

Weekly Media Updates **(7-13 May, 2018)**

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Africa

- **Zimbabwe, India Ink \$2,9m SMEs Grant¹**

Zimbabwe and India on 9th May 2018, signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for a \$2,92 million grant for the supply of additional machinery for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) under the Indo - Zimbabwe project.

The Indo-Zimbabwe project, which was established in 2006, has previously received a \$5 million grant from India to support the development of SMEs in the country. ogy being used by SMEs covered under the project, as well as getting new machinery.

Speaking during the signing ceremony in Harare yesterday, Minister of Industry, Commerce and Enterprise Development Dr Mike Bimha, said the \$2,92 million grant is expected to also support the training of local personnel, repair and maintenance of old and new machinery for three years.

- **Ghana and India Are Natural Partners for 1DIF--Vice President Bawumia**

A 16-member delegation of Indian businessmen, led by Ghana's High Commissioner to India, Michael Oquaye, last Friday, called on Dr Mahamudu Bawumia, Vice President of the Republic of Ghana, at the Jubilee House in Accra.

The delegation is in Ghana to explore the possibility of setting up a 200-metric-tonne-palm oil refinery, a cocoa processing plant and a gold refinery, and to also help with the Pharmapark initiative of the Ministry of Trade and Industry.

Speaking at the meeting, Dr Bawumia urged the prospective investors from India to take advantage of the increasingly business-friendly environment created by the Akufo-Addo Government to set up businesses in Ghana.

The Vice President assured the investor community of adequate protection and market for their investments and expressed Government's willingness to engage with anyone with genuine proposals.

Ghana and India since she gained Independence, including the era of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), Vice President Bawumia said the Government of Ghana was looking forward to further strengthening of business relations through investments in each other's country.

He described India as a "natural partner" for the Akufo-Addo Government's One-District One-Factory flagship programme and urged the delegation and their

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

counterparts back home to help achieve the President's vision of a Ghana beyond aid.

- **Ebola Outbreak - WHO Puts 10 Countries On 'High Alert'²**

The World Health Organization (WHO) on Friday said 10 countries, including the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and its neighbors, have been put on high alert after local authorities declared an Ebola outbreak earlier last week. WHO officials are most worried about the spread of Ebola in Congo-Brazzaville and the Central African Republic, since they are both connected to the outbreak area through river systems. He noted that the latest outbreak has occurred in a remote area near Bikoro. But if the virus spreads to Mbandaka, the capital of DRC's Equateur province home to more than one million inhabitants, it could have devastating consequences. The outbreak is the ninth of its kind since the virus was discovered in then-Zaire in 1976. The WHO is hoping to quickly quarantine the outbreak after it was criticized for its slow response during the 2014 outbreak in West Africa.

- **After Berbera and Djibouti Ethiopia Now Eyes On Kenya's Lamu Port³**

At the invitation of the President of Kenya, Uhuru Kenyatta, the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Dr. Abiy Ahmed Ali, made a State Visit to the Republic of Kenya from 6th to 7th May, 2018. The two leaders emphasized the importance of strengthening cooperation that inspires prosperity of the people of the two countries. They committed to the development of LAPSSET, the Northern Corridor including road network between Isiolo, Moyale through to Addis Ababa and the railway from Addis Ababa to Nairobi. Both sides agreed to finalise the Ethiopia-Kenya interconnection transmission line. Both sides agreed to jointly supervise and inspect the Lamu-Garissa-Isiolo-Moyale and Moyale-Hawassa-Addis Ababa road networks. The Kenyan side will facilitate the formal acquisition of land in Lamu Port given to the Ethiopian government and the Ethiopian side reiterated its commitment to develop the land for logistical facilitation.

- **South Africa Government Takes Control of Troubled North West Province⁴**

South Africa's national government on Sunday took control of the country's troubled North West province. The province has seen crowd protests over poor public services and widespread graft allegations in recent weeks. Public anger boiled over last month as protesters looted shops, burnt cars and clashed with police officials. Protesters have also demanded the resignation of local government leader Supra Mahumapelo, a member of President Cyril Ramaphosa's ruling African National Congress (ANC) and close ally of scandal-plagued former President Jacob Zuma. Mahumapelo has so far refused to step down but has since gone on a leave of absence.

² DW, 11 May 2018, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201805120001.html>

³ Mogadishu (Dalsan radio), 7 May 2018, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201805140647.html>

⁴ DW, 13 May 2018, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201805140001.html>

Ramaphosa cut short a visit to the Commonwealth summit in the UK to deal with the first major crisis of his young presidency

- **TAZARA Launches Hi-Tech Cargo, Train Information System⁵**

TANZANIA-ZAMBIA Railway Authority (TAZARA) has launched Freight Management and Information System that enables customers to track their cargo from origin to final destination just by using their smart phones.

With the new modern hightech initiative, Tanzania is now becoming the first in East and Central Africa to have the technology, according to TAZARA Regional Manager Fuad Abdallah.

The system was officially launched at TAZARA headquarters in Dar es Salaam, with the Minister of Works, Transport and Communication, Professor Makame Mbarawa officiating. According to Mr Abdallah, the new project is dedicated to transportation and cargo flow management performance by introducing location-based Transportation Management System (TMS) to main freight routes in Tanzania- Zambia economies.

- **Namibia to Sign N\$50 Trillion Africa Trade Deal⁶**

President Hage Geingob yesterday, 8 May 2018, confirmed that Namibia will soon sign up to the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA), which will give the country easier access to the African market currently valued at nearly N\$50 trillion.

Namibia has always been pro-AfCFTA but delayed signing the actual agreement to first ensure all its bases were covered through an inclusive consultative process, said Geingob during a meeting with AU Commission Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat at State House yesterday.

The president gave the assurance that Namibia is fully committed to the integration of the continent and strongly believes that its own economic development depends on advancing regional and continental economic cooperation and integration.

African leaders have agreed that the AfCFTA takes effect within 18 months, but first at least 22 countries must formally ratify the agreement.

⁵ Tanzania daily News, 9 May 2018,

http://allafrica.com/stories/201805090607.html?utm_campaign=allafrica%3Aeditor&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&utm_content=promote%3Aaans%3Aacbxam

⁶ New Era, 9 May 2018,

http://allafrica.com/stories/201805090414.html?utm_campaign=allafrica%3Ainternal&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&utm_content=promote%3Aaans%3Aabafbt

There is already a problem with the time frame, with Africa's biggest economies saying it is unrealistic as it is too short a notice to wrap up negotiations among the African countries that already signed up to the agreement.

Moulded in the form of the European Union's version of free trade, the AfCFTA presents immense opportunities for African countries to trade among themselves in a market valued at nearly US\$4 trillion (about N\$50.6 trillion) without trade restrictions such as tariffs.

- **The Continent is Able to Raise Its Own Capital⁷**

President Paul Kagame has debunked the mentality that Africa must always look to western countries for funding of major long-term initiatives, saying that the continent is not as poor as it is presumed.

The President was speaking yesterday at the opening of the Transform Africa Summit 2018 underway at the Kigali Convention Centre.

With the Single African Digital Market and other initiatives requiring capital injection, President Kagame called for efforts to mobilise private African capital to participate in the projects.

Kagame said that there is a myth that Africa lack ability to fund major investment projects and has to turn to the West which he said is more of a mindset problem.

The African continent loses billions of dollars through illicit financial flows while a section of its citizens have assets invested abroad, he said.

- **Deadly Attack on South African Mosque Has ‘Hallmarks of Islamic State’⁸**

South African police searching for three men who stabbed worshippers at a mosque near Durban have said the attackers’ motive was unknown but “elements of extremism” were involved. One Muslim leader said the mosque was targeted because it was a Shia place of worship that had received previous threats, exposing deep tension between the Shia and Sunni population. The assailants killed one man by slitting his throat and critically injured two others after midday prayers on Thursday at the mosque in Verulam, a town on the outskirts of Durban. “There are elements of extremism,” said Simphiwe Mhlongo, a spokesman for the Hawks police unit. “It shows hatred towards the worshippers.” A local Islamic leader, Aftab Haider, said Shias in South Africa had been subjected to a prolonged hate campaign. He said the attack may be connected to the Sunni extremist group Islamic State. The incident appeared to be unprecedented in South Africa, where

⁷ The New Times, 9 May 2018,

http://allafrica.com/stories/201805090024.html?utm_campaign=allafrica%3Aeditor&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&utm_content=promote%3Aaans%3Aabkopt

⁸ The Guardian, 11 May 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/may/11/south-africa-police-hunt-three-men-after-durban-mosque-attack>

about 1.5 per cent of the 55 million population is Muslim. The country prides itself on religious acceptance.

- **Renamo Leader's Death Sparks Fears of Unrest in Mozambique⁹**

Locals in Vunduzi, a village near the place where Mozambican soldiers and former Renamo rebels fought their last battle, fear that Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama's death this month could spell fresh unrest. After Dhlakama unilaterally decreed a truce at the end of 2016, life had returned to normal. Military checkpoints disappeared and cars, trucks and motorcycles moved around freely in the village. The main school, which had been shut in 2015, reopened. Public buildings have been repainted and the village now has electricity. Dhlakama's sudden death on May 3 in his Gorongosa bush camp has left the small village shaken and worried about the future.

- **Qatar Commits to Fund Zimbabwe Projects¹⁰**

Qatar, yesterday, made a commitment to fund developmental projects in Zimbabwe's education, health and micro-finance sectors, as President Mnangagwa's administration sealed a comprehensive financial agreement between Doha and Harare. Government will now have to provide project proposals in the targeted sectors for funding to be released. President Mnangagwa yesterday morning held private talks with Qatar's Minister of Defence Dr. Khalid bin Mohamed Al Attiyah before touring the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy, the body which is masterminding Qatar's projects for hosting the 2022 Fifa World Cup. Speaking to journalists after meetings with senior officials from the Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD), Finance and Economic Development Minister Patrick Chinamasa said the ball was now in Zimbabwe's court to submit project proposals. QFFD is a public development institution that helps developing countries implement development programmes.

- **Angola to Pay Back N\$600m by June¹¹**

The Angolan Central Bank is expected to pay its last instalment of N\$600 million to the Bank of Namibia in June. President Hage Geingob made the announcement on Friday during the commemoration of the 40th anniversary of Cassinga Day in Windhoek. The N\$600 million to be paid in June is part of the quarterly payments agreed between the two banks following the cancellation of a currency conversion agreement signed in 2014. The Bank of Namibia and the Banco Nacional de Angola

⁹ eNCA, 13 May 2018, <http://www.enca.com/africa/leaders-death-sparks-fears-of-unrest-in-mozambiques-former-rebel-bastion>

¹⁰ The Herald, 9 May 2018 , <https://www.herald.co.zw/qatar-commits-to-fund-zim-projects/>

¹¹ The Namibian, 7 May 2018, [https://www.namibian.com.na/67098/read/Angola-to-pay-back-N\\$600m-by-June](https://www.namibian.com.na/67098/read/Angola-to-pay-back-N$600m-by-June)

entered a currency conversion agreement in 2014 to allow the exchange of the Angolan kwanza for the Namibia dollar at the border towns of Oshikango and Santa Clara in an effort to maintain the momentum of business transactions between the two countries. The agreement was, however, revoked following unforeseen challenges observed by the two central banks, including “exchanging of currencies outside the scope of the agreement”. As a result, Angola ended up owing Namibia N\$5 billion.

- **Angola to Privatise 74 State Companies Over the Next Few Years¹²**

Angola plans to privatise 74 state companies over the next few years, predominantly those in the industrial sector, according to the prospectus sent to investors as part of the country’s Eurobond issuance. Africa’s second-largest crude producer has been battered by a fall in the price of oil over the past four years and President João Lourenço, who took office in September, has pledged to reduce state interference in the economy, which remains centrally controlled after years of civil war and Soviet influenced state building following independence from Portugal in 1975. A prospectus released by the Angola Government does not list the companies or say how much the privatisations could raise, but a source told Reuters that Angola’s ports, national carrier TAAG, BCI bank, and insurer Ensa were all being considered for full or partial privatisation. In the prospectus, Angola also said it saw its total debt – excluding that held by state oil firm Sonangol – reaching US\$77.3 billion, or 70.8 percent of GDP, by the end of 2018.

- **Madagascar President Lifts Restrictions on Opposition Candidates¹³**

Madagascar’s president approved a new election law lifting a provision that would have prevented the main opposition candidate from standing for office, which had provoked a political crisis and deadly street demonstrations. Supporters of opposition politician Marc Ravalomanana, who served as president from 2002 until he was toppled in a 2009 coup, had demanded the scrapping of election rules they said were drawn up to stop him from running. The High Court ruled last week that the rules were unconstitutional. “Organic laws (on elections) were promulgated today on the basis of the decisions and opinions of the High Constitutional Court,” President Hery Rajaonarimampianina’s office said in a statement late on Friday.

