

Asia

North East Asia

➔ **China/Japan** Amid ongoing Japan-China tensions, Tokyo engaged in diplomatic tour to build common position on maritime threats in East and South China Seas. Regionally, Japanese Defence Minister jointly with Filipino Defence Minister 2 June expressed concerns over tensions in East and South China Seas and Chinese coast guard law. Japan and Australia 9 June also raised concerns over tensions in East and South China Seas and Chinese coast guard law as well as issue of peace and stability in Taiwan Strait; in response, Chinese officials same day said statement was malicious slander. Japan along with G7 leaders 13 June jointly confirmed concerns over tensions in East and South China Seas. At regional body ASEAN's Defence Ministers Meeting Plus, Japan 16 June stressed importance of peace and stability across Taiwan Strait and called China's coast guard law problematic in regard to international law. Meanwhile, Japanese Coast Guard 5 June reported that Chinese Coast Guard vessels sailed through contiguous areas around disputed Diaoyu/Senkaku islands for 112th day straight, setting new record, while 16 Chinese vessels entered territorial waters during month. Notably, two Chinese vessels entered and stayed in territorial waters for 42 hours between 20-21 June, longest duration so far this year. Four Chinese vessels 26 June entered territorial waters, reportedly tried to approach Japanese fishing boats before Japanese Coast Guard warned vessels away.

➔ **Korean Peninsula** North Korea (DPRK) acknowledged severity of food insecurity amid COVID-19 pandemic, while U.S. reaffirmed readiness to continue dialogue. At ruling Korean Workers' Party plenum 15-18 June, DPRK officials agreed policy to distribute food to general population as matter of urgency, likely indicating that long-running border closure is doing real harm to livelihoods. North Korean leader Kim Jong-un 29 June accused senior officials of having "caused a grave incident that has caused a great risk to people and the nation's safety". At plenum, during speech on "major changes taking place on the international political arena", Kim Jong-un 17 June stated that North Korea should be ready for both "dialogue and confrontation" with U.S. administration; U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan 20 June called Kim Jong-un's comments "interesting signal". Following U.S.-South Korea summit in U.S. capital Washington 21 May, newly appointed U.S. Special Representative for North Korea Sung Kim 19-23 June visited South Korean capital Seoul; 21 June met with South Korean and Japanese counterparts and took opportunity to reiterate Washington's openness to unconditional talks with Pyongyang, saying that U.S. hopes North Korea "will respond positively to our outreach." Kim Yo-jong, senior official and sister of Kim Jong-un, 22 June published statement in state media cautioning U.S. against misplaced hope of imminent breakthrough, view reiterated by North Korean FM Ri Son-gwon.

➔ **Taiwan Strait** China stepped up intrusions of Taiwan's aerial zone after relative decline in recent months, while COVID-19 crisis fuelled domestic and cross-strait tensions. Taiwanese defence ministry 15 June

reported 28 Chinese military aircraft entering into Taiwan's Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ), marking sudden spike after numbers of aircraft had dipped between late April and early June. As of 28 June, total 43 Chinese aircraft had entered Taiwan's ADIZ during month. Three U.S. senators 6 June briefly visited Taiwan's capital Taipei by military plane; China 8 June called visit "very vicious political provocation." At summit in UK, G7 leaders 13 June noted importance of peace and stability across Taiwan Strait for first time. Amid worsening outbreak of COVID-19, Taiwan's ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) faced widespread criticism for not securing enough vaccines, especially from opposition party Kuomintang (KMT). Japan 4 June donated 2.1 mn vaccines to Taiwan, while U.S. 20 June donated 2.5 mn; Chinese foreign ministry 21 June called on U.S. not to use vaccination programme support for "political manoeuvre or interference in China's internal affairs" and Beijing continued to accuse DPP of politicising vaccine procurement by creating barriers to Chinese vaccines. Macau 16 June suspended operations of its representative office in Taiwan, as did Hong Kong in May without providing explanations. Staff working at Taiwan's representative office in Hong Kong 20 June returned to Taiwan after city govt demanded representatives sign document recognising "One China" principle or leave country.

