

Asia

North East Asia

➔ **China/Japan** **New Japanese PM reaffirmed U.S.-Japan alliance and need to increase defence capacity amid ongoing Chinese maritime presence around disputed islands.** Following his appointment as new Japanese PM, Kishida 4 Oct stated China uses force to change status quo in region and emphasised need to improve Japan's missile defence as well as coordination with allies. In call with U.S. President Biden, Kishida next day reaffirmed U.S.-Japan alliance and U.S. commitment to defending disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu islands in East China Sea. Amid heightened tensions in Taiwan Strait, Japanese FM Toshimitsu Motegi same day said Japan will weigh different Taiwan scenarios to "consider what options we have". In 8 Oct call between Chinese Secretary General Xi and Kishida, Xi said two countries should maintain cooperative relations, "properly handle major sensitive issues" and not threaten each other, while Kishida reportedly raised Senkaku Islands as well as human rights issues. Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party 12 Oct revealed aim to increase defence budget to two percent of GDP. Meanwhile, Chinese and Russian warships 18 Oct conducted joint exercise, passing through Tsugaru Strait between Japanese main island and Hokkaido for first time. Number of Chinese coast guard vessels entering contiguous zone around disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu islands numbered 86 as of 28 Oct, while four vessels 20 Oct entered Japan's territorial seas.

➔ **Korean Peninsula** **North Korea tested ballistic missile and South Korea launched first domestically-designed rocket, while Washington and Seoul mulled declaration to end Korean war.** North Korea 18 Oct tested submarine-launched ballistic missile near major east coast naval base of Sinpo, a day before trilateral meeting between U.S., South Korea and Japan on North Korean denuclearisation. Japanese PM Kishida 19 Oct called launch "very regrettable", while U.S. Special Representative for North Korea Sung Kim called on Pyongyang to "refrain from further provocations and engage in sustained and substantive dialogue". South Korea 21 Oct launched 200-ton liquid-fuelled 'Nuri' rocket into space in first launch of entirely indigenous design; although launch was successful, rocket failed to place payload in intended orbit. President Moon same day commented "we are now able to freely develop various space launch vehicles" and heralded advent of "Korea space age"; launch follows U.S. decision in May to drop restrictions on South Korea's missile ranges. Head of North Korean Institute for National Unification 19 Oct said South Korean President Moon's Sept proposal for declaration ending Korean War would be premature without resolving fundamental issues, such as U.S. troops on peninsula. Reports 20 Oct surfaced, however, that U.S. and South Korea were reportedly in discussions over text of such declaration; U.S. Special Representative Kim and South Korean counterpart Noh Kyu-duk 24 Oct reaffirmed growing focus on declaration. Meanwhile, Chinese customs data released 13 Oct showed China-North Korea cross-border trade more than doubled from Aug-Sept 2021, reaching highest value in over a year in tentative sign of recovery of cross-border trade dramatically reduced during COVID-19 pandemic. China's UN Security Council representative 22 Oct renewed call for sanctions on North Korea to be eased.

➔ **Taiwan Strait Tensions ran high as China conducted record air incursions into Taiwan's air defence zone, and U.S. and allies conducted large-scale exercises in region.** Military activity increased during month. In display of strength, China 1-4 Oct dispatched 149 military aircraft in south west area of Taiwan's air defence identification zone (ADIZ), with 56 jets entering zone on 4 Oct – by far largest daily incursion since Taiwan began publicising data in Sept 2020. U.S., UK, Japan, Netherlands, Canada and New Zealand 2-3 Oct conducted large-scale exercises off Japan's Okinawa island involving 17 vessels and three aircraft carriers. China 11 Oct reported beach landing and assault drill in Fujian province and 17 Oct reported integrated military-civilian cross-sea exercise using large civilian ferry likely designed to signal growing amphibious lift capabilities. U.S. destroyer USS Dewey 14-15 Oct conducted tenth Taiwan Strait transit of 2021 and with Canadian frigate HMCS Winnipeg for first time; China 17 Oct said U.S. and Canada “colluded to provoke and stir up trouble”. Meanwhile, political statements did not indicate major changes in policies of China, Taiwan or the U.S.. Taiwan's Defence Minister Chiu Kuo-cheng 6 Oct warned that by 2025 Chinese military capabilities “would be able to bring the cost and attrition of a full-scale invasion [of Taiwan] to its lowest”. Chinese President Xi 9 Oct said peaceful reunification with Taiwan was “most in line with the overall interests of the Chinese nation”. U.S. President Biden 22 Oct said U.S. would come to Taiwan's defence in event of Chinese attack; White House subsequently clarified there was no change in U.S. policy. U.S. and Taiwan continued efforts to reduce Taiwan's international isolation with support from some European countries, despite China's objections. EU Parliament 21 Oct passed non-binding resolution calling EU to deepen ties with Taiwan, including through investment deal. Taiwan's FM Joseph Wu 26 Oct began tour of Europe including Bratislava, Prague, Rome and Brussels. U.S. Sec State Blinken 26 Oct issued statement calling for Taiwan's meaningful participation in the UN system.

