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Asia in Review

Grasp the pattern, read the trend

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Dear Readers,

Welcome to this week's brief on the latest events and developments in constitutional politics and governance, geopolitics and international relations in Asia.

I wish you an informative read and extend special greetings to readers in Belgium and Colombia which celebrate National Day and Independence Day in this week.

With best regards,

Henning Glaser

Editor in Chief

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Law and Politics in East Asia

China: White paper on human rights progress in Xinjiang

(dx) China's State Council, the country's central government, issued a white paper on the progress of human rights in Xinjiang over the past seven decades since the founding of the People's Republic of China, documenting achievements in seven areas – civil, political, economic, cultural, societal, women's and children's, and religious rights – to improve the lives of Xinjiang's ethnic minorities.

Major outcomes identified in the report include: no terrorist attacks in Xinjiang for the past four the representation of Xinjiang's ethnic minorities in local and national governing bodies, accounting for more than 60% of the region's delegates at the national legislature; rapid improvements in the region's economy and living standards; improvement of school enrolment rate for ethnic minorities, with students entitled to study their own language. The white paper also highlights health insurance, retirement pensions and other state financial support. Additionally, it

stresses that women will play an increasingly important role in their communities.

On the controversial issue of religious freedom amid reports of a crackdown, the white paper claims there are efforts being made to preserve religious culture in Xinjiang and that several mosques in the region are being renovated by the government.

Coming at the heels of the white paper on the Chinese Communist Party's practice of "respecting and protecting human rights," [see AiR No. 26, June/2021, 5] this white paper is another countermeasure against accusations of human rights abuses in the region. China has consistently dismissed these claims as "[...], rumors, distortions and complete fabrications being spread by some foreign media and politicians," and as "a calculated campaign to undermine the Chinese government's enormous efforts to protect ethnic equality [...] and the historic progress that has been made on human rights in the region." [ECNS] [South China Morning Post]

The full text of the white paper is available at [China.org.cn].

China: Communist Party to reform grass-roots governance

(dx) China is set to reform its local governance system following a directive jointly issued by the Communist Party Central Committee and the State Council. Under the directive, the authority of rural townships and urban subdistricts will be strengthened to become an important part in the governance system as they are now granted powers to oversee village and neighborhood committees. So far, they have been functioning as dispatch agencies relaying orders from the higher level to the lower.

At the same they are put under more direct leadership of the party as the directive provides guidance on how to tighten the party's control of community workers, improve efficiency of data collection and usage, and distribute public goods for residents.

This move is seen by observers as the ending of China's decade-long experiment on village autonomy, with the party reestablishing its full control over governance at local level. [South China Morning Post] [The Sixth Tone]

The full text of directive is available at [Xinhuanet, in Chinese].

China: Tech giants sign voluntary antitrust "self-discipline" pledge amid Beijing's growing regulatory pressure

(dx) Chinese tech companies, including the largest such as Alibaba Group Holding, Tencent Holdings, ByteDance, Huawei Technologies Co, Baidu and JD.com, have collectively signed a convention on fair competition, consumer protection and strengthening innovation. The convention, drafted by tech companies and the Chinese Academy of Information and Communications Technology (CAICT), a subordinate to the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT), prohibits tech companies from engaging in different types of monopolies.

The action is the latest success in Beijing's recent push to rein in the country's big tech firms which so far have been allowed to massively expand under comparatively lax regulations and oversight, most prominently reflected in April, when Alibaba was fined 2.8 billion USD after an investigation fund the company guilty of abusing its market dominance. [Air No.15, April/2021, 2]

In a related development, the State Administration for Market Regulation (SAMR), the country's market regulator, blocked Tencent's planned merger of its two units Huya and Douyu International Holdings, China's two biggest video game live-streaming platforms, dealing a blow to the world's biggest games publisher. The merger "may have the effect of excluding or restricting competition, which is not conducive to fair competition and may damage the interests of consumers," SAMR said in the statement. [South China Morning Post 1] [South China Morning Post 2]

China: Agriculture tycoon faces decades in jail for criticizing the government

(dx) Outspoken businessman Sun Dawu is standing a closed-door trial on multiple charges including "provoking trouble and disturbing public order" and illegal fundraising. He faces punishment up to 25 years in prison.

Sun is billionaire owner of Dawu Agricultural and Animal Husbandry Group, an agriculture empire with some 9,000 employees. He has been vocal in criticizing the government, including over its rural policies and

handling of the Covid-19 pandemic and the so-called "709 crackdown" in 2015, when more 300 human rights lawyers and activists were arrested. [South China Morning Post]

China: Lower threshold for prosecution under Hong Kong's new anti-doxxing law

(dx) Hong Kong is preparing to tighten its legislation on doxxing and cyber harassment, with a bill expected to go before the Legislative Council by October.

In its Personal Data (Privacy) (Amendment) Bill 2021 proposal, Hong Kong's government has lowered the threshold for defining the crime of doxxing, removing a requirement that prosecutors prove victims suffered psychological harm. It also provides two years in prison as punishment for deliberately leaking individuals' personal information with the intent to threaten or harass them.

In response, Singapore-based Asia Internet Coalition, an alliance that includes tech giants such as Facebook, Google, Yahoo, Twitter and LinkedIn, criticized that the proposed law was too expansive and excessive, likely to curtail free expression, and would discourage tech companies from investing and offering services in Hong Kong. The government dismissed the coalition's concerns, saying that the proposed law only targets unlawful doxxing and would empower privacy commissioners to carry out investigations and prosecute wrongdoers. [South China Morning Post 1] [South China Morning Post 2] [CNET]

Since the Hong Kong anti-government protests of 2019, doxing has become a heated debate in the former British colony. After police officers stopped wearing identifying markers during the protests, protesters begun to expose their identities on social media, to which pro-government groups posted information about protesters.

China: University of Hong Kong student union derecognized

(dx) The University of Hong Kong announced that it no longer recognizes the institution's students' union (HKUSU). The announcement came hours after Chief Executive Carrie Lam demanded action against student leaders over a motion expressing condolences for the suicide of Leung Kin-fai, a 50-year-old Hong Kong man

who died after knifing a policeman and stabbing himself on July 1. Executive Councillor Ronny Tong, furthermore, threatened legal actions against HKUSU' members who approved the resolution.

The students' union's derecognition adds to growing worries that the authorities will root out opposition voices and instill mainland-China-style controls on campus, given that out of eight public universities in Hong Kong five have already stopped to collect student union fees. Additionally, faculty members and administrators at universities are concerned about academic freedom and self-censorship, staff retention and recruitment, and students' well-being under Beijing's tight control. [Radio Free Asia] [South China Morning Post 1] [South China Morning Post 2] [The Atlantic]

Japan: Backlash against Suga's administration over controversial plans on alcohol ban

(dx) Japan's government announced that it has retracted its plan to ask financial institutions to ensure restaurants follow the alcohol ban. Earlier, Yasutoshi Nishimura, the economic revitalization minister who is also in charge of Covid-19 response, said the government will share with financial institutions information about their client restaurants that are not complying with the alcohol ban request and want financial institutions to ensure restaurants follow the request. The policy was regarded as an implicit threat to withhold loans from restaurants and bars, and drew criticism that the government was attempting to use lenders to pressure such establishments.

Another request of the government, which asks liquor wholesalers, including the All Japan Liquor Merchants Association and other business groups, to stop transactions with bars and restaurants that refuse to temporarily shut down was retracted as well. The request was retracted after the association voiced its discontent to lawmakers of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and hinted at consequences for the Lower House election this fall. The second retraction led the opposition parties to call for Nishimura's resignation.

In the meantime, the online movement "anything but the LDP or Komeito", which calls for not voting for LDP or its coalition partner Komeito, is trending on Twitter Japan. Dissatisfaction among the Japanese public over the government's handling of the coronavirus crisis,

including Nishimura's recent comment, has been fuelling such protests. [Mainichi 1] [Mainichi 2, in Japanese] [Mainichi 3] [Asahi Shimbun]

Mongolia's democracy doomed under ruling party?

(dql) In June Mongolia held presidential election in which former Prime Minister Ukhnaa Khürelsükh of the Mongolian People's Party (MPP) won with 68% of the vote. With his presidency, which begun weeks later on June 25, all branches of government came under the control of the MPP [see AiR No. 24, June/2021, 3].

For a critical assessment of the election and the prospects of Mongolian democracy under the MPP, see Munkhnaran Bayarlkhagva in [Aljazeera] who argues that Khürelsükh' victory was "very much the result of a ploy by the MPP and the country's elite, which prefers to get rich on the back of commodity exports to China instead of working towards full democracy," and predicts that "under the leadership of the MPP and with the full approval of the economic and political elite, Mongolian democracy is dying a slow death."

South Korea: New think tank to be created to push space program

(dql) The South Korean Science Ministry announced that it will establish a space policy-oriented think tank to bolster the country's space development ambitions. The think tank is expected to conduct space-related research and analysis to provide guidance for the country's space development policies,

The announcement comes after South Korea has recently intensified efforts on its space program. Its first indigenous space rocket is set to be launched in October and a lunar orbiter program planned for 2022, while more than 100 miniature satellites are supposed to be developed by 2031, when 14 low earth orbit communications satellites are to be launched to establish a satellite communications network to prepare for future 6G network technology, and test autonomous ship control systems and marine traffic services.

South Korea's push of its space program received a boost earlier this year following the conclusion of an agreement with the US which completely scrap its

missile guidelines, which had hampered Seoul's space launch vehicles development efforts. [Yonhap]

North Korea: around 20 trading company heads arrested

(nds) North Korean authorities arrested around 20 company heads and hundreds of workers in the border region with China as part of a crackdown on entities involved in unauthorized trade. Some business entities are alleged to have imported items that aren't on their approved import lists. Others supposedly distributed imported items that have not been subjected to proper quarantine procedures.

The North Korean government has been tightening its control in the border region with China for several months. According to Daily N.K., this latest government operation is expected to last until the end of July. [Daily NK]

North Korea: Three university students tried for distributing South Korean videos

(nds) North Korean authorities publicly tried three students charged with the view and distribution of "capitalist recorded material (videos)" from South Korea. and face "expulsion from the party, losing their jobs, and even exile."

The trial comes amid recently growing efforts of the government to combat the spread of anti-socialist ideology. Last December, the government decided to enact a law that punishes more severely the possession of videos made in South Korea. [Daily NK]

Law and Politics in South Asia

Bangladesh: Islamist extremist executed for 2005 bomb attack

(lm) Bangladesh has executed a hardline Islamist for a 2005 bomb attack on a secular cultural group in the northeastern district of Netrokona, which killed eight people. The defendant had previously exhausted all his appeals, with his death sentence upheld by the Supreme Court and President Abdul Hamid rejecting a clemency appeal last month. [Dhaka Tribune] [The Straits Times]

The man was believed to be a member of Jama'at Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), a Bangladeshi Sunni violent extremist group established in 1998 which aims to institute an Islamic state in the country. In 2005, the group launched a high-profile series of explosive attacks across 63 of the 64 districts in Bangladesh. Following the attacks, local authorities arrested 656 JMB members, laying charges against 356 of those by 2011.

India: Spyware by Israeli surveillance firm potentially used to hack journalists, diplomats, and others

(lm) A powerful phone malware licensed only to governments was used to infiltrate mobile phones belonging to at least seven people in India and was active on some of their devices as recently as this month, according to global investigation by *The Washington Post*, and 16 other media organizations in ten countries. [The Washington Post]

Five of the phones infiltrated belonged to journalists, one of whom had reported extensively on the government's purchase of French-made Rafale omni-

role fighter jets, which has long been mired in corruption allegations [see AiR No. 27, July/2021, 1].

However, the hacks – confirmed by forensic analysis of the phones – represent a tiny fraction of what may be a vast surveillance net, for the phone numbers appear on a list of some 50,000 entries believed to be of interest to clients of NSO Group, an Israeli surveillance firm, whose spying tool Pegasus allows clients to secretly infiltrate phones and monitor text messages, camera feeds and microphones. [BBC]

The list, which was leaked to major news outlets, contained more than 1,000 Indian phone numbers, including numbers for Rahul Gandhi, India's main opposition leader; Ashok Lavasa, India's Chief Election Commissioner who is considered an obstacle to Prime Minister Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party; and M. Hari Menon, the local head of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Other India-related personalities included on the list were journalists, activists, opposition politicians, senior officials, business executives, public health experts, and Tibetan exiles. French newspaper *Le Monde* reported that several India-based diplomats appeared also on the list, along with a phone associated with Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan. [The Hindu]

It is not known how many of the phones on the list were actually targeted for surveillance or how many attempts were successful.

In the run-up to the 2019 general elections, Prime Minister Modi's government denied allegations carried in local news outlets that it had purchased the Pegasus spyware that was then allegedly used to hack over 1,400 phones, including those of several Indian activists, lawyers, and journalists. At the time, Facebook-owned WhatsApp confirmed that more than 120 users had been targeted with spyware, and sued NSO, alleging the company was behind the cyber-attacks.

India: Supreme Court agrees to examine colonial-era sedition law

(lm) Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana on July 15 sought views from the federal government and the country's attorney general on petitions by activists and lawyers seeking quashing Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code, which criminalizes sedition and gives

police the power to arrest without a warrant. The court has not yet given a date for hearing the case.

States run by Prime Minister Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party have repeatedly come under criticism for charging protesting students, farmers, activists, and journalists with the stringent sedition law which gives authorities broad powers to make arrests ahead of filing formal charges if an act or speech by an individual "excites or attempts to excite disaffection towards the government" [see AiR No. 9, March/2021, 1]. Punishment under the law can be a fine or a maximum sentence of life in prison, or both.

During the hearing, Ramana – who is heading a three-judge bench – said the colonial law was used to silence the freedom movement under the British rule and "continuation of this law after 75 years is unfortunate." The judges also said they were concerned that the law carries "enormous power of misuse" but no accountability of the executive. [The Straits Times]

In 1962, Section 124A's constitutional validity was for the first time challenged before the Supreme Court. In Kedar Nath Singh v State of Bihar, the apex court ruled that, although sedition imposes restrictions on the right to freedom of speech and expression under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution, the restrictions are in the interest of public order and within the ambit of permissible legislative interference. However, the court narrowed its application by holding that to meet the threshold of exciting disaffection or hatred, the alleged seditious conduct must incite violence against the state – mere criticism is not enough. [LAWFARE]

Earlier in April, in its influential annual rankings of countries across the world, the United States-based democracy watchdog Freedom House downgraded India from a free democracy to a "partially free democracy." Similarly, the Swedish-based V-Dem Institute demoted the country to an "electoral autocracy." Both organizations cited the regime's crackdowns on freedom of speech – and in particular, expressions of dissent – as a key factor driving India's slide down these indexes.

Last month, then, the Supreme Court quashed a case of sedition filed against a journalist for making allegedly seditious statements against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the government's handling of the migrant exodus during a COVID-19-related lockdown last year. The bench took eight months to pronounce its order, after arguments had concluded in October of last year. [AiR No. 23, June/2021, 2]

India: Media outlets challenge federal government in court over tougher IT rules

(lm) The Delhi High Court earlier this month issued a notice to the federal government on a plea moved by Press Trust of India (PTI), the country's largest news agency, challenging the constitutional validity of the third level of the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021.

