

# What's happening in Southeast and East Asia

In  
The  
News.

30th of November 2021

## Leaked papers link top Chinese leaders to Uyghur crackdown

*A newly published cache of documents directly links top Chinese leaders including President Xi Jinping to the state's crackdown on Uyghur Muslims.*

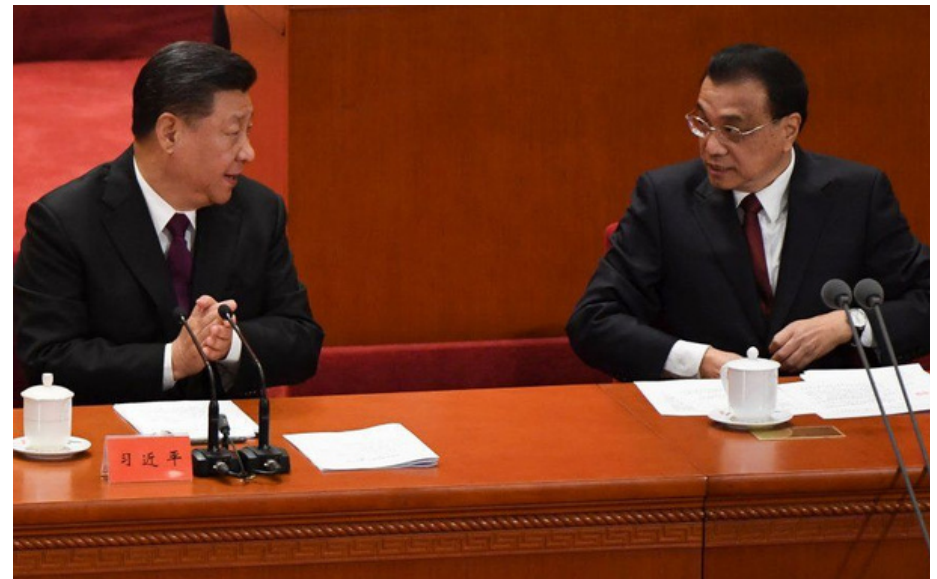
The documents include speeches which analysts say prove senior government leaders called for measures that led to mass internment and forced labour.

China has consistently denied that it is committing genocide against Uyghurs.

Some of the documents were the subject of an earlier report, but the latest leak has previously unseen information.

They were passed to the Uyghur Tribunal - an independent people's tribunal in the UK - in September, but have not previously been published in full. The tribunal asked three academics who specialise in the field - Drs Adrian Zenz, David Tobin and James Millward - to authenticate the documents.

The documents, branded the 'Xinjiang Papers', after the region which is home to most of China's Uyghurs, reveal how Chinese Communist party (CCP) leaders including Mr Xi and Premier Li Keqiang made statements which directly led to policies affecting the Uyghurs and other Muslims. These include forced internments, mass sterilisations, forced assimilation, "re-education", and coercion of detained Uyghurs to work in factories. The New York Times had reported on an identical set of documents that were leaked to them in 2019, but not all were made available to the public.



Source: BBC News Asia

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## UN urges Philippines to let Nobel laureate Maria Ressa travel to Norway

*The United Nations on Monday (Nov 29) urged the Philippines to allow Nobel Prize-winning journalist Maria Ressa to travel to Norway next month to accept the award.*

Ressa, the first Nobel laureate from the Philippines, shared the Peace Prize with Russian investigative journalist Dmitry Muratov, a move widely seen as an endorsement of free speech rights, which are under fire worldwide.

Ressa has requested government approval to travel to Norway to receive the award on Dec 10.



Mr Stephane Dujarric, spokesman for UN secretary-general Antonio Guterres, said the United Nations was "very concerned" about travel restrictions placed on Ressa by the government. The licence for Ressa's news site, Rappler, has been suspended and she has faced legal action for various reasons. Supporters say she has been targeted for her scrutiny of government policies, including a bloody war on drugs launched by President Rodrigo Duterte.

