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Asia in Review

Grasp the pattern, read the trend

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Dear Readers,

we are glad to welcome you to this week´s Asia in Review (AiR) with insights about the the latest developments in domestic politics, international relations and geopolitics in East Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia.

With special greetings to everyone celebrating the national days of Jordan, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Ethiopia, Anguilla, and Samoa we wish a good read, a great day, and a pleasant rest of the week.

With best regards,

Henning Glaser

Editor in Chief

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Constitutional Law and –Politics, Human Rights and National Security in East Asia

China: "One country, two systems" in Hong Kong to remain beyond 2047, President Xi says

(ms) In a meeting on May 30 with John Lee Ka-chiu, Hong Kong's Chief-Executive elect, Chinese President Xi Jinping reassured that last year's reforms of the electoral system in the former British colony, was in line with the with the "one country, two systems" approach, which according to him should persist in the long term.

Lee, who secured the city's leadership position unopposed earlier this month with more than 99% of the votes of the Election Commission [AiR No. 19, May/2022, 2], traveled to Beijing to receive the official

appointment letter from Premier Li Keqiang. He will be sworn in on July 1, which will mark the 25th anniversary of Hong Kong's return to Chinese rule.

Xi's remarks confirmed earlier statements of Shen Chunyao, Chairman of the Basic Law Committee and Legislative Affairs Commission of the National People's Congress Standing Committee, who, at a legal forum hosted by Hong Kong's Department of Justice, said that the "one country, two systems" approach will continue beyond 2047, the year when this approach expires. [Hong Kong Free Press] [RTHK] [South China Morning Post 1] [South China Morning Post 2]

Critics view the electoral reforms, which among others, significantly reduced the number of directly elected member of Hong Kong's parliament, as an attack on the city's democracy and on "one country, two systems". that is enshrined in the Basic Law of Hong Kong. According to Article 2 the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region is to "exercise a high degree of autonomy and enjoy executive, legislative and independent judicial power, including that of final adjudication, in accordance with the provisions of this Law. [Government, Hong Kong]

Reflecting such criticism, in its 2021 Annual Report on developments in Hong Kong to the European Parliament and European Council, the European Commission and the European Union's High Representative concluded that the imposition of the Hong Kong National Security in 2020 further undermined "one country, two systems" in Hong Kong. Among others, the report cited for this assessment the arrest of more than 160 individuals last year under the National Security Law and other related laws. Among them were former pro-democracy activists, opposition lawmakers, journalists and academics. [EU Reporter]

China: Supreme People's Court opinion on massive increase of official blockchain use

(dql/hg) The country´s top court issued an opinion to massively increase the blockchain technology by the Chinese state including government, judiciary, and the financial sector. The court´s recommendation extends to the creation of "an interoperation collaborative mechanism with blockchain platforms" and the integration of blockchain into large areas of China's economic and regulatory infrastructure. [The Register]

China: Third aircraft carrier might soon be launched; new unmanned ‘drone carrier’ just launched

(dql/hg) China is reportedly about to launch its third and much advanced aircraft carrier (type 003). Unlike the eleven US aircraft carriers and like its two predecessors, China’s Type 003 warship is not nuclear-powered. Different from its predecessors the type 003 uses an electromagnetic catapult system allowing to launch fixed-wing aircraft with heavier bomb loads and more fuel for longer-range operations. [The Times]

After a delayed launch which was initially expected around the People’s Liberation Army Navy’s (PLAN) 73rd anniversary on April 23, the recent Times report of an imminent launch contradicts an earlier report of the South China Morning Post which has claimed that the coronavirus lockdown in Shanghai could delay the aircraft carrier’s launch.

Current, only China’s first aircraft carrier - a refitted originally half-built Soviet Kuznetsov-class heavy aircraft-carrying missile cruiser that was purchased from Ukraine in 1998 - is fully combat-ready. The PLAN ´s second aircraft carrier has not yet attained combat-readiness status - without any official explanation for the deficits rendered. The country’s fourth carrier, which is in production since last year, will reportedly be powered by nuclear reactors. [EurAsian Times 1]

Additionally, China has just launched an unmanned drone ship, the Zhu Hai Yun, carrying drones and submersibles which are part of the vessel’s Intelligent Mobile Ocean Stereo Observing System (IMOSOS) to be used for instance for marine environment monitoring, analysis and reconnaissance. The 88.5 meters long ship with a designed displacement of 2,000 tones can sail at 13 knots with a top speed of 18 knots (33 km per hour). [EurAsian Times 2]

China: Premier Li calls on stabilizing economy

(ms/hg) China's Premier Li Keqiang chaired a special meeting of China's State Council, the country’s Cabinet, on Wednesday, May 25. The meeting, attended by more than 100,000 people, focused on stabilizing China's economy.

According to Li, especially March and April of this year have hit the Chinese economy, with downward or stagnation trends in areas of production, cargo

transportation or also employment. Due to this Li sees a necessity to imply measures, which should ensure again larger economic growth and a lower unemployment in the second quarter. The 33 measures presented on Monday of the same week after the State Council executive meeting should play an important role in the implementation. [Global Times 1]

The 33 measures are to be implemented as early as May and June and cover a wide range of areas of the Chinese economy, e.g., further tax rebates of USD 21 billion for smaller companies and enterprises are to be waived. The stabilization and improvement of economic chains will also play an important role. The State Council will send a task force to 12 provinces to monitor the implementation of the policies. [Global Times 2] [XinhuaNet]

One more recent indication for the country´s economic outlook is the fact that China is leading the global decline in venture capital deals with the value of venture capital deals tumbling 44% in the first four months of this year. [Bloomberg 1]

Meanwhile, authorities and banks encounter difficulties in convincing companies and households to increase borrowing amid lingering Covid uncertainty. After loan growth weakened in April to the lowest level since almost five years, housing sales continue to slump. [Bloomberg 2]

Meanwhile, as a more positive note, German company Merck KGaA has just signed a contract to open a semiconductor base in Zhangjiagang, which it claims to be the largest single electronic technology investment in the country. [NDTV]

China: Agriculture ministry to temporary suspend fishing activities

(ms) China is voluntarily enforcing a three-month ban on fishing in the international waters of the southwest Atlantic between the first of July and September 30 and in the northern Indian Ocean between the first of September and November 30.

According to reports from Trygg Mat Tracking (TMT), a Norwegian group that monitors international fisheries, and the Information Fusion Centre, Chinese vessels are allegedly involved in illegal fishing activities. They are said to have continued fishing for already threatened fish species and are also said to have fished illegally in national waters of third countries.

The so-called "dark shipping", the concealment of the own identity by switching off the tracking device, is to be investigated in a new initiative of the Quad states [see AiR No.21 May/2022,4] [South China Morning Post]

Japan: Expats' inability to review justices ruled unconstitutional

(nc) On May 25, a law preventing Japanese expats from reviewing justices was ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. In addition, the Court ordered the government to compensate for the damages as no legislative action was taken for a long time by the Diet, Japan's parliament. The Ministry of Internal Affairs confirmed to accept the decision and to revise the law.

Public reviews of Supreme Court justices are conducted during general elections, and citizens can decide whether to confirm a justice appointed since the last election. If a sitting judge does not receive the majority of votes, he/she will be removed from office.

About 95,000 people expats were not able to cast their votes in the review of Supreme Court justices during the general election in October last year. [Japan Times] [Kyodo News]

Japan: Ex-agriculture minister convicted for receiving bribery

(nc) Takamori Yoshikawa, Japan's former farm minister, was sentenced on May 26 to two years and six months in prison, suspended for four years, for receiving bribery from the head of the egg production company Akita Foods Co. He was also ordered to pay the state about USD 39 thousand, the amount of money he received as a bribe. [Mainichi]

Japan: Cancer patients seek reparation from the Fukushima disaster

(nc) Court hearings began in Tokyo on May 26 in a lawsuit launched by six Japanese cancer patients against the operator of the Fukushima nuclear plant, Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO). The plaintiffs were children during the 2011 Fukushima disaster, and they claim that radiation exposure from the nuclear plant's multiple meltdowns caused them to develop

thyroid cancer. They are seeking about USD 4 million in compensation from TEPCO. [Japan Today]

North Korea: Three more missile tests on the heels of Biden's Asia trip

(dql) One day after US President Joe Biden concluded Asia trip that covered visits to South Korea and Japan as well as the Quad summit Tokyo [see AiR No. 21, May/2022, 4], North Korea test-fired three missiles toward waters off its east coast. According to South Korea's military, the three missiles, which mark the 17th round of weapons test in this year, included one intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) system and two short-range ballistic missiles. [The Diplomat] [Aljazeera]

In response, the Washington and Seoul jointly fired two missiles into the East Sea on the same day. The South Korean military also confirmed that its Air Force conducted an exercise known as an elephant walk a day earlier, during which thirty F-15K fighter jets taxied on the ground, to prepare for the actual launch on Wednesday after signs of a "ballistic missile provocation," were detected. [NK News]

Meanwhile, recent commercial satellite imagery of the Yongbyon Nuclear Scientific Research Center reveals ongoing operations at the 5 MWe Reactor and Uranium Enrichment Plant (UEP), North Korea's main fissile material production facilities, believed to improve or expand efforts throughout the complex. This is indicative of Pyongyang investing in a long-term advancement of its nuclear weapons program. [38 North]

South Korea: Tensions in Democratic Party ahead of local elections

(dql) With the campaigns for the June 1 local elections in full swing, the Democratic Party (DP) is facing an party-internal, generational power struggle.

During a press conference on May 25, 26-year-old Park Ji-hyun, the party's co-interim chief, openly called on the "Generation 586," to retire to allow the party "to regain the trust of the people," and "say goodbye to the politics of fandom, while recovering the politics of the public."

The term “Generation 586” refers to people who are in their 50s, visited the university in the 1980s and were born in the 1960s.

Park’s statement prompted anger and criticism among the DP leadership and veteran politicians blaming her Park discussing publicly party reform without prior consultation within the party. [The Korea Herald]

South Korea: Breathing sensors installed in military prison

(dql) In response to criticism of existing monitoring methods in prisons, South Korea’s military has put in place breathing sensors that are designed to assist in preventing suicides in some 50 cells in a new military prison. It is the first that a correctional facility in South Korea is using such a method.

The sensors will monitor the breathing of inmates in real time and will sending an alarm if abnormal breathing or a stop of breathing for a certain period of time is detected. [Yonhap News Agency]

South Korea: New intelligence chief appointed

(dql) Former 1st Deputy Director of National Security Office (NSC) and Secretary General of the NSC Secretariat Kim Kyou-hyun has been appointed as director of South Korea’s National Intelligence Service.

Kim assumes office amidst strained inter-Korean relations in the wake of North Korea’s recent series of missile tests. During his confirmation hearing in parliament, he stressed that he would reinforce the intelligence capabilities of the country vis-à-vis Pyongyang to include cooperation with the Five Eyes, the intelligence-sharing alliance between Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK and the US. At the same time, he questioned the North’s will for denuclearization.

Prior to serving a deputy national security adviser, Kim had been in the foreign service since 1980 and worked in various posts dealing with the United States. In 2013, he was appointed 1st Vice Minister of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by then then President Park Geun-hye. [Yonhap News Agency] [The Korea Times]

South Korea: Peak wage system unconstitutional, Supreme Court rules

(dql) On May 26, the South Korean Supreme Court handed down a ruling that declares the so-called peak wage system "an illegal discrimination against workers on the basis of age."

Under the peak wage system, the salaries of senior workers are gradually cut several years prior to retirement, with the aim to create more jobs for young people to tackle high youth unemployment rate. It has been put in place by local firms, particularly in the public sector, since the early 2010s.

In its decision, the court ruled in favor of the plaintiff who demanded to be reimbursed by former employer for salary he lost as a result of the peak wage system, claiming that cutting his wage only on grounds of his age violated the Act on Prohibition of Age Discrimination in Employment and Aged Employment Promotion. [Yonhap News Agency]

Taiwan: Legislative Yuan retroactively acquits former president

(ms) Taiwan's Parliament has passed an amendment to Article 99-1 of the Accounting Act with 57 votes in favor, mainly from the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), and 32 votes against. The amendment to Article 99-1 states that all acts related to the filing, handling, reimbursement, and use of all special compensation prior to December 31, 2006, are exempt from punishment. As a result, Chen Shui-bian, President of Taiwan between 2000 and 2008 and a member of the DPP, is retroactively acquitted of his charges. [Focus Taiwan]

In 2010, Chen and his wife were sentenced to 20 years in prison for corruption and embezzlement of campaign contributions; due to his physical condition, he was released on parole in 2015. [BBC]

Taiwan: Kuomintang announces candidate for Taipei mayoral election

(ms) Taiwan's main opposition party., Kuomintang (KMT, Chinese Nationalist Party), has selected Chiang Wan-an as its candidate for the mayoral election in Taipei, the capital of Taiwan, this November. Chiang, a

former corporate lawyer in the United States, has been a member of the parliament since 2016.

The ruling Progressive Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) has not yet announced a candidate, but Chen Shih-chung, the current Minister of Health and Welfare, is expected to run in November. Deputy Taipei Mayor Huang Shan-shan of the People First Party could be another candidate. [Focus Taiwan]

Constitutional Law and –Politics, Human Rights and National Security in South Asia

Bangladesh: Nationalist Party initiates talks with other opposition parties, seeks united movement

(lm) Bangladesh's main opposition Nationalist Party (BNP) on May 24 launched talks with other opposition political parties to work out an outline for launching a united movement with the goal to restore democracy and the people's voting right by ousting the ruling Awami League from power. [NewAge]

Bangladesh: Three sentenced to death by International Crimes Tribunal over 1971 atrocities

(lm) Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) on May 31 sentenced three people to death for

collaborating with the Pakistan Army and committing crimes against humanity during the country's Liberation War in 1971. The counsels of the three convicts said they were preparing to challenge the ruling in consultation with their clients. Under Bangladesh's war crimes law, the convicts could appeal against the verdict in the apex Appellate Division of the Supreme Court. [The Week]

The ICT of Bangladesh is a domestic war crimes tribunal set up in 2009 to investigate and prosecute suspects for the genocide committed in 1971 by the Pakistan Army and their local collaborators during the Bangladesh Liberation War that led to establishment of Bangladesh as a county separate from Pakistan.

Bhutan: Food shortage, spike in domestic prices loom large

(sg) Against the larger backdrop of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which triggered price rises for fuel and food, Bhutan is facing a looming food scarcity. The Bhutanese economic affairs minister told *Reuters* that his government was worried about export restrictions imposed by countries; he declined to name any nation. Neighboring India banned wheat exports on May 13, citing its national food security. However, New Delhi has emphasized that it will continue exports to neighboring and vulnerable countries. [Reuters]

India: Election Commission to initiate graded action against over 2,100 unregistered political parties

(sr) To stop political parties from flouting rules related to financial impropriety and failing to report truthful contributions, India's Election Commission(ECI) will initiate ranked action against over 2,100 political parties.

On May 25, the ECI said 87 parties were found to be non-existent during a recent verification exercise, and thus, deleted from the list. Another 2174 so-called Registered Unrecognised Political Parties (RUPPs), which failed to submit contribution reports, will be recommended for consequential action by the Department of Revenue. The same recommendation has been made for three parties that were indulging in various serious financial improprieties. [The Economic Times]

This massive clean-up comes days after Rajiv Kumar was appointed the chief election commissioner on May 15. After taking charge as the secretary of the financial services, he directed the banks to flag all the shell companies deregistered by Registrars of companies and take the necessary actions against them.

Since 2001, there has been a rise of over 300 percent in RUPPs. [The Hindu]

India: Murder of popular singer sparks political storm in Punjab state

(rk/lm) The murder of a popular rapper, Shubhdeep Singh Sidhu, has sparked outrage in India's northern Punjab state, with opposition leaders criticizing the government and police. [The Guardian] [The Times of India]

Sidhu, better known by his stage name Sidhu Moose Wala, was killed on May 29 while driving his car, a day after the state's government had withdrawn or scaled back security cover for more than 400 individuals in an attempt to clamp down on so-called VIP culture. The initial investigation has revealed the killing to be an inter-gang rivalry, according to Punjab's top police official. But opposition leaders have questioned why the singer's security cover was scaled back. [BBC]

The killing has come as the latest setback for Punjab's ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which swept 66 of the 69 assembly seats in the elections held earlier this year. The AAP was already facing strong criticism after a recent rocket-propelled grenade attack on the headquarters of the intelligence wing of Punjab's state police by pro-Khalistan militants. [The Indian Express]

Against this backdrop, Punjab's Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann has ordered an inquiry - led by a high court judge - into the incident.

India: Trial begins after 5 years in journalist's killing case

(rk) Five years after the killing of Gauri Lankesh, a journalist from India's southern state of Karnataka known for her critical views on the rise of right-wing Hindu extremism, the trial in the case has begun in a special court of the state's capital, Bangalore. [The Indian Express]

Lankesh, a high-profile journalist and activist, was killed in 2017. Seventeen of the 18 accused, including the alleged mastermind, will face trial; the eighteenth accused is absconding. Most of the suspects are allegedly linked to the Hindu Right-wing organization Sanatan Sanstha, which has denied any involvement.

The court will hear the case on a day to day basis for a week every month as per the convenience of the parties. The next session of the trial will be held between July 4 and July 8.

India: Floods kill at least 30 in northeastern Assam state, displace thousands

(sr/lm) Heavy floods and landslides triggered by pre-monsoon rains in India's northeastern state of Assam have killed at least 30 people and affected approximately one million residents. Heavy monsoons are a yearly occurrence in Assam, resulting in flooding and landslides. The Brahmaputra River, one of the largest rivers in the world which flows from Tibet to India and finally into Bangladesh, burst its banks in the state. [Al Jazeera] [NDTV]

India: Peace efforts in northeastern Nagaland stall as extremists stay rigid on separate flag

(rk) Seven years after India's central government signed an agreement with separatist factions of the northeastern state of Nagaland, talks have stalled over the demand of having a sovereign flag by the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (IM) - the largest of the Naga factions.

While the center is agreeable that the state could have a separate flag for cultural purposes, the separatist faction considers the flag a "symbol of Naga political identity" which is "non-negotiable." [The Hindu]

Naga is an ethnic group living in the northeastern parts of India and the northwestern parts of the neighboring Myanmar. While various militant factions were earlier fighting for a sovereign Naga state, the central government signed an agreement with the extremists in 2015 that included the promise of giving some autonomy to the region. Now, different interpretations of "autonomy" are creating a rift between the two parties. [Deccan Herald]

Along with a flag, the Naga groups want a separate constitution and autonomy in internal matters of the region, like what the then northern state of Jammu and Kashmir had before its special status was revoked by the center in 2019. However, after 2019, the Bharatiya Janata Party led central government cannot afford to agree to such demands that could have big political fallouts for the party. [The Indian Express]

In December of last year, massive protests were held in neighboring Manipur state to demonstrate against a botched security operation that left 14 civilians dead in Nagaland state [see AiR No. 50, December/2021, 2]. Protesters were also demanding the repeal of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, a federal law that gives the army sweeping powers, including protection from prosecution for soldiers who mistakenly kill civilians.