Promulgated by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology in February, the new set of digital rules introduced a three-tier system for redress of a grievance for any news organisation with a digital presence. Part III of the regulations pertains to an oversight mechanism involving the federal government which gives authorities the power to take down content. [AiR No. 9, March/2021, 1]

Significantly, the High Court has tagged PTI's petition along with similar pleas filed by other online news outlets, including one filed by the Foundation for Independent Journalism, a non-profit organization which publishes *The Wire* news portal [see AiR No. 10, March/2021, 2]. All petitions are now scheduled to be heard on August 20.

The plea alleges that the rules should be stayed as same are only meant to be "a weapon for the Executive or the State to enter and directly control the content of online digital news portal".

Further, it has also been argued that granting the executive the power to "virtually dictate" the content of news portals will violate right to freedom of speech and expression, as per Article 19 of the Constitution. [LiveLaw]

But IT and Communications Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, who recently took over the portfolio in a major Cabinet reshuffle [AiR No. 28, July/2021, 2], said the new information technology rules were aimed at empowering and protecting users. The government has also denied that they impinge on the freedom of speech. [The Straits Times]

India: Demolition of village stepped up despite United Nations' protest

(lm) Indian authorities began demolishing hundreds of homes in a village on the outskirts of the capital, New Delhi, on July 14, in a move that housing activists said

could leave 100,000 people homeless, despite protests by rights activists and UN experts.

The Supreme Court last month ordered the removal of "encroachers including by forcible eviction" from the village, which is home to about 10,000 families of informal workers, including street food vendors, cleaners and tuk-tuk drivers. Their homes were built illegally on protected forest land, which is part of the Aravalli Mountain Range that stretches nearly 700 kilometers through Northwestern India. [The Straits Times]

The demolition drive started a day after the state announced a rehabilitation plan that would make residents eligible to live in low-cost flats if they met certain criteria, such as having an annual family income of less than $4,025. Under the plan, about $27 will be given to the residents to rent alternative housing for a period of six months. [Reuters]

Housing campaigners criticized the release of the plan one day before the demolition, and urged the government to conduct a survey to identify beneficiaries, give them ample time to prove their claims, and also link people to welfare schemes for work. They also said migrant workers and poor laborers have been there for more than 30 years and that the forest was destroyed by mining decades ago.

In a statement, rights experts appointed by the United Nations Human Rights Council on July 16 urged authorities to halt the mass eviction. The experts said the demolition would add to hardship caused by the coronavirus pandemic, with thousands of children and young mothers affected. [Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights]

India: Civilizations judged by how they treat minorities, Uttarakhand High Court remarks

(lm) Democracy means the protection of minorities, the Uttarakhand High Court observed on July 16 while hearing two petitions against a ban on sale and consumption in Haridwar, the state's second largest city, which is regarded as a holy place for Hindus. A civilization, the bench added, is judged only by how it treats its minorities and a ban like the one in Haridwar calls into question the extent to which the state can determine a citizen's choice. [The Times of India]

In March, the provincial government of the northern state – led by Prime Minister Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party - had declared all areas in Haridwar "slaughterhouse-free" and cancelled no-objection certificates to slaughterhouses. The petitions challenged this on two grounds: a blanket ban on mean of any type is unconstitutional, as was the section the Uttarakhand government had inserted into the provincial regulations to give itself the power to declare an area a "slaughterhouse-free" zone.

The High Court observed that the petition had raised "serious fundamental issues" and would require constitutional interpretation. It would not, however, be able to give its verdict before the Muslim festival Bakr-Eid on July 21. The next hearing is scheduled for July 23.

Maldives: Rift in ruling party out in the open

(lm) The former Maldivian President and incumbent Speaker of Parliament, Mohamed Nasheed, has declared his decision to break 'political alignment' with long-time friend and sitting President Ibrahim Solih. [Observer Research Foundation]

In a statement issued on July 17, Nasheed accused the president of reneging on his pledge to address religious extremism, referring to the government's "withdrawal" of support for a recent bill which sought to criminalize hate crimes. In a thinly veiled reference to Home Minister Imran Abdullah's Islamic Adhaalath Party, Nasheed claimed that people "did not vote for religious extremists who would deny their liberty and remove the things they love most from society". [South Asia Monitor]

The bill was tabled after Nasheed had been seriously injured when improvised explosive device (IED) detonated outside his home in the capital, Male earlier in May [see AiR No. 19, May/2021, 2]. Maldivian security agencies have been tight-lipped about the investigations, only indicated that jihadists elements remain the primary suspect for the attempt on Nasheed's life, although no group has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Nasheed's comments came against the larger backdrop of growing tensions within the ruling Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) over the government's policies, mainly on corruption and religious extremism. While some lawmakers back President Solih's "restrained" approach that they find

politically prudent, other MPs take the view that President Solih's pledge to address religious extremism and ensure justice for past victims of their violent attacks has been "overshadowed" by this intention to keep the ruling coalition intact. [The Hindu]

Earlier this month, has confirmed his intention to run in the primary of his MDP for the 2023 presidential election, while also claiming he was planning to conduct a national referendum next year to decide if the country would prefer a parliamentary system in lieu of the current presidential system [see AiR No. 27, July/2021, 1]. But lawmakers surrounding President Solih have been airing the view that the party should give the incumbent a second term in office. Nasheed, justified as he may – or may not – be, was still young and could take a shot in 2028, under a governmental system of his choice.

Nepal: New Prime Minister Deuba wins crucial vote of confidence

(lm) Nepal's Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba won a crucial vote of confidence in Parliament on July 18 affirming is position after the country's Supreme Court ousted hitherto Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli following months of political turmoil. Deuba is set to remain in office for a year and a half, until periodic elections are held. [The Straits Times]

On July 12, the country's highest court ruled as unconstitutional Oli's move in May to dissolve Parliament's lower chamber for the second time and call for snap elections. In an indication that Oli had deprived the opposition of a chance to form a government when they had enough support, the apex court ordered Oli replaced as prime minister by Deuba. [AiR No. 28, July/2021, 2]

The Supreme Court called for him to be appointed to the job within two days, but Deuba still needed to secure a vote of confidence in the House within 30 days from his appointment. [The New York Times]

Deuba, who was the head of the opposition Nepali Congress, received 165 votes of support in the 275-seat lower house of Parliament. He needed 136 votes to win the House confidence, as four lawmakers remain suspended. [The Kathmandu Post]

Nepal: President Bhandari rescinds contentious Constitutional Council ordnance

(lm) Nepal's President and ceremonial head of state Bidhya Devi Bhandari on July 18 revoked the contentious Constitutional Council Act (Amendment) Ordinance on the recommendation of the new government that took office early last week. [The Himalayan Times]

The former KP Sharma Oli-led government earlier in May had issued the ordinance to enable the Constitutional Council (CC) – a key agency that appoints officials at various constitutional bodies – to achieve quorum if as few as three of its current five members attend a meeting.

The ordinance had originally been issued in December of last year, after which the CC had met with the newly reduced quorum and made 38 nominations to vacant positions on 11 constitutional bodies [see AiR No. 51, December/2020, 4]. But the ordinance then failed to get tabled in the inaugural session of the reinstated lower house of Parliament on March 7 – as mandated by the Constitution – and thus, had to be re-issued.

International human bodies had also expressed concern over the ordinance and its fallout over the independence of constitutional bodies: Earlier this month, a sub-committee of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions decided to conduct a special review of the status of Nepal's Human Rights Commission and gave the national body until July 28 to justify whether the recent appointments to various constitutional bodies comply with existing international norms. [AiR No. 28, July/2021, 2]

Pakistan: Balochistan parties not convinced by Prime Minister Khan's dialogue offer

(lm) Leaders of regional parties in Pakistan's southwestern Balochistan province have expressed their reservations about plans by Prime Minister Imran Khan to initiate peace talks with separatist rebels in the region, saying the decision to do would exclusively lie with the country's military leadership. [South China Morning Post]

Balochistan is home to the China-operated deep-water port of Gwadar, the fulcrum of $50 billion in projects linked to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). But it is also the scene of frequent militant attacks and a long-running insurgency by small separatist groups that seek independence for the mineral- and gas-rich province bordering borders Iran and Afghanistan.

Prime Minister Khan earlier this month indicated that he was considering reaching out to the Baloch insurgents, who he believes have grown resentful of governmental authorities due to years of neglect by prior governments. [AiR No. 28, July/2021, 2]

Because Balochistan carries a special importance for the CPEC and for Beijing in general, Prime Minister Khan's move has prompted speculation among some analysts that Chinese envoys would be asked to speak to Baloch political leaders exiled in Britain and Switzerland. Beijing was said to have engaged with various Baloch leaders at Islamabad's request during a failed attempt at rapprochement in 2015, when the CPEC was launched.

But skepticism towards the peace plan prevails. Referring to the withdrawal of US-led foreign troops from Afghanistan, mainstream Baloch politicians have claimed that talks about a negotiated political solution to the insurgency were only taking place because of "the changing situation in the region".

They also criticize the prime minister's decision to appoint Shahzain Bugti as his Special Assistant on Reconciliation and Harmony in Balochistan earlier this month. Bugti is the estranged grandson of the late ex-governor of Balochistan, Nawab Akbar Bugti, who was killed by Pakistani forces in 2006 after launching the ongoing insurgency.

Pakistan: Textbooks featuring activist and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Malala removed from bookstores

(lm) Police in Pakistan's Punjab province last week raided bookshops and seized copies of an elementary school social studies textbook that include a picture of education rights activist Malala Yousafzai, a polarizing figure in the country. [The New York Times]

Malala's picture appeared in a chapter on national heroes, alongside Pakistan's founder, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, national poet Allama Iqbal, social reformer Sir

Syed Ahmed Khan, and others. Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board, a provincial authority, made the decision after writing to the book's publisher, Oxford University Press, saying the company had failed to obtain a no-objection certificate from the government. [The Print]

The following day, the All Pakistan Private Schools Federation, a body that claims to represent 150,000 schools, launched a documentary, "I am not Malala," to highlight what it called her controversial views on Islam, marriage and her pursuit of a Western agenda. Attacking Malala for "promotion of Western values" among the people of Pakistan, the association's president said Malala had "categorically rejected the institution of marriage and suggested that 'partnership' is better than getting married". [Geo News 1]

Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Chaudhry Fawad Hussain expressed concerns over Malala's picture being removed from the Punjab textbook, saying that removing the image was not a problem of a political party, but a reflection of the division in society. [Geo News 2]

Sri Lanka: President Gotabaya Rajapaksa to seek second term

(lm) Sri Lanka's President Gotabaya Rajapaksa announced on July 19 he would stand for a second term, reversing a promise to become a one-term president. [The Straits Times]

Rajapaksa reaffirmed in March of last year that one five-year term was sufficient to implement his ambitious "Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour" manifesto, triggering a succession struggle within his powerful family that dominates the government. The about-face comes at a time when the South Asian island nation confronts growing economic troubles, with its economy contracting by a record 3.6 percent last year.

The elevation of the president's youngest brother Basil as Finance Minister earlier this month was widely seen as a move to groom him for the presidency. Basil – who is credited with building the ruling Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna party – was thought to have edged out the incumbent Minister of Youth and Sports and eldest son of Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, Namal, to be the next family leader. [AiR No. 28, July/2021, 2]

With Basil's entry, the Cabinet headed by Gotabaya now has five members of the Rajapaksa family.

Sri Lanka: UN official says country should not use quarantine rules to suppress protests

(lm) The United Nations Resident Coordinator to Sri Lanka, alongside with local rights organizations, has criticized the government for using the pandemic containment regulations to allegedly stifle dissent. [EconomyNext] [MENAFN]

The immediate issue is the forced 14-day quarantining of a small group of demonstrators after they were bailed out by a court. Thereafter, a local student body and several civil society organizations staged a protest in Colombo against the arrest and forced quarantining. Further, nineteen schoolteacher unions refused to conduct online lessons indefinitely.

The Bar Association of Sri Lanka (BASL) also warned in a letter addressed to the Director General of Health Services and the Inspector General of Police that "quarantine is a health precaution and should not be used as a punishment or mode of detention". The BASL also remarked that the health guidelines did not list public protests or outdoor meetings as prohibited activities. [Colombo Gazette]

Sri Lanka: Three experts resign from advisory committee after Chinese vaccine is green-lighted

(lm) Three members of an expert panel of Sri Lanka's drug regulator resigned on July 17, a day after the regulatory body cleared the Chinese-made Sinovac COVID-19 vaccine, citing disregard to their advice against the approval. [NewsFirst]

The Expert Advisory Panel — an eight-member body for COVID-19 vaccines — had "agreed" during a previous meeting that the Sinovac vaccine was the "least effective vaccine" against the Delta variant, which may very soon be the dominant variant in Sri Lanka. The experts therefore advised the National Medicines Regulatory Authority to grant only limited approval by putting a cap on the import quantity. [The Sunday Times]

Law and Politics in Southeast Asia

Brunei: Briefing on DWP 2021

(nd) Brunei's Defense White Paper (DWP) titled "Defending the Sovereignty of the Nation: A Secure and Resilient Future" was briefed by the Ministry of Defense last week. The DWP will emphasize the creation of a comprehensive and current national defense strategy amid increasingly geostrategic challenges, combining both regional and international mechanisms to obtain peace and security. The ministry said the paper was developed in cooperation with other ministries and countries. [Borneo Bulletin]

Cambodia: Government denies independent inquiry in activist's murder

(nd) Five years into the murder of activist Kem Ley, the Cambodian government denied to allow an independent inquiry into his death. The activist and radio commentator, who was asking for an independent inquiry into the family wealth of Prime Minister Hun Sen, was shot in 2016 a coffee shop. The government has denied any involvement in his death. A former Khmer Rouge and government soldier pleaded guilty to the dead and was sentenced to life in jail. His claimed motive of outstanding depth of $ 3,000 was denied by Kem's widow and human rights activists, claiming the murder was politically motivated.

Phil Robertson, deputy Asia director at Human Rights Watch, commented that Kem's killing "marked the beginning of the end of Cambodia's commitment to

uphold human rights and democracy." In a joint statement issued by 45 non-governmental organizations, he reiterated their call for an independent Commission of Inquiry under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Cambodia is a party and therefore has a duty investigate. [UCA News]

Indonesia: 42 Western artists banned for explicit content

(nd) The Indonesian Broadcasting Commission censored 42 songs by Western artists arguing their content was "immoral", which critics called futile in the age of the internet. The songs will be banned on the radio before 10 pm, with censored versions after 10 pm for they contain "words of violence and obscenity or allude to sexuality." The Commission commented the purpose of this was to ensure Indonesian broadcasting "upheld integrity", "fostered character" and protected the national identity as "faithful and pious".

With similar bans and censorships of musicians and artists in the 1960s during the Presidency of Sukarno, and banning of communist songs during the Suharto era, this move is far from uncommon. Due to the unprecedented reach of the internet and the use of streaming providers like Spotify nowadays, the latest actions were ridiculed and not taken too seriously. Also, according to a research by Security.org in 2021, Indonesia's use of VPNs is the highest in the world, with 55 per cent of internet users. [South China Morning Post]

Indonesia to ratify autonomy law for Papua

(nd) Last week, the Indonesian parliament ratified a new autonomy law for Papua in order to initiate development in its poorest region. Activists opposed the move, arguing this was meant to tighten Jakarta's grip on the resource-rich area. Protesters, demonstrating against the law, were arrested in Jakarta and Jayapura. Critics also say the Bill was ratified without consulting regional key groups.

