

What's happening in Southeast and East Asia

In
The
News.

12th of July 2021

Tokyo Olympics: Spectators largely barred as Covid emergency declared

The Olympic Games in Japan will be held without spectators at venues in and around the capital after a spike in coronavirus infections.

Olympics Minister Tamayo Marukawa made the announcement after talks with officials and organisers on Thursday, 8th of July. A state of emergency in Tokyo will run throughout the Games, to combat coronavirus.

Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga told reporters it would run from 12 July and remain in place until 22 August. Bars and restaurants will not be allowed to serve alcohol and must close by 20:00 (11:00 GMT). Venues in Tokyo and other areas near the capital city will not be allowed to hold events with fans during the Games.



But stadiums in the regions of Fukushima, Miyagi and Shizuoka will be permitted to have spectators up to 50% of capacity and up to 10,000 people. Coronavirus infections are rising in Tokyo as the 23 July opening ceremony edges closer. There has been widespread opposition to the Games in Japan, with calls for them to be postponed or cancelled.

After meeting government officials, Tokyo 2020 President Seiko Hashimoto said: "It is regrettable that we are delivering the Games in a very limited format, facing the spread of coronavirus infections. "I am sorry to those who purchased tickets and everyone in local areas." Tokyo governor Yuriko Koike said that holding Olympic events without spectators was "heart-breaking" for those who wanted to attend. It was not immediately clear if refunds will be made available to some or all ticketholders. Mr Suga announced the state of emergency in Tokyo earlier in the day.

Source: BBC News Asia

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Under Philippine law, 12-year-olds can consent to sex. Activists are trying to change that

Child sexual abuse is rampant in the Philippines, which activists say is partly driven by the country's law regarding the age at which girls can legally consent to sex.

Antonette Acupinpin was 7 when the sexual abuse started. She had already endured years of beating and physical violence from her mother and stepfather, she said -- but then he took it a step further.

He would put a long knife near her face during the abuse, and threaten to kill her mother and brother if she reported him, she said. Terrified and ashamed, she didn't tell anyone for a year and a half -- until a school teacher saw her with a black eye and notified the police.



She's not alone. Child sexual abuse is rampant in the Philippines, which activists say is partly driven by the country's law regarding the age at which girls can legally consent to sex. At just 12 years old, it's the youngest age of consent in Asia -- and one of the youngest in the world. Opponents of the law say children that age are incapable of giving consent, and less likely to know how to call for help. The law protects predators, critics say, because they can claim victims consented -- and children as young as 12 can often be coerced or threatened into silence.

Victims' advocates also argue the low age of consent contributes to what international rights organizations have described as high levels of sex trafficking and teenage pregnancy in the Philippines, compounded by gaps in the enforcement of existing laws. Brosas and a number of lawmakers are now fighting to raise the age of consent to 16, which is standard in many other countries, including the majority of the United States. The movement took a significant step forward last December when their proposed bill was overwhelmingly approved by the Philippines House of Representatives.

Source: CNN News Asia

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Some Hong Kongers are glorifying a man who knifed a cop, showing the city's problems are far from over

They came with white flowers to honor a man accused of attempted murder. His victim was a seemingly random police officer -- and for some in Hong Kong, that not only justified the violence, it was cause for commemoration.

Over the past week, a steady trail of visitors have turned the July 1 crime scene into a memorial. Families have brought their young children to mourn the knifeman, who fatally turned his weapon on himself shortly after the attack. The student union of prestigious Hong Kong University passed a motion to say they "appreciated his sacrifice." And the man's employer, beverage company Vitasoy, saw its stock dip 14.6%, its biggest plunge since going public in 1994, after it offered condolences to the attacker's family in a leaked internal memo. Online, some have hailed him a hero.



Authorities have responded to the memorials with fury. Carrie Lam, the city's leader who was elected by only a few hundred people, urged the public to avoid inciting more "immoral acts." Police guarded the stabbing site for several days, removing flowers from the makeshift memorial, and characterized the attack as "terrorism," feeding a narrative from authorities that civil society is now under threat from random acts of political violence. The July 1 attack exposed that while protests and political opposition have been blunted, the anger that rocked Hong Kong in 2019 lingers in the anti-government camp -- prompting fears of more violence.

The attack was particularly shocking for two reasons -- both the choice of victim, and the choice of day. For the first 20 years after Britain returned Hong Kong to mainland China, July 1 was a day of mass peaceful pro-democracy marches. This year, those demonstrations were banned, ostensibly under coronavirus restrictions, and a huge police presence was deployed. The victim was one of dozens of police officers stationed near a cordoned-off street corner, which had been the starting point for previous mass pro-democracy marches, when his attacker pulled an object from his bag and plunged it into him. The police officer was rushed to hospital in critical condition.

Source: CNN News Asia

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Young members of ethnic minority groups most at risk in Vietnam-China human trafficking trade: report

The study by the Blue Dragon Children's Foundation found that groups such as the H'mong and Thai were vulnerable to being caught up in the illicit trade. More than 60 per cent of victims and prosecuted traffickers were from these communities, and most of the latter had no prior criminal record

Most people prosecuted for trafficking women from Vietnam to China between 2012 and 2020 were young members of ethnic minority groups with no prior criminal record, a new report has found, underlining how vulnerable people from those communities are to being caught up in the illicit trade.

