

July 22

International Assistance to Southeast Asia

China's "Mask Diplomacy"

With Covid-19 largely contained domestically, the Chinese government has pivoted to providing assistance abroad. Southeast Asia is a particular focus. Unlike in Europe, where China's so-called "mask diplomacy" has generated criticism due to some [faulty equipment](#) and [skepticism](#) about Beijing's [geopolitical intentions](#), Southeast Asian governments have welcomed China's emergency medical assistance. Chinese aid generally consists of surgical masks, test kits, and other equipment, as well as dispatching medical experts. Equipment is typically handed over with great fanfare. In addition to the Chinese government, foundations linked to billionaire Jack Ma and state-owned enterprises have made large donations of medical supplies to Southeast Asian states.

Chinese assistance has included:

- *ASEAN*: On April 21, China donated 75,000 surgical masks, 300 bottles of hand sanitizer, and 35 infrared thermometers to the [ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta](#).
- *Malaysia*: The Chinese Embassy in Malaysia delivered a batch of medical supplies to [Sungai Buloh Hospital on March 19](#). The Chinese government and other entities sent three more relief packages in March. Foreign Minister Hishammuddin Hussein received the largest shipment of medical supplies from China on March 28. On May 15, Senior Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob [expressed](#) his appreciation for China's support in fighting the pandemic to his Chinese counterpart, Minister of National Defence General Wei Fenghe.
- *Philippines*: China's first shipment of medical donations to the Philippines [arrived](#) on March 21. China sent a team of medical experts and a second batch of donations on April 5, followed by another one on April 27. On May 10, China sent another [shipment](#) of supplies, including 100 ventilators, 150,000 test kits, 70,000 protective suits, 70,000 N95 masks, 1.3 surgical masks, and 70,000 goggles. China's Ministry of National Defence [contributed](#) another batch of supplies, including more than 80,000 surgical masks, goggles, and suits on May 13. China on June 9 provided [7,200 bags of rice](#) to officials in Cebu to commemorate the 45th anniversary of Philippines-China relations. The Chinese Embassy in Manila on June 15 announced that it was donating over [3,000](#) tons of rice to families impacted by Covid-19.
- *Thailand*: China [sent](#) medical supplies worth \$9 million. Deputy Defense Minister Chaichan Changmongkol received them in a public ceremony on May 12. This followed a shipment [received](#) in April during the Songkran Festival. The Chinese Embassy in Bangkok, in partnership with the state-owned Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC), has donated 120,000 masks. An additional batch of supplies with 1.3 million

masks, 70,000 N95 masks, 150,000 test kits, and 70,000 suits of personal protective equipment (PPE) [arrived on June 29](#).

- *Indonesia*: On March 20, Indonesia [sent](#) a military aircraft to Shanghai to pick up 9 tons of medical supplies. A consortium of Chinese institutions and ministries [sent](#) 40 tons of Covid-19 test kits and other medical supplies to Indonesia one week later. On April 4, President Xi Jinping committed to helping Indonesia fight the outbreak during a phone call with President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo, reportedly [saying](#), “We believe that with your perseverance, Indonesia will be able to defeat this pandemic.” Indonesia’s Covid-19 taskforce [obtained](#) RNA isolation kits, polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test kits, and a viral transport medium kit from China on April 26. The Sichuan NGO Network for International Exchanges on May 14 donated over [10,000 masks](#) to the Indonesian Chinese Entrepreneur Association.
- *Laos*: From April 10-11, a team of Chinese medical experts [shared](#) anti-epidemic experiences and held training courses throughout Laos. The team provided 10,000 PCR kits, 10,000 KN95 masks, and 30,000 masks.
- *Cambodia*: On March 18, China [sent](#) medical supplies including detection kits, ventilators, PPE, and masks to Cambodia. On March 23, a Chinese medical team from Guangxi province delivered medical supplies including ventilators, medical masks, and test kits to Phnom Penh. China [shared another shipment](#) of “urgently needed” Covid-19 supplies, including testing kits and protective gowns, on April 26 at Cambodia’s request. Cambodia received [another donation](#) of unspecified medical supplies on June 4.
- *Myanmar*: On April 8, a 12-person Chinese medical team from Yunnan province [arrived](#) in Yangon for a 14-day visit, followed by another visit on April 24. On April 22, China [provided](#) 20 ventilators reportedly worth \$400,000. Another 15 machines are due to arrive in the near future. China sent medical experts from the People’s Liberation Army on April 24 to train Myanmar army [medical workers](#) on Covid-19 infection control. China on May 13 delivered [150,000 test kits](#) and 18,000 sets of PPE to the Myanmar Health and Sports Ministry. Chinese ambassador Chen Hai on June 9 announced the donation of masks, goggles, and other PPE in [commemoration of the 70th anniversary](#) of diplomatic ties between China and Myanmar.
- *Brunei*: On April 23, China [provided](#) Brunei with medical supplies, including 100,000 N95 respirators and 1,000 surgical gowns. The Chinese Embassy in Brunei also donated about \$42,000 to Brunei’s Covid-19 Relief Fund. On May 14, Brunei [received](#) masks, goggles, protective clothing, suits, and more.
- *Singapore*: On May 5, Singapore [received](#) a total of 620,000 face masks from the Chinese government and the Red Cross Society of China.

Non-government Chinese aid has included:

- Chinese non-government entities have also been active, most notably the Alibaba and Jack Ma foundations. On March 19, the two foundations announced they would send 2,000,000 masks, 150,000 test kits, 20,000 sets of PPE, and 20,000 face shields to Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Myanmar, and Thailand. On April 9, the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China [donated](#) medical equipment worth \$117,500, including 150,000 face masks to Laos. On May 14, Jack Ma and the Manny Pacquiao Foundation [donated](#) over 50,000 test and extraction kits to the Philippines. As of May 19, Chinese enterprises in the Philippines have donated 2.65 million masks and 250,000 protective suits, along with gloves and goggles. Secretary Teodoro Locsin said, "[China] is a model for what the rest of the world should be doing. Instead of blaming each other for what's happening, we should all start working together to help each other."
- On June 19, the China Soong Ching Ling Foundation partnered with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to donate 500,000 surgical masks valued at \$183,000 to frontline workers in Indonesia.

Assistance from the United States

The United States has committed \$1 billion to support the global response to the pandemic since March 2020. So far, \$76.9 million of that funding is earmarked for countries in Southeast Asia. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo made clear in March that urgent domestic needs in the United States mean this assistance will not include shipments of critical medical supplies such as protective gear, in contrast to China's recent "mask diplomacy." Instead, the funding will be used to train medical workers, boost screening capabilities, and bolster national health systems. When making these new pledges, the State Department has emphasized past U.S. leadership on global health, citing approximately \$3.5 billion in international assistance provided over the past two decades.

Pledges have included:

- *Philippines:* The U.S. government has [allocated](#) more than \$19.1 million for Covid-19 aid. This includes \$5 million in Economic Support Fund (ESF) assistance to provide grants and skills training to heavily affected communities, \$6.5 million in health assistance, \$6.8 million in International Disaster Assistance (IDA), and \$875,000 in Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA). During an April 19 phone call, Presidents Donald Trump and Rodrigo Duterte [discussed](#) cooperation between the United States and the Philippines to combat the pandemic. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) on June 18 [provided](#) an additional \$2.5 million for educational services during the pandemic.
- *Indonesia:* The U.S. government has pledged [\\$11 million](#) to Indonesia for Covid-19 aid, encompassing \$9 million in health funding, nearly \$1.5 million in MRA, and testing and visits by technical experts. During an April 24 phone call, Trump [promised](#) Jokowi an unknown number of ventilators. Indonesia will receive [100 ventilators](#) in early July.

