

What's happening in Southeast and East Asia

In
The
News.

12th of April 2021

Cambodians condemn artist who edited photos of Khmer Rouge victims to add 'smiles'

The regime led by Pol Pot killed some 2 million Cambodians, and took pictures of thousands of its victims. Irish artist Matt Loughrey has been adding colour to the black-and-white photos, but claims that he added smiles to some of those killed has provoked a backlash

A selection of the images and an interview with Loughrey was published on the *Vice* news website over the weekend, attracting a torrent of criticism both within Cambodia and social media.

"I'm talking with the museum about making these photos accessible to everybody," the artist said in the *Vice* interview, adding that the project had seen a "superb response" so far. He said his project aimed to humanise the 14,000 Cambodians executed and tortured at the Tuol Sleng prison.



Vice removed the article and photos later on Sunday, saying they did not meet its editorial standards and it was investigating.

Earlier, *Vice* added a disclaimer to the article before it was removed. "It has been brought to our attention that the restored portraits published in this article were modified beyond colourisation. We are reviewing the article and considering further actions to correct the record," *Vice* said in an editor's note.

Source: Agence France-Presse

Instagram Facebook #SEEACUK

SEEAC SOUTHEAST AND EAST ASIAN CENTRE

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Myanmar coup: death toll passes 600 as crackdown continues and security forces detain celebrities

Meanwhile, a coalition of more than 200 civil society organisations across Southeast Asia urged governments in the region to impose economic sanctions against the junta. The group also urged governments not to deport people fleeing the post-coup violence and to instead establish a 'humanitarian corridor' to deliver aid to displaced people

Anti-coup demonstrators in Myanmar fought back with handmade guns and firebombs against a crackdown by security forces in a town in the northwest but at least 11 of the protesters were killed, local media reported on Thursday, 8th of April.

Initially, six truckloads of troops were deployed to quell protesters in the town of Taze, the Myanmar Now and Irrawaddy news outlets said. When the protesters fought back with handmade guns, knives and firebombs, five more truckloads of troops were brought in.



Fighting continued into Thursday morning and at least 11 protesters were killed and about 20 wounded, the media said. There was no word of any casualties among the military, known in Myanmar as the Tatmadaw.

That would take the toll of civilians killed by security forces to over 600 since the junta seized power from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi on February 1, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP). It had a toll of 598 dead as of 7th of April. In addition, arrest warrants have been issued for hundreds of people, with the junta this week going after scores of influencers, entertainers, artists and musicians.

Source: Reuters

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How death threats, hate speech trapped Rohingya man in Malaysia home for a year

Zafar Ahmad Abdul Ghani became a target of hate speech and death threats after misinformation spread online that he had demanded Malaysian citizenship. The attacks have taken a heavy toll on the activist's family and his children no longer attend school due to safety concerns

Zafar Ahmad Abdul Ghani, a Rohingya Muslim refugee and activist who fled persecution and ethnic strife in Myanmar, has called Malaysia home for nearly three decades. Now, it's more like a prison.

Zafar, 51, has not left his home on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur for nearly a year, after misinformation spread online that he had demanded Malaysian citizenship, triggering a wave of hate speech and death threats against him and his family. "I'm still scared. For a year, I've not set foot outside. I've not seen the earth outside," said the father of three.



Zafar has reported the false accusations and online attacks to the police, but to his knowledge, no charges have been filed. He has denied making any demand for citizenship or the same rights as citizens for Rohingya in Malaysia. More than 100,000 Rohingya live in Muslim-majority Malaysia, long seen as friendly to the persecuted minority even though they are not officially recognised as refugees.

Hate speech calling for violence against Rohingya and other undocumented migrants spread widely online. A significant portion of the volume targeted Zafar, who heads a prominent Rohingya refugee rights organisation.

Source: Reuters

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Filipinos stock up on oxygen tanks as hospitals creak under pressure of surging cases

Nearly 80 per cent of ICU capacity in Metro Manila is filled and 70 per cent of isolation beds are occupied. The strain on the health system has even hit the ex-president, while many have already died inside tents outside hospitals, waiting to be admitted to the ERs

As hospitals in the Philippine capital reach capacity from a new surge of coronavirus cases, increasingly desperate Filipinos are stocking up on oxygen tanks and touting unapproved medications amid fears the health care system may collapse.

Daily infections rose to a record last week in the Southeast Asian nation, where one in nearly five Covid-19 tests comes back positive and vaccination rates lag its neighbours. The Philippines is at risk of a “humanitarian crisis that will overwhelm the country and wipe out families” unless the government steps up testing, tracing and treatment efforts, opposition Senator Francis Pangilinan said in an April 3 statement.

The country is behind neighbours in vaccinations, according to World Bank data, having administered 0.2 doses per 100 people as of mid-March, compared to Indonesia's 2.4 doses and Malaysia's 1.1 doses. The strain on hospitals has even hit one of the country's ex-presidents.

Former president Joseph Estrada spent the night in an accident and emergency room after being rushed to a Manila hospital with Covid-19 complications on March 28, since the regular beds were occupied. Estrada was later admitted to the intensive care unit and is now on ventilator as his pneumonia has worsened, his son said in a Facebook post on Tuesday. Others do not make it into the hospital at all.



Source: Bloomberg

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Ethnic Koreans in Japan who identify as people of Joseon featured in new photo book

'Chosen-seki' are descendants of Koreans who chose to stay in Japan after the Joseon dynasty fell in 1910. They continued living in Japan as stateless aliens, enduring the consequences of negative stereotyping and even death threats

South Korean documentary photographer Kim Ji-youn was puzzled when she learned about a group in Japan called "Chosen-seki" ("Korean domicile"), the descendants of Koreans who migrated to Japan before its surrender in 1945.