The study by the Blue Dragon Children's Foundation, a Hanoi-based non-profit that rescues and defends victims of human trafficking, was shared exclusively with This Week in Asia ahead of its Thursday release.



Of the 199 victims and 236 prosecuted traffickers covered by the report, more than 60 per cent are from minority groups including the H'mong, Thai, and Kho Mu. H'mong people accounted for almost a third of total victims and 33 per cent of total traffickers, despite making up around 1.4 per cent of Vietnam's population. Kinh people – the majority ethnic group in the country, at 85 per cent of the population – accounted for 38 per cent of total victims and 33 per cent of total traffickers.

More than 60 per cent of the traffickers were between the ages of 19 and 35, while 10 of them were under 18. The youngest, a 13-year-old who trafficked her classmate, did not receive a sentence as she was a year under Vietnam's age of criminal responsibility. Most prosecuted traffickers were low-level recruiters rather than middlemen or high-level criminals. They came from underprivileged backgrounds, and almost all of them were illiterate or did not finish high school – similar to their victims.

Source: South China Morning Post

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Vietnam jails former radio journalist, arrests freelancers over 'distorted information'

Vietnam on Friday (July 9) jailed a former radio journalist on an anti-state charge, state media said, after several other reporters were taken into custody in recent weeks.

The hardline administration moves swiftly to stamp out dissent and arrest critics, especially those who find an audience on social media platforms.

On Friday, Mr Thanh Pham Chi, a 68-year-old pro-democracy activist fiercely critical of the regime on Facebook, was imprisoned for 5½ years on the charge of "making, hoarding, disseminating and spreading information and documents against the socialist republic of Vietnam", according to state-run Vietnam News Agency.



The Vietnam News Agency report quoted the Hanoi court's verdict that Mr Thanh, a former editor of state-controlled radio station Voice of Vietnam, had spread on his Facebook account "distorted information that caused social concern" and giving interviews to foreign media outlets. Mr Daniel Bastard of Reporters Without Borders (RSF) said Mr Thanh's sentencing "speaks volumes about Vietnamese authorities' gross disregard for the rule of law and the country's Constitution".

"Pham Chi Thanh embodies Vietnamese citizens' fight for independent, truthful information," he said, adding that Mr Thanh is the "latest victim of the much harsher line that the government has been taking for the past five years", he added. Vietnam bans all independent media outlets, and is ranked 175th out of 180 countries in RSF's 2020 World Press Freedom Index.

Source: AFP

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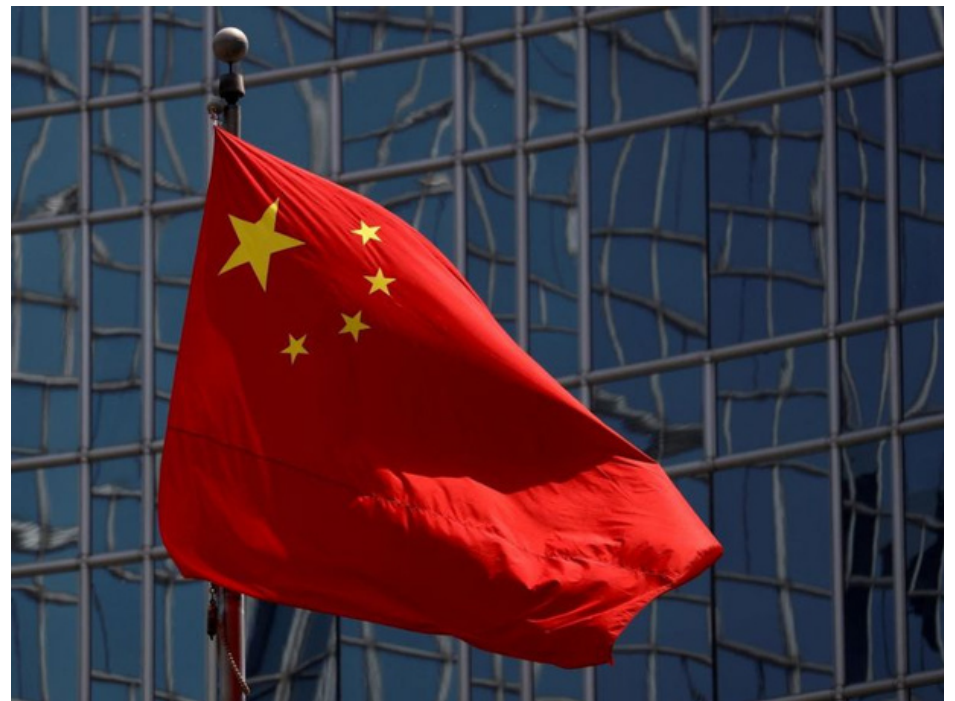
China drafts new cyber security industry plan

China's Ministry of Industry and Information Technology said on Monday (July 12) it has issued a draft three-year action plan to develop the country's cyber security industry, estimating the sector may be worth more than 250 billion yuan (\$52 billion) by 2023.

The draft comes as the Chinese authorities step up efforts to enact regulations to better govern data storage, data transfer and personal data privacy.

Over the weekend, the Cyberspace Administration of China proposed draft rules calling for all data-rich tech companies with more than one million users to undergo security reviews before listing overseas.

That draft came in the wake of a regulatory probe of Chinese ride-hailing giant Didi Chuxing for allegedly violating data privacy laws.



Source: Reuters