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Asia in Review

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Dear Readers,

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

I'd like to extend special greetings to everyone who will celebrate the birthday of Thailand's Late King Bhumibol Adulyadej, the National Days of Laos and the United Arab Emirates, the Independence Days of Barbados, Finland and the Central African Republic, or Romania's Great Union Day in this week.

I wish you an informative and enjoyable read.

With best regards,

Henning Glaser

Editor in Chief

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

China: Nationwide protests against Zero-COVID policy; resignation of President Xi Jinping demanded

(ms) Protests against the ongoing COVID-19 measures continue to spread across China, with confrontations between protesters and police reportedly erupting in more than 12 cities, including Shanghai and Beijing.

The discontent of the Chinese population continued to grow in recent weeks. While over the past few weeks there have been mainly isolated reports of riots and protests by migrant workers in Tibet and at the Foxconn factory [see AiR No. 44, November/2022, 1],

the protests are now spreading further and further among civilians and at university campuses.

The protests were triggered by a fire on November 24 in Urumqi, the capital of the northwestern Xinjiang region, which killed ten people. The city has been under a lockdown since August, and concerns arose among the population that residents of the apartment building were unable to leave their homes due to local COVID-19 measures and that firefighters were hampered in their rescue efforts, arriving too late at the scene of the fire due to barriers. Even though the local government in response denied the allegations that the measures resulted in the deaths of the ten people, they issued an unusual public apology and announced to slowly relax the measures in the city [BBC 1] [VOA News 1].

The protests in Urumqi that emerged after the fire then spread to at least 12 cities in the country; in Shanghai, 500-1000 people gathered on a street named after Xinjiang's capital. It was followed by other cities across the country with similar protest actions.

Protesters held up blank white pieces of paper, a form of protest that has already been used in Hong Kong, to symbolize the suppression of freedom of expression. Remarkable is the criticism of the government and of President Xi Jinping himself, unseen since the Tiananmen protest in 1989. In addition to protest slogans against test and COVID-19 restrictions and calls for more freedom, protesters shouted slogans such as "Step down, Xi Jinping! Step down, Communist Party!"

Students, who have not been allowed to leave the campus for weeks or months due to the COVID-19 measures, are also taking part in the protests. At Tsinghua University in Beijing, one of the most prestigious universities in the country, peaceful protests took place. [CNN] [Radio Free Asia] [VOA News 2]

The Chinese government is responding to the protests with a major censorship campaign on the Internet, blocking and deleting all posts related to the fire in Urumqi and the resulting protests. But action is also being taken against the protests themselves, reflected in a large number of arrests, and with video footage showing alleged members of the Chinese security police dragging speakers into police cars during demonstrations. At least in part, the security forces are also cracking down on media coverage, including a BBC journalist who was reportedly detained while reporting on the protests in Shanghai and beaten and kicked by security forces. The BBC's press team has

already released a statement on Twitter expressing their concern about the actions of the Chinese police. [Al Jazeera] [BBC 2] [Hong Kong Free Press]

While the protests reached their peak over the weekend, they calmed down again at the beginning of the week. This is due, among other things, to the closure of protest sites and a significantly higher police presence in the country's larger cities. According to reports, at least in Shanghai, random checks of cell phones by the police have been carried out, with those checked being asked to delete recordings of the protests or illegal apps. [Associated Press]

It is questionable to what extent the Chinese government will comply with the demands for relaxations and a departure from the zero-COVD policy. Although the Chinese government announced relaxations in mid-November [see AiR No. 46, November/2022, 3], it has partially backtracked and is imposing stricter measures again in various cities of the country in the face of new record numbers of newly infected people.

Initial reactions to the protests have already been seen on the stock market with a significant drop in the main Chinese stock indices and the Chinese currency. [South China Morning Post]

China: USD 160 billion for the property market

(ms) Six Chinese state-owned commercial banks signed an agreement promising to provide real estate enterprises with loans worth USD 160 billion to support the highly indebted sector.

The Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, Agricultural Bank of China, Bank of China, China Construction Bank, Bank of Communications, and Postal Savings Bank of China are involved in this latest liquidity injunction of the Chinese state. In mid-November the government urged second tier banks to provide around USD 60 Billion [see AiR No. 46, November/2022, 3], and in total, according to data by the Chinese Government, the real estate sector was supported with close to USD 400 Billion since the beginning of the year.

Recipients of this monetary injection are various property companies. Many of them had to partially suspend the construction of already paid construction projects due to their high debt level, which caused resentment and protests of affected Chinese citizens.

Together with the announced relaxation of the Zero-COVID strategy [see AiR No. 46, November/2022, 3], the banks' move provided a stable increase in the value of the respective companies. Investors react positively, with shares of property developers buoying and the MSCI China Index rising by about USD 370 billion.

However, it remains to be seen to what extent this investor confidence will decline again, especially if the lack of clarity in dealing with the rising COVID-19 infections (see entry above) continues. [Bloomberg] [Reuters] [Xinhua]

Also, the People's Bank of China (PBC) announced on November 25, that it will cut the minimum amount of money reserves that banks must hold. This adjustment is the second of its kind this year, after in April the reserve requirement ratio had been lowered for the first time. Due to the reduction, which is to come into effect on December 5, another USD 70 billion would be made available, which would then also be invested in the economy. [CNBC]

China: Former bishop of Hong Kong found guilty

(ms) Joseph Zen, the former bishop of Hong Kong, along with his five co-defendants, was found guilty by a court on November 25 of failing to register the 612 Humanitarian Relief Fund, which provided medical and financial support to protesters through donations during the 2019 anti-government protests, as a society. All six were fined the equivalent of between USD 300 and USD 500.

The defendants were initially charged under the Beijing-imposed 2020 National Security Law for Hong Kong, for colluding with foreign forces, but these charges were dropped. They were instead charged and convicted under the Societies Ordinance, which has its origins in the British colonial period and was of no relevance after the handover Hong Kong and has since been used in another prominent case to ban the Hong Kong National Party, a pro-independence party, in 2018. [CNN] [Hong Kong Free Press]

China: Mainland threatens interference in National Security trial of Jimmy Lai

(ms) Shortly before a Hong Kong court's ruling confirming at the third instance that British royal counsel Timothy Owen is allowed to represent Jimmy Lai in the high-profile national security case, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC) threatened mainland interference if the ruling is not overturned.

After the Hong Kong Court of Appeal last week upheld the ruling allowing British royal counsel Timothy Owen to represent Jimmy Lai in the high-profile national security case, the ruling was upheld again by Hong Kong's High Court on November 28. Whether this ruling will stand is questionable, however, because on November 26 the spokesman for the Standing Committee of the NPC announced that the Chinese government might interfere because in its view allowing Owen to represent Lai violates the legislative intent of the national security law. As a possible consequence of the ruling, according to pro-mainland news outlets, the possibility of holding the trial of Jimmy Lai on the mainland instead of in Hong Kong is said to be on the table. [Hong Kong Free Press 1] [Radio Free Asia]

Chief Executive John Lee Ka-Chiu, speaking at his weekly press conference, announced that the NPC Standing Committee had been invited to interpret the underlying law on the appointment of Ownes, referring to Article 65 of the National Security Law, which was introduced as part of the 2019 anti-government trials, the article states: "The power of interpretation of this Law shall be vested in the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress. Shortly after this announcement, Hong Kong's Department of Justice requested a one-week postponement of the start of the trial. [Hong Kong Free Press 2] [South China Morning Post]

The request and Lee's interference comes just two days before the trial of Jimmy Lai over three national security charges including two counts of conspiracy to collude with foreign countries or external elements, and one count of collusion with foreign forces, was to begin. [AiR No. 47, November/2022, 4]

China: Activist sentenced to 4.5 years in prison

(ms) Chinese activist and public critic of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Lu Huihuang was sentenced on November 20 to four and a half years in prison for incitement to subvert state power.

Lu was already arrested in February this year for his high-profile advocacy on behalf of a woman in Jiangsu, who also received media attention in February after a video appeared on a social media platform showing her chained in a house, the case sparked greater attention at the time about the practice of buying women and girls for marriage in China as a result of the one-child policy and the resulting preponderance of men in the population [see AiR No. 8, February/2022, 4].

After the local government dismissed his allegations of human trafficking, Lu demanded that the CCP directly investigate the case, which led to his arrest.

Lu was already known as a critic of the CCP before this case, having allegedly written several open letters and essays criticizing the party and advocating for democratic reforms in China. Lu is said to have spent two and a half years in detention at an earlier date, during which he is alleged to have been tortured. [Radio Free Asia]

China: Former political advisor under investigation

(ms) The former political adviser of the northwestern Jilin province, Zhang Xiaopei, is under investigation by the anti-corruption bodies, the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) and the National Commission of Supervision (NSC). He is accused of serious violations of discipline and law, an often-used euphemism for corruption. [Xinhua]

China: J-15 Jet in the future equipped with homemade engine

(ms) The People' Liberation Army (PLA) will rely in the future on domestically produced engines for their carrier-based J-15 fighter jets, according to a media report that aired on the 10th anniversary of the first J-15 lift-off from the Liaoning, China's first aircraft carrier, on November 23.

Engines for carrier-based aircraft require higher acceleration and to be more resistance against the harsher environment on the sea, than usual jet engines. The Chinese Shenyang WS-10 engine, which is already installed in every China-made fourth generation aircraft, besides the J-15, is said to fulfill these requirements and additionally offers a longer

lifetime than its Russian predecessor, which was used until now for the J-15 Jets.

The announcement on the one hand shows Chinas efforts to become more self-sufficient in the military sector, and China's improving technological know-how on the other. [Global Times] [South China Morning Post]

China: New SHORAD system revealed

(ms) At the Zhuhai Airshow 2022, held in mid-November, a new short-range air defense system (SHORAD) specifically designed to detect and shoot down low-flying aircraft, such as drones, was unveiled.

The Type 625E is an 8x8 vehicle and is armed with a six-barreled 25mm self-propelled anti-aircraft gun and two four-unit missile launchers which are reportedly loaded with FB-10 missiles, a missile with a range of five to ten kilometers. With the help of radar and optoelectronic detectors, the Type 625E will be able to shoot down helicopters and cruise missiles, but above all, drones, both large and small, thanks to the mounted weapon, and will offer advantages over conventional stationary air defense systems due to its mobility.

The Chinese military has been placing a greater focus on the production of unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) defense systems in recent years, after President Xi Jinping called for prioritizing this area as he sees UAVs as the future of military warfare. [South China Morning Post] [The Eurasian Times]

China: Third Type 055 Destroyer operational

(ms) The Anshan a Type 055 large destroyer of the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN), is now said to be „ready for far sea missions ", after successfully conducting acceptance tests.

During the three-day full-course training acceptance test in the Yellow Sea, the 10,000-ton class destroyer was accompanied by two 7,500-class Type 052D destroyers, the Baotou and the Qiqihar, and reportedly underwent war simulations, which they successfully completed.

The Anshan is the third of six announced Type 055 destroyers to become operational, following the

Nanchang and the Lhasa.

However, there are rumors that two more ships have already been launched, which could potentially increase the number of Type 055 destroyers in service to eight in the future. [Global Times]

The PLAN also announced via social media on November 27 that after successfully completing all full-course training tests, two Type 075 amphibious assault ships are ready for combat. The 40,000-ton Type 075 ships are said to have space for up to 30 helicopters and 35 amphibious vehicles and are expected to play an essential role in a possible invasion of Taiwan, as they would be primarily responsible for transporting vehicles to the island. [South China Morning Post]

Japan: Prime Minister dismisses Cabinet reshuffle speculations

(dql) Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has rejected speculations of an impending reshuffle of his Cabinet.

The speculations have come up after the resignation of three ministers within the last weeks [see No. 47, November/2022, 4] and were reinforced after a report revealed that a branch of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) led by reconstruction minister Kenya Akiba had made a payment of about USD 170 USD to a group connected to the Unification Church.

Akiba, who assumed his post only in August, has come under pressure after he had denied any connections to the religious group. The opposition demanded that Kishida dismiss him. The Prime Minister refused to meet the demand.

The Unification Church has been the center of Japanese political affairs over links of LDP politicians to the religious group that has under heightened scrutiny over its practices of soliciting donations in the wake of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's assassination in July. The suspect has reportedly confessed that he shot Abe after his mother went bankrupt due to donations to the religious group of more than USD 700,000. Abe is believed to have had ties with the group. [The Mainichi] [The Japan Times]

Japan: Major electricity firms fined record sum over breach of antimonopoly laws

(dql) The Japan Fair Trade Commission, the country's trade watchdog, is expected to issue unprecedentedly high fines of tens of billions of yen in total against major utilities for forming a cartel in violation of the antitrust laws.

The companies Chugoku Electric Power Co., Kyushu Electric Power Co. and Chubu Electric Power Co. were found guilty of agreeing on abstaining from acquiring new corporate customers outside their traditional service areas over several years.

