

# What's happening in Southeast and East Asia

In  
The  
News.

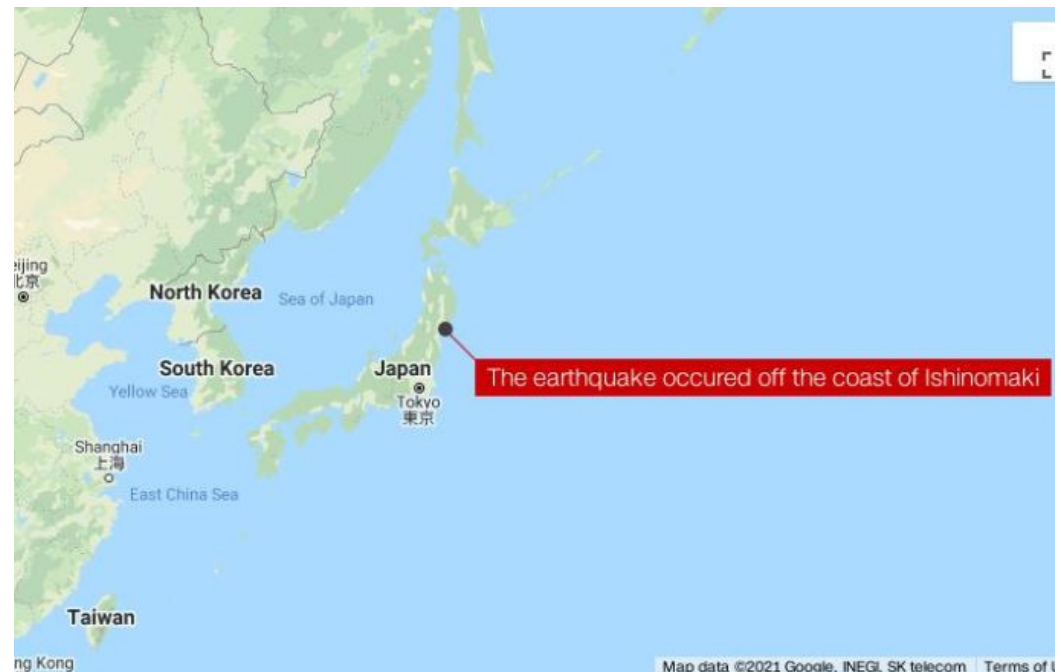
22nd of March 2021

## Earthquake of 7.0 magnitude hits Japan near devastating 2011 disaster epicenter

*A 7.0 preliminary magnitude earthquake has struck Japan off the coast of Ishinomaki, a city located just 65 miles (104 km) from Fukushima, the site of a devastating 9.0 magnitude quake 10 years ago.*

Latest information from USGS shows the earthquake has a depth of 54 kilometers (34 miles). CNN teams in Tokyo felt the tremor.

A tsunami warning was issued earlier Saturday but has now been downgraded to a "tsunami forecast" of slight changes in sea level, a Japanese government website showed. The US Tsunami Warning System says there is no warning, advisory, watch or threat of tsunami associated with the Japan quake.



Firefighters in the Miyagi jurisdiction, where Ishinomaki is located, have reported no damage from the quake and nuclear reactors in eastern and northeastern Japan are secure, according to the Japan Times, an English-language Japanese daily newspaper.

Japan experienced a deadly quake a decade ago that caused the country's worst nuclear disaster on record. More than 20,000 people died or went missing and a tsunami with 30-foot waves damaged several nuclear reactors in the area. More than 100,000 people were evacuated and authorities have spent the past 10 years cleaning up the area -- a massive effort that experts say will take decades to complete.

Source: CNN Asia

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## How Asian-Americans are banding together to confront hate crimes

*Reports of attacks, primarily against Asian-American elders, have spiked in recent months. Activists claim this has been fuelled by anxieties about Covid-19, described as the 'Chinese virus' by former president Donald Trump*

Reports of attacks, primarily against Asian-American elders, have spiked in recent months – fuelled, activists believe, by talk of the “Chinese virus” by former president Donald Trump and others.

In an address to the nation on Thursday, President Joe Biden forcefully condemned what he called “vicious hate crimes against Asian-Americans who have been attacked, harassed, blamed and scapegoated”.

People of Filipino, Thai, Japanese, Laotian, Korean and Chinese descent have been targeted.

Documented incidents range from looting Asian-owned businesses, to vandalising homes and cars with slurs, to violent and sometimes fatal attacks in the street.

