

# Asia

---

## North East Asia

---

➔ **China/Japan Tensions continued between Japan and China over contested island chain in East China Sea.** Japanese coast guard 3 Aug reported no Chinese vessels seen near disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu islands due to Typhoon Hagupit, ending 111 consecutive days of continuous presence since April; Japanese Defence Minister Taro Kono 4 Aug said military would support coast guard over island dispute and “act firmly when necessary” and 18 Aug reportedly told Chinese ambassador to Japan that China should refrain from military activities around islands. Japanese PM Shinzo Abe 28 Aug announced his resignation over health issues. Some 60 lawmakers from ruling Liberal Democratic Party in Japan 17 Aug formed pressure group to urge govt actions to control islands. Kono and U.S. Defence Secretary Mark Esper 29 Aug met at U.S. military base in Guam, agreeing to “oppose countries unilaterally changing the status quo by force” in South and East China seas. Amid arrest of activists in Hong Kong under controversial new security law, Japanese govt 11 Aug voiced concerns over territory and said it was important for Hong Kong to “develop democratically and in a stable manner”; Beijing same day called on Japan to “stop interfering in China’s internal affairs”.

➔ **Korean Peninsula** **U.S. and South Korea carried out annual joint-military exercises, while Pyongyang's economic struggles continued amid spread of COVID-19 and mass flooding.** As dispute between Seoul and Washington over sharing cost of maintaining 28,500 U.S. troops on Korean Peninsula still unresolved, U.S. and South Korea 18-28 Aug held annual joint military drills; exercises smaller than previous years with U.S.-based troops unable to join due to COVID-19 restrictions on travel; North Korea unusually quiet during drills. Amid widely suspected COVID-19 epidemic, North Korea 14 Aug lifted lockdown, imposed in July, on border city of Kaesong following accusation North Korean defector who swam back from South Korea in July imported virus. Pyongyang also faced major damages from floods that began 1 Aug during monsoon season. Amid floods affecting harvest and COVID-19 causing halt to nearly all trade with China due to closing of borders, North Korean leader Kim Jong-un 20 Aug admitted to failure of govt's economic policy during meeting of ruling party officials; hours later, South Korean media reported Kim had given responsibility for relations with Seoul and Washington to Kim Yo-jong, top official and Kim's sister. Reuters 3 Aug reported confidential UN document stated several countries believe Pyongyang has developed "miniaturised nuclear devices" for ballistic missiles. International concerns over suspected North Korean cyberattacks continued; Israel 12 Aug said it had prevented cyberattack by Pyongyang-linked hackers on its defence industry, though a cybersecurity firm said attack had been successful. In South Korea, civil society and conservative groups, including over 50,000 protestors rallying in downtown Seoul 15 Aug, continued to accuse President Moon's govt of authoritarian practices and violations of democratic rights, including passing new laws without due process and invading privacy; criticism among minority voices also continued over alleged election fraud during April general election. Meanwhile, Seoul 22 Aug announced new restrictions on gatherings and events following its second COVID-19 outbreak.

➔ **Taiwan Strait** **Cross-strait tensions continued between Taiwan and China amid visit to Taiwan by highest U.S. official in four decades.** U.S. health chief Alex Azar met with President Tsai during 9-12 Aug visit to Taipei, in most senior visit by American official since break of Washington-Taipei ties in 1979; Azar lent support to Taiwan's participation in global health forums like the World Health Organization and oversaw signing of first bilateral memorandum of understanding on health cooperation including vaccine development and infectious disease control; in lead up to visit, Chinese foreign ministry 7 Aug urged U.S. to "stop official ties with Taiwan" and said Beijing "will take firm countermeasures". U.S. Sec State Mike Pompeo 10 Aug criticised China's objections to Azar's visit as sign of "weakness." During visit, Chinese J-10 and J-11 fighter jets 10 Aug crossed median line in Taiwan Strait, with Taipei scrambling planes in response, while Chinese military 13 Aug reported it had carried out further drills during Azar's visit, both in Taiwan Strait and to the north and south of Taiwan. Taiwanese defence ministry 10 Aug said it had tracked Chinese planes with radars from surface-to-air missiles for first time. U.S. destroyers 18 and 30 Aug transited Taiwan Strait. Taipei 13 Aug proposed 10% increase to defence spending to \$15.4bn in 2021 and next day reportedly finalised purchase from U.S. of 66 F-16 fighter jets. Taiwanese govt 19 Aug said hackers linked to Beijing attacked at least ten govt agencies since 2018 in attempt to steal data.

