

Headlines at a Glance - 7th July 2020

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China troops pull back from key friction points

The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) has withdrawn up to 1.5km from friction areas in Galwan Valley, Hot Springs and Gogra along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh, and the Indian Army has pulled back proportionately, acting on an understanding reached last week by top Indian and Chinese military commanders on a phased de-escalation of the ongoing border conflict in the Ladakh theatre, multiple people familiar with the developments said. A minor thinning of PLA soldiers has also been noticed at the sensitive Finger Area near Pangong Tso, they added. But India is keeping its guard up and advancing with maximum caution as the complex disengagement process begins along the tense and heavily militarized border, an official said on the condition of anonymity. The Indian Army has observed the PLA retreat up to 1.5km (still under verification) from Patrolling Point (PP)-14 in the Galwan Valley — the site of a deadly clash which left 20 Indian and an unconfirmed number of Chinese soldiers dead on June 15 — after removing some temporary structures and tents it had pitched there, a second official said.

SOURCE: *Hindustan Times*

NHAI to undertake performance assessment and ranking of the national highways

National Highways Authority of India under the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has decided to undertake performance assessment and ranking of the highways in the country. The assessment audit and ranking of the National Highways is aimed to take corrective recourse, wherever needed, to improve the quality and provide higher level of service to highway commuters. The assessment parameters are based on different international practices and studies for benchmarking highway performances in Indian context. The criteria for the assessment have been broadly categorized in three main heads. They are - Highway Efficiency, Highway Safety and User Services. On the basis of outcome of the assessment, the authority will undertake a comprehensive

analysis and decide on the level of intervention required to enhance the overall service quality. Additionally, important parameters like operating speed, access control, and time taken at toll plaza, road signage, road markings, and accident rate will also be considered while conducting the assessment.

SOURCE: *The Hindu*

Kuwait to limit number of Indians to 15% of its total population

A new draft expat quota bill, approved by the legal and legislative committee of Kuwait's National Assembly, could put foreign citizens in danger of leaving the Gulf nation, if become law. The bill proposes to reduce the number of Indians to 15% of their total population, reported Kuwait Times. Currently, Kuwait has the highest number of expats from India at 1.45 million. This draft expat quota bill, if enacted into law, could force as many as 800,000 Indians to leave Kuwait. After India, Egypt accounts for the second-highest number of expats in Kuwait. The bill has also proposed to reduce their number to 10%. According to a report in the Kuwait Times, the bill is to be transferred to the respective committee so that a comprehensive plan is created. Since the beginning of coronavirus pandemic, many countries are changing their rules for foreign citizens, starting from travel ban to stricter visa rules in order to limit the spread of the virus. There has been a clamor among lawmakers and government officials in Kuwait for reducing the number of expats, which grows louder after the Covid-19 outbreak, Kuwait Times reported.

SOURCE: *Financial Express*

Bucking China pressure, Taiwan, Somaliland establish diplomatic ties

Taiwan has scored a rare diplomatic victory in establishing relations with the independent region of Somaliland. Intense pressure from China has reduced self-governing, democratic Taiwan to having just 15 diplomatic allies and being excluded from the United Nations and most other international organizations where Beijing has leverage. China claims Taiwan as its own territory to be brought under its control by military force if it deems necessary. In elections and public opinion surveys, Taiwanese have overwhelmingly rejected political union with China. Somaliland broke away from Somalia in 1991 as the country collapsed into warlord-led conflict and has seen little of the violence and extremist attacks that plague its neighbor to the south. Despite lacking international recognition, the region has maintained its own independent government, currency and security system.

SOURCE: *Business Standard*

Israel successfully launched its Intelligence Satellite Ofek-16 into LEO

Israel's Defence Ministry announced the successful launch of a new spy satellite early on Monday. It said the "Ofek 16" reconnaissance satellite was launched at 4 a.m. from central Israel into space. It described the Ofek as an electro-optical reconnaissance satellite with advanced capabilities. Shortly after the launch, it said the Ofek already was transmitting data and beginning to orbit around the Earth. It said engineers from the ministry and state-owned Israel Aerospace Industries were conducting tests before it begins full operational activities.

SOURCE: *The Indian Express*