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Asia in Review

Grasp the pattern, read the trend

No. 24, June/2022, 2

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Dear Readers,

Welcome to this week's Asia in Review issue.

Wishing you an informative read, I extend special greetings to everyone who celebrates Iceland's and Seychelles' National Day in this 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: New measures to boost trade sector

(dql) The State Council, China's Cabinet, has decided to launch new measures to strengthen the country's trade sector, including granting export tax rebates for businesses with sound creditworthiness, expanding imports of high-quality goods and accelerating port loading, unloading, transshipment and customs clearance.

In line with earlier moves to stabilize China's economy [see AiR No. 22, May/2022, 5, AiR No. 20, May/2022, 3], the measures were announced at a June 9 meeting of the State Council, presided by Premier Li Keqiang. They come at a time when China's trade sector is confronted with blows caused by lockdown measures to fight Omicron outbreaks in big cities like Shenzhen and Shanghai, and long-term challenges including the impact of Western sanctions against Russia and the Ukraine crisis on China's industrial chain stability and its trade supply side. According to the World Bank,

China GDP will grow by 4.3 percent in 2022, down from 8.1 percent in 2021. [Global Times] [World Bank Group]

On the same day, Chinese President Xi Jinping has instructed all local governments and central government departments to strive for economic and social stability during his two-day trip to the southwestern province of Sichuan, calling on cadres to "effectively" balance containment of the pandemic and economic development. [South China Morning Post]

Mr. Peer Morten Strantzen contributed research to this entry.

China: Beijing signals easing control over tech firms after approval of second batch of new video games

(dql) In a sign of further easing its regulatory grip on tech companies, the National Press and Publication Administration, China's agency responsible for regulating and distributing news, print and Internet publications, has approved its second batch of video games this year following a first approval in April.

Over more than one year, Beijing had tightened control over the country's gaming industry that saw giants such as Tencent and Net Ease declaring loss of USD 60 billion of stock value and forced some 14,000 Chinese gaming firms to de-register. In August last year, the gaming time for young gamers under 18 were limited to three hours per week, as part of efforts of the government to combat the threat of addictive habits in society, with online gaming perceived by the party as "spiritual opium," replacing "religion as the opium of the people." [The Straits Times] [See also AiR No. 15, April/2022, 2]

Mr. Peer Morten Strantzen contributed research to this entry.

China: New drone warship launched

(dql) China has successfully tested is first indigenous AI-operated drone vessel, signaling a further advancement of China in unmanned war capabilities.

Resembling the US Navy's most advanced stealth destroyer USS Zumwalt, the 200-ton unmanned surface vessel (USV) is claimed by Zhejiang-based developer Beikun Intelligence to be best in class with regards to detection range, stealth capability,

integrated power system, and comprehensive environmental awareness, among other technical aspects. [Global Times] [The EurAsian Times]

Mr. Peer Morten Strantzen contributed research to this entry.

China: Financial rewards for tip-offs on national security threats announced

(dql) Last week, China's Ministry of State Security China has issued a new regulation under which whistleblowers will be rewarded cash payments for "particularly significant contributions to the prevention, suppression and punishment of acts seriously endangering national security," ranging from USD 1,500 to USD 15,000.

The regulation, introduced with immediate effect, also states that an informant's workplace or organization will be punished if any move is taken to revenge the informant or to hide evidence from national security police. [South China Morning Post] [CNN]

Mr. Peer Morten Strantzen contributed research to this entry.

China: Campaign against crimes related to guns and explosives launched

(dql) A special campaign to crack down on crimes related to guns and explosives has been launched by China's Ministry of Public Security that seeks to strengthen efforts to eradicate criminal gangs and introduce harsh punishments for those involved in related cases. It also seeks to identify trafficking networks as well as the source and whereabouts, and crack down of dens where these weapons are produced and sold. [Xinhua]

Mr. Peer Morten Strantzen contributed research to this entry.

Japan: Prime Minister Kishida Fumio's Cabinet survives a no-confidence motion

(nc) A few days before the current Diet session comes to an end, on June 9, an opposition party, the Constitutional Democratic Party (CDP), filed two no-

confidence motions. The first was against the Cabinet of Prime Minister Kishida Fumio and the second towards Lower House Speaker Hiroyuki Hosoda. Both Kishida's Cabinet and Hisoda have survived the no-confidence motions in the country's Lower House.

The first no-confidence motion criticized Kishida's administration for failing to meet its obligations to the public by not addressing the price hike that has dampened consumption. Kishida has been criticized for not listening to the people who suffer from the soaring prices but to the U.S. and the Bank of Japan.

In a second no-confidence motion, which was against Hosoda, the CDP filed it hast it felt he was unfit to serve given allegations that he sexually harassed female journalists. Furthermore, a weekly magazine made allegations of bribery over Hosoda. His team paid local assembly members during the campaign for last October's Lower House election, which they recorded as labor expenses.

The ruling Liberal Democratic Party and its partner the Komeito, as well as the opposition represented by the Nippon Ishin (Japan Innovation Party) and the Democratic Party for the People who both left before the end of the plenary, opposed both motions. The Social Democratic Party, which is the CDP's parliamentary ally, and the Japanese Communist Party supported the motions. The ruling coalition enjoyed a large majority on the ballots for both motions.

Kishida later declared wishing to continue fulfilling his responsibilities and maintain the confidence of the Diet to live up to expectations. [Mainichi] [Japan Times] [Arab News Japan]

Japan: A new type of imprisonment for cyberbullying

(nc) On June 13, Japan's Parliament, the Diet, passed a bill to increase penalties for those who commit cyber violence, and they can now face jail terms in addition to fines.

This decision takes place after the suicide of the professional wrestler and reality TV actress Kimura Hana in May 2020, who was the victim of cyberbullying. This was a sensational cyber violence incident in Japan and the two men involved were each fined about USD 66 which is widely seen by the public as too light.

Under current Japanese law, cyberbullies can be punished with criminal detention of up to 30 days or a

fine of up to USD 74. The Japanese Senate adopted an amendment to the "Penal Code", stipulating that Internet abuse can be punished by up to one year in prison and a fine of up to USD 2, 221. But it is unclear what level of online violence carries the highest penalties.

The Diet's discussion of the bill mainly focused on how to balance free speech and online behavior management. According to the additional provisions, the new law will be reviewed three years after its implementation to ensure that there are no restrictions on freedom of expression online. The new law will enter into force 20 days after its publication. [Mainichi] [South China Morning Post] [NHK World-Japan]

Japan: Farmers to lower rice production in favor of wheat and soybean

(nc) With the rising grain price due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, farmers in 37 prefectures among 47 announced that they will increase their wheat production and reduce rice as of next year.

Since 1962, the consumption of rice follows a downward trend in Japan because of the diversification of lifestyles. This means an increase in soybean and wheat consumption, but 80 and 90 percent of soybean and wheat consumed in Japan is imported. As Russia and Ukraine are major producers, prices have increased, and the Japanese government encouraged farmers to switch from rice production to wheat and soybean. A request to which 37 prefectures have responded positively. 27 prefectures made plans to produce more wheat and 30 more soybeans. [Japan Today]

Japan: Firms sued over asbestos damage

(nc) On June 7, 190 plaintiffs from former construction workers and bereaved families filed lawsuits in 10 district courts across Japan. They demand from about twenty asbestos manufacturers to be compensated for the damage to health caused by the repeated inhalation of asbestos on construction sites.

In May 2021, the Supreme Court issued its decision over the case acknowledging the responsibility of the asbestos manufacturers but also the government for the health damage incurred to construction workers. However, compensation extraction has stalled as the

question of which of the manufacturers is responsible in each case has arisen. For the former workers whose illnesses have been linked with proof of their asbestos exposure, the government is in the process of giving compensation. But for those whose case has still not been presented to the court, a compensation fund has been created and they will be paid according to past settlements. Lawyers who represent the 190 plaintiffs request that the manufacturers contribute to the government's compensation fund. [Mainichi]

Japan: Promoting electricity-saving due to possible shortages

(nc) The Japanese government has warned the public to prepare for possible electricity shortages this summer and winter and asked for its cooperation by starting to cut back on electricity use. The last time the government made such a nationwide request was after the Fukushima nuclear disaster.

After a series of aging thermal power stations were shut down or suspended in Japan, the country is struggling to secure enough electricity. Furthermore, most nuclear power plants are still offline since the safety regulations imposed by the Nuclear Regulation Authority are stricter than before 2011. Japan's overall electricity supply capabilities are being reduced and electricity supply reserve rates are expected to drop soon.

To slow and counter this loss, the government has decided to inspect thermal power plants thoroughly to prevent their suspension if possible. In addition, the government has planned on sharing information with the public on how they can save electricity. A request will be made to ask the public to turn off unnecessary lights and set air conditioners at twenty-eight degrees Celsius. Businesses and local authorities will also be registered in a contact system so that the government can ask them to save electricity in the event of an energy emergency. Other measures are being considered such as restrictions applied to large companies and procedures to execute intentional power outages in targeted areas to avoid general blackouts.

Considering the government's request to the public, support has arisen for the measures to be set soon. In Osaka, 15,000 candles were lit during the semiannual "Candle Night for One Million People" event. The aim was to promote saving electricity by reducing the lights of the surrounding buildings. [Japan Today] [Mainichi]

Japan: Wind turbines hindering the detection of missiles

(nc) Wind turbines being installed across the country were found to be interfering with Self-Defense Forces radars in more than 10 locations. These allow the detection of missiles, and this capacity was hindered by wind energy infrastructure. These locations are now under investigation. Some location changes are necessary and energy operators have been asked to revise their projects. On the coast of the Aomori Prefecture, with the threat represented by North Korea, the Defense Ministry has asked for some water off as the radars could be rendered inefficient with surface-to-air missiles due to the turbines. The Japanese government is considering reviewing rules governing wind energy installations. [Mainichi]

South Korea: Truckers' strike continues

(mr) Thousands of South Korean truckers continued their strike that had begun last week for on Monday, June 13, for a seventh day, demanding better payment for their work to secure livelihood in the face of surging fuel prices and other rising prices.

The strike has disrupted production and slowed port operations. The country's auto, steel, petrochemical and other industries have been facing losses worth about USD 1.2 billion since the begin of the strike, according to estimates of the government.

As South Korea is a major supplier of semiconductors, smartphones, batteries, auto, and this latest strike raises also uncertainty over global supply chains already disrupted by China's Covid restrictions and Russia's invasion of Ukraine. [Reuters] [The Straits Times]

For President Yoon Suk-yeol, who assumed office a month ago, the strike is a first concrete policy challenge to face. So far, Yoon has taken a "neutral stance", saying the government should not be involved too much. [Yonhap News Agency]

In a latest development, Prime Minister Han Duck-soo expressed opposition towards the strike, calling them "illicit activities" that would "irrecoverably" damage country's economy and that the public would not support. [AP News]

South Korea: President rejects opposition's plan of reform of parliament's power

(dql) South Korea's main opposition Democratic Party (DP) submitted a proposal for an amendment to the country's National Assembly Act under which parliamentary standing committees would be allowed to request a revision to a presidential decree or enforcement ordinances if deemed to be violating the law.

In the run to the DP's move, President Yoon Suk-yeol has rejected the reform plans of the DP saying such an amendment could be "unconstitutional."

Currently, the DP holds 170 out of 299 seats in the National Assembly. [Yonhap News Agency 1] [Yonhap News Agency 2]

Taiwan: Boosting defense capabilities

(dql) Taiwan's Defense Ministry has concluded a USD 110 million contract with National Chung-Shan Institute of Science and Technology, the island's top weapons manufacturer, for the supply of 11 Bee Eye radars to be deployed on its outlying islands from next year, replacing of the Lockheed Martin portable search and target acquisition radars (PSTAR) currently in use on those islands.

This comes after recent sorties by low-flying objects from mainland China hat have triggered concerns about air defences on these outposts. The commissioned radars are expected to help close this defense gap. [South China Morning Post]

Furthermore, the Ministry announced that US has approved the possible sale of spare parts and technical assistance for Taiwan's Navy, worth USD 120 million. According to the ministry, the purchase aims to help the island keep its naval vessels properly equipped and replenished. The deal is expected to take effect next month. [Taiwan News]

Meanwhile, six Taiwanese F-16 fighter jets returned back to Taiwan on June 10 from a training mission in the US at Luke Air Force Base in Arizona. [Focus Taiwan]

Mr. Peer Morten Strantzen contributed research to this entry.

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

Bangladesh: Thousands protest to call on government to condemn India over comments about Islam

(lm) Thousands of Muslims marched in Bangladesh's capital Dhaka on June 10, raising slogans against the Indian government and calling for a boycott of Indian products in the country over comments made earlier this month by two senior officials in Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's governing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). [The Washington Post]

Nupur Sharma, the BJP's main spokesperson made derogatory comments during a television debate last month prompting protests in India. Naveen Jindal, the party's top media staffer in New Delhi, followed up with a since-deleted tweet about the prophet. Both BJP leaders were later punished, but India struggled to contain a major diplomatic outrage from Muslim-majority countries. [AiR No. 23, June/2022, 1]

Against this backdrop, Muslims held rallies across Bangladesh after Friday Prayer last week; one of the largest protests was organized by Islami Andolan Bangladesh, a grouping of Islamist parties that support the introduction of Islamic law in the country. Demonstrators also criticized their own government for not condemning India publicly for the comments made by the two BJP officials. [The Business Standard]

In related developments, a lawmaker for Bangladesh's opposition Nationalist Party on June 12 demanded a motion in parliament to condemn the remarks. He also demanded the government summon the Indian high commissioner in Dhaka to lodge a formal protest. [bdnews24.com]

Bangladesh: Thousands of garment workers continue protests in Dhaka

(lm) Thousands of workers from the garment sector rallied in Bangladesh's capital Dhaka on June 11 to protest against police violence during demonstrations held earlier this month by the workers to demand payment of due wages. [World Socialist Web Site]

Since May 2020, garment workers across Bangladesh have been protesting outside factories over unpaid wages after brands and retailers canceled orders and delayed payments to their suppliers in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Earlier this month, protests in Dhaka turned violent as allegations of vandalism rose against the agitating workers, resulting in police firing water cannons to disperse the workers.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina recently said the protesting garment workers were being instigated to stage demonstrations and warned that instability in the export-focused sector will lead to closures. She also warned people in Bangladesh to prepare for new austerity measures as the international economic crisis further impacts the country. [The Financial Express]

Bangladesh: Rebel group from Chittagong Hill Tracts region proposes peace talks

(lm) A rebel group from Bangladesh's restive Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) region has submitted a formal proposal to hold peace talks with the government, officials said on June 13, following several years of backchannel talks. [Voice of America]

The CHT, which holds strategic importance because it shares borders with Myanmar on the south and southeast, and with India on the north and northeast, is home to dozens of indigenous Buddhist, Christian and animist communities. In 1997, the main rebel outfit in the region, the Shanti Bahini, signed a peace accord and laid down its arms following 20 years of insurgency against government forces.

But the United People's Democratic Front (UPDF), a splinter group of younger rebels, rejected the agreement, claiming that the so-called Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord failed to address key issues such as autonomy for the region and the presence of thousands of government troops and Bengali settlers. Since then, a turf war between the JSS and UPDF has left hundreds of people dead, including senior UPDF figures and a small number of Bangladeshi soldiers.

The UPDF has now offered to hold peace talks with a former army major, Emdadul Islam, a key architect of the 1997 agreement.

India: Ruling BJP receives boost in polls to upper House ahead of presidential elections on July 18

(rk) India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its allies have secured eight out of 16 seats in parliament's upper House that went for poll last week, while five went to the main opposition Indian National Congress (INC) party. The results are widely considered a boost for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's BJP, coming ahead of the presidential election next month and the 2024 general elections. [Moneycontrol]

In the leadup to the polls, 41 candidates had already been declared elected unopposed. In light of this, voting for the remaining seats in the Rajya Sabha were only held in Maharashtra, Haryana, and Karnataka on June 10. Members of the upper House are chosen through indirect elections — voting by elected members of legislative assemblies as prescribed in Article 80(4) of the Constitution. [The Hindu]

Meanwhile, India's Election Commission has announced July 18 as the date for the 16th Presidential Election in which the so-called Electoral College will vote for the successor of incumbent President Ram Nath Kovind. [The Indian Express]

The BJP is expected to make its candidate win with support of its allies at the centre and in the states. However, the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance is short of the required majority mark in the Rajya Sabha and thus relies on support from allies such as the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam and other friendly parties. [Times of India]

India: Election Commission recommends ban on opinion and exit polls, new limit on poll candidature

(sr/lm) India's new chief election commissioner, Rajiv Kumar, has recommended the law ministry to ban opinion polls and exit polls ahead of elections, while also suggesting restricting the number of seats a candidate can contest, *The Indian Express* reported on June 13. [The Indian Express]

Kumar assumed his position this May, and the Election Commission soon thereafter announced it would initiate ranked action against over 2,100 political parties that had been found non-existent or failed to to submit contribution reports. [AiR No. 22, May/2022, 5]

India: Newspapers, agencies do no perform "public function", Delhi High Court says

(rk/lm) The high court in the Indian capital New Delhi has noted that a newspaper or a press agency engaged in the dissemination of news cannot be considered as performing a "public function", observing that expressions such as "public function" and "public duty" relate to "functions performed by the State in its sovereign capacity."

The high court made the observation while hearing a petition filed against French news agency Agence France Presse (AFP) by one of its Indian employees alleging racial discrimination and harrasment by the organisation. The petitioner claimed that AFP was established as an autonomous civil entity by an act of the French parliament and was mandated to provide objective information to the public. The petition was later dismissed.[Live Law]

India: Hate speech by leaders warrant stringent actions, Delhi High Court observes

(sr) The Delhi High Court on June 13 said hate speech made by political and religious leaders and elected representatives would face stringent actions if they were capable of inciting violence or feelings of hatred against members of specific communities. [NDTV]

The high court made the observation while hearing a petition filed by the leaders of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) challenging a trial court decision that had refused to order registration of a First Information Report against two leaders of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party for alleged hate speech. The petition was later dismissed. [The Times Of India]

India: Protests flare across country over anti-Muslim comments by senior members of ruling party

(rk/lm) Muslims have taken to the streets across India in recent weeks to protest against derogatory remarks against Islam's Prophet Mohammad made by two senior leaders of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Clashes have broken out between Muslims and Hindus and in some cases between protesters and police in several areas.

