

INSIGHT SOUTHEAST ASIA

Looking Eastwards From New Delhi



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

CONTENT

- UN Report on Myanmar paints a grim picture for the Rohingyas
- Vietnam's National Assembly elects a new president, chairman
- China, Cambodia conclude "Golden Dragon 2024"
- State Of Emergency lifted in New Caledonia
- New Delhi hosts the 26th ASEAN-India Senior Officials' Meeting

The violence in the Myanmar civil war continues unabated. Recent reports indicate a grim reality for the Rohingya community in the Rakhine state as the conflict between the military and the Arakan Army intensifies. Meanwhile, France's attempt at expanding the voting rights to settlers post-1998 has triggered unrest in its Pacific territory of New Caledonia. Despite the lifting of emergency measures, night curfews continue in the capital city of Noumea. In a first, China and Cambodia conducted joint naval drills as a part of the "Golden Dragon 2024" exercise off the coast of Cambodia. The 2024 edition featured 14 warships, helicopters, weaponised robotic dogs, and armoured vehicles. Vietnam's political churn culminated in the election of a new president and chairman of the National Assembly. Former Public Security Minister To Lam succeeded Vo Van Thuong as the President, thereby finding himself in a favourable position to eventually rise to the post of General Secretary in a post- Trong era. Standing Vice Chairman Tran Than Man was elected as the new Chairman of National Assembly. New Delhi hosted ASEAN senior officials and representatives from Timor Leste for the 26th ASEAN-India Senior Officials' Meeting (AISOM). Discussions at the forum included a review of ASEAN-India relations across the three pillars of engagement- political-security, economic and socio-cultural, proposals to draft a new POA (2026-2030), as well as regional and global issues.

UN Report on Myanmar paints a grim picture for the Rohingyas

Alarming reports of civilian casualty and displacement have emerged as the Myanmar crisis intensifies by the day. Thousands of residents of Buthidaung and Maungdaw townships are reported to have been forcibly displaced because of the fighting between the military and the Arakan Army. Over three million civilians have been displaced across the country since Operation 1027, with the highest concentrations in Chin, Magway and Sagaing regions in North-West Myanmar, at a staggering 1.5 million people.

An OHCHR report, released in May, highlights the alarming atrocities faced by the Rohingyas at the hands of the military as well as the Arakan Army (AA). In addition to the one million Rohingyas that are already seeking refuge in Bangladesh, another 45,000 Rohingyas are reported to have fled to the Myanmar-Bangladesh border to escape violence. OHCHR reveals allegations of intentional targeting of the Rohingya community and arson attacks, including the widespread destruction of property at Buthidaung since the AA took control of town on May 17. The Arakan Army has, however, denied the claims of deliberate attacks on Rohingya lives and properties.

Meanwhile, during his visit to a Rohingya camp in Ukhiya, Bangladesh Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal raised concern over a few Rohingya refugees'

involvement in the drug trade. Kamal also expressed hope that the repatriation of Rohingya refugees would begin “within a short time”.

Vietnam’s National Assembly elects a new president, chairman

Following the resignation of Vo Van Thuong in March, Vietnam’s National Assembly has elected To Lam as the new president of Vietnam. As the Public Security minister, Lam contributed actively to the anti-corruption crusade “blazing furnace” that has engulfed the country. Known to be a close aide of the General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong, analysts have speculated that the Presidency may give a boost to Lam’s candidacy for the post of the CPV’s General Secretary once Trong steps down. In the wake of Lam’s departure from the Ministry of Public Security, Deputy Minister of Public Security Tran Quoc To has been instructed to head the ministry temporarily. In his post-election speech, Lam pledged to continue the anti-corruption campaign “resolutely and persistently”,

Meanwhile, Standing Vice Chairman Tran Than Man was elected by the legislators as the new head of Vietnam’s National Assembly. Man, who has served as the deputy speaker of the house since 2021, was elected without opposition. Man succeeds Vuong Dinh Hue, after the latter resigned due to alleged “violations and shortcomings”.

China, Cambodia conclude “Golden Dragon 2024”

The annual “Golden Dragon” joint exercise between the Cambodian and Chinese defence forces, held regularly since 2016, concluded on May 30. The 2024 edition, under the theme of “joint counter-terrorism operations and humanitarian relief”, featured the participation of 1,315 Cambodian military personnel as well as 760 Chinese troops. The fifteen-day army drills featured 14 warships, helicopters, weaponised robotic dogs, and armoured vehicles. A notable feature of the 15-day Golden Dragon exercise was the inaugural twelve-day joint naval exercise between the People's Liberation Army Navy and the Royal Cambodian Navy. The naval drills included training in ship communication, formation movement, damage control and battlefield medical care. The Chinese Navy's amphibious dock landing ship Qilianshan (Hull 985) participated in the maritime exercise, serving as the benchmark ship during the formation movement training session. During the closing ceremony of the naval exercise at the Ream Naval Base, General Ith Sarath, deputy commander-in-chief of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (RCAF), stressed that the joint naval exercises did not pose a threat to any country and were intended to exchange experiences between the two navies in order to increase their capacities and combat terrorism at sea. As indicated by a statement from the Chinese National Defence Ministry, a medical unit

comprising of 20 Chinese medical staff members conducted free health treatment at a local health centre in the Kampong Chhnang province.

State Of Emergency lifted in New Caledonia

After two weeks of turmoil that has resulted in hundreds of injuries, seven fatalities, and nearly 500 arrests, France has announced an end to the state of emergency in its Pacific territory of New Caledonia. According to the French administration, restrictions have been relaxed to allow local authorities to remove road barricades and for FLNKS, the main pro-independence party, to organise meetings. However, night curfews continue to be imposed from 6:00 pm to 6:00 am. Around 3,500 troops have been deployed to maintain order, and nearly 480 paramilitary reinforcements from France are expected to be flown in for additional security. The French administration in New Caledonia has also maintained that the ban on alcohol sales will continue. The airport remains closed until June 2.

The unrest was triggered by France's efforts towards reform of the electoral roll in the archipelago, a move that is viewed negatively among the indigenous Kanaks. After widespread protests broke out in the territory, French President Emmanuel Macron flew down in an effort to set up a "dialogue mission".

New Delhi hosts the 26th ASEAN-India Senior Officials' Meeting

The Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN Political-Security Community as well as Senior Officials and representatives of all ASEAN Member States and Timor Leste attended the 26th ASEAN-India Senior Officials' Meeting (AISOM) held in New Delhi. The meeting was co-chaired by the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Singapore. The 26th AISOM examined ASEAN-India relations across three pillars of engagement: political-security, economic, and socio-cultural, as articulated in the ASEAN-India Plan of Action (2021-2025). The Senior Officials also discussed the implementation of the Prime Ministers' 12 Point Proposal, unveiled at the 20th ASEAN-India Summit in Jakarta in 2023, that aims to enhance the ASEAN-India Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. The Senior Officials expressed interest in drafting a new POA (2026-2030) that will assist both parties in maximizing the CSP's full potential over the following five years. The Senior Officials also discussed regional and global matters of concern. Officials at the AISOM expressed mutual interest in promoting regional peace, stability and prosperity. Both sides were encouraged to work towards the implementation of the ASEAN-India Joint Statement on Cooperation on the ASEAN Outlook on the India-Pacific for Peace, Stability and Prosperity in the Region, as well as the ASEAN-India Joint Statement on Maritime Cooperation.