

# What's happening in Southeast and East Asia

In  
The  
News.

16th of August 2021

## Prominent Hong Kong civil rights group disbands, citing government pressure

*Civil Human Rights Front (CHRF), the pro-democracy group that organized some of Hong Kong's biggest protests, announced Sunday that it was disbanding -- the latest of a string of civic organizations that have dissolved in the wake of a sweeping national security law.*

CHRF, an over-arching organization of local pro-democracy groups, organized mass marches that drew as many as 2 million participants during the 2019 pro-democracy, anti-government protests, according to some estimates.

It has long played a critical role in Hong Kong's civic society, as the organizer of the annual July 1 protests that mark the anniversary of the city's handover from Britain to China.



"We've aimed to advocate for the human rights and freedom of Hong Kong people. We have abided by the 'legal, peaceful, rational and non-violent' principles in organizing mass demonstrations, allowing everyone in society to have a chance in speaking up on issues they care about," CHRF said in a statement announcing its dissolution.

"Unfortunately, for the past year or so, the government repeatedly used the pandemic as a pretext to reject the front and other organizations' applications to hold rallies."

The group said with its leader, Figo Chan, in custody for his part in 2019's protests, and no one willing to take over, the organization had "no choice but to disband."

Source: CNN News Asia

# What's happening in Southeast and East Asia

In  
The  
News.

16th of August 2021

## Malaysia's political crisis: PM Muhyiddin Yassin finally quits, but question mark over successor remains

*Muhyiddin's departure caps weeks of political turmoil triggered by the Perikatan Nasional government's loss of majority legislative support*

The veteran politician's 17-month stint in office following a political coup last March is the shortest in independent Malaysia's history.

Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin resigned on Monday after weeks of turmoil in his government, ending a 17-month stint in power during which his legitimacy came under constant scrutiny and amid seething public anger over his handling of the Covid-19 crisis.



The 74-year-old's departure was expected, after a key minister revealed over the weekend that the prime minister would meet the country's king, Sultan Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah, to tender his resignation and end an impasse triggered by the government's loss of majority backing in parliament. "His Majesty has agreed to accept Tan Sri Mahiaddin Yassin's resignation letter," said a statement by the Comptroller of the Royal Household Ahmad Fadil Shamsuddin that used the prime minister's given name.

The statement said the monarch was against sanctioning fresh polls, citing the severity of the Covid-19 crisis in the country. Addressing the nation in a televised speech after the king's acceptance of his resignation, Muhyiddin struck a defiant tone. He said his efforts to maintain stability amid the coronavirus crisis were thwarted by "some who would rather snatch power than prioritise the lives of the people".

Source: South China Morning Post

# What's happening in Southeast and East Asia

In  
The  
News.

16th of August 2021

## Last living Khmer Rouge leader appeals against genocide conviction in Cambodia

*Khieu Samphan, 90, was the former head of state for the Khmer Rouge regime that ruled Cambodia from 1975-79. In 2018 he was found guilty of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.*

The last living leader from the inner circle of Cambodia's brutal Khmer Rouge regime launched his courtroom appeal on Monday, seeking to convince a long-running international tribunal to overturn his conviction on charges of genocide.

Khieu Samphan, 90, was the former head of state for the Khmer Rouge, the radical communist regime that ruled Cambodia with an iron fist from 1975-1979 and was responsible for the deaths of an estimated 1.7 million people.



His defence team is seeking to overturn a 2018 verdict finding him guilty of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, questioning the evidence and arguing there were procedural mistakes.

Kong Sam Onn told the judges of the Supreme Court Chamber of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, or ECCC, that his client had been given inadequate time to prepare an initial defence, and that the original panel failed to provide the grounds for its ruling in a timely fashion, among other things. "It should be null and void, and so I am requesting the Supreme Court chamber to ... reverse the judgment," he said.

Source: Associated Press

# What's happening in Southeast and East Asia

In  
The  
News.

16th of August 2021

## Thai protesters use stones, ping pong bombs, firecrackers against police during motorbike rally

*Hundreds rallied in Bangkok against the government's handling of the Covid-19 pandemic, using fireworks, pig's blood and bricks to express their anger. Thai riot police fired water cannons, rubber bullets and tear gas at the crowd. They also took six people into custody and confiscated nearly 100 motorbikes*

Thai riot police fired water cannons, rubber bullets and tear gas at protesters in Bangkok on Tuesday as hundreds rallied for democratic reform and against the government's handling of the coronavirus pandemic.