Nupur Sharma, the BJP's main spokesperson made derogatory comments during a television debate last month prompting protests in India. Naveen Jindal, the party's top media staffer in New Delhi, followed up with a since-deleted tweet about the prophet. Both BJP leaders were later punished, but for New Delhi, the diplomatic damage was already done: Twenty governments and multilateral organizations, including the 57-member Organization of Islamic Cooperation, issued formal condemnations. In the Persian Gulf region, where India has deep economic ties, governments denounced the remarks and summoned Indian ambassadors. [AiR No. 23, June/2022, 1]

In India, two young demonstrators were killed on June 10 in eastern Jharkhand state during protests that erupted after Friday Prayers in Ranchi, the state's capital. However, it was not clear if they were killed in police firing. According to Indian news reports, dozens of other demonstrators were injured, as were some police officers. [Al Jazeera] [The Straits Times]

In the eastern state of West Bengal, stone pelting, attacks on trains and destruction of public property has been reported. A leader of the opposition was also barred from visiting the violence-hit areas where several offices of the BJP were ransacked and set ablaze. [The Hindustan Times]

In Prayagraj, a city in northern Uttar Pradesh state, the police fired tear gas and charged protesters with batons after motorcycles and carts were set on fire and rocks were thrown. At least 10 police officers were

injured, according to local law enforcement. Over the weekend, then, the BJP-led government ordered officials to demolish the homes of people allegedly linked to the riots. The move drew condemnation from constitutional experts and rights groups, which interpreted the destruction as punishment, but state authorities said it was because it was illegally built on public land. [BBC] [CNN] [The Hindu 1]

In almost all the violence-hit states, local administrations have resorted to suspending internet services and imposing curfews. Furthermore, India's home ministry issued an advisory to the state governments asking to stay on vigil as police forces could be attacked during the protests. [The Hindu 2]

Meanwhile, leaders of prominent Islamic groups and mosques have appealed to fellow Muslims to suspend plans for protests. [ABC News]

India: Central government makes key changes in eligibility rules for appointment of Chief of Defence Staff

(rk) Six months after the demise of General Bipin Rawat, India's first Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), the central government has changed the rules of eligibility for the top military post, significantly broadening the scope of eligible officers. [Mint]

As per the notification issued on June 7 by the defense ministry, the top serving and retired officers from the Indian Army, Indian Air Force and Indian Navy will now be eligible to serve as CDS. The notification also opens a path for the second-highest active rank officers of the defence services to supersede their seniors - the chief of the three services - to take on the role. Another change in eligibility criteria marks the inclusion of recently retired service chiefs and vice chiefs, despite the age ceiling being 62 years. [The Hindu]

A reason for the change in rules, according to defence experts, could be that the government wanted to select a three-star officer as CDS, possibly indicating a "lack of confidence" in the current heads of the three services. However, if a three-star officer gets selected, it could lead to "turbulence" and "friction" in a "status-conscious military", some observers warn. [The Wire]

The highest-ranking uniformed officer on active duty in the Indian military, the CDS is appointed as the Secretary of the Department of Military Affairs. The CDS is also the military head and permanent Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee of the Indian Armed

Forces. The post has been vacant since the death of General Rawat in a helicopter crash in December last year [see AiR No. 50, December/2021, 2].

India: Police charge 30 soldiers for killing six tribal labourers in Nagaland state last year

(rk) 30 military personnel in India's northeastern state of Nagaland have been charged for killing six tribal labourers mistaken for militants during a botched security operation last December. A police probe has found that the accused did not follow the standard operating procedure and the rules of engagement. However, the request for prosecution has been awaiting approval by the Department of Military Affairs since April. [Al Jazeera] [The Indian Express] [The Telegraph]

On December 4, a unit of the Assam Rifles mistook a group of laborers for militants and opened fire. The soldiers had laid an ambush for a week following intelligence that insurgents were planning to attack soldiers in the area, according to a police report. Six men were killed and two critically injured in the shooting. Seven others were gunned down when villagers, angry after discovering the bullet-riddled bodies of the labourers on an army truck had clashed with the soldiers. [AiR No. 49, December/2021, 31]

Several parts of insurgency-hit northeastern India are declared "disturbed" under the contentious Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) that allows armed forces to open fire at civilians if they deem it necessary. The killings had renewed calls from local residents and politicians for the revocation of the AFSPA, and India's central government this April fully or partially withdrew the law from parts of three northeastern states [see AiR No. 14, April/2022, 1].

India: Central Intelligence on high alert after Al-Qaeda announces revenge attacks over prophet remarks

(sr) India has tightened public security after the regional branch of Al-Qaeda, known by its acronym AQIS, has said it plans to carry out suicide bombings in revenge for the "insulting and slandering" remarks made by two senior leaders of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) against Islam's Prophet Mohammad. [The Guardian]

In a letter dated June 6, AQIS threatened to launch suicide attacks in Delhi, Mumbai, Uttar Pradesh, and Gujarat to avenge the insult. The intelligence agencies first verified the note before informing all the state police concerned to stay on high alert. [The Indian Express]

A diplomatic row erupted when twenty governments and multilateral organizations, including the 57-member Organization of Islamic Cooperation, issued formal condemnations to protest against a remark made by two BJP spokespeople last month, which they found to be derogatory about the prophet [see AiR No. 23, June/2022, 1]. The remark also triggered protests by Muslims in Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh,resulting in violence and unrest [see entry in this edition].

India: Banks likely to deny power ministry funding for coal-fired power plants

(sr) Banks in India are likely to decide against funding the working capital requirements of 13 coal-fired power plants – key to the power ministry's efforts to tide over an ongoing electricity shortage – *The Indian Express* reported on June 10, citing people familiar with the developments. [The Indian Express]

Earlier in May, at a time when India was facing a power deficit due to an unprecedented rise in demand, the ministry had asked all power plants fuelled by imported coal to start operating at full capacity and indicated that these plants needed working capital to purchase coal. However, in a clear indication that it deemed the power projects not viable, the Reserve Bank of India later asked banks to exercise caution in lending to the 13 power plants.

Nepal: Police fatally shoot protester demanding protection from tiger attacks

(vd) Nepali police killed a teenage girl on June 6 when they opened fire on protesters who had blocked a highway to demand the government do more to protect them from wild animals from a nearby national park. [Human Rights Watch]

Following the incident, Home Minister Bal Krishna Khand told parliament that officials were meant to "resolve the dispute[s] … using the least amount of force. There was no order to shoot." He also

announced that a committee would be appointed to investigate the incident.[The Kathmandu Post]

Pakistan: Government unveils 2022/23 budget, boosts defense budget by nearly 6 percent

(ha) Pakistan's Finance Minister Miftah Ismail on June 10 presented the budget for 2022/23 fiscal year starting in July, aiming for economic growth of 5 percent amid pressure to control a surging inflation and reach a deal with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to ensure Islamabad can meet its foreign payment obligations. [Reuters]

The fiscal deficit is budgeted to decrease to 4.9 percent from 7.1 percent in the current fiscal year, with an average inflation of 11.5 percent. According to Ismail, Pakistan will need USD 41 billion in the next fiscal year to cover USD 21 billion in loan repayments, USD 12 billion to finance the current-account deficit and USD 8 billion to lift its forex stockpile to a safer level. He also said he was "very confident" that Islamabad would find the money, but stayed short saying how.[The Express Tribune]

In order to finance the budget deficit and meet IMF demands for fiscal sustainability, the government will raise different categories of taxes, aside from introducing a new tax on those who have more than one immovable property in Pakistan with a value of over USD 120,000. Similarly there will be an imposition of USD 0.25 per liter levy along with a 17 percent sales tax on petroleum products. The finance minister also announced several austerity measures to reduce expenditure, including a ban on new cars for government officials and reduction in fuel consumption by officials. [Dawn]

At the same time, the government is giving the military a nearly 6 percent funding increase, and it increased the fiscal defense budget by 2.69 percent to USD 7.4 billion. However, total military spending is not reflected in these figures, as they omit procurement under the Armed Forces Development Program, pensions and other military expenditure. [DefenseNews]

Pakistan: Police investigating sudden death of contentious televangelist

(ha) Pakistani police are investigating the circumstances surrounding the sudden death of the country's most prominent and contentious TV host, Aamir Liaquat Hussain, who was found unconscious at home in Karachi. [Reuters]

Hussain switched from televangelism to politics, being elected as lawmaker in the general elections held in 2018 as a member of the Pakistan Tehreek Insaf party of former Prime Minister Imran Khan. Prior to this, he was a member of parliament from 2002 until 2008, when he was expelled by the Muttahida Qaumi Movement party.

His media career was also marred by controversy – he gave babies to childless couples on TV and was banned for hate speech. Earlier this year, he married for a third time but his bride filed for divorce in May, publicly accusing Hussain of domestic abuse and being a drug addict. [BBC]

According to the police officials, the preliminary reports showed no sign of foul play; however, a detailed post-mortem examination of the politician was not conducted due to the refusal of his family. A close friend of the deceased said Hussain was disturbed after a video featuring him in a state of undress went viral on social media. He was also upset as no channel had approached him for hosting a Ramazan program this year. [Dawn]

Sri Lanka: President Rajapaksa forms two new ministries after brother resigns from parliament

(cm/lm) Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa on June 9 formed two new ministries, including an investment ministry, shortly after his younger brother and the country's former finance minister, Basil Rajapaksa, resigned from parliament. [Republic World]

Basil Rajapaksa will be replaced as lawmaker by tycoon Kulappuarachchige Don Dhammika Perera, one of the country's richest men. Perera could get the newly created role of Minister of Technology and Investment Promotion, according to people with knowledge of the matter. [Bloomberg]

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's elder brother, Mahinda Rajapaksa, resigned as prime minister last month after prolonged protests against the economic crisis turned deadly [see AiR No. 19, May/2022, 2]. The three Rajapaksa siblings have been a prominent force in Sri Lankan politics for decades, but are blamed by

those protesting for allegedly mishandling the nation's economy.

Basil Rajapksa, who resigned as finance minister in April [see AiR No. 14, April/2022, 1], is credited with building the ruling Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP), the political vehicle for the Rajapaksas' return to power in 2019. In light of this, experts believe that he will retain influence despite his resignation from the SLPP. [Reuters]

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

Brunei: Sultan announces early cabinet reshuffle

(bs) Brunei's Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah announced an early Cabinet reshuffle. Among the new ministers is Hajah Romaizah, appointed as the new Minister of Education. As she is the first female minister in the country's government, her appointment marks a key milestone in Brunei's political history.

The reshuffle, however, will not touch upon the Sultan's positions as Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Defense, and Minister of Finance and Economy.

The decision on an early Cabinet reshuffle is aimed at renovating the administration system while maintaining political stability in domestic and foreign affairs, according to a local media analyst. The

country's latest government reshuffle was in early 2018. [The Straits Times]

Cambodia: Political parties react to 2022 commune election's preliminary results

(pw) Following the National Election Commission (NEC)'s announcement that the ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP) is currently leading in the June-5 commune elections, opposite reactions sparked among political parties and their respective supporters. While the CPP sees the election results as a truthful expression of the Cambodian people's will, the main opposition Candlelight Party (CP) alleges that the polls were neither fair, free, nor just and affected by irregularities.

Also, the leading CPP has anticipated that the party will likely take over more than 100 out of 125 seats in the National Assembly, the lower chamber of Cambodia's legislature, in the 2023 general election. It has also claimed that local and international election observers from 75 bodies have considered this election as "inclusive, peaceful, and transparent."

On the other hand, to defend the claim of alleged irregularities in the communal elections, a CP vice-president has alleged that the party's election observers were arbitrarily removed from the ballot-counting centers and reported instances of voter intimidation and vote-buying which the NEC reportedly failed to address.

The CP's claims of electoral irregularities were also echoed by other opposition parties. For instance, the Grassroots Democratic Party noted that the party had collected more than ten complaints mainly regarding candidate coercion and the officials' presence in the vote-counting process. The Khmer Will Party president also alleged that there were cases of intimidation.

Responding to such accusations, the NEC called upon those parties to file official complaints on the matter, noting that only the CP had sent filed its concerns over the alleged breach of electoral regulations. The commission also stated that there were no laws concerning the closure of voting centers and that such closures might be attributed to various causes such as bad weather. Moreover, it has alleged that the CP infringed the law, regulations, and procedures by asserting that the commune election was unfair and plagued with irregularities, which the NEC perceived as the CP's attempt to deceive the populace.

According to the NEC, the preliminary 2022 commune election results showed that the CPP won over 5.3 million votes and 9,338 out of 11,622 commune council seats, while the CP gained 1.6 million votes and 2,180 seats. The official results are expected on June 26. Before the commune elections commenced, several opposition members and commune council candidates were allegedly barred from candidacy and claimed to have breached election laws. they were also reportedly intimidated, physically assaulted, and taken into custody by the Cambodian government and the CPP. [AiR No. 23, June/2022, 1] [Khmer Times 1] [Khmer Times 2] [Khmer Times 3] [Radio Free Asia]

Cambodia: Prosecution in treason case allegedly attempts to tie former opposition party leader to exiled opposition party founder

(pw) Lawyers of Kem Sokha, former leader of the deposed opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP), alleged that the prosecution, in his ongoing treason trial, persisted in questioning the defendant on the demonstrations that followed the 2013 general election alleging that such questions were intended to connect Sokha to Sam Rainsy, the exiled CNRP founder. The move came as the prosecution probed Sokha on photographs and video clips showing him and Rainsy side-by-side. In response, Sokha denied that such evidence indicated his current endorsement of Rainsy. Nonetheless, the defense urged the prosecution to stick to questions concerning only the defendant himself.

The Cambodian government took Sokha into custody in 2017 for ostensibly participating in a plot to oust Prime Minister Hun Sen's government. Previously, he tried to acquit himself of his treason charges by answering about his alleged collusion with the foreign powers and playing a video clip that reportedly validated his nonparticipation in that plot. In November 2021, he claimed Rainsy utilized his name and image for political purposes without his permission. Rainsy alleged that this statement was made under Sen's coercion. [AiR No. 48, November/2021, 5] [AiR No. 22, May/2022, 5] [The Phnom Penh Post]

Rainsy had also been previously indicted by the authorities in recent years on several treason charges, resulting in him being sentenced to ten years in prison on March 17. He was also charged with incitement for purportedly trying to depose Sen in 2018–2019.

Consequently, he has been in exile since 2015. [AiR No. 15, May/2022, 2]

Cambodia: Overseas citizens eligible to vote in country's elections

(pw) The Cambodian government announced that three generations of overseas Cambodians who have left the country during or after the civil war between the forces of the Communist Party, also known as the Khmer Rouge, and the government forces, which lasted from 1967 to 1975, are now allowed to cast their ballots in Cambodian elections.

Reportedly, Prime Minister Hun Sen suggested this measure after his trip to the United States in May, where he was informed about the obstacles that the overseas Cambodians faced in the voting process.

Cambodian nationals holding foreign citizenship can now request Cambodian citizenship or identity cards. If they wish to vote, they would have to sign up and cast their ballots in the Cambodian Embassies in their resident countries or travel to Cambodia to vote from there. [Khmer Times]

Cambodia: 600 additional soldiers to be enlisted in the Armed Forces' three new battalions

(pw) Prime Minister Hun Sen released an order to the Defense Ministry and the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (RCAF) to enroll 600 soldiers into the three recently-established battalions of the RCAF's General Artillery Command. The Defense Minister noted that these additional troops are needed to contribute to his ministry's efforts to improve the country's defenses and meet the personnel requirements of the RCAF's headquarters and units. Also, he mentioned that it is expected that these troops might be trained for six to eight months to be proficient in using the Command's weaponry and satisfy its physical requirements.

This recruitment drive came after the RCAF had reportedly acquired Chinese multiple rocket launchers (MRLs), self-propelled howitzers (SPHs), and their associated support vehicles. The received MRLs and SPHs purportedly comprised six AR2 300-millimeter (mm) MRLs and unknown amounts of 122mm Type 90B MRLs and 155mm SH1 SPHs. [AiR No. 23, June/2022, 1] [Khmer Times]

Indonesia: Decision over 2024 election campaign period officially released

(dbk) Election organizers, the government, and lawmakers released their final decision to hold an electoral campaign of 75 days for the upcoming 2024 general election. While the General Elections Commission (KPU) agreed earlier in early 2022 that the election will be held on February 14, 2024, the decision on a campaign period now allows KPU regulation processes to begin and sets the election in motion.

It has also been announced that presidential and vice-presidential candidacy can be registered from October 19 to November 25, 2022. The KPU will then regulate the campaigns of the candidates for the agreed-upon 75 days: a notable 128 days shorter than the 2019 election campaign.

The KPU's original proposition of a 120-day campaign was rejected by the government to avoid political polarization and division. As a compromise, the KPU requested "regulatory support" from the government to ensure efficient election distribution, to which President Joko Widodo agreed. However budgetary concerns remained a point of contention.

The Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle, the current ruling party, agreed to the KPU's election funding proposal of IDR 76.6 trillion (USD 5.3 billion), after rejecting the previous proposal of IDR 86 trillion (USD 5.9 billion) which was already three times the amount agreed to in the 2019 election.

Moreover, despite the prolonged deliberation and uncertainty, the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle has said that it is confident President Widodo will keep his grassroots votes for the election, certain that his actions for the community earned him enough following.

Meanwhile, the National Awakening Party (PKB) and the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) have begun to discuss forming a potential coalition that would unify moderate and conservative Muslims. [AiR No. 23, June/2022, 1] [The Jakarta Post 1] [The Jakarta Post 2] [The Jakarta Post 3]

Indonesia: Civil groups threaten protest over release of revised criminal code

(dbk) A combination of student organizations and civil groups have pushed for the government to release the completed draft revision of the Indonesian Criminal Code alleging that it is being kept in secrecy from the public.

Around 80 of the aforementioned groups signed a letter addressed to President Joko Widodo demanding that the latest draft bill be made public on the threat of mass public protest. If the bill is not made accessible before a House of Representative's revision in July, the University of Indonesia student body president threatened to “mobilize student alliances and civil society to move together.”

The Jakarta Legal Aid Institute has urged lawmakers to allow “meaningful public participation that is not a mere formality” as the bill revision would have ripple effects across the entire country also alleging that the government is trying to avoid public criticism by withholding the documents.

The Deputy Law and Human Rights Minister reported in May that the government had either reformulated or removed 14 controversial topics in the bill; almost half the number of removals calls for by rights activists. One of the provisions under review makes defaming a sitting president punishable by imprisonment. The government says that through the revision the indictable person may only have a file reported against them, but critics oppose that this still impinges on free speech. [Air No.23, June/2022,1] [The Jakarta Post]

Indonesia: Rights groups oppose candidacy of police officer as human rights commission’s official

(dbk) Human rights and civil society organizations have urged the government to rethink the approval of an active police officer as a candidate for the commissioners of the National Commission on Human Rights. Insp. Gen. Remigius Sigid Tri Hardjanto is the head of the legal division of the National Police and was recently announced as one of the 50 candidates long-listed to lead the Commission from November 2022 to 2027.

Amnesty International Indonesia voiced its opposition to such a candidacy mentioning that repeated cases of police violence and power abuse make police officers not suitable to lead human rights institutions. It also emphasized the many cases of both active and retired police officers taking roles in the Indonesian government, saying: “It’s hard to deny this

phenomenon is part of the police's further penetration into various nonpolice institutions."

In response, Hardjanto said that he is understanding of the public apprehension over his potential conflicts of interest and announced that he will be retiring from the National Police in October, meaning that if he was elected, he would no longer be a police officer upon being endorsed as a new commissioner. [The Jakarta Post]

Indonesia: Capital relocation project to move forward despite critcism from experts

(dbk) The development of Indonesia's new capital Nusantara is set to go ahead and is projected to be completed by 2045 despite growing hesitations from experts. The move, which will take at least USD 32 billion, will move the Indonesian capital from Jakarta to an underdeveloped area in Kalimantan and has been on top of President Joko Widodo's agenda.

However, a survey involving 170 lawmakers, researchers, bureaucrats, and other academic professionals showed that only half of them were confident that the project would come to fruition, with most doubts centering on funding and management. On the same line, a researcher of the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) said that a lack of transparency from the project management has spurred further doubt. [Free Malaysia Today] [The Jakarta Post]

In January, Indonesia approved a bill to relocate USD 32 billion of the national budget to a development project on a Borneo island to prepare for the relocation of the country´s capital. The move was met with widespread criticism that claimed the bill should have been approved after taking into consideration a wider public consultation and after proper environmental scrutiny.

According to the plan, Jakarta shall, nonetheless, remain the country's commercial and financial center. The National Development Planning Agency estimated that 19 percent of the financing for the project would be covered by the state budget, with the rest being financed by public-private partnerships and private investments. In early 2022, Japan's SoftBank stated it would be going against previous claims, and not investing any money into the project.

The plan to move Indonesia's capital was originally drafted in 2019. [AiR No. 3, January/2022, 3]

Indonesia: Unofficial payment request over presence in territorial waters sparks naval investigation

(dbk) Indonesian navy representatives denied allegations that its officers had asked for a USD 375,000 unofficial payment to release a Panama-flagged fuel tanker they detained on May 30 while it was anchored in Indonesian waters in the Singapore Strait. Under Indonesian law, such a move would be "strictly prohibited." Nonetheless, dozens of similar cases in which ship owners paid upwards of USD 300,000 were reported in 2021.

