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Asia in Review

Grasp the pattern, read the trend

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Dear Readers,

The Asia in Review (AIR) team is pleased to present you this week´s AiR issue offering an update on the latest events, developments and trends in domestic politics, international relations and geopolitics in East Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia.

I wish you an informative read and extend special greetings to everyone celebrating Iraq's, Lesotho's and Uganda's Independence Day, the German Unity Day and South Korea's National Foundation Day in this week.

With best regards,

Henning Glaser

Editor in Chief

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

China: Xi Jinping silences rumors about possible coup with public appearance

(ms) President Xi Jinping made a public appearance on state television on September 27 after his participation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit 2022, ending rumors that he has been oiusted from power.

In the course of September 23, rumors emerged that Xi had been the victim of a military coup and was under house arrest as a result, presumably triggered by a tweet of Jennifer Zeng, a Chinese-born human rights activist and a dissident of the Chinese Communist Party presently living in US [Twitter] claiming that Xi "was under arrest after #CCP seniors removed him as head of PLA." Especially on social media but also on

Indian news sites the rumors circulated. [Radio Free Asia]

China: Six corruption cases against senior provincial officials

(ms) On September 29, legal action was taken against five senior officials at the provisional level for serious violations of discipline and laws, a term often used in allegations of corruption.

Cao Guangjing, former vice governor of central China's Hubei Province, Song Xibin, a former senior legislator in northeast China's Heilongjiang Province, Hu Yifeng, former president of the Higher People's Court of north China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region and secretary of the court's leading Party members group as well as the former chief procurator of Shanghai Zhang Bencai were expelled from the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and their cases were transferred to court; in the case of Zhang Jinghua, former deputy secretary of the Jiangsu Provincial Committee of the CCP, and Zhang Yongze, former vice chairman of the government of southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region charges have been filed already with a trials soon to follow. [Xinhua 1] [Xinhua 2] [Xinhua 3] [Xinhua 4] [Xinhua 5] [Xinhua 6]

After the recent life sentences against former Chinese Justice Minister Fu Zhenghua and former Vice Minister of public security Sun Lijun – with both believed to be involved in a coup plan against President Xi Jinping last year – and harsh sentences against the police chiefs of Shanghai, Chongqing and Shanxi Province [see AiR No. 39, September/2022, 4], the latest cases are reflecting an ongoing intensification of the anti-corruption campaign shortly ahead of the 20th National Congress at which Xi will seek an unprecedented third term as party leader and reinforce opinions that view Xi's anti-corruption campaign that started in 2012 as a means to intimidate and eliminate potential rivals to Xi. [Observer Research Foundation] [Asia Sentinel]

China: PBC ninefold short-term cash injection

(ms) The People's Bank of China (PBC) injected USD 112 billion into the banking system via reverse repos from September 26 to 30, the highest level since the beginning of 2019. Already on September 15 as well as on September 19, the PBC injected USD 60 billion in

additional liquidity through medium-term lending facility (MLF) into the national banking system, which was then supplemented by another USD 1.7 billion [see AiR No. 38, September/2022, 3]. In a reverse repo, the central bank buys securities from commercial banks in a bidding process with the agreement to resell them in the future.

Besides the end of the quarter as well as the national Day (1 October) Golden Week, where the PBC wants to avoid a liquidity squeeze as much as possible to keep the consumption of the population up during the holidays, the 20th National Congress in mid-October will probably play the main role, as especially the economic stability and the stagnating growth is the current main domestic political problem of China. [Bloomberg]

In addition, the bank, together with the China Banking and Insurance Regulatory Commission announced on Sept. 29 that 23 Chinese cities are now allowed to lower or even completely eliminate mortgage rates for the purchase of real estate as primary residence.

The measures are intended to stabilize the heavily indebted real estate sector by lowering the cost of a property, thus attracting more potential buyers.

The crisis in the real estate sector, in addition to the stringent COVID-19 measures, is widely seen as being mainly responsible for the weakening Chinese economy, which led the Politburo of the Chinese Communist Party to abandon the 5.5 percent annual economic growth target in early August this year [see AiR No. 31, August/2022, 1].

Economists suggest that the easing may be extended to other cities in the future, but they also believe that the easing is not enough to stabilize the economy and that further support is needed. [Bloomberg] [Global Times]

China: First homemade passenger aircraft C919 certified

(ms) On September 29, the first Chinese-made passenger aircraft was certified during a ceremony. The C919 was produced by the state-owned manufacturer Commercial Aircraft Corp of China (COMAC) and, according to President Xi Jinping, represents an important step in China's ambitions of self-sufficiency in technology, as a result of which COMAC is intended to become competitive with the aircraft giants Airbus and Boeing in the future.

The planning of the own aircraft goes back to 2007 and in 2017 the first maiden flight was completed. [Global Times] [Reuters 1] [Xinhua]

Whether or when the C919 will receive the necessary certificates from Europe and America, which are necessary for a global deployment of the C919 is still pending, but Nigeria has already announced interest in the Chinese passenger aircraft, for the newly emerging airline Nigeria Air. [Reuters 2]

China: Tibetan teacher arrested for criticizing COVID-19 measures

(ms) In mid-August, a Tibetan teacher was reportedly arrested for sharing videos depicting the Chinese government's strict COVID-19 measures and alleged "inhumane treatment" in Lhasa, the capital of the Tibet Autonomous Region.

The detained man is from the Ngawa Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture in central China and one of many Tibetans, according to Tibet Watch, a London-based group that advocates for the rights of Tibetan people, who have been detained by Chinese security authorities in order to be "silenced" as part of the Chinese government's ongoing crackdown on Tibetans[see The Diplomat]. They are seen as a threat by China in part due to Tibetans' devotion to the Dalai Lama. [Radio Free Asia]

Reports which surface in early September showed poor living conditions in Tibet resulting from the COVID-19 containment operations in the Muslim minority Uyghur-inhabited Xinjiang region, where more than ten deaths are reported to have occurred due to lack of medical care and food [see AiR No. 37, September/2022, 2].

China: PLA shows off military capacity

(ms) China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) released video footage of the most advanced Type 094A nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine and a YU-20 tanker aircraft hosting aerial refueling exercises for two J-20 stealth fighter jets in two separate videos.

The Type 094A submarine footage was part of a training video of China's first Liaoning aircraft carrier. The Type 094A submarine is capable of launching the JL-3 or Julang (Big Wave) ballistic missile, which has a range of more than 10,000 km. The footage is part of a

video released the day before to demonstrate the Liaoning's joint operation capabilities and to show that the PLA is now "capable of dealing with provocations from foreign aircraft in high seas". [South China Morning Post 1]

In the other video, the YU-20 aircraft tanker is seen hosting aerial refueling drills for two J-20 stealth fighter jets, demonstrating the flexibility of the YU-20 aircraft, which until now has only performed such maneuvers with the J-10C and J-16 fighter jets, at least as far as the public is aware, and showing that the number of China's most advanced operational J-20 fighter jets continues to grow. [Global Times]

In a latest development, footage of the China's most powerful strategic nuclear-capable weapons was aired on Chinese state media to mark National Day on October 1. These weapons included anti-ship "carrier killers", such as anti-aircraft carrier DF-21D and DF-26B ballistic missiles as well as new-generation DF-41 intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM).

According to experts, the DF-41 ICBM is capable of hitting any target on the US mainland as it carries multiple nuclear warheads with a range of over 12,000km, while the two anti-ship missiles would pose a threat to US carriers. [South China Morning Post 2]

China: Developments in Hong Kong high profile cases against Ted Hui, Jimmy Lai and Cardinal Zen

(ms) Former Hong Kong Legislative Council (LegCo) member Ted Hui was sentenced in absentia on September 29 to 3.5 years in prison after being found guilty of four counts of contempt of court in June this year [see AiR No. 23, June/2022, 1]. Hui fled Hong Kong while on bail on another charge, with the help of Danish legislators, under the pretext of an international conference in Denmark that gave him an exemption to leave the country. [Hong Kong Free Press 1] [The Guardian]

Hong Kong media tycoon Jimmy Lai on September 28 appealed the court's late August decision [see AiR No. 35, August/2022, 5] to uphold the warrant to search his phones, even though he claims they contain journalistic material and should accordingly be protected from such an investigation. Lai is a Hong Kong entrepreneur and founder of the anti-government Hong Kong newspaper Apple Daily, which was shut down after several raids by Hong Kong police in 2021. Lai stood trial in late August, accused of

violating Apple Daily's lease by failing to disclose that another company was housed in the newspaper's office space. [Hong Kong Free Press 2]

The trial of Cardinal Joseph Zen, former Bishop of Hong Kong, and five other co-defendants, that begun on September 26 [see AiR No. 39, September/2022, 4] and was scheduled for five days of trial, was adjourned by the judge at the second session until October 26, when defense lawyers attempted to cross-examine police witnesses called by the prosecution.

Zen and the co-defendants were arrested in May this year [see AiR No. 20, May/2022, 3] accused of failing to register the 612 Humanitarian Relief Fund as a society, a fund which provided anti-government protesters with financial aid who face legal troubles or were in need of medical treatment in the wake of the 2019 protests [Radio Free Asia].

In addition to these high-profile cases, two of the five speech therapists sentenced to 19 months imprisonment for the offense of sedition [see AiR No. 37, September/2022, 2] have appealed the verdict, but no trial date is known. Furthermore, on September 29, two men were arrested on suspicion of "doing an act or acts with seditious intent".

Sedition cases in Hong Kong fall under a law that dates back to the British colonial period and that was revived during the anti-government protests in 2019. It has since been used by the government to legally suppress emerging independence movements. This is also likely to be the case in this case, as the two defendants are reported to have shared slogans promoting Hong Kong's independence that were commonly used during demonstrations in 2019, on their social media accounts, among other channels. [Hong Kong Free Press 3] [Hong Kong Free Press 4]

Japan: State funeral causes political controversy for Kishida

(sra) Tensions in the country were high as the state funeral for former assassinated Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was held amid political and social division on September 27. Thousands of people queued for almost three hours to pay their respects, as protesters chanted their opposing views of Abe's policies throughout his leadership and their disapproval of the event's cost of over USD 11.5 million in taxpayer funds. [Al Jazeera]

The ceremony has been a fundamental aspect of current Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's criticism following the scandals surrounding the former PM and the legality of the funeral. Issues surrounding the Liberal Democratic Party and Abe's link to the Unification Church following the suspected motive for his assassination on July 8 and Kishida's failure to consult the need for a state funeral with the rest of the Diet have caused a backlash in the country [see AiR No. 37, September/2022, 2].

Due to high tensions surrounding the funeral, over 20,000 police officers were hired to ensure maximum security during the ceremony that attracted more than 4,300 visitors including international officials as protesters marched in Tokyo as well as in Kobe, Kyoto, Nagoya and Sapporo. [The Japan Times 1]

The national division caused by the event continues to impact the public's declining support of the Kishida administration, causing detriment not only within Japanese society but also among the Diet and LDP lawmakers and may force the dissolution of the Lower House if not amended. [Associated Press] [Japan Times 2]

As a result of the uncertainty of the legal basis of the state funeral, opposition party lawmakers will submit a bill to establish clear regulations on the procedures for state funerals during the extraordinary parliament session. [The Japan Times 3]

Japan: Lower house speaker, lawmakers confirm ties to Unification Church

(sra) The Japanese lower house chief, Hiroyuki Hosoda admitted his ties to the Unification Church, along with 11 other lawmakers as the scandal between the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the religious group continues to grow.

The scandal surrounding the Unification Church follows the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinto Abe as a result of his association with the group. The suspect of his murder on July 8, was believed to hold resentment toward the group for causing financial distress to his family. Since then, ongoing surveys have exposed a significant number of LDP lawmakers to have connections with the church, causing political uncertainty as no internal investigations have been set in motion [see AiR No. 35, August/2022, 5].

It was confirmed on September 29 that Hosoda, speaker of the House of Representatives, took part in two events and an interview held by the church and its related organizations during the period between March 2018 and June 2019. His significant role within the LDP raises concerns about the credibility of Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's administration and whether the Unification Church may exert political influence on the ruling party and its members, especially as Diet chief chambers and the president of the House of Councilors have been removed from the investigation due to their higher levels in parliament. [Japan Times] [Japan Today] [The Asahi Shimbun 1]

Hosoda is not the first LDP member to come forward as a result of a connection to the religious group, however, his statement acknowledging his ties to the church failed to mention his role as adviser for the Japan-Korea Tunnel Research Institute. This affiliation has jeopardized the legitimacy of Hosoda's statement. The underwater project is supported by the founder of the Unification Church, operated by the International Highway Foundation. The removal of Hosoda's name from the website on September 2 was the explanation used for the lack of record in his statement. [The Asahi Shimbun 2]

Many lawmakers linked to the church have also been exposed for their alleged connections through affiliates of the church. Most of these can be associated with organizations related to the group now known officially as the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification, such as the "ambassadors for peace" under the Universal Peace Federation. The groups tend to invite politicians to attend events, manipulated by promises of a supportive base throughout elections, unaware of what they are actually endorsing. [The Asahi Shimbun 3]

The LDP now holds a total of 180 lawmakers with connections to the religious group as the results of another survey have found 11 additional members' affiliations. Their links include attending and speaking at meetings and sending congratulatory messages tied to the church. [The Asahi Shimbun 4]

Japan: Growing bribery scandal surrounding ex-Tokyo Olympic executive

(sra) The former Tokyo Olympic organizing committee executive, Haruyuki Takahashi has resurfaced amid growing corruption over the sponsorship selection for the Olympic Summer Games of 2021. Allegations of a shared bribe from an advertising company between

him and a close business partner were brought to light on September 28.

The allegations against Takahashi come in addition to previous claims of corruption found earlier in the year. So far, the former Dentsu senior managing director is suspected to have received over USD 350,000 from Aoki Holings Inc. and USD 572,000 from Kadokawa Corp. in accordance with their sponsorship of the Summer Games [see AiR No. 38, September/2022, 3].

As both Takahashi and his associate, Kazumasa Fukami, are former employees of the largest agency in Japanese advertising Dentsu Inc, their collaboration in the money transfers is imminent. The allegations stem from suspicions that the two were using their own consultation firms to enable the transference of USD 104,000 between January 2019 and February 2022. Both firms share the name "Commons", with company revenue being paid from Fukami to Takahashi's business. The bribe from Daiko Advertising Inc. would ensure the committee's use of their firm for a major English conversation school operator to become a sponsor of the Tokyo Games, of which they were served new arrest warrants on September 27. [Japan Today] [Kyodo News]

Prosecutors are also investigating Takahashi's corruptive hand in Sun Arrow Inc., the lead stuffed animal company of the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics. The company is said to have paid USD 55,000 to Takahashi for its involvement in the manufacture of the mascot dolls. [Japan Times]

The scandal continues to expose the corrupt nature of the Tokyo Olympic organizing committee and the advertisement companies involved. The immensity of the platform the games are known to provide attracted larger companies to take action. Takahashi's previous connection to Dentsu facilitated the cooperation along with smaller subcontractors like Daiko for outsourced work. [The Asahi Shimbun]

Japan: Extraordinary session for parliament to go ahead

(sra) The parliament of Japan is set to undergo an extraordinary session that will last for 69 days, beginning October 3. The session will allow opportunities to question the ruling Liberal Democratic Party and its coalition partner Komeito about its scandalous links to the Unification Church, as well as other issues regarding the current state of the economy and national politics.

It is expected that the opposition will call upon Prime Minister Fumio Kishida to explain the LDP's ties to the religious group, along with a legal justification for the allocation of over USD 11 million of taxpayer funds to the state funeral for the late prime minister [see AiR No. 39, September/2022, 4]. It is estimated that 20 bills will be submitted to the Diet throughout the session. [The Mainichi]

Other economic issues to be addressed include the supplementary fiscal bill due to inflation and the increased cost of energy and food. Kishida announced new economic strategies to be released will focus on facilitating the impact of rising energy prices as Japanese households continue to be impacted by inflation and the weakening yen. This plan follows the Cabinet's decision to provide USD 24 billion in reserve funds for relief measures. It is expected to boost the economy and increase wage growth within the public sector as prices have continued to rise over the last six months. [Japan Today 1] [Reuters 1]

With concerns over the stability of the Japanese economy, Kishida has also confirmed plans to invest USD 7 billion throughout the next five years for the development of human resources in Japanese industries. The plans include measures to construct semiconductor and battery factories to strengthen domestic production and improve the export sector. His policy speech is also set to present USD 35 billion as the new annual target as the tourism industry recuperates by opening international borders. [Japan Times] [Japan Today 2]

The government has also stated it will provide support to Japanese companies through the Japan Bank for International Cooperation and public financial institutions to acquire sufficient liquified natural gas before the colder months arrive. Exact details are to be confirmed, however, they will provide low-interest loans to energy utilities purchased from the spot market and counter rising prices in an effort to restore public support in the Kishida administration. The stimulus package will be put in place to keep the retail price of gasoline at USD 1.17 per liter while extending the subsidy program, until the end of December. [Kyodo News 1] [Reuters 2]

Kishida is also set to update the long-term policy guidelines of the National Security Strategy of Japan by December. The aim is to enhance public protection while maintaining peace and stability through multilateral cooperation in Asia. The strategy revision involves boosting the capabilities of the national defense forces in an unprecedented manner under the post-war constitution. [Kyodo News 2]

The government is also set to take on the production of sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) in a project involving at least 10 companies such as petroleum and chemical manufacturers by 2025. It will allow Japan to produce next-generation fuel for domestic airlines at a lower cost. [Japan News]

There is speculation that discussions will address how to maximize transparency of how Diet members distribute their additional payments of USD 6,900, originally to be allocated toward monthly expenses for research, travel and communication. Following the various scandals within Japanese politics currently, the allowances have also come under scrutiny for the lack of disclosure of how the addition to their monthly salaries is spent. The issue was addressed in a passed bill in April to revise the law to only provide the allowance for the days needed each month. Since then, no agreements have been made on how to address the issue of accountability. [The Asahi Shimbun]

Japan: Expert panel meeting to discuss defense buildup

(sra) Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has pledged to strengthen Japanese defense capabilities stating all options will be considered such as securing enough funding for the plan amid increasing security tensions involving China, North Korea and Russia.

Kishida made this pledge during the first of a series of meetings of an expert panel that will review three major security-related documents such as the National Security Strategy, which are to be updated by the end of 2022. The panel formed by the government includes economic ministers to facilitate the review through their expertise in national fiscal and security policies [see AiR No. 35, August/2022, 5].

