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Asia in Review

Grasp the pattern, read the trend

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Dear Readers,

Welcome to this week's issue of the Asia in Review (AIR) covering the latest events, developments and trends in domestic politics, international relations and geopolitics in East Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia.

I wish you an informative read and extend special greetings to everyone who celebrates Antigua and Barbuda's, Dominica's and Micronesia's Independence Day this week.

With best regards,

Henning Glaser

Editor in Chief

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

China: Li Keqiang passes away

(ms) Li Keqiang, China's Premier from 2013 till March of this year died on October 27 at the age of 68 from heart attack.

In his ten years as China's formal number two, Li stood for a relatively liberal and market-oriented economic policy and steered the country through difficult economic times over the past years amid rising national debt, the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing strained relations with the United States.

With his background of the Communist Youth League of China, the youth wing of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), Li was part of the Youth League Faction within the CCP, also known as Tuanpai, and a close confidant of Hu Jintao, China's President from 2003-

2013. He was Hu's candidate of choice for his succession as party chairman rivaling Xi Jinping.

The ouster of Li from the CCP Politburo and the removal of Hu during the 20th National Congress of the CCP October last year [see AiR No. 43, October/2022, 4] was seen not only as the end of the Tuanpai as a strong faction within the CCP, but also as the final centralization of power in Xi's hands. Li was replaced as Premier by Li Qiang, who is known for his deep loyalty to Xi.

While the Chinese government and Chinese state broadcasters expressed grief, the extent of official coverage was rather restrained, with the party controlling public tributes to Li and seeking to prevent mass outpouring of grief that might result in social unrest. According to China Digital Times, instructions, compiled for internal use by a censorship department/media organization based on higher-level directives, called on "[a]ll media outlets (including departmental and neighborhood public WeChat pages!)," to "[p]ay particular attention to overly effusive comments and assessments."

Li's death saw social media awash with tributes to the former Premier. China Digital Times has cited some comments, widely seen as indicating criticism of retrogressive aspects of Xi's rule. [Associated Press] [Global Times] [South China Morning Post] [The Guardian] [China Digital Times]

China: Defense Minister officially removed

(ms) With the signing of a presidential decree on October 24, China's Defense Minister Li Shangfu was officially removed from office after his two-month absence and is now the second minister having been sacked within a few months after Foreign Minister Qin's removal in July [see AiR No. 30, July/2023, 4].

In addition to Li's removal as minister, the decree also decided to remove both Li and Qin as state councillors, which is to be understood as the final end of the careers of both figures.

Li's removal come shortly ahead of the 10th Beijing Xiangshan Forum held on October 29-31, with Vice Chairman of China's Central Military Commission Zhang Youxia attending the opening ceremony and delivering a keynote speech (see article in this edition).

As with Qin, the Chinese government has remained silent about the reasons for the dismissal. However,

reports indicate that Li has been in custody since September and is part of a larger corruption campaign within the Chinese military.

According to rumors, it was not so much Li's time as minister but rather his time as director of the Equipment Development Department of the Central Military Commission (CMC) from 2017 to 2022 that was the reason for his investigation and resulting dismissal.

As recently as July, the department announced a corruption crackdown within its ranks, which was followed only a few days later by the investigation and detention of high-ranking generals of the Peoples Liberation Army Rocket Force (PLARF), followed by the arrest of four other high-ranking military officers [see AiR No. 42, October/2023, 3]. All of whom, like Li, had worked in or in connection with the Equipment Development Department in the past.

To date, no successor to Li has been announced, but three-star general and currently Chief of Staff of the Joint Staff Department of the Central Military Commission Liu Zheni is considered the most likely successor. [CNN] [Global Times] [South China Morning Post]

For a discussion on the sacking of Li and the recent reshuffle with the military as part of intra-party resistance to Xi and as indicative of "cracks in Xi's personnel management system," with his efforts to strengthen his command over the military and eliminate corruption within its ranks remaining "unfinished," see [Nikkei Asia] and [Atlantic Council].

China: Biggest state secrets law revision in a decade

(ms) In a significant and sweeping revision of its state secrets law, China is expanding its restrictions on the flow of sensitive information, impacting both domestic and foreign entities. The draft revision, the most extensive in a decade, introduces a dozen new clauses, significantly broadening the scope of the law, covering various sectors, from education and technology to the military.

One of the most notable provisions in the draft revision is the ban on all state employees with access to confidential information from traveling overseas without prior approval. Furthermore, the ban remains in effect even after these individuals leave their positions or retire.

While the draft law does not provide a clear definition of who falls under this category, it applies to all levels of government, including public institutions and agencies, further extending its impact.

Experts suggest that this revision could create a conflict for foreign firms operating in China as they may face conflicting legal obligations. The new laws are vague and encompass terms like “state secrets,” “national security,” and “national interests.” This ambiguity may present challenges for businesses operating in the country.

Additionally, the revision requires governments at all levels to allocate funds for safeguarding information in their annual budgets. The National Administration of State Secret Protection, an office under the State Council, gains more power to investigate cases related to state secrets, with the authority to conduct checks, question personnel, and confiscate relevant devices and files.

These changes, coupled with the call for specialized education and greater public awareness on keeping state secrets, indicate the Chinese government’s ongoing emphasis on information security.

Defending the draft law, State Security Minister Chen Yixin emphasized the need for stricter national security measures in a rapidly changing global environment, affirming that – amid rising geopolitical tensions – the Chinese government is actively tightening control over the flow of information to safeguard national interests and security. [South China Morning Post]

China: Major policy changes in financial strategy

(ms) The Chinese government approved on October 25, among various bills, the issuance of an additional USD 137 billion in government bonds which, together with the restructuring of the authority structures of the Chinese financial system, signals the continuous support of the economy, albeit under a new strategy.

The establishment of the Central Finance Commission (CFC) during “Two Sessions” in mid-March of this year [see AiR No. 11, March/2023, 2; AiR No. 12, March/2023, 3] together with the downsizing of the People’s Bank of China (PBC), the country’s central bank, already indicated a change of China’s economic strategy.

The CFC replaced the Financial Stability and Development Committee (FSDC) in March and, with the official start of its work at the end of September, centralized large parts of the decision-making authority over the Chinese financial system under itself, thus drastically curtailing the powers of the PBC.

The USD 137 billion in government borrowing has raised China's overall deficit to its highest level in three decades and unveiled a government debt package that represents a departure from its traditional model of budget support.

The newly released financial resources are to be disbursed primarily to heavily indebted local governments, of which about USD 68 billion will be spent this year in areas such as disaster relief and water infrastructure, signaling that local government debt burdens are having a greater impact than predicted.

The actual size of the package, accounting for approximately 0.8 percent of GDP, is relatively modest compared to past packages of several percentage points, but what is so special about the package is the method behind it. The fact that the government usually refrains from tweaking the central government's budget in the middle of the year and instead relies on special spending by the local authorities in addition to the officially defined deficit indicates a change in the overall financial strategy. Given the approximately USD 12.6 billion debt of the local government, and the difficulties in servicing the existing debt due to declining real estate prices, a change in thinking is urgently needed.

A related bill passed by the State Council allows local governments to surrender a portion of their 2024 bond quotas early in order to have more money available to pay off debt due this year and in 2024.

Further, the State Council is said to have restricted the ability of local governments in 12 heavily indebted regions to take on new debt and set limits on new state-funded projects to lower local government debt risks. The 12 regions are said to have been previously classified as "high risk" areas for defaulting on debt obligations.

Analysts interpret the bills as a change in the Chinese financial system, with the increased centralization of decision-making authority under the government marking an end to the hitherto somewhat liberal course of the PBC. [Bloomberg] [Reuters 1] [Reuters 2]

China: New Internet regulations to protect minors introduced

(ms) During the sixth session of the Standing Committee of the 14th National People's Congress the nation's first regulations focusing on protecting minors in cyberspace, coming to effect in January 1, 2024, were approved.

Key aspects of the new regulations lie in protecting personal information, curbing internet addiction, and enhancing the systems and mechanisms designed to protect minors online. Schools and technology companies are expected to provide specialized terminals, software, or apps with features that facilitate intervention and protect minors from internet addiction and harmful content.

The rules emphasize the importance of fostering a digital environment that adheres to socialist core values, revolutionary culture, and traditional Chinese culture. They also prohibit the production, reproduction, publication, or dissemination of content related to obscenity, violence, cults, superstition, terrorism, separatism, or self-harm.

Internet product and service providers will be subject to government and societal supervision, with stringent penalties, including fines of up to USD 68.500, for non-compliance. Organizations and individuals are forbidden from generating or disseminating explicit or harmful content.

Furthermore, these regulations require internet platforms to enhance their protection mechanisms, provide tailored services to minors, and establish external oversight agencies to supervise minor protection efforts.

To tackle cyberbullying, the regulations necessitate the establishment and improvement of early warning, detection, and response mechanisms. Schools are also tasked with enhancing teachers' guidance and training to identify internet addiction in students promptly and intervene effectively. [Global Times] [South China Morning Post] [State Council] [Xinhua]

China: Investigations against Foxconn and British advertising company

(ms) Chinese security authorities are said to have launched various investigations against the Taiwanese Apple supplier Foxconn, in addition to raids of offices

of British advertising company WPP Plc involving three arrests.

The investigations of Foxconn are said to be solely tax audits and investigations into its land use, which the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council said were routine investigations that the security authorities would conduct in accordance with the law "in all companies in an equal and fair manner."

While such investigations are common practice, they are usually not made public. According to commentators, the disclosure of the investigations against Foxconn could be politically motivated, with reference to the upcoming presidential elections in Taiwan at the beginning of next year and could serve as a warning against the Taiwanese company's plans to relocate production capacity from China to other countries such as India. [Business Insider] [Channel News Asia] [Global Times]

During the raid of the Shanghai office buildings of WPP Plc, an executive and two former employees were taken into custody on suspicion of bribery. More details were not disclosed about the circumstances behind the case, but WPP Plc assured cooperation with the Chinese security authorities and already reacted internally. In addition to the dismissal of the executive under investigation, the company terminated its cooperation with an unnamed company.

Regardless of the background or political motives, observers emphazised that with the investigation and raid China is again unsettling the already strained confidence of foreign investors in the country. They point to the fact that it is not investigations as such, but rather the lack of communication about the reasons behind them that is responsible for the resulting lack of trust, as a feeling of arbitrariness arises. [Bloomberg] [CNN]

China: Shanghai launches International Data Economy Industrial Park

(ms) China is solidifying its role in the global digital economy with the launch of the International Data Economy Industrial Park in Shanghai's Lingang pilot free-trade zone. This initiative aligns with China's broader strategy to boost digital trade and stimulate technological innovation.

The primary focus of this industrial park is to facilitate secure cross-border international online data flows to enhance digital trade. By 2025, it aims to evolve into a

global data industry hub, attracting over 100 leading data firms and generating more than USD 13.5 billion.

The opening underscores China's commitment to advancing digital trade capabilities, particularly in emerging fields like artificial intelligence (AI). This park's inaugural batch of 25 data-related companies lays the foundation for further development in hi-tech sectors such as humanoid robots and internet data centers.

As part of the 14th five-year plan (2021-2025), China is intensifying efforts to promote digital trade as an essential component of its economic landscape. The Lingang New Area is envisioned to become the national AI hub.

To support these objectives, a about USD 1,5 billion "multi-computing power supply system" will be established in the region by 2025 [South China Morning Post]

China: Investigation of 3000 meteorological stations amid national security concerns

(ms) China's Ministry of State Security (MSS) has intensified its crackdown on "illegal foreign-related" weather stations sending real-time data outside China, fearing the potential risks they pose to national security and data sovereignty.

As part of this effort, over 3,000 overseas-related meteorological stations across more than 20 provinces were investigated, and more than ten meteorological agents with overseas ties were investigated. The MSS explained that Chinese government views meteorological data as a vital component of data security, closely linked to national, food, and ecological security, as well as climate change and public interests. The unauthorized collection and cross-border transmission of this data are therefore considered threats to the country's sovereignty and development interests.

This action coincides with Beijing's heightened concerns about potential data leakage and its growing emphasis on national security amid ongoing geopolitical tensions, particularly with the United States. Chinese authorities have been increasing scrutiny in various areas with national security implications. Notably, this move follows an incident earlier in the year when a balloon, initially claimed by Beijing to be a civilian airship for meteorological

research, flew across North America for a week before being shot down by the US Air Force in a move Washington characterized as a violation of its sovereignty, a claim China denied [see AiR No. 6, February/2023, 1]. [South China Morning Post]

China: Adiran Zenz publishes new article about labor policies in Xinjiang

In a paper [full text], published on October 25, researcher Adrian Zenz, explores the evolving labor policies in China's Xinjiang region, particularly focusing on the re-education of detainees and the Poverty Alleviation through Labor Transfer program. Zenz's analysis offers insights into the distinct nature of these policies and their historical development.

These labor policies have faced serious allegations of human rights violations. The Xinjiang region has been at the center of international scrutiny, with accusations of mass internments, coercive labor transfers, and other oppressive measures targeting the Uyghur population and other predominantly Turkic ethnic groups.

According to Zenz, these policies operate independently and serve different objectives. Re-education centers, which emerged in 2017, are intended to de-radicalize individuals with extremist tendencies. In contrast, the labor transfer program seeks to prevent radicalization and surplus labor in a rapidly industrializing region.

The coercive aspects of labor transfers have intensified since 2014, aligning with Beijing's focus on full employment. This shift coincided with mass internments in Xinjiang and a national campaign to eradicate poverty.

Japan: Prime Minister Kishida plans tax cuts

(ic) On October 26, Prime Minister (PM) Kishida Fumio proposed to a gathering of senior officials of his Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) a fixed tax break of JPY 40,000 (USD 260) per taxpayer and dependent. A taxpayer with three dependents would be entitled to JPY 160,000 of tax relief.

The government also stated its intent to provide nearly JPY 70,000 (USD 468) per household in cash for low-income households. [NHK World]

The tax cut is likely to be a component of a bill that is to be approved by his cabinet on November 2.

On October 27, Kishida also responded to questions by members of his own government, LDP and Komeito members in the Lower House Budget Committee, regarding the feasibility of implementing both his proposed tax cuts as well as the proposed defense spending hike.

Kishida stated that there would be no tax increase in 2024 to pay for a larger defense budget, and further that his administration had not stated explicitly when the defense budget was set to increase. [Asahi Shinbun 1]

Asked similar questions in the Diet by members of the opposition, Kishida failed to convince lawmakers and analysts of his tax cut plan. The plan has been accused not just of being haphazard, as according to opposition parties the tax reduction "would undermine confidence in public finance," but also of being a "pork barrel" plan, i.e., government spending for the purposes of securing one's electoral position. [The Mainichi]

The level of control which Kishida is currently seeking to exert over tax policy – previously run by the influential Research Commission on the Tax System which at times even circumvented the PM's authority on tax issues – is unprecedented and has precipitated an existential crisis amongst members of the Commission. [Asahi Shinbun_2]

Japan: Resignation of Vice Minister Yamada Taro

(ic) On October 26, Vice Minister Yamada Taro resigned from his cabinet position in education, although he has indicated that he will not give up his Upper House seat.

An online report had been distributed by a weekly magazine on October 25, stating that he had was in a paid affair with a much younger woman despite being married. He has stated that he has not been paying the woman and may seek legal action against the magazine to counter this claim.

It is reported that even though Kishida had only re-shuffled his cabinet in September, upon the news of the report Kishida decided rather quickly that Yamada should resign to take responsibility.

Replacing Yamada will be Honda Akiko, the only woman in Kishida's cabinet at the state and vice-ministerial level. [Asahi Shinbun] [Japan Times]

Japan: Ruling party to create new team regarding imperial succession

(ic) Party executives of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) stated on October 27 that a new team will be set up within the party discussing measures to ensure stable Imperial succession and secure Imperial Family members.

The team will be directly headed by LDP Vice-President Aso Taro and under the supervision of LDP President and Japanese PM Kishida. [Jiji Press]

Japan: Retrial of 1966 murder case

(ic) On October 27, the retrial of Hakamada Iwao, known as Japan's longest-serving death row inmate, began at the Shizuoka District Court.

In 1968 Hakamada was convicted of murdering four members of a family, and the retrial was ordered in March 2023 due to potential evidence that would exonerate him. [Asahi Shinbun] [The Mainichi]

Hakamada has been out of prison but not acquitted since 2014, when the Shizuoka District Court suspended his execution and ordered a retrial and his release.

The Tokyo High Court had overturned that ruling in 2018, but the Supreme Court overturned that in 2020. [CBS News]

Japan: Ruling of Supreme Court on transgender rights

(ic) The Supreme Court declared on October 25 an existing requirement for sterilization surgery for people who seek to legally change their gender as unconstitutional. It ordered the case to be sent back to a high court for further review.

In the case, a transgender woman had sought to legally change gender in her family registry from assigned male at birth to female. Lower courts had dismissed

her request, arguing that she did not undergo sterilization surgery required under current law. [NPR]

In an earlier decision on October 11, the Shizuoka Family Court had ruled that a provision requiring transgender individuals to sterilize themselves violates article 13 of the Japanese Constitution guaranteeing the right to the pursuit of happiness [see AiR No. 42, October/2023, 3].

Mongolia: Reform of criminal procedure law discussed in parliament

(ap/dql) The Mongolian parliament's autumn sessions kickstarted on October 26 with a discussion on potential amendments to the Criminal Procedure Law.

During the discussion it was highlighted that according to preliminary findings of the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention 98-99 percent of the arrests of suspects in Mongolia are made without a court order.

In addition, it was discussed to change the period of arrest without court order. While current legislation foresees 12 months for minor crimes and 18 months for more serious crimes, a draft amendment provides for six months for minor crimes and one year for more serious crimes.

Furthermore, the discussion drew attention to the importance of differentiating between the power of the prosecutor and the investigation.

Meanwhile, a draft resolution on changes in the composition of the Special Control Sub-Committee was approved by nearly 70 percent of the members of the State Parliament's Standing Committee on Security and Foreign Policy. [News.mn]

North Korea: Ten people arrested for drug dealing and smuggling to China

(ap) The North Korean police have nabbed more than ten people from a nationwide gang of drug dealers, responsible for selling and producing narcotics around the country.

The criminals produced the drugs in Chongjin and Rason, North Hamgyong Province, with the raw materials coming from Hamhung, North Korea's

second-most populous city and the capital of South Hamgyong Province.

While the group distributed the narcotics within North Korea, some were smuggled into China and sold for a price two or three times higher. North Hamgyong in bordered in the North by China. [Daily NK]

South Korea: Presidential office to assess situation before deciding on talks with opposition leader

(tms) In response to opposition leader Lee Jae-myung's proposal for talks involving himself, President Yoon Suk Yeol, and the ruling party leader, a senior official announced that the presidential office would first assess the situation.

Lee, who serves as the chairman of the Democratic Party (DP), put forward this idea upon returning to his party responsibilities after several weeks of hospitalization following a 24-day hunger strike [see AiR No. 43, October/2023, 4].

This initiative came as a response to a prior suggestion by Rep. Kim Gi-hyeon, the leader of the ruling People Power Party (PPP), for one-on-one talks.

Kim's proposal for such discussions with Lee has led the presidential office to closely monitor the unfolding developments.

The senior presidential secretary for political affairs, Lee Jin-bok, disclosed this during a meeting with Ihn Yohan, the PPP's newly appointed innovation chief, at the National Assembly [see AiR No. 43, October/2023, 4]. [Yonhap]

South Korea: Ruling party appoints 12 members to innovation committee

(tms) The ruling People Power Party (PPP) has named a 12-member innovation committee, with Dr. Ihn Yohan of American heritage as its chair, in a surprising move aimed at revitalizing the party's image.

The committee comprises seven women and six men, featuring a mix of party insiders and external experts, including a former TV anchor and a startup executive.

The PPP leadership officially endorsed their selection following a meeting. Dr. Ihn emphasized inclusivity, focusing on women, youth, and external voices to guide the party's transformation. [Yonhap]

The committee's formation comes in the wake of the PPP's recent electoral setback in Seoul, and Dr. Ihn has promised to enact substantial changes and foster national unity [see AiR No. 43, October/2023, 4].

South Korea: Ruling party unveils comprehensive plan to combat surging narcotics issue

(tms) The ruling People Power Party (PPP) has announced its commitment to implement an all-encompassing strategy to address concerns over the escalating drug problem.

Rep. Yun Jae-ok, the PPP's floor leader, declared their intent to create a comprehensive drug response system, encompassing efforts to prevent foreign drug trafficking, conduct crackdowns on drug-related crimes, and establish rehabilitation and treatment programs.

The PPP considers eradicating illegal drug use as a top priority, particularly due to the increasing prevalence of narcotics among the younger generation, which they believe poses a severe threat to the nation's future.

To achieve this goal, the PPP plans to collaborate with the government in upcoming discussions, aiming to eliminate drug-related crimes and assist addicts in their recovery.

South Korea sees a sharp rise in narcotics use, including celebrities like G-Dragon. Police crackdowns surge by 19.6 percent, with a 51.5 percent increase in drug seizures in the first half of 2023, as per government data. [Yonhap]

South Korea: Ruling party's innovation committee recommends amnesty for suspended members

(tms) The Innovation Committee of the ruling People Power Party (PPP) has officially endorsed a proposal to lift membership suspensions for prominent figures, including former party leader Lee Jun-seok, Daegu Mayor Hong Joon-pyo, and others.

This decision aims to foster unity within the party. The committee members voted in favor of recommending a "grand amnesty" for members facing suspension or disciplinary actions.

The PPP is set to make the final decision at a Supreme Council meeting, potentially benefiting individuals like Lee, Hong, and former three-term lawmaker Kim Jae-won.

Lee and Hong had previously faced suspensions over allegations of sexual bribery and golfing during a national crisis, respectively. [Yonhap]

South Korea: Former lawmaker faces questioning over Seongnam corruption scandal

(tms) Kwak Sang-do, a former member of the ruling People Power Party (PPP), appeared before prosecutors for questioning in connection with allegations of concealing ill-gotten gains tied to a high-profile development corruption case in Seongnam, located south of Seoul.

In February last year, Kwak had been indicted for accepting KRW 5 billion (approximately USD 3.9 million) from the Seongnam-based developer Hwacheon Daeyu Asset Management under the guise of severance pay and incentives for his son, who was employed at the firm.

However, he was cleared of bribery charges by a Seoul court in February of this year. Subsequently, the Seoul Central District Prosecutors Office appealed the acquittal and initiated an inquiry into Kwak for suspected violations of the law related to concealing illicit gains linked to the KRW 5 billion obtained from the developer.

Prosecutors probed Kwak on matters pertaining to his close financial ties with his son and the source of the KRW 5 billion his son received from Hwacheon Daeyu.

It has been reported that Kwak previously covered his son's graduate school tuition amounting to around KRW 30 million and home rental deposit of KRW 20 million. [Yonhap]

South Korea: Government unveils gradual national pension premium rate increase

to address aging crisis

(tms) The government has disclosed a plan to incrementally raise the national pension premium rate to bolster the financial stability of the national pension system.

President Yoon Suk Yeol has emphasized the urgency of overhauling the system, fearing a faster depletion of the state-run pension fund due to the rapid aging of the population.

The National Pension Service predicts a shortfall from 2041, leading to complete depletion by 2055. The Ministry of Health and Welfare insists that the gradual premium rate hike is essential for program sustainability, with plans to differentiate the increase rate among different age groups to ensure fairness.

Specifics on nominal income replacement rate adjustments and potential delays in the retirement age for payouts remain undisclosed, with discussions ongoing.

The proposal will be presented to the National Assembly after Cabinet deliberation and presidential approval, following public input and collaboration with the parliamentary pension reform committee. [Yonhap]

South Korea: Cabinet proposes bill for life sentences without parole

(tms) Cabinet has put forth a bill to introduce life sentences without the possibility of parole in response to a recent surge in heinous crimes, including multiple stabbing incidents.

The proposed amendment to the Criminal Act, endorsed during a Cabinet meeting, will be sent to the National Assembly for review. Currently, convicts sentenced to life imprisonment can seek parole after serving 20 years.

The Supreme Court has opposed the revision, citing the need for further evaluation. South Korea has not executed anyone since 1997. [Yonhap]

South Korea: Vice Admiral Kim Myung-Soo named as Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman

(tms) The Defense Ministry announced Vice Admiral Kim Myung-Soo's appointment as the new Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) Chairman, replacing General Kim Seung-kyum in the latest military personnel reshuffle.

This marks the first time in a decade that a Navy officer will hold this top military position, with the last being Admiral Choi Yoon-hee from 2013 to 2015.

Kim's confirmation is contingent upon a parliamentary confirmation hearing and subsequent approval at a Cabinet meeting. [Yonhap]

Meta loses legal battle over unauthorized data sharing in South Korea

(tms) Meta Platforms Ireland Inc., formerly known as Facebook Inc., has been defeated in its legal challenge against South Korea’s data protection watchdog's decision to impose a fine for sharing users' personal information with third-party operators without consent.

In November 2020, the Personal Information Protection Commission (PIPC) fined Meta KRW 7.8 billion (USD 5.78 million) after an investigation revealed that personal information from over 3.3 million out of 18 million Facebook users in South Korea had been shared without their knowledge from May 2012 to June 2018.

The Seoul Administrative Court ruled against Meta, citing inadequate user notice and unfair financial gains.

The data shared included academic history, family details, and marital status, and Meta was accused of hindering the investigation by submitting false documents and delaying data submission. [Yonhap]

South Korea: President Yoon advocates fiscal prudence in 2024 budget speech

(tms) President Yoon Suk Yeol presented the 2024 budget in South Korea with a focus on fiscal prudence, marking the slowest growth since 2005.

He emphasized the importance of responsible fiscal management to maintain domestic price stability and national credibility, while preventing excessive debt for future generations.

Yoon also highlighted the need to address the economic challenges faced by the public and pledged to allocate funds for welfare benefits, crime response improvements, river maintenance, and increased soldiers' salaries.

He further announced investments in official development assistance and key areas like artificial intelligence, biotechnology, cybersecurity, and digital platforms. [Korea Times]

South Korea: Labor ministry to expand vocational training for foreign workers to address labor shortages

(tms) The Ministry of Employment and Labor is taking measures to address labor shortages in industries like shipbuilding by significantly expanding specialized vocational training for foreign workers holding non-professional employment visas (E-9).

The E-9 visa is granted to migrant workers seeking jobs that involve manual or non-professional labor. Earlier this year, the ministry initiated a pilot vocational training program for E-9 visa holders in the shipbuilding sector to enhance their job skills and facilitate their adaptation to Korean language and culture.

By the end of the year, approximately 500 to 600 foreign workers will complete specialized training at major shipbuilders, with plans to extend the program to other industries and increase the number of trainees to 4,000 in the coming year.

Additionally, more labor-sending countries will offer vocational and language training, and vocational training for existing E-9 workers will be enhanced.

The ministry will also make decisions regarding the number of E-9 workers for the next year earlier than usual, during November. [Yonhap]

Taiwan: Main opposition KMT ready for talks on joint presidential ticket with TPP

(jr) Taiwan's main opposition party, the Kuomintang (KMT) announced October 26 to enter party-to-party negotiations with minor opposition Taiwan's People's Party (TPP) over a possible collaboration for January 13, 2024, presidential election.

The announcement was made after the KMT decided there would not be enough time to hold primaries to decide a joint presidential candidate of the two parties, with less than 80 days remaining until the election.