---

## South Asia

---

➔ **Afghanistan Intra-Afghan dialogue remained delayed while violence persisted across country.** Following 3 Aug end of Eid holiday ceasefire between Taliban and govt, several attacks occurred, which govt blamed on Taliban but militants did not claim: militants 8 Aug attacked govt base on outskirts of Ghazni city (south east), killing seven Afghan security forces and wounding at least 12, while ten militants died during attack; militant suicide attack in Farah city (south west) on vehicle of deputy provincial police chief killed four police officers and wounded 15 people 12 Aug. Fighting intensified in northern regions, where Taliban did claim several attacks, including one on govt-sponsored militia in Takhar province (north east), killing nine militia members. Islamic State-Khorasan Province (IS-KP) 2-3 Aug carried out major coordinated attack on prison in Jalalabad city, Nangarhar (east), leading to 29 deaths and escape of hundreds of prisoners; although IS-KP claimed attack, govt officials blamed Taliban, who strenuously denied accusation. Attacks on activists and politicians increased: notably, in capital Kabul, unidentified attackers 15 Aug attempted to assassinate MP, women's rights activist and member of govt's intra-Afghan team Fawzia Koofi; bomb 19 Aug killed ministerial official involved in Doha meetings between govt and Taliban. Despite international hopes intra-Afghan dialogue could begin in Aug, peace process remained delayed amid Taliban violence and govt blocking release of final several-hundred prisoners; President Ghani convened 7-9 Aug Loya Jirga (traditional assembly of influential figures) in Kabul over issue of final several hundred prisoners, with govt claiming prisoners guilty of crimes including terrorist attacks and drug trafficking; Jirga 9 Aug voted to release prisoners amid concerns of Australia and France, both of which reportedly oppose release of several prisoners accused of killing their citizens. Domestic political stasis continued with tensions between Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah over appointments including positions in newly-created High Council of National Reconciliation; Ghani reportedly objected to Abdullah's nomination of Minister of Economy Mustafa Mastoor for position of State Minister for Peace. Ghani 29 Aug named some 40 individuals to council, but Abdullah 31 Aug said president did not have authority to appoint people to body, which he heads.

➔ **Bangladesh Amid ongoing govt crackdown on critics, security operations continued against alleged members of banned militant groups.** Police continued to detain people under controversial Digital Security Act over social media posts critical of govt, in cases mainly filed by ruling Awami League (AL) supporters: police 2 Aug opened investigation against journalist in Chittagong over critical comments about an AL parliamentarian; police 3 Aug detained three people in Thakurgaon district for criticising PM Hasina and allegedly spreading misinformation, and 6 Aug arrested one person in Jhenaidah district after AL activist accused individual of using abusive language about PM's brother Sheikh Kamal, assassinated in 1975; paramilitary Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) 9 Aug detained man in Sylhet district for insulting PM and security agencies. In continued anti-militancy efforts, anti-terrorism police 5 Aug arrested suspected member of Ansar al-Islam in Jhenaidah district and police 11 Aug arrested five alleged Neo-Jamaatul Mujahideen Bangladesh members in Sylhet district, accusing them of planning an attack on a Hazrat Shahjalal shrine in Sylhet before Eid holiday. In north, mass flooding continued; since floods began late June in Jamalpur, Kurigram, Gaibandha and

other districts, 6mn people affected, over 100 killed and thousands of villages submerged. Police 2 Aug suspended 21 officers following 31 July killing of retired army officer at police checkpoint in Cox's Bazar, Chittagong district.