The panel will look to acquire counterstrike capabilities and heavily update the capacity of the defense forces by doubling the national budget for the Defense Ministry. Going against the long-term spending cap of USD 35 billion will be assessed by the public finance ministers in the group, as Japan will need to account for its national debt, twice that of the economy. Kishida touched on the possibility of a future tax increase when addressing possible financial resources. The buildup will involve abolishing sectionalism, investing in more research and development and taking advantage of public infrastructures already in place. [Japan Today] [NHK World-Japan] [The Japan Times]

Japan: Komeito lawmaker resigns over sexual harassment allegations

(sra) Seishi Kumano, member of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party's partner Komeito, officially resigned from his position on September 30 due to sexual harassment allegations. He was reported for the violation of a female acquaintance in weekly magazines via an online messaging app. Kumano allegedly harassed the female with disrespectful messages, although he is yet to confirm the reports. His resignation letter expressed an apology to the Diet for the publicity of the reports. [The Asahi Shimbun]

Japan: GSDF apologize, confirm sexual harassment of former member

(sra) The Japanese Ground Self-Defense Force has come forward and apologized for the sexual harassment experienced by former soldier Rina Gonoi in a rare recognition of her allegations. On September 29, three weeks after the announcement that her assault was to be reinvestigated, the GSDF confirmed evidence of the servicemen involved in the assault. [The Associated Press]

The confirmation follows the 13-month-long process Gonoi endured in order to have her case investigated thoroughly after her initial request in August 2021 was inconclusive. It took quitting her role in the GSDF and seeking public support via an online petition with over 100,000 signatures following the cancellation of the original investigations for her case to be reopened. The Ministry of Defense was then subject to probe further into the investigations in early September due to the national publicity drawn to the case [see AiR No. 37, September/2022, 2].

In a conference, defence officials offered a public apology to Gonoi before pledging to take appropriate disciplinary action. The Koriyama Committee for the Inquest of Prosecution will challenge the initial choices made in regard to the claim, in an effort to prosecute the three servicemen suspected of indecent assault. The Defense Ministry is also set to come under further investigation for other forms of harassment to determine if claims are being dealt with appropriately. [Japan Today] [The Mainichi]

Japan: Division between defense minister, Okinawa governor over relocation of

Futenma base

(sra) A meeting to discuss the relocation of the contentious US Marine Corps Air Station Futenma was held between defense minister Yasukazu Hamada and Okinawa governor Denny Tamaki on September 28. The pair were unsatisfactory in coming to an agreement due to their opposing views.

The relocation plan of the Futenma Air Station has been a critical issue in Okinawa and was a deciding factor in the September 11 reelection victory for Tamaki, who outwardly pledged to remove the military base from the prefecture. Regardless of the outcome, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's plan to transfer the base to the coast of Nago City, away from populated Ginowan has not changed as a result of the Japan-US security agreement of 1996 [see AiR No. 37, September/2022, 2].

Hamada reiterated the Kishida administration's purpose is to redistribute the hosting of US bases in the prefecture in accordance with the agreement, yet the two failed to come to a mutual understanding. Tamaki urged a solution to be discussed in line with Okinawa residents, as a prefectural referendum in 2019 asserted that 70 percent of voters opposed the central government's relocation plan. [Japan News] [Japan Times] [Kyodo News]

South Korea: Rival parties collide over President's alleged use of foul language

(my) South Korea's parliament, controlled by the main opposition Democratic Party (DP) has adopted a motion to demand the dismissal of Foreign Minister Park Jin accused of diplomatic missteps

Introduced by the DP, the motion received 168 out of the 299 votes in the National Assembly. The ruling People Power Party (PPP) boycotted the vote,

The motion is not legally binding and has no suspending effect on Park. President Yoon Suk-yeol is expected to reject it.

Backdrop the DP's move were Yoon's remarks made on a hot mic on September 21. Yoon left comments to his aides when he was leaving the Global Funding Pledging Conference in New York. South Korea's local broadcaster MBC added captions on Yoon's remarks as "Biden will be embarrassed if his pledge is not approved by the Congress" when it was reporting the

news. US President Joe Biden pledged to contribute USD 6 billion to the Global Fund at the conference.

The DP blasted Yoon and his aides including Foreign Minister Park Jin, that Yoon caused a "diplomatic disaster." The National Assembly where the DP commands a majority passed a no-confidence motion on September 29, while the PPP boycotted the vote. Yoon rejected the motion. [JoongAng Daily] [Korea Herald]

South Korea: Justice Minister and National Assembly clash over legislation restricting prosecution's investigative powers

(my) Justice Minister Han Dong-hoon and the National Assembly clashed during a hearing at the Constitutional Court over a law that limits the prosecution's investigative power. In April, the main opposition Democratic Party (DP) has pushed for this law against fierce resistance of the rivel People Power Party (PPP) and the prosecution. The bill was eventually signed into law by former President Moon Jae-in in May. The Justice Ministry and prosecutors filed an injunction with the Constitutional Court in June demanding nullity of the amendment, claiming that it violates the prosecutor's right to investigate which is granted by the Constitution [see AiR No. 18, May/2022, 1].

Defending the law, the parliament's attorneys argued that the right of prosecutors to investigate was not guaranteed under the constitution and subject to changes. The DP went further to sue the minister for defamation, claiming that his remarks in the public hearing defamed the party. [Yonhap News Agency]

Han, for his part, argued that the law prevents the prosecution from exercising its right to investigate and indict as enshrined in the Constitution in a proper way, impeding its capacity to defend basic rights of the citizens. He added that the DP's motive to push for the law was to avoid investigations into some of its members and that it did not take into account the impact and damage to the justice system. [KBS World]

South Korea: Supreme Court rules government to compensate former sex workers at brothels for US troops

(my) The Supreme Court on September 27 acknowledged the state's responsibility for prostitution around military bases. The court ordered the state to pay compensation between KRW 3 million (USD 2 thousand) and KRW 7 million (USD 4.8 thousand) to 95 former sex workers who worked at now-defunct brothels around the US military bases.

The South Korean government enacted a law to prevent prostitution in 1961, permitting the establishment of special zones for prostitution, most of which were near US military bases. In 2014, 122 plaintiffs filed a complaint against the South Korean government on charges of sexual assault, confinement, prostitution, human trafficking, and corruption of public officials.

Following the lower court's 2018 ruling that said that "the government not only condoned but also encouraged and justified sex trafficking in the area," the Supreme Court ruled that "the government's formation and operation of brothels constitute a violation of the obligation to respect human rights." [Korea Times]

South Korea: State audit requires ex-president written investigation

(my) The Board of Audit and Inspection (BAI) of South Korea has called in former President Moon Jae-in for questioning about his administration's alleged mishandling of the death case of an official killed by North Korean soldiers in 2020.

An official of the Oceans Ministry was killed in shootings by North Korean soldiers in the waters of the North in September 2020. The South Korean government announced that the official attempted to defect to the North. The Maritime Police and the National Defense Ministry retracted the announcement in June citing insufficient proof for the assumption of a defection attempt.

Subsequently, the administration of President Yoon Suk-yeol of the ruling People Power Party (PPP) has launched a review of the case. Former high-ranking government officials involved in the case and the presidential archives had also been raided by prosecutors. [Yonhap News Agency] [See also AiR No. 36, September/2022, 1].

The rival Democratic (DP) has filed a complaint with the state audit for abuse of power, calling the probe "political retaliation." [JoongAng Daily]

South Korea: Prosecutors raid corporate offices over opposition party leader's bribery allegation

(my) The prosecution has raided ten corporate offices related to the alleged corruption of the opposition Democratic Party leader Lee Jae-myung. The companies searched included Naver, one of South Korea's largest IT companies.

The corporations are suspected of donating a total of KRW 16 billion (USD 12.6 million) to Seongnam City Football Club from 2014 to 2016 when Lee was serving as Seongnam Mayor, and receiving business favors such as land use changes in return.

Prosecutors had raided 20 locations including a construction company Doosan Engineering & Construction Co and Seongnam City Hall on September 16 [see also AiR No. 38, September/2022, 3]. [JoongAng Daily] A former CEO of Doosan was indicted for offering bribes, and a Seongnam city official was also charged with third-party bribery. [Yonhap News Agency]

South Korea: Government to purchase 450 thousand tons of rice surplus

(my) The government and the ruling People Power Party (PPP) agreed to purchase 450 thousand tons of rice to stabilize rice prices. South Korea's rice prices plunged 25 percent from a year ago to the lowest level.

The opposition Democratic Party (DP) expressed concerns that the decision is insufficient. The DP has been pushing for a revision of the law on overproduction calling for specific guidelines that allow the government to purchase excess rice. The current legislation does not contain any specific standards. The government and the ruling party rejected the move citing possible damage to the market economy. [KBS World]

South Korea: Rival Parties to increase monthly basic income for elderly

(my) South Korea's rival parties pledged to raise the monthly basic pension for seniors. The current pension for the elderly aged 65 or older in the bottom 70-

percent income bracket is KRW 300 thousand (USD 207), and both ruling and opposition parties aim to increase it to KRW 400 thousand (USD 277).

The ruling People Power Party vowed to increase the monthly pension gradually while widening welfare policies for the socially vulnerable. President Yoon Suk-yeol also emphasized increasing the monthly pension for seniors during his campaign.

The main opposition Democratic Party also vowed to increase the monthly pension but expand it to every senior regardless of income. The party criticized the Yoon government's decision to cut down next year's budget on the elderly welfare and employment.

The pledges were made on occasion of the Senior Citizens Day on October 2. [KBS World]

Taiwan: New law to relax use of guns by police officers

(dql) Taiwan's parliament has passed an amendment to the Act Governing the Use of Police Weapons, under which police officers are provided with more flexibility and guidance in their use of firearms.

Pressure to relax regulations on the use of weapons grew when in August two police officers were stabbed to death by an inmate who failed to return following his temporary leave from a minimum-security prison. One of the two officer only fired a warning shot and used pepper spray when attempting to apprehend inmate, while the other officer didn't carry a gun at all. [Taipei Times] [Focus Taiwan]

Taiwan: Defense spending 2023 to increase by nearly 14 percent

(dql) Taiwan will increase its national defense budget for 2023 by 12.9 percent or NTD 47.5 billion to NTD 415.1 billion (USD 13.06 billion), as announced by Premier Su Tseng-chang on October 4. Together with a special budget for fighter jets the total increase stands at 13.9 percent.

The government's planned total spending for 2023 come is NTD 2.719 trillion (USD 89.9 billion), marking a rise by 20.8 percent compared with 2022. Estimated annual revenue for 2023 stands at NTD 2.556 trillion, 12.8 percent higher than in 2022. [Taiwan News]

Meanwhile, Taiwan's Ministry of Defense has announced that the Taiwanese Navy has officially received the new Yushan-class landing platform dock Yushan, an amphibious multi-mission vessel.

With a length of 153 meters, a beam of 23 meters, and a standard displacement is 10,000 tons, Yushan-class ships have a draught of 6.1 meters, a maximum speed of 21 knots and a range of 11,000 km and are capable of carrying several AAV7 amphibious APCs along with 673 troops and accommodating Sikorsky UH-60 Black Hawk or the naval Sikorsky SH-60 Seahawk helicopters. [Navy Recognition] [The Japan Times]

Taiwan: Shrinking number of soldiers

(dql) According to official number of the Ministry of Interior, the Taiwanese military is confronted with a recruitment problem, with forecasts saying that the island's over-18 population is supposed to shrink significantly in the coming years, caused by a low birth rate.

Over the past ten years, Taiwan saw a decline in registered births from 196,627 in 2011 to a record low of 153,820 in 2021. Experts believe that the negative trend will continue over the next few years.

Taiwan's over-18 population stands at 217,000 in 2022, marking a sharp drop from 307,000 in 2018. It is expected that this number will further drop to below 200,000 by 2026 and to around 166,000 by 2028.

The Ministry also revealed that there will less than 118,000 new conscripts in 2022 which marks the lowest number in nearly ten years. The military currently comprises 180,000, with women accounting for 15 percent and voluntary enlistments for nearly 85 percent of the total. [Focus Taiwan]

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

Bangladesh: Next national election will not take place under a caretaker government

(az) Two senior officials of Bangladesh's ruling Awami League party, General Secretary Ubaidul Quader and Agriculture Minister Abdur Razzak, in separate statements recently reiterated that the country's next general election will not be held under a non-partisan caretaker government.

The caretaker government arrangement had been introduced in the mid-1990s in an effort to end violence and fraud that had often marred voting. In the lead-up to the 2008 election, the caretaker authority attempted to control corruption by sending hundreds of politicians – including the current Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and the former leader Khaleda Zia – to jail on charges of abusing power and illegally amassing wealth. In light of this, Bangladesh's Parliament overturned the requirement in 2011 after the Supreme Court ruled that the system of interim administrations was unconstitutional. [Prothom Alo] [The Daily Star]

However, nearly half of the 39 registered political parties in Bangladesh are in favor of a non-partisan government overseeing the country's next general election, a series of dialogue organized by the Election Commission found earlier this year. [AiR No. 31, August/2022, 1]

Bangladesh: Elite police unit fails to submit report in journalists' murder case for 92nd time

(az/lm) More than ten years after the murder of Bangladeshi journalists Sagar Sarowar and Meherun Runi, a court in the Bangladeshi capital Dhaka again asked the elite force Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) to

submit the probe report and extended the deadline for submission until October 31.

Sarowar was found dead alongside his journalist wife Runi, in the bedroom of their apartment in Dhaka in February 2012. Police said that Sarowar had been tied up, and he and his wife had been stabbed multiple times.

Right after the murder, Sahara Khatun, the home minister at the time, vowed to find the killers within 48 hours. But while at least eight accused people have been arrested in connection with the killings, none of them have confessed their involvement in the murder and no formal charges have been made. [risingbd.com]

Bangladesh: Nearly half of all DSA cases filed by police, ruling party members, data reveals

(az/lm) Recent studies have shown that nearly half of the 1,700 cases filed under the Digital Security Act (DSA) in the past four years were filed by supporter of Bangladesh's ruling Awami League party. [Prothom Alo]

The DSA has a provision for a jail term of up to 14 years for anyone who secretly records government officials or gathers information from a government agency using a computer or other digital device. It also sets similar punishments for people who spread "negative propaganda" about the country's 1971 independence war and its founding leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman – father of Prime Minister Hasina.

Just after passing of the DSA 2018, many human rights organizations have warned that some ill-defined, broad provisions may be used to crack down on critics of the government. But Prime Minister Shiekh Hasina's administration has defended the DSA, saying it is necessary to maintain order.

Recently, on September 29, a 35-year-old man was arrested because of posting allegedly derogatory comments on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Facebook. The man was first caught by the local Chhatra League activists, the ruling party's youth wing, and then handed over to the nearest police station. [The Daily Star 1]

On the other hand, nine persons were sued under the DSA for allegedly making derogatory comments

against an Awami League lawmaker and his wife on Facebook. [The Daily Star 2]

India: In a first, Supreme Court legalizes abortion up to 24 weeks, includes marital rape

(vv) In a landmark ruling, the topmost court of India – the Supreme Court – has issued a verdict upholding bodily and decisional autonomy of pregnant women and criminalizing marital rape, a decision hailed by many women's activists across the country.

Abortions have been legal in India since 1971, but stricter laws were introduced over time as termination of female fetuses became frequent and a worrying social norm leading to an alarming gender ratio. The social outlook on gender preferences have, however, changed over time and the contentions of abortion law and upholding women's right to pro-choice have been a plight of many across the country. The apex court has now ordered safe and legal abortion rights for women upto 24 weeks regardless their marital status. In a landmark hearing, marital rape, too, was included in the ruling allowing women to choose to abort within a marriage. Previously, a bench of Supreme Court justices heard several petitions filed requesting for the inclusion of marital rape as a legitimate criminal offense under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) – the official criminal code of India. The top court sought a detailed response from the central government relative to the petition and adjourned the hearing for February 2023. [AiR, No. 38, September/2022, 3]

The decision, taken on September 29, came as a response to a petition filed by 25-year-old women seeking abortion of pregnancy that resulted from a consensual relationship that eventually failed. A bench of justices, led by Justice Chandrachud, held that every woman, regardless the circumstance or situation, is entitled to reproductive autonomy and no external influence must impose an unwarranted situation.

Previously, the Medical Termination of Pregnancy act (MPT) amended laws dating back to 1971, which held that categories of women entitled for legal abortion were only limited to – married women, divorcees, widows, minors, the disabled and survivors of sexual assault or rape.

More recently in 2021, the central government amended the MTP to include more categories of women and marital statuses to seek abortion between 20 and 24 weeks. The latest Supreme Court hearing is

the most recent legal and constitutional assertion of legitimizing abortion law, which have been hailed by women's activists in the nation. The ruling also ordered that MTP can recognize marital rape as a legitimate reason for choosing to abort, which many consider to be a first in the potential to officially criminalize marital rape.

[Al Jazeera] [BBC] [CNN] [Reuters] [NBC] [Times of India]

India: Authorities ban popular Islamic group PFI for alleged terror links

(vv) After a series of raids in the premises of Islamic outfit Popular Front of India (PFI) and the detention of more than 300 of its members, the group has been officially banned by Indian authorities for a period of five years.

The PFI came together in 2008 as a merger of three Muslim-based organizations, claiming to counter majoritarian nationalism by the Hindu community and empower the minority Muslims. PFI soon after launched it political wing, the Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI) in the southern states of the country, to contest elections as forthright Muslim representation.

PFI was under the radar of the central government and investigating agencies for long and was subjected to several raids this month by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) and the Enforcement Directorate (ED), resulting in over 300 PFI top leaders and members detained. [AiR No. 39, September/2022, 4]

The Indian Home ministry, on September 28, stated that PFI and its associates or affiliate groups were found guilty of terrorism, radicalization, funding terrorists, organizing violent hate crimes and killings, and supplying arms to terror outfits, for which the outfit has been banned for 5 years. The central government officials also claimed in its chargesheet that many PFI members were found to have linkages with banned terror outfits such as the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI), Jamat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and international terror groups such as the ISIS, adding that its members were also involved in terror activities in Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan. PFI's alleged links with extremist elements in Turkey and funding received from Qatar are also being probed by the investigating agencies, while prior investigations claim that the – now banned – Islamic module had planned attacks on the Jew community visiting southern state Tamil Nadu (TN). The NIA asserts that

adequate material and evidence were found, during the raids conducted, to confirm the terror attacks planned against Jews and connections to international terror organizations for this particular plot are being drawn.

The PFI members have, however, denied all allegations maintaining that all of its members are law-abiding citizens, claiming that the ruling party Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led by Prime Minister Modi is practicing a totalitarian regime to silence the prominent voices of the Islamic community. The BJP, which is known for its pro-Hindu inclinations, are often accused of deliberately targeting and persecuting minority Muslims, and the PFI claim that they stand for an egalitarian regime that prevent the marginalization of the 15% of Muslim population of the country. While most of PFI's affiliates were banned, it's political arm the SDPI was excluded from NIA's radar and the party has now claimed that it will contest at least 100 seats in 2023 elections in the southern state Karnataka, to counter Prime Minister Modi's alleged oppression of the minority Muslims, Christians, and other communities that allegedly suffer at the hand of majoritarian nationalism. The decision to ban the outfit invited much criticism and ruckus as more than 500 Muslim demonstrators, staging a protest against the preventive custody of top PFI leaders, were arrested after the a 12-hour strike called on by PFI members turned violent.