The ranking of the Philippines in the 2021 World Press Freedom Index dropped two notches to 138 out of 180 countries, and the Committee to Protect Journalists ranks the Philippines seventh in the world in its impunity index, which tracks deaths of media members whose killers go free.

Source: Reuters

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## Myanmar navy seizes boat carrying 228 Rohingya, arrests all on board

*Myanmar's navy seized a boat carrying 228 Rohingya on Monday (Nov 29) and arrested all on board, the country's state television reported after the latest attempt by members of the persecuted Muslim minority group to leave the country.*

Thirty-three children were among those detained in waters near Sittwe in northwestern Myanmar, as well as five boat workers, according to the MRTV report. Those detained were handed over to the police and the immigration authorities.

A spokesperson for Myanmar's military government did not immediately respond to calls seeking comment. A local government official confirmed the incident but declined to provide details.



Images broadcast by the station showed people huddled together on the floor of a long wooden boat, including several veiled women clutching small children, a scene reminiscent of other perilous journeys taken by the Rohingya in recent years.

At least 32 Rohingya died on a ship that drifted for weeks after it failed to reach Malaysia in 2020. Buddhist-majority Myanmar does not recognise the Rohingya as citizens and they face severe curbs on freedom of movement as well as access to healthcare and education.

Source: Reuters

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## Thailand probes Amnesty International after ultra-royalist complaint

*Thailand is investigating whether Amnesty International has broken any laws, its prime minister said on Friday (Nov 26), after ultra-royalists called for the human rights group to be expelled for its support of activists facing prosecution.*

An ultra-royalist group sent a letter to the government on Thursday saying Amnesty's campaigns to bring an end to criminal charges against protesters calling for reforms of the monarchy had undermined national security.

More than 1,600 activists are now facing security-related charges, including at least 160 people charged under Thailand's strict laws against insulting the monarchy, which carry a potential prison term of up to 15 years.



Traditionalist Thais consider the monarchy sacrosanct and view insults to King Maha Vajiralongkorn as a threat to the fabric of society. Youth-led protests which started last year have challenged the decades-old taboos against any criticism of the king.

Asked about the royalists' request at a news conference, Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-o-cha, said: "We are checking whether there are any violations to the law and this involves the police and the interior ministry." "If there are wrongdoings, then it (Amnesty's licence) will be revoked," he added.

Source: Reuters

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## In Indonesia, LGBTQ 'wayang' shadow puppets have a message of tolerance, without the sermon

*Samidjan, a master of shadow puppetry or wayang, has created transgender characters to push back against rising intolerance in the Muslim-majority country. It's a modern message, but the tradition – which dates back to the 11th century – has always aimed to both entertain and convey a moral message to its audience*

Bullied for not being “masculine enough”, Bambang Priawan is feeling wretched. Priawan, a transgender man, rues his lot in life as part of a sexual minority in Indonesia, destined for prejudice by both society and government alike.

In Priawan's moment of distress, Betari Jaluwati, a transgender goddess, descends from the heavens to comfort him. Resplendent in her glorious rainbow-tinted hair, she tells Priawan to stop despairing. The almighty, she says, is neither male nor female.

This is an excerpt from a contemporary Javanese shadow puppet play created and performed by Ki (an honorific for a dalang or puppet master) Samidjan, 68, a resident of Gunung Kidul, Yogyakarta, and his son Kus Sri Antoro, 42, who acts as his assistant.

LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer) themes remain controversial in Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim-majority country. The recent release of the Hollywood superhero movie *Eternals* had to be postponed in Indonesia due to public angst over a scene in which two men kiss. The scene was later deleted for the Indonesian audience.



Source: South China Morning Post

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## African swine fever outbreak spreading widely in Vietnam

*An African swine fever outbreak is spreading widely in Vietnam and is hurting the local farming industry, forcing the culling of three times the number of hogs destroyed last year, the government said on Thursday (Nov 25).*

"The outbreak is evolving in a complicated manner," the government said in a statement. "It is threatening to spread on a large scale."