- **Madagascar Opposition Snubs UN Envoy Mediating to End Crisis¹⁴**

The opposition in Madagascar on Monday said it was shunning a UN special envoy who is trying to broker an end to a political crisis ahead of a general election. “Let the Madagascans speak to each other,” opposition member of parliament Hanitriniaina Razafimanantsoa told protesters gathering for the 17th straight day

¹² Africa News, 11 May 2018, <http://www.africanews.com/2018/05/11/angola-to-privatise-74-state-companies-over-the-next-few-years/>

¹³ Africa News, 12 May 2018, <http://www.africanews.com/2018/05/12/madagascar-president-lifts-restrictions-on-opposition-candidates/>

¹⁴ News24, 8 May 2018, <https://www.news24.com/Africa/News/madagascar-opposition-snubs-un-envoy-mediating-to-end-crisis-20180508>

in the capital Antananarivo. "For the moment this is a crisis that must be discussed between Madagascans and resolved by Madagascans," he said. Since April 21, hundreds of opposition supporters have occupied the May 13 Square in the heart of the capital, seeking the resignation of President Hery Rajaonarimampianina before general elections seven months away. Abdoulaye Bathily, a special advisor of the UN Secretary General arrived in Madagascar on Sunday to try to renew dialogue between the opposition and the ruling party. He held talks with president Rajaonarimampianina on Sunday. "The solution lies in the hands of the Madagascans, we just want to accompany them in this process," said Bathily.

- **Mauritius 2017 FDI Jumps 28 Per Cent yr/yr - Central Bank¹⁵**

Foreign direct investment (FDI) in Mauritius grew faster in 2017 than earlier reported, driven by inflows into real estate, revised central bank data showed on Tuesday. The Bank of Mauritius said in a statement FDI grew 28 percent year-on-year to 17.49 billion rupees (\$507.69 million). Last month the bank put the figure at 14.22 billion rupees in 2017 compared with 13.64 billion in 2016. Foreign investment in real estate led with 8.79 billion rupees, followed by financial and insurance activities with 6.58 billion, up from an earlier estimate of 3.32 billion, the central bank said.

- **Thousands of Tanzania's Maasai Evicted From Their Land 'For Tourism'¹⁶**

Tens of thousands of Tanzania's ethnic Maasai people are homeless after the government burnt their houses to keep the savannah open for tourism benefiting two foreign safari companies, a US-based policy think-tank claims. Villagers in northern Tanzania's Loliondo area, near the Ngorongoro Crater tourism hotspot, have been evicted in the past year and denied access to vital grazing and watering holes, said the new report by the Oakland Institute, a California think-tank that researches environmental and social issues. Allegations of wrongdoing have persisted in recent years against Tanzania Conservation Limited, an affiliate of US-based Thomson Safaris, and Ortello, a group that organises hunting trips for the royal family of the United Arab Emirates. Responding to the findings, Thomson Safaris said the "awful allegations of abuse are simply untrue". The company invested in Tanzania "in good faith", director Rick Thomson said in an email. Tanzania's Tourism Permanent Secretary Gaudence Milanzi denied the Maasai are being targeted, saying the government is working to improve their welfare by embracing modern methods of livestock keeping.

¹⁵ Reuters, 8 May 2018, <https://in.reuters.com/article/mauritius-economy/mauritius-2017-fdi-jumps-28-pct-yr-yr-central-bank-idINL8N1SE5DD>

¹⁶ The Sunday Morning Herald, 12 May 2018, <https://www.smh.com.au/world/africa/thousands-of-tanzania-s-maasai-evicted-from-their-land-for-tourism-20180511-p4zert.html>

- **Tanzania Opens New Embassy in Israel¹⁷**

Tanzania's Minister for Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation, Augustine Mahiga, on Wednesday commissioned the country's new embassy in Israel. A statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation on Wednesday said Mahiga urged the Israeli government to also open its embassy in Tanzania. The opening of the new embassy in Tel Aviv followed the recent visit to Tanzania by Israel's Minister for Justice, Ayelet Shaked, who led a high ranking delegation of Israeli businessmen. Speaking shortly after he had inaugurated the new office, Mahiga described Israel as a role model country to Tanzania. Ties between Tanzania and Israel, severed in the 1970s, were reestablished in 1995, but Israel had still been conducting diplomatic services with Tanzania through its office in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi.

- **Democratic Republic of Congo Reports Ebola Outbreak, 2 Cases Confirmed¹⁸**

The Democratic Republic of the Congo declared an Ebola outbreak after two suspected cases tested positive for the Zaire strain of the virus, the World Health Organization reported Tuesday. The outbreak emerged in Bikoro, a town in the northwest area of the country, after local health officials reported 21 patients with symptoms of a suspected viral hemorrhagic fever — rare and life-threatening fevers caused by several families of viruses, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Seventeen of the patients later died, according to the WHO. The WHO said in a statement it would deploy experts to support the Democratic Republic of Congo and attempt to prevent the virus from spreading.

- **Opposition Faction Agrees to Join South Sudan's Ruling Party¹⁹**

An opposition faction controlled by South Sudan's first vice president has said it will join the country's ruling party. Taban Deng Gai said on Monday that the political opposition Sudan People's Liberation Movement - In Opposition (SPLM-IO) had dissolved and joined the ranks of the SPLM party. The vice president's announcement came before peace talks led by a regional bloc were scheduled to be held in neighbouring Ethiopia on May 17. The move is expected to strengthen the position of the government of President Salva Kiir.

¹⁷ Xinhua Net, 9 May 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-05/09/c_137167463.htm

¹⁸ PBS News Hours, 9 May 2018, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/democratic-republic-of-congo-reports-ebola-outbreak-2-cases-confirmed>

¹⁹ Al Jazeera, 7 May 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/05/opposition-faction-agrees-join-south-sudan-ruling-party-180507151223909.html>

- **South Sudan Urges US not to 'Abandon' It After White House Announces Assistance Review²⁰**

South Sudan's government urged the United States on Wednesday not to "abandon" the country after Washington said it would review its assistance programs because it could not continue a partnership with leaders perpetuating "endless war". "We are asking the United States not to abandon this country (South Sudan) because we need them ... their role to assist the population of South Sudan is crucial and cannot be ignored", said foreign affairs ministry spokesman Mawien Makol Ariik. The United States is the largest donor of humanitarian assistance to South Sudan, which has been in the throes of a civil war since late 2013 that has displaced around a third of the 12 million-strong population and killed tens of thousands of people.

- **Kenya President Says 9 Soldiers Killed in Attack in Somalia²¹**

Kenya's president says nine Kenyan soldiers were killed when extremists attacked their patrol car in neighboring Somalia. President Uhuru Kenyatta mourned the soldiers who were killed Sunday evening in an al-Shabab attack in Dhobley, Somalia. Al-Shabab claimed responsibility for the attack, saying it had killed and wounded 15 soldiers, according to the SITE Intelligence Group, which monitors extremist groups. Kenyan troops are part of an African Union force bolstering Somalia's weak government against an insurgency by the Somalia-based extremist group al-Shabab.

- **Defiant Miguna Miguna Set to Return to Kenya, Odinga Insists on Referendum²²**

Kenya is headed for another political showdown in the short term as embattled opposition politician Miguna Miguna is set to return to the country next week and in the medium term as Raila Odinga insists on a referendum that has been opposed by deputy president William Ruto. Miguna announced on his Twitter account on Saturday that he will return to Kenya on May 16, arguing that he has a right to a fair trial. The last time Miguna attempted to return to the country on the strength of court orders compelling the government to facilitate his return, he was denied entry and flown back to Dubai, from where he returned to Canada. Miguna was deported from Kenya on February 6 after he was arrested, and held incommunicado for five days in different police stations. He was accused of treason for his role in the mock inauguration of opposition leader Raila Odinga as the "people's president."

²⁰ Reuters, 9 May 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-southsudan-usa/south-sudan-urges-u-s-not-to-abandon-it-after-white-house-announces-assistance-review-idUSKBN1IA1A3>

²¹ The Washington Post, 7 may 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/kenya-president-says-9-soldiers-killed-in-attack-in-somalia/2018/05/07/bd03f270-523b-11e8-a6d4-ca1d035642ce_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.01a8d390b8c8

²² Africa News, 9 May 2018, <http://www.africanews.com/2018/05/09/defiant-miguna-miguna-set-to-return-to-kenya-odinga-insists-on-referendum/>

- **Five Killed in ‘US Raid’ in Somalia²³**

Five civilians have been shot dead in an alleged raid involving US forces in southern Somalia, elders said Thursday. Ali Mohamed Moalin, a traditional elder close to Afgoye in Lower Shabelle where the alleged raid took place on Wednesday night, said “two military helicopters” were involved as well as “some foreign special forces”. District police officer Ibrahim Abdi confirmed the military operation saying it was targeting Islamic militants of the al-Qaeda aligned Shabaab group. “There was a raid by Somali special forces near Afgoye last night, they were targeting Al-Shabaab, but we have been informed about civilian casualties. The security forces are investigating the reports,” he said.

- **Kenya and Djibouti Strengthen Security and Trade Links²⁴**

Kenya is reaching out to Djibouti in a bid to benefit from the Horn of Africa nation’s strategic location for security and trade links. On Wednesday, President Uhuru Kenyatta and Djibouti leader Ismail Guelleh signed a number of agreements, mainly centred on boosting trade, but also influenced by security concerns. It is the second attempt by Kenya to woo Djibouti, a country which has traditionally not featured on Kenya’s trade links map. President Kenyatta in January held a meeting with Mr. Guelleh when the two met during the African Union Summit in Addis Ababa. At the time, they spoke of their readiness to improve trade and security ties. The meeting in Nairobi was influenced by security concerns by both countries. They both contribute troops to the African Union Mission in Somalia (Amisom) and have been targeted by Al-Shabaab terrorists. It came just two days after new Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed also visited Nairobi on a similar mission. It was also noted that trade between Kenya and Djibouti had been extremely low over the years, but expressed optimism that President Guelleh’s visit to Kenya would lead to the signing of a number of bilateral trade pacts to boost business.

- **Ethiopia Gets Lamu Land to Cut Reliance on Port of Djibouti²⁵**

Landlocked Ethiopia is set to build an office in Lamu, giving the clearest indication yet of its intention to shift some of its logistics undertakings to the Kenyan coast. The Kenyan government has committed to set aside some land to enable Ethiopia set up the logistics facility. “The Kenyan side will facilitate the formal acquisition of land in Lamu Port given to the Ethiopian government,” states a joint communique issued after bilateral talks between President Uhuru Kenyatta and Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali on Monday. “The Ethiopian side reiterated its commitment to develop the land for logistics facilitation.” At the moment, Ethiopia has mainly relies on the Port of Djibouti for sea link to the rest of the world after the 1992

²³ The News, 11 May 2018, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/315276-five-killed-in-us-raid-in-somalia>

²⁴ Daily Nation, 10 May 2018, <https://www.nation.co.ke/news/Kenya-and-Djibouti-strengthen-security--trade-links/1056-4553806-kg9rej/index.html>

²⁵ Business Daily, 8 May 2018, <https://www.businessdailyafrica.com/economy/Ethiopia-gets-Lamu-cut-reliance--Djibouti/3946234-4551732-6x3cv0z/index.html>

independence of Eritrea cut its Red Sea connection and rendered it landlocked. Unlike Kenya whose territorial Indian Ocean waters cover about 128,015 square kilometres but does not have a single merchant ship, Ethiopia has more than a dozen state-run seagoing vessels. On Monday, the two leaders committed to the development of Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia Transport corridor (Lapsset) including road network between Isiolo, Moyale through to Addis Ababa as well as the railway from Addis Ababa to Nairobi. “The leaders committed to expand the border town of Moyale into a joint city to boost socio-economic integration. The Joint Moyale City will host a special economic zone, the two leaders said.

- **Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia Fail to Agree on Nile Dispute²⁶**

Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia have failed again to make progress on their Nile dispute as Ethiopia works to complete a massive upstream dam, an Egyptian official said Tuesday. Egypt fears the Renaissance Dam will cut into its share of the river, which provides virtually all the freshwater for the arid country of 100 million people. Ethiopia, which has the same sized population, says the dam is essential for its economic development. Technical talks among irrigation ministers of the three countries in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, last week ended with no deal, Hossam el-Emam, a spokesman for Egypt’s Irrigation Ministry, told The Associated Press. Ethiopia and Sudan still insist on modifications to a technical report by a French firm commissioned to assess the dam’s impact, he said. The \$4.8 billion dam is now 63 percent finished, and Ethiopia hopes to become a key energy hub in Africa upon its completion. The main sticking point with Egypt concerns how quickly the reservoir behind the dam is filled, and the impact that will have downstream.