A similar law was enacted already in 2001 and had 20 articles revised, to support healthcare and education, boost proceeds from oil and gas, introduce affirmative action for indigenous Papuans in local politics and

initiate a special autonomy fund for the region. In the farthest Eastern provinces of Papua and West Papua a low-level insurgency for independence has been simmering for decades, after a UN supervised vote in 1969, which prompted Indonesia to consider it part of its territory. [Reuters]

Indonesia: Former Minister sentenced

(nd) Ousted maritime affairs and fisheries minister Edhy Prabowo was sentenced to five years in prison for accepting bribes with respect to the export of lobster larvae. The Gerindra Party member, who denied the charges, was also fined and banned from running for office for three years.

The anti-corruption body (KPK) has prosecuted numerous politicians, officials and businessmen since 2002, and has thereby become one of the country's most respected agencies. Transparency International (TI) corruption index saw Indonesia drop to rank 102 of 180 countries due to worsening graft. [Reuters]

Malaysia: Cabinet to unanimously support Muhyiddin

(nd) Following the announcement of Umno president Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, Umno would withdraw their support for Prime Minister Yassin Muhyiddin, the cabinet including Umno members announced to fully back Muhyiddin as Prime Minister and in his efforts to fight the global pandemic. The loss of the backing of the biggest party backing Muhyiddin's government caused yet another round of political uncertainty in Malaysia. The government is highly pressured over alleged mismanagement of the pandemic. Finance Minister Tengku Zafrul Abdul Aziz announced to cooperate closely with the opposition for the implementation of a road map for a progressive reopening of the economy, the National Recovery Plan. [South China Morning Post]

On July 26, a five-day special Parliament meeting will take place, the first one since the declaration of the state of emergency in January. [The Star] [Reuters] The emergency order will expire on August 1. A vote of no confidence during the special meeting is unlikely and will have to wait until the regular session in September, since the government announced not to allow a debate on this topic. Additionally, a successful vote of no confidence would require the dissolution of

parliament and an election within 60 days, which possibly would worsen the pandemic situation. [East Asia Forum 1]

In a recent analysis [East Asia Forum 2], Bridget Welsh presented some of the failures leading to the hashtag #Kerajaangagal (failed government) and connected it to the historical landmarks of the 1969 racial riots and the aftermath of the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997, arguing the disappointment with the ethnonationalist government will leave its traces, especially with the rising number of young voters being likely to initiate this shift away from party hierarchy and towards are more experience- and result-oriented approach.

Malaysia: Conviction of MP for corruption overturned

(nd) The corruption conviction of former Umno secretary general Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor was overturned by the court of appeal. He was tried alongside other top leaders, including Najib Razak, after Umno's surprising defeat in 2018, who overthrew the Pakatan Harapan government in 2020 in a coalition with other parties. Another former Najib loyalist, Musa Aman, was acquitted from charges of corruption and money laundering in June.

Umno is the country's biggest party and currently faces internal struggles due to dividing camps, one of them being Najib loyalists facing criminal charges and the other being those trying to distance themselves from them. The current parti president Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, also currently on trial for corruption-related charges, announced Umno to pull out of Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin's government, what commentators suggested as a try to pressure the government to drop charges. The weight of the maneuver was lightened by other Umno politicians currently serving as ministers announcing to fully back the administration. [South China Morning Post]

Myanmar: Anti-coup activists hold protests on Martyrs' Day holiday

(lm) Pro-democracy protesters in Myanmar held demonstrations across the country on July 19 to coincide with a public holiday to commemorate slain independence heroes, including the father of the country's ousted civilian leader, Aung San Suu Kyi.

In the country's largest city, Yangon, military authorities held a tightly controlled ceremony for Martyrs' Day at a mausoleum dedicated to Aung San, Suu Kyi's father and a former prime minister, who was assassinated alongside six members of his Cabinet – including his brother - on July 19, 1947. His political rival, U Saw, interned in Uganda during World War II, was later executed for his part in the killings. [Reuters]

In Monywa, west of the city of Mandalay, anti-junta demonstrators held a march where they chanted "Martyrs never die. We are going to wash our feet with the blood of war dogs", in a reference to soldiers, photographs on social media showed. In Meiktila in central Myanmar, protesters held a banner in front of the Martyrs' Day memorial paying tribute to four other "martyrs" who had died in their district during recent demonstrations against the coup.

Myanmar: Healthcare system on the brink of collapse as country plunges into third COVID-19 wave

(mt) Since the beginning of this month, Myanmar has reported daily record-breaking numbers of confirmed cases and deaths in what constitutes a rapidly deteriorating third wave of COVID-19 infections. One third of all people tested in Myanmar are testing positive for the virus, compared to the 5 percent that the World Health Organization has said shows an outbreak is being brought under control. [The Diplomat 1]

The Ministry of Health and Sports reported 5,200 new cases and 281 confirmed deaths on July 19, but accounts from medics and funeral services point to the death tolls being much higher. The total official death toll has risen 50 percent already this month to 5,000 with the spread of the Delta variant that has also surged elsewhere in Southeast Asia. [Eleven Myanmar 1]

This situation is worsened by a shortage of medical workers, many of whom have been detained or have gone underground to avoid arrest because of their involvement in anti-military coup protests. As a result, COVID-19 vaccination, testing and prevention measures have all stalled, all the while citizens refuse to cooperate with military authorities. [AiR No. 28, July/2021, 2]

For many locals, the third wave is being exacerbated by rising prices for pharmaceuticals and a shortage of

medicines and other essentials, including face masks and oxygen. In addition, the spread of COVID-19 from Shan State into a Chinese border town prompted Beijing on July 8 to shut all trade gates with Myanmar, putting at risks billions of dollars in bilateral business. [Frontier Myanmar 1] [The Diplomat 2]

Making matters worse, the country's inoculation drive has ground to near halt due to a vaccine shortage, with currently less than four percent of the population of about 55 million having received one vaccine dose. Myanmar's vaccination rollout, started by ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi in January, faltered as India restricted exports by the Serum Institute of India - which had a contract to supply 30 million doses - and deliveries from the global COVAX facility never materialized. [Nikkei Asia]

New vaccine doses are expected to come from China, as the Myanmar junta is set to receive six million COVID-19 vaccines by August. Myanmar has "bought four million" doses and Beijing will donate a further two million, according to officials. [Frontier Myanmar 2]

Myanmar: US journalist appears in court for second time

(mt) Danny Fenster, a US journalist working for the news publication *Frontier Myanmar* appeared virtually for a second time in a special court hearing. [Mizzima]

Fenster has been held in detention since May, when he tried to board a flight out of the country [see AiR No. 22, June/2021, 1]. He faces charges under Section 505(a) of Myanmar's Penal Code which purports to address "incitement" and carries up to three years' imprisonment and/or a fine. A complaint letter filed with the court earlier this month confirmed that police arrested Fenster because they believed he was working at independent news service *Myanmar Now*, despite having resigned from the media outlet in July of last year.

US officials have noted that the Myanmar military junta has signaled that it will handle Fenster's case in a similar manner to the case Japanese journalist Yuki Kitazumi, who was arrested in mid-April under a criminal provision that penalizes the dissemination of information that could agitate or cause security forces or state officials to mutiny [see AiR No. 19, May/2021, 2]. Kitazumi was released a month later, after charges against him were dropped as a diplomatic gesture [see AiR No. 20, May/2021, 3]. [The Detroit News]

However, US officials have received no details from the military as to the timeline for Fenster's case.

Meanwhile, Fenster's family voiced concern over his health, saying he was displaying COVID-19 symptoms earlier last week but has not been tested for the virus. Myanmar is currently facing a surge in coronavirus cases, with a public health system in tatters due to the political turmoil. Insein Prison – where Fenster is being held – began a two-week lockdown on July 8 due to the virus surge. [CNBC]

Myanmar: Ethnic armed organization accuses junta of hatching divisive scheme to disunite Karen people

(mt) The armed wing of a prominent ethnic political organization has denied rumors about an alleged assassination plot to kill leaders of the organization, calling it a divisive scheme by the military junta to disunite the ethnic Karen people. [Mizzima]

The Karen National Union (KNU) and its armed wing, the Karen National Defense Organisation (KNDO) have been fighting for decades in the country's eastern border region to gain more autonomy from the central government. Earlier this month the KNDO suspended Brigadier General Saw Nerdah Mya, as it investigates an alleged massacre of civilians on its territory [see AiR No. 28, July/2021, 2].

Philippines: Anti-'communist' funds to be revisited?

(lp) The Philippine National Police's (PNP) has barely utilized the anti-insurgency allocation it received from the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) for 2020. The PNP says it can transparently spend the remaining funds before the year ends. [Rappler] Otherwise, Bayan Munda and the rest of the Makabayan bloc would oppose and block the additional P40 billion Barangay Development fund (BDF) that the NTF-ELCAC would request for 2022, since the currently allocated money has not been accounted for yet. [Inquirer]

Meanwhile, the Philippines and the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signifying a mutual commitment to enhance the country's

capabilities to detect and prevent terrorists using passenger data. [Philippine News Agency]

Most recently, the Anti-Terrorist Council (ATC) designated the National Democratic Front Party (NDF) as a terrorist organization, so the government can now move to freeze their assets. According to the Council's ruling, they had "verified and validated information" that the NDF "committed, or attempting to commit, or conspire in the commission of the acts defined and penalized" under the ATA (Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020), and it is "organized, controlled, acting on behalf of or at the direction of, and operated by the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) — a designated terrorist organization". [Manila Bulletin]

Philippines: Duterte-Duterte as president and vice president

(lp) President Rodrigo Duterte said he might run for Vice President (VP) in what critics say an effort to receive legal immunity from any potential lawsuits. However, Far Eastern University (FEU) law dean rebuked Duterte, saying that the constitution does not guarantee the VP's immunity. [Rappler] Moreover, Duterte claimed he would seek help from the Supreme Court in case he is unfairly brought into the International Criminal Court (ICC) over his controversial war on drugs. [Manila Bulletin]

Meanwhile, according to an opinion poll of 2,400 respondents by Pulse Asia, Duterte had 18% support for a vice presidency and his daughter Sara 28% for the presidential position, ranked number one in candidates. Duterte is legally barred from a second term, but critics have circulated his plan to retain power as a number two, taking over from a resigning president. Months after denying running for presidents and following comments by Rodrigo Duterte he would not want his daughter to be president, Sara, his successor as Davao mayor, announced to be open to run for presidency only last week. [Reuters]

Philippines: Pacquiao to lose party leadership

(nd) Philippine senator, boxer and possible contender of current president Rodrigo Duterte, Emmanuel "Manny" Pacquiao in a vote last week lost his post as party president of the ruling party. Pacquiao used to support Duterte's war on drugs but criticized him for

being too soft with China and not rigorously enough fighting corruption.

The vote was called by faction of the ruling democratic party, led by Duterte ally Alfonso Cusi, who was elected party president. The vote was necessary because officials were past their two-year term limit. Duterte remained chairman. Pacquiao, who is currently training for a title match in the US, took oath as the party's president in December and has not yet announced his presidential bid. [Nikkei Asia]

Philippines: Labor leader to file complaint against red-tagging

(nd) Last week, leaders of labor group Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU) filed formal complaints against online red-tagging by state-sponsored social media pages before the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI). They argue that the Duterte administration and his anti-insurgency task force orchestrated the online red-tagging of labor leaders. They are also demanding for the posts to be taken down. Although red-tagging has resulted in many violent deaths already, there are no laws criminalizing the activity. [Rappler]

Singapore: World's biggest floating solar power farm

(nd) Covering the size of 45 football pitches, Singapore uncovered the world's biggest floating solar power farms, in an effort to cut greenhouse gas emissions. The 122,000 panels on Tengeh Reservoir will produce electricity to run its five water treatment plants. Within Asia, Singapore is the biggest per capita carbon dioxide emitters. In the Johor Strait separating it from Malaysia, Singapore built another solar farm, forming part of the government's "green plan" unveiled in February to achieve net-zero emissions "as soon as viable" in the second half of the century. [Asia Times]

Singapore: Launch of investment to boost the digital economy

(nd) Singapore announced to invest $50 million in a program to advance research on AI and cybersecurity, to support advanced communications and connectivity research. It forms part of the Future Communications

Research & Development Program, and aims at advancing in digital economy, such as the setup of the Singapore Trade Data Exchange, or SGTraDex, to enable multiple stakeholders along the supply chain to share information, like real-time cargo locations, in order to digitalize it. Digital economy in Southeast Asia is growing fast and its internet sectors are estimated to pass $300 billion by 2025, accelerated by the global pandemic forcing many businesses to switch to online models. [CNBC]

Thailand: Contempt of court cases increased in 2021

(pr) According to a report by legal aid group Thai Lawyers for Human Rights (TLHR), 2021 saw a sharp increase in contempt of court cases, mostly in connection with protesters calling to grant bail to detained activists. In 2021, 18 people in 14 cases have been prosecuted under contempt of court laws, as opposed to the years between 2014 and 2018, that had only 9 cases involving 20 people reported. Contempt of court offences include the refusal to comply with court orders, causing disorder in a trial, misleading the public about a trial or tempting people to give false evidence or testimony. The maximum jail sentence is 6 months. Insulting a judge or the court in a trial carries a jail sentence between one to seven years.

Rights groups criticized the government and the former National Council for Peace and Order, to misuse the offense of contempt of court. Due to the number of detained activists and the claimed political setting of the court hearing, activists frequently gave speeches in front of the court, took photographs inside the courtroom during hearings, and organized protests in front of the court, actions which have been judged as a violation of these laws. [Prachatai English]

Thailand: Government mishandled the pandemic

(pr) In its assessment report, Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI) said the government has mishandled the pandemic. It evaluated that the government handled the first wave of infections during the early months of 2020 well due to the work of medical personnel and public cooperation. The second wave during the end of the year was caused by lenient

border controls, which led to the spread of the virus mainly from labor migrants.

Despite warning signs from the first two waves, the government did not sufficiently prepare for the third wave in March 2021, which then originated from entertainment venues. The disbursement of money was slow. Additionally, there were poor decisions such as allowing people to travel home during the national holiday in April instead of announcing a lockdown. Administration in emergencies was chaotic and incoherent.

