German-Southeast Asian Center of Excellence for Public Policy and Good Governance
CPG

Asia in Review

Grasp the pattern, read the trend

No. 45, November/2022, 2

Brought to you by CPG

Dear Readers,

Welcome to this week's issue of the Asia in Review offering an overview of the latest events and developments in domestic politics, international relations and geopolitics in East Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia.

I wish you an informative read and extend special greetings to everyone who celebrates Angola's, Cambodia's and Poland's Independence Day in this week.

With best regards,

Henning Glaser

Editor in Chief

Webpage: www.cpg-online.de,
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/CPGTU

Main Sections

- Constitutional Law and –Politics, Human Rights and National Security in East Asia
- Constitutional Law and –Politics, Human Rights and National Security in South Asia
- Constitutional Law and –Politics, Human Rights and National Security in Southeast Asia
- International Relations, Geopolitics and Security in Asia
- Announcements

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

China: Zero-COVID policy remains in effect

(ms) Despite rising dissatisfaction and public anger against the Chinese government's strict COVID-19 containment measures, the Chinese government announced that it would stick to its policy.

Against speculation that the Chinese government might ease the COVID-19 measures, which among other things led to at least a short-term stabilization of the weakening renminbi (see entry below), the National Health Commission's disease prevention and control bureau declared that the measures taken by the Chinese government, such as lockdown, sustained mass testing and rigorous quarantine, are the right way forward and will be adhered to, apart from slight adjustments to accommodate vulnerable groups. [Politico]

The decision comes amid rising public discontent, particularly over the deaths of a three-year-old boy and a 55-year-old woman. According to their families and local residents, the lack or delay of medical care due to local restrictions had caused the deaths. [The Guardian] [South China Morning Post]

China: Introduction of degree programs in discipline inspection and supervision

(ms) The anti-corruption campaign launched by President Xi Jinping in 2012 continues to play an important role. From now on, it will be possible to study discipline inspection and supervision in 16 Chinese universities.

Upon completion of the new course, students will receive a law degree and would then be employed by one of the two national agencies for discipline inspection, namely the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) or the National Supervisory Commission (NSC) introduced in 2018 under Xi, which, unlike the CCDI, not only focuses on internal party corruption but also investigates "non-members". The study program will ensure a steady supply of workers, but also that future employees can be better and more explicitly trained for anti-corruption activities in line with Xi's ideas. [South China Morning Post]

Meanwhile, Fan Yifei, vice governor of the People's Bank of China (PBC), was placed under investigation by the two disciplinary agencies on November 5 for" suspected severe violations of disciplines and laws". [Reuters] [Xinhua]

China: PLA must "be ready for war at all times"

(ms) Two contributions by senior officials of the Central Military Commission (CMC) in the book of official comments on the Party Congress report of the 20th National Congress, which ended in late October, call for readiness and determination in a possible conflict in the Taiwan Strait.

China's ambitions for Taiwan's reunification with the mainland and its willingness to use force if necessary were reaffirmed during the 20th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) [see AiR No. 42, October/2022, 3].

The fears have now been further fueled in the aftermath of the Congress by the chairman of the Central Military Commission's research bureau calling in his speech for the Chinese military to be on "full time standby" and "be ready for war at all times," which was reiterated in similar terms by a general of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in another post. [Financial Times] [South China Morning Post]

The remarks come after U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken recently spoke of a “much faster timeline” for reunification and Admiral Mike Gilday, chief of U.S. naval operations, warned that an invasion of Taiwan by China might be possible before 2024 [see AiR No. 43, October/2022, 4].

China: Value of Renminbi could fall to 15-year low

(ms) The renminbi, which was already trading at around 7.3 yuan to the USD in late October and early November, could fall even further as the People's Bank of China lowered its daily benchmark interest rate for the sixth time on November 4, allowing the Chinese currency to fall to a 15-year low of 7.4 per USD.

Contrary to expectations, this announcement has not yet led to a sell-off in the currency, as at the same time rumors are circulating suggesting that the Chinese government may be planning to significantly ease the strict COVID-19 measures still in place, although the government has so far vehemently denied the rumors. [Bloomberg]

In addition to the rumors, President Xi Jinping himself emphasized China's will to further open its markets to the global market. At the start of the 5th China International Import Expo (CIIE), also on November 4, Xi announced in the opening speech [full speech] that China remains committed to opening up after the 20th National Congress and announced that China will seek to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and the Digital Economy Partnership Agreement (DEPA). In mid-October, member Australia expressed clear reservations about China joining the CPTPP [see No. 42, October/2022, 3]. [Global Times]

China: Hong Kong wants to become cryptocurrency hub again

(ms) On October 31, the Hong Kong government proposed several measures in a statement [full statement] to advance the vision of a local virtual asset (VA) industry and reposition itself as a cryptocurrency hub, a position that has been challenged by Singapore in recent years.

Measures are expected to include licensing schemes for asset providers, regulatory regimes for cryptocurrencies, pilot programs and the opening up of retail assets. Likewise, the Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) is working on a regulatory framework for stable coins, cryptocurrencies whose value is pegged to a fiat currency, he said. The Hong Kong government also wants to review the use of blockchain technology in the form of NFTs which could play an important role in the Web3. [South China Morning Post 1] [The Register]

Hong Kong's clear opening is in contrast to the mainland, where trading in cryptocurrencies is completely banned and efforts to develop Web3 are faltering or not progressing at all, as it relies on the use of cryptocurrencies and NFTs based on blockchain. For example, on Nov. 4, the central Chinese city of Wuhan withdrew a draft plan to promote investment in NFTs, saying there was insufficient confidence in the technology. [South China Morning Post 2]

China: Around 200 arrested after protests in Tibet

(ms) Around 200 protesters were reportedly arrested in the course of protests that took place in Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, at the end of October. The protest broke out on October 26, led by Chinese migrant workers who were unable to work or travel home due to the COVID-19 lockdown imposed in the southwestern province [see AiR No. 44, November/2022, 1].

Those arrested in a crackdown by the local security authorities are said to be both Han Chinese, who make up the majority of the Chinese population, and Tibetans. While most of the Han Chinese arrested are said to have been released and allowed to travel home, the Tibetans are said to remain in custody, although officials there said they would have released them by October 29. The government has remained silent about the conditions or whereabouts of those in custody. [Radio Free Asia]

China: Another Uyghur dies shortly after release from prison

(ms) A Uyghur doctor is reported to have died of kidney disease shortly after his release from prison in September this year, making this one of several cases of Uyghurs dying shortly after their release due to similar circumstances.

The doctor was arrested in 2013 and sentenced to eight years in prison after allegedly providing medical treatment to a person identified by local police as participating in a clash between Muslim Uyghurs and police and classified as a terrorist; during the clash, police forces allegedly fired on unarmed Uyghurs, killing three. Although no autopsy is available, deaths like that of the doctor are a recurring pattern and point to the poor conditions under which the Uyghurs are incarcerated in local prisons.

There have been and continue to be increasing reports of malnutrition and lack of medical treatment that may have triggered the death of the doctor, among others. [Radio Free Asia 1]

Also, in Xinjiang and concerning the Uyghurs, local officials in the town of Ghulja have been collecting the bodies of those who died during the lockdown declared in early August, during which there were also reports of lack of food and medical treatment, resulting in the death of ten people [see AiR No. 37, September/2022, 2].

By collecting the dead, the local authorities are depriving the relatives of the opportunity to bury the dead in accordance with Muslim funeral rituals. [Radio Free Asia 2]

China: Trial against disbanded Hong Kong newspaper Stand News halted

(ms) The sedition trial against high-ranking former employees of the pro-democracy news outlet Stand News, which was disbanded in 2021 after several raids by Hong Kong police, has now been temporarily halted due to possible improper handling of evidence by the prosecution.

After the prosecution's list of evidence in the case was made public late last week, the defense lawyer applied for a permanent stay of proceedings on November 7, saying the prosecution had violated the Criminal Procedure Act by failing to provide the defense with

the evidence. The defense did not receive the 1500 pages of evidence until the morning of the trial and thus had not had sufficient time to review the documents.

The hearing on the continuation of the trial is scheduled for December 13, if the defense request is granted, the defendants would have to be released immediately and the charges of sedition, which dates back to Hong Kong's colonial era and was re-invoked in the 2019 anti-government trials, would be dropped. [Hong Kong Free Press]

China: Last module docked at own space station

(ms) The Mengtian Module successfully docked with China's three-part Tiangong space station on November 1, the China Manned Space Agency (CMSA) announced. Mengtian will be the second lab module of the space station.

After the successful docking, the module will be repositioned to give the station its typical "T-look". Following this, solar panels will be attached, which will provide the energy supply for the space station, which will then be ready for operation.

The space station which represents a large step in the Chinese space efforts, is to possess a durability of 10 to 15 years, which could be extended however still further, so the CMSA. Thus, the Tiangong will presumably outlive the ISS, which is expected to be closed by 2030, and become the only space station. [Global Times] [Wired]

China: Air Force unveils new equipment

(ms) During the Airshow China 2022, which started on October 8, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Air Weapon presented the new equipment.

In particular, the armament of two aircraft attracted attention. On the one hand the H-6K bomber was spotted carrying an unknown missile. Military experts recognized similarities between the missile to the CM-401, which has previously been used as a truck- or ship-launched anti-ship ballistic missile, leading to speculation that the missile attached to the bomber is an adaptation of the same missile for an airborne application. Advantages of an air-launched ballistic missile (ALBM) over a ground-launched missile would

include a longer range, as well as the ability to get closer to the target before launch, making it more difficult to intercept.

On the other hand, the JH-7A2 fighter bomber was spotted equipped with a new armament which looked like a stealth air-to-surface cruise missile.

However, not only new armaments for aircraft were unveiled, but also for the first time a vehicle-mounted laser weapon system targeting small drones, a new and thinner HQ-9B air defense system missile, and the HQ-11 universal terminal defense system, which includes a vehicle with vertically launched missiles and another vehicle with a close-in weapon were presented during the Airshow.

In addition, a variant of the KJ-500 early warning aircraft was also on display, which was newly equipped with an air-to-air refueling probe that allows it to be refueled in flight, significantly extending its flight time, which could be particularly relevant for operations in the South China Sea and around Taiwan, where the KJ-500 is often deployed. [China Military] [Global Times 1] [Global Times 2] [The Drive]

China: Most powerful rocket engine successfully completes test

(ms) According to the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation (CASC), tests of the new and most powerful rocket engine completed on November 5 were reportedly successful, which could mark a milestone in Chinese spaceflight.

The engine tested is a 500-tonne-thrust, dual-nozzle liquid oxygen-kerosene engine, a.k.a. YF-130, which is said to outperform by a factor of four the 120-tonne-thrust YF-100 previously mounted on Long March 5, which was used to send all three modules of the Tiangong space station into space.

The YF-130 is to be installed as first-stage engines and boosters on the new Long March 9, outperforming its predecessor, the Long March 5, by a factor of six. This new performance of the rocket will play an important role in China's space ambitions. The new launcher will be able to carry spacecraft weighing up to 44 tons to Mars, which until now could only be reached by satellites and rovers. [Global Times] [South China Morning Post]

Japan: Support for Kishida increases slightly

(sra) The Japanese Prime Minister's announcement of the supplementary economic package on October 28 saw a slight increase in support for the administration as the value of the yen continues to depreciate under the impact of high inflation.

The additional economic stimulus establishes a reduction in electricity bills, promotes wage increases and overall focuses on providing financial support to households struggling with the rising costs of living. Rising prices of imports have also impacted the situation in the country, brought on by the Russian invasion of Ukraine [see AiR No. 44, November/2022, 1].

As a result of the launch of the USD 199 billion stimulus package, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's approval rose to 37.6 percent, with disapproval ratings down by 3.5 percent on October 30, however, numbers are still low compared to that of 54.1 percent approval in August. The prevalence of criticism toward the Kishida administration has also been influenced by the series of public scandals of the Liberal Democratic Party lawmakers' affiliation with the Unification Church. [The Japan Times]

Japan: LDP-Komeito coalition fails to agree on defense policy, spending boost allocation

(sra) As the nation is set to strengthen defense capabilities, spending has been a major element of deliberations between the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and its junior coalition partner Komeito. The results of three major national security documents are expected to clarify this and any updates to defense policy are to be released in December, although the two parties are to come to an agreement on how the budget increase is to be facilitated.

As national security concerns have become more prevalent due to the ongoing tensions of Chinese military exertion over Taiwan sovereignty, the series of ballistic missiles launched by North Korea and Russia's war on Ukraine, the Japanese government has been pushed to review its defense capabilities [see AiR No. 44, November/2022, 1]. The key topics to be decided on include the ability to strike enemy bases, the extent to which the defense budget should be increased, and the allocation of extra funding as growing concerns of

geopolitical tensions, defense and fiscal policy are a major element of focus for Prime Minister Fumio Kishida. The LDP believes enhancing the national counterstrike capability will successfully deter any missile attacks on Japan. However, Komeito sees the ability to counterattack as a possible provocation that could lead to escalated forms of aggression. Defense policy discussions note that there would need to be a way to maintain within the regulations of the Constitution in adhering to strict self-defense policy only. [The Japan Times 1]

A key panel of the central government has also called for a more concrete plan to increase defense expenditure, with members of the private sector in support of tax hikes to supplement the rise. For the first time, the Council on Economic and Fiscal policy urged the government to implement a secure economic foundation with long-term strategies to ensure aims to boost defense funding within the next five years to two percent of Japan's GDP are met sustainably. The panel also encouraged enhanced public-private cooperation in the area of research and development of defense equipment. [The Japan Times 2]

Japan: Government to establish council for defense use of airports, ports

(sra) The Japanese government has announced plans to bring together an inter-ministerial council to allow the use of airports and ports by the Self-Defense Forces (SDF), facilitating their use will provide access to these areas for drills and training purposes in order to prepare for instances of emergency.

