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

Grasp the pattern, read the trend

Asia in Review

No. 1, January/2021, 1

Brought to you by CPG

Dear Readers,

With best wishes for a healthy and happy new year, the Asia in Review team is presenting you the first Asia in Review issue in 2021.

We wish you an informative read and extend special greetings to readers in Myanmar which celebrates Independence Day this week.

Best regards,

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 Southeast Asia

- International Relations, Geopolitics and Security in Asia
- Announcements

Law and Politics in East Asia

China: New defense law boosts Central Military Commission's role

(dql) Approved at a session of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, China's top legislature, in December, China’s revised National Defense Law entered into force on January 1.

The revisions aim to strengthen “war preparedness and combat capabilities” of the People’s Liberation Army to ensure that they are “ready to fight at any time”. To this end, the amendments, among others, expand the power of the Chinese Communist Party’s Central Military Commission (CMC) – headed by President Xi Jinping – to mobilize military and civilian resources in defense of national interests, both at home and abroad. They also hand decision-making power to the CMC, weakening the role of the State Council, China’s cabinet, in formulating military policy.

A further notable change in the new law is the introduction of the vague terms of “disruption” and protection of “development interests”, added as grounds for the mobilization and deployment of troops and reserve forces.

According to observers, the new legislation reflects the party’s and Xi Jinping’s confidence in the legitimacy of

their absolute leadership over the country's military. [South China Morning Post] [ANI] [EurAsian Times]

China: Historic anti-ivory smuggling court decision

(dql) In China's largest ivory smuggling case, a Chinese court handed down lengthy prison sentences against a group of 17 people, ranging from two to 15 years and including life imprisonments against two of them. The court found the group guilty of smuggling a large number of pieces of ivory worth over 150 million USD from Nigeria and other countries between July 2013 and August 2018.

China has long been one of the world's largest markets for ivory. In an effort to combat illegal ivory trafficking, the Chinese government at the end of 2017 banned commercial ivory trade in the country. [Sixth Tone]

China: High-ranking official put under investigation over corruption suspicion

(dql) Hu Wenming, the former head of China's aircraft carrier program, has been expelled from the Chinese Communist Party and is being now investigated by the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection on suspicion of abusing his powers and taking bribes.

Hu is among the latest high-profile targets in President Xi Jinping's anti-corruption campaign, which since its launch in 2012 has snared over 1.3 million officials from powerful "tigers" to low-ranking "flies".

Hu joined China Shipbuilding Industry Corporation (CSIC) as party chief and general manager in 2010, overseeing the development of the Liaoning aircraft carrier, a refitted Soviet warship, and the Shandong, China's first domestically built aircraft carrier. CISC was responsible for the research, design, production, testing and support missions for naval weaponry and equipment including aircraft carriers, conventional and nuclear-powered submarines, surface vessels and underwater weapons. [South China Morning Post]

For insights into endemic corruption within China's military shipbuilders, see [The Diplomat].

Japan: Prime Minister expected to declare Covid-19 state of emergency this week

(dql) Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga announced the he will decide this week whether to declare a state of emergency for Tokyo and three neighboring prefectures as the areas continue to face record numbers of new coronavirus cases, accounting together for roughly half of about 3.000 daily cases nationwide.

Tokyo alone reported over 1.200 new coronavirus infections on Tuesday, marking the second-highest figure for the capital, after 1.337 cases reported on Dec. 31. The number comes along with a record-high 111 Covid-19 patients in serious condition.

The four prefectures form one of the world's most densely populated metropolitan areas, with the constant movement of people around this area posing a big challenge to combatting the spread of the coronavirus.

Suga is believed to impose a state of emergency for about one month, with details of the policy not disclosed thus far. [Mainichi] [Straits Times]

Japan: No executions of death row inmates in 2020

(dql) Japan's Ministry of Justice confirmed that in 2020 no death penalties were carried out, the first time since nine years. As of end of December 2020, there were death row inmates in Japan. [Mainichi]

South Korea: President Moon announces nominees for last Cabinet reshuffle 2020

(dql) Amid lowest approval ratings since assuming the presidency in 2017 [Yonhap], South Korean President Moon Jae-in last week announced nominations for a last reshuffle of his Cabinet in 2020 as well as for the post of the head of the new Corruption Investigation Office for high-ranking officials (CIO). The CIO is one core part of Moon's desired reform of the country's prosecution for which he has been facing fierce resistance from the main opposition People Power Party (PPP).

The nominees include Park Beom-kye and Han Jeoung-ae, both lawmakers from the ruling Democratic Party of Korea (DPK), as Justice Minister and Environment Minister respectively, as well as Hwang Ki-chul, a chair professor at Kookmin University, as Minister for Patriots and Veterans Affairs. Moon's pick for the post of the CIO head is Kim Jin-wook, a former judge and a Constitutional Court scholar. [Korea Herald]

Moon's latest reshuffle comes after he had made nominations for four other ministries earlier in December of whom he appointed two of them as new Ministers of Interior and Safety as well as of Health and Welfare after their hearing reports were adopted by the parliament. [Korea JoongAng Daily]

Taiwan: Local governments push back against over new ractopamine policy of Tsai administration

(nm) On past Friday, a contentious new government-sponsored policy lifting restrictions on imports of US pork containing the livestock drug ractopamine went into effect.

In response, 17 out of 22 city and local governments across the country have drawn up rules to keep US pork products containing the additive out of their jurisdictions, despite an announcement of the Cabinet that local bans on imported pork will become invalid as they contradict central government's authority. 'Rebellious' city governments include the capital Taipei and the two larges cities New Taipei and Taichung, who announced different measures to control pork containing ractopamine, with Taichung Mayor Lu Shiow-yen going furthest reassuring that her city will continue carrying out random testing of pork products and will impose penalties if any are found to contain ractopamine, citing a "zero tolerance" policy on the drug. [Focus Taiwan 1] [Focus Taiwan 2]

The lifting of the import ban on US pork containing ractopamine has been a contentious issue in Taiwan and has drawn sharp criticism especially from the major opposition party, the Kuomintang (KTM), which accuses the government and the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) of accepting risks to food safety and public health over its bid to court the US government to enter into talks on a bilateral trade deal.

But it has also led to disagreement within the DPP, reflected in the recent suspension of three of its

legislators who abstained on a series of votes, mainly regarding the import ban, from running for committee membership or party leadership positions for a period of three years. [Taiwan News 1]

Meanwhile, in response to concerns over price gauging among vendors suspected of raising prices following the lift of the import ban, the Executive Yuan asked the Consumer Protection Committee to monitor and crack down on artificial hikes of pork prices, while the Council of Agriculture released its "Pork Dashboard", an online overview indicating the daily quantity and country of origin of Taiwan's pork. [Focus Taiwan 3] [Taiwan News 2]

Taiwan: Criticism over Tsai's head of court pick

(nm) The Taiwan Jury Association has criticized President Tsai Ing-wen's recent appointment of a cousin-in-law to head of the Supreme Administrative Court – which arbitrates disputes between the public and the government. It called the move an overreach of her powers and a breach of the principle of separation of powers which could lead to further distrust of the judiciary. The Association's founder Jerry Cheng went further, stating that the appointment signals Tsai's attempt to "openly reintroduc[e] a dynasty-based system of leadership."

Echoing this criticism, the main opposition party, the Kuomingtang, voiced concerns over the appointment with regards to judicial independence and the increased possibility of presidential intervention in the judiciary. [Taipei Times]

Law and Politics in South Asia

India: Army appoints first Human Rights Cell

(lm) To enhance transparency and ensure the availability of investigative expertise, the Indian Army has appointed a Major General rank officer to head its newly created human rights cell. First approved in August last year, the cell will be the nodal point to examine reports on human rights violations by the Indian Army. The Additional Director General Human Rights will assist in investigations and legalities and will also facilitate coordination with other organizations and the Union home ministry, if required. [India Today] [The Tribune]

Nepal: Thousands march against the dissolution of the lower house of parliament

(lm) Defying a ban on public gatherings, thousands of opponents of Nepal's Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli marched through the streets of Kathmandu on December 29, urging the prime minister to reverse his decision to dissolve the lower house of parliament and call for early election [see AiR No. 51, December/2020, 4].The protests had been organized by the faction of the ruling Nepal Communist Party (NCP) led by senior leaders Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Madhav Kumar Nepal. [The Straits Times]

Previously, Nepal's two major opposition parties, Nepali Congress (NC) and Janata Samajwadi Party-Nepal (JSP-N), have also held separate protests. A plan to jointly protest the dissolution of parliament's lower house was placed on hold after the NC rejected the proposal of the Dahal-led faction of the NCP. Observers say, the decision not to participate has shed light on the NC's intraparty fault lines, pitching an anti-

establishment faction against the party's president, who may see a chance of leading the government. [The Kathmandu Post]

In the first session of parliament's upper house [see AiR No. 52, December/2020, 5] held on January 1, lawmakers from opposition parties Nepali Congress (NC) and Janata Samajwadi Party-Nepal (JSP-N) cornered the prime minister, accusing Oli of "unconstitutional and undemocratic actions." [The Himalayan Times]

The Supreme Court (SC), meanwhile, has issued a show cause notice to the Office of the Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers seeking an explanation on the prime minister's decision to remove two ministers from his cabinet and change the portfolio of another six, about a week after seven ministers had resigned to protest the dissolution of the lower house of parliament [see AiR No. 52, December/2020, 5]. The apex court, further, continues hearing dozens of petitions filed against Prime Minister Oli's political move and his plans to press ahead with parliamentary elections on April 30 and May 10, less than two years before the scheduled date. [The Himalayan Times 2]

