

What's happening in Southeast and East Asia

In
The
News.

December 14, 2020

Lone children among hundreds in Malaysia immigration detention

Concern about the effect on vulnerable refugee children with discussion on alternatives to detention stalled. As of October 26, Malaysia's home minister reported around 756 children are in immigration detention across the country and 405 of them are on their own.



The Malaysian government has been working with civil society for years on alternatives to immigration detention for children – focusing on those who are alone or have been separated from their families – but progress has been slow. Meanwhile, hundreds of children languish in detention, which experts say can be detrimental to their physical and psychological wellbeing.

Nearly 180,000 refugees are registered with the agency in Malaysia, the vast majority from Myanmar, while thousands more await registration.

But Malaysia, which is not a signatory to the UN Refugee Convention, does not have a legal framework for refugees, leaving them vulnerable to detention as undocumented migrants. Nearly 1,000 unaccompanied and separated refugee and asylum-seeking children were registered with UNHCR as of 2018.

Source: Al Jazeera.com

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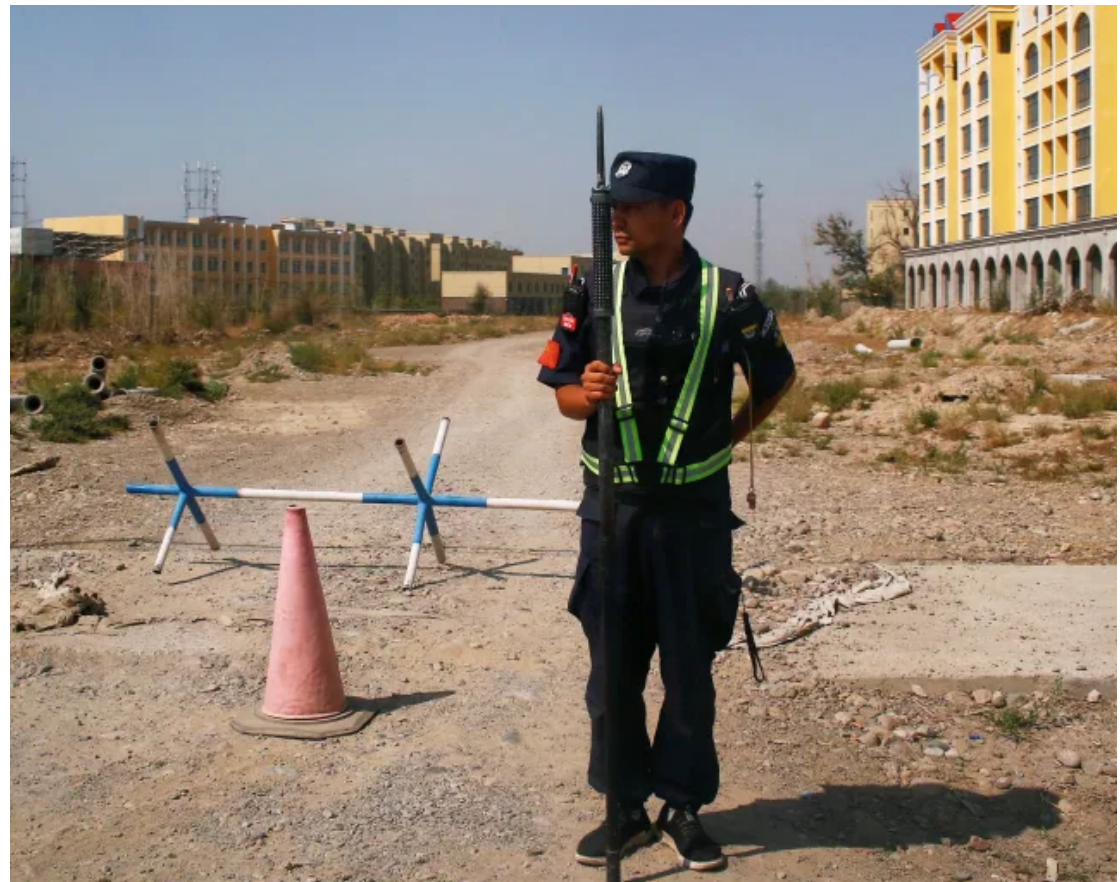
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Rights group says Chinese policing programme selects people for arrest for 'everyday, lawful' behaviour.

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A big-data program in China's Xinjiang "arbitrarily selects" Muslims for detention, flagging behaviour such as wearing a veil, studying the Quran or going on the Hajj pilgrimage as reasons for arrest, according to Human Rights Watch (HRW).

In a new report on Wednesday, the rights group said it analysed a leaked list of more than 2,000 detainees in Xinjiang's Aksu prefecture and found that the programme – known as the Integrated Joint Operations Platform (IJOP) – also flagged people for their relationships, their communications, their travel histories, or for being related to someone the authorities consider suspicious.



Source: Al Jazeera.com

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South Korea passes law to ban anti-North leaflets amid activists' outcry

South Korea's Parliament passed a Bill on Monday (Dec 14) to ban the launching of propaganda leaflets into North Korea, a move that was condemned by rights activists as a violation of freedom of speech.

Groups run by North Korean defectors and other campaigners have for decades sent anti-Pyongyang leaflets - alongside food, medicine, \$1 bills, mini radios and USB sticks containing South Korean news and dramas - into the North, usually by balloon or in bottles on border rivers. North Korea has long denounced the practice.

The amendment to the Development of Inter-Korean Relations Act bars any scattering of printed materials, goods, money and other items of value across the heavily fortified frontier.

It also restricts loudspeaker propaganda broadcasts, which the South's military once championed as part of psychological warfare against the North until it withdrew the equipment following a 2018 inter-Korean summit. Any violation of the law, which will take effect in three months, is punishable by up to three years in prison or 30 million won (\$27,500) in fines.



Source: Reuters.com

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Covid-19: Virus 'success' Taiwan to keep restrictions despite vaccine

Authorities in Taiwan have warned that even as vaccinations begin, the world should remain extremely vigilant against the virus. Health Minister Chen Shih-chung said scientific data on the vaccines' lasting effect was still insufficient.



Taiwan has been one of the most successful places in the world in dealing with Covid-19. So far, it has had only 724 confirmed cases and seven deaths and has never had to go into lockdown. The health minister does not question the vaccines' safety or whether they provide immunity but rather stresses that it was not clear to which extent and how long they would protect people.

Taiwan's impressive success battling the coronavirus has been largely attributed to early and strict border controls, a ban on foreign visitors and mandatory quarantine for all Taiwanese returning home.

The island's 23 million people have also proactively been wearing face masks, even before they were required to do so.

Source: BBC Asia