

# Iran defends seizure of U.K. oil tanker

Tehran says the vessel collided with an Iranian fishing boat after ignoring distress call

REUTERS  
GENEVA/LONDON

Britain denounced the Iranian seizure of a British-flagged oil tanker in the Gulf as a "hostile act" on Saturday, rejecting Tehran's explanation that it had seized the vessel because it had been involved in an accident.

Friday's action by Iranian Revolutionary Guards in the global oil trade's most important waterway has been viewed in the West as a major escalation in three months of confrontation that took Iran and the United States to the brink of war. It came two weeks after Britain seized an Iranian tanker off Gibraltar accused of violating sanctions on Syria, an action that prompted numerous Iranian threats to retaliate.

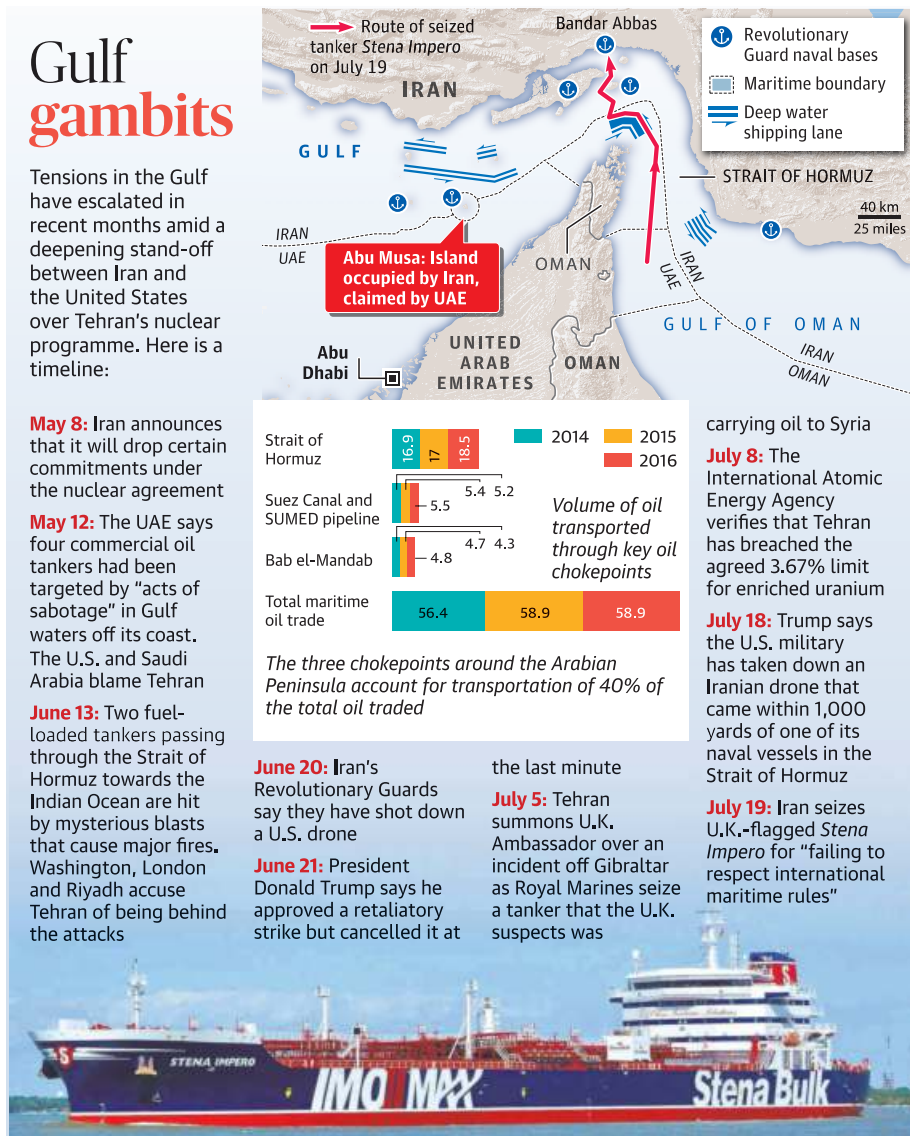
A spokesman for Iran's Revolutionary Guards, Brigadier-General Ramezan Sharif, said Tehran had seized the ship in the Strait of Hormuz despite the "resistance and interference" of a British warship which had been escorting it.