- *Thailand:* The U.S. government has pledged approximately [\\$7.2 million](#) for Covid-19 aid, consisting of \$6.5 million in health assistance and \$730,000 in MRA for the nine border camps housing Myanmar refugees in Thailand.
- *Laos:* The U.S. government has pledged approximately \$4.4 million for Covid-19 aid, including testing and supplies, plus deliveries of protective equipment and visits by technical experts. In an apparent exception to the policy Secretary Pompeo announced in March, Washington has provided a modest amount of PPE and medical equipment to Laos, including protective goggles, surgical gowns, face shields, biohazard bags, aprons, N95 masks, gloves, and hand sanitizer. On June 19, USAID announced plans to provide an [additional \\$2.5 million](#) to support the Covid-19 response in Laos.
- *Cambodia:* The U.S. government has allocated over [\\$11 million in assistance](#) to Cambodia, encompassing risk communication, community engagement, and laboratory support in response to the pandemic.

Myanmar: The U.S. government has pledged approximately [\\$18.5 million](#) in Covid-19 aid since February. About \$6.5 million has gone to health centers conducting contract tracing and fever testing. USAID has partnered with UNICEF to deliver nearly 30,000 N95 masks in conflict-affected parts of Kachin and Shan states. Over 60 percent of those were provided to non-governmental organizations.

- *Vietnam:* The U.S. government has pledged [\\$9.5 million](#) in Covid-19 aid. This includes \$5 million in ESF to support private-sector recovery and \$4.5 million in health assistance, covering testing and visits by technical experts.
- *Malaysia:* The U.S. government has pledged [\\$1.2 million](#) in Covid-19 aid. This includes \$1 million for prevention and control of infections in health facilities, community engagement, contact-tracing systems, and risk communication, and \$200,000 in MRA for refugees and asylum seekers in Malaysia.

Non-government U.S. aid:

U.S. philanthropic assistance has come from a range of sources, including \$50 million worldwide from the Rockefeller Foundation to combat Covid-19, including to its Asia office in Bangkok. Give2Asia, a U.S.-based public charity, has collected [over \\$17 million](#) in donations from corporations, foundations, and individuals to support Covid-19 response in the Asia-Pacific region. The PepsiCo Foundation has contributed \$3.3 million, the largest donation yet.

Singapore's "Test-kit Diplomacy"

Singapore, partly through the Temasek Foundation, was the first Southeast Asian country with excess capacity and ability to deliver aid to neighbors. "From a foreign policy point of view, we now have test kit diplomacy. What we need to do as a world is to share best practices, to rapidly develop test kits, vaccines, antivirals," [said](#) Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan on March 10.

- *Malaysia:* On April 1, Singapore [donated](#) 5,000 Universal Transport Medium swabs, a critical component in fast-acting test kits, to Malaysia.
- *Philippines:* On March 25, Singapore [sent](#) 3,000 test kits and a PCR machine for processing tests to the Philippines. On April 1, the Temasek Foundation [donated](#) 40,000 test kits and 2 ventilators to the Philippines.
- *Vietnam:* On March 30, the Temasek Foundation [presented](#) 10 ventilators to Vietnam to support the country's treatment of Covid-19 patients. The foundation said it will supply 10 oxygen generators to Hanoi and 10 to Ho Chi Minh City in the near future.
- *Brunei:* Singapore [sent](#) 3,000 test kits and a PCR machine for processing tests on March 25.
- *Indonesia:* On March 13, Singapore [donated](#) 50 sets of PPE and 2 ventilators to Batam. On April 2, Singapore [sent](#) medical supplies including 30,000 test kits, 5 PCR machines, and more than 1,000 sets of PPE to Indonesia. On April 8, an Indonesian navy vessel was sent to Singapore to collect supplies to manufacture more than 55,000 gallons of hand sanitizer for use in the city. On May 11, Singapore's Economic Development Board organized a consortium of 13 companies to [donate 100,000 KN95](#) masks and 5 tons of hand sanitizer to the city of Batam.
- *Myanmar:* On March 4, Singapore [sent](#) 3,000 diagnostic tests and 2 PCR machines to test for Covid-19 to Myanmar.

Assistance from Vietnam

Vietnam has extended aid to regional and international partners since early April after ramping up its domestic production of medical supplies. On April 30, Vietnam [started exporting](#) domestically made and WHO-approved Covid-19 test kits. Having already received orders from 20 countries, Vietnam is reportedly one of five nations with ready-to-export kits. The government [suspended](#) the export of drugs used to treat the virus to ensure sufficient preventive and curative supplies for Vietnam.

- *Laos:* On April 3, Vietnam sent nearly 5 tons of Covid-19 related medical equipment worth over \$300,000 to Laos, including test kits, 340,000 face masks, and PPE. It sent another 200,000 face masks on July 16.
- *Cambodia:* On April 3, Vietnam donated 390,000 face masks to Cambodia. On April 7, Region 7 of the Vietnam People's Army [provided](#) medical supplies and equipment, including 50,000 face mask, 1,000 sets of PPE, and 260 gallons of hand sanitizer to units of the Cambodian Royal Army. The group also provided 30,000 face masks and over \$21,000 in assistance to Vietnamese Cambodians in the area.
- *Indonesia:* On April 5, Vietnam's Ministry of Science and Technology [sent](#) 500 diagnostic test kits to Indonesia.

- *Myanmar*: On April 10, Vietnam [presented](#) \$50,000 as a symbolic gift of support during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- *United States*: On April 8, Vietnam [donated](#) 450,000 protective suits to the United States, with 450,000 more suits to follow in the near future. The delivery drew praise from President Trump on [Twitter](#), who expressed thanks to “our friends in Vietnam.” On April 16, Vietnam [announced](#) it is [donating](#) 250,000 made-in-Vietnam face masks, including 50,000 sent directly for use at the White House, reportedly worth at least \$100,000. Vietnam on April 29 presented [420,000 medical masks](#) to U.S. Ambassador Daniel Kritenbrink as a donation to the American Red Cross. On June 5, Vietnam donated 1.3 million masks, valued at \$450,000.
- *China*: On February 8, Vietnam’s Ha Giang province border guards [donated](#) 1,000 face masks and 20 sanitizer containers to the Yunnan Border Guards as a symbolic gesture. Two weeks later, the Department of Military Medicine within Vietnam’s Ministry of National Defence supplied unspecified “medical equipment” to China’s Ministry of Defence in a more formal ceremony. On March 8, border guards at Dien Bien province gifted 10,000 face masks to their Chinese counterparts.
- *Europe*: Vietnam on April 7 [donated 550,000 masks](#) to France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom.
- *Russia*: On March 27, Vietnam’s Department of Military Medicine [gifted](#) unspecified supplies to the minister counsellor of the Russian Embassy in Hanoi. On April 13, Vietnam [donated](#) 150,000 made-in-Vietnam antimicrobial face masks.
- *Japan*: Japan [received](#) made-in-Vietnam face masks reportedly worth \$100,000.
- *Sweden*: Vietnam [gifted](#) more than 100,000 face masks to Sweden on April 21.
- *France*: The Vietnamese Embassy in France on May 7 donated [15,000 masks](#) to local authorities. The Hanoi People’s Committee on May 17 presented [200,000 made-in-Vietnam masks](#) to French localities.
- *Cuba*: The Ministry of National Defence [announced](#) it would transfer test-kit technology developed by the Vietnam Military Medical University to Cuba.