Nepal: 5000 residents protest China-sponsored industrial park project

(lm) More than 5,000 residents protested on December 29 against the construction of a China-sponsored industrial park, demanding adequate compensation for the acquired land and transparency regarding the Chinese investment project located in Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli's home constituency. Built under Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative (BIR), the project will be fully funded by China and handed over to Nepal after 40 years. [The Himalayan Times] [Khabarhub]

Pakistan: Provincial government will pay to rebuild Hindu temple destroyed by mob

(lm) A Hindu temple in northwestern Pakistan will be rebuilt using provincial government funds, after it was destroyed by a Muslim mob last week. Around 1,500 people descended on the temple after protesting the alleged expansion of the century-old temple, using sledgehammers to damage the structure's walls before setting the building on fire. The mob was led by a radical cleric and supporters of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam

(JUI-F), one of Pakistan's largest Islamic parties. [The Straits Times] [Deutsche Welle]

Hindus constitute Pakistan's largest non-Muslim minority, estimated at between two and four percent of the population, most of whom live near the Indian border in the southern province of Sindh. Discrimination and violence against religious minorities has been growing in Pakistan for the last five years, with more frequent attacks on places of worship [see latest AiR No. 45, November/2020, 2]. Following the incident, dozens of Hindus rallied in the southern port city of Karachi to demand the rebuilding of their place of worship. [South China Morning Post]

Pakistan: Passport of former Prime Minister Sharif to be cancelled in February, says interior minister

(lm) Against the larger backdrop of Islamabad's failure to persuade the United Kingdom to repatriate former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, Pakistan on December 30 announced that it was planning to cancel Sharif's passport in mid-February. Sharif, who was jailed in a corruption case in 2018, has been residing in London since November last year after a court granted him indefinite bail to seek medical treatment. The former prime minister is facing several corruption charges in Pakistan and is considered by the courts to have absconded. He is also facing sedition charges for accusing the military of political interference [see AiR No. 41, October/2020, 2, AiR No. 37, September/2020, 3]. [Dawn] [Hindustan Times]

In October, Pakistan's federal government had written to British authorities for a third time, requesting the UK to consider cancelling Sharif's visa [see also AiR No. 37, September/2020, 3]. Responding in writing, British Home Secretary Priti Patel pointed out that the UK government was subject to international law, adding that London would give a potential extradition treaty request 'full attention the provision of UK law.' Pakistan currently has no extradition treaty with the UK. In response, Islamabad the same month withdrew clearance for a flight chartered by the UK to take deportees from London to Islamabad. While Pakistan has denied any links to the row over Nawaz Sharif's repatriation, the move last month prompted a letter from Patel to a Special Assistant to Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan [see AiR No. 51, December/2020, 4].

Separately, a British High Court has ordered debiting more than $28 million from the bank accounts of Pakistan' High Commission in London, after more than two years Islamabad had lost a long-running arbitration case against a foreign asset recovery firm. [WION] [The New Indian Express]

Pakistan: Abducted lawyer appears before Islamabad High Court

(lm) The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on January 4 once again expressed concern over the "deteriorating law and order situation" in the capital after a lawyer, who had been abducted from his home by unidentified individuals two days earlier, appeared in court to detail the ordeal he allegedly went through. In his detailed order, the IHC also noted that the Islamabad Capital Territory is directly supervised and administratively controlled by the federal government. A group of 12-15 people posing as members of the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) had kidnapped the lawyer late on Saturday night but released him after keeping him in illegal detention for forty-eight hours. [Dawn]

Extrajudicial abductions and enforced disappearances by shadowy military agencies have been a feature of life in Pakistan for two decades. Prime Minister Imran Khan has repeatedly pledged to end the practice, but since he became prime minister in 2018, the disappearances have continued [see e.g., AiR No. 43, October/2020, 4], while accountability seems as elusive as ever.

Pakistan: Supreme Court takes up Senate election reference

(lm) Pakistan's Supreme Court (SC) on January 4 commenced the hearing for a presidential reference seeking advisory jurisdiction on holding the upcoming Senate elections through open ballot. The reference was filed by the federal government after it decided to hold elections for the 52 seats that will fall vacant following the retirement of some senators from the 104-member upper house in March next year [see AiR No. 50, December/2020, 3]. [The Express Tribune 1] [The Nation]

Filed by the Attorney General earlier last week, the reference seeks the apex court's opinion on Prime Minister Imran Khan's plan to hold the election for members of the Senate utilizing show of hands.

Further, the government seeks legal guidance on amending Section 122(6) of the Elections Act, 2017 through an ordinance before the commencement of the election. The presidential reference further argues that there is national consensus amongst all major political parties, jurists and civil society that the electoral process should be cleansed of the pervasive practice of vote buying in elections to the Senate. [Dawn]

Separately, the oppositional Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) on December 1 decided to participate in the upcoming by-elections [see AiR No. 51, December/2020, 4] but postponed a decision about contesting the Senate elections. The 11-party alliance also decided to hold protests at the offices of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) and the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) later this month.

The PDM meeting was held a day after its deadline for collecting resignations of national and provincial lawmakers belonging to its constituent parties ended on December 31 [see AiR No. 50, December/2020, 3]. It also came a week after the Central Executive Committee (CEC) of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) – a constituent party of the PDM – had decided to take part not only in by-polls but also in the Senate elections. [The Express Tribune 2] [The Express Tribune 3]

The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) also stands divided on participating in the upcoming Senate elections, with one group supporting the PPP's stance of not leaving the field open for the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), while another group had advocated boycotting the contest, seeing a meagre benefit for the party. [Asian News International]

Sri Lanka: Government decides to postpone provincial council elections, citing COVID-19

(lm) After meeting with party leaders representing the ruling Sri Lanka People's Freedom Alliance (SLPFA), the government has decided to postpone the provincial council election, citing the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. Elections are due in eight out of Sri Lanka's nine provincial councils. [ColomboPage]

The National Elections Commission, meanwhile, announced that the voting mechanism would be decided on only once the Provincial Council Elections Act is passed by a two-thirds majority in Parliament.

The previous government under then-President Maithripala Sirisena enacted a piece of legislation demarcating provincial boundaries in 2017 but failed to get the recommendations of the report adopted by Parliament [see AiR (3/8/2018)]. In 2019, then, the Supreme Court held unanimously that it was not lawful for provincial council elections to be held in the absence of a redrawing of the boundaries of electoral districts, thereby effectively postponing the polls until after the presidential elections. The incumbent government is yet to introduce legislation that demarcates the provincial boundaries. [Daily News] [The Hindu]

Law and Politics in Southeast Asia

Cambodia: Civil groups demand transparent oil production

(nd) Following the announcement of Prime Minister Hun Sen that Cambodia extracted its first drop of crude oil from fields in the Gulf of Thailand [See also AiR No. 52, December/2020, 5], anti-corruption groups and senior officials from the opposition and banned Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) applauded the success but simultaneously demanded transparent and efficient revenue management. They demanded that revenues must be invested in education, health, the expansion of infrastructure and access to water, while pointing to the country's bad reputation with regards to corruption. In Transparency International's 2019 Corruption Perceptions Index, Cambodia was ranked 162nd out of 198 countries. [Radio Free Asia]

Indonesia: FPI banned

(nd) Indonesia's chief security minister Mahfud MD last week announced that the controversial, but politically influential, hardline group Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) has been banned on grounds of vigilantism and links to terrorism. Mahfud added that the FPI was officially disbanded in June 2019 for failing to renew its permit as an officially registered mass organization, but continued unlawful activities since then. Last week's ban was co-signed by the Home Affairs Minister Tito Karnavian, Justice Minister Yasonna Laoly, Communications Minister Johnny Plate, Attorney-General Burhanuddin and police chief Idham Azis, as well as by the director of the National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT) director, reflecting the government's determination to link the FPI to the Islamic State (ISIS) and other active terrorist groups.

The ban comes nearly three weeks after FPI leader Rizieq Shihab was arrested for breaching coronavirus rules. Upon his return in October, 50,000 supporters greeted Shihab at the airport, triggering the first of several violations against the laws to curb the Covid-19 spread, upsetting authorities, including President Joko Widodo, which led to the sacking of the police chiefs of Jakarta and West Java. Shihab's arrest was accompanied by the still-investigated killing of six of his bodyguards by police forces on a highway.

Shihab seems to be unimpressed by those steps, announcing that he was embarking on a "moral revolution" and warning that religion and religious leaders are not to be alienated from politics and the state.

The move to ban the party was criticized, with analysts saying that another outlet will be found and the ban "feeds the narrative that the government is against Islam." Other analysts said it could revive the so-called 212 Movement, a coalition of conservative Muslim groups, which were responsible for the 2017 downfall of Jakarta governor Basuki "Ahok" Purnama on blasphemy charges. [Asia Times] [Aljazeera]

Indonesia: Influential Islamic clerical body supports vaccinations

(nd) The influential Islamic clerical body Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) issued a recommendation allowing the use of vaccines, paving the way for the country's fight to curb the Covid-19 pandemic. Vaccines

are traditionally banned under Islamic law, now a halal certificate developed by China's Sinovac Biotech will be issued to counter the surge of misinformation in social media. In November, MUI elected more moderate leaders, fueling optimism for the 90% Muslim population. [South China Morning Post] [See also AiR No. 49, December/2020, 2]

Indonesia: Chemical castration for convicted child molesters

(nd) A new regulation enacted by President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo foresees chemical castration with a duration of up to two years as an additional punishment for convicted child molesters. The crime must have involved more than one victim and resulted in severe injury. Child molestation is punishable by up to nine years in prison under Indonesia's criminal code (KUHP).

