DPG WEEKLY WORLD WATCH

Volume IV, Issue 27 | July 3, 2020
ABOUT US

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Your comments and feedback can be addressed to Angana Guha Roy at angana@dpg.org.in.

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Delhi Policy Group
Core 5A, 1st Floor,
India Habitat Centre,
Lodhi Road, New Delhi- 110003.
www.delhipolicygroup.org
India, Japan navies conduct exercise in Indian Ocean
June 29, 2020, Deccan Chronicle
At a time when both India and Japan are facing hostility from China, warships from Indian Navy and Japanese Navy (Japan Maritime Self Defense Force) conducted a joint exercise in the Indian Ocean.

India increases surveillance in Indian Ocean region to track Chinese activities
June 29, 2020, The Time of India
The Navy has increased its surveillance missions and beefed up operational deployment in the Indian Ocean region in the wake of India’s seven-week bitter border standoff with China in eastern Ladakh, people familiar with the development said.

Pandemic accentuates challenges to global order. New framework is needed, India must be rule-shaper
July 2, 2020, The Indian Express
Syed Akbaruddin writes: Even while Guterres’ apocalyptic horsemen have been prancing around, the UN system has been missing in action, except at the fringes. Barring the descent of a guardian angel, the current multilateral order that Guterres presides over is in deep trouble.

Chinese building helipad in Pangong Tso, massing troops on southern bank of lake
June 28, 2020, The Indian Express
This has led to apprehensions that the Chinese are asserting their claims and conveying their disinclination for restoration of status quo ante in the area.

Mission Sagar: A major milestone in India’s engagement with IOR countries
July 1, 2020, Financial Express
Prime Minister of Mauritius had personally thanked Indian Prime Minister during a telephone conversation last month for the deployment of INS Kesari.
Citing defence of borders, Govt clears purchase of fighter aircraft, missiles

July 3, 2020, The Indian Express

The situation along the LAC in Ladakh remains tense, even after three rounds of discussions at the level of Corps Commanders, the most recent.

India-US Defence Trade Continuity Under Trump

July 2, 2020, ORF

This brief explores the factors informing the Donald Trump administration’s continuity on the US’s defence trade with India. The administration’s impetus to maintain US-India defence trade stems from factors like the ‘reverse revolving door’ policy that has increased the influence of US defence contractors, its ‘Buy American’ policy to boost US arms exports, and defence trade being construed as an incremental means to correct the bilateral trade imbalance.

France conveys ‘steadfast support’ to India amid standoff with China

July 2, 2020, Hindustan Times

French defence minister Florence Parly wrote a letter to Rajnath Singh on Monday, condoling the death of the 20 Indian soldiers in the clash in Galwan Valley on June 15, people familiar with developments said.

Australia ups defence spend by 40% for ‘dangerous’ world, PM mentions India-China stand-off

July 1, 2020, The Print

Under Australia’s new defence strategy, India remains a key partner for Indo-Pacific. Australian PM names countries that have ‘agency’ in the region.

US backs app ban; China chill prompts pushback elsewhere too

July 2, 2020, The Indian Express

From Australia to Japan, United States to ASEAN and countries in Europe, a loose strategic coalition is taking on China even as New Delhi tries to break the deadlock with Beijing amid the standoff along the Line of Actual Control.
Pakistan

Chinese company allowed exploration in Saindak area

July 1, 2020, Dawn

The Balochistan government has allowed Chinese firm Metrological Construction Company of China registered locally with the name of Saindak Metals Limited-the exploration and development of East Ore Body in Saindak lease area and the company has been issued an NoC for the purpose. Provincial government also extended the contract of MCC/SML for another 15 years under which the company would continue exploration work on East Ore Body site after the expiry of its present contract on Oct 31, 2022.

US keen to include Pakistan in $3b regional fund

July 2, 2020, The Express Tribune

The United States intends to launch a regional fund for development in Central Asian Republics, which will include Pakistan as well. In this regard, US International Development Finance Corporation (IDFC) CEO Adam Boehler informed Adviser to Prime Minister on Commerce Abdul Razak Dawood that they intended to start a regional fund for development in CARs, which had shown keen interest in including Pakistan in the fund. He added that the IDFC had a $3-billion fund for immediate liquidity requirements of financial institutions, in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Pakistan, India swap lists of inmates

July 1, 2020, The Express Tribune

India and Pakistan exchanged lists of prisoners in each other’s custody in accordance with a 2008 consular access agreement. The Foreign Office said the Indian High Commission in Islamabad was handed over a list of 270 fishermen and 54 civilian prisoners in Pakistan. Similarly, India shared a list of 362 Pakistani prisoners in India – 265 civilian prisoners and 97 fishermen – with the Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi.

