

Asia

North East Asia

► **China/Japan** Japan deepened defence ties with Australia and U.S., while encounters between Chinese and Japanese vessels in disputed waters reportedly doubled in 2021 compared to previous year. Japan and Australia 6 Jan signed reciprocal access agreement to facilitate enhanced cooperation between two militaries, marking first time Tokyo signed such security agreement with govt other than U.S.. Japan and U.S. next day held “two-plus-two” talks between defence and foreign ministers, announcing plan to conduct joint research on defence technologies including hypersonic missiles and space capabilities, and increase joint use of military facilities in Japan including south-western islands close to both Taiwan and disputed Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands. As of 30 Jan, 105 Chinese coast guard vessels had entered waters surrounding Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands during month. Japanese media 8 Jan reported Chinese coast guard vessels approached Japanese fishing vessels around disputed islands 29 times during 2021, doubling 2020 number. In 17 Jan speech, Japanese PM Fumio Kishida noted 50th anniversary of normalisation between Japan and China occurring in 2022, saying Japan would “aim to build a constructive and stable relationship” with China.

► **Korean Peninsula** North Korea conducted slew of missile tests, prompting U.S. to impose more sanctions, while early signs emerged of potential trade resumption with China. North Korea 1 Jan published report on Kim Jong-un’s speech to regular plenum of Korean Workers’ Party held 27-31 Dec; report expressed “heavy yet responsible agony for 2022”. Pyongyang thereafter conducted six missile tests during month, marking notable uptick in frequency compared to just eight tests of all kinds in 2021. Pyongyang claimed to have fired hypersonic weapons 5 and 11 Jan from heavily militarised Jangang province, short-range ballistic missiles 14 Jan from train mount and 17 and 27 Jan from static launchers, and cruise missiles on 25 Jan; tests appear to signal Pyongyang’s resumed desire to shake up political situation in East Asia after U.S attention focused elsewhere. In response to first two tests, U.S. 12 Jan imposed unilateral sanctions on several individuals linked to weapons programs; move reportedly chief cause of North Korean politburo’s 20 Jan decision to “promptly examine the issue of restarting all temporarily-suspended activities”, likely referring to resumption of inter-continental ballistic missile launches it last conducted in 2017, also accused U.S. of joint military exercises and “shipping...[of] nuclear strategic weapons” into surrounding region. Former U.S. Forces Korea head Gen Robert Abrams 20 Jan responded that U.S. “has not had a Carrier Strike Group, a Strategic Bomber, or 5th Gen fighter in [South Korean] waters or air space since May 2018”. UN Security Council 10, 20 Jan convened to discuss testing, with Russia and China making clear opposition to further sanctions. Trains crossed China-North Korea border in first indication of tentative reopening for trade; notably, three freight trains 17, 18, 19 Jan crossed border between Sinuiju city, North Korea, and Dandong city, China.

► **Taiwan Strait** China conducted largest aerial incursion into Taiwan's air defence zone since Oct 2021, while Taipei adopted special military budget and continued to cultivate international ties. Chinese aircraft flew into Taiwan's air defence identification zone throughout month, totalling 138 aircraft as of 30 Jan; 23 Jan marks largest incursion since Oct 2021 with defence ministry scrambling fighters to warn off 39 Chinese aircraft. U.S. navy destroyer 22 Jan transited Taiwan Strait. Taiwan's army 6 Jan conducted urban warfare exercise. Parliament 16 Jan passed over \$8bn five-year special military budget to produce precision and long-range missiles and naval ships. In 1 Jan New Year's speech, Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen said Taiwan would "neither bow to pressure nor act rashly when we have support" and that Beijing should "stop the spread of military adventurism within their ranks". In rare face-to-face meeting with U.S. senior officials, Taiwan's VP Lai Ching-te during 26-29 Jan trip to Honduras spoke with U.S. VP Kamala Harris at Honduran president's inauguration, and met virtually with U.S. congressional representatives. In 28 Jan interview, Chinese Ambassador to U.S. Qin Gang said if Taiwan continued "down the road of independence, it most likely will involve China and the United States ... in a military conflict". Former Deputy Director of China's Taiwan Affairs office Sun Yafu said 8 Jan Beijing would put forward "new policy decisions and arrangements" on Taiwan at 20th Party Congress due to take place in late 2022. Despite tensions last year, trade data 7 Jan revealed China-Taiwan trade grew in 2021, reaching new high of \$188.9bn. EU 27 Jan launched case at World Trade Organization against China for blocking trade with Lithuania after Vilnius opened Taiwan representative office using "Taiwanese" in its name rather than usual "Taipei." Taiwan 11 Jan pledged \$1bn credit fund for projects in Lithuania including semiconductor industry. Slovenian PM Janez Jansa 17 Jan said Slovenia and Taiwan were discussing exchanging representatives; Taiwan next day confirmed talks, while Chinese foreign ministry 19 Jan expressed shock, calling Jansa's remarks "dangerous".

