

July 1 – July 15

AREA BRIEF

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Area Briefs: 1-15 July, 2019

General Observations

Pakistan

- On July 14, 2019, Prime Minister Imran Khan ordered the creation of a commission to probe who was responsible for the situation that led to the Reko Diq case against Pakistan. Earlier On July 12, the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) slapped \$5.976 billion in damages against Pakistan in the Reko Diq case. ICSID rendered its judgement in a 700-page ruling against Pakistan in the Reko Diq case and awarded a \$4.08bn penalty and \$1.87bn in interest.
- July 14 also marked the second round of India-Pakistan talks at the Wagah border to discuss the draft agreement for finalising the modalities of the Kartarpur corridor. Both parties held productive discussions on the proposed draft agreement as they agreed to finalise the modalities for operationalising the Kartarpur corridor in time for the 550 th celebrations of Guru Nanak's birth anniversary.
- In a joint statement issued by the US Department of State on July 12, China, Russia, and the US welcomed Pakistan to a four-party consultation process that seeks to end the war in Afghanistan. During the meeting held in Beijing on July 10 and 11, 2019, the four sides exchanged views on the prevalent security condition and discussed mutual efforts to secure peace and stability in the region.
- On July 10, the White House confirmed Prime Minister Imran Khan's official visit to Washington to meet US President Donald Trump from July 21 to 23. The Prime Minister's visit will highlight Pakistan's commitment to peace and stability and the significance of positive engagement to promote a political solution in Afghanistan. In a sign of improving Pakistan-US relation the US Department of State designated the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) as a global terrorist group on July 2. The US Department of Treasury has also frozen all BLA assets in the United States and prohibited American citizens from having any financial dealings with the entity or the people associated with it.
- During a July 8 meeting between Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi and Tadamichi Yamamoto, the United Nations Secretary General's Special Representative (SRSG) on Afghanistan, Yamamoto appreciated Pakistan's role in facilitating the Afghan peace process.

- On July 3, the Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved a \$6 billion bailout package for Pakistan and released \$1bn to ease pressure on the country's foreign exchange reserves.
- In two separate meetings on July 2, General Oleg Salyukov, the Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Ground Forces, and Claire Landais, the Secretary-General for the National Defence & Security of France, met Army Chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa. Generals Bajwa and Salyukov discussed matters relating to steps for improved security and measures to further expand ties. Landais and General Bajwa discussed matters of mutual interest, including defence and security cooperation and the overall regional situation.
- On July 10, one soldier was martyred and five others were injured in two bomb explosions in North Waziristan. Earlier on July 3, five Pakistan Army soldiers were martyred and one other sustained injuries in an explosion that took place near the Line of Control (LoC) in Chamb sector of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK).
- On July 8 Pakistan welcomed the second report of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and its recommendation for the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry (CoI) to investigate the systematic human rights violations in IOK in the wake of Pulwama. However, it also cautioned OHCHR against equating the situation in IOK with Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan reiterating that there was no parallel between the horrendous human rights situation in Indian occupied Jammu and Kashmir and the prevailing environment in Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan. Unlike IOK, which is the most militarised zone in the world, AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan remain open to foreign visitors.
- On July 1 and 2, the top 13 leaders of the banned Jamaatud Dawa (JuD), including its chief Hafiz Saeed and Naib Emir Abdul Rehman Makki, were booked in 23 cases for terror financing and money laundering under the Anti-Terrorism Act, 1997.

International

- On July 3, Rahul Gandhi resigned as leader of Indian National Congress party. Accepting responsibility for the party's defeat in the recent general election in his resignation letter, Gandhi said that while he had no "hatred or anger" towards India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), "every living cell" in his body "instinctively resists their idea of India" which he said was based on differences and hatred.
- According to media reports on July 7, India's Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) test-fired three NAG third-generation anti-tank guided missiles

(ATGM) at the Indian military's test range at Pokhran in the Thar Desert. The missile is in the final stages of being inducted into the Army. The NAG missile is a third-generation anti-tank guided missile, capable of effectively engaging and destroying enemy tanks during day and night.

- Meanwhile tensions in the Middle East continue to worsen in the wake of US President Donald Trump's 2018 decision to abandon the JCPOA with Tehran under which the latter had agreed to curtail its enrichment of uranium in return for the lifting of global sanctions against its economy. On July 14, the EU signatories to Iran's nuclear agreement warned that the agreement was at risk of falling apart owing to increased tensions between the US and Iran. Earlier on July 8, Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation confirmed that Iran had passed the uranium enrichment limit set in its July 2015 Nuclear Agreement, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).
- On July 7, US President Donald Trump warned Iran over its imminent breach of a uranium enrichment cap. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, stated Iran will face further sanctions in response to the expected breach of the cap set in the 2015 nuclear deal.
- On July 13, Iran urged the UK to immediately release the Iranian supertanker it seized in Gibraltar, warning London against entering a "dangerous game with no end in sight". Meanwhile the British Ministry of Defence announced its decision to deploy an additional warship to protect British commercial oil tankers in the Gulf. According to the UK government on July 11 three Iranian boats were warned off by British warship, HMS Montrose, which was escorting a British oil tanker in the Strait of Hormuz. UK-Iran relations took a plunge on July 4 when British Royal Marines seized an Iranian supertanker suspected of carrying oil to Syria off the coast of Gibraltar in a move that escalated tensions between the UK and Tehran.
- On July 10, France's top diplomatic adviser, Emmanuel Bonne met Rear-Admiral Ali Shamkhani, Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, in an effort to de-escalate rising tensions with Iran over its unraveling nuclear deal with world powers.
- On July 11, US President Donald Trump announced his decision to abandon his effort to add a controversial citizenship question to the census. Civil rights groups have long argued that asking about citizenship status may discourage immigrants from participating in the census
- On July 9, the Taliban representatives and the US concluded the 7th round of the Afghan peace process in Doha. Meanwhile, a 2-day intra-Afghan conference was also held on

July 9-10, 2019, in Doha. The participants of the conference issued a joint declaration in which the Taliban pledged to reduce violence, and ensure women rights within the framework of Islamic values.

- On July 10, UK's Ambassador to Washington, Sir Kim Darroch submitted his resignation. Darroch's resignation came in the wake of the July 6 leaks of his personal memos which sparked a diplomatic row between Britain and Washington.
- On July 8, the UAE announced that it was redeploying and reducing troops across Yemen and moving from a "military-first" strategy to a "peace-first" plan.
- On July 7 Incumbent Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras conceded defeat in the Greek Election. Kyriakos Mitsotakis's centre-right New Democracy Party won by a landslide over the left wing Syriza party, which has been in power since 2015 in Greece.
- On July 3, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a legislature on the suspension of the INF Treaty.

---Amina Afzal

AMERICAS

Domestic

- On July 14, US President Donald Trump used racist language to attack four Democratic congresswomen.

Trump stated, they should “go back and help fix the totally broken and crime infested places from which they came”, adding “You can’t leave fast enough”. While Trump did not name his targets, it is assumed he is referring to Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York; Ayanna Pressley of Massachusetts; Rashida Tlaib of Michigan; and Ilhan Omar of Minnesota. All four congresswomen lashed out at Trump. Tlaib responded by saying Trump “needs to be impeached”, Ocasio-Cortez stated “the country I ‘come from’, and the country we all swear to, is the United States”. Omar called Trump “the worst, most corrupt and inept president we have ever seen” while Pressley said: “This is what racism looks like. We are what democracy looks like”. Trumps latest remarks have created uproar amongst Democrats that have strongly criticised the president’s statements.

- On July 12, US Labor Secretary, Alexander Acosta, submitted his resignation following criticism of his handling of a 2008 plea deal with billionaire Jeffrey Epstein.

Acosta struck a deal with Epstein which spared the billionaire a jail sentence at a time when Acosta was Miami’s top federal prosecutor. Epstein pleaded not guilty to sex trafficking charges, over allegations that he “sexually exploited and abused dozens of minor girls” at his homes in New York and Florida between 2002 and 2005. Acosta came under fire by Democrats who have called for him to resign. On July 10, 2019, Acosta defended himself, arguing that the involvement of his office secured a greater penalty for Epstein than state officials would have otherwise been able to secure, however on July 12, 2019, Acosta formally submitted his resignation. Acosta stated, “it would be selfish for me to stay in this position and continue talking about case that’s 12 years old rather than the amazing economy we have right now”. Acosta becomes the latest in a long list of high-profile officials to resign. The Trump Administration currently has the highest turnover of cabinet and White House staff than any previous administration.

- On July 11, US President Donald Trump announced he would abandon his effort to add a controversial citizenship question to the census.

The citizenship question that the Trump Administration was looking to include in the 2020 census has been controversial. Civil rights groups have argued that asking about citizenship status may discourage immigrants from participating in the census; thereby skewing the count of immigrants in official tallies. The Supreme Court had ruled in June 2019 to remove the controversial question from the census questionnaire. Initially, the Department of Justice

signaled it would not attempt to continue the legal fight, however, the department reversed its stance after Trump promised to keep trying to add the question, and notified judges in three similar legal challenges that it planned to find a new legal path to adding the question to the census. Trump, however, announced on July 11, 2019 that he would not add the citizenship question to the census; however, he argued he would move forward with executive action for his administration to collect information on its own. The executive order issued by Trump directs government agencies to provide records relating to citizenship to the commerce department. It also ordered the establishment of an interagency working group to improve access to administrative records. The order argued the administration required data on the number of citizens and non-citizens in the country to reevaluate immigration policy, and generate a “more reliable” count of the number of undocumented people living in the US.

- On July 10, the House Judiciary Committee voted to authorise subpoenas for 12 people mentioned in the special counsel Robert Mueller’s report into election interference including Donald Trump’s adviser and son-in-law, Jared Kushner, and former attorney general Jeff Sessions.

The vote, which was 21-12, allowed Democratic congressman and panel chairman Jerry Nadler discretion on whether to subpoena current and former Trump advisers, as part of a broad corruption and obstruction of justice investigation of the Trump presidency. The panel also voted to authorize subpoenas for documents and testimony related to Trump’s handling of immigration; an extremely controversial component of the Trump Administration’s policy that has resulted in the separation of scores of migrant families. Nadler will make the final decision about issuing the subpoenas, which he stated can be avoided if witnesses and the administration voluntarily cooperate. Trump lashed out at Democrats on twitter stating “Enough already, go back to work!”

- On July 9, Tom Steyer officially entered the presidential race in an already crowded field of Democratic contenders.

Steyer, a billionaire who has funded Democratic candidates and organisations that promote liberal causes, officially announced his bid to enter the presidential race. Steyer has gained notoriety over his support and calls to impeach President Donald Trump. Steyer has announced he intends to spend \$100 million on his presidential bid.

- On July 7, California Congressman Eric Swalwell officially withdrew his 2020 Democratic presidential nomination. Swalwell announced he would focus instead on his re-election to the House of Representatives.
- On July 4, US President Donald Trump’s Fourth of July celebrations marking American independence, displayed American military might.

In his 47-minute speech, Trump called for unity and focused much of his speech on US military endeavors. The event – which featured two Abrams tanks, two Bradley fighting vehicles and flypasts from aircraft, including six Blue Angel F-18s – cost the National Parks Service \$2.5m in redirected park entrance fees alone. Critics accused Trump of ‘militarising’ the traditional celebration and wasting tax payer money.

- On July 2, a Democratic-led US House of Representatives panel filed a lawsuit in federal court to demand US President Donald Trump’s individual and business tax returns.