Assistance from Malaysia

- *Palestine*: Malaysia [contributed](#) 1 million face masks, 500,000 gloves, and 500 face shields on May 11 to Palestine’s efforts against Covid-19.

Assistance from Indonesia

- *Timor-Leste*: On June 8, the Indonesian Red Cross donated medical supplies to Timor-Leste, including 500 masks, 500 protective suits, 500 face shields, 10,000 pieces of disinfectant, 10 sprayers, and 10 thermometers.

Assistance from Japan

Japan, traditionally a major donor in Southeast Asia, has been slower to provide assistance to combat Covid-19 than China or the United States.

- On February 14, the Government of Japan announced it would donate 222,000 sets of PPE to Cambodia, the Philippines, Laos, and Mongolia. The equipment was drawn from a stockpile of the Asia-Europe Foundation financed by Japan's contribution.
- Japanese foreign minister Toshimitsu Motegi on April 1 [pledged to provide at least \\$1.8 million](#) in aid to Vietnam to combat the virus. Japan gifted almost 5,000 isolation gowns, more than 6,000 gloves, 6,000 N95 face masks, 13,200 surgical gowns, 27 goggles, and 240 bottles of rubbing alcohol to Laos and [donated](#) \$20 million to Cambodia's Covid-19 response.
- The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) on [February 7 announced](#) it was providing Covid-19 testing reagents to the National Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology of Vietnam, worth about \$130,000. JICA [announced on February 25](#) it would send Covid-19 primer and testing reagents to the National Health Laboratory of Myanmar, worth approximately \$3,700. JICA also cooperated with UNICEF, USAID, and the Korea International Cooperation Agency to jointly donate \$3 million worth of PPE to the Philippines. This was followed by an additional [\\$46.5 million](#) emergency loan to Myanmar announced on June 1.
- On June 1, UNDP, the World Health Organization (WHO), and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) [delivered five ventilators to Indonesia](#), two of which were sourced through collaboration between the WHO and the Government of Japan. The WHO and Japan will contribute 25 more ventilators through this partnership.
- Cambodia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation on June 12 announced that the Government of Japan was providing [\\$6 million](#) in medical supplies and technical assistance through the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS).
- The Government of Japan provided Laos with [\\$14 million](#) for Covid-19 health and medical equipment. Tokyo pledged an additional \$3 million for supplies to Laos through the UNOPS.
- Myanmar received [\\$19 million](#) (2 billion yen) to bolster Covid-19 health care and medical instruments, including X-ray imaging equipment, ICU beds, and patient monitors.

- Japan extended a Crisis Response Emergency Support Loan worth [\\$1 billion](#) to the Philippines on July 1.
- During the July 9 Mekong-Japan Foreign Ministers' Meeting, Japan [announced](#) \$115.3 million in aid to Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, and Thailand. \$106 million will be designated for medical equipment and training medical workers.

Assistance from South Korea

South Korea has begun to pivot toward international assistance with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs [announcing on March 27](#) that the United States, the United Arab Emirates, and Indonesia were “on its priority list for exporting quarantine supplies, such as coronavirus test kits.” As of July 22, South Korea had [exported](#) \$520 million worth of test kits.

- On April 8, South Korea committed to provide \$500,000 in “varied forms of assistance” to Indonesia. On April 19, Indonesia received [50,000 test kit reagents](#) with an additional 495,000 reagents expected in the coming weeks. South Korean conglomerates [pledged](#) to donate 50,000 sets of PPE and PCR test kits each. CJ Corporation [donated](#) \$255,000 worth of rapid test kits and hand sanitizers to medical facilities and workers in the ride-hailing industry. The Philippines received over [50,000 test kits](#) from South Korea between March and April.
- On June 17, South Korea [launched](#) a program worth \$5 million funded by the ASEAN-Korea Corporation Fund that will provide testing kits, PPE, and other medical equipment to Southeast Asia.
- South Korea on July 15 [announced](#) it was sending 400,000 masks to the Philippines and Timor-Leste.

Assistance from Taiwan

- Taiwan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs [on April 14 announced](#) that it would be sending 1.6 million face masks to countries covered by its New Southbound Policy. [As of May](#), Taiwan has provided [100,000 face masks](#) to Singapore, 200,000 to Thailand, 300,000 each to Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam, and 170,000 masks along with infrared thermal imaging cameras to Myanmar.

Assistance from India

- India [provided Myanmar](#) with Covid-19 supplies, including 200,000 hydroxychloroquine tablets, gloves, body bags, and thermometers on May 6.

Assistance from Australia

- Australia has redirected over \$280 million from existing development programs to Covid-19 aid. Canberra provided \$14.5 million to Indonesia on May 29, followed by \$4.3

million alongside the [WHO](#) on June 17 and \$3.4 million in partnership with [UNICEF](#) on June 22. A \$7.3 million [pledge](#) was made to Vietnam on June 6, with an additional \$3.4 million [administered](#) through the Australia-World Bank Group Strategic Partnership on June 25. On July 8, Australia announced approximately \$1.5 million in assistance to the disaster management agencies of Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama, Indonesia's largest Islamic organizations, to support their Covid-19 response.

Assistance from New Zealand

- New Zealand on May 10 [provided \\$3 million](#) to Indonesia's pandemic response and recovery efforts through UNICEF Indonesia.

Assistance from the European Union

- The European Union on April 27 [announced the mobilization of \\$378 million](#) to ASEAN countries in support of pandemic response efforts. Indonesia has received \$22.5 million in grants, plus \$169 million in loans, as part of the European Union's "Team Europe" global initiative. The initiative will send another \$6.7 million to NGOs in Indonesia. Team Europe has also [contributed](#) \$22.5 million to the WHO's efforts in Southeast Asia and \$500,000 to the UN Multi-Sectoral Response Plan through the IOM in Indonesia.

Assistance from France

- The French Development Bank [provided about](#) \$2 million to Myanmar, Laos, the Philippines, Vietnam, and the Pasteur Institute of Cambodia.

Assistance from Germany

- In March, Germany pledged \$1.6 million to Cambodia's Emergency Response Plan.

Assistance from Israel

- Israel has donated medical supplies to the Philippines, including 50,000 medical gloves, 30,000 surgical masks, 3,000 N95 masks, 4,500 medical gowns, 1,500 face shields, and non-contact thermometers.

Multilateral Assistance

- *World Bank:* In early April, the World Bank approved \$20 million in credit to support Cambodia's pandemic response, \$18 million in assistance to Laos to help the country strengthen its health system and response capacity, [\\$7 billion](#) in loans to Indonesia in partnership with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), a [\\$50 million](#) emergency loan for hospital improvements and public health emergency preparedness to Myanmar, and a \$500 million loan [to support](#) the Philippines' Covid-19 response and recovery. The World Bank will provide Myanmar's National Food and Agriculture System Project an [additional loan of \\$200](#)

[million](#) on June 30 to help farmers weather the impacts of the pandemic. In total, the World Bank will provide Myanmar with [\\$460 million](#) as of June 1. In late May, the World Bank approved a \$250 million fund for Indonesia's Covid-19 Emergency Response Project, which aims to shore up the country's health care system.

