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WILL MYANMAR JUNTA REMOVE RED TAPE BLOCKING AID?

With all the fanfare the illegal Myanmar junta is currently putting on in a desperate effort to hang on to power, will they remove the red tape blocking permission to local and foreign humanitarian aid organizations to allow them to help those in need?

In the wake of the devastating Cyclone Mocha that hit shore on 14 May, the situation for many who were seriously affected remains dire.

As of 31 July, there were no indications that the Myanmar authorities had loosened up their restrictions on international and local humanitarian aid delivery permission.

Despite meetings between representatives of the UN agencies and the Naypyidaw authorities, no go-ahead has been forthcoming.

Is this a case of déjà vu? In 2008, in the wake of Cyclone Nargis, the then military regime did themselves no favours by blocking or controlling the flow of aid to the cyclone victims following a storm that killed over 138,000 people. Cyclone Mocha caused less damage and alerts to citizens and storm preparedness helped keep the total casualty toll down to about 140 people. But the attitude

of the generals smacks of Cyclone Nargis disinterest.

Post Cyclone Mocha, the junta has once again showed its disdain for the people of Myanmar. The generals have been using aid as a “weapon” by only officially allowing small amounts of aid to communities and administrations that kowtow to the junta. Aid has been delivered by local and foreign aid organizations but not at the level needed – two-and-a-half months after the storm hit.

The most pressing needs appear to revolve around IDPs in Rakhine State, many of whom have had problems rebuilding their damaged homes. Of particular concern are the living conditions of Rohingya IDPs.

It is unclear at this stage whether the junta will use August 1 past by when the new Buddha statue was inaugurated and important announcements were made but so far there is no green light to the easing of humanitarian aid red tape.

EDITORIAL

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WEEKLY

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MIZZIMA MAGAZINE

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Cover photo of Aung San Suu Kyi by AFP





GETTING BY

A woman walks across a bridge in Yangon with caged birds that will be freed on payment.

Photo: AFP

IN FOCUS



EIGHT MISSING POLITICAL PRISONERS KILLED BY JUNTA

The junta has admitted to killing eight political prisoners who were in a group of 37 prisoners removed without explanation by the authorities from Daik-U Prison in Bago Region on 27 June.

According to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP), on 27 June, under the pretense of transferring them, the military removed political prisoners from Daik-U (Kyaiksakaw) Prison. 37 political prisoners have since gone missing. However, previously, when concerned families of the political prisoners inquired at Daik-U Prison, the prison authorities repeatedly denied the whereabouts of these prisoners.

On 7 July the family of Khant Linn Naing (aka Ko Khant, aka Let Wel), a political prisoner at Daik-U Prison received a letter from Daik-U Prison saying their son was dead.

On 8 July the family of another Daik-U prisoner, Pyae Phyo Hein (aka Ko Pyae), also received a letter saying he was dead.

The letters stated that while transferring prisoners from Daik-U Prison to Insein Prison, a transport vehicle suffered an accident. Seizing the opportunity, the two of them (Khant Linn Naing and Pyae Phyo Hein) were alleged to have attempted escape. As a result, they were killed by the security forces who fired “warning shots” at them in an attempt to recapture.

Despite the letters being dated as “June 29”, they arrived to the 2 families on only July 7 and July 8 respectively. However, the letter inside the envelope sent to Pyae Phyo Hein’s was in fact addressed to Khin Moe Moe, the wife of the still missing Aung Myo Thu who was still missing at the time.

This caused massive concern for Aung Myo Thu’s safety, fears which were confirmed when AAPP released a statement on 19 July saying that the families of a further six of the 37 prisoners who went missing from Daik-U Prison, including Aung Myo Thu’s family, had received letters saying that their imprisoned

relatives were dead.

The six were named as: Ko Zin Myint Tun (aka Yar Lay), Ko Wai Yan Lwin (aka Gyargyi), Ko Zin Win Htut, Ko Aung Myo Thu, Ko Bo Bo Win, and Ko Nay Aye.

