



The Citizen Lab

Southeast Asia CyberWatch: October 2012

A monthly report on trends in online censorship, information operations,
and Internet use in South East Asia

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SOUTHEAST ASIA

Japan to create a cyber defense network with 10 member countries of ASEAN

Japan's largest English-language newspaper, The Daily Yomiuri, reported that the country, along with 10 member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), are [planning to develop a cyber defense network](#) after a number of Web sites of government offices and corporations in many of these countries were hit by cyber attacks. The Japanese government will share information on cyber

attack patterns and provide technologies to defend against these attacks. It will also carry out exercises to test the robustness of the system within the current fiscal year.

CAMBODIA

Cambodian activist sentenced to 20 years in prison

A Phnom Penh court [handed down](#) a 20-year sentence to Sonando, a 71-year old Cambodian-French land-rights activist and broadcaster, for "attempting to overthrow the country's government" and "establish a state within a state." Sonando, who has criticized Prime Minister Hun Sen's government for selling land rights to companies, [pled not guilty](#) to charges that he had attempted to "recruit up to a million people" to take up arms and revolt against the state. Human rights activists condemned the ruling as further proof of the Cambodian legal system's partiality.

INDONESIA

Telephones and email accounts belonging to Indonesia's influential Bakrie family have been hacked

A Bakrie official had said that telephones and email accounts belonging to the Bakrie clan have been [hacked over several months](#). The news broke just a day before the board of London-listed Bumi - the coal mining company that Bakrie helped to create with the British financier Nathaniel Rothschild - met in Singapore to discuss progress in an inquiry into potential financial irregularities, expected to total more than \$500 million, at its Indonesian operations. The probe is still ongoing and being led by a London law firm. Most of the allegations are related to the Indonesian affiliate, Bumi Resources, which is the flagship Bakrie company and Indonesia's largest coal producer.

Jakarta Police's Cyber Crime Division faces daunting cyber crimes challenge

The Jakarta Police's Cyber Crime Division [says that](#) it "is doing its best" to crackdown on Internet crimes, despite operating with "a small team, a shoestring budget and limited infrastructure". The team was established in 2003 and works with neighbouring countries such as Australia and US, and international organizations like Interpol to track down cyber criminals.

Facebook used to traffic Indonesian girls

As of November 2012, 27 of the 129 children reported missing to Indonesia's National Commission for Child Protection (Komisi Nasional Perlindungan Anak) are believed to have been abducted after [meeting their captors on Facebook](#). In the month since [an abduction victim was found](#) near a bus terminal in Depok on September 30, there have been at least seven reports of young girls being abducted by people they met on Facebook. The Commission had urged for the Ministry of Education and Culture to [draft a policy](#) on the "healthy usage of the Internet by children" to prevent them from being preyed upon.

MALAYSIA

Internet regulator shut down terrorist web portal

Malaysia's Internet regulator, the Communications and Multimedia Commission, has shut down Tawhed.net, a website said to be "Al-Qaeda's largest online library", which was hosted in the country. Two Malaysian nationals [were recently arrested](#) in Beirut on suspicion of having links with Al Qaeda. As a result, the authorities have begun an in-depth investigation on their involvement in the global terror group, which includes looking into radical websites.

Social media in the 2013 general elections

Barisan Nasional (BN), a major political coalition, will [rely on content](#) generated by the party's [10,000 "cyber troopers"](#) across social media platforms to help them win the 13th General Elections. Deputy Minister Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah said that BN had "learned a lesson" from its abysmal electoral performance in the 2008 elections, which was attributed to the party's failure to engage their support base online. At the time, the conversation on social media was dominated by parties that eventually formed the informal coalition Pakatan Rakyat.

Outrage in Malaysia and Singapore after sex blog went viral

Police from the Bukit Aman CyberSecurity and Multimedia Investigation Division [have begun investigations](#) into the case of a couple -- National University of Singapore (NUS) law student Alvin Tan and marketing graduate Vivian Lee -- who created a blog consisting of erotic photography and videos. However, the country's Internet regulator has been [reluctant to prosecute](#) them. "If I go after them, it will be a criminal case ... their future will be jeopardized," Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) Chairman Datuk Sharil Tarmizi told the online newspaper The Malaysian Insider.

Popular news website, Malaysiakini, granted publishing license

The Malaysian government has for a long time maintained control over traditional media. A government license is required to publish and the licensing process is administered either by the government or people connected to it. For the past 13 years, Malaysiakini used the Internet as a platform to provide Malaysians with an [alternate point of view](#) and has become one of the country's most popular news websites. Yet it has [twice been denied the license](#) to start a traditional newspaper. This changed in October when judge Abang Iskandar Abang Hashim in a landmark decisions ruled that Malaysiakini should [be able to have a licence](#). It is a move that is celebrated as a major step forward in advancing media freedom in Malaysia.

MYANMAR

Update on information controls

The OpenNet Initiative (ONI) has released an [update on Myanmar's information controls](#). The report summarizes some of the reforms that have taken place in the country, including a significant reduction in Internet filtering and the discontinuing of government vetting of release from the media prior to publication. Original testing performed by ONI in August 2012 verified that filtration of political sites has dramatically decreased compared to testing results in previous years, while filtration of unacceptable "social sites", including sites relating to pornography, gambling, drug use, and LGBT

content, was still prevalent. These reforms have accelerated since the election of Thein Sein in February 2011, who is the country's first civilian leader in decades.

