

APRIL 1

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 (MCO)” 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. The Malaysian Armed Forces, using personnel and drones, have been mobilized for detection and enforcement. Beginning on April 1, any travel to buy food, daily necessities, and medicine (list of essentials reduced to 10 items) has been restricted to 10 kilometers from a person's residence. Violators face penalties up to \$229 and up to six months of imprisonment.
- 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. Malaysians will start receiving [various assistance](#) from April 1.

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, five weeks after the first cases was reported. Only essential services and store remain open during the lockdown period. These services are asked to employ a reduced workforce and observe strict physical distancing. On April 1, Duterte [ordered](#) the police and the military to shoot protesters of these measures.
- 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. 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, President Duterte signed into law [Republic Act No.11469](#), granting him “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; Duterte is required to report to Congress weekly about actions performed under the law. President Duterte will also have access to \$5.36 billion from various government agencies to mitigate the potential economic fallout.

Thailand:

- Border closures and entry bans: Borders are closed to foreign visitors
- Quarantine or lockdown: An Emergency Decree is implemented from March 26 to April 30 whereby Prime Minister Prayuth chairs the country’s response to the pandemic. Social gatherings will be banned, domestic travel restricted, and all but essential shops shut until the end of April. As of April 1, [all shops in Bangkok](#) need to close at 12 a.m. for at least 5 hours.
- 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: Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi said after a Cabinet meeting that the Indonesian government will temporarily ban all foreign visitors from entering the country. 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. Jokowi said he had ordered the National Police to legally enforce the restrictions
- 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 31, President Jokowi announced Indonesia's [third stimulus package](#) worth nearly \$25 billion. The package focuses on health care spending, social assistance, and business stimulus efforts. 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.

Singapore:

- Border closure: Short-term visitors are banned. 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 six 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: Foreign visitors are banned, including all overseas Vietnamese and their non-citizen spouses and children; foreigners with sought after skilled labor might be considered for an exemption. On March 31, cross-border activities of individuals at main and secondary border gates and trails in border areas with Cambodia and Laos are suspended.
- Quarantine or lockdown: A 15-day lockdown began April 1. All cities will stop public gatherings with more than 20 people and shut non-essential public services until April 15. Those in public places are required to wear face masks. About 75,000 Vietnamese are currently under quarantine.
- Economic stimulus: The government [announced](#) on April 1 that it will offer \$1.19 to \$1.27 billion in cash payments to low-income earners and household businesses. On March 9, Prime Minister Phuc revealed a \$1.16 billion fiscal package 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. Vietnam has stopped exporting rice from March 24 to ensure national food security.

Brunei:

- Border closures and entry bans: From March 24, all foreign visitors are banned from entry; land, sea, and air entry points closed.
- Quarantine or lockdown: As of April 1, 854 are undergoing quarantine and 1,424 have 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/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, 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 for 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. Only "[legally registered and formally verified](#)" small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) will receive benefits. 95 percent of Cambodian SME's are informal businesses that are not officially registered.

Myanmar:

- Border closures and entry bans: All northern checkpoint borders with China are closed except for goods and crew. India has temporarily closed its land border with Myanmar. All visas on arrival are suspended until the end of April. All international flights are suspending from March 30.
- Quarantine or lockdown: Imposing community quarantines is currently under consideration as coronavirus continues to spread. All "potentially infected" will be put under a compulsory 14-day quarantine. All migrant workers returning to Myanmar are required to stay in quarantine centers for 14 days.

- Economic stimulus: A fund of nearly \$70 million was established at the Myanmar Economic Bank to provide soft loans to affected business (particularly the priority garment and tourism sectors and SMEs).

Laos:

- Border closures and entry bans: All international checkpoints will be closed to stop passengers from exiting and entering Laos from March 30 to April 19. 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. Vietnam has closed all border checkpoints with Laos as of April 1.
- Quarantine or lockdown: Laos has issued a stay-at-home order except for essential outings. Provincial borders will remain closed until April 30, except with the approval of local authorities. Gatherings of more than 10 people are prohibited. Shuttle flights will be allowed for countries needing to pick up their citizens from Laos.
- 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.

What We are Reading:

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