

CYCLONE MOCHA AID UPDATE

mizzima | WEEKLY

myanmar news & insight

ONE OFF

**Myanmar
jet fighter
shot down
but PDFs
still lack
anti-aircraft
capability**

mizzima

WEEKLY
myanmar news & insight

OUT EVERY
THURSDAY

PRINT VERSION

PDF ONLINE VERSION

For more contents to read
Follow us on:

Our Websites:

www.mizzima.com

www.mizzimaburmese.com

www.mizzima.tv

SUBSCRIBE HERE

KEEP UP ON WHAT MATTERS



Available at...

- Every City Mart in Yangon
- Innwa Book Store, Pansodan Road
- Yangon Bakehouse, Pearl Condominium, Block C
- Popular Bookstore in Mayangone Township
- Pansodan Gallery (1st Floor, 286 Pansodan Road - Upper)
- Book Worm Books, Pearl Condominium, Block C
- And in Mandalay and Nay Pyi Taw

Contact Us!



► Subscription
(95) 9 421010101

MYANMAR MILITARY REPEATS NARGIS AID DEBACLE

The sight was sad to see – at least for those who noticed. Last week we saw Ms Danielle Parry, the acting head of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) in Myanmar, going cap-in-hand to meet the junta Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Thet Thet Khine in Naypyidaw.

During the 5 July meeting, the two discussed the delivery of aid to Cyclone Mocha survivors in Rakhine State – or at least the wish to deliver aid. The UN and other INGOs have been facing problems as reportedly no international humanitarian groups have been permitted access to cyclone-impacted communities since 8 June, despite having millions of dollars-worth of aid ready to send. According to news reports, Ms Parry reportedly called on the junta to allow UNOCHA to resume its work.

Well over six weeks after Cyclone Mocha wreaked havoc across a swathe of western Myanmar, it is now painfully obvious that we are in effect witnessing a repeat of the 2008 Cyclone Nargis military regime intransigence over helping the storm-affected. The then-regime received a bad rap over their failures pig-headed obstruction.

Admittedly, Cyclone Nargis was far more destructive with a death toll of 138,000 compared to the 140 the current junta claims were killed by Cyclone Mocha. When Cyclone Mocha hit in mid-May, warnings, better communications and preparation made a significant difference to help protect the population. Yet, here we are once again having international aid organizations begging to help as happened in the wake of Nargis and seemingly being rebuffed once again.

Such is the dire state of the Cyclone Mocha humanitarian aid programme, a mix of local and international efforts, that the UN, in their latest report, equates the junta performance and “climate of

fear” with crimes against humanity. Anecdotally, we are hearing of communities crying out for help.

OHCHR Spokesperson Ravina Shamdasani, during a UN briefing in Geneva on the comprehensive human rights update for Myanmar, stressed that intentional obstruction or denial of humanitarian assistance may amount to serious violations of international law.

“The military has operated as if those providing aid are helping those opposed to their rule, rather than respecting their need for protection and facilitating their access and assistance to the civilian population in a time of crisis,” Ms Shamdasani said. She cited the Myanmar military’s “four cuts” strategy outlined in the report “to kill and injure thousands of civilians while destroying goods and infrastructure necessary for survival, including food, shelter, and medical centres”.

“Notably, our report says the security situation has dramatically worsened for humanitarian workers since the coup. Aid providers are consistently exposed to risks of arrest, harassment or other mistreatment, or even death,” Ms. Shamdasani added. “In the context of armed conflicts, intentional obstruction or denial of humanitarian assistance may further constitute war crimes such as willful killing, torture and other degrading treatment, starvation, and collective punishment.”

In 2008, post-Cyclone Nargis, the Myanmar military regime showed it was the enemy of the people.

Today, in 2023, there can be little or no debate that the current illegal military regime is seeking to once again play games and make a bad situation worse.

EDITORIAL

mizzima
WEEKLY

Editor In-Chief and Managing Director
Soe Myint

Contributors
Sai Wansai,
Andrew Landen, Marc Jacob

MIZZIMA MAGAZINE
Neither this publication nor any part of it may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without prior permission from Mizzima Media Co. Ltd.

Photos are by Mizzima
Unless otherwise credited.
© 2015 MIZZIMA All rights reserved

INFORMATION
Mizzima is owned by Mizzima Media Group in Yangon, Myanmar.

Subscriptions and sales in Myanmar
Mizzima Weekly is currently available as a PDF.

Contact: Mizzima Media Group
Email: sm@mizzima.com
Phone: +95-9421010100

CONTENTS



mizzima WEEKLY

NEWS & INSIGHT

- 3 EDITORIAL
- 6 IN FOCUS
- 8 NEWS ROUNDUPS
- 10 ONE OFF Myanmar jet fighter shot down but PDFs still lack anti-aircraft capability

UN COMMENT

- 14 Myanmar in 'deadly freefall' into even deeper violence, says UN spokesman
- 17 UN urges end to arms, currency supplies to Myanmar junta

CYCLONE MOCHA AID UPDATE

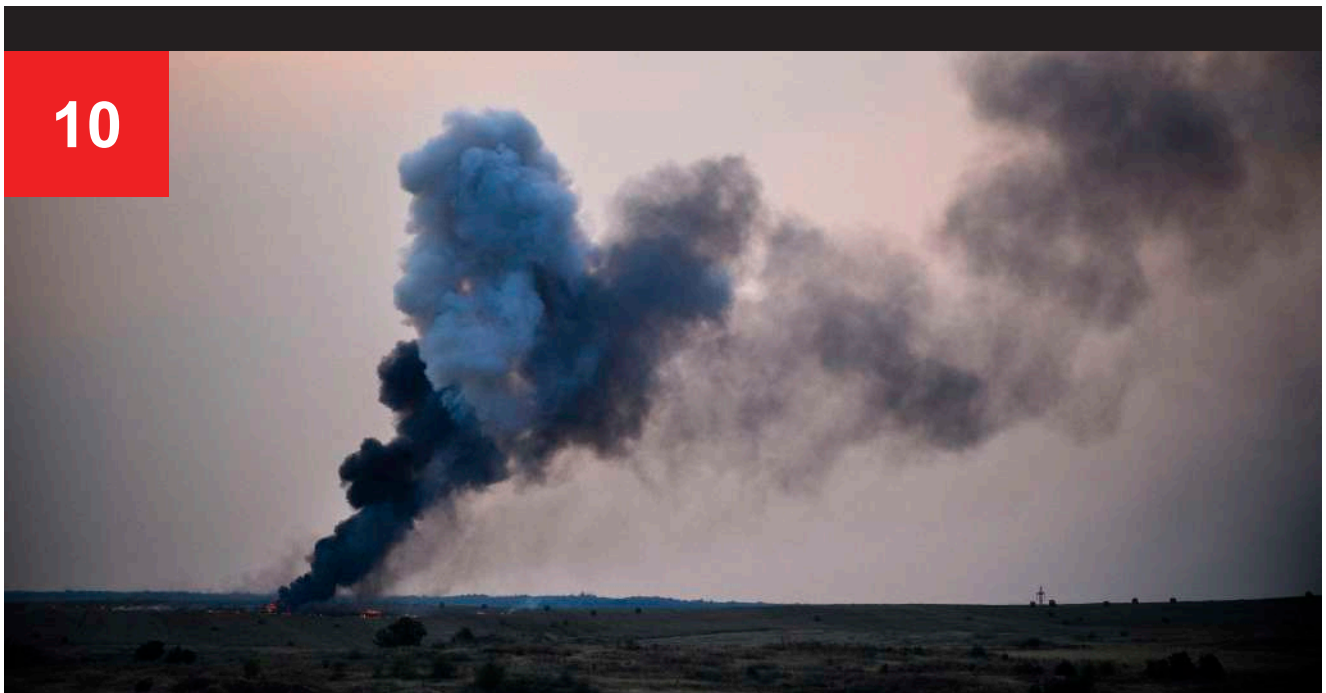
- 18 Rakhine women and children at risk in Cyclone Mocha clear-up



- 19 FAO warns of worsening food security in wake of Cyclone Mocha

JUDICIAL

- 20 Junta legal affairs ministry objects to two Supreme court appeals by Aung San Suu Kyi
- 21 Head of Aung San Suu Kyi protection team released from prison
- 22 Editor-in-Chief Kyaw Min Swe, charged with defamation, freed by junta





23 CPJ calls on Myanmar authorities for release of Irrawaddy news publisher

DIPLOMACY

24 NUG foreign affairs minister attends oath-taking ceremony of Timor-Leste's new govt

25 Karen women's meeting sees 'remarkable increase' in involvement

26 NGO accuses Chinese renewables firms of abuses in 18 countries, including Myanmar

27 Six killed in Rohingya camps after ICC prosecutor visit

CHINA FOCUS

28 Four arrested in Hong Kong for supporting fugitives

INDIA FOCUS

30 India's headhunter warriors sever past, fret over future

32 Climate change, El Nino drive hottest June on record

Cover photo of Russian-made fighter jet by AFP

COMMENTARY

34 Myanmar: Military's obstruction of humanitarian aid could be international crime

36 ETHNIC NEWS ROUNDUPS

38 LAST WEEK IN NAY PYI TAW

BUSINESS

40 Foreign garment companies to exit Myanmar after worker arrests

41 Russia to build small-scale natural fertilizer plants in four regions including Yangon

42 'No second chance' to save Sri Lanka, central banker warns

44 BUSINESS ALERTS

CULTURE & LIFESTYLE

46 IN FOCUS

48 Chasing the history of flying 'The Hump' and the Burma Front in WWII





WORK GOES ON

A worker unloads rice on a jetty in Yangon.

Photo: AFP

IN FOCUS



NUG: MYANMAR JUNTA SALES OF GOVERNMENT SECURITIES ILLEGAL

The National Unity Government (NUG) has declared the sale of government securities by Myanmar's junta regime illegal and said that any future administration would not be liable for any debts or liabilities incurred by the junta.

In a statement, the NUG's Ministry of Planning, Finance and Investment referred to its Public Debt Management Law approved by the exiled Pyid-aungsu Hluttaw (parliament) after the coup in 2021.

This states that the issue, sale and distribution of government securities should only be conducted with NUG approval and that any securities issued without its approval will not be honoured or recognised as government or public debt.

As a result of this, the NUG, or any government that follows it, will not be liable for any borrowing, debt or liabilities incurred by the Myanmar Military Council, or any of its subsidiary organisations, since

the 1 February 2021 coup.

The NUG is already selling its own Spring Revolution Special Treasury Bonds. These do not pay interest and the capital will only be paid when the revolution succeeds and the junta is toppled.

As of January 2023, the NUG had raised \$100 million, 45 per cent of which came from the sale of Spring Revolution Special Treasury Bonds, according to Bloomberg.

Funds were also raised from the auction of military-linked properties, including two mansions owned by the junta chief, Min Aung Hlaing. Currently, because the NUG is not in power, the new owners cannot take possession of their properties. They will have to wait until the junta is overthrown, at which point, the NUG has promised to let them take control of their properties.

MORE THAN 20 YOUTHS IN YANGON ARRESTED DURING FIRST WEEK OF JULY

Junta soldiers arrested more than 20 youths in Yangon's Mingalardon, Kamaryut, South Dagon, Kyimyindaing and Shwepyithar townships, during the first week of July.

On 1 July, a junta military patrol arrested Nyan Lin Htet, a 24-year-old student studying at Yangon University, near Sanyeiknyein (1) Street on Insein Road, in Kamaryut Township on 1 July. Mizzima enquired with the Yangon University Students' Union to see if they had any further details about what happened to Nyan Lin Htet, but they have not yet replied.

On 3 July, near Basic Education Middle School - 9 in Yangon's Shwepyithar Township, junta soldiers dressed in civilian clothes arrested a man and a woman while they were hanging a banner that said: "Never forget the day 7.7.1962, [when] history [was] written with the blood of students."

The banner was referring to 7 July 1962 when the then junta, under the dictator Ne Win, violently suppressed a student demonstration of 5,000 students at Rangoon University, (now called Yangon University)

killing more than 100 students and arresting another 6,000. The junta then blew up the Rangoon University Students' Union building.

A source from Yangon said: "Youths who live in Yangon need to be especially careful this month because it is the anniversary of the 7 July student uprising. Soldiers are [currently] arresting and torturing innocent civilians in Yangon."

