

Asia

North East Asia

➔ **China/Japan Tensions continued over disputed island chain in East China Sea.** Japan's Okinawa city council 22 June approved bill changing administrative status of disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands in East China Sea, asserting Japanese claim to islands; Beijing same day said it would lodge strong protest with Tokyo and warned "administrative re-designation is a serious provocation", after Chinese Foreign Ministry 19 June cautioned against any change to status quo. Amid daily Chinese maritime presence around disputed islands since 14 April, Japanese coast guard 22 June reported four Chinese coast guard vessels in contiguous zone outside Japanese territorial waters. Japanese military 20 June reported detecting suspected Chinese submarine near Amami-Oshima island in East China Sea. Lawmakers from Japan's ruling-Liberal Democratic party 4 June submitted resolution calling on govt to protest China's "stalking" of Japanese boats in waters near islands. Amid controversy surrounding new Chinese national security law in Hong Kong, Beijing 10 June criticised Japanese PM Abe's effort to take lead on G7 (group of seven nations including U.S. and Japan) statement on proposed legislation; G7 statement, released 17 June, highlighted "grave concerns" and urged China "to re-consider this decision"; Japanese Defence Minister Taro Kono 30 June said passage of law would "significantly affect" Chinese President Xi's planned state visit to Japan.

↓ **Korean Peninsula Inter-Korean tensions significantly rose as Pyongyang increased pressure on Seoul, demolished liaison office near border and threatened military action; meanwhile economic situation in DPRK continued to deteriorate.** After North Korea 9 June ended all inter-Korean communication, Kim Yo-jong, top official and sister of DPRK leader Kim Jong-un, warned 13 June that Pyongyang will "take its next action" and "break with the South Korean authorities"; Seoul's Ministry of Unification next day urged Pyongyang to "honour all inter-Korean agreements". North Korea 16 June demolished inter-Korean liaison office in border town of Kaesong set up after 2018 summit between two Korean leaders, citing Seoul's failure to stop activists and North Korean defectors sending leaflets, food and aid across border, as well as South Korea's continued military exercises and lack of progress in lifting sanctions. In attempt to prevent anti-Pyongyang leafleteers earlier in month, South Korea's Ministry of Unification 10 June said it would press charges against two activist groups. Following demolition of office, DPRK 17 June rejected South's offer to send special envoy to de-escalate tensions and vowed to redeploy troops to border areas of Mount Kumgang and Kaesong; South Korea's Defence Ministry reiterated support for 2018 agreement but warned of "strong response" to any military provocation. After South Korean unification minister 17 June offered resignation, members of ruling-Democratic Party called for reshuffle of U.S.-South Korea working group, claiming Washington was damaging inter-Korean relations; Seoul's chief nuclear negotiator same day arrived in Washington to discuss recent tensions on peninsula and potential responses; DPRK state media 24 June said Kim

suspended “military action plans against the south”. North Korea’s economy reportedly continued to deteriorate amid COVID-19 and halting of nearly all trade with China due to closed borders; Pyongyang continued to blame international sanctions. Amid ongoing dispute between U.S. and South Korea over cost sharing of maintaining 28,500 U.S. troops on Korean peninsula, U.S. military 2 June announced Seoul agreed to pay \$200mn for 4,000 Korean nationals working with U.S. forces.

↓ **Taiwan Strait Tensions increased between Taipei and Beijing amid increased Chinese incursions into Taiwanese Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ) and continued U.S. military presence.** Amid heightened tensions following top Chinese general’s 29 May threat to use “all necessary measures” to prevent Taiwanese independence, Chinese military activity spiked mid-month; Taiwanese army reported eight incursions by Chinese military aircraft into Taiwanese ADIZ 9-22 June, including: several Su-30 fighter jets 9 June, a Y-8 surveillance aircraft shortly after Taiwan carried out missile tests off eastern coast 12 June, intrusions by J-10 fighter 19 June and several jets including H-6 bomber 22 June. U.S. Navy destroyer 4 June sailed through Taiwan Strait; Taiwanese Defence Ministry 9 June said U.S. navy transport plane that day entered Taiwanese air space with permission; in response, China’s Taiwan Affairs Office 11 June said flight was “illegal act and a seriously provocative incident”; U.S. military jets, including P-8A maritime patrol aircraft and reconnaissance planes, flew daily over waters near Taiwan 21-30 June. Committee established by Taiwan’s main opposition Kuomintang party to examine party’s cross-strait policy 19 June recommended that “1992 Consensus” – tacit agreement between China and then ruling-Kuomintang on principles of cross-strait relations – be used as “historical description” of cross-strait interactions; China’s Taiwan Affairs Office same day urged adherence to “1992 consensus”. Amid concerns over controversial new Chinese national security legislation for Hong Kong, Taiwan govt 18 June announced that it will open office in July in Taipei to offer humanitarian assistance to Hong Kong citizens, including those seeking asylum. Taiwanese coast guard 3 June reportedly intercepted flotilla of illegal Chinese sand dredgers in Taiwan strait.