According to the Women Empowerment and Children Protection Ministry 5,640 child sexual abuse cases have been recorded in 2020. [Jakarta Globe]

Indonesia: Unmarked water drone discovered

(nd) Following the discovery of an unmarked underwater surveillance drone, the Indonesian Navy is investigating its country of origin. The drone was found in Indonesia's waters off South Sulawesi province in December. The type of underwater drone can be used for both surveillance in the fishing and oil industries and also for military purposes. Since its discovery, discussions about espionage were sparked on social media, referring to its similarity with Chinese vehicles called Sea Wing found in 2019 off Riau Islands and East Java last year.

The location is noteworthy according to analysts, since it was found in a crucial maritime route connecting the disputed South China Sea to Darwin, the northernmost Australian city. Indonesia does not regard itself as claimant state in the dispute over the South China Sea, but China claims rights to areas overlapping with Indonesia' exclusive economic zone. Currently, Indonesian law contains no regulations on unmanned underwater vehicles, with military observers now urging the government to draft a new legislation. [Radio Free Asia]

Myanmar: New vision for the nation's peace process

(nd) In her New Year's speech, State Counselor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi introduced a new approach to the country's peace process, the "New Peace Architecture", which shall enable participation by political groups, civil society organizations and the public, in order to find a balance between representation and effectiveness. This shall also include both formal and informal dialogues in the coming five years.

In order to achieve a democratic federal union, the constitution must be amended, foreseeing the 75th anniversary of the country's independence in 2022. During its first term in power, the National League for Democracy (NLD) government managed to sign three parts of the Union Accord with the 10 Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) signatories, and is in the process of negotiating bilateral agreements with the members of the Northern Alliance. [Irrawaddy]

This was mirrored by President Win Myint saying on Myanmar's Independence Day on Monday that the government is working to end the armed conflicts, securing long-term peace, and building a democratic federal union.

After the election in November last year, dozens of ethnic political parties appealed to join Aung San Kyi's vision to forge a federal union in the multiethnic nation, which consists of 135 ethnic races and of 54.4 million people. Still, some also urged the NLD government to put more effort into dealing with ethnic affairs within the existing legal framework rather than prioritizing attempts to amend the constitution, given that need for an approval of the amendment of more than 75% of parliamentarians and the concurrent constitutional right of the military to nominate at least 25% of members of parliament from its own ranks. [Radio Free Asia] [Myanmar Times]

Myanmar: Tension rising in Rakhine state

(nd) Ahead of this week's expiration of an unofficial cease-fire between Myanmar forces and the rebel Arakan Army (AA), displaced villagers fled anew due to signs of returning government troops.

For two years, the Northern Rakhine state has been in fights with the military in an attempt to seek greater

autonomy, leaving 300 civilians dead and about 230,000 displaced. [Radio Free Asia 1]

The government peace negotiators are looking for new peace talk rounds with the Northern Alliance, consisting of the AA, the Ta´ang National Liberation Army, the Kachin Independence Army and the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army, which is among seven other ethnic groups that yet have to sign the nationwide ceasefire agreement (NCA). Negotiations aim at a bilateral ceasefire agreement. [Myanmar Times]

Myanmar: Continued fighting in Kayin state

(nd) In Southeastern Myanmar's Kayin state, new clashes occurred between the Myanmar military and the Karen National Union (KNU), forcing more than 3,000 villagers to flee. Despite a nationwide cease-fire agreement (NCA) in 2015, fighting resumed in early December last year, following the military's refusal to withdraw troops from the area as required by the NCA. Soldier presence has been increased in many areas, while the parties are negotiating.

The KNU is one of ten ethnic armies to have signed the NCA to end decades of fighting that left one sixth of Myanmar's ethnic Karen people living in refugee camps in Thailand. [Radio Free Asia]

Myanmar: Abducted ruling party members released by Arakan Army

(nd) In an effort to build trust and achieve longstanding ceasefire with the government, the Arakan Army (AA) released three members of the ruling National League for Democracy (NLD) to enable the Rakhine State to hold voting canceled in November. The members were abducted mid-October. The release was "the result of the second online meeting" between AA chief Major and the military peace negotiation committee chairman.

Following active fighting since November 2018, the AA and the military agreed on a temporary ceasefire in October, mediated by the chairman of Japan's Nippon Foundation. The military unilaterally extended the truce until January 31, but excluded areas where groups operate that are considered as terrorist groups.

Since March, the AA has been labelled as such a group. [Irrawaddy]

Philippines: Military given unapproved Covid-19 vaccines

(nd) According to the Philippine defense minister, unapproved COVID-19 vaccines were given to President Rodrigo Duterte's military security, after having been smuggled into the country. They were obtained without governmental authorization and knowledge, yet, the move was called "justified" for it was a means of protecting the troops and the president. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) will investigate the case and reiterated importing, distributing or selling unapproved vaccines was illegal. Opposition lawmakers criticized the "VIP treatment", while local governments are struggling to get budgets to obtain vaccines. [Nikkei Asia]

Philippines: Indigenous people killed on Panay Island

(nd) In police operations on Panay Island, nine people were killed and 17 others were arrested, all being indigenous people associated with the Panay Tumandok community. Previously, they were red-tagged and accused by the military as members and supporters of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA). Therefore, the operation was labelled as regular law enforcement activity aimed to curb the proliferation of firearms and explosives on Panay Island.

House Deputy Minority leader Carlos Isagani Zarate condemned the incident, linking it to the killing of six farmers by state forces in Negros Oriental in December 2018, and calling the two cases "questionable and bloody operations," that is "apparently becoming the norm." [Rappler]

Philippines: Budget allocation criticized

(nd) Following the passage of the budget bill totaling 4.5 trillion pesos (US$93.7 billion) for 2021, three-quarters of the amount will be used for operating expenses of government ministries, including debt payments, with the majority of the rest being

attributed to an infrastructure building campaign, despite president Rodrigo Duterte's pledge to invest in the country's health care system amid the ongoing pandemic. Analysts view this as a move to cement his legacy by realizing large-scale infrastructure projects and possibly paving the way for his daughter, Davao City Mayor Sara Duterte, as his successor.

[South China Morning Post]

Singapore: New law on digital payment

(py) The parliament has passed the Payment Services (Amendment) Bill, which aims to strengthen current standards for virtual asset service providers in digital payment tokens (DPTs) also known as cryptocurrencies. Under this new amendment, the Money Authority of Singapore (MAS) will be able to regulate cryptocurrency service providers who facilitate the use of cryptocurrencies for payments to ensure consumer protection. This shall also curb the feared speed and transnational nature of cryptocurrency, which could impose higher money laundering and terrorism financing risks. [The Strait Times]

Singapore: Former Chinese spy arrested

(nd) Singaporean spy Dickson Yeo, jailed in the US for spying for China earlier last year, has upon his arrival in Singapore been arrested to be questioned on whether "he had engaged in activities prejudicial to Singapore's security."

From 2015 to 2019, Yeo used his US-based political consultancy as a front for Chinese intelligence services, according to court documents. To do so, Yeo hired US military and government insiders with high security clearances to write reports for the consultancy, which he then provided to China. According to the court documents, he was aware that those were affiliated with Chinese intelligence. The former PhD student at the National University of Singapore's (NUS) Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy (LKYSPP) was recruited by Chinese intelligence during his time at the university. [South China Morning Post]

Singapore: Modernization of the military

(nd) Determined to find an equilibrium between the possibilities of technology for armed forces and maintaining peace and security to avoid an arms race in the region, the next-generation modernization of Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) is likely to focus on three major points until 2030. First, technology will be enhanced, including sensor-shooter cycle, surveillance, pre-emptive maintenance and training on data analytics. This also encompasses unmanned, automated, artificial intelligence (AI), cyber and space-based assets. While this is a global trend, in Singapore's case, technology partially curbs the demographic issue with the number of conscripts expected to fall by a third in the next ten years. Second, technology will be expanded to cover homeland and cybersecurity threats, including special formations like the Island Defence Task Force, the Special Operations Task Force and the Maritime Security Task Force to address terrorism. Thirdly, training for kinetic operations will be continued, including larger and more realistic training areas.

In light of the growing tension with China in the region, Singapore's modernization efforts could also be misunderstood and jeopardize its neutrality, showcased in rumors about Singapore working as a possible home port for the US Navy's First Fleet. [East Asia Forum]

Thailand: Special unit stepping up Legal Action Against Social Media Providers

(nd) In light of the once-tabooed voicing of criticism of the monarchy, Thailand's Digital Economy and Society Minister has promised to speed up legal action against social media providers in case they do not remove deemed illegal posts timely. The Digital Economy and Society (DES) Ministry obtained court orders to block 8,440 URLs featuring said content in the last quarter of 2020, mostly on Facebook, with some on YouTube, Twitter and other pages, with 5,025 URLs blocked so far.

Meanwhile, the Cybercrime Investigation Bureau (CCIB) was formed as new part of the Royal Thai Police to specifically deal with cybercrimes [Chiangrai Times]

Thailand: Pheu Thai members to resign

(nd) In an effort to avoid any fallouts of the Election Commission's (EC) probe into the role of former prime

minister Thaksin Shinawatra in the local elections in December last year, at least four Pheu Thai Party executives announced their resignation from the party's board.