Torture of military officer over Internet comments

The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) has been alerted to the case of Ne Lynn Dwe, an officer in Myanmar Air Force, who was allegedly [arrested and tortured](#) in December 2011. Ne Lynn Dwe was subsequently sentenced to 20-years imprisonment in April 2012 for [violating](#) the Emergency Provisions Act and the Electronic Transactions Law for posting articles considered critical of the armed forces. According to Reporters Without Borders' *Internet Enemies Report 2012*, Myanmar is expected to ["revise or repeal"](#) its electronic media laws as part of its slow movement towards political reform.

PHILIPPINES

Cyber crime bill suspended

The Philippines' recently enacted [Cybercrime Prevention Act](#) was [suspended](#) in early October for 120 days as lawmakers investigate the extent to which the bill may infringe on civil liberties. Opponents of the bill have [supported](#) the suspension, with critics [protesting](#) the law prior to its suspension and voicing their concerns that the act could be used to penalize legitimate online dissent. Some critics have expressed their opposition to the bill through cyber attacks against websites including a division of the Philippine National Police and other government-linked sites as [previously reported](#). Despite this suspension, penalization of online comments have occurred in the Philippines, such as the recent [arrest](#) of anti-mining advocate Esperlita Garcia for an allegedly libelous comment made on Facebook.

Government appeals to hackers

Hackers in Philippines have [attacked](#) government sites responsible for delivering disaster-related information to the public in protest over the passing of the Cybercrime Prevention Act. The government has appealed to online attackers not to undergo operations against the weather, earthquake and tsunami monitoring services online in fear that doing so would compromise the safety of citizens in the event of an emergency. The government's National Bureau of Investigation (NIB) has also [identified](#) several members of "Anonymous Philippines" behind a spate of defacement attacks on government websites over the cyber crime legislation. The NIB has declined to publicly identify these suspects to prevent their investigation from being compromised.

SINGAPORE

Media Literacy Council and social media experts urged people to watch what they say online

As yet another Internet user [gets into trouble](#) after making offensive remarks on Facebook, the Media Literacy Council and social media experts called on individuals to self-regulate on the Internet. This statement complemented what Minister for Information, Communications and the Arts, Dr Yaacob Ibrahim, [had said earlier](#) that "industry self-regulation is needed to ensure a high level of credibility

and quality for Internet services". He urged for providers of Internet services "to develop codes of practice which can be used to complement existing Internet content regulations".

THAILAND

***Lèse majesté* laws upheld by court**

Somyot Prueksakasemsuk, an activist charged with [making anti-monarchist statements](#) online, has had his petition declaring that Thailand's *lèse majesté* laws are unconstitutional [struck down](#). Thailand's constitution court declared that the king, as head of state, was entitled to protection under Article 8 of the [Thai constitution](#) [PDF]. As [previously reported](#), those who commit defamation against the monarchy have been harshly penalized by Thai authorities.

Cyber attack on McDonald's and Red Cross Thailand

A group that referred to itself as the "Turkish Agent Hacker Group" [compromised](#) the website of McDonald's Thailand and released the private contact information of approximately 2,000 users on the Internet. The same group claimed responsibility for a [defacement attack](#) on the website of Red Cross Thailand. It posted a message protesting the "disrespect of our Beloved Prophet Mohammad" accompanied with a Turkish flag. The group previously defaced the website of Pepsi Hungary with the [same message](#).

Man acquitted *lèse majesté* charges

Surapak Puchaisaeng, a 41-year old Thai man who has been held in jail since September 2011 for allegedly insulting the king on Facebook, was [acquitted](#) on October 31. The court ruled that the prosecutors lacked sufficient evidence to convict Surapak.

VIETNAM

New draft decrees aim to regulate Internet activity

The Vietnamese government has [prepared two draft decrees](#) aimed at regulating the country's growing Internet use. One would detail "obligations of foreign enterprises providing cross-border online information in Viet Nam via an offshore server," including cooperating with the country's authorities and removing content deemed in violation of Vietnamese law. The decree [further stipulates](#) that foreign entities must locate at least one server and representative office in Vietnam, and provide the state with user data on social networks at the government's request. Finally, it makes foreign entities legally liable for the information they "store, transmit, supply, and spread online." The second decree specifies that foreign entities who violate the above regulations "would be subject to a fine of VND30-VND100 million (\$1,428-\$4,761)."

Internet blogs challenge Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung

The Wall Street Journal [reports](#) that the Internet has emerged as a threat to Vietnam's prime minister Nguyen Tan Dung and other top leaders. While traditional media remains [tightly controlled](#), blogs and independent news websites have recently gained popularity as sources of criticism against government officials. The most popular of these, [Quan Lam Bao](#) [Vietnamese], regularly [accuses](#) Dung of "greed,

cronyism, and economic mismanagement" and purportedly receives contributions from a number of disaffected party insiders. As [reported last month](#), Dung responded by ordering police to investigate Quan Lam Bao and two other blogs, while state courts handed down [harsh sentences](#) to three bloggers.

Courts sentence two songwriters

On October 30, Vietnamese courts in Ho Chi Minh City sentenced Vo Minh Tri and Tran Vu Anh Binh [for posting songs](#) deemed to be "anti-government propaganda". The two songwriters, who received sentences of four and six years respectively, had posted their music to YouTube and did not self-identify as political activists. Human Rights Watch [condemned the ruling](#) and "urged European Council President Herman Van Rompuy to use a three-day visit... to pressure Vietnam to loosen controls on free speech and to free prisoners convicted of political acts."