Junta troops are randomly arresting youths, then accusing them of assisting people's defence forces (PDFs) and interrogating them. After interrogation anyone found to be innocent still has to pay a bribe to the soldiers before they can be released.

According to reports, junta forces are randomly arresting and checking young people in Yangon and checking overnight guest registration lists in Thaketa, Hlaing, South Dagon and Sanchaung townships.

TRAFFIC POLICE OFFICER SHOT DEAD IN MANDALAY

A traffic police officer was shot and killed in Mandalay City's Aungmyaythazan Township on 1 July.

He was shot on the corner of 26th and 62nd streets at around 6:00 p.m., according to residents in the area.

"The traffic cop was driving a Scoopy brand motorcycle. Two unidentified motorcycle riders who chased him from behind opened fire and fled, near the corner of 26th and 62nd Street. After a while, junta soldiers arrived at the scene of the incident. The traffic police officer passed away at the scene", said someone living nearby.

The dead police officer was named as Lance Sergeant Chit Zaw Win, age 32. He was stationed at the Mandalay Traffic Police Unit 91, on the corner of 25th and 62nd streets.

"The unknown gunmen fired three times and ran away. The traffic police officer died on the spot from two wounds below his chest", said a person close to the Mandalay police community.

It is not yet known which organisation carried out the killing.

Last month another Mandalay traffic police officer, Police Sergeant Aung Kyaw Myo, was also shot and killed.

MYANMAR PUBLIC MARKS JUNTA LEADER MIN AUNG HLAING'S BIRTHDAY WITH PROTESTS

Many Myanmar residents took to the streets on Monday to curse the leader of their country.

On 3 July, the birthday of Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, the people of Myanmar and revolutionary groups expressed their strong discontent through "cursing strikes" in several locations in the country.

Min Aung Hlaing is 67.

In Yangon, the Kyimyindaing Networks (KMD18) and the Mayangone Democratic Front (MDF) revolutionary groups joined forces to hold the strike on the birthday of the military leader by putting photos of Min Aung Hlaing's on the ground and trampling on them. The strike was carried out in the city centre where security was tightened by junta forces.

An official of the Mayangone Democratic Front (MDF) told Mizzima, "When it was the birthday of the people's leader Mother Suu [Aung San Suu Kyi], the people wore flowers on their heads and wished her a

happy birthday, but on the birthday of the terrorist leader Min Aung Hlaing, they trampled his picture on the ground and wished him a speedy death."

In addition, the leading committee of the public strike of Yesakyo Township and the people of Yay Le Kyun joined together to curse the military leader Min Aung Hlaing and hold a mock funeral ceremony for him as a form of protest.

Similarly, the Yinmabin-Salingyi Villages Strike Committee orchestrated a cursing strike on the occasion of Min Aung Hlaing's birthday, utilizing this form of protest to voice their discontent and opposition.

On his birthday, a resident of Yangon told Mizzima that junta soldiers were conducting patrols in densely populated areas of the city, and the security measures implemented were notably stringent and tightly enforced.

NUG CONSTRUCTS 1,175 BOMB SHELTERS

More than 1,175 bomb shelters and trenches where people can shelter from airstrikes and artillery fire have been constructed across Myanmar using donations, according to the National Unity Government (NUG).

The announcement was made in a statement issued by the NUG on 1 July. It said that the shelters are necessary to help protect people from airstrikes and artillery fire that the junta is using on a daily basis across the country.

The shelters were constructed using money from a fundraising campaign and money donated

by members of the public. Each shelter costs about 50,000 kyats, according to Dr. Zaw Wai Soe, the NUG Minister of Education.

Amongst the places where shelters and trenches were constructed, were schools in areas not controlled by the junta and internally displaced people (IDP) camps.

There are over 5,000 schools with 750,000 enrolled students under NUG control, according to the NUG biennial report. Children in many of these schools are taught how to flee and protect themselves from junta airstrikes and attacks.



ONE OFF

Myanmar jet fighter shot down but PDFs still lack anti-aircraft capability

Andrew Landen



Myanmar resistance forces have limited firepower and so the downing of the Myanmar junta fighter was viewed as something of a fluke. (File photo of Russian jet shot down, by AFP)

Normally, the news of shooting down a Myanmar junta fighter jet would result in cheers amongst the ranks of the Spring Revolution resistance. But judging by the reporting and muted response to the incident last week, the harsh reality for the People's Defence Force (PDF) fighters is this was a fluke or one-off.

According to low-key local media reports, a junta jet was shot down by Karenni resistance forces near Ywathit Town in Karenni or Kayah State on 30 June, according to an insider from Taungoo Air Force base and local resistance groups.

The junta jet was shot down by the Karenni National People's Liberation Front (KNPLF) and the

Karenni Joint Forces at around 11:00 am near the Border Guard Force Battalion 1105 base in Ywathit Town, according to the Central Committee of the KNPLF.

They said that the plane, a Chinese-made K2 attack aircraft had flown out of Taungoo Air Force base, but the junta was trying to suppress any information about the aircraft's downing.

"Both pilots are still missing," the Taungoo Air force base insider said shortly after the incident.

OUTGUNNED

Myanmar's Spring Revolution fighters – whether PDF or Ethnic Revolutionary Organizations (ERO) – are poorly equipped when it comes to dealing



● Jet fighters and helicopter gunships pose a serious threat to the resistance and civilians in Myanmar. Photo: AFP

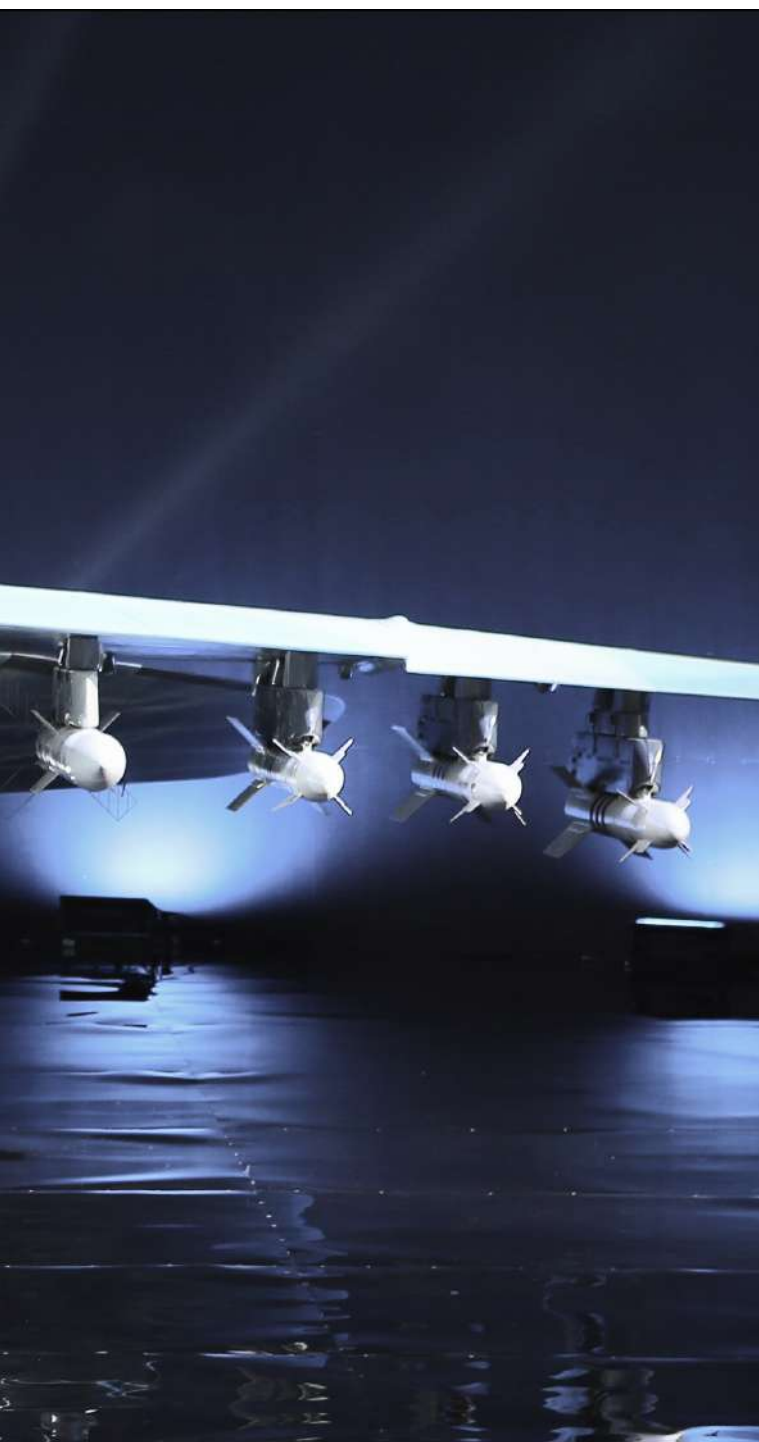
with fighter jets or helicopter gunships. This is an issue that has been brought up again and again with calls by the fighters and their supporters for anti-aircraft weapons or even the suggestion of an imposition of a “no-fly zone” to tackle the threat.

Yet such weapons or the mechanism of a “no-fly zone” are not forthcoming.

The Myanmar junta appears to have been relying more on jet fighter attacks against PDF and civilian targets over the last six months, in part because of the loss of ground forces in guerrilla skirmishes and Improvised Explosive Device (IED) attacks.

CHANGING TACTICS?

The downing of this jet, flying over this highly



contested region of Karenni state, will not have gone down well in the halls of power in Naypyidaw.

But in the wake of the incident, even the resistance appeared low-key.

Lawyinsoe, a KPLF soldier told Mizzima: “To be honest, we don’t even have any large weaponry to shoot down fighter jets, but we were able to shoot down the jet fighter because it flew so low. We fired with all the weapons we possessed, the biggest one was the G4 machine gun.”

There is ongoing fierce fighting in Karenni State and displaced people from across the state are fleeing to Loikaw Township where the fighting has subsided, according to local news sources.

It is unlikely that the shooting down of this jet fighter will prompt a major change in flying tactics – in part because there is no indication that resistance forces now possess effective anti-aircraft weaponry.

Sourcing such weaponry appears impossible – at least at this stage of this protracted war.

While analysts claim the UWSA in Shan State own such weaponry, the group does not appear to be willing or able to supply such weapons to PDFs or EROs – a stance based on strategy and the group’s relationship with neighbouring China.

NOT FORTHCOMING

PDFs are calling for anti-aircraft weapons. But as security analyst Anthony Davis wrote in Asia Times at the beginning of this year, virtually all actors in the conflict and observers beyond have recognized the reality that shoulder-launched surface-to-air missiles will not be coming to the rescue of Myanmar’s opposition forces in the foreseeable future.

“In sharp contrast to Afghanistan of the 1980s or Syria of the 2010s, in Myanmar of the 2020s no neighbouring state has any interest in facilitating the delivery into the country of MANPADS – or any other significant weaponry – even assuming an external power or reliable black market vendor were willing to supply them,” Davis noted.

The Spring Revolution is largely pressured into a defence posture in the face of Myanmar junta air power.

Part of that posture involves the digging of bunkers in the ground and in the hills, with the National Unity Government (NUG) trumpeting some success with this.

With the Myanmar junta relying increasingly on air power to hammer the resistance and its civilian support base, the core weakness remains – how to combat the threat from the skies.

MYANMAR IN 'DEADLY FREEFALL' INTO EVEN DEEPER VIOLENCE, SAYS UN SPOKESMAN



Mr Volker Turk. Photo: AFP

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Mr Volker Turk is warning that Myanmar is in a spiral of collapse and is calling for an immediate end to the violence.

In a speech on 6 July in the Interactive dialogue on Myanmar, 53rd Session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, the UN spokesman notes the people of Myanmar are in dire straits.

The following is his full speech:

Mr. Vice President,

Excellencies,

Distinguished colleagues,

This Council has heard report after report on the human rights situation in Myanmar.

With each successive update, it is almost impossible to imagine that the people of Myanmar can endure more suffering.

Yet the country continues its deadly freefall into even deeper violence and heartbreak.

A regime imposed by generals for the last two and a half years has snatched away the optimism that Myanmar's people once held for peace, democracy, and a more prosperous future.

Civilians live at the whim of a reckless military authority that relies on systematic control tactics, fear and terror.

Civilians also bear the devastating brunt of the grotesque violence, including against older people, people with disabilities and infants.