The council is to be made up of SDF officials, members of infrastructure ministries and the Cabinet after the update of the three key national security documents in December is finalized. The council is set to facilitate the use of civil airports and ports as the current procedures require permission from local municipalities and any organizations that may be involved which can at times impede SDF use of these facilities due to political bias. Currently, the only airfields used by the Air SDF are in Naha. This is now considered insufficient amid China's maritime expansion which places pressure on national security in terms of the vulnerability of the Senkaku Islands. [The Japan Times]

Simultaneously, the need for a council is evident in Saga Prefecture as the Defense Ministry is now set on facilitating the deployment of Osprey tilt-rotor

transport aircraft, although local fisheries are strongly opposed due to environmental concerns about building the Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF) base so close to Saga Airport and the Sea of Ariake. The local fisheries cooperative is concerned about the construction of the facility, as runoff will pollute the sea and impact the ecosystems of seaweed farms. However, they came to an agreement on November 1 to review the key documentation that had prior prevented the SDF from the area as a result of Saga Governor Yoshinori Yamaguchi's pledge to support the fisheries cooperative. The prefectural government will limit the military's use of the airport and the Defense Ministry will need to negotiate with local landowners in the purchasing of land for the base area which may prove difficult amid the opposition. [The Asahi Shimbun]

Japan: Lawyers denounce series of lawsuits by Unification Church

(sra) Lawyers of the Tokyo Bar Association issued a statement criticizing a series of lawsuits filed by the highly controversial Unification Church for stating the suppression of freedom of speech. The criticism was addressed at a conference in Tokyo on November 1, as the church filed a series of 'strategic lawsuits against public participation' (SLAPP), claiming defamation issues against national television commentators and others caused intimidation and stifled the speech of the plaintiffs.

The group of lawyers denouncing the SLAPP suit included 271 members made up of those from the association as well as university professors and others that oppose the financial ruin caused by the church to its followers. The lawsuits may be the church's way of impeding the government probe under suspected violations of civil law [see AiR No. 44, November/2022, 1]. The organization filed five lawsuits over September and October with claims reaching almost USD 672,000 in defamation damages against four major TV stations and individuals. [The Mainichi]

North Korea: Government replaces radio wave detectors near borders to lower international communication

(sm) According to a press source in Yanggang province in North Korea, the government has recently been replacing radio wave detectors in border regions with

China, such as Hyesan and Samjiyon, with newer models to more effectively crack down on the use of illegal foreign mobile phones.

The Ministry of State Security's Bureau 10, which is responsible for radio wave surveillance allegedly conducted a covert operation to replace detectors in the first half of October. The Ministry had been conducting a massive operation to catch all illegal phone users since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, arresting many people suspected of espionage. Suspects usually end up doing forced labor or detained in political prison camps.

While skepticism has been expressed over the increased effectiveness of these new detectors and the act of replacement, the rumor has been enough to deter a significant part of border residents from using their phones. Some North Koreans are careful never to call or message first, as they are allegedly easier to track this way, while others decry the rumors over the detectors completely. [Daily NK]

South Korea: Itaewon tragedy triggers massive investigation into police

(sm) Police and fire authorities have been under strict scrutiny in the aftermath of the tragic Itaewon incident on October 29 in which 156 people died and were crushed during Halloween celebrations in Seoul.

As of now, several key policy officials in charge on the night of the incident, such as Yongsan Policy Station Chief Lee Im-jae, Yongsan Ward Office Chief Park Hee-young, senior emergency monitoring officer Ryu Mi-jin, and Yongsan Fire Station Chief Choi Seong-beom, are under investigation and currently suspended.

The investigation focuses on whether the police officers who received the calls respected their duties and responded adequately to the situation. It also looks into whether the Yongsan Police Station's preventive preparation for the Halloween night had been sufficient, as the police usually devises public order and safety management plans for large gatherings.

On November 3, the Seoul Metropolitan Policy Agency, the Yongsan Police Station and several other authorities were raided by a special investigation team to find out the cause of the police and fire department's delayed reaction to the incident. More than 7000 pieces of evidence, digital data, documents,

and videos, among others have been collected until now and currently being analyzed.

Police had arrived on the scene only about one and a half hours after the deadly crowd crush started. Despite about a dozen emergency calls, only four units were initially dispatched in response to the distressed crowd. Only 200 police officers had been dispatched to Itaewon on the night of the incident, while 100,000 partygoers were predicted to participate.

Lee, Park, Choi, and Ryu are under investigation on charges of negligence of duty leading to the crowd crush deaths, officials announced on November 7. They are mainly being faulted for failing to communicate adequately and causing delay in the police emergency system and information system to the higher ups. National Policy Agency chief Yoon Hee-keun and Seoul Metropolitan Police Agency chief Kim Kwang-ho are also set to be investigated.

The Special Investigation Team spokesperson Kim Dong-wook disclosed that his team is also investigating the role of the ministry of interior and the Seoul city government for their responsibility over the incident. Critics, such as the main opposition Democratic Party, have commented that the accident could have been avoided with a better response from the emergency system and called for a parliamentary investigation of the issue. [Yonhap News Agency_1] [Yonhap News Agency_2] [Yonhap News Agency_3]

South Korea: Implementation of new emergency and crowd control policies following Itaewon incident

(sm) Seoul has been eyeing new safety and emergency measures in the wake of the Itaewon incident which left 156 Halloween party goers dead in a crowd crush on October 29. The government is looking to revamp its emergency call system as well as an integrated communication network for public safety and disaster prevention, which was out of order on the night of the tragedy.

As the policy had failed to properly respond to emergency calls on the night of October 29, Ministry of Interior and Safety official Park Jong-hyun announced on November 3 that policymakers would devise an update to the current hotline system as soon as investigations into the policy are finished. A task force supported by private experts for the safety management of large gatherings should also be set up in the early future. The communication network for

public safety and disaster prevention will also be looked into to determine the reason it was not operating.

In the meanwhile, the city government of Seoul is thinking about policies to address the routine overcrowding of the capital's subways by identifying high-density subway stops and strengthening evacuation measures and surveillance in such areas. Gangnam subway station is purported to be affected by the new emergency evacuation plans.

The city has been in mourning over the tragic crowd crush incident as more than 100,000 people offered their condolences at the funeral altars set up on the occasion, according to city officials on November 6. [Chosun Ilbo] [Korea Times] [Yonhap News Agency_1] [Yonhap News Agency_2]

South Korea: Age of criminal responsibility to be lowered by one year

(sm) On November 2, the South Korean Ministry of Justice announced the prospective revision of a law which aims at lowering the age of criminal accountability to 13 by one year.

In South Korea, minors between 10 and 14 years of age cannot be convicted with a crime, as they are considered to be criminal minors and usually referred to correctional facilities or community programs instead. The new law will make 13-year-old children eligible for criminal conviction.

The policy had been one of incumbent President Yoon Suk-yeol's campaign promises, as he had announced wanting to reduce the criminal age of responsibility to twelve, in line with the global average criminal age according to him. [Yonhap News Agency]

Taiwan: Military exercises conducted

(dql) Taiwan's Coast Guard Administration (CGA) has revealed that it has conducted a rescue exercise in waters surrounding Taiwan-controlled Taiping Island in the South China Sea on October 28.

The drill was part of efforts to transform Taiwan into a base for humanitarian aid and supplies in the South China Sea. It focused on a simulation of a fire in the engine room of a workboat and involved several vessels including the 4,000-ton coast guard patrol ship

and unmanned aerial vehicles flown to cast lifebuoys to those seeking help in water. [Focus Taiwan 1]

Meanwhile, rotary-wing aircraft were deployed for the first time, during drills conducted the island's Army Special Forces. The drills aimed to simulate the ferrying of troops into defensive positions. [Focus Taiwan 2]

In a latest development, Taiwan's Air Force kicked off its annual week-long Tien Lung exercise on November 7. The air-to-air, air-to-sea, and air-to-ground drills are expected to test the combat readiness and skills of pilots and involve F-16V, Mirage 2000-5, and Indigenous Defense Fighters. [Taiwan News]

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

Bangladesh: Dengue becomes another burden for people amid ongoing economic crisis

(az) Bangladesh reported five deaths from dengue on November 8, bringing the toll from the viral disease to 182 this year, the highest since the official tally began in 2000. The same day, the Directorate General of Health Services reported 820 new hospitalizations with dengue in 24 hours, bringing the number of hospitalizations from the disease to 44,802 across the country. However, the caseload is believed to be much higher as many people are still outside the government surveillance network.

Due to the increased number of dengue patients admitted to the hospitals, health care provider are charging more than usual. Some private hospitals also allegedly prescribe unnecessary medicines in addition to laboratory tests. In light of this, many poor people, as well as middle-class families, have to search for loans to afford the treatment cost. [New Age]

Bangladesh: Local firms in support of international hospitals plan to process world-class healthcare facilities

(az) To attract patients who want to receive international quality treatment, international hospitals in Bangladesh are trying to join hands with local partners. Seven local firms, in collaboration with hospital chains, have already begun the process of setting up world-class healthcare facilities in Dhaka and Chattogram with nearly USD 5 million in investments.

Around 700,000 Bangladeshis travel overseas for medical care annually, mainly to India. According to the Indian tourism ministry, Bangladesh was India's second-highest tourist-sourcing country, with 15.75 percent of the total number of foreign nationals visiting India being Bangladeshis. The local farms, taking technical and logistics support from the foreign hospitals, aim at attracting abroad-going patients to receive quality treatments in their own country. Countries like China, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia have already shown interest in building hospitals in Bangladesh. [The Business Standard]

India: Supreme Court grants relief to Jharkhand chief minister after summons from Enforcement Directorate

(vv) India’s Supreme Court on November 7 granted momentary relief to the chief minister of eastern Jharkhand state, Hemant Soren, after the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on November 2 issued summons to the minister over money laundering probe in an illegal mining case.

Soren had been asked to appear before the central probe agency on November 3, relative to its ongoing investigations on illegal grabbing and amassing of huge assets from illicitly run mining businesses in the state. Previously, Soren’s representative and close aide was arrested after being found guilty of acquiring criminal

proceeds amounting to USD 5 million, and over other incriminating evidence found during ED raids conducted at the residences of Mishra and his business associates.

A case under Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) was filed subsequently against Mishra, who is a member of the legislative assembly (MLA) in Jharkhand and controls all mining related businesses as well as inland ferry services in the state. Jharkhand chief minister is accused of allocating an illegal mining lease to Mishra in the said case. Other searches conducted by the ED relative to the probe resulted in the seizure of several explosives and arms found at the residences of business associates. [India Today]

Soren – leader of Jharkhand regional party Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) – skipped the summons, while denying all allegations of corruption against him. The minister claimed that he was summoned on the same day he had a program to attend in the east-central state Chhattisgarh, alleging that the summons and accusations are a political conspiracy by Prime Minister Modi's party the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Soren continued to challenge the BJP, which sits as the opposition party in Jharkhand, after JMM and the country's primary opposition party Indian National Congress (INC) formed an alliance to allegedly defeat an incumbent BJP state government in Jharkhand. It is worth noting that most opposition parties in the country accuse the BJP of using central agencies to allegedly file false cases against opposition ministers, an accusation BJP vehemently denies. Soren has now sought 3 weeks-time to appear before the ED, while a fresh date is expected soon from the federal agency. [Indian Express] [Hindustan Times]

In lieu of the summons, the apex court on November 7, passed a ruling that Public Interest Litigations (PILs) filed before Jharkhand High Court seeking a probe against Soren, on the alleged corruption charges, were not maintainable after previously placing a hold on the High Court PILs in August of this year, reserving a judgment. In light of this ruling, the Jharkhand chief minister hailed the judgment and continued to deny all allegations. [Telegraph]

India: Delhi deputy chief minister's close aide turns state witness, seeks pardon in Delhi excise policy scam

(vv) As investigations into Delhi's much controversial excise policy continue, businessman and one of the accused in the alleged scam Dinesh Arora, close aide of

Delhi deputy chief minister – and senior leader of anti-corruption party Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) – Manish Sisodia, has agreed to turn state witness in pursuit to seek pardon. [The Indian Express]

Amid prolonged tense exchanges between AAP, ruling party Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Delhi Lieutenant Governor (LG) Vinai Kumar Saxena, over the – now withdrawn – state excise policy that amended government run vendors to hold private licenses for retail and private business, investigations on financial irregularities in the said policy continued and Arora decided to turn approver for the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) – India's premier investigation agency. Previously, Sisodia's residence was raided on charges of corruption in the state excise policy, with both Sisodia and Delhi chief minister – leader of AAP – Arvind Kejriwal accusing the BJP of using state agencies for its own agendas, claiming that Prime Minister Modi was threatened by AAP's growing popularity. BJP has denied the said charges, maintaining that the CBI launched investigations on merits. [see AiR No. 34, August/2022, 4] [see AiR No. 35, August/2022, 5] Governor Saxena was the first to initiate official complaints against the Delhi excise policy, following which Kejriwal accused Saxena of corruption himself. Saxena has subsequently filed false defamation suits against several AAP leaders for said allegations. [see AiR No. 36, September/2022, 1] The latest development, however, spells trouble for Sisodia, as the deputy chief minister's role in the alleged scam remains contentious. [The Siasat Daily]

Arora appeared before a special judge in the national capital on November 7, seeking pardon and agreeing to turn state approver without any undue influence or coercion. Arora, and his lawyer R K Thakur, continued that the accused is willing to reveal all case sensitive accurate information that will further assist the probe and the decision was a voluntary choice of the businessman. Previously, Arora was arrested by the CBI as one of the main accused in the Delhi excise policy scam and later granted anticipatory bail. The CBI didn't oppose the bail as officials claimed Arora had divulged vital details relative to the alleged excise policy scam, which has further helped in the ongoing investigations. A special court in Delhi will now decide on CBI's plea to make Arora a state approver on November 14. [India Today] [Print]

India: Enforcement Directorate raids a dozen locations over money laundering probe in sale of defense land

(vv) The Enforcement Directorate (ED) - economic intelligence agency – on November 4 conducted a dozen raids in connection to money laundering and the alleged use of for the sale of defense lands in the eastern states Jharkhand and West Bengal.