South Asia

► **Afghanistan** Taliban continued to tighten their rule as government increasingly imposed ideologically driven policies; for first time since August takeover, group showed signs of disunity. Taliban imposed policies regulating social behaviour. Notably, Taliban officials 3 Jan ordered shopkeepers in parts of Herat province (west) to remove heads from display mannequins (as per their beliefs, representations of human figures are prohibited in Islam). Authorities 25 Dec dissolved Independent Election Commission and Electoral Complaints Commission, institutions that had overseen presidential and parliamentary polls. Taliban continued to target figures who challenge their rule; security forces 8 Jan erroneously arrested prominent critic Professor Faizullah Jalal (who was released a few days later), and 6 Jan reportedly arrested social media activist Faisal Mudarres, following his coverage of Dec Panjshir protests. Reports also claimed Taliban arrested female protesters mid-month; six women's rights activists abducted in capital Kabul remained missing by end of month. Taliban leadership has denied responsibility for incidents, and have yet to clarify whereabouts of missing women or identify culprits. Attacks by Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISIS-K) and

Northern Resistance Front (NRF) continued albeit at reduced rate, in part because of harsh winter conditions. Taliban FM Amir Muttaqi 10 Jan met NRF head in Iran but talks do not appear to have borne any immediate results. Taliban 12 Jan arrested one of their popular Uzbek commanders, Makhdoom Alam, in Mazar city, Balkh province, revealing possible ethnic divisions between Uzbek and Pashtun Taliban; Alam's arrest led to sporadic Uzbek Taliban-led protests in Faryab province's Maymana city (north west), with reports that Uzbek Taliban had disarmed and expelled Pashtun Taliban from city. In response, Taliban 16 Jan deployed suicide attack unit to quell unrest; situation appeared to have quietened by month's end. Internationally, Taliban 9 and 24 Jan visited Iran and met with European and U.S. officials in Norway's capital Oslo; international counterparts have yet to formally recognise Taliban as new Afghan govt. EU 21 Jan announced it had started to re-establish diplomatic presence in capital Kabul. Meanwhile, tensions with Pakistan persisted over security at Afghanistan-Pakistan border (see Pakistan entry).

► **Bangladesh** **Electoral violence continued, killing dozens, and authorities arrested scores of opposition supporters.** Election related clashes continued; notably, violence on poll day killed at least 11 persons and injured five policemen and 50 others across country 5 Jan. Clashes 6-7 Jan killed four and injured at least 26 persons in Satkhira and Bogra districts. Rivals 6 Jan also beat to death defeated candidate in Shariatpur district; 6 Jan seriously injured elected female member in Manikganj district; 20 Jan shot dead elected member in Jessore district. Govt clamped down on Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) opposition as protesters advocated for BNP leader Khaleda Zia to be granted medical treatment abroad. Police 1 Jan arrested four local BNP members following 30 Dec confrontation with ruling party Awami League (AL) supporters in Sirajgani district which had left 100 injured; next day imprisoned 31 BNP activists for 22 Nov clash with police during rally in Natore district; 5 Jan filed charges against 75 BNP leaders and activists for assaulting police officers and destroying public property during protest in Chittagong city previous day. Dhaka court 10 Jan sentenced ten BNP activists to five-year imprisonment in case filed in 2013 for violations of Explosive Substances Act. Senior BNP leader 11 Jan accused govt of filing "false and politically motivated cases" to hold on to power during general elections due in Dec 2023 or early 2024; accused judiciary of working on govt's behest. Cabinet minister 12 Jan said govt was preparing list of those "involved in anti-state activities and making anti-state statements abroad". Fires 2 and 9 Jan destroyed over 1,000 refugee shelters, including medical facilities and learning centres in Cox's Bazar's Ukhiya camp. Authorities 4 Jan admitted that they had demolished more than 3,000 Rohingya-run shops in Cox's Bazar in past weeks. In raid in Bandarban subdistrict, Paramilitary Rapid Action Battalion 7 Jan detained four Rohingya men and seized firearms. Police 16 Jan detained Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army chief's brother in Cox's Bazar's Ukhiya camp. Govt 28 Jan said it held repatriation talks with Myanmar junta officials.