In 2000 Japan begun to liberalize its electricity market to tackle the problem of decades-long monopoly of regional power companies. [The Mainichi]

Japan: Companies raided in Olympic Games corruption investigation

(dql) Tokyo District Prosecutors and Japan Fair Trade Commission officials have raided the headquarters of Japanese major advertising and public relations company Dentsu Inc. and production firm Cerespo Co on suspicion of being involved in a bid rigging for contracts related to more than 50 test events in 2018 ahead of 2021 Tokyo summer Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The raid is part of a widening investigation into corruption in the context of the Games during which a former executive at Dentsu has been arrested four times in recent months. He is suspected of having accepted bribes from various companies in return for special treatment in their bid for seats as sponsors of the Games. [NPR]

Japan: University of Tokyo to increase number of female faculty members

(dql) The University of Tokyo, Japan's premier university, has announce an action plan under which it will increase ratio of female faculty members from currently 16 percent to 25 percent by fiscal year 2027.

Even if the plan will be successfully implemented, the ratio will still leave the university lagging not only behind global standards that stand at 45 percent for members states of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, but also in comparison with Japanese universities with 30 percent. [The Japan Times]

Japan: Acquisition of enemy base strike capability proposed

(dql) Japan is reportedly planning to use an enemy base strike capability together with the U.S, following a proposal of a government committee that was made up of largely policy and public finance experts of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party and its junior coalition partner, Komeito, and that described such a capability as “essential” to enhancing the country’s deterrence and countering threats in the region, in particular North Korea’s missile threats.

Under the plan, Japan will deploy long-range missiles to be purchased from the U.S until domestic development of such missiles in completed.

In the meantime, the administration of Prime Minister Fumio Kishida is preparing a revision on its national security strategy, expected to be revealed in December. [The Japan Times] [Naval News]

Meanwhile, the Air Self-Defense Force carried out a missile interceptor exercise near a nuclear plant on the Sea of Japan coast, involving the ASDF’s Patriot Advanced Capability-3 system. [The Mainichi]

South Korea: Massive trucker strikes to disrupt key supply chains

(sm) South Korean truckers have been striking across the country since November 24 to protest poor working conditions and remunerations, raising concerns about potential worldwide supply chain disruptions. On November 29, South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol and his cabinet issued a work start order for some 2,500 cement truckers, arguing that the prolonged strike is hurting the country’s already weakened economy.

According to the main organizer Cargo Truckers Solidarity Union, some 11,000 truckers out of 22,000 union members are participating in the strike, while the police reported around 9,600 strikers. The strike is taking place across all 16 regions of South Korea and organizers stated that the protesters would first block important logistics hubs in Seoul, Busan, and Gwangyang.

The strike is disrupting major deliveries in the auto, steel, and refinery industries. The cargo container traffic at major ports has already been reduced by 40

percent compared to normal conditions. While damage has been limited as shipment companies prepared many key orders in advance of the strike, the cement and steel industries are the most affected by the supply chain disruptions. According to the finance ministry, cement shipments have been reduced by more than 90 percent since the beginning of the strike. Some cement companies have reported the suspension of their production, while more than half of construction sites are disrupted by the cement shortage. [Yonhap News Agency 1]

South Korea's trade association has received at least 32 complaints from 19 shippers since the beginning of the strike, mostly about shipment delays and loss of foreign clients. On November 25, as many as 30 industry associations issued a joint statement urging truckers to return to work. [Korea Herald]

The truckers are requesting the Safe Freight Rate (SFR) system to be established permanently. The SFR system, launched during the COVID-19 pandemic, currently temporarily guarantees a minimum wage and helps truckers deal with rising fuel costs. The system should also be expanded to all heavy shipping industries (steel, auto, grain, containers, cement, etc.). The truckers call for the government's guarantee that it will hold companies which do not respect the minimum wage accountable.

The government and ruling People Power Party have conceded to prolong the system for up to three years, but any other union demands, or negotiations have been unilaterally stalled. It has furthermore strongly reprimanded strikers, warning of strong retaliations in the case of an extended strike. The land ministry will implement the Cabinet's executive order against the strike as soon as possible and provide military trucks to complete deliveries. It is the first time in history that the controversial order has been issued since its passing in 2004. Land minister Won Hee-ryong also threatened to suspend the licenses of persistent strikers. The violation of an executive order by a trucker can result in a fine up to KRW 30 million (USD 22,500) or a maximum three-year imprisonment. The government has raised its cargo disruption alert to the highest level.

Contrary to the ruling party, the minor Justice Party announced its support for the demanded measures on November 28. The truckers have denounced the work start order as an undemocratic and unconstitutional measure, accusing the government of suppressing their labor rights and ignoring worsening work conditions. [Associated Press] [Reuters 1]

This is the second strike launched in less than half a year by the trucker's union. The previous one lasted eight days in June and resulted in significant delays in shipments, mainly in the auto and semiconductor industries and causing about USD 1.2 billion in damage due to lost or delayed orders. The daily losses of the current strike are estimated at around KRW 300 billion (USD 224 million). [Reuters 2] [Reuters 3] [Yonhap News Agency 2]

South Korea: Parliament approves probe into Itaewon disaster, plans no-confidence vote against interior minister

(sm) On November 24, the South Korean parliament approved a probe into the Itaewon disaster, the deadly crowd crush which resulted in the deaths of at least 158 party goers in Seoul's Itaewon district on October 29. The main opposition Democratic Party (DP) also decided to present a motion for a non-confidence vote against interior minister Lee Sang-min, suspected of mismanaging the incident, on November 28.

The ruling People Power Party (PPP) and DP agreed on a plan for a 45-day-long investigation until January 7, 2023. Agencies to be investigated include the state affairs monitoring team of the presidential office, the prime minister's office, the interior and health ministries, the national crisis management center, the Supreme Prosecutor's office, the police, and fire departments, especially the Yongsan Ward office.

As the PPP and DP disagreed on the scope of the prosecutors' investigation, only the prosecutors in charge of drug crimes will be summoned for questioning. The PPP agreed to the parliamentary probe providing that the National Assembly would cover its budget, in contrast to its earlier position that a probe should only be conducted if the ongoing police investigation fell short.

The PPP also opposed the DP's demand to sack interior minister Lee. In contrast, a poll conducted by the Korean Government Employees' Union showed that 83 percent of unionized civil servants support Lee's dismissal over the Itaewon disaster. Furthermore, around 90 percent were against the government's plan to reduce the public work force and to introduce differentiated minimum wages depending on the sector.

In previous weeks, police and fire department officers had criticized the official police investigation which seemed to target primarily low-ranking officers. The

police subsequently launched its own investigation into the responsibility of high-ranking officers, notably indicting interior minister Lee Sang-min. The probe thus represents an investigation in addition to the original police investigation and the independent police investigation into high-profile officials. [see AiR No. 47, November/2022, 4] [Yonhap News Agency_1] [Yonhap News Agency_2] [Yonhap News Agency_3]

South Korea: Supreme Court rules in favor of transgender parent with underage child

(sm) On November 24, the Supreme Court of Korea ruled in favor of the legal sex status change of a transgender parent with underage children. The court declared the denial of legal sex status change as illegal, solely on the grounds of having underage children.

A lawsuit had been filed in 2019 by a transgender person who undertook gender altering surgery and divorced to be able to change her legal sex status. The request had been rejected by the family court, then by the appellate court, in line with a 2011 court decision denying legal sex change to persons married or with underage children. The legal sex status change of a parents could cause psychological shock and confusion in minors and was thus not considered legal.

The Supreme Court overturned such previous decisions and sent the case back to the Seoul family court for retrial. As a legal correction which only implies the revision of gender status on a paper, legal sex status change cannot be considered as psychologically damaging to dependent minors. The revision of legal sex status is, however, constitutive of the indiscriminate right to pursue happiness, be it by a heteronormative or a transgender person, according to the court.

The latest ruling does, however, only apply to single transgender parents with underage children, not married ones. [Korea Times]

South Korea: *Reporters Without Borders* denounce media ban

(sm) On November 24, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) criticized South Korean Yoon Suk-yeol's decision to ban journalists from boarding the president's jet and his cancellation of his daily press meetings.

Yoon had banned Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) reporters from his presidential jet before his trip to Cambodia and Indonesia for the ASEAN and G20 summits on November 10. The justification for the ban had been a series of articles on Yoon's alleged hot mike incident during his meeting with US President Joe Biden on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in September. The South Korean president had been caught swearing about the US House of Representatives, resulting in a political blunder.

Yoon has denied such allegations and in turn accused the media of incorrectly reporting the incident and jeopardizing the US–South Korea relationship, thus prompting the ban. As the dispute between MBC and Yoon's office intensified, the president also decided to suspend his daily morning interviews with the press. [see AiR No. 46, November/2022, 3]

Reporters Without Borders urged the president to reverse his MBC ban and to resume his daily press meetings. [Korea Herald]

South Korea: Yoon announces plan for prospective space agency

(sm) On November 28, South Korean president Yoon Suk-yeol announced his plan to create a space agency similar to the US NASA among other measures to transform the country into a space economy.

The new space agency's headquarters are to be built in Sacheon, in the south of the country, under the Science Ministry's authority. Yoon's roadmap furthermore includes six major policy areas to help South Korea's transition to an aerospace economy, including the education of professionals and the promotion of the space industry. It envisages exploring the moon landing and exploration of its resources by 2032 and a Mars landing by 2045. Over the next five years, South Korea will develop its own rocket for the moon mission.

The establishment of a space agency had been one of Yoon's campaign pledges and should be launched after the passing of the corresponding bill next year. South Korea is the seventh country in the world to develop a heavy goods aircraft capable of going into space, with the launch of its first rocket Nuri in June 2023. [Yonhap News Agency_1] [Yonhap News Agency 2] [korea.net]

Taiwan: Opposition KMT wins local government election

(dql) Taiwan's ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) suffered a crushing defeat in the November 26 local government elections as the opposition Kuomintang (KMT) secured a landslide victory winning 13 of the 21 cities and counties that were up for grabs.

This includes four of the six largest metropolitan areas, with nearly 70 percent of Taiwan's population. Especially, the KMT retook the capital Taipei after eight years of city government under the Taiwan People's Party (TPP). The DPP won only five races, down from seven. [Focus Taiwan]

Taking responsibility for the electoral defeat, President Tsai Ing-wen, who in her election campaign had tried to frame the elections as plebiscite on Taiwan's defense of democracy against China's rising bellicosity toward the island, resigned from her post as DPP leader. [South China Morning Post] [VoA]

China was quick to comment on the election results, explaining that they demonstrated that the mainstream Taiwanese public opinion was favoring peace, stability and "a good life," adding that Beijing would continue its opposition to Taiwan independence and foreign interference. [Reuters]

Ahead of the elections search warrants were issued under Taiwan's Anti-Infiltration Act introduced in 2019, which is intended to prevent foreign entities from interfering in elections, against individuals suspected of buying or attempting to buy votes on behalf of China. According to reports from a Taiwanese news agency, four locations were searched, and three suspects were arrested. During the raids, evidence was said to have been discovered indicating that candidates standing for election had received money from China. However, which candidates or which party they belong to was not made public. [Bloomberg] [Reuters]

Taiwan: Referendum on lowering voting age fails

(dql) Held on the same day of the local government elections (see above), a referendum on a proposed constitutional amendment that would lower the voting age from 20 to 18 failed to obtain meet the required threshold of 50 percent "yes" votes from among them more 19 million eligible voters for passage.

The referendum received just 5,647,102 approving votes, compared with 5,016,427 opposing it. Only some 12 million voters participated in the referendum.

The results leave Taiwan among only a few democratic countries with a voting age of 20. [Focus Taiwan]

Taiwan: Former senior military officer charged with espionage for China

(dql) Taiwanese prosecutors have disclosed that a retired colonel has been charged with corruption and harming state security after he had been found accepting bribes from a Chinese agent for serving as a spy.

The prosecution is seeking a 12-year sentence. [CNN]

Against this backdrop, calls for resuming military trials during peacetime or reforming laws to better deter military espionage were voiced by scholars and lawmakers.

Under the current Military Trial Act, only active military personnel who commit crimes under the Criminal Code of the Armed Forces during wartime can be prosecuted. [Focus Taiwan]

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

Bangladesh: Female migrants prone to extremism, study finds

(az) Experts from the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) have warned that authorities should keep track of female migrants, especially the financially aggrieved abroad workers, to stop getting involved in the trap of radicalization and extremism.

Through a study, BRAC shows that due to a lack of digital literacy and knowledge about radicalization processes, the militants easily target female migrants. The study found that 2.3 percent of the respondents had already spent some of their money as donations to the violent groups that thrive under religious and political activism. To ensure that the life struggles of the migrants do not force them to engage with those extremist groups, the institution suggests that the migrants should be taught well about the host countries' regulations, laws, and culture before their departure. [The Daily Star]

India: Centre forms panel to revamp only govt job guarantee scheme

(wr) India's union government has formed a panel to reevaluate the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA), an anti-poverty plan that provides 100 days of employment every year to tens of millions of rural poor. Sources said the panel set up by the Rural Development Ministry will recommend institutional reform for more effective utilization of funds of the scheme. [Reuters] [News on Air]

India: Prime Minister Modi accuses opposition Congress party of shielding terrorists

(wr) In the run-up to a two-phase election in the western Indian state of Gujarat, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said that his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government has been acting towards eliminating the menace of terrorism. He also accused the opposition Congress party (INC) that it considers terrorism as its vote bank, adding that several other parties indulging in appeasement politics also have arisen. [Hindustan Times] [The Print] [India TV].