Demonstrators defied a ban on public gatherings as Thailand tries to quash its worst virus outbreak so far, with new cases hovering around the 20,000 mark daily.



The slow start to the Covid-19 vaccination programme in Thailand and economic pain from restrictions and business closures has heaped pressure on Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha's government. Two police traffic booths were set ablaze and some demonstrators threw firecrackers and fireworks at officers, who had earlier unleashed water cannons, rubber bullets and tear gas on the crowd.

Protesters defaced a logo of Sino-Thai Engineering and Construction – a company with links to Public Health Minister Anutin Charnvirakul – with pig's blood. They also targeted the logo of King Power, a major duty-free company, over its perceived support for the government.

Source: Agence France-Presse

# What's happening in Southeast and East Asia

In  
The  
News.

16th of August 2021

## Philippine court dismisses second cyber-libel case against journalist Maria Ressa

*A Philippine court has dismissed a libel case against Maria Ressa, a lawyer said on Thursday (Aug 12), one of several lawsuits filed against the journalist who says she has been targeted because of her news site's critical reports on President Rodrigo Duterte.*

The plight of Ressa, who was named Time Magazine's Person of the Year in 2018 for fighting media intimidation, has raised international concern about the harassment of journalists in the Philippines, a country once seen as a standard bearer for press freedom in Asia.

The cyber-libel case was filed by a college professor against Ressa and a reporter at her site, Rappler, in October over a story which alleged that the professor gave students better grades in exchange for money, an accusation he denied.

Ressa, a dual United States-Filipino citizen, and Rappler face several other legal cases, including alleged tax offences and violation of foreign ownership rules in media.

Mr Theodore Te, Ressa's lawyer, said on Thursday that the court dismissed the cyber-libel case on Tuesday after the professor said he was no longer interested in pursuing it. It is the second cyber-libel case against Ressa to be thrown out by a court after the complainant withdrew. Ressa was convicted in June last year in a cyber-libel case filed by businessman Wilfredo Keng over a 2012 article that linked a businessman to illegal activities. Ressa faces up to six years in jail but has appealed against the ruling.



Source: Reuters

# What's happening in Southeast and East Asia

In  
The  
News.

16th of August 2021

## Taiwan-Macau gay couple wed after landmark legal win

*A Taiwanese-Macanese gay couple tied the knot in Taipei on Friday (Aug 13) after winning a landmark legal case as they called for the island to amend its laws to allow same-sex unions with all foreigners.*

Taiwan is at the vanguard of the burgeoning LGBTQ rights movement in Asia and became the first place in the region to legalise marriage equality in 2019 - but there are still restrictions that same-sex couples face.

Taiwanese people can marry foreigners of the same sex, for example, but only those from countries where marriage equality is also upheld.

Ting Tse-yen and his partner Leong Chin-fai from Macau challenged that restriction in court earlier this year and won, allowing them to officially register their marriage on Friday.

But the ruling only applies to them, and other same-sex couples wanting to marry will have to launch the same legal fight. "This is an initial success. Other international couples still can't marry and we call for full recognition," 29-year-old Ting said.

"We hope our registration today will let the government see that marriage equality has yet to be realised," said Leong, 33. The couple were able to wed because a court in May ordered a government office to record a same-sex marriage with a foreigner from a place where such unions are not recognised - overturning its 2019 rejection of their marriage registration.



Source: The Straits Times

# What's happening in Southeast and East Asia

In  
The  
News.

16th of August 2021

## Torrential rain lashes Japan, three feared dead after landslide

*Japan braced for further downpours on Sunday (Aug 15) as rescuers sifted through flood and landslide damage after record rain that left at least six dead.*

Residents returned to check on their mud-covered homes in the country's southwest, where nearly two million people were urged to seek shelter on Saturday as dozens of rivers overflowed.

Showers eased in the hard-hit region on Sunday, with the weather agency downgrading alerts from the top level, but more rain was expected from the evening.



“It is still possible that extreme, severe rain will continue in many areas across the nation,” Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga said at an emergency cabinet meeting. “Because it has been raining so much, ground soil in many areas is becoming looser, and large-scale disasters could happen at any time,” he said, advising residents to exercise caution and stay in shelters.

Scientists say climate change is intensifying the risk of heavy rain in Japan and elsewhere, because a warmer atmosphere holds more water. The Japan Meteorological Agency has called the recent rainfall levels “unprecedented”. Just over one metre of rain was recorded over four days in Ureshino, a town in Saga prefecture. The same town recorded 3.3 metres of rain in the whole of 2020, and 2.3 metres in 2019.

Source: Reuters/ AFP