

November 18

National Responses to Covid-19 in Southeast Asia

Brunei

Brunei has successfully contained the spread of Covid-19 for several months and has begun opening travel corridors with other countries in Southeast Asia. Schools and places of worship have been open since July, while businesses and restaurants have reopened gradually. Brunei's success can be attributed to its quick and drastic restrictions on travel, extensive testing, and strict quarantine rules. The small country may also have benefitted from only sharing borders with Malaysia, which has contained the virus reasonably well.

October

- The Monetary Authority of Brunei and the Bank Association of Brunei [announced](#) the extension of a waiver for online bank transfer fees and charges until March 31, 2021 because of the ongoing economic burden caused by Covid-19.
- On October 3, Brunei began [charging](#) land border travelers for entry and exit into the country.
- The government reminded the public on October 20 to [adhere](#) to health guidelines to curb the spread of Covid-19 when attending mosques and religious halls during Maulidur Rasul, celebrating the birth of the prophet Muhammad, on October 29.

September

- Brunei and Singapore established a “green lane” on September 1 for essential business and official travel between the two countries.
- Brunei on September 4 announced that foreigners would be allowed to enter the country for essential travel from September 15. It also reduced the isolation period for travelers from low-risk countries.
- Brunei [announced](#) it was increasing the limit for social and public gatherings from 200 to 350 people beginning September 7.

August

- Brunei [resumed](#) direct flights with Hangzhou, China, on August 4, its first direct flights with the Chinese mainland after the Covid-19 pandemic cut air connection between the two countries.
- As of August 17, the government is allowing mass gatherings of up to 200 people. Restrictions on public facilities, mosques, and schools have also been [eased](#).

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 remained restricted to 50 people.
- Brunei began allowing gatherings of up to 100 people on July 27. Mosques and restaurants can now operate at full capacity.

June

- Schools partially [reopened](#) on June 2, and childcare and special needs centers resumed operations on June 8.
- Phase 2 of the Covid-19 de-escalation plan commenced on June 15. Many public spaces and business 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 1 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

- 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.
- Brunei banned all foreign visitors on March 24.

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, including a six-month deferment of principal repayments of financing and loans for tourism, hospitality, food, air transport, and medical supplies industries.

Economic Projections

- On October 14, the IMF lowered Brunei's GDP growth projections for 2020 to 0.1 percent, down from 3.9 percent growth in 2019.
- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) [projects](#) 2020 GDP growth to be 1.4 percent but predicts that the economy will rebound in 2021 with 3 percent growth.
- Brunei's economy [grew](#) 2.8 percent year-on-year in the second quarter, according to data released by the Centre for Strategic and Policy Studies (CSPS) in October.
- The CSPS report also indicated that the unemployment rate [declined](#) to 7.9 percent in September, after peaking at a record high of 14.7 percent in April.
- The ADB projects 2020 inflation to be 1.4 percent and predicts that the 2021 rate will be 1 percent.

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. However, the government has proceeded with plans to reopen the economy, having already reopened places of worship, schools, and many businesses. Cambodia has also resumed flights with some Chinese cities and several other countries in Southeast Asia.

Public Health Response

November

- Cambodia on November 2 reopened schools nationwide with limits on class size and operating hours.

- On November 9, the Health Ministry [closed](#) karaoke parlors, beer gardens, museums, cinemas, and other entertainment venues.
- The Education Ministry [re-closed](#) schools for two weeks starting on November 10 in Phnom Penh and Kandal.
- On November 11, the Interior Ministry [banned](#) all state-organized events in Phnom Penh and Kandal for two weeks.

October

- The Cambodian Ministry of Education on October 12 [announced](#) that public universities will be able to reopen so long as they follow the Standard Opening Procedures outlined by the government.

September

- The Ministry of Health on September 1 [announced](#) plans to build four quarantine facilities, which will be used as isolation centers for Cambodians returning from overseas.
- On September 1, the Cambodian government [approved](#) construction of a medical mask and glove factory to encourage the garment sector to produce face masks, medical equipment, and protective clothing for domestic consumption and export.
- Flights [resumed](#) between Cambodia and Beijing on September 3. Some airlines [resumed](#) flights between Phnom Penh and Singapore, Fuzhou, and Kunming a day later.
- On September 8, Cambodia [lifted](#) its ban on gatherings at mosques.
- Cambodia reopened [mosques](#) and [churches](#) on September 12.
- Angkor Air resumed regular flights starting on September 15.
- Flights between Vietnam and Cambodia are expected to [resume](#) the week of September 21.
- Minister of Education Hang Chuon Naron confirmed on September 22 that the ministry is ready to ask Prime Minister Hun Sen to [begin](#) the third and final phase of school reopenings.

August

- The Ministry of Education on August 4 [released](#) a set of standard operating procedures in advance of the first phase of school reopenings.
- Cambodia on August 5 [announced](#) that incoming foreign diplomats and NGO officials would be tested for Covid-19 upon arrival and would need to possess a health certificate from their host country certifying their Covid-19-free status within 72 hours of their departure.
- Cambodia on August 6 [allowed](#) cinemas and art facilities to reopen following their closure in March.
- The Ministry of Education on August 10 [announced](#) that high school exit exams will take place in December and that schools for Grade 12 students will reopen in September.
- The government on August 12 temporarily [suspended](#) all flights from the Philippines following a series of imported cases.
- Cambodia on August 14 [announced](#) that it was cancelling its three-day Water Festival scheduled for late October to prevent the spread of Covid-19.
- Prime Minister Hun Sen on August 15 [announced](#) that Cambodia was establishing Covid-19 test laboratories in Sihanoukville, Siem Reap, and Battambang.
- Cambodia and Japan on August 22 [announced](#) they would ease travel restrictions between the two countries as early as September.
- The Ministry of Education on August 26 announced that kindergartens and primary schools could reopen in September.

July

- All persons entering the country were placed under quarantine for 14 days.
- Cambodia's Ministry of Health on July 25 announced that it was [banning](#) all incoming flights from Indonesia and Malaysia effective August 1 after a spike in imported cases.

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 by monitoring communications and social media and restricting 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.

March

- Cambodia on March 16 [announced](#) nationwide school closures.
- Borders with neighboring countries were [closed](#) off in late March, after Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam suspended cross-border activities with Cambodia.

Economic Response

October

- Cambodia on October 26 [announced](#) it had allocated \$31 million in Covid-19 assistance for the third round of its IDPoor system, aimed at benefitting nearly 700,000 families through December.

August

- Cambodia on August 3 [announced](#) that it was extending out-of-work allowances for workers in the garment, footwear, and hospitality industries until October.
- Cambodia’s National Committee for Counter Trafficking on August 12 [launched](#) a \$1 million initiative to support migrant workers who were forced to return to the country due to Covid-19 border closures.

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.

- As of July 21, the fund to [support](#) low-income families during Covid-19 through the IDPoor system has grown to \$28 million.
- Cambodia on July 31 [extended](#) its tax holiday for locally registered airlines and tourism-related businesses through September.
- As of July 31, the government had approved \$22 million in loans under its SME Co-Financing Scheme.

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 October 14, the IMF [lowered](#) Cambodia’s GDP growth projections for 2020 to -2.8 percent, down from 7 percent growth in 2019.
- The ADB projects 2020 GDP to contract by 4 percent but predicts that the economy will rebound in 2021 with 5.9 percent growth. The ADB projects inflation to average 2.1 percent in 2020 and 1.8 percent in 2021.
- The World Bank on September 28 [projected](#) that Cambodia’s GDP will contract by 2 percent in 2020 and grow by 4.3 percent in 2021.
- 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.
- According to the State of Small Businesses survey conducted by Facebook, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, and the World Bank, 39 percent of Cambodian SMEs have [furloughed](#) workers.

- Moody's [maintained](#) Cambodia's credit rating at B2 in May, with a stable economic outlook.
- The Tourism Ministry [reported](#) during the second week of September that Cambodia had lost about \$5 billion in tourism revenue due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- In September, a study conducted by the Future Forum and Angkor Research and Consulting [revealed](#) that the overall salaries of Cambodians had decreased 30 percent from January to April 2020.

Indonesia

Indonesia has once again reclaimed the top spot from the Philippines for the most official coronavirus cases in Southeast Asia. While the Indonesian central government has continued to ease restrictions despite rapidly increasing case numbers and deaths, local leaders have begun to reimpose lockdowns, most notably in Jakarta. Doctors have warned that recent protests against the new omnibus bill on job creation could create new coronavirus hotspots. The country seems to be giving up on flattening the curve in favor of reopening the economy; however, official government and international sources have confirmed that the economy is continuing to contract, regardless.

Public Health Response

November

- Jakarta [announced](#) on November 13 that it has sought emergency authorization to start a mass vaccination campaign by the end of 2020.

October

- Jakarta on October 2 [announced](#) it would impose controlled isolation for asymptomatic Covid-19 patients.
- Minister of Law and Human Rights Yasonna Laoly [announced](#) on October 2 that Indonesia was preparing an electronic visa system and special counters at airports in Jakarta and ferry terminals in Batam to facilitate a proposed travel corridor, or green lane, with Singapore.
- Indonesia's parliament [passed](#) a controversial omnibus bill on job creation on October 5, sparking nationwide protests which experts [warn](#) could cause new hotspots to emerge.
- Indonesia's Food and Drug Monitoring Agency on October 6 [approved](#) the emergency use of antiviral drugs to treat Covid-19 patients.