Thaksin had sent messages and letter in support of Pheu Thai Party members running in the local elections in Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai. Local election rules require the candidate to submit a list of all campaign staff members to poll officials prior to election day. A person who writes a letter vouching for a candidate is considered as part of the campaign team. Thaksin was reportedly not listed as campaign staff of at least the candidate for Chiang Rai. [Bangkok Post]

Thailand: Music video "Reform" blocked

(nd) A music video, which featured pro-democracy movement band Rap against Dictatorship and their song "Reform" was blocked on YouTube following a legal complaint from the government.

All band members are active participants of the ongoing student-led protests, which are depicted in the video. The video, dealing with current problems in Thailand, including politics, social inequality and the right of protesters to seek justice, was first released in November and has about 9 million views.

In 2019 the band was among the three winners of Václav Havel Prize for Creative Dissent. [The Thaiger]

Thailand: Further arrests under section 112

(nd) On January 1, the 38th pro-democracy activist was arrested under the country's lèse majesté law, charged with selling a calendar using the protest movement's satirical rubber duck symbol to allegedly mock the monarchy. The arrested was a Facebook administrator of a protest group and was bailed out a day later.

The arrest is widely seen as part of a growing crackdown on protesters by the authorities in an effort to contain the unprecedented protests. [Voice of America]

Vietnam: Battle lines are drawn for Vietnam's future leadership, as all-important National Congress looms

(lm) Taking place against the larger backdrop of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, and increasingly dysfunctional Sino-US bilateral relations, the 13th National Congress of the ruling Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) is scheduled to commence on January 25. Held every five years since 1976, the National Congress is the supreme party organ: In electing the party's Central Committee, it decides on the new leadership and sets Vietnam's socioeconomic plans for the next five years. More broadly speaking, it also provides an indication of how the new leadership will respond to the pressing internal challenges and navigate the increasingly volatile external environment. [The Diplomat]

With less than a month to go before the convening, speculation is growing over the fate of the country's top leader. While the incumbent General Secretary of the CPV and President of Vietnam, Nguyễn Phú Trọng, is widely expected to step down, there are questions about whether he still has the clout to serve as kingmaker after his recent ill-health: Trong suffered a stroke last April and reportedly has not fully recovered, potentially undermining his ability to impose his political will as an ailing lame duck. [Asia Times]

Among those talked about to succeed Trong as General Secretary of the CPV is Tran Quoc Vuong, a party veteran who currently heads the party's Inspection Commission and serves as a standing member of the party's Secretariat. His main competition, that is, is incumbent Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc, a technocratic and non-ideological candidate [see AiR No. 20, May/2020, 3].

While his role as anti-corruption czar has made Vuong some powerful intraparty enemies, it has also secured him the support of Trong, who is seen as embodying tradition, unswerving faith in Marxism-Leninism and moral rigor. Gauging the chances of the two potential candidates, observers also put emphasis on the fact that the position of general-secretary has always been secured by those from the north of the country – home of Vietnam's political elite. This would put Vuong, coming from Thai Binh in northern Vietnam, in a better place than Phuc, who comes from a province in central Vietnam. [Asia Nikkei]

Thailand: Mother of Thanathorn charged

(nd) The mother of Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit - leader of the Future Forward Party until its dissolution in February – was charged by the Royal Forest Department for unlawfully owning at least 77 plots of forest land in Ratchaburi including 450 rai in reserved forests.

The case was brought by a Palang Pracharath Party (PPRP) MP for Ratchaburi and local people who had applied for community forest land rights documents. Following receipts of payments between 2010 and 2013, the department has evidence to prove the 90-rai plot of land that is in a reserved forest. [Bangkok Post]

Vietnam: Authorities begin trial of dissident journalists, as National Congress approaches

(lm) A court has found three dissident journalists guilty of charges of spreading propaganda against the state, handing them jail sentences of between 11 and 15 years. All prominent members of the Vietnam Independent Journalists Association (IJAVN), the three men had been charged with "making, storing, spreading information, materials, items that contain distorted information about the people's government". [Al Jazeera]

Tuesday's verdicts are the latest in a continuing crackdown against political dissidents, activists, and other independent voices as the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) prepares for its National Congress, which is scheduled commence on January 25. To forestall any disturbance to the country's landmark political event, dozens of people have been detained, according to human rights groups. [The Diplomat]

Days before his trial, the health of one of the three journalists had significantly deteriorated, his wife alleged on December 31, citing the harsh conditions in which her husband is being held. [Radio Free Asia]

International Relations, Geopolitics and Security in Asia

China-US relations: Diplomatic tensions flare up over 20 years in jail sentence for Uighur medical doctor

(dql) Already high running diplomatic tensions between China and the US flared up over the case of Uighur Muslim medical doctor Gulshan Abbas whose US-based family members revealed last week that Abbas was sentenced to 20 years in prison in China, claiming their human rights activism in the United States as ground for the conviction.

US Assistant Secretary of State for democracy, human rights and labor, Robert Destro, demanded Abbas' immediate release, describing the doctor's "forcible disappearance, detainment and harsh sentencing by the CCP," as testimony of the suffering of a family which spoke out against a government "that has no respect for human rights." China's Foreign Ministry, meanwhile, defended the sentencing, citing crimes of membership in a terrorist organization, support for terrorist activities, and "assembling a crowd to disrupt social order." It called on US politicians to stop "fabricating lies to smear China, and stop using the Xinjiang issue to interfere in China's domestic affairs." [Reuters] [Hong Kong Free Press]

China-US military relations: US destroyers transit Taiwan Strait

(dql) In a rare move, two Japan-based US Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers, the USS John S. McCain and USS Curtis Wilbur, last week conducted a Taiwan Strait transit, the 13th mission through the sensitive strait in 2020 but the first time in the year

that the US had sent double destroyers there. [USNI News] [South China Morning Post]

US accuses China of paying Afghan non-state actors to shoot US soldiers

(dql) The Trump administration has disclosed thus far uncorroborated intelligence according to which China has offered money to Afghan non-state actors for attacks on US soldiers.

China's Foreign Ministry rejected these claims calling them "fake new aimed to smear China," adding that Chinas does not get involved in the internal conflicts in Afghanistan, while reassuring Beijing's support for the US-initiated peace and reconciliation process, which seeks an end to two decades of war in the South Asian nation. [Axios] [VoA]

China-EU relations: Bilateral investment deal concluded

(dql) China and the European Union last week announced that they concluded talks on the long delayed Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI) which allows the world's second- and third-largest economies to deepen their ties.

The investment deal, negotiations on which begun already in 2014, is believed to boost European businesses seeking to enter the Chinese market, as it will "significantly improve the level playing field for EU investors by laying down clear obligations on Chinese state-owned enterprises, prohibiting forced technology transfers and other distortive practices, and enhancing transparency of subsidies," ensuring European companies "certainty and predictability for their operations," according to the European Council. [CNBC] [Nikkei Asian Review]

For China, the deal signals that it is maintaining the momentum of shaping the global economy, outmaneuvering the US again after having done so by the recent signing of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, another major free trade agreement of which the US is not a member. In a related statement, President-elect Joe Biden conceded that there is "an enormous vacuum" in American leadership, adding: "We're going to have to regain the trust and confidence of a world that has begun to find

ways to work around us or without us." [New York Times]

For a further discussion on the China's strategic yield of the deal, see Theresa Fallon in [The Diplomat] who argues that in addition to preserving and encouraging EU investment in China and gaining legitimacy in the eyes of domestic and international public opinion, "[t]he main deliverable from Beijing's point of view was to drive a wedge in transatlantic relations, and Brussels appears to have complied." See a similar assessment in [VoA], where Jacob F. Kirkegaard confirms that "[g]eopolitically, the CAI will signal that the EU does not see itself as 'wholly in the U.S. camp' in the U.S.-China rivalry, but will rather pursue a 'middle of the road/playing both horses' strategy between them," making the deal "undoubtedly a major political coup for China, as the EU is a major player in all multilateral economic organizations and it will now likely be more difficult for the Biden administration to utilize such organizations — say WTO, UNCTAD, etc. — to try to confront Chinese economic policies."

China warns UK against sending its largest warship to the South China Sea

(dql) China has warned the United Kingdom and other Western powers not to send warships to the South China Sea, adding that it would take "necessary measures to safeguard its sovereignty". The warning is a response to the Royal Navy's announcement that its Carrier Strike Group, centered on Britain's largest ever warship, the HMS Queen Elizabeth, had achieved initial operating capability, ready to deploy.

Over the past years, UK defense officials have been stating that the carrier's first deployment would include Asia and the Pacific on a route from Britain that would likely take it through the South China Sea. [CNN] [International Business Times]

China-Australia relations: Competing for influence in Pacific islands

(dql) In an attempt to counter increasing Chinese influence in the Pacific Ocean, Australia is moving to boost ties with small island nations off its eastern coastline. Prime Minister Scott Morrison's government has pledged to supply its neighbors with Covid-19 vaccines in 2021 as part of a 500 million AUSD package

aimed at achieving "full immunization coverage" in the region. [Bloomberg]

The promise comes on the heels of negotiations with Fiji, which were commenced in November and are believed to pave the way to allow military deployments and exercises in each other's jurisdiction. [Defense Connect]

For insights into China's growing footprint and aid activities in the South Pacific since 2006, see Jonathan Pryke in [Lowy Institute] who argues that while pandemic has provided China an opportunity to deepen its influence in the Pacific, the price for its "aspiring influence in the Pacific" might be "too high for the country to bear," given "[g]reater resolve from the West, greater awareness within the Pacific, and growing financial demands at home and abroad."

