrest an elected Member of Parliament who had just been released after 191 days in jail suggests due process of law and fair play in politics remain under threat in #Maldives."⁷⁵

- **Government blasts Nasheed over terror threat claims**

The government has slammed former president Mohamed Nasheed for his remarks over terrorism and the Maldives. In a statement on 23rd the government denied there was an immediate terror threat and accused him of exaggerating for personal and political benefit. Nasheed on 22nd told a news conference that there was a parallel state of religious radicals ready to overrun the country and that there were 300 Maldivians fighting in Syria and Iraq. "If they are flushed out of these countries they are bound to return," he said. "Once they establish themselves in the Maldives it's difficult to see how they can be contained."⁷⁶

- **UN body urged to rule that Nasheed's disqualification is illegal**

The UN Human Rights Committee has been urged to rule that disqualifying Mohamed Nasheed from the 2018 presidential race violates international law, as his legal team seeks to restore his political rights. Nasheed is currently ineligible to contest the election as he was sentenced to 13 years in prison on a controversial terrorism charge⁷⁷.

⁷⁴ Opposition to top court to impeach Maldives pres, 28th January 2018, <http://en.mihaaru.com/opposition-to-top-court-to-impeach-maldives-pres/>

⁷⁵ US questions fair play in Maldives politics after Faris' arrest, 28th January 2018, <http://en.mihaaru.com/us-questions-fair-play-in-maldives-politics-after-faris-arrest/>

⁷⁶ Government blasts Nasheed over terror threat claims, 23rd January 2018, <http://maldivesindependent.com/politics/government-blasts-nasheed-over-terror-threat-claims-135324>

⁷⁷ UN body urged to rule that Nasheed's disqualification is illegal

- **Opposition writes to Modi about Maldives political situation**

The opposition parties on 21st handed over a letter to the Indian High Commission in the capital Male, to be delivered to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The letter was delivered to the Indian High Commission by Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP)'s secretary-general Anas Abdul-Sattar and Jumhoory Party (JP)'s secretary-general Ahmed Sameer. According to a source from the opposition coalition, the letter is an appeal on behalf of four leaders of the coalition who are all currently in exile or in prison. It also details the current political situation of the Maldives, the challenges faced by the opposition leaders and the numerous unconstitutional acts being carried out by the ruling government⁷⁸.

West Asia

Turkey

Turkish, FSA units capture Syria's strategic Mt. Barsaya from YPG terrorists⁷⁹

After days of poor weather conditions, Turkish commando units and Free Syrian Army (FSA) fighters, backed by Turkish air and ground

forces, launched Sunday an assault on heavily-fortified terrorist People's Protection Units (YPG) in northern Syria's strategic Mt. Barsaya, capturing the position in the afternoon.

The mountain overlooks the plain and the shortest route between the towns of FSA-held Azaz and YPG-held Afrin. Its location also allows YPG terrorists to target civilians in the Turkish border province of Kilis and Syrian town of Azaz through mortar, artillery and rocket strikes.

YPG terrorists have constructed concrete tunnels, towers and other fortifications on the mountain to delay its capture for as long as possible.

Due to heavy fog and rain, the advance on the mountain, which was partially captured on the first day of Operation Olive Branch, has been stalled for the last three days.

UN body urged to rule that Nasheed's disqualification is illegal, 23 January 2018, <http://maldivesindependent.com/politics/un-body-urged-to-rule-that-nasheeds-disqualification-is-illegal-135320>

⁷⁸ Opposition writes to Modi about Maldives political situation, 22nd January 2018, <http://en.mihaaru.com/opposition-writes-to-modi-about-maldives-political-situation/>

⁷⁹ Daily sabah, 28 January 2017, <https://www.dailysabah.com/war-on-terror/2018/01/28/turkish-fsa-units-capture-syrias-strategic-mt-barsaya-from-ypg-terrorists>

On Sunday, the ninth day of the operation, Turkish jets, howitzers and tanks have conducted heavy bombardment of YPG positions, followed by close combat.

Speaking at the ruling Justice and Development Party (AK Party) provincial congress in central province of Çorum on Sunday, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said that the commander in charge of the operation has informed him that the mountain will soon be cleared of terrorists.

