

What's happening in Southeast and East Asia

In
The
News.

18th January 2021

More than 50 Hong Kong activists arrested under national security law

Hong Kong police arrested dozens of democracy activists on suspicion of violating a new security law by planning to "paralyse" and "overthrow" the city government, Secretary for Security John Lee said.



Police said they arrested 53 people, searched 72 locations and froze HK\$1.6 million (\$265,218) relating to the operation, adding that they will continue to make arrests. The arrests represent the biggest crackdown on the opposition camp since Beijing imposed the security law last year.

Mr Lee told reporters the group planned to cause "serious damage" to society and that authorities would not tolerate any subversive acts.

Britain rebuked China for the mass arrest which it said was a grievous attack on the rights of the former Crown colony.

"The mass arrest of politicians and activists in Hong Kong is a grievous attack on Hong Kong's rights and freedoms as protected under the Joint Declaration," UK Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said. The arrests will further raise alarm that Hong Kong has taken a swift authoritarian turn.

Source: ABC News.net.au

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Indonesia grapples with earthquake, flooding, landslides and fallout from Sriwijaya Air crash

As Indonesia continues to count the number of dead from last week's earthquake on Sulawesi island, search and rescue teams are being stretched to breaking point, as they grapple with a series of disasters unfolding across the country.



Flooding in South Kalimantan has killed more than a dozen people and displaced tens of thousands. Rescue workers are still looking for several missing and feared buried under the mud 10 days after landslides tore through a village in West Java. And divers continue to search for victims and crucial data in the wreckage of Sriwijaya Air flight 182, which crashed in the Java Sea on January 9, with 62 people on board.

Meanwhile, two volcanoes on the most populous island, Java, are spewing ash into the air, with hundreds of people evacuated from the slopes of Mount Merapi in recent weeks.

The string of grim events comes just a few weeks into 2021 and at a time when Indonesia is reporting record daily increases of Covid-19 cases while it embarks on a mass vaccination program.

Source: CNN News.com

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Japan expands emergency to seven more prefectures as COVID cases rocket

The government has urged the public to refrain from non-essential and non-urgent outings even during daytime.

Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga decided last 13th of January to expand a state of emergency over the Covid-19 pandemic to some other parts of the country as Japan suffered a resurgence of virus infections.

Suga issued a state of emergency in an additional seven prefectures, including Kyoto, Osaka and Fukuoka, which brings the number of prefectures under the measure to 11.

“The status of infection has continued to be very serious,” Health Minister Norihisa Tamura said at a meeting of experts.



Japan's coronavirus cases topped 300,000 on Wednesday, 13th of January, while the death toll reached 4,187, public broadcaster NHK said.

Source: South China Morning Post

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Thai protesters scuffle with police, fearing more royal insult charges

Scores of Thai protesters briefly scuffled with police on Friday, 15th of January, saying they feared another student activist would be charged with insulting Thailand's King.

Since last year Thailand's pro-democracy groups are holding a gathering and protests for the abolition of the "lese majeste law" a law that penalises insulting and criticising the nation's top royals after the authorities invoked the Act against protest leaders who are demanding monarchy reform.

More than a dozen protest leaders are facing lese majeste charges, which entail prison terms of as many as 15 years, as the authorities seek to curb the growing taboo-breaking movement that calls for the monarchy power to be reined in.



Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha last year said that the King had asked the government not to charge anyone with lese majeste, but as protests escalated, he said "all laws" would be used.

Source: The Straits Times

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Philippine journalist Maria Ressa, a leading critic of Rodrigo Duterte, faces third charge of cyber libel

Ressa was last year convicted on another charge of cyber libel – she is on bail pending an appeal against that verdict, which could see her jailed for six years. She and her news site Rappler face at least a dozen criminal charges stemming from stories critical of Duterte's policies, including his drug war

Embattled Philippine journalist Maria Ressa faces a third cyber libel charge, her lawyer said, this time for a story over students allegedly paying a professor for passing grades.

Ressa and her news site Rappler face at least a dozen criminal charges and investigations after publishing stories critical of President Rodrigo Duterte's policies, including his bloody drug war.

"It's my 10th arrest warrant in less than two years. That's definitely a pattern of harassment," Ressa, who Time magazine named Person of the Year in 2018,



Source: France 24.com