The BJP, on the other hand, has denied allegations of fabricating evidence against the Islamic group, stating that the ban is an effort to preserve national security for all regardless of religious identity. Another prominent Muslim group All India Muslim Jamaat (AIMJ) president Maulana Shahabuddin Razvi endorsed the ban imposed by the central government, calling PFI a radical group and urging the Muslim community to stay away from the organization. Top BJP leader, and chief minister of northeastern state of Assam, Himanta Biswa Sarma welcomed the ban stating that he had consistently requested the central government to monitor the operations of the PFI module that warranted a ban long ago.

[Al Jazeera] [BBC] [Economic Times] [Hindustan Times] [Reuters] [The Guardian] [The Hindu] [Times of India]

India: Agriculture minister in northern Bihar state resigns, alleging corruption in his department

(vv) The agriculture minister of India's northern Bihar state, Sudhakar Singh, who criticized chief minister and leader of regional party Janata Dal United (JDU) Nitish Kumar, submitted his resignation on October 2 citing corruption in his own department. [Op India]

Singh's resignation comes as the second biggest exit from the Bihar cabinet, since the infamous split of long term allies, chief minister Kumar's JDU and ruling party Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and the grand alliance formed between Kumar's JDU and former opposition party in the state Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD). Singh is one of the top leaders of RJD and has long term associations with former chief minister of Bihar and leader of RJD Lalu Prasad Yadav. [The Indian Express]

Singh had raised concerns over potential droughts in the state following a 40% depreciation in the rains this year, while flagging off corruption allegations last month as the former Agriculture minister claimed that the issues he tabled to the cabinet and chief minister Kumar were ignored and rather bureaucracy was practiced to fill own pockets. Singh alleged that every individual in his department engaged in unlawful financial practices, and that the chief minister had ignored his legitimate concerns on farmer's struggle due to the erratic weather patterns. A growing rift was expected in the alliance, and Singh's allegations while resigning reaffirms the dire state of the coalition claims opposition party in the state - the BJP. Singh has asserted that his resignation won't stop him from speaking out, and that he will continue to champion the plight of the farmers in the state parliament and on the roads if needed. [The New Indian Express]

Ms. Sitha Komatineni contributed research to this entry.

India: Anti-conversion law officially notified in southern Karnataka state

(vv) The southern state Karnataka state government officially notified into effect its anti-conversion law on September 30 after it received assent from the Karnataka governor.

The much controversial Karnataka Protection of Right to Freedom of Religion Act, 2022, whose bill was passed in Karnataka legislature in September 2022, seeks to prohibit conversions from one religion to another through force, undue influence, intimidation, financial allurement, and other forms of manipulation. The anti-conversion law was promulgated as an ordinance first, after which it was amended as a law by both the lower and upper parliaments of Karnataka

through a vote of trust. Violating the act warrants for upto ten years of imprisonment and a fine upto USD 6000, depending on the victims and degree of violations involved. [AiR No. 39, September/2022, 4] [Deccan Herald]

The anti-conversion law was criticized by opposition party Indian National Congress (INC) and the Christian community, alleging that state interference reflects religious and political bias. INC and the Christian community added that they will contest the law in Supreme court and will only accept legal contentions behind the ordinance's implementation. [The Indian Express]

Ms. Sitha Komatineni contributed research to this entry.

India: "China expert" appointed as new defense chief in push to modernize military

(vv) India on September 28 appointed retired Lieutenant-General Anil Chauhan as its new Chief of Defense Staff, as the country grapples with two unstable borders and efforts to reorganize its military. [BNN Bloomberg] [The Strait Times]

Known as the "China expert", Lieutenant-General Anil Chauhan's succession comes nearly a year after the unfortunate death of the previous defense chief General Bipin Rawat, who died in a chopper crash on December 8, 2021. [AiR No. 50, December/2021, 2]

During his career, which spans four decades, he also served as Director General Military Operations and oversaw the execution of two key military operations: the 2019 retaliatory airstrikes against Pakistan and Operation Sunrise - a joint India-Myanmar counter-insurgency offensive.

The appointment comes at a time when India is still in the process of carrying out the biggest military reforms in decades: theaterisation. The initial target for the rollout of the theater concept was 2022. However, the process, which was led by General Rawat, has expectantly not been a smooth one, with the Indian Air Force opposing the formation of unified theater commands, citing limitation of resources. [AiR No. 39, September/2021, 4]

India: Defense minister inducts first "Made in India" chopper

(vv) India's Defense Minister Rajnath Singh inducted the country's first indigenously built Light Combat Helicopter (LHC) in the Indian Air Force (IAF) during a ceremony held at the Air Force Station in the northern state Rajasthan on October 3.

The LHC, named Prachand, has been developed by Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL), in what is India's first "Made in India" chopper made from state-of-the art materials procured indigenously. The introduced LCH is expected to further strengthen India's defense policy of "Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan", which translates to self-reliant efforts of India, and provides impetus to local vendors in reducing imports of defense equipment.

The indigenously developed chopper also provides avenues for modern day battlefield success and offers large capacity for ammunition loading. The versatile chopper can assist both the army and IAF, serving Indian troops of all terrains. The HAL has stated that there is a projected requirement of 160 LHCs for the IAF and 60 LHCs for the Army, for which a detailed plan has been laid out to produce 30 LHC per year to expedite uninterrupted production. Prime Minister Modi appreciated HAL's development of the indigenous chopper and urged for a more self-reliant, made in India approach to defense manufacturing. The defense minister added that India's efficiency in defense manufacturing can meet the global requirements of military equipment. [News On Air] [The Indian Express] [Hindustan Times] [Mint]

Ms. Sitha Komatineni contributed research to this entry

India: Prison chief killed in Kashmir; militants claim responsibility

(lm) The director general of prison service in India's Jammu and Kashmir union territory, police said on October 4. Law enforcement said a household helper was the main suspect but the People's Anti-Fascist Front (PAFF), an Islamist militant group that emerged after New Delhi reorganised the disputed territory into two federally administered union territories in 2019, said it had targeted and killed the prison chief. [The Straits Times]

Pakistan: Court drops contempt case against ex-Prime Minister Imran Khan

(msk/lm) A high court in Pakistan's capital city Islamabad has accepted an apology tendered by former Prime Minister Imran Khan and dropped a contempt of court case against him, a ruling that eases the threat of him being disqualified from politics for at least five years. [Al Jazeera 1]

The charges were related to a speech by Khan in which he was accused of threatening police and judicial officers after one of his top aides, Shahbaz Gill, was denied bail in a sedition case [see AiR No. 34, August/2022]. Gill was ultimately granted bail last month, and Khan two weeks ago apologized in writing for criticizing the magistrate over the detention [see AiR No. 39, September/2022, 4].

He had also been charged under the country's terrorism laws for the August 20 speech, but a court dropped the charges last month. [AiR No. 38, September/2022, 3]

However, the ex-premier still has another case before the courts regarding the same comments in the August speech, for which he was recently ordered to appear in court on October 7. [Al Jazeera 2]

Pakistan: Cabinet approves legal action against ex-Premier Khan over leaked 'foreign conspiracy' audio

(fm) Pakistan's Cabinet has decided to launch legal action against the country's former Prime Minister Imran Khan and his party's top leaders over audio leaks in which he could allegedly be heard discussing a controversial cypher with United Statesleaders, and how to exploit it to portray his ouster as a conspiracy.

Since September 27, at least two audio recordings of Khan discussing diplomatic communication with leaders and offering instructions on how to utilize it for political goals have been making the rounds on social media. According to a cable based on a meeting between Pakistan's ambassador to the United States, Asad Majeed, and US Assistant Secretary of State for Central and South Asia Donald Lu, the US official discussed Pakistan's political situation. [The Economic Times]

Pakistan: Kissan Ittehad warns countrywide shutdown

(fm) Kissan Ittehad leader Khalid Hussain Batth has threatened to issue a call for a nationwide strike and set the government a deadline to meet the demands of farmers' in the country. Farmers in the nation are protesting due to a reduction in the electricity tariff, which will directly impact their incomes.

While talking to the media, Khalid Hussain Batth expressed hope that the government will issue a notification after accepting the farmers' demands. He pleaded with the government to make a notification to accede to the requests, otherwise he claims that the farmers could shut down the entire nation.

Millions of farmers will follow his call, he continued, to travel to Islamabad. The Kissan Ittehad sit-in in Islamabad is now in its fifth day, and the farmers have given the government till Monday to comply with their requests. Another round of negotiations between the government and farmers failed to resolve the impasse. If their demands are not met by the governments of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Kissan Ittehad protesters have suggested setting up sit-ins outside the parliament and Bani Gala. [The Frontier Post]

Sri Lanka: Debate over allegedly poor quality crude oil imports following extended blackouts

(kh/lm) A senior official from the Public Utilities Commission of Sri Lanka (PCUSL) has announced that a test will be conducted to unearth the quality of petrol and diesel in the country, after poor quality crude oil imports were blamed for the shutdown of a power plant, leading to extended blackouts on the South Asian island nation. [BBC] [NewsFirst]

The PCUSL chief said that the oil burnt in the furnaces contained too much sulfur, which was not only unsuitable for Sri Lanka's power plants but also does not align with environmental standards.

However, the energy minister challenged the senior official's claims saying that the power cut was extended because of a breakdown at one of the hydro-power stations and insufficient funds for diesel and fuel oil. The minister also said Sri Lanka's state-run fuel retailer, Ceylon Petroleum Corporation, would respond legally to the allegations made by the PCUSL official. [WION]

Notably, petroleum unions have also alleged that substandard products are a key reason for the ongoing power crisis, claiming that a recent crude oil consignment imported from Russia for refinery purposes cannot be used for power generation as the stock is substandard. [Daily Financial Times]

Sri Lanka: Contentious proposal recommends compensation for lawmakers following violent protests

(kh) Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe and Justice Minister Wijeyadasa Rajapakshe have presented to the Cabinet a contentious proposal that seeks to compensate lawmakers whose houses and offices were attacked during the violent protests between April and June this year. [NewsFirst]

The proposal recommends that 50 percent compensation of the estimated loss should be provided to these parliamentarians in the first phase. In addition to that, the letter states that District Committees chairmen should be provided one official vehicle along with 300 liters of fuel every month. Also, it states that each District Secretariat should be allocated seven staff members along with an official office.

Sri Lanka: Government relaxes import restrictions on some items

(kh) Sri Lanka's government recently lifted import restrictions on nearly half out of 1465 items that were originally banned from import. Since March 2020, the government has initiated multiple rounds of import restrictions on motor vehicles, ceramic items and mobile phones to reduce pressure on limited foreign reserves. In August, a ban was slapped on 300 consumer goods like chocolates, perfumes and shampoos. [NewsWire]

Sri Lanka: Two sub-committees set up under newly formed National Council to tackle economic crisis

(kh/lm) Sri Lanka's newly formed National Council in its inaugural meeting on September 29 decided to appoint two sub-committees related to national policies and economic stabilization. It has also been

decided that the Council will convene on Thursday of every sitting week. [The Hindu]

The resolution to constitute the National Council was unanimously passed by Sri Lanka's parliament last month; the body will represent all political parties represented in the current parliament and it is tasked with determining, among other things, the priorities of the legislature when formulating national policies and common minimum programs on economic stabilization.

While the government is in the process of adopting strategies to tackle the crisis, the tourism industry's statistics are showing that it will take longer to increase the inflow of money into the country. The data shows that there was a 21 percent decrease in tourist arrivals in September as only 28,902 tourists arrived last month, making it the lowest inflow for this year. [NewsWire]

Sri Lanka: Government imposes social media ban on state employees

(kh/lm) The Sri Lankan government has ordered its 1.5 million state employees not to express opinions on social media after some provincial health officials and teachers claimed that dozens of children were fainting in school due to a lack of food. [The Hindu]

The decision to impose the ban comes a week after President Ranil Wickremesinghe declared multiple key locations in the capital cityColombo as high-security zones and severely curtailed protests rights in areas close to these premises. During protests following the announcement, at least 84 protesters were arrested. [AiR No. 39, September/2022, 4

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

Cambodia: NEC rejects allegations of electoral irregularities

(th) There have been conflicting arguments regarding alleged election irregularities in recent Cambodian polls, with a new report accusing the government of weak and ineffective election laws in the country.

According to a report by the Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia (COMFREL), Cambodia's election law and election administration and management are inadequate and led to irregularities in the 5th commune council elections in June. The elections under discussion saw a landslide victory for the ruling Cambodian People's Party.

The National Election Committee (NEC) of Cambodia has rejected the allegations. According to a NEC spokesman, COMFREL's report is inaccurate and the commune council elections were conducted smoothly, fairly, transparently and in accordance with the law. [Phnom Penh Post] [COMFREL]

Cambodia: Press freedom under pressure according to report

(th) Press freedom has come under fire in Cambodia, with the publication of a new report.

The report published by the non-governmental organization CIVICUS classifies civil space in Cambodia as repressed. According to the report, the press is targeted by state repression. A spokesperson for the Cambodian Ministry of Information denies these allegations. According to the government, the media sector has developed and diversified so that journalists are free to do their work. This reflects the ongoing debate regarding press freedom in the country. [VOA News] [CIVICUS].

Cambodia: Crackdown on human trafficking continues

(th) A nationwide crackdown on human trafficking, gambling and related labor scams has continued for Cambodia, with some 500 people arrested, mainly in Sihanoukville. This follows a flurry of recent activity to address trafficking of persons in the country. [Straits Times]

At the Interfaith Forum against Human Trafficking in Phnom Penh, Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen said that the authorities must work together to ensure that Cambodia does not become a haven for crime, money laundering and human trafficking. [Khmer Times]

In this context, Cambodian Interior Minister Sar Kheng called on China to help with the ongoing crackdown by providing support and resources. [Straits Times] [Khmer Times].

Indonesia: NasDem nominates Jakarta governor as presidential candidate for 2024

(os) The National Democratic Party, or NasDem, will back outgoing Jakarta governor Anies Baswedan as candidate for president in the 2024 election.

According to polls, he can be considered as one of the three contenders with the most chances of success for being elected as successor of Joko Widodo. The current president cannot run for re-election as he has already reached the two-term limit.

Being Indonesia's fifth largest party, NasDem does not meet the required threshold of seats in the House of Representatives to nominate a candidate. However, it is almost certain that the Democratic Party and the Social Justice Party will form a coalition with NasDem to endorse the candidacy of Anies. [Jakarta Globe] [Reuters]

Indonesia: Spyware allegedly used to target Indonesian officials

(os) According to a recent report, more than a dozen senior Indonesian government and military officials were targeted with spy software last year. The software allegedly used had been designed by an

Israeli surveillance firm. It is unclear who initiated the attacks and if the attacks were successful.

The report was brought forward by nine anonymous sources with alleged knowledge of the matter. Six of them said they were targeted by the attack themselves. In November 2021, they stated that they were informed by Apple Inc. that they might have been targeted by spy software. Among others, the targeted individuals included Chief Economic Minister Airlangga Hartarto, senior military personnel, and two regional diplomats.

The hackers allegedly used ForcedEntry, an advanced piece of software that enables attackers to gain access to the device without user interaction. It is, however, suggested that the attack on Airlangga has not been successful. The office of the minister stated that Airlangga's official email address was not installed on his private phone at the time which means his data remained safe. [Reuters] [The Jakarta Post]

Indonesia: Parliament approves 2023 state budget

(os) The Indonesian parliament has passed the State Budget Bill for the fiscal year of 2023. On September 29, lawmakers approved the budget, which aims for a decline of the fiscal deficit to below three percent of gross domestic product.

The budget lays out a planned spending of USD 197 billion and a total revenue of USD 157 billion, which would lead to a budget deficit. Sitting at 2.84 percent, the targeted deficit would be much lower than in the last three years, when the government lifted the target to above three percent due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Spending is planned to be kept at a high level to maintain economic growth, which is set at 5.3 percent for next year. Inflation is projected at 3.6 percent.

According to the country's Finance Minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati, rising inflation and interest rate hikes by the U.S. Federal Reserve present challenges to financing the budget. Increasing interest rates will make borrowing even more expensive. A lower shortfall seeks to guard the state budget and the economy against the risk posed by the upcoming challenges. [Bloomberg] [Reuters] [The Jakarta Post]

Indonesia: Papua Governor suspended from Democratic Party amid corruption allegations

(os) In the wake of corruption allegations, Papua Governor Lukas Enembe failed to comply with two summonses by the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) and has been suspended as head of the Papua chapter of the Democratic Party.

The KPK announced corruption charges against the governor two weeks ago. While the charges have not been disclosed in detail, there have been allegations of money laundering and mismanagement of the province's funds. On Wednesday 28, the Democratic Party said that Lukas will be suspended from his duties in the party and stressed that the party supports the legal proceedings. They also warned against a politicization of the case. The Democratic Party is part of the opposition and critics have claimed that the case is politically motivated. Chief Security Minister Mohammad Mahfud MD has denied these claims.

After Lukas skipped both of his summons citing health reasons, the KPK stated they are soon going to send a third summons. The Papua Provincial Police are preparing special units for the arrest of Lukas. [CNA] [Jakarta Globe] [Tempo] [The Jakarta Post]

Indonesia: Human Rights experts call for investigation on East Java soccer stampede

(os/ai) A stampede at a football match in East Java province of Indonesia killed at least 125 people and left more than 320 people injured. The stampede unfolded after police used tear gas to quash an invasion of the pitch by soccer fans. Human Rights groups have condemned the excessive use of force by the police.

On October 1, at the match between Arema and Persebaya in the Kanjuruhan stadium, Arema fans took to the field after their team lost in a match against the rival club. In an attempt to disperse the masses, the police made use of tear gas. This caused panic among the fans as they were eager to escape the stadium and rushed to an exit gate. There was some vandalization of some police vehicles by the more extremist fans. Furthermore, protests were also recorded outside the stadium, where Arena FC fans allegedly destroyed eight police vehicles and cars.

The tear gas, which was fired into the public space numerous times in order to dispel the protests, had caused agony among the spectators and triggered them to flee the situation. However, in the confined space of the stadium, which was filled beyond capacity, they had nowhere to go. Reports state that 174 people, including children and members of the police, were killed. According to the Deputy for Special Child Protection of the Ministry (PPPA), 33 children between 4 and 17 have been victims of the tragedy. In addition, more than 300 were injured, including 11 people in a critical condition.

The stadium safety regulations of FIFA prohibit the carrying and use of tear gas by police. It is also stipulated in the General Comment 37 of the UN Human Rights Committee that law enforcement should only fall back to the use of tear gas in case other methods have failed or would fail. East Java police responded to the allegations of disproportionate use of force that they only fired tear gas after fans started rioting. Indonesia's human rights commission already expressed its plans to launch an investigation on security during the incident and the use of tear gas. The government said they will form an independent team comprising academics, soccer experts, and government officials to examine the incident.

