

South Asia Conflict Monitor

monthly newsletter on terrorism, violence and armed conflict...



Balochistan: State Suppression Under Chinese Pressure

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After a brief quiescence, Balochistan has once again gained international attention for extrajudicial killings and disappearance cases since the beginning of this year. In fact, in May 2020, Pakistan Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa had sought Iranian assistance in tackling Baloch militants suspected to be operating from its soil. Gen. Bajwa's request came days after the Pakistani Army lost six soldiers in an IED blast incident claimed by the Baloch Republican Army (BLA). In retaliation to the increase in atrocities on the Baloch and massive deployment of Army in the name of managing COVID-19 crisis in the province, the BLA attacked the Karachi Stock Exchange in June 2020. Earlier, at the beginning of the same month, the Balochistan National Party (BNP) leader Akhtar Mengal quit Prime Minister Imran Khan's parliamentary bloc, frustrated by unfulfilled promises to address Baloch grievances, including the festering issue of the rising number of disappeared cases. In 2018, Mengal gave the government a list of 5,128 missing persons' names from various parts of Balochistan.

The atrocity committed on the Baloch people, irrespective of nationalists and rebels by the Pakistani Army is, however, not a new phenomenon. It started much earlier. But, in 2017, for the first time, the details of the human rights violations by the Pakistan Army and State-sponsored terrorist groups were exposed.

Therefore, it is pertinent first to understand why Balochistan has witnessed a spike in violence suddenly and then to ask is Pakistan taking action against Baloch rebels under Chinese pressure?

Chinese expectation

There are two reasons behind Chinese concerns with Baloch rebels. First, as the largest (geographically) and resource-rich province of Pakistan, Balochistan figures strongly in the CPEC project. The strategically important Gwadar port is located in this province. Therefore, China wants a free and peaceful region for the smooth implementation of these projects. However, BLA attack on Chinese consulate in Karachi in November 2018 posed a serious security challenge to Chinese projects and citizens in Pakistan. Since then, Beijing has urged the Pakistani government to take measures to ensure the safety of Chinese citizens. China once again raised concerns after BLA claimed responsibility for the Karachi Stock Exchange attack in June 2020. According to media reports, China has been putting pressure on Pakistan to get the BLA banned by the UNSC.

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Second, as a mineral-rich province, China wants to tap the natural resources of the area without any local resistance. Chinese companies are engaged in mining activities in this region since 2002. In July this year, the Pakistani government renewed the contract of a Chinese mining company for a further 15-year period. Media reports indicated that Pakistan allowed MCC Resources Development Company of China to operate Saindak copper-gold mine in Chagai district of Balochistan till 2035. The company will invest \$45 million to explore copper and gold in the East Ore Body area of the town where some 278 million tons of deposits are estimated.

Pakistan has stated that it earned \$2 billion from the project between 2002 and 2017. The decision has angered the Baloch people who claim that China has been usurping their province's mineral resources. On the other hand, the revenue generated from the mining activities does not utilise for local development.

Baloch grievance against China

Balochistan is the poorest and oppressed province of Pakistan. Around 75 per cent of Balochistan's population remain in rural areas. The literacy rate of the region stands at 41 per cent, and urban unemployment is at over 12 per cent. The low human development indicators reflect that the local Baloch population is not benefiting from the revenue generated from the Chinese operated mines. The people also argue that they were not consulted when the decision to build the port was taken, and that a major part of the revenue from it will fill the coffers of the central government while the province will receive only a minor share of it. During the implementation of the CPEC project, the Balochis alleged that the locals were hardly recruited in the project works. Brahamdagh Bugti, leader of the Baloch Republican Party living in exile in Switzerland and who is also the grandson of slain nationalist leader Nawab Akbar Bugti, observed lately that Chinese economic projects in Balochistan were aimed at "colonising" the province, and must be resisted.

Suppression by the State

Unfortunately, Islamabad interprets Baloch local people's grievances against State and the Chinese exploitations as a separatist movement. The BLA is declared a terrorist organisation by Pakistan. The same is endorsed by the UK and US. The Pakistani State's approach has been to suppress the

movement by engaging the Army and radical islamist groups to neutralise senior Baloch leaders, youth activists and journalists, who have been reporting on Baloch issues. In February 2020, Balochistan witnessed three attacks that killed nearly 30 people. Since Islamabad does not want to internationalise the issue, it has conveyed to Beijing that the movement would be controlled by military means.

The number of youth disappearances and missing cases have doubled in the last six months. Going by the reports in the social media and online portals run by the Baloch diaspora, there has been a spike in military operations in Baloch like in Kech, Panjgur and Awaran districts since March 2020 onwards. These areas were reportedly shelled by helicopter gunships and massive raids were carried out afterwards. In April alone, in the military raids, 16 Baloch were killed and as many as 73 people were picked up by the Pakistani forces, including students, women, children and infants. On the day of the Eid-ul-Fitr this year, relatives of Baloch missing persons chose to assemble outside Quetta press club and staged a hunger strike demanding the early return of those missing.

Observations

Since the CPEC project is strategically important to China and economically beneficial to Pakistan, Imran Khan Government may go to any extent to ensure smooth implementation of the CPEC projects. But PM Imran Khan does not want to see the UNSC declaring the BLA as a terrorist organisation in order to avoid internationalisation of the issue. The current military means and targeted killings of Baloch leaders to resolve the unrest could worsen the conflict. Therefore, the international community should put pressure on Pakistan to hold dialogue with the Baloch rebels and ensure local people's participation in the economic development of the region.

