January 27

**National Responses to Covid-19 in Southeast Asia**

**Brunei**

*Brunei* has successfully contained the spread of Covid-19 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 until recently, contained the virus reasonably well.

January

- The Minister of Health on January 7 announced plans to vaccinate a total of 70 percent of Brunei’s population.
- Travelers from Malaysia will be banned from entering Brunei via land and sea checkpoints for two weeks starting January 13.
- On January 26, Brunei extended until February 10 a temporary ban on foreign nationals entering the country from Malaysia by land and sea.

December

- Brunei’s government announced on December 2 that the country’s annual December Festival will go ahead this year but will be scaled down to accommodate social distancing measures.
- On December 9, Malaysia’s Sabah state announced plans to reopen its border with Brunei.
- On December 15, the Sabah government announced that Sabahans in Brunei could return to Sabah if they receive a Covid-19 rapid test or screening beforehand, instead of needing to quarantine.
- On December 24, the Brunei government announced the formation of a technical committee to create and implement a Covid-19 vaccine dissemination strategy.

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 International Monetary Fund (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 Monetary Authority of Brunei Darussalam reports that Brunei’s domestic economy grew by 2.6 percent year-on-year in the first half of 2020.

- 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.

Cambodia

*Cambodia* has reported few cases and zero deaths despite weak health infrastructure and an initially slow response. Cambodia’s location may have played a role in its success, as the country is surrounded by Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand, all of which controlled the virus relatively well for most of 2020. In the latter half of the year, the government proceeded with plans to reopen the economy, having already reopened places of worship, schools, and many businesses and resumed some flights. However, after an outbreak of imported cases in late November and the country’s first case of community spread in December, Cambodia reimposed some travel and gathering restrictions. Imported cases rose in January as migrant workers returned from Thailand due to an outbreak there, but Cambodia has thus far kept community transmission at bay. Prime Minister Hun Sen has recently turned his attention to securing sufficient vaccine doses and has promised that they will be free to the public.

Public Health Response

January

- On January 4, schools and museums reopened.

- Cambodia and Vietnam tightened their border on January 4 and began requiring individuals crossing the border to quarantine for 14 days.

- The Health Ministry on January 19 announced that China is slated to deliver 300,000 doses of the Sinopharm vaccine to Cambodia in early February.

December

- Prime Minister Hun Sen on December 1 announced the distribution of 2 million face masks to the poor in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap province.
Cambodia on December 2 announced it was conducting mass contact tracing related to a community transmission case detected on November 28.

Cambodia’s Tourism Ministry on December 3 banned gatherings of more than 20 people at resorts.

The Ministry of Health on December 5 announced that it will begin disclosing the identities of those testing positive for Covid-19 to aid in contact tracing.

On December 7, Prime Minister Hun Sen said local authorities will close down any businesses found to have flouted the Ministry of Health’s guidelines to prevent the spread of Covid-19. He also called on all people to wear masks, use hand sanitizer, and maintain social distancing.

Prime Minister Hun Sen on December 7 instructed the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Economy to prepare a budget to buy Covid-19 vaccines to be administered to up to 10 million Cambodians free of charge.

Prime Minister Hun Sen said on December 15 that Cambodia will acquire 1 million doses of the coronavirus vaccine from the United Nations-backed COVAX facility.

On December 15, Prime Minister Hun Sen asked the Ministry of Education to cancel grade 12 exams, previously intended to be administered in January, because of the impact Covid-19 has had on school attendance.

On December 15, Prime Minister Hun Sen announced that Cambodia will begin building a warehouse to store Covid-19 vaccines.

Prime Minister Hun Sen said on December 15 that Cambodia will bar its citizens from undergoing trials for any coronavirus vaccine produced by foreign companies and countries.

On December 20, Cambodia tightened its border with Thailand.

On December 21, Labor Minister Ith Samheng announced that all recruitment agencies must suspend sending migrant workers to Thailand until further notice due to Thailand’s recent Covid-19 outbreak.

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.

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports on November 29 directed all public schools to close. Private schools were ordered to temporarily shut down for two weeks.

Prime Minister Hun Sen on November 30 issued an order prohibiting gatherings of more than 20 people in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap province until December 15.

Health Minister Mam Bun Heng on November 30 announced that passengers arriving in the country would no longer be permitted to self-quarantine at home and would be required to conduct their quarantine at designated government centers.

The Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts on November 30 closed all cinemas, museums, and theaters for a period of 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

January

On December 15, Prime Minister Hun Sen announced that the fourth round of the “Cash Transfer Programme for Poor and Vulnerable Households during Covid-19” will take place from January to March 2021.

As of December 24, the “Cash Transfer Programme for Poor and Vulnerable Households during Covid-19” had distributed $175 million in cash support to around 700,000 households across Cambodia since June.

