

What's happening in Southeast and East Asia

In
The
News.

5th of April 2021

Passenger train carrying 490 derails in Taiwan, killing at least 50 and injuring dozens

The eight-car train, traveling to Taitung, came off the rails in a tunnel just north of Hualien Friday morning, causing several carriages to hit the wall of the tunnel, the government-run Central News Agency (CNA) reported, citing the fire department.

The train driver was among the dead, the fire department told the government's executive office, and at least 69 survivors were being treated in several hospitals in the surrounding Hualien County.

Some of the dead are still awaiting identification, the government added Friday, but authorities believe that everyone trapped within the train's heavily damaged carriages have been removed. Officials said a French citizen was killed in the crash, while two Japanese citizens and a citizen of Macau were among those injured.



On Saturday, rescue teams started to remove the train wreck from the crash site, rescue team worker Chen Cheng-chang told reporters. The government has also laid out a compensation plan for every passenger, which will see NT\$5.3 million (\$185,500) provided to the families of each fatality. Those badly injured will each receive \$91,000 and other injured passengers will receive \$14,000, officials said.

Source: CNN Asia

What's happening in Southeast and East Asia

In
The
News.

5th of April 2021

Floods and landslides in Indonesia and East Timor kill more than 100

At least 113 people have died after flash floods and landslides hit Indonesia and East Timor on Sunday. Torrential rain sparked widespread destruction in the South East Asian neighbours, with water from overflowing dams submerging thousands of homes.

The affected area stretches from Flores island in eastern Indonesia to East Timor. In Indonesia alone, 86 people have died with dozens still missing. Officials warn the toll could still rise.

"The mud and the extreme weather have become a serious challenge and the debris piling up has hampered the search and rescue team," Indonesian Disaster Mitigation Agency spokesman Raditya Djati told reporters.

At least 27 people have also died in East Timor, also known as Timor Leste, news agencies quoted officials in the island nation as saying. Many of the victims are believed to be from the country's capital Dili.

Landslides and flash floods are not uncommon across the Indonesian archipelago during the rainy season. In January this year, 40 people died when flash floods hit the town of Sumedang on Java. And last September, at least 11 people were killed in landslides on Borneo, while a few months earlier dozens died in Sulawesi. The country's disaster agency has estimated that nearly half of the country's population - some 125 million people - live in parts of the country at risk of landslides.



Source: BBC News Asia

What's happening in Southeast and East Asia

In
The
News.

5th of April 2021

Japan just recorded its earliest cherry blossom bloom in 1,200 years. Scientists warn it's a symptom of the larger climate crisis

Think of Japan in the spring, and the image that comes to mind is likely the country's famous cherry blossoms, also known as "sakura" -- white and pink flowers, bursting across cities and mountains, petals covering the ground.

The flowers, which experience a "peak bloom" that only lasts a few days, have been revered in Japan for more than a thousand years. Crowds celebrate with viewing parties, flocking to the most popular locations to take photos and have picnics underneath the branches.

But this year, cherry blossom season has come and gone in the blink of an eye, in one of the earliest blooms on record -- and scientists warn it's a symptom of the larger climate crisis threatening ecosystems everywhere.



Yasuyuki Aono, a researcher at Osaka Prefecture University, has gathered records from Kyoto back to 812 AD from historical documents and diaries. In the central city of Kyoto, cherry blossoms peaked on March 26, the earliest in more than 1,200 years, Aono said.

And in the capital Tokyo, cherry blossoms reached full bloom on March 22, the second-earliest date on record. "As global temperatures warm, the last spring frosts are occurring earlier and flowering is occurring sooner," said Dr. Lewis Ziska from Columbia Universities Environmental Health Sciences.

Source: CNN News Asia

Instagram Facebook #SEEACUK

SEEAC SOUTHEAST AND EAST ASIAN CENTRE

What's happening in Southeast and East Asia

In
The
News.

5th of April 2021

Philippines turns up heat on China over boats massing in South China Sea

Aides of Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte on Monday, 5th of April, criticised China for what they called territorial incursions by hundreds of its vessels, which his legal counsel warned could damage ties and lead to “unwanted hostilities”.

