

Weekly Media Updates **(26 June-02 July, 2017)**

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Africa

- **Africa makes strides toward financial independence** ¹

African Union deputy chairperson Kwesi Quartey has said that Africa continues to make great strides in its quest for financial independence and sustainability, to reaffirm the continent's renaissance and stop over-reliance on development partners. In a press meeting Quartey said the momentum in the implementation of the 0.2 percent levy to finance the Union's budget continues to gain traction.

Ten member states including Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Chad, Ghana and Republic of Congo, among others, are at various stages of implementing the decision on financing of the AU.

Quartey noted that a well-functioning financial regime is essential to foster longterm economic growth. The heads of state and government adopted a decision in Kigali last year to finance 100 percent of the operational budget of the AU. The decision also seeks to finance 75 percent of the programme budget, where the flagship programmes are covered. Also 25 percent of the contributions will go to finance the Peace Fund to cover operational activities such as mediation and preventive diplomacy, institutional capacity and peace support operations.

- **West African and French Leaders Launch Sahel Force** ²

Five African countries have launched a new multinational force to fight armed groups in the Sahel region, which France's President Emmanuel Macron told a summit in Mali should be fully operational "in a matter of weeks".

The new regional anti-terror force is set to include as many as 5,000 soldiers, with one battalion from each of the so-called G5 Sahel countries: Mali, Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad.

In a regional summit with the G5-Sahel leaders in the Malian capital, Bamako France's president said his country would contribute \$9m to the new force this year. He also mentioned a contribution of 70 vehicles, without saying whether that was included in the sum.

The European Union has also pledged \$57m towards the new force, and France is seeking additional financing from partners, including Germany and the United States.

¹ <http://journalducameroun.com/en/africa-makes-strides-toward-financial-independence-au-official/>

² Aljazeera, 2 July 2017, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201707030730.html>

The new force will operate in the region along with the 12,000-strong UN peacekeeping mission and the 5,000-strong French troops already in Mali, which obtained its independence from France in 1960.

In addition, Macron announced \$228m in development aid to the Sahel region over the next five years.

The fight against armed fighters is expected to focus on the border area between Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso, where attacks against military barracks have occurred recently.

Key challenges

Macron's visit comes as al-Qaeda's Mali branch released a proof-of-life video of six foreign hostages, including a French woman who was abducted in late 2016 in the northern Malian town of Gao. On 30 June 2017, Sunday, Macron denounced the abduction of Sophie Petronin, vowing that his government will "put all our energy towards eradicating" the armed groups involved in the abduction.

- **India Remains Nigeria's Top Oil Export Destination³**

Nigeria exported over 155.125 million barrels of crude oil to India between February and March 2017, thus making it the biggest importer, according to data from the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC).

Countries like the United States of America, Netherlands, and Spain imported 107.976 million, 61.561 million barrels and 60.353 million barrels respectively, while others including China, Malaysia and Australia had drastically reduced crude import from Nigeria.

According to the NNPC, revenue from Nigeria's oil and gas export decreased from \$404.55 million in March to \$142.12 million in April, where contributions from crude amounted to \$71.81million, while gas and miscellaneous receipt stood at \$70.29 million and \$0.013 million respectively.

- **Malawi MP Says 'Very Strange' for India to Demand Diplomatic Treatment for Tax Evading, Law Breaking Businessman⁴**

East Member of Parliament (MP) Kamlepo Kalua on 29 June 2017, Thursday raised a motion for Ministry of Foreign Affairs to comment why the Indian High Commission in Lilongwe has been demanding diplomatic immunity for deported Chandrashaker More an Indian businessman.

³ The Guardian, 28 June 2017 <http://allafrica.com/stories/201706280519.html>

⁴ Nyasa Times , 30 June 2017, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201706300217.html>

More evaded K20 million which he owed Malawi Revenue Authority (MRA) and had been jumping bail granted by the Malawian court. He was also accused of uttering racial slurs to police officers and a Magistrate.

Kalua said it is "very surprising" that a Malawian cannot be treated with kid's gloves for breaking the law and evading tax both locally or even in India, yet Moore wants "special" treatment. "It is very surprising that a persona non grata in the country is asking through Indian High Commission to give him high powered security which is VIP treatment.

He was apparently referring to a letter which Indian High Commission sought for security escort for Moore and his Indian lawyer.

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Francis Kasaila promised to respond to the concerns. The Department of Immigration and Citizenship Services deported Moore because he was not a law abiding foreigner. Malawi Revenue Authority (MRA) spokesperson Steven Kapoloma said despite the Indian deportation, MRA will use lawful ways to recover the money he owed the body.

More's lawyer Justin Dzonzi said the Indian was on court bail on the tax evasion matter, left for India in 2015 after the court allowed him to travel but fell sick while there and his business permit expired in October 2015, meaning he could not have returned without applying for one.

- **Chinese Firms Operating in Africa Hit 10,000⁵**

There are over 10,000 Chinese firms operating in Africa, according to a new report by McKinsey Africa. Of these, 90 per cent of the firms are private, with about a third operating in the manufacturing sector.

A quarter is in the services sector while a fifth are in trade, construction and real estate. Chinese firms also handle 12 per cent of the continent's industrial production valued at US\$500 - Sh51.7 trillion- billion a year in total. Their dominance can be seen in infrastructure, where they cover 50 per cent market share of Africa's international engineering, procurement and construction works.

According to the study, nearly a quarter of the 1,000 firms surveyed said they covered their initial investment within a year or less. A third said they recorded profit margins of over 20 per cent.

Unlike other firms, Chinese firms have also made investments that represent a long-term commitment to Africa. Of the Chinese firms surveyed, 74 per cent said that they are optimistic about their future in Africa.

⁵ Capital FM, 28 June 2017, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201706290672.html>

The study says Chinese firms in operation have employed several million Africans. Figuratively, of the 1,000 firms polled, 89 per cent of the employees are local, while nearly two-thirds provide skills training to their workers.

According to the study, some 48 per cent of the firms introduced new products and technologies while 36 per cent have introduced a new technology in the last three years.

Despite the positives, the study notes that the firms offer too few locals managerial positions at only 44 per cent. The firms are also not sourcing products in the continent as they should, as only 47 per cent of the firms' sourcing was from local African firms.

North Africa

Egypt

- **June 30 revolution brought down a fascist regime: Al-Sisi⁶**

President Al-Sisi of Egypt has said that the June 30 revolution successfully brought down a fascist regime in the country. He was addressing the nation on the eve of fourth anniversary of the downfall of the Morsi's regime in 2013. He also said that revolutionaries thwarted the plan of spreading the chaos and the terror across the region by some forces but he did not name the specific groups who were responsible for it. According to him, June 30 was the beginning of the end of the fascist regime and it was meant to correct the past revolution which put the nation on true path of progress and dignity where Egypt could reclaim its respectful place in the region. He remarked that after four years, the voice of Egypt are being heard globally and hailed the people for cooperating with the government particularly on the economic issues when government had to take some tough measures to bring the poor economy on track. All these are happening when people on the streets were showing their anger against the hefty rise in the oil and gas price in the country. The decision to raise the price has been taken by the government under pressure from IMF which has been providing loan to Egypt.

- **Egypt Accuses Qatar of Supporting Terrorism⁷**

⁶AsharqalAwsat,ArabicDaily

<https://aawsat.com/home/article/963947/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%B3%D9%8A-%C2%AB30-%D9%8A%D9%88%D9%86%D9%8A%D9%88%C2%BB-%D8%A3%D8%AD%D8%A8%D8%B7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%83%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%B4%D9%8A-%D9%88%D8%AE%D8%B7%D8%B7-%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%84-%D8%B3%D8%B9%D8%AA-%D8%A5%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%AE%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A8-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%86%D8%B7%D9%82%D8%A9>

Egypt urged the UN Security Council to document repeated violations by some countries, especially Qatar, of the sanctions imposed on Libya. The request was made during a meeting held at the United Nations headquarter in New York on the “Challenges of Combating Terrorism in Libya. An Egyptian delegation at UN meeting in New York accused Qatar of financing terrorists in turmoil-stricken Libya, the Egyptian Foreign Ministry said in a statement on Wednesday. At a meeting of an anti-terror committee of the UN Security Council held on Tuesday night, Egypt's assistant foreign minister for Arab affairs said that the oil-rich Gulf state provides support to militants in Libya, which poses a threat to the Egyptian national security particularly at the western borders with neighboring Libya.

Reading Egypt's statement before the committee, the minister said that the terrorist groups and organizations in Libya receive support particularly from Qatar and other states in the region. The statement said that Libya has become a safe haven for terrorists and it stressed the necessity for reaching a political settlement there and urged the UN to intensify efforts to ensure implementation of political agreement in the country.

It is worth mentioning here that Egypt has recently joined the Gulf States of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain in imposing a blockade on Qatar, accusing Qatar of sheltering members of terrorist organizations and interfering in other countries. Egypt's administration led by President Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi is already at odds with Qatar for supporting and hosting fleeing members of the currently blacklisted Muslim Brotherhood group after the Sisi-led overthrow of former Brotherhood-oriented President Mohamed Morsi in July 2013.

Libya

- **Libya is a Failed State: French Foreign Minister⁸**

French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian admitted that Libya had no effective government or state to deal with. He said that France has no Libyan State interlocutors to deal with and also added that France could not be satisfied by this situation and Libya is a totally failed State where all state structures now need to be rebuilt.

On Libyan Political Agreement (LPA) signed by the contending Libyan parties in Skhirat in December 2016, Mr. Le Drian said that it must remain as the mechanism for seeking Libyan accord and its architecture needs to be adjusted. He also said

⁷AlArabiya English New Arab, an English Daily <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/gulf/2017/06/28/Egypt-calls-for-documentation-of-support-for-terror-by-countries-including-Qatar.html>

⁸ Libyan Herald <https://www.libyaherald.com/2017/06/30/libya-is-a-failed-state-and-lpa-needs-to-be-adjusted-french-foreign-minister-le-drian/>

that General Haftar is part of the solution but he did not tell how he could be part of the solution. He also added that France cannot remain silent as Libya is a priority of our President. Responding to the questions, he added that the security risk is growing in Libya in the trafficking of all sorts and even of people. The central Mediterranean migration route is once again the largest one and we have no Libyan State representative to talk about it. On terrorism, he said that the scope of the ISIS action in Libya has been reduced, particularly around Sirte, Derna and Benghazi, but the Jihadists have split up and the threat remains the same.

China

- **China, Kyrgyzstan border forces hold exercises to stop arms smuggling**⁹
On June 27, 2017, Chinese and Kyrgyzstan border forces held exercises in China's Xinjiang region to bolster defences against the smuggling of weapons. China has stepped up security in Xinjiang in its far west amid fears of attacks by militants from the mostly Muslim Uighur ethnic minority. China's official Xinhua news agency reported that helicopters, armoured jeeps and 700 border police officers from the neighbours took part in the exercise in Xinjiang's Kirgiz Prefecture. The drills were observed by officials from all countries in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, a security bloc jointly led by China and Russia that includes Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India and Pakistan.
- **Xi Jinping: Challenging Chinese sovereignty in Hong Kong crosses a 'red line'**¹⁰
Presiding over the 20th anniversary of British hand-over of Hong Kong to Chinese rule, President Xi Jinping issued the clearest warning yet against challenges to China's sovereignty by forces in Hong Kong, calling it a "red line". He further called on young people to have a "full understanding" of China's constitution, which he said forms the basis for Hong Kong as well as the policy of "one country, two systems". Xi also asked the new administration to focus its energies on development, which he said would be the key to resolving the city's problems.
- **China says joint declaration with Britain on Hong Kong autonomy no longer has meaning**¹¹

⁹ Reuters, "China, Kyrgyzstan border forces hold exercise to stop arms smuggling", *Euronews*, 27 June 2017, at <http://www.euronews.com/2017/06/27/china-kyrgyzstan-border-forces-hold-exercises-to-stop-arms-smuggling> (accessed 2 July 2017).

