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**FUELING THE KILLING**

**Civilians on the sharp  
end of Myanmar fighter  
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# IF UKRAINE GETS SO MUCH ATTENTION, WHAT ABOUT MYANMAR?

Three leading Myanmar resistance players have reached out with a message to the world.

Writing for USIP, in an Op-Ed entitled, “Like Ukraine, Myanmar Deserves International Aid – aid will help Myanmar’s unified and strengthening resistance,” National Unity Government (NUG) Defense Minister Yee Mon, democracy activist Min Ko Naing, and the Kachin Independence Council Vice Chairperson Sumlut Gun Maw have criticized the international community for not providing the same kind of support to Burma as Ukraine.

“Even a small fraction of the aid Ukraine has gotten to repel Russian aggression could dramatically affect the struggle to unseat Myanmar’s military dictators,” they said.

The three are important resistance players. Lt. Gen. Sumlut Gun Maw is the vice chairman of the Kachin Independence Council, a crucial player. Yee Mon is the Minister of Defense of the NUG, technically the head of the Spring Revolution resistance. And Min Ko Naing is an old hand, one of the most prominent activists and a former student leader of the renowned 8888 movement.

While many around the world focus on the conflict between the Russian forces and the Ukrainian fighters, with billions of dollars thrown in, “the people of Myanmar fight for every inch of land stolen by the junta”.

A crucial element in the Myanmar resistance is the unity in terms of the efforts made by the People’s Defence Forces (PDFs) and the Ethnic Revolutionary organizations (EROs) to take on the

junta, noting the gains being made.

But, as they note, “a swift victory will require the support and assistance of the international community and in this, we cannot compare ourselves to Ukrainians. We have received very little in the way of materiel support. A mere 1 percent of the aid going to Ukraine would prove instrumental in the Myanmar revolution’s ability to achieve a decisive victory in a matter of months instead of the years-long struggle we face against such lopsided combat power.”

Right and wrong is clear in the current conflict in Myanmar. “The current resistance movement is unique in Myanmar’s history and worthy of international support. With our pan-ethnic unity of purpose, unwavering belief in democracy and commitment to the cause, this is the best — and perhaps last — chance, after seven decades of unending war, to bring peace, democracy and freedom to Myanmar,” they say.

This is a “do-or-die” scenario.

“Regardless of the support we get from the international community, the Myanmar people will not waver in their determined struggle against the military dictatorship,” they say. “However, if international support reinforces the struggle, the will of the people is sure to triumph over the military dictatorship in a shorter time span, leading to a swifter emergence of a peaceful federal democratic union and the restoration of stability in both the country and the region.”

EDITORIAL

**mizzima**  
WEEKLY

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# CONTENTS



**mizzima** WEEKLY

## NEWS & INSIGHT

- 3** EDITORIAL
- 6** IN FOCUS
- 8** NEWS ROUNDUPS
- 10** FUELING THE KILLING Civilians on the sharp end of Myanmar fighter jet strategy
- 16** Insight Myanmar – Leaving on a jet plane
- 18** Austrian aircraft company's deal with Myanmar junta breaches EU arms embargo

## ASEAN DIPLOMACY

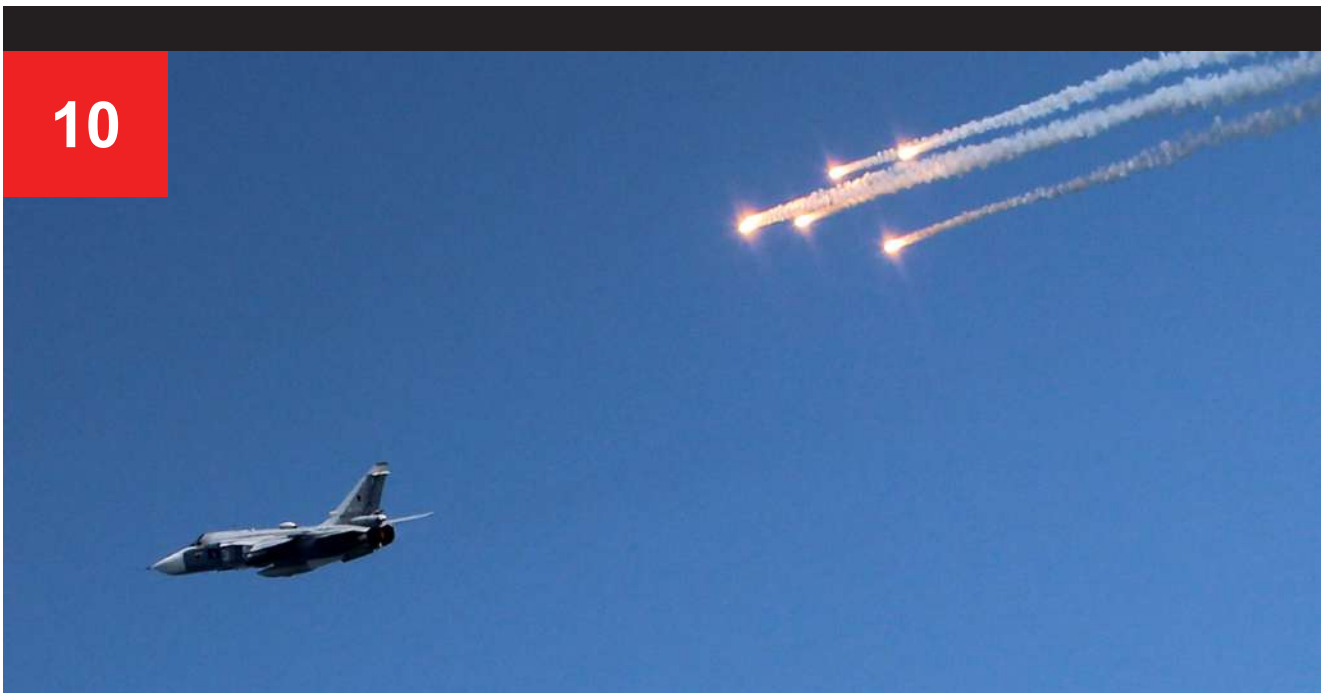
- 20** 'Premature' for any ASEAN talks with Myanmar, says Singapore FM



## CYCLONE MOCHA AID UPDATE

- 21** Myanmar's blocking of aid access 'unfathomable'
- 22** Myanmar junta deputy says Cyclone Mocha international aid has to get okay from Rakhine authorities
- 23** FAO alarmed over food insecurity in Myanmar
- 24** Junta-backed Global New Light of Myanmar editorial slams 'rotten' United Nations

**10**







- 25 Report claims 6,000 civilians killed in first 20 months since Myanmar coup, tally higher than earlier estimates
- 26 More than 70,000 houses in Myanmar torched since the coup
- 27 Free Burma Rangers boss thanks Elon Musk for bringing Starlink internet to Myanmar's conflict-ridden Kayah
- 28 Interim executive council formed to develop Myanmar's Karenni State into a federal unit
- 29 Aung San Suu Kyi's birthday celebrated

## CHINA FOCUS

- 30 AIIB not multilateral, 'serves China's interests' says ex-exec

## INDIA FOCUS

- 32 Foreign journalists quit FCC India club in protest after chief visits Myanmar
- 34 Nine killed in fresh ethnic clashes in India's northeast
- 35 Pakistan pressed over charges against journalists

Cover photo of fighter jet by AFP

- 36 Influencers overtaking journalists as news source
- 37 US trafficking report highlights forced labor, exploited boys

## COMMENTARY

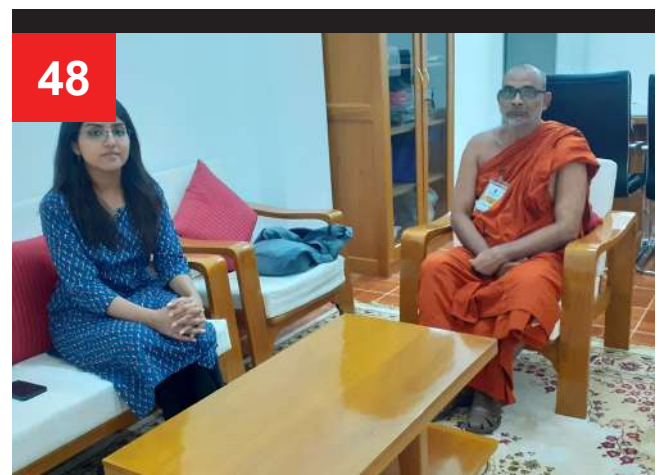
- 38 UNHCR calls for concerted action as forced displacement hits new high of 110 million
- 40 ETHNIC NEWS ROUNDUPS
- 41 LAST WEEK IN NAY PYI TAW

## BUSINESS

- 42 Unrest will not impact India's Kaladan project in Rakhine, says SAC
- 43 Myanmar paddy production 8 per cent below five-year average: FAO report
- 44 Myanmar junta arrests, questions gold traders in Yangon and Mandalay
- 45 BUSINESS ALERTS

## CULTURE & LIFESTYLE

- 46 IN FOCUS
- 48 The New Spiritual Relationship Between India and Myanmar – Venerable Sumedha Bodhi







## CYCLONE DESTRUCTION

**A** Myanmar boy in a displaced people's camp near Sittwe stands next to his destroyed home. Many people are still waiting for humanitarian aid in the wake of Cyclone Mocha.

Photo: AFP



IN FOCUS





## FORMER MYANMAR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS' APPEAL REJECTED

The Union Supreme Court rejected special appeals against prison sentences for corruption by the former Mayor of Naypyitaw and the former Yangon Regional Social Affairs Minister.

Dr. Myo Aung, the former Naypyitaw Mayor, was convicted of receiving donations for election candidates during the election.

U Naing Ngan Lin the former Yangon Regional Social Affairs Minister was convicted in five corruption cases for accepting bribes from businessmen whilst he was serving as the chairman of the Education Facilities Construction Tender Committee.

A lawyer said: "They forbid the special appeal. Nothing can be done after filing a special appeal."

Both men served under the last National League for Democracy (NLD) government until it was ousted by the junta in the February 2021 coup. They had already tried appealing once before, but that appeal had also been rejected.

Since the coup until 7 June 2023, a total of 23,283 people have been arrested and of those 18,953 are still being detained, according to reports by the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP).

## RETURNING IDPS ARRESTED IN TANINTHARYI TOWNSHIP

Internally displaced people (IDPs) were arrested when they tried to temporarily return to their homes in Tanintharyi Township's Nyaungpinkone Village, on 7 June, according to people assisting the IDPs.

They had fled their houses when fighting between local defence forces and the junta army broke out in the area on 6 June.

On 7 June some of the villagers who had fled Nyaungpinkone Village in Myiek District returned to check on their houses because they thought that the junta soldiers had already left the area.

"It was quiet in the village after the battle, so they [the IDPs] went into the village because they thought there were no military troops there. Then, they ran into patrolling [junta] soldiers and were arrested", said an IDP.

Of the arrested, five were men and four were women. The four women have reportedly been released.

"We heard that a total of 9 people, both men and women, were arrested. Among them, four women were released on the day they were arrested. But we do not know the exact details yet", said a Tanintharyi-based person assisting the IDPs.

The remaining five men are reportedly still being detained at Tanintharyi-based Light Infantry Battalion 556 and Field Artillery Regiment 306, according to locals, though this has not yet been independently verified by Mizzima.

Tanintharyi Township is currently under martial law.

## ACTRESS SENTENCED TO THREE YEARS JAIL FOR POSTING BLACK PROFILE PICTURE

An actress who posted a black social media profile picture to show her disapproval of the Myanmar junta's attack Pazigy Village was sentenced to three years imprisonment on 10 June.

