

Tatmadaw attempts military coup against government

by Jordan Chan
News Editor

The Tatmadaw, the name for Myanmar's military, seized control of Myanmar's government in a coup d'état on Feb. 1 and declared a one-year state of emergency following the reelection of State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi of the National League for Democracy (NLD). They arrested Suu Kyi along with President Win Myint and dozens of other NLD leaders on Feb. 2. The junta alleges that the elections in November of 2020 were fraudulent, but sources like the Associated Press call this claim "unsubstantiated." This event is the culmination of years of tension between the NLD and Tatmadaw, and it represents the imminent threat to democracy in Myanmar.



MARCHING MYANMAR: Citizens protest Tatmadaw taking government control.

NLD leader Win Htein has voiced Suu Kyi's support for civil disobedience amongst the public to protest the new government, and hundreds of thousands of people have listened. Dozens have died during recent anti-coup protests from altercations with the military, and there are reports of several injuries from the violence. On the deadliest day of the protests, Mar. 4, 38 people lost their lives. These mass protests persisted throughout February, demanding that the military restore Suu Kyi's government. Despite the fact that the protests are largely peaceful, the police have used force against protestors and arrested hundreds. They have also established new curfews, shut down access to the internet, and set limitations on gatherings in the hopes of curtailing opposition.

US President Joe Biden has stated that the Tatmadaw's actions are "a direct assault on the country's transition to democracy and the rule of law," while the United Nations Secretary General António Guterres has called the coup a "serious blow to democratic reforms." Both the US and the UK have imposed sanctions on military officials. Myanmar's neighboring nations have also expressed concern for the situation, and many intend to be quite cautious with their aid. In response to the situation, major corporations like YouTube and Facebook have pulled Myanmar military content. YouTube stated that several videos were not "in accordance with [its] community guidelines and applicable laws."

The Tatmadaw has a long history of rule in Myanmar. In 1962, the army took power of the South East Asian country, then called Burma, in a coup. In 1988, hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets to call for democratic government, but the military effectively

suppressed their efforts. In 1990, the NLD won elections in Myanmar; Suu Kyi's efforts to democratize the country at that time won her a Nobel Peace Prize one year later, although her reputation as a human rights champion has since fallen due to her allowance of the military campaign against Rohingya Muslims. Many label this campaign as genocide, condemning to the mass killings and rapes carried out by the military. Suu Kyi denied these claims. Despite winning the 1990 election, Suu Kyi only came to power in 2015, because authorities put her under house arrest for 15 years. Last year's elections gave her a second five-year term, and despite what happened with the Rohingyas, many still see her as a global symbol of democracy. (Sources: Associated Press, Washington Post, BBC, Reuters)



CALM BEFORE THE COUP: A market in Myanmar is peaceful prior to military coup.

New coronavirus mutation from Brazil causes concern

by Senji Torrey
Media Production Editor

A new variant of the coronavirus has sprung up in Brazil, causing many scientists to worry that the end of the pandemic is much farther away than previously thought.

This new adaptation of the virus, dubbed the P1 variant, is possibly a much more resilient form of COVID-19. The location where it was first discovered, Manaus, saw 75 percent of its population infected with the original strain in the summer of last year.

However, the supposed herd immunity gained by the city due to the sheer number of its infected citizens was inapplicable to the P1 variant. In December of 2020, Manaus went through an even bigger wave due to the P1 virus. According to science writer Carl Zimmer, "not only does [the new variant] spread quickly, but [it] appears to be able to evade antibodies, maybe antibodies that people develop from a previous infection." He added that the P1 variant "might even infect people who've gotten vaccinated."

This form of the virus has cast a dark shadow over the South American country, whose president, Jair Bolsonaro, has made little effort to help his country fight the virus. He inspired widespread ire when he told Brazilians to stop whining about the P1 variant and pandemic as a whole. Because of the lack of a reaction from the top, Brazil's population has been struggling to fight off both the P1 strain

and original variants of the coronavirus, an uphill battle ominously depicted by the nation's death toll. In early March, the biweekly daily death count in Brazil amounted to an average of 1,250 deaths, a number that ranks among the highest in the world.

Health officials have warned the Brazilian government that if actions are not taken soon, the toll could reach up to 3,000.

In the U.S., about ten people have contracted the new variant. However, these individuals are spread across five states, including Alaska, Maryland, Oklahoma, Florida, and Minnesota.

One potential glimmer of hope in the face of this new, stronger variant is that, according to U.S. News and World Report, the AstraZeneca vaccine seems to be effective in killing the P1 virus. However, AstraZeneca's vaccine has yet to be approved by the FDA for emergency use due to the lack of consistency and precision used in the production of the vaccine.

