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Related Categories: Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues; Border Security; China; Russia; South Korea; Taiwan

TENS OF THOUSANDS OF HONGKONGERS RELOCATING TO TAIWAN

Between 2019 and 2021, Hongkongers bought 158,614 sq. meters of property in Taiwan, accounting for 41.2% of foreign acquisitions on the island. During those three years, 27,844 Hongkongers received Taipei residency, more than double the 12,220 the 2016 to 2018 period. While official data for last year is not yet available, home prices in Taiwan rose by 2.15% in the third quarter from the previous quarter, and 7.43% from the same period in 2020. "We have seen a significant increase in Hong-kongers moving to Taiwan in the past three years," said Andrew Liu, managing director of Colliers Taiwan. (*South China Morning Post*, February 3, 2022)

PUTIN OFFERS XI A NEW GAS DEAL

While meeting in Beijing with Xi Jinping, Russian President Vladimir Putin promised to increase Russia's liquefied natural gas (LNG) exports to China. "Our oilmen have prepared very good new solutions on hydrocarbon supplies to the PRC. And a step forward was made in the gas industry, I mean a new contract supplying 10 billion cubic meters (bcm) per year to China from Russia's Far East," Putin said. Russian gas giant Gazprom has pledged to increase gas exports to China from 38 bcm to 48 bcm a year, with the additional 10 bcm flowing from Sakhalin Island via the newly finished Russian Far East pipeline. Last year, China imported 16.5 bcm of gas from Russia, including 10.5 bcm via the Power of Siberia pipeline, which began pumping in 2019, and the remainder via ship. Meanwhile, Rosneft and CNPC extended an existing deal for another 10 years to supply 100 million metric tons of oil to China via Kazakhstan. (France 24, February 4, 2022)

CHINA ENCROACHES ALONG NEPAL BORDER

A leaked Nepalese governmental taskforce report accuses China of encroaching into the country's territory. Investigators found that China's security forces are building a fence, a canal and a road on the Nepal side of the common border between the two countries, and are restricting the religious activities of Nepalese farmers and limiting the grazing of their flocks. While the issue is a pressing one, the study found, locals were often reluctant to discuss border issues because they depend on China's markets. The report also called for Kathmandu to deploy Nepalese forces to guarantee security in the area, and to reactivate a mothballed border dispute resolution mechanism with China. Kathmandu commissioned the taskforce report in response to claims of Chinese encroachment, which Beijing denies. (BBC, February 8, 2022)

JAPAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION CRITICIZES CHINA

Japan's Parliament has adopted a resolution on the human rights situation in China, specifically identifying the repression of Uyghurs in Xinjiang and the crackdown in Hong Kong and Tibet, and calling on its own government to take measures to address the situation. "In recent years, the international community has expressed concern over the serious human rights situation in the Xinjiang, Tibet, Southern Mongolia, Hong Kong and other areas, including violations of religious freedom and forced imprisonment," it read. Lawmakers in Germany, Australia, and Italy have expressed similar concerns over China's human rights abuses; while eight national legislatures – those of the U.S., UK, Canada, the Netherlands, Lithuania, Belgium, the Czech Republic and France – have adopted resolutions accusing China of committing genocide against the Uyghurs. (Radio Free Asia, February 1, 2022)

KOREA URGED TO EXPLORE WAYS TO REDUCE CHINA RELIANCE

As China's economic growth falters, South Korea is seeking to reduce its economic dependence by diversifying its partners. In 2021, China accounted for 25.2 percent of Korea's exports, worth \$644.4 billion. Seoul sees such a heavy reliance on China as risky, especially amid "Beijing's weaponization of trade in the form of export bans or consumer boycotts," the Korea Times reports. Other concerns include the COVID-19 pandemic, the ongoing property crisis, the CPC's tightening grip on private enterprises (especially tech start-ups), and China's falling birthrate and expanding wealth gap. The problem, according to Joo Won of the Hyundai Research Institute, is the lack of specific and effective "countermeasures" that South Korea can adopt in the short-term. (*Korea Times*, January 31, 2022)

[EDITOR'S NOTE: The World Bank has revised its 2022 outlook on China down from 5.4% to 5.1%, and the IMF has adjusted it from 5.6% to 4.8%. For every 1 percentage point fall in China's GDP growth, Korea's economy will contract by 0.5 percentage points, according to the Hyundai Research Institute.]

