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**One Good Thing: A Singapore skyline view for migrant workers**

By Annabelle Liang  
The Associated Press

SINGAPORE — The capsules of the Ferris wheel in Singapore were peppered with rain. Not great for a bird’s eye view of the city. But the migrant workers riding the Singapore Flyer attraction did not mind.

They were a fraction of at least 20,000 workers getting a treat, from members of the public and businesses.

The ItsRainingRaincoats initiative began calling for tickets to be donated to the workers in January.

A volunteer felt it was a meaningful way to use tourism vouchers from the government, founder Dipa Swaminathan said.

Singapore citizens age 18 and older have received 100 Singapore dollars (\$74.30) in vouchers. They were to spend it on attractions, hotels, and tours — businesses that have lost income during the coronavirus pandemic.

Swaminathan’s group worked with the Ferris wheel operator and a booking platform to get tickets routed to the foreign workers.

“There are so many people who appreciate the contributions workers have made to Singapore and this is their chance to give back,” Swaminathan said.

“There’s a lot of joy in giving. I think that’s what causes the public ... to support us in these kinds of endeavors,” she told The Associated Press.

The group will keep organizing rides as long as tickets stream in.

A ticket, which includes entrance to an interactive display, costs 35 Singapore dollars (\$26). There are currently enough for 20,000 workers.

That is 2% of the 700,000 to 800,000 who live in Singapore, Swaminathan estimates.

She said the “contained” nature of the Ferris wheel makes it a good fit.

Volunteers reminded the riders to keep their masks on and keep a one-meter distance during a recent visit.

Ganesan Thivagar visited with his dormitory mates. They waited while rides were briefly halted for bad weather.

When it was time to board, the 540-foot-high view was spotty.



**SINGAPORE SKYLINE.** Migrant worker Natarajan Pandiarajan, right, enjoys the view on board the Singapore Flyer attraction in Singapore on March 7, 2021. Pandiarajan is among at least 20,000 migrant workers being treated to rides by members of the public and businesses. Migrant workers are getting a bird’s eye view of Singapore, with the public’s help. (AP Photo/Annabelle Liang)

The 34-year-old was unfazed. He marvelled at how Singapore had changed since he arrived 14 years ago.

He quickly got to taking photographs for his family in India’s Tamil Nadu state.

“I am happy to enjoy the trip and enjoy together with my friends. Thanks to Singapore (I get to) come here,” Thivagar said.

Workers like Thivagar have had a rough time, as their dormitories were early hotspots for coronavirus infections.

Migrant workers have accounted for most of Singapore’s 60,000 reported cases.

Although the situation is under control, workers have tighter movement restrictions than the general population. These are being eased by authorities.

Natarajan Pandiarajan, 29, said the restrictions were “really difficult,” so he was grateful for breathers like his recent ride. “Inside many feelings I also have. But this time now, coming on, happiness,” he said.

*“One Good Thing” is a series that highlights individuals whose actions provide glimmers of joy in hard times — stories of people who find a way to make a difference, no matter how small. Associated Press religion coverage receives support from the Lilly Endowment through The Conversation U.S. The AP is solely responsible for this content.*

**Myanmar pageant contender calls for urgent international aid**

BANGKOK (AP) — A pageant contestant from Myanmar used her moment in the spotlight to appeal for urgent international help for her country as security forces suppressing protests against a coup killed more than 100 people.

Yangon University student Han Lay made the comments in late March at the Miss Grand International pageant held in the Thai capital of Bangkok. As she was speaking, news was coming out from across the border in Myanmar that at least 114 people had been killed in the bloodiest day since the February 1 coup.

Han Lay had made no secret of her sympathies in a publicity video interview from March and on her Instagram page, which shows memes and photos from the protest movement in her homeland. Yet it was still surprising to see a contestant at an international pageant use the event to in part criticize her own country’s leaders.

“I deeply feel sorry for the people who have lost their lives on the streets. Every citizen of the world wants the prosperity of their country and the peaceful environment. In doing so, the leaders involved should not use their power and selfishness to apply,” she said.

“Today in my country, Myanmar, while I am going to be on this stage, there are so many people dying, more than 100 people died today. I am deeply sorry for all the people who have lost their lives,” she went on, pausing frequently to fight back tears.

“I want to say for here that, please help Myanmar. We need your urgent international help right now.”

The bloodshed in Myanmar quickly drew international condemnation, both from diplomatic missions within Myanmar and from abroad.

Other high-profile Myanmar people have used international platforms to criticize the coup and the new junta running the country.

Several Myanmar diplomats abroad have said they are loyal to an alternative underground self-proclaimed



**PAGEANT PLEA.** Miss Myanmar, Han Lay, speaks on stage during the Miss Grand International contest on March 27, 2021, in Bangkok, Thailand. The beauty pageant contestant from Myanmar used her brief moment in the spotlight to appeal for international help for her country, on the worst day for bloodshed since the military there staged its coup about two months ago. (Miss Grand International via AP)

government set up by elected lawmakers who were not allowed to take their seats in parliament when the army staged its coup.

The highest profile defection was Kyaw Moe Tun, Myanmar’s representative at the United Nations, who declared his new loyalties at an official session of the world body and flashed the three-finger salute of the protest movement at the end of his remarks.

Inside Myanmar, celebrities from the world of modelling and entertainment added a bit of glamour to the protest movement before the government unleashed lethal violence on it.

The government last month issued arrest warrants for several well-known actors and directors who had been publicly supportive of the protests, charging them under a public order law that carries a penalty of up to three years in prison.

It was also significant that Han Lay’s call for action at the Miss Grand International pageant came from within Thailand. Thailand hosts as many as 4 million migrant workers from Myanmar, many of whom are sympathetic with the protest movement, but fear their jobs might be in jeopardy if they speak out as Thai officials have warned them not to be politically active.

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