- **India, Ethiopia Vow to Boost Counter Terror Cooperation²⁷**

External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj today held talks with her Ethiopian counterpart Workneh Gebeyehu to strengthen ties in key areas such as combating terrorism, trade and investment, and development partnership. Swaraj and Gebeyehu led their respective delegations for the second Joint Committee Meeting here. The two sides exchanged views on strengthening relations in areas such as counter terrorism, trade and investment, development partnership, capacity building, science and technology, and culture, Ministry of External Affairs Spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said.

- **Boko Haram No Longer 'Holds Any Territory,' Nigeria Tells UN, but Killing Continues²⁸**

²⁶ The Washington Post, 8 May 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/egypt-sudan-ethiopia-fail-to-agree-on-nile-dispute/2018/05/08/f7d1040a-52af-11e8-a6d4-ca1d035642ce_story.html?utm_term=.cddf59b9a1dd

²⁷ The Times of India, 9 May 2018, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/india-ethiopia-vow-to-boost-counter-terror-cooperation/articleshow/64096615.cms>

The Nigerian Army says that it has freed 1,000 captives of Boko Haram during a week-long battle with the militant group in the country's northeast. The rescued prisoners are said to be mostly women and children, although some young men who were also abducted and forced to fight for the group are among them. The army is providing few details about the operation beyond saying that it also involved forces from Chad, Benin, Niger and Cameroon — all part of a multinational anti-Boko Haram task force — and that four villages were targeted. Local media reports that the captives have been taken to hospital for treatment, debriefing and "rehabilitation." This is not the first time that Nigeria's military has made such claims. Just yesterday, Samson Itegeboje, Nigeria's ambassador to the United Nations, told the General Assembly that Boko Haram no longer "holds any territory" in the country. The declaration came at the same time that media back home were reporting that a Nigerian Air Force jet flattened a village in Borno state with rockets and cannon bursts, "neutralizing" a "major source of fire from the Boko Haram terrorists." A spate of recent attacks suggest that the militant group remains a lethal force.

North Africa

- **Hamas Delegation Visits Cairo to Discuss Current Situation in Gaza²⁹**

A Hamas delegation under the leadership of Mr. Hnaiya visited Cairo to discuss the situations arising out of shifting of US capital to Jerusalem as per the decision taken by the US administration taken in month of last December. The delegation met the intelligence chief of Egypt and discussed about handling of the situation when Palestinians would be holding march and series of protest in the towns of Gaza. One member of the delegation told that the talk was very cordial with the intelligence director in Cairo and the officials assured full support to the delegation that Egypt would always stand by the just cause of Palestine and Gaza people. The officials in Cairo also hinted at the possibility of open the crossing of Rafah with Gaza and the conversation between two sides mostly revolved around the decision of the US to shift the US capital to Jerusalem.

The delegation members said that they would continue to protest the decision of shifting the capital and they have not left the cause of refugees who have every right to return. They also pointed out that the protest and march would be peaceful and large number of participation would from the oppressed masses are expected across the cities of Palestine. It is worth mentioning here that the Hamas delegation

²⁸ CBC News, 8 May 2018, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/thenational/national-today-newsletter-boko-haram-la-presse-rape-india-1.4651311>

²⁹ Rail Youm, an Arabic Daily <https://www.raialyoum.com/index.php/%D9%88%D9%81%D8%AF-%D8%AD%D8%B1%D9%83%D8%A9-%D8%AD%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%B3-%D8%A8%D8%B1%D8%A6%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%A9-%D9%87%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%8A%D8%B9%D9%88%D8%AF-%D8%A5%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%BA%D8%B2%D8%A9/>

visited the town of Cairo at the invitation of Egypt government and the members mentioned that both side discussed the aftermath of the “March of Return” which is being organized to commemorate the Nakba occurred seventy years ago in 1948 an it is also coinciding with the day when the US would officially shift the capital to Jerusalem. It is expected that thousands of Palestinians would be participating in the protest march an according to the report; large numbers of Palestinians had started assembling on the Gaza-Israel border in the last days of March.

- **No Houthi Plan minus UN Resolution 2216 is Acceptable to the Saudi Arabia³⁰**

The spokesperson of the Saudi-led coalition, Al-Turkey has stated that the Saudi Arabia would accept no initiative from the Houthis unless they agree to accept and execute the UNSC resolution 2216. IN a telephonic interview with the an Arabic daily, Asharqal Awsat , Mr. Al-Turkey said that the Houthis are working out of the bond of international laws and norms and they do not represent the civil society members of the Yemen but they are merely a militia group and they have no legitimacy . He also made it clear that their present act of terrorism and usurpation of power from an elected and sovereign government should be subjected to global scrutiny and must be punished for these acts of usurpation. He also sought the international community to rein them because they are biggest source of predicament for the Yemeni people and they are the threat to national and regional security.

Central Asia

- **Uzbekistan President to Visit US**

President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoev is visiting the US from 15 to 17 May 2017. It is the first visit of the Uzbek President since the visit of former President Islam Karimov in 2002.³¹ The visiting President will be meeting US President Donald Trump on 16 May, and interact with other authorities. He will be visiting Pentagon as well.

After focusing to improve relations with neighbouring countries, the new government of Uzbekistan under Mirziyoev is probably seeking greater economic and security relation with the US.

- **Mongolia’s First Refinery to be Built with India’s Support**

³⁰ Ath-Thaurah, A Yemeni Arabic Daily: <http://www.althawranews.net/archives/502938>

³¹ Bruce Pannier, “Majlis Podcast: Mr. Mirziyoev Goes To Washington,” Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 13 May 2018, <https://www.rferl.org/a/majlis-podcast-mr-mirziyoev-goes-to-washington/29224079.html>

Mongolia is to begin construction of its first oil refinery later this year. The project will be completed by 2022 and it will be supported by India's US\$ 1 billion credit to Mongolia announced in 2015.³² It is likely to boost the country's GDP by 10 percent.

Engineers India Ltd. has been selected to prepare the detailed project report for the refinery's construction.

China

- **China's top legislator visits Ethiopia to boost bilateral ties**

Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of China Li Zhanshu visited Ethiopia from May 9 to 12, 2018. Li said that China is willing to work with Ethiopia to deepen mutual political trust, strengthen practical cooperation and constantly elevate friendship and cooperation between the two nations. Ethiopian President Mulatu Teshome expressed readiness to develop the comprehensive strategic partnership of cooperation.

The Chinese side expressed interest in strengthening cooperation within the Belt and Road Initiative and the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation framework. Li also added that the two countries should give full play to the role of the Addis Ababa-Djibouti railway as an economic "main artery" for constructing economic corridors along the railway route and develop industrial zones, oil and gas resources and new areas of cooperation. Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed said that the implementation of the "ten major plans" for China-Africa cooperation and the Belt and Road Initiative has brought tangible benefits to Africa.³³

- **First China-Belgium freight train from China's Tangshan arrived in Antwerp**

On May 12, 2018, the first freight train from Tangshan port in China's Hebei province arrived at Antwerp Port in Belgium. The train with 41 containers left Tangshan on April 26 and travelled a distance of 11,000 km during the 16 days journey connecting China and Belgium as part of the Belt and Road Initiative. The train passed through Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus, Poland and Germany before reaching Antwerp in Belgium.³⁴

³² Devdisource.com, "Mongolia's first oil refinery construction to start later this year," 12 May 2018, <https://www.devdisource.com/Article/7175-mongolias-first-oil-refinery-construction-to-start-later-this-year/East%20and%20South%20East%20Asia>

³³ "China's top legislator visits Ethiopia to boost bilateral ties", *The People's Daily*, May 12, 2018, <http://en.people.cn/n3/2018/0512/c90000-9459446.html>, Accessed on May 14, 2018.

³⁴ "First China-Belgium freight train from China's Tangshan arrived in Antwerp", *Xinhua*, May 13, 2018, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-05/13/c_137176090.htm, Accessed on May 14, 2018.

- **First carrier designed in China begins sea trial**

China's first domestically designed aircraft carrier left the Dalian shipyard for its maiden sea trial on May 13, 2018. The ship is testing reliability and capability of its propulsion systems. The ship has a conventional propulsion system and it uses a ski-jump to launch aircraft like the Liaoning.³⁵

European Union

- **EU rushes to arrange crisis meeting with Iran over nuclear deal**

The European Union is scrambling to arrange a crisis meeting with Iran after Donald Trump pulled out of the nuclear agreement, as the Iranian president Hassan Rouhani said Europe had a “very limited opportunity” to save the deal. Foreign ministers aim to reassure Tehran that the nuclear deal is salvageable at a meeting currently slated for Monday (14 May 2018) in London which they are expecting their Iranian counterpart Mohammad Javad Zarif to attend. EU ministers hope to put forward a credible package to soothe Iranian fears about the effect of Trump's decision on EU-Iranian trade. The ministers recognise that Iran will only stay inside the deal if they are confident that the promised economic benefits can survive an American sanctions assault. But they were keen to stress that Trump's move had not necessarily dealt the agreement a fatal blow.³⁶

- **European luminaries warn about new phase of EU ‘lethargy’**

In an open letter, a number of well-known European public figures have asked EU leaders to come up with a clear plan for a “revival of the European Union”, saying they feared “a new phase of lethargy” that could encourage a rise of populist parties in the European elections in May 2019. Among the signatories are former Commissioner László Andor, former Prime Ministers Alain Juppé and Felipe Gonzalez, MEPs Elmar Brok and Maria João Rodrigues, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, former president of the Greens group, but also the German film director Wim Wenders and the Italian writer Roberto Saviano. The signatories have offered an online platform, civico.eu, as a tool to achieve a higher participation of citizens in EU institutions. The website aims to create a dialogue between citizens and the

³⁵ “First carrier designed in China begins sea trial”, *The People's Daily*, May 14, 2018, <http://en.people.cn/n3/2018/0514/c90000-9459499.html>, Accessed on May 14, 2018.

³⁶ *The guardian*, 9 May 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/may/09/eu-moves-to-protect-european-firms-from-us-sanctions-on-iran>

EU, thus allowing them to make concrete proposals and be a part of European decision making.³⁷

- **First EU cybersecurity law takes effect—with new fines for misbehaving companies**

The first EU cybersecurity law went into effect on Wednesday (9 May), as negotiators continue to hammer out details of a second bill that will create even more rules in the area. The new law will require firms running “essential” services, including water, energy, transport, health and banking operations, to inform national authorities if they are hit with serious cybersecurity breaches. Providers of cloud computing services, search engines and online marketplaces will also need to report those incidents. Companies will face fines if they don’t report breaches. So far, only the UK government has announced the level of its fines under the law—up to £17 million, or €19 million. A European Commission official said last week that Brussels expects other countries to introduce similarly high sanctions.³⁸

Italy

- **Italy’s League and 5-Star make ‘significant steps’ towards government deal**

The anti-establishment 5-Star Movement and far-right League have made “significant steps” towards forming a government, the two parties said Thursday (10 May) as Italy looked to end nine weeks of political deadlock. The two groups, which are hostile to European Union budget restrictions and have made electoral pledges that would cost billions of euros to implement, entered into negotiations just as a swift return to the polls looked inevitable. “Significant steps forward have been made on the composition of the government and on the (nomination) of a prime minister,” a joint statement said following a meeting between League leader Matteo Salvini and 5-Star chief Luigi Di Maio. They gave no indication of who might lead the administration or who could take charge of the key ministries.³⁹

Spain

- **Pro-independence candidate set to become next Catalan president**

Catalan politicians have cleared the way for a pro-independence candidate to be elected regional president and end the emergency direct rule imposed by Madrid during last year’s political crisis. The far-left pro-independence Popular Unity Candidacy (CUP) party said it would abstain from an investiture vote in the

³⁷ Euractiv, 9 May 2018, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/future-eu/news/european-luminaries-warn-about-new-phase-of-eu-lethargy/>

³⁸ Euractiv, 9 May 2018, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/cybersecurity/news/first-eu-cybersecurity-law-brings-fines-for-companies-that-fail-to-report-hacks/>

³⁹ Euractiv, 11 May 2018, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/future-eu/news/italys-league-and-5-star-make-significant-steps-towards-government-deal/>

regional parliament on Monday (14 May 2018). The absence of its votes will leave pro-independence candidate Quim Torra with the simple majority needed to be elected regional president. The formation of a new regional government is required for Spain to lift the state of direct rule. He was handpicked as a candidate by deposed Catalan leader Carles Puigdemont, currently in exile in Germany and facing jail on rebellion charges for last year's secession bid if he returns to Spain.⁴⁰

East Asia /South-East Asia

Korean Peninsula and Japan

- **Japan and China agrees to set up security hotline**

On May 9, 2018, Japan and China agreed to set up a security hotline to defuse maritime incidents that could ignite tension between Asia's two largest military powers. The agreement was signed after a summit meeting in Tokyo between Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Chinese Premier Li Keqiang. Within 30 days two countries will set up a hotline for senior defense officials to communicate during incidents involving each others' naval vessels or military aircraft. Besides the hotline, the recent pact provides for regular meetings between both nations' defense officials and a mechanism for their naval vessels to communicate at sea to avert maritime incidents.⁴¹