The two opposition parties have been at loggerheads on deciding the strongest presidential candidate against Taiwan's vice president, Lai Ching-te, the ruling Democratic Progressive Party's (DPP's). Only last week, TPP chair and presidential candidate dismissed a suggestion of KMT nominee Hou Yu-ih to use a combination of primaries and phone polls to decide who would be the joint nominee and who the running, comparing it with arsenic, saying that "whether you consumed a full can of half a can of arsenic, the outcome would be the same, and you would still die."

The announcement also comes as Taiwan's Public Opinion Foundation stated on October 24 that the current reigning People Democratic Progressive Party's President Tsai Ing-wen's approval ratings are still plummeting, and support for the independence-leaning Democratic Progressive Party continues declining.

Tsai's approval rating in October slipped to 36.5 percent from last month's 38.4 percent, her worst polling since April 2019, according to the latest survey.

Meanwhile, Lai saw a drop in his lead over the second-place candidate, according to a latest poll conducted by Formosa. Still, he leads with 33.7 percent (-6.3 percent), followed by KMT Hou with 24.6 percent (+2.2 percent), and Ko with 23.9 percent (+2.3 percent). [Focus Taiwan] [Taiwan News 1] [South China Morning Post] [Taiwan News 2]

Taiwan: Taiwan People's Party dismisses allegation of China spouse as legislative candidate

(jr) Minor opposition Taiwan People's Party (TPP) has brushed away any allegations of the presence of a woman from China on the party's list of candidates for the legislative election that will be held on the same day of the presidential election

This comes after reports emerged according to which the party was considering nominating Xu Chunying, the chair of an association of foreign spouses. Xu was suspected to have served as a cadre for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). She denied the allegations. [Taiwan News]

Taiwan: Ex-colonel sentenced to 20 Years in jail for China spy ring

(jr) Taiwan's High Court has handed down a 20-year jail sentence against retired Air Force Colonel after it found him guilty to being part of a spying ring, connected to the Chinese Communist Party.

Another six serving officers that the Colonel recruited to work for Beijing received sentences ranging from six months to 20 years.[Taiwan News]

Taiwan: Changching military exercise concluded

(jr) Taiwan's Army and Marine completed on October 30 the Chang Ching 17 exercise, the first of its kind in seven years.

The seven-day drill included live fire and combat-ready exercises and aimed at enhancing the troop's operational capabilities. [Overt Defense] [Taiwan News 1] [Ministry of National Defense, Taiwan]

Meanwhile, Taiwan's Air Force begun on October 30 the four-day Tien Long exercise that will focus scenarios in air-to-air, air-to-sea, and air-to-ground combat to evaluate combat readiness and involve F-16Vs, Mirage 2000-5s, and Indigenous Defense Fighters (IDF), per CNA.

Ground troops will also carry out conduct exercises, such as small arms target practice, aircraft rearmament, and mobile defense drills. [Taiwan News 2]

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

Bangladesh: Opposition protest turns violent; BNP general secretary detained

(lm) One police officer was killed, and over 100 people were injured during protests organized by Bangladesh's main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) on October 28 in Dhaka. Protesters called for the resignation of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and demanded free and fair elections under a caretaker government. [Reuters]

The protest, initially peaceful, turned violent when police fired tear gas and rubber bullets to disperse tens of thousands of BNP supporters. Clashes ensued, resulting in injuries to both protesters and police officers. Several vehicles, including police vans and ambulances, were set on fire during the unrest. Some areas saw activists aligned with the ruling Awami League join the police's side in clashes with supporters from the BNP.

Security had been heightened in the city in anticipation of the rally, and hundreds of opposition party activists were reportedly arrested leading up to the event. Moreover, a day after the rally, the secretary-general of the BNP, Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, was picked up by law enforcement for questioning over the violence that broke out during the protests. [Al Jazeera]

In response to the arrests of their supporters, the BNP called for a nationwide strike and announced plans for three days of road and transportation blockades across the country starting on October 31. [The Daily Star]

Separately, thousands of supporters of the ruling Awami League party held a rally in Dhaka on October 30 to denounce what they perceive as violence by the BNP. [Associated Press]

Bangladesh: Prime Minister again warns of foreign conspiracy against government

(ps) Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh accused vested interests both inside and outside the country of conspiring against the government and spreading propaganda to hinder Bangladesh's progress. She made these remarks in parliament during a question-and-answer session, stating that various government agencies are working to counter these efforts. [The Daily Star]

The warning resembles a leaked statement Hasina allegedly made three days earlier while addressing an internal meeting of her party, the ruling Awami League, where she said there was a conspiracy to install a puppet government. [AiR No. 43, October/2023, 4]

Bangladesh: Chief Election Commissioner to meet with president on November 5

(lm) Bangladesh's Chief Election Commissioner, Kazi Habibul Awal, is set to meet with President Mohammed Shahabuddin on November 5 to discuss the announcement of the schedule for the country's 12th national parliament election. [Dhaka Tribune]

The Election Commission had requested this meeting, which is a customary practice before the election schedule is finalized. Following the meeting, the Election Commission is expected to convene to potentially finalize the election schedule and appoint returning officers.

In separate developments, the Election Commission held a meeting with top officials from various security agencies to assess the situation and reported that there were no major obstacles to organizing the upcoming elections. [Associated Press]

Bangladesh: Parliamentary standing committee recommends removing section of draft law giving paramilitary group police powers

(ps) A draft law that has been tabled in Parliament and seeks to grant members of the Bangladesh Ansar – a paramilitary auxiliary force responsible for the preservation of internal security and law enforcement – the authority to make arrests, conduct searches, and seize goods, has been criticized by the parliamentary

standing committee on home affairs. The law has been previously criticized by police as an attempt to set up a parallel police force [see AiR No. 43, October/2023, 4]. [The Daily Star 1]

The committee has recommended not granting Ansar members the powers to detain suspects, frisk them, and seize goods. It also recommended amending section 8 of the proposed bill, stating that Ansar members should take necessary action under the Code of Criminal Procedure when an offense is committed in front of them. The committee also recommended removing the death penalty provision from the bill.

Meanwhile, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan denied that there was an intention to provide the Ansar Battalion with the authority to arrest, suggesting the government under current law was incapable of granting such authority. [The Daily Star 2]

Bangladesh: Member of Parliament and former minister dies, by-election scheduled

(ps) After the death of Member of Parliament and former State Minister for Religious Affairs Shahjahan Miah the Election Commission has decided to hold a by-election for the vacated seat in parliament on November 26.[The Daily Star]

Bangladesh: Visiting US doctors complete surgery on BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia

(ps) Three visiting US specialist doctors have successfully performed a crucial medical procedure on former Bangladesh Prime Minister Khaleda Zia. [Dhaka Tribune]

Zia, who leads the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and is an archrival of incumbent Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, has been living under house arrest since 2020. Her health has deteriorated due to inadequate medical care. In August, she was hospitalized in Dhaka, and doctors recommended overseas treatment. However, the government refused to allow her to leave the country, despite appeals from her family and doctors.

Bangladesh: Parliament passes condemnation motion on Israeli response to Hamas attack

(ps) Lawmakers in Bangladesh's parliament have unanimously condemned Israel's bombardment of Gaza Strip launched in response to an unprecedented attack by Hamas on military outposts and communities in southern Israel. The condemnation motion was adopted by voice votes, with lawmakers criticizing the role of the main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party for not protesting the Israeli attack. [Dhaka Tribune]

The parliament also urged all Muslim nations to unite and support the legal rights of the Palestinian people to stop the Israeli assault immediately. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina called on the world community to assist the Palestinians in establishing their legal rights and criticized the Western community for not doing enough to address the situation.

Bangladesh: Jamaat-e-Islami denied rally on October 28

(lm) Jamaat-e-Islami (Jamaat), Bangladesh's largest and most organized Islamist party, was prohibited to hold a rally in the country's capital Dhaka on October 28. Police officials emphasized a "zero tolerance" policy for Jamaat rallies and requested that both the ruling Awami League and the main opposition BNP consider alternative locations for their public meetings instead of holding them on city streets. [Dhaka Tribune 1]

Jamaat, which in June held its first rally in Dhaka in over a decade, sought police permission to hold a peaceful rally to press home its demands including restoration of the caretaker government. Their other demands include the release of its imprisoned Ameer, Shafiqur Rahman, and other religious leaders, and control of prices of the daily essentials. [Dhaka Tribune 2]

Bangladesh: Draft guideline for uniform university entry exam created

(ps) The University Grants Commission (UGC) has developed a draft guideline for a uniform entrance exam to all public universities starting from the next academic year. [Dhaka Tribune]

The UGC also plans to enroll new students in both public and private universities under the National Testing Authority (NTA). Five public universities, including Dhaka University, have not participated in the cluster admission test, but the UGC believes a

Presidential Ordinance will be required to conduct the uniform entrance test, which would make it mandatory for all universities to participate. The UGC expects that all universities will participate without reservations after the ordinance is issued.

Bangladesh: New customs law seeks to align regulation with international standards

(ps) On October 25 a draft law entered parliament seeking to replace the 1969 Customs Law to enhance fiscal discipline, accountability in import revenue collection, and trade facilitation. The bill aims to modernize customs practices and align them with international standards, incorporating provisions on revenue collection, facilitating business activities, and promoting new industrial sectors. [The Business Standard]

Bangladesh: Bankers, directors, to be kept out of Sharia board

(lm) Bangladesh's central bank is introducing new rules to improve compliance and address issues in Islamic banking. Bankers and directors will no longer be allowed on Shariah supervisory committees, even if they have Islamic jurisprudence knowledge, to avoid conflicts of interest. Additionally, a separate department will be established to oversee Shariah banking due to financial weaknesses caused by loan irregularities. [The Daily Star]

Bangladesh: Two dead as garment workers protest low pay

(ps/lm) Recent protests erupted with at least 10,000 garment workers leaving their shifts in Bangladesh's Gazipur district, leading to a factory being torched and two fatalities. Thousands more protested in other areas. The protests began when the manufacturers' association offered a 25 percent wage raise, falling far short of the union's demand for a threefold increase in the monthly minimum basic wage to roughly USD 210. [The Daily Star]

The garment industry is central to Bangladesh's economic growth, contributing to 85 percent of the country's USD 55 billion in annual exports. Thus, the

wage protests pose a significant challenge to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, especially as elections approach. Major brands wrote a letter to Hasina this month calling for a "successful conclusion" to wage negotiations. [France24]

Bangladesh: Prime Minister Hasina opens underwater tunnel, mosques

(ps) Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has opened the underwater expressway tunnel in Chittagong that will significantly improve the road connection with Cox's Bazar on October 28. It is the latest megaproject that will be inaugurated before the Election Commission is expected to announce the schedule of the upcoming election in early November. [Dhaka Tribune]

Two days later Sheikh Hasina inaugurated 50 mosques and Islamic cultural centers. [The Daily Star]

Bhutan: Office of Attorney General clears former ministers of abuse of function charges

(na) The Office of the Attorney General (OAG) in Bhutan has decided not to charge two former People's Democratic Party (PDP) ministers, Dasho Dorji Choden and Namgay Dorji, in court for alleged abuse of function during their time in office. The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) had charged these individuals, along with former MoWHS secretary Phuntsho Wangdi, for abuse of function related to violations of procurement rules and the direct award of construction work, resulting in a government financial loss. [Kuensel]

India: Law Commission presents roadmap on 'One Nation, One Election' to panel

(lm) India's Law Commission, an executive body responsible for researching and advising the central government on legal reform, has proposed a roadmap for implementing simultaneous elections in India to the high-level committee (HLC) led by former President Ram Nath Kovind. The roadmap is seeking to align all state elections with the 2029 elections to Parliament's lower house, and thus, includes proposed changes to the Constitution. [The Hindu]

Till 1967, simultaneous elections were held in India. However, the premature dissolution of some state assemblies in 1968-69 and the subsequent dissolution of the Lok Sabha in 1970 resulted in a new trend of elections which has been followed till date. The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, for its part, has been advocating the move since Narendra Modi's first prime ministerial stint in 2014.

The HLC was formed on September 2, after the government had notified that an eight-member panel must be formed to make recommendations regarding holding concurrent elections of the Lok Sabha, state assemblies and local governments including panchayats, or the rural local bodies and municipalities, or the urban local bodies [see AiR No. 36, September/2023, 1]. In its first meeting on September 23, the HLC decided to seek input from political parties and has since written to six national parties, 33 state parties, and seven registered unrecognized parties to gather their views on the "One Nation, One Election" concept [see AiR No. 39, September/2023, 4].

Notably, Adhir Ranjan Choudhury, the parliamentary leader of the main opposition Indian National Congress, the single-largest party in the Lok Sabha, has resigned from the committee, as noted in an official statement.

India: Home Ministry to review other pre-Independence acts, including Official Secrets Act

(lm) India's Home Ministry has initiated a process to review and modernize several pre-independence laws, in addition to the recent introduction of bills to replace colonial-era law codes like the Indian Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure, and the Indian Evidence Act. The laws currently under review include the Passport Act, 1920; the Registration of Foreigners Act, 1939; the Foreigners Act, 1946; the Official Secrets Act, 1923; the Delhi Laws Act, 1915; and the Poison Act, 1919. [Hindustan Times]

Union Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla has convened a meeting to assess progress in repealing or amending these laws, some of which have not been updated for decades. While there is no fixed timeline for amending these laws, officials emphasize that the review is an ongoing process.

The government has expressed the need to change obsolete and archaic laws inherited from the British

colonial era, stating that such laws place unnecessary compliance burdens on citizens. Earlier in the year, the home minister introduced three bills aimed at transforming India's criminal justice system [see AiR No. 33, August/2023, 3]. These bills are currently being examined by a parliamentary committee on home affairs [see AiR No. 35, August/2023, 5].

India: Opposition slams ruling BJP over imposing 'Bharat' instead of 'India' in NCERT books

(hp) Leaders of several opposition parties on October 25 opposed a recommendation made by a National Council for Education and Research Training (NCERT) panel. The recommendation was to replace the name "India" with "Bharat" in textbooks affiliated with NCERT. Critics of the move alleged that the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was attempting to rewrite history, suggesting that it was a desperate measure to prevent defeat by the opposition Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) bloc in the upcoming national elections next year. [Economic Times]

The NCERT is an autonomous organization set up to assist central and state governments in improving the quality of policies and programs aimed at education. Along with this agenda, the NCERT also sets the curriculum, syllabus and reading material for primary and secondary education in India.

The INDIA coalition, composed of several national and state-level political parties, questioned the significance of such a change. Furthermore, many party leaders, ministers and officeholders expressed their disapproval of the NCERT's decision and called it a tactic of BJP for "politics of polarization", while others termed it as a malicious effort to increase "divisive communalism". [Zee News] [Arunachal Times] [ABP Live]

This controversy follows a previous uproar regarding the proposed name change from "the Republic of India" to "the Republic of Bharat," which arose when some G20 Summit invitations displayed the latter name [see AiR No. 37, September/2023, 2]. Bharat is the other principal short name for India, with both being historically significant. A third name, "Hindustan", is sometimes an alternative name for the region comprising most of the modern Indian states of the Indian Subcontinent when Indians speak among themselves.

India: Poster battle erupts in Uttar Pradesh as Congress, Samajwadi parties stake claims on prime ministerial candidacy

(hp) Two key members of the newly formed Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) bloc are engaged in a poster war in India's Uttar Pradesh state, claiming their respective leaders to be the prime ministerial candidate for next year's polls. The top leaders of both parties have not commented on this poster and hoarding war. [Hindustan Times]

While the Samajwadi Party, which is largely based in Uttar Pradesh, erected hoardings portraying party president Akhilesh Yadav as the future prime minister, the Indian National Congress responded by projecting its state president Ajay Rai as the would-be Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh and Rahul Gandhi as prime minister. [Telangana Today] [Times of India]

The ongoing rift between the Congress and Samajwadi parties is a result of their inability to arrive at a conclusion over the seat-sharing of the candidates in the upcoming state assembly elections in Madhya Pradesh. The elections are scheduled to be held on November 17.

India: At least three dead, several injured after explosion at Jehovah's Witnesses convention

(lm) Multiple explosions occurred at a convention center in Kalamassery, a location approximately 10 kilometers northeast of Kochi in the southern Indian state of Kerala. The incident took place during a gathering of Jehovah's Witnesses, resulting in at least three deaths and 50 injuries. [The Straits Times]

Police identified the suspect a man, who had posted a video on Facebook claiming responsibility for the blast. The suspect cited his disagreement with the Jehovah's Witness theology as the motive for the attack, expressing concerns about their beliefs. Authorities are investigating the incident and working to verify the suspect's claims. [Associated Press]

India: Security forces arrest four militants, five members of Mao militant group in Manipur

(hp) Security forces in India's northeastern state of Manipur have carried out a series of operations resulting in the arrest of four individuals and the confiscation of weapons and ammunition. The operations were launched to uncover objectionable and war-provoking items such as explosives and focused on Imphal East, Imphal West, Kakching and Bishnupur districts. [The Hindu]

The arrests included two cadres of the banned United National Liberation Front (UNLF), one of the oldest insurgent organizations in Northeast India. The two men were apprehended in Imphal East and Imphal West districts by the police, and weapons and ammunition were seized. Preliminary investigations suggest that these individuals were involved in extorting money from the public. [Telegraph India]

In separate developments, five active members of the Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP), a Mao militant organization, were arrested and detained. They were found in possession of various inappropriate articles such as pistol holsters, fighting dresses, ammunition charger clips, based on which they were charged with extortion. [India Today NE] [Prag News]

India: Petrol bombs launched at Tamil Nadu governors' residence

(hp/lm) A man was arrested in India's southern state of Tamil Nadu after he threw a petrol bomb at the heavily guarded residence of the state's governor, the so-called Raj Bhavan, in Chennai. The incident has raised concerns about the state's law and order situation, with the opposition questioning the government's ability to maintain security. [Wion]

The Raj Bhavan claimed that the petrol bomb caused significant damage, contradicting the police's earlier statement that it did not burst. There were no injuries, and three additional petrol bombs were seized from the attacker.

According to the accused, he hurled the 'Molotov Cocktail', a vernacular term for the bomb, as the governor refused to give sanction to the so-called anti-NEET bill, which seeks to remove the national entrance test for admission to medical colleges, known as National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) and return

to its earlier practice of admitting students based on their Class 12 results. [News18] [India Today]

India: Former Hamas leader's online sets off row in Kerala state

(hp/lm) Khaled Mashal, a former leader of Hamas, a Sunni Islamist political and military organization governing the Gaza Strip of the Palestinian territories, virtually addressed a rally in India's state of Kerala on October 27 in support of the Palestinian people. [The Hindu]

The rally had been organized by the youth wing of the Islamist organization Jamaat-e-Islami, known as Solidarity Youth Movement. Abdussalam Ahmed, a member of the Jamaat-e-Islami Central Council, inaugurated the rally and accused a collective of racists of being involved in the genocide in Palestine, including India. Furthermore, during the rally, the Solidarity Youth Movement used the slogan "Uproot bulldozer Hindutva and apartheid Zionism" to draw a connection between Hindutva and Zionism ideologies.

This led to criticism from the Bharatiya Janata Party, which accused the Kerala state government of trying to glorify Hamas under the guise of the "Save Palestine" slogans and termed the event a "glorification of terrorists". [Economic Times] [Hindustan Times]

India: Five militants killed during foiled infiltration bid in Jammu and Kashmir

(hp) Indian security forces in the Jammu and Kashmir union territory successfully thwarted an infiltration attempt along the Line of Control (LoC), which marks the military control line separating the disputed regions of Kashmir under Indian and Pakistani administration. As a result of this operation, five militants were killed. These militants are believed to be affiliated with Lashkar-e-Taiba, an Islamic militant organization based in Pakistan, which seeks to unify the entire Kashmir region with Pakistan. [Business Standard]

Maldives: Supreme Court accepts ruling party's challenge against no-confidence motion cancelation

(na) The Supreme Court has accepted a constitutional lawsuit filed by the Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) challenging the decision by the Parliament Secretary General to cancel Speaker Mohamed Nasheed's no-confidence motion. [Edition 1]

The no-confidence motion, backed by 49 MDP members, was scheduled for discussion in Parliament on October 29-30 but was canceled due to the absence of Parliament Deputy Speaker Eva Abdulla on sick leave [see AiR No. 42, October/2023, 3]. The Parliament Secretariat determined that the motion could not proceed in her absence.

The MDP is seeking a remedy through Article 44 of the Parliament Regulation, which allows for one of the five longest-serving MPs to preside as chair in cases where the Speaker or Deputy Speaker is unable to do so. The lawsuit also aims to ensure that no other parliamentary matters can proceed without first addressing the no-confidence motion.

MDP argues that the Parliament Secretary General's decision was in violation of Articles 44 and 82 of the parliament regulation. Article 205(d) of the parliament regulation states that no other matter can be scheduled in a parliament sitting until any submitted no-confidence motion has been addressed by the chamber. [Edition 2]

The MDP's primary argument is based on Article 205(d), and the party has previously stated that it would not acknowledge the official oath-taking of President-elect Dr. Mohamed Muizzu, scheduled for November 17, without first addressing Nasheed's no-confidence motion in Parliament.

Maldives: Election Commission receives complaints on 2024 constituency designation

(na) The Elections Commission of the Maldives (ECM) has received 65 complaints regarding the preliminary report on the designation of constituencies for the 2024 parliamentary election. These complaints specifically concern constituencies in Male' City, Addu City, Baa Atoll, Laamu Atoll, and Gaafu Alifu Atoll. The ECM plans to respond to all the complaints by November 5. They are currently finalizing the report on constituency designations and will subsequently formulate and publish the voters' list. [PSM News]

The preliminary report outlines that 93 seats have been allocated for the upcoming parliamentary

election, an increase of six seats from the current 87-seat Parliament. Seat allocation is determined by policies related to the number of registered residents in a constituency. The first policy focuses on constituencies with either the initial 5,000 registered residents or less, while the second policy addresses constituencies with additional registered residents beyond the initial 5,000, as long as they reach that threshold.

The ECM also intends to announce the date of the parliamentary election next month, with the election likely to be held in late March or early April next year, coinciding with the fasting month of Ramadan.

Maldives: High Court criticizes prosecutor general over acquittal in drug case

(na) Recently, the High Court of Maldives has criticized the state for trying to overturn a drug trafficking conviction, arguing it was in everyone's best interest. The suspect was initially acquitted due to lack of evidence but was later convicted by the High Court. However, the state, just before the sentencing, attempted to cancel the case, claiming there was no significant reason to proceed.

Against this, the High Court strongly disagreed with the state's sudden change, stating that such actions undermine the law and society's fundamental rights. They emphasized the importance of delivering fair sentences for serious offenses to uphold the rule of law. Also, the convict received a life sentence and a fine, with 21 years of jail time after considering the suspect's time in custody. [Edition]

Nepal: Human Rights Commission requests global alliance to save its ‘A’ status

(lm) Nepal’s National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has appealed to the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI), a global network of national human rights institutions, to maintain its "A" status, asserting that it has effectively collaborated with civil society in protecting human rights. [The Kathmandu Post]

In October lsat year, GANHRI’s Sub-Committee on Accreditation recommended downgrading the NHRC to the "B" category after two years of review, citing

concerns over appointment processes and the NHRC's effectiveness in safeguarding the rights of marginalized communities. GANHRI is currently holding its annual conference; a decision on the NHRC's status is expected later this week.

The controversy surrounding the NHRC's status primarily centers on the appointment of its chairperson and members, which critics argue did not align with the so-called Paris Principles, which set the minimum standards that national human rights institutions must meet in order to be considered credible and to operate effectively.

These appointments were made by the Constitutional Council – a six-member body consisting of the prime minister, chief justice, and other senior officials – based on a revised Constitutional Council Act, with the appointments taking place without parliamentary hearings. Several writ petitions challenging the appointments are pending in the Supreme Court, with a hearing scheduled for December 6.

Speaking against this backdrop, NHRC members on October 25 defended their "A" status during a presentation to GANHRI, emphasizing their role in promoting and protecting human rights. They also highlighted the government's positive steps toward amending the commission's Act in accordance with the Paris Principles.

The NHRC asserts that the Supreme Court is assessing the legality of these appointments and maintains that they conform to the Paris Principles. GANHRI may choose to wait for the court's ruling before making a final decision on the NHRC's status.

Maintaining an "A" status is significant for a national human rights commission as it allows the country to participate in UN Human Rights Council deliberations and vote on its decisions, as well as contest or vote for leadership positions in GANHRI and regional human rights alliances.

Nepal: Upper house committee approves the New Order of Precedence Bill

(na) The Legislation Management Committee of Parliament's upper House, the National Assembly, has unanimously endorsed a bill concerning the order of precedence. [Nepal News]

This non-government bill, which at the time of writing was set to be presented to the House at its October 31

meeting, addresses key issues regarding the hierarchy in the country. It seeks to establish a protocol for VVIPs (Very Very Important Persons) and VIPs (Very Important Persons).

The proposed order of precedence places the President at the top, followed by the Vice President, Prime Minister, Chief Justice, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Chairperson of the National Assembly. These positions should be addressed with the prefix 'Right Honourable' before their names.

Furthermore, the bill suggests that federal ministers, parliamentarians, province chief ministers, ministers, speakers, deputy speakers of the House of Representatives, National Assembly vice-chair, Supreme Court Justices, chiefs and members of constitutional bodies, attorney general, former VVIPs, Constituent Assembly chair, vice-chair, and members should be addressed with the prefix 'Honourable' before their names.

The bill also proposes using the prefix 'Excellency' before the names of foreign heads of state, Nepali Ambassadors, foreign ambassadors in Nepal, Secretary-Generals of the United Nations and SAARC, office-bearers of inter-governmental regional organizations, and Nepal-based foreign consul generals.

Pakistan: Former Premier Nawaz Sharif regains right to appeal convictions, opening path to election

(lm) A federal court in Pakistan's capital, Islamabad, on October 26 reinstated the right of the country's three-times former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to appeal his 2018 convictions in two corruption cases. This decision comes less than a week after Sharif returned to Pakistan following four years of self-imposed exile in the United Kingdom. [The Washington Post]

Sharif's ability to appeal his convictions is seen as a significant development ahead of parliamentary elections scheduled for January, not least because prosecutors did not oppose his appeals and expressed no intention to arrest him. If his convictions are overturned in the coming weeks, Sharif would become eligible to run for a seat in parliament, and his Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) party could potentially return to power.

Sharif stepped down as prime minister in 2017 due to corruption charges. In July 2018, he was arrested and

convicted by the government of then-Prime Minister Imran Khan but was later allowed to travel to London for medical treatment following a court order due to health concerns.

Pakistan: Court declines bail to ex-Premier Imran Khan in state secret case

(lm) A Pakistani court on October 27 denied bail to former Prime Minister Imran Khan, who has been indicted on charges of leaking state secrets related to a classified cable sent by Pakistan's ambassador in the United States. Khan is accused of making the contents of the cable public, but he denies this, stating that the information had already appeared in the media from other sources. [Reuters]

Khan was forced out of office in 2022 after losing a no-confidence vote in parliament. He claims that the leaked cable was evidence of a United States-led conspiracy to push Pakistan’s powerful military to remove him from power because of his visit to Moscow on the day of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Both Washington and the Pakistani military have denied this allegation.

The former premier has faced numerous legal cases, which he has characterized as attempts to keep him out of politics. He has been convicted in one corruption case and sentenced to three years in jail, although the sentence was suspended. However, he remains in prison in connection with other cases. Due to his conviction, Khan is unable to participate in the upcoming general election expected early next year.

