



CHINA REFORM MONITOR

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Related Categories: Democracy and Governance; Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues; International Economics and Trade; Afghanistan; China; Hong Kong; India; Latin America; Pakistan; Russia

HONG KONG ELECTIONS POSTPONED FOR A YEAR

Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam has invoked emergency powers to postpone September's elections for a year, ostensibly due to the coronavirus. While Hong Kong is currently experiencing an increase in COVID-19 infections, the opposition believes the government is using the pandemic as a pretext to stop voting. The government has already banned twelve pro-democracy candidates from running in the elections. Opposition activists had hoped to capitalize on anger at Beijing's imposition of a controversial national security law and erosion of freedoms in Hong Kong to obtain a majority in the Legislative Council. Pro-democracy candidates made unprecedented gains in last year's district council elections, winning seventeen out of eighteen council seats. (*BBC*, July 31, 2020)

RUSSIA WITHHOLDING MISSILE DELIVERIES TO CHINA WHILE EXPEDITING SALES TO INDIA

Russia has delayed delivery on the S-400 *Triumf* mobile air defense missile systems that China purchased. The hypersonic S-400 anti-aircraft system has the longest range of its kind and can engage 36 targets simultaneously. In 2014, Beijing became the first foreign buyer of the system when it purchased six S-400 units at \$300 million apiece. But Moscow has increasingly bristled at Beijing's espionage and intellectual property theft, which underpin China's drive to build up its indigenous R&D in key defense technologies – many that compete with those of Russian producers. China's embassy in Moscow helps Chinese students, scholars, and contractors glean classified information about Russia's military, aerospace and nuclear sectors. Meanwhile, Moscow has agreed to move up the delivery to next year of the five S-400 units India bought for \$5.5 billion in 2018. (*Asia Times*, July 29, 2020)

[EDITOR'S NOTE: The S-400 system is important as a way for the Beijing to ramp up military pressure on Taipei, because - given the proximity of Taiwan - it would allow the PLA to comprehensively target the island's coasts.]

INDIA BANS 47 MORE CHINESE MOBILE APPS

India has banned 47 more Chinese apps, just weeks after blocking the highly popular video-sharing platform TikTok and 58 others over national security and privacy concerns. "We have banned 47 mobile apps from China in this ongoing exercise which highlights the government's seriousness about data privacy and security. Most of these 47 apps are banned for the same reasons as the earlier 59, and many were lite versions or variants of the earlier banned applications," said an anonymous Indian official. Another 275 more could also be on the chopping block over similar security concerns, including Tencent's popular PUBG Mobile game. (*Channel News Asia*, July 27, 2020)

CHINA CALLS FIRST EVER "QUADRILATERAL" MEETING WITH PAKISTAN, NEPAL AND AFGHANISTAN

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi has hosted the first ever four-party meeting with senior officials from Pakistan, Nepal and Afghanistan. Wang said the four countries should strengthen their connections for regional peace and security, and Pakistani economy minister Makhdum Khusro Bakhtyar called for an end to the "military siege" of "Indian occupied" Jammu and Kashmir to allow health experts to access the region. Neither Nepal nor Afghanistan released an official statement on the meeting. "Look around you at the global situation," said Madhav Nalapat of India's Manipal University. "The geopolitical situation is changing in India's favour, and is getting worse for China." (*South China Morning Post*, July 28, 2020)

HUNDREDS OF CHINESE FISHING VESSELS DISCOVERED NEAR GALAPAGOS ISLANDS

The Ecuadorian navy has discovered a huge fleet of 260 mostly Chinese-flagged fishing vessels just outside the 188-mile wide exclusive economic zone around the Galapagos Islands. The ships are in international waters, and the Ecuadorian navy has been monitoring them for more than a week, Ecuador's defense minister, Oswaldo Jarrin, has said. "This fleet's size and aggressiveness against marine species is a big threat to the balance of species in the Galápagos," according to the country's former environment minister, Yolanda Kakabadse. In 2017, the Ecuadorean navy captured a Chinese vessel, the *Fu Yuan Yu Leng 999*, leaving the Galapagos Islands carrying 300 metric tons of marine wildlife. (*Guardian*, July 27, 2020)