



The Citizen Lab

Southeast Asia CyberWatch: February 2013

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

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CAMBODIA

Media censorship on the rise in Cambodia

Media censorship in Cambodia is in a “critical” state, according to Reporters Without Borders’ (RSF) [Press Freedom Index 2013](#). The report argued that freedom of speech is at its worst due to the increasingly strict censorship policies of the country’s Ministry of Information. RSF also noted that many journalists who have expressed criticism of the government have faced intimidation, detention, or deadly attacks. In a [Cambodia Daily](#) news article, Cambodian journalists and government figures appeared divided in their opinions of the state of press freedom in the country, with some politicians stating their willingness to improve media conditions, while other journalists vocally criticized the state of journalism in the country.

INDONESIA

Internet access on the rise

The Jakarta Post [reports](#) that Internet penetration has risen substantially over the past decade. Samuel A. Pangerapan, chairman of the Indonesian ISPs Association (APJII), told the publication that, according to a survey conducted last year, the country has approximately 63 million Internet users, up from 1.8 million in the early 2000s. The majority of those individuals are between 12 and 34 years old and access the web from mobile devices. Most users spend their time on “websites related to social media, e-commerce, and news coverage,” though Indonesian workers increasingly rely on the Internet for their occupations.

MALAYSIA

Malaysian government hacked, vows to improve cybersecurity

On February 18, the website of Malaysia’s Department of Information was [hacked](#). The hackers posted a fake statement that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak was resigning. In response, Chief Secretary to the Government Datuk Seri Dr. Ali Hamsa announced that all ministries and departments will be required to strengthen their network security, according to [The Malaysian Insider](#). Information director-general Datuk Ibrahim Abdul Rahman released a statement that the false message [had been removed](#) and that the hacking was likely done to “[tarnish the image](#) of the department as the government’s official media.”

Government will regulate online businesses

Beginning on July 1, the Malaysian government [will regulate](#) all online businesses in order to ensure safe and secure electronic transactions. The country’s Minister for Domestic Trade, Co-operatives, and Consumerism announced the “Consumer Protection (Electronic Trade Transactions) Regulations 2012” at a conference on February 20, pointing to the increasing prevalence of online transactions fraud in the context of a booming e-commerce industry. The new regulations [will require](#) online businesses to fully display on their websites all details relating to the enterprise and the goods and services offered.

MYANMAR

Cyberattacks on the rise in Myanmar

Several journalists who cover Myanmar have had their email accounts [hacked](#). Google [warned](#) a number of these journalists, including reporters associated with the Associated Press and local publications Irrawaddy and Weekly Eleven News Journal, that these attacks had occurred. Google determined that some of these attacks may have been “[state-sponsored.](#)” Myanmar has officially [denied](#) all accusations that they were responsible for these accounts being compromised. As [previously reported](#), Myanmar has abolished its restrictive press laws and started to liberalize its media environment.

PHILIPPINES

Supreme Court extends restraining order on cybercrime law

The Supreme Court of the Philippines has [extended](#) its temporary restraining order on the 2012 Cybercrime Prevention Act with no indication as to when the order will end. Internet freedom activists in the country have praised the decision as part of the court's "[responsiveness](#)" to public sentiment. As [previously reported](#), the Act has been met with significant opposition from a variety of human rights activists and legal experts in the Philippines.

SINGAPORE

Government makes changes to cybercrime law

Singapore's Computer Misuse Act, passed in January and recently renamed the Computer Misuse and Cybersecurity Act, has been [amended](#) to increase protections on the city-state's critical information infrastructure (CII). These amendments permit the Ministry of Home Affairs to take proactive measures to protect Singapore's CII and allow the government to direct individuals and institutions to [protect](#) its infrastructure using "pre-emptive" measures. Businesses may be required to give [real-time information](#) to authorities on potential threats in cyberspace.

Increase in cyber extortion cases in Singapore

Singaporean media has reported a sharp rise in the number of "[sexually related](#)" cyber-extortion cases between 2011 and 2012. Most often, these cases involve women asking men whom they have met on social media to perform various sexual acts on video. The women then typically use the videos to blackmail the victims for money. Law enforcement in Singapore has [warned](#) citizens of the dangers of befriending strangers online.

VIETNAM

Vietnam continues campaign against bloggers

Over the past month, the Vietnamese government has continued to arrest bloggers for their online writings. On January 24, security officials [arrested](#) Le Anh Hung, an independent blogger who has posted entries critical of corruption within the ruling Communist Party. Hung was held at a psychiatric institute in Hanoi [until February 5](#). Meanwhile, Nguyen Van Hai, detained blogger and founder of the Free Journalists Club, [harshly criticized](#) the Vietnamese government in a petition smuggled out of prison by recently released activist Nguyen Quoc Quan (aka [Dieu Cay](#)). Currently, over 30 people are [imprisoned](#) for "peacefully using the Internet," while a dozen bloggers remain under house arrest.

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