➔ **India (non-Kashmir) In symbolic victory for PM Modi's Hindu nationalist project, construction of Hindu temple began at long-disputed site.** In Uttar Pradesh, PM Modi 5 Aug formally launched construction of Hindu temple at location in Ayodhya, long contested by Hindus and Muslims with dispute triggering some of India's deadliest Hindu-Muslim violence in recent decades; in speech same day, Modi said Hindu god Ram's birthplace had "finally" been "liberated" and India was "creating a glorious chapter in history". In response to derogatory Facebook post about prophet Muhammad by nephew of local Indian National Congress politician in Bangalore, hundreds of Muslims 12 Aug took to streets; police opened fire on protesters, killing at least three, and arrested some 200. Wall Street Journal 14 Aug alleged that Facebook had failed to remove hate speech posted by at least one member of ruling Bharatiya Janata Party and at least three other "Hindu nationalist individuals and groups" due to fear of harming business prospects in India. Meanwhile, anti-Maoist operations and Maoist violence continued: in Chhattisgarh (centre), security operations 5-30 Aug killed seven Maoists in Bijapur, Kanker, Sukma and Dhamtari districts; suspected Maoists 23-31 Aug killed two police officers in Bijapur district. In Andhra Pradesh (south east), Maoist landmine 3 Aug killed two civilians in Visakhapatnam district. In Maharashtra (west), Maoists 14 Aug shot and killed police officer in Gadchiroli district; security forces 26 Aug shot and killed Maoist in Gadchiroli district. India and China continued talks on disengagement of troops at disputed border: military officials met 2 and 8 Aug, and diplomats 20 Aug agreed "to resolve outstanding issues" related to disengagement "in an expeditious manner", but India 31 Aug accused China of "provocative military movements" to change the status quo on Line of Actual Control, adding it took measures to "thwart Chinese intentions to unilaterally change the facts on the ground"; China same day denied accusation. COVID-19 cases continued to soar with total number of cases 23 Aug surpassing 3 mn; by end of month India had world's third-highest caseload and third-highest death toll.

➔ **Kashmir Militant attacks persisted inside Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) while clashes continued across Line of Control (LoC, dividing Pakistan and Indian-administered Kashmir).** Militant attacks remained frequent in J&K, including on members of ruling-Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP): in Kulgram district, militants killed local BJP officials 4 and 6 Aug; militants 9 Aug shot BJP member in Budgam district, who died next day. Following attacks, several BJP members reportedly resigned; police officer 10 Aug said some 400 officials moved to secure accommodation elsewhere. Security forces 10 Aug detained two suspected militants in Sopore district and three more in Kupwara district next day; one soldier and two militants 12 Aug killed in clash in Pulwama district. Militants 14 Aug killed two police officers on outskirts of Srinagar, and next day killed civilian in Pulwama district. Militants 17 Aug attacked security post in Baramulla district, killing two paramilitary soldiers and police officer; 29 Aug attacked security forces at checkpoint in Panthachowk on outskirts of Srinagar, which left one policeman and three militants dead. Meanwhile, New Delhi 4 Aug imposed curfew on eve of first anniversary commemorating revocation of Article 370, which afforded Kashmir

autonomous status. New Delhi 6 Aug appointed senior BJP leader Manoj Sinha as J&K lieutenant governor; Indian PM Modi 15 Aug said elections would be held in territory after finalisation of new electoral constituencies. New Delhi 18 Aug claimed security situation had improved and ordered withdrawal of 10,000 paramilitary personnel deployed in region since Aug 2019. All Kashmiri mainstream parties 22 Aug signed joint declaration vowing to “collectively fight to restore the special status of J&K as guaranteed under the constitution”. Meanwhile, cross-LoC fire between India and Pakistan continued: New Delhi accused Pakistan of cross-LoC fire that injured six civilians 7 Aug, including man who died 13 Aug. Islamabad claimed Indian fire responsible for killing woman and injuring nine civilians 7 Aug, and injuring two civilians 12 Aug. Pakistani PM Khan 5 Aug addressed Pakistan-administered Kashmir’s legislature calling India’s 5 Aug 2019 actions in J&K, which revoked its special constitutional status, “illegal and unilateral” and reiterated support for UN-mandated plebiscite in territory.