November

Prime Minister Hun Sen on November 30 announced that the government disbursed $290,000 to support families placed under Cambodia’s newly-instated 14-day quarantine.
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 National Bank of Cambodia on December 31 forecasted that the country’s economic growth will return to 4 percent in 2021 if Covid-19 vaccines can be successfully deployed.
- 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 spent most of the pandemic with the most coronavirus cases in Southeast Asia. While the Indonesian central government has continued to ease gathering and travel restrictions despite rapidly increasing case numbers and deaths, local leaders have begun to reimpose lockdowns, most notably in Jakarta. The country seems to be giving up on flattening the curve in favor of reopening the economy. But official government and international sources have
confirmed that the economy is continuing to contract. President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo recently announced that all Covid-19 vaccines will be free for Indonesians and has been proactive in securing doses. However, storage and distribution will be difficult as Indonesia faces serious challenges with bureaucracy, corruption, refrigeration, infrastructure, and geography. Indonesia is bucking the global trend of providing vaccines to senior citizens first, and instead opting to prioritize the younger, working-age population. After becoming the first country outside of China to approve the Sinovac vaccine for use, Indonesia began its vaccination program in mid-January.

Public Health Response

January

- Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi announced that Indonesia would close its borders to all incoming travelers for the first two weeks of 2021.

- Nationwide distribution of the Covid-19 vaccine developed by Chinese firm Sinovac Biotech started on January 3. Indonesian state vaccine producer Bio Farma received 1.2 million doses of Sinovac’s vaccine on Dec 6 and another 1.8 million doses on Dec 31.

- Travelers arriving from England and Scotland will be required to show negative coronavirus tests, officials said on January 8.

- Indonesia's food and drugs agency on January 11 approved the Covid-19 vaccine developed by China's Sinovac Biotech for emergency use. Indonesia is the first country outside of China to greenlight the Sinovac vaccine.

- On January 11, the Jakarta administration placed new limits on operating hours for public transportation and businesses across the capital.

- On January 13, President Jokowi received the first dose of the Sinovac vaccine, beginning Indonesia’s coronavirus vaccination drive.

- On January 21, President Jokowi extended restrictions on public activities in areas of Java and Bali until February 8.

- Indonesia on January 21 extended entry restrictions for incoming travelers until February 8.

December

- Indonesia on December 2 announced it would cut short its year-end holidays to curb Covid-19 transmission.
Jakarta on December 7 extended its “transitional” phase of large-scale social restrictions (PSBB) until December 21.

On December 7, Indonesia submitted a vaccine request form to the COVAX Facility vaccine allocation plan led by the World Health Organization (WHO).

Indonesia held regional elections held on December 9, during which regional election officials received Covid-19 rapid tests. Local poll administrators were sent to hospitals and isolation facilities to collect ballots from individuals infected with the virus.

On December 14, the governor of West Java announced that the province will ban New Year’s Eve celebrations in public spaces.

Indonesia announced on December 15 that it would vaccinate its young working-age population against the coronavirus before the elderly.

President Jokowi on December 16 announced that all Covid-19 vaccines will be free for Indonesians.

On December 21, Jakarta extended the transitional period of large-scale social restrictions (PSBB) until January 3.

The government on December 22 restricted civil servants from traveling out of town and taking leave as part of its efforts to avoid a Covid-19 case surge following the Christmas and New Year celebrations.

Central Java on December 24 closed 84 tourist sites in the province until early January.

Indonesia on December 24 banned travelers from the United Kingdom and tightened the rules for those arriving from Europe and Australia to try to limit the spread of a new coronavirus variant.

The Health Ministry on December 24 approved a locally made Covid-19 detector called GeNose. Officials claim the device can detect a Covid-19 infection within minutes of administering the test.

In anticipation of a rising coronavirus case tally, the Jakarta Health Agency announced plans on December 26 to add more Covid-19 referral hospitals in the capital city.

Newly appointed health minister Budi Gunadi Sadikin said on December 29 that the government is finalizing deals with U.S. vaccine producer Pfizer and United Kingdom-based AstraZeneca to secure enough stockpile for its 2021 vaccination drive.

November
Jakarta announced on November 13 that it has sought emergency authorization to start a mass vaccination campaign by the end of 2020.

Minister of Health Terawan Agus Putranto on November 17 announced that Indonesia had made a down payment of approximately $36 million for Sinovac’s Covid-19 vaccine.

On November 18, the Electronics and Telecommunications Research Center of the Indonesian Institute of Sciences released Si-Monic, an individual monitoring system for Covid-19 patients, those with suspected cases, and their close contacts.

Gadjah Mada University and the Research and Technology Ministry on November 26 announced they would distribute 11,000 locally developed rapid test kits for free across the country.

The Indonesian military on November 27 confirmed the cancellation of a “212 Reunion Rally” hosted by the Islamic Defenders Front, which was set to take place on December 2.

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 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 Ulema 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.

- 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 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

December

National flag carrier Garuda Indonesia and state-owned steelmaker PT Krakatau Steel on December 28 issued mandatory convertible bonds worth trillions of rupiah as a means to receive a state capital injection to weather the economic downturn.
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.

- On November 19, Bank Indonesia cut its benchmark interest rate for the fifth time this year to 3.75 percent.

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 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 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 reopened travel with several countries in Southeast Asia and encouraged domestic tourism.