Despite the effectiveness of the AstraZeneca vaccine on the P1 variant, this vaccine has not been effective in fighting off the B.1.351 variant of the virus that emerged in South Africa; this resulted in the termination of its use in South Africa and has made many suspicious about the overall efficacy of the company's formula.

Whether or not the AstraZeneca vaccine does get utilized, Brazil, along with neighboring countries, still has a long way to go before herd immunity is reached.

(Sources: NY Times, USN, France 24, Fierce Pharma, CNN, The Guardian, Washington Post)



VACCINE TIME: A woman receives a coronavirus vaccine from a nurse in Brazil.

Citizens respond to Bobde

by Sidney Bricker
Media Production Editor

India's Chief Justice Sharad Arvind Bobde faces growing outrage over his recent comments during rape cases.



BAD GUY BOBDE: An Indian citizen marches against Bobde.

more than 5,200 signatures according to women's rights campaigner Vani Subramanian. One passage in the letter read, "By suggesting that this rapist marry the victim-survivor, you, the Chief Justice of India, sought to condemn the victim-survivor to a lifetime of rape at the hands of the tormentor who drove her to attempt suicide." The letter received overwhelming support from many notable Indian women's rights activists.

In another case in which a woman accused her former partner of rape, Bobde claimed that the woman should have filed the case as marital cruelty or assault, stating that "When two people are living as husband and wife, however brutal the husband is, can the act of sexual intercourse between them be called rape?" Courts in India often dismiss marital rape cases and acquit the perpetrators, but Bobde's statements and rulings in favor of the accused come at a time when activists increasingly demand the Indian government to consider marital rape a crime, which it currently is not.

According to the open letter "[Bobde's] comment not only legitimizes any kind of sexual, physical and mental violence by the husband, but it normalizes the torture that Indian women have been facing within marriages for years without any legal recourse." Bobde granted the accused men in both cases protection from arrest.

According to federal data, a rape occurs every fifteen minutes in India, though it is likely that the number could be much higher due to the stigma and victim-blaming that comes with reporting a rape case. Furthermore, of the reported cases, courts leave many trials pending for years, and cases that do manage to make it to the courtroom almost always end with the accused walking free. (Sources: Reuters, NY Times, Indian National Crime Records Bureau, Dawn)

In a case in which a 23-year-old man allegedly stalked, threatened, and repeatedly raped a 16-year-old girl, Bobde suggested that the accused rapist marry the survivor, who is no longer a minor. Bobde stated, "If you want to marry [her] we can help you. If not, you lose your job and go to jail." Protests and petitions picked up momentum across India as the Chief Justice's statements and decisions angered activists. Published on Mar. 2, an open letter calling for Bobde's resignation gained

Algerian activists protest

by Michaela Thimot
National/World Editor

Marking the two-year anniversary of the start of the pro-democracy movement in Algeria, known as Hirak, protesters returned to the streets all throughout the country on Feb. 22, despite COVID-19 restrictions.

The day prior, President Abdelmadjid Tebboune promised that the government would enact political reforms in response to previous protests. Activists are looking to dissolve the current political system and take away the power it affords the military. The number of protestors marching was significantly fewer than before the pandemic, but the turnout still amounted to thousands of protesters. All around the country, protesters remained solely in narrow streets in order to avoid the police cordons on larger roads.

The leaderless protest originally began on Feb. 22, 2019, prior to Tebboune's election. Up until the pandemic halted their demonstrations, protesters across the country marched every Friday. Hirak was initially established in response to former President Abdelaziz Bouteflika announcing he planned to run for a fifth term. After successfully removing Bouteflika from power, the protesters demanded the government transition towards a democracy. During his election campaign in 2019, Tebboune expressed staunch support for the Hirak movement. The protests continued following his election, since protesters claim he did not enact any major reforms. Algeria has an upcoming parliamentary election — beginning June 12 — and Tebboune has guaranteed that he will ensure there is a major shift in the country's government at that time.

The most notable outcome of the continuous protests is the termination of the "Bouteflika clan." The former president resigned in Apr. 2019

after 20 years in power, primarily as a result of defections from the military. However, the fall of the Arab autocrat did nothing to dull the magnitude of the protests. Hirak's continued demonstrations resulted in the arrest and prosecution of numerous advisers, prime ministers, intelligence chiefs, and officials from the Democratic National Rally and National Liberation Front parties.

When Algerians first initiated Hirak, many expected that the fire driving the protests would fade out fairly quickly. The protesters soon proved the opposite to be true when hundreds of thousands of citizens took to the streets week after week all across the country. Against immeasurable odds, the Hirak has survived COVID, and the Algerians will likely not give up until their demands for systemic change are met. (Sources: HRW, Washington Post, Brookings)



ANGRY ALGERIA: People take to the streets in protest.