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Asia in Review

Grasp the pattern, read the trend

No. 25, June/2022, 3

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Dear Readers,

Welcome to this week's issue of the Asia in Review.

The entire Asia in Review (AiR) team wishes you an informative read and hopes that you will enjoy our coverage.

With special greetings to everyone celebrating a national day this week, I wish you a very nice day!

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 anti-corruption guidelines target families of senior party officials

(dql) The Chinese Communist Party has issued new guidelines to restrict business activities of families of senior officials, in a latest move of the party's ongoing anti-corruption campaign that had been adopted at 18th CPC National Congress in November 2012 and under which nearly 4 million people have been punished so far.

Under the new regulations which have not been published in full yet, in some cases activities such as starting a business or investments in private equity are forbidden for children and spouses of officials

This comes after President Xi Jinping claimed at a June 17 meeting of the party's Politburo that "a sweeping victory has been secured for the anti-corruption

endeavor," while conceding at the same time that corruption remained a "severe and complicated" challenge. [South China Morning Post] [CGTN]

Mr. Peer-Morten Strantzen contributed research to this article.

China: Measures to boost private investments

(dql) The National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), China's state planner, revealed that ten fixed-asset investments worth USD $18.1 billion had been approved in May, marking a more than six-fold rise from April and reflecting efforts of China's policymakers to get economic growth back on track amidst a slump in world's second-largest economy caused by COVID-19 lockdowns in major cities such as Beijing and Shanghai in April and early May. [Reuters]

The announcement comes on the heels of a meeting of the State Council, the country's cabinet, on June 15 which decided that financial institutions will be guided to increase long-term loans and strengthen support for private investment. The Council also vowed to double down on supporting for private investment through a selection of a batch of major infrastructure projects from a total of more than 100 projects that the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) had set out to attract private investors. [Global Times]

Mr. Peer-Morten Strantzen contributed research to this article.

China: Beijing appoints new Hong Kong cabinet

(dql) On June 19, Beijing appointed Hong Kong's new administration after approving a list of 26 officials proposed Hong Kong's Chief Executive-elect John Lee. The new administration will be sworn in on July 1, which marks the 25th anniversary of Hong Kong's return to China.

Among the 26 officials are four who are under US sanctions, including John Lee, Security Minister Chris Tang, Mainland Affairs Minister Erick Tsang and Hong Kong's No. 2, Chief Secretary for Administration Eric Chan. [Global Times] [VoA]

Mr. Peer-Morten Strantzen contributed research to this article.

China: New textbooks on Hong Kong

(dql) China is reportedly about to introduce new textbooks that deny that Hong Kong was a British colony, citing that the Chinese government did not recognize the unequal treaties under which the city was ceded to Britain. In line with the government's account of the 2019 protests, the textbooks describe them as a threat to national security, with external forces being behind them.

The textbooks are to be used in secondary school in courses on citizenship ideals, lawfulness and patriotism, replacing course that sought to impart critical thinking and ideas on civic engagement among the pupils.

They are now with Hong Kong's Education Bureau for vetting, ahead of the 25th anniversary of Hong Kong's return to China on July 1. [South China Morning Post] [BBC]

Mr. Peer-Morten Strantzen contributed research to this article.

China: Prominent rights activists to face trial

(dql) Prominent Chinese activist Xu Zhiyong and human rights lawyer Ding Jiaxi are set to stand trial soon after Xu's pre-trial conference was held on June 17 and Ding's one scheduled for June 20.

Both have been detained since in February 2020 and December 2019 respectively on suspicion of "subversion of state power" after holding a dinner gathering with other democracy activists in the southeastern port city of Xiamen in December 2019 during which they discussed political reform of the country. [Radio Free Asia] [South China Morning Post]

Shortly before his arrest, Xu published an article in which he accused President Xi Jinping of being incapable of handling crises China's is facing, including the trade war with the USA, the political crisis in Hong Kong, and the Covid-19 public health crisis, and demanded that his resignation [see AiR No. 7, February/2020, 3].

China: Country's most advanced aircraft carrier launched, missile interception system tested

(jw/dql) On June 17, China launched the aircraft carrier Fujian. It is the country's third aircraft carrier after Liaoning and the most advanced one. The first domestically designed and built catapult aircraft carrier is equipped with electromagnetic catapult-assisted launch system capable of launching a wider variety of aircraft faster and with more ammunition.

The latest aircraft carrier marks a significant advancement compared its predecessor, the Liaoning and the Shandong, and allows China to quickly come close to rival US aircraft carriers, according to western analysts. State-run newspaper Global Times hailed the launch as "key landmark" in China's efforts to build up a blue-water navy.

The launch of the aircraft carrier, named after the province Fujian opposite to Taiwan, comes at a time of heighten tensions between Beijing and Washington over Taiwan, with Chinese Defense Minister warning in his speech at the Shangri-La Dialogue earlier this month that China "fight at all costs," and "to the very end," if "anyone dares to secede Taiwan from China." [CNN] [Global Times 1] [See also No. 24, June/2022, 2]

Furthermore, China's Defense Ministry has disclosed that a land-based missile interception test was conducted on June 19, adding that the test was "defensive" in nature and "not aimed at any country." The test reflects China's increased efforts to advance research and development of missiles, including those capable of destroying satellites in space as well as advanced ballistic missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads. [Aljazeera]

Meanwhile, according to Chinese state media, one of the most advanced destroyers of the Chinese naval fleet conducted exercises in the Sea of Japan. The Type 055 destroyer Lhasa was accompanied by two other ships as it took part in an exercise for the first time after its commissioning last year. A Global Times report on the exercise linked the incident to Taiwan, claiming that the Chinese navy must be on alert as "the US and Japan have been repeatedly provoking China over the Taiwan question." [Associated Press] [Global Times 2]

Mr. Peer-Morten Strantzen contributed research to this article.

Japan: Supreme Court's decision unrecognizing national responsibility in Fukushima disaster

(nc) For the first time, the Supreme Court has given a unified judgment on the national liability in the Fukushima nuclear accident, recognizing the government is not responsible.

The judgment was handed down in cases in which people who evacuated to various places after the nuclear accident sued the government and TEPCO. TEPCO's liability was fixed, and the Supreme Court heard the liability of the country.

The focus was on whether the accident could have been prevented if the necessary measures were taken by the government. The top court recognized the earthquake and tsunami were larger than estimated, but that a large amount of seawater intrusion was unavoidable. One of the four judges disagreed with the conclusion. The decision brought anger to plaintiffs and supporters, and it is expected to affect similar cases filed all over the country. [Mainichi]

Japan: New laws to protect children and actors in adult movies

(nc) On June 15, two bills were approved by the House of Councilors. The first one is for the establishment of the "Children and Families Agency". In May, the House of Representatives had already passed the legislation. And the second one is to help adults, who are pressured into making adult videos get out of their contract. The new law states that regardless of age or gender, the contract can be terminated unconditionally for one year after the release of the video.

As for the "Children and Families Agency", it will be established in April 2023 as an external agency of the Cabinet Office, therefore under the direct control of the Prime Minister. It will have the right to make recommendations to other ministries and government offices. The jurisdiction of the nursery school and the certified child institution will be transferred from the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare and the Cabinet Office to this agency. It will centrally plan and make comprehensive adjustments in a wide range of fields such as the declining birthrate, child poverty, and measures to prevent child abuse. The agency is expected to hire private human resources and have a staff of more than 300 people. [Japan Times]

As for the second bill, it is now mandatory for adult video producers to wait one month from the signature of the contract to the shooting of the video, and four months from the filming to the release. This leaves time for actors to decide on whether to let the video be released. It will also give them time to terminate their contract. Furthermore, adult video makers must specify exactly what will be the content of it and what acts will be performed. Misrepresentation of the contract includes imprisonment of up to 3 years or a fine of up to USD 22,000 and a fine of up to USD 745, 000 for companies. Many human rights organizations and support group have expressed their positive opinion on this bill, stating it was giving hope and protection to victims. Considered groundbreaking, some victim's support groups have nonetheless expressed concern that this bill will lead to the legalization of sexual exploitation. They argue that it would legalize merchandising sex for money. [Mainichi] [Japan Today] [Asahi Shimbun]

Japan: Same-sex partnerships allowed in Tokyo, ban on same-sex marriage not unconstitutional in Osaka

(nc) Following Thailand's bill granting same-sex partnerships, the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly unanimously passed a draft ordinance to introduce a same-sex partnership system, recognizing the LGBT community. [see AiR No. 24, June/2022, 2]

For sexual minority couples who live, work, or study in Tokyo, a certificate will be issued and may include a common name or the name of the child if desired. The purpose of establishing the partnership system is to promote Tokyo citizens' understanding of diversity and reduce the disadvantages of life associated with same-sex partnerships. This will lead to the creation of an environment where they can live comfortably. [Japan Times]

Though this represents progress in LGBT+ rights, the top court in Osaka, following a case filed by three same-sex couples, ruled on June 20 that same-sex marriage is not unconstitutional. Same-sex couples are therefore not allowed to legally marry yet. [Japan Today]

Japan: Date for House of Councilors' election set

(nc) The Cabinet decided on July 10 as the date for the election during the closure of the Diet's session.

The election is likely to focus on economic measures facing rising oil prices and the depreciation of the yen. But also, on security policies following Russia's invasion of Ukraine and China's military rise.

The results of the House of Councilors' election are likely to have a major impact on the outcome of the debate on the revision of the Constitution. The ruling Liberal Democratic Party has already declared ahead of the election that it will concentrate on defense and double the country's defense budget. Its plan for Japan is not only to defend but also to counterstrike amid North Korea, China, and Russia's armed weight. Furthermore, the LDP still has in mind the revision of the Constitution.

Even though Prime Minister Kishida Fumio's party, the LDP, aims to secure half of the 248-member upper house, this election takes place after the two no-confidence motions filed against Kishida and House of Representatives Speaker Hiroyuki Hosoda. [see AiR No. 24, June/2022, 2]

Securing half of the seats, like he currently has now, would help Kishida pave the way for implementing his policies and addressing the challenges Japan is facing. The government, composed of the coalition between the LDP and the Komeito is currently occupying 138 seats and the opposition 97 seats. [Mainichi]

Japan: Hosoda files a complaint about sexual scandal reports

(nc) Lower House Speaker Hiroyuki Hosoda is suing the Shukan Bunshun magazine over the reports they published about his alleged sexual harassment of female reporters. This takes place after he survived a no-confidence motion during the Diet's session on June 9. [see AiR No. 24, June/2022, 2] [Japan Times]

Japan: Criminal complaint filed against ex-Prime minister Shinzo Abe

(nc) A group of citizens filed a criminal complaint against ex-Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, saying that the brewery company Suntory Holdings Ltd. provided free alcohol during a party held by Abe's support group. They argue that it was a corporate donation that violates the Political Funds Control Act.

The citizens' group has also filed complaints against three employees from Suntory Holdings Ltd. pointing out they provided free alcoholic beverages, knowing that corporate donations could not be made to non-political parties.

In response to the accusation, the company's public relations department refrained from commenting and Abe's office declared cooperating with the investigative agency and having corrected the points that should be corrected in income and expense reports. [Mainichi]

Japan: Charges against officials dropped in a case over Sri Lankan's death

(nc) The Nagoya District Public Prosecutors Office filed a complaint about suspicion of murder and abandonment against immigration officials, which was dropped on June 17. A Sri Lankan woman died at the center detention at the Nagoya Regional Immigration Services Bureau in March 2021. Thirteen staff members, including the then-director, were held into account. But the prosecutors dropped the charges for lack of evidence. [Mainichi]

Japan: Marriage rate drops, 1 of 4 single chooses not to marry

(nc) According to the Cabinet Office's 2022 white paper on gender equality, one in four single Japanese in their 30s who had never been married has no desire to marry. This white paper summarizes the results of a survey carried out by the Cabinet Office from December 2021 to January 2022 and received responses from 20,000 people in their 20s to 60s.

The number of marriages in 2021 was around 514,000, the lowest after the war. In their thirties, 54.6 percent of men and 62.6 percent of women were legally married. Asked about their intention to marry, 46.4 percent of men and women in their 30s declared wanting to, while 26.5 percent of men and 25.4 percent of women said they had no intention of doing so. The burden of household chores, childcare, and financial anxiety were mentioned as reasons for this lack of desire to tie the knot.

In Japan, systems causing gender-related discrimination such as pay gaps, and discriminatory working practices are the same as in 1970. Therefore, this white paper calls for policies and systems

implementations to favor gender equality in society. It advocates the construction of an environment where women can be more independent when they are young. The objectives are to help women be financially more independent by fixing the pay gap and to provide better education opportunities. [Asahi Shimbun] [Global Times]

Japan: Yen slips to lowest level against the U.S. dollar

(nc) The yen has reached its lowest level against the U.S. dollar since 1998. It is now trading at USD 135.20 which furthers the interest gap between the two countries. The yen has been weakening against the dollar as the U.S. monetary policy diverges from the Japanese one amid higher inflation.

Bank of Japan Governor Haruhiko Kuroda declared that this decline would make it more complicated for companies to draw up business plans. Technology companies' indexes such as Tokyo Electron also follow this decline. Kuroda declared the depreciation of the yen was negative for the Japanese economy. [Mainichi]

Japan: Kishida not so keen on acquiring nuclear-powered submarines

(nc) Opposition parties called for the acquisition of nuclear-powered submarines to increase deterrence. But Prime Minister Kishida Fumio stays cautious about this idea.

The Japan Innovation Party and the Democratic Party for the People asked for Japan to acquire submarines to boost reconnaissance capacity and deterrence. This is in the context of the invasion of Ukraine and China's growing assertiveness in the region. Kishida recognized the need for Japan to boost its defense but stays cautious about acquiring nuclear-power submarines for two main reasons. It has a high running cost, and it is difficult to implement under the Atomic Energy Law. This law states that nuclear energy can only be used for research, development, and peaceful purposes. The acquisition of submarines represents a military purpose thus contrary to the law. [Mainichi] [Kyodo News]

South Korea: President Yoon vows reform on public institutions, government outlines economic polices

(dql) South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol has urged a far-reaching reform of the country's public institutions during a cabinet meeting on June 21. Yoon ordered strict evaluation of pubic institution and a drastic improvement in case where lax management is found.

The move is aimed at cutting back their growing debts which has been significantly increasing over the past five years and stood at USD 452 billion the end of 2021. It is part of Yoon's push for "strong structural reforms in expenditure" that seek to secure the stabilization of the people's livelihoods and restore economic vitality in the country. [Yonhap News Agency]

Last week, the finance ministry lowered growth forecast for this year down from 3.1 percent 2.6 percent, as result of supply bottlenecks, inflation and rising interest rates. Inflation is predicted to raise from 2.2 percent to 4.7 percent, the fastest since 2008. [Reuters]

Amidst these forecasts, the government revealed a blueprint for its economic policies for the next five years that put emphasis on private sector-led growth and deregulation to tackle high inflation and expanding uncertainties at home and abroad.

That includes a cut on maximum corporate taxes from 25 to 22 percent in a bid to encourage corporate investment and job creation, along with broader tax incentives for investing in innovative sectors such as semiconductors. Furthermore, taxation on capital gains from stock transfers will be postponed for two years while taxes on stock transactions will be reduced, too. [KBS]

South Korea: Trucker strike ends

(dql) A eight-day strike of South Korean truckers ended after a tentative agreement was reached between South Korea's unionized truckers and the transport ministry on June 14 under which the truckers' minimum wage system is extended. Both sides also agree to continue discussions about expanding a guarantee of minimum pay for carrying cargo to cover additional products.

According to the industry ministry, the strike caused more than USD 1.2 billion in lost output and unfilled deliveries for the country's industry. [Reuters]

South Korea: Interior ministry reveals plan for new office controlling police

(dql) South Korea's Ministry of Interior made public plans to establish a new bureau which can directly control police. The plan follows recommendations made by an advisory committee as part of a set of police reform proposals. The committee was established at the order of Minister of Interior Lee Sang-min.

In response, Seoul police officers rejected the plans, citing risks of damaging independence and neutrality of the police. The opposition Democratic Party also voiced criticism, accusing the government of trying to infringe on the police's political neutrality. [Yonhap News Agency]

The plans come as South Korea's police has been vested with more investigative power following the recent reform laws on the prosecution [see AiR No. 18, May/2022, 1].

South Korea: Successful rocket launch

(dql) On June 21, South Korea successfully launched five satellites into orbit with the indigenous Nuri rocket. The satellites will carry out Earth observation missions for up to two years.

The launch marks a significant advancement of the country's emerging space program. A first launch in October last year failed.

So far, only Russia, the United States, the European Union, China, Japan and India had developed a space launch vehicle that can carry a satellite weighing more than 1 ton, the Korea Aerospace Research Institute, the country's space agency said. [CNN]

Taiwan: Cabinet present national CEDAW implementation report

(dql) On June 15, Taiwan's Cabinet released its fourth national report on the implementation of the U.N.

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) that covers the years from 2017-2020, revealing both progress and setbacks in the government's efforts to improve women's rights in Taiwan.

Achievement in this period identified in the report, include the 2019 same-sex marriage legalization, along with the more than 40 percent female representation rate in Taiwan's parliament, marking the highest rate in Asia in 2020.

However, the report also found that while the number of reports on domestic violence incidents stood at 110,000 in 2017, the incidents reported in the following three years totaled over 120,000 per year. Abuse between partners accounted for half of all reported cases, with 83 percent of the victims being women. [Taiwan Today] [Taipei Times]

Mr. Peer-Morten Strantzen contributed research to this article.

Taiwan: Latest indigenous armored vehicle showcased

(dql) The Taiwanese military showcased last week the CM-34 Clouded Leopard, its latest homegrown armoured vehicle.

In service since 2019, the CM-34 is eight-wheeled and equipped with the Mk44 Bushmaster 30mm chain gun, produced by Northrop Grumman (NOC.N) as well as with an effective firing range of 3 km (1.9 miles). It is said to possess high mobility and able to operate in all weathers.

So far, the military has received 173 out of a total of 305 tanks ordered. [Reuters]

Meanwhile, six Taiwan Air Force F-16V fighters left the island for the US Luke Air Force Base in Arizona where they will be used to train Taiwanese pilots.

The measure is part of a Taiwan-U.S. program that was launched in the 1990s when Taiwan bought the first batch of the jets from the US. [Focus Taiwan]

Mr. Peer-Morten Strantzen contributed research to this article.

