

What's happening in Southeast and East Asia

In
The
News.

19th of July 2021

Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh City turns into ghost town under Covid-19 lockdown

Vietnam's commercial capital has shut down business and social activities since early July, after thousands of Covid-19 cases were recorded. It now accounts for the majority of cases in the country.

For a month now, Ms Linh Ho, a mother of two and a vegetable seller in Ho Chi Minh City's Chinese district, has seen her earnings plummet.

"Since the start of the outbreak I have had to hide to sell my products. There is little chance to sell because my regular customers cannot find me," the 56-year-old told The Straits Times at her makeshift stall, hemmed in between a pair of umbrellas.

Following the closure of wet markets, including two wholesale markets which usually provide the city with food, residents can shop at only designated supermarkets chains. Rumours of shortages have led to long lines for groceries, with people queueing for hours.

When asked why she risked breaking the law by continuing to trade, Ms Linh said: "I am not doing anything wrong. I do not steal or rob anyone. My family has been selling vegetables for 40 years. I have no other choice but to keep going." Vietnam has generally managed to keep coronavirus cases relatively low since the pandemic began, with strict border controls, mass testing and targeted lockdowns.

However, fresh clusters have emerged in recent weeks, sparking concern. The steady progression of the virus towards the other provinces, and especially to Ho Chi Minh City, prompted the government to implement Directive 16, which came into effect on July 7.



Source: The Straits Times

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Thai police fire rubber bullets, tear gas at crowds protesting government's virus response

Over 1,000 demonstrators gathered in Bangkok to mark the first anniversary of the 'Free Youth' pro-democracy protest movement. Protesters are angry at the Thai government's Covid-19 response as the country experiences a deadly resurgence in cases

Thai police on Sunday fired rubber bullets, water cannons and tear gas at a crowd of over 1,000 people protesting against Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha and his government's handling of a fresh wave of Covid-19 infections.

Thailand is experiencing a rebound in coronavirus cases, on Sunday reporting 11,397 new infections and 101 deaths. Public anger has mounted over the slow vaccine roll-out and an expansion of restrictions as partial lockdowns in Bangkok and nine other provinces fail to curb the deadly wave.



Hospitals have reportedly run out of beds while just 3.4 million people – under 5 per cent of the population – are fully vaccinated. At the start of Sunday's protest, a convoy of cars, tuk-tuks and motorbikes formed a 'car mob' and hooted as they travelled the short distance between Democracy Monument and Government House.

Marking the first anniversary of the founding of the core 'Free Youth' pro-democracy group, protesters massed in defiance of police warnings they could face prosecution under the Emergency Decree imposed ostensibly to control the virus. Over 1,000 protesters milled around Democracy Monument near a pile of stuffed white sacks symbolising the Thais whose lives have been lost to the pandemic.

Source: South China Morning Post

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Indonesia reports record coronavirus deaths ahead of Hari Raya Haji

Indonesia reported record-high coronavirus deaths as the world's fourth most populous country decides whether to extend an ongoing partial lockdown due to end on Tuesday (20 July)

A total of 1,338 Covid-19 patients died in the past 24 hours, bringing total deaths to 74,920 since the pandemic began. New infections totalled 34,257 on Monday, the lowest in the past two weeks.

The number of tests on Monday was 160,000, lower than the more than 200,000 daily average. The country has a total of 2.91 million cases. The record daily death toll comes as the country - which has the world's largest Muslim population - celebrates Hari Raya Haji on Tuesday, when Muslims gather for the annual sharing of meat from sacrificial cows and sheep for the poor and needy.



For this year's Hari Raya Haji, the government has banned congregational prayers in cities and regencies covered by the partial lockdown, which covers most parts of Java and Bali, and 15 other locations elsewhere in the country. The cow and lamb meat should not be handed over at the slaughter sites, but instead must be delivered to recipients' homes, to prevent queueing, according to newly issued government guidelines.

Under the emergency restrictions, which began on July 3 and are due to end on Tuesday, grocery stores and supermarkets on Java and Bali islands, which account for two-thirds of Covid-19 cases nationwide, are to limit customers to half their capacity and close by 8pm. Public places, such as shopping malls, parks and places of worship, have been ordered to close, and eateries can provide only takeaway service or deliveries. The partial lockdown was expanded to 15 regencies and cities outside Java and Bali on July 12.

Source: The Straits Times

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Hong Kong police raid top university in security law probe

Hong Kong's national security police on Friday (July 16) raided buildings at the city's top university after its student leaders paid tribute to a man who stabbed a policeman.

Anti-police sentiment has been running high in Hong Kong, a deeply polarised city since huge, often violent pro-democracy protests that took place in 2019.

On July 1, a lone attacker knifed a police officer in a busy shopping district before taking his own life in what authorities labelled an act of "domestic terrorism".

Officials warned people against mourning the attacker, saying any memorials amounted to "advocating violence, inciting hatred and beautifying attacks".

But the student union council at the University of Hong Kong (HKU) expressed "deep sadness" at the man's death in a statement, which prompted officials to call for action against the body. Dozens of police officers with suitcases and boxes arrived at the university on Friday afternoon and searched buildings housing the student union, campus TV station and undergraduate office. "The police is investigating a case related to advocating terrorism and searched our studio," Mr Kong Chak-ho, chairman of the campus TV station told reporters. A spokesman for HKU confirmed that "police have entered the campus to investigate a case with a court order" and the university was "obliged to act in compliance".

The student union council last Friday withdrew its motion expressing sympathy for the attacker and apologised but the backlash has been unrelenting. Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam, who is also the university's chancellor, on Tuesday called on HKU's management as well as police to look into the motion for any violation of the law. She called the resolution by the student union council "infuriating" and said she was "ashamed".

Source: AFP



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A Chinese woman found a video of herself on Pornhub. Her new app aims to help survivors of image-based abuse

*The woman came close to taking her own life after learning about the non-consensual footage.
Now she is fighting for justice*

She hopes her app, Alecto AI, will help others find their images online – the first step to getting them removed. It was a sunny spring afternoon last year when Tisiphone, 25, received a phone call from a male friend that turned her life upside down.

“He told me that I was on Pornhub. Of course, my first reaction was that it must be a mistake. How could it be me?” said the Chinese woman, who asked for her details to be kept private and to be identified as Tisiphone – one of the Furies, the Greek goddesses of vengeance.



When she opened the link sent by her friend, her heart sank in disbelief as she saw herself in an intimate video filmed non-consensually while she was living in the United States.

Source: AFP