South Asia

➔ ✂ **Afghanistan U.S. pressure led to incremental progress in peace process, raising prospect of long-awaited intra-Afghan talks starting in July, while violence persisted as new govt appointments stalled.** Amid U.S. Special Representative Zalmay Khalilzad’s continued diplomatic efforts – including 7 June meetings with Taliban’s deputy leader in Doha and Pakistan’s chief of army staff in Islamabad – Taliban refrained from major attacks on govt forces or large cities while govt continued to release prisoners, reportedly bringing total Taliban fighters released to date to 4,000; moves on both sides raised hopes for intra-Afghan talks to begin in July. Following Taliban-govt ceasefire late May, Taliban militants rejected ceasefire extension but reportedly communicated to U.S. their willingness to continue period of “reduced violence”; decrease in Taliban violence uneven across country: provinces of Balkh

(north) and Faryab (north east) recorded reduced violence throughout month, while several provinces saw unchanging or increasing levels of conflict, including Kapisa (north east), Khost (east), Zabul (south) and Wardak and Ghazni (centre); govt late month released casualty figures showing several hundred security forces killed per week, controversially claiming these to be a record high. Taliban appeared to shift tactics with uptick in roadside bombs, targeted killings and ambush shootings, while continuing abductions and running of checkpoints. Market bombing in Sangin district, Helmand province (south), 29 June killed at least 23 civilians; Taliban and govt blaming each other. Despite May agreement between President Ghani and main opponent Abdullah Abdullah to form inclusive govt, domestic political stasis continued; new govt yet to appoint half of cabinet, Abdullah and allies did not submit list of preferred candidates while Ghani has already filled his share of posts with acting appointees. Pakistan 6 June appointed diplomat Muhammad Sadiq as special envoy on Afghanistan (see Pakistan). Amid concerns over conflict hindering COVID-19 response, UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan 21 June released report detailing 12 deliberate attacks affecting healthcare personnel and facilities 11 March-23 May; report attributed responsibility of eight targeted attacks to Taliban and three attacks to govt forces, while May attack on Kabul hospital remained unattributed; local media reported severe mismanagement of foreign aid for tackling pandemic.

➔ **Bangladesh Amid ongoing crackdown on critics, security operations continued against alleged members of banned militant groups.** Despite international and domestic concerns over Awami League (AL) govt's use of controversial Digital Security Act, police continued to detain journalists and academics using controversial law throughout month: police 9 June detained two journalists after leader of Hindu community in Habiganj district accused them of offensive social media posts; 13 June arrested Dhaka University teacher and 17 June Rajshahi University teacher for posts allegedly criticising senior AL leader Mohammed Nasim, following his death on 12 June; 18 June arrested two individuals after local AL leader in Barekha district accused them of critical social media remarks about PM Hasina and cabinet; 23 June arrested man for anti-govt social media posts in Narayanganj district; 26 June arrested editor in capital Dhaka for article criticising PM's political affairs advisor. NGO Transparency International 20 June expressed deep concern over recent arrests and urged govt to respect freedom of speech. In anti-militancy efforts, paramilitary Rapid Action Battalion arrested alleged Jamaat-ul Mujahideen Bangladesh members, including five in Myemensingh district 1 June, two in Dhaka 9 June and one in Madaripur district 14 June. Amid concern over potential COVID-19 spread in Rohingya refugee camps, with surge in national cases following 31 May lifting of lockdown, govt 2 June reported first refugee death from disease in Cox's Bazar refugee camp; aid groups and UN early June confirmed low testing capacity in camp amid concern that number of cases could be higher than govt reporting. Group coordinating activities of UN agencies and NGOs 10 June warned that lack of funding hindered assistance to Rohingya and host communities, with only 27% of \$877mn appeal for 2020 joint response plan provided.