¹⁰Stuart Lau, Jeffrey Lam, "Xi Jinping: Challenging Chinese Sovereignty in Hong Kong crosses a 'red-line'", *South China Morning Post*, 1 July 2017, at <http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/2100843/xi-jinping-challenging-chinese-sovereignty-hong-kong-crosses> (accessed 2 July 2017).

China said on June 30, 2017, that the joint declaration with Britain over Hong Kong, which laid the blueprint over how the city would be ruled after its return to China in 1997, was a historical document that no longer had any practical significance. The stark announcement from the Foreign Ministry, that is sure to raise questions over Beijing's commitment to Hong Kong's core freedoms, came the same day Chinese President Xi Jinping said in Hong Kong the "one country, two systems" formula was recognized "by the whole world".

- **Taiwan vows retaliation after Nigeria shuts down trade office¹²**

On July 2, 2017 Taiwan vowed to retaliate by asking Nigeria's trade office on the island to move out of the capital, Taipei. Taiwan's Foreign Ministry said, "We will take a reciprocal measure by asking Nigeria to do the same after the completion of relocation of our office [in Lagos]." In January, Nigeria ordered that Taiwan move its trade office out of Abuja and open a smaller one with a skeleton staff in Lagos. The order came after a visit by top Beijing envoy Wang Yi, who asked that Nigeria abide by the one-China policy. On June 30, 2017, the African nation sent 25 armed police officers to shut down the trade office in Abuja in a bid to force it to relocate to Lagos.

European Union

- **The UK to Pull Out of Fishing Deal**

Britain will withdraw from the London Fisheries Convention. The move is considered to be the first step towards enhancing control of fishing industry. Environment Secretary Michael Gove stated, "This is an historic first step towards building a new domestic fishing policy as we leave the European Union - one which leads to a more competitive, profitable and sustainable industry for the whole of the UK."¹³ After withdrawing from the convention, the UK vessels will not be allowed to fish in the area 6 to 12 nautical miles off the coast of the other European countries of the agreement- Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland and the Netherlands. The withdrawal from the convention will take two years. Ireland's

¹¹ Reuters, "China says joint declaration with Britain on Hong Kong autonomy no longer has meaning", *Strait Times*, 30 June 2017, at <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/xi-jinping-says-hong-kongs-one-country-two-system-formula-faces-new-challenges> (accessed 2 July 2017).

¹² Lawrence Chung, "Taiwan vows retaliation after Nigeria shuts down trade office", *South China Morning Post*, 3 July 2017, at <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/2100970/taiwan-vows-retaliation-after-nigeria-shuts-down-trade> (accessed 2 July 2017).

¹³ Britain set to trigger pullout from fishing deal as it heads toward Brexit, DW, July 2, 2017, <http://www.dw.com/en/britain-set-to-trigger-pullout-from-fishing-deal-as-it-heads-toward-brexit/a-39512972>

agriculture minister, Michael Creed has criticized the British decision and termed it as “unwelcome and unhelpful.”¹⁴

- **German Chancellor Merkel’s Parliament Speech**

German Chancellor Angela Merkel has spoken in the parliament on 29 June 2017. Her speech reflects the changing dynamics of transatlantic partnerships after Donald Trump has become the President of the US. She talked about international cooperation in dealing with global challenges. In backdrop of tension with the US and Brexit, Chancellor Merkel said, “Europe has no choice but to increasingly take its fate in its own hands.” Emphasizing on cooperation with France, she noted that Germany and France would take ‘a greater role in leading the European Union.’ She also stated that German and French interests are “connected in the closest possible way.” Like Chancellor Merkel, new President of France is also pro-EU and supports deeper European integration.¹⁵

- **European Union Extends Sanctions on Russia**

The European Union has extended economic sanctions on Russia till January 2018. The European Union has imposed economic sanctions on Russia after crisis in Crimea. Economic sanctions restrict business with Russia in energy, defence and financial sectors.¹⁶ The European Union links the lifting of economic sanctions with progress in implementation of Minsk agreements.

- **Migrants Pressure Increases in Italy**

As migrant inflow is increasing in Italy, Rome has threatened to close the ports and seize the rescue boats of humanitarian agencies. Due to proximity with Libya, Italy is the main destination for migrants coming to Europe via sea.¹⁷ Italy has urged other EU member states to take more migrants because persistent inflow of migrants is causing immense strain. Italian Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni stated, “It’s a country under pressure, and we ask the help of our European allies.”¹⁸

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ G20: Angela Merkel sketches vision of French and German-led Europe, DW, June 29, 2017, <http://www.dw.com/en/g20-angela-merkel-sketches-vision-of-french-and-german-led-europe/a-39469089>

¹⁶ European Council, <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/sanctions/ukraine-crisis/history-ukraine-crisis/>

¹⁷ Europe migrant crisis: Italy threatens to close ports as ministers meet, BBC, July 2, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-40470102>

¹⁸ Migrant pressures grow; Italy presses EU nations to do more, ABC news, June 29, 2017, <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/eu-backs-support-italy-struggling-migrants-48346020>

- **US President Donald Trump's Visit to Warsaw**

The US President, Donald Trump will visit Warsaw next week. The president will take in part in a gathering of leaders from central Europe, Baltic states and the Balkans. The event will be organized by Poland for enhancing regional trade and infrastructure.¹⁹

East Asia /South-East Asia

Korean Peninsula and Japan

- **Moon-Trump Summit**

The first Summit Meet between US President, Donald Trump and South Korean President, Moon Jae-in was held on June 29-30, 2017 in Washington. The meeting was focused on reinforcing the alliance between the two countries through leadership relationship rather than substantive aspects of the relationship. At the end of the summit a joint statement was issued to advance the comprehensive strategic alliance between the two countries. During the meeting Trump supported Moon's approach to North Korea and demanded a reappraisal of the US-Korea free trade agreement and asked Seoul to share more cost on security.²⁰

During the meeting President Moon succeeded in winning support from President Trump to play a leading role in resuming talks with North Korea. The joint statement "affirmed their commitment to fully implement existing sanctions and impose new measures designed to apply maximum pressure on North Korea to compel Pyongyang to cease its provocative actions and return to sincere and constructive talks." They also agreed to set up a new "Extended Deterrence Strategy and Consultation Group" to discuss North Korean issues together. The statement further said the two countries will "work to expeditiously enable the conditions-based transfer of wartime operational control of [South Korean] forces."²¹

¹⁹ Justyna Pawlak, Unease in Brussels over Trump's Poland visit, Reuters, June 29, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-poland-usa-trump-idUSKBN19KoGo>

²⁰ Greater Trump trade pressure looming, *The Korea Times*, July 12, 2017, http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2017/07/120_232271.html (accessed on July 3, 2017); "Joint press conference of Presidents Moon Jae-in and Donald Trump", *The Korea Times*, July 1, 2017, http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2017/07/120_232243.html (accessed on July 3, 2017); "Joint statement of Presidents of South Korea and the United States", *The Korea Times*, July 1, 2017, http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2017/07/120_232241.html (accessed on July 3, 2017).

²¹ Jeong Woo-sang, Lim Min-hyuk, "Moon Wins U.S. Support for 'Leading Role' in Talks with N. Korea", *The Chosun Ilbo (English Edition): Daily News from Korea*, 03 July 2017,

Referring to a joint statement with Trump which said the U.S. President “supported President Moon’s aspirations to restart inter-Korean dialogue on issues including humanitarian affairs,” President Moon urged North Korea to return to the negotiating table on July 3, 2017, saying now may be the last chance for the communist state to do so.²²

- **New type of US Sanction, targeting Chinese bank, company, two individuals over North Korea**

On June 29, 2017, the United States introduced a new level of sanction in its ongoing effort to put pressure on North Korean nuclear and missile programme. The target of the sanction includes a Chinese bank, a Chinese shipping company and two Chinese citizens, and is designed to cut off funds that help North Korean missile and nuclear programme. China has raised strong opposition on the ground that the new sanction is unilateral and outside the scope of UN framework.²³ In this regard, Chief Cabinet Secretary of Japan, Yoshihide Suga noted, “We want to strongly support [the sanctions] as they demonstrate the resolute stance of the United States against North Korea”.²⁴

- **Malaysia Stops Issuing Permits for North Korean Workers, Official Says**

A senior government official confirmed to Benar News on June 30, 2017 that the Malaysian authorities have deported all workers from North Korea and stopped issuing work permits for citizens of the communist nation. At least 140 North Koreans who worked in coal mines and construction industries in the eastern state of Sarawak have been deported in stages, according to an official based there.²⁵

(ASEAN, Malaysia, Cambodia, Phillipines)

- **Concerns on Indonesian Military Assistance to the Conflict in Marawi**

Recognizing the growing concerns on rising militancy in Indonesia, military expert Mufti Makarim has urged the government to be careful with its plan to provide military aid to Philippines to crush militant group, affiliated with the IS in

http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2017/07/03/2017070300792.html (accessed on 03 July 2017).

²² "Moon says now is time for NK to return to dialogue table", *The Korea Herald*, 03 July 2017. <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20170703000861> (accessed on 03 July 2017).

²³ "U.S. targets Chinese bank, company, two individuals over North Korea", *The Reuters*, June 30, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-northkorea-china-sanctions-idUSKBN19K2OB> (accessed on July 3, 2017).

²⁴ "Japan supports U.S. decision", *The Yomiuri Shimbun*, June 30, 2017, <http://the-japan-news.com/news/article/0003794249>, (accessed on July 3, 2017).

²⁵ "Malaysia Stops Issuing Permits for North Korean Workers, Official Says", *North Korea Times*, 01 July 2017, <http://www.northkoreatimes.com/news/253803125/malaysia-stops-issuing-permits-for-north-korean-workers-official-says> (accessed on 03 July 2017).

Marawi.²⁶ Noteworthy, following the arrest of a man in connection with the stabbing to death of an officer in North Sumatra Police check point on June 25, 2017, the Indonesian police have found hundreds of books containing Islamic State propaganda targeting children at his home. It is believed that the arrested suspect had spent six months in Syria in 2013, and also believed to be a part of Jemaah An Sharat Daulah (JAD), an umbrella organisation on a US State Department terrorist list which supports the Islamic State and has hundreds of Indonesian followers.²⁷

- **President Duterte ask to continue the military onslaught even at the cost of civilians**

On June 28, 2017 President Duterte in a television speech said that the troops do not intend to kill civilians, but they should not hesitate to engage just because there are civilians. According to the President, “It is the duty of the civilians to flee or seek cover”. On the same day, Duterte further assured troops that he would protect them from any legal action if they accidentally kill civilians while battling militants who have besieged Marawi city.²⁸

- **External Military Assistance to end the Marawi Crisis**

On June 24, 2017, the *Strait Times* reported that Australian two high tech AP-3C Orion aircraft will provide surveillance support to the Philippines military to help in the fight against Islamic militants terrorising the area. According to Australia’s Defence Minister, Marise Payne, “the regional threat from terrorism, in particular from ISIS and foreign fighters, is a direct threat to Australia and our interest. The best way to defeat terrorism in our region is for us to work together.”²⁹

Myanmar

- **No entry to UNHRC fact-finding mission in Rakhine**

In view of a scheduled visit by the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) fact-finding mission into Rakhine State to probe allegations of human rights violations,

²⁶ “Indonesia should think twice about military aid for Philippines: Expert”, *The Jakarta Post*, June 28, 2017,

<http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2017/06/28/govt-should-think-twice-about-military-aid-for-philippines-expert.html> (accessed on June 29, 2017).