India: Situation in Kashmir Valley volatile after court sentences separatist leader to life in prison

(rk) The security situation in Indian-administered Kashmir has turned volatile after a court sentenced a former militant and campaigner for Kashmir independence to life imprisonment on terrorism charges. [France24]

On May 25, a special court in New Delhi convicted Yasin Malik, who had spent years in prison and had been in custody since 2019, of terrorism and funding acts of terror. The National Investigation Agency, India's top anti-terrorism investigation body, had asked that Malik be given the death sentence, but the court instead sentenced him to life under a section of the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act. [CNN] [The Indian Express 1] [The Indian Express 2]

Following the order, protests erupted in Kashmir's main city of Srinagar, where police arrested ten youths for raising "anti national slogans" and stone pelting. Moreover, ten suspected rebels were killed in three separate incidents in the disputed territory, while the rebels shot dead a TV presenter and a police officer. [Al Jazeera]

India: Head of citizenship check in Assam state alleges intentional shortcomings by predecessor

(rk) The incumbent coordinator of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in India's northeastern Assam state has filed a police complaint against his predecessor for allegedly avoiding re-verification of nearly 65,000 persons, calling it "treason" and a threat to national security.

Created in 1951, the NRC is a list of people who can prove they came to Assam by March 24, 1971 – the day before neighboring Bangladesh declared independence from Pakistan. In 2019, the register was updated for the first time, resulting in the exclusion of nearly 2 million residents of the state. But the exercise is yet to officially be declared as concluded by the Registrar General.

The Bharatiya Janata Party - which is ruling at the center as well as in the state and was among the leading groups demanding the exercise – has raised questions over its credibility. Political experts say the party had earlier thought that a large number of Muslim immigrants would be left out of the list, favorable for its Hindutva politics. But now it feels that more Hindus have been excluded and wants their inclusion while an exclusion of more Muslims. [The Hindu]

India: Power ministry seeks 2-year extension of deadline for cutting emissions

(rk) In what could be a major blow to India's commitment for clean air, its power ministry has expressed inability in installing emission-cutting equipment in the country's thermal power plants by 2025, and thus, has sought a two-years extension. [The Straits Times]

India had initially set a 2017 deadline for thermal power plants to install so-called flue gas desulphurization (FGD) units that cut emissions of sulfur dioxide. That was later changed to varying deadlines for different regions, ending in 2022, and further extended last year to a period ending 2025. Justifying the latest extension request, the ministry has cited higher costs, a lack of funds, COVID-19-related delays and the geopolitical tension with neighboring China, which has restricted trade.

At present, 75 percent of India's power needs are met by thermal power plants, which account for 80 percent of industrial emissions of sulfur and nitrous oxides, gases responsible for lung diseases, acid rain and smog. In light of this, in a letter dated May 26 and sent

to energy departments of state and central government, the power ministry said it was planning to reduce power generation from 81 thermal coal-fired plants over the next four years. [S&P Global]

India: Prime Minister Modi inaugurates country's largest drone festival in New Delhi

(sr/lm) Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the country's biggest drone festival in the capital, New Delhi, on May 27, calling it a "game-changer" in the agriculture sector and pointing out the need for drones to improve last-minute healthcare delivery. The two-day event, which concluded on May 28, was also attended by many high-level government officials, including the ministers for civil aviation, health, railway, environment, and rural development. [The Hindu] [The Indian Express]

In August of last year, India's government notified the Drone Rules to liberalize the stringent regime for civilian drone operations established in 2018. The rules were further amended this February to make it easier for people to fly small drones legally for non-commercial purposes.

Nepal: Petition filed with Supreme Court challenging one year statute of limitations for rape

(vd) Activists in Nepal have taken to the streets to demand the removal of a statute of limitations on cases of rape and other sexual violence after a survivor on May 18 through social media made public the allegations of rape that was committed eight years ago, when she was 16 years old. Other women have since come forward and shared their own stories of being assaulted, some when they were children, many saying they faced blackmail.

Under the 2017 Penal Code of Nepal, complaints of rape must be filed within one year from the date of the commission of crime. The statute of limitation is further reduced to three months when the offense is committed against a person held in detention, taken into control, kidnapped, or taken hostage. International human rights watchdogs allege that the length of limitation fails to take into account the stigma that women and girls face when reporting cases of

sexual and gender-based violence and prevents them from accessing legal remedy.[Amnesty International]

Following the latest revelations, female lawyers filed a petition with the Supreme Court on May 25 arguing that the statute of limitations violates constitutional rights that guarantee a right to justice for victims of crime, and are meant to ensure that all acts of sexual violence are punishable by law. [The Kathmandu Post]

As a result of the pressure from the protests and in light of one-year limitation, the police arrested the alleged perpetrator on 21 May under Human Trafficking and Transportation (Control) Act, 2007.

In related developments, the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Committee ruled on May 23 that Nepal must thoroughly investigate the 2004 torture, rape and execution of a 16-year-old girl by security forces during the country's civil war. The Committee also criticized the lack of an effective remedy for her parents. [UN News]

Pakistan: Ex-Prime Minister Imran Khan issues election ultimatum after disbanding protest march

(ha/fq) Pakistan's ousted Prime Minister Imran Khan disbanded a protest march by supporters on May 26 after a series of clashes with law enforcement outside parliament the previous evening, but threatened that they would return unless an early election was called within six days. [Al Jazeera] [Reuters]

Khan was at the helm of Pakistan's government for over three and half years before he was ousted by a no-confidence vote in Parliament last month. Following his dismissal, he and his followers have held several rallies across the country in the hope of bringing down a fragile coalition government and forcing early elections. [AiR No. 15, April/2022, 2]

Against this backdrop, the government of Khan's successor, Shahbaz Sharif, last week banned a long march towards the capital Islamabad and warned Khan he could face arrest if he went ahead with the demonstrations. A day before the ban was announced on May 24, a policeman was killed during a raid on the home of a worker of Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party in Lahore [see AiR No. 21, May/2022, 4]. In light of this, the PTI accused authorities of arresting and detaining hundreds of its supporters in raids overnight, while the government and police said some

protesters planned to join the march with weapons. [Deutsche Welle]

Throughout the following day, clashes were reported in different cities across Pakistan, leaving dozens of protestors and policemen injured. Security forces fired tear gas on the supporters of PTI supporters who were trying to remove roadblocks on the highways leading to Islamabad, Lahore and Faizabad. Khan claimed that five of his supporters were killed – a claim that officials have not commented on.

The same day, the country's Supreme Court ruled that the rally could go ahead — but only at a specifically allocated public grounds and on condition the demonstrators disperse after an address by the former prime minister. The court also asked Khan's lawyer to ensure that the rally remains peaceful. Pakistan's administration, in turn, ordered sufficient army troops into Islamabad to protect important government buildings. [Bloomberg, $] [Radio Pakistan] [TIME, $]

But on May 26, Khan abruptly changed course: He announced that he would leave Islamabad but would return in six days if the government didn't agree to early polls. The about-face has left some observers believing that some negotiations might be taking place with the government that may indeed lead to early elections. [Foreign Policy, $]

On May 27, the chief minister from the Gilgit-Baltistan territory, along with his security chief and 50 police personnel, was booked for rioting and disturbing public order in Islamabad. The chief minister, a PTI lawmaker, led a convoy for the long march from Gilgit-Baltistan and has been accused of opening fire on the policemen.

In another related development, the Islamabad Police registered a case against 150 senior leaders of PTI, including Chairman Imran Khan, Asad Umar and Imran Ismail for the riots in Islamabad. Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah also announced to take legal action against Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Mahmood Khan and other government officials of KP who participated in the long march. [The News]

Pakistan: Parliament approves bill to bar overseas citizens from voting, stop use of EVMs

(ha) The lower house of Pakistan's parliament passed on May 26 the Elections (Amendment) Bill, disallowing the use of electronic voting machines (EVMs) and

baring overseas Pakistanis from voting in the next general elections.

In November of last year, the government of then Prime Minister Imran Khan bulldozed legislation in joint session Parliament, getting 33 laws approved, including the Elections (Second Amendment) Bill, which introduced the use of EVMs and granting voting rights to overseas Pakistanis, among other things [see AiR No. 47, November/2021, 4]. At that time, the legislation was vehemently opposed by a strong opposition, which called the policy an attempt to rig the next elections.

Speaking against this backdrop, Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar last week claimed that the Amendment Bill sought to revive the Elections Act in the shape prior to last year's amendments to "ensure free, fair, and transparent elections". He further dispelled the impression that the amendments were aimed at depriving overseas Pakistanis – many of whom are supporters of the former prime minister – their right to vote, adding that parliament was not against the use of technology, but had concerns regarding its misuse. [Dawn]

Separately, the law minister also introduced a bill that seeks to amend the National Accountability Ordinance to prevent the misuse of law and the victimization of political rivals. The bill limits the powers of the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), removing federal and provincial tax matters from its domain as well as financial irregularities in any development project. In addition, the NAB would also not be able to take action on any regulatory body's decisions and would be bound to ensure the availability of evidence prior to arrest. The punishment for filing a false reference would be up to five-year imprisonment. [Daily Times] [The Express Tribune]

Pakistan: Supreme Court dismisses contempt of court case against former Prime Minister Khan

(fq) Pakistan's Supreme Court on May 26 dismissed a contempt of court plea against the country's ousted Prime Minister Imran Khan over his alleged violation of the apex court's order during a major protest march towards the capital, Islamabad. [Daily Times]

On May 25, the Supreme Court ruled that the major rally to demand the removal of the government and immediate general elections could go ahead — but only at a specifically allocated public grounds and on

condition the demonstrators disperse after an address by the former prime minister. The court also asked Khan's lawyer to ensure that the rally remains peaceful.

But the following day, Khan directed his followers to gather in an area inside Islamabad's Red Zone, which houses important government buildings, among others. It was against this backdrop that the government filed the plea with the Supreme Court.

However, the Court observed that Pakistani citizens have the right to move and assemble anywhere within the country under Article 15, 16 and 17 of the Constitution of Pakistan, and warned authorities against any illegal arrests and raids. The Court noted that the former prime minister may have been "misinformed" about its orders. [The News]

Pakistan: President approves appointment of new governor of Punjab Province

(fq) Pakistan's President Arif Alvi approved on May 30 the appointment of Muhammad Baligh Ur Rehman as the new govenor of Punjab Province. Earlier this month, the president had rejected the appointment summary sent by Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif twice and urged the premier to reconsider his advice as there was no occasion to propose a new appointment. [Geo News]

Rehman's predecessor Omar Sarfaraz Cheema was appointed as governor of Punjab just days before then Prime Minister Imran Khan was ousted by the opposition through a parliamentary no-confidence vote [see AiR No. 15, April/2022, 2]. He was finally de-notified on May 9 [see AiR No. 20, May/2022, 3]. [Dawn]

Pakistan: Local government polls in Balochistan province, marred by violence

(fq) Elections for local bodies in 32 out of 34 districts in Pakistan's southwestern Balochistan Province were held on May 29, marred by violence between rival parties that killed one person and injured dozen others. Polls in the other two districts of Quetta and Lasbela were not held due to problems of delimitation and ward formation. [The Express Tribune]

By the end of the day, independent candidates had won more than 1,000 seats in municipal corporations, municipal committees and union councils. The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party of ousted Prime Minister Imran Khan had secured tens seats, while the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz of his successor, Shehbaz Sharif, had secured six seats.

Pakistan: Government hikes fuel prices to meet IMF loan conditions, but seeks to renegotiate agreement

(fq/lm) Pakistan's government announced a hike in local fuel prices on May 26 to meet a key benchmark for the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to resume a long-stalled bailout program. The decision came a day after the two sides ended week-long talks without reaching an agreement to revive the stalled loan. [Al Jazeera] [The Express Tribune]

Officials are in talks with the IMF to resume lending under a USD 6 billion loan program agreed in 2019 but in limbo since a dispute with former Prime Minister Khan's government over energy subsidies [see AiR No. 6, February/2022, 2]. Khan's successor Shehbaz Sharif, who took office in April, had banned luxury imports and the central bank raised borrowing costs more than expected in May to deal with all-time high imports [see AiR No. 21, May/2022, 4].

Pakistan is struggling with a shortage of foreign reserves that has prompted some analysts to warn that the country is at risk of defaulting on its foreign debts. In fact, Finance Minister Miftah Ismail said on May 28 that the government was unable to secure funding from the global bond market and commercial banks, making it even more important to secure an agreement with the IMF. [Bloomberg, $]

Islamabad is seeking to secure a staff-level agreement with the IMF by mid-June, as it requires about USD 36 billion to USD 37 billion in financing for the fiscal year starting this month. However, Islamabad also hopes to renegotiate the deal in response to the surge in global food and fuel prices, according to Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari.[CNA] [Financial Times, $]

Pakistan: Rights activist, daughter of former minister gets preemptive bail in army defamation case

(ha) A Pakistani women's rights activist and the daughter of a former human rights minister, Iman Mazari, was granted preemptive bail on May 27 in a move that protects her from arrest after the army accused her of using derogatory and hateful remarks against General Qamar Javed Bajwa, the country's military chief. [Dawn] [The Washington Post, $]

The army made an official complaint with the police after Mazari publicly lashed out at the army chief, accusing him of being behind her mother Shireen Mazari's arrest on May 21. Shireen, who served as a human rights minister in the Cabinet of ousted Prime Minister Imran Khan, was detained over a land-grabbing allegation from decades ago. She was released hours later, after a court decided she was arrested in violation of a law stipulating that no lawmaker can be detained without permission from the parliament speaker [see AiR No. 21, May/2022, 4].

Pakistan: Sixth case of polio reported in North Waziristan District

(ha) Health officials in Pakistan have confirmed two new polio cases in the country on May 27, bringing the total number of confirmed cases in the current year to six. All children confirmed with polio cases belong to North Waziristan, an area notorious for high vaccination refusal rates and instances of fake finger-marking without administering vaccine during campaigns. [Gulf News] [The Express Tribune]

In light of the recent developments, Health Minister Abdul Qadir Patel urged the people to vaccinate their children in order to protect their futures. According to health officials, the Pakistan Polio Program has started conducting emergency campaigns to administer vaccination to all the children in the area. The only two endemic countries in the world, Pakistan and Afghanistan, synchronized immunization campaigns from May 23 to May 27, in order to vaccinate millions of children on both sides of the border [see AiR No. 20, May/2022, 3].

Sri Lanka: Prime Minister offers olive branch to protesters

(lm) Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said on May 29 that protesting youth groups will be invited to be part of governance under political reforms he is proposing to solve the country's political

rage triggered by a worsening economic crisis. [Associated Press]

Wickremesinghe assumed office on May 12, days after his predecessor – President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's elder brother Mahinda — stepped down from the role following fighting between his supporters and anti-government demonstrators that killed nine people and wounded 300. [AiR No. 19, May/2022, 2]

In a televised statement to the nation, the premier said that the proposed constitutional reforms under the 21st Amendment sought to clip the powers of the president and strengthen those of Parliament. He also said that governance will be broad-based through parliamentary committees where lawmakers, youth and experts will work together. [The Hindu BusinessLine]

Wickremesinghe announced that five finance committees and ten oversight committees will be appointed, supplementing the three already existing committees on government finance. He further proposed to appoint four youth representatives to each of the 15 new committees. According to the proposal, one of the youth representatives will be appointed by the so-called "youth parliament" and the other three will come from protesting groups and other activist organizations. [Business Standard]

Setting up new broad-based parliamentary committees apparently can be done under the current constitution, but broader reforms such as reducing presidential powers would need approval of the Supreme Court and a two-thirds parliamentary majority. Notably, a proposal pertaining to the 21st Amendment was not presented to Cabinet on May 24 after lawmakers of the Sri Lanka Podu Jana Peramuna (SLPP) party run by the Rajapaksa brothers objected. [AiR No. 21, May/2022, 4]

But observers doubt that the political reforms proposed by Prime Minister Wickremesinghe will be able to appease protesters, who held a major rally in the capital Colombo on May 28 to mark the 50th day of demonstrations against the government. Police used tear gas and water cannons as the protesters tried to approach the president's office. They broke up the rally and briefly detained three people before releasing them.

Notably, some experts argue that the protests have managed to unite Sri Lankans across ethnic and religious divisions, as many people – particularly the youth – have lost faith in political parties, both ruling and opposition ones. [Deutsche Welle] [The Hindu]

Sri Lanka's prime minister takes over finance portfolio, says China will help weather financial crisis

(cm/lm) Ranil Wickremesinghe, who was appointed Sri Lanka's prime minister last month, will hold dual charge as finance minister and will lead talks with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the president's office announced on May 25.

Prior to Wickremesinghe's appointment, the critical finance portfolio had remained vacant following the resignation of former Finance Minister Ali Sabry in early May. His resignation was part of the Cabinet dissolution that followed the resignation of the former prime minister and elder brother of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's, Mahinda [see AiR No. 19, May/2022, 2].

Notably, the appointment follows two-week wrangling between coalition partners. An official involved with the negotiations said that the Sri Lanka Podu Jana Peramuna (SLPP) party run by the Rajapaksa brothers wanted the portfolio. But the premier – who had an IMF program in 2016 during one of his previous tenures as prime minister – insisted that he wanted to lead the country out of the economic crisis. [The Straits Times]

The day before his swearing in, in an interview with *Reuters* on May 24, Wickremesinghe laid out his immediate plans for the economy, including presenting an interim budget within six weeks that will slash government expenditure "to the bone" and reroute funds into a two-year relief program. The Sri Lankan leader also said he hoped for a "sustainable loan package" from the IMF while undertaking structural reforms that would draw new investments into the country. [Reuters]

In related developments, Wickremesinghe told the *Financial Times* that China has offered "a few hundred million dollars" in lending to Sri Lanka to help alleviate a shortage of essential goods in the crisis-hit country. Wickremesinghe also said he hoped to finalize the Chinese loan, but added that he would only approach Beijing and other creditors for restructuring talks once an IMF deal has been agreed. China had previously refused a request by Colombo to renegotiate the existing debts – which total about USD 3.5 billion – and instead offered to provide aid and additional loans [see AiR No. 18, May/2022, 1]. [Financial Times]

Meanwhile, the World Bank told Sri Lanka that it would disburse USD 700 million by repurposing already committed projects. The Washington-based lender had announced earlier last week that it was not planning to provide any new financing to Colombo until an adequate economic policy framework has been put in place. [The Hindu BusinessLine]

Constitutional Law and –Politics, Human Rights and National Security in Southeast Asia

Cambodia: Political parties called to run a fair and respectful electoral campaign

(pw) Cambodia has had a "trouble-free" election campaign period so far, according to the National Election Committee (NEC). The country will hold the commune elections on June 5.