Public Health Response
January

- Laos is set to vaccinate a third group of frontline medical staff in the second week of January after more than 100 people vaccinated earlier showed no side effects.

- Deputy Minister of Health Phouthone Muongpak on January 5 announced that tests for Covid-19 and treatment for individuals who contracted the virus will be free for the general public, but that charges will be imposed on businesspeople and foreign nationals working in Laos.

- Laos on January 12 placed the Ton Pheung district under lockdown for the second time.

- Laos on January 25 tightened controls against illegal entry after discovering two imported cases of coronavirus from Thailand.

- Lao authorities on January 25 placed the northwestern Bokeo province’s Golden Triangle Special Economic Zone, a casino entertainment district that caters mainly to Chinese tourists, under a two-week lockdown after a Chinese worker tested positive for the coronavirus.

- Deputy Director General of the Department of Communicable Diseases Control under the Lao Ministry of Health Sisavath Soutthaniraxay announced on January 27 that people entering Laos will be required to stay in quarantine centers for 14 days.

December

- Laos released an update of its Covid-19 prevention measures on December 2, noting that international charter flights from countries that are experiencing an outbreak would be suspended.

- Laos on December 4 placed Ton Pheung district under lockdown following the detection of two imported cases.

- Laos on December 7 placed the Boten special economic zone under lockdown following reports that individuals infected with Covid-19 travelled through the area.

- Lao authorities on December 14 strengthened lockdown measures in Bokeo province, prohibiting festivals, marriage ceremonies, and other events.

- Laos announced on December 17 that it is set to receive a British vaccine in 2021.

- The second batch of frontline medical officials, including medical workers, were vaccinated on December 22.
▪ On December 23, Laos extended its Covid-19 control order until the end of the year, which included a continued ban on chartered flights from foreign countries and zones with local transmission; suspension of tourist visas for foreign nationals; closure of all border checkpoints except for certain Lao citizens; extra monitoring of those entering Laos; and a requirement that those who enter Laos wear a medical device for tracking purposes.

▪ Authorities on December 28 ordered inspections of imported seafood amid fears that food imported from Thailand could be contaminated with the coronavirus following a fresh outbreak in that country.

November

▪ The first batch of frontline officials, including medical workers, were vaccinated in late November.

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 when Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad resigned and Muhyiddin Yassin rose to
power on a razor-thin majority coalition. Malaysia saw few cases in the early months but soon after Muhyiddin took office, the government was forced to impose nationwide restrictions on public movement in mid-March. Those were gradually relaxed as the virus was brought under control. But unrestricted campaigning in September’s Sabah state election kicked off a chain reaction of community transmission that has lasted through early 2021 and has yet to be contained. Prime Minister Muhyiddin overcame a critical leadership test in December when lawmakers approved his 2021 budget after having previously failed to secure royal permission for a state of emergency that would have allowed him to pass the budget without parliamentary approval. Malaysia’s king in January announced a sweeping state of emergency that suspends Parliament and political activities until August, granting Muhyiddin a reprieve as his government grows increasingly unstable.

Public Health Responses

January

- As of January 1, international students are allowed entry into Malaysia, except for those from the United Kingdom.
- Vaccination against Covid-19 will be voluntary in Malaysia, said Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Khairy Jamaluddin on January 5.
- Prime Minister Muhyiddin on January 11 announced a nationwide movement control order (MCO), with measures set to run from January 13 to January 26.
- Malaysia’s Ministry of Health and Pfizer on January 11 signed a manufacturing and supply agreement for the first phase delivery of the firm’s Covid-19 vaccines. The agreement involves the procurement of 25 million doses through the end of the year.
- Malaysia's king Al-Sultan Abdullah on January 12 declared a state of emergency across the country. The emergency will last until August 1, during which there will be no parliamentary sitting or elections.
- Senior Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob on January 12 announced that the Reciprocal Green Lane and Periodic Commuting Arrangement with Singapore will continue despite the newly-announced MCO.
- Malaysia’s Pharmaniaga on January 12 signed an agreement with Sinovac to purchase and eventually manufacture the Chinese firm’s Covid-19 vaccine.
- Health Minister Adham Baba on January 13 announced that Covid-19 patients who have mild or no symptoms may undergo treatment and quarantine at home.
- Sarawak on January 16 reduced the number of flights entering the state.
On January 21, Senior Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob extended the MCO in all Malaysian states and federal territories except Sarawak until February 4.

Senior Minister Yaakob announced on January 21 that the government may use emergency powers to increase fines for Covid-19 breaches above the current maximum of $250 and increase jail terms.

Malaysia’s health minister on January 23 announced that the country’s coronavirus vaccination program will start on February 26.

The Health Ministry on January 26 signed an agreement with local pharmaceutical companies Pharmaniaga Berhad and Duopharma (M) Sdn Bhd to jointly supply 18.4 million doses of Covid-19 vaccines from China and Russia starting next month.

Malaysia on January 27 began a phase 3 clinical trial of a Covid-19 vaccine candidate developed by the Institute of Medical Biology of the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences.

December

On December 7, the government removed the limit on the number of people allowed to share the same table in restaurants, allowed businesses serving food and beverages to extend their hours, and began permitting social gatherings like reunions and weddings.