Karachi Shipyard & Engineering Works Building Indigenous Platforms For Pakistan Navy

July 1, 2020, Daily Times

The contract signing ceremony of Pakistan’s indigenously designed Gun Boat and Tugs was held at Ministry of Defence Production. The Gun Boat possessing stealth features, armor protection and capable of achieving high speed will be
indigenously designed by Pakistan Navy, while its construction will be undertaken by KS & EW. Additionally, 02 x Tugs which can operate in rough weather and capable to conduct salvage operations will also be constructed.

**PIA banned from flying to EU states for six months**

June 30, 2020, Dawn

The European Union Air Safety Agency (EASA) has suspended the authorisation for the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) to operate in the bloc for six months. The move follows the grounding of 262 pilots whose licences Aviation Minister Ghulam Sarwar Khan termed “dubious”.

**Pakistan’s case not taken up at FATF meeting: FO**

June 27, 2020, Dawn

The Foreign Office on Friday said that Pakistan’s case was not taken up at the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) meeting held earlier this week and it would continue to be on its ‘grey list’ till October.

**PTM says ready for talks but calls for confidence-building measures**

June 27, 2020, Dawn

The Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement (PTM) announced that the group accepted the government’s offer for talks but stressed that the authorities should first take confidence-building measures (CBMs) to demonstrate their sincerity.

**Afghanistan**

**’Russian Bank Transfers to Taliban-Linked Accounts’: NYT**

July 1, 2020, Tolo News

According to a New York Times article citing three anonymous American officials, US intelligence monitored electronic data showing large financial transfers from a bank account controlled by Russia’s military intelligence agency to a Taliban-linked account, which the Times offers as evidence potentially supported allegations that Russia covertly offered bounties for killing US and coalition troops in Afghanistan.

**Khalilzad Talks Afghan Peace with Central Asian Ministers**

July 1, 2020, Tolo News

The US peace envoy for Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad in a tweet said that he had “good meetings” in Tashkent with Uzbek officials and others in the C5+1 and
discussed the latest on the Afghan “peace process and the critical role Central Asia has played.”

**Pentagon: Taliban Keeps ‘Close Ties’ With Al-Qaeda Affiliate**

July 1, 2020, RFERL

Al-Qaeda's regional affiliate in Afghanistan maintains "close ties" to the Taliban and has an "enduring interest" in attacking U.S. troops, the Pentagon says in a new report. Under a February deal between the Taliban and the United States, the insurgents agreed to stop terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda from using Afghanistan as a safe haven to plot attacks.

**U.S. special envoy holds talks with Pakistani FM on Afghan peace process**

July 2, 2020, Xinhuanet

U. S. Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad held talks with Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi here on July 1, on the peace process in Afghanistan. Khalilzad's visit to Pakistan, the second one in a month, was part of his regular engagement for consultations and exchange of views on the Afghan peace and reconciliation process, the foreign ministry said in a statement.

**Taliban Talks With Pompeo, Iran Delegation**

June 30, 2020, Tolo News

The Taliban and US delegations discussed via video conference Intra-Afghan talks and other related issues to Afghanistan on June 29. Taliban deputy Mullah Baradar and his delegation spoke with US Secretary Mike Pompeo via video conference and discussed foreign troops' withdrawal based on the Doha agreement, the prisoners' release, intra-Afghan talks and reducing the level of fighting.

**Trump plans Afghanistan withdrawal of another 4,000 troops**

June 28, 2020 Digital Journal

As part of the peace deal the US signed with the Taliban the end of February the US agreed to withdraw troops down to 8,600 by the end of July. But by last week officials announced that withdrawals had already reached that target. To achieve this goal Trump has finalized plans to withdraw around another 4,000 troops from Afghanistan. This would be the lowest US troop level in Afghanistan since the 2001 invasion and occupation.
UN Reports Decrease in Opium Production in Afghanistan
June 26, 2020, Tolo News
The World Drug Report released by the United Nations Drugs and Crime Office’s (UNODC) shows a decrease in opium cultivation in the country in 2019 in which Afghan farmers planted opium poppy on 163,000 hectares of land. This, according to the report, is 38 percent less than in 2018 when 263,000 hectares was planted.

Bangladesh

Bangladesh blocks Indian imports as West Bengal govt yet to issue SOP for Bangladeshi imports
July 3, 2020, CNBC TV 18
After 23 days of accepting Indian imports, but unable to export anything to the country, disgruntled Bangladeshi traders have now stopped the entry of Indian goods via the Petrapole-Beniapole border.

After Bengal’s curbs on imports from Bangladesh, Dhaka stops Indian trucks
July 3, 2020, Financial Express
Amid a furore over tighter scrutiny of Chinese goods by Indian Customs, Bangladesh has started retaliating against Indian supplies through the Petrapole border in West Bengal since Wednesday. The move is purportedly in response to a decision by the West Bengal authorities to retain restrictions on imports from Bangladesh via Petrapole to contain the Covid-19 spread, while Dhaka had been allowing Indian supplies through the same border since June 7.