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

Bangladesh: Thousands of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh rally to demand repatriation to Myanmar

(lm) Tens of thousands of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh staged demonstrations on June 19 – a day before World Refugee Day – demanding repatriation back to Myanmar, where they fled a brutal military crackdown five years ago. Simultaneous marches and rallies were allowed to be held, despite a ban on rallies since a 200,000-strong protest in August 2019 [see AiR No. 35, August/2019, 4]. [Al Jazeera] [The Straits Times]

Bangladesh: Fresh protest over remarks about Prophet Muhammad by Indian officials

(lm) Thousands of people have marched in Bangladesh's capital, Dhaka, last week to afresh demand the governments of Bangladesh and neighboring India officially condemn comments made earlier this month by two senior officials in Indian Prime Minister Modi's governing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) about the Prophet Muhammad.

Muslims held previous rallies across Bangladesh after Friday Prayer on June 10; 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. Unlike the governments of other Muslim-majority countries, Bangladesh's Awami League government has remained silent on the comments [see AiR No. 24, June/2022, 2].

Against this backdrop, protesters again took to the streets on June 17 to demand that Muslim-majority nations boycott Indian products and cut off ties with New Delhi, and that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina publicly condemn the comments. The march began at the country's main Baitul Mukarram Mosque but was blocked by police as it headed toward India's embassy, a few kilometers away. [The Straits Times]

India: New recruitment reform for armed forces triggers violent protests across the country

(rk/lm) Protests against a new recruitment plan for India's Army that calls time on a guaranteed job for life turned violent on June 17, with demonstrators attacking train coaches, burning tires and clashing with security forces.

This follows protests which erupted in several states on June 15, a day after the announcement of the "Agnipath" (path of fire) scheme, which aims to recruit people aged between 17 and 21 on four-year contracts. Once the contract ends, 25 percent of the proposed 45,000 recruits will be allowed to stay on, and the rest must leave. Those who don't qualify to continue their military careers will receive a lump sum of about USD 15,300 in lieu of a pension or benefits. [The Guardian]

The reform is aimed at reducing the army's expenditure on ballooning salaries and pensions – accounting for more than half of its total budget, leaving only small funds for modernization - and bringing down the average age of the forces. However, the announcement came as a shock to young rural people who have become accustomed to the idea of becoming soldiers in the armed forces.

In eastern Bihar – a state that has some of India's highest unemployment and poverty rates – police fired teargas to disperse crowds who set four train carriages alight. Protests and burning of effigies have also taken place in parts of Rajasthan, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, all states whose youth majorly takes part in the biannual recruitment rallies for the Army. [The Hindu]

These recruitments have been stalled since the COVID-19 pandemic began, frustrating millions of desperate applicants who fear that they might soon be too old to apply for the armed forces – a job that brings a stable income and social status. Until now, new noncommissioned recruits have served for an average of 17 years, and as of March 2021, more than 100,000 posts were lying vacant in India's Armed Forces. [The Times of India] [The Tribune]

In a bid to pacify protesters, the federal government announced late on June 16 that - just for this year - candidates aged up to 23 years could apply under the scheme. On the weekend, the home ministry also said it would reserve 10 percent of vacancies in the paramilitary forces and the Assam Rifles, a unit in the Indian Army, for those who finish the four-year term. But a senior Indian army official later confirmed that the recruitment scheme will not be rolled back. [Anadolu Agency] [BBC]

Along with the potential recruits and several opposition parties, the new plan is being criticized by some military generals and defense experts who say it could weaken the structure of the army and could have serious ramifications for national security, especially when India has tense borders with two of its neighbors - Pakistan and China. Some analysts also fear that the reform could lead to an influx of short-term soldiers in the private militias of right-wing Hindu nationalist groups. [Al Jazeera]

India: Thousands protest 'bulldozer justice' against Muslims, as lawyers condemn state response

(sr/lm) Thousands of Muslims marched in the capital of India's West Bengal state, Kolkata, on June 14 in a second week of protests triggered by derogatory remarks made by ruling party figures about Islam's Prophet Muhammad. [Reuters]

At the end of the first week of protests, authorities in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh demolished the homes of several people allegedly linked to riots that had erupted during demonstrations on June 10. Furthermore, more than 300 people were arrested. [AiR No. 24, June/2022, 2]

Against this backdrop, 12 prominent people, including former Supreme Court and High Court judges and lawyers, sent a letter to India's chief justice urging him to hold a hearing on the demolitions, calling them illegal and "a form of collective extrajudicial

punishment." They accused the Uttar Pradesh government of suppressing dissent by using violence against protesters. [Hindustan Times]

India: Opposition-led finance ministers demand extension of compensation program for GST tax

(sr/lm) Finance ministers from three opposition-led states are pressuring the government of Indian Prime Minister Modi to continue compensation for losses from the Goods and Services (GST) tax for another three years or risk a stalemate in attempts to further simplify the structure.

Under the GST law, the central government has to compensate states for five years through June 2022 for giving up their tax-making powers and gaining their support for the consumption tax. Several states want the program to continue as it has become a key source of income to pay for salaries, subsidies and infrastructure development.

Against this backdrop, the GST Council, the governing body of the GST, is scheduled to hold its 47th on June 28-29 in Chandigarh, the capital of the northern states of Punjab and Haryana. The push is led by the governments of Kerala, West Bengal and Chhattisgarh. Notably, Tamil Nadu and Bihar, a state governed by a local ally of Prime Minister Modi's, *Bloomberg* reported on June 16, citing people with knowledge of the matter. [The Straits Times]

If the Council, headed by the federal finance minister, Nirmala Sitaraman, doesn't agree to the request, the states could unilaterally raise revenue with other taxes that goes against a push by the central government to standardize such duties across the countries.

India: Ruling BJP earns, spends the most among country's national parties

(rk) Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) – ruling at the center since 2014 – earned almost 57 per cent of the total income of eight national political parties of India in 2020-2021. The party got USD 96 million while the main opposition party, Indian National Congress got USD 36 million, according to a report of Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), an organization that advocates electoral reforms for greater transparency. The report

was based on the annual audited reports submitted to the Election Commission by the national parties. [The Indian Express] [The Hindu]

India: National Congress leader Rahul Gandhi questioned in money laundering case

(rk) On June 13, India's central agency to investigate cases of money laundering began questioning the leader of the opposition Indian National Congress (INC) party, Rahul Gandhi, in a money laundering case linked to the *National Herald* newspaper owned and run by the party.

The Enforcement Directorate is investigating a complaint filed nine years ago by a lawmaker from Prime Minister Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The complainant has alleged that the Gandhi family formed a shell company and illegally gained control of property worth USD 300 million. The assets had belonged to a firm that published the National Herald newspaper, founded in 1937 by India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru, who was Rahul Gandhi's great grandfather. [The Straits Times]

On the day of the first session, INC party workers staged massive protests outside the Enforcement Directorate's offices, leading the police to barricade some parts of New Delhi to control crowds. Clashes between protestors and police, and detention of INC senior party leaders – including two chief ministers - have also been reported. [The Times of India]

The questioning resumed on June 20 following a four-day break to allow Gandhi to be with his hospitalized mother, INC President Sonia Gandhi, who had been diagnosed with COVID-19 last week. [NDTV]

Meanwhile, the INC has alleged abuse of the central agencies by the BJP government against its political opponents, a charge that has been leveled against the Modi government for quite a long time as several other leaders of opposition parties are also facing probes against them. [The Hindu]

India: Court rejects plea to register cases against ruling BJP leaders for hate speech

(rk) The Delhi High Court has rejected a plea asking to register cases against two lawmakers of India's ruling

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for their alleged hate speeches in 2020 against the anti-Citizenship Law protesters. The court, while dismissing the plea filed by two leaders of a Left party, said that prior sanction of the Central government was needed to register cases against the lawmakers, as per the norms for registering cases against elected representatives in the country. [The Hindu]

India: Supreme Court hears plea challenging divorce through Islamic 'Talaq-e-Hasan' practice

(sr/lm) India's Supreme Court on June 17 heard a plea challenging the constitutional validity of "Talaq-e-Hasan", a practice by which by a Muslim man can legally divorce his wife by saying the word "talaq" once a month for three months.

The petitioner, whose husband was set to pronounce the third talaq on June 19, argues that the practice is discriminatory since only men can exercise the same, and therefore it is not harmonious with human rights and equality, and is not necessary in the Islamic faith. [The Wire]

In 2017, the Supreme Court by a majority of 3:2 had deemed the instant triple talaq practice – a form of divorce where the Muslim man pronounces divorce three times in one sitting – unconstitutional. The form of talaq challenged last week requires the man to pronounce divorce in three turns, and thus, differs from the practice banned in 2017. [The New Indian Express]

India: As targeted killings continue, anti-militancy operations take place in Kashmir

(rk/lm) In an effort to projecting the majority-Muslim Kashmir Valley as a stable, integrated part of India ahead of the Amarnath Yatra – a Hindu pilgrimage that takes place every year from July to August in the Valley – anti-militancy operations have been stepped up by defense forces.

On June 2, members of a little-known militant group called the Kashmir Freedom Fighters killed a bank manager in the southern Kulgam district. Later the same day, two Hindu migrant workers were shot at in

Budgam by two masked gunmen. One among them died from his injuries on the way to the hospital.

These killings, the latest in a intensifying spate of attacks targeting government officials, teachers and civilians, have intensified an exodus of members of the Kashmiri Pandits, a small Hindu community native to the Muslim-majority Kashmir Valley. [AiR No. 23, June/2022, 1]

Against this backdrop, two militants, who were reportedly intending to attack the Amarnath Yatra, were killed in an overnight encounter with security forces in the region's main city Srinagar on June 13. The two suspects were believed to be members of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), a Sunni Muslim militant insurgent group based in Pakistan, whose primary aim is the liberation of Jammu and Kashmir from Indian control. Seven more members of the LeT were killed in separate security operations over the weekend. [The Hindu] [NDTV]

Separately, two militants – one of them suspected of gunning down the bank manager – were also killed by the security forces. Furthermore, the government of the Jammu and Kashmir union territory ordered 300 schools affiliated with the banned Jamat-e-Islami group to shut, telling students to report to government schools. [The Straits Times]

In a possible retaliatory attack a senior Muslim police official was shot dead on June 18, marking the third murder of a police officer in the past four weeks. [The Wire]

At least 24 people have been killed by militants in Kashmir this year. Security forces, in turn, have killed at least 116 militants this year, double than last year's tally for the same period. [The New Indian Express]

Nepal: Parliament's upper house accepts proposal to consider Appropriation Bill

(lm) The upper house of Nepal's parliament, the National Assembly, accepted on June 17 a proposal seeking consideration of the Appropriation Bill amidst obstructions from the main opposition Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist–Leninist). On June 20, then, a three-day period dedicated to headings-wise discussions on the Bill commenced; the schedule for replies of respective ministers has been proposed for June 23-24. [The Himalayan Times]

Ms. Vaishnavi Deegwal contributed research to this article.

Pakistan: TV journalist freed after overnight detention by plainclothes police

(ha) Nafees Naeem, a Pakistani television journalist apparently abducted by plainclothes police in the southern port city of Karachi was released and returned home before dawn on June 14. However, at the time of writing, Naeem is yet to comment on his forced disappearance. Similarly, no official statement has been released from the police. [Associated Press] [Dawn News]

Naeem's forced disappearance had been condemned by Pakistan's journalists' union, which called on the government to take action against those responsible for the journalist's disappearance. [Daily Times]

Pakistan: At least three killed in militant attack on labor camp in southwestern Balochistan Province

(ha) At least three workers were killed and five more wounded after militants opened fire at a road construction labor camp in Pakistan's southwestern Balochistan Province on June 17. No group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack but separatist groups operating against the federal government have staged similar attacks in the past in response to what they call the unfair exploitation of resources in the mineral-rich region. [Associated Press]

In another security-related development, a militant and a soldier were killed in a shootout in Miran Shah, the main town of Pakistan's North Waziristan district on June 18.

Separately, gunmen attacked a police post in Balochistan on June 19, killing two constables. [Al Arabiya]

Sri Lanka: IMF team arrives in Colombo as cabinet moves to cut President Rajapaksa's powers

(lm) A delegation of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) arrived in Sri Lanka on June 20 for talks on a crucial bailout program, as the government closed schools and halted non-essential government services,

starting a two-weeks shutdown to conserve its fast-depleting fuel stocks.

Sri Lanka suspended payment on USD 12 billion of foreign debt in April and is seeking up to USD 3 billion from the IMF to put its public finances on track and access bridge financing [see AiR No. 16, April/2022, 3]. The nine-member IMF team, visiting the island nation through June 30, already held talks with Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe on how to structure what would be Sri Lanka's 17th loan program with the Washington-based lender. [Al Jazeera] [Reuters]

Colombo hopes the IMF visit will yield a quick staff-level agreement and a fast track for IMF board disbursements. But the final program approval will be contingent upon assurances that official creditors, including China, are willing to provide adequate debt relief.

Also on June 20, the cabinet approved the so-called 21st Amendment to its constitution to dilute presidential powers, in a move to appease protesters that have been taken to the streets since March calling for President Gotabaya Rajapaksa to quit [see AiR No. 11, March/2022, 3]. The amendment was not presented to cabinet in mid-May after lawmakers of the Sri Lanka Podu Jana Peramuna (SLPP) party run by the Rajapaksa brothers objected [see AiR No. 22, May/2022, 5]. [The Hindu]

But public distress over the fuel shortages is growing, and troops opened fire to contain rioting at a fuel station on June 18, leaving four civilians and three soldiers wounded. This week, then, thousands of students marched through Colombo chanting "Gota go home" in reference to the president, who they accuse of corruption and mismanagement. Rajapaksa had previously vowed to finish the remaining two years in his term, but said he will not stand for re-election [see AiR No. 23, June/2022, 1]. [CNA] [The Straits Times]

Furthermore, four out of five people in Sri Lanka have started skipping meals as they cannot afford to eat, the United Nations has said, warning of a looming "dire humanitarian crisis" with millions in need of aid. In light of this, the World Food Programme (WFP) began distributing food vouchers to about 2,000 pregnant women in Colombo's "underserved" areas as part of "life-saving assistance" on June 16. The WFP estimates that it will have to raise USD 60 million to assist three million people between June and December. [The Straits Times] [UN News]

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

Brunei: Labor sector sees improvement in work-related fatalities

(bs) Brunei's labor sector has seen remarkable improvement since 2013, an inspector for the Health and Environment National Authority (SHENA) reported. According to the findings, the country's continuous monitoring of the labor environment has contributed to a drastic decrease in work-related deaths within 9 years. The only field that saw an increase in such fatalities was the construction industry, which reported 154 accidents in 2020 compared to the 18 filed in 2014.

According to the inspector, the increase in accidents in the construction industry is caused by various factors, including "a lack of awareness of the law, a competent supervisor, and the absence of individuals to manage or coordinate safety and health matters on site." She then suggested the implementation of a risk assessment system for all industries along with an emergency response plan and certification of equipment maintenance. [The Star]

Brunei: Government to invest in renewable energy development

(bs) Brunei's Energy Department is planning to increase the share of renewable energy in the total power generation mix with a first milestone to be

achieved by 2025 and reach 30 percent of the power generation mix by 2035.

Moreover, the government reiterated that improvement in the energy sector will be crucial to the further growth of the country's socio-economic framework. In fact, in Brunei, the energy sector accounted for 58.8 percent of the country's total GDP in 2021.

The plan has been developed in line with the country's commitment to achieving a net-zero target by 2050. A goal that was established during the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) in November 2021.

Cambodia: Opposition members, human rights lawyer sentenced for treason

(pw) Sam Rainsy, founder of the now-dissolved former major opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) and around 60 other opposition members have been sentenced to between five to eight years of imprisonment by the Phnom Penh Municipal Court for having been involved in a conspiracy to oust Prime Minister Hun Sen's government in 2018–2019. Many of the defendants were sentenced in absentia after having escaped to foreign countries or as they remained in hiding.

Rainsy, who has been residing in France since 2015, would now have to bear a cumulative 55-year prison sentence from the various charges filed against him, which he regards as political charges.

Another notable defendant in this context is Theary Seary, a Cambodian-American lawyer who received a six-year jail sentence for protesting outside the court in a Lady Liberty costume to demand the release of political prisoners in Cambodia. Her lawyer is planning to file an appeal. Following her sentence, the United States (US) Embassy in Cambodia expressed concerns about the court judgment and urged the Cambodian government to release Seary and other human rights and political activists. In response, the government claimed that the court decision is consistent with national laws and that Seary's imprisonment would not overshadow the Cambodia–US relationship.

Meanwhile, Human Rights Watch (HRW) has regarded this trial as part of mass court trials designed to remove opposition election threats to Sen's government adding that these proceedings embodied the demise of democracy in Cambodia.

The court's judgment brought an end to this court case which had begun in 2020. [AiR No. 15, April/2022, 2] [Associated Press News] [CNN] [Khmer Times] [Radio Free Asia]

Contemporarily, Kem Sokha, the CNRP's former leader, claimed that his partnership with Rainsy has come to an end. The claims were made during a court hearing in Sokha's treason trial, where the defendant also reiterated that he has not endorsed Rainsy's overseas actions. In response, Rainsy dismissed such statements alleging that such remarks followed intimidations by Prime Minister Hun Sen. Sen's ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP) has rejected Rainsy's accusations on this matter and alleged that it was the West who forced Rainsy and Sokha into working together.

In 2017, the Cambodian authorities apprehended Sokha for being involved in a purported conspiracy with foreign powers to depose Prime Minister Hun Sen's government. In the latest court hearings, his attorneys claimed that the prosecution had attempted to link him to Rainsy.

Cambodian courts in recent years have put forth treason charges against more than 100 opposition supporters. [AiR No. 24, June/2022, 2] [Khmer Times 1] [Khmer Times 2] [Radio Free Asia] [The Phnom Penh Post]

Cambodia: Ruling party submits defamation lawsuit against main opposition party's vice president

(pw) The ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP) has filed a lawsuit against Son Chhay, the vice president of the main opposition Candlelight Party (CP), for allegedly defaming the CPP in an interview with a local news website in which he claimed that the 2022 commune election was neither fair nor free.

The CPP is now seeking to receive USD 1 million as compensation. In response, while Chhay accused the CPP of attempting to undermine the CP, the other CP vice president called the National Election Committee (NEC) to resolve such an incident.

However, the NEC considered Chhay's remarks to be damaging to the Committee and Cambodian democracy. Hence, it has planned to file a lawsuit against Chhay on this matter as well for allegedly breaching electoral laws and regulations. According to the Committee, his comments might also lead to him being criminally charged for purportedly insulting the

NEC and other political parties and inciting public unrest.