- **People's Democratic Party: New opposition party of Japan**

On May7, 2018, a new opposition party was established through the merger of two parties, but it only attracted about 60 percent of the members who at one time belonged to those two entities. The Kokumin Minshuto (People's Democratic Party) was formed through the merger of the Democratic Party and Kibo no To (Hope). But only 62 members joined in the convention held at a Tokyo hotel on May 7 to formally launch the new opposition party, dashing hopes of it becoming the largest opposition bloc. Kohei Otsuka, the head of the Democratic Party, and Yuichiro Tamaki, the leader of Kibo no To, will serve as co-leaders of the new party.⁴²

- **China, Japan and South Korea join hands toward denuclearization**

⁴⁰ The Guardian, 13 May 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/may/13/pro-independence-candidate-set-to-become-next-catalan-president>

⁴¹ "Japan and China agree on security hotline after a decade of talks", The Asahi Shimbun, May 9, 2018, www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201805090067.html

⁴² "New opposition party lacking in numbers after 2 parties merge", The Asahi Shimbun, May 7, 2018, www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201805070046.html

On May 9, 2018, during the trilateral Summit held in Tokyo, leaders of China, Japan and South Korea confirmed that they would work together for the denuclearization of North Korea. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang and South Korean President Moon Jae-in agreed to support the Panmunjom Declaration, which stipulates the “complete denuclearization” of the Korean Peninsula, signed between Moon and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un during the inter-Korean summit late last month. Abe also sought cooperation to resolve the issue of Japanese nationals abducted by North Korea, and obtained understanding from Li and Moon. The content of the trilateral agreement was announced as a joint declaration. The three leaders also were came out with a special statement that includes support for the Panmunjom Declaration and expressing hope for progress toward denuclearization in the upcoming talks between Trump and Kim. The trilateral summit was the first in about 2½ years. The previous one was held in Seoul in November 2015.⁴³

- **Singapore to host Trump-Kim Summit on June 12, 2018**

On May 12, US President Donald Trump announced that he will meet North Korean leader Kim Jong-un on June 12 in Singapore. If it happens, the encounter will be the first between an American and North Korean leader. “The highly anticipated meeting between Kim Jong Un and myself will take place in Singapore on June 12th,” Trump wrote on Twitter. “We will both try to make it a very special moment for World Peace!” Singapore’s Prime Minister, Lee Hsien Loong, tweeted that the Trump-Kim meeting was a “significant step on the path to peace” and expressed hope for a successful outcome.⁴⁴

- **US Secretary of State Pompeo meets Kim Jong-un in Pyongyang**

On May 9, 2018 U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo flew into Pyongyang to finalize details of President Donald Trump’s summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un and successfully secured the release of three Americans detained by North Korea. Pompeo told Kim that, “for decades, we have been adversaries..now, we are hopeful that we can work together to resolve this conflict, take away threats to the world and make your country have all the opportunities your people so richly deserve.” Pompeo also acknowledged, according to The Washington Post, “There are many challenges along the way. But you have been a great partner in working to make sure our two leaders will have a summit that is successful.” Kim was reported as telling Pompeo that North Korea has “high expectations the United States will play a very big role in establishing peace on the Korean Peninsula.”⁴⁵

⁴³ "Abe, Li, Moon join hands toward denuclearization", The Japan News, May 9, 2018, [the-japan-news.com/news/article/0004426588](https://www.the-japan-news.com/news/article/0004426588)

⁴⁴ "Singapore to host Trump, Kim", The Korea JoongAng Daily, May 12, 2018, koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/Article.aspx?aid=3048035

⁴⁵ "Pompeo flies to Pyongyang for the second time", KoreaJoongAng Daily, May 10, 2018, koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/Article.aspx?aid=3047936

- **Kim meets Xi in Dalian**

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un flew to Dalian, a city in China's Northeast to meet Chinese President Xi Jinping on May 7-8, 2018. Kim made his second visit to China in less than two months and met with his Chinese counterpart to coordinate for the upcoming historic summit meeting between Kim and U.S. President Donald Trump. The report on Kim's visit to China and meeting with Xi confirmed speculation that official confirmation of his visit would only be made once the 34-year-old had returned home, as was the case when he visited Beijing from March 25 to 28.⁴⁶

(ASEAN, Malaysia, Cambodia, Indonesia, Phillipines)

- **US, Philippines begin 12 days military exercise**

The US and Philippine militaries launched major exercises on May 7, aimed at fighting global terrorism. This would be the second "Balikatan" ("shoulder-to-shoulder") manoeuvres to be held under President Rodrigo Duterte. Philippines's Lieutenant-General Emmanuel Salamat stated that last year Balikatan focused mainly on honing humanitarian responses to the Philippines' frequent natural disasters. This year's terror focus comes after Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) group supporters seized the southern Philippine city of Marawi in May last year, triggering a five-month battle with US-backed Filipino troops that killed some 1,200 people. "This is focusing mostly on countering terrorism... that will allow us to respond to a similar scenario in the future". Further according to Lt Gen Salamat, most of the 5,000 Filipino troops and 3,000 US counterparts taking part in the manoeuvres are from special operations units who will train in mock urban terrain to respond to "crises and calamities, either natural or man-made".⁴⁷

- **Indonesia and China marks 50 years of Strategic Comprehensive Partnership**

President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo welcomed Chinese Prime Minister Li Keqiang at the Bogor Palace on May 7, a visit that marks the fifth year of Indonesia and China's strategic comprehensive partnership. The two leaders held bilateral talks, which were expected to focus on the countries' economic partnership, including trade and investment. In a press briefing on Friday, Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi said Jokowi aimed to narrow the country's trade deficit with China through increasing Indonesian exports to China and other measures. China ranks as the third-largest foreign investor in Indonesia with US\$3.36 billion in 2017, a

⁴⁶ "Kim Jong-un meets with Xi Jinping in eastern China", The Korea JoongAng Daily, May 9, 2018, koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/Article.aspx?aid=3047905

⁴⁷"US-Philippine war games open under pro-China Duterte", *The Straits Times*, May 7, 2018, <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/us-philippine-war-games-open-under-pro-china-duterte>, accessed on May 8, 2018.

significant increase from \$2.66 billion in 2016. Between 2015 and 2017, Indonesia reduced its trade deficit with China to 11.63 percent.⁴⁸

At a joint press conference Chinese Premier Li Keqiang said China is committed to a peaceful settlement of bilateral disputes with ASEAN nations over the South China Sea, despite differing views. The bilateral talks also included discussions on regional security and China's Belt and Road Initiative projects in Indonesia. The leaders agreed to increase economic cooperation, with President Joko stressing that it is vital for Indonesia to increase exports to China. Mr Li committed to increasing palm oil imports by at least 500,000 tonnes a year. Beijing sees Indonesia as a key partner for its infrastructure companies. Chinese and state-owned local companies are working to build Indonesia's first high-speed rail linking Jakarta and Bandung in West Java. Indonesia said last week that it needed to find ways to expedite the US\$5.9 billion project, where only a fraction of the funding needs have been disbursed by China. Apart from this there has been cost over-runs and obstacles in land acquisition that have hampered work of the project.⁴⁹

- **Dr Mahathir Mohamad's led Coalition Pakatan Harapan (PH) wins Malaysia's 14th General Elections**

For the first time in 61 years Malaysians voted in a new Federal Government, PH led by Dr Mahathir Mohamad in their 14th General Election held on May 9. The new ruling coalition PH, which comprises of PKR, DAP, Pribumi and Amanah, according to the election commission won 112 of the 222 Parliament seats. The simple majority by PH sets the stage for former and Malaysia's longest serving Prime Minister Dr Mahathir to once again take charge as the seventh PM of Malaysia. The former ruling coalition Barisan Nasional (BN) headed by now former PM Najib Razak won 79. PAS won 18, Parti Warisan Sabah won seven, Sabah STAR won one and Independents won three seats. PKR president and leader of the opposition Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail was appointed the country's new Deputy Prime Minister on May 12. She is Malaysia's first woman to be appointed to the position.⁵⁰ Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamad on May 13 in a special televised address to the nation announced sweeping measures to clean up corruption in the country and restore the people's trust in government. PM Mahathir said the Government wants to cut red tape as it does not want too many laws or regulations that can restrict the freedom to do business in the country.

⁴⁸ Marguerite Afra Sapiie, "Jokowi, Chinese PM commence Bogor Palace talks", *The Jakarta Post*, May 7, 2018, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2018/05/07/jokowi-chinese-pm-commence-bogor-palace-talks.html>, accessed on may 8, 2018.

⁴⁹"China committed to peaceful settlement of sea disputes: Li", *The Straits Times*, May 8, 2018, <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/china-committed-to-peaceful-settlement-of-sea-disputes-li>, accessed on May 8, 2018.

⁵⁰"Dr M poised to be nation's seventh PM", *The Star Online*, May 10, 2018, <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2018/05/10/dr-m-poised-to-be-nations-seventh-pm-kak-wan-expected-to-be-first-woman-dpm/>, accessed on May 10, 2018.

Further the PM unveiled steps to boost investor and business confidence in Malaysia.⁵¹

Myanmar

- **Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, State Counsellor receives Smt. Sushma Swaraj, External Affairs Minister of India**

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi received the External Affairs Minister of India Smt. Sushma Swaraj at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nay Pyi Taw, in the morning of 11 May 2018 and held a bilateral meeting. During the meeting, they cordially discussed matters pertaining to promotion of bilateral relations and cooperation; provision of assistance for the development of Rakhine State and support to the Myanmar Government's endeavours on the repatriation process of displaced persons from Rakhine State; and closer cooperation and collaboration between the two countries in the regional and international fora. Present on the occasion were Union Minister for Labour, Immigration and Population U Thein Swe, Union Minister for International Cooperation U Kyaw Tin, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs U Myint Thu, Indian Ambassador to Myanmar Shri Vikram Misri, departmental officials and members of the Indian delegation⁵².

- **Bring Myanmar before ICC, say rights groups**

Four international human rights groups have urged the UN Security Council to refer Myanmar to the International Criminal Court (ICC) for alleged crimes against humanity, including targeting about 700,000 Muslims from northern Rakhine State who fled military-led violence to Bangladesh. Among the countries that are not state parties to the ICC are the United States, Russia, China, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Israel⁵³.

- **Beijing urges ceasefire after deadly Myanmar border clashes**

China on Sunday condemned fighting on its border between Myanmar forces and the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) that has left 19 dead, mostly civilians, in some of the worst bloodshed on the restive frontier in recent years. The fighting erupted when ethnic minority insurgent groups, who are locked in a long-running

⁵¹Razah Ahmad and Victoria Brown, "PM makes sweeping changes", *The Star Online*, May 14, 2018, <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2018/05/14/pm-makes-sweeping-changes-dr-m-the-aim-is-to-clean-up-our-country-and-reduce-economic-woes/>, accessed on May 14, 2018.

⁵² Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, State Counsellor receives Smt. Sushma Swaraj, External Affairs Minister of India, 12 May 2018, <http://www.statecounsellor.gov.mm/en/node/1939>.

⁵³ Bring Myanmar before ICC, say rights groups, 10 May 2018, <https://www.mmmtimes.com/news/bring-myanmar-icc-say-rights-groups.html>.

battle with the Myanmar state, attacked security posts around Muse, a border town and trade hub in northeastern Shan state⁵⁴.

- **19 dead in fighting between Myanmar army, TNLA: military**

At least 19 people have been killed in clashes between Myanmar's military and Ta'ang National Liberation Army, or TNLA, in northern Shan State, Myanmar army and local sources told AFP, the most deadly flare-up in recent years as fighting in the borderlands intensifies. Rights defenders say clashes in northern Myanmar near the China border have ramped up since January as the international community focuses on the Rohingya crisis in the west of the country⁵⁵.

Russia

- **Russia and India**

On 11 May, Indian National Security Advisor Ajit Doval held talks with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in Moscow and discussed a host of issues such as combating terrorism, organised crime and drug trafficking. The visit, which was part of the regular dialogue at the NSA-level between the two countries, comes ahead of summit talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Russian President Vladimir Putin in India later this year. In his opening remarks during the meeting with Doval, Lavrov was quoted as saying by an official Russian statement, "We have a very full agenda in our bilateral relations. Economic ties are growing, and a mechanism is being developed to further liberalise trade both bilaterally and as part of India's cooperation with the Eurasian Economic Union." "I am speaking of the Russia-India-China (RIC) format, BRICS, and now the SCO, of which India became a full-fledged member last year. All this allows us to closely interact and coordinate our approaches in the UN and various military and political security mechanisms in the Asia-Pacific region," he said.⁵⁶ During this meeting, they also discussed on a way out amid impending US sanctions on Russian defence firms that might impact supplies to India.