The House Ways and Means Committee filed the lawsuit against the US Treasury Department and Internal Revenue Service (IRS) after Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin refused a legal request for the records, and defied two congressional subpoenas seeking Trump’s tax returns. The Ways and Means Committee Chairman, Richard Neal stated, "Despite its mandatory obligation, the Treasury Department failed to comply with the law and denied the Committee's request". Trump’s lawyer Jay Sekulow called the filing the "latest effort at presidential harassment" and said the president's legal team would respond in court. Democrats have asked for Trump's tax records from 2013 to 2018. Trump broke with decades-old political precedent by refusing to release his returns as a presidential candidate in 2016 and he continues to do so as president, saying his tax returns are under IRS audit.

International

- On July 9, the US said it hopes to enlist allies in the coming weeks for a military coalition to safeguard the strategic waters in the Persian Gulf.

The US has blamed Iran and Iran-aligned fighters for recent attacks in the waters of the Persian Gulf. Gen Joseph Dunford, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff announced, under the plan, the US will provide command ships and lead surveillance efforts for the military coalition in the waters off Iran and Yemen. Allies would patrol waters near those US command ships, and escort commercial vessels with their nation’s flags. Dunford stated, “We’re engaging now with a number of countries to see if we can put together a coalition that would ensure freedom of navigation both in the Straits of Hormuz and the Bab al-Mandab”. He added, “And so I think probably over the next couple of weeks we’ll identify which nations have the political will to support that initiative and then we’ll work directly with the militaries to identify the specific capabilities that’ll support that”. Iran has threatened to close the Straits of Hormuz, through which almost a fifth of the world’s oil passes, if it was unable to export its oil.

- On July 8, the US State Department approved the potential sale of \$2.2 billion in arms to Taiwan.

Congress has been notified about the potential deal, which would include 108 M1A2T Abrams tanks, 250 Stinger missiles, and related equipment and support, according to the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA). US lawmakers have 30 days to object to the sale but are unlikely to do so. DSCA stated the proposed sale would “contribute to the modernization of the recipient’s main battle tank fleet, enhancing its ability to meet current and future regional threats and to strengthen its homeland defense,” but maintained, it would not alter the “basic military balance in the region”. Beijing has made clear their opposition to the possible sale. Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesman, Geng Shuang stated, “We have repeatedly emphasised to the US to fully understand the extremely sensitive and damaging nature of their decision to sell arms to Taiwan, and abide by the One China principle”. China and the US are currently locked in a trade war with that has seen the two sides impose tariffs on hundreds of billions in two-way commerce. The sale of arms to Taiwan will likely strain already tense relations between Washington and Beijing. The Trump Administration has sought to strengthen ties with Taipei and appeared more willing to sell major weapon systems, than previous administrations, despite the concern of rising tension between China and the US.

- On July 7, US President Donald Trump announced on Twitter that the White House would “no longer deal with” the UK’s ambassador to Washington, Kim Darroch.

Trump’s statement came after Darroch’s leaked memos revealed he believed Trump to be “inept” and “dysfunctional”- stirring a diplomatic row between London and Washington. Darroch’s memos reveal bitter conflicts within Trump's White House; warn that Trump could have been indebted to 'dodgy Russians'; claims the President's economic policies could wreck the world trade system; and voices fear that Trump could still attack Iran. UK Prime Minister Theresa May however expressed her “full faith” in Darroch, but insisted she did not agree with his “honest and unvarnished” assessment of the White House. Trump on July 8, lashed out against UK Prime Minister Theresa May on Twitter, accusing her of making a “mess” of Brexit, after failing to follow his advice on the issue, as diplomatic tensions between the both countries rose. On July 10, 2019, Darroch submitted his resignation stating, “The current situation is making it impossible for me to carry out my role as I would like” despite the full support extended to him by May and other key lawmakers in Britain.

- On July 7, US President Donald Trump warned Iran over its imminent breach of a uranium enrichment cap.

Trump stated, “Iran better be careful, because you enrich for one reason, and I won’t tell you what that reason is. But it’s no good. They better be careful”. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, stated Iran will face further sanctions in response to the expected breach of the cap set in the 2015 nuclear deal. Tehran had announced on May 8, 2019 that it would no longer respect the limits set on its enriched uranium and heavy water stockpiles in the face of crippling US

sanctions after the US unilaterally pulled out of the agreement last year. Iran has also threatened to go further and abandon more nuclear commitments unless the remaining partners – Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia – help it to circumvent sanctions. In related news, on July 10, 2019 Trump threatened Iran with further sanctions on twitter stating, "Iran has long been secretly 'enriching,' in total violation of the terrible 150 Billion Dollar deal made by John Kerry and the Obama Administration. Remember, that deal was to expire in a short number of years. Sanctions will soon be increased, substantially!

- On July 6, U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation, Zalmay Khalilzad, termed the latest talks with the Taliban as the 'most productive' to date.

Khalilzad noted the latest round of discussions with the Taliban was the “most productive session” to date and progress has been made on all four parts of a peace deal- counter-terrorism assurances, troop withdrawal, participation in Intra-Afghan dialogue and negotiations, and a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire. Both sides resumed talks in Qatar on July 7, 2019.

- On July 4, White House National Security adviser John Bolton welcomed the seizure of an Iranian oil tanker carrying crude oil bound for Syria by British Royal Marines in Gibraltar.

Bolton stated on Twitter, “Excellent news: UK has detained the supertanker Grace I laden with Iranian oil bound for Syria in violation of EU sanctions”. He added, “America & our allies will continue to prevent regimes in Tehran & Damascus from profiting off this illicit trade”. Spain confirmed the exercise had been conducted at the request of the US.

- On July 1, Ivanka Trump, daughter of US President Donald Trump, came under sharp criticism over her role at the G20 Summit held in Osaka, Japan.

Critics accused Donald Trump of promoting nepotism after he gave his daughter, Ivanka Trump, a prominent position at the G20 Summit. Both Donald Trump and Ivanka Trump received a flurry of criticism after the French Government released a video where Ivanka was seen awkwardly interjecting with French President, Emmanuel Macron, British Prime Minister, Theresa May, Canadian Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau and IMF Director Christine Lagarde. Congressman Eric Swalwell, who is Democratic candidate for the office of president responded, “This is your reminder that Ivanka Trump has no foreign policy or diplomacy experience. The American people deserve to be represented by a qualified diplomat, not the president’s daughter”. Trump received further criticism after his daughter accompanied him to North Korea as he held talks with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un; critics warned his daughters complete lack of diplomatic experience and training, would damage the US’ credibility.

Latin America

- On July 12, Brazil's President, Jair Bolsonaro invited his son Eduardo Bolsonaro to become Brazil's Ambassadors to the US.

Eduardo Bolsonaro who is currently a congressman announced he would accept the post if it were offered to him. Both Eduardo and Jair Bolsonaro share a pro-US stance. Brazilian diplomats have reacted with scorn over the announcement, citing Eduardo Bolsonaro's lack of diplomatic experience.

---Kiran Mazari

ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT

- On July 14, the EU signatories to Iran's nuclear agreement warned that the agreement was at risk of falling apart owing to increased tensions between the US and Iran.
- On July 8, Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation announced that Iran passed the uranium enrichment limit set in its July 2015 Nuclear Agreement, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).
- According to Iran's *Fars News Agency* on July 1, Iran's enriched uranium stockpile has passed the 300-kilogramme limit under the JCPOA.

Behrouz Kamalvandi, spokesman for Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation, confirmed that Tehran had enriched uranium by 4.5%, beyond the 3.67% that the JCPOA allows. Kamalvandi said, "This level of purity completely satisfies the power plant fuel requirements of the country." Enriching uranium beyond the set limits marked second step of Iran's reducing commitments to the nuclear agreement. On July 1, 2019, Iran took its first step of reducing its commitment by passing the country's enriched uranium stockpile of 300-kilogramme limit permitted by the JCPOA. Iran had pledged to keep scaling back their commitments every 60 days unless Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia protected it from the punishing sanctions imposed by the US following its withdrawal. Kamalvandi said that Iran would stick to 4.5% level of enrichment for the time being, which is below than 90% level required for a nuclear warhead. On July 8, 2019, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) also confirmed that Iran had resumed enriching uranium to higher levels than permitted under the JCPOA. In its statement, the IAEA noted that its inspectors "verified that Iran is enriching uranium above 3.67% U-235."

In response to Iran's steps, all remaining states parties to the JCPOA including the UK, Germany, France, China and Russia expressed their concerns. The EU said it was "extremely concerned" by the development and called on Iran to "reverse all activities" inconsistent with its deal commitments. Meanwhile, China and Russia both accused the US for the latest suspension of Iran's compliance with the JCPOA. Both countries said that US' unilateral withdrawal from the JCPOA has created conditions that encouraged Iran to pass the limits set by the agreement. Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on July 7, 2019, that declining oil sales and the effect of financial sanctions are the main issues that needed to be solved. Araghchi said, "We hope we can reach a solution, otherwise after 60 days we will take the third step as well."

In a related development on July 10, 2019, the IAEA Board of Governors held an emergency meeting at the US' request in the Austrian capital Vienna, aimed at assessing Iran's breach of the JCPOA. During the meeting, Jackie Wolcott, US Ambassador to the IAEA, called on Iran to reverse the steps it had undertaken against the JCPOA commitments. However, Kazem

Gharibabadi, Iran's Ambassador to the IAEA, noted that the meeting did not produce any results for the US. While describing Iran's recent disregard to the JCPOA limits a response to the US' "outlaw behaviour," Gharibabadi said, "The sadistic tendency of the US to use illegal, unilateral sanctions as an instrument to coerce sovereign states and private entities should come to an end."

On July 13, 2019, the EU said that it supported Iraq's proposal to hold a regional conference to resolve differences between the US and Iran. EU's Foreign Policy Chief, Federica Mogherini, said, "The EU shares Iraq's approach to dealing with the difficult situation in the region." Mogherini made her comment during a joint press conference with the Iraqi Foreign Minister, Mohammed al-Hakim, during her official visit to Iraq.

In another development on July 14, 2019, the EU signatories to the JCPOA including France, Britain, and Germany warned that the agreement was at risk of collapse, and urged Iran to resume dialogue with the US. In their joint statement, the three countries said, "The risks are such that it is necessary for all stakeholders to pause, and consider the possible consequences of their actions. The statement added, "We believe that the time has come to act responsibly and to look for ways to stop the escalation of tension and resume dialogue."

- On July 14, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini urged Russia to ensure continued respect of the 1987 Intermediate Range Nuclear Force (INF) Treaty.
- On July 3, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a legislature on the suspension of the INF Treaty.

The legislature noted, "Given the need to take urgent measures following the United States' violation of its obligations under the Treaty, signed by the Soviet Union and the United States on December 8, 1987, Russia's compliance with the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty is hereby suspended until the US addresses the violation of obligations under the Treaty or until the Treaty is terminated." The decree entered into force on the day of signing. According to media reports, President Putin has instructed the Russian Foreign Ministry to send a notice of suspension to the US. On February 1, 2019, the US announced suspension of its compliance with the INF Treaty. The formal withdrawal of the US would take place in August 2019 unless Russia returns to "real and verifiable" compliance. In response to the US, Russia had announced suspension of its compliance on February 2, 2019. The US claims that the 9M729 ground-launched cruise missile (GLCM) has a range capability that exceeds the 500 kilometres limit stipulated by the INF Treaty and demanded Russia eliminate all these missiles. However, Russia stressed that the 9M729 missile did not violate the INF Treaty as the range of the missile falls below the INF Treaty limits. Moreover, Russia also accused the US of violating the agreement. Russia maintains that the US missile defence interceptor platforms deployed in Eastern Europe could be used for offensive purposes, and therefore, is in violation of the Treaty. Signed by

Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev in 1987, the INF Treaty led to the elimination of an entire class of destabilising nuclear weapons that were deployed in Europe and helped bring an end to the Cold War arms race, as it banned ground-launched nuclear and conventional ballistic missiles with ranges between 500 to 5,500 kilometres.