► **India** **Maoist-related violence increased, north east witnessed militant attacks, and tensions persisted with China over disputed unofficial boundary.** Month witnessed uptick in Maoist-related violence. Notably, security operation 18 Jan killed three alleged Maoists, including one woman, and left one security personnel injured on border of Telangana state

(centre) and Chhattisgarh state (centre). Encounter with Maoists 2 Jan injured Special Task Force constable in Gariyaband district of Chhattisgarh. Maoists 4 Jan killed two police guards of former lawmaker in Jharkhand state (east). Encounter between police and Maoists 5 Jan killed Maoist in Aurangabad district of Bihar state (east). Chhattisgarh police 6 Jan claimed Maoists killed three officers in Bijapur district. Exchange of fire between Maoists and security forces 18 Jan killed two Maoists in Sukma and Bijapur districts; police same day killed three Maoists in Mulugu district of Telangana. Conflict in neighbouring Myanmar fueled militancy in north east. Security operation reportedly left two insurgents and one security forces personnel killed during raid of Manipur militant group People's Liberation Army's camp about 10km inside Myanmar 13 Jan; Indian army 17 Jan denied operation. Earlier, IED blast 5 Jan killed one security forces member and injured another in Thoubal district, Manipur state; Manipur-based outfit People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (Progressive) subsequently claimed responsibility. Tensions continued with China over disputed territory. China's Land Border Law 1 Jan came into effect, with law stipulating that state will take measures to safeguard territorial integrity and land boundaries and "combat any act that undermines" this effort, also calling for opening up border areas to civilian population and ramping up infrastructure along borders. Observers fear law could provide legal cover for Chinese military transgressions across disputed unofficial border known as Line of Actual Control (LAC), as Beijing late Dec had issued names for 15 locations inside Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh situated on border. Media 3 Jan also reported that China is building bridge on Pangong Tso Lake in Eastern Ladakh, which would enable faster passage of troops and equipment. Indian govt 12 Jan held 14th round of military talks with China at senior highest military commander level, aimed at resolving 21-month standoff in eastern Ladakh; military talks yielded no progress but both countries pledged to stay in contact.

► **India-Pakistan (Kashmir)** Tensions continued in Jammu and Kashmir as authorities killed over a dozen militants during security operations and stifled dissent. Indian army 1 Jan accused Pakistani army of violating Feb 2021 ceasefire agreement by carrying out Border Action Team attack inside Kashmir near Line of Control in Kupwara district, said it had killed one Pakistani "infiltrator". India 5 Jan lodged "strong protest" with Pakistan over infiltration attempts, smuggling of arms, ammunition and narcotics across border. Despite harshest months of winter, security operations and militant attacks continued unabated in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). Security forces 1 Jan killed alleged Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT) militant in Kupwara district; 3 Jan killed two alleged LeT militants in regional capital Srinagar; 4 Jan killed two suspected LeT militants in Kulgam district; 5 Jan killed three alleged Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) militants in Pulwama district; 6-7 Jan killed three alleged JeM militants in Budgam district; 10 Jan killed two militants in Kulgam district. Security operation 12 Jan also left one suspected JeM militant and one police officer killed. Police 6 Jan claimed to have found hybrid terror group of four militants in Srinagar; 15 Jan claimed to have arrested three militants in Bandipora district in north. Govt continued to stifle media: police 8 Jan arrested reporter Sajjad Gul at his home in Bandipora district for violating Public Safety Act day after he uploaded video on Twitter of family of slain militant expressing anti-India slogans. Local govt 15 Jan helped group of alleged journalists take over Kashmir Press Club and appoint themselves as new management body; central govt 17 Jan cancelled club's

registration and handed building over to estates department. Meanwhile, concerns and criticism over delimitation of electoral constituencies continued. Authorities 1 Jan put under house arrest leaders of all five political parties affiliated with People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration after they had announced planning protest against delimitation commission draft proposal.