The vessel, Nord Joy ship, was detained under the accusation of docking in Indonesian waters without a permit and sailing without a national flag. Its owner remains unknown. This offense has a maximum penalty of an IDR 200 million fine (USD 13,600) and a one-year prison sentence for the captain. The captain of the Nord Joy has later denied the original allegation that Indonesian naval officers asked for USD 375,000.

Synergy Group, the vessel's managing company based in Singapore, said in a statement that it believed the ship was anchored in a location clear of Indonesian territory. They said they docked on May 26, and by May 30 the ship was boarded by armed naval forces who then escorted them to an anchorage near Batam, around 20 miles (32 km) south of Singapore. Synergy is working with the Indonesian navy and its own layers to overcome the issue.

In November 2021, the Indonesian navy said that there had been an increase in the number of detentions of ships, however, these were all discharged due to deficient evidence or after being processed through Indonesian courts. The navy also denied that unofficial payments were made to navy staff during that time.

According to maritime analysts, the location east of the Singapore Straight has been a common anchorage point for years, with many believing they are in international waters. The Indonesian navy has now announced they will be tightening restrictions for vessels that anchor in Indonesian waters without a license. [Reuters 1] [Reuters 2] [South China Morning Post]

Indonesia: Militant group leader arrested over promotion of Islamic State

(dbk) The top leader of Khilafatul Muslimi, a militant group, known to work closely with Abu Bakar Bashir, spiritual leader of the Southeast Asian annex of the international terrorist web al-Qaida, has been arrested by the National Police after hosting a sequence of motorcycle convoys where banners were carried that promoted the establishment of an "Islamic Caliphate." While the authorities confirmed the arrest, they did not provide any further details or disclose eventual criminal charges against the leader.

The man had served over a decade of prison time in the past over various charges including terrorism, finance terrorism, and multiple bombings.

Police officers at the counterterrorism police unit said the situation will be closely monitored and warned the public to stay aware of militant groups such as this. [The Jakarta Post] [KompasTV in Indonesian]

Laos: Hydropower safety law needed, says Energy Minister

(pw) The Energy Minister urged Lao lawmakers and the government to pass legislation directly concerning the safety measures of hydropower dams. The move would be included as part of the country's renewable energy development plan. He noted that Laos only had hydropower dam construction and operation guidelines and regulations in the past, with no specific laws of the aforementioned type.

The legislative gap has allegedly hampered standardized dam inspections, which could thwart future accidents, and prevents the authorities to examine dam safety measures implemented by building contractors. The ministry also advised that the passage of this law could give recommendations that might speed up the drafting of hydropower plant construction legislation.

In January, a hydropower safety law was drafted and expected to be approved by the National Assembly, Laos's legislative body. The legislation would regulate the safety measures related to the construction of hydropower facilities, such as construction standards or quality control procedures. The country has reportedly been working towards sustainable hydropower development after a dam collapsed in

southern Laos in 2018, resulting in the deaths of 71 people and displacement of 14,440 others.

With its abundant water resources, Laos has embarked on a plan to become “the battery of Southeast Asia” by constructing hydropower dams, with 88 dams completed and a further 246 dams planned. Laos expects that the revenues from the hydropower energy exports would help its economy and reduce poverty levels across the country. However, its efforts have come under criticism from the NGOs and locals living next to the Mekong River due to concerns that the construction and operation of such dams would negatively affect the local environment and livelihoods of locals. Moreover, the population fears that it would not receive sufficient government compensation in the case of displacement over dam constructions. [AiR No. 4, January/2022, 4] [AiR No. 18, May/2022, 1] [The Laotian Times] [Vientiane Times]

Malaysia: Government set on abolishment of mandatory death penalty

(tp) Following a cabinet meeting on June 8, the Malaysian government agreed to work toward the abolishment of the mandatory death penalty. The court would then be allowed to discretionally decide between issuing a death sentence or alternative punishments.

However, the parliament is yet to refine and pass any legislative bills on the matter. All relevant amendments are thus expected to be debated by October with a general hope that the abolishment of the mandatory death penalty could be achieved as early as the first quarter of 2023. Subsequently, a Parliamentary Special Select Committee (PSSC) is to be established to scrutinize existing laws on the mandatory death penalty. [malaymail 1] [malaymail 2] [The Star]

Meanwhile, the cabinet agreed to reconsider the death penalty for the 11 offenders currently sentenced to death, one of whom was sentenced under Section 39B of the Dangerous Drugs Act of 1952. The Act is one of the key pieces of legislation on the matter as it states that drug trafficking is prohibited and that those who violate such a law will face the death penalty. Additionally, the government will also examine alternative punishments for other 22 offenders who could potentially enter death row.

Furthermore, the government will investigate the possibility of reforming the country's criminal justice system, including establishing pre-sentence

procedures and a sentencing council, developing comprehensive sentencing guidelines, reforming prisons, and imposing restorative justice-based sentences rather than retributive ones. However, the country will not abolish the death penalty altogether, national sources reported. [Free Malaysia Today]

Malaysia is regarded as one of the last countries to retain the death penalty, which is reserved primarily for murder and drug trafficking crimes. The Pakatan Harapan (PH) government, which was the ruling coalition in Malaysia's politics from 2018 to 2020 and was led by former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, issued a moratorium on executions in 2018, halting executions of death row prisoners until the government could formally issue a bill abolishing the death penalty altogether. The bill was scheduled to be introduced in parliament in 2020. However, such a bill could not be actualized because, in 2019, the government backtracked from the complete abolishment of the death penalty to make it optional. Since then, according to the local media, more than 1,300 people have been sentenced to be on death row, a significant number of whom were convicted of drug trafficking. [Bloomberg] [Reuters]

Malaysia: Cabinet minister joins newly formed party

(tp) Datuk Zuraida Kamaruddin, a Malaysian politician who served as a member of the cabinet for the Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (Bersatu), or Malaysian United Indigenous Party, and as the Minister of Plantation Industries and Commodities, will officially join Parti Bangsa Malaysia (PBM, or Malaysian Nation Party). The PBM has approved her application on June 9, and appointed her a "president-designate." Datuk Zuraida has also been given the authority to chart the PBM's development plan, which includes supervising the negotiation of a new partnership with other parties prior to the upcoming 15th general election. Similarly, the PBM has asked the prime minister to keep her in his cabinet in order for her to finish her term as minister of plantation industries and commodities. [Free Malaysia Today]

PBM was founded in 2012 as the Sarawak Workers Party before being rebranded to PBM in 2021. The party advocates for women and youth's participation in political activities and the inclusion of all ethnicities. It is currently regarded as a ruling party supporter. Additionally, it should be noted that despite the political rhetoric in support of the ruling coalition, Barisan National (BN), the PBM has yet to submit a

formal application to join the coalition. [AiR No. 22, May/2022, 5] [The Star 2]

Following the admission of Zuraida to the PBM. Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (BERSATU) stated that her resignation to join PBM will not affect the party. BERSATU political leaders emphasized ethnic unity, citing that the BERSATU is a Malay-based party, and thus it is unlikely that its policymakers would follow Zuraida to join PBM, which is a multiracial party. [The Malaysian Insight]

Malaysia: Country suffers labor shortage amidst dispute over migrants' rights

(tp) Following the resumption of business activities after the covid pandemic, Malaysian firms are struggling to fill orders, resulting in billions of dollars in losses. This is due to a shortage of migrant laborers in various sectors of Malaysian economic activity, such as plantation, factory, and service jobs. In response, the human resources minister plans to implement an "identification card by sector" to employ foreign workers. He explained that the decision is based on an agreement to prevent the misuse of employees' registration. [The Star 1]

In February, the human resources minister reportedly approved only 2,065 out of 475,000 migrant workers that companies requested to hire. Indonesia and Bangladesh, the two largest contributors of migrant workers to Malaysia, especially expressed concerns regarding migrant workers' rights in the country. In particular, Bangladesh withholds sending their migrant workers to Malaysia after signing a labor agreement with Malaysia in December, citing the allegations of human rights issues and flaws in the hiring process.

Malaysia is one of the countries affected by serious human rights issues concerning migrant workers, as at least 7 Malaysian companies have been sanctioned by the United States for allegations of forced labor since early 2021.

The situation is especially difficult for refugees as there are over 182,000 refugees and asylum seekers in the country despite Malaysia's lack of the legal framework to provide them with refugee status, leaving them unable to work or being heavily exploited. Nonetheless, during the administration of Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin, who was in office between March 2020 and August 2021, the government established a committee supported by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to

develop guidelines to properly grant the rights of refugees to work in Malaysia. [Ajizeera] [The Star 2] [South China Sea Morning Post]

Myanmar: World Bank unable to delineate national economic forecast for 2022

(cmsk) The World Bank's Global Economic Prospects Report published in early June did not include any forecasts for Myanmar after 2021 with the organization citing "a high degree of uncertainty" in the country.

The World Bank noted that the country's economy had contracted sharply, by 18 percent, since the military coup in February 2021. However, although the national economy seems to be stabilizing, the near-term economic outlook for Myanmar remains fragile, according to the World Bank. [World Bank Group] [The Irrawaddy]

Myanmar: New report alleges similarities between Rohingya genocide and Holocaust and Rwanda cases

(cmsk/bs) A new report released by Fortify Rights (FR), a prominent human rights organization, condemned Myanmar's military administration for allegedly perpetrating a widespread genocide of the Rohingya Muslim ethnic minority identifying alarming similarities to the Holocaust and Rwanda genocide cases.

The document reported that by forcing Rohingya people to obtain National Verification Cards (NVCs) the military administration is effectively stripping Rohingya of access to full citizenship rights and ethnic protections within Myanmar. The report also draws on examples of the Holocaust and Rwandan genocide to demonstrate how authoritarian regimes used such documents to "systematically identify, persecute, and kill targeted populations on a widespread and massive scale."

Moreover, according to FR, the junta authorities force Rohingya people to carry NVCs to prevent them from identifying as "Rohingya," and instead compel them to identify as "Bengali" immigrants from Bangladesh. The NVCs are also allegedly used as a tool to restrict the Rohingya members' movement and undermine them from earning a proper living. The report also added that whilst the parallel National Unity Government had

committed to ensuring the Rohingya ethnic minority their citizenship and inclusion, the junta is coercing them to identify as foreigners in a bid to ultimately erase records of their existence.

Following similar calls by Amnesty International in early June, the FR report urged state members of the United Nations (UN) to cut off Myanmar's military's access to arms, finances, and avenues for gaining political legitimacy. Fortify Rights also urged the UN Security Council to refer the case to the International Criminal Court. [The Diplomat] [Radio Free Asia]

Because the Rohingya minority represents the largest group of Muslim people in Myanmar the group has been a victim of abuses and atrocities for centenaries due to the cultural differences with the Buddhist majority in the country. The use of violence and the exclusion of Rohingya people escalated in 1982 when the government denied them the right to citizenship. Since then, the Rohingya ethnic group has been seeking refuge in neighboring states. In 2017, the military attacks against the Rohingya people further escalated and Myanmar was brought before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on genocide allegations. The members of the Rohingya ethnic minority are currently stateless. [AiR No. 8, February/2022, 4]

Myanmar: Former journalist charged with incitement over social media post

(cmsk) A former Myanmar journalist has been charged with incitement under Section 505(a) of the Penal code over a post on Facebook, which content remains undisclosed. Under the junta's revised rules, Section 505 (a) criminalizes comments that "cause fear," spread "false news, [or] agitates directly or indirectly a criminal offense against a government employee."

The authorities arrested the journalist in April, who, if found guilty, could face up to three years in jail.

According to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, at least 50 journalists are being held in custody of a total of 10,962 political prisoners. A number of journalists have also been convicted on incitement charges. A regional court reportedly handed two-year prison sentences to two journalists in January. [Myanmar Now] [Radio Free Asia]

Myanmar: Trial on terrorism charges put off for over two years

(cmsk) A Myanmar court received complaints over putting off the trial of two individuals arrested on terrorism charges for more than two years.

The accused were arrested for their suspected links to the Arakan Army (AA), an ethnic armed organization, in March 2020. The two individuals were charged under Article 52(a) of the Counter-Terrorism Law after photos of AA fighters were discovered on their phones.

The court had repeatedly postponed their verdicts and a judge had not responded to the accused's family complaint of delayed verdicts in a previous hearing. In two other cases, a total of eleven individuals were also charged under the country's Anti-Terrorism law on allegations of ties to the AA. The eleven accused also reportedly remain in prison without a verdict for over two years.

Commenting on the case, a local politician argues the cases should be dropped as the AA was removed from the government's list of terrorist organizations in March 2021. [The Irrawaddy]

Myanmar: Prison inmates allegedly beaten and denied drinking water

(cmsk) At least 60 inmates were allegedly tortured in a series of violent incidents that followed the escape of two political prisoners on June 4. The authorities employed in the detention center in the Kayin State, in southeastern Myanmar, denied any accusation of allegedly beating the inmates using electric sticks and slingshots or any use of violence against the inmates. [Radio Free Asia 1]

Reports also emerged that authorities in another prison in southern Myanmar cut off the drinking water supply to female political prisoners who protested the poor living conditions inside the premises. The event was followed by the miscarriage of one of the inmates who was reportedly denied medical treatment by prison staff. [Radio Free Asia 2]

Myanmar: Armed conflict leaves hundreds of deaths across the country

(cmsk) Following the arrest of 15 civilians, local regime forces and pro-junta militia in the Sagaing Region, northwestern Myanmar, allegedly executed eight people including two members of the anti-regime People's Defense Forces (PDF). In the same area, eleven civilians, including children and elders, were shot at gunpoint and two more were burnt by military forces, which have also torched more than 300 houses across the region within one week. [Myanmar Now 1] [Radio Free Asia 1][The Irrawaddy 1][The Irrawaddy 2]

Meanwhile, clashes continue in the central Magway Region where PDF forces have attacked a police post and torched it. Contemporarily, 13 Myanmar regime soldiers were allegedly killed during a PDF raid on a police checkpoint. Further, 20 Myanmar regime troops were reportedly killed in ambushes by the anti-regime forces in Magwe's Gangaw Township. On the other hand, the military reportedly used landmines, heavy weapons, and drones in their attacks, and torched 120 houses in five villages in the region. [Myanmar Now 2] [The Irrawaddy 3] [The Irrawaddy 4]

The PDF was also involved in attacks in the eastern Kayah State where ten junta soldiers were killed. Meanwhile, the military's artillery killed two civilians, injured others, and caused 1,000 residents to flee. At least six anti-regime groups reportedly participated in the fighting. [The Irrawaddy 5]

Nine more regime soldiers died in the northwestern Chin State during clashes involving at least 200 regime forces. Several civilians were reportedly taken hostage whilst thousands of others from 20 villages have fled. [The Irrawaddy 6]

The parallel administration of the National Unity Government (NUG) claims that more than 2,063 regime soldiers were killed and almost 539 wounded during fighting with the ethnic armed forces and people's defense forces between May 7 and June 6. According to the NUG, there were 593 clashes and 107 bomb and mine-attacks. Karen State had the highest number of shootouts at 211, followed by Sagaing Region at 175 shootouts and ten mine-attacks. Moreover, the NUG claims that more than 8,000 regime soldiers have defected from the military since the 2021 coup. [The Irrawaddy 7]

The NUG also reported that between December 1, 2021, and May 31, 2022, regime forces committed 2,778 war crimes including arbitrary killings, extrajudicial executions, torture, using civilians as human shields, air and artillery strikes on civilian targets, looting, and torching houses as well as engaging in sexual violence. According to the NUG,

there have been 910 arrests, 479 arson attacks, 346 murders, 336 armed attacks, 226 robberies, and 101 cases of torture, all by the military, during the 6-month period. Regime forces also allegedly committed 10 cases of sexual violence and in 27 instances used civilian detainees as human shields to deter attacks by resistance groups. At least 12,719 houses and religious buildings have also been destroyed, at an estimated value of USD 6.9 million according to the NUG. Sagaing has seen the worst arson attacks followed by Magwe and Chin State, according to the NUG's Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration. [The Irrawaddy]

Myanmar: Resistance groups to cooperate in establishing anti-arson task force

(cmsk) A prominent resistance leader of the Myanmar Royal Dragon Army in a recent interview announced that his resistance forces in the northwestern Sagaing Region (which has experienced the worst attacks in the country) plan to cooperate with the anti-regime People's Defense Forces to establish a 150-member anti-arson task force. He further said that his fighters were cooperating with other resistance forces in sharing arms, and acknowledged that as more people were joining the resistance insufficient arms was an issue. [The Irrawaddy]

The Philippines: President-elect Marcos Jr. to continue Duterte's war on drugs

(db) President-elect Ferdinand Marcos Jr. said that his administration will work closely with the United Nations and would be open to taking a "high level of accountability" on human rights. Marcos will take over the presidential seat on June 30, also taking over his predecessor's trail of condemned human rights violations as he vacates his position.

Marcos reiterated his strong commitment to continue President Rodrigo Duterte's war on drugs but claimed that he will do so within the framework of the law while respecting human rights. Marcos also aims to change the anti-drug effort to focus on health aspects. [Rappler][Benar News]

Since 2016, the beginning of Rodrigo Duterte's presidency, over 300,000 people were arrested, and, according to human rights groups, around 30,000 were killed. The number of deaths includes those killed in anti-drug crackdowns by the authorities and in

operations carried out by vigilantes linked to law enforcement, also known as "death squads." The case was brought before the International Criminal Court, which halted its investigations 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, respectively against drug-related crimes and supporters of the Communist party. [AiR No. 22, May/2022, 5]

The Philippines: President-elect Marcos Jr. appoints first woman as national security adviser

(db) President-elect Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has appointed political scientist Clarita Carlos to serve as his national security adviser (NSA). This comes as a surprise to many as this position not only is usually given to former military officers but also has never been held by a woman so far. [Inquirer]

Clarita Carlos is a retired political science professor from the University of the Philippines, former president of the National Defense College of the Philippines, and the executive director of StratSearch Foundation, a policy think tank. Carlos was a Marcos Jr. supporter throughout the entire election campaign period and was criticized for her comments that allegedly whitewashed the crimes and violence that took place during Marcos' father's Martial Law regime.

What awaits Carlos as the new NSA director-general is the vice-chair of the anti-terror council as well as executive power to designate people and groups as terrorists without going through the court system. This executive power is upheld by the Supreme Court. [Rappler]

The Philippines: Flexible working arrangements approved for government employees

(db) In a statement released on June 6, the Civil Service Commission (CSC) has approved a new policy allowing government employees in the Philippines to adopt flexible working arrangements,

The CSC said that they aim to institutionalize flexible work arrangements to transition the country's work

arrangements smoothly into its 'new normal' because of the COVID-19 health emergency.

As per Resolution 2200209, flexible work arrangements include flexi-place, where officials and employees may be authorized to render services away from their office; a 40-hour work week compressed into four days or less; minimum staff will be required to report to the office when full staffing is unavailable; work shifts for agencies required by law to operate 24/7 and required to observe workplace health and safety protocols; flexi-time, where employees are allowed to report between 7:00 am and 7:00 pm, provided they complete the 40-hour work week, and a combination of flexible work arrangements may be adopted by an agency depending on what is applicable to its functions.

According to the CSC, this resolution will greatly benefit employees who are immunocompromised, pregnant, recovering from sickness, or have mobility issues, as well as senior citizen employees.