The NEC has declared that the preliminary election results have shown the CPP to be in the lead for the commune elections on June 5. The official results are expected on June 26. Chhay has previously claimed that there were cases of CP election observers being expelled from the vote-tallying centers during this election. Both the CPP and the Cambodian government have been accused of trying to suppress the opposition before this election with methods such as arrests, candidate delistings, election law violation claims, physical violence against opposition members, and threats. [AiR No. 24, June/2022, 2] [Associated Press News] [Khmer Times] [The Phnom Penh Post]

Cambodia: Election committee accuses overseas opposition supporter of undermining committee's reputation

(pw) The National Election Committee (NEC) filed accusations of defamation against Kim Chanratana, a Cambodian-American residing in the United States, for "undermining the democratic process in Cambodia" after allegedly posting a song mocking the committee on Facebook.

According to the NEC, Chanratana's actions ruined the integrity of the 2022 commune elections. Therefore, the Cambodian government has been called upon by the committee to conduct a probe on the matter and, if appropriate, take legal action against Chanratana.

A local rights group executive director noted the NEC should have informed Chanratana about its stance on the matter and warned that attempting to file lawsuits against the accused would only lower its reputation. [The Phnom Penh Post]

Cambodia: Opposition parties contemplate to form a coalition

(pw) Representatives of four opposition parties have agreed to form a committee to look into the possibility to establish a coalition in light of the upcoming 2023 general election. All the four parties formerly belonged to the now-dissolved opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP).

It is currently unknown how these parties would form this coalition, whether by joining with a preexisting party or creating an entirely new one. According to a Cambodian political analyst, such a development would allow the opposition parties to become more competitive and influential nationwide. He believed that if those parties joined forces with the main opposition Candlelight Party, they could challenge the ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP). [AiR No. 23, June/2022, 1] [The Phnom Penh Post]

Cambodia: Civil society groups urge Prime Minister to accelerate progress on access to information draft law

(pw) In a letter, 33 Cambodian civil society organizations (CSOs) have requested Prime Minister Hun Sen to help accelerate the drafting process of the country's Access to Information (ATI) law.

The letter came as a CSO executive director remarked the ATI draft had already been completed in 2018 without any positive progress soon after, also adding that the current draft does not include any of the substantial inputs proposed by the CSOs.

Another critic came from a journalists' association executive director who noted that the delayed passage of the ATI law has been negatively affecting the right to access to information, especially for news reporters.

Meanwhile, in response, the Information Ministry has attributed the delay in passing the ATI law to the government's desire to consult every societal and ministerial stakeholder on the matter. It added that the Justice Ministry is currently scrutinizing this legislation and that the Council Ministers would review the law in the near future. [Khmer Times]

Indonesia: President reshuffles cabinet

(jvk) President Joko Widodo has reshuffled his cabinet to welcome two new ministers and three deputy ministers. The reshuffle, which was ordered on June 15, includes the replacement of Trade and Agrarian and Spatial Planning Ministers and deputy ministers in Home Affairs, Spatial Planning, and Labor and it marks Widodo’s seventh cabinet reshuffle in eight years.

Among those who left the cabinet was former Trade Minister Muhammad Lutfi who faces criticism over a

series of policy switches on palm oil exports that include a major export ban lifted on May 23.

The reshuffle follows months of speculation and has been met with mixed reactions. Analysts believe that the move aims to steady the remainder of Widodo's term. Observers also say new appointments seem heavily backed by political rather than technocratic interests. Ahead of the 2024 Presidential Elections, Widodo seems to be strengthening power within his coalition. [Reuters] [The Jakarta Post]

Indonesia: Unofficial naming of candidates for 2024 presidential election

(jvk) Ahead of the 2024 Presidential Elections, parties have announced potential candidates and election coalitions begin to close in with the recent cabinet reshuffle. Among other names, the National Democratic Party (NasDem), a government coalition, has announced three potential candidates: Jakarta Governor Anies Baswedan, Central Java Governor Ganjar Pranowo, and Military Chief General Andika Perkasa.

Meanwhile, election stakeholders continue to voice concern over identity politics. Many hope for a reduction in issues of tribal affiliation, religion, race, and societal groups (SARA) in the upcoming election. The growing conversations, coalition speculation, and recent electoral period announcement show that 2024 electoral preparations are in full swing. [AiR No. 24, June/2022, 2] [Jakarta Globe] [The Jakarta Post]

Indonesia: Controversial draft criminal code to be passed by July

(jvk) After the Indonesian Deputy Law and Human Rights Minister announced that a disputed draft Criminal Code (RUU KUHP) should be passed as law no later than July, observers see a political crisis looming. The bill contains controversial bills including incriminating blasphemy, cohabitation, pre-marital sex, and presidential defamation.

The RUU KUHP implementation is said by critics to threaten free speech and the human rights of minorities in Indonesia, legal experts reported. The draft had sparked heavy protests in 2019 and stayed controversial since. The updated version of the draft Criminal Code has still not been released in full.

Experts say that its release and legislation, even with revisions, could spark heavy backlash. [Al Jazeera]

The case led 80 groups of student organizations and civil society to sign a letter addressed to President Joko Widodo demanding that the draft bill be made public by the end of July. [AiR No. 24, June/2022, 2]

Indonesia: Parliament endorses bill on mother and child welfare

(jvk) The House of Representatives Legislation Body (Baleg) has unanimously endorsed a bill on mother and child welfare. The provisions include extending the maternity leave to six months, granting paternity leave and full pay for the first three months of maternity leave, leave for miscarriage, and improving maternal and childcare facilities.

Theresa Iswarini of the National Commission on Violence against Women has called the bill "progressive", and supportive of the welfare of the mother and children. Lawmakers are expected to approve the bill in the upcoming plenary session. [Jakarta Post]

Indonesia: Police freezes bank accounts of suspected Muslim leader

(jvk) The Indonesian police and Anti-Money Laundering Agency have frozen bank accounts of suspected leaders of the Muslim group Khilafatul Muslimin. The move came after 20 of the group members had been named suspect Muslim radicals and targeted in the crackdown against radicalism. The group has promoted establishing an "Islamic Caliphate" and is known to work closely with Abu Bakar Bashir, leader of the Southeast Asian leg of al-Qaida.

The authorities reported that the flow of money was cut to restrict the group's amount of crime. The move was taken as part of an ongoing investigation of Khilafatrul Muslimin's members and following the arrest of Khilafatul, the group's top leader. [AiR No. 24, June/2022, 2][Jakarta Globe]

Laos: Government vows to take more actions to address country's burgeoning economic crisis

(pw) The Lao National Assembly, the national legislative body, held a session concerning the efforts to resolve the country's ongoing economic woes.

In this session, Prime Minister Phankham Viphavanh declared that the government would stay the course to attain its 2022 development goals while accelerating the efforts to fix the economic crisis, with an emphasis on dealing with consumer goods costs, and currency exchange rates, and inflation. Moreover, he has promised to raise the budget revenue and support the utilization of austerity measures. [Vietnam Plus 1]

On the same occasion, the government announced that a line of credit had been provided to the Lao National State Fuel Enterprise to obtain 200 million liters of fuel for the country's motorists, an amount adequate for a three-month period, June–August 2022. The decision came after, due to the depreciation of the Kip, the Lao currency, against the United States Dollar (USD) by 23.5 percent in 2022 and a significant increase in global oil prices caused by the War in Ukraine, Laos could only obtain one-sixth of the fuel needed over the past months. The ensuing fuel shortage has taken a toll on the country's motorists and farmers. [The Star Online]

Moreover, by May 2022, inflation has risen to 12.8 percent, the highest Laos has experienced since 2004. Consequently, the price of goods has substantially increased, causing the locals to perceive their minimum monthly wage of USD 75, alongside the government's latest announced wage raise to USD 88, to be insufficient. As a result, many people have started traveling to nearby Thailand to purchase cheaper fuel and goods or get more rewarding jobs. [Radio Free Asia]

Contemporarily, the Central Bank of Laos announced the implementation of a number of measures to resolve the country's fiscal problems. These measures include enhancing foreign currency management and supplying procedures concerning the importation of vital commodities, issuing special bonds with high-interest rates, and prohibiting public possession of foreign currencies. Also, measures that keep the foreign currencies circulated within the banking system would be promoted as well. [The Thaiger]

So far, to alleviate the economic crisis, the Lao government has reduced the excise taxes on diesel and gasoline by almost 50 percent and encouraged the public to conserve fuel. Moreover, an economic task force was formed by Viphavanh to handle this crisis.

This crisis has been publicly covered by state media, which might imply the gravity of the situation. It has been anticipated that the ruling Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP) would be able to withstand this crisis. Still, an analyst noted that the worsening economic issues might cause the LPRP to scapegoat Viphavanh or other high-ranking government officials to quench public discontent. He added that the LPRP's current issue is whether it is able to resolve the economic crisis in a timely fashion or not. [Bangkok Post][Financial Times]

According to the World Bank, Laos has also accrued a public debt of USD 14.5 billion in 2021, with approximately half of it having to be paid to China, mainly for infrastructure projects. Furthermore, the country has drained up its foreign reserves and been embroiled in a foreign debt crisis.

Since 2020, credit rating agencies have significantly reduced Laos's credit ratings due to the fragility of government liquidity. These agencies have been concerned that the country might default on its debts, with one of such agencies recently downgrading Laos' credit ratings further. An analyst at another agency noted that China would significantly impact Laos's efforts to pay off the debts due to its status as Laos's major creditor.[AiR No. 20, May/2022, 3] [AiR No. 23, June/2022, 1] [Vietnam Plus 2]

Malaysia: Bar Council organizes peaceful protests to defend the independence of the judiciary

(tp/bs) On June 17, following the allegation that the independence of the judicial system was being compromised, the Malaysian Bar Council organized a peaceful protest aiming at submitting a Memorandum to the government that would defend the independence of the judiciary and protests the alleged intimidation of the Court of Appeal's judge Datuk Mohd Nazlan Mohd Ghazali, currently being investigated over a corruption case.

This came after the protesters, members of the Malaysian Bar Council, were informed that the police would allow only 20 representatives to hand over the Memorandum at Parliament. The protest was tense for a short while when the police formed a human chain, preventing the lawyers from leaving the staging area. Nonetheless, the situation quickly de-escalated when the deputy minister in charge of parliament and law had declared to accept the Memorandum on the prime minister's behalf.

In late April, the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) began investigations on Nazal following reports alleging that he received funds while he was the Maybank general counsel and secretary. Nazlan, the judge who had also convicted former prime minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak over a major graft scandal, denied the accusations.

However, such a move was highly debated by the Malaysian Bar and lawmakers who regarded the investigation by the MACC as unconstitutional for violating the principle of the separation of powers. and, consequently, undermining judicial independence. [The Star 1] [The Star 2]

Malaysia: Former foreign minister denies involvement in corruption case

(tp) Datuk Seri Anifah Aman, a former foreign minister, denied his involvement in a corruption scandal. Anifah's name was brought before the court by the Ultra Kirana Sdn Bhd (UKSB) administrative manager during his testimony in mid-June. Anifah was mentioned in regards to his alleged involvement in the case as he was one of the money recipients in the UKSB ledger.

Anifah is currently the president of Parti Cinta Sabah (PCS), the regional party in Sabah that aims to restore native Sabah's rights and identity. In his statement released on June 19, he expressed shock while stating that he had never dealt with this UKSN administrative manager or anyone involved in the case. Furthermore, he also added that he would provide full cooperation with authority, and provide them assistance. [New Straits Times] [malaymail]

The UKSB was tasked with overseeing the foreign visa system after being appointed by the government in 2016. The company is currently embroiled in an alleged corruption case after it was discovered that it had been giving money to many key political figures such as former Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin and former deputy prime minister Ahmad Zahid, so the company could receive an advantage when doing business. [Free Malaysia Today]

Malaysia: Former ruling party denies alleged return of defector Azmin Ali

(tp) According to the report of a meeting between the Minister of International Trade and Industry, Azmin Ali, and 2 representatives of Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR), the former second-largest party in the Pakatan Harapan (PH) government that ruled the country from 2018 to 2020, Azmin is likely to rejoin the PKR.

However, in response to this speculation, the PKR has declared its opposition to any cooperation with Azmin, branding him one of the root causes of the "Sheraton Move treachery," which refers to the gathering of policymakers at the Sheraton hotel in Kuala Lumpur prior to the PH government's dissolution in 2020. At the time, he and the other 10 representatives switched from the PKR to Bersatu, which then collaborated with the Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition to seize the government.

However, Bersatu has now become antagonistic with the ruling BN, fueling speculation that those members who previously switched allegiances, primarily Azmin loyalists, now encouraged by Zuraida Kamaruddin's departure, would seek to leave the party. [Free Malaysia Today] [malaymail]

Malaysia: Ruling party urges recognition of the refugees' rights amidst the influx of Rohingya migrants

(tp) In response to the refugee crisis, the vice president of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), the dominant party within the ruling Barisan Nasional coalition government, has called for the recognition of refugee rights and dignity in Malaysia. Furthermore, he stated that the refugees, unlike illegal immigrants, were victims of the circumstances that forced them to enter Malaysia. [Free Malaysia Today]

The call comes after more than 600 ethnic Rohingya people have been arrested in recent months for allegedly attempting illegal entry into Malaysia. Most of them are attempting to flee either the deplorable living conditions in Bangladesh refugee camps or the regime's persecution in Myanmar.

However, because Malaysia is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, most refugees found themselves without basic rights upon arrival. Furthermore, with regard to refugees, the Malaysian government frequently employs a harsh approach, such as primary detention. Since 2019, the government has consistently denied UNHCR access to people in immigration detention centers, making it more difficult to verify their status and issue them with necessary

documents. Similarly, the conditions in these centers are not ideal; allegedly, more than 520 people chose to flee the centers in early 2022. [South China Sea Post]

Myanmar: Parallel government calls on public to stop 2023 military election

(cmsk) The parallel administration of the National Unity Government (NUG) has called on the public to stop the military's alleged fraudulent elections for 2023 from taking place.

The NUG's acting president called on the Myanmar people to prepare to "eliminate" the elections through "political and military affairs." He also mentioned that NUG's strategy should go beyond its current efforts through the parallel defense ministry to put up armed resistance by including other parallel ministries which could work towards informing and organizing the public on the election issue.

Although the Myanmar military regime continues the preparation for next year's poll, civil society groups believe that the junta is using the election to find a way out of the precarious position the regime currently finds itself in and prolong the military rule in the country.

On February 1, 2021, the State Administration Council, at the time a military junta, seized power in Myanmar after rejecting the 2020 election results that saw a landslide victory of the National League for Democracy (NLD) party led by former civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi. She and several other senior NLD members were immediately arrested.

The coup was followed by the Myanmar military leader promising to hold new elections and give power to the winning party. Nonetheless, since the coup, the now-established military regime has targeted thousands of resistance fighters, opposition members, and lawmakers through widespread violence, arbitrary killings, and arrests. [The Irrawaddy]

Myanmar: Authorities imprison ousted government official for 21 years on corruption charges

(jp) Former Mandalay Region Chief Minister Dr. Zaw Myint Maung was sentenced to 21 years in prison on five corruption charges by a military court. Zaw Myint

Maung was accused of taking bribes for business contracts and abusing his power to grant land permits for offices of the ousted National League for Democracy (NLD)'s government.

Reportedly, the NLD vice-chair received a five-year jail sentence each on three corruption charges over alleged kickbacks to cover personal health costs in 2019.

Zaw's legal team will appeal the ruling claiming that the court lacked strong evidence.

In December 2021, he was sentenced to four years, two of which were for incitement under Article 505(b) of the Penal Code and two for violations of COVID-19 regulations. Moreover, in June, he was sentenced to a year in prison for alleged connection to the 2020 election fraud. The 70-year-old politician is still on leukemia medication and was sentenced to a total of 26 years. Zaw Myint Maung has been in Obo Prison since the February 2021 coup. The former military regime imprisoned him for 18 years. [The Irrawaddy]

Myanmar: United Nations releases report on 'systematic human rights abuses' against Children

(cmsk) The United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Myanmar has released a report documenting "systematic human rights abuses" against children in Myanmar by the ruling military regime.

The UN's fact-finding mission found evidence that Myanmar children were not only being caught in the crossfire of escalating attacks but also that they have often been targets of violence inflicted by the military authorities. The UN Special Rapporteur, Thomas Andrews, said he also "received information about children who were beaten, stabbed, burned with cigarettes, and subjected to mock executions, and who had their fingernails and teeth pulled out during lengthy interrogation sessions". Such actions could constitute crimes against humanity, according to Andrews, who also added that coup leader General Min Aung Hlaing and others regime members must be held accountable.

Following the claims, Andrews urged states to pursue coordinated action against the Myanmar military regime including stronger targeted economic sanctions, coordinated financial investigations, as well

as increased humanitarian aid and support to Myanmar refugees.

To date, the international community has only committed 10 percent of the funds required for the UN's Myanmar Humanitarian Response Plan 2022.

Since the February 2021 coup, 382 children have been "killed or maimed" by the military and its allies, including by indiscriminate air attacks and heavy artillery, according to the report. The military has tortured at least 142 children and over 250,000 have been displaced by the military's attacks, says the UN. Furthermore, 1,400 children have been arbitrarily detained. Of these, at least 61 are under three years of age.

Meanwhile, the collapse of the healthcare system is preventing children from receiving their immunizations. The World Health Organization thus foresees that 33,000 children will die preventable deaths in 2022 because of it. [Reuters] [Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights] [The Guardian][Radio Free Asia]

Myanmar: Military arrests protestors in Yangon

(cmsk) Following anti-junta flash demonstrations in Yangon, the authorities have arrested more than 30 people and are now actively seeking to arrest other protestors. Soldiers and police are reportedly searching apartments and vehicles as part of their efforts to crack down on dissidents.

Moreover, the junta's surveillance includes an overnight guest registration system under which individuals who are not residents of a particular area have to inform the police if they wish to stay overnight. The system is used to monitor the presence of outsiders in local neighborhoods.

Several anti-regime groups, including the General Strike Committee (GSC) and Yangon Revolution Force, have reported the arrests. Further, according to one GSC member, landlords do not want to rent to young people as the military has threatened to confiscate their properties if they accommodate dissidents. [The Irrawaddy] [Myanmar Now]

Myanmar: Armed resistance rejects regime's calls to surrender

(cmsk) Anti-regime armed groups have rejected the Myanmar regime's calls on all members of the armed resistance to lay down their arms and return to civilian life.

In May, the parallel National Unity Government (NUG) reportedly formed more than 250 battalions across the country and established links to more than 400 People Defense Forces units, a major resistance armed organization, suggesting that it could defeat the regime. The NUG also called the military's actions contradictory to their reconciliatory offer.