China-Mauritius relations: Free trade agreement enters into force

(dql) Signed in October 2019, the China-Mauritius free-trade agreement (FTA) took effect last Friday, opening up a market of 1.4 billion Chinese consumers to the island nation in the Indian Ocean and making within seven years 96% of over 8.500 products Mauritius sells to China duty-free.

The FTA is Beijing's first ever FTA with an African country. Its importance for China lies less in economic terms, but rather in symbolic and strategic terms as it cements China's footprint in Africa and influence in the Indian Ocean. [South China Morning Post] [TRT]

The launch of the FTA coincided with the first day of trading within the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), a 3.4 trillion USD economic bloc encompassing 1.3 billion consumers. The framework agreement for the AfCFTA has been signed by every African nation except Eritrea, and ratified by 34 of them. China in November last year vowed to support the development of the AfCFTA by providing financial aid and capacity-building training. [The Voice] [AiR No. 46, November/2020, 3]

Japan welcomes naval deployment plans of European powers in the Indo-Pacific

(dql) Japan has welcomed planned naval deployments this year by major European countries to the Indo-

Pacific region, including Britain's aircraft carrier Queen Elizabeth and its strike group to East Asia, France's naval vessel to Japan, and Germany's frigate to the Indian Ocean – all planned for 2021, according to government announcements and news reports. [Japan Times]

In a related move, during talks between Japanese Defence Minister Nobuo Kishi and his German counterpart, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, in late December Japan invited Germany's warship to hold a joint naval drill with Japan's Self-Defense Forces in 2021. [WION]

Japan, Mexico agree to step up joint efforts to deepen and expand TPP

(dql) During a meeting on Tuesday, Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi and his Mexican counterpart Marcelo Ebrard agreed to coordinate their countries' efforts to enhance the steady enforcement of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and expand the 11-party free trade agreement's membership.

Japan, which succeeded Mexico this year as chair of the regional FTA, is expected to lead talks to expand the group's membership, with Britain, China and South Korea having recently expressed interest in joining the TPP, while it remains to be seen whether the US will return to the framework under the incoming Biden administration. [Mainichi]

The TPP currently includes Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam. The US withdrew in 2017.

South Korea: Mitsubishi appeals asset seizure court order

(dql) Japan's Mitsubishi Heavy Industries has appealed a South Korean court's order to seize its assets held in South Korea soon after the relevant legal process to compensate victims of Japan's wartime forced labor took effect late last month. The public notifications to the company entered into force last week after the company failed to comply with a 2018 ruling by the Supreme Court ordering the company to pay compensation to five victims of forced labor during Japan's 1910-45 colonization of the Korean Peninsula.

In line with the official stance of the Japanese government, Mitsubishi argues that South Korean citizens cannot make any compensation claims as the reparation issue was fully and finally settled in the 1965 Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and South Korea. The Korean government, however, insists that the agreement was not intended to settle individual claims against Japan for war crime or crimes against humanity, referring to by documents presented during the negotiations which specifically exclude claims for personal injuries incurred by Japan's violations of international laws. [Korea Herald] [AiR No. 52, December/2020, 5]

Cross-strait relations: Tsai Ing-wen reiterates conditions for meaningful dialogue with China

(nm) In her New Year's speech on past Friday, President Tsai Ing-wen reassured China of Taiwan's readiness for having "meaningful" cross-strait talks, but also reiterated her demand that such talks will be held among "equals" and based on "principles of reciprocity and dignity."

China's Foreign Minister, however, harshly rejected Tsai's remarks, accusing the Taiwanese government of engaging in "cheap talk," and Taiwan's ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) of continuing "to provoke by seeking independence, confronting the mainland at every turn, deliberately creating confrontation across the Taiwan Strait." [Reuters 1] [Aljazeera]

Tsai's remarks come amid an exchange between officials from both the People's Republic of China (China) and the Republic of China (Taiwan), that depicts their divergent views on Taiwan' status as a country and the prospect of cross-strait relations. On Thursday last week, Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) rejected a statement from China's Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) that 2021 would see further efforts to bring about the "unification of the motherland." The MAC emphasized Taiwan's status as a sovereign country that has never been part of the People's Republic of China and that it will never accept any unilateral legislation by Beijing that tries to destroy its sovereignty. It also pointed at the crucial role played by Taiwanese investors in China's rise as "the world's factory" and its high-tech sector. The TAO, in contrast, referred to an increase in bilateral trade and identified the refusal of Taiwan's government to accept that it is

part of China as the root cause of present tensions. [Taiwan News] [Reuters 2]

Meanwhile, according to a year-end report released by the Institute for National Defense and Security Research (INDSR), a Taiwanese government-funded think tank, Beijing's policy toward Taiwan is unlikely to change in 2021, citing the deterioration of US-China relations, warming US-Taiwan ties, and the cessation of cross-strait talks due to political differences, including on the "1992 consensus," and adding that 2020 saw most intrusions of the People's Liberation Army into Taiwan's ADIZ (91 days) since the "Taiwan Strait missile crisis" in 1996. [Focus Taiwan 1] [Focus Taiwan 2]

Cross-strait relations: Taipei and Beijing issue convictions against Taiwanese nationals

(nm) Last week, a Taiwanese businessman was found guilty of working with Chinese intelligence in contravention of the National Security Act and handed a three-month jail sentence or payment of a fine by the Taipei District Court. The man had been charged in August for attempting to "develop an organization" for the official use of a foreign government. The case is still open for appeal. [Focus Taiwan 1] [Taipei Times 1]

Meanwhile, 29 Taiwanese nationals were sentenced to four-and-a-half years to 14 years in prison by a Beijing court for telecoms fraud committed in Spain in 2016. The defendants were allegedly members of a fraud ring that operated from Spain but defrauded 14 Chinese nationals residing in China and Hong Kong by pretending to be Chinese law enforcement officials and swindling money. [Focus Taiwan 2] [Taipei Times 2]

Taiwan-US relations: Senate overrides Trump's veto against US defence bill, securing sections supporting Taiwan

(nm) The US Senate overrode a veto of President Trump against the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), a defence bill which also comprises two sections that specifically deal with Taiwan and signal further support of Washington for Taipei.

The first Section 1260 calls for an annual briefing to Congress on US arms sales to Taiwan, a brief by the defence secretary on the feasibility of establishing a

medical security partnership and reaffirms that the Taiwan Relations Act and the "six assurances" provided by the US to Taiwan in 1982 are "the foundations for United States-Taiwan relations." Section 9724 further urges the US to ensure that Taiwanese do not face discrimination when seeking employment at international financial institutions. [Focus Taiwan]

In a related development, the US National Security Council welcomed Taiwan's lift of the import ban on ractopamine-fed US pork as "a great step … for American farmers," adding that the US "look forward to further strengthening US-Taiwan economic ties in 2021." [Taiwan News]

Taiwan-New Zealand relations: Customs standard agreement signed

(nm) Last week, Taiwan's the Ministry of Foreign Affairs revealed that Taiwan and New Zealand have signed in December an agreement to mutually recognize their authorized economic operators (AEO). The agreement is expected to deepen customs cooperation and supply chain safety between the two countries

The World Customs Organization (WCO) defines an AEO as "a party involved in the international movement of goods that has been approved by a national Customs administration as complying with the WCO or equivalent supply chain security standards." [WCO]

Taiwan currently holds similar agreements with eight other countries: Australia, Israel, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, and the United States. Its Custom Administration introduced its AEO program in December 2009 and has to date certified 789 AEOs, with countries accounting for 48% of Taiwan's trade.

In a separate statement, Taiwan's Ministry of Finance estimated the trade volume between Taiwan and New Zealand in 2019 at 1.3 billion USD. [Focus Taiwan] [Taipei Times]

India joins United Nations Security Council as non-permanent member

(lm) With a pledge to "bring human-centric and inclusive solutions" to world problems, India on January 4 officially joined the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) as a non-permanent member,

beginning a two-year tenure. Speaking at the ceremony, India's Permanent Representative pledged that India would "not shy away from raising our voice against the common enemies of humanity like terrorism." [India Today] [The Hindu]

While this is the eighth time that New Delhi has been elected to the UNSC, India hopes that this time its presence in the UN's highest decision-making body will help move the organization towards the ultimate reform: a permanent seat on the UNSC for India. The bid is currently backed by four of the five permanent members, namely France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. [The Diplomat]

Underscoring the importance of this endeavor, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in September declared that United Nations reform is "the need of the hour." Addressing world leaders in a video address to the General Debate of the General Assembly, he also complained that his country had not been adequately rewarded for its participation in in some 50 UN peace-keeping missions.