Although the electoral campaign, from May 19 to date, has not witnessed any major incident, the NEC renewed its appeal to all political parties to carry out fair and respectful propaganda after the committee received 18 electoral complaints during this period. The ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP) reportedly filed the majority of these complaints, one of which accused the main opposition Candlelight Party (CP) of infringing election laws by utilizing disrespectful language and encouraging attacks against its competitors.

Moreover, in a letter, the Interior Minister alleged that the CP had illegally appointed one of its vice-presidents, who has been barred from politics due to

his former ties to the disbanded opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party. The vice-president viewed this issue as a clerical matter and currently plans to address the Minister's claims.

Meanwhile, responding to the CPP's claims, the CP denied any breach of electoral regulations. It also mentioned that the party's posters in the capital Siem Reap had been torn down alleging that the local authorities were favoring the CPP. The party plans to file a petition to the NEC on this matter.

Additionally, it was reported that a CP candidate had been attacked by two assailants in the Oddar Meanchey province. The candidate believed that the assault was conducted to force her into ending her candidacy. She was unwilling to file complaints on the matter due to her perception that the authorities would not assist her. The district police leader did not believe that there were political motives behind this incident and reaffirmed his political neutrality.

In the past, the Cambodian authorities have been alleged to undertake several measures to suppress opposition parties, including the CP. Some of these methods include arbitrary detention, intimidation, and physical assaults, alongside the removal of opposition candidates from the commune election candidate lists by the NEC. The CPP has regarded the CP's complaints on the matter to be a ploy to obfuscate the electoral situation. Additionally, it has asked those complaints to be sent to the NEC.

Meanwhile, the Cambodian government has granted textile workers a paid holiday between June 4–6, allowing them to cast their votes in the commune election. [AiR No. 20, May/2022, 3] [Khmer Times] [Radio Free Asia 1] [Radio Free Asia 2] [The Phnom Penh Post]

Cambodia: Former opposition leader attempts to absolve his alleged charges in a treason case

(pw) During the treason trial of Kem Sokha, the former leader of the disbanded opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party, he has replied to twelve questions relating to whether he had made any agreements or colluded with foreign organizations or powers to depose Prime Minister Hun Sen's government. According to one of his attorneys, Sokha's answers "vindicated" him from the prosecution's accusations. Also, Sokha showed a video purportedly substantiating his non-involvement in the alleged foreign plot.

According to the court, the questions mentioned above were redundant and outside of the trial chamber's scope of questions. It is expected that the court process will resume on June 1.

Sokha was apprehended in 2017 for his alleged role in the aforementioned conspiracy with foreign powers to overthrow Fun Sen's government. He has claimed that a video that supposedly incriminated him in this plot was distorted and falsified. Moreover, he has attempted to receive the court's authorization to receive medical treatment abroad after the Prime Minister himself gave his approval. [The Phnom Penh Post] [AiR No. 21, May/2022, 4]

Cambodia: Appeal Court refuses bail to opposition party founder in forgery case

(pw) On May 26, Seam Pluk, the founder of the opposition National Heart Party (NHP) arrested for purportedly utilizing forged thumbprints to have the party registered, has been denied bail by the Phnom Penh Municipal Court of Appeal over concerns about his potential escape and a potential impact of the bail on the court case. The court upheld the verdict of the lower judge charging Pluck with "forgery and the use of forged documents" under Articles 626, 627, and 628 of the Criminal Code. His lawyer announced the possibility of appealing the matter to the Supreme Court.

Rights groups have negatively received this move. One said that it would negatively affect the image of the country's political system, while the other viewed Pluk's apprehension as a breach of electoral rules.

In November 2021, following the allegations of alleged forgery of thumbprints with "bad intent," the Interior Ministry revoked the CNHP's registration. Pluk was then arrested in May. [The Phnom Penh Post] [AiR No. 20, May/2022, 3]

Cambodia: Local opposition leader summoned for questioning over incitement allegations

(pw) A Cambodia Provincial Court summoned the local head of the main opposition Candlelight Party (CP) for questioning over incitement allegations. The CP local leader was accused by the Governor of Pailin province of being a partisan and utilizing the provincial hall for

the party's interests. Following the allegations, the CP local head believed that the indictment and summons were intended to prevent him from participating in the commune election campaign season between May 21 to June 3.

If found guilty, he could be jailed for between six months to two years. [Khmer Times]

Cambodia: Opposition member might appeal to election committee over fine for alleged handouts to voters

(pw) Kong Raiya, a member of the main opposition Candlelight Party (CP), plans to appeal to the National Election Committee after the Kampong Cham Provincial Election Committee fined him approximately USD 1,232 for purportedly providing money to voters in eleven communes. The decision occurred after the ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP) submitted a complaint claiming that Raiya was giving out money to the voters for the June 5 commune elections. Raiya rejected the accusations and said he used USD 1,100 to help the CP's candidates in those eleven communes instead. Moreover, he regarded the CPP's actions as illegal, politically-motivated, and a form of intimidation.

The CPP was not available to make comments on this development. A rights group's executive director noted that if the accusations were true, then the local election committee should send a warning letter and seek guarantees in writing before proceeding to the mediation on this case. [Khmer Times]

Cambodia: Appeal Court upholds conviction of five rights group activists in bribery case

(pw) The Phnom Penh Court of Appeal has reaffirmed five-year jail sentences for three current and two former activists of the Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC), a local rights group. Except for Ny Chakrya, they have been indicted for allegedly bribing witnesses. Chakrya was charged with being an accomplice to the aforementioned charges. The authorities took them into custody in 2016. The court granted them bail in June 2017.

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (Observatory), a human rights action program, considered the charges made against the five

to be fabricated. Additionally, alongside the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, which viewed their detention as arbitrary. According to the Observatory, this case reflected the trend of judicial harassment against the ADHOC members. For example, Chakrya was jailed for six months and fined around USD 1,478 for "public defamation," "acts of slanderous denunciation," and "commentaries to put pressure on jurisdiction" after denouncing the alleged arbitrary incarceration of two villagers who were involved in land disputes in Siem Reap Province.

Moreover, the Observatory urged the Cambodian government to grant fair treatment to the five activists and ensure their immediate release with fair compensation. Also, it has called for an end to the harassment of the aforementioned five and other rights defenders while urging the Cambodian government to make sure that the rights defenders can freely and safely conduct their lawful work. [FIDH]

Cambodia: TV producer apprehended, indicted for claiming that local authorities took bribes

(pw) A Provincial Court has charged a TCN TV producer with "inciting to discriminate and public defamation" for reportedly accusing the law enforcement officers in Kandal province of accepting bribes from the local illegal gambling business owners. Also, it was purported that he claimed that local officials of the ruling Cambodian People's Party also received bribes. He was taken into custody on May 26. The provincial police dismissed the man's allegations and claimed that he was trying to smear the officials and stir up the people. If found guilty, he can be imprisoned for up to two years. [Khmer Times]

Indonesia: Indonesia's plan to create new provinces in Papua unviable, governor said

(dbk) The Indonesian Government's plan to create three new provinces in eastern Papua has been under-discussed and unviable, according to the region's governor.

With a population of 5.4 million, the people of Papua and West Papua would have to adapt to new borders and may not adequately fill the new provinces. Papua Governor Lukas Enembe said that the region did not

have enough resources to sustain new provinces and the inevitable “influx of people from outside Papua” if the plans were to go ahead. The proposed plans have also seen protests from the public, who assert that their opinion on the matter should also be considered.

Consistently placing within the lowest ranks in Indonesia on several economic and development indexes, the two provinces have relied on welfare funding since their establishment in 2003, and critics have blamed the government for its insufficient development and impoverishment.

Representatives of indigenous Papuans said that the plans are “a form of state violence that seeks to eradicate the lives of Papuans”. Other representatives have also voiced their opposition saying the proposal will not help the local population.

However, a senior Indonesian home affairs ministry official reiterated that the proposed provinces would provide improved public services and give better jobs to Papuans, ultimately inciting regional development. [Reuters]

Indonesia: Cabinet ministers arrive in Miangas Island to begin border development plan

(dbk) Two cabinet ministers visited Miangas Island, Indonesia’s northernmost regency, in an attempt to emphasize governmental inclusion in the region and to further the economic development of the border islands. One of the diplomats stated that the visit was “symbolically” showing the security of the government, warning “do not play with Indonesia’s borders”. He also said that the government was dedicated to the 2008 law on territorial regions which specified the development of these outlying regencies. This law, which also saw the creation of its own agency, was delegated around IDR 10.5 trillion (USD 720 million).

However, experts have highlighted that the problems that border areas face, like increased poverty and smuggling, need focused development and have sparked doubt about the government’s commitment. A lead Indonesia analyst at public policy advisory firm Global Counsel said that the North Sulawesi administration needs its own priority programs that focus on improving communication, infrastructure, access to clean water, and helping businesses. He said that the outlying islands all have issues that are unique from each other. [The Jakarta Post]

Indonesia: Appointment of military official as interim regent creates splitting backlash

(dbk) President Joko Widodo's government has faced widespread backlash after a senior Indonesian military official was appointed as interim regent in Maluku, where he will hold the place of the exiting regent until the 2024 election. The criticism primarily surrounds concerns over "hidden agendas" and non-transparent processes by the government which supposedly contradicts the new regulation specifying accountable practices that were ruled by the Constitutional Court in April.

Civil groups have called for the revoking of his appointment, and for the Home Ministry to avoid appointing Military and police officers as it is "against democratic principles". Multiple provinces, including Southeast Sulawesi and North Maluku, initially refused to accept the interim regents as they did not come from their list of proposed names. All interim regents have since been accepted.

Despite the wave of disapproval, the government has stressed that the senior military official's appointment is not in violation of any regulations or laws. While the 2016 Regional Elections Law does ban these personnel from running for regent, it does not forbid them from being placed as an interim, according to the government. [The Jakarta Post]

Indonesia: Five military officers detained, 10 named as suspects in modern slavery case

(dbk) Five army personnel have been detained by the Indonesian authorities after being allegedly involved in a modern slavery case in North Sumatra in 2012. Currently, the armed forces are running investigations on a total of 10 suspects and any other person who might have been involved in the case. [Antara News]

The case came to light in January when the National Commission on Human Rights announced that two iron cages holding around 60 people had been found. The victims, mostly male, were allegedly forced to work on a palm oil plantation. Since 2012, two domestic iron-barred prison cells built in the house have reportedly accommodated between 2,000-3,000 palm oil plantation workers.

In early February, Terbit Rencana Perangin-Angin, a district head in North Sumatra, who had previously been suspected of political corruption, was found guilty of modern slavery and was charged, in April, with murder, human trafficking resulting in serious injury or death, torture, false imprisonment, and group violence. [AiR No. 5, February/2022, 1] [The Jakarta Post]

Indonesia: Alleged correlation between online hearings and increased death penalty sparks widespread concerns

(dbk) Since early 2021, Indonesian courts condemned almost 100 people to death via virtual hearings due to Covid-19 restrictions. Amnesty International Indonesia (AII) reported that while the number of sentences in Indonesia had been increasing from 2018, it spiked in 2020 and stayed steady throughout 2021. Moreover, AII, along with other rights groups reported that handing out death penalties in virtual hearings is a significant violation of the defendants' fair trial rights and "impinge on the quality of the defense."

Upon this, the head of the Center for Legal Information at the Attorney General's Office said that while he was unable to confirm the correlation due to a lack of proof, most bodies involved with the online hearings vocally preferred them to be in-person also claiming that reading body language during an online trial is increasingly difficult, and the tasks placed upon judges, prosecuting and defendants are tougher. But he added that court proceedings "cannot stop" so they persevered using rule-adhering methods.

While the direct correlation between the increasing number of death sentences and online hearings is still hypothetical and not yet proven, the Brennan Center for Justice in New York released research [Brenan Center for Justice] that showed defendants heard over an online hearing had considerably greater penalizations. It also found that 50 percent of the judges studied admitted to altering credibility assessments that were made during a video hearing after holding an in-person one.

Currently, hearings in Indonesia are in the process of transitioning back to completely offline status, and revisions of the Criminal Code will continue to look into downgrading the death penalty as a criminal charge. [The Jakarta Post] [Al Jazeera]

Indonesia: Government launches program on integrated waste management

(da) The Indonesian government launched a national program to create an integrated waste management system for 2.6 million people across the country by 2025. The project was developed in coordination with the Alliance to End Plastic Waste and the local government administration in Malang City.

The project aims to coordinate with local governments and work at a household level, sorting, processing, and recycling waste in Malang. With at least 3000 new jobs expected to be created, the construction of five Integrated Waste Processing Sites (TPST) and four Waste Transit Stations (SPA) is set to begin around June 2022.

Phase One of the program will cost the Alliance over IDR 400 billion (USD 29 million) but it is predicted that the result will see more than 50,000 tons of usually deposited plastic waste recycled, creating a recycling rate of around 60 percent. Community and school engagement programs will be initiated in 2023 to aid the efforts and improve recycling literacy. [Jakarta Globe]

Malaysia: Plantation industries and commodities minister to switch party

(tp) Datuk Zuraida Kamaruddin, a prominent Malaysian politician who served as a member of the cabinet for the Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (Bersatu), also known as the Malaysian United Indigenous Party, and as the minister of plantation industries and commodities, is now applying to join the Parti Bangsa Malaysia (PBM, or Malaysian Nation Party, originally based in Sarawak).

Datuk Zuraida is currently in Turkey and will return to Malaysia on June 2, when she will meet with the prime minister to discuss her resignation as a minister. Zuraida stated that her understanding of PBM's potential influenced her decision. Furthermore, she stated that she believes in the PBM's core principles, which include multiracial engagement, women and youth empowerment, and the advancement of education and technology. [malaymail] [The New Straits Times 1] [The New Straits Times 2]

PBM is regarded as a newly formed party. PBM was founded in 2012 as the Sarawak Workers Party before being rebranded to PBM in 2021. The party advocates

for the reformation of Malaysian politics, with a focus on the voices of women and the young, as well as the inclusion of Malaysians of all ethnicities. It should also be noted that the PBM is regarded as a ruling party supporter. [The Sun Daily]

As a result, an expert stated that her resignation as Bersatu's MP would significantly strengthen Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob's ruling party, the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO). The Bersatu and the UMNO used to work closely together in the federal government, but their ties have weakened over the year. Therefore, many experts believe they will form a separate coalition in the upcoming general election. [The South China Morning Post]

Malaysia: Ex-Sabah minister found guilty of falsifying the document

(tp) On May 27, a national court found Datuk Peter Anthony, who used to serve as the state minister of infrastructure development of Sabah and the founder of the Social Democratic Harmony party (KDM), guilty of forgery and sentenced him to 3 years in prison in addition to imposing a USD-11,419 fine against him. The court also stated that in case of failure to pay the fine, he would be sentenced to an additional 15 months in prison in accordance with Section 468 of the penal code which carries a penalty of up to 7 years in prison with a fine without a conviction for such violations.

The man allegedly falsified the documents for a 9-year system maintenance contract that his company was awarded at the Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS). He was charged after he was accused of forging a letter from the office of the UMS deputy vice-Chancellor and adding a fail statement for fraudulent purposes. This alleged action was carried out at the office of the prime minister’s principal private secretary back in 2014. [malaymail]

He stated that this development will not prevent him from engaging in further political activities, but rather will encourage him to strengthen Sabah's position in the country. Nonetheless, he stated that he respects the court's decision. [The Star]

Malaysia: Major oil plantation company attempts to regain its reputation

following allegations of worker mistreatment

(tp) The world's largest oil palm grower based in Malaysia is attempting to reverse the negative effects of alleged worker mistreatment. Following the discovery of mistreatment of workers on the plantation, such as forced labor and intimidation, the company, Sime Darby Plantation Berhad, was barred from exporting to the United States by the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agency.

The company is now attempting to repair its image in order to overturn the import ban and regain the trust of its American and European customers. In terms of improvement, the company increased internal control and continued on a development plan. With the same objective, the company also established an internal hotline for employees to report problems.

However, for many people, the progress is too slow. For example, Cargill, the world's largest food corporation, has banned all purchases from Sime Darby Plantation Berhad, citing a lack of transparency and how it addresses working conditions. Sime Darby Plantation Berhad, on the other hand, acknowledged the accusation and attempted to address it. [Aljazeera]

Myanmar: Military administration orders government to stop using foreign currencies

(cmsk) In its latest effort to curb exchange rate instability, Myanmar's central bank has ordered government ministries and agencies to stop using foreign currencies for domestic transactions. An increase in the demand for foreign currencies could lead to currency fluctuation, according to the country's central bank. The World Bank estimates that Myanmar's economy shrank by 18 percent in 2021 and projects it to only grow by one percent in 2022. The latest announcement follows last month's central bank order demanding that individuals immediately convert all foreign currencies into the local kyat. The present currency rate has stabilized from 2,200 to approximately 1,800 kyats per US dollar. The latest move may be taking Myanmar's economy back to the era under the old military rule, where western capitalism was combined with economic autarchy, according to an analyst. Moreover, even if the junta succeeds at stabilizing the currency, it will have little bearing on the regime's long-term survival. [The Diplomat]

Myanmar: Political party elects new leader and committee members disregarding military regime threats

(cmsk/bs) The Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD), a political party in Myanmar established in 1988 to support the Shan people, has elected its new leader and other 117 central committee members during a conference on May 26-27. The election came after the death of the party's former leader in April. During the conference, the SNLD has also agreed upon the future party's objectives and plans to maintain internal peace.

The meeting was held regardless of the threats from the Myanmar regime to suspend the party's activities for three years for allegedly violating budgetary regulations set up by the junta-controlled Union Election Commission. [Eleven Myanmar] [Myanmar Now]

Myanmar: Military regime arrests opposition figures under corruption and anti-terrorism law

(cmsk) A former regional chief minister, who was in office under the ousted National League for Democracy (NLD) government, received a new three-year prison sentence by a military court for allegedly violating Covid-19 regulations under the Natural Disaster Management Law bringing his prison term to a total of 24 years.