Indonesian president Joko Widodo stated that authorities need to evaluate security at matches, after what was one of the deadliest events in soccer history. Amnesty International called for an independent investigation to examine the use of tear gas and stressed the necessity to hold the people responsible for the tragedy accountable. According to experts, the use of tear gas was one of the main factors in bringing about the stampede.

Discontent against the police in Indonesia is mounting as many blame the police for the unfolding of the event. [AiR No. 35, August/2022, 5]. [Amnesty International] [Reuters] [The Jakarta Post 1] [The Jakarta Post 2] [The Jakarta Post 3] [The New York Times]

Critics accuse the organizing committee of Arema FC (PanPel) of having sold a more significant number of tickets than the maximum number available in the stands. The police had allegedly ordered PanPel to sell only a maximum of 25,000 tickets, whereas it is reported that PanPel printed and sold about 45,000, almost the double. [dempasarsuara] [KompasTV.Bahasa] [CNNIndonesiaBahasa] [Liputasn6Bahasa] [Merdekabahasa] [bola.bisnisnbahasa]

Malaysia: Najib's request to attend Dewan sittings rejected

(th) Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak, who is serving a jail sentence for abuse of power, criminal breach of trust and money laundering, has been refused by the Prisons Department to attend sessions of the Dewan Rakyat, Malaysia's House of Representatives [The Star].

Earlier, the Speaker of the House, Tan Sri Azhar Azizan Harun, had called on the Prisons Authority to make a decision on whether Najib could attend the sittings. This decision comes amidst public debate over the alleged preferential treatment recieved by Najib in the Malaysian prison system. [Malay Mail].

Malaysia: Anti-party hopping law to be enforced before general election

(th) The Prime Minister's Department has announced that the anti-party hopping law will be enforced before the general election, which is scheduled to be held before Sept 14, 2023 [The Star].

The law, which was passed by Parliament in July, aims to make it more difficult for Members of Parliament to switch parties after an election. [The Straits Times].

Some other approved laws recently approved by the Malaysian monarch include the Malaysian Border Control Agency Dissolution Act 2022, the Employment Insurance System Amendment Act 2022, the Employees Social Security Amendment Act 2022, the East Coast Economic Region Development Council Amendment Act 2022, the Control of Rice and Padi Amendment Act 2022, the Offenders Compulsory Attendance Amendment Act 2022, the Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority Amendment Act 2022, the Courts of Judicature Amendment Act 2022, the Criminal Procedure Code Amendment Act 2022, the National Forestry Amendment Act 2022, the Armed Forces Fund Amendment Act 2022, the Poisons Amendment Act 2022 and the Housewives' Social Security Act 2022. [Malay Mail]

Malaysia: Tabling of 2023 Budget confirmed

(th) Justice Minister Datuk Seri Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar has confirmed that the 2023 Budget will be tabled next Friday. [Malay mail].

This announcement refutes fears that Parliament could be dissolved before the presentation day, which would have meant that an announced budget could not be implemented. The date of the next election continues to be discussed by the Malaysian parliament. [Malay mail].

Malaysia: Prime Minister requests Cabinet 's opinion on dissolution of parliament.

(gl) The Malaysian Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob, has turned to his cabinet to request opinion on the dissolution of Parliament, which must happen if a General Election (GE15) is to be held.

The Home Minister has claimed that this decision was due to the fact that the country's political and administrative climate has changed since the time when Barisan Nasional (BN) was still the leading party in the government. Since the GE15 will be held this year, the Prime Minister must provide the suggested date of the dissolution of Parliament in accordance with Article 40 (1) of the Federal Constitution. [Daily Express]

Malaysia: 2023 large fund allocation for infrastructure and education in Sabah and Sarawak

(gl) The 2023 funds for development projects, mostly education and infrastructure, in Sabah and Sarawak regions of Malaysia are expected due this Friday October 7.

The budgets experienced an increase from the ones allocated in 2022. The fund allocations are essential because basic infrastructure, like roadways, accessibility to clean water and electricity, are still lacking in many rural areas in Sabah and Sarawak. The federal government and the state government also intend to collaborate in conducting rigorous research on poverty data to better identify the needs of the population. [Daily Express]

Myanmar: New land selling scheme raises more than USD 9 million

(dql) In a bid to raise funds, Myanmar's National Unity Government (NUG) has sold 579 out of a total of 980 plots of land in two townships that were illegally confiscated by the military.

The sale raised nearly USD 9.3 million within two days after the NUG's Ministry of Planning, Finance and Investment (MOPFI) launched the land selling scheme on October 1. [Irrawaddy]

Myanmar: Model sentenced to six years for "disgracing Burmese culture" after publishing nude photos

(tp) The military court of Dagon Myothit in Yangon region has sentenced a beauty model to six years in jail for violating Myanmar's Electronic Communications Act. She has been accused of posting pornographic material for payment via OnlyFans, a social media platform.

According to reports, Nang Mwe San is the first person to get a sentence under this law, which was put into effect during the Thein Sein president's administration in 2011–2016. Her critics have accused her of damaging the nation's reputation, whereas others have labeled the decision as a violation of her human rights.

After the Myanmar military junta seized power in February, 2021, the model took part in anti-coup protests and wrote remarks on social media criticizing the junta's suppression of the civil unrest. She quickly fled into hiding after the junta warned that she would be arrested for defaming the government in violation of the Penal Code Section 505(a). However, Nang Mwe San was nonetheless detained by the military on August 5. [RFA][BBC]

Myanmar: Aung San Suu Kyi and Australian former advisor sentenced 3 years in jail under the Official Secrets Act

(tp) Sean Turnell, a former economic adviser, has been jailed in Yangon along with Aung San Suu Kyi. Already imprisoned by the government for months, he reports he has been unable to meet with his lawyer or any

representatives of the Australian embassy during this time.

When Turnell was detained last year, the military accused him of possessing confidential documents. Turnell has reportedly denied the charge and said the documents were not confidential but were economic recommendations he had given in his capacity as adviser to Aung San Suu Kyi's government.

According to reports, Sean Turnell has been found guilty of breaking the Official Secrets Act and misusing a visa. He was given a three-year prison sentence. [NY Times]

Along with Turrell who was her advisor, Aung San Suu Kyi has been given the same punishment. She is already serving a 20-year prison sentence. The decision has been roundly criticized by several rights organizations, which have questioned the transparency of court procedures and the right to fair trial. [The Guardian]

Myanmar: Latest developments in conflict violence

(dql) During a raid of a combined resistance force on October 2, seventeen junta troops were reportedly killed while more than 50 pro-regime militia personnel were detained.

The raid took place in Pauk, where close to 100 militia troops were conducting a training. [Irrawaddy 1]

Meanwhile, an attack on a police outpost in Salingyi Township, Sagaing Region, was launched by four resistance groups launched in the morning of the same day. The groups claim to have destroyed three of the outpost's five bunkers. [Irrawaddy 2]

In addition, more Myanmar junta outposts near Paya Taung village outside Payathonsu, a border town in southern Karen State, have been seized by the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) Brigade 6, the armed wing of the Karen National Union (KNU). [Irrawaddy 3]

For an assessment of the overall situation of the Myanmar military, see Andrew Nachemson in [Foreign Policy] who argues that – despite the successes of the resistance forces – "arguments that they are on the verge of victory or that the military is on the verge of collapse are overly optimistic," in light of the military's far superior firepower and complete air supremacy.

Myanmar: Passenger on national airline hit by bullet mid-flight

(tp) A passenger of the Myanmar National Airline has been injured by a bullet that was allegedly shot from the ground.

According to a report, the aircraft was four miles north of the airport and flying at a height of 3,500 feet when the bullet hit the passenger. All flights to the city have been permanently canceled. The military administration of Myanmar has accused rebel troops in the state of Kayah of firing at the aircraft.

Speaking on behalf of the country's ruling military council, Major General Zaw Min Tun told state media that the attacking was carried out by terrorists from the Karenni National Progressive Party, an ethnic minority group that is at odds with the government. [India Today]

Philippines: International Criminal Court prosecutor opposes Philippines' call to stop resumption of drug war probe

(jd) International Criminal Court (ICC) Prosecutor Karim Khan has rejected the Philippines' request to stop the resumption of the investigation related to the deaths linked to the Duterte administration's war on drugs and 'Davao Death Squad' killings. He said that the crimes appear to have been encouraged and condoned by high-level government officials, including the former President.

On September 8, the Philippine government asked the ICC pre-trial chamber to deny the prosecution's request to resume the probe into the drug war arguing that the ICC has no jurisdiction, a probe is already ongoing, and a precedent is needed. But, in his comment, Khan affirmed that none of those arguments have merit.

The ICC Prosecutor stated that although the Philippine government provided additional submissions to the ICC, it wasn't able to demonstrate that it is conducting national investigations or prosecutions comparable to the probe authorized by the pre-trial chamber, and that it failed to substantiate any relevant criminal proceedings in relation to events in Davao from the years when Duterte was vice mayor and mayor. [Inquirer] [Rappler]

Following the events, Department of Justice (DOJ) Secretary Remulla said that ICC Prosecutor Khan is doing the court a disservice for challenging the Philippine system.

The Office of the Solicitor General is still considering whether the Philippine government would respond, while the DOJ secretary believes that the Philippines should no longer reply to the ICC.

Remulla stated that despite the latest developments, the Philippine government will continue its investigations into the alleged crimes.

The ICC prosecutor pointed out that the prosecution's request for a resumption of investigations was based on complaints, reports from civil society organizations, eyewitness accounts, and insider accounts of people who claimed to have participated in the crimes. [Rappler]

Philippines: President Marcos appoints new Commission on Human Rights chair and commissioner

(jd) President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. appointed two new officials of the Commission on Human Rights (CHR).

The president appointed lawyer Richard Paat Palpal-latoc, as new chairperson of the CHR and lawyer Beda Epres as a new commissioner.

With Palpal-latoc's appointment, the CHR will have a new chairperson after being led by Executive Director Jacqueline de Guia, since May 2022.

Paat Palpal-latoc is a lawyer who worked as a Deputy Executive Secretary for Legal Affairs under the Office of the President and served as Assistant City Prosecutor at the Office of the City Prosecutor in Quezon City.

The CHR said that Palpal-latoc hopes to expand the organization's work in economic, social, and cultural rights, and to strengthen the rights of families, children, and women.

The CHR also confirmed the appointment of lawyer Beda Epres as a commissioner and stated that he has strong foundation in investigation work because of his experience at the Office of the Ombudsman.

Marcos still has to appoint three other commissioners of the CHR. [CNN Philippines]

Human rights groups urge the new appointees of the Commission of Human Rights to show independence and transparency in investigating violations involving civil and political rights, and to defend the constitutional body's mandate. [Philstar]

Philippines: Shopee facing boycott calls after new ambassador announcement

(pe) Shopee, Southeast Asia's largest shopping platform by average monthly active users, is facing boycott calls from Philippine consumers. This comes after the e-commerce giant named their new brand ambassador, a supporter of the country's president, Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

Filipina actress and singer Toni Gonzaga has been named as the newest ambassador, drawing criticism across social media. Gonzaga has been a prominent public supporter of Marcos Jr. despite his controversial reputation. Hashtags #ByeShopee and #BoycottShopee saw over 340,000 tweets, calling users to switch to alternative shopping platforms. Some netizens defended the ambassador and Shopee's decision, amidst online debate. [Bloomberg]

Singapore: New Bill proposed targeting harmful content on online platforms and social media

(pe) Singapore's social media companies are facing a new code of practice to tackle harmful content after the introduction of a Bill in Parliament.

The Online Safety Bill would expect online platforms to remove content advocating suicide, physical or sexual violence, content depicting child sexual exploitation, Furthermore, it includes content likely to cause racial and religious disharmony, terrorism, or content deemed a risk to public health. Supporters of the Bill claim that it will particularly serve to protect vulnerable groups, such as children, from harm. Those supporters claim that over half of internet users have encountered harmful content on the internet.

The Bill would serve to regulate Singaporean internet access from both domestic and overseas providers, who would be expected to mitigate and manage content deemed risky, on their services. Social media services will be expected to create measures to minimize exposure to harmful content and provide

tools for users to manage their own safety. Failure to comply could lead to financial penalties. Critics of the proposed law suggest that any form of censorship may damage freedom of expression online.

Parliament is due to debate the Bill in November. [Channel News Asia] [The Straits Times]

Thailand: Constitutional Court rules in favor of PM Prayut's claim on eight-year term in office

(td) The Constitutional Court has ruled that Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha has not breached his legally mandated eight-year tenure limit in office, after deliberating a petition filed by a group of opposition lawmakers.

In this regard, a majority of the nine-member judge panel argued that his term started in 2017 when the present constitution was officially promulgated. As a result, the verdict has sparked public outcry, reignited civil demonstrations, and spelled growing suspicions of Thailand's conservative Establishment. [The Washington Post] [AiR, No. 38, September/2022, 3]

In a last-ditch effort to remove him from the top post, a group of parliamentarians from the opposition parties, specifically Phue Thai, turned to constitutional mechanisms to take on Prayut. However, his premiership tenure is subjected to conflicting interpretations; be it when he led the coup in 2014 and became PM, or when he was elected as civilian PM in 2019, if not 2017 as many predicted. The 2017 Charter in question could not be applied retroactively, thus allowing him to serve until 2025. [Bloomberg] [Nikkei Asia]

Observers state that political stability is crucial for now as Thailand is hosting the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) this year. Nonetheless, it remains to be seen if anticipated protests – adamantly demanding his resignation – would pose challenges to the government. Shortly after the delivery of a verdict, several groups of dissidents began to rally in key venues across Bangkok to express their objections. [Bangkok Post 1]

The opposition Move Forward Party expects a prospective referendum on a new constitution to rid of an ensuing legacy from the coup, which seeks to help Prayut and his clique prolong their power. Meanwhile, its counterpart, Pheu Thai Party has expressed doubts about the constitutional legitimacy. They are convinced

that Prayut should have ceased performing his duties in August. [Bangkok Post 2] [Reuters]

Observers remark that Prayut is likely to face a political reckoning early next year when the four-year term of the incumbent Parliament comes to an end. Moreover, it is challenging as he would not be able to stay in office for four straight years – should he be elected. In contrast, political analysts have predicted that a coalition of opposition parties possibly win at the next poll in 2023, capitalizing on the court's ruling for greater support. [Aljazeera] [Voice of America]

Thailand: Opposition files corruption petitions against PM Prayut and two ministers

(fj) The opposition has filed two petitions with the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC), accusing Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha and two of his cabinet ministers of graft in relation to two projects.

The first petition seeks the NACC's investigation of training projects conducted by the Ministry of Higher Education, Science Research and Innovation with an authorized budget of USD 10 Million. The opposition claims these trainings were neither urgent nor suitable under the terms of reference specified for the related project. Besides PM Prayut, the petition makes allegations against the Minister for Higher Education, Science Research and Innovation, Anek Laothamatas, as well as two further politicians and three executives from Rajamangala University of Technology Isan. [Bangkok Post]

The second petition submitted with the NACC accuses PM Prayut and Minister of Commerce Jurin Laksanawisit of neglect in overseeing the procurement of rubber gloves in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic. They are accused of not having prevented the misappropriation and laundering of USD 50,000 through the procurement process. [Bangkok Post]

The Secretary-General of the biggest opposition party Pheu Thai, Prasert Chantararuangtong, further declared that the opposition parties were in the process of collecting evidence of corruption against other ministers. [Bangkok Post]

With the political parties gearing up to the general election tentatively scheduled for May 2023, the filing of graft petitions by the opposition must be seen in the broader context of the incumbent government's struggle for legitimacy. The opposition's repeated use

of legal means to question the government's claim to power has most recently been evident in their petition filed with the Constitutional Court over the Prime Minister's eight-year term limit, which constituted the fifth time that PM Prayut has been brought before the Constitutional Court with the apparent goal of removing him from office. [The Nation Thailand]

Thailand: Minister of Natural Resources and Environment takes over leadership of Chartthaipattana Party

(fj) The current Minister of Natural Resources and Environment has been elected the new leader of the Chartthaipattana Party. He aims to lead the party, which is a member of the government coalition with currently twelve Members of Parliament, to win between 25 and 30 MP seats in the upcoming general election.

The Minister, Varawut Silpa-archa succeeded his sister Kanchana Silpa-archa as the head of the party that his father Banharn Silpa-archa had led to a win in the general election back in 1995 when he became prime minister. Despite his family's leading role throughout much of the party's history, Varawut maintained that the party was not run by a political dynasty, and he assured that members would partake in decision-making.

In view of the upcoming elections, Varawut refused to make any commitments on whether his party would be willing to join a coalition government again. [Bangkok Post]

Thailand: Elective abortion legalized up to week 20 of pregnancy

(fj) Thailand is legalizing elective abortions for women who are up to 20 weeks into their pregnancy. The kingdom is thereby significantly extending the period during which this procedure is legally sanctioned. [Thai Enquirer]

The relevant amendment of the Criminal Code extends the period of free choice from twelve to 20 weeks of pregnancy. Whereas previously abortions between week twelve and week 20 were only permissible based on clearly defined reasons such as rape and physical or mental risk to the mother, the amended law stipulates a compulsory medical consultation at a medical facility

designated by the Department of Health Services as the sole condition. [Thai PBS World]

The country's National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has voiced its support for the amendment, underlining that it brings Thailand in closer alignment with international human rights frameworks, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women to which Thailand has been a party since 1985. [Bangkok Post]

Besides legal restrictions, the access to safe abortions in Thailand has long been complicated by a strong social stigma associated with the procedure. In introducing the new amendment, the Deputy Government Spokesperson showed awareness of the issue as she stressed the need to treat women who decide to exercise their right of abortion under the new regulations respectfully and to keep the process strictly confidential. [Thai PBS World]

Timor-Leste: Resolution of the National Parliament for the ratification of the Millennium Challenge approved.

(gl) The Timor-Leste government has approved the Millenium Challenge Compact Agreement, in a move to improve several key public health and wellbeing areas.

The suggested resolution will run for five years, with an absolute investment of USD 484 million, and will focus on two fields of critical significance to Timor-Leste's development, education, and sanitation. As a consequence, it seeks to improve the water supply and drainage. The water, sanitation and drainage projects aim to downgrade pollutants of drinking water and groundwater that can cause illness and affect the well-being and health of Timor-Leste's citizens.

In addition to the direct impact on public health, water, sanitation, and drainage strategies will also help reduce the risk of flooding, which has hit Timor-Leste badly in recent years. To add more, it will help avoid environmental and socioeconomic impacts by guaranteeing sustainable management of water and sanitation. The education projects aim to supply in teacher instruction, thus creating better high schools that will prepare students for jobs and education and enhance their ability to contribute to national economic growth. [Government of Timor-Leste]

Vietnam: Deputy foreign minister and Minister officials removed from party over repatriation flights

(fe) The Deputy Foreign Minister and the assistant to the Deputy Prime Minister have both been removed from office amidst criticism of repatriation flights provided to Vietnamese citizens who had been stranded abroad due to Covid-19 border closures. The flights have been labeled as overly costly, with the selection process allegedly lacking transparency.