- *Asian Development Bank:* In late-April, the ADB [approved a \\$1.5 billion loan](#) to support Indonesia's response to the Covid-19 pandemic and a [\\$200 million loan](#) to assist the Philippine government in providing cash subsidies to households affected by the pandemic. On May 11, the ADB [announced](#) possible plans for an additional \$125 million to aid the Philippines. The ADB on July 8 [approved](#) a \$250 million loan to assist Cambodia's response to Covid-19.
- *Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank:* The AIIB will [allocate \\$1 billion in loans](#) to Indonesia to support its pandemic response. The first \$250 million will arrive as part of a co-financing program with the World Bank and the Islamic Development Bank, with the second loan of \$750 million coming as a co-financing project with the ADB. On May 29, the ADB and AIIB jointly approved another [\\$750 million](#) loan to the Philippines.
- *United Nations:* A UN humanitarian aid flight [delivered](#) 10,000 test kits to Myanmar on May 10. A second delivery is due next month from the United Nations Children's Fund, or UNICEF, with 10,000 additional tests, reagents, and other medical supplies. The UNDP and IOM will procure [six ventilators](#) for Indonesia, in addition to the 27 to be provided by the WHO in partnership with Japan. On June 19, UNDP partnered with the China Soong Ching Ling Foundation to [present](#) Indonesia with 500,000 surgical masks valued at \$183,000 for frontline workers. The United Nations has earmarked an additional \$2 million for Indonesia, \$1 million for Cambodia, \$1 million for Laos, and \$1 million for Vietnam from its Covid-19 Multi-Partner Trust Fund. The Myanmar Humanitarian Fund has allocated \$1 million from the United States, Australia, United Kingdom, Germany, New Zealand, Switzerland, Sweden, Canada, and Luxembourg to Myanmar's emergency response. The United States, United Kingdom, Sweden, and Switzerland have also designated \$1 million for the Government of Myanmar's Access to Health Fund.
- The Livelihoods and Food Security Fund, a multidonor fund financed by the United Kingdom, European Union, Australia, Switzerland, United States, Canada, and Ireland has allocated \$15.8 million to Myanmar's Covid-19 response.

National Responses to Covid-19 in Southeast Asia

Indonesia

The Indonesian government has continued to ease restrictions despite rapidly increasing case numbers and deaths. Under President Jokowi's "New Normal" policy, tourism hotspots are seeing thousands of local visitors and social and religious activities have continued unchecked.

Public Health Response

July

- Jakarta governor Anies Baswedan on July 16 [extended](#) large-scale social restrictions (PSBB) by 14 days.
- Government ministries on July 8 announced guidelines for cultural events as museums, theaters, and galleries prepare to resume normal operations by month's end.
- The Indonesian Army Officer Candidate School in West Java was put under quarantine on July 11 after nearly 1,300 people at the military academy tested positive for Covid-19.
- The WHO [warned](#) in a July 15 report that Jakarta is the only part of the country to meet its benchmark of 1 test per 1,000 people per week. Indonesia has one of the lowest testing rates in the world.
- Despite hitting a record daily increase in deaths on July 22, the government [announced](#) it would no longer be holding daily official briefings.
- Polls show that public trust in the government's handling of the pandemic [decreased](#) from June to July. Most Indonesians [disapprove](#) of PSBB.

June

- On June 2, the government canceled the *hajj* pilgrimage, which over 200,000 Indonesians were preparing to take. The Ministry of Religious Affairs on July 1 announced a ban on public celebrations of the July 31 *Idul Adha* (Day of Sacrifice) holiday in areas still at risk of Covid-19 spread.
- Airlines [resumed domestic flights](#) for all passengers on June 10.

May

- Jokowi announced on May 26 that 350,000 army and police personnel had been deployed across four provinces and 25 cities, including Jakarta, to “discipline citizens and make the society abide” by PSBB.
- On May 4, Jokowi announced a five-point plan to anticipate the second wave of the outbreak: (1) an evaluation of PSBB; (2) testing, contact tracing, and isolation goals for provinces under PSBB; (3) stricter monitoring of migrant workers; (4) a stronger social safety net for low-income families; and (5) a hotline for feedback on the government's handling of the pandemic.

March

- On March 31, the government declared a “[public health emergency](#),” allowing regional administrations to impose social restrictions like closing schools and workplaces and limiting religious and public gatherings. Indonesia declared the Covid-19 outbreak a “[non-natural national disaster](#),” but the implementation of quarantines and lockdowns have varied significantly by location.
- On March 31, the Indonesian government announced a temporary ban on all foreign visitors.

Economic Response

July

- A new National Covid-19 Mitigation and Economic Recovery Committee was [established](#) on July 21 to resuscitate the economy.

May

- Minister of Finance Sri Mulyani Indrawati on May 18 announced \$43 billion in economic stimulus. The funds will be used to support state-owned enterprises, subsidize loan repayments for approximately 60 million borrowers, and strengthen social safety net programs, among other things.

March

- On March 13, the Indonesian government issued its second emergency stimulus package worth \$8.1 billion. This included exempting some workers in manufacturing from income taxes and giving manufacturing companies a discount on corporate tax payments.
- On March 31, President Jokowi introduced Indonesia’s third stimulus package worth nearly \$25 billion for health care spending, social protection, and tax incentives.

February

- The government announced a [stimulus package](#) worth \$725 million in February 2020, which provides fiscal incentives to support the country’s tourism, aviation, and property industries. The package also allocated \$324 million for low-income households.

Economic projections

- The Ministry of National Development Planning [projects](#) that the 2020 unemployment rate will reach 9.2 percent, up from 5.2 percent in 2019.
- The [International Monetary Fund](#) (IMF) in June lowered Indonesia’s GDP growth projections for 2020 to -0.3 percent from 5.0 percent in 2019.

Philippines

The Philippines has the highest number of new confirmed cases per day in the region. The Philippine government is now prioritizing jumpstarting the economy over minimizing infections and has told citizens to learn to “dance” with the virus. In the pandemic’s early days, the Congress granted President Duterte “special temporary power,” allowing him to implement draconian measures which are hitting vulnerable populations like the urban poor especially hard.

Public Health Response

July

- Presidential spokesperson Harry Roque on July 7 announced that the Philippines was lifting its [ban on non-essential outbound travel](#) for Filipinos. Foreigners are banned from entry, with exceptions for foreign spouses and children of repatriating overseas Filipino workers.
- Religious venues in areas under general community quarantine (GCQ) [reopened](#) on July 10.
- Manila has been [placed](#) under the less-restrictive GCQ until July 31.
- The city of Navotas in Metro Manila reinstated lockdown measures on July 16 following a rise in cases.
- On July 16, Duterte [eased](#) restrictions in Cebu City to a Modified Enhanced Community Quarantine until July 31.
- Interior Minister Eduardo Año on July 14 [announced](#) that police will conduct house-to-house searches for individuals with Covid-19 and transfer them to isolation facilities.
- The Department of Education announced it will [allow](#) limited in-person schooling in “low-risk” areas when the school year begins on August 24.
- On July 21, Duterte [ordered](#) police to arrest anyone found not wearing a mask to teach “a lesson for all time.”

