

Indonesia to beef-up patrols after China coastguard raises suspicion

● **The vessel entered Indonesia's 200-mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ) off the northern Natuna islands**

Reuters | Jakarta

Indonesia will increase maritime security operations near some of its islands in the South China Sea after a Chinese coastguard vessel was spotted nearby, raising suspicions about its intentions, a senior security official said on yesterday. The vessel entered Indonesia's 200-mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ) off the northern Natuna islands

on Saturday and left on Monday after radio challenges over jurisdiction, Aan Kurnia, chief of the maritime security agency, Bakamla, said.

Under international law, innocent passage is permitted through another country's EEZ, but Aan said the vessel was lingering too long.

"Because this one floated, then went circling, we became suspicious, we approached it and learned that it was a Chinese coastguard vessel," he said, adding the navy and coastguard would boost operations there.

Wang Wenbin, China's foreign ministry spokesman, said the ship was undertaking

"normal patrol duties in waters under Chinese jurisdiction".

"China's rights and interests in the relevant waters in the South China Sea are clear," Wang told a news conference.

Indonesia renamed the northern reaches of its EEZ in 2017 as the North Natuna Sea, pushing back against China's maritime territorial

ambitions.

While China has made no claim to islands, the presence of its coastguard nearly 2,000 km (1,243 miles) off its mainland has concerned Indonesia, after numerous encounters between Chinese vessels in the EEZs of Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam, which disrupted fishing and energy activities.

A weeks-long standoff occurred 10 months ago when a Chinese coastguard vessel

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AAN KURNIA, CHIEF OF THE MARITIME SECURITY AGENCY

and accompanying fishing boats entered the northern Natuna Sea, prompting Indonesia to send

fighter jets and mobilise its own fishermen.

China's coastguard often operates alongside fishing boats described by experts as state-backed militia.

The "nine-dash line" on Chinese maps denoting its vast maritime claims includes waters off the Natuna islands. An international arbitration panel in 2016 invalidated that line.

Indonesia's foreign ministry spokesman Teuku Faizasyah reiterated that Jakarta does not recognise the line.



China Coast Guard vessel patrols at the disputed Scarborough Shoal (file)

AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine trial in US on hold

● **AstraZeneca on Saturday said it had restarted its trial in Britain**

Reuters | Chicago

AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine trial remains on hold in the United States pending a US investigation into a serious side effect in Britain even as other trials of the vaccine resume, sources familiar with the details told Reuters.



Representative picture

AstraZeneca on Saturday said it had restarted its trial in Britain after regulators completed their review of a serious side effect in

one trial participant there.

This was the first indication that the US trial will remain on hold until the US Food and Drug Administration and a safety panel investigate the case.

Enrollment in the company's global trials of the vaccine, which it is developing with researchers at Oxford University, was put on pause on Sept. 6.

Sources told Reuters that enrollment of new patients and other trial procedures for the pivotal US trial were being rescheduled until at least midweek and that it was not clear how long it would take for the FDA to

complete its probe.

Governments around the world are desperate for a vaccine to help end the pandemic, which has caused more than 900,000 deaths and global economic turmoil. The World Health Organization (WHO) had flagged AstraZeneca's as the most promising. A prolonged delay in the US trial could slow access to the vaccine in the United States.

The British adverse event involved a study patient thought to be suffering a rare spinal inflammatory disorder called transverse myelitis.

An AstraZeneca spokes-

woman declined to comment on when the US trial would resume. She said in an email the company "will continue to work with health authorities across the world, including the FDA, and be guided as to when other clinical trials can resume."

The status of the South African and Indian trials remains unknown, but the trial in Brazil has also restarted. The company has not commented on timing of resumption in other parts of the world besides Britain.

FDA did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Starved of wifi, Indonesians trade plastic trash to study online

Reuters | Jakarta/Bogor, Indonesia (Reuters)

When the coronavirus pandemic forced Indonesian schools to shut, it exposed how millions of households in the Southeast Asian country still had no access to the internet or even a device like a mobile phone to do remote learning.

So students and volunteers have come up with creative ways to get round the problem.

For the last two months, Dimas Anwar Putra, 15, and a friend have been collecting plastic trash in their Jakarta neighbourhood in exchange for wifi access.

With no internet access at home, the two students need to collect one kg (2.2 lb) of mostly plastic waste to trade for access to the internet so they can do online learning for around three hours up to three times a week.

"If we collect trash, it's like a charity for me and apart from that we also get free internet data," Dimas said.

The "wifi station" is the brain-



A student wearing a protective mask carries a bag of plastic bottles to be exchanged for internet wifi access for online studying at a local district office in Jakarta

child of Iing Solihin, who sells trash collected by students to purchase data costing 340,000 rupiah (\$22) a month to al-

low small groups of students to study.

"The problem is when the internet data runs out before

the end of the month ... and they can't study anymore," Iing

Local students pray before they start studying at a local district office in Jakarta

said.

Millions of Indonesian students have been forced to learn remotely since many schools shut in March due to the pandemic, a particular challenge for poorer families and those in remote areas.

In a hilly district near Bogor, about 80 km (50 miles) south of Jakarta, volunteers bring a car equipped with a mobile network transmitter weekly to remote villages so students can use the internet. The "School Volun-

teers" provide laptops and mo-



Only about one in six of Indonesia's roughly 60 million households had an internet connection in mid-2019, according to the Association of Internet Service Providers Indonesia (APJII).

bile phones.

"The problem of learning online is I rarely use a phone, I share my phone with my parents," said Dafa Mahesa Sudirman, 14, who along with about 30 other students grabbed his chance to study online in a wooden shed in their village.