The actress, May Panache, was detained on 11 April at her home in North Dagon Township.

She was sentenced to three years imprisonment under Section 505 (a) of the Penal Code for posting a black profile picture and comments about the Pazigy Village massacre.

"Due to the actress changing her profile picture to black, a military tribunal sentenced her to three years in prison. She was unjustly arrested by military council soldiers", said a lawyer.

Similar cases have also been brought against

singer Shwe Yi Thein Tan and the former editor-in-chief of The Voice Journal Kyaw Min Swe for posting black profile pictures.

They were questioned at the Aung Thabyay Interrogation Center in Mayangone Township, Yangon, according to legal sources.

Both were also sentenced to three years in prison, according to posts on junta Telegram Channels on the morning of 11 June, but Mizzima has not yet been able to independently confirm this.

A person close to Kyaw Min Swe said: "I haven't yet heard about Kyaw Min Swe's sentence".

Around 170 civilians were killed in the 11 April airstrike on Pazigy Village in Sagaing Region's Kantbalu Township.



# JUNTA BURNS DOWN OVER 100 HOUSES IN SALINGYI TOWNSHIP, SAGAING

**B**etween 9 and 11 June Myanmar junta soldiers have burnt down over 100 houses in Nyaungpingyi Village Tract in Sagaing Region's Salingyi Township, according to a villager.

They said that the junta soldiers started setting the fires after fierce fighting between junta and defence forces close to Nyaungpingyi Police Station, on 9 June at around 5:45 p.m.

"The military junta soldiers fired light and heavy weapons into the villages and stole civilians' belongings.

Junta soldiers have deployed in Nyaungpingyi Village and are patrolling [there]."

The junta's actions have caused more than 10,000 people to flee Nyaungpingyi Village Tract.

Those people are suffering from food shortages, according to the director of Anyar-Pyittaungtaung,

a philanthropic Sagaing Region youth organisation, that managed to provide 500 meals to some of the displaced people.

He said: "Currently, residents of the Nyaungpingyi Village tracts are escaping the fighting. Due to the military junta soldiers stationed in Nyaungpingyi Village, the locals are finding it difficult to return to their homes. Currently, people are having trouble finding both housing and food. We have provided a meal to 500 people, but there are many people out there in Salingyi Township who need aid."

A man and two women were injured by junta artillery fire in Nyaungpingyi Village Tract on 10 June.

10 junta soldiers were killed in the fighting at Nyaungpingyi Police Station and weapons and ammunition were seized, according to Buffalo People Defense Force (BPDF), one of the defence forces involved in the fighting.

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## RESIDENTS OF BAGO'S KYAUKKYI TOWNSHIP FORCED TO FLEE JUNTA ARTILLERY FIRE

**M**any residents of Kyaukkyi Township in Bago Region's Taungoo District were forced to flee to safer locations because of heavy junta artillery fire on 12 June, according to Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) Brigade 3.

A KNLA Brigade 3 officer said to Mizzima: "The military junta's Infantry Battalion 60 and Ogre Column fired heavy weapons at 9:00 pm on 12 June, three more times around 10:30 pm (on the same day), and five more times in the early morning around 1:00 am on 13 June.

Infantry Battalion 60 is stationed in Thanbo Village, Kyaukkyi Township and the Ogre Column has recently moved into the township after starting to invade the KNLA Brigade 3 area in late May it has moved through Mone Township and is now in Kyaukkyi Township.

Both the military units have been firing heavy weapons in Kyaukkyi Township since 12 June causing villagers from 10 villages in the township to flee for

their own safety.

The KNLA officer said: "The villages are Natthankwin, Duangmo, Tawkyaugpauk, Wapinsu, Thaugpu, Yetwinkonekyi, Yetwinkonelay, Okshikin, Ohnpinsu, and Thapyaykone. People from those villages moved to the internally displaced people (IDP) camp and nearby areas where their relatives live. It is raining right now as well."

Currently the exact location of the IDP camp is unknown.

There are many elderly people and children amongst those who fled and the heavy rainfall has exacerbated their poor living conditions and healthcare needs, according to a Kyaukkyi resident.

They said: "The difficulties affect the elderly and children. Young adults are relatively unaffected. The situation got a lot worse due to the heavy rain. Most of the elderly people were ill because they didn't have enough stamina. The main thing we need right now is medications and shelters."





Myanmar jet fighters have been targeting civilians in their war against their people. Photo: AFP





# **FUELING THE KILLING**

**Civilians on the sharp end of Myanmar  
fighter jet strategy**

**Andrew Landen**



**C**alls by Myanmar protestors are growing shrill to demand countries block the supply of aviation fuel to the Myanmar military.

The nub of concern is jet fighter and helicopter fuel enables the Myanmar military to bomb, rocket and strafe civilian and resistance targets in Myanmar to devastating effect.

Aerial attacks have picked up substantially over the last couple of years since the 2021 military coup – and to a large extent, Myanmar civilians have felt the brunt of the deadly onslaughts.

## **TWO SIDES OF THE COIN**

It can be argued that the reasons for the Myanmar junta to rely more on the use of jet fighters and helicopters – as part of their multifaceted “four cuts” strategy - are primarily two-fold.

Firstly, since the Spring Revolution resistance started two years ago, the People’s Defence Forces (PDFs) – while poorly armed - have gained significant

ground, meaning well over 50 per cent of the country is effectively out of the control of the junta.

Secondly, as a result of numerous military engagements, the Myanmar military, particularly ground troops, have suffered as a result of PDF actions – particularly due to hit-and-run engagements, including the devastating use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), that have led to a significant troop body count. This has prompted a rethink by junta military strategists.

As has happened in many war theatres around the world over the last half century, ground troop losses often lead those in power to step up the use of mechanized armour, particularly fighter jets and helicopter gunships. In typical scenarios in which government forces are pitted against guerrillas, menacing jets and gunships give regimes the edge, and minimize the loss of military personnel. Such a scenario could be seen in the Soviet war against Afghan guerrillas in the 1980s.

Aerial military action, while not necessarily that



● Civilians take shelter in a cave from the aerial bombing. Photo: Free Burma Rangers/AFP

accurate, brings with it “shock and awe”, prompting the enemy – in this case PDFs and civilians – to cower and run in fear, and leads to a significant increase in deaths.

Over the last 12 months, the Myanmar junta has stepped up aerial bombing in attempts to batter the resistance and its support base into submission. This strategy also takes into account that the PDFs do not have anti-aircraft weapons, despite rumours that such weapons might be supplied.

## **MASSACRES OF CIVILIANS**

The Myanmar junta appears to be pursuing a deliberate strategy of targeting the PDF support base, while seeking to divide powerful ethnic resistance organizations (EROs) - being offered peace deals - from the PDFs.

Air strikes on civilians that have prompted international condemnation are part of a wider campaign that has expanded into the main drive of the junta's

war effort.

Since mid-2022, the air force has ratcheted up the number of daily sorties aimed not only at beating back attacks by PDFs and their ethnic army allies, but also at hitting ERO bases, command centres and supporting economic resources, according to security analyst Anthony Davis, writing for Asia Times.

Three lethal airstrikes against civilians stand out over the last 12 months, all shocking.

They were the air attacks on a school in Sagaing's Depayin township last September, a concert near the Kachin jade-mining centre of Hpakant in October, and the massacre of about 170 civilians in the village of Pazigyi in Sagaing Region in April this year.

In the weekly tally of airstrikes against a range of targets across the country, in both Bamar-majority areas, and some areas of the ethnic states, the message from the Myanmar junta is clear – civilian casualties are a price the junta is willing to pay in its strategy to hang on to power in Myanmar.

In a recent commentary published by USIP entitled, “Like Ukraine, Myanmar Deserves International Aid”, Lt. Gen. Sumlut Gun Maw, vice chairman of the Kachin Independence Council, Yee Mon, Minister of Defense of the National Unity Government (NUG), and Min Ko Naing, a prominent activist, cite the air strikes as evidence of the “boundless cruelty” of a junta at war with its people.

“A recent example: On the morning of April 10, 2023, a deafening cacophony of explosions woke the secluded mid-country village of Pazigyi into a hellish chaos. Fighter jets and helicopters hovered overhead, unleashing a merciless barrage of bombs and gunfire on a gathering of villagers below.

Hundreds of bodies were strewn across the area, leaving the whole nation reeling in shock and pain.

But the atrocities did not end. Another round of aerial gunfire continued the slaughter, targeting rescue workers and destroying evidence.

“This tragedy is far from an isolated incident. In the two and a half years since the coup, the military has killed thousands of civilians, detained tens of thousands — including senior elected officials, such as State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi — demolished thousands of homes in arson attacks and launched hundreds of air strikes against civilian targets. Both the majority Bamar-populated central plain and minority





ethnic areas are targets for having resisted the generals' attempts to retake power against the people's will," the trio write.

Deadly aerial attacks represent the sharp end of the Myanmar junta's increasingly desperate war that according to critics shows how the generals in Naypyitaw have lost all credibility and have seriously failed their people.

## **RESPONSE**

Apart from the Myanmar public outcry against these aerial bombardments that kill and strike fear, a growing number of local and international NGOs, and the United Nations, are calling for countries and companies concerned to deny the junta support where it hurts.

Amnesty International continues to call on the international community to urgently prevent shipments of aviation fuel from reaching the Myanmar military. Their report, published at the end of last year, entitled:

"Deadly Cargo: Exposing the Supply Chain that Fuels War Crimes in Myanmar" provides the most detailed look into aviation fuel since the military seized power in the 2021 coup, from the distant port where the fuel originally departed to the unlawful air strikes that killed civilians – and every step in between.

"These air strikes have devastated families, terrorized civilians, killed and maimed victims," says Amnesty International Secretary General Agnès Callamard. But, as he notes, if the planes can't fuel up, they can't fly out and wreak havoc, and therefore Amnesty is calling on suppliers, shipping agents, vessel owners and maritime insurers to withdraw from a supply chain that is benefiting the Myanmar Air Force.

"There can be no justification for participating in the supply of aviation fuel to a military that has a flagrant contempt for human rights and has been repeatedly accused of committing war crimes, crimes against humanity and other grave human rights violations."

Amnesty International's research was carried out in collaboration with Justice For Myanmar and with the support of other civil society organizations, including Burma Campaign UK, all of whom have been vocal on the need to switch off fuel supplies to the junta.

These NGOs have not just been researching to compile reports. They've used up shoe leather and online action to lobby the companies and governments quietly delivering the fuel.

## **SUPPLY CHAIN EXPOSED**

As Amnesty stresses, businesses have a responsibility to respect human rights wherever they operate. But Amnesty's evidence demonstrates that the actions of some companies involved in the supply of aviation fuel to Myanmar link them to the Myanmar military's commission of war crimes.

Since 2015, the main foreign business involved in the handling, storage and distribution of aviation fuel in Myanmar has been Puma Energy, which is largely owned by global commodity trading giant, Trafigura. It has operated in Myanmar through its subsidiary Puma Energy Asia Sun (PEAS) and joint venture National Energy Puma Aviation Services (NEPAS). According to Puma Energy, since February 2021 and until 5 October 2022, it limited its operations to the provision of aviation fuel for civilian purposes. However, this report shows otherwise.

Amnesty's findings indicated that aviation fuel (Jet A-1) entered Myanmar primarily through a terminal in Thilawa port managed by PEAS. Amnesty International identified eight separate shipments of aviation fuel that were offloaded at the terminal between February 2021 and mid-September 2022 – a post-coup window of time.

The fuel was then stored at the PEAS terminal until transported by tanker truck to NEPAS storage facilities and military air bases across the country. Based on data obtained from December 2021 to August 2022, some NEPAS storage facilities are linked to military air bases, showing that civilian and military use of aviation fuel is inextricably linked.