The elections are scheduled to begin on December 1; pre-poll surveys have predicted that Modi's BJP will win a majority of the 182 seats in the state's legislative assembly for a record seventh time in a row, defeating the INC and new entrant Aam Aadmi Party. Results will be announced on 8 December. [BBC]

India: More than 80 injured in latest clash to halt project in Kerala state

(wr/lm) More than 80 protesters and police have been injured as villagers from a fishing community in Kerala state clashed with law enforcement during demonstrations against the construction of a USD 900 million port project by India's multinational Adani Group conglomerate, the latest escalation in a months-long strike.

Building at Vizhinjam port has been halted for more than three months after villagers blamed the port's development for coastal erosion and depriving them of their livelihoods. The protests have forced Adani's USD 23 billion ports business to stop work at the port, which seeks to plug into lucrative east-west trade routes, and thus, is seen as a potential and lucrative rival to those in Dubai, Singapore and Sri Lanka.

Over the weekend, police arrested some protesters who blocked Adani's construction vehicles from entering the port, despite a court order for work to resume. The arrests prompted hundreds of protesters, led by Catholic priests, to march on the police station on November 27, leading to clashes with personnel and leaving police vehicles damaged, according to a police document and footage on local television.

The Adani Group has said the project was in full compliance with all laws and has repeatedly sought relief from the Kerala state court, but locals have refused to relent. [The Strait Times] [Reuters] [The Guardian]

India: IT workers turn to unions as tech giants sack employees

(wr) As layoffs have hit the Indian tech sector, thousands of workers have resorted to joining trade unions, revolutionising the way to exert political pressure. While massive layoffs have been reported in at least 44 start-ups in India, international brands such as Apple, Meta, and Amazon are also cutting jobs or

have frozen the hiring of new employees amid worsening global economic turmoil, which has been exacerbated by the Ukraine war and post-COVID woes. [Deutsche Welle] [The Strait Times]

In related developments, the labour ministry has announced to set up an inquiry to find out whether a recent spate of resignations at Amazon India constituted layoffs that violate labour laws or terms of service. [Hindustan Times]

India: AAP senior official commits suicide after being denied MCD ticket

(wr/lm) A leader of the ruling party in India's capital territory, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), is believed to have died by suicide on November 24 after being denied a ticket in the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) elections to be held on December 24. [The Week] [MSN]

The Delhi president of Prime Minister Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party alleged that the AAP was responsible for the death of the party official - an accusation the AAP categorically rejected.

India: Assam Petroleum Mazdoor Union suspends fuel transportation to Meghalaya amid border disputes

(wr) The Assam Petroleum Mazdoor Union on November 25 temporarily suspended the transportation of fuel to India's northeastern Meghalaya state following a firing incident along the state's border with neighboring Assam that left at least six workers dead. [ANI] [Deccan Herald] [MSN]

Assam and Meghalaya have a long-standing dispute in 12 areas along their nearly 900-kilometer-long inter-state border, and the location where the violence took place is one of those. The two states signed a memorandum of understanding in March this year towards ending the dispute in six of the areas.

Nepal: Deadlocked election threatens political turmoil

(lm) Political observers expect a hung parliament in Nepal after no political party emerged as clear victor in

the country's general election - a development that gives new political parties a decisive role in forming the government and raises fears of political instability in the Himalayan nation. [ABC] [Reuters]

About 61 percent of 18 million eligible voters voted on November 20 for the 275-member federal parliament. Of them 165 seats will be filled on the basis of first-past-the-post and the rest through proportional representation. Elections of 550 members of the seven state assemblies were simultaneously held. [AiR No. 47, November/2022, 4]

Although the final results are yet to be released, it is already clear that no political party or alliance will win a majority of seats required to form a government. The Nepali Congress party of Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba is leading in 53 seats, and the main opposition CPN-UML in 44. The Maoist Center — a former rebel force and now part of the ruling coalition — has maintained a distant third position with 17 projected seats. Results have been declared in 160 of the total 165 directly elected districts. [The Kathmandu Post]

It is worth noting that a newly formed National Independent Party (NIP) — led by firebrand journalist-turned-politician Rabi Lamichhane and the pro-monarchist Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) — are projected to fourth and fifth place respectively. The NIP campaigned on a platform of good governance and leadership change, while the RPP emphasized restoring the monarchy and abolishing secularism. [Deutsche Welle]

Altogether, nine political parties and a few independent candidates are projected to win seats in the parliament.

Pakistan: General Asim Munir takes charge of military

(fm) General Asim Muni took command of Pakistan's armed forces on November 29 amid a deepening political rift between the government and opposition leader Imran Khan, as well as a renewed threat from the Pakistan Taliban (TTP) militant group that has been behind scores of deadly attacks.

Munir, who previously served as head of the Inter-Services Intelligence, replaced General Qamar Javed Bajwa who retired from the post after a six-year term. Bajwa, during his tenure, had approved a series of operations against the TTP to evict them from the country's former northwestern tribal regions bordering

Afghanistan. Bajwa also opened peace talks with the militant group earlier this year.[DAWN] [South China Morning Post]

Pakistan: Imran Khan's PTI announces plan to quit state assemblies

(fm) Imran Khan, the chairman of Pakistan's opposition Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, threatened on November 26 that his party would "quit the corrupt political system" and withdraw from all state assemblies where it is power - an announcement that failed to impress Khan's political opponents. [South China Morning Post] [The News]

The ousted prime minister launched a protest march late last month from the eastern city of Lahore toward the capital Islamabad as part of his campaign for early polls, but stepped down from personally leading the convoy after surviving a gun attack – which supporters say was an attempted assassination – on November 3 [see AiR No. 45, November/2022, 2].

On November 26, then Khan brought his "long march 2.0" to the city of Rawalpindi as he continued to push for early general elections. [The Guardian]

Pakistan: Senior Senator again arrested for speaking out against custodial torture by high military officials

(msk/lm) A senior Pakistani senator, Azam Khan Swati, was arrested by federal police on November 27 for comments critical of top military officers, according to colleagues from his opposition Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party. It was the second time he was taken into custody in two months [see AiR No. 42, October/2022, 3]. [Associated Press]

Sawti, who represents Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, was picked up from his residence in an Islamabad suburb hours after he addressed an Imran Khan-led rally in the garrison city of Rawalpindi. He was later charged with libel and appeared before a judge who allowed the Federal Investigation Agency to interrogate the senator for two days.

Sri Lanka: court grants bail to activist detained under Prevention of Terrorism

Act

(sn) the Magistrate's Court of Sri Lanka on November 23 granted bail to a student activist who had spent 89 days in detention under the country's Prevention of Terrorism Act. The court ordered the young man to appear in the Criminal Investigation Department once a month, to remain in the country, and to refrain from commenting on the legal matter to the media. [Colombo Times] [News First]

Sri Lanka: Ceylon Teachers' Union seeks changes to dress code

(sn) The Ceylon Teachers' Union has asked to extend a circular that allows government employees to wear suitable attire to the state schoolteachers.

Sri Lanka's Education Minister Susil Premjayantha recently refused a request by teachers to make changes to the dress code, citing cultural values. In light of this, on November 21, teachers responded by attending their work in casual attire. Following this, the union's general secretary noted that the teachers work better if they wear comfortable clothes rather than traditional wear. [News Wire]

Sri Lanka: Ministerial Consultative Committee on Justice discusses anti-corruption bill proposal

(sn) Sri Lanka's Ministry of Justice has proposed an anti-corruption bill to meet the obligations of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC). The draft was shared with Transparency International Sri Lanka (TISL), which shared the document with the public on its website.

The bill seeks to amend the Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption (CIABOC), meaning that suspects could be arrested without a warrant & Magistrate's court order. Instead, the Independent Commission will be authorized to detain the accused and request monitoring from the court when the commission officer suspects the offense covered by the act has taken place.

On November 21, the Ministerial Consultative Committee on Justice, Prison Affairs, and Constitutional Reforms discussed the proposed act under the chairmanship of Minister of Justice

Wijeyadasa Rajapakshe. According to the bill, the Independent Commission has to submit its progress report to Parliament every three months. The Committee emphasized the need for severe punishments for those found guilty of bribery scams; and is expected to make more appropriate amendments to the bill.

Political observers believe that President Ranil Wickremesinghe lacks public support due to his ties with the previous administration, detentions under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, the use of force by police against protesters, and the use of troops to dismantle protest camps in Colombo. Thus, the public perceives the proposed anti-corruption bill as a potentially alarming message. [News Wire, Daily News, News First, Colombo Page, The Diplomat]

Sri Lanka: Female lawmakers to support UN campaign against gender-based violence

(sn) Sri Lankan female lawmakers will participate in a United Nations-led global campaign which features 16 days of activism against Gender-Based Violence (GBV). On December 1, the women will wear orange and a wristband with the slogan of this initiative "Let's Unite to end Gender-Based Violence"

Around a quarter of women covered by the Department of Census and Statistics reported experience of sexual or physical violence from their partners. Female parliamentarians expressed they often encountered verbal abuse based on their gender roles and described it as a typical way of disgracing women as electoral candidates. The Women Parliamentarians' Caucus (WPC) also works on a women's bill that they wish to represent to parliament soon. [The Island]

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

Cambodia: National bank authorizes Acleda Bank to issue green bonds on Cambodia Securities Exchange

(sn) The National Bank of Cambodia (NBC) has authorized the request of Acleda Bank Plc to issue and list green bonds on the Cambodia Securities Exchange (CSX). The issuance is given for qualified investors to support government policy aiming to achieve zero carbon emissions by 2050 and join the according enterprises. Environment-friendly initiatives such as water treatment, electricity production, solar panels, and soil conversions are the target uses of the green bond loans listed by Acleda Bank Plc. [Khmer Times]

Cambodia: Prominent businesswoman arrested for multi-million-dollar embezzlement

(sn) On November 17, Phnom Penh Military Police arrested a famous Cambodian businesswoman and CEO of Pich Sunshine Realty Estate, Pich Srey Mom. She was found guilty of allegedly defrauding a multi-million dollar sum and charged with “noncompliance with the instruments that can be traded”.

The woman acquired gains by writing checks without sufficient funds to her victims. In May 2022, Pich Srey Mom was arrested for a similar crime, defrauding USD 776,000 from another entrepreneur. It was found that the courts, police, and military have already filed various other lawsuits against the businesswoman. On November 22, the court decided to move the defendant to the Phnom Penh Capital Prison. [Khmer Times, VOD News, Cambodia Expats Online]

Cambodia: *Human Right Watch* reports how Covid-19 regulations were used for

the union busting

(sn) *Human Rights Watch* has published a report evaluating how the Cambodian government intensified its crackdown on the independent labor unions. The strike of NagaWorld casino workers is one of the most prominent examples over the past year. The authorities repressed the demonstrations by announcing most of the strikes as 'illegal' and using threats and detention to disperse the protestors.

Moreover, the government adopted restrictive laws to displace independent groups with its subordinate trade unions. As such, the Trade Union Law makes the union registration process problematic; and the Covid-19 Law passed in March 2021 allows government agents to exercise its broad definitions to infringe on any assembly. [Human Rights Watch, Camboja News]

Cambodia: Police arrests NagaWorld Union leader upon arrival from Australia

(sn) On November 26, 2022, the Phnom Penh Municipal Police arrested the NagaWorld workers union leader, Chhim Sithar, upon her arrival from Australia. The arrest took place since the Phnom Penh Municipal Police initially ordered miss Sithar on March 14 to abstain from traveling abroad to comply with her bail conditions. The court arranged for her to be sent to prison following the arrest warrant order.

The union leader was returning from the labor conference and was escorted for questioning upon landing at Phnom Penh International airport. Her lawyers were unaware or informed of "any judicial supervision or probation conditions, such as travel restrictions."

Chhim Sithar and 10 other demonstrators are on bail for cases from the NagaWorld protests. Indeed, it remains unclear whether they were initially prevented from traveling overseas and if there could be restrictions on reasons why she could not leave Cambodia. [Cambodianess, VOD English]

Cambodia: Human rights committee sets up confidential complaint mailboxes for jail inmates

(sn) The Cambodian Human Rights Committee (CHRC) has launched a program that aims to set up secret

complaint mailboxes for prison inmates in Phnom Penh. The facilities participating in this pilot program are the Phnom Penh Police Judiciaire (PJ) prison, and the Prey Sar Prison Correctional Centers 1 (M1) & 2 (M2).

Earlier in March 2022, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Cambodia found that courts often fail to provide justice to the families of convicts who died in prison. The number of incarcerated people in Cambodia is expected to reach more than 37,000 by the end of 2022, with 52 percent jailed for drug offenses. [Cambodianess, Cambodia Daily]

Laos: Cabinet holds monthly meeting, approves draft amendments and decrees

(ih) The Laotian cabinet held its monthly meeting on November 21 and 22. The cabinet approved draft amendments on decrees covering the definition of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and the country's SME Promotion Fund. They approved amendments to a draft decree on taxpayer identification numbers as well, calling on the Ministry of Finance to collaborate with the relevant authorities to revise the decree based on their recommendations to ensure more transparent and efficient tax collection.

