German-Southeast Asian Center of Excellence for Public Policy and Good Governance
CPG

Get the pattern, read the trend

Asia in Review

No. 7, February/2020, 3

Brought to you by CPG

Dear Readers,

The AiR team is presenting you the third issue of 'Asia in Review' (AiR) in February providing you an update on the latest important events and developments in geopolitics and international relations as well as constitutional politics, law reform and governance in Asia.

I wish you an informative read.

Henning Glaser

Director, German-Southeast Asian Center of Excellence for Public Policy and Good Governance (CPG)

Webpage: www.cpg-online.de,
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/CPGTU/

Main Sections

- Law and Politics in East Asia
- Law and Politics in South Asia
- Law and Politics in South East Asia

- International Relations, Geopolitics and Security in Asia
- Background Reading

Law and Politics in East Asia

China/Hong Kong: Xi ally at helm of Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office

(dql) Beijing last week appointed Xia Baolong, a vice-chairman and secretary general of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, China's highest advisory body, as director of the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office.

Widely regarded as a trusted ally of President Xi, Xia served as deputy party secretary of the province Zhejiang under Xi from 2003-2011 before becoming the province's party chief in 2012.

Along with Xia's appointment, Luo Huining, a cadre credited with having successfully enforced Xi's anti-corruption campaign in Shanxi province who was appointed as head of China's Liaison Office in Hong Kong in January, [AiR No. 1, January/2020, 1] was appointed one of the deputy directors of the office. [Xinhua]

Beijing's move raised concerns among pan-democrats in Hong Kong's legislature over the central government's hardened stance on Hong Kong policy. Commentators and analysts view Xia's appointment as Beijing's attempt to strengthen oversight of the Hong Kong and the political crisis there which has been

frozen in the wake of the Covid-19 epidemic. [South China Morning Post]

China: Xi critic detained

(dql) Chinese rights activist Xu Zhiyong, an outspoken critic of the Chinese government who recently accused President Xi Jinping of being incapable of handling crises China's is facing, including the trade war with the USA, the political crisis in Hong Kong, and the ongoing Covid-19 public health crisis, and demanded that he steps down, [AiR No. 6, February/2020, 2] was detained by authorities in the southern city of Guangzhou. [Radio Free Asia]

Xu has been hiding since December after police in December raided a secret gathering to discuss democratic transition of the country in which he took part. [AiR No. 1, January/2020, 1]

In a related development, a Chinese professor who criticized the Communist Party leaders for failing to control the coronavirus outbreak, was put under house arrest for several days last week. He is currently denied any internet access while his account has been suspended on the popular Chinese messaging app WeChat. [The Guardian]

Japan: Cabinet approves bill supporting firms to develop 5G technology

(dql) Japan's cabinet approved a bill in support of companies which develop secure 5G mobile networks and drone technologies. The bill incentivizes companies developing such technologies with access to low-interest rate loans from government-affiliated financial institutions under the condition that their plans meets cyber security standards.

The move is widely seen as reflecting concerns among the country's policymakers over the growing influence of China's 5G technology. [Japan Times]

South Korea: Merger of political parties ahead of the legislative elections

(dql) The main opposition Liberty Korea Party (LKP) and two minor parties officially merged to form a new

political party under the name “Party for Future Unification” on Monday.

The move aims to pool conservative forces to challenge the ruling Democratic Party in the parliamentary elections in April. [Korea Times]

In a related development, three other opposition parties last week announced their plans to merge to a new party which would be named "Democratic Unity Party". [Korea Herald]

South Korea: Supreme Court approves not-guilty verdict for conscientious objectors

(dql) Upholding lower courts' not-guilty verdicts, South Korea's Supreme Court acquitted more than 100 Jehovah's Witnesses who were indicted for rejecting mandatory military service for religious reasons.

The ruling follows the Court’s landmark ruling in November last year when for the first time in South Korea’s history a conscientious objector was acquitted after the Court ruled that religious and conscientious beliefs were to be recognized as valid reasons for refusing military service. [Yonhap]

Since the 1950s, around 19,000 conscientious objectors have been arrested and served jail terms of 18 months for violating the country's Military Service Act.