The situation has become untenable.

We see a spiralling economy, worsening the poverty already endured by much of the population.

Natural resources are being exploited at dangerous rates, causing irreversible environmental harm.

The voices of civil society and journalists are being strangled.

Arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances and torture continue unabated.

And the country's minorities again face brutal attacks by the military in border regions, with increasing numbers of people crossing international frontiers in search of safety and protection.

More than one million Rohingya remain in neighbouring Bangladesh where they live in the world's largest refugee camp in deplorable conditions. The conditions for their return to Myanmar are still non-existent. The military continues to carry out atrocities in their home state of Rakhine, where they are denied citizenship.

Mr. Vice President,

Credible sources indicate that as of yesterday, 3,747 individuals have died at the hands of the military since they took power, and 23,747 have been arrested. These figures represent the minimum that can be documented and verified - the true number of casualties is likely to be far higher.

Every day, the military's ruthless so-called "four cuts" strategy continues to wreak destruction.

Entire villages are razed and burned to the ground, collectively punishing civilians, by depriving them of shelter, food, water, and life-saving aid. Since the coup began, the military has scorched at least 70,000 homes across the country, 70 percent of which were in Sagaing region. Over 1.5 million people have been forcibly displaced with minimal access to humanitarian aid.

Incessant airstrikes and artillery shelling are destroying homes and stealing lives. In the first six months of this year, my Office reported a 33 percent increase in indiscriminate airstrikes compared to the first half of last year, with rising attacks on civilian targets, including villages, schools, hospitals and places of worship.

On 11 April in Pa Zi Gyi village in Sagaing region, up to 168 civilians, including scores of women and children, were killed in an air attack.

Artillery attacks have also dramatically increased, with over 563 this year, representing already 80 percent of the total attacks last year. My Office also continues to document repeated violations of the most brutal forms: sexual violence, mass killings, extra-judicial executions, beheadings, dismemberments, and

mutilations.

This constitutes a complete disregard of the principles of international human rights and international humanitarian law.

And it displays an utter contempt for humanity.

Mr. Vice President,

The report I present to the Council today focuses on the systematic denial by the military of life-saving humanitarian aid for civilians. They have put in place a raft of legal, financial, and bureaucratic barriers to ensure people in need do not receive and cannot access assistance.

This obstruction of life-saving aid is deliberate and targeted, a calculated denial of fundamental rights and freedoms for large swathes of the population.

This is being done in a situation where one-third of the entire population requires urgent help – including access to adequate housing, enough food and water, or employment.

In mid-May, when Cyclone Mocha made landfall with devastating effect in Rakhine, Chin, Magway and Sagaing, the military actively prevented independent needs assessments, and obstructed access to information. They suspended all travel authorisations in Rakhine State, eventually allowing distribution of aid to resume if it was not cyclone-related.

Importantly, all disbursements of Cyclone Mocha-related humanitarian aid remain frozen unless delivered by the military apparatus. They have threatened legal action against anyone reporting figures different to theirs on the number of Rohingya deaths, fixed by the military at 116, but believed to be higher.

To date, because of lack of access, it has not been possible to confirm the number of Rohingya deaths and those of members from other communities.

I deplore the direct attacks on humanitarian staff. Local organizations, which provide the vast majority of humanitarian aid, face the greatest risks in carrying out their work. Up to 40 humanitarian workers have been killed and over 200 arrested since the coup.

The already fragile health system is now in disarray. Despite the efforts of grassroots organizations, a

de facto ban on transportation of medicines and other medical supplies across large parts of Myanmar has resulted in lack of access to medical assistance.

15.2 million people are in need of urgent food and nutrition support. The price of food rose 177 per cent in 2022, and the continued violence, land-grabbing and high risk posed by mines and unexploded ordnance has resulted in a marked decrease in food production.

The need for unhindered humanitarian access throughout Myanmar has never been more urgent. I call on Member States to fund the Myanmar Humanitarian Response Plan and to provide direct and flexible funding for local organisations on the ground that are desperately trying to reach people in need.

Mr. Vice President,

In line with Security Council resolution 2669 I repeat the call for an immediate end to this senseless violence.

Without delay, I also urge the authorities to release the 19,377 political prisoners detained throughout Myanmar, including deposed President Win Myint and State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi.

The path out of this crisis must be anchored in accountability for the grave human rights violations and other violations of international law that are occurring. I urge the Security Council to refer the situation to the International Criminal Court. Any political solution to this protracted emergency must include accountability.

Regarding the one million Rohingya in Bangladesh, voluntary repatriation can only occur when conditions for safe, sustainable, and dignified returns to Myanmar are in place and when the full range of their rights will be respected and upheld. The Rohingya themselves must be at the centre of decision-making. Returns must only take place with their fully informed and truly voluntary choice.

For its part, the international community must continue to provide support to host communities, including and notably in Bangladesh, and adequate protection for all people who are crossing international borders.

I also appeal to all countries to cease and prevent the supply of arms to the military and to take tar-

geted measures to limit access by generals to foreign currency, aviation fuel and other means that enable attacks on Myanmar's people.

This Council needs to consider how to bring to light the business interests that support the military and keep them afloat.

Mr. Vice President,

Among the numerous crimes perpetrated against the people of Myanmar, I was outraged to hear of the arrests of over a hundred people by the military on 19 June. Their crime was buying, selling, carrying, or wearing a flower to celebrate Aung San Suu Kyi's 78th birthday.

It is difficult to imagine that Myanmar's people – who just two and a half years ago were looking forward to a better future – are being stifled by an oppressor which regards bearing a flower as a criminal act.

For decades, the people of Myanmar have faced repression and isolation. But they have never stopped calling for their fundamental rights to be respected, nor have they ceased to make great sacrifices for a democratic future.

I stand in solidarity with Myanmar's people. I honour their extraordinary strength, spirit, and resilience as they endure day after day of crisis.

I want to emphasise that the Rohingya are an integral part of Myanmar's people and the future of the country.

I remind the international community, the Security Council, ASEAN, and all Member States with influence over Min Aung Hlaing and the Tatmadaw of their responsibility to exert maximum pressure to end this crisis.

It is of the utmost urgency that we restore all conditions necessary for Myanmar's people to find a way out of the heartache, and to live their lives in freedom and safety.

Thank you.

UN URGES END TO ARMS, CURRENCY SUPPLIES TO MYANMAR JUNTA



The United Nations on 6 July urged the international community to deny Myanmar's junta access to foreign weapons and currency as the conflict-wracked country's humanitarian crisis deepens.

Myanmar was plunged into chaos after a 2021 coup ousted democratically elected civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi, sparking fighting between the military, ethnic rebel groups and newer People's Defence Forces (PDF).

The UN and human rights groups have denounced alleged rights violations including attacks on civilians and humanitarian workers, arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, sexual violence and torture.

"We need to prevent the supply of arms to the military and to analyse the economic interests that are behind it," said UN human rights chief Volker Turk.

In a new report presented to the UN Human Rights Council, Turk also called for "targeted measures" to limit the generals' access to "foreign currency, aviation fuel and other means that enable attacks on Myanmar's people".

The UN's special rapporteur on human rights

for the Southeast Asian nation, Tom Andrews, said foreign currency allowed the junta to buy arms, supply its weapons factories and refuel combat aircraft.

He added that other countries should join the United States in sanctioning Myanmar's financial institutions and urged greater coordination among governments that have already imposed sanctions.

Turk accused the military of razing villages and said 3,747 people have died at the hands of the military since it took power, with more than 23,000 arrested.

Up to 40 aid workers have been killed since the coup, he added.

More than 15 million people urgently need food and nutrition support, he added, saying the army was deliberately preventing aid from reaching populations left stricken after the destruction caused by Cyclone Mocha.

The UN has already warned that obstruction or denial of humanitarian assistance may amount to serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian laws.

RAKHINE WOMEN AND CHILDREN AT RISK IN CYCLONE MOCHA CLEAR-UP



● Women and children come to collect aid in Sittwe, Rakhine State. Photo: EPA

Women and children are reportedly exposed as humanitarian aid work continues in Rakhine State in the wake of Cyclone Mocha, ReliefWeb reports.

Cyclone Mocha, one of the most powerful storms ever to hit Myanmar, affecting an estimated 3.4 million people, hit land around the 14 May. Howling winds tore homes to pieces, while torrential downpours and a dangerous storm surge submerged areas along the coast, flooding villages and leaving hundreds of thousands of vulnerable people without shelter.

Six weeks later, aid and humanitarian support is proving slow to arrive, and the most vulnerable are women and children.

To reach women and girls in even the most inaccessible areas, UNFPA is supporting mobile clinics across nine villages in Sittwe township, providing assistance such as health check-ups, prenatal and postnatal care, family planning and psychosocial support, according to ReliefWeb. These clinics, already operated by UNFPA partners before the cyclone, help ensure those grappling with the crisis can receive critical sexual and reproductive health care.

Reaching people in need was already a challenge in parts of both Rakhine and the northwest due to ongoing conflict and restrictions on movement and supply transportation, and now roads and bridges have been destroyed by flooding. As UN OCHA was reporting, Myanmar red tape has been blocking or slowing the delivery of assistance from abroad.

Over a month on from the cyclone, humanitarian needs in cyclone-struck areas are enormous. Those affected include some 432,000 women and girls of reproductive age, including over 20,700 who are currently pregnant; around 2,300 of these women were due to give birth over the past month, in the chaotic aftermath of the crisis.

Mya Khin, 37, from the Min Hla village in Sit-

two said: "I am nine months pregnant. My house was severely damaged by the cyclone [...] What I need most is quality health care for a safe delivery. I am very happy that this mobile clinic is reaching us at this critical time. I received the services and information that are important for my pregnancy."

Dr Win Zaw Tun, a medical officer with the Myanmar Medical Association in Say Thamar Kyi village in Sittwe, explained the gravity of the situation many are facing.

As one female doctor in a village outside Sittwe explained, pregnant women can experience many health-related issues unless services are available. Women with high-risk pregnancies are more likely to critical condition. They need continuous care and even early referral in case of emergency.

The storm also disrupted community support systems and services to prevent and respond to gender-based violence. Most of the UNFPA-supported safe spaces for women and girls in central and northern Rakhine have been damaged, while power outages, dilapidated water and toilet facilities and overcrowded living conditions that lack privacy, sanitation and proper lighting are exacerbating these risks.

With the scale of the needs in Myanmar, UNFPA urgently requires funding to support sexual and reproductive health services, including gender-based violence response and mental health and psychosocial support, rehabilitating health facilities, deploying trained midwives and other critical cadres and procuring essential medicines, clean delivery kits and dignity kits.

The message from aid workers is that with the serious gaps in health infrastructure, it is imperative to ensure emergency sexual and reproductive health services to help prevent maternal deaths, sexual violence, unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV.

FAO WARNS OF WORSENING FOOD SECURITY IN WAKE OF CYCLONE MOCHA



Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the United Nations has warned of how victims of Cyclone Mocha have lost productive assets – including livestock and paddy – in the wake of Cyclone Mocha, suggesting trouble ahead for communities as they try to rebuild.

In a statement published 5 July through UN OCHA, the FAO warns of the dangers, particularly in the worst hit area, Rakhine State. All this hints at worsening food security.

On 14 May 2023, Cyclone Mocha made landfall in Myanmar, accompanied by violent gusts, torrential rainfall and flooding. Mocha caused significant disruption to the lives and livelihoods of more than 40 percent of farming households in Ayeyarwady, Chin, Kachin, Magway and Sagaing, and more than 80 percent in Rakhine. The climate-induced disaster struck some of the most vulnerable rural communities at a time when they were already grappling with a growing food security crisis.

Moreover, agricultural production had been steadily declining, and more than half of farmers reported a drop in agricultural production in January 2023.

Cyclone Mocha damaged approximately 327 000 ha of agricultural lands, wiping out agricultural production worth an estimated USD 22.6 million.³ Furthermore, nearly 13 000 heads of livestock were lost, valued at approximately USD 6.7 million.

Mocha also inflicted severe damage on critical agricultural infrastructures, fisheries, and vital seed

stocks.

According to the findings of a household survey conducted by the FAO in Ayeyarwady, Chin, Kachin, Magway, Rakhine and Sagaing, half of the surveyed farming and livestock-keeping households reported loss of productive assets. FAO further estimates that nearly half of the fishing equipment in Sittwe in Rakhine State was damaged.