- Jakarta governor Anies Baswedan on October 11 once again [relaxed](#) large-scale social restrictions (PSBB) in the capital, starting another transitional phase despite there being no significant decrease in new Covid-19 cases.
- On October 21, two major cinema chains [reopened](#) for the public in Jakarta.
- On October 26, a reciprocal green lane between Singapore and Indonesia [opened](#) at Soekarno-Hatta International Airport for diplomatic missions and essential business trips.
- The Law and Human Rights Ministry on October 27 [launched](#) an online visa application for foreign citizens who wish to enter Indonesia.
- Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs Airlangga Hartarto [confirmed](#) on October 28 that Indonesia had secured a commitment of 100 million vaccine doses from AstraZeneca, 3 million doses from Sinovac Biotech, 15 million from China National Pharmaceutical Group (Sinopharm), and 100,000 from CanSino Biotech.

September

- Governor Anies [announced](#) on September 2 that the city will require Covid-19 patients in the capital to quarantine at coronavirus referral center hospitals rather than requesting individuals to self-quarantine.
- On September 3, President Jokowi [established](#) a national team to assist with vaccine development. The government plans to set aside \$2.5 billion for vaccine procurement next year.
- On September 8, the Ministry of Health [began](#) large-scale trials of Covid-19 plasma therapy.
- Jakarta on September 9 announced it would [reimpose](#) large-scale social restrictions effective September 14 amid rising case numbers in the capital. The restrictions are [less stringent](#) than the first lockdown in April and allow for some non-essential workplaces to operate if they meet specific conditions.
- The Indonesian government on September 10 [announced](#) it would deploy personnel from the military, national police, and public order agencies to enforce mask-wearing protocols.
- Governor Ridwan Kamil on September 14 [announced](#) that West Java would implement “micro-scale” social restrictions in Covid-19 red zones in Jakarta’s satellite cities of Bogor, Depok, and Bekasi.

- The Indonesian Mosque Council on September 16 [called](#) on mosques in Jakarta to halt Friday prayer services. This followed a September 10 statement from the Indonesian Ulama Council [advising](#) Muslims in Covid-19 hotspots to pray at home.
- Indonesia on September 16 [signed](#) an agreement with United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF) on the procurement of Covid-19 vaccine under the COVAX Facility vaccine allocation plan led by the WHO.
- As of September 19, 30 hotels in Jakarta are [prepared](#) to quarantine asymptomatic coronavirus cases.
- Beginning on September 26, stricter regulations will be [enforced](#) to ensure Covid-19 health protocols are followed during campaigning events for the December regional elections.
- On September 21, the government [increased](#) the number of deployed police and military personnel to enforce Covid-19 protocols.
- In late September, Governor Anies [set up](#) three new isolation centers in Jakarta.
- The national Covid-19 task force on September 28 [added](#) Aceh and Bali to its list of prioritized provinces as they both see rising daily case tallies.
- The West Java administration on September 30 [extended](#) large-scale social restrictions in Bogor, Depok, and Bekasi until October 27.

August

- President Jokowi [issued](#) new presidential instructions on August 4 subjecting individuals and businesses that violate Covid-19 protocols to legal sanctions.
- China's Sinovac Biotech on August 11 [launched](#) a trial involving as many as 1,620 patients in Indonesia for a Covid-19 vaccine candidate developed with Indonesia's state-owned Bio Farma.
- Indonesia agreed to create a travel corridor arrangement with South Korea for essential business trips between the two countries starting on August 17.
- Indonesia on August 22 [signed](#) an agreement with China's Sinovac Biotech for 50 million doses of Covid-19 vaccine concentrate.
- On August 24, Bali [announced](#) that it will ban foreign tourists for the rest of 2020, scrapping an earlier plan to reopen the island to foreigners.

July

- 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 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.
- Jakarta governor Anies Baswedan on July 30 extended large-scale social restrictions (PSBB) by another two weeks, until August 13.
- 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.
- Indonesia's Covid-19 task force on July 29 called for workplaces to [implement](#) work-from-home policies, following a spike in coronavirus clusters in offices

June

- On June 2, the government canceled the *hajj* pilgrimage, which over 200,000 Indonesians were preparing to make.
- 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

November

- President Jokowi [signed](#) the controversial omnibus bill on job creation into law on November 2. His administration has [argued](#) that the law will help Indonesia recover from the economic devastation of Covid-19. The law has been met with nationwide [protests](#) since its introduction last month.
- On November 5, the government [adjusted](#) its stimulus budget to include the establishment of a \$1 million sovereign wealth fund which will be used to fund vaccine procurement and the establishment of agricultural plantations.
- Indonesia [accepted](#) a \$1 billion loan from Australia on November 12 to fund pandemic response efforts.

October

- The Indonesian government on October 2 [announced](#) it had spent \$20.5 billion of the funds allocated for Covid-19 stimulus, or about 44 percent of the total recovery budget.
- The Indonesian House of Representatives on October 5 [passed](#) its controversial omnibus bill on job creation, with cabinet officials arguing the bill is necessary for post-pandemic economic recovery.
- On October 16, the Tourism Ministry [announced](#) plans to set aside \$8 million to provide free cleanliness, health, safety, and environment certification for businesses across Indonesia to increase tourism.
- On October 21, the Cooperatives and Small and Medium Enterprises Ministry [gave](#) small grants of about \$160 each to more than 50,000 businesses in Garut regency, West Java.
- The Tourism and Creative Economy Ministry announced plans to start disbursing \$224 million in grants on October 26 to help the tourism industry recover from the pandemic.

September

- Indonesia in early September launched micro-loans for female entrepreneurs from low-income families in order to assist with Covid-19 recovery, with approximately \$67.5 million [disbursed](#) by October 3.

- The National Disaster Mitigation Agency on September 8 [announced](#) it will assist the Health Ministry in setting a price ceiling for Covid-19 swab tests following numerous complaints over the high price for tests in many private testing facilities.
- Coordinating Economic Affairs Minister Airlangga Hartarto on September 14 [said](#) that the government has only spent \$15.9 billion of funds earmarked for Covid-19 economic stimulus, or 34 percent of the allocated budget.

August

- On August 6, the National Economic and Covid-19 Recovery Committee [announced](#) the government will send workers earning less than \$340 per month payments of \$40 each month from September through December.
- On August 17, the public works and housing ministry [announced](#) it will speed up employment schemes to spur economic recovery. It will disburse about \$776 million through a regular cash-for-work program and \$44 million for a public employment scheme.
- President Jokowi on August 25 [launched](#) an economic assistance program for micro businesses, disbursing about \$160 million to 1 million small business.

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 on February 25, 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

- Indonesia's Central Agency on Statistics (BPS) confirmed on August 5 that Indonesia's economy [contracted](#) for the first time in 20 years in the second quarter, putting the archipelago at serious risk of a Covid-19-induced recession. The country's real GDP plunged 5.32 percent in the three months ending in June from a year earlier.
- The IMF in October [revised](#) its projection for Indonesia's 2020 economic performance to a deeper recession of -1.5 percent growth. The IMF expects the Indonesian economy to rebound to 6 percent growth in 2021.
- The ADB on September 15 projected that Indonesia's GDP would contract by 1 percent in 2020 and grow by 5.3 percent in 2021.
- Indonesia on September 22 revised its 2020 GDP outlook to between -1.7 and -0.6 percent.
- The World Bank on September 28 predicted Indonesia's GDP would [contract](#) by 1.6 percent in 2020 and rebound to 4.4 percent in 2021, lower than its pre-Covid growth level.
- The Ministry of National Development Planning projects that the 2020 unemployment rate will reach 9.2 percent, up from 5.2 percent in 2019.
- S&P on April 17 [revised](#) Indonesia's credit rating outlook from "stable" to "negative."
- Indonesia [recorded](#) \$13 billion in exports in August, down 4.6 percent from July and down 8.3 percent annually.
- According to Indonesia's Finance Ministry, government revenue [fell](#) by 13.5 percent year-on-year to \$68.1 billion.
- Since March, 78.5 percent of the total registered workers in the tourism industry have been [furloughed or laid off](#).

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. Geography and demographics may be important factors here: Laos is relatively sparsely populated and surrounded by neighbors which have managed to contain the virus

relatively well. In an effort to boost its economy, Laos has already resumed travel to several countries in Southeast Asia and encouraged domestic tourism.

Public Health Response

October

- Laos on October 2 announced that it has [extended](#) its Covid-19 prevention measures until the end of the month. However, the country will also [allow](#) tourist charter flights from countries where there is no community transmission of the virus.
- As of October 18, those entering Laos are [required](#) to obtain a certificate indicating they have tested negative for Covid-19 within 72 hours of arrival.
- On October 26, Laos [announced](#) the temporary reopening of some local border crossings to facilitate cross-border trade.
- On October 26, Laos [announced](#) it would launch a fast-track immigration service for Chinese nationals effective the following week.

September

- The Lao government on September 1 [announced](#) that it would continue to suspend the issuance of tourist visas for incoming visitors from or transiting via countries with ongoing Covid-19 outbreaks.
- Laos [kicked off](#) its new in-person school year on September 2. Prime Minister Thongloun Sisoulith mandated that students sit at least three feet from each other and that schools install handwashing basins, provide soap and face masks, and take temperature checks.
- The Lao Thiao Lao marketing campaign was [launched](#) on September 11 to boost domestic tourism.
- The Lao Ministry of Health on September 16 began [requiring](#) all individuals entering Laos to be checked and sent to a quarantine center for 14 days.
- Flights between Vietnam and Laos resumed the week of September 21.

