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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 with the latest events, developments and trends in domestic politics, international relations and geopolitics in East Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia.

Wishing you an informative read, I extend special greetings to everyone celebrating Antigua and Barbuda's, Dominica's and Micronesia's Independence Day as well as Panama's Separation Day.

With best regards,

Henning Glaser

Editor in Chief

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

China: New appointments at top security agencies

(ms) China has appointed new leaders for its he security agencies, with Chen Yixin, a long-time confidant of Chinese President Xi Jinping, now heading state security ministry. In 2020, he was member of a team that was sent to contain the Covid-19 outbreak in the central city of Wuhan. Later he led a two-year anti-corruption campaign against the country's law enforcement and security apparatus. He also served under Xi when Xi was party secretary of Zhejiang Province from 2002 to 2007.

He replaces Chen Wenqing, who takes over the Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission, the country's top security body which oversees the law enforcement agencies, including the police, courts, prosecutor's

office, prisons and national security apparatus. Chen Wenqing was also appointed to the Politburo of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), marking the first time a spy chief has been promoted to the 24-member top decision-making body of the party. [Reuters] [

The appointments are part of a major leadership reshuffle since the recent National Congress of the CCP that saw Xi securing an unprecedented third term as party leader and the Standing Committee of the Politburo, the seven-member group representing the apex of power in the country, entirely staffed with Xi-loyalists [see AiR No. 43, October/2022, 4]. They are seen among observers as indicative of Xi's focus on the security and intelligence agencies in the next five years. [Axios] South China Morning Post] [Brookings]

China: Xi protege becomes new propaganda chief in personnel reshuffle

(ms) Li Shulei is the new head of the Publicity Department of the Chinese Communist (CCP) often referred to as the Propaganda Ministry. The 58-year-old, who first rose to the ranks of the Politburo in the wake of the 20th National Congress and is considered a protege of Xi Jinping, will be responsible for spreading Xi's ideology. Li was vice president of the Central Party School in 2007 under Xi, who headed the school at the time. [Caixin Global] [South China Morning Post 1]

With his promotion, Li succeeds Huang Kunming, who had held the post since 2017. Huang has been a member of the Politburo since 2017 and succeeds Li Xi as secretary of the southern province of Guangdong, the powerhouse of China's economy. Like Shulei, Huang has close ties to Xi, as he had worked in both Fujian and Zhejiang under Xi.

Li Xi, for his part, was appointed member of the Politburo Standing Committee at National Party Congress and has taken over the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI), the party's the anti-corruption body. [South China Morning Post 2]

In addition to Guangdong, Shanghai also gets a new party chief, namely Beijing Mayor Chen Jining, who has also been appointed a member of the Politburo. An environmental scientist who graduated from Tsinghua University – Xi's alma mater – and Imperial College London, his appointment to the top job in one of the country's economic powerhouses is reflective of Xi's strategy to put people with strong scientific

backgrounds in key positions. [South China Morning Post 3]

China: GDP grows by almost 4 percent, economy continues to be a concern

(ms) The economic data for the third quarter have been released after a delay probably due to the 20th National Congress [see AiR No. 43, October/2022, 4]. The GDP grew in the third quarter by 3.9 percent, compared to the previous year a clear increase to the second quarter, in which the Chinese economy stagnated with a growth of only 0.4 percent. However, the economic development will not be sufficient to reach the original growth target of 5.5 percent, which had to be abandoned at the beginning of August [see AiR No. 31, August/2022, 1]. According to current forecasts, annual growth of about 3.3 percent is expected for 2022. [Bloomberg]

The heavily indebted real estate sector persists as problem of the Chinese economy. Although the People's Bank of China (PBC) announced on October 28 that it will provide an additional USD 27.6 billion in special loans for the completion of housing projects, and the China Securities Regulatory Commission (CSRC) plans to allow certain companies with small real estate holdings to raise money through the sale of A-shares, the proceeds are not allowed to be invested in the real estate business, which aims to restore confidence in the sector. However, in the wake of the 20th National Party Congress, this faith in the real estate sector has declined, especially among large investors, as can be seen in the real estate prices in Shanghai. Under Xi's announced goal of "common prosperity" which, according to Xi, is to distribute wealth "more fairly" within society, investors fear that the crackdown on the tech sector, even if it has loosened somewhat since the end of 2021, will spread to other companies with high capital. As a result, wealthy Chinese and Taiwanese have begun trying to sell off their shares and stakes in real estate, causing prices of luxury properties in Shanghai to plummet by up to 40 percent compared to the pre-congress period. [Radio Free Asia] [Reuters 1] [Reuters 2]

In addition to economic support for the real estate sector, the State Council of China and the National Development and Reform Commission announced policies to promote China's tech industry, which has been heavily sanctioned by the Biden administration. The digital infrastructures are to be expanded, resources are to be better bundled into the tech industry to achieve breakthroughs in core

technologies, and the promotion of digital innovation is to be increased. The specific measures to be used to achieve these goals have yet to be announced. [South China Morning Post]

China: Renminbi fifth most traded currency

(ms) According to the report [BIS] released on October 28 by the Bank for International Settlements (BIS), the Chinese yuan (CHY) or renminbi (RMB) is the fifth most traded currency in terms of global foreign exchange turnover.

The report, published every three years, showed trading in over the counter (OTC) foreign exchange markets reached USD 7.5 trillion per day in April 2022, up 14 percent from USD 6.6 trillion three years earlier, marking a new high.

The US dollar is the constant leader with a participation of 88 percent, followed by the Euro in second place with a slight decrease by about two percentage points compared to 2019 with now 30.5 percent. In third place is the Japanese yen (JPY) and the British pound (GBP) in fourth.

With the largest growth of almost 3 percentage points from 4 percent to 7 percent, the CHY overtook, the Australian dollar (AUD), Canadian dollar (CAD) and the Swiss franc (CHF). [Global Times] [Reuters]

China: Protests in Tibet's Capital against COVID-19 Lockdown

(ms) On October 26, protests have reportedly erupted in Tibet, particularly in the capital Lhasa, the first since the 2008 unrests, a series of protests and demonstrations over the Chinese government's treatment of Tibetans. The reason for the protests is said to be the strict COVID-19 measures and the lockdown imposed in the province since the end of August.

According to videos, which were first distributed via Chinese social media and – after its removal by the Chinese government – increasingly uploaded on Twitter, the protesters are primarily Han Chinese, which reinforces the assumption that these are mainly migrant workers who have traveled from other parts of China to Tibet for work. Due to the lockdown, they are unable to work, but also cannot return home.

The protesters are said to have threatened to “set off a fire” if the government does not ease the restrictions, though they did not define exactly what they meant, according to local experts it could be a reference to self-immolation, of which there have been more than 150 reported cases since 2009. [BBC] [Radio Free Asia]

China: Crackdown on Uyghurs ahead of 20th National Party Congress

(ms) According to local authorities and a Uyghur source, the Chinese government had stepped up its crackdown on the Muslim minority Uyghurs living in the Xinjiang region ahead the 20th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, which was held from 16 to 22 October [see AiR No. 43, October/2022, 4], resulting in hundreds of arrests of Uyghur supporters.

The arrests are said to have begun in June of this year, followed by a COVID-19 lockdown beginning in August, during which more than ten people are said to have died due to a lack of medical and food supplies [see AiR No. 37, September/2022, 2], and then a travel restriction in early October that almost completely barred the residents from leaving the province.

Those detained, are mainly people born after 2000, who according to a local Chinese government official, are “easily influenced by harmful influence and are easily misled,” so “that they need 'education' for a while.” [Radio Free Asia]

Also, in the context of Xinjiang, it has now been disclosed that two reporters and a senior editor have left the Hong Kong-based newspaper South China Morning Post after the newspaper refused to publish a three-part series on possible human rights crimes in the Xinjiang province. According to the unpublished series, after the repeal of the one-child policy, the use of contraceptives and cases of sterilization decreased throughout China, with the exception of the Xinjiang region, and based on this, the series discussed whether this could be evidence of a genocide against the Muslim minority.

While the reporters and editor responsible for the series believe that the series was not published because it directly criticized and made serious allegations against the Chinese Communist Party, the South China Morning Post reports that the series did not meet the newspaper's standards. [Hong Kong Free Press]

China: Foxconn to allow migrant workers safe journey home following local COVID-19 outbreak

(ms) After several videos surfaced online which showed how several alleged employees of the technology manufacturer Foxconn fled the company premises, Foxconn announced to allow the employees a safe journey home.

The scene of the said videos was the Zhengzhou complex of the world's largest electronics contractor Foxconn in which more than 200,000 people work. The reason for the escape action was a COVID-19 outbreak in the surrounding city, which also spread to the company premises. According to employees working there, the area was put under a lockdown, which did not allow employees to leave the compound. The conditions inside the premises are said to have been grave, and as COVID-19 spread, more and more employees were quarantined in the local dorms, and food and medical supplies were said to have reached their limits. Due to the circumstances, as seen in the videos, employees were forced to climb over fences to escape the company premises and many employees began the often-long journey home on foot out of fear of being recognized and caught on public transport.

Foxconn, which was a particularly attractive employer for young guest workers from the surrounding regions and provinces, announced in several statements on October 30 that it would provide local employees with a safe journey home. The surrounding cities, on the other hand, are preparing for the arriving migrant workers and their quarantine. [BBC] [Financial Times] [Global Times]

China: Apple Daily Founder Lai found guilty

(ms) Jimmy Lai, a Hong Kong entrepreneur and founder of the government-critical Hong Kong newspaper Apple Daily, which was shut down after several raids by Hong Kongs police in 2021, was found guilty on October 25 of fraud. The court argued that Lai violated Apple Daily's lease agreement by failing to disclose that another company was located in the newspaper's office space.

Lai was accused of leasing parts of the Apple Daily office space to Dico Consulatants Limited without informing Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation (HKSTP), which was in charge of leasing

the property. Lai pleaded not guilty last in late August, and his lawyer stressed that even with a breach of contract present, it is a civil matter and not a criminal matter [see AiR No. 35, August/2022, 5].

The sentencing will be heard on November 24, until then Lai will remain in custody. [Hong Kong Free Press 1]

In addition to the fraud conviction, Lai faces another trial based on the British colonial-era Sedition law, under which Lai and some of his former employees are accused of conspiring to print, publish, sell, offer for sale, distribute, display or reproduce seditious publications [see AiR No. 34, August/2022, 4].

In another high-profile case against Cardinal Joseph Zen, the hearing of closing arguments by Zen and his five co-defendants, who are accused of failing to register the 612 Humanitarian Relief Fund as a corporation, began on October 26. The fund provided financial and medical assistance to protesters during the 2019 anti-government protests and its aftermath. The trial is scheduled to continue on November 1 with the questioning of witnesses. [Hong Kong Free Press 2]

Also, the trial of Chow Hang-Tung, an activist who was vice chairwoman of the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China, a group known for organizing Fourth of July vigils, has resumed. At the beginning of the retrial, one of the judges in charge forbade Chow from using certain terminology regarding the Tiananmen incident, saying that she should not refer to it as the “Tiananmen Massacre”, nor should she refer to “the killings” in connection with July 4, 1989. [Hong Kong Free Press 3]

China: Hong Kong students to be forced to register before reading books critical of China

(ms) The Hong Kong University (HKU) is establishing a new system that forces students to register before reading politically sensitive books critical of China.

The books in question are said to be about the Tiananmen Incident in 1989 and the actions of the People's Liberation Army, but also about the mood in Hong Kong at the time, which was strongly supportive of the protesters, as well as about Hong Kong's British colonial period.

The move is a continuation of the pro-Chinese measures, which bring Hong Kong's control apparatus in the field of education more and more in line with the standard of the mainland. Although access to books about Tiananmen Square protests is still possible, in China a large part of the books and publications on the subject is censored or completely banned.

Just late last year, 29 titles about the 1989 protests had already been removed from public libraries. [Hong Kong Free Press]

China: Z-20 helicopter superior to Black Hawk?

(ms) The chief designer of the Chinese Z-20 combat helicopter sees the Chinese model as superior to its American counterpart, the Sikorsky UH-60 Black Hawk.

He cited for his claim features such as active control systems of noise and vibration, a powerful engine, which allows the Z-20 to operate even at high altitudes, which is particularly relevant for possible operations in the Chinese Indian border. The designer, however, particularly pointed out the fly-by-wire flight control system, in which, unlike the usual manual systems, the pilot does not directly control the aircraft mechanically, but the inputs are made to a computer, which then transmits them in the form of electronic signals. Fly-by-wire systems are used primarily in fixed-wing aircraft, while they are rare in rotary-wing aircraft. The advantages of the system are said to be a reduction in weight, improved reliability, and greater damage tolerance. [Global Times]

Japan: Kishida announces economic package to counter impact of inflation

(sra) Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida announced on October 28 the scale of the supplementary budget for this fiscal year. The implementation of the economic stimulus package will include USD 199 billion in government spending in an attempt to counter the decline in public support of the Kishida administration, which along with its citizens, has suffered amid the depreciation of the yen under the Bank of Japan’s (BOJ) maintained low-rate policy and the increasing cost of household products.

The devaluation of the yen is a result of the already-struggling Japanese economy that suffered from a

blow to the tourism industry during the coronavirus pandemic which is only now accepting international visitors. The economy has been further impacted by the rising cost of imports due to the Russian war on Ukraine, causing economic tensions on the current burden of national debt [see AiR No. 42, October/2022, 3].