Vaccine procurement and inoculation was slow. There was no risk diversification in procurement. [TDRI, in Thai] Vaccine procurement and inoculation was slow and it made a mistake in not joining the COVAX, the global collaboration to produce and provide equitable access to vaccines. The government majorly relied on AstraZeneca locally produced by a company owned by the Thai king as its main vaccine. However, the production fell short of the 61 million doses target by the end of the year and may be delayed until May 2022. In addition to attempts to secure vaccines from other producers, it planned to restrict exports of the locally produced AstraZeneca to other countries in the region. [The Diplomat]

According to a leaked letter from Astra Zeneca, approximately 35% of the vaccines locally produced will be provided to Thailand and the rest will be exported to Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Maldives, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam. Restriction of exports or additional allocations might have economic repercussions. [Nikkei Asia]

The TDRI report proposed the establishment of an independent committee to gather facts and study the mishandling of the pandemic to prevent similar mistakes in the future as well as holding the people responsible accountable. [Bangkok Post]

Thailand: Leader of Sang Thai Party sued for defamation of government

(pr) Khunying Sudarat Keyuraphan, the leader of Sang Thai Party and former chief strategist of Pheu Thai Party was sued for defamation and instigating unrest over her party's campaign to take legal action against the government for the mismanagement of the pandemic. They carry a maximum sentence of two respective seven years.According to Seksakol, the Sang Thai Party's campaign to sue the "murderous government" and the accusation of mismanagement

were defamatory, labeling them a political game and attempt to discredit the government. The Sang Thai Party had launched an online campaign to collect signatures against the government for its handling of the COVID-19 crisis. [Bangkok Post]

Thailand: Leaders of pro-democracy protestors indicted for protest held last year

(pr) Prosecutors have indicted 14 key pro-democracy protest leaders protesting against the government at the Victory Monument last year on the grounds of sedition and violating the Emergency Decree issued to curb the spread of the pandemic. A majority of them turn up to hear the charges. High profile activists, Parit "Penguin" Chiwarak, Panupong "Mike" Jadnok, and lawyer Arnon Nampa were among the 14 indicted. [Bangkok Post] [Thai PBS World] They were previously put under pre-trial detention for various criminal charges such as sedition and royal defamation, which carries a maximum penalty of 15 years in jail. They were released from detention on conditions that include not protesting. However, on June 24, they joined pro-democracy demonstrations which re-emerged after a hiatus due to the worsening pandemic. [see, AiR No. 26, June/2021, 5]

Thailand: Media Company content to affect national security, says NBTC

(pr) The National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) ordered MVTV company to pay a fine for airing a news program allegedly affecting national security. The program reported on the situation of the protests in front of the Supreme Court, which called for the release of the then-detained activists and also interviewed protestors. A majority of the commissioners held that the content affected national security, peace, and public morals and ruled for MVTV to be fined.

According to the minutes to the meeting, a dissenting commissioner said that the program was a news report of the situation, was done in good faith, and also asked whether the NBTC had compared the reported content to other channels so the NBTC's self-initiated investigation was not discriminatory. He also cautioned for the NBTC to investigate whether the news program led to the initiation of contempt of court

or court insult cases. If there was none, it would not be prudent for the NBTC to decide on the matter beforehand.

The NBTC also fined the company for over-time airing of advertisements, and advertisements featuring food and health products, which it ruled to be taking advantage of the audience. [Prachatai English]

Thailand: Six local media organizations to join concerns over pandemic regulation on press freedom

(pr) Six local media organizations expressed concerns over the impact of the recent regulatory measures issued under 2005 Emergency Decree on Public Administration in Emergency Situation on press freedom, which came into effect last week. The six organizations are the National Press Council of Thailand, the News Broadcasting Council of Thailand, the Thai Journalists Association, the Thai Broadcast Journalists Association, the Society for Online News Providers and the National Union of Journalists. They said the clause bestows officials with too much discretionary power and cut out the requirement of a warning, suspension, and opportunity of redress to offenders before legal action can be taken, which was present in the previous regulation. They cautioned that the measures may affect the freedom of expression and media rights and urged the government to reconsider the measures. [Bangkok Post]

The civil society group Internet Law Reform Dialogue (iLaw) joined the criticism, arguing the prohibitions went beyond the presentation of fake news and false information about COVID-19 but also prohibits the sharing of news and information, which may be true, "that may cause panic among the public or has the intention to distort information that causes misunderstandings in emergency situations that affect the security of the state, peace and order, or decent public morals nationwide". [see, AiR No. 28, July/2021, 2]

Thailand: Three generals are candidates for position of secretary-general of the NSC

(pr) Three generals are rumored to be potential candidates for the position of secretary-general of the

National Security Council (NSC). General Supoj Malaniyom is the chief of staff at the Royal Thai Armed Forces Headquarters. General Chatchai Patranavik is the former commander of the Counter Terrorist Operation Center. General Nothapol Boonngam, is a specialist at the Office of the Permanent Secretary for Defense. Sources say General Nothapol was groomed to take over the position two years ago and was an advisor in the NSC during the tenure of the previous NSC chief, General Somsak Rungsita. The incumbent NSC chief is General Nattaphol Nakpanich.

Military reshuffle lists are being prepared to be presented to the reshuffle committee next month. The committee will be attended by the commanders of the different armed forces and Prime Minister Prayut Chan-ocha, who also holds the position of Defense Minister. He is in charge of picking the NSC chief. An NSC source says military background has become an unspoken qualification since the coup in 2014. The Permanent Secretary of Defense, and the commanders of the air force and navy will also be succeeded at the end of the fiscal year in September. [Bangkok Post]

Thailand: Anti-government protestors clash with police

(pr) Anti-government protestors rallying in Bangkok clashed with the police on Monday, which marked the anniversary of the first major rally since the 2014 coup. The police fired water cannons, rubber bullets, and tear gas at protestors when they attempted to bring down barricades in their march towards the Government House. Among those injured, three reporters on the scene were hit by rubber bullets despite having visible press identification. [Prachatai English]

The protestors demanded the resignation of Prime Minister Prayut Chan-ocha for the mismanagement of the pandemic, military and palace budget reductions, and the procurement of mRNA vaccines. They carried mock body bags to represent deaths from COVID-19. They later dispersed and vowed to return. [Bangkok Post 1] [Channel News Asia] [Reuters]

One of the leaders of the protest was the Free Youth Group. It led one of biggest rallies since the 2014 coup on the same day last year. [see, AiR No. 29, July/2020, 3]

The protestors gathered despite a ban on gatherings in order to curb the spread of COVID-19. More than 2,000 police officers were deployed to maintain order.

[Bangkok Post 2] Violations of the ban are punishable with up to two years in prison. [Thai PBS World]

Further restrictions are underway to curb the spread of the virus, which has now created an economic and financial crisis. Stricter control measures further dampen any outlook on economic growth and destroy business confidence. Analysts say the revised lower growth rate of 1.8 percent set by the Bank of Thailand (BoT) is highly unlikely. Household debt rose to 90.5 percent of GDP in three months, the highest in 19 years from 89.3 percent at the end of 2020, urging BoT Governor to comment the current crisis was bigger one than the Financial Crisis of 1997. [Thai Examiner] Thailand was once praised as a model in containing the pandemic but is now facing an average of 10,000 infections per day and the total number has exceed 400,000 since it started last year. [Bangkok Post 3]

Thailand: Second reading of charter amendment bill expected in August

(pr) Paiboon Nititawan, a lawmaker of the ruling Palang Pracharath Party (PPRP) and also the chairman of the committee examining the constitutional amendment bill, said the second reading of the bill should be around August. Paiboon said the committee will finalize its work on August 7 and the second reading is expected to be held later that month. 15 days after the second reading as required by law, the bill will go through a final reading. Lawmakers also have the right to ask the Constitutional Court to rule on questions concerning the bill before it is presented for royal endorsement. [Bangkok Post]Last month, the joint sitting of Parliament approved the bill in the first reading. Sponsored by the ruling government coalition – save the PPRP – the bill proposes to amend Sections 83 and 91 of the 2017 Constitution to adjust the proportions of lawmakers from currently 350 constituency MPs and 150 party-list MPs to 400 and 100, respectively. It also seeks to return to the previous election system that involves voters casting to ballots – one for a candidate and one for a political party. [see, AiR No. 26, June/2021, 5]

Thailand: Man put under pre-trial detention for lèse-majesté charge denied bail for the third time

(pr) A man charged with royal defamation was denied bail for the third time. The charges relate to three online posts earlier this year. The court reasoned that there was a flight risk, the charge was serious and there was no other reason to deviate from the previous orders. Two previous bail requests were made earlier this month. According to the legal aid group Thai Lawyers for Human Rights, 103 charges of royal defamation have been filed since November 2020. [Prachatai English]

Royal defamation is a criminal offense in Thailand which carries a maximum prison sentence of 15 years.

Thailand to end emergency in the Deep South, activists and observers demand

(pr) Rights groups and observers urge the government to lift the Emergency Decree in the southernmost provinces of Thailand as it raises human rights concerns, and its effectiveness in controlling the pandemic and insurgency is questioned.

The Emergency Decree, martial law decrees, and the Internal Security Act has been applied for 16 years in the southernmost provinces of Yala, Pattani, Narathiwat and parts of Songkhla. The majority of the people in the area are Muslims. These laws allow officers to take special measures in order to combat insurgency such as the detainment of suspects for 30 days.

In an event organized by ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights, along with the Cross Culture Foundation and the International Commission of Jurists, rights groups say these measures do not help solve the conflict but are deepening the divide, and are being misused in violations of people's rights. The former National Human Rights Commissioner said the consolidation of governance through the Emergency Decree led to ineffective disease control compared to the more effective response during the first wave when power was decentralized in the hands of provincial governors. [Bangkok Post]

Vietnam: Tightening requirements for social media providers

(nd) The Vietnamese government is tightening its grip on social media, regulating livestream activity on platforms like Facebook and Google, citing efforts to

curb fake news. According to a draft decree, operators shall be obliged to provide contact information of account operators with more than 10,000 followers or subscribers. Current legislation only covers domestic social media providers such as Zalo. According to an estimate, the top 10 Vietnamese social media platforms have 80 million users combined, while foreign competitors like Facebook have 65 million users, YouTube with 60 million users and TikTok 20 million. The yet unapproved draft will require these providers to block or remove flagged content within 24 hours upon "justified" requests by Vietnamese individuals and affected organizations.

Within the last months, Vietnam has repeatedly tightened rules on online content, censoring posts and deleting accounts. A cybersecurity law already requires foreign companies to set up local offices and store data in Vietnam. Facebook commented it does not store user data in Vietnam. [The Star]

International Relations, Geopolitics and Security in Asia

China-US relations: Biden administration sanctions Chinese officials and warns US companies of doing business in Hong Kong

(dql) The US sanctioned seven Chinese officials who, according to US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, “have systematically undermined Hong Kong's

democratic institutions, delayed elections, disqualified elected lawmakers from office, and forced officials to take loyalty oaths to keep their jobs." Along with the sanctions the Biden administration also issued an advisory warning saying that US companies doing business in Hong Kong are exposed to "growing risks" posed by the governments in Beijing and Hong Kong, including “data privacy risks; risks regarding transparency and access to critical business information; and risks for businesses with exposure to sanctioned Hong Kong or PRC entities or individuals.” [CNN]

Citing evidence of genocide and other human rights abuses in Xinjiang, a similar advisory was issued earlier last week with regards to Xinjiang warning that American companies with supply chain and investment ties in the region could risk to break US law. [BBC]

China-US trade relations: WTO dispute over grain imports revived

(dql) Amid strained Sino-US trade relations, the US is reviving a long-running dispute between with China over Beijing’s import controls on grain with a complaint at the World Trade Organization (WTO) accusing China of continuing to use a tariff-rate quota (TRQ) system for rice, wheat and corn and of failing to comply with a WTO ruling in Washington’s favor back in 2019.

Washington added a warning to Beijing that it would take “countermeasures”, including imposing new tariffs on Chinese products, in case Beijing would leave the complaint unaddressed. [South China Morning Post]

China-US relations: US House committee passes Eagle Act

(dql) The US House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee has passed the “Ensuring American Global Leadership and Engagement Act,” (Eagle Act) that aims at boosting America’s competitiveness vis-à-vis China and targeting China on multiple fronts, including a call on diplomats to boycott the Beijing Olympics in 2022, strengthening ties between the US and Taiwan, and cracking down on researchers in the US believed to be linked with the Chinese military. The omnibus-style legislation also encourages to establish a Quad Intra-Parliamentary Working Group tasked with promoting relations between lawmakers of the US, Japan, Australia and India. It, furthermore, includes the House

version of the Uygur Forced Labour Prevention Act, a bill that says that any goods coming from Xinjiang is presumed to be tainted by forced labor, and that therefore entry into the US would be prohibited unless US importers are able to prove otherwise. [South China Morning Post] [Times of India]

The Eagle Act is one in a recent string of legislative moves of US legislators aimed at boosting US responses to challenges posed by China. In June, the Senate passed the "US Innovation and Competition Act," aimed a meeting Beijing's challenge in the field of technology and authorizing some 250 billion USD in funding for technology research, semiconductor development and manufacturing, as well as subsidies for robot makers and chipmakers [see AiR No. 24, June/2021, 3].

US and allies accuse China of global cyberespionage campaign

(dql) The US, the UK, the EU, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Japan and NATO have accused China of sponsoring and protecting "cyber actors" responsible for a massive hack of the Microsoft Exchange email server. The hack was discovered earlier in March and compromised tens of thousands of accounts across the world, belonging to both public and private entities.

China rejected the accusations, calling them fabricated accusing, in turn, the US of "gang[ing] up with its allies to make unwarranted accusations against Chinese cybersecurity." [Aljazeera] [BBC]

China-France relations: President reveals plan for South Pacific Coast Guard network

(dql) Speaking at video conference with the leaders of Australia, the Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea and representatives of New Zealand and other Pacific nations, French President Emmanuel Macron announced that France and South Pacific nations will establish a network of South Pacific coastguards, in an attempt to "better cope with the predatory logic we are all victims of." While Macron did not name China as target of the planned network, an adviser said it was aimed at illegal fishing.

The announcement comes as the US and allies, including France, Japan, Australia and New Zealand, are actively expanding their maritime activities in the Pacific to counter China's influence. France has island territories spanning the Indo-Pacific including Reunion in the Indian Ocean and French Polynesia in the Pacific. [CNN]

China-Australia relations: Chinese surveillance ships spy on Talisman Sabre exercise

(dql) China has dispatched two high-tech surveillance ships to Queensland as the 2021 Talisman Sabre exercises are conducted last week involving Australian and American as well as Japanese, Canadian, South Korean, New Zealand and British forces. [ABC News]

The Chinese Navy, meanwhile, has begun conducting a six-day drill in the East China Sea that will last until July 21. The sudden military exercise comes in response to the brief stop of a US military aircraft at Taipei's Songshan Airport on July 15. [South China Morning Post]

China: Foreign Minister Wang Yi's Middle East trip

(dql) Reflecting China's growing efforts to increase its engagement in the political and security affairs of the Middle East in the wake of the US withdrawal, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi made his second trip to the Middle East within a few months after his first in March when he visited six countries. This time's trip included three countries: Syria, Eqypt and Algeria.

During his meeting with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in Damaskus on Saturday, Wang reassured that China opposes any attempts to seek regime change in Syria and offered Beijing's support for the fight of the Syrian government against terrorism. He also offered to step up cooperation with Damaskus on projects of the Belt and Road Initiative. [Straits Times]

In Egypt, Wang met with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi on Sunday and confirmed that China further firmly supports Egypt in its efforts for comprehensive development and in combating terrorism and achieving security and stability in the region. He also confirmed the Shanghai Cooperation

Organization's agreement to accepted Egypt as a dialogue partner. [All Africa]

At the same day, he also spoke with Arab League Secretary General Ahmed Aboul Gheit and expressed his support for a two-state solution between Israel and Palestine. According to a joint statement, released on Monday on the Chinese foreign ministry's website, China and the 22-member Arab League reached agreement on strengthening cooperation on the production of Chinese Covid-19 vaccines in the region and on opposing any political manipulation of inquiries into the coronavirus' origins, while stressing the importance of "maintaining the unity and territorial integrity of Arab countries, particularly Syria, Libya and Yemen." [South China Morning Post]

On Monday in Algeria, Wang reassured his Algerian counterpart Ramtane Lamamra of China's willingness to work with Algeria "to translate their high-level political mutual trust into tangible results of cooperation, help Algeria accelerate the pace of industrialization, and enhance its capacity for independent development." [Xinhuanet]

For insights into the growing role of China as player in the arms trade in the Middle East, see Alvite Ningthoujam in [The Diplomat] who suggests that "defense industrial cooperation and technology transfers will likely come to form a pivotal component of China-Middle East engagements," which are "likely to raise more eyebrows in the Western capitals, particularly in Washington."