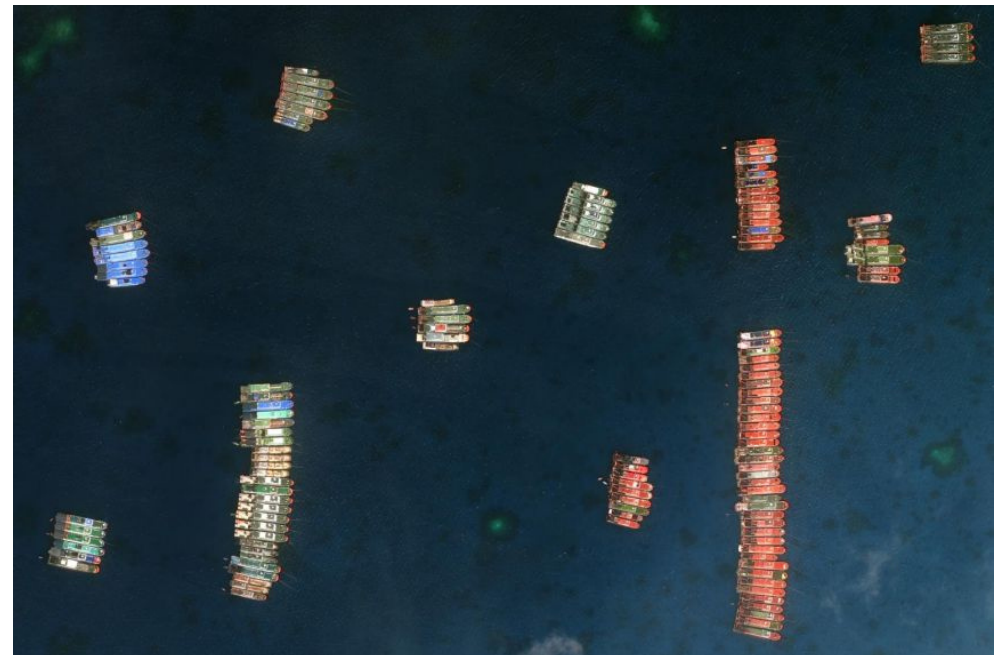
In some of the strongest words yet from Mr Duterte's camp about China's conduct in the South China Sea, his lawyer Salvador Panelo called the prolonged presence of boats an unwelcome stain on relations that risked “unwanted hostilities that both countries would rather not pursue”.

Mr Duterte's spokesman Harry Roque echoed the view and told a news conference: “We will not give up even a single inch of our national territory or our exclusive economic zone (EEZ).” China's embassy in Manila did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Though Philippine diplomats and top generals have spoken out against China lately, the comments from the presidential palace are unusually strong given Mr Duterte's reluctance to confront Beijing, which he has sought to befriend. His refusal to press China to respect a landmark 2016 arbitral ruling that clarified the Philippines sovereign rights in its EEZ has frustrated nationalists, who accuse Mr Duterte of gambling with territory in return for elusive Chinese investment.

The Philippines last month filed a diplomatic protest over a “swarming and threatening” presence of 220 Chinese vessels it believed to be manned by militias at Whitsun Reef, a stance backed by ally the United States.

Source: Reuters



What's happening in Southeast and East Asia

In
The
News.

5th of April 2021

Amid Myanmar's post-coup violence, there is one township in Yangon that 'scares the military'

North Okkalapa in Yangon is renowned for its lawlessness and illicit activities but it has also been central to Myanmar's protest movements for decades. Since the February 1 coup, the battles between security forces and protesters in North Okkalapa have been some of the fiercest

Home to more than 300,000 people, North Okkalapa is one of the largest working-class communities in Yangon. Infamous for lawlessness and illicit activities, it has also been central to Myanmar's democracy struggle for generations. In March, it was the site of some of the worst clashes between protesters and security forces since the junta deposed the democratically elected government on February 1.

“North Okkalapa is a place where you will get the three-digit lottery: drugs, sex work and people begging,” said Elliot Prasse-Freeman, a professor at the National University of Singapore who conducted field research in North Okkalapa.

The sudden displacement instilled a strong sense of identity. On the city's margins, a fierce spirit of resistance against state oppression was born. Aung Myat Thu, a 23-year-old activist and native of North Okkalapa, said the neighbourhood's working-class struggles fuel its resistance. North Okkalapa has produced activists who have led Myanmar's democracy movements. The most prominent is Min Ko Naing, the legendary student leader of the 1988 uprising.



Source: South China Morning Post

What's happening in Southeast and East Asia

In
The
News.

5th of April 2021

Myanmar death toll edges up to 550 as online crackdown tightens

Several deaths reported on Saturday as the country marks one week since the deadliest day of anti-government protests.