Kishida is set to reduce domestic electricity bills by 20 percent in 2023, as part of the plan to mitigate the impact of rising energy bills. [The Japan Times] The package will minimize energy and fuel costs for Japanese households by approximately USD 35 per month, as electricity and oil refiner subsidies are put in place. This will see the government spend around USD 6.8 billion in the next three months on subsidies, with tariffs on renewable energy to promote businesses to use alternative energy sources. The overall cost of the budget will come to a total of USD 490 billion when other funds are included such as the private investment sector. [Nikkei Asia]

The government will spend at least USD 83 billion to incentivize wage growth for domestic companies, and USD 72.2 billion towards disaster relief and "changes in the national security environment." However, the BOJ continues to maintain its low-interest rates, causing concern over the Japanese monetary policy and growing national debt to impact the economy over the long term. [Bloomberg]

Kishida also announced the current subsidies in place for oil providers will continue past their expected date in December to keep the costs of fuel from hiking up. Pregnant women will also be extended USD 680 in financial support and the domestic agriculture industry will also receive government funds to promote the export of grain, fertilizers and livestock feed. [Kyodo News]

Japan: Justice Ministry draft proposals, revision of Penal Code for sexual crimes causes outrage

(sra) The Japanese Justice Ministry has proposed a draft of new criteria when addressing sexual crimes under the Penal Code. The draft, received by the Legislative Council on October 24, has been a cause for controversy as sexual assault victims feel the draft of legal revisions seems to exclude their support as it fails to stipulate that sexual intercourse without consent is a crime.

The draft of proposals brings into account eight new ways of recognizing sexual intercourse crimes. This draft is set to also increase the legal age of consent from 13 years old as it currently stands, making it illegal for those outside the five-year age group to take part in sexual intercourse with minors under the age of 16. [NHK World-Japan]

The backlash from sexual assault victims was supported in a Tokyo news conference by a group of lawyers and 12 other groups of citizens that provide support for sex crime victims, pleading with the ministry to include the act of sexual violence as recognized by "conducting a nonconsensual sexual act," although members have stated that this could allow the heightened "risk of false accusation.s" The eight cases drafted to the Penal Code were predominantly looking to define forced sexual intercourse and other crimes. The cases include a crime being committed if the victim struggles to yell no if the victim is under the influence of drugs, alcohol or any other substance that impacts their ability to stop an attack. The cases also include instances where coercion, terror or abuse of power dynamics are used and the act of secretely photographing genitalia or underwear. The law is still to consider criminal rape cases where a victim is in shock and is therefore unable to fight back. [The Asahi Shimbun]

Japan: Unification Church ties lead to replacement of economy chief, probe guidelines cause division

(sra) Prime Minister Fumio Kishida named the previous health minister, Shigeyuki Goto as the new economic revitalization minister on October 25, as the Unification Church scandal continues to unfold. Goto was sworn in to replace Daishiro Yamagiwa after he stepped down for his part in the ruling Liberal Democratic Party's (LDP) controversial ties to the church group.

The shift in ministers came as a result of the criticism of Yamigawa's affiliation with the religious organization that is to undergo investigation for its role in the manipulation of its members and causing financial distress. Cases of financial ruin caused by donations have previously been criticized, yet it was only after the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe that the allegations of his close support of the Unification Church sparked outrage, reducing civil support of the LDP and Kishida himself [see AiR No. 42, October/2022, 3]. Opposition lawmakers submitted a bill to the Diet earlier to request permission for the government to introduce penalties in the instance when groups

exploit their members, this is further explained in the Japan Times. [The Japan Times 1]

It is expected that the next meeting of experts from the Cultural Affairs Agency will decide on the regulations for the government to acquire the church report on the religious group to go ahead with the probe. The task is to avoid any infringement on religious freedom throughout the investigation, under the law which allows government oversight of religious corporations if it is suspected of violating any law. If the investigation can confirm any violations, a court order for the group's dissolution will be requested. [Kyodo News 1]

Kishida's attempt to counter public and opposition party criticism toward his administration due to the LDP's connection to the church that saw Yamigawa as the first minister to officially resign under the prime minister for his failure to openly discuss his affiliation with the church. Goto's appointment to the role in the Diet will see him take on the finalization of the economic stimulus package due by the end of November. His position was asserted by Kishida, claiming that Goto has no previous ties to the religious group now known as the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification. [Kyodo News 2]

The children of former church members have also called to action, requesting the government to implement legislation to address the economic and educative neglect of children. With their parents' affiliation with the organization, the pressure was placed on families to provide large donations and prioritized the teachings of the church, which not only caused financial ruin but also restricted the right to a normal education. The government is yet to respond although the Unification Church has stated it will consider the needs of the children in its reforms. [NHK World-Japan]

Issues within the LDP are tense, as the links to the Unification Church have undermined the credibility of lawmakers. This was further enhanced by opposition parties that have also targeted claims against LDP internal affairs minister Minoru Terada and reconstruction minister Kenya Akiba for allegations of tax evasion and using political funds for personal gain, respectively. The ministers have been called out, with requests for Kishida to hold them accountable for their actions. [The Japan Times 2]

Japan: Vote-value disparity in July Upper House election ruled as being in a "state

of unconstitutionality"

(sra/dql) The Hiroshima court has ruled the "state of unconstitutionality" of the vote disparity of up to 3.03 times in the July 10 upper house elections. The disparity was deemed an issue of significant inequality on October 28, however, the court did reject the plaintiff's request to nullify the results of the election. The ruling is now number six of the court series to be finalized by the Supreme Court by the middle of November after the last ruling.

The court ruling was held after the bill revision of the Public Offices Election Act of 2019 was approved by the Cabinet on October 21, after the Supreme Court addressed the large vote-value disparity in previous national elections. The revision will address the unequal distribution of access that hinders rural district populations from participating in national elections, unlike the higher representation of urban areas [see AiR No. 43, October/2022, 4].

The ruling is backed by the high courts of Osaka, Tokyo and Sapporo which have all claimed the state of unconstitutionality of the disparity of the July elections, countering the courts of Nagoya and the Matsue Branch of Hiroshima High Court. Although a House of Councillors election result has yet to be judged unconstitutional by the Supreme Court, there is a chance the 3.03-fold vote disparity between Kanagawa and Fukui Prefectures of the July elections may be the first if the level of inequality is decided to violate the regulations of fairness in elections under the Constitution. [The Mainichi]

In a latest development, the Sendai High Court went further to issue on November 1 a ruling that the vote disparity in July's election was unconstitutional. But is also refrained from nullifying the poll results in five northeastern Japan constituencies as demanded by the plaintiffs.

The ruling marks the first time that a court declared the vote disparity in an Upper House election unconstitutional since the government 2015 decision to merge two pairs of prefectures with low population into two constituencies in an attempt to reduce the gap in the value of votes. [Kyodo News]

Japan: Okinawa relocation of Futenma base finally sees agreement made

(sra) The Okinawa prefectural government, the Japanese government and the governments of Naha

and Urasoe cities finally came to an agreement over the relocation of the Futenma US military base on October 25. The site currently in Okinawa prefecture is to be relocated to a 49-hectare coastal site in Urasoe's west.

After almost 50 years of back and forth between the prefecture and the central government, the contentious US Marine Corps Air Station Futenma will be moved from its port in an unexpected agreement following the division between the defense minister Yasukazu Hamada and the re-elected Okinawa governor, Denny Tamaki after their failure to see eye-to-eye during discussions on September 28 [see AiR No. 40, October/2022, 1].

The agreement between the Japan-US Joint Committee states the key reason for the relocation to the Naha military port is to facilitate access to the harbor and oil storage units. There are still concerns as locals opposing the relocation state there is no need for the US military port. Tamaki has claimed the move will enhance Okinawa prefecture's economy with plans for a port to be constructed for the private sector. The construction of the new base is to commence soon, as the entire facility is estimated to take about 17 years to be completed. [The Asahi Shimbun]

South Korea: Main opposition to table bill to revise the Board of Audit and Inspection

(sm) On October 27, South Korea's main opposition Democratic Party (DP) announced it would table a bill to revise the Board of Audit and Inspection (BAI) Act, after a series of allegedly abusive inspections of members of the opposition.

The BAI is the primary authority conducting legal investigations into government and administration bodies, as an important check on South Korean political actors. The DP bill is a call for more transparency in the decision-making processes of the BAI, as it requests the Council of Commissioners to report internal inspection results to the incumbent administration and parliament. It also forbids auditors from making public announcements before the end of an investigation and from making a probe before getting an appropriate warrant from the council.

The DP has recently been accusing the BAI of being manipulated by the ruling People Power Party, making politically motivated decisions and thus being unconstitutional. Recent cases, such as the handling of

the killing of a South Korean fishery official by North Korea and the nuclear phase out policy, had allegedly not been handled impartially. The ruling party has been initiating a series of inspection into cases linked to the previous Moon Jae-in administration.

The DP will also press for the investigating of the BAI and the prosecution for having abused their power. [Yonhap News Agency]

South Korea: Legoland debt controversy causes uproar

(sm) On October 26, opposition leader Lee Jae-myung heavily criticized the Legoland theme park project in Gangwon Province as an economic disaster and demanded that Kim Jin-tae, the governor of the province steps down. A government-linked company participating in the construction of the theme park had filed for bankruptcy in early October, missing a debt payment of KRW 205 billion (USD 143 million) and rocking the local corporate debt market. Following the main opposition Democratic Party's (DP) criticism, the provincial government vowed to repay the debt by whatever means by December 15, one month earlier than initially planned, to limit its impact on the local financial market.

While the province had pledged the repay the debt by January, the market has stayed uneasy in worries over a potential credit crunch which would make it harder for businesses to borrow money. Financial authorities and the government have been taking measures to stabilize the market by purchasing corporate bonds and commercial papers, among others.

Lee raised concerns that the Legoland crisis could lead to a similar situation to the 1997 Asian financial crisis and lambasted the government for failing to prevent the default, calling it incompetent. DP floor leader Park Hong-keun and Lee also accused the government of having double standards and suspected the default decision to be politically motivated. While DP members have been heavily investigated by the prosecution over alleged corruption scandals, the debt default linked to Legoland has not been legally investigated as the current head of Gangwon province, Governor Kim Jin-tae, is a member of the ruling People Power Party.

On his side, Kim Jin-tae commented on October 27 by apologizing for the unfortunate circumstances and vowing to prepare the funds to start debt repayment by whatever means. Kim denied that the bankruptcy of the special purpose company Iwon Jeil Cha, partially

owned by the Gangwon Jungdo Development Corporation, was politically motivated in any way.

The Legoland Korea Resort, which opened in May this year, is set to close for three months over the winter allegedly due to maintenance work. The theme park was expected to welcome about 2 million visitors per year and generate profits of KRW 590 billion (USD 414, 8 million) but has fallen short of those expectations with 700,000 visitors so far. [Yonhap News Agency_1] [Yonhap News Agency_2]

South Korea: First time government compensation for Jeju massacre

(sm) On October 27, the government announced that victims of the Jeju massacre, a violent suppression of a civilian uprising on Jeju Island, in the South of the Korean peninsula, would be compensated for the first time by the state.

After the enactment of a special law on the Jeju April 3 incident last December, a first group of 300 people, related to the deceased or missing victims will receive up to KRW 90 million (USD 63,300) and a formal apology. About 2100 people are expected to be compensated this year and a total of 10,100 victims until 2026, with an estimated packet of KRW 960 billion (USD 675 million).

On April 3, 1948, residents of Jeju Island protested the US's strong military influence on the Korean peninsula after its liberation from the Japanese colonial rule. The former government of the time mislabeled the protests as a communist uprising and killed about 30,000 protesters over the next ten years, representing approximatively 10 percent of the islands' population. [Yonhap News Agency]

South Korea: Yoon to invest into twelve national strategic skills

(sm) On October 28 South Korea President Yoon Suk-yeol during a meeting of the Presidential Advisory Council on Science and Technology announced he would invest KRW 25 trillion (USD 17,6 billion) to develop twelve national strategic skills over the next five years.

These skills include science and technology advances concerning semiconductors, displays, rechargeable batteries, advanced mobility, nuclear power, and

biology, among others. Qualifying science and technology as the source of industrial and economic growth, Yoon aims to secure cutting-edge knowhow to put the country ahead of the rest of the world. The Yoon administration expects this plan to make South Korea one of the world's top five economic powerhouses. [Yonhap News Agency]

Taiwan: Fertility rated expected to become the world's lowest in 2035

(dql) According to a report of Taiwan's National Development Council (NDC), Taiwan will become the country with the world's lowest fertility rate by 2025.

The NDC predicts that births per woman of a childbearing age will average 1.12 by the middle of the next decade. That would put Taiwan below the 1.18 rate predicted for South Korea which currently has world's lowest at around 0.8.

Last year, Taiwan's total fertility rate stood at just below one birth per woman at 0.98 in 2021 following a slight recovery from the start of the coronavirus pandemic, but is predicted to a record low of 0.89 this year. [South China Morning Post]

Taiwan: Constitutional Court declares legislation on indigenous tribes unconstitutional

(dql) Taiwan's Constitutional Court has declared Article 2 of the Status Act for Indigenous Peoples and its subsequent bylaws unconstitutional. The laws had been invoked for the dismissal of applications by members of Indigenous Pingpu tribe for formal Indigenous status.

In its ruling of October 28, the Court argued that Austronesian peoples, of which the Pingpu are a branch, are to be granted Indigenous status and ordered the Council of Indigenous Peoples (CIP), the central interface for the indigenous community with the government, to draft new rules to address the issue.

The case goes back to a lawsuit filed by activists with the Siraya tribe, the largest group of Pingpu tribes, against the CIP that had repeated rejected the tribe's applications tribal recognition, citing existing laws under which official registration by the tribe's

members in the 1950s and 1960s is required. [Focus Taiwan]

Taiwan: Development of military vehicles in schedule, Defense Ministry says

(dql) Taiwan Ministry of National Defense (MND) has reassured that the development of two home-grown military vehicles was on schedule, in response to questions raised by opposition lawmakers.