► **Nepal Political parties disputed timing of local and general elections, reflecting potential fissures within five-party coalition ahead of polls.** Following indecision by Nepali Congress-led govt on timing of local elections, which Election Commission recommended be held by early May, Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre) Chairman and key leader of ruling alliance Pushpa Kamal Dahal 19 Jan argued general elections for lower house of parliament – likely to be held late 2022 – should be held first in spring and local polls delayed until later in 2022. Following widespread criticism of Dahal's proposal for potentially undermining rule of law, ruling coalition 29 Jan agreed on holding local polls by mid-June and leaving general elections likely for late 2022. Observers argued episode revealed fears among some ruling parties that weak showing in local polls could damage their prospects in general elections, especially amid uncertainty over whether five-party coalition will continue its alliance into new electoral cycle; Nepali Congress leaders have indicated willingness to end coalition ahead of polls. In elections for upper house of parliament held 26 Jan, where 19 of 59 total upper house seats were contested, opposition Unified Marxist-Leninist (UML) lost seven previously held seats while ruling alliance parties won 18 seats; UML remains largest party with 16 seats.

► **Pakistan Tensions over border fencing at Afghan border ran high as Pakistani Taliban continued to clash with security forces.** Tensions flared over Pakistan's construction of border fencing along Nangarhar district at Afghan border. After Afghan soldiers 2 Jan tried to remove section of fence, FM Qureshi 3 Jan declared border "confusion" would be quickly resolved through "diplomatic channels"; however, Taliban acting information minister same day said "issue of the Durand Line is still an unresolved one" and "construction of fencing itself creates rifts". In response, Pakistani military 5 Jan said "purpose of the fencing is not to divide people but to protect them", blamed problems on local Taliban commanders, said Pakistan has "good relations" with Afghan central govt. Use by Pakistani Taliban (Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, TTP) of Afghan territory as refuge became another point of contention during month, as insurgents continued to clash with Pakistani security forces. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province (KP), unknown armed men 1 Jan shot dead police officer in Bannu district; clashes 5 Jan left two militants and two soldiers dead in Dera Ismail Khan and South Waziristan districts. Unidentified gunmen 9 Jan also shot dead Pakistani Taliban spokesman and operational commander, known as Mohammad Khorasani, in Afghanistan's Nangarhar province; Pakistani Taliban 13 Jan vowed to avenge his death. One police officer killed, three injured 17 Jan in TTP attack in capital Islamabad. Bomb blast in Lahore market 20 Jan also attributed by interior minister to TTP. In Balochistan province, counter-terrorism police 8 Jan claimed to have killed six Islamic State (ISIS) militants who had been planning major attack in Quetta city. Militant attack night of 26-27 Jan killed ten soldiers in Kech district. Military 27 Jan confirmed militant raid on base in Balochistan killed at least ten soldiers. Meanwhile, Election Commission of Pakistan's Scrutiny Committee 3 Jan released report revealing ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) had hidden millions in

foreign funds. Following first phase of local polls held 19 Dec, commission 7 Jan announced final results of 41 out of 65 district councils in KP, with bulk of seats attributed to opposition as Pashtun Islamist Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam won 15 seats.

► **Sri Lanka Financial and economic crises grew increasingly acute, parliament reconvened after prorogation, and tensions came to fore between govt and Catholic leaders.** Prices of food and other essentials continued to rise amid widening shortages and increasingly frequent power cuts, as govt currency reserves dwindled and risk of default rose. Bar Association of Sri Lanka 14 Jan issued unprecedented statement expressing grave concern over economic crisis's "possible impact on the Rule of Law and Democracy and on the living conditions of the people". Central bank 18 Jan repaid \$500mn due on international sovereign bonds, despite prominent economists and business leaders urging govt to postpone repayment and use its scarce currency to purchase food and medicine. After late Dec currency swap with China, and China's promises of further support to Sri Lanka during 8-9 Jan visit to capital Colombo by Chinese FM Wang Yi, India offered more than \$1.5bn in stop-gap loans to support Sri Lankan govt, including 18 Jan announcement of \$500mn credit line to allow fuel importation from India. After suspending parliament in Dec, President Rajapaksa 18 Jan opened new parliamentary session with speech that confirmed govt is "preparing to make relevant amendments to the Prevention of Terrorism Act"; govt 27 Jan released text of proposed amendments. Delegation of Tamil parliamentarians, led by Tamil National Alliance (TNA) leader R. Sampanthan, 18 Jan met Indian high commissioner in Colombo, and handed over letter addressed to Indian PM Modi; letter appeals for renewed Indian efforts to press Colombo to negotiate lasting political solution to "Tamil national question" based on federal model. Discovery 11 Jan of live grenade in Catholic Church in Colombo deepened bitter conflict between govt and Catholic leaders as Church officials challenged police arrest of long-time church employee and initial disregard for Church CCTV footage. Catholic Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith 13 Jan publicly criticised police investigations into incident and noted possible political motives behind it, next day alleged authorities are suppressing truth over 2019 Easter attacks, claiming existence of conspiracy to allow attacks to take place for political reasons ahead of presidential election.