Turkey, US agree to work on de-escalating bilateral tension over Syria⁸⁰

Turkey and the United States have agreed to work on de-escalating tension between the two long-standing allies over the latter's support to the People's Protection Units (YPG) in Syria as the Turkish military carries out a massive operation to defeat the group along its borders.

"We may have a difference of opinion on some issues, but we are allied countries," H.R. McMaster, the national security advisor to U.S. President Donald Trump, told President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's chief foreign policy advisor and spokesman İbrahim Kalın during a phone conversation on Jan. 27, according to sources familiar with the conversation.

The conversation between the two advisors came after Trump and Erdoğan spoke over the phone on Jan. 24 in which the two leaders discussed Turkey's ongoing "Operation Olive Branch" against the YPG in the Afrin district of Syria. Turkey considers the YPG as the offshoot of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and, hence, a terrorist group.

Both the content of the conversation and the readout issued by the White House over the Trump-Erdoğan phone call have further fueled already strained ties between Turkey and the U.S.

Turkey accused the White House of mischaracterizing the talk by inserting matters that were never discussed between the two leaders in the presidential readout.

According to the same sources, McMaster admitted the lack of coordination within the White House in the issuance of the readout after the conversation.

"We were in Davos when the phone conversation took place but the statement was issued by our staff in Washington at the White House," McMaster told his counterpart, sources informed the daily Hürriyet.

The two officials have agreed to issue presidential statements following future phone exchanges or in-person meetings in full coordination, a custom that was abandoned in the latest conversation.

⁸⁰ Hurriyet Daily News, 28 January 2017, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-us-agree-to-work-to-de-escalate-bilateral-tension-over-syria-126388>

Turkey, US to overcome confidence crisis

Apart from this issue, Kalın and McMaster mainly focused on Turkey's ongoing military operation and disagreements over the U.S. support to the YPG.

According to the information Hürriyet gathered from senior Turkish officials, Kalın and McMaster agreed to work on improving ties between the two allies on the grounds of mutual interests and respect. They also agreed to work on overcoming the existing confidence crisis between the two allies, with Ankara believing that it will not be an easy process.

According to sources in Ankara, re-building trust between the two allies heavily depend on the steps the U.S. will take with regard to its partnership with the YPG. McMaster reiterated that no weapons will be delivered to the YPG, during the phone talk with Kalın, a commitment that was already given to Turkey in recent months.

"We will closely follow to what extent they will fulfill their commitments," the sources said, underlining once again that they want concrete actions taken by the U.S. in the field.

According to the sources, here are five measures the U.S. needs to take:

1. No weapons should be given to the YPG.
2. Weapons already delivered to the YPG should be taken back immediately.
3. Military training given to the YPG should be ceased.
4. No logistical support should be given.
5. All ties with the YPG should be cut.

US needs to withdraw from Syria's Manbij region immediately: Turkish FM⁸¹

The United States needs to withdraw from northern Syria's Manbij region immediately, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu said on Jan. 27.

President Tayyip Erdoğan on Jan. 26 had said Turkish forces would sweep Syrian Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) militia from the Syrian border and could push all the way east to the frontier with Iraq, including Manbij.

⁸¹Hurriyet Daily News, 28 January 2017, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/us-needs-to-withdraw-from-syrias-manbij-region-immediately-turkish-fm-126385>

Speaking to reporters, Çavuşoğlu also said Turkey wanted to see concrete steps by the United States to end its support for the YPG militia.

"We want to see more concrete steps rather than words. The U.S. must cut ties with the terrorist organization," Çavuşoğlu told reporters before a meeting in the Mediterranean province of Antalya.

Ankara said earlier it had been told by U.S. National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster that Washington would not provide the YPG with weapons anymore.

German Kurds protest Turkey's Afrin assault in Cologne⁸²

Several thousand pro-Kurdish protesters marched through streets of the German city of Cologne on Saturday to demonstrate against Turkey's military intervention in the Syrian Kurdish enclave of Afrin.

