

New Trump-era US-China dialogue set for June 21

AFP, Washington

The first meeting in a much-touted new diplomatic and defense dialogue between the United States and China will take place in Washington on June 21, the State Department announced Thursday.

North Korea's nuclear weapons program is likely to top the agenda for next week's talks, which follow Pentagon chief Jim Mattis's assurances to Asian allies that the initiative will not compromise US opposition to China's activities in the South China Sea.

President Donald Trump -- who frequently denounced China on the campaign trail -- has turned to Beijing to help pressure Pyongyang, with Mattis arguably his most important statesman on the issue.

Mattis and US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson will host Chinese State Councilor Yang Jiechi and General Fang Fenghui, Chief of the People's Liberation Army's Joint Staff Department, along with other officials from both sides, the announcement said.

The meeting aims "to expand areas of cooperation while narrowing differences on key diplomatic and security issues," the State Department added in a statement.

Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping agreed to the dialogue during their talks in April at the Republican billionaire leader's Mar-a-Lago weekend retreat in Florida.

After meeting with Xi, Trump -- who once accused China of "raping" the US -- praised its leader as a "good man," saying it would be inappropriate to put pressure on Beijing while Washington is seeking its help with Pyongyang.

Mattis directly addressed the North Korea issue during a major Asia-Pacific defense summit earlier this month, calling its nuclear ambitions a "threat to us all," in an appeal for international unity.

It is "imperative that we do our part each of us to fulfill our obligations and work together to support our shared goal of denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula," Mattis said at the event in Singapore.

"The Trump administration is encouraged by China's renewed commitment to work with the international community toward denuclearization," he added.

Mexican journalists demand justice in colleague's murder

AFP, Mexico City

Murdered Mexican journalist Javier Valdez's widow, children and colleagues led protests Thursday to mark one month since he was gunned down in the street, condemning the lack of progress in the investigation.

Valdez, 50, was shot a dozen times in broad daylight on May 15 outside the offices of *Riodoce*, the newspaper he co-founded in the violent western state of Sinaloa.

A veteran crime reporter, award-winning author and longtime AFP contributor, he is the highest-profile journalist yet to be murdered in Mexico, where more than 100 of his colleagues have been killed since 2000.

The crime drew international outcry and forced President Enrique Pena Nieto to publicly address the issue for the first time.

But one month on, Valdez's colleagues are unimpressed by the results of the president's promises to fight impunity in a country where more than 90 percent of these cases remain unpunished.

One journalist pulled an ambush protest on Pena Nieto as he delivered a speech to media executives on his government's commitment to a free press.

"Enough bloodshed," read a banner held up by journalist Alvaro Delgado of the newsweekly *Proceso*.

Hundreds of journalists and activists held protest marches in Sinaloa's capital, Culiacan, and Mexico City's historic center. Smaller protests were held in several other cities around the country.

In Mexico City, protesters carried pictures of murdered and missing journalists and read out the long list of their names.

One group unfurled a large Mexican flag with the green and red replaced by black. Its insignia read: "The state is dead."

The investigation into Valdez's death shows little progress.

Speaking at the protest in Culiacan, Valdez's widow, Griselda Triana, voiced outrage at the authorities' "incompetence."

"The few times they've approached me to tell me about their progress on the case, the truth is that you can tell they're useless," she said.

"I ask myself if I haven't crossed paths with Javier's murderers this month in the street," she told reporters.

Dhaka-Aricha-Khulna

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days before and after the Eid, he said.

Shafiqul, however, admitted that four landing stations at Daulatdia were vulnerable.

"Big ferries are already having difficulties at these landing stations," he added.

Faruk Talukder Sohel pointed out that besides the lack of landing stations and ferries, there was a syndicate at the terminal that allows trucks to cross the river during the Eid in exchange of money.

The authorities need to stop this, he added.

Najmus Sadat, deputy commissioner of Manikganj, said they would be alert and take action if they found any such syndicate.

Azmal Hossain, deputy general manager of BIWTC, said usually 3,000 to 4,000 vehicles cross the Padma using the ferry ghat every day and the number would multiply during the Eid.

Handling the traffic will be a big challenge, he said.