South Asia

➔ **Afghanistan Insecurity persisted as Islamic State Khorasan Province launched dozens of attacks, killing scores, and land disputes resurfaced amid dire food crisis across country.** Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISIS-K) significantly ramped up its activities against Taliban, carrying out dozens of attacks, including three that caused mass casualties. Notably, ISIS-K 3 Oct killed five civilians attending funeral for Taliban spokesperson's mother in capital Kabul; 8 Oct killed more than 40 civilians at Shiite mosque in Kunduz province (north); 15 Oct killed at least 50 civilians at Shiite mosque in Kandahar city (south). Additionally, smaller-scale attacks against Taliban security personnel occurred daily throughout country, notably in Nangarhar (east), Kunar (east) and Kunduz (north) provinces. In response, Taliban raided ISIS-K hideouts in Kabul, Parwan (east) and Kunduz (north) provinces, killing ISIS-K members and family members, arrested hundreds of ISIS-K suspects, particularly in Nangarhar (east) and Kunar (east), and increased checkpoints to limit freedom of movement between provinces. Separately, Northern Resistance Front maintained low-level resistance, launching small-scale attacks in Panjshir and Parwan provinces (north). UN warned of unprecedented levels of hunger as drought and economic crisis left half country acutely food insecure, according to 25 Oct UN assessment. Ethnic and tribal tensions increased

due to competition over resources. In Daikundi and Ghazni provinces (centre), land disputes led to displacement of ethnic minority Hazaras. In Daikundi province, two-decade-old land dispute between Pashtun tribes of northern Uruzgan and Hazaras of Daikundi resurfaced. On political front, Taliban 5 Oct announced additional govt appointments, including Maulawi Abdul Kabir as Deputy PM for Political Affairs, Maulawi Matiul Haq, son of Younus Khali, as head of Red Crescent, and Nurudding Turabi as his deputy; 28 Oct announced Maulawi Abdul Hakim Haqqani as head of Supreme Court. Internationally, despite meetings with U.S., Russian, Turkish and Indian officials during month, Taliban made little progress to gain formal recognition of govt, and to get country's financial assets unfrozen by U.S. govt. However, working relations continued with Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, China and Kyrgyzstan; relations with Pakistan deteriorated amid border skirmishes after Taliban accused Islamabad of implementing restrictions on transit of goods and people.

↓ **Bangladesh Deadly inter-religious violence during Hindu festival killed seven and escalated tensions between ruling Awami League party and opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP).** As Hindu community observed holiest festival, violent anti-Hindu violence 13-18 Oct erupted across country following circulation of video on social media that allegedly showed desecration of Quran at Hindu temple in Comilla town, sparking clashes with law enforcement and attacks on Hindu temples, businesses and homes; violence killed at least seven, including two Hindus, and injured dozens. Govt deployed paramilitary to 22 of country's 64 districts, arrested over 450 people, and filed hundreds of cases against protesters, including three BNP leaders and one Jamaat-e-Islami leader. Awami League and BNP blamed each other for violence. Police 21 Oct arrested two Muslim men, one on 21 Oct for allegedly planting Quran in Comilla temple, and one on 14 Oct for allegedly posting first social media video. Attacks on temples continued, including 23 Oct in Chittagong city. Meanwhile, with mandate of Election Commission due to expire 15 Feb 2022, and next general elections due at end of 2023, PM Hasina 4 Oct said new Election Commission would be created through search committee formed by president, adding opposition BNP leader Khaleda Zia and son Tarique Rahman could not participate in polls due to their convictions; BNP Sec 5 Oct said party would not participate in polls under Awami League govt. Violence in run-up to local elections 15 Oct killed four persons in Magura district, including one in Faridpur district 23 Oct, and two in Rangamati district on 16 and 26 Oct. Police 10 Oct detained 16 suspected Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army members in Cox's Bazar's Ukiya camps, for role in Sept killing of prominent Rohingya Muslim leader Mohib Ullah in Cox's Bazar. Attack on madrassa in Ukiya camp in Cox's Bazar 22 Oct killed six people and wounded at least 20; police arrested 14 Rohingyas suspected of involvement in killing. UN Refugee Agency 11 Oct signed deal to start delivering aid to flood-prone Bhasan Char island; govt said 81,000 refugees would move there in next three months.