↓ **India (non-Kashmir) Clashes on informal border with China killed at least 20 Indian soldiers, tensions rose with Pakistan and Maoist-related violence continued.** Following series of skirmishes on Indo-

China border in May, Indian and Chinese soldiers 15 June clashed along Line of Actual Control in Galwan Valley in Ladakh, killing at least 20 Indian soldiers and unknown number of Chinese soldiers, in deadliest clash in over five decades; incident occurred despite 6 June agreement between Indian and Chinese military officials that they would disengage in several areas along border; Indian media 16 June announced govt gave army emergency powers to respond to border situation. Delhi and Beijing 17 June agreed to de-escalation amid mutual accusations of territorial incursions and violations of disengagement agreement; PM Modi same day said India wanted peace but threatened response to any provocation while New Delhi rejected China's 17 and 19 June claims over Galwan Valley as "untenable". Military officials from both sides 22 June agreed on outline for mutual disengagement at border; diplomats on both sides 24 June endorsed agreement under Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on China-India Border Affairs (WMCC); military officials met again 30 June to discuss de-escalation. Police in Pakistan's capital Islamabad 15 June briefly detained two Indian embassy employees, accused of involvement in road accident; India claimed they were illegally detained and 23 June said it would expel half of Pakistan's embassy staff in Delhi over spying allegations within seven days; Pakistan took reciprocal measure, also accusing Indian officials of "illegal activities". In Bihar state on border with Nepal, clashes 12 June broke out between Nepali border police and Indian nationals attempting to cross border; Nepali police shot and killed one Indian citizen. Meanwhile, Maoist-related violence persisted: security forces killed Maoist 2 June in Chhattisgarh state's Bijapur district and 18 June in Jharkhand state's Koderma district; Maoists killed civilians 8 and 11 June in Madhya Pradesh state and 18 June in Gadchiroli district. UN General Assembly 17 June elected India to two-year UN Security Council term (2021-2023).

↓ **Kashmir Counter-insurgency operations inside Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) sharply intensified, amid ongoing clashes across Line of Control (LoC, dividing Pakistan and Indian-administered Kashmir).**

Month saw sharp increase in number of militants killed amid insurgent-related violence. Security forces killed over 35 militants 2-29 June in Pulwama district; 2 June killed two alleged Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) militants and suspected JeM commander, as well as two overground workers following day; 4 June killed militant in Rajouri district, while militant 6 June reportedly shot dead civilian in Baramulla district. In Shopian district, security forces targeted alleged Hizbul Mujahideen militants: 7-8 June killed nine militants – which triggered local protests and confrontations between demonstrators and security forces; 10 and 16 June killed seven more. Militants 9 June killed Kashmiri Hindu Pandit in Anantnag district. Security forces 18-19 June killed eight militants in Pulwama and Shopian districts, while police 22 June killed three fighters in gun battle in capital Srinagar. Gun battle between militants and security forces in Anantnag district 26 June killed paramilitary soldier and boy; security forces 26 June killed three militants in Pulwama district and 29 June killed three militants in Anantnag district. Army's regional commander 8 June held Pakistan responsible for "inducting weapons and pushing weapons" into region. Meanwhile, cross-LoC fire between India and Pakistan continued amid sustained hostile rhetoric on both sides: New Delhi accused Pakistan of several days of cross-LoC fire beginning 2 June and said Pakistani fire 4 June killed two soldiers; 11 June killed soldier and wounded civilian; 22 June killed soldier; and 26 June injured girl. Islamabad claimed Indian fire responsible for spate of killings mid-month, including civilians 12-21 June. Pakistan's Foreign Ministry 2 June urged international intervention to end Indian forces' killings and rights abuses in J&K. Pakistan 12 June claimed to have arrested two "Indian spies" who allegedly crossed LoC into Gilgit Baltistan; claim followed New Delhi's 31 May expulsion of two Pakistani diplomats on charges of "espionage" (see also India non-Kashmir).

➡ **Nepal Pressure on govt increased following rising tensions with India linked to competing territorial claims, prompting calls within ruling party for PM to resign, while peaceful public protests took place against govt's poor handling of COVID-19 pandemic.** Parliament 13 June unanimously approved constitutional amendment updating country's political map to reflect Kathmandu's claims over territory contested between Nepal and India, escalating dispute with Delhi. Several senior leaders of ruling Nepal Communist Party (NCP) 26 June criticised PM KP Oli at party meeting — which Oli skipped — for failing to initiate talks with India over border dispute and for govt's overall lack of competence. Amid tensions with Delhi, Oli 28 June accused India of trying to unseat him as PM; NCP senior leaders, including former PMs Pushpa Kamal Dahal, Madhav Kumar Nepal and Jhala Nath Khanal, 30 June urged Oli to step down from both PM and party chair positions, with other party leaders demanding proof of Oli's claims against Delhi, describing them as “diplomatic disaster” for bilateral ties. Widespread peaceful anti-govt protests throughout June demanded better quarantine facilities and transparency regarding use of donor funds earmarked for COVID-19 response. Opposition parties and private-sector leaders expressed concerns late June over govt's authoritarian turn following proposed legislation enabling national anti-corruption body to investigate private-sector entities; parliament 27 June decided to review bill in light of criticism.