Additionally, officials were instructed to take further measures to prevent the leakage of government revenues and to implement the government's austerity policies to help better manage the country's debt load. A new draft national strategy on civil servant management was also approved, covering meritocratic promotions, civil servant quotas, and the selection process for civil servants. [Laotian Times] [KPL]

Laos: Government still unable to repair national ID card database

(ih) The Laotian Ministry of Public Security remains unable to repair their national ID card database to an extent that would enable them to issue new national ID cards. Possession of a national ID card is compulsory for Laotian citizens and are required to access many essential services. Citizens have been advised to use their family registration booklets as a temporary substitute photo ID. The government has provided no public information regarding the nature of the system error rendering the database inoperable,

nor provided any timeline on when the system would be fixed. [Laotian Times]

Myanmar: 100 prisoners re-arrested after last week's release

(jp) More than 100 political prisoners released in Myanmar after a supposed amnesty were re-arrested soon after. [The Guardian]

Myanmar Airforce grounds most JF-17 jets

(th) Due the technical issues the Myanmar Airforce was forced to ground most of its JF-17 jets it has bought from a China-Pakistan joint venture. The aircrafts, which are supposed to carry out interceptions as well as ground attacks and bombing missions, can no longer be used in the ongoing civil war, which features frequent bombing rates contacted on behalf of the State Administration Council. [The Economic Times]

Indonesia: President approves controversial removal of constitutional justice

(os) Indonesian President Joko Widodo has approved the decision of the House of Representatives to replace former Constitutional Court justice Aswanto with Guntur Hamzah. Civil groups warn that this move might be a threat to the independence of the judiciary in Indonesia. [The Jakarta Post]

Lawmakers removed Aswanto from office in September after a decision that resulted from a closed-door meeting by House Commission III, which oversees legal affairs. Lawmakers claimed that Aswanto had not been sufficiently loyal to the House and allegedly underperformed.

On November 23, Aswanto's replacement, Guntur, was sworn in with Jokowi in attendance. State Secretary Pratniko justified Jokowi's nod to the removal by stating that according to Constitutional Court Law, the president has the obligation to ratify the House's decision.

However, civil groups and experts questioned this claim. They state that Jokowi had the power to counter the House's decision. Furthermore, they put forward

that lawmakers do not hold the authority to remove a justice. A presidential decree after a request from the court's chief justice is needed for the removal of a justice.

Experts also expressed their view that the moves by the House and Jokowi are part of a larger development of attacks on the independence of the judiciary. The House has also planned a revision to the Constitutional Court Law which would include a possible evaluation of justices by the House, the president, and the Supreme Court every five years.

Indonesia: Government wants to curb lawmaker's influence on central bank, other watchdogs

(os) The government has proposed to the House of Representatives a ban on political party members from running for posts at Bank Indonesia (BI) and other watchdogs. [The Jakarta Post]

The proposal is part of the government's response to the House's draft of the omnibus bill on financial sector development and strengthening (PPSK). The proposed revision of Article 47 of the BI Law would hinder political party leaders and members from sitting on the BI board of governors.

The government's proposal also encompasses a possible ban of political party leaders and members from sitting on the Deposit Insurance Corporation's (LPS) board of commissioners. The draft by the House only stipulated a ban on regular party members, not leaders. Furthermore, the proposal seeks to counter the House's plan to scrap the government from the selection processes for leaders of the Financial Services Authority (OJK) and the LPS.

Experts stress the importance of these financial authorities in ensuring financial stability. Political interference could lead to conflicts and instability, which would be detrimental to attracting investors.

Indonesia: President nominates navy chief as new armed forces commander

(os) Indonesian President Joko Widodo has nominated Navy Chief of Staff Admiral Yudo Margono as the new commander of the Indonesian Armed Forces (TNI). If approved by the House of Representatives, he will

replace General Andika Perkasa, who is set to retire in December.

The House has time until mid-December to process the appointment of the candidate. Yudo would be the first Navy chief at the helm of the TNI since 2013. Three out of the last four TNI commanders have come from the Army. However, his time in office would be short, since he will reach his retirement age in November 2023. [Antara News] [Jakarta Globe]

Indonesia: President makes remark about possible successor during rally

(os) President Joko Widodo held a rally over the weekend which displayed his unwavering influence in the country. He made a remark that for the next presidential election he would favor a “white-haired” leader, which many interpret as a nod to Central Java Governor Ganjar Pranowo. [Antara News] [South China Morning Post] [Tempo] [The Jakarta Post]

Jokowi's term in office will end in 2024, and he will not be allowed to run for office again. With last weekend's mass gathering in a stadium in Jakarta, which was attended by almost 150 thousand supporters, he signaled his willingness to wield influence over the 2024 presidential election.

The president emphasized the importance of a continuation of Indonesia's current development under the next president. He urged the people to choose a caring leader in the next election. He claimed that this character trait could be derived from the candidate's appearance, including white hair. Many see this as a hint that he favors Ganjar as his successor since the governor of Central Java province is the only one of the most popular contenders for the next election with full white hair.

Ganjar has kept mostly quiet about possible plans to run for office. He is a member of the same party as President Jokowi. However, the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) has not yet nominated its candidate for the 2024 election. Powerful PDI-P chairwoman Megawati Sukarnoputri is widely regarded as wanting to choose her daughter as presidential candidate. But her daughter boasts lower popularity than Ganjar.

Megawati has the final say in nominating a candidate for the PDI-P, according to party consensus. Observers point out that Jokowi seems to want to have a say in the decision, as well. Due to his lack of power within

the PDI-P, mass gatherings could be a way for him to leverage his support in the population.

Philippines: Senator push to decriminalize libel

(tjb) Former broadcast journalist turned lawmaker Senator Raffy Tulfo is calling for the decriminalization of libel, a law that press freedom advocates criticize for being used to silence criticism, in a senate hearing discussing measures to prevent disinformation. [Philippine Star]

However, the scope of his proposal is directed only to reporters under an established media organization. Tulfo wanted those who air disinformation on media platforms until their victims pay money to silence them to be exempted from the policy. [Rappler]

Meanwhile, The National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP) cautioned lawmakers on creating laws to tackle fake news. They argue that these laws can be used for censorship. Instead, NUJP is calling for fact-checking and media literacy programs. [Philippine Daily Inquirer]

Philippines: Court finds cop guilty of drug war torture

(tjb) A Caloocan City court convicted a cop for torture and planting of evidence under former President Rodrigo Duterte's war on drugs. [Philippine Star]

The court found police officer Jeffrey Perez guilty of the arrest and death of Carl Anaiz, 19, and Reynaldo de Guzman, 14. The incident happened in 2017 amid Duterte's crackdown on illegal drugs. Perez is sentenced to two terms of life imprisonment. His former colleague, Ricky Arquilita, was charged with the same accusation but he died in April 2019 due to liver disease. [Philippine Daily Inquirer]

Based on court findings, the officer planted sachets of marijuana and methamphetamine as well as a revolver on Arnaiz. Police reports indicate that Arnaiz died in a gunfight while De Guzman was found with stab wounds on his body. [Reuters]

Human rights advocates welcomed the verdict while hoping that justice will continue to end impunity in the country. [Benar News]

Singapore, Australia air forces conduct training exercise

(ih) Republic of Singapore Air Force (RSAF) personnel participated in a two day training exercise with the Australian Air Force on November 22 and 23. The exercise, intended to help the RSAF familiarize itself with the F35 Joint Strike Fighter system, included flying exercises deploying Singapore's fourth-generation fighters alongside Australia's F35As. Additionally, a symposium was held on integrating fifth generation fighters with Singapore's existing fourth generation fighters in operations, as well as the maintenance and engineering requirements of the F35 platform. Singapore has ordered four F35Bs, with an option to procure eight more. They are expected to take delivery of the F35Bs in 2026. [Straits Times]

Singapore: Temasek, repealing the criminalization of gay sex, constitutional amendments regarding the definition of marriage to be discussed at upcoming Parliament session

(ih) At the next parliament session, due to begin on November 28, the governance of Temasek and the country's sovereign wealth fund GIC are expected to feature prominently on the agenda.

Since Temasek's decision to write off its USD 275 million investment in cryptocurrency exchange FTX, lawmakers from the Worker's Party have been consistently raising questions about the extent of the government's oversight over Temasek and GIC, seeking more transparency on the structures governing these investment vehicles. Among the issues raised were whether the Ministry of Finance tracks the investments made by Temasek and GIC; whether there were regulations covering minimum required levels of due diligence for entities investing government funds; the extent of government knowledge of the pay packages of top Temasek and GIC executives; and whether Temasek and GIC had received advice from the government to reduce exposure to cryptocurrency trading risks.

The Parliament will also debate two bills expected to significantly impact the LGBTQIA+ community in Singapore. The first is Penal Code (Amendment) Bill to repeal Section 377A, which aims to remove the provision criminalizing sex between men from the

penal code. The second is the Constitution of the Republic of Singapore (Amendment No. 3) Bill to amend the Constitution, which would amend the constitution to define marriage as between a man and woman. [CNA] [The Online Citizen]

Singapore: Ministry of Law proposes bill to privatize the handling of all bankruptcy cases

(ih) The Singapore Ministry of Law (MinLaw) proposed a new Insolvency, Restructuring and Dissolution (Amendment) Bill in Parliament on November 28. The bill would mandate that Private Trustees in Bankruptcy (PTIBs) would be appointed to handle all bankruptcy cases, in order to reduce the number of public resources expended in adjudicating these issues.

Under the current law, only institutional creditors are mandated to appoint PTIBs. Bankruptcies deemed to be of public interest would still be handled by official assignees. If MinLaw's proposed bill is passed, it is expected to be fully implemented by September 2023 [Straits Times]

Singapore: High Court dismisses constitutional challenge to the death penalty

(ih) On November 25, the High Court dismissed the application by four convicted drug traffickers for permission to seek a prohibiting order preventing their death sentences from being carried out. The defendants had asserted that certain provisions of the Misuse of Drugs Act shift the burden of truth for some aspects of the crime to the accused, violating the constitutionally enshrined presumption of innocence, specifically sections 18(1) and 18(2).

These articles state that a person in possession of things containing a controlled substance is assumed to be in possession of that substance unless they can prove otherwise, and that if a person possessing a controlled substance claims to have no knowledge as to the nature of that substance, the burden is on them to prove that this is the case. Justice Valerie Thean noted in a written statement that the application was not valid as it was filed outside of the three-month period following the final decision in the defendants' case. Furthermore, she stated that there were no reasonable grounds to argue that there had been any

infringement upon articles of the Constitution in this case. [Straits Times]

Thailand: Former Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra cries foul as court issues arrest warrant

(ts) The Supreme Court's Criminal Division for Holders of Political Positions issued an arrest warrant for former Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra on account of her absence in court. The former PM remonstrated strongly against the issue highlighting that the court treated her unfairly.

The court issue came on November 21 as she failed to be present at the first deliberation session of the case. Being summoned to enter a plea, she neither explained absence nor sought to postpone the session. The prosecutors claimed that these were tantamount to rejecting the Criminal Code. Yingluck later reacted in marked contrast to the court's decision. She tweeted, claiming that she has been "ceaselessly persecuted." However, the defense counsel was appointed as her representative to lodge a written claim. The court approvingly set the date for evidence examination on March 14, 2023. [Bangkok Post] [Thai Post]

Dated back in September 2011, Yingluck ordered the Prime Minister's Secretariat to shift Thawil Pliensri, the then-National Security Council chief, to the inactive post of PM Office's adviser. The move was believed to seek a way for Police General Priewpan Damapong, Yingluck's elder brother-in-law, to assume the National Police Chief, where the incumbent by then was to replace Thawil. The transfer was thus considered to violate the Criminal Code's Section 157 by unlawful power abuse, against which public prosecutors earlier this year filed a charge. It is also worth noting that Yingluck has stayed outside the Kingdom for almost four years now. [The Nation Thailand]

Thailand: Rumors of Prime Minister Prayut joining another political party continue

(fj) Rumors of Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha planning to join the United Thai Nation Party (UTN) endure despite UTN leader Pirapan Salirathavibhanga's denial of any agreement between him and the Prime Minister.

As Prayut needs to find a political platform to support his candidature for the upcoming general election tentatively scheduled for May 2023, the rumors are fueled by an alleged falling out between Prayut and the leader of the Palang Pracharath Party (PPRP), Deputy Prime Minister Prawit Wongsuwon. [Bangkok Post 1]

In the last general election held in 2019, the PPRP had nominated Prayut as an external prime ministerial candidate even though he never officially joined the party. Up to now Prayut has continued to keep some distance from party politics, but recently there have been speculations that he would soon change course and join a party in a bid to shift his public image away from his military background and towards that of a fully-fledged politician. [see AiR No. 46, November/2022,3]

The rumors have also prompted speculations on the possible impact of Prayut turning his back on the PPRP. If he can mobilize factions within the party to follow him to the UTN, this might substantially cut into the party's number of members of parliament, with sources stating that up to 40 MPs could leave the PPRP to either follow Prayut or seek better political opportunities in other parties. [Bangkok Post 2]

While UTN leader Pirapan, who also serves as an advisor to Prayut, stated that there had been no communication between him and the Prime Minister on joining his party, he noted that UTN, known as Ruam Thai Sang Chart Party in Thai, would welcome Prayut and the popular appeal he could bring to the party. The UTN leader further denied that the party, which was founded only in 2021 by another close supporter of Prayut, was designed as a vehicle for ensuring Prayut's political future. [Thai PBS World]

Thailand: Government ends co-payment stimulus package as indicators hint at economic recovery

(fj) Finance Minister Arkhom Termpittayapaisith has announced that the 50:50 economic stimulus measure, through which the government supported citizens on certain clearly defined and relatively small purchases by paying half the price from public funds, will not be extended further.