However, CSC emphasized that the decision to adopt flexible working arrangements is up to the respective government agencies. [CNN] [HRD] [Manila Times]

The Philippines: Political groups call for the Netherlands government to extradite Communist leader

(db) Anti-Communist groups gathered outside the Netherlands Embassy in the Philippines on June 10 requesting the Netherlands to extradite Joe Maria 'Joma' Sison, the founding leader of the terrorist organization Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), to remove his status as a political refugee, and deport him to the Philippines to face trial over criminal charges. Sison was alleged to be planning terrorist attacks "remotely" from the Netherlands. [Philippine News Agency] [Philippines News.Net]

The CPP and its armed wing began their strong opposition to the Philippine government in 1968 through widespread insurgencies. The attacks intensified in 1981 when former dictator Marcos Sr. announced the end of martial law and of its authoritarian regime. Since that moment, the Philippines' government counter-insurgency has led to thousands of extrajudicial killings and harsh repression against supporters of the Communist party. [Crisis Group]

Singapore: New Deputy Prime Minister leads country as acting Prime Minister for one week

(bs) Singapore's newly appointed Deputy Prime Minister Lawrence Wong will take the lead of the country for one week when Prime Minister Lee Hsian Loong takes "local leave" from office from June 13 to 19. The occasion marks the first chance for Wong to serve as acting Prime Minister. During that week-long period, Wong will also have the chance to chair his first Cabinet meeting.

In April, Wong was appointed leader of the People's Action Party's fourth-generation team, which is believed to be the first step toward his journey to be the next Singapore's Prime Minister. [South China Morning Post]

Thailand: Court accepts land encroachment case against deputy education minister, nine others

(lm) Thailand's Criminal Court for Corruption and Misconduct Cases on June 10 accepted a case against the country's deputy education minister, Kanokwan Vilawan, and nine other individuals in connection with allegations of land encroachment following an investigation by an anti-corruption watchdog.

The National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) launched the investigation in connection with three plots of land in Thailand's Prachin Buri province two years ago. The accused also include Kanokwan's father – the current mayor of the provincial administrative organization – who escaped arrest on June 12. [The Nation]

After accepting the case, the court granted the temporary release of Kanokwan and scheduled the first hearing in the case for August 5th. But Kanokwan – also deputy secretary-general of the ruling Bhumjaithai Party – was further found to have allegedly committed ethical misconduct by the NACC, which plans to take the case to the Supreme Court for Holders of Political Office. [Thai PBS]

Against this backdrop, Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o cha on June 13 denied rumors of an imminent cabinet reshuffle. [Bangkok Post]

Thailand: Cabinet approves bill allowing same-sex couples to register civil partnership

(bs/td) The Thai Cabinet has approved the Civil Partnership Bill after the government has put it forward as a response to the demands of the LGBTQ+ community. The bill is currently awaiting parliamentary deliberation. The new piece of legislation would introduce a legal mechanism to recognize civil partnerships between same-sex couples where each partner is at least 17 years of age and at least one of the two is a Thai national.

The Bill also grants civil partners the same legal rights as traditionally married people in regards to joint and personal property rights, family wealth, inheritance rights, and the right to adopt children.

The draft law was met with criticism which pointed out that the promulgation of the civil partnership bill could potentially lead to further discrimination and aggravate unfair treatment. With regards to such controversial issues, the opposition Move Forward Party proposed a similar draft law, the “Marriage Equality Bill,” seeking to amend Section 1448 of the Civil and Commercial Code to serve people of all genders. [Bangkok Post 1] [Bangkok Post 2] [Thai Enquirer]

Thailand: Senate to hold general debate preceding no-confidence motion

(bs) Capt Thamanat Prompow, leader of the independent Setthakij Thai (Thai Economic) party, reiterated his intention to support only Deputy Prime Minister General Prawit Wongsuwon, who is also the current leader of the ruling Palang Pracharat party, in the upcoming no-confidence motion to discuss the alleged ethical code violations and poor performances in handling government administration of Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha and nine Cabinet ministers.

The motion, which will be tabled by the opposition in mid-June, will be preceded by a Senate general debate without a vote. Such a debate is aimed at scrutinizing the government's activities in accordance with the constitutional regulations, specifically under Section 153 of the constitution which governs that the Senate is allowed to ask the government to clarify issues related to national administration. [Bangkok Post 1] [Bangkok Post 2]

Thailand: Former leader of the New Economics Party establishes new party

(bs/sw) Former leader of the New Economics Party (NEP) and former Deputy Prime Minister Mingkwan Sangsuwan announced the establishment of a new political party in light of the next general election. The new party will likely be named "Okas Thai," meaning Thai opportunity, and will be identified with green and pink colors respectively meaning an opportunity for farmers and youth and innovation. The Election Commission is currently running the Okas Thai Party's registration procedure. [Bangkok Post]

Mingkwan resigned from The New Economics Party's leadership after pressure from the other 5 members of parliament of the party in 2019. After Mingkwan's resignation, there was speculation that Mingkwan would join the governing Palang Pracharath Party. However, Mingkwan denied the speculation and did not join Palang Pracharath Party even after his exit from the New Economics Party which occurred in February 2022. [BBC, in Thai] [PPTV, in Thai] [Thai PBS World]

Thailand: Deputy interior minister refuses to quit despite found guilty by Supreme Administrative Court

(sw/lm) The deputy interior minister and deputy leader of the Democrat Party, Niphon Bunyamanee, has said he will not step down from his position despite being found guilty by Supreme Administrative Court in a nonfeasance case dating back to his tenure as head of the provincial administrative organization (PAO) in Songkhla. [Bangkok Biz]

The court ruled on June 7 in favor of Ponlavit Tech Plus and ordered the PAO – for which Niphon served as president in 2013 – to pay the firm nearly USD 1.5 million, with 7.5 percent interest per year. [Bangkok Post]

In February of last year, Niphon was facing allegations he had abused his authority by helping his family and close associates benefit from buying and reselling land at the location of a contentious industrial complex in Songkhla.

Thailand: First woman appointed as new attorney general

(sw) Naree Tantasathien, previously the director-general of the Department of Legal Counsel, had been appointed as the 17th attorney general. She is the first female attorney general in Thailand. [Bangkok Post]

Thailand: Former police officers sentenced to life in prison over murder by torture case

(bs/td) On June 8, the Central Criminal Court for Corruption and Misconduct ruled that a police colonel informally referred to as Joe Ferrari would be sentenced to death, however, the decision was immediately revised and the sentence was reduced to life imprisonment. The man was found guilty of murder by torture of a 24-year-old drug suspect during a police interrogation.

Other five police officers were also sentenced to life imprisonment for their alleged involvement in the aforementioned interrogation. [BBC]

The case has sparked a public outcry. According to a Thai human rights activist and director of the Cross Cultural Foundation, the verdict is considered a significant precedent for legal proceedings against state officials. [Reuters]

Thailand: Police set to take legal action against demonstrators

(sw) Thai authorities vowed to take legal action against the demonstrators who marched and set fire to a police vehicle on June 11 protesting against Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha's government.

Around 200 people gathered in the Thai capital and marched towards Victory Monument, a populated central square in Bangkok. The police attempted to halt the protest with an anti-riot truck with a water cannon. [Bangkok Post]

Thailand: Military to return fake bomb detectors examination budget

(sw/bs) The Thai army has withdrawn from a project to examine fraudulent GT200 bomb detectors on which the military invested USD 217,501, an amount that was not included in the official Defence Ministry's budget document. Following the decision to renounce the investigations, the army is set to return the allocated budget to the state. [Bangkok Post]

The military originally planned to examine 757 GT200 bomb detectors after the devices appeared to be made without any electronic components. GT200 bomb detectors have thus been regarded as fake. In 2013, a United Kingdom (UK) Court had already released a jail sentence against the owner of the bob detectors company based in the UK. [AiR No. 23, June/2022, 1]

Timor-Leste: President upholds media freedom during China's diplomatic visit

(bs) Timorese journalists protested the government's decision to forbid any questions to be asked to the Chinese Foreign Minister during his visit to Timor-Leste on June 4. The Timorese government allegedly abided by a request advanced by the Chinese delegation to impose restrictions on news coverage of the diplomatic visit.

Following the media workers' protests and appeals to newly-appooited President José Ramos-Horta urging the respect for media freedom, the Chinese delegation allowed Timorese journalists to ask a few questions to Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi. [Global Voices]

Vietnam: Government to raise minimum wage

(bs) Vietnam's minimum wage will rise by an average of 6 percent in July, the government announced. Although the decision immediately received widespread critics from local businesses over high inflation rates, the move marks the first increase since the beginning of the Covid pandemic in early 2020.

The agreement over wage increase was originally signed in mid-April. The final decision was then delayed due to strong opposition by national trade groups and foreign businesses. Foreign investors are particularly concerned about the move because Vietnam has long been one of the countries with the lowest labor costs, which was a key condition for manufacturers to operate in the country. [Asia Nikkei]

Vietnam: Court sentences social media user to jail over 'anti-state' content

(ntan) The Vietnamese authorities arrested Nguyen Duy Linh, a Vietnamese national, for allegedly violating Article 117 of Vietnam's Penal Code by "creating, storing, disseminating information, materials, publications, and items against the Socialist Republic of Vietnam." The court sentenced him to 5 years in jail and 5 years of probation to be served following his release.

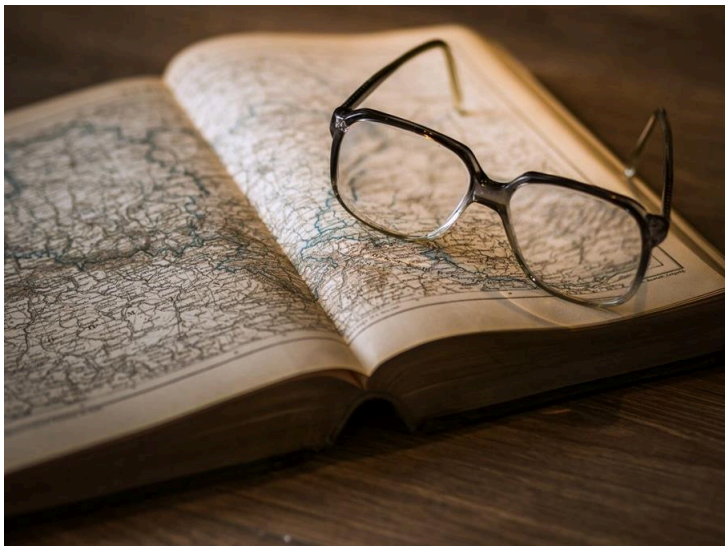
The man posted on his Facebook account stories criticizing public authorities. According to state media, from March 2020 to September 2021, he had posted on his account up to 193 pages with content that is regarded as "offensive to the party and State's leaders or against the government."

Human rights experts believe voiced their concerns over the grave violation of freedom of speech and expression by the Vietnamese government. [Radio Free Asia]

Vietnam: Locals injured in clashes with authorities over protest against cemetery project

(ntan) Residents in Nghe An Province, in central Vietnam, were hurt in clashes with the authorities during a rally to oppose the Vinh Hang Eco-park and cemetery, which is believed to have a negative impact on the environment and local water resources. According to the villagers, four locals were injured in fights with the police, one of them was critically injured and taken to a provincial hospital for emergency treatment. Meanwhile, two people with minor injuries were taken to a district hospital. Moreover, other persons were detained but released the next day. [Radio Free Asia]

International Relations, Geopolitics and Security in Asia



Politicians and delegates from more than 40 countries meet for Shangri-La Dialogue, discuss security issues

(jw/bs/cmsk) For the first time since the beginning of the pandemic, politicians and delegates from more than 40 countries met in Singapore to participate in the Shangri-La Dialogue, the key security meeting in the Asia Pacific taking place between June 10 and June 12. The participants directed most of their attention to current security issues, discussing Taiwan, China's role in the South China Sea, the Indo-Pacific, and the Ukraine War among others.

China criticizes United States 'bully', says it will 'fight to the end' for Taiwan

The Chinese side represented by Chinese Defense Minister Wei Fenghe attributed a large amount of its attention to Taiwan with Wei claiming outright that the "pursuit of Taiwan independence is a dead-end". In his June 12 speech, Wei ramped up his rhetoric, emphasizing that China "will not hesitate to fight" should any country try to "secede Taiwan from China". Wei also criticized the United States directly, urging it to "stop smearing and containing China" and emphasizing that Washington is responsible for relations between the two countries remaining stable. [Deutsche Welle] [Reuters 1]

Before Wei's speech, US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin met his Chinese counterpart in person for the first time. During the meeting, the hardened fronts between Washington and Beijing were displayed . Wei complained about US plans announced on June 8 to sell USD 120 million worth of parts for Taiwanese naval ships to Taiwan, stating that the selling of arms to Taipei "seriously undermined China's sovereignty and security interests". Resorting to a tone typical of

Chinese diplomats when engaging with the US, Wei claimed that China would respond to a Taiwanese move toward independence by "smashing it even at any price, including war."

Wei's counterpart Austin responded to the Chinese criticism by urging China to "refrain from further destabilizing actions" on Taiwan. Austin also emphasized the need to "responsibly manage competition and maintain open lines of communication". The Taiwanese foreign ministry also commented on the meeting, thanking the US for showing its support and denouncing Chinese claims as "absurd". [Associated Press 1] [Reuters 2] [US Department of Defense]

South-China Sea

Debates on the South-China Sea were also centered around China's increased assertiveness and the US-China rivalry that dominates many security issues in the region. Speaking about the South-China Sea, Austin lamented "unprofessional and frequent interceptions" of aircraft by the Chinese military. Austin's remarks come a week after both Canada and Australia complained about their airplanes being endangered by Chinese pilots maneuvering in close distance to them [see AiR No. 23, June/2022, 1]. The Chinese side reiterated its refusal of the accusations, stating that the Canadian and Australian aircraft endangered Chinese national security and that their interception was legitimate and justified. [Xinhua]

Meanwhile, Indonesia's Defence Minister Prabowo Subianto voiced his discontent with the US-China rivalry being the dominant factor influencing the fate of the South-China Sea. According to Subianto, ASEAN members should receive more attention as they try to resolve tensions and work toward a "peaceful resolution of all outstanding problems". Singapore Defense Minister Ng Eng Hen emphasized his agreement with Subianto's remarks that the problems surrounding the South China Sea need to be dealt with together. [Channel News Asia]

Indo-Pacific

As the Pacific was at the center of China's attention in previous weeks, with some successful efforts to gain more influence in the region, such as the signing of a security pact with the Solomon Islands [see AiR No. 17, April/2022, 4] but also with a failed proposal for a broad agreement with multiple Pacific countries [see AiR No. 22, May/2022, 5], there were debates on the ramifications of an increased Chinese presence in the region. New Zealand Minister of Defence Peeni Henare

emphasized that the Pacific countries are free to decide on their cooperation with China, but New Zealand will "support them, to make sure they make strong decisions for themselves". [Reuters 3]

However, China's representative Wei shared a different perception of the role of the US and its allies, complaining that the US engages in the "hijacking" of support in the Pacific to turn countries against China. According to Wei, the US pursues a "strategy to create conflict and confrontation to contain and encircle others." [CBS News]

While the US-China rivalry left little space for mellow statements, exchanges between China and other important countries in the Indo-Pacific region seemed less antagonistic as representatives from Indonesia, Fiji and Australia stressed China's economic weight and pledged to pursue a productive relationship, according to Chinese media. [China Daily]

The Shangri-La Dialogue also served as a platform to discuss Chinese plans to expand the Ream naval base in Cambodia. Amid concerns voiced by the US and other states, the Cambodian Defense Minister Tea Banh reiterated that Cambodia is the owner of the base and will not grant rights for exclusive use to China. According to Banh, the development of facilities such as a repair workshop, pier and dry dock as well as the receival of grant aid from China "should not be surprising". [The Straits Times]

The Dialogue also served as an opportunity for China and Australia to rethink their bilateral relations after the new Australian government eased its rhetoric toward China a bit but still emphasized multiple issues such as China's outreach into the pacific and punitive tariffs on Australian goods that put a strain on bilateral relations. In the first meeting between Wei and his Australian counterpart Richard Marles, both parties discussed the current issues. Even though details about the meeting were not released, Marles stressed that the talk itself was "a critical first step" after China and Australia had not had any high-level diplomatic exchange in almost three years.

Ukraine

With Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy delivering a virtual address at the Shangri-La Dialogue on June 11, Russia's invasion of Ukraine and its ramifications were poised to be one of the most prevalent topics. The issue is especially complicated for China, which tries to maneuver between supporting Russia on a fundamental level due to a shared distrust of the west and refraining from appearing too close to

Russia to circumvent secondary sanctions [see AiR No. 23, June/2022, 1].

Zelenskyy's speech came amid Ukrainian concerns that Asian countries might bypass Western sanctions on Russia, thus strengthening the country in its war efforts against Ukraine. The focus of many delegates laid on China which was urged to assume a clearer position against the Russian invasion and refrain from supporting the country economically or even militarily. [Foreign Policy]

According to Singaporean Defense Minister Ng Eng Hen, multiple delegates used a closed-door meeting to urge China to use its influence over Russia in a positive way. While Australian Defense Minister Richard Marles stated that a clear statement of China on Russia's actions in violation of the UN Charter is still expected, Japanese Defense Minister Nobuo Kishi voiced his concern about joint military exercises between Russia and China. [Reuters 4]

Myanmar

Another key issue that the countries addressed is the current situation in Myanmar. In a special session on Myanmar at the Shangri-la Dialogue, the United Nations Special Envoy on Myanmar emphasized the crucial role of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in resuming the implementation of the peace accord Five Point Consensus to end all violence and hold peace dialogues between all stakeholders in Myanmar. She reiterated that growing violence and instability in Myanmar had "dire" consequences beyond its borders. [United Nations - Political and Peacebuilding Affairs] [Mizzima]

Defense officials, representatives from Five Power Defence Arrangements meet in Singapore

(bs) Defense ministers and representatives of the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA) group involving Malaysia, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, met on June 11 on the sidelines of the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore.

FPDA countries' representatives voiced their support to continue strengthening regional cooperation and promoting the group's exercises. They also discussed the escalating tensions in the South China Sea, mentioning a recent incident between a Chinese fighter jet and Australian maritime surveillance aircraft in the area. [Channel News Asia] [The Straits Times]

China defends vetoing North Korea sanctions proposal in front of UN General Assembly

(jw) Together with Russia, China defended its decision to block a US proposal [see AiR No. 22, May/2022, 5] that would have led to the imposition of additional sanctions on North Korea in reaction to the increasing number of missiles tests. The meeting was the first of its kind, as a new rule requires the UN General Assembly to examine veto decisions of permanent Security Council members.

China's UN Ambassador Zhang Jun criticized the US in his justification of China's veto, claiming that the US follows an "old path" of "chanting empty slogans for dialogue and increasing sanctions against the DPRK [North Korea]". Jun described the US as the major responsible actor behind the issues surrounding North Korea and called on the US to "demonstrate a reasonable attitude" instead of bringing talks to a "deadlock". Jun also reacted to warnings of the US that North Korea might carry out a nuclear test in the near future, arguing that China does not want North Korea to carry out such a test but does also not want to "prejudge" the situation. [Associated Press] [Reuters]

China under international pressure after WHO report laments lack of data on COVID-19 origins

(jw) The politicized debate on the origins of the COVID-19 virus was further fueled by a World Health Organization (WHO) report released on June 9. In the report, the WHO stated that efforts to find the origin of the virus were largely inconclusive due to missing data from China. After an earlier report in 2021 concluded that a verification of the "lab-leak hypothesis" about the virus accidentally escaping from a Chinese laboratory was highly unlikely, the newly released report states that the lack of information necessitates a pursuit of all possible explanations. This is likely to fuel criticism of the WHO after frequent accusations that the institution was overeager in backing China and refusing alternative explanations to the hypothesis that the virus had a natural origin. [Associated Press 1] [Reuters]

In reaction to the report, the Chinese foreign ministry rejected the accusation that the COVID-19 virus was fabricated in a Chinese laboratory calling it a "lie

concocted by anti-China forces for political purposes". Instead, the foreign ministry reiterated its calls for investigating "highly suspicious laboratories such as Fort Detrick and the University of North Carolina", repeating the suggestion that the US developed the COVID-19 virus as a bioweapon. [Associated Press 2]

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi holds talks with Central Asian counterparts

(jw) As uncertainties over Ukraine and Afghanistan cause concerns in Central Asia, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi arrived in Kazakhstan on June 6 for bilateral talks and the third China + Central Asia (C+C5) meeting with his counterparts from Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. Wang's visit comes after a Central Asia tour of U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Donald Lu after which Lu stated that ties between the US and Central Asia are "stronger than ever".