Security forces in central Myanmar opened fire on anti-coup protesters on Saturday in violence that a human rights group said has killed 550 civilians since the February 1 military takeover.

The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners activist group said security forces have killed 550 people, 46 of them children, since the military overthrew an elected government led by Aung San Suu Kyi. Some 2,751 people have been detained or sentenced, the group said.



At least two deaths were reported on Friday, with several more reported on Saturday, including in Monywa, the largest city in the Sagaing region. Saturday marks one week since the deadliest day of the anti-government protests.

In Mandalay, there were reports of security forces opening fire at protesters and destroying barricades. Videos posted on social media also showed security forces firing at protesters and detaining others in Loikaw township in Kayah state. Despite the repression, opponents of the coup march every day in cities and towns across the country, often holding what they call “guerrilla rallies” – small, quick shows of defiance before security forces can respond.

Source: Aljazeera

What's happening in Southeast and East Asia

In
The
News.

5th of April 2021

'Weaponised' COVID restrictions stifle Hong Kong's freedom

Residents and critics say new health regulations are encroaching on rights enshrined in the city's constitution

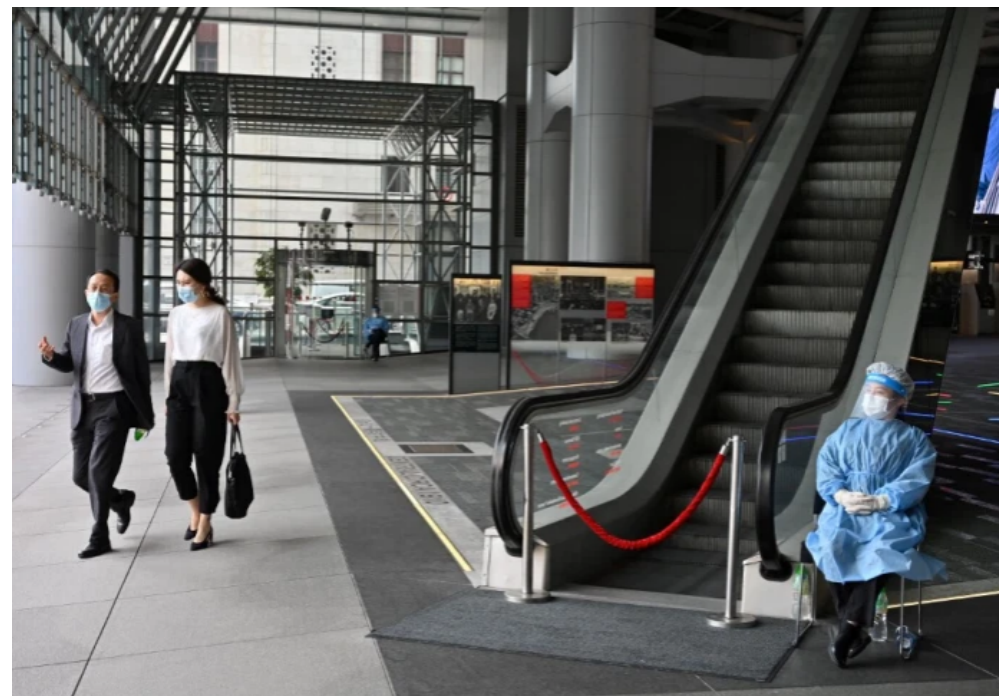
Restaurant owners are compelled by authorities to subject their customers to contact tracing. Teachers are ordered to be tested for COVID-19 regularly once school resumes in person after Easter. Any time more than four protesters stand together, they risk stiff fines by police for violating social distancing regulations.

These are the new realities of life in Hong Kong.

For the better part of the past year, the city has been reporting the most new positive cases per capita of all China's municipalities and battling local clusters like a game of whack-a-mole.

And the government here has resorted to draconian measures commonplace in mainland China to tackle the virus. "Hong Kong's leaders are under tremendous pressure from Beijing to contain COVID," said Bruce Lui, senior lecturer at Hong Kong Baptist University and veteran political commentator. "That's why they aren't above ruling with an iron fist in order to deliver and show Beijing they mean business."

The passage of the national security law by Beijing last June, which criminalises protests and most forms of political organising, has cast a pall on the freewheeling city of 7.5 million, but health regulations are also encroaching on rights enshrined in the city's own constitution.



Source: Aljazeera