Vivek Mishra and Mark S. Cogan in [Indian Express], meanwhile, critically discuss the "realpolitik on Uighurs" in Middle East and other Islamic countries and warn that with Muslim countries shifting their allegiances to China, "Uighur Muslims have legitimate fears that the religious ties that once bound their societies together are fading and that they will become targets no matter where they flee."

China-Mongolia relations: Presidents hold a phone ahead of trip of US high level official to Ulaanbaatar

(dql) In a phone call with his Mongolian President Ukhnaagiin Khurelsukh on Monday, Chinese President Xi Jinping urged both countries "to respect each other's independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and

independent choice of development paths chosen by the two peoples and accommodate and support each other's core interests and major concerns." He also called for strengthening cooperation in various areas including minerals, infrastructure and the environment. Khurelsukh, for his part, rassurred that his country "stands ready to conduct close exchanges with China, advance practical cooperation in all fields, actively join the Belt and Road cooperation, and strengthen coordination and cooperation in multilateral affairs." [Foreign Ministry, China] [South China Morning Post]

The phone call comes days ahead of the trip of US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman to Mongolia, signaling the strategic importance of the country for both China and the US. Sherman's visit to Mongolia is part of her East Asia trip covering also Japan and South Korea. [The Diplomat]

Japan-UK relations: Expanding defense ties

(dql) The British and Japanese Defense Ministers have announced that the aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth and its strike group will visit Japanese ports in September for joint exercises. In addition, Britain will permanently deploy two warships in Asian waters. [Reuters] [Military.COM]

Furthermore, Tokyo and London are discussing a potential joint program to develop aero-engine technologies that will power Japan's next-generation F-X fighter aircraft. [Japan News]

Japan-South Korea relations: South Korean President not to visit Tokyo for Olympic Games

(dql) South Korea announced that President Moon Jae-in's decided not to visit Tokyo for the upcoming Olympic Games, scrapping plans for what would have been his first summit between the two leaders. The decision was prompted by a news report that a senior diplomat at Japan's embassy in Seoul had said Moon was "masturbating" when describing his efforts to improve relations between the two countries.

This latest incident adds to already frosty relations over territorial claims and their wartime history, crushing previous hopes that the Tokyo Games might

provide an opportunity for a fresh start for bilateral and regional cooperation. [Reuters]

North Korea lashes out against Japan for claim to Liancourt Rocks

(nds) Ahead of the commencement of the Tokyo Olympic Games, North Korea blamed Japan for claiming the Dokdo isletsand marking the islests as Japanese territory on the map of the relay of the flame published on the official site of the Olympic Summer Games. [Yonhap]

Dokdo has been a subject of dispute between the both Koreas and Japan for many years remain strained. The islets have been administered since 1954 by the South Korean Coast Guard, which has a military base there.

Taiwan-US relations: House Committee passes EAGLE Act

(nds) On 16 July, a U.S. Congressional committee passed the Ensuring American Global Leadership and Engagement (EAGLE) Act. This legislative package includes several bills aimed at strengthening US ties with Taiwan. Among the pro-Taiwan bills are the Taiwan Diplomatic Review Act, the Taiwan Peace and Stability Act, the Taiwan International Solidarity Act, and the Taiwan Fellowship Act.

Under the Taiwan Diplomatic Review Act the US Secretary of State is required to consult with the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office (TECRO) in the US about changing its name to the Taiwan Representative Office, reflecting an elevation of US-Taiwan relations. The Taiwan Peace and Stability Act seeks to support Taiwan's participation in international organizations and forums, expand bilateral economic and trade relations, and strengthen Taiwan's military deterrence, while the Taiwan Fellowship deepens exchanges between Taiwanese and American officials. [Taiwan News]

Taiwan-Germany relations: Air services agreement signed

(nds) On 15 July, Germany and Taiwan signed an agreement on air services allowing to increase the

maximum number of passenger flights between Taiwan and Germany from seven to 11 per week.

Germany is Taiwan's largest trading partner in Europe, and since 2016, both sides have reached agreements in various fields, such as energy, science, and transitional justice. The air agreement, which replaces an earlier one concluded in 2001, shows Germany's willingness to get closer to Taiwan while seeking to maintain a balance between its relations to Taiwan and the economic ties with China. [Taiwan News] [Focus Taiwan]

Taiwan to open de facto embassy in Lithuania

(dql) Taiwan announced that it will open a de-facto embassy in Lithuania, with Vilnius agreeing to name it "Taiwanese Representative Office in Lithuania," the first time the island's name has been used for one of its offices in Europe, as normally only "Taipei" is used.

The announcement is the latest in growing signs that some Baltic and central European countries are seeking closer relations with Taiwan, with Lithuania announcing in May that it was withdrawing China's 17+1 cooperation forum with central and eastern European states. It has since pledged to donate some 20,000 coronavirus vaccines to Taiwan and open its own representative office on the island. [Euro News]

SCO member states call for end to violence in Afghanistan, as Taliban claim control of key border crossing

(lm) The foreign ministers of the eight-member Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) on July 14 called for an end to violence in Afghanistan against civilians and the authorities, and urged the Afghan government to strengthen its position for the sake of stability. [Reuters]

The meeting - which brought together the foreign ministers of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and India – also being attended by representatives from countries with observer status with the SCO, including Afghan Foreign Minister Haneef Atmar. [ASIA-Plus]

The meeting coincided with the Taliban announcing they had captured a strategic border crossing on the

frontier with Pakistan, continuing its rapid at a time when the United States is just weeks away from wrapping up its final withdrawal from Afghanistan. [BBC] [The Straits Times]

Spin Boldak is the latest in a string of border crossings and dry ports seized by the hardline Islamist group in recent weeks, including crossings with Iran, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, with the Taliban seeking to cut off much-needed revenue from the government in Kabul while also filling their own coffers.

The seizure of the border crossing – the second busiest crossing between Pakistan and Afghanistan – assumes added significance. For it is one of the most strategically valuable for the Taliban, providing the group with direct access to Pakistan's Balochistan province – where the insurgents' top leadership has been based for decades – along with an unknown number of reserve fighters who regularly enter Afghanistan to help bolster their ranks.

India tells China continuing border tensions not in either side's interests

(lm) A meeting last week between India's Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi made clear that both sides still have starkly different views on their disputed border in the western Himalayas, where 200,000 troops have built up on both sides of the frontier. [The Straits Times]

The two top diplomats were meeting on the sidelines of a gathering of foreign ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation in the capital of Tajikistan, Dushanbe, on July 14 [see article in this edition].

The talks marked the first high-level meeting in months between the Indian and Chinese foreign ministers to address the ongoing border aggressions, they had reached a five-point consensus during their last face-to-face meeting in Moscow in September of last year [see AiR No. 36, September/2020, 2].

Jaishankar said the withdrawal of troops and artillery from the southern and northern banks of Pangong Lake in February had created the conditions needed to resolve the stand-off. But the Indian diplomat also emphasized that it was only with Beijing's de-escalation and disengagement from other newly occupied areas in eastern Ladakh that formerly cordial bilateral ties could be resumed. [South China Morning Post]

Wang, however, said that “the responsibility does not lie with China” to resolve the issue, and appeared to call on New Delhi to accept the current status quo in the interest of good relations. According to Wang, despite the heavy troop presence, “the situation in the China-India border area has generally been easing”. He also added that neither side should interfere in the other’s domestic affairs, and they should respect territorial integrity.

Talks between the two foreign ministers to place against the larger backdrop of both sides having resumed patrols into forward areas along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), while also strengthening logistics and adding infrastructure along the de facto border. In a sign of the shift in Indian military priorities, some of the additional troops on three distinct areas along the LAC have come from the border with Pakistan, which for decades was India’s most turbulent frontier.

Further, Indian army officials allege the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) is becoming more aggressive with every passing day. Though recent skirmishes between the two sides have been denied by the Indian government, army officials told British daily newspaper *The Guardian* that the situation in areas of eastern Ladakh including Galwan Valley and Hot Springs remained extremely tense. [The Guardian]

Afghanistan withdraws senior diplomats from Pakistan ahead of crucial Afghan peace conference

(lm) Afghanistan withdrew its senior diplomats from Pakistan on July 18 after the ambassador’s daughter was allegedly abducted, held for several hours and brutally assaulted last week. [BBC] [CNN]

Silsila Alikhil was "abducted for several hours and severely tortured by unknown individuals on her way home" in the Pakistani capital Islamabad on July 16, according to the Afghan Foreign Ministry. Two days thereafter, Kabul announced it would withdraw its ambassador and all other senior diplomats based in Islamabad “until all security threats are met including the arrest and trial of the perpetrators of the abduction.” [South China Morning Post]

Pakistan's Foreign Ministry had appeared to confirm the incident in a statement on July 17, saying that the woman had been "assaulted while riding a rented vehicle" and that it was trying to apprehend suspects. But in an about-turn on July 18, Pakistan's Interior

Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed expressed skepticism toward the Afghan government's account of what happened. [Al Jazeera]

The alleged incident came just days before Pakistan was to host prominent Afghan political leaders at a conference in a bid to speed up the intra-Afghan peace process as the United States-led foreign military withdrawal from the neighboring country nears completion. [Voice of America]

China sends team to Pakistan to investigate 'terrorist' bus attack

(ra) China has sent criminal investigation specialist to Pakistan to look into a potential terrorist attack that killed 13 people, including nine Chinese nationals, in northwestern Pakistan last week. The suspected suicide attack on July 14 targeted a two-bus convoy transporting Chinese and Pakistani workers to the World Bank-funded Dasu Hydropower project in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. [South China Morning Post]

While the Pakistani Foreign Ministry initially said in a statement the blast was caused by mechanical failure resulting from a "leakage of gas", Chinese officials were quick to blame a "blast" for causing the deadly incident. The following day, then, after traces of explosives were found on the vehicle, Pakistan also said it would not rule out a terrorist attack. [Deutsche Welle] [Voice of America]

No one has claimed responsibility for the recent attack, but Chinese observers said it could also be linked to Pakistan's leading Taliban group, Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), or insurgents in the country's restive Balochistan province. In April, the Afghanistan-based TTP claimed responsibility for a suicide blast at a hotel hosting the Chinese ambassador in the province's capital, Quetta. The diplomat was not hurt. [see AiR No. 17, April/2021, 4].

Bangladesh summons British envoy to convey 'disappointment' over report on Khaleda Zia's status

(lm) Bangladesh last week summoned the British Acting High Commissioner to convey disappointment over an "insinuating and misleading" comment on the current status of Khaleda Zia, the chairperson of the

opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party who served two periods as prime minister. [South Asia Monitor]

An arch-rival of Prime Minister Hasina's, Zia had served 25 months out of 17 years of prison sentences in two corruption cases when the government granted her conditional release for six months in March of last year to seek medical treatment in hospital under the supervision of the prison authorities [see AiR No. 13, March/2020, 5]. The suspension was subsequently extended twice – first in September of last year and, more recently, in March – on condition that the former prime minister cannot go abroad [see AiR No. 10, March/2021, 2].

Earlier this month, the British Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office in its "Human Rights and Democracy Report 2020" had stated that Khaleda "remained under house arrest [...] throughout 2020". [Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office]

Dhaka clarified that the government had – as per the provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898 – suspended her Khaleda's sentence and "released" her in March 2020 on condition that she would receive medical treatment at home and would not travel abroad. The British envoy was told that it would be advisable to consult the authorities concerned of the government in case of any confusion over such legal issues. [Dhaka Tribune]

It was further suggested that any official document of the British government also refrain from using any form of insinuating and misleading statements about the government of Bangladesh or the ruling Bangladesh Awami League.

Indian Navy receives first two of 24 multi-role maritime helicopters from United States

(lm) The Indian Navy has received two MH-60R Swahawk helicopters from the United States to address an important Indian capability gap with respect to anti-submarine warfare. [The Hindu]

The Modi-led government had used a visit by then US President Donald Trump in February 2020 to announce its decision to purchase more than $3 billion in defense equipment. This purchase includes six AH-64E Apache attack helicopters for the Indian Army and 24 MH-60R Seahawk helicopters for the Indian Navy. As

per reports, all 24 MH-60Rs are likely to be delivered by the end of 2025. [Swarajya]

The capabilities of both the AH-64E and MH-60R will be further augmented by the recent Communications, Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) which formalized the integration of secure, bilateral communication networks between the United States and India in 2018. The helicopters will be the first post-COMCASA hardware available to the Indian military.

United States urge ASEAN members to act on Myanmar, rejects China maritime claims

(mt) Addressing a video conference with foreign ministers from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on July 14 urged the group to take joint action to help end violence, restore a democratic transition and release those "unjustly detained" in Myanmar. [The Irrawaddy] [The Straits Times]

The virtual session marked the first such high-level meeting between the two sides under the administration of US President Joe Biden. Both sides were scheduled to hold their first foreign ministers' encounter via videoconference on May 25, but Blinken, who was touring the Middle East at the time, cancelled over technical difficulties after keeping his counterparts waiting.

Laos, which coordinates the bloc's "dialogue relations" with Washington, had wanted the session to be held back-to-back with the ASEAN Regional Forum on security next month, but Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia were persuasive in preponing it.

The meeting comes amid rising concerns that the Biden administration has done little to engage ASEAN since taking office in January, focusing instead on the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, a loose strategic coalition comprising of France, the United States, India and Australia, which is increasingly seen as a potential counterweight to growing Chinese influence and alleged assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific.

During the virtual meeting, Blinken urged his counterparts to take "immediate action" on the so-called "Five-Point Consensus" reached by the bloc's leaders in earlier in April and appoint a special envoy to Myanmar. The ASEAN has been showing limits in firmly doing so both due to internal disagreements

among group members, but also key foundational principles of the group of non-interference and consensus [see AiR No. 28, July/2021, 2]. The US official also asked for the release of all those "unjustly detained" in the country, and the restoration of Myanmar's democratic transition. [Voice of America]

Blinken also emphasized his country's rejection of China's "unlawful maritime claims" in the South China Sea at the meeting and said Washington "stands with Southeast Asian claimants in the face of (Chinese) coercion". [The Diplomat]

The remarks assume added significance, coming as they did hot on the heels of the fifth anniversary of the international tribunal ruling on the South China Sea [see also AiR No. 28, July/2021, 2]. On July 12, 2016, an Arbitral Tribunal established in accordance with the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) found that Beijing's claim to "historic rights" or "maritime rights and interests" established in the "long course of historical practice" in the disputed waterway were inconsistent with UNCLOS and, to the extent of that inconsistency, invalid.