The largely peaceful protest saw a nearly 1-kilometer (0.6-mile) line of Kurds and anti-war activists snake through the city waving flags and shouting slogans against Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and in support of the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) in Afrin.

"Child murderer, woman murderer, terrorist Erdogan," protesters shouted. "Long live the resistance of Kurdistan" and "Long live the YPG" were other slogans, yelled out as Kurdish music praising guerrilla fighters blared from the back of an old truck.

About 2,000 police were deployed for the protest, which drew at least 20,000 demonstrators.

Halfway along the planned march route, riot police backed by water cannon tanks blocked roads leading to Cologne's iconic cathedral after hundreds of flags were unfurled depicting Abdullah Ocalan, the imprisoned leader of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

Police corralled protesters and ordered Ocalan and PKK flags to be dropped — a demand that was met with slogans praising the PKK and Ocalan. Eventually police ordered the protesters to disperse, which most did peacefully near the planned end of the protest.

⁸² DW Media, <http://www.dw.com/en/german-kurds-protest-turkeys-afrin-assault-in-cologne/a-42337447>

- **EU minister Çelik dismisses EP rapporteur Piri's remarks**

Turkish EU Minister Ömer Çelik dismissed the European Parliament's rapporteur on Turkey, Kati Piri's recent remarks, in which she said the PKK and its affiliated groups are not a threat to EU but Daesh is.

Çelik said Turkey will not take seriously any comments about Turkey coming from Piri, someone whom Çelik said has a distorted mentality, as the minister vowed to continue fighting against both Daesh and PKK.

In an interview Saturday with the United Arab Emirates (UAE)-funded Ahval, Piri claimed that Daesh was not a priority threat for Turkey but PKK was, while an opposite situation was the case for the European Parliament.

"Here is the issue; for us, the Kurdish militia, the PKK and its variations are not a threat. There are no attacks of PKK in the Netherlands, Belgium or France. For us, when it comes to Syria, apart from the humanitarian catastrophe, the threat is ISIS," Piri said, using a different acronym for the extremist terror group.

Çelik said on his Twitter account: "It is good that they have frankly expressed the abstrusity in their heads. They have put an end to their ugly game of words."

Accusing Piri of lacking basic-level information of terrorist organizations, Çelik said Turkey is the only country that puts an effective fight against both Daesh and PKK.

"It is clear that PKK is actively being protected in many places in Europe. We have seen that our flag was illuminated on the European public buildings when we were attacked by Daesh. The same thing did not happen after Turkey suffered a PKK terror attack."⁸³

- **New election law may keep 10 pct threshold⁸⁴**

making changes to the current electoral regulations may see that Turkey's current 10 percent national election threshold is also valid for the alliance formed between political parties in the country, sources have revealed.

This implies that even if one of the parties in the alliance falls below the 10 percent threshold, if the total percentage of the votes each party receives passes the threshold, the parties will enter the parliament.

⁸³ Daily sabah, 28 January 2017, <https://www.dailysabah.com/eu-affairs/2018/01/28/eu-minister-celik-dismisses-ep-rapporteur-piris-remarks>

⁸⁴Hurriyet Daily News, 28 January 2017, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/election-threshold-for-political-alliances-to-be-10-percent-126398>

The move has come after Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) leader Devlet Bahçeli had voiced a demand to lower the threshold, which the Justice and Development Party (AKP) had ruled out, eventually leading to a pre-election alliance between the two parties.

As the current legislation does not allow pre-election alliances, officials from both parties gathered twice in January to work on legal amendments for what they call a “national alliance” they want to form for the 2019 elections.

Justice Minister Abdulhamit Gül, parliament’s constitutional commission head Mustafa Şentop and AKP spokesperson Mahir Ünal, as well as MHP lawmakers Mehmet Parsak, Mustafa Kalaycı and İsmail Faruk Aksu, have undertaken work on the set of legal changes to the election law and political parties’ law. The changes will be ready to be presented to both party leaders in 10 days, according to sources.

The AKP and MHP officials are said to have agreed to a great extent on the framework of the legal regulations paving the way for political parties in Turkey to form an alliance for the elections.