The finance minister cited increasing consumer spending as a sign of rising purchasing power among the population, which he takes as indicating a broader economic recovery of the Thai economy. This positive trend, so the Minister, allows to shift focus towards

addressing the rise in household debt, which currently stands at USD 418 billion, or around 88 percent of the nation's GDP.

Despite his purported concern with Thailand's long-term fiscal health, he stated that a new economic stimulus package is currently being developed and will be rolled out as "New Year gifts" to the Thai people.

The chairman of the Thai Chamber of Commerce voiced his understanding for the termination of the 50:50 stimulus measure under the rising fiscal pressures. He further suggested that the government work on ways to attract more foreign investment, such as rethinking the proposal to allow foreigners to purchase land in the country. [Thai PBS World]

Thailand: Charter Court declares amendments of Political Parties Act constitutional

(fj) The judges of the Charter Court have unanimously ruled that several proposed amendments to the Political Parties Act are constitutional, including the reduction of party membership fees and the opening of party membership to those implicated in prison sentences.

A petition signed by 77 senators had sought the Constitutional Court's ruling on the amendments of the Organic Bill on Political Parties after it had passed both houses of parliament. Of particular concern was the reduction of annual party membership fees from around USD 2.50 to around USD 0.50. The senators had expressed concern that these changes could allow wealthy individuals to pay the party membership fees for many members, thereby putting themselves in a position to dominate the party. [Bangkok Post] [Thai PBS World]

A second election-related petition signed by 105 MPs and senators has been accepted by the Constitutional Court with a ruling scheduled for November 30. It concerns a change in the method used to calculate the allocation of parliamentary seats. [Bangkok Post]

Thailand: Business prefers real-estate tycoon Srettha Thavisin as prime minister, survey finds

(ts) A recent survey reveals that real-estate tycoon Srettha Thavisin tops the PM candidate choices among business leaders. His gain from this survey comes as no big surprise yet reflects what the business wants for the country's likely scenario.

The survey on the potential PM, conducted by Krungthep Thurakij, shows to date that the president of the real-estate developer Sansiri received 58.2 percent far ahead of Phaetongtarn Shinawatra, the Pheu Thai Family project chief and the youngest daughter of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. Despite being undocumented, Srettha is also Pheu Thai's PM candidate next to Phaetongtarn for the general election next year. More than half of the respondents favor correspondingly the opposition Pheu Thai to be the next ruling party. Featured respondents were over 500 CEOs from an extensive range of business industries. Among a myriad, the Thai Chamber of Commerce Chairman Sanan Angubolkul remarked that the next prime minister must give priority to the economy. [The Nation Thailand]

Further to this notion, it is believed that one candidate from Pheu Thai is to strongly deliver economic prospects, which are the party's strong points while the other must be able to maintain the voting base and appeal to the new generation. [see Siripan Nogsuan Sawasdee in South China Morning Post and Air No. 47, November/2022, 4]

Vietnam: Former deputy health minister receives suspended prison sentence

On November 24, the People's Court of Hanoi sentenced former Deputy Minister of Health Cao Minh Quang to a 30-month suspended jail sentence for the offence of "lack of responsibility, causing serious consequences". The charges stemmed from Cao Minh Quang's tenure leading the steering committee to deal with issues related to Tamiflu, raw materials, and Oseltamivir in 2005. In response to the A(H5N1) influenza strain, the ministry ordered Cuu Long Pharmaceutical JSC to produce Oseltamivir using imported raw materials. The price of the drugs was to be set based on the cost of the raw materials, and potentially renegotiated if these raw material costs changed. However, when the foreign partner supplying the materials reduced their price, Cuu Long Pharmaceutical JSC concealed this discount from the Ministry of Health (MOH), resulting in US$ 3.8 million in losses to the state.

In addition to Cao Minh Quang, the former Director of the MOH's Planning and Finance Department, the former Deputy Director of the MOH's Planning and Finance Department, and the former chief accountant of the management board for the plan for prevention and control of the A(H5N1) influenza epidemic all received suspended sentences. As the court determined that the officials involved did not benefit from the losses to the state, no compensation was required of them. [VN Express] [Vietnam+]

Vietnam: 17th session of National Assembly Standing Committee begins

The 17th session of the National Assembly Standing Committee convened on November 28. Outcomes of the fourth session of the 15th National Assembly, which ended on November 15, will be discussed, as well as the necessary preparations for the legislature's upcoming second extraordinary session and the fifth regular session in May 2023. The Prime Minister has submitted seven urgent issues that need to be addressed before the next regular session. These include the national master plan for 2021-2030, with a vision to 2050; a draft revision of the Law on Medical Examination and Treatment; and a variety of financial and budgetary issues.

The National Assembly Standing Committee will examine which issues to put on the agenda of the second extraordinary session, and consider a number of financial and budgetary issues, such as how to allocate remaining capital from the central budget and adjusting the on-lending capital plan for localities during the remainder of the year. [Vietnam+]

International Relations, Geopolitics and Security in Asia

Bangladesh, European Union hold first bilateral Political Dialogue

(az/lm) Against the larger backdrop of a geopolitical shift among the global powers in the context of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the European Union and Bangladesh have held their inaugural Political Dialogue in Dhaka on November 24, paving the way to putting their relationship on firmer footing.

The meeting in Dhaka was the first of what will now be an annual event, alternating between Bangladesh's capital and Brussels. It will provide strategic guidance and intensify foreign and security policy cooperation. The significance of the format to the EU was illustrated by Brussel's proposal last week to initiate discussions on a Partnership Cooperation Agreement with Bangladesh. [EUReporter]

Although not interested in military cooperation, Bangladesh still aspires to cooperate in fields like climate change, cyber and maritime security, defense, connectivity, human rights, and democracy. [The Daily Star]

India to engage with four key economies over free trade agreements

(wr) India's minister for finance and corporate affairs, Nirmala Sitharaman, said on November 24 that the country's trade negotiators are all set to engage four key economies - the United Kingdom, the European Union (EU), Canada and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) - in trade and investments under free trade agreements (FTAs). [CNBC] [Hindustan Times]

Senior officials of India and the EU on November 28 commenced the third round of talks on a proposed FTA, which aims at boosting trade and investments between the two regions. The two sides on June 17 this year formally resumed negotiations on the proposed

India-EU Trade and Investment Agreement, including the Geographical Indications. The EU delegation will be staying in New Delhi until December 9. [Business Standard]

Meanwhile, India and the GCC, a union of six countries in the Gulf region, have also agreed to resume talks on an FTA. These talks mark the third such attempt by the two sides to ink a trade pact, with negotiations previously held in 2006 and 2008. [Reuters]

India already signed an FTA with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in February, which officially entered into force on May 1, and the India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA), which was inked on April 2 was ratified by Australia's Parliament on November 22.

United Nations calls on China for compensation payments to Uyghurs

(ms) The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) on November 24 called on the Chinese government to investigate all allegations of human rights violations against Uyghurs, a Muslim minority largely based in the northwestern Xinjiang region, and to provide all victims of such human rights violations with "adequate and effective remedies and reparation." [OHCHR]

This call comes after Michele Bachelet had released the "OHCHR Assessment of human rights concerns in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, People's Republic of China" [full report] in late August on the last day of her term as OHCHR chairwoman [see AiR No. 36, September/2022, 1], which classified China's actions as serious human rights violations, stating that China's "arbitrary and discriminatory incarceration" of Uyghurs and other Muslims in its Xinjiang region may amount to crimes against humanity.

China's UN representative clearly rejected the CERD statement, saying it" smears and slanders China's human rights situation based on disinformation fabricated by Western countries and anti-China separatist forces." [Reuters]

Indian Ocean Rim Association foreign ministers vow cooperation to protect security of Indian Ocean

(az) The foreign ministers of the 23-member Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) met on November 24 in Dhaka, Bangladesh, for the 22nd meeting of the IORA's Council of Ministers. During their meeting, the top diplomats agreed to strengthen economic relations between their countries through regional trade agreements and the elimination of intra-IORA trade and investment barriers. [The Daily Star]

Indonesia hosts 11th East Asia Local and Regional Government Congress

(os) From November 23 to November 25, 75 delegations from seven countries participated in the 11th East Asia Local and Regional Government congress in West Java, Indonesia.

The congress is aimed at increasing cooperation between local and regional governments in a wide variety of fields. It encompasses two panel discussions on promoting local industries and regional tourism after the COVID-19 pandemic. Indonesian provinces were able to foster relationships. For instance, West Java province is planning to work together with Shizuoka Prefecture of Japan in the field of human resources and economic development. [Antara News] [Vietnamplus]

Vietnam hosts 22nd World Peace Council in Hanoi

(ih) The World Peace Council (WPC) held its 22nd Assembly in Vietnam from November 21-26. The meetings took place in both Hanoi and Quang Ninh. Opening remarks were made by Politburo member and permanent National Assembly Vice Chairman Tran Thanh Man on November 22, and the delegates were hosted by President Nguyen Xuan Phuc on November 23. Close to 100 delegates from 50 countries attended the event. During the assembly the WPC elected a new 40-member executive committee, which in turn elected Pallab Sengupta as president of the WPC, Iraklis Tsavdaridis as executive secretary, and re-elected Athanasios Pafilis as general secretary. The delegates in attendance also adopted a political declaration indicating their determination to rally sympathetic forces to continue fighting for peace. [VoV] [Vietnam+ 1] [Vietnam+ 2]

Russia, China reaffirm friendship

(ms) During a meeting between Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and the new Russian Ambassador to China Igor Morgulov, both sides underlined the Russian-Chinese friendship.

Focus of the meeting on November 27 was the continuation of good relations between the two countries, with Morgulov saying that "Russia-China ties cannot be broken, and the friendship between the two countries can overcome any challenge."

Russia's war in Ukraine was not specifically addressed during the meeting, however, both countries announced to "promote a multipolar world and do not believe in unipolar hegemony," a thinly veiled criticism of the Western sanctions, on the one hand in the form of the economic sanctions, mainly of the US, against China, and on the other hand the Western sanctions against Russia. [South China Morning Post] [Xinhua]

China, United States defense ministers meet on sidelines of summit in Cambodia

(ms) On the sidelines of the ninth ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting-Plus in Cambodia, Chinese Defense Minister Wei Fenghe and US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin held a meeting on November 22. While both parties expressed support for better communication, disagreement over Taiwan and China's military activities in the Indo-Pacific was apparent.

Following the November 14 meeting between Chinese President Xi Jinping and U.S. President Joe Biden just before the G20 Summit in Bali [see AiR No. 46, November/2022, 3] and Xi's November 19 meeting with U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris [see AiR No. 47, November/2022, 4], the meeting between the two defense ministers was the third meeting between senior officials of the two major economic powers in just over a week. Both sides appear eager to at least to speak with each other at international diplomatic for after China cut communication channels in a retaliatory response to the visit to Taiwan of Speaker of the United States House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi.

As in previous meetings, Wei and Austin spoke in favor of resuming better communications between the two countries. Likewise, the two parties again jointly opposed the use of nuclear weapons by Russia in

Ukraine, but other than that, there was little agreement.

According to the Pentagon's readout, Austin "raised concerns about the increasingly dangerous behavior demonstrated by [People's Liberation Army] PLA aircraft in the Indo-Pacific region that increases the risk of an accident," adding that "the United States will continue to fly, sail, and operate wherever international law permits." He also urged China, in light of recent provocations by North Korea, to fully enforce existing U.N. Security Council resolutions regarding the North Korean weapons programs. [U.S. Department of Justice]

With regard to Taiwan, both parties maintained their well-known positions. Austin, while professing his support for the "One-China-Policy," spoke out against unilateral changes in the status quo in the Taiwan-China relations, referring to the Taiwan Relations Act, and called on China to stop its aggression against Taiwan. Wei, on the other hand, insisted that Taiwan is part of China, and that the Taiwan issue is "the first insurmountable red line in China-U.S. relations." Wei also rejected accusations that China is an aggressor in the Indo-Pacific, stressing that "the United States, not China, is responsible for the current situation in China-U.S. relations." [Foreign Policy] [Nikkei Asia] [Reuters] [Xinhua]

Possible illegal entry of US warship into waters claimed by China

(ms) The People's Liberation Army (PLA) reported on November 29 that the USS Chancellorsville guided-missile cruiser illegally entered China's claimed waters around the Sea's Spratly Islands, located in the South China Sea.