➔ **Nepal External and internal political pressures on ruling communist party eased following thaw in relations with India and halt in intra-party tensions.** PM KP Oli 15 Aug called Indian PM Narendra Modi to mark India’s Independence Day and, in first conversation between two leaders since border dispute began in May, mentioned looking forward to “meaningful cooperation” with New Delhi. Technical-level bilateral channels also reopened following 17 Aug eighth meeting of Nepal-India Oversight Mechanism (tasked in 2016 to oversee implementation of bilateral developmental projects) with Foreign Secretary Shanker Das Bairagi and India’s Ambassador to Nepal Vinay Mohan Kwatra; following discussions, foreign ministry officials proposed convening Boundary Working Group - joint entity formed by two govts in 2014 - which could pave way for formal dialogue on ongoing border row. Indian officials 20 Aug reportedly ruled out discussing contested territory along Nepal’s north-western border at Working Group level, instead preferring to address it between respective foreign secretaries. Meanwhile, leadership tensions within Nepal Communist Party (NCP) eased after internal task force formed by co-chairs Oli and Pushpa Kamal Dahal 22 Aug recommended Oli continuing as PM – with imminent cabinet reshuffle – while Dahal serves as party’s executive chair. NCP’s haphazard COVID-19 response continued to elicit widespread criticism with provincial-level officials accusing Oli’s govt of undermining transition to federalism after he 17 Aug empowered district administrators – instead of provincial leaders – with greater authority to tackle pandemic.

➔ **Pakistan Tensions continued over govt use of anti-corruption cases to silence political opponents, while deadly militant violence persisted.** Following Supreme Court’s July criticism of ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)’s use of anti-corruption National Accountability Bureau (NAB), tensions remained high over body; NAB brought corruption cases against former Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) PM Abbasi on 6 Aug and former President and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) co-chair Zardari on 10 Aug; Mayam Nawaz, daughter of former PM Sharif, and PML-N members 11 Aug protested against targeting of PML-N leaders outside NAB office in Lahore city, leading to clashes with police and arrest of 50 members. Amid concerns over attacks on press, group of prominent female journalists 12 Aug issued statement holding govt supporters responsible for “vicious online attacks” and threats, including “sexual and physical violence”. Police 16 Aug

arrested paramilitary soldier accused of killing university student on 13 Aug in Kech district, Balochistan province. Militant attacks persisted: in Balochistan, bomb blast 10 Aug killed at least five and wounded 22 others in Chaman city and grenade attack 12 Aug killed child and injured six civilians in Quetta city; in Sindh's capital Karachi, grenade attack on rally of political party Jamaat-i-Islami 5 Aug killed an activist and wounded dozens, and unidentified gunmen 14 Aug killed police officer, fifth police casualty in city since mid-July. Internationally, tensions increased with Afghanistan following 30 July clash between Afghan and Pakistani security forces after Islamabad closed Chaman border, leaving at least three dead, and raising concerns among govt officials about their desire to play key role in Afghan peace process; foreign ministry 13 Aug rejected Kabul's complaints over building of fence on border; govt also reportedly held Kabul and New Delhi responsible for splinter groups Jamaat-ul-Ahrar and Hizbul Ahrar 16 Aug merging with Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan; group allegedly agreed to focus on targeting govt's military, paramilitary and police forces. Following concerns Saudi Arabia may withdraw \$3bn loan, army chief Bajwa 17 Aug visited Riyadh. Despite rising COVID-19 cases, govt 10 Aug began lifting restrictions on public transport and entertainment venues.