It added that the required initial weapon testing on a prototype of a Clouded Leopard armored vehicle was completed in June, while a reconnaissance vehicle prototype completed initial system integration last week. The initial weapon testing phase is expected to be concluded before the end of March in 2023. [Focus Taiwan]

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

Bangladesh: Cyclone leaves 24 dead, millions without electricity

(az) At least 24 people have died and millions were without electricity after Cyclone Sitrang struck Bangladesh on October 24, forcing the evacuation of about a million people to safety. Thousands of homes were destroyed, areas flooded, and the storm washed away 1000 shrimp farms. [Al Jazeera] [The Guardian]

Bangladesh: Authorities crackdown in Rohingya camps after murders

(az) Bangladesh police have launched a crackdown against suspected criminals and insurgents in the Rohingya refugee camps in the country's Cox's Bazar district, arresting at least 56 people since October 28. [The Strait Times]

Authorities say that the security in the overcrowded camps had deteriorated in recent months, with at least 15 15 Rohingyas – more than half of them camp leaders – hacked to death or shot by rivals. The power-hungry Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), a Rohingya insurgent group active in Myanmar's northern Rakhine State, is believed to be behind most of the killings.

In September of last year, suspected ARSA men killed top Rohingya rights group leader Mohib Ullah in front of his office [see AiR No. 40, October/2021, 1]. The ARSA was also blamed for murder of seven teachers and students at an Islamic seminary last October [see AiR No. 43, October/2021, 4].

Bangladesh: Children suffer from the double burden of poverty and climate risks

(az) According to a recent *Save the Children* report, around ten million children in Bangladesh face the double burden of poverty and climate risk. Bangladesh has a child population of 11.1 million, which is 21 percent of the total population. A new global report says one in every five children in Bangladesh lives with poverty and high climate risk. Besides, the World Bank estimates that 20 million people will be internal climate migrants in Bangladesh by 2050, and around 40 percent are children. [Asia News Network]

Bangladesh: Tribal ethnic groups rally in capital to demand end to land grabbing

(az/lm) Ethnic minority students and youth organizations of tribal ethnic groups on 31 October rallied in Bangladesh's capital, Dhaka, to demand an end to the rubber industry's land-grabbing efforts in the country's Bandarban district. [NewAge]

The protesters claimed that Lama Rubber Industries Limited had burnt 400 acres of cropland that belonged to local tribal owners, and later also poured poison into the only water source for villagers. They also alleged that more than two-hundred people are being plotted to evict. [Prothom Alo]

Bangladesh: Court issues arrest warrant against opposition BNP chairman and his wife

(az) A court in Bangladesh's capital Dhaka has accepted charges against the acting chairman of the country's main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and his wife in a graft case filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC). The couple has been living in the United Kingdom since 2008. [The Daily Star]

The charges against Tarique Rahman, son of former Prime Ministers Khaleda Zia and Ziaur Rahman, were first filed in September 2007, but the caretaker government later the same year filed a stay order on the case. A high court withdrew the stay order and rejected writ petitions challenging the filing this June.

The Cantonment police station is responsible for submitting the progress report by January 5 on executing the arrest warrants.

India: Dislodging ruling BJP without help of opposition Congress party not possible, senior leader says

(vv) A senior leader of India's main opposition Congress party (INC), Jairam Ramesh, has claimed that without the party, defeating the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party of Prime Minister Narendra Modi is a far-fetched dream. He claimed that while many political parties are entitled to their claims, the national view remains to favor the INC in being the true challenge to Prime Minister Modi's party. [Hindustan Times] [The Hindu]

Ramesh, a former minister under the central government of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, made these remarks while addressing the media in India's southern Telangana state. An event was held to mark the 50th day of the Bharat Jodo Yatra [Unite India March], the INC's cross-country march that was launched in September and is being spearheaded by former party president Rahul Gandhi.

The event also marked the third day of the five-months-long protest march in the southern state, and Telangana politics featured prominently in the press conference, with Ramesh calling for a stronger alternative political alliance to emerge in the state. [India Today] [Outlook]

India: Uttar Pradesh opposition lawmaker convicted in hate speech case, sentenced to three years in jail

(vv/lm) The leader of the main opposition party in India's northern state of Uttar Pradesh was on October 27 convicted in a 2019 hate speech case for making provocative remarks against the state's Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and sentenced to three years in jail. However, the court granted bail to the lawmaker, allowing him to appeal the sentence in a higher court.

The case was first registered against Azam Khan, senior leader of the opposition Samajwadi Party, in April 2019 and alleged hate speeches against Prime Minister Modi, Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath, opposition Congress party leader Sanjay Kapoor and others during a regional campaign in the lead-up to the state elections. [Mint] [Economic Times]

Khan was released from prison this May after being held for 27 months. He had 87 cases registered against him for alleged cheating, land grabbing and a host of other alleged offenses. It is worth noting that the vast majority of these criminal cases pending against Khan were registered in a short period before and after the 2019 state elections. [The Wire]

Against the backdrop of his most recent conviction, Khan was on October 28 disqualified as a member of Uttar Pradesh's parliament. The decision was criticized by opposition lawmakers who called it a "vendetta" and alleged that several leaders of Prime Minister Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party delivered hate speeches during the campaigns but were overlooked. [Hindustan Times] [Telegraph] [The Hindu]

India: Delhi chief minister tells Prime Minister Modi to print images of Hindu deities on currency notes

(vv/lm) The chief minister of the National Capital Territory of Delhi, Arvind Kejriwal, has raked up a nation-wide controversy after he appealed to Indian

Prime Minister Modi to print images of Hindu deities on new currency notes to bring "economic prosperity" to the country. Presently, all Indian currency notes are printed with India's father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi. [BBC]

Kejriwal, who is also the president of Delhi's ruling Aam Aadmi party (AAP), made these comments while addressing a press conference on October 26. Coming as they did in the lead-up to elections in the states of Gujarat - a stronghold of the governing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) - and Himachal Pradesh, the remarks drew sharp criticism from political parties across the board. [Telegraph]

The AAP has been campaigning extensively in Gujarat, the home state of Prime Minister Modi whose BJP has been enjoying political dominance for 27 years in the state. Fresh off a sweeping win in Punjab state earlier this year, the AAP is now eyeing wins in Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh, as well as in municipal elections in Delhi, where it hopes to defeat the BJP and emerge as an alternative to the Congress, India's main opposition party. [Business Today]

India: Prime Minister Modi to address rallies in Himachal state ahead of elections

(vv) Ahead of the crucial state elections in India's northern state of Himachal Pradesh, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will travel to the region from November 5-9 to address ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) rallies. Other prominent BJP ministers to address rallies across Himachal include the chief ministers of Uttar Pradesh and Haryana, and BJP union ministers Anurag Thakur and Smriti Irani. [Outlook India] [Times of India] [Tribune India]

Crucially, Prime Minister Modi's visit comes at a time when the Himachal BJP faces an internal rebellion of at least 12 local party lawmakers after their tickets were given to newer lawmakers. After the intervention of the BJP's top brass, some of the rebel lawmakers who had announced that they would be contesting the election as independent candidates, withdrew their nomination. At least five, however, were suspended from the party. [The Hindu]

The voting for the 68-seat state assembly is scheduled to take place on November 12. The counting will take place on December 8.

India: Every state to have National Investigation Agency office by 2024 to counter terrorism, minister says

(vv) All states in India will have National Investigation Agency (NIA) offices by 2024 to strengthen the central government's efforts to counter terrorism, Home Minister Amit Shah said during a speech at the two-day "Chintan Shivir" [Brainstorming Session] on October 27. [The Indian Express] [News 18] [Telegraph]

The chief ministers of eight states and home ministers and deputy chief ministers of 16 states had gathered in the city of Faridabad for the event, which was chaired by Shah. Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the session on October 28 through video-conferencing.

In his speech, Shah stated that important changes were made to hand more power to the NIA to develop better anti-terror networks and control trans-border crimes. The changes and provisions given to the NIA and the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, India's contentious anti-terrorism law, will provide more extra-territorial jurisdiction to monitor suspicious terror activities across many states. Furthermore, a new draft is expected to amend the Indian Penal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure.

The home minister, however, emphasized that the changes and provisions can only prove effective if states and central governments work together in using the amendments appropriately and work collectively to prioritize national security. Shah also added that the NIA is working on building ties with its foreign counterparts for better coordination in terror investigations.

India: Investigators in Tamil Nadu discover possible terror plot with ties to Islamic State

(wr/lm) At least one person was killed in a car explosion in front of a Hindu temple in Coimbatore, one of the major metropolitan cities in India's southern Tamil Nadu state, on October 22. A search at the residence of the deceased led to the detection of a huge amount of explosive materials, and police later said the man had been on its watchlist over possible connections to Islamic terrorist networks.

In the following days, at least six suspects were arrested by the investigating agency over a possible terror plot to target five places in Tamil Nadu. All men

were booked under India's anti-terrorism law, the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act) (UAPA). [HindustanTimes]

The development comes after the Indian government banned the Popular Front of India (PFI), a Muslim political association, and eight of its affiliates for five years and arrested 200 members in two rounds of coordinated raids. The ban was carried out under the UAPA, which grants the government extraordinary powers to pursue organisations considered as a threat to the "integrity and sovereignty" of India. [AiR No. 40, October/2022, 1]

Thus, it is worth noting that India's home affairs ministry recently issued a specific alert on possible attacks on prominent leaders of Hindu organisations by activists of PFI in the states of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka. [The Hindu]

India: Army deploys drone jammers, triple gun controlling machine on disputed border with Pakistan

(wr) Recent incidents of drone surveillance from Pakistan have prompted the Indian Army to install drone-killing devices to swat unmanned aerial vehicles out of the sky along the disputed Line of Control (LoC). The new counter-drone systems include quadcopter jammers, which interfere with the electricity of an enemy drone, as well as multi-shot guns. The two systems have been deployed around 400 meters behind the LoC. [IBTimes] [The Defense Post]

Pakistan: Ex-Prime Minister Khan begins 'long march' for early election

(fm/lm) Pakistan's former Prime Minister Inmran Khan began his much anticipated "long march" on October 28 on the capital Islamabad to demand early elections, piling pressure on the Shehbaz Sharif government already in crisis. Starting off from Lahore, the marchers are now trekking to the capital, passing through towns in Punjab Province, where they seek to rouse public support and pick up additional participants. [The Straits Times]

The former prime minister has given assurances that the week-long march and planned sit-in at the capital will be kept peaceful, at least by his followers. Seeking to leave no justification for the authorities to block his

procession's entry to Islamabad, Khan has promised to have his supporters stay out of the city's designated Red Zone of government buildings and embassies. Still security has already been tightened in the capital, with hundreds of shipping containers positioned at key intersections, ready to block marchers should they try to storm the government enclave.

Khan hopes to avoid repeating the May 26 march that was disbanded after a series of clashes with law enforcement outside parliament the previous day [see AiR No. 22, May/2022, 5]. At that time, the former premier and his supporters had already been holding several rallies across the country in the hope of bringing down the fragile coalition government of Prime Minister Sharif and forcing early elections [see AiR No. 15, April/2022, 2].

Pakistan: Spy chief says gives unprecedented press conference

(lm) The chief of Pakistan's powerful spy agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), has accused former Prime Minister Imran Khan of asking the country's military for "illegal and unconstitutional" support for his government, while also calling out as slanderous various statements circulating about the Armed Forces following the death of a prominent Pakistani journalist in Kenya earlier this month.

Lieutenant-General Nadeem Anjum leveled these allegations during a news conference on October 27 - marking the first time in the history of Pakistan that the head of the ISI gave a live briefing or addressed the media. Speaking alongside the ISI chief, the director general for the military's public relations, Lieutenant-General Babar Iftikhar, said the extraordinary step of getting Anjum to speak in public was taken because of a smear campaign against the military.

Notably, Anjum admitted the military made mistakes in the past, but an institutional decision had been taken recently to stay out of politics. The two generals then accused Khan of offering a "lifetime extension" to army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa in exchange for military support ahead of the April 2022 parliamentary confidence vote - but the offer was turned down. [The Straits Times 1]

The unprecedented joint press conference came after Arshad Sharif, a well-known journalist favored by Khan, was shot dead by the Kenyan police on October 23 [see AiR No. 43, October/2022, 4]. Sharif had fled to Kenya in August after receiving death threats and

being charged with sedition because of his critical views of the military establishment [see AiR No. 33, August/2022, 3]. The details of the shootout given by Kenyan police, which they claim is a case of mistaken identity, are being called dodgy, and critics suggest the possibility of a targeted killing. [VICE]

Sharif's funeral at Islamabad's main mosque on October 27 was attended by tens of thousands of people, with supporters of Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party making up a large proportion of the crowd. [The Straits Times 2]

Sri Lanka: Cabinet approves amendments to criminal procedure act

(sn) The meeting of Sri Lanka's Cabinet of Ministers took place on October 25. In the process, the Cabinet approved the proposal for amendments to the Code of Criminal Procedures Act. The proposal was developed per the Singapore Convention on Mediation that Sri Lanka signed on August 7, 2019 [see News.lk 1]. The amendments seek to reform outdated laws in the legal system and include three bills: the Powers of Attorney Ordinance, Wills Ordinance, and Prevention of Frauds Ordinance. [ColomboPage]

A few days later, the Telecommunication Regulatory Commission of Sri Lanka (TRCSL) was moved from the purview of the Ministry of Defense to the Ministry of Technology by issuing an Extraordinary gazette that came into effect on October 27 [ColomboPage]. The Select Committee of Parliament discussed the proposed "Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment" bill. The members agreed to incorporate all the recommendations outlined during the conference in the upcoming draft. It targets gender based-discriminations and human rights violations. [News.lk 2]

Sri Lanka: Travel ban on former Central Bank governor extended

(sn/lm) A Sri Lankan court has extended the travel ban imposed on the central bank's former governor, Ajith Nivard Cabraal, until November 24, but also ordered the release of Cabraal on two sureties. The travel ban was first imposed in April this year after Cabraal was named as a suspect in a personal complaint filed alleging misappropriation of funds while serving as governor of the central bank. [ColomboPage]

Sri Lanka: Forty-five attempted illegal immigrants caught in Habaraduwa

(sn) During the ongoing mission of coordinated search operations, Sri Lankan authorities have arrested at least forty-five people who were suspected of being about to board a boat to leave the country. [News.lk 3].