August

- The Lao government on August 1 [announced](#) it would continue to implement Covid-19 prevention measures through August, including the closure of entertainment venues and border crossings and the suspension of the issuance of tourist and visitor visas. Shuttle flights have also been suspended.

- Japan and Laos on August 23 [agreed](#) to ease travel restrictions between the two countries as early as September.

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

October

- On October 16, the Lao government [approved](#) a resolution to stimulate economic growth by ramping up manufacturing.

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 ADB projects 2020 GDP to contract 2.5 percent but predicts that the economy will rebound in 2021 with 4.5 percent growth.
- The World Bank on September 28 predicted that Laos will register its slowest growth rate in three decades: between -0.6 percent and -2.4 percent. Growth is expected to rebound in 2021 to 4.9 percent.
- The Lao government on October 28 [announced](#) it expected its economy to grow by 3.3 percent in 2020.
- 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." In August, Moody's [downgraded](#) Laos's issuer rating from B3 to Caa2 and changed its outlook to negative.
- Finance Minister Somdy Douangdy speculated in early August that public debt may [increase](#) to over 65 percent of GDP in 2020 following a sharp fall in national revenue collection alongside an increase in government loans due to the pandemic.
- The Lao government on August 29 [announced](#) that expects revenue from exports to decrease by \$483.3 million, or 8.4 percent, compared to 2019.
- On September 3, the country's foreign exchange reserves reportedly [fell](#) below \$1 billion.

Malaysia

Malaysia's initial response to the outbreak was nonchalant and complicated by an abrupt change in government. In mid-March, the government imposed nationwide restrictions on public movement, which were gradually relaxed as the virus was brought under control. But unrestricted campaigning in the recent Sabah state election caused Malaysia's largest spike in coronavirus cases to date, which the government has yet to effectively control. Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin is on shaky political ground after failing to secure royal permission for a state of emergency which would have allowed him to pass a 2021 budget without parliamentary approval. He now faces calls to resign and will likely face a no-confidence motion when Parliament convenes in early November.

Public Health Responses

November

- Senior Minister of Security Ismail Sabri Yaakob on November 7 [announced](#) the reinstatement of conditional movement control orders in all but three states in peninsular Malaysia.
- Malaysia's education ministry on November 8 [announced](#) that all schools would close for the remainder of the year beginning November 9.
- The Sarawak state assembly on November 9 unanimously [passed](#) a bill providing temporary relief from obligations under various state ordinances not covered by the Covid-19 Act.
- Senior Minister Ismail on November 10 [announced](#) that work from home policies for the public and industry sectors had been extended to all states.
- Sabah on November 11 [relaxed](#) the state's conditional movement control order.
- Senior Minister Ismail on November 12 [announced](#) that foreign domestic workers stranded abroad would be allowed to return to Malaysia for work.
- The Women, Family and Community Development Ministry on November 12 [announced](#) that public and private childcare centers and nurseries would be allowed to operate under the conditional movement control orders.
- Malaysia [tightened](#) movement restrictions in Klang Township near Kuala Lumpur on November 16 after a Covid-19 outbreak in worker dormitories.
- On November 18, Malaysia's king [declared](#) a state of emergency in a parliamentary constituency in Sabah to prevent the holding of a by-election because of fears that it would contribute to community spread of the virus.

October

- Malaysia [imposed](#) a travel ban between Sabah, which has seen a spike in cases, and the rest of the country from October 7 to October 20.
- Over 100 schools in the Kota Kinabalu, Penampang, and Putatan areas of Sabah were [closed](#) on October 7.
- As of October 14, those returning from Sabah to other states before September 27 will not have to undergo mandatory Covid-19 tests but are encouraged to do so. Those returning after October 11 must undergo mandatory Covid-19 tests.
- Sarawak's deputy chief minister Douglas Unggah on October 14 [announced](#) that the state was extending its strict entry procedures through November 15.

- Local authorities in Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya on October 19 [reopened](#) parks, subject to health protocols like physical distancing.
- Senior Minister Ismail on October 21 [announced](#) that work from home orders issued the previous day in Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya, Labuan, and the states of Selangor and Sabah would only apply to the industrial and public sectors. The Ministry of International Trade and Industry also announced that it would exempt workers in accounting, finance, administration, law, and planning.
- On October 26, Malaysia [extended](#) movement restrictions in Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya, and the surrounding state of Selangor for another two weeks amid a record spike in cases.
- On October 29, the city of Johor Bahru was [declared](#) a Covid-19 “red zone” but authorities did not impose new movement restrictions.
- On October 30, the Malaysian Association of Film Exhibitors [announced](#) that it was closing all cinema operations nationwide until further notice.

September

- Malaysia [barred](#) long-term pass holders who are citizens of India, Indonesia, and the Philippines from entering the country effective September 7.
- On September 10, Malaysia [reversed](#) its decision on September 7 to [bar](#) entry for citizens from 28 countries with more than 150,000 coronavirus cases after heavy criticism from the business community.
- Muhyiddin announced on September 16 that border controls would be [tightened](#) and that the government would step up enforcement against illegal immigration.
- Sarawak deputy chief minister Douglas Uggah on September 19 [announced](#) that all visitors entering the state from neighboring Sabah would be required to take a Covid-19 PCR test prior to departure.
- Malaysia on September 19 [announced](#) it was planning to join the COVAX vaccine plan.
- Senior Minister Ismail on September 22 [announced](#) that voters who have tested positive for Covid-19 would be barred from voting in the Sabah state elections.
- Malaysia on September 28 [announced](#) it would implement movement restrictions in four districts in Sabah after a spike in Covid-19 cases
- Sarawak on September 30 [announced](#) it would tighten entry restrictions into the state from areas with large numbers of Covid-19 cases.

August

- The wearing of face masks is [compulsory](#) in crowded public areas and on public transport, not in areas where physical distancing is possible, said Senior Minister Ismail on August 3.
- The uptick in cases reported at the end of July turned into a small surge, with Malaysia [confirming](#) double digits of new cases on August 5. The government is quarantining all those infected.
- Prime Minister Muhyiddin [launched](#) a new pandemic public awareness campaign on August 7.
- Malaysia and Singapore on August 17 [reopened](#) their border for the first time in five months to long-term pass holders, essential business, and official travelers.
- Muhyiddin said on August 28 that the Recovery Movement Control Order, originally set to expire at the end of the month, would be [extended](#) to December 31.

July

- Muhyiddin on July 13 reversed a plan to send detained Rohingya refugees back to sea after international outcry. He declared that Malaysia would “look for an appropriate solution for their situation” and called on Vietnam, as this year’s ASEAN chair, “to play a bigger role in addressing the Rohingya refugee crisis.”
- Schools reopened on July 22 for pupils from years one through four.
- On July 23, Senior Minister Ismail [ordered](#) mandatory mask-wearing in crowded areas and on public transportation, effective August 1.
- Ismail [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.
- Several new local transmissions of the coronavirus [appeared](#) at the end of July, ending a streak of nearly a month without such cases.

June

- Muhyiddin announced that the Conditional Movement Control Order would [end](#) on June 9 and the country would remain under a more relaxed Recovery Movement Control Order until August 31.
- Malaysia on June 19 reopened its borders to select groups of foreigners, including medical tourists and international students.

- 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

May

- On May 4, Malaysia [implemented](#) a Conditional Movement Control Order, which relaxed regulations in the original Movement Control Order. This allowed 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

November

- State-owned oil company Petronas on November 3 [approved](#) a \$2.4 billion dividend to the government to help fight the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Malaysia on November 6 [announced](#) that citizens enrolled in the government's mandatory pension fund who lost their jobs would be allowed to make withdrawals of up to \$120 per month.
- Finance Minister Tengku Zafrul Abdul Aziz on November 6 [announced](#) that the government plans to add \$4.8 billion to a special Covid-19 fund as part of the 2021 budget.

October

- On October 13, Prime Minister Muhiyyidin [announced](#) that the 2021 budget will include targeted support for economically vulnerable groups during the pandemic.
- Malaysia's king on October 25 [rejected](#) Muhyiddin's bid to declare a state of emergency in order to pass the 2021 budget without the need for parliamentary approval. The budget is due November 6.
- On October 29, the Sabah state government [announced](#) that it would distribute \$72 to workers in the tourism industry.
- As of October 30, the Malaysian government had [spent](#) approximately \$480 million on Covid-19 economic recovery assistance in Sabah. Nearly \$100 million has been spent on delivery of food aid and medical supplies in recent weeks.

September

- Malaysia on September 23 [unveiled](#) an additional \$2.4 billion in economic stimulus targeted at industries and citizens affected by the pandemic.
- Finance Minister Zafrul Abdul Aziz on September 29 [stated](#) that wage subsidies amounted to approximately \$2.9 billion, benefiting more than 2.6 million employees and 300,000 employers during the pandemic.

August

- On August 13, Malaysia [lifted](#) an earlier limit on hiring foreign workers, citing demands from local employers.

July

- The Malaysian government on July 29 [announced](#) a three-month extension to the loan repayment moratorium for those who lost their jobs this year due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

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 October 14, the IMF [lowered](#) Malaysia's GDP growth projections for 2020 to -6.0 percent, down from 4.3 percent in 2019.
- The ADB [projects](#) 2020 GDP to contract 5 percent but predicts that the economy will rebound in 2021 with 6.5 percent growth.
- Bank Negara Malaysia [forecasts](#) Malaysia's GDP will contract between 3.5 percent and 5.5 percent in 2020.
- The World Bank on September 28 [projected](#) that Malaysia's GDP would contract by 4.9 percent in 2020 and grow by 6.3 percent in 2021.
- Unemployment [dropped](#) to 4.7 percent in July, following the reopening of economic sectors in stages since May. It remained at that level in September.
- On April 9, Fitch affirmed Malaysia's A- credit rating while [revising](#) the country's outlook to negative.