Myanmar junta rejects UN resolution on Rohingya

(mt/lm) Myanmar's military junta has rejected a United Nations Human Rights Council (UN HRC) resolution condemning human rights violations against the persecuted Rohingya and other minorities, and calling for a process of reconciliation.

The resolution, brought forward by Pakistan on behalf of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, was approved without a vote in the UN HRC. China, one of the 47 Council members, said it could not join the consensus but nonetheless did not insist on bringing the text to a vote. [Frontier Myanmar]

The resolution was "based on false information and one-sided allegations," Myanmar's Foreign Ministry said, slamming "one-sided allegations" over its treatment of the stateless Rohingya community. [The Straits Times]

Hundreds of thousand Rohingya currently languish in sprawling refugee camps in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar after a brutal military crackdown in Myanmar's Rakhine state that now sees the country facing genocide charges at the International Court of Justice [see AiR No. 26, June/2021, 5].

The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Thomas Andrews, earlier this month decried the "widespread, systematic attacks against the people" since the military takeover five months ago. Some of the acts, he said, "amount to crimes against humanity", while also slamming the international community for failing to “end this nightmare”. [AiR No. 28, July/2021, 2]

Indonesia and the G20 summit presidency

(nd) In preparation of Indonesia’s G20 summit presidency in 2022, President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo in May issued a Presidential Decree to create a national committee for the organization, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, and the Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs. The most pressing issues were identified as the global recovery from the pandemic, stronger resilience and partnership among the member nations, and the necessity for structural reforms. While global trends of rising populism and polarization and economic inequalities remain, the pandemic has arguably accelerated these trends and also uncovered, that G20 itself not only did not respond to it well but also in a fragmented, non-coherent way, reflecting a national rather than a global governance approach. Additionally, the tension between the US and China weakened the format, calling for structural reforms. Another point of criticism is the fluidity of the summit agenda, which allows every host country to bring a new point to it. Indonesia is likely to represent developing countries, with Jokowi focusing on the need of debt restructuring for low-income countries and financial support for developing states to mitigate the repercussions of the pandemic, including the detrimental effect to the youth with respect to education and employment.

The G20 grouping was initially found in 1999 in a response to the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997. [The Diplomat]

Indonesia: Swiss referendum to help with palm oil conflict, Minister says

(nd) Following a Swiss referendum approving the comprehensive economic partnership agreement (IE-CEPA) between Indonesia and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) from 2018 by 51.6%, Indonesian deputy trade minister commented this was a strong message with respect to the EU’s treatment of palm oil.

EFTA is not an EU member but nevertheless has influence on European trade. The referendum was initiated due to opposition by Swiss anti-palm oil activists. The IE-CEPA is currently in the ratification process and will grant lower duties once implemented. The minister also commented this fact might influence the outcome of the dispute settlement with the EU at the World Trade Organization (WTO). Following a major pushback in the EU against palm oil, Indonesia has filed a lawsuit at the WTO claiming discriminatory measures on palm oil and oil palm crop-based biofuels. Indonesia is the world's top palm oil producer with a production totaling 51.58 million tons in 2020. [Jakarta Globe]

Malaysia, Iran to import palm oil

(nd) In continuation of a boost in imports earlier this year, Iran is planning to import one million tons of palm oil from Malaysia in the near future. In the first half of 2021, the import of 309,704 tons of marked a five-fold increase over the same period last year, with additional 650,000 tons targeted this year. According to the Iranian embassy, Iran is currently the largest importer of palm oil among countries in the Middle East, saying it could become a distribution hub in the region, which would require more strategic bilateral trade ties between both nations.

Malaysia overtook Indonesia to become the biggest crude palm oil exporter to India, which is currently the world's largest importer of vegetable oil, with exports totaling 2.42 million tons. In 2020, China imported 2.731 million tons of Malaysian palm oil, India 2.727 million tons, Netherlands 1.073 million tons, Pakistan 1.004 million tons. [Free Malaysia Today]

Singapore, Malaysia on the reclamation of Pedra Branca island

(nd) Singapore announced to conduct land reclamation works within 0.5 nautical miles of the island of Pedra Branca. Sovereignty over the island has been in dispute between Singapore and Malaysia since 1979. Malaysia claimed it as its territory, which led to an International Court of Justice (ICJ) case in 2003, also about two other maritime features, namely Middle Rocks and South Ledge. The ICJ ruled in 2008 that Singapore had established sovereignty over Pedra Branca due to such moves uncontested by Malaysia, that Middle Rocks belonged to Malaysia and that the

two countries shall negotiate on the status of South Ledge. A request for revision of the decision from 2017 was discontinued a year later.

Therefore, Singapore's most recent move is in accordance with Article 60 of the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), to build and construct new artificial islands in their Exclusive Economic Zones, if such is desired with the works. Contrarily, Singapore cannot claim more territory by constructing artificial islands off the island's coast, since Article 121(1) of UNCLOS only grants the claim of sovereignty 12 nautical miles off territorial sea to an "island" in the sense of a naturally formed, not man-made one – a principle derived from the famous decision in 2016 on the Spratly Islands, between the Philippines and China.

The recent Malaysia-Singapore Joint Technical Committee (MSJTC) has not concluded yet the Maritime Boundary Delimitation of Pedra Branca, Middle Rocks, and South Ledge, which for the latter, according to the ICJ ruling, is dependent on negotiations between the two nations. In the case of South Ledge, which is only 2.2 nautical miles off Pedra Branca as opposed to Pedra Branca, which is 24 nautical miles off Singapore, it could prove easier for Singapore to claim South Ledge and thereby exclusive rights and sovereignty over the waters, including for underwater exploration and scientific research. [The Diplomat]

Philippines probes alleged waste-dumping, maintains patrols in South China Sea

(lp) The US-based geospatial intelligence company Simularity reported that hundreds of ships were dumping raw sewage in the Spratlys, which is within the Philippines' exclusive economic zone. Philippine Defence Secretary Delfin Lorenzana announced to investigate the allegations. [Reuters]

For months, the government has been criticized for allowing China to intrude and exploit Philippine territory. Just recently, China dismissed the 2016 Hague Arbitral Award to the Philippines as 'nothing more than a piece of waste paper', which remained uncommented by the Filipino side. At the beginning of his presidency, Rodrigo Duterte did not exert the rights granted to the Philippines in the award but reasserted China has been a generous friend. This contrasts with to a recently much higher level of monitoring and interference by the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) and

has prompted the director of the University of the Philippines (UP) Institute for Maritime Affairs on Law of the Sea (IMLOS) to suggest that these efforts were motivated by the upcoming presidential elections. [Philippine Star] [Radio Free Asia] [Manila Bulletin]

Cambodia to ask China for a construction loan

(nd) For the creation of a bridge and a road to cross the Tonle Sap River, connecting Kampong Chhnang to Kampong Thom provinces, Cambodia has asked China for a loan. Delays to the $200 million project were already announced in 2019. Approval is expected due to the good relations between the country and precedent of infrastructure building support. [Phnompenh Post]

Cambodia, Thailand to create joint business council

(nd) Cambodia and Thailand signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in order to have the newly-established Cambodia Business Council (CBC) Bangkok and Thai Subcontracting Promotion Association (Thai Subcon) join forces to boost bilateral trade and investment. The cooperation furthers the implementation of Cambodia's 2021-2023 Economic-Diplomacy Strategy. The collaboration of networks will cover a wide of areas, such as automotive parts, food processing machinery and electronics and generally increase potential in manufacturing, management, marketing and procurement. In 2020, the countries' bilateral trade volume amounted to $7.236 billion, down by 23.17 % from 2019 due to the repercussions of the global pandemic. [The Star]

Cambodia to chair ASEAN in 2022

(nd) For the upcoming Cambodian chairmanship of ASEAN, some core issues were identified in a recent analysis, which in part had been already identified for its last chairmanship in 2012. Back then, Cambodia was criticized for siding with China over conflicting territorial claims at the South China Sea. Cambodia is a non-claimant state to the disputed waters and repeatedly referred to its neutrality, yet ASEAN has to address the desperately needed Code of Conduct

issue, which needs a central and united approach of the bloc.

Similarly, the aftermath of the coup and the situation in Myanmar are yet to be solved, with the violence continuing amid a spike in Covid-19 and unlikeliness of a successful implementation of ASEAN's five-point consensus reached during its special summit in April. Additionally, Cambodia itself is criticized for its poor human rights record and has a less strict attitude towards the coup than other bloc members. Another unsolved cross-border issue is the environmental situation in the Mekong Delta region caused by a multitude of big dam projects at the Upper Mekong River.

With all three issues, the growing US-China rivalry is putting even more pressure on the bloc's members, driving division within and making a united stand harder to achieve. This applies especially given Cambodia's high economic and military involvement with China. For months, tensions were simmering due to the alleged establishment of a Chinese military base in Cambodia opposed by the US. While Chinese vaccinations have come under criticism and some bloc members have stopped using Sinovac, Cambodia is exclusively using Chinese vaccinations, showing their high dependence on China. [East Asia Forum]

ASEAN and the EU's AI legislation

(nd) According to a recent analysis, the EU's recent draft legislation to harmonize artificial intelligence (AI) rules is unlikely to have direct impact on similar legislation in Southeast Asia. Still, there might be some repercussive effects of it since the objectives of the legislation, risk mitigation for AI systems, is relevant for the region as well. As part of China's Belt and Road initiative, competitively-priced technology has already been exported through Chinese companies, namely Huawei, Hikvision, Dahua and ZTE, notably in the area of face recognition, raising concerns about security risks and the danger of importing norms and values from the system providers.

Regionally, AI-based systems are not produced largely yet, with the exception of Singapore having launched a national AI strategy for AI-based solutions in the global market. One obstacle therefore for implementing EU rules directly is the lower degree of integration of markets and regulations in the regional bloc as opposed to the EU. Nevertheless, in its first Digital Ministers' Meeting early this year, ASEAN adopted a Digital Masterplan 2025 with the aim of a regional

policy for best practice guidance on AI governance and ethics. A key issue will be regulating cross-border data flows among member states which have localization requirements for personal data.

The recently adopted Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership missed this chance and still enables parties to restrict cross-border data flows, with the sole requirement of non-discriminatory application. Of the signatories, only Singapore and Vietnam implemented the "gold standard" digital trade provisions supporting cross-border data flows. Since most ASEAN members have already formed a national AI strategy, it could be beneficial for the bloc to focus on a sector-based approach to subsequently build a common framework for AI policy consolidation. [East Asia Forum]

Thailand to proceed with world heritage nomination of forest complex despite indigenous rights issues

(pr) The Thai government is insisting on the nomination of Kaeng Krachan Forest Complex as a world heritage site despite rights issues with communities within the area. According to a cabinet resolution, the Thai delegation should convince the WHC and other related bodies of the situation of the communities in the forest area and amend any draft resolution which might affect future proceedings should the result of the session be unfavorable to Thailand.

Against this backdrop, the National Human Rights Committee of Thailand proposed that the government postpone the nomination of the forest complex due to unresolved human, indigenous, and land rights violations against indigenous Karen communities in the area. The 44th session of the World Heritage Committee (WHC) takes place between 16-31 July in China.

Last month, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, an advisory body to the WHC, also recommended the deferral of the nomination for similar reasons. Prior to this attempt, Thailand applied for the site to be recognized as a world heritage three times but was all deferred for the same reasons. [see, AiR No. 27, July/2021, 1]

On a related matter, the cabinet resolution stated that the Thai delegation should convince the WHC and related bodies not to list Dong Phayayen-Khao Yai

Forest Complex as an Endangered World Heritage Site. [Prachatai English]

Thailand: NGOs urge not to buy electricity produced by Laos dam

(pr) A group of domestic and international organizations urged the Thai government not to purchase electricity to be produced by the Luang Prabang Dam due to concerns that the dam's operation will threaten a world heritage site. The project by a Thai-owned developer has already begun and is scheduled to finish in 2027. A heritage impact assessment was not yet completed. Concerns mentioned were the displacement of communities around the dam, environmental impacts from the dam's construction and operation, and the threat it posed to Luang Prabang City.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) listed the ancient city of Luang Prabang as a world heritage site. It will be on the agenda of the 44th session of the World Heritage Committee (WHC) taking place throughout this month. The WHC's draft decision recommended the government to pause construction until the full assessment was carried out. [The Diplomat] According to Lao authorities, all environmental impact assessment reports have been completed but the world heritage impact assessment was rejected by the WHC and demanded to be renewed. The dam is part of a bigger project of 11 Mekong River dams by the Lao government as an economic strategy to become the "Battery of Southeast Asia" by selling its produced electricity to countries in the region. [Radio Free Asia]

Thailand: Prime Minister postpones the Navy's purchase of two submarines

(pr) The Defense Ministry announced the postponement of the Navy's plan to purchase two submarines for $685 million from the Chinese government, naming the necessity to manage spending amid the pandemic. The proposal faced heavy opposition, from the public as well as from the ruling Palang Pracharath Party. [Bangkok Post 1]

The Navy said it was duty-bound to make the proposal and it was "a matter of procedure". The purchase is within the $6.1 billion defense budget under the

national expenditure bill, which is current under parliamentary examination. [Bangkok Post 2]

US to visit Southeast Asian countries

(nd) The Pentagon announced that US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin will visit the Philippines, Singapore and Vietnam later this month. The trip is to demonstrate the importance the Biden-Harris Administration gives to the region and the coordination with the regional bloc ASEAN as part of the US's Indo-Pacific's architecture. These efforts shall mitigate the economic influence gained by China in the last years. Also, the end of tenure of largely pro-China President Rodrigo Duterte next year is seen as a chance to renew decades-old military ties in the Philippines. [Reuters]

US, Vietnam to solve currency manipulation dispute

(nd) The US and Vietnam announced they have reached an agreement in their currency manipulation dispute. The former administration of Donald Trump gave the designation of currency manipulators to China, Vietnam and Switzerland, withdrawing it against China later, while Biden withdrew it against China and Switzerland. All three remained on the US Treasury's "Monitoring List" for scrutiny of its currency policies, together with Japan, Korea, Germany, Ireland, Italy, India, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Mexico. In a twice-yearly analysis, the US Congress lists countries that are likely weakening their own currency against the US dollar to make exports cheaper and imports of American products more expensive. [Asia Times]

Announcements

Upcoming Online Events

21 July 2021 @ 4:00-5:00 p.m. (GMT-5), Asia Society Policy Institute, USA

Executive Roundtable on The Myanmar Conflict and Crisis

This webinar will assess Myanmar's current challenges, including security issues, the ongoing humanitarian crisis, hampered economic reform, strained bilateral relationships, and governance challenges that have hampered its progress as a nation. It will especially address the question: Are there opportunities for Myanmar going forward with the Biden Administration and what will be the future of Myanmar?

For more information, see [Asia Society].

21 July 2021 @ 12:00-1:00 p.m. (GMT-4), Hudson Institute, USA

The Future of Industrial Cybersecurity

The industrial world has spent the past twenty years optimizing its operational infrastructure with computers. From manufacturing to energy grids, water treatment to food processing, the world as it exists today runs on top of the internet. This webinar will discuss the question whether this development has introduced incalculable risks in the form of ransomware, foreign exploitation, and other attacks.

More events details are available at [Hudson].