Additionally, according to the findings of a series of key informant interviews conducted by FAO in 11 townships in Rakhine state, two in every three farming households, two in every five agropastoral households, and more than one in every three fishing households lost their productive assets.

Of particular concern, coastal areas in Rakhine are likely experiencing saline water intrusion due to their low-lying locations relative to sea level.

As the multidimensional crisis continues and considering the impacts of Cyclone Mocha on rural communities, food production may decline further, and more people could lack access to food.

With three in four people dependent on agriculture for their livelihoods, emergency livelihoods support to farmers, fishers and livestock keepers is crucial in preventing a decline in food security.

Accordingly, and in line with Cyclone Mocha Flash Appeal, FAO aims to scale up emergency livelihoods support to the most vulnerable rural households in the affected areas.

JUNTA LEGAL AFFAIRS MINISTRY OBJECTS TO TWO SUPREME COURT APPEALS BY AUNG SAN SUU KYI



Protesters in Bangkok call for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi. Photo: AFP

In the initial statements of the Myanmar Supreme Court appeals made by State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, the junta-controlled Ministry of Legal Affairs on 5 July stated their objection to the appeals, according to sources close to the court hearing.

Arguments were made by both sides over the cases concerning Section 130 (a) of Penal Code for influencing the Union Election Commission in connection to the 2020 general election, and the case under Section (3) (1) (c) for violating the Official Secrets Act.

Aung San Suu Kyi was given three years with labour for the first charge and additional three years for the second charge. Her legal team made appeals on the grounds that the charges were unreasonable, and to remove the sentences.

“We lodged appeals to remove the punishments for these false charges which she did not commit,” said a source close to this hearing, adding that it may normally take over one month for the verdict for

such arguments.

State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, President Win Myint and Union Minister for Union Government Office Min Thu were sentenced to three years with labour in September 2022 under Section 130 (a).

She was also sentenced to additional three years under Section (3) (1) (c) along with her economic policy advisor Sean Turnell, Union Minister for Planning, Finance and Industry Soe Win, his Deputy Minister Set Aung and former minister Kyaw Win.

Except for the state counsellor, the remaining persons have been released.

Aung San Suu Kyi is still serving a total of 33 years imprisonment under 19 sentences, residing in solitary confinement inside a prison compound in Nay-pyitaw.

HEAD OF AUNG SAN SUU KYI PROTECTION TEAM RELEASED FROM PRISON



File photo of Pyae Phyo Naing, right, with Aung San Suu Kyi. Photo: Supplied

Police Inspector Pyae Phyo Naing, who was in charge of Aung San Suu Kyi's protection team whilst she was State Counselor, was released from Yamethin Prison in Mandalay Region on the morning of 5 July.

He had been charged with violating the Myanmar Police Force Maintenance of Discipline Law, for which he was sentenced to three years in prison.

A source from Yamethin Prison said: "He's on his way home right now. He was released after serving his entire sentence in prison. He was charged under The Myanmar Police Force Maintenance of Discipline Law."

He served his full sentence, only receiving a standard remission for prisoners who follow prison rules.

Sub-inspector Cherry Htet and security officer Aung Naing Oo, two other members of Aung San Suu Kyi's protection team, are also serving prison sentenc-

es in Yamethin Prison.

Cherry Htet was sentenced to five years in prison under Section 505(a) of the penal code and Aung Naing Oo was sentenced to 15 years in prison under Section 52 (a) of the Counter Terrorism Law and Section 3(1)(c) of the State Secrets Act.

Dr. Myo Aung, the former Mayor of Naypyitaw, Ye Min Oo, the former Deputy Mayor of Naypyitaw and Min Thu, a former union cabinet minister, are all also currently imprisoned in Yamethin Prison.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF KYAW MIN SWE, CHARGED WITH DEFAMATION, FREED BY JUNTA



Kyaw Min Swe, centre. File photo: AFP

Journalist Kyaw Min Swe, who was arrested for expressing condolences on social media following the bombing of Pazigy Village in Sagaing Region, was released on 7 July by the junta. Mizzima has received information confirming that he has safely returned to his home.

Kyaw Min Swe, who served as the editor-in-chief of The Voice Weekly, was charged under Section 505-A for alleged defamation of the Military Council.

Similar to Kyaw Min Swe, actor May Bachi and singer Shwe Yi Thein Tan, who were arrested in April and faced charges under Section 505-A for alleged defamation of the junta, have also reportedly been released.

On the morning of April 11, Pazigy Village in Kanbalu Township, Sagaing Region, was subjected to an airstrike and machine gun attack by the military junta, resulting in the loss of at least 170 lives.

Several individuals who expressed their condolences on social media for the victims of the Pazigy airstrike were arrested by the junta.

CPJ CALLS ON MYANMAR AUTHORITIES FOR RELEASE OF IRRAWADDY NEWS PUBLISHER



Thaung Win. Photo: Supplied

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) has called on Myanmar's military authorities to immediately release Thaung Win, stop persecuting journalists for their work, and let the independent news outlet The Irrawaddy operate freely, according to a press release.

CPJ reports that on 28 June, the Western Yangon District Court sentenced Thaung Win, The Irrawaddy's publisher, to five years in prison under Article 124-A of the penal code, which covers penalties for the anti-state crime of sedition, according to news reports and The Irrawaddy editor-in-chief Aung Zaw, who communicated with CPJ by email.

The court also fined him 100,000 kyats (about US\$47).

Thaung Win, who became the outlet's publisher when it received a license in late 2012 after operating for two decades from exile, was arrested at his home in Yangon on September 29, 2022, and was held at Insein Prison until his trial.

"The punitive and unjust sentencing of The Irrawaddy publisher Thaung Win is repugnant and should be immediately reversed," said Shawn Crispin, CPJ's senior Southeast Asia representative. "The military regime must release him and stop harassing The Irrawaddy for its fearless and uncompromising news reporting."

Thaung Win was initially charged with violating the Publishing and Distribution Act for allegedly publishing news that "negatively affected national security, rule of law and public peace," according to the news reports and Aung Zaw, who received CPJ's International Press Freedom Award in 2014.

CPJ could not immediately determine if Thaung Win intends to appeal his conviction. The Yangon court that sentenced him also issued arrest warrants for three unnamed editors of The Irrawaddy on 28 June, the news reports and Aung Zaw said.

The military regime has banned The Irrawaddy and at least 13 other independent news outlets including Mizzima since a media crackdown following a coup against a democratically elected government on 1 February 2021.

The Irrawaddy has defied the ban and continues to publish daily news online. Several of its reporters have gone into hiding to avoid arrest and the publication now operates mainly from exile, according to the reports and Aung Zaw.

Myanmar's Ministry of Information did not reply to CPJ's emailed request for comment on Thaung Win's sentencing. Myanmar was the world's third-worst jailer of journalists, with at least 42 members of the press behind bars at the time of CPJ's 1 December 2022, prison census.

NUG FOREIGN AFFAIRS MINISTER ATTENDS OATH-TAKING CEREMONY OF TIMOR-LESTE'S NEW GOVT



President of Timor-Leste Jose Manuel Ramos-Horta, centre, with Union Minister for Foreign Affairs Daw Zin Mar Aung, right, and U Lin Thant, the representative of NUG for Czech Republic. Photo: Facebook

Senior officials of Myanmar's National Unity Government (NUG) attended the oath-taking ceremony of Timor-Leste's new government in the capital Dili on 1 July.

Union Minister for Foreign Affairs Daw Zin Mar Aung and U Lin Thant, the representative of NUG for Czech Republic, were among 100 international dignitaries invited by President of Timor-Leste Jose Manuel Ramos-Horta, a Nobel Peace Prize winner, to the ceremony.

Newly-elected Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao will lead the government after his opposition National Congress for Timorese Reconstruction (CNRT) won May's election in a landslide.

Gusmao was elected as premier again after CNRT allied with the Democratic Party to gain a majority in Parliament. The 77-year-old independence icon was well-known for unifying the country during his first two terms in office, after a bloody guerilla war against Indonesian occupation.

He became the nation's first president be-

tween 2002 and 2007 and served as prime minister between 2007 and 2015.

During his terms in office, Gusmao tackled the economic challenges of the country with an estimated 1.5 million population, with nearly 42 percent of them living below the poverty line.

Gusmao has pledged that his government will reduce poverty through a strategic development plan, while giving priority to national reconciliation and unity in order to achieve the development goals.

"I promise to carry out the tasks that the people have entrusted to me and to bring prosperity to the Timorese people through government programmes," Gusmao said at the swearing-in ceremony, according to the media.

He also promised that local governments will be allowed their own development programmes, including those to improve health services for mothers and children.

Timor Leste is in the process of joining ASEAN as its 11th member.

KAREN WOMEN'S MEETING SEES 'REMARKABLE INCREASE' IN INVOLVEMENT



The Karen Women Organisation (KWO) successfully convened its 8th Congress from 29 June to 1 July 2023, noting an increase in women's participation in the wake of the 2021 Myanmar military coup.

The Karen Women Organisation's 8th Congress brought together 125 representatives from 7 districts of Kawthoolei, refugee camps, KWO Central, invited organisations, and special guests. The event took place at a special area within KWO Central.

A notable highlight of the Congress was the remarkable increase in the number of young women representatives. Fifty-four young women, most of whom were graduates from the Karen Young Women Leadership School and others who are actively involved in KWO at district and township levels, joined the congress. Their presence showcased the ongoing commitment to empower and uplift the next generation of Karen women leaders.

Throughout the congress, various critical topics were discussed and analysed. These included the accomplishments and challenges faced by KWO over the past six years, the amendment of KWO's Constitution, policy reviews, updates to the organisation's strategy plan, analysis of the current political landscape, and the formulation of future plans for the next four years 2023-2027.

A primary focus of the 8th Congress was to actively strengthen women's participation in politics.

To achieve this, KWO pledged to enhance the political capacities of Karen women, nurturing their skills and knowledge. Additionally, the organisation will continue providing support to Karen women leaders who are already active within the Karen political movement.

Furthermore, KWO remains committed to advocating for the rights and protection of Karen women and children by striving for improvements in laws and justice systems.

KWO updated and approved its policy including humanitarian aid in response to the current situation. It primarily promotes respect and recognition of local government structures and that aid should not, in any way, provide recognition to the State Administrative Council (SAC), whether directly or indirectly.

During the 8th Congress, an Executive Committee comprising eleven members was elected.

The Congress said it was pleased to announce that Naw K'nyaw Paw has been Elected as the Chairperson, supported by Naw Say Say Heh as the Vice Chair, Naw Ta Mla Saw as the Secretary, Naw Dah Mu as Joint Secretary 1, and Naw Eh Ta Mwee Paw as Joint Secretary 2.

NGO ACCUSES CHINESE RENEWABLES FIRMS OF ABUSES IN 18 COUNTRIES, INCLUDING MYANMAR



Chinese companies investing in minerals used in the renewable energy industry have been accused of more than 100 human rights and environmental abuses around the world since 2021, according to a report released on Thursday last week.

China dominates the processing and refining of minerals critical to the transition to renewables - including copper, nickel and cobalt - and has poured investment into facilities in resource-rich countries such as Indonesia, Peru and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, an international NGO, logged 102 alleged cases of abuse committed by Chinese firms involved in sourcing transitional minerals overseas between January 2021 and December 2022. More than a quarter allegedly took place in Indonesia.

“Our data shows human rights and environmental abuse is prevalent in the exploration, extraction and processing of transition minerals,” a spokesperson for the NGO said.

“Local communities are bearing the brunt of these abuses.”

Of the total alleged cases of abuse across 18 countries by Chinese firms, the NGO found 27 in Indonesia, 16 in Peru, 12 in DRC, 11 in Myanmar and seven in Zimbabwe.

China has been blamed for environmental damage and poor workers’ rights in Indonesia, where electric battery-producing companies hungry for nickel have worsened pollution and stoked tensions over sub-par working conditions at their facilities.

The Chinese government has pledged to not build any more coal-burning plants abroad, but the NGO said its green pledges have been “overshadowed by the serious human rights risks associated with their overseas business operations”.

More than two-thirds of the total allegations involved rights abuses against local communities and over half involved harmful environmental impacts including water pollution, effects on wildlife and preventing access to water, the report said.

More than a third were allegations of harming workers’ rights.