Malaysia began allowing movement across states and districts nationwide on December 7 without the need for a police permit, except in areas under an Enhanced Movement Control Order.

The Conditional Movement Control Order ended on December 6 for most states, but was extended until December 20 for Kuala Lumpur, Sabah, most of Selangor, and some parts of Johor, Negeri Sembilan, Kelantan, and Perak.

The Health Ministry on December 13 announced that the quarantine period for overseas travelers would be shortened from 14 days to 10.

Malaysia on December 14 lifted its month-long lockdown on facilities associated with the manufacturer Top Glove, which had been the sites of recent outbreaks.

Malaysia’s government on December 16 declared a state of emergency in two constituencies to prevent them from holding by-elections in January amid a sharp increase in Covid-19 cases.

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.


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.

Malaysia announced the closure of some Top Glove factories on November 23 following a jump in infections. The world’s largest maker of latex gloves has racked up record profits this year on skyrocketing demand for its products and protective gear. The closure will affect over 5,000 workers.

The Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture said on November 23 that all vehicles traveling within the country’s domestic “green travel bubble” can operate at full occupancy.

Malaysia expects to receive its first Covid-19 vaccines from Pfizer in the first quarter of 2021 after signing a deal for 12.8 million doses from the U.S. manufacturer on November 27.
- 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 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.

Malaysia announced on November 30 that employees’ mandatory contributions to the Employee Provident Fund (Malaysia’s retirement fund) would remain reduced until the end of 2021 to help participants cope with the economic fallout from coronavirus.

October

On October 13, Prime Minister Muhyiddin 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. According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia, unemployment stood at 4.7 percent in October. Malaysia’s unemployment rate rose by 0.1 percent to 4.8 percent in November.
Fitch downgraded Malaysia’s credit rating from A- to BBB on December 4. Fitch had last affirmed the A- rating in April while revising the country’s outlook to negative.

Myanmar

*Myanmar* had maintained some of the region’s lowest case counts until August. But the rate of infections accelerated quickly over the past several months, first due to an outbreak in Rakhine state and then the holding of national elections on November 8. The country’s underdeveloped healthcare system has impeded Myanmar’s ability to cope as new case counts have stayed above 1,000 per day. The government’s distribution of cash assistance has also come under criticism over allegations that most aid went to well-connected business owners.

*Public Health Response*

**January**

- The United Wa State Army on January 6 imposed a lockdown in its de-facto capital of Panghsang in Shan state to carry out citywide testing for Covid-19.

- On January 8, the President’s Office announced that Myanmar had ordered 30 million doses of a Covid-19 vaccine from India that are expected to arrive by February.

- Yangon on January 19 closed 8 of the city’s 15 temporary hospitals set up late last year to address surging cases. The city has seen new daily cases drop to below 200.

- On January 22, Myanmar is expected to receive 1.5 million doses of the Covishield vaccine produced by the Serum Institute of India.

- Myanmar on January 27 began vaccinating healthcare personnel as part of its nationwide vaccination drive.

**December**

- Myanmar’s Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment of Covid-19 extended restrictions, including a ban on travel and gatherings, until December 31.

- Domestic flights resumed on December 16.

- The Rakhine state government on December 16 imposed restrictions requiring residents to seek approval from ward and village administrators prior to any travel.

- The Yangon city government on December 21 closed off public gardens and parks to prevent a spike in cases during the New Year holiday.
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 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.

On November 18, the government announced that it had disbursed over $17 million to about 700 businesses in the latest round of its Covid-19 loan program.

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.

- The World Bank projects Myanmar’s GDP growth rate will increase to 7 percent in 2021.

- The World Bank projects that the national poverty rate will increase to 27 percent in the 2020-21 fiscal year, up from 22.4 percent a year earlier.
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

*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 since 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. The government has begun to make preparations for a vaccine rollout. The Philippines recently approved the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine for emergency use but has not yet secured any doses. The AstraZeneca, Sinovac, and Novovax vaccines, supplies of which have been secured, are still pending approval.

Public Health Response

February

- Beginning on February 1, all passengers arriving in the Philippines are required to undergo an institutional quarantine.

January

- The Philippine government banned travelers from the United States from January 3 to January 15 after it detected cases of a new coronavirus strain believed to be more infectious.

- Thousands of Catholic pilgrims gathered in Manila on January 9 for the Festival of the Black Nazarene. Despite government attempts to maintain social distancing and reduce crowd sizes, pilgrims reportedly violated many of these restrictions.

- The Philippines has secured 30 million doses of a Covid-19 vaccine developed by U.S. drug maker Novavax and produced in India, officials said on January 10.

- Vaccine czar Carlito Galvez on January 11 told the Senate that the first 50,000 vaccine doses from the Chinese firm Sinovac are expected to arrive in February. The Philippine
government has secured 25 million doses from Sinovac in total.

- The government on January 13 announced a two-day ban on the entry of all non-Filipino travelers from China.