The ongoing probe began following a Jharkhand Police FIR filed to investigate the alleged use of fabricated documents in sale and purchase of crucial defense lands. Real estate dealers, private individuals and linked entities were searched by the central agency. Other members raided and searched include individuals associated to businessman Amit Agarwal, based in West Bengal capital Kolkata, who was arrested by the ED in October relative to the said probe and on charges of conspiracy to trap lawyer Rajeev Kumar, who's representing the PILs filed against Jharkhand chief minister Hemant Soren – who is under the ED radar for alleged corruption in illegal mining business. [Indian Express] [The Hindu]

India: National Investigating Agency arrests three in connection to BJP youth leader's murder

(vv) The National Investigating Agency (NIA) – the primary counter terrorism task force of India – conducted searches in five locations in southern state Karnataka and arrested three members of the banned muslim outfit Popular Front India (PFI), in connection to the murder of ruling party Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) youth leader Praveen Nettaru in the southern state. [Hindustan Times]

The Indian Home Ministry had banned PFI, and it's affiliates, on September 28 for a period of five years after being found guilty of terrorism, hate crimes, radicalization and for links with terror outfits Al Qaeda and ISIS, while its political wing Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI) was excluded from the ban. Raids and investigations on PFI and SDPI members, however, continued even as PFI refutes the allegations and maintains that its organization empowers minority muslims in the country. [see AiR No. 40, October/2022, 1] Combined with the investigations on the murder of BJP youth leader Nettaru, who was hacked to death by sharp weapons by alleged PFI cadres in the southern state on July 26, the most recent raids and arrests are of PFI and SDPI members for their alleged involvement in the said murder. [see AiR No. 31, August/2022, 1]

The three arrested have been identified as K Mahammad Iqbal, K Ismail Shafi and Ibrahim Sha, all having links with the banned outfit PFI and for political

associations with SDPI, and are the most recent arrests made in the case for alleged involvement in the conspiracy hatched to murder Nettaru. During the searches, incriminating documents, sharp weapons, and digital devices were seized from the residences of the accused. So far, 10 accused have been arrested in the said case, while the NIA are pursuing all efforts to arrest four other accused declared absconding by the counter-terrorism agency. [Asian News International] [The Hindu]

India: Politicians trade blames as pollution reaches alarming levels in Delhi

(vv) Even as the air quality in the national capital Delhi worsened, Indian politicians continued to trade blames on the current pollution crisis in all of northern states in the country, while schools remained shut after the air quality index (AIQ) in Delhi breached the “severe” and “hazardous” categories.

Delhi, and several northern states in India, have been battling hazardous pollution levels for years but the most recent AQI number exceeding the normal boundary of 400 has sparked much panic across the country. As the AQI number reached 450 on November 3, people of Delhi were practically breathing smoke by mid-day and schools, especially primary schools, were ordered to shut immediately by The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights. While chief minister, and leader of anti-corruption party Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), Arvind Kejriwal suggested implementing preventive measures such as the infamous “Odd-Even” rule that allows private vehicles to be driven on alternating days based on the last digit of their number plate. Other preventive measures recommended by Kejriwal was to allow Work from Home for 50% of all office staff, to minimize exposure to the “hazardous” levels of pollution in the capital. [The Strait Times] [The Hindu]

Even as the people of Delhi continued to breathe toxic air, political parties initiated a “blame game” as many called it. While the AAP claims that its proposed solutions to counter the worsening AIQ were rejected by the central government run by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), ministers of Prime Minister Modi’s party blamed Kejriwal for turning Delhi into an alleged “gas chamber”. The deteriorating air quality is a matter for concern in neighboring northern states Punjab and Haryana as well, as farmers burn large quantities of crops during winters that worsens the existing poor air quality. Stating the same concerns, Kejriwal continued that farm fires and air pollution is a problem

throughout Northern India but Prime Minister Modi allegedly choses to play politics only in AAP ruled states. Soon after, on November 4, Kejriwal alongside Punjab chief minister Bhagwant Mann, addressing a press conference stated that now is not the time to pin blame for pollution in National Capital Region (NCR) of Delhi and in Punjab, continuing that they take responsibility and seek assistance from the central government. [BBC] [Hindustan Times]

In lieu of the said matter, National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) issued summons to chief secretaries of northern states Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and Delhi to appear before the commission on November 10 to discuss the matter with urgency. The NHRC was allegedly not satisfied with the preventive actions taken so far to address pollution, and that more efforts were required especially in Delhi that is known for the worst AIQ in all of India. NHRC has also sought a detailed response within a week, on steps taken by the respective state governments to address stubble-burning carried out by farmers. [Tribune India]

India: Prime Minister Modi assures end of corruption in defense sector, touts Make in India policy to be a success

(vv/wr) India's Prime Minister Narendrai Modi has said that anti-graft agencies should work without fear. Addressing an event to mark the Vigilance Awareness Week of the Central Vigilance Commission, the premier said the possibility of scams in the country's defense sector is "ending" as the country is moving towards self-reliance by manufacturing its own equipment. [Hindustan Times]

India: Supreme Court upholds validity of 10 percent quota reservation for Economically Weaker Section

(wr) India's Supreme Court in a three-to-two majority vote uphold the validity of a constitutional amendment that introduced a 10 percent reservation in government jobs and educational institutions for the so-called Economically Weaker Section, a subcategory of people having an annual family income less than USD 10,000 and who do not belong to any other category. [Hindustan Times]

India: Radical Hindu leader shot dead in Amritsar

(wr) A radical Hindu religious leader, Sudhir Suri, has been shot dead while protesting in the northwestern city of Amritsar - home to the gilded Golden Temple, one of the holiest sites of the Sikh religion. Suri was the self-styled leader of a fundamentalist religious group, Hindu Shiv Sena, and had sparked the anger of many Sikhs who accused him of making derogatory remarks about their faith and community. [BBC] [NDTV] [HindustanTimes] [Voice of America]

India: Army brass to review operational situation with China in five-day retreat

(lm) The top generals of India's Army on November 7 kicked off a five-day, biannual retreat in the country's capital New Delhi, against the larger backdrop of the continuing 30-month-long military standoff in eastern Ladakh with China and growing insecurity in the Indian Ocean region. [MSN]

The Army Commanders' Conference, chaired by General Manoj Pande, will review the operational situation, combat readiness and border infrastructure development, among other issues. The agenda also features a briefing by the Commander-in-Chief of Andaman and Nicobar Command (CINCAN), the only tri-services command, and an expert talk, both on China post disengagement in Ladakh and the Indian Ocean Region. [The Hindu Businessline]

India: Army seeks more than 2,200 drones

(wr/lm) The Indian Army has launched a series of fast-track drone procurement efforts under emergency powers that will see the military spend up to USD 36 million for each program. [DefenseNews]

In February this year India banned the import of drones, except for those needed by the military or for research and development. The government wants to develop a home-grown industry that can design and assemble drones and make the components that go into their manufacture. [BBC]

India: Army foils infiltration bid into Kashmir territory, kills three believed

terrorists

(vv/wr) The Indian Army on November 3 detected suspicious movement along the military control line between the Indian- and Pakistani-controlled parts of disputed Kashmir. At least three believed terrorists were killed in the ensuing gunfight. [IndiaToday] [HindustanTimes] [NDTV]

Pakistan: Former Prime Minister Imran Khan shot in lower leg in reported assassination attempt

(fm/tj) Pakistan's former Prime Minister and opposition leader Imran Khan survived a gun attack – which supporters say was an attempted assassination – while he was leading a protest march to demand fresh elections for his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Party (PTI) in the country's Punjab province on November 3. Khan suffered bullet wounds to his right leg; one person was killed and at least 10 injured. [CNN]

Immediately after the shooting, some of Khan's allies told media that the opposition leader believed the current political leaders - including Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the interior minister and a senior official of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) had plotted the attack. Khan reiterated these allegations in a letter he later sent to Pakistani President and fellow party member Arif Alvi, while also claiming that he had information from within the intelligence agencies that a plot was being hatched to assassinate him. In the letter, Khan also lambasted ISI chief Lieutenant-General Nadeem Anjum and the director general for the military's public relations, Lieutenant-General Babar Iftikhar, for addressing a nationally televised news conference against him late last month [see AiR No. 44, November/2022, 1]. [Voice of America]

Furthermore, Khan later said police in Punjab were insisting he withdrew a reference to the ISI official from his complaint before they investigate his accusation. In light of this, Pakistan's Supreme Court inquired on November 11 why law enforcement had not begun a formal investigation four days after the shooting - and gave them 24 hours to do so. Meanwhile, the government and the military have rejected the charges as "baseless and irresponsible" and "absolutely unacceptable and uncalled for." [Al Jazeera] [BBC]

On November 6, Khan announced that the protest march would resume two days later from the same point in Wazirabad where his convoy came under

attack. Imran said that once the march reaches Rawalpindi, he would then join it and lead it himself. [The Frontier Post]

Pakistan: Government lifts ban on live broadcasting of Imran Khan's speeches

(msk) Pakistan's government has instructed the country's media regulatory (PEMRA) to lift a ban on broadcasting or rebroadcasting speeches from former Prime Minister and opposition politician Imran Khan. Previously, PEMRA had issued the ban after Khan had alleged that the current political leaders - including Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the interior minister and a senior official of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) – were behind the assassination attempt on him on November 3. [NDTV] [Express Tribune]

Sri Lanka: Hundreds protests in Colombo against economic crisis, alleged state-led repression

(sn) Political parties, mass organizations and student unions in Sri Lanka on November 2 held demonstrations in the capital Colombo to protest against inflation, which hit 66 percent last month, and to call for new elections. They also accused the government of using the Prevention of Terrorism Act, the country's anti-terrorism legislation, to crack down on protest leaders and jail two of them. [Colombopage] [NewsFirst] [Reuters]

Six main business chambers requested the protest organizers to cancel the demonstration to protect the flow of tourism and exports. [Economynext]

Sri Lanka: Villagers murders policeman after killing of woman by wild elephant

(sn) A police officer in Sri Lanka succumbed to his injuries sustained at the hands of a group of enraged villagers who attacked the man and his colleagues when they attempted to investigate the death of a woman during an invasion of the village by wild elephants. [Island.lk]

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

Cambodia: Two opposition parties merge

(sn) In preparation for Cambodia's general election next year, the opposition Kampucheaniyum Party (KP) and Khmer National United Party (KNUP) have merged. Former opposition lawmaker and KP founder Yem Ponhearith decided to merge his party with the KNUP to boost their probability of gaining more seats in the National Assembly. The ruling Cambodian People's Party (CCP) said that it has no concern with the merger since "loser plus loser equals loser". [Phnom Penh Post]

Cambodia: Prime minister defends new agriculture minister against criticism

(sn) Cambodian Prime Minister Huns Sen has defended recently appointed Agricultural Minister Dith Tina against public criticism based on his perceived lack of qualification. [Cambodianess]

Indonesia: President Joko Widodo approves ministers running for election

(os) President Joko Widodo has spoken in favor of a recent ruling of the Constitutional Court that allows ministers to run for election as presidential or vice-presidential candidates while in office.

The ruling overturned a provision within the 2017 election law that required ministers or ministerial-level officials to resign if they wanted to run for election. Now, according to the Court, they only need the permission of the President if they want to take leave for campaigning. The court stated that the previous rule was discriminatory since everyone should be allowed to run for office. While the President approved the ruling, he clarified that he will take the performance of ministers running for election into consideration for the next Cabinet reshuffle.

Some experts warned of possible conflicts of interest if ministers are campaigning while sitting in office and pointed at the risk that high-ranking officials running for election could exploit state facilities to gain votes.

Several officials at the ministerial level have already expressed their willingness to run for the presidential election in 2024 to succeed President Joko Widodo. Defense minister Prabowo Subianto has accepted the nomination by Gerindra Party. Also, Golkar Party has endorsed current coordinating economic minister Airlangga Hartarto. [The Jakarta Post]

Indonesia: Villagers file lawsuit against mining operation

(os) A group of villagers in Wadas, Purworejo, Central Java, has filed a lawsuit with the Jakarta State Administrative Court to fight a mining project in their village.

In 2021, the Indonesian government approved mining in Wadas to be used for the construction of the Bener Dam near the village. This dam is one of the government's national strategic projects. It is supposed to supply water for irrigation and act as a hydroelectric power plant.

The villagers point out that they have never been consulted regarding the project. Prior protests failed to hold back the government to acquire plots of land in the village for the mining operation. The local government is set to pay out compensation to villagers who agree to sell their land.

The representative of the villagers, the Yogyakarta Legal Aid Institute, claims that the mining activities lack a valid permit. According to the institute, the 2009 Law on Mineral and Coal Mining does not allow unlicensed mining activities. [The Jakarta Post]

Indonesia: Calls to investigate death of Papuan activist mount

(os) Activists call for an in-depth investigation of the death of Filep Karma, one of the most prominent Papuan independence activists, who was found dead on a beach in Papua on November 1.

According to a report, Karma had been diving alone when he drowned. Following an external investigation of his body, Karma's daughter, Andrefina Karma, stated that her father's death was accidental and not the result of any kind of violence.

Filep Karma had been an activist for Papuan independence since the 1990s. He was imprisoned twice for organizing flag-raising ceremonies of the Morning Star flag, which is a symbol of Papuan independence. Serving a total of twelve years in prison, he was granted early release by President Joko Widodo in 2015.

Given Karma's prominent role in the independence movement, Papuan activist group Papuan Customary Council (DAP) formed a team to conduct an independent investigation of Karma's death. The group stated that an external investigation would not be sufficient. Amnesty International Indonesia also called on law enforcement and human rights agencies to investigate the case in-depth pointing out that many Papuan activists have become targets of violence. [The Diplomat] [The Guardian] [The Jakarta Post]

Malaysia: Campaigning kicks off for November 19 general election

(lm/gc) Campaigning has formally begun for Malaysia's November 19 general elections, a highly competitive race that will see the Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition seeking to regain its dominance four years after a shocking electoral loss. [Al Jazeera] [The Diplomat]

Scores of candidates, including BN leader Anwar Ibrahim and two-time former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad submitted their nomination papers at their constituencies on November 5, paving the way for the start of a 14-day campaigning period. Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob registered to defend his seat in central Pahang state.