➔ **Sri Lanka Ruling party Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) won resounding victory in parliamentary elections, paving way for unbridled executive powers for President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and increasingly Sinhala nationalist policies.** Following peaceful campaign, 5 Aug legislative elections resulted in ruling party SLPP securing 145 of 225 seats in parliament, enough – together with allied parties – to achieve two-thirds majority SLPP sought in order to amend constitution and unshackle presidential powers. In prominent Buddhist temple near capital Colombo, Mahinda Rajapaksa was sworn in as PM 9 Aug. Mahinda and Gotabaya 12 Aug announced new cabinet and state ministers, giving portfolios to themselves and to three other family members; other appointees included Gotabaya's personal lawyer as justice minister and retired admiral as foreign secretary. Cabinet 19 Aug approved repealing 19th amendment to constitution, which limits presidential powers, and established committee under justice ministry to draft replacement. In speech at opening of new parliament, Gotabaya 20 Aug promised that once 19th amendment had been replaced, govt would draft new constitution in which “priority will be given to the concept of one country, one law for all the people” and which will allow govt to make decisions freely without being influenced by “extremists”. Former Director of Police Criminal Investigations Department Shani Abeysekera remanded in custody 20 Aug accused of fabricating evidence in 2015 murder conviction; Abeysekera's arrest widely seen as retribution for his key role investigating major criminal cases implicating senior officials in 2005-2015 Rajapaksa govt. Joint letter to Sri Lanka govt from six UN Special Rapporteurs sent in June and publicised 25 Aug expressed “grave concern over the seemingly arbitrary arrest and prolonged detention” of Muslim lawyer Hejaaz Hizbullah, in “what may be a reprisal for his legal work and human rights advocacy”. President 24 Aug appointed four prominent Buddhist monks to join all-Sinhalese task force on archaeological heritage in multi-ethnic eastern province. Foreign Secretary Adm. Jayantha Colombage announced Sri Lanka will adopt “India first approach” in its foreign policy and would “not do anything harmful to India's strategic security interests”, despite China's increasing influence in Sri Lanka.

---

## **South East Asia**

---

➔ **Indonesia Security forces continued operations against suspected separatists in Papua while Islamic militant group launched attacks in Central Sulawesi.** In Papua province, security forces 6 Aug raided hideout of armed separatist group West Papua Liberation Army (WPLA) in Mimika regency, reportedly killing two suspected separatists; 16 Aug raided house in Mimika, killing senior WPLA commander Hengkin Wanmang; WPLA 17 Aug said group would retaliate; WPLA subsequently claimed killing several security force members. Papuan activists 15 Aug demonstrated in several provinces against 1962 New York agreement which led to transfer of rule over West Papua from Netherlands to Indonesia. In West Papua province, death in custody of brother-in-law of popular Papuan singer and Indonesian democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) politician Edo Kondologit sparked hundreds 31 Aug to demonstrate at Sorong city police station demanding investigation. In Central Sulawesi province, suspected Mujahidin Indonesia Timur (MIT) militants 8 Aug kidnapped two farmers in Poso, reportedly killing one; later that day opened fire on vehicle of medical workers and robbed them. Also in Poso, police 11 Aug found body of retired military officer allegedly killed by MIT. Counter-terror unit Densus 88 11-12 Aug arrested at least 20 suspected terrorists with alleged links to MIT and Islamic State-linked Jamaah Ansharut Daulah in West Java, Jakarta and Riau. Company of 150 soldiers 15 Aug arrived in Central Sulawesi to support Operation Tinombala in hunting down MIT militants. Govt continued to press ahead with controversial job creation bill; National Human Rights Commission 13 Aug called on President Joko Widodo and parliament to end discussions of bill, saying it could potentially violate environmental and labour protections; thousands 14 and 25 Aug demonstrated against bill in capital Jakarta.