AAPP has increasingly been documenting letters being sent to the families of these missing political prisoners informing them of their deaths and says such letters are not only an act of extrajudicial murder upon political prisoners, but severe psychological torture against family members of the political prisoners in question.

In a statement, AAPP said: “It is clear, these brazen murders of political prisoners in prisons violates not only domestic laws, but also international laws. Such killings mirror the unlawful and sadistic murders of the Jewish community by the fascist Nazi Germany during the World War II. Moreover, political prisoners removed from Daik-U Prison remain missing without a trace. It is currently unknown whether they are dead or alive. These actions overstep the procedures of prison, along with committing the heinous crime of unjust torture and illegal killings. This is also a blatant violation of the ASEAN Human Rights Convention.

“In Burma, the rule of law has been rendered void since the military junta coup by the supporting pillars of junta rule: the judges; soldiers; police; prison staff, who have intentionally perpetrated wrongful arrests, unlawful sentencings, illegal killings, torture and persecution of political prisoners in prisons, at the command of the junta.

“We, the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, strongly condemn such unlawful killings and torture, we will do our best to ensure justice for all political prisoners who have been wrongfully imprisoned.

“All perpetrating parties must be held accountable for these acts.”

41 MYANMAR JUNTA MEMBERS KILLED IN BAGO CLASH

41 Myanmar junta personnel were killed and a further 40 were injured in fighting in Kyauktaga Township, Bago Region, on 19 July, according to the National Unity Government’s (NUG) Ministry of Defense (MOD).

Two columns of 400 junta soldiers, police officers and members of the Pyu Saw Htee junta-aligned militia were attacked by Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) led defence forces at about 12:00 p.m. on 19 July, according to the NUG MOD statement.

It said that the fighting lasted for about one hour. 33 junta personnel, including army captains were killed on the battlefield and a further 8 died later in hospital, bringing the junta death toll from the fighting to 41. Another 40 junta personnel were injured and are being treated at Taungoo Hospital. One defence force fighter was also killed and another one was injured.

The casualty numbers were confirmed by Comrade Tin Oo, the second-in-command of the NUG’s Military Region No.2 (Bago).

INNTAKAW PDF PRODUCES DRONES BUT NEEDS FUNDS TO ARM THEM

Inntakaw People's Defence Force (PDF) earlier this month began producing drones to use in attacks against the junta, according to U Aung Naing Thu, the deputy commander of Inntakaw PDF.

He said that producing the drones had taken longer than expected because they had experienced difficulties in acquiring all the parts needed to build the drones.

He said: "It took us over a year to produce drones and we encountered many challenges. We failed numerous times, but we never gave up. The other challenges are technological. To produce drones we must learn the relevant technologies as we go along. Of course, purchasing the materials to build a drone presents financial challenges."

Though Inntakaw PDF can now successfully manufacture drones, it still needs to arm them and get ammunition before it can use them in combat.

To raise money for drone weapons and ammunition Inntakaw PDF is going to hold an online 45-day raffle called the Ammunition and Drones Campaign, from 15 July to 29 August.

U Aung Naing Thu said: "We require weapons and ammunition to operate the drones and we are facing difficulties in buying them, that is why we organised the [fundraising] campaign].

The fundraising campaign will sell 1,500 raffle tickets for 10,000 kyats each. Prizes include: jade plaques, Aung San Suu Kyi portraits, Salai Tin Maung Oo portraits, sculptures, laptops, phones, guitars, ear-phones, and Thai lottery tickets.

Currently, the homemade drones will only be used by Inntakaw PDF. They have also produced their own firearms which are currently being used by Inntakaw PDF and other local ethnic armed organisations (EAOs) and defence forces.

JUNTA DESTROYS ILLEGALLY SOLD LAND PLOTS IN MANDALAY'S PYIN OO LWIN TOWNSHIP

The junta has been using bulldozers to destroy plots of land in Pyin Oo Lwin Township in Mandalay Region since 22 July.

