

# What's happening in Southeast and East Asia

In  
The  
News.

## Fears of forced removals as Bangladesh moves hundreds of Rohingya refugees to remote island

Hundreds of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh are being relocated to a controversial island facility in the Bay of Bengal today amid fears that some could be coerced to move there and held indefinitely. A ship carrying 1642 refugees is traveling to Bhasan Char, an island about 40 kilometers (24 miles) off the coast near the city of Chittagong, according to Shahriar Alam, Bangladesh Minister of State for Foreign Affairs.

But human rights groups and the refugees themselves have long expressed concerns over the safety of the uninhabited, low-lying island, as it often becomes partially submerged during monsoon season and is vulnerable to cyclones.

Human Rights Watch has described conditions on the island as "poor" with Rohingya likely facing a lack of adequate medical care. The group has also expressed concerns that refugees there could be denied freedom of movement, sustainable livelihoods or education. It is also unclear what role -- if any -- humanitarian agencies will be allowed to have there.



Source: CNN Asia

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## In Vietnam, Facebook and Google fast becoming 'human rights-free zones', says Amnesty International

Vietnam has long jailed its critics but the number has now reached the highest in years, with around 70 currently serving time for online activism. The ruling Communist Party has intensified a crackdown on dissidents and online activists ahead of a key party meeting next year.

Facebook and Google are fast becoming "human rights-free zones" in Vietnam, Amnesty International warned on Tuesday, December 1, 2020, accusing the tech titans of helping censor peaceful dissent and political expression in the country.

Communist Vietnam has long jailed its critics but the number has now reached the highest since Amnesty began publishing figures in 1996. Hanoi has come under fire in recent years for targeting users on Facebook, a popular forum for activists in the country where all independent media is banned.



Source: South China Morning Post

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## With arrests and a security law, who is left to fight for democracy in Hong Kong?

Three high-profile democracy activists were jailed Wednesday, December 2, 2020, others have already fled the city, while still more face prosecution. Their cases involve a host of charges, both serious and petty, with one of those jailed this week, Agnes Chow, convicted in large part for shouting slogans through a megaphone.

The city's parliament no longer has any pro-democratic members, while the media and judiciary are coming under increasing pressure. Protests, once a symbol of Hong Kong, have been stifled by a new national security law and sporadically-applied coronavirus restrictions.

Invisible red lines are spreading out through a host of fields, with journalists facing arrest for accessing public records, or legislators accused of colluding with foreign powers for attending certain meetings.



All the while, as members of the opposition are picked off one-by-one, the likelihood of them being replaced by new blood is shrinking, as the spaces for cultivating new talent shrink and the cost of getting involved in politics rises ever higher.

Source: CNN Asia

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## Singapore approves sale of lab-grown meat in world first

Singapore has given U.S. start-up Eat Just the greenlight to sell its lab-grown chicken meat, in what the firm says is the world's first regulatory approval for so-called clean meat that does not come from slaughtered animals.



The meat, to be sold as nuggets, will be priced at premium chicken prices when it first launches in a restaurant in Singapore “in the very near term”, co-founder and CEO Josh Tetrick said.

Demand for alternatives to regular meat is surging due to concerns about health, animal welfare and the environment. Plant-based substitutes, popularised by the likes of Beyond Meat, Impossible Foods and Quorn, increasingly feature on supermarket shelves and restaurant menus. But so-called clean or cultured meat, which is grown from animal muscle cells in a lab, is still at a nascent stage given high production costs.

Source: Reuters.Com

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## South Korea urges vigilance as Covid-19 clusters emerge in third wave

South Korean authorities urged vigilance on Saturday (Dec 5) as small coronavirus clusters emerged in a third wave, centred in the Seoul area, with infections near nine-month highs. The Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency (KDCA) reported 583 new coronavirus infections, down from the previous day's 629, which was the highest since a first wave peaked in February and early March



After implementing tighter restrictions on Saturday, the government is to decide on Sunday whether to further tighten curbs in a country that had seen initial success through aggressive contact tracing and other steps.

Infections of the virus that causes Covid-19 averaged 487.9 this week, up 80 cases from the week before. This wave of infections is different from the first two, which were driven by large-scale transmission, said KDCA official Lim Sook-young.

Seoul accounted for 235 of the new infections. More than half of South Korea's 52 million people live in the capital and surrounding areas.

Source: The Straits Times