Accordingly, the political parties in the alliance will have their own emblems on the paper ballots, but will also have another sign featuring their “alliance” on the ballots.

According to the proposed draft law, the political parties prior to the election will apply to the Supreme Electoral Council (YSK) if they have formed any alliance with another party. The voter who has balloted for their party will also be considered to have voted for the alliance.

Germans up in arms about weapons sales to Turkey and others⁸⁵

On Thursday, German foreign minister Sigmar Gabriel said in a statement that the government would freeze the decision about whether to grant Turkey’s request for more modernized tanks until a new government has been formed.

Gabriel’s statement comes at a time when relations between Germany and Turkey could hardly be more strained. The countries’ leaders have feuded over Germany’s large Turkish minority, which includes dissidents, Berlin’s criticism over civil rights abuses in Turkey, and German journalists who’ve been imprisoned without charge or trial, one for over 11 months.

Despite Germany’s role as a major arms supplier to Turkey, there are limits to its leverage, said Andrew Feinstein, an expert on the global arms trade. “Even if Germany decided to stop selling weapons to Turkey now, they’ve got decades

⁸⁵ https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/germans-up-in-arms-about-weapons-sales-to-turkey-and-others/2018/01/26/a4f190b0-02a0-11e8-86b9-8908743c79dd_story.html?utm_term=.4adcf6debc40

worth of German weaponry to use in these sorts of assaults against the Kurds,” Feinstein said.

West Asia

GCC & Saudi Arabia

- **Reform not oil Price would determine Saudi Arabia’s future**

Chief officer Moritz Kraemer of global rating agency S&P said in a meeting that Saudi Arabia’s future depends upon reform than the price of oil. Even if oil price goes to US\$ 100 a barrel, it would not determine the stability of the economy. Only reform is the remedy. He said “The Kingdom should maintain growth of spending, and one way of trying to achieve this was by getting the private sector more involved in service delivery, health and education and also infrastructure”.⁸⁶ He further said that unlike Turkey and Qatar, Saudi Arabia enjoys a positive opinion in the circle of international investors. Riyadh four times oversubscribed the bonds it issued in 2016 worth US\$17.5 billion. Its economic growth has also been estimated higher to 1.2 per cent this year than the previous year of 0.5 per cent. However, Riyadh needs finance to speed up its infrastructure projects. For this, the government needs to manage its expenditure side and maintain liquid asset close to 100 per cent of GDP. Saudi Arabia is facing political risk and pressure from society as well. But its reform processes would cushion the domestic disturbances and economic growth will ram down the external forces to listen Riyadh.

- **Belgium Setup Energy Saving Training Centre in Saudi Arabia**

Belgium has announced to setup a centre for its country’s energy-saving machines used in Saudi Arabia. This is because of high energy intensity in the country. Saudi Arabia consumes 38 per cent of energy domestically and its energy intensity is one of the highest in the world. Energy intensity is measured by the estimate of energy consumed for producing on unit of output. Talking about the importance of the centre, the ambassador of Belgium to Saudi Arabia said that Riyadh is the hub in the region and people from GCC and other neighbouring countries, including Egypt can easily come and take training.

Energy saving of one the central themes of Vision 2030 and the Saudi Energy Efficiency Center plans to save 1.5 million barrels per day, which is 15 per cent of the total oil production of the country.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ <http://www.arabnews.com/node/1234346/business-economy>

⁸⁷ <http://www.arabnews.com/node/1234211/saudi-arabia>

Israel

- **Vice President Pence in Israel**

In an address to the Knesset on January 22nd, US Vice President Mike Pence pledged the US would relocate its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem by the end of 2019, called on the Palestinians to return to the negotiating table for peace talks, and vowed Washington would withdraw from the “disaster” Iran nuclear deal unless it was “fixed.”⁸⁸ As per information provided by the media, Pence asked Egyptian President Abdel-Fatah el-Sissi and Jordanian King Abdullah II to tell Palestinian leaders the US is interested in restarting peace negotiations.⁸⁹ Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas January 22nd, urged the member states of the European Union to “swiftly” recognize the state of Palestine, arguing such a move would preserve the Palestinians’ hope for peace.⁹⁰ President Abbas told Meretz party leader Zehava Galon on January 26th that “the Oslo Accords are dead”. He said that the US President Donald Trump had, in several past conversations, “promised a good deal to [resolve] the conflict, and then came this unfortunate surprise, which we cannot accept.”⁹¹