- The Philippine government is expected to sign a deal with AstraZeneca on January 14 for up to 20 million doses of its Covid-19 vaccine. The Philippines is also in the final stages of talks with Moderna for at least 10 million doses to be delivered by mid-year.

- The Philippines on January 14 approved Pfizer’s Covid-19 vaccine, the first to be allowed for emergency use in the country.

- The government on January 15 extended until the end of the month a travel ban on foreigners from Japan and other countries where a new, more transmissible variant of the coronavirus has been confirmed.

- On January 25, President Duterte announced that individuals aged 10 to 65 are no longer allowed to leave their homes in modified general community quarantine areas.

- The Philippines announced on January 27 that about 1 million Covid-19 vaccine shots from AstraZeneca, Sinovac, and Pfizer will arrive in early February.

December

- The government extended the general community quarantine for Metro Manila and six other areas for the entire month of December.

- Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte issued an executive order on December 2 granting the Food and Drug Administration the power to clear Covid-19 drugs and vaccines for emergency use.

- The Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF) on December 4 allowed workshops, consumer trade shows, and board meetings to be conducted at 30 percent capacity of venues in areas under general community quarantine (GCQ).

- Philippine trade secretary Ramon Lopez said on December 9 that the government would now require all commercial and government establishments to use the locally made StaySafe App to help in contact tracing efforts and that compliant establishments would be allowed to operate after being given “safety seals.”

- The government on December 14 approved the resumption of provincial bus routes.

- Philippine vaccine czar and National Task Force chief implementer Carlito Galvez Jr. said on December 14 that pandemic officials have asked Chinese pharmaceutical
company Sinovac to deliver its Covid-19 vaccine to the country by March 2021.

- The IATF on December 15 announced new rules requiring citizens to wear both face shields and face masks at all times outside of their residences.

- The Department of Education announced on December 15 that it will not force students to attend in-person classes, even in low-risk areas.

- The Philippines suspended all flights to and from the United Kingdom from December 24 until December 31 because of the new strain of the coronavirus. It also restricted all passengers who had visited or traveled through the United Kingdom in the two weeks prior from entering the country.

- On December 26, President Duterte canceled the Department of Education’s plans to resume in-person classes at the end of January.

- On December 28, President Duterte extended partial coronavirus restrictions in Manila until January 31.

- The Department of Transportation barred foreign travelers and Filipino citizens from traveling to the Philippines from 20 countries from December 30 until January 15.

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.

- On November 19, Duterte announced plans to cut the approval time for coronavirus vaccines already greenlit by other nations to three weeks, down from the normal six months, and to make advance payments to acquire those vaccines.

- President Duterte on November 19 allowed the government to enter advance market commitments with vaccine makers.

- On November 20, Duterte lifted a suspension on nurses and other medical workers deploying overseas, allowing a maximum of 5,000 to travel abroad for employment.
On November 23, Duterte approved pre-payment for the Pfizer vaccine, although details regarding numbers of doses and prices remain confidential.

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.

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.

President 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**

**December**

- The House of Representatives’ labor and employment committee on December 14 approved a measure providing 14-day paid pandemic leave to workers who are confirmed, probable, or suspected to be Covid-19 positive.

**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, reapportion 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

In January, the IMF downgraded its projection for the Philippines 2020 GDP performance to -9.6 percent. The fund projected growth to rebound to 6.6 percent in 2021 and 6.5 percent in 2022.

The government projects GDP will expand by between 6.5 and 7.5 percent in 2021.

The Philippines is likely to recover from the pandemic-induced recession with 7 percent growth in 2021, according to Moody’s Investors Service.

The World Bank on December 8 downgraded its 2020 Philippine economic growth forecast to -8.1 percent.

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.

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.

The Philippines’ unemployment rate eased to 8.7 percent in October, according to data from the Philippine Statistics Authority.
- 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 a sharp increase in cases linked to foreign workers’ dormitories. It has since flattened the curve with the help of an innovative contact tracing mobile app and token system called [TraceTogether](https://www.tracetogether.gov.sg), although migrant workers continue to disproportionately suffer from infections. Gathering restrictions were loosened cautiously as Singapore prepared for Phase 3 of its reopening at the end of 2020. Meanwhile, the government has actively pursued “green lane” and travel corridor reopenings with its neighbors for essential and business travel, although a recent global spike in cases has delayed implementation.

**Public Health Response**

**January**

- On January 13, Health Minister Gan Kim Yong announced that Singapore had vaccinated more than 6,200 people against Covid-19 and would continue to ramp up the pace. He also announced that four vaccination centers will be established by the end of January to facilitate rapid vaccination of the general public.

- Singapore has begun vaccinating seniors against Covid-19, with residents in Tanjong Pagar and Ang Mo Kio receiving their first dose of the vaccine on January 27.

**December**

- On December 1, Singapore and Hong Kong announced an indefinite delay in implementing their planned travel bubble.

- On December 9, three bars and pubs were allowed to reopen for two months under a small-scale pilot program for the nightlife industry.

- Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong on December 14 announced that Singapore had approved the use of Pfizer’s coronavirus vaccine and the first shipment will arrive by
year’s end.