The outbreak has this year spread to 2,275 areas, in 57 out of the country's 63 cities and provinces, the government said, adding that the authorities have so far this year culled 230,000 hogs.



African swine fever is harmless to humans but often fatal to pigs. It originated in Africa before spreading to Europe and Asia and has killed hundreds of millions of pigs.

Vietnam reported its first African swine fever cases among its hog herd in February 2019. The disease forced the culling of around 20 per cent of its hog herd and doubled domestic price of pork as of early last year.

The outbreak subsided during the rest of last year and early this year, allowing the country to rebuild its hog herd.

Source: Reuters

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## Hong Kong bans non-resident arrivals from 13 more countries due to Covid-19 variant Omicron

*Hong Kong has banned non-residents from entering the city from four African countries and plans to expand that to travellers who have been to Australia, Canada, Israel and six European countries in the past 21 days due to fears over Omicron.*

The World Health Organisation (WHO) said on Monday (Nov 29) the Omicron coronavirus variant carried a very high risk of infection surges, and countries around the world have tightened travel restrictions.

In a statement late on Monday, the Hong Kong government said non-residents from Angola, Ethiopia, Nigeria and Zambia would not be allowed to enter the global financial hub as of Nov 30.



Residents can return if they are vaccinated, but will have to quarantine for seven days in a government facility and another two weeks in a hotel at their own cost. "Non-Hong Kong residents from these four places will not be allowed to enter Hong Kong," the statement said. "The most stringent quarantine requirements will also be implemented on relevant inbound travellers from these places."

Additionally, non-residents who have been to Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Israel, and Italy in the past 21 days will not be allowed to enter the city from Dec 2.

Source: Reuters

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## Japan labour boss finds widespread resistance to female leaders

*Attempts to appoint female leaders in Japan meet with resistance from men and women who see them as running counter to traditional values, according to the new head of the country's biggest federation of labour unions.*

"The perception that roles should be divided by gender remains strong," said Ms Tomoko Yoshino, the first woman to become president of the 7-million-member Japanese Trade Union Confederation, also known as Rengo.

"Even if women are capable, they lack confidence. Men are able to pass as capable, even if they're not. I sense that disparity very strongly."

After breaking the glass ceiling at Rengo, Ms Yoshino is looking at ways to help other women rise through the ranks in the country that has one of the developed world's largest gaps in gender equality. Japan ranks 120th among 166 countries in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index 2021, and the situation for many women has worsened during the pandemic because they make up the bulk of the casual labour force that has borne the brunt of layoffs.

Ms Yoshino is mulling ways to provide practical training for women in presentation and persuasion skills to help them advance. While about 36 per cent of Rengo's membership and 34.5 per cent of its executives are female, the veteran union executive said she's determined to shift the gender balance further, with a target of having women in 40 per cent of decision-making positions by 2030.



Source: Bloomberg



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## Chinese province targets journalists, foreign students with planned new surveillance system

*Security officials in one of China's largest provinces have commissioned a surveillance system they say they want to use to track journalists and international students among other "suspicious people", documents reviewed by Reuters showed.*

A July 29 tender document published on the Henan provincial government's procurement website - reported in the media for the first time - details plans for a system that can compile individual files on such persons of interest coming to Henan using 3,000 facial recognition cameras that connect to various national and regional databases.



A 5 million yuan (S\$1.07 million) contract was awarded on Sept 17 to Chinese tech company Neusoft, which was required to finish building the system within two months of signing the contract, separate documents published on the Henan government procurement website showed. Reuters was unable to establish if the system is currently operating.

Shenyang-based Neusoft did not respond to requests for comment. China is trying to build what some security experts describe as one of the world's most sophisticated surveillance technology networks, with millions of cameras in public places and increasing use of techniques such as smartphone monitoring and facial recognition.

Source: Reuters