South Asia

↓ **Afghanistan** Taliban sustained major offensive, gaining additional district centres and killing over 500 Afghan security forces; deadly terror attacks targeted minority Hazara community. Taliban forced govt troops, police and militia to retreat from more than 50 districts, most in north and north east, throughout month; while Taliban often declined to occupy space, gains constitute significant loss in govt's territorial standing, revealing structural weaknesses in Afghan security forces. Taliban 21 June also seized control of main border crossing with Tajikistan. In series of attacks, Taliban 2 June killed 40 govt forces in border area of Nangarhar (east); 4 June killed 11 security forces in Herat province (west); 5 June killed 26 security forces in Badakhshan (north east) and Badghis (north west); 9 June killed 21 soldiers in Badakhshan and Nimroz provinces (south west); 12 June killed 20 security forces in Ghor province (centre). Taliban 6 June also killed 17 security forces in truck bombing in Balkh province (north), and same day killed 28 security forces in another car bombing in Faryab province (north). In coming months, potential for Taliban to overrun provincial capitals is high. Meanwhile, a more organic form of popular resistance to Taliban emerged in several provinces, including Baghlan, Takhar and Badakhshan. Deadly terror attacks targeting ethnic Hazara minority persisted. In capital Kabul, bombings against civilians 1 and 3 June killed at least 14 and wounded 17 more in Hazara neighbourhoods. Unknown armed men 8 June attacked staff of international charity clearing land mines and attempted to single out Hazara employees, killing ten and injuring 16 in Baghlan Province (north). Additional attack on humanitarians 15 June killed at least five polio vaccinators in Nangarhar province (east). President Ghani 20 June announced replacement of army chief of staff, defence minister and interior minister amid rising casualties in Afghan security forces. Ghani, Vice President Saleh, top advisers and chief rival Abdullah

24-25 June visited U.S. capital Washington, met with U.S. President Biden and top U.S. officials to reaffirm commitments to fund and support Afghan govt and security forces.

➡ **Bangladesh Govt continued crackdown on critics under Digital Security Act, while concerns over relocation of Rohingya refugees to flood prone Bashan Char island persisted.** Authorities continued to stifle dissent under Digital Security Act (DSA). Notably, counter-terrorism police 13 June pressed DSA charges against seven people alleging involvement in anti-govt activities; cartoonist Ahmed Kabir Kishore, who had been released on bail in March, among those charged. NGO Transparency International 8 June reported that DSA used against at least 85 journalists since start of COVID-19 pandemic. Day before local elections, Awami League factions 20 June clashed in Ghazipur district, injuring ten people; clashes on election day also left two killed and two injured in Barisal district. In Chittagong city, counter-terrorism police 11 June arrested alleged member of banned Ansar al-Islam who recently returned from Syria where he had joined Islamic State in 2017. After four-day visit to Bangladesh, UN Refugee Agency senior representatives 2 June said Bashan Char had “some potential, though the human and protection elements of refugees living there must be fully considered”. Human Rights Watch report 7 June said Rohingya refugees had been moved to Bashan Char “without full informed consent”, urging donors to support refugees right to return to mainland; FM Momen same day responded: “If they have so much sympathy, let them take them back to their country”. In Noakhali District, police 10 June detained 12 Rohingya refugees, including four children, who had escaped Bashan Char. Human Rights Watch 15 June claimed UN refugee agency had shared refugees’ personal data with authorities, asserting practices were “contrary to the agency’s own policies and exposed refugees to further risk”. During meeting with senior UN officials in New York, FM Momen 17 June stressed importance of UN operations in Bashan Char; Bangladesh 18 June abstained from UN General Assembly resolution on Myanmar crisis as it did not recommend repatriation of Rohingya refugees. Police 12-14 June recovered bodies of six Rohingyas, including four children, who drowned in Naf River when boats overturned as they attempted to enter Bangladesh from Myanmar.