In a related development on July 4, 2019, President Putin indicated that “there had recently been signs that Washington is beginning to consider resuming bilateral dialogue on a wide-ranging strategic agenda.” Putin said, “I think that the achievement of concrete agreements in the field of arms control would contribute to strengthening international stability. Russia has the political will to work towards this. Now it’s up to the US.” He also rejected propositions that collapse of the INF Treaty would lead to initiation of a new arms race. Putin made these comments during an interview with Italian newspaper Corriere della Sera.

On July 14, 2019, EU’s Foreign Policy Chief, Federica Mogherini, said, “The European Union calls on all States to uphold the integrity of the rules-based international system with effective multilateralism as a key principle. This is indispensable for maintaining international peace and security.” Mogherini said that the EU was concerned that the international disarmament and non-proliferation regime was under great strain.

- On July 13, French President Emmanuel Macron approved the creation of a space command within the French Air Force to improve the country’s defence capabilities.

While addressing military personnel a day before the Bastille Day parade, Macron said, “To ensure the development and reinforcement of our space capabilities, a space command will be created next September in the Air Force.” He indicated that a space command would strengthen the protection of French satellites.

Earlier, on July 12, 2019, France also launched its new nuclear-powered attack submarine (SSN). According to media reports, President Emmanuel Macron launched the submarine to ensure French naval superiority. The submarine, known as ‘Suffren’, was launched at a dry-dock ceremony in the northern port of Cherbourg. Suffren is the first of six new generation, Barracuda-type SSNs, and it is designed to replace the Rubis-class in the French Navy.

- On July 12, Turkey confirmed it had received the first shipment of Russian-made S-400 air defence systems, in defiance of US warnings against its procurement.

According to the Turkish Defence Ministry, the first shipment of S-400 systems landed in Ankara, at the Murted Air Base. Anadolu News Agency reported that three Russian planes landed in Ankara to deliver the systems. On July 13 and 14, 2019, the Russian Defence Ministry said in a statement that Russia delivered another batch of components for S-400 systems to Turkey. The Turkish Ministry of National Defence reported that the fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh planes with S-400 components had landed at Murted Air Base. On July 14, 2019, Turkey’s President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said, “Today, the most important agreement in our modern history is the S-400 deal. Purchasing S-400 systems, Turkey is not getting prepared for a war. These missile defence

systems are meant to ensure peace and security in our country. We make other steps to improve our defence capacities.”

In response, both the US and NATO expressed concerns over the delivery of the system. While admitting that the purchase of Russian S-400 systems is a problem, a senior US Administration official said, “We are aware of reports that Turkey has taken delivery of the S-400. As the President said at the G20, it is a problem, there is no question about it.” A NATO official also noted, “It is up to allies to decide what military equipment they buy. However, we are concerned about the potential consequences of Turkey’s decision to acquire the S-400 system.” In retaliation, the US could formally suspend Turkey from participation in the F-35 programme. Earlier, in June 2019, Acting US Secretary of Defence, Mark Esper had warned that the US would not provide Turkey with F-35 fighter jets if the country procured S-400 systems.

- On July 7, India’s Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) test-fired three Nag third-generation anti-tank guided missiles (ATGM) at the Indian military’s test range at Pokhran in the Thar Desert.

Terming all three tests successful, the DRDO officials said, “The missiles were test-fired during both day and night.” Media reports also quoted the Indian government sources noting that the missile was in the final stages of being inducted into the Army. The Defence Acquisition Council has already approved the procurement of DRDO’s designed and developed NAG Missile System (NAMIS) in 2018. The NAG missile is a third-generation anti-tank guided missile, capable of effectively engaging and destroying enemy tanks during day and night.

- On July 5, China rejected US allegations that the Chinese Military had recently carried out anti-ship ballistic missile tests in the disputed South China Sea.

According to July 2, 2019 NBC report, two US officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, indicated that China appeared to have tested multiple anti-ship ballistic missiles, marking a significant new type of military activity by the Chinese Military in the disputed waters. The report noted these tests occurred on June 29 and 30, 2019. Following the NBC report, the US Military also confirmed the tests on July 2, 2019. Pentagon Spokesman Lt. Col. Dave Eastburn said, “The Pentagon was aware of the Chinese missile launch from the man-made structures in the South China Sea near the Spratly Islands.” In response to US accusations, China’s Defence Ministry rejected the allegations and noted that China, instead, had held routine drills involving firing of live ammunitions. The Ministry said, “Recently, the People’s Liberation Army Southern Theatre Command arranged live ammunition firing drills in waters near Hainan island in accordance with annual exercise arrangements.”

--- Moiz Khan

CHINA, EAST ASIA AND PACIFIC

China

- On July 12, China threatened to impose sanctions on US companies involved in a potential \$2.2 billion arms sale to Taiwan.

China said that the US companies involved in a potential \$2.2 billion arms sale to Taiwan will face sanctions. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman, Geng Shuang said, “The US arms sale to Taiwan has severely violated the basic norms of international law and international relations.” Taiwan however, defended the weapons purchase saying it will strengthen Taiwan’s defence forces and ensure national security in the face of an increasing military threat from China on July 13, 2019.

In a related development, on July 9, 2019, Geng Shuang said that Beijing had lodged formal complaints through diplomatic channels expressing “strong dissatisfaction and resolute opposition” to the proposed US’ arms sale to Taiwan as it would be a “crude interference” in Chinese internal affairs that harms “China’s sovereignty and security interests.” According to the US Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA), the deal includes 108 M1A2T Abrams tanks, 250 Stinger portable anti-aircraft missiles, related equipment, and support. The US’ proposed arms sale comes at a time when tensions are high between the US and China, and both nations are currently locked in a trade war.

- On July 4, British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt denied backing violent protests in Hong Kong, after Chinese state media blamed “Western ideologues” for fomenting unrest in the former British colony.

China and Britain engaged in a bitter exchange of words over Hong Kong, after Hunt warned of consequences if China neglected the commitments it made when it took back Hong Kong; particularly the commitment to allow Hong Kong its way of life for at least 50 years. The Chinese State media blamed London, Washington and other Western capitals for offering support to the demonstrators and noted, “Ideologues in Western governments never cease in their efforts to engineer unrest against governments that are not to their liking, even though their actions have caused misery and chaos in country after country in Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and Asia.” Hunt, speaking to BBC radio, reiterated his condemnation of the violence.

In a related development, on July 3, 2019, Britain summoned the Chinese Ambassador over ‘unacceptable, inaccurate’ remarks on Hong Kong. The summoning of Liu Xiaoming by the British Foreign Ministry came after Liu held a press conference denouncing recent comments on the protests in Hong Kong from members of the British government. Liu said the Sino-UK relationship had been damaged by Britain’s interference in Hong Kong and that “the UK

government chose to stand on the wrong side, it has made inappropriate remarks, not only to interfere in the internal affairs of Hong Kong but also to back up the violent lawbreakers.”

- On July 1, Bulgarian President, Rumen Radev paid a state visit to China at the invitation of his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping.

The visit was aimed at strengthening bilateral relations between Bulgaria and China to a strategic level and setting guidelines for further development. The prospects for increasing Chinese investment in Bulgaria, promoting business contacts, as well as partnerships in information technology, transport infrastructure, tourism, and education were the highlight of the discussions.

- On July 1, hundreds of protesters in Hong Kong flocked into the legislature’s main building, taking down portraits of legislative leaders and painting pro-democracy slogans.

The police advanced toward the government headquarters and fired tear gas at protesters near the legislature’s main building. The escalation in tactics came on the anniversary of the former British colony’s return to China and reflected mounting frustration with Hong Kong’s leaders for not responding to protesters’ demands after several weeks of demonstrations. The protests in Hong Kong erupted in response to a government attempt to change extradition laws to allow suspects to be sent to China for trial.

North Korea

- On July 11, North Korean Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un was officially named head of state after a constitutional amendment.

North Korea has revised its Constitution to make Kim Jong Un the head of state. This move is expected to normalise the country’s diplomatic relations with the international community. A new text of North Korea’s governing document adds “represents the country” to the list of duties of the chairman of the State Affairs Commission, Kim’s top government title.

Indonesia

- On July 1, the Indonesian police said they had arrested the leader of Al Qaeda-linked extremist network Jemaah Islamiah, which carried out the 2002 Bali bombings that killed more than 200 people.

According to National Police spokesman, Dedi Prasetyo, Para Wijayanto was detained by counterterrorism police with his wife at a hotel in Bekasi, a city on the outskirts of the capital Jakarta. Police said Wijayanto was a long-time leader of Jemaah Islamiah (JI), one of

Indonesia's oldest terrorist groups, which was behind a series of deadly attacks in the world's largest Muslim-majority nation.

Cambodia

- On July 2, Cambodian Defence Ministry officials rejected the speculation made by US officials regarding a Chinese military presence at the Ream Naval Base in Preah Sihanouk province.

According to a report by Reuters, Joseph Felter, US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence for South and Southeast Asia, sent a letter to Cambodian Defence Minister General Tea Banh asking why it declined assistance to repair a training facility at the base. Emily Zeeberg, a spokeswoman for the US Embassy in Phnom Penh said the concern stemmed from rising Chinese influence in Cambodia's economic and political sectors. She added, "Any steps that weaken Cambodia's independence or open the door to a foreign military presence in Cambodia would be of serious concern to the United States." Rear Admiral Mey Dina, spokesman for the Ream Naval Base, denied a Chinese military presence at the naval base and said, "We have no Chinese military base here." He further added that "the Cambodian constitution does not allow foreign troops to erect a military base in the Kingdom."

Thailand

- From July 10 to 12, the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) was held in Thailand's capital city Bangkok under the theme of sustainable security.

Defence Ministers from ASEAN countries at the meeting discussed ASEAN's framework initiatives on modern security and environmental policies, and the role of ASEAN in border area management. The expansion of direct hotline communications between the ASEAN 6 countries, to include the US, New Zealand, Australia, Russia, the Republic of Korea, China, India, and Japan, and military medical aid was also scheduled for consideration.

---Fareeha Shamim

EUROPE

- On July 14, the Guardian reported that the suspected leaker of Sir Kim Darroch's cables had been identified.
- On July 10, UK's Ambassador to Washington, Sir Kim Darroch submitted his resignation.
- On July 6, UK's ambassador to Washington, Sir Kim Darroch's personal memos were leaked, sparking a diplomatic row between Britain and Washington.

Darroch's leaked memos painted a critical picture of US President Donald Trump, referring to him as "inept", "isnecure" and "dysfunctional". Darroch's memos reveal bitter conflicts within Trump's White House; warn that Trump could have been indebted to 'dodgy Russians'; claims the President's economic policies could wreck the world trade system; and voices fear that Trump could still attack Iran. The UK Foreign Office has ordered an inquiry into the leaked cables, while UK Prime Minister Therese May has expressed her "full faith" in Darroch, but insisted she did not agree with his assessment of the White House. May's spokesman said: "The prime minister said that while at the same time the views expressed in the documents are not necessarily the views of ministers or the government, it is hugely important that ambassadors are able to provide honest, unvarnished assessments of the politics in their country. She said it is therefore absolutely right that we continue to give Sir Kim Darroch our full support". On July 7, 2019, US President Donald Trump announced on Twitter that the White House would "no longer deal with" Darroch, and called him a "very stupid guy". Trump lashed out at May accusing her of making a "mess" of Brexit, after failing to follow his advice on the issue. Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt responded on July 9, 2019 on Twitter saying "Friends speak frankly so I will: these comments are disrespectful and wrong to our prime minister and my country". He added that Darroch would remain in his post until he is scheduled to retire at the end of this year. On July 10, 2019 however, Darroch submitted his resignation stating, "The current situation is making it impossible for me to carry out my role as I would like". On July 14, 2019, the suspect believed to have leaked Darroch's cables was identified according to the Guardian. While the Metropolitan Police's Assistant Commissioner, Neil Basu, warned media organisations that they could be breaking the law by publishing further cables, on July 14, 2019, the Mail on Sunday, quoted Darroch on Trump abandoning the nuclear deal with Iran out of spite towards his predecessor Barack Obama. Darroch in a telegram to then Foreign Secretary, Boris Johnson stated, "On the substance, the (US) administration is set upon an act of diplomatic vandalism, seemingly for ideological and personality reasons – it was Obama's deal."