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AFGHANISTAN



Five months after the peace process accord was signed between the US and the Taliban, Afghanistan continues to bleed due to fighting between the State forces and the Taliban militia. Even a unilateral ceasefire declaration by the Taliban two days before the Eid al-Adha festival did not stop the turf war between the state forces and the Taliban. Earlier, several appeals from the international community, including the US and UN, went in vain. The UN and Afghanistan government reports indicated the increase in civilian casualties and the Taliban attacks on the State forces. But most importantly, despite reoccurring violence, negotiations between the Afghanistan government and the Taliban continued over the release of Taliban prisoners and intra-Afghanistan talks. Moreover, the presence of foreign militants and increase of joint attacks by the Daesh group, the Taliban and Al-Qaeda

on the state security forces remained a significant concern for the Afghanistan government. However, the review period ended with a positive note as President Ghani declared the release of 500 Taliban prisoners and called for holding consultative Loya Jirga (grand assembly of Tribal elders) over the release of 400 dreaded Taliban prisoners.

Given the hidden agenda of Taliban, its linkages with other extremist groups, simmering cold war between President Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah, and involvement of anti-US neighbours of Afghanistan in the country's crisis, political instability and violence will continue in the country.

MAJOR EVENTS:

July 05: The Afghan government clarified that one of the main reasons behind the delay in the intra-Afghan negotiations is not releasing 597 prisoners of the 5,000 as reported in Media. However, the government failed to disclose the exact reason of that. ([Tolo News](#))

July 08: A lesser known Uzbek militant group, Khatiba Imam al-Bukhari (KIB) claimed that the KIB and the Taliban captured several members of a public uprising force in an unspecified place of Afghanistan. The KIB released two pictures about a joint operation with the Taliban. The Long War Journal website has said that the KIB affiliates are operating in Afghanistan's Jawzjan and Faryab provinces. ([Tolo News](#))

July 12: Taliban Spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid rejected the call for humanitarian ceasefire and reduction in violence in a bid to start the intra-Afghan talks. "If anyone seeks ceasefire before talks then such is illogical". In a series of tweets, he said that war is raging precisely because we have yet to find an alternative. Implementation of the Doha Agreement and start of intra-Afghan negotiations are necessary so we can work towards de-escalation and end of war. ([Afghanistan Times](#))

July 12: At least 13 security force personnel were killed and 11 others were wounded in clashes with the Taliban in Badakhshan and northern Kunduz province. In a separate incident, 4 Afghan force personnel died and three others wounded in an attack by Taliban militates in northern Parwan province. ([Khaama Press/Tolo News](#))

July 13: At least 43 people, including three children and a woman, were injured in a bomb blast. The explosion occurred close to the National Directorate of Security (NDS) office in Aybak city, capital of northern Samangan province. The Taliban has claimed responsibility. ([Tolo News](#))

July 20: Kunar Provincial Governor Spokesman Ghani Musmim said Pakistan has been continuing rocket attacks across the Durand-Line on the eastern the rockets targeted several villages in Shiltan district. There are no human casualties so far. ([Afghanistan Times](#))

July 20: The Special Operations Corps in Afghanistan claimed that the Afghan National and Security Forces destroyed at least 20 underground tunnels of the Taliban. It also said the Taliban militants were looking to launch attacks in Sarband and Deh Adam Khan areas of Greshk district. ([Khaama news](#))

July 27: NATO expressed concerns that the continuation of violence by the Taliban might harm the ongoing peace process. It appealed the Taliban to cease violence, live up to their commitments and enter intra-Afghan negotiations as soon as possible. Separately, UNAMA said a tally of 3,458 civilian casualties reported mainly due to violence between Afghan government forces and the Taliban by killing 1,282 and injuring 2,176 others. ([Khaama News/ Arab News](#))



July 28: The Taliban announced a ceasefire with the Afghan government that would take effect when then Muslim festival of Eid al-Adha. The Taliban group in a statement declared a 3-day ceasefire starting from July 31, ordering its fighter not to attack Afghan security forces unless responding to their attack. The group also called on their members not to enter into territory under control of the Afghan government. ([Afghanistan Times](#))

July 30: Quoting Afghan Defense Ministry, media reports said at least nine civilians were killed and 50 others were wounded in Pakistani forces artillery attacks on "residential areas" in Spin Boldak district, Kandahar province. The Afghan Army's Chief of Staff General Yasin Zia directed all Army corps to get ready for similar actions against Pakistani forces and to equip Afghan troops who are stationed along the Durand Line. The Afghan Air Force and the special forces were ordered to stay alert for similar actions against Pakistani forces. ([Tolo news](#))

BANGLADESH



Anti-terrorism agencies of Bangladesh continued their crackdown against both existing and budding extremist Islamist groups in the country during the review period. The agencies continued to arrest cadres of various extremists groups and ceased an unspecified number of weapons, anti-state campaigning materials and documents related to the indoctrination of new cadres. Interestingly, a Hindu woman from Hoogly district of West Bengal, who converted to Islam and married a Bangladeshi Muslim man settled in Oman, was arrested in Dhaka after being identified as a new JMB operative. She was also accused of recruiting cadres for the JMB. Politically, the ruling party targeted pro-BNP media houses to suppress criticism against the government. Nearly 40 journalists were booked under Digital Security Act, and out of those, 37 were arrested. 14 out of 20 provisions of the Digital Security Act are non-bailable. Bangladesh journalists

have been extremely critical of the Act.

In the Diplomatic front, there was a telephonic conversation/meeting between Imran Khan and PM of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina. The ground for the meeting was set after High Commission of Pakistan to Bangladesh Imran Siddiqui assumed office in February 2020 and met the Foreign minister of Bangladesh A.K. Abdul earlier in July. The two PMs discussed the need to renew commitment to SAARC and the Kashmir issue as well.