➡ **India (non-Kashmir) Reports revealed increased military build-up along disputed China-India border; meanwhile, Maoist violence persisted.** Local media reports 2 June indicated Chinese military had for first time created combined air defence system for Chinese military responsible for border operations along disputed Line of Actual Control (LAC). Indian and Chinese diplomats 25 June agreed on bilateral mechanism to hold next round of military talks “at an early date to achieve complete disengagement from all the friction points” in Western Sector of LAC. Defense Minister Rajnath Singh 27 June arrived in Ladakh territory on three-day visit to carry out comprehensive review of India’s operational readiness along LAC. Reports same day emerged that India had redirected at least 50,000 additional troops and fighter jet squadrons to border with China in recent months, resulting in roughly 200,000 total Indian troops. Meanwhile, Singh 17 June inaugurated 12 roads in Arunachal Pradesh, Ladakh, and Jammu and Kashmir regions, saying India is “capable of giving a befitting reply to those who show aggression towards us” and that roads would help secure India’s borders and aid movement of defence forces (see also Kashmir).

Maoist violence continued. In Chhattisgarh state (centre), exchange of fire with security forces killed two Maoists in Kondagaon district; security forces 18 June killed Maoist in Bastar district; security forces 19 June killed two Maoists in Narayanpur district and one Maoist in Dantewada district 27 June. In Odisha state (east), security forces 11 June killed Maoist in Bargarh district. In Andhra Pradesh (south east), police 16 June killed six Maoists in Visakhapatnam district. Overall COVID-19 epidemic improved as number of cases began to decline and vaccination programme picked up speed, with authorities 21 June administering record 8.5mn doses in single day. To mark seven months of protests, thousands of farmers 26 June demonstrated nationwide demanding govt repeal controversial agriculture laws.

➡ **Kashmir Amid ongoing tensions between Pakistan and India over Line of Control (LoC, dividing Pakistan and Indian-administered Kashmir), violence persisted in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K).** While visiting J&K, India's army chief General Naravane 3 June said: "The onus of making sure that the ceasefire remains is on Pakistan." Pakistani PM Imran Khan next day said Pakistan was ready to hold talks if New Delhi provided "a road map" for reversing 2019 actions that revoked J&K special constitutional status. Militant attacks continued in J&K. Militants 2 June shot dead ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) politician in Pulwama district's Tral town; 17 June killed police officer in Srinagar city; 12 June killed two police officers in Baramulla district; 22 June killed police officer and civilian in Srinagar; 26 June killed one civilian and injured three in grenade attack on security forces; 28 June shot dead police officer, wife and daughter in Pulwama district. Grenade explosion at bus stand 6 June also injured seven people in Pulwama. Meanwhile, police 3 June killed detainee inside counter-insurgency police camp in Tral; police claimed detainee had attempted to take officer's rifle; detainee's mother alleged police tortured her son. Security forces 16 June killed suspected militant in Srinagar's Nowgam area; 20 June killed three alleged militants in Baramulla district, and 25 June killed another suspected militant in Shopian district. Military bases put on high alert after 26 June twin explosions on air force station 14km from Pakistan border, in Jammu, which left two injured; drone attack suspected. In first meeting with pro-India J&K political parties since Aug 2019, Indian PM Modi 24 June said J&K assembly elections will be held after completing delimitation process; in response, opposition National Conference and Peoples Democratic Party called for restoration of J&K's statehood before polls.

➡ **Nepal Supreme Court began hearings against President Bhandari's decision to dissolve House of Representatives in May.** Supreme Court's Constitutional Bench 23 June began deliberations on over 30 petitions – including one by opposition Nepali Congress leader Sher Bahadur Deuba and backed by 146 MPs – challenging Bhandari's dissolution of lower house of parliament on 22 May. Petitioners questioned Bhandari's impartiality, claimed her disqualification of Deuba's candidacy to lead govt in May was "extra-constitutional", and characterised dissolution as encroachment on legislature's jurisdiction. In written clarifications submitted to Court 17 June, Bhandari argued that decisions by Office of the President cannot come under judicial review, while PM KP Oli same day claimed that court cannot adjudicate political issue. Earlier, court itself faced criticism over composition of Constitutional Bench, prompting

reshuffle by Chief Justice Cholendra Rana 6 June following accusations of conflicts of interest. Court 22 June delivered blow to Oli after annulling PM's appointments of 20 ministers on 4 and 10 June, arguing that cabinet expansions contravened constitution given current govt's caretaker status.