Bangladesh urges India to solve stalemate on border
July 2, 2020, Andolu Agency
The Indian government should take initiative to resolve a stand-still of cross-border trade on the largest land port between Dhaka and New Delhi, said the Bangladeshi foreign minister on Thursday.

As the Sino-Indian rivalry heats up, watch Bangladesh carefully
July 2, 2020, Atlantic Council
The ongoing tensions and stalemate between India and China in Ladakh along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) has brought not only the Sino-Indian rivalry into the spotlight, but also India’s relationships with its neighbors. Unlike previous instances, when India used to enjoy unqualified support from all its neighbors
save Pakistan, the clash with Beijing has produced a deafening silence. Worse, the Nepalese parliament chose this as the moment to approve a revised map of the country, including three areas it disputes with India. In Bangladesh, the government received an offer from Beijing for tariff exemptions for 97 percent of Bangladeshi products with immediate effect.

**Bangladesh sends China $6.4bn infrastructure wishlist**

July 1, 2020, Global Construction Review

Bangladesh has asked the Chinese government for $6.4bn for nine infrastructure projects, including an ambitious port project and the country’s longest bridge.

**India and Bangladesh should now look at trade in services instead of just trade in goods**

July 1, 2020, Hindustan Times

India and Bangladesh have scripted a ‘Shonali Adhyaya’ -- a golden chapter -- in their partnership, under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, MoS V. Muraleedharan said.

**Over 100 freight trains run between Bangladesh, India in June**

July 2, 2020, Dhaka Tribune

Railway authorities in Bangladesh and India have achieved a record by running more than 100 trains in June to transport essential commodities amid the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

**Nepal**

**Nepal likely to be asked to pick between India and China**

July 1, 2020, The Annapurna Express

Nepal is watching mounting tensions between India and China in the Himalayas with great concern as it struggles to balance its relationship with its two giant neighbors. Reportedly, both India and China are amassing troops and weapons along the Galwan Valley in Ladakh—and preparing for the worst. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has already given his armed forces a free hand to “take necessary steps to protect Indian territory.”
**Boundary issue should not impact other dynamics of Nepal-India ties, Gyawali says**

June 29, 2020, The Kathmandu Post

Foreign minister’s statement comes a day after Prime Minister Oli accused Delhi of trying to unseat him over his government’s move of publishing a new political map of Nepal.

**Nepal PM Oli throws last dice to save his chair, rivals up ante | 10 quick points**

July 2, 2020, India Today

Nepal PM Oli chaired a meeting of his cabinet getting it to recommend prorogation of Parliament session. This appears as attempt to avoid no-confidence vote that rivals may move against him.

**Faced with party revolt, Nepal PM blames India**

June 29, 2020, The Times of India

The recent strife in ties with Kathmandu has foregrounded again India’s old fault lines with Nepal PM K P Oli. Faced with dissension in the ruling communist party, Oli Sunday accused Indian authorities, including the Indian embassy, of plotting his ouster.

**Sri Lanka**

**India, Sri Lanka hold talks over debt**

June 30, 2020, The Hindu

India is holding “close and constructive” discussions with Sri Lanka, on Colombo’s pending requests for rescheduling its debt repayment and for currency swap facilities under bilateral and SAARC arrangements, the Indian mission here said.

**Chinese policy towards Sri Lanka tells a cautionary tale**

June 29, 2020, WION

China was quick to aid coronavirus-stricken Sri Lanka. Chinese magnanimity and speed in responding to the Indian Ocean island’s request contrasted starkly with Beijing’s more measured response to Africa’s needs, widely expected to be the pandemic’s next hotspot.
China

India should wake up to Pompeo’s empty words
July 2, 2020, Global times
US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Wednesday applauded India’s ban on 59 Chinese apps, including TikTok. He hypocritically expressed concerns about India’s national security by saying New Delhi was ensuring its own security, integrity, and sovereignty.

How much is US willing to damage HK at own costs?: Global Times editorial
July 2, 2020, Global Times
The US House of Representatives passed the “Hong Kong Autonomy Act” on Wednesday. The bill states the US government can impose sanctions on individuals, entities and financial institutions that back efforts to “restrict Hong Kong’s autonomy.” Some believe the bill is an enhanced version of the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act.

UK can’t back citizenship offer for HK residents
July 7, 2020, Global Times
While UK companies have laid off more than 12,000 employees over the past few days, the British government is certain to add to rising employment crunch by reportedly offering a path to UK citizenship for up to 3 million Hong Kong residents.