MAJOR EVENTS:

July 01: Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Commissioner Shafiqul Islam said that militant extremists are incapable of conducting big attacks like July 2016 Gulshan Holey Artisan bakery and café violence. He said that in the remembrance meeting for the victims who were killed in the extremist attack. ([New Age](#))

July 02: Monirul Islam, chief of Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit of Dhaka Metropolitan Police at pre-book release press meet said that in Bangladesh both affluent and marginalised people are vulnerable to engaged in terrorism. The forthcoming study observed that terrorists do not pursue violence simply based on ideology. Only a few get involved in terrorism for the sake of ideology, according to Monirul. "Ideology only works on people after they have dedicated themselves towards terrorism activities." Himself a co-author in the book (with Professor Zia Rahman, chairman of criminology department at Dhaka University), titled "Terrorism in Bangladesh: The Process of Radicalization and Youth Vulnerabilities" the CTTC chief also observed that there is no single reason to get involved in terrorism and their research found that people aged between 15 to 30 years are the most vulnerable. There was an also discussion in the presser about how Militant organisations have resorted to "online recruitment" in Bangladesh during the Covid-19 pandemic. ([Daily Star](#)/ Parthom Alo (Bengali))

July 07: Six members of Jana Samhati Samiti (Reformist-MN Larma) were killed at Baghmara of Bandarban Sadar sub district. The Jana Samhati Samiti (MN Larma) group blamed Parbatya Chattogram Jana Sanghati Samiti (PCJSS- Santu Larma) group, for the killings. Police said the incident happened when the group was holding a meeting. ([Dhaka Tribune](#))

July 09: Bangladesh police Anti-Terrorism Unit (ATU) have arrested a Hizb-ut-Tahrir operative from Dumuria area of Khulna District in Khulna Division. The arrested individual was identified as Humayun Kabir and found to be in possession of five Islamism oriented books. ([Dhaka Tribune](#))

July 10: Bangladesh's Anti-Terrorism Unit (ATU) have arrested one Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT) member, Muhammad Wali Ullah from Mohammadpur area of Dhaka city. ([New Age Bangladesh](#))

July 12: Bangladesh police (RAB) arrested five Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) militants when the group was holding a secret meeting at a safe house in Kuripara village of Mymensingh. The arrestees were identified as Mohammad Asad Ali, Mohammad Mister, Muklesur Rahman Muktar, Mohammad Rashed and Mohammad Based Ali. Four other members of the group managed to flee. ([Daily Star](#)).

July 16: The Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) branch of Bangladesh Police apprehended Ayesha Jannat Mohona (a.k.a Jannatul Tasnim), a Bangladesh born, Indian national for suspected involvement with the women's wing of Neo-JMB. She was arrested from the Sadarghat area in Dhaka city. Mohona, formerly a Hindu, converted to Islam and became interested in studying religion after that. At one point, Mohona was introduced to several members of Neo-JMB's women's wing through social media. Originally Pragya Debnath, Mohona had collected funds from West Bengal for the organisation. ([Dhaka Tribune](#); [Zee News](#))

July 19: The RAB arrested Six JMB operatives from Vatpara area of Savar holding a secret meeting. They were later identified as Omar Faruq, Habibur Rahman, Saidur Rahman, Mahbubur Rahman, Shafiqul Islam and Golam Mostafa. Islamist books and leaflets and several other extremist propaganda materials were recovered. ([Bangladesh Post](#))

July 23: The RAB arrested three Allahr Dal members in Dinajpur District's Bagerhat Bazar area. They were identified Biplob Hossain, Nur Mohammad and Mowla Miah. RAB recovered extremist literatures including leaflets and jihadi books. During interrogation, the detainees confessed that they had been regularly collecting new members and money for running organisational activities for a long time. ([Dhaka Tribune](#))

July 25: Dhaka police recovered a fake bomb from the motorbike of a Policeman in Gulistan area. A detonator was also found. Subsequently, the bomb was found to be a dummy bomb. Last year, (2019) during this time of the year, police recovered explosive materials and on April 30, a hand grenade was hurled at a traffic police in Gulistan. On May 26, 2019, a police pickup was bombed in front of the Special Branch office in Malibagh. ([Dhaka Tribune](#))

July 27: Intelligence sources said that the Neo-JMB (a pro IS aligned group) could attempt to carry out attacks centring Eid-ul-Azha celebrations. The Police Headquarters has already instructed its various units to remain cautious about the group and be ready take necessary measures to prevent any subversive acts. Also Neo-JMB may choose Embassies, Religious institutions or Police establishments as their targets. ([Daily Star](#))

July 27: Bangladesh's Rapid Action Battalion and Ant-terrorism Unit police have arrested six Ansar al Islam from Dhaka and Narayanganj. The Police have unearthed a Facebook ID called "Sotter Shondhane" (in Search of Truth) run by one Ansar al Islam (Al Qaeda linked), identified as Sabuj Sheikh (from Sultanbag area in Narayanganj District). On Same day, five more Ansar al Islam militants have been arrested in Dhaka.. They were identified as Mizanur Rahman Palash, Nurul Huda, Abdur Rashid, Rasel and Abdul Hai. Several books and leaflets on extremist ideology were recovered. ([Daily Star](#); [Priyo News](#))

July 28: Bangladesh Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal claimed that law enforcement agencies have established great control over militant groups but are yet to completely rout them out. He also observed that the militants existence is now limited to scattered small cells in different areas. They have no activity now. ([Dhaka Tribune](#))