➡ **Pakistan Political tensions heightened following controversial electoral reforms, while militant attacks and counter-insurgency operations continued.** Despite opposition and Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) concerns, ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party 10 June introduced new electoral bill, which National Assembly same day endorsed. ECP 16 June issued objections to at least 45 amendments (out of 72) to electoral law, as it deemed some unconstitutional, and others could undermine free and fair elections. Opposition Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) leader 9 June questioned Supreme Court's failure to protect judiciary during appeal of High Court judge who was removed from his post in 2018 after publicly accusing inter-services intelligence chief of interfering in corruption cases against former PM Nawaz Sharif; bar associations and councils 18 June called for independent high-level commission to look into allegations. Financial Action Task Force 25 June retained Pakistan on grey list for strategic deficiencies in counter-terrorism financing and anti-money laundering regimes. Meanwhile, militant attacks and counter-insurgency operations continued. Pakistani Taliban 3 June claimed killing two police officers in capital Islamabad. In Balochistan, counter-insurgency operation left soldier and two militants dead in Kharan district 11 June; bomb attack 14 June killed four soldiers guarding mine on Marget-Quetta road. Militant attacks 17 June killed soldier in Turbat district, five soldiers in Sibi district 25 June and one soldier in Kech district 28 June. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, bomb attack 2 June killed soldier in South Waziristan district; security operations left two soldiers and four alleged Pakistani Taliban militants dead in North Waziristan 19-20 June; and militants 9 June killed two police officers in Mardan district. In Lahore city, car bomb explosion 23 June killed at least three and injured 21, including children. In Karachi city, gunman 16 June killed Jamaat-e-Islami leader; armed assailants next day injured PTI leader Isa Khan and killed his wife. Internationally, PM Imran Khan 4 June warned "Taliban feel they have won the war" ever since U.S. announced date for troop withdrawal from Afghanistan. FM Qureshi 14 June urged Afghan leaders to ensure peace process succeed, emphasised Pakistan's stake in process and denied Pakistani support to any Taliban faction.

➡ **Sri Lanka COVID-19 crisis continued to worsen as economy faced growing strains, while EU and UN voiced concerns over govt's abuse of rule of law.** Amid worsening COVID-19 epidemic, govt faced growing accusations of limiting access to coronavirus tests to prevent full knowledge on gravity of health situation and failing to report accurately on death rate, which reached new daily highs during month. Notably, eight members of independent expert panel 8 June called for immediate probe into failings of vaccination programme. Economic concerns persisted as COVID-19 spread among workers in garment and other export industries and Central Bank governor 28 June announced steps to restrict use of dwindling foreign reserves on non-essential imports; energy minister 11 June announced sharp spike in fuel prices, prompting protest in southern town of Ambalangoda 15 June. European Parliament 10 June passed resolution highlighting govt's abuse of Prevention of Terrorism Act, which permits arrests

without warrant and detention without charge for up to 18 months, and failure to adhere to international conventions required to retain EU trade benefits; urged EU Commission to consider withdrawing Sri Lanka's special trade status; Sri Lanka foreign ministry 14 June rejected allegations of abuse and renewed promise to "revisit provisions" of Terrorism Act. UN human rights chief Michelle Bachelet 21 June expressed concerns over govt's continued misuse and expansion of Terrorism Act, policies targeting Tamils and Muslims, and "continuing series" of deaths in police custody. In widely criticised decision, President Rajapaksa 24 June pardoned Duminda Silva, former ruling-party legislator convicted of 2011 murder of political rival; also pardoned 16 Tamils convicted under Terrorism Act. Bar Association of Sri Lanka 10 June raised concerns with inspector general of police about his 7 June directive calling on police to step up social media monitoring. In rare judicial rebuke of govt, Court of Appeal 16 June approved bail of former senior-most police investigator Shani Abeysekera detained in what was widely seen as retribution for investigations into previous alleged abuses by Rajapaksa-led govt.