National Security Law denies US ambition to manipulate HK
July 7, 2020, Global Times
US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo called China’s National Security Law for Hong Kong “an affront to all nations” which is of course nonsense. At the same time, I wanted to say that the National Security Law for Hong Kong is indeed a denial of the US’ ambition to manipulate Hong Kong society. If Washington feels humiliated because of this, then in the words of the Chinese people, it deserves its own humiliation.
How EVFTA will impact China-Vietnam industrial chain?
July 7, 2020, Global Times

Vietnam’s National Assembly recently ratified the European Union(EU)- Vietnam Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA) and the EU-Vietnam Investment Protection Agreement (EVIPA). What substantive changes will these two agreements have on both sides? Will some Vietnamese people’s plan to get rid of Vietnam’s economic dependence on China become a reality?

Morrison’s defense blueprint reveals Canberra’s anxiety
July 7, 2020, Global Times

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison on Wednesday unveiled a new defense blueprint which focuses on the Indo-Pacific region. It boosts defense spending by 40 percent over the next 10 years. What is Australia’s motivation behind the move? Quite a few Australian media rushed to the conclusion that China is the unspoken threat at the center of the new defense strategy.

New Delhi foolishly playing with fire: China Daily editorial
June 30, 2020, China Daily,

More than two weeks have passed since the most deadly clash in over four decades on the Sino-Indian border broke out on June 15, during which 20 Indian soldiers died with an undisclosed number of casualties reported on the Chinese side as well.

China's foreign ministry refutes Pompeo's Hong Kong remarks
July 2, 2020,Xinhua

The US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo’s statements regarding China’s national security legislation on Hong Kong demonstrate nothing but ignorance and prejudice, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson said Thursday.

China-India commander-level talks make progress: spokesperson
July 1, 2020,Xinhua

Chinese and Indian military commanders on Tuesday held the third round talks, and made progress on deescalating the situation along the border, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian said on Wednesday. Zhao said the two sides continued working towards implementing the consensus reached at the two earlier rounds of commander-level talks. They had made progress in the effective measures by frontline troops to disengage and deescalate the situation.
52 countries welcome China's adoption of law on safeguarding national security in HK

July 1, 2020, Xinhua

Speaking at the 44th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council on Tuesday, Cuba on behalf of 52 countries welcomed the adoption of the law on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region by China's top legislature.

Japan

Hong Kong law leaves Japan in a bind as it juggles U.S. alliance and China ties

July 1, 2020, Japan Times

Japan is being urged by Hong Kong citizens to become more serious about safeguarding their freedoms and human rights as China makes moves to tighten its grip on the territory, but Tokyo is caught in a dilemma as it eyes improved ties with the mainland.

308 Japanese companies affected by U.S. work visa halt: survey

July 3, 2020, Kyodo News

At least 308 Japanese companies and over 1,400 staff based in the United States have been affected by U.S. President Donald Trump's decision to halt the issuance of certain work visas until the end of this year, a survey by Japan's trade promotion agency showed.

Japan told U.S. it opposes South Korea joining G7, in move likely to anger Seoul

June 28, 2020, Japan Times

Tokyo has told Washington it opposes a suggestion by U.S. President Donald Trump to add Seoul to the Group of Seven summit, diplomatic sources said, in a move likely to further chill already frozen ties with South Korea.

Japan asks US to extradite 2 men over Ghosn case

June 3, 2020, NHK

Japan has asked the United States to extradite two Americans who are under arrest for allegedly helping former Nissan Motor chairman Carlos Ghosn to flee Japan while on bail.
Korea

NK leader warns against complacency in COVID-19 prevention

July 3, 2020, The Korea Herald

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un convened a Workers’ Party Politburo meeting on COVID-19 for the first time in three months, and called for strengthened efforts to contain the epidemic, the North’s state news agency said.

South Korean leadership for openness

July 3, 2020, The Korea Herald

North Korea’s recent demolition of the South Korean liaison office in Kaesong is a sharp reminder that tension remains the norm on the Korean Peninsula. More recently, Prime Minister Abe of Japan came out against the idea of including South Korea in an expanded G-7 meeting.

North Korean leader calls for maximum alert against virus, warns of ‘unimaginable’ crisis

July 3, 2020, The Korea Times

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un called for “maximum alert” against the coronavirus as he presided over a politburo meeting of the ruling Workers' Party, warning that premature easing of anti-virus measures will lead to “unimaginable and irretrievable crisis,” state media reporte.

Frayed inter-Korean relations dash hopes for return to Gaeseong

July 3, 2020, The Korea Times

When Shin Han-yong crossed the inter-Korean border into the North Korean city of Kaesong in 2018, he thought the opening of an inter-Korean liaison office could eventually lead to the resumption of a joint factory park.

Southeast Asia

ASEAN stops pulling punches over South China Sea

July 3, 2020, Asia Times

ASEAN Chair Vietnam’s strongly worded statement marks a milestone in a growing regional pushback against China’s expansionism.
Myanmar calls out China for arming terror groups, asks world to help
July 2, 2020, Hindustan Times
Myanmar suspects that China was trying to use terror groups as a bargaining chip for smooth implementation of Belt and Road Initiative projects.