While the U.S. Navy announced that the USS Chancellorsville maneuver was in accordance with international law, its Chinese counterpart accuses the U.S. military of "militarizing" the South China Sea, saying the maneuver severely violated Chinese sovereignty. [Reuters] [South China Morning Post]

A similar situation took place in mid-July, when the guided missile destroyer USS Benfold also passed through the South China Sea and sailed close to the Paracel Islands, islands also claimed by China. [see AiR No. 29, July/2022, 3]

China, South Korea discuss cultural ties and regional security at inter-ministerial meetings

(sm) On November 24, China and South Korea held a virtual joint economic committee meeting to discuss the exchange of cultural content between them, according to South Korean Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lim Soo-suk. A day earlier, a bilateral defense ministerial meeting on regional security was held.

This was the 26th annual meeting of the joint economic committee since its inception in 1993. A year earlier, the two countries established formal ties.

South Korea asked for the increased exchange of cultural content such as movies, dramas, concerts, and games. China favorably responded to the request which would promote mutual understanding and good will between the two countries. More particularly, they discussed reducing a ban on South Korean cultural content in China. [KBS World]

The meeting was held the day after Beijing's Foreign Ministry reaffirmed that China took an open attitude towards the development of interpersonal and cultural exchanges with Seoul. China had recently lifted a ban on South Korean content which had been put in place after Seoul's decision to authorize the deployment of the US Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system (THAAD), a missile defense system on South Korean soil in 2016. The South Korean presidential office noted the resumption of online streaming of a South Korean movie after six years, just after the China-South Korea leader summit in Indonesia on November 15. [AiR No. 47, November/2022, 4] [Yonhap News Agency_1]

Further echoing the summit between South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol and Chinese leader Xi Jinping, the two countries' Defense Ministers Lee Jong-sup and Wei Fenghe met on November 23 on the sidelines of the ASEAN's Defense Ministers' Meeting-Plus to discuss China's role in addressing North Korea's missile and nuclear threats.

Lee asked for China to get more actively involved in the conflict and dismissed Pyongyang's argument that it had only been so assertive lately because of South Korea's joint military drills with the US and Japan. As the country with the most leverage over North Korea, China should actively try to keep the dialogue with the country and dissuade it from its continued threats.

Wei responded that the countries involved should try their utmost to relieve tensions through dialogue and

that China has already been playing a constructive and active role in alleviating the conflict.

The two then agreed to strengthen their strategic communication and exchanges for the future flourishing of their bilateral defense ties. Echoing the cultural ban lift, people-to-people exchanges in the defense sector should be normalized, starting with the reopening of their vice-ministerial strategic defense dialogue which last took place in 2019. [Yonhap News Agency_2]

China's President Xi 'willing to work' with North Korea for global peace

(ms) According to reports from the North Korean state broadcaster KCNA, China's President Xi Jinping is said to have written a letter to North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in which he declared his willingness to work with Kim for global peace and stability.

The letter was said to be a response to Kim's congratulations to Xi for successfully assuming his unprecedented third term as head of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) during the 20th National Congress in October. This commitment to close relations between China and North Korea is contrary to the demands of the U.S. on China, which were voiced during the meeting between Biden and Xi on November 14 [see AiR No. 46, November/2022, 3] shortly before the G20 Summit in Bali and which were reiterated during the meeting by Chinese Defense Minister Wei Fenghe and U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin (see entry above), who demanded that China uses its influence to exert a de-escalating influence on North Korea and to fully enforce existing U.N. Security Council resolutions.

Even apart from this, the letter, which is said to be dated on November 22, was written only four days after North Korea fired an intermediate range ballistic missile (IBRM) on November 18 [see AiR No. 47, November/2022, 4], which theoretically would be capable of reaching the United States. [Al Jazeera] [South China Morning Post]

Chinese coast guard enters Japanese waters

(ms) Just days after the meeting between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Japan's Prime Minister Fumio

Kishida, four Chinese Coast Guard vessels entered waters claimed by Japan around the Senkaku islands one of them armed with a 76mm gun, the largest caliber weapon sighted so far, during such maneuvers in Japanese waters.

While both parties, as expected, failed to agree on the territorial claim regarding the Senkaku or, in China, the Daioyu Islands during the talks between Xi and Kishida on November 17, both parties agreed in the five-point consensus published after the meeting to expand communications, including regarding maritime disputes [see AiR No. 47, November/2022, 4].

With the intrusion of the Chinese coast guard, however, this decision does not seem to have been able to fulfill the accompanying hope of lowering maritime tensions between the two major Asian powers. Although the Chinese ships left the waters again after Japanese patrol ships ordered them to do so, China apparently simply continues its course regarding territorial claims over the islands despite the meeting of both heads of state.

The incident, according to Japanese sources, was the 32nd intrusion of Chinese vessels into Japanese waters this year. [Japan Times] [South China Morning Post]

Chinese President Xi meets with Cuban, Mongolian counterparts

(ms) President Xi Jinping, after a long hiatus due to the Zero-COVID-19 policy, has started to meet in person again with his appearance at the G20 meeting in Bali [see AiR No. 46, November/2022, 3] and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Forum in Bangkok [see AiR No. 47, November/2022, 4] and in this course welcomed the Cuban and Mongolian presidents for a state visit last week.

Chinese President Xi Jinping welcomed his Cuban counterpart Miguel Diaz-Canel on November 25 for the first state visit by a Latin American leader since the 20th National Congress, at which he secured an unprecedented third term as leader of the Chinese Communist Party. Both parties agreed to further intensify their bilateral relations and to support each other in problems related to their "core interest". China is also said to have agreed to restructure Cuba's debt, provide new loans and donate USD 100 million to help the country, which is suffering from economic hardship.

The two socialist countries promised to maintain close communication in order to further develop socialist theories and adapt them to the national context and the national conditions. Both heads of state also witnessed the signing of bilateral documents regarding inter-party exchanges, Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) cooperation and a consultation mechanism between their foreign ministries. [Associated Press] [FMPRC] [Reuters]

On November 28, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang and shortly afterwards also President Xi Jinping met with Mongolian President Ukhnaa Khurelsukh, both parties agreed to intensify their relations. In particular, trade between the two neighboring countries is to be expanded. For this purpose, a new railroad line between Mongolia and China was inaugurated on November 25. The now three railroad lines to China are particularly important for the land-locked country, as it allows its economy to rely less on trucks for the transport of bulk commodities, as has been the case until now, and instead to rely on the cheaper and, above all, more efficient transport by rail. [Foreign Times] [Xinhua 1]

A meeting between Li and Kazakh Prime Minister Alikhan Smailov via video link is also scheduled for November 29. Xi also welcomed President Thongloun Sisoulith for a state visit from November 29 to December 1, followed by a visit in person of European Council Charles Michel. [South China Morning Post] [Xinhua 2] [Xinhua 3]

United Kingdom removes Chinese-made security systems from government buildings

(ms) The UK government on November 24 ordered government departments to stop installing Chinese-made security systems inside sensitive buildings, disconnect all existing Chinese systems from the core network and replace them.

Cabinet Office Minister Oliver Dowden justified the move to Parliament by stating that the Chinese security systems pose a threat to national security, explaining that the systems are “produced by companies subject to the National Intelligence Law of the People’s Republic of China.” The law obliges every citizen and organization to ensure China’s national security.

Already this summer, there were calls from the British Parliament to ban security systems made by Chinese

companies Hikvision and Dahua, due to security concerns as well as the fact that the security systems are allegedly used for mass surveillance in the northern Chinese region of Xinjiang. [Deutsche Welle] [Politico]

Vatican accuses China of violating recently renewed deal

(ms) The Vatican expressed dismay over the appointment of a bishop in the southeastern Jiangxi province, accusing China of violating a deal between the Catholic Church and the Chinese government that was renewed only in late October [see AiR No. 43, October/2022, 4].

Although the exact details about the deal between the pope and the Chinese government are not known to the public, according to consistent reporting, the agreement includes that the Chinese government is responsible for nominating bishops within China, while the Pope then either approves or vetoes the candidates.

According to the Vatican, however, the Pope's final judgment is said to have been waived by the Chinese government in the appointment of Giovanni Peng Weizhao, Bishop of Yujiang a district located in a city in Jiangxi Province.

The Vatican is demanding an explanation and expressed hopes that "similar episodes are not repeated." [Reuters] [Vatican News]

China intensifies gray zone operations, Japanese defense ministry report says

(dql) The National Institute for Defense Studies (NIDS) of the Japanese Ministry of Defense has released it China Security Report. Titled "China's Quest for Control of the Cognitive Domain and Gray Zone Situation," the report claims that China's military is advancing capabilities for carrying out "gray zone" operations in contested waters.

It explains that the restructuring of China's military organizations under Xi Jinping "has reinforced operations in the psychological and cognitive domains and the gray zone," to involve the "Three Warfares", that include public opinion warfare, psychological warfare, and legal warfare, conducted by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in coordination with paramilitary

organizations, such as the People's Armed Police (PAP), the China Coast Guard (CCG), and Militia. [NIDS] [The Mainichi]

United States excludes Japan from price cap on oil imports from Russia's Sakhalin 2 energy project

(dql) The U.S. Treasury Department has announced that oil from Russia's Sakhalin 2 energy project imported by Japan will be excluded from facing a price cap which the U.S. will introduce on December 5.

Japanese trading firms holds shares stakes in the Sakhalin 2 project. Tokyo has repeatedly said that the Russian government-controlled project is a vital energy supply source for Japan as a resource-poor country as it accounts for about 9 percent of the country's LNG imports.

The price cap is part of efforts to squeeze Moscow's revenues for its war in Ukraine, which – besides Japan – other members of the Group of Seven and Australia have agreed on. [Kyodo News]

Japan, Israel to set up study group for envisioned Economic Partnership Agreement

(dql) Japan and Israel have agreed to launch a joint study group to explore the possibility of a bilateral Economic Partnership Agreement.

According to outgoing Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid, the envisioned free trade agreement would see discounts for Japanese products and goods in Israel while raising Israeli exports to Japan.

The move comes as bilateral trade has increased expanding and defense ties deepened over the recent years. Investments of Japanese companies in the Israeli tech industry have reached a total of USD 13 billion since 2000. Japan accounts for 12 percent of all foreign and Israeli investments and for nearly 16 percent of all foreign investments in Israeli tech industry. In 2016 the Japanese investments in this sector stood at 1.8 percent. [Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan] [The Times of Jerusalem]

Japan, UK conduct joint military exercise

(dql) The Japanese Ground Self-Defense Force and the British Army are carrying out a joint exercise that simulates remote island defense in Gunma Prefecture northwest of Tokyo and runs until November 30. [NHK]

It is the first joint exercise in four years, coming shortly after the British patrol ship HMS Sprey joined the first time in "Exercise Keen Sword," the regular Pacific training operation conducted by the Japanese and US navies, with participation also from Australia and Canada and involving 36,000 military personnel, 30 ships and 370 aircraft, largely deployed by Washington and Tokyo. [Al Arabiya]

Sister of North Korean leader slams South Korea, United States over additional sanctions

(sm) On November 24, the North Korean Central News Agency issued a statement by Kim Yo-jong, North Korean leader Kim Jong-un's sister, lambasting South Korea's plan to impose additional sanctions on Pyongyang together with the US.

South Korea's foreign ministry announced on November 22 that it was considering additional sanctions against the regime, mainly in the cyber sector, in the case that Pyongyang conducts its seventh nuclear test. Kim warned the sanctions would only heighten tensions and insulted the South Korean Yoon administration for following the US' lead blindly. [North Korean Central News Agency]

Both the South Korean unification ministry and Prime Minister Han Duk-soo expressed their regret over the statement and the North's recent attitude, insisting that Pyongyang remains the sole responsible for current tensions with its repeated missile launches. [Yonhap News Agency]

Pyongyang has been firing missiles at an unprecedented rate over the last three months, one intermediate range ballistic missile flying over Japan and another landing in de facto South Korean maritime territory. The US has called for the UN Security Council (SC) to adopt a unified position against North Korea aggressions on November 21, a request which was rejected again due to the current deadlock in the UNSC. While China and Russia had previously supported UN sanctions against the regime, tensions with the West over the Russia–Ukraine war and Taiwan

have jeopardized cooperation within the UNSC. Kim Jo-yong had issued another statement on the UNSC's double standards and hypocrisy on November 22. [Reuters 1] [Reuters 2]

United States Space Force Command to be installed in South Korea

(sm) According to multiple high-level government sources, the US Forces Korea are set to host the second Asia Pacific US Space Force (USSF) Command following the establishment of the first one in Hawaii earlier this month.

The establishment of the USSF will enable the detection of elements, such as missiles, flying into the exosphere and their real-time report to other USSF commands through the US military network called C4i. It is predicted to be smaller than the one based on Hawaii, which counts some twenty soldiers.

The plan to host the new command in South Korea comes amid frequent North Korean missile launches over the last three months. The US also endeavors to create an additional USSF command under its Middle East Central Command before the end of 2022. [seeAiR No. 47, November/2022, 4] [Yonhap News Agency]

South Korea, Kenya hold summit on economic cooperation

(sm) On November 23, South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol and his Kenyan counterpart William Ruto met in Seoul and exchanged their views on strengthening trade and economic cooperation.

The two countries signed an agreement to raise Kenya's loan ceiling at the Korean Economic Development Cooperation Fund (EDCF) to USD 1 billion between 2022 and 2026. The EDCF is a fund launched by South Korea to support industrial development and economic cooperation with developing countries since the 1980s. The loan ceiling for Kenya was previously at USD 300 million from 2018 to 2020.