²⁷ “Indonesia police find IS propaganda targeting children”, *Bangkok Post*, June 26, 2017, <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/asean/1276030/indonesia-police-find-is-propaganda-targeting-children> (accessed on June 27, 2017).

²⁸ Jim Gomez, “Duterte tells troops not to fear civilian deaths”, June 29, 2017, *Phil Star Global*, <http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2017/06/29/1714706/duterte-tells-troops-not-fear-civilian-deaths> (accessed on June 29, 2017).

²⁹ “Australia to send military spy planes to S. Philippines”, *The Straits Times*, June 24, 2017, <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/australia-to-send-military-spy-planes-to-s-philippines> (accessed on June 27, 2017).

U Kyaw Tin, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, at the Pyithu Hluttaw meeting on June 29, said that Myanmar will carry out its own investigations in neighbouring countries, contact and interview foreign personnel, and submit the findings in a report". He further added, "A directive rejecting the visit will be issued soon." The purpose of the mission is to investigate the allegations and to bring to book the violators and ensure justice to the victims, according to the UNCHR.³⁰

- **Malaysia to consider action against Myanmar over blocking of UN fact-finding mission**

The Straits Times reported on July 2, 2017 that Malaysia will consider action against Myanmar following the latter's decision on June 30 to deny entry to a United Nations fact-finding mission probing alleged abuse of Rohingya in the north-western state of Rakhine. It further reported that Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi has stated that the government will seek the foreign ministry's advice on whether humanitarian or diplomatic action would be taken.³¹

- **Myanmar Migrants Continue to Flee Thailand in Wake of New Labor Rules**

After new labour regulations adopted by the military government sparked fear and panic among the migrant community, tens of thousands of workers have fled Thailand, most of them from neighbouring Myanmar. Immigration officials said that millions of workers from poor neighbours, such as Cambodia and Myanmar, form the backbone of Thailand's manual labour force, with industries such as the multi-billion-dollar seafood business heavily reliant on foreign workers. According to an Immigration Bureau official about 60,000 workers left between June 23 and 28, and the number has risen since.³²

- **Rights groups urge repeal of 66(d)**

In a joint statement issued on June 29, 2017 human rights groups have urged a repeal of Section 66(d) of The Telecommunications Law, enacted by the previous government in 2013. The section, which sets a maximum three-year prison term for anyone found guilty of online defamation, is being reviewed by the government under pressure from journalists, campaigners and rights groups. At least seventy-one people have been prosecuted under this section. On June 29, 2017 sixty-one human rights groups said in a joint statement that failure to repeal 66(d) would

³⁰ "No entry to UNHRC fact-finding mission in Rakhine", 30 June 2017, <http://www.mmmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/nay-pyi-taw/26610-no-entry-to-unhcr-fact-finding-mission-in-rakhine.html> (accessed on 3rd July 2017)

³¹ "Malaysia to consider action against Myanmar over blocking of UN fact-finding mission", 3 July 2017, <http://www.mizzima.com/news-domestic-regional/malaysia-consider-action-against-myanmar-over-blocking-un-fact-finding> (accessed on 3rd July 2017)

³² "Migrants Continue to Flee Thailand in Wake of New Labor Rules", 3 July 2017, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/migrants-continue-flee-thailand-wake-new-labor-rules.html> (accessed on 3 July 2017)

leave people at risk of imprisonment simply for sharing opinions online, and silence the ability of the public and the media to report on public sector mismanagement, harmful and illegal business practices, and corruption.³³

North America

Canada

- **Canada 150: Huge crowds celebrate nation's anniversary**

People across Canada came together this weekend to celebrate the country's 150th anniversary of confederation. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau kicked off celebrations outside the country's parliament in Ottawa, joined by as many as 25,000 revellers. However, the celebrations were dampened not only by rain, but also by the reminder that for Canada's Indigenous community, the anniversary represents little more than 150 years of oppression and is considered a celebration of brutal colonisation and genocide. Protests in the country's major cities drew attention to the stark contrast between the idealised version of Canada that its leader strives to represent and the lived realities of Indigenous communities still suffering the consequences of a history of abuse.³⁴

- **Canada's trade deal with itself now in effect, as EU deal waits**

July 1 was supposed to be not only Canada's 150th birthday, but the day that two wide-ranging — and interrelated — trade deals kick in. Canada's agreement with the EU has stalled, but a domestic deal covering trade in goods and services between provinces is still on. The full text of the Canadian Free Trade Agreement (CFTA) came out April 2016. It applies to all interprovincial trade, but — and it's a rather big but — a detailed list of exemptions was negotiated for each province and territory. Business groups believe the CFTA has potential. But very little's been fixed yet. There are new processes for harmonizing things like transportation safety rules and professional credentials. A new dispute resolution system has been established to sort out cross-border grievances.³⁵

- **Canada's Iraq mission extended until 2019 at cost of \$371 million and Trudeau says no to new Afghan mission**

The Liberal government has extended Canada's military mission in Iraq for almost another two years. The mission will be extended until March 31, 2019. The

³³ "Rights groups urge repeal of 66(d)", 29 June 2017, <http://frontiermyanmar.net/en/rights-groups-urge-repeal-of-66d> (accessed on 3rd July 2017)

³⁴ Chantal Da Silva, "Two Canada Day photos that show two very different realities in the country," <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world-o/canada-day-celebrates-150-anniversary-indigenous-rights-a7818976.html>, Accessed on 03 July 2017.

³⁵ Janyce McGregor, "Canada's trade deal with itself now in effect, as EU deal waits," <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/cfta-interprovincial-trade-july-1-1.4181380>, Accessed on 03 July 2017.

Canadian military will be able to deploy capabilities as needs arise, the government noted. "This extension includes the authority to provide training for new potential partners within the Iraqi security forces and a CC-130J Hercules aircraft for tactical airlift," it added in the news release. Fifteen nations have committed to provide more troops for Afghanistan, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said. Canada, however, will not be among those countries sending training troops to aid the Afghan military.³⁶

The United States

- **Supreme Court allows parts of travel ban to take effect**

The Supreme Court allowed parts of President Donald Trump's travel ban to go into effect and will hear oral arguments on the case this fall. The court is allowing the ban to go into effect for foreign nationals who lack any "bona fide relationship with any person or entity in the United States." The court, in an unsigned opinion, left the travel ban against citizens of six majority-Muslim on hold as applied to non-citizens with relationships with persons or entities in the United States, which includes most of the plaintiffs in both cases. This is the first time the high court has weighed in on the travel ban, and a partial victory for the Trump administration, which has been fighting lower court rulings blocking the ban from taking effect. Justices did not address Trump's tweets which have caused legal problems for his administration previously.³⁷

- **Trump and South Korea's Moon Assert Unity Against North Korea**

The leaders of the US and South Korea share a common goal: Get North Korea to abandon the nuclear and missile programs that have rapidly expanded under the country's supreme leader, Kim Jong Un. But Presidents Moon Jae-in and Donald Trump, who meet for the first time. The Trump administration wants to pressure Kim to the negotiating table but with preconditions. Moon wants to start talking to Pyongyang to stabilize the situation on the Korean Peninsula sooner than Trump, whose administration won't negotiate until North Korea agrees to certain terms.³⁸

- **Trump meets Modi: Budding romance or one-night stand?**

³⁶ David Pugliese "Canada's Iraq mission extended until 2019 at cost of \$371 million," <http://ottawacitizen.com/news/national/defence-watch/iraq-mission-extended-until-2019-at-cost-of-371-million> and "Trudeau says no to new Afghan mission," <http://ottawacitizen.com/news/national/defence-watch/trudeau-says-no-to-new-afghan-mission-focus-for-canada-is-now-on-iraq>, Accessed on 03 July 2017.

³⁷ Ariane de Vogue, "Supreme Court allows parts of travel ban to take effect," <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/06/26/politics/travel-ban-supreme-court/index.html>, Accessed on 03 July 2017.

³⁸ Joshua Berlinger, "North Korea casts shadow as Trump and Moon meet for first time," <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/06/28/asia/south-korea-moon-jae-in-donald-trump-meeting/index.html>, Accessed on 03 July 2017.

President Trump and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi would seem to be kindred spirits. But despite a lot of sweet talk as Modi arrived in Washington for a White House meeting Monday, the question remains whether his dalliance with Trump will be a one-night stand or will blossom into a full-on romance. Trump and Modi are alike in many ways. They both came to power on populist, nationalist waves with promises to confront Islamist terrorism and stand up to China. Both rule large democracies with a clear interest in increasing their security and economic and diplomatic cooperation. Their social media followings currently rank first and second, respectively, among world leaders. Trump's commitment to building on the momentum in U.S.-India ties established by his two predecessors is significant, as far as it goes. The Trump administration also must settle on its own foreign policy for India to be reassured that strategic interests remain aligned. Does Trump share India's concern about Chinese expansion in South and Central Asia? It's hard to tell. Is Trump prepared to aggressively confront Pakistan on its support for radical groups? Nobody knows.³⁹

- **Trump approves US-Mexico pipeline: 'That'll go right under the wall'**

President Trump approved construction of a new pipeline between the United States and Mexico Trump was referring to the Burgos Pipeline, a joint venture between NuStar Logistics and an affiliate of Petróleos Mexicanos that would cross the border between McAllen, Texas, and Reynosa, Tamaulipas, Mexico. The 10-inch pipe would export up to 108,000 barrels a day of petroleum products such as gasoline and diesel, relatively small in comparison with other cross-border pipelines. The State Department needed to approve the project because it crosses a border., saying it will go "right under" the wall he plans to build along the border.⁴⁰

Mexico

- **Mexican spy scandal escalates as study shows software targeted opposition**

The spy software – known as Pegasus and made by the Israeli firm NSO Group – is only sold to governments, supposedly for use against terrorists and criminals. But an investigation by researchers at the University of Toronto revealed that it was deployed against Mexican anti-corruption crusaders, journalists investigating the president, and activists pushing for a soda tax. Now the spying scandal has escalated after researchers showed that the same software was used to target senior members of the rightwing PAN party. Opposition politicians and civil

³⁹ Josh Rogin, "Trump meets Modi: Budding romance or one-night stand?," https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/trump-meets-modi-budding-romance-or-one-night-stand/2017/06/25/2ae6d118-5841-11e7-ba90-f5875b7d1876_story.html?utm_term=.afab6be6c1f7, Accessed on 03 July 2017.

⁴⁰ Timothy Cama, "Trump approves US-Mexico pipeline: 'That'll go right under the wall'," <http://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/340155-trump-approves-us-mexico-pipeline-thatll-go-right-under-the-wall>, Accessed on 03 July 2017.

society activists alike have reacted with outrage at the revelation that they had been targeted alongside the crime groups which have pushed violence in Mexico to its highest levels in 20 years.

