

What's happening in Southeast and East Asia

In
The
News.

2nd of November 2021

In Cambodia, autistic teenager sentenced for insulting government in Telegram posts

Kak Sovann Chhay, 16, was arrested in June and received an eight-month sentence, largely suspended, for incitement and insulting public officials

A Cambodian court has sentenced an autistic teenager to eight months in prison, with part of the term suspended, for sending Telegram messages that were deemed insulting to the government, his mother said.

The son of an opposition figure, 16-year-old Kak Sovann Chhay was arrested in late June after posting messages on a private Telegram group, and has been detained for more than four months.



Phnom Penh Municipal Court on Monday sentenced him to eight months in prison, under incitement charges and for insulting public officials.

Most of the remainder of his term – taking into account time served – has been suspended for two years. He will be released from prison this month but will remain under probation for two additional years, during which time he will be required to appear before the court whenever summoned; tell the court if he changes address; and obtain permission to leave the country, among other conditions, local rights group Licadho said.

Source: Agence France-Presse

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Singapore rapper Subhas Nair charged with sowing division over racism comments

He is accused of suggesting that ethnic Chinese citizens receive preferential treatment from Singapore's law enforcement agencies

A controversial Singaporean rapper of Indian descent who has accused authorities of racism may face jail after being charged on Monday with sowing divisions between the city state's different ethnic and religious groups.

Singapore's government has long sought to promote racial harmony among its diverse population of 5.5 million, but some still complain that the ethnic Chinese majority enjoy greater privileges.



Outspoken rapper Subhas Nair faced four counts when he appeared in court on Monday over offences that allegedly occurred between 2019 and this year. According to charge sheets, the 29-year-old made comments on social media appearing to suggest an ethnic Chinese man involved in the death of an Indian received lenient treatment from authorities because of his race.

And he was charged over a 2019 rap video that criticised a local Chinese actor who darkened his skin to portray an Indian in an advert. Police had already issued a warning over the video to Nair and his sister Preetipls – a well-known local comedian, who rapped alongside him.

Source: Agence France-Presse

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Japanese man in Joker costume injures 17 in knife attack on Tokyo train

A 24-year-old man wearing a Joker costume attacked passengers on a Tokyo train line on Sunday evening.

As many as 17 people were injured as they headed for Halloween parties in the city. Witnesses say the suspect was wearing a green shirt and purple suit.

He sprayed a clear liquid around the carriage and set it alight. Video footage showed passengers running through carriages away from the flames while others clambered through windows.

"I thought it was a Halloween stunt," one witness told the Yomiuri newspaper about the attack. "Then, I saw a man walking this way, slowly waving a long knife."

The attack happened at around 20:00 local time (11:00 GMT) near Kokuryo station, in the city's western suburbs. Media reports say the man was arrested by police on the spot.

According to news outlet Kyodo, he told police he adored the character Joker in the Batman comics. The Joker is a super villain in the comics and Batman's arch-enemy. The 2019 hit movie Joker, starring actor Joaquin Phoenix, featured a scene where he attacks several men on a train after being repeatedly harassed by them. It's a pivotal moment, marking the beginning of the character's transformation into the Joker.



Source: CNN News Asia

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Thailand drops lengthy quarantine restrictions for vaccinated travelers

Thailand has relaxed its quarantine restrictions and is reopening to vaccinated travelers arriving from several dozen countries and territories, providing a much-needed boost for the country's embattled tourism industry.

As of November 1, fully vaccinated travelers who have stayed a minimum of 21 days in one of 63 approved "low risk" countries and territories-- including the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, India and Canada -- can avoid a lengthy hotel quarantine for the first time in more than 18 months.

Instead, incoming travelers who meet the updated requirements will only need to stay one night in a government-approved hotel while they await the results of a Covid-19 test that will be administered upon arrival.



Fully vaccinated travelers arriving from countries not on the list are eligible to enter through a "sandbox" scheme that requires them to stay in a government-approved hotel or resort in one of 17 "blue" destinations, including Phuket, Bangkok, Chiang Mai and Koh Samui, for seven nights before they will be allowed to travel freely in the country.

Tourists who aren't fully vaccinated with an approved vaccine must quarantine in a pre-booked, government-approved hotel for 10 days upon arrival.

Source: CNN News Asia

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Yahoo leaves China for good, cites 'challenging' environment

Yahoo said it had stopped allowing its services to be accessible from mainland China "in recognition of the increasingly challenging business and legal environment", the second Western tech brand to quit the country in recent weeks.

