NEWS CLIPPINGS

"THE NAVY: PROTECTING THE SEAS, SECURING OUR FUTURE"

Date: 06 Nov 2021

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### A. NAVY NEWS/COVID NEWS PHOTOS

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<td>2 Vaccine willingness rises to 64% - SWS</td>
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<td>Community preparedness vs. tsunami vital: Solidum</td>
<td><a href="https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1158925">https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1158925</a></td>
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<td>Marines’ new home starting to rise in Bataan</td>
<td><a href="https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1510958/marines-new-home-starting-to-rise-in-bataan">https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1510958/marines-new-home-starting-to-rise-in-bataan</a></td>
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<td>Maritime agencies hold drills in Surigao del Norte</td>
<td><a href="https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1511031/maritime-agencies-hold-drills-in-surigao-del-norte">https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1511031/maritime-agencies-hold-drills-in-surigao-del-norte</a></td>
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<td>PH needs West Philippine Sea policy that no president can change—expert</td>
<td><a href="https://globalnation.inquirer.net/200098/ph-needs-west-philippine-sea-policy-that-no-president-can-change-expert">https://globalnation.inquirer.net/200098/ph-needs-west-philippine-sea-policy-that-no-president-can-change-expert</a></td>
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**AFP RELATED**

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<td>PH, Spain sign intel protection pact</td>
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<td><a href="https://morningstaronline.co.uk/article/china-rejects-us-claims-it-is-increasing-its-nuclear-arsenal">https://morningstaronline.co.uk/article/china-rejects-us-claims-it-is-increasing-its-nuclear-arsenal</a></td>
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<td>Beijing slams US for refusing entry to students, fellows linked to military institutions</td>
<td><a href="https://www.aninews.in/news/world/asia/beijing-slams-us-for-refusing-entry-to-students-fellows-linked-to-military-institutions20211105163835/">https://www.aninews.in/news/world/asia/beijing-slams-us-for-refusing-entry-to-students-fellows-linked-to-military-institutions20211105163835/</a></td>
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<td><a href="https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/17873/china-space-weaponization">https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/17873/china-space-weaponization</a></td>
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<td><a href="https://www.defenseworld.net/news/30719/Mast_Affixed_on_China's_Third_Aircraft_Carrier">https://www.defenseworld.net/news/30719/Mast_Affixed_on_China's_Third_Aircraft_Carrier</a></td>
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<td>Xi expands wartime mobilization powers as Taiwan tensions rise</td>
<td><a href="https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/Xi-expands-wartime-mobilization-powers-as-Taiwan-tensions-rise">https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/Xi-expands-wartime-mobilization-powers-as-Taiwan-tensions-rise</a></td>
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<td>China rushes to debunk rumours of war with Taiwan after fake draft texts</td>
<td><a href="https://www.asiaone.com/china/china-rushes-debunk-rumours-war-taiwan-after-fake-draft-texts">https://www.asiaone.com/china/china-rushes-debunk-rumours-war-taiwan-after-fake-draft-texts</a></td>
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<td><a href="https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20211105001400325?section=national/defense">https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20211105001400325?section=national/defense</a></td>
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<td><a href="https://www.scmp.com/comment/opinion/article/3154722/malaysia-s-quiet-diplomacy-and-expanded-defence-ties-show-its-no">https://www.scmp.com/comment/opinion/article/3154722/malaysia-s-quiet-diplomacy-and-expanded-defence-ties-show-its-no</a></td>
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<td><a href="https://defence-blog.com/australia-receives-4-more-f-35-fighter-jets/">https://defence-blog.com/australia-receives-4-more-f-35-fighter-jets/</a></td>
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<td><a href="https://www.aspiestrategist.org.au/australia-already-has-a-submarine-capability-gap/">https://www.aspiestrategist.org.au/australia-already-has-a-submarine-capability-gap/</a></td>
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<td><a href="https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/we-must-be-on-our-toes-as-war-tactics-now-dynamic-pm-modi/articleshow/87531156.cms">https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/we-must-be-on-our-toes-as-war-tactics-now-dynamic-pm-modi/articleshow/87531156.cms</a></td>
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<td><a href="https://defenceview.in/india-joins-elite-club-of-aircraft-carrier-manufacturers/">https://defenceview.in/india-joins-elite-club-of-aircraft-carrier-manufacturers/</a></td>
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<td><a href="https://nationalinterest.org/blog/reboot/india-pakistan-nuclear-arms-race-should-concern-you-195630">https://nationalinterest.org/blog/reboot/india-pakistan-nuclear-arms-race-should-concern-you-195630</a></td>
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<td><a href="https://asiaplustj.info/en/news/world/20211105/is-terror-group-uses-china-to-vilify-taliban">https://asiaplustj.info/en/news/world/20211105/is-terror-group-uses-china-to-vilify-taliban</a></td>
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<td><a href="https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2021/11/05/afgh-n05.html">https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2021/11/05/afgh-n05.html</a></td>
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<td><a href="https://www.thedefensepost.com/2021/11/05/importance-biodefense-covid/">https://www.thedefensepost.com/2021/11/05/importance-biodefense-covid/</a></td>
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<td><a href="https://www.nzherald.co.nz/world/the-insurrectionist-and-the-jihadi-a-parallel-path-to-radicalisation/P4ELWEWD3R7CE6KQTTEENFSCY/">https://www.nzherald.co.nz/world/the-insurrectionist-and-the-jihadi-a-parallel-path-to-radicalisation/P4ELWEWD3R7CE6KQTTEENFSCY/</a></td>
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<td><a href="https://wavellroom.com/2021/11/05/the-submarine-affair-an-american-strategic-paradox/">https://wavellroom.com/2021/11/05/the-submarine-affair-an-american-strategic-paradox/</a></td>
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<td><a href="https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RRA500/RRA537-1/RAND_RRA537-1.pdf">https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RRA500/RRA537-1/RAND_RRA537-1.pdf</a></td>
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<td><a href="https://mb.com.ph/2021/11/06/govt-administers-1m-covid-19-shots-in-single-day/">https://mb.com.ph/2021/11/06/govt-administers-1m-covid-19-shots-in-single-day/</a></td>
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<td><a href="https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/what-you-need-know-about-coronavirus-right-now-2021-03-02/">https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/what-you-need-know-about-coronavirus-right-now-2021-03-02/</a></td>
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Vaccine willingness rises to 64% – SWS

By JANVIC MATEO

Six in every 10 Filipinos are now willing to be vaccinated against COVID-19 or have already received their jabs, according to a recent survey conducted by Social Weather Stations (SWS).

The survey, conducted from Sept. 27 to 30 with the results released yesterday, showed 64 percent of adult Filipinos willing to get vaccinated against the viral illness.

This total consists of 25 percent already done with a second dose; 10 percent done with a first dose and 29 percent who said that they are willing to get vaccinated.

"This is twice the 32 percent who said they are willing to get vaccinated," SWS head Ramon Arboleda said.

The results showed that at the time of the survey, the number of those who already completed doses was at 61 percent in Metro Manila, 22 percent in the rest of Luzon, 15 percent in the Visayas and 16 percent in Mindanao.

SWS said willingness to get vaccinated was highest among college graduates (83 percent), followed by junior high school graduates (68 percent), elementary graduates (59 percent) and non-elementary graduates (37 percent).

Overall unwillingness to get vaccinated is highest among non-elementary graduates at one-third of the respondents, it added.

The survey had 1,500 adult respondents and has a sampling margin of error of plus or minus 2.5 percent for national percentages.

From Page 1

Vaccine

are willing to get vaccinated in a similar survey in May, and nine points above the 55 percent (10 percent vaccinated, 45 percent willing) in June.

In contrast, the number of those unwilling to get vaccinated dropped to just 18 percent, from 33 percent in May and 21 percent in June.

Those who are uncertain fell to 19 percent, from 35 percent in May and 24 percent in June.

According to SWS, the number of those willing to get vaccinated rose in all areas compared to the most recent survey conducted last June.

In Metro Manila, the percentage of those willing to get vaccinated rose from 76 percent (26 percent vaccinated with at least first dose, 49 percent willing, correctly rounded) to 87 percent (71 percent vaccinated, 16 percent willing).

It also increased by 11 points among respondents in the rest of Luzon, from 54 percent (eight percent vaccinated, 46 percent willing) to 65 percent (35 percent vaccinated, 29 percent willing).

Vaccine willingness also rose in the Visayas, from 48 percent (six percent vaccinated, 41 percent willing, correctly rounded) to 56 percent (21 percent vaccinated, 35 percent willing), and in Mindanao, from 48 percent (six percent vaccinated, 41 percent willing, correctly rounded) to 54 percent (24 percent vaccinated, 29 percent willing, correctly rounded).
National Vaccination Day: 5 M eyed for inoculation

By SHEILA CRISOSTOMO

Some five million Filipinos are being eyed for inoculation during the three-day National Vaccination Day being prepared by the national government, the Department of Health (DOH) said yesterday.

According to DOH Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire, the government is gearing for the holding of simultaneous mass vaccination activities.

"We are now on initial planning and coordination stages. This will be whole-of-government activities and all agencies will be mobilized to reach the five million (vaccinates)," she noted.

Based on initial plans, the vaccination sites would be expanded to include government offices, department stores and other public places.

Vergeire said they would also seek the help of health care workers from the public and private sectors, including those self-employed.

She said they have already

Meanwhile, he said a total of 62.4 million doses of COVID-19 jabs have been administered as of Thursday.

In Metro Manila, more than 9.5 million or 97.45 percent of the target population received their first dose while over 8.6 million or 88.86 are fully vaccinated.

Roque said the country is expected to receive 1,733,940 more doses of Pfizer vaccines procured by the government through the Asian Development Bank.

In his public address early this week, President Duterte said he has directed Interior Secretary Eduardo Año to impose sanctions on local government units that fail to administer COVID-19 vaccines to their constituents in the "most expeditious manner."  

With Helen Flores
In-person college classes at 50% capacity OK'd

By ROMINA CABRERA

Limited face-to-face (F2F) classes in all degree programs with up to 50 percent capacity will be allowed for all areas under the more lenient Alert Level 2, including Metro Manila, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) announced yesterday.

"This will happen in areas where vaccinations are high, probably in Metro Manila universities. We ask everyone to get vaccinated so that we have now other options to open our classes so we can slowly bring our students and get them to schools," CHED chair Prospero de Vera said.

However, higher education institutions (HEIs) need to meet three requirements to be approved for in-person classes: 80 percent vaccination rates, retrofitting of facilities, and inspection/approval by CHED regional offices.

Local government units (LGUs) should also concur with the resumption of in-person classes in their areas. A technical working group is currently crafting guidelines for the resumption of all degree programs that could be released as early as next week.

Under the revised guidelines, HEIs will be given the authority to adjust and stop their F2F classes depending on the classification even without a directive from the national government.

"To me, they don't need national government intervention there. If the coordination with LGUs is good, the schools can do it on their own. When will it start? It depends on how fast they can comply and how fast can they be inspected and approved," De Vera added.

"The CHED head again trimmed down questions on mandatory vaccination for students, stressing that the primary concern now is to "vaccinate all individuals who want to be vaccinated.'

Meanwhile, over 485 education program supervisors, school heads, and teachers from 100 identified public schools took part in the Department of Education's virtual seminar in preparation for the pilot implementation of F2F classes in basic education.

The sessions included lessons on Designing Learning Progress Checklist, Implementing Considerations for Inclusivity, Developing the Weekly Home Learning Plan and Understanding the Blended Learning Process as the critical areas to be considered in the combined in-school and off-school approaches.

Booster shots

To keep students safe, priority sectors like health workers, students, teachers and school employees will need booster shots once F2F classes are implemented, National Task Force against COVID-19 spokesman Restituto Padilla said on One News.

"The vaccine supply in NCR is enough to administer booster shots. The NCR needs booster shot to stay protecteder shots and bring more doses," Padilla said, adding that the country purchased 34.8 million jabs in October, with more deliveries arriving daily.

"The ramping up of the vaccines for all priority sectors is in time for the face-to-face classes. Our target is vaccinate 90 percent of the teachers, students and school personnel to keep them, especially the students in pilot areas, safe," Padilla said.

He added that government would increase the vaccination rollout to cover all 1.5 million health workers.
'No vax, no entry'

Palace tells establishments to strictly enforce policy

By HELEN FLORES

"If you will accept unvaccinated customers, COVID-19 will surely spread. If this happens, we will have to escalate alert levels again and you will have to close down your businesses. So to the businessmen, if you want to keep your establishments open, enforce the 'no vaccine, no entry' policy," presidential spokesman Harry Roque said.

Roque made the appeal as the government downgraded Metro Manila's alert level from 3 to 2 until Nov. 21, allowing higher indoor capacity for several establishments. Under Alert Level 2, maximum operational capacity for several businesses and activities is 50 percent for indoor venues for fully vaccinated adults. The ca-

Capacity of outdoor venues was also increased to 70 percent, provided all employees of establishments are fully vaccinated.

Roque also warned the public against faking vaccination cards, saying that individuals caught using fake vaccine cards can face jail time.

"We have a law on falsification of public documents and the vaccination card is a public document. You can be imprisoned for that," he said.

In the absence of a law mandating COVID-19 vaccination, the Department of Health (DOH) is looking at the possibility of making it compulsory only among workers in specific sectors like government, health care...
No vax From Page 1

and those who “are really facing clients.”

“What we are proposing right now is we identify the specific sectors (that) really have to be mandated to being vaccinated,” DOH Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire said on One News’ “The Chiefs.”

However, she pointed out that this could not be done due to lack of legislation, citing an earlier opinion of Justice Secretary Menardo Guevarra.

Vergeire said the government already used encouragement, nudges and incentivizing vaccinated individuals to encourage the public to get inoculated but there are still “some forms of resistance among other sectors of the population.”

Rejected

Vice presidential aspirant Sen. Bong Go rejected proposals to make the COVID-19 vaccination mandatory. Instead, he urged the national government to strengthen its vaccination drive to convince more people to get inoculated.

“In my opinion, instead of making vaccination mandatory, we should focus on more efforts to convince our countrymen to get the jabs,” Go said, suggesting the offering of incentives.

For Go, forcing people to get vaccinated is counterproductive, and that the better way is to ensure that the vaccines reach every community in the country.

“If we need to go from house to house, we should do it so we can make sure nobody is left behind in our recovery,” Go said.

According to Vergeire, the biggest resistance comes from senior citizens but there is no official survey why seniors were refusing the jabs. Because of this, Vergeire said the Inter-Agency Task Force on Emerging Infectious Diseases is already considering making inoculation mandatory.

“Based on observation... a lot of our senior citizens are hesitant, maybe because of culture, fear of reactions and maybe because they say ‘I do not go out so I will not be affected by this virus.’ These are the common things that we hear from our local governments,” she maintained.

The government aims to inoculate 8,254,531 senior citizens but only 4,785,828 or 57.98 percent of them have so far completed their shots.

Data from the National Vaccination Operations Center showed that as of Nov. 2, about 60,406,424 doses have already been administered while 27,749,809 Filipinos have been fully vaccinated.

— With Sheila Crisostomo,
Emmanuel Tupas
DOH NOW CONSIDERING MANDATORY VACCINATION

The health official was reacting to remarks a day earlier by Secretary Carlito Galvez Jr., chief implementer of the National Task Force Against COVID-19 (NTF), who said a vaccine mandate in the form of an executive order may be necessary to ensure protection of inoculated families.

“Now this is one of the things we are looking at because we will never achieve the immunity needed by our population if there are still sectors of society that remain unvaccinated,” Vergeire said.

“One of the ways we can do this is to make it mandatory,” she said during a press briefing.

This was a departure from her statement in April when she said that it was “the right of a person to decide on his own if he shall receive or will not receive the vaccine,” citing “principles that we adhere to” and the recommendations of the World Health Organization (WHO) that vaccination should be voluntary.

But she also said that people had the “moral obligation” to protect themselves, their families and communities, and the “whole population” against COVID-19. She added, however, that vaccination could not yet be mandated because the vaccines then were at the “developmental stage.”

According to the WHO, herd immunity is the “indirect protection” against an infectious disease that happens when people become immune either through vaccination or natural immunity developed after a previous infection.

The Philippine government is targeting 70 percent of the country’s 110 million population for inoculation to achieve herd immunity. The WHO said the proportion of population to be vaccinated for herd immunity against COVID-19 is not yet known. Some experts are saying this may have to be bigger because new variants of the coronavirus are emerging that are more resistant to vaccines.

During Friday’s press briefing, Vergeire said the country’s vaccine supplies were continuing to come in and vaccine confidence had "tremed}"
ous improved." But due to fears of adverse reaction to the jabs and brand preference some sectors were still hesitant to get the shots and this was affecting the government’s efforts to speed up the inoculations, she said.

A Sept. 27-30 survey by the Social Weather Stations found three in five adult Filipinos, or 64 percent, saying they were willing to get vaccinated, up from 55 percent in June and 52 percent in May. (See related story on page A6)

28M out of 77M

A total of 62,476,334 shots have been administered out of the 106,912,460 doses that have arrived in the country as of Nov. 4.

The government has already used other means to boost jab acceptance — especially in the provinces through information drives, incentives and house-to-house vaccination, Vergara said. But it wants to "push its campaign forward" to achieve herd immunity sooner, she said.

As of Thursday, only about 28.7 million have been fully vaccinated out of the 77 million targeted for herd immunity in the country.

In Metro Manila, 88.86 percent have been fully vaccinated.

The government wants to fully vaccinate at least 50 million Filipinos by the end of the year, according to presidential spokesperson Harry Roque.

He said a record 1.119 million doses were administered in one day on Nov. 4, and more than 900,000 doses each on Nov. 2 and Nov. 3.

"If we continue to vaccinate almost one million a day, we will be able to reach our target of population protection in December. Keep up the good work, Filipinos," Roque said at a press briefing.

4Ps beneficiaries

Galvez had said that beneficiaries of the Pantawid Pamilyang Filipino Program (4Ps), who belong to the A5 group, or indigents, would be among the targets of a vaccine mandate.

Based on the Nov. 4 data from the national COVID-19 vaccination dashboard, only 25.4 percent, or 3.27 million, of the A5 group are fully vaccinated.

The same data showed 58.7 percent of the elderly or 4.85 million had completed their doses against COVID-19.

The rest of the population categorized as B and C groups have a vaccination rate of 2.5 percent, or just 426,496 individuals. These include teachers, social workers, other government and essential workers, indigenous Filipinos, people at higher risk than senior citizens, overseas Filipinos, other members of the workforce and the rest of the population.

An infectious disease expert was concerned that only a little over half of seniors nationwide had been fully vaccinated. He noted that this age group had the highest morbidity and mortality, and would have a more severe disease.

Dr. Benjamin Co of the University Santo Tomas Hospital told the Inquirer that the elderly "should always be priority" for inoculation and the government should aim to vaccinate 80 to 100 percent of this age group.

After starting the inoculation of minors age 12 to 17 the government may start administering booster shots or third doses of the COVID-19 vaccine.

FDA reviewing boosters

Food and Drug Administration Director General Eric Domingo on Friday said a review of the administration of an extra COVID-19 dose, including all possible combinations of the vaccines, may be completed in about two weeks.

He said the administration of an extra dose may start this month to a "very selected group" — the health-care workers, the immunocompromised and the people at risk of getting severe COVID.

He said vaccine manufacturers would have to apply for a new emergency use authorization (EUA) for vaccines for those below 12 years old.

He expects Pfizer, which was recently authorized to use its vaccines on young American children, to apply for an amendment to its EUA this month to allow the use of its COVID-19 vaccine on children 5 to 11 years old, he said. — WITH REPORTS FROM LELA R. SALAZAR AND INQUIRER RESEARCH INC.
NCR face-to-face classes OK'd
All degree programs covered at maximum 50% capacity — CHED

Limited face-to-face classes for all degree programs in the tertiary level in Metro Manila and other areas under Alert Level 2 will now be allowed.

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) announced this Friday, Nov. 5, as the National Capital Region (NCR) eased to Alert Level 2 from Nov. 5 to 21, 2021.

"In the IATF [Inter-Agency Task Force], we discussed the other day that in places that are already under category 2 [Alert Level 2], we will allow now limited face-to-face up to 50 percent capacity in all degree programs in these areas," CHED Chairman Prospero de Vera said during the ceremonial vaccination of tertiary students at the Palawan State University.
However, De Vera clarified that limited in-person classes for all degree programs will only be possible under certain conditions. "The students, faculty and employees are vaccinated, they should have high vaccination rate," he said.

Another major consideration is the approval coming from the local government units (LGUs) to reopen higher education institutions (HEIs) in their respective areas. "The local government must be okay with it," De Vera said.

"Additionally, De Vera said facilities in these HEIs "must be retrofitted and inspected" by CHED, the Department of Health (DOH) and the LGUs.

"In schools like that, we will have the second order of limited face-to-face which is to allow it in all degree programs so that there will be an incentive to get vaccinated," De Vera said.

De Vera said that this "would probably happen in areas where vaccination rate is already high like Metro Manila universities."

Given this, he once again called on the students to "get vaccinated so we will have other options to open our classes." He also urged HEIs to start retrofitting their facilities, "so that we can slowly bring back our students to school."

"That is the direction that we are taking [and] hopefully by the second semester or January or February, we can do this already," he added.
Duterte wants De Lima as 'first witness' before ICC

By ALEXIS ROMERO

President Duterte wants detained opposition Sen. Leila de Lima to be his "first witness" if an International Criminal Court (ICC) trial on the killings tied to his drug war commences.

Speaking during a meeting of a regional anti-insurgency task force in Palawan yesterday, Duterte insisted that the ICC has no jurisdiction over him because the Rome Statute, which created the tribunal, was not published in the government's official publication.

"If you insist on prosecuting me before the ICC to the locals, listen for your education: nothing will happen. You cannot bring me within the jurisdiction of your ICC because here in the Philippines, you have deprived me of my constitutional right that no person shall be deprived of life, liberty and property without due process of law," Duterte said.

"What is the due process? The publication. Ngayon, manigas kayo.

(drop dead)," he added.

While insisting that he won't face "white judges," Duterte said he is willing to go to the ICC "without necessarily submitting to its jurisdiction."

"But I would love to go to where that Hague court is without necessarily submitting to its jurisdiction, I would like to give a speech there," the President said.

"And worse comes to worse, if there is really a trial, then my first witness will be De Lima. She keeps on talking," he added.

Duterte did not elaborate on the speech he wants to deliver before the ICC or why he wants De Lima to be his witness.

De Lima, a vocal critic of Duterte's narcotics crackdown, is in jail on drug-related charges, including accepting money from convicted drug lords. The senator has denied involvement in the illegal drug trade and has accused the Duterte administration of "political persecution."

Officials, however, maintained that the senator is in jail for violating drug laws, not because she is a member of the opposition.

An ICC pre-trial chamber has allowed a probe on Duterte's drug war, saying there is "reasonable basis" to proceed with an investigation on the killings connected with his war on drugs.

According to the chamber, the crime against humanity of murder "appears to have been committed."
Duterte promotes 12 Napolcom officials

President Duterte has promoted 12 officials of the National Police Commission (Napolcom).

Duterte signed on Oct. 19 the appointment papers of 12 newly promoted directors from the Napolcom’s central and regional offices.

Napolcom vice chairman Vitaliano Aguirre II, during a virtual ceremony, administered the oath of office of the newly promoted officials.

Promoted to the rank of Director III are Editha Puddock, staff service chief of the Napolcom’s Crime Prevention and Coordination Service (CPCS); Angelito Ravanera, who heads the agency’s Calabarzon field office; and Mimaropa regional director Aileen Arcin.

Nine were promoted to the rank of Director II: Renato Santos, assistant staff service chief of the Installations and Logistics Service; Edilberto Pardinas, assistant staff service chief of the CPCS; Arlene Castro-Coo, Central Luzon assistant regional director; Golophine Chavez-España, Calabarzon assistant regional director; Zamboanga Peninsula assistant regional director Pablito Abad Jr.; Soccsksargen assistant regional director Veronica Hatague; Bangsamoro Autonomous Region assistant regional director Esmail Panda; Caraga assistant regional director Rolita Fatima Ortiz and Leilani Vecina, head executive assistant for the Ilocos region.

"The President’s approval of the appointment of our newly promoted Napolcom directors will definitely redound to the overall performance effectiveness of the Napolcom and continuous rendering of quality service to our clients and the public," Aguirre said in a statement.

Emmanuel Tupas
PUV drivers may not get fuel subsidy, group warns

A group of public utility vehicle (PUV) drivers in San Juan City expressed apprehension over the possibility that they will not receive the fuel subsidy the government will release soon.

Rolando Miguel Carrasco, who heads the San Juan Kalempor-Little Baguio Drivers and Operators Association, told The STAR only PUV operators are likely to benefit from the subsidy if the government pushes through with releasing the money to operators instead of directly giving it to the PUV drivers.

"If the government is serious in assisting burdened PUV drivers like us, jeepney drivers, they should place the money intended for us under our name, not under the names of the operators," he said.

Carrasco said the fuel subsidy should go to the drivers, noting that the operators "are not the ones buying diesel for the daily operations of PUVs."

Their group never received any assistance from the government since the pandemic started, according to Carrasco.

The government earlier approved P1 billion as fuel subsidy for PUV drivers amid rising prices of fuel in recent weeks. –Jose Rodel Clapano
Duterte warns of return of illegal drug menace

By EJSELSON A. QUISUMBING

President Duterte has warned the next administration about the possible "return" of illegal drugs if the person placed at the helm doesn’t share his stance against narcotics.

"Yung drug remains to be a corrosive and corrupting factor in every strata of government. I’m not just saying about the police, labat (everywhere)," Duterte said Thursday, Nov. 4 at Puerto Princesa Port in Palawan.

"So things to kung ano ang mangyari sa — kung wala na ako and mag-ano ka, magkawang ka. Kasi ginagamit ko ngayon mo ‘yan, baba ng droga. Sigurado ‘yan (So I’ll just observe what will happen once I’m gone and you become lax. Once you become lax, drugs will come back. That is sure)," said the Chief Executive, who attended the inauguration of the Puerto Princesa Seaport Expansion Project and the Philippine Coast Guard Kalayaan Station.

Duterte will end his Palace term on June 30, 2022. He had earlier bailed at running for vice president in the May 9, 2022 polls and claimed that he would instead retire from politics.

"Buti na lang ‘yung kung ang papalit (It would be good if the successor) would have the same dimension as... Alden, kasi (Because for me), there must be law and order before anything else. Without law and order, wala (it’s useless). Kanya-kanya tayo. Kagaya noon mga tao – kung mayo na, sa mga mayors na involved (It’s every man for himself. Like before, there were several mayors involved)," he said.

Duterte was alluding to the time early in his term when he would announce the names of personalities in his "drug lists." Such list would include high-ranking members of police and elected public officials.

"It can be argued that then—Davao City Mayor Duterte’s hardline stance against criminality and illegal drugs swayed over 16 million Filipinos to vote for him in the 2016 presidential race, which he won in landslide fashion.

