

What's happening in Southeast and East Asia

In
The
News.

22nd February 2021

Alarm as Myanmar ships reach Malaysia to pick up detainees

US and UN call on Malaysia to halt the deportation of 1,200 Myanmar nationals saying it could put their lives at risk.

The United Nations refugee agency said on Saturday at least six people registered with it were among 1,200 Myanmar nationals to be deported by Malaysia next week, while the United States voiced alarm that the plan could put deportees' lives at risk.

The comments came as Myanmar naval ships arrived in Malaysian waters to pick up the detainees.



But concerns over the deportation of unregistered asylum seekers persist as the UNHCR has not been allowed to interview detainees for more than a year to verify their status. Malaysia does not formally recognise refugees and arrests them along with other undocumented migrants.

Confirming the planned deportation of six people of concern registered with it, the UNHCR said it has asked authorities not to send back those in need of international protection.

Source: Aljazeera

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Cambodia adopts China-style internet gateway to control, monitor online traffic

The new decree seeks to facilitate and manage internet connections to help revenue collection, protect national security and maintain social order. Rights activists say the law has implications for free speech, privacy, data protection and public information

Cambodia's government has issued a decree establishing a China-style internet gateway that will allow online traffic to be controlled and monitored, prompting local concern that democratic freedoms could be under threat.

The 11-page decree announced on Wednesday, 17th of February, seeks to facilitate and manage internet connections to help revenue collection, protect national security and maintain social order, culture and tradition.



The gateway's operator will support authorities with “measures to prevent and disconnect all network connections that affect national income, security, social order, morality, culture, traditions and customs”.

It comes as Prime Minister Hun Sen's government faces international criticism over a crackdown that has decimated civil society and the political opposition, resulting in a power monopoly for his party, and criminal charges and jail terms for many of its rivals.

Source: Reuters

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Laos leaders fear 'domino effect' of Thailand's pro-democracy movement amid election

The polls come as Laotian leaders are increasingly wary about the spillover effects of the protests in neighbouring Thailand and Myanmar on its young people

Laos will hold its general election on Sunday to select members of the national assembly and provincial parliaments, and while no surprises are expected in the one-party communist state, analysts said authorities in the Southeast Asian country are increasingly concerned about the spillover effects of the protests in neighbouring Thailand on its own younger citizens.



According to Laos' National Election Committee, among the 224 candidates listed for the general election, 164 will be selected as national assembly members by 4.3 million voters across the country.

According to the Vientiane Times, more than 7,200 polling stations are being set up across Laos and voting cards and ballot boxes have been produced and prepared for the election which is held once in five years.

Source: South China Morning Post

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Philippines evacuates thousands in south as Storm Dujuan approaches

More than 5,000 people have fled to temporary shelters in southern Philippines as tropical storm Dujuan brought heavy rains, submerging dozens of villages, the country's disaster monitoring agency said on Sunday, 21st of February, 2021.

Two regions were hit, including the country's nickel mining hub of Caraga, with floods damaging some houses and bridges in the province of Surigao del Sur, according to the agency's initial report.

The bad weather also prompted the cancellation of at least 36 domestic flights. Philippine authorities evacuated tens of thousands of people in the south of the country earlier as the storm approached.



Dujuan, locally known as Auring, is forecast to make landfall on the Dinagat Islands–Eastern Samar–Leyte area, about 600km to 700km south of Manila, between Sunday evening and Monday morning.

About 51,400 people were moved to 331 evacuation centres in the provinces of Surigao del Norte, Surigao del Sur, Agusan del Norte, Dinagat Islands and Butuan City, the disaster risk reduction and management agency said.

Source: Reuters and Bloomberg

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Severe floods kill 5 in Jakarta; some 1,700 people remain in shelters

Five people were killed in severe floods that submerged entire neighbourhoods in Indonesia's capital Jakarta, authorities said Sunday, 21st of February as residents returned to clean their homes and salvage belongings.

The city was struck by torrential rain over the weekend, which flooded dozens of major roads and forced hundreds of people to rush to emergency shelters.

A 67-year-old man was found dead after he became trapped in his water-logged house in the badly hit southern part of the capital on Saturday, Jakarta disaster mitigation agency head Sabdo Kurnianto told AFP.

He added that three boys died after being swept away by the floods, and one girl drowned.

Indonesia's meteorological agency warned that Greater Jakarta - a region of around 30 million people that is regularly hit by floods in the rainy season - can expect more heavy downpours next week.



Source: AFP

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UN condemns Myanmar junta after three killed in anti-coup unrest

A lethal attack on anti-coup protesters in Myanmar sparked fresh UN condemnation of the country's new military regime on Sunday, 21st of February as mourners held a funeral for a young woman who has become a national symbol of resistance to the junta.

The authorities have gradually ratcheted up their tactics against a massive and largely peaceful civil disobedience campaign demanding the return of ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

Saturday marked the deadliest day so far in more than two weeks of nationwide street demonstrations after two people were killed when security forces fired upon a rally in Mandalay, while a third man was shot dead in Yangon.



As dusk fell on Sunday in Yangon, Monywa and Myitkyina, protesters held candlelight vigils and prayer ceremonies to pay tribute to the dead. United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Antonio Guterres condemned the use of "deadly violence" against the crowd in Mandalay.

Late on Sunday, Myanmar's foreign ministry accused the UN and foreign countries of "flagrant interference" in its internal affairs.

Source: AFP and Reuters

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Hong Kong student arrested over independence calls at Chinese University protest

Teen is accused of inciting secession at a protest during a graduation ceremony last November. At least nine people have so far been arrested over the demonstration on the Sha Tin campus

A Chinese University student was arrested under the national security law on Thursday and accused of calling for Hong Kong independence during a graduation ceremony protest that drew strong criticism from Beijing.

At least nine people have so far been arrested on suspicion of threatening national security in relation to the on-campus demonstration last November.



The 19-year-old student, who studies philosophy at the university, was stopped and searched on the street by Police Tactical Unit officers, according to a source.

Source: South China Morning Post