July 29: Five people including four Policemen were injured in crude bomb explosion in Pallabi Police Station in Dhaka city. Police blamed local Neo-Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (Neo-JMB) militants. Meanwhile, the Islamic State (IS) claimed responsibility for the blast, as part of the 4th wave of its 'Raid

of Attrition' campaign. Bangladesh police investigation gave it a criminal angle by arresting several gang

members. CTC Deputy Commissioner Saiful Islam quoted in media as saying, "ISIS has made this type of fake claims before... We have so far found criminal intentions behind the incident through analysing primary motive." Last time IS claimed an attack on February 29.. (Daily Star)

July 30: Bangladesh police have arrested one JMB militant , Ziarul Islam from Bolla area in Tangail District. He has two cases filed against him at Narayanganj Police Station under the Explosives Act. (Dhaka Tribune)



July 31-August 02: The Islamic State group (IS) has claimed two other attacks in Bangladesh. The attack on a Hindu temple in northern Bangladesh's Sapahar area of Naogaon was claimed by the IS. The transnational Jihadi group issued a statement mentioning its militants planted an improvised explosive device (IED) on July 31 inside a Hindu temple in, and detonated it causing "material damage". The group also claimed another attack on July 31, by killing a 'sorcerer' in Gazipur. All three attacks were all claimed under the banner of the group's latest iteration of its

"Raid of Attrition" campaign. However, no further details were available and the mainstream media in Bangladesh have not yet reported the Hindu temple attack and Sorcerer death incidents. IS issues statements from Bangladesh under the regional branding of Bengal, without the term "wilayah" or province. (RocketChat)/ Hoop Messenger).

INDIA



Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) and Maoist affected regions of India continued to witness a spike in violent political activities. However, the same became slower in the North East (NE) region due to the continuation of COVID-19 related restrictions. The number of arrests and surrenders in the NE region increased as the rebel groups perhaps found it difficult to operate under a lockdown situation. However, as the COVID unlocking process started expanding to more sectors and areas, the Maoists attempted to regroup in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Telangana, Odisha and Maharashtra.

The restriction on the internet was gradually relaxed in J&K. The restrictions were imposed earlier after witnessing the increase in violence and continuation of local protests against killings of some militants in

the last week of June. However, local people made vigorous complaints to the authorities concerned regarding the slow internet speed. The high-speed internet services in this region were cut off since August 2019 after amendments in Article 370. India's border disputes with China remained unresolved even after four rounds of Major General level talks and one round at National Security Adviser level. Both the sides have increased their presence of ground and air force in the Ladakh region. Other than China, India's border disputes with Nepal and Pakistan also remained complicated. As the government of India has been relaxing the lockdown, the operations of the rebel groups in their respective areas will increase.

MAJOR EVENTS:

July 01: Two Islamic State Jammu and Kashmir (ISJK) militants were killed in a gun battle in Waghama area in Bijbehara town in Anantnag District on June 30. They were identified as Yawar Ahmad Bhat of Hutigam and Ukash Muzaffar Sheikh of Boughgam Kulgam. ([Greater Kashmir](#))

July 01: India banned nine persons including Gurpatwant Singh Pannu, the US-based legal adviser of the banned pro-Khalistan organisation, Sikhs For Justice (SFJ), as terrorists under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) for their involvement in acts of terror and pushing Khalistan movement. ([Hindustan Times](#))

July 03: The Islamic State group (IS) has claimed an attack on security force in Srinagar, Indian-administered Kashmir. A release on its social media outlet (Hoop Messenger) said that an exchange of fire took place in Srinagar leading to the death of one member of the "infidel" Indian forces and "the injury of others". Local media reported about the incident adding the militant involved in shooting as Zahid Das was also killed. Zahid Das was heading IS unit in Kashmir's Anantnag and commanded a group of 5 militants among few had been killed. He was previously involved in several acts of arms snatching and killing of security personnel and civilians. ([Hindustan Times](#); [Kashmir News Service](#))

July 05: Four Maoists were killed in an exchange of fires between the security forces in Sirla forest under Kandhamal district of Odisha. Police claimed that several Maoists were injured in the gun battle. An unspecified number of firearms and other Maoist items were seized from the spot. ([The Times of India](#))

July 07: The Communist Party of India (Maoist) has made a key strategic change and advanced its annual tactical counter-offensive campaign (TCOC), where rebels carry out maximum attacks against security forces, to two phases this year – January to March and April to June. Usually, TCOC was carried out between March and June, allowing rebels easier move in dense jungles of Central India during peak summer. Amid this ongoing Pandemic, the Maoists have managed to recruit 50 cadres in eastern Bastar, Chhattisgarh. ([Hindustan Times](#))

July 09: A J&K based Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Wasim Ahmad Bari, and his family member (father and brother) were shot dead by armed militants in Bandipora District on July 08. Bari was a former Bandipora District party president of BJP. According to police Lashkar-e-Taiba militants were involved in the murders. One of them was identified as Abir Hakani from Pakistan. Later LeT's offshoot the Resistance Front, has claimed responsibility for the killing of BJP leader. In a statement, the TRF said that political stooges who ever sabotage Kashmir's cause with their filthy designs to make and help occupational regime in brutalising Kashmir will be dealt with dire consequences. ([One India](#)/ [Twitter](#)/ [India Today](#))

July 10: The Assam Rifles recovered a huge cache of arms and ammunition near Chedima Village in Kohima District of Nagaland. The arms dump included three 60 mm Mortar bombs, two M-60 Anti-Tank Rifle Grenades, 390 rounds of 7.62 mm Sniper, 109 live rounds of 7.62 mm AK-47, 51 rounds of 7.62 mm Pistol, three Kgs of PEK (explosive) and one AK-47 magazine. ([Northeast Today](#))



