

# What's happening in Southeast and East Asia

In  
The  
News.

23rd of August 2021

## China NPC: Three-child policy formally passed into law

*China has formally revised its laws to allow couples to have up to three children, to boost the birth rate*

China had announced back in May that it would allow couples to have up to three children, in a major policy shift.

That decision has now been formally passed into law, along with several resolutions aimed at boosting the birth rate and "reducing the burden" of raising a child, said Xinhua news agency.

Recent census data had shown a steep decline in the birth rate.

These include cancelling the "social maintenance fee" - a financial penalty couples pay for having children beyond the limit, encouraging local governments to offer parental leave, increasing women's employment rights; and improving childcare infrastructure.

In 2016, the country had scrapped its decades-old one-child policy to replace it with a two-child limit, but this failed to lead to a sustained upsurge in births.

The cost of raising children in cities has deterred many Chinese couples.



Source: BBC News

# What's happening in Southeast and East Asia

In  
The  
News.

23rd of August 2021

## Afghanistan: Taliban's return 'boosts morale' of militant groups in Southeast Asia

*Indonesia, Malaysia and southern Philippines are seen as being most affected by the Taliban's victory, according to an analyst*

A security source said seven Indonesian Isis fighters were recently among 5,000 prisoners freed by the Taliban from a former US airbase in Afghanistan.

The return of Taliban rule in Afghanistan has boosted the morale of militant groups in Southeast Asia, inspiring some to make plans to go to the country and undertake military and other training there, according to analysts and a former militant.



The Taliban's success has been widely celebrated by Islamist and extremist groups, which are also expected to have been reinvigorated in their fight to replace secular governments in the region with an Islamic state.

"Indonesia, Malaysia and the southern Philippines will be most impacted by the Taliban's victory as the three countries have real or perceived local grievances [involving such groups]," said Noor Huda Ismail, visiting fellow at the S. Rajaratnam Institute of International Studies (RSIS) in Singapore.

Source: South China Morning Post

# What's happening in Southeast and East Asia

In  
The  
News.

23rd of August 2021

## 'It's our only home': Malaysia's changes to MM2H visa scheme throw expats' plans into chaos

*Existing participants of the Malaysia My Second Home programme say they can't meet stricter financial criteria to renew visas*

The scheme, which is popular with those from mainland China, has been revised to attract more wealthy foreigners but visa agents say the new rules are too prohibitive.

After Mansur and Moina Khan from Bangladesh secured long-term visas to reside in Malaysia in 2014, they bought a condo worth at least 1 million ringgit in the heart of the capital, Kuala Lumpur, and moved there in 2017.



We invested our life savings in Malaysia,” said Mansur, who like his wife, is in his 60s and retired. “We loved living here, its multiracial people and food. We are law-abiding visa holders and wished to spend a hassle-free retirement in Malaysia,” he added.

Under the new rules, foreigners must prove they have liquid assets worth 1.5 million ringgit (US\$354,000) – up from 350,000 ringgit for those above the age of 50, and 500,000 ringgit for those below the age of 50 – although 500,000 ringgit of the funds can be used for property, health care and school fees. They must also have a monthly offshore income of at least 40,000 ringgit (US\$9,400) compared with 10,000 ringgit previously, which the Malaysian government says ties in with its effort to target high-income individuals who can contribute to an economy hard-hit by the Covid-19 pandemic and ongoing political turmoil.

Source: South China Morning Post

# What's happening in Southeast and East Asia

In  
The  
News.

23rd of August 2021

## Myanmar military arrests more journalists

*Myanmar's military government has arrested two more local journalists, army-owned television reported on Saturday (Aug 21), the latest among dozens of detentions in a sweeping crackdown on the media since a Feb 1 coup.*

Sithu Aung Myint, a columnist for news site Frontier Myanmar and commentator with Voice of America radio, and Htet Htet Khine, a freelance producer for BBC Media Action, were arrested on Aug 15, Myawaddy TV reported.

Sithu Aung Myint was charged with sedition and spreading false information that Myawaddy said was critical of the junta and had urged people to join strikes and back outlawed opposition groups.



Htet Htet Khine was accused of harbouring Sithu Aung Myint, a criminal suspect, and working for and supporting a shadow National Unity Government.

BBC Media Action said in a statement it was concerned about Htet Htet Khine's safety and the charges against her, and was closely monitoring the situation. Reporters Without Borders (RSF) said the pair were being held incommunicado.

Myanmar remains fraught with instability and opposition to army rule, under which more than 1,000 people have been killed, according to an activist group that has tracked killings by security forces.

Source: Reuters

# What's happening in Southeast and East Asia

In  
The  
News.

23rd of August 2021

## Philippines' Duterte orders payment of healthcare workers' benefits

*Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has ordered the health and budget ministries to arrange payment for healthcare workers who have not received their benefits on time, following nurses' threats to resign and strike warnings by unions.*

Hospitals fear that desertions of medical staff, particularly nurses, have reached a critical point just as the Delta variant of the coronavirus sends infection cases soaring, as it has elsewhere in South-east Asia and globally.

"Pay them. Use whatever money there is," Mr Duterte told Health Minister Francisco Duque, who is facing questions over more than US\$1 billion (S\$1.36 billion) in Covid-19 spending, including non-payment of medical workers' benefits.



The order came after union leaders in hospitals in virus hot spots threatened last week to strike, while a nursing group said dozens could resign over unpaid risk allowances and hazard pay, adding pressure to facilities battling staff shortages.

The Private Hospitals Association of the Philippines estimated that 40 per cent of private hospital nurses resigned last year, but more followed after new waves of infections this year.

Public hospitals face similar challenges.

Source: Reuters

# What's happening in Southeast and East Asia

In  
The  
News.

23rd of August 2021

## US to allow visitors from Hong Kong to stay for 18 months

*Thousands of Hong Kong residents are to be offered a temporary "safe haven" in the US, President Joe Biden says.*

Mr Biden said that because Hong Kong's freedoms were being violated by China, the US would allow visitors to stay for a period of 18 months.

Thousands of Hong Kong residents already in the US may benefit.

China has reacted angrily to the announcement, describing the decision as a gross interference in Hong Kong's internal affairs.

The UK has offered people from Hong Kong a path towards permanent residency following last year's adoption of China's security law for the territory.

Mr Biden said there were "compelling foreign policy reasons" to allow Hong Kong visitors to stay. He said China had been "undermining its remaining democratic processes and institutions, imposing limits on academic freedom, and cracking down on freedom of the press". He pointed to the arrests of more than 100 people, including activists and opposition politicians, under the new security regime.

Liu Pengyu, the spokesman for China's embassy in Washington, criticised the US government's actions, which he said "disregard and distort facts, and grossly interfere in China's internal affairs".



Source: BBC News