Malaysia suspends Pakistan pilots after license fraud revelation
July 3, 2020, The Jakarta Post
Malaysia’s aviation regulator has temporarily suspended pilots employed by domestic airlines who hold Pakistani licenses, after the government of the South Asian nation revealed that many pilots had dubious qualifications.

Australia’s Strategic Update: What it means for Indonesia
July 3, 2020, The Interpreter
Jakarta’s response is likely to be complex and will require deft management by Australian policymakers. One might assume that Australia’s announcement of a significant increase in defence funding and move to a more assertive defence posture would be welcomed by Jakarta. After all, as the old proverb goes, “the enemy of my enemy is my friend”, and Indonesia certainly has its own challenges with China, seen starkly in Beijing’s increasing encroachment into Indonesia’s Exclusive Economic Zone.

Vietnam, Philippines denounce China military drills in disputed waters
July 2, 2020, The Economic Times
China scheduled five days of drills from Wednesday near the Paracels according to a June 27 announcement by the Hainan’s Maritime Safety Administration. Vietnam has overlapping claims with China over the Paracels. Vietnam and the Philippines have been the most vocal regional opponents to what they see as Chinese overreach in the South China Sea.
Central Asia

Turkmenistan, UK sign MoU on sustainable economic development
July 2, 2020, AKI Press

The Minister of Finance and Economy of Turkmenistan Ezizgeldi Annamuhammedov held a meeting with the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to Turkmenistan Hugh Stanley Philpott.

Moscow’s approach to Central Asia fails to reflect new realities, Uzbek scholar says
July 3, 2020, The Times of Central Asia

Russia’s political elite is a hostage of outdated imperial ideas and pretensions Moscow has toward Central Asia — a region that is now increasingly different from its common Soviet past with today’s Russia.

China’s past border tactics, especially in Central Asia, offer India a clue
June 29, 2020, The Indian Express

If India falls for some kind of Chinese position over Aksai Chin, Beijing will then shift the focus to Arunachal to emphatically claim 90,000 sq km from India. Ceding Aksai Chin would fundamentally alter the status of J&K and Ladakh.

Here’s looking at EAEU
July 2, 2020, Eurasia Net

China is evidently the market on which the EAEU is pinning its hopes of export diversification. The Eurasian Economic Union is, first and foremost, an exporter of raw materials. This has left it especially vulnerable to the coronavirus pandemic-linked slump in global demand for such goods.

US senators call on Central Asian leaders to release imprisoned activists
July 3, 2020, The Times of Central Asia

Twelve U.S. Senators have called for the release of “prisoners of conscience” in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, Freedom Now, a U.S.-based non-profit, non-governmental, and non-partisan organization that works to free individual prisoners of conscience through focused legal, political and public relations advocacy efforts, said.
West Asia

Mysterious Explosion and Fire Damage Iranian Nuclear Enrichment Facility
July 02, 2020, The New York Times
A fire ripped through a building at Iran’s main nuclear-fuel production site early Thursday (July 02), causing extensive damage to what appeared to be a factory where the country has boasted of producing a new generation of centrifuges.

Saudis Threaten New Oil-Price War with OPEC Brethren
July 01, 2020, The Wall Street Journal
Saudi Arabia has threatened to ignite an oil-price war unless fellow OPEC members make up for their failure to abide by the cartel’s recent production cuts, delegates said.

Israel, Palestine Should Hold Direct Talks for ‘Two-States Solution’: India
July 02, 2020, The Indian Express
India on Thursday (July 02) asked Israel and Palestine to resolve issues between them through direct negotiations and engage with each other to find an acceptable “two-states solution” for peaceful coexistence.

15 Percent Vat Hike Comes Into Effect in Saudi Arabia
July 01, 2020, Gulf News
Saudi Arabia’s decision to raise the value-added tax (VAT) rate to 15 per cent was enforced on Wednesday (July 01) on all goods and services subject to it in markets across the Kingdom.

Bahrain’s Economy Likely to Contract by 3.6 per cent This Year
July 07, 2020, Zawya
The International Monetary Fund (IMF) forecast real GDP for the GCC shrinking by 2.69 per cent in 2020 and by 3.27 per cent for the West Asia-North Africa region as a whole.

Iraq Looks to Lure Saudi Investment as It Tries to Comply With OPEC+ Deal
July 01, 2020, Oilprice.com
Iraq is looking to attract investment from Saudi Arabia in one of its natural gas fields, Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister, Ali Allawi, told Bloomberg, while OPEC’s second-largest producer looks to be seriously trying to comply with the OPEC+ production cuts.
**India-funded Chabahar Port in Iran to be Integrated with Free Zone**

July 02, 2020, Business Line

The integration of Chabahar port with the Free Zone was approved by the Iranian Guardian Council. Subsequently, a memorandum of understanding was signed between the Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Free Zone Authorities on June 9 for implementation of laws and regulations of the Free Zone in the port of Chabahar.