## **HUMAN RIGHTS HARM**

By facilitating the Myanmar military's access to aviation fuel, Puma Energy contributed to human rights harm caused by the Myanmar military, Amnesty claims.

Puma Energy itself acknowledged to Amnesty that it had "become aware of reports of the military forcibly demanding fuel at selected NEPAS airport facilities. These reported incidents undermined our confidence in NEPAS's ability to maintain the controls that were put in place" by Puma Energy.

On 26 September, Amnesty International presented Puma Energy with evidence from this report.

Ten days later, the company announced it was leaving the country and selling its business in Myanmar.





A civilian in a dug-out bomb shelter in Shan State. Photo: AFP

## DIGNIFIED EXIT?

“We acknowledge Puma Energy’s decision to exit from Myanmar, but the announcement of sales to an undisclosed ‘locally-owned private company’ raises entirely new concerns about the need to disengage responsibly, transparently, and to avoid leaving aviation fuel infrastructure in the hands of the Myanmar military,” said Montse Ferrer, Business and Human Rights Researcher at Amnesty International.

“Puma Energy must responsibly withdraw and contribute to the remediation of any harm. This should begin with consultations with representatives of the Myanmar communities that have been affected by unlawful air strikes to find appropriate measures of reparation,” Ferrer said.

The lobbying of Puma appeared to pay off.

On the decision to leave Myanmar, Amnesty International’s Human Rights Researcher Montse Ferrer said: “Amnesty International acknowledges Puma Energy’s decision to leave the country, which comes after a long campaign by civil society groups including

Burma Campaign UK and Justice For Myanmar who, among others, have placed vital scrutiny on aviation fuel supplies that may end up in the hands of Myanmar’s military.

Needless to say, the Puma victory is just part of the puzzle that represents companies and countries that support Myanmar’s brutal regime, including the key bugbears China and Russia.

The Dragon and the Bear are integrally linked to the Golden Land – a land soiled by military bombing, strafing and arson. For the Myanmar resistance, activists, and critics, targeting military fuel supplies is crucially important. But more concerted efforts will be needed to staunch the flow of aviation fuel - just one factor in the Spring Revolutionaries’ efforts to turn the tables on the junta.

*Andrew Landen is the pseudonym for a writer who reports on Asia.*



# INSIGHT MYANMAR - LEAVING ON A JET PLANE



Montse Ferrer, Amnesty International

**M**ontse Ferrer points to a simple fact. The only way to power a fighter jet – the aircraft creating fear over many parts of Myanmar – is using aviation fuel.

As Amnesty International’s Interim Deputy Regional Director for Research in the Asia and Pacific, Ferrer has been on a mission to discover the secret of how jet fuel is getting into Myanmar, and recently published a report on her findings.

Airstrikes are the primary cause for displacement since the coup. But while the Burmese population can do little to escape an approaching air attack, some activists and researchers outside the country have begun to look into how the military’s use of this weapon of terror can be curtailed.

“The only way you can power a fighter jet is with aviation fuel, it’s as simple as that,” Ferrer explains.

“So in order to minimize the ability of the Myanmar military to conduct such airstrikes, many of which are unlawful and have caused terrible impacts

on communities, [we need to limit] the ability of these airstrikes to be conducted by the Myanmar military.”

Because Myanmar does not have the technology to refine crude oil into international grade aviation fuel, the military’s fighter jets need outside access to it in order to fly. However, unlike weapons, which can only be used for destructive purposes and are subject to trade restrictions, jet fuel is known as a “dual use” good; commercial and other non-military flights also rely on it. So it can be tricky to tease apart these two supply chains. Ferrer notes that although fighter jets perform better using a higher grade fuel, they can mostly manage on commercial fuel, which makes the issue more challenging to untangle.

In this interview with Insight Myanmar, Ferrer discusses the challenges.

<https://insightmyanmar.org/complete-shows/2023/6/2/episode-169-leaving-on-a-jet-plane>



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# AUSTRIAN AIRCRAFT COMPANY'S DEAL WITH MYANMAR JUNTA BREACHES EU ARMS EMBARGO

**A**ustria's Diamond Aircraft Industries' tech transfer deal with Myanmar military apparent breach of EU arms embargo.

A Justice For Myanmar investigation has uncovered new details of Austria's Diamond Aircraft Industries' project with the Myanmar military to locally assemble and produce DART-450 aircraft, in an apparent breach of the EU arms embargo.

The DART-450 are training and reconnaissance planes that would provide the military with support to train Myanmar Air Force pilots, who are essential to the junta's large-scale indiscriminate airstrikes, part of its campaign of terror against the people. The aircraft would also provide the military with aerial surveillance capabilities.

Through a transfer of technology deal, Diamond Aircraft Industries supplied the Myanmar military with composites and parts, as well as technical assistance in Myanmar and the training of military personnel in Austria to assemble aircraft and manufacture key parts.

Diamond Aircraft Industries is an Austrian based aircraft manufacturer owned by the Chinese corporation, Wanfeng Aviation Industry via a UK holding company. Wanfeng Aviation Industry's ultimate owner is the Shenzhen-listed Zhejiang Wanfeng Auto Wheel Company Limited.

Diamond Aircraft Industries' support for the Myanmar military took place after its campaign of genocide against the Rohingya and while it was com-



Photo: Supplied

mitting war crimes and crimes against humanity in other ethnic areas with total impunity. The project was running between 2017 and 2020, when it was temporarily disrupted as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Under the EU's arms embargo on Myanmar, in force during the project period, it is illegal to provide arms, dual use goods, and equipment used for internal repression to Myanmar, in addition to restrictions on military training and military cooperation.

Justice for Myanmar has obtained confidential records that confirm that the project would result in the Myanmar air force obtaining DART aircraft that would be locally assembled, with the military producing key composite components and parts in Myanmar over six apparent phases.

In the first phase of the DART-450 project in Myanmar, six DART-450 aircrafts were to be manufactured in Austria and shipped, bulk-packed and by airfreight, to Myanmar for final assembly from 2019. The assembly of one aircraft has been completed in Myanmar with the on-site support of Diamond Aircraft technicians from Austria and Germany.

Justice For Myanmar has identified companies from multiple countries implicated in the project that may also be in breach of sanctions. The companies whose key technical components have been used for the DART-450 project in Myanmar and are based in countries with arms embargoes on Myanmar include Garmin (Switzerland), SIRS Navigation (UK), Electronics International (USA) and Safran (France). Composite materials have been supplied to Myanmar by Engineered Cramer Composites (ECC) (Germany).

According to information obtained for Justice For Myanmar, negotiations between Diamond Aircraft Industries and Swedish company DST Control AB to equip the DART-450 aircrafts with OTUS-U250 sensors have also been initiated.

Justice For Myanmar identified companies whose computer numerical control machines have been used to manufacture and assemble the DART-450 aircrafts at the Shante air base in Myanmar, including Schuko (Germany), Styrotec (Germany) and Felder (Austria).

The Diamond Aircraft Industries deal with the

Myanmar military was brokered by Miya Win International, a Myanmar company that has been sanctioned by the UK and has been involved in the procurement of other military end-use equipment from Austria for the Myanmar military, including unmanned aerial vehicles from Schiebel Corporation and a flight simulator from Axis Simulation.

Justice For Myanmar has submitted evidence of the Diamond Aircraft Industries business with the Myanmar military to the European Union's sanctions whistleblower tool and calls for a swift investigation into Diamond and associated companies.

Justice For Myanmar spokesperson Yadanar Maung says: "Diamond Aircraft Industries' deep engagement with the Myanmar military is a shocking failure of the Austrian government to enforce the EU arms embargo on Myanmar.

"While the Myanmar military was carrying out indiscriminate airstrikes and committing genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity with total impunity, Diamond Aircraft Industries was equipping and training Myanmar military personnel to locally assemble aircrafts that would clearly be used to repress the Myanmar people.

"This is not a standalone case but part of a pattern of Austria's failures to stop its companies from supplying the Myanmar military with equipment and technology, including after the military's illegal coup attempt on February 1, 2021

"Austria needs to urgently investigate all those that have violated EU restrictive measures on Myanmar, hold them accountable, and take concrete steps to prevent the further complicity of Austrian companies and citizens in the Myanmar military's international crimes.

"The UK, France, Switzerland, Sweden and the USA should also investigate companies in their jurisdictions that are implicated in the Myanmar military's DART-450 project and take action against all breaches of sanctions.

"The EU and its allies should sanction Miya Win International and its owners to help prevent further European transfers of arms and equipment to the murderous junta."



# 'PREMATURE' FOR ANY ASEAN TALKS WITH MYANMAR, SAYS SINGAPORE FM



Singapore Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan, left, with US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken. Photo: AFP

**S**ingapore Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan said Friday that conditions were not yet right for ASEAN to open high-level talks with Myanmar on the country's political situation.

"We believe it would be premature to re-engage with the junta at a summit level or even at a foreign minister level," Balakrishnan said when asked about a news report that Thailand's military-controlled caretaker government had proposed talks.

Speaking in a joint press conference in Washington with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Balakrishnan said the leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations had recently reaffirmed their stance.

"We condemned the coup, and the ongoing violence against civilians, the instability in the country, the setback to national reconciliation, and the enormous impact on the economy," he said of the 2021 military takeover in Myanmar.

"Unfortunately, it's now more than two years. We haven't seen any signs of improvement," Balakrishnan said.

The Irrawaddy, a Myanmar-focused news

website operated in Thailand, said that Thailand's foreign ministry proposed in a recent letter to host an informal ministerial meeting of some ASEAN members with Myanmar on Monday to relaunch engagement.

Balakrishnan did not reject all engagement with the Myanmar junta.

"The key point is this. You do need everyone ultimately to sit down and negotiate," the Singapore diplomat said.

"I don't know how long it will take. The last time it took 25 years for some form of democratic transition to occur in Myanmar. I hope it won't take that long," he said.

Blinken said the United States backs ASEAN efforts to resolve the violence that has seen 6,000 civilians killed since the February 2021, according to the Peace Research Institute of Oslo.

"It's very important that we continue, all of us, to sustain the appropriate pressure on the junta and look for ways of course to engage the opposition" in Myanmar, Blinken said.

AFP

## MYANMAR'S BLOCKING OF AID ACCESS 'UNFATHOMABLE': UN



Clearing up the wreckage near Sittwe. Photo: AFP

The United Nations slammed Tuesday last week the Myanmar junta's "unfathomable" decision to suspend travel authorisations for aid workers trying to reach more than a million people in cyclone-ravaged Rakhine state.

Cyclone Mocha brought lashing rain and winds of 195 kilometres (120 miles) per hour to Myanmar and neighbouring Bangladesh last month, killing at least 148 people in Myanmar.

The cyclone destroyed homes and brought a storm surge to Rakhine state, where hundreds of thousands of Rohingya minority refugees live in displacement camps following decades of ethnic conflict.

But despite the towering needs, the UN said last week that junta authorities had suspended "existing travel authorisations... for humanitarian organisations".

"Four weeks into this disaster response and with the monsoon season well under way, it is unfathomable that humanitarians are being denied access to support people in need," Ramanathan Balakrishnan, the UN resident and humanitarian coordinator in Myanmar, said in a statement on Monday.

Since the cyclone hit on May 14, humanitarian workers have been getting aid to a growing number of people using limited travel authorisations granted to organisations with long-standing operations in Rakhine.

Jens Laerke, spokesman for the UN humanitarian agency OCHA, told reporters in Geneva on Tuesday that more than 110,000 people had received

shelter and other relief items during that time, while food assistance had reached almost 300,000 people in Rakhine thanks to those approvals.