The junta's offer has come less than a week after Data for Myanmar reported that the military regime and its proxies torched more than 18,886 homes across the country between the 2021 coup and May 2022. [Radio Free Asia]

Myanmar: Prisoners allegedly beaten by prison guards

(cmsk) More than ten prisoners in Yangon's Insein Prison were allegedly beaten by prison authorities for reportedly staging a hunger strike against the decision of military-controlled courts to execute four dissidents, which includes a prominent democracy activist and a National League for Democracy party lawmaker.

Prisoners are allegedly forced to work on a prison farm for 12 hours a day whilst prison conditions remain poor with cramped spaces, according to a local source. In mid-June, women inmates in Insein reportedly protested poor living conditions after a woman had a miscarriage due to a lack of access to adequate health care. [The Irrawaddy] [See AiR No. No. 24, June/2022, 2]

Further, the Hpa-an University Students' Union claims that 60 political prisoners, including student union members, in Hpa-an prison (Karen State) were tortured for protesting against the junta. Junta troops allegedly used rubber bullets and extreme violence to force over 200 political prisoners to stay with criminal inmates. The prisoners were also reportedly denied food and drinking water, as well as a medical treatment after injury. Criminal inmates are also allegedly threatening political prisoners. [The Irrawaddy]

Myanmar: Military regime tracks soldiers with Mytel SIM cards

(jp) After leaked documents show that the military-owned Mytel telecommunications operator Mytel offered ID-linked phone numbers that allowed senior officers to identify their troops, Justice for Myanmar (JFM), a rights group, called for immediate sanctions against Viettel Global Investment, Vietnam's largest mobile carrier, which owns a stake in Mytel's father company Telecom International Myanmar. Over four years, Mytel gave hundreds of thousands of free SIM cards to military personnel, civil servants, and members of the former National League for Democracy (NLD) government, JFM said.

Moreover, Justice for Myanmar (JFM) reported that Mytel provided free SIM cards to detained shadow State Counselor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, President U Win Myint, and other government officials and business leaders. As also commanders utilize Mytel SIMs the SIM cards are used to communicate with military superiors. In light of that, JFM cautioned deserting soldiers against using Mytel SIMs.

Former captain Nyi Thuta, who escaped the army after the coup last year, now assists fellow soldiers in defecting through his Facebook page People's Goal, formerly known as People's Soldier. [Radio Free Asia] [The Irrawaddy]

Myanmar: Human Rights Watch reports on arbitrary detention of Rohingya people

(jp) Human Rights Watch reported that Myanmar has arbitrarily detained 135,000 ethnic Rohingya and Kaman Muslims in the southern Rakhine State for a decade. "Nothing Called Freedom: A Decade of Detention for Rohingya in Myanmar's Rakhine State" shows how Myanmar's continuous abuse, persecution, killings, and imprisonment have been detrimental to Rohingyas' freedom and livelihoods.

A Human Rights Watch researcher argued that the Myanmar junta's unyielding oppression of the ethnic Muslim minority Rohingya was foreseeable as the military has faced no consequences for a decade of ethnic cleansing and alleged genocide.

Myanmar's transition to democratic civilian rule coincided with the 2012 violence and displacement. Increased policy and practice oppression inflamed anti-

Muslim sentiment, laying the groundwork for the more brutal and organized military atrocities of 2016 and 2017. Instead of punishing those responsible for the violence and apartheid, foreign governments lifted sanctions and prepared for the country's political and economic opening.

In February 2021, the security forces staged a coup and detained the country's civilian leaders, re-militarizing Myanmar. The junta responded to widespread opposition with a brutal nationwide crackdown.

Meanwhile, the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council and UN member states are called to advance a strategy for accountability in Myanmar at the June 15 panel discussion and in the proposed resolution on the Rohingya in order to speed up the dismantlement of the regime's impunity for grave abuses. [BNI]

Myanmar: News website obtains evidence of junta atrocities

(cmsk) Radio Free Asia (RFA) Burmese has obtained images and videos from a phone that allegedly belongs to a junta soldier. The phone was reportedly found by a civilian whose village was raided by Myanmar military forces and the contents were passed onto RFA in Washington by an intermediary.

The images include a photo of 30 men and their hands being tied behind their backs on the grounds of a monastery. Another series of photos shows a tied and bloodied man being forced to look up at a camera whilst a second man holds a knife to his heart. The images also include 'selfie' images in what RFA believes is the phone's owner. A ten-minute video was also found of men telling each other about the number of people they killed and what they did to the bodies. The images with the men in uniform and guns also reveal the Myanmar army badge and the numbers on a gun reveal the battalion and command of the Myanmar army. Upon getting in touch with the junta about the material it had found, the junta Deputy Information Minister told RFA that an investigation was launched into the matter. There has been routine and widespread news of junta atrocities across Myanmar. This evidence was unique in that the alleged perpetrators are owning up to their actions. [Radio Free Asia]

Myanmar: Civilians killed while used as human shields in ongoing armed conflicts

(cmsk) On June 16, ninety Myanmar regime soldiers and four resistance fighters were reportedly killed in fighting with People's Defense Forces (PDFs) in Sagaing and Magwe regions over the course of five days. In the end, the PDF reportedly stopped attacking because the junta allegedly used villagers as human shields.

In a separate attack, the PDF also killed three regime soldiers who were involved in torching homes in a village in the Sagaing region. During the shootout, the junta reportedly resorted to air attacks. In the same region, ten villagers including two children were also allegedly killed by regime forces while being used as human shields. One of them was torched. Over 5,000 civilians reportedly fled from Mawlaik after regime forces allegedly raided four villages and torched 1,000 houses. In Depayin Township, at least 200 homes were torched, according to witnesses. A PDF leader emphasized the need for the shadow National Unity Government (NUG) to supply arms, saying that in his group there was only one gun available for three members. [Myanmar Now][The Irrawaddy 1][The Irrawaddy 2][The Irrawaddy 3]

More clashes across the country killed over 20 civilians. Meanwhile, a total of 60 villagers were abducted by the Myanmar military. The whereabouts of the abducted villagers remain unknown, but it is believed they were taken to a nearby military base. [The Irrawaddy 4]

Over the same week, more than 100 regime soldiers defected to the Arakan Army, (AA) according to an AA spokesperson. AA troops also reportedly took into custody two military soldiers and said they would only return them if the military offered a prisoner exchange. Tensions between AA and regime forces have been running high in Rakhine whilst the two sides are fighting each other. [The Irrawaddy 5]

The Philippines: President-elect Marcos Jr. to lead Department of Agriculture

(db) President-elect Ferdinand Marcos Jr. will head the Department of Agriculture (DA) from June 30, when he is expected to assume presidential office. The news was released following consultations with his economic team. Marcos had previously expressed his plans on prioritizing food security for the country and is accepting the role as the head of the DA to solidify said intentions.

Marcos aims to increase rice production and restructure the agriculture department so it can be more responsive to the global situation's effects on food supply to the country, citing that the Russia-Ukraine war has had an enormous influence on the Philippines' food supply and prices. [ABS-CBN News] [Inquirer]

The Philippines: Sara Duterte takes oath as new vice president

(db) Following her landslide win in the presidential election held on May 9, Sara Duterte took her oath as the country's 15th vice president in an inauguration ceremony on June 19 while her running mate President-elect Ferdinand Marcos Jr. will be inaugurated on June 30.

Duterte's inauguration being held two weeks earlier than the traditional June 30 inauguration ceremony is considered a projection of power not only because it was the first time to be held outside the capital, in Davao city, but also because Sara is President Duterte's daughter. [Rappler]

Apart from being the new vice president of the Philippines, Sara will also serve as the new education secretary under the Marcos administration. She was a lawyer before pursuing her political career in 2007 when she became the vice mayor of Davao alongside her father who was the mayor at the time; she subsequently served as the first female mayor and youngest to hold the post in the city of Davao. [Asia News Network]

The Philippines: Supreme Court dismisses petition to prevent lawmakers to serve over term limits

(db) The Supreme Court (SC) of the Philippines dismissed a petition that sought to prevent lawmakers from serving more than the maximum term limit, even after a hiatus. The high court's decision to dismiss the petition under its ruling Socrates vs. Commission on Elections, which states that the prohibition of term limits referred to consecutive terms, therefore a hiatus in between would not make it consecutive, stating that the petitioners' interpretation of the constitution was extra-textual.

The petition sought to require the Commission on Elections to strictly enforce said limits for officials in Congress, the Senate, and the House of Representatives. The group responsible for the petition cited Sections 4 and 7, and Article VI of the Philippines Constitution which allows a six-year term for senators and a three-year term for Representatives.

Sections 4 and 7 state that senators aren't allowed to serve for more than two consecutive terms and House representatives aren't allowed to serve more than three consecutive terms. [Manila Standard] [Rappler]

The Philippines: Three men killed in armed ambush in Maguindanao

(db) Unidentified gunmen have ambushed two men on a Maguindanao highway, killing one and escalating tensions in the province. The armed ambush happened just a day after soldiers and police killed a leader of an armed group and one of his followers, who were identified as members of the armed group Puti Sumanday. The armed men responsible for the highway ambush are currently facing arrest for murder. [Manila Times] [Rappler]

Police have tightened security in the province as another armed incident in the municipality had resulted in 50 families being forced to flee their homes. [Rappler]

Thailand: Parliament passes first reading of marriage equality bill

(bs) The Thai parliament passed the Marriage Equality Bill in its first reading and three related draft bills on the legal status of civil unions. The draft law was sponsored by the opposition Move Forward Party (MFP).

Meanwhile, LGBTQI+ groups are calling on the House of Representatives to fully pass the bill opposing the government's Civil Partnership Bill, which is believed to not fully endorse same-sex marriage.

The draft law on civil partnerships, which would recognize civil partnerships between same-sex couples where each partner is at least 17 years old and at least one of the two is a Thai national, was approved by the Cabinet in mid-June amidst widespread criticisms. The critics argued that such a bill could potentially lead to

further discrimination and aggravate unfair treatment against the LGBTQI+ community.

In response to the critics, the MFP proposed the Marriage Equality Bill, which aims at legalizing same-sex marriage by amending Section 1448 of the Civil and Commercial Code. [AiR No. 24, June/2022, 2] [Bangkok Post][Thai Enquirer]

Thailand: Bill on Criminal Record awaiting final endorsement

(td) The new bill on criminal records, which would allow those who have served their criminal sentence to clear their criminal records, is awaiting to be submitted to the Cabinet for formal endorsement.

According to the committee on justice and human rights, the committee and the Royal Thai Police agreed in principle that those people have the right to have their criminal records expunged from the police's database in accordance with Section 28 of the Constitution. [Bangkok Post]

Thailand: More than 3000 inmates released after decriminalization of marijuana

(td) In early June, Thailand became the first country in Southeast Asia to legalize the use of marijuana for medical and research purposes by delisting the substance from the narcotic drug list. Nonetheless, those who look forward to growing marijuana must seek to receive a license. Moreover, the possession and sale of cannabis-infused products containing more than 0.2 percent of the psychoactive ingredient, tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), are still prohibited along with smoking it in the public, which remains unlawful and subject to a fine of 25,000 baht (723 USD) and imprisonment for up to three months.

The move reportedly came after a push by the Thailand Bhumjaithai party which is a member of Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-o cha's coalition government. The party commented further that full legalization of the substance that extends to free use of marijuana for recreational purposes would be highly beneficial in terms of economic revenues for the country.

Following the government's official recognition of marijuana, Thailand has released over 3000 inmates who were convicted of cannabis-related crimes. [Nikkei Asia 1][Nikkei Asia 2][Reuters]

Thailand: Parliament passes bill seeking to change composition of police commission

(bs) On June 16, Members of the Parliament (MPs) and Senators voted to pass Section 14 of the Royal Thai Police Bill in its second hearing, which aims at amending the structure of the Police Commission, and Section 15 of the law, which governs the commission's responsibility to draft rules and policy standards for police officers.

During the hearing, a number of MPs argued that the presence of the prime minister as a chair and other political figures as members of the commission would cause unwanted political interference in the appointment of police. Instead, the commission should be chaired by either the national police chief or a former police leader, according to the critics.

Meanwhile, another group of MPs called for the inclusion of the public sector and the chairman of the Lawyers Council of Thailand in the commission. [Bangkok Post]

Thailand: Secretary-General of Progressive Movement answers royal defamation charge

(bs) The secretary-general of the Progressive Movement, an independent political group, will be interviewed by the Thai police over royal defamation charges.

The man, Piyabutr Saengkanokkul, was called by the authorities after claiming that the lèse-majesté law, which under Section 112 of the Penal Code punishes with a three to 15-year jail term those who defame, insult or threaten the Thai royalty, and other related sections in the constitution should be improved "to prevent abuse by law enforcement authorities bent on persecuting people who freely express their views."

Following the police summon to Piyabutr, a member of the opposition Move Forward Party objected that Section 112 has been arbitrarily used to charge and

prosecute a high number of political opponents, activists, and academics becoming a tool for persecution. [Bangkok Post]

The claims followed a long line of events that put the law under the scrutiny of human rights groups and international institutions. In November 2021, the United Nations (UN) reviewed Thailand's lèse-majesté law at the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), which assesses the human rights situation of UN members, while the international community called for the country to reform Section 112 after it had reportedly been increasingly used against Thai citizens.

At the same time, in Thailand, more than 120,000 people signed up to submit a draft bill aimed at repealing of lèse-majesté. The bill included a paragraph stating that the law repressed freedom of expression and its penalty was disproportionate to the crime. [AiR No. 45, November/2021, 2]

Thailand: Election Commission endorses new mayor of Pattaya amidst critics

(td) On June 13, the Election Commission (EC) approved the results of Pattaya local elections endorsing Poramase Ngamphiches as the city's new mayor.

The polls took place on May 22 and were followed by widespread critics on alleged unfairness. Regardless, the EC, releasing the final results, claimed that the election was transparent and fair even though controversial cases could still be open to investigations upon formal request. [Bangkok Post]

Thailand: Acting director of opposition Pheu Thai Party over legal concerns

(bs) Surapong Suebwonglee has resigned as acting director of the opposition Pheu Thai Party to reduce the chance of potential forced dissolution of the party for violation of Section 98 of the constitution. The section, as well as the Pheu Thai's membership regulations, prohibits those who have been released from jail for less than 10 years to become members of a political party.

Surapong was released from jail in July 2017 after being incarcerated for 10 months for malfeasance under Section 157 of the Criminal Code. [Bangkok Post]

Thailand: Former protest leader returns to opposition Pheu Thai Party

(td/bs) Nattawut Saikuar, former Member of Parliament (MP) for the opposition Pheu Thai party, has returned to the party after, in 2019, he left to join the now-disbanded Thai Raksa Chart Party.

The party welcomed Saikuar as a key member expecting him to help strengthen the party in light of future elections. Consequently, he is now the new director of the "Pheu Thai Family" and is in charge to recruit new members across Thailand.

In light of the present election rules, the party looks forward to securing more than half of the seats in the Lower House in order to smoothly form a new government. As some Pheu Thai MPs have defied the party on various occasions, such as when it called on its members to vote against the government's budget bill, rearranging members in the lead-up to the upcoming election does indeed matter to ensure the desired result.

Saikuar was one of the leaders of the United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship, also known as Red Shirts, a political pressure group responsible for leading widespread protests against the 2006 Thai military coup that overthrew the government of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. [Bangkok Post 1] [Bangkok Post 2][Thai PBS World]

Thailand: Bangkok governor proposes establishment of public space for civil demonstrations

(td) Following a new wave of civil demonstrations against the Thai government, the Bangkok governor proposed an alternative way for people to exercise their rights which would help lessen the impact of prospective civil demonstrations on commuters and local residents. The Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) was thus instructed to provide a public space for protestors, while the city hall is expected to arrange a medical unit to serve demonstrators as well as security officers. The BMA will also dispatch a team to look after the affected residents after eventual confrontations between protestors and the police.

Such an alternative also aims to ensure the termination of the use of violence, according to the Bangkok administration. [Bangkok Post][Thai Enquirer]

The proposal came after more than 200 people gathered in the Thai capital in mid-June and marched towards Victory Monument, a populated central square in Bangkok, in protest of the current Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha's government. The police attempted to halt the protest with an anti-riot truck with a water cannon. [AiR No.24, June/2022, 2]

Thailand: Former ruling party's MP sentenced to jail term over defamation case

(td) A Thai Appeal Court has upheld a final ruling of a lower court that sentenced a former member of the ruling Palang Pracharath Party, Pareena Kraikupt, to eight-moth-term imprisonment, revised from the original two-year term, and to a fine of 66,666 baht (1,892 USD) in a defamation case. The lawsuit against Pareena was filed by the Future Forward Party's spokesperson who accused her of publishing a Facebook post on August 4, 2019, with false information and claims about the party in connection with a series of bombings in Bangkok and in the three southernmost provinces of Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat.

Formerly, the Supreme Court ruled Pareena's disqualification as a politician and subjected her to lose her seat in the parliament over the illegal encroachment of a reserve forest in Ratchaburi. [Bangkok Post 1][Bangkok Post 2]

Thailand: International Labor Organization report shows improvement in labor rights in Thai seafood industry

(td) The International Labor Organization (ILO) released its latest report on the progress of Thailand in seafood labor practices reporting that local associations have been thoroughly complying with the ILO guidelines set up in the Seafood Good Labour Practices program (Seafood GLP). Thailand has also improved the welfare of migrant workers in the field through the work of welfare committees by lessening the financial burdens on migrant workers and ensuring that women's rights are respected, especially for pregnant women and new mothers.

Seafood GLP is a voluntary program developed by the ILO and implemented by the Thai Tuna Industry Association (TTIA) and the Thai Frozen Foods Association (TFFA) to support the private sector to improve labor standards in the Thai seafood industry. The Seafood GLP was launched under the European Union-funded program Ship to Shore Rights Thailand 2016–20.

The report examines how, since the beginning of the program's implementation, the Seafood GLP has impacted the seafood processing companies in Thailand, factory workers, and the wider supply chain. The assessment also explores three possible future pathways for the Seafood GLP program and makes recommendations for robust and effective improvement of labor conditions for workers. [Bangkok Post][International Labor Organization] [National News Bureau of Thailand]

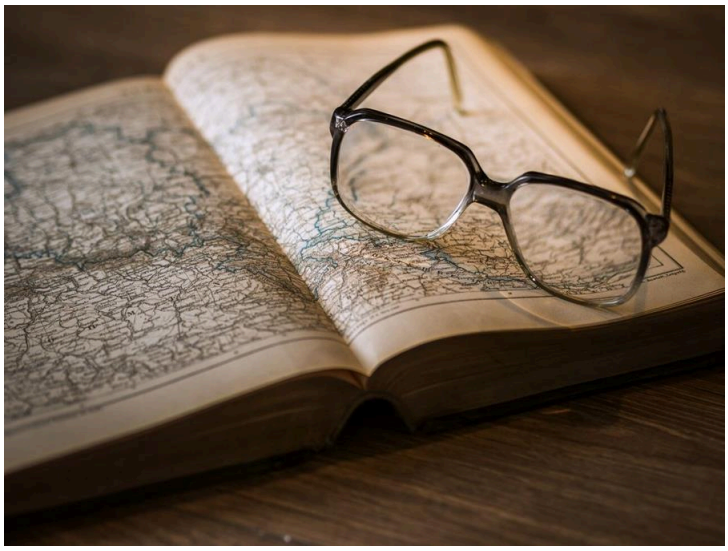
Vietnam: High-profile environmentalist jailed for tax evasion

(bs) A prominent environmental activist was sentenced to two years in jail over tax evasion charges.