➔ **India Farmer protests turned deadly, Maoist violence continued, and talks with China on disputed border stalled.** Farmer-led protests turned deadly. In unprecedented incident, convoy of cars reportedly associated with son of deputy home minister 3 Oct ran over and killed four protesters in Uttar Pradesh state; in retaliation, protesters attacked car, killing driver and two members of ruling party; govt next day announced judicial enquiry and police 9 Oct arrested minister's

son. During 16 Oct protest on Delhi-Haryana border 16 Oct, four people tied man to barricades and cut off hand before killing him after he allegedly desecrated Sikh holy book; incident fuelled speculation of subterfuge in attempt to discredit farmer-led protests. Meanwhile, Maoist militant 8 Oct injured security forces member during shootout in Narayanpur district of Chhattisgarh state (centre). Security forces 12 Oct killed three Maoists and 15 Oct exchanged fire with others in Malkangiri district of Odisha state (east); 23 Oct killed Maoist in Lakhisarai district, Bihar state (east); 25 Oct killed three leaders in Mulugu district of Telangana state (central-south). Tensions with Chinese armed forces along disputed unofficial border known as Line of Actual Control (LAC) briefly spiked early month as both sides came face-to-face and close to clashing in East Tawang sector of Arunachal Pradesh state, which is claimed by China but controlled by India. Army commanders 10 Oct held 13th round of talks with Chinese counterparts to discuss disengagement and de-escalation of LAC as well as protocols for military patrols of region; foreign ministry 11 Oct claimed “Chinese side was not agreeable and also could not provide any forward-looking proposals”; continued deadlock means both armed forces – comprising thousands of troops as well as tanks and air defences – would remain in forward areas during upcoming winter months.

➔ **India-Pakistan (Kashmir) Militant group stepped up attacks on non-Muslim migrants in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), triggering mass arrests and heightening tension between India and Pakistan.** Militant group The Resistance Front (TRF) claimed responsibility for series of attacks on non-local, non-Muslim migrants, reviving memories of early 1990s mass exodus of Hindu Kashmiri Pandit community from Kashmir Valley. Notably, TRF claimed responsibility for killings of two school teachers 7 Oct. In response to attacks, Indian security forces detained at least 700 Kashmiris for questioning. Pakistan’s foreign office 11 Oct strongly condemned “arbitrary arrests and detentions” of Kashmiris by Indian forces in J&K; Pakistan’s UN representative 18 Oct declared it “one of the biggest crackdowns in the disputed territory”. Indian army chief MM Naravane 10 Oct said Feb ceasefire agreement respected only until July but has since given way to “sporadic incidents”. Pakistan’s Navy 19 Oct claimed to have blocked attempt by Indian submarine to enter Pakistani waters. Meanwhile, counter-insurgency operations and other militant attacks continued in J&K. Security forces 1 Oct killed alleged Lashkar-e-Tayyaba militant in Shopian district; 8 Oct allegedly killed Lashkar-e-Tayyaba militant in Srinagar; 12 Oct killed five alleged TRF militants in Shopian district; 13 Oct killed alleged Jaish-e-Mohammad commander in Tral town, Pulwama district; 15 Oct killed two suspected militants in Pulwama and Srinagar districts; 16 Oct killed two alleged militants in Pampore area; 20 Oct killed four alleged militants in Shopian and Kulgam districts. Militants 2 Oct killed two civilians in Srinagar; 5 Oct killed taxi driver in Bandipora district; 11-19 Oct killed nine soldiers in Jammu’s Poonch district; 16, 17 Oct killed four migrant labourers in Kulgam and Pulawama districts. New militant group, People’s Anti-Fascists Front, took credit for Poonch attack.

