

## Myanmar

## US promises sanctions

## Suu Kyi charged, can be held until Feb 15

YANGON, Myanmar, Feb 3, (AP): Police leveled their first formal charge against Myanmar's ousted leader **Aung San Suu Kyi**, members of her party said Wednesday, giving military authorities who staged a coup a legal reason to detain her at least through the middle of the month.

The charge — that Suu Kyi was in possession of illegally imported walkie talkies — came to light two days after she was placed under house arrest and appeared to merely be an effort to lend a legal veneer to her detention, though the generals have previously kept her and others locked up for years.

At the same time that authorities were working to keep Suu Kyi in detention, hundreds of lawmakers who had been forced to stay at government housing after the coup were told Wednesday to leave the capital city within 24 hours and go home, said a member of Parliament from Suu Kyi's party who is among the group. He spoke on condition of anonymity because he feared drawing the attention of the military.



Suu Kyi

Top generals announced Monday that they would take power for one year — accusing Suu Kyi's government of not investigating the military's allegations of voter fraud in recent elections. Suu Kyi's party swept that vote, and the military-backed party did poorly.

National League for Democracy spokesman Kyi Toe confirmed the charge against Suu Kyi that carries a maximum sentence of three years in prison. He also said the country's ousted president, Win Myint, was charged with violating the natural disaster management law. A leaked charge sheet dated Feb 1 indicates they can be held until Feb 15.

Police and court officials in the capital Naypyitaw could not immediately be contacted.

The coup was a dramatic backslide for Myanmar, which had been making progress toward democracy, and highlighted the extent to which the generals have ultimately maintained control in the Southeast Asian country.

The military announced Monday that it would hold power under a state of emergency for a year, and then hand power to the winner of elections. In response, Suu Kyi's party has called for nonviolent resistance, and scores of people in Yangon, Myanmar's largest city, honked car horns and banged on pots and pans on Tuesday night in a protest. Supporters of the military have also staged demonstrations.

## Protest

Medical workers have also declared they won't work for the new military government in protest of the coup at a time when the country is battling a steady rise in COVID-19 cases with a dangerously inadequate health system. Photos were shared on social media showing health workers with red ribbons pinned to their clothes or holding printed photos of red ribbons.

At a protest in Bangkok in neighboring Thailand on Wednesday against the coup, Khin Maung Soo, a Myanmar national, said he was demonstrating to "show the world that we are not happy with what happened."

He added: "We want to the world to know, and we want the whole world to help us too."

The takeover marked a shocking fall from power for Suu Kyi, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate who had lived under house arrest for years as she tried to push her country toward democracy and then became its de facto leader after her party won elections in 2015.

Suu Kyi had been a fierce critic of the army during her years in detention. But after her shift from democracy icon to politician, she worked with the generals and even defended their crackdown on Rohingya Muslims, damaging her international reputation.

The international community, which had enthusiastically supported Myanmar's nascent democracy, now faces a test. The United States has threatened sanctions and has labeled the takeover a coup. The UN Security Council held an emergency meeting Tuesday but took no action.

The foreign ministers of the Group of 7 leading industrial nations on Wednesday issued a statement calling for Suu Kyi and others to be released and for power to be restored to the democratically elected government.

While in power, Myanmar's new leader said the military government plans to investigate alleged fraud in last year's elections. Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing announced the moves Tuesday at the first meeting of his new government in the capital, the state-run Global New Light of Myanmar newspaper said.

While the military has cited the government's failure to properly investigate allegations of electoral irregularities as one of the reasons for the coup, the state Union Election Commission has said there were no significant problems with the vote.

Analysts have said the landslide victory of Suu Kyi's party may have caught the military by surprise — and made the generals concerned that it had too much power, even though the constitution had been carefully written to ensure the military maintained significant control, including with an allocation of 25% of the seats in Parliament.

Min Aung Hlaing also said that COVID-19 containment measures taken by Suu Kyi's government would be continued.

## Targeting

Myanmar has confirmed more than 140,600 cases including some 3,100 deaths. Its health care infrastructure is one of the weakest in Asia, according to UN surveys.

A statement issued Wednesday in the name of the executive members of Suu Kyi's party said that authorities began raiding the party's offices in Mandalay and other states and regions on Tuesday and seized documents and laptop computers.

The statement on the Facebook page of party spokesman Kyi Toe said locks were broken at several offices. It denounced the raids as illegal and demanded that they stop.

Meanwhile, the United States said Tuesday it considered the military roundup of civilian leaders in Myanmar a coup, setting the stage for sanctions and other measures targeting what State Department officials said was "the very small circle of military generals" responsible.

The military power grab poses a challenge for the two-week-old Biden administration, which wants both to support wobbly democracy movements globally but to avoid driving countries like Myanmar toward China.

And with Myanmar's military leaders already under US sanctions over the brutal campaign against the country's Muslim Rohingya minority, it was unclear how much additional impact any new penalties would have.

Biden administration officials previously had held off on officially classifying the military's weekend roundup as an outright takeover, and the country's leaders said in a televised address they were taking power for a one-year state of emergency. State Department officials said Tuesday they were satisfied the move met the legal definition of a coup.

