INDIAN QUOTA EXTENSION ATTRACTS FIRE: Australia is among 6 economies to have stepped up their complaints at the WTO against India’s year-long extension of import quotas on pulses. The extension on produce like lentils and peas has been questioned by Australia, Russia, Canada, US, Ukraine and EU.

ASEAN MINISTERS SIGN ON TO SERVICES TRADE: Economic Ministers from ASEAN met in Phuket during the week where their discussions on key trade issues included progress toward concluding RCEP (ASEAN + 6) negotiations. They also signed an ASEAN Trade in Services Agreement.

US & CHINA TO KEEP TALKING: A further round of high-level trade talks will be held in Beijing this week. USTR Lighthizer and Treasury Secretary Mnuchin are travelling for the talks to begin on April 30. Chinese Vice Premier Liu is expected to return to Washington DC in the second week of May.

TRUMP & ABE TALK TRADE: President Trump and Prime Minister Abe talked trade and investment when they met in Washington DC during the week. The US and Japan recently began negotiations for a bilateral FTA. Further talks were also held during the week. President Trump is now scheduled to visit Japan in May.

US PIRACY & COUNTERFEITING LIST PUBLISHED: The US has published its annual watch-list on piracy and counterfeiting. Asia-Pacific economies on the report’s “priority watch list” are China, India and Indonesia. Those on a lower-level “watch list” include Canada, Thailand and Vietnam.

ASEAN OFFICIALS IN AUSTRALIA: Senior trade officials from ASEAN, Australia and New Zealand are in Melbourne this week for the 11th meeting of the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand FTA Joint Committee. The FTA links 12 economies, was signed 10 years ago and has been in full force since 2011-12.

PHILIPPINES SEeks NEW FTA: The Philippine and South Korea have agreed to fast-track negotiations toward a free trade agreement. They hope to conclude an FTA by November in time for a 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations. Trade between the two economies is worth $US13.7 billion annually.

APEC MINISTERS HEAD FOR CHILE: APEC Trade Ministers will be meeting in Chile on May 17-18 and are expected to focus on the pursuit of policies to strengthen trade integration and regulatory coherence. Australia is unlikely to have Ministerial representation in Vina del Mar because of its election on May 18.

KIWI MINISTER IN CHINA: Trade Minister Parker was in China last week. The visit followed a recent visit by Prime Minister Ardern. Parker led a business delegation to Guangzhou and visited Beijing for President Xi’s Belt & Road Forum. A resumption in talks to upgrade the China-NZ FTA is also on the bilateral agenda.

US BEATS CHINA IN WTO FARM DISPUTE: A WTO Dispute Panel has found that China’s administration of tariff rate quotas for wheat, rice and corn was inconsistent with its WTO commitments. It found in favour of a US complaint that China’s administration of the quotas was not transparent, predictable or fair.