South East Asia

► **Myanmar Deadly fighting between Tatmadaw and resistance forces escalated sharply in Kayah State in south east, while Cambodian PM became first foreign leader to visit country since Feb 2021 coup.** Kayah State saw marked escalation in conflict during Jan following 24 Dec massacre by Tatmadaw of over 30 civilians outside Moso village. Clashes 6 Jan erupted between military and Karen Nationalities Defence Force (KNDF) fighters in state capital Loikaw, forcing 60,000 residents to flee to neighbouring Shan State and prompting Tatmadaw to deploy helicopter gunships and launch military airstrikes 7-16 Jan; notably, two jets 11 Jan dropped seven bombs in Maing Lone ward. KNDF same day said it had killed 20 soldiers and captured three during fighting. Rising violence in Kayah and Kayin States in past two months have led civilians to flee to Moei River bordering Thailand, with some 2,000 people camped

on Myanmar side by mid-Jan. Regime-controlled court 10 Jan sentenced deposed leader Aung San Suu Kyi to four additional years in prison on charges of violating COVID-19 rules, breaching import-export laws and owning signal jammers, increasing her most recent sentence to six years. Cambodian PM and current Chair of South East Asia regional body ASEAN Hun Sen 7-8 Jan visited capital Naypyitaw, becoming first foreign leader to visit Myanmar since coup; visit reportedly sparked protests, notably in Depayin and Mandalay cities. In meeting, State Administration Council Chairman Min Aung Hlaing attempted to reframe ASEAN's demands for complete cessation of violence and dialogue among "all parties concerned" to cover only clashes with Myanmar's ethnic armed groups, also proposed to extend unilateral ceasefire with ethnic armed groups that notably excludes People's Defence Force and other resistance forces. Amid fallout from Hun Sen's visit, with some ASEAN member states, notably Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore, criticising progress and implications of visit, Cambodia 12 Jan announced indefinite postponement of ASEAN foreign ministers' retreat scheduled 18-19 Jan. Attorney general of Gambia 14 Feb said International Court of Justice will hold next hearing on Rohingya genocide case on 21 Feb – first hearing since Feb 2021 coup.

► **Philippines** Low-level violence continued in south, while skirmishes between govt forces and communist rebels persisted, albeit at reduced frequency and lethality. In Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao in south, militants and military forces engaged in few major clashes amid some instances of political violence. In Maguindanao province, unknown gunmen 7 Jan fired on house of mayor of Datu Piang municipality. In Cotabato province, bus explosion 11 Jan injured six people in Aleosan town, including three children. Police and military 15 Jan conducted operations against alleged members of Al-Khobar gang suspected of responsibility for explosion, killing four; gang is allegedly linked to jihadist militants formerly under control of Salahuddin Hassan. Military 17 Jan clashed with Islamic State-linked Abu Sayyaf Group in Sumisip town, Basilan province, killing one militant. In Talipao town, Sulu province, two Abu Sayyaf members 3 Jan surrendered. In Marawi city, rehabilitation efforts continued. Department of human settlements and urban development 20 Jan inaugurated two public infrastructure projects, including Pumping Bridge in Barangay Raya Madaya previously destroyed in 2017 fighting. Senate 24 Jan adopted resolution granting amnesty to Moro Islamic Liberation Front combatants following earlier proclamation by President Duterte in Feb 2021. Meanwhile, clashes between armed forces and communist group New People's Army (NPA) dropped in frequency compared to last month, following general trend of lull in hostilities at end of year. Yet, incidents between govt security forces and rebels in Mindanao Island in south and Visayas Islands in centre killed five combatants and one civilian. Preparations for May presidential elections continued. Election Commission 17 Jan rejected petition from civic leaders seeking to disqualify candidacy of Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on basis of tax fraud; petition comes amid several filed by civil rights groups since Nov 2021.