- On July 14, French riot police used tear gas to disperse Bastille Day protesters in Paris.

Dozens of protesters attempted to block roads in Paris, but were swiftly halted by French riot police. The demonstrators were not wearing the signature yellow vests of the anti-government gilets jaunes protests. The gilets jaunes protest movement began as a revolt against a fuel tax hike in November 2018 and has continued as a larger anti-government protest.

- On July 13, the British Ministry of Defence announced it will be deploying an additional warship to protect British commercial oil tankers in the Gulf.
- On July 11, the UK government announced three Iranian boats were warned off by the British warship, HMS Montrose, which was escorting a British oil tanker in the Strait of Hormuz.

The UK government contends three Iranian boats attempted to impede a British oil tanker in the Strait of Hormuz on July 10, 2019. The UK government issued a statement which noted, “Contrary to international law, three Iranian vessels attempted to impede the passage of a commercial vessel, British Heritage, through the Strait of Hormuz”, adding the HMS Montrose was “forced to position herself between the Iranian vessels and British Heritage and issue verbal warnings to the Iranian vessels, which then turned away”. The statement expressed concern over the rising tensions and urged Iran to de-escalate the situation in the region. In related news, on July 13, 2019, the UK Ministry of Defence announced it will be deploying an additional warship, the HMS Duncan, to protect British commercial oil tankers in the Gulf. British Foreign Secretary, Jeremy Hunt, while calling to deescalate the crisis with Iran stated, “We take maritime security very seriously. It is our primary responsibility to protect British shipping. This is a situation that is changing every hour, but we are reacting to what is happening in a clear and very measured way”.

- On July 10, France’s top diplomatic adviser, Emmanuel Bonne met Rear-Admiral Ali Shamkhani, Secretary of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council, in an effort to de-escalate rising tensions with Iran over its unraveling nuclear deal with world powers.

Bonne arrived in Tehran in the hopes of piecing together a de-escalation strategy with Iran, after Tehran announced it had exceeded the 3.67 percent uranium enrichment limit under the 2015 nuclear deal, and threatened on July 8, 2019 to restart deactivated centrifuges and ramp up the enrichment of uranium to 20 percent purity.

- On July 9, the UK and France agreed to send additional troops to Syria in an effort to facilitate the US’ withdrawal of its ground troops from Syria.

The UK and France have pledged to contribute up to 15% more elite soldiers to continue the fight against ISIS in Syria, though the exact number remains confidential. This move is seen as a victory for US President Donald Trump’s National Security Team, as the US is looking to

draw down its forces in Syria. In related news, on July 7, 2019, Germany announced it would not be sending ground troops to Syria, thereby refusing a US request for Germany to increase its military involvement in the fight against ISIS militants. German government spokesman Steffen Seibert stated, “When I say that the government intends to continue with its ongoing measures in the framework of the anti-IS coalition, then that means no ground troops”. Currently, the mandate for Germany’s participation in Syria runs out on October 31, 2019, after which the German Parliament will have to decide if and how Germany will engage moving forward.

- On July 7, a charity vessel carrying 41 refugees arrived in Sicily despite Italian Interior Minister, Matteo Salvini’s decision to close ports to NGO boats in a bid to curtail migrants from entering Italy.

The charity vessel rescued the 41 refugees off the coast of Libya and brought them to the port of Lampedusa. The ship was seized by police and the Captain was put under investigation for allegedly aiding illegal immigration. Salvini has repeatedly declared Italian seaports closed to NGO rescue vessels, leaving several boats stranded at sea for weeks. He stated on Twitter, “Law enforcement forces are ready to intervene ... in a normal country there would be immediate arrests and the boat would be impounded”. The German and French governments have stepped up their criticism of Italy over its handling of refugee landings.

- On July 7, Kyriakos Mitsotakis’s centre-right New Democracy Party won by a landslide over the leftwing Syriza party, which has been in power since 2015 in Greece.

Incumbent Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras conceded defeat and called Mitsotakis to congratulate him on his victory. Mitsotakis greeted supporters and stated, “Society wants us to move forward united” adding, “It wants growth, work, security and for Greece to become, as it deserves, strong again. I’ll be prime minister of all Greeks. I will work to convince our compatriots who did not support us. We are too few to be divided and we have much to do together ... from today a difficult but beautiful battle lies ahead”. Mitsotakis’s New Democracy Party has an outright majority with 158 seats in the Greek parliament; more than double its current representation in the 300-seat house. Tsipras called the vote three months ahead of schedule after the Syriza Party’s staggering defeat in European parliament elections in May.

- On July 4, British Royal Marines seized an Iranian supertanker suspected of carrying oil to Syria off the coast of Gibraltar in a move that escalated tensions between the UK and Tehran.

Approximately 30 British troops working in collaboration with Gibraltarian police intercepted the tanker, believed to be carrying 2 million barrels of oil to Syria. Spain confirmed the exercise had been conducted at the request of the US. White House National Security Adviser John Bolton welcomed the seizure of the Iranian oil tanker carrying crude oil bound for Syria. Fabian Picardo, Gibraltar’s Chief Minister, stated, “This action arose from information giving the

Gibraltar government reasonable grounds to believe that the vessel, the Grace I, was acting in breach of EU sanctions against Syria". He added, "In fact, we have reason to believe that the Grace I was carrying its shipment of crude oil to the Banyas refinery in Syria". This incident sparked tensions between Iran and the UK; Tehran responded by summoning Britain's ambassador to its foreign ministry to explain what it described as an "illegal seizure". The UK however, maintains that their actions were justified as they were enforcing the EU's sanctions regime against Syria. In related news, on July 13, British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt attempted to ease tensions with Iran by stating the tanker would be released if Tehran guaranteed it was not heading to Syria.

- On July 4, German President, Frank-Walter Steinmeier met with Irish President, Michael Higgins, in Germany and confirmed their "solidarity" with Ireland over Brexit.

Steinmeier made clear that Germany "stands firmly by Ireland's side", raising questions about Jeremy Hunt and Boris Johnson's optimism that the Irish border backstop can be revisited. Hunt and Johnson are the final contenders for the post of Prime Minister in Britain, after the resignation of Theresa May. Steinmeier added, "All EU member states have clearly stated that renegotiations is not an option. We just have to hope that the new government in London realises that too".

- On July 2, Russia's defence ministry confirmed a fire broke out on a Russian deep-water research submersible killing 14 Russian seamen.

This accident is the latest in a string of accidents to hit the Russian Navy. In related news on July 4, 2019, Russian President Vladimir Putin confirmed for the first time that the top-secret submersible was nuclear-powered. Russia's Defence Minister said the nuclear unit had been sealed off and was in "working order". The Russian government has been slow to reveal information about the incident because the submersible, thought to be a deep-diving vessel used for research and reconnaissance, is among Russia's most secret military projects.

- On July 2, after days of negotiations, Germany announced that Defence Minister, Ursula von der Leyen, will replace Jean-Claude Juncker as President of the European Commission in Brussels and Christine Lagarde, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, will take over from Mario Draghi as the President of the European Central Bank, once it is formally signed off by the Eurozone group.

Belgium's prime minister, Charles Michel, 43, has been chosen to replace Donald Tusk as president of the European council and Spain's Foreign Minister Josep Borrell, 72, will become the EU's high representative for foreign affairs. Parliament however must sign off on all these nominations.

- On July 1, Russian opposition leader and long-time critic of Russian President Vladimir Putin, Alexei Navalny was sentenced to 10 days in jail for taking part in an unsanctioned rally in June 2019.

The rally was a part of a series of protests against the arrest of investigative journalist, Ivan Golunov, who had been charged with drug dealing. The charges were later dropped for lack of evidence but sparked outrage in the community, prompting Putin to fire two senior police officers. Navalny stated on twitter, "Ten days of detention for a rally against arbitrariness," adding, "It's unpleasant, but I think I did the right thing. If we remain silent and sit at home, the arbitrariness will never stop." Navalny has long criticised Putin and has served numerous jail sentences for organising anti-government demonstrations.

- On July 1, a stray Russian-made S-200 missile, believed to have been launched from Syria during suspected Israeli air strikes on Syria, hit the Tashkent region of Northern Cyprus. No casualties were reported and it is believed the missile exploded in the air before scattering debris.
- On July 1, EU powers resisted calls to impose sanctions on Iran after it breached the nuclear deal.

Iranian Foreign Minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif announced on July 1, 2019, that the country had exceeded stockpiles of low-enriched uranium beyond the 300kg limit set in the nuclear deal. The EU is looking to keep the nuclear deal alive and avert further breaches of the deal, while refraining from imposing sanctions on Iran. The UK announced it remains committed to the deal and UK foreign secretary, Jeremy Hunt, said he was "very worried" by the Iranian move, but he did not refer to any plan to activate the deal's formal dispute resolution mechanism, a staged process that could end with EU sanctions being re-imposed in as little as 65 days. He said in a tweet that the UK "remains committed to making (the) deal work and using all diplomatic tools to de-escalate regional tensions". Iran is exerting pressure on the EU to support the country in the face of crippling US sanctions.

Kiran Mazari

GLOBAL TERRORISM

- On July 12, Al Shabab terrorist group attacked a hotel in the port city of Kismayo in Somalia, leaving at least 26 people dead.

According to media reports, at least four terrorists attacked the Asasey Hotel. Following a suicide car bombing at the entrance gate, the attackers carried out an assault and took over the building for more than 14 hours. In response, Somali forces conducted an operation and killed all four terrorists. Al Shabab claimed responsibility for the attack. According to Jubbaland State President Ahmed Mohamed Madobe, 10 foreigners from Kenya, Canada, America and Tanzania were among those who were killed in the attack. According to Mogadishu-based independent radio station Radio Dalsan, Canadian journalist Hodan Nalayeh and her husband, Farid Jama Suleiman, also died in the attack.

On July 13, 2019, Kenya called on the international community to unite in the fight against global terrorism after Somali militant group Al-Shabab killed 26 people. Monica Juma, Foreign Affairs Cabinet Secretary, also urged the international community to waste no time in listing of Al-Shabab as a terrorist organisation under the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1267 to help deal with the Al-Qaida allied terrorist group.

- On July 10 and 11, the UN and the Republic of Kenya convened the African Regional High-Level Conference on Counter-Terrorism and the Prevention of Violent Extremism Conducive to Terrorism at the UN Office at Nairobi.

According to the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism, the two-day conference was aimed at enhancing the understanding of terrorism threats faced by African countries, to share good practices and lessons learned, and to identify how cooperation among Member States and the United Nations can be made more effective. President of the Republic of Kenya, Uhuru Kenyatta and UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres addressed the gathering at the conference. While indicating that terrorist groups including Al Qaeda and its affiliates and splinter groups have an active presence in Africa, Uhuru advocated for greater investment and reforms in the war against terrorism. Speaking during the conference, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres noted that the threat of terrorism in Africa was spreading and destabilising entire regions. Guterres said, “For terrorism to be defeated, it is essential that African counter-terrorism is holistic, well-funded, underpinned by respect for human rights, and, most importantly, backed by strong political will.”