Against the larger backdrop of civil unrest and a worsening economic crisis, hundreds of Sri Lankans have tried to get to Australia by boat this year. This June saw the highest number of illegal boat interceptions by Australian Border Force since 2013 - all were from Sri Lanka.

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

Cambodia: Candlelight party has links to Rainsy, Prime Minister claims

(th) Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen of the ruling Cambodian People's Party (CCP), in a speech to farmers in Kampong Chhnang province, accused the opposition Candlelight Party (CP) of having links to Sam Rainsy, former chairman of the dissolved Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP). [Phnom Penh Post].

He threatened that the CP would be dissolved if the links to Sam Rainsy could be verified. Meanwhile, CP Vice President Setha stated that the CP was not in contact with Sam Rainsy, who is currently residing outside Cambodia [Khmer Times].

Cambodia: Senate President meets CPV General Secretary

(th) Say Chhum, president of the Cambodian Senate and vice president of the ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP), made an official visit to Hanoi [THE GIOI & VIET NAM], where he met with Nguyen Phu Trong, general secretary of the ruling Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV), to discuss deepening cooperation between the two countries [Khmer Times]

Indonesia: New deputy chairman of anti-corruption watchdog sworn in

(os) Indonesia's President Joko Widodo has inaugurated Johanis Tanak as the new deputy chairman of the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), the government's prime agency established to prevent and fight corruption.

Before being selected as KPK commissioner, Johanis worked under the assistant attorney general for civil and state administration. In September, he was approved for the job after a House of Representatives confirmation meeting. Previously he was nominated by the House Commission III, which is responsible for the areas of law, human rights and security. During his inauguration, Johanis emphasized that he would conduct his duties in line with regulations and would avoid creating any controversies.

Johanis replaces Lili Pintauli Siregar, who was relieved from her duties in regard to ethic violations. In March, Lili allegedly accepted hotel stays and flight tickets to attend a Grand Prix by MotoGP. [The Jakarta Post]

Indonesia: New steps to retire coal plants early

(os) Indonesia takes steps to retire older generation coal-fired plants early in order to help meet the country's climate target of net-zero emissions by 2060.

The governments run an exercise to find out which power plants could be closed early. As a result, 32 plants were identified that could retire five to ten years prior to the end of their operational lifespan. Since Indonesia is the top thermal coal exporter worldwide and 60 percent of its power stems from coal, an early

retirement of a large number of coal plants could epitomize a significant advancement in reaching the country's climate goal.

However, financing an early retirement could prove to be costly. Thus, the government is looking for external funding. Indonesia, in conjunction with the Philippines, endorsed a pilot program by the Asian Development Bank called Energy Transition Mechanism. This program would boast separate funds for an early retirement of coal-fired power plants and clean-energy investments.

Indonesian state coal firm PT Bukit Asam already announced that it is working together with state-owned electricity company PT Perusahaan Listrik Negara (PLN) to close one coal plant in West Java nine years earlier than planned. PLN owns the vast majority of power plants in Indonesia and previously outlined three possible ways to retire coal-fired power plants early. Namely, these comprise writing the plants off the company's book, using a spin-off blended financing scheme, or falling back to independent power producer (IPP) refinancing. [The Jakarta Post] [The Straits Times]

Malaysia: Ruling UMNO aims for 'simple majority'; Prime Minister Ismail leads in survey ahead of elections

(gc/lm) The United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), the largest party in Malaysia's ruling coalition, is aiming to secure a "simple majority" in next month's parliamentary elections, a senior party official told *Nikkei Asia* in a recent interview. [Nikkei Asia]

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob was the number one choice for 19 percent of respondents in an opinion poll carried out in the two months before parliament was dissolved. Notably, Ismail's UMNO also came out on top in the survey at nearly 32 percent. [Bloomberg]

In light of this, and against the larger backdrop of years of political instability, the youth vote is attracting new attention in Malaysia. Due to constitutional changes to lower the voting age from 21 to 18 and automatically register voters, people under 40 are now the largest voting cohort. However, questions remain about whether this group holds values distinctive enough to prompt political change, and whether they will turn out at all. [The Guardian]

Malaysia: Lawsuit to stop upcoming general election rejected by high court

(gc/lm) A Malaysian high court has rejected a lawsuit by an incumbent lawmaker which had sought to stop the upcoming general election due to an alleged invalid request from then Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob to dissolve Parliament. In its decision, the high court observed that the prime minister, as head of the executive, does not require the consultation of the Cabinet members when seeking the dissolution of Parliament. [MALAYMAIL]

Malaysia: Government, UMNO won't interfere with judiciary in Najib's case, Prime Minister Ismail says

(lm) The Malaysian government and the largest party in the country's ruling coalition, the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), won't interfere with the judicial system in ex-premier Najib Razak's case, Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob said on October 26. [The Straits Times]

Ismail was responding to social media speculation that Najib, who is in jail, would be pardoned and become a Member of Parliament again should the UMNO-led Barisan Nasional alliance (BN) again lead the government after the general election later this month.

Najib, who was formerly the president of UMNO, started to serve his 12-year prison sentence for graft on August 23 after the Federal Court upheld convictions by two lower courts in connection with misusing funds from SRC International, a former unit of state fund 1Malaysia Development Bhd [see AiR No. 34, August/2022, 4]. In light of this, his lawyers in September filed an application for the top court to review the decision and for a Royal pardon. [Policy Forum]

Malaysia: Former attorney-general sues government task force for publishing report on his memoirs

(lm) Malaysia's former Attorney-General Tommy Thomas has sued the government for setting up a task force that recommended investigations into his memoir, alleging that the body was unlawful and had no legal authority to perform the function assigned to

it by the government. [Free Malaysia Today] [The Straits Times]

Thomas, who served as the country's first non-Malay and non-Muslim attorney-general from 2018 to 2020, published his book last year. He recounts how his appointment, as well as those of former finance minister Lim Guan Eng and Tan Sri Richard Malanjum as the first non-Muslim Chief Justice, drew fire for placing non-Malays and non-Muslims in senior government posts. He also describes the civil service – more than three-quarters of which comprise Malays – as lacking in commitment and incompetent, on top of questioning the discretionary powers of the King.

Against this backdrop, the government established a task force to examine whether Thomas' publication had violated any laws or regulations applicable to the office of the attorney-general, as well as to determine whether it had disclosed potential abuse of power by the author, breach of professional ethics or conduct by him. Based on its declassified report, which was made public on earlier this month, the task force found that Thomas, in his role as attorney-general, had wanted then Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad "to do his bidding in a manner contrary to the law", in the appointment of three lawyers as Court of Appeal judges.

Malaysia: Authorities raid LGBT Halloween party

(lm) Malaysia's Islamic religious officers broke up a Halloween party attended by the LGBT community and arrested 20 people for cross-dressing and allegedly encouraging vice on October 29. Eyewitness said authorities divided party-goers into two groups — Muslims and followers of other faiths. 20 Muslims were then taken to the Federal Territories Islamic Religious Department. All of them were released after a few hours but are required to return next week for further questioning. [Deutsche Welle] [Reuters]

Same-sex acts are illegal in Malaysia, although convictions are rare. Each state in Malaysia has its own Syariah court system, which deals with matters relating to Islamic Law in which all parties are Muslim. These religious laws do not apply to the Chinese and Indian communities, nor do they apply to most foreigners.

Myanmar: Military pushing at least 3,000 displaced to return

(tp) Around 3,000 internally displaced person (IDP), who fled from Myanmar's civil war in Rakhine State have been threatened by the military junta to return to their villages of origin. According to a report, four officers from IDP camps claimed that they were summoned by the military and threatened to charge people in shelters with trespassing. However, the Myanmar junta also blocked access to humanitarian aid in Rakhine and made the lists of all displaced in several camps to pressure them to leave. [Myanmar Now]

Myanmar: Military junta bans *The Irrawaddy* news agency

(lm) Myanmar's military junta has banned and revoked the publication license for The Irrawaddy, the latest move in a series of lawsuits, raids, arrests and other forms of harassment of the news organization. The Ministry of Information announced the decision on October 29, accusing the publisher of damaging "state security, rule of law and public tranquility" through its reporting. [Radio Free Asia] [The Irrawaddy]

The ban is the latest on at least 20 media groups – news agencies, publishing houses and printing presses – since the military seized power in a coup in February 2021. Precisely because its editorials were critical of the military junta, *The Irrawaddy* had moved production and editorial staff outside the country in the aftermath of the takeover.

Philippines: House panels urge probe into Martial Law era 'whitewashing' in schools

(jd) A resolution was filed by the progressive bloc of the House of Representatives to call for an investigation into the Department of Education's (DepEd) alleged rebranding of the Martial Law era in schools, after reports of school modules were found in which the cited era is described as "period of New Society".

Vice President and Education Secretary Sara Duterte denied the allegations and stated that the term has been used by DepEd textbooks since 2000. She then referred to a module that described the late dictator's time as "golden era" in the news, although the media was heavily suppressed during that period. [Rappler]

Thailand: Government pushes for contentious regulation that will allow foreigners to own land

(fj) Thailand's Cabinet has approved a bill that will allow foreigners to buy up to 1,600 square meters of land for residential purposes in Bangkok and Pattaya under the condition that they invest around USD 1 million (THB 40 million) for a duration of at least three years. The new plan has been criticized by Thailand's main opposition Pheu Thai Party (PTP), which accused the government of "selling off" the country to foreigners. [The Straits Times]

The government's rationale behind the bill is the attraction of investment to Thailand, particularly stemming from wealthy individuals, affluent retirees, highly skilled professionals and well-off people interested in residing in Thailand while working online. While the scheme retains a high investment requirement, it would open a legal pathway for foreigners to own landed real-estate in the kingdom. Property ownership by individuals is currently limited mainly to condominium units or through complicated long-term lease agreements. [Thai PBS World]

However, the bill has provoked stark criticism by the PTP. While the government is presenting the bill as merely a small revision to a ministerial edict on real estate ownership issued under Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra in 2002, the PTP has stressed that the present push for liberalization of real estate ownership comes under very different circumstances. The party maintains that Thaksin, was under considerable pressure by the World Monetary Fund to liberalize the country's real estate regulations in the wake of the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis. In contrast to Thaksin's situation, the PTP asserts that the current government's need to attract foreign investment lies in an alleged failure to exercise good economic governance. [Bangkok Post]

Critics of the bill have also voiced concerns over real estate speculation as well as the risk of attracting foreigners involved in illegal activities. PTP has stated concerns that any economic benefit of the regulation would only be temporary, as investors would be free to withdraw their money after three years. They also questioned whether the benefits would disproportionately accrue to the financial sector and would leave the bulk of the Thai population worse off, as they would have to contend with rising housing costs. [Thai PBS World]

Thailand: Ruling, main opposition parties deny teaming up to contest next election

(td) Thailand's ruling Palang Pracharath Party (PPRP) and the main opposition Pheu Thai Party (PTP) have denied that they would consider forging an alliance to form a coalition government if incumbent Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha were to step aside. Although the PTP remains adamant to stick to the pro-democracy bloc to work with like-minded partners, it views Deputy Prime Minister Prawit Wongsuwan, the PPRP leader, as a more reliable prime ministerial candidate than Prayut.

That said, should Prawit run for election, and the two parties can secure a majority of seats in the Parliament at the next poll, they are likely to team up as observers have speculated. Nonetheless, it is premature to jump to a conclusion during the pre-election period. Yet, it is worth noting growing internal rifts within the ruling party as a number of its members have expressed their favor of Prawit, in view of the Constitutional Court's verdict that Prayut could serve until 2025 — the end of his eight-year tenure limit [see No. 40, October/2022, 1]. The ball is in the PPRP's court to nominate Prawit or Prayut as a candidate to contest the next election. [Bangkok Post 1] [Bangkok Post 2]

Thailand: Anti-torture and Enforced Disappearance Act to take effect within 120 days

(td) Thailand's Prevention and Suppression of Torture and Enforced Disappearance Act, the first of its kind, was published in the Royal Gazette on October 24, and should take effect after 120 days. The bill aims to criminalize cruel, inhumane, or degrading treatment and punishment of victims by the state officials to uphold justice, and put an end to impunity. It places an emphasis on the crime of enforced disappearance, given a total of 82 cases since 1980, according to the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances. If prosecuted, they will be liable to a maximum fine of about USD 26,000 and jail term of 30 years based on their offense.

To human rights advocates, torture and enforced disappearance have been problematic in Thailand for years — prompting all the relevant stakeholders to call for law amendments. Although it has been a party to the United Nations Convention against Torture, which

was ratified in 2007, and a signatory to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance since 2012, the Thai government pushed for the bill for the first time in 2014. Nevertheless, it was reportedly turned down by the post-coup National Legislative Assembly. It was not until 2021 that the Parliament reintroduced the bill, and put it to further readings in order.