Pakistan: Thousands rally in major cities to protest Israel’s bombing of Gaza Strip

(lm) Thousands of supporters from Jamaat-e-Islami (Jamaat), one of Pakistan’s largest religious parties, on October 29 rallied in Islamabad to protest against Israel's bombing of Gaza Strip. Originally planned as a march to the United States Embassy, the rally was relocated due to authorities' actions the previous night, including detaining party leaders and supporters. [Associated Press]

Jamaat also organized a rally in Pakistan’s southern port city of Karachi, which was attended by hundreds of women and children who carried banners and placards with pro-Palestine and anti-Israel slogans.

Simultaneously, more than 2,000 students at Karachi University attended a rally denouncing what they deemed "Israel's war crimes in Gaza." [Yeni Şafak]

Separately, the Jamiat Ulema Islam party held a rally in Quetta, where its leader Maulana Fazlur Rehman expressed solidarity and support for Gazans.

Pakistan: Women's advocacy group holds protests across country against government's deportation policy

(lm) On October 29, Aurat March, a women's advocacy group, held protests in several Pakistani cities against a government policy to arrest and deport all foreigners found living in the country illegally after October 31, including at least 1.7 million Afghans. Aurat March supporters gathered in Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore and Multan to support Afghans facing the threat of deportation. [ANI]

Sri Lanka: Cabinet approves formation of body to establish code of conduct for Parliamentarians

(lf) Sri Lanka's Cabinet has announced the establishment of an independent body to create a code of conduct for parliamentarians and serving MPs. This decision was prompted by recent disruptions in parliament caused by unruly MPs staging protests [see AiR, No. 43, October/2023, 4]. No specific timeline for the passage of the bill or for meetings between government and opposition officials on this matter has been provided.

A preliminary draft of the code has been prepared and will be presented to the Speaker of the House and opposition party leaders for their input. The formation of this parliamentary standards body will proceed after the necessary approval procedures have been completed. The objective is to hold all MPs, regardless of their political affiliation, to higher standards of conduct while serving in parliament.

It is hoped by Prime Minister Gunawardena and President Wickremesinghe that the formation of this body will improved confidence in government and the perception of parliament by the Sri Lankan population, who have been sceptical of MPs following the revelations of corruption which were unearthed during

the nation's economic crisis in 2022. [Daily Mirror] [The Morning] [The Island Online]

Sri Lanka: Police deploy teargas, water cannons against protesting teachers in Colombo

(lf) On October 24, a protest involving over 4,000 teachers and principals in Colombo, Sri Lanka, was forcefully dispersed by the police. Tear gas and water cannons were used to disperse the demonstrators who had gathered in front of the Education Ministry. The protesters were demanding higher pay and allowances, increased government funding for education, and an end to the collection of funds from parents for school maintenance. [Daily Mirror] [Asian Mirror] [The Morning]

Sri Lanka: Agriculture Ministry introduces harsher punishments for cattle theft

(lf) Sri Lanka's Agriculture Ministry has decided to increase the penalty for cattle theft to a fine of roughly USD 1,200. and a minimum of one year of imprisonment. The decision comes in response to the rising incidents of cattle theft across the country. Under the existing Animal Welfare Act, the maximum fine for cattle theft was approximately USD 600, with no mention of imprisonment. [Daily Mirror] [Sunday Times]

Although the increase in punishment for the crime is hoped to stagger the boldness of thieves who dare to steal and kill livestock, the changes do not address the root of the problem as to why these crimes occur, and thus will likely not have a significant impact on the stealing and murder of dairy cattle in Sri Lanka's regional areas.

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

Brunei: Viral message of monthly welfare assistance investigated

(dql) The Community Development Department (Japem) announced on October 30 that viral WhatsApp message pertaining to obtaining monthly welfare assistance of BND 350 (approx. USD 260) is being investigated.

Japem called on the public to refrain from obtaining information beyond its official website and social media. It also warned against being involved in the production and dissemination of fake news and false information, adding that the offence of spreading of false information to cause public alarm carries a penalty of a fine of BND 3,000 fine or three-year imprisonment, or both. [The Star]

Cambodia: Draft Royal Decree on out-of-court mediation body approved by Prime Minister

(pm) Prime Minister Hun Manet approved on October 27 a draft Royal Decree on the establishment, organization, and functioning of the new National Authority for Out-of-Court mediation.

The move aims to address the backlog of cases in the country's court system.

The authority will be headed by a Deputy Prime Minister, supported by four vice-presidents made up of one Senior Minister, the Minister of Inspections, one secretary of state from the Ministry of Interior and one from the Ministry of Justice. Other members will be recruited from various relevant ministries, with a secretariat serving to administer the authority. [Phnom Penh Post]

Cambodia: 27 parties forming alliance with the Cambodian People's Party (CPP)

(pm) The ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP) and CPP and 27 other political parties signed on October 25 the "Cooperation and Alliance Agreement," for form an alliance, in a move "to jointly contribute to the country's development and make good progress of democracy's practices in Cambodia," according to former Prime Minister and CPP president Hun Sen who made this statement at the signing ceremony.

He affirmed that although the CPP "has a lot of human and financial resources," all 28 political parties "have the same rights."

The new alliance will compete with the "Alliance for the Future," that was formed by the Candlelight Party, the Khmer Will Party, the Grassroots Democratic Party and the Cambodia Reform Party. [Khmer Times]

Cambodia: Manet refutes criticism of development policies

(pm) Prime Minister Hun Manet rebutted accusations made by unnamed critics that his administration's development policies are serving his ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP) and the country's elite.

Hun Manet described the critics as "narrow-minded," and cited the expansion of the public health policy to include 7.4 million people benefitting from their equity cards, as well as through the National Social Security Fund (NSSF).

The Prime Minister also referred to vocational training planned for 1.5 million youth from impoverished or vulnerable households, who will receive not only training but also cash support. This policy will also cover women workers. [Phnom Penh Post] [Khmer Times]

Cambodia: Ministry of Information, Government Lawyers Group to cooperate in support to the journalists

(pm) A new Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Ministry of Information and the Government Lawyers Group that seeks to guarantee effective legal protections for journalists who conduct

their profession lawfully while fulfilling their professional duties is under preparation.

According to the ministry, the two parties are currently reviewing the potential for a revision of the existing MoU with regards to legal safeguards for qualified journalists.

Part of the revision will be drawing up a code of ethics and code of conduct which serves as guiding principles to ensure journalists carry out their work "with honesty and integrity in all facets of its day-to-day operations," and "only engage in acts that promote a benefit to society."

In line with recommendations of former Prime Minister Hun Sen the changes will also permit government lawyers to assist journalists in their work. [Khmer Times]

Cambodia: Working group established to support victims of landmines and explosive remnants

(pm) The Cambodian Mine Action Centre (CMAC) has set up a working group that provides socio-economic support to individuals with disabilities stemming from landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW).

Besides conducting activities, such as spreading educational messages about landmines, gathering ERWs, carrying out in-home prosthetic repair services health screenings and consultations for individuals with disabilities, the working group also do assessments of family economic development needs and offer training in agricultural technical skills and support for starting small-scale businesses.

27 victims of landmines and ERWs were recorded in the first nine months of this year. [Phnom Penh Post]

Indonesia: Constitutional Court to investigate ethics complaints regarding election ruling

(lm) Indonesia's Constitutional Court has set up a panel to investigate accusations of bias and nepotism following a ruling that effectively allowed President Joko Widodo's son to run in next year's presidential election. [The Diplomat] [Benar News]

In its decision, the Constitutional Court rejected a petition to lower the minimum age for presidential and vice-presidential candidates from 40 years to 35 years. However, it also amended the country's election law to permit exceptions for candidates who have served as members of legislative councils or regional heads at the provincial or city level, regardless of their age. [AiR No. 42, October/2023, 3].

Gibran Rakabuming Raka, the eldest son of President Widodo was elected the mayor of Surakarta, a post once held by his father. In the wake of the ruling, he was announced as the running-mate of Defense Minister Prabowo Subianto.

The Court's ruling has raised concerns about political interference and nepotism within the court, particularly because the chief judge, Anwar Usman, is President Widodo's brother-in-law and the uncle of the president's son who is running for office.

In light of this, activists and legal experts have filed complaints against the court, alleging a politically motivated ruling to benefit the president's son. The court's ability to impartially investigate itself is being questioned, and concerns about its independence persist.

Indonesia: Candidates call on President Jokowi to remain neutral ahead of 2024 election

(lm) Two potential successors of Indonesia's outgoing President Joko Widodo, Anies Baswedan and Ganjar Pranowo, have called on him to remain neutral in the run-up to the February 2024 election amid concerns that he may be trying to retain power after leaving office. [The Straits Times]

While President Widodo has publicly stated that he will not interfere in the election, critics argue that his backing of certain candidates and changes in eligibility criteria raise concerns about his efforts to retain influence.

In the most recent of a series of four opinion polls conducted within a week, presidential contender Prabowo Subianto has maintained a slim lead ahead of other candidates. Nevertheless, his advantage over Ganjar Pranowo, representing the ruling Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P), remains marginal as the campaign season draws near. [The Jakarta Post]

Notably, the polls are also being contested by Defence Minister Prabowo Subianto, an old rival of President Jokowi who is running with the president's eldest son, Gibran Rakabuming. The announcement of the vice-presidential nomination came days after a controversial court ruling that cleared the path for Rakabuming to run [see AiR No. 42, October/2023, 3]. *Reuters* reports that the ruling has raised fears of patronage politics returning post-Suharto. [Reuters]

Indonesia: President Jokowi never proposed extension of his term as PDI-P party chair, Puan Maharani says

Puan Maharani, the Speaker of Parliament's lower House and senior member of the ruling Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) has asserted that President Joko Widodo has never proposed extending his tenure in office beyond his second term to the party's chair, Megawati Soekarnoputri. [Jakarta Post]

Puan's response came in reaction to remarks made by PDI-P legislator and former student activist Adian Napitupulu, who implied that the current tensions between President Jokowi and Megawati are the result of her rejection of the President's desire to continue serving beyond his constitutionally mandated two-term limit.

Indonesia: President to sign regulation aimed at easing rules on minorities' places of worship

(lm) Indonesia's President Joko Widodo is set to sign a presidential regulation aimed at easing requirements for the establishment of places of worship by minority groups. However, critics argue that the proposed law may not address the concerns adequately, as key elements of excising decrees are likely to be retained. [The Star]

The new law will replace two 2006 decrees that minority groups have criticized for imposing stringent conditions for building churches, temples, or mosques, particularly affecting the Ahmadiyah Muslim group. These decrees have required proposers for a place of worship to obtain support from local residents and worshippers, among other conditions.

Ahead of the 2014 presidential election, President Widodo's campaign team pledged to replace the 2006

decrees. But despite an attempt to address the issue through legislation, it failed as Parliament couldn't reach an agreement with the government.

Indonesia: Court sentences eight Iranians to death for drug smuggling

(lm) An Indonesian court has sentenced eight Iranian nationals to death for smuggling more than 315 kilograms of crystal methamphetamine into Java. The Iranians were arrested in early 2023 after authorities found the stash hidden aboard a ship that brought them to Banten, a province on the western tip of Java island. The defendants have seven days to appeal the verdict. [Benar News]

Indonesia has one of the world's toughest anti-drug laws and has executed several foreign and local drug offenders in recent years, despite condemnation from other countries.

Indonesia: Life sentence upheld for ex-police general Teddy Minahasa

(lm) The Supreme Court in Indonesia has upheld the life sentence of former two-star police general Teddy Minahasa, who earlier this year was found guilty of trafficking illicit drugs originally confiscated as criminal evidence. [The Jakarta Post]

Teddy, while serving as chief of the West Sumatra Police, ordered his subordinate to swap seized methamphetamine with a chemical compound that had a similar appearance to the drug as part of a plot to sell the illicit drugs. In May, he was handed a life sentence, which was lighter than the prosecutors' demand for the death penalty. [AiR No. 20, May/2023, 3]

Teddy was the second police general to have been tried this year for a high-profile crime. Former National Police internal affairs chief Ferdy Sambo was tried for the murder of his own aide-de-camp and of tampering with evidence to orchestrate a cover-up. A panel of judges at the South Jakarta District Court and the Jakarta High Court sentenced Ferdy to death but the Supreme Court later commuted this to life imprisonment [see AiR No. 33, August/2023, 3].

Indonesia: TikTokker arrested for video of ‘jokes’ mocking Christianity

(lm) An Indonesian TikTok user has been arrested in Malaysia’s North Sumatra province for alleged blasphemy against Christianity after videos mocking the religion went viral on the platform. The individual is expected to be charged with inciting hatred under the information and electronic transactions (ITE) law, which carries a maximum sentence of six years in prison. Blasphemy is a criminal offense in Indonesia, a Muslim-majority country, with a maximum penalty of five years in jail. [South China Morning Post]

Indonesia: President Widodo pushes economic growth amid presidential election

After officially opening the Investor Daily Summit, President Widodo stressed the importance of continuing to increase exports and investments to maintain Indonesia’s economic growth. The remarks come as the Indonesian presidential election is kicking off.

According to President Widodo, it is important to continue exports, even if this is not an easy task. Government and private consumption are important, so it is imperative to continue investment in certain fields. The President mentioned that the government plans to provide incentives like value-added tax for the property market. This is because the property market may stimulate other areas of the Indonesian economy – wood, bricks, cement, tile, doors, glass, ceramics, and so forth. [Presiden RI]

Key themes are emerging amid the Indonesian presidential election: having a clean energy plan, moving the capital from Jakarta, and boosting average growth of the economy [VOA] [Mongabay]

Indonesia: Police arrest 27 suspected militants in nationwide crackdown

(lm) Indonesian police have arrested at least 27 suspected militants with links to banned extremist groups in a nationwide crackdown that comes as the country prepares for the 2024 elections. [Head Topics]

The arrests were made by the police's elite counterterrorism squad, known as Densus 88, in

Jakarta, West Java, and Central Sulawesi provinces. Most of those arrested are believed to be members of a homegrown militant outfit affiliated with the Islamic State group known as Jemaah Anshorut Daulah (JAD). Authorities are investigating and interrogating the suspects to determine if there are other potential threats.

Lao PDR: Government to reraise VAT rate for boosting revenue

(ws) The Ministry of Finance of Laos is deliberating a potential increase in the value-added tax (VAT) rate, transitioning it from the current 7 percent to 10 percent. This move aims at bolstering government revenues and providing support to the national economy.

The ministry has cited several reasons for contemplating this VAT rate hike. Notably, the current rate has not yielded the anticipated economic stimulus. Additionally, the number of businesses registered under the VAT law is lower than expected, and the government is seeking to augment its revenue to address budget deficits and stabilize the local currency, the kip, as per the government's finance department.

Shifting VAT rate to 10 percent would mark a return to the original rate in place from 2010 to 2021. It is worth noting that as of January 1, 2022, the country had lowered the VAT rate to 7 percent for the import of goods and services.

The development of new legislation to raise the VAT rate is expected to be completed this year, with the changes set to take effect in early 2024. [Laotian Times]

Lao PDR: Government requests Huawei's enhanced involvement for digital transformation

(ws) During his visit to Beijing, Saleumxay Kommasith, Laos' Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, held discussions with a delegation from Huawei. Their talks centered on Huawei's global development strategies and industry concepts, and Saleumxay expressed a desire for increased Huawei involvement in Laos' digital transformation efforts.

During the meeting, the Deputy Prime Minister commended Huawei for its valuable contributions to Laos' digital transformation and advancements in science and technology. He also expressed hope for Huawei's close collaboration with the Lao government and relevant stakeholders in shaping the nation's digital transformation strategies in the future.

In response, the Huawei delegation reaffirmed their commitment to actively cooperate and participate in the digitization of various sectors in Laos. Their aim is to collectively enhance security, stability, and reliability in the digitization process and promote innovations with low carbon footprint. [Vientiane Times]

Malaysia: Businesses must adopt sustainable practices, invest in biodiversity-friendly supply chains

(mw) Businesses in Malaysia need to embrace sustainable practices, reduce their environmental impact, and invest in supply chains that support biodiversity, according to Tan Sri Abdul Wahid Omar, chairman of World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Malaysia.

Speaking at the Joint Committee on Climate Change (JC3) Journey to Zero conference 2023, held on October 25 in Kuala Lumpur, he emphasized the need for a collaborative, inclusive approach to address environmental challenges.

Abdul Wahid noted the global biodiversity conservation financing gap, which amounts to an average of 711 billion USD annually, stressing the urgency of mobilizing private finance for the protection and restoration of natural capital.

He also mentioned the potential six percent annual GDP loss by 2030 in a worst-case scenario of partial ecosystem collapse and highlighted nature-related risks faced by Malaysian companies. [New Straits Times]

Malaysia: Communication ministry warns TikTok, Meta over alleged blocking of pro-Palestinian content

(mw) Malaysia’s communications minister, Fahmi Fadzil, has warned to take firm action against social media platforms TikTok and Meta for blocking pro-

Palestinian content. Meta, which owns Instagram and WhatsApp, has taken steps to address the conflict by lowering the threshold for its technology to take action against potentially violative posts.

Both platforms designate Hamas, the Palestinian Islamist movement, as a "dangerous organization" and ban content praising the group. Meta has taken down or labeled nearly eight-hundred thousand pieces of content in Hebrew and Arabic in the three days after Hamas' attack on Israel.

Malaysians have a right to freedom of speech regarding the Palestinian cause, Fahmi said, and announced plans to meet TikTok representatives this week to discuss the matter. [Reuters]

Malaysia: Government to complete national action plan for business and human rights by 2024

(mw) The Malaysian government is committed to developing a comprehensive National Business and Human Rights Action Plan (NBHRAP) for the years 2025-2030. This plan, set for completion by next year, aims to create an environment that attracts responsible investments and prioritizes the welfare of the people. The plan seeks to promote inclusive, ethical, and responsible business practices that boost economic growth while upholding human rights and values, especially in areas such as foreign workers and forced labor.

This commitment was emphasized by Datuk Seri Azalina Othman Said, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department for Law and Institutional Reform, during the "Unveiling Insights and Actions: Malaysia's Baseline Assessment on Business and Human Rights Conference." The conference showcased the preliminary findings of the national baseline assessment, which is a critical step in developing the action plan.

Azalina Othman Said will chair a steering committee to finalize the report by the end of the year, followed by discussions among relevant agencies and submission to the Cabinet, expected in the coming year. This initiative reflects Malaysia's dedication to ethical and responsible business practices that respect human rights and social values. [Malay Mail]

Malaysia: Citizenship application process period to take only 14 days

(mw) The National Registration Department (NRD) in Malaysia has launched an integrated security vetting system to process citizenship applications more efficiently. This system has reduced the processing period from seventy-three days to just fourteen days.

The NRD, in collaboration with the police, developed the system, enabling online submission of application documents. The system can automatically reject applications involving individuals associated with dangerous organizations or overstaying their visas.

Additionally, the Malaysian Cabinet is finalizing the establishment of a single agency to regulate the country's borders, aiming to enhance security and national border control. [New Straits Times]

Malaysia: Government looks to enforce Section 19 of SOAC to take action against silent witnesses

(mw) Datuk Seri Azalina Othman Said is taking action to enforce Section 19 of the Sexual Offences Against Children Act 2017 (SOAC), which prosecutes witnesses who do not report sexual abuse cases.

The Minister in the Prime Minister's Department is meeting with law enforcement and court officials to discuss the matter and enhance awareness for witnesses to report such cases. Section 19 allows for the charging of individuals who are aware of child abuse but fail to report it.

Azalina Othman Said also emphasized the need for legal aid services to support underage victims of sexual abuse, particularly in cases involving family members. [New Straits Times 1]

Meanwhile, Education Minister Fadhlina Sidek emphasized the importance of teachers and school administrators reporting any incidents of sexual abuse involving students to the authorities. This reminder aligns with the guidelines for managing misconduct, particularly related to sexual harassment and bullying, which the ministry recently launched.

Fadhlina stressed the ministry's commitment to addressing sexual harassment and ensuring it is effectively managed within the education system. Her statement followed Minister in the Prime Minister's

Department (Law and Institutional Reform) Datuk Seri Azalina Othman Said's consideration of prosecuting witnesses who fail to report sexual abuse cases, particularly those involving minors.

The Education Ministry's guidelines aim to protect human dignity and create a safe educational environment. [New Straits Times 2]

Malaysia: Education ministry welcomes corporate sector support to tackle malnutrition among students

(mw) The Malaysian Education Ministry is encouraging corporate entities to support government efforts to combat malnutrition among school children. Minister Fadhlina Sidek highlighted the adverse effects of malnutrition on education access and attendance, emphasizing the need for an effective intervention.

While the government is increasing allocations for the Supplementary Food Program (RMT) in schools, additional support from the corporate sector is welcomed.

A state-level Healthy Meals Program called Promak has been launched, benefiting nearly twenty thousand students across ninety-three selected schools in Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan, and Terengganu.

The government has increased the allocation for RMT and pre-school food supplementary programs to address malnutrition and improve attendance rates. [New Straits Times]

Malaysia: Education for all via 'Pendidikan Manusiawi'

(mw) Malaysia's Education Ministry has introduced the concept of "Pendidikan Manusiawi" or humanizing education, aimed at providing inclusive, character-driven, and value-based quality education for all children.

This concept aligns with the broader goals of the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 and focuses on nurturing well-adjusted, morally grounded, and positive contributors to the nation's growth, including students with special needs and those from marginalized backgrounds.

It promotes inclusivity and caters to diverse student needs, with a strong emphasis on character and values-driven education. Efforts are also made to bridge the digital divide and enhance early childhood education. [New Straits Times]

Malaysia: Selangor launches childcare incentive for working mothers

(mw) From next month, around five thousand eligible working mothers in Selangor state can apply for the 'MamaKerja' childcare incentive, which offers a one-time payment of RM1,000 (209 USD) to help with childcare costs.

Eligibility requirements include having a minimum of three children aged twelve or younger and a household income of RM 8,000 (1,657 USD) or less. The initiative aims to support women's participation in the workforce, especially considering the challenges working women face due to high childcare costs. RM 5 million (USD 1.050 million) has been allocated to the MamaKerja.

The initiative aligns with Selangor's strategy to enhance social inclusivity and the welfare of the people. It is part of the 1st Selangor Plan (RS-1), focusing on women and family institutions, with various programs designed to support the development and welfare of family institutions in the state. [New Straits Times]

Myanmar: Opposition parties allege exclusion from forthcoming election

(sk) The junta-appointed Union Election Commission (UEC) in Myanmar, chaired by Thein Soe, has implemented restrictive measures on political parties registering for an upcoming general election.

Thein Soe, who previously chaired the election body during the 2010 general election, is now imposing strict requirements that effectively hinder political party registrations.

These requirements include recruiting at least 100,000 members within 90 days, opening offices in over half of Myanmar’s 330 townships within six months, and contesting at least in half of Myanmar’s constituencies.

These stringent criteria effectively prevent smaller parties from participating and lead to the dissolution

of major pro-democracy parties like the National League for Democracy (NLD).

As a result, many see the upcoming election as skewed in favor of the military's proxy party, the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP). [Irrawaddy]

Myanmar: Military council raids news agency, arrests two staff

(wn) The provincial military council, headquartered in Sittwe, raided the Development Media Group (DMG), a Rakhine news agency, that reports on armed conflict and human rights violations in the western state that borders Bangladesh.

According to the residents and a spokesperson of the news agency, a reporter and a night watchman were arrested during the raid.

Both are currently being held at Sittwe City No. 1 Police Station.

The editor-in-chief of DMG filed a case against them under Section 17 (2) of the Unlawful Association Law in 2019, which was investigated by the Rakhine State Military Council's news police. [RFA Burmese] [Radio Free Asia]

Myanmar: Life sentence against teacher supporting civil disobedience movement

(sk) A teacher supporting the National Unity Government (NUG) and involved in the civil disobedience movement (CDM) has been sentenced to life imprisonment by a regime-controlled court.

The teacher was charged with terrorism, fundraising for the NUG and teaching at an NUG-operated school. [MyanmarNow]

Myanmar: Death row inmates, lifers denied prison visits

(sk) Prisoners serving life sentences or facing the death penalty will not be allowed to receive visitors despite the resumption of prison visits announced earlier this week.

Families of inmates began gathering outside of prisons on October 24, a day after they learned that in-person visits would be permitted for the first time in more than three years. However, some relatives were turned away because the prisoners they had gone to visit had been sentenced to death or life imprisonment [MyanmarNow]

Myanmar: Northern region commander sentenced to ten years in prison, former information minister arrested

(wn) Koko Maung, commander of the Northern Region Military Command based in Myitkyina, has been sentenced to ten years in prison by a military court.

He was arrested in mid-July in Kachin State and was accused of allowing the mining of gems and gold in prohibited areas in Phakant region in exchange for money. [The Irrawaddy Burmese]

Meanwhile, the Military Council has arrested U Ye Htut, a former Information Minister, on charges of spreading false information on social media.

U Ye Thut, a 64-year-old former Minister of Information and Presidential Spokesperson during U Thein Sein's government, has been indicted under section 505-A for inciting the disintegration of the military. If convicted, he could face up to three years in prison. [VOA Burmese]

Ye Thut is a graduate of the Defence Services Academy, the country's premier military service academy, and was transferred to the Information Department when U Kyaw San became the Minister of Information during the Nawata government. While serving in the Ministry of Information, he was promoted to the rank of Director General and subsequently appointed as the Deputy Minister and Minister of Information during the presidency of U Thein Sein.

Several notable figures who were classmates of U Ye Thut including Lieutenant General Yar Pyae, who is now the Minister of the Interior for the Military Council; Lt. Kyaw Swe, who served as the Minister of Home Affairs during the previous NLD government; and U Kyaw Min, who is the current Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and U Kyaw Min, Myanmar Ambassador to England. [[The Irrawaddy Burmese]

Myanmar: Regime troops kill five civilians

(sk) Junta forces were responsible for the deaths of five civilians in Mandalay's Madaya and Singu townships during recent raids on six riverside villages.

The bodies of three men were found near Tha Hpan Daunt village in Madaya, while the other two were discovered near Kyet Tu Yway village in Singu following junta attacks on October 25.

Evidence of torture and blunt-force trauma to the head was found on the victims, indicating the brutality of their killings. [Irrawaddy]

Myanmar: Simultaneous attacks strike three regime targets

(sk/wn) Resistance forces in Myanmar's Tanintharyi Region have conducted three coordinated attacks on junta targets in Dawei District, including an assault on a police station in the town of Thayetchaung, an attack on a checkpoint on the Shwegu Bridge near Thayetchaung, and an explosive detonation on the Kanna Road during a Buddhist ceremony.

Since months, the region has experienced almost daily fighting, particularly on Route 8, an important trade route with neighboring Thailand. [MyanmarNow 1]

In a separate development, the "Brotherhood Alliance," which includes the Arakan Army (AA), Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), and Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), also carried out simultaneous attacks on regime targets and bases in several towns in northern Shan State. [Irrawaddy 1]

Meanwhile, officials of the "Northern Alliance," consisting of three armed groups - Taang National Liberation Army (TNLA), The Kokang Army (MNDAA), and the Rakhine Army (AA) - claimed they could capture 57 military council camps during a joint operation carried out from October 27th to 29th. [RFA Burmese]

Further, the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) has recently captured two junta bases in Shan and Kachin states while defending its headquarters. The junta acknowledged the loss of these bases. [MyanmarNow 2][Irrawaddy 2]

Myanmar: Junta army takes infants hostage in Wetlet township

(sk) Regime forces in Wetlet Township, Sagaing Region, raided Wet Let Ywei village, taking four small children and over a dozen adults hostage as they returned to their base.