Parliament's term was set to expire in July 2023, but Prime Minister Ismail decided to dissolve Parliament on October 10, paving the way for snap polls [see AiR

No. 41, October/2022, 2]. Ismail and his United Malays National Organization (UMNO) is feuding with allies in the ruling BN coalition and seeks to capitalize on recent wins in local polls to improve on their four-seat majority in the 222-member house.

Meanwhile, the relatively low number of female candidates running for UMNO in the upcoming general election has led to criticism by NGOs. According to *GAP Malaysia*, women made up 50 percent of voters, but only 10 percent of UMNOS's candidates were female. [FREE MALAYSIA TODAY]

Malaysia: Interim government accused of awarding projects through direct negotiations

(gc/lm) The vice president of Malaysia's opposition People's Justice Party (PJP) has alleged that some members of the caretaker government are trying to award multimillion dollar projects through direct negotiations to companies with ties to the United Malays National Organisation of Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob. Speaking against the backdrop of the upcoming general elections, the PJP senior official claimed that such projects shouldn't be approved by the interim government. [The New Straits Times]

Myanmar: Five anti-junta protesters arrested in Mandalay city

(tp) A prominent monk activist and four other political activists from a local resistance group in the country's second-largest city, Mandalay, have been arrested by the military. Since last year's military coup, more than 50 monks, who spoke out against the military government, have been arrested by the junta. [Myanmar Now] [RFA]

Myanmar: Aviation fuel supply chain linked to war crimes, *Amnesty* reports

(th) Human rights watchdog *Amnesty International* in a report claims that fuel supplies intended for civilian planes in Myanmar are being diverted to the country's ruling military junta, which then uses it to bombard civilians. The report revealed that both civilian and military planes were often provided jet fuel from the same storage facilities. Some foreign fuel shipments

were also delivered directly to the junta. [Amnesty International] [Deutsche Welle]

Singapore-based Puma Energy, handled and distributed the shipments, told *Reuters* that the air fuel provided to Myanmar is not used by the Myanmar air force. Puma announced in October that it would leave Myanmar, but it has not yet given an exit date [see AiR No. 41, October/2022, 2]. [Reuters]

Myanmar: Former member of overthrown government sentenced to 148 years in prison

(jp) A former lawmaker from Myanmar's deposed National League for Democracy (NLD) party, Win Myint Hlaing, was handed a 148-year prison sentence last week, adding to a previous conviction which will now see him spend a total of 173 years in prison. The sentence, which was handed down on November 2 after his conviction on eight offences under the counterterrorism act, appeared to be the longest jail term given to any member of Aung San Suu Kyi's government and NLD party since the military seized power in February last year. [Al Jazeera]

Thailand: Opposition Move Forward Party risks dissolution over bid to amend royal defamation law

(fj) Thailand's opposition Move Forward Party (MFP) is facing pushback for including plans to amend Article 112 of the penal code on royal insults in its policy pledge for the upcoming general election, which has been tentatively scheduled for May 2023. A complaint against the party was filed with the Election Commission (EC), requesting investigation into whether the pledge constitutes a violation of the Political Parties Act.

MFP politicians have been among the most vocal critics of Thailand's lèse majesté law, particularly since a growing number of political activists involved in the large-scale anti-establishment protests that began in late 2020 have been charged under the law. As it currently stands, the text of the law states that anyone who defames, insults, or threatens the King or other members of the royal family is to be punished with imprisonment of three to 15 years.

A previous push was made by the MFP in 2021 to reduce the punishment under the law to a maximum of one year imprisonment and a fine of USD 8,000. It further sought to limit the ability to file lèse majesté complaints to the Royal Household Bureau, whereas the current legislation permits any citizen to file such complaints with the police. In reaction to this, charges against the MFP were filed with the EC, alleging that the push for policy reform was part of a broader effort by the party to overthrow Thailand's fundamental political structure as a democracy with the Monarch as Head of State. The EC ultimately decided against passing the charges on to the Constitutional Court.

By reaffirming its continued commitment to see reform of lèse majesté legislation, the MFP is standing out from rivaling political parties. Among the other major political parties, all but the Pheu Thai Party (PTP) have clearly stated their disinterest in amendments of Article 112. The PTP, the biggest opposition party, has been avoiding clear commitments on the issue. [Thai PBS World]

Thailand: Thai Sang Chart Party would welcome Prime Minister Prayut, party leader says

(th/lm) Against the larger backdrop of a possible party switching ahead of Thailand's general elections, tentatively scheduled for May 2023, the chairman of the Ruam Thai Sang Chart Party has stated that he would welcome current Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha joining the party. [The Bangkok Post 1]

Deputy Prime Minister Prawit Wongsuwon, meanwhile, stated that he would not prevent Prayut from no longer running as a candidate for the ruling Palang Pracharath Party. He also confirmed that he, the prime minister and Interior Minister Anupong Paochinda would remain close. [The Bangkok Post 2]

Thailand: House votes in favor of opposition-sponsored charter referendum motion

(lm) The lower House of the Thai parliament on November 3 voted in favor of an opposition-sponsored motion calling for a referendum on the drafting of a new constitution, after the voting was deferred for more than one month. The motion needs the support

of the Senate to turn it into action, but the Senate has not scheduled a meeting. [The Bangkok Post]

The motion, proposed by the opposition Move Forward Party and Pheu Thai Party, calls on the government to hold a referendum asking the public if the country should have a new constitution drawn up by a charter drafting assembly made up of elected representatives to replace the current charter. It also suggests the referendum be held on the same day as the next general election, which is tentatively scheduled for May 7, 2023.

Thailand: Government leaders deny plans to dissolve parliament following APEC summit

(fj) Thailand's Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha, Deputy Prime Minister Prawit Wongsuwon and other leading members of the ruling Phalang Pracharat Party (PPRP) have rejected speculations that parliament might be dissolved before the completion of its four-year term on in March next year. With their clear rejections, the PPRP leaders are countering rumors suggesting either the completion of hosting the APEC Summit (November 18 to 19) or December 24 as likely dates for an early dissolution of parliament. [Bangkok Post] [The Nation Thailand]

Thailand: Voters in north favor Pheu Thai Party's Phaetongtarn Shinawatra as premier, poll shows

(fj) A recent opinion poll shows that Paetongtarn Shinawatra, a high-profile member of Thailand's main opposition Pheu Thai Party (PTP), is the most favored choice for the position of prime minister among voters in Thailand's northern provinces.

However, when extrapolating from the poll's results to the upcoming general elections and the race for the post of prime minister two caveats must be considered. Firstly, the strong regional divergences among the Thai electorate must be considered. As a case in point, last week's installment of the NIDA poll focusing on Bangkokians' voting preferences saw the progressive Move Forward Party ahead of the PTP [see AiR No. 44, November/2022,1]. Secondly, the Senate with its 250 members will vote together with the 500 members of parliament in electing the next prime minister. Hence, the popular vote will only determine a

part of the support that a candidate will need in becoming the next prime minister. [Bangkok Post 2]

Thailand: Government amends regulations on production of alcoholic beverages

(fj) Thailand's Cabinet approved new ministerial regulations governing the production of alcoholic drinks on November 1. An opposition-sponsored liquor liberalization bill was subsequently rejected in its second and third reading in parliament on November 3 by a slim majority of lawmakers. [Thai PBS World]

Due to their timing and contents, the new ministerial regulations have been seen as motivated by the intention to preempt MFP's proposed legislation. Whereas the declared goal of MFP's liquor liberalization bill was to lower the entry barrier for small brewers and liquor producers, MFP leader Pita Limjaroenrat accused the government of now enacting legislation that will make it even harder for small-scale producers to partake in the economic opportunities of this industry. [Bangkok Post] [Thai Enquirer]

Pita suggested that the new ministerial regulations safeguard the interests of the established big alcohol companies by requiring even small-scale producers to register as legal entities or partnerships and by putting in place strict restrictions on the machinery that can be used in production. [Bangkok Post]

In its response to the criticism, a government spokesperson stressed that the regulations had been adopted following normal procedures and that the government was seeking to balance liberalization with the need for safety and health provisions. [Bangkok Post]

Thailand: Government U-turns regarding directive on land sale to wealthy foreigners

(fj/th) Thailand's government is reportedly backing down from its proposal to allow wealthy foreigners to buy land in Thailand under the requirement of a minimum investment of around USD 1 million. [Bangkok Post]

The bill has been criticized regarding the lack of provisions against groups of foreigners purchasing

adjacent pieces of land. Thailand's comparatively low tax rates across different aspects of real estate ownership have also been pointed out as an important factor that distinguishes the country from many of the other nations that have adopted liberal policies on foreigners owning real estate. The concern was that these low tax rates might make real estate in the country an attractive object for speculation. [Bangkok Post] [see AiR No. 44, November/2022,1]

Thailand: Anti-Money Laundering Act amended in response to US TIP report

(td) Thailand's amended Anti-Money Laundering Act has been published in the Royal Gazette since October 25 and shall take effect within 60 days. Such an active move to rectify laws does not only seek to combat criminal offenses involving money laundering, which in turn ensures the public order, but also to upgrade the country's ranking in the United States State Department's Trafficking in Persons (US TIP) report. In 2022, Thailand is now on the list of Tier 2 after it was demoted to Tier 2 Watch List last year because of rising human trafficking cases.

The bill in question focuses on three aspects including compensation of victims for damages severely caused to them, enabling them to seek compensation or — in contrast — appeal to the Court to protect their confiscated assets if they had unknowingly engaged in criminal activities, and mandating the Court to authorize the sell-off of wrongly accumulated assets through the Anti-Money Laundering Office to provide compensations, managed the Treasury Department. Besides, the related agencies have worked on the organic law to align their practices with international standards, the International Monetary Fund (IMF)'s Anti-Money Laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT).

Prior to the endorsement of the Act, it was reported that the Cabinet had approved a draft amendment to the Money Laundering Act, in 2021, to include more offenses such as child pornography trade, tax evasion, digital asset trade, bid rigging, document forgery, and loan sharking to combat financial-related crimes. It would cover identity fraud in transactions as well and empower officials to supervise international currency and data flows. [Bangkok Post] [Bangkokbiznews, in Thai] [The Nation Thailand]

Thailand: Civil society groups expect APEC to prioritize grass-root problems

(td) In the lead up to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit on November 14-19, dozens of civil society and non-governmental groups across Thailand are set to hold parallel meetings to raise a wide range of socio-economic problems for discussion in a bid to make their collective voices heard. Although the Thai host is committed to advancing regional economic integration, liberalization of trade and investment, green economy, and digitalization, the public believes that only big corporations stand to benefit hugely from the APEC Summit, as opposed to grassroots or ordinary people.

Drawing a comparison between APEC and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), as well as the G20, the first bloc — in their views — hardly offers a representation to citizens in order that they will have an opportunity to meet with leaders and delegates from the 21 APEC member economies. Therefore, in general, they have sought to participate in the international gathering to put forth their viewpoints and suggestions to ensure that any policy initiatives, to be implemented, are compatible with their communities and responsive to their demands. Some cases in point are community rights, digitalization, access to resources, and food security [Thai PBS World].

Vietnam: Takedown deadline for misinformation reduced to 24 hours

(ih) On November 4., Minister of Information and Communications Nguyen Manh Hung announced that the government has reduced the deadline for social media platforms to address false or “anti-state” content on their services from 48 hours to 24 hours. Minister Hung also stated that he believed current penalties for posting and spreading misinformation online were significantly below the penalties imposed by Vietnam’s Southeast Asian peers and indicated that his ministry would propose an increase in the administrative finds for these offences to an extent that they would be an effective deterrent. [Reuters]

Vietnam: Ruling party’s Inspection Commission meets to decide disciplinary measures

(ih) On November 1-2, the Central Committees of the Communist Party of Vietnam's (VCP) Inspection Commission held its 22nd meeting to decide on disciplinary measures for Party officials and organizations. Senior officials within the VCP Committee and People's Committee of Dong Thap province were issued warnings and reprimands for actions which enabled the breaching of party regulations and state laws governing the bidding and purchasing of medical materials for pandemic control during the current 2021 to 2026 tenure.

The standing boards of the VCP Committees of the Shipbuilding Industry Corporation (Vinashin) were found to have taken actions enabling the company to break Party regulations and State laws around financial management, resulting in considerable losses to the State, in the 2010 to 2015 and 2015 to 2020 tenures. The Committee decided disciplinary actions should be taken against the members of these committees, as well as the Chairman of the Members' Council of Vinashin and the Director General of the corporation, as well as numerous unnamed individuals.

Warnings and reprimands were handed out to a wide variety of organizations in An Giang province for actions taken in the 2015 to 2020 and 2020 to 2025 tenure, including the VCP Committee of the Public Security Department, the Party civil affairs board of the provincial People's Procuracy, and the Party civil affairs board of the provincial People's Court.

The Committee also examined the results of inspections of the provincial VCP Committee of Soc Trang province, noting the standing board of the provincial Committee had taken actions that enabled some unnamed organizations and individuals to break Party regulations and State laws surrounding asset declaration, land management and use, and personnel work. The standing board was required to correct its mistakes, determine responsibility for the violations that had occurred, and report back to the Committee. [Vietnam+]

International Relations, Geopolitics and Security in Asia

G7 discuss Chinese military expansion, Ukraine aid

(sra) The Group of Seven (G7) nations held a meeting to discuss how to best solve the tensions of sovereignty between Taiwan and China, as well as the most effective way to provide support for Ukraine as winter looms over the Russian invasion.

The two-day meeting was one of ten talks this year, held in Muenster, Germany on November 3 in which ministers from Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States along with European Union counterparts, shared an agreement to seek a 'free and open Indo-Pacific.'