His famous campaign promise was for him to totally eradicate the drug menace in three to six months’ time. As he counted the years of his presidency, Duterte admitted that his war on drugs would take the entirety of his six-year tenure in Malacañang.

"You know, you only have to have one addict in a family and that family becomes dysfunctional. Marahil ‘yan, maraming namatay (A lot of people have died)." Duterte said.

"Hindi alam ng human rights ‘yan. Walang kaalam—alamin ang human rights..."

"Yang mga pinupot ang ulo, nire—rape (The human rights people don’t know that. They have no clue about those being decapitate, being raped). Iyon iba hindi na lang nagre—report (Others aren’t reported at all), but domestic crimes are abundant in a place where there is a lot of 'shabu' sold," he said.

Duterte’s drug war has also become synonymous with bloodshed, so much that it has caught the attention of the International Criminal Court (ICC)."
CHR prods Congress not to push for death penalty

By Krixia Subingsubing
@krixiaINQ

The Commission on Human Rights (CHR) on Friday urged Congress to scrap all pending proposals seeking the reimposition of death penalty in the country after its main proponents, running mates Sen. Panfilo Lacson and Sen. Vicente Sotto III, admitted they have changed their minds about capital punishment.

In a statement, Commissioner Karen Gomez-Dumpit welcomed the senators' statements abandoning their support for death penalty after a Netflix crime show "opened their eyes" about the possibility of ending the life of an innocent person.

Before this, Lacson and Sotto, who are running for president and vice president, had been staunch champions of capital punishment for heinous crimes.

Their statements, Gomez-Dumpit said, "was a win for the sanctity of life."

"Affirm right to life"

We also hope that this is enough to turn the tide in the Senate and halt the proposals to reintroduce capital punishment in the country. We ask other legislators who have given their support for this counterproductive measure to reconsider their position and urge them to affirm the right to life and dignity of all persons," she added.

The CHR has long maintained that capital punishment, which was abolished during President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's term in 2006, runs counter to the basic principles of human rights and is an ineffective deterrent to crime.

Moreover, an October 2020 study by the CHR also showed that seven out of 10 Filipinos, when provided with alternative punishments other than the death penalty, would not support capital punishment.

"Prison terms preferred"

Likewise, a majority of Filipinos also prefer prison terms for those convicted of serious drug crimes—a surprising finding considering President Duterte’s take-no-prisoners approach under his brutal war on drugs, supposedly propelled by public demand.

Overall, however, only three out of 10 Filipinos have expressed the strongest support for the death penalty.

This could mean public support for capital punishment may actually just reflect the "policy inclinations of the government, only because the government framed the death penalty as the only solution without providing options for alternative punishments," the research concluded.

The commission's study revealed that the support for death penalty mainly lies in wanting to be safe and secure. The heightened fear of becoming a victim to a crime is pushing Filipinos to support harsher penalties. However, the harshness of the penalty is not a deterrent but the certainty of punishment," Gomez-Dumpit said.

AG
US Navy sacks top officers of nuke sub in collision

WASHINGTON—The US Navy on Thursday sacked the commanding officer, executive officer and top enlisted sailor of the nuclear-powered submarine USS Connecticut that crashed into an underwater mountain in the South China Sea, saying the Oct. 2 accident was preventable. The crash damaged the forward ballast tanks of the Connecticut and forced it to sail on the surface for a week to reach Guam. Eleven sailors were injured in the accident.—APP
New PNP chief named? Fake news, says Año

By EMMANUEL TUPAS

Interior Secretary Eduardo Año yesterday denied that President Duterte has appointed a successor to Philippine National Police (PNP) chief Gen. Guillermo Eleazar.

Año made the statement after an alleged invitation to a retirement ceremony and change of command ceremony — which named PNP Directorate for Operations (DO) director Maj. Gen. Rhodel Sermonia as the next chief of the police force — made the rounds on social media platform Facebook.

The Facebook post said the ceremony will be held at Camp Crame on Nov. 12, a day before Eleazar bows out of the service.

"Fake news 'yan," Año said in a message on Viber.

Año on Tuesday submitted to Duterte a list of five names recommended to replace Eleazar, who will retire from the service next week.

Sermonia, in a statement posted on Facebook, denied that the "malicious" post came from his camp.

"We take offense at whoever orchestrated this. We believe this is a work of sabotours who wish to put malice on the President’s upcoming appointment of the new PNP chief," he said.

Sermonia has asked the PNP Anti-Cybercrime Group to investigate the source of the posting on social media.

He warned people behind the post that they would be held accountable for spreading false information.

Sermonia, a member of Philippine Military Academy Class 1989, was recently embroiled in a controversy after Sen. Panfilo Lacson accused him of ordering police officers to conduct a census of at least 30 percent of residents in every barangay in the country using funds of the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict.
Westmincom gets Blackhawk helicopters

ZAMBOANGA CITY – The Armed Forces of the Philippines deployed Blackhawk helicopters to the Western Mindanao Command (Westmincom) on Thursday for its operations against the remaining terrorists in Mindanao.

Westmincom chief Maj. Gen. Alfredo Rosario Jr. said the Tactical Operations Wing-Western Mindanao, the major Air Force unit under its command and control, received the helicopters.

Rosario did not say how many units were deployed. Two helicopters showed their presence with a low pass over the city.

Eleven Sikorsky S-70i Black Hawk helicopters have been delivered to the country since December last year. Five more units are expected before the end of the year.

Rosario said the deployment of Blackhawk helicopters would boost their capability in both “lethal and non-lethal” operations.

“We are very grateful that the top brass considered the deployment of these air assets, which will greatly contribute to the accomplishment of our missions here in Western Mindanao,” he said.  

– Roel Faneñor
2 Black Hawk chopper idineploy sa Western Mindanao

Edwin Andrew’s Airbase, nagsagawa ng low-pass ang mga helicopter sa buong Zamboanga City kung saang tinagap ng Tactical Operations Wing-Western Mindanao (TOW-WM), ang Philippine Air Force unit na kontrolado ng WestMinCom.

Bago isinagawa ang welcome ceremony sa Edwin Andrew’s Airbase, nagsagawa ng low-pass ang mga helicopter sa buong Zamboanga City. "We are very grateful that the top brass considered the deployment of these air assets which will greatly contribute to the accomplishment of our missions here in western Mindanao," ani WestMinCom. Commander Major General Alfredo Rosario Jr.

Ayon kay Maj. Gen. Rosario, ang deployment ng mga Blackhawk sa kanilang area of responsibility ay magpapalakas sa lethal at non-lethal na kapabilidad ng militar. (Doris Franche)

Ang mga Blackhawk helicopter ay dumating kamakalawa sa Edwin Andrew’s Airbase sa Zamboanga City kung saang tinagap ng Tactical Operations Wing-Western Mindanao (TOW-WM), ang Philippine Air Force unit na kontrolado ng WestMinCom.

Nabatid na gagamitin ng mga hamabat ng Sikorsky S70i Blackhawk "helicopters sa iba't-ibang misyon sa Western Mindanao kaibigan ang pagpapunta sa "combat operations" at "quick response" sa paghahanda ng humanitarian aid.

Ang mga Blackhawk helicopter ay dumating kamakalawa sa Edwin Andrew’s Airbase, nagsagawa ng low-pass ang mga helicopter sa buong Zamboanga City kung saang tinagap ng Tactical Operations Wing-Western Mindanao (TOW-WM), ang Philippine Air Force unit na kontrolado ng WestMinCom.

Bago isinagawa ang welcome ceremony sa Edwin Andrew’s Airbase, nagsagawa ng low-pass ang mga helicopter sa buong Zamboanga City. "We are very grateful that the top brass considered the deployment of these air assets which will greatly contribute to the accomplishment of our missions here in western Mindanao," ani WestMinCom. Commander Major General Alfredo Rosario Jr.

Ayon kay Maj. Gen. Rosario, ang deployment ng mga Blackhawk sa kanilang area of responsibility ay magpapalakas sa lethal at non-lethal na kapabilidad ng militar. (Doris Franche)
Duterte tells Reds: ‘We’ll fight forever’

BY CATHERINE S. VALENTE

President Rodrigo Duterte has reiterated that he will no longer talk peace with the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People’s Army (CPP-NPA) as the rebel group still refuses to hold its members accountable for their killing spree.

In a speech during a meeting of the joint national and regional task force to end local communist armed conflict in Puerto Princesa City, Palawan, on Thursday, Duterte said accountability is the “missing ingredient” in peace talks with the CPP’s political wing, the National Democratic Front (NDF).

“Bumagsak ‘yung peace talks. Lahat nang binigay na mga proposal, at binigay ko rin sa military, sabi ko you study, pero ako talaga, pagtanggap ko, hindi na (The peace talks were stalled. All the proposals, which I asked the military to study, were unacceptable). And there was this one missing ingredient to arrive really at a peaceful resolution of the insurgency. ‘Yung accountability, wala (There’s no accountability),” he noted.

Duterte said he would just “fight forever” with the NPA rebels rather than enter into a peace pact that does not contain “a provision or sanctions” that will hold them responsible for killing innocent people.

He defended the killings carried out by state forces, saying the government “would not kill for no reason.”

“The accountability, whatever, if they have any against us or against them, wala (it’s not there). At ayaw nilang i-discuss iyan. Sabi ko, wala na (And they don’t want to discuss it. I said, no more [peace talks]). No peace talks. We will fight forever, if ako ang masunod (if I’d be asked what to do),” Duterte said.

“Kaya ako, hindi talaga. Sabi ko may kulang dito (So, I said no. I said there’s a missing ingredient, One ingredient is really the sanctions na ano. ‘Yung mga insurgent [for killing people]. Hindi tayo. Tayo ang gobyerno eh. Hindi nanman tayo papalay kung walang rason (The sanctions could not be applied to us. We are in the government. We are not killing people without any reason),” he added.

The President’s statements came days after the death of key communist leader Jorge “Ka Oris” Madlos.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines said Madlos was killed in a clash with troops, but his wife said he was unarmed and was ambushed on his way to get medical treatment.

The peace talks between the national government and the NDF have been intermittent since 1986.

Duterte held a series of peace talks with the NDF but decided to scrap the negotiations over the NPA’s relentless attacks against government troops and civilians.

He formally ended the peace dialogue with the NDF through Proclamation 360 inked on Nov. 23, 2017.

The termination of the talks was followed by the Dec. 5, 2017 signing of Proclamation 273, which declared the CPP-NPA as a terror group.

Nevertheless, Duterte said he has “high hopes” that his government would be able to maintain peace and order in the country despite the termination of the talks with the communists.

He lauded the national and regional task force to end local communist armed conflict for its efforts to address the insurgency problem.

“Tama na ba ang abangan ng araw, despite the forces that try to prevent us from becoming stronger and a more progressive nation,” Duterte said.

“The good that you have done is significant in building and restoring the people’s trust and confidence in the government,” he added.

The President also commended the task force for seeking “much-needed” social services to conflict-affected areas “with a strong sense of urgency and concern.”

Your quick response to the needs of our (countrymen) speaks well of your faithfulness to duty and love of country,” Duterte said.

“We all deserve in this life what we aspire for. Your important work in peace-building and fighting extremism has also paved the way for the improved well-being of our people,” he added.
Reds caused peace talks flop — Duterte

In a speech in Palawan, Duterte said he ended the administration's peace negotiations with the CPP's political wing, the National Democratic Front (NDF), over its refusal to hold its members accountable for committing crimes.

"There was this one missing ingredient to arrive really at a peaceful resolution of the talks. There's no accountability," he said during his meeting with the regional task force against communist insurgency.

The Commander-in-Chief said he would just fight armed rebels rather than enter into a peace pact that did not contain any provisions that would hold them responsible for the murders they had committed.

"The accountability, whatever, if they have any against us or against them, it's not there. And they don't want to discuss it. I said, 'No more. No peace talks.' We will fight forever if I'd be asked what to do," Duterte said.

The President also maintained that the demands of the communist groups were unacceptable to the military.

He did not elaborate on the matter, but the communist movement has long been pushing for the Comprehensive Agreement on Social Economic Reform (CASER), which includes a provision on the demobilization of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

Also among the proposals in the draft CASER are agrarian reform and land distribution, development of the agricultural sector, and nationalization of utilities and of the mining industry.

Duterte said he had already accepted that the peace negotiations were stalled during his term, but he expressed hopes the government would maintain peace and order in the country.

In his speech, the President also commended the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) and its regional offices for their efforts to extend the "much-needed" social services to the conflict-affected areas in a bid to address the insurgency problem.

"I am certain that you will champion the security of our fellow Filipinos, despite the forces that try to prevent us from becoming stronger and more progressive nations," Duterte said, addressing the NTF-ELCAC.

In December 2018, Duterte signed Executive Order 70 creating the NTF-ELCAC that is aimed at putting an end to the decades-old insurgency — one of his major campaign promises during the 2016 presidential campaign, alongside eradicating corruption and criminality.

Duterte held a series of peace talks with the NDF, but decided in November 2017 through Proclamation 360, to scrap the negotiations following the rebels' relentless attacks against government troops and civilians.

A month later, the President signed Proclamation 278, which declared the CPP and its armed wing NPA as terror groups.
President Marcos and the Liberals (1)

On 11 September 1972, the media asked me whether martial law was coming. I parried the question. I simply answered: "It is remote at the moment." And I described the national condition of the country. I emphasized that although the communist threat intensified, the military could deal with any contingency.

The next day President Marcos announced that he was "studying" the use of "extraordinary powers to arrest the communist threat to the country's security." The remark of President Marcos sent shivers around the country. The media, the opposition and the United States Embassy harried me with questions. I was hard put to answer them. All I could do was to make vague denials.

President Marcos convened the National Security Council. His purpose was to inform the opposition about the intelligence information from the military on the plan of the National Democratic Front-Communist Party of the Philippines New People's Army (NDP-CPP-NPA) to intensify their effort to overthrow the government.

The National Security Council was composed of some from the Nationalist Party, some from the Liberal Party, and some from the private sector. I was the chairman of the executive committee of the National Security Council. In particular, President Marcos invited Senators Gerardo Roxas, Jovito R. Salonga and Benigno S. Aquino Jr. These three Liberal senators were his most vocal critics. They were the leading candidates of the Liberal Party for president in the 1978 election.

Unfortunately, the leaders of the Liberal Party refused to attend the National Security Council meeting. Their refusal disappointed President Marcos.

President Marcos also asked the mayors of the towns and cities around Manila because of Ninoy's speech on Oplan Sagittarius.

Unfortunately, the leaders of the Liberal Party refused to attend the National Security Council meeting. Their refusal disappointed President Marcos. Instead of collaboration and cooperation between the two major political parties of the country, the rebuff led to a bitter verbal clash of President Marcos with the leaders of the Liberal Party.

Without naming anyone, President Marcos told the press that certain Liberal leaders were actively making an alliance with the NDP-CPP-NPA against the Marcos regime. The statement of Marcos was carried in the Sunday Times of 17 September 1972. (To be continued)
By Bong S. Sarmiento
@InqNational

KORONADAL CITY—The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) is set to decommission 14,000 more combatants of its armed wing, the Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (BIAF), as part of its commitment to a 2014 peace deal with the government.

This comes almost two years after 12,000 MILF fighters and their weapons began to be deactivated in September 2019, presided by President Duterte.

Lt. Col. Mohammad Shalleh Ismail, deputy chief of staff of the Independent Decommissioning Body (IDB), said the decommissioning ceremonies on Monday will start at 8 a.m. at the Old Provincial Capitol in Barangay Crossing Simsay, Sultan Kudarat town, Maguindanao province.

Ismail said the number of individuals who were allowed to enter the venue would be limited in compliance with the COVID-19 health protocols.

The decommissioning process is overseen by the IDB, which is currently chaired by Turkish Ambassador to the Philippines Ahmet Idem Akay, who is expected to preside over Monday’s rites.

Under the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro, decommissioning seeks to “put beyond use” the BIAF’s forces and weapons, and transition its fighters to “productive civilian life.”

Monday’s event will kick off the third phase of the BIAF’s decommissioning process, and involves 2,500 weapons to be put out of use.

As part of the peace deal with the government, the MILF has sought the decommissioning of 40,000 combatants. During the first phase, which was largely ceremonial, presided by then President Benigno Aquino III in 2015, 145 BIAF members and 75 high-powered weapons were deactivated.

Benefits due

In the second phase, 2,100 assorted weapons and more than 500 ammunition were turned over by former MILF combatants to the DB. The second phase of the process was completed in March 2020.

The third phase of the decommissioning process was supposed to roll out last year, but it was hampered by the pandemic.

Each decommissioned BIAF member is set to receive P100,000 in cash assistance.

During a budget hearing last September, presidential peace adviser Carlito Galvez Jr. said the decommissioned combatants will also benefit from a socioeconomic development package to be rolled out for them and their communities.

Ariel Hernandez, cochair of the Joint Normalization Committee, said the rollout of the third phase of decommissioning is a positive step for the Bangsamoro peace process.

Apart from the Turkish ambassador, also expected to grace Monday’s rites are Undersecretary David Diclanio and Bangsamoro Education Minister Mohagher Iqbal, chairs of the peace implementing panels of the government and the MILF, respectively.
PHL external trade growth slows to 6.3% in September–PSA

THE country’s export and import performance slowed in September, according to the preliminary External Trade Performance report released by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) on Friday.

PSA data showed exports growth is back in single-digit growth to 6.3 percent in September following a growth of 18.9 percent in August 2021.

Imports, the data also showed, slowed to 24.8 percent in September following a growth of 30.9 percent in August.

However, both exports and imports growth remained higher than the 3.4 percent and contraction of 9.9 percent in September 2020, respectively.

PSA data showed the country’s total export sales in September 2021 amounting to $6.68 billion.

Of the top 10 major commodity groups in terms of the value of exports, seven recorded annual increases led by chemicals at 55.4 percent.

This was followed by gold at 44.3 percent, and cathodes & sections of cathodes, of refined copper at 39.8 percent.

Meanwhile, import receipts amounted to $10.67 billion. The cumulative import value from January to September 2021 amounted to $84.87 billion, representing an increment of 30.3 percent from the import value of $65.15 billion in the same period of 2020.

“The annual increment of imported goods in September 2021 was due to the increase in all the top 10 major commodity groups which was led by mineral fuels, lubricants and related materials with 117.4-percent increase,” PSA said.

This was followed by medicinal and pharmaceutical products which posted growth of 105.8 percent and iron and steel, 67.1 percent.
Philippines eases COVID-19 curbs in Manila as cases fall

MANILA: The Philippines on Friday (Nov 5) lifted restrictions on national obsessions like karaoke and basketball in the capital Manila and reopened universities in the megacity of 13 million people as virus cases eased there.

All restrictions on the movement of young people aged below 18 were lifted in the capital, officials announced, and primary schools could reopen soon, pending the approval of President Rodrigo Duterte.

"This is good news and one that has been highly anticipated," Duterte's spokesman Harry Roque told a news conference.

Curfews as well as curbs on indoor recreation and contact sports are components of severe lockdowns aimed at slowing the spread of COVID-19 which has infected about 2.8 million people and killed 44,000 across the Southeast Asian nation.

Officials cited rising vaccination coverage for a slowdown in the spread of the virus, which had strained health services between April and October with the onslaught of the highly contagious Delta variant.

Cases have fallen from a high of 2,000 average daily cases in Manila last month "to an average of just 493 cases per day", Health Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire told the news conference.

Philippines' Duterte threatens to punish officials for slow pace of COVID-19 vaccinations

The new guidelines are in place until Nov 21, but officials said they could be extended if the number of new cases and hospital admission rates continue to fall.

Minors had only been allowed outside their homes starting this month, but only to "obtain essential goods and services".

Contact sports like basketball, the national sport, karaoke bars, and amusement park operations were allowed for the first time since the Philippines began imposing lockdowns early last year.

Roque said metropolitan Manila universities would reopen at 50 per cent capacity, while "face-to-face" instruction in grade schools could resume for the first time since March 2020 if Duterte gave his approval.

NCR's alert level 2 status assures 'merrier Christmas, brighter 2022' — Concepcion

Presidential Adviser for Entrepreneurship and Go Negosyo founder Joey Concepcion is brimming with optimism following the Inter-Agency Task Force’s (IATF) sudden but welcome decision to de-escalate the National Capital Region (NCR) to alert level 2 in connection with the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

“I am confident that we will succeed in learning to live with COVID,” Concepcion said in a statement, Friday, Nov. 5, the first day of the effectivity of NCR’s alert level 2 classification.

“I am positive that not only will we have a merrier Christmas, but we can also look forward to a brighter 2022,” he added.

The Palace official thanked the IATF for lowering Metro Manila’s alert level from alert level 3 to alert level 2—something that he and the business sector have called for since Oct. 17 in light of the huge drop in fresh daily COVID-19 cases and rising local vaccination rate.

NCR’s intial alert level 2 status will last from Nov. 5 to 21. The new classification was announced Thursday night.

“I would like to thank the national government for considering our call. An alert level 2 for NCR will be a big boost for businesses,” Concepcion said.

Under alert level 2, indoor businesses are allowed a maximum of 50 percent capacity for fully vaccinated individuals. Outdoor capacity will be increased to 70 percent for both vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals.

Since NCR has already exceeded the 84 percent vaccination target, businesses can add an additional 20 percent capacity, plus another 10 percent if they have a safety seal. This would bring the total possible indoor capacity to 80 percent.

Concepcion credited the decline in cases and the resulting easing of restrictions to the call last July for a lockdown during the first week of August. At that time, the Philippines was experiencing a rise in cases following the spread of the Delta variant of COVID-19.

“We did what was right to save the fourth quarter,” said Concepcion, referring to the last three months of the year when consumer spending will be at its highest because of the holiday season, as well as the run-up to the 2022 elections.

Community preparedness vs. tsunami vital:
Solidum

MANILA – As the country commemorates the World Tsunami Awareness Day, Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) Director Renato Solidum Jr. on Friday noted the importance of community preparedness against a tsunami. "The Philippines, being an archipelago and in a seismically active region, is highly prone to tsunamis. It has experienced more than 40 local tsunami events in the past 500 years," he said in a webinar.

He cited that based on Phivolcs' recent hazard mapping efforts, there are around 14 million people living in the coastal areas of the Philippines at risk of tsunamis. This high exposure to tsunami, he said, highlights the need to prepare the communities to be ready for tsunamis by developing an end-to-end early warning system. This system involves international and national organizations, local governments and coastal communities, focused on monitoring and warning, hazards and risk assessment, and effective and efficient actions that reduce the risks through mitigation and preparedness for appropriate response. "The different sectors of our society need to continuously work together towards developing tsunami-ready communities that need to be resilient to other threats, including climate change and Covid-19," Solidum said. He emphasized that while building tsunami ready communities in the new normal is challenging, partnership is key towards this effort.

Phivolcs for instance has organized and led discussions with national and local disaster risk reduction and management officers and other disaster risk reduction practitioners to create a harmonized tsunami disaster risk reduction program. The agency has been providing technical assistance to the Department of Interior and Local Government in its endeavors to mainstream disaster risk reduction in local government unit level mechanisms. Solidum said the business sector needs to continue its critical operations immediately after disasters. With this, Phivolcs helped in developing tsunami risk reduction guides for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in Metro Manila for their tsunami preparedness and response planning. "We must continue to work hand in hand with communities to ensure that effective approaches and initiatives are cascaded, sustained and advocated. Just like what we have learned from the Covid-19 pandemic, we all need to anticipate and be prepared for rare but possible extreme events," he said.

Meanwhile, the World Tsunami Awareness Day raises public awareness on the risk posed by tsunamis and serves as an avenue for countries to share effective approaches to make communities tsunami ready. Among the activities that Phivolcs do to commemorate this since 2016 include the holding of exhibitions and tsunami seminars in schools and towns.

Phivolcs also holds online digital poster-making contests for students, webinars for the public MSMEs, Solidum said.

https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1158925
Still no final word on government’s face shield policy; DOH wants one more week to evaluate evidence

While the Department of Health (DOH) supports ditching face shields in areas with low transmission, Health Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire said the DOH wants one more week to review the evidence before making their recommendation to the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF).

“We need more evidence before making a recommendation to IATF,” Vergeire said in an online media forum.

On Thursday, the Department of the Interior of Local Government (DILG) have also expressed support on the calls to relax the face shield policy.

In September, President Duterte authorized the easing of the face shield regulation by limiting its wearing in closed and crowded spaces, and if a person will be engaging in an activity, which will close contact with other people.

The DOH earlier said, the benefits of using face shield or face mask or both as published in various studies suggest that one may offer better protection than the other on specific scenarios or depending on the size of particulate matter the protective equipment is blocking.

One of the studies further underscores that the use of face shields alone would be inadequate, but the use of both face mask and shield can provide better protection against infections.

A study by Bhaskar and Arun (2020) among community health workers in India, suggests that, after the introduction of face shields to 50 of the health workers who counseled 118,428 persons in May 2020, none of the healthcare workers were infected with Covid-19.

Furthermore, in the Living Clinical Practice Guidelines (CPG) of the Philippine Society for Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (PSMID) and University of the Philippines National Institutes of Health (UP-NIH) for Covid-19 as of May 2021, evidence still suggest the public’s use of face mask plus protective eyewear such as face shield or goggles in areas with sustained community transmission of the virus.

Scattered rains due to a low pressure area (LPA) may continue to affect Palawan while “fair” weather conditions may prevail over the rest of the country in the next 24 hours, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said on Saturday morning, Nov. 6.

Weather specialist Grace Castañeda said the LPA was last spotted 125 kilometers west of Puerto Princesa City or over the West Philippine Sea.

She said the weather disturbance remains less likely to develop into a tropical depression.

However, it may still bring cloudy skies with scattered rain showers and thunderstorms over Palawan.

PAGASA advised those in Palawan to remain vigilant against possible flash floods or landslides during moderate to at times heavy rains.

Meanwhile, partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rain showers or thunderstorms may prevail over Metro Manila, Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, Quezon, Oriental Mindoro, Occidental Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon, Central Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao due to localized thunderstorms.

New LPA spotted off Capiz -- Pagasa

A new low pressure area (LPA) was spotted off Capiz and is likely to develop into a tropical depression, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) said on Friday.

The weather disturbance was estimated at 95 kilometers west of Roxas City, also in the province, Pagasa said in its 11 a.m. advisory.

"This LPA is less likely to develop into a tropical depression and may continue to move west towards Palawan," the state-run weather agency said.

Over the next 24 hours, Pagasa said the LPA will bring light to moderate with at times heavy rains over Western Visayas, Oriental Mindoro, Occidental Mindoro, Romblon and Palawan.

Also affected by the LPA and shear line are Visayas, Albay, Sorsogon, Catanduanes, Masbate and Mindoro Provinces which will experience cloudy skies with scattered rain showers and thunderstorms.

The weather bureau said Mindanao will have partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rain showers or thunderstorms due to the localized thunderstorms.

Metro Manila and the rest of Luzon will have partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated light rains caused by the northeast monsoon or "amihan".

https://www.manilatimes.net/2021/11/05/latest-stories/new-lpa-spotted-off-capiz-pagasa/1821072
New P28-B PH Marines headquarters to rise in Bataan

The new headquarters of the Philippine Marine Corps (PMC) will soon be constructed in a 100-hectare lot of the Bataan Technology Park (BTP) in Morong town which is being administered by the Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA).