The hostages, including infants and toddlers, were released when the soldiers reached their base in Thar Laing. The regime had deployed additional troops in the area to repair the Myitkyina-Mandalay railway line, resulting in concerns about the safety of residents and displacement due to the increased military presence. [MyanmarNow]

Myanmar: Resistance actions delay junta convoy's journey through Karenni State

(sk) A Myanmar junta convoy, comprising about 40 trucks, endured a three-month journey through Karenni (Kayah) State, facing delays and ambushes.

The convoy, possibly originating from southern Shan State or Naypyitaw, passed through Loikaw in August and continued southward for around 50 miles.

Resistance forces in the area speculated that the convoy, carrying ammunition and heavy weapons, might be heading to Mese, a township controlled by the resistance.

Frequent battles occurred along the route, with resistance forces reporting 29 clashes in Karenni State in September, resulting in significant junta soldier casualties. Independent verification of these figures is unavailable. [MyanmarNow]

Myanmar: Mass exodus triggered amid raids and fires in Western Depayin Township

(sk) Military raids and attacks by Pyu Saw Htee militias, loosely organized networks of pro-military and pro-junta villagers, in Depayin Township, Sagaing Region, displaced over 5,000 civilians on the west bank of the Mu River.

A column of over 100 soldiers and militia members advanced into villages, burned down rice barns, houses, and food supplies, forcing residents from twelve villages to seek shelter in the nearby woods.

The junta forces left threatening words on a house's walls, claiming to be affiliated with the "Ogre Column," which is known for brutal actions in the region.

Sagaing Region has seen an increase in armed conflict since the 2021 military coup, with significant destruction and displacement. [MyanmarNow]

The Philippines: Supreme Court urged to grant protection writs for two environmental activists

(lm) Human rights group *Karapatan* has urged the Philippine Supreme Court to grant the writs of amparo and habeas data sought by two environmental activists who accused the military of abduction. Karapatan's Secretary General, Cristina Palabay, emphasized that the activists need protection from threats and harassment, especially from elements within the military and the government's anti-communist task force. The two activists filed their petition for protection writs on September 28, and the case is ongoing. [Inquirer.net]

The Philippines: Nearly 600 detained in anti-trafficking raid

(lb) Philippine police have conducted a raid on a suspected sex trafficking and online scam operation in Manila, resulting in the detention of nearly 600 individuals. Among those found inside the compound were Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, and Filipino nationals. Authorities are conducting interviews to determine who might be victims or suspects in the case, with the Chinese embassy's assistance sought to identify nine individuals suspected of running the operation. [Macau Business.com]

Authorities suspect the use of computers for crypto and love scams and are applying for warrants to access them. Thus, this incident reflects the growing international concern over internet scams, often exploiting trafficking victims to promote fraudulent cryptocurrency investments. In June, a similar raid resulted in the detention of over 2,700 people involved in recruiting players for online games through alleged trafficking activities.

Singapore: Former president Halimah Yacob awarded Order of Temasek

(lm) Former President Halimah Yacob has been honored with Singapore's highest civilian honor, the Order of Temasek (With High Distinction). The award recognizes her lifetime of devoted and distinguished service and her embodiment of the so-called "Singapore Story", the narrative of Singapore's remarkable socio-economic and political transformation since gaining independence in 1965. [The Straits Times]

Halimah Yacob has achieved numerous milestones during her career, including being the first Singaporean to serve on the governing body of the International Labour Organisation, the first Malay woman elected as an MP, the first female Speaker of Parliament, and the first female President of Singapore.

In addition to former President Halimah Yacob, four other individuals were conferred the Distinguished Service Order in recognition of their distinguished conduct and contributions.

Singapore: Jeffrey Siow to be Second Permanent Secretary at Ministry of Manpower in leadership shuffle

(lb) Jeffrey Siow, the current Chief Operating Officer of Enterprise Singapore, a statutory board under the Ministry of Trade and Industry, will become the second permanent secretary at the Ministry of Manpower starting January 1, 2024. Siow previously served as the principal private secretary to Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong from 2017 to 2021. [The Business Times]

Additionally, Tan Gee Keow, who is currently the permanent secretary at the Ministry of Culture, Community, and Youth (MCCY), will step down from her role at MCCY but will retain her position as permanent secretary at the Public Service Division (PSD) starting January 1, 2024.

Teoh Zsin Woon, the current permanent secretary for development at the Ministry of National Development (MND), will succeed Tan as the permanent secretary at MCCY while also continuing her role as permanent secretary for development at PSD.

Melvyn Ong, who has been serving as the permanent secretary for defence development at the Ministry of

Defence since June, will become the permanent secretary for development at MND starting January 1, 2024.

Chng Kai Fong, the current permanent secretary for development at the Ministry of Communications and Information, will remain in the same ministry but take on a new role as permanent secretary for information and development starting November 1, 2023. He will continue as permanent secretary for development and cyber security at PMO.

Singapore: Enforcement of POFMA raises concerns about selective application

(lb) A recent editorial published on *Gutzy Asia* expresses concerns about how Singapore's Protection from Online Falsehoods and Manipulation Act (POFMA) is applied selectively and inconsistently, particularly targeting activists and political figures.To exemplify, it focuses on correction directives issued to news outlets like *Gutzy Asia*, *The Online Citizen Asia*, and *Singapore Eye*, and how these outlets complied with the directives. [Gutzy]

The author points out that there's a contrast in how non-compliance was handled, with *Asia Sentinel* facing stricter consequences than *Singapore Eye*. This inconsistency, the author argues, could harm POFMA's credibility and raise suspicions of bias. They stress the importance of clear, transparent, and impartial enforcement of POFMA to maintain public trust in information integrity safeguards.

Singapore: Internal Security Department celebrates 75th anniversary

(lb) On October 25, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong delivered a celebratory address during an event marking the 75th anniversary of the Internal Security Department (ISD) in Singapore. In this speech, Lee acknowledged the important role of ISD in safeguarding the city state’s security over the years. He discussed three major security concerns: terrorism, foreign influence and espionage, and domestic vulnerabilities. The speech also highlighted the importance of ISD's organizational transformation and the dedication of its officers in ensuring the safety and sovereignty of Singapore. [Prime Ministers Office Singapore]

Singapore: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance Lawrence Wong at the launch of the Forward Singapore Festival

(lb) The Singaporean Prime Minister, in his speech at the launch of the Forward Singapore Festival, emphasized that Singapore is at a crucial juncture marked by global changes and domestic challenges. He highlighted the need to create a shared vision for the nation's future, termed the "Singapore Dream," which goes beyond material success to include vibrancy, inclusivity, fairness, and unity. The Prime Minister acknowledged the importance of collective efforts and unity to tackle societal challenges, emphasizing the significance of working together as a society and as a country. He also announced the launch of the Forward Singapore Festival, a roadshow aimed at encouraging greater citizen participation and co-creation to shape Singapore's future. [Prime Ministers Office Singapore]

Forward Singapore report unveils social support plans, lays out mindset shifts needed amid changing times

(lb) Singapore's 4G leadership has unveiled a roadmap for a more equitable and thriving future in the face of changing times. The Forward Singapore report outlines measures to support groups like the less well-off, mid-career workers, and seniors with increased financial assistance and improved infrastructure. The roadmap focuses on meeting basic needs at every life stage, such as education, retirement, healthcare, and housing. The report also highlights the importance of a collective effort from the government, employers, community groups, families, and individuals to maintain the nation's progress. The refreshed Singapore Dream emphasizes fulfillment, meaning, and purpose, creating a more vibrant, equal, and united society. [The Straits Times]

Thailand: Prime Minister Srettha vows to push forward bills on gender equality and sex work

(ws) On October 26, Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin made a commitment to advocate for the passage of three bills. These bills, including one addressing

marriage equality, are scheduled for cabinet deliberation on October 31, after which they will be presented to the parliament.

The marriage equality bill seeks to modify the Civil and Commercial Code to enable individuals of an appropriate age to register their marriages without regard to their gender. The current legal framework only recognizes marriages between a man and a woman.

The second bill under consideration pertains to gender recognition and proposes to permit transgender individuals to update their gender marker on their official identity documents.

The third bill aims to decriminalize and regulate prostitution by amending the 1996 Act on the suppression and prevention of illegal prostitution. [Bangkok Post]

Thailand: Labour Ministry to raise minimum wage cap to THB 400 baht

(ws) On October 26, Labor Minister Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn told the media that the Ministry is considering raising minimum wages to a maximum of THB 400 per day as the new cap. However, the specific amount of the wage cap will depend on the economic conditions and inflation rates in each province, with the stipulation that it should not surpass THB 400 per day. Currently, Thailand's minimum wages range from THB 328 to 354.

In order to raise minimum wages provincially, the tri-partite wage committee, comprising representatives from labor, the private sector, and the government, will be responsible for determining the appropriate wage level for each province.

It's worth noting that the ruling Pheu Thai party had previously pledged in their electoral manifesto to raise the minimum wage to THB 600 per day over a four-year period. [ThaiPBSWorld]

Thailand: New leader of Pheu Thai Party elected

(ak) Paetongtarn Shinawatra, the daughter of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, has been elected leader of the ruling Pheu Thai Party during the party's

general assembly held on October 27. She ran uncontested for the post.

The figurehead of Pheu Thai's campaign for the May general election, she was among the party's prime minister candidates, though eventually Srettha Thavisin was elected as prime minister by the parliament. [The Nation] [Reuters]

Thailand: Anti-corruption commission probes government's 10,000-baht digital handout

(nt) The National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) has launched an investigation of the Thai government's 10,000-THB digital currency handout scheme, a key policy of Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin. The move follows a recommendation of the corruption monitoring and appraisal panel of the NACC.

The committee in charge is tasked with collecting and analyzing data related to the scheme and propose measures to prevent potential policy-oriented corruption resulting from the implementation of the scheme. [The Thaiger]

Thailand: MFP charter rewrite motion rejected by House of Representatives

(nt) Thailand's House of Representatives has rejected a charter rewrite motion proposed by the opposition Move Forward Party by a vote of 262 against, 162 in favor, and six abstentions.

The motion was voted down due to concerns that the proposed changes could touch upon chapters in the constitution deemed "non-negotiable", such as the country's indivisibility and royal prerogatives.

Meanwhile, the parliamentary sub-committee tasked with gathering public opinion on a constitutional amendment referendum is expected to complete its work by mid-December. A referendum is likely to take place in the first quarter of next year. [The Thaiger]

Thailand: House of Representative sets up a new committee on legal casino complexes

(ak) The House of Representatives has set up a 60-member committee to study the potential opening of entertainment complexes, including casinos.

The move aims to tackle the problem of illegal casinos and to boost the country's economy. [Bangkok Post]

Thailand: Social media movement against the dismantling of ISOC

(bk) The hashtag "#Save ISOC" has surfaced on various political websites on October 28 in response to a bill introduced in July by the Move Forward Party (MFP), proposing the dissolution of Thailand's Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC).

The MFP argues that the 2008 Internal Security Act, which established the ISOC, gives excessive power to the military and duplicates the functions of other security agencies, resulting in the inefficient use of resources.

The bill is currently undergoing public opinion research, as stipulated by Section 77 of the Constitution, to gauge public support for ISOC's dissolution and the transfer of its resources to the Department of Provincial Administration.

Without naming the MFP, advocates of the hashtag have expressed concern that a "political grouping" is aiming to disband ISOC, potentially leading to an increase in insurgent activities and a further destabilization in the south.

They called on their supporters to vote against the bill to protect the country from "ill-intentioned" people. [Thai PBS World]

Thailand: Defense minister announces lifting of emergency decree in the South by 2027

(ak) Defense Minister Sutin Klungsang told a commottee of the House of Representatives that the government will lift the emergency decree put in place in the southern provinces by 2027.

Sutin also vowed to consider relaxing the decree gradually until it is lifted.

He further promised to end the compulsory conscription to the armed forces soon but admitted that it was still needed for national security reasons.

With regards to the Royal Thai Navy's plan to switch from procuring a Chinese submarine to an anti-submarine frigate, the panel in charge stated that the change should not cost the country more money.

In an earlier statement, Sutin stressed that Navy would need at least another THB 1 billion to buy the frigate. [The Nation]

Thailand: UNDP & SEC launch SDG guidebook for Thai firms

(nt) The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Securities and Exchange Commission of Thailand (SEC) together with another partners, launched the SDG Guidebook for Thai Listed Companies and SDG Impact Standards on October 27.

The book is designed to serve as a practical guideline for businesses to integrate the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into their business operations and strategies.

It also contains globally recognized tools and frameworks on impact measurement and management which businesses can refer to in their corporate reporting process on their positive contributions to social and environmental issues and in their SEC`s 56-1 One Report Disclosures. [The Nation]

Vietnam: Prime Minister gets high parliament support in confidence vote

(lm) Vietnam's Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh received strong support during a mid-term confidence vote in the National Assembly. About 78 percent of delegates expressed "high confidence" in him, while nearly 19 percent voted with "confidence," and less than 4 percent gave a "low confidence" rating. [Bloomberg]

Vietnam: Lawmakers discuss draft Law on Water Resources

(km) Lawmakers in Vietnam have discussed the draft Law on Water Resources on Oct 26, emphasizing the need for increased IT application and a roadmap to build a database on water resources to respond to climate change and weather developments.

Nguyen Thi Thu Thuy, a NA deputy from Binh Dinh province, emphasized the need to develop response scenarios for urban water supplies in the context of climate change, including saltwater intrusion and other negative impacts. Thuy also called for stricter control of waste discharge into water sources and the development of scenarios for water resource crises. National Assembly deputies stressed the importance of specific regulations related to the use of science and technology in water resource management and protection to prevent harmful effects. [vovworld.vn]

Vietnam: Police seeks to arrest lenders for alleged fraud after bank run

(lm) Vietnamese authorities have issued arrest warrants for two former chairs of Saigon Commercial Bank following a bank run that occurred last year. Customers feared the bank had ties to a real estate conglomerate under investigation for fraud. [The Straits Times]

The former chairman, Dinh Van Thanh, has been charged with alleged asset embezzlement and violations of banking operation regulations. Additionally, the former chairwoman, Nguyen Thi Thu Suong, and ex-deputy chief executive, Chiem Minh Dung, have been charged with alleged banking regulation violations. Police are also seeking the arrests of three board members and a former deputy director of one of the bank's branches.

The bank run occurred after police detained Truong My Lan, chairwoman of real estate conglomerate Van Thinh Phat Holdings Group, and other company officials in connection with an investigation into the issuance and trading of bonds of related companies. Rumors circulated that Saigon Commercial Bank was tied to the investigation, prompting depositors to withdraw their savings.

Vietnam's property market has faced challenges since 2021 due to an anti-corruption campaign, and regulatory interventions have been implemented to stabilize the situation. However, these issues continue to affect the country's economy, which relies heavily on exports. Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh has warned of the impact of an "unpredictable" global economy

and internal limitations on Vietnam's economic prospects.

International Relations, Geopolitics and Security in Asia

10th Beijing Xiangshan Forum held

(ic) The 10th Beijing Xiangshan Forum was held from October 29 -31 in Beijing. The Beijing Xiangshan Forum, China's biggest annual show of military diplomacy, co-organized by the China Association of Military Sciences and the China Institute for International Strategic Studies, brought together high-level defense, military and foreign affairs leaders from around the world to discuss a range of security issues.

The organizers highlighted that the number and level of foreign participants was the highest since the forum was first held in 2006: 1,800 participants, including members of 99 official delegations, defense ministers of 19 countries and chiefs of defense forces of 14 nations. [China Daily]

Notably, China was not represented by a defense minister due to the recent sacking of Li Shangfu (see article in this edition). Russia was represented by Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu. [Channel News Asia]

In the absence of a defense minister, Zhang Youxia, vice chairman of China's Central Military Commission, delivered a keynote address in which he stated that that the Chinese armed forces were willing to cooperate with all parties to improve the global security architecture and promote mutual trust,

including the US to prevent near-misses and further escalation. [Xinhua] [The China Project]

Demonstrating closed ranks against the US, Zhang and Shoigu both delivered statements calling out the US in all but name, with Shoigu articulating that the West held a "policy of steady escalation of the conflict with Russia [which] carries the threat of a direct military clash between nuclear powers, which is fraught with catastrophic consequences."

Similarly, Zhang – with reference to the war in Ukraine and the Israel-Palestine conflict – claimed that "a certain [...] sets up pegs everywhere and intentionally creates many geopolitical contradictions, pretending to be fair in stopping a fight but actually helping one side, making regional situations become complex and difficult to resolve. It also provides weapons and triggers proxy wars so it can reap the spoils of victory without lifting a finger." [Global Times] [Washington Post] [Reuters]

Further, during his bilateral meeting with Shoigu, Zhang reaffirmed that was ready to cooperate Russia "to actively respond to various security threats and challenges and jointly safeguard global strategic balance and stability." [Ministry of Defense, China]

Shanghai Cooperation Organization meets in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

(ic) On 26 October 2023, the 22nd meeting of the Heads of Government Council of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) took place in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

Among the attendees were India's Minister of the External Affairs Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Mokhber, Kazakhstan's Prime Minister Alikhan Smailov, China's Premier Li Qiang, Kyrgyzstan's Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers Akylbek Japarov, Pakistan's Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani, Russia's Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin, Tajikistan's Prime Minister Kokhir Rasulzoda, and Uzbekistan's Abdulla Aripov.

Taking part as observers were Belarus' Prime Minister Roman Golovchenko, Mongolia's Prime Minister Luvsannamsrain Oyun-Erdene, and Turkmenistan's Deputy Prime Minister Hojamyrat Geldimyradov as a guest of the presiding party, as well as leaders of permanent bodies of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Eastern Economic

Corridor (EEC), and Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA).

The heads of delegations reaffirmed the importance of initiatives to promote cooperation in establishing a new type of international relations in the spirit of mutual respect, justice, equality, and mutually beneficial cooperation. [Shanghai Cooperation Organization]

Notably, the meeting saw the admission of Iran as a full member of the SCO. [Mehr News]

Chinese Premier Li Qiang also told Mongolian Prime Minister L. Oyun-Erdene that China was ready to expand cooperation with Mongolia, hinting at interest to bring Mongolia into the SCO as a full member as well. [Reuters]

On the sidelines, Chinese Premier Li Qiang met with Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin, where both agreed that they wished to expand trade and investment networks, although with the caveat that the expansion of such relations should not target nor be disrupted by any third party. [Bloomberg] [Xinhua]

Belarus joins China's lunar base project

(ga) Belarus has joined China's International Lunar Research Station (ILRS) which is seeking to create a permanent base on the moon in the decade from 2030-2040.

An agreement for the Eastern European country to join the program was signed on October 23 by the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus and the China National Space Administration. A few days earlier, Pakistan also officially joined the ILRS program.

The agreement includes cooperation on developing new space technologies as well as joint training of scientists.

The ILRS program was jointly founded by China and Russia in 2021 but has been mostly China-led. Countries involved in the ILRS program now include China, Russia, Belarus, Pakistan, Azerbaijan, Venezuela, and South Africa alongside several companies and international space organizations. [SpaceNews] [Xinhua]

The ILRS program is seen as a competitor to the program being led by the US's National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), called Artemis. China

has been pushing for more countries to join its ILRS program recently, with Azerbaijan joining earlier this month [see AiR No. 41, October/2023, 2].

The ILRS is reportedly hoping to be fully operational as a lunar research station by 2050, with the potential to provide a base for further manned exploration of other planets in the solar system. [Reuters]

China invited to November AI summit in UK

(ga) On October 26, UK Deputy Prime Minister Oliver Dowden announced that China had accepted the UK's invitation to join an international summit on artificial intelligence (AI) this week. [Reuters]

Political, business, and international organization leaders are gathering in the UK from November 1-2 with the aim of beginning a dialogue to develop a consensus on the dangers of artificial intelligence and its regulation. [Reuters]

Chinese officials are invited to attend the summit but will reportedly not be invited to attend a meeting on AI security risks on November 2. [Politico]

In a speech looking to publicly justify the conference on October 26, UK Prime Minister Sunak warned that there is a myriad of risks around the development of AI which necessitate international dialogue to mitigate. The UK is also seeking to boost its standing as a major player in the AI space, which is dominated by the US and China. [CNBC]

The decision to invite China to the summit has come under fire from some within the UK, however. Former UK Prime Minister Liz Truss, in response to the announcement of China's invitation to the summit, called on current Prime Minister Rishi Sunak to rescind China's invitation, citing Beijing's "fundamentally different attitude to the West about AI, seeing it as a means of state control and a tool for national security." [Politico]

Meanwhile, US Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy, Arati Prabhakar, expressed support on October 26 for the UK's decision to invite China to join the summit. US Vice President Kamala Harris will also be attending the summit. [Washington Post] [Yahoo! Finance]

G7 trade ministerial meeting held

(ic) The G7 Trade Ministers' Meeting in Osaka-Sakai was held on October 28 and 29, where agreement was reached on the need to create resilient supply chains in crucial minerals such as rare earths among partner nations. Japanese Economy, Trade and Industry Minister Nishimura Yasutoshi chaired the meeting. [Kyodo News] [Nikkei Asian Review]

Special attention was paid to the issues of market distorting and/or non-market practices, non-transparent industrial subsidies, and all forms of forced technology transfer and the question of effective actions to be taken to realize level playing field, an apparent reference to state-owned enterprises (SOEs) in China. [Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan 1]

The anti-China stance is also reflected in the joint statement that condemned "economic coercion" and called for "the immediate repeal of measures that unnecessarily restrict trade, including the newly introduced import restrictions on Japanese food products," in reference to China and Russia restricting imports of Japanese seafood products. [Kyodo News] [Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan 2]

On the sidelines of meeting, the EU-Japan High-Level Economic Dialogue (HLED), co-chaired by European Commission Executive Vice-President, Valdis Dombrovskis, Japanese Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry, Yasutoshi Nishimura, and Kamikawa, was held. Both parties reached an agreement on cross-border data flows that will be incorporated into the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA). [European Commission]

The agreement, seeking to find equilibrium between the more liberal regulatory regime in Japan and the more privacy-centric one in Europe, will prohibit restrictions of a protectionist nature, such as rules requiring localization, while allowing authorities to intervene in matters such as cybersecurity or privacy and personal data. [Japan Times]

International Atomic Energy Agency completes safety review

(ic) On October 27, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) wrapped up its safety review of Japan's discharge of treated radioactive water from the Fukushima nuclear plant. This concluded the monitoring mission in conjunction with the

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and third-party experts from China, South Korea and Canada. [Kyodo News 1] [See AiR No. 42, October/2023, 3]

Chair of the IAEA Task Force Gustavo Caruso stated that "[n]o issues were identified during our visit to the facilities this week and we will continue our review to assess whether the IAEA's findings from our comprehensive report remain valid." [International Atomic Energy Agency] [Kyodo News 2]

In the meantime, Japanese government sources stated on the same day that its embassy in China had received about 1 million harassing calls regarding the Fukushima water release so far, an indicator of the deep anti-Japanese sentiment being activated in response to the issue. [Kyodo News 3]

Meanwhile, five workers had been splashed with liquid containing radioactive materials while cleaning the plant on October 25. According to Tokyo Electric Power Co. on October 26, two workers had been hospitalized for decontamination treatment and medical observation. [Asahi Shinbun]

ASEAN-Japan Tourism Ministers' Special Dialogue

(ic) The ASEAN-Japan Tourism Ministers' Special Dialogue was held on October 28, 2023, in Tokyo to commemorate the 50th year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation. Both parties agreed to promote innovative marketing activities for sustainable tourism, highlighting the unique cultural and natural attractions of ASEAN and Japan. [ASEAN Secretariat] [Vietnam+]

UN expert panel reports illicit acquisition of vessels by North Korea

(dql) According to findings of a United Nations (UN) expert panel, North Korea continues to violate international sanctions as it acquired 14 vessels between January and May 2023, with most of them coming from China.

The panel's latest report on violations of the North Korea sanctions regime, with the latest acquisition North Korea has increased number of ships that it has added to its fleet since 2020 to 52 ships.

The 2017 U.N. Security Council Resolution 2397 2017 prohibits the direct or indirect supply, sale or transfer of vessels to North Korea. [NK News]

South Korea, Japan, US condemn North Korea's arms supply to Russia amid Ukraine conflict

(tms) South Korea, Japan, and the United States strongly denounced North Korea's provision of arms and military equipment to Russia for its involvement in the conflict in Ukraine in a joint statement.

Reports suggested the movement of vessels carrying containers, suspected to hold weapons, between North Korea and Russia. Although the contents of these shipments couldn't be confirmed, there were reports of North Korean containers being delivered to a Russian munitions' storage facility near the Ukrainian border.

The statement confirmed several such weapons deliveries, expressing concern about the increased human toll in Russia's war of aggression. North Korea sought military assistance from Russia in exchange for supporting Moscow with arms.

The three nations emphasized that any arms transactions with North Korea violated multiple UN Security Council resolutions, including those that Russia had supported. North Korea and Russia have previously pledged closer military cooperation during high-level meetings [see AiR No. 37, September/2023, 2]. [Reuters] [The Guardian]

South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol boosts economic and defense collaboration during Middle East visits

(tms) South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol recently concluded his state visits to Saudi Arabia and Qatar, where he focused on strengthening economic and defense ties and opening new avenues for South Korean businesses.

During his visit to Riyadh, Yoon held a summit with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, leading to the signing of a USD 15.6 billion worth of agreements and memorandums of understanding (MOUs).

These deals encompassed various sectors, including crude oil, hydrogen energy, statistics, food, and medical products. A highlight was the collaboration between Korea National Oil Corp and Saudi Aramco to create a joint crude oil reserve of 5.3 million barrels in Ulsan, South Korea. [Yonhap 1]

Yoon also held meetings with Saudi Defense Minister Khalid bin Salman Al Saud and Minister of National Guard Abdullah bin Bandar bin Abdulaziz Al Saud. They deliberated on enhancing defense cooperation and the defense industry, underlining the significance of recent high-level visits to further strengthen bilateral ties. [Yonhap 2] [Yonhap 3]

In Qatar, Yoon elevated bilateral relations to a "comprehensive strategic partnership" with Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani.

This visit resulted in the signing of a historic USD 3.9 billion contract between South Korea's Hyundai Heavy Industries and QatarEnergy for the construction of 17 liquefied natural gas (LNG) carriers.

This contract represents the largest-ever for South Korea's shipbuilding industry and substantially increased South Korean companies' share of the global LNG carrier market. [Yonhap 4]

11 MoUs were inked across diverse sectors, including smart farming, solar energy, driverless cars, cultural content, medical services, and finance, further solidifying South Korea's presence in the Qatari market.

These agreements reflect a pivotal step in expanding economic opportunities and forging lasting partnerships between South Korea and its Middle Eastern counterparts. [Yonhap 5]

South Korean foreign minister holds talks with Israel, UAE, Jordan on escalating Israel-Hamas conflict

(tms) South Korean Foreign Minister Park Jin engaged in phone conversations with his counterparts from Israel, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Jordan to address the growing conflict between Israel and the Hamas militant group.

Park expressed deep concern over the expanding ground offensive in the Gaza Strip and the rising death toll, which has now exceeded 9,400.