Myanmar

Myanmar had maintained some of the region's lowest case counts until August. But the case count accelerated steeply over the past several months, largely due to an outbreak in Rakhine state that has since spread to Myanmar's largest cities. The situation there continues to worsen as fears persist that the virus could spread unchecked through the vulnerable Rohingya community. The country's underdeveloped health care system may leave Myanmar unprepared to cope with the pandemic should the current wave of infections escalate. Myanmar's state counselor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has warned that celebrations following her National League for Democracy's success in recent national elections could accelerate the spread of Covid-19. The government's distribution of cash assistance has also come under criticism over allegations that most assistance has gone to well-connected business owners.

Public Health Response

November

- Myanmar [conducted](#) its general election on November 8 as coronavirus cases soared amid a second wave of infections.

October

- On October 8, Yangon's stay-at-home order was [extended](#) for two weeks. Construction sites will still be [allowed](#) to operate.
- On October 13, officials began [conducting](#) health checks of private cars and trucks on the Yangon-Mandalay highway and requiring Covid-19-free certificates.
- On October 14, Yangon garment factories were [permitted](#) to reopen after instituting Covid-19 safety measures.
- On October 27, the government [announced](#) that Myanmar's private hospitals and clinics would begin treating Covid-19 patients.
- On October 27, Myanmar's Foreign Affairs Ministry extended Covid-19 travel restrictions until November 30.

September

- On September 3, Myanmar [imposed](#) a mandatory quarantine and coronavirus test for individuals entering Yangon.
- The Union Election Commission on September 8 [issued](#) restrictions for campaigning ahead of the November elections. Political parties are [barred](#) from campaigning in areas with stay-at-home orders.
- Myanmar tightened lockdown measures in Yangon and Naypyidaw on September 10 to curb the rapid spread of Covid-19. New measures include expanding the stay-at-home order and closing schools. Businesses, however, remain open.
- Myanmar's Committee for Prevention, Control and Treatment of Covid-19 [banned](#) domestic travel [effective September 11](#).
- The government announced on September 15 that it is rushing to [build](#) a new field hospital in Yangon to cope with Covid-19.

- On September 17, Myanmar's military [announced](#) plans to offer more quarantine beds to civilians and have since set up several transit centers.
- On September 21, Myanmar's Ministry of Health and Sports [instructed](#) garment factories in Yangon to close for two weeks and ordered other businesses to work from home.
- On September 21, a stay-at-home order was [instituted](#) in Yangon.
- On September 24, it was reported that the government is [housing](#) more than 45,000 people in schools, monasteries, government offices, and tower blocks, mostly run by volunteers. Those being housed include confirmed and suspected Covid-19 patients, their close contacts, and returning migrant workers.
- On September 25, Myanmar [extended](#) a ban on international flights until October 31.

August

- Myanmar [relaxed](#) social restrictions on August 16, allowing outdoor gatherings of fewer than 30 people.
- Myanmar in mid-August [detected](#) a small crop of new locally transmitted cases for the first time in over a month.
- The government of Rakhine state on August 21 [imposed](#) a curfew in the capital Sittwe after a spike in cases.
- Japan and Myanmar on August 24 [agreed](#) to ease travel restrictions between the two countries as early as September.
- The Myanmar Army on August 25 [extended](#) a unilateral nationwide ceasefire, excluding Rakhine state, until the end of September due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Myanmar on August 26 [expanded](#) the lockdown of Sittwe to all of Rakhine state.
- Myanmar on August 27 [closed](#) government and private high schools due to a surge in Covid-19 cases.
- Myanmar on August 29 [extended](#) its entry restrictions on all incoming visitors until September 30.

July

- Myanmar on July 14 [extended](#) its Covid-19 restrictions. A curfew remains in place. All citizens are still required to wear masks in public. Gatherings of more than five people remain prohibited.

- Borders with China, India, and Thailand 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.
- Myanmar on July 21 [reopened](#) over half of its high schools, with the remainder [expected](#) to reopen in the next month.
- Myanmar on July 29 announced that it would [allow](#) outbound air travel for citizens with urgent business abroad.
- Myanmar on July 30 again [extended](#) various Covid-19 measures, including [extending](#) entry restrictions for foreigners through August 31.

June

- Long-distance travel within the country resumed in early June, although buses must limit the number of passengers.
- Also in early June, restaurants, cafes, tea shops, and markets reopened with social distancing guidelines and limited customer capacity.
- On June 29, the government extended restrictions on visas and international flights until the end of July.
- 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.
- 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.
- On April 28, the government and ethnic armed organizations established a coordinating committee to jointly fight Covid-19.
- On April 30, 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.

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

November

- Myanmar announced on November 5 that it would [provide](#) a \$31 cash handout to households facing hardship due to Covid-19.

October

- The Yangon regional government began [distributing](#) cash payments to workers not registered with the government’s social safety net on October 30.

September

- Myanmar on September 2 [announced](#) it would provide civil servants with two months’ salaries as interest-free loans to mitigate the economic impact of Covid-19.
- On September 7, the Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry [extended](#) the deadlines for paying income and commercial taxes for small and medium-sized enterprises and the garment, textile, and tourism industries until December 31.
- As of September 22, the government [pledged](#) more than \$758 million to fight Covid-19.

August

- The application period for the government's second tranche of loans aimed primarily at agriculture, livestock, fisheries, and food industries [closed](#) on August 10. More than 700 businesses applied.

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

- Due to the pandemic, the IMF [revised](#) Myanmar's GDP growth projection for 2020 from 6.0 percent down to 1.8 percent.
- The IMF [projected](#) that Myanmar's economy would grow 2.0 percent in 2020 and 5.7 percent in 2021.
- The ADB [confirmed](#) Myanmar's GDP growth projection for 2020 at 1.8 percent while predicting growth to bounce back to 6 percent in 2021.
- The World Bank lowered Myanmar's GDP growth rate estimate to 0.5 percent in 2020. It estimates a growth rate of 5.9 percent in 2021.
- According to the Ministry of Labor, an [estimated](#) 60,000 factory workers have been laid off since the beginning of the shutdown in the third quarter. Nationwide unemployment numbers remain unavailable.

- The ADB measured average inflation in the first eight months of 2020 at 7.5 percent, down from 7.9 percent a year earlier, reflecting lower commodity prices and subdued demand.
- The World Bank [reports](#) that headline inflation was 4.2 percent in May 2020.

The Philippines

Against the backdrop of an inconsistent government response, the Philippines is second only to Indonesia for the most officially reported cases in Southeast Asia. Since the government lifted most restrictions in June, a new surge in cases has overwhelmed the public health system and further damaged the economy. Quarantines have been reintroduced throughout the country and testing has steadily increased, but the government has yet to bring the virus under control. Protests against job losses and food shortages have cropped up across the country even as the government cracks down on dissent. Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez has signaled that the government will wait for a vaccine to spur an economic turnaround rather than borrow more funds to aid recovery efforts.

Public Health Response

November

- On November 2, the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board [reopened](#) 35 additional jeepney routes and six provincial bus routes to provide more transportation to the public.
- The Philippine House of Representatives on November 15 [imposed](#) a “No Covid Test, No Entry” policy for all visitors to the House complex in anticipation of the resumption of legislative sessions on November 16.
- The Bureau of Immigration on November 16 [clarified](#) its guidelines regarding the entry of foreign investors, who must now secure a specific type of visa before they can enter the Philippines.

October

- As of October 1, Philippine tourist sites, including Boracay and Baguio, have partially [reopened](#) to the public.
- The government on October 19 [shortened](#) curfew hours in Manila to midnight to 4 a.m.
- On October 21, non-essential overseas travel [resumed](#), ending a restriction in effect since July.
- The Philippines on October 23 [announced](#) it would welcome back foreign nationals arriving on investment visas beginning November 1.

- President Duterte on October 27 [announced](#) that Metro Manila and areas of the Visayas and Mindanao would remain under general community quarantine (GCQ) until November 30.

September

- Several businesses in Metro Manila [resumed](#) operations on September 1 under GCQ rules, prompting additional police deployments in business districts.
- On September 5, Joint Task Force Covid Shield commander Guillermo Eleazar [directed](#) police officers to monitor social media for individuals violating health protocols during quarantine.
- The Philippine government on September 8 [expanded](#) its face shield requirements, making them mandatory in supermarkets, public markets, shopping malls, and government venues.
- The government on September 8 approved the use of antigen tests as a pre-boarding requirement for asymptomatic domestic travelers.
- Interior Secretary Eduardo Año on September 8 [stated](#) that the government was planning to prohibit home quarantine measures in favor of moving patients to isolation centers.
- The Philippines on September 11 [eased](#) social distancing rules for public transport, allowing for the gradual reduction of physical distancing rules.
- President Duterte on September 16 [ordered](#) six government agencies to pool their resources into the production of face masks and their distribution to the public free of charge.
- On September 13, Duterte [extended](#) the nationwide state of calamity over the entire country for a full year.
- On September 21, the government lifted an overseas travel ban on Filipino nurses and other medical workers.
- President Duterte on September 28 [announced](#) that Metro Manila would remain under GCQ through October. Meanwhile, the Lanao del Sur province, including its capital of Marawi, was placed under the more restrictive modified enhanced community quarantine.