In a related development on July 9, 2019, the UNSC organised an open debate on ‘Threats to International Peace and Security: Linkage between International Terrorism and Organised Crime.’ Tamara Makarenko, an International Consultant, who works with the UN Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), Yuri Fedetov, Executive Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and Michele Coninx, Executive Director of the Counter-

Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, addressed the gathering and expressed concerns over growing nexus between crime and terrorism. Makarenko said that the less predictable threats represented by small-time criminals who have opportunistically embraced terrorism, are a source of growing concern. Pakistan's Permanent Representative to UN, Maleeha Lodhi also addressed the conference. While urging the UNSC to ensure evidence-based responses to the nexus between terrorism and organised crime, Ambassador Lodhi said that collective regional and international efforts were important to obstruct the various sources that support terrorist outfits through organised crime.

- According to Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs on July 5, the first Six Nations Regional Cooperation Meeting against terrorism, drug trafficking, illegal migration and organised crimes was held in Istanbul, Turkey, on July 3 and 4, 2019.

Turkey had organised the meeting, and participating countries included Turkey, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Iraq and Pakistan. Secretary for Interior Azam Suleman Khan led Pakistan's delegation to the meeting. The Six Nations Regional Cooperation Meeting was aimed at establishing a new cooperation mechanism among the regional countries to deal with the issues of terrorism, irregular migration, drug trafficking and organised crimes. During the meeting, Azam Suleman Khan "reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to close cooperation with regional countries to achieve the shared objectives of countering the common threats through joint efforts."

- On July 6, Pakistan's Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) killed a suspected terrorist during a raid on a militant hideout in Naseerabad district of Balochistan.
- On July 1, Pakistan's Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) foiled a terrorist attack and killed three terrorists in an intelligence-based operation in Gujrat.

The CTD carried out the raid on a house in Notal area of Naseerabad district after receiving confidential intelligence information. Deputy Inspector General of CTD, Aitzaz Goraya said, "Terrorists inside the compound began firing at the CTD personnel when they approached it. One of the terrorists was killed when the forces returned fire. Two of them managed to escape from the scene." According to the DIG CTD, these terrorists were involved in attacks on Dargah Fatehpur Jhal Magsi and an imambargah in Bhag Narri.

In another development on July 1, 2019, the CTD killed three wanted terrorists who were planning an attack. The Department also seized explosive arms, funds for terrorism financing and maps of sensitive places. According to a CTD spokesman, CTD Gujrat team received information from a credible source that six terrorists, including three most wanted Red Book terrorists were planning to kill personnel of a sensitive agency in Gujrat. They were present on Jalalpur Jattan Road, District Gujrat. Three terrorists were killed during the operation and three others managed to escape. These terrorists were involved in multiple attacks including attack on Pakistan Air Force (PAF) bus in Sargodha, Police Training School Sargodha, Police

Post Qudratabad, Patrolling Post Darra Tang and Police Post Kundian killing dozens of citizens.

- According to *Dawn* on July 4, Pakistan's Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) filed terrorism, terror financing and money laundering cases under the Anti-Terrorism Act, 1997, against 13 leaders of the banned Jamaatud Dawa (JuD), including its chief Hafiz Saeed and Naib Emir Abdul Rehman Makki.

The report noted that some 23 FIRs were registered against JuD leaders at the CTD police stations in five cities of Punjab including Lahore, Gujranwala, Multan, Faisalabad and Sargodha on July 1 and 2, 2019. The CTD indicated that the JuD was financing terrorism from the funds collected through banned non-profit organisations and trusts including Al-Anfaal Trust, Dawatul Irshad Trust, Muaz Bin Jabal Trust. A CTD official said that the cases were filed "in connection with the implementation of UN sanctions imposed on the JuD, Lashkar-i-Taiba and Falah-i-Insaniyat Foundation (FIF) besides their designated entities and leadership as directed by the National Security Committee (NSC) in January 2019 under the National Action Plan."

- According to *The Nation* on July 4, Interpol arrested Rashid Brohi, the prime suspect behind the attack on the Chinese consulate in Karachi, from a Gulf state and transferred him to Pakistan

The report noted that Interpol arrested Brohi, a member of the proscribed Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), on July 3, 2019. He is facing charges of facilitating the consulate attack, in which four people, including two policemen, were killed in November 2018. According to a separate media report, a senior counter terrorism officer, on the condition of anonymity, confirmed his arrest and revealed that the suspect was taken into custody from a Gulf state. The official said, "He had fled the country after the attack but was later identified by suspects arrested by law enforcement agencies during the course of investigation."

- On July 2, Indonesian police noted that they arrested the leader of Al Qaeda-linked extremist network Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), responsible for the 2002 Bali bombings that killed more than 200 people.

According to National Police spokesman Dedi Prasetyo, counter-terrorism police detained Para Wijayanto and his wife on June 29, 2019, at a hotel in Bekasi, a city on the outskirts of the capital Jakarta. Wijayanto was a long-time leader of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), one of Indonesia's oldest terrorist groups, which was behind a series of deadly attacks in the country. Prasetyo said Wijayanto is "suspected of being involved in the making of bombs used in a series of attacks, including the 2002 Bali bombings that killed 202 people and a 2004 attack on the Australian Embassy in Jakarta, that killed nine." The JI is also accused of the 2003 car bombing at the JW Marriott hotel in Jakarta.

- On July 2, the US designated Pakistan’s separatist Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), and Lebanon-based Hezbollah operative Husain Ali Hazzima as Specially Designated Global Terrorists (SDGTs).

Meanwhile, the US State Department also amended the terrorist designations of Jundallah to reflect the group’s new primary name Jaysh al-Adl and associated aliases. The US had designated Jundallah as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation (FTO) and SDGT in 2010. In its new notification, the State Department reviewed and maintained the FTO designation of Jundallah. In its statement, the State Department said, “Today’s actions seek to deny Hazzima, BLA, and Jaysh al-Adl the resources to plan and carry out terrorist attacks. All of their property and interests in property subject to US jurisdiction are blocked, and US persons are generally prohibited from engaging in any transactions with them.” The statement read that the US seeks to “notify the US public and the international community that Hazzima and BLA have committed, or poses a significant risk of committing, acts of terrorism, and that Jundallah, having adopted the new name Jaysh al-Adl, continues to engage in terrorism that threatens the national security of the US.”

--- Moiz Khan

MIDDLE EAST & WEST ASIA

Iran

- On July 13, Iran urged the UK to immediately release the Iranian supertanker it seized in Gibraltar, warning London against entering a “dangerous game with no end in sight”.

On July 4, 2019, Gibraltar police and customs agencies, aided by a detachment of British Royal Marines, boarded and impounded Iranian supertanker Grace 1 in the Strait of Gibraltar, upon a request from the US. The British and Gibraltar officials claim that the supertanker was possibly transferring up to 2 million barrels of oil to the Baniyas refinery in Syria in breach of EU sanctions against the country. Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman, Abbas Mousavi rejected the claim saying the tanker was not bound for Syria because no Syrian port could receive a vessel of such capacity. He cautioned the UK against the detention of Iranian tanker. He said, “We still demand that they release this oil tanker as soon as possible because that’s to the benefit of everyone”. Following the seizure, Iran’s Foreign Ministry summoned Britain’s ambassador to the country to express its strong protest against the move. Iranian President, Hassan Rouhani also warned the UK about the “consequences” of the move, calling the action “very juvenile, heinous, and wrongful” and “to their (Britain’s) detriment.”

- On July 10, Iran’s President, Hassan Rouhani held talks with visiting French envoy, Emmanuel Bonne in Tehran.

Bonne visited Iran to hold high level talks aimed at saving the 2015 nuclear deal and easing tensions between Iran and the US. During his meeting with Bonne, President Rouhani said Tehran had “completely kept the path of diplomacy and talks open”. He called on other parties to the deal to “completely implement their commitments” to keep it alive. Bonne also met Rear Admiral Ali Shamkhani, the Secretary of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council, and Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and his deputy Abbas Araghchi. According to French Foreign Minister, Jean-Yves Le Drian, Bonne’s mission was “to try and open the discussion space to avoid an uncontrolled escalation, or even an accident”. Before meeting with Bonne, in reference to US sanctions against Iran Zarif said “negotiations are never possible under pressure”.

On July 14, 2019, President Hassan Rouhani said that Iran is ready to hold talks with the US if Washington lifts sanctions and returns to the 2015 nuclear deal. During a televised speech, he said, “We have always believed in talks ... if they lift sanctions, end the imposed economic pressure and return to the deal, we are ready to hold talks with America today, right now and anywhere”. US President Donald Trump’s Administration says it is open to negotiations with Iran on a more far-reaching agreement on nuclear and security issues. But Iran has made any talks conditional on first being able to export as much oil as it did before the US withdrew from the nuclear pact with world powers in May 2018.

Iraq

- On July 7, the Iraqi Military announced a new operation “Will of Victory” in an attempt to secure the vast western desert leading to the Syrian border, amid fears that militant sleeper cells were using the area to regroup.

According to a statement from the Military, the operation would push to clear the remote territory between the provinces of Salahaddin, Nineveh and Anbar. The statement also noted that Iraqi Armed Forces, paramilitary units of the Shia-dominated Hashed al-Shaabi, tribal groups and US-led coalition warplanes were all taking part in the operation. Iraq fears there are “pockets of Daesh fighters in the northwestern, western, and southwestern parts of the Salahaddin province”. Iraq formally declared victory against Daesh in late 2017, a few months after ousting the militants from Mosul, the capital of Nineveh province. However, Daesh sleeper cells have kept up hit-and-run attacks in isolated parts of Iraq, targeting government checkpoints, public infrastructure and local officials.

Israel

- On July 10, Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu said that the regime will not evacuate the settlements it has built under any conflict resolution deal with Palestine.

Netanyahu said, “In any diplomatic plan, I will not allow the uprooting of a single settlement or a single settler, not a single settler”. He also said the Israeli Military would continue to operate throughout the West Bank, including the Jordan Valley, adding “we will continue to build and develop” the settlements. Over the past decades, Israel has built dozens of settlements on the occupied Palestinian and Syrian territories in defiance of international calls for the regime to stop its illegal construction activities.

Lebanon

- On July 12, Secretary General of the Lebanese Hezbollah movement, Syed Hassan Nasrallah said that all of Israel is within the range of the group’s missiles.

During a televised interview with al-Manar television on the occasion of the 13th anniversary of the Second Lebanon War in 2006, Nasrallah said that despite Western sanctions the resistance movement is stronger than ever. While presenting the group’s developed capabilities, he warned that in case of any confrontation, the Zionist entity would be brought to the “verge of vanishing, and it knows this.” He added, “Once we said that we could strike targets south of Haifa. Today, we can say that if Israel has sites south of Eilat, then we can also hit them. All of Israel is under the range of our missiles. We have a larger number of missiles and we have precise missiles that we did not have in 2006. We also have a large and powerful branch of UAVs.” However,

Nasrallah said a war with Israel was “unlikely to happen anytime soon,” stressing that Israel will not risk another war on Lebanon, “thanks to Hezbollah’s deterrent force”. He also criticised US President Donald Trump’s so-called ‘Deal of the century’, as a means to solve the conflict between Palestinians and the Israeli regime, stressing the proposal is bound to fail.

- On July 10, Lebanese Prime Minister Saad al-Hariri said that the US sanctions moved in “a new direction” than existing measures, but would not affect government work.
- On July 9, the US Treasury placed two Hezbollah members of Lebanon’s Parliament on its sanctions blacklist.

In an attempt to step up its effort to build global pressure on the Hezbollah movement, the Treasury named MPs Amin Sherri and Muhammad Hasan Raad to a terror-related blacklist, saying that Hezbollah uses its parliamentary power to advance its alleged violent activities. Wafiq Safa, a top Hezbollah official close to Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah, was also placed on the blacklist. The move came as the US bolsters pressure on Iran and its alleged “proxies” in the Middle East, including Hezbollah, which Washington has officially designated a “terrorist group”. It was the first time the US Treasury had placed Hezbollah lawmakers on its blacklist, which forbids US individuals and businesses from doing business with those sanctioned. According to Hezbollah officials, new US sanctions against some of its officials and lawmakers have widened Washington’s assault on the country. Lebanon’s Parliament Speaker, Nabih Berri denounced the American sanctions as an “assault” against not only the Parliament but the entire Lebanese nation.