During discussions with Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen, Park condemned Hamas' indiscriminate attacks and called for the swift release of hostages held by the group and emphasized the importance of adhering to international law safeguarding civilians and the need to prevent further harm to civilians.

In talks with the UAE and Jordan, Park emphasized the urgency of a "humanitarian pause" in the conflict and acknowledged the UAE's leadership in requesting a UN Security Council meeting. He also requested these countries to ensure the safety of South Korean nationals in the region. [Ministry of Foreign Affairs, South Korea] [Yonhap]

Park had previously spoken with his Saudi Arabian and Qatari counterparts, sharing concerns over the Middle East situation and agreeing to collaborate to prevent further escalation (see entry above).

South Korea, UNESCAP discuss climate and sustainable development cooperation

(tms) South Korea's Second Vice Foreign Minister, Oh Young-ju, held talks with Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Secretary-General of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP).

Their meeting focused on potential collaboration in addressing climate change, promoting sustainable growth, and other regional challenges.

Oh emphasized South Korea's dedication to partnering with UNESCAP to tackle significant issues in the Asia-Pacific region, including climate change mitigation and the development of sustainable cities. She also briefed Alisjahbana on South Korea's advocacy for the "Carbon Free Alliance," a global initiative introduced by President Yoon Suk Yeol at the UN General Assembly.

The initiative advocates for the adoption of nuclear power and green hydrogen as future energy sources to achieve carbon emission reduction goals. [Ministry of Foreign Affairs, South Korea] [Yonhap]

South Korea, US initiate joint research in Vietnam for rare earth extraction

(tms) South Korea and the United States have commenced a collaborative research initiative in Vietnam aimed at extracting rare earth elements and enhancing the critical mineral supply chain.

In the frame of the initiative, researchers and geological experts from both nations will work in Hanoi for three months, focusing on extracting rare earths and other vital elements from coal ash.

This endeavor is part of the US Embassy Science Fellow (ESF) project, marking the first time the US has sent scientists to a third country in cooperation with an international partner.

The project emphasizes eco-friendly extraction technologies and aims to strengthen global collaboration in processing critical minerals, thereby reducing reliance on China for raw materials.

The effort complements existing multilateral mechanisms, including the US-led Minerals Security Partnership (MSP). [Yonhap]

South Korea reaffirms opposition to forced repatriation of North Korean defectors in China

(tms) South Korea's Vice Defense Minister, Kim Seon-ho, reiterated Seoul's strong stance against the forced repatriation of North Korean defectors in China.

The statement was made during discussions with Lt. Gen. Jing Jianfeng, Deputy Chief of Staff of China's Joint Staff Department, on the sidelines of the Xiangshan Forum, an international security dialogue held in Beijing.

China, as North Korea's key ally, does not recognize these defectors as refugees and often sends them back to a place where they may face severe repercussions.

Kim also urged China, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, to play a constructive role in resolving North Korea's nuclear weapons program.

Both sides agreed to resume personnel exchanges and cooperation, which had been disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and to enhance communication to foster mutual trust. [Yonhap]

South Korea hosts ASEAN delegation for seminar on combating North Korea's cyber threats

(tms) South Korea's foreign ministry has hosted a seminar for a delegation from five Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries. The seminar aimed at enhancing their capabilities in dealing with North Korea's evolving illegal cyber activities.

Representatives from Laos, Vietnam, Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines were visiting Seoul for the three-day program last week co-hosted by the Korea Information Security Industry Association and the Korea International Cooperation Agency.

This initiative was launched in response to a cyberattack last year, where North Korea stole approximately USD 620 million worth of cryptocurrency by hacking into Axie Infinity, an online video game developed by the Vietnamese company Sky Mavis. [Yonhap]

South Korean President Yoon, Japanese Prime Minister Kishida honored with JFK Foundation's courage award for improving bilateral relations

(tms) The John F. Kennedy Library Foundation bestowed its International Profile in Courage Award upon South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida for their dedicated efforts to mend historical tensions between their nations.

During a ceremony in Boston, US Ambassador to Australia, Caroline Kennedy, praised the leaders for transcending painful historical issues to foster trust and closeness. Both leaders, who faced domestic opposition and upcoming elections, were lauded for their courage in building a more amicable relationship.

In response, President Yoon emphasized the responsibility shared by South Korea, the US, and Japan in promoting global freedom and prosperity through solidarity.

Prime Minister Kishida pledged to collaborate with President Yoon and US President Joe Biden to work towards peace. [Yonhap]

South Korea, US, Japan explore humanitarian aid cooperation in trilateral talks

(tms) South Korea, the United States, and Japan conducted their first trilateral working-level talks in Honolulu, Hawaii, focusing on strengthening collaboration in humanitarian aid policies.

The two-day policy dialogue, led by officials including Won Do-yeon from South Korea, Michele Sumilas from the US Agency for International Development (USAID), and Endo Kazuya from Japan's foreign ministry, was initiated as part of the follow-up to the Camp David summit among the three countries' leaders.

The discussions delved into enhancing coordination in development policy, potentially expanding aid cooperation into areas like cybersecurity and artificial intelligence and addressing global challenges like the conflict in Ukraine and climate change.

They plan to hold these dialogues every two years, with South Korea hosting the next meeting in 2025. [Yonhap]

South Korean prime minister tours Africa, Europe to secure support for 2030 World Expo bid

(tms) South Korean Prime Minister Han Duck-soo embarked on a diplomatic tour of Africa and Europe, visiting Malawi as part of his mission to garner support for South Korea's bid to host the 2030 World Expo and strengthen bilateral relationships.

Han's visit to Lilongwe marked the first high-level official visit to Malawi since the establishment of diplomatic ties in 1965.

During his meeting with Malawian President Lazarus McCarthy Chakwera, they discussed mutual interests in agriculture, education, and healthcare, and Han sought Malawi's endorsement for Busan, South Korea, as the host city for the 2030 World Expo.

Han will also visit Togo, Cameroon, Norway, and Finland during his week-long diplomatic tour, focusing on reinforcing value-based diplomacy with Europe and exploring collaboration on issues such as economic security, climate change, and supply chains. [Yonhap 1] [Yonhap 2]

UNESCO's first international centre for documentary heritage opens in South

Korea

(tms) UNESCO's inaugural international institution dedicated to documentary heritage, the International Centre for Documentary Heritage (ICDH), is set to open in Cheongju, South Korea.

The ICDH, covering a space of 4,307 square meters over five floors, represents a significant investment of USD 16 million. Its primary mission is to support UNESCO's Memory of the World Program, which seeks to preserve global documentary heritage and enhance its global recognition.

The center will play a vital role in monitoring and managing records and collections registered in the Memory of the World Program, focusing on preserving endangered materials and latent heritage in African regions.

The ICDH will also contribute to the study of the world's oldest extant book printed with movable metal type, "Jikji," and the Gutenberg Bible.

Various events, including international conferences and exhibitions, are planned at the center until June next year. [Yonhap]

South Korea, EU to begin digital trade agreement negotiations

(tms) South Korea's Ministry of Trade has announced its intention to initiate negotiations with the European Union (EU) for a digital trade agreement, marking a further step in the country's pursuit of wider collaborations in the online commerce and data sectors.

The agreement aims to provide a legal framework that ensures businesses and consumers engaged in digital trade have legal certainty, enhanced protection in digital transactions, and a fair online environment.

The move builds upon the strong economic ties established between South Korea and the EU, rooted in the Korea-EU Free Trade Agreement since 2011.

South Korea has previously secured digital trade agreements with Singapore, Chile, and New Zealand. [Yonhap]

Bangladesh to import 1.5 million tons of crude oil from Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates in 2024

(ps) Bangladesh has approved the import of 1.5 million tons of crude oil for the year 2024 from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). This decision was made during a virtual meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), chaired by Finance Minister AHM Mostafa Kamal. Bangladesh's need for crude oil for 2024 might be fully covered by the deal. [Dhaka Tribune]

The crude oil will be imported through a direct purchase method (DPM), meaning there was no competitive bidding process to select the suppliers, and it will be provided by Saudi Aramco and UAE-based Adnoc. The cost of the petroleum was not mentioned in the proposal at this stage.

India unlikely to join global cooling pledge at COP28, government officials say

(lm) India is unlikely to sign a global pledge aimed at reducing cooling-related emissions at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP28), which will be held in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) later this month. This decision is based on New Delhi's concern for maintaining affordable cooling, according to two government officials who spoke with *Reuters*.

The pledge, developed by the United Nations Environment Programme's Cool Coalition and the UAE calls for a reduction of cooling-related carbon dioxide emissions by at least 68 percent by 2050 compared to 2022 levels. Achieving this target would require substantial investments by countries to transition to sustainable cooling technologies, potentially increasing the cost of cooling products.

Countries are expected to announce their decision regarding the cooling pledge at the annual climate conference in Dubai from November 30 to December 12. Both India and China, as major economies and carbon emitters with a combined population of over 2.8 billion, play a crucial role in the success of this pledge.

Against this backdrop, experts have emphasized India's importance in this pledge, citing the country's efforts in developing the India Cooling Action Plan announced in 2019. This plan aims to reduce power

demand for cooling across sectors by 20 percent to 25 percent by 2038.

However, the Indian government has stated that it is not willing to commit to targets beyond those agreed upon in 1992 under the multilateral Montreal Protocol, which regulates the production and consumption of ozone-depleting chemicals and hydrofluorocarbons used in cooling appliances. The country faces a growing demand for cooling, particularly in household air conditioning, which is expected to increase nine-fold by 2050. Despite this, India's per capita carbon emissions are relatively low, and it seeks to balance its cooling needs with affordability.

More attention at COP28 urged for 'vulnerable' mountain range spanning China, India, Nepal

(lm) As world leaders prepare to gather for the UN Climate Change Conference (COP28), to be held in Dubai from November 30 to December 12, experts are urging swift action to address the climate crisis in the Hindu Kush Himalaya region. [South China Morning Post]

The region, known as the "pulse of the planet," spans across Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan. The rivers originating from this region support the lives and livelihoods of nearly 2 billion people, making it crucial to address the climate crisis's impact on food security, energy security, and water security.

However, the region is experiencing unprecedented glacier melting and climate-related disasters. Rising temperatures have led to the expansion of glacial lakes and the frequent occurrence of glacial lake outburst floods. These disasters have caused significant casualties and destruction in the region. The melting glaciers also contribute to rising sea levels, potentially displacing populations and increasing global pressures.

To address these challenges, experts are calling for increased investment, technology transfer, and international support for the region. They also highlight the the need for accessible funding mechanisms to help countries overcome climate-related shocks. While COP27 announced a loss and damage fund to assist vulnerable countries, consensus on the funding mechanisms remains elusive.

UN General-Secretary Guterres arrives on four-day visit to Nepal

(lm) United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on October 29 arrived in Kathmandu, Nepal, for a four-day official visit at the invitation of Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal.

During his visit, Guterres will engage in various meetings and discussions with Nepali officials, including the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Ministers, and former prime ministers. The topics of discussion are expected to include Nepal's peace process, its role in UN peacekeeping operations, the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, and climate change.

Additionally, he plans to visit the Everest region and Annapurna Base Camp to observe the impacts of climate change on local residents. Guterres will also visit Lumbini and address the joint sitting of the Parliament before departing on November 1. [The Kathmandu Post] [The Himalayan Times]

Chinese research ship arrives in Sri Lanka, a year after similar port call raised concerns with India

(lm) A Chinese research ship, Shi Yan 6, on October 25 arrived in Sri Lanka, a year after a similar port call by a spacecraft-tracking vessel had raised security concerns from neighboring India. The vessel was seen entering the port of Colombo, where a Chinese state-owned company operates a deep-sea container terminal. Sri Lanka had authorized the vessel to dock in the city for replenishment purposes. [South China Morning Post]

The Chinese state broadcaster refers to the Shi Yan 6 as a "scientific research vessel" with a crew of 60 conducting oceanography, geology, and marine ecology tests. As per the official readout, Shi Yan 6 will conduct a maritime survey in Sri Lanka's Exclusive Economic Zone, collaborating with Sri Lanka's National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency.

In the past, India had expressed concerns over similar port calls by Chinese research vessels, citing security worries [see AiR No. 33, August/2022, 3]. New Delhi believes that Shi Yan 6 will also be conducting seabed surveys in addition to the maritime survey, with implications for future Chinese Navy operations in the Indian Ocean. [Swarajya]

Sri Lanka to offer visitors from various countries free tourist visas to boost crisis-hit economy

(lm) Sri Lanka's cabinet has approved the issuance of free tourist visas to visitors from seven countries in an effort to boost tourism and revive its economy, which has been hit hard by crises. Tourists from China, India, Russia, Japan, Thailand, Indonesia, and Malaysia will be granted free visas until March 31 next year as part of a pilot program. This initiative is aimed at supporting Sri Lanka's goal of attracting five million tourists by 2026. [South China Morning Post]

Sri Lanka's tourism industry suffered from the COVID-19 pandemic and a severe financial crisis in the previous year, leading to protests and shortages of essential goods. However, in 2023, the tourism sector has been showing signs of recovery, with the country welcoming a million tourists by September, the first time since 2019. India is the largest source of tourists, followed by Russia.

In the first eight months of 2023, Sri Lanka earned USD 1.3 billion from tourism, up from USD 833 million during the same period the previous year, according to the central bank. The country's inflation rate has also eased, with food prices falling and prices for non-food items rising. This improvement is attributed to factors such as a stronger currency and improved harvests, following a period of high inflation due to a severe financial crisis.

Malaysia clear on stance in WHO pandemic treaty, IHR negotiations

(mw) Malaysia is clear in its stand on the Pandemic Treaty of the World Health Organization Convention Agreement (WHO CA+) and the amendment of the International Health Regulations (IHR 2005), with the priority being the protection of public health and the nation's sovereignty, according to Health director-general Datuk Dr Muhammad Radzi Abu Hassan.

The negotiation process for these agreements includes various fields, including trade, environment, geopolitics, and socio-economic, and Malaysia has engaged with relevant ministries and agencies to ensure its sovereignty and laws are preserved while prioritizing the interests of its citizens.

The final decision will be made when consensus is reached among WHO member countries participating

in the negotiations. [New Straits Times]

Malaysia working with partners to drag Israel to International Court of Justice

(mw) Malaysia is working with its partners to bring Israel to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), according to Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Dr Zambry Abdul Kadir.

The Palestinian situation is already under investigation by the International Criminal Court (ICC), with an investigation into the Palestinian situation in March 2021 against alleged crimes committed by Israel since June 13, 2014.

Malaysia will cooperate with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and like-minded countries to refer the issue of Israeli atrocities to the ICC and ICJ.

Malaysia has no diplomatic relations with Israel and has been a vocal supporter of the Palestinian cause since 1957. [Wion News]

FATF urges Philippines to address pending deficiencies to exit ‘gray list’; Indonesia joins as new member

(lb/lm) The Financial Action Task Force (FATF), a global anti-money laundering watchdog, concluded its fourth Plenary under the the Presidency of T. Raja Kumar of Singapore on October 27. In its post-plenary report, 23 countries remain under heightened monitoring, with the Philippines and Vietnam being the only ASEAN nations on the "Jurisdictions under Increased Monitoring" or “gray” list - a register which includes countries deemed to be doing too little to combat money laundering.

The Philippines

During the three-day event, FATF strongly urged the Philippines to implement its action plan to address strategic deficiencies before the January 2024 deadline to be removed from the "gray list." The Philippines was granted a one-year extension to address five out of 18 action plan items that still require attention before the January 2024 deadline.

Indonesia

Indonesia also became the 40th member of FATF, having undergone a mutual evaluation and worked to address key technical and effectiveness issues identified during the evaluation. The Plenary approved Indonesia's membership due to its strong political commitment to completing the remaining items on its action plan and ongoing progress in improving its national program. [PhilStar] [Manila Bulletin]

UN commends the Philippines for its progression towards meeting Sustainable Development Goals

(lb) United Nations officials have commended the Philippines for its efforts in progressing towards the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), focusing on poverty alleviation, environmental protection, and peace and prosperity.

UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator Gustavo González praised the Department of the Interior and Local Government's leadership for highlighting the importance of the SDGs at the Philippine Mayors Forum, emphasizing the direct relevance of these goals to cities and municipalities. The SDGs, launched in 2015, represent a global plan to eliminate extreme poverty, reduce inequality, and safeguard the environment by 2030. González also emphasized the vital role of local government units in achieving the SDGs, as they are often the first responders in challenging situations.

South China Sea: Biden says US will defend the Philippines if China attacks

(lb) US President Joe Biden has issued a strong warning to China, declaring that the United States will defend the Philippines in the event of any attack in the disputed South China Sea, emphasizing the "ironclad" commitment under the Mutual Defense Treaty. This statement follows recent collisions between Filipino and Chinese vessels in the contested waters, with both sides accusing each other of dangerous maneuvers. The Philippines, under President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., has become more assertive in challenging China's actions in the South China Sea, marking a shift from the pro-China stance of the previous administration led by Rodrigo Duterte, who had been criticized for not countering Beijing's aggression in the region. [BBC]

China has asserted that the United States lacks the right to intervene in disputes between China and the Philippines, particularly in the South China Sea, where tensions have been escalating. This statement comes in response to recent confrontations in the disputed waters, including a collision between a Chinese vessel and a Philippine boat near the Second Thomas Shoal.

The Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson emphasized that any commitment by the U.S. to defend the Philippines should not impinge on China's sovereignty and maritime interests or support the Philippines' claims. This exchange follows U.S. President Joe Biden's declaration of unwavering support for the Philippines' defense and accusations of China acting "dangerously and unlawfully" in the South China Sea. The U.S. and the Philippines have recently updated guidelines for their Mutual Defense Treaty, specifying mutual defense commitments in the South China Sea. [Reuters]

Bangladesh Prime Minister on crucial official visit to Europe

(ps) Bangladesh's Prime Minister concluded a crucial three-day visit to Europe, which included participation in the Global Gateway Forum, the signing of EUR 400 million in investment and bilateral meetings with high-ranking European Union (EU) officials and the prime ministers of Belgium and Luxembourg. [Dhaka Tribune]

While in Brussel Hasina held a bilateral meeting with European Commission President von der Leyen before overseeing the signing a landmark contract with the European Investment Bank (EIB) for a EUR 350 million loan to finance the development of renewable energy in Bangladesh, complemented by a EUR 45 million grant. The package, which marks the EU's biggest wager yet on the South Asian economy, is one of several investments Brussel has earmarked as part of the Global Gateway initiative — its landmark foreign investment program unveiled as an alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative back in 2021.

Von der Leyen further highlighted the almost EUR 1 billion that Global Gateway would invest in infrastructure in Bangladesh. The pair also launched negotiations on a new partnership and cooperation agreement between Bangladesh and the EU.

Prime Minister Hasina also sought support from the EIB for vaccine production in Bangladesh and discussed potential infrastructure development for

vaccine production and testing facilities. EIB President Dr. Werner Hoyer expressed support for strengthening the health system and vaccine production in Bangladesh.

The Rohingya crisis was another key topic of discussion, with additional EU assistance of EUR 10.5 million announced for the Rohingyas, temporarily sheltered in Bangladesh. The prime minister sought international support for the safe and sustainable repatriation of Rohingyas to Myanmar and held talks with European Parliament Vice-President Nicola Beer and European Commissioner for International Partnerships Jutta Urpilainen.

Notably, however, Hasina emphasized that her country is neutral in the competition for influence between Europe and China. Speaking with POLITICO, she stated that Bangladesh's foreign policy is focused on friendship with all nations and seeks investment for its own development. She highlighted the need for investment from various countries and mentioned that each investment is carefully assessed for suitability for the country. [POLITICO]

Bangladesh advises United States to provide financial support to counter Chinese influence

(ps/lm) Bangladesh's Foreign Minister, AK Abdul Momen, has advised the United States to provide financial support rather than just advice if they want to compete with China's influence in Bangladesh. He emphasized the importance of money for the South Asian nation’s development and suggested that Washington follow Beijing’s example by offering substantial funds and workable proposals. [Dhaka Tribune]

The Bangladeshi top diplomat made these remarks in the context of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to Brussels for the Global Gateway Summit, which is seen as a Western counterpart to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). During the visit, democracy and human rights issues took a backseat as the EU expressed interest in investing in Bangladesh's infrastructure development. [see entry in this edition]

Bangladesh, United States envoys for climate meet

(ps) Bangladesh and the United States have expressed their mutual interest in strengthening their bilateral relations to address the pressing challenges posed by climate change. This commitment was reaffirmed during a meeting between Saber Hossain Chowdhury, the Special Envoy to the Prime Minister of Bangladesh for Climate Change, and John Kerry, the US Special Presidential Envoy for Climate, in Washington. [Dhaka Tribune]

During their discussions, the envoys explored various aspects of climate change, including mitigation and adaptation efforts, funding for climate initiatives, technology transfer, and addressing issues related to loss and damage. They also discussed the importance of collaborative efforts both bilaterally and on global climate platforms, such as the upcoming COP28 summit.

Earlier in the day, Saber Hossain Chowdhury chaired a global inquiry on public financing and progress toward the phase-out of fossil fuels at the Senate Hart Building in Washington. The inquiry involved parliamentarians from Uruguay, Bolivia, Colombia, Zambia, and Uganda, as well as US Senator Ed Markey and Canadian Senator Roza Galvez.

United States condemns violence at protests in Bangladesh, threatens visa sanctions

(ps) The United States has strongly condemned the violence that occurred in Bangladesh's capital, Dhaka, on October 28, involving clashes between police and the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party. Washington expressed its concern over the reported deaths of a police officer and a political activist, as well as the burning of a hospital, emphasizing that such violence against civilians, including journalists, is unacceptable. Additionally, the US called for calm and restraint from all parties involved and stated that they would review all violent incidents for potential visa restrictions. [Dhaka Tribune]

Russian naval visit to Cambodia set for November

(pm) During a meeting between Prime Minister Hun Manet and Russian ambassador to Cambodia Anatoly Borovik on October 26, both sides confirmed that

Russian naval vessels will dock at the Preah Sihanouk Port this November.

They also agreed on a visit of the president of the Cambodian Senate to Russia next year. [Phnom Penh Post]

Cambodia-India: Enhancing naval defense cooperation

(pm) During a meeting between Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence Tea Seiha and Indian ambassador Devyani Khobragade on October 25, Cambodia and India agreed to further enhance naval cooperation, based on a memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed in February. [The Phnom Penh Post]

Cambodia-Vietnam: Strengthening efforts for repatriation of remains of war deads

(pm) At the 22nd meeting of the Specialised Committees of both governments Cambodia and Vietnam, held on October 24 Ho Chi Minh City, Cambodia and Vietnam reached agreement on enhancing their collaborative efforts in the search and repatriation of the remains of Vietnamese volunteer soldiers and experts who perished in Cambodia during wartime.

The meeting was co-chaired by Pol Saroeun, Senior Minister in charge of Special Missions, and Vo Minh Luong, Vietnam's Deputy Defence Minister. [Phnom Penh Post]

China-US: Meeting between Joe Biden and Wang Yi

(ic) President Joe Biden met Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi at the White House on October 27 to pave the way for a meeting in San Francisco with Chinese President Xi Jinping, over the occasion of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan were also present. [Channel News Asia] Wang Yi stated further on October 29 that the "road to the San Francisco summit will not be a smooth one". [Reuters]

Clarifying the details of the meeting, Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Wang Wenbin stated on October 30 that for a successful meeting between Biden and Xi, the US must follow the so-called Five Musts: the US must follow the common understandings reached by the two heads of state, must stabilize bilateral relations, must keep communication channels open, must properly manage differences, disputes and frictions, and must promote mutually beneficial cooperation. [Ministry of Foreign Affairs, China]

Also discussed at the Biden-Wang Yi meeting was concerns over a wider conflagration in the Middle East resulting from the Israel-Hamas war. Biden called on Wang Yi to use China's influence over Iran to cool tensions and advocate against a direct Iranian military action to support Hamas in Gaza or Hezbollah in Lebanon. China has previously stated that Israel's military response to the October 7 attacks went "beyond the scope of self-defense". [Financial Times]

China, US aircraft nearly collide over South China Sea

(ga) On October 26, the US Indo-Pacific Command (US INDOPACOM), the military command center responsible for US military operations in Asia, stated that a Chinese J-11 pilot "executed an unsafe intercept of a U.S. Air Force B-52 aircraft," putting the Chinese aircraft "within 10 feet of the B-52," that was flying over the South China Sea

The Chinese aircraft involved in the incident was reportedly a Shenyang J-11 twin-engine fighter plane.

US INDOPACOM affirmed that the US military would continue to operate in the South and East China Seas despite pressure from China not to and urged China to operate both lawfully and safely within the airspace to prevent incidents such as collisions. [US Indo-Pacific Command] [AP]

The Chinese foreign ministry responded to the statement above accusing the US of being "the source of maritime and air security risks and dangers to regional peace and stability," as the US military aircraft "traveled halfway around the world to China's doorsteps [sic] to show off military muscle." [Ministry of Foreign Affairs, China]

Incidents like this have become increasingly common over the last few years, as China has become more assertive in the South China Sea, where it has

territorial claims which overlap with those of other countries in the region.

China's claims in the South China Sea were rejected by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea in 2016 as the result of litigation, but China has continued to expand its military presence in the region and has clashed with its neighbors, including the Philippines, which is a US military ally.

California Governor Newsom visits China, talks with Xi on climate

(ga) Last week, California Governor Gavin Newsom made a trip to China, where he visited Hong Kong, Shenzhen, Beijing, Shanghai, Guangdong, and Jiangsu, meeting with a number of Chinese leaders including Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Newsom's visit to China was primarily focused on cooperation between California and China on climate change-related issues. During his meetings, Newsom emphasized the importance of working at the subnational level to meet climate goals, alongside the importance of China as a partner in reducing emissions, with China being the world's largest emitter. He also discussed economic exchanges, particularly tourism, and cultural exchanges to strengthen ties between China and the US. [California Governor's Office] [AP] [CNN]

On October 25, Newsom met with Chinese President Xi Jinping, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, and Chinese Vice President Han Zheng. [AP] [Ministry of Foreign Affairs, China]

With California and China aiming for carbon neutrality by 2045 and 2060 respectively, Newsom and Xi reportedly discussed climate change cooperation as well as curbing the fentanyl crisis which has plagued the US over the last few years, fueled by precursor chemicals made in China [Council on Foreign Relations]. [AP] [Reuters] [California Governor's Office]

San Francisco, California is hosting the Asia-Pacific Economic Forum in November, which Xi Jinping is expected to attend. Newsom's meeting with Xi is viewed by many as a precursor to Xi's visit.

Reaffirming his commitment to cooperation on addressing climate change between the US and China, Xi said during their meeting that he hoped that Newsom's visit to China would help to stabilize the US-

China relationship, which further suggests a US visit by Xi next month. [California Governor's Office] [CNN]

Xi stressed the importance of the China-US bilateral relationship during their meeting, emphasizing a desire to continue developing cultural and other exchanges between China and the US as well as sub-national cooperation such as Newsom's trip demonstrates in order to solve mutual problems facing the two countries. [Chinese Foreign Ministry]

During his meeting with Foreign Minister Wang, Newsom reportedly discussed human rights in Hong Kong, Tibet, and Xinjiang, and the issue of Taiwan. This conversation was not mentioned in any Chinese readouts of the meeting. [AP] [California Governor's Office]

Newsom discussed David Lin, a Christian pastor from California who has been held in China since 2006, when he met with Vice President Han. [California Governor's Office] [Politico]

Newsom said in his remarks after his meetings: "Divorce is not an option. The only way we can solve the climate crisis is to continue our long-standing cooperation with China. As two of the world's largest economies, the work we do together is felt in countless communities on both sides of the Pacific". [California Governor's Office]

Newsom's visit has been criticized in the US by both Democrats and Republicans, with both sides suggesting that his trip should only proceed if Newsom was willing to discuss human rights violations, issues with Chinese precursor chemicals being used in the fentanyl crisis in the US, and the removal of legal protections for those in Hong Kong. [NBC]

A number of California governors over the years have made climate-related trips to China, including Arnold Schwarzenegger and Jerry Brown. [California Governor's Office] [NBC] [Politico]

US enforces new restrictions on AI chip exports

(ga) Computer chip designing company Nvidia announced on October 25 that the US instructed it to immediately cease exports of high-end artificial intelligence (AI) chips to China.