Thanks to civil society organizations and parliamentarians, both lower and upper Houses of the Thai Parliament passed the draft bill unanimously in February 2022, though an ad-hoc committee was set up to review different proposals to single out the best version of the combined draft. The Senate-revised bill was sent to the House of Representatives for consideration afterwards, and was eventually adopted on August 24. In light of what critics view as an intervention to allay concerns of the Senators in charge, the recent bill, to be enforced in time, could be considered as a watered-down version as opposed to the lower house's original version bill in favor of many. [Association for the Prevention of Torture] [Prachatai English] [The Nation Thailand]

Thailand: House Speaker indicted for defamation in suit filed in 2012 by former Prime Minister Thaksin

(fj) The Speaker of the Thai House of Representatives, Chuan Leekpai, was indicted on defamation charges filed by former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra back in 2012. The defamation charges concern Chuan alleging Thaksin to have made mistakes in his handling of the civil unrest in Thailand's deep South in a speech given in the same year.

The indictment was handed down just days before the statute of limitations, which is set at ten years in defamation cases, would have run out on October 28. Chuan gave his respect for the reputation of the prosecutors and the police as the reason why he decided not to let the ten-year deadline lapse and instead acknowledge the charges in time. He further suggested that his willingness to face the indictment was a matter of supporting the principle of equal treatment before the law. Thaksin's lawyer countered by noting that after letting almost ten years lapse before acknowledging the charges, Chuan should not take credit for his behavior. [Bangkok Post 1] [Bangkok Post 2]

The upcoming proceedings in the case carry particular weight because the Tak Bai incident and the Krue Se

incident, two particularly consequential eruptions of violence that occured in Thailand's southernmost provinces under Thaksin's premiership in 2004, might be reinvestigated by the court. [Thai PBS World]

Thailand: Indicted former deputy chief of anti-corruption watchdog facing further corruption charges

(fj) The former deputy secretary-general of Thailand's National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC), Prayat Puangjumpa, is facing further charges over amassing an unaccounted-for personal wealth of around USD 17 million.

In September, allegations over Prayat's failure to truthfully declare his personal wealth upon assumption of his leadership role with the anti-corruption watchdog had led to his suspension from office [see AiR No. 36, September/2022,1]. He has since been indicted by the Supreme Court's Division for Holders of Political Positions for his failure to declare his assets with the intention to conceal his wealth's origin. [Bangkok Post]

The present charges, which were brought by the NACC on October 26, go beyond earlier corruption allegations insofar as they concern not only his untruthful asset declaration but the assets themselves, which are deemed in the NACC's charges to be "unusual". [Bangkok Post]

Thailand: Leader of opposition Move Forward Party Bangkokians favored prime minister choice, polls show

(fj) A recent opinion poll shows the leader of Thailand's opposition Move Forward Party (MFP), Pita Limjaroenrat, to be the most preferred choice for the role of prime minister among Bangkok's voters.

The poll involving 2000 eligible voters residing in the capital was conducted between October 21–27 by the National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA). With 20 percent of participants favoring him over other candidates, MFP's Pita is leading the results. Current Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha is the second most favored choice with 15 percent of participants supporting him. Coming in third, Paetongtarn Shinawatra, a member of the main

opposition Pheu Thai Party (PTP) receives the support of 14 percent of participants.

Deputy Prime Minister and leader of the Bhumjaithai Party Anutin Charnvirakul is favored by only around 2 percent of respondents, suggesting that, at least as far as the capital is concerned, the Bhumjaithai's media exposure relating to its push for the legalization of cannabis has done little to boost its leader's popular appeal.

Around 12 percent of respondents, constituting the fourth biggest group, agree that there is currently no suitable candidate for the role of Prime Minister. This hints at substantial frustration and disengagement from politics existing among parts of the electorate.

On a party-level, the most preferred parties were PTP (28 percent), MFP (26 percent) and PPRP (nine percent), with ten percent of participants still undecided.

With stark regional inequalities in terms of economics as well as in broader political outlook, this Bangkok-focused poll cannot be easily extrapolated to reflect the country as a whole. This is evident when comparing it to Nida's poll conducted between October 17-20 in Thailand's southern provinces. There, Prayut came out clearly on top, with 24 percent of participants favoring him, whereas MFP's Pita only ranked third, with the support of 11 percent of respondents. On the party-level, the Democrat Party, which did not even make the top three in the Capital, was clearly ahead in the South (27 percent) with the MFP only coming in fourth place (11 percent). [Bangkok Post] [see AiR No. 43, October/2022,4]

Thailand: Political activist Srisuwan files complaint with NACC over well-drilling bids

(fj) A well-known royalist political activist, Srisuwan Janya, has filed a complaint with Thailand's National Anti-Corruption Commission, accusing the executives of the Department of Groundwater Resources of irregularities in the bidding process of ten well-drilling projects.

Srisuwan is alleging foul play regarding what he considers the undue cancellation of the drilling projects, seven of which are happening under royal-initiative projects. The department's chief, Thanya Nethithammakul, has refuted the allegations, stressing the department's respect for projects conducted on royal initiative and stating that the projects have not

been canceled but rather suspended for adjustments of their terms of reference and further technical evaluation following soil inundation. [Bangkok Post]

He further added that the department had received 72 complaints regarding potential irregularities in the bidding process, which are being investigated by a special committee on the issue. Thanya stated that the bidding would reopen within seven days, after the committee had done its work. [Bangkok Post]

International Relations, Geopolitics and Security in Asia

India hosts UN Counter Terrorism Committee, pledges USD 500,000 to strengthen counter terrorism efforts

(wh/lm) India will contribute half a million dollars to a United Nations fund to further strengthen the organization's fight against global terrorism, the country's foreign minister said on October 29 as he addressed a special meeting of the UN's Counter Terrorism Committee in New Delhi. It was the first such conference — focused on challenging threats posed by terror groups in the face of new technologies — to be held outside the UN's headquarters in New York. [Voice of America]

During the gathering, India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and his counterparts agreed that new and emerging technologies, including encrypted messaging services, blockchain and unmanned aerial systems, are increasingly misused by terror groups.

The special conference kicked off on October 28 in Mumbai, which witnessed a series of attacks in 2008 that left 140 Indian nationals and 26 citizens of 23 other countries dead by terrorists who had entered India from Pakistan. [The Hindu]

Speaking against this backdrop, Jaishankar said the task of bringing the perpetrators of the 2008 Mumbai attacks remains "unfinished", adding that New Delhi regretted the UN Security Council's inability to act in some cases when it came to proscribing terrorists because of political considerations. The Indian top diplomat did not name China but referred to its decision to block UN sanctions against leaders of Jaish-e-Mohammed, a Pakistan-based extremist group designated as a terrorist organization by the UN. [AwazTheVoice] [Hindustan Times] [Economic Times]

Earlier this month, China again blocked a joint proposal by India and the United States to designate two Pakistan-based terrorists under the Al Qaeda Sanctions regime of the United Nations Security Council (UN SC) - the fifth time in four months - saying it needed more time to study their cases. [AiR No. 43, October/2022, 4]

ASEAN reaffirms five-point 'consensus' during special meeting on Myanmar's armed conflict

(tp/lm) Foreign ministers and representatives of the 10-nation Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) who met in Indonesia on October 27 for a special meeting to discuss an intensifying crisis in Myanmar, agreeing the bloc should be "even more determined" to bring about a peaceful solution there as soon as possible. [Reuters] [South China Morning Post]

No Myanmar representative attended the emergency meeting as the country's rulers have been barred from high-level meetings of the ASEAN since last year's military coup. Also absent at the meeting was Malaysia's Foreign Minister Saifuddin Abdullah, one of the strongest advocates on pressing the bloc to take firmer measures on Myanmar and calling for more engagement with the country's ousted lawmakers.

After the meeting, Myanmar's military government in a statement warned that any pressure from the ASEAN bloc to put a time frame on the peace plan would create "negative implications". The government also blamed the failure of progress on the country's

instability and the COVID-19 pandemic. [Al Jazeera] [Reuters]

The United Nations has backed the ASEAN plan that was created in April 2021, including an immediate cessation of violence and a plan to visit Myanmar by the special envoy to meet with all stakeholders. However, because the junta has refused to implement the plan, the process has so far been a failure. [Deutsche Welle]

Recent weeks have seen a number of the deadliest attacks in Myanmar, including a bombing at Myanmar's largest insein prison and an air strike in Kachin State, which was reported killed at least 80 people. [see AiR No. 43, October/2022, 4]

G20 health ministers' meeting delivers six key actions for upcoming leaders' summit

(lm) The health ministers of the Group of Twenty (G20) intergovernmental forum produced a technical document outlining six crucial actions to be taken for consideration during the upcoming G20 Leaders' Summit in mid-November. The document was released on October 28, the last day of the health ministers' gathering in Bali, Indonesia. [The Jakarta Post] [G20]

Four riparian countries of Mekong-Lancang take part in joint river patrol

(td) China, Laos, Myanmar and Thailand have kicked off their 122nd joint river patrol along the Mekong, also known as Lancang River, for four days to prevent illegal activities along the regional river, and to ensure safety and stability of such a vital waterway for cross-border shipping.

Since 2011, the riparian states have been conducting patrols for more than 100 times in unison, and the security situation in the Mekong River basin has improved significantly since. Generally, the enforcement authorities from respective states would hold talks to discuss criminal and security issues prior to a joint patrol. [Vientiane Times] [Xinhua Net]

Military coup propels Myanmar into Global Impunity Index

(lm) Against the larger backdrop of an ongoing crackdown by Myanmar's military on media, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), a US-based non-profit working to promote press freedom and the rights of journalists worldwide, has included the Southeast Asian nation in its annual Global Impunity Index for the first time. [Voice of America]

CPG's index, published on November 1, calculates the number of unsolved journalist murders as a percentage of each country's population. Somalia tops the list, followed by Syria, South Sudan and Afghanistan. Notably, the Philippines, Pakistan and India are also among the top eleven countries. [Committee to Protect Journalists]

Rule of law continues five-year decline, latest World Justice Project index shows

(lm) The World Justice Project, an international civil society organization working to advance the rule of law worldwide, released its 2022 Rule of Law Index on October 26. Notably, China, which the index ranked 95 out of 140 states, and India, at 77, are virtually tied in their respective declines in rule of law scores since 2015, by -1.6 percent and -1.7 percent respectively. [World Justice Project]

For the fifth year in a row, the majority of countries, accounting for 4.4 billion people, experienced a decline in the rule of law. Only 52 countries, or 39 percent, saw overall improvement. At the same time, this year's Index finds that the rule of law has not deteriorated as much as the year before. Back then, there were far-reaching government restrictions on public life aimed at curbing the COVID-19 pandemic, which curtailed civic freedoms. [Deutsche Welle] [JURIST]

Since 2009, the Rule of Law index measures eight areas of society: constraints on government power, absence of corruption, open government, fundamental rights, order and security, regulatory enforcement, civil justice and criminal justice. 44 sub-factors, like labor rights and due process of law, delve deeper into each major category. [Brookings]

Report highlights exacerbating internet freedom in Southeast Asian countries

(os) According to a recent report, published by the US-funded think tank *Freedom House*, global internet

freedom is continuing to decline. This also accounts for the nations in Southeast Asia. None of the eight countries covered in the report were categorized as “free”. [Forbes] [The Diplomat]

The report, which is named Freedom of the Net 2022 and examined internet freedom in 70 countries around the world, noted that governments are increasingly trying to control which resources people can access online. Out of the eight Southeast Asian countries in the report, five were deemed as “partly free” and three as “not free".

Out of the eight Southeast Asian countries in the report, the Philippines were rated the highest. The country was able to get a score of 65 out of 100. Nevertheless, the report pointed out the continuation of politicized lawsuits and digital attacks against government critics. The report also criticized the disinformation campaigns led by major politicians, including President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr., during the presidential election in May 2022.

Malaysia scored 69 out of 100 points. The report reasons the scoring by stating that the Malaysian government keeps blocking content, in addition to criminally prosecuting people for social media posts or other forms of online expression. With 49 out of 100 points, Singapore was also deemed “partly free”, stating a new law that provides the government with large power to restrict online content.

Freedom House stated that Indonesia’s score (49/100) could be put down to a continuation of obstruction to internet access. For instance, residents trying to organize protests via social media against a mine construction project in Wadas village in Central Java in February 2022, faced connectivity problems. Additionally, the report noted that internet users in Indonesia still see themselves confronted with a violation of user rights. [The Jakarta Post]

Cambodia scored even less, with just 43 out of 100. The report particularly accounts the government’s plan to launch a single national internet gateway for the score. Thailand (39/100) was rated as “not free”, mostly due to its lèse-majesté law that is used repressively against any kind of critics of the monarchy and the military government. Vietnam (22/100) was also deemed “not free”. The country’s government tightly controls expression on the internet and continuously forces companies to remove content [Radio Free Asia].

Unsurprisingly, Myanmar (12/100) was rated the lowest among the eight countries. Since the military junta toppled the elected civilian government in February

2021, the junta blocked the vast majority of websites, restricted access to most social media platforms, and made use of local internet shutdowns. This censorship regime led to the second-worst score, after only China, in this year's report.

Philippines seeks European Union trade perk renewal, cites changes in drug war tactics

(lm) The Philippines seeks renewal of its inclusion in the Generalized Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP+) of the European Union, telling Brussels that it is committed to international conventions on human rights and has revised its tactics in the war on drugs. [Rappler]

The GSP+ grants participating vulnerable low- and lower-middle income countries zero tariffs on more than 6,000 products or 66 percent of all EU tariff lines. The status is given and retained on the condition that the country implements 27 international conventions related to human rights, labor, good governance, and climate and environmental protection.

Relations between the EU and the Philippines had been strained under former President Rodrigo Duterte over the contentious war on drugs. In February this year, the EU Parliament even adopted a resolution suggesting to immediately initiate a procedure which could lead to the temporary withdrawal of GSP+ preferences.

