

Asia

North East Asia

➔ **China (internal)** *People's Daily* reported that authorities in Xinjiang had relocated 461,000 residents to work in other parts of region during first quarter of 2018, with plans to relocate 100,000 in southern Xinjiang by 2019. Scholar at Chinese Academy of Social Sciences told *Global Times* that relocation will help maintain regional security and alleviate poverty; some observers cite move as part of campaign to weaken Uighur culture.

➔ **China/Japan** Following May visit of Chinese Premier Li Keqiang to Japan, Chinese foreign ministry 5 July announced invitation to Japanese PM Abe to visit Beijing later in 2018, ahead of planned visit by Chinese President Xi to Tokyo in 2019 for G20 summit. Li 24 July called for healthy, stable ties between China and Japan in meeting with speaker of Japanese parliament in Beijing. Japan reported it scrambled fighter jets 27 July to intercept Chinese Y-9 electronic surveillance aircraft over Sea of Japan.

➔ **Korean Peninsula** U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo visited Pyongyang 5-7 July for follow-up discussions after 12 June U.S.-DPRK Singapore summit; described talks as “productive” and “good-faith negotiations”, however North Korea released statement denouncing “unilateral and gangster-like [U.S.] demand for denuclearisation”, saying U.S. stance runs “against spirit” of Singapore summit, while saying that leader Kim Jong-un nevertheless wants to build on “friendly relationship and trust” forged with President Trump in Singapore. U.S. intelligence official 31 July told Reuters about further evidence of increased North Korean ballistic missile production activity, citing images showing trucks activity at Sanumdong factory. U.S. and North Korean officials 16 July met to coordinate repatriation of 50-55 sets of remains of U.S. servicemen killed in Korean War; repatriations took place 27 July. North Korea and South Korea resumed ship-to-ship radio communication links 1 July, ten years after their unilateral suspension by Seoul, which said move represents bid to defuse military tensions and prevent violent confrontation, especially around contested islands in Yellow (West) Sea. Koreas 17 July fully restored military communications line in western part of peninsula, suspended since early 2016 closure of Kaesong Industrial Complex. South Korea 10 July announced suspension of large-scale annual civil defence drills and independent military exercises, saying it plans to develop new drills to prepare for armed attacks “from outside as well as terrorism”; also affirmed intention that U.S. troops should remain in South Korea. South Korean defence ministry 24 July announced plan to gradually reduce troop numbers along demilitarised zone. Month saw further inter-Korean good-will gestures of sports engagements. South Korean workers travelled to Kaesong, North Korea, mid-July to repair facilities to be used for inter-Korean joint liaison office, as agreed during April inter-Korean summit in Panmunjom. China and North Korea 11 July celebrated 57th anniversary of DPRK-China Treaty of Friendship, which compels the two countries to defend one another in event of attack. China and Russia 20 July reportedly blocked U.S. request made at UN Security Council to stop oil transfers to North Korea.

➡ **Taiwan Strait** Two U.S. warships sailed through Taiwan Strait 7 July; China next day accused U.S. of playing the “Taiwan card” to harm Chinese national interest; U.S. Navy said warships’ route “perfectly permissible”. Chinese navy 18-23 July conducted live-fire drill in East China Sea; China’s *Global Times* reported operation was over area “roughly the size of Taiwan” and designed to simulate real combat against Taiwan and show preparedness for conflict. Taiwan foreign ministry 26 July denounced Beijing’s efforts to stop private companies referring to Taiwan as separate country as “attempts to destroy Taiwan’s sovereignty”. Beijing 31 July said it had called on U.S. not to allow President Tsai to transit through U.S. en route to Latin America in Aug. Taiwan 17 July brought into service a second squadron of U.S.-supplied Apache AH-64E attack helicopters. Chinese President Xi 13 July met Lien Chan, former chair of Kuomintang party, in Beijing and urged more work on peaceful development of relations across Taiwan Strait and efforts toward peaceful reunification.