Detained since the 2021 coup, the former chief minister faces nine charges in total, including incitement, corruption, and the alleged violation of electoral laws. With the exception of the former Yangon Chief Minister, who spoke against former civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi in a corruption trial, all other ousted chief ministers under the NLD have been detained and are facing corruption charges with lengthy prison sentences. [The Irrawaddy]

A major business tycoon was also detained by the military authorities for his alleged involvement in corruption activities. The military regime's Anti-Corruption Commission announced that it has launched a corruption investigation against the tycoon, U Zin Min Aung, a major shareholder of Yangon Petrol (YP). Aung's arrest is reportedly linked to land acquisition. In 2019 as part of then Yangon chief

minister's plan to reduce fuel prices, the YP chain reportedly bought state land at low prices in exchange for selling fuel at lower prices. In the same light, the regime has also charged with corruption a number of ousted National League for Democracy members for their alleged links to Aung.[The Irrawaddy 1]

Moreover, the military authorities have been carrying out several arrests of anti-regime suspects. Between May 20 and 27, three people were charged under Section 49 (a) of the Counter-Terrorism Law for their alleged links with the anti-regime armed People's Defense Force (PDF), which the junta has labeled a terrorist organization. One man received a 10-year sentence in jail, while the other two detainees were sentenced to three years in prison. A total of 12 residents from four different townships in the Rakhine State have been detained and charged under the Counter-Terrorism Law for their alleged ties to the PDF. In August 2021, the country's Counterterrorism Law was amended by the State Administration Council's leader Min Aung Hlaing, imposing harsher penalties and increasing the prison term from three to seven years. [The Irrawaddy 2]

Myanmar: State Administration Council meets ethnic armed organizations

(cmsk/ny) The New Mon State Party (NMSP), an ethnic armed organization (EAO) in Myanmar, was widely criticized for holding talks with the military regime which, at the end of the meeting, agreed in principle to establish a federal democratic union and the adoption of a Mon State charter.

However, a junta-affiliated newspaper did not mention a charter for the state as part of the latest discussions. An analyst also remains skeptical of the junta's reported promises to the NMSP, saying that any charter for the state was unlikely, at least not until the 2024 general election. The analyst further added that securing greater autonomy for the state would be next to impossible under the 2008 military constitution which the junta said it will hold onto. But NSMP maintains that talks with the junta are both necessary and a pragmatic choice for the 1.1 million Mon people it claims to represent. [The Irrawaddy]

On the same occasion, the State Administration Council also met with the Karen National Liberation Army (Peace Council) (KNU/KNLA – PC), the EAO of the Karen National Union. Prime Minister Sr. Gen. Min Aung Hlaing's meeting with the KNU/KNLA-PC Chief

reportedly led to an undisclosed agreement between the two sides. [Eleven Myanmar]

Both NMSP and KNU/NLA-PC are parties to the 2018 Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA). The Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS), another EAO, is the only other NCA party that has held discussions as part of the junta's peace talks. [AiR No. 21, May/2022, 4]

Myanmar: Local resistance groups request arms from parallel government

(cmsk) Following last week's request by the parallel National Unity Government (NUG) for international arms assistance to support the resistance movement in Myanmar, four local groups under the NUG's armed wing, the People's Defense Force (PDF), are also requesting guns from the NUG administration.

The groups issued public statements claiming they were experiencing logistical difficulties and had insufficient weapons to fight national military forces. Large numbers of PDF fighters reportedly use homemade rifles as part of their fight against the junta. In response to the public requests, the NUG's Ministry of Defense announced its intentions to supply weapons to the local resistance groups while acknowledging the delays in arms supplies due to logistical challenges. Meanwhile, some other PDF groups have reportedly started raising their own funds, including selling tickets for future travelers with prices ranging from USD 100 to USD 300 [The Irrawaddy]

According to its defense secretary, the NUG at present can only arm 10 percent of its resistance forces. Also, the shadow government is reportedly producing its own weapons. [The Irrawaddy 1]

Myanmar: Reports of widespread massacres emerge as Sagaing Region sees worst violent attacks

(cmsk) The parallel National Unity Government (NUG) alleges that the military regime massacred almost 170 civilians since July 2021 across four regions in Myanmar, mostly in the northern Sagaing region. Victims reportedly include women and children. [The Irrawaddy]

Moreover, between April 1 and May 24, around 6,300 homes were allegedly torched by the military forces in Sagaing and in the central Magway Region. Regime forces reportedly used rocket-propelled grenade launchers, machine guns, mortars, and drone jammers in some of its attacks. Ten people including children were also allegedly taken as hostages by the military during fighting with local People's Defense Forces (PDF) in Sagaing's Myinmu Township. As a result of the violence, 15,000 people were reportedly displaced during the same period of time.

In May, about 10,000 civilians from Yesagyo Township in Magway were also displaced and at least 63 were killed during junta raids. Contemporarily, two other Myanmar nationals working for the Chinese mining company Yangtse Copper Co. Ltd. were also allegedly murdered by regime forces. One of the victims was striking against the company, which allegedly funds the junta through business partnerships. [Myanmar Now] [Radio Free Asia] [The Irrawaddy 1] [The Irrawaddy 2] [The Irrawaddy 3]

Furthermore, with tensions between the Arakan Army, an ethnic armed organization based in the western Rakhine State, and regime forces simmering for weeks and both sides publicly issuing warnings to each other, in late May, fighting between the two parties broke out with the military reportedly using heavy artillery. [Myanmar Now 1]

The junta forces also suffered a number of losses. For instance, the Karen National Liberation Army collaborated with local PDF fighters on the launch of simultaneous attacks on a police station and an army base killing one army sergeant. Meanwhile, fighting in Kayah and southern Shan states has killed about six resistance troops and 25 regime soldiers. [Myanmar Now 2] [The Irrawaddy 4]

Myanmar: Internally displaced people adversely impacted by heavy rains

(cmsk/ny) Rising water levels in the Thaungyin River/Moei River on the Myanmar-Thailand border have led to a large-scale evacuation of internally displaced people (IDP) camped along the river. The affected IDP camps host around 10,000 people.

According to a local human rights group, there could be as many as 20,000 civilians displaced by the recent fighting, with a majority of IDPs without access to aid due to the heavy military presence in the area. Between February 2021 and May 2, the number of

IDPs now stands at 936,700, according to the United Nations. Moreover, of 54 million people in Myanmar, about 14.4 million are in need of humanitarian assistance.[Myanmar Now] [Mizzima] [Eleven Myanmar]

The Philippines: Marcos Jr. presidential victory sparks widespread concerns

(bs) Widespread concerns in the Philippines sparked after the victory of Ferdinand Marcos Jr., son of the latest authoritarian dictator Marcos Sr., and Sara Duterte, daughter of President Rodrigo Duterte, on the May 9 presidential elections. Marcos Jr. is the elected president with 31.6 million votes, and Sara Duterte won the vice-presidential polls with a landslide.

The critics voiced their concerns over a repetition of history naming not only the two decades of martial law led by Marcos Sr. that ended in 1986 with a coup but also the Duterte's "war on drugs" and "red-tagging" that have been widely condemned for their extrajudicial killings and arbitrary arrests. Moreover, soon after the victory, Marcos called for a revision of history textbooks on his father's rule, calling that information lies.

However, regardless of the critics, Marcos Jr. has begun announcing the new administration's ministers. First of which was Benjamin Diokno, the current governor of Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), who will be the new finance minister and central bank governor. [Aljazeera] [Channel News Asia]

Marcos will take office on June 30. [ABC] [The Guardian]

During the six-year term of Duterte's presidency, it is estimated that there have been over 300,000 arrests and, according to human rights groups, around 30,000 deaths including deaths from anti-drug crackdowns by the authorities. Some of the shootings were allegedly carried out by vigilantes linked to law enforcement, also known as "death squads." The case was also brought before the International Criminal Court, which dropped it when the Duterte's government committed to open a national investigation on the extrajudicial killings kinked to both the war on drugs and the red-tagging campaign.

Moreover, Marcos Jr. himself has had previous experiences that added up to the general concern over his presidency. In 1997 the Supreme Court ordered the Marcos family to pay over USD 400 million in estate

tax, a fact that Marcos Jr. dismissed as “fake news.” More recently, a group of civic leaders filed a petition to the Supreme Court seeking to review the president-elect’s certificate of candidacy (COC) accusing the Commission of Elections (Comelec) to have acted with “grave abuse of discretion amounting to lack or excess of jurisdiction” by refusing to cancel Marcos Jr.’s COC in the multiple official requests to disqualify him from the presidential election. All the petitions sought Marcos’ disqualification for tax evasion. They alleged Marcos’ violation of Section 253 of the 1977 National Internal Revenue Code as he had yet to serve his sentence on tax payment ordered in 1995 for failing to file tax returns while being a public officer from 1982 to 1985. According to the law, “a government official who violates the tax code would be dismissed from the public service and perpetually disqualified from holding any public office, to vote and to participate in any election.” [AiR No. 21, May/2022, 4]

The Philippines: Former Comelec chairman appeals to supreme court in data breach case

(bs) The Court of Appeals upheld the ruling against former Commission on Elections (Comelec)’s chairman Andres Bautista over his alleged data breach of personal information of millions of voters in 2016. The court upheld the decision of the National Privacy Commission (NPC) which found Bautista guilty of violating the Republic Act 10173, also known as the "Data Privacy Act of 2012," and suggested pursuing a criminal procedure against him.

According to the NPC, there was an unauthorized spreading of data from the Comelec web server on March 23, 2016, with a government IP address. The event was followed by Bautista fleeing the country in November 2017, after resigning as Comelec chairman. He was then impeached by the House of Representatives under allegations of unexplained wealth and was under an arrest warrant released by the Senate.

Following the Court of Appeals’ decision, Bautista appealed to the Supreme Court. If found guilty, he could be imprisoned for three to six months and sentenced to pay a monetary fine. He would also be automatically disqualified from public office. [The Manila Times]

The Philippines: Court condemns mining company to pay victims of 1993 disaster

(bs) Activists and environmentalists rejoiced in a Filipino court decision to condemn a mining company to pay USD 5,734 of damages to each of the 30 people who were harshly affected by the 1993 worst mining disaster in the country which was caused by a dam burst.

Residents of the affected area filed a case to a national court seeking compensation for the damage they suffered when the dam burst submerged the community and destroyed fields and livelihoods. [South China Morning Post]

The Philippines: Project to combat wildlife trafficking launched

(bs) The environmental team of the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has launched a project to combat wildlife trafficking in the Philippines. The toolkit will work on the country's criminal justice system and wildlife trafficking preventive mechanisms. It also provides the country with recommendations for effective long-term action to combat such a crime.

Reports show that the Philippines is a key location for the illegal wildlife trade in Southeast Asia. According to the Asian Development Bank, the government loses up to USD 9.5 billion a year due to illicit trade, especially of Palawan pangolin, Palawan hill mynah, and Tokay gecko. [PhilStar]

The Philippines: More displaced people amidst local militias fighting in southernmost region

(bs) Two bombs exploded at a bus station in the southern Philippines on May 26 injuring two people. The police believe that the attack was allegedly carried out by the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), a group that has pledged allegiance to the Islamic State. However, the group has not claimed responsibility for the attack.

The bombing happened only a few days after a BIFF leader and other members of the group were injured in an air assault in Maguindanao by the military, which displaced over 1,000 locals. [Bernar News]

Contemporarily, in the same region, the national authorities killed a member of the Dawlah Islamiya (DI), a name used by the Philippines to indicate the various Islamic State-affiliated groups in the country. [The Manila Times]

The Philippines counts over 119,000 displaced people due to ongoing fighting with local militias, according to the latest founding by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

Al of May 2022, 3,300 of them are Internally Displaced Persons in Maguindanao province only, according to a government report. [ReliefWeb]

Singapore: Appeal Court overturns conviction in drug trafficking case

(bs) On May 27, the Court of Appeal in Singapore acquitted two people who were sentenced for drug trafficking. One of the men was originally sentenced to death. The court overturned their conviction by accepting the defense appeal claiming that the men were mistakenly delivering the drugs.

The men were convicted in a drug trafficking case by the High Court in June 2020 for allegedly driving into Singapore a bag of drugs containing around 1.875kg of cannabis in September 2015.

The men argued that they did not know the nature of the drugs and were merely transporting it from Malaysia being allegedly told that they were carrying four bags of chemically sprayed tobacco. [The Straits Times]

Thailand: Draft Budget Law under scrutiny amidst political party, government potential dissolution

(sw/bs) A Draft Budget Bill for the fiscal year 2023 has been distributed to members of parliament and the draft bill will be considered from May 31 to June 2. [Daily News, in Thai]

The first reading is expected to provide clearer hints on what will be the future of Prime Minister (PM) Prayut Chan-o-cha in Thai politics as a number of minor opposition parties and the prominent opposition Setthakij Thai Party (Thai Economic Party) voiced contradictory concerns over Prayut's administration. In

fact, in case of failure to clear the 2023 budget in the first reading, PM Prayut will face increasing pressure to resign and, if the bill is rejected, to dissolve the House of Representatives. [Bangkok Post]

Major concerns regard the stance of the Setthakij Thai Party as 15 of its members, including its secretary-general Thamanat Prompow resigned on May 24 after the latter voiced his opposition to Prayut's government, which led to a split with the party leader Wit Devahastin na Ayudhya. Following the debate, Gen. Wit refused to depose as a party head causing Thamanat to leave the party. However, the party's board was automatically dissolved once the majority of its members resigned. The board dissolution also means that Gen. Wit is consequently removed as party leader until the group meets in a general meeting for the selection of a new executive board within 45 days. [Bangkok Post 1] [Bangkok Post 2]

Meanwhile, the Move Forward Party, another prominent opposition party, has made the Draft Budget Law available online and has hosted a 'Hackathon' event to invite citizens to help scrutinize the law. [Bangkok Biz, in Thai][Matichon, in Thai]

Thailand: Gubernatorial election results delays over irregularities complaints

(bs) Following the numerous petitions to the Election Commission, the final results of the May 22 gubernatorial election in Bangkok is facing further delay. Although the commission is facing pressure over the endorsement process, under the election laws, it can take up to 30 days to declare the official poll results. The deadline can be extended to up to 60 days in case the commission is handling irregularities or complaints against a candidate.

Being that the case, the Commission is currently investigating several complaints over alleged irregularities in the poll count and against the governor-elect, who is accused to have bought votes.

On May 22, former Transport Minister and member of the opposition Pheu Thai Party (PTP) Chadchart Sittipunt secured himself a landslide victory in the Bangkok gubernatorial elections with 1.37 million votes according to unofficial results released by the Election Commission right after the polls. [Bangkok Post]

Thailand: Activist detained under royal defamation law granted provisional release

(sw) The Thai Criminal Court granted 30 days of provisional release to Tantawan "Tawan" Tuatulanon, an activist for monarchic reforms who has been charged under Article 112 of the Thai Penal Code, also known as royal defamation law or lese-majeste. She had gone on a hunger strike during her detention but received medical attention at the hospital upon her release. [AiR No. 21, May/2022, 4] However, her release is subject to strict conditions which include the prohibition from leaving her house and wearing an electronic tag.

The activist was arrested on March 5 after she gathered with other activists on February 8 asking people's opinions on royal motorcades. While in detention, she went on a hunger strike for about one month. [Bangkok Post]

Thailand: Opposition parties side with protestors against draft law on non-profit organizations

(sw/bs) Several opposition parties have joined the protest of activists and civil society against the draft law on non-profit organizations (NPOs). Among the parties that joined the call, there are Pheu Thai Party, the Move Forward Party, and the Thai Sang Thai Party.

While the Pheu Thai Party has voiced its concerns in parliament by asking it to reconsider the bill as it would "curb freedom of expression," the Move Forward and Thai Sang Thai parties have ensured the protestors that they will oppose the draft law. [Prachatai, in Thai]

The draft law on NPOs was approved in principle by the cabinet on January 4. Since then, rights groups, activists, and civil society pushed for its abolishment starting by filing a letter to Prime Minister Prayut and the government. The new draft law would allegedly increase government control over public gatherings and NPO. According to its opposers, the law could be used as a "weapon" to crackdown on people's freedom of expression as it requires NPOs to disclose their mission statement and their sources of funding. It also forbids them to undertake, promote, or participate in activities that may threaten or disrupt "national security and harmony and the well-being of other people." Any violation will cause suspension of the

activities and liability under criminal law. Under the law, non-profit organizations will be juristic entities.

Further protests against the draft law sparked on May 23, when a group of non-profit organizations rallied in front of the United Nations headquarters in Bangkok. [AiR No. 21, May/2022, 4] [Bangkok Post]

Thailand: Peace talks not halted after another bomb attack in 'deep south'

(bs) The Thai authorities condemned a group of suspect smugglers and drug and human traffickers as responsible for an attack on a marine police station in the southern Narathiwat province. On May 25, the group allegedly used pipe bombs and automatic guns and scattered spikes on the road at the marine police station in Narathiwat in an attempt to block the police. The attack injured three people. [Bangkok Post]

Although the region has been long affected by ongoing violence, the government has not halted its effort to negotiate peace with armed militants by cooperating with Malay authorities. During a visit to Thailand, on May 26, the Malaysian Defense Minister reiterated his country's commitment to supporting Thailand in holding peace talks with insurgent groups in the deep south of the country as the regions affected are all bordering Malaysia.

During the visit, the parties also discussed strengthening border security and cooperation and partnering in combatting transnational crime. [Bangkok Post 1]

Vietnam: New law amendment facilitates foreign investments in energy and electricity

(ntan) The latest amendments to the 2004 Law on Electricity in Vietnam are expected to facilitate foreign investment in the country's electricity sector. Experts have foreseen an increase in power consumption in Vietnam by 10-12 percent each year to 2030.

Vietnam passed the amendment law on public investments, Law No. 03/2022/QH15, in January 2022, which came into effect on March 1. The new reforms allow private investors to build, manage, and operate electrical grids without being directly controlled by the state. The role of the state is however maintained over

construction operations, and it consists of management of the national power grid system and the construction of major electricity plants that are particularly important for the national socio-economic status and its defense and security.

Thanks to this amendment, foreign entities are allowed to invest in the sector and contribute to its development by working on infrastructure and adopting renewable technologies. However, compliance regulations remain strict. Foreign investors will be required to have clear strategic plans before investing in the country's electrical grid. [ASEAN Briefing]

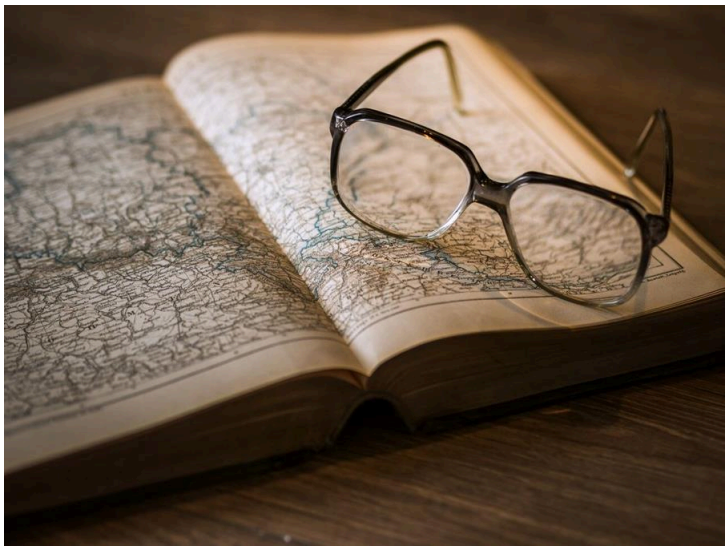
Vietnam: Government seeks international experience to ensure LGBTI+ rights

(bs) Vietnam is seeking to align with international experiences in ensuring support and protection for the LGBTI+ community. The country has been working on reducing violence and discrimination against LGBTI+ people as it is a candidate for the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) for the 2023-2025 term.

