

Five SE Asian nations agree to share data on aviation safety

BANGKOK Five Southeast Asian nations said yesterday they had agreed to share aviation data and information among themselves, including reports of severe turbulence, to help make air travel safer. Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand signed a memorandum of understanding on Wednesday, aiming to launch the plan by the end of the year, their civil aviation authorities said in a joint statement.

The agreement comes as air travel recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, which hammered tourism in the region.

The initiative was mooted last year but it took time for the coun-

tries to agree on what to share and the draw up protocols that will govern data confidentiality.

"In a first-of-its kind initiative in the Asia-Pacific, the five States will collaborate and share de-identified safety data and safety information to identify safety hazards and trends and develop mitigating measures to better manage safety risks," the joint statement said.

The countries identified an initial seven categories to be shared, including collision warnings, deviations from altitudes assigned by air traffic controllers and activation of warning systems on the ground. Reports of severe air turbulence, windshear, bird strikes and the car-

riage of dangerous goods are also to be shared.

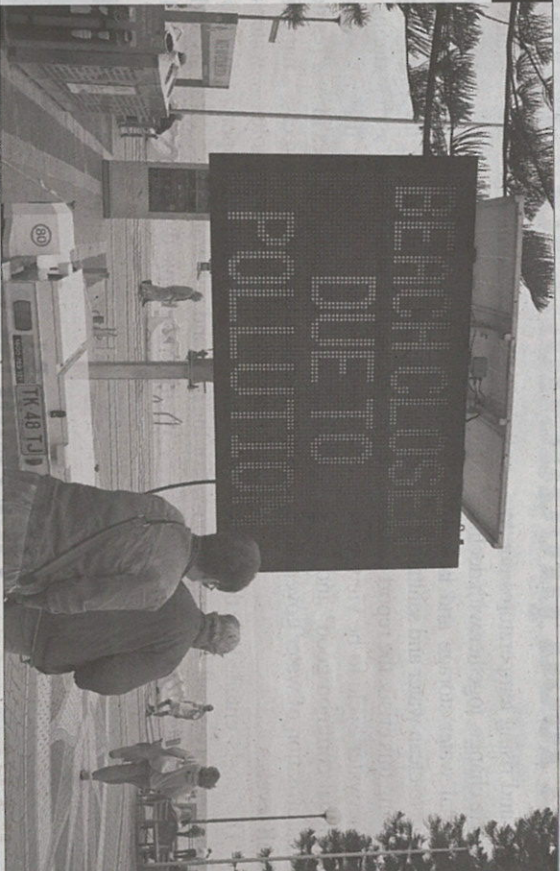
The Civil Aviation Authority of Thailand will act as the "custodian" of the data and its Singapore counterpart the "data analyst", the statement said.

The data, findings and recommendations from the analysis of the information "shall not be used to support investigations of accidents and incidents and shall not be used for punitive or enforcement purposes", the statement said.

Singapore's civil aviation authority director-general Han Kok Juan said he hoped other countries would join "to ensure safer skies for the travelling public". AFP

Beach balls

Beaches in Sydney including the iconic Bondi were closed to bathers yesterday after hundreds of black balls suspected to be toxic washed up on the city's shores. The authorities were baffled earlier this week when thousands of black spheres were found littering the shores of tourist haven Coogee Beach. AFP/WMA Photo



Japan's ruling party could struggle to maintain majority in upcoming legislative election

TOKYO Japan's ruling party may struggle to retain a majority in the October 27 House of Representatives election in the wake of slush funds scandal, while the main opposition could secure more seats than before last week's dissolution of the powerful chamber, a Kyodo News poll showed on Wednesday.

The projections, based on a telephone survey of 156,000 eligible voters across the coun-

try and information gathered by Kyodo News, point to a rough road ahead for Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba's Liberal Democratic Party despite his pledge to repair its tarnished image and win back public trust.

Nearly 30 per cent of respondents in the survey said they have yet to decide which candidate to vote for in the single-seat districts, meaning the final results of the race remain fluid.

Before Ishiba dissolved the 465-member lower house, the LDP had 256 seats. Together with its coalition partner Komeito party, the LDP held 288. The ruling coalition is aiming to secure the majority threshold of 233 at least in the forthcoming election.

The LDP is leading in only about half of the 289 single-seat districts, while its candidates are seen neck-and-neck with their rivals in many other districts.

The party is expected to see its number of seats in the proportional representation section decrease from the 72 held before the race, according to the polls conducted on Tuesday and Wednesday.

The latest scandal, in which some LDP members had failed to report income from fundraising parties properly, is expected to benefit the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan.

The largest opposition party, headed by former Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda, is projected to increase its seats from 98, likely winning support from nonaffiliated voters.

In the first general election since 2021, each voter casts two ballots, one to choose a candidate in a single-seat constituency and the other to select a party for proportional representation. KYODO



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