- **Russia and Egypt**

Russia Today's (RT) website took down an opinion poll on 12 May regarding the ownership of the Halaib triangle between Egypt and Sudan, a move which Egypt's State Information Service (SIS) described as "provocative." According to a statement released by SIS on 11 May, the poll was deleted following intensive

⁵⁴ Beijing urges ceasefire after deadly Myanmar border clashes, 14 May 2018, <http://www.mizzima.com/news-domestic/beijing-urges-ceasefire-after-deadly-myanmar-border-clashes>

⁵⁵ 19 dead in fighting between Myanmar army, TNLA: military, 14 May 2018, <http://www.mizzima.com/news-domestic/19-dead-fighting-between-myanmar-army-tnla-military>

⁵⁶ "Ajit Doval, Russian FM discuss ways to combat terror", *Economic Times*, May 11, 2018. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/ajit-doval-russian-fm-discuss-ways-to-combat-terror/articleshow/64128582.cms> Accessed on May 14, 2018.

contacts with RT's officials in Moscow and Cairo by the SIS. It also made contact with various personalities involved in the safety of Egyptian-Russian relations. The SIS explained to the Russia side the seriousness of RT's actions, which would only divide the Egyptian and Russian peoples and offend the feelings of Egyptians as this is a sensitive matter concerning the unity of Egypt's territory and its national sovereignty. Egypt controls the Halaib triangle and Shalatin, which lies on the Red Sea coast in a mineral-rich region, while Sudan has asserted sovereignty over the triangle since its independence in 1956.⁵⁷

- **Russia and Iran Nuclear Deal**

On 8 May, the Russian Foreign Ministry expressed on Tuesday its regret over the US decision to withdraw from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) known as the Iranian nuclear deal. It also expressed its disappointment on re-imposition of national US sanctions against Iran. The Russian Foreign Ministry pointed out that the US decision sharply violated international law. The Russian Foreign Ministry added that Moscow was open for further cooperation with other JCPOA parties and for continuation of dialogue and cooperation with Tehran.⁵⁸ On 8 May, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said he has directed his diplomats to negotiate with European countries, Russia and China about remaining in the nuclear deal despite the U.S. withdrawal from the agreement. But Rouhani said Iran is ready to start unlimited uranium enrichment if these negotiations do not yield benefits in a couple of weeks.⁵⁹ On 11 May, Russian President Vladimir Putin and German Chancellor Angela Merkel discussed the Iran nuclear deal after Washington announced its withdrawal from it.⁶⁰

- **Russia and Its Presence in Mediterranean Region**

On 7 May, NATO's southern Europe commander U.S. Navy Adm. James Foggo told that Russian President Vladimir Putin had used the desperation of Syrian President Bashar Assad to expand Russian military power beyond Syria's borders. Russia has taken advantage of its military role in Syria to bolster its naval presence in the eastern Mediterranean region, making the region "very crowded." Noting some "unsafe or unprofessional" incidents involving Russian aircraft during the Syrian

⁵⁷"Russia Today takes down "provocative" poll on Halaib Triangle ownership: SIS", *Egypt Independent*, May 13, 2018. <http://www.egyptindependent.com/russia-today-takes-provocative-poll-halaib-triangle-ownership-sis/> Accessed on May 14, 2018.

⁵⁸"Russian FM: Russia Regrets US Decision to Withdraw from Iran Nuclear Deal", *Sputnik*, May 8, 2018. <https://sputniknews.com/russia/201805091064271245-russia-iran-nuclear-deal-usa/> Accessed on May 14, 2018.

⁵⁹Erin Cunningham and Bijan Sabbagh, "Iran says it will work with Russia, China, EU on deal", *The Mercury Post*, May 8, 2018. <https://www.mercurynews.com/2018/05/08/iran-says-it-will-work-with-russia-china-eu-on-deal/> Accessed on May 14, 2018.

⁶⁰"Russia's Putin, Germany's Merkel discuss Iran nuclear deal: Kremlin", *Reuters*, May 11, 2018. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-nuclear-russia-germany/russias-putin-germanys-merkel-discuss-iran-nuclear-deal-kremlin-idUSKBN1IC0Y0> Accessed on May 14, 2018.

conflict, Foggo said the eastern Mediterranean region was becoming "congested" with Russian vessels.⁶¹

South Asia

Afghanistan

- **AIHRC Calls on World Not to Ignore Afghan Civilian Casualties**

On May 8, 2017 Sima Samar, Chairwoman of Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) on account of rise of civilian casualties through suicide attacks called on the international community to address human rights violence incidences in Afghanistan. She said that "Civilian casualties committed from any side of the conflict, whether by the government and its international partners or the armed opponents of the Afghan government, is not acceptable and there should be accountability". Sima Samar also added that attacks on civilian should be investigated by the International Criminal Court.⁶²

- **Key District in Baghlan Reportedly Falls To Taliban**

There have been reports that insurgents captured Tala Wa Barfak district in Baghlan province bordering Bamyan and Parwan provinces, in the north of Afghanistan on May 8, 2018. Ismail Barfaki, the district governor held that dozens of Taliban fighters had severe clashes with government forces and three police officers were injured during the battle. Although Taliban claimed to have captured the district, however Baghlan police stated that Tala Wa Barfak has not been fallen to the hands of Taliban.⁶³

- **UNAMA Releases Findings on Dasht-e-Archi Airstrikes**

In its report on airstrikes executed by the Afghan government forces in the Kunduz province on April 2, 2018, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) stated that air strikes killed 36 people, wounding 71. Most of the casualties consisted of children. According to the report, "A key finding of this report is that the government, which indicated the airstrike, targeted senior

⁶¹Trisha Thomas, "NATO: Russia Uses Syrian War to Boost Mediterranean Presence", *Military.com*, May 8, 2018. <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2018/05/08/nato-russia-uses-syrian-war-boost-mediterranean-presence.html> Accessed on May 14, 2018.

⁶² "AIHRC Calls on World Not to Ignore Afghan Civilian Casualties," *Tolo News*, May 8, 2018, <https://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/aihrc-calls-world-not-ignore-afghan-civilian-casualties>, accessed on May 8, 2018.

⁶³ "Key District In Baghlan Reportedly Falls To Taliban," *Tolo News*, May 8, 2018, <https://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/key-district-under-siege-baghlan>, accessed on May 8, 2018.

Taliban leaders present in the area, used rockets and heavy machinegun fire on and around a religious gathering, killing and injuring civilians, the majority of whom were children”.⁶⁴

- **Saudi Arabia to Boost Cooperation with Afghanistan**

On May 7, 2018, Ambassador Jassim Mohammad Al Kadi, the new Saudi ambassador to Afghanistan met Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Dr. Abdullah Abdullah and pledged to increase cooperation between Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia. On the other hand, Dr. Abdullah Abdullah stated that Saudi Arabia had always maintained a cordial and friendly relation with Afghanistan and presence of oil rich country like Saudi Arabia would boost Afghanistan’s mineral developments.⁶⁵

Bangladesh

- **Bangladesh, India Sign MoUs on Defence**

Bangladesh and India have signed four memoranda of understanding (MoUs) to expand defence cooperation including purchase of equipments. One MoU is to provide a framework for using India’s \$500 million loan under line of credit offered last year. The matters were discussed at a meeting India’s defence secretary Sanjay Mitra held with a Bangladesh delegation headed by principal staff officer (PSO) of the Bangladesh Army Lt Gen Mahafuz Rahaman in New Delhi last week. If Bangladesh wants to purchase certain defence equipments and India produces those, sales and purchase would be made with consent from the both the sides, according to the sources. The defence ministry of Bangladesh will provide a demand note to India which will check their availability.⁶⁶

- **Myanmar Identifies Aaround 1,000 Rohingyas**

In February 2018, Bangladesh provided Myanmar with a list of around 8,000 refugees, but the country, after three months and seven phases of scrutiny, managed to verify the identities of only around a thousand Rohingyas. A government official, on condition of anonymity, confirmed the matter adding that

⁶⁴ “UNAMA Releases Findings On Dasht-e-Archi Airstrikes,” *Tolo News*, May 8, 2018, <https://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/unama-releases-findings-dasht-e-archi-airstrikes>, accessed on May 8, 2018.

⁶⁵ “Saudi Arabia to Boost Cooperation with Afghanistan,” *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, May 8, 2018, http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=20886, accessed on May 8, 2018.

⁶⁶ “Bangladesh, India sign MoUs on defence coop,” *Prothom Alo*, May 13, 2018, <http://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/news/175492/Bangladesh-India-sign-MoUs-on-defence-coop>, accessed on May 13, 2018.

Bangladesh will focus on a speedy repatriation process of the Rohingyas. When asked about whether Bangladesh was submitting another list of the refugees, he added: "This is an ongoing process, and we do want to submit another list soon."⁶⁷

- **ICC Seeks Dhaka's Opinion on Rohingya**

The International Criminal Court (ICC) has asked Bangladesh to explain whether the crimes committed by the Myanmar authorities against Rohingya Muslims fall within the court's jurisdiction. In a letter sent to Bangladesh on Monday, a pre-trial chamber of the international court urged Dhaka to send its opinion either secretly or openly by June 8. "We have received their (ICC's) request and are considering the matter," Foreign Secretary Shahidul Haque said.⁶⁸

- **Tougher Programs to Oust Government: Moudud**

BNP will declare tougher programs to oust the incumbent Awami League government from power after the month of Ramadan, says the party's Standing Committee Member Moudud Ahmed. "The people are not in favour of this government any more. They want to see a different government. Our movement is a must to bring back the judiciary's independence, the democratic and voting rights of the people and justice in the country," he said.⁶⁹

नेपाल

ग्यावली ने मोदी की नेपाल यात्रा का विवरण दिया:

विदेश मंत्री प्रदीप कुमार ग्यावली ने संसद के निम्न सदन प्रतिनिधि सभा के समक्ष बुधवार को भारत के प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी की दो दिवसीय नेपाल यात्रा का ब्यौरा प्रस्तुत किया .उन्होंने कहा कि मोदी शुक्रवार को जनकपुर आयेंगे और उन्हें वहां नागरिक अभिनंदन समारोह दिया जायेगा साथ ही साथ काठमांडू में भी दिया जायेगा .ग्यावली ने उम्मीद जताई कि मोदी की इस यात्रा से दोनों देशों के संबंधों में प्रगाढ़ता आएगी.⁷⁰

भारतीय नेतृत्व नेपाल के राष्ट्रीय हितों का सम्मान करेगा :ओली

⁶⁷ "Myanmar identifies around 1,000 Rohingyas in 3 months," *Dhaka Tribune*, May 13, 2018, <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/foreign-affairs/2018/05/13/myanmar-identifies-around-1-000-rohingyas-in-3-months>, accessed on May 13, 2018.

⁶⁸ Sheikh Shahriar Zaman, "ICC seeks Dhaka's opinion on Rohingya crisis," *Dhaka Tribune*, May 9, 2018, <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2018/05/09/icc-seeks-dhakas-opinion-rohingya-crisis>, accessed on May 9, 2018.

⁶⁹ "Moudud: Tougher programs to oust AL government after Ramadan," *Dhaka Tribune*, May 7, 2018, <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/politics/2018/05/07/moudud-tougher-programs-oust-al-government-ramadan/>, accessed on May 7, 2018.