Oman

- On July 7, Oman’s State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah visited Syria and held talks with President Bashar al Assad in Damascus.

According to Omani Foreign Ministry, the two sides discussed bilateral relations and regional security. The Ministry tweeted that Alawi delivered a message from the Sultan of Oman and talked about boosting efforts “to restore stability and security in the region.” He also held talks with his Syrian counterpart, Walid Muallem and discussed regional affairs. According to the Syrian Presidency, President Assad discussed regional and international affairs with Oman’s Foreign Minister, as well as “economic and political challenges imposed on the region”. Oman is one of the few Arab states to have maintained ties with Damascus over the past eight years. Oman’s Sultan Qaboos adheres to a strict policy of non-interference in regional affairs, maintaining relations with rivals Saudi Arabia and Iran.

Qatar

- On July 14, Qatar inaugurated its own largest naval base in Semaisima.

Qatar's Prime Minister, Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al Thani and commander of US Naval Forces in the Middle East, Vice Admiral Jim Malloy attended the inaugural of al-Daayen coastguard base. According to Qatar's Interior Ministry, the base, which is spread over 640,000 square meters, aims to "facilitate the securing of all territorial waters of the state and border posts". It includes a "sophisticated seaport", training and medical facilities, civil defence offices and operating rooms. Malloy, commander of the US Fifth Fleet based in Bahrain, said the new base presented "a wonderful opportunity for us to interface more strongly with the Qatari coast guard". Qatar is home to the biggest US military base in the Middle East. The country has opened its own base amid ongoing tensions with Saudi Arabia, which is currently holding joint military drills with American forces.

- On July 8, Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani visited the US for high-level talks with Pentagon and White House officials.

During his visit, Sheikh Tamim met with US President Donald Trump. He also held talks with acting Secretary of Defence, Mark T. Esper at the Pentagon. Esper said, "The United States' relationship with Qatar is stronger than ever". He also thanked the Emir for his support to American service members stationed in the country. The Qatari leader, for his part, said "by working together, we can find the ways and right means to de-escalate the tension we have in our region." Trump welcomed the Qatari emir at dinner hosted by Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin. Working meetings between President Trump and Sheikh Tamim encompassed issues related to defence, purchases and trade.

Saudi Arabia

- On July 14, the Saudi Royal Land Forces and the US Army launched a military drill at the main exercise centre at the King Khaled Military City in the Kingdom's Northern Region.

General Saleh bin Ahmed al-Zahrani praised the participation of US forces in the Commander 2019 drill. The exercise reportedly aims at developing and strengthening Saudi-American joint relations within the framework of plans and programmes of the Saudi Royal Land Forces.

- According to Houthi's *Al-Masirah* satellite news channel on July 6, the rebels claimed they launched drone strikes targeting two Saudi airports.

The news channel said the Houthis attacked Saudi airports in Abha and Jizan with Qasef-2K drones. Yahia Sarie, spokesman for the rebels, said the attacks resulted in the suspension of air traffic in both airports. Saudi Arabia did not immediately comment on the Houthi claim and a

spokesman for the Saudi-led coalition fighting the Houthis in Yemen did not answer calls seeking comment. The Houthis have increasingly used drones to target southern Saudi Arabia, including two recent strikes on the Abha airport, which killed one person and wounded over 30.

Syria

- On July 12, Syrian President, Bashar al Assad held talks with Russian presidential special envoy for Syria, Alexander Lavrentiev and Deputy Foreign Minister, Sergey Vershinin in Damascus.

The talks mainly focussed on the formation of a constitutional committee in Syria. According to Syria's official SANA news agency, the meeting focused on "the continuous efforts to make progress on the political track, especially in forming a committee for discussing the Constitution and the mechanisms and procedures of its work." President Assad, Lavrentiev and Vershinin also agreed "to continue working extensively and coordinating on the next steps" and stressed the importance of not allowing certain countries to hinder the process. The discussions dealt with the latest developments in the war on foreign-backed terrorism and strategic relations between Moscow and Damascus. The Russian delegation reaffirmed its support for the Syrian Army against terrorist attacks in the northwestern Idlib Province. The delegation also backed Syria's right to defend its citizens, preserve the country's territorial integrity and cleanse it from terrorism.

- On July 11, at least 12 people, including eight civilians, were killed in a car bomb blast in the province of Aleppo.

According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, the car bomb exploded near a checkpoint, manned by Turkey-backed militants of the Free Syrian Army (FSA), at the entrance to the Kurdish-populated town of Afrin. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack.

- On July 11, at least 80 fighters were killed in clashes between regime and militant forces in northwest Syria.

According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, clashes erupted in northern Hama following an advance by militant-led forces overnight. Fighting and bombardment killed at least 46 regime forces and 36 militants and allied rebels. Head of the Observatory, Rami Abdel Rahman said, "the fighting is ongoing as regime planes and artillery pound the area". In another development, eight civilians were among the 13 people killed in a car bomb near a checkpoint outside Afrin. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the blast, however, a commander of a pro-Ankara faction accused Kurdish fighters. Turkish troops and Syrian proxies took control of Afrin from Kurdish forces in March 2018 after a two-month air and ground offensive.

- On July 10, UN envoy Geir Pedersen visited Syria and held talks with Foreign Minister Walid Muallem.

Following their meeting, the two sides announced “progress” towards forming a body to agree on a post-war constitution for Syria. The announcement was the first time that Damascus has spoken of progress towards forming the panel. The Syrian Foreign Ministry said in a statement, “Great progress was made towards reaching an agreement for a committee to discuss the constitution”. Pederson called it “good progress” and said both sides were “getting closer to reaching an agreement to establish a constitutional committee”. The regime wants to amend the existing constitution, while the opposition has called for a new one.

- On July 5, at least 20 civilians, including seven children, were killed in Syrian and Russian air strikes on a village in the Idlib Province.

According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, regime warplanes and helicopters carried out air strikes on Mahambel village in the Idlib province, killing 13 civilians including the seven children. Another seven civilians were killed in a regime rocket fire on the outskirts of the town of Khan Sheikhun in the south of the province. In a related development, three members of a family were killed by a Russian air strike on the town of Morek, in neighbouring Hama province. Idlib was recaptured by the government during its fight against terrorists, however, a number of militants still remain in the region as the last major opposition to the regime. Idlib is supposed to be protected from a major regime assault by a September 2018 deal between Moscow and Ankara, however, Damascus and its ally Russia have ramped up their bombardment of the region since late April 2019. According to the Observatory, more than 530 civilians have been killed since then.

Turkey

- According to the Turkish Defence Ministry on July 14, Turkish Military forces killed nearly 60 members of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) during a series of counter-terrorism operations in Iraq’s northern semi-autonomous Kurdistan region.

The Defence Ministry announced in a statement that the Kurdish terrorists had been “neutralised” ever since Turkish troops, supported by artillery strikes and air raids, launched Operation Claw in the Hakurk region of northern Iraq on May 27, 2019. On July 12, 2019, Turkey launched Operation Claw-2 in northern Iraq. The statement added, “This is a follow-up on the successfully ongoing Claw-1 operation in Hakurk area which revealed new information on terrorist activity”. Turkey says that through this anti-terror operation, it will continue to destroy weapon emplacements and shelters used by PKK terrorists in Hakurk. PKK militants regularly clash with Turkish Forces in the Kurdish-dominated southeast of Turkey attached to northern Iraq.

UAE

- On July 8, the UAE announced that it was redeploying and reducing troops across Yemen and moving from a “military-first” strategy to a “peace-first” plan.

The UAE is a key partner in a Saudi-led military coalition which intervened in Yemen in 2015 to support the internationally recognised government of President Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi against Houthi rebels. While talking to reporters, an unnamed UAE official said, “We do have troop levels that are down for reasons that are strategic in Hodeida and reasons that are tactical. It is very much to do with moving from what I would call a military-first strategy to a peace-first strategy, and this is I think what we are doing.” The official reiterated the UAE’s commitment to the Yemeni government and the Saudi-led coalition, saying discussions on redeployment have been ongoing for more than a year. The UAE has already cut its deployment around the strategic Red Sea port of Hudaydah by 80 % to fewer than 150 men. The country has also pulled out its attack helicopters and heavy guns. According to the New York Times, the pull out of forces by the UAE has deeply upset its Saudi allies. However, coalition spokesman Turki al-Maliki said both the UAE and Saudi Arabia are committed to achieve their goals in Yemen.

In a related development on July 9, 2019, Yemen’s Houthi movement called for the full withdrawal of the Saudi-led military coalition from the country. Mohammed Ali al-Houthi, the Chairman of the Supreme Revolutionary Committee of Yemen said, “We call on the countries of aggression to declare withdrawal from Yemen. The Republic of Yemen rejects the aggression, siege and aerial embargo”. He also said, “Withdrawal from Yemen is the ideal decision that must be taken at this particular time. It is just good enough for the countries of aggression to use Yemen a test field for European and American weapons for five years, and prove the ugliness of their crimes to the world.”

---Muhammad Shoaib

SOUTH ASIA: I

Pakistan

External

- On July 14, *The Daily Mail*, in an investigative report, claimed that the Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly, Shehbaz Sharif during his tenure as Punjab Chief Minister had embezzled the UK grant designated for relief activities after the 2005 earthquake in Pakistan.

The report claimed that Shehbaz Sharif stole British taxpayers' money given to Pakistan's Earthquake Relief and Reconstruction Authority (ERRA), which was set up to help the victims of the earthquake in Pakistan in 2005. However, United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) has refuted claims made by report and stated that "our robust systems protected UK taxpayers from fraud".

- On July 14, the second round of talks with India to discuss the draft agreement for finalising the modalities of the Kartarpur corridor was held at the Wagah border.

Pakistan claims making progress on more than 80% of issues in the second round of talks with India on the opening of the Kartarpur corridor for Sikh pilgrims by the 550th birth anniversary of the founder of the Sikh religion, Baba Guru Nanak. The Pakistani team was lead by SAARC and South Asia desk Director General and Foreign Office (FO) spokesperson, Dr. Mohammad Faisal, while the Interior Joint Secretary, S.C.L. Das, led the Indian delegation. Dr. Faisal said both parties had "in-depth and productive discussion on the proposed draft agreement and agreed to expeditiously finalise the modalities for operationalising the Kartarpur corridor in time for the 550th celebrations." The technical details discussed during the meeting included a process for the entry of Indian Sikh pilgrims, their currency limit, transportation, medical emergency facilities and duration of stay at Gurdwara Darbar Sahib.

- In a joint statement issued by the US Department of State on July 12, China, Russia, and the US welcomed Pakistan to a four-party consultation process that seeks to end the war in Afghanistan.

According to the statement, "Pakistan can play an important role in facilitating peace in Afghanistan." The statement further added that "Pakistan appreciated the constructive efforts by the China-Russia-US trilateral consultation on the Afghan peace process." During the four-party meeting on the Afghan peace process, held in Beijing on July 10 and 11, 2019, the four sides exchanged views on the prevalent security condition and discussed mutual efforts that are crucial to secure peace and stability in the region. The communique also emphasised the importance of the trilateral consensus on the Afghan settlement reached in Moscow on April 25, 2019. The four sides also reaffirmed that the negotiations should be "Afghan-led and Afghan-owned."

- On July 12, the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) announced an award of \$5.976 billion against Pakistan in the Reko Diq case.