The accusations concerned 39 Chinese companies, of which only seven have published human rights policies, according to the report.

With the global use of these minerals anticipated to rise six-fold by 2040 as the demand for renewables grows, the NGO called on China and the governments that welcome its companies to take “urgent action” to mitigate the harm caused by the transition.

“Given their vital role in energy sectors globally, Chinese actors are well placed to lead a responsible energy transition,” its spokesperson said.

“However, this can only be achieved if Chinese businesses and regulators take proactive measures to address endemic human rights and environmental abuses.”

AFP

SIX KILLED IN ROHINGYA CAMPS AFTER ICC PROSECUTOR VISIT



ICC prosecutor Karim A.A. Khan visiting a Rohingya refugee camp. Photo: AFP

Six Rohingya people were killed in Bangladesh refugee camp clashes that broke out hours after an International Criminal Court prosecutor visited the settlements to gather testimony, police said on 7 July.

Bangladesh is home to around a million ethnic Rohingya people, most of whom fled a 2017 military crackdown in neighbouring Myanmar that is now subject to a genocide probe at the UN court.

This week's violence was the latest in a series of deadly clashes between the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) and the Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO), two rival insurgent groups operating in the camps.

Faruq Ahmed, a spokesman for the Armed Police Battalion that looks after security in the refugee camps, told AFP that five people had been shot dead in a gunfight before dawn on Friday.

"All five who were killed in the gunfight are members of ARSA including a commander," he said, adding that security had been stepped up in the camps as a result.

Ahmed said that the violence came hours after the murder of Ebadullah, a refugee community leader, apparently at the hands of ARSA members.

Local daily Prothom Alo said Ebadullah, 27, had been marshalling refugees to meet with ICC prosecutor Karim A.A. Khan, who visited the camps on Thursday afternoon to record statements from witnesses to the 2017 crackdown in Myanmar.

The insurgent group did not immediately com-

ment on the killings, but its members have been accused of targeting Rohingya civic leaders who challenge its authority.

Its leader, Ataulah Abu Ammar Jununi, was last year charged in absentia with the murder of popular peace activist Mohib Ullah in 2021. Mohib Ullah had regularly spoken out against ARSA's activities in the camps.

Jununi and other key ARSA leaders are also accused of murdering a senior Bangladeshi intelligence officer last November.

The murder prompted security forces in January to evict a makeshift settlement on the Myanmar border that ARSA had allegedly used as a staging post for methamphetamine trafficking to fund its operations.

Dozens have been killed in Rohingya camp clashes so far this year, including women and children.

Funding cuts forced the United Nations food agency to cut rations to refugee settlements twice in recent months, with aid workers warning that the move would likely worsen the already precarious security situation in the camps.

Bangladesh and Myanmar have renewed efforts to begin repatriating Rohingya refugees to their homeland, where the stateless minority have been subject to decades of persecution and are denied citizenship.

FOUR ARRESTED IN HONG KONG FOR SUPPORTING FUGITIVES: POLICE

Hong Kong police arrested four men on Wednesday last week for allegedly supporting people living abroad who “endanger national security”, according to a statement.

The arrests came two days after authorities announced million-dollar bounties for the capture of eight prominent pro-democracy activists living overseas.

The eight include former pro-democracy lawmakers, activists and a unionist. They were put on a wanted list by Hong Kong police over various alleged

national security crimes, sparking an international outcry.

The four men arrested Wednesday were accused of profiting from operating companies, social platforms and mobile applications to “support people who have fled overseas and continue to engage in activities that endanger national security”, the police statement said.

Authorities on Monday offered a HK\$1 million (\$127,800) reward for each of the eight activists abroad to anyone providing information leading to



Tight security in Hong Kong. Photo: AFP

their arrest or prosecution.

The bounties have been criticised by the United States, Britain and Australia, countries where the wanted activists reportedly reside.

On Wednesday, the four men aged 26 to 28 were arrested by national security officials over suspicion of “conspiracy to collude with a foreign country or with external elements to endanger national security” and “conspiracy to doing acts with seditious intent”, the police statement said.

The collusion offence carries a sentence of up to life in prison under the sweeping national security law Beijing imposed on the financial hub in 2020 to quell dissent.

They also allegedly published “seditious” so-

cial media posts to provoke hatred against the authorities and advocate for Hong Kong independence.

Police had said they would investigate connections of the eight abroad in order to find their allies and funders, and city leader John Lee has called on the activists to turn themselves in.

According to photos published by local newspaper Ming Pao, police escorted Ivan Lam - a former chairperson of disbanded political party Demosisto - out of an industrial building after searching it on Wednesday evening.

Demosisto was co-founded by one of the eight wanted activists Nathan Law, as well as jailed activist Joshua Wong and former activist Agnes Chow.

Officers were also photographed seizing banners and flags of an online shopping app called “Mee”.

The app was created in 2020 to share discounts and information about “yellow businesses”, which consist of restaurants, shops and service providers that support democracy in Hong Kong.

According to public records, the company behind the app has former and current directors whose names are the same as two former Demosisto members.

Hong Kong’s national security law -- enacted after massive and at times violent pro-democracy protests in 2019 -- has led to the shutdown of scores of civil society groups, opposition parties and pro-democracy outlets.

Police have so far arrested 260 people on national security grounds.



AFP

INDIA'S HEADHUNTER WARRIORS SEVER PAST, FRET OVER FUTURE

Once, the way to get ahead among India's Konyak warriors was by chopping off an enemy's skull.

Today, the last survivors of a past age mourn the changing times - and a new generation they see as soft.

At 90, Nokkho Konyak can barely see beyond a few feet, his facial tattoos marking him as a warrior are fading and his frail body needs support.

But his eyes light up and his hands become animated when he talks about "those simpler times".

"We witnessed our brave elders cutting off enemies' heads and participated in many battles," he told AFP.

Nokkho is a Konyak, a small but fierce and respected warrior community in northeastern India's Nagaland state.

The Konyaks were the last to give up the age-old practice of severing enemies' heads in this remote, hilly and densely forested region close to the Myanmar border.

"I am lucky to still be alive, to be around my extended family, and I feel that today's generation is too privileged," he said at Chi village, about 360 kilometres (225 miles) from the regional capital Dimapur.

'HEADS WERE TROPHIES'

Nokkho is an old man from a dying breed that practised or witnessed headhunting before it stopped



India's Konyak. Photo: AFP

half a century ago.

“Human heads were trophies that earned you respect,” he said, sitting in front of a wall decorated with the skulls of animals sacrificed by his family.

Warriors were inked with different tattoos signifying anything from participation in a battle to killing someone and actually taking a head.

As a young boy, he practised lopping off heads on large puppets, though he never severed a human one in battle himself.

The last two headhunters in the village, his two elderly friends, died about 20 years ago.

Most tribal fights happened over land and limited resources, with warriors carrying spears, axes and machetes ambushing their enemies.

Wherever possible, enemies' headless bodies were tied to a bamboo pole and taken back to the victor's village.

The head itself was taken and paraded about for the village to see, hailed as a sign of bravery to be celebrated.

“My youth was a time of great transition,” Nokkho said, referring to the arrival of missionaries, who denounced headhunting and gradually converted most people from their traditional animist beliefs to Christianity.

Nokkho remembers World War II, the end of British colonial rule, the formation of the Indian state in 1947, the first roads and power lines, and now, finally, the arrival of mobile phones.

‘HARD FOR WOMEN’

Like Nokkho, 90-year-old Bo Wang, king of nearby Hongphoi village, took up hunting wild boars and other animals after “headhunting became taboo”.

Wang's family, like other royals in nearby Konyak villages, has been the final local authority for generations.

“Everyone lived in fear of an ambush, and we were taught to be wary of everyone,” Wang said, describing the stress of growing up with the threat of headhunters.

The area is peaceful now, he said, but he

laments what he sees as a lost era.

“Everything changed with modernity, our culture is dying,” he said.

“People respected hierarchy, elders and their king - which isn't the case anymore,” he added.

Dressed in a traditional red conical cap adorned with fluttering feathers and boar tusks, he sat around a fire with his peers reminiscing, saying they hoped their stories, lives and culture would not be forgotten.

But Wang's second wife, Kamyra, 80, said she was glad her granddaughters were growing up today and not in the conditions she experienced.

“There was just stress, not enough food or resources,” she told AFP. “It was particularly hard for women, who thanklessly worked at home, in the fields - all the time”.

Kaipa Konyak, 34, from a local tribal organisation working to support the Konyak culture, said that the history would not be lost.

“Young people are proud of their warrior traditions and culture,” he said.

“We remember our roots and will strive to protect them while also securing our future with the best modern education and infrastructure.”

AFP

CLIMATE CHANGE, EL NINO DRIVE HOTTEST JUNE ON RECORD

The world saw its hottest June on record last month, the EU's climate monitoring service said Thursday, as climate change and the El Nino weather pattern looked likely to drive another scorching northern summer.

The EU monitor Copernicus also said preliminary data showed Tuesday last week was the hottest day ever recorded - beating the record set only the day before.

It's the latest in a series of records halfway through a year that has already seen a drought in Spain and fierce heat waves in China as well the United States.

"The month was the warmest June globally at just over 0.5 degrees Celsius above the 1991-2020

average, exceeding June 2019 - the previous record - by a substantial margin," the EU monitor said in a statement from its C3S climate unit.

Temperatures reached June records across northwest Europe while parts of Canada, the United States, Mexico, Asia and eastern Australia "were significantly warmer than normal", Copernicus noted.

On the other hand it was cooler than normal in western Australia, the western United States and western Russia, it said.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said "the situation we are witnessing now is the demonstration that climate change is out of control".

He reiterated his wish that "developed countries can get to net zero emissions as close as possi-



Beijing swelters in the summer heat. Photo: AFP

ble to 2040 and the emerging economies as close as possible to 2050”.

‘HOTTEST DAY EVER’

The tumbling records reflect the impact of global warming driven by greenhouse gases released from human activity.

Copernicus told AFP preliminary data showed a global average temperature of 17.03 C on Tuesday, beating another record of 16.88 C already set on Monday.

For June, Copernicus noted that sea surface temperatures were higher globally than any previous June on record, with “extreme marine heat waves” around Ireland, Britain and the Baltic.

Antarctic sea ice reached its lowest extent for June since satellite observations began, at 17 percent below average.

C3S scientist Julien Nicolas told AFP the June record was driven largely by “very warm ocean surface

temperatures” in the Pacific and Atlantic due to El Nino, a periodic warming phenomenon.

Marine heatwaves struck the Atlantic and low winds meant the warm surface did not mix with colder water deeper down.

“On top of that is this warming trend of the ocean absorbing 90 percent of heat released by human activity,” he added.

The global temperature was 0.53 C above the 30-year average at an average of 16.51C (61.72 degrees Fahrenheit), he calculated.

“June 2023 is way above the others. This is the kind of anomaly we are not used to,” Nicolas said.

Petteri Taalas, secretary-general of the UN’s World Meteorological Organization, warned on Monday that El Nino “will greatly increase the likelihood of breaking temperature records and triggering more extreme heat in many parts of the world and in the ocean.”

He urged governments “to mobilise preparations to limit the impacts on our health, our ecosystems and our economies.”

DEADLY HEAT WAVES

El Nino is a naturally occurring pattern that drives increased heat worldwide, as well as drought in some parts of the world and heavy rains elsewhere.

In addition, human activity - mainly the burning of fossil fuels - emits roughly 40 billion tonnes of planet-warming CO2 into the atmosphere every year.

As well as withering crops, melting glaciers and raising the risk of wildfires, higher-than-normal temperatures also cause health problems ranging from heatstroke and dehydration to cardiovascular stress.

In the United States, local officials said last week that at least 13 people died from an extreme heatwave in Texas and Louisiana.

China issued its highest-level heat alert for northern parts of the country as Beijing baked in temperatures around 40 degrees Celsius.

After a record hot June in Britain, water use restrictions were imposed in parts of southeastern England, and Scotland put regions on water scarcity alert.

The world has warmed an average of nearly 1.2 C since the mid-1800s, unleashing extreme weather including more intense heatwaves, more severe droughts in some areas and storms made fiercer by rising seas.

AFP



MYANMAR: MILITARY'S OBSTRUCTION OF HUMANITARIAN AID COULD BE INTERNATIONAL CRIME

Myanmar's military is killing civilians, destroying food and homes, and keeping the most vulnerable from receiving lifesaving aid, according to a new report from the UN human rights office (OHCHR).

