

MARCH 30

National Responses to COVID-19 in Southeast Asia

Malaysia:

- Border closures and entry bans: Malaysia [shut](#) its borders to travelers and restricted internal movement from March 16 until March 31.
- Quarantine or lockdown: Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin enacted and then extended a “movement control order” until April 14; this includes prohibition of religious, sports, and cultural congregations. Places of worship and businesses must close except for essential services and stores.
- Economic stimulus: On March 27, Malaysia announced its second “more people oriented” relief package worth \$53 billion. The package includes \$23.1 billion for businesses and \$2.3 billion in direct cash payments for 4 million low-income households. A previous \$4.8 billion stimulus package was launched on February 27 to cushion the blow of COVID-19 on tourism and other industries, including nationwide electricity discounts of 2 percent for industrial, commercial, and domestic users, as well as a monetary assistance scheme for employees.

Thailand:

- Border closures and entry bans: Borders are closed to foreign visitors.
- Quarantine or lockdown: Social gatherings will be banned, domestic travel restricted, and all but essential shops shut until the end of April.
- Economic stimulus: As of March 30, the Thai government is planning an estimated \$15.3 billion stimulus package; “it should be bigger than earlier two packages” combined,” [said](#) Finance Minister Apisak Tantivorawong. This comes after the Thai government approved a stimulus package expected to inject \$12.7 billion into the economy on March 10, including includes cash transfers, soft loans, and tax benefits.

Indonesia:

- Border closures and entry bans: All visa exemptions and visa on arrival to foreigners are suspended until April 20; this does not apply to Indonesian nationals. Land borders with Timor-Leste and all sea and land ports in Papua province have been closed by provincial leaders. People with a Permanent Staying Permit or a Temporary Staying Permit can enter Indonesia if they have a valid health certification stating that they are fit for travel issued by local health authorities in English at least seven days prior to departure.
- Quarantine or lockdown: The cabinet announced that it will only be considering a “civil emergency” as a last result but is planning on implementing stricter measures for social distancing. On March 27, Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs Mahfud MD announced a new regulation stipulating the requirements for regional lockdowns is being drafted. A state of emergency was declared in Jakarta, meaning closure of entertainment centers, including bars, massage parlors, restaurants, and cinemas. Malls and supermarkets remain open. Offices in Jakarta suspended activities for 14 days beginning on March 23.
- Economic stimulus: On March 13, the Indonesian government issued its second emergency stimulus package worth \$8.1 billion, which includes exempting some workers in manufacturing from income tax and giving manufacturing companies a discount on

corporate tax payments. A first [\\$725 million stimulus package](#) announced in February 2020 provided fiscal incentives to support the country's tourism, aviation, and property industries. The package also allocated \$324 million for low-income households.

Philippines:

- Border closures and entry bans: Domestic and international flights have been canceled until April 14. Foreigners are banned from entry except for overseas Filipino workers, repatriating Filipinos, their foreign spouses and children (provided that the foreign spouse and children are travelling with the Filipino national), and foreign government and international organization officials accredited to the Philippines. Stopped issuing visas to foreigners worldwide.
- Quarantine or lockdown: On March 16, President Duterte announced he would be placing the country's main island of Luzon—home to about 60 million people--, including Manila, under lockdown until April 14, meaning that only essential services and store will remain open during the lockdown period. These services are asked to employ a reduced workforce and observe strict physical distancing.
- Economic stimulus: On March 16, President Duterte announced a \$531 million stimulus, including wage subsidies, support for the tourism industry, and social security. On March 17, the Philippines government announced the entire country will be placed under a “state of calamity” for a period of six months. The declaration will enable national and local governments to quickly access relief funds to curb the spread of the disease. The Congress of the Philippines is crafting a bill for approximately \$4 billion. The response package will provide \$100 to \$150 monthly aid for two months to poor families, \$2,000 for every health worker who contracted COVID-19, and \$20,000 for every health worker who died from the disease.
- On March 24, Congress granted President Duterte “special temporary power” to manage the pandemic, placing the Philippines under a state of emergency. Although he failed to get approval to take over private companies and utilities, President Duterte can now tap into private hospital and ships, reappropriate the executive department's budget, and punish those disobeying quarantine orders and spreading false information. While the decree is scheduled to last for three months, it can be extended by congress. President Duterte will also have access to \$5.36 billion from various government agencies to mitigate the potential economic fallout.