21 July 2021 @ 12:00-1:00 p.m. (GMT-4), Hudson Institute, USA

Indo-Pacific Engagement: A Discussion with Rep. Rick Larsen

This webinar will discuss US policy in the Indo-Pacific region, with focal questions to include: How can the US ensure that the region remains free and open in the face of an increasingly aggressive China? How does the U.S. Navy and Coast Guard fit into our overall strategy to maintain freedom of navigation in the Taiwan Strait, South China Sea, and other waterways? How can we expand cooperation between the United States and partner nations in the region?

Visit [Hudson] for further information.

21 July 2021 @ 6:00-7:00 p.m. (GMT+10), Strategic Policy Studies at the Strategic & Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Australia

Competing Strategic Imaginaries in Asia

The contemporary struggle in Asia is as much about competing strategic 'imaginaries' as it is about military or economic power, making geopolitical competition essentially a contest over which imagined connected community is most important. This webinar will analyse the three main competing strategic imaginaries of Asia today: the 'Asia-Pacific'; a revived 'Greater Asia' made possible by China's resurgence; and the 'Indo-Pacific' visions.

For further information, see [SDSC].

21 July 2021 @ 3:00-4:30 p.m. (GMT+2) Istituto Affari Internazionali, Italy

Responsible to Protect: G20 tackling the global nutrition pandemic

This webinar will present and discuss a briefing paper on the impact of COVID-19 on nutrition and the role of the Italian G20 Presidency in promoting more sustainable and nutritious food systems. It will, furthermore, look at potential synergies between the G20 decision making process and other key events that will take place in the upcoming months such as the September UN Food Systems Summit and the December Nutrition for Growth Summit.

Visit [IAI] to learn more about the event.

21 July 2021 @ 2:00-4:00 p.m. (GMT+2), Istituto Affari Internazionali, Italy

Banking for Sustainable and Inclusive Infrastructure

To recover from the current crisis, governments are moving away from the measures that protect households and firms from the short-term impact of COVID-19 to policies with longer-term development goals. In this context, reviving investments in infrastructure is decisive for promote sustainable and inclusive development. This webinar aims at fostering a dialogue between the T20 and other engagement groups and stakeholders to discuss how the G20 could promote the mobilization of banking investors for sustainable and inclusive infrastructure.

Find out more at [IAI].

21 July 2021 @ 10:00-11:00 a.m. (GMT-4), Center for Strategic & International Studies, USA

Engaging the Private Sector for Innovative Global Development

This online expert panel will examine how innovative private sector engagement can help make a tangible difference in the lives of the world's most vulnerable.

Further information is provided at [CSIS].

21 July 2021 @ 10:00-11:30 a.m. (GMT+8), ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore

Angkor (c. 9th-15th century): People, Monument, City, and Statecraft

This historical talk will (re)introduce the Angkor civilisation from its formation in the 9th century to its political collapse in the 15th century based on recent archaeological research, focusing on the city of Angkor, urban infrastructure (monuments, water management structures, roads, etc.) and its associated social aspects, the people who lived there, and most importantly, the relationship with its provincial centers.

For more information on the webinar series, click [ISEAS].

21 July 2021 @ 3:00-4:15 p.m. @ (GMT+1), Chatham House, UK

The future of Africa-EU relations: Restoring momentum for effective partnership

This event will explore the status of the relationship between Africa and the European Union and the key opportunities for progress towards stronger collaboration.

If you are interested in joining, please see [Chatham House].

21 July 2021 @ 4:00-5:00 p.m. (GMT+1), Chatham House, UK

Turkey's changing role in the global order

This webinar will examine how Turkey's role in the international order has changed, and what to expect from Erdoğan's government in the future.

Find out more at [Chatham House].

21 July 2021 @ 3:00-4:30 p.m. (GMT-4), Wilson Center, USA

Ransomware Everywhere: Advancing Responsible State Behavior in Cyberspace

Against the backdrop of the recent wave of high-profile ransomware attacks, this online panel will address the following questions: What role can and/or should international cooperation play in addressing this spectrum of actors? How should the Biden administration respond to the rash of attacks originating in Russia? What form should engagement with Russian President Vladimir Putin take? Where have we made the most progress and what gaps remain?

If you are interested in this event, please see [Wilson Center] for more information and registration.

21 July 2021 @ 9:15 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. (GMT-4), Atlantic Council, USA

4th US-ROK joint public-private economic forum

The online forum will discuss two main topics: “Allies in Innovation: Enhancing US-ROK Cooperation on Science, Technology, and Global Supply Chains” and “Partnerships for the Global Good: Advancing US-ROK Cooperation on Climate Change and Public Health.”

For further information, see [Atlantic Council].

21 July 2021 @ 2:00-3:00 p.m. (GMT-4), Atlantic Council, USA

Reimagining the Civilian Conservation Corps

The event will feature a discussion of the prospects and opportunities for a revised CCC to mitigate climate change, tackle injustice, and revitalize the US workforce.

If you are interested in joining, you can register at [Atlantic Council].

21 July 2021 @ 9:00 a.m. (GMT-7), Hoover Institution, USA

Japan: The Legacy Of Japan's Longest Serving Prime Minister

In this webinar former Prime Minister Shinzō Abe will reflect on his service as prime minister, shared security challenges, and the vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific.

Visit [Hoover] for further events details.

22 July 2021 @ 3:00-3:45 p.m. (GMT-5), Asia Society Policy Institute, USA

Southeast Asia and COVID-19 Update

This online panel will address Southeast Asia's response to the coronavirus pandemic, with a focus put on the following questions: What is the outlook for a return to economic recovery in this complex and dynamic environment in the face of recent surges of Covid-19 infections in Southeast Asia? Can Southeast Asia once again contain the pandemic or could we see infection rates spiral out of control?

And can vaccination programs be surged in time? Finally, how are the politics of the pandemic playing out across the region?

Find out more at [Asia Society].

22 July 2021 @ 10:30-11:00 a.m. (GMT-4), The Heritage Foundation, USA

Policy Pulse: Enhancing Deterrence in the Indo-Pacific

In the face of a rising China, it has never been more important for the United States to have a strong force posture in the Indo-Pacific. Last year, Congress established The Pacific Defense Initiative (PDI) to consolidate and rebalance investments that enhance deterrence. This year's budget continues funding the PDI, but largely misses the mark on key priorities. In addition, while current and previous commanders of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command have emphasized the need for advanced defense of Guam as part of the PDI, development of such a system has been too long deferred.

More event details are provided at [Heritage].

22 July 2021 @ 1:00-2:30 p.m. (GMT-4), The Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, USA

Implementing Deterrence by Detection

The Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments (CSBA) will hold this webinar to discuss its newest report "Implementing Deterrence by Detection: Innovative Capabilities, Processes, and Organizations for Situational Awareness in the Indo-Pacific Region".

For more information, please see [CBSA].

22 July 2021 @ 9:00-10:00 a.m. (GMT-4), Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs Harvard Kennedy School, USA

The Future of China's National Carbon Market

China's emissions trading system (ETS) for carbon dioxide will become operational in mid-2021. The system targets reductions in carbon intensity via a tradeable performance standard, initially in the power sector, with expected expansion to other industries. Plans to convert from a rate-based to a mass-based system are underway. This webinar will describe the trading system's history, design, rules governing implementation, and anticipated developments over the next decade. The ETS is expected to support China's goals of reaching peak CO2 emissions by 2030 and of achieving carbon neutrality by 2060.

More information about the event is provided at [Belfer Center].

22 July 2021 @ 4:00-5:00 p.m. (GMT+8), Institute of Policy Studies, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, Singapore

An Inclusive Society

This four-part lecture series will elaborate on Singapore's synthesis of markets and government, meritocracy and equality, as well as international orientation and national identity, which has allowed the country to move from third world to first, and examine how Singapore's approach will come under pressure from four tectonic shifts altering the global landscape.

For more information, please see [IPS].

22 July 2021 @ 05:15-06:30 p.m. (GMT+8), Institute of Water Policy (IWP), Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy - NUS, Singapore

Risk-based decision-making: applications for ecosystems-based flood risk reduction and extreme event analysis

This talk showcases the benefits of probabilistic risk analysis for promoting nature-based flood risk reduction interventions. Through a case-study of

riverine flooding, speakers demonstrate that relative small impacts of natural ecosystem change on peak river discharge can lead to significantly amplified consequences when propagated through the risk analysis chain.

If you want to know more about the event, go to [IKYSPP].

22 July 2021 @ 1:30-2:30 p.m. (GMT-4), United States Institute of Peace, USA

China's Potential Role in Venezuela's Political and Humanitarian Crisis

This online discussion will be about the nature of the China-Venezuela relationship, the role China could realistically play in support of a negotiated political settlement and how Washington and Beijing may be able to find common ground on key issues.

More information is accessible via [USIP].

22 July 2021 @ 2:30-3:30 p.m. (GMT+1), Royal United Services Institute, UK

The FATF Standards and Unintended Consequences: Part 3: Looking to the Future

How far has the standard setter come and where is it heading? As the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) considers ways to mitigate the unintended consequences of its financial crime standards, this three-part webinar series will assess the FATF's work on this issue to-date, consider current challenges and look ahead to future ways in which its standards might be manipulated.

For more information, please visit [RUSI].

22 July 2021 4:00-5:00 p.m. (GMT-4), Center for Strategic & International Studies, USA

Exit Interview with Carl Gershman, Founding President of the National Endowment for Democracy

This summer, Carl Gershman, the founding president of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), will retire from his post after almost four decades of extraordinary leadership. Over the course of his service, he built the NED from the ground up and helped extend its influence in support of freedom to millions around the world. Join for a conversation with Mr. Gershman to talk about the successes and struggles of the last 40 years as well as the future of democracy.

Please see [CSIS] for more information.

22 July 2021 @ 10:00-11:00 a.m. (GMT-4), Middle East Institute, USA

The Role of Libyan Youth in Promoting Social Cohesion

This event will discuss the work on the obstacles to promoting greater social cohesion in Libya. The speakers will address historic and modern day social fragmentations, the impact of various initiatives and policies on the stability of communities, and the role of state and non-state actors on the Libyan social structure.

For more details, see [MEI].

22 July 2021 @ 10:00-11:15 a.m. (GMT+8), ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore

Sketch by Sketch with Zunar – A Visual Satire of Malaysian Administrations Over Time

In this webinar, Zunar, one of Malaysia's foremost cartoonists, will share with us the philosophy, craft, and technique of his art. Based on three cartoons picked from the past three Malaysian administrations, he will share with us his initial idea, and then his method for refining each of the works. In doing so, we will gain a glimpse of Zunar's creative process as well as his thoughts on key political developments in the country.

If you want to attend the event, find out how to register at [ISEAS].

22 July 2021 @ 1:00 p.m. (GMT-4), Atlantic Council, USA

Russia, cybercrime, and a new phase in US-Russian cybersecurity

In this virtual event, a panel of experts will look at the developments of the past six months and the tools which are on the table for a US government response. What are the real dynamics at play between official Kremlin cyber operations and the criminal groups that have conducted the vast majority of these attacks? With little indication that “cyber conflict” is going away any time soon, what do policymakers, businesses, infrastructure operators, and everyday citizens need to know about these increasingly dangerous digital threats?

Further event details are available at [Atlantic Council].

22 July 2021 @ 1:00-1:45 p.m. (GMT-5), The Chicago Council on Global Affairs, USA

Charting a New Course for US-North Korea Relations

The Biden administration completed its review of US foreign policy toward North Korea and proposed an approach different from President Trump’s "grand bargain" and President Obama’s "strategic patience." Can the United States and North Korea reach an agreement on North Korea’s nuclear weapons program? Former officials who engaged Pyongyang in the past discuss what lessons we can draw from previous negotiations and the state of US foreign policy toward North Korea.

If you want to attend the event, find out how to register at [The Chicago Council].

22 July 2021 @ 10:30 to 12:00 (GMT+2), Institute for Security Studies

Do police make South Africa safe?

This seminar will launch three new reports by Dr Anine Kriegler. They explore the meaning of ‘evidence’ in evidence-based policing, the state of South Africa’s policing evidence base, and how partnerships between police, academics and researchers can help transform

the South African Police Service (SAPS) into the professional agency the country needs.

Find out more at [ISSAFRICA].

23 July 2021 @ 11:00-11:45 a.m. (GMT-4), The Heritage Foundation, USA

How Congress Can Help America Get More Out of Our Defense Dollars

With inflation on the rise and many predicting future Pentagon budgets will be flat, it becomes even more important to get the most out of every single taxpayer dollar. Today, there are legal, cultural, and procedural barriers that frustrate those efforts resulting in waste and poor decision-making. One such obstacle is the phenomena of "use it or lose it," where every year the Pentagon loses buying power due to expiring funds. Join the discussion with our expert panelists who will provide perspectives on both the "use it or lose it" phenomenon and the broader efforts taking place with defense budget reform efforts.

Visit [Heritage] to learn more about the event.

23 July 2021 @ 10:00-11:15 a.m. (GMT+8), ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore

China's Efforts to Shape the Media Landscape in Vietnam

China is known to have conducted "influence operations" to shape other countries' policies, public opinion and information environment in ways that are favourable to China's interests. One essential part of such operations is to shape the media landscape of the targeted countries to influence their people's perception of China. This webinar will examine such efforts by China in the Vietnamese context.

Find more about event details at [ISEAS].

23 July 2021 @ 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. (GMT+10), Australian Strategic Policy Institute, Australia

Indigenous Cyber and Digital Skills Conference

This half-day conference will canvas a range of curriculum and engagement initiatives in cyber-security and STEM as well as government and industry responses to both support those already in work, and to attract diverse candidates. What can defence, and defence-related sectors, do to support the next generation of technology champions?

For further information, see [ASPI].

23 July 2021 @ 12:30-1:30 p.m. (GMT-4), The Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program, USA

Transatlantic data flows: What's next after the EU-U.S. Privacy Shield?

The Center for Technology Innovation at Brookings will host this webinar to discuss issues of cross-border data transfers and data localization in the context of ongoing negotiations to replace the EU-U.S. Privacy Shield.

For more information, please visit [Brookings].

23 July 2021 @ 3:00-4:30 p.m. @ (GMT+1), Chatham House, UK

Innovation and inclusion: Policy priorities for Zimbabwe's informal economy

At this online event, speakers will discuss the informal economy in Zimbabwe, including the impact of COVID-19 on the sector and how to improve exchanges between formal and informal sectors

If you are interested in this event, please visit [Chatham House] for more information.

23 July 2021 @ 1:30-2:30 p.m. (GMT-4), Wilson Center, USA

Roadmap for a Renewed U.S.-Canada Partnership

President Biden and Prime Minister Trudeau agreed on a "Roadmap for a Renewed U.S.-Canada Partnership" on February 23, 2021 at their first "virtual bilateral" meeting. In May, U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken sent veteran diplomat Ambassador Arnold

Chacón to Ottawa to serve as Chargé d'Affaires and lead U.S. efforts to advance the Roadmap. The Wilson Center will host Ambassador Chacón and Canada's Ambassador to the United States Kirsten Hillman for a conversation about the Roadmap agenda and the route ahead for U.S.–Canada relations.

For more information, please visit [Wilson Center].

23 July 2021 @ 3:00-4:30 p.m. (GMT-4), Wilson Center, USA

The Selling of a Centennial, 2021: What the Chinese Communist Party's Propaganda Reveals About the CCP

Join this webinar for a detailed analysis of how the CCP sees, and sells, its leadership of China after 100 years.