Nguy Thi Khanh, who also had a key role in pushing Vietnam to pass the plan to reduce coal by 2030, was arrested in February and received a jail sentence on June 17. The sentence was immediately followed by critics, one of which came from the Goldman Environmental Prize executive director who believes that she was falsely accused of tax evasion in an attempt to silence her environmental activism in Vietnam. More critics came from rights groups and the United States government, which called for Nguy's immediate release. [Aljazeera]

Reportedly, Nguy is just the last of a series of arbitrary arrests of environmental activists. In January, three other environmental activists were jailed after having voiced their disagreement with the Vietnamese government's coal policies. [The Guardian]

International Relations, Geopolitics and Security in Asia



Global Peace Index 2022 shows fractional improvements across Asia

(dbk) The 2022 Global Peace Index (GPI), which is produced by the Institute for Economics and Peace and is the world's forefront unit of measuring global peace, showed that the average level of peace across the world has decreased by 0.003 percent. According to the report, the Asia-Pacific region has increased by 0.4 percent: its first improvement in three years. Only six counties' scores fell, compared to last year's 10.

Singapore has held its place as the second most peaceful nation in the region for the third year in a row, improving mostly in weapons exports and military.

The Philippines, despite recording the largest regional improvement of 4.6 percent, remains the third least peaceful country. Its improvement was due to the positive changes in Safety and Security and Ongoing Conflict domains. It also saw improvement in political stability, the impact of terrorism, and homicide rates.

Thailand is now in the top 100 most peaceful nations, recording its highest score since the beginning of the GPI. Its improvements have been across all observable domains, despite rising protests and demonstrations against the government.

However, Myanmar recorded the largest fall in peacefulness in the region, still dealing with repercussions from the 2021 military coup. All domains saw significant deteriorations as civil unrest and violent crime continued to climb. [Institute for Economics and Peace] [Vision of Humanity]

WTO strikes global trade deals after 'roller coaster' talks

(dbk/lm) The World Trade Organization (WTO) held its first ministerial conference in almost five years. The 164 members of the WTO gathered in Geneva on June 12 to kick off the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference. The conference resulted in two major agreements on a global trading rule change and a COVID-19 vaccine deal. Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala said the process was not easy, and despite eventually reaching unprecedented agreements, it felt "like a roller coaster". [World Economic Forum]

The first agreement will see a curb in fishing subsidies and ban unregulated overfishing. Throughout the conference, the deal faced heavy discussion and backlash over its potential to collapse fish stocks but resulted in a multilateral agreement. It is only the second global trading rules agreement of its kind in the WTO's almost 30 years. [The Wall Street Journal, $]

The second agreement is a deal on a partial waiver on intellectual property which would allow developing countries the ability to produce and even export Covid-19 vaccines. The deal has been a much-discussed topic in the WTO since the beginning of the pandemic and was finally passed on June 17. However, it has attracted severe criticism from campaign groups that say it will not be enough until it also covers therapeutics and diagnostics.

Another minor agreement was also met during the conference which will maintain a moratorium on e-commerce tariffs until at least the next ministerial meeting. A move that many businesses have regarded as crucial in allowing the free movement of data globally.

During the proceedings, many countries were frustrated by the confrontational stance of India's trade official, Piyush Goyal, who threatened to derail all of the deals should the other member states not agree to grant developing countries 25 years to phase out subsidies that have contributed to the depletion of ocean fish stocks. [Politico]

Still, it was generally observed that the deals will enhance the credibility of the WTO, weakened over the past few years by interventions from various political leaders that stumped the ability to reach trade agreements. However heavy criticism still arises, with some labeling the WTO as still needing "life support". It has been hypothesized that with multilateralism under never-before-seen strain and the issues in managing global public goods increasing, the agreements

reached in the conference last week will lead to arguments and potential trade wars. [Reuters 1] [Reuters 2] [The Financial Times]

Countries pressure UN, China to be more transparent on Xinjiang human rights abuses

(jw) After UN human rights chief Michelle Bachelet was heavily criticized for embarking on a six-day visit to China's Xinjiang province that was described as a propaganda coup for Beijing [see AiR No. 22, May/2022, 5], 47 countries delivered a statement to the UN Human Rights Council emphasizing their concerns over ongoing human rights abuses against Uyghurs and other minorities such as widespread surveillance, discrimination, torture, forced sterilization or forced labor.

The joint statement calls on China to address the concerns and provide "unfettered access" to the relevant areas. Previously, Bachelet claimed that such access had not been given during her visit and that she could not speak to any detained Uyghurs or their families. Shortly after her visit and the ensuing criticism, Bachelet announced that she would not seek another term as UN human rights chief.

The 47 countries supporting the statement read by the Netherlands also called on Bachelet to quickly release her report on Xinjiang which has reportedly been ready for months. According to Bachelet, the report is to be released before she steps down on August 31.

China's Ambassador Chen Xu dismissed the statement and the allegations associated with it as lies and rumors to attack China". He was backed by Belarus, Cuba, North Korea and Venezuela. [Al Jazeera] [Government of the Netherlands] [The Guardian]

In a countermove, Cuba on behalf 69 countries delivered joint speech to oppose using human rights as excuses to interfere with internal affairs of China in Xinjiang, Hong Kong and Tibet and to warn against politicizing human rights issues. [CGTN]

Similarly, in a February speech led during a session of the Chinese Communist Party Politburo, which was released in the party's official theoretical journal last week, Chinese President Xi Jinping accused "some Western countries" of using democracy and human rights as pretext to interfere in China's domestic affairs, adding that promotion of democracy led by the West was the caused for wars, chaos and human

displacement around the world. [South China Morning Post]

Indonesia to hold G20 health meeting, discussions of pandemic preparation fund

(dbk) The Group of 20 (G20) major economies have conditionally agreed to a multi-billion-dollar fund set up that aims to ensure better preparation for future pandemics, by financing efforts like surveillance, research, and vaccination access for lower-to-middle income countries.

The health minister of Indonesia, the current G20 president, said that the economies are aiming to raise around USD 1.5 billion in donations this year, and hope to raise another USD 1.5 billion in 2023. He said the United States, European Union, Indonesia, Singapore, and Germany have pledged about USD 1.1 billion to the fund so far, and beginning discussions around contributions from countries like Japan and Britain took place in Indonesia this week at the G20 health ministers' meeting. The G20 leaders' summit will be housed in Bali in November.

The fund will be housed by the World Bank and the facility will be advised by the World Health Organization (WHO). These two bodies estimated in a report that the annual funding gap for pandemic preparedness is USD 10.5 billion. However, WHO has pushed back against the United States and Indonesia's drives for a fund establishment, saying it is concerned the fund might "undermine its own efforts and those of other global health mechanisms". Yet for the fund to work to its full potential, the WHO plays an essential role in fund delegation across countries.

The World Bank announced the fund will be operational this year, and its structure may be released within only a few months' time. [Reuters] [The Leader]

India hosts ASEAN foreign ministers on 30th anniversary of bilateral relations

(dbk/cmsk) Foreign ministers of India and the countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) met in the India-ASEAN foreign ministerial meeting on June 16 and 17 to mark the 30th anniversary of India-ASEAN relations. The event was hosted by New Delhi and co-chaired by the Indian and Singaporean foreign

ministers, respectively S Jaishankar and Vivian Balakrishnan.

The parties committed to upholding multilateralism in cooperative response to the global challenges and "geopolitical headwinds" brought on by the Ukraine crisis. During the meeting, regional representatives also discussed the increased influence of China in the South China Sea. Moreover, they agreed to enhance the utilization and effective implementation of the ASEAN-India Free Trade Area (AIFTA).

The connectivity and dialogue between India and ASEAN were raised as an important issue, and physical and digital "synergies between the connectivity of India and the ASEAN" will apparently be further explored. Jaishankar noted India's economic growth and credited the mounting consumer class, increased internet access, and the diversification of demographic dividends. ASEAN projects have also centralized Northeast India, boosting this growth and offsetting issues like insurgency and tax evasion. The potential establishment of an India-ASEAN Maritime Transportation Agreement will also help to stabilize trade in India. [The Economic Times]

Myanmar representatives were reportedly excluded from the meeting due to the junta's lack of cooperation in implementing peace measures agreed upon by all ASEAN member states to end violence and hold dialogue among all stakeholders in Myanmar.

Meanwhile, at the United Nations, India reiterated its desire to support Myanmar's return to a fully functioning democracy. However, India's position reveals difficult since it shares its northeastern border with Myanmar and its influence in the country is being contested by China. Despite the junta's exclusion from the ASEAN-India meeting, and calls by Malaysia to undertake a "creative" approach to resolving the crisis in Myanmar during discussions, the ASEAN-India joint statement did not reportedly mention the situation in Myanmar. At present Myanmar is officially represented in India by its pre-coup Ambassador in New Delhi. [Associated Press] [The Hindu] [The Indian Express] [Voice of America] [ThePrint]

ASEAN, New Zealand reaffirm cooperation commitments

(bs) The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and New Zealand reviewed their commitments under the ASEAN-New Zealand Plan of Action 2021-2025 and reaffirmed their pledge to

enhance cooperation at the 10th ASEAN-New Zealand Joint Cooperation Committee (ANZJCC) on June 16.

Both parties are seeking to resume the activities halted for over a year due to the Covid pandemic outbreak. They also look forward to enhancing air connectivity and economic cooperation across the regions. In this specific regard, the parties stressed the importance of an "open, inclusive, rules-based trading and investment arrangement" while discussing the entry into force of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement in January.

They also pushed to speed up negotiations toward an upgrade of the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Area (AANZFTA). [ASEAN]

Thailand takes chair of regional BIMSTEC grouping, vows action

(td) Thailand, as current chair of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), has pledged to build a prosperous, resilient, and transparent region in the framework of technical and economic cooperation. The observation marked the 25th anniversary of the BIMSTEC, which joints Thailand with Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. [Bangkok Post 1]

Of all commitments, the BIMSTEC aims to realize a more efficient transportation infrastructure system and network to increase intra-regional trades. It also expects to incorporate its national economic model "Bio-Circular-Green" (BCG) as a guiding concept in each sector of cooperation, not limited to economics, together with increasing people-to-people connectivity to cement the mutual partnership. [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand] [Royal Thai Government]

Japan to skip 1st UN nuclear ban meeting but to maybe attend the NPT

(nc) The first Meeting of States Parties to the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) is being held in Vienna from June 21 to 23 and Japan is not participating.

The country has not signed the Treaty and has not made all the required formalities to attend, as an observer, the event. This has angered Japanese atomic

bomb survivors. But the government wishes to focus on realistic approaches which are the cooperation and involvement of nuclear weapons states. They are not signatory, and they are not attending the meeting thus Japan does not participate either. Nevertheless, Prime Minister Kishida Fumio recognizes the importance of abolishing nuclear weapons. He has sent a delegation to the Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons held in Vienna too on June 20.

In the context of the Russian threat to use nuclear weapons and as a representation of Hiroshima district, Kishida wants to build a world without nuclear weapons. He has been considering participating to the review conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to be held in New York in August. By doing so, he would be the first Japanese Prime Minister to attend this review conference.

Finally, Japan will host the 2023 G7 summit in Hiroshima, an appropriate choice to send a message of peace. And Kishida is considering hosting it the latter half of May 2023. He will also announce his plans later this month. [Mainichi] [Asahi Shimbun] [Japan Today]

Kishida to be first Japanese leader to attend NATO summit

(nc) Prime Minister Kishida announced that he will attend the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) summit to be held in Spain from the 29th to the 30th of this month. It is the first time a Japanese prime minister is attending the summit of the US-led alliance. He stressed, during a conference, that security cooperation will be important in Asia following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. He will advocate at the summit to focus NATO's attention on Asia, citing China, which is accelerating its maritime expansion in the South and East China Seas.

Kishida will travel directly to the NATO summit from the G7 summit in Germany from the 26th to the 28th. [Kyodo News]

Japan MSDF fleet exercise

(nc) In a joint naval exercise with the U.S. and eleven other countries, Japan has dispatched Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) flotilla over the Pacific. The deployment of the MSDF started on June 13 and will continue till October 28 to counter the assertiveness of

China in the Indo-Pacific region. The flotilla will make port in several Pacific Island nations. Among these are the Salomon Islands who signed a pact in April with China allowing the deployment and docking of Chinese warships at the islands. During this annual deployment, the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force will also do some drills for the first time. [Mainichi]

Pakistan to stay on FATF 'grey list', but formal exit to follow on onsite inspection this October

(ha/tj) The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) has decided to retain Pakistan on its list of Jurisdictions under Increased Monitoring – often externally referred to as the 'grey list' – of nations that do not take full measures to prevent money laundering and "terrorism" financing.

The announcement on June 17 was a blow to Pakistan's newly elected government, which said it has mostly complied with the intergovernmental organization's tasks set for Islamabad. However, the FATF also said an onsite inspection in Pakistan would be done before October to determine Islamabad's progress on implementing the last remaining item assigned to the country in 2018. Depending on the findings of the inspection team, a formal announcement on Pakistan's removal could follow. [Al Jazeera] [The Express Tribune]

The announcement was welcomed by Pakistan's foreign affairs minister, Hina Rabbani Khar, who expressed Islamabad's readiness to receive the FATF assessment team for completing the procedural requirements for its exit from the grey list. [Dawn] [Deutsche Welle] [The Straits Times]

The FATF decided in February 2018 to place Pakistan on the gray list and handed Islamabad a list of 27 action items that it needed to implement for exiting from this list. Last year, the FATF decided to retain Pakistan on the grey list, citing Islamabad's failure to investigate and prosecute senior leaders and commanders of UN-designated terrorist groups. [AiR No. 26, June/2021, 5]

Bangladesh, India foreign ministers meet in in New Delhi for Joint Consultative Commission meeting

(pd) The foreign ministers of Bangladesh and India on June 19 chaired the seventh meeting of the Joint Consultative Commission (JCC) in New Delhi. This was the first in-person JCC meeting convened since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, with the previous edition held virtually in 2020. [The Times of India]

The two top diplomats expressed satisfaction over close bilateral cooperation on various sectors including security and border management, trade and investment, bilateral and sub-regional multimodal connectivity, power and energy cooperation, developmental assistance and capacity building exchanges, cultural and closer people-to-people ties.

India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar told his visiting counterpart AK Abdul Momen that New Delhi is ready to cooperate with Bangladesh on new areas like artificial intelligence, cyber security, start-ups and fintech. Jaishankar also proposed to work with Dhaka on a "comprehensive management" of the 54 common rivers, although India is yet to sign off a long-pending water-sharing agreement for the Teesta River, which originates in the Teesta Kangse glacier and flows through the Indian Sikkim and West Bengal states before entering Bangladesh [see AiR No. 8, February/2022, 4]. [Deccan Herald] [United News of Bangladesh]

Foreign Minister Momen met Indian Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu on June 20.

Bangladesh to open ambitious Padma Bridge, dismisses reports linking project to China's BRI

(lm) Bangladesh has clarified that the "Padma Multipurpose Bridge" — the country's first self-financed signature project – was not part of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), days before the inauguration of June 25. [The Daily Star]

It is estimated that the bridge, which has been under construction since 2014, will reduce Dhaka's travel time with the country's 19 southwestern districts by 25 percent, thus spurring industrialisation efforts. Specifically, estimates suggest that the landmark project will increase the GDP growth of the southwestern part of Bangladesh by 2.0 percent, whereas the country's overall GDP growth will increase by more than 1.0 percent per annum. [Australian Institute of International Affairs]

Mr. Sheikh Afif Bin Zaman contributed research to this article.

Brunei, India External Affairs Ministers meet on sideline of Delhi Dialogue

(bs) Indian and Bruneian External Affairs Ministers met on June 16 on the sidelines of the Delhi Dialogue, held on June 15-16 between India and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' representatives.

During the meeting, the parties assessed bilateral cooperation and discussed trade, investment, energy, and space issues. [The Print]

Brunei, United States launch military exercise

(bs) On June 13, the United States Army Pacific (USARPAC) and the Royal Brunei Land Force (RBLF) launched the second phase of the Pahlawan Warrior military exercise. The exercise is a bilateral military training that aims at strengthening partner land force capacity and capabilities, tackling national security issues, and increasing military relations to ensure shared security commitments to the Indo-Pacific region. [US Army]

Brunei welcomes United States diplomatic representative

(bs) On June 20, Brunei welcomed United States (US) State Department Counsellor Derek Chollet, who visited the Sultanate to follow up on the outcome of the late ASEAN-US Special Summit, held in Washington DC in May. The meeting also aimed to re-affirming the US commitment to strengthening its relations with Indo-Pacific countries.

The parties also discussed the US-Brunei relationship and both international and regional issues such as the situation in Myanmar, the Ukraine crisis, and the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF).

During his visit, Chollet also met with civil society, business leaders, local ambassadors, and the new deputy defense minister. [Borneo Bulletin]

Cambodia, Vietnam to enhance border demarcation

(pw) In the Cambodian capital of Phnom Penh, Cambodian and Vietnamese officials met to discuss measures to maintain the border and boundary markers with the intention of creating a cooperative, friendly, peaceful, and stable border for the nations' mutual development. Both countries have agreed to fix the preexisting border markers and put additional border poles in the already demarcated areas to mark the borders clearly. Furthermore, it has been decided by both states that a new border regulation agreement has to be created to expedite coordination in the administration of the Cambodia–Vietnam border. [Khmer Times] [Vietnam Plus]

Chinese President Xi Jinping reiterates support for Russia

(jw) As the Ukraine war continues and western nations ramp up their support for Ukraine, Chinese President Xi Jinping spoke with Russian President Vladimir Putin on June 15 and reasserted China's willingness to cooperate with Russia and preserve "respective core interests concerning sovereignty and security", according to a Chinese readout. The call between the two leaders, held in Xi's birthday, appears to be the first direct conversation since the end of February, shortly after the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. During the call, both sides emphasized their willingness to deepen ties and cooperate on a range of issues with the Russian readout listing energy, finance, the manufacturing industry and transport.