Iran's Fars news agency said the Guards had taken control of the *Stena Impero* on Friday after it collided with an Iranian fishing boat whose distress call it ignored.

## 23 crew members

The vessel, carrying no cargo, was taken to the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas. It would remain there with its 23 crew members — 18 of them Indians — while the accident was investigated, Iranian news agencies quoted the head of Ports and Maritime Organisation in southern Hormozgan province, Alahmorad Afshar, as saying.

Iran's semi-official Tasnim news agency posted a video



## A hostile act, says U.K.

REUTERS  
LONDON

Britain denounced the Iranian seizure of a British-flagged oil tanker in the Gulf as a "hostile act" on Saturday, rejecting Tehran's explanation that it had seized the vessel because it had been involved in an accident.

Defence Secretary Penny Mordaunt called the incident a "hostile act". Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt said he had expressed "extreme disappointment" by phone to his counterpart, Mohammad Javad Zarif. Britain also summoned the Iranian charge d'affaires.

## Saudi to host U.S. troops

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
RIVADH

Saudi Arabia has decided to host U.S. troops in a joint move with Washington to boost regional security, the kingdom's Defence Ministry said.

"Based on mutual cooperation between Saudi Arabia and the United States of America, and their desire to enhance everything that could preserve the security of the region and its stability... King Salman gave his approval to host American forces," a Ministry spokesman was quoted by state news agency SPA as saying.

Saudi Arabia has not hosted U.S. forces since 2003 when they withdrew following the end of the war with Iraq.

# Pak. ruling party's tweets spark fresh censorship concerns

PTI asks scribes to practise journalism, not 'agenda'

MEHMAL SARFRAZ  
LAHORE

On July 16, the official Twitter handle of the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) sparked off a fresh debate on censorship under the present regime when it sent out a dozen tweets on media ethics, using the hashtag #JournalismNotAgenda.

The content of the tweets confirmed that PTI's media managers have a murky understanding of state, citizenship, media and the complementary way they function in a democracy, said political analyst Salman Zaidi, speaking to *The Hindu*.

"Whether or not these tweets represent the Prime Minister's views... the PM is not known to rein in federal Ministers when they behave like trolls," he said.

Pointing out that many of the tweets invoked "defence and security", Mr. Zaidi said that with an increased securitisation of the public sector apparatus, fundamental freedoms were being defined in terms of security.

**Freedoms under threat**  
"Dictatorships upend media freedoms, and the PTI may want to think about the legacy it builds as a party seeking re-election. Not only are the 'directives' issued in the name of security rather childish, they come from a party whose own track for mudslinging, defaming, name-calling and irresponsible statements is rather well known," he said.

Underlining that some of the tweets were misunderstood by journalists, Muhammad Kamran, operations head of the PTI's official social media team, told *The Hindu* that the go-



**Rights, duties and censorship:** A protest by Pakistani journalists in Karachi this month against censorship. • AP

vernment's aim was to engage media in a "productive and constructive discussion".

"We will never stand for curbs on media but yes, we do feel that some journalists only talk about specific agenda, use specific language. We feel that journalists should tell the truth and not follow an agenda... This hashtag wasn't for journalists but for those with agendas..." added Mr. Kamran.

However, journalist Benazir Shah told *The Hindu* that such tweets are not just "irresponsible," they are outright "dangerous" and put reporters and news organisations at risk. "Recently, similar messages targeting the freedom of press have come from other state organisations as well. Those in Pakistan who still care about an independent and free press, and their right to information, should be concerned about the PTI's authoritarian impulses," she said.

Senior journalist Ahmad Noorani told *The Hindu* that the tweets were posted to harass journalists, make them fall in line and to give a message to party followers that they shouldn't trust cer-

tain journalists critical of the establishment.