Talks with China yet to make progress to end border stand-off, says India

(lm) While more than 100,000 soldiers of both armies remain deployed in harsh winter conditions, talks between India and China have yet to make headway to end the months-long border stand-off, Indian Defense Minister Rajnath Singh said on December 30. Notwithstanding periodic hopes for a resolution [see AiR No. 46, November/2020, 3], a breakthrough has hitherto eluded several rounds of diplomatic and military talks. Yet, both sides are still exchanging messages over the border situation and another round of military talks was in the offing, according to Singh. [The Straits Times]

Recognizing that Beijing has an immense military advantage, observers suggest that India is stalling for time, privily accepting that a diplomatic solution is unlikely. While New Delhi's heavy military deployment can neither punish Chinese incursions nor force Beijing to relinquish control of its newly acquired territorial gain, it may be able to contain losses and prevent any further Chinese encroachment into Indian territory, at least temporarily. With both armies locked into the prospect of a long watch in the high mountains [see AiR No. 48, December/2020, 1], the Indian Army's performance and its sustenance through this winter may be the critical factor for New Delhi's plans to deal

with the Chinese aggression in eastern Ladakh. [Foreign Policy]

Bangladesh wants repatriation of Rohingya refugees to begin this year

(lm) Bangladesh's foreign minister on January 3 informed that a letter had been sent to Myanmar's government, requesting to resume the repatriation process of more the more than 1 million Rohingya refugees this year. Context and timing of the announcement are noteworthy: In a 134-9 vote with 28 abstentions the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on December 31 approved a resolution strongly condemning rights abuses against Rohingya Muslims and other minority groups in Myanmar, including arbitrary arrests, torture, rape, and deaths in detention. [India Today] [Dhaka Tribune] [New York Times]

Bangladesh and Myanmar had signed a repatriation deal in November 2017 followed by a physical agreement in January 2018 to facilitate the return of Rohingyas to the Rakhine province. However, there has been no success in the repatriation of Rohingyas despite two failed attempts in the past. Meanwhile, authorities in Bangladesh have started relocating Rohingya refugees from crammed camps near the Myanmar border to a settlement on what the UN and rights groups worry is a dangerous low-lying island prone to cyclones and floods [see AiR No. 52, December/2020, 5].

Chinese delegation downplays visit to Nepal

(lm) The Chinese delegation dispatched in the wake of the dissolution of Nepal's lower house of parliament [see AiR No. 52, December/2020, 5] wrapped up its four-day visit on December 30, after meetings with Nepal Communist Party (NCP) leaders, including Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli, and his two intraparty rivals, Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Madhav Kumar Nepal.

While members of the delegation claimed their visit was focused on strengthening ties between the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and political parties in Nepal, observers say the group explored several options to retain the dominance of the communist parties in Nepal's politics, including forging an alternative alliance led by the NCP for the upcoming

general elections: The first was to convince Prime Minister Oli to reverse his decision to dissolve the lower house of parliament and call for early election [see AiR No. 51, December/2020, 4] in exchange for being allowed to lead the caretaker government. But the prime minister refused the proposal, saying there was no guarantee that the rivaling faction would not try to topple his government. Dahal and Nepal, in turn, also refused to give any commitments, demanding that the prime minister should reverse the order to dissolve parliament first. [Hindustan Times]

Moreover, the Chinese delegation also explored the possibility of mobilizing an alternative government led by the NCP - but minus Prime Minister Oli - in case the dissolution is reversed by the Supreme Court (SC) [see AiR No. 52, December/2020, 5]. To this end, the group held meetings with leaders from Nepal's two major opposition parties, Nepali Congress (NC) and Janata Samajwadi Party-Nepal (JSP-N), testing the water for cross-party support of a Dahal-led NCP. The team also reached out to the next generation of NCP leaders from both camps to get them to nudge their seniors to keep the party united. [The Himalayan Times]

Indian External Affairs Minister to visit Sri Lanka between January 5 and 7

(lm) Indian Minister of External Affairs Subrahmanyam Jaishankar will pay an official visit to Sri Lanka from January 5-7 at the invitation of his Sri Lankan counterpart Dinesh Gunawardena. Scheduled to hold discussions with President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, Jaishankar is also expected to take up the release of Indian fishermen from Tamil Nadu, who had been arrested last December on charges of poaching. [Hindustan Times]

The latest in a series of effort's by New Delhi to further smoothen bilateral relations, Jaishankar's visit marks the second high-profile trip to Colombo in two months. India's National Security Adviser Ajit Doval made a three-day visit to Colombo last November, meeting with President Gotabaya Rajapaksa to discuss trade, new investments, and security amid plans to bolster bilateral ties between the two countries [see AiR No. 48, December/2020, 1].

Pakistan, China agree on need to deepen cooperation

(lm) During a telephone conversation between Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi, both sides on December 31 agreed to deepen their cooperation and work together for peace and stability in the region. The same day, representatives of both countries signed a loan agreement worth $100 million for the rehabilitation of the National Highway N-5 Project, an 1819-km road artery linking the port of Karachi to Peshawar and the Afghan border. [Dawn] [The Nation]

To maintain the momentum of high-level exchange, Chinese President Xi Jinping was scheduled to visit Islamabad early this year. However, it now appears that the trip may not happen in the coming months as Qureshi has been invited to visit Beijing, instead.

China, meanwhile, has dismissed reports that it sought additional guarantees from Pakistan before sanctioning a $6 billion loan for the construction of a railway line project [see AiR No. 52, December/2020, 5]. Beijing also rejected claims that it was moving away from its initial commitments to Islamabad under the multibillion-dollar China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) agreement, after Pakistani media had reported that concerns over Pakistan's ability to pay back loans had emerged in recent negotiations. [WION] [The Hindu]

Pakistan to buy costliest LNG amid increasing gas shortage

(lm) Against the backdrop of an intensifying domestic gas crisis [see AiR No. 51, December/2020, 4], Pakistan LNG, the state-run procurement agency, will be buying an all-time high priced Liquified Natural Gas (LNG) to secure cargoes for February. Meeting with industrialists, President Arif Alvi, meanwhile, promised to take up the matter with concerned ministers. [Geo News] [The Express Tribune]

LNG spot buying has become a topic of intense debate in the South Asian country, where gas demand peaks in December and January as people use more natural gas to heat homes during the winter [see AiR No. 45, November/2020, 2].

Leader of group linked to 2008 Mumbai attacks arrested in Pakistan

(lm) Pakistan authorities on January 2 arrested Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi, leader of the Islamist terrorist group Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), over a separate case of terrorism financing. Lakhvi was arrested in the eastern city of Lahore where he was running a medical dispensary that he allegedly used to collect funds for militant activities. [The Straits Times]

One of the largest militant organizations in South Asia, LeT is accused by India of plotting the 2008 Mumbai attacks that left at least 174 people dead and more than 300 wounded. The Indian government's view is that Pakistan, particularly through its intelligence agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), has both supported the group. Lakhvi was detained in 2015 over the attacks but granted bail months later. Since then, the government had slapped him with a series of detention orders, but judges repeatedly cancelled them. [The Hindu]

Context and timing of the arrest are significant, coming in the run-up to a series of meetings of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), an inter-governmental organization that monitors global money laundering and terrorist financing. During the FATF's last review in October, Islamabad was urged to complete the internationally agreed action plan by February 2021 and to demonstrate that terrorism financing probes resulted in effective sanctions [see AiR No. 43, October/2020, 4].

Earlier this year, Pakistan also arrested firebrand cleric and alleged mastermind of the attacks Hafiz Saeed, who heads the Islamist militant organization Jama'at-ud-Da'wah (JuD), a wing of LeT, for terrorism financing. An anti-terrorism court sentenced Saeed to fifteen-and-a-half years in prison on charges of terrorism financing last week - his fourth conviction this year on similar charges [see AiR No. 47, November/2020, 4]. [AiR No. 52, December/2020, 5]

Sri Lanka signs currency swap agreements with China and India

(lm) To boost its foreign currency reserves and maintain short-term foreign exchange liquidity, Sri Lanka is seeking currency swap facilities with the respective central banks of China and India combined worth $2.5 billion. The negotiations come at a time when Colombo is gearing up to repay a daunting $4.5 billion of its outstanding foreign loans this year. The government of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, that is, desperately needs cash to service its multibillion-dollar

international debts and to run a current account deficit estimated at $1.1 billion annually. [South Asia Monitor]

Colombo's financial vulnerability is providing a fresh opportunity for both Beijing and New Delhi to deepen their influence in the island nation as they engage in a growing contest to gain the upper hand in the strategic Indian Ocean. China, which styles itself as an all-weather friend to Sri Lanka, already provided $500 million 'urgent financial assistance' last year, to help cope with the economic knock-on effects of the pandemic [see AiR No. 42, October/2020, 3]. India, in turn, provided a $400m currency swap facility last year through the Reserve Bank of India, its central bank, helping to boost the island's reserves [see AiR No. 30, July/2020, 4].

Maldives signs debt relief suspension deal with Japan, France, and United States

(lm) In a major relief to an already debt-ridden country, the Maldives has signed a series of agreements with Japan, France, and the United States under the G20 'Debt Service Suspension Initiative' to temporarily suspend debt-service payments owed to bilateral creditors. Earlier in September, the government had signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the treatment of debt service suspensions with the representatives of various lenders countries. [The Edition 1] [The Edition 2] [Raajjee.mv]

The economic outlook for the Maldives has deteriorated dramatically in recent months, as the country has been unable to offset the impact of the drastic reduction in tourism activity caused by the coronavirus pandemic. Against the larger backdrop of projections of a more severe and prolonged external liquidity pressures than initially forecasted, Fitch Ratings in November downgraded the country's credit rating to 'CCC' from 'B', ranking Malé's vulnerability to default as 'a real possibility'. [AiR No. 46, November/2020, 3]

Moreover, Malé is estimated to have accumulated $1.5 billion in debt to China, equivalent to 45 percent of the island nation's national debt. Beijing has already reduced this year's loan repayment to $75 million from the scheduled $100 million under the G20 'Debt Service Suspension Initiative', and agreed to partially suspend debt repayment applicable to $600 million in loans for a period of approximately four years [see AiR No. 44, November/2020, 1]. Earlier last month, China then agreed to defer repayment for loans which were

secured via state-owned companies [see AiR No. 49, December/2020, 2].