Humanitarian assistance to Myanmar's people would not be affected by whatever penalties the US decides on, a State Department official said. The officials briefed reporters on condition they not be identified.

The weekend military detentions targeted the country's civilian leader, Nobel winner Aung San Suu Kyi, and others. The generals cited claims of fraud in November elections, which Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party won by a landslide.

The roundups upended years of internationally backed efforts to promote democracy in Myanmar, which had been emerging from a half-century of military rule and international isolation. After street protests against the military dictatorship, the generals allowed elections in 2015 that were won by Suu Kyi's party.



President Joe Biden and first lady Jill Biden pay their respects to the late US Capitol Police officer Brian Sicknick as an urn with his cremated remains lies in honor on a black-draped table at the center of Capitol Rotunda, Feb 2, in Washington. (AP)



Burmese living in Japan and supporters march during a protest in front of the Foreign Ministry in Tokyo, Feb 3. Myanmar's new leader said the military government installed after Monday's coup plans an investigation into alleged fraud in last year's elections and will also prioritize the COVID-19 outbreak and the economy, a state newspaper reported Wednesday. (AP)



In this April 16, 2020 file photo, Captain Tom Moore gestures after achieving his goal of 100 laps of his garden, at his home in Marston Moretaine, England. Tom Moore, the 100-year-old World War II veteran who captivated the British public in the early days of the coronavirus pandemic with his fundraising efforts, has died, Feb 2. (AP)

## Asia

**China to send 10m doses abroad:** China on Wednesday announced a plan to provide 10 million coronavirus vaccine doses to developing nations through the global COVAX initiative.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson **Wang Wenbin** said China is responding to a request from the World Health Organization under its Director-General **Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus** as developing countries seek to fill shortages predicted to run through March. He did not offer details on which vaccine China was providing to COVAX, or whether it was a donation.

COVAX, coordinated by the World Health Organization and GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance, seeks to ensure low- and middle-income countries have enough shots as wealthy nations have snapped up a large part of the billions of upcoming doses from mostly Western vaccine makers.

"We hope countries in the international community with the capability will swing into action, support COVAX through practical actions, support the work of the World Health Organization, assist developing countries in obtaining vaccines in a timely manner and contribute to ... conquering the pandemic at an early date," Wang said in a daily briefing. WHO is in the process of approving Chinese vaccines for emergency use, he added.

COVAX has secured only a fraction of the 2 billion doses it hopes to buy in 2021. Pfizer last month committed to supply up to 40 million doses of its COVID-19 vaccine this year through COVAX. (AP)

**T-shirt ignites tiff:** China says it has lodged a formal complaint with Canada over T-shirts ordered by one of the country's Beijing Embassy staff that allegedly mocked China's response to the coronavirus outbreak, in an apparent mix-up between the city of Wuhan and the hip-hop group Wu-Tang Clan.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang

## America

## Democrats push on

## 'GOP virus aid too small'

WASHINGTON, Feb 3, (AP): President Joe Biden panned a Republican alternative to his \$1.9 trillion COVID rescue plan as insufficient since Senate Democrats pushed ahead, voting to launch a process that could approve his sweeping rescue package on their own, if Republicans refuse to support it.

Biden and Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen joined the Democratic senators for a private virtual meeting Tuesday, both declaring the Republicans' \$618 billion offer was too small. They urged big fast action to stem the coronavirus pandemic crisis and its economic fallout.

As the White House reaches for a bipartisan bill, Democrats marshaled their ever-slim Senate majority, voting 50-49, to start a lengthy process for approving Biden's bill with or without GOP support. The goal is to have COVID-19 relief approved by March, when extra unemployment assistance and other pandemic aid expires.

"President Biden spoke about the need for Congress to respond boldly and quickly," Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said after the lunch meeting. "If we did a package that small, we'd be mired in the COVID crisis for years."

## Action

The swift action from Democrats on Capitol Hill underscores the urgency of delivering Biden's top legislative priority even as talks are progressing privately between Republicans and the White House, as well as with centrist Democrats, on potential changes to the package to win over broader bipartisan support.

Biden framed his views during the virtual lunch meeting with Democrats by talking about the need not to forget working and middle-class families — even those like nurses and pipelayers making \$150,000 for a family of four — who are straining during the

crisis, according to a person granted anonymity to discuss the private call.

The night before, Biden met with 10 Republican senators pitching their \$618 billion alternative, and let them know it was insufficient to meet the country's needs. The president made it clear that he won't delay aid in hopes of winning GOP support.

While no compromise was reached during the late Monday session, White House talks with Republicans are privately underway.

The outcome will test the new president striving to unify the country but confronting a rising COVID-19 death toll and stubbornly high jobless numbers, with political risks for all sides. Vaccine distributions, direct \$1,400 payments to households, school reopenings and business aid are all on the line.

Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell criticized the Democrats for pressing ahead on their own. He said he had spoken to Biden ahead of his meeting with the 10 GOP senators.

"They've chosen a totally partisan path," McConnell said. "That's unfortunate."