The ministers in response to China's military expansion exchanged views on the major power, stating the nations will work in collaboration to hold Beijing accountable for its role as a member of the United Nations Security Council and under the UN Charter of peaceful diplomacy to enhance a secure resolution of cross-Strait issues with Taiwan. In a joint communiqué on November 4, the foreign ministers called on China to avoid the use of force or coercion. All members acknowledged that any threats toward another nation's sovereignty are a violation of international law, with concerns about how the increased tensions throughout the East and South China Seas undermine the geopolitical stability of the region. [German General Foreign Office]

The meeting also raised concerns over China's violation of human rights in Tibet, the unlawful treatment of the Uyghur Muslim minority in the Xinjiang region, as well as the erosion of autonomy and civil rights in Hong Kong. Although the ministers condemned China's military assertion, they also expressed the need for cooperation in terms of countering global health and climate issues. In the German Chancellor's meeting with Chinese Leader Xi Jinping, Olaf Scholz also pushed for China's role in ending Russia's war on Ukraine. [Politico] [Reuters 1]

Russia's invasion was also condemned, as the foreign ministers expressed concerns about upholding support for Ukraine despite all the political shifts in leadership in the West. With winter coming up, aid will need to be strengthened in order to prevent increased mortality rates due to food or electricity shortages, as more than 30 percent of Ukrainian electricity grids have been destroyed by Russian attacks. The group pledged to also send aid in the form of climate necessities such as heaters, pumps, beds, blankets and sanitary portacabins to name a few.

Tensions with China after President Xi Jinping's statement that China will never promise to renounce the use of force in its quest for unification have brought up concerns similar to those of Russian policy. And thus, provoked the multilateral group to reconsider its trading relationship with China. However, Germany has decided to continue Chinese investment in the China Ocean Shipping Company (Cosco) to a port in Hamburg, merely reducing its stakes to 24.9 percent [see also AiR No. 44, November/2022, 1]. [Reuters]

The recent actions of North Korea's test-fired ballistic missiles were also a topic of scrutiny, as the G7 ministers condemned the ongoing drills with a warning that any nuclear test or use of force will be met with a robust international response. [Kyodo News 1]

The G7 summit also allowed Yoshimasa Hayashi, Foreign Minister of Japan – the only Asian country in the G7 group – to meet up with international counterparts to enhance ties and international collaboration. He also held a series of talks with his counterparts from Canada, France, Germany, Italy, the UK and the US. The meetings were held to promote international cooperation in enhancing a 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific,' and address concerns over support for Ukraine.

A summary of each of the bilateral meetings is available through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. [Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan]

Navy chiefs of Quad grouping meet in Japan ahead of Malabar multilateral exercise

(wr/lm) The navy chiefs of the United States, India, Japan and Australia - the informal grouping known as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) – met in Tokyo on November 5, just days before the launch of this year's iteration of the Malabar naval exercise off

Yokosuka on November 8. This exercise will conclude on November 18.

The meeting in Tokyo came ahead of a series of multilateral engagements in the next couple of weeks to be hosted by Japan. This year also marks 30 years of the Malabar exercise, which began as a training event between India and the US in 1992. In 2020, Australia again participated in the exercise following a 12-year hiatus. [NDTV] [RepublicWorld] [The Hindu]

China supports Russia's call for bioweapons probe at UN Security Council; India abstains

(wr/lm) Russia failed on November 2 to get the United Nations Security Council to establish a formal inquiry into its accusation that the United States and Ukraine have biological weapons programs in Ukraine, a claim that Washington and Kyiv deny. Only China voted with Russia in favor of a draft resolution on the measure. The United States, Britain and France voted against it, while the remaining 10 council members, including India abstained. [Reuters] [The Washington Post]

Explaining India's abstention Counsellor Asokan Amarnath cited the absence of "an effective, universal & non-discriminatory verification mechanism" for implementing the Biological Weapons Convention. [DeccanHerald] [Times of India]

Flood-battered Pakistan seeks loss and damage 'compensation' at COP27

(msk) The ultimate goal of Pakistan in this year's Conference of Parties (COP) 27 will be finally getting the world to commit to helping countries like Pakistan deal with the growing "loss and damage" caused by global warming, according to Pakistan's climate change minister. At this month's U.N. climate negotiations in Egypt, Pakistan will lead a bloc of more than 100 developing nations insisting on compensation for the irreversible harms of climate change — a class of impacts collectively known as "loss and damage." The bloc has called for the creation of a dedicated loss-and-damage fund, which hard-hit countries can rely on for immediate assistance after a disaster, rather than waiting for humanitarian aid or loans that will drive them into debt.

In a video message posted in the run-up to COP27, U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres called the climate conference a critical "litmus test" for rebuilding trust between developed and developing countries, and said he hoped it would be able to secure meaningful outcomes around loss and damage. He singled out the devastation caused by the flooding in Pakistan as an example of how "the world is failing to invest in protecting the lives and livelihoods of those on the frontline".

A recent assessment led by Pakistan's government has put the cost of recovery from the floods at more than USD 12.5 billion [see AiR No. 36, September/2022, 1]. It is unlikely that Pakistan - with its economy already wracked by spiraling inflation - can cover that sum on its own. In response to the Pakistan floods, the United Nations launched an appeal to raise USD 160 million, which was later increased to USD 816 million to provide healthcare, food, shelter and clean drinking water to 9.5 million people. The U.N. Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Pakistan revealed in October that only USD 90 million had been received so far. [Reuters] [Washington Post] [Express Tribune]

China-backed revival of Teesta River moves forward amid geopolitical concerns

(az) China could soon begin a USD 1 billion project to revive the Teesta River, which is shared by Bangladesh and India. China's ambassador to Bangladesh Li Jiming visited the river last month, saying engineers from the Power Construction Corporation of China (Power China) were carrying out an inspection of the work area.

Although China is interested in starting the project upon request from Bangladesh due to the decreasing water level, there remains some tension with India. The Indian side is not only diverting the flow of the river but also exporting water to other parts of the country. Due to these actions of India, Bangladesh lost many fish species, leading to hundreds of fishermen losing jobs, resulting in an issue of inequality. [South China Morning Post]

300 suspected migrants from Sri Lanka rescued off Vietnam

(lm) Vietnam said on November 7 that more than 300 suspected migrants have been rescued after their boat

began taking on water. The boat was thought to be heading to Canada, about 6,000 nautical miles across the Pacific Ocean. [The Washington Post]

Sri Lankans in the past sometimes undertook hazardous and illegal boat journeys to escape a long civil war. Some Sri Lankans are now trying to escape an economic crisis by migrating illegally to other countries [see latest AiR No. 44, November/2022, 1].

World Bank voices for urgent climate action in Bangladesh

(az) Due to Bangladesh's success in adaptation and disaster risk management and for budget prioritization, carbon taxation, external financing, and private investment, the World Bank calls for urgent climate action to sustain strong growth in the country.

According to the World Bank's Country and Climate Development Report (CCDR) for Bangladesh, the country should focus on improving agriculture productivity, energy, and transport efficiency to lower future emissions while improving air, soil, and water quality. The report also said that besides a high level of air pollution, which costs about 9 percent of GDP annually, the average tropical cyclones in Bangladesh put an annual burden of USD 1 billion. For Bangladesh's climate-resilient growth and development, the report prioritizes three sectors: people-centric, climate-smart development, delivering development benefits with decarbonization, and enabling environment and institutional realignment. [bdnews24]

World Bank-supported project provides chance for education to disadvantaged children in Bangladesh

(az) According to the World Bank, around five million children in Bangladesh remained out of school, mostly in under-served areas and urban slums. Added to the already stretched local economy and social services is the mass influx of Rohingya refugees, which caused increased dropout rates and disengagement among the host community youths. To help the disadvantaged children in Bangladesh, the World Bank has started the Reaching Out of School Children (ROSC II) project, providing primary education to 735,000 children. Benefitting mainly from the area's innovative and community-led program are the children from rural

areas, especially the girls. This project not only helped to reach the dropouts among Bangladeshi children but also the Rohingya children who fled the genocide in Myanmar.

While there persists inequity of access, completion rates, learning outcomes, and transition to upper grades and to secondary education in the Bangladeshi education system, the project comes up with new opportunities for children in targeted deprived communities through innovative learning centers (LCs), providing non-formal education through Government-NGO-UN collaboration and financial support from the IDA 19 Sub-Window for Refugees and Host Communities. [The Business Standard]

Cambodia hosts 5th ACMECS, 6th CLMV Tourism Ministers meetings in Siem Reap

(sn) Cambodia hosted the 5th Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy meeting (ACMECS) and the 6th Cambodia-Lao-Myanmar-Vietnam (CLMV) Tourism Ministers meetings in Siem Reap on November 3. CLMV Members and Thailand's Tourism Ministers attended the event. Discussions dealt with the impact of COVID-19 on tourism and strategies to overcome these issues [Khmer Times]

Bangladesh, Qatar sign agreement for cooperation in defense sector

(az) As part of ongoing efforts to increase cooperation in new areas of bilateral relations between Bangladesh and Qatar, especially in the defense sector, the delegations from both countries signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). [The Business Standard]

Japan agrees to provide USD 3.4 million to Bangladesh for a human resource development project

(az) As a part of the human resource development project, Japan will provide Bangladesh with USD 3.4 million. As per the agreement, scholarships will be provided to the BCS officers, judicial service officers, and first-class officers of Bangladesh Bank to do Masters and Ph.D. courses at various universities in

Japan. For implementing The Project for Human Resource Development Scholarship (JDS), both sides signed an exchange of notes and grant agreements. Already spending USD 40.45 million on the project to run until this year, Japan has planned to extend it until 2025. [The Business Standard]

Cambodia, Ukraine leaders hold phone conversation

(th) Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky held a telephone conference on November 1 against the larger backdrop of Cambodia's chairmanship of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the ASEAN and East Asia Summit to be held in Phnom Penh later this month. [Khmer Times]

In March, Cambodia formally condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine and echoed ASEAN-backed calls for an immediate ceasefire. Regional news outlets reported last week that Cambodia's foreign ministry offered to host Russian-Ukrainian talks at the upcoming summit, but neither side has expressed willingness to engage in dialogue.

Appreciating the stance of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) on the Russia-Ukraine war, Zelenskyy also requested the Cambodian premier that he would like to video address the upcoming ASEAN summit. [Anadolu Agency]

Notably, Hun Sen committed to send deminers in collaboration with Japan to help train Ukrainians in clearing land mines planted by Russian forces during their invasion. The Cambodian Mine Action Center said it would send its first team to Ukraine in early December, and a second team may be sent in the first quarter of next year. [The Washington Post]

Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, who will be travelling to Cambodia for the upcoming ASEAN Summit and related high-level meetings, is expected to sign the so-called Instrument of Accession to the Treaty on Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC), a peace treaty established by the founding members of the ASEAN. As of August 2022, there are 49 signatories to the peace pact, including Russia, China, the United States and the European Union. [Voice of America]

Stolen statue linked to US antiquities trafficker repatriated to Cambodia

(sn/lm) The United States have returned a stolen vishnu to Cambodia, nearly 30 years after looters removed the sacred figure from a seventh-century temple. The piece was returned during a repatriation ceremony attended by Cambodian Ambassador to the United States Keo Chhea on 2 November. [Cambodianess] [The Art Newspaper]

Cambodia, Brunei to sign agreement on bilateral consultations

(sn) The signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on bilateral consultations is scheduled to take place during a state visit by Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah, the Sultan of Brunei, to Phnom Penh in mid-November. [Khmer Times]

Cambodia, France establish security cooperation

(ns) On November 1, Cambodian Interior Minister Sar Kheng met with the French ambassador to Cambodia, Jaques Pellet. The representatives met to initiate formal measures for security cooperation to combat the crime increase and the human-trafficking issue, more specifically. Other matters of concern include drug and cybercrimes. The French ambassador mentioned that the outcomes of recent operations in Preah Sihanouk province could determine the scope of the framework for establishing cooperation to prevent crimes. [Phnom Penh Post]

German Chancellor visits China amid European strategic concerns

(dql) German Chancellor Olaf Scholz visited China on November 3, making him the first European leader to travel to China after the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) concluded it 20th National Congress.

He held talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang, during which both sides discussed a wide range of topics, including the war in Ukraine and its impact on global stability, climate change, human rights issues, and bilateral relations.

According to the readout the German foreign ministry, Scholz and Xi agreed that threatening to make use of nuclear weapons in war in Ukraine “were extremely dangerous,” and that “any such deployment would cross a red line.” Both sides also agreed on a bilateral climate and transformation dialogue.

The German Chancellor, who was accompanied by a business delegation that included CEOs of 12 of Germany’s biggest companies such as Volkswagen, Deutsche Bank, Siemens and chemicals giant BASF, highlighted the close economic relations between the two countries while calling on Beijing to ease access to the Chinese market for German companies and conveying concerns of the German business sector over China’s new focus on economic self-sufficiency.

On Taiwan, Scholz reaffirmed Germany One China policy. However, he also voiced the expectation that “any status changes should only be made by mutual agreement.”

With regards to human rights, he pointed to universal human rights and the protection of minorities to which China, like all members of the United Nations “have made a commitment to," adding that while “there are serious differences between our two countries in this respect,” Germany is upholding an “unwavering conviction on this matter." [The Federal Government, Germany]

Xi, for his part, stressed the close bilateral “practical cooperation,” that has seen two-way trade increasing by nearly 1,000 times over the past five decades since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1952. He added that China was ready to work for a “future-oriented all-round strategic partnership” with Germany and “for new progress in China-Germany and China-Europe relations,” while also calling on Germany to join China in fighting “bloc confrontation and attempts to see everything through the prism of ideology.”

According to the readout of the Chinese Foreign Ministry, Xi called for opposing the threat or use of nuclear weapons in the Ukraine crisis.