Find more about event details at [Wilson Center].

23 July 2021 @ 12:00 p.m. (GMT-4), Atlantic Council, USA

#HeatSeason Europe press event and launch

This online event will unveil European efforts to tackle the accelerating climate threat of extreme heat.

If you want to attend the event, find out how to register at [Atlantic Council].

26 July 2021 12:00-1:00 p.m. (GMT-4), Center for Strategic & International Studies, USA

A Navy Admiral's Bronze Rules: Managing Risk and Leadership

The webinar will introduce the book "A Navy Admiral's Bronze Rules: Managing Risk and Leadership". Author Rear Admiral Oliver uses real world events as case studies to discuss how to balance the risks involved in leadership and the tools available to those who nevertheless wish to shoulder those responsibilities.

More information is accessible via [CSIS].

26 July 2021 @ 3:00-4:30 p.m. (GMT+8), ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore

Rethinking the Export-Led Growth Strategy in ASEAN Developing Economies

This webinar will explore the development of export diversification and its potential impact on economic growth in ASEAN. The webinar also discusses the role of export diversification and sophistication in stimulating economic growth using cross-country analysis.

More information is accessible via [ISEAS].

26 July 2021 @ 6:00-7:00 p.m. (GMT+10), Australian Institute of International Affairs - Victoria, Australia

Afghanistan: On The Brink of Disaster

This online talk will he reflect upon the past, and speaks about the reversal of progress found in Afghanistan following the withdrawal of US and allied forces.

If you are interested in this event, please see [AIIAVIC] for more information and registration.

26 July 2021 @ 2:00-3:15 p.m. @ (GMT+1), Chatham House, UK

Shaping sustainable security on the Korean peninsula

This webinar will address the question of how the international community should respond to the persistent challenge of a nuclear North Korea which appears to be developing its conventional military capabilities.

More event details are provided at [Chatham House].

27 July 2021 @ 6:00 p.m. (GMT+8), The International Institute for Strategic Studies, Singapore

The imperative of partnership

Lloyd J. Austin III, United States Secretary of Defense will deliver the 40th IISS Fullerton Lecture in which he will make the case for the US' role as a reliable partner in helping nations in the Indo-Pacific make their own choices and 'build back better' after COVID-19. The Secretary will also argue for 'a more fair, open, and inclusive regional order' and discuss ways that the US is working with its network of allies and partners to update and modernise capabilities to meet the defence challenges of the 21st century.

More information about the event is provided at [IISS].

27 July 2021 @ 12:00-12:45 p.m. (GMT-4), The Heritage Foundation, USA

Scaling Up the U.S. Response to the Coup in Burma

It has been nearly six months since the military coup in Burma, also known as Myanmar. Conditions inside the country continue to worsen with over 5,000 people currently detained and nearly 1,000 killed. Civil liberties and freedoms are evaporating as the military consolidates power. While the initial U.S. response to the coup was swift, there is much left to be done. There is strong bipartisan agreement on the need to ramp up U.S. sanctions, issue an atrocity determination, and ensure adequate humanitarian assistance

For more information, please see [Heritage].

27 July 2021 @ 2:00-3:00 p.m. (GMT-4), The German Marshall Fund of the United States, USA

Discussing the Taiwan Peace and Stability Act with Rep. Ami Bera and Rep. Steve Chabot

In the past five years, the People's Republic of China has notably increased its pressure campaign on Taiwan's diplomatic, economic, and security environment, with some of the most concerning provocations occurring over the past year. Beijing's actions have elevated Congress's concern and attention to how the United States and like-minded allies and partners can help preserve cross-strait stability. In response, a bipartisan group of Congressional national security leaders have introduced the Taiwan Peace and Stability Act (HR

3972) to support Taiwan's long-term security, while reinforcing longstanding U.S. policy that "peace and stability in the area are in the political, security, and economic interests of the United States, and are matters of international concern."

If you want to know more about the event, go to [GMFUS].

27 July 2021 @ 2:00-3:30 p.m. (GMT-4), The Dialogue, USA

Haiti's Crisis – An Uncertain Future Amidst Violence and Turmoil

The assassination nearly two weeks ago of President Jovenel Moïse has exacerbated Haiti's already dire situation – political turmoil, spiraling violence, precarious and deteriorating economy – into a full-blown and deepening crisis. The discussion will examine a variety of questions: What are the contours of the political and social crisis facing Haiti at this moment? What has been the impact of Moise's assassination? How should the Biden administration respond to the troubled situation in Haiti? Who are the key actors shaping these events? What remains of the plans for a constitutional referendum, and national elections? With a mixed record of past achievements, what are practical roles that the US and other international actors can play? What must happen immediately?

More information about the event is provided at [The Dialogue].

27 July 2021 @ 5:00-7:00 p.m. (GMT+9), Asian Development Bank Institute, Japan

Institute Roundtable on Research and Policy Trends and Prospects for Sustainable Post-COVID Recovery in Central Asia

This ADBI-Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Institute roundtable will discuss research and policy trends and prospects for boosting sustainable post-COVID-19 recovery in Central Asia. Experts will explore the future role of research and policy making in promoting sustainable development. They will also examine pressing challenges facing the region's developing countries moving forward and innovative

solutions covering areas such as investment, sustainable infrastructure, and fiscal management.

If you want to know more about the event, go to [ADBI].

27 July 2021 12:00 p.m. -1:00 a.m. (GMT-4), Center for Strategic & International Studies, USA

Report Launch: Mapping the Human Rights Risks of Facial Recognition Technology

This webinar will feature the launch of a new report examining the human rights impacts of Facial Recognition Technology, from development through deployment.

For more information, see [CSIS].

27 July 2021 @ 10:00-11:15 a.m. (GMT+8), ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore

Challenges for Indonesia's Diplomacy in Israel-Palestine Conflict

This webinar will thus discuss the conduct of Indonesia's foreign policy in supporting Palestinian independence. It will identify the sources of and debates in Indonesia's Palestine policy.

Visit [ISEAS] to find out more about the event.

27 July 2021 @ 5:00-6:00 p.m. (GMT+10), Australian Strategic Policy Institute, Australia

In-Conversation with Marietje Schaake

This online event will feature a conversation focusing on technology, democracy and the question of accountability and addressing the question of how democracies can cooperate amidst rising authoritarianism and the privatised governance of technologies.

If you want to join the event, you can register at [ASPI].

27 July 2021 @ 2:00-3:00 p.m. @ (GMT+1), Chatham House, UK

Paper launch: Breaking the curse of corruption in Lebanon

In a new Chatham House paper, Karim Merhej explores how Lebanon's anti-corruption laws, while commendable in theory, are unlikely to be effectively implemented. It also discusses how the political class in Lebanon uses those laws to garner praise among their constituents and burnish their image in front of international audiences, rather than to undertake genuine efforts to reduce corruption. In this webinar, the author presents the paper's key arguments while two distinguished guests will provide their critical insights and comments.

Find out more at [Chatham House].

27 July 2021 @ 4:00-5:00 p.m. @ (GMT+1), Chatham House, UK

How do we tackle ransomware?

This event will bring together members of the Ransomware Task Force, cyber practitioners, and experts to discuss the framework's applicability to the global threat of ransomware.

Find out more at [Chatham House].

27 July 2021 @ 11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. (GMT-4), Wilson Center, USA

Arctic Security Dialogues IV | Progress on the Department of the Air Force Arctic Strategy

Please join the Wilson Center's Polar Institute for a facilitated round table discussion with distinguished Department of the Air Force leaders to explore paths forward in implementation of the Arctic Strategy.

For more information, please see [Wilson Center].

28 July 2021 @ 1:30-2:30 p.m. (GMT-4), United States Institute of Peace, USA

Nuclear Security Policy in an Era of Strategic Competition

In this online talk, Reps. Fortenberry and Foster will explore some of the key issues facing policymakers when it comes to nuclear nonproliferation, maintenance and modernization, and diplomacy in this era of strategic competition.

More event details are provided at [USIP].

28 July 2021 @ 9:30 a.m. (GMT-7), Berggruen Institute, USA

Keeping Cool: Lessons of Low-Tech Thermoregulation for the Climate Change Era

A virtual conversation with anthropologist and former Berggruen Fellow Josh Berson, artist and researcher Simon Penny, and Berggruen Institute Vice President of Programs Nils Gilman as they explore climate adaptations and mitigations beyond batteries, grids, and electric vehicles.

If you are interested in this event, please see [Berggruen Institute] for more information and registration.

28 July 2021 @ 4:00-5:00 p.m. (GMT+1), Royal United Services Institute, UK

Barbarossa: How Hitler Lost the War

This webinar will introduce Jonathan Dimbleby's new book "Barbarossa: How Hitler Lost the War," which examines the operation that turned the tide of the Second World War in the Allies' favour.

More event details are provided at [RUSI].

28 July 2021 3:00:4:45 p.m. (GMT+5.5), Council on Energy, Environment and Water, India

International Dialogue on Pre-2020 Climate Commitments: Have Developed Countries Delivered? How Can They Regain Trust?

This webinar will showcase differentiated positions of the developed countries with respect to their performance in the pre-2020 regime. The discussion would centre around the need - and mechanisms - to accelerate time-bound actions to meet erstwhile climate targets to strengthen trust and confidence among the developing and developed nations.

Please see [CEEW] for more information.

28 July 2021 @ 10:00-11:00 a.m. (GMT-4), The Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program, USA

Prospects for peace and security in Zimbabwe

The Africa Security Initiative will host this online discussion on U.S. policy toward Zimbabwe and future political course of action.

For further information, click [Brookings].

28 July 2021 @ 6:00-7:00 p.m. (GMT+10), Australian Institute of International Affairs - ACT, Australia

A Great Wall Game? China and the South China Sea

There are many threads to China's approach to the South China Sea. This presentation will seek to disentangle the key skeins to better understand the interaction between China's strategic aims, its economic and environmental interests and its nationalist narrative, as well as some of the complexities of international maritime law.

For further details, see [AIIAACT].

28 July 2021 @ 10:00-10:45 a.m. (GMT+1), Chatham House, UK

Technology and de-extremization in Xinjiang

In this event, Xinjiang experts will explore the technologies and security strategies behind the 'de-extremization' of Xinjiang. They also consider the implications more broadly state surveillance systems,

and the extent to which Xinjiang may serve as a model for foreign authoritarian governments.

Find out more about the event at [Chatham House].

28 July 2021 @ 3:00-4:00 p.m. (GMT+1), Chatham House, UK

Delivering policy priorities during Sudan's transition

In this online talk, Sudan's Minister of Cabinet Affairs, Hon. Khalid Omer Yousif, will outline the government's vision for moving the democratic transition forward, including plans for delivering on key priorities.

For more details, see [Chatham House].

28 July 2021 @ 11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. (GMT-7), Pardee Rand Graduate School, USA

Community Response and Resilience to Disaster: Lessons from the COVID-19 Crisis in Sitka, Alaska

This webinar will examine how local, state, and federal governments can improve their collaboration with community-based organizations by drawing on the experiences of NGOs in Sitka, Alaska, that were instrumental in addressing emergent challenges in the local community as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Representatives from local organizations in Sitka will share their experience in responding to the pandemic, including how they interacted with funders and governmental organizations outside of Sitka and how their practices contributed to community resilience.

If you want to attend the event, find out how to register at [PRGS]

Recent book releases

Tony Saich, ***From Rebel to Ruler: One Hundred Years of the Chinese Communist Party***, Harvard University Press, 560 pages, July 6, 2021, with a review in [The Hindu].

Amitav Acharya, ***ASEAN and Regional Order: Revisiting Security Community in Southeast Asia***,

Routledge, 156 pages, May 31, 2021, discussed in [IDE].

Samuel Fleischaker, ***Adam Smith***, Routledge, 380 pages, July 14, 2021, with brief reviews in [Routledge].

Calls

The **International Journal of Public Leadership** invites paper submissions for its 2022 Special Issue ***"Public Leadership in Times of Crisis – The Intersection of Political and Administrative Leadership Responding to Crisis"***. Closing date for submission is August 1, 2021. For more information, see [Emerald Group Publishing].

The journal **Sociological Perspectives** is seeking paper proposals for its Special Issue ***"New Perspectives on the Sociology of Science and Technology Studies"***. Deadline for submission is August 15, 2021. Visit [SAGE Pub] for further details.

The **Central and East European International Studies Association** has opened its call for paper and panels for the online conference ***"Six decades of the Past – Six decades for the Future"*** to be held on October 8-9, 2021 to celebrate six decades of teaching and researching International Relations in Slovenia. Closing date for submission is July 31, 2021. If you are interested, you can find out more at [CEEISA].

The journal **Culture and Organization** invites paper submissions for its Special Issue ***"The Politics of Difference: Critical Investigations across Time and Space"*** (Vol. 29, Issue 2, 2023). Manuscripts can be submitted until September 13, 2021. For more details, see [Taylor and Francis].

Jobs & positions

The **International Monetary Fund** is hiring ***Senior Risk Specialist (Financial Risk)*** responsible for the leadership, innovation, governance, and management necessary to identify, evaluate, mitigate, and monitor the organization's market, credit and liquidity risks. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis. If you are interested, you can find further details at [IMF].

The **International Labour Organization** is offering the position of ***Head of the Labour Law and Reform Unit***. Closing date for applications is August 9, 2021. Visit [ILO] for more information.

The **International Organization for Migration** is offering the position of a ***Programme Coordinator*** to be based in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. Applications can be submitted until July 29, 2021. Find out more at [IOM].

The **Asian Development Bank's Office of the General Counsel** is seeking a ***Counsel (Nonsoverign)*** to be based at the Asian Development Bank Headquarters. Deadline for applications is July 26, 2021. For more information, see [ADB].

The **World Bank** is hiring a ***Senior Education Economist/Specialist*** to be based in Bogota, Colombia and responsible for leading the bank's education policy dialogue in Colombia. Deadline for applications is August 12, 2021. More information is provided at [World Bang Group].

The **European Commission's European Climate, Environment and Infrastructure Executive Agency** is recruiting a ***Legal Advisor*** with responsibilities including providing legal analysis as well as advising and supporting on legal, regulatory and institutional aspects related to the management of the programs delegated to the Agency. Closing date for applications is July 30, 2021. Visit [EPSO] for more information.

Interpol is offering the position of a ***Regional Specialized Officer*** for its Middle East & North Africa Coordination Desk. Application deadline is August 12, 2021. More details are available at [Interpol].

Europol is hiring a ***Specialist in Stakeholder Management*** for its Strategy and External Relations Unit, responsible for providing support to the Directorate and the activities of the Stakeholder Management Team by implementing Europol's External Strategy and for maintaining Europol's external relations. Closing date for applications is July 23, 2021. Details about the vacancy are provided at [Europol].

The **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development** is recruiting a ***Climate Change Economist*** with main responsibilities in research, analysis and drafting, co-ordination, management and liaison, as well as communication and outreach. Candidates can submit applications until August 20, 2021. Find out more at [OECD].

USAID is inviting applications for the position of ***Project Management Specialis***t for its Southern Syria Assistance Platform Office in Amman, Jordan.

Deadline for applications is July 25, 2021. For further information, see [USAID].

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