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## Myanmar Holds First Post-Coup Election Amid Global Scrutiny



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Voting in the first phase of Myanmar's general elections concluded on Sunday, marking the country's first nationwide electoral process since the military takeover in 2021. Polling was held across 102 townships, with stations opening early in the morning and closing in the afternoon, according to local media reports.

Myanmar's Union Election Commission said more than 21,500 polling stations were established

nationwide for the multi-phase elections. The second and third phases are scheduled for January 11 and January 25. Officials also confirmed that 139 representatives from diplomatic missions and international observer groups monitored the first phase of voting.

At least six political parties are contesting the elections with nearly 5,000 candidates, following the dissolution of 40 parties in 2023, including the formerly ruling National League for Democracy (NLD). The military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party has fielded more than 1,000 candidates. At the regional level, 57 parties are participating in the race.

After casting his vote in Naypyidaw, junta leader and acting President Min Aung Hlaing described the elections as “free and fair,” while declining to comment on any future political role.

Myanmar’s bicameral parliament, comprising 664 seats, is expected to convene within three months of the vote to elect parliamentary speakers and a president.

The elections are taking place amid prolonged internal conflict following the 2021 coup, which ousted the elected NLD government. The crisis has left thousands dead and more than 3.5 million people displaced. Military authorities have not yet announced a timeline for vote counting or the release of official results.

International reaction remains divided, with United Nations human rights officials urging the global community to reject the legitimacy of the electoral process