The restrictions on sending advanced AI chips to China, Russia, and Iran were not a surprise, having been

announced on October 17, but were originally planned for implementation on November 16, with regulators moving the deadline forward. [The Guardian]

Other semiconductor and chip-making companies such as Advanced Micro Devices and Intel are expected to see similar export limitations from the new restrictions.

The US has been cracking down on the export of AI chips to China recently, claiming that the chips are being used by the Chinese military to advance their capabilities. [BBC]

The South China Morning Post reported that in the wake of Nvidia's announcement Chinese companies are hurriedly gathering as many Nvidia chips as possible from third-party suppliers before the market dries up. [SCMP]

Reuters, meanwhile, reported that China is pouring more money into its domestic chip-production capabilities in response to the waves of restrictions which are being imposed by the US. It cited Chinese government data in asserting that China spent USD 191 billion in 2022 to overhaul its dependence on foreign hardware and software, with fears of foreign hacking being particularly prevalent. [Reuters]

Colombia's new strategic partnership with China is concerning to the US, which has traditionally had an interest in keeping foreign powers from becoming significantly involved in the Western hemisphere. The new strategic partnership marks the 10th out of 11 South American countries to have upgraded their relations with China from normal bilateral relations to 'strategic partnerships'.

This increasing relationship strength with Latin American countries is geopolitically significant for China both in its rivalry with the US and its push to remove international recognition for Taiwan, which still has official bilateral relationships with Paraguay, and until recently, several countries in the region.

China has been importing more from Colombia over the last few years, with imports totaling about USD 7 billion. Colombia has previously awarded several large infrastructure projects such as subway systems and rail lines to Chinese firms, a trend which is expected to continue. [Reuters]

US rolls back COVID-era flight restrictions on China

(ic) American officials stated on October 28 that the frequency of flights between the US and China will increase to 70 a week starting November 9. The US Department of Transportation said in a filing on October 27 that it was seeking an "ongoing and productive dialogue" with its counterparts at the Civil Aviation Administration of China "to facilitate a gradual, broader reopening of the U.S.-China air services market." [Bloomberg] [Regulations.gov]

This filing came hours after the Biden-Wang Yi meeting (see article above).

China honors US veterans who fought the Japanese in China

(ga) On October 30, China honored two American World War II veterans who were part of a US effort known as the Flying Tigers which supported the Chinese against Japan. The Flying Tigers both fought Japanese forces in the air and delivered supplies from then-British India to China across the Himalayan mountains to support the Chinese war effort. [AP] [SCMP]

The veterans took part in a ceremony at the US Embassy in Beijing, where they met with Chinese Vice President Han Zheng. The veterans also met Vice Chairman of the National People's Congress Standing Committee at the Chinese People's Anti-Japanese War Memorial Hall. [AP] [People's Daily] [SCMP]

The ceremony has been interpreted by some as an attempt to repair the damaged China-US bilateral relationship. [AP]

Australia 'not opposed' to China joining CPTPP

(ga) On October 26, the South China Morning Post exclusively reported that Australia "will not oppose China joining the CPTPP" (Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership), nor would it push for Taiwan to become a member.

The CPTPP is comprised of Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, and Vietnam.

The comments come ahead of a visit to China by Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese from November 4-7. Albanese has been working to improve

China-Australia ties which languished under his predecessor.

New agreements on trade have been reached between Australia and China, an Australian journalist was returned home from her prison sentence in China, and both countries have made other overtures towards a stronger relationship. [SCMP]

Australia returns smuggled historical artifacts to China

(ga) On October 26, Australia returned to China three historical artifacts which had been smuggled out of China, including a 100-million-year-old dinosaur fossil and two Tang Dynasty figurines. The artifacts were recovered by Australian border police. [BBC]

The artifacts were returned via a handover ceremony at the Chinese embassy to Australia. [Sky News Australia]

This handover takes place shortly before Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese is set to visit China, from November 4-7, meeting Chinese President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang. [BBC] [Sky News Australia]

Chinese government accused of trying to acquire land and companies to spy on Canada

(ic) Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) director David Vigneault stated in an interview on CBS 60 minutes, alongside other intelligence chiefs over the Five Eyes Summit, that Canada has blocked attempts by the Chinese government to acquire properties near sensitive and strategic locations over espionage concerns.

CSIS spokesperson Eric Balsam declined to provide specific examples of blocked Chinese acquisitions in Canada but noted that two new national security laws in China compel companies and citizens to cooperate with Chinese intelligence agencies. Defense Minister Bill Blair also responded indirectly, saying that he was "familiar with the work that Canada has done to protect our national interests, the protection of critical infrastructure." [CTV News]

China has been accused of setting up foreign “police stations” in the US and Canada that have been cracked down upon by both countries’ police forces. [Anadolu Agency] [CBC]

The Five Eyes intelligence sharing network met on October 17 to launch the inaugural Emerging Technology and Securing Innovation Security Summit. [See AiR No. 43, October/2023, 4]

French diplomatic representative visits Beijing

(ga) Emmanuel Bonne, the diplomatic counselor to French President Emmanuel Macron, visited China from October 29-30 to co-chair the 24th China-France Strategic Dialogue. [Chinese Embassy in the Netherlands] [Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs]

In Beijing, Bonne met with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and discussed bilateral relations between China and France, relations between China and the European Union (EU), and international issues.

Wang Yi emphasized continuing dialogue and cooperation between China and France as well as China and the EU to meet international challenges. Wang also noted that 2024 will mark the 60th anniversary of China-France relations and said that China is ready to work with France to improve political and economic ties.

Wang said that “China and the EU are partners, not rivals,” and put forth the Chinese view of the EU as an important component of a multipolar world. During their meeting, Wang also reportedly said that China is hoping for more “pragmatic” and “rational” cooperation from the EU, urging Europe to “avoid external interference, ensure mutual openness and promote the stable development of relations between China and Europe”. [Chinese Embassy in the Netherlands] [Reuters] [SCMP]

The two sides also discussed the war in Ukraine, the conflict between Israel and Palestine, climate change, and artificial intelligence, although no further details were provided on those discussions.

A number of French diplomats have visited China this year, following President Macron’s visit in April. China is France’s seventh-largest trading partner, with trade reaching about USD 41 billion in the first half of 2023. [SCMP]

Colombian president Petro visits China, meets Xi Jinping

(ga) On October 25 Colombian President Gustavo Francisco Petro Urrego met with Chinese President Xi Jinping as part of a state visit to China, where they announced that their relationship was being elevated to a strategic partnership.

Xi highlighted the strengths of the relationship between the two countries and expressed confidence that the two countries could work together for their mutual benefit, inviting Colombia to join the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Petro suggested that Colombia would be willing to join the BRI, would work with China on geopolitical issues such as the Israel-Palestine conflict, and further develop technical cooperation on infrastructure. [Chinese People's Daily]

While in Beijing, Colombia and China signed several trade deals, particularly focused on increasing exports of agricultural products from Colombia to China.

Petro also met with Chairman of the National People's Congress Standing Committee Zhao Leji on October 25. [Xinhua]

China, Pakistan collaborate in agricultural research

(xc) China and Pakistan have jointly established the China-Pakistan Joint Wheat Molecular Breeding International Lab at Quaid-i-Azam University in Islamabad. The lab, funded by the Chinese Ministry of Science and Technology, aims to enhance food security, human resource development, and training of Pakistani students and scientists in wheat breeding. The lab has already produced promising results, with wheat varieties that yield 8-10 percent more than local varieties. The products from this project are expected to be available to farmers in the next two to three years. [Xinhua]

India, EU hold maiden maritime exercise in Gulf of Guinea

(hp) On October 24, India and the European Union (EU) conducted their first joint naval exercise in the Gulf of Guinea, following a maritime security dialogue held earlier in October. The exercise involved Indian Naval Ship Sumedha and three naval vessels from EU member states. [EEAS]

They engaged in various tactical maneuvers and training activities off the coast of Ghana, including boarding exercises, flying exercises with helicopters, and personnel transfers between ships. Additionally, a knowledge-sharing session in Accra strengthened cooperation and operational expertise.

India slams Pakistan for raising Kashmir issue amid Israel-Gaza war

(hp) Slamming Pakistan for raising the Kashmir issue at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Open-debate amid the Israel-Gaza conflict, India called it a 'habitual nature' of its neighboring country. India's Deputy Permanent Representative (DPR) to the United Nations condemned Pakistan's attempt to raise India's 'internal matter' and stated that they are unworthy of getting a response. The DPR was representing India on the ongoing crisis in the Middle East, with a prime focus on the Palestine-Israel war. [ANI News] [DNA News]

India 'shocked' at Qatar death penalty for eight citizens accused of spying

(lm) India has reported that eight of its citizens have been sentenced to death by Qatar, with the case reportedly involving high-ranking ex-naval officers accused of spying. New Delhi said it will take up the matter with Qatari authorities and provide consular and legal assistance to the prisoners. [The Straits Times]

According to an official statement released by India on October 26, the Court of First Instance in Qatar has delivered the death penalty verdict for eight Indian employees of Al Dahra company, but further details and the nature of their alleged crimes were not disclosed. Al Dahra is a Gulf-based company specializing in providing support solutions to the aerospace, security, and defense sectors.

India resumes some visa services with Canada, but might drag Ottawa to FATF for perceived inaction over terror funding

(hp/lm) India has resumed issuing certain categories of visas for Canadian citizens, indicating a possible thaw in tensions between the two countries related to the killing of a Sikh separatist leader. [South China Morning Post]

Tensions had escalated between India and Canada after Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau accused New Delhi of involvement in the killing of Sikh separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a Canadian citizen, on Canadian soil. Nijjar was wanted by Indian authorities for alleged terrorism and conspiracy to commit murder. In response, India stopped issuing visas to Canadians and asked Canada to reduce its diplomatic presence in India see AiR No. 43, October/2023, 4]. [Mint]

Last week, India notified that its High Commission and Consulates General in Canada would recommence issuing visas to people of Indian origin and those requiring permits for attending conferences, conducting business, or seeking medical treatment. Canada's immigration minister welcomed the decision and termed it as “good sign”. [Asia News Network]

At the same time however, India is reportedly considering approaching the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), a Paris-based organization that focuses on combatting money laundering and terrorist financing globally, regarding Canada's alleged soft stance towards terror elements operating on its soil. India plans to present evidence to the FATF demonstrating how Canada provides a safe environment for terrorists to operate. [WION]

In fact, recent Indian intelligence reports indicate the presence of a Khalistani terror network operating in Canada. These reports identify several Canadian citizens who are allegedly connected to the banned organizations International Sikh Youth Federation (ISYF) and the Khalistan Liberation Force (KLF). Additionally, information has been shared regarding the purported links of Nijjar with Jagtar Singh Tara, the chief of the Pakistan-based Khalistan Tiger Force (KTF). [Firstpost]

Indonesia, India to hold high-level dialogues on development of Sabang Port

(jb) In a move to bolster their bilateral ties, India and Indonesia are preparing for high-level meetings aimed at enhancing the infrastructure of Sabang Port, situated in Indonesia's Aceh province. Key topics expected to be explored at the meetings include exploration of potential areas of collaboration, investment opportunities, and the identification of challenges and solutions for the development of Sabang Port. [Construction World]

Located on the northern part of Sumatra, Sabang Port is only 700 kilometers away from India's union territory of Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Upgrading and modernizing this port will enhance New Delhi's connectivity and trade with the ASEAN region and the Far East, making it easier to access the Malacca Strait, a crucial maritime route. Additionally, the port would provide a logistics and resupply node for the Indian Navy in the eastern Indian Ocean and the Malacca Strait, boosting its operational capabilities in the region. [India Narrative]

Indonesia, Australia solidify cooperation for women's empowerment

(jb) Indonesia and Australia have intensified cooperation in the areas of women's empowerment and child protection. The Indonesian Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (PPPA) held a bilateral meeting with the Australian government to strengthen their partnership. [Antara news]

Australia has been actively involved in initiatives related to gender equality, women's empowerment, and child protection in Indonesia and the ASEAN region. The Australia-Indonesia Partnership Towards an Inclusive Society (INKLUSI) Program, in particular, has been working to improve gender equality and social inclusiveness in Indonesia through community institution strengthening.

While these collaborative efforts are commendable, there remain challenges in Indonesia concerning women's rights. One contentious development has been the Indonesian parliament's approval of a new criminal code, which inter alia places restrictions on the reproductive rights of women and imposes imprisonment for those producing and disseminating information on contraception.

Indonesia, United States hold first Senior Officials' Foreign Policy and Defense Dialogue

(jb) The United States and Indonesia convened their inaugural Senior Officials' Foreign Policy and Defense Dialogue at the State Department in Washington last week, reaffirming their intent to elevate the US-Indonesia relationship to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. [US State Department]

Leading the U.S. delegation were Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Daniel Kritenbrink, and Assistant Secretary of Defense for Indo-Pacific Security Affairs, Dr. Ely Ratner. On the Indonesian side were Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Director General for American and European Affairs, Ambassador Umar Hadi, and Ministry of Defense's Director General for Defense Strategy, Major General Bambang Trisnohadi.

They discussed various areas of cooperation, including support for ASEAN centrality and the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific, the crisis in Myanmar, global and regional security issues, military engagement, maritime security, and economic cooperation under the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF). Both countries emphasized the importance of strengthening their bilateral and multilateral ties to address regional and global challenges effectively.

Indonesia emerges as key advocate for Palestinian cause

(jb) On 23 October 2023, *The Diplomat* reported that Indonesia has emerged as a key advocate for the Palestinian cause. Not only is this interesting in that it shows the Israel-Palestine conflict coming to Asia, but it also indicates Indonesia's emerging role as a global power [The Diplomat]

By 8 October 2023, and shortly following Hamas attacks against Israel, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Indonesia issued a statement expressing its deep concern regarding the war between Palestinians and Israelis. The statement, shared on X, emphasizes the need for an immediate ceasefire to prevent further loss of human lives, particularly in Palestine.

In a separate tweet, without explicitly naming Hamas as the party responsible, the ministry noted that the occupation of Palestinian territories by Israel is the major reason for the conflict. It emphasized the

necessity of resolving this core issue in alignment with norms established by the United Nations and international law [VOA News]

On 25 October, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Retno Marsudi noted that Indonesia "condemns the continuing unprecedented aggression against civilians by Israel in Gaza" and "We are seeing a humanitarian catastrophe."

She blamed political disagreement for wasting time and limited aid to Palestinians. The Minister affirmed that it will not waste any time in "harnessing global support for immediate action" and called for an immediate ceasefire [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia]

Alongside Indonesia, Malaysia has also emerged as a key advocate of the Palestinian side [The Diplomat]

US to supply its troops in Japan with Japanese seafood

(dql) U.S. ambassador to Japan Rahm Emanuel has disclosed that the US has for the first time begun buying seafood from Japan to supply its military deployed in the East Asian country, in a move to counter China's ban on such products which Beijing imposed in response to Tokyo's release of treated water from its crippled Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant into the sea.

In an interview Emanuel revealed that the US was looking into ways to support Japan in offsetting the ban that he considered as part of its "economic wars." [The Japan Times]

Prime Minister Kishida visits Philippines and Malaysia to prepare for summit with ASEAN

(ic) Japanese PM Kishida Fumio confirmed on October 31 that he would kick off a three-day trip on November 3 to the Philippines and Malaysia, where he would meet President Ferdinand Marcos Jr and Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim respectively.

The primary purpose for the trip is to prepare for a special Japan-ASEAN Summit over December 16-18 that will be held in Tokyo; Kishida is also expected to

deliver a speech on Japanese foreign policy at the Congress of the Philippines. [The Mainichi]

Japan, Philippines consider reciprocal access agreement

(ic) During their scheduled early November summit in the Philippines, PM Kishida Fumio and President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. are expected to discuss a reciprocal access agreement (RAA) that would allow mutual military access.

This would be the first RAA with an Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member state, and Japan's third RAA after the US and Australia.

Sources suggest that Kishida and Marcos Jr. aim to sign the deal by early 2024 to facilitate expanded military exercises and cooperation. [Kyodo News]

Japanese Foreign Minister Kamikawa Yoko to visit Israel and Jordan

(ic) Japanese Foreign Minister Kamikawa Yoko will visit Israel and Jordan starting on November 2.

Kamikawa will hold talks with Israeli officials on November 3 before meeting leaders of the Palestinian National Authority and the Jordanian government the following day. [Asahi Shinbun]

This follows on Japan's efforts to de-escalate the Israel-Hamas war [see AiR No. 43, October/2023, 4]

Japan to freeze assets of Hamas-related individuals, company

(ic) In a press conference on October 31, Chief Cabinet Secretary Matsuno Hirokazu stated to a press conference that Japan will immediately freeze the assets of nine men and a company linked to fundraising for Hamas. The men are Palestinian, Sudanese, Egyptian and Jordanian. The US Treasury Department has accused them of being key Hamas members, operatives and financial facilitators. The company, named Buy Cash Money and Money Transfer Company, is a business based in the Gaza Strip that provides money transfer and virtual currency exchange services. [Kyodo News]

Laos receives USD 10.5 million grant from South Korea for enhanced waste management

(ws) Laos has secured a grant of USD 10.5 million from South Korea to bolster its efforts in solid waste and wastewater management, with a focus on enhancing public health and environmental protection.

This funding marks the continuation of Phase Two of the project, which initially aimed at strengthening the capacity for treating wastewater and solid waste.

However, its scope has expanded to encompass the development of green cities and the promotion of responsible waste management practices. This includes the implementation of the 3R principles, which involve recycling, reusing, or reproducing waste to add value and reducing the overall waste output.

Thus far, this project is being implemented across multiple provinces, including Champassak, Savannakhet, and Vientiane. [Vientiane Times]

Malaysia-Turkey: Prime Minister arrives in Istanbul to meet President Erdogan

(mw) Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim arrived in Istanbul for a meeting with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan last week. The two leaders discussed various topics, including concerns related to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Anwar's visit to Turkey was part of his two-day working trip, which also includes a meeting with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi to address the crisis in Gaza and the opening of the Rafah crossing for humanitarian aid.

This visit reaffirms Malaysia's commitment to supporting the Palestinian cause and alleviating the suffering of Palestinians during the ongoing crisis in Gaza. [PMO.MY]

Malaysia and China establish Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) Overseas Venture Incubator to deepen business cooperation

(mw) Malaysia has launched the Malaysia-China Belt and Road Institute (MCBRI) during the 2023 Belt and Road Symposium Malaysia. The symposium aimed to chart the course for collaborative development between Malaysia Madani and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

China expressed its willingness to work jointly with Malaysia to achieve the vision of a shared future between the two countries.

China has been Malaysia's largest trading partner for fourteen consecutive years, with bilateral trade surpassing USD 200 billion and Chinese investments reaching USD 12.5 billion last year.

The two nations are preparing to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of their diplomatic relations next year. The Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia noted that both the Malaysia Madani and BRI concepts share common goals of achieving comprehensive and sustainable development for all. The cooperation also includes advancements in science, technology, and innovation. [New Straits Times]

Thailand ready to lend a hand to Malaysia during monsoon season

(mw) Thai authorities have assured Malaysian authorities of continued assistance during the upcoming monsoon season. Narathiwat Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Department operations chief, Lieutenant Muhaday Nithatnawaday Chakul, highlighted their long-standing cooperation with the Kelantan Fire and Rescue Department in rescue operations for flood victims and other disasters.

The collaboration includes sharing weather information to better prepare for the monsoon season. The Kelantan Fire and Rescue Department's director, Zainal Mandasin, received praise for his efforts in fostering strong relations with the Narathiwat Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Department, given the mutual impact of monsoon-related floods in the region. [New Straits Times]

Malaysian transport ministry to negotiate with Singapore continuation of KTM Tebrau shuttle train service

(mw) The Malaysian Transport Ministry plans to discuss the continuation of the Keretapi Tanah Melayu Bhd (KTMB) Tebrau shuttle train service to Singapore even after the Rapid Transit Service (RTS) begins operation.

While the shuttle service is set to cease six months after the RTS commences, there is a recognized need for enhanced connectivity between Malaysia and Singapore via Johor.

The ministry aims to negotiate with Singapore to continue this service after the RTS is launched. The Tebrau shuttle service has experienced increasing ridership, with the average daily riders reaching eight thousand six hundred thirty-five people in this year, marking a seven increase from pre-pandemic levels in four years ago.

Discussions are also underway to increase the shuttle service's capacity, including raising the frequency and coach capacity. These improvements would lead to a daily passenger capacity of thirteen thousand seven hundred sixty people. [New Straits Times]

Malaysia-India: Joint military exercise

(mw) "Exercise Harimau Shakti 2023," a joint military training exercise in being conducted in India, featuring troops from the Indian Army and the Malaysian Army.

The exercise, taking place at Umroi cantonment in Meghalaya and running until November 5, is aimed at enhancing the military capabilities of both forces in multi-domain operations, particularly in sub-conventional scenarios.

Approximately one hundred personnel from both sides will engage in the exercise, focusing on various areas such as establishing a joint command post, integrated surveillance, intelligence collection, and the use of drones and helicopters. The exercise aims to enhance defense cooperation and foster bilateral relations between India and Malaysia. [ABP Live]

Sabah-Brunei collaboration to be strengthened

(mw) Sabah's Industrial Development and Entrepreneurship Minister, Datuk Phoong Jin Zhe, is optimistic about strengthening cooperation between Sabah and Brunei following his recent official visit to the neighboring nation.

During a two-day work visit last week, he engaged with various government agencies and business leaders to foster opportunities, promote Sabah's local industries and entrepreneurs, and enhance bilateral trade relations. The visit aimed to establish a solid foundation for cooperation in industrial and business sectors, contributing to mutual economic growth.

Trade between Sabah and Brunei has grown significantly in recent years, with a fourfold increase in last year compared to 2017. [The Star]

Mongolia-China: Prime Minister Oyun-Erdene Luvsannamsrai meets Premier Li Qiang

(dql) Mongolian Prime Minister Oyun-Erdene Luvsannamsrai held bilateral talks with Chinese Premier Li Qiang on October 26 in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, where the extended Meeting of the Council of Heads of Government of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Member States took place on October 25-26 (see artictle above).

Recognizing the progress in the cooperation within the framework of Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between their countries, Oyun-Erdene and Li reaffirmed their commitment to further deepening cooperation in various fields, such as border port connectivity, environmental protection, green development, and tourism.

Oyun-Erdene further reassured his country's opposition to external interference in China's domestic affairs, adding that Mongolia is willing to cooperate with China in promoting Belt and Road cooperation. [Montsame] [China Daily]

Li, for his part, confirmed China's readiness to deepen cooperation with Mongolia under the SCO and other multilateral frameworks.

For nearly twenty years, Mongolia has refrained from joining the SCO after receiving observer status in 2004. Choosing to forge strategic partnerships with countries such as the United States, Japan and South Korea, Mongolia has been avoiding joining regional security alliances. [Reuters]

Mongolia-Kyrgyzstan: Prime ministers' meeting

(ap) Mongolian Prime Minister Oyun-Erdene Luvsannamsai met with Prime Minister of Kyrgyzstan Akylbek Japarov in the Kyrgyz Republic on October 25. It was the first time a Mongolian Prime Minister visited the Central Asian country which was hosting the extended Meeting of the Council of Heads of Government of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Member States on October 25-26 (see artictle above).

The two heads of the government held talks about further cooperation and strengthening close ties between their countries, including infrastructure, transport, and agriculture.

In addition, the two sides signed an agreement for future cooperation in education and a memorandum for cooperation in trade and promoting business ties between the two countries. [Montsame]

Mongolian president meets with Deputy Prime Minister of Russia to discuss climate change

(ap) President of Mongolia Khurelsukh Ukhnaa met with Deputy Prime Minister of Russia Viktoria Abramchenko on October 24 in Ulaanbaatar. [Montsame 1]

During the meeting, the two sides highlighted the development of Mongolia-Russia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and willingness from both sides to promote cooperation.

President Khurelsukh mentioned the bilateral talks with President Putin when the two Presidents exchanged views on how to deepen bilateral ties and increase investment. Both sides discussed further cooperation, related to climate change and ecosystem stability.

Abramchenko emphasized the opportunities for cooperation in energy, infrastructure, education and the environment. She mentioned the campaign "One Billion Trees" which aims to combat climate change and reduce desertification. [Montsame 2]

Deputy Chairman of Mongolian Parliament visits Sweden

(ap) Deputy Chairman of the Mongolian Munkhbaatar Lkhagva, who led a Mongolian delegation to Sweden was received by First Deputy Speaker of the Swedish parliament Kenneth G. Forslund.

Both sides noted the significance of inter-parliamentary cooperation between Mongolia and Sweden to expand the bilateral ties.

The future of bilateral cooperation green technology, education, and culture was the focus of the official meeting, with Lkhagva briefing on Mongolia's "One Billion Tree" campaign, initiated by the Mongolian President Khurelsukh Ukhnaa in 2021, to highlight Mongolian commitment to combat climate change. [Montsame]

Myanmar-Philippines: Chin displaced persons demand investigation of junta officials by Philippine court

(ski) Five displaced members of Myanmar's Chin State have filed war crimes charges against Myanmar junta officials with the Department of Justice in the Philippines.

The legal complaint seeks an investigation into ten regime officials, including junta chief Min Aung Hlaing, for crimes such as murdering civilians, as well as desecrating bodies, burning churches and houses, and withholding aid from people impacted by conflict or natural disasters.

Findings of the advocacy group Institute of Chin Affairs have revealed that a total of 528 ethnic Chin people have been killed in military atrocities since the coup. 217 were civilians and the rest were resistance fighters. [MyanmarNow]

Myanmar undocumented migrant workers arrested in Malaysia

(wn) On October 28, Malaysian authorities conducted a raid on the new market in Selayang Township, Kuala Lumpur and detained over 120 foreign workers, including individuals from Myanmar.

The area near Kuala Lumpur has been a hot spot for the continuous arrest of illegal immigrants throughout the country. The arrests were made in the market where a majority of Burmese nationals work in the Salarang area.

In an earlier move on October 13, Malaysian immigration officials conducted a raid in Johor State around a construction site and detained nearly 200 individuals who were living and working in the country illegally. Out of those detained, 62 were Myanmar nationals. [VOA Burmese]

Myanmar-China: Beijing calls for stable and secure border

(wn) In light of the ongoing conflict between ethnic armed groups and military council forces along the Sino-Myanmar border in northern Shan State, the Chinese Foreign Ministry has called for an immediate ceasefire to restore stability and security to the border region.

The ministry expressed deep concern over the recent clashes and called on all parties involved in the conflict to immediately cease the ceasefire. It stressed the need for practical and effective measures to prevent the situation from escalating, and to ensure the security and stability of the China-Myanmar border.