Unlike the Japan-born Zainichi-Koreans who are legal residents in Japan, Chosen-seki identify themselves as people from Joseon, the dynasty that existed in the Korean peninsula from 1392 until 1910 when Korea was annexed by Japan. They continued living in Japan as stateless aliens, enduring the consequences of negative stereotyping.



Chosen-seki children are often bullied due to their parents' vulnerable legal status. For adults, discrimination is part of life and some even fall victim to death threats or hate crimes, as they may be accused of being linked with North Korea.

The hostility of the Japanese right-wing towards descendants of Korean migrants reaches its peak whenever North Korea attempts to display a show of might by test-firing missiles over the East Sea or by conducting nuclear tests. Some Chosen-seki schoolgirls have even experienced their uniforms being slashed with knives wielded by Japanese right-wing extremists. These stateless Koreans in Japan are part of projects focusing on the Korean diaspora that Kim has worked on for the past two decades.

Source: Korea Times

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Taiwan reports largest action yet by Chinese air force

Twenty-five Chinese air force aircraft including fighters and nuclear-capable bombers entered Taiwan's air defence identification zone (ADIZ) on Monday, 12th of April, the island's government said, the largest reported action to date.

While there was no immediate comment from Beijing, the news comes after the US State Department on Friday issued new guidelines that will enable US officials to meet more freely with Taiwanese officials, further deepening ties with Taipei.

Chinese-claimed Taiwan has complained over the last few months of repeated missions by China's air force near the self-ruled island, concentrated in the southwestern part of its air defence zone near the Taiwan-controlled Pratas Islands.

It was the largest daily action since the ministry began regularly reporting Chinese Air Force activities in Taiwan's ADIZ last year. The ministry added that combat aircraft were dispatched to intercept and warn away the Chinese aircraft, while missile systems were also deployed to monitor them.

The Chinese aircraft all flew in an area close to the Pratas Islands, according to a map the ministry provided. China has in the past described such missions as being to protect the country's sovereignty and deal with "collusion" between Taipei and Washington. China describes Taiwan as its most sensitive territorial issue and a red line the United States should not cross. It has never renounced the possible use of force to ensure eventual unification.



Source: Reuters

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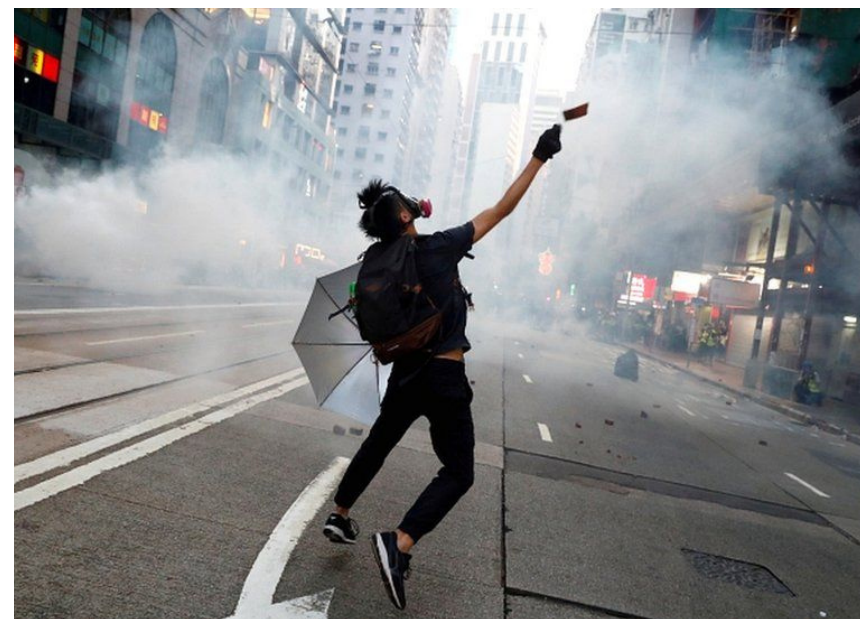
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Hong Kong citizens to be given 'support' to come to UK

Hundreds of thousands of Hong Kong citizens expected to move to the UK under a new visa scheme will be helped to access housing, schools and jobs, the communities secretary has said.

Around 27,000 applications have been made for visas brought in after Beijing imposed a national security law in the former British colony. The visas give Hong Kong citizens the right to live in the UK for five years.

Robert Jenrick told the BBC ministers wanted to provide "necessary" help. "If they struggle, then we're here to support them," he said. "That means local councils being there to provide them with housing, with the benefit system standing behind them, with all the support the state can offer to make sure that no-one gets into difficult times," he added.



Meanwhile, one of Hong Kong's leading pro-democracy activists, Nathan Law, has been granted asylum by the UK. Mr Law said the Home Office had accepted he was "exposed to severe political persecution" if he returned to Hong Kong. Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said the UK has a "proud history of providing protection to those who need it".

The UK introduced the British National (Overseas), or BNO, visa after China passed a **wide-ranging new security law** for Hong Kong which makes it easier to punish protesters and reduces the city's autonomy. The UK says the law is an erosion of freedoms and rights. Government sources said school places for the new arrivals, many of whom will have young families, were "a pressure to be acknowledged".

If the number of applications for the visas continues to rise at the same rate, they will far outstrip the Home Office's prediction of 154,000 arrivals in the first year of the scheme. Mr Jenrick said he expected the new arrivals to make a "real and important contribution" to the UK - and that many had qualifications in teaching, medicine or engineering

Source: BBC News Asia