The chief of OHCHR's Myanmar team, James Rodehaver, explained that since their February 2021 coup, the country's military rulers have been instilling a "climate of fear" to subjugate the civilian population, restricting aid access and using "all means" at their

disposal to clamp down on civil society.

BRUTAL TACTICS

He said the military's tactics had included the use of heavy weaponry on civilian areas and airstrikes, the burning of villages, and the use of landmines to prevent those forced to flee from returning home.

"Another thing that they have done regularly has been to burn food stores, crops and seed stores, to destroy medical facilities and to target medical



Photo: UN News

workers.”

The military imposed further restrictions on humanitarian assistance in the aftermath of deadly Cyclone Mocha in May, Mr. Rodehaver said.

Over 17.6 million people, or a third of the overall population of Myanmar need aid.

OHCHR Spokesperson Ravina Shamdasani briefing in Geneva on the comprehensive human rights update for Myanmar, stressed that intentional obstruction or denial of humanitarian assistance may amount to serious violations of international law.

AID WORKERS TREATED AS OPPONENTS

“The military has operated as if those provid-

ing aid are helping those opposed to their rule, rather than respecting their need for protection and facilitating their access and assistance to the civilian population in a time of crisis”, she said.

She cited the military’s “four cuts” strategy outlined in the report “to kill and injure thousands of civilians while destroying goods and infrastructure necessary for survival, including food, shelter, and medical centres”.

An estimated 1.5 million people have been internally displaced, and approximately 60,000 civilian structures have reportedly been burnt or destroyed, she said.

Between the overthrow of the civilian Government and April 2023, credible sources have verified that at least 3,452 people had died at the hands of the military and its affiliates, and 21,807 individuals had been arrested.

DRAMATICALLY WORSE

“Notably, our report says the security situation has dramatically worsened for humanitarian workers since the coup. Aid providers are consistently exposed to risks of arrest, harassment or other mistreatment, or even death”, Ms. Shamdasani added.

“In the context of armed conflicts, intentional obstruction or denial of humanitarian assistance may further constitute war crimes such as wilful killing, torture and other degrading treatment, starvation, and collective punishment”, she warned.

Intentional denial can also constitute crimes against humanity, she continued, such as murder, “extermination, torture and other inhumane acts, or persecution, when committed in the context of a widespread or systematic attack against a civilian population.”

Courtesy of UN News





Photo: Zink Hein

MON STATE

Bridge on Yangon to Malamyine highway bombed

Defence forces destroyed two-thirds of a bridge over the Bilin River on the Yangon to Mawlamyine highway in Mon State's Thaton Township on 29 June.

At around 4:00 a.m. on 29 June, mines were detonated on the Kyone Eait Bridge (a.k.a. the Bo P'lay Bridge), which crosses the Bilin River in Bilin Township's Shwe Yaung Pya Village Tract.

The explosion killed a pedestrian and damaged three cars. It also destroyed large sections of the bridge.

"People who live near to the bridge said that there was an explosion at 4:00 a.m..... When the bridge broke three cars also fell [off the bridge]," a Bilin resident said to Mizzima.

Traffic jams started building up at the bridge at around 6:00 a.m. as cars took turns to use the single remaining carriageway on the bridge.

A Bilin defence force member said: "We heard that family and passenger vehicles are allowed to cross once they reduce their load, even though it is unsafe to use the bridge."

The bridge was blown up by fighters from Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) Brigade 1 and local people's defence force (PDF) fighters. Their aim was to disrupt junta convoys and prevent them from supplying reinforcements to other areas, according to a local defence force member.

He said: "Our revolutionary force specially targeted the military convoy. We are going to speed up our military operations. We have issued a statement warning the public. We need cooperation from the public."

Later, at around 9:00 a.m., when staff from the Ministry of Construction came to inspect the damage to the bridge, a defence force drone dropped a bomb on them that killed two people and injured at least a further five, according to Major Saw Kyaw Myint, the Karen National Union (KNU) liaison officer for Thaton District.

The Kyone Eait Bridge is on the Yangon to

Mawlamyine to Hpa An highway that the junta regularly uses to transport supplies and reinforcements to its Southeastern Military Command in Mawlamyine and its Coastal Regional Military Command in Myeik.

KARENNI STATE

Western Demoso IDP Camp in Karenni State hit by airstrikes

A family of three was seriously injured in junta airstrikes on an internally displaced people (IDP) camp in western Demoso Town, Karenni State, on 4 July.

The IDP family, A 33-year-old woman, a 27-year-old man and a two-year-old child were all seriously injured in the airstrikes on the camp where over 1,000 IDPs are sheltering.

“Thousands of people are staying at the IDP camp. Fortunately, only one family was hit by a shell. They have been seriously injured, but none of their injuries are life-threatening. They are being given medical treatment at our clinic. Even though we have dug bomb shelters for the IDPs, some do not get there in time to take shelter because the aircraft are so fast,” said a press officer from Demoso People’s Defence Force (PDF).

There were three airstrikes on the IDP camp, two at around 2:00 a.m. and a third at around 4:00 a.m. The attacks also destroyed a school and some tents in the IDP camp.

Though there has been heavy fighting in the Karenni towns of Bawlakhe, Ywar Thit, and Mese there had been no recent fighting in Demoso Town where the IDP camp is located.

The Demoso PDF officer said: “The [IDP] camp is far from any ongoing fighting. Since there has been fighting in Hpasaung and Mese towns I think they [the junta] have reinforced their forces there. Now, the Military Council is purposefully attacking civilians areas.”

Currently, there are about 100,000 IDPs sheltering in western Demoso Town.

KAREN STATE

Junta artillery kills two, injures two in Karen State

In Karen State two people were killed in Kyain Seik Gyi Township and two people were injured in Myawaddy Township, by junta artillery fire, according to a 2 July Karen National Union (KNU) statement.

On the evening of 30 June junta artillery fired into Tagay Village, in Kyain Seik Gyi Township killing a villager.

“Two shells landed outside Tagay Village, which locals call Takukhee Village. One resident was killed. We had not heard about any fighting [in the area] at that time, they were just firing heavy artillery into civilian areas”, a source from Kyain Seik Gyi Township said to Mizzima.

Later in Tagay Village, on the morning of 2 July, a 120mm mortar shell fired by Infantry Battalion 283 based in Kyain Seik Gyi Township landed on a rubber farm and killed a man in his 40s.

Also, on 30 June, junta Infantry Battalion 275 fired four 120mm mortar shells into Maekanal Village-Tract, in Myawaddy Township, injuring a 76-year-old woman and a 10-year-old child.

The KNU statement said the artillery fire had also destroyed properties in Kyain Seik Gyi and Myawaddy townships.

Both Kyain Seik Gyi Township and Myawaddy Township are in the area controlled by KNU Brigade 6.

Three people, including a 13-year-old child, were killed and another 17 were injured by junta artillery fire in the KNU Brigade 6 area, during June 2023.



INDIA'S DEFENCE SECRETARY HOLDS BILATERAL TALKS IN MYANMAR

India's Defence Secretary Giridhar Aramane concluded his two-day visit to Myanmar on 1 July, where he engaged in comprehensive discussions with officials on various aspects of bilateral defense ties and the border situation between the two countries, reported *The Pioneer*, an English-language daily newspaper in India.

The visit presented an ideal opportunity for India's Defence Secretary Aramane to address India's security concerns with the senior leadership of Myanmar, as highlighted by India's defense ministry officials. The discussions primarily revolved around key issues such as maintaining peace and tranquility in the border areas, curbing illegal cross-border movements, and combating transnational crimes, including drug trafficking and smuggling.

Both sides reiterated their commitment to preventing their respective territories from being exploited for activities detrimental to each other's interests. It is crucial for India to closely monitor developments in Myanmar, given the direct impact they have on the bordering regions.

The shared border between India and Myanmar spans approximately 1,700 kilometers.

As part of his visit, India's Defence Secretary Aramane held meetings with various high-ranking officials. He paid a courtesy call to Myanmar junta chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing in Nay Pyi Taw, and met with Myanmar's Defence Minister General Mya Tun Oo.

In additional information, a group of Myanmar activists has requested French President Emmanuel Macron to discuss concerns regarding the sale of arms and technology from India to the Myanmar junta during Prime Minister Modi's upcoming visit to France.

Justice For Myanmar (JFM), a group of activists, has urged Macron to raise the issue and impose conditions on the export of French arms and technology to India, ensuring that they are not indirectly supporting the Indian government's exports to Myanmar.

India's Prime Minister Modi will be the chief guest at the Bastille Day Parade in Paris, France, on July 14, and the two countries are expected to strengthen defense ties during the visit.

Proudly Presented by Mizzima Media Group

MIZZIMA TV APP

Mizzima TV delivers the best Video experience anywhere, anytime.

NOW WATCH LIVE!



You can instantly watch Live TV, subscribe to watch your favorite TV episodes, VOD of different genre & more on your mobile device.

Get the app free!

- NEWS
- CJ NEWS
- LIVE TV
- MOVIES
- SERIES
- MAGAZINE
- PODCASTS



SCAN QR WITH PHONE CAMERA OR SCANNER APP FOR DOWNLOAD



Mizzimaburmese.com

Mizzima.com

Mizzima TV app

Mizzima Free to Air Satellite Channels

Mizzima English Weekly Magazine

Mizzima Facebook Pages

Mizzima Radio

Mizzima 108FM Radio

FOREIGN GARMENT COMPANIES TO EXIT MYANMAR AFTER WORKER ARRESTS



Protesting Yangon workers. File photo by AFP

Two foreign garment manufacturers have announced they are leaving Myanmar after workers were arrested by junta authorities.

JAKO brand says it is exiting Myanmar after their workers were arrested.

Germany-based sportswear company JAKO is being manufactured by SUN Apparel Myanmar Co. Ltd. at Malikha Street, Industrial Zone No. 5, Hlaingtharyar Township, Yangon Region. The company announced that they were arranging to halt their operations in Myanmar after two workers from SUN Apparel were arrested by the junta.

A senior official from the company said that they had to make this hard decision by taking into consideration the welfare of the company workers.

A JAKO Company official told the garment industry watchdog media EcoTextile News that they stopped placing job orders in Myanmar and they had a plan to withdraw their work from the country.

JAKO Company official Heiko Rumm said that the company was standing with the workers and they would maintain the long-term relations with their partner businesses in the country.

The Military Council arrested some Yangon workers who asked for a wage hike at the end of June by accusing them of having contacts and cooperation with unlawful organizations and two of the arrested workers are from the SUN Apparel garment factory.

Similarly, another branded fashion house Zara

announced recently that the Inditex Company which was manufacturing their apparel would exit Myanmar.

The Military Council arrested 10 workers on 14 June and some of them are from the garment factories which are manufacturing Zara and JAKO brand garments.

The EU called for respecting labour rights and abiding by the International Labour Organization Charter.

The garment factories are manufacturing the garments ordered by companies in Europe and US in May this year. The Myanmar Garment Manufacturers Association says that they got more job orders than usual.

On the other hand, trade unions say that labour rights were being violated in the garment industry.

Myanmar garment industry watchdog media EcoTextile reported that Myanmar could export garments worth US\$3.3 billion in the period from January to September in 2022.

Myanmar could export garments worth nearly US\$400 million in April this year alone.

The labour rights organizations say that there were rampant incidents of forced overtime, refusal to increase basic wages, firing trade union members from work, and other issues in the Myanmar garment industry.

RUSSIA TO BUILD SMALL-SCALE NATURAL FERTILIZER PLANTS IN FOUR REGIONS INCLUDING YANGON



Photo: Sandy Zebua

Negotiations are underway for building natural fertilizer plants in Yangon, Naypyitaw, Ayeyarwady and Magway Regions in joint operations with Russian companies.

Myanmar Union Minister of Cooperatives and Rural Development Hla Moe had discussions with the country representative of Russia Ross Congress Investment Fund in Myanmar and LLC Souznedra Chairman Mr. Artemiy Alimov on 3 July.

They discussed the building of three small-scale mobile fertilizer factories and rural development matters and also discussed methods, technology and joint operation programmes for the building of natural fertilizer factories in Naypyitaw, Yangon, Ayeyarwady and Magway Regions.