Ruto assumed his position of head of state in September and chose to make his first diplomatic visit in Asia to South Korea, the first visit of a Kenyan president to Seoul in 32 years.

Yoon asked for Ruti's cooperation in giving Korean companies easier access to Kenya's energy and

defense sectors and promised South Korea would help improve food security in the country by sharing new rice varieties. He also asked for Kenya's support in South Korea's bid to host the 2030 World Expo and its plan to become a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council.

Ruti answered that Kenya is interested in partnering with South Korea for the construction of nuclear power plants, as it plans to build nuclear reactors on its territory. Its current energy supply relies by more than 90 percent on renewable energy. He moreover voiced Kenya's will to adopt Korea's intelligent bus and fare transfer systems in its capital, Nairobi, and requested Korea's assistance in developing the Kenyan human capital pertaining to medicine and natural sciences. [Korea.net]

Furthermore, Kenyan and South Korean trade ministers Moses Kuria and Ahn Duk-geun held talks on November 24 about a potential trade agreement, according to Seoul's Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Energy. They decided to establish a platform to boost the scope and level of their bilateral economic cooperation pertaining to trade, investment and energy. [Yonhap News Agency]

South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol urges Elon Musk to invest, build a prospective EV plant in country

(sm) South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol and Tesla, SpaceX, and Twitter CEO Elon Musk had a virtual call on November 23 about the latter's plan to build an Electric Vehicle (EV) gigafactory in Asia. Yoon welcomed the project and highlighted South Korea's world-class auto industry and investment conditions.

The two had been scheduled to meet in person in early November in Indonesia but Musk canceled his trip.

Musk, for his part, announced a comprehensive review of each Asian country's investment, human and technological skills conditions, before making a final decision. The billionaire praised the quality of South Korean-made automobile parts and AI products and promised to develop the South Korea electric charging infrastructure. Purchases from South Korean companies will reach USD 10 billion in 2023 amid increasing supply chain collaboration, Musk estimated.

Yoon complimented Musk on his successful EV and space companies, hinting at South Korea's willingness to further develop its own space industry through a

partnership with the SpaceX CEO. The president assured that any regulations impeding global high-tech firms from implementing themselves in South Korea would be revised to meet global standards. [KBS World] [Yonhap News Agency]

Taiwanese delegation visits Japan

(dql) A Taiwanese delegation led by Legislative Speaker You Si-kun is in Japan for a five-day to deepen in trade, cultural, and parliamentary relations.

During the visit, the delegation is also trying to win support Taipei's bid to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership. [Taiwan News]

Chinese military aircraft and vessels spotted around Taiwan

(dql) According to Taiwan's defense ministry, nine Chinese military aircraft and four naval vessels were spotted around Taiwan on November 28.

Three of the nine aircraft intruded Taiwan's air defense identification zone (ADIZ), while on CH-4 reconnaissance drone crossed the Taiwan Strait median line in the northeast sector of the ADIZ. Further, one Shaanxi Y-8 electronic warfare plane and one Shaanxi Y-8 anti-submarine warfare plane were spotted in the southwest corner of the identification zone.

As of writing time, China has sent 439 military aircraft and 94 naval ships around Taiwan in November. [Ministry of Defense, Taiwan] [Taiwan News]

Bangladesh requests India to hand over house to commemorate headquarter of Mujibnagar Government

(az) Bangladesh has requested India to hand over a house in the city of Kolkata which served as headquarter for the Provisional Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, popularly known as the Mujibnagar Government, which was established following Dhaka's declaration of independence of East Pakistan in 1971. [The Daily Star]

India expects refugees amid clashes in Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts

(az) Amid an ongoing clash in Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts area between the Kuki Chin National Front and the elite police Rapid Action Battalion, India expects more refugees entering into its state of Mizoram.

The first influx of Kuki refugees occurred after a violent push by the Myanmar junta in the neighboring area. India is now preparing itself with aid, shelter, and food for the expected third influx into the country. Analysts also assume that due to the intentional repealing of the indigenous people by the Bengali community, the Bengali speakers in the Kuki region increased from 2 percent to 50 percent, which made the Kukis to migrate to the neighboring Mizoram state of India. [The India Express]

Navies of India, Oman participate in 13th edition of bilateral exercise

(wr) The 13th edition of bilateral Naseem Al Bahr exercise between the navies of India and Oman concluded on November 24. The exercise facilitates operational-level interaction between the two navies to foster mutual cooperation and enhance good order at sea and aims to intensify maritime exchanges between the two countries and enhance maritime security in the region. [Indian Navy, MoD] [News on Air]

India has a long-standing maritime tradition and maritime interaction with Oman. The two countries signed a defence cooperation agreement in December 2005 and another agreement on Joint Military Cooperation (JMC) in March 2006. [Brahmand]

India, Iran discuss development of Chabahar Port

(wr) Foreign Office Consultations were held between India and Iran in New Delhi on November 24. During the delegation level talks, both sides discussed the entire gamut of bilateral relations including political, economic, cultural and consular engagement.

The two sides reiterated their commitment to continue cooperation for development of the Shahid Beheshti

terminal of Chabahar Port, a seaport located in southeastern Iran, on the Gulf of Oman. They also exchanged views on regional and international issues including Afghanistan, prospects of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and oil supplies which were sanctioned by the Trump administration. [Infra Economic Times] [Indian Awaaz] [Tribune India]

In separate developments India on November 24, abstained along 15 others on a resolution adopted by the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) to set up a fact-finding mission into alleged human rights violations in Iran committed on protesters in the country by state authorities since September 16 after Mahsa Amini was murdered under custodial violence of morality police. [The Wire]

India upset at "unnecessary" reference to Modi by US officials

(wr) India has criticized the US State Department for comparing the legal immunity given to Prime Minister Narendra Modi since 2014 with the immunity determined for Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince, Mohammed bin Salman, in regard to a case brought against him by the fiancée of Jamal Khashoggi, whom the Biden administration has said was murdered at the prince's direction.

Additionally, India has rejected the "biased and inaccurate" observations made by the US Commission for International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) in its "Country Update" released on November 22, which calls recent incidents and government actions "crackdown on civil society and dissent". [NDTV] [Hindustan Times]

India, UAE central banks discuss rupee-dirham trade prospects

(wr) The central banks of India and the United Arab Emirates are discussing a potential mechanism to trade in their respective local currencies, India's ambassador to the Emirates said on November 25. Earlier this year in February, the two countries signed a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), to boost trade on a free trade pact. Rupee-Dirham trade will help reduce transaction costs. [Financial Express[[Reuters] [Zawya]

India has been campaigning for rupee trade, bypassing the dollar, to settle international trade. So far, the UAE and sanctions-hit Russia and Iran had given green signal.

India, Australia launch bilateral military training exercise in Rajasthan

(wr) The inaugural edition of the bilateral "Austra-Hind" exercise between contingents of the Indian and Australian armies took place on November 28. The exercise, which will comprise joint training operations in semi-desert terrain under the United Nations peace enforcement mandate, will conclude on December 11. [Hindustan Times]

The drills coincide with an ongoing bilateral army exercise, Yudh Abhyas, between the Indian and United State armies in Uttarakhand.

Pakistan foreign minister meets Afghan Taliban amid border concerns

(msk/lm) A high-level Pakistani delegation, led by the country's minister of state for foreign affairs, Hina Rabbani Khar, arrived in neighboring Afghanistan on November 29 for talks with the ruling Taliban on cooperation in trade, education, investment, regional connectivity and security. [Reuters] [Voice of America]

The visit comes at a time of heightened security concerns in areas bordering Afghanistan. Prior to Khar's trip, Pakistan on November 21 had reopened a major Afghan border crossing that was shut for trade and transit after security forces from the two sides had clashed [see AiR No. 47, November/2022, 4]. But on November 28, the Pakistani Taliban said it would no longer abide by a months-long ceasefire with the Pakistani government. The Afghan Taliban have been facilitating peace talks between local militants and Pakistan authorities since late last year.

Sri Lanka suspends tourist visas to UAE, Oman for female workers following human-trafficking arrests

(sn) The Sri Lankan government has committed to probing the requests of the public to deal with the

problem of human trafficking Sri Lankan women to Oman and the United Arab Emirates for sex work.

Following the exposure of a sex slave ring in Oman, police apprehended several suspects on November 19. The victims accused the third secretary of Sri Lanka's embassy in Oman of being involved in auctioning women for sex. In light of this, on November 22 the Labour and Foreign Employment Minister suspended the suspect over the allegations. Two more suspects were detained and currently remain in custody.

Against this backdrop, tourist visas were temporarily suspended for Sri Lankan women seeking employment abroad. The Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE) has closed the 'Self-registration facility' for female laborers for the domestic and unskilled job categories. The suspension will not affect those registered through a foreign employment agency and those who hold re-entry visas. [The Island, News First 1/2, Daily News, Colombo Times]

Sri Lanka: Financial State Minister states regulations to prevent gold smuggling by air passengers

(sn) The Finance Ministry of Sri Lanka enforces measures to prevent gold smuggling by air passengers into the country. The new law implies that air passengers would not be allowed to wear gold valued over 22 carats, said the state's Finance Minister, Ranjith Siyambalapitiya. The next stage in this measure is to deploy the technology that can detect gold over 22 carats. Travelers would need permission from the Controller General of Imports and Exports to wear gold items of more than 22 carats when flying to Sri Lanka. The action taken by the authorities targets problematic findings from the recent Finance Ministry report showing that with no regulation, passengers smuggle up to 50 kg of gold daily, causing losses of nearly 30 million USD monthly. [Colombo Page, Daily Mirror, Deccan Herald]

Sri Lanka: Committee approves new ambassador to UAE, posts in external relations, technology sectors

(sn) On November 22, Sri Lanka's Committee on High Posts appointed various authorities in the technology, industry, and external relations sectors.

Mr. Udaya Indrarathna became the Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The Committee approved Mrs. Aruni Wijewardne as the Secretary to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Gunawardene as the Secretary to the Ministry of Technology, Mrs. Jayasundara as the Secretary to the Ministry of Industries, and Mr. Chulananda Perera as the Secretary to the Ministry of Tourism and Lands. In addition, the High Posts authorities appointed new chairmen for the National Paper Company Limited and for the Bank of Ceylon. [Colombo Page]

Chinese presence in Ream Naval Base strains US-Cambodia relations

(sn) On November 22, 2022, the US Defense Secretary, Lloyd Austin, met with the Cambodian Minister of Defense, General Tea Banh, following a series of ASEAN-US meetings. The General said that: "military-to-military ties between Cambodia and the United States are at a difficult stage." The US side continues to rise questions around its "concerns over not only human rights and democracy, but also the lack of transparency." The transparency demand is rooted in the Chinese military activities that US Security Forces detected in the Ream Naval Base. Despite disagreements, the US side also indicated that it wants to build strong bilateral defense ties with Cambodia. [Khmer Times]

Cambodian company responses to monkey-smuggling allegations by United States

(sn) After the US Justice Department arrested the suspects involved in the monkey-smuggling operation from Cambodia, the Vanny Bio-Research Corporation Ltd strongly denied any wrongdoing in the operation of its business.

The Agriculture Ministry declared that Cambodia farmed and exported monkeys to the US for pharmaceutical research since 2005, and they always considered standards to preserve their gene pool. One of the two US companies that received those animals is the largest private supplier of monkeys to labs in the States. Recently, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has changed the status of long-tailed macaques from vulnerable to endangered. As a result of these actions, US drug and

vaccine research may be contemporarily disrupted. [Khmer Times 1/2, Camboja News]

Laos, Cambodia sign MoU on cross-border payments cooperation

The Bank of Laos P.D.R and the National Bank of Cambodia have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on developing banking integration and facilitating cross-border payments between the two countries. Acleda Bank Plc has been commissioned by the two central banks to develop cross-border payment systems for the two countries, given its past experience developing a similar cross-border payments system for Thailand and Cambodia by connecting the Bakong and PromptPay mobile payment systems to each other. The system is anticipated to be completed within six months following the signing of the MoU. [Khmer Times]

Indonesia, Australia hold joint disaster relief training

(os) Indonesia and Australia have held the 2022 edition of a yearly exercise aimed at enhancing cooperation in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) operations. [Department of Defence, Australia]

More than 60 personnel from the two countries' militaries trained in Surabaya, Indonesia, in the wake of Exercise Nusa Bhakti Ausindo 22 (NBA22). Indonesia stressed the historically strong cooperation between the two countries regarding natural disasters. The exercise should further help to advance military relations and practical collaboration in HADR response. The exercise was supported by non-defense government and emergency services organizations.

In the face of last week's earthquake in Indonesia's West Java province, which killed more than 270 people, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has emphasized Australia’s readiness to provide aid to Indonesia. [Tempo]

Indonesia's new capital project attracts Finland's, Spain's interest in cooperation

(os) Finland and Spain have expressed their interest in cooperating with Indonesia in developing Indonesia's

new capital (IKN) Nusantara.