South Asia

➡ **Afghanistan** Post-ceasefire resumption of violence continued; NATO 20 July reported Afghan national army (ANDSF) conducted more than 90 post-ceasefire operations, with 1,700 insurgents killed or injured; period also saw sharp uptick in civilian casualties caused by ANDSF and U.S. forces, with worst-hit provinces including Badghis (west), Farah (west), Faryab (north) and Ghazni (south). Islamic State-Khorasan Province (IS-KP) suffered significant setbacks late June-early July from Taliban offensives in Laghman and Kunar provinces (east), and Jawzjan province (north), where local officials reported more than 250 killed on both sides during two weeks of fighting. Taliban reportedly captured territory from IS-KP in Darzab and Qush Tepa districts throughout July. U.S. military 7 July reported joint U.S.-ANDSF operations had retaken Deh Bala district, Nangarhar province, from IS-KP. IS-KP continued attacks, with dozens killed, mostly civilians, in several suicide bombings in Jalalabad, Nangarhar province (east), and at least ten killed in suicide attack on govt ministry in Kabul 16 July. During two-day international conference in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia 10 July, nearly 200 religious scholars called for Taliban to end insurgency and accept govt’s peace offer, issuing statement labelling ongoing bloodshed “religiously illegitimate” and conferring religious legitimacy to govt; Taliban condemned declaration. U.S. Sec of State Pompeo 9 July paid unannounced visit to President Ghani in Kabul, reiterated support for peace process; *New York Times* 16 July cited “senior American and Afghan officials” as saying U.S. President Trump was now seeking direct talks with Taliban. International media late July reported that direct informal talks took place between Taliban negotiators and senior U.S. diplomats in Doha, Qatar; both sides described meetings as positive. Special forces 2 July arrested militia commander and close ally of VP Abdul Rashid Dostum, Nizamuddin Qaysari, in Faryab province (north), resulting in clash with his supporters and death of four of his guards; arrests prompted protests in several northern provinces, subsiding after Dostum returned from exile in Turkey 22 July. UN mission 15 July said more civilians killed – 1,692 – in first six months of 2018 than any comparable period over past decade.

➡ **Bangladesh** Ruling Awami League (AL) continued anti-narcotics drive with over 202 killed since May, some allegedly in staged police encounters by end of July.

Opposition Bangladesh National Party (BNP) 20 July held rally in Dhaka demanding immediate release of its jailed leader Khaleda Zia, which it says is a condition for its participation in Dec parliamentary elections, also threatening to hold protests elsewhere in country. Supreme Court 2 July upheld its decision to reject High Court's granting of bail for Zia (in March) in murder case from Feb 2015. Visiting Bangladesh at start of July, UN Secretary-General António Guterres and World Bank President Jim Kim 1 July praised country for accepting Rohingya refugees from Myanmar in meeting with PM Hasina; 2 July visited refugees and humanitarian workers in Cox's Bazar. Bangladesh and UN late June began formal registration of refugees aimed at facilitating repatriation, stressing any returns would be safe and voluntary. Home Minister Asaduzzaman 11 July said registration process was completed and registration of children born in camps was ongoing; data to be ready by Nov and shared with Myanmar. UN investigators ending fact-finding mission in Cox's Bazar camps 19 July noted that Rohingya refugees continue to arrive in Bangladesh from Myanmar, many reporting violence and persecution.

➡ **India (non-Kashmir)** In Jharkhand state, encounter between security forces and Maoist rebels 11 July left one officer dead. In Chhattisgarh state, suspected Maoist rebels 15 July killed two security forces in Kanker district; eight suspected Maoist rebels, including four women, killed 19 July in large-scale police operation in nearby Bijapur district.

➡ **Kashmir** Fall of Kashmir's three-year-old coalition govt and New Delhi's imposition of "governor's rule" direct control in June continued to fuel unrest. In Hawoora Mishipora village, Kulgam district (west), paramilitary forces 7 July killed three protesters when clashes erupted after demonstrators, protesting alleged army beatings of villagers earlier that day, threw rocks at army patrol; govt temporarily suspended mobile services to prevent organisation of further protests. Separatists 7-8 July held strikes in south Kashmir, closing shops, schools and businesses. Army 11 July fired on youths throwing stones at patrol in Trehgam, Kupwara district (north west), killing one. Militants abducted and killed two policemen during month, in Shopian (west) district 6 July and in Kulgam 20 July; security forces 22 July claimed to have killed three men responsible for second attack, one allegedly from Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT) and others from Hizbul Mujahideen, in operation in Kulgam. Suspected LeT militant killed in clashes with security forces in Handwara, Kupwara district 20 July. Security forces 25 July claimed to have killed two LeT militants in gunfight in Anantnag (south).