June

- The government [eased](#) the lockdown in Manila on June 1 after 76 days. Most businesses were allowed to reopen and domestic flights resumed.
- President Duterte on June 15 [reimposed an Enhanced Community Quarantine on Cebu City](#) following a rise in Covid-19 cases, which was later extended through July 15.

May

- Stay-at-home orders were lifted on May 15 in central and southern Luzon and several provinces in the Visayas and Mindanao.
- On May 16, the Enhanced Community Quarantine [was eased](#) in Manila. Businesses have since been allowed to operate with 50 percent of their employees on site.
- On May 25, President Duterte [announced](#) he would not allow students to return to school until a coronavirus vaccine is available.

April

- On April 1, Duterte [ordered](#) the police and the military to shoot protesters violating quarantine measures. [The first police shooting](#)—of a civilian for refusing to follow quarantine restrictions—was reported on April 4. Since then, Human Rights Watch [has reported](#) other instances of law enforcement abuse during the implementation of these public health measures. The UN high commissioner for human rights [called out](#) the Philippines’ “highly militarized response” during the lockdown, which has led to the arrest of 120,000 people for violating curfew.

March

- On March 16, President Duterte [imposed](#) an Enhanced Community Quarantine, or ECQ, in Metro Manila and broader Luzon.

Economic Response

July

- The Department of Social Welfare and Development on July 7 revealed that only 1.3 million of an eligible 17 million citizens had actually received emergency cash aid.
- The Department of Trade and Industry on July 21 [approved](#) over \$5 million in loans for micro and small enterprises. Meanwhile, the state-run pension fund [extended](#) the deadline for Covid-19 Emergency Loan program applications

June

- The Philippine government on June 24 announced that it was [seeking a record-breaking \\$85.9 billion budget](#) for 2021 to support the economic recovery from the pandemic. The budget proposal will be submitted to Congress when it resumes session in July.

May

- On May 12, House of Representatives Speaker Alan Peter Cayetano and eight other lawmakers [filed](#) the COVID-19 Unemployment Reduction Economic Stimulus Act of

2020 aimed at creating jobs in rural areas through infrastructure projects worth \$29 billion. More than 20 million families will receive government aid.

April

- On April 7, the Duterte administration announced a \$610 million "[Bayanihan Grant to Cities and Municipalities](#)" to assist local governments.
- On April 13, the government approved a \$1 billion wage subsidy package intended to support about 3.4 million small business workers. Workers qualifying for the financial assistance will receive about \$340 for two months.

March

- On March 17, the Philippine government announced the entire country would be placed under a “state of calamity” for six months, enabling national and local governments to quickly access relief funds.
- On March 24, President Duterte signed into law [Republic Act No. 11469](#), granting him “special temporary power” for three months until June 24. The law allowed Duterte to direct the operations of private hospital and ships, reappropriate the Executive Department’s budget, and access \$5.36 billion from various government agencies to mitigate the potential economic fallout of the pandemic.
- On March 30, the government [approved](#) a \$3.9 billion social protection program for low-income families and health workers.

Economic Projections

- The [IMF](#) in June lowered the Philippines’s GDP growth projections for 2020 to -3.6 percent from 5.9 percent in 2019.

Vietnam

Despite limited resources and a bustling border with China, Vietnam has managed to effectively contain the pandemic. It has done so with a prompt and aggressive response, starting with travel restrictions in late January and a local quarantine in mid-February. The Communist Party of Vietnam has shown its ability to mobilize society, enact aggressive containment and monitoring strategies, and communicate effectively with citizens, underpinned by its network of informants who surveil the populace and help enforce government restrictions. Vietnam was the first ASEAN country to lift lockdown measures.

Public Health Response

July

- Vietnam on July 13 [announced](#) it was allowing the resumption of commercial flights to and from China.
- Vietnam [resumed issuing e-visas](#) to foreign visitors from 80 countries on July 1.

June

- Flights between Vietnam and Japan for commercial activities [resumed](#) between June 25 and 27.
- [Cross-border travel restrictions](#) with Cambodia were lifted on June 22.

May

- On May 7, the Ministry of Transport [announced that all public and commercial transport](#) could begin to operate at full capacity and frequency.
- The country reopened [six secondary border gates](#) with China in mid-May to facilitate the resumption of cross-border trade.

April

- A national lockdown began on April 1.
- Social isolation measures were [lifted in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi](#) on April 23 with some restrictions remaining for hospitality and entertainment businesses. “Unnecessary major events” remained banned, and non-essential public services suspended.
- The government released guidelines on April 25 that allowed localities [to lift Covid-19 restrictions](#) if they had contained the virus.
- The government on April 15 released a decree to prevent the spread of “[fake news](#)” related to the pandemic. Violators face fines of about \$400 to \$850.

Economic Response

April

- In early April, the government announced plans for a \$2.6 billion fiscal package to support those most affected by the pandemic. Under the new package, those displaced from their jobs received about \$76 per month through June, low-income households collected about \$42 per month, and those who “rendered services to the state during the revolution” were sent about \$22 a month.

- The government has delayed collecting an estimated \$7.6 billion in value-added tax, corporate income tax, and land rent from various businesses and households for five months starting April.

March

- On March 3, Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc [announced](#) a \$1.16 billion fiscal stimulus package from the government's contingency budget. The package included tax breaks, delayed tax payments, and government spending on infrastructure.
- Vietnam stopped exporting rice on March 24 to ensure national food security.

Economic Projections

- The [IMF](#) lowered Vietnam's GDP growth projections for 2020 to 2.7 percent from 7.0 percent in 2019.
- Vietnam's first quarter employment rate is at a 10-year high. On July 10, the government announced that the Covid-19 pandemic has negatively [impacted](#) about 31 million workers, with 900,000 out of work and up to 18 million receiving reduced income. The services sector has been most heavily impacted, with 72 percent of workers affected.

Thailand

The Covid-19 pandemic presents Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha with a new crisis at a time when Thailand was returning to a semblance of normalcy after five years of junta rule. After a rocky start, Thailand has managed to lower case counts significantly. As of early July, over 40 days had gone by without local transmission. But Thailand is projected to suffer the worst economic consequences in the region due to its overwhelming dependence on tourism and exports.

Public Health Response

July

- Thailand remains under a state of emergency [first declared](#) by Prime Minister Prayuth on March 26. It has been extended until the end of July, though lockdown measures for most businesses were relaxed on June 29.
- The state-of-emergency decree grants the government sweeping powers to restrict domestic travel, ban social gatherings, and [censor the media](#).
- Thailand lifted its ban on incoming flights [on July 1](#) and reopened [37 checkpoints along its borders](#) with Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, and Malaysia to facilitate cargo transport. It has subsequently begun to reopen to foreign visitors in July.

- On July 13, Thailand [increased](#) security at its land borders amid concerns over a second wave of Covid-19 infections
- Schools reopened on July 1.

June

- Provincial and international travel along with all public transport was allowed to resume as part of a third phase of gradual reopening through June. The government announced the country would completely reopen on July 1.