ICSID rendered its judgement in a 700-page ruling against Pakistan in the Reko Diq case and awarded a \$4.08bn penalty and \$1.87bn in interest. The ICSID tribunal was seeking resolve a dispute between Pakistan and the Tethyan Copper Company Pty Limited (TCC) which had claimed \$8.5bn in damages. Earlier, Pakistan had taken the request before the tribunal that the mining licence for the Reko Diq project was obtained through fraudulent means and thus, TCC could not ask for damages. On July 14, 2019, Prime Minister Imran Khan ordered the creation of a commission to investigate who was responsible for landing Pakistan in this situation.

- On July 10, the White House confirmed Prime Minister Imran Khan’s official visit to Washington to meet US President Donald Trump from July 21 to 23.

During the visit, Prime Minister Khan and President Trump will engage in discussions pertaining to bilateral and regional matters. The Prime Minister will meet prominent members of the US Congress, corporate leaders, and opinion makers as well as members of the Pakistani diaspora. Prime Minister Khan will also highlight Pakistan’s commitment to peace and stability and the significance of positive engagement to promote a political solution in Afghanistan.

- On July 8, Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi met with the United Nations Secretary General’s Special Representative (SRSG) on Afghanistan, Tadamichi Yamamoto at the Foreign Office.

The Foreign Minister highlighted Pakistan’s consistent efforts towards promoting peace in the region and reaffirmed Pakistan’s support for reconciliation in Afghanistan. He stressed that while efforts of all stakeholders were important, the ultimate arbiters of the future of Afghanistan were only the Afghans themselves. He assured him of Pakistan’s resolve in emphasising the need for a result-oriented intra-Afghan dialogue. SRSG Yamamoto appreciated Pakistan’s role in facilitating the peace process in Afghanistan.

- On July 3, the Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved a \$6 billion bailout package for Pakistan and released \$1bn to ease pressure on the country’s foreign exchange reserves.

The package includes the release of the additional aid over a 39-month period, during which the IMF will also conduct a quarterly review of Pakistan’s performance. Adviser to the Prime Minister on Finance, Abdul Hafeez Shaikh also confirmed the package and said that the “structural reform agenda of improving public finances and reducing public debt through revenue reforms is a key part of the programme”. He further added that the IMF support “bodes well for the country and is a testament to the government’s resolve for ensuring financial discipline and sound economic management.”

- On July 2, the 6th Session of the Pakistan-Tajikistan Joint Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific-Technical Cooperation was held in Dushanbe.

Omar Ayub Khan, Federal Minister for Energy and Petroleum headed the Pakistan delegation while Usmonzoda Usmonali, Minister of Energy and Water Resources led the Tajik side. Pakistan and Tajikistan reiterated their shared commitment to boost bilateral ties in diverse fields including trade, energy, road, and air connectivity, science & technology, and agriculture. The two sides also reviewed the progress made towards the implementation of the decisions taken during the 5th Session of the Joint Commission, held in Islamabad on June 15-16, 2016. The two sides also signed a Protocol recognising the enormous potential that needs to be tapped through mutual efforts.

- On July 2, the 4th round of Bilateral Political Consultations between Pakistan and Russia was held in Moscow. Additional Secretary (Europe) Zaheer A. Janjua and I.V. Morgulov, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, led their respective delegations.

The two sides held a wide-ranging review of bilateral relations, and identified areas for further cooperation in political, economic, trade, investment, defence, energy, agriculture, education, and tourism. The Additional Secretary briefed his counterpart on the political and economic developments in Pakistan and invited Russian companies to benefit from Pakistan's investor-friendly policies. Furthermore, the Additional Secretary highlighted Pakistan's efforts aimed at peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan. The Russian side appreciated Pakistan's constructive role in the Afghan peace process.

- On July 2, General Oleg Salyukov, the commander-in-chief of the Russian Ground Forces, called on Army Chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa at the General Headquarters.
- On July 2, Claire Landais, the Secretary-General for the National Defence & Security of France, met with Army Chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa.

According to Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), General Bajwa and General Salyukov discussed matters relating to steps for improved security and measures to further expand ties. General Bajwa said that cooperation between the two countries would not only help in establishing peace and stability in the region but would also lead towards economic prosperity. General Oleg Salyukov praised Pakistan Army's professionalism and its achievements in the war against terrorism.

In a related development, Claire Landais and General Bajwa discussed matters of mutual interest, including defence and security cooperation and overall regional situation. Both sides highlighted the need to increase military-level interactions between the two countries to strengthen defence ties.

- On July 2, the US State Department designated the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) as a global terrorist group.

The Foreign Office (FO) in Islamabad welcomed the US decision, hoping that the designation would ensure that BLA's space to operate was curtailed. US Department of State said, "BLA has carried out several terrorist attacks in the past year, including a suicide attack in August 2018 that targeted Chinese engineers in Balochistan, a November 2018 attack on the Chinese consulate in Karachi, and a May 2019 attack against a luxury hotel in Gwadar, Balochistan." The US Department of Treasury has also frozen all BLA assets in the United States and prohibited American citizens from having any financial dealings with the entity or the people associated with it.

Pakistan Internal

- On July 10, one soldier was martyred and five others were injured in two bomb explosions in North Waziristan.

The first incident occurred near Kharqamar check-post in Datakhel tehsil where one security personnel died while three soldiers were wounded. The second blast took place near Mirali town. Witnesses said that a rocket was fired at the Army's Golden Arrow School shortly before the bomb blast. Two injured in the blast were shifted to a military hospital.

- On July 8, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) released its second report on Jammu and Kashmir.

The second OHCHR report on Jammu and Kashmir documents the human rights situation in Indian Occupied Kashmir (IOK) between May 2018 and April 2019. The report specifically notes an increase in human rights violations after the February 14, 2019 attack on Indian paramilitary forces in Pulwama that led to a military stand-off between Pakistan and India. According to the report, post-Pulwama, the rights of Kashmiris, including the right to life, have been adversely affected, with gross violations of human rights perpetrated by Indian forces. The first report was released in June 2018, which focused on serious human rights violations, particularly excessive use of force by Indian forces leading to civilian casualties, arbitrary detention, impunity for human rights violations and human rights abuses in IOK.

Pakistan welcomed the second report of OHCHR and its recommendation for the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry (CoI) to investigate the systematic human rights violations in IOK, however, it also cautioned OHCHR against equating the situation in IOK with Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan. A statement issued by Pakistan's Foreign Office said, "While we appreciate the Report's efforts to document the human rights violations in Indian occupied Jammu and Kashmir, we would like to reiterate that there is simply no parallel between the horrendous

human rights situation in Indian occupied Jammu and Kashmir and the prevailing environment in Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan. Unlike IOK, which is the most militarised zone in the world, AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan remain open to foreign visitors.”

- According to a statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) on July 3, five Pakistan Army soldiers were martyred and one other sustained injuries in an explosion that took place near the Line of Control (LoC) in Chamb sector of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK).

According to ISPR, “the incident is evidence of the state-sponsored terrorism by India violating bilateral ceasefire agreement and the international rules.” The statement further added that the nature of the blast, which took place in Barnala tehsil, is being determined.

- On July 1 and 2, the top 13 leaders of the banned Jamaatud Dawa (JuD), including its chief Hafiz Saeed and Naib Emir Abdul Rehman Makki, were booked in 23 cases for terror financing and money laundering under the Anti-Terrorism Act, 1997.

The Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD), which registered the cases in five cities of Punjab, declared that the JuD was financing terrorism from the massive funds collected through non-profit organisations and trusts. Twenty-three FIRs were registered against JuD leaders at the CTD police stations of Lahore, Gujranwala, Multan, Faisalabad, and Sargodha. Besides the top two JuD leaders, 11 others were also booked in the cases.

India

- On July 8, Indian Air Force (IAF) Chief Birender Singh Dhanoa went on a four-day bilateral visit to Russia.

During the visit, Air Chief Marshal Dhanoa visited various operational and training units and interacted with senior functionaries of the Russian Armed Forces. The visit was aimed at strengthening the defence cooperation between the Indian and Russian air forces.

- From July 7 to 9, His Highness Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the United Arab Emirates, paid an official visit to India.

During the visit, Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah met with the External Affairs Minister (EAM), Dr. S Jaishankar to discuss bilateral, regional and international matters of mutual interest. The UAE Foreign Minister also called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi; during the meeting, the UAE Foreign Minister conveyed felicitations of the UAE leadership on the victory in the elections and extended an invitation to Modi to visit UAE.

- On July 3, Rahul Gandhi resigned as leader of Indian National Congress party.

In his resignation letter, Rahul Gandhi took responsibility for the party's defeat in the recent general election. In the letter, he added that while he had no "hatred or anger" towards India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), "every living cell in my body instinctively resists their idea of India" which he said was based on differences and hatred.

---Fareeha Shamim

SOUTH ASIA II

Afghanistan

- On July 13, a Taliban attack left at least 8 Afghan security personnel dead, and 7 others wounded in Badghis province.

The Taliban claimed that they attacked the police headquarters. However, media and the Afghan Interior Ministry reported that Taliban attackers targeted a hotel. The Interior Ministry also claimed to have killed three attackers and apprehend two others. In a related incident on July 14, 2019, at least five Afghan policemen were killed in a roadside bomb blast in the northern Baghlan province. No group claimed responsibility for the blast.

- On July 12, Pakistan joined representatives from China, Russia, and the US for their 3rd consultation on the Afghan peace process in Beijing.

The US, China and Russia welcomed Pakistan and indicated that Islamabad can play an important role in facilitating peace in Afghanistan. They exchanged views on the current situation and joint efforts for realising a political settlement to advance peace, stability, and prosperity of Afghanistan and the region. All sides also welcomed intra-Afghan meetings previously held in Moscow and Doha. The four sides called for relevant parties to grasp the opportunity for peace and immediately start intra-Afghan negotiations between the Taliban, the Afghan government, and other Afghans. The four sides encouraged all parties to take steps to reduce violence leading to a comprehensive and permanent ceasefire that starts with intra-Afghan negotiations. All participants agreed to maintain the momentum of consultations, and agreed to invite other important stakeholders to join, on the basis of trilateral consensus agreed on April 25, 2019, in Moscow.

- On July 12, Pakistan and Afghanistan resumed talks to resolve differences in the transit treaty after a three-year halt in negotiations.

Talks between the two neighbours had collapsed in September 2015 after Kabul insisted on including India in transit treaty negotiations and the trilateral trade agreement involving Pakistan, Afghanistan and Tajikistan. A Technical Working Group (TWG) of Afghan officials met with Pakistan's Adviser to Prime Minister on Commerce, Abdul Razak Dawood where both sides exchanged their concerns and proposals. During the meeting, Dawood complained to Afghan officials over the unchecked pilferage of goods through transit trade and asked them to address the issue. The Afghan delegation agreed to increase bilateral trade through mutual cooperation by addressing all the issues which are negatively affecting trade relations. Relations between Kabul and Islamabad have improved after Afghan President Ashraf Ghani met with Prime Minister Imran Khan in Islamabad on June 27, 2019, where both sides agreed to deepen trade relations. Pakistan's exports to Afghanistan peaked at \$2.4 billion in 2010-11 but fell to \$1.3bn in 2018-19 after talks between the two sides broke down. Dawood is expected to visit

Kabul to continue talks and understand issues hampering trade relations between the two neighbours.

- On July 11, US Chief of Staff of the Army, Gen. Mark Milley said that withdrawing American troops from Afghanistan too soon would be a “strategic mistake”.

Gen. Milley was testifying before a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on his nomination to become Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. His remarks clearly outline the Pentagon’s position, and caution against a premature troop withdrawal. The Taliban have maintained US troop withdrawal is a condition to start an intra-Afghan dialogue and halt the war. Earlier, on July 10, 2019, NATO’s Special Representative for Afghanistan, Nicholas Kay said that NATO will not leave Afghanistan until the job is done. While talking to media on July 2, 2019, US President, Donald Trump also hinted that he would leave an intelligence presence in Afghanistan, though he has long hoped for a full withdrawal of US military presence from the country.

