بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

Philippines Ministry of Foreign Affairs Reprimands Officials for Public Comments on China

The Philippine Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DFA) delivered a rare rebuke to government officials and military institutions over public statements regarding China. The reprimand was issued to maintain the unity of diplomacy as Manila prepares to host the ASEAN Summit next week.

The tensions stemmed from a war of words between Philippine security forces and the Chinese Embassy over the dispute in the South China Sea. A number of Philippine senators even urged that the Chinese ambassador be declared *persona non grata*. In response, Beijing accused Manila of obstructing their attendance at the ASEAN defense ministers' meeting and limiting the Philippines' defense minister's visit to China.

The DFA asserts that public statements that muddy diplomacy can damage international credibility, display internal divisions, and weaken the Philippines' bargaining position. While security forces play an important role in documenting incidents in the waters, civilian authorities remain in control of the country's foreign policy. The rebuke was released following diplomatic talks between Philippine Foreign Minister Theresa Lazaro and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, who emphasized the importance of diplomatic dialogue and balanced management of differences.

China Seeks Extradition of Five Uyghurs from Thailand

Chinese authorities issued arrest warrants for five ethnic Uyghurs detained in Thailand since 2014. Thailand's National Security Council secretary-general Chaipruak Doungprapat stated that Thai courts would determine whether the five men would be extradited to China if there was a formal request.

The five Uyghurs were previously imprisoned for trying to escape from immigration detention in 2020. Although two of them received amnesty last month, they do not have official refugee status and are currently still in immigration detention awaiting certainty of their fate.

This decision sparked widespread concern from human rights groups. Human Rights Watch warned of serious risks of torture and rights violations if they were repatriated. In a letter shared by the Peace Rights Foundation, the detainees expressly refused to be returned to China and asked to be transferred to a third country because they feared for their safety.

On the other hand, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning emphasized that cooperation in handling illegal immigration between China and Thailand has been in accordance with national and international laws.

Philippines Plans to Add BrahMos Missiles from India

The Philippines plans to augment India's fleet of BrahMos supersonic cruise missile systems to strengthen its foreign defenses. Philippine Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr. conveyed this in his speech at the 3rd Delhi Defense Dialogue.

In order to adjust to the geography and infrastructure of the Philippines, the military has submitted a list of special adjustments. Logistical constraints of inter-island transportation as well as less load-bearing road and bridge conditions are the main considerations for the manufacture of the special variant. However, Teodoro has not detailed the number of additional units to be purchased or the status of the new contract negotiations.

Previously, the Philippines became the first foreign country to purchase this individual system through a contract worth 18.9 billion pesos in January 2022. The purchase includes three batteries of beach-based anti-ship missiles for the Marine Corps, whose deliveries begin in stages in April 2024 and April 2025.

The BrahMos missile, which is capable of firing almost three times the speed of sound, is used to dispel threats to sovereignty in the waters, especially the West Philippine Sea. In addition to the BrahMos missile, the Philippines is also exploring other defense technology cooperation with India, such as land-based air defense systems, rocket capabilities, to space and satellite technology.

Indonesians Protest Water Crisis Due to Data Center Surge

Residents in Batam, Indonesia, held a protest related to the clean water crisis exacerbated by the surge in data center construction to support the global artificial intelligence (AI) needs. Drought due to the El Nino cycle has disrupted residents' water supply to make it difficult to meet daily necessities such as cooking and bathing.

Residents' concerns are centered in the Nongsa Digital Park area, where data center facilities operate that require large volumes of water to cool servers. Although the local water manager (Air Batam Hilir) stated that the crisis was caused by climate factors and a decrease in the volume of reservoirs, the local government has instructed developers to build seawater desalination plants so as not to burden local water sources.

This phenomenon does not only occur in Indonesia. In Malaysia, especially the Johor region, data center capacity has jumped sharply and is projected to consume one-third of the country's total energy by 2035. Similar protests from local communities even managed to stop the data center construction project in Damansara City.

The rapid growth of AI infrastructure in Southeast Asia, which is projected to triple by 2030, now requires governments and investors to better manage environmental impacts and the basic needs of local residents.