➔ **Nepal Govt formed cabinet after three-month delay, but appointment of Supreme Court judge’s brother-in-law as minister sparked fresh controversy.** PM Deuba 8 Oct appointed 18 new ministers, ending months of stalemate; appointment of Supreme Court Chief Justice Cholendra Shumsher Rana’s brother-in-law Gajendra Hamal as industry minister sparked

widespread criticism following reports that he was appointed at Rana's behest. Accusations centred around Deuba granting Rana share of cabinet designations as part of quid pro quo arrangement following 12 July Supreme Court decision which ousted previous KP Oli-led govt from office. Hamal 10 Oct resigned as industry minister, but calls mounted for Rana to step down from Supreme Court position for having undermined judiciary's independence; 15 of 19 other Supreme Court justices 26 Oct demanded Rana's resignation and have refused to hear cases at court in late Oct in protest at reported collusion between Rana and Deuba. Rana however refused to step down, 26 Oct challenged parliament to begin impeachment motion against him; Nepal Bar Association 29 Oct announced protests against Rana as Chief Justice.

↓ **Pakistan Violent clashes erupted between hardline Sunni group and law-enforcement agencies in Punjab; deadly militant attacks and military operations persisted.** Calling for release of detained party chief and expulsion of French ambassador, Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan (TLP) 21 Oct vowed to march from Punjab's Lahore city to capital Islamabad. In violent clashes, TLP activists killed seven police officers, including two in Lahore 22 Oct, and four 27-28 Oct some 50km away, while injuring more than 600 members of security forces in Punjab province. Holding negotiations with TLP leaders, interior ministry 24 Oct said it accepted TLP demands, including release of chief and detained activists. Protests for expelling French ambassador and deadly clashes with police however persisted, prompting paramilitary Rangers 27 Oct to deploy in Punjab. Information ministry 27 Oct said govt decided no further negotiations with "militant group" would take place until protests end; yet interior ministry same day said talks with TLP leadership ongoing. Meanwhile, militant attacks and security operations continued at high intensity. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, Pakistani Taliban attack 2 Oct killed five soldiers in North Waziristan district. Militants 4, 16, 20 Oct killed two soldiers, police officer and local politician in North Waziristan, Hangu, Bajaur and Lower Dir districts. Bomb blast 7 Oct killed three people in North Waziristan district. Roadside bomb 20 Oct killed two soldiers and two police officers in Bajaur district. Militant attacks 22 Oct killed two soldiers in North Waziristan district; four police officers 26 Oct in Mianwali district, two soldiers 26-27 Oct night in Kurram district, and two soldiers 27 Oct in North Waziristan district. In Balochistan, roadside bomb 18 Oct killed police officer in Quetta district; militant attack 20 Oct killed soldier in Kech district. PM Khan 1 Oct disclosed govt was negotiating with some factions of Pakistani Taliban, Pakistani Taliban group in North Waziristan same day confirmed information. Interior minister 4 Oct however said no talks "have taken place yet", and negotiations "will be carried out only with those who lay down arms" and abide by constitution.

➔ **Sri Lanka President Rajapaksa appointed controversial "nationalistic" legal task force, while efforts toward accountability came under renewed scrutiny, including over Easter bombings events.** President Rajapaksa 27 Oct appointed Task Force to draft law instituting principle of "One Country, One Law" to regulate religious and family law, with clear focus on Islamic institutions; headed by Buddhist monk and militant Sinhala nationalist campaigner Galagodaaththe Gnanasara, whom many accuse of instigating anti-Muslim violence; task force widely criticised across political and religious spectrum as partisan and divisive. Catholic Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith 24 Oct accused Rajapaksa govt of covering up conspiracy behind Easter Sunday 2019 jihadist

