

Quarterly Round Up

Mr. Usama Bin Ashraf*

First-Ever Human Mosque in Pakistan

Thousands of people clad in white gathered in Punjab's Jhang district on Friday April 12 to form a human mosque in the image of the Christchurch's Al Noor mosque, where 50 people were martyred by a white supremacist four weeks ago. The flags of New Zealand and Pakistan were also displayed along with a giant banner which read: "Solidarity with the Martyrs of Christchurch from Pakistan." Worshipers were standing in such a formation to form the words "Islam is Peace." The tribute was organized by the MUSLIM Institute, a non-government organization aimed at promoting peace and stability in the Muslim world. The Chairman of the MUSLIM Institute, Sahibzada Sultan Ahmed Ali, praised the New Zealand government especially the Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, for her response that "not only soothed the wounds of Muslims but also assured them that Muslims in their country is safe."

First-Ever Image of a Black Hole

Accomplishing what was previously thought to be impossible, a team of international astronomers released the first-ever image of a black hole, which is located in a distant galaxy. The black hole is 500 million trillion km away and was photographed by a network of eight telescopes across the world. Evidence of the existence of black holes – mysterious places in space where nothing, not even light can escape – has existed for quite some time, and astronomers have long observed the effects on the surroundings of these phenomena. Learning about these mysterious structures can help students understand the gravity and the dynamic nature of our universe, all while sharpening their math skills.

North Korea-US Nuclear Talks

North Korea built its first nuclear facilities in the early 1980s. For years, the United States and the international community have tried to

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negotiate an end to North Korea's nuclear, missile development and its export of ballistic missile technology. On June 30, U.S. President Donald Trump meets with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un at the demilitarized zone dividing North and South and becomes the first sitting U.S. President to set foot in North Korea. The leaders agree to resume negotiations and say working-level talks will restart within the next several weeks.

US-China Trade War

The world's two largest economies have been locked in a bitter trade battle. The US and China impose tariffs of hundreds of billions of dollars upon each other's goods. US President Donald Trump has long accused China of unfair trading practices and intellectual property theft. In China, there is a perception that America is trying to curb its rise as a global economic power. The US has imposed tariffs on more than \$360bn of Chinese goods, and China has retaliated with tariffs on more than \$110bn of US products. Negotiations are on-going but have been proven difficult. Uncertainties around the trade war have hurt businesses and weighed on the global economy.

Gulf of Oman: Tanker Attacks

On June 13, two oil tankers were damaged by explosions near the Strait of Hormuz in the Gulf of Oman, a strategic waterway crucial to global energy supplies. Each tanker was carrying 75,000 tons of naphtha from the United Arab Emirates to Taiwan. Four tankers were damaged by explosions within the UAE'S territorial waters in the Gulf of Oman, in the early hours of 12 May. It was the second time in a month that tankers have been attacked in the region and came amid escalating tension between the United States and Iran in the Persian Gulf region. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo swiftly accused Iran of being behind the attacks. But a senior Iranian official insisted Iran had "no connection with the incident" and called for an international investigation of the incident, describing it as a possible false flag operation.

Sri Lanka Attacks: Easter Bombings

On Easter, Sunday, April 21, a series of devastating terror attacks struck popular churches and high-end hotels in Sri Lanka killing over 350 people and wounding 500 others. Nearly all victims were Sri Lankan, many of them Christian worshippers attending Easter mass. Dozens of foreigners were also killed. The attacks were the deadliest on the island nation since the end of its civil war 10 years ago and targeted three churches as well as four hotels in the capital, Colombo. Sri Lankan authorities said the attacks were carried out by two little-known organizations and ISIS claimed the responsibility for attacks. According to the State Intelligence Service, the second wave of attacks was also planned but was stopped as a result of government raids.

General Elections in India

On April 11, India embarked on a six-week-long vote for a new parliament, which will then select a prime minister. India faces high unemployment, religious extremism, sharpening sectarian and cast divisions and a recent flare-up of tensions with Pakistan. On May 23, the results of elections were announced and Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has claimed a landslide victory in national elections that cements the Hindu nationalist leader as the country's most formidable politician in decades. BJP Hindu nationalist leader brushes aside economic woes to claim another term. With Modi coming into power again, human rights activists have shown concerns over already worsening situation of human rights in Indian Occupied Kashmir.

PM Theresa May Resigned over Brexit

Theresa May became the leader of Britain after the country voted in a June 2016 referendum to leave the European Union. Brexit was her number one job, and she couldn't succeed to deliver it. She had been struggling to get parliamentary support for the legislation needed to implement the deal. She had agreed with the European Union on how the UK would leave the bloc. Her deal was rejected three times by the UK Parliament. After multiple efforts, May was unable to sway members of parliament to back her compromise vision of Brexit. On May 24, she

officially announced her resignation saying, “It will always remain a matter of deep regret for me that I have not been able to deliver Brexit.”

Gaza-Israel Conflict

The Palestine-Israel conflict has been highly labelled as the mother of all issues in the Middle East. It is one of the most protracted and potentially dangerous conflicts in the world. The latest violence began during protests in Gaza on 3rd May against the blockade of the area. At least four Israelis were killed and 25 Palestinians were martyred. After more than seven decades, the resolution of the conflict is still a distant dream and Palestinians look for their rights. The international community should play a constructive role to resolve this conflict.