After going across the Padma, the

holidaymakers heading to Jessore and Khulna will have to take a detour through Jhenidah as an iron bridge at Shimakhalia Bazar in Shalikha of Magura on Jessore-Dhaka collapsed five months ago.

The construction of another bridge is yet to be completed.

Shamsul Islam, the driver of a bus, said it takes around an hour longer to go to Jessore from Magura.

People of southern districts also use the Dhaka-Mawa highway. Gridlocks may occur in the absence of proper management of ferry and launch services at Shimulia and Kathalbari ghats.

Bad weather may also contribute to the tailbacks, a staff of the ghat said.

Dhaka-Chittagong

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often takes 15 to 16 hours to cross the distance during Eid holidays, mainly because of the traffic congestion at these two points and accidents involving overloaded vehicles at several other points of the highway.

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After going across the Padma, the

Dhaka-Tangail

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Rabna to Elenga is in a bad shape creating bottlenecks. The authorities said the road would be repaired before the Eid.

The works for upgrading the two-lane Dhaka-Tangail highway into a four-lane one are going on.

Lutfar Rahman Lalju, general secretary of bus-minibus workers union in Tangail, said the works should be suspended for at least seven days before and after the Eid and trucks shouldn't be allowed on the road to ease some pressure.

Mahbub Alam, superintendent of police in Tangail, said the four-lane project director was requested to keep the works suspended for seven days before Eid.

Maznu Miah, a driver of Nirala Paribahan in Tangail, said law enforcers should be alert at all times to prevent traffic chaos.

Khalilur Rahman Patwary, officer-in-charge of Gorai Highway Police Station, blamed the level crossing at Dherua in Mirzapur for tailbacks on the highway.

At least 12 trains go through the road about 24 times a day, creating tailbacks of hundreds of vehicles on the both sides.

Noor-e-Alam, executive engineer of

Roads and Highways Department in Tangail, said fixing the potholes on the highway was going on while measures were being taken to let vehicles use all four lanes wherever possible.

Vehicles using 138 routes in 26 districts including 16 northern and five south western districts use this highway. Every day, around 12,000 vehicles use this highway. But during the Eid, the number increases to 30,000 to 40,000, according to highway police.

Dhaka-Sylhet

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on the Shahbajpur bridge in Brahmanbaria's Sarail. After several cracks developed on the bridge, a Bailey bridge was constructed over the Titas river there. Vehicles move slowly on that bridge as it starts to shake whenever a heavy truck crosses it.

Dhaka-Mymensingh

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which eat up a large portion of the road space, further halt the traffic flow. The increased number of vehicles during holidays will only cause congestions, our Mymensingh correspondent reports.

Bangladesh 84th

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It said the world became 0.28 percent more peaceful than the previous year.

"The global level of peace has slightly improved this year by 0.28 percent, with 93 countries improving, while 68 countries deteriorated."

Since 2008, the global level of peace deteriorated by 2.14 percent, with 80 countries improving while 83 deteriorated.

The IEP pointed out that there had been the largest deterioration in terrorism impact indicator, with 60 percent recording higher levels of terrorism in 2017 than in 2008. The number of countries experiencing record number of deaths from terrorism jumped to 23, including Denmark, Sweden, France, and Turkey."

Iceland has retained its place as the most peaceful country in the world since 2008, followed by New Zealand, Portugal, Austria and Denmark while war-ravaged Syria and Afghanistan remained at the bottom of the rankings.

In South Asia, Bhutan has been identified as the most peaceful country, followed by Sri Lanka, Bangladesh,

Nepal, India, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Bhutan ranks 13th, Sri Lanka 80th, India 137th, Pakistan 152nd and Afghanistan 162nd.

The report said the economic impact of violence on the global economy in 2016 was \$14.3 trillion in purchasing power parity (PPP) terms which was equivalent to 12.6 percent of the world's economic activity.

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The IEP is an independent, non-partisan and non-profit think tank dedicated to shifting the world's focus to peace.

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Chikungunya awareness

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comes when chikungunya has become quite common in the capital with fears of further spread of the viral disease due to very high presence of aedes mosquitoes.