Pakistan urges UN to prevent "judicial murder" of Kashmiri separatist

(lm) Pakistan called on UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on January 1 to prevent the "judicial murder" of Asiya Andrabi, founding leader of Dukhtaran-e-Millat (Daughters of the Nation, DeM). A part of the separatist All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC), DeM is an all-woman outfit that advocates jihad to establish Islamic law in Kashmir and to establish a separate state from India. A Delhi court last month ordered framing charges against Andrabi and her two associates for allegedly "waging war against India" and other unlawful activities, two years after she was taken into custody by the National Investigation Agency (NIA), India's federal anti-terror organization. [Dawn]

Islamic State militants kill coal miners in southwestern province of Balochistan

(lm) Islamic State militants in Pakistan's southwestern province of Balochistan have killed at least 11 workers at a remote coal mine, authorities said on December 3. Police video of the bodies revealed the miners were blindfolded and had their hands tied behind their backs before being shot. The victims were said to be members of the minority Shiite Hazara community, which is often targeted by Sunni militant groups, including the Islamic State group, who consider them heretics. [Al Jazeera] [Deutsche Welle]

Following the incident, hundreds of Shiites blocked a key highway on the outskirts of the provincial capital, Quetta, the coffins with the miners' bodies laid out on the ground before them, insisting they would not be buried until authorities arrest the killers. [Associated Press]

India clears Akash missile for export

(lm) To achieve the target of clocking defense exports worth $5 billion by 2024, the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) on December 30 approved the export of the indigenous Akash surface-to-air-missile systems to friendly foreign countries. To this end the CCS, chaired

by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved setting up a high-level committee to provide swifter approval for export of such platforms. [Hindustan Times]

Developed by India's Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO), Akash is India's first indigenously designed missile system that can target fighter jets, cruise missiles, drones, and other aerial assets. However, the export version of Akash will be different from the weapon system currently deployed by the Indian armed forces. [Financial Express] [Defense World]

Maldives president on unofficial trip to Dubai, meets with crown prince

(lm) Maldives President Mohammad Soli on January 2 embarked on a three-day visit to the United Arab Emirates (UAE). While his office had not revealed any further details beforehand, Soli on January 2 met with Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi to discuss bilateral relations. [Saudi Gazette]

Indonesia, Australia, to ensure non-violence of released cleric

(nd) After the release of Abu Bakar Bashir, the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs urged Indonesia to make sure the 82-year-old will not incite further violence. The radical cleric is the suspected mastermind of the 2002 Bali bombings, killing 200 people including many Australian nationals, which he denied. He was jailed in 2011 for entertaining links to militant training camps in the Indonesian province of Aceh and considered the spiritual leader of the al Qaeda-linked Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) network. The JI leader was arrest last December. [See also AiR No. 50, December/2020, 3][Channel News Asia]

Laos: Set to build seventh dam

(nd) As part of its ambitious economic strategy to become the "battery of Southeast Asia" Laos is moving forward to build the seventh of nine planned large-scale Mekong river mainstream dams, the 728-megawatt Phou Ngoy Dam, with a projected completion date of 2029.

The environmental and social impact study has just been approved; however, the project has not been submitted to the Mekong River Commission (MRC), an inter-government agency to manage the Mekong's resources, to undergo the Prior Consultation and Agreement (PNPCA) process yet "because the detailed environmental and social impact study is not yet complete."

To be affected residents, which might even have to be relocated, are opposed to another Mekong River dam, fueled by reports of villagers displaced by dam projects ending up poorer than they started. The projects are controversial because of their unclear environmental impact, displacement of villagers without adequate compensation, and questionable financial and power demand arrangements. [Voice of America]

Malaysia, US to ban import of Malaysian palm oil

(nd) For the second time, the US moved to ban the import of Malaysian palm oil, this time against Sime Darby Plantation, one of the world's biggest producers.

Activists long claimed bad working conditions on the plantations and the destruction of rainforests to make way for plantations. In the current case, the US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) said there was evidence that workers face abuses including sexual and physical violence, withholding of wages and restrictions on movement. In October, the US banned imports from Malaysian palm oil producer FGV Holdings, also on accounts of alleged labor law violations. [Asia Times]

Malaysia, Singapore to terminate multibillion-dollar high-speed rail project

(nd) Malaysia and Singapore announced they would terminate a 2016 plan to build a US$25 billion high-speed rail project. Demanded changes by the Malay side were not agreed upon. The Malaysian government will have to pay a fee for the cancellation of the contract, reportedly more than S$100 million (US$75 million).

The Pakatan Harapan (PH) alliance, who unexpectedly won the general election in 2018, asked for a commencement extension to re-evaluate costs and the project's merits, referring to the huge national debt.

Following the PH's oust by a political coup in March, Prime Minister Yassin Muhyiddin's administration tried to renegotiate, including a realignment of the rail link to connect it to Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA), to avoid the feared divert in traffic to Singapore's more established Changi Airport.

The original plan was to reduce travel time from Kuala Lumpur to Singapore to 90 minutes for the 350km distance. The pandemic and expected decrease in travel also for business purposes might have made the project less economically interesting. [South China Morning Post]

China, Russia to vote against resolution against Myanmar

(nd) A draft resolution on the situation of human rights of Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in Myanmar was adopted 130-9 by the UN General Assembly, with Russia, China, Belarus, Cambodia, Laos, Philippines, Vietnam, Zimbabwe and Myanmar themselves voting against it, and 26 countries, including India, Japan, Sri Lanka and Singapore abstaining from voting.

India said they engaged with Myanmar at every level, Japan commented they were also communicating with Myanmar directly, while China said they were trying to negotiate with Myanmar and Bangladesh. [New Age World]

ASEAN countries, US to seek last minute deals

(nd) Only weeks before the official end of the Trump administration, countries across Southeast Asia seem to pursue last minute security and economic agreements with the US in light of president Donald Trump's transactional approach to diplomacy. During the Trump presidency, trade with the US increased despite of his relative lack of interest in the region, while the incoming administration of President-elect Joe Biden is widely associated with a stricter emphasis on human rights and democratic values. In early December, the Philippines received $29 million in military equipment during a visit, with an announcement of additional $18 million worth of military equipment and training.

For Indonesia's planned sovereign wealth fund, the US International Development Finance Corp. signed a

letter of interest for a $2 billion as one of the first countries to sign up, with an aimed estimated total of about $15 billion from around the world. The US also extend tariff exemptions for Indonesia, possibly with an eye on cooperation against Chinese maritime actions in the South China Sea. Due to its geographic position, the region will play a pivotal role in geopolitics in the coming years, to stand strong against Chinese aggression and growing influence, but still, in the region, democratic governance is deteriorating, and left unaddressed.

Economically, the region has benefitted from the Trump administration, with ASEAN having received about $24.5 billion in direct investment from the US in 2019, with exports from Indonesia, Vietnam and Cambodia on the rise since 2017. Additionally, US-based power company AES announced to join a development project for a liquefied natural gas terminal in Vietnam, which also agreed to import up to $500 million in American pork over the next three years. This was seen as a reaction to mitigate the trade imbalance, still US accused Vietnam of currency manipulation after. [Nikkei Asia]

Announcements

Upcoming Online Events

January- February 2021, Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance, Switzerland

DCAF Young Faces 2021 Webinar Series on Cybersecurity Governance for Young Leaders

The DCAF invites all young leaders and interested scholars from Southeast- and Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus interested in cybersecurity and good governance to apply for the Young Faces Webinar Series. The series consists of three different webinars with three sessions each, covering the following topics: Introduction to Good Governance in Cybersecurity (26-28 January), National Cybersecurity Strategies (NCSS) – Experiences in Strategically Planning Cybersecurity Governance (16-18 February), and Gender and Security Online (23-25 February). Participants will have the opportunity to exchange with experts and researchers in the field while expanding their knowledge. Applications are open until 31 December 2020.

For more information and application guidelines, please visit [DCAF].

6 January 2021 @ 12:00 pm EST, Hudson Institute, United States

U.S.-India Defense Ties: Partnership of the 21st Century

In light of considerably deepened defense ties between the US and India since the turn of the century, this webinar asks: Will the India-US relationship finally become the key American partnership of the next century? The panel will feature Abhijnan Rej, Security and Defense Editor at The Diplomat and Director of Research at Diplomat Risk Intelligence and Vice Adm (retd) Shekhar Sinha, former Chief of Integrated Defence Staff and former C-in-C Western Naval Command.

For more information, please follow [Hudson Institute].

7 January 2021 @ 10:00 am IST, Centre for Land Warfare Studies, India

Changing Security Dynamics in the Indian Ocean Region in the 21st Century

In consideration of China's increased influence in the Indian Ocean Region, this online panel focusses on two key aspects: first, understanding the changing dynamics in the Indian Ocean Region and its impact on India; second, assessing the China factor in changing the security situation in the Indian Ocean Region.

For more details and information on how to attend the round table, please visit [CLAWS].

8 January 2021 @ 12:00 pm EST, Hudson Institute, United States

The Distribution of Wealth since the Great Recession

In this webinar, Hudson Senior Fellow Dr. John Weicher will discuss his new report "The Distribution of Wealth Since the Great Recession." He will discuss how the Great Recession affected the wealth of rich and poor families, as well as the often-overlooked large group of families in between.