Myanmar Petrochemical Enterprise under the Ministry of Electricity and Energy invited Expression of Interest (EOI) for privatization of four fertilizer man-

ufacturing plants. These four factories are No. 1 Fertilizer Factory (Salay), No. 2 Fertilizer Factory (Kyunchaung), No. 4 Fertilizer Factory (Myaungtagar) and No. 5 Fertilizer Factory (Kangyidaung).

The prices of chemical fertilizers used in agriculture fell in the market slightly in comparison with last year but some predict higher prices at cultivation time.

It is learned from the Land Utilization Section under the Department of Agriculture that 590 companies applied for fertilizer import licenses to meet the demand of agriculture in the country.

Myanmar imported over 2.2 million tonnes of chemical fertilizers in FY 2022-23 and most of them were nitrogen, urea and compound fertilizers.

'NO SECOND CHANCE' TO SAVE SRI LANKA, CENTRAL BANKER WARNS

The man charged with clawing Sri Lanka out of bankruptcy says he had warned about economic calamity years before it hit - and was pressed into retirement for his troubles.

Central bank chief Nandalal Weerasinghe was asked to return to the island nation last year to help steer it through a financial collapse that triggered months of food shortages, petrol queues and nightly blackouts.

The 63-year-old says his mandate coincides with Sri Lanka's one final opportunity to rescue itself from a cycle of economic shocks that stretches back decades.

"There's no excuse this time, no second chance, we have to get it right this time," he told AFP at his Colombo office this week.

"This is where I think crisis is an opportunity."

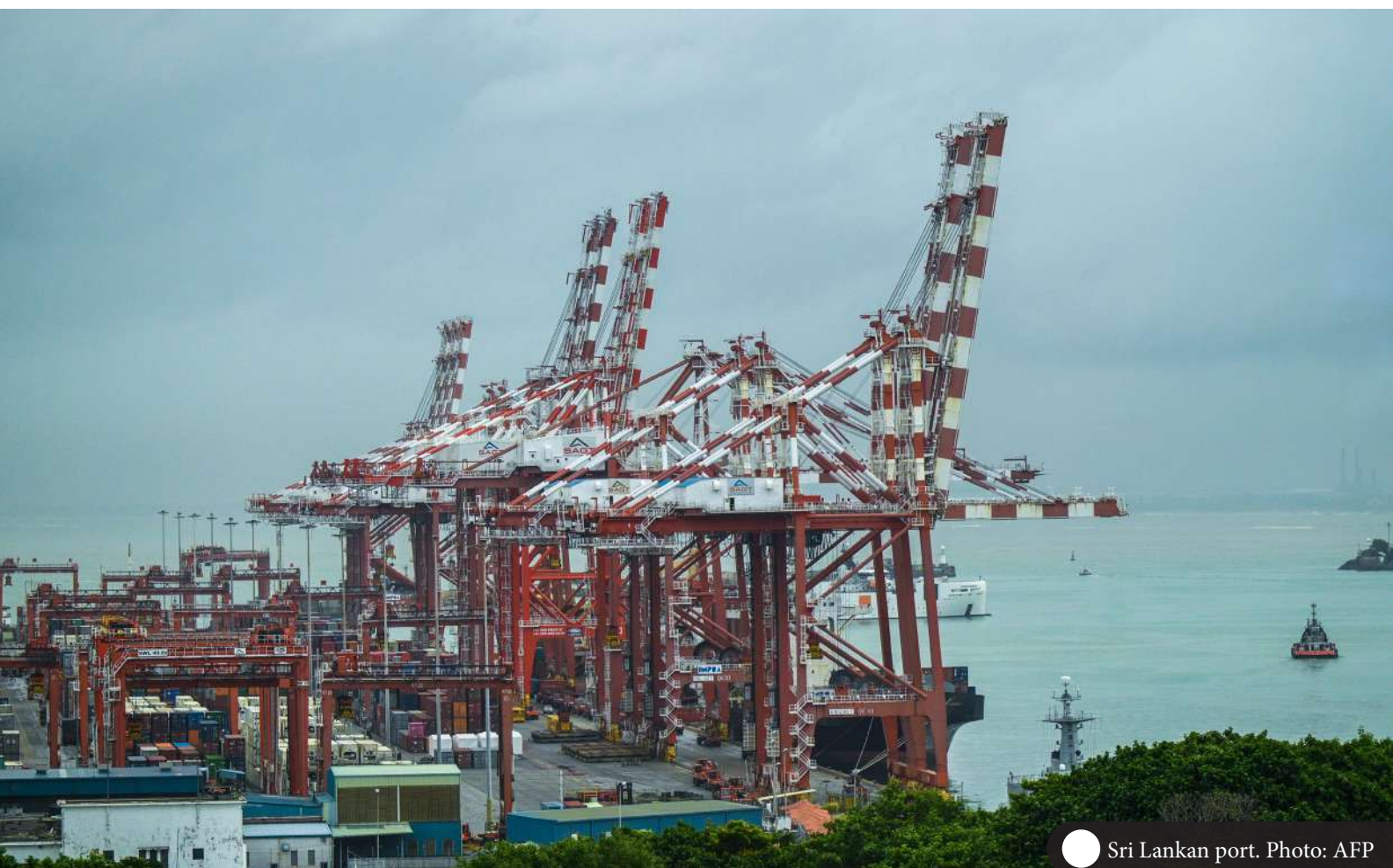
Weerasinghe was the Central Bank of Sri Lanka's number two when Gotabaya Rajapaksa was elected president in 2019 on populist promises of generous tax cuts.

Government debt soared as Rajapaksa pursued an unorthodox policy of printing exorbitant amounts of money while holding down exchange and interest rates to spur growth.

"As the senior deputy governor, I always raised concerns," Weerasinghe said.

But with Rajapaksa's administration steam-rolling objections from him and other senior central bankers, Weerasinghe said he felt he had no option but to take early retirement.

"Obviously I saw if those policies continued in



● Sri Lankan port. Photo: AFP

that way... we'll end up in a situation that I said at that time was exactly what happened," he added.

Weerasinghe had decamped for a quiet life in Australia, spending time with his children and hitting the golf course five days a week, when Rajapaksa asked him to come back and helm the central bank.

He returned to a country in chaos, its currency in freefall and the government days from defaulting on its \$46 billion foreign debt.

The COVID-19 pandemic had dealt a hammer blow to already precarious public finances, as the island's lucrative tourism industry shuttered and remittances from Sri Lankans working abroad dried up.

Foreign exchange reserves had almost been exhausted, leaving importers unable to buy goods necessary to keep the economy functioning.

Supermarket shelves were empty, long lines snaked from fuel stations, and thermal power stations were forced to ration electricity for 13 hours each day.

By July, Rajapaksa had fled the country after months of protests demanding his resignation for mismanaging the crisis.

'CHINA ON BOARD'

Rajapaksa's successor, Ranil Wickremesinghe, has sought to repair the nation's finances through a \$2.9 billion International Monetary Fund bailout.

The rescue package commits Sri Lanka to an austerity regime of steep tax hikes and an end to generous consumer utility subsidies, both of which have proven deeply unpopular.

Its passage was reportedly held up for months when China - Sri Lanka's largest bilateral creditor - resisted agreeing to a haircut on its loans.

Chinese debt has been controversial politically, with Rajapaksa and his elder brother Mahinda -- himself a former president -- accused of taking Beijing's money to finance costly vanity projects.

Weerasinghe said the delays to the IMF package were understandable because Beijing was a relatively "new player" to bilateral lending.

"China is fully on board, and agreed to support Sri Lanka and help Sri Lanka to come out of this crisis," he said.

'END OF THE STORY'

Last year brought Sri Lanka's worst economic downturn in its 75-year history as an independent nation, with GDP contracting 7.8 percent and inflation hitting 70 percent at its peak.

But the island's tea- and tourism-dependent economy is no stranger to shocks, with foreign exchange shortages triggering recessions and government rationing of consumer goods numerous times in prior decades.

Sri Lanka had already gone to the IMF cap in hand 16 times before last year, but failed to stick with agreed-upon reforms, giving it a serious credibility gap.

Weerasinghe said the country had two choices this time around: if it sticks to its current IMF programme, its economy would return to normal within "two to four years".

If it did not, Sri Lanka would no longer be indulged if it fell off the wagon and returned to its spend-thrift ways at the first sign of stability, he warned.

"This time, the 17th time with the IMF, is different," he said.

"If you are trying to go back to another programme, that will be most difficult, and I think that will be the end of the story."

AFP

Penrose Thitsa

MYANMAR ACTIVISTS URGE FRENCH TO ADDRESS INDIA-MYANMAR ARMS TRADE DURING MODI'S VISIT, HIGHLIGHTING CONCERNS OVER FRENCH INDIRECT SUPPORT

A group of activists from Myanmar has urged French President Emmanuel Macron to address the issue of arms and technology trade between India and the Myanmar junta in Modi's upcoming visit to France, reported The Wire.

Justice For Myanmar (JFM) has called upon Macron to deal with the issue of Indian arms and weapons technology being sold to the military regime in Myanmar. They have further urged him to impose a condition that French arms and technology will only be exported to India if such practices cease.

During his visit, Indian Prime Minister Modi will serve as the chief guest at the Bastille Day Parade in Paris on July 14, and it is anticipated that the two nations will enhance their defense relations.

JFM has released at least two reports outlining the business dealings of the Indian public sector undertaking Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) with the junta. According to JFM, the Indian government is "equipping and profiting from the junta as it commits acts of terror against the people."

In the open letter to Macron, the organization said, "We request that you raise concerns regarding the sale of arms, dual use goods and technology from India to the Myanmar junta with Prime Minister Modi during his upcoming visit to France. We also request that you require India to ban further exports of arms, dual use goods and technology to the junta as a condition on the export of French arms and technology to India."

The open letter expressed concern that France might inadvertently support the Indian government's export of arms and dual-use goods and technology to Myanmar through its defense cooperation with India, potentially due to links to India's domestic arms production. The letter emphasized the importance of implementing sufficient safeguards to prevent such indirect support.

"Our request for France to take action on Indian arms sales to Myanmar is consistent with the recommendations of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar in his reports on arms, and UN General Assembly resolution A/75/L.85, which 'calls upon all member States to prevent the flow of arms into Myanmar,'" said the open letter.

Proudly Presented by Mizzima Media Group

MIZZIMA TV APP

Mizzima TV delivers the best Video experience anywhere, anytime.

NOW WATCH LIVE!



You can instantly watch Live TV, subscribe to watch your favorite TV episodes, VOD of different genre & more on your mobile device.

Get the app free!



NEWS

CJ NEWS

LIVE TV

MOVIES

SERIES

MAGAZINE

PODCASTS

SCAN QR WITH PHONE CAMERA OR SCANNER APP FOR DOWNLOAD



Mizzimaburmese.com

Mizzima.com

Mizzima TV app

Mizzima Free to Air Satellite Channels

Mizzima English Weekly Magazine

Mizzima Facebook Pages

Mizzima Radio

Mizzima 108FM Radio



CYCLONE AFTERMATH

A statue of Buddha looks out across the sea in Sittwe surrounded by damaged buildings, hit by Cyclone Mocha.

Photo: AFP

IN FOCUS



CHASING THE HISTORY OF FLYING 'THE HUMP' AND THE BURMA FRONT IN WWII



One of the American aircraft that flew The Hump during World War II. Photo: Wikipedia

British historian Robert Lyman has been on a lengthy mission to document the Burma Front of World War II and the stories of valour shown by the American airmen who flew “The Hump” to deliver supplies to the Chinese as they battled the forces of Imperial Japan.

“I’m trying very hard to get away from it, but it draws me back all every time, because it’s absolutely fascinating. It’s an area and a part of the war that very few people really know much about,” historian Lyman says, describing to Insight Myanmar for a podcast the 35 years he’s spent researching the Burma Front of World War II.

Check out the Insight Myanmar podcast with Mr Lyman here: <https://insightmyanmar.org/complete-shows/2023/6/25/episode-173-revisiting-the-aluminum-trail>

LIFETIME QUEST

After completing a PhD on Field Marshall Slim, the British commander of the Fourteenth Army who successfully fought back the Japanese occupation of Burma, Lyman became intrigued by the ethnic hill tribes living in the impacted areas, particularly the Naga who currently live on both the Myanmar and In-

dia side of the India-Myanmar border. This combined interest led to the publication of the book “Among The Headhunters”, in which this conversation is centered.

Lyman, himself, is a former officer in the British Army, and the author of over a dozen books.