South East Asia

➔ **Indonesia Low-level armed violence persisted in Papua amid arrests of pro-independence activists; concerns rose about spread of COVID-19.** United Liberation Movement for West Papua (ULMWP) leader Benny Wenda 2 June said govt had cut off internet in Papua to "conceal its crackdown on the peaceful liberation movement", also said ULMWP leader in hiding and two of his relatives had been arrested. In Papua province, low-level armed violence continued. In Ilaga district, Puncak regency, unknown armed assailants 3 June killed construction worker near Kibogolome village, same day killed three people and injured three others in Nipuralomome village. NGO International Coalition for Papua 24 June reported that military 4 June killed indigenous Papuan in Wamena town, Jayawijaya regency. Authorities 25 June reported that dozens of armed assailants previous day opened fire on construction workers in central Yahukimo regency, killing at least four people; separatist armed group West Papua Liberation Army claimed responsibility for killings. Arrests of activists continued. In Merauke district, authorities 9 June arrested Manuel Metemko, pro-independence activist from NGO West Papua National Committee (KNPB), for allegedly spreading fake news on Facebook about Catholic Church leaders; Metemko faces charges under Electronic Information and Transaction Law which carries up to six years imprisonment. Police 18 June also reportedly arrested 32 members of NGO West Papua National Committee in Napua district, Jayawijaya; all detainees released next day. Amid rumours of mandatory COVID-19 vaccination plans, protesters 27 June demonstrated against alleged programme at Freeport mine in Tembagapura district, Mimika regency; authorities reportedly violently dispersed protesters, leaving one injured, and arrested 20. Localised violence erupted in Elelim district as pro-regent supporters 29 June set fire to govt offices and residential buildings, and blocked roads, reportedly in protest at Constitutional Court's decision requesting new local polls and preventing current regent from running in regional election. Meanwhile, Indonesian Red Cross 29 June said surge in COVID-19 cases across country had left Indonesia "on the edge of a COVID-19 catastrophe". U.S.

and Indonesia 25 June agreed plans for maritime training centre on Indonesia's Batam Island in Singapore Strait (see South China Sea).

➡ **Myanmar Tatmadaw continued to struggle to contain acts of resistance amid intense fighting with civil defence groups and ethnic armed groups across country.** Targeted assassinations of alleged supporters of junta increased in June, with several dozen people killed, including local administrators appointed by regime and alleged state informants; with security forces unable to stop killings, armed defence groups mobilised in support of military. Soldiers 22 June attacked resistance forces in downtown Mandalay, leaving several killed on both sides; regime next day intercepted large weapons shipment allegedly destined for Mandalay resistance. Meanwhile, People's Defence Forces and other civilian militias continued to battle Tatmadaw nationwide. Chinland Defence Force (CDF) 6 June staged several deadly ambushes, claiming killing of up to 50 soldiers in Mindat township and 17 soldiers in Thantlang township. Clashes between junta and civilian militias continued in Sagaing Region; heaviest fighting took place in Kayah State, which led to looming humanitarian disaster. Local defence force and Tatmadaw 15 June agreed temporary ceasefire; 14-day ceasefire also struck between CDF and military from 20 June. In Kachin State and Sagaing Region, wave of fresh fighting between ethnic armed groups and Tatmadaw erupted during month. In far northern Kachin State, Kachin Independence Organisation 1 June fired mortars on Putao Airport. In Kayin State, ethnic armed groups and local defence force 1-2 June clashed together with Tatmadaw troops and members of Karen Border Guard Force near border town of Myawaddy; about 600 civilians fled into Thailand; Tatmadaw shell 2 June hit temporary refugee camp in Thailand, injuring two civilians and Thai soldier. During virtual press conference – which junta blocked by shutting down internet – National Unity Government 5 June presented Rohingya policy providing for equal rights for Rohingya and inviting Rohingya to join opposition to dictatorship. Junta 10 June announced corruption charges against deposed leader Aung San Suu Kyi and other senior National League for Democracy figures; Suu Kyi 7 June appeared in court to face raft of charges. For first time since Feb military coup, delegation from regional organisation ASEAN 4-5 June visited country. G7 leaders 11-13 June condemned Feb coup.