bombings in order to “protect the interests” of president, called for international assistance in uncovering truth and announced Pope Francis had written to convey his support for cardinal’s efforts. Meanwhile, teachers continued months-long strike calling for salary increases and protesting arrest and harassment of trade union leaders. Farmer protests against govt’s ban on importing chemical fertiliser and pesticides also continued, fuelling concerns over potential food shortages with predicted fall of rice and tea harvests. Following EU visit to monitor govt’s compliance with EU treaty obligations underpinning trade benefits associated with General Scheme of Preferences, European Commission officials 6 Oct urged amendment of Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) act but gave no deadline for changes; PTA permits arrests without warrant and detention without charge for up to 18 months. Previously, EU-Sri Lanka Joint Commission’s Working Group on Governance, Rule of Law and Human Rights 1 Oct announced both parties “agreed to take stock of progress” related to PTA amendment. President Rajapaksa’s office 4 Oct announced “immediate steps” to amend “necessary provisions”. FM Peiris 13 Oct reiterated that govt “rejects the establishment of an external [accountability] mechanism when domestic processes were ongoing”; Attorney General Rajaratnam 13 Oct informed High Court govt was dropping charges against former Naval Commander Karannagoda for alleged abduction, torture and murder of at least 11 Tamil and Muslim men in 2008-2009 – making it one of more than dozen indictments against Rajapaksa family members and former officials dropped since Gotabaya Rajapaksa became president in Nov 2019.

South East Asia

➔ **Myanmar Regime forces faced stiffening resistance amid wave of deadly attacks, while regional body ASEAN barred junta leader from its summit.** Myanmar military reportedly deployed significant forces to country’s north west (Chin, Magway, Sagaing regions) throughout Oct in apparent preparation for renewed offensive against opposition People’s Defence Forces; unconfirmed reports revealed that over 1,500 soldiers killed throughout Oct, making it potentially bloodiest month since Feb coup. State Administration Council also faced growing economic crisis as dollar shortages and declining kyat currency made critical imports such as food, fuel, fertiliser and other essential goods particularly difficult; kyat stabilised as of 14 Oct but remained far below value before coup. Meanwhile, court hearings against senior National League for Democracy figures resumed. Notably, in corruption case against deposed leader Aung San Suu Kyi, former Yangon Region Chief Minister Phyto Min Thein 1 Oct testified that he had bribed her to secure businesses interests. Aung San Suu Kyi described allegations as “all absurd” and said Phyto Min Thein had given testimony under duress. On international front, member states of South East Asia regional body ASEAN 15 Oct decided to bar junta’s representatives, chiefly Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, from attending 26-28 Oct ASEAN summit and other related summits over lack of progress on five-point consensus, notably Tatmadaw’s refusal to allow ASEAN special envoy Erywan Yusof to meet Aung San Suu Kyi. In address to nation, Min Aung Hlaing 18 Oct pinned blame for snub on opposition violence and announced mass release of over 5,600 political prisoners; NGO Human Rights Watch 22 Oct called release “limited in scope”, while authorities subsequently re-arrested 110 people; junta also arrested

prominent activist Ko Jimmy in North Dagon township, Yangon region 24 Oct. U.S. legislators 5 Oct introduced “Burma Unified through Rigorous Military Accountability Act” authorising stronger sanctions, support for civil society and appointment of “special coordinator for Burmese democracy”. French senate same day unanimously approved symbolic proposal to recognise National Unity Govt (NUG) as legitimate government. European Parliament 7 Oct approved resolution that “supports the CRPH [Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw] and the NUG as the only legitimate representatives”.

➔ **Philippines Insecurity persisted in south, while clashes between govt forces and communists killed over dozen.** In Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao in south, insecurity continued throughout Oct. Gunmen 11 Oct ambushed election officer and his daughter in Basilan province, severely wounding both. Security forces throughout Oct found IEDs, notably around Lamitan town. Two families 19 Oct re-ignited clan feud over land in village of Nabundas, Pikit town; Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)-facilitated agreement had quelled feud earlier this year. In Maguindanao province, Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) maintained low profile during month; BIFF’s Karialan faction 19 Oct however underscored group’s continued robustness. In Sulu Archipelago, Abu Sayyaf Group militant 12 Oct surrendered to military in Tawi-Tawi province. Military 29 Oct killed BIFF faction leader Salahuddin Hassan in Talayan town, Maguindanao province; group 31 Oct retaliated by attacking military detachment in so-called “SPMS-box”, area around towns of Shariff Aguak, Datu Saudi Ampatuan, Mamasapano and Shariff Saydona. Clashes between armed forces and communist New People’s Army (NPA) persisted: violence in Mindanao Island in south, Visayas Islands in centre, and Luzon Island in north killed at least 19 combatants and civilians during month. Notably, govt claimed forces killed key NPA commander Jorge Madlos in Bukidnon province, Mindanao island, on 30 Oct. Meanwhile, Bangsamoro Transition Authority continued work on priority legislation; President Duterte 28 Oct signed bill to postpone parliamentary poll in region for three years, thereby extending transition until 2025. Representatives from govt and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) 16-17 Oct met in planning and review workshop in Davao city to discuss normalisation process; Independent Decommissioning Body 12-14 Oct conducted simulation exercises for next phase of disarmament. In Lanao del Sur’s Marawi city, Duterte 16 Oct committed to “expedite the completion of rehabilitation projects at the soonest time possible” during visit to commemorate four-year anniversary of town’s liberation.