The company stopped providing content for users in mainland China as of Nov 1, according to a statement published on its website, which directed users of Yahoo and AOL mail to other links. Local Chinese media reported Yahoo's move on Tuesday (Nov 2).

"In recognition of the increasingly challenging business and legal environment in China, Yahoo's suite of services will no longer be accessible from mainland China as of Nov 1," a Yahoo spokesperson told Reuters in an email on Tuesday.

"Yahoo remains committed to the rights of our users and a free and open Internet. We thank our users for their support." Yahoo's move follows that of Microsoft Corp, which pulled the plug on LinkedIn in China last month, marking the retreat of the last major US-owned social network in China.

LinkedIn cited a "more challenging operating environment and greater compliance requirements in China". Yahoo had already greatly scaled back its presence in China over the past few years. Prior to Monday, it had still operated a weather app and some pages that showed news articles in foreign languages.



Source: Reuters

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Vietnam jails citizen journalists for 'abusing democratic rights'

A Vietnamese court has jailed five citizen journalists for "abusing democratic rights", drawing sharp United States criticism of the communist government's crackdown on freedom of speech.

Vietnam's administration often moves swiftly to stifle dissent, jailing activists, journalists and any critic with large audiences on Facebook, which is widely used throughout the country.

Critics say the government has adopted a much tougher approach to dissent since Mr Nguyen Phu Trong was re-elected as the Communist Party chief after a congress earlier this year.



Five people working on an online citizen journalist news page were sentenced on Thursday (Oct 28) by a court in Can Tho, a city in southern Vietnam's Mekong Delta region. Truong Chau Huu Danh, the founder of Facebook page Bao Sach, which translates as The Clean Newspaper and has posts on hot-button social issues and corruption, was jailed for four and a half years.

Articles by Danh - a former journalist - had "reactionary thoughts, going deep into content that is not suitable for the interests of the country", state-run Vietnam News Agency said, quoting court documents. His four co-defendants received jail terms of between two and three years. All five will be banned from working in journalism for three years after completing their jail terms.

Source: AFP

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Source: AFP

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Journalist shot dead in Philippines, 21st killed since Duterte took office

Orlando Dinoy, a reporter for Newsline Philippines and anchor for Energy FM, was shot six times by a gunman who barged into his home on Mindanao island

A Philippine news reporter has died after being shot multiple times in his home, police said on Sunday, becoming the latest in a long line of journalists murdered in the country. The archipelago nation is one of the most dangerous places in the world for journalists, and most of their killers go unpunished.

Orlando Dinoy, a reporter for online outfit Newsline Philippines and anchor for Energy FM, was shot six times by a gunman who barged into his flat in Bansalan town, Mindanao island, local police chief Major Peter Glenn Ipong said. Dinoy died immediately.



Officers were still investigating possible motives, the police force added. “One of the angles we are looking at is his work as a media man ... but no one can give us a concrete lead so far,” said Ipong.

National police chief General Guillermo Eleazar ordered a thorough investigation into the case, and vowed to protect the media from attacks. In a report this month, the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists listed the Philippines at seventh place in its Global Impunity Index, with 13 murders of journalists still unsolved.

Source: AFP

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Indonesia sets 2024 deadline to move capital from Jakarta to Borneo's East Kalimantan province

Indonesia is moving ahead with the plan to relocate its capital to the island of Borneo in the first half of 2024, after the proposal languished for months amid the pandemic.

In the draft submitted in September, South-east Asia's biggest economy plans to move the capital from Jakarta to an area of 56,180 hectares in East Kalimantan province.

The Bill also states that the president, with approval from Parliament, gets to decide who will govern the capital, scrapping the requirement for an election often marred by fierce political battles.



Parliament is expected to pass the Bill into law this year, giving the 489 trillion rupiah (S\$46.31 billion) project the legal basis to proceed before the 2024 presidential election.

While the move could help secure President Joko Widodo's legacy in the last year of his final term, it has also sparked environmental concern over deforestation. Indonesia, which has contemplated the idea for decades, would be the third country in South-east Asia to relocate its capital city. Next-door neighbour Malaysia moved its administrative capital to Putrajaya in 2003 and Myanmar changed its capital to Naypyidaw in 2006.

Mr Joko, popularly known as Jokowi, said the relocation will help spread economic activities outside of the most-populous island of Java and narrow its income gap with the rest of the country.

Source: Bloomberg