- Singapore will enter Phase 3 of its reopening on December 28, according to Prime Minister Lee. Social gatherings of up to eight people will be permitted and capacity limits in public places will be increased.

- The government on December 15 announced that from the second half of January 2021, short-term business travelers arriving in Singapore through new segregated travel lane arrangements will no longer need to quarantined.

- Singapore and Vietnam agreed on December 15 to “expeditiously conclude ongoing discussions” on a “green lane” agreement for essential business and official travel.

- On December 23, Singapore announced that it would bar long-term pass holders and short-term visitors who had traveled to the United Kingdom within the past 14 days from entering or transiting the city-state.

- On December 24, Singapore required all visitors from South Korea to serve their 14-day quarantines at dedicated facilities due to a “sustained surge in cases” there.

- On December 30, Singapore began vaccinating healthcare workers.

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.
Singapore’s Ministry of Health announced on November 20 that the country will **tighten** border measures with Malaysia given the resurgence of cases there.

On November 21, Singapore **postponed** its quarantine-free leisure “travel bubble” one day before it was due to launch, after Hong Kong reported a jump in Covid-19 cases.

**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**

- The IMF in October lowered its projection for Singapore’s 2020 economic performance to a 6 percent contraction, 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.

- The ADB projected a 6.2 percent GDP contraction for 2020 overall while predicting a rebound of 4.5 percent for 2021.

- Singapore’s Ministry of Trade and Industry reported that the country’s economy will likely expand between 4 and 6 percent in 2021.

- 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.

- 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* confirmed its earliest case of Covid-19 on January 13, becoming the first country outside of China to do so. Numbers remained low until March, when the country began to see widespread community spread. Since then, Thailand has done relatively well in combating the coronavirus crisis with a quick lockdown, an effective contact tracing rollout, an already strong healthcare system, and wide embrace of mask-wearing. However, 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 demonstrations, citing the increased risk of spreading Covid-19. Case counts remained low throughout the months-long protest movement, as the government appeared to be more concerned with halting the calls for reform than with public health. Case numbers spiked in December following an outbreak of Covid-19 among migrant workers in Samut Sakhon, and the country has quickly reimposed lockdown measures.
Public Health Response

January

- Bangkok on January 2 announced the closure of 25 types of businesses, including entertainment venues, playgrounds, and all buildings at schools or educational institutions.

- Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha on January 4 applied a new set of coronavirus-related restrictions on 28 “red zone” provinces. The restrictions call for the closure of schools and educational institutions, a ban on high-risk activities including meetings and seminars, and empower provincial governors to impose further restrictions as needed.

- Thailand’s cabinet on January 5 approved plans to procure 35 million additional doses of Covid-19 vaccines.

- Education Minister Nataphol Teepsuwan on January 5 ordered more than 10,000 public and private schools across 28 provinces to close until January 31.

- As of January 8, people in the Covid-19-hit provinces of Chanthaburi, Chon Buri, Trat, Rayong, and Samut Sakhon are required to use MorChana, Thailand’s contact tracing app.

- Thai health authorities announced on January 14 that they will accelerate Covid-19 testing for Myanmar migrant workers in Samut Sakhon, the epicenter of the country’s latest outbreak.

- Foreigners with Thai residency whose re-entry visas require that they return to Thailand within one year will be allowed to stay abroad until further notice, the Immigration Bureau said on January 20.

- The Food and Drug Administration on January 21 approved the emergency use of AstraZeneca’s Covid-19 vaccine. Thailand is set to receive 50,000 doses in February.

- The Bangkok Metropolitan Administration approved the reopening of 13 kinds of businesses, including arcades and shops, effective January 22. Bars, along with 13 other types of business, will remain closed.

- On January 25, the government announced plans to begin Thailand’s national vaccine rollout on February 14, starting with healthcare and frontline workers.

December
- Health Minister Anutin Charnvirakul on December 2 ordered officials to prosecute individuals found infected by Covid-19 after illegally entering the country from Myanmar.

- The Thai government on December 7 announced that New Year’s countdown activities can be held so long as they take place under health safety standards.

- Prime Minister Prayuth on December 7 ordered officials to erect barricades along Thailand’s borders with Myanmar to curb illegal crossings amid fears of imported cases.

- Thailand on December 9 announced it would open its borders to tourists from all countries regardless of their Covid-19 situation, so long as travellers comply with mandatory quarantine requirements.

- The Public Health Ministry on December 14 imposed limitations on end-of-year festivities. Organizers of events must get prior permission from their provincial governor, limit the number of people attending, and ensure all regulations are followed, including wearing of face masks.

- The Centre for Covid-19 Situation Administration on December 18 eased curbs on travel from 56 countries, though visitors still need to undergo a two-week hotel quarantine.

- Thailand on December 18 announced that it would partner with AstraZeneca to produce 200 million doses of the British firm’s Covid-19 vaccine.

- Thailand on December 19 placed Samut Sakhon province under lockdown after an outbreak at a local shrimp market.

- Commerce Minister Jurin Laksanawisit on December 19 issued price control measures on surgical masks due to a surge in demand amid recent outbreaks.