Philippine lawmaker proposes law to keep foreign boats, planes in check in exclusive economic zone

(lm) A lawmaker in the Philippines has reintroduced legislation that designates special sea lanes and air routes for foreign ships while transiting the country's archipelagic waters, among others, to curb maritime and airspace encroachment in Manila's exclusive economic zone (EEZ). [South China Morning Post]

The Philippines has long accused Chinese vessels of harassing and disrupting fishing activities in its EEZ, as part of Beijing's efforts to assert its claim to sovereignty over almost the entire South China Sea. Manila argues that those fishing boats are not engaged in "innocent passage", as is permitted under international law.

The proposed bill from Congressman Rufus Rodriguez states vessels or planes must pass as quickly as possible and cannot deviate more than 25 nautical miles from designated routes, or engage in fishing or resource extraction during passage. It also prohibits research activity in the areas unless approved by the Philippine government. Further, the bill calls for prison terms of up to two years or a fine of more than USD 1 million or both on the captain, owners or operators of vessels or planes violating the rules. [The Maritime Executive]

The legislation was approved by the previous lower House of the Filipino parliament but failed to get the upper House's backing.

Commanders of Bangladesh, Myanmar meet to resolve border tension

(az/lm) Against the larger backdrop of nearly three months of unrest along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border, the border forces of the two South Asian neighbors on October 30 held a commander-level meeting to resolve the prevailing tension. [Anadolu Agency]

During the discussion between the high-ranking army officers, other issues like training exchange, joint disaster management, exchange of relevant information, regional security, and especially the rapid return of the Muslim-majority Rohingya refugees to Myanmar were also addressed.

Since early August, fighting between the Myanmar military and the Arakan Army, an ethnic armed group present in Myanmar's Rakhine and Chin states, has increased along the border, resulting in relentless gunfire and cross-border shelling. Dhaka on several occasions summoned Myanmar's envoy to formally protest.

In related developments, Bangladesh's Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen on October 30 told Parliament that the government is interested in peaceful coexistence with Myanmar and is trying to resolve the current tensions through diplomatic channels. [Dhaka Tribune]

United States to provide USD 1 billion to support Bangladesh's private sector

(az) The United States Agency for International Development, a federal government agency primarily responsible for administering Washington's development assistance, will provide USD 1 million to support the private sector in Bangladesh over the next five years - especially in the fields of agriculture, skills development, renewable energy and research and revenue system development. [Dhaka Tribune]

US President Biden to travel to Cambodia, Indonesia

(lm) United States President Joe Biden will travel to Southeast Asia next month to participate in the annual US-ASEAN summit and the East Asia Summit in Cambodia, as well as in a summit of leaders from the Group of 20 major economies in Indonesia, the White House confirmed.

The meeting in Cambodia, which currently ASEAN chair, will be the first ASEAN meeting that President Biden attends in person after last year's meetings were held remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. He is expected to reaffirm the U.S.' commitment to Southeast Asia, while highlighting the importance of U.S.-ASEAN cooperation in ensuring security and prosperity in the region.

Reportedly, Prime Minister Hun Sen has extended an invitation to Russian President Vladimir Putin to attend related ASEAN summits. Ukrainian Minister for Foreign Affairs Dmytro Kuleba has already agreed to come to Cambodia to sign the Instrument of Accession to the Treaty on Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC).

In Bali, Biden is believed to address global challenges including climate change, the war in Ukraine and its impact on energy and food security and affordability, and and further issues important to the global economic recovery.

Vice President Kamala Harris will also travel to Asia, following the president's visit, the White House said. Harris will travel to Bangkok to attend the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) leaders meeting, scheduled for November 18-19. She will also travel to the Philippines, where she will meet with government leaders and civil society representatives. [Reuters] [The Diplomat] [Thai PBS]

Chinese, US foreign minister hold phone talk

(dql) In a phone talk on October 31 with his US counterpart Antony Blinken, Chinese Foreign Minister and new appointed member of the Politburo of the Chinese Communist Party Wang Yi, called on the US to "stop its efforts to contain and suppress China," and to "create new obstacles" to Sino-US relations, according the readout of the Chinese Foreign Ministry.

He cited the new restrictions on exports and investment in China, in an apparent reference to comprehensive controls of the export of certain chips and manufacturing equipment to China, introduced by the Biden administration last month in an attempt to impede Beijing's efforts to develop the high-end semiconductors needed for artificial intelligence and supercomputing. Under the new regulations, Chinese firms that seek to develop advanced chips are blocked from accessing non-Chinese factories that rely on U.S. technology to manufacture their products, and deprive those firms of expertise by prohibiting American citizens and companies to help them [see Air No. 41, October/2022, 2]. [The Atlantic]

Wang added that the US "should stop wearing tinted glasses to make subjective guesses, let alone let ideological prejudice cloud its eyes."

The very brief readout of the US Department of State states that Blinken stressed "the need to maintain open lines of communication and responsibly manage the U.S.-PRC relationship."

Both readouts confirm that the two ministers also discussed the war in Ukraine, with Wang reiterating China's call for "exercising restraint" on all sides and "increasing diplomatic efforts" to prevent an escalation of the situation.

According to both foreign ministries' statement Taiwan was not on the agenda of the talk. This is surprising after shortly before Blinken had stated in an interview that China was trying speed up the seizure of the island. [Ministry of Foreign Affairs, China 1] [Department of State, USA] [South China Morning Post 1] [NHK]

The phone talk followed a meeting between Wang and U.S. Ambassador to China Nicholas Burns days earlier during which the Chinese Foreign Minister insisted that "neither China nor the US can change the other side," demanding that the U.S. gives up "trying to deal with China from a position of strength," and "stop aiming at

suppressing and containing China's development." [Ministry of Foreign Affairs, China 2]

The two talks come ahead of the G20 summit in Indonesia, where a meeting between US President Joe Biden and his Chinese President Xi Jinping might take place. It comes after the 2022 National Defense Strategy, released by the U.S. Department of Defense last month, called China "most consequential strategic competitor for the coming decades" and the "most comprehensive and serious challenge to U.S. national security." [Department of Defense, USA]

Meanwhile, in another phone talk with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov a day before meeting Burns, Wang reassured Russia of China's continued support in further establishing "Russia's status as a major country on the international stage," as well as of China's willingness "further deepen exchanges with Russia at all levels, and take China-Russia relations and cooperation in various fields to a higher level." [Ministry of Foreign Affairs, China 3] [South China Morning Post 2]

Chinese and Vietnamese Communist Party leaders meet in Beijing

(dql) During the visit of Nguyen Phu Trong, the leader of the Vietnamese Communist Party to China on October 31, Chinese President Xi Jinping who just secured a third term as leader of the Chinese Communist Party at the National Party Congress, told his guest that their countries and their parties should not allow outside interference from any force with their progress, in an apparent reference to US and the West over the war in Ukraine, Taiwan and other issues.

He, further pledged, that China would establish a stable supply chain with its "comrade and brother" Vietnam and encourage investments of the country's tech firms in Vietnam, while also promoting cooperation in various areas, including healthcare, green development, the digital economy and climate change.

In addition, Xi called on both countries to strengthen exchanges on governance and deepen military communication and cooperation on law enforcement in order "maintain each other's political security and social stability".

Nguyen, for his part, affirmed that relations with China remains the top priority in his country's foreign policy which seeks to cooperate with China to avoid maritime

issues “affecting the overall development of relations between the two countries”.

The meeting between the two party leaders comes as Beijing and Hanoi are holding competing territorial claims in the disputed South China Sea. While the dispute has seen confrontation between the countries’ coastguards and fishing boats, bilateral ties have remained largely stable though. [South China Morning Post] [Reuters]

China increases investments in raw materials in Indonesia

(dql) China has increased its foreign direct investment in Indonesia in the third quarter to USD 1.56 billion between July and September, marking a rise from USD 595.61 million in the same period in 2021. The rise is especially due to China’s demand for raw materials used in manufacturing. In the first six months of this year, Chinese firms invested a total US$3.6 billion, almost doubling the USD 1.7 billion in same period last, making it the Southeast Asian country’s second largest investor after Singapore.

The Indonesian Ministry of Investments recorded more than 1,150 new Chinese investments in the last quarter, involving largely downstream processing refining minerals such as nickel.

The data reflects China’s heavy reliance on resource-rich Indonesia for manufacturing. Indonesia is the world’s largest nickel producer, accounting for nearly 40 per cent of global refined supply and possessing 25 percent the world’s reserves of the metal. [South China Morning Post] [Financial Times]

China donates stock of essential medicine to Sri Lanka

(sn) A new consignment of essential medical supplies donated by China under its emergency humanitarian assistance arrived in Sri Lanka on October 27. Beijing said more medical supplies and other assistance will be delivered to Colombo in the coming months. [Xinhua]

China, Pakistan agree to build Karachi/Peshawar rail line

(dql) China and Pakistan have agreed on building much delayed rail line from Karachi to Peshawar that is widely viewed as the backbone of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and that had remained neglected in the past since the 2013 launch of the CPEC, a USD 60 billion project in the frame of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) that links Pakistan's Gwadar port on the Arabian Sea with Kashgar in northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region.

The agreement was reached at a virtual meeting of the Joint Coordination Committee on October 28 and comes days before Prime Minister Shebaz Sharif's visit to China this week, during which he is expected to discuss the revitalization of the CPEC as well as a debt relief. [CNBC] [Al Arabiya News]

Chinese President Xi Jinping to visit Saudi Arabia

(dql) Saudi-Arabia's government has reportedly confirmed a visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping to the country in the near future. Xi is said to receive the same treatment as US President Joe Biden during his visit in July. Further, three separate bilateral summits are expected to be held between on the occasion of the visit.

Observers see this as a strong message sent to the US, warning that if Washington is not willing to commit more to the Middel East, its part and role in the region will be taken over by Beijing. [Atalayar]

This comes as Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and his Saudi Arabian counterpart Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud agreed to deepen bilateral relations during the fourth meeting of the political and diplomatic sub-committee under the China-Saudi Arabia high-level joint committee on October 27. Both sides also agreed to cooperate in supporting the stability of the international oil market and discussed the development of regional hub for Chinese manufacturers to utilize Saudi Arabia's geographical location. [Al Arabiya News]

This latest development in Sino-Saudi-Arabian relations comes as ties between Washington and Riyadh are strained over the recent decision of the Saudi-led OPEC+ oil cartel to cut oil output by 2 million barrels per day, which aligns with Russian interests and is particularly politically troublesome for US President Joe Biden, as he is campaigning for the midterm elections next week. [CNN]

German government approves China's port terminal bid

(dql) The German Cabinet has decided to agree to allow Chinese China Ocean Shipping Company (Cosco) to take 24.9 percent stake in a terminal at the Port of Hamburg, Germany's largest port.

The decision was made in defiance of concerns over selling critical infrastructure to China voiced by six ministries. Chancellor Olaf Scholz, and former mayor of Hamburg, is seen as Olaf Scholz is seen as the driving force behind the decision. He is set to visit China next week. [Nikkei Asia]

Russian President Putin praises Indian Prime Minister Modi for independent foreign policy

(vv) Russian President Vladimir Putin heaped praises for India during a speech on October 25, praising Prime Minister Modi for pursuing an independent foreign policy despite "attempts to stop him" due to New Delhi's close relations with Moscow. [Mint] [The Indian Express]

In his wide-ranging speech at the Valdai Club discussion forum, President Putin also took some familiar swipes at the United States and its allies, saying that the world is entering a decade of tumult as the pursuit of a more just world order clashes with the arbitrary hegemony of the collective West. [CNN] [Russia Briefing]

When Modi told Putin "today's era is not of war" last month, the West welcomed his comments as a sign of Moscow's widening isolation on the world stage [see AiR No. 38, September/2022, 3]. At the same time, however, India has increased its purchases of Russian oil, coal and fertilizer – giving Moscow a vital financial lifeline. Furthermore, New Delhi has repeatedly abstained from votes condemning Russia at the United Nations – providing Moscow with a veneer of international legitimacy. And in August, India participated in Russia's large-scale Vostok military exercises alongside China, Belarus, Mongolia and Tajikistan – where Moscow paraded its vast arsenal.

Speaking against this backdrop, Russian leader Putin said last week that his country intends to allow companies from friendly countries, most notably China

and India, to invest in its gas and LNG business, as Western firms retreat. [Energy Voice]

United Kingdom prioritizing India trade deal but cannot give timeline, visiting foreign minister says

(vv/lm) The United Kingdom is prioritizing finalizing a free trade deal with India, London's foreign minister said on October 29 during his first visit to New Delhi, but declined to give a new deadline after missing one earlier this month. [Reuters]

After a meeting with his Indian counterpart S Jaishankar, British foreign minister James Cleverly said that ties between the two nations would improve further under Rishi Sunak, who last week became Britain's first prime minister with Indian roots. Cleverly also touched on counter-terrorism efforts, and UK-India's joint efforts in addressing cross-border and trans-border terrorism as a global threat in its entirety. Cleverly also called India a natural ally for London in the Indo-Pacific and expressed support towards India's G20 presidency in December of this year. [Business Standard] [The Hindu] [The Sunday Guardian]

Both of Sunak's predecessors, Boris Johnson and Liz Truzz, had hoped that a trade deal with India would be signed by the Diwali festival, which began on October 24. [AiR No. 41, October/2022, 2]

In light of this, plans to fast-track the free trade talks featured prominently in a phone conversation between Sunak and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on October 27, two days after he was appointed. Notably, the Indian leader is due to travel to London once the deal is done, and although both sides missed the Diwali deadline, that visit could happen as soon as the new British government feels a framework is ready. In addition, the two leaders are scheduled to meet in mid-November on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Indonesia. [Mint] [Outlook] [The Strait Times]

Indonesia, Singapore to extend gas supply contract by five years, minister says

(os) Indonesia will extend its gas supply contract with Singapore by five years, according to Energy Minister Arifin Tasrif. The current contract for supplying natural

gas to Singapore from South Sumatra is due to expire in 2023.

