

National Responses to COVID-19 in Southeast Asia

Malaysia:

- Border closures and entry bans: Total ban on foreign visitors.
- 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, social gatherings will be banned, domestic travel restricted, and all but essential shops shut until the end of April.
- Quarantine or lockdown: Chiang Mai, Nakhon Ratchasima, Chon Buri, Nonthaburi, Samut Prakarn, Samut Sakhon, Nakhon Pathom, Pathumthani, and Bangkok, among others, are under partial lockdown.
- Economic stimulus: On March 10, the Thai government approved a stimulus package expected to inject \$12.7 billion into the economy to help alleviate the impact of COVID-19, including includes cash transfers, soft loans, and tax benefits. Thailand has since announced its plans for extra stimulus packages as relief for certain sectors hit especially hard by the pandemic.

Indonesia:

- Border closures and entry bans: Foreign visitors are banned, and citizens are prohibited from leaving the country for a month beginning on March 19. Land borders with Timor-Leste and all sea and land ports in Papua province have been closed by provincial leaders.
- Quarantine or lockdown: President Jokowi reiterated he will not impose a national lockdown over COVID-19 and discouraged regional leaders from implementing lockdowns on March 24. 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:** Foreigners are banned from entry except for overseas Filipino workers (OFWs), 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, including Manila, under lockdown for 30 days, 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, reappropriation 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:** Short-term visitors are banned, and there is limited entry for work pass holders for essential services providers. Malaysians with a Singapore work permit will continue to be allowed to work in Singapore.
- **Quarantine or lockdown:** Quarantine for individuals showing symptoms.
- **Economic stimulus:** On March 26, Singapore unveiled an unprecedented stimulus plan, the "Resilience Budget," worth [\\$33 billion](#) to tackle the economic fallout stemming from COVID-19. 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.

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. Four small checkpoints with Laos are open.
- Quarantine or lockdown: Schools are closed nationwide, as well as cinemas, clubs and bars, massage parlors, karaoke lounges, and online game centers in urban areas until the end of March. Quarantine for all incoming travelers on military bases starting March 21.
- Economic stimulus: On March 9, Prime Minister Phuc announced a \$1.3 billion fiscal package of 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: 1,651 individuals are undergoing quarantine as of March 23. Individuals found breaking the quarantine order can be fined up to 10,000 Brunei dollars (\$6,898) or six-month imprisonment or both.
- Economic stimulus: None for now.

Cambodia:

- Border closures and entry bans: Neighboring countries closed their borders with Cambodia. On March 17, 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 have proceeded as scheduled.
- Quarantine or lockdown: 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: 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: Quarantine for people for individuals returning to Laos from neighboring countries with confirmed COVID-19 cases. All state and private educational facilities from preschools through to universities are closed until further notice.

- Economic stimulus: On March 20, a preliminary 13-part stimulus package was approved during the cabinet's monthly meeting. 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.
- Quarantine or lockdown: All travelers, including Myanmar citizens, must quarantine for 14 days at government facilities, except for UN workers and diplomats. Myanmar has suspended entry of foreign nationals at all land borders
- Economic stimulus: Nearly \$70 million worth of loans, eased deadlines for tax payments, and tax exemptions for Myanmar-owned companies.

What We are Reading:

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