➡ **Maldives** EU 16 July warned it could adopt sanctions, including travel ban and assets freeze, on those responsible for human rights violations since Feb imposition of state of emergency and arrest of political opponents.

➡ **Nepal** Civil disobedience and concerns about the narrowing of political space dominated discussions between ruling Nepal Communist Party (NCP) and opposition groups. Two simultaneous hunger strikes – by Dr Govinda KC, prominent doctor demanding medical sector reforms, and Ganga Maya Adhikari, demanding accountability for her son's conflict-era killing in 2004 – created public pressure on govt. Opposition Nepali Congress (NC) and prominent civil society leaders subsequently criticised govt's policy of restricting public protests to designated areas around country – first announced in April – as curtailing right to protest and contravening constitution. Supreme Court 6 July issued interim order to govt not to

implement protest ban. NC 17 July announced nationwide protests to increase pressure against govt's "totalitarian" decisions. UN Human Right Council experts 11 July claimed govt's National Integrity Policy – aimed at monitoring and restricting NGO activity – could severely impinge on rights to free speech and association. Domestic activists and international organisations including Amnesty International and International Commission of Jurists criticised draft legislation to amend 2014 transitional justice act for critical flaws; urged govt to reconstitute transitional justice mechanisms, ensure punishment proportionate to gravity of crimes, and undertake transparent consultative process with victims' groups.

◆ **Pakistan** Deeply contested 25 July general election marred by high level of violence across country and allegations of fraud and vote-rigging; marking second time in country's history that a civilian govt has transferred power to another civilian govt, Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) won with 116 seats, emerging as largest party in National Assembly (lower house of parliament) but short of 137 required for an absolute majority. Former ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) won 64 seats, and Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) 43. Losing parties claimed PTI was unfairly assisted by federal and provincial caretaker govts, military and electoral commission ahead of poll, including alleged clampdown on media and arrest of PML-N activists and restrictions on rallies. Parties also claim they were disadvantaged by court rulings against their leaders ahead of vote, including 6 July sentencing of PML-N leader and former PM Sharif to ten years' imprisonment for corruption; and Supreme Court's 9 July reopening of cases of suspicious financial transactions implicating PPP leader and former President Asif Ali Zardari. PTI dismissed claims as anti-Pakistan agenda. Judge 18 July criticised what he alleged was interference of intelligence agencies in affairs of judiciary in order to undermine election. Amid concerns over insecurity, electoral commission granted military unprecedented arresting powers and deployment of 371,000 troops – by far the largest ever for an election; concerns remain over risk of militant and extremist violence during post-election uncertainty. Death toll in attacks on candidates and supporters ahead of election and on polling day over 200, exceeding total for 2008 election; included second deadliest terror attack in Pakistan's history in Mastung, Balochistan (south west) 13 July, killing at least 149; Islamic State (ISIS) claimed attack but security officials blamed sectarian extremist Lashkar-e-Jhangvi. ISIS also claimed election day bomb killing 31 in Balochistan capital Quetta. Electoral commission allowed banned militant and new extreme groups to take part in election through political fronts and alliances; PPP's Bhutto Zardari cautioned that extremists were being given space, however other front-line parties reportedly sought alliances with them. Other incidents of insecurity persisted, particularly in Balochistan.