Law and Politics in South Asia

India: Modi's BJB loses also New Delhi elections

(ls) In last week's elections in India's capital New Delhi, the incumbent chief minister Arvind Kejriwal and his Aam Aadmi Party ("common man" party) were able to defend their seats in the state assembly. They won 62 of the 70 assembly seats, whereas Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) increased its seats only from three to eight. The result is widely seen as a defeat for the BJB, the latest in a string of setbacks for Modi's party in regional elections over the past two years. It is also interpreted as a backlash against the government's controversial Citizenship Amendment Act. [South China Morning Post]

Nonetheless, Kejriwal said that he intended to work closely with the Central government to develop Delhi in his third term, which has been seen as quite unlike the confrontation that marked his second term in office. He had even invited Modi for the swearing-in ceremony on Sunday, but the Prime Minister could not attend. [The Hindu]

Kejriwal is a former bureaucrat and tax inspector who helped launch the AAP in 2012 to rid the Indian political system and government of corruption and inefficiency. He has pushed pro-poor policies, fixed state-run schools and provided free healthcare and utilities services. His popularity in New Delhi's teeming slums therefore rivals that of Modi. [Al Jazeera]

However, an opinion piece in the New York Times argues that while Modi and his party might have lost an election, they won the ideological battle by setting the terms of electoral politics. For electoral success in India, the article argues, it is no longer acceptable to speak about equal citizenship and political rights of India's Muslims or speak out against the violence and hostility they encounter. [New York Times]

India: Political parties ordered (again) to publish criminal history of their candidates

(ls) The Indian Supreme Court has ordered political parties to publish the criminal history of their candidates for Assembly (i.e. state parliaments) and Lok Sabha (central parliament) elections along with explanations in case they fielded suspected criminals. The information will need to be published in traditional

as well as social media. According to data cited in the judgment, in 2004, 24% of the Members of Parliament had criminal cases pending against them; in 2009, that went up to 30%; in 2014 to 34%; and in 2019 as many as 43% of MPs had criminal cases pending against them. The decision confirms a 2018 Supreme Court ruling, which, however, has widely been ignored. [The Hindu] [Jurist with link to the decision]

Pakistan & India: Governments adopt strict social media regulations, provoking criticism

(fs/ls) The Pakistani Government passed a regulation concerning social media platforms. Although the cabinet had already approved the "Citizens Protection (Against Online Harm) Rules 2020" [Copy of the Regulation] on January 28, this has only now become publicly known through a leak. Only recently, public allegations came up that the government around Prime Minister Imran Khan and the military were already censoring the media and trying to silence the opposition. [RadioFreeEuropeRadioLiberty]

As per the new regulation, social media companies will now be obliged to disclose any information or data demanded by any designated investigation agency, whenever asked. Failing to abide by this will attract fine of up to Rs 500 million (3.2 million USD). It also enables the government to ask social media platforms to remove content deemed "unlawful" within 24 hours, in emergency cases six hours. Furthermore, social media companies are required to establish offices with a physical address in Islamabad during the next three months. [Al Jazeera]

The minister of Information Technology Shoaib Ahmad Siddiqi, said that the law is necessary to preserve "the integrity, decency and respect of individuals and the sanctity of institutions" and would help to "identify and weed out unwanted and slanderous online content." The opposition Pakistan People Party believes that this is about restricting freedom of expression. [The New York Times]

The Committee to Protect Journalists is also asking the government to change course, fearing the restricting of reporting since journalists could no longer protect sources and contacts. [Committee to Protect Journalists]

Digital rights activists worry that the new rules will give authorities unlimited power to restrict social media.