He slammed the "effective ban" on access by humanitarian workers, "paralysing the distribution of life-saving food, drinking water, shelter supplies and other relief to affected communities."

"We had plans and material relief available for distribution in the coming weeks and months for one million people in Rakhine alone. That has been stopped," he said.

Last month, the UN launched an appeal for \$333 million in emergency funding for the 1.6 million people in Myanmar it said were affected by the storm.

Laerke said the suspension also raised serious health concerns over possible disease outbreaks, "if we don't have access and we don't have the ability to first of all monitor, to survey what the situation is, and of course bring help".

He called on the junta authorities "to reconsider this decision and re-instate the initial approval for aid distributions and transportation plans".

Rakhine state is home to around 600,000 Rohingya, who are regarded by many there as interlopers from Bangladesh, and are denied citizenship and freedom of movement.

Most of the 148 people who died during the storm are from the minority, according to the junta.

AFP



# MYANMAR JUNTA DEPUTY SAYS CYCLONE MOCHA INTERNATIONAL AID HAS TO GET OKAY FROM RAKHINE AUTHORITIES



**A** local media source has reported on 15 June that Vice Senior General Soe Win, Vice Chairman of the State Administration Council (SAC), said that if the international community wants to provide aid and relief to the affected population, including Muslims, they should have the permission of the Rakhine State Administration Council (RSAC).

Western News was reporting on the deputy military leader's recent visit to Sittwe, citing a speech on 14 June at a meeting with relevant officials at the government office, mentioning the aid community.

Western News, citing The Global New Light of Myanmar, said the "Vice-Senior General stressed the need to seek permission from the Rakhine State government for providing aid to IDPs and Bengalis (using the junta term for Rohingya) under the rules and regulations. Aid can be donated to the Yangon Region DMC (Disaster Management Committee) to Mocha-hit regions through the Ministry of International Cooperation."

The report says the junta also approved "the plans of the Secretary-General of ASEAN and the ASEAN Humanitarian Assistance Coordinator (SG-AHAC) for assessing the damage caused by the cyclone and formed an On-Site Operation Coordination Centre for systematic measures related to international aid."

The United Nations has expressed serious concern over the last two weeks over problems they claim international aid organizations are facing in delivering humanitarian aid to victims of Cyclone Mocha that struck Myanmar on 14 May, resulting in over 140 deaths, and a swathe of destruction through Rakhine State and other areas of western Myanmar.

# FAO ALARMED OVER FOOD INSECURITY IN MYANMAR



## Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Photo: AFP

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations has expressed concern over the critical food security situation in Myanmar due to multiple shocks in its latest country report, dated 14 June.

The FAO warns that acute food insecurity is at critical high levels in various parts of the country, mainly due to the protracted political and economic crisis, which started after the military takeover in February 2021, shortfalls in 2022 cereal production and ongoing soaring food prices.

According to the Humanitarian Needs Overview report, about 15.2 million people, nearly 28 percent of the total population, are estimated to face acute food insecurity in 2023, a 15 percent increase from the high level in 2022 and almost five times higher than before February 2021 estimate.

A key factor underpinning the current acute food insecurity levels is the upsurge of violent incidents since mid-2022, which spread in most parts of the country, causing movement restrictions, a high number of civilian casualties and large-scale displacements. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as of May 2023, a record high of 1.83 million people were internally displaced, compared to 760 000 people in mid-2022, while 1.12 million people sought shelter in neighbouring countries, mostly in Bangladesh.

The protracted political instability resulted in serious macroeconomic challenges, which caused widespread income losses, eroded households' purchasing power and hampered access basic food items and services. The situation has worsened also due to high inflation, strong depreciation of the national currency and conflict-related supply chain disruptions.

On 14 May 2023, Cyclone Mocha hit the northwestern parts of the country and brought strong winds and heavy rains, triggering flash floods and landslides caused devastation of lives and livelihoods of millions of people, of which 3.4 million living in the most affected areas.

The Rakhine, Chin, Magway, Sagaing and Kachin states/regions, where 60 percent of the Internally displaced people (IDPs) are located, were the most severely affected. In these areas, early assessments indicate extensive damage to housing and critical agricultural infrastructure, extensive destruction of fisheries assets as well as losses of livestock, standing crops and households' food reserves. According to the recently released Humanitarian Aid report, about 1.6 million people urgently need assistance following the passage of the cyclone.



# JUNTA-BACKED GLOBAL NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR EDITORIAL SLAMS ‘ROTTEN’ UNITED NATIONS



Junta raps the United Nations. Photo: AFP

**M**yanmar state media condemned the United Nations as “rotten” on Friday last week, days after the UN special envoy for the country stepped down and the world body slammed curbs on aid for survivors of Cyclone Mocha.

The military has criticised attempts by the UN and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) bloc to establish dialogue between the junta and its opponents, whom it has vowed to “annihilate”.

The state-backed Global New Light of Myanmar published an opinion piece on Friday entitled “The Picture of Irrelevance”, accompanied by a photo of the UN headquarters in New York.

“Inside, it is infested with egos. Its core is rotten,” the piece said.

“The arrogance, ignorance and self-interest have so polluted their minds that they are either in denial of how irrelevance (sic) their existence has become... or just simply incompetent and incapable of seeing the reality.”

The hit-piece came as UN special envoy for Myanmar Noeleen Heyzer stepped down this week after an 18-month tenure in which she was criticised by both the junta and its opponents.

The Singaporean sociologist was tasked with urging the military to engage in political dialogue with opposing groups, and end the bloody crackdown it launched after toppling the government of Aung San Suu Kyi.

Ms Heyzer visited last August and met junta chief Min Aung Hlaing and other top military officials in a move criticised by rights groups as lending legiti-

macy to the generals, and angering with a proposal for “power-sharing”.

“This week another one of them ‘bites the dust’, in connection with Myanmar,” the op-ed said, without mentioning Ms Heyzer by name.

“These people should be given no role in finding solutions for the problems Myanmar is facing,” it said.

“Solutions for Myanmar will come from within and with the help, cooperation and understanding of the neighbours and friendly countries.”

Earlier this month Ms Heyzer met Zin Mar Aung - the foreign minister of the National Unity Government (NUG) dominated by lawmakers ousted in the coup, which is working to topple the junta.

The military has declared the NUG as a “terrorist” organisation.

Friday’s article comes as the UN struggles to get access to areas in western Myanmar devastated by the deadly Cyclone Mocha last month.

On Tuesday the UN denounced the junta’s “unfathomable” decision to suspend travel authorisations for aid workers trying to reach more than a million people in cyclone-ravaged Rakhine State.

The article also came on the same day the Global New Light of Myanmar ran a story on the visit of a UN delegate to Sittwe in Rakhine, where the subject of aid was discussed, according to the story.

AFP/Mizzima

# REPORT CLAIMS 6,000 CIVILIANS KILLED IN FIRST 20 MONTHS SINCE MYANMAR COUP, TALLY HIGHER THAN EARLIER ESTIMATES



Civilians flee junta forces. Photo: EPA

A report released last week by the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) finds that at least 6,000 civilians were killed in the first 20 months following Myanmar's military coup in 2021.

PRIO claims this tally is significantly higher than reported by international bodies, including the United Nations.

"Our data shows that the human toll of the conflict is higher than previously reported, and while the junta is clearly the main killer, anti-junta forces also have large amounts of blood on their hands,"

said Stein Tonnesson, Research Professor at PRIO and the co-author of the study.

The report, 'Counting Myanmar's Dead - Reported Civilian Casualties since the 2021 Military Coup,' uses the Township-based Conflict Monitoring System maintained by Myanmar Institute for Peace and Security, and two other datasets as the main sources for compiling figures.

It found that the Myanmar military, police and affiliated militia were responsible for over 3,000 reported civilian deaths between 1 February 2021 and 30 September 2022 – the timeframe of the report.

The report claims that in the same 20-month period, anti-coup resistance groups killed over 2,000 civilians, and unspecified perpetrators killed at least 1,000 civilians. The actual totals are no doubt higher since many killings have likely gone unreported.

In addition, the study found that politically motivated murders, and not collateral killings in connection with armed clashes, constituted the main form of violence against civilians in both urban and rural areas in the 20-month period after the coup. This was especially true in regions populated by the ethnic Burman majority, including the two major cities of Yangon and

Mandalay.

At least 67 percent of reported civilian fatalities were politically motivated murders, the report claims. Four regions – Sagaing, Magway, Mandalay and Yangon – have seen the highest number of civilian deaths due both to the repression in the first six months after the coup and to targeted political murders in subsequent months.

The military regime plans to hold a general election in the second half of 2023, where the National League for Democracy, which won the elections by a landslide in 2015 and 2020, and other important opposition parties will not be able to partake. The risk of election-related violence is high.

There have already been reports of conflict incidents, and of threats against civil servants working on behalf of the regime's election.

"Civilians in Myanmar are bracing themselves for a steep escalation in violence. There is huge potential for politicide, with large-scale retaliatory killings, if the civil war escalates to a next level.

This report should set off alarm bells to world bodies like the UN and ASEAN," warned Dr. Min Zaw Oo, a Global Fellow at PRIO and director of the Myanmar Institute of Peace and Security, the lead author of the report.

The study recommends that the UN improve its system to observe and document the murder of civilians in Myanmar, in accordance with Security Council Resolution 2669, regardless of the perpetrators' political affiliation. This resolution demands the cessation of all violence and encourages restraint and the reduction of tensions. The report also urges all sides to the conflict to begin a dialogue on protecting civilians.



# MORE THAN 70,000 HOUSES IN MYANMAR TORCHED SINCE THE COUP



**D**ata for Myanmar announced on 14 June that a total of 70,324 houses nationwide were burned down by the military junta and its affiliated organizations during the post-coup period.

From May 2021 to May 2023, the number of houses torched and destroyed by the junta's troops was the highest in Sagaing Region with 53,816, followed by the second and third highest in Magway Division and Chin State respectively, according to the report.

There were 10,451 houses gutted by fire in Magway Region and 1,637 houses in Chin State.

In Myo Thit Village (with over 600 houses) in Khin Oo Township, Sagaing Region, more than 350 houses were destroyed in the arson by the junta's troops in April. Thus, some of those who became homeless are still living in the monastery, said a local from the Myo Thit Village.

"Some of those whose houses were destroyed build small tents to live. Those who cannot afford it are living in monasteries. As for the food, we are eating what is being donated," said the resident.

# FREE BURMA RANGERS BOSS THANKS ELON MUSK FOR BRINGING STARLINK INTERNET TO MYANMAR'S CONFLICT-RIDDEN KAYAH



Elon Musk. Photo: AFP

**D**avid Eubank, the founder of the Free Burma Rangers, expressed his gratitude to Elon Musk in a Tweet on Twitter for bringing Starlink Internet to some parts of Kayah (Karenni) State, which previously lacked stable internet access due to the civil war.

“Thank you so much, Starlink people, Elon Musk, and company and family,” Eubank said on Twitter. “We love you all because you made this, and here we are in Burma, under heavy attack... 73 years of civil war, but the last two years since the coup even worse, over 3 million displaced, 300,000 right here in Karenni.”

“Thank you and God bless you and please make more and we’ll pay what we need to pay.”

The Starlink internet service is not provided for free in Kayah State, and detailed information regarding which townships in Kayah State have access to Starlink internet is currently unavailable.

Karenni Human Rights Group Director Banyar told RFA that Starlink Internet is too expensive, making it unaffordable for the majority of Kayah resi-

dents.