August

- President Rodrigo Duterte granted the medical community's appeal to [reimpose](#) the stricter modified enhanced community quarantine (MECQ) in Metro Manila on August 4.

- Police have [deployed](#) roadblocks and checkpoints in and around the capital to check for travel passes and negative test results. Public transport has been [suspended](#).
- In addition to face masks, face shields are [required](#) in Metro Manila and Calabarzon.
- Local government units and the Department of Health will go door to door in select barangays to [identify](#) symptomatic individuals.
- The government on August 15 announced the extension of GCQ in multiple provinces on Luzon, Panay, and Cebu islands until August 31.
- Despite rising infection rates, lockdown restrictions in Metro Manila and four nearby provinces were relaxed to GCQ on August 19. Public transportation [resumed](#). The government has [said](#) that police checkpoints are “here to stay.”
- On August 31, Duterte [named](#) a former chief of the National Bureau of Investigation as the new head of the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation, sparking criticism over his lack of [experience](#) in public health.

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 GCQ [reopened](#) on July 10.
- 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 city of Navotas in Metro Manila reinstated lockdown measures on July 16 following a rise in cases.
- On July 21, Duterte ordered police to arrest anyone found not wearing a mask to teach “a lesson for all time.”
- The ban on nonessential outbound travel was [reimposed](#) on July 24.
- The Department of Education announced on July 29 that it will allow limited in-person schooling in “low-risk” areas when the school year begins on August 24.
- On July 16, Duterte [eased](#) restrictions in Cebu City to a Modified Enhanced Community Quarantine until July 31, at which point he [further](#) downgraded restrictions to GCQ until August 15.

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 \(ECQ\) 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 ECQ [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 ECQ in Metro Manila and broader Luzon.

Economic Response

November

- The Manila city government on November 9 [provided](#) approximately \$2,000 in cash rewards to 73 barangays that have been free of Covid-19 for two months.
- President Duterte on November 16 [issued](#) two directives allocating additional benefits to healthcare workers who work directly with Covid-19 patients.

October

- On October 7, the government [announced](#) plans to distribute aid to the airline industry through loans and regulatory fee waivers.
- The Philippine Congress has [suspended](#) budget hearings until November 16, effectively blocking any new pandemic recovery legislation.
- The Philippine Department of Budget and Management on October 20 [announced](#) that just \$91 million out of \$2.8 billion allocated for the Bayanihan 2 recovery scheme had been released.

September

- The Bureau of Internal Revenue on September 1 extended a deadline for the registration of online merchants until September 30.
- At least three companies blacklisted by the Department of Budget and Management [secured](#) \$15 million in deals to supply personal protective equipment as the government eased procurement rules in response to the health crisis.
- The Department of Labor and Employment on September 9 [announced](#) that only a small portion of unemployed Filipinos had received their coronavirus-related financial assistance.
- President Duterte on September 11 [signed](#) into law a \$3.4 billion pandemic relief measure to expand healthcare and assist small businesses.

August

- The House of Representatives on August 9 [earmarked](#) about \$6 million in financial assistance for private school teachers and personnel affected by the coronavirus pandemic.
- The Senate on August 20 ratified a nearly \$3 billion national recovery bill, called Bayanihan 2, which would provide targeted assistance to the country's most affected workers and sectors.
- The City of Manila [allocated](#) \$3.1 million for hazard pay for city government employees who worked through the ECQ.

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

- On June 4, the House of Representatives passed the Accelerated Recovery and Investments Stimulus for the Economy, or [ARISE](#), act. If approved by the Senate, the bill would seek to help more than 15.7 million workers, create 4.5 million jobs, and provide assistance to more than 5.5 million small and medium enterprises.
- The Duterte administration 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.

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, reappropriation 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.
- In October, the IMF [projected](#) that the Philippine economy would contract 8.3 percent in 2020 before rebounding to 7.4 percent growth in 2021.
- The ADB on September 15 projected that the Philippines' GDP would [contract](#) by 7.3 percent in 2020 but expand by 6.5 percent in 2021.
- The World Bank on September 28 projected that the Philippines' GDP would contract by 6.9 percent in 2020 and grow by 5.3 percent in 2021. contract by 6.9 percent in 2020 and grow by 5.3 percent in 2021. The Philippines' GDP [shrank](#) 11.5 percent in the third quarter from a year earlier.
- Several foreign and local analysts, including from the Bank of the Philippine Islands, [revised](#) their GDP growth projections for 2020 from -8.1 to -10.8 percent.
- The Philippine economy [plunged](#) a record 16.5 percent in the second quarter, according to the country's statistics agency.
- A national poll released on August 16 [found](#) that 45.5 percent of adults surveyed in July were unemployed and that 21 percent had lost their livelihoods due to the pandemic. This contrasts sharply with the finding by the Philippine Statistics Authority that the unemployment rate had [fallen](#) to 10 percent in July.
- Fitch, in late April, maintained a BBB+ credit rating for the Philippines despite the Covid-19 crisis. On September 9, the ratings agency announced it expects the Philippine economy to contract by 8 percent this year.
- Economist and Marikina representative Stella Quimbo [estimated](#) that the economy stands to lose \$245 million per day during MECQ.

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, with no new local infections reported on October 13 for the first time in over six months.

Public Health Response

November

- The Islamic Religious Council of Singapore on November 1 [announced](#) that 10 mosques will participate in a pilot project to increase the number of worshippers per session to 250 by the end of the year, with attendees required to use the TraceTogether app or token.
- The Ministry of Education on November 3 [postponed](#) its requirement for students to use the TraceTogether token for entry into schools until all tokens are given out.
- Singapore announced on November 6 that a limited number of nightlife establishments will be allowed to [reopen](#) with Covid-19 safety measures in place under a pilot program.
- The Ministry of Health announced on November 10 that foreign travelers planning to enter Singapore from high-risk countries will need to [take](#) a Covid-19 test within 72 hours before departure.
- Students aged 7 and older must [use](#) the TraceTogether app or token beginning December 1.
- Singapore announced on November 10 that coronavirus tests will be [available](#) for all individuals from an approved provider on December 1.
- On November 22, Singapore and Hong Kong began [operating](#) a quarantine-free leisure travel corridor.

October

- The Ministry of Manpower on October 8 [announced](#) it would set up additional regional screening centers and testing facilities in dormitories.
- Singapore and Indonesia on October 12 [announced](#) that negotiations over their reciprocal travel corridor had concluded and they would accept applications for the green lane beginning October 26.
- On October 16, Singaporean authorities [announced](#) that 450,000 contact tracing devices will be distributed to all those living or working in dormitories, construction, and marine shipyard worksites.
- On October 20, the Ministry of Health [announced](#) that Singaporean citizens, permanent residents, and long-term pass holders traveling out of Singapore who have Covid-19 symptoms within 14 days of their return will be allowed to tap into government subsidies and insurance coverage for their medical bills.
- On October 20, the Minister of Health [announced](#) that Singapore will pilot pre-event testing from mid-October to December in order to hold safer large-scale events in 2021.

- On October 20, Education Minister and co-chair of the multi-ministry task force on Covid-19 Lawrence Wong [announced](#) that the nightlife industry will likely not resume its activities even after Singapore enters Phase 3 of its reopening.
- On October 20, the Smart Nation and Digital Government Office [announced](#) that it will soon be compulsory to use the TraceTogether app or token to do SafeEntry check in at popular venues across Singapore by the end of 2020.
- A Ministry of Manpower press release [stated](#) on October 21 that a new program would be implemented at migrant worker dormitories to train and educate operators and residents on infection prevention and control.
- Singapore and Germany have [agreed](#) to start a reciprocal “green lane” allowing business and official travel as of October 23.
- Singapore on October 28 [announced](#) that foreign worker dormitory residents who tested negative for Covid-19 would be able to visit recreation centers starting October 31.
- The distribution of TraceTogether tokens at community centers was temporarily [suspended](#) until October 29 to prevent long queues at centers.
- Singapore on October 29 [announced](#) that all travelers from China and the state of Victoria in Australia would be able to enter Singapore without being quarantined, beginning November 6.
- Transport Minister Ong Ye Kung on October 30 [announced](#) that staff at Changi Airport who come into close contact with passengers will be required to wear full PPE and be tested for Covid-19 every two weeks.

September

- On September 1, Singapore and Brunei [announced a](#) reciprocal green lane, permitting travel between the two countries for essential business and official purposes only.
- A fast lane connecting Singapore and South Korea [opened](#) on September 4 for essential business and official travel.
- The Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore on September 8 [announced](#) that all incoming and outgoing flights are required to set up emergency quarantine areas on board.
- Entry restrictions to four popular markets were [lifted](#) on September 12.
- Singapore announced that it would distribute its “TraceTogether” contact-tracing tokens nationwide beginning September 14.

- Singapore and Japan will launch a “reciprocal green lane” to facilitate essential business and official travel between the two countries on Sep 18.
- The Ministry of Health on September 23 [announced](#) that more people will be allowed to return to the workplace starting September 28, subject to certain criteria including capacity limits.
- Minister for Health Gan Kim Yong on September 23 [announced](#) that restrictions on worship services and weddings would be eased on October 3, with up to 100 attendees allowed at gatherings.
- Singapore on September 23 [announced](#) it would pilot a business travel pass for senior executives.
- The Ministry of Health on September 23 [announced](#) that the legal cutoff age for children who need to wear face masks would be adjusted to six-years-old, up from the current two-years-old.
- The Ministry of Health [announced](#) on September 29 that all Singaporeans would receive a one-time Covid-19 subsidy to offset the net increase in premiums for their healthcare plans.
- On September 29, the Ministry of Law [amended](#) a law that came into effect on March 27, permitting general meetings of most entities to be held electronically until the end of June 2021 and making additional real-time electronic voting provisions.
- On October 7, 19 mosques in Singapore will [open](#) 50 more spaces for individuals to use for daily congregational prayers.