“The Philippine Marine Corps is excited for this much-awaited groundbreaking ceremony and looks forward to building our new headquarters at the Bataan Technology Park. We see the strategic value of this area and confirm that it offers a conducive place especially that we are in the midst of strengthening our Archipelagic Coastal Defense strategy,” Caculitan said.

**Marines to move headquarters to Bataan**

Converge submarine cable makes final landing in Coron, Palawan

PUVs along Quezon Ave. inspected for compliance with 70% capacity

Philippine Marines breaks ground on new headquarters in Bataan

A new headquarters of the Philippine Marine Corps (PMC) will be constructed in Bataan, according to the Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA).

A groundbreaking ceremony was held on Thursday to commence construction of the new headquarters and operational facilities at a 100-hectare lot in the BCDA-administered Bataan Technology Park (BTP) in Morong town.

Present at the event were PMC commandant Major General Ariel Caculitan and Philippine Navy vice commander Major General Nestor Herico, and BCDA officer-in-charge Aristotle Batuhan.

“Unlike its current headquarters in Metro Manila, where operations are hindered by traffic and congestion, the Bataan location was deemed ideal for the Marines as it would help expedite emergency response and ease deployment of troops,” the BCDA said in a press release on Friday.

“The new headquarters will also feature modern, state-of-the-art facilities to ensure more efficient operations.”

Caculitan added that the Bataan site “offers a conducive place especially that we are in the midst of strengthening our Archipelagic Coastal Defense strategy.”

The first package of the development mainly involves security and utility facilities, while the second package consists of a detention facility, a retraining battalion facility, liaison office, billeting, and other operations and support structures for the Marines.

The final package includes the PMC headquarters, a communication tower, residential areas and other support facilities.

The P7.5-billion first phase of the P28-billion project is set to be completed by 2024.

The Department of National Defense and the BCDA signed on August 5 a memorandum of agreement for the replication of the Philippine Navy’s existing facilities at Bonifacio South Pointe inside Fort Bonifacio, and the Navy Village also in Taguig City.

Marines break ground at new home in Bataan

Authorities on Thursday started construction of the Philippine Marines’ new headquarters in Morong, Bataan.

The corps will be transferring to a 100-hectare lot in the Bataan Technology Park (BTP) from its current 12.46-hectare headquarters in Fort Bonifacio.


The development costs P28 billion, with P7.5-billion allotted for the first phase targeted for completion in 2024.

The first phase involves security and utility facilities, while the second consists of a detention facility, a battalion retraining facility, liaison office, billeting, and other operations and support structures for the Marines.

The last package includes the Marine headquarters, a communication tower, residential areas and other support facilities.

“We trust that this will go a long way in enhancing the operational effectiveness and responsiveness of the Marine Corps,” Batuhan said.

Caculitan, for his part, said the corps sees the strategic value of the new site.

“It offers a conducive place especially that we are in the midst of strengthening our Archipelagic Coastal Defense strategy,” he said.

Thursday’s event was part of pre-anniversary celebrations of the Marines’ 71st anniversary on November 7.

Meanwhile, the BCDA said income-generating opportunities will be opened up for the government in the area that the Marines will vacate in Fort Bonifacio.

The BCDA has been working on the development of the 33.1-hectare Bonifacio South Pointe property inside Fort Bonifacio, along with SM Prime Holdings Inc.
MANILA, Philippines — Maritime agencies in Eastern Mindanao held exercises in Surigao del Norte province this week to improve interagency cooperation on maritime challenges.

The Maritime Inter-Agency Exercise 2021-02, which ran from Nov. 3 to 5, sought to promote team effort and test the interoperability of agencies in maritime security operations, according to the Naval Forces Eastern Mindanao (NFEM).

A capability demonstration off the coast of Punta Bilar in Surigao City was the culmination of a series of lectures and discussions.

A team of Philippine Navy SEALs and various assets from the Navy, including the BRP Andres Bonifacio (PS-17), C90 aircraft, BRP Gregorio Velasquez (AGR702); and vessels from the Philippine Coast Guard, Philippine National Police and Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, joined the exercise, which simulated smuggling and terrorism scenarios.

The capability demonstration capped off with a passing exercise—an activity which highlights communications and coordination—of participating vessels.

“The series of lectures and exchange of information leading up to the simulation exercise and capability demonstration proved to be instrumental in laying the groundwork of a successful mission accomplishment and goal realization of our respective organizations,” said NFEM and Joint Task Force Seahawk commander Commodore Carlos Sabarre.
PH needs West Philippine Sea policy that no president can change—expert

MANILA, Philippines—The Philippines needs to craft a long-term policy in the West Philippine Sea that would remain in place no matter who is president, a maritime law expert said. Dr. Jay Batongbacal, director of the University of the Philippines Institute for Maritime Affairs and Law of the Sea, said a sitting administration, who would not heed the policy could hand over the West Philippine Sea to China, which is aggressively claiming nearly the entire South China Sea as its backyard.

“As far as China is concerned, it doesn’t matter who is president or what political party there is, they will continue with their plan,” Batongbacal told a forum hosted by the Foreign Correspondents Association of the Philippines. “We should be like that, too. We also have our own long-term plan and stick to it regardless of who is there in the chair. Any president who doesn’t stick to that plan is essentially going to hand over to China these areas,” he added, speaking partly in Filipino.

Batongbacal said the Philippines can potentially lose control of the West Philippine Sea if the next administration will continue President Rodrigo Duterte’s policy of non-confrontation which his critics said was actually just capitulation. “My view is that the country’s sovereignty and jurisdiction in the West Philippine Sea will not survive another six years of what we’ve seen in the past five of this administration,” he said.

In the last five years, Duterte has downplayed China’s aggressive behavior in the West Philippine Sea following his foreign policy pivot and tight embrace of China in exchange supposedly for massive investments and loans. Duterte has also set aside the ruling by an international tribunal that invalidated China’s preposterous nine-dash line claims in the South China Sea. “With those five years, we saw how quickly China increased its pressure into the West Philippine Sea and is now very hard to dislodge at this point,” Batongbacal said. “That’s why if that kind of policy is taken up again by the next administration, you can bet they will go even deeper. We will eventually lose control of the area and that cannot happen,” he added.

Critical elections

Senatorial aspirant Antonio Trillanes IV, a former Navy officer, said the 2022 presidential elections will be very critical because the country’s foreign policy direction, including sovereignty in the West Philippine Sea, would depend on it.

https://globalnation.inquirer.net/200098/ph-needs-west-philippine-sea-policy-that-no-president-can-change-expert
PH, Spain sign intel protection pact

MANILA – The Philippines and Spain signed an agreement on the "Protection of Classified Information in the Field of Defense" on Thursday.

"Recognizing the importance of information sharing in fostering mutual understanding and closer cooperation between security partners, an agreement between the Department of National Defense (DND) of the Republic of the Philippines and the National Intelligence Center (CNI) of the Kingdom of Spain on the Protection of Classified Information in the Field of Defense, was signed on 4 November 2021 in Madrid," DND spokesperson Arsenio Andolong said in a statement on Friday.

The signing of the agreement is one of the highlights of Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana's official visit to Spain, he added.

The agreement provides a framework to regulate the exchange of all classified information in the course of bilateral defense cooperation, including but not limited to defense equipment acquisitions and transfer of technology.

"It is an important step to further deepening Philippines-Spain defense relations, as the two countries both endeavor to develop their defense capabilities and promote their shared interest in a rules-based international order," Andolong said.

On November 2, Lorenzana met with Spanish Defense Minister Margarita Robles where they discussed matters of mutual interest, including the importance of strengthening partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region, fostering multilateral cooperation, and jointly addressing the global issue of climate change.

https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1158916
Duterte: NPA killers pushed gov’t to end peace talks

The failure of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) to impose sanctions on rebels killing government workers and civilians led to the termination of peace talks, President Rodrigo Duterte said Thursday. In a speech during his visit in Palawan, Duterte said he had ended the administration’s peace negotiations with the CPP’s political wing, the National Democratic Front (NDF), over its refusal to hold its members accountable for committing crimes. “There was this one missing ingredient to arrive really at a peaceful resolution of the talks. There’s no accountability,” he said during his meeting with the regional task force against communist insurgency. The commander in chief said he would just fight armed rebels rather than enter into a peace pact that did not contain any provisions that would hold them responsible for the murders they had committed. “The accountability, whatever, if they have any against us or against them, it’s not there. And they don’t want to discuss it. I said, ‘No more. No peace talks.’ We will fight forever if I’d be asked what to do,” Duterte said. The President also maintained that the demands of the communist groups were unacceptable to the military. He did not elaborate on the matter, but the communist movement has long been pushing for the Comprehensive Agreement on Social Economic Reforms (CASER), which includes a provision on the demobilization of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. Also among the proposals in the draft CASER are agrarian reform and land distribution, development of the agricultural sector, and nationalization of utilities and of the mining industry. Duterte said he had already accepted that the peace negotiations were stalled during his term, but he expressed hopes the government would maintain peace and order in the country. In his speech, the President also commended the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-Elcac) and its regional offices for their efforts to extend the “much-needed” social services to conflict-affected areas in a bid to address the insurgency problem. “I am certain that you will champion the security of our fellow Filipinos, despite the forces that try to prevent us from becoming stronger and more progressive nations,” Duterte said, addressing the NTF-Elcac. In December 2018, Duterte signed Executive Order 70 creating the NTF-Elcac aimed at putting an end to the decades-old insurgency — one of his major campaign promises during the 2016 presidential campaign, alongside eradicating corruption and criminality. Duterte held a series of peace talks with the NDF, but decided in November 2017 through Proclamation No. 360 to scrap the negotiations following the rebels’ relentless attacks against government troops and civilians. A month later, the President signed Proclamation 273, which declared the CPP and its armed wing, New People’s Army, as terror groups.

Duterte tells Reds: 'We'll fight forever'

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte has reiterated that he will no longer talk peace with the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA) as the rebel group still refuses to hold its members accountable for their killing spree.

In a speech during a meeting of the joint national and regional task force to end local communist armed conflict in Puerto Princesa City, Palawan, on Thursday, Duterte said accountability is the "missing ingredient" in peace talks with the CPP’s political wing, the National Democratic Front (NDF).

"Bumagsak 'yung peace talks. Lahat nang binigay na mga proposal, at binigay ko rin sa military, sabi ko you study, pero ako talaga, pagtanggap ko, hindi na (The peace talks were stalled. All the proposals, which I asked the military to study, were unacceptable). And there was this one missing ingredient to arrive really at a peaceful resolution of the insurgency. 'Yung accountability, wala (There's no accountability)," he noted.

Duterte said he would just "fight forever" with the NPA rebels rather than enter into a peace pact that does not contain "a provision or sanctions" that will hold them responsible for killing innocent people.

He defended the killings carried out by state forces, saying the government "would not kill for no reason."

"The accountability, whatever, if they have any against us or against them, wala (it's not there). At ayaw nilang i-discuss iyan. Sabi ko, wala na (And they don't want to discuss it. I said, no more [peace talks]). No peace talks. We will fight forever, if ako ang masunod (if I'd be asked what to do)," Duterte said.

"Kaya ako, hindi talaga. Sabi ko may kulong dito (So, I said no. I said there's a missing ingredient. One ingredient is really the sanctions sa ano, 'yung mga insurgent [for killing people]. Hindi tayo. Tayo ang gobyerno eh. Hindi naman tayo papatay kung walang rason (The sanctions could not be applied to us. We are in the government. We are not killing people without any reason)," he added.

PH Air Force Black Hawk choppers sent to Mindanao

MANILA, Philippines—The Armed Forces of the Philippines has deployed S-70i Black Hawk combat utility helicopters to Mindanao. Four units were sent to the Eastern Mindanao Command on Thursday (Nov. 4). Two were stationed at Tactical Operations Wing-Eastern Mindanao in Davao City. Another two were at Tactical Operations Group 10 Headquarters, Lumbia Airport in Cagayan de Oro City.

“The arrival of these Black Hawk choppers happened at a very opportune time to aid our hardworking troops in the pursuit of genuine peace and development in Eastern Mindanao,” said Eastmincom chief Lt. Gen. Greg Almerol. Eastern Mindanao is a bailiwick of communist insurgents. Last week, top New People’s Army leader Jorge Madlos was killed in Bukidnon in what the military said was a clash but which communist rebels said was an ambush.

The Tactical Operations Wing-Western Mindanao in Zamboanga City received two helicopters on the same day. These will be used to support combat missions and humanitarian aid in Soccsksargen up to the Sulu archipelago. “We are very grateful that the top brass considered the deployment of these air assets which will greatly contribute to the accomplishment of our missions here in Western Mindanao,” said Western Mindanao Command chief Maj. Gen. Alfredo Rosario Jr.

Procurement program

The Philippine government earlier procured 16 units of Black Hawk helicopters — built by Poland’s PZL Mielec, a subsidiary of American firm Lockheed Martin — for P12.1 billion, to replace the aging Vietnam-era Hueys (UH-1H) mainly used for transport tasks. Eleven Black Hawk units have been delivered since last year but 10 are currently in service, after one crashed in June. Five units have yet to be delivered.

The PAF recently retired some of its aging Hueys as it seeks new helicopters. President Rodrigo Duterte earlier this year approved the acquisition of additional helicopters after a spate of crashes since last year although it was unclear if funding is available. The Philippines and Poland signed an agreement in April that would allow government-to-government deals on defense procurement, which could include additional Black Hawk helicopters.

Helicopters are crucial in the Philippines, an archipelago of more than 7,600 islands, where transport is difficult especially during calamities. They are used in search and rescue missions, close air support, medical evacuation and disaster response.

https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1510949/2-ph-air-force-black-hawks-off-to-western-mindanao
AFP chief urges troops to join search for outstanding Pinoys

MANILA – Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) chief-of-staff, Gen. Jose Faustino Jr., on Friday urged all members of the military to join the Metrobank Foundation Inc.’s (MBFI) Search for Outstanding Filipinos. “As the Chief-of-Staff, I urge all the members of the AFP to join the Metrobank Foundation in the search for the recipients of this award for 2022. Let us take pride in our fellow soldiers and nominate who we think are most laudable,” Faustino said in a statement. Since 1985, the Metrobank Foundation has honored a total of 685 Outstanding Filipinos -- 372 teachers, 163 soldiers, and 150 police officers. Eligible to join in the search are soldiers, police officers, and teachers who have a minimum of 10 years of service with at least “very satisfactory” rating in the last decade. Those set to retire must have at least three remaining years of service. They must have exhibited good moral character and must not have been charged guilty in any administrative or criminal case. For the AFP, qualified commissioned officers (Captain to Colonel) must have completed a bachelor’s degree while enlisted personnel (Corporal to Chief Master Sergeant) must have completed at least a high school degree.

On Thursday, nominations for the prestigious award were officially launched at a virtual occasion led by MBFI president Aniceto Sobrepeña. AFP deputy chief-of-staff, Vice Admiral Erick Kagaoan, attended the multi-sectorial activity with representatives from the Philippine National Police, Department of Education, Commission on Higher Education, Philippine Savings Bank, Rotary Club of Makati Metro, and Rotary Club of New Manila East. The MBFI’s Outstanding Filipino Award seeks to recognize four teachers, three soldiers, and three police officers for inspiring and influencing their peers and communities through service beyond and above the call of duty. Each of them must have transformed a community with a lasting positive impact on people and to the country. “Our esteemed institution is filled with outstanding men and women who are truly qualified to be nominated for the award. In times of peace or crisis, we have seen our brave soldiers stepping up to heed the call of duty and beyond in order to save lives, secure properties, and support in the delivery of basic needs,” Faustino said. He added that he is grateful the AFP has partnered with stakeholders like the Metrobank Foundation who honor and respect the hard work of all teachers, soldiers, and police officers especially during these trying times brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Faustino also said that he is thankful for the foundation for bestowing due recognition that our personnel truly deserve.

https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1158867
AFP rolls out Covid-19 vax for troops' minor dependents

MANILA – The Armed Forces of the Philippines Health Service Command (AFPHSC) has rolled out its coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) vaccination drive for military dependents aged 12 to 17.

"The AFPHSC through the Victoriano Luna Medical Center (VLMC), one of its operating units, opened up its latest Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccination roll-out to military dependents aged 12–17 years old," it added in a statement Thursday night.

The vaccination is being held at the AFPHSC Basketball Court, Camp Victoriano K. Luna, V. Luna Avenue, Quezon City, and will run from November 3 to 8.

The VLMC vaccination team is headed by Maj. Vicente Vila II, with Maj. Carrol Mae Asia, as assistant leader.

Minor vaccinees are required to comply with the following requirements as prescribed by the Department of Health:

* Philippine Statistics Authority Birth Certificate;
* ID card of accompanying parent;
* For guardians other than the parents, duly notarized Certificate of Guardianship; and
* Medical Certificate/ Clearance from the Department of Pediatrics, VLMC.

As of Thursday, around 426 vaccinees have received their first dose of the Covid-19 jabs. This number is expected to increase significantly in the succeeding days of the program.

"The AFPHSC stands firm on its commitment as the people’s partner in promoting good health through Disease Prevention; Prompt Diagnosis and Treatment; and Rehabilitation in order to provide a five-star health care delivery system that will benefit all military personnel, their direct dependents, and other authorized civilians," it added. (PNA)

https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1158838
Calls mount to disqualify Kabataan, Gabriela from 2022 polls

MANILA – Multi-sectoral organizations on Friday urged anew the Commission on Elections (Comelec) to disqualify party-list groups Kabataan and Gabriela from the 2022 elections because of their links with the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army-National Democratic Front (CPP-NPA-NDF). Members of the League of Parents of the Philippines, Liga Independencia Pilipinas, and Yakap ng Magulang, along with parents of minors who have been recruited by CPP-NPA organizations, staged a rally outside the Comelec main office at the Palacio del Gobernador in Intramuros, Manila to renew their call for the cancellation of the registration of the two party-list groups. Earlier this year, Angela Aguilar, a former CPP cadre and Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT) member, filed a petition before the poll body to disqualify "the party-list groups that are identified sympathizers of the communist terrorist groups (CTGs)". The petition also urged the Comelec to revoke the registration of other party-list groups under the Makabayan Koalisyon ng Mamamayan (Makabayan) Bloc, including Bayan Muna, Anakpawis, ACT, Integrity, Equality, Leadership, and Action, General Assembly Binding Women for Reforms. In a statement, the anti-communist groups believe that the militant party-list groups are violating the provisions of the Republic Act 7941 (Party-List System Act), saying "they are pretending as the voice of marginalized Filipinos to protect the communist armed struggle". "Specifically, they have violated the provision on receiving foreign assistance and grants to pursue their terroristic acts," the statement read. The groups said the party-lists are expanding toward infiltrating other sectors such as the academe and professionals.

In an interview, Hands Off Our Children member and Yakap ng Magulang founder Relissa Santos Lucena appealed to the Comelec to swiftly act on their petition. Lucena, mother of Alicia Jasper who was recruited by Anakbayan and is an active member of the Kabataan party-list, said they can only "live in peace" once the Comelec would provide positive feedback on their calls against the CPP’s legal fronts. Lucena lamented these party-lists, particularly Kabataan, are manipulating the House of Representatives to accumulate funds "to sustain their communist mass movement and to lure more minors to join the armed struggle". Most of the former NPA rebels who were recruited from the prominent state universities in Metro Manila, she said, could testify that the Kabataan party-list has been part of the underground mass movement of the CTGs. She also cautioned other parents who have sent their children to universities and schools known to be infiltrated by the CPP-NPA-NDF "to be wary and always be vigilant" against militant organizations that are recruiting new members for armed revolution. "Nagre-recruit sila ng mga kabataan sa mga universities and colleges para gawing mga future members at cadres ng NPA kung saan doon sa kalibliban ng mga kabundukan ay magmu-multiply sila (They are recruiting more children in the universities and colleges to become future NPA members and cadres and they go to far-flung communities, in the mountains, to multiply)," Lucena said.

https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1158934
Army eyes enhanced capability development programs with Thai military

Army chief Lt. Gen. Andres Centino said the force seeks to sustain cooperation and enhance capability development programs with the military of Thailand.

Centino made this commitment when the new naval attaché of Thailand, Capt. Pakpoom Muensri, rendered an introductory call on him in Fort Bonifacio on Thursday. Muensri visited along with defense and air attaché Group Captain Soonthorn Pongampai.

During their meeting, Centino also highlighted the upcoming renewal of the Terms of Reference as a testament to the Army’s commitment to strengthen its relationship with the Royal Thai Army.

“I would like to extend my gratitude to the government of Thailand for its support to the Philippine Army throughout the years. We look forward to our future activities and engagements that will further strengthen our military relations,” he said.

Muensri expressed his gratitude for Centino’s warm accommodation and pledged to foster the military relations of both countries.

2 soldiers killed, 4 others hurt in Negros clash

BACOLOD CITY — The Philippine Army lost two soldiers and suffered four more casualties following an encounter with suspected New People’s Army (NPA) rebels at Sitio Tiyos, Barangay Quintin Remo in Moises Padilla, Negros Occidental on Wednesday, November 3.

The Army, however, did not reveal the names of the victims as of this writing.

Capt. Kim Apitong, officer-in-charge of Division Public Affairs Office (DPAO) of 3rd Infantry Division (ID), said the first encounter happened when personnel of the 62nd Infantry Battalion (IB) and 79th IB responded to reports about the alleged plan of the enemies to stage an attack and the reported extortion scheme in the area.

The Army was able to determine the position of the enemies and clashed with about 25 NPA rebels, Apitong said. The firefight lasted for about an hour.

Apitong said the two slain soldiers and the four wounded soldiers from the 79th IB were immediately airlifted from the scene.

He said the wounded soldiers were already on stable condition.

The Army believed the NPA also suffered major loses as they were reportedly seen dragging their killed or severely wounded comrades from the encounter site, as bloodstains were also seen along their withdrawal route.

An hour later, the soldiers again engaged in a firefight with NPA rebels at the said area which resulted in the recovery of ammunition, cellular phones, supplies, and other personal belongings.

Prior to the encounter, Apitong said the NPA reportedly planned to attack the farm-to-market road project in Barangay Trinidad, Guihulngan City, Negros Oriental, which is situated at the boundary of the occidental and oriental side.

https://mb.com.ph/2021/11/05/2-soldiers-killed-4-others-hurt-in-negros-clash/
MILF decommissions 14,000 more fighters

PUT BEYOND USE In this 2019 photo taken in Maguindanao, police and other officials inspect firearms issued to former Moro Islamic Liberation Front fighters before these weapons are deactivated. — BONG S. SARMIENTO

KORONADAL CITY — The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) is set to decommission starting on Monday 14,000 more combatants of its armed wing, the Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (BIAF) as part of its commitment to a 2014 peace deal with the government.

This comes almost two years after 12,000 MILF fighters and their weapons began to be deactivated in September 2019, presided by President Duterte.

Lt. Col. Mohammed Shalleh Ismail, deputy chief of staff of the Independent Decommissioning Body (IDB), said the decommissioning ceremonies on Monday will start at 8 a.m. at the Old Provincial Capitol in Barangay Crossing Simuay, Sultan Kudarat town, Maguindanao province.

Ismail said the number of individuals who were allowed to enter the venue would be limited in compliance with the COVID-19 health protocols.

The decommissioning process is overseen by the IDB, which is currently chaired by Turkish Ambassador to the Philippines Ahmet Idem Akay, who is expected to preside over Monday’s rites.

Under the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro, decommissioning seeks to “put beyond use” the BIAF’s forces and weapons, and transition its fighters to “productive civilian life.”

https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1511060/milf-decommissions-14k-more-fighters
U.S. and Philippines Celebrate 60 Years of Development Partnership

MANILA, U.S. Embassy in the Philippines -- The U.S. government, through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), is celebrating 60 years of development partnership with the Philippines. USAID leads the U.S. government’s international development and humanitarian efforts to save lives, reduce poverty, strengthen democratic governance, and help people progress beyond assistance.

USAID was founded on November 3, 1961, by President John F. Kennedy, and the Philippines was one of the agency’s very first partner countries.

“This year, USAID is proud to celebrate 60 years of partnering with people around the world to build stronger, more prosperous communities. As we celebrate 60 years of partnership for development in the Philippines, and 75 years of diplomatic relations, the bonds between the American and Filipino people are stronger, deeper, and more sustaining than ever,” said USAID Philippines Acting Mission Director Sean Callahan.

In its first two decades in the Philippines, USAID supported infrastructure development, agricultural and medical research, and rural electrification. In the 1980s and 1990s, USAID supported the development of civil society organizations and citizen engagement in policymaking and assisted in rolling out the Local Government Code and decentralization. USAID also supported the health and education sectors, strengthened local capacity, and continued to invest in infrastructure.

Since 2010, USAID has provided more than Php17.5 billion ($340 million) to help more than 100 cities and municipalities in the Philippines respond to disasters, including Typhoon Yolanda. This assistance has helped build climate-resilient schools and health clinics, fund livelihood activities, support the Philippine government’s planning and coordination efforts, and strengthen the Philippines’ ability to implement disaster risk reduction measures.

Over the last five years, USAID has helped establish 1.2 million hectares of Marine Protected Areas in the Philippines, protecting the environment and ensuring a sustainable source of food and livelihood for millions of Filipinos. USAID supported the passage of landmark health legislation such as the Universal Health Care Act, Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Law, and Tuberculosis Elimination Law so that Filipinos are able to access quality health services.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, USAID has provided more than Php1.8 billion ($36.4 million) to support the country’s COVID-19 response at the national and local levels.

USAID also supported the Philippine government in launching a national commodity and logistics tracking tool and an emergency procurement portal that helped secure more than Php50 billion ($1 billion) in essential goods during the pandemic. In addition, USAID partnered with the Bangko Sentral ng...
Pilipinas to establish the National Retail Payment System that gave birth to a number of digital payment options, which accelerated e-payment usage from 1 percent in 2015 to 20 percent in 2020 and helped ensure continued economic activity and livelihoods.

During the pandemic, USAID also partnered with the Department of Education to produce and distribute nearly four million supplementary reading materials to more than 250,000 students so they could continue learning remotely.

Since 1961, USAID has invested more than Php258 billion ($5.1 billion) towards achieving shared development goals in the Philippines, partnering with the government, private sector, and local organizations to improve everyday lives.

Today, USAID works nationwide to expand inclusive, market-driven growth; foster strong democratic systems and good economic, health, and education governance; promote responsible natural resource management; and enhance resilience for communities and the environment. Through USAID, the U.S. and the Philippine governments work shoulder-to-shoulder to create a more prosperous, resilient society for all Filipinos.

China Tells US to Back Down After Explosive Taiwan Comment

TEHRAN (FNA)- The Chinese Foreign Ministry hit back at the US, demanding Washington refrain from interfering in Taiwan, after American General Mark Milley said his forces were capable of defending the island nation against Beijing.

Speaking on Thursday during a daily press briefing, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesman Wang Wenbin demanded that the US stop making comments about Taiwan that may contribute to the “arrogance of the separatist forces,” RT reported.