Singapore:

- Border closure: On March 22, the city-state barred all short-term visitors from entering Singapore, saying that from 11:59 p.m. on Monday, the only non-nationals allowed in would be work permit holders in "essential sectors" such as healthcare. Malaysians with a Singapore work permit will continue to be allowed to work in Singapore.
- Quarantine or lockdown: Singapore has avoided major lockdowns, curfews, and business closures with strict social distancing rules. Violators are imposed a \$7,000 fine and jail time for up to 6 months.
- Economic stimulus: On March 26, Singapore unveiled an unprecedented stimulus plan, the “Resilience Budget,” worth [\\$33 billion](#). This is the largest, most aggressive stimulus package in Asia so far. The package is designed to assist hard-hit sectors (e.g., food services, aviation, tourism), self-employed individuals, and cash payouts depending on

income. This is only the second time that Singapore has dipped into its reserves—the first time being in 2009 during the global financial crisis (about \$1 trillion). Singapore had first announced [\\$4.4 billion of relief funding](#) for workers and businesses through co-funding of business costs and tax relief on February 18. The total fiscal boost now stands at about 11 percent of the city-state’s GDP.

- The Monetary Authority of Singapore [eased](#) monetary policy as expected on March 30.

Vietnam:

- Border closure and entry bans: There is a ban on foreign visitors, including all overseas Vietnamese and their non-citizen spouses and children; foreigners with sought after skilled labor might be considered for an exemption.
- Quarantine or lockdown: On March 30, Prime Minister Phuc asked major cities to prepare for possible lockdown. Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City have been mentioned as lockdown locations. In addition to quarantining all incoming travelers, Vietnam will use a contact-tracing program to curb the coronavirus spread.
- Economic stimulus: On March 9, Phuc announced a \$1.3 billion fiscal package for health spending from the central contingency budget, including tax breaks, delayed tax payments, and government spending on infrastructure in an effort to maintain a 6.8 percent growth target, according to state media.

Brunei:

- Border closures and entry bans: From March 24, all foreigners are banned from entry; land, sea, and air entry points closed.
- Quarantine or lockdown: As of March 29, 917 individuals are undergoing quarantine with 1,298 people already having completed the quarantine period.
- Economic stimulus: On March 19, the Brunei Darussalam Monetary Authority announced measures to alleviate the financial burden on sectors hit hard by the pandemic. From April 1, businesses in the tourism, hospitality, air transportation, medical and food import services will have a six-month deferment of their principal repayments of financing and loans.

Cambodia:

- Border closures and entry bans: From March 30, all visa exemptions, visas on arrival and e-visas are suspended until April 30. [All foreigners](#) must have a medical certificate stating that they have not been tested positive for the virus and issued no more than 72 hours prior to travel date and have proof of insurance policy with minimum medical coverage of \$50,000. Neighboring countries closed their borders with Cambodia. On March 17, Prime Minister Hun Sen ordered a [30-day ban on arrivals](#) from Italy, Germany, Spain, France, the United States, and Iran. Joint military exercises involving hundreds of Chinese soldiers proceeded as scheduled.
- Quarantine or lockdown: Cambodia’s more than 157 casinos will close starting April 1. Schools are closed. Human Rights Watch has documented the [arrests of 17 people](#) since late January 2020 for sharing information about the coronavirus in Cambodia.
- Economic stimulus: As of March 30, additional fiscal resources to the health sector of around \$70 million (around 0.2 percent of 2019 GDP) are expected. On March 9, Hun

Sen said the government had allocated between \$800 million to \$2 billion to address the economic impacts of COVID-19.

Laos:

- Border closures and entry bans: All types of visas and visa exemptions are suspended. Outbound travel by Lao citizens and document holders is prohibited except for essential travel. Road borders with Myanmar and China are closed. Thailand has barred the movement of people at all nine of its border checkpoints, including ports. Ten border checkpoints with Vietnam are closed, but four smaller ones remain open.
- Quarantine or lockdown: Residential lockdown took effect on March 30. All individuals are prohibited from leaving their residences, except in necessary circumstances, including buying food, going to the hospital, and carrying out authorized activities. Factories and entertainment venues must close, and employers must provide workers with necessary welfare allowance for the duration of closure. Gatherings or events of more than 10 people are prohibited.
- Economic stimulus: On March 20, a preliminary 13-part stimulus package was approved during the cabinet's monthly meeting. About \$11 million (less than one percent of GDP) has been allocated for prevention and control. The government was expected to further discuss economic stimulus measures on Thursday, March 26.

Myanmar:

- Border closures and entry bans: All northern checkpoint borders with China are closed except for goods and crew. All visas on arrival are suspended until the end of April. All international flights are suspending from March 30.
- Quarantine or lockdown: All public gatherings have been banned as a precautionary measure.
- Economic stimulus: Fund of nearly \$70 million have been established at the Myanmar Economic Bank to provide soft loans to affected business (particularly the priority garment and tourism sectors and small- and medium-sized enterprises).

What We are Reading:

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