According to the Secretariat, Dung and Linh violated Party and State laws about the prevention and control of corruption and other negative phenomena, as well as rules regarding what Party members must and must not do. These violations, the Secretariat claimed, have serious repercussions, incite public outrage, and harm Party organs. After an investigation into the case was completed, both have been placed in detention.

Only a relatively limited number of aircraft were authorized to re-enter the country under the COVID-19 border restrictions. These aircraft drew criticism for being pricey and lacking transparency in the selection and application processes. The Secretariat issued an eviction order for Dung and Linh and asked that the Party's disciplinary process impose the proper administrative punishments on them. [Vietnamnews.vn] [Vietnamplus.vn]

In addition, this case has led to the standing Board of the Party Committee of the Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences (VASS) receiving a disciplinary warning from the Inspection Commission of the Party Central Committee for the terms 2015–2020 and 2020–25.The Commission suggested that the Politburo take action against the Party Committee Secretary and VASS President and requested the provincial Party Committee's Standing Board increase inspection and oversight, as well as penalize various at-fault organizations and people. [Vietnamnews.vn] [Vietnamplus.vn]

Vietnam: Government drafting regulations to restrict news posts on social media platforms

(fe) Vietnam is developing new regulations to limit which social media accounts may broadcast news-related content as the government tightens its grip over the nation's news and information sources.

The regulations will provide a legal framework for controlling news transmission on websites such as Facebook and YouTube while placing a significant amount of moderating duty on platform owners. Before the year is over, they are expected to be revealed.

The government has concentrated on these platforms to halt the flow of news from unauthorized sources as more and more tech-savvy young Vietnamese people turn to social media sites for information. According to an informed source, the government wants to confront what it sees as the misleading use of social media as a news source.

In secret sessions, government representatives have allegedly informed well-known social media and internet businesses on the kind of accounts that will be allowed by the new restrictions to spread news content. Upon request by the police, social media companies would be required to delete any accounts that are in violation of such laws.

Official forecasts for 2021 stated that TikTok and YouTube each have 20 million users in Vietnam, with Twitter continuing to play a minor role. Vietnam is one of Facebook's top 10 markets with 60 to 70 million members, and according to people with direct knowledge of the situation, it surpasses France in terms of yearly income with an estimated USD 1 billion.

Authorities also intend to adopt new rules mandating that social media platforms remove any material that might endanger national security promptly, as well as any illicit content, within 24 hours. Additionally, Vietnam unveiled new regulations that, starting in October, would require digital companies to establish local offices and store customer data there. [Reuters.com]

Vietnam: President attends a ceremony commemorating Elderly Action Month

(fe) On October 1, in honor of the International Day of Older Persons and Action Month for the Vietnamese Elderly, President Nguyen Xuan Phuc attended a ceremony in the northern province of Hung Yen.

The leader complimented the 12 million senior citizens for their active roles in constructing and defending the country and referred to them as an essential driving force of society and a cornerstone of families and communities.

The Vietnam Association of the Elderly (VAE) was praised for holding activities in response to the month, patriotic emulation campaigns, and the fight against COVID-19. He reaffirmed that the Vietnamese Party, State, and people are always respectful and grateful to the thousands of old women honored as Heroic Vietnamese Mothers, many Heroes of the People's Armed Forces, and Heroes of Labor for their sacrifice and unwavering dedication.

He stated that he hoped that the elderly Vietnamese people at home and abroad would continue participating in patriotic emulation campaigns, thus devoting their knowledge and experience to national development. He asked the VAE, Party committees, and authorities to continue adhering to the Party's guidelines, State policies, and laws regarding the elderly. [Vietnamplus.vn] [Nhandan.vn]

International Relations, Geopolitics and Security in Asia

United Nations increases flood aid appeal as Pakistan enters ‘second wave of death and destruction'

(msk) The United Nations (UN) has increased its aid appeal for Pakistan, where more than five million people are facing a severe food crisis in the wake of recent catastrophic floods. [Al Jazeera] [Dawn]

The UN’s humanitarian coordinator for Pakistan announced on October 3 that the UN was now seeking $816m for flood-relief efforts, up from its initial appeal for $160m in August, when heavy rains and floods swept through much of Pakistan. "We are now entering

a second wave of death and destruction. There will be an increase in child morbidity, and it will be terrible," he said.

Nearly 1,700 people, including more than 600 children, lost their lives and a total 33 million people were affected after record-breaking rains began lashing Pakistan in June. In its latest report on Saturday, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said 8.62 million people in 28 assessed districts were estimated to be in crisis and enduring the emergency phases of food security between September and November 2022, “including some 5.74 million people in flood-affected districts covered by the assessment”.

The OCHA report also noted that “water-borne and vector-borne diseases” are of “growing concern”, particularly in the hard-hit provinces of Sindh and Balochistan. It added that close to 1.6 million women of reproductive age, including nearly 130,000 pregnant women, need urgent health services.

Pakistan government has estimated that its economic growth rate would fall massively to 2pc during the ongoing fiscal year, against 5pc budgeted target, owing to devastation caused by heavy rainfalls and flash floods, which affected more than 33m people, mostly in Sindh and Balochistan.

United States seeks China, India to prevent Russian President from potential use of nuclear weapon

(vv) The United States and its allies are seeking increasingly seeking help from India and China to amp up pressure on Russian President Vladimir Putin by signaling that that the use of nuclear weapons in Ukraine would prompt a crippling economic and diplomatic response – even from Moscow’s partners. [Politico]

But China and India have recently abstained from voting at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) on a draft resolution that sought to condemn Russia’s annexation of four crucial territories in Ukraine, claiming that the decision was taken in view of the overall evolving situation. Ten nations voted in favor of the resolution, which was co-sponsored by Albania and the US, while China, Gabon, India and Brazil abstained. Russia, for its part, used its veto to scuttle the draft. [Al Jazeera] [Daily Pioneer]

United States defends Pakistan arm sales against Indian criticism

(vv/lm/tj) The United States Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, has defended military sales to Pakistan in a meeting with his Indian counterpart S Jaishankar, just a day after he had called for "a responsible relationship" between New Delhi and Islamabad. [South China Morning Post] [The Strait Times]

The US Defence Security Cooperation Agency last month announced that it was considering a USD 450 million deal with Pakistan to upgrade the South Asian country's F-16 fighter jets for counter-terrorism purposes and to fight potential threats from Afghanistan's Taliban regime. [AiR No. 37, September/2022, 2]

Despite the balancing act, US' move to send across F-16 fighter jets to Pakistan had Jaishankar question the merits of the US-Pakistan relationship, adding that their diplomatic relation hasn't served the "American interest". Jaishankar claimed that arming Pakistan with high functioning military fighter jets will only be deployed for a different purpose, subtly hinting at what India alleges – Islamabad using the ammunition against India [see AiR No. 39, September/2022, 4]. [Hindustan Times] [The Indian Express]

Blinken was quick to defend US' arms sales to Pakistan, stating that his administration is only overhauling and sustaining an existing fleet and not supplying a new package altogether. The American top diplomat further maintained that the primary focus was to assist Pakistan in combating growing terrorism threat emanating from its home turf, and from neighbor Afghanistan's Taliban regime, which will in turn help global counter-terrorism efforts. Blinken also clarified that the Biden administration pushes for a constructive diplomatic relation between India-Pakistan, and that the US has distinct relations with both countries.

Sri Lanka seeks December bailout, but IMF says timing hard to predict

(kh/lm) Sri Lanka is optimistic about receiving International Monetary Fund (IMF) board approval for a USD 2.9 billion dollars by December this year, but the Washington-based lender has cautioned that the time frame remains uncertain, and much depends on discussions with Colombo's public- and private-sector creditors.

The debt-ridden South Asian island nation last month reached a staff-level agreement with the IMF for the loan of about USD 2.9 billion, contingent on it receiving financing assurances from official creditors and negotiations with private creditors [see AiR No. 36, September/2022, 1]. Sri Lanka now targets agreements in principle with all its creditors between the last quarter of the year and the second quarter of 2023, *Reuters* reported, citing officials from the country's central bank. [Reuters 1]

Still, two IMF officials working on Sri Lanka in a written comment to *Nikkei Asia* said that it was "difficult to predict the timeline", further urging all parties involved in the process to "move expeditiously, so that Sri Lanka can emerge from the crisis as quickly as possible." [Nikkei Asia]

Moreover, among the creditors, Japan has shown the most positive attitude towards restructuring Sri Lanka's debt and has encouraged other creditors to get united so that every contributor fairly and transparently provides financial assurances. India has followed suit and reiterated its support for Sri Lanka as Indian High Commission in Sri Lanka stated that they will help Sri Lanka to receive the bailout as early as possible. Also, during his meeting with his Sri Lankan counterpart at the UN General Assembly, the Chinese foreign minister reaffirmed China's support for Sri Lanka as he stated that China will maintain its friendly ties with Sri Lanka and will support them in every possible means within China's capacity. [ColomboPage]

Moreover, on September 30, Sri Lankan president addressed the 55th Annual Meeting of the ADB Board of Governors in the Philippines, during which he urged the creditors to support Sri Lanka in its journey towards debt sustainability. He further highlighted his government's efforts and macroeconomic policies they have undertaken to address the crisis. Although the Sri Lankan government's radical measures have to some level stabilized the country's economy, however, unemployment and inflation are still on the rise. Therefore, he stated that only domestic measures are not sufficient, which means external partners' and international stakeholders' support is urgently required. Also, he claimed that the country is not only experiencing an economic crisis due to domestic policymaking but is also the consequence of geopolitical upheaval.

In response, the ADB has pledged to support and provide financial assistance to Sri Lanka. [Reuters 2]

South Korea, Japan, US hold joint military drills with US aircraft carrier Ronald Reagan

(sm) The Republic of Korea Navy and the US Ronald Reagan Carrier Strike Group held joint military drills in the East Sea from September 26 to 29 to enhance joint interoperability and deterrence capabilities. The exercise culminated in trilateral operations together with the Japanese navy on September 30.

It is the first US–South Korea maritime drill in five years to include a US aircraft carrier, as larger exercises had been avoided by Seoul under the administration of former President Moon Jae-in under the so-called "sunshine policy" to minimize tensions with Pyongyang.

The nuclear aircraft carrier, originally based in Japan, arrived on September 23 at the Busan naval base. The nuclear-powered USS Annapolis submarine, the South Korean Aegis destroyer Seoae Ryu Sung-ryong and over twenty more vessels also participated in the drill. [Korea Herald] [Yonhap News Agency_1]

Top military officials from both countries, such as South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman General Kim Seung-kyum and the commander of the South Korea-US Combined Forced Command General Paul LaCamera, attended the exercise and agreed to routinely hold joint drills to strengthen the countries' joint deterrence capabilities amid recent North Korean provocations. [Yonhap News Agency_2]

Japan joined the drills on September 30 with the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force's destroyer Asahi as a message of joint deterrence against Pyongyang. The purpose of this first trilateral operation since April 2017 was to detect and practice countering North Korean submarine-launched ballistic missiles. [Kyodo News]

The exercises were held after increasingly worrying nuclear actions from North Korea, and amid strong protests from the North Korean ambassador to the UN Kim Song, who qualified the drills as extremely concerning. Pyongyang has recently altered its law to allow preemptive nuclear strikes for self-defense and has fired four short-range ballistic missiles into the East Sea during the drills on September 28 and 29, in violation of UN Security Council recommendations. [Yonhap News Agency_3]

The South Korean army had joined US military exercises earlier this month in California as well. The two countries announced a joint five-year plan to conduct amphibious exercises on September 21,

strengthening their defense cooperation and signaling potential joint drills in the early future. [Yonhap News Agency_4] [Yonhap News Agency_5]

Japan, Australia, US talks over increased defense cooperation

(sm) In their first meeting since June, the defense ministers of Japan, Australia, and the US discussed the Asia Pacific security situation in Honolulu, Hawaii, agreeing to better coordinate their trilateral defense strategy.

On October 1, Japanese, US, and Australian Defense Ministers Yasukazu Hamada, Lloyd Austin, and Richard Marles vowed to strengthen the interoperability of their armies by increasing joint drills and sharing military technology and information. They strongly condemned China's firing of ballistic missiles across the Taiwan Strait, cautioning against hasty escalations, and urging a peaceful resolution to current tensions over the issue. [Kyodo News]

In response to US House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan this August, China launched a series of ballistic missiles over the Taiwan Strait, some of which landed in Japan's exclusive economic zone. The Chinese army also conducted military exercises in the East and South China sea. Furthermore, Chinese vessels entered the waters around the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands on September 28, just ahead of the 50th anniversary of Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations. The two countries have a territorial dispute over the Tokyo-administered Beijing-claimed islands. Chinese boats have been sighted near Japanese waters for 14 days in a row now. [The Japan Times]

International support for Taiwan's membership in International Civil Aviation Organization

(dql) France, Japan, and New Zealand have jointly called on the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) to include Taiwan as member.

The call was made during the 41st session of the ICAO that is currently held in Montreal, Canada. [Taiwan News]

US sanctions against Bangladesh's RAB remain in place until there are accountability, reform, envoy says

(az/lm) The United States Ambassador to Bangladesh, Peter Haas, has said that Washington's policy on Dhaka's elite paramilitary force, the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), has not changed and the sanctions against the force will remain in place "until there is both accountability and reform". [bdnews24]

In December last year, the US Treasury Department imposed sanctions on the RAB, as well as seven of its current and former officers due to serious human rights violations. These actions came at the last day of the virtual Democracy Summit organized by the White House, to which Bangladesh was not invited, and marked the first time Washington ever sanctioned Dhaka, which it has described as a key partner. [AiR No. 50, December/2021, 2]

Both of these actions, and particularly the imposition of sanctions, have irked Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's government, precisely because it views sanctioning RAB as an attack on an institution that has carried out successful counterterrorism and counternarcotics operations.

Ambassador Haas last week highlighted that as Bangladesh moves closer to graduating from LDC status by 2026, its relationship with the US is also getting a new dimension. The US, therefore, is seeking improvements in the judiciary, human rights, good governance, and democracy. Pointing to the consequences of the sanction, he also informed that there has been a remarkable decline in reported abuses being conducted by RAB since the US imposed the sanctions last year. [The Daily Star]

Nordic countries seek strong engagement with Bangladesh

(az) Ambassadors from Denmark, Norway, and Sweden conveyed the message that their countries look forward to building more robust and sustainable partnerships with Bangladesh and continuing the 50 years of friendship and beyond. The critical fronts of collaboration among them will be the climate, green transition, technology transfer, healthy oceans, gender equality, trade, and investment.

The Danish ambassador informed that his country is keeping an eye on Bangladesh for the upcoming

national election. He reiterated the importance of a free and fair election for Bangladeshi people to express their views following the constitution. The Swedish side stressed the effort at promoting green transition within the trade policy that goes side by side with the development cooperation. In contrast, the Norwegian Ambassador focused more on the ocean as a source for international transport, global food security, poverty reduction, and climate change. He also added that Norway hopes to work with Bangladesh on the Nordic initiative to establish a global agreement to combat marine plastic litter and microplastics.

On the other hand, in response, Bangladesh has encouraged the Nordic envoys to see whether it is possible to establish carbon-neutral villages in Bangladesh as the Nordic countries strongly focus on the environment. If one or two carbon-neutral villages are established in Bangladesh, they will be the role model for the nation to move toward the carbon reduction goal. For this mission, the Bangladeshi side also asked if for a possible investment in Bangladesh. The envoys from Bangladesh also urged for possible assistance from the Nordic countries for deep sea fishing as Bangladesh can go for this issue.

On the Rohingya issue, the Nordic ambassadors expressed that their countries may get involved in a tripartite initiative with Myanmar and Bangladesh. However, they expressed the concern that although their standing on the peace issue is very solid, but Myanmar is not very easy to call. [The Daily Star]

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen on state visit in Japan

(th) On the sidelines of the state funeral for assassinated former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen met with current Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida.

During the meeting, Kishida and Hun Sen discussed deepening Japan-Cambodia cooperation, especially in view of the upcoming ASEAN-Japan summit. Furthermore, Kishida is expected to make a state visit to Cambodia in November. [Phnom Penh Post] [Khmer Times].

Washington holds the first Pacific islands summit, targeting China

(yv) The United States has announced that it had reached an agreement with the leaders of the Pacific islands to invest more than USD 860 million in expanded initiatives to aid the islands at the two-day summit, on top of the more than USD 1.5 billion provided in the previous ten years.

The announcement was made during the first U.S.-Pacific Island Country Summit, held in Washington on September 28-29, attended by Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Nauru, New Caledonia, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and the US which signed the Declaration on U.S.-Pacific Partnership. A 11-point statement, the declaration discusses strengthening U.S.-Pacific cooperation and addresses climate change, while condemning "Russia's brutal war against Ukraine." [The White House, USA]

Among the leaders signing the Declaration is Prime Minister of the Solomon Islands Manasseh Sogavare whose administration had previously said it would not sign the proclamation, adding to suspicions about his connections to China. In April, the Solomon Islands signed with China a security agreement that prompted concerns about a mounting Chinese military presence in a region [see AiR No. 17, April/2022, 4]

The summit is indicative of a growing US-Sino competition over influence in the Pacific regions and comes after Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi's virtual meeting in May with his counterparts from Pacific Island countries during which he – unsuccessfully – pushed for a draft communique and five-year action plan that called for cooperation in areas such as trade, security, policing, cybersecurity and economic development [see AiR No. 22, May/2022, 5]. However, China's attempts to expand its influence in the region is believed to remain unchanged. [VoA] [Reuters] [Nikkei Asia]

China accuses US of cyberattack on Northwestern Polytechnical University

(dql) According to findings of an investigation of by China's National Computer Virus Emergency Response Centre and a Chinese internet security company, the US National Security Agency (NSA) has launched a cyberattack against Northwestern Polytechnical University, one of the country's leading universities for military research, to steal the personal data of people with sensitive identities.

Funded by China's Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, Northwestern Polytechnical University frequently collaborates with the government in project related to national security, including the development of fighter jets. [South China Morning Post]

US set to rival China over Africa's essential minerals

(yv) The United States and its allies have developed a financial effort for resource-rich African nations to support crucial mineral supply chains necessary for a clean energy transition that will counter China's hegemony in this field.

The Minerals Security Partnership, a US-led organization, gathered in New York last month to explore objectives, difficulties, and possibilities in ethical mining and processing of crucial minerals. Together with the US, Australia, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Japan, South Korea, Sweden, Britain, and the European Commission, this cooperation was launched in June in Canada.

Five of Africa's mineral-rich nations, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania, and Zambia, attended the meeting in New York. The program claims to provide funds and knowledge to assist African countries in enhancing domestic processing of vital minerals.