**Indian Air Force to Buy SPICE-2000 Bombs from Israel, Last Used in Balakot Airstrikes**

June 30, 2020, India Today

Amid tensions with China, India is going to acquire more SPICE-2000 bombs, which were earlier used in the airstrikes in Balakot, Pakistan. The weapons will be procured from Israel.
United States

Trump again hails U.S. COVID-19 testing as cases rise by record levels
July 3, 2020, Reuters

President Donald Trump, yet again, hailed the United States’ coronavirus testing as COVID-19 cases in the country increased by more than 55,000 on Thursday, a new daily global record for the pandemic.

China warns US of countermeasures over Hong Kong sanctions bill
July 3, 2020, Al Jazeera

China has promised to take "all necessary countermeasures" if the United States pressed ahead with legislation penalising banks doing business with Chinese officials who implement Beijing’s draconian new national security law on Hong Kong.

Taiwan to re-open de facto consulate on US island of Guam
July 3, 2020, Nikkei Asian Review

Taiwan said on Friday it will re-open its de facto consulate in Guam, a strategically-located U.S. island with a large U.S. military base in the Pacific, a part of the world where China is stepping up its diplomatic reach.

U.S. Halts High-Tech Exports to Hong Kong Over Security Concerns
June 29, 2020, The New York Times

The Trump administration placed new restrictions on U.S. exports of defense equipment and certain high-technology products to Hong Kong on Monday, in response to a new Chinese law aimed at tightening Beijing’s control over the territory.

U.S. Officials Fear Chinese Predatory Acquisitions During Pandemic
July 2, 2020, National Defense Magazine

The COVID-19 pandemic may open the door for China to acquire U.S. companies struggling during the economic downturn that has been wrought by the virus, lawmakers and officials are warning.
U.S. Supreme Court takes up Trump bid to withhold parts of Russia report
July 2, 2020, Reuters
Democratic U.S. lawmakers are highly unlikely to gain access before the Nov. 3 election to material withheld from former Special Counsel Robert Mueller’s report on Russian political meddling after the Supreme Court on Thursday agreed to hear President Donald Trump’s administration’s bid to keep it secret.

U.S. should put sanctions on Russian intelligence, defense sectors: Pelosi
July 2, 2020, Reuters
The United States should impose sanctions on Russia’s intelligence and defense sectors, House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi said on Thursday after a briefing on reported Russian payments to Taliban militants to kill U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan.

U.S. House panel backs defense bill, Confederate battle looms
July 2, 2020, Reuters
A U.S. House of Representatives committee unanimously backed a $741 billion defense bill late on Wednesday, setting the stage for a battle with President Donald Trump over naming military bases for Confederate generals and moving troops from Germany.

For This Fourth of July, Officials Say Celebrate Freedom by Staying Home
As the nation staggers toward a holiday weekend during the coronavirus pandemic, health officials are pleading with residents to not make a bad situation worse.

Two US senators introduce legislations to strengthen India-US defence ties
June 30, 2020, The Economic Times
Two top senators from the ruling Republican and opposition Democratic parties have introduced legislations to strengthen the India-US defence ties, especially in the area of the fifth-generation fighter aircraft and to accelerate joint research and development in the military field.
Indian envoy meets National Space Council, discusses India-US collaboration in science and space

July 3, 2020, The Economic Times

Indian Ambassador to US Taranjit Singh Sandhu on Thursday (local time) said that he had held several meetings with Kelvin Droegemeier, Director, Office of Science and Tech Policy, and Scott Pace, Executive Secretary, National Space Council this week to discuss India-US collaboration in science and space.
Europe & Russia

Europe

Europe Pushes to Avoid Economic Calamity by Extending Crisis Aid

July 3, 2020, Bloomberg

European governments are fast learning that they’ll have to live with aid programs to save jobs and businesses longer than thought to keep the economy from falling off a cliff.

Brexit: Serious differences over trade deal, say UK and EU

July 2, 2020, BBC

EU negotiator Michel Barnier said the bloc's position needed to be "better understood and respected" by the UK if an agreement is to be found.

U.K. Sets Out New Red Tape on Post-Brexit Trade in Irish Sea

July 2, 2020, Bloomberg

Companies exporting goods into Northern Ireland from the rest of the U.K. after Brexit will need to file new customs paperwork, an extra headache for businesses when Britain completes its split from the European Union at the end of the year.

E.U. Formalizes Reopening, Barring Travelers From U.S.


The European Union opened its borders to visitors from 15 countries on July 1, but not to travelers from the United States, Brazil or Russia, putting into effect a complex policy that has sought to balance health concerns with politics, diplomacy and the desperate need for tourism revenue.