The Free Burma Rangers, founded by Dave Eubank, operate from the Burmese border as their home base, providing assistance in conflict zones worldwide. They are involved in rescuing civilians and documenting atrocities in various locations, including Myanmar and Syria, KPBS reported in 2022.

Following the military coup in Myanmar, internet access was deliberately disrupted by the junta in several areas, including Karenni State in Myanmar. In some cases, the military junta intentionally cut phone lines and reduced internet speed to restrict the flow of information to the people.

Starlink is a satellite internet constellation operated by Musk’s American aerospace company SpaceX, providing satellite Internet access coverage to over 54 countries, according to the latest reports. It also aims for global mobile phone service after 2023. SpaceX started launching Starlink satellites in 2019. As of May 2023, Starlink consists of over 4,000 mass-produced small satellites in low Earth orbit.



# INTERIM EXECUTIVE COUNCIL FORMED TO DEVELOP MYANMAR'S KARENNI STATE INTO A FEDERAL UNIT



The establishment of the Interim Executive Council of Karenni State (IEC) was announced on 12 June as a step to develop Karenni State into a federal unit and to ensure self-administrative power of the state.

The council is comprised of six council members, and will be expanded into at least 12 state affairs departments.

The Karenni State is one of the strongest resistance areas fighting against the Myanmar military regime after the 2021 coup, and the military carried out 108 airstrikes in this state in April this year alone.

The announcement on forming the IEC said that the council will work to protect the lives and property of its people, to deliver public services and to fulfill the fundamental needs of the people including education, health, food and other basic necessities, while developing short-term and long-term plans to mobilize revolutionary forces and provide adequate protection for the people.

It has also been committed to work with revolutionary forces at home and abroad, and collaborate with the CRPH, NUCC and NUG for the emergence of a federal democratic union.

The IEC was established under the political leadership and policy guidelines of the Karen State Consultative Council (KSCC) which was earlier formed in April 2021, with the intention to abolish the military-written 2008 Constitution, to remove all forms of dictatorship, to adopt state constitutions and to build a federal union.

In the announcement, the IEC specified its objectives to carry out executive functions of the interim state government through collective leadership, to ensure checks and balances between legislative, executive and judicial branches, and to bring about peace and stability within Karenni State, and to enhance closer and practical cooperation with different revolutionary forces located in Karenni State.

The IEC emphasized that it will uphold its core values of national equality, justice and self-determination, and be fully committed to the establishment of a federal union before it is dissolved within a pre-specified time frame after the new Karenni State Government with self-determination has been formed.

Congratulatory messages for the establishment of IEC were sent by ethnic revolutionary organizations and resistance forces.

# ANTI-JUNTA FORCES CALL FOR AUNG SAN SUU KYI BIRTHDAY ‘FLOWER STRIKE’



**O**n the 78th birthday of the State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi, on 19 June, anti-junta revolutionary groups called for a “flower strike”.

“What is the purpose of this flower strike? It stands for the military regime crazy over power. They use several ways to terrorize and oppress the public to be scared, silenced, and become cowardly. However, our public’s revolutionary blood, mind, and hubris have not weakened or declined. Thus, this flower strike would bring out the fact that the public’s revolutionary blood is still bright red,” said Dr Tayzar San, a leading figure in the Spring Revolution resistance in Myanmar.

On 15 June, the General Strike Coordination Body (GSCB) called on people to celebrate the flower strike movement nationwide on 19 June to mark the birthday of Aung San Suu Kyi to show respect to tens of thousands of political prisoners, and the portrayal of women’s virtue who have been fulfilling their responsibilities throughout the revolution history.

The public can participate in the flower strike in various ways, and the flower types and colors are not limited, said Dr. Tayzar, who also warned the pub-

lic to be cautious about security, especially those who are in the military junta-controlled areas.

“On 19 June, people can engage in various activities such as adorning flowers in the Buddha’s flower vase, wearing flowers or pinning flowers on their chest while going to work or spending time together,” said Dr Tayzar.

“Our civilians have already known that this kind of public protest, also known as a mental combat strategy, is very powerful in the anti-dictatorship revolution. Therefore, on 19 June, I would like to urge everyone of you to participate in celebrating a nationwide flower strike movement,” said Dr. Tayzar.

After the coup, the military regime detained the State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi after accusing her under 19 cases and sentencing her to 33 years in prison.



# AIIB NOT MULTILATERAL, 'SERVES CHINA'S INTERESTS' SAYS EX-EXEC

**T**he Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank “serves China’s interest” and Beijing wields “undue” influence over what is supposed to be a multilateral organisation, a former executive told AFP Thursday after resigning.

In the wake of his resignation, Canada’s Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland announced Ottawa would “immediately halt all government-led activity at

the Bank”.

Bob Pickard, the bank’s former communications chief, resigned earlier this week and launched a broadside against the institution on his Twitter account.

Speaking to AFP from Tokyo, he doubled down on his allegations that the bank is dominated by members of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and



Photo: Gundam

primarily funds projects of interest to Beijing.

“It’s a resource to the geopolitical goals of the PRC (People’s Republic of China)... in practice, I believe it serves China’s interest,” he said.

“The bank portrays itself as governed by a board of directors and there are a lot of window-dressing foreign executives on the leadership,” he said.

But inside the bank, “there’s a parallel system, it’s adjacent to the public-decision making structure”, he added.

In a statement issued after his tweets, AIIB confirmed Pickard’s resignation and called his allegations “baseless and disappointing”.

The AIIB, a brainchild of Chinese President Xi Jinping, was launched in 2016 to counter Western dominance of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

The United States is not one of its 106 global members, however, having chosen to stay out from the start on concerns over transparency and governance.

Pickard said he was warned after joining the bank around a year ago “not to mess with any of the party people... don’t mess with them because they’re powerful”.

He declined to say who had issued him the warning, but said he raised concerns about the role of party members and their influence a month ago, in writing.

“I also said what I would do... so this can’t come as any surprise,” he added.

“The response was: ‘Don’t go there’ basically.”

Freeland, the Canadian finance minister, said the government would now conduct an “immediate review of the allegations raised and Canada’s involvement in the AIIB”.

Pickard said he was “happy that my country’s government is taking seriously the issue of lack of transparency and undue CCP influence over what is supposed to be a multilateral organisation”.

“I believe that the Canadian government will find that ultimately, the interests of this bank do not coincide with the interest of our country.

“Why is Canada participating in an organisation that at the end of the day, makes China more powerful?”

AFP





## FOREIGN JOURNALISTS QUIT FCC INDIA CLUB IN PROTEST AFTER CHIEF VISITS MYANMAR

A furor has blown up after Mr Shirumalla Venkat Narayan, President of the Foreign Correspondents Club of India visited Myanmar last week and met Ko Ko Hlaing Union Minister for International Cooperation of Myanmar in Naypyitaw, a visit publicized by the junta-run publication, the Global New Light of Myanmar.

A total of 10 foreign correspondents who are members of FCC India declared in a statement on Sunday that they had resigned from the FCC India in protest.

The statement was reportedly signed by Aletta André, Sebastien Berger, Sébastien Farcis, Sean Gleeson, Laura Höflinger, Peter Hornung, Oliver

Mayer, John Reed, Lena Schipper and Gerry Shih.

The 10 signatories in the letter include the bureau chiefs of the Economist, Washington Post, Agence France Presse, Financial Times, Radio France International and ARD.

The statement was also “supported” by 22 other former FCC members, who are currently based in India as foreign correspondents, according to local media.

Reed, one of the correspondents, said in a Tweet: “I’m horrified to see that the president of the @ FCCNewDelhi, to which I belong, met with representatives of the military junta in #Myanmar, one of the world’s worst places for journalists. I and other mem-



Mr Shirumalla Venkat Narayan, President of the Foreign Correspondents Club of India, second left, having an official audience with the Myanmar junta in Naypyitaw. Photo: Junta media

bers will be asking the board to explain the visit.”

Thompson Chua, who claims to have resigned FCC India membership over this issue, wrote on his Twitter account that the visit “destroyed our faith in the FCC as an organisation that can successfully represent our interests. We resign our membership with immediate effect.”

He added, “There’s a big backlash against the @FCCNewDelhi president’s visit to #Myanmar, where he - at the invitation and cost of regime-run GNLM - met with the junta’s ministers to talk about economic and media cooperation”.

As veteran Indian journalist Subir Bhaumik, who worked for years for the BBC and Reuters told Mizzima, there is a serious question over the visit.

“Why should any free media kowtow to a brutal military junta like the one in Myanmar?” Bhaumik, who worked in Myanmar before 2021, told Mizzima.

“It is fine if media bodies went to Myanmar to investigate massive human rights violations of the regime but for the FCC office bearers to go on a junket organised by the junta is abominable and unacceptable. The junta will obviously use this visit to cultivate free media in the region and the visit has obviously been set up by Burmese diplomats in Delhi whose job is to project a crocodile as a dove of peace.”

This appears to be the case. The junta reportedly ran the visit in four stories with photos in the pages of the Global New Light of Myanmar. In an 8 June story, the paper said:

“U Kyaw Myo Htut, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, received the delegation led by Mr Shirumalla Venkat Narayan, President of New Delhi-based Foreign Correspondents’ Club of South Asia at the ministry in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday.

“At the call, they cordially exchanged views on the latest developments in Myanmar and matters pertaining to collaboration for the media sector development, dissemination of news on true situation of Myanmar to International community and capacity enhancement for state-owned media.”

In response to the FCC India members’ criti-

cism, Narayan said in a statement to FCC India, reported by The Wire, that he did not visit Myanmar on behalf of FCC India.

Narayan said he was a professional journalist for over 50 years, travelled to 68 countries on work and interviewed scores of foreign dignitaries.

“My visit to Myanmar last week was one such, and I met many diplomats, journalists and ministers in Myanmar to understand what is going on there, when they plan to hold elections, etc., as any journalist would,” he said.

He also argued that no member of the board, whether travelling to Srinagar or Kabul, is bound to inform the managing committee (of FCC India), if they have gone on a private capacity. “And, being a member of the MC (managing committee) in no way restricts any of us from seeking stories, travel for exclusives and meeting all types of people.”

The furor, however, appears to go beyond the FCC India chief’s ill-advised junta-arranged visit to Myanmar to touch on longer-standing gripes concerning the club and the conditions under which foreign journalists work in India.

The protest statement also alleged that the latest episode was only part of a broader trend of ethical concerns besieging the club. “This episode, which continues a pattern of activities that betrays the club’s role in protecting and facilitating independent journalism, has irrevocably destroyed our faith in the FCC as an organisation that can successfully represent our interests. We resign our membership with immediate effect,” the statement said, as reported by The Wire.

The Wire explained that there have been rising vocal concerns about the difficulties faced by foreign correspondents in doing their jobs in India, especially due to uncertainties in the timely renewal of their visa status as well other coercive methods. The pressures faced by the foreign correspondents had been documented in internal surveys conducted by the FCC India over the last three years.



# NINE KILLED IN FRESH ETHNIC CLASHES IN INDIA'S NORTHEAST



Indian troops carrying out searches in Manipur. Photo: AFP

**A**t least nine people were shot dead in the remote northeast Indian state of Manipur, officials said Wednesday last week, the latest incident in weeks of violence sparked by long-standing ethnic tensions.

Manipur saw days of deadly clashes in May, prompted by a dispute over access to government jobs and other perks.

More than 100 have died in the resulting unrest, during which mobs raided police stations and stole weapons, while tens of thousands of others fled their homes to seek safety.

Unidentified gunmen stormed Kamenlok village on the outskirts of state capital Imphal late Tuesday and shot indiscriminately at houses using "sophisticated weapons", Manipur government information officer Heisnam Balakrishna told AFP.

"Nine persons including a woman was killed during the firing," he added.