At the meeting, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken stated that the US and its allies were willing to "provide a loan guarantee or debt financing" to nations that had a plentiful supply of the minerals used in solar panels, wind turbines, and electric car batteries. To support the US' transition to green energy, President Joe Biden is trying to obtain minerals like lithium and cobalt, a supply chain that is dominated by China.

According to Blinken, the program would provide funding for initiatives that met strict environmental, social, and governance standards. Instead of a race to the bottom, he declared, "We want to make this a race to the top, not a race to the bottom."

China currently holds a monopoly on the import and processing of essential minerals, particularly those used to create the batteries for electric vehicles. It has significant mining interests in several African nations. It obtains more than 60percent of its cobalt requirements from the DRC. Additionally, since last year, Chinese businesses have made several purchases in Zimbabwe for lithium, which is highly sought after

for lithium-ion rechargeable batteries that power solar panels and electric vehicles. South Africa, Namibia, Zambia, and other resource-rich nations are also of interest to China. [South China Morning Post]

US Congressmen express national security concerns over American diplomats in "Covid detention" in China

(yv) Concerned that China may have forced US diplomats in China to provide intelligence, two US Republican legislators have urged the US State Department to keep papers related to what they claim to be the incarceration of more than a dozen US diplomats in Chinese Covid-19 quarantine.

The lawmakers cited correspondence that whistle-blowers provided and reporting in The Washington Post, as well as US embassy's confirmation that that 16 diplomats and their family members were involuntarily held. [South China Morning Post]

China-Russian joint operation around Alaska spotted by US Coast Guard

(dql/yv) During a routine patrol in the Bering Sea off Alaska, a US Coast Guard vessel encountered with a Chinese Renhai CG 101 guided missile cruiser that was later discovered to be travelling with two other Chinese naval vessels and four Russian Navy ships.

According to the US Coast Guard, the Chinese and Russian ships, including a destroyer, were later spotted moving "in a single formation with the Renhai as a combined surface action group operating in the US Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)."

The encounter comes weeks after NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg had warned of Beijing's growing interest in the Arctic and Moscow's military build-up in the region, citing Russia's creation of a new Arctic Command and opening of hundreds of new and former Soviet-era Arctic military sites that includes deep-water ports and airfields. [South China Morning Post 1]

In response to reports of the encounter, Global Times, the Chinese Communist Party's newspaper, was quick to cited Chinese official sources insisting that the joint operation was aimed "to improve the ability of both Russia and China to deal with threats to maritime

security and jointly maintain regional peace and stability," and not “aimed at third countries.” [Global Times]

Meanwhile, according to a recent study by the US think tank Rand Corporation, Beijing’s influence in and access to the Arctic would grow over the next ten years if Beijing strengthens ties with Moscow.

Over the past ten years, China and Russia’s cooperation has intensified as a result of the signing of numerous trade and shipping agreements along the Northern Sea Route. In 2017, Beijing and Moscow adopted the joint development of China’s concept of the “Polar Silk Road”, under which new freight routes linking East Asia, western Europe and North America through the Arctic Circle are to created and scientific, environmental and resource extraction efforts to be covered. [South China Morning Post 2] [Rand Corporation]

China and Russia to jointly strengthen satellite navigation systems

(yv) According to the Russian space agency Roscosmos, China and Russia have decided to construct satellite ground stations on each other’s territory to enhance the interoperability of their global navigation systems, China’s BeiDou and Russia’s GLONASS systems which are both rivaling the US GPS system.

Three Chinese cities – Changchun in the northeast, Urumqi in the northwest, and Shanghai in the east – will have GLONASS stations installed as a result of agreements China and Russia reached during a regular conference on satellite navigation. [South China Morning Post]

China’s Philippine envoy urges President Marcos Jr to get rid of “interference” in bilateral ties

(yv) Beijing has urged the Marcos administration to end “intervention” from the outside world in their bilateral relations and said it is eager to discuss issues with the Philippines territorial claims in the contentious South China Sea.

Chinese Ambassador to the Philippines Huang Xilian made this statement at the Chinese embassy’s commemoration of China’s National Day on October 1

and urged both parties to resolve their disagreements amicably "so that our overall ties would not be damaged."

Huang's statement comes after Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr in September met with US President Joe Biden in New York. During the meeting both leaders stressed the importance of freedom of navigation and overflight in the South China Sea, with Biden reassuring Washington's "ironclad" vow to defend the Pihilippines. [South China Morning Post]

New Delhi wants a relationship of "mutual respect" with China, Indian foreign minister says

(vv) India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, while addressing a press brief in the United States on September 28, said that his country sought a relationship with China that was built on "mutual respect". [The Hindu] [Tribune India]

The comments were made against the backdrop of remarks by the Chinese ambassador to India, Sun Weidong, who had claimed that the situation along the shared Line of Actual Control (LAC) was moving towards normalcy and overall stability.

Jaishankar had earlier stated that the nature of the relationship with China was not normal and is difficult to normalize as the border situation itself isn't normal. The Indian top diplomat also claimed that having assessed the foreign policies of both countries, India doesn't shy away from healthy relations with its any of its neighbors and strives to normalize diplomacy with its China, but one that is of mutual respect, mutual sensitivity and mutual interest, overall hinting at accusations of territorial sovereignty from both countries.

Ms. Sitha Komatineni contributed research to this entry.

India announces USD 250 million arms deal with Armenia

(vv) India and Armenia have signed significant defense deals pertaining to India's exports of military missiles and rockets and other ammunition to Armenia. A number of arms and ammunition deals were signed between both countries in September, seeking the government-to-government route.

The security deals are especially important in view of the government's level of engagement in arranging for mutual defense agreements and cooperation, asserting closer ties between the European and South Asian nations. The Indian exports includes the indigenously built "Pinaka '' multi-barrel rocket launchers, which are already in service with the Indian army. The weapons have been developed by the Development Research and Development Organization of India (DRDO) and manufactured by private vendors of India.

The Armenia-India deal includes a package of weapons and ammunitions indigenously developed in India and builds a relation of trust in defense related matters between both nations. The export of ammunition to Armenia will also support the country in its territorial war with neighbor Azerbaijan, in the south Caucasus region that has escalated into alarming hostilities. Azerbaijan had previously procured weaponry supply from Turkey and Israel, which wreaked havoc in several regions of Armenia that lack the military sophistication that Azerbaijan proclaims. [Azerbaijan State News Agency] [Eurasian Times] [Economic Times]

Ms. Sitha Komatineni contributed research to this entry.

Indian warships anchor in Seychelles, to take part in CMF training exercises

(vv) In what is considered New Delhi's growing interest in the Indian Ocean, the Indian Navy has announced its participation in a two-week exercise conducted by the world's largest multinational naval partnership in Seychelles – Combined Maritime Forces (CMF).

The Indian Naval Ship (INS) Sunayna, was anchored in Port Victoria on October 1 to participate in the planned naval exercises, marking India's maiden participation in a naval exercise and reaffirming India's commitment to maritime security in the Indian Ocean. The CMF is hosting the two-week naval partnership with the Seychelles People's Defense Force, European Union Naval Force, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and INS. Other participating countries include Australia, Canada, France, Italy, New Zealand, Saudi Arabia, the UK, and the US, in a pursuit expanding regional and naval collaborations and preparedness. [Hindu Post]

The Seychelles CMF comprises 34 member nations whose naval forces operate in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Northern Arabian Sea, Gulf of Oman, Arabian

Gulf, and the Indian Ocean. The CMF member nations focus on maritime trade, free flow of commerce and ensure maritime security. Expanding cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region, both India and Seychelles have collaborated on multiple maritime security exercises and extended mutual defense support. [Hindu Post]

Ms. Sitha Komatineni contributed research to this entry.

Pakistan receives humanitarian aid from Indonesia

(os) The Indonesian government sent humanitarian assistance for flood victims to Pakistan. In a short ceremony, a delegation from Indonesia offered their condolences to the victims and handed over the aid package to Pakistani officials.

The delegation also highlighted their sentiment of friendship with Pakistan. Indonesia and Pakistan are the two most populated Muslim countries. They have friendly relations and a long history of helping each other during natural disasters. [Ministry of Foreign Affairs]

Indonesia committed to strengthen relations with Bangladesh

(os) In celebration of its 77th Independence Day, the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Dhaka held a reception to stress the strong partnership between Bangladesh and Indonesia.

Heru Hartanto Subolo, the Indonesian Ambassador to Bangladesh, emphasized that his country aims to strengthen its ties with Bangladesh in a host of areas, including bilateral trade. Bangladesh also lauded the relations between the two countries and expressed hope to deepen them. On the sidelines of the reception, Indonesian export-oriented products were showcased and promoted. [United News of Bangladesh]

Japan issues new sanctions against Russia after high level talks with Zelenskyy

(sm) On September 30, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida promised further sanctions against Russia during a 30 min talk with Ukrainian President

Volodymyr Zelenskyy. The new sanctions on items used to create chemical weapons were approved on the same day by the Japanese Cabinet.

The talks between the Japanese and Ukrainian leaders followed Russian President Vladimir Putin's declaration earlier in the day that Russia will annex four Ukrainian regions. Kishida declared the annexation as a violation of international law, strongly condemned unilateral changes in territorial sovereignty, and assured Zelenskyy of further sanctions against Moscow.

89 new items used to analyze chemicals and bacterial agents will be banned from October 7, adding to high technology equipment, semiconductors and communication gear already banned earlier this year. Japanese Trade Minister Yasutoshi Nishimura commented that Japan stands with the G7 countries and will continue to coordinate new export bans with them in support of Ukraine.

The group including Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, the United States, and the European Union has similarly tightened economic sanctions against Russia and declared it would not recognize the referenda which led to the annexation of the Ukrainian regions by Russia.

Japan's relations with Russia have been incrementally worsening since the beginning of the Russia–Ukraine war. On September 27, a Japanese diplomat was expelled from Russia on allegations of espionage, following a series of similar events since February. Russia has also revoked the right to visa-free visits of Japanese nationals to Tokyo-claimed Russia-administered islands in the north of Japan. The two countries have an ongoing territorial dispute since World War Two. [Kyodo News_1] [Kyodo News_2]

Japanese diplomat expulsed from Russia generates tensions

(sm) Japan protested the detention of a Japanese diplomat by Russian authorities over alleged espionage on September 27. Tokyo denied accusations of spying and criticized Russia for having conducted abusive interrogations, demanding an apology.

The Japanese Consulate official in Vladivostok was caught exchanging information against financial incentives and leaked valuable intelligence on the effect of Western sanctions on the Primoriye region, according to the Russia's Federal Security Service. The Russian Foreign Ministry declared the consulate official

as “persona non grata” with an order to leave the country within 48 hours.

Motoki’s interrogation took place on September 22, with his hands and head immobilized and eyes bound, according to the Japanese Foreign Ministry. Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi found Russia’s intimidating style of interrogation to be in violation of the Vienna Convention and the Japan–Russia treaty over consular affairs.

The official was released on September 28 and has since returned to Japan unharmed.

Japan and Russia’s ties have been worsening since the beginning of the Ukraine-Russia war, as Tokyo has joined Western countries in their sanctions against Moscow. A series of diplomats have been mutually expelled from the two countries and Russia has been calling Japan a hostile country. These tensions add up to the long-standing territorial disputes over islands north of Japan since World War Two. [Nikkei Asia] [The Japan Times]

US Vice President holds talks with Japanese Prime Minister, seeks new investments for semiconductors

(sm) US Vice President Kamala Harris visited Japan for a three-day trip from September 26, attending former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s funeral and holding talks with Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and with major stakeholders of the Japanese semiconductor chip industry.

Harris reaffirmed the US’ commitment to the peace and security of the Indo-Pacific region and criticized China’s recent military actions in the Taiwan Strait and in Japanese territorial waters in a meeting with Kishida ahead of the funeral. She stated that the US would work closely together with Japan, one of its strongest security allies in the region, in the case of threats against joint allies. Harris and Kishida also exchanged their views on the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war and criticized Pyongyang’s launch of ballistic missiles ahead and during Harris’ visit to East Asia.

The talk took place after China held a series of military drills in the East and South China seas as a response to US House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s visit to Taiwan in early August. Several Chinese military vessels were also sighted near the Beijing-claimed Tokyo-administered Senkaku-Diaoyu islands. [The Mainichi_1]

The US vice president then went on to meet with Japanese technology executives of companies such as Tokyo Electron, Nikon, Hitachi, Micron, and Fujitsu, to seek new opportunities for investments and partnerships over computer chips on September 28.

This comes after the US recently signed the CHIPS and Science Act as an attempt to boost semiconductor manufacturing and to secure critical supply chains. The law promises USD 52 million in financial incentives to semiconductor companies and a 25 percent tax credit for investment in US companies. The US is trying to strengthen its relations with major semiconductor producing countries, such as Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, as China is planning to build its own computer chips.

Japan has also planned renewed investments into its computer chip industry, with subsidies reaching USD 4.3 billion. It is currently investing into a new factory in Kumamoto co-built by Denso, the Sony Group, and the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Corporation, set to start operations in late 2024. Japan is increasingly worried about falling behind in the chip manufacturing industry, after its decline over the last twenty years. [The Mainichi_2]

Harris finally visited the US Navy base in Yokosuka, Kanagawa, the largest overseas US naval base in the world and reiterated the US' commitment to support Taiwan's defense in the event of a potential aggression by China. [The Japan Times]

Former Japanese Prime Minister's funeral gives rise to high level talks

(sm) From September 26 to 28, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, met with more than 30 dignitaries, , on the occasion of former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's state funeral. More than 4000 people attended Abe's funeral, including dignitaries from 210 countries and international organizations.

On September 26, Kishida met with US Vice President Kamala Harris to discuss the further strengthening of their security alliance. [The Mainichi_1]

The Japanese Prime Minister then had the opportunity to hold a meeting with Australian and Indian counterparts Anthony Albanese and Narendra Modi on September 27. They agreed to strengthen ties to achieve a free and open Indo-Pacific, a vision that was supported by the late Abe. In a separate meeting, Kishida and Modi discussed the Russia-Ukraine war

and supported peaceful conflict resolution. They also highlighted the need for transparent and fair development aid, in reference to China's alleged use of concessional loans to influence poor countries' policies. Kishida and Albanese agreed to further strengthen their bilateral ties in the defense sector.

On the same day, Kishida also met with European Council President Charles Michel and the leaders of Papua New Guinea, Singapore, and Jordan. [The Mainichi_2]

On September 28, Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen and Kishida agreed to work towards closer relations and to cooperate for the upcoming ASEAN summit in Phnom Penh this November. Meanwhile Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno and the vice chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference Wan Gang met to reaffirm a constructive and stable relationship, amid recent tensions over Taiwan and alleged Chinese incursions into Japanese territorial waters. [The Mainichi_3]

Tokyo has shown subtle signs in favor of Taiwan for the occasion of the state funeral by including Taiwan among the countries cited during the flower offerings, a move that was bound to anger the mainland Chinese delegates. The island was however not referred to by its chosen name of Republic of China, and the delegation was seated between the country delegations and the representatives of international organizations, next to the Palestinian delegation.

Japan's approach to its relationship with Taiwan can be described as "salami slicing", a term also often used to qualify Tokyo's engagement with Beijing over their territorial disputes. Tokyo uses subtle signaling as to not escalate tensions with mainland China, while incrementally strengthening its bilateral ties with Taiwan. [The Japan Times]

Japan, Germany to enhance defense cooperation in their air forces

(sm) On September 29, Japanese air force chief Shunji Izutsu and his German counterpart Ingo Gerhartz agreed on increased defense cooperation between the two countries during a meeting in Tokyo.

The air forces of Japan and Germany organized a joint formation flight for the first time on September 28, including three Eurofighters and F-2s, respectively. As Germany is in the process of buying F-35 advanced stealth fighters, Gerhartz announced the air forces

intention to learn how to operate the aircraft during its cooperation with Japan.

This willingness for increased cooperation comes amid China's growing assertiveness in the Indo Pacific region. The two countries had already worked together during an Australian-led multilateral drill at the beginning of September. [Kyodo News]

Japan condemned for inviting Myanmar ambassador to Abe's funeral

(tp) Myanmar residents in Japan and human rights organizations have blamed the Japanese government after it invited Myanmar's Ambassador to Japan Soe Han to the state funeral of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. The critics accused the administration of Prime Minister Fumio Kishida of approving Myanmar's military government.

The government defended the invitation saying that "the decision was made in light of the nature of the funeral," adding that no country was excluded. Russia was also invited. [The Asahi Shimbun]

Japan, South Korea meet and call for improved relations

(sm) On September 28, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and his South Korean counterpart Han Duck-soo met in Tokyo, the day after former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's state funeral. They called for efforts to improve bilateral relations, concerning wartime issues and supply chain security. They also insisted on the importance of trilateral defense cooperation with the US amid North Korea's recent launch of short-range ballistic missiles into the Sea of Japan.

The meeting took place after Kishida and South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol met on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly last week in a first leader-to-leader meeting since 2019 and vowed to work together to strengthen bilateral relations.

Japan and South Korea have been at odds over a recently issued court order to liquidate South Korea-based assets of two major Japanese companies, who are accused of forced wartime labor during World War Two. After the relationship hit an all time low under the previous South Korean administration led by former President Moon Jae-in, the current Yoon

administration has been trying to reestablish healthy diplomatic ties with Japan. The foreign ministers of the two countries are currently consulting to find a solution to the issue. [Yonhap News Agency]

Laos Prime Minister visits Singapore

(vm) Laos' Prime Minister Phankham Viphavanh visited Singapore from September 27 to 28, in a visit praised by both sides as productive, resulting in multiple agreements.

Prime Minister Phankham met his counterpart Singaporean PM Lee Hsien Loong and the Singaporean President Halimah Yacob. Four memoranda of understanding (MOUs) were signed between the two parties. These four MOUs cover topics on diplomatic missions, technical, energy, and digital cooperation.

In 2021, Laos and Singapore had a bilateral trade value of USD 115.9 million, and the investment of Singaporean companies in Laos is estimated around USD 362 million. [Lao News Agency]

The MOU of energy cooperation follows the start of the Lao PDR-Thailand-Malaysia-Singapore Power Integration Project in June. It is the first time for Singapore to import renewable energy. Both parties are expecting strengthened cooperation in the future; and PM Lee suggested: "As fellow small states, we share an interest in maintaining regional peace and stability, and upholding an open and inclusive, rules-based multilateral system". [The Laotian Times]

Mongolia, Japan to deepen economic cooperation

(dql) During a meeting between Mongolian Prime Minister L. Oyun-Erdene and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida on September 30, both leaders discussed the current state of bilateral relations between Mongolia and Japan and future prospects, as well as international and regional issues.

They highlighted the importance of building strong political relations between Mongolia and Japan, while deepening cooperation in trade, investment and in the economic field and intensifying public-private partnership.

