

What's happening in Southeast and East Asia

In
The
News.

11th January 2021

Thailand arrests 19 Rohingya, Thai woman for illegal entry

Nineteen Rohingya and a Thai woman accused of housing them have been arrested for illegal entry to Thailand, last 9th of January, as concerns grow about trafficking routes for the Muslim minority fleeing Myanmar.

The embattled Rohingya have long faced persecution in Myanmar, where they are denied freedom of movement and citizenship and lack access to work, healthcare, and schools.

A 2017 military crackdown in western Rakhine state sent almost 750,000 fleeing across the border to Bangladesh, while many choose to embark on treacherous journeys with human smugglers to reach Malaysia and Indonesia, sometimes going through Thailand.



Thai police said the latest trafficking operation was discovered this week when 19 Rohingya were found in a house in Bangkok's Don Mueang district. The group was smuggled into Thailand overland from Rakhine state and was bound for Malaysia, said an immigration officer who declined to be named.

Out of the 19 Rohingya, seven tested positive for coronavirus and are being treated, said the officer, while the rest are being kept in quarantine as a precaution.

Source: The Straits Times

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Indonesian jetliner with 62 passengers crashes after taking off from Jakarta

A Sriwijaya Air jetliner carrying 62 people on board crashed shortly after taking off from Jakarta, according to the head of Indonesia's National Transportation Safety Committee, Suryanto Cahyono. Sriwijaya Air Flight 182 from Jakarta to Pontianak, in Indonesian Borneo, lost contact at 2:40 p.m. Western Indonesian Time (2:40 a.m. ET) on Saturday, January 9.



The plane is believed to have crashed between the islands of Laki and Lancang, in the Thousand Islands chain northwest of the capital, Jakarta. Basarnas is now conducting a search operation.

Indonesian news agency Antara reported Sunday that the Jakarta Metropolitan Police have set up a command post at a hospital in East Jakarta for families to identify bodies from the crash if any are recovered.

So far, a pregnant mother, a family of five and a father on a business trip was among the identified as victims of the said Air crash.

Source: CNN.com/Asia

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Snow storms bring deadly chaos to Japan

Japan has been hit by severe snowstorms, killing at least eight people and bringing parts of the country to a standstill. The snowfall in the Hokuriku region is more than double the average expected for this time of year.

The mind-boggling snowfall is linked to a pair of record-breaking weather systems that induced a prolonged period of westerly to northwesterly winds, the ideal wind fetch needed to yield the factory-like production and dumping of heavy snow.

Mountainous areas of Japan are bracing for yet another dump of heavy snow over the next five days.



Japanese news agency NHK reported that Okura Village in Yamagata Prefecture, a mountain community a little more than 200 miles north of Tokyo, had received 85 inches of snow by late Friday. The seven feet of snow matched what came down the week of Dec. 18 just to the south in the community of Fujiwara.

Some locales hit hard included Uonuma City, 50 miles south of Niigata, as well as Yokote City in northern Japan.

Source: BBC Asia

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Twitter deletes China embassy's Xinjiang 'emancipation' tweet

Twitter has deleted a post from China's US embassy which claimed Uighur women had had their minds "emancipated" by their policies in Xinjiang.



The post linked to an article by state-run media which claimed women were no longer "baby-making machines" due to action on alleged religious extremism.

Beijing is alleged to have forced many Uighur women to be sterilised or fitted with contraceptive devices, apparently to control population growth.

China has denied the allegations. The Uighurs are a mostly Muslim minority group that lives mainly in Xinjiang province in northwestern China.

The original tweet had linked to an article by China Daily, a state-run newspaper, which alleged the eradication of extremism in Xinjiang "had given Uighur women more autonomy when deciding whether to have children". Last year, a report by China scholar Adrian Zenz alleged Uighur and other ethnic minority women were being threatened with internment in camps for refusing to abort pregnancies that exceeded birth quotas.

Source: [BBC.com/ Asia](https://www.bbc.com/news/asia-55484444)

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Taiwan rolls out new passport, hoping to banish confusion with China

Taiwan rolled out a newly redesigned passport on 11th of January that gives greater prominence to the island's day-to-day name, aiming to avoid confusion with China amid the Covid-19 pandemic and Beijing's stepped-up efforts to assert sovereignty.



Existing Taiwanese passports have "Republic of China", its formal name, written in large English font at the top, with "Taiwan" printed at the bottom, creating confusion internationally according to the government.

During the early days of the pandemic, Taiwan said some of its citizens were confused with Chinese nationals and on occasion unfairly subjected to the same Covid-19-related entry bans when the disease was well under control in Taiwan though not in China.

The new passport enlarges the word "Taiwan" in English and removes "Republic of China", though that name remains in Chinese and in small English font around the national emblem.

Source: The Straits Times