Imported gas accounts for about 95 percent of Singapore's electricity needs. Thus, the country is highly vulnerable to any kind of volatility in the global gas market. Since the Grissik–Batam–Singapore Pipeline makes up around 40 percent of all pipeline gas flowing from Indonesia to Singapore, this new contract might to some extent provide Singapore with stability amidst jittery energy markets as a result of the Russia–Ukraine war. [Reuters] [The Straits Times]

Japan to conclude deal to purchase US Tomahawk cruise missiles

(sm/sra) Japan and the US are reportedly about to finalize talks on a weapons deal, as Japan is looking to purchase US Tomahawk cruise missiles with range over 1000 km. It will encourage government cooperation between the two nations, with the expectation of starting up domestic production of the missiles in the future.

Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno acknowledged media reports but denied comments on the possible deal, conceding that the government had been looking to improve Japan's counterattack capabilities.

If concluded, the missiles will be part of the country's largest accumulation of arms since World War Two, with Prime Minister Fumio Kishida seeking to increase government spending on national security in a huge step away from the Constitution's Article 9, which renounces war. Although the arms would strictly be used in instances of self-defense, the government is still considering possible counterattack measures. [Reuters] [NHK World-Japan]

In order to achieve domestic manufacturing and further develop standoff missiles available to be fired from land, ships and aircraft vessels, the Japanese defense forces will need to extend the current range cap of the GSDF's Type-12 surface-to-ship guided missiles. This will require improving the accuracy of the missiles at a further distance. However, there is still time to develop the technology, as the Tomahawk cruise missiles are not expected to run until 2026. [The Japan Times 1]

Extending the range capacity of these missiles, along with the 2.500 km range of the US-produced Tomahawk cruise missiles is a move set to enhance

national security, especially that of remote islands off of Japan's coast such as the Senkaku Islands. The location of the islands places them in a contentious region between the country and the extent of Chinese military assertion which claims the islets belong to the East China Sea. [The Japan Times 2]

Japan is currently revising its national security strategy amid growing tensions with China over Taiwan and North Korea's recent launch of a ballistic missiles over Japan. The purchase of the Tomahawks would put parts of China and Russia into range.

In August, China had fired missiles into the waters around Taiwan, less than 160 km away from the Japanese coast, in response to US House of Representative Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan. The country has also announced it would accelerate the building of its military capabilities at the recent 20th Chinese Communist Party Congress, with President Xi Jinping calling in the on the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to "win regional wars,". [Aljazeera] [AiR No. 42, October/2022, 3]

Japan, Lithuania to set up a bilateral security framework

(sm) On October 26, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and his Lithuanian counterpart Ingrida Simonyte disclosed a joint statement to establish a security dialogue framework to exchange views on international security matters.

Kishida and Simonyte strongly condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine and Moscow's nuclear "blackmail", acknowledging the growing interdependence of Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific security. Looking towards Asia, the two expressed their concerns on unilateral attempts to coercively change the status quo regarding territorial issues amid China's increasing assertiveness in the East and South China seas.

Japan and Lithuania are strongly involved in current global military developments, as Lithuania is a NATO-member with a border to Russia-loyal Belarus and the enclave of Kaliningrad, while Japan has various territorial disputes with both China and Russia. [Kyodo News]

Japan, EU agree to promote free, fair economic order

(sm) In a virtual high-level dialogue on October 25, Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi, Economy, Trade, and Industry Minister Yasutoshi Nishimura and EU Trade and Finance Commissioners Valdis Dombrovskis and Mairead McGuiness exchanged their views on economic issues, such as trade investment and energy.

Japan and the EU agreed to promote a free and fair economic order as strategic partners and highlighted the importance of energy and food supply security, amid the disruptions caused by the Ukraine-Russia war. They also took a joint stance against coercive policies based on economic leverage and promoted a transparent and fair development finance to prevent market distortions.

The conversation hinted at China's alleged debt-trap diplomacy, in which China is accused of using debt as a pressure means to achieve desired policies from borrowing nations.

This is the second high-level economic dialogue between Japan and the EU, after a first one took place in October 2018 to pave the way to their 2019 bilateral economic partnership agreement. [The Mainichi]

Japan, Philippines, US hold joint military drills

(sm) The Japanese, Philippine, and US Coast Guards have been conducting joint maritime drills off the Philippine coast since October 23, amid China's increasing assertiveness in the East and South China seas.

The joint forces have conducted trainings on counterterrorism, amphibious operations, humanitarian assistance, and disaster response, as well as chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear defense. During exercises on October 28 in Manila Bay, the joint forces practiced towing damaged patrol vessels, while Japan supplied the Philippines with a new patrol ship. A total of 3760 American and Philippian soldiers and 30 Japanese Self Defense Force soldiers joined the drills.

The exercises took place as the Philippine coast guard has seen increased incursions into its exclusive economic zone by Chinese patrol and fishing boats. [NHK World] [The Mainichi]

Japan to remain in Russia's gas project

(dql/sm) Japan's Trade Minister Yasutoshi Nishimura has announced that the country will maintain its investment in the Sakhalin-1 oil and gas project in Russia, after the government had called on a Japanese consortium, that partly owns the project, to keep its stake in the project.

A decree in October, that was signed by Russian President Vladimir Putin in October and transferred operations of the project to the Russian government, forced foreign investors to declare to maintain or sell their stakes.

Resource-poor Japan relies on fuel from the nearby project that has become even more important for the country's energy security since Russia's invasion of Ukraine. In an earlier move, Japanese firms decided to keep their stakes in the nearby Sakhalin-2 liquefied natural gas export plant. [Bloomberg] [AiR No. 36, September/2022, 1]

The announcement comes amid a further deterioration of diplomatic relations between Tokyo and Moscow over the war in Ukraine, as Mikhail Galuzin, Russia's ambassador to Japan is set to return to Russia in late November.

The ambassador had criticized Japan over its sanctions in line with Western countries, which have severely stalled peace treaty negotiations concerning Russia and Japan's territorial dispute over islands north of Hokkaido. In October, he had been summoned by the Japanese foreign ministry over Japan's decision to expulse a Russian diplomat in retaliation to the forceful interrogation of a Japanese consul suspected of espionage by Russian authorities. The ambassador qualified this expulsion as detrimental to bilateral ties.

Galuzin is a long-standing member of Russia's diplomatic representation to Japan, renowned for his excellent Japanese language skills, and assumed his fourth term as an ambassador to the island in 2018. [Kyodo News]

Japan: Labor ministry confirms employment for over 200 Ukrainian evacuees

(sra) The Japanese Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare confirmed on October 27 that 221 Ukrainians seeking refuge from the invasion of Russia have successfully landed work in the country.

The number marks just over 10 percent of almost 2,000 Ukrainian evacuees in Japan. The government seeks to increase its support, with 1,749 of the 1,946 evacuees in Japan having been approved for "designated activities" visas which legally allow the opportunity to work while living in the country. Of those employed, 67 were through Hello Work, a public job placement company. The company has now held consultations with 566 evacuees. [Kyodo News]

Japan: Key role in climate disaster management, UN disaster office head

(sra) The UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction has stated Japan is a model country when it comes to disaster prevention and affirmed that it could play an active role in preparing other nations to activate risk reduction measures from the impacts of natural disasters brought on by climate change.

Japan has been a leading advocate for the cause and has hosted all UN disaster risk reduction conferences held in 1994, 2005 and 2015. The UN Office head, Mami Mizutori, stated that only a few countries, like Japan, are part of and contribute to official development assistance (ODA) projects which implement preventative warning systems. She warns that only four percent of global disaster-related government aid is allocated to risk reduction, with 96 percent used toward response and recovery. By switching this and focusing on developing more efficient preventative measures, Mizutori claims the impact of disasters such as the mortality rate can be reduced. The UN's most recent goal to provide early warning system access to all people by 2027 aims to challenge the current statistics of only 50 percent of countries having these systems in place, with only 30 percent of smaller island states - of which are most prone to these disasters. [The Mainichi]

With the continued warming of the planet expected to reach between 2.1 and 2.9 degrees Celsius by 2100, as seen in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change report, cutting greenhouse gas emissions may not be enough to counter the impact of climate change. Concerns about the consequences to come to require governments to increase their action by 2030, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions caused by human activities by 50 percent within the next eight years in order to keep global warming below 2 degrees within this century. [The Japan Times]

North Korea launches two short-range ballistic missiles

(sm) On October 28, North Korea launched two short-range ballistic missiles towards the East Sea in a renewed protest against South Korea-US joint military drills.

The missiles were detected north of the inter-Korean maritime buffer zone agreed upon by a 2018 military accord between the two countries. There was also no intrusion into Japan's exclusive economic zone according to Japanese media. Tensions are running high as South and North Korea have repeatedly been exchanging warning shots along the maritime buffer zone over the last weeks.

The latest North Korean missile launches came towards the conclusion of South Korea's week-long large-scale annual Hoguk drills together with the US. Pyongyang has repeatedly lambasted the two countries over their joint military drills, accusing them of escalating tensions in the peninsula. Washington and Seoul nevertheless kicked off joint "Vigilant Storm" aerial drills on October 31.

The last launches constitute North Korea's 28th missile test this year. The regime had last fired a ballistic missile on October 14, observing a pause during the weeklong Chinese Communist Party Congress securing Xi Jinping a renewed five-year term as party leader.

Days earlier, on October 25, South Korean First Vice Foreign Minister Cho Hyun-dong and his Japanese and US counterparts Takeo Mori and Wendy Sherman held trilateral talks in Tokyo on the issue, agreeing to further strengthen their deterrence. The United States have reiterated their complete commitment to the defense of South Korea, as Pyongyang is suspected to have completed preparations for a seventh nuclear test, including the possibility of vehicles capable of carrying tactical nuclear warheads. The deployment of US tactical nuclear weapons to the peninsula and a NATO-style nuclear sharing agreement remain off the table. [Korea Herald] [Kyodo News_1] [Kyodo News_2] [Yonhap News Agency]

Oldest Guantanamo Bay prisoner released to Pakistan

(lm) A 75-year-old Pakistani man who was the oldest prisoner at the Guantánamo Bay detention center was reunited with his family after more than 17 years in

custody at the United States base in Cuba. Saifullah Paracha was captured in Thailand in 2003 and held at Guantánamo since September 2004 on suspicion of having links with al-Qaida, but was never charged with a crime. He was notified that his release had been approved in May 2021 having been cleared by the prisoner review board, along with two other men, in November 2020. [The Guardian] [The Straits Times]

Germany, Japan extend assistance to Pakistan

(tj/lm) Germany has extended grant assistance worth nearly USD 7.5 million to Pakistan to help improve the health status of the population in the country's Gilgit-Baltistan region and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. In separate developments, the chairman of a Japanese company visited the Pakistan embassy in Tokyo to donate more than USD 15 million for the flood victims in the South Asian nation. [The Express Tribune]

Singapore, China deepen cooperation

(dql) Singapore and China have concluded 19 memoranda of understanding (MOUs) and agreements to strengthen bilateral cooperation covering various areas ranging from green development and green finance, e-commerce, public health, to innovation cooperation and tourism exchanges.

The deals were concluded the 18th Joint Council for Bilateral Cooperation meeting, the highest-level annual forum between the two countries, on November 1 in Singapore. [Channel News Asia]

South Korea to expand cooperation on climate change with Asian Development Bank, Pacific Islands

(sm) South Korea is seeking to expand cooperation on climate issues with both the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Pacific Island Countries (PIC).

According to the South Korean finance ministry on October 26, Finance Minister Choo Kyung-ho and ADB President Masatsugu Asakawa agreed to expand their cooperation on issues such as health care and environmental issues. On the same day, Foreign

Minister Park Jin met with the PIC's 14 top diplomats to boost coordination over climate action.

Highlighting Asian countries' need for financial and technological support to deal with climate change, Choo and Masatsugu agreed to propose a plan for a future South Korea-hosted Climate Innovation and Technology Hub, which would serve as a cooperation interface for the ADB's 68 member countries. Asakawa had been on a trip from October 24 to 26 to visit the annual ADB venue in Songdo, Seoul. The next annual ADB meeting is set to take place in May under the slogan "Rebounding Asia: Recover, Reconnect, and Reform". [Yonhap News Agency]

In the meanwhile, Park talked with the PICs' foreign ministers (Papua New Guinea, Fiji, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Tonga, Palau, Niue, Nauru, Kiribati, the Federated States of Micronesia, Samoa, and the Cook Islands) and agreed to increase Official Development Assistance as stipulated in the 2050 Strategy for a Blue Pacific Continent to help the islands cope with the climate crisis and strengthen cooperation on sustainable development.

Park also reiterated his concerns over the currently tense security situation with North Korea, as the country launched a record number of ballistic missiles this year and has stepped up its nuclearization plan. He thanked the PICs for their continued support for Pyongyang's denuclearization and asked for their support in South Korea's bid to host the 2030 World Expo.

The Pacific islands are among the most vulnerable territories to climate change, with their very existence being threatened by the prospective rise of sea levels due to global warming. This was South Korea's fifth inter-ministerial meeting with the 14 PICs since 2011, with plans of holding a first summit meeting in the near future. [Yonhap News Agency]

South Korea expands tariff-rate quota amid inflation concerns

(sm) The South Korean finance ministry announced on October 28 that it would expand its tariff-rate quota concerning energy and food imports, a system which allows tariff advantages for a certain amount of imported goods, amid growing inflation and continued US Federal Reserve interest rate hikes.

A zero-tariff policy will be extended for liquefied natural gas imports until March 2023 and established for eggs and fruits such as mangoes, pineapples, and bananas, among others. Imports beyond the quota will be taxed as usual. In total, the ministry will cut KRW 482 billion (USD 339,1 million) with this policy which should be implemented in early November.