The meeting comes as this year marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic

relations between the two countries. [Montsame]

EU sanctions against Myanmar's arms suppliers have failed, according to reports

(tp) There has been public criticism of the European Union's (EU) sanctions against Myanmar, caused by a recent report into the matter.

Seven months ago, the European Union imposed its most recent round of sanctions on Myanmar due to an increase in indiscriminate airstrikes, the shelling of civilian sites, the execution of political detainees, and the killing of civilians, including air and ground attacks at local schools.

However, numerous businesses of the junta in Myanmar have been identified by the Justice For Myanmar (JFM) as not being subject to sanctions by the European Union. This included companies with connections to Europe.

A JFM spokeswoman remarked that the junta will be able to continue action against the people of Myanmar if it has access to weapons and resources. Therefore, JFM is calling on the EU to take a serious action on this matter. The EU member nations have already voted in the UN General Assembly last year to halt the transfer of weapons to Myanmar's military, and groups such as JFM seek to put pressure on those nations to ensure that tangible action is taken to assure this. [Irrawaddy]

North Korea consecutively launches ballistic missiles

(my) North Korea has consecutively fired short-range ballistic missiles (SRBM) and an intermediate-range ballistic missile (IRBM) into the sea. Following the first launch in 40 days on September 25 [see also AiR No. 39, September/2022, 4], it fired SRBM into the East Sea on September 28, 29 and October 1. The North fired one IRBM on October 4 and it flew over Northern Japan. It reportedly landed in the sea outside Japanese waters.

The North's launch took place during joint naval exercises between South Korea and the US that started on September 26, and during US Vice President Kamala Harris' visit to Seoul.

The US State Department criticized North Korea's ballistic missile launch, saying it posed a major threat

to neighboring countries, but added that there is still the possibility of a diplomatic approach. The Japanese government swiftly condemned the launch of IRBM as a "threat to regional security." [Yonhap News Agency 1] [Yonhap News Agency 2] [The Guardian]

North Korea's delegation to UN condemns South Korea-US joint military exercises

(my) Kim Song, the North's permanent representative to the UN, condemned the joint maritime exercise between South Korea and the US at the general debate of the UN General Assembly session. Kim noted that maritime drills were driving the situation on the Korean Peninsula to "the brink of war." South Korea and the United States conducted joint naval exercises in the East Sea from September 24 to 30.

In response to US President Joe Biden's speech at the UN General Assembly in which he said that North Korea is blatantly violating UN sanctions, Kim added "[w]e have never recognized such 'resolutions'," continuing, "[w]e do not abide by its 'rules' made by the US unilaterally." He also described the UN Security Council sanctions as "the most brigandish and brutal" and that no other nuclear power had been treated as such. [Hankyoreh]

Islamabad, New Delhi should work together on climate change, Pakistan foreign minister says

(vv) Given the recent devastating floods in the country, Pakistan Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has urged active cooperation between India and Pakistan to address climate change and support each other.

Addressing Pakistani media, Zardari stated that one third of Pakistan is under water and one in seven people are impacted by the devastating floods resulting from the severity of climate. He added that if the world expects rivals US and China to work together on climate change, India and Pakistan must work on their hostilities and jointly address climate security so as to achieve mutually beneficial results. Responding to another question, Zardari endorsed Pakistan's stand on opposing India's permanent membership in the UNSC, stating that there exists no reciprocal partnership and his country can't support India in the matter until healthy diplomatic relations are built between the two countries. [The Hindu]

Ms. Sitha Komatineni contributed research to this entry.

Filipino Senator announces disputed Sabah region is owned by Philippines, not Malaysia

(gl) There has been backlash after a Filipino Senator announced that the disputed area of Sabah is owned by the Philippines, as opposed to Malaysia. Sabah is an area located in the northern portion of Borneo, recognized under international law as Malaysian.

Following an arbitration judgment awarded to the heirs of the Sulu Sultanate against the Malaysian government, Senator Francis Tolentino said that the Philippines owns Sabah. Tolentino added that 750,000 Filipinos are indeed stateless and lacked access to healthcare and social security in Sabah. This has led to politicians in Malaysia to condemn the statement, with Filipino politicians and observers urging the government to stake their claim to Sabah. [Daily Express] [Free Malaysia Today]

Philippines establishes diplomatic ties with Niue

(jd) President Marcos Jr. and Niue Prime Minister Dalton Emani Makamau Tagelagi have signed a joint communiqué which formally establishes the diplomatic relations between the Philippines and the South Pacific Island country.

Niue is one of the three states in the Realm of New Zealand and it's a self-governing nation since 1974.

The two leaders expressed their will to develop friendly relations and cooperation based on the principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, nonaggression, noninterference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence. They have also confirmed their intention to exchange representatives as soon as possible and to provide them with the help they need in order to perform their functions. [Inquirer] [PNA]

Philippines and Australia to consider stronger anti-terrorism ties

(jd) The Philippines and Australia are considering the possibility to further strengthening their partnership against terrorism.

Armed Force of the Philippines (AFP) public affairs office chief said that Australia Ambassador for Counter Terrorism, Noble, met with AFP acting vice chief-of-staff, Reyes, and that the two leaders talked about cooperation in terms of best practice sharing, intelligence exchange, and counter-terrorism training in order to prepare for future challenges.

Noble stated the Philippines has some of the best practices in countering local terrorism and that his government can learn from that, while Reyes emphasized the importance of identifying groups that fund terrorists, highlighting the importance that the international community plays in this regard.

Both Noble and Reyes affirmed their countries' commitment to mutually beneficial engagements in counterterrorism and disaster response. [PNA]

Singapore re-elected to ICAO council in commitment to sustainable aviation

(pe) The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) council has re-elected Singapore to join the council, in a meeting in Canada. The council is the governing body of the ICAO, a United Nations sustainable aviation body.

Singapore was first elected to the council in 2003. The council works together in areas such as aviation safety and security, air traffic management, and environmental protection. In related news, Singapore has announced a newly revised open skies agreement with Britain that now includes environment protection. [The Straits Times]

South Korea’s spy agency raises possibility of North Korea’s nuclear test in October

(my) South Korea’s National Intelligence Service (NIS) has raised the possibility of the North’s nuclear test, after it reported that North Korea has completed an underground nuclear test tunnel in Punggye-ri. The Punggye-ri site, located in the northeastern area of North Korea, is where North Korea has conducted the previous six nuclear tests so far. The NIS said the test could take place between October 16 and November 7, after the Chinese Communist Party’s 20th congress

opening but before the US midterm elections, if North Korea goes ahead with its nuclear test. [Yonhap News Agency]

Meanwhile, South Korea at the International Atomic Energy Agency General Assembly urged the international community to continue to support its efforts to achieve denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. The delegation said North Korea's nuclear development is a challenge to the global non-proliferation system and violates UN Security Council resolutions. [KBS World]

South Korean President and US Vice President discuss Inflation Rate Act and North Korea

(sm) On September 29, South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol and US Vice President Kamala Harris discussed South Korea's concerns over the US Inflation Rate Act (IRA) and their joint deterrence position against North Korea.

The IRA passed in August gives tax credits only to electric vehicle makers who assemble their cars in the US. South Korean carmakers are concerned the IRA will create a trade barrier as some consider the law to be discriminatory and in violation of the WTO's Most Favored Nation principle.

Cooperation on the issue is underway as a high-level consultation mechanism has been established earlier in September, following several visits of South Korean government officials to the US and a meeting between Yoon and US President Joe Biden, among others [see AiR No. 38, September/2022, 3].

Harris reiterated the US' commitment to resolve the issue through close consultation and the country's willingness to create liquidity facilities if there were a need for financial market stabilization. The Bank of Korea and the US Federal Reserve are currently discussing this topic. In an earlier meeting on September 28 with South Korean Prime Minister Han Duk-Soo in Tokyo, Harris also hinted at a potential grace period until South Korean carmakers are ready to assemble their electric vehicles (EV) in the US. Hyundai Motors is set to begin the operations of its EV plant in Georgia in 2025. [The Chosun Ilbo]

Beyond the IRA concerns, Yoon and Harris talked about the strengthening of the US-South Korea defense relationship amid recent concerns over a seventh North Korean nuclear test. Just ahead of

Harris' visit, Pyongyang launched ballistic missiles on September 28 in protest over joint US-South Korea military drills. They agreed on a strong immediate and joint response in case of renewed North Korean nuclear provocations and discussed a prospective visit of the South Korean President to the US.

Yoon and Harris furthermore talked about a potential cooperation in space, as the US Vice President is also chair of the US National Space Council. [Yonhap News Agency]

Meanwhile, on September 28, the South Korean industry ministry announced its willingness to coordinate joint responses with EU countries over the recently passed US Inflation Rate Act, which gives tax advantages to carmakers who assemble their electric vehicles in the US.

Deputy Trade Minister Jeong Dae-jin stated his concerns about the IRA's discriminatory nature with ambassadors from 18 EU countries, such as France, Italy, Austria, Denmark, and Ireland, seeking to cooperate on the issue. South Korea is worried the IRA could constitute a trade barrier for its carmakers in the future and give American carmakers an unfair advantage. European electric carmakers are not unconcerned by the IRA measures. Talks between Seoul and Washington are underway to resolve the issue.

Jeong and the ambassadors furthermore addressed supply chain security and energy cooperation, especially in the nuclear sector, as South Korea is eyeing two projects to build additional nuclear power plants in Poland and the Czech Republic. [Yonhap News Agency_1]

Jeong's actions come as the EU Chamber of Commerce in Korea (ECCK) issued recommendations in its latest annual white paper on the same day, calling for revised regulations on electric vehicles, energy, environment, chemicals, food, and other key South Korean industries. The ECCK called for South Korea to step up and take leadership in the implementation of increased procedural transparency and adaptability to international standards. [Yonhap News Agency_2]

South Korea's mission to NATO accepted

(sm) On September 28, the North Atlantic Council (NAC), NATO's decision-making body announced its approval of South Korea's mission to NATO, creating

opportunities for further strengthen security cooperation.

South Korea has designated its embassy to Belgium, headed by Ambassador Yoon Soon-gu, as its mission to NATO. NATO and South Korea will see increased defense cooperation in areas such as cybersecurity, counterterrorism, chemical, biological, and nuclear defense, nuclear non-proliferation, interoperability, and joint disaster management. The mission represents an additional diplomatic platform for South Korea in Europe to tackle global challenges.

While not a partner nation, South Korea has had ties with NATO since 2005. NATO has allowed non-member countries to establish missions since 2011 and Japan, Australia, and New Zealand had already established their own diplomatic missions to NATO. The establishment of the South Korean mission came after NATO invited the four countries to a summit this June, a first for South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol.

The four countries held their own meeting on the sidelines of the NATO summit and Seoul's special representative for the Korean Peninsula peace and security affairs Kim Gunn joined a NAC+4 (Australia, New Zealand, Japan, South Korea, Finland, Sweden) meeting on September 27 in Brussel. Kim raised South Korea's concerns about North Korea's increasing nuclear and ballistic activity and introduced Seoul's audacious initiative plan, which consists in giving Pyongyang economic aid in exchange for its denuclearization. [Korea Herald] [The Korea Times]

South Korea ratifies free trade agreements with Israel, Cambodia

(sm) On September 27, the South Korean National Assembly ratified two free trade agreements (FTA) with Israel and Cambodia. The signature of the FTA with Israel was in May 2021 and with Cambodia in October 2021, respectively.

After three years of negations, this is the first FTA agreed upon between an East Asian country and Israel, expected to lower prices for the Korean car, food, and video game industry in Israel. It is estimated to bring the Middle Eastern country about USD 140 million in benefits a year, to improve its competitivity with South Korea's other 18 FTA partners, and to diversify exports to the East Asian country. The FTA includes tariff reductions on investments, imports, and exports and tariff exemptions on the majority of Israelian exports.

Israel also concluded an FTA with the United Arab Emirates and is negotiating with China, the UK, Vietnam, and Bahrain over similar deals. The South Korea-Israel FTA will be implemented on December 1.

Similarly, under the FTA between South Korea and Cambodia, the Southeast Asian country is expected to receive over 95 percent of the total tariff lines from the East Asian country to export 92 percent of all of its goods to the latter at zero percent of customs duty. [Reuters] [Yonhap News Agency] [Khmer Times]

South Korea, UK summit in Seoul to increase strategic cooperation

(sm) On September 28, South Korean and British Foreign Ministers Park Jin and James Cleverly met in Seoul and discussed increased cooperation on issues such as economic security and climate change, marking their seventh foreign ministerial strategic dialogue meeting.

Cleverly also met with South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol on the same day and assured Britain's support, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, to ensure a strong response in case of a seventh North Korean nuclear test. Yoon asked for the UK's support in its project to host the 2030 World Expo in Busan. The British Foreign Minister then visited the demilitarized zone on the North–South Korean border. [Yonhap News Agency_1] [Yonhap News Agency_2]

South Korea, Romania meet in Tokyo over energy cooperation

(sm) South Korean Prime Minister Han Duk-soo met with his Romanian counterpart Nicolae Ciuca on September 28 over cooperation on supply chains and energy.

Han and Ciuca were in Tokyo to attend former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's state funeral. They mentioned their effective cooperation in the medical sector during the COVID-19 pandemic. Romania provided vaccines to South Korea in exchange of medical equipment.

The Prime Ministers agreed to increase cooperation in nuclear power generation projects and the supply of raw materials. South Korea is currently eyeing two projects to build new nuclear power plants in Poland and Czech Republic, as the country wants to work

closely with countries looking to increase nuclear energy generation in the future. Han furthermore asked for Romania's support concerning South Korea's ambition to host the 2030 World Expo in Busan. [Yonhap News Agency]

Sri Lankan and Philippine presidents meet to strengthen relations

(kh) Sri Lankan and Philippines prime ministers held a meeting on September 30 in the Philippines. During the meeting, both discussed bilateral relations and planned to promote their friendly relations by developing Asian regional cooperation and by adopting new approaches. Other senior advisors such as the secretary to the ministry of finance and the chief of presidential staff were also present at the meeting. [ColomboPage]

Indian ruling party's member meets Sri Lankan ex-President Rajapaksa

(kh) Indian ruling party member Subramanian Swamy met with Sri Lankan ex-President Gotabaya Rajapaksa along with a group of Indian lawyers and businessmen, which makes him the first foreign politician and visitor to meet Rajapaksa after his return to Sri Lanka. The BJP member was in Sri Lanka to attend the 15th International Research Conference that is organized by General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University (KDU).

Subramanian is well-known for his alliance with Rajapaksa's family due to which he faced backlash on social media during the Sri Lankan protests of March-June 2022. It was due to his tweet in which he stated that India should send its military to restore the constitution as India's national security can be negatively affected. Although he did not explicitly mention Sri Lanka in his tweet, however, due to his firm support for Rajapaksa's family, social media users claimed that his statement is directed toward sending troops to Sri Lanka to disperse the protestors. [NewsWire]

German parliamentary delegation reaffirms support for Taiwan

(gö) German lawmakers have expressed their support for Taiwan as China is increasing its military activities

around the island, with Klaus-Peter Willsch, chairman of the German-Taiwan Parliamentary Friendship Group reassuring that Germany "will bravely stand up to assist and support Taiwan if it faces such military threats" during a meeting with Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen on October 3, the German Unity Day.

Willsch heads a parliamentary delegation from Germany which is currently visiting Taiwan, the first visit in three years aimed to improve bilateral cooperation and exchanges.

The group is scheduled to also meet Vice-President William Lai, Foreign Minister Joseph Wu, President of the Legislature You Si-kun as well as senior officials and leaders from the business sector in the course of the five-day stay on the island. [South China Morning Post]

Taiwan, Poland form working group for cooperation on semiconductors

(gö) Taiwan and Poland signed a memorandum of understanding to establish a working group to further strengthen bilateral cooperation on cutting-edge technologies in the semiconductor industry, including investment, business, and R&D cooperation.

The establishment of a Taiwanese-Polish working group was agreed upon back in May during the 10th Polish-Taiwanese economic consultations in Taipei to boost the cooperation on semiconductors to share experience and build cooperation in the area. [Focus Taiwan]

EU Investment Forum to be held in Taipei late October

(gö) The third European Investment Forum will be held on October 25 in Taipei. The Forum will focus on opportunities in sustainable industries in der European Union (EU) and will cover discussions on possible Taiwan-EU collaborations to build a sustainable future.

President Tsai Ing-wen as well as Economics Minister Wang Mei-hua and other top Taiwan government officials will be attending the Forum. The Head of European Economic and Trade Office in Taiwan (EETO) Filip Grzegorzewski said it would benefit Taiwanese companies to invest in the EU member nations.

According to Grzegorzewski the EU has “a commitment to Taiwan” as the biggest investor of the Island. He also stressed the importance of shared values as democracies.

In 2020, a total of USD 48.8 billion from the EU was invested in Taiwan, which made up for 25.7 percent of the total foreign direct investment in Taiwan. In comparison Taiwanese foreign direct investment in the EU was about USD 7.3 billion, according to EETO data. [Focus Taiwan]

Former U.S. Secretary of State calls Pelosi’s visit “not provocative”

(gö) Former U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo called China the "only threat to the region" and denounced the description of U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan.

While Pompeo delivered the opening speech at the World Taiwanese Chambers of Commerce in Kaohsiung, he spoke out against news media reports who Pelosi’s visit to Taiwan “provocative and threatening “. Pelosi visited Taiwan at the beginning of August which invoked a series of on-going Chinese military drills around the Island. Her visit marked the first visit by a sitting U.S. House Speaker to Taiwan in 25 years.

President Tsai Ing-wen also attended the event and thanked Pompeo for his support of Taiwan. It was Pompeo’s second visit to the Island since March. [Focus Taiwan]

Chinese military aircraft and warships spotted around Taiwan

(dql) 14 Chinese military aircraft and four naval ships were spotted around Tawain on October 3, with no aircraft crossing the Taiwan Strait median line.

So far in October, 44 Chinese military aircraft and 12 naval ships have been spotted around Taiwan. [Taiwan News]

Myanmar supermodel granted asylum in Canada after entry to Thailand denied

(td) A Myanmar beauty queen and dissident of the military-led government at home has made her way to Canada as a political asylum-seeker shortly after she was barred from entering Thailand and, thus, left stranded.

Without the support of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Canadian Embassy in Thailand, the model, Thaw Nandar Aung – also known as Han Lay, could have been subjected to repatriation to her country. Her supporters claim that she would be vulnerable to torture and abuse should this occur.

Han Lay rose to fame and made headlines when she called on the public to pay heed to atrocities committed by the Myanmar military, which had ousted the civilian-led government of Aung San Suu Kyi in early 2021, with an expectation of more assistance during her competition in the Miss Grand International contest in Thailand. As a result, she was reported to have been charged in absentia with sedition for speaking out in a way which excites disaffection towards the Establishment, carrying a maximum penalty of 20-year imprisonment, pursuant to the Statue. Therefore, she remained in Thailand while the UNHCR was processing her application for asylum status.