In a workshop on "Protection against Violence and Discrimination based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity," government representatives voiced the need for Vietnam to coordinate with international experts and adopt a consistent stance on the protection of human rights in the country by promoting and facilitating inclusiveness of the LGBTI+ community in policy-making decisions.

The country is currently tackling the "follow up" phase of the latest Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in which, in 2019, the Human Rights Council (HRC) of the United Nations (UN) released several recommendations to the Vietnamese government to align with international standards and respect international human rights regulations. The next review will be held in 2024. [Hanoi Times] [UPR info]

International Relations, Geopolitics and Security in Asia



United Nations human rights chief visits China

(ms) The visit of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet to China took place from May 23 to 28 and was the first visit of a UN human rights chief in 17 years. Bachelet's visit was criticized in advance by, among others, human rights activists who feared that China would exploit the visit for its own propaganda. In addition, shortly before the start of the visit, various Western media houses published documents under the name of the Xinjiang Police Files, which allegedly gave even more detailed insight into the systematic violation of the Muslim minority of the Uyghurs living in the Xinjiang region, which was also visited by Bachelet. [AiR No. 21, May/2022, 4]

During her trip, Bachelet visited the Xinjiang region and held talks with Wang Yi, who said that Bachelet was helping to clear up misinformation about China [see AiR No.21 May/2022,4], as well as with President Xi Jinping. Xi echoed the statements of his foreign minister and reportedly stressed that China would not accept patronizing lectures, saying there is a double standard in which human rights are politicized by foreign actors to put pressure on China. [South China Morning Post 1]

At the end of the visit, Bachelet said in a statement that her visit was not an investigation but an opportunity to exchange views with Chinese officials to discuss concerns but also to work together in the future, as China plays an important role in the enforcement of human rights. Bachelet also praised China's achievements in the field of human rights, especially in the fight against poverty, but also highlighted China's achievements in the implementation of the Sustainable Development

Goals, both nationally and internationally. [The New York Times] [OHCHR]

Regarding human rights violations, especially with regard to the Uyghurs, Bachelet said that while countering extremism is important, care must be taken that counterterrorism does not lead to human rights violations. During Bachelet's visit in Xinjiang, she had articulated concerns about the treatment of the Uyghurs and advocated for a rethinking of the handling of the Uyghur population. [Associated Press]

On the situation in Hong Kong, she expressed concern about the arrests of journalists, lawyers, and activists, but referred to an investigation of the situation by the UN Human Rights Committee scheduled for July this year.[Al Jazeera] [South China Morning Post 2]

Amnesty International releases global report on death penalty, executions in 2021

(bs) Amnesty International (AI) released the latest global report on "death sentences and executions 2021." The document gathers information on the judicial use of the death penalty throughout 2021.

According to the report, the number of people who were executed globally was 20 percent higher than in 2020. AI also found that the number of death sentences handled in 2021 increased by 40 percent compared to the previous year.

The data collected shows that Iran saw the highest increase in executions since 2017. However, the data does not include China, which remains in the shadow. Vietnam and North Korea are also believed to keep high levels of secrecy on the matter, which caused issues in collecting information for a comprehensive AI report.

The 2021 coup in Myanmar also triggered an alarming increase in the death penalty in the country, according to the AI document. Meanwhile, the United States (US) witnessed a drastic drop in executions reaching its lowest since 1988. Moreover, while the US state of Virginia abolished the death penalty, the parliament in Sierra Leone, in the African continent, unanimously voted in favor of a bill that abolishes the death penalty.

Nonetheless, Amnesty International remains positive. The group reported that only 18 countries have carried out executions throughout 2021, which is the lowest

number since AI began recording data on such a matter. [Al Jazeera] [Amnesty International]

United Nations refugee agency chief urges support for Bangladesh to save Rohingya lives

(lm) On a visit to refugee camps in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar district, the United Nations (UN) refugee agency chief agreed last week to boost support to Rohingya refugees relocated to Bhasan Char, a remote and flood-prone island in the Bay of Bengal, despite concerns people were moved there against their will. [Al Jazeera]

In meetings with national leaders, UNHCR donors and humanitarian actors, Fillipo Grandi also emphasized the need to maintain refugees' hopes for voluntary return to Myanmar, as the situation allows. He also said the solutions lie within Myanmar. [UN News]

Since December 2020, authorities in Bangladesh have relocated some 28,000 Rohingya refugees to Bhasan Char to ease chronic overcrowding in the sprawling refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, where more than one million members of the largely Muslim minority group have taken shelter. Bangladesh aims to eventually relocate around 100,000 Rohingya refugees to the previously uninhabited island.

The transfer has sparked strong criticism from human rights groups, which denounce the living conditions on Bhasan Char, especially a lack of freedom of movement. They also accuse the Bangladeshi government of coercion, unnecessary family separation, and manufacturing a lack of informed consent among the Rohingya refugees [see AiR No. 5, February/2022, 1]. Still, Grandi last week observed that essential humanitarian services have been scaled up. [France24]

In related developments, at least 17 Rohingya refugees, including children, have been reported dead after their boat capsized in bad weather off the Myanmar coast. The boat had left the capital of Myanmar's Rakhine State on May 19, with at least 90 people on board, and was on its way to Malaysia across the Bay of Bengal when it ran into bad weather a couple of days later. [Al Jazeera 2]

China, Russia veto United States proposal for expanding sanctions on North Korea

(jw) After differences about how to respond to North Korea's frequent missile tests in the previous months already arose in the UN Security Council [see AiR No. 20, May/2022, 3], China and Russia vetoed a US proposal that would warrant an expansion of sanctions on the North Korean regime. The other 13 council members supported the draft resolution that entailed a ban of tobacco and oil exports to North Korea and would have led to the blacklisting of Lazarus, a hacking group that the US says is tied to North Korea.

U.S. Ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield expressed her disappointment at the result of the vote, stating that "Council restraint and silence has not eliminated or even reduced the threat. If anything, DPRK [North Korea] has been emboldened."

Despite North Korea's assertiveness, China and Russia advocated for fewer sanctions, citing humanitarian reasons. However, the May 26 vote was the first time the council broke unanimity in voting on sanctioning North Korea since 2006 when council members started to steadily approve measures aimed at preventing North Korea from developing nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles. [CNN] [Reuters]

United Nations Security Council members fail to agree on Myanmar situation

(cmsk) The United Nations (UN) Security Council reportedly failed to agree on a statement that was aimed at pushing Myanmar's military administration to take steps towards peace restoration in the country.

The text was drafted by China and the United Kingdom. However, the two countries reportedly disagreed on describing the situation in Myanmar since the 2021 coup. While the United Kingdom wanted to employ the word "limited," China wanted to use the word "slow". The disagreement in the use of terminology led to a failure in publishing a statement on behalf of the UN Security Council.

The rest of the statement reportedly expresses the Council's concern about the continuing violence and humanitarian crisis in Myanmar. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)'s envoy for Myanmar, and the UN envoy, Noeleen Heyzer, also reportedly provided an update on the situation in the country to the Council. [The Irrawaddy]

Cambodian Prime Minister, United Nations envoy met to discuss efforts to resolve the Myanmar conflict

(pw) Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen and Noeleen Heyzer, the United Nations Special Envoy to Myanmar, had a meeting to address the ongoing conflict in Myanmar. Sen confirmed that Cambodia, as the chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), is still dedicated to supporting the country in searching for a lasting peace solution to the conflict. Sen named three main priorities that are key to addressing the issue, namely a lasting cessation of hostilities, the delivery of humanitarian relief, and the promotion of a constructive discourse among all of the parties in this conflict.

Moreover, Heyzer added that the most crucial matter is to explore ways to mitigate the violence that the civilian population suffered. Furthermore, she stated that Myanmar's military regime under Senior General Min Aung Hlaing is looking forward to meeting with her again but noted she would like Sen's opinion on Myanmar's current affairs first.

In 2022, Sen has met with Min Aung Haling three times over the situation in Myanmar and asked him to implement several measures to address the conflict, including ASEAN's five-point consensus. With little success, ASEAN has attempted to utilize this consensus to reach a peaceful resolution to this conflict. Heyzer, on the other hand, was prevented by the Myanmar military administration to attend an ASEAN meeting concerning the provision of humanitarian aid to Myanmar. Some commentators suspected that this might have to do with her previous meeting with the main opposition National Unity Government.

Since Min Aung Hlaing overthrew a democratically elected government in February 2021, pundits have perceived Myanmar to be embroiled in a civil war between the military junta and the opposition groups. [The Phnom Penh Post] [AiR No. 19, May/2022, 2] [AiR No. 20, May/2022, 3]

Family of former Myanmar civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi lodge complaint at United Nations

(cmsk) On behalf of former civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi's family, human rights lawyers have lodged a

complaint to the United Nations (UN) Working Group on Arbitrary Detention against what they argue is her unlawful detention. Kyi has been sentenced to eleven years in prison and faces a slew of charges potentially leading to more than 100 years in jail. According to Kyi's family lawyers, her detention lacks any legal basis, and trials against her are not following essential rules which must govern any proper legal procedures.

The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention investigates cases "of deprivation of liberty imposed arbitrarily or inconsistently with the international standards" that are enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in other international legal instruments. Moreover, the UN working group had previously determined that Kyi, who has already spent a total of 15 years in detention, was arbitrarily detained in 1991 and 2001. Although the Working Group's decision is not legally binding, it carries repetitional weight. [The Irrawaddy]

United States call on Comprehensive Cambodian Peace Agreements signatories to reassert vows

(pw) In a resolution unanimously passed by the United States (US) Senate, all parties to the 1991 Paris Peace Accords have been urged to attest their willingness to enhance the Cambodian people's freedom and prosperity alongside the peace in Cambodia. The Cambodian government has considered the resolution as demonstrating that the US abhorred foreign aggression against the country, alongside its aspirations to deter foreign efforts to arm the opposition factions in Cambodia.

The 1991 Paris Peace Accords resulted in the conclusion of Cambodia's twelve-year civil war and the removal of foreign troops from the country. Also, this agreement has pledged to ensure the Cambodians can determine their fates with free and fair elections. [Khmer Times]

Recently, the Cambodian government has been accused of repressing the opposition groups in the country through arrests and threats, alongside the barring of opposition commune council candidates from participating in the forthcoming commune elections. [AiR No. 21, May/2022, 4]

Information provided by Bangladesh in 66 enforced disappearance cases “inadequate”, UN finds

(lm) The information and explanation provided by Bangladeshi authorities in 66 out of 76 cases of enforced disappearances have been deemed “insufficient” by a United Nations (UN) working group, which also called on Dhaka to take "decisive steps" to find people.

For the first time in 26 years, Bangladesh had responded to the Working Group on Enforced Disappearance or Involuntary Disappearances, one of the thematic special procedures overseen by the UN Human Rights Council. In its latest report, the working group reminded Dhaka of the obligation to locate the missing persons or their bodies. It also called for the protection of the persons filing complaints about the disappearances, the relations of the missing ones, lawyers, witnesses and all involved in the process of searching for these persons, against any form of threats and vengeful attacks. [South Asia Monitor] [The Daily Star] [Protho Malo]

The Philippines to uphold international court ruling on South China Sea disputes

(bs) The Philippines President-to-be Ferdinand Marcos Jr. committed to maintaining sovereign control over the current national maritime territory in the South China Sea ensuring that China will not take control over the area. The claims came as Marcos Jr. reiterated the country’s intention to uphold the 2016 international court ruling against China’s territorial claims in the South China Sea, including the Chinese self-delineated “nine-dash line,” claiming that such claims were inconsistent with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The court also ruled that China violated the Philippines’ sovereign rights by invading the area within the 200-nautical-mile Philippine Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

China’s claims were dismissed by an arbitral tribunal at the Permanent Court of Arbitration in the Hague after the case was filed in 2013 over the control of Scarborough Shoal. [The Diplomat]

In the same light, the Philippines established a naval base in a coastal area facing the South China Sea in an attempt to counter China’s increased presence in disputed territories. The base, which was previously under the United States' control, will monitor the

Chinese presence in the area. [South China Morning Post]

China´s attempt to gain more influence in Pacific faces setback

(jw) After the signing of a security pact between China and the Solomon Islands caused concerns about an increased Chinese military presence in the Pacific [see AiR No. 17, April/2022, 4], China is seeking to conclude similar deals with almost a dozen other Pacific island nations. A draft communique and five-year action plan that China sent to ten Pacific countries which participated in the May 30 China-Pacific Island Countries Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Fiji called for cooperation in areas such as trade, security, policing, cybersecurity and economic development. [CNN]

The May 30 meeting between Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and his counterparts from pacific countries including Samoa, Tonga, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Niue reflected the concerns of many of the pacific states who did not agree to a final communique. Multiple countries seemed to have considerable reservations which rendered Wang's attempt to foster deeper cooperation between China and the Pacific by concluding a wide-ranging agreement unsuccessful. [Associated Press 1]

Despite his failure to convince the pacific countries of taking a less skeptical stance on China, Wang emphasized that the participants agreed on cooperation being achievable in areas such as economic recovery from the pandemic or establishing centers for agriculture and disaster. However, Wang did not mention security as one of these areas and stated that further discussions need to be held. Reacting to the doubts and concerns of the pacific countries, Wang appealed to them to not be "too anxious" about cooperating with China. The other participating countries did not give concrete reasons for their refusal of China's proposals but indicated that they need more time to build a consensus among themselves. According to Fiji's Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama, the pacific countries want to tackle the problems at hand instead of engaging in "geopolitical point-scoring." [Reuters 1]

An agreement between China and Pacific nations could touch on many sensitive areas that are of concern to Australia, New Zealand, Japan and the US, the countries that had voiced their reservations regarding the deal between China and the Solomon Islands because of concerns that China might establish a

military base. However, China does not only prompt concerns due to possible ambitions to build military bases bus also because of plans to provide critical infrastructure in the region. So far, Chinese telecom giant Huawei was outbid by the US after making offers to develop mobile networks or build submarine cables in the region. [Reuters 2]

Increased cooperation with China might, however, seem attractive to many Pacific countries who are dependent on foreign aid to ensure further development, especially after the tourism sector was heavily hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. Other than most lenders, China does not tie its loans to demands of economic or governmental reforms and does therefore often seem easier to cooperate with. [Al Jazeera 1]

The Chinese proposals for increased cooperation prompted an alarmed response from the US State Department which voiced its concerns about agreements being "negotiated in a rushed, nontransparent process." Furthermore, it warned the Pacific nations that China "has a pattern of offering shadowy, vague deals with little transparency or regional consultation in areas related to fishing, related to resource management, development, development assistance and more recently even security practices." [CNBC]

In reaction to the Chinese cooperation proposal, New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern stated that New Zealand is "ready to respond" to security challenges arising in the Pacific. Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong also emphasized that Australia intends to remain the partner of choice to Pacific nations despite Chinese ambitions. [The Guardian 1] [The Guardian 2]

However, only the Federated States of Micronesia which are traditionally allied with the US outright rejected the Chinese offer. The President of the Federated States of Micronesia, David Panuelo, addressed other leaders of Pacific nations stating that he will not accept the agreement because it would heighten geopolitical tensions and threaten regional stability. Panuelo also warned of China gaining control of regional fishery grounds and using infrastructure cooperation to increase espionage. According to Panuelo an agreement would lead to "bring a new Cold War era at best, and a World War at worst." [Associated Press 2]

The Chinese proposal for the wide-ranging cooperation agreement comes as Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi embarks on a ten-day tour to visit the Solomon Islands,

Samoa, Fiji, Vanuatu, Kiribati, Tonga, Papua New Guinea and East Timor. Despite the May 30 meeting between the foreign ministers of China and pacific nations not being very successful, Wang managed to conclude bilateral agreements with several nations he visited.

On the Solomon Islands, Wang spoke about increasing cooperation with Solomon Islands Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare and his counterpart from the Solomon Islands Jeremiah Manele. He also stated that "China's cooperation with the Island countries is not targeted at any country, nor is it subject to interference by any other country." The two nations signed a memorandum of understanding as a first step toward the opening of air routes between China and the Solomon Islands. [CGTN] [Reuters 3]

After his visit to the Solomon Islands Wang went to Kiribati on May 27. China reportedly already made a lot of progress on reaching some sort of agreement with Kiribati [see AiR No. 21, May/2022, 4]. However, the representatives from Kiribati were reportedly keener to discuss trade and tourism opportunities instead of negotiating Chinese access to fishing grounds or the construction of an airstrip. As part of the meeting, both sides signed cooperation agreements on issues such as the joint building of the Belt and Road, disaster prevention and reduction, infrastructure construction, tourism and people's livelihood. [Reuters 4] [China Daily]

From Kiribati, Wang continued to travel to Samoa where another bilateral agreement was signed on May 28. However, details on the agreement were not released. According to a statement by the Samoan government, Wang discussed "climate change, the pandemic and peace and security" with Samoan politicians. [The Guardian 3] [Government of Samoa]

Australia's foreign minister Penny Wong tried to counter Chinese efforts to gain more influence by traveling to Fiji on May 26 and advocating for closer ties between Pacific nations and Australia. In a press conference, Wong stated that Australia has a "strong desire" to play a big role in the "Pacific Family" and "build stronger relationships". One day after Wong's arrival, Fiji signaled that it would remain in close cooperation with China's competitors announcing that it joined the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF), an initiative aimed at countering the growing economic influence that China has developed in the Pacific region [see AiR No. 17, April/2022, 4]. Wong's visit came shortly before Wang visited the island and failed to convince the participants China-Pacific Island Countries Foreign Ministers' Meeting to

agree on a broad cooperation agreement. [ABC News Australia] [Al Jazeera 2]

Quad security alignment elusive?

(nc) During last week's meeting of the 'Quad' in Japan, the U.S., Japan, Australia, and India discussed economic and security topics and agreed on several partnerships on cybersecurity, technology, and military awareness. China's military power in Indo-Pacific region and Russia's war in Ukraine were also discusses as security threats.