- **Mexico sugar deal threatens to drive up prices for last U.S. candy cane manufacturer**

US Sen. Pat Toomey (R-Pa.) on Thursday voiced his opposition to the Trump administration's agreement with Mexico on the sugar trade, saying the deal increases the costs for consumers. The agreement, announced earlier this month in principle, would halt taxes on Mexico's sugar imports coming into the U.S. The deal would increase the price of Mexican raw sugar while reducing the percentage of refined sugar that can be imported to the U.S. The Coalition for Sugar Reform, alliance of food manufacturers and other groups, also criticized the deal in a statement, saying it benefited corporate interests rather than consumers.⁴¹

- **Presidents of Mexico, US to meet at G20**

The Mexican Foreign Ministry confirms Presidents Enrique Pena Nieto and Donald Trump will meet at G20. President Pena Nieto abruptly cancelled a State visit to Washington in January, after President Trump demanded that Mexico must pay for a Border Wall. US officials then intimated it could be funded by placing tariffs on all Mexican imports to the United States. That seems to have been shelved, as it would have made talks about amending the North American Free Trade Agreement pointless and redundant. The Nafta negotiations are due to start in August. President Trump is insisting the US must get a significantly better deal, and the billions of dollars trade surplus in Mexico's favor must be drastically reduced, or he'll scrap the deal.⁴²

Russia

- **Russia and Foreign Secret Services**

While visiting the headquarters of the Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR), Russian President Vladimir Putin on June 28 said that foreign secret services have been stepping up their activities against Russia and its allies. According to Putin, "they use new methods of collecting and spreading information, carry out cyber attacks, try to recruit agents to gain access to the information concerning Russia's defense capabilities, economic potential and resources". He added that a number of foreign

⁴¹ Mallory Shelbourne, "GOP senator rips Trump over sugar deal with Mexico," <http://thehill.com/policy/international/trade/340078-gop-senator-rips-trump-for-touting-sugar-trade-deal-with-mexico>, Accessed on 03 July 2017.

⁴² The Vatican Radio, "Presidents of Mexico, US to meet at G20," http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2017/06/30/presidents_of_mexico,_us_to_meet_at_g20/1322255, Accessed on 03 July 2017.

spy services provide immediate support to extremist and terrorist groupings in order to destabilize the regions adjoining the Russian border. He said that they are conducting operations to wield impact on the internal political and social processes in this country. He spoke about boosting the capacity of the intelligence service, provide it with new technical means, encourage experienced professionals and train new personnel.⁴³

- **Russia, US and North Korea**

US Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley on June 26 said that as the US pressures China to enforce United Nations sanctions on its ally North Korea, Washington is concerned that Russia could provide support to Pyongyang and fill any vacuum left by Beijing. While Washington has urged countries to downgrade ties with Pyongyang over its nuclear and ballistic missile programs, a cross-border ferry service was launched in May between North Korea and neighboring Russia. Russian President Vladimir Putin has said the world should talk to, rather than threaten, North Korea.⁴⁴

- Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov said in an interview with the Izvestiya newspaper that Russia has presented to the countries interested in the easing of tensions on the Korean peninsula a plan that stipulates abandoning the further escalation of the situation and gradual easing of tensions. Ryabkov added that "it is necessary to freeze the situation, achieve some kind of status quo and then advance under the methods of step-by-step easing of tensions and increasing dynamics in the search of political solutions. The diplomats, including American diplomats, are well aware of this technique." He noted that direct neighborhood with China is one of the major reasons of Russia's attention to this problem.⁴⁵

- **Russia and European Union**

The European Union formally extended its economic sanctions on Russia on June 28, a widely expected step that keeps restrictions on business with Russian energy, defense and financial sectors until Jan. 31, 2018. EU leaders agreed to the extension at their summit in Brussels last week, after France and Germany cited no progress

⁴³"Putin points to growing activities of foreign secret services against Russia", *TASS*, June 28, 2017. <http://tass.com/politics/953774> Accessed on July 3, 2017.

⁴⁴Michelle Nichols, "U.S. worries Russia could step up North Korea support to fill China void", *Reuters*, June 27, 2017. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-northkorea-russia-idUSKBN19I2E3> Accessed on July 2, 2017.

⁴⁵"Russia proposes plan of gradual easing of tensions on Korean Peninsula", *TASS*, July 3, 2017. <http://tass.com/politics/954365> Accessed on July 3, 2017.

in efforts to negotiate an end to the conflict in eastern Ukraine that has killed more than 10,000 people since April 2014. Under the sanctions that were imposed in tandem with the United States, European companies are banned from doing business with or investing in Russia's defense and energy industries, while financial ties are severely limited. European companies cannot borrow or lend money to Russia's five main state-owned banks for more than 30 days, limiting Moscow's avenues for raising funds. Along with restrictions on business with Russia's top energy companies, exports of some energy-related equipment and technology to Russia must also be approved by EU governments.⁴⁶ In a riposte to the European union extending sanctions against Russia until the end of 2017 President Vladimir Putin has extended his own counter-sanctions until the same date. He has also suspended payments to the Council of Europe until the Russian delegation's full rights are restored. All European food products are banned under the sanctions. The aviation and energy sectors have also been hit. The Italian, Polish and Finnish agricultural and German business sectors have been particularly badly hit. However key large-scale projects like the Nordstream gas pipeline into Germany have continued apace.⁴⁷

- On June 30, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said at the Primakov Readings conference that Russia is not inclined to gloat over the political fermentation that the European Union has been going through. The Russian top diplomat pointed out that the talk about the possible collapse of the EU had been initiated by its member states, adding to it by saying that some politicians even came up with initiatives to follow the British example and hold a referendum. Lavrov stressed that Russia had always wanted the EU to be "united, strong and speak in one voice." He called on the European Union to build relations with its partners taking into consideration the interests of all member states. "We would like the European Union's policy towards us and their other partners to be based on a balance of interests of the member countries rather than on a position imposed by a minority group," Lavrov concluded.⁴⁸
- Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on June 30 said that NATO is continuing to shatter security structures in Europe, but is unable to respond to terrorism,

⁴⁶"European Union extends Russia sanctions until Jan 2018", *Reuters*, June 28, 2017. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-eu-sanctions-idUSKBN19J1DM> Accessed on July 3, 2017.

⁴⁷"Putin Extends Sanction on EU", *Euronews*, June 30, 2017. <http://www.euronews.com/2017/06/30/putin-extends-russian-counter-sanctions-against-eu-until-end-of-2018-tass> Accessed on July 3, 2017.

⁴⁸"Russia's top diplomat says no gloating over political fermentation in EU", *TASS*, June 30, 2017. <http://tass.com/politics/954132> Accessed on July 3, 2017.

which is the major threat. He said that the attempts to adapt institutions of the bipolar standoff era to the 21st century's realities are doomed to failure.⁴⁹

Russia and China

- Before the upcoming talks between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping, which will be the issues of economic cooperation, the latter gave an exclusive interview to "Rossiyskaya Gazeta" on July 2. Xi Jinping said that China and Russia are experiencing the best period in their comprehensive strategic partnership because of some aspects which are the following:
- The political and strategic mutual trust has a high level. Both sides strongly support each other's efforts aimed at protecting the fundamental interests, in particular the sovereignty, security, territorial integrity, firmly support each other in choosing a path of development that meets the national peculiarities, strongly support each other in national development and revival, in a word, in establishing their cases. China and Russia - the most trustful strategic partners for each other.
- There are improved mechanisms for contacts at a high and the highest level, as well as multi-faceted cooperation. The personal relationship with Putin also contributes to the bilateral partnership. Jinping and Putin meets about five times a year, instead of the planned direction of bilateral relations and discuss their future development.
- China and Russia are actively working on coupling development strategies. Both the leaders have reached an important agreement on the construction of pairing "One Belt and One Road" with the EAEC.
- There is a strong social base and support.
- Both the countries are supported by tight strategic cooperation in international and regional affairs.⁵⁰
- On June 30, Russia's Ambassador to China Andrei Denisov told reporters ahead of the Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Russia, due on July 3-4 that the joint Russian-Chinese naval drills at the Baltic Sea inject novelty into bilateral military cooperation. He said that "there is a point of novelty, but I haven't heard anyone expressing much concern over this so-called 'threat.' The Baltic States repeat their

⁴⁹"Russia's top diplomat says NATO unable to respond to growing terror threat", *TASS*, June 30, 2017. <http://tass.com/politics/954101> Accessed on July 3, 2017.

⁵⁰"Strengthen the commonality of interests", *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, July 2, 2017. <https://rg.ru/2017/07/02/si-czinpin-kitaj-i-rossiia-dolzheny-ukrepliat-obshchnost-interesov.html> Accessed on July 3, 2017.

usual incantations, but at the same time, they take for granted the fact that NATO is deploying large forces on their territory.”⁵¹

South Asia

Afghanistan

- **Kabul security plan final and will be implemented soon: Ghani**

President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani has said a comprehensive security for capital Kabul has been prepared and will be finalized in the near future. He informed regarding the finalization of the security plan during a meeting with the generals, officers, and personnel of the Afghan army's 11th division in Kabul. According to President Ghani, the security plan for capital Kabul and implementation of the four year security plan will further boost the capabilities of the Afghan national defense and security forces. This comes as the key cities of the country, including capital Kabul witnessed unprecedented violence in the past one month, with the militants staging some of the deadliest attacks.⁵²

- **Lapis Lazuli Corridor Agreement Set to Signed by 5 Countries**

The Ministry of Finance (MoF) on Saturday (01 July 2017) said during the finance minister's recent trip to Georgia, the finance minister has spoke to officials from five countries along the Lapis Lazuli Corridor and they all agreed to sign an agreement based on transporting goods to European markets. The agreement is set to be signed between Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey in the near future. The Lapis Lazuli Corridor is very important for Afghanistan and for four other countries, because it has a direct effect on the economy of the countries.⁵³

- **Khalili Sworn in as New HPC Chief Amid Peace Talks Stalemate**

President Ashraf Ghani on 2nd July officially introduced Mohammad Karim Kahlili, a former vice president to ex-president Hamid Karzai, as the new head of the Afghan High Peace Council (HPC). The newly appointed HPC Chief Khalili said the peace facilitating body so far has failed to make a breakthrough in the process and that the integration of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, leader of Hizb-e-Islami, in the peace process has not reduced the scale of violence in the country. However, he

⁵¹“Russian-Chinese drills at Baltic Sea inject novelty into military cooperation — ambassador”, TASS, June 30, 2017. <http://tass.com/defense/954180> Accessed on July 3, 2017.

⁵² "Kabul security plan final and will be implemented soon: Ghani", *Khaama Press*, 27 June 2017. <http://www.khaama.com/kabul-security-plan-final-and-will-be-implemented-soon-ghani-03025> accessed on 28 June 2017.