This decision comes as the global energy and food supply has been disrupted by the ongoing Russia–Ukraine war. The Korean won lost 17 percent of its value against the dollar this year due to US interest rate hikes and global economic uncertainties. In line with other Asian countries such as Japan, South Korea's consumer prices had risen by 5,6 percent since the beginning of the year until September. [Yonhap News Agency]

South Korea, Russia clash over weapon supply to Ukraine

(sm) South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol declared on October 28 that South Korea has not been supplying Ukraine with lethal weapons, after being accused of doing so by Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Putin stated that he was aware of South Korea's export of lethal weapons to Ukraine and that this had the potential to destroy Moscow's diplomatic relations with Seoul in his address on the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war on October 27. Yoon rebuked the claim, affirming that South Korea had only supplied Ukraine with humanitarian aid and defensive gear, such as helmets and bulletproof vests, among others. He reiterated South Korea's will to maintain peaceful relations with all countries.

Since the beginning of the war, South Korea has tried to maintain stable relations with Russia due to the country's economic leverage and ties with North Korea. [Reuters] [Yonhap News Agency]

South Korea, Finland enhance technological cooperation on radioactive waste

(sm) South Korea and Finland agreed to deepen their cooperation over technology to deal with high-level radioactive waste during a working-level teleconference on October 28.

The two sides want to further expand their cooperation by finding better ways to convince and inform citizens about the need to build nuclear disposal facilities and by exchanging their findings in research and development on nuclear disposal technologies. Their future roadmap, devising KRW 1,4 trillion (USD 989,5 million) in investments for radioactive waste disposal, aims to increase public awareness and to catch up technologically to other countries on the issue by 2060.

South Korea and Finland had been jointly working on the project since July, as South Korea's ruling People Power Party is planning to increase the country's nuclear power production to ensure energy security. The previous Moon Jae-in administration had been trying to phase out nuclear power. Seoul's nuclear waste disposal technology is said to lag several years behind that of other OECD countries. [Yonhap News Agency]

South Korea, Nigeria, Tanzania hold bilateral talks

(sm) South Korea held bilateral talks with Nigeria on October 26 and Tanzania on October 27, respectively. South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol met with Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari, while Prime Minister Han Duk-soo met with his Tanzanian counterpart Kassim Majaliwa in Seoul.

It was the first time in ten years that a Nigerian President visited Seoul, as Yoon and Buhari met on the occasion of the World Bio Summit co-hosted by South Korea and the WTO. They agreed on joint efforts to increase economic and cultural exchanges between the two countries.

Han and Majaliwa also sought ways to deepen economic ties by promoting joint key transportation and information infrastructure projects, while celebrating the 30th anniversary of their diplomatic ties. Han also reassured Majaliwa of South Korea's continued supply of Official Development Aid and asked for Tanzania's support for South Korea's project to host the 2030 World Expo. [Yonhap News Agency_1] [Yonhap News Agency_2]

Taiwan's Vice President visits Palau

(dql) Taiwan's Vice President Lai Ching-te is visiting to Palau, leading a delegation consisting of government

officials and business representatives.

On the first the day of the three-day visit from November 1 to 3 Lai met with Palauan President Surangel Whipps. Jr. to discuss cooperation between Taiwan and Palau in combating climate change and in contribute to resolving global issues.

He is scheduled to hold talks with Palau's Senate President and Speaker of the House of Delegates to discuss ways to promote tourism to the Pacific ally that has been badly suffering from the fallouts of the COVID-19 panedmic over the past two years. [Focus Taiwan]

Taiwan-Italy parliamentary exchange group launched

(dql) Taiwanese lawmakers from all political parties have established the Taiwan-Italy Inter-Parliamentary Amity Association in Taipei. It seeks to boost cooperation and strengthen bilateral ties. [Focus Taiwan]

Pro-democracy Thai publisher approached by Chinese businessman for shutting down in exchange for money

(fj) Sam Yan Press, a Bangkok-based pro-democracy publisher that has also printed works critical of Beijing's human rights record, has been approached by a Chinese businessman offering USD 50,000 to shut down operations for six months.

Offers were made repeatedly through a local private investigator, who made a number of written and in-person attempts to convince Sam Yan Press's founder, activist Netiwit Chotiphatphaisal to take the deal offered by his Chinese principal. In an email apparently written directly by the Chinese businessman soliciting the deal, gaining a favorable standing with the Chinese government by showing ability to wield influence in Thailand was given as personal motivation behind the deal offered. [Radio Free Asia] [Thai Enquirer]

Despite the correspondence thus suggesting personal motives, reporting on the case has highlighted commonalities with other attempts made by Chinese nationals in an effort to further their government's control and influence abroad. [Radio Free Asia]

Thailand, Vietnam step up defense cooperation and economic diplomacy

(td) Thailand and Vietnam have been eager to advance their bilateral strategic partnership in all fields, notably defense and economic-related. On the military front, Vietnamese Deputy Minister of National Defense, Hoang Xuan Chien, met with Thai military attachés, on October 27, to push for the establishment and optimization of joint working groups and consultative mechanisms, support delegation exchanges and high-level contacts, and put into practice their agreements. They vowed to work alongside at multilateral forums such as ASEAN as well. Meanwhile, economic diplomacy fosters their relations, given Thailand being Vietnam's largest trading partner in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. The bilateral trade value reached USD 19.5 billion in 2021, and USD 10.6 billion in the first half of 2022, coupled with two-way investments. Thus, they aim to boost trade and extensive investments in promising sectors, and streamline trade regulations. [Vietnamplus 1] [Vietnamplus 2]

Lao, Thai prime ministers set sights on more linking bridges across Mekong River

(td) Thailand's Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha and his Lao counterpart Phankham Viphavanh welcomed the progress on the construction of the fifth Thai-Lao Friendship Bridge, connecting the Thai northeastern province of Bueng Kan with Bolikhamxay province in Laos. At the foundation stone laying ceremony, both sides also held talks to discuss the potentiality of more bridges linking the two countries across the Mekong River, and linkages between the Thai rail network and the Laos-China railway, which would then contribute to streamlined regional connectivity. Aside from the transport viewpoint, the bridge is expected to spur their economic growth at large.

This new linking bridge project, worth USD 96.3 million, has been underway since 2020, and will complete the construction work by 2024. In general, it is part of the Greater Mekong Subregion Economic Cooperation Program and the Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy, whereby it will serve as another transport route linking Thai-Lao-Vietnam Highway R8 with Guangxi region of China. Cambodia and Myanmar could also enjoy the benefits. Prior to Bridge No.5 are those bridges linking Nong Khai-

Vientiane, Mukdahan-Savannakhet, Nakhon Phanom-Khammouane, and Chiang Khong-Huay Xai, built earlier respectively. [Bangkok Post] [The Nation Thailand] [Thai PBS World]

Myanmar, Thai Police hold talks to discuss responses to cross-border drug smuggling

(td) The Royal Thai Police led a delegation to Myanmar to discuss coordinated efforts in stemming the exports of illegal chemical substances, used to make methamphetamine and amphetamine, with the Myanmar police. According to Thailand's Office of Narcotics Control Board, with abundant supplies of precursor chemicals, they have driven the street price of these drugs down; moreover, the rebel United Wa State Army, which now takes control of Myanmar's Golden Triangle, has smuggled the chemicals and churned out methamphetamine, thus flooding Southeast Asia. In light of this, a large amount of meth tablets, crystal meth, and precursor chemicals were seized in Mekong countries from October 2021 to August 2022, as per the United Nations. Consequently, both sides must tighten monitoring and exchange information to keep those drugs and chemicals at bay. Also, Myanmar has pledged to prosecute drug-related offenders under the local laws before their return to Thailand. [The Nation Thailand]

Announcements

Upcoming Online Events

2 November 2022 @ 8:30-9:30 a.m. (GMT-5), Center for Strategic & International Studies, USA

India's Leadership of the G20

India will assume the Presidency of the G20 from Indonesia on December 1, 2022 for a 1-year term. This online event will explore the Indian government's priorities for its term.

For more information, see [CSIS].

2 November 2022 @ 3:30-4:15 p.m. (GMT-5), Center for Strategic & International Studies, USA

U.S.-Canada Defense Partnership in a Dangerous World

This event will discuss the future of North American defense, the U.S.-Canada defense relationship, Arctic security, and support to Ukraine following Russia's invasion.

Visit [CSIS] for more details.

3 November 2022 @ 3:00-4:30 p.m. (GMT+8) ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore

The Development of Regional and Ethnic Identities on Thailand's Northern and Southern Peripheries

This webinar offers insights into Thailand's extreme political and administrative centralization, diverse regional and ethnic identities have become increasingly visible in the country.

If you are interested in joining, register at [ISEAS].

3 November 2022 @ 1:00-2:00 p.m. (GMT-4), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, USA

What Are America's Strategic Options on Iran?

This webinar will discuss the following questions: What are the big strategic options that the United States should be considering when it comes to the future of American policy toward Iran? What's realistic and what's not?

See [Carnegie] for more details.

4 November 2022 @ 10:00-11:30 a.m. (GMT+8) ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore

The United States and the Myanmar Crisis: Perceptions, Expectations, Options

As Myanmar's ongoing political crisis has brought under scrutiny the United States' (US) response to the February 2021 military coup in Myanmar, questions arise as to: Does the current US approach build on past policies and pronouncements on Myanmar? How have successive US administrations engaged with the state in Myanmar, whether authoritarian or elected? How can the US work with regional powers as well as America's allies and partners in ASEAN and Asia to address the Myanmar crisis?

This webinar will provide answers to these questions.

See [ISEAS] for more information.

4 November 2022 @ 2:30-5:20 p.m. (GMT+8) ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore

The Outlook for Malaysia's 15th General Election

This online seminar will examine different aspects of the upcoming Malaysian General Election and their implications.

For more information, go to [ISEAS].

Recent book releases

Tarun Khanna, and **Michael Szonyi (eds.)**, ***Making Meritocracy: Lessons from China and India, from Antiquity to the Present***, Oxford University Press, 394 pages, published on August 26, 2022. For a review, see [Asian Review of Books].

Ruha Benjamin, ***Viral Justice: How We Grow the World We Want***, Princeton University Press, 392 pages, published on October 11, 2022, with a review in [Kirkus].

Bradley Hope, ***The Rebel and the Kingdom: The True Story of the Secret Mission to Overthrow the North Korean Regime***, Crown, 272 pages, published on November 1, 2022, reviewed in [Kirkus].

Calls for Papers

The **Telos-Paul Piccone Institute** invites paper proposals for its ***2023 Telos-Paul Piccone Institute Conference*** to be held from March 30 through April 1, 2023. The conference theme is "Forms of War". The deadline for submission of proposals is December 15, 2022. For more information, see [Telos-Paul Piccone Institute].

The **Nullcon Berlin International Security Conference and Training**, scheduled for March 6-10, 2023, in Goa, India invites research proposals for ***technical talks and workshops on defensive and offensive security technology***. The closing date for submission of proposals is November 30, 2022. Visit [Nullcon] for more details.

Jobs and positions

New York University's Liberal Studies invites applications for two ***Postdoctoral Faculty Fellow positions*** from candidates specializing in Global Works and Society. The deadline for submission of applications is November 14, 2022. For more information, see [NYU].

Miami University is seeking an ***Assistant Professor – Public Law and/or Judicial Politics*** for research and teaching in American politics, constitutional law, civil rights and liberties, racial politics and law. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis until the position is filled. More details are provided at [Miami University].

The **Department of Government and Public Administration at the University of Macau**, China, is seeking an ***Associate/Assistant Professor of Political Science (Public Administration)***. The closing date for applications is November 6, 2022. Go to [Times Higher Education] to learn more about the position.

The **College of Liberal Arts at Wenzhou-Kean University**, China, invites applications for 2023 ***Political Science/International Relations Assistant/Associate Professor/Lecturer positions***. The application deadline is December 31, 2022. Visit [Careerjet] for more information.

The **East Asian Institute (EAI) at National University of Singapore** welcomes applications from suitable candidates with expertise in the field of East Asian development, particularly in the political development

of contemporary China and its foreign policy, for a one-year ***Visiting Senior Research Fellow position***. Applications are accepted until November 18, 2022. [Times Higher Educations] has more about the job offer.

The **Department of Politics and Public Administration at the University of Hong Kong** is looking for a ***Tenure-Track Professor in Comparative Politics/Public Administration***. The application deadline is March 31, 2023. See [The University of Hong Kong] for more information.

The **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** is hiring a ***Program Analyst*** to be based in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, with core responsibility in monitoring, analyzing and reporting on human rights developments in the countries covered by the UN Human Rights Office in Central Asia as well as in advising follow-up actions. The closing date for applications is November 16, 2022. Find more details at [UNDP].

The **United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)** is seeking a ***Program Specialist*** to be based in Poltava, Ukraine. Among the key responsibilities is ensuring that area/country programs are strengthened through knowledge management as well as complete and accurate reporting. Applications can be submitted until November 14, 2022. Further information is available at [UNICEF].

The **United Nations World Food Programme (WFP)** is looking for a ***Digital Finance & Climate Risks Innovation Expert*** to be based in Guatemala and to contribute to formulating of WFP-wide program policies and to developing program guidance and implementation modalities and operations. The application deadline is November 9, 2022. More about the position at [WFP]

The **International Rescue Committee (IRC)** welcomes applications for the position of ***Senior Officer, Economic Recovery & Development Partnerships (Private Sector)***. The position is based in New York, USA, and London, UK. Core responsibility is to supports programming that improves the economic status and well-being of people affected by crisis across the globe, with focus three core areas, including climate resiliency, workforce development and financial inclusion. The closing date for application is January 2, 2023. See [IRC] for more details

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