Since October 27, there has been intense fighting in northern Shan State between the three northern alliance forces of Kokang MNDAA, Ta'an TNLA and Arakan (AA) who declared war on the military council.

According to some local residents, heavy weapons fell on Wanting on the Chinese side during the exchange of fire between the two sides. Videos of the incident are being shared on social networks. [VOA Burmese]

North Korean embassy closes in Uganda

(ap) North Korea will close its embassy in Uganda, as part of efforts to “raise efficiency of North Korean’s organization overseas,” according to the North Koran ambassador to Uganda, cited by The Independent.

The diplomatic affairs with Uganda and North Korea will be handled in the North Korean embassy in Equatorial Guinea. [Yonhap]

North Korea, that faces sanctions over its nuclear and missile programs, and Uganda re-established their diplomatic ties in 1972 after cutting them in 1964.

North Korea is strengthening its diplomatic relations with other African countries as it is under the pressure of diplomatic isolation due to United Nations Security Council's sanctions. The North Korean close ties with African nations dates from Kim Il-Sung, the founder of North Korea, and the Non-Aligned Movement against imperialism in the 1960s.

North Korea installs additional electric fences to a new bridge to China

(ap) North Korea is strengthening its measures against defectors by putting electric-wired fences to the New Yalu River Bridge which connects the country with China.

The bridge which connected the Chinese city of Dandong with North Korean city of Sinjuiju, was completed in 2014 and it is expected to replace the old bridge from World War II. However, North Korea has not yet completed the infrastructure. [Radio Free Asia]

The North Korean government's intention is to discourage people from crossing river Yalu to China by covering the area around the bridge with electric fences. In 2020 and 2021 during the strict pandemic restrictions, Pyongyang employed electric fencing with the intent of stopping people from escaping the country.

There is a growing disapproval among residents as they criticize the high spending of the government on high-voltage electric fences, while the population does not have enough food and must deal with regular shortage of electricity.

Afghans leave Pakistan in droves amid Islamabad's 'Final Warning' before arrest, deportation

(tj/lm) Tens of thousands of Afghans have left Pakistan in response to an approaching deadline for undocumented migrants to leave the country by November 1 voluntarily or face deportation. [Deutsche Welle] [RFERL]

In October, Pakistan's caretaker government announced a major crackdown on undocumented migrants in the country, emphasizing that the move was not specifically aimed at Afghans but would apply to all nationalities [see AiR No. 40, October/2023, 1]. However, the vast majority of unregistered migrants – an estimated 1.7 million – are of Afghan origin, as Pakistan has been a destination for Afghan refugees fleeing conflict and the Taliban for many years.

The crackdown comes against the larger backdrop of a rise in attacks in Pakistan attributed to militants operating from Afghanistan. Islamabad has accused Kabul of sheltering these militants, a charge that the ruling Taliban consistently deny. Additionally, there has been a growing anti-Afghan sentiment in Pakistan as economic challenges continue to burden the country.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's caretaker government has announced plans to open "holding centres" for undocumented migrants, particularly Afghan refugees. The caretaker interior minister, Sarfraz Bugti, explained that these holding centers would provide medical facilities and food to the detained individuals, with special attention to children, women, and the elderly. However, after the November 1 deadline, the government intends to take a strict stance on undocumented immigrants, although further details were not provided.

Against the backdrop of the approaching deadline, the United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration have called on Pakistan to suspend the forcible returns of Afghan nationals, as they believe that many of those facing deportation could be at risk of human rights violations if returned to Afghanistan. These violations may include arbitrary arrest, detention, torture, and inhumane treatment. [South China Morning Post] [UN News]

In related developments, plans have been made to transport Afghan refugees who previously served alongside coalition forces in Kabul to the United Kingdom via special flights as part of a resettlement scheme. These charter flight operations will accommodate approximately 2,000 Afghans and will continue until December, with a weekly flight departing for the UK. [The Express Tribune]

Philippines drops funding deal with China for three railway projects valued at over USD 5 billion

(lb) The Philippines has decided to no longer seek financial aid from China for a set of major railway projects, valued at over USD 5 billion and has begun discussions with other Asian countries for alternative financing deals. The move comes after the government of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. reviewed the Chinese-funded projects due to a lack of progress from the Chinese side. [Radio Free Asia] [Bloomberg]

It marks a departure from the previous administration's pro-China stance, and senators have encouraged the current administration to explore financing options from other countries, citing concerns about the terms and interest rates associated with Chinese loans. The decision to scrap Chinese loans also coincides with rising tensions between the Philippines and China in the disputed South China Sea.

Philippines, Denmark to expand cyber defense partnership

(lb) The Philippines and Denmark have announced plans to cooperate on cyber defense and information technology, with a focus on countering disinformation and addressing threats in the information ecosystem. Philippine Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr. and Danish Ambassador to Manila Franz-Michael Skjold Mellbin revealed the plan on October 24 at Camp Aguinaldo in Quezon City. [The Defense Post]

The two senior officials also discussed military cooperation to address global security challenges. The Danish ambassador expressed concern about China's activities in the West Philippine Sea, and discussions are expected to lead to cybersecurity partnerships and other defense agreements.

The Philippines has recently taken steps to enhance its cybersecurity, including banning certain AI-enabled applications and forming an independent cyber defense command.

Myanmar nationals ask Philippines to probe alleged war crimes committed by Myanmar military

(lb/lm) Five Myanmar nationals have lodged a criminal complaint against 10 current or former members of Myanmar's military, including junta chief Min Aung Hlaing, for alleged war crimes against the mainly

Christian Chin minority. [Voice of America] [The Diplomat]

The complaint has been brought under the 2009 International Humanitarian Law Act, which "incorporates into national legislation the international crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes." The law obligates the Philippines to prosecute these crimes when they are committed elsewhere in the world under the principle of universal jurisdiction.

The complaint accuses the military of killing a pastor and two church elders in Thantlang town, Chin, in September 2021, as well as directing attacks on churches and burning hundreds of houses in the same town. It also alleges that relief supplies were blocked from reaching people in Chin state after Cyclone Mocha in May.

While the Philippines' justice system has faced criticism for its slow trials, the complainants believe it is worth pursuing justice through universal jurisdiction. Cases against the Myanmar military have also been filed in other countries, including Indonesia, the United Kingdom, and Turkey. [CNA]'

Philippines, Canada Armed Forces end strategic planning course

(lb) The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Canadian Armed Forces concluded a five-day Business Planning Course (BPC), aiming to enhance the strategic planning, resource management, and decision-making skills of military personnel. The training was held in Clark, Pampanga, and had 33 military and civilian students from eight countries participating. The course was designed to help participants gain familiarity with business planning processes and products to contribute to national defense planning. The culminating activity was attended by Canadian Ambassador to the Philippines David Bruce Hartman and AFP deputy chief-of-staff for education, training, and doctrine Marine Maj. Gen. Noel Beleran. [PhilStar]

Czech Republic proposes marine vessels to Philippines to help secure its territorial waters

(lb) The Czech Republic has proposed supplying marine vessels to the Philippines to help secure its territorial waters, according to President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

The proposal came during a meeting with Czech Republic Ambassador to Manila Karel Hejč. [Navy Recognition] [Inquirer.net]

President Marcos Jr. expressed concern over the rising tensions in the West Philippine Sea and the need to secure the country's maritime territory. The Czech Republic manufactures various types of war materials, including fighter jets, and could become an important partner in the Philippines' foreign policy, said Marcos. Ambassador Hejč also invited Marcos to visit the Czech Republic to observe its defense industries.

South Korea-North Korea: Boat carrying potential defectors detained

(tms) South Korean authorities have detained a North Korean boat suspected of carrying individuals attempting to defect from the reclusive nation.

The vessel was intercepted near the Northern Limit Line, the de facto maritime border between North and South Korea, off the eastern city of Sokcho.

The exact number of individuals on board was not disclosed by the military, but it is reported that four North Koreans were seeking defection. [Yonhap]

This marks the second instance of North Koreans crossing the sea border to defect in recent months. Most defectors typically opt for routes through China and Southeast Asia instead of the heavily fortified inter-Korean border [see AiR No. 31, August/2023, 1].

South Korea has raised concerns about the potential forced repatriation of North Korean escapees by China, who are at risk of imprisonment and mistreatment in North Korea. Chinese authorities have denied the presence of defectors in their territory. [Reuters]

South Korea-US: Report suggests modernizing tactical nuclear weapons

(tms) A joint report by the Asan Institute for Policy Studies, Korea's leading independent policy think tank, and the Rand Corp., a non-partisan American nonprofit global policy think tank, suggests that South Korea and the United States should modernize approximately 100 US tactical nuclear weapons to enhance South Korea's security against the growing threats posed by North Korea.

The report highlights North Korea's existing nuclear capabilities, which could pose an existential threat to South Korea and potentially a significant threat to the US.

It anticipates North Korea's plans to expand its nuclear arsenal, estimating that it could reach a threshold of 300 weapons by 2030.

The report emphasizes the need for enhanced nuclear assurance for South Korea, including the modernization and deployment of US tactical nuclear weapons in the region, while addressing concerns about the US commitment to South Korea's security. [Yonhap] [RAND]

South Korea-US: Aegis-equipped destroyer departs after replenishment stop

(tms) A US destroyer equipped with the Aegis combat system has left a South Korean naval base on Jeju Island after making a stop for replenishment purposes.

The USS John Finn destroyer departed on October 30, following its arrival at the port last week, according to the South Korean Navy. The visit provided an opportunity for crew rest and the loading of military supplies.

Notably, this advanced US destroyer is recognized for its successful interception and destruction of a simulated intercontinental ballistic missile during a test in November 2020.

It had previously participated in joint exercises with South Korean and Japanese destroyers in the East Sea and engaged in a maritime counter-special operations exercise with the South Korean Navy in the Yellow Sea. [Yonhap]

South Korea-US: Military forces collaborate in high-tech drills to modernize defenses

(tms) South Korean and US troops recently conducted joint military exercises that incorporated cutting-edge technology to modernize their military capabilities and enhance readiness against North Korean threats.

Over 120 soldiers from both nations engaged in simulated combat within a mock town resembling

Pyongyang at the Korea Combat Training Centre in Inje, East Korea. The exercises showcased advanced equipment, including wearable laser sensors, drones for reconnaissance (some armed with assault rifles), and a multipurpose unmanned vehicle for medical evacuations.

The troops employed multiple integrated laser engagement systems (MILES) to replicate real battle scenarios. South Korea's TIGER brigade, known for its use of AI-powered drones and agile combat vehicles, demonstrated the military's progress towards modernization, with plans to transition all combat units to this model by 2040.

Additionally, a large-scale maritime exercise in the Yellow Sea saw South Korea and the United States collaborating to strengthen their defense posture and operational coordination. The drills involved a wide array of naval, air, and ground assets, demonstrating their commitment to enhancing their combined capabilities.

Furthermore, a combined multi-domain special operations exercise involving US Navy SEALs and South Korean troops aimed at bolstering interoperability and mission readiness across various domains.

These efforts underscore the determination of both nations to upgrade their military capabilities and address regional security concerns. [Reuters] [Yonhap 1] [Yonhap 2]

South Korea-Germany: Talks held on strengthening global supply chain cooperation and climate action

(tms) South Korean Second Vice Foreign Minister Oh Young-ju engaged in a luncheon meeting with Udo Philipp, the state secretary for Germany's ministry of economic affairs and climate action, to explore avenues for enhancing collaboration in global supply chains and addressing climate change.

During the luncheon, Oh expressed optimism about further cooperation between the two nations to bolster a stable and resilient global supply chain.

In response, Philipp conveyed Germany's efforts to reduce its supply chain reliance on specific countries and suggested continued close communication to uphold the rules-based international trade order.

Oh further sought Germany's support for South Korea's bid to host the 2030 World Expo in Busan, emphasizing its potential to address contemporary global challenges like climate change and inequality. [Yonhap]

South Korea-Vietnam: Trade, environmental cooperation discussed

(tms) South Korea's Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Energy stated that First Vice Industry Minister Jang Young-jin met with Tran Tuan Anh, leader of the Central Economic Committee of Vietnam's Communist Party to to share ideas on ways to expand bilateral trade and investment.

Jang emphasized Vietnam's role as Southeast Asia's prime investment hub, expressing South Korean companies' potential contributions to its economic development.

He also sought Vietnamese support in addressing issues confronting South Korean businesses, particularly pertaining to authorization delays for financial firm establishment.

Both nations agreed to collaborate on global carbon emissions reduction efforts and clean energy adoption as they pursue carbon neutrality by 2050.

Jang also sought Vietnam's endorsement for South Korea's bid to host the 2030 World Expo in Busan. [Yonhap]

Sri Lanka, India to hold 12th round of negotiations for Economic and Technology Cooperation Agreement

(lf) Sri Lanka and India are set to enter their 12th round of negotiations on the proposed Economic and Technology Cooperation Agreement (ETCA).

This comprehensive agreement will have a broader scope than the current free trade agreement shared by both nations. The Sri Lankan government has emphasised two crucial components: expanding supply capacity and broadening market access, as part of a multilateral growth strategy to drive economic recovery.

11 rounds of bilateral talks between 2016 and 2019, aiming to expand the existing India-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement (ISFTA) and foster deeper economic ties, were previously held. However, Sri Lanka's economic woes combined with policies of the former Rajapaksa administration put a halt on the progress of the talks.

There is no set timeframe for how far away the proposed deal is from being implemented. With discussion only restarting, there will be some necessary updates made to the conditions of previous talks. The Sri Lankan government also communicated their willingness to expand similar deals with other partners, including China and the ASEAN states. [Daily Mirror] [Daily News]

United States congratulates Sri Lanka on IMF agreement

(lf) United States Ambassador to Sri Lanka Julie Chung met with Central Bank Governor Dr. Nandalal Weerasinghe on October 26 in Colombo. During their meeting, the ambassador emphasised the importance of fairness in Sri Lanka's debt restructuring with major creditors. She stressed the need for equal treatment for all creditors and highlighted the essential role of transparency from all parties involved. Ambassador Chung also congratulated Sri Lanka on its progress in securing the second instalment of a bailout loan from the International Monetary Fund. [Daily Mirror] [Newswire]

Furthermore, she reaffirmed Washington's commitment to an economic landscape that values fairness and transparency to ensure stability and growth in Sri Lanka. In the context of Sri Lanka's debt restructuring, Clombo has entered into a preliminary debt restructuring deal with the EXIM Bank of China, but details of the specific terms of the deal have not been revealed [see AiR, No. 42, October/2023, 3]. China, the largest bilateral creditor to Sri Lanka, has expressed cooperation in reaching a debt restructuring agreement during President Ranil Wickremesinghe's recent visit to Beijing.

Australian high commissioner meets with Sri Lanka's opposition National People's Power party

(lf) Representatives from the National People's Power (NPP) party, a far-left political party which currently controls three seats in the 225-member Parliament, held a meeting with Australia's High Commissioner to Sri Lanka, Paul Stephens, at his official residence in Colombo on October 25. [Daily Mirror] [Lanka Truth]

The NPP discussed a number of matters with the Australian High Commissioner, including the controversial Anti-Terrorism and Online Safety Bills, which have been met with fierce resistance from a number of Sri Lankan civil society and international organisations. The NPP informed the High Commissioner of their position on the bill and their feeling that it will have a negative impact on Sri Lanka's political culture and their concerns over potential crackdowns on protests and political resistance. The economy and Sri Lanka's ongoing negotiations with the IMF were also discussed at length.

Italy to recognise education qualifications from Sri Lanka

(lf) Sri Lanka's Education Minister Susil Premajayantha held a bilateral discussion with his Italian counterpart Giuseppe Valditara in Rome on October 25. Both education ministers met to discuss increasing cooperation between their countries in the realm of study opportunities and qualification recognition. Both men agreed to work towards mutual recognition of qualifications and degrees from Sri Lankan and Italian universities, to increase economic exchange and the flow of workers.

Minister Premajayantha expressed his interest in bringing Sri Lanka's Vocational Education training services in line with those offered in Italy, so that Sri Lankan workers and graduates will have the same quality of skills as their Italian counterparts and can find work opportunities in the European nation easier. Minister Valditara also received his Sri Lankan counterparts request to establish a language laboratory in Sri Lankan for the nation's citizens to learn how to speak Italian and increase their fluency with the Italian culture.

The pledge from both ministers signals a firm commitment between both nations to deepen cooperation, however no timeframe was provided as to how long it may take for these initiatives to manifest. [Daily Mirror] [Daily News]

Sri Lanka, United Kingdom driving licence exchange agreement makes progress

(lf) Sri Lanka and the United Kingdom are both working towards making driver's licences issued by both nations exchangeable for citizens, the UK's House of Commons in Westminster was informed on October 26. The negotiations will empower Sri Lankan citizens visiting the United Kingdom, and vice versa, to freely drive when visiting the other nation.

UK Parliamentary Under-Secretary from the Department for Transport Richard Holden assured MPs that "Work is currently progressing on arrangements" to recognise Sri Lankan drivers' licences in the United Kingdom. The scheme will make it easier for Sri Lankan nations applying for UK permanent residency to travel within the United Kingdom and will also empower UK tourists and visitors to the island nation to find their own means of transport across the country.

The success of the scheme will depend on the quality of drivers that both countries offer each other when the program launches. No official date has been put forward for when the licence exchange will formally commence. [Daily Mirror] [Daily News]

Taiwan-Canada: Negotiations on investment promotion pact completed

(jr) Canada and Taiwan concluded negotiations for foreign investment, promotion, and protection agreements on 24 October, marking a pivotal step in strengthening bilateral relations.

The two countries have become mutually significant economic partners, with two-way trade amounting to USD 5.8 billion in 2022. Following the success, Taiwan has activated investments in Canada, mounting up to 600 million USD as of October; in contrast, Canada's investment in Taiwan has increased to 1 billion USD.

Canada issued in 2022 its Indo-Pacific strategy and deepened the bonds between Taiwan and Canada. [Taiwan Today]

Taiwanese President Tsai meets Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute delegation

(jr) Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen met with a delegation from the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute (RRPFI) on October 24.

During the meeting, Tsai welcomed the US government's normalization of military sales to Taiwan to deepen bilateral security relationships and partnerships between both donations.

RRPFI President Trulio, for his part, expressed his conviction, that the US and Taiwan together will solidify the "commitment to security, freedom, and economic opportunity that our peoples hold dear." [Office of the President, Taiwan]

Taiwan-Lithuania: Foreign Minister Wu meets visiting Parliament Speaker Čmilytė-Nielsen

(jr) Taiwan's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jaushieh Joseph Wu, on the 24 of October, welcomed the Lithuanian delegation led by Speaker of the Lithuanian Parliament Viktorija Čmilytė-Nielsen.

During the meeting, which was part of the visit of the delegation to Taiwan [see AiR No. 43, October/2023, 4], both sides exchanged a wide range of issues and topics, including economics, culture, security, and finance, as well as a joint effort to assist Ukrainians in their war against the Russian Federation.

Wu and Čmilytė-Nielsen also presided over the signing of a memorandum of understanding on health care cooperation.

In addition, it announced that the two sides agreed to conclude an agreement to eliminate double taxation and prevent tax evasion and avoidance. [Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Taiwan]

The meeting followed a luncheon hosted by President Tsai Ing-wen a day earlier during which she referred to the government's Central and Eastern European Investment Fund as a source to deepen bolster economic and trade ties with the Baltic country [see AiR No. 43, October/2023, 4].

US hands over 12 patrol boats to Thai marine police

(ak) The United States handed over 12 patrol boats to the Thai Marine Police Division for operations in the Mekong River aimed at combatting drug crimes, contraband smuggling and transborder crime. [Bangkok Post]

Thailand-Laos: Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin meets Lao counterpart Sonexay Siphandone

(nt/dql) During a meeting between Thai Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin and his Lao counterpart Sonexay Siphandone on October 30 in Vientiane, both sides agreed to work together to raise the value of bilateral trade to US 1 billion in the next two years. The meeting was part of Srettha's state visit to the neighboring country on the same day.

The two prime ministers also discussed cooperation in trade and investment, energy cooperation, rail and road connectivity, transport and logistics, and security.Srettha, for his part, proposed to intensify effort to finalize details related to project of building a railway bridge across the Mekong River that connects Nong Khai province and Vientiane. He affirmed that Thailand was ready to offer the soft loan to fund the project.

Moreover, Srettha requested Laos to specify clear cargo-handling charges at the Vientiane Logistic Park, Laos's first-ever integrated logistics facility designed to provide comprehensive logistics services. This would allow Thai operators calculate in advance their cargo transport.In addition, the Thai prime minister expressed his country's interested in buying more clean energy from Laos to serve the purpose of industrial growth in the country. [Bangkok Post]

Thailand-Vietnam: Foreign Minister Pranpree Bahiddha-Nukara meets Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh

(ak) Foreign Affairs Minister Pranpree Bahiddha-Nukara held a meeting with Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh as part of his two-day visit to Vietnam on October 25-26.

The discussion during the meeting focused on the diplomatic relations and cooperation between the two countries in economics, trading and tourism, regional cooperation in ASEAN and Greater Mekong Subregion.

Further discussion includes international policies and geopolitics, as well as the possibility on more investment from Thai investors in Vietnam. [Bangkok Post]

Thailand-Hamas: Negotiations on hostage release in progress

(nt) Negotiations with Hamas were held in Iran on October 27 to negotiate the release of Thai hostages taken by Hamas.

Hamas has indicated its readiness to immediately release all 18 Thai hostages. [The Thaiger]

Vietnam invites Japan's newly elected House Speaker

(km) The Chairman of the Vietnamese National Assembly, Vuong Dinh Hue, has congratulated Nukaga Fukushiro on his election as Speaker of the House of Representatives of Japan. In a letter of congratulations, Hue expressed his belief that Fukushiro and the Japanese House of Representatives would continue to support the development of Vietnam-Japan relations and enhance cooperation between the two legislative bodies. He also extended an invitation to Fukushiro and a high-ranking delegation of the Japanese House of Representatives to make an official visit to Vietnam. [thanhnien.vn]

Vietnam, Cuba hold high-level talks to strengthen defense cooperation

(km/lm) In Hanoi, Senator Lieutenant General Nguyen Tan Cuong, the Chief of the General Staff of the Vietnam People's Army, and Senator Lieutenant General Roberto Legra Sotolongo, the Chief of the General Staff and Deputy Minister of the Cuban Revolutionary Armed Forces, engaged in discussions. These talks revolved around the robust relationship between Vietnam and Cuba, with a particular focus on defense cooperation. [Saigon News]

Both parties reached an agreement to sustain the exchange of delegations, the sharing of professional expertise, and the expansion of collaboration across various domains. These domains include defense industry, military medicine, training, and Party

development. Furthermore, the two officials delved into regional and international matters of mutual interest.

While in Hanoi, Senator Lieutenant General Sotolongo also held a meeting with the Vietnamese President at the Presidential Palace. During this meeting, they explored avenues for cooperation and areas of shared friendship. They aimed to strengthen the enduring tradition of friendship and solidarity, especially between Vietnam and Cuba. President Vo Van Thuong put forth a proposal to intensify high-level exchanges between Vietnam's Ministry of National Defense and Cuba's Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces. Additionally, they discussed ways to enhance economic, trade, and investment collaboration. [thanhnien.vn]

Vietnam, Switzerland aim to strengthen development cooperation for 2021-2024 period

(km) The Deputy Prime Minister of Vietnam, Khai Khai, has proposed that Switzerland and Vietnam should work closely to implement the Switzerland-Vietnam Development Cooperation Program for the 2021-2024 period. At the reception in Hanoi on October 25 for Dominique Paravicini, visiting State Secretary of the Swiss Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education, and Research, the Deputy Prime Minister proposed accordingly. [vovworld.vn]

Priorities include enhancing the competitiveness of the private sector, developing a knowledge-based economy, and addressing development and climate change challenges. Vietnam seeks Switzerland's support for sustainable development, particularly improving the private sector's competitiveness and increasing scholarships for Vietnamese students.

Paravicini, on his side, mentioned that Swiss businesses are optimistic about Vietnam's potential and anticipate more Swiss investments in the country.

Announcements

Upcoming online events

01 November 2023 @ at 9 a.m. (GMT-4), Atlantic Council, USA

Second annual Pakistan Conference

The focus of the event will be on post-crisis reforms and a recovery roadmap for Pakistan: the goal of the 2023 conference is to begin laying out a plan for Pakistan in 2024 and beyond, to lift the country out of its ongoing crisis and put it on the path to sustainable and inclusive growth.

Learn more about the event at [Atlantic Council].

01 November 2023 @ 9:30 – 11:15 a.m. (GMT-4), Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), USA

Supply Chain Resiliency and the Outlook for Economic Growth in the Indo-Pacific

Since the Indo-Pacific is one of the fastest growing and most dynamic regions in the world, the speakers will accent on the ways of enhancing the resilience of regional and global supply chains. Thus, there will be discussed regional economic trends and how the United States and Japan can work with regional stakeholders to support economic integration and supply chain resiliency.

Learn more about the event at [CSIS].

01 November @ 9:00 a.m. – 03 November 2023 @ 11:30 a.m. (GMT-4), United States Institute of Peace, USA

Missing Peace Global Symposium on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence

The attention of the audience will be paid to one of the most complicated issues in the field of human rights defending – violation of human rights through committing conflict-related sexual violence. The panelists will try to answer two important questions: (1) what is missing from policy, research and practice to deter conflict-related sexual violence, mitigate ongoing harms, and heal from the intergenerational impacts? (2) what are the implications for peace and global security when action falls short?

Learn more about the event at [United States Institute of Peace].

01 November 2023 @ 9:00 – 10:00 a.m. (GMT-4), Center for a New American Security, USA

The Challenge Ahead: Campaigning to Deter Global Threats with General Eric M. Smith, 39th Commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps

As it implements force design changes over the next few years, the Marine Corps must continue to respond to global challenges. The conversation will be dedicated to find the answers to two questions: (1) what is the way ahead for the U.S. Marine Corps? (2) how will the service balance longer-term force redesign with the demands of current operations?

Learn more about the event at [Center for a New American Security].

01 November 2023 @ 10:00 - 11:30 a.m. (GMT-4), The Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, USA

"Strategic Stability, Crisis Communication, and Shared Nuclear Responsibilities in South Asia" MTA Seminar with Rabia Akhtar

The South Asian region currently faces a multitude of challenges to its strategic stability due to the complex geopolitical landscape. The chain of influence in this region involves major players at various levels, making it difficult to maintain a balance of power and prevent

potential conflicts. Without effective crisis communication mechanisms, stability remains fragile. The event is devoted to discussing the necessity and possible ways of effective crisis communication and a comprehensive approach to address the region's challenges.

Learn more about the event at [The Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs].

01 November 2023 @ at 9:00 a.m. (GMT), Institute for Economics and Peace, UK

Ecological Threat Report 2023 Global Launch Webinar

Without concerted international action, current levels of ecological degradation will substantially worsen, thereby intensifying a range of social issues, such as malnutrition and forced migration. Current conflicts will escalate and multiply as a result, creating further global insecurity. There will be considered threats relating to food insecurity, water risk, and natural disasters, all exacerbated by climate change during the event.

Learn more about the event at [Institute for Economics and Peace].