- On July 9, the US and Taliban representatives concluded the 7th round of the Afghan peace process in Doha.

While talking to media after the meeting, US Special Representative on Afghanistan Reconciliation, Zalmay Khalilzad said, “When there is no threat from Afghanistan against the US and when the Afghans do not want the Americans to stay, we are going to leave Afghanistan from a military point of view. But we want to have good relations with Afghanistan in the future.” Taliban’s chief negotiator, Abbas Stanekzai told reporters that disagreements between the two sides have ended, and a draft agreement will be signed in the near future. Meanwhile, a 2-day intra-Afghan conference was also held on July 9-10, 2019, in Doha. The participants of the conference issued a joint declaration in which the Taliban pledged to reduce violence, and ensure women rights within the framework of Islamic values. The participants showed their consensus on all-inclusive Afghan negotiations. They also agreed on a roadmap for peace based on institutionalising the Islamic system in the country. Germany’s Special Envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, Markus Potzel, who helped arrange the conference, noted that the Doha conference was a success, and that one of the most important points of the joint statement is the promise to reduce violence in Afghanistan. German Chancellor Angela Merkel welcomed the Intra-Afghan Conference and said, “Ultimately, there is an extended desire for cooperation and trust in the establishment of sustainable peace and stability in Afghanistan have been created. We appreciate the Afghan and American governments for their work on a political settlement which is moving slowly. I am fully confident that the meeting will give more strength to the peace process in Afghanistan.” Russia also extended its support to the intra-Afghan meeting and hoped that it would lay the foundation for future reconciliation agreements in Afghanistan. Many Afghan politicians including Chief Executive, Abdullah Abdullah, former President, Hamid Karzai and President, Ashraf Ghani also showed optimism regarding the outcomes of the conference, however, emphasised that peace must be inclusive and it should involve all parties.

- On July 8, a Taliban attack on National Directorate of Security (NDS) compound killed 14 people, including 8 security personnel and wounded several others in Ghazni city.
- On July 2, the Qush Tepa district in the northern province of Jawzjan fell to the Taliban following heavy clashes between the group and the government forces.
- On July 1, a Taliban attack on the Defence Ministry's logistics center left hundreds of people dead and injured in Kabul.

According to Afghan government officials, the attack, which started with a truck bombing and was followed by a gunfight by five attackers, left six people dead and more than 116 others wounded, including many school children. However, sources said that more than 40 people were killed in the bombing. The attack inflicted heavy damages to public places, houses, schools, two key sports facilities, the Football Federation and the Olympic Committee, and to the Defence Ministry's logistics center. Afghan political leadership and many other world leaders including the UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres condemned the attack. In another incident on July 1, 2019, Taliban suicide bombers killed at least 19 people in an attack on a voter's registration center in Kandahar province. According to the police chief of Kandahar, eight election workers, 11 Afghan Security Force members and four suicide bombers were killed in the attack. The Taliban offensives have been underway while the group is simultaneously engaged in peace talks with the US and the group's representatives in Doha.

Bangladesh

- On July 6, Bangladeshi Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina concluded her 5-day trip to China.

During her visit, Hasina attended the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Dalian. She also held bilateral talks with Chinese Prime Minister, Li Keqiang and President, Xi Jinping in Beijing. Bangladesh and China signed nine instruments in different sectors ranging from aid for the Rohingya refugees, economic and technical cooperation, investment, power, culture and tourism.

- On July 3, nine leaders of the Bangladesh National Party (BNP) were sentenced to death in a case filed over the 1994 attack on a train carrying the then opposition leader Sheikh Hasina.

The death-row convicts were also charged a fine of Tk5 lakh each. The court sentenced 25 other BNP leaders and activists to life in prison, and fined each of them Tk3 lakh. Thirteen more convicts were sentenced to 10 years in prison and charged a Tk1 lakh fine each. Out of 52 people accused in the charge sheet, 33 were present during the verdict at the court. Five died during the trial proceedings, and the remaining 14 were on the run. According to the case

details, on September 23, 1994, a group of members of BNP and its affiliate organisations attacked a train carrying the entourage of Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina when it was entering Ishwardi railway junction.

Sri Lanka

- On July 7, Sri Lankan President, Maithripala Sirisena announced that he will not allow his government to conclude a proposed military deal with the US.

The draft Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) that the two countries are negotiating to further strengthen their military ties would allow US troops free access to the island's ports. Opposing the deal, Sirisena said, "Several agreements currently being discussed are detrimental to our country. I will not allow the SOFA that seeks to betray the nation. Some foreign forces want to make Sri Lanka one of their bases. I will not allow them to come into the country and challenge our sovereignty." He added that there will be no bilateral agreements against Sri Lanka's national interest as long as he was in office. His term will end in January 2020. Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe told the parliament that the Status of Force Agreement (SOFA) will be signed only if the US agrees to the points raised by Sri Lanka. He added that the US has increased contact points in the new proposed draft. These include Sri Lankan Army, Navy and Air Force Head Quarters. In 2018, Washington announced it was granting \$39 million to boost maritime security in Sri Lanka as China developed its strategic hold on the Indian Ocean Island. Increased US interest in Sri Lanka comes as China enhances investment in ports and other building projects on the island, which is a key link in Beijing's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative.

- On July 2, Sri Lankan President, Maithripala Sirisena said that the Easter Sunday terrorist attacks were linked to the global drug trade.

Sirisena said, "There is a close connection between international terrorism and the global drug trade. The involvement of several politicians with drug peddling is not a secret. I am not sure how many politicians toil to save the country from this threat." On June 27, 2019, Sirisena announced an end to a moratorium on the death penalty that has been in force in Sri Lanka since 1976. The President also said he had signed the death warrants for four drug convicts and they would be executed soon. Two petitions were filed in the Court of Appeal against Sirisena's decision. Prime Minister, Ranil Wickremesinghe also voiced his party's opposition to capital punishment and said, "The death penalty is against the policies of our party. As a civilised country, we cannot bring back the death penalty." Several international organisations, the European Union (EU) in particular, also voiced their opposition to the decision. However, Sirisena emphasised, "I will never take a step back and give the leadership to the fight against drugs though it is a threat to my life. I consider it as a duty on behalf of the nation and future generation."

- On July 2, Sri Lankan police arrested their top commander and a former defence chief over alleged failures to prevent the Easter Sunday bombings.

Pujith Jayasundara is the most senior police official to be arrested in the country's history. Former defence secretary, Hemasiri Fernando has also been taken into custody. Attorney General Dappula de Livera, the chief state prosecutor, said that the two men failed to act on advance warnings of the deadly Easter Sunday attacks that killed 258 people.

---Kashif Hussain

UNITED NATIONS

- On July 11, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) released its new report on global poverty index, noting that there were vast inequalities across countries, especially, among the poorer segments of societies.

The report titled, “the 2019 global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI),” noted that approximately 1.3 billion people are “multidimensionally poor”, implying that “poverty is defined not simply by income, but by a number of indicators, including poor health, poor quality of work and the threat of violence.” The report’s analysis is based on the study of 101 countries, comprising 31 low income, 68 middle income and 2 high income countries. The report reads that many of the countries studied show “extensive” internal levels of inequality. The report also noted that “Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia are home to the largest proportion of poor people with some 84.5%.” Regarding the report, Pedro Conceicao, Director of the Human Development Report Office at UNDP, said that the report “gives a more comprehensive picture of poverty, and gives an indication of where to target policies that may address the dimensions in which people are deprived, whether it’s education, health, or other aspects that could enable people to be lifted out of poverty if these investments are made.”

- On July 8, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) released its report on the situation of human rights violations in Indian Occupied Kashmir (IOK) from May 2018 to April 2019.

This is the OHCHR’s second report. The first report on the human rights situation in Kashmir was released on June 14, 2018. The report has again accused India of human rights violations in the IOK and has called for the formation of a commission of inquiry into the allegations. The report declared that tensions continue to have a severe impact on the human rights of civilians, including the right to life. The report said, “around 160 civilians were killed in 2018, which is believed to be the highest number in over a decade. The year 2018 also registered the highest number of conflict-related casualties since 2008 with 586 people killed, including 267 members of armed groups and 159 security forces personnel.” The report noted that accountability for violations committed by members of the Indian security forces remains virtually non-existent in the IOK. Apart from India, the report has also discussed human rights violations in Azad Kashmir. While noting that the nature of human rights violations differs along both sides of the Line of Control (LoC), the report said, “people living in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, as well as in Gilgit-Baltistan are also deprived of a number of fundamental human rights, particularly in relation to freedoms of expression and opinion, peaceful assembly and association.” The report stressed that both India and Pakistan have not taken important steps aimed at addressing and implementing the recommendations” made in the OHCHR’s previous report. The OHCHR urged the 47-Member-State UN Human Rights Council to “consider the possible establishment of a

commission of inquiry to conduct a comprehensive independent international investigation into allegations of human rights violations in Kashmir.”

- On July 3, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR) and the head of the UN mission in Libya (UNSMIL), condemned an airstrike on a detention centre in Tripoli that killed a large number of migrants and refugees, and insisted that it may amount to a war crime.

UN International Organisation for Migration (IOM), UNHCR and UNSMIL issued a joint call for an investigation to bring those involved in the July 2, 2019, airstrike on the Tajoura Detention Centre in a suburb of the Libyan capital to justice. Both the IOM and the UNHCR appealed “to determine how this happened and who was responsible, and to bring those individuals to account.” According to media reports, the cell of the detention centre which was hit, had more than 600 men, women and children. The strike left scores of people dead and dozens injured. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet declared that the incident amounts to a war crime. While condemning the airstrike, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said that he was “outraged by reports that at least 44 migrants and refugees, including women and children, have been killed and more than 130 injured.” Guterres also called for an independent investigation to ensure that the perpetrators are brought to justice.

In another development on July 12, 2019, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres condemned airstrikes that hit several health facilities in north-west Syria. In a statement, Guterres urged parties to the conflict to protect civilians and public buildings in line with a 2018 de-escalation agreement overseen by guarantors including Russia and Turkey. He insisted that perpetrators of serious violations of international humanitarian law must be held accountable.

- On July 1, Virginia Gamba, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC), signed a landmark new agreement on child protection with the Force Commander of a main Syrian opposition military alliance aimed at ending and preventing the recruitment and use of children under the age of 18 in armed conflict.

Both Virginia Gamba and Syrian Democratic Force (SDF) Commander, General Mazloum Abdi signed and endorsed the agreement during an official ceremony at the Palais des Nations. Describing the agreement as an Action Plan against grave violations of children rights, Gamba said the agreement “demonstrates a significant commitment by the SDF to ensure that no child is recruited and used by any entity operating under its umbrella.” Signing of the agreement became possible following months of UN-SDF engagement, in close consultation with the Special Representative.

- On July 1, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres welcomed first sitting US President Donald Trump’s visit to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) and offered his full support to reset relations between the two countries.

UN Secretary-General's spokesman said, "The UN Chief welcomes the meetings in Panmunjom involving the leaders of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Republic of Korea and the United States." The Secretary-General also appreciated both the US and the DPRK for resuming working-level dialogue and making efforts to establish new relations towards sustainable peace, security and complete and verifiable denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula. North Korea re-established meetings with the US following its sixth and largest nuclear test in 2017. Both the countries held their first talks in Singapore in June, 2018, which culminated into signing of a joint statement vowing to pursue peace and complete denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula. Their second meeting took place in the Vietnamese capital, Hanoi, in February 2019, which collapsed and failed to yield any agreement on denuclearisation owing to disagreements between the two countries.

--- Moiz Khan