July 12: India's elite Anti-Terrorism investigating agency, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) arrested two Islamic State linked persons from Pune, Maharashtra. They were identified as Nabeel Khatri who runs a gymnasium in Pune and Sadiya Shaikh, a student of mass communication at a Baramati college in Pune. Both were allegedly in contact with the arrested Kashmiri couple, Jahanzaib Sami Wani and his wife Hina Bashir Beigh. The Kashmiri couple had been arrested on March 8, 2020 from Delhi for their alleged affiliations with the Islamic State Khorasan Province. Sadiya Sheikh is a highly radicalised extremist who had undergone de-radicalisation twice before and recently planning a lone wolf attack. As per the interrogation report, Sadiya was available on the Telegram app with the name of AHLE-WAFA. She was in touch with three other recruits of Islamic

State (IS) Heena Beig, Jahaanaheb and Abdul Bashir. Heena, Sadiya, Jahaanaheb and Abdul Bashir all used to publish a magazine named 'Voice of India' for the Islamic State. They used to publish content against the government over the issues of CAA and NRC. Investigators have said their plan was to execute a lone wolf attack in Jammu and Kashmir and Delhi. ([Hindustan Times](#); [New Indian Express](#)).

July 12: Indian security forces, a joint team of the Indian Army's 22 Rashtriya Rifles, Jammu and Kashmir Police and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) killed three Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) militants in an encounter in Reban village of Sopore. (Baramulla, J&K). Police identified two of the killed militants as Abu Rafia and Saifullah from Pakistan. ([Kashmir Observer](#))

July 13: In India's Jammu and Kashmir, two Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM) militants were killed in Srigufwara area in Anantnag. One of the slain militants who was a Pakistan national has been identified as Nasir (Shahbaz). Arms and ammunition and other incriminating materials were recovered from the site of encounter. ([India Today](#))

July 13: The NIA stated that a charge-sheet has been filed against 17 key conspirators, who formed a terror group initiated by Islamic State of Syria and Iraq (IS) terrorists Mehboob Pasha of Bangalore and Khaja Moideen of Cuddalore (Tamil Nadu), for their attempt to perpetrate terror activities in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. The 17 persons have been charged under various sections of the IPC, the UAPA and the Arms Act before the Bengaluru NIA Special Court. ([One India](#); [The Tribune](#))



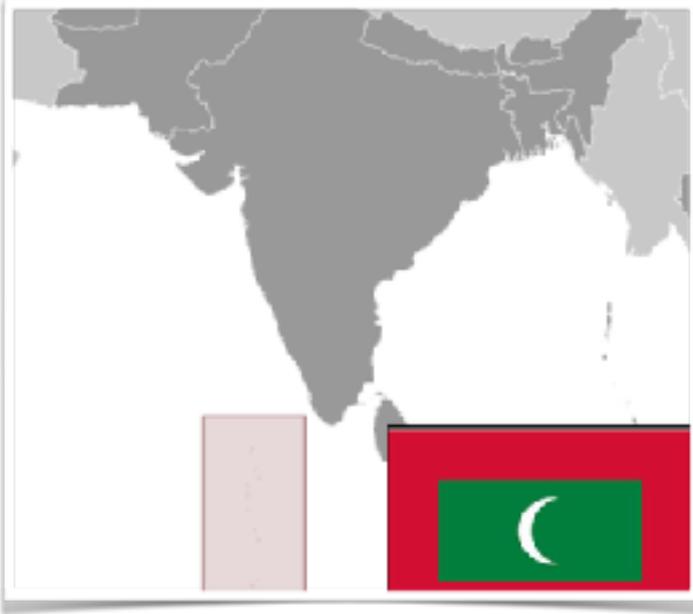
July 15: Kashmir Police rescued Meraj ud Din Malla, a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader and Vice President Municipal Committee Watergam in Baramulla from the custody of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) militants from Baramulla. Malla was abducted by LeT militants in a vehicle while he was waiting for a cab to attend a marriage function in nearby village. Earlier, Malla's family had requested the abductors to release him in a video message put out by his daughter. After his abduction, the police had launched a major search operation in the area to trace him. ([News18](#))

July 22: The India and Jammu and Kashmir focused pro-Islamic State (IS) magazine 'Voice of Hind (Sawt al Hind)' has released its sixth edition, with topics on Muslim prisoners, IS fighters embattled by the Taliban and a commentary on the conversion of Turkey's Hagia Sophia museum to a mosque. The article on Turkey's decision to turn the historical Hagia Sophia museum in Istanbul into a mosque echoes IS's official reaction to the subject on July 16. The latest issue of the monthly English-language magazine released on the

messaging app Telegram. It was also shared via affiliated accounts on Hoop Messenger, such as media outfits al-Qital, al-Burhan and al-Tazkirah, which all claim to support IS fighters in the Indian subcontinent. ([Telegram/Jihadology](#)).

July 30: Indian intelligence agencies have alerted about the possible terrorist attacks in the country in the next fortnight or so. It issued different alerts mentioning at least 20 Taliban terrorists trained by Pakistan Army would carry out the attacks in India on the anniversary of abrogation of Article 370. Indian agencies also issued an alert warning of a possible terror attack at the 'Bhoomi Pujan' (foundation stone-laying ceremony) ritual of Ram temple in Ayodhya (Uttar Pradesh) on August 5. According to the alert, Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) might use its power and proxies to orchestrate an attack. It also gave enough indications about similar conspiracy ahead of August 15 Independent day celebration in the country. ([Times Now/Hindustan Times](#))

MALDIVES



Till July 31, 2020, Maldives recorded total 3793 Coronavirus cases with 16 deaths. The people who have passed away due to complications with COVID-19, includes 11 Maldivians, four Bangladeshi nationals, a man from Philippines. For Maldives, Covid-19 pandemic or its effect on its tourism industry are not the only problem to cope with at present. In July 2020, the spectre of 2007 Malé bombing has return to haunt the country's security apparatus. Two extremists Moosa Inaas and Abdul Latheef who were previously implicated in the Sultan Park Bombing, have been arrested for conspiring against the country. The review period and preceding months have seen an uptick in Islamist activities as the country is still struggling to cope with Salafi jihadist ideology that gained ground among the youths who are supportive of both Al Qaeda and Islamic State. After several arson attacks in March and April this

year, security agencies are now alert for any further such incidents.