“No one can underestimate China’s firm determination and will to defend national sovereignty and territorial integrity. We will never allow anyone or any force to split Taiwan from the embrace of the motherland in any way,” the spokesman stated.

Wang called on the US to respect the One-China policy and fulfil its commitments to Beijing under the Sino-US Joint Communiques, adding that issues relating to Taiwan should be handled prudently and properly.

The spokesman was responding to a question regarding comments made by the General Milley, on Wednesday. Speaking at the Aspen Security Forum, Milley said US forces “absolutely have the capability” to defend Taiwan from China, adding that there’s “no question about that”.

He also said he did not believe that China would seek to invade Taiwan anytime soon. Milley continued, however, to say that Beijing is “clearly” building up military capabilities so that its future leaders have that option.

The Chinese government has consistently called on Western powers not to interfere in affairs relating to Taiwan, which it regards as an inalienable part of China and is seeking to reunite the island, even potentially by force.

Xi Jinping votes in local legislative election, stresses whole-process people's democracy

Elections of deputies to the people's congresses is an important manifestation of the people being the masters of the country, said Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing on Friday.

President Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, made the remarks when casting his ballot at a voting booth to elect lawmakers for the local people's congress in his district.

The election of deputies to the people's congresses is the basis of the people's congress system, he said, stressing ensuring interconnection of democratic elections, consultations, decision-making, management and oversight to continuously enhance the whole-process people's democracy.

The concept of "whole-process people's democracy" was first used by Xi when he visited Shanghai in November 2019.

Emphasizing on strengthening oversight of the entire process of elections, he called for zero tolerance on any violations of the regulations and laws on elections to ensure that the results are satisfactory to the people.

Six other members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, including Premier Li Keqiang and top legislator Li Zhanshu, also cast their votes at polling stations in Beijing.

The deputies, 4,898 at district and 11,137 at township levels, after being elected, will vote for the new lineup of local governments at the grassroots legislature's plenary session.

In keeping with the Constitution and laws, China has started its township- and county-level congress elections in the first half of this year.

China lashes out at press freedom survey in Hong Kong

Press freedom advocates rally outside a court in Hong Kong, Thursday, April 22, 2021. China has criticized a press freedom survey, Friday, Nov. 5, 2021, from the Hong Kong Foreign Correspondents' Club that found nearly half its members were considering leaving the city. The survey said the members are concerned about a decline in press freedoms under a sweeping new national security law imposed by Beijing following massive anti-government protests in 2019.

Press freedom advocates rally outside a court in Hong Kong, Thursday, April 22, 2021. China has criticized a press freedom survey, Friday, Nov. 5, 2021, from the Hong Kong Foreign Correspondents' Club that found nearly half its members were considering leaving the city. The survey said the members are concerned about a decline in press freedoms under a sweeping new national security law imposed by Beijing following massive anti-government protests in 2019.

HONG KONG (AP) — China on Friday criticized a press freedom survey from the Hong Kong Foreign Correspondents’ Club that found nearly half its members were considering leaving the city.

The survey said the members were concerned about a decline in press freedoms under a sweeping national security law imposed by Beijing following massive anti-government protests in 2019.

Eighty-three of the 99 journalists polled said that the working environment had “changed for the worse” since the law was introduced last June. The law outlaws subversion, secession, terrorism and foreign collusion to intervene in the city’s affairs, and has since been used to arrest over 120 people in the semi-autonomous Chinese city.

“These results clearly show that assurances that Hong Kong still enjoys press freedom, guaranteed under the Basic Law, are not enough,” FCC President Keith Richburg said. “More steps need to be taken to restore confidence among journalists and to make sure Hong Kong maintains its decades-long reputation as a welcoming place for the international media.”

In a statement, the Commissioner’s Office of China’s Foreign Ministry in Hong Kong warned the FCC to stop making “noise” and accused the organization of being “black hands” that intervene in the city’s affairs.

“There is no absolute press freedom in the world that is above the law,” the statement read. “It is a common international practice for countries to supervise the news media working in their own countries in accordance with the law.”
The survey comes as authorities are cracking down on political dissent in Hong Kong. Most of the city’s prominent pro-democracy activists are currently in jail. Critics say the security law has rolled back freedoms promised to Hong Kong for 50 years when it was handed over to China in 1997.

The former British colony was previously known for its vibrant press freedoms, and for decades has served as regional headquarters for many English-language news outlets.

The national security law has been used against journalists in the city. The pro-democracy newspaper Apple Daily was forced to close in June after millions of dollars in assets were frozen and several top editors and executives arrested.

The New York Times has transferred some of its staff from Hong Kong to Seoul due to the uncertainties about the city’s prospects for journalism under the security legislation.

China’s Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said Friday at a regular news briefing that the rights of foreign media and journalists in Hong Kong will be “fully protected” as long as they report in accordance with the law.

Wang said that as of April this year, there were 628 foreign employees with work visas for foreign media in Hong Kong, a 18.5% increase from the same time last year.

“It is a true reflection of how people from all walks of life, including foreign media in Hong Kong, see and feel about the economic and social and media reporting environment in Hong Kong,” he said.

https://apnews.com/article/business-china-arrests-beijing-hong-kong-11792d62e3fcccc15f0a1879368f0c48
Top Hong Kong Court Rules Against Government Bid to Expand Riot Prosecutions

HONG KONG—Hong Kong’s top court on Thursday quashed attempts by the city’s government to prosecute people for rioting or “illegal assembly” even without being present at the scene. A ruling lawyer described it as a landmark decision.

The five-judge panel in Hong Kong’s Court of Final Appeal, headed by Chief Justice Andrew Cheung, unanimously rejected an earlier ruling by a lower appeal court that people, such as supporters, could be criminally liable without being actually present under the common law doctrine of “joint enterprise.”

Criminal lawyers said Thursday’s ruling was highly significant, impacting future prosecutions, and will be closely scrutinized amid an intensifying national security clampdown in the former British colony.

“They’ve effectively raised the bar for the prosecutors—and maybe even stopped a flood of sweeping and hasty charges,” one criminal barrister said.

“That does not mean that the government won’t try to bring different charges though, after going back to the drawing board.”

Activists, diplomats, and the foreign business community members are also closely watching court developments after Beijing’s imposition on the city of a sweeping national security law last year, with some fearing it could threaten a legal system seen as the bedrock underpinning the Asian financial hub.

Britain handed Hong Kong back to Chinese rule in 1997 amid guarantees that its social and commercial freedoms—and separate legal system—would be maintained under a “one country/two systems” formula.

Beijing imposed the national security law on Hong Kong last summer, criminalizing the vaguely defined crimes of secession, subversion, terrorism, and collusion with foreign forces, with a maximum penalty of life imprisonment. Since then, dozens of the city’s pro-democracy opposition leaders have now either fled overseas, are facing prosecution, or are in jail.

The appeal, in part, was brought by Tong Wai-hung, who was earlier acquitted of rioting in July 2019 and was one of more than 10,000 people arrested during months of pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong that year.

While Hong Kong’s Department of Justice did not seek to overturn Tong’s acquittal, they won an earlier appeal at a lower appeal court, the Court of Appeal, to show that a person’s presence at a riot or illegal assembly was not necessary for a conviction, under the “joint enterprise” doctrine.

China releases black list of Taiwanese 'secessionists' banned from Hong Kong and Macau

The sanctioned officials include Taiwan’s prime minister, foreign minister and parliamentary speaker. The Chinese government is ready to prosecute those on its list. China attacks MEPs visiting Taiwan. European countries are afraid about their relations with China.

Beijing (AsiaNews) – The Chinese government has drawn up a black list of "stubborn Taiwanese secessionists" who are banned from entering China via Hong Kong and Macau, this according to Zhu Fenglian, spokesman for mainland China’s Taiwan Affairs Office.

The measure mainly affects three Taiwanese leaders, namely Prime Minister Su Tseng-chang, Foreign Minister Joseph Wu and Legislative Yuan (parliament) Speaker You Si-kun.

This “punitive” measure extends to family members and activities by Taiwanese citizens included in the list.

According to Beijing, the sanctioned people are guilty of instigating “cross-strait confrontations, maliciously attacked and slandered the mainland, sought ‘independence’ with bad words and deed”.

Charges of separatism include the accusation of collaborating with foreign forces to divide the country, damage relations between Communist China and the island, and seriously endanger the region’s security.

China considers Taiwan a “rebel province”, and has never ruled out using force to take it.

The island has been de facto independent since 1949 when Chiang Kai-shek's nationalist forces fled the mainland after losing the civil war against the Communists, claiming to be the heir to the Republic of China founded in 1912.

Zhu added that the Chinese government is ready to prosecute the people on the list.

Yesterday the Chinese Foreign Ministry used no less threatening words to criticise the recent visit to Taiwan by a delegation from the European Parliament.

For spokesman Wang Wenbin, “The clumsy show of a few people won't shake in the slightest the international community's universal and firm commitment to the one-China principle or the inevitable trend of reunification of China.”

Yesterday, the head of an EU parliamentary delegation visiting Taiwan, Raphael Glucksmann, told Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen that her country is “not alone” and that Europe is on the side of the island in defending freedom and the rule of law.
The French MEP described Taiwan as the most “vivid, enlightening” democracy in the Indo-Pacific region, and a “treasure that democrats around the world should cherish and protect”.

Taiwanese Foreign Minister Joseph Wu's recent European tour is a sign of Taipei’s strong diplomatic activism. The Taiwanese envoy again asked the European Union to open negotiations with his country in order to ink a bilateral investment agreement.

However, like several of its member countries, which do not want to jeopardise their relations with China, The European Union has so far proved reluctant to go ahead on this point.

Speaking to AsiaNews, a spokesman for the Czech Ministry of Industry and Trade pointed out that on 26 October Prague did not sign any formal agreement with a trade delegation from Taipei, noting that the two sides only held economic “consultations”.

He added that the "16+1" group is a useful tool for the Czech Republic to develop bilateral relations with China.

The 16+1 group is an economic forum that brings together China and 16 countries in central, eastern and southern Europe, 11 of which belong to the EU. Lithuania recently left the forum.

EP delegation to recommend Taiwan as hub to combat disinformation

Taipei, Nov. 5 (CNA) The head of a visiting European Parliament (EP) delegation said Friday he believed Taiwan would be a perfect partner for the European Union (EU) as it considers building a hub to combat disinformation campaigns launched by authoritarian regimes.

"We can benefit a lot as Europeans form a closer cooperation with Taiwan in the fight against disinformation," said Raphaël Glucksmann at a press event at the conclusion of the delegation's three-day trip in Taiwan.

The EU is now considering building a hub to combat disinformation and the whole delegation agreed that "it should be Taiwan."

"That actually makes a lot of sense, the partnership should grow and get deeper and deeper," he said.

Glucksmann's delegation consisted of members of the EP's Special Committee on Foreign Interference in all Democratic Processes in the European Union, including Disinformation (INGE), and they were in Taiwan to learn how Taiwan has built a strong democracy while facing high-level threats from China, he said.

Like Taiwan, Europe is facing large-scale actions orchestrated by an authoritarian regime to weaken its democracy, Glucksmann said, and in seeing Taiwan's successful example, the "idea of the whole society being involved in this fight is crucial for us."

The EP delegation is visiting Taiwan amid rising tensions across the Taiwan Strait. The visit drew a protest from Beijing, which sees Taiwan as part of its territory.

Asked if the delegation's trip, the first ever by an official EP delegation to Taiwan, could exacerbate existing tensions across the Taiwan Strait, Glucksmann said he believed their visit would have the opposite effect.

"We are really convinced that the more you have interaction between international community and Taiwan, the less dangerous the situation would be in the Strait," he said.

A trip to Taiwan or a high-level meeting with Taiwanese officials should be considered a normal thing instead of a provocation that adds fuel to the fire, he said.

He also said he and the other members of the delegation were not afraid of possible Chinese sanctions for their visit.
As EP members, they make their decisions and policies based solely on the interests of European citizens and the principles on which EU is built, he said.

"We don't make our decisions thinking what would be the reaction in any third country," including China, Glucksmann said.

The delegation, which arrived in Taiwan on Wednesday, was scheduled to conclude its trip later Friday.

The European Parliament said in a statement on the visit that Taiwan has succeeded in countering externally organised destabilisation campaigns by making its entire society more resilient while avoiding restrictions on freedom of expression.

The lesson the delegation drew from Taiwan’s experience in disinformation and destabilisation campaigns, mainly orchestrated by Chinese state actors, are going to feed into the ongoing work on the recommendations of the special committee, it said.

https://focustaiwan.tw/politics/202111050014
Japan to reelect Kishida as PM next Wednesday

Japan's Diet is to convene a special session next Wednesday to choose the country's next prime minister.

Prime Minister Kishida Fumio is expected to be reelected to the post, after the ruling Liberal Democratic Party's victory in the latest general election.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Matsuno Hirokazu announced the schedule in a meeting of representatives of the Lower House parliamentary groups on Friday.

The ruling parties proposed that the session continue for three days, through next Friday. Opposition parties agreed.

The meeting also agreed that the Lower House will choose its speaker and vice speaker at the session on Wednesday afternoon.

Matsuno also reported the schedule to an executive meeting of the Upper House steering committee.

Kishida is expected to launch his new Cabinet on Wednesday after being elected prime minister in both houses.

The ruling parties and the government aim to convene an extraordinary Diet session this year. They hope to pass a supplementary budget including economic stimulus measures for this fiscal year.

Seoul vows close communications with UNSC following N.K. sanctions relief proposal

SEOUl, Nov. 5 (Yonhap) -- South Korea will continue close communications with key U.N. Security Council (UNSC) members, the unification ministry said Friday, after China and Russia again proposed easing sanctions against North Korea.

Deputy ministry spokesman Cha Duck-chul said South Korea was aware that the two countries have circulated such a draft resolution to UNSC members, and that it will closely monitor related moves at the council.

"The government will ... continue close communications with the United States and other key members of the UNSC on how to deal with the situation surrounding the Korean Peninsula," Cha said during a regular press briefing.

On the same matter, the U.S. State Department spokesperson, Ned Price, said Thursday the U.S. remains committed to implementing UNSC sanctions on North Korea and urged all other U.N. members to do the same to prevent the North from advancing its "threatening and unlawful" weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programs.

The proposal from Beijing and Moscow came amid little progress in nuclear negotiations between Washington and Pyongyang after their Hanoi summit in 2019 collapsed without a deal.

The North has remained unresponsive to U.S. overtures for talks, demanding Washington first retract what it calls "double standards" and "hostile policy" against Pyongyang.

https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20211105004100325
UN investigator 'hopeful' Facebook will hand over more Myanmar information

UNITED NATIONS: The head of a UN team of investigators on Myanmar said on Friday (Nov 5) he is hopeful that Facebook will hand over more information to the team as it collects evidence of the most serious international crimes since 2011.

The Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM) aims to build case files for proceedings in national, regional or international courts. It was established in 2018 by the UN Human Rights Council and began work the following year.

Facebook has previously said it was working with the IIMM. In 2018, UN human rights investigators said the social media site had spread hate speech that fueled the violence. Facebook has said it is working to block hate speech.

"We began engaging with Facebook as soon as we were created in 2019. And they have been meeting with us regularly," Nicholas Koumjian, head of the Geneva-based IIMM, told reporters in New York on Friday.

"We have received some, but certainly not all that we have requested. We continue to negotiate with them and actually I am hopeful that we are going to receive more information. I know that there's some of our requests they've told us they are now again considering," he said.

https://www.channelnewsasia.com/asia/un-investigator-hopeful-facebook-will-hand-over-more-myanmar-information-2294901
Ex-U.S. ambassador to U.N. Bill Richardson ends Myanmar visit

BANGKOK—Former U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Bill Richardson left Myanmar on Thursday after finishing a private humanitarian mission in which he sought to boost the Southeast Asian country’s efforts to fight the coronavirus pandemic and facilitate the delivery of aid.

“The main focus of my discussions was to identify specific ways to speed the delivery of COVID-19 vaccines from the COVAX facility to Myanmar and to help mitigate a possible fourth wave of COVID-19,” he said, according to a statement issued by his Richardson Center for Global Engagement.

COVAX is a U.N.-backed effort to even out global vaccine distribution by supplying doses to low- and middle-income countries. Myanmar is one of the poorest countries in Asia.

During his visit, Richardson met with the leader of Myanmar’s military government and other top officials, members of the foreign diplomatic corps and representatives of the United Nations and other international organizations, the statement said.

It said he recommended a range of specific humanitarian measures, mainly to facilitate the delivery of assistance to remote areas.

The situation has been worsened by armed conflict following the military’s seizure of power in February, when it ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi. Opposition to the takeover has grown into an incipient insurgency that some U.N. officials have warned could turn into a civil war.

Richardson, who has also served as secretary of energy and governor of New Mexico, “also encouraged Myanmar authorities to engage with the U.N. and ASEAN Special Envoys, suggesting creative solutions to break the current impasse,” the statement said. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN, has sought to mediate a solution to the violent conflict, but Myanmar’s leaders have been uncooperative.

Richardson said he was able to secure the release from prison on Wednesday of a woman, Aye Moe, who used to work with his center. The military-installed government has arrested more than 9,700 people on political charges since it took power, though many have since been freed.

Richardson is known for his past efforts to gain the freedom of Americans detained in countries with which Washington has poor relations, such as North Korea. His visit had raised hopes that he might obtain the release of U.S. journalist Denny Fenster, who has been jailed for more than five months on political charges, but the statement did not mention his case.

https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/14475544
In Coastal Cambodia, Climate Change Kills Rice Crops With Salt Water

Time passes, but the rice cycle remains the same. This was the essential truth for Nget Srey and other farmers in this remote village in coastal Preah Sihanouk province.

Or so it was until two years ago, when salt water started spilling over the dike containing the nearby estuary. The salt water flooded their rice fields, killing a crop that requires fresh water to thrive.

Last year, Nget Srey’s paddy was almost ready to harvest when her 2½-hectare field became inundated with seawater, wiping out her crops, slashing her main source of income and destroying her way of life.

“My paddy was really good by then, and salt water spilled over and it died out. So did other neighbors’ rice paddies,” said the 58-year-old farmer in Prey Nob district’s Champou Khmao village.

“Now I am really concerned that I can’t farm anymore,” she said.

Nget Srey and her neighbors, like other coastal farmers around the world, are feeling the effects of saltwater intrusion, a phenomenon in which seawater infiltrates freshwater sources such as groundwater, rivers and aquifers. Today, a combination of unchecked development and climate change is accelerating the process.

Coastal flooding predicted

While reports forecasting the effects of climate change in Cambodia have predicted that saltwater intrusion will threaten coastal agriculture, none described the effects.

In general terms, Cambodia’s sea level could rise by more than half a meter by 2090, inundating 25,000 hectares and forcing thousands to relocate, according to the government’s 2013 Climate Change Strategic Plan. Temperatures are expected to rise by between 0.13 and 0.36 degrees Celsius per decade.

The government’s point person on global warming said he wasn’t sure how big the problem was for farmers along the 450-kilometer coastline stretching from Kep to Koh Kong.

31st SEA Games will be held in Vietnam from May 12-23, 2022

The 31st Southeast Asian (SEA) Games will be held in Hanoi, Vietnam from May 12 to 23, 2022, Jakarta Post reported.

It was initially slated to be held from Nov. 21 to Dec. 2, 2021, but has been postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

According to a report on the Vietnam Olympic Committee website, the decision on the new date was made by the country's deputy prime minister Vu Duc Dam.

Jakarta Post added that there had been concerns over deciding on an appropriate date in the sporting calendar to hold the Games.

However, the report said the new dates do not clash with any other major global or regional sporting events.

Vietnam last hosted SEA Games in 2003

Reuters reported that on Jul. 8, Malaysia's Olympic Council said the SEA Games this year has been postponed until 2022 by the Games federation.

The Council said "the SEA Games Federation members praised the work done thus far by the Vietnam organising committee but took note of the current conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic in the Southeast Asian region".

Vietnam last hosted the SEA Games in 2003.

According to Jakarta Post, it had budgeted US$69 million (S$93 million) for the Games and expected to attract nearly 20,000 participants, including about 7,000 athletes from 11 countries.

The last SEA Games was held in the Philippines in 2019 with the host country bagging the most medals with 149 gold medals, 117 silver and 121 bronze.

Indonesia criticizes COP26 deforestation pledge as 'unfair,' days after signing it

JAKARTA, Indonesia — Indonesia's environment minister has dismissed as "inappropriate and unfair" a global plan to end deforestation by 2030, days after her country, home to a third of the world's rainforests, joined 127 other nations in making the deforestation pledge.

The agreement late on Monday at the COP26 climate talks was at odds with Indonesia's development plans and the global goals should be fine-tuned, said minister Siti Nurbaya Bakar, who attended the summit in Glasgow, Scotland.

"Forcing Indonesia to (reach) zero deforestation in 2030 is clearly inappropriate and unfair," she said on Twitter on Wednesday.

"The massive development of President Jokowi's era must not stop in the name of carbon emissions or in the name of deforestation," she said, referring to Indonesian leader Joko Widodo by his nickname.

Her comments so soon after the pledge underline the challenges ahead over global deforestation goals, with just three countries — Indonesia, Brazil and the Democratic Republic of Congo — collectively accounting for 85 percent of the world's forests.

Adding to confusion over Indonesia's position, the country's vice foreign minister, Mahendra Siregar, on Thursday denied that zero deforestation by 2030 was even part of the COP26 pledge.

"The declaration issued does not refer at all to the 'end deforestation by 2030,'" he said in a statement.

"It is important to move beyond mere narrative, rhetoric, arbitrary targets and sound bites," he added.

He further explained that the pledge did not mean to halt deforestation completely, but to ensure there was no net loss of forested land.

New Zealand’s PM Ardern says trade with China won’t trump rights concerns

Her government has been accused of going easy on Beijing, with some commentators labelling Wellington a ‘weak link’ in the Five Eyes alliance.

Unlike Australia, which China has hit with sanctions over its outspoken stance on issues like Hong Kong and Xinjiang, New Zealand has not faced retaliation.

New Zealand will not shy away from criticising China’s human rights record to protect its lucrative trade relationship with Beijing, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern has said in an interview.

Ardern’s government has been accused of going easy on China’s much-questioned humanitarian record, prompting some commentators to label New Zealand a “weak link” in the Five Eyes security alliance.

But the leader rejected suggestions that economic ties with her country’s largest trading partner were muting her ability to voice broader concerns.

“It is very important to us that we maintain integrity in the way that we conduct our diplomatic relationships,” she said in a joint interview with AFP, The New Zealand Herald, NBC News and Covering Climate Now.

Ardern noted “heightened tensions” between China and Australia, which has been hit with punitive sanctions by Beijing over its outspoken stance on issues such as the treatment of Uygurs and the erosion of democracy in Hong Kong.

New Zealand has also raised concerns about the same issues, but has been more restrained in its statements and has not faced any economic retaliation.

Ardern’s government declined to support a parliamentary motion in May labelling the treatment of Uygurs as genocide, saying the legal case to use the term had not been made and instead expressed “grave concern”.

We have the maturity in our relationship to raise issues that we’re concerned about.

New Zealand has also said it is “uncomfortable” using the Five Eyes group – comprising the US, Canada, Britain, Australia and New Zealand – to criticise China on rights issues.

Ahead of Crucial Assembly Polls in Five Indian States, Congress Slams Modi Gov't on Farmer Issues

Farmers block a railway track to stop train services at Modi Nagar railway station, demanding the dismissal of the Indian federal minister whose son’s car, according to the protesting farmers, ran over farmers that were taking part in a protest against farm laws earlier this month, in Modinagar, Uttar Pradesh, India, October 18, 2021 - Sputnik International, 1920, 05.11.2021

India's farmers have been protesting against controversial farm laws passed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government last year. Protesters fear these laws will lead to the phasing out of the Minimum Support Price (MSP) system and leave farmers at the mercy of big corporations and they want the laws repealed.

Ahead of crucial assembly polls in five Indian states, including Uttar Pradesh, the Congress party has attacked the government and its leader, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, over farmers’ issues.

In several tweets, the main opposition party has contrasted the help Congress-led state governments have been able to bring to the farmers with the perceived wrongs perpetrated by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led federal government.

The party has said that the BJP-led federal government has done nothing to raise farmers' income whereas the Congress-led state government of Chhattisgarh has promised farmers an extra INR10,000 ($134) per acre.

To help ease household expenses, the Congress government in Punjab has not only waived outstanding electricity bills, but has also slashed power prices by Rs. 3/unit. pic.twitter.com/BUm9FcPe28

Congress berated the federal government for allegedly doing nothing for the farmers, and said that farmers' debts have risen by 58 percent since the BJP came to power.

Congress also drew attention to the plight of the farmers because of a shortage of fertilisers.

Farmers are unable to plant the Rabi crops due to a fertiliser shortage. What will the government do when they are unable to grow crops in the upcoming sowing season? pic.twitter.com/nXps6aFyyS

In one of the tweets, the party extended support to farmers saying that Congress will continue to stand by them and support them in their fight to repeal the three farm laws.

Pakistan Denies India Use of Its Airspace For Operating Kashmir-Sharjah Flights

Pakistan on Tuesday did not allow the Srinagar-Sharjah flight of Go First, previously known as GoAir, to use its airspace, forcing it to take a longer route and fly over Gujarat to reach its destination in the UAE, according to officials in India.

Islamabad: Pakistan said on Thursday that it has denied an Indian airline to use its airspace for operating flights from Kashmir to the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Pakistan on Tuesday did not allow the Srinagar-Sharjah flight of Go First, previously known as GoAir, to use its airspace, forcing it to take a longer route and fly over Gujarat to reach its destination in the UAE, according to officials in India.

The Foreign Office spokesman, Asim Iftikhar Ahmed, was asked at the weekly media briefing here on Thursday whether Foreign Office was taken on board when Pakistan permitted these (Srinagar-Sharjah) flights and when these permissions were cancelled.

“The over-flight permission for such flights has been denied,” he said, adding that the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) would have technical details.

“There are various aspects to this issue and the concerned authorities are fully seized of it,” he said.

“As a long outstanding dispute, it (Kashmir) remains on the agenda of the UN Security Council pending its resolution and final disposition in accordance with UNSC resolutions,” he said.

To another question about the Indian Home Minister during his visit to Kashmir announcing Rs 500 billion worth of development plan, he said the reported investment and development projects were an effort by India to divert international attention from its alleged human rights violations.

When asked about the UAE’s planned investment in infrastructure and other projects in Kashmir, the spokesman said, we continue to sensitise our friends and remain in touch with them.

He said that Pakistan values the significance of the Kartarpur corridor and “remain strongly committed to its functioning, and supports its early reopening. We hope India will respond positively.”

The movement of pilgrims to Pakistan through the Kartarpur corridor has been suspended since March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the neighbouring country banned all travel from India citing the surge in cases in April this year.

Russia’s initiative to lift diplomatic restrictions turned down by US — Russian ambassador

MOSCOW, November 3. /TASS/. The United States has turned down our initiative to lift all the existing diplomatic restrictions, Russian Ambassador to Washington Anatoly Antonov said on Wednesday.