- **French President Macron, PM Netanyahu and Davos**

French President Emmanuel Macron said on January 24th before attending the Davos Summit that he would not recognize Palestine as an independent state as a reaction to US President Donald Trump’s declaration of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met on January 24th with several heads of state on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos, urging them to act to fix the Iran nuclear deal and vowing that Israel would not allow Iran to establish military bases in Syria. Netanyahu held meetings with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel, Swiss President Alain Berset and Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko, Rwandan President Paul

⁸⁸ Marissa Newman, “Pence in Knesset: Embassy to open in Jerusalem in 2019, Iran will never get bomb”, *The Times of Israel*, January 22, 2018, https://www.timesofisrael.com/in-knesset-speech-pence-says-us-embassy-will-move-to-jerusalem-by-end-of-2019/?utm_source=The+Times+of+Israel+Daily+Edition&utm_campaign=4b932ae2fa-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_01_22&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_adb46cec92-4b932ae2fa-55556173 accessed on January 29, 2018

⁸⁹ Margaret Talev, “Pence Asks Egypt, Jordan to Reach Out to Palestinians, Source Says”, *Bloomberg Politics*, January 21, 2018, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-01-21/pence-is-said-to-ask-egypt-jordan-to-reach-out-to-palestinians> accessed on January 29, 2018

⁹⁰ Dov Lieber, “Abbas urges EU to swiftly recognize Palestine, says it will encourage peace”, *The Times of Israel*, January 22, 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/abbas-urges-eu-to-swiftly-recognize-palestine-says-it-will-encourage-peace/> accessed on January 29, 2018

⁹¹ “‘Oslo Accords are dead,’ Abbas tells Israeli left-wing leader”, *The Times of Israel*, January 27, 2018, https://www.timesofisrael.com/oslo-accords-are-dead-abbas-tells-israeli-left-wing-leader/?utm_source=The+Times+of+Israel+Daily+Edition&utm_campaign=0823f01fb0-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_01_27&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_adb46cec92-0823f01fb0-55556173 accessed on January 29, 2018

Kagame and French President Emmanuel Macron in addition to the CEO of the SAP German multinational software corporation, Bill McDermott.⁹²

- **Rwandan Migrant in Israel**

Rwandan President Paul Kagame told Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on January 24th that his country would only accept asylum-seekers Israel is looking to deport if the move was made in accordance with international law. The comment came as the two met on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. Netanyahu agreed to Kagame's assertion, a statement from the Prime Minister's Office read, and the pair were said to discuss expanding cooperation between their two countries. The PMO statement did not elaborate on the details of Israel's plan to expel over 38,000 African migrants and asylum seekers, nor did it relate to what Rwanda would be getting in return for its cooperation.⁹³

- **PM Netanyahu in Russia**

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is headed to Moscow on January 29th for a trip lasting for few hours, during which he is set to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin and visit an exhibition on the Holocaust. On the agenda of his meeting with Putin will be Iran's attempts to entrench itself militarily in Syria, since Moscow is one of the key allies of both Damascus and Tehran. Other issues likely to come up in their talks will be the future of the Iranian nuclear deal, of which Russia is one of the signatories, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In February, he is scheduled to participate in the Munich Security Conference, and the following month in the AIPAC Policy Conference in Washington, DC.⁹⁴

⁹² Jacob Magid, "In Davos, Netanyahu urges world leaders to act on Iran nuclear deal", *The Times of Israel*, January 24, 2018, https://www.timesofisrael.com/in-davos-netanyahu-urges-world-leaders-to-act-on-iran-nuclear-deal/?utm_source=The+Times+of+Israel+Daily+Edition&utm_campaign=b608987cd5-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_01_24&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_adb46cec92-b608987cd5-55556173 accessed on January 29, 2018; Jacob Magid, "Macron says he won't recognize Palestine in response to Trump's Jerusalem move", *The Times of Israel*, January 24, 2018, https://www.timesofisrael.com/macron-says-he-wont-recognize-palestine-in-response-to-trumps-jerusalem-move/?utm_source=The+Times+of+Israel+Daily+Edition&utm_campaign=b608987cd5-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_01_24&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_adb46cec92-b608987cd5-55556173 accessed on January 29, 2018