➔ **Myanmar** **Amid ongoing fighting between Arakan Army (AA) and security forces, fourth “Panglong-21” Union Peace Conference took place in capital Naypyitaw.** Violence continued across Rakhine state where unexploded ordnance and landmine 1-3 Aug killed three youths in Rathedaung and Ann townships. AA attacks against security forces 2-3 Aug caused several casualties in Rathedaung and Buthidaung townships; AA claimed killing “more than 20” and capturing six. Military shelling in first half of Aug reportedly injured ten villagers in Kyauktaw, Minbya and Rathedaung townships. Military 7 Aug arrested alleged AA fighter who later died in custody, body showed signs of torture. Unidentified gunmen 12 Aug killed head of Kyauktaw township police. AA 18 Aug reportedly abducted two Buddhist monks and two novice monks in Mrauk-U township. Military 24 Aug announced extension of its nationwide COVID-19 ceasefire until end-September, but continued to exclude Rakhine State. Fighting appeared to have eased in Rakhine after 16 Aug, when first local transmission of COVID-19 for many weeks detected in regional state; some 250 cases recorded by end of month, and night-time curfew and stay-at-home orders imposed across Rakhine 26 Aug. In Naypyitaw, representatives of govt and ten signatory armed groups of Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement 19-21 Aug took part in fourth “Panglong-21” Union Peace Conference, first session in over two years; conference agreed on 20 “principles” with regard to ceasefire agreement, including some vague language on a future federal arrangement; govt’s exclusion of AA from conference due to its designation as terrorist organisation prompted six allied armed groups to boycott talks. Ahead of Nov general elections, electoral authorities began vetting candidate applications; between 11 and 16 Aug district-level election commissions rejected applications of six Rohingya due to alleged failure to prove citizenship status of their parents.

➔ **Philippines** **In south, clashes persisted but at reduced level of violence, while authorities’ focus on COVID-19 continued to delay implementation of peace agreement.** In Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) in south, clan feuds continued: clash between warring clans involving Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) members 3 Aug displaced around hundred villagers at boundary of Datu Montawal and Pagalungan; armed groups from Moro side and indigenous Teduray natives 15 Aug conducted peace dialogue, defusing tensions over land in South Upi municipality; peace dialogue 18 Aug pacified warring commanders of 105th MILF base command in Shariff Aguak municipality; community feud involving MILF members 19 Aug erupted in Kalingalan and Nabalawag municipalities in Midsayap, and then pacified following intervention of BARMM Special Geographic Area caretaker and members of ceasefire committee. Govt drug enforcement raid 16 Aug killed village councillor of Northern Kabuntalan. Clashes continued between security forces and elements of Islamic State-linked Abu Sayyaf Group in Sulu province. Twin bombings in Jolo 24 Aug killed 15 and injured 74; perpetrators alleged to be Indonesian suicide bombers affiliated with Hatib Sawadjaan’s Islamic State-linked faction. Also in south, implementation of ceasefire between govt and MILF remained delayed as govt and interim govt concentrated efforts on preventing spread of COVID-19; countrywide cases continued to rise to over 217,000, with average of 5,500 new cases daily throughout month - double the daily average in July. Govt’s focus on halting contagion also continued to hinder efforts to rehabilitate Marawi city. Suspected Ansara Khilafa Philippines insurgents 9 Aug clashed with police operatives in Polomolok town, in South Cotabato, killing four insurgents and injuring one. Clashes continued throughout month between communist New People’s Army and armed



forces in Visayas in centre, Mindanao in south, and Luzon in north at relatively decreased levels in comparison with July, killing at least 15 combatants and civilians and injuring 13 in total throughout month.