But despite the showcase of unity on many of these topics, the Indo-Pacific alignment sought by American President Joe Biden against China remains elusive as a common front has not been displayed yet. Biden would favor a coalition to prevent China from invading Taïwan, a possible scenario thought to be emboldened by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. But the 'Quad' has its limitations in reaching this goal with India's stance on antagonizing China remaining ambiguous. Japan has taken a firmer stand as it prepares to raise its defense budget, but it does not close the door to discussion with China. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida calls for more cooperation and is considering a Japan-China summit. [Japan Times] [Japan Today]

27th International Conference on the Future of Asia held in Japan

(sw) Tokyo hosted the 27th International Conference on the Future of Asia on May 26 and 27 where prominent politicians from across Asia attended alongside business leaders and academics. [Future of Asia]

Among those attending were the prime ministers of Cambodia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam, Bangladesh, and the presidents of Laos, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia. Each prime minister and president gave speeches on subjects relating to regional economic cooperation, regional security, COVID-19 Pandemic, and the Russia–Ukraine conflict.

Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has used the opportunity to request international help amid his country's political and economic crisis. Meanwhile, Thai Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-o-cha emphasized the need for regional economic cooperation. [Nikkei Asia 1] [Nikkei Asia 2]

In contrast, Indonesian Prime Minister Joko Widodo and Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen, and Laotian President Thongloun Sisoulith have taken a more explicit stance in support of China, with Widodo urging the need for a trade bloc led by China while Hun Sen and Sisoulith deny that China is putting Cambodia and Laos in a debt trap. [Nikkei Asia 3] [Radio Free Asia] [The Phnom Penh Post]

Experts also observed that China and the United States' stances on the Russia–Ukraine conflict reveal the differences between their ideologies and warn against an escalation of violence in Taiwan [Nikkei Asia 4]

In light of the Russia–Ukraine conflict, Laotian President Thongloun Sisoulith has spoken out against imposing international sanctions against Russia. For Singapore, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong focuses on regional security and warns against a potential nuclear arms race in the region. [Nikkei Asia 5] [Nikkei Asia 6] [South China Morning Post 1]

Another major topic in discussion was the US-led Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF). In late May, the US President, Joe Biden, met with Prime Minister Fumio Kishida in a meeting where he launched the IPEF as a plan to strengthen ties with the Indo-Pacific region. The IPEF aims at integrating member states with agreed standards in the digital economy, supply chains, clean energy infrastructure, and anti-corruption measures while leaving out the areas of tariffs or market access. In this regard, the former Prime Minister of Malaysia, Mahathir Mohamad, alleged that IPEF is politically motivated to 'isolate China'. [AP News] [Nikkei Asia 7] [South China Morning Post 2] [South China Morning Post 3]

Fiji became the latest member to join the IPEF on 26 May, at the same time that the Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi started his visits to Pacific Island Nations, highlighting the competition between China and the US for influence in the region. [Nikkei Asia 8]

China urges Indonesia to keep Ukraine war off agenda at G20 summit

(jw) Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi reiterated the Chinese wish to not discuss the Ukraine war at the G20 summit in a phone call with Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi. According to Wang, China will support Indonesia, which will host the summit in November, to lead participating countries "towards the correct direction". Both China and Indonesia already

spoke out in support of purely discussing economic issues at the summit with China emphasizing that the UN Security Council is the platform to discuss political and security issues. However, the Ukrainian ambassador to Indonesia stressed that the Ukraine war brought about economic issues such as the impact of sanctions on Russia or the breakdown of supply chains which are worth discussing. [South China Morning Post]

Despite being closer to China regarding the attitude toward Russia and the Ukraine war, Indonesia also keeps close contact with the US as the territorial ambitions of China in the South China Sea are not supported in Indonesia. Thus, Indonesia is reportedly considering holding joint military drills with the US on the Natuna Islands which are close to waters claimed by China. Drills on the Natuna Islands could be part of the annual Garuda Shield war games taking place in August. [ThePrint]

Tension blazes among G20 leaders over who holds a seat

(dbk) Tensions have risen among the Group of 20 (G20) leaders as Indonesia, the current G20 president, has called for peace over the decision to invite Russian President Vladimir Putin to the summit. Spokespeople from multiple countries have contested the invitation of President Putin, with Polish Development and Technology Minister Piotr Nowak embracing international support on the suggestion that Poland replaces Russia at the G20 summit altogether. However, China has argued that Russia is an essential part of the Group, despite current political affairs, and cannot be removed by other members.

Meanwhile, Ukraine President Volodimir Zelenskyy has also been invited as per United States President Joe Biden's request.

While Indonesia has avoided officially taking a stance on either side of the debate, foreign policy principles and G20 regulations afford restricted options in moving forward for all involved nations. [The Jakarta Post]

China holds joint military patrol with Russia during Quad summit

(jw) After reports of talks on increasing oil trade between Russia and China, both countries also openly displayed their military cooperation by conducting the first joint-areal patrol since the beginning of the Ukraine war over the Sea of Japan, East China Sea and the Western Pacific on May 24 [see AiR No. 21, May/2022, 4]. According to the Chinese defense ministry, the patrol is part of an annual military exercise. However, in previous years similar patrols of the Chinese and Russian military took place in the latter half of the year. [Reuters 1]

The Chinese and Russian aircraft did not violate any country's airspace but entered the Korea Air Defence Identification Zone. In response, the South Korean military scrambled its jets to prepare for a possible contingency. One day after the patrol, Japan and the US conducted a joint flight over the Sea of Japan involving eight warplanes. [Reuters 2] [Associated Press]

As a response, Japanese and U.S. fighter jets conducted on May 26 a joint flight drill displaying their unity against the China and Russia as well as North Korea which tested three ballistic missiles on the same day. threat. [Mainichi]

Need to enhance Afghanistan's counterterrorism capacities, India's NSA tells 4th Regional Security Dialogue

(pb) Addressing the fourth iteration of the Regional Security Dialogue, India's National Security Advisor Ajit Doval on May 27 called on his regional counterparts to help Afghanistan enhancing its counterterrorism capacities, adding that terrorist groups would pose a threat to regional peace and security. [South Asia Monitor]

In his speech, Doval also pushed for the protection of human rights in Afghanistan, including the right to life and dignified living. He also spoke for education for Afghan women and youth for growth and productivity of the nation. [WION]

The Dialogue, hosted by Tajikistan, saw the participation of National Security Advisors of Russia, China, Iran, and the five Central Asian countries Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. In November of last year, India hosted the senior security officials to discuss the situation in Afghanistan following the Taliban takeover, but the talks were boycotted by Pakistan and China [see AiR

No. 46, November/2021, 3]. The first two editions of the Dialogue were hosted by Iran in 2018 and 2019.

India, Japan to support Sri Lanka

(sg) India and Japan have agreed to support Sri Lanka shortly after Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe addressed Quad members at their summit in Japan. Indian prime minister Narendra Modi and his Japanese counterpart Fumio Kishida met at the sidelines of the Quad summit in Tokyo to discuss bilateral cooperation in the Indo-Pacific and defense and energy collaboration.

Following the meeting, Kishida announced that India and Japan would cooperate more closely together to ensure a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific." The two countries would support Sri Lanka as the island nation struggles amid the worst economic crisis since independence. Previously, Wickremesinghe had addressed Quad members Australia, India, Japan, and the US, stating that the group should take lead in aiding his country. Japan and India are significant backers of the Indian Ocean country, India has already sent more than 3 billion USD in aid to the island nation since January 2022. Both countries are looking to expand their influence in Sri Lanka to counter China's Belt and Road initiative, which passes through the region. [Colombo Gazette] [News Wire] [The Hindu]

Wickremesinghe, who has also assumed the role of finance minister, stated that he would also discuss loans with China. Hours after addressing the Quad, Wickremesinghe announced that Beijing had offered "a few hundred million dollars" in lending to alleviate short-term commodity shortages. Sri Lanka is currently seeking an IMF loan of up to 4 billion USD by mid-June and discussing debt restructuring to secure long-term economic stability. [Economic Times]

Indian foreign policy to have impact beyond South Asia, foreign minister tells NADI summit

(sg) Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar called for greater connectivity to East- and Southeast Asia, stating benefits for the whole region. Jaishankar made the comments at a Natural Allies in Development and Interdependence (NADI) summit on May 28 in Assam, India.

The minister addressed several envoys from South Asia and ASEAN countries at the meeting, which put the spotlight on India's eastern regions, notably the state of Assam. Jaishankar said Assam and India's eastern states could serve as a bridge between India and ASEAN nations. Furthermore, he remarked that greater land and sea connectivity could build on the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), stating that trade integration could expand its impact beyond India's neighboring countries. The IPEF was launched by US President Biden in Tokyo last week to encourage cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region and to counter the influence of China. [Hindustan Times] [see No. 21, May/2022, 4] [The Hindu]

The NADI conference aimed at activating cooperation in the Bay of Bengal region, those sharing the Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Mekong River basins. The summit this week marked the third NADI meeting. Bangladesh foreign minister AK Abdul Momen, the high commissioner of Singapore, and the ambassador of Cambodia to India attended the conference. [Northeast Today]

India has no plans to lift wheat export ban, commerce minister tells *Reuters*

(sg) Indian commerce minister Piyush Goyal, who traveled to Switzerland to attend the World Economic Forum, told *Reuters* that India has no plans to lift a ban on wheat exports. Goyal also rejected raising private wheat exports stating that only "black marketeers, hoarders and speculators" would profit from such a measure. Alternatively, the minister highlighted that India would continue to export wheat to countries with direct governmental deals. [Reuters]

India banned wheat exports on May 13 amid a record-breaking heatwave and soaring commodity prices. In the past few weeks, India has faced criticism from multiple countries; notably, the G7 nations which urged India to lift restrictions while China backed India, stating more developed countries' responsibility [see No. 21, May/2022, 4].

ASEAN aims to enhance ties with Europe, Cambodian prime minister says

(pw) According to Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen, the member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), including Cambodia, will

collaborate on strengthening their relations with the European Union (EU) in preparation for the 45th anniversary of ASEAN–EU ties in December 2022. Sen noted that the exact details for this event are currently being fleshed out. A Cambodian researcher has mentioned that both ASEAN and the EU have been working on improving their cooperation in areas such as the digital sector, energy, environmental protection, and regional security. [The Phnom Penh Post]

China seen as paramount future partner by ASEAN citizens, survey finds

(jw/sw) According to a new Japanese government opinion poll, almost half of the citizens in ASEAN countries view China as an important regional partner in the future. With 48 percent of the questioned citizens considering China important, China is topping the list for the first time after Japan went down to 43 percent, dropping eight percentage points in comparison to the last poll in 2019. The US went up by four percentage points, reaching 41 percent.

China also remained on top of the list of countries considered an important partner in the present with 56 percent of respondents choosing the country. Japan is again number two after 50 percent answered that the country is considered important. The survey is commissioned by the Japanese foreign ministry and conducted by the marketing research firm Ipsos. 2700 citizens of all ASEAN countries except for Myanmar participated. [Kyodo News]

Thirteen countries voice support for Taiwan's World Health Assembly participation

(ms) At the annual meeting of the World Health Assembly (WHA) in Geneva from May 22 until May 28, 13 countries supported directly or indirectly Taiwan's accession to the WHA.

Taiwan was again not invited to this assembly due to diplomatic pressure of China on WHO member states. While China had allowed Taiwan to participate in the WHA as an observer between 2009-2016 because the Taiwan's then government under the Kuomintang (KTM) sought to maintains good relations with Beijing, this stopped when the independence-leaning Democratic Progressive Party took over power in 2017. [Focus Taiwan]

Chinese companies accused of illegally poaching Taiwanese semiconductor engineers

(ms) As part of the investigation launched in April this year into the possible illegal recruitment of chip engineers involving about 100 Chinese companies, ten of them were raided last week and about 70 people were called in for questioning.

Taiwan is the second largest producer of semiconductors after China, and Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC) produces more than 90% of the world's most advanced semiconductors. Since China has set the economic goal to be self-sufficient in advanced semiconductors, China has been looking for qualified engineers, which has increased their poaching activities in Taiwan. [Reuters 1] [Reuters 2]

Myanmar migrants held in Chinese prisons

(cmsk) More than 1,000 Myanmar migrant workers are reportedly stranded in Chinese detention centers without any contact with their families or any way of returning to Myanmar. Among those detained are undocumented illegal migrants and others who overstayed their week-long tourist visas in search of employment. Some had reportedly lost jobs due to the coronavirus outbreak whilst others were allegedly arrested whilst trying to return to Myanmar. The Myanmar nationals in detention are reportedly being held on charges of forging Chinese identity cards. [Radio Free Asia]

India donates field ambulances to Nepal

(sg) The Indian army has donated two field ambulances to the Maldives National Defense Forces. The aid comes as part of India's "Neighborhood First" foreign policy to focus collaboration on South Asian nations, which New Delhi regards as being in its sphere of influence. [Avas]

India to deliver aid to crisis-hit Sri Lanka

(sg) India will deliver 15000 liters of kerosene and 25 tons of medical supplies to neighboring Sri Lanka. The news comes one week after India sent 40000 tons of fuel to the country. The current economic crisis has led to significant commodity shortages within the country. [ANI News] [Business Standard]

Malaysia, Thailand to strengthen border security

(sw) Malaysia and Thailand have agreed to strengthen their border against 'non-traditional security threats as part of the resolution of the Thai–Malaysian 55th General Border Committee (GBC). For this purpose, intelligence exchange will be promoted. The countries have also agreed to increase their cooperation in the area of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. [Malay Mail] Malaysia also reaffirms its commitment to support peace negotiations between Thailand and the country's insurgents in the Deep South. [Bangkok Post]

Indonesia's oil export ban, Malaysia aims to fill the gap

(dbk) Food supply shocks caused by the war in Ukraine and Indonesia's short-lived palm oil ban have seen a chain effect of shortages and price increases. India, Serbia, and Kazakhstan have also curbed export products and introduced new quotas. Governments are subscribing to food and cost protectionism in order to protect domestic supply.

However, Malaysia, which falls just behind Indonesia in global palm oil production, has moved against the flow and will not be restricting cooking oil exports as its current supply meets domestic supply with more than 50 percent excess. The Malaysian government has opted to focus its subsidies on the neediest consumers, despite a recent local price increase of 3.3 percent.

These boosted commodity prices will continue into 2023, according to Kamaruddin, so Malaysia is aiming to fill the edible oil marker gap. This will be possible with employment and labor conditions quickly returning to pre-pandemic levels and normalization of foreign work admission.

The country will, however, pause the export of chicken in an attempt to secure domestic supply, as announced by Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob. This

move will predominantly affect Singapore, with Thailand, Brunei, Japan, and Hong Kong also feeling the brunt. Agriculture and Food Industries Minister Ronald Kiandee said that the exports will be resumed once local prices of chicken stabilize. [South China Morning Post]

Rights groups urge Japan to cease training Myanmar's military

(cmsk) Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Justice for Myanmar, two prominent rights groups, have urged Japan to stop training Myanmar military officials.

Separate statements issued by both rights organizations claim that a Lieutenant Colonel of the Myanmar Air Force, who has allegedly taken part in the junta's aerial raids in the Magway Region, was trained at Japan's Air Command and Staff College between August 2016 and March 2017. Whilst Japan's training program dates back to 2015, it has continued offering training to Myanmar military officers since the coup, accepting two junta cadets and two officers to participate in its program in 2021.

The European Union (EU) also previously came under fire for a controversial program, MYPOL, which provided training to Myanmar police officers, but the EU suspended the program right after the Myanmar 2021 coup.

According to analysts, however, Japan does not intend to sanction or disengage with the Myanmar military, fearing that it could open the floodgates for Chinese influence in Myanmar and thereby altering the wider Indo-Pacific geopolitical landscape in favor of China. [The Diplomat] [Mizzima]

Japan, Malaysia agree to strengthen bilateral diplomatic ties

(tp) Following the meeting, on May 27, between Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, both countries have agreed to strengthen their bilateral ties starting from an improvement from a "strategic partnership," established in 2015, to a "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership" (CSP).

The move aims at expanding various areas of cooperation, including energy, smart cities, the environment, and climate change. During the press

conference, Malaysia's Prime Minister stated that clearer outlines of the tight cooperation will be drafted soon by both countries.

This year marks the 65th anniversary of Malaysia and Japan's diplomatic relationship. Japan is regarded as an important partner, as it has been the fourth largest trade partner since 2015, with a trade value of USD 35.9 billion in 2021. Japan is also the third-largest investor in the manufacturing sector in Malaysia. [The Edge Markets] [The Sun Daily]

Japan, Singapore committed to cooperating in enhancing regional stability

(bs) On May 26, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and his Singaporean counterpart met to discuss strengthening bilateral relations while enhancing cooperation in maintaining regional peace.

The parties also agreed to promote a “free and open Indo-Pacific,” and announced a Japan-Singapore Economic Dialogue at a ministerial level to enhance trade and investment relations. Two other agreements were already signed by Japan and Singapore since 2021. One on digital government transformation and another one on bilateral cooperation in promoting start-ups and facilitating green transformation. [The Straits Times]

Thailand, Vietnam to jointly raise rice price

(sw) Thai Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-o-cha has suggested that Thailand and Vietnam should cooperate to raise the prices of their rice to increase their bargaining power. This suggestion comes amid a global food crisis caused by the Russian invasion to Ukraine in late February. Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, wheat and corn prices have increased by 41 and 28 percent as Russia and Ukraine count for a total of 30 per cent of the global wheat exports. [Financial Times]

Vietnam has yet to announce its stance on the matter, however, it plans to discuss rice production with its Thai counterpart in June. [Bloomberg]

According to the United States department of agriculture, Thailand and Vietnam’s rice exports

amount to around 26 percent of the global exports. Nonetheless, it comes as a surprise that India was not included into the arrangement as it amounts to around 40 percent of rice export in the global market. It also predicted that buyers could instead turn to India for cheaper rice prices. Still, there is a possibility that India will also restrict its rice export. [Reuters] [South China Morning Post]

Israel visit by Pakistani expatriates draws criticism from opposition parties, conservative segments at home

(ha/lm) A visit of a 15-member delegation made of Pakistani expatriates to Israel earlier this month to promote interfaith harmony has prompted a fierce outcry at home, with one participant getting fired from his job.

While addressing the World Economic Forum meeting in Davos, Switzerland, Israel's President Isaac Herzog confirmed on May 26 that he had met with the delegation, saying it "showed me the great change" taking place in the aftermath of the Abraham Accords – a series of diplomatic pacts brokered by the United States in 2020. [Dawn 1]

The meeting was organized by Sharaka, an Israeli non-government organization (NGO), and The American Muslim and Multifaith Women's Council with the aim to "promote peace in the Middle East". The delegation included a Pakistani journalist Ahmed Qureshi and Pakistani Jew Fischel BenKhald. [The Times of Israel]

According to news reports, Qureshi and BenKhald entered Israel on their Pakistani passports, making it the first-ever trip of its kind. Pakistan is among the countries that have no diplomatic relations with Israel and Islamabad takes the view that it cannot recognize Israel until a "just settlement of the Palestinian issue" is found. However, the two countries have long maintained undeclared contacts at unofficial level. The only known official interaction was between the then foreign minister Khurshid Kasuri and Silvan Shalom in 2005.