Digital Rights Foundation speaker Nighat Dad gave a statement saying “the worrying part for is that the definition around extremism, religion or culture is so wide and ambiguous and that means they have these unfettered power to call any online content illegal or extremist or anti-state”. [Reuters]

The Indian government introduced new rules for social media companies and messaging apps, too. They are expected to be published later this month. The new guidelines go further than most other countries’ by requiring blanket cooperation with government inquiries, as no warrant or judicial order will be required. [Bloomberg]

Meanwhile, the Modi administration is currently seeking bids from companies to help set up a National Automated Facial Recognition System. It would match photos captured from CCTV with existing databases, with policing a key potential use for such technology. Critics equate the project with the far larger-scale surveillance system in China. [DW]

Pakistan: Suicide bombing at religious rally in Quetta

(fs) At least seven people were killed in a suicide attack near a religious rally in city Quetta in the West Pakistani province of Baluchistan and another at least 21 were injured in the incident on Monday. Two police officers were among the dead. The assassin detonated his explosive vest outside the city's press club when members of the Sunni group Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat (ASWJ) held a rally. So far, nobody claimed responsibility for the attack. In the past, the Pakistani Taliban and the terrorist militia Islamic State (IS) have claimed attacks on mosques, religious rallies or clerics in the province. [Al Jazeera]

Sri Lanka: Families of ‘disappeared’ threatened

(tk) According to Human Rights Watch, Sri Lankan security forces and intelligence agencies have intensified surveillance and threats against families of victims of enforced disappearance and activists supporting them since Gotabaya Rajapaksa became president in November 2019. Instead of fulfilling its commitments that the previous government had made with the UN Human Rights Council in order to promote “reconciliation, accountability and human rights”, it has

repeatedly denied government involvement in serious human rights violations, including enforced disappearance in state custody between 2005 and 2015, when the current president was defense secretary and his brother, current Prime Minster Mahinda Rajapaksa, was president.

The previous government also started criminal investigations and legal proceedings concerning enforced disappearance. Under its relatively open environment, many relatives of the disappeared had chosen to speak out about their cases and started victim's meetings. The current government, however, not only halted those criminal investigations and proceedings. [Human Rights Watch]

On Friday, February 14, hundreds of family members of enforced disappeared persons gathered in Colombo to commemorate their missing family members, and demand justice, truth and reparation. Amnesty International has demanded support for truth-seeking families by the government and immediate provision of information by the authorities, as well as independent criminal investigation in those disappearance cases. [Amnesty International]

Bangladesh builds barbed-wire fences around Rohingya refugee camps

(tk) Bangladesh started erecting barbed-wire fences around Rohingya refugee camps, watchtowers and CCTV. The government said, it had taken these measures to strengthen the surveillance on the Rohingya people and the refugee camps in order to rein in illegal trafficking of refugees. In recent months incidents of trafficking of Rohingya to Malaysia have significantly increased. Several had died on their way.

However, Rohingya refugees and rights groups urged the government not to take these measures. They are concerned, that wire fences may cause psychological and mental disorders. [AA]

Nepal: Former parliament speaker acquitted of rape charges – New speaker a murder suspect

(ls) A court in Nepal has acquitted the former speaker of parliament and senior Communist Party leader, Krishna Bahadur Mahara, on charges he raped a government worker. Mahara, a former leader of the

Maoist rebels, had been elected speaker of the House of Representatives last year after the Communist Party of Nepal won a majority of the seats in elections in November 2017. [ABC News]

Mahara's replacement will likely be Agni Sapkota, a senior member of the ruling Nepal Communist Party and also a former Maoist rebel leader. He is accused of ordering a man's death during Nepal's civil war. Though several hearings over the case have taken place in the Supreme Court, he has not been officially charged. Civil and human rights activists said the case has made mockery of (the) rule of law and undermined human rights obligations. [Dhaka Tribune]

Law and Politics in Southeast Asia

Singapore: POFMA appeal rejected and first Facebook page block ordered

(jk) After the Singaporean Democratic Party (SDP) has been ordered to correct two Facebook posts and one article under the Protection from Online Falsehood and Manipulation Act (POFMA) in December 2019 [Asia in Review No. 51, December/2019, 3], and filed an appeal against the order [Asia in Review, No. 3, January/2020, 3], this first court challenge against POFMA has failed.