At the C + C5 meeting, all parties agreed to deepen economic cooperation as part of the Belt and Road initiative and discussed the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan Railway project. As many of the Central Asian countries depend on Russian remittances, the uncertainty over the Russian invasion of Ukraine was expected to also be part of the discussions as well as the still problematic situation in Afghanistan. [CGTN] [South China Morning Post] [The Diplomat]

IMF asks Pakistan to renegotiate CPEC energy deal with China

(sg/lm) During the ongoing negotiations over the resumption of the USD 6 billion loan program, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has asked Pakistan to renegotiate energy deals under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), saying Beijing might have overcharged Islamabad. [The Express Tribune]

Eleven so-called Independent Power Producers (IPP) have invested USD 10.2 billion in energy projects under the CPEC in Pakistan. The request by the Washington-based lender puts Islamabad in a tight spot, given that Beijing has reportedly made further investment under the CPEC framework conditional upon the repayment of about USD 1.5 billion Islamabad currently owes to the IPP. [Pakistan Senate Committee]

Trilateral Defense Ministerial Meeting between Australia, U.S., and Japan at Shangri-La Dialogue

(nc) On the sidelines of the Shangri-La security dialogue in Singapore, Japanese Minister of Defense Kishi Nobuo, U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin III, and Australian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defense Richard Marles met for a Trilateral Defense Ministerial Meeting. They exchanged their views on security in the Indo-Pacific region and showed their commitment to take together concrete steps to ensure it.

Defending the rule of law, the three leaders condemned the Russian invasion of Ukraine and called for the invader to immediately withdraw its forces from Ukraine. In a likewise situation, as China shows a growing maritime assertiveness in the Taiwan Strait, the ministers shared their concerns about the situation in the South China Sea. They oppose China's assertion and any unilateral attempts to change the status quo in the region. As they defend a vision of peace and stability, the three ministers agreed to peacefully resolve this issue.

Nonetheless, Japan, U.S., and Australia will strengthen drills to protect the region and be ready for a possible break of the status quo. Foreign military assets will also be protected by the Japanese Self-Defense Forces. [NHK World-Japan] [June 11, 2022, Release by the U.S. Department of Defense]

Japan's Prime minister Kishida plans to attend the African development conference in Tunisia

(nc) Prime Minister Fumio Kishida plans to visit Tunisia for the 8th Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) held in Tunisia. TICAD is a framework to enhance cooperation between Japan and African countries. As the Tunisian Foreign Minister visited Japan, Tunisian President Kais Saied invited Kishida to visit the North African nation. [Mainichi]

Cambodia to receive USD 10 million grant for development project from South Korea

(pw) The Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) has decided to send a USD-10-million grant to Cambodia for the development of Cambodia's northwestern Banteay Meanchey, Battambang, and Pailin provinces, which are still affected by landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) from past conflicts. The grant is intended to be used in executing the 2022–2026 plan to enhance the rural living conditions, raise sustainable agricultural incomes, and strengthen the governance of rural development. This program also aims to support vulnerable groups such as collective farmers, disabled persons, low-income persons, small-scale farming families, and relevant government officials.

The Cambodian Rural Development Minister has mentioned that some of the country's rural areas still need greater international aid, especially in terms of clean water, help for enhanced land use, and socio-economic infrastructure.

In 2021, KOICA contributed USD 10 million to the United Nations Development Program to clear out the landmines and UXOs in northeastern Cambodia. Recently, to assist two programs, it also delivered seven trucks to the Cambodian Education, Youth, and Sports Ministry. [The Phnom Penh Post]

Cambodia, China expand naval base amid US, Australia, Vietnam concerns

(pw) Cambodia and China have launched an expansion project of the Ream naval base in Cambodia, which entails modernizing port facilities and constructing a dry dock, repair workshops, and two open docks. Furthermore, repairs will be conducted on Cambodian floating docks and naval ships alongside the dock levees to allow access for medium-sized ships. The program is expected to be completed within two years.

During the groundbreaking ceremony, The Cambodian defence minister, Tea Banh, rejected on June8 allegations that the northern part of Ream would be solely utilized by the Chinese military, a claim the Cambodian government had already dismissed a few days before the event. He also ensured that Ream, even after the expansion, would not pose a threat to other nations.

In response, the United States embassy in Cambodia reiterated Washington's over the transparency of this expansion program and the Chinese military's involvement with Ream, which was previously used for annual joint Cambodian-United States training and

naval exercises. Furthermore, the embassy voiced further concerns claiming that the increased Chinese military presence might be harming Cambodian sovereignty and regional security.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese was also worried about the base and called upon China to be more open about its plan with Ream.

Aside from Australia and the US, Vietnam has also reportedly kept a watchful eye on the aforementioned event. According to a Vietnamese analyst, Vietnam is concerned about Ream's proximity to its Phu Quoc island naval base. Still, he believed that the Chinese participation in Ream was aimed toward the US rather than Vietnam. Vietnam has been Cambodia's traditional ally due to its role in overthrowing the Khmer Rouge regime in 1979. Hence, the Chinese involvement in modernizing Ream has been considered a recent loss of Vietnamese influence in Cambodia.

Cambodia, under Prime Minister Hun Sen, has developed its ties to China for decades. In return, several major infrastructure programs in Cambodia have been financed by China under its Belt and Road Initiative. In contrast, the Cambodia–US relationship has been tense due to their differing views in areas such as China, democracy, and human rights. Hence, a defense policy analyst noted that, compared to China, the US has much less influence in Cambodia and added that publicly strong-arming Cambodia on this expansion program would not convince the Cambodian government to change its mind.

Cambodia and China were alleged to have privately concluded a 30 year-agreement in 2019 to let the Chinese military employ a portion of this base for 30 years, leading to Western concerns since then. In the past, Cambodia has repeatedly rejected accusations of the possible use of this base by the Chinese military, with Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen stating that foreign military bases are prohibited in his country. In 2020, two US-built facilities in the port were demolished. Additionally, in November 2021, two top-ranking Cambodian military officials were sanctioned by the US over corruption allegations concerning the base's construction. Recently, there were reports that this port is being dredged so that larger vessels can dock there.

As Ream is located next to the Gulf of Thailand, it will allow China to establish a maritime choke point in the Gulf, which is also close to the Strait of Malacca, and conduct more naval patrols in the South China Sea. Furthermore, a Ream-based Chinese naval force can

also jeopardize the security situation of Indonesia's Natuna Islands. Hence, this base is essential as China is claiming almost all of the South China Sea as its own, putting it at odds with the US and several Southeast Asian nations adjacent to this sea, such as Vietnam. On the other hand, the existence of Chinese naval forces would help Cambodia defend its maritime claims in the South China Sea from Thailand and Vietnam.

If the allegations are true, Ream would be China's second foreign military base after its base in Djibouti, a country strategically located in the Horn of Africa. The previously mentioned defense policy analyst stated China plans to establish more military bases abroad, much like the US. Currently, with greater than 800 foreign military bases, the US possesses the largest number of such bases.

[AiR No. 5, February/2022, 1] [Associated Press News 1] [Associated Press News 2] [Khmer Times 1] [Khmer Times 2] [Khmer Times 3] [Radio Free Asia 1] [Radio Free Asia 2] [Radio Free Asia 3] [The Phnom Penh Post]

Brunei, Cambodia commemorate 30th diplomatic anniversary

(pw) Bruneian Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah has exchanged letters with Cambodian King Norodom Sihamoni and Prime Minister Hun Sen to celebrate 30 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries. The Sultan noted that both countries have a good relationship and anticipated future opportunities to deepen the bilateral ties. Both the Cambodian King and Prime Minister also said there is a warm relationship between the two countries. The King believed that the bilateral cooperation and links would be closer with earnest endeavors by both sides. Moreover, the Prime Minister reemphasized his firm dedication to enhancing both countries' cooperation and relationship. [The Phnom Penh Post]

Three US companies accused of sending blueprints to China sanctioned by US Commerce Department

(jw) The US Commerce Department barred three US companies from exporting goods for 180 days after accusing them of sending sensitive information about defense prototypes, such as blueprints and technical drawings of satellite or rocket technology, to China. The sanctioned companies provided 3D-printing

services and allegedly sent the blueprints to China to cut costs. However, the US Commerce Department alleged that they failed to alert US authorities about the outsourcing, thus endangering national security.

The case shows that increased wariness about intellectual property theft and national security not only affects US-China bilateral relations [see AiR No. 18, May/2022, 1] but also US companies trying to do business with China. [Associated Press]

US envoy visits Marshall Islands in further attempt to counter China's increased presence in Pacific

(jw) After Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi embarked on a Pacific tour visiting eight Pacific nations but failing to secure a broad agreement [see AiR No. 23, June/2022, 1; AiR No. 22, May/2022, 5] US President Joe Biden tried to further counter the Chinese strive for more influence in the Pacific by sending special envoy Joseph Yun to the small but strategically important Marshall Islands.

During his visit between June 14 and June 16, Yun will negotiate the Compact of Free Association (COFA), a framework that governs economic assistance of the US to the Marshall Islands and will expire in 2023. Similar frameworks with Palau and the Federated States of Micronesia are also set to expire shortly. However, talks on their continuation were largely stalled in 2020 under the Trump administration and only took up speed recently. [CNBC]

Reconfiguration of China-tariffs underway, but no "panacea" against inflation, US Treasury Secretary says

(jw) According to US Treasury secretary Janet Yellen, the reconfiguration of tariffs imposed on China under the Trump administration is "under active consideration" but will not lead to an extreme decrease in inflation as "goods account for only a third of consumption". Speaking on June 8 before a House of Representatives Ways and Means Committee hearing, Yellen argued that some of Trump's trade war tariffs hurt the US consumers more than China and should thus be replaced with a more strategically oriented composition of punitive tariffs amid inflation surging to an "unacceptable" level of about eight percent in the US. However, Yellen still seems to be in a debate with

US Trade Representative Katherine Tai who displays a more skeptical outlook on tariffs [see AiR No. 21, May/2022, 4]. [Reuters]

Chinese, South Korean defense ministers agree to strengthen cooperation

(mr) During a face-to-face meeting between Chinese Defense Minister Wei Fenghe and his South Korean counterpart Lee Jong-sup, held on June 10 on the sidelines of the Shangri-La Dialogue Asian security summit in Singapore, both sides agreed to expand and deepen military cooperation and to work together in resolving North Korean issues.

Among others, the ministers reached agreement on resuming military exchanges between their armies and ministries, such as the vice-ministerial defense strategic dialogue. Furthermore, they also agree add two more new military hotlines to the existing three.

On North Korea, Lee called on China to play a constructive role in the North's denuclearization, while Wei reassured that China's goal is to maintain peace and achieve denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. [The Korea Herald]

The ministers' meeting comes as North Korea has tested more than 30 ballistic missiles including intercontinental ballistic missiles in less than six months this year.

Japan's, China's defense ministers clash over maritime dispute at Shangri-La Dialogue sideline meeting

(dql) During a meeting between Chinese Defense Minister Wei Fenghe and Japan's Defense Minister Nobuo Kishi on the side lines of the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, both sides agreed to promote dialogue and exchanges.

Kishi, however, also called for Beijing's "self-restraint" in the East China and South China seas, voicing strong concerns over the ongoing "unilateral attempts to alter the status quo by force," on the Chinese side. [Kyodo News] [Reuters]

Cross-strait relations: Taiwan mulls to take China to WTO over Beijing's ban on grouper imports

(dql) Taiwan is considering to take China to the World Trade Organization (WTO) after Beijing issued a ban on imports of grouper fish from Taiwan on June 10, claiming that banned chemicals and excessive levels of other substances had been detected in grouper from Taiwan since December 2021.

After similar claims earlier this year, the COA had the fish tested but found no evidence of banned chemicals. While it will continue to pass on scientific research results to China, the COA said it would also consider filing a report about Beijing's actions to the WTO Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures Committee. [Taiwan News]

Mr. Peer Morten Strantzen contributed research to this entry.

The Philippines lodges new protest against China's presence in South China Sea

(db) A second diplomatic protest against Beijing has been lodged by the Philippines foreign ministry last week for the act of illegal activities in the South China Sea, bringing the toll of complaints against Beijing to more than 300.

In a statement released on June 9, the Philippines called on China's responsibility to, "under international law, cease and desist from displaying illegal and irresponsible behavior, avoid further escalating tensions at sea and immediately withdraw all of its vessels from Philippine maritime zones."

The return of 100 Chinese vessels in the Julian Felipe Reef on April 4 came just days after President Rodrigo Duterte and President Xi Jinping met via telesummit, where the two leaders reaffirmed their commitments to solve issues and exercise restraint in all activities relating to the South China Sea.

On June 10, the foreign ministry lodged a new protest as Chinese coast guard vessels shadowed Philippine boats during a resupply mission around the Second Thomas Shoal. The shoal is claimed by both Beijing and Manila and is 105 nautical miles off Palawan, Philippines.

During the time that the two protests were made, incoming president Ferdinand Marcos Jr. said that China was the Philippines' strongest partner in the pandemic recovery during a live-streamed event. Marcos also pledged to pursue his own independent foreign policy while encouraging ties with China. [Philstar] [Reuters] [South China Morning Post]

China, Pakistan hold military talks, vow to enhance counterterrorism cooperation

(ha) A tri-service military delegation of Pakistan, headed by army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa, visited China from June 9 to 12 to hold wide-ranging talks with the Chinese military leadership, represented by the vice chairman of the Central Military Commission, General Zhang Youxia. The visit was part of the Pakistan-China Joint Military Cooperation Committee – the apex body for top-level military cooperation between the two nations. [The Express Tribune] [The News]

The meeting was held against the backdrop of rising security threats to Chinese nationals working in Pakistan under the framework of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. In April, three Chinese language teachers and their Pakistani driver were killed in a suspected suicide bombing near Karachi University's Confucius Institute. The Baloch Liberation Army, a militant separatist group from Pakistan's southwestern province of Balochistan, claimed responsibility for the attack [see AiR No. 18, May/2022, 1].

Vietnam protests China's fishing ban over potential territorial violation

(bs) The Vietnamese government objected to the yearly fishing ban imposed by China over part of the waters in the South China Sea, including most of the Gulf of Tonkin and the Paracel Islands, territories that are claimed by Vietnam despite being currently occupied by China. Vietnam is thus claiming China's violation of Vietnamese territorial sovereignty over part of the area mentioning that the country's rights and jurisdiction are in adherence with the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and with the Agreement on the delimitation of the Gulf of Tonkin signed in 2000 by both Vietnam and China.

The ban has been imposed on a yearly basis since 1999 as an attempt "to promote sustainable marine

fishery development and improve marine ecology." [Voices of America News]

Italy's Prime Ministers Mario Draghi vetoes transfer of technology and software to China

(jw) After Italian robotics company ROBOX struck a deal with China's EFORT Intelligent Equipment, Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi reportedly used his veto powers to prevent the implementation of the agreement which would have led to ROBOX providing some of its software to EFORT. The Chinese robot maker is however still allowed to increase the shareholding up to 49 percent. The prevention of the technology transfer is already the fifth time Draghi used his veto powers to strike down a bid from a Chinese company after taking office in 2021. [Reuters]

EU Parliament passes resolution critical of China's actions in Xinjiang with overwhelming majority

(jw) In a landslide vote, the European Parliament voted to adopt a resolution that flags the Chinese treatment of Uighurs and other Turkic-speaking indigenous ethnic groups in the province of Xinjiang as amounting to "crimes against humanity" leading to a "serious risk of genocide". The resolution that does not automatically lead to an official shift in the stance of the EU but indicates the highly critical attitude of EU parliamentarians lists practices of China such as mass deportation, family separation and extensive surveillance and condemns them "in the strongest possible terms".

The resolution was also critical of UN human rights chief Michelle Bachelet's visit to the region [see AiR No. 22, May/2022, 5] claiming that Bachelet "failed to clearly hold the Chinese government accountable for human rights abuses against the Uyghurs during her visit". However, the resolution stops short of outright calling the persecution of ethnic minorities in Xinjiang a genocide – an allegation that the US is making. 513 EU lawmakers voted in favor of the resolution with 14 abstentions and one vote against. [Radio Free Europe] [South China Morning Post]

In a reaction to the decision of the European Parliament, the Chinese Mission to the EU branded the content of the resolution as in total disregard of facts

with fabrication and confounding black and white" and claimed that "No lie or fallacy can deny the fact that Xinjiang has made historic progress in human rights development and no disinformation can hinder Xinjiang's development and prosperity." [Xinhua]

Recent leaks of documents illustrating the scale of human rights abuses in Xinjiang [see AiR No. 21, May/2022, 4] led to a change of attitude in some European countries. A case in point, Germany vowed to reconsider its close economic ties to China pledging to prioritize human rights more. However, observers are hesitant to believe that Germany will actively choose to decouple from its largest trading partner. [South China Morning Post]

India, Vietnam sign defense pact on mutual logistics support

(lm) India and Vietnam signed a mutual logistics support pact on June 8, pledging to "significantly increase the scope and scale" of their military coordination over the coming decade.

The announcement came hard on the heels of China launching The agreement was signed after talks between the defense minister of both countries in Hanoi, and allows Indian and Vietnamese forces to use each other's bases for repair and resupply. It marks the first agreement on military logistics support Vietnam has signed with any other country. India has logistical support agreements with several other global and regional powers, including the United States.

Furthermore, India agreed to expedite a USD 500 million line of credit for defense products to Vietnam and gifted the Vietnamese with 12 high-speed coast guard boats, two training simulators, and a million-dollar cash grant to establish a Vietnamese Air Force training program. [The Hindu] [Trend News Agency]

Timing and context of the signing assume significance, coming as did on the heels of China launching a highly suspicious naval port expansion with Vietnam's neighbor Cambodia. As Bejoy Sebastian writes at *Modern Diplomacy*, both India and Vietnam have good reason to be displeased with Cambodia's decision to renovate its Ream naval base with Chinese assistance – contributions that will reportedly be repaid by allowing China to build a secret military facility at the base. [Modern Diplomacy]

India, Indonesia navies begin joint patrol in Andaman Sea, Strait of Malacca

(lm) The navies of India and Indonesia on June 13 began a 12-day coordinated patrol (CORPAT) in the Andaman Sea and Strait of Malacca. The 38th exercise of its kind between the two countries includes a visit by the Indonesian Navy units to Port Blair, followed by a Sea Phase in the Andaman Sea and visit by Indian Navy units to Sabang later this month. [The Business Standard]

Indonesia, European Union discuss digital economy cooperation despite lack of data protection bill

(dbk) Indonesia and the European Union (EU) are discussing the improvement of their digital industries' bilateral cooperation, with Indonesia's lack of a personal data protection law "not a problem" for the EU. After meeting with EU Ambassador to Indonesia to discuss the prospect of digital economy cooperation, Communications and Information Minister Johnny G. Plate said, "Indonesia's regulations are in line with the European Union, which is allowing [the existing regulations to serve] as a legal umbrella to increase economic cooperation in Indonesia's digital sector". EU Ambassador Piket said the idea of collaboration came from Indonesia's rapid growth in the digital and the communication sectors, which highlighted to the EU the need for developments in technology and legislation.