The story Lyman tells is simple enough, notes Insight Myanmar: a American C-47 bound for China goes down in the Naga Hills, and a race to get the survivors to safety begins. Though obviously an adventurous plot, it is the details around this tale which stand out, and Lyman goes into the many layers underlying how it unfolded.

He sets the stage by unraveling a pivotal chapter in history: the Japanese invasion of Burma. Their main objective was to block the Burma Road, a crucial supply line for Allied forces. The Japanese army accomplished their goal in April 1942, which caused the Americans to become concerned about the perilous fate of their Chinese allies and the implications for the wider war in Asia if Chinese forces should fail. “It was very important to keep the Japanese occupied in China, and the way to do that is to feed and fuel and arm the Chinese so that they can hold down the Japanese,” Lyman explains. “If you take China out of the

war, you've got a very different dynamic now operating in the Pacific, and you have to deal with very large numbers of Japanese infantry."

INTERESTING VIPS

However, hidden beneath the surface of this strategic choice lay a web of political turmoil. In the middle of it all was General Joseph Stilwell, a staunch critic of the China plan, arguing that a significant portion of the American supplies dispatched to China were being hoarded by Nationalist forces for the imminent Chinese Civil War, instead of used in combat against the Japanese. Yet Stilwell, who was known by the moniker "Vinegar Joe" due to his irascible temperament, found himself outmaneuvered in the debate by influential figures like American aviator Claire Chennault, a charismatic and forceful communicator. Chennault commanded the Flying Tigers, whose daring involvement in the resupply missions swayed the tide of opinion. And so, in this clash of personalities and conflicting interests, careful discernment succumbed to brash determination. But now came the harder part: implementing the plan.

"Only the Americans could have done this," Lyman explains of the dramatic flights planned over the eastern portion of the Himalayas, which came to be known as The Hump. "I mean, I'm serious, it really was quite an extraordinary piece of thinking that went behind it! It was probably one of the greatest logistical exercises ever undertaken in human history." Lyman also believes that the "can-do" American spirit displayed here also likely reveals why the Allies were ultimately able to prevail.

"We can deliver, we can solve these problems," he notes, describing the American attitude at the time. "Nothing's too big for us! The roads are gone, so hey, we'll fly everything and by air... and they jolly well did."

DARING MISSIONS

Navigating the Himalaya's treacherous skies, pilots had to wear oxygen masks on their daring missions, which wove around 17,000 foot peaks and dodged Japanese fighters determined to bring them down. Against all odds, these intrepid aviators flew a staggering 650,000 tons of vital supplies to Chinese forces over 900 harrowing days! However, this extraordinary feat came at a tremendous price. The route they traveled earned the haunting moniker, "The Aluminum Trail," a chilling homage to all the planes that never

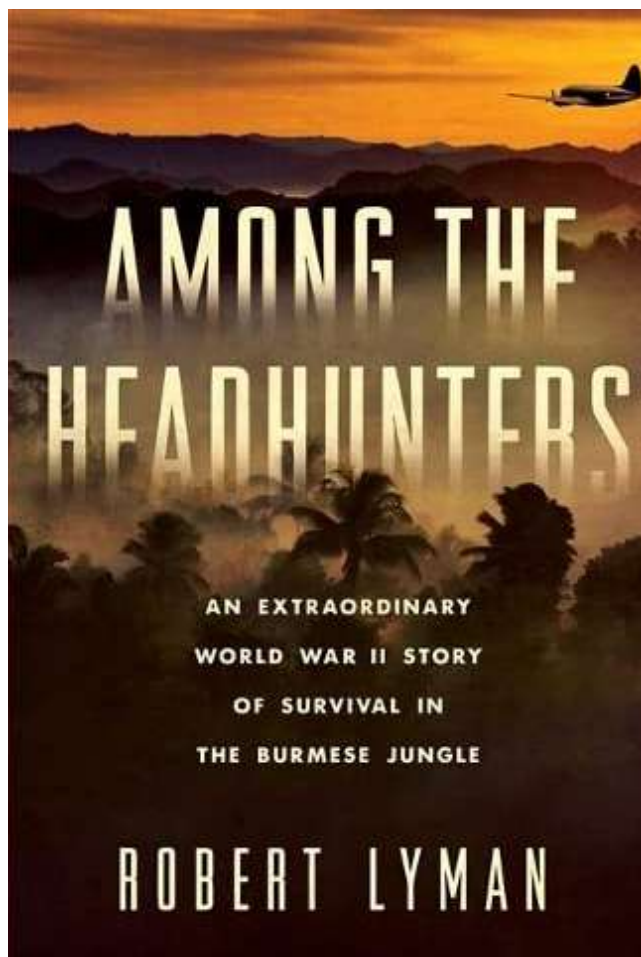
returned home.

Yet as compelling as this story may be, Lyman admits he wouldn't have gone further with his research if the flight crew of the crashed plane had been ordinary. "It's quite extraordinary, actually, you wouldn't have ever thought about putting all of these people in the same aircraft," he says.

"That's a fun thing for me. If these were just ordinary soldiers, then I probably wouldn't have given this subject another thought." He recounts just some of those involved in the crash that became the subject of his book: Duncan Lee, a direct relative of Robert E. Lee, who was later revealed to have been a Soviet spy; Eric Sevareid, one of the most respected American journalists at the time; Jack Davies, the political attaché to General Stilwell who was on his way to meet Chiang Kai-Shek; and Bill Stanton, a member of the Board of Economic Warfare.

INSIGHT INTO THE NAGA

Having described the principle Western actors, Lyman turns his attention to the Naga, an ethnic group spread out along the borderlands of Burma and India. Naga origins are believed to be from Papua New Guinea, and to stretch back a millennium, and they became





Robert Lyman visiting a site from the days of the Burma Front. Photo: Robert Lyman.

subdivided into a great many tribes. Their total population is estimated at about 200,000, and includes at least 17 distinct languages. When the British Empire eventually expanded into the Naga Hills, conflict soon developed.

The Naga are perhaps best known for being headhunters, a facet of their culture that Lyman delved deeper into. “Headhunters provide a spiritual benefit to the recipients,” he explains. “If you chop someone’s head off, even if it’s a child, you will receive the spiritual value inherent in that individual.” However, it wasn’t just headhunting that made the British sensibilities recoil: some Naga tribes were also slaveowners. “A village would often capture men, women and children out in the fields or collecting water, and they would use them as slaves. Once when they thought it was opportune, they would kill them and take their heads and stick their heads on the head poles that adorn the entrances to the villages. So slavery and headhunting were intertwined.”

Over time, as the British Empire began encroaching further into Naga territory, they became concerned that these Naga raids would have long-term, detrimental consequences for the Raj; that is, it would

symbolize the inability of the giant colonial power to ensure peace in the vast and expanding territory it was acquiring. Although some Naga tribes actually sought out the British and paid them a tax in exchange for security, others avoided them altogether while persisting with their custom of raiding, headhunting and slavery. This led to a series of punitive expeditions in which the British trekked into hostile territory to burn the villages responsible for these raids.

These forays were carried out by administrators who were part of the Indian Civil Service (ICS), and Lyman goes into detail about the men who filled these positions over the years. “Many of us have completely erroneous view about the nature of the colonial administration,” Lyman notes. “The colonial administrators in the hills tended almost exclusively to be significant anthropologists in their own right. They were there to study the people, and they wanted to preserve the cultures of the people.” He explains how these administrators were concerned that these repeating cycles of violence limited the ability of Naga people to advance. “If you want endless peace, you have to set up mechanism structures to enable that to happen,” he notes, describing the British rationale for these punitive missions as an attempt to restore order.

OUTSIDE INFLUENCES

Lyman goes on to note that there were two additional groups of Westerners who descended on Naga lands: American missionaries, and the East India Company. The East India Company’s primary purpose was trade, and they started growing tea as early as the 1840s in Assam. Located in the foothills of Naga territory, many of these tea plantations were soon subject to Naga raids. But the Company couldn’t do much about it, and so the incursions continued, until the British Crown claimed the territory. “There’s a very significant change here in 1858,” Lyman explains, “[it goes] from a commercial sort of freewheeling commercial enterprise where the primary focus of life and of law and the structures of social existence were built around trade, and all of a sudden under the Raj, that the world was turned upside down, and the preeminent priorities were about civil order.”

As for the American missionaries, they arrived as early as the 1830s, but came in greater numbers after the American Civil War. “There seemed to be an American revitalized sense of itself, which sent lots of evangelical Baptist missionaries to places all over the Indo Pacific, including Nagaland.” They were wildly

successful, as Nagas are 97% Christian today. However, the missionaries soon clashed with the ICS administrators, who were dismayed about how rapidly American influence was affecting traditional Naga culture, from clothing to Christian hymns. “The British colonial administration in the Naga Hills, you might describe it today as being ‘woke,’ because it was desperately keen on preserving the characteristics of an ancient culture that modernity was threatening to strip away.”

With the context and the principle characters adequately fleshed out, Lyman returns to the tale of the plane crash. While few onboard would have known much of this Naga history, there was certainly a fear of being captured by either the Japanese, or Naga tribes that were not supporting the Allied effort. The crash survivors would later learn that the site of the crash occurred near Pangsha, a Naga town that, as luck would have it, had been the target of two especially notorious punitive missions by the British, in 1936 and 1937, respectively. The Pangsha Naga were known as some of the most fearful warriors of the entire region.

DROPPING FROM THE SKY

Although some of them would have encountered white men before during British assaults on their territory from a decade earlier, few had any conception of the modern world outside their village.

“All of a sudden, a whole bunch of white men come falling on top of your village in Pangsha!” Lyman describes, painting the scene. “You can imagine that they had a number of choices in their heads: what do we do with these people? Who are they? Are they angels? Or they come from the gods? Are they a gift to us?”

Ultimately, Lyman believes that their extreme strangeness and the modernity they represented was an advantage, causing the villagers to be in a state of shock more than anything else. They were enthralled by everything from the parachute fabric to the empty tin cans, and fights broke out among the Naga to claim these discarded items. “I think we can’t underestimate the dramatic cultural discombobulation of the Pangshaites,” he says, “And in many respects, I think this probably explains why they behaved so benevolently to the survivors of the air crash.”

The survivors were given shelter in local villages, and American transport planes managed to get them further supplies, while a ground expedition was sent out to find them. Other than the co-pilot who was

killed on impact, all the others survived. “The triumph of the story is the fact that both American survivors and Naga Pangshaites, actually were able to communicate to each other at levels of their base humanity, that enabled our both sides to survive,” he says in summary.

SADNESS OF CURRENT-DAY MYANMAR

Sadly, this sense of shared humanity is missing almost entirely from the current conflict in Myanmar.

For this, Lyman is equally critical of colonial mapmakers as he is of the many disastrous decades of Bamar rule. As for the former, he notes how “it’s quite hilarious when you look at their map nowadays [of the Naga Hills], there’s no rhyme or reason to a lot of it!” He describes how this region was never adequately mapped by the British-run Survey of India, and that World War II put a permanent stop to whatever effort was there. So when formal borders were drawn, “maps just didn’t exist.” The end result was that tribes were subsumed haphazardly into either India and Burma without any real understanding of the nations they suddenly became a part of. And to complicate matter further, some Naga preferred to stay under British rule.

As for the Bamar, he notes that the government should have been working towards establishing “a nation of all the people of the hilltribes.” Here, Lyman sees parts of the British colonial administration as something that modern day Nay Pyi Daw should aspire to. “You have to create the systems and structures and processes to enable a nation to grow, and you’re never going to do that in Myanmar if you just beat up the Chins or the Karens or if you if you utilize violence,” he notes.

“The really tragic thing about Myanmar is that the government doesn’t seem to understand that every time they use violence... they simply create more warriors... They’re not doing anything to create a long peace! It’s very difficult to impose a set of structures that will enable peace to grow.

And Myanmar needs to do that. If Myanmar wants peace, if it wants to create a national polity and a national identity, and there are very good ways of doing it. But stamping on and causing violence against the people in the hilltribes is not the way to do it.”

Check out the Insight Myanmar podcast with Mr Lyman here: <https://insightmyanmar.org/complete-shows/2023/6/25/episode-173-revisiting-the-aluminum-trail>



Mizzima TV

Be Different

FREE TO AIR **DIGITAL TV CHANNEL**

Proudly broadcast by Mizzima Media Group