## History of attacks

"They fear that such critical journalistic work can expose failures of the party and can also push minds of party workers to think rationally. PTI supporters have a history of attacking media houses and journalists and PTI trolls are known for their abusive and threatening tweets and posts against media houses in general and individual critical journalists in particular," said Mr. Noorani.

He added that he was not sure whether the Twitter onslaught was ordered by the party's top leadership, though the tweets were sent through the PTI's official handle. "I know for a fact that not all Twitter and Facebook accounts introducing themselves as of PTI are being run by PTI supporters."

Mr. Kamran said the party had two kinds of tweeters. "One, who are members of our team, who sign our code of conduct... We monitor them so we know that they don't do anything unethical. The other set is of supporters who are not in our control."

## ELSEWHERE



## Hong Kong actor stabbed in mainland China

BEIJING  
Hong Kong actor Simon Yam was stabbed in the stomach while appearing on stage for a promotional event in southern China on Saturday. A man ran onto the stage and stabbed and slashed the veteran actor, video broadcast on local media showed. Mr. Yam was receiving treatment at a local hospital and his wounds are not life-threatening, the local Huojia Development Zone police said. • AFP

## Pak. PM Imran Khan begins U.S. visit

Terror, Afghan peace process, ties with India to be discussed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
ISLAMABAD

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on Saturday left for his maiden trip to the U.S. to have face-to-face talks with President Donald Trump and reboot bilateral relations.

Mr. Khan is undertaking the three-day trip on the invitation of Mr. Trump, and is to be joined by Army chief Gen. Qamar Javed Bajwa and ISI chief Lt. Gen. Faiz Hameed.

Diplomatic sources said that issues like the Afghan peace process, Pakistan government's action against terrorism and terror financing and restoration of military aid to Pakistan would be the highlights of the trip.

Mr. Khan is also expected to brief President Trump



Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan. • REUTERS

about the steps he has taken to normalise relations with India, especially after the Pulwama terror attack in Kashmir.

**Doctor's release sought**  
Meanwhile, a senior Trump administration official said on Friday that Mr. Trump will seek the release of jailed

Pakistani doctor Shakil Afridi during his meeting with Mr. Khan. Dr. Afridi had helped the CIA track down Osama bin Laden.

"This is an extremely important issue to the President and the American people. I think Pakistan could demonstrate its leadership role in the region and among the international community by freeing Dr. Afridi," the official told reporters on Friday.

In an interview to Voice of America, the lawyer and family members of Dr. Afridi expressed hope that Mr. Trump and Mr. Khan would discuss his release.

The U.S. has been repeatedly requesting Pakistan to free Dr. Afridi, said the senior administration official.

## China stresses need for united trade front

Ugly path of unilateralism has affected economic stability, says envoy to India

ATUL ANEJA  
BEIJING

Ahead of the next informal summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping, China has flagged its interest in partnering India for building a united front of emerging economies and developing countries to counter trade headwinds.

Amid a spiralling trade war with the U.S., Ambassador-designate to India, Sun Weidong, told Indian journalists on Friday that "the ugly path of unilateralism and protectionism has now affected the growth and stability of the world economy."

**Seeks bigger partnership**  
"This will surely have an impact on the emerging markets and the developing



**Laying out the agenda:** China's new Ambassador to India Sun Weidong addressing Indian media in Beijing on Friday. • PTI

countries because it also based on the international order that they rely on," he observed.

Seeking a bigger partnership with India on a global scale, Mr. Sun said on the eve of his departure to New Delhi that China and India had a "historical" duty to become frontrunners in protecting

China-India collaboration. Asked to comment on the trade gap between the two countries, he said China "highly values" India's concerns. He pointed out that from last year, China had increased imports of Indian rice and sugar, along with stepping up the review and approval process for Indian pharmaceutical products.

On the resolution of the border issue, Mr. Sun reiterated that the dialogue among the Special Representatives of the two countries, which began in 2003, had yielded the political principles guiding the resolution of the boundary row. Besides, "the basic principle of a package planned through mutual adjustment to resolve the boundary issue" had been identified.