- Thailand’s Office of the Private Education Commission on December 22 closed more than 100 schools in Bangkok and Samut Sakhon.

- The Department of Health Service Support on December 23 instructed private hospitals nationwide to provide free Covid-19 tests for at-risk individuals.

- Thailand’s Centre for Covid-19 Situation Administration on December 24 announced that the government would not conduct a national lockdown but would instead impose “Covid-19 control zoning” amid rising case numbers.

- The Thai cabinet on December 29 approved the registration of undocumented migrant workers from Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar to remain in the country for two years to contain the spread of Covid-19.
Thailand on December 30 imposed restrictions on large gatherings and events to contain the spread of Covid-19 during New Year’s celebrations.

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 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).
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

January

- Thailand’s Social Security Office on January 1 announced that it would reduce employers’ and employees' contributions to its worker welfare fund.

- The government on January 8 allocated $1.5 million from its central budget to the Public Health Ministry to battle the new wave of coronavirus infections.

- Thailand’s government on January 12 approved more measures to mitigate the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, including issuing soft loans and reducing utility bills.

December

- On December 2, the government approved a $1.4 billion package to boost domestic consumption and local travel.

- The Thai cabinet on December 22 approved a series of relief payments to subscribers of the Social Security Fund who have been made jobless by the Covid-19 pandemic.

- The Thai cabinet on December 29 approved a $377 million budget to address the re-emergence of Covid-19 in the country. Budget items focus on preventative measures, treatment, and support.

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.

• Thailand’s Ministry of Finance on November 23 announced that it expected the economy to grow by 4 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

Timor-Leste, despite initial fears that its weak health infrastructure would not be able to handle an outbreak of Covid-19, 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

January
The government on January 5 announced restrictions on social events, allowing no more than 10 people to gather in one place.

October

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

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

January

The government as of January 5 had spent 58.7 percent of its Covid-19 Fund budget, according to the Ministry of Finance.

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.

The Asia Development Bank predicts GDP contracted 6.3 percent in 2020 and will expand 3.3 percent in 2021.
The Central Bank of Timor-Leste projected that Timor-Leste’s GDP contracted 6 percent in 2020 and will grow 3.2 percent in 2021.

Vietnam

Vietnam has been the region’s biggest success story. Despite limited resources and a bustling border with China, Vietnam initially managed to contain the pandemic by halting travel with China early, deploying epidemic control teams to implement a massive test-and-trace regime, and committing to data transparency. Life had returned to normal for most Vietnamese until a second wave spread from the city of Danang at the end of July. But Hanoi’s response was swift, getting the virus back under control by early September, and the government has not been shy to reimpose restrictions where needed since then. Vietnam’s economy has been surprisingly resilient; it is the only Southeast Asian nation still projected to have positive economic growth in 2020. But that growth will be limited to 1.6 percent. It will be the first time Vietnam’s GDP growth has dipped below 5 percent in at least 20 years.

Public Health Response

January

- Vietnam’s deputy health minister announced on January 4 that the country will receive at least 30 million doses of the AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine in phases throughout 2021. Vietnam announced that it is looking at other sources as well, including Pfizer.
- Vietnam on January 5 suspended inbound flights from countries with new Covid-19 variants, including the United Kingdom and South Africa.
- Vietnam on January 9 announced it would limit inbound flights until the end of the Lunar New Year holiday in mid-February to reduce the risk of Covid-19 transmission.
- Vietnam on January 15 announced that all individuals attending the upcoming National Party Congress will be tested twice for Covid-19. Journalists who cover the event will also be tested for the virus.
- The National Steering Committee for Covid-19 Prevention and Control on January 15 waived quarantine-related fees for individuals legally entering Vietnam by road in an attempt to curb illegal border crossings.
- Vietnam’s Ministry of Health on January 19 announced that the Covivac vaccine being developed by the country’s Institute of Vaccines and Medical Biologicals received approval for human trials set to begin in mid-February.
- Vietnam on January 20 mandated that all foreign experts and flight crews entering the country will need to undergo a 14-day centralized quarantine in advance of the Lunar New Year holiday.
Vietnam on January 22 announced that it will tighten border controls to prevent Covid-19 cases linked to illegal entry into the country.

December

- On December 1, Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc announced a temporary halt to all inbound international commercial flights except for repatriation flights.
- On December 1, two schools in Ho Chi Minh City required 2,000 students to stay home after their teachers came into contact with a colleague infected with Covid-19.
- On December 7, Vietnam and South Korea agreed to allow businesspeople to enter each other’s country for short-term visits without the mandatory 14-day centralized quarantine, effective next year.
- Vietnamese authorities told domestic vaccine producer Nanogen Pharmaceutical Biotechnology on December 11 to proceed with clinical trials of its Nanocovax vaccine, aiming to launch widespread vaccinations in the second half of 2021.
- Vietnam and Singapore agreed on December 15 to “expeditiously conclude ongoing discussions” on a “green lane” agreement for essential business and official travel.
- Vietnam announced on December 17 that the first three volunteers to receive a dose of Nanocovax were in stable condition three days after injection.