Meanwhile, Pakistan has "categorically rejected" claims that it endorsed the visit. In a statement, Islamabad reiterated that its position on the Palestinian issue is "clear and unambiguous", and that there would be no changes in the policy, which was formed by national consensus. On May 30, then, Pakistani Information Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb announced the sacking

of Quraishi from state-owned Pakistan Television Corporation. [Geo News] [The Express Tribune]

In related developments, Pakistan's former Prime Minister Imran Khan accused the new government of posing a security threat to the country, for they were allegedly ordered by the United States to recognize Israel. Religious conservatives, meanwhile, also criticized the visit of the delegation, with the chairman of the organization of Islamic scholars and clerics calling on the government to take legal action against those who visited Israel on the Pakistani passports. [Dawn 2] [Pakistan Today]

Philippines' president criticizes Putin for killing civilians in Ukraine

(bs) The Philippines' President Rodrigo Duterte has openly moved critics against Russian President Vladimir Putin for killing civilians in the Ukraine War. President Duterte distanced his alleged extrajudicial killings in the framework of the "war on drugs" from Putin's actions claiming that the operations against drug users or smugglers would kill criminals rather than children and the elderly.

In the same context, Duterte condemned the Russian invasion of Ukraine as a full-scale war waged against "a sovereign nation."

However, the international community might see the claims as being far from reality. In fact, the so-called war on drugs has sparked investigations by the International Criminal Court (ICC) over potential crimes against humanity after human rights groups have reported that the anti-drug campaign also killed innocent people, including children. The probe before the ICC is currently deferred after the Philippines requested to run national investigations on the matter. [Aljazeera] [South China Morning Post]

Sri Lanka latest South Asian nation to take Russian oil as shortage persists

(cm/lm) Debt-ridden Sri Lanka took delivery of a consignment of Russian oil to restart operations at the country's only refinery in Sapugaskanda on May 28. The shipment had been waiting offshore for over a month as Colombo was unable to raise the more than USD 70 million to pay for it.

The Sapugaskanda refinery stopped operating in late March, with Sri Lanka no longer able to import crude oil. As a result, fuel prices were raised drastically, and rationing is still in effect for purchasers. Moreover, Sri Lanka's Ceylon Petroleum Company is in arrears of more than USD 735 million to suppliers, and the energy minister said that no one came forward to even bid for the country's oil tenders. But the minister said Colombo would nevertheless call for fresh supply tenders in two weeks.

After India, Sri Lanka is the latest South Asian nation to accept imports of Russia's crude, as the United States, United Kingdom and many European companies turn their back on Moscow, forcing it to look for buyers in Asia. [Al Jazeera] [Deutsche Welle]

United States Secretary of State Blinken presents China strategy, delivers speech highly critical of Beijing

(jw) In a long-awaited speech that was previously postponed due to US State Secretary Antony Blinken testing positive for COVID 19 [see AiR No. 19, May/2022, 2], Blinken outlined the US strategy in facing China over the coming years.

In his speech held on May 26 at the George Washington University in Washington DC, Blinken pictured China as an expanding and increasingly aggressive autocracy with the intention to reshape the world's rules-based order and value system. According to Blinken, the US must compete with a China that would pose the "most serious long-term challenge to the international order" and cooperate with allies to ensure that democracy, human rights and the "international rules-based order" prevail.

Blinken added that competing with China does not mean that the US aims to "block China from its role as a major power, nor to stop China — or any country, for that matter — from growing their economy or advancing the interests of their people." In his speech which was described as containing many contradictions, the US Secretary of State also emphasized the need for cooperation between China and the US, for example regarding climate change. [Politico] [The Diplomat] [US Department of State]

In an immediate reaction, the Chinese foreign ministry stated that it is "firmly opposed" to the speech which displayed Washington's intention to "contain and suppress China's development and maintain US hegemony and power." Chinese foreign minister Wang

Yi also reacted to the speech, lamenting Blinken's characterization of China which, according to Wang, is based on "serious misconceptions". [France 24] [Global Times]

China, United States keep looking for solution to audit dispute as time is running out

(jw) As negotiations between regulatory authorities of the US and China continue, Chinese regulators find themselves under increasing pressure to resolve the auditing dispute between the two countries quickly and thus prevent the delisting of Chinese companies on the US stock market. Because a deadline set by the US is expected to be shortened by a year, US authorities need to be able to conduct in-depth reviews of the books of Chinese companies listed on the US stock market this year. If the Chinese side keeps refusing to release information branded as sensitive to national security, US authorities will start to expel the first Chinese companies on the list of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) from the US stock market.

Even though the Chinese side is under immense pressure, "significant differences remain" according to SEC's international affairs chief, YJ Fischer. Citing the slow progress of negotiations, Fischer proposed a voluntary delisting of Chinese companies on a case-by-case basis if information demanded by US authorities is too sensitive to national security and compliance with US regulations is not expected. In response to Fischer's comments, the China Securities Regulatory Commission (CSRC) aimed to stress positive aspects of the negotiations, emphasizing the progress already made in the talks and the mutual commitment of both sides to reach an agreement. [Reuters 1] [Wall Street Journal]

While the audit talks still show considerable differences, the US continues to employ a softer stance on tariffs with China, prolonging tariff exclusions on Chinese-made medical products needed to address the COVID-19 pandemic. The extension of the tariff exclusions comes as the US is considering cutting more tariffs on China to combat inflation [see AiR No. 20, May/2022, 3]. [Reuters 2]

Cambodia seeks United States to lift sanctions over alleged relations with

China

(sw) As diplomatic relations between Cambodia and the United States (US) have grown stronger, Cambodia is hoping that the US would lift sanctions against the country over its relations with China. [Bloomberg] [France 24]

In December 2021, the US imposed an armed embargo on Cambodia amid Cambodia's deepening military ties with China, which is highlighted by the US's suspicion that China is involved in the construction of the Ream Naval Base in Cambodia. [CNBC] [Reuters] Officials involved in the naval base's construction were also sanctioned by the US.

In May, Cambodia issued a white paper on its military strategy, which emphasizes the country's neutrality and has reassured the US of its prohibition of the foreign military from using Ream Naval Base. [The Phnom Penh Post] [The Phnom Penh Post 1]

United States Treasury official heads to India to discuss Russian oil purchase

(pb) A United States official visited India last week to talk with officials and private industry about the implementation of Washington's sanctions and export controls. The visit by Elizabeth Rosenberg, the Assistant Secretary for Terrorist Financing and Financial Crimes, was widely seen as part of a broader Western effort to encourage India to downgrade ties with Russia in response to Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. [Reuters]

India boosted Russian oil imports in April to about 277,000 barrels per day (bpd), up from 66,000 bpd in March as refiners buy the discounted crude shunned by many Western countries – most notably the US and United Kingdom [see AiR No. 14, April/2022, 1]. Current US sanctions against Russia do not prevent other countries from buying Russian oil. But White House officials have considered so-called secondary sanctions that could restrict those purchases.

United States call for action in ending humanitarian crisis in Myanmar

(cmsk) In a briefing to the United States (US) Senate members, a senior senator asked if the current US administration was willing to assist Myanmar,

particularly as the fight for democracy in the country was now at a “serious crossroads”.

The senator is presently directing a bipartisan amendment to the National Defense Authorisation Act for the 2022 fiscal year, and through the amendment is specifically seeking to support the democracy movement in Myanmar. The amendment reportedly includes provisions to legitimize Myanmar’s parallel National Unity Government (NUG). He recently also met with the NUG’s foreign minister Daw Zin Mar Aung, who requested that the US legitimize the NUG, sanction the junta and provide direct assistance to Myanmar. The US Senator questioned the Administration addressing each of these issues, including drawing attention to the need to sanction the junta’s oil and gas businesses. The Senator even added that Thailand and India could be used to provide direct assistance to the Myanmar people. [The Irrawaddy]

Meanwhile, the US has urged the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to push for establishing a dialogue with both the current military administration and the ousted government in order to end the humanitarian crisis in the country. [Bangkok Post]

Pakistan foreign minister calls for reset in relations with United States

(sg) Pakistan’s Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari in an interview with the *Washington Post* has called for a reset in relations with the United States, saying both countries could profit immensely. The comments came a week after Bhutto-Zardari met with his American counterpart Antony Blinken in New York.

Bilawal called for progress in US-Pakistan relations amid the US withdrawal of troops from neighboring Afghanistan in 2021. The foreign minister added that the two nations could now work together on common ground to bring stability to the Afghan people following the dissipation of the fog of war. The conflict in Afghanistan had been a significant source of contention between the US and Pakistan – a historic non-NATO ally and a major customer of US weapons. [The Washington Post]

The comments from the 33-year-old foreign minister and heir to the powerful Bhutto-Zardari clan differ significantly from former Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan. Relations between the two countries became strained under Khan’s leadership; his government sought closer ties with China. Khan was

ousted in a no-confidence vote last month and has repeatedly claimed that the United States had orchestrated his ouster. In a CNN interview last week, Khan alleged that American officials had bribed Pakistani politicians to oust him, and that anti-American sentiment was becoming popular amongst the country's young population. [CNN] [see No. 21, May/2022, 4]

United States plans to expand economic relationship with Taiwan

(ms) The U.S. and Taiwan plan to hold talks to strengthen their trade relationship in the coming weeks. This comes after U.S. President Joe Biden launched the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) on Monday, May 23, as part of his trip to Japan to strengthen economic trade among the 13 countries involved. [see AiR No.21 May/2022,4] Taiwan was excluded from the IPEF because some participating countries feared possible sanctions by China. [Bloomberg] [CNN]

Bangladesh, European Union to hold Political Dialogue on June 28

(lm) Bangladesh and the European Union (EU) will hold their first Political Dialogue on June 28. The Bangladeshi side will be led by the state minister of foreign affairs, Shahriar Alam, while the EU will be represented by the deputy secretary general of the European External Action Service, Enrique Mora. Notably, the EU is also keen on holding a meeting centered on security with Bangladesh in the leadup to the Political Dialogue, according to people familiar with the developments. [Bangla Tribune, in Bengali]

Cambodian Interior Minister meets with European officials over upcoming commune elections

(pw) The Cambodian Interior Minister and a European Union (EU) delegation met at a conference concerning Cambodia's commune elections scheduled for June 5. In this meeting, the minister claimed that the election would be trouble-free, which, according to him, embodied the Cambodian people's will in a multi-party democracy. Furthermore, both sides used this meeting to discuss their opinions on future electoral

collaboration and official trips to strengthen democracy in Cambodia. Moreover, the EU was called upon by the Minister to assist in Cambodia's decentralization and deconcentration reforms to modify the local administration's scope of power, alongside the provision of training to the local officials. [The Phnom Penh Post]

India, Hungary foreign ministers meet

(sg) Indian foreign minister S. Jaishankar met with his Hungarian counterpart Peter Szijarto, who traveled to India to inaugurate the India-Hungary Business Forum in New Delhi on May 27. The pair signed a Memorandum of Understanding concerning the International Solar Alliance (ISA) and discussed bilateral ties. The ISA was launched by the Indian prime minister Narendra Modi in 2015 to help member states secure financing for solar projects. [ANI News 1] [ANI News 2]

Germany to rethink its China policy, focus more on human rights

(jw) A May 24 phone conversation between Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi and his German counterpart Annalena Baerbock displayed the German efforts to develop a policy toward China that focuses more on norms and human rights and less on economic benefits. While Wang emphasized that "China and Germany are both beneficiaries of and contributors to globalisation, and noise about decoupling is not in the interests of both sides and countries," Baerbock criticized China for refusing to condemn the Russian invasion of Ukraine and addressed the human rights situation in Xinjiang on which new details Baerbock described as "shocking" were recently released [see AiR No. 21, May/2022, 4]. [South China Morning Post]

This development happens as the relatively new government under German Chancellor Olaf Scholz finds itself under pressure not only domestically but also from other European countries to change its course in facing China. German Economy Minister Robert Habeck signaled on May 24 that Germany will seek to reduce its dependence on China, diversify its supply chains and screen outward investments to rule out that German companies are associated with human rights violations or forced labor. The German Economic ministry already refused to grant guarantees covering prospective investment in China to German automotive company Volkswagen, German newspaper

Spiegel reported. [Reuters 1] [Reuters 2] [Spiegel, in German]

A similar development can be observed in Switzerland where the Chinese side seems unwilling to update a free trade agreement and expand tariff reductions as the Swiss government takes a more critical approach toward human rights violations in China. [Reuters 3]

India, Israel hold consultation on United Nations, multilateral issues

(pb) During the visit of an Indian delegation to Israel, the two countries held the second round of talks on the United Nations and multilateral issues on May 23. The Indian side also discussed the country's concerns and priorities at the UN Security Council. [ThePrint]

The latest talks are salient in light of an upcoming visit to India by Israel's Defense Minister Benny Gantz to ink a "special security declaration", commemorating 30 years of diplomatic ties between the two countries. [Republic World]

Last November, India and Israel resumed talks on a free trade agreement, with the aim of signing a deal by mid-2022.

Australia's government urges China to remove trade barriers

(jw) China sent a congratulatory letter to the newly elected Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, a move that was interpreted as a relaxation of bilateral relations as it softened a Beijing-imposed ban on high-level diplomatic relations between the two countries. However, in his first remarks on relations between Australia and China, Albanese raised issues that the previous Australian government also lamented, urging China to remove official and unofficial trade barriers that harm the Australian economy.

The new Australian Treasurer Jim Chalmers also rebuked China for holding on to tariffs imposed just a few years after the countries implemented a free trade agreement. According to Chalmers, the tariffs put a considerable strain on Australian employers and workers. [Associated Press] [Reuters]

New Australian government promises closer ties with Indonesia

(dbk) Newly appointed Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has promised to strengthen ties with Indonesia, following a term of insecurity in the relationship. During his election campaign, Prime Minister Albanese said that as the country is a key regional partner, he would ensure one of his first overseas trips would be to Indonesia.

The Australian Labor Government has policies with a much higher focus on south and southeast Asian relationships than the previous coalition government. Tensions over export bans, the death penalty, and refugee policy have all contributed to the apparent hesitancy surrounding the new Prime Minister's promises, however, agreements over climate and infrastructure policy bode well.

The Australian Government has announced a Southeast Asia policy in which AUD 470 million (USD 338 million) will be budgeted over four years in foreign aid and for the establishment of a Southeast Asia office in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Upon this, the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and Indonesia-Australia Comprehensive Economic Partnerships were signed in 2018 and will continue.

However, there have been calls for more cultural integrations on Australia's part from activists and journalists in Indonesia. These integrations include strengthening Asian studies in all levels of schooling and being more inclusive of Southeast Asian perspectives. [The Conversation]

Timor-Leste's new president accused former Australian diplomat of covering up 2004 bugging scandal

(bs) Newly elected Timorese President José Ramos-Horta has accused former Australian foreign affairs minister Alexander Downer of being untruthful with regard to the alleged spying scandal that affected the two countries in 2004. According to Ramos-Horta, Downer's recent comments omitted that Australia had allegedly used a foreign aid program in Timor-Leste to spy on the country's oil and gas reserves potential. [The Guardian]

Announcements

Upcoming Online Events

01 June 2022 @ 9:00 a.m. (GMT-4), Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), USA

A Digital Dollar? International Considerations

This event will critically examine the major issues for a potential digital dollar which has generated key questions on the design and implementation of central bank digital currencies (CBDCs) which is essential especially to the United States due to the potential security risks and challenges in an international context.

Get further information on [CSIS].

01 June 2022 @ 12:00pm (GMT-4), Wilson Center, FKA Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, USA

The Echo of Chechnya in Russia's War with Ukraine

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine bears uncanny similarities to the Chechen wars. However, international criticism of Russia's conduct in Chechnya did not progress into widespread sanctions, the current war is nearly universally condemned and has had practical repercussions for Russia. This event discusses how Russia’s wars in Chechnya is parallel to Putin’s war in Ukraine and will consider what lessons the Chechen wars have for Russia and the world today.

More details on this event can be found on the [Wilson Center] website.

01 June 2022 @ 3:30pm (GMT-4), Wilson Center, FKA Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, USA

Opportunity and Risk: Mining and the Green Energy Transition

This live event webcast will present a discussion on how the projected increase in mineral demand could influence markets, supply chains, and geopolitical competition which in turn will shape the future of global peace and security.

Join this event and get more details [here].

01 June 2022 @ 10:00am (GMT+4), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, USA

Summer Reads: Saving Yellowstone

The Carnegie Endowment is hosting the first of a two-part Summer Reads series online featuring Megan Kate Nelson, author of Saving Yellowstone, and Dan Baer, acting director of Carnegie's to throw light on how the Yellowstone story might inform our understanding of contemporary political discourse on land and the environment.

Get to know more this event by visiting [carnegie].

01 June 2022 @ 14:00 (GMT+2), Bruegel, Belgium

The Bufferati Concept: A Radical New Bank Capital Model

The Deputy Governor of the Bank of England and CEO of its supervisory arm the PRA, Sam Woods, outlined a possible radical simplification of bank capital buffers. Thus, this online event will host Sam Woods to discuss his proposal and the feedback he has received since then. This event is part of a series of closed-door events on finance and it is only open to Bruegel members and selected invitees.

Find more details [here].

01 June 2022 @ 10:00am (GMT-3), Fundação Getúlio Vargas (FGV), Brazil

Conversation circle: Finalists Evidence Award and IMUDS Trophy - Social Mobility

The objective of the circle is to share experiences on the use of evidence in the day to day of management, present policies, and exchange ideas about the program implementation process, presenting challenges and possibilities in the endeavors.

See this [webpage] for further details.

01 June 2022 @ 11:00am (GMT-4), Center for American Progress (CAP), USA

Meeting the Climate Crisis

The CAP and the Institute for Public Policy Research on the United States and the United Kingdom will be hosting a discussion on ways of meeting challenges related to climate-centered politics. Invited speakers will address the U.S. and U.K. approaches to creating clean energy jobs, fostering climate-friendly trade, and ensuring a just transition in industrial decarbonization.

Get more details via this [link].

01 June 2022 @ 11:00am (GMT-4), Heritage Foundation, USA

A Conversation on Readiness with the Secretary of the Air Force

Join this conversation to find out whether the U.S Air Force is ready for war, as the secretary, Frank Kendall discusses key indicators for capacity, capability, and readiness in the U.S. Air Force.

[Heritage] has more details.

01 June 2022 @ 2:00p.m. (GMT-4), Heritage Foundation, USA

Price Controls on Fuel Would Be Disastrous for Americans

This event brings experts to examine recent legislation imposing a federal price control system on consumer fuel while explaining how government intervention

aggravates the pain Americans are feeling at the pump.

Further details can directly be accessed [here].

01 June 2022 @ 8:30 a.m (GMT+2) Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), Germany

Symposium: The Country Needs Female Mayors – How Do You Win (More) Women for the Town Halls?