"Our proposal to lift all the existing restrictions was not supported by either the Department of State or the White House. I raised this issue during my contacts," he said in an interview with the Rossiya-24 television channel.

According to the Russian diplomat, it will be impossible to resume normal relations between the two countries without settling these problems.

"It seems to me that someone here in Washington thinks that we need predictably bad relations in this sphere. Naturally, we cannot accept this point of view," he stressed, adding that these problems impact adversely everyday life of Russian diplomats.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov on Tuesday called on the United States to begin dialogue with the Russian side to lift the existing restrictions.

In response to the US sanctions and another expulsion of Russian diplomats, Moscow banned the US embassy from hiring Russian and foreign citizens. The US embassy said after that it would reduce the range of consular services, including considering the applications for visas other than those for diplomatic trips, from May 12. Visa issuance to diplomatic personnel slowed down considerably. Since August 1, the US embassy in Moscow has been working with only 120 employees, the lowest ever number over the past five years.

The Russian foreign ministry noted that the US embassy is free to fill the quota of 455 diplomats by employing US nationals.

https://tass.com/world/1357735
IPCC Warns That Capitalism Is Unsustainable

A second leak from the Sixth Report of the UN panel of experts, originally obtained by CTXT, clearly states that the only way to avoid climate collapse is to move away from an economic model based on perpetual growth.

A leaked draft of the third part of the upcoming IPCC report establishes that we must move away from the current capitalist model to avoid exceeding planetary limits. It also confirms that, as stated in the article published by CTXT on August 7, “Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions must peak in at most four years”. The document also acknowledges that there is little chance of further economic growth.

The signatories of this article, scientists and journalists, have analysed a new part of the Sixth Report, leaked by the scientists’ collective Scientist Rebellion and Extinction Rebellion Spain. The leak clearly shows the vast discrepancies between the scientific community’s understanding of what is needed to achieve an effective and just transition, and the reality of how little has been achieved. Fortunately, among the usual more timid positions, demands that would have been unthinkable not so long ago are beginning to emerge.

Before getting into the analysis, a bit of context is needed. In 1990, the IPCC’s First Assessment Report still stated that “the observed increase [in temperature] may be largely due to natural variability”. This debate was closed in subsequent reports. However, in case there was still any doubt, the analysis of Group I of the Sixth Report – now official – has eliminated any uncertainty. It removes any possibility of retorts from climate denialists, who have long been amply showered with money by those who had the most to lose — the fossil fuel lobbies. The first question to solve a mystery is usually the classic Cui Bono (Who benefits?).

The underlying question now is, how do we ensure that the necessary transition is perceived as a benefit and not as a difficulty? The leaked report confirms that there is no other possibility than giving up indefinite growth. The transition has to take into account the cultural and historical differences in emissions between countries, and the differences between the rural and urban world, so as not to benefit one over the other, and above all the tremendous and growing economic inequalities between the increasingly poor and the increasingly obscenely rich. Either these three dichotomies are addressed, or the transition will have more enemies than supporters and will sabotage itself. The draft reads: “Lessons from experimental economics show that people may not accept measures that are perceived as unfair even if the cost of not accepting them is higher”.

Even if we manage to change course, the scientists warn that “Transitions are not usually smooth and gradual. They can be sudden and disruptive”. They also point out that “the pace of transition can be hindered by the blockage exerted by existing capital, institutions and social norms”, emphasising the importance of inertias. They add, “The centrality of fossil energy in economic development over the past two hundred years raises obvious questions about the possibility of decarbonisation.”

https://thewire.in/environment/ipcc-warns-that-capitalism-is-unsustainable
Power of the Weak: Taiwan’s Strategy in Countering China’s Economic Coercion

In September, China’s General Administration of Customs (海关总署通知, Haiguan zong shu tongzhi) imposed bans on Taiwan’s sugar apples and wax apples, claiming that harmful pests were found in produce imports on multiple occasions (SCMP, September 19; PRC Customs Notice, September 18). In response to China’s suspensions, Taiwan considered filing a formal complaint with the World Trade Organization (WTO) (Taipei Times September 20; PRC Customs Notice, February 26). In fact, this is not the first time that Taiwan’s tropical fruits have suffered from Chinese import restrictions. In February, Beijing also suspended the importation of Taiwanese pineapples using similar justifications (Reuters, February 26). Meanwhile, at the beginning of October, China greatly increased its military probing of Taiwan’s air defense identification zone (ADIZ) including the largest single-day incursion to date on October 4 involving 56 warplanes. (Taiwan News, October 4, 2021). The intensity and frequency of PLA Air Force incursions indicate that Beijing is flexing its muscles, and ability to project force around Taiwan’s airspace and maritime borders.

These recent incidents, amidst ongoing China-Taiwan tensions, reveal a clear pattern in Beijing’s coercive measures, which employ a combination of economic sanctions and military provocations [1]. China’s increasing economic capabilities and frequent use of coercive measures have led to the following questions: how effective are Beijing’s economic sanctions against Taiwan in achieving its desired outcomes and how can the Taiwanese government respond to China’s coercive measures? As China becomes more powerful in Asia, it has gradually learned how to achieve its foreign policy goals through a diverse set of policy tools. China’s shift from economic incentives to economic coercion to Taiwan, specifically from the Ma Ying-jeou (2008-2016) to the Tsai Ing-wen (2016-) administration, deserves careful investigation. Furthermore, Taiwan’s strategy to respond to this shift demonstrates the agency that medium-sized countries can employ in response to China’s coercion.

This article highlights Taiwan’s diversification strategy to overcome economic and political challenges from China. Concerns over economic reliance on China and Taiwan’s geostrategic location are the main drivers for this strategy (Taiwan News, September 17, 2020). It concludes with initial thoughts on establishing a trade pact in the Asia-Pacific region to counter China’s unilateral economic sanctions.

What Does China's New Land Borders Law Mean for Its Neighbors?

China has a new tool to wield during any future flareups along its borders with foreign entities, whether those be the Indian government, Afghan refugees or Myanmar rebel groups.

Announced on October 23, the new Land Borders Law authorizes the use of weapons to halt "illegal" border crossings and lists reasons for Chinese authorities to ban those crossings.

Scholars say the law appears to be aimed at legitimizing military and armed police actions along 22,117 kilometers of largely remote, rugged borders while warning other states against testing China's resolve in any sovereignty spats.

China has enforced similar laws in the past, largely to cast doubt on the legality of any activities by other countries that challenge Chinese sovereignty, said Heritage Foundation senior research fellow Dean Cheng in a May 2021 study. Such laws cover Taiwan, Hong Kong and countries bounded by the South China Sea.

"Beijing is now employing the same lawfare approach it successfully employed in the South China Sea to provide legal cover for its territorial expansion," said Mohan Malik, author of the 2011 book "China and India: Great Power Rivals." "It shows that China's domestic laws now override bilateral agreements, established norms and international law."

Multiple threats, multiple laws

China, which has rankled several neighbors with its aggressive maritime claims, has reason to be concerned about several of its land borders. Beijing officials are closely watching Myanmar for any spillover of fighting between ethnic minority rebel groups and the Southeast Asian state's military government.

Scholars say the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in August poses another concern for China, which worries about an influx of refugees or Islamic extremists across the two countries' short, mountainous boundary.
Building ‘Stable, Predicable’ US-Russia Ties: Dream Or Reality? – Analysis

On November 2, the Secretary of Russia’s National Security Council Nikolai Patrushev and CIA Director William Burns met to discuss various issues related to US-Russia ties. Burns’ two-day visit to Moscow with a senior-level delegation follows a series of engagement at various levels between the two countries since the Geneva summit between Russian President Vladimir Putin and US President Joe Biden in June 2021. The visit also comes weeks after the US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Victoria Nuland was in Moscow for discussions with the Russian side, which included meetings with Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Ryabkov, Presidential Aide Yuri Ushakov and Deputy Chief of the Russian Presidential Staff Dmitry Kozak (in charge of Ukraine affairs). These visits are an indication of the attempt by both sides to bring about some stability to a relationship that has touched new post-Cold war lows. Nuland’s visit was made possible after a reciprocal deal that lifted restriction on her entry, in return for Russian arms control expert Konstantin Vorontsov being granted an American visa. The situation had arisen as both sides have placed specific individuals on their respective sanctions list after the 2014 Ukraine crisis. Though no major announcement followed Nuland’s visit, and the embassy staffing issue remains unresolved, both the sides have classified the meetings in a positive light. There was a ‘frank’ review of US-Russia ties in the Nuland-Ushakov meeting. A ‘productive discussion’ took place between the visiting diplomat and Kozak on “shared interests, along with those of Ukraine, France, and Germany, in full implementation of Minsk agreements.” This follows the Biden- Putin summit, where the two leaders had supported the accords. This reiteration about the Minsk agreements, despite differences over its implementation and opposition from Ukraine, has led to hopes in Russia of Washington persuading Kiev about the process. Nuland and Kozak also agreed to remain in touch over Ukraine, which is a key positive outcome of the meeting. While cautious optimism reigns on both sides and no turnaround in bilateral ties is expected anytime soon, regular interactions are a welcome development to reduce risks of unintended escalation and to make the relationship predictable. At the same time, the meetings also revealed the amount of work still required to be done to stabilize this bilateral equation. The latest meetings in Moscow failed to resolve the issue of embassy staffing. Russia accuses the US of tightening visa provisions that have limited number of diplomats at its embassy, while proposing a lifting of all restrictions that have been imposed in the past years—believed to include return of two Russian compounds in the US that were closed on charges of being used for intelligence gathering. On the other hand, the US has said that visa and consular services in Russia cannot be carried out due to restrictions on hiring of local staff, and called for parity in diplomatic numbers. For now, it has been decided that expert level talks will take place to discuss the issue further. Since the June Presidential Summit, two rounds of strategic stability talks have been held, in July and September respectively, after the gap of over a year.

PH, Spain sign intel protection pact

MANILA – The Philippines and Spain signed an agreement on the "Protection of Classified Information in the Field of Defense" on Thursday.

"Recognizing the importance of information sharing in fostering mutual understanding and closer cooperation between security partners, an agreement between the Department of National Defense (DND) of the Republic of the Philippines and the National Intelligence Center (CNI) of the Kingdom of Spain on the Protection of Classified Information in the Field of Defense, was signed on 4 November 2021 in Madrid," DND spokesperson Arsenio Andolong said in a statement on Friday.

The signing of the agreement is one of the highlights of Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana's official visit to Spain, he added.

The agreement provides a framework to regulate the exchange of all classified information in the course of bilateral defense cooperation, including but not limited to defense equipment acquisitions and transfer of technology.

"It is an important step to further deepening Philippines-Spain defense relations, as the two countries both endeavor to develop their defense capabilities and promote their shared interest in a rules-based international order," Andolong said.

On November 2, Lorenzana met with Spanish Defense Minister Margarita Robles where they discussed matters of mutual interest, including the importance of strengthening partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region, fostering multilateral cooperation, and jointly addressing the global issue of climate change. (PNA)

https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1158916
Pentagon’s China Military Power Report Confirms Beijing’s Nuclear Ambitions

China is headed toward becoming a nuclear peer (or surpassing) the United States and Russia—a state of affairs for which U.S. nuclear forces are wholly unprepared. The U.S. has its work cut out for it to ensure that it can maintain deterrence of the advancing Chinese threat. The Biden administration should forgo rhetoric about reducing the role of U.S. nuclear weapons and pledging to never use nuclear weapons first in a conflict. The Pentagon’s annual report on China’s military capabilities confirms that Beijing’s days of maintaining a minimum nuclear deterrent are over. Along with several other concerning military developments, the report makes clear that China is headed toward becoming a nuclear peer (or surpassing) the United States and Russia—a state of affairs for which U.S. nuclear forces are wholly unprepared. The size and scope of China’s nuclear arsenal have been subjects of public debate, with most information remaining classified.

Last year, the Pentagon reported that China’s nuclear arsenal of about 200 warheads would double by the end of the decade. Disarmament advocates used that statistic to claim that China’s arsenal will stay way below the United States’ deployed arsenal of about 1,550 strategic nuclear weapons, so the U.S. can afford to unilaterally reduce its arsenal (even though this argument still ignores Russia’s nuclear buildup). Yet other estimates put China’s nuclear stockpile headed toward much more than a doubling, citing the rapid expansion of its nuclear capabilities. Adm. Charles Richard, commander of the U.S. Strategic Command, wrote earlier this year that China might “triple or quadruple” its stockpile by the end of the decade. This year’s China military report confirms that Beijing might have 700 warheads by 2027 and at least 1,000 by end of decade. That would mean a fivefold increase—even greater than Richard’s prediction. The report also confirms the discoveries made by analysts using open-source information on China’s construction of three new nuclear missile silo fields. The Defense Department report states that China is building hundreds of new missile silos and “is on the cusp of a large silo-based [intercontinental ballistic missile] force expansion comparable to those undertaken by other major powers.” Some analysts have suggested that many of China’s new missile silos would remain empty. But the Pentagon report seems to be confirming that China plans to fill those silos with missiles, swatting down the notion that Beijing would build silos, but not use them. Rather than maintain the minimum level of nuclear forces needed to deter attack, it’s clear that Beijing’s nuclear ambitions fit into a greater goal of building a world-class military, one capable of using coercion to pursue its interests. In light of this information, the U.S. has its work cut out for it to ensure that it can maintain deterrence of the advancing Chinese threat. The current U.S. nuclear force posture was designed back in 2010 for a completely different threat environment, one where China still had a very small nuclear arsenal and Russia was not considered an adversary. In other words, the United States’ current nuclear forces are designed to deter only one peer nuclear threat (Russia), not two.

THE MALACCA DILEMMA: GROWING CHINESE MILITARY POWER

The People’s Republic of China has risen over the past two decades to become the world’s largest economy, when measured by purchasing power parity. As Chinese global economic interests and influence have expanded so, too, has the size and capability of the Chinese military. In this week’s episode of Horns of a Dilemma, Thomas Shugart, adjunct senior fellow with the defense program at the Center for a New American Security, discusses the implications of growing Chinese military power. Shugart frames his discussion in terms of what he calls the “Malacca Dilemma”: Since much of Chinese trade and almost all Chinese energy imports must flow through strategic chokepoints controlled by the U.S. Navy or its allies and partners, Chinese leaders want to be able to protect their interests in these vital regions. But the same capabilities that allow them to protect their trading interests also allow them to threaten, intimidate, and coerce other regional countries, and may give Chinese communist leaders the tools needed to challenge or change the global order that has defined the region for decades. This talk was given at the University of Texas, Austin, and jointly sponsored by the Strauss Center and the Clements Center at the University of Texas, Austin.

https://warontherocks.com/2021/11/the-malacca-dilemma-growing-chinese-military-power/?singlepage=1
German frigate conducts Indo-Pacific naval diplomacy

A German Navy frigate is about midway through a six-month training mission to the Indo-Pacific designed to showcase Germany’s commitment to securing freedom of sea routes and upholding international law in the region. The Bayern, pictured, is cutting a path between the Horn of Africa, Australia and Japan from August 2021 to February 2022 to uphold freedom of navigation in international waters, protect “open societies” and show support for regional partners with common values, according to a statement by German Defence Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer. The training deployment, which is Germany’s first to the region in nearly two decades, includes joint exercises with Indo-Pacific partners including Australia, Japan, Singapore and the United States, according to the German Armed Forces, known as the Bundeswehr. It also is in keeping with Germany’s strategy, which it published in 2020, to manage Indo-Pacific challenges. The Bayern will also help enforce United Nations sanctions against North Korea and support the NATO and European Union missions, namely Operation Sea Guardian and Operation Atalanta, a counterpiracy mission, the German Ministry of Defence said.

In its first binational exercise in the Indo-Pacific, the Bayern trained with the Indian Navy frigate INS Trikand on August 26, 2021, in one of a series of passing exercises that lasted several hours. NATO describes such training between two or more navies as conducting partial exercises in navigation and communication while maneuvering together. “The exercise with [the] German Navy will greatly contribute towards interoperability and maritime security in the region,” the Indian Ministry of Defence said in a statement, according to the Indian news agency Asian News International.

After the exercise with India, the Bayern met the Spanish frigate Navarra, the flagship of Operation Atalanta, and continued on to train with Japanese forces in late August. “I feel honored to have been able to work with the German Navy,” said Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) Cmdr. Takeshi Kumashiro, Bundeswehr reported. As commanding officer of the destroyer JS Yuugiri, he lauded the experience of meeting with the Bayern in the middle of the Gulf of Aden. “Up to now, I haven’t been able to exercise with the Japanese Navy, so this was also a great honor for me personally,” said Cmdr. Tilo Kalski, the Bayern’s commanding officer, according to the Bundeswehr website. Although Germany and Japan are not officially military allies, they share common values and interests. “Through this training we improved our tactical skills,” Kumashiro said. In addition, the JMSDF stated that deepening cooperation with Germany’s naval forces “in order to realize a Free and Open Indo-Pacific, safeguards the peace and security of Japan, and contributes to support stability in the Indo-Pacific region.”

In September and October, the Bayern trained with Royal Australian Navy and other regional naval ships.

USS America, JS Ise Lead Integrated Training with Sasebo-based JMSDF Ships

EAST CHINA SEA -- USS America (LHA 6), the Navy’s only forward-deployed amphibious assault ship, trained alongside Hyūga-class helicopter destroyer JS Ise (DDH 182) and other Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) ships off the coast of Kyushu, Nov. 3.

America, Ise, and six other JMSDF ships conducted precision maneuvering and integrated surface warfare training, which enhanced operability and partnership between the two navies.

“Our ability to come together as a partnered surface action group, right out of a two-month pause in operations to conduct maintenance and training ashore, speaks to the strength and agility of our relationship with the JMSDF,” said Capt. Ken Ward, America’s commanding officer. “We’ve aggressively rekindled the relationship with our host nation sister ship, JS Ise, as COVID restrictions have lifted. It was extremely gratifying to be able to plan, stage and execute with our JMSDF partners in nearly the same fashion that we used to prior to the pandemic.”

The result of detailed planning and integration between America and counterparts aboard Ise while in port, a simulated bilateral strait transit and screen formation seamlessly integrated America into the group of JMSDF ships.

“We have conducted several in-port events so far, and we were finally able to conduct a bilateral event at sea,” said Capt. Koji Miyazaki, Ise’s commanding officer. “This event was a very good opportunity to enhance our interoperability. We also succeeded in nurturing spirits of the U.S. Navy and JMSDF friendship in our crews through events we did in port and underway. We will keep this relationship for the future.”

The formation comprised America, Ise, the Murasame-class destroyer JS Harusame (DD 102), the Asahi-class destroyer JS Asahi (DD 119), the Hayabusa-class guided-missile patrol boat JS Otaka (PG 826), and the Harishima-class minesweepers JS Takashima (MSC 603), JS Harishima (MSC 601) and JS Yakushima (MSC 602).

America, flagship of the America Expeditionary Strike Group, along with the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, is operating in the U.S. 7th Fleet area of responsibility to enhance interoperability with allies and partners, and serve as a ready response force to defend peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region.

Navy fires top officers of U.S. nuclear submarine damaged in underwater collision in South China Sea

The Navy said Thursday it fired the two senior officers of a nuclear-powered attack submarine that was damaged in an underwater collision last month in the South China Sea. A sailor who served as a senior enlisted adviser to the commander and the executive officer was also removed from his position. The actions were taken by Vice Adm. Karl Thomas, commander of the U.S. 7th Fleet, based in Japan.

"Thomas determined sound judgement, prudent decision-making and adherence to required procedures in navigation planning, watch team execution and risk management could have prevented the incident," according to a 7th Fleet statement.

As a result, the statement said Thomas relieved Cmdr. Cameron Aljilani as commanding officer, Lt. Cmdr. Patrick Cashin as executive officer, and Master Chief Sonar Technician Cory Rodgers as chief of the boat, "due to loss of confidence." The chief of the boat is the senior enlisted adviser to the commander and the executive officer. The Navy has yet to publicly explain how or why the USS Connecticut, a Seawolf-class submarine, struck a seamount, or underwater mountain, or to reveal the extent of damage to the vessel. U.S. defense officials told CBS News that two crew members suffered "moderate" injuries and several more sustained minor bumps and bruises. All were treated by Navy corpsman aboard the vessel, and nobody was taken off the sub.

The Navy has said the submarine's nuclear reactor and propulsion system were not damaged. The collision caused a small number of moderate and minor injuries to the crew. USNI News, which was first to report that the sub had struck a seamount, said damage to the forward section of the submarine damaged its ballast tanks. The incident happened on October 2 but was not reported by the Navy until five days later, well after it had exited the South China Sea. The vessel made its way to Guam for a damage assessment, where it remains.

The 7th Fleet Statement on Thursday also said the sub will return at an unspecified time to Bremerton, Washington for repairs.

As CBS News Asia correspondent Ramy Inocencio reported, the incident happened amid high tensions between Beijing and Washington, just weeks after the U.S. and Britain signed a deal to supply nuclear-powered submarine's to Australia's military, and just days after China sent a record number of military planes into U.S. ally Taiwan's air space, prompting concerns in Taipei that Beijing "is going to launch a war."

US Marine Corps have denied claims they were wiped out and forced to surrender by the British during a fierce simulated battle in a Californian desert.

The Telegraph reported on Tuesday that the British commandos had “dominated” the US Marines during the recent five-day multinational Exercise Green Dagger in the Mojave Desert, California.

It said the Royal Marines had wiped out almost an entire US unit, prompting the Americans to ask for a “reset” halfway through the war game, having suffered too many simulated casualties.

In a statement after the drill, the Royal Navy said an allied force composed of UK, US, Canadian, Dutch, and Emirati units had been pitted against “a highly equipped US Marine Corps adversary.” According to the navy, the British commandos had “won decisive battles” early on and gained ground from the enemy, after which they carried out raids behind enemy lines to disrupt any counterattacks by the Americans.

“Our success has proved the new commando force concept is more lethal and sophisticated than ever before,” Lieutenant Colonel Andy Dow, Commanding Officer of 40 Commando, said.

Captain Zachary Colvin, a spokesperson for the US Marine Corps, described the events differently.

“‘Winners’ are never determined [by war games],” Colvin told Military Times. “This exercise does not provide an opportunity to ‘surrender,’ ‘keep score,’ or ‘reset.’ The objective of the exercise is to heighten unit performance and increase readiness.”

“This training opportunity increased the warfighting readiness and interoperability of the US Marine Corps with multinational forces. Exercise scenarios are adjusted as needed to assist commanders in meeting training objectives,” Colvin said.

2030 AND BEYOND: DELIVERING CORPS’ NEW WARGAMING CENTER WILL ‘TAKE A VILLAGE’

Buzz surrounding the Marine Corps’ new, innovative wargaming center continues to grow within the Department of Defense.

Earlier this year, the Marine Corps broke ground on the Marine Corps Wargaming and Analysis Center. The 100,000 square-foot facility will provide next-generation technologies to help Marines better visualize the threat environment and gain competitive advantages over adversaries.

The facility will enable Marines to leverage modern modeling technology that replicates the future operating environment, enabling participants to develop new skills and test new concepts in a simulated, realistic setting.

“This new wargaming facility represents the Marine Corps’ undying effort to support the future Marine,” said Lt. Col. Raymond Feltham, MCSC’s program manager for Wargaming Capability. “MCWAC will offer innovative capabilities that will prepare them for battle against an ever-evolving threat.”

The groundbreaking ceremony was a significant moment for the Marine Corps.

It represented the culmination of a years long effort as well as myriad planning and researching by Marine Corps Systems Command, the Marine Corps Warfighting Lab, Operations Analysis Directorate, and Capabilities Development Directorate to produce a facility that influences Force Design 2030 concepts.

However, the Marine Corps will not work alone.

Developing the new, state-of-the-art facility requires the influence and expertise of multiple parties to achieve its potential. Col. Robert Bailey, MCSC’s portfolio manager for Command Element Systems, said the Corps is soliciting help from several partners, including the U.S. Navy and industry.

MCWAC will also provide a critical asset to the joint force and senior leadership that has been currently unavailable in the National Capital Region. The location facilitates participation in wargames by joint, interagency and multinational organizations.

Deadly U.S. Air strike on Kabul Blamed on 'Execution Errors'


The Pentagon’s accidental drone attack on a Toyota Corolla that killed 10 civilians on August 29 has been blamed on execution errors, aside of a host of other reasons.

On Wednesday, John F. Kirby, Pentagon press secretary, and Air Force Lt. Gen. Sami D. Said, the Air Force inspector general, briefed the news media about the investigation into the Afghan strike conducted by the U.S. military. It killed three Afghan adults and seven children. At the time, U.S. personnel mistakenly thought the car was operated by ISIS-K who intended to target evacuees and military forces with explosives at the Hamid Karzai International Airport in Afghanistan's capital.

The UAV operators and intelligence analysts had been monitoring multiple threat streams. Three days before the drone strike, a suicide bomber killed 13 U.S. service members and many Afghan evacuees. Said said the drone operators and intelligence analysts believed the strike on the vehicle was a legitimate defensive action designed to prevent an imminent attack. They didn't realize children were in the area, he said.

"You can imagine the stress on the force is high, and the risk to force is high and not appreciating what I'm about to say through that lens I think would be inappropriate," he said.

"Individuals involved in the strike interviewed during this investigation truly believed at the time that they were targeting an imminent threat to U.S. forces," he said. "Regrettably, the interpretation or the correlation of the intelligence to what was being perceived at the time in real time was inaccurate."

The investigation found no violation of law, including the law of war, Said told reporters. However, there were execution errors, combined with confirmation bias and communication breakdowns, that regrettably led to civilian casualties.

"I had the luxury of time to review that data over weeks; they didn't," he said. "They had the same data, but they had to assimilate it, digest it, and make a decision in a matter of hours."
NASA craft to crash into asteroid for Earth-defense test

Final preparations are underway in the US as NASA gets ready to launch a spacecraft destined to deliberately collide with an asteroid at high speed. The crash will be a test of the agency's "planetary defense" mission.

Aiming to find out whether it's possible to protect Earth from a potentially hazardous space object, NASA is sending a spacecraft to try and change an asteroid's path by crashing it into the speeding rock. Called the Double Asteroid Redirection Test (DART), the mission — worth $330 million — is part of a larger-scale "planetary defense" program. While it has been deflecting Earth-threatening space rocks only virtually, now a real space probe will be sent some 6.8 million miles away from the planet to hit an asteroid.

From nuclear warheads to gravity tractors, how well are we prepared for an impending asteroid?

Detecting potentially threatening space rocks is key to keeping our planet secure, NASA's Planetary Defense Officer Lindley Johnson told reporters in an online briefing on Thursday. "We don't want to be in a situation where an asteroid is headed towards Earth and then have to test this capability," he said.

To challenge the effectiveness of shooting asteroids off course, engineers have been working on the spacecraft they will soon crash for over a decade. Scheduled to be launched aboard a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket from its base in California on November 23, it is expected to reach its target asteroid by the end of September next year.

