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# Myanmar military seizes power, Suu Kyi detained

## Junta imposes one-year state of emergency after bloodless coup



NAYPIDAW, Myanmar: A soldier stands guard on a blocked road to Myanmar's parliament yesterday after the military detained the country's de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi and the country's president in a coup. — AFP

YANGON: Myanmar's military seized power in a bloodless coup yesterday, detaining democratically elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi and imposing a one-year state of emergency. The intervention ended a decade of transition from outright military rule in Myanmar, with the generals justifying the power grab by alleging fraud in the November elections that Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) party won in a landslide.

The coup sparked global condemnation, with the United States leading calls for democracy to be immediately restored. Suu Kyi and President Win Myint were detained in the capital Naypyidaw before dawn, party spokesman Myo Nyunt told AFP, just hours before parliament was meant to reconvene for the first time since the elections.

Late yesterday, Myanmar state television announced the removal of 24 of Suu Kyi's ministers, and 11 new appointments. Former foreign minister Wunna Maung Lwin, who served under ex-general Thein Sein, will return to that role after five years - taking over a job that Suu Kyi had held while she was de facto national leader.

Earlier the military sealed off roads around the capital with armed troops, trucks and armored personnel carriers. Military helicopters flew across the city. A putsch had been expected for days, yet when it came it left Myanmar stunned - with roads to its main international airport blocked and communi-

cations cut - a country once more isolated from a world it only rejoined a decade ago. "It's extremely upsetting - I don't want the coup," said a 64-year-old Burmese man in Hlaing township, standing with a crowd outside a grocery stall.

The military declared, via its own television channel, a one-year state of emergency and announced that former general Myint Swe would be acting president for the next year. It alleged "huge irregularities" in the November polls that the election commission had failed to address. "As the situation must be resolved according to the law, a state of emergency is declared," the announcement said.

The army later pledged to hold fresh elections after the year-long state of emergency. Suu Kyi had issued a pre-emptive statement ahead of her detention calling on people "not to accept a coup", according to a post on the official Facebook page of her party's chairperson. The military moved quickly to stifle dissent, severely restricting the internet and mobile phone communications across the country.

In Yangon, the former capital that remains Myanmar's commercial hub, troops seized the city hall just ahead of the announcement, according to an AFP journalist. AFP saw several trucks in Yangon carrying army supporters, with Myanmar flags and blaring nationalist songs, and some NLD members reported that security forces had ordered them to stay at home.

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### News in brief

#### Fake COVID-negative papers

THE HAGUE: The EU's police agency yesterday warned travellers to watch for organized crime gangs selling fake COVID-negative certificates at airports, sometimes for as much as €300 each. The warning from Europol comes after police busted several suspects selling forged certificates declaring people COVID-19 negative at airports in Britain and France, online and through mobile messaging chat groups in Spain and the Netherlands. — AFP

#### Hezbollah downs Israeli drone

BEIRUT: Lebanon's Iran-backed Hezbollah movement said it downed an Israeli drone yesterday after it flew over the UN-demarcated Blue Line border, while Israel acknowledged an unmanned aircraft had crashed. Hezbollah said it "downed a drone belonging to the Israeli enemy that had entered Lebanese airspace outside Blida" in southern Lebanon. — AFP

#### Deal struck to free Lebanese

BEIRUT: A deal has been struck with the UAE to release from custody 11 Lebanese citizens, one of whom has already flown home, a top Lebanese official said yesterday. The UAE has in recent years expelled or sentenced to jail dozens of Lebanese Shiites over alleged ties to Hezbollah, which Abu Dhabi classifies as a "terrorist" organization. — AFP

#### Alcohol at 2022 World Cup

DOHA: Alcohol will be available to football fans in stadiums at the 2022 World Cup, but so far only to those purchasing hospitality packages, the contractor behind the premium offerings has said. No ruling on the availability of alcohol in stadiums for standard ticket-holders has yet been issued. Speaking at yesterday's launch of packages for the tournament, Jaime Byrom, the chairman of MATCH Hospitality, said: "It is our expectation that people will be able to (drink)." — AFP

## Dubai creates 'space court'

DUBAI: Dubai announced yesterday the creation of a "space court" to settle commercial disputes, as the UAE - which is also sending a probe to Mars - builds its presence in the space sector. The tribunal will be based at the Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) Courts, an independent British-inspired arbitration center based on common law.

Space law is governed by international conventions and resolutions, including the UN Outer Space Treaty which entered into force in 1967. Several states have also signed bilateral or multilateral agreements to regulate their space activities. However, while until recently the field was almost exclusively the domain of nations and institutions, space has become a commercial issue involving more and more private companies.

"An integrated space industry, supported by human resources, infrastructure, and scientific research, is under

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## N Korean envoy told daughter to 'find freedom'

SEOUL: A senior North Korean diplomat who was acting ambassador to Kuwait told his daughter they were going to defect to the South while pretending to drive her to school. Ryu Hyun-woo told media yesterday. "Come with Mom and Dad to find freedom," Ryu recalled telling his daughter in an

interview with CNN.

The teenager was "shocked" at the sudden suggestion that would change their lives, but responded "okay", he said - and he took them instead to the South Korean embassy. Ryu and his family reached the capitalist, democratic South in Sept 2019 but their arrival was kept secret until last week, and the interview aired yesterday was his first media communication.

About 30,000 North Koreans have fled repression and poverty to settle in the South, almost all of them first secretly crossing the porous border with China. Defections by senior officials are rare, although Ryu's arrival came just two months after

## Kosovo to open embassy in Jerusalem

JERUSALEM: Israel and Kosovo established diplomatic ties yesterday, with the Muslim-majority territory recognizing Jerusalem as the Jewish state's capital, putting it at odds with the rest of the Islamic world. Israel has since August normalized ties with four Arab states under a series of deals brokered by former US president Donald Trump, collectively known as the Abraham Accords.

But the majority-Muslim parties to those accords - the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan - have all said their diplomatic missions will be in Tel Aviv, in line with global consensus against recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital until the Palestinian conflict is resolved.

In exchange for setting up its mission in Jerusalem, Kosovo gets recognition from Israel, as it seeks to further legitimize its 2008 declaration of independence from its former war foe Serbia. Because of coronavirus restrictions, officials yesterday signed joint declarations separately in Jerusalem and Pristina.

Israel's Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi said the ceremony

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DUBAI: This picture taken yesterday shows a view of the downtown Dubai skyline. — AFP



JERUSALEM: Israel's Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi signs a joint declaration establishing ties with Kosovo during an official ceremony held over Zoom with his counterpart from Kosovo Meliza Haradinaj Stublla (screen) at the Israeli foreign ministry yesterday. — AFP