The call can be seen as a clear show of support from China, displayed after China continuously supported Russian rhetoric and attempts to legitimize the invasion of Ukraine [see AiR No. 23, June/2022, 1]. Since the beginning of the war, China has refused to condemn Russia but repeatedly condemned western sanctions on Russia instead. The phone call between Xi and Putin displayed how closely the Chinese side follows Russian rhetoric as in the Chinese readout of the phone call Xi refrained from calling the fighting over Ukraine a "war" and instead referred to the "Ukraine crisis" urging all parties to "push for a proper settlement" in a "responsible manner". The Russian readout goes even further, stating that Xi "noted the legitimacy of Russia's actions to protect fundamental national interests in the face of challenges to its security created by external forces." [Associated Press

1] [China Ministry of Foreign Affairs] [President of Russia] [The New York Times]

While China still shies away from supporting Russia in a way that would be in direct violation of western sanctions or directly support Russian war efforts, overall economic cooperation between the two countries surged in the previous months with Chinese demand for Russian oil and gas stabilizing the Russian federal budget and mitigating the effect of western sanctions to a certain extent. To further increase trade, the first vehicle bridge crossing the Amur River that marks parts of the border between China and Russia was opened on June 10. A railway bridge is also expected to open soon. [Associated Press 2] [CNN]

Xi hailed these economic developments in his June 17 video speech at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum's plenary session, claiming that "cooperation between Russia and China is rising" and speaking out against unilateral sanctions and international decoupling. Economic cooperation between Russia and China is indeed soaring with Russia surpassing Saudi Arabia as the largest supplier of crude oil to China after imports increased 55 percent from a year earlier. [CNBC] [Renmin Ribao, in Chinese] [Reuters]

Like most western nations, the US is highly critical of China pursuing close ties with Russia amid the Ukraine war. In reaction to the call between Xi and Putin, the US State Department asserted that "China claims to be neutral, but its behavior makes clear that it is still investing in close ties to Russia". Furthermore, it announced that it would closely monitor China's behavior, warning the country to not end up "on the wrong side of history." [The Guardian]

In similar remarks, US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan stated that "if the United States let [Russia's invasion of Ukraine] stand without challenge or check, it would send a message to other would-be aggressors, including China, that they could do the same thing" [South China Morning Post]

Cross-strait relations: China continues to send military aircraft in Taiwan's

(dql) China continues to flex its military muscles against Taiwan.

On June 21, Taiwan's military scrambled jets to warn of 29 Chinese aircraft in its air defense identification zone (ADIZ). Among the warplanes bombers. This came two

days after ten Chinese military aircraft flew into Taiwan's ADIZ. The incidents mark the eighth and ninth day of intrusions this month. [Reuters] [Taiwan News]

US National Security Advisor meets top Chinese diplomat, discusses regional and global security issues

(jw) Amid numerous security challenges putting a strain on US-China relations, US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan met top Yang Jiechi, Director of the Central Foreign Affairs Commission General Office of the Chinese Communist Party, on June 13, discussing North Korea, the release of Americans detained in China and Russia's invasion of Ukraine over more than four hours.

Details released on the meeting are relatively scarce with only an anonymous source claiming that Sullivan pressed China to work together with the US after vetoing a UN resolution that would have led to additional sanctions on North Korea [see AiR No. 22, May/2022, 5]. Furthermore, Sullivan reportedly discussed the situation of numerous Americans held in China after being wrongfully detained or subjected to exit bans, stating that their release is a "personal priority for both himself and for the President." [CNBC] [CNN] [Politico]

The meeting between Sullivan and Yang prompted speculations that US President Joe Biden might soon directly contact his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping as he is still considering whether to waive certain tariffs hitting Chinese exporters. According to a short June 18 statement, Biden is in the process of deciding on the tariffs and plans to speak with Xi soon. [Reuters]

China accuses US, UK of hypocrisy over treatment of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange

(jw) In response to the UK's June 17 decision to extradite WikiLeaks founder and whistleblower Julian Assange to the US where he is prosecuted for leaking documents relating to the Iraq and Afghanistan wars [The Guardian], the Chinese foreign ministry claimed that the treatment of Assange is a violation of press freedom, exposing the hypocrisy of both the UK and the US.

According to the Chinese foreign ministry, Assange helped expose US practices of cyber hacking as well as US actions in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars and is thus prosecuted on “made up” charges such as “sexual harassment, espionage, [and] computer abuse”.

Accusing the US and UK of double standards, the Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson stated that the countries hail whistleblowers who release secrets of other states as heroes while suppressing and prosecuting individuals that expose their own actions. [Global Times]

US targets Chinese companies over cooperation with Iran

(jw/dql) According to the US Treasury Department, Chinese companies were hit with penalties alongside companies from the United Arab Emirates and Iran who facilitated the export of Iran’s petrochemicals despite sanctions imposed on the country. The Treasury Department legitimized its actions with the current absence of an international deal on Iranian nuclear development. A previous deal allowed for Iran to engage more with the global economy as long as Iran limits its nuclear program and refrains from developing nuclear weapons. However, the US left the deal in 2018 with the Trump administration restoring sanctions. Efforts to reinstate a deal have so far failed. [France 24] [Reuters]

Meanwhile, U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen stated that the removal of some tariffs on China inherited from the administration of former President Donald Trump is under review, citing that they served "no strategic purpose". She added that removing them was a way to bring down inflation which is currently at its highest in four decades. [Reuters]

Chinese News Assistant for Bloomberg released on bail after being accused of threatening national security

(jw) Haze Fan, a news assistant for Bloomberg who was detained in late 2020 after being accused of endangering national security, was released on bail pending trial, according to a statement by the Chinese embassy in the US. The embassy claimed that the charge is not related to press freedom or Fan’s employment with a foreign media outlet. However, the case shows parallels to the detainment of Australian

journalist Cheng Lei who was also detained in 2020 [see AiR No. 23, June/2022, 1]. The Committee to Protect Journalists demanded that China drops all charges against Fan. [Associated Press]

China claims telescope picked up signals of alien civilization

(dql) China's science ministry has claimed to have picked up signals on its Five-hundred-meter Aperture Spherical radio Telescope (FAST), nicknamed "Sky Eye," which is the largest radio telescope in the world, that it believes could be indicating the existence of an alien civilization. [Live Science]

The claims come amidst an increasingly fierce race over space exploration between China and the US.

Australia continues efforts to counter Chinese influence in the Pacific

(jw/dql) After China heavily increased diplomatic contact with Pacific nations, attempting but failing to secure a wide-ranging agreement [see AiR No. 22, May/2022, 5], Australia ramps up its efforts to regain lost influence among Pacific nations, with Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong going on her third trip to the Pacific after taking office in May. On June 17, she visited the Solomon Islands and engaged in talks with Solomon Islands Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare, who previously had agreed to sign a security pact with Beijing [see AiR No. 17, April/2022, 4]. According to Wong, Sogavare again reassured her that "there will not be a military base nor a persistent foreign military presence [...] in the Solomon Islands" despite the security pact with China. [Reuters 1]

Besides security, Wong's visit to the Solomon Islands centered on education, health aid and policing as she went to examine areas in the capital Honiara that were hit by riots in November [see AiR No. 49, December/2021, 1] and announced that Australia would provide 200.000 doses of pediatric COVID-19 vaccines for the Solomon Islands. [ABC News Australia]

In contrast to the willingness of the Solomon Islands to cooperate with China on security issues, Samoan Prime Minister Fiame Naomi Mata'afa stated on June 17 that Pacific nations should tackle their security issues among themselves. However, Mata'afa also

stated that China's economic weight makes it an attractive economic partner. [Reuters 2]

Meanwhile, officials at the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) have reportedly reacted with alarm to news of the April security pact between China and the Solomon Islands, calling the agreement as "very troubling" and "unfortunate", as revealed by internal emails released by [Aljazeera].

Shareholder dispute between Congolose and Chinese mining company heating up

(jw) Amid allegations of Congolese state miner Gecamines that mining company China Molybdenum – China's largest molybdenum producer and one of the five largest in the world – manipulated finances and owes up to USD 5 billion in payments, Gecamines threatened to block all exports of China Molybdenum or even take the Tenke Fungurume mine away from the Chinese company. As the dispute has deteriorated to an argument over who should run the mine, attempts to find a solution have failed with representatives of China Molybdenum refusing to attend a shareholders' meeting. Disputes over the Tenke Fungurume mine already started in August 2021 and have never been fully resolved as legal disputes led to China Molybdenum losing control over the mine in March [see AiR No. 14, April/2022, 1]. [Bloomberg]

India, Pakistan foil bids to list its nationals as global terrorists by UN Security Council Committee

(pb/lm) Pakistan's bid to reinstate Gobinda Patnaik Duggivalasa, an Indian national accused of committing acts of terrorism in Balochistan Province, was rejected by five members of the UN Security Council's ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee. The United Kingdom, the United States, France and Albania backed India's request to reject the bid. [The Express Tribune]

In a possible tit-for-tat, China - a close ally of Pakistan - placed a 'technical hold' on a joint proposal by India and the US to list Abdul Rehman Makki as a global terrorist by the Security Council. Makki, a US-designated terrorist, is the brother-in-law of firebrand cleric and co-founder of the of the Islamist terrorist group Hafiz Saeed [see AiR No. 47, November/2020, 4].

The hold placed by Beijing on the bid can last for up to six months. [ThePrint]

The Security Council Committee requires the consent of all the Security Council members to accept a listing request.

Pakistan frees 20 Indian fishermen after four years in prison

(ha) Pakistan has freed 20 Indian fishermen who had been imprisoned since 2018 in the port city of Karachi for violating the country's territorial waters. The two South Asian neighbors periodically arrest each other's fishermen for allegedly crossing their maritime border in search of a better catch. But both sides every year release some prisoners after negotiating their release. [Associated Press] [Dawn]

India, European Union resume free trade agreement talks after more than eight years

(pb/lm) India and the European Union on June 17 resumed negotiations to forge a free trade agreement, after a nearly nine-year break, with the aim of completing talks by the end of 2023. [Reuters]

The EU and India previously launched talks in 2007, but they were frozen in 2013 after several rounds of talks due to lack of progress. In May 2021, during the first EU-Indian Leaders' Meeting, the two sides agreed to resume negotiations [see AiR No. 19, May/2021, 2]. The next round of talks is scheduled to take place in New Delhi from June 27 to July 1.

The two sides will also hold separate discussions to create agreements to protect investment and region-specific agri-food product names such as champagne or feta cheese, known as geographical indications. [Business Standard]

The EU is India's third largest trading partner, while for Brussel, New Delhi ranks 10th.

India grants visa to more than 100 Sikh, Hindu Afghans after deadly attack on temple in Kabul

(pb/lm) India granted emergency visas to more than members of the Sikh and Hindu communities in Afghanistan on June 19, following a deadly attack on a Sikh Gurdwara in Afghanistan's capital Kabul the previous day that left at least two people dead. [CNN] [The Indian Express]

Notably, all visa candidates had submitted their application in September 2021, and the communities had petitioned the Indian government after a regional affiliate of the extremist "Islamic State" group had issued threats in retaliation for derogatory remarks against Islam's Prophet Mohammad made by two senior leaders of Indian Prime Minister Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party [see AiR No. 24, June/2022, 2]. [The Hindu]

Government of India's Mizoram state issues identity cards to Myanmar refugees; migration to Thailand surges

(cmsk/jp/lm) The government of India's northeastern Mizoram state has begin issuing temporary identity cards to nearly 30,000 refugees who are currently taking shelter in the state after fleeing the military coup in neighboring Myanmar in February last year. [The Irrawaddy] [The Indian Express]

Seperately, The number of "illegal" migrants from Myanmar to Thailand has reportedly surged in recent months. According to a Thai organization, 20,000 Myanmar nationals attempting to cross the border were arrested by Thai police in the last five months alone. Some of the migrants have reportedly been left behind by traffickers. Most of the migrants were however seeking refuge from the war and unemployment. [Radio Free Asia]

Ethnic groups have long straddled Mizoram's 510 kilometers border with Myanmar's Chin State, which has been a critical battlefield since the military coup in February last year. Ousted National League for Democracy activists have also fled to Thailand and India. Another 15,000 Chin State residents crossed into Mizoram in July and August 2021, and another surge followed violence in January and February 2022.

United Arab Emirates suspends exports of Indian wheat for four months

(pb) The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has announced a four-month suspension in exports and re-exports of wheat and wheat flour originating from India, citing interruptions to global trade flows, after New Delhi approved exports of wheat to the Gulf nation for domestic consumption. [WION]

India banned wheat exports in a surprise move in mid-May, except for those backed by already issued letters of credit (LCs) and to countries at risk of serious shortages, including Egypt and Oman [see AiR No. 20, May/2022, 3]. New Delhi is also in talks with Bangladesh, Indonesia and Yemen to thrash out a similar deal to the one reached with the UAE.

The UAE and India signed a wide-ranging trade and investment pact on February 18, coinciding with a virtual summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. The pact, known as the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Trade Agreement, took effect on May 1 aims to increase annual trade between the two nations to USD 100 billion within five years. [AiR No. 8, February/2022, 4]

Indonesia, Singapore welcome German President Steinmeier

(bs) On a trip to Southeast Asia, German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier met not only with Indonesian President Joko Widodo Indonesia to commemorate the 70th anniversary of their countries' bilateral diplomatic relations but also with Singaporean representatives to promote free trade and discuss international law.

During his visit to Indonesia, President Steinmeier also met with the governor and the king of the Indonesian Yogyakarta Sultanate to discuss environmental plans. [ANTARA News] [Deutsche Welle] [Tempo]

Indonesian business community meets with Vietnamese representatives

(bs) The Indonesian business community held talks with the Vietnamese Embassy and the Vietnamese Trade Office on June 17. The discussion aimed at promoting the Vietnam-Indonesia trade partnership.

In 2021, Vietnam and Indonesia's two-way trade reached a record of USD 11 billion, and its potential is increasingly growing, according to representatives from Vietnamese businesses. The parties also

discussed the high population and high demand for e-commerce development, locals' interest in Vietnamese food, similarities in culture, history and tourism, and the air connections between Vietnam and Indonesia. [Vietnam Plus]

Japan and South Korea hope to share military intelligence anew

(nc) Japanese defense minister and South Korean foreign minister have both expressed their will for their military intelligence sharing to go back to normal. They talk about restarting the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA).

Considering North Korea provocations, the administration of South Korean President Yoon Suk-Yeol wishes to share intelligence again with Japan. The GSOMIA was suspended as the diplomatic ties between the two countries went awry due to the matter of the wartime laborers. With new governments in South Korea and Japan, both countries wish to strengthen cooperation and communication to increase peace in the East Asia region. The heads of the two countries will meet for the first time in Spain later this month to attend a NATO summit. [Japan Today] [Asahi Shimbun]

Japan-Saudi Arabia Policy Consultations to discuss cooperation

(nc) During the Japan-Saudi Arabia Policy Consultations held in Riyadh on June 13, representatives of the countries discussed several topics regarding bilateral cooperation in security, energy, economy, climate change, and others. They also discussed the situation in Ukraine, East Asia, and the Middle East. [Arab News Japan]

Japan and France to cooperate on food crisis and Russia's sanctions

(nc) During a phone call on June 14 between the French and Japanese foreign ministers, both countries agreed on cooperation over the food crisis. They also agreed on keeping the sanctions on Russia.

As global food prices are soaring due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Japan and France pledged to work

together to help developing countries and nations affected by food shortages and rising prices. They also confirmed the importance of keeping the sanctions on Russia to showcase the unity of the international community. The ministers eventually talked about China's military power in the Indo-Pacific region and therefore agreed on strengthening maritime security cooperation. [Arab News Japan] [Japan Today]

Laos meets Vietnamese president to observe countries' diplomatic anniversaries

(pw) The Lao Presidential Office attended a meeting with Vietnamese President Nguyen Xuan Phuc to commemorate 60 years of their countries' diplomatic relations and 45 years of the Laos–Vietnam Treaty of Amity and Cooperation. In this meeting, President Nguyen mentioned that there should be a deeper collaboration among both countries' presidential offices so that both countries' Presidents and Vice Presidents can receive better advice to execute their respective national and party guidelines and policies effectively. He added that the utilization of digital technology by both presidential offices in their duties should also be encouraged.

Additionally, the Lao representation wished that Nguyen would keep fostering an environment where the two presidential offices could work together. [Vietnam Plus]

Myanmar regime rejects ASEAN's request to reconsider planned executions

(cmsk) The Myanmar junta has reportedly rejected in writing Cambodia's request to reconsider and refrain from proceeding with its planned executions of four individuals, including a veteran democracy activist and a former lawmaker of the ousted National League for Democracy party. The Cambodian Prime Minister acted as the chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). In such a role, he shared ASEAN concerns over the possibility of a "strong" and "widespread" condemnation from the international community if Myanmar's authorities will proceed with the executions.

The news of the execution immediately sparked international criticism as the country's last execution dates back to 1990. The United Nations, the United

States, Canada, and France issued strong statements against the Myanmar military court's decisions. [The Irrawaddy] [See AiR No. No. 24, June/2022, 2]

Myanmar regime rejects ASEAN envoy's request to meet Aung San Suu Kyi during upcoming visit

(cmsk) The Myanmar regime reported that the special envoy to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) will not be allowed to meet with former civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi on his second visit to Myanmar scheduled for June 29 and 30. The refusal comes as the ASEAN Special Envoy was originally only scheduled to meet with ethnic armed groups which are currently holding talks with the junta. Moreover, the military representatives upheld the decision despite receiving multiple requests by Cambodia as chair of ASEAN as well as by Malaysia to hold talks with all parties, particularly Aung San Suu Kyi.

The focus of the ASEAN envoy's second visit is expected to be the urgent need for humanitarian assistance in Myanmar. However, Cambodia, Malaysia, and others do not see the situation improving without holding talks with all stakeholders.

The junta even rejected the Cambodian Prime Minister's request to withdraw the junta's plan to execute four individuals, including a former lawmaker and democracy activist. Earlier this year, the regime also canceled a scheduled meeting with the ousted National League for Democracy (NLD) party because of opposition to the junta by NLD MPs residing outside Myanmar. If the Special Envoy is not allowed to meet ousted leaders in Myanmar, the visit is likely to be seen as a failure. ASEAN has already been criticized for a lack of success in implementing its plans in Myanmar. [AiR No. 24, June/2022, 2][Radio Free Asia]

Myanmar military described as a 'bunch of thugs' by US State Department counselor

(jp) In mid-June, the counselor of the US Department of State, Derek Chollet, referred to Myanmar's military as "a bunch of thugs" suffering "serious losses" in their fight against their people. The claims were made during his trip to Thailand to enhance the US partnership with Indo-Pacific countries.