Please visit [Hudson Institute] for more information.

11 January 2021 @ 12:00 pm EST, Queen's University, Canada

HSPRI Inside Research Series: Ontario Health Teams w/ Dr. Walter Wodchis

Dr. Walter Wodchis – Associate Professor at the Institute of Health Policy, Management and Evaluation at the University of Toronto – will seek to determine: What does success mean and how do we know if we are progressing toward that goal?

If you are interested in joining the event, please follow [QU] for more information and registration.

12 January 2021 @ 5:00-6:15 pm EST, Center For Strategic & International Studies, Washington, DC, USA

Taiwan and Indo-Pacific Regional Security Architecture Conference

This event will discuss Taiwan's role as a key player in the Indo-Pacific and its integration into the security architecture of this region, specifically focused on views from the US, Japan, and Australia.

If you are interested in this event, please follow [CSIS] for more information.

13 January 2021 @ 10:30 am - 12:00 pm EST, United States Institute of Peace, Washington, DC, USA

Joe Biden's Tough Challenges in Iran

This event will discuss Iran as a challenge to Joe Biden in the Middle East.

For more details about the event, see [USIP].

13 January 2021 @ 4:00-6:00 pm GMT, Overseas Development Institute, London, UK

Global Reset: Inequality and a new social contract

The Covid-19 crisis has exposed existing and persistent inequalities. It has revealed how inequalities in the provision of essential services and in the world of work affect the ability of societies to respond to shocks and create new vulnerabilities in a crisis.

If you wish to participate in the webinar, please visit [ODI] for more information and registration details.

13 January 2021 @ 7:00 pm ET, Centre for International Governance Innovation, Canada

Everything is Connected with Dr. Laura DeNardis

This presentation and subsequent Q&A ask: Is our ever-increasing connectivity to the Internet blurring the lines between our physical and virtual worlds? How can we manage the balance between the benefits and dangers of the Internet of Things (IoT)? Dr. Laura DeNardis, CIGI Senior Fellow and scholar of Internet architecture and governance at American University and Yale Law School's Information Society Project, will launch her new book.

For more information, please visit [CIGI].

13 January 2021 @ 11:00 am CET, European Centre for International Political Economy, Belgium

ECIPE Webinar: How Can We Revive the WTO and Trade Multilateralism?

In this webinar, Simon Evenett considers how to revive the WTO and trade multilateralism after the COVID-19 crisis, asking in particular: Has the COVID-19 crisis done permanent damage to the self-correcting system of the WTO? What can the WTO do to arrest the trend of new trade frictions? How is the WTO system addressing various shifts in the global economy and politics – like the growth of the digital economy and climate change? Is the WTO able to deal with these and other new 21st century problems?

If you wish to participate in the webinar, please visit [ECIPE] for more information and registration details.

19 January 2021 @ full day, Nanyang Technologies University, Singapore

Workshop by China Programme and United States Programme

Join this workshop to learn more about "Great Powers Exceptionalism: Sino-American Conceptions of World Order."

For more details, see [RSIS].

26-28 January 2021 @ 5:00 pm IST, The Institute for National Security Studies, Israel

The 14th Annual International Conference | New World Disorder – Redefining National Security

Over three days, the INSS 14th Annual International Conference compromises a wide array of online formats, including panel discussions, lectures, simulations, Q&As, and interviews, considering contemporary questions of national security such as the world between Trump and Biden, the war in the Middle East, and future perspectives for Israel.

For details and information on how to join the conference, please access [INSS].

27 January 2021 @ 4:00 pm CET, Bruegel, Belgium

In search of a fitting monetary policy: the ECB's strategy review

As the European Central Bank is in the middle of reviewing its monetary policy strategy, this webinar seeks to discuss the following questions: What are the issues that it needs to address? Are there quick gains to be had? And what are the big issues that it must consider? Importantly, how is the role of macroeconomic management changing in the era of the digital transformation?

If you are interested in this event, please follow [Bruegel] for more information.

27 January 2021 @ 9:00 am EDT, Hudson Institute, United States

The Future of US-Nigeria Relations: A Conversation with Ambassador John Campbell

James Barnett and John Campbell – former US Ambassador to Nigeria and Senior Fellow for Africa Policy Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations – will discuss contemporary Nigerian politics, the challenges of post-colonial state-building, and the future of US-Africa relations. Campbell is also author of the new book, Nigeria and the Nation State: Rethinking Diplomacy with the Postcolonial World, urging US officials to stop projecting their own image of the nation-state onto Africa and embrace a more decentralized approach to diplomacy.

Please follow [Hudson Institute] for more information.

27-29 January, 2021 @ 11:00 am - 3:30 pm GMT+9 , Asian Development Bank, Tokyo

Virtual Policy Dialogue on Taxation in the Digital Economy: New Models in Asia and the Pacific

This event will discuss administration strategies for enhancing services and tax compliance in a digital economy, identify key features of digital markets and business models, and highlight policy lessons and experiences to build revenue administration capacity in Asia and the Pacific amid accelerating digitalization.

Please find registration detail here: [ADB]

3 February 2021 @ 1:00 pm EST, Queen's University, Canada

Injustices in the Globalized Food System: Migrant Agricultural Work in Canada and Greece

This webinar held by Janet McLaughlin – Associate Professor of Health Studies at Wilfried Laurier University as well as co-founder and co-coordinator of the Migrant Worker Health Project – and Reena Kukreja – Assistant Professor of Global Development Studies at Queen's University – is part of the Gender Matters Speaker Series organized by the Department of Gender Studies at Queen's University.

If you are interested in joining this webinar, please visit [QU] for details.

9 February 2021 @ 1:30 pm EST, Centre for International Governance Innovation, Canada

National Security, Economic Prosperity, and Canada's Future

Against the backdrop of a considerably shifted international security and geopolitical landscape, this webinar discusses the changing threat landscape and the ways in which Canada can contribute to an important strategic discussion around national security and intelligence practice. It will also discuss how Canada can better safeguard future economic growth, innovation, sovereignty, and its national interests.

Details are accessible under [CIGI].

25 February 2021 @ 12:15 pm GMT, Royal United Services Institute, UK

Sea Power Virtual Conference 2021: Transforming Maritime Forces For an Age of Persistent Competition

This event will explore the ways in which naval force structures, postures and concepts of operations will need to adjust to a strategic context in which husbanding forces for high intensity clashes will no longer suffice.

Please find registration detail here: [RUSI]

11, 15-19 March 2021, Institute for Global Environmental Strategies, Japan

The 7th 3R International Scientific Conference (3RINCs)

Global academics, policymakers, and business representatives, especially those from the Asia-Pacific region, will come together for interdisciplinary discussions around green recovery policies. In the "Special Session" of the conference, participants will, with respect to various countries, share information about and discuss topics such as: analytical methods of plastic waste, organic waste and food waste management, disaster waste management, and waste management during/after COVID-19. The "General Session" will cover a wide range of topics and be a good opportunity to publish research outputs as part of the proceedings e-book. There is also an opportunity to submit a full paper for the special issue of a well-known international journal.
Abstracts may be submitted until 1 February 2021; registration is required.

If you are interested in this conference, please visit [IGES] for more information and fee details.

Recent book releases

Charles a. Kupchan, ***Isolationism: A History of America's Efforts to Shield Itself From the World***, Oxford University Press, 464 pages, October 1, 2020, reviewed in [Foreign Affairs]

Wolfgang Ischinger, ***World in Danger: Germany and Europe in an Uncertain Time***, Brookings Institution Press, 280 pages, November 10, 2020, with a review in [Foreign Affairs].

Cynthis Miller-Idriss, ***Hate in the Homeland: The New Global Far Right***, Princeton University Press, 257 pages, October 27, 2020, reviewed in [New Books Network].

Eyck Freymann, ***One Belt One Road: Chinese Power Meets the World***, Harvard University Asia Center, 330 pages, November 17, 2020, reviewed in [New Books Network].

Calls

The I**nterdisciplinary Centre on Nuclear and Strategic Studies (CIENS)** invites to submit papers its conference ***"Nuclear deterrence in Europe. Visions, debates, opportunities, and challenges from 1945 to present"*** scheduled for summer 2021 (exact date tbd). The deadline for submission is 19 February, 2021.

For more information, see [CIENS]

The **Center for Austrian and German Studies** has opened a call for papers for its conference ***"Americans in Vienna, 1945-1955"*** to be held in 27-28 April, 2021. The deadline for submission is 15 January, 2021

More details provided at [networks.h-net]

The **Association of Chinese and Comparative Literature** invites to submit papers for its conference "**Literature and the Sea" organized on** 29 -31 July, 2021, in Taipei. The deadline for submission is 31 January, 2021.

For more information, see [networks.h-net].

Jobs & positions

The University of Antwerp is offering a position of ***Research Professor*** for public international law, human rights and sustainable development. Closing date for application is 15 February, 2021.

For more information, see [Academic Positions].

The **University of Ghent** is offering a position of Scientific **Researcher** in the field of European and Belgian energy law, with a particular focus on the legal regime of urban energy islands. Applications can be submitted until 15 January, 2021.

Further details provided [Academic Positions].

The International Organization for Migration is recruiting a Programme Manager to be based in Tripoli, Libya. Closing date for application is 10 January 2021. More about the vacancy at [IOM].

The European Union Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators is recruiting a Policy Officer at its office in Ljubljana (Slovenia). Deadline for applications is 26 January 2021. If you are interested, find more details at [EPSO].

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