It is claimed that the land, located near to the Pyin Oo Lwin Center, east of the Pyin Oo Lwin-Lashio Road, had been illegally sold.

"Local people say brokers put up fencing and illegally sold the land as plots. So, the Military Council used bulldozers to demolish the boundary walls, but the houses have not yet been demolished. Furthermore, I've heard that the bulldozed land will be reclaimed by the Junta", said a Pyin Oo Lwin resident.

Pyin Oo Lwin Township Administration has issued multiple eviction notices to people living on the disputed land. It said that the homes on the plots were illegally built without permission, on agricultural land intended for farming.

The land brokers who sold the land, and who have now vanished, bought the agricultural land, divided it up into lots and put in residential amenities such as concrete roads, drains and lampposts before illegally selling the plots off as residential land.

A real estate agent from Mandalay explained: "The broker purchases an acre of agricultural land and sells it as a non-agricultural land plot. People with no knowledge of farmland then purchase it. The people who sold the land plot then run away. The brokers collaborate with officials from the Settlement and Land Records Department, the Mandalay City Development Committee, and the General Administration office."

More than 200 acres of agricultural land, forest land, and vacant land are reportedly being sold illegally in Pyin Oo Lwin Township.

USING THE LADY

**Myanmar junta's
chess moves seek
to maintain grip on power**





● Incarcerated civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi is being used as a pawn in the Myanmar junta's game. Photo: AFP

Right now, Aung San Suu Kyi is a pawn being played by the Myanmar junta in time of crisis, her immediate whereabouts uncertain.

Analysts suggest coup-maker Min Aung Hlaing seriously misjudged the Myanmar people when he grabbed power in 2021. And, now over two years on and facing a bitter armed pushback, he may well be hoping to dampen local disquiet and placate the angry West by trying to give the impression he is lessening the burden on The Lady.

Myanmar analysts were watching carefully as August 1 rolled around. Rumours were in the air about major changes to the status quo, even the idea of an interim government – a flashback to 2010 – being floated.

In the end, August 1 proved a damp squib and a failure of imagination. On the day before, the junta extended the State of Emergency another six months,

suggesting a delay to plans for an election. And there was an amnesty for over 7,000 prisoners, yet another gesture to placate the masses.

But it was Min Aung Hlaing's treatment of The Lady that raised eyebrows.

TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE

A key part of the strategy, as seen by Min Aung Hlaing, has been to return Myanmar's democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi to house arrest, and placing former president Win Myint under house arrest as well.

But there was outcry over the August 1 junta announcement that Aung San Suu Kyi's total 33-year sentence had been reduced by a mere six years, Win Myint's 12-year sentence reduced by four years.

Maybe Min Aung Hlaing thought this gesture or "pardon" would help his case, but many were not impressed.



Myanmar junta leader is struggling to hold on to power.
Photo: AFP

There have been concerns for the 78-year-old Nobel laureate's health as the junta moved her from prison to a government building last week.

"Six years imprisonment will be reduced," junta spokesman Zaw Min Tun told reporters after it was announced she had been pardoned in five cases.

Suu Kyi still faces 14 cases despite the pardon. Rights groups have condemned the legal battle against her as a sham designed to remove a popular democratic leader from the public eye.

Aung San Suu Kyi and former president Win Myint were the most high-profile recipients of the "pardon". Aung San Suu Kyi had five cases removed, whereas Win Myint had two.

David Mathieson, an independent analyst on Myanmar, told AFP that the partial pardon was a "cynical ploy to tell the world that there might be some kind of political resolution coming. When we know that there is not".

"I think they are just playing cruel games with a political prisoner," Mathieson said. "All the charges against her are absurd and shaving six years off 33 isn't mercy."

Human Rights Watch's Asia division deputy director Phil Robertson said the junta aimed "to create the impression of moderation and dialogue when in fact there really is none on offer".

Joe Freeman, a spokesman on Myanmar for Amnesty International, said the reductions showed the arbitrary nature of the junta's military courts.

"Those swept up in its clutches never know what may happen to them," he said.