MAJOR EVENTS:

July 06: Laamu Atoll Magistrate Court in the Maldives sentenced terror suspect, Abdul Latheef for more than year imprisonment in Maafushi Prison attack case. Latheef who was also a September 2007 Sultan Park bombing suspect, now sentenced for one year and 12 days of imprisonment over obstruction of justice linked to the averted Maafushi Prison attack case. He was arrested during April 2020. ([Edition](#))

July 30: Maldives' Prosecutor General's Office charged two suspects, Moosa Inas, and Abdul Latheef Ibrahim over the deliberate burning of a Police speedboat docked at the harbour of Gan of Laamu Atoll on March 22. Both were also charged with "possession of material implying support for a terrorist organisation" under Article 6 (b) of the Counter-Terrorism Act. Police officers have reportedly discovered documents and videos supporting Al Qaeda and Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) on Inas' laptop. Several documents supporting jihadi groups Al Qaeda and Jabhat al-Nusra were found on Abdul Latheef's hard drive. If convicted of the charge Moosa Inas faces a sentence of 20 to 25 years in prison. ([One-Online](#))

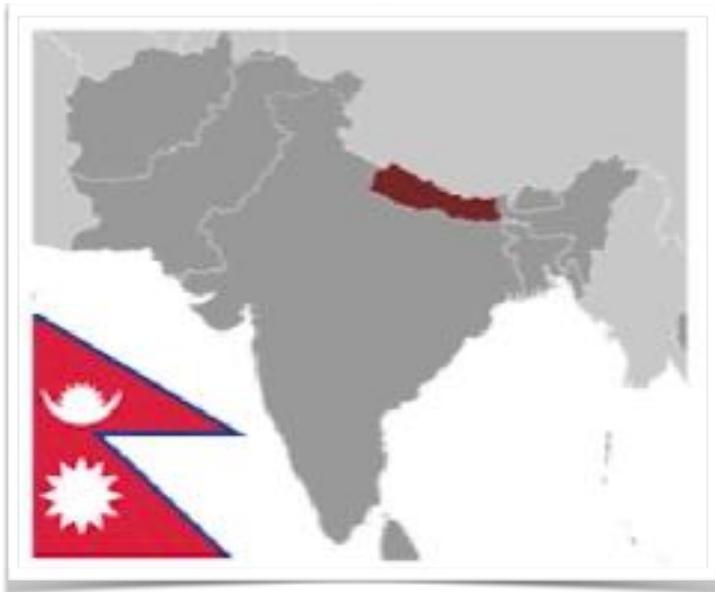
NEPAL

Although Nepal did not witness any significant political unrest and violence in the review period, the NCP (Nepal Communist Party), the ruling political party, continued to struggle to resolve an internal power struggle between top three leaders -- Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli, Prachanda, and Madhav Kumar Nepal. Even after a series of standing committee meetings and one-on-one meetings between Oli and Prachanda, the NCP failed to settle the intra-party disputes.

The internal problems in the NCP have severely affected the delivery mechanisms of the state to manage twin challenges of COVID-19 crisis and monsoon related natural disasters. More than 200 people have died due to seasonal floods and landslides.

Public frustration is snowballing in Nepal over governance delivery deficiency and failure of the state to control the spread of Corona infections. Nepali youths and civil society, who are already engaged in 'Enough is Enough' protests, could arrange more anti-government protests in the near future once the national lockdown is relaxed in Nepal.

MAJOR EVENTS:



July 07: The "Enough is Enough" campaign ended after a 12-point agreement between the government and Pukar Bam and 'Iih'. The protests were organised on June 26 by four youths – Pukar Bam, Iih, Sudan Gurung and Subani Sijapati – against the sluggish response of the government in battling the COVID-19 pandemic. ([Myrepublica](#))

July 09: Quoting a report of consortium of non-governmental organisations, Kathmandu Post said five years since the United Nations Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review, Nepal's government has put on a dismal performance when it comes to transitional justice. The report was submitted to the council on behalf of 440 non-government organisations advocating for human rights. ([Kathmandu Post](#))

PAKISTAN



The Imran Khan government used twin approach of India bashing on Kashmir issue and actions against opposition leaders to hide its failure to manage growing economic crisis and COVID-19 scenario. Some government officials, including the Prime Minister and many political commentators, raised the alarm about the possibility of what they call as false flag attack in Pakistan. They claim that India has spread networks of its agents in Pakistan. It is going to activate its agents and create problems in that country.

Internally, Imran seems to find it hard to manage his PTI led alliance. Some alliance partners have expressed their concerns publicly, and Akhtar Mengal has withdrawn his support to the government. PM Khan has been facing criticism and resistance from the opposition as well as from members within the PTI. There are talks about a minus one formula (minus one Imran Khan) and questions are being asked about the

PM's credibility to remain in the post. One senior leader of the PML-N has already said that anyone with credibility from PTI will be acceptable except Khan.