While racial motivation can be hard to establish, a study by the Centre for the Study of Hate and Extremism at CSU San Bernardino found that reported anti-Asian hate crimes nearly tripled from 49 to 122 cases last year across 16 major US cities including New York and Los Angeles – even as overall hate crime fell 7 per cent. The report looked at events categorised as criminal in nature and showing evidence of ethnic or racial bias, using preliminary local police data.

Source: Agence France-Presse



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## Indonesian women face harassment and bullying for not wearing Islamic headscarves, Human Rights Watch says

*The rights group found that more than 60 discriminatory local laws that enforce dress codes for women had been implemented in the country since 2001. Some women and girls who choose not to wear hijabs have been kicked out of school or have lost jobs, HRW said, with some ending up feeling 'mentally isolated'*

HRW said more than 60 discriminatory local, regional and provincial by-laws that enforce dress codes for women and girls had been implemented since 2001, three years after the Southeast Asian nation transitioned to democracy. The dress codes, it said, are a sign of rising intolerance and religious conservatism in the country, which officially recognises six religions even though 85 per cent of its 270 million population is Muslim.

Indonesia's National Commission on Violence Against Women in 2016 also identified 421 local regulations that it said discriminated against women and religious minorities, the HRW report said.



The national government in 2014 introduced regulations on school uniforms, but the wording of the law seemed to suggest that female Muslim students should wear a Muslim headscarf – the *hijab*, or *jilbab* as it is known in Indonesia – as part of their school uniforms.

Source: South China Morning Post

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## Myanmar coup: UN agencies slam security forces' occupation of schools

*Unicef and Unesco says the occupation of education facilities across Myanmar by security forces is a serious violation of children's rights. As crackdowns continue, the resistance movement has pushed ahead even as more than 230 people have been killed*

Protesters returned to the streets across Myanmar on Saturday, defying a junta-led campaign of fear as regional powers Indonesia and Malaysia condemned the violence deployed by security forces against anti-coup demonstrators.

The country has been in turmoil since the military ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi from power in a February 1 coup, triggering a nationwide uprising as protesters call for a return to democracy.

So far, more than 230 people have been killed in anti-coup unrest, according to a local monitoring group, as security forces have deployed tear gas, rubber bullets and live rounds against anti-coup protesters.

But the movement has pushed ahead – albeit in smaller numbers. Local media showed protesters in gas masks gathering in northern Shan state, while in the southern coastal city of Dawei, motorists hoisted posters of Suu Kyi and signs that said “end the dictatorship”. The protesters in Shan state wielded home-made shields that said “protect unarmed civilians”. Security forces fired shots and killed at least one person in the workers’ district of Hlaing Tharyar in Yangon late on Friday night, a local resident reported on Saturday.

Source: Reuters



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## Philippine troops free four Indonesian hostages, kill Abu Sayyaf leader 'Apo Mike'

*Majan Sahidjuan, alias Apo Mike, was among five militants whose boat capsized last week with the kidnap victims aboard, according to the military. Three of the four hostages were rescued from the sea. The fourth, a 15-year-old, was found at the site of the gun battle where Sahidjuan was fatally hurt*

Majan Sahidjuan, alias Apo Mike, was severely wounded in a gun battle with the marines on Saturday night in Languyan town in southern Tawi-Tawi province, and later died, said Lieutenant General Corleto Vinluan Jr.

He described Sahidjuan as the mastermind in several kidnappings by Abu Sayyaf, which is based in Sulu and has also been involved in bomb attacks and piracy for decades. Since 2014, it has proclaimed allegiance to Islamic State.

Sahidjuan was among five Abu Sayyaf militants who went to Tawi-Tawi by boat from Sulu, with their four Indonesian kidnap victims last Thursday.

Their boat capsized after it was battered by big waves, giving government troops the chance to rescue three of the four hostages – Arizal Kasta Miran, 30; Arsad Bin Dahlan, 41; and Andi Riswanto, 26. The fourth, 15-year-old Mohd Khairuldin, was found by government troops in the same village where the gun battle took place.

The four hostages were among five Indonesians kidnapped by the Abu Sayyaf on January 17 last year off Tambisan in Malaysia. One of the five was killed while trying to escape.

Source: Reuters



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## Thailand braces itself as refugees from Myanmar coup flee to border regions

*Hundreds of people have fled Myanmar's towns and cities since last month's military coup and are sheltering in areas controlled by ethnic militias on the Thai border, an official from one of the groups said on Thursday (March 18), as Thailand prepared for a surge of refugees.*

An official from the Karen National Union (KNU), which has been fighting the Myanmar army for decades, said almost 1,000 and people were sheltering inside KNU-controlled territory.