Forty-seven of the 53 areas of two Dhaka city corporations surveyed by the DGHS early June this year were found with a very high presence of aedes mosquitoes.

On average, fifty-two percent of plastic barrels, buckets, clay pots, used or abandoned tyres and tubes and water tanks have been found with larva or pupae of this mosquito. Besides, stored clean water is a perfect breeding place for aedes mosquitoes.

Dr Tahmina said the campaign would begin at 9:00am and end at 2:00pm. Health Services Division Secretary Sirajul Haque Khan and Health Education and Family Welfare Division Secretary Sirajul Islam would inaugurate the campaign in Dhaka North City Corporation and Dhaka South City Corporation respectively.

"The students in groups will go to the households, show practically the possible breeding sources of aedes mosquitoes and encourage people to inform it to others," Dr Tahmina told

The Daily Star. They would also distribute leaflets containing such information.

Niaz Morshed, a student of Dhaka Medical College, who attended an orientation on the campaign, said they were excited about the massive campaign.

"We will inform the people how they can prevent chikungunya by not creating any scope for aedes mosquitoes to breed," he told this correspondent.

Besides, Niaz said they would inform them what to do if one is infected with the disease.

Chikungunya causes fever and severe joint pain, muscle pain, headache, nausea, fatigue and rash. Joint pain is often very debilitating but usually lasts for a few days or may be prolonged to weeks.

While dengue can be fatal at times, chikungunya is not. However, for patients with old-age complications or diabetes, chikungunya might lead to fatalities, epidemiologists say.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), there is no cure for the disease. Treatment is focused on relieving the symptoms.

6 found guilty

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These are the latest convictions in a long-running case that at its outset involved 189 defendants.

One of the most high profile, Yakub Memon, was executed in 2015 -- a decade after he was convicted under controversial anti-terror legislation that is no longer on the statute books.

The attack also involved Bollywood star Sanjay Dutt, who served time for buying weapons from gangsters accused of orchestrating the bombings before walking free last year.

MUMBAI BLASTS CASE TIMELINE

March 12, 1993: Within an hour, a total of 13 bombs exploded throughout Mumbai.

Most of the bombs were planted in cars and scooters. The explosions killed 257 people and injured 713.

April 19, 1993: The Crime Branch arrests actor Sanjay Dutt at Mumbai airport on charges of possession of an AK-56 rifle, a 9mm pistol and ammunition.

April 28, 1993: Dutt confesses about possession of arms and later destroying it.

May 5, 1993: The Bombay High Court grants Dutt an interim bail.

November 4, 1993: Over 10,000 page-long primary charge-sheet filed against 189 accused, including Dutt.

April 10, 1994: The TADA court discharges 26 accused, while charges against the remaining 163 framed.

April 19, 1994: Trial begins.

October 14, 1994: The Supreme Court grants bail to Dutt, which was cancelled by the trial court in July.

November 20, 1994: Dutt takes back his confession.

June 13, 2006: Gangster Abu Salem's trial separated.

September 12, 2006: The court pronounced four members of the Memon family guilty and acquits three. It announced death penalty to 12 other convicts and 20 are given life imprisonment.

July 31, 2007: Dutt gets six years rigorous imprisonment.

August 20, 2007: Sanjay Dutt appeals to the Supreme Court.

November 1, 2011: The SC begins hearing on appeals filed by Dutt and 100 other convicts as well as the state.

March 21, 2013: The SC upholds death sentence of Yakub Memon, transfers death sentence of 10 convicts to life imprisonment and also upholds life imprisonment of 16 out of 18 convicts. The court declares five year jail term to Dutt and asks him to surrender within four weeks.

July 21, 2015: The SC rejects Yakub Memon's petition.

July 29, 2015: President and Maharashtra Governor reject Yakub's second mercy plea.

July 30, 2015: Yakub Memon hanged at Nagpur central jail. SC rejects a last-minute plea seeking a 14-day stay on his execution.

February 25, 2016: Sanjay Dutt walks free from Yerwada jail.

May 29, 2017: The TADA court announces June 16 as the date for pronouncement of judgement on trial against Abu Salem and other six accused.

SOURCE: LIVEMINT

MALAYSIA'S 1MDB SCANDAL US moves to seize another \$40m