Singapore's High Court ruled that statements made by SDP on employment statistics were indeed false and therefore, the order was issued lawfully. The SDP is considering an appeal against the decision and pointed in a statement that POFMA should only be used in "clear cut cases of falsehood", not when interpretation

of statistical data is involved as was the case here. [The South China Morning Post 1]

In another POFMA-related development, the government has for the first time issued a notice for Facebook to be ordered to disable access for users to the States Times Review's (STR) Facebook page. Allegedly, STR's Facebook page has repeatedly posted falsehoods and has not complied with any previous POFMA directions, which is why the "disabling provision" of POFMA is now being used. [The South China Morning Post 2]

Philippines: Head of drug enforcement for Philippine National Police said ultra-violent approach to curbing illicit drugs had not been effective

(jk) Earlier in February, the head of drug enforcement of the National Police said that although volume of crime had decreased, users could still buy illegal drugs with easy and the violent approach of the war on drugs has failed. The Duterte government, which has been criticized for its approach before, seems undeterred and not to be looking for a new strategy. It continues to maintain that it is "winning" the war on drugs and if there are setbacks, those are only due to corruption and "absence of a death penalty". [Reuters]

Indonesia: National Commission on Human Rights finds gross human rights violations by Indonesia's military in Papua

(jk) According to an investigation by the commission concluded this week, Indonesia's military carried out "crimes against humanity" when it shot dead four students and tortured many more in the country's Papua region during 2014 protests. The commission forwarded the findings to the Attorney-General for possible prosecution. [Straits Times]

Malaysia: Campaign for moratorium on attempted suicide charge

(fs) Malaysian Human rights groups and the Malaysian Bar demand the repeal of a law that criminalizes

attempted suicide and the pardoning of those who have been prosecuted and convicted under this provision. Malaysia is one of 25 countries worldwide where attempted suicide is considered a crime, leading sentences up to a year in prison or fine.

The issue arose in the public discourse after a 38-year-old with a physical disability tried to take his live and was sentenced to six months in prison. “The charging and sentencing (...) sends out a completely inappropriate message to the world at large, that Malaysian society is uncaring and lacks empathy towards its troubled citizens,” said the Malaysian Bar's president. Opposing views suggest the government should rather consider rehabilitative solutions and strengthen support mechanisms to help the affected. [The Guardian] [Malay Mail]

Malaysia appoints first female counterterrorism chief

(jk) Malaysia has appointed its first female counterterrorism chief with Normah Ishak taking over last week as the principal assistant director of the Special Branch’s Counter Terrorism Division. [South China Morning Post]

Philippines: Worries about Media freedom as largest television network ABS-CBN struggles

(tk) President Rodrigo Duterte has filed a Supreme Court petition to shut down ABS-CBN, the country’s largest television network, accusing it of committing “highly abusive practices”. Duterte has repeatedly pledged to stop the network’s operation and has threatened other media outlets. [Al Jazeera]

ABS-CBN secured its franchise for 25 years under Republic Act 7966 which gives it the right to operate until 2020. Though, the period previously got extended until the end of Congress in 2022, ABS-CBN has faced an ongoing struggle for franchise renewal since Dutere’s election in May 2016. The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) calls this “a disgraceful attack on media in the Philippines with the intent to destabilize and threaten independent media reporting.”

Last week, more than 500 journalists have gathered to protest threats regarding the broadcasters’ franchise

renewal. [Asia Pacific Report]

The Socioeconomic Planning Secretary expressed concerns that the non-renewal of the franchise may get in the way of promoting economic diversity and fostering competition. It would affect investor confidence in the country and endanger 11,000 jobs created by the network. [philstar]

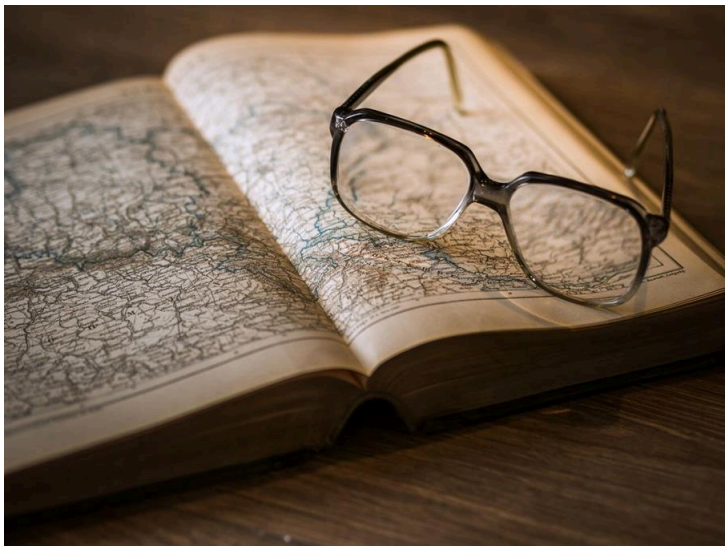
Myanmar: No improvement of Rakhine situation

