

Ambassador Gautam Bambawale

Distinguished Visiting Fellow, Ananta Centre

Former Ambassador to Bhutan, China and

High Commissioner to Pakistan

NOVEMBER 2022 | VOL 04 ISSUE 09 | MONTHLY

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Overview**
- **Developments in China**
- **Developments in Japan**
- **Developments in South Korea**
- **Developments in North Korea**
- **Developments in Taiwan**

I Overview

China:

- China reveals details of Shenzhou – 15 manned space mission
- Widespread protests in Chinese cities over Zero-Covid policy
- China protests Canada's new Indo – Pacific Strategy

Japan:

- PM Kishida sets defense spending at 2% of GDP
- Jack Ma living in Japan?

South Korea:

- President Yoon warns North Korea of unprecedented response to a possible nuclear test
- Industrial production declines 1.5% in October
- Samsung Heavy Industries bags order for 1 LNG carrier
- Korea and U.S. to co-host the 2nd Summit for Democracy

North Korea:

- Kim Jong-un's daughter makes 2nd public appearance

Taiwan:

- DPP loses in local elections
- Taiwan cuts GDP growth forecast for 2023 to 2.75%

II Developments in China

China reveals details of Shenzhou – 15 manned space mission

The China Manned Space Agency (CMSA) recently revealed the names of the taikonauts chosen for the Shenzhou -15 mission to the Chinese Space Station. They are Fei Junlong, Deng Qingming and Zhang Lu. This will be the sixth flight of China's manned spaceflight program this year. The Shenzhou – 15 crew will replace the Shenzhou – 14 crew at the ongoing construction of their space station. The crew of Shenzhou – 15 are expected to stay in space orbit for a period of 6 months. They will unlock, install and test 15 scientific experiments in space application, space medicine and space technology. They are expected to conduct 3-4 extra vehicular activities. The Chinese space station being constructed is named Tiangong. The work to be carried out by the taikonauts of Shenzhou – 15 will complete its construction.

Widespread protests in Chinese cities over Zero-Covid policy

Towards the end of November 2022, at least 15-20 major Chinese cities witnessed street protests against the Chinese government's stringent Zero-Covid policy. The trouble apparently started at the Foxconn plant in Zhengzhou, central China, where workers protested measures being enforced against Covid and left their workplaces to return home as a mark of protest. Simultaneously, a serious fire incident in Urumuqi, Xinjiang appeared to fan sentiments. Soon the protests expanded to many Chinese cities, with people carrying empty slips of paper to signal their dissent with the Zero-Covid policy. Slogans against Xi Jinping were also heard by observers. This is a definite challenge for Xi Jinping soon after the 20th Party Congress which gave him a third term as Party General Secretary. He is expected to use a stick and carrot approach. While protestors will be proceeded against as per law, these clear signals of opposition to the continued dynamic Zero Covid policies may lead to a slight moderating of Xi's strong armed Covid policy.

China protests Canada's new Indo – Pacific Strategy

The spokesperson of China's Foreign Ministry came down heavily on Canada's newly released Indo – Pacific Strategy stating that the section on China was full of ideological bias and baseless accusations. He confirmed that strong demarches have been lodged with Ottawa. The Chinese Embassy in Canada had earlier stated that

the Canadian policy report hyped the China threat and threw mud at China. It is apparent that China bristles every time the Indo – Pacific is mentioned. This implies it gets under their skin. In turn, this means that the Indo – Pacific concept particularly the Quad is something which upsets Beijing.

III Developments in Japan

PM Kishida sets defense spending at 2% of GDP

In a major shift, PM Kishida has instructed his cabinet colleagues to boost defense spending to 2 per cent of GDP by 2027. Japan has till recently maintained an informal cap on defense spending amounting to 1 per cent of GDP. This move comes even as China keeps increasing the size of its defense equipment and North Korea engages in a flurry of missile launches.

Jack Ma living in Japan?

Multiple sources have apparently confirmed that Chinese businessman Jack Ma has been living in Japan over the past 6 months after the tech crackdown in China. He has been maintaining a very low profile since Chinese regulators scrapped Ant Group's IPO and issued record fines on Alibaba. From Japan, Ma has also been reported as having travelled to the United States as well as Israel. Jack Ma had more or less disappeared from public view after the Chinese government cracked down on his businesses.

IV Developments in South Korea

President Yoon warns North Korea of unprecedented response to a possible nuclear test

In a wide-ranging interview to Reuters, South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol warned Pyongyang of an unprecedented response from South Korea and its allies if the North went ahead with a nuclear test. Yoon also called on China to do more and fulfill its responsibilities as a permanent member of the UNSC. Yoon noted that North Korea's actions were leading to increased defense spending in countries around the region. North Korean leader Kim Jong-un has stated that his country aims to have the world's most powerful nuclear force.

Industrial production declines 1.5% in October

South Korea's industrial production declined 1.5% in October 2022 as compared to the same month of the previous year. Retail sales too dived by 0.2%.

Samsung Heavy Industries bags order for 1 LNG carrier

In a regulatory filing, Samsung Heavy Industries has revealed that it bagged an order for a LNG carrier from an Oceanian shipping firm. The order is worth US \$ 250 million. In 2022, Samsung Heavy Industries has bagged orders to build 36 LNG carriers worth US \$ 9.4 billion.

Korea and U.S. to co-host the 2nd Summit for Democracy

South Korea and the U.S. will co-host the 2nd Summit for Democracy on 29-30 March 2023. It will be a virtual summit which will be co-hosted by 3 other nations from Europe, Africa and Latin America.

V Developments in North Korea

Kim Jong-un's daughter makes 2nd public appearance

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un's 10-year old daughter made a 2nd public appearance recently being described as her father's "most beloved" child. Ju Ae was first unveiled to the world just a week before her 2nd appearance with Kim Jong-un along with North Korea's missile scientists and officials involved with the test launch of the Hwasong – 17 ICBM. These two appearances by Ju Ae have sparked rumors that she is the chosen successor to Jong-un.

VI Developments in Taiwan

DPP loses in local elections

President Tsai Ing-wen of Taiwan has stepped down as Chairperson of the Democratic Progressive Party after it lost heavily in local city elections across the nation. The party won only 5 mayoral and county leadership races out of 21 up for grabs. Chiang Wan-an, the great grandson of Chiang Kai-shek won the mayoral contest in Taipei. He is reported to have obtained 42.2% of the vote in a triangular contest. He is educated in the US and has attracted a lot of attention over the past months. Taiwan's next Presidential election is in 2024.

Taiwan cuts GDP growth forecast for 2023 to 2.75%

Taiwan's statistics agency has cut the nation's GDP growth forecast for 2023 to 2.75%. Earlier it had forecast growth of 3.05%. Consumer prices are forecast to increase by 1.86%.

The previous issues of East Asia Digest are available here: [LINK](#)

.....
(The views expressed are personal)
.....

[COMMENTS](#)