Taiwan and human rights are not mentioned in the readout, only citing Scholz as saying that “[o]n issues where the two countries’ positions diverge, Germany is willing to exchange views with China to increase mutual understanding and trust, and stabilize, cement and grow bilateral ties.” [Ministry of Foreign Affairs, China 1]

Meanwhile, in his meeting Scholz and the German business delegation, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang

reassured that China will continue to expand its opening up and to "foster a market-oriented, world-class business environment governed by a sound legal framework," under which "each and every one of Chinese and foreign enterprises and enterprises of all types of ownership [are] treated" as equals." In a press conference following the meeting, Scholz reiterated that the economic relationship between China and Germany had recently become "more difficult" as Beijing was making access to some of its markets more difficult. [Ministry of Foreign Affairs, China 2] [CNN]

Scholz's trip to China is seen among observers as walking a thin line between Germany's economic interests on the one side and European strategic concerns on the other. While China has become Germany's largest trading partner over the past years, the Chancellor's visit has prompted controversy about Germany as a reliable partner in the strategic competition of the West with China. [South China Morning Post] [The Guardian] [Foreign Policy]

In the run up to the trip to Beijing, Baltic member states of the European Union voiced skepticism stressing that "China is best dealt with when we are 27," and warned of "separate deals," that would weaken the EU as a union. [DW]

Further fueling the strained relations between the EU and China, Chinese authorities have reportedly cancelled a pre-recorded opening ceremony address by the European Council President Charles Michel to a major trade expo in Shanghai. The speech was said to call for reducing EU trade dependency on China, besides criticizing Russia for the war in Ukraine. [Reuters]

Pakistan's Prime Minister Sharif visits China

(vv/tj/lm) China's President Xi Jinping hosted wide-ranging bilateral talks last week with Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, who visited Beijing for the first time assuming office in April of this year. [South China Morning Post]

Sharif was the second foreign leader – after the leader of the Vietnamese Communist Party, Nguyen Phu Trong – to visit China since last month's 20th Communist Party congress. The 47-point joint statement released after the visit saw the two nations pledge cooperation on a wide range of areas, from disaster relief to trade and investments and security.

Beijing in the past provided more than USD 88 million in aid as Pakistan battled a deadly and devastating flood season this year, apart from sending in disaster relief supplies and flood control experts. More such help could be on the way, as China has pledged an additional assistance package of nearly USD 69 million to support Islamabad's relief and rehabilitation efforts.

The two sides also agreed to continue to revitalize the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the Pakistan component of Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative, which recently lost momentum due to Chinese security concerns. Receiving special mention were upgrades to the Main Line-1 high-speed railway project and the Gwadar Port that gives Beijing international trade access to the Arabian Sea. [The Diplomat]

Key agreements have also been signed on e-commerce and the digital economy. The central banks of the two countries have signed a memorandum of cooperation recently for the establishment of a clearing arrangement, in a bid to facilitate the use of renminbi for cross-border transactions by enterprises and financial institutions in both countries. Moreover, China agreed to export technology for a high-speed railway train to Pakistan, marking the first time Beijing exports the technology. [Reuters]

China also reaffirmed its stance on the Jammu and Kashmir border dispute between India and Pakistan, urging "sincere dialogue" and a peaceful resolution through the UN and bilateral agreements. [Mint]

However, based on the joint statement, the discussions did not touch on Pakistan's debt distress, though Prime Minister Sharif was hoping to secure commitments for financial assistance as the South Asian country struggles with high inflation and an increasing debt burden. Days before Sharif's visit, Islamabad requested Beijing to roll over USD 6.3 billion in debt maturing in eight months, as part of a plan to arrange USD 34 billion to meet debt obligations in the financial year ending in June next year. [Outlook India]

Additionally, a Chinese foreign ministry statement noted Chinese President Xi Jinping's "great concern" about security in Pakistan—a reminder that the increasing risk of terrorism has given Beijing pause about making new investments in the country. [Voice of America]

US warns of "big" conflict with China and its nuclear capabilities

(dql) Navy Admiral Charles A. Richard, the commander of the United States Strategic Command (Stratcom), has sounded alarm arguing that the war in Ukraine is only a “warmup” for the “big” conflict with China to come, adding that “it isn't going to be very long before we're going to get tested in ways that we haven't been tested in a long time.”

Richard made this remark in a speech at the Naval Submarine League 2022 Annual Symposium and Industry Update in which he also warned that China is much faster than the U.S in the development of nuclear weapons, surpassing the U.S. in a “dramatic fashion.” He added that this issue is “near-term problem” and compared the level of U.S deterrence in this field with a “sinking ship. [Department of Defense, USA]

“Illegal Chinese police stations” ordered to be shut down in the Netherlands

(dql) The Dutch government has disclosed that it has ordered China to shut down its overseas “service stations,” and “service centers,” which are suspected of being used to target and harass dissidents overseas. It also announced that it will investigate centers and their precise activities.

Safeguard Defenders, a Spanish-based rights group, has claimed in a report in September that Chinese policing operations are conducted through these centers, aimed at exiled dissidents for harassment and putting pressuring exiled dissidents to return to China. According to the report, China currently runs at least 54 of such centers in 30 countries across the globe. They are called Overseas 110 and enable people to report crimes to Chinese law enforcement while located overseas.

In the wake of the report, an increasing number of governments including Canada, the United Kingdom and Spain, have revealed that they are investigating the reports. The Netherlands, along with Portugal and Ireland have issues orders for the closure of these centers. [Radio Free Asia 1] [Radio Free Asia 2] [Safeguard Defenders]

China, Vietnam deepen supply chain cooperation

(dql) China and Vietnam have signed an agreement under which both sides “strengthen joint works” to ensure a supply chain for raw materials.

The agreements was one of 13 deals that were signed during the visit of Vietnamese Communist Party leader Nguyen Phu Trong to China last week. [Bangkok Post]

China, Tanzania agree to elevate relations to comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership

(dql) China and Tanzania have signed of 15 strategic agreements on November 3. Among them is a deal to upgrade of the Tanzania-Zambia railway, whose funding by China dates 50 years ago. It is still the African country’s largest foreign aid project. Further, the agreements included a debt waiver of USD 13.49 million as well as duty-free access to China for to 98 percent of Tanzanian products.

The agreements were concluded during the visit of Tanzania’s President Samia Suluhu Hassan to China last week. During her meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping, the two leaders reached agreement on elevating Sino-Tanzanian relations to a comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership. Both sides also agreed to implement an existing Memorandum of Understanding to boost high-quality Belt and Road cooperation.

China continues to be a leading source of foreign direct investment into Tanzania, with nearly 1,100 projects with a investment volume of USD 9.6 billion as of October this year. [Ministry of Foreign Affairs, China] [South China Morning Post]

India to prohibit Chinese research vessel from entering economic zone

(lm) The Indian Navy is reportedly planning to stop a Chinese research vessel from entering the country’s Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), claiming that the vessel is a "spy ship" sent to the Indian Ocean Region to track New Delhi’s missile tests. This comes just three months after a major diplomatic showdown between India and Sri Lanka over the docking of a similar vessel at the Hambantota Port in August [see AiR No. 35, August/2022, 5]. [Global Times]

The Yuang Wang-6 departed from Jiangyin in China on October 21, and as on the morning of November 4 was located near Indonesia and heading in the southwest direction. While research activities are allowed in international waters, Indian law forbids any survey, research or exploration in its EEZ by a foreign nation without permission. [The Economic Times]

In fact, the timing of the entry of Yuan Wang-6 into the Indian Ocean coincides with a planned long range missile test by India next week. According to open source intelligence, India has issued a notification for a no-fly zone over the Bay of Bengal between November 10-11 for a maximum distance of 2,200 km. Given the range, the test is likely to be related to an Agni medium-range ballistic missile. [The Hindu]

Indian foreign secretary meets with US counterpart in Washington

(lm) India's Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra met with United States Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman in Washington to discuss a wide range of issues between the two nations. During the meeting, Sherman underscored her country's commitment to the people of Ukraine in the face of Russia's illegal war of aggression, according to the official readout. [U.S. Department of State]

Iran ready to supply India with oil, ambassador says

(wr/lm) Against the larger backdrop of United States sanctions, Iran has conveyed its interest to India to again deepen bilateral economic ties with India, most notably in the supply of oil. Tehran was one of New Delhi's top energy suppliers – accounting for nearly 11 percent of the country's overall oil intake – till May 2019, when the country stopped purchasing crude oil after the threat of secondary sanctions by the US. [IranIntl] [The Indian Express]

India working on release, repatriation of eight former navy officers detained in Qatar

(vv) India is continuing its efforts for an early release and repatriation of eight former navy officers who had been detained in Qatar for about two months. The

eight detained Indians were reportedly working for Dahra Global Technologies and Consultancy Services, a private firm that describes itself as a "local business partner" for the Qatari armed forces and security agencies. [Hindustan Times] [Scroll] [The Indian Express]

Beijing diplomat calls for direct flights between India, China, asks governments to work together

(vv) As Indian students who were studying in China before the COVID-19 pandemic have started returning to China, Beijing's Consul General of in Kolkata, Zha Liyou has called for the resumptions of direct flights between both nations asking the governments to work together on the same. Close to 23,000 Indian students who were stranded back home due to the visa bans – now lifted – imposed in China, are planning for return but the absence of direct flights is causing disruptions. [The Hindu] [Deccan Herald]

Indonesia calls for engagement with Myanmar's NUG as next ASEAN chair

(dql) With regard of Indonesia's chairmanship of ASEAN in 2023, Burmese activists are calling for Indonesia to engage with and recognize Myanmar's National Unity Government (NUG). These suggestions find support by Heidi Hautala, the European Parliament vice president, who said Myanmar's pro-democracy movement needed recognition and support from the entire world.

Meanwhile, Charles Santiago, chair of the ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR), warns ASEAN to be wary of the planned 2023 election and the possibility of a new constitution under the auspices of the military government. [Asia News Network]

Indonesia boosts defense cooperation with several countries at Indo Defense 2022

(os) In the wake of the Indo Defense Expo & Forum 2022, Indonesia was able to showcase its local defense production and further its defense cooperation with several countries.

The Tri-service Defense, Maritime and Security event was running from November 2 to 5, hosted by the Indonesian Ministry of Defense and the Indonesian Armed Forces. As the largest defense expo in Indonesia since 2004, the event had visitors and exhibitors from 59 countries. [Antara News 1] [Antara News 2] [The Jakarta Post]

Indonesia-UAE/Egypt: Working Visit of Vice President to Abu Dhabi and Kairo

(dql) During his official visit to the UAE Indonesian Vice President K.H. Ma'ruf met with the UAE President H.H. Mohamed Bin Zayed to discuss matters of cooperation between the two countries among them the spreading of moderate Islamic values and the commitment to uphold the positive and true understanding of Islam. The Vice President continued his visit to Dubai before continuing to Egypt where he attended the Conference of The Parties 27 (COP27) Summit, a climate summit. [Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Indonesia] [Antara News]

Japanese Ex-PM and South Korean President pledge to improve bilateral ties amid historical forced labor issues

(sra) A bilateral meeting between South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol and former Japanese Prime Minister and vice president of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, Taro Aso was held to come to an agreement on issues of forced labor on November 2. The pair sought to restore relations between the countries to facilitate open communication in an effort to improve active cooperation. [Yonhap News Agency]

The meeting was the first in-person talk between leaders of Japan and South Korea since December 2019, as ties between the nations were impacted in 2018 over South Korea's Supreme Court ordered two large Japanese companies to compensate Korean civilians over forced labor issues due to wartime atrocities in World War Two under Japan's colonial rule of the Korean Peninsula. The Japanese government refused recognition, allowing the companies to refuse the rulings, leaving local courts to liquidate firm assets held in South Korea to provide compensation to the plaintiffs. The two nations are planning to establish a foundation with aid from South Korean firms to finally provide compensation to the wartime labor victims as a representation of the Japanese defendants of the company. [Kyodo News]

The compensation issues have plagued relations between the countries as the Japanese government believes the historical issue was resolved through the bilateral treaty of 1965 in addition to the USD 500 million in payment to compensate. Former leader of South Korea Moon Jae-in defended the need for further investigation of Japanese actions throughout the colonial period was required before ties can be restored. [The Japan Times]

The two also discussed North Korea's launch of an estimated 23 missiles in South Korean territorial waters, with concerns the country may conduct a seventh nuclear test under its increasing provocations. South Korea is also dealing with the stampede disaster in the Itaewon district in Seoul where the lives of over 150 people were taken. Amid this, Yoon has requested Aso to make a formal summit between Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and him possible. It is looking like talks are to be held at the end of November alongside the Group of 20 summit in Indonesia which the two diplomats will attend. [The Asahi Shimbun].

Japan protests against North Korean missile launch, suspected ICBM

(sra) Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has condemned the North Korean launches of ballistic missiles in an issue protest through its Beijing embassy. Over 23 missiles were launched on November 2 with those deployed the next day thought to have been intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM) as they reached over 2,000 km in altitude across a distance of 750 km.

The recent continued launch of ballistic missiles has caused outrage, as civilians in Niigata Prefecture were told to seek shelter within buildings or underground if possible and major rail services Joetsu and Hokuriku Shinkansen Lines were suspended until the next day. The launches also threatened nuclear facilities however no issues were found by the nuclear regulation authority. [NHK World-Japan]

The missiles appeared under analysis by the Japanese Defense Ministry to evade defenses, as three missiles landed in the Sea of Japan just outside of the nation's exclusive economic zone, 370 km from the coastline. Over the course of 2022, North Korea has overseen 28 launches of at least 60 missiles, increasing concerns throughout the region as South Korea, Japan and the US seem to strengthen security cooperation in case North Korea decides to continue to escalate their launches. As the foundations for North Korea's seventh

nuclear test have been completed, the final steps in place are forcing South Korean allies to take precautionary measures to counter the profound consequences of the test. A bilateral meeting between Japanese and South Korean lawmakers on November 3 saw the group's vow to improve diplomacy between leaders by strengthening cooperation in both economic and security sectors. [The Japan Times 1] [The Japan Times 2]

Japan to provide the Philippines nearly USD 2.6 billion in loans for urban transit system development

(dql) During the 13th Meeting of the Japan-Philippines High Level Joint Committee on Infrastructure Development and Economic Cooperation, held in Manila on November 4, Japan confirmed plans to provide the Southeast Asian country with loans of more than USD 2.5 billion to support the development of the North–South Commuter Railway project, an urban rail transit system in the Greater Manila Area whose construction began in 2019.