August

- Amid a [third wave](#) of imported cases, all inbound travelers must [wear](#) quarantine monitoring devices starting on August 11.
- The majority of foreign workers will be [allowed](#) to return to work by the end of the month, putting many construction projects back on track.
- Singapore and Malaysia [reopened](#) their border on August 17 for the first time in five months for limited business travel.
- Singapore on August 21 [announced](#) that national exams will take place from September 14 through December 2, with Covid-19 safety measures in place
- The Ministry of Health on August 22 [announced](#) a new cluster of cases at Singapore’s largest dormitory.

- On August 22, authorities [mandated](#) that employers in labor-intensive industries must screen employees for Covid-19 before they return to work and every 14 days thereafter.
- Singapore held discussions with [Indonesia](#) and [Thailand](#) on August 25-26 to establish reciprocal travel arrangements for essential business.

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.
- Tourist attractions reopened at 25 percent operating capacity on July 1.
- Singapore has rolled out a [pilot program](#), giving each of its 5.7 million residents a Bluetooth device to trace interactions with virus carriers. As of July 29, just under [40 percent](#) of the population had downloaded the app. Authorities have said they would like that figure above 75 percent.

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.
- On June 8, Singapore set up a “fast lane” for essential trips by government and corporate travelers between Singapore and Shanghai, Guangdong, Tianjin, Jiangsu, and Zhejiang.
- 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 Korea, 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, Lee [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

October

- Singapore on October 8 [unveiled](#) additional temporary relief measures for property developers.
- As of October 28, 470,000 lower-income Singaporean workers had received Workfare Special Payment payouts from the Ministry of Finance.
- As of October 30, 89,000 people had [received](#) funds from Singapore’s Covid-19 Support Grant, which provides up to \$588 per month for three months to Singaporean and permanent residents whose employment status have been impacted by the pandemic.
- Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat on November 2 [launched](#) a \$2.9 million fund for Singaporean households impacted by Covid-19-related job losses, with each household to receive a one-time payment of approximately \$370.

- President Halimah Yacob on November 3 formally [approved](#) Singapore's third Supplementary Supply and Budget Adjustments Bill, providing an additional \$5.8 billion in Covid-19 support.

September

- Singapore on September 4 [passed](#) amendments to its Covid-19 Act, expanding rent relief efforts.

August

- Singapore [allocated](#) an additional \$5.8 billion to support the construction, retail, food services, and arts sectors. The aviation industry will receive \$136.7 million in additional relief, while the tourism industry will be supported by \$233.9 million in domestic travel vouchers. The government has also launched a billion-dollar scheme to help biomedical sciences and financial services companies hire local talent.
- Singapore [allocated](#) \$365 million to help Singaporeans and businesses adapt to a digital working environment as a part of the "Fortitude" budget.

July

- Around 400,000 low-income workers will be eligible for cash payouts [starting](#) July 28 as part of the Workfare Income Supplement scheme targeting the bottom 20 percent of the workforce.
- The Singapore Tourism Board [launched](#) a \$33 million campaign to encourage domestic tourism and redirect overseas spending.
- Workforce Singapore and the Singapore Business Federation have [launched](#) multiple traineeship schemes for new graduates and mid-career job seekers.

June

- On May 6, 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," totaling \$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

- Singapore [reported](#) that the economy shrank by a record 13.2 percent year over year in the second quarter. GDP is expected to fall by 5 to 7 percent overall this year.
- The ADB projected a 6.2 percent GDP contraction for 2020 overall while predicting a rebound of 4.5 percent for 2021.
- The IMF in October lowered Singapore’s GDP growth projections for 2020 to -6 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.
- Singapore’s overall unemployment rate [rose](#) to 2.9 percent in June, a 20 percent increase from March. Layoffs more than doubled in the second quarter. The Ministry of Manpower on September 7 [announced](#) that two in five workers retrenched in the first quarter were able to find jobs by June. Singapore’s overall unemployment rate rose to 3.4 percent in August while resident unemployment rate [rose](#) to 4.5 percent, up from 4.1 percent in July. Singapore’s total unemployment rate [rose](#) to 3.6 percent in September, while unemployment among permanent residents rose to 4.7 percent.

Thailand

Thailand had done relatively well in combating the coronavirus crisis with a quick lockdown, an effective test-and-trace rollout, and an already strong healthcare system. But after more than 100 days without local transmission, Thailand reported a new case on September 3. Additionally,

Thailand is projected to suffer the worst economic consequences in the region due to its overwhelming dependence on tourism and exports. This has contributed to pro-democracy protests in Bangkok, which have flouted an emergency order by Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha banning free assembly. The government has cracked down on protests, citing the increased risk of spreading Covid-19. But the government appears to be more concerned with halting the spread of the protest movement than with public health.

Public Health Response

November

- The Thai cabinet on November 17 [approved](#) approximately \$197 million in funding to purchase 26 million doses of AstraZeneca's Covid-19 vaccine..
- The Thai government on November 18 [extended](#) its nationwide state of emergency through January 15 to prevent Covid-19 infections during the New Year's travel period.

October

- The Centre for Covid-19 Administration Situation gave the green light for long-stay foreign visitors to [enter](#) Thailand beginning October 1 on special tourist visas. The tourists must quarantine for 14 days. Visitors can stay in the country for up to 90 days, with visa renewals extending that to as many as nine months.
- Thailand's National Vaccine Committee on October 6 [requested](#) nearly \$100 million in order to procure enough doses of a Covid-19 vaccine for half of the population, beginning with frontline healthcare workers.
- Thailand agreed on October 12 to [manufacture](#) British pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca's experimental Covid-19 vaccine AZD1222 and act as Southeast Asia's supplier of the drug.
- The government temporarily [imposed](#) a "severe" state of emergency on October 15, restricting gatherings to no more than four people, ostensibly to curb spread of the coronavirus. But the declaration was widely criticized as a ploy to quash anti-government protests. Protestors largely ignored the order and the Prayuth rescinded it on October 22.
- Thailand and China entered talks on October 16 to establish a quarantine-free travel corridor by January.
- Thailand [received](#) a group of tourists from China on October 20, its first such arrivals since commercial flights were halted in April.

- The Public Health Ministry announced on October 26 that it will make a [list](#) of low-risk countries whose nationals might face fewer restrictions to enter Thailand.
- Thailand on October 28 [extended](#) its state of emergency due to Covid-19 until the end of November.

September

- Thailand will [ease](#) the approval process for overseas patients beginning in September to facilitate medical tourism.
- Thailand [restarted](#) contact tracing on September 4 after reporting its first non-imported case in over 100 days.
- On September 3, Thai Airways International [announced](#) that it would operate 18 special flights to European and Asian cities to repatriate Thai citizens throughout September.
- Thailand tightened security on its borders with Myanmar and Cambodia on September 11.
- The government on September 15 [approved](#) long-term tourist visas for those who agree to a 14-day quarantine and stay for at least 90 days.
- The state of emergency decree was [extended](#) for a sixth time on September 28, to last until the end of October.
- On September 28, Thailand announced a plan to slowly reopen to tourism. 150 tourists will arrive in Phuket via charter flight from Guangzhou, China. After that, two more groups of foreign travelers—from China and Europe—will arrive on October 26 and November 1, respectively.
- The cabinet announced on September 29 that it would [allow](#) foreigners unable to return to their home countries due to Covid-19 to stay in Thailand until October 31.

August

- Under Phase 6 of loosening lockdown restrictions, foreign residential and work permit holders and their families, and migrant workers, can [return](#) beginning August 4.
- All schools [resumed](#) in-person classes on August 13. More than 3,000 foreign teachers have been [cleared](#) for entry.
- Thailand on August 21 [extended](#) its state of emergency for the fifth time, continuing until the end of September.

- Thailand on August 26 [announced](#) it was delaying human trials of its Covid-19 vaccine until the end of the year due to limited production capacity. Trials were expected to begin by October.
- The interior secretary on August 28 [ordered](#) 10 provinces bordering Myanmar to tighten security and health protocols after a new wave of infections were in reported in Rakhine state. Businesses were told to [refrain](#) from bringing Myanmar workers into the country.

July

- The state of emergency [first declared](#) by Prime Minister Prayuth on March 26 has been extended through the end of [August](#), 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.
- On July 13, Thailand [increased](#) security at its land borders amid concerns over a second wave of Covid-19 infections.
- Thailand on July 23 [announced](#) that migrant workers from Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam with proper paperwork would be allowed to return to the country, while migrant workers entering through irregular channels would be deported in line with the July 13 hardening of land borders.
- The Royal Thai Army on July 29 announced it was [suspending](#) all plans to send personnel to overseas military exercises after nine soldiers returning from the Lightning Forge 2020 drill in Hawaii tested positive for Covid-19.

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 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 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 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

October

- The government announced on October 7 that it will [give](#) 3.7 million taxpayers a tax deduction of up to \$960 on purchases of goods and services from October to December.

September

- Thailand on September 9 announced plans to invest nearly \$1 billion to support its farm sector and create rural jobs.
- To help low-income workers and boost the economy, the government on September 16 [approved](#) a \$100 handout to 10 million people, which must be spent in the last quarter of this year.
- The Thai cabinet on September 22 [approved](#) a one-year extension of a scheme to help underprivileged people with their electricity and water bills during the pandemic.