However, there is still confusion within the opposition alliance whether to demand a vote of no confidence or seek a government minus Imran Khan. It is said that an All Party Meeting will be called to finalise a decision on this matter. On the other hand, Imran Khan is desperately looking for a face-saving opportunity, and he might undertake a cabinet reshuffle to quell anti-Imran leaders in the cabinet.

From an internal security point of view, Baluchistan will witness more violence against extra-judicial killings and suppression of freedom by the Pakistani military in the name of managing COVID-19 crisis in that province. More stringent actions could be taken against Baloch rebels to ensure that the region is free of challenges to the ongoing CPEC projects.

MAJOR EVENTS

July 02: Mumbai (26/11) terror attack mastermind Hafiz Saeed's associate Mujeeb Ur Rahman Zamurani was killed in Karachi. The close aid of the globally designated terrorist was reportedly shot dead by unknown gunmen. Known to be the right hand of Hafiz Saeed, Mujeeb Ur Rahman Zamurani was the Makaran head of Lashkar e Taiba in Balochistan. ([International business Times](#))

July 05: Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) claimed the responsibility of attacking multiple targets including Frontier Corps (FC), Levies Force and a coal mine in Balochistan. BLA spokespersons also claimed another attack in Zard Aloo and Chappar Lat area of Hernai around same time. ([Current Baluchistan/Telegram](#))

July 06: Islamic State (IS) group has claimed to have targeted a member of the intelligence services in north-western Pakistan in the town of Domadola in the Bajaur district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. In May 2020, the IS claimed to have killed two members of the intelligence services in Bajaur, exactly after one year after the IS declared its "Pakistan Province" (May 2019). (RocketChat)

July 07: The Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) , Punjab (Pakistan) arrested three Islamic State (IS) militants in an operation at Ranjhail village of Daska in Sialkot. These operatives were found to be planning their subversive activities in Daska, Sambrial and Sialkot in the province. The CTD also collected evidence of their facilitation, financial help and funds collection for the IS and other related materials. Explosive devices were also seized from the militants ([Dawn](#)).

July 10: Highlighting the plight of Hindus in Pakistan, persecuted Pakistani Hindus protested against Imran Khan Government at UN Headquarters in Geneva during the 44th session of UN Human Rights Council. The hard-line radical Islamists in Pakistan oppose the construction of the Hindu temple claiming that it is contrary to the idea of the Islamic nation. Recently, one Hindu temple in Sindh was brutally attacked by an Islamist mob. ([The Times of India](#))

July 11: A Lahore Anti-Terrorism Court handed down death sentence on two counts to Mohsin Khan, a facilitator of a suicide attack on a Police van outside the Data Darbar shrine on May 8, 2019. At least ten people, including five policemen, had lost their lives in the suicide attack. On Nov 29, 2019, an ATC had already handed down death sentence on 22 counts to Mohsin Khan for facilitating suicide attack outside Data Darbar Shrine. ([The Nation](#); [Dawn](#))

July 12: Pakistan has reportedly restored the bank accounts of the outlawed Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD) chief and the 2008 Mumbai terror attack mastermind Hafiz Saeed and his four top aides. Saeed, a UN designated terrorist whom the US has placed a USD 10 million bounty was arrested on July 17 2019 in the terror financing cases. He was sentenced to 11 years in jail by an anti-terrorism court in February 2020 in two terror financing cases. His bank accounts were frozen by the Pakistani government complying with the UNSC resolution. ([The Indian Express/](#) [The News](#))

July 12: During a webinar Pakistani and Chinese leaders have agreed that Baluchistan was important region due to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The dialogue engaged speakers from most of the mainstream political parties of Baluchistan to reiterate their commitment towards making CPEC a success and to discuss China's achievements in tackling the corona virus pandemic at home and abroad. ([The Nation](#))

July 14: The Baluchistan Liberation Front (BLF) claimed responsibility for an ambush on a military convoy in the Kahan area of Panjgur district in Baluchistan, killing three soldiers and injuring several others. ([Dawn](#))

July 14: The Counter-Terrorism Department has arrested three Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) militants from Gujranwala, Punjab They were Muhammad Saqib, Abdul Malik, and Mujahid Iqbal. Detonators, safety fuses, and explosives were recovered from the possession of arrested militants. The banned sectarian group was involved various mass-casualty attacks against the Shia community in Pakistan, including multiple bombings that killed over 200 Hazara Shias in Quetta in 2013. It has also been linked to the abduction of slain US journalist Daniel Pearl in 2002, and the attack on the Sri Lankan cricket team in Lahore in 2009. ([India Today](#))

July 16: The UN Security Council has blacklisted Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) 'chief' Mufti Noor Wali Mehsud and designated as a global) for participating in the financing, planning and perpetrating acts on behalf of and in support of entities associated with al Qaida. The UNSC's 1267 ISIL and al Qaida Sanctions

Committee added Mehsud to the ISIL (Daesh) and al Qaida Sanctions List, subjecting the Pakistani national to an assets freeze, travel ban and arms embargo. ([The UN News](#))

July 18: Pakistan welcomed the United Nation's decision to place TTP chief Mufti Noor Wali Mehsud on its sanctions list. Previously, the [US designated](#) Noor Wali as a terrorist in September 2019. Noor Wali became chief of TTP in June 2018 after the death of former leader Mullah Fazlullah ([Geo News](#))

July 27: The United Kingdom has placed Noor Wali Mehsud of TTP on its sanction list, frozen his assets and imposed a travel ban following the move by the UNSC on July 16. ([The National](#))

July 31: At least three people, including a woman, were killed and over 20 injured in a clash between an unruly mob and security forces at Friendship Gate border crossing in Chaman, while a heavy exchange of fire also took place between Pakistani and Afghan security forces. After remaining closed for pedestrian movement for several weeks, the border crossing was reopened on July 29 to allow people from both sides to travel to their native areas to celebrate Eid. ([Dawn](#))

SRI LANKA



The political parties of this Island country remained busy in campaigning for the 16th parliamentary elections, which were held on August 5 for which the lockdown was lifted completely. The Attorney General approved the health regulations to be followed during the elections prepared by the health authorities of Sri Lanka.