Ten others were injured in the attack and were taken to a hospital in Imphal for treatment.

Another nine people were injured in a separate attack on Monday in the same village, according to police.

Tensions in the state came to a head last month between the majority Meitei, who are mostly Hindus and live in and around Imphal, and the mainly

Christian Kuki tribe in the surrounding hills.

The Kuki community had protested Meitei demands for reserved public job quotas and college admissions as a form of affirmative action.

This also stoked long-held fears among the Kuki that the Meitei might also be allowed to acquire land in areas currently reserved for them and other tribal groups.

Manipur, which borders Myanmar, is part of India's remote northeast, a region linked to the rest of the country by a narrow land corridor.

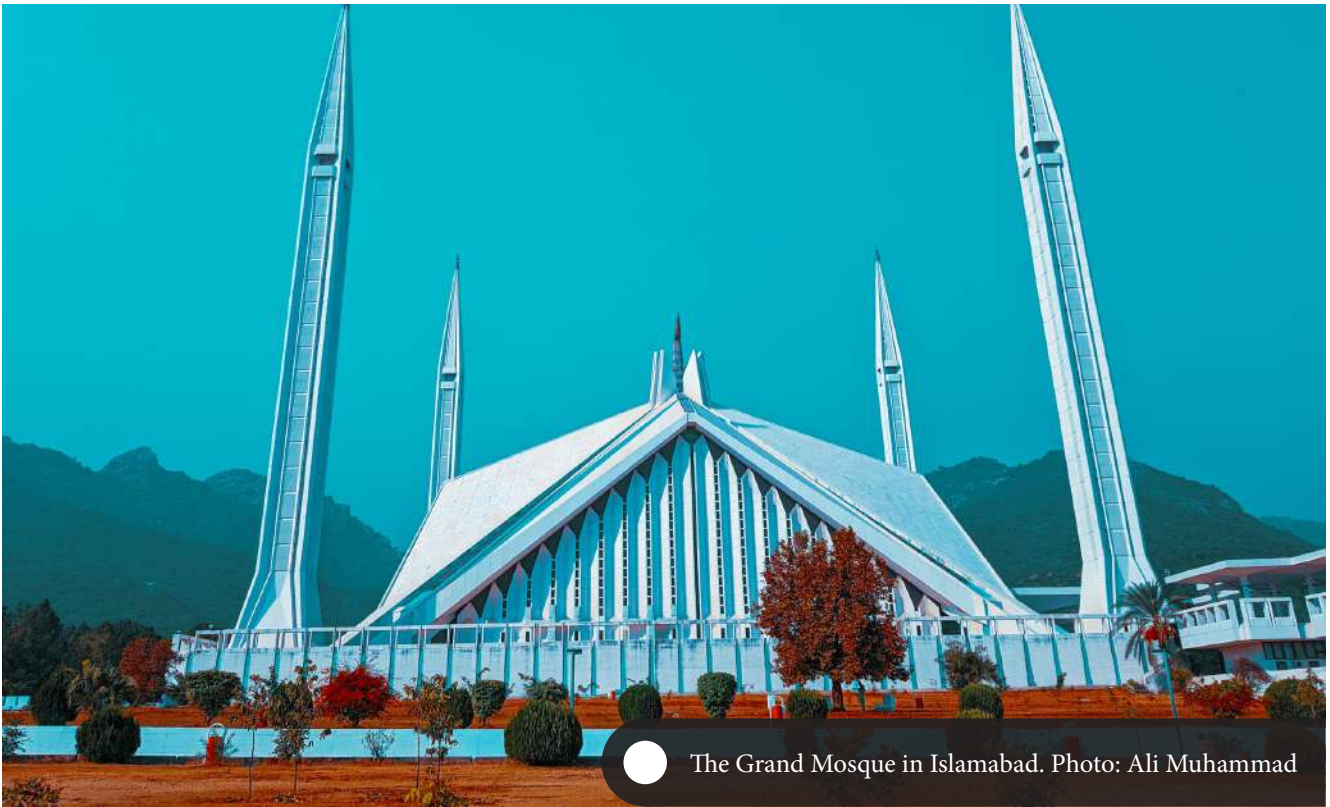
The area is home to dozens of tribal groups and small ethnic guerrilla armies whose demands range from greater autonomy to secession from India.

A curfew remains in force and internet shut in most of Manipur, where tens of thousands of soldiers were sent to control the violence last month.

The situation in the state remains volatile despite a visit this month by India's home minister Amit Shah, who demanded the return of assault rifles seized from police stations when the violence began.

AFP

# PAKISTAN PRESSED OVER CHARGES AGAINST JOURNALISTS



The Grand Mosque in Islamabad. Photo: Ali Muhammad

**R**eporters Without Borders last week demanded that Pakistani prosecutors dismiss accusations against two journalists that could theoretically carry the death penalty, adding to US criticism of a crackdown.

Two prominent Pakistani journalists living in the United States, Wajahat Khan and Shaheen Sehba, were charged over nationwide protests that swept Pakistan on May 9 after the arrest of former prime minister Imran Khan.

A complaint accuses the two of a conspiracy against the military and in support of terrorism, saying that protesters were looking at the social media accounts of the two journalists and of two former officers who are critical of the army.

“Make no mistake - the sole purpose of this ludicrous complaint, which arbitrarily associates the names of Wajahat Khan and Shaheen Sehba with those of rebel ex-army officers, is to intimidate the two journalists into silence,” said Daniel Bastard, the head of Reporters Without Borders’ Asia-Pacific desk.

“In view of the absurdity of the supposed incriminating evidence, we call on the Islamabad prosecutor’s office to dismiss this complaint, which should never have been received.”

US State Department spokesman Matthew Miller earlier voiced alarm over Pakistan conducting military trials over involvement in the May 9 protests.

The United States will “urge Pakistani authorities to respect democratic principles and the rule of

law for all people as enshrined in the country’s constitution,” Miller said.

Wajahat Khan, a well-known freelance journalist, said that he has received threats to his mother in Pakistan.

“It was from a very highly placed official. I’m not taking that lightly,” he told AFP.

In a statement, Khan called the suggestions that his social media content triggered violence and terrorism “shocking, baseless and absurd.”

“I am a proud citizen of Pakistan. Perhaps one of the proudest,” he said.

“I’ve dedicated my career reporting from Pakistan’s frontlines, deployed with the same military that these charges falsely claim I’m trying to divide.”

Sehba, former editor of The News, said that Pakistanis had turned to social media due to a clampdown on traditional press and that authorities were trying to clamp down on voices from abroad.

Imran Khan, who was ousted in a parliamentary vote and is looking for a political comeback, was locked up for three days as prosecutors accused him of corruption.

His arrest led to thousands of arrests as protesters targeted the military, long the key powerbroker in Pakistan.



# INFLUENCERS OVERTAKING JOURNALISTS AS NEWS SOURCE: REPORT



South Korean “influencers” Kyu-won Han and Kyu-jin Han. Photo: AFP

**T**ikTok influencers and celebrities are increasingly taking over from journalists as the main source of news for young people, according to a report published Wednesday last week by the Britain-based Reuters Institute.

The report found that 55 percent of TikTok and Snapchat users and 52 percent of Instagram users get their news from “personalities” - compared to 33-42 percent who get it from mainstream media and journalists on those platforms, which are most popular among the young.

The figures were based on interviews with some 94,000 people across 46 countries, conducted for the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, part of Britain’s University of Oxford.

“While mainstream journalists often lead conversations around news in Twitter and Facebook, they struggle to get attention in newer networks like Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok,” the report said.

Lead author Nic Newman highlighted people like Britain’s Matt Welland, who discusses current affairs and daily life on TikTok for his 2.8 million subscribers.

“Or it could be a celebrity like a footballer talking about a topical news event,” he told AFP, such as footballer Marcus Rashford’s 2020 campaign to get free school meals for children from poor families.

For young people, “news” is not just the traditional focus on politics and international relations, but “anything new that is happening in any walk of life: sports, entertainment, celebrity gossip, current affairs, culture, arts, technology...” he added.

## ‘FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE’

Facebook remains the leading source of news among social networks worldwide, but its influence is dropping, with 28 percent saying they use it to get news, compared with 42 percent in 2016.

This likely reflects Facebook’s shift away from news-sharing towards a focus on friends and family, as well as young people’s preference for more video-based apps like TikTok and YouTube.

TikTok now reaches 44 percent of 18-24-year-olds, and 20 percent get their news from the app, up five percent on last year.

The biggest challenge for traditional news outlets is the falling number who go direct to their websites - just 22 percent, down 10 points since 2018 - rather than relying on social media links.

In his foreword, Reuters Institute director Rasmus Kleis Nielsen said this shift presented “a much more fundamental change” for the news industry than even the shift from paper to digital a generation ago.

“Legacy media... now face a continual transformation of digital as generations come of age who eschew direct discovery for all but the most appealing brands, (and) have little interest in many conventional news offers oriented towards older generations’ habits, interests, and values,” he said.

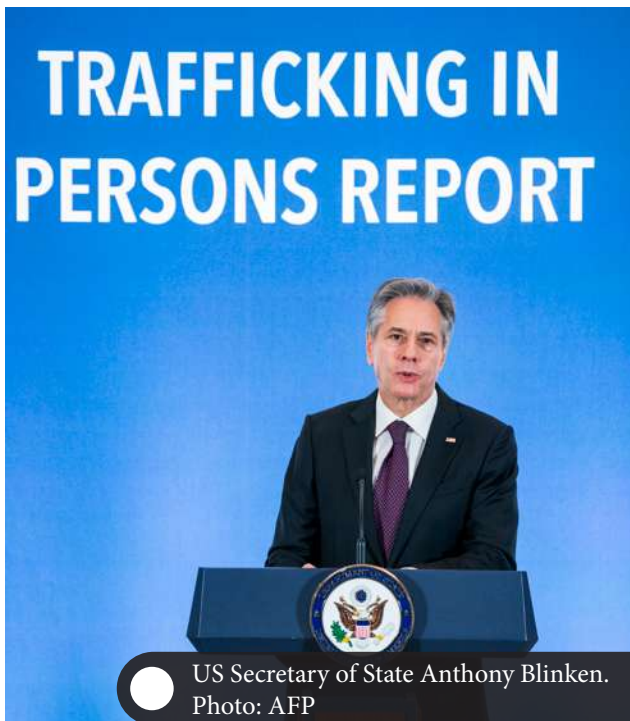
These new audiences are aware of the risks of relying on algorithms, with only 30 percent thinking this is a good way to get a balanced diet of news - but that is still considered better than relying on journalists, who scored just 27 percent.

None of this is good news for media firms reliant on subscribers and ad revenue.

The report found that 39 percent of subscribers had cancelled or renegotiated subscriptions, though the overall share of people paying for news across 20 countries surveyed remained stable compared with last year at 17 percent.

AFP

# US TRAFFICKING REPORT HIGHLIGHTS FORCED LABOUR, EXPLOITED BOYS



**T**he United States on Thursday last week denounced the scourge of human trafficking, calling out forced labour and the little-known but growing problem of boys and young men caught up the trade.

The condemnation came as Secretary of State Antony Blinken presented a report on what he called “concerning trends” in human trafficking.

Blinken blasted the rise in forced labor as worldwide supply chains were disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

“Exploitative employers use a host of tactics to take advantage of lower paid and more vulnerable workers,” he said.

According to State Department anti-trafficking official Cindy Dyer, “traffickers have leveraged pandemic-related economic hardships, increased global youth unemployment and international travel restrictions” to manipulate victims.

These schemes have become “a multibillion-dollar industry” in recent years, she told reporters after Blinken’s presentation.