➡ **Philippines Low-level violence continued in south between militant groups and security forces.** In Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao in south, clashes between insurgents and security forces took place at relatively low levels throughout month. Clashes between govt security forces and suspected elements of Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) 20 June killed three militants in Linantangan village, Maguindanao province. Military operations against elements of Islamic State-linked Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) continued. Clashes between Abu Sayyaf members and military 6 June killed one militant on Basilan island; military 13 June clashed with remnants of Sawadjaan-linked ASG network, killing three, including brother of current ASG leader Mundi Sawadjaan. Clash 23 June left ASG militant dead in Patikul village in Sulu province. Meanwhile, clashes between armed forces and communist New People's Army continued at similar levels as May: violence in Luzon in north, Visayas in centre, and Mindanao in south left at least ten combatants and civilians dead and three injured throughout month.

➡ **South China Sea Regional defence ministers expressed support for legally binding code of conduct in South China Sea (SCS), while tensions persisted between China and claimant parties.** During Defence Minister's Meeting Plus of south east Asia regional organisation ASEAN and partner countries, U.S. Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin 16 June highlighted China's "unlawful behaviour" in SCS, while Chinese Defence Minister General Wei Fenghe said that "China is determined to safeguard the country's core interests". ASEAN ministers 16 June underlined in declaration need for "early conclusion of an effective and substantive [Code of Conduct]." During visit to Indonesia's capital Jakarta, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell 3 June said EU supports "ASEAN-led process towards an effective and legally binding Code of Conduct" for SCS. China National Radio 10 June reported that Chinese Army Rocket Force had recently conducted exercises involving "carrier killer" DF-26 ballistic missiles. Following late May flight of 16 Chinese Air Force planes within 110km of Malaysia's Sarawak state, near Malaysian-administered Luconia Shoals, Kuala Lumpur dispatched pair of combat aircraft to identify and intercept Chinese aircraft and 1 June said it would summon China's envoy; Chinese embassy in Kuala Lumpur 1 June insisted aircraft were on "routine flight training" manoeuvre, while Malaysian FM Hishammuddin Hussein called Chinese action "breach of the Malaysian airspace and sovereignty". U.S. Navy 10 June reported that guided-missile destroyer USS Curtis Wilbur and Royal Australian Navy's HMAS Ballarat 6-11 June held exercises in SCS. U.S. and Indonesia 25 June agreed plans for maritime training centre on Indonesia's Batam Island in Singapore Strait.

➡ **Thailand Parliament considered series of constitutional amendments as protesters commemorated end of absolute monarchy in 1932; violence persisted in deep south.** Parliament 22-24 June reopened debate on 13 draft constitutional amendment bills, one of which involves stripping appointed senate of power to participate in PM selection process. One bill 24 June passed first reading; bill proposes to raise number of constituency MPs and to restore simpler method for selecting party-list MPs. Parliamentary Legal Advisory Committee President Dr. Sukit Atthopakorn 19 June rejected one draft amendment calling for establishment of Constitution Drafting Assembly, said it contradicted Constitutional Court ruling that referendum would be required before drafting assembly could be formed. Meanwhile, thousands of pro-democracy protesters 24 June commemorated anniversary of 1932 coup, staging rallies at Government House, parliament, Democracy Monument and other locations in capital Bangkok; coup had brought end to absolute monarchy. After late May establishment of subcommittees to supervise and enforce social media laws, digital economy and society ministry 2 June announced court order for Facebook and internet service providers which blocks or removes eight accounts that govt has accused of spreading "fake news"; said accounts had been critical of govt and monarchy. Criminal Court 1 June granted bail to pro-democracy protest leaders Anon Nampa and Panupong "Mike" Jadnok, as well as activist Chukiatt "Justin" Saengwong, who face multiple charges including lèse-majesté, sedition and illegal assembly. In the deep south, violence continued. Combined police-military force 21 June raided resort in Yaring district, Pattani province, after receiving reports that small number of insurgents were hiding there; operation left two gunmen dead and injured bystander.