On the same occasion, Chollet stated that Washington's message to the regime was straightforward: “cease hostilities and restore democracy.” He stated that after losing the 2020 election, the regime is attempting to create a new reality. Using Myanmar's former name, he also said, "however, we've observed that the Burmese will not accept that."

Since the military takeover in February 2021, the junta has struggled to maintain control over the country, which has been gripped by armed resistance from the populace. Chollet stated that Myanmar's regime is becoming increasingly isolated domestically and internationally. [The Irrawaddy]

Myanmar to join Russia's financial messaging system

(cmsk) The Myanmar military administration and the Russian government are negotiating an agreement for Myanmar to join Russia’s financial messaging system (FMS). The junta confirmed that representatives of the Central Bank of Myanmar had held talks with their counterparts in the Russian Central Bank to use the Russian FMS, which is an alternative to the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunications (SWIFT).

Since the beginning of the Russia-Ukraine conflict in February, western governments have excluded Russia from SWIFT targeting Russia’s banking network and preventing access to funds via SWIFT. Meanwhile, Myanmar is also facing sanctions since the February 2021 coup and has worked out deals for currency exchanges between the Myanmar kyat and Thai baht as well as the Chinese yuan.

The junta also said that it was working out an arrangement to facilitate bilateral payments between Russia and Myanmar, and was discussing the use of the Russian Central Bank’s Mir payment system cards in Asian countries. Russia and Myanmar have continued to deepen their relations since the coup as well as after the Ukraine-Russia war. Earlier this year, the UN identified Russia and China as the major countries responsible for arming Myanmar’s military junta. [The Print]

Australian academics request their government to grant humanitarian

protection visas to Myanmar students

(cmsk) Australian academics have called on the Australian government to grant humanitarian protection visas to Myanmar students who are stranded in the country. These students face life-threatening prospects if they return home to Myanmar, where armed conflict and unrest are widespread. If the students are repatriated, the Australian government could be in violation of international law, according to the group of academics.

Currently, at least 30 scholarship recipients remain in Australia. Their scholarship conditions stipulate that if they overstay their visas, they have to reimburse the full scholarship amount. Australian academics have also requested the government to waive the obligation to repay the cost of their scholarships. [ABC]

Pakistan further increases prices of petroleum products, seeks help from United States to unlock IMF funding

(ha/tj) In a bid to control a soaring fiscal deficit and revive a long-stalled aid program with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Pakistan on June 15 announced the third cut in fuel subsidies since May 26. [Dawn] [Reuters]

Pakistan's economic crisis has become the worst in South Asia, aside from Sri Lanka's. Foreign reserves are below USD 10 billion, enough for barely six weeks of imports. The government, which took office in April, earlier this month released its budget for the next fiscal year, which begins on July 1. Key measures include raising taxes on the rich and on banks and privatizing government assets to boost revenue and limit spending [see AiR No. 24, June/2022, 2].

But discussions between the IMF and the new government, led by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, had been deadlocked for weeks over the terms of reviving the bailout, which was announced in 2019 and later suspended after Pakistan's previous government failed to meet some loan conditions, most notably cutting energy subsidies. [AiR No. 23, June/2022, 1]

Against this backdrop, Pakistani news outlets reported on June 19 that the United States – the largest IMF member state - had agreed to help Islamabad negotiate a deal with the Washington-based lender, citing unnamed diplomatic sources. [NDTV]

Prime Minister Sharif, meanwhile, issued a statement on social media, criticizing the previous government's handling of negotiations with the global lender. The premier stated that his government was left with no choice but to raise the prices for fuel. Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal, in turn, urged the nation on June 14 to reduce their consumption of tea in order to preserve currency reserves. However, the request was lamented by the public. [The Express Tribune] [The News] [The Washington Post, $]

US ambassador to Pakistan signals Washington's willingness for 'robust two-way' engagement

(tj/lm) The new United States ambassador to Pakistan, Donald Blom, on June 13 signaled Washington's intention to engage in a "robust two-way communication" with the country's actors, including political parties and civil society organizations. [Dawn]

The remarks by Blome – the first US ambassador to Islamabad since August 2018 – assume added significance, coming as they do at a time when the government of Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif seems to be working towards a reset in bilateral ties with Washington.

Last month, Pakistan's Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari met his American counterpart Anthony Blinken in New York. Notably, Blinken told Bhutto Zardari that the White House was looking forward to "expanding partnership" with Islamabad – a marked shift from September last year when he told the US Congress that Washington will "reassess" its ties with Pakistan [see AiR No. 21, May/2022, 4].

The meeting between the two foreign ministers came just days after high-level security officials from Pakistan, including the director-general of the country's premier intelligence agency, had traveled to the US to meet with National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and CIA Director William Burns. [AiR No. 20, May/2022, 3]

Senior Pakistani, United States diplomats discuss forging closer ties on human rights, Afghan refugees

(ha/lm) Pakistan's ambassador to the United States, Masood Khan, met with the US Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human

Rights, Uzra Zeya, in Washington on June 16 to discuss ways to deepen bilateral cooperation on human rights and Afghan relocation efforts. [Daily Times]

South Korea, US agree to deepen industrial cooperation

(dql) During a meeting in Washington on June 16, South Korean Foreign Minister Park Jin and US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo in Washington agreed to deepen industrial cooperation and to enhance supply resilience.

Park, furthermore, proposed to hold "2+2" ministerial summits between the top commerce chiefs and foreign affairs chiefs of the two countries. He also requested a review of Section 232 of the US Trade Expansion Act, that imposes a quota against steel imports. [Korea Herald 1]

The meeting with Raimondo was part of Park US trip at the beginning of which he met his US counterpart Antony Blinken on June 13 to discuss ways to expand their joint military posture and deterrence against 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 [see AiR No. 24, June/2022, 2]. According to Park, both Ministers agreed that the North Korea issue has become "the top policy priority for both South Korea and the US under the serious current condition where questions about North Korea's seventh nuclear test and its use of tactical nuclear weapons are being raised." [Korea Herald 2]

Pyongyang launched 31 ballistic missiles in less than six months. According to analysts, satellite imagery of the Punggye-ri nuclear test site, the only known nuclear test site of North Korea, may suggest that another nuclear test is in preparation its and that such as test could be conducted at any time. [NBC]

At the Punggye-ri nuclear test site, Nuclear tests were conducted at the site in October 2006, May 2009, February 2013, January 2016, September 2016, and September 2017.

US Senators introduce bill to increase defense assistance to Taiwan against China

(dql) Two US Senators from both the Republican Party and Democratic Party have introduced a bill that would raise defense assistance to Taiwan and that – according to one of the bill's two authors, Senator Bob Menendez, the Democratic chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee – sends a "a clear message to Beijing not to make the same mistakes with Taiwan that Vladimir Putin has made in Ukraine".

Center piece of the bill, named Taiwan Policy Act of 2022, is a nearly USD 4.5 billion budget allocated for security assistance over the next four years. Furthermore, the bill would designate Taiwan as a "major non-Nato ally" alongside Israel, Japan and South Korea. That would make Taipei eligible for increased security cooperation with Washington; and the bill would also formulate new sanctions to be imposed of Chinese officials accused of "interfering with Taiwan's territorial integrity". [South China Morning Post]

In another development, reflecting military cooperation between Taiwan and the US, four Taiwanese military officers took part as observers in the he four-day Pacific Amphibious Leaders Symposium (PALS) security forum jointly hosted by the US and Japan from June 13-16. It was the first time since 2019 that Taiwan has been present at the forum, that was attended by almost 70 military personnel from 18 countries.

The program covered visits to military bases in Japan and demonstrations of US- and Japanese-made weapon systems. [Focus Taiwan]

Mr. Peer-Morten Strantzen contributed research to this article.

Lithuania to open office in Taiwan

(dql) According to Lithuania's Vice Minister of Economy and Innovation Jovita Neliupsiene, the Baltic state plans to open a representative office in Taiwan in September. The move would reciprocate the opening of a Taiwanese representative office in Vilnius last November that bears "Taiwan" in its name instead of the usual "Taipei".

In response to allowing Taiwan to do so, China has put Lithuania under diplomatic and economic pressure. [Channel news Asia]

Mr. Peer-Morten Strantzen contributed research to this article.

Taiwan demands corrections on Qatar soccer world cup ID card

(dql) Taiwan has demanded that the organizers of this year's football World Cup in Qatar revise the so-called Hayya" fan ID card as it labels its citizens as Chinese, rejecting the labelling as "unfriendly" and "improper" measures against Taiwanese fans.

The Haya card serves a visa to enter the country as well as stadiums. [Hong Kong Free Press]

Mr. Peer-Morten Strantzen contributed research to this article.

Thailand-US military exercise 'Cobra Gold' to resume in 2023

(td) The United States-Thailand "Cobra Gold", a multilateral military exercise led by Washington, is set to resume in full scale in 2023 after it was phased out during the two-year-long COVID-19 pandemic. The announcement follows on a visit to Bangkok by US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin earlier this month [see AiR No. 24, June/2022, 2]. [Bangkok Post] [National News Bureau of Thailand]

Timor-Leste receives Australia's in accession to WTO

(bs) While Timor-Leste is aiming for its accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) by early 2023, the Australian government announced the conclusion of Australia's market access negotiations with Timor-Leste as part of its upcoming accession to the WTO.

The announcement was released following a meeting with Timor-Leste on the sidelines of the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference in Geneva.

Australia has reiterated its commitment to support Timor-Leste's accession to the WTO and the country's integration into the regional and global economy while promoting Timor-Leste's sustainable growth and economic resilience. [Australia Trade Minister]

Vietnam receives clean energy funds from USAID while bolstering trade, investment cooperation with South Korea, Australia

(bs) On June 17, Vietnamese representatives met with South Korea counterparts to discuss possible ways to enhance bilateral relations investment and innovation. The meeting was held in the framework of Vietnam's goal to become a high-income country in 2045. With that objective in mind, Vietnamese representatives have been stressing the importance of strengthening bilateral cooperation in energy, science-technology, and innovation with key regional partners. South Korea, being one of them, is currently the largest investor in Vietnam with more than 9,000 underway projects that are worth over USD 79 billion. [Vietnam Plus]

On the same occasion, Vietnamese and Australian businesses discussed enhancing partnership opportunities in technology and trade and strengthening economic cooperation by developing effective solutions and technologies in the fields of clean energy, high-tech, agriculture, and digital transformation. The Australian parties stressed the importance of the countries' cooperation especially in clean energy in order to support Vietnam achieve the goals set at the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in November 2021. [Vietnam Plus]

Seprately, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has launched a new clean energy investment scheme in Vietnam worth USD 36 million. The project aims at enhancing the private sector investments in the energy sector and improving the country's performance in the field. To achieve the goals by 2025, USAID is set to closely work with the Vietnamese government while supporting the private sector investment and providing project design support for the technical staff. [Pinsent Masons]

Ms. Nguyen Thi An Nhan has contributed research to this entry

Vietnam agrees to bolster ties with Brunei, Indonesia

(bs) The Vietnamese Foreign Minister held bilateral meetings with his Indonesian and Bruneian counterparts on June 16 on the sideline of the ASEAN-India Foreign Ministers' Meeting in New Delhi.

The Vietnamese representative discussed enhancing bilateral ties with Indonesia and agreed to coordinate with his Indonesian counterpart to prepare for high-level visits and the 4th conference of the Vietnam-Indonesia joint cooperation committee throughout this year. The parties also agreed to enhance bilateral cooperation in the political and economic sectors.

On the same occasion, Vietnam's Foreign Minister met with the Second Minister of Foreign Affairs of Brunei with whom he agreed to cooperate in holding the celebrations for the 30th anniversary of their bilateral diplomatic relations. The parties further discussed bilateral investments and enhancing the import and export sectors. [Vietnam Plus]

Ms. Nguyen Thi An Nhan has contributed research to this entry

Announcements

Upcoming Online Events

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

Webinar | Judicial Administrative and Tax Enforcement Proceedings in the 21st Century

The project aims to maximize the dialogue between active and passive individuals of the tax obligation, including and mainly in the pre-training phase; prevent the configuration of disputes and, being frustrated this purpose, adjust the referral of the solution to extrajudicial means; maximise the consensual

application of the judicial's binding precedents; disciplinary, in its ontological and economic tax particularities, the application of principles, rules, procedures and instruments dealt with by general procedural legislation. Based on these pillars, texts were produced with proposals aimed at implementing specific changes in the current system, raising the level of maturity of the tax process.

Check this [page] for more on this event.

22 June 2022 @ 8:30 a.m. (GMT-4), Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) (United States)

Rebuilding Energy Security: The Role of U.S. Oil and Gas

Over a series of panels and keynotes, leaders in the oil and gas sector will address the future U.S. energy security, how companies are navigating markets during the energy transition, the role of public lands in oil and gas, and how ESG is affecting the oil and gas sector.

See [here] for more.

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

Can Turkey Keep Defying Financial Gravity?

For years, Turkey has maintained an unconventional policy stance while avoiding major financial and economic disruption. But can it last much longer? Inflation is at record levels, and banks especially are highly dependent on external financing.

Get more information to join this event [here].

22 June 2022 @ 7:00 p.m. (GMT+2), Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) (Germany)

The Division of Germany: History from Personal Experience

More than 30 years after the reunification of Germany, the history of the division of Germany as part of a series of events will be addressed. Prominent actors

and contemporary witnesses will not only report on everyday life in the SED state from their own experiences, but also shed light on the major challenges of the reunification process in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. In addition, they will look into the future of the Federal Republic and the northeastern federal state.

See [here] for further information.

22 June 2022 @ 5:00 p.m. (GMT+2), Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) (Germany)

TikTok and Politics, how do they Fit Together?

Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have arrived at most companies and organizations. But now TikTok is overrunning the social media world. The Chinese video portal already reaches more than one billion active users per month – including the Tagesschau and the Washington Post. There is criticism of censorship and the blocking of certain content, but the style and aesthetics of the short clips are already shaping pop culture. If you want to keep your finger on the pulse, if your target group also includes young people and you are open to new developments, then TikTok is the right place for you.

This [webpage] offers more details.

22 June 2022 @ 5:30 p.m. (GMT+2), Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) (Belgium)

Rethinking the Growth Paradigm: Capitalism, Inequality, and Climate Change

Across centuries and civilizations, economic growth appears deeply intertwined with the human quest for well-being and happiness as well as progress. But economic growth is also clearly appearing as the engine driving climate change, pollution, and the shrinking of natural spaces. Do we need to give up on growth to save the environment? In this webinar, Alessio Terzi will present his views about how capitalism can be reshaped to contribute to a better world and engage in a conversation with Prof. Barry Eichengreen and Dr Daniel Gros to discuss the challenges that this solution presents.

Find out more details [here].

22 June 2022 @ 16:00 (GMT+2), Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI) (Italy)

Iraq: Between Political Impasse and Regional Competition

Iraq has recently witnessed an unprecedented diplomatic push, with Baghdad attempting to establish itself as a significant diplomatic player in the region. In this poised situation, it is unclear how the global consequences of the war in Ukraine will affect Iraq's long-term stability, especially in the energy sector.

Find out more to join this exciting event [here].

22 June 2022 @ 8:30 (GMT-4), Atlantic Council (United States)

2022 EU-US Defense & Future Forum

The Delegation of the European Union to the United States, in partnership with the Atlantic Council's Europe Center, is hosting the EU-US Defense & Future Forum on June 22, 2022. This year's Forum combines two of the EU Delegation's flagship events dedicated to furthering the dialogue on the transatlantic relationship: The second iteration of the EU-US Future Forum and the EU Defense Washington Forum, now in its 11th year.

This [webpage] has further details.

23 June 2022 @ 9 :00 (GMT-4), Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) (United States)

The Future of Economic Order in the Asia-Pacific Region

The CSIS Japan Chair, CSIS Economics Program, and the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) will be holding their annual conference about the future of economic order in the region with experts from the United States, Japan, China, and Singapore.

This link has more information.

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

Book Event: The Age of the Strongman

Join the CSIS Freeman Chair in China Studies for a discussion of the new book; The Age of the Strongman, authored by Gideon Rachman, chief foreign affairs columnist for the Financial Times. In the book, Rachman analyzes the recent global rise of authoritarian leaders and how this broad phenomenon will impact the global order.

Find out more information on this [website].

23 June 2022 @ 8:00 a.m. (GMT+1), Chatham House (United Kingdom)

The Second Century London Conference

We have entered a new phase of geopolitical competition (with Covid19 and Russian invasion of Ukraine) and confrontation that will require navigating a multiplicity of risks and potential for conflict. How we respond will shape our ability to address the systemic challenges of our age, above all climate change and delivering sustainable and equitable health and development, after the ravages of the pandemic.

Join this event and get more information [here].

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

BRI 2.0: How has the Pandemic Influenced China's Landmark Belt and Road Initiative?

China's grand infrastructure development strategy, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), has suffered because of the COVID-19 pandemic, at least when measured by the amount of funds lent or invested by China in BRI projects. China's isolationism after two years of closed borders, together with China's worsening image globally, are two important reasons for this trend. This seminar discusses how this important strategy is changing, as well as the potential consequences for Europe.

This website offers more information.

23 June 2022 @ 14:00 (GMT-4), Heritage Foundation (United States)

Title IX in the Crosshairs: The 50th Anniversary of Women's Equality in Education

On the 50th anniversary of Title IX, the Biden administration is poised to eviscerate long-standing protections for women and girls by expanding "sex" to include sexual orientation and gender identity. Schools would be forced to open housing, locker rooms, sports teams, admissions, and other sex-specific offerings to the opposite sex. And this is just one of the changes the Biden administration has proposed with its new rule.

For further details, follow this [link].

23 June 2022 @ 18:00 (GMT-3), Fundação Getúlio Vargas (FGV) (Brazil)

Workshop of the Women's Political Training Course - Day 4 - For More Women in Politics

FGV Direito Rio's Diversity and Inclusion Program will hold a series of workshops for women engaged in politics. With the participation of experts debating challenges and potentialities, we remind you that a woman's place is also in politics. The workshops are part of the Political Training Course for Women and make up the Mini-Course of Political Training for Women.

See this [webpage] for more information.

23 June 2022 @ 18:30 (GMT+2), Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) (Germany)

Real heroes. False Heroes - What Makes Democrats Strong Against Populists - Reading and Discussion with Author and Publicist Christoph Giesa

The author Christoph Giesa focuses on the changed right-wing scene. "Right-wing movements are rolling up democracy without much resistance, because a large

part of civil society is too fed up to turn around and recognize the danger." (p.108) The rise of the New Right shows how easy it is today to stylize oneself as a hero under false motives. What populists exploit is what established parties have ignored for too long – our desire for genuine emotionality.