Turkey asks EU to correct ‘mistake’ of travel list exclusion

July 1, 2020, Reuters

Turkey said on Wednesday it is disappointed by the European Union’s decision to exclude it from a list of countries recommended for non-essential travel and called on the bloc to correct the “mistake” as soon as possible.
Investment Plan for Europe exceeds €500 billion investment target ahead of time
July 2, 2020, European Commission
The European Commission and the European Investment Bank (EIB) Group have delivered on their pledge to mobilise €500 billion in investment under the Investment Plan for Europe.

Germany disbands elite military unit after reports of right-wing extremism
July 2, 2020, The Washington Post
The KSK was formed in 1996 with a focus on counterterrorism, its commandos serving in the Balkans and Afghanistan. Its operations are secret, but international missions have been paused while the restructuring takes place.

National security law: Germany’s Angela Merkel says right of asylum available to all, including Hongkongers
July 3, 2020, South China Morning Post
Germany plans no specific measures to allow Hong Kong citizens affected by the new national security law to relocate, Chancellor Merkel said, adding that the right to asylum in Germany was available to anyone in the world.

Trump called May and Merkel ‘losers’ after their political setbacks, ex-officials say
July 1, 2020, The Guardian
Donald Trump described Theresa May and Angela Merkel as “losers” after they suffered political setbacks, and was repeatedly rude to them, without any of the deference he showed to authoritarian rulers, according to former officials and diplomats.

France and Germany push for cease-fires to tackle pandemic
July 3, 2020, Yahoo News
France and Germany’s top diplomats urged stepped-up action Thursday to quickly implement a new U.N. Security Council resolution demanding cease-fire in major global conflicts to tackle the coronavirus pandemic.

France's Macron to embark on next phase of his presidency with ‘new team’
July 2, 2020, France24
French President Emmanuel Macron said on Thursday the next phase of his presidency will be embodied by a new government team, but he remained coy about the future of his prime minister.
Libya crisis: France suspends NATO mission role amid Turkey row  
July 2, 2020, BBC  
The defence ministry said France had suspended its role in Operation Sea Guardian, accusing Turkey of violating an arms embargo against Libya.

France's foreign minister says new sanctions on Turkey possible  
July 1, 2020, Reuters  
France’s foreign minister said on Wednesday that European Union foreign ministers would meet on July 13 to discuss Turkey and said new sanctions on Ankara could be considered.

A year after Russia reset, France sees no concrete results: minister  
July 2, 2020, Reuters  
France’s efforts to nurture a new relationship with Russia over the last year to bring Moscow back into the fold of leading industrialised nations has yet to yield any results, Armed Forces Minister Florence Parly said on Thursday.

UK to lift ban on non-essential travel to up to 90 countries  
July 2, 2020, The Guardian  
Overseas holidays and visits to up to 90 countries will be possible for Britons from Monday without the need to quarantine for 14 days on return.

Russia  
PM Modi phones Russia’s Putin, congratulates him for constitutional reform vote  
July 3, 2020. Hindustan Times  
The telephonic conversation on Thursday came against the backdrop of the Indian government approving a move to acquire 33 new combat jets from Russia, including 12 Su-30MKIs and 21 MiG-29s.

Now, Russia faces China’s ire over Vladivostok founding day celebrations  
July 3, 2020. WION  
Russia and China got into a diplomatic spat after the Russian embassy officials posted a video on China’s Weibo of a party to celebrate the 160th anniversary of the founding of Vladivostok.
Russia Expects Expedited Fighter Jet Deal With India
July 3, 2020, The Moscow Times

Russia and India could sign contracts for the sale of 33 fighter jets soon as New Delhi deals with heightened tensions with China and Pakistan. India’s defense ministry said it has approved procurement of 21 Mig-29 for nearly $1 billion and 12 Su-30MKI for $1.4 billion. It has also approved an upgrade to its existing fleet of 59 MiG-29s.

Russia Expects OPEC+ To Ease Cuts Next Month
July 2, 2020, Oil Price.com

OPEC+ is not discussing or planning changes to its production cut agreement, which should see the oil producers ease the cuts in August, Russia’s Energy Minister Alexander Novak said.

Russia supplied weapons only to Afghan government, not to Taliban, says diplomat
July 2, 2020, TASS

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo never raised this issue at meetings with Russian colleagues, the spokeswoman pointed out.

Russia faced unprecedented opposition to constitutional amendment vote, says speaker
According to the lawmaker, there were attacks from foreign Internet accounts on the Central Election Commission's websites.

Russia faced unprecedented opposition to constitutional amendment vote, says speaker
July 2, 2020. TASS

According to the lawmaker, there were attacks from foreign Internet accounts on the Central Election Commission's websites.
Latin America

Unemployment soars in Latin America in the wake of the coronavirus
July 1, 2020, CNN

Some Latin American countries are seeing shocking unemployment figures as the United Nations warns that the pandemic has caused hunger to rise in the region.