⁹³ Jacob Magid, "Netanyahu agrees to Rwandan demand to only deport migrants there lawfully", *The Times of Israel*, January 25, 2018, https://www.timesofisrael.com/rwandan-president-tells-netanyahu-he-wont-take-in-forcibly-deported-migrants/?utm_source=The+Times+of+Israel+Daily+Edition&utm_campaign=b608987cd5-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_01_24&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_adb46cec92-b608987cd5-55556173 accessed on January 29, 2018

⁹⁴ Raphael Ahren, "Netanyahu to make whirlwind trip to Moscow to discuss Iran, Syria with Putin", *The Times of Israel*, January 25, 2018, https://www.timesofisrael.com/netanyahu-to-make-whirlwind-trip-to-moscow-to-discuss-iran-syria-with-putin/?utm_source=The+Times+of+Israel+Daily+Edition&utm_campaign=b608987cd5-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_01_24&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_adb46cec92-b608987cd5-55556173 accessed on January 29, 2018

Cyber Security

- **Ransomware Scare Prompts Power Authority Alert: Threat Is Real⁹⁵**

India's power sector is in urgent need of a cyber security framework amidst of rising Wannacry ransomware attacks in the year 2017. The Ministry of Power had entrusted Central Electricity Authority (CEA), advisory body in the electricity sector to look into "cyber security issues in the power sector" that submitted its report on 19 July 2017. Warning cyber threats on smart grid systems that supply electricity to common people of a country, a study published in International Journal of Infrastructure Protection said, "Sophisticated cyber attacks on advanced metering infrastructures (smart grids) are a clear and present danger. The most devastating scenario involves a computer worm that traverses advanced metering infrastructures and permanently disables millions of smart meters". Cyber warriors across the world attacked information systems of power distribution organisations, disturbing electricity supply of many western nations especially Ukraine. The CEA report viewed lack of security built into the smart grid systems and called for creation of a multiple-threat intrusion detection system in the power system devices. The report stated, "the country's security establishment "have complete information about the mechanism of protecting critical infrastructure like power sector, its crisis management plan and command structure and procedures to follow in case of an emergency due to cyber security threat".

- **To Prevent a Digital Dark Age: World Economic Forum Launches Global Centre for Cyber Security⁹⁶**

On 24 January 2018, leaders at the World Economic Forum (WEF) agreed to create a Global Centre for Cyber-security, an autonomous organisation in Geneva, Switzerland for safe and secure cyber space. Recognising the need for global collaboration, the centre would provide effective information and capacity building initiatives to governments, industry, technical and legal experts to deal with cyber security challenges. Alois Zwinggi, Managing Director at the World Economic Forum and Head of the Global Centre for Cyber-security, said, "If we want to prevent a digital dark age, we need to work harder to make sure the benefits and potential of the Fourth Industrial Revolution are secure and safe for society. The new Global Centre for Cyber-security is designed as the first platform to tackle today's cyber-risks in a truly global manner". In the light of rising digital crime, Jürgen Stock, the Secretary General of Interpol stated "Interpol is a natural strategic partner for the World Economic Forum's Global Cyber Centre. Both are unique because their global dimension underpins our collective response against the cyber threat. Our partnership contributes to building effective security architecture against such global threats, bringing key interdependent actors together, including police and business." The creation of the new Global Centre for

⁹⁵ The Indian Express, 24 January 2018, <http://indianexpress.com/article/technology/ransomware-scare-prompts-power-authority-alert-threat-is-real-cyber-security-5036833/>

⁹⁶ <https://www.weforum.org/press/2018/01/to-prevent-a-digital-dark-age-world-economic-forum-launches-global-centre-for-cybersecurity>, 24 January 2018.