See this [page] for more information.

23 June 2022 @ 10:00 (GMT+8), Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI) (Japan)

Recent Technological Advances in ASEAN+3 Financial Market Infrastructure

Financial markets in East and Southeast Asia have become increasingly sophisticated and interlinked over the last two decades. A panel of experts will discuss six new technologies that are helping financial market infrastructure evolve to meet the challenges of the digital age. The experts will consider the extent that the Association of Southeast Asian Nations plus the People's Republic of China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea—collectively known as ASEAN+3—have applied these new technologies to their systematically important financial market infrastructures such as central securities depositories and central banks.

For more information check out this [website].

23 June 2022 @ 15:00 (GMT+2), Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI) (Italy)

Religions & the SDGs 2030 Agenda: Why it Matters

Why does religion matter in achieving the SDGs and to what extent does the international development policy community engage religion in development cooperation? These and more would be addressed at this event.

Follow this [link] to find out more.

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

Critical Materials and Battery Sustainability

The clean energy transition will require secure supplies of critical materials, such as lithium for batteries and rare earth metals for electric motors. This seminar will provide an overview of how these critical materials have been extracted, processed, and used in the past. The seminar will also address the uncertainties that exist around future material markets and related sustainability issues and offer potential solutions to these problems.

For more information, see this [page].

23 June 2022 @ 1:00 p.m. (GMT-4), Atlantic Council (United States)

Republics of Myth: How National Narratives Divide the US and Iran

The United States and Iran have been estranged for more than 40 years and are currently at loggerheads over Iran's nuclear program, its human rights abuses, and a variety of regional issues. Although there have been periods when the two countries' interests have coincided – which has even included diplomatic agreements – the US and Iran have never been able to build on that progress and reversals have inevitably occurred. "*Republics of Myth: National Narratives and the US-Iran Conflict*," a provocative new book by three long-time experts on Iran, explores this history and posits that diverging national narratives have contributed heavily to this dysfunctional relationship.

For further information, check out this [webpage].

23 June 2022 @ 3:30 p.m. (GMT-4), Atlantic Council (United States)

Future Foreign Policy: The food insecurity crisis

Fertilizer shortages, sanctions, and disruptions of supply chains are combining to create severe food crises around the world. While Russia's war in Ukraine has been responsible for the immediate onset of these conditions, there is the risk that deep vulnerabilities in the global food system are being revealed. Are food shortages likely to persist and for how long? Are there changes in agriculture, logistics, or trade practices that could improve conditions? And what might be the geopolitical consequences of a protracted food security crisis? The Future Foreign Policy series features new perspectives to expand the US toolkit to

address traditional threats, confront emerging challenges, and enable greater and more robust global engagement with allies and partners.

Visit this [website] for more details.

24 June 2022, 11:00 a.m. (GMT-4) Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) (United States)

Boost-Phase Missile Defense: Interrogating the Assumptions

The CSIS Missile Defense Project is pleased to rollout our new report, *Boost-Phase Missile Defense: Interrogating the Assumptions*. The study provides a fresh assessment of key issues related to boost-phase defense, including the ways missile threats are evolving and broader technological trends. It examines prior boost-phase programs for lessons learned and review prior studies, with particular attention to the assumptions underlying their conclusions.

See [here] for more.

27 June 2022, 17:00 (GMT+2) Bruegel - Belgium

The European Single Access Point Legislation

In November 2021, the Commission published a legislative proposal on the European Single Access Point (ESAP), which would provide a portal giving access to the financial and sustainability-related information disclosed by relevant European companies and investment products. In the U.S. this role is played by the Electronic Data Gathering, Analysis, and Retrieval (EDGAR) system, managed by the Securities and Exchange Commission. At this event Ward Möhlmann from the European Commission will present the initiative and discuss it with invited participants.

Further details can be found [here].

27 June 2022, 18:00 (GMT-3) Fundação Getúlio Vargas (FGV) (Brazil)

Webinar | Project Management and the General Data Protection Law

On September 18, 2020, Law 13,790/2018 entered into force, known as lgpd – General Data Protection Law. This Law provides for the processing of personal data, including in digital media, by a natural person or by a legal entity under public or private law, with the aim of protecting the fundamental rights of freedom, privacy and the free development of the natural person. All organizations or persons who process personal data of natural person, need to protect this data and comply with the Law. The penalties range from warning, fine, advertising of the incident, to elimination or blocking of the processing of personal data. The adequacy of companies to this law is complex and project management is a tool that helps us deliver value while maintaining control over deadlines and costs.

For more information, see this [page].

27 June 2022, 18:00 (GMT+2) Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) (Belgium)

The Road towards Gender Equality: The Role of Industrial Relations

This conference aims at fostering our knowledge of the role played by industrial relations systems in addressing gender equality on European labour markets as well as identifying key factors related to social dialogue that can impact gender equality. The research project "Visualising and Measuring the Role of Industrial Relations in Addressing Gender Equality" (VIRAGE – VS/2020/0115) will inform the discussion. Its findings will show how industrial relations and social dialogue can shape progress towards the achievement of gender equality in Europe. The conference will conclude on a panel discussion bringing together participants from EU member states and EU-level organizations. The discussion will center around best practices and developments in stakeholder strategies to ensure and achieve progress towards gender equality.

Get further information [here].

27 June 2022, 12:00 p.m. (GMT-4) RAND Corporation (United States)

Energy Resilience: How Energy Fits into Disaster Preparation, Response, and Recovery

This webinar will define and discuss resilience in the context of energy systems, and will explore policy, governance, and technical solutions and barriers to building more resilient energy systems. The importance of equity considerations and metrics for fair provision of energy services, and the centrality of energy services to other lifeline services—especially under circumstances of multi-disaster management—will also be discussed.

For further information, see [here].

27 June 2022, 2:00 p.m. (GMT-4) Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) (Canada)

Canada's National Security: A Discussion with The Honourable Marco Mendicino

The world is changing and becoming a more challenging place for Canada and Canadians. We are still living through the world's worst pandemic; we are experiencing increasing security impacts from climate change, especially around emergencies caused by extreme weather events; our political fabric is being tested by those who espouse extremist views and are prepared to protest in ways that harm our economy and democracy; the rules-based international order is being threatened by the Russian invasion of Ukraine; international actors are increasingly threatening our security through disinformation, influence campaigns and cyberattacks. The need for a coordinated approach within Canada is more important than ever before.

See [here] for more.

27 June 2022, 11:00 a.m. (GMT-4) American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research (AEI) (United States)

The Economic and Security Consequences of Great-Power Competition

As Beijing grows more ambitious, the United States must take many measures to safeguard our national security and interests. The recently released National

Defense Strategy reaffirmed that outpacing China remains a national priority, which presents some of the most pressing economic and security challenges of our time. How should the US balance competition between commercial enterprise and national defense? How is China leveraging its economy against the US, and are we taking appropriate countermeasures?

For answers to these questions and more, follow this [link].

27 June 2022, 6:30 p.m. (GMT+1) LSE IDEAS (United Kingdom)

The New Geopolitics of Trade: What are the Implications for the Global Trading System?

The US-China geopolitical conflict and the Russian war in Ukraine are having profound implications in the global trading system. Some experts talk of a new era of deglobalisation where there would be little role for rule-based multilateral cooperation. Thus, this talk will provide an opportunity to reflect about possible future scenarios for the global trading system, including the prospects for WTO reform.

See this [webpage] for more.

27 June – 01 July 2022, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) (Italy)

Humanitarian Crises and Conflicts - 4.ed.

IAI's Summer School on "Crisi Umanitarie e Conflitti" aims at deepening the knowledge of participants and at understanding the role of the numerous actors involved in peace processes and crisis management through specific case studies. Moreover, the course will analyze the main new paradigms of analysis on this topic with the aim of providing the necessary tools to understand and explain the dynamics of conflict and cooperation in the legal and institutional framework at the international level.

Check this [page] for more information.

28 June 2022, 18:00 (GMT-3) Fundação Getúlio Vargas (FGV) (Brazil)

Webinar | Innovation and Technological Capacity: Vital Sources of Growth and Competitiveness of Companies

This webinar will discuss how companies and other organizations and their managers have righted, but also failed, to manage the process of innovation and development of technological capacity and its impacts on growth and competitiveness.

Join this event and get more information by visiting this [webpage].

28 June 2022, 2:00 p.m. (GMT-4) RAND Corporation (United States)

Is Los Angeles County Prepared for California's Edible Food Recovery Mandate?

A new state law, California Senate Bill 1383, came into effect on January 1, 2022. By 2025 California must reduce its organic waste by 75 percent and recover at least 20 percent of edible food that would otherwise have been disposed of. Implemented locally, its goals are state-wide. Major supermarkets and wholesalers must comply now. Hotels, hospitals, and other event venues must comply by 2024.

See this [webpage] for more details.

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

National Security and Artificial Intelligence: Global Trends and Challenges

Much of the research, development, application, and testing of artificial intelligence technologies is taking place separately from international efforts to define suitable norms, guidance, and ethics to govern these technologies. Bridging these two lines of effort—innovation and governance—is an urgent necessity, particularly in the ongoing pursuit of AI technologies with applications for national security and public safety. To explore this issue, CSIS Intelligence Fellow Jake Harrington will host a panel discussion examining how the United States, its allies, and its partners must lead in the development of comprehensive norms and standards that will allow democratic states to harness the potential of emerging technology and data without

undermining core democratic principles, such as privacy, transparency, fairness, and due process.

Get further details [here].

28 June 2022, 2:00 p.m. (GMT-4) Heritage Foundation (United States)

The Latest on Rising Food Prices: Lessons from Across the Food Supply Chain

Food prices are increasing at rates not seen in over 40 years. These rising food prices are impacting everything from fresh fruit to fish and seafood. From high energy costs, labor shortages, and misguided government intervention, there are significant challenges across the food supply chain. Join us as we hear directly from experts throughout the supply chain to discuss the latest on food prices, dispel myths, get to the truth about what is going on, and identify potential solutions.

For more details, check out this [page].

28 June 2022, 14:00 (GMT+2) Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) (Germany)

A Strengthened Partnership? An Expert Evaluation of the Latest EU-Japan Summit

The 28th EU-Japan Summit took place in Tokyo on 12 May and this discussion will take stock of the progress made on furthering EU-Japan cooperation, as well as to look ahead to the future. This event will seek to address the following questions: What progress has been achieved in the Connectivity and Digital Partnership, which was announced during the Indo-Pacific Forum in Paris? What has the EU-Japan Green Alliance achieved so far? What is the impact of the war in Ukraine on both the energy transition and the changing security situation in the Indo-Pacific? Where can EU-Japan relations have the greatest impact, and what should be the next key priority.

Click [here] for more.

28 June 2022, 10:00 (GMT+2) Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) (Belgium)

New Energy Governance to Address Europe's Energy and Climate Security: Lessons from the Kremlin Playbook

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has put the European energy and climate security policy through its most difficult test so far. The effective implementation of the REPowerEU plan to decouple Europe from its overreliance on fossil fuel imports from Russia, while keeping on track the energy transition, will require new and improved energy governance mechanisms on EU and member-states level. The Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) together with the Center for the Study of Democracy (CSD) will discuss options to strengthen energy governance to effectively address the risks related to the early phase out of Russian oil and gas and the increasing dependence on mineral raw materials from authoritarian regimes in general.

Further information can be found [here].

28 June 2022, 14:00 (GMT+2) Clingendael, Netherlands Institute of International Relations (Netherlands)

REKA Annual Conference 2022

The Russia and Eastern Europe Knowledge Alliance (REKA) will organize an online event titled *A new reality in Eastern Europe*. During the event, the consequences of the Russian invasion of Ukraine for Ukraine, Europe as a whole and the Netherlands will be discussed.

Get more information [here].

28 June 2022, 10:30 a.m. (GMT+2) Clingendael, Netherlands Institute of International Relations (Netherlands)

The Kurdistan Region of Iraq: A Challenging Time Ahead

Clingendael has the pleasure of hosting an online discussion with several experts to shed greater light on a complex set of problems facing the Kurdistan Region of Iraq today.

For further information, check this [page].

28 June 2022, 9:00 a.m. (GMT+2) Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (CIDOB) (Spain)

The Reception of Refugees in Spain in the Context of the War in Ukraine: Limits, Challenges and Opportunities for the Future

The invasion of Ukraine has led to one of the fastest exoduses since World War II: in two months nearly 6 million people have left the country in search of international protection. In terms of reception, this is an unprecedented challenge to which the European Union and its member states have responded in an extraordinary way. So has Spain, with relevant political and institutional changes in both asylum procedures and the reception system.

Visit this [page] for more on this event.

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

China in 2022: Relationship with Argentina (Agreements and Investments); Digital News; Impact of the War in Ukraine on its Foreign Policy

This seminar is organized by the Working Group on China of the Committee on Asian Affairs. In this seminar, the presidential trip to the People's Republic of China and the Chinese investments in Argentina: lessons learned and looking forward to the Future, will be tackled by experts.

See this [webpage] for further information.

Recent Book Releases

Ramon Pacheco Pardo, ***Shrimp to Whale: South Korea from the Forgotten War to K-Pop***, Oxford University Press, 280 pages, to be released on August 15, 2022, reviewed in [The Korea Herald].

D. G. Tor and Minoru Inaba (eds.), ***The History and Culture of Iran and Central Asia: From the Pre-Islamic to the Islamic Period***, University of Notre Dame Press, 364 pages, published on April 15, 2022, with a review in [Asian Review of Books].

Gareth Evans, ***Good International Citizenship: The Case for Decency***, Monash University Publishing, 96 pages, published on June 1, 2022. For a review, see [Australian Institute of International Affairs].

Vipin Narang, ***Seeking the Bomb: Strategies of Nuclear Proliferation***, Princeton University Press, 400 pages, published on January 11, 2022. A brief review is available at [Foreign Affairs].

David B. Ottaway, ***Mohammed bin Salman: The Icarus of Saudi Arabia?***, Lynne Rienner, 232 pages, published September 2, 2021. Visit [Foreign Affairs] for a review.

Ho-fung Hung, ***City on the Edge: Hong Kong under Chinese Rule***, Cambridge University Press, 316 pages, May 19, 2022, reviewed in [Publishers Weekly].

Stephen Biddle, ***Nonstate Warfare: The Military Methods of Guerillas, Warlords, and Militias***, Princeton University Press, 464 pages, published on April 6, 2021, with a review in [Council on Foreign Relations].

Calls for Papers

The **Association for the Advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AAAI)** invites paper proposals for its ***37th Conference on Artificial Intelligence***, to be held on February 7-14, 2023. Deadline for submission is August 8, 2022 30, 2022. For more information, visit [AAAI].

iCourts – The Danish National Research Foundation's Centre of Excellence for International Courts at the University of Copenhagen welcomes paper proposals for its ***conference "Nordic perspectives on the international legal regulation of cyberspace,"*** scheduled for September 28-29, 2022. Closing date for abstract submission is August 1, 2022. Visit [iCourts] for further details.

Jobs and Positions

Lockheed Martin seeks applications for the position of a ***Regional Security Specialist.*** This position is based in London, UK. For more information, visit [Lockheed Martin].

Control Risks, a global risk and strategic consulting firm specializing in political, security and integrity risk, is recruiting an ***Associate Director, Africa***. This position is based in London, UK. Applications must be

submitted by June 24, 2022. If you are interested, find more at [Indeed].

The **University of Illinois College of Law** welcomes applications for ***positions on the tenured/tenure-track faculty*** to begin in August 2023, with particular interests in hiring in the areas of constitutional and tax law. Closing date for applications is July 6, 2022. If you are interested, find more details at [University of Illinois].

Miami University is recruiting an ***Assistant Professor – Public Law and/or Judicial Politics***. The position is open until filled. Review of applications will begin on September 9, 2022. Follow [Miami University] to learn more about the vacancy.

The **Department of Political Science at The College of Wooster** is offering three tenure-track positions in U.S. National Politics, at the level of ***Assistant Professor or Associate Professor***. Applications submitted by September 1, 2022, will receive full consideration. Visit [The College of Wooster] for further information.

Dakota Wesleyan University, South Dakota, welcomes applications for a ***full-time faculty position in political science***. This position is at the rank of assistant or associate professor. The position is open until it is filled. Review of applications has begun last week. For more information, see [Dakota Wesleyan University].

The **Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies (FSI) at Stanford University** is looking for a ***Research and Communications Assistant***. Follow [Stanford University] to find more details.

The **Department of Journalism in the Bob Schieffer College of Communication at Texas Christian University (TCU)** is offering an open rank faculty position as tenure-track ***Assistant Professor or Associate Professor of Journalism***. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis until the position is filled. If you are interested, follow [TCU].

The **School of Public and International Affairs at North Carolina State University (NCSU)** invites applications for the position of ***Assistant Teaching Professor of Political Science***. The position is open until filled. See [NSCU] for further details.

The **United Nations [UN]** invites applications for the position of ***Executive Director of the United Nations Office for Project Services.*** Based in Copenhagen, Denmark, this position is at the Under-Secretary-

General level. Application deadline is August 1, 2022. Find more information at [UN].

The **United Nations** seeks applications for the position of ***Assistant Secretary-General (ASG) for Development Coordination***. This position is based in New York, USA. Applications are accepted until July 19, 2022. More details about the job offer are available at [UN].

The **United Nations** is offering the position of ***Deputy Secretary-General of United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)***. This position is at the Assistant Secretary-General (ASG) level. Deadline for applications is June 30, 2022. See [UN] to know more about the vacancy.

The **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** is hiring a ***Senior International Consultant – Programme Reporting***. The position is based is home-based. Travel to Dhaka, Bangladesh is possible. Closing date for applications is July 20, 2022. Visit [UNDP] to find further information.

The **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** is looking for a ***Head of Experimentation – NOB***. This position is based in Panama City, Panama. Applications must be submitted by July 15, 2022. [UNDP] provides more details.

The **International Labour Organization (ILO)** is recruiting a ***Regional Coordinator for Human Resources*** to be based in Abidjan (Ivory Coast). Application deadline is until July 18, 2022. Follow [ILOhttps://www.unjobnet.org/jobs/detail/43945339] to learn more about the job offer.

Hudson Institute is hiring a ***Public Affairs Associate*** with key responsibility lying in supporting all aspects of public affairs operations, encompassing digital, editorial, and media work. This position is based in Washington, D.C., USA. Details are available at [Hudson Institute].

The **International Rescue Committee (IRC)** is looking for an ***Individual Development Accounts (IDA) Program Coordinator*** to be based in Phoenix, A.Z., USA. If you are interested, visit [IRC] for more information.

Team:

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