Traveling at a speed of 15,000 miles per hour (24,000 kph), it is planned that DART will impact with a 4.5 billion-years-old asteroid, Dimorphos. Described as "a fine grain mixture of rock and metal together," Dimorphos is about 525 feet (160 meters) in diameter. At a distance of about 0.75 miles (1.2 kilometers), it orbits a larger asteroid, Didymos, with a diameter roughly the height of the world's tallest building, Burj Khalifa.

The DART spacecraft will weigh 1,210 pounds (around 550 kilograms) at the time of impact. The collision will not destroy the asteroid but only "give it a small nudge," to deflect its path, scientists said.

Playing on the edges of empire: Special Operations Forces face uncertain future

Marines with 2nd Reconnaissance Battalion, 2nd Marine Division, conduct bobs with their hands and feet bound together for a time limit of five minutes at the Courthouse Bay Training Tank aboard Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, in 2015. Approximately 20 Marines from 2nd Recon Battalion participated in a two-week predive course in which they conducted exercises that would ready them for combatant diver course.

A laboratory with real stakes.

That’s what a former commander of one of the Army’s top-tier special operations units called Afghanistan. It was a place, over two decades of war, where a generation of special operations units honed their skills carrying out missions ranging from kill-or-capture raids to training Afghan soldiers. With the war in Afghanistan officially over, the U.S. military — especially the special operations community — sees an uncertain future.

“We learned a lot of stuff [in Afghanistan],” says the former Army commander, who spoke under condition of anonymity because he still serves in the military. “We’ve used the lab to hone the tools, but you’re going to pay a penalty. There will be a dividend that we’ll get back in terms of pressure on the force. There is a cost to being constantly deployed. There is also the cost of not being directly engaged in the job you signed up to do all the time.”

America’s secret warriors — who cemented themselves as the nation’s “go-to” force — will need to find that balance in a world where the global order has changed. They will need to pivot to a fight that includes more than just insurgents and terrorists. Experts, from the top of the chain of command to the team room, all agree terrorism isn’t going away, but the world they spent the last two decades fighting has.
New Tech Will Erode Nuclear Deterrence. The US Must Adapt

Nuclear weapons are no longer enough to sustain U.S. strategic deterrence. Senior military leaders and pioneering scholars believe a new technological revolution is now unfolding, and they are right. If we are not attentive now, the United States may lose the ability to deter major attacks in coming years.

The old model of strategic nuclear deterrence is increasingly threatened by a new suite of military technologies, from hypersonic missiles and advanced missile defenses to non-kinetic cyberattacks. Individually, these technologies are potent. But together, they will revolutionize the way that great powers deter and conduct war. To avoid falling behind, the United States must hedge against disruptive capabilities by modernizing its existing nuclear arsenal and undertaking a systematic review of strategic capabilities for the 2030s. This vision for the future balance of strategic forces should then enable defense and diplomatic officials to determine investment priorities accordingly and decide when and how to engage Russia and China to avoid strategic instability in this new era.

These contemporary trends are best understood through the historical lens of revolutions in military affairs, or RMAs. While the history of warfare is mostly evolutionary, certain technological advancements—such as gunpowder, aviation, and precision-guided munitions—have revolutionized warfare and reshaped military balances and the geopolitical landscape.

Technology is not the only variable; RMAs require a convergence of technology, training, doctrine, and operational concepts, as well as a fundamental shift in underlying assumptions, to produce a new way of competing and fighting. For example, the United Kingdom invented tanks, but Germany revolutionized tank warfare by integrating armor, radio, and airpower with novel concepts for employing them. This produced the blitzkrieg of World War II.

The nuclear revolution was perhaps the most consequential RMA, since nuclear weapons could do what no other weapon had ever done: pose an instantaneous, existential threat. The preceding paradigm of strategic deterrence was instantly outdated, as large armies and navies no longer sufficed to deter major attacks. The advent and continual evolution of nuclear weapons ultimately precipitated a new approach to deterrence during the Cold War, wherein only a “triad” of nuclear delivery systems—strategic bombers, intercontinental ballistic missiles, and submarine-launched ballistic missiles—was deemed sufficiently diversified to survive any enemy first strike and retaliate, thereby maintaining stability between nuclear-armed adversaries. These capabilities, which so uniquely affect the very decision to wage war, are termed “strategic forces.”

US Troops Refusing COVID Vaccine May Not Be Guaranteed Veteran Benefits, Report Says

Preventative Medicine Services NCOIC Sergeant First Class Demetrius Roberson administers a COVID-19 vaccine to a soldier on September 9, 2021 in Fort Knox, Kentucky. The Pentagon, with the support of military leaders and U.S. President Joe Biden, mandated COVID-19 vaccination for all military service members in early September. The Pentagon stresses inoculation from COVID-19 and other diseases to avoid outbreaks from impeding the fighting force of the US Military. - Sputnik International, 1920, 05.11.2021

Earlier this week, the US Air Force revealed that some 8,500 airmen had failed to meet the 2 November deadline for receiving a vaccine against the coronavirus, with almost 5,000 people seeking a religious exemption.

US military personnel reluctant to get vaccinated against the coronavirus may not be guaranteed protections or leniency in how they are dismissed from the armed forces, Military Times reported, citing Defence and Veterans Affairs officials.

It will be local commanders who make decisions on whether to give such individuals other-than-honourable discharges - something that could potentially lead to one losing their veteran benefits.

“We see the vaccine as a readiness issue”, said Gil Cisneros, Defence Department undersecretary for personnel. “Any discharge decision is up to the individual service as to how they proceed with that”.

Cisneros said he is aware of concerns that many active-duty personnel have in regard to the vaccine mandate, but remains adamant that the mandate is needed anyway.

Earlier this week, the Air Force released vaccination statistics showing that while 95.9% of active-duty personnel and 90.5% of those in reserve have been fully vaccinated, around 8,500 troops failed to meet the 2 November deadline for getting a jab, and almost 5,000 of those are seeking a religious exemption.

Tinnitus, depression most common ailments in generational study of troops’ health

A survey of troops and veterans has gathered 20 years of information on how service affects health. Tinnitus is the No. 1 concern among men.

A study of more than 250,000 service members begun in 2001 released some preliminary findings on Friday, to celebrate the effort’s 20th anniversary.

Among them is that a plurality of male troops and veterans report tinnitus, or ringing of the ears, as their No. 1 health complaint. For women, the biggest issue is depression, though among women in the reserve component, migraines slightly edge out depression.

The Millennium Cohort Study, inspired by concerns about the health effects of serving in Vietnam and the Gulf War, began in 2001 and has enrolled new waves of subjects every few years.

“The goal of the study is to understand the impact of military service, including deployments and other occupational exposures, on the long-term physical health, mental health, and quality of life of service members,” according to a report released Friday, which presents data from 2001 to 2016.

One of the principal findings is top health concerns among troops. Among men, 24 percent report tinnitus, 23 percent report high blood pressure, 20 percent high cholesterol, 17 percent sleep apnea and 17 percent acid reflux. Those levels are roughly the same for active-duty and reserve troops, as well as veterans.

US government report details first-ever drone attack on energy grid

A REPORT ISSUED BY the United States government last month provides details of what is thought to be the first known attack on the country’s energy infrastructure by an unmanned aircraft system. The report appears in a Joint Intelligence Bulletin (JIB) dated October 28, 2021. The JIB is a collaborative intelligence product of the Department of Homeland Security, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the National Counterterrorism Center.

The report documents an apparent drone attack that took place on July 16, 2020. The target of the attack was an electrical substation in the state of Pennsylvania. The document does not provide details about the geographic location of the attack, nor does it identify the substation that was targeted. It does, however, give details about the type of commercial drone that was used, which it identifies as a Chinese-built DJI Mavic 2. The DJI Mavic 2 is a compact quadcopter drone, which is popular among aerial photography enthusiasts in the United States. It costs between $1,300 and $4,450, depending on its design and amount of features.

The specific device used in the attack in Pennsylvania had been modified by its operator, most likely in order to cause a short circuit and damage the distribution lines or transformers it came in contact with. The device had a thick copper wire hanging from its body, which was attached with nylon cords. Additionally, the perpetrator of the attack had taken steps to anonymize the device, be removing its quality control markings and other identifying information from it. The camera and internal memory card, which are standard technical features of DJI Mavic 2 drones, had also been removed, according to the report. As a result, the operator of the device has not been identified.

The report concludes that illicit [drone] activity is expected “to increase over energy sector and other critical infrastructure facilities as use of these systems in the United States continues to expand”.

https://intelnews.org/2021/11/05/01-3101/
CIA Director Visits Moscow At President Biden’s Request

CIA Director William Burns flew to Moscow for two-day talks with top Russian officials. At President Biden’s request, Burns was leading a delegation of senior American officials on the trip to Moscow. In the Russian capital, Burns held at least two meetings: with the Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) chief and the secretary of the Security Council.

While in Moscow (November 2–3), Burns met Nikolai Patrushev, the powerful secretary of the Kremlin’s Security Council and a close associate of Vladimir Putin. The two “discussed Russian-U.S. relations,” the Council’s press service said in a short statement. No further details were disclosed. It was Patrushev’s first meeting with Burns since the senior U.S. official was appointed the director of the CIA. The two men know each other because Burns was a U.S. ambassador to Moscow in 2005–2008. He was an architect of the Russian reset, an attempt by the Obama administration to improve relations between the United States and Russia. In addition, Burns met with Russia’s Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) chief Sergei Naryshkin and the two discussed U.S.-Russia cooperation in fighting international terrorism. The meeting took place at the initiative of the American said, according to the Russians. The U.S. delegation flew to Russia at President Biden’s request, marking another high-level U.S.-Russia meeting. Last month, Under Secretary of State Victoria Nuland traveled to Moscow. All these talks confirm that the U.S. administration is looking to cooperate with Moscow.

https://warsawinstitute.org/cia-director-visits-moscow-president-bidens-request/
Chinese spy convicted for attempting to steal US trade secrets

A spy for China’s Ministry of State Security was convicted on Friday for attempting to steal trade secrets from General Electric and other U.S. aviation firms, the Justice Department announced.

Yanjun Xu, a 41-year-old Chinese national, was the first Chinese intelligence officer ever to be extradited to the United States to stand trial, according to federal officials. A federal grand jury found him guilty on all counts, including conspiring and attempting to commit economic espionage and attempting to steal trade secrets.

"This was state-sponsored economic espionage by the PRC designed to steal American technology and put Americans out of work," said Alan E. Kohler Jr., assistant director of the FBI’s Counterintelligence Division. "For those who doubt the real goals of the PRC, this should be a wakeup call; they are stealing American technology to benefit their economy and military."

WASHINGTON - MARCH 09: The seal of the F.B.I. hangs in the Flag Room at the bureau’s headquarters March 9, 2007 in Washington, DC.

Xu was identified as a deputy division director in the Chinese Ministry of State Security. According to court documents, Xu used various aliases dating back to 2013 to steal trade secrets from leading aviation companies based in the U.S. and abroad.

The jury found Xu attempted to steal information related to GE Aviation’s proprietary composite aircraft engine fan. The Justice Department said GE worked closely with the FBI during its investigation.

https://www.foxbusiness.com/politics/chinese-spy-convicted-steal-us-trade-secrets
Sputnik was a wakeup call for the US. China's 'hypersonic missile' is a trickier challenge

(CNN) "Listen now, for the sound that forevermore separates the old from the new."

That was how NBC radio introduced the signal from the first satellite in space, on October 4, 1957.

But it wasn't a triumph of American science: The sound came from the Soviet Union's Sputnik, a piece of hardware the size of a beach ball whose launch stunned the world -- and the United States in particular.

The phrase "Sputnik moment" was coined to mark the moment. It signified shock at the loss of a presumed superiority, a rival's technological leap that might wreck the nuclear balance of power.

The then-President Dwight D. Eisenhower professed to be worried "not one iota" about Sputnik, but public and political reaction in the US was less sanguine. "Russian science whipped American science," screamed the Boston Globe.

Last week, the chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Mark Milley, recalled the "Sputnik moment" when he spoke about China's test of one or more hypersonic missiles this summer.

"What we saw was a very significant event of a test of a hypersonic weapon system. And it is very concerning," Milley said. "I don't know if it's quite a Sputnik moment, but I think it's very close to that."

China says it has done nothing more than launch a reusable space vehicle -- and based on these tests alone determining its intentions is difficult. But China has invested massively in missile and space capabilities in recent years, while also developing conventional forces and cyber warfare.

In national security terms, surprises and the inability to assess a threat are what keep the top brass awake at night. Sputnik briefly ticked both boxes. China's rapid development of hypersonic technology may be of a different order.

In the years after Sputnik, the US quickly overtook the Soviet Union in satellite and space technology. NASA was created in 1958 (and flew the very first hypersonic test vehicle in 1959). By 1960, the US had three times as many satellites orbiting the Earth as did the USSR.

China continues to take incremental, tactical actions to press its claims at the LAC: Pentagon report India is keen to resolve the ongoing military standoff through dialogue

Amidst military and diplomatic negotiations to bring peace on the India-China border, China has continued taking incremental and tactical actions to press its claims at the Line of Actual Control (LAC). This is what a report by the United States Department of Defence (DOD) talks about while stating that the stand-off between India and China at the LAC since May 2020 gave the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) “valuable real-world operational and tactical experience”.

Indian establishment is keen to resolve the ongoing military standoff through dialogue or negotiation, but it is left with no option but to keep large scale deployment of its men and machine on the Himalayan frontiers to counter any 'misadventure' by the Chinese forces. It is going to be the second consecutive winter of massive military deployment for both forces on the icy heights.

South Block, which houses the ministry of defence is looking forward to fixing the next round of military commander’s meetings after the last meeting, which took place on October 10, failed to make a breakthrough to defuse the tension between the two nuclear-armed militaries.

The report titled ‘Report on Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China – 2021’ claims that China is taking “incremental and tactical actions to press its claims at the Line of Actual Control (LAC)” and mentions 100-home civilian village built by Beijing between the Tibet Autonomous Region and India’s Arunachal Pradesh state in the eastern sector sometime in 2020. A few months back, satellite imaging by Planet Labs has revealed around 100 houses have been built along the river Tsari Chu in the upper Subansiri district in Arunachal Pradesh. The Indian ministry of external affairs (MEA) had then said in response, our (Indian) government too, has stepped up border infrastructure including the construction of roads, bridges etc, which has provided much-needed connectivity to the local population along the border.”

“Sometime in 2020, the PRC built a large 100-home civilian village inside disputed territory between the PRC’s Tibet Autonomous Region and India’s Arunachal Pradesh state in the eastern sector of the LAC. These and other infrastructure development efforts along the India-China (sic) have been a source of consternation in the Indian government and media,” the Pentagon report mentions.

Lt Gen Manoj Pande, Eastern Army Commander of the Indian army, in a recent interaction has stated that villages on the other side of the Indian border are part of China’s strategy model and is a matter of 'concern'. It is estimated that since 2017, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has been building 628 border defence villages in Tibet along its frontier with India and Bhutan. China has worked on better
infrastructure in the area with a dual-use strategy, which means it (infrastructure) can be used both for civilian and military purposes.

And, to counter, Chinese dual strategy, the Indian Army is also working with the Government of Arunachal Pradesh for the development of model villages along the border with Tibet.

Experts believe that it is PLA’s policy to work closely with civilians staying in border areas. "China will now bring more people to settle along the border- to work as the first line of defence," an expert says.

US report further said that asserting that its deployments to the LAC were in response to Indian provocation, Beijing has refused to withdraw any forces until India's forces have withdrawn behind the PRC's version of the LAC and ceased infrastructure improvements in the area.

According to the report, a big part of China's effort to match the strength of a "strong enemy" involves major modernization and reform efforts within China's army. Those efforts include an ongoing effort to achieve "mechanization," which the report describes as the Chinese army's efforts to modernize its weapons and equipment to be networked into a "systems of systems" and to also utilize more advanced technologies suitable for "informed" and "intelligible" warfare.

Pentagon: China Nuclear Threat Level Doubles

Reports emerge of worsening panic buying in China. Some have even been spotted fighting over goods in stores amid concerns over possible repeat pandemic lockdowns.

Donated organs come with official price tags in China. Six provincial departments co-released a price guide for transplants. But critics say it may encourage killing for profit.

Fourteen candidates are forced to withdraw from an upcoming election in Beijing. Police threatened them over not being appointed by the communist government.

China’s nuclear threat level has increased 150 percent over the past year, according to the newest Pentagon report on China.

U.S. Customs has detained products from the world’s largest solar cell manufacturer. The Chinese company is accused of involvement in Xinjiang’s human rights violations.

US Senate Bill Would Give Taiwan $2 Billion in Annual Military Aid, Including Hypersonics

A group of Republican senators have introduced a bill that would set aside $2 billion a year in military aid to Taiwan to ensure the autonomous island is able to stand up to the People’s Republic of China, which considers it a Chinese province in rebellion. The bill would violate a key agreement in US-China relations.

The Taiwan Deterrence Act was introduced in the Senate on Thursday by Sen. Jim Risch, (R-ID), the highest-ranking Republican in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and sponsored by Sens. Mike Crapo (R-ID), Bill Hagerty (R-TN), Mitt Romney (R-UT), John Cornyn (R-TX), and Marco Rubio (R-FL).

“China’s increasing efforts to militarily overwhelm Taiwan is a threat to international diplomacy and regional security,” Crapo said in a press release. “It is imperative to get asymmetric capabilities, training and readiness resources to Taiwan quickly so it can protect itself from China’s encroaching aggression in the Indo-Pacific region.”

The bill would require the US Department of State to set aside $2 billion in Foreign Military Finance grant assistance program annually from 2023 until 2032, provided Taipei commits to matching spending on a dollar-for-dollar basis.

The bill proposes that the US “design for export to Taiwan capabilities critical to maintaining a favorable military balance in the region, including long-range precision fires, air and missile defense systems, anti-ship cruise missiles, land attack cruise missiles, conventional hypersonic systems, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities, and command and control systems.”

It also says the State Department should urge the government in Taiwan to “invest in sufficient quantities of munitions to meet contingency requirements and avoid the need for accessing United States stocks in wartime” and to “cooperate with Taiwan to deliver such munitions, or when necessary, to increase the capacity of Taiwan to produce such munitions.”

However, the bill’s justifications make clear that the lawmakers see the defense of Taiwan as something not so much done for the benefit of the Taiwanese, but primarily to advance US strategic interests in the region, the foremost of which is to control and limit the continued expansion of Chinese political, military and economic power.

Beijing Slams US Attempts to Hype Up the 'China Threat'

The latest report on China, drafted by the Pentagon, suggested that the Asian nation was expanding its nuclear arsenal in no small part thanks to the US' own aggressive policy towards Beijing, which purportedly fears that war between the two countries is possible.

China has lodged an official protest to the US over its criticism of Beijing building-up its nuclear arsenal, which Beijing rejected as unfounded. The spokesman for the Chinese Defence Ministry, Wu Qian, has stressed that Beijing only pursues a defensive policy aimed at safeguarding national sovereignty, and does not target any country or endanger regional stability.

The official went on to decry the Pentagon's latest report on China, accusing Washington of ignoring the facts, filling the document with bias and making up an illusory "Chinese military threat". He also said that the Pentagon's criticism of Beijing for building up its nuclear arsenal was "unfounded".

In this Friday, July 8, 2016, file photo released by Xinhua News Agency, Chinese missile frigate Yuncheng launches an anti-ship missile during a military exercise in the waters near south China's Hainan Island and Paracel Islands. China is holding another round of military drills in the South China Sea amid an uptick in such activity in the area highlighting growing tensions - Sputnik International, 1920, 05.11.2021

At the same time, the Defence Ministry's spokesman lashed out at the US, pointing out that Washington had itself made a large contribution to destabilising the world's peace and security by building up its nuclear arsenal, cyber operations and withdrawing from important arms treaties, such as the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty.
Chinese Soldiers in Tibet Get New Tactical Vests

The Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) Xinjiang Military Command who carried out training on the snow-capped plateau at the elevation of 5,300m have recently received the new type of tactical vests.

The command is stationed close to the border with India. The two countries recently failed to reach an agreement during the 13th round of corps commander-level talks over issues related to the western section of the China-India border.

The new vest covers the torso region of the body, featuring design, structure, material and manufacturing process, as well as a major improvement over previous products in terms of portability, fire resistance and intensity, the Chinese military reported Thursday.

Chinese Soldiers in Tibet Get New Tactical Vests

It is learnt that the new vest is designed in strict accordance with the requirements of patrol and sentry duty so as to meet the actual needs of training and combat readiness on the plateau. The materials used for the vest can resist strong wind and keep the soldiers warm in freezing conditions, and the embedded quick-slip device enables the soldiers to quickly escape from danger at critical moments.

The vest is also able to carry information, operational and other supportive devices in a modular approach according to different needs.

Major Li Xiaoliang, deputy political instructor of the brigade under the PLA Xinjiang Military Command, said that the new tactical vest, designed to suit the training requirements and local conditions on the plateau, is very practical.

https://www.defenseworld.net/news/30727/Chinese_Soldiers_in_Tibet_Get_New_Tactical_Vests#YYmF4m3MLIU
China rushes to debunk rumours of war with Taiwan after fake draft texts

Authorities in mainland China were rushing to quell rumours of imminent war with Taiwan in an attempt to prevent "unpredictable consequences."

The rumour mill began to churn after the Ministry of Commerce (Mofcom) encouraged families on Tuesday (Nov 2) to stockpile essentials.

Text notifications claiming to be from the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and asking reservists to be prepared for a draft because the Taiwan issue had become severe were also circulating on the Chinese internet on the same day.

The PLA-affiliated social media account Junzhengping issued two statements on Weibo to debunk the rumours, saying the text messages were fabricated.

"These kind of rumours being able to spread widely is linked to the heated public discourse on the topic.

It's very easy for the public, who do not know the truth, to interpret this incorrectly, leading to unpredictable consequences," said the statement published on Wednesday.

Tensions in the Taiwan Strait continued with Beijing sending a record number of PLA fighter jets into the island’s air defence identification zone last month.

Last week, Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen broke with convention by acknowledging the presence of US soldiers on the island.

State broadcaster CCTV published a report on Tuesday clarifying the Mofcom statement, saying that the public had read too much into the one sentence of a Mofcom notice, which encouraged families to stockpile necessities and help prepare for emergency situations.

Zhu Xiaoliang, a Mofcom official, further explained that earlier in the year adverse weather and other factors had led to a rise in vegetable prices, affecting people's lives, according to the report.

The mainland was battling a resurgence in Covid-19 cases in 14 provinces, National Health Commission data showed, leading to stay-at-home orders and public establishments being closed in some cities.

By coincidence, on Tuesday Elon Musk, the chief executive of Tesla electric car company and the world's richest man, shared a Chinese poem that had been quoted decades ago by former Chinese president Jiang Zemin when discussing cross-strait relations.

https://www.asiaone.com/china/china-rushes-debunk-rumours-war-taiwan-after-fake-draft-texts
China's intent to seize Taiwan threatens US economic security

TAIPEI (Taiwan News) — U.S. Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro on Thursday (Nov. 4) said that China's plans to seize Taiwan has a "serious impact on our economic security" and could destabilize the global economy.

On Thursday, Kevin Baron, executive editor of Defense One, interviewed Del Toro at the Aspen Security Forum in Washington. Midway through the interview, Baron asked Del Toro to elaborate on his priorities listed in his strategic guidance in his new role as secretary of the navy.

Del Toro started out by making it clear that China is the top priority as America's "most significant pacing threat." He then highlighted Beijing's increasing menace toward Taiwan: "China's intent to one day take over Taiwan, either peacefully or through military means has a most serious impact on our economic security of this country."

He added that China's military aggression toward Taiwan could lead to the "destabilization of the global economy for that matter." The U.S. navy's new head concluded that China is the "pacing threat and the number one threat that we have to pay attention to."

Del Toro stressed that this does not mean that the U.S. will ignore existing threats posed by other countries such as Russia, Iran, North Korea, and many other countries, as well as the terrorism that is ever-present around the world, "but China is unquestionably the most significant threat."

Japan defense chief inspects German navy frigate Bayern

Defense Minister Nobuo Kishi on Friday inspected the German navy frigate Bayern, the European country's first military vessel to make a port call in Japan in about 20 years. Kishi's visit to the frigate at a Tokyo cruise terminal was to demonstrate robust bilateral ties, according to the Defense Ministry. Japan and Germany have been deepening their defense cooperation in response to China's military buildup and assertive territorial claims in the Indo-Pacific.

The minister hailed the port call in Japan, saying at a press conference following the inspection, "It is of great significance in showing Germany's commitment to contributing to peace and stability in this region actively." Since Thursday, the Bayern has been conducting joint exercises with Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force in the Pacific Ocean south of Tokyo, the ministry said. The frigate also conducted training with the MSDF in the Gulf of Aden in August.

According to the German navy, the frigate is set to visit South Korea after Japan and sail through the South China Sea, where China is building military outposts. German Ambassador to Japan Clemens von Goetze said at the news conference the Bayern's passage through the South China Sea will "demonstrate that Germany and Japan are both committed to international law and freedom of navigation."

The envoy added the Bayern will conduct a mission for the first time later this month to monitor whether there are ship-to-ship transfers of goods by North Korea in violation of U.N. sanctions for its nuclear and missile development. Germany has been stepping up its engagement in the Indo-Pacific region, partly propelled by Beijing's action deemed as undermining the rule of law, human rights and democracy. Berlin released its comprehensive Indo-Pacific strategy in September last year, signaling the country's shift away from a China-centered Asia policy.

Prior to the inspection, Kishi held talks with Gen. Eberhard Zorn, the German chief of Defense, who said at the outset of the meeting the Bayern deployment is "part of demonstration of our Indo-Pacific guidelines."

Kishi underscored the importance of Japan-Germany cooperation, saying, "In the East China Sea and the South China Sea, we see unilateral attempts to change the status quo based on force, and these problems are a common concern not only in Asia but also in the rest of the world, including Europe."

North Korea Allegedly Not Using Its Full Capacity in Nuke Manufacturing

The newly developed hypersonic missile Hwasong-8 is test-fired by the Academy of Defence Science of the DPRK in Toyang-ri, Ryongrim County of Jagang Province, North Korea, in this undated photo released on September 29, 2021 by North Korea's Korean Central News Agency (KCNA). KCNA via REUTERS - Sputnik International, 1920, 05.11.2021

Despite pressure from the international community in the form of sanctions, the DPRK has not abandoned its efforts to build up a nuclear arsenal. Furthermore, it is also developing delivery methods, which recently received a significant boost with the introduction of a hypersonic missile.

North Korea has the capacity to produce fissile material for its nuclear armaments in volumes that greatly exceed the country's current output, research from Stanford University's Center for International Security and Cooperation has shown.

The authors of the study looked through satellite imagery to assess the DPRK's level of production of fissile materials involved in the early stages of a nuke's manufacturing, studying photos of equipment, facilities, and a uranium mining complex in Pyongsan. The researchers also evaluated the level of waste disposal at these facilities.

The study showed that the DPRK's current output of fissile materials is just a fraction of what it could actually produce.