⁵³ "Lapis Lazuli Corridor Agreement Set to Signed by 5 Countries", *Outlook Afghanistan*, 03 July 2017. http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=18519 accessed on 03 July 2017.

hailed the peace accord recently signed between the Afghan government and Hekmatyar and said it was a step forward.⁵⁴

- **Pakistani Forces 'Providing Weapons' to Taliban in Border Regions**

A police commander in Paktia province, in Afghanistan's east, on 27 June 2017, said Pakistani military forces 'are supplying heavy weapons to Taliban fighters in areas along the Durand Line – the de facto border between Afghanistan and Pakistan – in order to attack Afghan security forces'. The militants are stationed in parts of Dand-e-Patan district, said Gen. Abdulwase, commander of 203 Thunder Army Corps in the district. Pakistan is simply deceiving the world. But the world knows that Pakistani government is providing all these facilities to the Taliban," he said.⁵⁵

- **Three Afghan Political Parties Form New Coalition in Ankara**

Leaders from three mainstream Afghan political parties, including Jamiat-e-Islami party, Hizb-e-Wahdat-e-Islami party and Junbish-e-Milli party, have agreed to form a new coalition. A spokesman for Junbish-e-Milli said a joint statement by the new coalition will be issued soon and that the coalition will take practical steps towards implementing its agendas and programs in the country. The presidential palace has said government welcomes any move that is taken in the name of national interests.⁵⁶

- **Iran Worried As Afghanistan's Allies Mulling Deployment of More Troops**

The Iranian authorities have expressed concerns regarding the presence of the foreign forces in Afghanistan as the international allies of Afghanistan, including the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) mulling expansion of the troops presence in the country. The Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani during a meeting with the Speaker of the Lower House of the Parliament of Afghanistan Abdul Rauf Ibrahimy said there is no need for presence of foreign troops in Afghanistan since Afghan people are fully capable of fighting the terrorists.⁵⁷

- **Pakistan's Aziz Expected in Kabul in Move to Ease Tensions**

Afghanistan's government on 29 June 2017, announced that a high level Pakistani delegation – led by Sartaj Aziz, advisor to Pakistani prime minister on foreign relations - will visit Afghanistan in the near future to hold talks with Afghan officials on the implementation of agreements signed between Islamabad and

⁵⁴ "Khalili Sworn in as New HPC Chief Amid Peace Talks Stalemate", *Outlook Afghanistan*, 03 July 2017. http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=18518 accessed on 03 July 2017.

⁵⁵ Abdulhaq Omeri, "Pakistani Forces 'Providing Weapons' To Taliban In Border Regions", *Tolo News*, June 27, 2017, <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/pakistani-forces-providing-weapons-taliban-border-regions> (accessed on July 3, 2017)

⁵⁶ Karim Amini, "Three Afghan Political Parties Form New Coalition In Ankara", *Tolo News*, June 29, 2017, <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/three-afghan-political-parties-form-new-coalition-ankara> (accessed on July 3, 2017)

⁵⁷ "Iran Worried As Afghanistan's Allies Mulling Deployment of More Troops", *Khaama Press*, June 29, 2017, <http://www.khaama.com/iran-worried-as-afghanistans-allies-mulling-deployment-of-more-troops-03039> (accessed on July 3, 2017)

Kabul. “The Chinese foreign minister also visited Afghanistan and Pakistan and we hope that these talks will help establish a new chapter of cooperation between Afghanistan and Pakistan,” said deputy presidential spokesman Dawa Khan Menapal.⁵⁸

- **Taliban Leadership is Based in Pakistan: Ashraf Ghani**

President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani said the Afghan government is not asking Pakistan to bring peace in Afghanistan as the Afghan government wants reconciliation with the country, apparently pointing towards his earlier remarks regarding an undeclared war being waged in Afghanistan. Speaking at a gathering for the introduction of the new high peace council chief, President Ghani said the Afghan government and nation wants peace with Pakistan, emphasizing that Afghanistan is not expecting Pakistan to bring peace.⁵⁹

Bangladesh

- **PM orders suspending new VAT law for 2 yrs⁶⁰**

Prime minister Sheikh Hasina on Wednesday (June 28) asked finance minister AMA Muhith to fix excise duty at Tk 150 on bank deposits above Tk 100,000 up to Tk 500,000 and charge it in three slabs for amounts up to Tk 10 million. In a major policy directive, she also asked the custodian of the exchequer not to fully implement the new Value-Added Tax (VAT) act for the next two years, a law that was due to come into effect from 1 July.

- **This is the last chance: CJ⁶¹**

The Supreme Court on Sunday (July 1) gave the government a two-week ultimatum for issuing a gazette notification on the rules determining the discipline and code of conduct for lower court judges. Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha said, “This is the last chance.” Earlier on several occasions, the apex court expressed disappointment over the government’s failure to issue the gazette notification.

- **Election-time govt will be supportive govt: Quader⁶²**

⁵⁸ “Pakistan’s Aziz Expected in Kabul in Move to Ease Tensions”, *Daily Outlook Afghanistan*, July 2, 2017, http://outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=18497 (accessed on July 3, 2017)

⁵⁹ “Taliban leadership is based in Pakistan, says Afghan president Ashraf Ghani”, *The Pashtun Times*, July 2, 2017, <http://thepashtuntimes.com/taliban-leadership-is-based-in-pakistan-says-afghan-president-ashraf-ghani/>

⁶⁰ “PM orders suspending new VAT law for 2 yrs,” *Prathom Alo*, June 28, 2017, <http://en.prothomalo.com/economy/news/152323/PM-orders-suspending-new-VAT-law-for-2-yrs> (accessed on June 28, 2017)

⁶¹ “This is the last chance: CJ,” *The Independent*, July 2, 2017, <http://www.theindependentbd.com/post/101830> (accessed on July 2, 2017)

⁶² “Election-time govt will be supportive govt: Quader,” *The Daily Star*, July 2, 2017, <http://www.thedailystar.net/city/election-time-govt-will-be-supportive-govt-quader-1427158> (accessed on July 2, 2017)

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said that the election-time government would play the role of supportive government in the next parliamentary polls. The election will be held under the present Election Commission as per the constitution and the government will perform its routine works, but they would not take any important decision, he told a press conference in the capital.

- **SC upholds HC verdict against 16th amendment to constitution**⁶³

The Supreme Court on Monday (July 3) upheld a High Court verdict that declared illegal the 16th amendment to the constitution, dismissing a state appeal against it. "Dismissed," said Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha, while passing the short order. The court came up with some observations, which, however, will only be known after the release of the full text of the verdict.

- **BNP for coordinated initiative to combat militancy**⁶⁴

Observing that the Gulshan Cafe terror attack put a stigma on the nation's long tradition of communal harmony and pragmatism, BNP called for taking a coordinated initiative to stamp out militancy. The party also urged the government not to create any smokescreen over the militancy and militant incidents.

नेपाल

- प्रांत संख्या : में स्थानीय चुनाव 7 और 5,1

नेपाल के चुनाव आयोग ने नेपाल के लोगों से कहा कि बुधवार को प्रांत संख्या में होने वाले द्वितीय 7 और 5,1 चरण के स्थानीय चुनावों में भाग लेदूसरे चरण के चुनाव की तिथि दो बार बदल चुकी है और अंततः जून 28 प्रथम दौर में स्थानीय निकायों पर चुनाव होने वाले हैं 334 जिलों में 35 इस चुनाव में तीन प्रान्तों के तय हुई प्रतिशत मतदान हुआ जिसे देखकर लगता है कि दूसरे चरण में भी अच्छे मत पड़ेंगे 74⁶⁵

- आर जे पी ने हिंसा न करने की बात कही:

राष्ट्रीय जनता पार्टी ने दूसरे चरण के चुनाव में अडचने डालने के लिए आन्दोलन करने के चेतावनी दी लेकिन दल के अध्यक्ष महंत ठाकुर ने कहा कि उनका आन्दोलन शांतिपूर्ण रहेगा किसी भी प्रकार की हिंसा नहीं होगी

⁶³ "SC upholds HC verdict against 16th amendment to constitution," *The Independent*, July 3, 2017, <http://www.theindependentbd.com/post/101986> (accessed on July 3, 2017)

⁶⁴ "BNP for coordinated initiative to combat militancy," *Dhaka Tribune*, July 1, 2017, <http://en.prothom-alo.com/bangladesh/news/152573/BNP-for-coordinated-initiative-to-combat-militancy> (accessed on July 1, 2017)

⁶⁵ Prithvi Man Shrestha, "Local Elections in Provinces 1, 5, 7 today", *The Kathmandu Post*, 28 June 2017, <http://epaper.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2017-06-28/1>

शुरू में पार्टी ने दूसरे चरण के चुनाव के लिए व्यापक आन्दोलन की बात कही थी लेकिन सरकार द्वारा प्रांत संख्या दो में सितम्बर में चुनाव करवाने की बात कहने के बाद दल ने नरम रुख अपनाया.⁶⁶

- चुनाव के दूसरे चरण में :प्रतिशत मतदान हुआ 70.5

बुधवार को नेपाल के लोगों ने तीन प्रान्तों के स्थानीय चुनाव में मतदान किया चुनाव आयोग के अनुसार इस मतदान वर्षा होने के बावजूद भी लोगों ने काफी अच्छी संख्या में मतदान किया .मतदान हुआ 70.5 दौर में .शांतिपूर्ण पूर्ण रहा कुछ जगह छिट पुट घटनाएँ हुई⁶⁷

- चुनाव के रुझानों में एमाले और नेपाली कांग्रेस में टक्कर:

दूसरे चरण के चुनावों के नतीजे आने शुरू हो गये हैं और रुझानों को देखे तो हम पायेंगे कि तीनों प्रान्तों में एमाले और नेपाली कांग्रेस में कड़ा मुकाबला चल रहा है 86 गुरुवार शाम तक के नतीजों के अनुसार एमाले स्थानों पर 83 स्थानों पर जीत चुकी थी तथा नेपाली कांग्रेसर जीत दर्ज कर चुकी थी बल्कि माओवादी केंद्र स्थानीय निकायों पर ही जीत दर्ज कर पाई 25 तीसरे स्थान पर रहकर मात्र⁶⁸

- चुनाव आयोग ने :नवम्बर तक सभी चुनाव करवाने के लिए कहा 23

चुनाव आयोग के सदस्यों ने प्रधानमंत्री शेर बहादुर देउबा से मुलाकात कर सभी स्तर के चुनाव नवम्बर तक करवाने का प्रस्ताव रखा , आयोग ने प्रस्ताव दिया कि प्रांतीय संसदों के चुनाव अक्टूबर के दूसरे सप्ताह में राष्ट्रीय एसेम्बली के चुनाव अक्टूबर के पहले सप्ताह में और संघीय संसद के चुनाव नवम्बर के तीसरे सप्ताह में करवाए जाये⁶⁹

Pakistan

- **US India and Pakistan**

The Pakistan Foreign Office on June 28th expressed its concern by the recent Indo-US joint statement and was worried that it could add to tensions between Pakistan and India. The joint statement in between India and US is singularly unhelpful in achieving the objective of strategic stability and durable peace in the South Asian region. The latest statement is believed to contain the strongest wording so far on alleged cross-border incidents and “Pakistan-based groups” as compared to joint statements issued by the two countries in the past, although all carried similar messages. The US had, ahead of the Trump-Modi meeting, listed Hizbul

⁶⁶ "RJP-N says won't resort to violence", The Kathmandu Post, 28 June 2017, <http://epaper.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2017-06-28/1>

⁶⁷ Prithvi Man Shrestha, "Phase II polls see 70.5 pc vote turnout", The Kathmandu Post, 29 June 2017, <http://epaper.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2017-06-29/1>

⁶⁸ "Early results put UML and NC in close contest", The Kathmandu Post, 30 June 2017, <http://epaper.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2017-06-30/1>