(tk) Myanmar's military chief and an ethnic Rakhine delegation led by a member of the Arkan National Party (ANP) met in Naypyitaw and discussed how to stop clashes in order to achieve peace in Rakhine State last week. The meeting, however, drew criticism and questions from members of the Rakhine community because this meeting was not officially planned in the ANP and violence continues. [The Irrawaddy]

On the same day, an artillery fire hit a primary school in Rakhine state and left at least 19 students injured. Both, the military and Buddhist rebels denied they were behind the shelling. [Al Jazeera]

Due to the ongoing violent situation and seasonal calmer water, more Rohingyas risk their lives by trying to flee to predominantly Muslim countries like Malaysia or Indonesia. On Tuesday, at least 15 Rohingya refugees drowned when an overloaded boat carrying mostly women and children sank as it tried to reach Malaysia. Local authorities respond with detention, prosecution and sending back the refugees. On Friday, nearly 50 Rohingyas have been detained at sea by Myanmar's navy as they were caught trying to flee. [The Star]

International Relations, Geopolitics and Security in Asia



China and USA clash at Munich Security Conference

(dql) At the Munich Security Conference last weekend, both China and the USA appeared eager to sell their respective visions of global order while bashing on each in stark rhetoric.

Dispersing concerns over cracks in the relationship between the USA and Europe, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo rejected claims about the erosion of the transatlantic alliance as “grossly exaggerated.” He cited NATO’s pressure on Russia, unanimous support for Washington's withdrawal from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty on grounds of Russian treaty violations, pressure on China’s aggression in the South China Sea, and sanctions on North Korea over its nuclear program as examples of the continued strength of the transatlantic alliance and insisted that the “West will win, and we will together,” adding with regards to China that “Western values would prevail over China’s desire for ‘empire’.” [Voice of America]

Defence Secretary Mark Esper, meanwhile, claimed that “[u]nder President Xi’s rule, the Chinese Communist Party is heading even faster and further in the wrong direction,” citing ‘[m]ore internal repression; more predatory economic practices; more heavy-handedness; and [...] a more aggressive military posture.” He urged the international community “to wake up to the challenges presented by Chinese manipulation of the long-standing international rules-based order.”

China’s Foreign Minister Wang Yi dismissed Washington’s criticism as “lies”, accusing it in return of not willing “to see the rapid development and rejuvenation of China” and “to accept the success of a socialist country.” Claiming that China’s modernization

was an unstoppable historical necessity, he demanded the West to “eschew the subconscious belief in the superiority of its civilization and abandon its prejudices and anxieties regarding China.” [CNBC] [China Daily]

In a surprisingly frank way, German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier criticized both the USA and China for “moving further and further away from the goal – international cooperation in order to create a more peaceful world.” Referring to “an increasingly destructive dynamic in international politics” in the wake of "great power competition", he blamed the USA for “reject[ing] the very concept of an international community” and for pursuing being “‘Great again’ – even at the expense of neighbours and partners,” and China for being “selective in accepting international law only where it does not run counter to its own interests.” [bundespraesident.de]

China and USA cut tariffs

(dql) In line with the "phase one" deal signed in January, the United States last week cut tariffs from 15% to 7.5% on 120 billion USD of Chinese imports in exchange for Beijing's pledge to purchase U.S. goods and services over the next two years by minimum 200 billion USD. [Kyodo News]

China, meanwhile, announced earlier this month that it will cut its retaliatory tariffs on some U.S. goods worth 75 billion USD by February 14. [AiR No. 6, February/2020, 2]

In a latest development, Beijing on this Tuesday announced that it will accept applications for new tariff exemptions for almost 700 products imported from the United States. [South China Morning Post]