May

- Thailand began to ease restrictions on business operations on May 3, allowing certain businesses to reopen, including retail stores, food services, and markets. It reopened more businesses, including department stores and shopping malls, on May 17.
- Thailand removed South Korea and China, including Hong Kong and Macau, from its list of Covid-19 Disease Infected Zones on May 15, easing restrictions on travel to and from those countries.
- Thailand in May created a Covid-19 [contact-tracing app](#), *Thai Chana* (Thailand Wins).

April

- On April 15, Prime Minister Prayuth announced plans to gradually ease Covid-19 restrictions at the end of the month due to a decline in new confirmed cases.

March

- Thailand closed all its borders on March 22 and banned foreign visitors.

Economic Response

July

- The Thai cabinet on July 8 approved a \$3.2 billion budget for projects targeted at boosting consumption and tourism.
- Ninety-two public-private partnership projects worth \$3.3 trillion are currently being planned to stimulate the economy.

April

- On April 7, the government unveiled plans for a new stimulus package worth \$58 billion—10 percent of GDP. Of this, \$18 billion was earmarked for financial aid to

workers, \$12 billion for infrastructure and job investments, \$15 billion for soft loans to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and \$12 billion for a Corporate Bond Liquidity Stabilization Fund.

- On April 28, the cabinet approved monthly payments of \$154 for three months to the 8.4 million households registered as farmers.

March

- The government approved a stimulus package on March 10 that was expected to inject \$12.7 billion into the economy.

Economic Projections

- The [IMF](#) in June lowered Thailand's GDP growth projections for 2020 to -7.7 percent from 2.4 percent in 2019.
- The Bank of Thailand has predicted the economy will contract by 8.1 percent this year.
- Up to 14.4 million jobs may be lost due to the combined pressures of the Covid-19 pandemic and drought. The National Economic and Social Development Council expects this to include 2.5 million jobs in tourism, 1.5 million in the industrial sector, and 4.4 million in other services.

Myanmar

Myanmar has maintained some of the region's lowest case counts and containment measures have been lifted almost entirely. But Myanmar's paucity of Covid-19 cases may be due in part to a lack of testing. The country's underdeveloped health care system leaves Myanmar unprepared to cope with the pandemic should it experience a new wave of infections. Additionally, some parts of Myanmar may be unaware of the pandemic due to the ongoing targeted internet ban.

Public Health Response

July

- A curfew remains in place, and schools and training centers must remain closed. All citizens are still required to wear masks in public. Gatherings of more than five people remain prohibited.
- Borders with China and India remain closed while those with Bangladesh are restricted to trade flows. Second Vice President Henry Van Thio [announced](#) on July 10 that the country was unlikely to reopen to international commercial flights until October.

June

- On June 29, the government extended restrictions on visas and international flights until the end of July.
- Long-distance travel within the country resumed in early June, although buses must limit the number of passengers.
- Restaurants, cafes, tea shops, and markets reopened with social distancing guidelines and limited customer capacity.
- With stay-at-home orders lifted for the last remaining township in Yangon on June 30, partial lockdown measures were relaxed countrywide.

May

- On May 15, Myanmar extended Covid-19 measures a second time, including the ban on public gatherings, school and cinema closures, and visa and international flight suspensions, until May 31.
- The first Covid-19 case was reported on May 15 in the Kutupalong Rohingya refugee settlement in Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh. As of July 22, 62 cases of Covid-19 have been [confirmed](#) among Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazaar.
- The health and sports minister on May 18 submitted a new draft Prevention and Control of Communicable Diseases Law to Parliament. The country's current law on communicable diseases was drafted in 1995 and has only been amended once, in 2011.

April

- Starting April 19, Yangon imposed a 10 p.m. to 4 a.m. curfew and a supplementary stay-at-home order [on seven Yangon townships until June 18](#), excluding essential workers. Shan, Karen, and Kachin states and Mandalay, Sagaing, Ayeyarwaddy, and Bago regions also adopted curfews.
- On April 21, after an [attack](#) on a World Health Organization team, the United Nations called for an urgent ceasefire. But rights groups reported that the military was [escalating offensives](#) against ethnic armed groups in Shan, Kachin, Chin, and Rakhine states. UN Special Rapporteur Yanghee Lee [said](#) the military was conducting "war crimes" against minorities, emboldened by the significant political role it was granted to fight the pandemic.
- On April 28, the government and ethnic armed organizations [established a coordinating committee](#) to jointly fight Covid-19.

March

- In mid-March, the government formed a Covid-19 committee led by State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi to oversee the crisis response. On March 31, however, Myanmar's military set up a [separate task force](#) led by the military-appointed vice president U Myint Swe. The task force includes other military-appointed members of the cabinet as well as the joint chief of staff of the defense forces and five civilian cabinet members. This military-led task force [does not report to](#) Aung San Suu Kyi and has taken upon itself broad powers to investigate Covid-19 cases, conduct contact tracing, and clamp down on the press and social media.

Economic Response

July

- Parliament on July 17 approved Covid-19 [tax relief measures](#), including a 10 percent non-refundable tax credit on incremental wage increases and investments in capital equipment and a 125 percent tax deduction for incremental wage increases paid during the previous fiscal year.

June

- On June 24, the Ministry of Planning, Finance, and Industry announced a \$1 billion stimulus programs using funds from the IMF and JICA.

April

- On April 27, the government released a comprehensive economic [relief plan](#) outlining, among other things, new monetary policy, measures to boost private businesses and trade, and efforts to mitigate the economic impacts for workers and households.
- A fund of nearly \$70 million was established at the Myanmar Economic Bank to provide soft loans to affected business, particularly the garment and tourism sectors and SMEs.

Economic Projections

- The World Bank at the end of June projected that economic growth will [drop](#) from 6.8 percent in the previous fiscal year to just 0.5 percent this fiscal year.

Malaysia

Malaysia's initial response to the outbreak was nonchalant and complicated by an abrupt change in government. Since mid-March, however, the country has been under a nationwide enforced movement control order and reached a milestone in early July after it recorded zero locally transmitted cases.

Public Health Responses

July

- Senior Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob [announced](#) on July 21 that all individuals returning to Malaysia from overseas will conduct their mandatory quarantine at hotels or quarantine centers beginning July 24.
- Schools [reopened](#) on July 22 for pupils from years one through four.
- Malaysia and Singapore have [agreed](#) to resume cross-border travel for long-term pass holders, essential business, and official travelers by August 10.

June

- Ismail announced on June 24 that Malaysians would be permitted to host and attend social gatherings beginning July 1.
- Restaurants and eateries resumed full operations on June 30.
- Malaysia on June 19 [reopened](#) its borders to select groups of foreigners, including medical tourists and international students.
- The government extended the movement control order for the fourth and final time on [June 9](#).
- On June 18, sources in Malaysia [indicated](#) that the country was planning to send 269 detained Rohingya refugees back to sea after Bangladesh refused to take them. Prime Minister Muhyiddin on July 13 [announced](#) that the government was not going to send refugees back to sea, and that Malaysia would “the government will look for an appropriate solution for their situation.” Prime Minister Muhyiddin [called on](#) Vietnam, as this year’s ASEAN chair, “to play a bigger role in addressing the Rohingya refugee crisis.”

May

- On May 1, Muhyiddin announced that a Conditional Movement Control Order would take effect three days later, allowing private tertiary institutions (but not entertainment businesses, hospitality venues, schools, or religious gatherings) to operate under strict conditions.
- All university-level lectures are to be held online with no face-to-face contact allowed until the end of 2020.