For years, there have arisen complaints about the lack of applicants for the office of Mayor. There is in fact a shortage of applicants and in the small population, women are rarely seen as heads of town halls and are therefore greatly underrepresented. This symposium aims at discussing how the gap in representation can be bridged and how women can be inspired for the office of mayor and – should they be elected – (want to) stay there.

See [FES] for more.

01 June 2022 @ 4:00 p.m. (GMT-4) American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research (AEI), USA

Back to the Future: How Not to Write a Regulation

What role do consumer protection rules play according to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC)? When are they appropriate, and what processes and procedures should be used to develop them? In their forthcoming report, J. Howard Beales III and Timothy Muris answer these questions by analysing the FTC's history with rulemaking and the recent changes made to the procedures for promulgating rules under the FTC's primary rulemaking tool, Section 18 of the FTC Act. Join the AEI for a discussion with Mr. Muris, Dr. Beales, and Maureen Ohlhausen, moderated by AEI's Mark Jamison.

Join [AEI] to learn more about this event.

01 June 2022 @ 10:00 a.m. (GMT+2) Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), Germany

Dare more participation?! Workshop for political educational institutions on interactive format

In this workshop, the representatives of very different providers of political education share their experiences

with different participation formats, develop goals for their institutions and discuss their ideas, wishes and questions in a world café with several discussion partners who bring us additional ideas.

To find out more, visit this [page].

01 June 2022 @ 9:00 a.m. (GMT+2) Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS), Belgium

CEPS Ideas Lab 2022

CEPS Ideas Lab 2022 is an interactive one-day event bringing together the 'Next Generation' of Europeans with more seasoned experts in EU policymaking across many different fields. The underpinning theme is how can the EU re-establish peace and prosperity. More than two years into a global pandemic and now with a major war that's erupted in Europe's neighborhood on top, the need for a united union is stronger than ever.

To find out more, see this [webpage].

01 June 2022 @12:00 p.m. (GMT-4) Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI), Canada

Competition Policy Series: What Can Canada Learn from International Developments in Competition Policy?

As Canada looks ahead to a consultation on the modernization of the *Competition Act*, it is crucial to look to and learn from recent experiences of other jurisdictions. This second of three weekly panels will discuss recent developments in the European Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States, as competition authorities move into the regulation of digital markets.

For more information on this event, check out the webpage of [CIGI].

01 June 2022 @ 10:00 a.m. (GMT+2) Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS), Denmark

Climate Change Is Not the Cause, Migration Not the Problem

Climate change is a problem of unimaginable scope and magnitude – in cause, implication, and responsibility. However, a focus on climate hazards can

exclude the multiple other causes of, and thus responsibilities for, crises that follow climate or climate-change events. Professor at the American University in Washington, Jesse Ribot, suggests that we need to rethink our understanding as to the role climate change plays in migration, and, importantly, does not play. The choice of analytical frame for explaining migration, or any other climate-associated crisis, is normative and matters.

Visit [DIIS] for more details on this event.

01 June 2022 @ 6:00pm (GMT-3) Consejo Argentino para las Relaciones Internacionales (CARI), Argentina

Democracy and Elections in Latin America

Join this virtual academic session by Daniel Zovatto, the Regional Director of International IDEA for Latin America and the Caribbean, organized by the Committee for the Study of Latin American Affairs for an insightful discussion on democracy and elections in the Latin American region.

See [CARI] for further information.

01 June 2022 @ 12:00 p.m. (GMT-4) Atlantic Council, USA

Oil, the State, and War: Global Energy Security after the Russian Invasion of Ukraine

On June 1st, the Atlantic Council's New American Engagement Initiative will host a virtual discussion on the linkages between oil, gas, and international security, based on Senior Fellow Emma Ashford's new book, Oil, the State and War.

Visit [Atlantic website] for further details.

01 June 2022 @ 2:00 p.m. (GMT-4) Atlantic Council, USA

How Powerful is Xi Jinping?

Speculation about Xi's hold on power is mounting as policy failures become more evident ahead of the 20th Party Congress. This panel of experts with deep knowledge of China's political landscape will work to dispel misconceptions and provide evidenced-based analysis of likely trajectories for Xi's political control and policy agenda in the months ahead.

Get more details [here].

01 June 2022 @ 3:30 p.m. (GMT-4) Atlantic Council, USA

Offshore Wind and Greening Europe's Energy Supply: A Fireside Chat With Belgian Minister Of Energy Tinne Van Der Straeten

In this event, Belgian Minister of Energy Tinne Van der Straeten will discuss her country's expertise in offshore wind deployment, Belgium's potentially game-changing ambitions, and the endeavor's core challenges. What obstacles must Belgium and its partners overcome to achieve their climate and energy security objectives?

Join this event to get answers to this question and more via this [link].

02 June 2022 @ 12:00 p.m. (GMT-4) Atlantic Council, USA

The Future of the ITU: How will Russia-Ukraine Affect Technology Standards?

Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, geopolitical tensions in Europe and globally have spiked, and already-contentious issues across the globe have become increasingly fraught. One such inflection point is the upcoming election for the next Secretary General of the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), the UN's official technology regulator. This event will delve deep into this and more.

For further information, visit this [page].

02 June 2022 @ 3:30 p.m. (GMT-4) Atlantic Council, USA

Fireside Chat with Margaritis Schinas, European Commission Vice-President

Russian cyber-attacks threaten Europe's critical infrastructure and require mechanisms for prevention. To this, the Vice-President of the European Commission; H.E. Margaritis Schinas will be joining the Atlantic Council to discuss Europe's response to these issues, their transatlantic implications, and the future of transatlantic cooperation in these areas.

Get to know more this event by visiting [webpage].

02 June 2022 @ 12:00-13:30 p.m. (GMT+2) Elcano Royal Institute, Spain

Roundtable 'European security after Ukraine: The role of defence innovation'

This event seeks to assess how the NATO Alliance and its members should respond to emerging and disruptive technologies, while maintaining a military-technological edge as ongoing conflict in Ukraine has stepped up the need to align efforts with the new strategic and operational realities, revealing the importance of the exchange on key issues like innovation policies and hubs for the defence sector.

See [Elcano] for additional information about this event.

02 June 2022 @ 10:00 a.m. (GMT+2) Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), Germany

Digital Climate Conference for Hessen's Municipalities: Successfully Shaping the Solidarity-Ecological Change

Though climate crisis is global, none should accept it powerlessly. As full-time or honorary local politicians, as employees in the administration, as committed citizens, each can successfully help shape the solidarity-ecological change. In the "Climate Handbook for Municipalities in Hesse" last year, it was indicated which roles the municipalities can take on and in which policy areas there are opportunities for change. Thus, this event will seek to deepen these insights and discuss the various fields of action and the municipal scope, to learn and develop new ideas.

See [here] for more details about this event.

02 June 2022 @ 7:00 p.m (GMT+2) Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), Germany

Resistance to the Right - from Direct Flyer to #hashtag

Just as the extreme right has changed in Germany, so have the forms of resistance. In the 1960s, flyers were duplicated on matrices in pubs and distributed on the street. Today, social media campaigns are an indispensable form of protest. The democratic actors always remain challenged. How have the forms of

protest changed since the 1960s? How did resistance organize itself, how is it organized today? Have the forms adapted to a new zeitgeist or has the content of the protest also changed? What is at the heart of protests against the right today: fighting the enemies of democracy? Enlightenment? protection of victims? This event aims to exchange views on the resistance against the extreme right yesterday and today.

Get more details on this event [here].

02 June 2022 @ 10:00 a.m. (GMT-3), Fundação Getúlio Vargas (FGV). Brazil

The role of CMAP in strengthening public policy evaluation in the federal government

This roundtable will debate the role of the Council for Monitoring and Evaluation of Public Policies (CMAP) in the process of evaluating public policies in the federal government, highlighting the selection criteria of policies to be evaluated, the formation of the annual agenda, and the attribution of each one of the actors involved.

To learn more, visit [FGV].

02 June 2022 @ 11:15am (GMT-7) Fraser Institute, Canada

2022 Dr. Harold W. Siebens Lecture & Luncheon

Over the past several years, Canada has suffered from higher taxes, enormous expansion of government financed by more debt, and marked increases in regulations. These policies have resulted in slower economic growth, higher taxes on the middle class, a legacy of massive debt for young Canadians, and an exodus of investment. The panel will discuss these, and other important policy issues facing Canada.

See [fraser] for further information.

02 June 2022 @ 2:00 p.m. (GMT+9) Korea Institute for International Economic Policy (KIEP), South Korea

Economic Security Issues and Responses to Strengthen Industrial Competitiveness and Supply Chain

Korea Institute for International Economic Policy (KIEP) will hold a seminar with the Korea Institute for Industrial Economics & Trade (KIET), the Korea Institute of Intellectual Property (KIIP), and the Korean Security Agency of Trade and Industry (KOSTI) under the theme of Economic Security Issues and Response to Strengthen Industrial Competitiveness and Supply Chain.

More information is accessible via this [link].

03 June 2022 @ 10:30 a.m. (GMT-4) Urban Institute, USA

Modernizing the Community Reinvestment Act: Ensuring Banks Meet the Credit Needs of Their Communities

The Urban Institute in collaboration with the leaders of the three federal banking regulatory agencies, and housing finance experts will host a hybrid in-person and virtual event focused on the proposed regulations, the future of the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA), and new Urban Institute research.

Follow this [link] for more.

03 June 2022 @ 10:30 a.m. (GMT-4) American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research (AEI), USA

Agency: A Book Event with Ian Rowe and Yuval Levin

Kindly join AEI's Mr. Rowe and Yuval Levin for a book discussion on how to promote an aspirational spirit among America's children and help them build lives unshackled by present realities.

Click [here] for more.

06 June 2022 @ 11:30 a.m. (GMT-4) American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research (AEI), USA

How Has COVID-19 Changed the Geography of America's Cities?

The Harvard University's Edward Glaeser, Chapman University's Joel Kotkin, and Yichen Su of the Federal

Reserve Bank of Dallas on June 6th will have a conversation on the changing geography of America's cities triggered by COVID-19, and this event will be moderated by AEI's Howard Husock.

For more information, check this [webpage].

06 June 2022 @ 2:00 p.m. (GMT-4) Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, USA

Nathaniel L. Moir — Number One Realist: Bernard Fall and Vietnamese Revolutionary Warfare

As the United States reflects on its infamous history of "forever wars" and searches for lessons to avoid similar entanglements in the future, join the Belfer Center's Applied History Project for an open session of our Applied History Working Group. Its members—distinguished historians and public servants—study the past to illuminate the most pressing challenges we face today.

Get additional information on [Belfer center].

07 June 2022 @ 11:00 a.m. (GMT-4) Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, USA

Pakistan's Bomb: Development and Current Implications

Project on Managing the Atom (MTA) hosts a reflective and policy-oriented discussion focused on Pakistan's development of its nuclear arsenal and implications for South Asian security today.

Visit this [webpage] for further information.

07 June 2022 @ 3:00 p.m. (GMT+1) LSE IDEAS, UK

Russia-Ukraine Dialogues: Negotiating with Putin

This event will center on discussions about the negotiations in the context of the Russia-Ukraine war, answering the questions: What are the key issues that have to be resolved? What lessons can we learn from past negotiations between Russia and Ukraine? Should Ukraine be negotiating with Putin?

[LSE] has more information on this event.

07 June 2022 @ 2:00 p.m. (GMT-4), Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), USA

Oil and Gas Majors in the Energy Transition

New demand trends are seen in the global energy markets which continue to undergo various changes. There are issues of supply chain and rising energy prices in the global energy markets which have become obstacles for policymakers and business leaders to achieve decarbonization and energy security. This event will host the CEO of Chevron, Mr. Mike Wirth to discuss the state of the industry and the role U.S. oil and gas can play in the global energy transition.

Visit this [webpage] for further information.

07 June 2022 @ 3:00 p.m. (GMT-4), Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), USA

Private Sector Development and US Foreign Policy: Opportunities and Tensions

CSIS is delighted to host a panel of experts on June 7th to discuss the extent to which U.S. foreign assistance policy harnesses the power of the private sector in responding to great power competition.

Find more about this event [here].

07 June 2022@ 6:00pm (GMT+1), Chatham House, UK

Climate and conflict

Climate change and the destruction of the natural environment represent some of the most significant challenges in our world today pushing more states towards conflict and resulting in greater risks of destabilisation. There is a pressing need for decision-makers to identify practical solutions and address the root causes while avoiding the risks and pitfalls of transition thus, this event aims to discuss such solutions and more.

Get more information about this event by visiting [Chatham].

07 June 2022 @ 4:30pm (GMT-4), Wilson Center, FKA Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars,

USA

A Path to Self-Sufficiency: Advancing Venezuelan Refugee Integration in the Americas

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and International Organization for Migration (IOM), more than 6 million Venezuelans are living abroad, of which over 4.9 million are hosted in Latin American and Caribbean countries. The need for more sustainable and efficient solutions to support both displaced people and host communities has been very great, considering the increasing numbers of displaced people around the world.

Visit this [webpage] for further information about this event.

07 June 2022, 11:00 a.m. (GMT+3) Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO), Russai

A Roundtable Conference "The New Quantum Race. The State Policy and the Corporate Efforts. The Global Experience"

The year 2019 brought into service the first commercial quantum computer IBM Quantum System One and this marked the beginning of a new global race for leadership in the field of quantum technologies. This creation prompted leading governments to encourage their companies to use this technology to create new services and products. It is therefore expected that the integration of quantum computation in various fields, including finance, development of new materials, medicines, secure Internet, artificial intelligence, etc., will lead to a new scientific breakthrough, and provide significant economic and innovative growth to countries involved in research, development, and implementation of quantum technologies.

Join this event to find out more by following this [link].

07 June 2022 @ 11:00 a.m. (GMT-4) Atlantic Council, USA

Balance of Power: Promoting More Women in Leadership

This workshop to be hosted by Atlantic Council will discuss strategies for empowering more women to reach senior leadership positions in Saudi Arabia and the wider MENA region.

Follow this [link] for further details.

07 June 2022 @ 12:00 p.m. (GMT-4) Atlantic Council, USA

A New Transatlantic Relationship for the Middle East and North Africa

How can the transatlantic alliance, and specifically the US-Italian partnership, counter Russia and China's increasing presence and engagement in the Middle East and North Africa? What does this great power rivalry mean for the region's future? What role can transatlantic allies play in promoting stability and security in the region? Make a date with the Atlantic Council on 7th June 2022 to find answers to these questions.

For more information, visit this [website].

07 June 2022 @ 5:00-7:00 p.m. (GMT+2) Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), (Italy)

Strategic Compass: Le Sfide Per l'Italia

IAI will host a discussion on the way ahead for EU's defence and security integration in the wake of the EU Strategic Compass. The event's main objective will be for participants to reflect on how Italy should position itself during the document's implementation in order to take on an active role in this process, while safeguarding its interests.

Visit [IAI] to sign up and for further event details.

Recent Book Releases

Deepti Acharya, ***Water and Public Policy in India: Politics, Rights, and Governance***, Routledge India, 248 pages, published in September 17, 2021, reviewed in [LSE].

Tanja Burkhard, ***Transnational Black Feminism and Qualitative Research: Black Women, Racialization and Migration***, Routledge, 112 pages, published on November 17, 2021. For a review, see [LSE].

Robert Samuels and Toluse Olorunnipa**, **His Name Is George Floyd: One Man's Life and the Struggle for

Racial Justice, Viking, 432 pages, published on May 17, 2022, with a review in [The Guardian].

Louisa Lim, ***Indelible City: Dispossession and Defiance in Hong Kong***, Riverhead Books, 320 pages, published on April 19, 2022. Visit [The New York Times] to read a review.

Karen Cheung, ***The Impossible City: A Hong Kong Memoir***, Random House, 352 pages, published on February 15, 2022, with a review in [Asian Review of Books].

Justin E. H. Smith, ***The Internet Is Not What You Think It Is: A History, a Philosophy, a Warning***, Princeton University Press, 208 pages, published on March 22, 2022, reviewed in [Los Angeles Review of Books].

Anthony R. DiMaggio, ***Rising Fascism in America: It Can Happen Here***, Routledge, 304 pages, published on December 31, 2021. For a review, see [Los Angeles Review of Books].

Calls for Papers

The **Oxford Brookes University** invites paper proposals the Eighteenth International Conference on Interdisciplinary Social Sciences. Conference theme is "***Agency in an Era of Displacement and Social Change***" to be held on July 19-21, 2023. Closing date for submission is June 19, 2023. For more information, visit [The Social Sciences].

The **9th International Conference on Information Management**, scheduled for March 17-19, 2023 at Oxford University, seeks paper proposal related to the topics of information management and information system applications. Deadline for submission is November 1, 2022. Further details are available at [ICIM].

Jobs and Positions

The **Department of History and Political Science at Tuskegee University** welcomes application of the position of a tenure track ***Assistant Professor in Political Science.*** Deadline for applications is June 16, 2022. If you are interested, find more information at [Tuskegee].

The **Department of Political Science at the University of South Carolina** is offering a ***full-time***

instructor position in International Relations. The position will remain open until filled. Review of applications has started on April 16, 2022. For more details, see [USC Job].

The Department of Political Science at the University of California Los Angeles is recruiting ***part-time lecturers in Race and Ethnic Politics***. Closing date for applications is June 1, 2022. Visit [UCLA] for more information.

The **Department of Political Science, University of Oslo**, is offering two ***Associate Professor positions in Political Science***. Deadline for applications is August 22, 2022. Details of the job offer are available at [University of Oslo].

The **Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Cultures at the University of Leeds** seeks applications for the position of a ***Teaching Fellow in Theology, Philosophy of Religion and Human Rights***. Application can be submitted until June 7, 2022. See further information at [University of Leeds].

The **Princeton School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University** is recruiting ***a Lecturer in Public and International Affairs***. The position will remain open until filled. Review of applications has started on April 15, 2022. Visit [Princeton University] for more information.

Stanford University is offering a ***joint appointment as a continuing-term senior fellow and tenured faculty at the associate or full professor level*** in the broad area of China and Climate Change. Closing date for applications is September 15, 2022. For further details of the vacancy, see [Stanford University].

The **Brookings Institution** seeks applications for the position of an ***Assistant Director, Center on the United States and Europe***. If you are interested in the position, find more information at [Brookings].

Schmidt Futures, a New York-based philanthropic venture that funds science and technology research as well as talent networking program is looking for a ***Director for its International Strategy Forum***. For more information, see [Schmidt Futures].

David Rockefeller Studies Program at the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) is hiring an ***Analyst*** to work in the Program's Greenberg Center for Geoeconomic Studies. The position is based in New York. Further details are provided at [CFR].

Lazard Geopolitical Advisory (LGA) is offering the position of a ***Geopolitical Advisory Associate***. The position is based in Austin, Texas. Find more about the job offer at [Lazard].

Team:

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