⁷⁰ "Minister Gyawali briefs House on Modi's visit", *The Rising Nepal*, 10 May 2018, <http://therisingnepal.org.np/epaper/showimage?img=uploads/epaper/2018-05-10/b1ffe801a86142be0b1f031907c80f8e.jpg>

प्रधानमंत्री ओली ने मंगलवार को सिंह दरबार में भूतपूर्व विदेश मंत्रियों को संबोधित करते हुए कहा कि भारत अब हमारे राष्ट्रीय हितों का सम्मान करेगा और आंतरिक मामलों में हस्तक्षेप नहीं करेगा .ओली ने आगे कहा कि मेरी पिछली भारत यात्रा के दौरान भारत के प्रधानमंत्री मोदी से इस मुद्दे पर बात हुई और इसी परिप्रेक्ष्य को ध्यान में रखते हुए वे नेपाल की दो दिवसीय यात्रा पर रहेंगे.⁷¹

नेपाल के विकास में भारत का सहयोग रहेगा :मोदी

मोदी की नेपाल के यात्रा के दौरान कहा गया कि भारत के बाजारों में नेपाल को व्यापक पहुँच मिलेगी और परिपूर्ण रूप से द्विपक्षीय व्यापार को आगे बढ़ाया जाएगा और भारत नेपाल को आवागमन व्यापार की सुविधा भी देगा .प्रधानमंत्री मोदी की यात्रा के दौरान काठमांडू में जारी संयुक्त वक्तव्य में कहा गया कि दोनों देश व्यापार और पारगमन की संधि की समग्र समीक्षा पर सहमत हुए हैं .दोनों देश पिछले समझौतों जैसे कृषि ,रेलमार्ग और जलमार्ग को प्रभावी ढंग से लागू करेंगे.⁷²

मोदी और ओली ने संयुक्त रूप से रामायण सर्किट का शुभारम्भ किया:

प्रधानमंत्री मोदी अपनी दो दिवसीय नेपाल यात्रा पर सर्वप्रथम जनकपुर गये ,वहाँ उन्होंने जानकी मंदिर में पूजा अर्चना की और यहाँ वे नागरिक अभिनंदन समाहरोह में शामिल हुए .इस अवसर पर मोदी ने प्रान्त दो के लिए 1बिलियन राशि की सहायता की घोषणा की. इस अवसर पर दोनों देशों के प्रधानमंत्रियों भारत नेपाल के रामायण सर्किट का मंदिर परिसर से उद्घाटन भी किया.⁷³

Pakistan

- **Concerns on CPEC**

A petition has been placed by Barrister Zafarullah Khan of Watan Party at the Lahore registry that the government of Pakistan allowed Chinese citizens to acquire property/land on lease here, which, amounted to leasing out the country's sovereignty. It was stated that the establishment of recreational parks and residential colonies for the Chinese citizens in Pakistan a deceptive way of permanent occupation. The Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industries had

⁷¹ "Indian Leadership will respect Nepal National interest: PM", The Rising Nepal, 9 May 2018, <http://therisingnepal.org.np/epaper/showimage?img=uploads/epaper/2018-05-09/088f050a56afa266c19508cc6c1b24b9.jpg>

⁷² "India ready to shoulder Nepal's development efforts: Modi", The Rising Nepal, 13 May 2018, <http://therisingnepal.org.np/epaper/showimage?img=uploads/epaper/2018-05-13/f9163a45cad63c0a07fe2ed00450a004.jpg>

⁷³ Dharbedra Jha, "PM Oli, Modi jointly open Ramayna Circuit", The Kathmandu Post, 12 May 2018, <http://therisingnepal.org.np/epaper/showimage?img=uploads/epaper/2018-05-12/f91aaa96733453017386e27faed38856.jpg>

decided not to allow further special economic zone sites to Chinese citizens since they believed it would affect the local industry.⁷⁴

- **US Pakistan Diplomatic Stiff**

As the United States implemented travel restrictions on Pakistani diplomats posted there, Pakistan put into effect retaliatory measures affecting US mission and its diplomats based in Pakistan from May 11th, and withdrew “special facilities” that had been extended to them. The special facilities withdrawn were permission to use tinted glasses on official and rented vehicles; use of non-diplomatic license plates on official vehicles; use of diplomatic number plates on “unspecified and rented vehicles”; use of biometrically unverified/unregistered cell-phone SIMs; hiring or shifting of rented properties without prior NOC; installing radio communications at residences and “safe houses” without prior NOC; and visa overstay and holding of multiple passports.⁷⁵ It can be noted here that Pakistan is sending Ali Jahangir Siddiqui as the new ambassador to US. Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhary, the present ambassador will leave US on May 29.⁷⁶

Sri Lanka

- **Sri Lanka Statement on Inter-Korea Summit**

Sri Lanka welcomes the Inter-Korea Summit between the leaders of the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea on 27 April 2018 and the adoption of the Panmunjom Declaration for Peace, Prosperity and Unification of the Korean Peninsula. We look forward to the implementation of the important commitments and agreed actions outlined in the Declaration aimed at progressing through dialogue, diplomacy and trust-building towards achieving sustainable peace and prosperity, and verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.⁷⁷

- **Ayatollah Ali Khamenei says Sri Lanka Need Unity in Asia**

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Leader of the Islamic Revolution, told visiting Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena on 13th May that Asian countries should enhance cooperation in a bid to boost their strength, The Tehran Times reported. “Asian countries must further cooperate and work with each other, because such

⁷⁴ “Plea against relaxations given to Chinese citizens under CPEC”, *Dawn*, May 8, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1406196> as accessed on May 14, 2018

⁷⁵ “Pakistan puts tit-for-tat curbs on US diplomats”, *Dawn*, May 12, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1407194> as accessed on May 14, 2018

⁷⁶ Anwar Iqbal, “Pakistan to have new envoy as US imposes restrictions”, *Dawn*, May 10, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1406771> as accessed on May 14, 2018

⁷⁷ Press Release, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sri Lanka, May 11, 2018, <http://www.mfa.gov.lk/iks18/>, accessed on May 11, 2018.

cooperation will make them strong,” Ayatollah Khamenei said, according to Press TV.⁷⁸

- **External Forces Attempting to Disrupt China-SL Ties: Ambassador**

Chinese Ambassador Cheng Xueyuan maintained that certain external forces are provoking unfounded speculation on joint mega-projects between Sri Lanka and China in order to disrupt the cooperation and create problems between the two countries in order to further their own interests. Issuing a statement, the Chinese Embassy said the Ambassador has expressed these views upon meeting Speaker Karu Jayasuriya last week. At the meeting, Ambassador Cheng reiterated that China attaches great importance to its relations with Sri Lanka and stands ready to implement the important consensus reached by the leaders of the two countries.⁷⁹

Maldives

- **Indian Navy Vessel in Joint Patrol of Maldivian Waters**

An Indian naval ship is carrying out joint surveillance of the Exclusive Economic Zone of the Maldives. Ahead of the surveillance operation from May 12 to 15, the Sumedha offshore patrol vessel conducted training for Maldives National Defence Force personnel during the weekend. “The Joint EEZ surveillance of Maldives is an endeavour of the Government of India and the Indian Navy to ensure the safety and security of the vast EEZ of the island nation,” the Indian navy said in a statement.⁸⁰

- **Nasheed Proposes Switch to Parliamentary System**

Former president Mohamed Nasheed has proposed switching to a parliamentary system after a six-year interim national unity government to oversee transitional justice and constitutional reforms. The interim government would reform the judiciary and the security services, and ensure the independence of oversight bodies. “During the first year and a half of these six years, we must provide relief to

⁷⁸ “Ayatollah Ali Khamenei tells Sri Lanka need unity in Asia,” *Colombo Gazette*, May 13, 2018, <http://colombogazette.com/2018/05/13/ayatollah-ali-khamenei-tells-sri-lanka-need-unity-in-asia/>, accessed on May 13, 2018.

⁷⁹ “External forces attempting to disrupt China-SL ties: Ambassador,” *Daily Mirror*, May 9, 2018, <http://www.dailymirror.lk/article/External-forces-attempting-to-disrupt-China-SL-ties-Ambassador-149714.html>, accessed on May 9, 2018.

⁸⁰ “Indian navy vessel in joint patrol of Maldivian waters,” *Maldives Independent*, May 13, 2018, <http://maldivesindependent.com/society/indian-navy-vessel-in-joint-patrol-of-maldivian-waters-138111>, accessed on May 13, 2018.

those Maldivians who have faced loss, sadness and brutality,” the exiled opposition leader said.⁸¹

- **US Dubious over Possibility of Free & Fair Elections**

The US Ambassador to the Maldives, Atul Keshap, questioned the possibility of the island nation having a free and fair election this year under the current circumstances. The Elections Commission has opened candidacy applications for the Presidential Elections slated to be held this September. Keshap said in a tweet, “Now jailed in Maldives for asserting their Constitutional rights are one former President (and one more in exile), a Supreme Court chief justice, a Vice President, several elected Members of Parliament, & a party leader. How will free & fair elections happen under such conditions?”⁸²

- **Talks of Separating State Constitute as Coup: Home Ministry**

Ministry of Home Affairs declared Tuesday that any discussion of forming a separating state is equivalent to planning a coup. An audio was recently leaked on social media, allegedly of former President Mohamed Nasheed discussing the possibility of forming a separate state in southernmost Addu Atoll. Although he came under fire since the leak, Nasheed has not made any comments on the matter.⁸³

- **Ahmed Mahloof a Prisoner of Conscience: Amnesty International**

Amnesty International has declared MP Ahmed Mahloof the MP for Galolhu South constituency a Prisoner of Conscience. Amnesty International stated that Mahloof has been a victim of the government’s “wave of repression” ever since he left PPM. In May 2018, Mahloof appealed to Amnesty to declare him as a Prisoner of Conscience and to save him from the “danger.”⁸⁴

⁸¹ “Nasheed proposes switch to parliamentary system,” *Maldives Independent*, May 12, 2018, <http://maldivesindependent.com/politics/nasheed-proposes-switch-to-parliamentary-system-138092>, accessed on May 12, 2018.

⁸² “US dubious over possibility of free and fair elections in Maldives,” May 9, 2018, <http://en.mihaaru.com/us-dubious-over-possibility-of-free-and-fair-elections-in-maldives/>, accessed on May 9, 2018.

⁸³ “Talks of separating state constitute as coup attempt: home ministry,” May 9, 2018, <http://en.mihaaru.com/talks-of-separating-state-constitute-as-coup-attempt-home-ministry/>, accessed on May 9, 2018.

⁸⁴ “Amnesty International declares Ahmed Mahloof a Prisoner of Conscience,” May 12, 2018, <http://miadhu.mv/article/en/10422>, accessed on May 12, 2018.

West Asia

Iraq and GCC

- **Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr takes a surprise lead in Iraq vote**⁸⁵

The political coalition of firebrand nationalist cleric Muqtada-al-Sadr took an early lead in Iraq's national elections in partial results announced late on Sunday by the Iraqi electoral election.

More than 90% of the votes have been counted in 10 of Iraq's 18 provinces, and preliminary official results show the coalition led by Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr's bloc is ahead, followed by the Conquest alliance led by Hadi al-Amiri, who commanded powerful Shia paramilitaries during the battle against ISIS. Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi who is leading a cross-sectarian alliance including Sunni and Kurdish parties performed poorly in majority Shia provinces that should have been his base of support.

According to the Iraqi Electoral Commission, 44% of eligible voters made it to the polling booths on Saturday. It was the first election in Iraq since the defeat of ISIS, and security remained tight across the country.⁸⁶ Abadi had ordered Iraq's airspace be closed on election day and banned people from driving their vehicles to allow people to walk to the polls without fear of car bombings.

- **Kurdish clashes rise tension as opposition cries foul in Iraq vote**⁸⁷

In Iraq's Kurdish city of Sulaimaniya, there were clashes between militias of opposition party, Gorran and the Peoples Union of Kurdistan, PUK, the dominant Kurdish party in the province. The two opposition parties Gorran and Coalition for Democracy and Justice – both splinters of PUK – campaigned on anti-corruption platforms and had hoped to make gains in the vote. An initial tally suggested the Movement for Change (known as Gorran) and the CDJ had won three and two parliamentary seats, respectively, with the PUK well ahead on eight.

Unlike previous elections, a new electronic device was used in Saturday's parliamentary polls to verify voter cards, fingerprints, and to count ballots—a system meant to streamline the electoral process and prevent fraud from taking place.

In a press conference organized on Sunday, six Kurdish parties echoed Iraqi Vice-President Ayad Allawi's coalition's call for a redo of the Iraqi parliamentary elections. We have detailed proof of how those in power committed fraud in the

⁸⁵ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/05/iraq-vote-initial-results-show-pm-abadi-muqtada-al-sadr-leading-180513200426674.html>

⁸⁶ <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/05/14/middleeast/iraq-elections-results-intl/index.html>

⁸⁷ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-election-kurds/kurdish-clashes-raise-tension-as-opposition-cries-foul-in-iraq-vote-idUSKCN1IE0W0>

election,” Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU) member Muthana Amin said on behalf of the parties at the press conference. Also present were representatives of the Movement for Change (Gorran), the Coalition for Justice and Democracy (CJD), Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU), Komal, Kurdistan Islamic Movement (KIM), and Communist Party of Kurdistan (CPK).⁸⁸

- **Iran, Qatar hold economic committee meeting⁸⁹**

An Iranian business delegation comprising 70 experts and businessmen from the private and public sectors landed in Doha for a two-day meeting on Sunday, the first of its kind in 13 years, the state news agency IRNA reported. The Iranian delegation is led by Mohammad Reza Fayyaz, Deputy Head of International Affairs at the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade.

The meeting with Iranians was looked with suspicion by Qatar’s neighbours as it came on the heels of the US call to Qatar to review its relations with Iran and Iran-sponsored terror groups in view of the President Trump’s decision to withdraw from Iran nuclear deal.⁹⁰

Since the economic embargo imposed by the so-called Arab quartet in June last year, Qatar has been deepening its economic relation with Turkey, Iran and Iraq, with Qatari companies planning to tap into new markets in the region.