⁶⁹ "EC proposes holding all elections by 23 November", The Kathmandu Post, 1 June 2017, <http://epaper.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2017-07-01/1>

Mujahideen leader Syed Salahuddin as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist, a move hailed by India as evidence of US cooperation against terrorism.⁷⁰

- **Pakistan Census**

The chief census commissioner Mr. Asif Bajwa, has assured Finance Minister Ishaq Dar that provisional results from the Population and Housing Census 2017 will be available by the end of July. A total of 151 districts in the four provinces, Pakistan occupied Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas were covered. The census was conducted in two phases — with 63 districts being covered in the first phase and 88 districts in the second.⁷¹

- **Pakistan and US**

Pakistan told the Security Council that the declared plans by United States to expand its nuclear capabilities would renew an arms race and seriously set back global disarmament efforts. Pakistan's Ambassador to the UN Maleeha Lodhi was speaking in the Security Council debate on 'Global efforts to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction by non-state actors'. The envoy made a strong case for Pakistan's NSG membership by highlighting her country's credentials as a credible global partner in international non-proliferation efforts.⁷²

- **Terrorism Financing**

Despite taking a few significant steps against terror financing, Pakistan remains on the radar of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), an international watchdog tracking terror financing, over concerns that it is not fully complying with curbs against entities listed with the United Nations. At a meeting held last week of June in Valencia, Spain, the FATF referred Pakistan to its regional affiliate, Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering (APG), for further analysis and a follow-up report. ATF's International Cooperation Review Group (ICRG would once again take up Pakistan's case at its meeting in October.⁷³

Indian Ocean Region

- **Pentagon to Reassess its Approach to Partner with India and Cooperate with it in Anti-Submarine Warfare: A Key Senate Panel**

⁷⁰BaqirSajjad Syed & Syed Irfan Raza, "Trump-Modi nexus worries Pakistan", *Dawn*, June 29, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1342031> (accessed on July 2, 2017)

⁷¹Kalbe Ali, "Top census official says provisional results by next month", *Dawn*, June 30, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1342275> (accessed on July 2, 2017)

⁷²Masood Haider, "Pakistan cautions against expansion of N-capabilities", *Dawn*, June 30, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1342284/pakistan-cautions-against-expansion-of-n-capabilities> (accessed on July 2, 2017)

⁷³BaqirSajjad Syed, "Pakistan still on radar of terror financing watchdog", *Dawn*, July 1, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1342535/pakistan-still-on-radar-of-terror-financing-watchdog> (accessed on July 2, 2017)

According to a media report, "a key Senate Panel has asked the Pentagon to re-assess its approach to partner with India and cooperate with it in anti submarine warfare, amid China's growing naval presence in the Indian Ocean region."⁷⁴ In this regard, an amendment bill- National Defence Authorisation Act (NDAA)-2018- moved by Senator Ted Cruz was passed by the Senate Armed Service Committee.⁷⁵ The move is being considered as a part of Senator Cruz's effort to "further implements the designation of India as a Major Defence Partner."⁷⁶

- **Guardian drone export license for India**

Citing the government source, PTI reported that the US state department has issued the DSP-5 Guardian export license for India.⁷⁷ After the meeting of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Donald Trump at the White House on June 26, 2017, the state department has issued the license for the export of 22 predator Guardian drones to India.⁷⁸ The inclusion of 22 Guardian drones in Indian Navy will increase India's maritime surveillance capabilities in the Indian Ocean region.

- **China proposes "Blue Economic Passages"**

China's National Development and Reform Commission and the State Oceanic Administration unveiled its vision for future maritime cooperation under the One Belt, One Road (OBOR) Initiative on 19 June 2017.⁷⁹ The report revealed China's plan for three ocean based blue economic passages connecting Asia with Oceania, Africa and Europe.⁸⁰ The China- Oceania, South Pacific blue economic passage will link South China Sea to the Pacific Ocean and connect China- Indochina Peninsula Economic Corridor to China Pakistan Economic Corridor and Bangladesh -China – India – Myanmar Economic Corridor, and an Arctic sea route will link China to Europe.⁸¹

- **A Cruise Tourism Policy in July: Union Minister for Shipping-** With an aim to tap the vast potential of cruise tourism, the Government of India will announce 'a

⁷⁴Pentagon asked to work closely with India in maritime domain, 30 June, 2017, <http://www.financialexpress.com/india-news/pentagon-asked-to-work-closely-with-india-in-maritime-domain/742696/>, accessed on 02 July 2017.

⁷⁵ Pentagon approaches to partner with India in Anti-Submarine Warfare, 30 June, 2017, <http://defencenews.in/article/Pentagon-approaches-to-partner-with-India-in-Anti-Submarine-Warfare-262923>, accessed on 02 July 2017.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ 'US state department issues Guardian drone export license for India', 02 July, 2017. <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/us-state-department-issues-guardian-drone-export-license-for-india/printarticle/59413294.cms>, accessed on 02 July, 2017

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ China unveils Maritime Silk Road plans, 30 June 2017, <http://www.china-briefing.com/news/2017/06/30/china-market-watch-maritime-silk-road-plans-released-audit-report-reveals-soe-profit-inflation.html>, accessed on 02 July 2017.

⁸⁰ Ibid

⁸¹ China proposes "blue economic passages" for maritime cooperation, 20 June 2017, <http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/2017/06/20/74421/China-proposes->, accessed on 02 July 2017.

cruise tourism policy' in July 2017, Union Minister for Shipping, Road Transport, and Highways Nitin Gadkari said on June 26, 2017.⁸² "Cruise tourism can be India's economic growth engine as there is a vast untapped potential. In a month, the policy will be ready as a joint working group comprising shipping and tourism secretaries is working on it," he said.⁸³ Nitin Gadkari said that at present India attracts 70 cruise vessels a year that can go up to 700 vessels with this initiative.⁸⁴

- **CMFRI to Formulate National-Level Action Plan for the Sustainable Management of Marine and Coastal Ecosystems**-As per the direction of the NITI Aayog, the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) with the collaboration of World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-India will "draft the management strategies for strengthening the resilience to achieve healthy and productive ocean ecosystems of the country."⁸⁵ The NITI Aayog, CMFRI and WWF-India are jointly organising a "two-day brainstorming session of eminent marine biologists, environmentalists, technocrats, fisheries experts across the country and senior officials of fisheries departments from all the maritime States and UTs on July 4 and 5 at the CMFRI."⁸⁶
- **Turkey Takes Command of CTF- 151**-The Turkish Navy took over the command of counter- piracy multinational Combined Task Force 151 (CTF151).⁸⁷ Tatsuya Fukuda of the Japan Maritime Defence Force handed over command of the 25 nations coalition of the combined task force to Rear Adm. Emre Sezenler of the Turkish Navy.⁸⁸ The changes of command ceremony, held at headquarter of Combined Multinational Force in Manama, Bahrain, was chaired by Vice Adm. Kevin Donegan, commander of the U.S. Fifth Fleet.⁸⁹ The CTF -151 was setup in 2009 as a response to growing incidence of piracy in Gulf of Aden and Somalian water.

⁸² Cruise policy next month, India to attract 700 vessels: Union Minister Nitin Gadkari, June 17, 2017, <http://www.moneycontrol.com/news/business/cruise-policy-next-month-india-to-attract-700-vessels-union-minister-nitin-gadkari-2312989.html>, accessed on 03 July , 2017

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ CMFRI to formulate action plan for sustainable management, June 17, 2017, <http://www.dnaindia.com/business/report-cmfri-to-formulate-action-plan-for-sustainable-management-of-2489601>, accessed on 03 July , 2017

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Turkey takes command of anti-piracy naval task force, 03 July , 2017, <http://www.hellenicshippingnews.com/turkey-takes-command-of-anti-piracy-naval-task-force/>, accessed on 03 July , 2017

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

Maldives

- **Maldives taken off US human trafficking watch list**

The Maldives has been removed from a human trafficking watch list of the US State Department following the first successful prosecution and conviction of traffickers. The Maldives was on the tier two watch list for the past two years due to the low rate of prosecution as well as inadequate and inconsistent protection for victims. A downgrade to tier three could have entailed non-humanitarian and non-trade sanctions. “The government acceded to the 2000 UN [Trafficking in Persons] Protocol, launched awareness campaigns and amended its Employment Act to require employers to establish and pay employees’ salaries through bank accounts,” the report noted.⁹⁰

- **Maldives President meets with ruling party leadership**

The advisor of ruling Progressive Party of Maldives (PPM), President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom, met with senior officials of the party on 1st July. The meeting took place amidst political tension heated by the opposition’s declaration that members of the ruling party are in favour of the opposition coalition’s attempt to seek a motion of no confidence against Parliament Speaker Abdulla Maseeh. Messages of PPM parliamentary group’s viber chat were recently leaked to media, which show that PPM lawmakers are of clashing opinions regarding the issue of Speaker Maseeh.⁹¹

- **EU parliament discusses Maldives human rights situation**

The foreign affairs committee of the European Parliament on 27 June discussed the human rights situation in the Maldives, raising concerns over radicalism and the reintroduction of the death penalty. Briefing committee members, Dietmar Krissler, head of the European External Action Service for the Maldives region, said the “political and human rights situation” has been a source of concern since President Abdulla Yameen came to power in November 2013. “A strong message was passed to the government on the EU’s principled rejection of the application of the death penalty,” he said.⁹²

⁹⁰ “Maldives taken off US human trafficking watch list”, 28 June 2017, <http://maldivesindependent.com/society/maldives-taken-off-us-human-trafficking-watch-list-131315> (accessed on 29 June 2017)

⁹¹ “Maldives pres meets with ruling party leadership”, 2 July 2017, <http://en.mihaaru.com/maldives-pres-meets-with-ruling-party-leadership/>(accessed on 3rd July 2017)

⁹² “EU parliament discusses Maldives human rights situation”, 27 June 2017, <http://maldivesindependent.com/politics/eu-parliament-discusses-maldives-human-rights-situation-131303> (accessed on 3 July 2017)

Sri Lanka

- **New Constitution drafting process nearing crucial stage**

The new Constitution drafting process is nearing a crucial stage where a consensus will be sought, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said. The Prime Minister said that one of the issues which needs to be addressed in the process to draft a new Constitution is how the country will operate without weakening the powers of the Central Government for an emergency while strengthening the forms of Parliamentary Governance.⁹³

- **UN Committee urges Sri Lanka to adopt a Bill of Rights**

The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights urged Sri Lanka to adopt a comprehensive Bill of Rights that fully incorporates economic, social and cultural rights, bearing in mind the indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights. In a statement the Committee said it is concerned that at present most economic and social matters relevant to the individual or groups are confined to the Directive Principles of State Policy Chapter of the Constitution.⁹⁴

- **Indian aided buildings for Jaffna Uni. declared open**

A Student Development Centre of the Agriculture Faculty of the Jaffna University and a two storey building for the Engineering Faculty set up with financial assistance provided by India were declared open by the Higher Education Minister Lakshman Kiriella, High Commissioner of India Taranjit Singh Sandhu and the Governor of the Northern Province Reginald Cooray. The Government of India provided a grant of Rs. 600 million for the project, which included infrastructure development like lecture halls, conference halls, a computer laboratory, a library and a sports complex, an administrative office and a staff room for the two faculties'.⁹⁵