## SUDOKU

			1	7				
6			2	3	5			9
	2		9		6			
4	8							3
		5	7		1	4		
3						1	9	
	4		7		3			
2		9	3	6			7	
			4	8				

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

## Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

5	7	4	8	2	1	9	3	6
6	9	3	5	7	4	8	1	2
2	1	8	9	3	6	4	7	5
3	4	9	1	8	2	5	6	7
8	6	2	7	4	5	3	9	1
1	5	7	6	9	3	2	8	4
7	3	5	2	1	9	6	4	8
4	2	1	3	6	8	7	5	9
9	8	6	4	5	7	1	2	3

## Pregnant black lawmaker claims she was abused at U.S. store

Erica Thomas was asked to 'go back to where she came from'

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
MABELTON

A pregnant African-American lawmaker in Georgia said she was verbally attacked in a supermarket on Friday by a middle-aged white man who used profanity, called her vulgar names and told her to "go back where you came from" as her nine-year-old daughter looked on.

Representative Erica Thomas, a Democrat from Austell, said the man was irate that she was in an express line with too many items.

Ms. Thomas said she was in a line for customers with 10 items or less because she cannot stand for long periods of time.

"And this white man comes up to me and says, 'You lazy son of a b\*\*\*\*', she said, sobbing as she described the confrontation in a Facebook video. "He says, 'You lazy son of a b\*\*\*\*; you



Georgia Representative Erica Thomas. • AP

need to go back [to] where you came from."

## Taken aback

Ms. Thomas said she was stunned by his anger. "I said, 'Sir, you don't even know me. I'm not lazy. I'm nine months pregnant.'" Ms. Thomas said she never identified herself to the man as a public official. She said she was so taken aback by his actions that she didn't think to try to record them.

The incident came days after President Donald

Trump tweeted that four Congresswomen of colour, including U.S. Representative Ilhan Omar of Minnesota, should go back to the "broken and crime infested" countries they came from.

In Ms. Thomas's video, she alludes to Mr. Trump's attacks. She never mentions Mr. Trump's name but says, "There's so much hate in this world and it's being incited by our President every single day." She said that it appeared the man had already paid for his groceries when he approached her. "He ran up on me and just verbally assaulted me," she said. At one point, Ms. Thomas said, the man told her "You people are ignorant."

Ms. Thomas said a store employee at some point approached the man and told him to leave. She said she believes store employees were slow to respond to the assault.

## 'El Chapo' begins life term at prison

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
NEW YORK

Mexican drug lord Joaquin 'El Chapo' Guzman was locked up on Friday at the ADX federal maximum security prison in the State of Colorado, where he will spend the rest of his days.

"We can confirm that... Guzman is in the custody of the Federal Bureau of Prisons" at the Administrative Maximum site in Florence, central Kansas, read a short email from the prisons bureau.

Guzman, 62 former co-leader of Mexico's feared Sinaloa drug cartel, was convicted in February of smuggling hundreds of tons of cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine and marijuana into the U.S.

In a New York courtroom on Wednesday, he was sentenced to life in prison, and sent to the notorious supermax prison nicknamed the "Alcatraz of the Rockies."

## Bangladesh Hindu activist to be tried for sedition

Had sought U.S. help on minority rights

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Internal issues of Bangladesh are for its own citizens to deal with, a group of civil society activists said on Saturday after human rights worker Priya Saha raised the issue of rights of minorities with U.S. President Donald Trump.

Awami League general secretary Obaidul Quader said Ms. Saha will be tried for sedition upon her return. "There is an ongoing drive to create communal disturbance in non-communal, democratic Bangladesh. The recent comments by Priya Saha is part of a trend. Our concerns are not for any neighbour or a distant nation to deal with," said members of the Resistance Group against Extremism and Communalism.

**Influence of India., U.S.**  
The group indicated that the influence of India and the



Bangladesh human rights activist Priya Saha.

U.S. on the internal affairs of Bangladesh was growing and called upon the Sheikh Hasina government to restore the original secular Constitution, drafted after the 1971 War.

Ms. Saha, who was in Washington to participate in an event organised by the State Department from July 16 to 18, had alleged that Christians, Hindus and Buddhists were disappearing from Bangladesh and called for support.

"Please help us. We don't want to leave our country," she had said.