◆ **Sri Lanka** Amid ongoing govt divisions, political discourse continued to be dominated by extreme and violent statements from Sinhala and Tamil nationalists. United National Party parliamentarian Vijayakala Maheswaran 5 July resigned as state minister for child affairs following widespread criticism of 2 July speech in which she said return of LTTE ("Tamil Tigers") was necessary "if we want to walk freely, if we need our children to attend schools and return back", in wake of high-profile murder of northern Tamil child. PM 20 July condemned late June statement by Sinhala nationalist retired admiral calling for death penalty for alleged treasonous actions of chairperson of National Human Rights Commission. Controversy

generated by late June *New York Times* article about Chinese govt companies' control of strategically located but economically unproductive Hambantota port, particularly allegations of payment to Mahinda Rajapaksa's presidential election campaign in 2015, continued. PM Ranil Wickremesinghe promised to reopen criminal investigation into alleged campaign contribution, which company denied, while Rajapaksa-aligned legislators denounced story. Govt 17 July tabled in parliament bill to create office of reparations, which would be second of four key transitional justice institutions promised in Oct 2015 UN Human Rights Council resolution; bill being challenged in Supreme Court. EU delegation and member states representatives, with Norwegian and Canadian ambassadors to Sri Lanka, issued 16 July statement requesting President Sirisena not to follow through on his 10 July decision to end 40-year moratorium on implementation of the death penalty.

South East Asia

➡ **Cambodia** PM Hun Sen's Cambodian People's Party (CPP) won all 125 seats in 29 July general election marked by voter intimidation and manipulation. Final vote count expected 15 Aug. Twenty parties registered to compete, but govt dissolved main opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party Nov 2017. UN Special Rapporteur Rhona Smith 20 July expressed concern over reports of voter intimidation, particularly statements by officials that abstaining from vote is illegal, and threats to withhold services from communities that do not support CPP. White House released statement declaring election "neither free nor fair", and Australia expressed "disappointment that Cambodian people have been unable to freely choose their representatives".

➡ **Indonesia** United Liberation Movement for West Papua reported that security operation in West Papua's Nduga agency had conducted aerial campaign in pursuit of pro-independence fighters who claimed responsibility for late June attack on police at local airport; said operation resulted in several casualties and thousands displaced; military said reports of airstrikes and bombings were a hoax, and that it was working with police in "law enforcement activities" in Alguru in Nduga. Amnesty International 2 July said that security forces have committed almost 100 extrajudicial killings in Papua and West Papua since 2010, mainly in context of "unnecessary or excessive use of force during mass protests, during law enforcement operations or due to misconduct by individual officials", and almost no accountability. Police chief mid-July said police had arrested almost 200 terror suspects and killed twenty who were resisting arrest since mid-May Surabaya attacks; early July told media police had foiled over 500 terror plots since 2012. Jakarta court 31 July banned Islamic State (ISIS)-linked Jamaah Ansharut Daulah group, blamed for Surabaya attacks.

➡ **Myanmar** Amid continued occasional clashes between military and ethnic armed groups in Kachin and North Shan states, third "Panglong-21" Union Peace Conference was held in Naypyitaw 11-16 July. For first time, all ethnic armed groups attended, including those without ceasefires. State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and commander in chief both struck slightly more conciliatory tone, but did not offer any major new concessions; conference outcome seen as not particularly substantive, no discussion of security sector and constitutional change. Govt reaffirmed intention to complete peace process by 2020 elections. Outgoing UN High Commissioner Zeid

Ra'ad al-Hussein gave strongly worded update on Rohingya human rights situation at UN Human Rights Council in Geneva 4 July, stating that, "people are still fleeing persecution in Rakhine"; member states expressed increased focus on accountability measures. UN Secretary-General António Guterres and World Bank President Jim Kim visited Bangladesh early July, including Rohingya camps; Guterres called for greater funding to support Rohingya and host communities, and for Myanmar to create conditions suitable for return. Bangladesh home minister 11 July said that Bangladesh and UN had completed process of formally registering Rohingya refugees, aimed at facilitating repatriation, registration of children born in camps ongoing. Following fact-finding mission to camps, UN investigators 19 July reported continued refugee influx, with violence and persecution ongoing. Leaked confidential memorandum of understanding between govt and UN on humanitarian and development assistance to northern Rakhine 29 June prompted criticism over lack of consultation with Rohingya refugees; failure to recognise the Rohingya identity; and denial of basic rights for Rohingya residents or returnees, including citizenship. Govt 30 July named two local and two international members of commission of inquiry into allegations of rights abuses in Rakhine state, which was announced in late May. Court 9 July decided to formally charge two Reuters journalists under Official Secrets Act over their reporting on massacre of Rohingya villagers perpetrated by security forces and local people; decision criticised by U.S., EU, and others.