Japan is the Philippines' largest provider of official development assistance (ODA). As of end of last year, Manila received committing loans and grants worth USD 10.2 billion, accounting for nearly 32 percent of the country's total ODA. [Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan] [Philstar]

Japan, Germany discuss deepening security cooperation at 2+2 meeting

(dql) Japan and Germany held the second 2+2 meeting, attended by Japanese Minister of Defense Yasukazu Hamada, Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs Yoshimasa Hayashi of Japan and their German counterparts Christine Lambrecht and Annalena Baerbock.

Besides reassuring their stance on continuing sanctions against Russia, reaffirming the need for bilateral cooperation to maintain and strengthen the international order, and condemning North Korea's latest missile tests [see entry above], both sides agreed to consider joint military exercises starting in 2023 and the development bilateral cooperation in defense equipment and technology.

The minister also reached agreement on the launch of talks on a legal framework for facilitating joint military activities between the two countries, including an agreement under which the two countries' armed forces would be allowed to mutually provide fuel and ammunition. [Ministry of Defense, Japan] [Nikkei Asia]

The meeting came days after the visit of German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier to Japan. During his meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida both sides confirmed that the two countries will cooperate in tackling global challenges, while reaffirming that Europe's security is inseparably linked to Asia's security. [Kyodo News]

Japan, UK agree to deepen coordination on Russia and military cooperation

(dql) Japanese Prime Minister Kishida Fumio and his British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak held a phone talk on November 4 during which they agreed upon close coordination of sanctions against Russia and support for Ukraine as well as on cooperation to tackle North Korea's nuclear and missile programs and its abductions of Japanese nationals.

They, furthermore, reaffirmed their commitment to pushing forward the signing of the Japan-UK Reciprocal Access Agreement for joint exercises of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces and the British military and to speeding up negotiations on the joint development of the next generation of fighter aircraft for Japan's Air Self-Defense Force. [Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan] [NHK]

Japan hosts international fleet review

(sra) Japan enhanced its diplomatic relations as the host of the International Fleet Review 2022 on November 6. Over 40 warships from 13 countries attended the event in Sagami Bay to promote the country's 70th anniversary of the Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF). The international fleet was a prominent way of displaying Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's aims to increase national defense capacities amid growing geopolitical tensions in Asia, especially in response to Chinese military expansion and North Korea's conduct of ballistic missile launches as well as Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The Fleet Review featured a display of aircraft and submarines from participating navies, which saw Japan take part in multilateral exercises. The navy of Japan was joined by those of Australia, Brunei, Canada, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand and the US, with a contribution from the French Navy and the delayed participation of the British Royal Navy due to weather conditions. [Reuters]

The event saw the South Korean Navy attend for the first time since the MSDF held the Japan Fleet Review of 2015, showing deepening relations between the two nations as Seoul and Tokyo focus on promoting security through bilateral military ties. The two are also part of a trilateral agreement with the US to promote stability in the Indo-Pacific. [Korea Times] [The Japan Times]

Group of stranded Malaysian pilgrims to return from Saudi Arabia

(gc) A group of more than 60 Malaysians, who had been stranded in Saudi Arabia since June after traveling to the country to undertake pilgrimage to Mecca, will return home this week. [MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS]

North Korean missile breaches inter-Korean border, tensions with South Korea sharply escalate

(sm) On November 2 and 3, North Korea launched a series of short-range ballistic missiles (SRBM) and one intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) off its coast into the East Sea in renewed protest over South Korea's recent military drills with the US. One of the missiles flew across the Northern Limit Line, landing in de facto South Korea waters.

The North Korean army fired a total of 23 missiles on November 2 alone, a record number of launches in a day, as South Korea and the US were conducting their Vigilant Storm aerial drills which kicked off on October 31.

It was the first time since the inter-Korean war (1950-53) that a missile fell into South Korean territorial waters, triggering the air raid alarm on a nearby South Korean Island. According to Seoul's national security adviser Kim Sung-han, the firing of the missile

constitutes the most aggressive North Korean military provocation since 2010, when the regime had fired artillery shots towards Yeongpyeong island across the inter-Korean maritime border, killing four people at the time. [Yonhap News Agency_1]

Pyongyang started firing early on November 2, sending SRBMs and ground-to-air missiles from both the West and East coast. The country also fired some 100 artillery shots into its maritime buffer zone with South Korea. Both the artillery shots and the missile which landed in South Korean territorial waters were in clear violation of the inter-Korean military agreement signed by both parties in 2018. In response to North Korean provocations, the South Korean army sent three ground-to-air missiles into the northern part of the shared maritime buffer zone, in their own violation of the military agreement. The North Korean side continued firing artillery shots and SRBMs into the East Sea throughout November 3, launching one ICBM which is suspected to have malfunctioned and crashed into Japan's exclusive economic zone. [Yonhap News Agency_2]

After the firing of the ICBM, South Korean Defense Minister Lee Jong-Sup, in concertation with his US counterpart Lloyd Austin in the 54th Security Consultative Meeting in Washington DC on November 3, decided to extend the joint US–South Korea aerial drills by one day until November 5. The massive drills include a total of 240 aircrafts with stealth fighter jets, among others. [US Department of Defense]

Pyongyang's secretary of the Central Committee of the ruling Worker's Party Pak Jong-chon denounced the extension of the drills as a provocative and dangerous act which would sharply escalate tensions. This is not the first time that Pyongyang criticizes US–South Korean military drills, as it launched two SRBMs last week in protest of the week-long Hoguk ground exercices. North Korea considers these drills as a preparation for the invasion of its territory. [see AiR No. 44, November/2022, 1] [Kyodo News_1] [Kyodo News_2] [Yonhap News Agency_3]

A range of South Korea political actors, such as the National Security Council (NSC) presided by President Yoon Suk-yeol, members of the opposing and ruling Democratic and People Power Parties and the unification ministry have strongly condemned North Korea's actions as serious threats to peace and stability of the peninsula, citing them as a violation of UN Security Council resolutions and as particularly inappropriate during South Korea's mourning period over the Itaewon tragedy, in which about 150 people died in a crowd crush on October 29. According to a

statement by the NSC, the responsibility for the recent escalation of inter-Korean tensions lies solely with Pyongyang and its reckless plan to continue to develop nuclear weapons. Joint Chief of Staff Chairmen of the US Forces in Korea General Kim Seung-kyum and Paul La Camera reaffirmed their commitment to an even stronger joint defense posture and called for the immediate cessation of North Korea provocations. [Yonhap News Agency_4] [Yonhap News Agency_5] [Yonhap News Agency_6]

Seoul's foreign ministry disclosed on November 3 that it was considering imposing further sanctions on the authoritarian regime. Last month, South Korea had enacted its first unilateral sanctions against North Korea in five years. [see AiR No. 42, October/2022, 3] [Yonhap News Agency_7]

Pakistan grants visas to about 3000 Sikh pilgrims for November festival

(msk) Pakistan has issued visas to nearly 3,000 Indian pilgrims under the framework of the Pakistan-India Protocol on Visits to Religious Shrines of 1974 to participate in celebrations in several cities on the birth anniversary of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, from November 6-15.

Every year, a sizeable number of Sikh pilgrims from India visit Pakistan for religious festivals and on special occasions. "The issuance of pilgrimage visas to religious pilgrims by the high commission is in line with the government of Pakistan's commitment to fully implement the bilateral Protocol on Visits to Religious Shrines between the two countries," the Pakistan high commission said in a statement [Hindustan Times] [Express Tribune]

South Korea, US hold inter-ministerial defense talks amid North Korea missile firings

(sm) On November 3, South Korean Defense Minister Lee Jong-sup and his US counterpart Lloyd Austin met for the 54th US–South Korea Security Consultative Meeting in Washington DC. The meeting occurred just as North Korea fired a series of ballistic missiles into the East Sea off its coast to protest joint South Korean American drills.

In an effort to strengthen the credibility of their joint defense capabilities, Lee and Austin defined four categories of extended deterrence to counter North Korean threats – information sharing, consultation process, joint planning, and execution – and enhanced South Korea's role in the US security strategy on Korea. Austin reiterated the US' commitment to utilize the full range of its conventional and nuclear capabilities to defend its ally and promised to increase the deployment frequency of military assets to the peninsula. The two ministers also agreed to extend their joint aerial drills by one day until November 5 in response to North Korea's missile firings on November 2 and 3. The ministers pledged to keep their joint military strategy updated and to conduct more joint routine drills to enhance the interoperability of their armies.

Lee also visited the US geospatial intelligence agency, one of the US' big five intelligence agencies (besides the CIA and NSA, for instance) on November 2, in a symbolic trip to highlight the two countries strengthening security commitments. [Yonhap News Agency]

North Korea's nuclear threats have intensified over the last two months, with many suspecting the regime of preparing a seventh nuclear test and developing mobile nuclear missile launching platforms. The North passed a domestic law in August allowing it fire preemptive strikes in the case of a threat.

South Korean politicians have been calling for a joint nuclear deterrence treaty akin to that between NATO allies, but rumors of such an agreement which would allow the US to station nuclear weapons in South Korea have been decried by President Yoon Suk-yeol last month. [see AiR No. 42, October/2022, 3] [Korea Times] [US Department of Defense]

China, South Korea consult over North Korean missile firings

(sm) On November 4, South Korea's ruling People Power Party leader Chung Jin-suk met with the Chinese ambassador to South Korea Xing Haiming to ask for China's active involvement in the currently escalating situation in the Korean peninsula.

Chung argued that the maintenance of peace and security on the peninsula is in the interest of all, including China, to which Xing answered that China has also been concerned with recent developments and has called for talks to defuse the situation. They also

agreed on strengthening their economic cooperation in the future and Xing offered his condolences over the Itaewon crowd crush, in which about 150 died on October 29.

The meeting came as North Korea fired a series of ballistic missiles at an unprecedented rate since the inter-Korean war (1950-53) on November 2 and 3 in protest of joint US–South Korean military drills. North Korea has been firing 81 ballistic missiles on 34 occasions in total this year alone. [Korea Times]

South Korea to prepare for legal dispute with US over Inflation Reduction Act

(sm) According to some industry sources on November 3, South Korea has been preparing for legal disputes with the United States over the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) it passed last August.

The IRA is a policy which gives tax advantages to carmakers who assemble their electric vehicles (EV) in the US and use raw materials originating from the US or its FTA partners to build batteries. Concerns over its discriminatory features have been raised by several South Korean policymakers and car companies (Hyundai and Kia, for instance), as well as some European car makers, who fear to lose ground in the US market due to the legislation.

South Korea has allegedly recently hired a domestic law firm to prepare for a lawsuit over these discriminatory features, as talks with the US have been underway but have not led to concrete solutions until now. The country is planning to file a lawsuit through WTO or the Korea–US FTA dispute resolution mechanism, as the IRA's requirement have been in violation of WTO principles.

South Korea Industry Minister Lee Chang-yang had earlier qualified the legal route as mechanism of last resort in case talks turned out not to be fruitful. Filing with the WTO would allow South Korea to include some possible allies over the matter, as the country has been seeking support from equally affected European countries. [Yonhap News Agency]

South Korea, Saudi Arabia to boost cooperation on oil supply chains

(sm) During a teleconference on November 2, South Korean Industry Minister Lee Chang-yang and Saudi

Energy Minister Abdulaziz bin Salman agreed to strengthen their cooperation on secure oil supply chains.

Lee expressed South Korea's willingness to participate in Saudi Arabia's Global Supply Chain Resilience Initiative, which guarantees financial incentives for supply chain investors, according to the South Korean Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Energy. The ministers also agreed to strengthen their cooperation in hydrogen, petrochemicals, and plant construction fields.

The meeting took place amid concerns over the OPEC Plus countries' recent plan to lower oil production by 2 million barrels per day from November. OPEC Plus refers to the 13 OPEC members and 11 non-OPEC members, who constitute together 90 percent of the world's proven oil reserves and agreed in 2016 to work together on stabilizing the oil market by adjusting crude oil production.

As a major energy importer, 31 percent of South Korean oil imports came from Saudi Arabia this year, with a purchase of about 186 million barrels of crude oil until July 2022. [Reuters] [Yonhap News Agency]

Sri Lankan manufacturer launches new ship for French company

(sn) Sri Lankan Manufacturer Colombo Dockyard launched a ship on November 3 made for the France-based Orange Marine. The C/S Sophie Germain ship is designed to repair submarine cables. The Colombo Dockyard combines its engineering technology with Japan, and it is a leading institute for Sri Lanka to earn foreign exchange. [Colombopage]

Taiwan, US deepen cooperation in international development assistance

(dql) Taiwan and the U.S. have concluded three agreements that seek to deepen cooperation on international development and humanitarian assistance, targeting in particular Paraguay and Pacific island nations,

Among the three agreements is a memorandum of understanding (MOU) under which both will strengthen cooperation in various areas, ranging from international development assistance, and humanitarian assistance, to research in international

development and humanitarian fields, to capacity building and training, and knowledge transfers.

Further, under the second agreement both sides will coordinate with the Paraguayan Ministry of Industry and Commerce polices and measure expected to "strengthen micro, small, and medium sized enterprises (MSMEs) and promote development," in the South American country.

The third agreement provide the frame for U.S-Taiwan cooperation to "enhance climate and disaster resilience in the Pacific region." [Focus Taiwan]

The agreements come after Paraguayan President Mario Abdo Benitez revealed last month that he is facing huge pressure from farmers and the meat industry to open up the market for China. [Merco Press]

Taiwan seeks extradition of citizen detained in Poland

(dql) The Taiwanese Ministry of Justice (MOJ) announce that it will seek the extradition of a citizen currently detained in Warsaw, Poland.

Taiwanese national Liu Hong-tao was found guilty by a Polish Supreme Court of belonging to internet fraud ring that operated out of Spain and consisted of some 260 members, largely Taiwanese. It was dismantled it in 2016 and 2017.