Myanmar's security forces have killed at least 217 people in their crackdown against opposition to the coup, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, a civil rights group in Myanmar.

"Hundreds of people are now in our area," Mr Padoh Saw Taw Nee, the KNU's head of foreign affairs, said in an interview.

"Some are strike leaders, some are involved in CDM (civil disobedience), government staff... deserters of police and military and then also some MPs (members of parliament) and doctors." He said a smaller number had also sought shelter further north, on the border with Shan state, in a region controlled by another ethnic militia.

The Thai authorities are bracing themselves for a surge of refugees and have set aside areas to shelter more than 43,000 people in Mae Sot district, according to plans. Thai Army Colonel Prasan Henprasert said border patrols had been increased.



Source: Reuters

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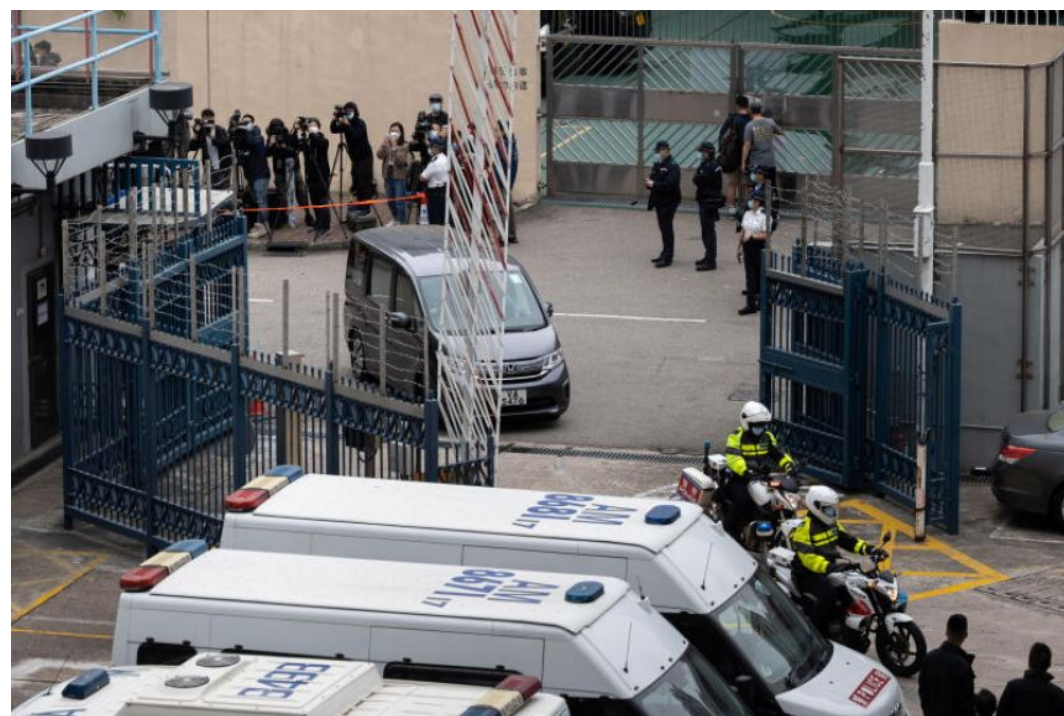
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## China returns eight Hong Kong 'speedboat fugitives'

*Eight Hong Kongers who were part of a group of democracy activists that failed to flee the city by speedboat last year were handed back to the authorities on Monday (March 22) after serving jail sentences in mainland China.*

Dubbed by supporters as "The Hong Kong 12", the group was picked up by the Chinese coast guard last August as they tried to make a break for nearby Taiwan. Those on board were being prosecuted for actions linked to 2019's huge and often violent democracy protests. The charges they faced ranged from rioting and attempted arson to possession of offensive weapons and making explosives.

The group disappeared into the mainland's judicial system after their capture and were eventually convicted for crossing China's border illegally.



On Monday, eight of them were handed over to Hong Kong police having completed their sentences. "They have been deported in batches on the day in accordance with the law," police in Yantian, the mainland district where the group were jailed, said in a statement. Hong Kong police confirmed their return in a separate statement. Images published by local media showed some of those being returned had black hoods placed over their heads as they were marched by officers into a Hong Kong police station close to the border with the mainland.

Among those returned into Hong Kong custody on Monday was Andy Li. Before he fled, he was arrested under a sweeping national security law Beijing imposed on Hong Kong last year.

Source: Reuters