



China Reform Monitor No. 1383

September 10, 2019 **Joshua Eisenman**

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PHILIPPINES MAY ASK FOR U.S. HELP TO MONITOR CHINESE SHIPS

The Philippines is weighing the possibility of receiving assistance from the U.S. to monitor People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) vessels in its surrounding water. "There's nothing wrong with that. There is a treaty between America and the Philippines," said a Philippine Presidential spokesperson. The press conference was held after two PLAN warships turned off their automatic identification systems and passed through the Sibutu Strait without clearance or notification. Since February, there have been at least four instances when PLAN ships took measures to avoid being detected by the Philippine authorities while traversing the country's southern extremity. (*The Philippine Star*, August 11, 2019)

INDONESIAN MINISTER DEFENDS DECISION TO SEND OFFICIALS TO CHINA...

China is currently hosting 20 staff from Indonesia's Ministry for Maritime Affairs, who are there to study new maritime technologies. When asked about the study trip, Coordinating Maritime Minister Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan, Indonesian President Joko Widodo's advisor in charge of ties with Beijing, said: "As long as they [China] aren't colonizing us, just let it be. We should search for new knowledge everywhere. So, don't be closed minded because this is China. Yes, if we were stupid we could be tricked by them, but we know what is permissible and what is not. I went to China and visited nine industrial areas. I almost didn't see a [single] person [working there], everything was done automatically using robots, and all of the industries had research centers. They are very disciplined, focused and quick at their jobs." (Detikcom, August 13, 2019)

...AS JAKARTA SEEKS HELP FROM CHINA TO REFORM NATIONAL HEALTHCARE

Former top Indonesian government officials are criticizing Minister Pandjaitan for seeking help from China's Ping An Insurance to reform the nation's healthcare system, known as the BPJS. "Are we really going to ask China's help for BPJS? Are we really not that creative or is there a hidden motive behind the act? What if all of Indonesians' health data [is accessed by] Beijing? Looks like someone deserves the title of 'China's honorary ambassador to Indonesia,'" tweeted Rizal Ramli, a former coordinating minister for economic affairs. "For Pandjaitan, every problem that this nation faces could only have one solution, which is to ask for 'help' from China. From the high-speed railway, electricity, Garuda, BPJS, labourers, etc. he has asked for China's help for all of this. Have we given up, that we ask for help from the Chinese on all [of our problems?]" In July, Pandjaitan visited Ping An in Shenzhen, spoke with company leaders, and praised its use of AI to increase efficiency. (*South China Morning Post*, August 26, 2019)

CONFUCIUS INSTITUTE TEACHERS MUST "LOVE THE MOTHERLAND"

Beijing is vetting Chinese language and culture teachers at its Confucius Institutes for "good political quality" and a love of "the motherland." Being of "good political quality" means "to accept the CPC's politics as your own politics and to express no political views of your own," explains John Fitzgerald from Swinburne University. The Beijing-based Confucius Institute Headquarters added the political loyalty condition to the application in late 2016 and it has been repeated in all subsequent recruitment notices. Successful applicants are then sent to teach in Confucius institutes and Confucius classrooms around the world. The chair of the Confucius Institute Headquarters Council in Beijing, vice-premier Sun Chunlan, previously led the United Front Work Department, which leads the CPC's foreign influence efforts. (ABC News -Australia, July 16, 2019)

AUSTRALIAN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION EXPELS INSTITUTES

Australia's New South Wales Department of Education has ended the Confucius Institute's Chinese language program in 13 public schools across Sydney due to fears of foreign influence. Following concerns about the institutes' spreading propaganda in public schools, last May the Department of Education ordered a full review of the program. "I am glad to see the department is cancelling this arrangement, it is unfortunate they can't cancel it immediately because the secret agreement they entered into has a six-month termination clause. This is an agreement that should never have been signed by the Coalition Government. They were so desperate for cash, and in this case very small amounts of money, they were literally willing to sell out the sovereignty of the State Government," said NSW Greens MP David Shoebridge (ABC News -Australia, August 22, 2019)