➔ **South China Sea Tensions continued between China and U.S., while Malaysia rejected China's claims to historic rights in SCS.** Chinese People's Liberation Army 25 July to 2 Aug conducted live-fire drills in north-western SCS off Leizhou Peninsula. Following U.S. Sec State Mike Pompeo's July statement that China's claims in SCS were "unlawful", U.S. continued sizable military presence and operations in SCS: U.S. 11 Aug deployed two B-2 bombers to military base on Diego Garcia island in Indian Ocean; U.S. Ronald Reagan Carrier Strike Group 14 Aug conducted maritime air defence operations in SCS. U.S. Defence Secretary Mark Esper 6 Aug spoke with Chinese Defence Minister Wei Fenghe for 90 minutes; Pentagon same day confirmed that Esper had "expressed concern about [Chinese military's] destabilising activity in the vicinity of Taiwan and the South China Sea, and called on [China] to honour international obligations." Malaysia 29 July issued note verbale to UN rejecting "China's claims to historic rights, or other sovereign rights or jurisdiction", move follows Chinese opposition to Malaysian 12 Dec 2019 note to UN that sought to establish limits of Malaysia's continental shelf in northern part of SCS pursuant to UN Convention on Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Philippine's Navy Chief Vice Admiral Giovanni Bacordo 19 Aug stated that Chinese navy was attempting to provoke Philippines and urged Philippines' President Duterte to file diplomatic protest to Beijing over presence of two Chinese survey ships at Reed Bank, in north-eastern SCS. Manila 20 Aug filed diplomatic protest with China over Chinese coast guard's "illegal confiscation" of Filipino fishermen's fishing equipment in May. China 26 Aug test-fired two missiles – DF-21D and DF-26B – from its mainland into SCS. U.S. 26 Aug imposed sanctions on 24 Chinese companies involved in building artificial islands in SCS. Malaysia 27 Aug filed note verbale at UN that rejected Philippines' claim over Kalayaan/Spratleys island group and state of Sabah.

➔ **Thailand Protests continued amid growing calls for constitutional reform.** In capital Bangkok, human rights lawyer Anon Nampa 3 Aug organised small demonstration at Democracy Monument, where in taboo-breaking speech he called for reform of monarchy; in response, senior govt official 5 Aug filed lèse-majesté complaint against Anon, and police 7 Aug arrested him and activist Panupong Jadnok for involvement in 18 July rally, releasing both on bail 9 Aug. More than 5,000 gathered 10 Aug at Thammasat University in Pathum Thani province, demanding dissolution of parliament, new constitution and end to harassment of govt critics; at end of rally, student activist Panusaya Sithijirawattanakul unveiled list of ten demands aimed at reforming monarchy, including revoking lèse-majesté law and prohibiting king from endorsing coups. PM Prayuth Chan-ocha 11 Aug said protesters had gone "too far". Prayuth 13 Aug called on Thai citizens to reject efforts to divide them. Police 14 Aug arrested protest organiser Parit "Penguin" Chiwarak in Nonthaburi province, released him on bail following day. Activist group Free People 16 Aug organised largest pro-democracy rally since 2014 coup as some 20,000 gathered at Democracy Monument. Police 19-20 Aug arrested nine activists including Anon, all released on bail 20 Aug. Authorities 26 Aug arrested two Free Youth Movement leaders and charged them with sedition among other crimes before releasing them on bail. Anti-govt protesters gathered overnight at 14 October Monument 27-28 Aug; protesters scuffled briefly with police. Prayuth 4 Aug said

govt would propose constitutional amendments to parliament but reneged on his promise 18 Aug; Army Chief General Apirat Kongsompong 19 Aug said he had no objection to amending constitution. Facebook 24 Aug complied with govt request to block access in Thailand to Royalist Marketplace, a satirical page with more than one million members; Facebook said it would challenge legality of govt order. Cabinet 25 Aug approved extension of COVID-19 emergency decree for one month until 30 Sep. In deep south, suspected insurgent bombings 13 Aug killed two rangers in Pattani and Narathiwat provinces; security forces 14-16 Aug killed seven suspected insurgents in Pattani province.