- **Foreign Minister renews Qatar’s call for new regional agreement to guarantee protection of states⁹¹**

In a lecture at Qatar University titled 'The Gulf Crisis and Political Transitions in the Region', His Excellency said that the State of Qatar believes in the necessity of a new regional agreement that guarantees the protection of large and small countries and non-interference in their internal affairs, in addition to focusing on the consolidation of the principles that aim at promoting cooperation in the fields of economy and development, as demanded by HH the Amir at the Munich Security Conference.

HE Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani pointed out that Qatar welcomes the Kuwaiti mediation, adopted by HH Amir of the State of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, for resolving the Gulf crisis, as well as any other efforts exerted in this mediation. He attributed the siege of Qatar and the Arab Gulf developments, to changes in the policies of the siege countries, which are unacceptable in normal circumstances. "Therefore, they had to create a crisis and a phantom enemy, which unfortunately is the State of Qatar, to pass these policies."

⁸⁸ <http://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/90704457-d267-4156-9c27-aa08df9c70ab>

⁸⁹ <https://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/qatar/iran-qatar-hold-economic-committee-meeting-1.2220883>

⁹⁰ <https://www.khaleejtimes.com/region/qatar/iranian-team-of-experts-/in-qatar-proves-dohas-ties-with-militias>

⁹¹ <https://thepeninsulaqatar.com/article/14/05/2018/Foreign-minister-renews-Qatar-s-call-for-new-regional-agreement-to-guarantees-protection-of-states>

- **Somalia: President Farmajo begins Qatar visit amid dispute with UAE⁹²**

The President of Somalia's Federal government, Mohamed Abdulahi Mohamed Farmajo, after receiving an official invitation from Qatari government embarked on an official visit to Qatar, his second in less than in year.

The timing of the visit is important as it comes amid strained relations between United Arab Emirates and Somalia. For Qatar, the visit by the Somali President is important to underscore the failure of the siege in isolating Qatar from its regional environment and strategic depth.⁹³

Relations between UAE and Somalia have been in decline since the seizure of \$9.6 million from an Emirati aircraft in Mogadishu in early April and the subsequent end of three year old military cooperation between Somalia and UAE, under which Emirates was training and paying salaries for Somali army.

Qatar, which is seen to be taking advantage of the Somalia-UAE dispute has donated 30 buses and two cranes to the federal government last April and sent an extraordinary ambassador to Somalia.

- **Bahrain bars opposition figures from elections**

Bahrain's Parliament approved a bill on Sunday barring members of dissolved opposition groups from running in elections ahead of parliamentary polls this year. Bahraini courts last year dissolved the main opposition groups Al-Wefaq and National Democratic Action Society (Waad), accusing them of fostering violence and terrorism.

The Shura Council, Parliament's upper house, passed the draft bill that bans leaders and members of political associations dissolved by the judicial system from standing in elections "due to their serious violations of the constitution and laws of the kingdom," state news agency BNA reported. The bill still needs to be signed by the king to become law.

Al-Wefaq, which has strong links to the country's Shiite majority, and Waad, which is seen as a secular movement, have both campaigned for social and political reforms in the island state. A former member of Parliament for Al-Wefaq, Ali al-Aswad, criticized the move as an attempt to further stifle opposition.

Main opposition groups, including Al-Wefaq, boycotted the last parliamentary elections held in 2014 to protest what they described as an unfair electoral system.\

- **Yemen: UAE attempting to colonise Socotra⁹⁴**

⁹² <https://www.garoweonline.com/en/news/somalia/somalia-farmajo-begins-qatar-visit-amid-dispute-with-uae>

⁹³ <http://www.gulf-times.com/story/592621/Qatar-and-Somalia-common-interests-and-aspirations>

⁹⁴ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/05/yemen-uae-attempting-colonise-socotra-180513104819582.html>

Yemen's government is accusing United Arab Emirates (UAE) of trying to "colonise" the country, in a worsening standoff over the island of Socotra.

Turki al-Malki, spokesman for the Saudi operations in Yemen, said on Sunday that Saudi forces had landed on Socotra on a mission to train and support loyalists to ex-president Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi.

The Saudi deployment comes after the UAE sent some 300 soldiers, along with tanks and artillery, to Socotra earlier this month in a move that drew the ire of Yemenis. Hadi's loyalists have accused the UAE of abandoning an initial cause of fighting the Houthis, saying Emirati forces are instead providing support to those seeking separation of Yemen's southern territories from the north.⁹⁵

Turkey

- **Why a US defence bill seeks a halt to arms sales to Turkey**

A draft bill on US military spending is calling for a temporary halt of American weapons sales to Turkey, a key Middle East ally of Washington. Clauses on Turkey in the annual defence policy bill - released by members of the House of Representatives on Monday - are the latest strain in already-sour relations between the two NATO allies.⁹⁶

- **Turkey threatens US over bill seeking to halt weapons sales**

A U.S. bill that would halt weapons sales to Turkey risks terminating all procurement deals between the two NATO allies, according to Turkish officials and procurement official. But a U.S. diplomatic source is downplaying the impact of the move, saying it would not be the end of a decades-long defense and security alliance. Turkish Foreign Affairs Minister Mevlüt Cavuşoğlu said May 6 that the country would retaliate if the U.S. enacts the proposed law, calling the measures in the bill "wrong, illogical and not fitting between the NATO allies." "If the United States imposes sanctions on us or takes such a step, Turkey will absolutely retaliate. What needs to be done is the U.S. needs to let go of this," he added.⁹⁷

- **Turkey to station US-made F-35 jets at base protecting country's borders with Iraq, Iran, Syria**

⁹⁵ <http://www.presstv.com/Detail/2018/05/14/561645/Saudi-troops-Yemen-Socotra-UAE>

⁹⁶ "Why a US defence bill seeks a halt to arms sales to Turkey", 08 May 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/defence-bill-seeks-halt-arms-sales-turkey-180508105236122.html>

⁹⁷ "Turkey threatens US over bill seeking to halt weapons sales", 10 May 2018. <https://www.defensenews.com/congress/2018/05/09/turkey-threatens-us-over-bill-seeking-to-halt-weapons-sales/>

Turkey will station F-35 fighter jets due to arrive from the U.S. in June in the Eastern Anatolian province of Malatya, at a base that safeguards the country's borders with Iraq, Iran and Syria. The joint strike fighters will be stationed in the 7th Main Jet Base Command in Malatya, which is also home to the Kürecik anti-missile shield has been functioning since 2011 as a protective measure for NATO, of which Turkey is a member. According to defense industry authorities, the delivery of the first of the 30 F-35 fighters will be made on June 21 at a ceremony in the U.S. Preparation work in Malatya to welcome the jets – 30 of them in the first delivery — is still ongoing, with construction and modernization works in place.⁹⁸

- **Turkey's Erdoğan rails against French racism**

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan made Francophobia the centrepiece of a speech to international relations students on Saturday, after several days of hectoring the European country for a manifesto which proposed to alter the text of the Quran.

France under President Emmanuel Macron has been the most vocal European opponent of Turkey's military operation against Kurdish groups in Afrin in northern Syria, which took place earlier this year.⁹⁹

- **Power to women under Turkey's new action plan**

The government conducts and will carry out projects to empower Turkish women whose rights and access to employment are often overlooked in male-dominated society. In his party's manifesto ahead of the June 24 elections, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has pledged to end "every tradition of the age of ignorance targeting women." The Ministry of Family and Social Justice already works to empower women with projects to improve gender equality for women, which have lagged behind men in every field, courtesy of a patriarchal mindset.¹⁰⁰

Israel

- **Israel, Iran and Syria**

While US President was announcing its pulling out from the Iranian Nuclear Agreement, tensions between Syria and Israel rose to new levels. On May 8th there was information that there were irregular Iranian movements in Syria near Golan

⁹⁸ "Turkey to station US-made F-35 jets at base protecting country's borders with Iraq, Iran, Syria", 11 May 2018. <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-to-station-us-made-f-35-jets-at-base-protecting-countrys-borders-with-iraq-iran-syria-131700>

⁹⁹ "Turkey's Erdoğan rails against French racism", 12 May 2018. <https://ahvalnews.com/france-turkey/turkeys-erdogan-rails-against-french-racism>

¹⁰⁰ "Power to women under Turkey's new action plan", 14 May 2018. <https://www.dailysabah.com/turkey/2018/05/14/power-to-women-under-turkeys-new-action-plan>

Heights.¹⁰¹ Later on May 10th Israel alleged that Iranian forces in Syria fired about 20 rockets into the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights, targeting forward positions of the Israeli military.¹⁰² On the same day, Israel retaliated by firing 35 rockets, and its warplanes attacking 50 Iranian targets, which is nearly Iran's entire military infrastructure in Syria, while killing 23 military personnel, including Syrian and non-Syrians. Syrian state media said Israel launched dozens of missiles and hit a radar station, Syrian air defense positions and an ammunition dump, underscoring the risks of a wider escalation involving Iran and its regional allies.¹⁰³ The strikes were supported both by US and EU as they supported on Israel's right to self-defense.¹⁰⁴

- **Hamas's continued March of Return protest and the Opening of US Embassy in Jerusalem**

The Israeli military is gearing up for fierce "March of Return" protests along the Gaza security fence on May 14, with more than 100,000 Palestinians expected to take part, and dire warnings from the IDF that hundreds plan to try breach the fence and carry out a "massacre" of Israeli civilians. It can be noted here that on May 14, US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin will unveil the seal and the dedication plaque at the new US embassy's site in Arnona, in southern Jerusalem, which would officially open the US embassy there.¹⁰⁵ Though initially, the protests were proposed to take place in May 15th, as it fell on Nakba Day¹⁰⁶, but protests were rescheduled for May 14th, to coincide with the move of the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.¹⁰⁷

Terrorism and Counter Terrorism

Pakistan

¹⁰¹ IDF puts Golan on alert over 'abnormal' Iranian movement in Syria, *The Times of Israel*, May 8, 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-alerts-golan-residents-over-abnormal-iranian-movement-in-syria/> as accessed on May 14, 2018

¹⁰² Iran Fires Rockets Into Golan Heights From Syria, *Israelis Say*, *The New York Times*, May 9, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/09/world/middleeast/israel-iran-attack.html> as accessed on May 14, 2018

¹⁰³ Israel strikes Iranian targets in Syria after rocket fire, *Reuters*, May 10, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-israel/iranian-forces-in-syria-fired-rockets-at-israeli-targets-in-golan-israeli-military-idUSKBN1IA3GF> as accessed on May 14, 2018; EU backs Israel's strikes against Iran in Syria, *The Jerusalem Post*, May 10, 2018, <https://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/UK-Germany-back-Israeli-right-to-defensive-strikes-against-Iran-in-Syria-556077> as accessed on May 14, 2018

¹⁰⁴ EU backs Israel's strikes against Iran in Syria, *The Jerusalem Post*, May 10, 2018, <https://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/UK-Germany-back-Israeli-right-to-defensive-strikes-against-Iran-in-Syria-556077> as accessed on May 14, 2018

¹⁰⁵ "Ahead of official embassy opening, it's Jerusalem of red-white-and-blue", *The Times of Israel*, May 13, 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/ahead-of-official-embassy-opening-its-jerusalem-of-red-white-and-blue/> as accessed on May 14, 2018

¹⁰⁶ Nakba Day is generally commemorated on May 15th, the day after the Gregorian calendar date for Israeli Independence Day, commemorating the displacement of the Palestinians.