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

Economic Response

January

- The Vietnam Bank for Social Policy on January 14 allocated $1.3 million in soft loans to 207 businesses to pay the wages of workers who lost their jobs due to Covid-19.

November

- Vietnam’s National Assembly on November 17 passed a series of measures to assist national flag carrier Vietnam Airlines, including allowing the State Bank of Vietnam to refinance and offer loan extensions to the company.
- Ho Chi Minh City on November 18 approved a proposal to disburse over $1 million in unemployment benefits to workers in non-essential sectors impacted by Covid-19.

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.

- The government statistics office announced on December 27 that the economy expanded 2.9 percent in 2021, a 30-year low.

- 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.

- Oxford Economics predicts that Vietnam will achieve 8 percent GDP growth in 2021.

- 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

Assistance from China

With Covid-19 largely contained domestically, the Chinese government pivoted to providing assistance abroad. Southeast Asia is a particular focus. Southeast Asian governments have generally welcomed China’s assistance. But as in Europe, China’s so-called “mask diplomacy” from early to mid-2020 generated criticism of faulty equipment and skepticism about Beijing’s geopolitical intentions. Chinese aid has generally consisted of surgical masks, test kits, and other equipment, as well as dispatching medical experts. 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. China has recently moved on from “mask diplomacy” to focus on distribution of its domestically produced Sinopharm and Sinovac vaccines. China has been able to use the power of the state to compel these companies to allocate doses to its Southeast Asian neighbors—something U.S., European, and other partners cannot do. But Beijing’s largesse has also raised concerns that it will seek to leverage vaccine access to advance other foreign policy priorities, such as stalled infrastructure projects under China’s Belt and Road Initiative.

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. China in December provided a Covid-19 testing facility to the United Wa State Army. On January 12, Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi promised 300,000 doses of the Covid-19 vaccine to 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 for Vietnam.

**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 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.

On November 24, Prime Minister Hun Sen announced that Cambodia would donate 2 million face masks and other medical supplies to Myanmar.
On December 2, Prime Minister Hun Sen announced that Cambodia would donate more than 1 million face masks and other medical supplies to Timor-Leste.

**Assistance from Taiwan**

Taiwan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs on April 14 announced that it would be sending 1.6 million face masks to countries covered by its New Southbound Policy. As of 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.

- The European Union on December 1 announced a $24 million Southeast Asia Pandemic Response and Preparedness program to support ASEAN’s regional coordination for Covid-19 response. The program aims to increase testing and monitoring capacity, strengthen the capacity of regional healthcare systems, and support transparent communication about pandemic developments.

- The European Union in Cambodia announced on December 4 that it will donate around $3.45 million to Cambodia in order to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic.

**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.

- The Indonesian embassy in Berlin in November announced that German state bank KfW would provide a $650 million loan to assist Indonesia’s response to Covid-19.

**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. On December 3, the World Bank announced that the International Development Association fund had allocated an additional $60 million for the purchase, transport, and distribution of Covid-19 vaccines in Myanmar. The World Bank on December 7 approved $1 million in emergency funds for Timor-Leste's national health system.


Asian Development Bank: In late-April, the ADB approved a $1.5 billion loan to support Indonesia’s response to the Covid-19 pandemic and a $200 million loan to assist the Philippine government in providing cash subsidies to households affected by the pandemic. On May 11, the ADB announced possible plans for an additional $125 million to aid the Philippines. The ADB on July 8 approved a $250 million loan to assist Cambodia’s response to Covid-19. 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. The ADB on December 11 provided $600,000 toward supporting Vietnam’s efforts to combat Covid-19.

Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank: The AIIB will allocate $1 billion in loans to Indonesia to support its pandemic response. The first $250 million will arrive as part of a co-financing program with the World Bank and the Islamic Development Bank, with the second loan of $750 million coming as a co-financing project with the ADB. On May 29, the ADB and AIIB jointly approved another $750 million loan to the Philippines.
- **United Nations**: A UN humanitarian aid flight delivered 10,000 test kits to Myanmar on May 10. A second delivery is due next month from the United Nations Children’s Fund, or UNICEF, with 10,000 additional tests, reagents, and other medical supplies. The UNDP and IOM will procure six ventilators for Indonesia, in addition to the 27 to be provided by the WHO in partnership with Japan. On June 19, UNDP partnered with the China Soong Ching Ling Foundation to present Indonesia with 500,000 surgical masks valued at $183,000 for frontline workers. The United Nations has earmarked an additional $2 million for Indonesia, $1 million for Cambodia, $1 million for Laos, and $1 million for Vietnam from its Covid-19 Multi-Partner Trust Fund. The Myanmar Humanitarian Fund has allocated $1 million from the United States, Australia, United Kingdom, Germany, New Zealand, Switzerland, Sweden, Canada, and Luxembourg to Myanmar’s emergency response. The United States, United Kingdom, Sweden, and Switzerland have also designated $1 million for the Government of Myanmar’s Access to Health Fund. The 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. UNHCR has spent $4.2 million on Covid-19 response in Myanmar as of November by donating over 50,000 Covid-19 test kits since July and supplying quarantine facilities.

- 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.