India under mounting diplomatic pressure over Kashmir situation

(ls/tk) India is facing increased scrutiny over its handling of the situation Jammu and Kashmir, but maintains that it is a domestic affair. The Modi government rejected a mediation offer from UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, saying the focus instead should be on making Pakistan vacate the territories that it has “illegally and forcibly occupied”. According to the External Affairs Ministry, “India hoped that the UN secretary general would stress on the imperative for Pakistan to put an end to cross-border

terrorism against India, which threatens the most fundamental human rights – the right to life of the people of India, including in Jammu and Kashmir." [NDTV]

Guterres expressed "deep concern" at the heightened tensions, demanding India to respect "human rights and fundamental freedoms" when dealing with discontent in the territory. He also called for the implementation of UN Security Council resolutions on Kashmir, which date back to 1948, calling for a plebiscite to be held among Kashmiri residents on whether they would join India or Pakistan. [Al Jazeera]

India also sent a diplomatic note to Turkey over President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's remarks on the Kashmir crisis. Erdoğan said the Indian government's "unilateral steps" in the region over the years have accelerated the suffering of the Kashmiri people, aggravating the current situation and revoking their freedom and rights. [Daily Sabah]

Meanwhile, Debbie Abrahams, a Labour MP from the United Kingdom was denied entry to India. Abrahams has been an outspoken critic of the Indian government for stripping Kashmir of its semi-autonomy last August, demoting it from a state to a federal territory, saying the action betrayed the trust of the people of Kashmir. [The Guardian]

U.S. classifies India as a developed country, cutting support

(tk) The Trump administration has declared India a developed country, as it has a share of 0.5% or more of world trade. In 2018, India's share in global exports was 1.67% and in global imports 2.57%. [The Economic Times]

This decision means, India will lose all the benefits it used to receive under the Generalized System of Preference Scheme (GSP). Under the GSP, duties on thousands of products imported from emerging countries like India were eliminated. Until 2018, India received benefits worth up to $260 million, which helped it grow exports at a rapid pace. Without the benefits, Indian companies will be at a severe disadvantage, and exports to the U.S. as its largest importer will come down.

Not only the Indian economy is likely to be damaged by the Trump administration's decision. It could also harm Modi's reelection probability, because he might not be

able to achieve his plan to turn India into a $5 trillion economy by 2024.

During President Trump's visit on February 24, India was planning to finalize a limited trade agreement with the U.S. which now stands in question. [CCN]

U.S. travel ban on Sri Lanka's Army Chief

(tk) The U.S. government on Friday issued a travel ban on Sri Lanka's army chief Lieutenant General Shavendra Silva over accusations of human rights violations including extrajudicial execution of unarmed rebels and systematic torture of people in government custody during the country's civil war. [Al Jazeera]

After the war, Silva was promoted to major general and became Sri Lanka's army commander last year amid international condemnation. According to the U.S. Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, "the allegations of gross human rights violations against Shavendra Silver, documented by the United Nations and other organizations, are serious and credible." Sri Lanka's government, however, condemned the U.S. measure and said there were "no substantiated or proven allegations" against General Silva. On Sunday, it asked the U.S. to review its decision. [The Diplomat]

Cambodia: EU partially suspends trade preferences

(jk/fs) After a year-long review and a preliminary report in November last year (Asia in Review No. 51, December/2019, 3, Asia in Review No. 51, December/2019, 4), the European Commission made its decision regarding the future of Cambodia's Everything-But-Arms (EBA) trade preferences.

Last week, the Commission announced the partial suspension of Cambodia's preferential trade preferences with the European Union after the government failed to improve its human rights situation. Instead of preferential tariffs, the usual EU tariffs now apply to certain clothing and shoes, sugar and products for travel needs from Cambodia. According to the Commission, this affects around a fifth of Cambodian exports to the EU, which corresponds to around one billion euros.

The Commission justifies the step by saying that the government of Prime Minister Hun Sen has acted

unduly against the opposition, civil society groups and the press in the past three years. Josep Borrell, the EU high representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, said the EU “will not stand and watch as democracy is eroded, human rights curtailed, and free debate silenced.” The measure against Myanmar will come into effect on August 12, unless the member states in the Council and the European Parliament object.