There are several possible reasons why North Korea keeps it so low, in the opinion of Sulgiye Park, the lead researcher. Either the DPRK is satisfied with the current speed of the nuclear arsenal's build-up, or it faces certain bottlenecks in the production chain. The latter could either be related to a lack of uranium ore, the key component in a nuclear device, or with limitations in the later stages of a nuke's manufacturing, Park suggested.

The DPRK is continuing to upgrade its nuclear arsenal, as well as its means of delivery despite international sanctions pressure and attempts in recent years to negotiate the denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula. Most recently, North Korea boasted of successfully testing its first hypersonic missile, the Hwasong-8. Normally, hypersonic vehicles possess greater capabilities for dodging interception by enemy air defence systems.

Australia to Acquire Bulletproof Jaeger-C Swarming Attack Robots

The Australian military has contracted technology firm GaardTech to supply Jaeger-C unmanned combat vehicles featuring both anti-tank and anti-personnel capabilities.

Designed for enemy ambush, the wheeled robot can silently observe targets with its autonomous image analysis function. When it identifies a potential target, the platform switches into either Goliath or Chariot mode, depending on whether the target is personnel or a vehicle.

In Goliath mode, the cutting-edge technology can carry out a kamikaze attack to destroy any enemy vehicle it detects. When it Activate Chariot mode, the robot can engage targets using an undisclosed weapon. Reports say the robot carries a 7.62mm medium machine gun or a 6.5mm sniper rifle.

The Jaeger-C is also equipped with an armor-piercing shaped charge said to be comparable to the 20-pound warhead on the FGM-148 Javelin. It reportedly has a considerable advantage when attacking thinly-armored tanks.

The bulletproof platform has a maximum speed of 50 miles (80 kilometers) per hour, making evasive action difficult for adversaries.

Robot Demonstration

Last year, GaardTech uploaded a video showing a swarm of Jaeger-C robots carrying out a coordinated attack on a target from different angles. The video shows the last robot approaching the target to confirm that it has been destroyed.

Another exercise was conducted in July where the vehicle took 50 rounds of 7.62mm sniper fire at 50 meters (164 feet). The company said the amount of fire the Jaeger-C took was equivalent to two bursts of fire from a machine gun mounted on a military tank.

After the test, GaardTech revealed that the outer layer of the robot’s armor was damaged but not penetrated. Its second and third layers were not affected.

“MG [machine gun] fire has nil effect on Jaeger-C,” the company wrote on social media at the time.

https://www.thedefensepost.com/2021/11/05/australia-jaeger-attack-robot/
**Australia receives 4 more F-35 fighter jets**

The Royal Australian Air Force received from the United States four new F-35A stealth fighter jets.

“This is one of our newest four F-35A Lightnings, which touched down recently at RAAF Base Williamtown fresh from the US.,” the RAAF said in a Twitter post Friday.

The Australian military also added that with these new additions they now have 41 of the fifth-gen stealth fighters.

The F-35 is a 5th generation fighter, combining advanced stealth with fighter speed and agility, advanced mission systems, fully fused sensor information, network-enabled operations and cutting-edge sustainment.

The first two Lockheed Martin F-35A Lightning II fighters arrived at RAAF Base Williamtown, north of Sydney, on December 10, 2018.

The F-35A (commonly known as the Joint Strike Fighter) will meet Australia’s future air combat and strike needs, providing a networked force-multiplier effect in terms of situational awareness and combat effectiveness.

The F-35A’s combination of stealth, advanced sensors, networking and data fusion capabilities, when integrated with other Defence systems, will enable the RAAF to maintain an air combat edge.

Australia already has a submarine capability gap

At Senate estimates hearings on 24 March of this year, the independent Senator Malcolm Roberts bluntly asked Defence Department officials, ‘If the last sub will be delivered in the 2040s and the first delivery is estimated to be in 2032–33, won’t these subs be obsolete by the time they are ready for the water?’ (page 62 here). The officials answered, ‘No, they won’t be obsolete by the time they enter the water. We are also designing this submarine to ... keep them superior throughout their service life.’ That answer was consistent with the one repeatedly delivered by ministers and officials since the Attack class was chosen in 2016, despite it being a conventional, not nuclear, design.

Roberts was expressing what many were thinking—and was remarkably prescient. On Monday, Prime Minister Scott Morrison, discussing the events that led to the cancellation of the Attack class deal with France’s Naval Group, said that the first submarine would have been obsolete almost the minute it got in the water. And it was ‘the unanimous view of all the chiefs of our services and defence force, that this was a capability that was not going to meet our needs’. Similarly, Defence officials had consistently denied suggestions at estimates that there were significant delays in the project by saying that the first Attack-class boat would be operational by 2034. Yet the prime minister said that ‘our view [was] that this project would be further delayed and that would not see a submarine in the water until the late 2030s and possibly as late as 2038’.

What are we to make of this? How confident should we be in any of Defence’s statements on other key capabilities? Will the Hunter-class frigate be a superior and survivable capability when (or if) it starts to enter service around 2033? Will the army’s $40 billion investment in armoured vehicles be worth it in the face of the cheap drones and missiles that are available to any state that wants them? Can the navy avoid a submarine capability gap during the (now even longer) transition to its future submarines?

Since we started by talking about submarines, we’ll look at the last of those questions. First, a word of warning. It’s important not to fall for the old street magician’s trick in which he steals your watch while diverting your attention somewhere else. Don’t fall for Defence’s line that it can keep the Collins-class submarines going until the SSNs arrive, because that’s an entirely separate issue from a capability gap. If you do, you’ve already lost your watch.

The 2009 white paper was the first defence strategic planning document to announce that Australia would acquire a fleet of 12 submarines. This requirement was driven by Australia’s changing strategic environment. Those submarines were meant to start entering service around 2025. We can argue about whether that was a realistic date, but the intent was to increase Australia’s submarine capability beyond six Collins-class boats. Since 2009, no government has wavered from the intent to increase our submarine capability. Moreover, there is broad consensus that Australia’s strategic circumstances have become more perilous, reinforcing that requirement. Yet the timeline for delivery of that additional capability has moved from 2025 to 2034 and now to the late 2030s.

INS_Vikrant aircraft carrier

“An aircraft carrier is 100,000 tons of diplomacy”, Henry Kissinger once said. In this sense, India’s first Indigenous Aircraft Carrier (IAC) INS VIKRANT sailed into history last month as she was launched for sea trials, thereby catapulting India into the elite club of nations owning the niche technology to design and construct an aircraft carrier.

The 40,000-ton reincarnated INS VIKRANT, named after India’s very first aircraft carrier acquired in 1961 from the UK and decommissioned in 1997, successfully completed her five-day maiden sea voyage in south-western India. The other carrier-owning navies of the world are the USA, France, the UK, Italy, Russia, and China.

The vessel is expected to be officially commissioned into the Indian Navy in 2022, coinciding with India’s commemoration of the 75th anniversary of independence. It is expected that the INS VIKRANT will be fully operational by mid-2023 after the integration of its air element, following the trials of Russian MiG-29K fighters and the indigenously produced advanced light helicopters.

Project Background

Constructed with a budget of US$3.15Bn under the codename Project-71, INS VIKRANT has 76 per cent indigenous content and has been designed by the Indian Navy’s Directorate of Naval Design (DND) and constructed by the Indian Government-owned Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL), under the Ministry of Shipping. INS VIKRANT has proven to be the shining beacon by giving a big push to India’s “Atma Nirbhar” pitch pioneered by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. This is CSL’s and the Indian Navy’s premiere attempt at carrier design and construction.

The carrier’s power generation and propulsion worthiness have already undergone testing at harbour as part of basin trials in November 2020, after which the sea trials ought to have begun, but the delay is attributable to the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. The dedicated efforts of engineers, OEMs, designers, inspectors, overseers and the ship’s crew have more than made up for the delay.

The indigenous construction has accelerated the growth in indigenous design and construction capabilities besides developing a large number of ancillary industries, leading to the creation of employment opportunities for 2,000 CSL personnel and about 12,000 employees in ancillary industries. Over 76 per cent indigenous content towards procurement of equipment, besides work by CSL and their sub-contractors is being directly invested back into the Indian economy. Around 550 Indian firms, including about 100 MSMEs (medium small and micro enterprises) are registered with CSL, who are providing various services for INS VIKRANT.

https://defenceview.in/india-joins-elite-club-of-aircraft-carrier-manufacturers/
The India-Pakistan Nuclear Arms Race Should Concern You

Here's What You Need to Remember: Since the fighters would have to penetrate India’s air defense network to deliver their payloads against cities and other targets, Pakistani aircraft would likely be deliver tactical nuclear weapons against battlefield targets.

Sandwiched between Iran, China, India and Afghanistan, Pakistan lives in a complicated neighborhood with a variety of security issues. One of the nine known states known to have nuclear weapons, Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal and doctrine are continually evolving to match perceived threats. A nuclear power for decades, Pakistan is now attempting to construct a nuclear triad of its own, making its nuclear arsenal resilient and capable of devastating retaliatory strikes.

Pakistan’s nuclear program goes back to the 1950s, during the early days of its rivalry with India. President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto famously said in 1965, “If India builds the bomb, we will eat grass or leaves, even go hungry, but we will get one of our own.”

The program became a higher priority after the country’s 1971 defeat at the hands of India, which caused East Pakistan to break away and become Bangladesh. Experts believe the humiliating loss of territory, much more than reports that India was pursuing nuclear weapons, accelerated the Pakistani nuclear program. India tested its first bomb, codenamed “Smiling Buddha,” in May 1974, putting the subcontinent on the road to nuclearization.

Pakistan began the process of accumulating the necessary fuel for nuclear weapons, enriched uranium and plutonium. The country was particularly helped by one A. Q. Khan, a metallurgist working in the West who returned to his home country in 1975 with centrifuge designs and business contacts necessary to begin the enrichment process. Pakistan’s program was assisted by European countries and a clandestine equipment-acquisition program designed to do an end run on nonproliferation efforts. Outside countries eventually dropped out as the true purpose of the program became clear, but the clandestine effort continued.
Pakistan held keel-laying ceremony of the 4th Milgem-class corvette

According to a tweet published by the Facebook account of the Pakistan Navy on November 5, 2021, the keel-laying ceremony of the 4th MILGEM Class Corvette was held at Karachi Shipyard and Engineering Works.

The MILGEM ships built for the Pakistani Navy are based on the Ada-class corvette but a modification requested by Pakistan includes the Aselsan GOKDENIZ Close-in weapon system.

The GOKDENIZ complex along with Aselsan ATOM 35mm airburst ammunition is an all-weather-capable Turkish 35 mm dual-barrel close-in weapon system (CIWS) developed by Aselsan. It is a CIWS variant of the KORKUT Self-propelled anti-aircraft gun.

Each GOKDENIZ platform carries a variant of Oerlikon 35 mm twin cannon, manufactured under license by MKEK. The CIWS system, sensors, and electronics are manufactured by Aselsan. The CIWS can fire up to 1100 rounds a minute up to an effective range of 4 km.

The Ada-class corvette has a length of 99.56 m, a beam of 14.4 m, a draft of 3.9, and a displacement of 2,400 tones. The ship is equipped with the GENESIS, a network-centric warfare management system developed by HAVELSAN, an Electronic Chart Precise Integrated Navigation System (ECPINS), Integrated Platform Management System (IPMS), a SMART-S Mk2 search radar, X-band radar, and fire control radar.

The Ada-class corvette is powered by a Combined diesel and gas (CODAG) propulsion system including 1 gas turbine, 2 diesel engines driving 2 shafts. The ship can reach a top speed of 30 knots (56 km/h) with a maximum cruising range of 3,500 nautical miles at 15 knots (28 km/h).

She has a crew of 93 sailors including aviation officers and can accommodate up to 106 people with 10 days of endurance in autonomous conditions.

Russia Mulls Exporting Next Generation S-500 Air Defense System to China and India

Russian S-500 anti-aircraft missile systems, dubbed Prometheus, are by far the most advanced anti-missile system in Russia and regarded as the best in the world. / Mil.ru

The world's second-largest military power may export its next-generation version of mobile S-500 air defense system to India and China in the future, said Dmitry Shugaev, who heads the Russian Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation (FSMTC).

In an interview with RBC issued on Tuesday, Shugaev explained that once the national armed forces receive enough of those systems, Russia will start exporting its cutting-edge S-500 anti-aircraft missile systems abroad.

"We are considering India, as well as China and all the states with which we have a longtime partnership and predictable mutual relations, as future owners of this cutting-edge system," Shugaev said during his interview.

India is a long-standing strategic partner of Russia, stressed Shugaev, recalling that the parties had sealed a multi-billion deal that would supply New Delhi with the S-400 Triumf anti-aircraft missile system. The $5.43-billion contract — the biggest of its kind in the history of Russian-Indian cooperation and the largest to date for Russia’s state arms exporter Rosoboronexport — envisages the delivery of the first battalion set of S-400 to India by the end of the year.

"That is why it is quite logical that they will display their interest in the foreseeable future and request the S-500 from us as well," Shugaev concluded.

Russian S-500 anti-aircraft missile systems, dubbed Prometheus, are by far the most advanced anti-missile system in Russia and regarded as the best in the world. Branded as a silver bullet against stealth fighters in general and the F-35 in particular, the S-500 is reportedly capable of destroying low-orbit satellites and fifth-generation aircraft, in addition to its primary targets - cruise and ballistic missiles, which could already be dealt with by existing S-300 and S-400 units.

Created on the basis of the S-400, the range of the new Russian air defense system is expected to significantly surpass its predecessors. The S-500 will likely use a variety of missiles in addition to the 77N6 missile series, currently under development for the S-400, as a hit-to-kill interceptor for ballistic missile targets. With a widely expected maximum operating range of 600 km (373 miles) and a system response time of 3 to 4 seconds, the S-500 reaches a whopping 200 km (124 miles) farther and is around 6 seconds faster to respond than its S-400 predecessor.

Russia’s Navy might get two new nuclear submarines in 2022

A Russian biggest shipbuilder is planning to hand over two nuclear-powered submarines to the Russian Navy next year.

A source close to the Russian defense ministry says that both submarines will enter service with the Pacific Fleet.

“The current plans for 2022 envisage the transfer of one strategic [submarine] – the Generalissimus Suvorov missile-carrying submarine [of the Borei-A class] and one attack [submarine], the Krasnoyarsk multipurpose submarine [of the Yasen-M class],” the source said.

The modern Russian Borei nuclear ballistic missile submarine, or SSBN, was conceived as a replacement to the aging Delta and Typhoon strategic submarine lines.

According to TASS, Borei-and Borei-A-class submarines have been developed by the Rubin Central Design Bureau of Marine Engineering. They carry 16 Bulava intercontinental ballistic missiles and are outfitted with 533mm torpedo tubes.

The Yasen-M is a new line of nuclear-powered cruise missile submarines, designed to phase out Russia’s aging, Soviet-era attack submarines. The submarines can be deployed in anti-submarine warfare, anti-surface warfare, surveillance operations and special missions.

IS terror group uses China to vilify Taliban

Eurasianet says that since the Taliban took Kabul, Islamic State (IS) terror group sympathizers across South Asia have increased attacks on the movement over its ties to China.

Since its founding in 2014, the Islamic State group has reportedly always been hostile to China. China’s well-documented repression of Uyghurs and other Muslims in Xinjiang features often in IS propaganda, especially in South Asia.

That reportedly puts the Taliban in an awkward position.

Seeking international legitimacy and finance, the Taliban is carefully cultivating China. Beijing has reciprocated, inviting Taliban officials to visit several times since 2014. This past July, before Kabul had fallen to the Taliban, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi warmly received the group’s leaders, telling them that Beijing expects they “deal resolutely” with Uyghur militants in Afghanistan.

Now Afghan Uyghurs reportedly say they are being harassed by the new Taliban government, apparently at Beijing’s behest.

That’s good news for Islamic State recruiters who exploit China’s ties with the Taliban to discredit the group, calling it a sell-out for negotiating with Americans and not defending the Xinjiang Muslims, Eurasianet said, noting that in recent months, the IS affiliate in Afghanistan, Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP), has used high-profile attacks, at least one claimed by an ethnic Uyghur, to nominate itself as the new leader of Afghan jihad.

Beijing was reportedly stunned when ISKP (also known as ISIS-K) claimed a Chinese Uyghur suicide bomber was responsible for carnage at a Shiite mosque in Kunduz that killed at least 50 on October 8. The Islamic State’s Amaq news agency identified the perpetrator as “Muhammad al-Uyghuri” and thundered that “the Taliban has pledged to expel and oust [Uyghurs] at the request of […] China.”

The Voice of Hind, an English-language magazine published by an IS offshoot in India, celebrated the attacker as “a knight of Allah from China” and blasted the Taliban for supposedly vowing to protect Buddhist statues at China’s behest.

IS propagandists hoping to demonize China arguably find more fertile soil for their efforts in South Asia than in the Middle East. China’s historical ties to peoples across Asia are stronger. Since at least the time of Mao, Uyghurs have sought refuge in South Asia. (And China’s relations with South Asia’s largest economy, India, are extremely tense.) So the region’s militants have been able to craft more nuanced critiques of Beijing than what IS produced in the Middle East.

Colombian Navy Seizes 7.41 Tonnes of Cocaine in 4 Maritime Operations

MANAGUA (Sputnik) – Colombian Naval Forces said they have intercepted three submarines and a speed boat with 7.41 tonnes of cocaine in national and international waters.

"In four operations conducted in national and international waters, a total of 7,410 kilograms [16,336 pounds] of cocaine have been seized, as well as three semi-submersible vessels and a speed boat, which inflicted a financial damage of $249 million to the drug business organisations", the Colombian Navy said in a statement.

About 5.5 tonnes of cocaine were seized from two submarines near Malpelo Island in the Pacific Ocean. The operation was carried out in cooperation with the US Joint Special Operations Command and resulted in the detention of three Ecuadorian and three Colombian citizens.

Over 90 percent of the world's coca plantations are located in Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia, which makes these countries crucial for international drug trafficking.

The secret of the stealth of new Royal Navy Dreadnought class submarine

The Dreadnought class is the future replacement for the Vanguard class of ballistic missile submarines. The first two submarines, Dreadnought and Valiant, which have undergone significant design changes compared to existing ones, are already under construction. They are expected to enter the UK Navy in the 2030s.

Speed, depth and countermeasures can help a submarine escape, but stealth is the best way to survive. Therefore, submarines which are under construction today will be more subtle than those already in service.

The new Dreadnought class of submarines for the Royal Navy, currently under construction, includes innovative capabilities that promise to take submersible stealth to the next level.

Four Dreadnought class submarines are being built to replace the current Vanguard class submarine fleet. They will be armed with Lockheed Trident-II D5 missiles to provide the United Kingdom with a maritime advantage. Their size will be slightly larger than the existing ones for the possibility of implementing a number of new stealth technologies. In an underwater arena, being inconspicuous basically means being quiet, so new boats will be the quietest.

Since the 1980s, soundproofing “anechoic” tiles have been installed on submarines. And the current generation Astute Class has an anechoic coating. This provides a better fit and optimal performance compared to adding tiles after the boat is built.

The Astute case is completely covered with anechoic tiles. Added to this is a distinct cheekbone that runs around the bow, and the top of the body and fin are angled to reduce sonar reflections. In the Dreadnought design, the cheekbone runs along the entire length of the hull. This testifies to the new design of such submarines.
Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on the Missile and Missile Defence Market

Security dilemma, the quest for survival, the keenness to display a state’s power and prestige, strengthen its position in the international system have led countries to seek for hard power capabilities. Missiles and missile defence systems form an integral component of a state’s hard power prowess. Today, both developed and developing states are seeking for such capabilities to strengthen their combat and deterrent capabilities vis-à-vis their adversaries. Even amid the pandemic, when criticisms came up for states to divert resources to health care systems and other non-traditional security threats to global security rather on traditional security mechanisms, states have continued to acquire or develop or test missile capabilities. Big, medium and small players in the missile and missile defence market, no doubt are facing myriad challenges to cope with the pandemic- that include managerial and operational challenges- however, it must be noted that some of these big players continue to sail through this tough time owing to their own abilities to take effective decisions on their business and functioning. Some players are surviving in the gloomy economy based on their ongoing defence deals with countries while others are coping with the pandemic by diverting their attention towards research and development of Covid related equipment like ventilators, personnel protective equipment (PPE), masks and other related equipment to support their governments and also to survive in this hour of crisis. However, how defence enterprises are diverting their focus on COVID related equipment is beyond the scope of this paper. This article analyses why states continue to develop and test missile and missile defence capabilities even as they deal with health, food security and other non-traditional modes of security. It also highlights the challenges that defence enterprises are facing at the moment and how they are coping with the same. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the Corona Virus epidemic as a pandemic. In addition, the WHO also declared that the pandemic would affect not just public health, but would affect every other sector. [1] Even as the world was grappling with this deadly disease, states like North Korea conducted two tests of its short range ballistic missiles (SRBMs).[2] The pandemic, despite its seriousness, could not eradicate the ‘security dilemma’ that arises in states regarding its adversaries, its existence and survival. The lockdowns in the country forced North Korean labourers from going to work, further causing a slow-down in its economy. Even as North Korea itself was facing this challenging situation to cope with the pandemic as due to United Nations Security Council (UNSC) sanctions prior to the pandemic, its economy has weakened, it conducted the missile tests probably as a message to the international community that it was not weak and fragile. As the global order worried about North Korea and its preparedness regarding Covid-19 considering that the state had poor health care infrastructure, the missile tests were a message to the international community that North Korea could fight its own battles even if it was suffering significantly from Covid.

HUMANS AND HARDWARE: HOW SPECIAL OPERATIONS CAN PIONEER WEARABLE TECHNOLOGY

In 2009, the U.S. Special Operations Command announced that “Humans are more important than hardware.” But with wearables revolutionizing sports medicine and athletics, the distinction between humans and hardware is less relevant than ever. This means that investing in wearable technology for special operations forces is now the best way to put humans first.

What might this look like? With a small population of elite warfighters in high-stress environments, Special Operations Command can lead the force in determining which wearable devices are worth the investment. The Preservation of the Force and Family program, which is already in place to improve the holistic health of special operations forces, can spearhead efforts to distribute, monitor, test, and best utilize wearables for the entire military.

A Wearable Revolution

In the last two decades, sports medicine and sports science have advanced dramatically. Athletes are now bigger, faster, and stronger due, in part, to advancements in technologies that allow them to train smarter. A critical facet of this revolution is wearable technology that offers athletes immediate and continuous feedback on an increasing number of health and performance metrics. The wearable trend started with simple Global Positioning System-enabled devices measuring steps taken in a day and heart-rate monitors allowing users to train in specific heart-rate zones. However, wearable technology is now quickly outpacing older, more expensive, and more invasive technologies. New Apple Watches, for example, allow users to bypass hospital visits by serving as both an electrocardiogram to monitor heart health and a pulse oximeter to measure blood oxygen levels in 10 seconds. Wearables’ rapid development is providing valuable new tools for physical therapists and healthcare professionals and eliciting optimism about the future of individualized self-care.

President Joe Biden’s decision to double down on over-the-horizon capacities like drones to keep the terrorist threat at bay has unleashed a deluge of commentary about everything from the likely outcomes of such an approach, compared to placing boots on the ground, to whether the extant intelligence infrastructure is capable of supporting it. Among the more puzzling entries in this recent flurry of articles is from Jeff Rogg and Christopher Faulkner, two academics who recently published an essay entitled “Ten Years after the al-Awlaki Killing: A Reckoning for the United States’ Drones Wars Awaits.” In truth, the only “reckoning” as far as drones go is for the critics who deny that the age of drone warfare is upon us.

Are Drones Effective?

Rogg and Faulkner make a number of allegations, but let’s start with their questioning of the effectiveness of drones. Few military professionals around the globe share their doubts as investment in military drones is surging worldwide.

Today there are about thirty-five countries operating or developing armed drones, and about one hundred who have integrated drones of some kind into their armed forces. Drones have become an integral part of any competent military, and will only become more indispensable as artificial intelligence capabilities are increasingly integrated into unmanned platforms.

Do they work? Even a cursory scan of the evidence indicates clearly that they do. The devastating use of drones in the recent war between Armenia and Azerbaijan is but the latest example of how they are, as the Washington Post reported last November, the “future of warfare.” The Post pointed out:

Drone strikes—targeting Armenian and Nagorno-Karabakh soldiers and destroying tanks, artillery and air defense systems—provided a huge advantage for Azerbaijan in the 44-day war and offered the clearest evidence yet of how battlefields are being transformed by unmanned attack drones rolling off assembly lines around the world.

How effective are they as a counterterrorism tool? The people with the most information about them overwhelmingly report their usefulness. In his book, The Great War of Our Time: The CIA’s Fight Against Terrorism—From al Qa’ida to ISIS, former acting director of the CIA Michael Morell observed that documents recovered from the raid on Osama bin Laden’s compound show that “Bin Laden considered drone strikes the most effective US weapon against his group.” Describing drone operations as “the single most effective tool in the last five years for protecting the United States from terrorists,” Morell concluded that “there is no doubt in my mind that these strikes have prevented another attack on the scale of 9/11. They have decimated al Qa’ida’s core leadership in South Asia.”

https://mwi.usma.edu/the-law-of-armed-and-unmanned-conflict/
The insurrectionist and the jihadi - a parallel path to radicalisation

In the months before he was charged with storming the US Capitol, Doug Jensen was sharing conspiracy theories he'd consumed online. But it hadn't always been that way, says his brother, who recalls how he once posted the sort of family and vacation photos familiar to nearly all social media users.

A world away, Wahab hadn't always spent his days immersed in jihadist teaching. The product of a wealthy Pakistani family and the youngest son of four, he was into cars and video games, had his own motorcycle, even studied in Japan.

No two ideologues are identical. No two groups are comprised of monolithic clones. No single light switch marks the shift to radicalism. The gulf between different kinds of extremists — in religious and political convictions, in desired world orders, in how deeply they embrace violence in the name of their cause — is as wide as it is obvious.

But to dwell only on the differences obscures the similarities, not only in how people absorb extremist ideology but also in how they feed off grievances and mobilise to action.

https://www.nzherald.co.nz/world/the-insurrectionist-and-the-jihadi-a-parallel-path-to-radicalisation/P4ELWEWD3R7CE6KQTTEENFPSCY/
The Submarine Affair: An American Strategic Paradox

The recent and still ongoing Franco-American crisis surrounding the AUKUS agreement is undoubtedly the most serious one since 2003, when France had refused to join the United States in its war against Iraq. Evidencing this, the former went as far as recalling its ambassadors from both the latter and Australia, something which had never been done before. The French reaction is understandable, to say the least. Not only did France lose what has been coined the “contrat du siècle” (contract of the century), but also felt betrayed by one of its closest allies. While we do not have all the details (so far?), it seems that it is Australia, and then the United Kingdom, which initiated the move, not the United States. Yet, it is the latter which gets most of the blame from Paris. What actually hurt France the most is the way the Biden administration handled the whole matter, calling it an “unacceptable behavior between allies” – especially since the new administration had made clear it was seeking to tighten its links and cooperate more with allies (see for instance pp. 6, 10), breaking with the Trump administration’s legacy of unilateralism.