April

- On April 16, Malaysia [denied](#) entry to a boat carrying 200 Rohingya refugees, saying it feared they might spread the virus. [Human Rights Watch](#) called on Malaysia to better fulfill its human rights obligations while adopting public health measures.

March

- Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin enacted a Movement Control Order on March 18. The government mobilized the Malaysian Armed Forces to enforce the order, including through the use of drones, resulting in the [arrest](#) of hundreds of violators.

Economic Response

June

- Malaysia on June 5 [launched](#) its fourth stimulus package, valued at \$8.2 billion.

April

- The government announced a [third stimulus package](#), worth \$2.2 billion, on April 6. It included wage subsidies, grants and loans for SMEs, and tax deductions.

March

- Muhyiddin unveiled the country's second stimulus package, estimated at \$53 billion, on March 26. It included \$23.1 billion for businesses and \$2.3 billion in direct cash payments for 4 million low-income households. The combined value of the first two packages equaled 15.5 percent of Malaysia's GDP and 84.2 percent of the federal government's original 2020 budget.

February

- Interim prime minister Mahathir Mohamad launched Malaysia's first stimulus package, worth \$4.6 billion, on Feb 27 to cushion the blow of Covid-19 for the tourism sector and other industries. This included nationwide electricity discounts of 2 percent for industrial, commercial, and domestic users, as well as a monetary assistance scheme for employees.

Economic Projections

- On June 24, the [IMF](#) lowered Malaysia's GDP growth projections for 2020 to -3.8 percent from 4.3 percent in 2019.
- Unemployment hit a 10-year high of 3.9 percent, or 610,500 people, in March.

Cambodia

Cambodia has reported few cases and zero deaths despite weak health infrastructure and an initially slow response. This has led to widespread speculation that infections have been undercounted.

Public Health Response

July

- All persons entering the country are being placed under quarantine for 14 days.

June

- The government lifted [cross-border travel restrictions](#) with Vietnam on June 22.
- Since June 11, visitors have been [required](#) to pay a \$3,000 [deposit](#) to cover any coronavirus-related services and must have \$50,000 in travel insurance. The deposits are returned only if all passengers on an inbound flight test negative for the virus.

May

- On May 20, Hun Sen [lifted](#) the ban on arrivals from Iran, Italy, Germany, Spain, France, and the United States until further notice.

April

- On April 10, the Cambodian National Assembly [passed](#) a law granting Prime Minister Hun Sen greater powers to combat the Covid-19 pandemic. A royal decree announced the promulgation of the law on April 29. It grants the government the power to monitor communications and social media and restrict the distribution of information.
- Between January and late April, the government [arrested](#) at least 30 people on charges of spreading “fake news” related to the outbreak. Twelve of them were linked to the dissolved Cambodian National Rescue Party. This raised concerns about human rights violations and the martial power granted to Hun Sen without oversight.

Economic Response

July

- The Cambodian government on July 8 [allocated \\$1.2 billion](#) for Covid-19 recovery, with \$564 million earmarked for health and social assistance and \$600 million for economic support through lending to SMEs. Some \$100 million has been [set](#) aside for job training for suspended workers.

June

- As of June 3, the government had designated \$350 million in aid for vulnerable groups and modest wage subsidies.
- The government launched a cash relief program on June 24 for 600,000 families especially vulnerable to the pandemic.

March

- As of March 30, the Cambodian government was expected to approve around \$70 million in additional resources for the health sector.
- On March 9, Hun Sen announced the government had allocated between \$800 million and \$2 billion to address the economic impacts of Covid-19. Only “[legally registered and formally verified](#)” SMEs would receive benefits. This excluded the 95 percent of Cambodian SMEs that are informal businesses.

Economic Projections

- On April 14, the [IMF](#) lowered Cambodia’s GDP growth projections for 2020 to -1.6 percent, down from 7 percent growth in 2019.
- A consortium of garment and footwear associations on July 1 announced that 400 factories have suspended operations due to the Covid-19 pandemic, leaving approximately 150,000 workers unemployed in Cambodia’s largest export sector.

Laos

Laos, the most rural country in Southeast Asia, was also the last to report its first Covid-19 infection. Despite the country’s almost non-existent health care system, it has avoided a major outbreak and claimed victory over the virus in early June.

Public Health Response

July

- The government plans to lift remaining restrictions on international travel on July 31. Incoming passengers are required to undergo a mandatory 14-day self-quarantine [monitored](#) by local officials.
- While some entertainment venues remain closed through July 31, officials have allowed most businesses to resume operations under social distancing precautions. Non-essential mass gatherings are limited to 50 people.

- On July 7, the Laos National Taskforce Committee for COVID-19 Prevention and Control announced that more than 4,000 individuals were being monitored under isolation.

June

- Laos continued its easing of Covid-19 restrictions on June 1 with the reopening of night markets and some restaurants.
- On June 11, Laos declared victory over Covid-19 with just 19 total cases since March.

May

- On May 4, the government permitted restaurants and malls to reopen. Offices were allowed to reopen if they adopted rotating shifts.
- On May 18, authorities announced more businesses could operate, including some schools and sport activities.
- The government lifted restrictions on inter-provincial travel on May 18.

March

- On March 30, Laos issued a [national stay-at-home order](#) except for essential outings.
- Laos [banned](#) international travel beginning March 30, with exceptions for diplomats and other key personnel.

Economic Response

April

- The government approved [relief measures on April 10](#) exempting micro- and small businesses from paying income tax for three months.

March

- On March 20, the Lao cabinet approved a preliminary 13-part stimulus package during its monthly meeting. Only about \$11 million was allocated to Covid-19 prevention and control.

Economic Projections

- The IMF in April lowered Laos's GDP growth projections for 2020 to 0.7 percent from 4.7 percent growth in 2019.

- The *Vientiane Times* reported at the end of May that [unemployment had surged](#) from 2 percent to 25 percent due to the virus
- In May, Fitch Ratings [downgraded](#) Laos's Long-Term Foreign-Currency Issuer Default Rating to B- and revised its overall outlook from "Stable" to "Negative."

Singapore

Singapore initially managed to contain the virus through widespread testing, comprehensive contact tracing, and mandatory, well-enforced quarantines. But then the city-state suffered an explosion of cases linked to foreign workers dormitories. It appears to have flattened the curve, but new community infections continue at a lower rate.

Public Health Response

July

- Minister for National Development Lawrence Wong on July 17 [announced](#) that Singapore was entering the final phase of testing all foreign workers residing in dormitories, with testing expected to be completed by mid-August.
- The Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore and the European Union Aviation Safety Agency [announced](#) on July 22 that the two organizations would collaborate to create common standards to facilitate air travel between Singapore and the European Union.
- Singapore [announced](#) on July 17 that travelers entering Singapore from Japan, Hong Kong, and the Australian state of Victoria would be required to serve their quarantine at dedicated facilities.
- Malaysia and Singapore have [agreed](#) to resume cross-border travel for long-term pass holders, essential business, and official travelers by August 10.
- Singapore and China are [planning](#) a travel "bubble" for essential trips by government and corporate travelers between Singapore and Shanghai, Guangdong, Tianjin, Jiangsu, and Zhejiang.
- Tourist attractions reopened at 25 percent operating capacity on July 1.
- Singapore is rolling out a [pilot program](#) to give each of its 5.7 million residents a bluetooth device to trace interactions with virus carriers.