Neighborly test in US-Latin America ties
July 1, 2020, CS Monitor

Even before the coronavirus crisis, Latin America had the world's slowest economic growth. Now it is also the epicenter for new COVID-19 cases. The combination is driving the region into recession. Mexico’s economy, for example, is expected to dip by about 20% this year. No wonder most of the migrants lately crossing the southwest U.S. border have been single Mexican men seeking work.

A Latin American economic tragedy
July 4, 2020, The Economist

Where covid-19 strikes, it reveals hard truths. In recent weeks Latin America has become the centre of the pandemic, responsible for over half of daily deaths. The region’s acute health crisis is accompanied by an economic decline unrivalled in the developing world. The imf forecasts that output in the region will shrink by 9.4% in 2020, more than three times the contraction of 3% projected for emerging economies as a whole. The economic and social devastation wreaked by the pandemic is all the more painful for coming on the heels of two underwhelming decades. Investors had waxed enthusiastic about Latin America’s prospects during the great emerging-market boom of the 2000s and the 2010s, only to be disappointed. The few gains that were made seem almost certain to be reversed.

US tries to seize four Iranian tankers sailing towards Venezuela
July 2, 2020, Al Jazeera

Iran and Venezuela increased coordination in the face of a Trump administration which has pounded them with sanctions.

US lifts Venezuela-related sanctions imposed on shipping firms, tankers
July 3, 2020, Business Standard

A Treasury representative said the delisted entities had committed to cease involvement in the Venezuelan oil sector as long as Maduro, who is accused of rigging his 2018 re-election, remains in power
Argentina reiterates call for unity at Mercosur Summit

July 2, 2020, Presna Latina

Argentine President Alberto Fernandez today reiterated the need for an absolutely integrated Latin America to meet the challenge of 'building a more balanced world'.

Africa

What Can India Offer Africa?

June 27, 2020, The Diplomat

The multidimensional rivalry between India and China looks set to grow more acute following the death of 20 Indian soldiers in a border skirmish with Chinese forces. Africa, as a continent of increasing importance to both China and India, stands to see another manifestation of this competition. What is India’s end goal in Africa, what are its primary methods and conduits, and how likely is it that it can achieve the same level of influence as China?

The African Union needs to broaden its role in Somalia

July 2, 2020, ISS

Somalia’s historic one-person-one vote election, scheduled for late 2020, looks set to be postponed. Electoral commission chair Halima Ismail told the country’s federal Parliament on 29 June that the much-anticipated polls could not be carried out in less than 13 months.

Uganda reopens borders to receive refugees from DR Congo

July 2, 2020, Xinhua

Uganda has temporarily opened its borders to receive thousands of people fleeing deadly ethnic clashes in neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo.

Belgium expresses regrets for brutal DR Congo rule

June 30, 2020, Andolu Agency

Belgium’s king expressed his “deepest regrets” over the country’s brutal colonial rule over the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).
Sudan receives critical support from international partners yet problems remain
July 2, 2020, African Business
Since Abdalla Hamdok came to power on the back of last year’s popular revolution, the prime minister has been plagued by his inability to raise up to $10bn over the next two years to rebuild Sudan’s battered economy.

Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan must learn how to share the Nile river
July 4, 2020, The Economist
Once completed, the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam will be nearly twice as tall as the Statue of Liberty and as wide as the Brooklyn Bridge is long. The reservoir behind it is roughly the size of London. Sitting on the Blue Nile, the main tributary of the Nile river, the dam is the largest hydro-electric project in Africa. Soon it will produce 6,000 megawatts of electricity, more than double Ethiopia’s output today. With a little co-operation between Ethiopia and its downstream neighbours, Egypt and Sudan, the dam could be a boon for the whole region.

Zimbabwe’s Security Forces Sideline Government as Economy Crashes
June 30, 2020, Bloomberg
Zimbabwe’s security force leaders sidelined the nation’s economic chiefs and forced the government to close the stock exchange and halt most mobile-money transactions, people familiar with the situation said.

Kenya hits at China’s debt-trap diplomacy
July 2, 2020, Sentinel Assam
A Kenyan Appellate Court has halted the dragon’s African safari by pronouncing that “the $3.2 billion contract between Kenya and China for the construction of the Standard Gauge Railways (SGR) is illegal.” The recent judgment has lifted the lid on the dragon’s “debt-trap diplomacy”.

U.S. welcomes independent probe of African Development Bank’s ethics committee
July 3, 2020, Reuters
U. S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin on Thursday welcomed a decision by the governors of the African Development Bank to launch an independent probe of the bank’s ethics committee that will be headed by former Irish President Mary Robinson.