► **South China Sea** China protested U.S. military activities in South China Sea, while Washington issued report disputing basis of Beijing's maritime claims. Chinese military 20 Jan said U.S. guided-missile destroyer *USS Benfold* sailing around Paracel Islands "illegally entered China's Xisha

territorial waters” and had been given “eviction” warning; U.S. Navy same day challenged claims, said Chinese move posed “serious threat to the freedom of the seas”. U.S. response comes on heels of 13-17 Jan joint training operations in South China Sea (SCS) between *Carl Vinson Carrier Strike Group* and *Essex Amphibious Ready Group*, including 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit. U.S. State Dept in 12 Jan report said China’s declaration of “historic rights” over SCS “is deficient for its vagueness” and unlawful; Philippines 21 Jan welcomed report as “consistent with Philippines-U.S. Joint Vision Statement”. Chinese FM Wang Yi 17 Jan during virtual forum organised by Chinese embassy in Philippines stressed importance of not “imposing one’s own will on the other”, vowed to work with Philippines to resolve tensions in SCS. Philippine Defence Secretary Lorenzana 14 Jan said that Philippines had finalised deal to acquire shore-based anti-ship missile system from India. Chinese media 7 Jan claimed Vietnamese militia-armed fishing boats were being built in Da Nang town, Vietnam, and launched on trial voyages; Vietnamese foreign ministry 14 Jan said all activities in SCS adhered to international law. Japanese PM Fumio Kishida and Australian PM Scott Morrison 6 Jan signed reciprocal access agreement set to go into effect “as early as possible.” Malaysian FM Saifuddin Abdullah 19 Jan raised concern over Beijing’s shift from disputing “nine-dash line” water territories to disputing “Four Sha” land territories, which “is even more serious” than former.

► **Thailand Political parties continued to prepare for looming election, while talks recommenced between govt and separatist group Barisan Revolusi Nasional after almost two-year hiatus.** Ruling Palan Pracharat Party faced several challenges in Jan. Two MPs 17 Jan resigned and former MPs Uttama Savanayana and Sontirat Sontijirawong 19 Jan formed new Sang Anakot Thai party, with splintering indicating weakening of PM Prayut Chan-o-cha’s parliamentary majority. Ruling party 20 Jan also expelled Sec Gen Thammanat Prompao and 20 other MPs. Meanwhile, former PM Thaksin Shinawatra 4 Jan vowed to return to Thailand during 2022, potentially signalling optimistic outlook for main opposition Pheu Thai Party in general election likely going ahead this year. Month saw no anti-govt rallies in one of quietest months since commencement of pro-democracy protests in early 2020, likely due to jailing of protest leaders, end-of-year break and coronavirus concerns. Judges 13 Jan extended bail of student protest leaders Panusaya “Rung” Sithijirawattanakul and Benja Apa on condition they refrain from participating in protests; other leaders remain in jail. In deep south, insurgents conducted several attacks during Jan. More than ten insurgents 3 Jan attacked Ranger Base 4513 in Ra-ngae district, Narathiwat province, killing one ranger and injuring two. In Narathiwat province, unidentified attackers night of 28 Jan set off 13 small explosives in Yala town, injuring one. Ranger truck 7 Jan struck IED in Nong Chik district, Pattani province, injuring five. Malaysian authorities 13 Jan repatriated three suspected Thai Malay insurgents connected to Runda Kumpulan Kecil group previously arrested in Malaysia after fleeing across border in first such extradition in approximately 25 years. In first dialogue since March 2020, Thai govt and Barisan Revolusi Nasional separatist group 11-12 Jan held preliminary talks over conflict in deep south in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, facilitated by Malaysia’s former federal police chief and observed by delegates from UK and Norway; talks agreed upon three-point framework for future negotiations centred on violence reduction, public participation and political solutions, set to be facilitated by working groups.