- **Ex-President says govt rushing in where angels fear to tread**

The government is attempting to incorporate into the law of Sri Lanka the provisions of the 'International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances', former President Mahinda Rajapaksa says. "Countries like the United States, Britain, Australia and Canada, never even signed this Convention. Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Ireland and India signed it ten

⁹³ "New Constitution drafting process nearing crucial stage", 28 June 2017, <http://colombogazette.com/2017/06/28/new-constitution-drafting-process-nearing-crucial-stage/> (accessed on 30 June 2017)

⁹⁴ "UN Committee urges Sri Lanka to adopt a Bill of Rights", 28 June 2017, <http://colombogazette.com/2017/06/28/un-committee-urges-sri-lanka-to-adopt-a-bill-of-rights/> (accessed on 3 July 2017)

⁹⁵ "Indian aided buildings for Jaffna Uni. declared open", 30 June 2017, <http://www.dailymirror.lk/article/Indian-aided-buildings-for-jaffna-uni-declared-open-131968.html> (accessed on 3 July 2017)

years ago in 2007, but never ratified it," Rajapaksa said. He said, all Members of Parliament should be mindful that passing this Bill into law will be a clear case of betraying our country to the pro-LTTE Diaspora and the interested foreign parties backing them.⁹⁶

West Asia

Israel

- **Cyber Attack in Israel** - A cyber attack in the name of GoldenEye or Petya virus, which is separate from ransomware, originating in Ukraine hit two Israeli hospitals on June 29th. Hospital computers were immediately examined and treated without suffering any damage to medical data, according to the National Cyber Authority in the Prime Minister's Office.⁹⁷
- **Ehud Olmert out of Prison** - Ehud Olmert, the former prime minister of Israel who was serving a 27-month sentence for bribery, fraud, obstruction of justice and breach of trust, was released on July 2nd after a parole board cut his sentence by a third.⁹⁸
- **UN and Israel** - Israel's Ambassador to the UN Danny Danon accused the United Nations of "colluding with supporters of terror seeking to harm Israel," following a two-day panel (June 29-30) marking "50 years of occupation" in which groups Israel says have links to Palestinian terror organizations participated. The panel was addressed by Palestinian officials, an Israeli MK, Israeli and Palestinian activists and others. "It is beyond comprehension that UN funds are supporting organizations which aid terrorists and incite against Israel," Danon said in a statement about the event, which was organized by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and held at UN headquarters in

⁹⁶"Ex-President says govt rushing in where angels fear to tread", 2 July 2017, http://www.island.lk/index.php?page_cat=article-details&page=article-details&code_title=167662 (accessed on 3 July 2017)

⁹⁷ Judy Siegel-Itzkovich, Sharon Udasin, "Cyber attacks hit Israeli hospitals as globe battles new computer virus", *The Jerusalem Post*, June 29, 2017, <http://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Israel-thwarts-hackers-from-cyber-attack-on-hospitals-498256> (accessed on July 4, 2017)

⁹⁸ Isabel Kershner, "Ehud Olmert, Israeli Ex-Prime Minister, Granted Early Release from Prison", *The New York Times*, June 29, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/29/world/middleeast/ehud-olmert-israel-parole.html> (accessed on July 4, 2017); "Ex-PM Olmert released from prison after 16 months", *The Times of Israel*, July 2, 2017, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/ex-pm-olmert-to-go-free-after-16-months-in-prison/> (accessed on July 4, 2017)

New York. Israel stated that two groups which participated, Al Haq and the Al Mezan Center for Human Rights, had links to Hamas and the PFLP.⁹⁹

Yemen

- **Cholera epidemic kills 1,560 in Yemen: WHO¹⁰⁰**

The cholera epidemic has killed at least 1,560 people in war-torn Yemen since late April, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

A total of 252,816 suspected cases of cholera have been registered in 21 Yemeni provinces, the WHO said on Twitter.

According to the UN agency, the northwestern Hajjah province is the hardest-hit by the disease with 288 deaths reported.

The southern province of Socotra remains the only Yemeni province where the cholera epidemic has not spread.

UN agencies have repeatedly warned that the three-year long fighting in Yemen had destroyed the country's health sector, making it difficult to deal with the epidemic.

Impoverished Yemen has remained in a state of civil war since 2014, when Houthi rebels overran much of the country, including the capital Sanaa.

In 2015, Saudi Arabia and its Arab allies launched a massive air campaign aimed at reversing Houthi military gains and shoring up Yemen's embattled government.

According to UN officials, more than 10,000 people have been killed in the war, while more than 11 percent of the country's population has been displaced as a direct result of the conflict.

Turkey

- **Germany's Der Spiegel claims second coup attempt in Turkey is possible¹⁰¹**

German newspaper Der Spiegel claimed in a report Saturday that a second coup attempt in Turkey was within the bounds of possibility along with other crises that could erupt in the country.

⁹⁹ Cathryn J. Prince, "After UN hosts 2-day anti-Israel event, Israel's envoy says it colludes with terror supporters", *The Times of Israel*, July 1, 2017, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/danon-says-un-colluding-with-terror-supporters-at-anti-israel-panel/> (accessed on July 4, 2017)

¹⁰⁰ <http://aa.com.tr/en/health/cholera-epidemic-kills-1-560-in-yemen-who/853066>

¹⁰¹ <https://www.dailysabah.com/war-on-terror/2017/07/02/germanys-der-spiegel-claims-second-coup-attempt-in-turkey-is-possible>

The six-page report penned by the newspaper's Turkey correspondent Maximillian Popp said all factors that led to the coup attempt still existed in the country, and that new crises or even a second coup attempt were not impossibilities.

The report said that the plotters of the first coup attempt, which was dubbed as a putsch against President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, were still uncertain. Fetullah Gülen, the U.S.-based leader of the FETÖ terror group, remains the prime suspect in all trials and faces aggravated life imprisonment for his role in masterminding the coup attempt.

Meanwhile, Istanbul police found a machine Saturday that printed and distributed political leaflets, which contained material provoking people against President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, in a hotel room booked by a German national in Istanbul's Taksim district.

- **No reason to fear Qatar-Turkey defense ties: Envoy¹⁰²**

Qatar's ambassador to Turkey has dismissed fears about defense relations between Doha and Ankara amid a Gulf crisis.

In an exclusive interview with Anadolu Agency, Salem bin Mubarak said Qatar can survive a blockade imposed by Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain.

"There is no reason to be afraid of our defense relations with Turkey," the envoy said.

"No one has the right to meddle in or comment on our relations," he stressed. "This is a sovereign issue and there is no need to make a fuss about it."

- **Erdoğan meets Russian defense minister prior to Astana talks¹⁰³**

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on Sunday met with Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu in Istanbul, a Turkish presidential source said.

The meeting at Tarabya Palace, which was closed to the press, started at 3.15 p.m. (1215GMT) and lasted around two hours, said the source, speaking on condition of anonymity due to restrictions on talking to the media.

Turkish National Defense Minister Fikri Işık, Chief of General Staff Gen. Hulusi Akar, National Intelligence Organization (MIT) head Hakan Fidan, and Turkish presidential spokesman Ibrahim Kalın also attended, said the source.

¹⁰² <http://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/no-reason-to-fear-qatar-turkey-defense-ties-envoy/853046>

¹⁰³ <https://www.dailysabah.com/diplomacy/2017/07/02/erdogan-meets-russian-defense-minister-prior-to-astana-talks>

- **CHP led justice march nears Istanbul¹⁰⁴ Jailed HDP leader Demirtaş calls for opposition unity¹⁰⁵**

CHP's justice march is set to end on March 9 with a massive rally in Istanbul.

The protest had begun right after [CHP](#) Istanbul Deputy Enis Berberoğlu was arrested on accusations of espionage and leaking “state secret” documents to the press.

“No prosperity can be reached through oppression. Our core philosophy necessitates us to stand with the oppressed,” Kılıçdaroğlu said.

“We are hearing that some provocations could take place as we are getting closer to Istanbul. I want all participants to respond to any kind of provocations with applause,” Kılıçdaroğlu told reporters early July 3.

Kılıçdaroğlu began the 19th day of his justice march on early July 3, with thousands of participants accompanying him. There were minor protests against the justice march in its earlier days.

“We have been subject to swearing, stones were thrown at us, and fertilizers were dumped on our way. We are walking for justice and for a cause. So, consider stones thrown at us as roses and curses as nice words,” Kılıçdaroğlu said.

“Whatever they say, we'll walk for an ideal Turkey, for our children, for our future and for justice,” he added.

The jailed co-chair of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) has said a march launched by the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) should “unify all opposition groups.”

HDP co-chair Selahattin Demirtaş, who has been under arrest in a jail in the northwestern province of Edirne since Nov. 4, 2016, said the CHP's “justice march” must aim to provide justice for all groups, according to HDP Group Deputy Chairman Ahmet Yıldırım who visited Demirtaş in prison.

“He said the issue is not about walking to Edirne, but the march should aim to unify all opposition groups,” Yıldırım told news website Duvar on July 3.

The jailed HDP co-chair also stressed the “significance of making social opposition sustainable, moving beyond ambiguous discourses,” according to Yıldırım.

The HDP has opted to join the march with a small delegation so far as a show of support.

¹⁰⁴ <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/chp-leader-warns-of-provocations-as-justice-march-nears-istanbul-.aspx?pageID=238&nID=115034&NewsCatID=338>

¹⁰⁵ <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/jailed-hdp-co-chair-demirtas-says-justice-march-should-unify-all-turkish-opposition-.aspx?pageID=238&nID=115041&NewsCatID=338>

The party's co-chair Serpil Kemalbay, lawmakers Ertuğrul Kürkçü, Feleknas Uca and Mithat Sancar, and the ousted co-mayor of the southeastern province of Mardin, Ahmet Türk, are among those planning to join the march.

Cyber Security

- **Cyber security to be discussed during PM Modi's Israel visit¹⁰⁶**

JERUSALEM: India and Israel will discuss cooperation in cyber security when Prime Minister Narendra Modi visits the country amid a series of cyber attacks across the globe, including by non-state actors.

"Once it was a disadvantage to say that you are from Israel. Today when you talk about cyber or advanced technology, it is an advantage to say we are an Israeli company. The whole world wants us. The whole world is coming here," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in his remarks at the Cyber Week 2017 conference in Tel Aviv University. Terming Modi as "one of the most important prime ministers of the world", Netanyahu said the Indian leader wants close cooperation with Israel in many areas including in cyber security.