↑ **Philippines** President Duterte 26 July signed Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) which creates Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), implementing 2014 peace agreement between govt and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) which ended 40-year conflict in Mindanao region. Senate and House earlier ratified BOL after bicameral conference committee approved final version 18 July. Bill provides for self-rule of entity, home to estimated five million Muslims, by 2022. BARMM to have more powers and cover bigger area than entity that it replaces: will have 80-member regional parliament which will select chief minister to head govt; will keep 75% of locally collected taxes and receive govt funds; manage natural resources; and incorporate Islamic law into regional justice system for cases exclusively involving Muslims. Central govt to retain control over police and military, MILF to lay down arms in phased approach and decommission its fighters, which leaders say number 30,000-40,000. First local elections to be held 2022; before then, Duterte will appoint 80-member Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA). Martial law to remain in place in Mindanao until end of 2018 so that security forces can tackle Islamic State (ISIS)-linked groups. MILF leadership satisfied with BOL, which they said would help win back splinter rebel groups and make them less susceptible to ISIS-linked foreign groups. Regional referendum needed to ratify BOL anticipated for Oct; MILF began efforts to build support for BOL, including consultation at main MILF camp in Maguindanao province 29 July reportedly attended by tens of thousands of MILF members. MILF leaders visited national military HQ in Manila 12 July. Military retook town taken by ISIS-linked Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) in Maguindanao 4 July; military reported twelve BIFF killed in clashes in Maguindanao province 8 July. Army reported one soldier, five paramilitary troopers and four civilians killed by vehicle suicide bomb at checkpoint on southern island Basilan 31 July; ISIS claimed responsibility. Duterte 27 July offered to open talks with Abu Sayyaf rebel group; presidential spokesman said his remarks were calling for surrender. Amid stepped-

up military offensive against communist New People's Army in north late month, Duterte 26 July said he hoped govt and communist rebels would return to negotiating table.

➡ **South China Sea** Biennial U.S.-led Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) naval exercises continued, scheduled to end 2 Aug, including some 25,000 personnel and 52 ships from 26 countries; China sent surveillance ship to monitor exercises. Vietnam's participation for first time seen as significant sign of closer military relations with U.S. Department of Ocean and Fishery. China's Hainan province 4 July released notice encouraging Chinese development of uninhabited islands in SCS; policy would particularly affect islands in Paracel archipelago, also claimed by Taiwan and Vietnam. Reports emerged that Philippines govt is proposing new constitution that would make more explicit assertions of sovereignty over areas in SCS, which Manila calls West Philippine Sea. ASEAN and Chinese officials late June discussed proposed code of conduct (CoC) in meeting on implementation of 2002 Declaration of Conduct of Parties in the SCS, agreeing on a single draft CoC negotiating text and to move ahead with consultations to produce a unified draft document. Australia and UK 20 July discussed plans to send British aircraft carrier to Pacific and undertake joint naval operations to reassert international "norms and conventions".

➡ **Thailand** Amid ongoing violence in southern insurgency, series of five bombings targeting Buddhist-owned rubber plantations in Yala province 28 June-4 July wounded five, including in Krong Pinang district 2 July and Muang district 4 July. Villager shot dead at rubber plantation in Chanae district, Songkhla province 14 July. Motorcycle-borne gunmen shot dead policeman in Cho Airong district, Narathiwat, 10 July. Dialogue process between Bangkok and MARA Patani (Patani Consultative Council) remains on hold pending decision by new Malaysian govt on its role as facilitator. PM Prayuth Chan-ocha 27 June said another meeting with political parties would be held in Sept to discuss long-delayed national poll; commented that "national reconciliation" and stability must be achieved before general election; and dismissed as groundless speculation that he would compete for elected office. National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO)'s hand-picked National Assembly 9 July unanimously approved twenty-year national strategy, including sanctions designed to prevent future civilian govts from revoking it, ruling that they must comply with strategy and stating that political parties are prohibited from advocating policies at odds with strategy; regime's appointed Senate will ensure compliance, together with National Strategy Commission, which will include all military service chiefs.