➡ **Pakistan Govt used anti-corruption cases to silence political opponents, deadly militant violence persisted and govt stepped up diplomatic efforts on Afghan peace process.** Ruling-Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) continued targeting of opposition and critics through controversial anti-corruption National Accountability Bureau (NAB): NAB 29 May issued warrants for former Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) PM Sharif and summoned former PML-N PM Abbasi, former Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) PM Gillani and President Zardari. NAB 9 June questioned PML-N president and parliamentary leader of opposition Shahbaz Sharif; and 26 June summoned former PML-N Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif. Balochistan National Party-Mengal 17 June withdrew support for PM Khan's govt for violating earlier agreements, including on recovery of Baloch missing persons, reducing PTI majority to eight. Supreme Court 19 June rejected PTI govt corruption charges against Supreme Court judge Qazi Faez Isa. Militant violence continued: in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, bomb blast 4 June killed two people in Bajaur tribal district. Bomb 10 June killed two police officers in North Waziristan tribal district, where, on 21 June, officer and soldier killed in militant attack. Sindhi separatist group claimed three separate attacks on 19 June on paramilitary Rangers force in three cities in Sindh province, killing three Rangers and two civilians. Militant attack on Pakistan Stock Exchange building claimed by Baloch separatist group in Karachi 29 June killed seven, including one police officer and two guards; security forces killed all four militants. Anti-terrorism court 18 June sentenced four leaders of Jamaat-ud-Dawa to prison on terror-financing charges, sentences ranging from one to five years. Police in Pakistan's capital Islamabad 15 June briefly detained two Indian embassy employees (see India). Govt stepped up diplomatic efforts relating to Afghan peace process: govt 6 June appointed diplomat Muhammad Sadiq as Pakistan's special envoy on Afghanistan; Sadiq, army chief Qamar Javed Bajwa and director of military intelligence Faiz Hameed 9 June met Afghan President Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah, chair of intra-Afghan talks, to discuss peace process; Sadiq 16-17 June met Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, head of Taliban's political office, in Doha.

↓ **Sri Lanka Supreme Court (SC) ruling granted President Gotabaya Rajapaksa authority to govern without parliamentary oversight, while Gotabaya's appointment of two new bodies with far-reaching powers signalled further steps toward authoritarianism and hard-line Sinhala Buddhist nationalism.** SC 2 June dismissed civil society and opposition parties' petitions challenging constitutionality of 20 June legislative polls and dissolution of parliament; ruling allows Gotabaya to govern without parliamentary oversight for at least another two months, as Election Commission 10 June again rescheduled elections for 5 August. PM Mahinda Rajapaksa 28 June promised voters that, if elected, his ruling-Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna party would defeat "domestic and international conspiracies" allegedly backed by main opposition parties. Gotabaya 2 June appointed two task forces headed by Defence Secretary Kamal Gunaratne: one entirely made up of military and police officials with broad mandate to turn Sri Lanka into "a virtuous, disciplined and lawful society"; the other composed exclusively of Sinhalese Buddhists charged with "preserving the historical heritage of Sri Lanka" in Tamil- and Muslim-majority Eastern province. Prominent civil society group Friday Forum 13 June called for abolition of military task force arguing that it could be first step toward "military dictatorship" while leader of

Tamil National Alliance R. Sampanthan 17 June said intention of all-Sinhalese task force is to “convert the Eastern province into majority Sinhalese areas”. UN Human Rights High Commissioner Michelle Bachelet 3 June expressed concern over clampdown on free speech. In Colombo, police 9 June raided home and seized computer of Dharisha Bastians, govt-critical journalist who fled country after Rajapaksas came to power. Colombo magistrate 25 June sharply criticised police for manipulating witness statements in case against prominent Muslim lawyer, Hejaaz Hizbullah, detained for alleged involvement in Easter 2019 Islamic State (ISIS)-inspired terror attacks. Expert review committee presented strongly critical final report to president on proposed U.S. govt \$480mn Millennium Challenge Corporation grant; U.S. embassy expressed disappointment at the “politicization and spread of disinformation” related to grant.