Terrorism and Counter Terrorism

Pakistan

| S. No. | Date | Place | Incident | Killed | Injured |
|--------|--------|----------------------|--|-------------------|---------|
| 1 | July 1 | Khyber Agency / FATA | Four persons, including one security official, were killed in a landmine blast during a routine patrolling exercise in Medan Valley of Khyber Agency. ¹⁰⁷ | 4 | 0 |
| 2 | July 1 | Bolan / Balochistan | Security forces foiled an attempt to blow up the Rawalpindi-bound Jaffar Express passenger train by defusing a 15 kilogram bomb | Terror bid foiled | |

¹⁰⁶http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/59423494.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

¹⁰⁷ Ali Akbar, Security official, three civilians killed in mine blast in Khyber Agency, *Dawn*, July 1, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1342564/security-official-three-civilians-killed-in-mine-blast-in-khyber-agency>, accessed on July 3, 2017

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| | | | planted at the main railway line near Mach area of Bolan District. ¹⁰⁸ | | |
| 3 | June 23 | Kurram Agency / FATA | A total of 65 persons have been killed and 261 others injured in two back-to-back blasts in a market located in Parachinar town of Kurram Agency. According to details, the first blast took place in Turi Market, while the second explosion occurred when rescuers and bystanders rushed to help the survivors of the first blast. ¹⁰⁹ | 65 | 261 |
| 4 | June 23 | Quetta / Balochistan | At least 14 persons, including seven Policemen, were killed and 19 others were injured in a suicide blast at Shuhada Chowk in Gulistan Road area of provincial capital Quetta. Two outfits, Islamic State and Jama'at-ul-Ahrar, a splinter group of the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP-JuA) claimed responsibility for the suicide blast. ¹¹⁰ | 14 | 19 |

Afghanistan

| S.No. | Date | Place | Incident | Killed | Injured |
|-------|--------|-----------|--|--------|---------|
| 1 | July 1 | Nangarhar | At least six ISIS militants were killed in three separate airstrikes conducted in Tora Bora and Alef | 6 | 0 |

¹⁰⁸ Bid to blow up Jaffar Express foiled, *Dawn*, July 1, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1342509/bid-to-blow-up-jaffar-express-foiled>, accessed on July 3, 2017

¹⁰⁹ Mehdi Hussain, Death toll in Parachinar soars past 60, *Dawn*, June 24, 2017, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1443898/death-toll-parachinar-twin-blasts-reaches-57/>, accessed on July 3, 2017

¹¹⁰ 85 dead as terror strikes Parachinar, Quetta, *Dawn*, June 24, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1341501>, accessed on July 3, 2017

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|---|----------------|-----------|--|-----------|----|
| | | | Khal areas of Pacher Agam District Nangarhar Province. Several weapons, ammunitions, and explosive were also destroyed. ¹¹¹ | | |
| 2 | July 1 | Faryab | Seven people, including three civilians and one security official, were killed after militants ambushed the convoy of Afghan National Army 209th Shaheen Military Corps in Faryab city of the same Province. ¹¹² | 7 | 0 |
| 3 | June 30-July 1 | Nangarhar | At least twenty ISIS terrorists were killed in an airstrike in Achin District of Nangarhar Province. The Afghan Defense Ministry said in a statement that the airstrike was carried in support of the ongoing offensive to eliminate the threats posed by the terror group. ¹¹³ | 20 | NS |
| 4 | June 23 | Kabul | The Afghan Taliban leader Maulvi Haibatullah Akhunzadah said that a planned US troop surge will not end the protracted war in the country and vowed to fight on until the full withdrawal of NATO troops from Afghanistan. ¹¹⁴ | Statement | |
| | June 23 | Kabul | A study by TOLO News shows | | |

¹¹¹ Deadly airstrike target ISIS militants in Nangarhar, leaving several dead, *Khaama Press*, July 2, 2017, <http://www.khaama.com/deadly-airstrike-target-isis-militants-in-nangarhar-leaving-several-dead-03062>, accessed on July 3, 2017

¹¹² 7 Dead as Taliban Ambush ANA Convoy in Faryab, *Outlook Afghanistan*, July 2, 2017, <http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/assets/epaper/July%2002,%202017/Main%20Page.pdf>, accessed on July 3, 2017

¹¹³ 20 ISIL terrorists killed in airstrike East of Afghanistan, *Outlook Afghanistan*, July 1, 2017, <http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/assets/epaper/July%2001,%202017/Main%20Page.pdf>, accessed on July 3, 2017

¹¹⁴ Afghan War Will End only When NATO Leaves: Taliban Leader, *Outlook Afghanistan*, June 24, 2017, <http://www.outlookafghanistan.net/assets/epaper/June%2024,%202017/Main%20Page.pdf>, July 3, 2017

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| | | | that the month of Ramadan this year (May 27 to June 25) was the deadliest month in the past 15 years with deadly terrorist attacks in Kabul, Paktia, Herat and Helmand Provinces that claimed more than 230 lives and wounded over 800 others. ¹¹⁵ | Report |
|--|--|--|---|--------|

Iraq

| S.No. | Date | Place | Incident | Killed | Injured |
|-------|------------|----------|---|--------------------|---------|
| 1 | July 2 | Anbar | At least 14 persons, including women, children and a police officer, were killed and 13 others were injured when a suicide bomber blew himself up at a refugee camp in Anbar Province. ¹¹⁶ | 14 | 13 |
| 2 | July 2 | Damascus | At least 20 persons were either killed or wounded in a suicide bombing near al-Tahrir Square in central Damascus. ¹¹⁷ | 20 | 0 |
| 3 | June 29-30 | Mosul | Iraqi forces took over more of the last few remaining areas in western Mosul's Old City from Islamic State militants. The Iraqi Joint Operations Command Abdul-Ghani al-Assadi said that Counter-Terrorism Service troops | Capture/liberation | |

¹¹⁵ Ramadan Deadliest Month For Afghanistan In Past 15 Years, *Tolo News*, June 23, 2017, <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/ramadan-deadliest-month-afghanistan-past-15-years>, accessed on July 3, 2017

¹¹⁶ Mohamed Mostafa, Suicide bomber kills 14 people at Anbar refugee camp: official, *Iraqi News*, July 2, 2017, <http://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/suicide-bomber-kills-14-anbar-refugee-camp/>, accessed on July 3, 2017

¹¹⁷ Loaa Adel, Suicide bombing in central Damascus, 20 casualties, *Iraqi News*, July 2, 2017, <http://www.iraqinews.com/arab-world-news/suicide-bombing-central-damascus-20-casualties/>, accessed on July 3, 2017

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|---|---------|--------|--|-------------|
| | | | took over Shaarin market, Nabi Girgis and Abd Khoub in the Old City. ¹¹⁸ More than 600 Islamic State fighters had been killed and 900 families were set free from western Mosul's Old City as Iraqi forces took over the group's birthplace mosque, the Nuri al-Kabir mosque. ¹¹⁹ | |
| 4 | June 30 | Aleppo | According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, IS militants have withdrawn from the last territory they held in Aleppo after the Syrian army retook the Ithriya-Rasafa road and areas east of Khanaser. ¹²⁰ | SOHR Report |
| 5 | June 29 | Mosul | Islamic State militants executed the first <i>mufti</i> (legislator) appointed by the group in 2014, identified as Abu Zakaria (50), for plotting an armed dissent against the group at a major stronghold west of Mosul. ¹²¹ | |

¹¹⁸ Mohamed Mostafa, Counter-terrorism forces retake more areas in Mosul's Old City, *Iraqi News*, June 30, 2017, <http://www.iraqinews.com/features/counter-terrorism-forces-retake-areas-mosuls-old-city/>, accessed on July 3, 2017

¹¹⁹ Mohamed Mostafa, 600 militants killed, 900 families liberated as Mosul's Old City freed from IS, *Iraqi News*, June 29, 2017, <http://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/600-militants-killed-900-families-liberated-mosuls-old-city-freed/>, accessed on July 3, 2017

¹²⁰ Mohamed Mostafa, Islamic State withdraws from last area of Aleppo province: war monitor, *Iraqi News*, June 30, 2017, <http://www.iraqinews.com/arab-world-news/islamic-state-withdraws-last-area-aleppo-province-war-monitor/>, accessed on July 3, 2017

¹²¹ Mohamed Mostafa, Islamic State executes top "mufti" west of Mosul over dissent plot, *Iraqi News*, June 29, 2017, <http://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/islamic-state-executes-top-mufti-west-mosul-dissent-plot/>, accessed on July 3, 2017

Syria

| S.No. | Date | Place | Incident | Killed | Injured |
|-------|---------|-----------------------------------|--|------------------------|---------|
| 1 | June 2 | Damascus | The Syrian Arab Army (SAA) battled against militants in Damascus, breaking through their defensive line in the suburb of Ayn Tarma. As a result of their advance, the SAA's 105th Brigade of the Republican Guard managed to capture much of 'Ayn Tarma's southern quarter. The SAA is trying to cut off all supply lines between Ayn Tarma and militant-held areas in the East Ghouta. ¹²² | SAA captures Ayn Tarma | |
| 2 | June 30 | Arsal (Syria-Lebanon border town) | Five suicide bombers attacked Lebanese soldiers searching for militants in refugee settlements near Lebanese border town of Arsal. The suicide explosions killed a girl and wounded a number of soldiers. ¹²³ | 1 | NS |

International Economic Issues

- **IMF cuts US economic growth look**

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) on June 27, 2017, cut its growth forecasts for the US economy to 2.1% in 2017 and 2018, dropping its assumption that the Trump administration's tax cut and fiscal spending plans would boost growth. In a statement following a review of US economic policies, the IMF said that the Trump administration's push for annual growth of over 3% for a sustained period was unlikely to be achieved partly because the labour market is already at a level

¹²² Leith Fadel, Syria: SAA breaks through Ayn Tarma defensive line, Al Masdar News, July 3, 2017, <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/syria-saa-breaks-ayn-tarma-defensive-line/>, accessed on July 3, 2017

¹²³ Ben Hubbard, Suicide Bombers Attack Lebanese Soldiers Near Syria Border, *New York Times*, June 30, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/30/world/middleeast/lebanon-syria-refugees-militants.html>, accessed on July 3, 2017

consistent with full employment. The IMF held that the Trump administration's latest budget plans would place a disproportionate share of spending cuts on to low and middle income households, countering the budget's goals of promoting safety and prosperity for all Americans. Instead, the fund suggested a tax policy that would improve the federal revenue-to-GDP ratio, more balanced cuts that would strengthen the social safety net efficiency, and efforts to contain healthcare cost inflation.¹²⁴

- **Sturgen rules out new independence vote till after Brexit**

On June 27, 2017, Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgen announced the postponement of her plans to introduce legislation for a second independence referendum until the terms of Brexit from the European Union are clear. Sturgen party, Scottish National Party, lost 21 of its 56 seats in the parliament election held on June 8. Following the elections, Ms. Sturgen acknowledged that her insistence on a second referendum has lost the SNP votes.¹²⁵

- **IMF to participate for 'last time' in Greek bailout: Schaeuble**

On July 1, 2017, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), a key creditor in Greece's bailout, announced that the bank will not participate in any further rescues of the debt—wracked country. In this direction, German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schaeuble said, "We have all acknowledged (eurozone and IMF) that the third Greek (bailout) payment will be the last with the participation of the IMF". The German finance chief has been inflexible on the issue of Greek debt relief, in opposition to the IMF which says that Greece needs debt relief to inject new life into its floundering economy. After participating in two previous international loans to save Greece from bankruptcy, the IMF is still set to take part in a third bailout. But for the moment, it has held back its contribution over the issue of whether the eurozone will decide to ease Greek debt — currently at 180 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP).¹²⁶

¹²⁴ "IMF cuts forecast for US growth in blow to Trump tax plan", *Reuters*, June 28, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/jun/27/trump-tax-plan-us-economy-imf-forecast> (accessed on June 28, 2017)

¹²⁵ Elisabeth O'Leary, "Sturgen rules out new independence vote till after Brexit", *The Indian Express*, June 28, 2017.

¹²⁶ "IMF to participate for 'last time' in Greek bailout: Schaeuble", *Hindu Businessline*, July 1, 2017, <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/world/imf-to-participate-for-last-time-in-greek-bailout-schaeuble/article9744926.ece> (accessed on July 3, 2017)