Making use of her tourist visa, however, she had to leave and enter the country at intervals to extend a limited period of stay granted. In light of this constraint, she left Thailand for Vietnam. Thai immigration authorities denied entry upon her arrival from a short trip on September 21 due to unexpected issues with her travel documents. According to the Human Rights Watch (HRW), the Myanmar authorities may have made a pre-emptive move by revoking her passport – thereby making her stateless, and ineligible to enter any countries. Had she been sent back to Vietnam, she would have then been extradited to Myanmar instantly.

Han Lay claims to have acted on the advice from certain agencies responsible for refugee rights and protection. Thus, she had been staying put at the airport – rather than leaving – until she was granted political asylum in Canada. Despite the resettlement, she vows to continue standing up to the junta in solidarity with her Myanmar compatriots. [The Diplomat] [The Guardian]

Thailand hopes APEC meeting to help bridging divides amongst major powers

(td) According to reports, as Thailand is assuming chairmanship of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) in 2022, the country has pinned its hope on such a multilateral framework to provide a dialogue forum for a handful of global major powers: namely China, Russia, and the United States, to iron out and resolve their differences peacefully.

Observers state that given Thailand's long-standing and amicable relations with the three economies – through a neutral, balanced, and pragmatic foreign policy orientation – it could play a mediator role and help bridge their divides. However, the domination of great power politics, coupled with domestic instability, poses key challenges to the Thai host.[The Diplomat] [Thai Enquirer] [see Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand]

With the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting scheduled on November 18-19 it remains uncertain whether Chinese, Russian, and U.S. Presidents will attend the meeting in Thailand in unison. For now, regardless of official confirmation, Xi Jinping of the People's Republic of China verbally confirmed his participation, whereas his U.S. counterpart, Joe Biden, would delegate his Vice President Kamala Harris. As for Russia, reportedly, Vladimir Putin is likely to join. [Bangkok Post]

Some state that this is different from the G20 summit which the conflicting parties have pledged clearly to engage in the meeting, where certain pressing issues such as the war in Ukraine and tension in the Taiwan strait will be brought up for discussion. Nevertheless, in addition to the APEC members made up of 21 economies, several non-APEC members Thailand regards as key strategic partners like India, France, Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom, and the European Union, are to be invited to the high-level meeting later this year.[Thai PBS World 1]

The participation of Biden is now debatable among the public and opposition politicians. According to analysts, the Thai Prime Minister could exploit APEC for political gains. However, Biden's likely absence is an indication of the faltering democracy, which has weakened the international image of the country. They believe the U.S. may not find Thailand a credible mediator as it has maintained friendly ties with China, Myanmar, and Russia – all of whom are the U.S. opponents. After all, the Thai Foreign Ministry has remained in coordination with the U.S. to arrange a possible visit of Biden; thus, it expects more focus on talking points to advance the regional economy. [Thai Enquirer] [Thai PBS World 2]

On China's National Day, Vietnamese officials congratulate their Chinese colleagues

(fe) On the 73rd National Day of China, representatives of the Vietnamese Party, State, Government, and National Assembly have sent greetings to the President of China, General Secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, Premier, and Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress.

The Vietnamese leaders praised the socioeconomic successes that the Chinese Party, State, and people have achieved over the past 73 years and reaffirmed that the Chinese people will continue to be unified and complete the CPC's objectives to transform China into a modern socialist nation with prosperity, democracy, civilization, harmonization, and beauty.

They stated that the Party, State, and People of Vietnam attach importance to strengthening and developing friendly neighborliness and comprehensive cooperation with the Party, State, and People of China; stand ready to work with China to deepen cooperation in various areas and strengthen political trust to develop the Vietnam-China comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership steadily and healthily to bring about tangible benefits for the two peoples, contributing to global peace and prosperity. [Vietnamnews.vn]

Cuban Prime Minister meets with Vietnamese association for friendship

(fe) On September 30, the Vietnam-Cuba Friendship Association leaders and members met with Cuban Prime Minister Manuel Marrero Cruz in Hanoi. He noted that the leaders of Cuba and Vietnam had shown their shared trust, dedication to strengthening bilateral cooperation, and duty to the unity of their two countries.

He emphasized that Vietnam constantly respects and never forgets Cuba's real assistance, both materially and spiritually, for its six-decade battle for national freedom, building, and growth and expressed that future generations of Vietnamese and Cuban people will continue to preserve and add to the history of their countries' growing solidarity, friendship, and fraternal cooperation in support of national building and defense efforts to promote peace, stability, and

development on a regional and international scale. [Vietnamplus.vn]

Vietnam seeks greater confidence in reducing nuclear hazards for global security

(fe) To accomplish the aim of nuclear disarmament, a favorable international climate is necessary to develop goodwill and trust among states, according to Ambassador Dang Hoang Giang of Vietnam, who serves as the country's permanent representative to the United Nations (UN).

The ambassador emphasized the observance of international law, nations' adherence to their commitments, and the implementation of the Treaties on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), noting that this is the long-term goal of the UN but will face difficulties.

To reduce nuclear weapons and fissile materials, Vietnam urged stepping up discussions and negotiations with other countries. Remembering the lessons of tragedies like the Cold War bombings of Japan's Nagasaki and Hiroshima, the UN Secretary-General urged all states to use all available channels of communication, diplomacy, and negotiation to reduce tensions, reduce risk, and end the nuclear threat. He pledged to work closely with all member countries to create a new understanding regarding how to cooperate to neutralize threats and realize the common goal of peace. [Vietnamnews.vn] [Vietnamplus.vn]

Vietnam Deputy Prime Minister receives the Indian Minister of State for External Affairs

(fe) Rajkumar Ranjan Singh, a diplomatic guest from India, has been welcomed by the Vietnamese deputy prime minister Vu Duc Dam.

The deputy prime minister reaffirmed that Vietnam valued its comprehensive strategic partnership with India and urged the two countries to work together to advance the key areas of their relationship, including trade, investment, science and technology, culture, and people-to-people contacts and called on India to

improve the market conditions for Vietnamese goods to enter.

Vu Duc Dam also referred to the occasion as a significant chance for the two countries to assess the economic development trends in Asia, India, and Vietnam as well as Vietnam's role in connecting India with Southeast Asian nations to look for opportunities to strengthen trade and investment ties. He urged Indian companies to increase investment in Vietnam in sectors like processing, manufacturing, the support industry for the auto sector, and information and telecommunications technology.

The two sides maintain close communication and support for one another at international and regional fora, particularly the United Nations and the ASEAN-India cooperation framework. The authorities agreed on the significance of preserving freedom of navigation and overflight and amicably resolving relevant conflicts by international law, including the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). [Vietnamnews.vn] [Vietnamplus.vn]

Announcements

Upcoming Online Events

5 October 2022 @ 6:00-7:00 a.m. (GMT-5), RAND Corporation, USA

South Korea's Policy Options in Asia

This webinar will examine South Korea's role in South and Southeast Asia's economic and social interactions, especially with South Korea's new president, that could influence the nation's conditions in the global context.

Go to [RAND] for more information.

5 October 2022 @ 1:00-2:00 p.m. (GMT+8), Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore

The UK's Indo-Pacific 'Tilt': Progress, Challenges and Prospects

In this hybrid seminar, Lord Mark Sedwill analyzes the strategic rationales and prospects of the United Kingdom's Indo-Pacific 'tilt', the country's progress since 2021, the importance of Southeast Asia and ASEAN to the UK's agenda with regards to the Indo-Pacific, among other foreign affairs topics.

More details available at [ISEAS].

6 October 2022 @ 8:00–9:00 p.m. (GMT-5), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, USA

Localization and Tech Success on Two Continents

Many in the West argue that China holds strong global influence through exporting and imposing its developmental model on other countries. However, those in the Global South have successfully pushed Chinese firms to provide technological goods and services to use for their own development. These Chinese localization strategies have resulted in mixed returns to local economies that have not seen meaningful capacity or technological improvements.

For more information, visit [Carnegie Endowment].

6 October 2022 @ 8:30–9:15 p.m. (GMT-5), Center for Strategic & International Studies, USA

The Capital Cable #56: North Korean Human Rights

Listen to CSIS Korean Chair along with Ambassador for International Cooperation on North Korean Human Rights for the Republic of Korea, Amb. Lee Shin-wha, and other panelists as they discuss the important issue of North Korean Human rights.

Visit [CSIS] for further details.

7 October 2022 @ 12:30–3:30 a.m. (GMT-5), Center for Strategic & International Studies, USA

North Korean Human Rights at a New Juncture: COVID, Regional Players, and South Korea-U.S. Cooperation

In this webinar, academia and policy experts embark on a discussion of the ongoing human rights crisis in North Korea, focusing on the roles of the South Korean and United States governments of addressing this issue. Topics of North Korea's response to the coronavirus outbreak in the country and China's complicity in North Korea's human rights abuses along with other issues will be raised.

Go to [CSIS] for more details.

7 October 2022 @ 9:00-10:15 a.m. (GMT+8), Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore

The International Community's Response to the Myanmar Crisis: What Comes Next?

This webinar explores the factors impacting the effectiveness of the international community's response to the 2021 Myanmar coup as well as the implications of this stalemate. Ambassador Mitchell will talk about the current state of international initiatives to address the Myanmar crisis along with the China's, Russia's, and India's attitudes and responses to the issue in contrast to Western democracies' responses

For more information, go to [ISEAS].

7 October 2022 @ 1:30-2:30 p.m. (GMT-8), Asia Society, USA

Strategic Competitors: The Future of the U.S. and China Relationship

At this hybrid event, former Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd will discuss the U.S. strategic competition with China and the question how to manage it.

For more information, visit [Asia Society]

8 October 2022 @ 1:00-2:00 a.m. (GMT-5), Center for Strategic & International Studies, USA

An Armchair Discussion with Fawzia Koofi: Reflections on the Current State of Affairs in Afghanistan

The CSIS Project on Prosperity and Development and Fawzia Koofi, an Afghan parliamentary lawmaker, accomplished author, and internationally known advocate for women's and children's rights, democracy, and moderate Islam discuss the current state of affairs in Afghanistan. Koofi is the first female in the Afghan parliament to be elected as second deputy speaker and is the head of the parliament's Women Affairs Commission.

Go to [CSIS] for more details.

10 October 2022 @ 2:00-3:30 p.m. (GMT+8), Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore

Malaysia's Opposition Ahead of GE-15: Strategies, Tactics, and Challenges

The upcoming 15th General Election will be different from previous polls because structural changes have altered the elections in terms of how parties organize, campaign, and form alliances. In addition, the recently passed anti-party-hopping bill has strengthened the role of parties, however it does not strengthen coalitions since parties can leave one coalition for another. This webinar gathers leaders from three opposition parties to learn about their strategies, tactics, and plans for campaigning.

Go to [ISEAS] for more information.

10 October 2022 @ 8:30–11:00 p.m. (GMT-5), RAND Corporation, USA

The View of the Taiwan Strait from the U.S.-Japan Alliance

This webinar will delve into the view of the Taiwan strait from the U.S.-Japan alliance, examining the issue from American and Japanese perspectives.

For more information, go to [RAND].

10 October 2022 @ 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. (GMT-5), Asia Society, USA

Gandhi's India: Change Begins With the Last

This hybrid event will explore global efforts of grassroots organization to combat and eradicate child sex trafficking,

More information is available at [Asia Society].

Recent book releases

Jayita Sarkar, ***Ploughshares and Swords: India's Nuclear Program in the Global Cold War***, Cornell University Press, 300 pages, published on July 15, 2022, reviewed in [Asian Review of Books].

Richard Kerbaj, ***The Secret History of the Five Eyes: The Untold Story of the Shadowy International Spy Network, Through Its Targets, Traitors and Spies***, Blink Publishing, 416 pages, published on September 1, 2022, with a review in [The Guardian].

Jacob Soll, ***Free Market: The History of an Idea***, Basic Books, 336 pages, published on September 6, 2022. A review is available at [The Guardian].

Calls for Papers

The **6th International Academic Conference on Research in Social Sciences** to be held on March 24-26, 2023, in Oxford invites paper proposals. The deadline for submission of proposals is March 1, 2023. For more information, see [IACRSS].

The **European Union in International Affairs (EUIA) Conference** scheduled for May 3-5, 2023, invites paper proposals. The conference theme is "Europe's Pathways to (Dis)Engagement with the World". The closing date for proposal submission is October 15, 2022. For further details, visit [EUIA].

Jobs and positions

The **Asian Development Bank** is seeking a ***Climate Change Specialist*** to be based in Manila. Core responsibility is to support integration of climate change in ADB's operations. Applications are accepted

until 17 October 2022. More information about the position is provided at [ADB].

The United Nations Department of Safety and Security is seeking a ***Field Security Associate*** to be based in the Dominican Republic. Core responsibilities include Assisting the Security Adviser in collecting, updating and communicating information regarding the security situation in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. Applications are accepted until 31 October 2022. More information about the position is provided at [UNDSS].

The World Health Organization is seeking a ***Data Management Officer*** to be based in New Delhi. Core responsibilities include providing technical support to the IVD unit on initiating VPD surveillance information systems in terms of database management. Applications are accepted until 24 October 2022. More information about the position is provided at [WHO].

The **Food and Agriculture Organization** is seeking an ***Emergency Coordinator*** to be based in Philippines. Core responsibilities include providing oversight support in the implementation and supervision of emergency and response preparedness initiatives. Applications are accepted until 24 October 2022. More information about the position is provided at [FAO].

The **United Nations Development Programme** is seeking ***Gender Empowerment Associate*** to be based in Bangladesh. Core responsibilities include supporting the project team in implementing strategies to address gender transformation. Applications are accepted until 15 October 2022. More information about the position is provided at [UNDP]

The **United Nations Development Programme** is seeking a ***Policy Specialist, Inclusive Growth*** to be based in Jordan. Core responsibilities include the process of analyzing, improving and adapting policies for different contexts on key emerging policy agendas. Applications are accepted until 14 October 2022. More information about the position is provided at [UNDP]

The **United Nations Development Programme** is seeking an ***Assistant Administrator & Director, Regional Bureau for Arab States (RBAS).*** Core responsibilities include participation in UNDP's highest level corporate decision-making body, the Executive Group (EG). Applications are accepted until 4 November 2022. More information about the position is provided at [UNDP].

The **United Nations Development Programme** is seeking a ***Research Analyst*** to be based in Laos. Core

responsibilities include identifying, visualizing and communicating emerging development trends, data, technologies and issues. Applications are accepted until 14 October 2022. More information about the position is provided at [UNDP]

The **World Food Programme is** seeking a ***Philanthropy Content Development Specialist*** to be based in Italy. Core responsibilities include development of high impact value propositions for the engagement of a UHNW philanthropic audience. Applications are accepted until 17 October 2022. More information about the position is provided at [WFP]

The **World Food Programmme** is seeking a ***Communications Officer*** to be based in Italy. Core responsibilities include defining and implementing the division's communications framework, in order to maintain and enhance visibility for WFP innovation. Applications are accepted until 16 October 2022. More information about the position is provided at [WFP].

The **World Food Programmme** is seeking an ***Innovative Financing Consultant*** to be based in Germany. Core responsibility is to foster the development and implementation of the Accelerator's innovative financing models. Applications are accepted until 15 October 2022. More information about the position is provided at [WFP].

The **International Rescue Committee** is seeking an ***Employment Specialist*** to be based in the United States. Core responsibility is to conduct intake, assessment and provide program orientation to clients eligible for employment services. Applications are accepted until 30 November 2022. More information about the position is provided at [IRC].

The **International Rescue Committee** is seeking a ***Climate Resilience Designer*** to be based in Nigeria. Core responsibility is to ensure UCD tools and solutions are fit-for-purpose. Applications are accepted until 2 January 2023. More information about the position is provided at [IRC].

The **International Rescue Committee** is seeking an ***Anti-Trafficking Caseworker*** to be based in the United States. Core responsibility is to maintain up to date knowledge and understanding of human trafficking laws, regulations, and local issues relating to human trafficking. Applications are accepted until 30 November 2022. More information about the position is provided at [IRC].

The **International Rescue Committee** is seeking a ***Virtual Events Manager*** to be based in United States.

Core responsibility is to manage and implement virtual Cultural Orientation learning series about Cultural Orientation topics for the national audience. Applications are accepted until 29 November 2022. More information about the position is provided at [IRC].

The **World Bank** is seeking a ***Procurement Analyst*** to be based in Chennai. Core responsibility is to conduct procurement, sourcing, and category management activities required by the World Bank Group globally. Applications are accepted until 20 October 2022. More information about the position is provided at [WB].

The **World Bank** is seeking a ***Senior Agriculture Economist*** to be based in Liberia. Core responsibility is to lead the preparation and supervision of operations as Task Team Leader of projects led by SAWA4 in Liberia. Applications are accepted until 14 October 2022. More information about the position is provided at [WB].

The **World Health Organization** is seeking a ***National Professional Officer*** (Cardio Vascular Disease) to be based in New Delhi. Core responsibility is to provide technical support to Cardiovascular Health Officers (CVHOs) at state level for planning, training, surveillance, monitoring and evaluation of hypertension and diabetes treatment and control activities. Applications are accepted until 17 October 2022. More information about the position is provided at [WHO].

The **World Health Organization** is seeking a ***Data Management Officer*** to be based in New Delhi. Core responsibility is to provide technical support to the IVD unit on initiating VPD surveillance information systems in terms of database management. Applications are accepted until 24 October 2022. More information about the position is provided at [WHO].

The **World Health Organization** is seeking an ***Administrative Assistant*** to be based in the Philippines. Core responsibility is to ensure the daily coordination of appointments for the Regional Director. Applications are accepted until 17 October 2022. More information about the position is provided at [WHO].

The **World Health Organization** is seeking a ***Logistics Assistant*** to be based in Libya. Core responsibility is to monitor on-going shipments, pipeline information, insurance claims and other data. Applications are accepted until 16 October 2022. More information about the position is provided at [WHO].

The **World Health Organization** is seeking a ***National Consultant*** to be based in Bangladesh. Core responsibility is to provide technical assistance to the Government counterpart and other relevant stakeholders. Applications are accepted until 21 October 2022. More information about the position is provided at [WHO].

The **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization** is seeking a ***Programme Assistant*** to be based in France. Core responsibility is to provide general office assistance to the section and secretarial functions to the Chief of Section. Applications are accepted until 31 October 2022. More information about the position is provided at [UNESCO].

The **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization** is seeking an ***Assistant Accountant*** to be based in France. Core responsibility is to prepare financial statements relating to UNESCO funds and Accounts as assigned. Applications are accepted until 29 October 2022. More information about the position is provided at [UNESCO].

The **United Nations Environment Programme** is seeking a ***Finance and Budget Assistant*** to be based in Panama. Core responsibility is to provide support in the preparation of supporting documents (narrative and supporting tables) with respect to finalization of cost estimates and budget proposals. Applications are accepted until 29 October 2022. More information about the position is provided at [UNEP].

Team:

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