The EU is willing to fully reinstate Cambodia into the EBA trade scheme if the country demonstrates improvements in human and labour rights and the democratic situation. The EU will continue to monitor and assess the country’s development. [South China Morning Post] [Asia Times]

Despite obvious human rights violations and the undermining of democratic and judicial processes in Cambodia, the EU's decision is not without critique. In addition to driving Cambodia even further into Chinese arms by reducing its trading options elsewhere, very valid concerns relate to who actually suffers from these punitive measures. While they most likely fail to effectively address the actual target - PM Hun Sen and the political elite - they will certainly punish those who work in the factories to produce much of Cambodia's exports and those the workers support with their modest earnings. In [Nikkei Asian Review], one commentator points out the sad irony that "EBA removal will cause substantial pain to the most vulnerable Cambodians, who are now paying the price of the elite's poor human rights record twice: first as the victims of the country's abuses and then as the victims of the EU's punitive measures."

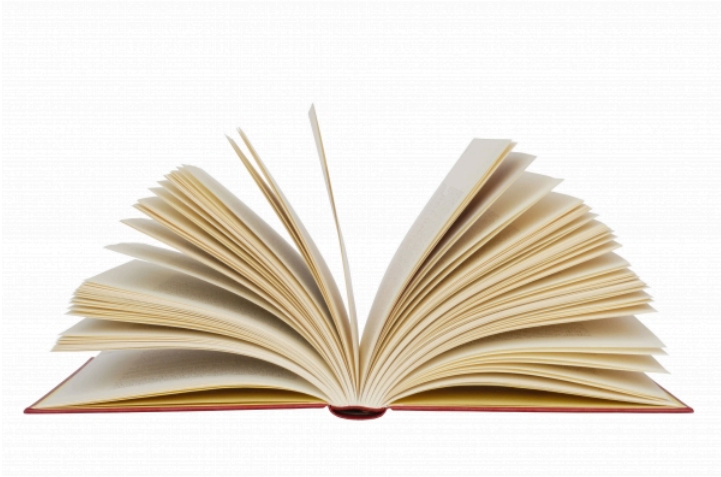
Philippines lifts travel ban on visitors from Taiwan

(jk) The Philippines has lifted a travel ban on visitors from Taiwan over fears of spreading of the Coronavirus. It had initially banned travelers from Taiwan as part of the ban of travelers from the PRC, but Taiwan had objected to this view, also in light of the fact that it has significantly less cases than the mainland. Taiwan's foreign ministry said the World Health Organization’s "mistaken designation of Taiwan and listing it as part of China’s virus area had misled the international community, causing huge problems for Taiwan’s government and people." [Straits Times]

Malaysia seeks agreement with Vietnam to stop illegal fishing

(fs) Malaysia's Foreign Minister Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah announced that the country plans to fight encroachment of deep-sea fishermen from Vietnam in Malaysian waters by working out an agreement between the countries. A similar agreement does already exist between Malaysia and Indonesia and Vietnam positioned itself open to this idea last year. 141 Vietnamese fishermen were detained for encroachment into the Malaysian Exclusive Economic Zone in 2019. [The Malaysian Reserve]

Background Reading



Thailand: The Future Forward Party: A future amid legal troubles?

(jk) Thailand's Future Forward Party (FFP) is awaiting a crucial Constitutional Court ruling this week (21 February) in a case regarding alleged misconduct in receiving money in form of a donation in violation of Thailand's Political Parties Act. [Asia in Review, No. 51, December/2019, 3] The case may well end the party's existence altogether and lead to a politics ban for the party executives.

41-year-old party leader Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit talks about the case, the party's and his future, and why in his view, the ongoing proceedings should be considered "lawfare" rather than due process. [Southeast Asia Globe]

We would greatly appreciate your feedback! Please send any feedback you have regarding this newsletter to: info@cpg-online.de

Also, don't forget to Like CPG on Facebook, and browse our *website* for other updates and news!

German-Southeast Asian Center of Excellence for Public Policy and Good Governance - CPG
Room 204, Faculty of Law, Thammasat University, 2 Prachan Road, Bangkok 10200, Thailand

Preferences | Unsubscribe