During his speech, Blinken also pointed to a rise in labor trafficking using online scams.

The annual 188-country State Department report lays out how traffickers in Myanmar, Malaysia, Ghana and Turkey, among other countries, deceived adults and children around the world with fake job offers posted online.

The report lists countries that Washington says are actively engaged in trafficking, including Afghanistan, China, Cuba, Eritrea, North Korea, Iran, Russia, South Sudan, Syria and Turkmenistan.

Nations that appear on such lists can be punished with US sanctions or have US aid revoked.

According to Dyer, China is “engaging in a policy or pattern of trafficking.”

“The PRC is actually taking efforts to try to make it more difficult for us to determine if their supply chain is clean for us to determine if forced labor is occurring,” she said, using an acronym for China’s official name.

“We are aggressively monitoring this,” she added, just days before Blinken is set to depart on a rescheduled visit to Beijing.

## **BOYS AND MEN**

Blinken also emphasized the report’s findings on the trafficking of young boys, which has seen a sharp increase in recent years.

“The percentage of boys identified as victims of human trafficking rose fivefold” between 2004 and 2020, Blinken said, citing a UN report - a higher proportion than among girls, women or men.

“For years there’s been a widely held (perception) - but incorrectly - that trafficking affects exclusively female victims. This false perception has had some quite frankly devastating, intangible consequences” as fewer resources are allocated to support boys caught up in human trafficking, he said.

In addition, “many boys frequently are less likely to seek services and self-identify,” according to Dyer. “And what’s even more troubling is that when they do, services are not always available for them.”

Blinken praised local anti-trafficking efforts in the Seychelles, Hong Kong and Denmark.

**AFP**



# WOMEN SUFFER DISPROPORTIONATELY FROM RAVAGES OF DROUGHT, DESERTIFICATION

**W**omen's land rights are in the spotlight ahead of the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought, observed on 17 June, at events around the world, from Kenya to Viet Nam, including a high-level event at UN Headquarters in New York on Friday.

"Equal land rights both protect land and advance gender equality," UN Secretary-General António Guterres said, in a video message, urging all governments to eliminate legal barriers to women owning land, and to involve them in policy making.

"We depend on land for our survival, yet we treat it like dirt," the UN chief added, emphasizing the

need for action.

Women make up nearly half of the world's agricultural workforce, yet discriminatory practices related to land tenure, credit access, equal pay, and decision-making often impede their active participation in sustaining land health.

Today, less than one in five landholders worldwide are women, according to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

## **WOMEN HAVE 'LEAST CONTROL'**

"Unsustainable farming is eroding soil 100 times faster than natural process can restore them, and up to 40 per cent of our planet's land is now de-



Photo: UN News

graded, imperiling food production, threatening biodiversity, and compounding the climate crisis,” the UN chief said.

“This hits women and girls the hardest,” he said. “They suffer disproportionately from the lack of food, water scarcity, and forced migration that result from our mistreatment of land, yet they have the least control.”

Calling for support for women and girls to play their part in protecting “our most precious resource”, he said “together let’s stop land degradation by 2030”.

### **THIS LAND IS #HERLAND**

Ahead of the international day, UNCCD launched the #HerLand campaign to raise awareness about women making a difference now and the challenges ahead.

When given equal access, women and girls can increase agricultural productivity, restore land,

and build resilience to drought, according to UNCCD.

At the outset of the high-level event, Inna Modja, Malian singer and UNCCD Goodwill Ambassador, performed the world premiere of the song, Her Land, to mark the day.

“As a woman, artist, and climate and social justice activist, I believe it’s vital to empower women and youth and promote gender equality in the fight against desertification and land degradation,” she said. “Together, we can create a brighter, sustainable future.”

High-level speakers, women leaders, renowned scientists, land activists, and youth representatives agreed that much has been done but more efforts are needed to level the land ownership playing field.

Tarja Halonen, former President of Finland and UNCCD Land Ambassador, said action is needed now.

“Solving gender inequalities is not just the right thing to do,” she said. “If we ensure that women are fully able to use their abilities, knowledge, talents, and leadership potential our societies are simply better off.”

### **‘UNFINISHED BUSINESS’**

“When women farmers have access to own land, they grow more and so do their nations,” said UN General Assembly President Csaba Kőrösi. “Strengthening women’s land and property rights increases food security and reduces malnourishment.”

These positive shifts have a ripple effect, he said.

“What we are lacking are the policy decisions and measures that recognize their role in managing land,” he said. “We should do our best to remove barriers to women’s participation in decision making.”

UNCCD Executive Secretary Ibrahim Thiaw said this Desertification and Drought Day aims at mobilizing the international community in that direction.

“Of all the gender inequalities we experience in the world, the imbalance in women’s access to fertile land remains arguably the most shocking,” he said. “In every corner of the world, filling this particular gender gap remains an unfinished business.”

Courtesy of UN News







Photo: Hakan Nural

## CHIN STATE

### *Two junta soldiers surrender to CNDF*

Two Myanmar junta soldiers escaped from Rihkhawdar junta army camp in Chin State's Falam Township and surrendered along with their weapons and ammunition to the Chin National Defence Force (CNDF).

On 10 June the two private soldiers surrendered to a CNDF checkpoint along with one MA1 gun, four boxes of magazines, 330 rounds of ammunition and one MG1 grenade.

They had managed to desert whilst on guard duty. They said they had deserted because they were not allowed to freely communicate with their families, had been forced to serve in the army against their will, and the general hardships of army life.

A CNDF spokesperson said to Mizzima: "We are taking good care of them. Currently, we are providing them with healthcare and assistance to meet their basic needs. If they want to join our team, we are happy to have them, but we can't guarantee what will happen because it depends on what they choose to do."

According to the two soldiers, there are 55 junta soldiers and 20 policemen stationed at Rihkhawdar junta army camp.

About 10 junta soldiers have now defected to the CNDF.

### *IDPs in Mindat Township need urgent assistance*

About 500 internally displaced people (IDPs) sheltering in Chin State's Mindat Township require immediate assistance.

They fled from the villages of Pyan, Ramtine, and Montone Ywa Thit in Matupi Township, Chin State when junta Infantry Battalion 140. entered the villages.

Lorence, the officer in charge of the Mindat Township IDP Camp Management Committee said to Mizzima: "The IDPs are currently seeking shelter and some are living in the building where Cyclone Mocha made landfall, so they require waterproof sheets and raincoats. They also need basic food, medicine as well as nourishing supplies for children and the elderly."

According to Lorence the IDPs are fleeing on motorcycles in the rain with only a few pieces of clothing and now the buildings where they are staying need repairs because Cyclone Mocha damaged them. This means many IDPs are living in very damp conditions and need more clothing.

Though there are nurses and healthcare workers there has been a shortage of medicines in Chin State because the junta has prohibited the transportation of medications into Chin State.

Among those who fled, a 60-year-old woman became ill and died and a seven-day-old baby died on 9 June after contracting a cold.

Despite the bad weather, the Mindat Township IDP Camp Management Committee delivered 61 bags of rice and 40 cans of cooking oil to the 500 IDPs in Mindat Township on 9 June.

Lorence said: "We provided some cooking oil and rice for them. They can't buy anything as there are no vendors. As it is the rainy season in the mountains, vegetables have started to grow. That's what they eat, meat and fish are very difficult to get."

He also said that the Mindat Township IDP Camp Management Committee will only be able to supply aid to the Mindat Township IDPs for the next week to 10 days if the fighting continues. If that happens the IDPs' situation could worsen.



## **THAI FOREIGN MINISTER HOLDS FORUM FOR MYANMAR JUNTA DELEGATES, EMPHASIZES REGIONAL INTEREST AND NON-ASEAN REPRESENTATION: BANGKOK POST**

Thailand's Foreign Minister Don Pramudwinai emphasized that the Thai caretaker government convened a forum for ASEAN and other countries' representatives to hear from Myanmar junta delegates in the interest of the region, clarifying that they were not acting on behalf of ASEAN, reported Bangkok Post.

In response to reports about the Thai government hosting an informal meeting for delegates from ASEAN member states to engage with representatives of the Myanmar junta, which had been excluded from Asean's high-level meetings due to the 2021 military coup in Myanmar, Minister Don clarified that the gathering was not an official Asean meeting but rather a forum aimed at providing Asean member states with insights into the latest developments in Myanmar following the appointment of a new foreign minister Than Swe by the ruling Myanmar junta.

"It is not the first time Thailand has organised a meeting like this. It is the third one. We hosted such meetings twice in Thailand but they were not reported. They were for brainstorming and listening to Myanmar on what it has done," Mr Don said.

Foreign Minister Don made a visit to the capital of Myanmar in late April for discussions with Min Aung Hlaing, the leader of the Myanmar military junta. During that meeting, both sides had engaged in cordial discussions regarding cooperation among Myanmar, Thailand, and Laos to address transboundary smog pollution, according to Myanmar junta-controlled media. They also discussed peace and stability in the border regions of both countries, along with plans to collaborate in eradicating human trafficking, drug trafficking, and arms smuggling.



# UNREST WILL NOT IMPACT INDIA'S KALADAN PROJECT IN RAKHINE, SAYS SAC



**M**yanmar's State Administration Council (SAC) Minister of Economy and Commerce Aung Naing Oo said that the fighting and unrest in Rakhine State would not have an impact on the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project.

The Minister Aung Naing Oo said these words during his recent India tour.

India External Affairs Ministry, Minister of State R.K. Ranjan Singh said in March that the domestic situation in Myanmar would cause hindrance to the India-sponsored Kaladan project.

Myanmar Minister Aung Naing Oo said that the road connecting Paletwa in Chin State, Myanmar and Zorinpui in Mizoram State, India was under construction.

The road building in the west of Rakhine State was being carried out and he expected it would be completed soon, Myanmar Minister Aung Naing Oo said.

The operation of Sittwe port in Rakhine State

would be started with great momentum soon and the trade between Myanmar and India could be done via this port, Minister Aung Naing Oo added.

This Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Transport project was financed by the Indian government and it includes the Sittwe port expansion project, dredging and widening the waterway in Kaladan River to make it navigable by large vessels and the building of a road from Paletwa in Chin State, Myanmar to Zorinpui in Mizoram State, India.

The Myanmar and India governments signed the agreement for the Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Transport project in 2008 and the construction work started in 2009.

The objective of this project is to give the landlocked northeastern states in India access to the Bay of Bengal through roads in Mizoram State and Chin State via Paletwa and Sittwe port.

# MYANMAR PADDY PRODUCTION 8 PER CENT BELOW FIVE-YEAR AVERAGE: FAO REPORT



Photo: Andres Serrato

**T**he yearly paddy production of Myanmar in 2022 is forecast at 24.7 million tonnes at the end of its last harvest in late June, according to the report of Global Information and Early Warning System of UN Food and Agriculture published on 14 June.

The overall production is 8 per cent below the five-year average due to the low yield as farmers faced challenges in skyrocketed agricultural inputs impacted from the February 2021. Cash shortage resulting from the banking crisis has suspended agricultural loans to the farmers.

The assessment is for 2022, published in June 2023.

The agricultural sector is the backbone of Myanmar's economy, contributing 32 per cent of the country's GDP and 56 per cent of the workforce. However, the military takeover in 2021 have had serious impacts on the agricultural sector, like others revenue sources of garment production, industry, the retail and wholesale trades, and exports and imports.

Armed conflicts are intensifying in the central Myanmar regions of Sagaing and Magway which are the third and fifth largest paddy production areas of the country. Many farmers have turned into internally displaced persons (IDPs) and they could not return to work in their paddy fields due to fear of land mines and the actions of military troops in some areas.