¹⁰⁷ IDF gears up for mass Gaza riots, warns that Hamas plans to 'massacre' Israelis, *The Times of Israel*, May 13, 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-gears-up-for-mass-gaza-riots-warning-hamas-plans-to-massacre-israelis/> as accessed on May 14, 2018

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	May 7	FATA	A Middle School for girls was bombed in the Mir Ali <i>tehsil</i> (revenue unit) of North Waziristan Agency (NWA). The blast partially damaged the school's main building. ¹⁰⁸		School blown up
2	May 9	FATA	Two schools for girls were blown up and pamphlets warning locals not to send grown-up girls to educational institutions were distributed widely in Hasokhel area of Mir Ali <i>tehsil</i> of NWA. ¹⁰⁹		School blown up
3	May 10	Balochistan	The Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) claimed to have arrested a "wanted" militant linked with Lashkar-e-Jhangvi al-Alami (LeJ-A) in a raid conducted at a compound in Killi Shah Muhammad area of Hazarganji area in provincial capital Quetta. CTD Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Aitzaz Ahmed Goraya confirmed the incident. ¹¹⁰		Arrest
4	May 11	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	At least one Policeman was killed and six persons were injured in a remote-controlled bomb Improvised Explosive Device (IED) blast targeting a Police van near Kohat Chowrangi in Bannu district. ¹¹¹	1	6
5	May 12	FATA	The son of former Member National Assembly (MNA) Maulana Mohammad Dindar was shot dead by unidentified armed assailants in a targeted attack in Mir Ali <i>tehsil</i> of NWA. Separately, a religious scholar,	2	0

¹⁰⁸ Pazir Gul, Two girls' schools hit by bomb explosions in North Waziristan, *Dawn*, May 10, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1406747/two-girls-schools-hit-by-bomb-explosions-in-north-waziristan>, accessed on May 14, 2018

¹⁰⁹ Ibid

¹¹⁰ Saleem Shahi, 'Wanted' LeJ al-Alami militant held in Quetta, *Dawn*, May 10, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1406774/wanted-lej-al-alam-militant-held-in-quetta>, accessed on May 14, 2018

¹¹¹ Ali Akbar, One policeman martyred in IED blast near police van in Bannu, *Dawn*, May 11, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1407012/one-policeman-martyred-in-ied-blast-near-police-van-in-bannu>, accessed on May 14, 2018

			identified as Abdul Qayyum, was also shot dead in a targeted killing incident in Mir Ali <i>tehsil</i> . The political administration said the victim was a teacher in a government school. The latest attacks bring the number of target killings in Mir Ali to five in May. ¹¹²		
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Afghanistan

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	May 8	Baghlan	At least three Security Forces (SFs) were injured when Tala Wa Barfak district of Baghlan province in the north of Afghanistan fell to Taliban. The District Governor Ismail Barfaki confirmed the siege saying that the roads to the district were closed as militants attacked different routes to the center. ¹¹³	0	1
2	May 11	Kabul	In the wake of recent string of attacks, a United States (US) commander General Joseph Votelhas vowed to maintain relentless pressure on the Taliban and its supporters. During the meeting, the Interior Minister Wais Ahmad Barmak talked about reforms in many departments of the security agencies and mentioned reforms in the Afghan police offices, particularly in Kabul city. ¹¹⁴	US vows to put more pressure on Taliban	
3	May 12	10 provinces	Afghanistan's Interior and Defense Ministries said that clashes have intensified in the last two days in 10 provinces across the country – resulting in an increased casualty toll among all warring parties, which includes. Afghan security forces, Taliban and Daesh	Security worsens in 10 provinces	

¹¹² Nasruminallah, Two killed in Mir Ali target killing incidents, *The Express Tribune*, May 13, 2018, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1708965/1-two-killed-mir-ali-target-killing-incidents/>, accessed on May 14, 2018

¹¹³ Hamid Shirzai, Key District In Baghlan Reportedly Falls To Taliban, *Tolo News*, May 8, 2018, <https://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/key-district-under-siege-baghlan>, accessed on May 14, 2018

¹¹⁴ US vows more pressure on Taliban, its supporters, *Afghanistan Times*, May 11, 2018, <http://afghanistantimes.af/us-vows-pressure-taliban-supporters/>, accessed on May 14, 2018

			<p>militants.</p> <p>Interior Minister Wais Ahmad Barmak said that Farah, Ghor in the Western Region and Baghlan in the North are among the 10 provinces where clashes have been ongoing between security forces and Taliban since May 10, 2018.¹¹⁵</p>		
4	May 13	Nangarhar	<p>At least 10 persons, including civilians, workers of the Customs Department, and security personnel, were killed and 42 others were injured in coordinated attacks carried out on Customs Department in Jalalabad city. Following a five-hour gun-battle between militants and SFs, at least six militants were eliminated.¹¹⁶</p>	10	42
5	May 13	Kabul	<p>Following the heavy casualties among the Afghan SFs the Ministry of Interior said that SFs have retreated from some areas that have high threat levels so as to avoid additional fatalities. According to security departments, in the last 19 days, since the start of the Taliban's Spring Offensive on April 25, 2018, the group has carried out over 2,700 attacks which resulted in high fatality rates to both security forces and Taliban militants.</p> <p>During this period, Kohistan district in Badakhshan province, Belchiragh district in Faryab province and Tala Wa Barfak district in Baghlan province fell to the Taliban.¹¹⁷</p>	SFs retreat in the wake of Taliban Offensive	

Iraq

¹¹⁵ Tamim Hamid, Casualties Rise Amid Heavy Clashes In 10 Provinces, *Tolo News*, May 12, 2018, <https://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/casualties-rise-amid-heavy-clashes-%C2%A010-provinces>, accessed on May 14, 2018

¹¹⁶ Coordinated attack ends in Jalalabad city, 10 dead, 42 wounded, *Khaama Press*, May 13, 2018, <https://www.khaama.com/coordinated-attack-ends-in-jalalabad-city-10-dead-42-wounded-05149/>, accessed on May 14, 2018

¹¹⁷ Sharif Amiri, Forces Retreat From High Risk Areas To Avoid Casualties, *Tolo News*, May 13, 2018, <https://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/forces-retreat-high-risk-areas-avoid%C2%A0casualties>, accessed on May 14, 2018

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	May 9	Baghdad	<p>Five Islamic State (IS) officials, including a top aide to the group's leader, were captured in a three-month complex cross-border sting carried out by Iraqi and American intelligence.</p> <p>The operation tracked a group of senior IS leaders who had been hiding in Syria and Turkey. This represents a significant intelligence victory for the American-led coalition fighting the extremist group and underscores the strengthening relationship between Washington and Baghdad.¹¹⁸</p>	Five ISIS captured	
2	May 11	Diyala	Three Iraqi soldiers were wounded while repulsing an attack by IS militants near Berwana village in Diyala province. ¹¹⁹	0	3
3	May 13	Kirkuk	An Iraqi chieftain and one of his sons were killed and three others were injured in a dual bomb attack in al-Maslakha village of Kirkuk governorate. ¹²⁰	2	3
4	May 14	Iraq	According to The Cipher Brief, "The IS has experienced significant territorial losses in its former self-declared caliphate that once spanned large swaths of eastern Syria and western Iraq. However, the group remains a potent international threat as it increasingly adopts conventional insurgent tactics, increases its focus on executing terrorist attacks in the West and doubles down on supporting affiliate organizations across the globe as well as lone	ISIS Threat Report	

¹¹⁸ Five Top ISIS Officials Captured in U.S.-Iraqi Sting, *The New York Times*, May 9, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/09/world/middleeast/iraq-isis-islamic-state-arrest.html>, accessed on May 14, 2018

¹¹⁹ Nehal Mostafa, Three Iraqi soldiers wounded while repelling Islamic State attack in Diyala, *Iraqi News*, May 11, 2018, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/three-iraqi-soldiers-wounded-while-repelling-islamic-state-attack-in-diyala/>, accessed on May 14, 2018

¹²⁰ Mohammed Ebraheem, Five Iraqis killed, injured in dual bomb attack in Iraq's Kirkuk, *Iraqi News*, May 13, 2018, <https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/five-iraqis-killed-injured-in-dual-bomb-attack-in-iraqs-kirkuk/>, accessed on May 14, 2018

		wolf actors pursuing inspired attacks in their home countries.” ¹²¹	
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Syria

S.No.	Date	Place	Incident	Killed	Injured
1	May 10	Baghdad	The Iraqi pro-government paramilitary troops announced shelling IS locations in Syria. In a press release, the media service of al-Hashd al-Shaabi (Popular Mobilization Forces) said, “The artillery of the 29th brigade targeted pivotal locations of Islamic State members at al-Atshana village in Syria.” ¹²²		
2	May 13	Damascus	Led by 42nd Brigade of the 4th Division and 105th Brigade of the Republican Guard, the Syrian Arab Army (SAA) and their Palestinian allies scored a big advance in the southern part of Damascus, forcing the IS to abandon several areas inside Hajar Al-Aswad and Yarmouk Camp. These liberated areas included the municipal building, Al-Quds School, and power station, which were all previously held by the IS for three years. ¹²³		
3	May 13	Damascus	The Russian Aerospace Forces unleashed an assault over the southern part of Damascus, targeting the IS’s last positions inside Yarmouk Camp, Hajar Al-Aswad, and Al-Tadamon. According to Al-Masdar’s Ibrahim Joudeh the loud sounds from Russian airstrikes on southern		

¹²¹ Threat Report 2018: ISIS In the Spotlight, *The Cipher Brief*, May 14, 2018,

<https://www.thecipherbrief.com/article/international/threat-report-2018-isis-spotlight>, accessed on May 14, 2018

¹²² Nehal Mostafa, Iraqi pro-gov’t troops shell Islamic State ‘pivotal’ locations in Syria, *Iraqi News*, May 10, 2018,

<https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/iraqi-pro-govt-troops-shell-islamic-state-locations-in-syria/>, accessed on May 14, 2018

¹²³ Leith Aboufadel, Battle map update of southern Damascus, *Al Masdar News*, May 14, 2018,

<https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/battle-map-update-of-southern-damascus/>, accessed on May 14, 2108

			Damascus have greatly exceeded those of the Israeli attack earlier in the week. ¹²⁴	
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International Economic Issues

- **AIIB set to extend reach to Latin America and Africa**

On May 7, 2018, the *Financial Times* reported that the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is set to extend its financing operations to Latin America and Africa after reaching agreements with the regions' leading development banks. The moves represent an important step in the AIIB's metamorphosis from an Asia-focused lender into a global institution similar in structure to the World Bank. So far, 18 of the 25 projects financed by the Beijing-based bank have involved co-lending with the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, European Investment Bank and Islamic Development Bank. The remaining seven projects have been financed solely by the AIIB. Danny Alexander, vice-president of the AIIB, said that the bank was intending to increase the total loans it disburses this year from \$2.7 bn last year and \$1.6 bn in 2016. He did not give a target number, but it is thought that the bank is looking to lend between \$3 bn and \$3.5 bn this year. The move to co-finance with the IADB coincides with a number of Latin American countries joining the bank among 27 new members. While Brazil was among 57 founding members, six other countries — Argentina, Chile, Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru and Venezuela — are in the process of joining.¹²⁵

- **US says something 'terribly wrong' at WTO, attacks China**

Addressing the WTO's General Council for the first time, the new U.S. Ambassador to the World Trade Organization (WTO), Dennis Shea, told its membership on May 8, 2018 that something had gone “terribly wrong” with judges at the world body and that China's arguments showed Beijing was living in a fantasy. Recognising that the WTO's rules had substantial value and had “generally contributed” to global economic stability, Shea added that there was a “steadily worsening rupture of trust” by the Appellate Body.

He said, “Something has gone terribly wrong in this system when those charged with adjudicating the rules are so consistently disregarding those very rules.” Shea said he was “perplexed” by China's assertion that it was a victim and the WTO must not shield countries that undermined the global trading system. “If the WTO

¹²⁴ Leith Aboufadel, Breaking: Skies above southern Damascus turn red after Russian forces unleashes massive night assault, *Al Masdar News*, May 14, 2018, <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/breaking-skies-above-southern-damascus-turn-red-after-russian-forces-unleashes-massive-night-assault/>, accessed on May 14, 2018

¹²⁵ James Kynge, “AIIB set to extend reach to Latin America and Africa”, *The Financial Times*, May 7, 2018, <https://www.ft.com/content/d45f9f00-4fa7-11e8-9471-a083af05aea7> (accessed on May 10, 2018)

wishes to remain relevant, it must with urgency—confront the havoc created by China's state capitalism.”¹²⁶

- **Members voice concerns over rising trade tensions, underline support for WTO**

Forty-one members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) issued a joint statement on May 8, 2018 expressing concerns over rising trade tensions and risks of escalating protectionism. The statement, delivered to a meeting of the WTO's General Council, calls on governments to resolve their differences through dialogue and cooperation, including through the WTO. The member-countries held that a well-functioning, rules-based multilateral trading system embodied in the WTO was of “key importance for our economies as well as for global economic stability, prosperity and development”.¹²⁷

- **India fastest growing economy at 7.4 per cent in 2018: IMF**

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) reaffirmed on May 9, 2018, that India will be the fastest growing major economy in 2018, with a growth rate of 7.4 per cent that rises to 7.8 per cent in 2019 with medium-term prospects remaining positive. The IMF's Asia and Pacific Regional Economic Outlook report said that India was recovering from the effects of demonetisation and the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) and “the recovery is expected to be underpinned by a rebound from transit”. However, it added a note of caution stating, “In India, given increased inflation pressure, monetary policy should maintain a tightening bias.”¹²⁸

¹²⁶“US says something 'terribly wrong' at WTO, attacks China”, *CNBC News*, May 8, 2018, <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/05/08/us-says-something-terribly-wrong-at-wto-attacks-china.html> (accessed on May 8, 2018)

¹²⁷ WTO, “Members voice concerns over rising trade tensions, underline support for WTO”, https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news18_e/gc_07may18_e.htm (accessed on May 9, 2018)

¹²⁸ “India fastest growing economy at 7.4 per cent in 2018: IMF”, *Economic Times*, May 9, 2018, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/indicators/india-fastest-growing-economy-at-7-4-per-cent-in-2018-imf/articleshow/64089078.cms> (accessed on May 9, 2018)