August

- The government [approved](#) a \$28.5 million stimulus package to support farming and tourism sectors on August 4.
- The government announced that social security contributions will be [cut](#) for a second time from September through November.
- The government has approved a \$32 million budget to support domestic vaccine production.
- The Thai cabinet on August 25 [approved](#) stimulus measures to support domestic tourism, including subsidies for travel and accommodations.
- The Bangkok Metropolitan Administration [extended](#) the deadline for land and building tax payments until October 31.

- Prime Minister Prayuth on August 29 [accepted](#) a petition for over \$767 million in soft loans to bail out seven domestic budget airlines.

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 October [revised](#) their economic growth outlook for Thailand to -7.1 percent for 2020, an improvement over its June prediction. The IMF also predicts a rebound to 4 percent growth in 2021.
- Thailand's central bank said in October that it expects the economy to [contract](#) by 7.8 percent this year.
- The ADB on September 15 projected that Thailand's GDP would contract by 8 percent in 2020 and would expand by 4.5 percent in 2021.
- The World Bank forecasted that the Thai economy will [shrink](#) at least 8.3 percent this year, with a projected [rebound](#) of 4.9 percent in 2021.
- 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.

- In June, Kasikorn Research Center noted that unemployment in Greater Bangkok [rose](#) to 9.6 percent, much higher than normal. In May, the president of the Thai Chamber of Commerce [predicted](#) that up to one-quarter of Thais would be unemployed due to the global shutdown.
- S&P on April 14 [downgraded](#) Thailand's credit rating outlook from "positive" to "stable" due to uncertainties introduced by Covid-19

Timor-Leste

Despite initial fears that Timor-Leste's weak health infrastructure would not be able to handle an outbreak of Covid-19, the country has effectively contained the virus since March. After announcing a state of emergency, the government heavily restricted travel to and from Timor-Leste and strictly enforced health guidelines for all travelers and residents.

Public Health Response

October

- Timor-Leste on October 3 [extended](#) its state of emergency for another 30 days.
- On October 28, the government [announced](#) a mandatory mask wearing policy from November 4 to December 3.
- Timor-Leste on October 27 [extended](#) its state of emergency until December 3.

September

- Timor-Leste on September 4 [extended](#) its state of emergency through October 4.

August

- On August 6, Timor-Leste [implemented](#) its fourth state of emergency, effective until September 4.
- On August 25, the Timor-Leste government [declared](#) victory over Covid-19.

June

- The country's second state of emergency [expired](#) on June 26. While internal restrictions were relaxed, many restaurants, government buildings, and markets still mandated restrictions including mask-wearing and social distancing.

May

- On May 27, President Francisco Guterres [renewed](#) Timor-Leste's state of emergency for another month but adopted more flexible measures.
- On May 29, some religious, cultural, school, and sporting events were [permitted](#) as border control was strengthened.
- On May 29, foreigners born in Timor-Leste, resident citizens, and legal guardians of Timorese minors were [permitted](#) to enter the country. In addition, foreigners deemed essential to business or transportation were allowed to enter.

April

- Dili's international airport [restricted](#) international and domestic commercial operations as of April 4, with an unspecified end date.
- On April 8, Prime Minister Taur Matan Ruak withdrew a resignation he had issued in February, deciding to stay on until the virus was defeated and a new government could form.
- Beginning April 13, travelers, regardless of their citizenship, were [forbidden](#) from entering or exiting the country.
- On April 24, President Guterres renewed Timor-Leste's state of emergency.
- On April 29, the Council of Ministers [reinstated](#) public transportation, including taxis.

March

- After Timor-Leste [reported](#) its first case of Covid-19 on March 21, President Guterres [announced](#) a state of emergency on March 28, [including](#) travel restrictions, managed migration, and imposition of social health interventions.

Economic Response

October

- The government on October 20 [presented](#) its economic recovery plan to the national parliament, consisting of 71 short- and medium-term measures to boost the economy.

April

- On April 8, the government [approved](#) a \$250 million fund for Covid-19 relief.

Economic Projections

- The IMF [projects](#) Timor-Leste's GDP to contract by 3 percent in 2020.
- In October, the IMF [projected](#) that Timor-Leste's GDP would contract 6.8 percent in 2020 and grow 4 percent in 2021.
- The World Bank [predicts](#) GDP growth to decline by 6.8 percent in 2020.

Vietnam

Despite limited resources and a bustling border with China, Vietnam initially managed to effectively contain the pandemic. Life had returned to normal for most Vietnamese until a second wave spread from the city of Danang. Vietnam recorded its first handful of deaths at the end of July, but Hanoi's response was swift, getting the virus back under control by early September. Vietnam offers an important cautionary tale: no country, no matter how effective its initial response, is out of the woods yet. New imported cases are inevitable as countries reopen, and vigilance is paramount, especially as Vietnam reopens flights to major cities around Asia to encourage foreign investment. Vietnam's economy has been surprisingly resilient; it is the only Southeast Asian nation still projected to have positive economic growth this year.

Public Health Response

October

- On October 1, Vietnam's immigration department [announced](#) another automatic stay extension until the end of the month for foreigners stranded in Vietnam due to the pandemic.
- Vietnam on October 8 [announced](#) it was temporarily suspending regular inbound flights pending the issuance of official national quarantine procedures.
- Ho Chi Minh City on October 9 [announced](#) that it would continue to require all citizens to wear face masks when leaving their homes. City officials that same day also [outlined](#) quarantine requirements for arriving foreigners.
- Vietnam and Japan [agreed](#) to quarantine-free procedures for short-term entries beginning on November 1.

September

- Foreign experts, investors, managers, and diplomats entering the country for fewer than 14 days are no longer be required to quarantine [as of](#) September 2.
- As of September 11, Vietnam [required](#) seven-day centralized quarantine for foreigners, in anticipation of resumed commercial flights.

- Vietnam on September 15 [announced](#) it would restart passenger flights to and from Guangzhou, Seoul, Tokyo, Taipei, Phnom Penh, and Vientiane this month in an effort to encourage foreign investment inflows.

August

- On August 3, a government spokesperson said that Vietnam has [no plans](#) for a widespread Covid-19 lockdown and will only put areas considered epicenters under strict quarantine.
- Danang on August 11 announced that it was [extending](#) its social distancing measures indefinitely.
- With the second-largest outbreak after Danang, Quang Nam Province on August 13 [suspended](#) non-essential services until further notice.
- Vietnam [registered](#) to buy a Russian Covid-19 vaccine, state television announced on August 14. In the meantime, Vietnam will continue developing its own vaccine.
- Beginning August 19, all restaurants in Hanoi must [adopt](#) social distancing measures and require masks.
- Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc on August 19 [called](#) for greater inspection measures for medical equipment amid reports of the circulation of substandard gloves and face masks
- Quang Nam Province [lifted](#) social distancing measures on August 28.
- On August 31, the Ministry of Health [issued](#) a directive allowing foreigners entering Vietnam to work for a period of less than 14 days to forgo quarantine.

July

- Vietnam resumed issuing e-visas to foreign visitors from 80 countries on July 1.
- Vietnam on July 13 announced it was allowing the resumption of commercial flights to and from China.
- On July 27, Vietnam began a four-day [evacuation](#) process of 80,000 people from Danang after several new cases cropped up in the tourist hotspot over the weekend. Meanwhile, the Vietnamese government [warned](#) of stiff penalties for illegal immigration and mandated social distancing in Danang while banning gatherings of 30 or more.
- The Vietnamese government swiftly [imposed](#) a lockdown on Danang, restricting any flights or public transit in or out of the city and closing entertainment venues.

- Vietnam recorded its first two [deaths](#) from Covid-19 on Friday, July 31.

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.
- 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.
- 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.

February

- Vietnam [declared](#) a state of emergency and banned all flights to and from China on February 1.
- On February 15, Vietnam [announced](#) its first local quarantine orders.

January

- Vietnam [recorded](#) its first case of Covid-19 on January 23.

Economic Response

October

- On October 2, the government announced a 30 percent corporate income tax cut for certain businesses for the 2020 financial year.

August

- Ho Chi Minh City on August 17 [allocated](#) \$26 million in financial support to over 500,000 individuals impacted by Covid-19, including workers laid off or on unpaid leave.

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](#) in October lowered Vietnam’s GDP growth projections for 2020 to 1.6 percent, down from 7.0 percent in 2019.
- On September 15, the ADB [revised](#) Vietnam’s projected economic growth to 1.8 percent, but the economy is expected to bounce back at 6.3 percent in 2021.
- The World Bank [estimates](#) that Vietnam’s GDP will grow by 2.8 percent in 2020 and 6.7 percent in 2021.
- The World Bank [estimates](#) that Vietnam’s annual inflation rate will be 3.7 percent for 2020.
- Vietnam’s first quarter employment rate reached a 10-year high. On July 10, the government [announced](#) that the Covid-19 pandemic had 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.

- In late May, S&P maintained Vietnam's credit rating at BB, with a [stable](#) outlook.

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.