Domestic prices of common rice qualities last month were more than double the already high levels of a year earlier due to lower outputs and difficulties in transport of food to people in need. It is predicted that the price-hike will worsen if the IDPs cannot return to their work do to a lack of stability in their areas.



# MYANMAR JUNTA ARRESTS, QUESTIONS GOLD TRADERS IN YANGON AND MANDALAY



Photo: Jingmin Pan

**T**he gold trading community says the Military Council has arrested some gold traders and money changers in Yangon and Mandalay after the gold price and US dollar exchange rate rose sharply.

Sources in the community said that at least 10 gold traders were arrested and the gold traders from seven gold shops were taken for questioning by the Military Council.

The Military Council reportedly questioned some gold traders in Mandalay for their alleged illegal trading of gold and the US dollar and they could face action under the anti-money laundering law and foreign exchange management law.

The Military Council started arresting these gold traders and gold smelters since 14 June with allegations of conducting illegal import and export of gold and illegal money changing business.

Despite the arrests and questioning of gold traders and gold shop owners in Yangon and Mandalay the prices of gold and the US dollar continue to rise.

On 16 June the price of 24 Karat gold was over 3,125,000 Kyat per tical (approx. 16.3 gm) in the open market and 22 Karat gold is over 2,929,000 Kyat per tical.

The official reference price set by the Yangon Gold Entrepreneur Association (YGEA) is 2,310,000 Kyats per tical for 24 Karat gold and over 2,166,000 Kyats per tical for 22 Karat gold.

High demand and shortage of US dollars in the market pushed the exchange rate up to between 2,900 Kyat and over 3,000 Kyat against the dollar.

The high dollar exchange rate reportedly caused the high price of gold in the market.

# MYTEL EMERGES AS LEADING TELECOMMUNICATIONS OPERATOR IN MYANMAR AMIDST BOYCOTT

In the span of five years, telecommunications company Mytel, which is operated as a joint venture between the Myanmar junta and Vietnam's Viettel, has established itself as the foremost operator in the country, boasting the highest market share, reported Vietnam Economy News.

Notably, the total accumulated revenue of Mytel during this period surpassed US\$2 billion, making it Viettel's most lucrative market in terms of service revenue last year.

According to Vietnam Economy News, Mytel currently dominates the mobile service market share, serving a staggering 13 million customers.

It stands as the leading operator in Myanmar, boasting the largest and most extensive 4G coverage, reaching nearly 90 percent of the population.

"Entering the sixth year of doing business in Myanmar, Mytel would continue to support people through investing in technology so that each family and business here could develop sustainably, for the benefit of the people and country of Myanmar," said Nguyễn Tiến Dũng, General Director of Mytel.

Mytel has faced criticism for undermining the competitiveness of Myanmar's telecoms market and contributing to the military's reestablishment of dominance in the telecommunications sector.

Following the 2021 Myanmar military coup in February, a domestic boycott movement emerged among Myanmar consumers, aiming to boycott products and services associated with the Myanmar military, including Mytel.

On 4 November, 2021, Thein Aung, the chief financial officer of Mytel, was assassinated at his residence in Mayangone Township, Yangon, by three individuals riding bicycles.

As armed resistance groups are attacking the interests of the Myanmar military who are killing civilians, they are targeting Mytel towers.



## SUNRISE OVER THE PLAIN

The sun rises over the plain of the ancient city of Bagan.

Photo: Farfar

# IN FOCUS





# THE NEW SPIRITUAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INDIA AND MYANMAR

VENERABLE SUMEDHA BODHI



● Venerable Sumedha Bodhi, left, is spreading the Dhamma in India and Myanmar.

*Venerable Sumedha Bodhi is an Indian Buddhist monk working to spread the wisdom of the Buddhist Dhamma Soldier movement to reform in Myanmar and India. In this commentary, released during this time of crisis for Myanmar and India, he expresses hope that relationships between people in India and Myanmar will grow and benefit from reflection on Buddhist wisdom.*

India and Myanmar are linked by the cultural affinity and the geographical contiguity, and they are shared in history. Buddhism remains an enduring bond. The sacred sites of Bodh Gaya and Shwedagon pagoda are testimony to the strong relations that have existed between the two countries throughout the centuries. This contact was not only one way, but the traders and teachers also visited each other from the two countries or territories.

Today, India and Myanmar are working together on many levels. Many students from both countries are visiting to study long-term and short-term courses, construction of projects are underway, humanitarian relief work is going well and tourists and pilgrims are visiting the sacred places of both countries.

Myanmar is a Southeast Asian country where

the innumerable beings practiced the ancient teachings of the Buddha and became the Arhanats. But today, the followers of the Buddha are facing social, political, economic, technological, health, religious, and environmental challenges. In fact, the Golden Land has the ability to support others, instead nowadays it is trying to get support from outside to survive.

The other side of the coin is the unrest, injustice, gambling, bogus-like negative factors that are increasing day by day. Therefore, to come out from these problems, we should “reform” ourselves and our organizations and policies as early as possible. The Government of India is already reforming itself through “the ancient Indian knowledge system” to extract itself from corruption.

The “Dhamma Soldier Reform Movement”

(DSRM) is conducting lectures and activities related to Dhamma to educate the masses to reform India. I conducted classes to improve human values and spiritual values to improve the knowledge of the masses. I am strongly working to help people to come out from drunkenness, guthka, Panparg, gambling, betel chewing and prostitution. For women, I am stressing to develop moral values and for those affected to come out from an undignified way of life. Myanmar people can work to eradicate corruption by not supporting wrong policies, wicked persons, and institutions in their own country, and Indian people can do the same.

I strongly believe that the same movement holds good in Myanmar and India to realize the dreams of people going forward. India and Myanmar have the many similarities socially, politically, and economically to work together. Therefore, we hope that India and Myanmar are entering into new relationship, a relationship devoted to reform.

India and Myanmar need to work together to resolve the post-coup crisis in Myanmar and ethnic and political clashes in India peacefully within the constitutional framework. I hope that the Dhamma Soldier Reform Movement is quite useful in this regard for people and both governments.

How will we reform? Who will reform? What are the benefits of reforms? I will discuss.

First of all, everybody should know that there is not "I" and "mine". There is no someone, some-situation and some-thing, there is only mind-matter (Nāma-Rūpa) which is ever changing by nature.

Everything happens according to "Karma", but there is not any God almighty or superpower who is executing all of these things.

If you know who you are then only you can take the appropriate decisions and if you are ignorant of "what you are", then your decisions all go the wrong way. I mean one should be a 'realist' as the Buddha

said. But now unfortunately, people are living in an illusion. They also don't have a moral-based "Art of Living" to lead a peaceful and meritorious life. If they cultivated the proper way of life definitely, they can be successful in achieving their goals materially and spiritually.

Therefore, everybody should learn to see things as they are. For example, we know the flower-garland. Flowers always looks beautiful but fade away within a few hours, but the inside thread does not fade. In the same way, we shouldn't look at the external factors which are impermanent and always changing (Anicca). See the thread inside the garland, not the outside flowers of the garland. I mean don't confuse with the external objects, concepts, issues, etc. Follow the path proclaimed by the enlightened beings for the benefit of ourselves.

One should practice Sīla, Bhāvanā, and Vandana, etc. which is the base for the spiritual and material development in one's own life. Then we have to think about the world around us. Nowadays, the natural decline in the moral standards and natural changes in health, height, etc., and also it is affecting the practitioner negatively. Today, we are living in unclean surroundings. Also, there are not serene and sanctified surroundings in which to practice the teachings of the Buddha as the Buddha asked us to practice. To overcome these hindrances, we have to follow "socially-engaged Buddhism" the 20th century concept to continue our traditional Buddha's path for the benefit of oneself and others around us.

The engaged Buddhism grounded in the ethics and morality is the path of social action in the world as opposed to the path of rights and rituals, which became the part of ancient traditional Buddhism.

I mean identifying and addressing the human suffering outside of the cravings and ignorance of the sufferer - such as social, political and economic injustice, etc. This doesn't mean that present-day Buddhists







Venerable Sumedha Bodhi imparts wisdom to followers.

are deviating from the actual ancient path, which is promulgated by the Buddha.

The leaders of engaged Buddhism advocated moral training (Sīla such as right speech, right action, and right livelihood which is featured in the traditional eightfold path), which may be of special interest to the engaged Buddhists, in forming their choice of public statements, activities, and roles through meditation training (Samadhi: right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration), and wisdom training (Pañña: right view and right thought). It is nothing but Dhamma or Dharma in action.

The distinction between the social actions (for example, caring for the sick or helping the poor and needy or joining a peace march) which is typically undertaken to relieve others' suffering, and the ritual action (meditation and devotional rites, for example), which is typically undertaken to relieve the practitioner's own suffering, is not easy to maintain in Buddhism, where "inner" and "outer" practices are deeply interdependent.

Most of the engaged Buddhists profiled insist on the identification of the spiritual and social dimensions of their practice, and they regard service and activism as essential to today's Buddhist path. This view point is not acceptable to all the engaged Buddhists or scholars in engaged Buddhism like Robert Bosewell

and Robert Gimello and others. In this connection, the words of Tich Nhat Hanh are worth remembering: Do not avoid contact with suffering or close your eyes before suffering.

Do not lose awareness of the existence of suffering in the life of the world. Find ways to be with those who are suffering by all means, including personal contact, visits, images, and sounds. By such means awaken yourself and others to the reality of suffering in the world.

Further, many international figures in engaged Buddhism, particularly ordained leaders such as the Dalai Lama and Maha Goshanada, hold that spiritual effort, mindfulness, and meditation are the very actions that will decisively shape one's speech, social behaviors, and livelihood – and these will, in turn have beneficial ripple effects throughout society.

The engaged Buddhists never asserted that individual freedom and awakening are unimportant or unrelated to social justice, human rights, and environmental protection, but it is critical to stress the distinction between immediate and long-term objectives. It is seeing the personal and social as deeply interconnected.

Now, we decided to focus our attention to reform society, politics, economy and the judicial system.

We also have to consider health and environment issues. We have to uproot 'social, political, economic suffering and injustice' through educating people, not by the gun.

When I am doing activities in India, I detected that many even learned also doubt about positive change. They are strongly believing that there won't be change in the future. They lost hope regarding positive developments in society, government and individuals. Then, I explained to realize the facts of future possibilities in my "Dhamma Soldier Reform Movement". For example, if we can remember teachings of the enlightened beings that they said everything is happening in our life due to "karma", not because of our effort or any other external superpower, etc.

We should be optimistic to gain benefits in our personal life. If we take refuge in the Dhamma, we will definitely attain positive change. After taking refuge, we should work hard to try ourselves to be good and to do good deeds. If anyone follows as I say, he will definitely get to a higher level spiritually and materially.

Conclusion: Material wellbeing is a prerequi-

site for moral development and its absence leads to social disaster. I mean that the material support precedes successful moral leadership because it eradicates the immoral environments and poverty that are obstructions.

The engaged Buddhist movements do not typically make clear distinctions between the "worldly" or "mundane" suffering which is caused by temporal conditions and the more profound "spiritual" suffering (dukkha) that is the result of individuals' attachments. The engaged Buddhist social ethics can be regarded as nominal. Thus, the distinction between "temporal" and "spiritual" suffering is crucial and should not be overlooked by any engaged Buddhists if they wish to maintain a sense of continuity with the Buddhist tradition.

It is becoming clear that our Buddhism must be and will be socially engaged – not as a replacement of earlier teachings, but as a supplement to and development of them. I believe that the Buddha's ancient teachings on suffering, impermanence, and selflessness will continue to shine.



Venerable Sumedh Bodhi's mission under the Dhamma Soldier movement is to bring the people of India and Myanmar together.





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