Despite the present advances in cross-border cooperation over the digital economy, the Indonesian data protection bill is still caught in the House of Representatives' deliberation. The bill, which will provide the legal scaffolding for instating penalties against the illegal use of personal data, is stuck in deliberations over its data protection agency. Lawmakers have advocated for the agency's independence, while the government remains that it will be positioned under the Communications and Information Ministry. Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle and House Commission I spokesperson said the government and lawmakers are coming closer to reaching an agreement. They said that while lawmakers are pushing for independence to avoid a conflict of interest, they will ultimately yield to the decision of the president.

Indonesia's personal data protection regulations are modeled after the EU General Data Protection

Regulation, hence the cooperation, which protects its people from privacy and data breaches from wherever the data is administered. Indonesia's bill will regulate the transferring of personal data to offer assurance to both users and foreign investors in the digital industry. Experts have said the immediate passing bill is necessary, so Indonesia, which holds the G20 presidency this year, has a firmer ground in fronting discussions on international data management. Experts have continually noted that without the bill, Indonesia would be minimally backed by G20 in their discussions of the Digital Economy Working Group formed to improve connectivity and post-pandemic recovery; digital skills and digital literacy; and cross-border data flows and the free flow of trusted data. [The Jakarta Post]

Japan among five countries elected to UN Security Council as non-permanent members

(nc) Japan, along with Mozambique, Ecuador, Malta, and Switzerland, was elected non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for the 12th time, a record. It will serve for two years from January 2023. The country wishes to reform the Council by including its participation as a permanent member to ensure the application of the rule of law. As the permanent members are divided over the issue of the invasion of Ukraine, Japan is expected to face difficulty in negotiations. [Arab News Japan] [Japan Times]

Russia suspends agreement with Japan on fishing near disputed islands

(nc) On June 8, a 1998 fisheries agreement for safe fishing between Russia and Japan was suspended by the former on the grounds of payment failure on a development project in Sakhalin by the latter. The Japanese government is protesting this decision.

This agreement enables Japan and Russia to annually negotiate details of Japanese fishing operations in Russian-controlled waters and near the disputed Kuril Islands, also called Northern Territories by the Japanese. These islands are the heart of a feud between Russia and Japan since the second world war and are administrated by Russia since then. But Japan has claimed its sovereignty over them, and this territorial litigation has never been resolved. The 1998 agreement allows Japanese fishermen to fish Atka

mackerel, octopus, and other types in these waters in exchange for government cooperation money. The suspension of the agreement may make it impossible for Japanese fishing boats to operate near the disputed islands off near Hokkaido.

The Japanese government has admitted that it did not make the latest payment for the project in Sakhalin. But it also added that the project is not part of the safe fishing agreement. As Japan imposed sanctions on Russia over the invasion of Ukraine, the Russian government has suspended several treaties talks with Japan and this latest one adds to the list. [Arab News Japan] [Japan Times]

Japan and Singapore to work on a deal to transfer defense equipment and technology

(nc) Negotiations will start soon as Japan and Singapore agreed on a deal for the transfer of defense equipment and technology. In its objective to attain a free and open Indo-Pacific region, Japan Prime Minister Kishida Fumio declared promoting, with this deal, more security in the region. Both countries agreed to jointly defend the rule of law and build more robust supply chains and enhance cooperation in digital technology. This follows the Russian invasion of Ukraine feared to be repeated by China in Taiwan. [Mainichi]

Lao, Thailand hold defense talks

(td) Following an official visit to Thailand by Lao Prime Minister Phankham Viphavanh on June 1-2, 2022, the countries have stepped up multi-sectoral cooperation ranging from economic, security, and people-to-people, to sub-regional and regional cooperation.

With regards to the security sector, in addition to tackling illegal border crossings and drug trafficking, the countries share common concerns over crimes such as “Call Center Gangs” as a number of people from both Thailand and Laos have been lured into the criminal network.

How security cooperation has been a key discussion topic can be noticed from another visit by senior-level Laotian government officials to Thailand. During the meeting, Thai Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha welcomed Lao troops to receive training in Thailand.

The parties also vowed closer cooperation between the two respective armed forces and to strengthen security cooperation at border villages in a bid to cement and foster the bilateral ties.

Further discussion points also included mutual exchanges in education, culture, and sports, as well as agricultural know-how. Lastly, concerning the reopening of nine border checkpoints, it has provided the two sides with economic prospects, in light of the China-Laos high-speed railway. [Bangkok Post] [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand]

Malay-Thai border control strengthened after Thailand legalizes marijuana

(tp) Following the legalization of marijuana in Thailand, law enforcement officials are concerned that there will be an increase in cannabis smuggling across Malaysia's borders, complicating the country's current efforts to reduce the abusive use of drugs. As a result, the director of the Narcotics Crime Investigation Department (NCID) stated that efforts will be made to strengthen border security in order to prevent cannabis smuggling; however, it required intensive cooperation among law enforcement agencies.

Furthermore, the Royal Malaysian Police (PDRM) recommended to the Home Ministry (KDN) that several acts concerning the drug penalty be amended to be consistent with the country's efforts to ban abusive substances. Additionally, when asked to commend current efforts to abolish the death penalty, the PDRM stated that the efforts would only impede the PDRM's efforts to combat drugs. [malaymail] [New Sarawak Tribune] [The Star]

Malaysia, Saudi Arabia agree to establish Saudi-Malaysian Coordinating Council

(tp) Following the talks between Malaysian and Saudi Arabia delegates on June 8, the countries agreed to expand their cooperation by establishing the Saudi-Malaysian Coordinating Council (SMCC). The topic of discussion ranged from haj quota tourism to education. Furthermore, Prime Minister Ismail Sabri stated on June 12 that the reactive of the Saudi-Malaysian business council will be given priority, with the goal of improving both countries' bilateral economic cooperation. [The Edge Markets] [The Star]

Myanmar military regime will proceed with death executions regardless of international condemnations

(cmsk) The military regime will proceed with the execution of four individuals, including a former lawmaker and a veteran democracy activist, whose appeal against their death sentence was denied. The news sparked international criticism as Myanmar's last execution dates back to 1990. Among the major opponents worldwide are the United Nations, the United States, Canada, and France, which issued strong statements against the Myanmar military court's decisions. Also Cambodia, the Chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), reportedly sent a letter to Myanmar Prime Minister and coup leader Min Aung Hlaing urging him to reconsider the decision.

Calling the death sentences illegal, a member of the ousted National League for Democracy party, which was overthrown by a military coup in February 2021, said the Myanmar State Administration Council might be trying to wage psychological warfare against its opponents. Leading opposing forces have also denounced the executions as a blatant violation of Myanmar's legislation and international conventions and laws. The groups also reportedly pledged to hold the junta accountable if it went ahead with the planned executions.[The Irrawaddy][Radio Free Asia 1]

Meanwhile, prison authorities reported that they have not yet received any orders from their superiors although all four prisoners have already been transferred to death row. [Radio Free Asia 2]

According to the rights organization Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, the military junta has, since the coup, killed more than 1,900 civilians and arrested 14,032 people of whom 10,976 remain in detention. [AiR No. 23, June/2022, 1]

United Nations experts condemn Myanmar "Digital Dictatorship"

(cmsk) United Nations (UN) human rights experts condemned the Myanmar regime's attempt to establish what is called a "digital dictatorship" through restrictions on internet access, internet shutdowns, online censorship, and surveillance, among other actions. They called on UN member states to adopt

targeted sanctions against the military and military-linked companies, including sanctions on the sale or supply of dual-use surveillance technology. The experts also urged UN member states to donate to and support Myanmar civil society groups that work on countering censorship and surveillance in the country.

According to the group, access to the internet is a matter of life and death for many Myanmar people, including those seeking safety from indiscriminate attacks by the military. The experts also reported that the military authorities were using internet shutdowns and invasive surveillance to undermine widespread public opposition as well as to carry out attacks against the Myanmar people.

Since the military coup, an amendment to the Electronic Transactions Law expanded access to personal data by government agencies. A draft Cybersecurity Law would reportedly also further empower authorities to restrict internet access without judicial oversight. [Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights]

Myanmar's Chin ethnic minority alleges exclusion from ASEAN Humanitarian Assistance Plan

(cmsk) Ethnic Chin people in Myanmar, nearly 100,000 of whom are displaced, have called on civil society groups to avoid distributing aid through the military junta alleging that aid originating from neighboring countries and distributed through the junta does not reach their community.

Chin State is known to be an anti-junta resistance stronghold along with Magway and Sagaing regions. According to the UN, junta forces have indiscriminately attacked civilians in all three areas, killing or wounding them and torching their homes and villages. In addition to local organizations, the UN has acknowledged that aid distribution was being impeded by restrictions on movement and transportation.

Furthermore, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has recently announced its plan to cooperate with the junta to provide aid in war-torn areas in Myanmar. The move was immediately opposed by the parallel administration of the National Unity Government (NUG), which feared that the military regime would weaponize such aid.

Another aid organizer in India said that the Indian State of Mizoram and the state's NGOs, which initially

helped the Chin refugees in India, could no longer sustain their support.

The UN recently announced that the total number of internationally displaced people (IDPs) in Myanmar crossed 1 million on May 30, including Rohingya who had been displaced prior to the coup. [Radio Free Asia]

Myanmar anti-regime forces claim responsibility for killing World Health Organization driver

(cmsk) The United Nations (UN) has condemned the shooting and death of its World Health Organization employee, a Myanmar national, who worked as a driver for the organization for five years. Myo Min Htut was shot dead whilst riding his motorcycle on Thanlwin Uyin Road on June 8. The UN Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator ad interim in Myanmar called on "all parties and stakeholders to respect the neutrality of the United Nations and Humanitarians" and also called on parties to protect the rights and safety of civilians and strongly condemned acts of violence against civilians. [Al Jazeera] [United Nations - Myanmar]

Following the condemnation, however, the anti-military People's Defense Organization Mawlamyine (PDOM) claimed responsibility for the shooting and alleged that Htut used to take the lead in conducting searches for the military junta and that Htut allegedly threatened members of the anti-regime Civil Disobedience Movement and their families. PDOM also claimed that Htut was related to a top junta general. The UN has not responded since the PDOM claims. [Radio Free Asia] [Reuters]

United States urges ASEAN cooperation with Myanmar parallel government while exploring support to Myanmar civilians through Thailand

(cmsk/jp) On his trip to Southeast Asian countries, United States (US) Counselor Derek Chollet visited Thailand. As part of the US efforts to enhance the country's support to Myanmar civilians, the Counselor specifically visited the Thai-Myanmar border to assess the situation of refugees and displaced people from Myanmar. Chollet met with senior Thai officials and international and civil society organizations. He also reportedly also met with Myanmar's Karen, Mon, and

Shan civil society organizations. As a result, more US aid and support to Myanmar civilians might be seen in the near future. [The Irrawaddy]

With the same objective, Chollet also urged the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to engage with Myanmar's parallel civilian National Unity Government (NUG). The Counselor argued that a political solution could not be reached without engaging with the NUG and revealed that the US had been urging individual ASEAN countries to actively hold discussions with the NUG.

Chollet also revealed that the US had held regular online meetings with the NUG leadership over the last nine months and that the US government was engaging with the NUG for capacity building and helping NUG organize itself better to serve the Myanmar people. [The Irrawaddy]

Myanmar, Thailand agree to strengthen cross-border security

(cmsk) A meeting between Myanmar Major General Zin Min Hte and his Thai counterpart led to an agreement between the two sides on strengthening cooperation on border security, the rule of law, counter-terrorism, fighting the drug trade, human trafficking, and cross-border smuggling, according to Myanmar state media.

The two sides have also reportedly discussed cooperation in human resource development and police training as well as taking action against armed groups operating along the Myanmar-Thai border. Thai authorities denied these latter claims, saying the two sides only discussed cross-border crime. The junta labels the parallel National Unity Government and its armed wing the People's Defense Forces as terror organizations. [The Irrawaddy]

Australia opposes trial of Australian Advisor to Aung San Suu Kyi in Myanmar

(cmsk) The Australian government has opposed the ruling by a court to resume the trial of Australian economist Sean Turnell and former advisor to ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi. The Australian Foreign Minister released a statement calling on the immediate release of Turnell, who was arrested on February 6, a few days after the 2021 coup.

Turnell is reportedly being tried in Yangon along with three other ousted cabinet ministers of Kyi's government who were reportedly indicted in early June. Although the details of charges against Turnell have not been made public, Myanmar state television cited government statements that allege that Turnell had access to the country's "secret financial information" and was planning to flee from Myanmar.

The colonial-era Official Secrets Act criminalizes the possession, collection, recording, publishing, or sharing of state information that is "directly or indirectly, useful to an enemy." A violation of the law carries a maximum prison sentence of 14 years.

Turnell's case is believed to have reached the second phase of the trial. Under Myanmar law, after the prosecution presents its initial case against an accused, a judge is empowered to end the proceedings if the case is not found to have merit. However, if the judge finds the prosecution credible, the trial proceeds to a second phase where the accused defends himself. Following the defense, a verdict is awarded. The plethora of cases against ousted leaders of the pre-coup Myanmar government and other individuals are widely viewed as being conducted at the behest of the military which allegedly controls the courts.

At least 14,055 individuals have been arrested since the February 2021 coup, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners. Meanwhile, Australia is understood to have moderated its position on the junta because of Turnell's detention. Australia, unlike the United States, European Union, the United Kingdom, and Canada, is yet to impose any targeted sanctions on the Myanmar military regime. However, it is not entirely clear if Australia will be able to secure Turnell's release because of Turnell's proximity to Aung San Suu Kyi. [ABC] [Reuters] [The Diplomat]

Visiting United States general urges Nepal to join State Partnership Program, promises aid

(vd/lm) During a four-day visit to Nepal, the commanding general of the United States Army Pacific, Charles A. Flynn, has urged Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba to sign an agreement on a key US security cooperation program, in the latest of a series of signs that Washington seeks to widening its engagement in South Asia. [The Kathmandu Post]

The US has been proposing Nepal to join the State Partnership Program (SSP) since 2015, and sent a draft

agreement to Kathmandu for consideration in April. As per the draft, Washington promises to provide Nepal USD 500 million over five years besides non-lethal equipment to the Nepal Army. But the Army has so far been cautious not to endorse the deal over fears that it would ensnare Kathmandu in Washington's deepening competition with China. [the draft agreement is available at [Online Khabar]

Importantly, US-Nepal relations have their 75th anniversary this year, and Nepali Prime Minister Deuba is expected to visit Washington sometime next month. The trip would be the first by a sitting Nepali prime minister since 2002. Notably, it will be preceded by a visit to the United States by Nepal's army chief, Gen Prabhu Ram Sharma.

Recent diplomacy has focused on a USD 500 million infrastructure grant from the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) – a US government aid agency – which Nepal's parliament ratified in February after much delay. [AiR No. 9, March/2022, 1]

North Korea: Kim Jong-un again defends weapons development

(mr) In a speech, which concluded a major political gathering of the ruling Worker's Party held last week, North Korean leader Kim Jong-un reiterated his defense of the country's accelerated weapons development, calling it "a rightful exercise of sovereign rights to self-defence," amid an "aggravating security environment," adding that the North Korean armed forces would pursue further "militant tasks".

Kim's statement comes as North Korea has fired 31 missiles in over 18 different launch events in less than six months this year. The latest round of test involved eight short-range ballistic missiles fired on June 5. Furthermore, North Korea has according South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff test-fired suspected artillery pieces into the sea on Sunday, June 12. [VoA] [9 News]

In response, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and his South Korean counterpart Park Jin agreed during a face-to-face talk on June 13 to prepare adjustments to their military posture against counter North Korea that would include expanding the scope and scale of joint military drills for defensive and preparedness purposes, as well as training on and around the Korean Peninsula. Both ministers, however, also reassured that their countries remained "committed to dialogue and diplomacy," and "prepared to take a

more flexible and open-minded approach to diplomacy vis-a-vis North Korea." [The Korea Herald 1]

Meanwhile, South Korean Defense Minister Lee Jong-sup and his US and Japanese counterparts Lloyd Austin and Nobuo Kishi reached an agreement on a joint missile search and tracking exercise, namely the biennial Pacific Dragon exercise, to be conducted in waters off Hawaii later in August and aimed at demonstrating deepening defense cooperation between the three countries amid the North's recent missile launches and speculations of a nuclear test by Pyongyang in the coming weeks. The agreement was made in talks held on the side lines of the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore.

Lee, furthermore, announced that his country will "dramatically" boost defensive capabilities "to deter North Korea's nuclear and missile threats. [The Korea Herald 2] [CNN]

German Foreign Minister Baerbock visits Pakistan to discuss humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan

(sg/lm) German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock traveled to Pakistan on June 7 for talks with her Pakistani counterpart Bilawal-Bhutto Zardari which centered on bilateral cooperation and the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan.[Deutsche Welle] [Modern Diplomacy] [Geo News]

Baerbock was also supposed to meet with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa, but all further engagements had to be canceled after she tested positive for COVID-19. The Green party lawmaker had planned to stay in Pakistan until June 8 and then visit Greece and Turkey. [The Washington Post]

The Philippines' president-elect meets United States officials

(db) Philippine President-elect Ferdinand Marcos Jr. met with the United States (US) Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman to discuss the Philippine-US alliance, economic ties, human rights, and preservation of a free and open Indo-Pacific.

This comes as a broad effort by the US to reach out to leaders in the region as China's efforts to dominate the

strategic waterway in the South China Sea increase concerns over nations in the area, which includes the Philippines. The aims of the US Indo-Pacific strategy are to advance and open the Indo-Pacific so that there are transparent and fairly applied rules; as well as to forge stronger US-ASEAN connections.

The Philippines and the US have a longstanding allyship that had been strained during President Rodrigo Duterte's term and the outgoing president's move toward China. While Marcos had also made moves towards a partnership with China, he had also declared to defend sovereign territory and to stand up against Chinese intrusion. [Reuters] [The Diplomat] [The White House]

The Philippines, South Korea discuss naval cooperation

(db) South Korean and Filipino representatives met on June 3 to discuss the naval cooperation between the two countries.

South Korea's Hyundai Heavy Industries has been selected to build the Philippine Navy's six offshore patrol vessels (OPV) as part of their OPV program. The HDP-1500 Neo OPVs will be the latest addition to the country's South Korean-supplied naval vessels, which has an impressive lineup like the BRP Jose Rizal in 2020. South Korea also aims to supply two more corvettes by 2026.

The parties discussed South Korea's participation in the joint U.S.-Philippine Marines Corps exercise *KAMANDAG* in October, which will have around 2,100 troops. The Philippines and South Korea will also participate in Rim of the Pacific this year, a full-scale naval exercise with 26 participating nations. It will involve around 25,000 troops combined. [Naval News] [The Defense Post]

The Philippines, United Arab Emirates to boost economic cooperation

(db) The Philippines and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have signed an investment promotion and protection agreement (IPPA). This is considered a historic agreement, which will boost investments and economic cooperation between the two countries.

This agreement will also cement the close ties between the two nations, who will mark 48 years of diplomatic

relations this year. [Manila Times]

The UAE is the Philippines' biggest export partner in the Middle East, with the total trade between the two countries growing by 34.7 percent, from USD 705 million in 2020 to USD 951 million in 2021.

