

## Headlines:

- **Pakistan's Blasphemy Laws in Spot-light once again**
- **Qatar Isolated by its Arab neighbours**
- **US Warns China**

## Details:

### **Pakistan's Blasphemy Laws in Spot-light once again**

An outspoken Pakistani student killed by a lynch mob was falsely accused of blasphemy, according to an official report that added his murder was organised by faculty members and rival students. Mashal Khan, 23, was stripped, beaten and shot before being thrown from the second floor of his hostel at the Abdul Wali Khan University in northwest Mardan in April. The country's top court ordered the formation of a joint investigation team comprising police and intelligence agencies, which is set to submit its findings this week. "No direct or indirect evidence supporting blasphemy allegations against Mashal Khan (or his friends) Abdullah and Zubair was received," the 308-page report, a copy of which was seen by AFP news agency, said. The investigation says that the killing was instigated by members of Khan's own secular Pakhtun Students Federation, who felt threatened by his growing prominence as a critic of rising fees and alleged corruption at the university, as well as the institution's staff. Mashal's father, Muhammad Iqbal, told reporters on Monday that the findings had vindicated his son. "This proves my son was not a blasphemer," he said, calling for the suspects to be tried by a military court. It is evident that the Pakistani political system has failed the people when they would rather turn to military courts expecting a result better than that from the civilian courts. This issue also highlights the need for Islam to take precedence in all spheres of government so laws to do with blasphemy can be implemented correctly rather than the whims of the people.

### **Qatar Isolated by its Arab Neighbours**

A host of Arab countries including Saudi Arabia and Egypt have cut all diplomatic ties with Qatar, with citizens being told to return home within 48 hours. Qatar has been claimed to have "supported ISIS" as well as backing Iranian backed terrorist groups. Qatar has denied all such claims and has been left lambasted as to why such a step has been taken. For a long time, despite being armed and protected by the USA, Qatar has acted differently to other Gulf States and has been termed a "thorn" in the side of the US. Its famous news channel, Al Jazeera, explicit support for Hamas and implicit support for the Muslim Brotherhood has been framed as contradictory to US policy. Therefore, it seems that this step has been taken to put Qatar back in its place and to ensure that it knows that the US calls all the shots in the Gulf.

### **US Warns China**

The US will not accept China's militarisation of man-made islands in the South China Sea, Defence Secretary James Mattis has warned. Speaking at a security conference in Singapore, he said such moves undermined regional stability. China's territorial claims in the resource-rich South China Sea are contested by several nations. In his speech at the annual Shangri-La Dialogue forum, Gen Mattis said: "We oppose countries militarising artificial islands and enforcing excessive maritime claims. We cannot and will not accept unilateral, coercive changes to the status quo." This demonstrates China's attempt at consolidating its regional borders beyond its own. As this is a key trading route for the United States, it will do all within its power to maintain the existing set-up to their advantage - however, over time this will be difficult due to the nature and position of the route and its proximity to Beijing, making it contestable.