- Singapore's prime minister Lee Hsien Loong announced at the ASEAN Summit on November 12 that his country will contribute \$100,000 to the Covid-19 ASEAN Response Fund.
- Vietnam donated \$5 million worth of health equipment to ASEAN's regional reserves and contributed \$100,000 to ASEAN's Covid-19 Response Fund on November 12.
- ASEAN pledged to step up cooperation with the European Union and India following the ASEAN-EU and ASEAN-India Ministerial Meetings on September 12, where both sides agreed to support capacity building and response to the Covid-19 pandemic and promote recovery.
- Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced on September 10 that the U.S. Centers for Disease Control will open a regional office in Hanoi to increase its public health engagement in Southeast Asia.
- During the September 10 ASEAN-US Foreign Ministers' Meeting, the United States introduced cooperation and support programs for ASEAN member states that focused on four main fields: strengthening public health systems for the future, building connectivity through human capital development, advancing partnerships in economic cooperation, and promoting maritime cooperation for a secure Indo-Pacific.
- During the ASEAN-China Ministerial meeting on September 9, ministers of member countries called for increased cooperation with China in supporting ASEAN's Covid-19 response as well as in areas in economic development, cybersecurity, maritime issues, and disaster relief.
- The ASEAN Foreign Minister's Meeting kicked off on September 9 with a draft communique acknowledging widespread supply chain disruptions, job losses, and

demand shocks.

- At the ASEAN Economic Minister's Meeting in late August, ASEAN member countries [pledged](#) to collaborate and support external partners' Covid-19 vaccine development by sharing key clinical data and reports.
- The ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly Caucus met on August 14 with the aim of deepening coordination on Covid-19 response.
- ASEAN on July 29 [convened](#) a meeting between ASEAN and Australian health experts to discuss best practices on the public health response to Covid-19.
- 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.
- The [29th Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership \(RCEP\) Trade Negotiating Committee Meeting](#) was held April 20 to 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.

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 countries.

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. China on August 13 [donated](#) 130 ventilators to the Philippines.
- *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 task force [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. On June 5, the Chinese government [donated](#) an additional 100,000 test kits, 70,000 sets of PPE, 70,000 protective masks, and 1.3 million surgical masks.

- *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. The city of Kunming on August 14 [provided](#) medical supplies and equipment to Vientiane and Luang Prabang, including two ambulances.
- *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. UNICEF on October 21 [announced](#) a collaboration with China’s Ministry of Commerce to provide hygiene supplies and education materials to more than 3,000 Cambodian preschools.
- *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 and [followed](#) that up with another 15 machines on April 30. 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. China on August 11 [provided](#) Brunei with 35,000 face masks and 5,000 units of hand sanitizer. As of August 11, [over](#) \$1.3 million in aid has been given to Brunei from more than 12 Chinese companies and China-Brunei joint ventures.
- *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. As of [September 9](#), more than \$87 million of that funding had been 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. The United States on August 28 [donated](#) 100 ventilators to the Philippines. USAID on September 28 [extended](#) \$213 million in funding to the Philippines to boost economic development and growth.
- *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. One hundred ventilators [arrived](#) in Indonesia from the United States on July 22, followed by [500 more](#) at the end of August.
- *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. On July 20, the U.S. government

donated public health supplies including handwashing stations and personal protective equipment valued at \$14,500 USD (approximately 450,000 THB) to support Mae Fah Luang University's effort to assist vulnerable migrant and ethnic communities in Chiang Rai.

- *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. USAID on August 7 [donated](#) medical supplies to the Lao Ministry of Health worth \$170,000. On November 6, the U.S. Embassy in Laos [donated](#) \$75,000 worth of Covid-19 test kits and related supplies to the Lao government.
- *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. On September 30, the U.S. [donated](#) 100 ventilators, worth over \$1.7 million, and pledged grants worth \$9.5 million to support health services.
- *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.
- *Timor-Leste*: The U.S. government has given \$1.6 [million](#) in Covid-19 aid to Timor-Leste. This includes \$1.1 million to help the government prepare to test and trace cases, and \$500,000 for community engagement and sanitation in health clinics. On June 2, the U.S. Embassy in Timor-Leste also [donated](#) 15,000 reusable fabric masks to the Ministry of Education in order to help students return to school.

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. U.S. businesses have reportedly donated [at least \\$40 million](#) to ASEAN as well.

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. Singapore's Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan informed State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi on October 2 that Singapore would be [donating](#) an additional 25,000 Covid-19 diagnostic kits, 1 million surgical masks, and 200,000 bottles of hand sanitizer.

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.
- *Maldives*: Vietnam on August 31 presented aid worth \$20,000 in medical equipment to the Maldives to support its efforts against Covid-19.
- *Israel*: Vietnam on September 22 [donated](#) 100,000 medical face masks to the Embassy of Israel.

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 Thailand

- The Thai Ministry of Defence on October 23 [announced](#) it would provide 20 mobile isolation chambers to Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, and Myanmar.
- On November 17, Thailand [donated](#) 10,000 Covid-19 test kits to Singapore.

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. JICA on July 23 [donated](#) lab equipment and supplies to the Philippines to boost Covid-19 testing capacity.
- 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.
- Japan extended a Crisis Response Emergency Support Loan worth [\\$500 million](#) 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.
- A Japanese flight carrying \$18.1 million worth of donated medical equipment [arrived](#) in Myanmar on August 15.
- Japanese foreign minister Toshimitsu Motegi on August 24 [pledged](#) to provide Myanmar about \$280 million in loans for emergency budget support and \$140 million to assist small and medium-sized enterprises.
- Japan on September 7 [provided](#) an \$18.8 million grant to Vietnam for Covid-19 prevention and control.
- Japan on September 15 [provided](#) the Philippines with a loan of nearly \$500 million for Covid-19 response.

- On October 21, Japan [offered](#) Indonesia \$473 million in low-interest loans to support its fight against Covid-19.
- On November 13, Japan [pledged](#) \$50 million to create the ASEAN Center for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases and \$1 million for the bloc's Covid-19 response fund.

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 has [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.
- South Korea on July 27 [donated](#) 200 metric tons of rice, valued at \$200,000, to the Philippine Department of Social Welfare and Development to support its Covid-19 relief efforts.
- The Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency on July 27 [delivered](#) Covid-19 test kits to the Philippine Department of Health. The donation was accompanied by 60,000 KF94 masks, seven Covid-19 walk-through diagnostic booths, and 1,000 face shields.
- Myanmar [received](#) 200,000 test kits from South Korea at the end of September.
- The Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) [provided](#) \$200,000 to the International Red Cross' (ICRC) regional delegation to Indonesia and Timor-Leste. The funds are expected to enable the ICRC to expand its program and technical support to 67 prisons in six provinces that accommodate more than 57,600 inmates.

- Myanmar announced on October 20 that it had received and [disbursed](#) 700,000 out of the 900,000 rapid antigen test kits promised from a South Korean company.
- KOICA on October 20 [donated](#) 15,000 sets of food and hygiene products for Cambodians impacted by the pandemic.
- On November 13, South Korea [pledged](#) \$1 million to the ASEAN Covid-19 response fund and \$5 million worth of medical equipment to ASEAN member states.

Assistance from Cambodia

- Prime Minister Hun Sen announced on November 14 that Cambodia would [donate](#) 2 million face masks and other medical supplies to neighboring Laos.

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 [August](#), Taiwan has provided 1.1 million face masks to Singapore, 300,000 to Indonesia and Vietnam, and 200,000 to Thailand. Taiwan has also provided 800,000 face masks and PPE to the Philippines and infrared thermal imaging cameras, PPE, and 170,000 face masks 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 Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama, Indonesia's largest Islamic organizations, to support their Covid-19 response. The Australian government [partnered](#) with the IOM on July 24 to donate over 100 ventilators as part of its \$1.4 million critical medical and laboratory equipment package for Indonesia. Australia on October 31 [announced](#) it will spend \$351 million to secure Covid-19 vaccines for Southeast Asia and the Pacific. During the ASEAN-Australia meeting on November 14, Prime Minister Scott Morrison [announced](#) a \$15 million donation to the ASEAN Regional Center on Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases, and \$51 million for recovery efforts.

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. The European Union on August 18 [provided](#) Laos with \$2.9 million in funding to mitigate the health, social, and economic impacts of Covid-19.

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 Sweden

- Sweden on October 26 [announced](#) it would provide Cambodia with nearly \$500,000 for Covid-19 relief.

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. On November 7, Israel [donated](#) an additional 10,000 Covid-19 test kits to the Philippines.

Assistance from the United Arab Emirates

- The United Arab Emirates [sent](#) 5 metric tons of medical supplies and testing kits to Cambodia on September 2.

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. Responding to a surge in cases, the World Bank [provided](#) Vietnam \$6.2 million in aid on July 31. The World Bank on October 22 [approved](#) \$40 million in emergency financing to small- and medium-sized enterprises in Laos.

- *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. On July 29, Myanmar [announced](#) it will seek a \$250 million loan for its Covid-19 Economic Relief Plan. The ADB on August 4 [announced](#) it was providing a \$1.5 billion loan to Thailand to support its Covid-19 response. The ADB on August 28 [donated](#) \$1.3 million in medical equipment and health worker training to Laos. In early September, the ADB [approved](#) \$250 million in concessional financing to support Cambodia's Covid-19 response. On October 12, the ADB [approved](#) a \$30 million loan to support Myanmar's fight against Covid-19 by helping the government upgrade laboratory and hospital equipment and clinic management and services.
- *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 IOM has [delivered](#) over \$1 million in essential medical equipment and supplies to Indonesian hospitals. The Global Partnership for Education on August 14 [allocated](#) a \$7 million grant via UNICEF to Laos to mitigate the impacts of Covid-19 on children's education. UNICEF on October 21 [provided](#) over \$1 million in medical supplies to the Lao Ministry of Health.

- The Livelihoods and Food Security Fund, a multi-donor 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.