Liu was initially sentenced and supposed to be extradited to China. He appealed to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) which in October dismissed an extradition request from Beijing citing concerns over torture and human rights violations. [Focus Taiwan]

European lawmakers, US Communication Commissioner visit Taiwan

(dql) Brendan Carr, commissioner at the U.S. Federal Communications Commission, has visited Taiwan last week for talks Taiwanese government counterparts, including officials from Taiwan's National Communications Commission, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

According to Carr, his visit aimed to deepen cooperation on network resiliency, cyber, and telecom

issues that are crucial to security interests of both the U.S. and Taiwan. He also reaffirmed that the island's chip industry is also U.S. economic interests.

Carr's visit is the first of a sitting FCC commissioner in an official capacity. It follows a string visits of government officials from democratic nations to express support for Taiwan in the face increasing pressure from Beijing. [Axios]

Meanwhile, eight lawmakers from Belgium, Britain, the Czech Republic, Germany, Kosovo, the Netherlands, Ukraine and the European Parliament – all of them representing the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China (IPAC) – also visited Taiwan last week to hold a meeting with Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen. During the meeting the group reaffirmed their commitment to "work[ing] towards appropriate military and defense cooperation" between Taiwan and their respective countries and advocate for Taiwan's greater involvement in international institutions and increased bilateral trade. [VoA]

Established in 2020, the IPAC is an international, cross-party alliance of parliamentarians from democratic countries focused on relations with the People's Republic of China (PRC), and specifically, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

Taiwanese Vice President hopeful of strengthening tourism in Palau

(dql) Taiwan's Vice President Lai Ching-te has wrapped up his visit to Palau last week, expressing his confidence that his trip has helped increase the number of Taiwanese tourists in the Pacific island nation as well as bilateral ties.

Palau is one of 14 states in the world that formally recognize Taiwan. Both sides established diplomatic ties in 1999. [Focus Taiwan]

Hong Kong dissidents call on Taiwan to persist in fighting Chinese disinformation and authoritarianism

(dql) Speaking at Oslo Freedom Forum (OFF) that was held in Taipei on November 3, two exiled Hong Kong pro-democracy activists – former Hong Kong student leader, legislator and current activist Nathan Law and political and digital rights activist Chung Ching Kwong –

have called on Taiwan to uphold its efforts to combat China's disinformation and counter Beijing's authoritarian expansionism. [Focus Taiwan]

The OFF is a flagship event of the New York-based Human Rights Foundation that aims to promote human rights and democracy globally.

Thailand, Australia strengthens strategic partnership, seek to combat human trafficking

(td) As part of her regional tour in Southeast Asia, Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong made an official visit to Thailand, as a guest of the Thai Foreign Ministry, to cement bilateral relations between Bangkok and Canberra, and strengthen their strategic partnership in multiple dimensions. Between the end of October to early November, she visited Brunei and Thailand in order to deepen engagement with the region as Australia has elevated its relations with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to comprehensive strategic partnership. It demonstrates Canberra's ambition to play a constructive and bigger role in this dynamic region.

Wong and her Thai counterpart, Don Pramudwinai, signed the Plan of Action (POA) to implement the strategic partnership between Australia and Thailand (2022-2025), and to foster practical cooperation as they altogether commemorated their 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations. The POA covers several forms of cooperation in response to both traditional and non-traditional security issues such as green energy transitions, cybersecurity, anti-trafficking, military, and strategic economic cooperation. In terms of trade and investment, the Thai side called for more investment projects from Australian partners, capitalizing on their Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

On this occasion, the Australian Foreign Minister paid a courtesy call on Thai Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha to discuss multi-sectoral cooperation, with a focal point on coordinated efforts to help Thailand combat human trafficking. In this regard, she came to terms with the Thai Justice Ministry and, therefore, signed an agreement to set up a new center of excellence to support capacity-building of local security and related officers — as part of the ASEAN-Australia Counter-Trafficking Initiative. Meanwhile, the center is committed to assisting victims of trafficking. As for Australia, it has also strived to counter the exploitation of migrants to ensure human security.

In general, significant progress has been made since 2020 as the Thai and Australian Prime Ministers signed the Joint Declaration of the Strategic Partnership. [Bangkok Post] [Royal Thai Government, in Thai] [Thai PBS World] [The Scoop] [The Sydney Morning Herald] [Voice of America]

Thai authorities seize nearly USD 50 million in assets from detained Myanmar tycoon

(tp) Thai authorities have reportedly seized nearly USD 50 million in assets from a Myanmar tycoon, who is believed to have links to the upper echelons of Myanmar's ruling military junta and who was arrested in the Thai capital Bangkok in September. [The Irrawaddy]

Tun Min Latt was arrested along with three Thai nationals on charges of conspiracy to traffic narcotics and money laundering. At the time, *Reuters* reported that the arrests were part of a broader crackdown by Thai authorities on money laundering from narcotics in the border town of Tachileik in Myanmar's Shan state. It is worth noting that the son-in-law of Upakit Pachariyangkun, a Thai Senator, was one of those three Thais arrested alongside with Tun Min Latt. [AiR No. 39, September/2022, 4]

Coast guards of Vietnam, China begin second joint patrol

(ih) On November 3, the Chinese and Vietnamese coast guards initiated their second joint patrol in 2022, taking place in the waters adjacent to the Sino-Vietnamese maritime boundary in the Gulf of Tonkin. Educational activities targeting fishing vessels within the vicinity were also undertaken during the patrol. [Vietnam+]

Announcements

Upcoming Online Events

9 November 2022 @ 8:00-9:00 a.m. (GMT-5), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, USA

Carnegie China Global Dialogue: U.S.-China Relations After the Midterms

This online panel, the first of the Carnegie Global Dialogue Series 2022-2023, discusses the potential impact of the US midterm elections on the US-Sino relations. The elections come as U.S. export controls on semiconductors and related chip manufacturing equipment have raised the stakes of U.S.-China competition. On the other side: Will Beijing amend its approach toward Washington after Xi Jinping secured a third term as party leader at the recent 20th Party Congress?

More about the event at [Carnegie].

9 November 2022 @ 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. (GMT-5), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, USA

Palestinian Succession: Rules of the Game

This webinar addresses crucial questions pertaining to Palestinian politics and succession. Among these questions are: What institutions do various figures aspire to lead? How will a new leader or set of leaders be chosen? And how do the Palestinian people feel about the potential successors?

See [Carnegie] for more details.

9 November 2022 @ 10:00-11:00 a.m. (GMT-5), The Heritage Foundation, USA

What China's Strategic Breakout Means for the U.S.

According to the U.S. Strategic Command, the "strategic breakout" of China's nuclear forces led to Beijing surpassing its historic nuclear strategy of minimum deterrence and now being able to execute any nuclear employment strategy. Against this backdrop, this online discussion focuses on the questions: what China's nuclear expansion means for the U.S. and what options policymakers should consider in response.

If you are interested in joining the event, register at [The Heritage Foundation].

9 November 2022 @ 12:30-2:00 p.m. (GMT+8), Asia Society (Hong Kong), China

US-China Relations and the Taiwan Dilemma

This online event features an expert debate on US-China relations and policy towards Taiwan.

For more information, see [Asia Society].

9 November 2022 @ 12:30-2:00 p.m. (GMT-5), Asia Society (New York), USA

The Evolution of Emerging Technologies: What are They, How will They Impact Us and What are the Benefits and Risks?

This online event will discuss key issues and problems arising from the rapid transformation of the world, the society and the individual human being by emerging technology. Among others, the following questions will be addressed: How is "emerging technologies" to be defined, and what are the key areas within it driving investment, by who and why? Is there a common denominator when it comes to government and private sector support in the exploration of "emerging technologies" for innovation and growth? What are the economic and societal benefits and risks associated with emerging technologies?

More details are provided at [Asia Society].

9 November 2022 @ 5:30 p.m. (GMT-5), University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, USA

The Death of Democracy: Hitler's Rise to Power and the Lessons we can learn for our Violent and Tumultuous Times

This online event features a discussion on Adolf Hitler's seizure of power that will also explore the lessons from his dictatorship.

See [Krasno Event] for further information.

10 November 2022 @ 2:00-3:00 p.m. (GMT+0), Chatham House, UK

Another Israeli election: Could there be different results?

At the hybrid event, speakers will provide an analysis of the results of the 1 November 2022 general election in Israel and the prospects for domestic affairs, rule of law, and relations with the Palestinians, Iran and the rest of the region and the world.

More about the event at [Chatham House].

10 November 2022 @ 2:00-3:30 p.m. (GMT+1), Bruegel, Belgium

Rewriting the rulebook of the EU fiscal framework

This webinar addresses the question how fiscal rules of the European Union are to be reformed to better cope with current economic realities and challenges?

You can find more information and register at [Bruegel].

10 November 2022 @ 10:00-11:00 a.m. (GMT-5), Wilson Center, USA

Saudi Arabia and Oil: Between the United States and Russia

Until recently the alliance between Saudi Arabia and the U.S. was believed to be unshakable. However, lately Riyadh has signaled a reverse trend, abstaining

from condemning the Russian invasion to Ukraine and not only rejecting American and European requests to increase oil output, but, even more, leading the OPEC+'s adoption of a resolution on production cuts. This webinar answers the questions why Saudi Arabia's foreign policy has shifted and what goals Riyadh seeks to achieve.

More information and registration at [Wilson Center].

10 November 2022 @ 4:00-5:30 p.m. (GMT-5), Wilson Center, USA

Republics of Myth: National Narratives and the US-Iran Conflict

This online seminar presents a widely neglected, yet highly potent, factor shaping US-Iran relations: national narratives and provides new perspectives on the frameworks that shape decision-making, policy discussions, and missed opportunities in US-Iran relations since 1979.

Follow [Wilson Center] for more event details.

14 November 2022 @ 3:00-4:15 p.m. (GMT+8), ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore

Democracy Delayed? Interim Regional Leaders and Indonesia's 2024 Elections

While Indonesia is going to hold simultaneous local, parliamentary and presidential elections in November 2024, the terms of some 270 elected regional and local leaders, however, have or will come to an end prior to 2024, some as early as mid-2022. Meanwhile, the government has decided that these posts will be replaced by interim leaders chosen directly by the Ministry of Home Affairs from among existing bureaucrats.

This webinar addresses the phenomenon of interim regional leaders that has prompted controversy over lack of democratic legitimacy.

Visit [ISEAS] for more event details.

14 November 2022 @ 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. (GMT-5), The Heritage Foundation, USA

How Cultural Marxism Threatens the United States – and How Americans Can Fight It

As cultural Marxists have taken over key U.S. institutions and are now deeply entrenched in the sectors and industries that create meaning and values in America, this hybrid event explores the following questions: How did this happen? What is the history behind this NextGen Marxism? How can it be defeated, and America's freedoms preserved?

Find more information at [The Heritage Foundation].

14 November 2022 @ 9:00 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. (GMT+0), Chatham House, UK

Iraq initiative conference 2022

This hybrid conference, Chatham House annual Iraq Initiative Conference 2022, brings together policymakers, analysts, academics, and activists to examine the past year's developments in Iraq and explore the potential trajectory of the country.

Follow [Chatham House] to find more about the conference.

14 November 2022 @ 2:00-3:30 p.m. (GMT-5), Wilson Center, USA

Eurasia from the East: Japanese Views

In this webinar, scholars from the Slavic-Eurasian Research Center at Hokkaido University, Japan, present an "Japanese" (in contrast to "Western") perspective on Russia, exemplified along the issues of sanctions, petrostate, the Hajj and Russia's relations with China, Japan and Saudi Arabia.

See [Wilson Center] for details.

14 November 2022 @ 4:00-5:30 p.m. (GMT-5), Wilson Center, USA

Ideology in U.S. Foreign Relations: New Histories

This webinar sheds light on different ideologies driving U.S. foreign policy.

More information is available at [Wilson Center].

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

A Washingtonian in Beijing

This hybrid event features an interview with CSIS's Trustee Chair in Chinese Business & Economics Scott Kennedy, who will share findings of his recent extended research trip to China, including developments in domestic Chinese society, U.S.-China relations, and potential pathways to improving the relationship.

Visit [CSIS] for more event details.

15 November 2022 @ 10:00-11:30 a.m. (GMT-5), International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), USA

Indo-Pacific Powers and NATO: A conversation with the Ambassadors of Australia, Japan, New Zealand and the Republic of Korea

This hybrid even features a talk among senior diplomats of four Indo-Pacific nations on their countries relations with NATO.

For more information, go to [IISS].

Recent book releases

Eleanor Knott, ***Kin Majorities: Identity and Citizenship in Crimea and Moldova***, McGill-Queen's University Press, 376 pages, published on August 15, 2022, reviewed in [New Books Network].

Marc Lynch, Jillian Schwedler, and Sean Yom (eds.), ***The Political Science of the Middle East: Theory and Research Since the Arab Uprisings***, Oxford University Press, 320 pages, published on July 29, 2022. For a review, see [LSE].

Vicente L. Rafael, ***The Sovereign Trickster: Death and Laughter in the Age of Duterte***, Duke University Press Books, 192 pages, published on February 28, 2022. The book is reviewed in [Los Angeles Review of Books].

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 **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

---

Team:

Duc Quang Ly (dql), Farhan Maqsood (fm), Felix Jonas Jantz (fj), Gabriela Lopez (gl), Henning Glaser (hg), Ian Hollinger (ih), Lucas Meier (lm), Mashal Shahid (msk), Natalie Svinina (ns), Peer Morten Strantzen (ms), Sheikh Afif Bin Zaman (az), Silke Marian (sm), Sol Renteria Adorno (sra), Theerapon Damrongruk (td), Tim Hildebrandt (th), Tomwit Jarnson (tj), Varshinya Varadhachari (vv), Venus Phuangkom, Wardah Rehman (wr)

We would greatly appreciate your feedback! Please send any feedback you have regarding this newsletter to: info@cpg-online.de

Also, don't forget to Like CPG on Facebook, and browse our *website* for other updates and news!

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

www.cpg-online.de
www.facebook.com/cpgtu

Preferences | Unsubscribe