

# What's happening in Southeast and East Asia

In  
The  
News.

2nd of August 2021

## Myanmar: State of emergency extended with coup leader as PM

*The general who took power in a coup in Myanmar in February has named himself prime minister and said emergency rule may now extend to August 2023.*

In an hour-long speech, Min Aung Hlaing pledged to hold a "free and fair multi-party election" but also called the elected party he removed "terrorists".

Hundreds have died in continuing protests against the military coup. Many protesters were in the health care system, which has collapsed amid a massive surge in Covid-19 infections.

Myanmar has so far reported 300,000 cases and 9,300 deaths, although the limited testing available suggests those numbers are vast underestimates.



In the general's televised speech he accused those opposing the coup of deliberately spreading Covid-19. He spoke of "fake news and misinformation via social networks" about his government's Covid policies, calling it a "tool of bioterrorism".

The general said Covid would be contained through more vaccines, extended public holidays and what he called the harmonious co-operation of the people. But BBC correspondent says dozens of medical personnel have been arrested and many more are in hiding since the coup, while people seeking treatment say the military is turning them away from hospitals, and restricting access to oxygen, leaving many to die in their homes. After the military seized power in February, a one-year emergency rule was announced.

Source: BBC News Asia

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## Hong Kong police arrest man for booing Chinese national anthem while watching Olympics

*Hong Kong police have arrested a man after he allegedly booed the Chinese national anthem while watching an Olympics award ceremony inside a shopping mall, authorities said on Friday.*

The 40-year-old man was accused of "insulting" the anthem when watching a live stream of an award ceremony on Monday, which showed Hong Kong fencer Edgar Cheung winning the first gold medal for the city in 25 years.

When the Hong Kong flag was raised and the "March of the Volunteers" was played through a live stream, the man -- who identified himself as a journalist -- was accused of "insulting" the anthem, police said.



He was arrested on suspicion of breaking the National Anthem Ordinance, which came into effect in June last year. The charge carries a maximum penalty of three years' imprisonment.

During a press briefing on Friday, a police officer said the arrest was made after the man allegedly booed the national anthem and chanted slogans to insult the country. Police said the man also displayed a British Hong Kong colonial flag, adding his goal was to incite hatred and politicize the Olympic Games.

Police also said they found the man carried about 10 British Hong Kong flags of varying sizes, adding they would continue to investigate if anyone present at the shopping mall violated the national security law.

Source: CNN News Asia

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## Protesters in downtown Kuala Lumpur demand PM Muhyiddin's resignation

*Several hundred protesters marched peacefully in Kuala Lumpur's city centre on Saturday (July 31) to demand the resignation of Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin.*

Roads around Merdeka Square, where National Day parades were often held, were sealed off as protesters dressed in black took to the streets. The demonstration was organised by a coalition of youth and civil society groups, called the Sekretariat Solidariti Rakyat (People's Solidarity Secretariat).

Some brought mock corpses wrapped in white cloth to symbolise the high number of daily Covid-19 deaths in Malaysia, in a criticism of the government's handling of the pandemic.



The coalition is also calling for a full parliamentary sitting and automatic bank loan moratoriums to ease hardship fuelled by the ongoing Covid-19 lockdown.

Malaysia's daily Covid-19 cases hit a new record high on Saturday, the last day of the month, at 17,786. This was more than doubled the 6,988 cases notched on July 1.

Traffic police and plainclothes police were seen standing by at the scene, The Star reported. Some marshals donning white safety hats and medics wearing red safety hats were also present. City police chief Azmi Abu Kassim warned that those who violated Covid-19 health protocols would face police action.

Source: The Straits Times



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## Foreign journalists harassed covering China floods, correspondents' club says

*Journalists from several media outlets covering recent floods in China were harassed online and by local residents, with staff from the BBC and Los Angeles Times receiving death threats, according to the Foreign Correspondents' Club of China (FCCC).*

In a statement on Tuesday (July 27), the FCCC criticised what it said was growing hostility to foreign media, some of which it said was fanned by official bodies.

"There must be immediate action by the Chinese government to stop these attacks which continue to endanger foreign journalists," the BBC said in a statement on Twitter.

China's foreign ministry did not immediately respond to requests for comment on the FCCC and BBC statements.

A spokesman for the Los Angeles Times did not immediately respond to a request for comment sent after office hours. In one incident, the local branch of the ruling Communist Party's Youth League had asked its social media followers to report the whereabouts of a BBC reporter covering the floods, according to the FCCC statement.

"Rhetoric from organisations affiliated with China's ruling Communist Party directly endangers the physical safety of foreign journalists in China and hinders free reporting," it said.

Chinese nationals working for foreign media have also been threatened and accused of treason online, the FCCC said. China's foreign ministry has publicly criticised what it calls "fake news" from Western news outlets including the BBC.



Source: Reuters

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## 'Powerless and angry': Japan's anti-Olympic activists fight on

*Kai Koyama was standing outside Tokyo's Olympic Stadium as fireworks burst overhead during the opening ceremony but unlike many of those around him he wasn't cheering, but protesting.*

For months, polls showed strong opposition to the Games in Japan, which only grew as virus cases surged and the country's vaccine programme got off to a sluggish start.

But since the opening ceremony, sentiment seems to have softened.

More than half of the city's residents watched the opening extravaganza on TV and long lines have formed by the Olympic Stadium as people wait to have their photo taken with the Olympic rings.



Japanese athletes have won a record number of gold medals and shops selling Games merchandise have reported a surge in sales. None of that sways Mr Koyama and other long-time opponents of the Games, who continue to stage demonstrations, even if they tend to draw just a few dozen people.

"Lives are more important than medals!" chanted demonstrators outside Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga's office in Tokyo on one recent evening. Mr Koyama was among them, urging Mr Suga to cancel the Olympics and focus on Japan's latest surge in coronavirus cases, which has put Tokyo and other regions in a state of emergency.

Tokyo 2020 is being held under strict anti-virus rules, with spectators banned from most competition venues. But Mr Koyama argues that holding the event sends the wrong message and encourages people to flout restrictions and risk infection.

Source: AFP



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## Metro Manila going into hard lockdown again to head off Covid-19 Delta surge

*The Philippines' sprawling capital will go through another round of hard, sweeping lockdowns to head off a deadly surge of the highly contagious Delta variant of the coronavirus.*

Metro Manila will be under “enhanced community quarantine” (ECQ), which imposes the strictest lockdown measures, for two weeks from Aug 6, President Rodrigo Duterte’s spokesman Harry Roque announced on Friday (July 30).

Metro Manila, which spans 16 cities, is home to some 13 million people, or about one-tenth of the country’s population. “This is a painful decision... but we need to do this to avoid a shortage of (intensive care) beds and other hospital requirements if cases balloon because of the Delta variant,” said Mr Roque.



Health Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire said the decision was in line with data modellers' forecasts that warn of a Delta-fuelled explosion of Covid-19 cases. Experts from the independent group Octa Research this week warned of a “catastrophic surge” that could lead to “thousands dying”, unless the government acted now.

Only those considered as essential workers and or who need groceries and vital supplies will be allowed to go out. Police checkpoints may likely be put up again across the region. Restaurants and food outlets will be limited to take-out, while salons, barber shops and nail spas can fill up only one-third of their seats. Churches will be shut. Malls will remain open, but only pharmacies and shops that provide groceries and home repair needs will be open.

Source: The Straits Times