The Philippines could potentially serve as a strategic hub for the UAE in Southeast Asia, and this is the perfect time for UAE investors to seek investment opportunities in the country. [Gulf News]

Singapore, Australia discuss defense ties

(bs) Australia and Singapore officials met on June 12, on the sideline of the defense Shangri-La Dialogue, to discuss their countries' bilateral defense ties. In the meeting, they also held talks on plans to enhance cooperation in the framework of the Australia-Singapore Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

The parties also discussed regional and international security issues and reiterated their commitments to promoting regional peace and security. [Channel News Asia]

Head of Sri Lankan electricity authority who alleged pressure to award project to Indian conglomerate resigns

(cm/lm) The chairman of Sri Lanka's state-run electricity company, MMC Ferdinando, resigned from his post on June 13, just days after told a parliamentary panel that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi hat "pressured" President Gotabaya Rajapaksa to award a power project to an Indian multinational conglomerate. [The Wire]

During a parliamentary hearing on the Electricity Amendment Bill, Ferdinando alleged that President Rajapaksa had "summoned him" last November and informed him that the Indian premier was pressuring him to hand over a USD 500 renewable energy project in the island nation's Northern Province to the Adani Group. Ferdinando also claimed that the Ceylon Electricity Board had never granted unsolicited proposals earlier, even on a government-to-government basis. [The Economic Times] [The Indian Express]

However, Ferdinando retracted his statement the following day, stating that he made it when he had

become “emotional” over some questions asked by the committee. President Rajapaksa, for his part, denied the allegations in a lengthy statement.

The energy project is the second major venture in Sri Lanka involving the Adani Group, which significantly increased its presence in Sri Lanka in recent months. Last September, the conglomerate was brought in to develop the Colombo West International Container Terminal after the Sri Lankan government unilaterally canceled a 2019 cooperation pact offering India and Japan the right to operate the long-stalled Colombo Port’s East Container Terminal at the same port [see AiR No. 40, October/2021, 1].

The controversy erupted just days after Sri Lanka changed its laws to effectively eliminate competitive bidding for energy projects. The opposition Samagi Jana Balwegaya party alleged that the change was made with the intention of regularizing the award of the Mannar contract to the Adani Group. [The Hindu]

US, China envoys meet in Colombo as crisis-hit Sri Lanka needs $5 billion to ensure basic living standards

(cm/lm) Against the larger backdrop of Sri Lanka’s worst economic crisis in decades and an impending debt restructuring, the ambassadors of China and the United States to the island nation met in Colombo on June 13 to discuss matters “of mutual interest”. [Economy Next]

Sri Lanka is on the verge of bankruptcy and in April suspended repayment of nearly USD 7 billion of its foreign debts due this year [see AiR No. 17, April/2022, 4]. The meeting between the envoys took place just days after Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe told parliament on June 7 that the government would require USD 5 billion over the next six months to fund the import of basic necessities, including fuel imports, food, cooking gas and fertilizer. [Reuters]

The same day, the cabinet approved a USD 55 million credit line from India's Exim Bank to fund 150,000 tonnes of urea imports - a critical requirement as supplies have run out during the current cropping season. The United Nations also plans to make a worldwide appeal for Sri Lanka, and has pledged USD 48m for food, agriculture and healthcare, according to Prime Minister Wickremesinghe. [BBC]

Debt restructuring is crucial for Sri Lanka to reach a deal with the International Monetary Fund. In light of this, Sri Lanka has requested China to renegotiate the terms of a yuan denominated swap worth USD 1.5 billion agreed last year. But Beijing – which ranks third among Sri Lanka's creditors after Japan and the Asian Development Bank – has been hesitant to restructure the debts claiming it would then have to do the same for other debtor nations [see AiR No. 18, May/2022, 1].

In related developments, Sri Lanka has decided to offer 40 years of tax relief to investors in its China-built Colombo Port City (CPC) after the project failed to attract any foreign interest after nearly 12 months of operations. Pitched as a new hub between Singapore and Dubai, the CPC was built in the hometown of then-president Mahinda Rajapaksa and paid for with USD 1.1 billion in Chinese loans despite the plan having been rejected by an expert panel. [NDTV]

Yoon Suk-yeol to attend NATO summit

(mr) South Korean President Yoon Suk-Yeol will face his first test in multilateral diplomacy since assuming office in May, when we will attend the upcoming NATO summit in Madrid later this month. It will be his first overseas trip since assuming power in May.

Yoon's participation in the summit on invitation of NATO was confirmed on June 10, marking the first time that South Korea will be attending the summit of the US-led defense alliance.

While the summit will be dominated by the issues of the war in Ukraine, it is believed that Yoon will try to meet Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida. It would be first direct talk between the leaders of the two countries since two and a half years and it would come at a time when relations between Seoul and Tokyo have been strained over disputes over Japan's colonial rule in Korea between 1910 and 1945, including the issues of the Japanese military's wartime sexual slavery and forced labor. [The Korea Herald] [Korea Joongang Daily]

European support for Taiwan

(dql) On June 7, the European Parliament adopted with overwhelming majority pass a resolution in which is voiced concern over China's threats to Taiwan's sovereignty as well as to the security in the wider Indo-Pacific region, citing Beijing's military build-up and

increasingly assertiveness and expansionist behavior in the Indo-Pacific region, along with military activities in and surrounding the Taiwan Strait as factors destabilizing the region.

The Parliament furthermore, described Taiwan as "a key partner and democratic ally in the Indo-Pacific," urging the EU to advance the existing partnership with Taiwan to promote common values of democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and good governance in the region. [Focus Taiwan]

Meanwhile, on June 8, Taiwan and Slovakia had signed an arrangement on judicial cooperation in civil and commercial matters that allows for deepening collaboration on laws, policies and prosecutions, as well as widening channels for exchanges on related issues via regular consultative meetings. The agreement is the first of its kind Taiwan with a European Union member state. [Taiwan Today] Furthermore, President of Slovakia's Bratislava region Juraj Droba concluded a partnership agreement with Chen Chi-mai, Mayor of the southern city of Kaohsiung on the same day. The agreement aims at facilitating bilateral cooperation in various fields, including economic development, public health, technology, tourism, culture and education. [Focus Taiwan]

Last but not least, a delegation of French Senators also vowed support for Taiwan and expressed their wish to deepen cooperation with the island during their visit last week. [US News]

Mr. Peer Morten Strantzen contributed research to this entry.

Thai Prime Minister Prayuth meets US Defense Secretary Austin in Bangkok

(td/lm) United States Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin met with Thailand's Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha, who is also defense minister, on June 13 as part of an effort to strengthen what Austin called Washington's "unparalleled network of alliances and partnerships" in the region.

The two men, who had met in the US last month, discussed ways to deepen bilateral defense cooperation between their countries, as well as prioritizing cooperation in emerging technical areas, such as the cyber and space technology sectors. In the leadup to the meeting, Thai media had reported that Prayuth would likely discuss arms procurement with his American counterpart, including F-35 fighter

aircraft, but Austin did not comment specifically on that in remarks to the media. [ABC News]

Notably, the ministerial-level meeting was preceded by the first session of the US-Thailand Senior Leader Dialogue, which was held between Thailand's deputy defence minister, Chaichan Changmongkol, and the commander of the US Indo-Pacific Command, Admiral John C. Aquilino, on June 8. [Bangkok Post]

Thailand arrests Vietnamese citizens over seized trawlers

(sw) The Royal Thai Navy has arrested 8 Vietnamese nationals for illegally fishing near the southern Thai Songkhla Province and seized the trawlers they had used to fish. Illegal fishing has been a common occurrence, with the Second Fleet of the Thai Navy having already made 12 instances of arrest this year. [Bangkok Post]

Announcements

Upcoming Online Events

15 June 2022, 1:00 p.m. (GMT-4), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (United States)

Carnegie Connects: America and the World with David Petraeus

The Ukraine conflict drags on seemingly without end. Neither Russia nor Ukraine are on the verge of a military victory, while prospects for any serious

negotiations now seem elusive at best. Meanwhile, a rising China is determined to become the dominant power in the Indo-Pacific region and reshape the international order more to its liking. At the same time, Iran is ramping up its nuclear program while North Korea—a de facto nuclear weapons state—has recently flaunted its ballistic missiles. And as America grapples with these foreign policy challenges, at home it remains a polarized and divided nation. How will the United States navigate these perilous waters?

Join Aaron David Miller as he sits down with General David Petraeus to survey America's challenges abroad and at home.

Check out the website of [Carnegie] for more information.

15 June 2022, 9:00 a.m. (GMT-3) Fundação Getúlio Vargas (FGV) (Brazil)

Paths to Sustainability

FGV In Company, in partnership with gv-executive magazine, promotes, on 15/06, the webinar Paths to Sustainability. Mario Monzoni, Lívia Menezes Pagotto and Aron Belinky, experts in the field, will discuss the topic, bringing their views on the scenario, challenges and trends for the sustainability segment.

This [page] has more details about the event.

15 June 2022, 6:00 p.m. (GMT-3) Fundação Getúlio Vargas (FGV) (Brazil)

Webinar | Rebidding: Current and Main Practical Issues of the New Institute

This webinar will address practical topics of the rebidding institute, provided for in Federal Law No. 13,448/19, increasingly relevant in the context of infrastructure projects at the federal level. The webinar will feature speakers from the Federal Public Administration and the Federal Court of Auditors.

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

15 June 2022, 9:30 a.m. (GMT-4) Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) (United States)

Report Launch: Localizing Humanitarian Action in Africa

Despite billions in Official Development Assistance (ODA) to Africa, local and national actors receive little of this funding as African voices are often excluded from decision-making circles in donor capitals and localization. Although Washington has repeatedly signaled a commitment to localization, truly localized humanitarian action has yet to manifest itself at scale. Supporting local African actors for the delivery of an effective humanitarian response is crucial, given their experiences as first responders to crises in their communities and understanding of the realities on the ground.

For more information, see this [webpage].

15 June 2022, 9:00 a.m. (GMT-4) Peterson Institute for International Economics (PIIE) (United States)

Will the WTO Survive Amid Russia's War and Other Stresses on Global Trade?

The world desperately needs strong multilateral organizations and global rules, but the WTO's ability to provide progress looks gloomy. The geo-politization of trade, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the disturbances of supply chains, and now sanctions against Russia, are having a profound impact on global trade. How do we move from here? What reforms are realistic and desirable for a future world trade organization?

Join this event and find answers to these questions and more by visiting this [webpage]

15 June 2022, 9:00 a.m. (GMT-4) Wilson Center, FKA Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars (United States)

The Impact of Violence Against Women on Central American Migration

This event is aimed at discussing how policies and programs can respond to the serious violations of agency and human rights perpetuated against women and girls that result in instability and migration from the Northern Triangle.

See this [page] for more.

15 June 2022, 3:00 p.m. (GMT-4) Wilson Center, FKA Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars (United States)

Trade, Minerals, and the Green Transition in Greenland: A Conversation with Prime Minister Múte B. Egede

With accessible deposits of minerals needed to satisfy rising global demand, and fisheries exports as a key component of Greenland's economy, as well as other trade products, Greenland is poised to capitalize on its strategic geographic location and natural resources. However, investments in these and others areas must limit environmental impacts on the fragile Greenlandic ecosystem and more broadly consider how to implement the Green transition. How can such investments bolster Greenland's economy? What role can the United States play in facilitating environmentally and socially responsible development?

Get further details [here].

15 June 2022, 9:00 a.m. (GMT+2) Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) (Germany)

Act For Charity, But How Does It Work? Civil And Tax Law Issues When Working in Non-Profit Organizations

The seminar is aimed at managers and decision-makers from non-profit institutions and organizations as well as those interested in founding an association, a foundation, or a non-profit corporation. The focus is to convey the most important legal framework conditions for non-profit activities with instructions in a clear and understandable way. Active participation by the participants is expressly desired.

For more details, check out this [page].

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

"Strengthening Democracy - Fighting Right-Wing Extremism" - Guided Tour of The Exhibition

The newly designed exhibition shows the importance of democracy for society and addresses the danger posed by right-wing extremism. It is aimed primarily at young people and can be borrowed free of charge from the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation. Democratic principles as a guarantee of freedom and human dignity as well as the ideology of right-wing extremism are explained on six panels. On a media table you will see, among other things, videos of Holocaust survivors and those affected by right-wing violence today and an argumentation game against right-wing slogans. Questions, tasks, and key terms relating to the exhibition can be found on nine seating cubes.
The exhibition can be visited from 2 p.m. to 7 p.m. in the Julius-Leber-Forum of the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation. There is always the opportunity to exchange ideas with the Julius-Leber-Forum team, to view the accompanying educational material and to discuss how to work with the exhibition.

Click here for more.

15 June 2022, 5:00 p.m. (GMT+2) Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI) (Italy)

The Future of Regional Reset in The Middle East

The Middle Eastern rivals are talking to each other and de-escalating their tension. Economic cooperation and political normalization seem to form the new narrative of the region. Whether these flurries of diploma-tic outreaches represent a new era in the region, if not the emergence of a new order, or a mere strategic pause in the regional disputes remain to be seen.

Get more information [here].

15 June 2022, 8:00 a.m. CEST (GMT+2) Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) (China)

Conference on the Ukraine Crisis: Responses from the European Higher Education and Research Sectors

This conference seeks to bring different stakeholders together to discuss best practices, to begin planning for medium to long-term actions to support and redevelop Ukraine's higher education, research, and development sectors, and to strengthen relationships within Europe. Maintaining and extending in-country

and international teaching, supporting the continued participation of Ukrainian scholars and researchers in high quality research projects and international research collaborations, preserving existing and rebuilding damaged education and research systems and infrastructure, will ultimately serve to lay the groundwork for peace that collectively benefits societies and people across borders.

For further information, check this [page].

15 June 2022, 3:00 p.m. (GMT+2) German Development Institute (DIE) (Germany)

Social Protection and Social Cohesion

The European Journal of Development Research (EUDR) is publishing a special issue on "Social Protection and Social Cohesion", which is guest-edited by Francesco Burchi, Markus Loewe, and Daniele Malerba from the German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE). It includes eight articles examining how social protection contributes to social cohesion – that is vertical and horizontal trust in society, inclusive identity, and cooperation for the common good – but also how social cohesion affects the implementation and effectiveness of social protection programmes.

This [webpage] has more information about the event.

15 June 2022, 10:00 a.m. (GMT+2) German Development Institute (DIE) (Germany)

Allied Resolve: NATO Perspectives on the Russian invasion of Ukraine

As Putin's war in Ukraine escalates, it is apparent that his objective is not only to maintain Russia's sphere of influence in Ukraine, but to bend the present European security architecture to his will. With the toll of Russia's destruction growing, NATO has enhanced its deterrent posture along the Alliance's eastern flank while providing political and materiel support to Ukraine. Still, pressure is mounting for NATO to do more to help those fighting for their freedom and self-determination. During this event, the former Secretaries General of NATO will discuss the political and military options available to NATO and what more the transatlantic alliance can do to protect Ukraine and its people, strengthen Western resolve, and bolster collective defense.

Visit this [page] for more on this event.

15 June 2022, 12:30 p.m. (GMT-4) Atlantic Council (United States)

Missing Key: The Challenge of Cybersecurity and Central Bank Digital Currency

Security issues have multiplied with the rise of the Internet and the threat of cyberattacks. Many central banks, including the Federal Reserve, consider cybersecurity a top priority. CBDCs have quickly landed on the international policy landscape. It is therefore critical that policy makers understand the novel cybersecurity implications that could emerge from issuing a CBDC. Of the G20 economies, 19 are exploring a CBDC with the majority already in pilot or development. This raises immediate questions about cybersecurity and privacy. A government-issued digital currency system could, but does not necessarily need to, collect, centralize, and store massive amounts of individuals' sensitive data, creating significant privacy concerns. It could also become a prime target for those seeking to destabilize a country's financial system.

See this [webpage] for further information.

15-16 June 2022, 10:00 a.m. (GMT+2) Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) (Germany)

"On The Trail of Democracy in Hamburg" - City Tour

Democracy is a big word, but it is also very local. Not only in Berlin, Brussels, and Washington, but also in Hamburg, there are examples everywhere of the vitality of our democracy. Now in the time of crisis, however, they are sometimes less or differently visible. We want to explore with you how and where democracy comes alive in Hamburg.
The city tour will show a few selected places where active democracy participation in Hamburg becomes visible. And not only that - we also get into direct contact with people who tell us something about their commitment and their work!

Find out more and register [here].

16 June 2022, 9:00 a.m. (GMT-4) Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) (United States)

Armchair Conversation with the Ambassador of Ukraine to the U.S. Oksana Markarova

The United States' partnership with Ukraine is now more important than ever, with Russia's unjust invasion of Ukraine causing humanitarian catastrophe, refugee crisis, and infrastructure damages of outstanding proportions. The U.S.'s recent $40 billion aid package reflects the strength of U.S. commitment to Ukraine's economic recovery and security.

This [link] provides further details.

16 June 2022, 8:00 a.m. CEST (GMT+2) Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) (China)

The Science in Exile initiative: Displacement, Gender, and the Right to Science in the Global South

This event will feature displaced scientists from the Global South to look at the Right to Science in the context of global forced displacement and progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and provide different regional and global perspectives on supporting displaced scientists in reaching safety, staying up to date in their field, maintaining meaningful careers, and being in a position to help rebuild their countries if and when conditions allow. The session will also have a special thematic focus on gender, looking at the intersectional nature of challenges that displaced and refugee scientists may encounter, particularly during a pandemic.

This [webpage] offers more information.

16 June 2022, 9:30 a.m. (GMT-4) Atlantic Council (United States)

The Transatlantic Partnership in Africa

This discussion featuring officials and experts serves as a timely opportunity to engage in a high-level conversation following the EU-AU Summit, which took place in Brussels on February 17, 2022. The conversation will focus on the joint vision for a renewed partnership that EU and AU leaders agreed

on at the Summit and its relevance in the context of EU-U.S. cooperation in Africa.

Further information can be accessed [here].

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

We Were Like Brothers

He was ten when the revolution broke out in East Germany. While many yearn for freedom, he is afraid: of the imperialists and fascists his teachers warned him about. Of what is to come and what he does not know. A few years later he was persecuted by neo-Nazis because of his long hair. At the same time, he meets with rights, because he feels safe with them. As safe as with Mariam, whose family is from Georgia and who is not afraid of anything. But he must decide which side he's on. "We Were Like Brothers" is a drastic evocation of the immediate post-reunification period - and an all-too-present novel about the often-banal origins of racism and right-wing violence.

Get further information [here].

16 June 2022, 9:45 a.m. (GMT-4) Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) (United States)

The Capital Cable #50: Korea-Japan Relations and Trilateral Cooperation

The new Korean government is taking positive steps to restore the relationship between Korea and Japan and enhance trilateral cooperation between Korea, Japan, and the United States. To this, the CSIS in this event will discuss the relationship between Korea and Japan and trilateral cooperation.

Find out more [here].

16 June 2022, 10:00 a.m. (GMT-4) Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) (United States)

Assessing Russia's War in Ukraine

Following Russia's unsuccessful initial invasion and attempt to seize the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, the Russian military has reoriented its offensive to Ukraine's east,

attempting to seize the Donbas and annex portions of the country. Please join the CSIS International Security Program for a discussion on Russia's military efforts, Ukraine's military resistance, and opportunities for the United States and its allies and partners to assist Ukraine.

Get more information [here].

16 June 2022, 10:00 a.m. (GMT-4) Heritage Foundation (United States)

Life After Roe Symposium

The Supreme Court is poised to correct a grave error and relegate *Roe v. Wade* to the dustbin of history. The pro-life movement will then enter a new phase of building a culture of life. Join us for a symposium featuring panel discussions on one of the most talked-about topics in America right now: What does life after *Roe* really look like? Leading legal, medical, and policy experts will provide their analysis of the opportunities—and challenges—facing policymakers and the American people in their work to protect unborn children, empower their mothers, and strengthen families.

Further details can be accessed [here].

16 June 2022, 3:00 p.m. (GMT-4) Cato Institute (United States)

Black Liberation through the Marketplace: Hope, Heartbreak, and the Promise of America

The experiences of black Americans do not fit neatly into our nation's political culture. As the authors argue, those on the right fail to acknowledge the gravity of past injustices and rights violations, while those on the left ignore decades of failed paternalism and unintended consequences of government policy. But there is an alternative: classical liberalism, a philosophy based on free markets, individual rights, and vibrant civil society.