June

- On June 2, Singapore gradually reopened schools and 75 percent of its economy, allowing one-third of workers to return to offices and factories.

- Phase two of Singapore’s reopening [began](#) on June 19, allowing for public and private gatherings of up to five people, a resumption of physical retail and recreational businesses, and the reopening of restaurants with a maximum occupancy of five people.
- Primary, secondary, and junior college students returned to school daily beginning June 29.
- As of June 26, religious services with a maximum of 50 attendees were [permitted](#).

May

- On May 1, Prime Minister Lee announced the eventual “step-by-step” reopening of the economy. “Circuit breaker” measures would be progressively [lifted](#) in three phases.
- Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, South Korean, and Canada on May 1 agreed to [resume cross-border](#) travel to maintain supply chains.

April

- On April 5, Singapore [imposed a quarantine](#) on dormitories housing 20,000 migrant workers, most of whom are manual laborers from South Asia living in cramped conditions. A task force lead by the Ministries of Health and Manpower [deployed](#) special teams to bring supplies, food, and medical assistance to quarantined foreign workers.
- On April 21, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Long [announced](#) that the stay-at-home order, which the government dubbed a “circuit breaker,” would be extended until June 1. Work permit holders were placed under a mandatory stay-at-home notice until May 18 because of the rise in the number of infections in the community.

March

- On March 22, the city-state barred all short-term visitors from entering Singapore. Malaysians with a Singapore work permit were allowed to continue [working](#) in the country. The only other non-nationals allowed entry were work permit holders in essential sectors such as health care.

January

- Singapore [banned the entry](#) of all travelers from China on January 31.

Economic Response

June

- Singapore set up an “Emerging Stronger Taskforce” to establish industry coalitions to spark job growth and new project ideas in areas such as robotics and supply chain digitization.

May

- On May 26, Singapore unveiled its fourth stimulus, dubbed the “Fortitude Budget,” totalling \$23.2 billion to support workers and businesses affected by Covid-19 border closures and social distancing measures.

April

- On April 6, Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat announced an unprecedented third round of support measures called the “Solidarity Budget.” This included one-off payments to citizens, wage subsidies, and self-employed relief funds. Singaporeans over the age of 21 began receiving \$424 each on April 14.
- By April, the government had earmarked approximately \$70.4 billion, about 20 percent of GDP, to respond to Covid-19. This was the largest, most aggressive stimulus package in Asia.

March

- On March 26, Singapore unveiled a second stimulus plan, the “Resilience Budget,” worth \$33 billion. The package was designed to assist hard-hit sectors and self-employed individuals and provide cash payouts to citizens depending on income.

February

- Singapore first announced \$4.4 billion of relief funding, dubbed the “Unity Budget,” on February 18 to co-fund business costs and provide tax relief for workers.

Economic Projections

- On April 14, the [IMF](#) lowered Singapore’s GDP growth projections for 2020 to -3.5 percent, down from 0.7 percent growth in 2019. Singapore’s economy [contracted](#) by over 40 percent in the second quarter, resulting in the city-state entering a recession.

Brunei

The sultanate has implemented drastic measures to clamp down on travel, impose strict quarantine rules, and conduct extensive testing. Containment policies have been lifted in phases over the past two months as Brunei’s case tallies have remained flat. The country has reported zero deaths. Most cases in Brunei can be linked back to a large-scale religious event in Malaysia at the end of February.

July

- In-person classes for secondary students resumed on July 4.
- Phase 3 of the government's reopening plan started on July 6 with the reopening of additional public spaces. Public gatherings remain restricted to 50 people.
- Foreign visitors remain banned from Brunei.

June

- Schools partially reopened on June 2, and child care and special needs centers resumed operations on June 8.
- Phase two of the Covid-19 deescalation plan commenced on June 15. Many public spaces and businesses reopened, and restaurants were allowed to operate at 60 percent capacity.

May

- On May 14, Brunei launched a new contact-tracing app, BruHealth. Businesses and members of the public are required to download the app in an effort to track potential virus carriers. Roughly 88 percent of the country's population had registered with the app as of June 29.
- Phase one of the government's plan to ease Covid-19 measures started in certain areas on May 16, beginning with social distancing and the reopening of businesses like sports facilities and markets.

April

- Brunei on April 30 issued iMSafe [tracking bracelets](#) to all Covid-19 patients under home quarantine and those already recovered.

March

- Brunei banned all foreign visitors on March 24.
- On March 16, citizens, foreign residents, and green card holders in the country were barred from leaving without permission from the Prime Minister's Office.

Economic Response

April

- On April 1, the Ministry of Finance and Economy [announced](#) additional steps to aid SMEs and individuals affected by the pandemic, amounting to about \$1.7 million in the form of deferment of principal or loan repayment and exemptions from fees and charges.
- On April 13, Brunei announced a special \$400 monthly allowance for health care workers, including doctors, nurses, volunteers, hospital cleaners, and security guards.

March

- On March 19, the Brunei Darussalam Monetary Authority announced measures to alleviate the financial burden on sectors hit hard by the pandemic.

Economic Projections

- On April 14, the [IMF](#) lowered Brunei's GDP growth projections for 2020 to 1.3 percent, down from 3.9 percent growth in 2019.

ASEAN Response to Covid-19

While ASEAN has convened a series of meetings on how to deal with the pandemic, including with external partners such as the United States, China, and the European Union, there has been little collective action. Diplomatically, the crisis has threatened ASEAN's centrality in regional affairs, with the crisis causing the cancellation of several key ASEAN meetings, including the ASEAN-U.S. summit scheduled for March 14 in Las Vegas and the 36th ASEAN Summit scheduled for April 6-9 in Vietnam. The latter was held as a [virtual summit](#) on June 26 where leaders agreed to establish an ASEAN Covid-19 fund and a regional reserve of medical supplies and coordinated disease response mechanisms.

- The [29th Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership \(RCEP\) Trade Negotiating Committee Meeting](#) was held April 20-24. Representatives from the 17 parties to the agreement reaffirmed their commitment to sign it into law in 2020. They also voiced interest in engaging with India to bring it back into the fold and reiterated the importance of RCEP in jumpstarting the global economy in response to Covid-19.
- ASEAN foreign ministers [participated](#) in an ASEAN-U.S. special foreign ministers' meeting with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and ASEAN Secretary General Lim Jock Hoi on April 23. In addition to discussing coordination on Covid-19, Pompeo raised Washington's concerns about China's damming of the Mekong River and its continued assertiveness in the South China Sea despite the ongoing pandemic.
- On February 20, the foreign ministers of ASEAN and China [met](#) in Vientiane, Laos, to discuss ways to tackle the public health and economic implications of the global pandemic. The 10 ASEAN countries and China agreed to step up cooperation in sharing medical and health information and best practices to enhance emergency preparedness and response, with the communiqué praising China's response to the pandemic.

- Southeast Asian leaders virtually [attended](#) the 36th ASEAN Summit on June 26, where they addressed “land reclamations, recent developments and serious incidents” in the South China Sea, the Rohingya crisis, and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the region. As part of the post-pandemic recovery plan, ASEAN will establish a [Covid-19 response fund](#) for medical supplies and aid. Thailand has already pledged \$100,000 and ASEAN partners China, Japan, and South Korea are expected to contribute.