This time, newly formed political parties -- the Sri Lanka Padajana Peramuna (SLPP) and the Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) -- have participated in the elections. It is anticipated that the main contest would be between the SLPP and the SJB. The popularity of the two traditional political parties -- the SLFP and the UNP -- has declined significantly due to formation of these two new parties.

Meanwhile, the core group on Sri Lanka at the UNHRC expressed its concerns regarding the country's withdrawal from co-sponsoring a critical resolution. Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahinda

Rajapaksa in February had said that his government would withdraw from co-sponsoring a UN Human Rights Council resolution on accountability for war crimes. Sri Lankan Government representatives responded to this concern by saying that although Sri Lanka has withdrawn from co-sponsoring the decision, it is still committed to the reconciliation process through internal mechanisms.

The new elections results are vital for Sri Lanka's minority groups as they eagerly await the results. They are worried about SLPP's electoral promises against the 13-amendment. If the ruling party wins a two-thirds majority, it has promised to repeal a key amendment which put significant restrictions on presidential powers and expanded the role of the prime minister.

MAJOR EVENTS

July 07: The Attorney General Dappula de Livera's Coordinating officer and State Counsel, Nishara Jayaratne revealed that a total of 78 investigation files concerning April 2019 Easter Sunday bombings have been returned thus far in connection to the attacks. On June 27, around 40 files of Police inquiry conducted on the suspects of April 2019 Easter Sunday terrorist bombings were found incomplete and have been returned to the investigating police department for further action. To note, Lankan police have arrested over 200 suspects in connection with the Easter Sunday attack so far. ([MENAFN](#); [Colombo Gazette](#))

July 08: A former Tamil rebel affiliated with erstwhile Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), died in an accidental bomb explosion in a house located at the Puliyadi Junction in Iyakachchi (Kilinochchi district). Police suspect the deceased was member of the former LTTE intelligence wing. ([Asian Tribune](#))

July 09: According to a senior Military Intelligence officer attached to the Directorate of Military Intelligence (DMI) informed the Presidential Commission of Inquiry (PCoI) that former President and PM (Maithripala Sirisena and Ranil Wickremesinghe respectively) should take sole responsibility over Easter Sunday attacks. He added that after the formation of the 52-day Government, the clash between the former President and former Prime Minister intensified and this had a direct impact on the country's national security.

July 13: A police Inspector was arrested by the Colombo Crimes Division (CCD) at Akkaraipattu in Ampara District of Eastern Province on charges of concealing evidence on a bomb blast at Sainthamarudu on April 26, 2019. Nagur Thambi Abubakar was arrested in connection with an investigation into the Easter Sunday attacks. He was serving as Traffic Officer in Charge (OIC) of the Kalawanchchikudi Police at the time of the bombing. 15 people were killed in the explosion that took place in a house in Sainthamarudu during a gun battle between security forces and the National Thowheeth Jama'ath (NTJ) militants. ([Colombo Page](#)).

Jul 21: During a special operation conducted in the Western Province, the police arrested 364 individuals suspected of drug related offenses. Among the arrested, 168 suspects were for the possession of heroin. More than 116 grams of heroin and more than 369 grams of cannabis were among the drugs seized. Police said the heroin was seized from Peliyagoda, Borella, Mattakkuliya and Panadura areas. ([Colombo Page](#))

July 23: Sarah, wife of one of the suicide bombers belonging to NTJ that carried out the Easter Sunday bombings in Sri Lanka killing nearly 260 people may have fled to India to avoid arrest, according to media reports. Bomber Achchi Mohammmu Mohammadu Hasthun's wife Sarah had reportedly fled to India in September 2019. Mohammadu Hasthun, the suicide bomber who blew himself up at St. Sebastian's Church in the western coastal town of Negombo. However, SL agencies have so far refuted the news on Sarah so far while the investigations are on. ([The Hindu](#), [First Post](#))

July 28: Sri Lanka's Former State Intelligence Service (SIS) Director Nilantha Jayawardena informed the Presidential Commission of Inquiry (PCoI) probing Easter Sunday attacks that mastermind of the Easter Sunday bombings was not Zahran Hashim, but his mentor Nawfar Moulavi. He said that Nawfar Moulavi has been living in Qatar for several years and had been identified as having various foreign links. This person has inspired Zaharan and others to wage jihad and easter attacks. ([Daily Mirror](#))

Jul 28: Police Special Task Force (STF) arrested a man with a T-56 assault rifle and a magazine containing 22 live ammunition in the Nikandalupotha area in Wellawa, Kurunegala. The T-56 assault rifle was discovered inside a plastic container filled with grease in the garden located behind a house. The police said the weapon belongs to an underworld leader known as "Malwatte Manju" and the weapon has been used to commit a crime. ([Colombo Page](#))



The South Asia Conflict Monitor (SACM) aims to provide in-depth analyses, country briefs, summary sketches of important players and a timeline of major events on issues relating to armed conflicts, insurgencies and terrorism. It also aims to cover the government's strategies on conflict resolution and related policies to tackle these risks and crises.

The South Asia Conflict Monitor is a monthly bulletin designed to provide quality information and actionable intelligence for the policy and research communities, the media, business houses, law enforcement agencies and the general reader by filtering relevant open source information and intelligence gathered from the ground contacts and sources.

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