Get more details [here].

16 June 2022, 9:00 a.m. (GMT-4) Urban Institute (United States)

12th Annual IRS/TPC Joint Research Conference on Tax Administration

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and the Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center invite you to virtually attend the only annual conference focused exclusively on tax administration research. Researchers from the IRS, other government agencies, academia, and private organizations will discuss some of the latest analyses seeking to make tax administration as effective as possible.

Access more details [here].

16 June 2022, 12:00 p.m. (GMT-4) Urban Institute (United States)

The Prescription: Fiscal Policy for Today's Economy with US Representative Jim Cooper

This interview is part of the Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center series of online conversations on tax and fiscal policy in today's economy. The discussions take place every other Thursday afternoon and feature varying perspectives on the historic economic challenges facing the United States and the world and the best ways to address them.

This webpage has more.

16 June 2022, 2:00 p.m. (GMT+2) Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS) (Denmark)

Everyday Foreign Policy: Performing and Consuming the Russian Nation

In her forthcoming book, Elizaveta Gaufman, an assistant professor, University of Groningen focuses on Russian grass roots foreign policy after the annexation of Crimea, zeroing in on the fetishization of Putin, militarization, sanctions, Russian-Turkish and Russian-American relations, FIFA World Cup and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Follow this [link] for more information.

16 June 2022, 6:00 p.m. (GMT-3) Consejo Argentino para las Relaciones Internacionales (CARI)

(Argentina)

Tribute Session to Ambassador Atilio Molteni

Atilio Molteni was a career diplomat, lawyer and doctor in Law and Social Sciences from the University of Buenos Aires. He entered the Foreign Service of the Nation in 1964, and from that moment until his retirement from the Palacio San Martín, he held different and important functions both in the Foreign Ministry and abroad. In the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he held positions as Director of International Organizations, Director of Science and Technology and Director of Information Technology and Director of International Security, Nuclear and Space Affairs. Abroad, he served at the embassy in Washington, at the consulate general in New York, the representations before the United Nations and before international organizations in Geneva, the embassies in the United Kingdom, Mexico and Japan. As Ambassador, he served in Sweden, Turkey and Israel.

This [link] has more information.

16 June 2022, 2:00 p.m. (GMT+2) Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) (China)

The Science in Exile initiative: Displacement, Gender, and the Right to Science in the Global South

This event will feature displaced scientists from the Global South to look at the Right to Science in the context of global forced displacement and progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and provide different regional and global perspectives on supporting displaced scientists in reaching safety, staying up to date in their field, maintaining meaningful careers, and being in a position to help rebuild their countries if and when conditions allow. The session will also have a special thematic focus on gender, looking at the intersectional nature of challenges that displaced and refugee scientists may encounter, particularly during a pandemic.

Find out more [here].

16 June 2022, 8:00 a.m. CEST (GMT+2) Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) (China)

Science Communication in Multi-Institutional Collaborations: Talk Back Better Webinar Series

The webinar will explore ways to navigate the tension between collaborative research programmes and individual institutional agendas on public engagement. Recent evidence confirms that most research communication is done by programmes, not institutions per se. This is often a challenge for researchers, communication specialists and research funders. This webinar will discuss how this organizational reality can provide some useful opportunities for public engagement for researchers and their institutions.

This [webpage] offers more information.

16 June 2022, 3:00 p.m. (GMT-4) American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research (AEI) (United States)

Evaluating the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 is a generational investment in America's infrastructure. It includes approximately $1.2 trillion in spending on highways, transit, hazardous materials, railroads, broadband access, clean water, and electric grid renewal over an eight-year window. This complex, bipartisan legislation aims to address America's deferred maintenance, spur technological innovation, and support broadband adoption—and it will affect virtually all aspects of the US economy. The event will feature Brookings Institution's Adie Tomer, who will summarize the bill's main elements, benefits, and potential drawbacks.

For further information, follow this [link].

16 June 2022, 3:00 p.m. (GMT-4) American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research (AEI) (United States)

From Syria to Ukraine: Russia's Continued Attacks on Healthcare in Conflict

The perpetrators of these attacks remain free and able to commit the same crimes with impunity in Ukraine and beyond. The Atlantic Council's Strategic Litigation

Project and Eurasia Center invite you to a discussion about the well-documented pattern of Russian attacks on healthcare facilities in Syria and Ukraine, to explore legal and policy paths for preventing future attacks and advancing accountability measures. The discussion will be based on a new issue brief by the Strategic Litigation Project's Gissou Nia and Elise Baker, entitled *Attacks on Hospitals from Syria to Ukraine: Improving Prevention and Accountability Mechanisms*.

For further information, check out this [page].

16-17 June 2022, 2:00 a.m. (GMT-4) Wilson Center, FKA Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars (United States)

Peacebuilding Processes in the Great Lakes Region of Africa

This regional conference, "Peacebuilding Processes in the Great Lakes Region," aims to interrogate peacebuilding in the region by focusing on the root causes of the conflict in the region and the various attempts to build peace. The conference will also evaluate the role of regional institutions and the various peace agreements in the countries in the region. By assessing the implementation of the various national and regional peace frameworks, lessons will be drawn and strategies developed for more effective approaches to peace building in the region.

For further information visit this [webpage].

17 June 2022, 3:00 p.m. (GMT+2) Clingendael, Netherlands Institute of International Relations (Netherlands)

How Climate Change Undermines Security in Iraq, Africa & India

Climate change has implications for security. Droughts, increasing temperatures, rising sea levels and extreme weather events threaten the livelihoods of millions around the globe. Iraq, the Horn of Africa and India are among the most affected areas. In Iraq, a combination of water shortages, heat waves, and dust storms is directly threatening people's lives and livelihoods and has helped to spur instability, notably in Basra in 2018. The Horn of Africa is facing the severest drought since 1981, accelerating food shortages along with the fallout of wheat exports from Russia and Ukraine. India is struggling with stronger and more frequent cyclones,

rising sea levels and temperatures, with heatwaves threatening wheat harvests.

Access more information [here].

17 June 2022, 10:00 a.m. (GMT-4) Atlantic Council (United States)

Juneteenth 2022: Celebrating our Past, Present, and Future

Juneteenth is one of the longest running African American holidays and commemorates the final emancipation of enslaved people after national troops arrived in Galveston, Texas on June 19, 1865 to ensure the freedom of all enslaved people—two-and-a-half-years after the Emancipation Proclamation. It received federal holiday designation last year.

Further details can be found on this [page].

17 June 2022, 5:00 p.m. (GMT+2) Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) (Germany)

Women's Web Seminar (5): Would You Like A Little More? Get Out of The Superwoman Trap

There is nothing wrong with Superwoman, because SHE can do everything.
Today, however, expectations of women are very high, especially women in politics. Self-imposed high standards and external expectations sooner or later lead to excessive demands. Therefore, a reversal is required so that one's own balance is not neglected. Women who volunteer do so in addition to their professional and family responsibilities. In this workshop you will receive impulses to measure your work commitment against goals and results and no longer fall into typical traps. You practice managing your time better to achieve a good balance between everyday pressures and voluntary commitment.

Get more information [here].

18 June 2022, 6:00 p.m. (GMT+2), Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (CIDOB) (Spain)

“What is going on in the World?” The War in Ukraine and the Global Food Crisis

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed inequalities in the global system of access to and distribution of the most basic foods. In effect, thanks to confinement of populations and trade restrictions, it has caused the disruption of certain food supply chains. More than two years into the pandemic, and just when supply chains were starting to recover, the war in Ukraine is now causing a shortage of wheat and other basic foodstuffs as well as a rise in food transport costs. The predictions for 2022 of the UN World Food Programme are alarming. What are the consequences of the war in Ukraine for global food trade and distribution? Is a global food crisis a possibility? How can the multilateral food trade system be maintained and what does the future hold for food supply chains? These questions will be discussed by Johanna Mendelson Forman, Adjunct Professor at the American University’s School of International Service and Distinguished Fellow of the Stimson Center, Washington, DC, and Eckart Woertz, director of the GIGA Institute for Middle East Studies and Associate Senior Researcher at CIDOB.

To find out more about this event, see [CIDOB].

20 June 2022, 1:00 p.m. (GMT+2) Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) (Belgium)

From Words to Action? European Strategic Autonomy After the Return of War

The Russian invasion of Ukraine challenges the EU’s foreign and security policy and already led to unprecedented policy shifts in Brussels and national capitals. Decisions to provide substantial military assistance to Ukraine, or to impose biting sanctions on Russia show a new willingness of the EU to deliver on its promise to increase its strategic autonomy and become a capable international actor. However, the EU’s ability to respond to the new security environment is far from certain. The task to manage its economic dependency on global supply chains has become ever more daunting in a splintering world economy. Its traditional conflict prevention and crisis management approach in the neighborhood is overshadowed by geopolitics. What is left of the idea of “strategic autonomy” in times when the EU’s traditional diplomatic and civilian approach to international politics is failing and more military muscle is in demand? What kind of EU external action might emerge from the current storm?

Follow this [link] for more details.

20 June 2022, 2:00 p.m. (GMT+2) Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS) (Denmark)

Rethinking Urban Connections: Social Infrastructure and Infrastructural Imaginaries

At this seminar, Julie Kleinman presents her acclaimed book "Adventure Capital", chronicling how West Africans use the Gare du Nord to create economic opportunities, confront police harassment, and forge connections to people outside of their communities. Kleinman will focus on the ways that migrants retool French transit infrastructure to build alternative pathways toward social and economic integration where state institutions have failed.

For further details, see here.

20 – 21 June 2022, 2:00 p.m. (GMT+2) Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI) (Italy)

Global Policy Forum

The war in Ukraine is causing a humanitarian crisis and has profound consequences for global governance, not least for the ability of the international community to address global challenges, from the post-Covid recovery to healthcare, from climate change to the SDGs and digital transformation. This hybrid international event on the prospects for peace and cooperation will bring together at Bocconi University (in Milan) thought global leaders and senior experts.

This link has more details.

20-24 June 2022 Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) (China)

Sustainability Research & Innovation Congress 2022 – SRI2022

The gap between rich and poor seems to be widening in Germany. What does this mean in concrete terms for social areas such as education, work, housing, and family? Globalization, digitization, climate, migration are the buzzwords of major change processes, which

should ideally be shaped in a sustainable and fair way in the interests of the people. There are also challenges during the Corona crisis - a crisis that has brought social imbalances into focus as if under a magnifying glass. In the seminar, we therefore address the question of which future models there are for the reorganization of justice and take up the debate about the unconditional basic income.

Find out more [here].

20-24 June 2022, 8:00 a.m. (GMT+2) Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) (Germany)

What Is Social Justice? - Education, Work, Housing and Family Under Scrutiny

The gap between rich and poor seems to be widening in Germany. What does this mean in concrete terms for social areas such as education, work, housing and family? Globalization, digitization, climate, migration are the buzzwords of major change processes, which should ideally be shaped in a sustainable and fair way in the interests of the people. There are also challenges in the course of the Corona crisis - a crisis that has brought social imbalances into focus as if under a magnifying glass. In the seminar, we therefore address the question of which future models there are for the reorganization of justice and take up the debate about the unconditional basic income.

Get further details [here].

21 June 2022, 2:00 p.m. (GMT+2) Bruegel - Belgium

EU Enlargement in a New Light

This seminar will discuss the EU's architecture and enlargement from a political economy perspective along with deepening and widening as trade-off at the heart of the EU's future enlargement.

See [here] for more details about this event.

21 June 2022, 5:30 p.m. (GMT+2) Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) (Germany)

Facets of Internal Security I

The subject of extremism and terrorism has accompanied Germany since the 1970s, but for a long time it was overshadowed by the Cold War. At the latest since the terrorist attacks in the USA on September 11, 2001, especially with a view to Islamist extremists, it has moved right up the list of political priorities for both internal and external security actors. With the attacks by the National Socialist underground in Germany, the massacres in Utøya in Norway and in Christchurch in New Zealand, the threat posed by right-wing extremism became brutally visible. This discussion will analyze how the threat of extremism has developed and changed in international comparison.

Find out more on this [webpage].

21 June 2022, 10:00 a.m. (GMT-4) Wilson Center, FKA Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars (United States)

India and Pakistan at 75: A Tale of Two Divergent Economic Paths

Pakistan's growth exceeded India's as recently as the late 1980s. But since then, India has become one of the world's largest economies, while Pakistan's has failed to keep pace. This event will compare and contrast each country's economic evolution, identify key economic policies and turning points, and highlight what each must do to achieve future economic success. The event will also consider how the economic trajectories of India and Pakistan have shaped US policy toward each country.

See [wilson] for additional information about this event.

21 June 2022, 3:00 p.m. (GMT+2) Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) (Belgium)

How to hit Russia with EU Sanctions?

Since Russia’s recognition of independence of the separatist-held areas of Donetsk and Luhansk and the military invasion of Ukraine on 24 February, the EU has announced six packages of sanctions. The objective of the measures is to limit the funds available for the war and to make the war costly for Putin and the political elite responsible for it. The measures include economic sanctions on the energy, transport, luxury goods and defence sectors; financial sanctions including asset

freezes and transaction bans of banks and individuals; media restrictions; and diplomatic measures.

This page has more information about the event.

21 June 2022, 5:00 p.m. (GMT+2), Clingendael, Netherlands Institute of International Relations (Netherlands)

China Unbound with Joanna Chiu & Sjoerd Den Daas

Joanna Chiu has spent a decade tracking China's propulsive rise, from the political aspects of its multi-billion-dollar "New Silk Road" global investment project to its growing sway over foreign countries and multilateral institutions through "United Front" efforts. What is China's significance to the world and what is the world's reaction to this? Moreover, how does China view its position in the world, and how does this influence working as a journalist in and on China?

Get more details and join this online conversation via this [link].

21 June 2022, 1:15 p.m. (GMT-4), Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) (Canada)

Digital Trade and Competition Policy: How Can Trade Agreements Support Competitive Digital Markets?

This session will explore: What problem is pro-competition digital platform regulation trying to solve? Why use regulation and not competition law? To what extent is international coordination needed to achieve competitive digital markets? How much coordination is already happening? How effective is it? What role should trade agreements play? Should they be used as vehicles to deepen cooperation between regulatory authorities (for example, in investigation and enforcement), promote regulatory harmonization, or contain specific regulatory commitments (for example, an agreement to proscribe specific anti-competitive behaviours)?

See this link for further details.

Recent Book Releases

Victoria A. Malko, ***The Ukrainian Intelligentsia and Genocide: The Struggle for History, Language, and Culture in the 1920s and 1930s***, Lexington Books, 398 pages, published on October 19, 2021, reviewed in [LSE].

Lachlan Fleetwood, ***Science on the Roof of the World: Empire and the Remaking of the Himalaya***, Cambridge University Press, 294 pages, published on May 12, 2022. For a review, see [Asian Review of Books].

Thomas McKenna, ***Moro Warrior: A Philippine Chieftain, an American Schoolmaster, and The Untold Story of the Most Remarkable Resistance Fighters of World War II in the Pacific***, Armin Lear Press, 340 pages, published on May 6, 2022, with a review at [Asian Review of Books].

Rupal Patel and Jack Meaning, ***Can't We Just Print More Money?: Economics in Ten Simple Questions***, Cornerstone Press, 320 pages, published on May 19, 2022, reviewed in [The Guardian].

Calls for Papers

The **Northeast Modern Language Association (NeMLA)** at the **University at Buffalo** invites paper proposals for its ***54th Annual Convention***, to be held on March 23-26, 2023. Conference theme is 'Resilience'. Deadline for abstract submission is September 30, 2022. For more information, visit [NeMLA].

The **Department of Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) at the Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology (IIIT)**, Delhi, welcomes paper proposals for this year's ***annual conference on "Disruption and Its Discontents: Ethics, Politics, and Epistemology of Disruptive Technology",*** scheduled for August 19-20, 2022. Closing date for abstract submission is July 10, 2022. Visit [IIIT] for further details.

Jobs and Positions

E3G, an independent European climate change think tank, seeks applications for the position of a ***Researcher, Climate Change (Politics & Governance)***. The position is based in London. Closing date for applications is June 15, 2022. For more information, visit [E3G].

The **Bank of England** is looking for a ***Climate Advisor***. The position is based in London. Applications must be submitted by June 29, 2022. If you are interested, find more at [Bank of England].

The **University of Edinburgh** welcomes applications for the position of a ***Senior Lecturer*** with specialization in European Union Politics. The successful candidate is expected to provide leadership in research and teaching in the Politics and International Relations subject area. Deadline for application is June 28, 2022. See [University of Edinburgh] for further details.

The **Department of Social & Political Sciences at Brunel University London** is recruiting a ***Lecturer (Education)*** to provided support in teaching in the field of European history. Closing date for applications is June 16, 2022. Follow [Brunel University] to learn more about the job offer.

The **University of Bath** is offering the position of a ***Lecturer (Teaching)*** in International Relations and Politics, preferably with specialization on political violence and peace-processes. Applications can be submitted until June 21, 2022. More information is available at [Bath University].

The **Department of European and International Studies at King's College London** is looking for a ***Lecturer in International Political Economy***. Deadline for applications is June 26, 2022. Visit [King's College London] for further details.

The **Department of European and International Studies at King's College London** is recruiting a ***Lecturer in French & European Studies***. Applications must be submitted by June 26, 2022. Follow [King's College London] for further details.

The **School of Government at the University of Birmingham** seeks application for the position of a ***Chair in Public Policy/Public Administration/Public Management/Political Institutions***. Closing date for applications is September 30, 2022. For more information, see [University of Birmingham].

Hill+Knowlton Strategies, an American global public relations consulting company, is hiring an ***Associate Director – Energy + Industrials***, to be based in London, UK. If you are interested, find more information at [Hiil+Knowlton Strategies].

The **College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University of Florida** seeks applications for the position of ***Director of the Center for African Studies***.

The position is open until filled. For further details of the vacancy, see [University of Florida].

The **Department of African and African American Studies at Brandeis University** is looking for a ***Lecturer in African and African American Studies***. Visit [Brandeis University] for further information,

Howard University seeks applications for the position of ***Ronald W. Walters Endowed Chair for Race and Black Politics***. See [Howard University] to find more about the position.

The **Department of Political Science at New England College** is offering the position of an ***Assistant to Associate Professor in Political Scienc***e. The position is open until filled. Details are accessible via [New England College].

Hampton University is hiring an ***Assistant Professor of Political Science***. The position is open until filled. For more information, see [Hampton University].

Bristol Law School invites applications for the position of ***Lecturer in Law***. Application closing date is June 26, 2022. Visit [Bristol University] for more details.

Bristol Law School seeks applications for the position of Lecturer/Senior Lecturer in Constitutional and Public Law and Research Methods. Applications must be submitted by June 20, 2022. Follow [Bristol University] for more details.

Team:

Beatrice Siviero (bs), Charisma M S Kundan (cmsk), Chithra Madhusudhanan (cm), Dana Lane Batac (db), Daniela Bozoski (dbk), Duc Quang Ly (dql), Henning Glaser (hg), Hira Akram (ha), Julian Wendt (jw), Lucas Meier (lm), Margot Renard (mr), Nguyen Thi An Nhan (ntan), Nitia Carttigueane (nc), Peer Morten Strantzen (ms), Peeranat Wongbandit (pw), Rakshit Kumar (rk), Sebastian Gräff (sg), Shilpa Ramachandran (sr), Tarapoom Panpin (tp), Theerapon Damrongruk (td), Vaishnavi Deegwal (vd), Venus Phuangkom

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German-Southeast Asian Center of Excellence for Public Policy and Good Governance - CPG
Room 207, Faculty of Law, Thammasat University, 2 Prachan Road, Bangkok 10200, Thailand

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