01 – 02 November 2023 @ 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. (GMT+1), Chatham House, UK

Climate change 2023

Temperatures expected to temporarily rise beyond 1.5°C in the next five years, amid worsening climate extremes. The path forward must include radically strengthened efforts to reduce emissions, build resilience, address loss and damage, and mobilize climate finance. New partnerships, financing mechanisms and innovative approaches to harness public and private sector collaboration will be crucial to deliver on our global climate goals and protect biodiversity. The experts will discuss innovative approaches, actionable steps and collaborative solutions to accelerate the climate transition.

Learn more about the event at [Chatham House].

01 (@ 9:55 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.) – 02 (@ 9:35 a.m. – 6:20 p.m.) November 2023 (GMT+8), Asian Development Bank, The Philippines

Increasing the Resilience of Education Systems in Asia and the Pacific

Natural disasters, violent conflicts, and health crises disrupt education, and prolonged educational disruptions lead to dropout or learning losses. Disruptions, in turn, increase learning disparities. Without specific efforts to recover learning, these losses will be permanent. Ultimately, these disruptions can result in large lifetime earning losses and significantly lower economic development. The issue of resilience should be central as countries rebuild their education systems.

Learn more about the event at [Asian Development Bank].

02 November 2023 @ 12 - 1 p.m. (GMT+2), Asia Society, UK

Oxford Debate: Is India Becoming a Superpower?

We can observe that India became an influential party of international relations, particularly occupied a strong position in the world market recent years. Therefore, it is time to ask whether India is becoming a superpower nowadays. Thus, the speakers will discuss such touching questions as (1) will India be able to deliver on that growth and ambition? (2) can it leverage its digital transformation and demographic dividend successfully in other countries? (3) will China accept a superpower neighbor with whom it shares a disputed border and who continues to cooperate with its main competitor, the U.S.? (4) will India's rise to the top bring a truly multipolar world that is more stable and better equipped to cooperate on specific topics? (5) or will the country's complexity and internal divisions slow it down, as has been true in the past?

Learn more about the event at [Asia Society].

02 November 2023 @ 1:00 – 3:30 p.m. (GMT+2), U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre, Norway

Addressing corruption to achieve Universal Health Coverage and advance

Global Health Security

Resources lost to bribery, embezzlement, rent-seeking, and other forms of corruption result in weaker health systems. It compromises the availability, accessibility, acceptability, and quality of health services, and ultimately threatens people's lives. The aim of event is to highlight the challenges in the field of healthcare corruption leads to, and to discuss possible solutions of these problems.

Learn more about the event at [U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre].

02 November 2023 @ 10:00 – 11:30 a.m. (GMT-4), Wilson Center, USA

A Look at the UN Climate Summit's New Focus on Relief, Recovery, & Peace

Climate, peace, and security are deeply interconnected: climate change impacts can exacerbate underlying security risks, like social tensions and loss of livelihoods, and instability weakens adaptation capacities, leaving communities more vulnerable to climate shocks. Responses to climate change can also unwittingly threaten security by fueling corruption, undermining informal land tenure systems, and driving the extraction of minerals in communities that lack environmental and social safeguards. The summit will include the theme of peace. The explicit focus on peace highlights the peacebuilding potential of climate action that accounts for conflict risks and vulnerabilities—as well as the environmental dividends of peacebuilding: efforts to address climate-change with a conflict-sensitive lens—and efforts to build peace with an environmental dimension—can help build climate resilience and peace together.

Learn more about the event at [Wilson Center].

02 November 2023 @ 11:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. (GMT-4), Stimson Center, USA

Climate, Energy, Insecurity – How UN Peace Operations Can Help Soften the Blow

Security, climate sensitivity and access to affordable and dependable electricity are critical factors in the

health and success of a society. They can mutually reinforce each other in positive and negative ways; they can also be combined to illustrate the scale of the challenge a society may face. The aim of this event is to explore how best to leverage the presence of UN Peace Operations in fragile states to adopt renewable energy technologies that can contribute to building lasting peace.

Learn more about the event at [Stimson Center].

02 November 2023 @ 9:00 - 10:00 a.m. (GMT+8), ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore

Is the US Competing Effectively with China in Asia?

This webinar sheds light on the challenges faced by the US in its competition with China in the region, particularly Southeast Asia. In doing so, the speaker will also address the complexity of the China challenge to the US, especially Beijing's ability to leverage its favorable strategic and economic position in its own region to make itself a central player in the future of Asia.

Learn more about the event at [ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute].

03 November 2023 @ 10:00 – 11:30 a.m. (GMT-4), Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), USA

A Discussion of the 2023 Counter Ransomware Initiative

The main goal of the initiative is to discuss different aspects of international cyber partnership to improve individual and collective security all over the world.

Learn more about the event at [CSIS].

03 November 2023 @ 9:30 - 11:00 a.m. (GMT-4), RAND Corporation, USA

A New Approach to Power Projection

The discussion will arise the topic of the world security frame and analyze the capabilities of the strongest actor – the United States. The focus of the panelists will

be directed on the issue of emerging approaches to projecting power against the United States' most capable adversaries, and the implications of these new approaches for defense planning.

Learn more about the event at [RAND Corporation].

03 November 2023 @ 8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. (GMT+2), Diplo Foundation (Diplo), Switzerland

4th AI Policy summit

In a world shaped every day by technological developments, it is of utmost importance to discuss what roles these technologies should play in society. The auditory will delve into exploring of the use of public policy and societal engagement to capture the benefits of artificial intelligence, minimize its risks, and enhance its adoption.

Learn more about the event at [Diplo].

03 November 2023 @ 10:00 – 11:00 a.m. (GMT-4), Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), USA

The Power of Cross-border Financial Flows: Reflections on the 2023 Global Philanthropy Tracker

The discussion is important because of its main goal – considering the role of all sectors in addressing global development challenges. In this context the following two questions will be touched: (1) what lessons can be learned from the most recent data about the role of each sector individually, and about cross-sectoral partnerships, in addressing global challenges? (2) what are the most effective ways to leverage the financial sources to address growing needs worldwide?

Learn more about the event at [CSIS].

06 November 2023 @ 10:00 a.m.– 6:00 p.m. (GMT-4), Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), USA

Korea Global Forum 2023

The forum will accent on current issues influencing the United States' nuclear policy towards North Korea. The

panelists will discuss the fields of US policy towards North Korea, its denuclearization, and the role of the US-ROK Alliance in achieving this goal. Also, there will be covered the topic of human rights in the state, precisely – US-ROK Collaboration on North Korean Human Rights.

Learn more about the event at [CSIS].

06 November 2023 @ 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. (GMT+1), Chatham House, UK

Challenges to delivering humanitarian health care in today's conflicts

The discussion will focus on exploring how to deliver effective humanitarian healthcare in conflict. The speakers will discuss obstacles to effective implementation of humanitarian health services in conflicts. These obstacles include state-sanctioned use of indiscriminate weapons. The experts will also discuss the geopolitical implications of such challenges to humanitarian efforts.

Learn more about the event at [Chatham House].

06 November 2023 @ 10:00 - 11:00 a.m. (GMT-4), Stimson Center, USA

Missile Technologies in Southern Asia

The focus of the discussion will be made on missile technologies and their impact on competition between China, India, and Pakistan – the experts will assess the role that missile and missile defense technologies play in Southern Asia today and the impact they may have in the future.

Learn more about the event at [Stimson Center].

06 November 2023 @ at 11:30 a.m. (GMT+2), Institute for Economics and Peace, France

World Forum for Democracy 2023 - Democracy untended?

Women and children are too often the tragic face of war's devastation, but their voices are rarely heard in the political debates, peace negotiations and peace-building processes. If democracy and peace are

processes or a way of life, then there is surely a need to cultivate the knowledge, skills and competencies necessary for people to actively engage, participate and contribute to its survival. The speakers will try to answer the question of how to do it.

Learn more about the event at [Institute for Economics and Peace].

06 November 2023 @ 1:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. (GMT+2), German Institute for Global and Area Studies (GIGA), Germany

"China: Partner, Rival, System Competitor" – Expectations on the Implementation of the German Government's China Strategy

China would like to continue to profit from trade with the West and Western technology or know-how, but at the same time is sealing itself off from foreign countries in many areas through a policy of "dual cycles" – or increased reliance on its own strengths, technologies, and standards. Germany and the EU are dependent on China in many security-related areas, especially in critical infrastructure and in digital realms of the future. Economic dependencies (for example in important raw materials such as rare earths, solar and battery technologies, medical products, and similar) are also in play here. The speakers are going to arise such questions as (1) how Germany should implement the strategic guidelines it has set itself in very concrete terms and what expectations there are of this from politics, business, and society; (2) what exact role can Germany play here? (3) where will the EU be called upon to get involved?

Learn more about the event at [GIGA].

07 November 2023 @ 3:00 – 4:30 p.m. (GMT+2), Bruegel, Belgium

Transatlantic Climate and Trade Cooperation after the EU-US Summit

The summit is an event of world importance since the accent will be maid on the issues flowing from climate changes and the interrelation of such a factor with international trade.

Learn more about the event at [Bruegel].

07 November 2023 @ 5:00 – 6:00 p.m. (GMT), Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), UK

Seeking Stability? The Foreign Policies of Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar

The event is valuable for the states over the world since the discussion will cover the field of strategic partnership of Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar. Panelists will explore the similarities and differences in how the three countries see their region, and what they hope to achieve through their actions and their relationships, including with global powers like the US, China and Russia, regional players like Iran, Israel and Turkey, and governments and non-state actors across the region.

Learn more about the event at [RUSI].

07 November 2023 @ 10:30 – 11:30 a.m. (GMT-4), Hudson Institute, USA

Unraveling North Korean Complexities: Security, Human Rights, and Diplomacy

The conversation will consider different aspects of security area in Asia. As North Korea's nuclear buildup, political repression, and strengthening ties with Russia and China undermine peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and in northeast Asia, there will be explored these issues and identified the most important avenues for bilateral cooperation in the United States–South Korea relationship as well as opportunities for multilateral cooperation throughout the region.

Learn more about the event at [Hudson Institute].

07 November 2023 @ at 11:00 a.m. (GMT+2), Institute for Economics and Peace, France

World Forum for Democracy: Economics of Peace

Democracy, with its emphasis on citizens' participation and the protection of individual rights, provides a framework for collective decision making, while limiting and distributing political power. This forum is

focusing on consideration of different challenges democracy faces.

Learn more about the event at [Institute for Economics and Peace].

Recent and upcoming book releases

Elliott Prasse-Freeman, ***Rights Refused: Grassroots Activism and State Violence in Myanmar***, Stanford University Press, 366 pages, published September 5, 2023, reviewed in [LSE].

Bernie Sanders, ***It's OK To Be Angry About Capitalism***, Penguin, 304 pages, to be released January 25, 2024, with a review in [LSE].

Perry Link, and Dazhi Wu, ***I Have No Enemies: The Life and Legacy of Liu Xiaobo***, Columbia University Press, 568 pages, published June 20, 2023. For a review, see [Foreign Affairs].

Calls

The **European Society of International Law (ESIL)** invites paper proposals for its ***2024 conference on "Technological Change and International Law,"*** to be held on September 5-6, 2024, in Vilnius, Lithuania. The deadline for abstract submission is January 31, 2024. For more information, see [ESIL].

The University of Michigan Law School invites paper proposals for its 10th Annual Junior Scholars Conference, which will take place in-person on April 12-13, 2024, in Ann Arbor, Michigan. The conference theme is "Reimagining the Public-Private Divide." The deadline for abstract submission is January 5, 2024. For more information, see [University of Michigan].

Jobs and Positions

The German-Southeast Asian Center of Excellence for Public Policy and Good Governance (CPG) seeks an **Office Manager** to be based in Bangkok, Thailand. Applications are accepted until not specified. More information is provided as [CPG].

The **German-Southeast Asian Center of Excellence for Public Policy and Good Governance (CPG)** seeks a **Asia Weekly Regional Editor (South-, Southeast-,**

or East Asia) to be based in Remote Working. Applications are accepted until open until filled. More information is provided as [CPG].

The **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** seeks a **Planning, Monitoring and Reporting Coordinator** to be based in Islamabad, Pakistan. Applications are accepted until November 7, 2023. More information is provided as [UNDP].

The **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** seeks a **Strategic Planning Analyst** to be based in Remote Work. Applications are accepted until November 8, 2023. More information is provided as [UNDP].

The **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** seeks a **Project Associate** to be based in Copenhagen, Denmark. Applications are accepted until November 8, 2023. More information is provided as [UNDP].

The **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** seeks a **Transportation Assistant** to be based in Kabul, Afghanistan. Applications are accepted until November 9, 2023. More information is provided as [UNDP].

The **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** seeks a **Project Manager** to be based in Nairobi, Kenya. Applications are accepted until November 8, 2023. More information is provided as [UNDP].

The **World Food Programme (WFP)** seeks a **Program Associate** to be based in Abeche, Chad. Applications are accepted until November 9, 2023. More information is provided as [WFP].

The **World Food Programme (WFP)** seeks a **Programme Policy Officer** to be based in Baghdad, Iraq. Applications are accepted until November 8, 2023. More information is provided as [WFP].

The **World Food Programme (WFP)** seeks a **Communications Assistant** to be based in Mali. Applications are accepted until November 8, 2023. More information is provided as [WFP].

The **World Food Programme (WFP)** seeks an **Assistant Logistic** to be based in Venezuela and Multiple locations. Applications are accepted until November 9, 2023. More information is provided as [WFP].

The **World Food Programme (WFP)** seeks a **Monitoring Officer** to be based in N'Djamena, Chad. Applications are accepted until November 9, 2023. More information is provided as [WFP].

The **United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)** seeks a **Human Resources Assistant**, to be based in Copenhagen, Denmark. Applications are accepted until November 7, 2023. More information is provided as [UNICEF].

The **United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)** seeks an **Emergency Specialist**, to be based in Cotonou, Benin. Applications are accepted until November 8, 2023. More information is provided as [UNICEF].

The **United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)** seeks a **Statistics & Monitoring Manager**, to be based in United States. Applications are accepted until November 9, 2023. More information is provided as [UNICEF].

The **United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)** seeks a **Data Science Specialist**, to be based in United States. Applications are accepted until November 9, 2023. More information is provided as [UNICEF].

The **United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)** seeks a **Consultancy**, to be based in Bangkok, Thailand. Applications are accepted until November 7, 2023. More information is provided as [UNICEF].

The **World Health Organization (WHO)** seeks a **Consultant**, to be based in Multiple locations. Applications are accepted until November 7, 2023. More information is provided as [WHO].

The **World Health Organization (WHO)** seeks a **Technical Officer**, to be based in Cairo, Egypt. Applications are accepted until November 15, 2023. More information is provided as [WHO].

The **World Health Organization (WHO)** seeks a **Finance Associate**, to be based in Manila, Philippines. Applications are accepted until November 8, 2023. More information is provided as [WHO].

The **World Health Organization (WHO)** seeks a **Scientist**, to be based in Geneva, Switzerland. Applications are accepted until November 14, 2023. More information is provided as [WHO].

The **World Health Organization (WHO)** seeks an **Associate Rehabilitation Officer**, to be based in Kyiv, Ukraine. Applications are accepted until November 15, 2023. More information is provided as [WHO].

The **United Nations Secretariate (UN)** seeks an **Associate Criminal Analyst** to be based in Erbil, Iraq. Applications are accepted until November 5, 2023. More information is provided as [UN].

The **United Nations Secretariate (UN)** seeks a **National Information Officer** to be based in Kyiv, Ukraine. Applications are accepted until November 7, 2023. More information is provided as [UN].

The **United Nations Secretariate (UN)** seeks an **Associate Witness Support Officer** to be based in Geneva, Switzerland. Applications are accepted until November 22, 2023. More information is provided as [UN].

The **United Nations Secretariate (UN)** seeks an **Associate Security Coordination Officer** to be based in Baghdad, Iraq. Applications are accepted until November 5, 2023. More information is provided as [UN].

The **United Nations Secretariate (UN)** seeks a **Field Security Assistant** to be based in Erbil, Iraq. Applications are accepted until November 10, 2023. More information is provided as [UN].

The **International Rescue Committee (IRC)** seeks a **Crisis Case Manager**, to be based in United States. Applications are accepted until December 24, 2023. More information is provided as [IRC].

The **International Rescue Committee (IRC)** seeks an **Access & Security Coordinator**, to be based in Tunisia. Applications are accepted until November 25, 2023. More information is provided as [IRC].

The **International Rescue Committee (IRC)** seeks a **Policy Advocacy and Communication Coordinator**, to be based in Tunisia. Applications are accepted until November 25, 2023. More information is provided as [IRC].

The **International Rescue Committee (IRC)** seeks a **Casework Supervisor**, to be based in United States. Applications are accepted until December 24, 2023. More information is provided as [IRC].

The **International Rescue Committee (IRC)** seeks a **Senior Caseworker**, to be based in United States. Applications are accepted until December 24, 2023. More information is provided as [IRC].

The **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)** seeks an **Emergency Programme Specialist**, to be based in

Rome, Italy. Applications are accepted until November 15, 2023. More information is provided as [FAO].

The **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)** seeks a **Disaster Risk Reduction Specialist**, to be based in Multiple locations. Applications are accepted until November 15, 2023. More information is provided as [FAO].

The **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)** seeks a **Technical Specialist**, to be based in Beirut, Lebanon. Applications are accepted until November 8, 2023. More information is provided as [FAO].

The **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)** seeks a **National Project Coordinator**, to be based in Hanoi, Vietnam. Applications are accepted until November 8, 2023. More information is provided as [FAO].

The **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)** seeks a **Warehouse Assistant**, to be based in Kabul, Afghanistan. Applications are accepted until November 8, 2023. More information is provided as [FAO].

The **International Organization for Migration (IOM)** seeks an **International consultant**, to be based in Armenia. Applications are accepted until November 10, 2023. More information is provided as [IOM].

The **International Organization for Migration (IOM)** seeks an **Investigator**, to be based in Geneva, Switzerland. Applications are accepted until November 12, 2023. More information is provided as [IOM].

The **International Organization for Migration (IOM)** seeks an **Operations Assistant**, to be based in United States. Applications are accepted until not specified. More information is provided as [IOM].

The **International Organization for Migration (IOM)** seeks a **Regional Project Development Officer**, to be based in Bangkok, Thailand. Applications are accepted until November 6, 2023. More information is provided as [IOM].

The **International Organization for Migration (IOM)** seeks a **Programme Officer**, to be based in Suva, Fiji. Applications are accepted until November 6, 2023. More information is provided as [IOM].

The **Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO)** seeks **Interns**, to be based in Vienna, Austria. Applications are accepted until October 31, 2023. More information is provided as [CTBTO].

The **Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO)** seeks a **Linux/Unix Support Technician**, to be based in Vienna, Austria. Applications are accepted until November 19, 2023. More information is provided as [CTBTO].

The **Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO)** seeks a **Maintenance Engineer**, to be based in Vienna, Austria. Applications are accepted until November 26, 2023. More information is provided as [CTBTO].

The **Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO)** seeks a **Support Technician**, to be based in Vienna, Austria. Applications are accepted until November 12, 2023. More information is provided as [CTBTO].

The **Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO)** seeks a **Director**, to be based in Vienna, Austria. Applications are accepted until November 10, 2023. More information is provided as [CTBTO].

The **United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)** seeks a **Support Services Manager**, to be based in Antananarivo, Madagascar. Applications are accepted until November 14, 2023. More information is provided as [UNOPS].

The **United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)** seeks a **Procurement Officer**, to be based in Geneva, Switzerland. Applications are accepted until November 8, 2023. More information is provided as [UNOPS].

The **United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)** seeks a **Programme Management Support Associate**, to be based in Angul, India. Applications are accepted until November 8, 2023. More information is provided as [UNOPS].

The **United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)** seeks a **Communications Senior Assistant**, to be based in Angul, India. Applications are accepted until November 8, 2023. More information is provided as [UNOPS].

The **United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)** seeks a **Deputy Project Manager**, to be based in Kabul, Afghanistan. Applications are accepted until November 14, 2023. More information is provided as [UNOPS].

The **Family Health International (FHI 360)** seeks am **Assistant Technical Officer**, to be based in Bama,

Nigeria. Applications are accepted until not specified. More information is provided as [FHI 360].

The **Family Health International (FHI 360)** seeks a **Documentation Specialist**, to be based in Manila, Philippines. Applications are accepted until not specified. More information is provided as [FHI 360].

The **Family Health International (FHI 360)** seeks a **HR Assistant**, to be based in Madagascar. Applications are accepted until not specified. More information is provided as [FHI 360].

The **Family Health International (FHI 360)** seeks am **Administrative Assistant**, to be based in Madagascar. Applications are accepted until not specified. More information is provided as [FHI 360].

The **Family Health International (FHI 360)** seeks a **Human Rights Grants Program Officer**, to be based in Bujumbura, Burundi. Applications are accepted until not specified. More information is provided as [FHI 360].

School of Politics and Global Studies at Arizona State University in Arizona State University, Tempe is inviting applications for a **Presidential Postdoctoral Fellowship**. Application submission deadline is not specified. For more details, see [Arizona State University].

Department of Political Science at Georgia State University in Atlanta, GA is inviting applications for a **Lecturer**. Application submission deadline is open until filled. For more details, see [Georgia State University].

Rice University in Texas, United States is inviting applications for a **Professor of Materials Science and Nanoengineering**. Application submission deadline is not specified. For more details, see [Rice University].

New Jersey City University in New Jersey, United States is inviting applications for an **Adjunct Faculty in Fire Science**. Application submission deadline is not specified. For more details, see [New Jersey City University].

School of Social Science and Global Studies at The University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg, Mississippi is inviting applications for an **Assistant Professor of Political Science**. Application submission deadline is not specified. For more details, see [The University of Southern Mississippi].

Department of Political Science at the University of Colorado Boulder in Colorado, United States is inviting applications for an **Assistant Professor**. Application submission deadline is November 14, 2023. For more details, see [University of Colorado Boulder].

Department of Art and Music Histories in the College of Arts and Sciences at Syracuse University in New York, United States is inviting applications for a **post-doctoral scholar specializing in East Asian art**. Application submission deadline is open until filled. For more details, see [Syracuse University].

Department of Material Science and Nanoengineering at Rice University in Texas, United States is inviting applications for an **Assistant Professor of Quantum Materials**. Application submission deadline is not specified. For more details, see [Rice University].

Worcester State University in Massachusetts, United States is inviting applications for an **Adjunct in Legal Studies and Political Science**. Application submission deadline is not specified. For more details, see [Worcester State University].

San Jose State University in California, United States is inviting applications for a **Lecturer**. Application submission deadline is not specified. For more details, see [San Jose State University].

Department of Political Science at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois is inviting applications for an **Assistant Professor of Instruction in Computational Social Science**. Application submission deadline is open until filled. For more details, see [Northwestern University].

University of North Georgia in Dahlonega, Georgia is inviting applications for an **Assistant Professor of Political Science**. Application submission deadline is not specified. For more details, see [University of Missouri].

Texas Southern University in Texas, United States is inviting applications for an **Assistant Professor in International Relations**. Application submission deadline is not specified. For more details, see [Texas Southern University].

St. Catherine University in Minnesota, United States is inviting applications for an **Adjunct in Economics**. Application submission deadline is November 30, 2023. For more details, see [St. Catherine University].

University of South Alabama in Mobile, Alabama is inviting applications for an **Assistant Professor in Public Administration**. Application submission deadline is open until filled. For more details, see [University of South Alabama].

Saint Catherine University in Minnesota, United States is inviting applications for an **Adjunct in Economics & Political Science**. Application submission deadline is November 30, 2023. For more details, see [Saint Catherine University].

Department of Quantitative Theory and Methods at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia is inviting applications for an **Associate Teaching Professor in Quantitative Theory and Methods**. Application submission deadline is December 20, 2023. For more details, see [Emory University].

University of California Santa Barbara in California, United States is inviting applications for an **Assistant Professor in Political Science**. Application submission deadline is not specified. For more details, see [University of California Santa Barbara].

University of Texas in Texas, United States is inviting applications for a **Lecturer in Political Science**. Application submission deadline is not specified. For more details, see [University of Texas].

Syracuse University in New York, United States is inviting applications for an **Associate Teaching Professor or Professor of Practice in Information Studies**. Application submission deadline is open until filled. For more details, see [Syracuse University].

European Network on Debt and Development is accepting applications for a **Senior Policy and Advocacy Officer** based in Brussels, Belgium until November 15, 2023. More information can be found at [Eurodad].

European Molecular Biology Laboratory is accepting applications for a **Scientific Project Manager** based in Heidelberg, Germany until December 14, 2023. More information can be found at [EMBL].

International Federation of Reproduction Rights Organisations is accepting applications for a **Legal/European Affairs Internship** based in Brussels, Belgium until November 15, 2023. More information can be found at [IFRRO].

Microsoft is accepting applications for a **Strategic Relations, European Government Affairs Coordinator** based in Brussels, Belgium until not

specified. More information can be found at [Microsoft].

International Federation of Reproduction Rights Organisations is accepting applications for an **Assistant Policy Adviser** based in Brussels, Belgium until November 27, 2023. More information can be found at [IFRRO].

International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems is accepting applications for a **Project Manager** based in Brussels, Belgium until November 20, 2023. More information can be found at [IPES-Food].

Human Rights Watch is accepting applications for a **Director** based in Brussels, Belgium until November 19, 2023. More information can be found at [HRW].

European Fuel Manufacturers Association is accepting applications for a **Communication Trainee** based in Brussels, Belgium until November 20, 2023. More information can be found at [FuelsEurope].

International Center for Future Generations is accepting applications for a **Programme Lead** based in Brussels, Belgium until November 20, 2023. More information can be found at [ICFG].

European Organisation for the Exploitation of Meteorological Satellites is accepting applications for a **Project Controller** based in Darmstadt, Germany until not specified. More information can be found at [EUMETSAT].

New York University Abu Dhabi is accepting applications for a **Post-Doctoral Associate in the Division of Social Science** based in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates until January 23, 2024. More information can be found at [New York University Abu Dhabi].

William & Mary is accepting applications for an **Assistant Teaching Professor of International Relations** based in Virginia, United States until open until filled. More information can be found at [William & Mary].

University of Nebraska is accepting applications for an **Assistant Professor in International Relations** based in Lincoln, United States until open until filled. More information can be found at [University of Nebraska].

Lamar University is accepting applications for an **Assistant Professor of Political Science** based in

Beaumont, United States until open until filled. More information can be found at [Lamar University].

Wake Forest University is accepting applications for an **Assistant Professor in Social and Political Philosophy** based in Winston Salem, United States until November 27, 2023. More information can be found at [Wake Forest University].

Team:

Aida Pachedji (ap), Aimpavee Kiratiakkrasak (ak), Dan Kristian Rivera (kr), Duc Quang Ly (dql), Griffin Allan (ga), Hanzaw Aung (ha), Harshita Prashar (hp), Isabelle Chua (ic), Jonathan Riley (jr), Joseoh Black (jb), Kanokphong Visetvoharn, Khin Ohnmar Moe (km), Lachlan Foster (lf), Lawrence Brenner (lb), Lucas Meier (lm), Maria Christina Wong (mw), Morten Strantzen (ms), Muhammad Hussain Amin (mha), Noor Afrose (na), Olena Krytska, Philipp Schüßler (ps), Phoo Wai Yan Myint (pm), Sai Laung Kam (slk), Saranya Setthi (ss), Tarazi Mohammed Sheikh (tms), Tomwit Jarnson (tj), Venus Phuangkom, Wai Yan Phyo Naing (wn), Worrawit Sirijintana (ws), Xiangyi Chen (xc)

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