However, the conclusion of a “security pact” with Australia should come as no surprise. Indeed, the American strategic documents both under the Trump and Biden administrations (such as the National Defense Strategy of 2018, the Interim Security Strategy, and the Annual Threat Assessment of 2021) clearly affirmed that: American global primacy is essential; China is the United States’ primary adversary; and that the United States wished to reinforce its alliance with Australia (on this particular point, see Interim Security Strategy, p. 10). As a result, this agreement is the logical continuation and implementation of American policy towards the critical Indo-Pacific region. Yet, the way the pact was negotiated and concluded behind France’s back, and the obvious lack of consideration from the United States for its oldest ally is paradoxical, and contrary to American interests, including in the Indo-Pacific.

It is the case for two reasons: first, France could be a relevant ally in the Indo-Pacific, and Washington just marginalized it. Second, the Biden administration, by acting the way it did, might have unintentionally pushed for the creation of a “non-aligned block” in the Indo-Pacific, which would likely be against its interests.
Behold the Glory of the Bosun's Whistle and Its Power Over Sailors

If you're a Navy veteran, there's a good chance you've heard this whistle. You might know it as the boatswain's call, boatswain's pipe or bosun's whistle, but it's all the same whistle, and it's been in continuous use since before the U.S. Navy -- or even the United States -- existed.

In the days before electronic communication or gigantic ships crewed by thousands of sailors, something was needed to communicate orders easily to a ship full of hardy men who were drinking grog, extremely focused on arduous tasks and were often in the middle of terrible weather.

Try finding your friend in a crowded bar toward the end of a long Friday night, and you might have an idea of how hard this might be. Sure, shouting will get the attention of people around you, but it's not going to tell your pal the Uber has arrived.

So instead of going hoarse trying to shout orders all over the ship in the middle of a storm or battle, naval officers took a page from land armies and created a system of orders that could be heard easily with the use of a musical instrument. Instead of drums, they chose a high-pitched whistle and put it in the hands of the boatswain.

For you landlubbers, the boatswain is essentially the foreman of the ship's work crews. Simply put, the boatswain is the one directing the maintenance and operation of anything aboard the ship that isn't the engines.

Now imagine needing to direct hundreds of men and boys at once to make sure the ship operated well and didn't fall apart. A whistle could easily be used to send orders to the crew or even to other ships. It's a good system.
DOH reports over 2K new COVID-19 cases

Another 2,376 new cases of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) were detected nationwide, the Department of Health (DOH) said.

Based on Friday’s COVID-19 update, the number of active infections in the country stood at 37,377.

Of these active infections, 69 percent have mild symptoms, 13.94 percent were in moderate condition, 8.2 percent have severe symptoms, 5.4 percent were asymptomatic, and 3.5 percent were in critical condition.

The death toll rose to 44,085 after 260 more people lost their lives due to the viral illness.

However, 2,109 more patients were able to recover, raising the recovery tally to 2,716,524.

Since the start of the pandemic, the Philippines has already confirmed a total of 2,797,986 cases.

“Thirty-two duplicates were removed from the total case count. Of these, 24 are recoveries. Moreover, 219 cases that were previously tagged as recoveries were reclassified as deaths after final validation,” the DOH said.

“All labs were operational on Nov. 3, 2021 while four labs were not able to submit their data to the COVID-19 Document Repository System (CDRS),” it added.

DOH cautions tagging COVID ‘endemic’ in PH

The Philippines must conduct a three- to five-year evaluation before declaring that COVID-19 has become endemic in the country, the Department of Health said Friday. Health Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire, during a media briefing, said the evaluation would be conducted with the World Health Organization. "It’s about three to five years of observations, of notations, of taking blood tests or taking swabs kung COVID 'yan [if it’s COVID] among the general population," Vergeire said. "We use certain criteria to declare that a virus is already endemic in an area. We cannot say it is endemic just because cases are going down,” she said. Vergeire was reacting to the statement of OCTA Research's Dr. Guido David that Cebu City was “probably close” to the endemic stage. According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, endemic refers to the constant presence and/or usual prevalence of a disease or infectious agent in a population within a geographic area. Vergeire advised caution when mentioning such things. "Because the public may become complacent if they hear that the virus is already endemic when in fact it's not,” said Vergeire. Vergeire stressed that COVID-19 was still being studied across the globe. "Let’s remember that there are still uncertainties and unknowns regarding COVID-19. We should consider that our evidence is not yet complete. We still have a lot of variants that we are still monitoring across the globe,” she said. OCTA’s David on Thursday said the National Capital Region had returned to its state before the surge in cases driven by the highly contagious Delta variant. Vergeire, however, said the DOH could not yet say that NCR had reversed the surge of the Delta variant even though cases have gone down and become manageable. The DOH recently reported 520 additional Delta cases, bringing the total to 5,331. Cebu City on Thursday recorded 21 fresh infections, raising its tally of active cases to 275. Vergeire said some parts of the country were still facing rising COVID-19 cases and admissions in hospitals. Vergeire noted health authorities were able to contain at a "manageable level" the resurgence of COVID-19 cases in the country from the Delta variant. The health care system, she said, was also not overwhelmed. Region and seven other urban areas were now classified as "low risk" for COVID-19, while Cebu City was now considered as "very low risk." The seven other areas include Davao City, Bulacan, Batangas, Cavite, Laguna, Pampanga, and Rizal. "We have reversed the Delta surge already in NCR. We were back to where we were before the surge in July. And the good news is it's not just in the NCR," he told reporters. The decline in cases could be attributed to wide vaccine coverage, the public's adherence to minimum public health standards, and the enforcement of lockdowns, David said. Metro Manila is now averaging 493 cases per day, compared to its peak of 5,000 in the past months, Vergeire said. The country is recording an average of 2,888 daily infections. In September, it logged over 20,000 cases amid the presence of the Delta variant. The sprawling capital region, home to over 13 million people, eased to Alert Level 2 starting Friday amid decline in COVID-19 cases. The alert level, which allows for greater mobility and higher capacity in businesses, will last until Nov. 21

COVID response, trade, tech, security partnership between PH and UK enhanced

The Philippines and the United Kingdom (UK) have agreed to launch an “enhanced partnership” on trade and investment, technology, security and defense, and coronavirus (COVID-19) response, among others.

In a tweet late Friday evening (Manila time), British Liz Truss said she had a “great meeting” with Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr.

The Philippines is an important partner, a country of over 100m (million) people and a major economy of the present and future,” she tweeted along with emojis of the British and Philippine flags.

“The Enhanced Partnership we agreed today will forge closer ties in Trade & Investment, Tech, [and] Security & [defense],” she added, with each field of partnership accompanied by green checkmarks.

The Philippines is an important partner, a country of over 100m people and a major economy of the present and future. The Enhanced Partnership we agreed today will forge closer ties in:

In his own tweets, Locsin echoed Truss’s sentiment about them having a “productive meeting” and “deep discussions”.

Aside from the fields of cooperation mentioned by the British Member of Parliament for South West Norfolk, Locsin added that they also talked about (COVID-19) response.

“We agreed to launch the PH-UK Enhanced Partnership and work closer on defense cooperation, cyber security, green investments, and combatting COVID,” he said.

Japan approves antibody cocktail for prevention

Japan's health ministry has approved the use of an antibody cocktail to prevent COVID-19 symptoms.

The ministry in July approved the intravenous use of the cocktail, which combines two types of antibodies, for high-risk patients with mild to moderate symptoms.

Chugai Pharmaceutical, the drug's distributor in Japan, had applied for expanding its use to include prevention.

The company cited the results of overseas clinical trials that show an 81 percent reduction in the risk of symptomatic coronavirus infections among people who were in close contact with infected family members.

On Friday, the health ministry approved the use of the antibody cocktail. It is limiting the use to household exposure and asymptomatic cases. The ministry has stipulated that use in principle must be limited to those who are at risk of developing severe symptoms if infected.

The ministry stressed that vaccination is the first line of defense for any infectious disease and has limited the cocktail's use to those who can't rely on vaccines.

It also approved subcutaneous administration, which takes less time than intravenous infusion.

Pfizer vs. Merck: A Look at the Two New Covid Pill Treatments

Pfizer Inc. released data on its experimental Covid pill Friday that suggest a potential challenge to molnupiravir, the drug from Merck & Co. and Ridgeback Biotherapeutics LP that’s already been cleared for use in the U.K.

While the Pfizer pill showed an 89% reduction in hospitalization or death in high-risk Covid-19-infected individuals, and Merck’s showed a 50% reduction, “we can’t yet compare the two until the risk profile of the patients is clearer,” according to Bloomberg Intelligence analyst Sam Fazeli.
Pfizer says antiviral COVID-19 pill cuts risk of severe disease by 89% in high-risk adults

Pfizer released preliminary clinical trial results for its antiviral pill, showing an 89 per cent reduction in risk of hospitalization or death in patients with COVID-19 symptoms. 1:58

Pfizer Inc. said Friday that its experimental antiviral pill for COVID-19 cut rates of hospitalization and death by nearly 90 per cent in high-risk adults, as the drugmaker joins the race to bring the first easy-to-use medication against the coronavirus to the U.S. market.

Currently all COVID-19 treatments used in the U.S. require an IV or injection. Competitor Merck's COVID-19 pill is already under review at the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) after showing strong initial results. On Thursday, the United Kingdom became the first country to OK it.

Pfizer said it will ask the FDA and international regulators to authorize its pill as soon as possible, after independent experts recommended halting the company's study based on the strength of its results. Once Pfizer applies, the FDA could make a decision within weeks or months. If authorized, the company would sell the drug under the brand name Paxlovid.

At a briefing on Friday looking at COVID-19 modelling in Canada, Chief Public Health Officer Theresa Tam told reporters that the Pfizer antiviral product and the Merck pill recently authorized for use in the U.K. are under review by Health Canada.

Pfizer's experimental antiviral pill for COVID-19 has great potential to drive down mass hospitalizations and reduce death, says infectious diseases specialist Dr. Zain Chagla. 'There is a lot of optimism,' he said. (Bebeto Matthews/The Associated Press) 4:49

However, Health Canada later clarified that it has not received a submission from Pfizer for its antiviral pill and is currently reviewing only the Merck antiviral.

"Health Canada has had ongoing discussions with Pfizer on the development of their new antiviral drug for the treatment of COVID-19. They have just ended their clinical trials, and have not yet filed formal submissions with any regulator," the department said in an emailed statement to CBC News.

What you need to know about the coronavirus right now

People line up at a makeshift nucleic acid testing site near a residential compound under lockdown following local cases of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in Chengdu, Sichuan province, China November 3, 2021. Picture taken November 3, 2021.

Patrick Vo gets his hair cut on the first day of eased coronavirus disease (COVID-19) regulations, following a lockdown to curb an outbreak, in Melbourne, Australia, October 22, 2021.


Global COVID-19 cases hit 250 million

Global COVID-19 cases surpassed 250 million on Monday as some countries in eastern Europe report record outbreaks, even as the Delta variant surge eases elsewhere and many countries resume trade and tourism. The daily average number of cases has fallen by 36% over the past three months, according to a Reuters analysis, but the virus is still infecting 50 million people every 90 days due to the highly transmissible Delta variant. Infections are still rising in 55 out of 240 countries, with Russia, Ukraine and Greece at or near record levels of reported cases since the pandemic started two years ago, according to a Reuters analysis. More than half the world's population has yet to receive a single dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, according to Our World in Data, a figure that drops to less than 5% in low-income countries.

Australia begins vaccine booster rollout as more curbs ease

Australia began administering booster shots of Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine on Monday as millions of people in its largest city, Sydney, woke up to more freedom amid an accelerating immunisation drive. There are now no limits on the number of fully vaccinated guests at homes, while restaurants and entertainment venues can allow more patrons. Stadiums can operate at full capacity. read more

After more than 18 months of some of the world's strictest containment policies, border restrictions have started to ease, setting in motion a plan to reopen the country to travellers amid a gaping hole in the market for casual workers.
U.S. braces for surge of vaccinated international travelers

The United States is expecting a flood of international visitors crossing its borders by air and by land on Monday after lifting travel restrictions for much of the world's population first imposed in early 2020 to address the spread of COVID-19. read more

Passengers will need to show an "official source" showing vaccination status, and airlines will need to match the name and date of birth to confirm the passenger is the same person reflected on the proof of vaccination. read more

UK to roll out COVID-19 antiviral drug trial this month

Britain will start to roll out Merck's molnupiravir COVID-19 antiviral pill through a drug trial later this month, Susan Hopkins, Chief Medical Adviser at the UK Health Security Agency said on Sunday.

Mapping the Coronavirus Outbreak Across the World

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Active Cases</th>
<th>Hospital Beds</th>
<th>ICU Capacity</th>
<th>Intense Care</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>N/A</td>
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</table>

Sources: OECD for number of hospital beds (2016 for the U.S., 2017 for other countries), government agencies and the COVID Tracking Project via Our World in Data for testing data (various recent dates) (reported in the past 45 days) and the U.S. Census Bureau for population figures (2019).

The world is bracing for a new wave of Covid-19 infections, as the coronavirus pandemic has infected more than 245 million people and killed more than 5.0 million globally since late January 2020. Efforts many countries took to stamp out the pneumonia-like illness led to entire nations enforcing lockdowns, widespread halts of international travel, mass layoffs and battered financial markets. Recent attempts to revive social life and financial activities have resulted in another surge in cases and hospitalizations, though new drugs and improved care may help more people who get seriously ill survive.

249,985,186
Confirmed cases worldwide
5,051,478
Deaths worldwide
Global Cases Added Per Day
New cases: 332,372

<table>
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<th>Where deaths have occurred</th>
<th>Deaths</th>
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<td>89,352</td>
<td>2,924,072</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: On February 14, 2020, Hubei officials changed their diagnostic criteria, resulting in a spike in reported cases.

Countries took drastic measures to mitigate the spread of Covid-19 on their homefront—with varying degrees of success. More than 140 governments placed blanket bans on incoming travelers, closed schools and restricted gatherings and public events, according to data compiled by Oxford University’s Blavatnik School of Government and Bloomberg reporting.

As countries loosen lockdowns in an effort to reboot their economies, many have seen a resurgence of infections. The number of new daily cases in the U.S. rose to record highs after some states relaxed social distancing requirements. Even places that successfully contained infections earlier in the year, like China and South Korea, have seen cases bubble back up. Theories that warmer weather in the Northern Hemisphere would bring relief appear to be unfounded.
How the Outbreak Spread Country by Country

Note: Shown are the 15 places with the highest totals of confirmed cases, as of November 7. Negative values resulting from governments revising their totals have been excluded from rolling average calculations.

The “worst is yet to come” given a lack of global solidarity, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, head of the World Health Organization, said at a briefing in Geneva on June 29.

In May, the WHO emphasized the need for a plan that includes testing for the virus and its antibodies, effective contact tracing and isolation, and community education. Antibody tests on the market that could potentially indicate a person’s immunity have been unreliable so far. Researchers and drugmakers are racing to develop treatments that could hold the key to recovery.

Gilead Sciences Inc.’s antiviral remdesivir is one of the first widely used drugs for Covid-19. It received an emergency use authorization from U.S. regulators in May, after a trial found it sped recovery by about four days in hospitalized patients. It was also part of U.S. President Donald Trump’s treatment after he tested positive for the coronavirus in early October, along with Regeneron Pharmaceuticals Inc.’s antibody cocktail and the generic drug dexamethasone.

Vaccines are also in development, though the study of one leading candidate from the University of Oxford and AstraZeneca Plc is on hold in the U.S. while regulators investigate a potential safety issue.

Covid map: Coronavirus cases, deaths, vaccinations by country

Covid-19 is continuing to spread around the world, with about 250 million confirmed cases and more than five million deaths across almost 200 countries.

Who has vaccinated the most?

Of the 197 countries and territories administering vaccines and publishing rollout data, 67 are high-income nations, 103 are middle-income and 27 low-income.

Where are cases still high?
The number of daily cases is stable or falling in most regions, except Europe.

More Than 7.26 Billion Shots

The biggest vaccination campaign in history is underway. More than 7.26 billion doses have been administered across 184 countries, according to data collected by Bloomberg. The latest rate was roughly 31.7 million doses a day. In the U.S., 431 million doses have been given so far. An average 1.47 million doses per day were administered over the last week.

When will life return to normal?
While the best vaccines are highly effective at preventing hospitalization and death, it takes a coordinated campaign to stop a pandemic. Infectious-disease experts have said that vaccinating 70% to 85% of the U.S. population would enable a return to normalcy, but boosters may be required to keep the disease in check. On a global scale, that’s a daunting level of vaccination. At the current pace of 9.15 million people getting their first shots each day, the goal of halting the pandemic remains elusive. Manufacturing capacity, however, is increasing, thanks to new vaccines and added capacity from existing drugmakers.

The Path to Immunity Around the World
Globally, the latest vaccination rate is 31,677,593 doses per day, which includes 9,153,329 people people getting their first shot. At this pace, it will take another 6 months until 75% of the population has received at least one dose.

‘Pandemic of the Unvaccinated’
Israel was first to show that vaccines were bending the curve of Covid infections. The country led the world in early vaccinations, and by February more than 84% of people ages 70 and older had received two doses. Covid cases declined rapidly, and a similar pattern of vaccination and recovery repeated across dozens of other countries. This progress is under threat. New strains, led by the highly transmissible delta variant, caused renewed outbreaks. Israel saw another surge of cases, which it brought under control by offering boosters to all vaccinated people. Worldwide, unvaccinated people are more at risk than ever, leading U.S. health officials to dub it a “pandemic of the unvaccinated.”

Even among those who are vaccinated, the delta variant may lead to mild cases, and those who get sick are able to spread the disease to others, according to the latest data. The vaccines remain effective at reducing hospitalizations and deaths.

Vaccinations vs. Cases

Vaccines have helped reduce case numbers in the places where they’ve been deployed most widely. Currently, 34 places have given at least one dose to 75% of the population.

https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/covid-vaccine-tracker-global-distribution/?srnd=premium-asia
COMMENTARY Public office is a public trust

Under our Constitution, public office is a public trust. It sounds trite and hackneyed. But it is a very serious statement of fact that many people in government often “forget.” If public office is a public trust, it follows that all public officials and employees must at all times be accountable to the Filipino people. “Accountable” means to be answerable. Answerable for the way they treated their office and held accountable if there were indeed abuses committed.

Because of the undeniable truth in this mandate, Congress enacted Republic Act (RA) 6713 of 1989, known as the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards of Public Officials and Employees, to promote a high standard of ethics in public service, and so that, at all times, public officials and employees remain accountable to the people. The Civil Service Commission issued the corresponding rules to implement the provisions of RA 6713. Government officials and employees covered under the law and its implementing rules are those in the government service, such as career officials and employees, non-career, appointive, elective, permanent, and temporary, with compensation or not.

Every government office is part of the government’s bureaucracy. Through its officials and employees, it discharges its functions in accordance with the policies, procedures and organizational set-up ordained under the Revised Administrative Code of 1987 and/or its Charter for an efficient and effective running of the entire government. They are called public servants, as they are called to serve. Avoid snickering when you read that. They should serve the public and the country.

All public officials and employees possess power no matter what their position is. The exercise of that power may be misused and abused and, instead of being a vehicle for service, it becomes a means to make money illegally. Economists and political analysts call this rent-seeking. When you seriously study it, you inevitably become amazed at the sheer variety of tricks and sleight-of-hand moves that even the lowest bureaucrat can perform to make ordinary citizens pay extra for services due to them to begin with. Rent-seeking is based on the distorted belief that public office is their property and to use it, that is, if you want your documents to pass or have a needed signature, you must pay.

How to make China and Taiwan earn their admission to CPTPP

Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen said on Tuesday that she will seek support for its bid to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership when she attends a meeting of economic leaders of the Asia-Pacific group APEC next week. © Reuters

Ambassador Kurt Tong is a former U.S. diplomat. He is a partner at the Asia Group.

After China's Sept. 16 application to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), Washington faces the supreme irony of watching passively as its primary strategic rival becomes a beneficiary of a regional market-opening arrangement that the United States crafted for its own benefit.

With both American political parties indulging the populist view that fostering globalization is bad policy, the probability of President Joe Biden plotting a return to CPTPP is close to zero. Indeed, any White House effort to seek Congressional support in engaging on CPTPP would likely end in disaster.

The more important question now is how the eleven actual members of CPTPP, with Japan being the most powerful in the group, handle the dual applications to join the pact coming from China and Taiwan.

China is the world's second-largest market and plays a huge role in the Indo-Pacific regional economy. But Taiwan, which registered its formal interest just days after Beijing, has economic regulations and business practices that are much closer to the standards required by CPTPP. The situation is made even more complicated by the two candidates' seven-decade-long struggle over sovereignty.

As noted in the article "Can the CPTPP change China, or will China change it?" by Nikkei commentator Hiroyuki Akita published online on Oct. 30, experts in the region are divided on how to juggle these two quite different applications. Some favor taking China's bid seriously, given the possibility of significant benefit for the Indo-Pacific economies if China can truly meet CPTPP standards.

Others want to focus on keeping China out, because they believe that CPTPP membership would do too much to enhance Beijing's regional power, and they doubt the sincerity of China's willingness to reform its economy enough to meet CPTPP standards. Meanwhile, among the CPTPP members, most of the voices speaking out thus far to support Taiwan's candidacy are coming from Japan.

I believe the solution to this puzzle lies in the details. If the CPTPP members consider and negotiate the China and Taiwan candidacies separately, it would create a narrow playing field where China can strong-arm CPTPP members one-by-one into making substantive concessions.
Such a setup would enable China to loosen the CPTPP rules, and win a variety of exceptions and extensions, thereby allowing it to join the CPTPP without making the once-in-a-generation changes to its economy that should be the price of joining the club. At the same time, China would be able to push those same counterparts, via bilateral diplomacy, to stall Taiwan's candidacy.

Rather than deal with them separately, I believe the CPTPP members should consider the China and Taiwan applications together, at the same negotiating table, and thus force the two to compete substantively for admission.

Such a combined and competitive process will yield better results, as both candidates would be asked in the same forum to meet tough CPTPP requirements that China, in particular, would find daunting -- including disciplines such as rules on state-owned enterprises, labor unions, environmental standards, access for foreign investors, intellectual property rights protection, digital economy rules and currency convertibility.

The world needs to talk about a more dangerous problem than climate change: nuclear weapons

The prospect of nuclear war is frightening beyond imagination. We talk in the abstract about the millions who would die but are reluctant to accept the reality that the worst might someday come true.

Such talk echoes through the media whenever the question arises of who might strike first. We’re accustomed to hearing aggrieved expressions of doubt and sensitivities. Such talk assumes urgency as the US considers whether to adopt a policy of “no first use”, meaning it would not initiate a nuclear holocaust.

This debate strikes a special chord with Americans, considering the US’ place in global history as the first country to use nuclear weapons. The atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 led Japan’s Emperor Hirohito to call on his people “to pave the way for a grand peace for all the generations to come by enduring the unendurable and suffering what is insufferable”.

With those immortal words, the Japanese surrendered unconditionally, giving up all the territories they had conquered.

In the ecstasy of triumph and relief over Japan’s defeat, it was easy to overlook images of charred, burned bodies and urban wasteland or the long ordeal of those who would suffer and die months or years later from nuclear radiation.

Rather than focus on global denuclearisation, policymakers wonder whether the US should wait for some other country, maybe Russia (estimated to have well over 6,000 nukes, about 700 more than the US), China (which has about 300), or North Korea (which has a few dozen), to conduct the first nuclear strike before firing back.

How Confucius Institutes in the Arab World Shape Positive Perceptions of China

Much has been written about Confucius Institutes (CI) in the West, but this tool of Chinese influence does not receive much attention for its activities in the Arab world. This article aims to fill this gap. CIs, which operate in universities worldwide, are managed by the Hanban (汉办), the Office of Chinese Language Council International, which is a branch of the Chinese Ministry of Education. As of 2006, CI centers began to appear in Arabic speaking countries, and by 2021, China had established 550 CIs around the globe including 15 institutes operating in the Middle East. Although it should be noted that in 2006 the Hanban planned to run 1000 institutes by 2020, this goal has not been met (PRC Embassy Egypt, September 29. 2006). In 2007, the global head of CIs, Xu Lin, remarked that the CIs were “the ‘brightest brand’ in China’s soft power repertoire”.

West versus East

The reception of Confucius Institutes (CIs) is an essential lens to gauge local public opinion towards China’s presence and to develop a clear picture of the general attitude towards China. In recent years, many CIs in Western oriented countries, have shut down due to local criticism. For example, earlier this year, Confucius Institutes at Alabama A&M University, and the University of Southern Maine were shut down. (Al.com, April 22; Bangor Daily News, April 13). By contrast, Confucius Institutes have expanded their presence in the Arab world. The local reception to CIs in the Middle East and North Africa can be understood through three dimensions: supply and demand, reception from local media and leadership, and the levels of identification by locals with CIs and Chinese values and culture.

Gauging the Local Response

Based on Arabic newspapers, CIs have been positively received in the Arab world in all three dimensions. The first CI in an Arab country was established in Beirut. Speaking at the launch of the Beirut CI, the Deputy President of the host university in Lebanon at Saint Joseph University, stated: “Traditionally, our researchers and students tend to select study and research areas pertaining to France, Britain, Germany and the USA. It is unreasonable that nowadays we wouldn’t care about China, which is quickly becoming a leading global presence” (Arabic China.org.cn, March 12, 2009). At the Beirut institute’s ten-year anniversary celebrations, one of the guests of honor, Adnan Kassar, Chairman of the Lebanese bank Fransabank, said that: “The fact that one of every six people in the world speaks Chinese illustrates very clearly why it is so important to study this language and get to know these wonderful people” (Xinhua, October 1, 2016).
In Egypt, which hosts two CIs in Cairo and Ismailia, there is similar positive receptivity. In March 2017, the Confucius Institute at the Suez Canal University and the British University in Egypt signed a memorandum of understanding regarding the establishment of a Chinese language training unit at the British university (El Watan News, March 21, 2017). According to the leaders of both universities, this step was intended to enable more students to acquire knowledge in Chinese, and to prepare them to apply to scholarships for language studies in China itself. Haled Abdul Jafar, Egyptian Minister of Education and Science, said that the inauguration of the new building is an example of positive and fruitful collaboration between Egypt and China, adding that this is the beginning of a new era in the relationship between the two countries and that he hopes that future collaboration expanded in many further areas (Ahram Online, April 21, 2018).

In Morocco, three CIs were opened between 2008 and 2016. As with the Egyptian model, one CI in Morocco operates branches of its institute in other universities because of high national demand for Chinese language instruction (China Today, October 26, 2018). There is also a similar approach in Sudan, which hosts a CI in the capital, Khartoum. The Sudanese institute serves not only the Sudanese population, but also students from about twenty other nationalities (mostly from African states) in order to meet the demand in these countries. Some of the students at the Khartoum CI expressed appreciation for the Chinese narrative and drew a clear line between studying Chinese and success in business, “I’m learning Chinese so as to improve and further establish his commercial ties in China” (Arabic China.org.cn, November 3, 2016).