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TAIWAN GOVERNMENT DATABASE LEAKED ON DARK WEB

A Taiwanese governmental database containing the private information of more than 20 million Taiwanese citizens has been posted on the dark web. The 3.5 GB database, titled "Taiwan Whole Country Home Registry DB," appears to be from Ministry of the Interior's Department of Household Registration, and lists the names, addresses, genders, dates of birth, and other personal data of nearly all of the country's residents. The initial breach and leak occurred last year, according to cyber threat intelligence company Cyble Inc. (Taiwan News, May 30, 2020)

AMID PROTESTS, HONG KONG PASSES CHINA NATIONAL ANTHEM BILL

Hong Kong has passed a bill that criminalizes disrespect of China's national anthem. The national anthem bill mandates that all primary and secondary school students in Hong Kong be taught the "March of the Volunteers," as well as the song's history and proper etiquette when it is played. It carries penalties of up to three years jail as well as fines of up to HK\$50,000 (\$6450) for those who insult the tune. The anthem has been booed at football matches, where soccer fans have at times sang "Glory to Hong Kong," a rallying cry for the city's democracy movement. (Reuters, June 3, 2020)

NEW TENSIONS IN THE TAIWAN STRAIT

Taiwan's Coast Guard has intercepted a flotilla of about 20 Chinese sand dredgers 46 nautical miles southwest of Qimei island, Penghu County. Four Taiwanese craft surrounded the largest Chinese ship, a 7539-metric ton vessel, and escorted it to Kaohsiung City harbor, where it was found to be transporting 400 metric tons of sand that will be dumped back into the sea. Illegal fishing and sand dredging by ships from China has been a recurring problem in the Taiwan Strait – one that has heightened tensions between Beijing and Taipei. Taiwan's Coast Guard has increased its operational presence to 24 hours a day and enlisted its military and an airborne observation unit. (Taiwan News, June 4, 2020)

BIPARTISAN U.S. SUPPORT FOR INDIA IN ITS BORDER STANDOFF WITH CHINA

President Donald Trump has offered to mediate the border dispute between India and China. "We have informed both India and China that the United States is ready, willing and able to mediate or arbitrate their now raging border dispute," he tweeted. China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs responded that it did not need "third party" intervention on the issue. "Increasing forces of China moved up to north of India on the line of actual control there on the Indian border. These are the kind of actions that authoritarian regimes take and they have a real impact," said U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on May 29th. Eliot Engel, chairman of the U.S. House Committee on Foreign Affairs, said that he was "extremely concerned" by PLA troop movements along the Indian border. "China is demonstrating once again that it is willing to bully its neighbors rather than resolve conflicts according to international law. I strongly urge China to respect norms and use diplomacy and existing mechanisms to resolve its border questions with India," he said (CNN, June 4, 2020)

CHINA BUYS U.S. SOYBEANS AMID SOURING POLITICAL RELATIONS

China continues to purchase U.S. soybeans and announced new purchases this week, said Jim Sutter, CEO of the U.S. Soybean Export Council. "As we look ahead to our harvest and shipping window this fall, we are optimistic that China will honor the phase one trade agreement to substantially increase imports of U.S. farm products, including soybeans," he said. China's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs confirmed: "China is still buying U.S. soybeans." Since 2012, "China had been stepping up efforts to diversify its soybean import suppliers in the past few years," said Jiao Shanwei of cngain.com. In 2019, Brazil was China's largest foreign supplier of soybeans (accounting for 65% of the total), followed by the U.S. (19%), and Argentina (10%). (Global Times, June 5, 2020)