

# What's happening in Southeast and East Asia

In  
The  
News.

28th December 2020

## Vietnamese truck deaths: two found guilty of manslaughter in UK

A truck driver from Northern Ireland and a Romanian national were found guilty after two others had already pleaded guilty. The deaths of the 39 people shocked Britain and Vietnam and shone a spotlight on the illicit global trade in migrants



Two men were found guilty in Britain on Monday of the manslaughter of 39 men, women and children from Vietnam after they were found suffocated to death in the back of a refrigerated truck near London last year.

The discovery of so many dead people – some as young as 15 – shocked Britain and Vietnam, and shone a spotlight on the illicit global trade that sends the poor of Asia, Africa and the Middle East on perilous journeys to the West.

As oxygen levels fell in the back of the truck, some tried desperately to escape, but in vain. Others used mobile phones to say their last farewells to devastated relatives on the other side of the world.

Source: South China Morning Post

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## Anti-Myanmar hate speech flares in Thailand over coronavirus

"Wherever you see Myanmar people, shoot them down," read one Thai comment on YouTube after a surge of coronavirus cases among workers from Myanmar. The outbreak, first detected at a seafood market near Bangkok, has prompted a flare-up in such online hate speech as well as questions over the treatment of millions of migrant workers in traditionally tolerant Thailand.



"Myanmar people are being labelled for transmitting Covid-19, but the virus doesn't discriminate," said Mr Sompong Srakaew of the Labour Protection Network, a Thai group helping migrant workers.

Shifting sentiment has real consequences, he said, with workers from Myanmar, previously known as Burma, being blocked from buses, motorcycle taxis and offices.

One of the many incendiary comments on social media called for infected migrant workers to remain untreated and punishment for people that brought them into Thailand. The rhetoric reflects a global pattern since the start of the pandemic of foreigners being blamed for spreading the virus.

Source: The Straits Times

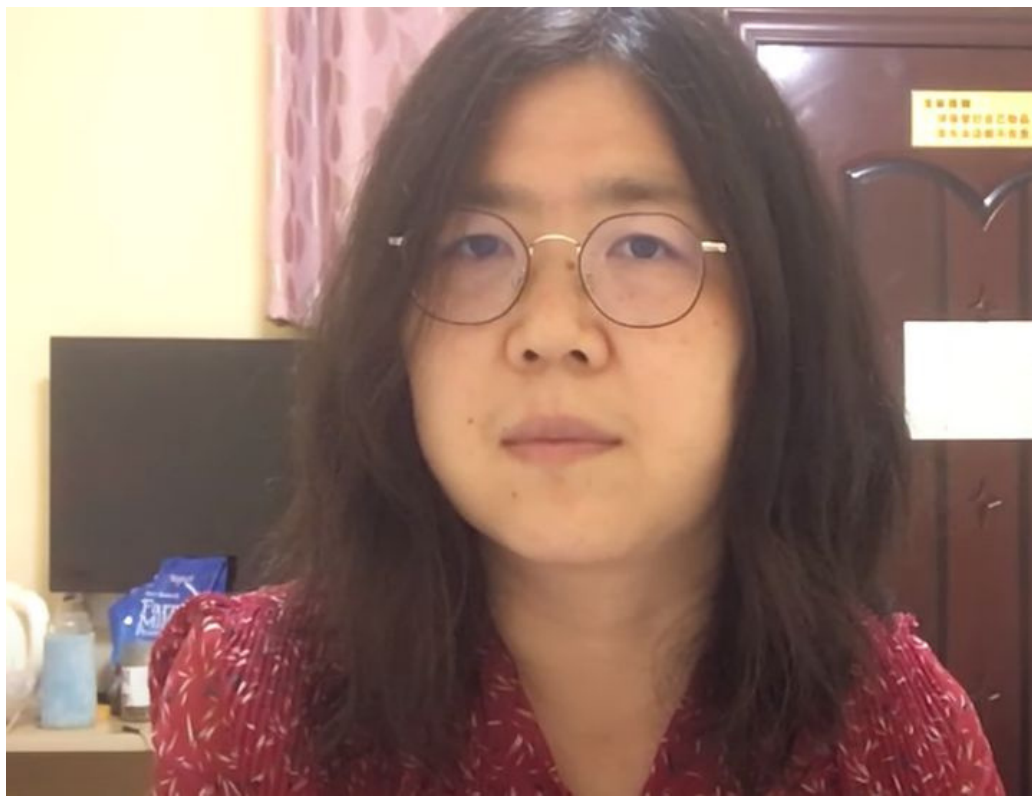
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## Zhang Zhan: China jails citizen journalist for Wuhan reports

A Chinese citizen journalist who covered Wuhan's coronavirus outbreak has been jailed for four years.



Zhang Zhan was found guilty of "picking quarrels and provoking trouble", a frequent charge against activists.

The 37-year-old former lawyer was detained in May, and has been on hunger strike for several months. Her lawyers say she is in poor health. Ms Zhang is one of several citizen journalists who have run into trouble for reporting on Wuhan.

There is no free media in China and authorities are known to clamp down on activists or whistleblowers seen as undermining the government's response to the outbreak.

Ren Quanniu, one of Zhang Zhan's lawyers, expressed serious concern for her physical and mental wellbeing, saying she was very weak and on hunger strike. Mr Ren said his client "looked devastated" when her sentence was announced and her mother sobbed loudly.

Source: BBC News Asia

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## Duterte's war on drugs: global human rights coalition to aid International Criminal Court in Philippines inquiry

Investigate PH, comprised of foreign-based church groups, lawyers and political leaders, will gather evidence of the president's misdeeds for the ICC. Group will also probe "red-tagging" of student activists, human rights advocates, lawyers, teachers and religious leaders

Foreign-based church groups, lawyers and political leaders have formed the human rights coalition Investigate PH to gather evidence on suspected crimes against humanity related to Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte's "war on drugs" and to lobby the United Nations and other international bodies to hold him accountable.

The group intends to submit its findings to the International Criminal Court so Duterte and other Philippine officials involved in alleged extrajudicial killings can be prosecuted.



The ICC's chief prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, last week said there was a "reasonable basis to believe" that Duterte was responsible for crimes against humanity. The ICC said it would decide by the first half of next year whether to open an investigation, which could potentially lead to charges and a trial of Duterte and other Philippine officials in The Hague, Netherlands.

Source: South China Morning Post

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## Coronavirus latest: Japan, South Korea, Philippines and Singapore restrict travel from UK

Hong Kong, India and Pakistan have also restricted travel from the UK due to the new strain of coronavirus discovered there. Meanwhile, Sydney on Wednesday eased lockdown restrictions for Christmas after Australia's largest city reported a reduction in new cases.

Asian governments have moved to tighten border restrictions for travel from the UK due to the discovery of a highly infectious coronavirus mutation there.

Japan will ban the entry of non-Japanese people from the UK beginning on Thursday, Chief Cabinet Secretary Katsunobu Kato told a news conference on Wednesday.

South Korea will temporarily suspend flights from the United Kingdom until the end of December over fears of a new strain of the coronavirus.



Source: Reuters.com