South East Asia

➔ **Indonesia Suspected Islamist militant activity surged in South Kalimantan, while month saw series of protests calling for release of Papuan activists accused of pro-independence activities.** In South Daha district, South Kalimantan province, suspected Islamic State (ISIS) militant 1 June set fire to police car and attacked police officers, killing one and seriously injuring another, before being fatally shot; counter-terror unit Densus 88 7 June arrested two alleged members of South Kalimantan branch of Jamaah Ansharut Daulah, who they accused of co-planning attack. In Central Sulawesi province, members of joint police-military taskforce – established in 2016 to capture or eliminate Islamic militant group Mujahidin Indonesia Timur (MIT) – 2 June allegedly shot and killed two Muslim farmers in Poso regency; hundreds of people 10 June demonstrated in town of Poso demanding investigation into shooting; police and National Human Rights Commission next day established team to look into farmers’ deaths and that of civilian reportedly also killed by security forces in April. Thousands rallied in series of demonstrations early-to-mid June in Papua, East Java, Jakarta and East Kalimantan provinces demanding release of seven Papuan activists, including Buchtar Tabuni, accused of “treason” for pro-independence activities; dozens injured as protest in Jayapura in Papua turned violent and some buildings were attacked. Balikpapan District Court 17 June sentenced all seven Papuan activists to between ten and 11 months in prison for treason. Jakarta State Administrative Court 3 June ruled unlawful govt’s internet shutdown in Papua and West Papua during 2019 protests. Local fishermen 25 June rescued 99 Rohingya refugees stranded at sea north of Aceh province, ignoring govt hesitations to allow them in due to COVID-19 risk.

➔ **Myanmar Deadly fighting between military and Arakan Army (AA) persisted in Rakhine State.** Govt negotiators 9 June proposed to Brotherhood Alliance – coalition of armed groups AA, Kachin Independence Organisation, Ta’ang National Liberation Army and Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army – to resume peace talks via videoconference but coalition rejected offer. Violence between AA and military continued across Rakhine State. AA 10 June reportedly launched rocket-propelled grenades at two navy vessels, which returned fire killing civilian in nearby village in Sittwe township; AA ambush on

military column same day prompted several thousands to flee in Minbya township; suspected AA fighters 11 June stabbed soldier and abducted another in Sittwe, military reportedly killed civilian in retaliation. AA 22 June reportedly launched attack on police convoy killing three officers and one civilian in Rathedaung township; landmines targeting military column 2 June killed civilian and unknown number of soldiers in Ponnagyun township. Govt issued order 23 June to villagers in part of Rathedaung township to leave their villages due to imminent military “clearance operation”; thousands fled and intense fighting ongoing since 24 June, prompting UN and Western embassies to raise alarm and call for urgent civilian protection measures. Clash between military and Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) 4 June left two ARSA fighters dead in Maungdaw township, Rakhine State; ARSA claimed “sizable” number of military casualties. Govt 12 June said internet blackout in Rakhine and Chin states would remain in place until at least August; on 21 June, one-year anniversary of internet ban, international community and more than 100 civil society organisations called on govt to lift ban. Rise in detected COVID-19 cases in Rakhine State due to informal returns from Rohingya refugee camp in Cox’s Bazar in Bangladesh, prompted govt to announce criminal penalties for illegal cross-border travel and fuelled anti-Rohingya hate speech.

➤ **Philippines Low-intensity fighting between security forces and communist rebels continued, while violence persisted in Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) in south.** Clashes between communist New People’s Army (NPA) and armed forces in Luzon in north, Visayas in centre and Mindanao in south continued, although at lower level of violence compared to April-May due to weakening of some NPA front units; at least 18 combatants and civilians killed throughout month. In BARMM, clan feuds continued in Pikit and Pagalungan municipalities, often involving Moro Islamic Liberation Front commanders, leaving several houses destroyed and hundreds displaced. In South Upi municipality, Maguindanao province, IED 22 June exploded targeting the town’s mayor who was unharmed. Clashes between soldiers and elements of Islamic State (ISIS)-linked Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) 7-13 June continued in multiple provinces: four soldiers and two ASG militants killed and 17 injured in Pakitul, in Sulu province 5 June; one ASG militant killed during operations against drug syndicates in Bongao municipality in Tawi-Tawi province 7 June; two policemen killed and two injured after armed men attacked Parang police station in Sulu province 13 June. In Maguindanao province, members of Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters 9 June killed one soldier in Sultan Kudarat town. Despite delay in formal aspects of peace process due to COVID-19 outbreak, Bangsamoro Transition Authority 16 June resumed parliamentary sessions after temporary COVID-19 suspension. House of Representatives and Senate 8 June agreed on controversial “Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020” to be signed by President Duterte into law; human rights groups and other critics highlighted concern that police and military could resort to extended detention and more unchecked arrests. Authorities 15 June indicted social news network Rappler.com CEO Maria Ressa for cyber-libel; journalists, NGOs and UN Special Rapporteur on Free Speech David Kaye condemned verdict as attack on freedom of press. FM Teodoro Locsin Jr. 2 June announced govt suspended 11 Feb notice to terminate Visiting Forces Agreement with U.S., citing “political and other developments in the region.”