The two sides are far apart, with the Republican group of 10 senators focused primarily on the health care crisis and smaller \$1,000 direct aid to Americans than the \$1,400 payments Biden proposed, while the president is leading Democrats toward a more sweeping rescue plan to shore up households, local governments and a partly shuttered economy.

At the White House, press secretary Jen Psaki reiterated Biden's view that the risk is not in crafting too large a package, but in providing too little aid. She said the president was hopeful GOP ideas will be brought forward, and said nothing precludes Republicans from participating in the process.

"We need to make sure people get the relief they need," she said.

Wenbin told reporters Tuesday that China called on Canada to "thoroughly investigate the incident and give China a clear explanation."

The incident arose after a T-shirt maker posted on the Chinese internet that a staff member from the Canadian Embassy had ordered T-shirts with a bat print. That ap-



Wang



Tedros

peared to reference allegations that the virus developed in China from bats and then spread to humans in the city of Wuhan, where infections were first reported in late 2019.

But Canadian media reports said the logo was a W in homage to the New York hip-hop group the Wu-Tang Clan and that Ottawa had apologized for any misunderstanding.

China's government is extremely sensitive to accusations it was the source of the pandemic and failed to respond quickly enough when cases were first reported in Wuhan. The T-shirts were reportedly ordered last summer and it wasn't clear if any were still in circulation.

The controversy underscores the plunge in relations between the countries in the past two years over China's demand that Canada release a top executive of communications giant Huawei who is wanted on fraud charges in the United States. (AP)

## Obituary

## Raised funds

## Captain Tom dead at 100

LONDON, Feb 3, (AP): Capt. **Tom Moore**, the World War II veteran who walked into the hearts of a nation in lockdown as he shuffled up and down his garden to raise money for health care workers, has died after testing positive for COVID-19. He was 100.

His family announced his death on Twitter, posting a picture of him behind his walker in a happy moment, ready for an adventure.

"The last year of our father's life was nothing short of remarkable. He was rejuvenated and experienced things he'd only ever dreamed of," the family's statement said. "Whilst he'd been in so many hearts for just a short time, he was an incredible father and grandfather, and he will stay alive in our hearts forever."

Captain Tom, as he became known in newspaper headlines and TV interviews, set out to raise 1,000 pounds for Britain's National Health Service by walking 100 laps of his backyard. But his quest went viral and caught the imagination of millions stuck at home during the first wave of the pandemic. Donations poured in from across Britain and as far away as the United States and Japan, raising some 33 million pounds (\$40 million).

## Remember

For three weeks in April, fans were greeted with daily videos of Captain Tom, stooped with age, doggedly pushing his walker in the garden. But it was his sunny attitude during a dark moment that inspired people to look beyond illness and loss.

"Please always remember, tomorrow will be a good day," Moore said in an interview during his walk, uttering the words that became his trademark.

When Captain Tom finished his 100th lap on April 16, a military honor guard lined the path. The celebration continued on his birthday a few days later, when two World War II-era fighter planes flew overhead in tribute. Moore, a plaid blanket over his shoulders, pumped a fist as they roared past.

In July, he was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II in a socially distanced ceremony at Windsor Castle, west of London. The 94-year-old monarch used an impossibly long sword to confer the honor as Moore, wearing his wartime medals on his chest, leaned on his walker, beamed and became Sir Tom.

"I have been overwhelmed by the many honors I have received over the past weeks, but there is simply nothing that can compare to this," he tweeted after the ceremony. "I am overwhelmed with pride and joy."

Queen Elizabeth II plans a private message of condolence to the family, Buckingham Palace said.

"Her Majesty very much enjoyed meeting Capt. Sir Tom and his family at Windsor last year," the palace said in a statement. "Her thoughts, and those of the Royal Family, are with them, recognizing the inspiration he provided for the whole nation and others across the world."

Flags were lowered at Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Downing Street office. The British leader described Moore as a "hero in the truest sense of the word."

Born in Keighley, West Yorkshire, on April 30, 1920, Moore completed an apprenticeship in civil engineering before being drafted into the army during the early months of World War II. After being selected for officer training, he rose to the rank of captain while serving in India, Burma and Sumatra.

## Preserving

After leaving the army in 1946, Moore went to work for the family construction firm. After that failed, he became a salesman and later a manager for building materials companies. When the concrete company he was working for was threatened with closure, Moore rounded up a group of investors and bought it, preserving 60 jobs.

Along the way, he divorced his first wife and fell in love with his employer's office manager, Pamela. The couple married, had two daughters and eventually retired to Spain, but returned to England after Pamela Moore became ill.

After his wife died in 2006, Moore moved to the village of Marston Moretaine in Bedfordshire to live with his younger daughter, Hannah, and her family. The former motorcycle racer slowed down at age 98 after he fell and broke his hip in 2018. A walker replaced his Skoda Yeti, but he kept moving.

During a backyard barbecue in early April of last year, Moore's family challenged him to walk the entire length of the 25-meter (82-foot) driveway. After he made it to the end, his son-in-law encouraged him to keep going, offering to pay 1 pound for every lap and suggesting a goal of 100 laps by Moore's 100th birthday.