➔ **South China Sea U.S., UK and allies conducted joint maritime exercises throughout month, while Malaysia protested Chinese maritime presence in country’s exclusive economic zone.** Maritime activity continued. Chinese research institute 4 Oct reported USS Carl Vinson and HMS Queen Elizabeth aircraft carriers had crossed Bashi Channel and entered South China Sea (SCS) for second time since July. USS Ronald Reagan and USS Carl Vinson carrier strike groups, alongside UK Royal Navy carrier strike group and Japan Maritime Self-Defence Forces, 2-3 Oct conducted operations in Philippine Sea; drills included navy frigates and personnel from Canada, the Netherlands and New Zealand. U.S. nuclear-powered attack submarine USS Connecticut 2 Oct collided with “unknown underwater object” in SCS. HMS Queen Elizabeth 9-10 Oct conducted joint exercises with Singapore military. Five Power Defence

Arrangements nations – Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore and UK – 8-18 Oct conducted sea and air exercises in SCS to mark fiftieth anniversary of alliance. USS Carl Vinson strike group 25 Oct began joint training exercises with Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force's JS Kaga in SCS. Meanwhile, Malaysian foreign ministry 4 Oct said it had summoned Chinese ambassador for second time this year to “protest against the presence and activities of Chinese vessels, including a survey vessel, in Malaysia’s exclusive economic zone off the coasts of Sabah and Sarawak”; Chinese survey vessel left zone 18 Oct. Following high-level meeting in Indonesian capital Jakarta 18 Oct, Malaysian FM Saifuddin Abdullah expressed “concern and disturbance” over Australia-UK-U.S. “AUKUS” defence pact while Indonesian FM Retno Marsudi warned of tensions caused by “arms race and power projection”.

➔ **Thailand Protests continued in capital Bangkok, while clashes between security forces and insurgents intensified in deep south.** Rallies calling for PM Prayuth Chan-ocha’s resignation and clashes with police in Din Daeng area in Bangkok continued almost nightly in first half of Oct. Police 4 Oct arrested 26 protesters in Din Daeng for violating emergency decree. Unknown shooter 6 Oct shot and seriously wounded riot policeman at Din Daeng housing project during police search for “rioters”. Police 11 Oct arrested two youths throwing small improvised bombs at police kiosk at Asoke-Din Daeng intersection. Fifteen-year-old boy, who was shot 16 Aug by unknown assailant outside Din Daeng police station, died 28 Oct; first protester killed since anti-govt rallies resumed in 2020. Thousands 31 Oct gathered in central Bangkok to demand repeal of lèse-majesté law in largest protests in months. Former Future Forward Party leader and current Progressive Movement leader Thanathorn Jungrungruangkit 12 Oct reported to police to answer lèse-majesté charges, Computer Crimes Act violations and defamation; charges relate to earlier comments he made in 2021 about how firm Siam Bioscience, owned by Thai king, won contract to manufacture AstraZeneca vaccine. Amid growing speculation of plans for early election, all major parties save Pheu Thai Party named their PM candidates by 7 Oct; PM Prayuth 12 Oct however said he was not contemplating parliament dissolution or cabinet reshuffle. In deep south, late Sept firefight in Bacho district, Narathiwat province, that killed police officer and militant prompted two-week security operation in search of insurgents; clashes in province overnight 2-3, 7 and 13 Oct left army lieutenant and total of six insurgents dead before authorities 15 Oct announced end of operation. Elsewhere in Narathiwat, unidentified gunmen 3 Oct ambushed train bound for Raman district, leaving no casualties; IED 4 Oct exploded in Sungai Padi district; IED 10 Oct exploded in Bacho district, damaging police vehicle and wounding civilian. In Bannang Sata district, Yala province, IED 3 Oct wounded two rangers. Former village headman also shot dead in Pattani’s Kapho district 29 Oct.