➡ **South China Sea Tensions between China and SCS claimant parties continued amid U.S. reiteration of its rejection of China's claims in region.** In notable toughening of rhetoric, South East Asia regional organisation ASEAN 27 June affirmed UN Convention on Law of the Sea as “basis for determining maritime entitlements, sovereign rights, jurisdiction and legitimate interests over maritime zones”. Beginning mid-June, three U.S. aircraft carrier strike groups – USS Theodore Roosevelt, USS Nimitz and USS Ronald Reagan – simultaneously patrolled Western Pacific for first time since 2017; U.S. 17 June stated that deployment was to “promote security, stability and prosperity throughout the Indo-Pacific region”. U.S. media Fox News 9 June reported that U.S. B-1B Lancer bombers operated over SCS. U.S. envoy to UN Kelly Craft 2 June reiterated in note to UN Sec Gen Guterres that U.S. rejects Chinese claims as “inconsistent with international law as reflected in the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention.” Meanwhile, reports of regular Chinese activity in SCS continued. Chinese ship 8 June began laying undersea cables between its outposts in disputed Parcel Islands; satellite imagery suggested that cables were laid between Tree Island, North Island and Woody Island. U.S. media Radio Free Asia (RFA) 10 June reported Chinese research and survey vessel entered waters close to Pratas islands, which Taiwan controls and China claims; 16 June reported that two separate vessel-tracking tools detected other Chinese survey vessel within Vietnam's Exclusive Economic Zone. Vietnamese FM 14 June stated that two Chinese ships 10 June rammed Vietnamese fishing boat near Chinese-occupied Lincoln Island in Paracels before seizing its catch and equipment. Filipino Defence Secretary Delfin Lorenzana 9 June marked completion of construction work on Thitu island in disputed area of Spratlys. Australian High Commissioner to India 2 June raised concern over maritime militias in SCS and 17 June noted that China “not as committed” to existing international order as Australia and India. After Indonesia 28 May stated China's “nine dash line” claim in region lacks basis in international law and violates Indonesia's Exclusive Economic Zone, China 2 June offered boundary negotiations with Jakarta; Indonesian MFA 5 June rejected offer.

➡ **Thailand Insurgent violence persisted in south and abduction of pro-democracy activist in exile sparked outrage and small-scale protests.** In deep south, security forces 16 June exchanged fire with suspected insurgents in Saiburi district, Pattani; next day shot and killed suspected insurgent after he allegedly opened fire on them at checkpoint in Muang district, Pattani. Head of Thai delegation in Malaysia-brokered peace negotiations 19 June expressed his intention to restart talks with main insurgent group Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN) in July or August. In two separate attacks, unidentified gunmen 22 June shot and killed village official and timber worker in Pattani and Yala provinces. In Cambodian capital Phnom Penh, unidentified gunmen 4 June abducted exiled Thai pro-democracy activist Wanchalerm Satsakit, who had fled Thailand after 2014 military coup; Wanchalerm's disappearance 15 June sparked series of small-scale protests in capital Bangkok while prompting calls on social media to repeal article 112 of country's criminal code under which insulting monarchy is punishable by up to 15 years in prison; PM Prayuth Chan-ocha same day warned activists that such criticism could damage their job prospects. To mark anniversary of 1932 coup that ended absolute monarchy, pro-democracy activists 24 June staged peaceful commemorations across country. Security officials 23 June attempted to link discovery of small-arms cache in Mae Sot, Tak province, on Myanmar border, to alleged anti-government plot to coincide with 1932 coup anniversary; in fact, arms were destined for rebels in Myanmar.