Representatives of both countries recently met with the IKN Authority and expressed their willingness to contribute to the development of IKN. The Indonesian government is eager to attract investors from other countries and wants to quickly advance the development of the new capital. Recently, Indonesian President Joko Widodo proposed a revision of the IKN Law in order to expedite the relocation of the capital and the implementation of special regional government. [Antara News] [Tempo]

Indonesia, Philippines hold border committee meeting

(os) The 39th Indonesia Philippines Border Committee (IDPHBC) Chairmen's Conference was held from November 22 to November 23 in Davao City, Philippines.

The annual conference between Indonesia and the Philippines deals with border patrol and communications, intelligence, and cross-border activities. This year, the implementation of the 1975 Border Crossing Agreement (BCA) and Border Patrol Agreement (BPA) was discussed. Both countries signed an agreement to expedite the implementation. [Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Indonesia]

Indonesian, French defense ministers meet in Jakarta

(os) On November 25, French Armed Forces Minister Sebastien Lecornu met with his Indonesian counterpart Prabowo Subianto in Jakarta, Indonesia.

The meeting saw Indonesia placing an order for France's Rafale fighter jets. The deal, worth a total of USD 8.1 billion, was signed in February. Indonesia is also contemplating buying two French Scorpene-class attack submarines. Lecornu vaunted the evolving strategic ties between the two countries. [The Jakarta Post]

Vietnam hosts Australian deputy prime minister, defense minister on official visit

(ih) Vietnam hosted Australian Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Richard Donald Marles for an official visit on November 45-25. He was received by the Minister of National Defense, General Phan Van Giang. The two reviewed existing bilateral defense cooperation initiatives and discussed potentially updating these initiatives. They also agreed to continue to cooperate in the fields of military medicine, training, and addressing post-war consequences. Minister Marles additionally indicated that Australia would continue to provide transport for Vietnam's Level 2 Field Hospital during UN peacekeeping missions. [Vietnam+]

Philippines issues diplomatic note to China after rocket debris incident

(jd) The Philippines has relayed a diplomatic note to China following the incident that has seen a Chinese rocket debris found by a Philippines vessel in the contested waters of the South China Sea [see AiR No. 47, November/2022, 4]

The Philippines is currently seeking for an official explanation from the Chinese government after the Philippine Navy reported that the rocket debris was retrieved with force by the Chinese coast guard.

The Chinese foreign Ministry has previously denied any forcible seizure. [AP News] [The Diplomat]

Philippines, Vietnam to strengthen ties

(jd) The Philippines and Vietnam are seeking to improve and strengthen their relations in order to protect their sovereignties and to expand cooperation in the fields of defense, security, and economy, among others.

The two countries talked about how they share similar geopolitical circumstances and about the need to protect their territories, as they pledged to support each other in regional issues, including the ones related to the South China Sea. [Philstar] [The Star]

Timor-Leste: Government launches music and cultural festival

The government of Timor-Leste held a music and cultural festival with participants from all over the country to promote tourism in the Catholic-majority country. President Ramon-Horta said that Atauro, the island on which the festival was held, will be transformed into a world tourist destination. He also said that to attract tourists, the people of Atauro should plant trees and protect the island's marine environment. Timor-Leste Prime Minister Taur Matan Ruak as well as ambassadors from different countries, including the United States, and the European Union also attended the festival. [UCA News]

Announcements

Upcoming Online Events

30 November 2022 @ 6:00-7:00 p.m. (GMT+1), Asia Society (Zurich), Switzerland

Oxford Debate: Has China's Global Power Reached Its Peak?

This online debate will focus on questions pertaining to China's position as a global power, such as: Will the ambitions of Xi Jinping who recently secured a historic third term as leader of the Chinese Communist Party make China stronger? Or will his unassailable power position be met with international and domestic resentments? How are the country's economic problems affecting its influence in the region? Will China decouple from the global market?

See [Asia Society] for more event details.

30 November 2022 @ 3:00-4:30 p.m. (GMT-5), Wilson Center, USA

Technological Innovation and Arctic Climate Security

This webcast shed light on how to make use of indigenous knowledge and combine it with western data with specialized artificial intelligence and machine learning algorithms to forecast climate change and translate knowledge into action.

Further event details are provided at [Wilson Center].

30 November 2022 @ 8:00-9:00 p.m. (GMT-5), Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS), USA

The Politics of Policy: Japan's Road Ahead on National Security and Economic Strategy

This webinar explores the challenges Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida is confronted in his push for a new national security and defense strategies and in his efforts to restore post-pandemic economic growth in Japan. The event will also address the question of the impact domestic political dynamics might have on important debates related to Japan's future security and prosperity.

For more information, see [CSIS].

1 December 2022 @ 9:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. (GMT+0), Chatham House, UK

Russia's war: How will it shape the region's future?

This hybrid conference explores the impacts of Russia's was in Ukraine on the broader regional economy and asks whether this will hasten Vladimir Putin's exit. It will also address the question what to hope for, what to fear and the key trends that will dominate the region going forward.

For further information, visit [Chatham House].

1 December 2022 @ 9:00-10:15 a.m. (GMT+1), German Institute for Global and Area Studies (GIGA), Germany

Towards Closer Cooperation with South Korea in the Indo-Pacific

This online panel discussion explores ways to deepen relation between the European Union/Germany with South Korea, whose central location in the East Asian region, its strong economy, its alliance with the United States, and its rich but ambivalent ties with China make the country a particularly interesting partner.

You can find more event details at [GIGA].

1 December 2022 @ 9:30-11:00 a.m. (GMT+8), ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore

Beyond Fact-Checking: Narratives and Emotions in Imaginative Counter-Disinformation Strategies Across Southeast Asia

This webinar offers insights into approaches and strategies of countering disinformation in Southeast Asia that is rapidly innovating its tactics.

If you want to know more about the event, follow [ISEAS].

1 December 2022 @ 3:00-4:30 p.m. (GMT-5), Wilson Center, USA

Book Talk: Owning the City: Property Rights in Authoritarian Regimes

This online event discusses "Owning the City: Property Rights in Authoritarian Regimes," the new book of George F. Kennan Fellow Marsha McGraw Olive who argue that globally successful cities achieve better outcomes by respecting property rights and putting citizens at the center of urban planning and explains how case studies of Putin's Moscow and Erdogan's Istanbul serve as testimony as their manipulation of property rights, once fundamental to regime support, turn into a source of vulnerability.

If you are interested in joining the event, register at [Wilson Center].

1 December 2022 @ 3:00-4:00 p.m. (GMT-5), Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS), USA

Report Launch: Growing Challenges, Rising Ambitions: AUSMIN 2022 and Expanding U.S.-Australia Cooperation

Ahead of the he 32nd iteration of AUSMIN – the annual Australian-U.S. Ministerial Consultations – on December 6, this online event features the launch of a CSIS report that introduces to over 70 recommendations for advancing US-Australian relations from nearly two dozen leading experts.

You can find further event details at [CSIS].

2-3 December 2022, Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI), Italy

Rome Mediterranean Dialogues 2022

This hybrid conference brings together government leaders with representatives of international organizations, academia, the media, the business sector, and civil society to discuss the future of the region amid challenges posed by the impact of the pandemic and of the war in Ukraine and uncertainties related to shared security, energy and food security, cultural and religious dialogue.

For more information, follow [ISPI].

5 December 2022 @ 10:00-11:00 a.m. (GMT-5), Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS), USA

Book Event: The Fight for Privacy with Danielle Citron

This event is an online discussion of "The Fight for Privacy: Protecting Dignity, Identity, and Love in the Digital Age," a book by Danielle Citron, Jefferson Scholars Foundation Schenck Distinguished Professor in Law and Caddell and Chapman Professor of Law at the University of Virginia, who details how the privacy afforded to intimate lives is under threat by deep fakes, leaked emails and phone records, hacked computers, and character assassination in the form of journalistic scoop, among others.

Visit [CSIS] for more information.

5 December 2022 @ 11:00-11:45 a.m. (GMT-5), The Heritage Foundation, USA

Lessons for America from Europe's Green Energy Disaster

This hybrid events critically reflects on European climate and energy policy in the wake of Russia's war in Ukraine that has forced Europe to return to burning coal and building more pipelines and LNG terminals to import oil and gas from elsewhere.

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

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

Book Event: The Dragon Roars Back

This online book discussion introduces "The Dragon Roars Back: Transformational Leaders and Dynamics of Chinese Foreign Policy," the latest publication of Suisheng Zhao, Professor and Director of the Center for China-U.S. Cooperation at the University of Denver, he gives an historically in-depth and comprehensive account of China's foreign policy shifts since 1949, while also examining the role of influential leadership in shaping the trajectory and ambitions of China's political system.

More about the events at [CSIS].

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

Myanmar Twenty-Two Months after the Coup

This online panel discussion examines the current challenges of Myanmar's multidimensional crisis, focusing on the sceptical sentiment towards international and regional responses among large parts of the people in the country.

See [ISEAS] for details about the event and how to register.

5 December 2022 @ 4:00-5:00 p.m. (GMT+1), German Institute for Global and Area Studies (GIGA),

Germany

Gulf Hydrogen Horizons: Why Are Gulf Oil and Gas Producers so Keen on Hydrogen?

This webinar looks into the recent interest in hydrogen energy among political and economic leaders in counties of the Middle East which has seen many new "post-oil" energy investments over the past decade. However, hydrogen energy has recently spiked in interest among Gulf oil and gas producers – especially among the state-owned hydrocarbon giants in the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

Further information are accessible through [GIGA].

Recent book releases

Dominic Lieven, ***In the Shadow of the Gods: The Emperor in World History***, Allen Lane, 528 pages, published on May 5, 2022, reviewed in [LSE].

Chien-Wen Kung, ***Diasporic Cold Warriors: Nationalist China, Anticommunism, and the Philippine Chinese, 1930s-1970s***, Cornell University Press, 318 pages, published in March 15, 2022, with a review in [LSE].

Lulu Chen, ***Influence Empire: Inside the Story of Tencent and China's Tech***, Hodder & Stoughton, 320 pages, published on November 22, 2022. For a review, see [The Guardian].

Aynne Kokas, ***Trafficking Data: How China Is Winning the Battle for Digital Sovereignty***, Oxford University Press, 360 pages, November 1, 2022. A review is available at [China Books Review].

Martin Chorzempa, ***The Cashless Revolution: China's Reinvention of Money and the End of America's Domination of Finance and Technology***, Public Affairs, 320 pages, published on October 4, 2022. Find a review at [The Wall Street Journal].

Calls for Papers

Houston Christian University invites paper and creative work proposals for its ***inaugural Christianity and Culture Conference*** to be held on February 3-4, 2023. The conference theme is "The Family: Past & Future" and aims to emphasize the importance of the family in the western tradition. Closing date for

proposals is December 16, 2022. For more information, see [Houston Christian University]

The **International Public Policy Association (IPPA)** welcomes paper proposals for its ***6th International Conference on Public Policy***, scheduled for June 27-29, 2023. Proposals are accepted until January 31, 2023. More about this call for papers at [IPPA].

The **Centre for Strategic Research and Analysis (CESRAN) International** has opened the call for papers for ***the 10th Annual Conference on International Studies*** on September 12-15, 2023. The deadline for submissions is June 1, 2023. Visit [CESRAN] to find more details.

Jobs and positions

The **British Government** welcomes applications for the position of ***Counter-Terrorism and Security Attaché*** to be based at the UK Mission to the European Union in Brussels. Application deadline is December 4, 2022. Details of the position are available at [FCO].

The **Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS)** is seeking a ***Digital Policy Analyst***. The position is based in Brussels. Closing date for applications is December 20, 2022. For more information, see [FEPS].

Transparency International EU (TI EU) is looking for a ***Policy Assistant*** – Rule of Law & Protection EU Financial Interests to be based in Brussels. Deadline for applications is January 16, 2023. Find more about the offer at [Transparency]

The **Blavatnik School of Government at the University of Oxford** is recruiting a ***Postdoctoral Research Fellow in Public Policy***. The closing date for applications is November 30, 2022. Visit [University of Oxford] for further details.

The **Global Priorities Institute at the University of Oxford** is offering the position of ***Senior Research Fellow in Philosophy***. Applications can be submitted until December 6, 2022. If you are interested, learn more about the position at [University of Oxford].

The **Blavatnik School of Government at the University of Oxford** is seeking a ***Policy Fellow and Researcher in National Economic and Security Policy***. Application deadline is December 12, 2022. Visit [University of Oxford] for further information.

The **Centre for Law, Medicine, and Life Sciences (LML) at the University of Cambridge** is seeking applications for the position of ***Project Coordinator***. Applications are accepted until December 17, 2022. For more details, see [University of Cambridge].

The **Center for Research on Extremism (C-REX) at the University of Oslo** is looking for a ***PhD Research Fellow*** with expertise in political science, sociology, social anthropology, or a related field. The closing date for applications is January 31, 2023. Further details are provided at [University of Oslo].

The **Institute of Public Administration at the University of Leiden** invites applications for the position of ***Assistant Professor of Public Policy & Administratio***n, with a focus on sustainability. The deadline for applications is January 5, 2023. If you are interested, learn more about the position at [University of Leiden]

The **Asia-Africa-Institute at Hamburg University** is recruiting two ***Research Associates*** for the Project "Buddhism in East Asia". Applications can be submitted until December 8, 2022. Follow [Uni Hamburg] for more information.

Team:

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