Cyber-security at the WEF is crucial in the sense that it would encourage governments and industries associated with WEF to jointly come up with a multi-stake holder approach to secure global cyber space.

Terrorism and Counter Terrorism

Pakistan

Sr.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	January 24	FATA	A 'commander' of Haqqani network and two of his associates were killed in a US drone strike in Kurram Agency. ⁹⁷ Pakistan condemned the drone strike, saying that it targeted an Afghan refugee camp. ⁹⁸ However, US denied Pakistan's claim, calling it "false." ⁹⁹	3	0
2	January 24	Punjab	Justice Aminuddin Khan of the Lahore High Court restrained the government from taking any 'illegal' action against Jama'at-ud-Dawa (JuD) 'chief' Hafiz Muhammad Saeed, who had approached the court fearing possible arrest on account of a UN delegation arriving this week and at the behest of US and India. ¹⁰⁰	LHC issues stay order on Hafiz Saeed arrest	

⁹⁷ 3 Haqqani commander among 3 killed in US drone strike in Pakistan, *Economic Times*, January 24, 2018, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/haqqani-militant-killed-by-drone-strike-in-pakistan-officials/articleshow/62637058.cms>, accessed on January 29, 2018

⁹⁸ Haqqani commander, two others killed in Kurram drone strike, *The Express Tribune*, January 24, 2018, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1616614/1-drone-strike-kills-two-suspected-militants-near-pak-afghan-border/>, accessed on January 29, 2018

⁹⁹ US denies hitting Afghan refugee camp in Pakistan drone strike, *AFP*, January 26, 2018, <https://sg.news.yahoo.com/us-denies-hitting-afghan-refugee-camp-pakistan-drone-090908775.html>, accessed on January 29, 2018

¹⁰⁰ Govt stopped from taking 'illegal' steps against Hafiz Saeed, *Dawn*, January 25, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1385178/govt-stopped-from-taking-illegal-steps-against-hafiz-saeed>, accessed on January 29, 2018

3	January 25	Balochistan	<p>Over 200 Baloch separatists, including Baloch Liberation Front (BLF) militants and 15 'commanders', laid down their weapons in the presence of Chief Minister Abdul Quddus Bizenjo during a ceremony held in Turbat District.</p> <p>CM Bizenjo distributed cheques worth PKR 0.1 million each to the surrendering militants and urged disgruntled Baloch leaders to shun violence and come back into the national fold.¹⁰¹</p>	Separatists lay down arms
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Afghanistan

Sr. No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	January 20	Kabul	<p>At least 40 people, including four American citizens, were killed and 140 others were injured during a 13-hour long Taliban siege in Intercontinental Hotel located in Kabul. All the five attackers were killed in retaliatory firing by the SFs.¹⁰² The National Directorate of Security (NDS) announced that initial investigations show the explosives used by Taliban in the attack came from Pakistan.¹⁰³</p>	25	140
2	January 26	Kandahar	An explosion, targeting a police vehicle, occurred in Aino Mina Township in PD11 of Kandahar city, killing one Policeman and injuring four people, including a	1	4

¹⁰¹ Syed Ali Shah, Over 200 Baloch separatists lay down their weapons, *Dawn*, January 25, 2018,

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1385208/over-200-baloch-separatists-lay-down-their-weapons>, accessed on January 29, 2018

¹⁰² Kabul Hotel Attack killed 40 people: Officials, *NDTV*, January 25, 2018, <https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/kabul-hotel-attack-killed-40-people-official-1804605>, accessed on January 29, 2018

¹⁰³ Explosives Used in Hotel Attack Traced Back to Pakistan: NDS, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, January 25, 2018, <http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/assets/epaper/January%2025,%202018/Main%20Page.pdf>, p. 2, accessed on January 29, 2018

			civilian. Kandahar Police Chief General Abdul Raziq confirmed the incident. ¹⁰⁴		
3	January 27	Kabul	A suicide car bombing killed at least 103 people and wounded 235 others near a police checkpoint in Kabul's Chicken Street, which is an area bustling with merchants and shoppers. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack; the Interior Ministry's deputy spokesperson Nasrat Rahimi said that attacker made it through one security checkpoint by driving an ambulance and claiming to be taking a patient to a hospital. He then detonated the bomb at the second checkpoint near the government offices and embassies. Taliban said the attack was aimed at the country's Interior Ministry. ¹⁰⁵	103	235

