



The Myanmar coup: Democracy under siege

Unrest after a military coup in Myanmar has sent shock waves around the world, and the situation is worsening. Large-scale demonstrations and civil disobedience have broken out in Myanmar, and have not yet abated.

A military coup in Myanmar began on the morning of February 1, 2021. On that day, the Myanmar State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi, President Win Myint, and the leader of the ruling National League for Democracy were detained by the Myanmar Defense Forces. A few hours later, the Myanmar military declared that the country had entered a one-year state of emergency and stated that power had been transferred to the commander-in-chief of the Myanmar National Defense Forces, Min Aung Lai.

The coup occurred in the aftermath of the general election in November 2020, in which Aung San Suu's National League for Democracy (NLD) won 396 out of 476 seats in parliament. The military's proxy party, the Union Solidarity and Development Party, won only 33 seats, but after the election the army disputed the results, claiming that the result was fraudulent. Western democratized nations did not move in time to alter the action. The coup d'état began on the morning of Feb 1, when democratically elected members of the National League for Democracy, were deposed

by Myanmar's military—which, has a long tradition of autocracy. Myanmar (formerly known as Burma) gained independence from Britain in 1948, and was ruled by the armed forces from 1962 until 2011, when the new democratic government ushered in a return to civilian rule.

Last Wednesday (March 3) was what the



Protesters in Myanmar United Nations called "the bloodiest day" of the protests in Myanmar. At least 38 demonstrators were killed. On March 1, demonstrations were held in various towns in Myanmar. In Yangon, the largest city, roadblocks were set up to keep civilians away from the army and police. One person in charge of the Yangon demonstration said, "Many people have died, and everyone's anger is greater than before. I hope that many people will continue to participate in the demonstrations."

Democratic nations and the UN have spoken out strongly against the coup. Washington has led the global rebuff, with US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan saying the US was "coordinating closely with allies and

partners in the Indo-Pacific region." The UK sanctioned generals and said it is working on punitive measures. Asian nations, it is said, are unfortunately not following suit. Foreign ministers of ASEAN, which includes Myanmar, sought to stabilize calls for the release of Suu Kyi, while dodging any interference in Myanmar's internal affairs. Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong (李顯龍) said sanctions would only harm the population and would push Myanmar closer to certain foes, such as China.

The coup d'état occurred the day before the Parliament of Myanmar was due to swear in new members elected during the 2020 election.

The world is watching and hoping such autocracy can be overcome by the people in the streets, and order, stability and democracy can return to Myanmar soon. "We will continue to oppose the government until the real leader of our people is restored. I am scared. But I also don't want to regret what I didn't

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do. I want to fight against this," said one Myanmar artist participating in the protests.



Travel Agencies in Taiwan and the threat of COVID-19

By Staff writers Anne Xu and Ruby Huang

COVID-19 has affected many countries, and resulted in many deaths around the world. This pandemic has also impacted many local industries. The aviation industry has not been able to operate normally, because many countries now forbid other countries from entering, and tourists are being closely monitored for the disease, and often worry about catching it if they travel. Some airlines companies have even needed to shut down. As a result, the tourism industry has been deeply affected by COVID-19. Many travel agencies have begun to consider how to solve these problems during this terrible pandemic.

Because of this serious pandemic, tourists and other visitors have been limited in Taiwan. As a result, the tourism industry in Taiwan has declined, and a number of agencies have had to close. Why have these travel agencies had to shut down? First, because some countries have implemented con-

trolled entry policies, and people could not fly. Clearly this has been true in Taiwan, and visitors have undergone extensive testing and quarantine measures to ensure that they are safe. As well, Taiwanese themselves have traveled less, because nobody wanted to take a trip at this dangerous moment. Therefore, they have not asked travel agencies to plan foreign trips for them. So, travel agencies have lost many customers. Finally, as income and revenue dropped, travel agencies started to demand their employees take unpaid leave. In sum, the industry was dramatically impacted.

Although this pandemic had a great impact on the tourism industry, some travel agencies have discovered solutions to solve problems. They have started to focus on domestic and local tourism. Some cooperated with local hotels and launched a profitable plan in order to boost people's travel around Taiwan, sometimes called "staycations." Travel agencies pre-

pare everything, including transportation, accommodation, meals and the travel itinerary. People just need to pack the baggage and enjoy the localized journey. This is a great plan for those who don't want to deal with the complicated process of traveling overseas. In addition, the Taiwan government has also created travel subsidies. This makes people more willing to go out and travel locally. One comment says that "the attitudes, motivations, and preferences of tourists will have changed for the foreseeable future, perhaps forever" (www.siteminder.com).

All of this has reenergized Taiwan travel and the tourism industry. Tourists have found that they can still go out and travel. Everyone hopes that COVID-19 can be controlled someday. In this way, industries will be able to run their business again.

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