Iraq

Sr. No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	January 24	Mosul	At least 21 Islamic State (IS/ISIS) militants were killed and six armored vehicles were destroyed in a military operation which was launched on January 23, 2018 to purge the southern part of Mosul from IS remnants. ¹⁰⁶	21	NS
2	January 26	Salahudd in	Security troops arrested two ISIS militants from in the vicinity of Tuz Khurmatu region, east of	ISIS arrest	

¹⁰⁴ Explosion Targets Police Vehicle in Kandahar, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, January 27, 2018, <http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/assets/epaper/January%2027,%202018/Main%20Page.pdf>, accessed on January 29, 2018

¹⁰⁵ At Least 103 Killed, 235 Wounded In Taliban Car Bombing In Kabul, *National Public Radio*, January 27, 2018, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2018/01/27/581265342/dozens-killed-more-than-100-wounded-in-taliban-car-bombing-in-kabul>, accessed on January 29, 2018

¹⁰⁶ Mohammed Ebraheem, 21 Islamic State militants killed in southern Mosul military operation, *Iraqi News*, January 24, 2018, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/21-islamic-state-militants-killed-southern-mosul-military-operation/>, accessed on January 29, 2018

			Salahuddin. According to details, the Rapid Response troops received accurate information that located two IS members, who have arrest warrants issued against them. Troops then carried out an operation and managed to arrest them. ¹⁰⁷	
3	January 26	Syrian border	Mohamed al-Dulaimi, a member of Anbar Province Council said that ISIS militants still pose a threat to Iraq by maintaining presence at Syrian regions on the border with Iraq. These include Hezein, Sousa and Barghoul border regions of Syria that still “pose a security threat to western Anbar”. ¹⁰⁸	ISIS threat from Syrian border
4	January 28	Diyala	A mass grave of IS militants’ bodies was found in Basateen al-Mekheisa region. The police command said in a statement that six graves of IS militants were found during an operation that destroyed a rest house for the group, which included weapons and explosives. ¹⁰⁹	ISIS mass grave recovered

Syria

Sr. No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	January 25	Deir Ezzor	ISIS launched an offensive against the Syrian regime forces near Albukamal city, southeast of Deir Ezzor, which is witnessing wide-scale ISIS-led assaults. ¹¹⁰	ISIS offensive	

¹⁰⁷ Nehal Mostafa, Two Islamic State members arrested in operation, east of Salahuddin, *Iraqi News*, January 26, 2018, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/two-islamic-state-members-arrested-operation-east-salahuddin/>, accessed on January 29, 2018

¹⁰⁸ Mohamed Mostafa, Iraqi official: Islamic State still pose a threat from Syrian border regions, *Iraqi News*, January 26, 2018, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/iraqi-official-islamic-state-still-pose-threat-syrian-border-regions/>, accessed on January 29, 2018

¹⁰⁹ Nehal Mostafa, Mass grave of Islamic State members’ bodies found in Diyala: Police, *Iraqi News*, January 28, 2018, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/mass-grave-islamic-state-members-bodies-found-diyala-police/>, accessed on January 29, 2018

¹¹⁰ Loaa Adel, ISIS launches assault against security forces in Albukamal, *Iraqi News*, January 25, 2018, <https://www.iraqinews.com/arab-world-news/isis-launches-assault-security-forces-albukamal/>, accessed on January 29, 2018

2	January 28	Manbij	General Joseph Votel, commander of the United States Central Command said that US troops will not withdraw from Manbij, a strategically important city in northern Syria, a leading US military figure said. He said that withdrawing US forces from Manbij is “not something we are looking into.” ¹¹¹	US won't withdraw from Manbij
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¹¹¹ Euan McKirdy, US general: US troops won't withdraw from Syrian city of Manbij, *CNN*, January 29, 2018, <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/01/29/politics/general-votel-syria-manbij-commitment-intl/index.html>, accessed on January 29, 2018