Democracy activist Igor Blazevic claimed Aung San Suu Kyi's total sentence was "still a life sentence in disguise" and that the actions of the junta amounted to "hostage diplomacy".

BACK TO THE FUTURE

It is easy for the Myanmar Spring Revolutionaries to stamp on photos of Min Aung Hlaing and verbally slag him off for the ugly war he is waging against his own people.

But judging from the moves being played out, it would be wise not to underestimate his cunning,

even though some of his own generals may be unhappy with the missteps he has made in handling of the 30-month-old crisis.

What is starkly clear is that the Myanmar generals misjudged the 2010 opening up of Myanmar and moves to bring in "disciplined democracy" under the 2008 Constitution – a charter that sought to cement military control under a quasi-democratic system. The country opening and the rolling out of a red carpet for foreign investors sent a message that good times were here after decades of restricting military rule. The time-frame of 2010-20 proved a decade of change in which the young generation got used to a better way of life and grew more politically astute. This transition phase saw Aung San Suu Kyi freed from house arrest and move to pick up her father's leadership mantle, stepping once again into the political race, after the troubles of the 1980s-1990s. The result was the Myanmar people voted on mass for Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) in 2015 and yet again 2020.

Min Aung Hlaing and his generals underestimated the massive support and idolization of The Lady, after decades of military control. As a result of the 2020 election outcome, they sensed the country was slipping out of their hands, their exercise in "disciplined democracy" on the rocks, their personal wealth and position under threat.

Hence the February 2021 coup, executed under flimsy claims of election fraud. But this move to grab power backfired, prompting the rise of street protests that morphed into the aggressive Spring Revolution and National Unity Government (NUG) that threw any messages of compromise to the wind and plunged the Golden Land into crisis and civil war.

The underlying message from fighters and protestors was "now or never" as they turned to face a military that has abused their citizens for far too long.

This is still the message.

PUSH FOR 'SYSTEM CHANGE'

Just before the junta's announcement this week about Aung San Suu Kyi's sentence reduction, the NUG said the revolution cannot be derailed.

The Prime Minister of the NUG Mahn Win Khaing Than said that the anti-military dictatorship rev-

olution will not be changed even if Aung San Suu Kyi is released from her confinement. He was speaking at a meeting on 31 July, prior to the Myanmar junta's announcement of a reduction in Aung San Suu Kyi's sentence.

During the special meeting of National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC) and the NUG on 31 July, the prime minister said, "There have been some questions whether we will change our plan if Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was released from prison. Our response is 'No Way'. We will focus on the expectation of our nationals. It is believed that she also takes priority over the expectation of the people."

He said that a federal democratic union could not be established under the 2008 Constitution, and that the military dictatorship must be rooted out in collaborative efforts.

The meeting discussed recent political developments and cooperation with alliances, and it was attended by 72 delegates, including the acting president, ministers, deputy ministers of the NUG, and members of the NUCC.

Acting President Duwa Lashi La said in his opening remark, "We have a federal democracy charter with the targets to remove dictatorship and to establish a federal union. It is our political path. We should not fall into the trap of the military despite any challenges and threats."

Daw Khit Nyein Aye, a member of the NUCC said, "NUCC/NUG could overcome the obstacles, with keeping focus on the federal democracy charter. We expect not 'regime change', but 'system change'. The military is trying to divide us. However, our leaders and organizations need to move forward united."

NEXT MOVES?

With only a few years shaved off The Lady's "life sentence" and her incarceration improved a little, the moves are arguably two years late. At this moment in time, the fighters of the Spring Revolution are in full swing attacking the junta armed forces under the banner of a federal democratic future, with the growing infrastructure of the NUG and other remnants of the former government, with funding to go with it.

While it is unlikely that Aung San Suu Kyi will compromise over Myanmar's future if lured into talks,

Min Aung Hlaing's clique will likely seek to sow division, while at the same time doubling down on the People's Defence Forces (PDFs) and Ethnic Revolutionary Organizations (ERO) – and at the same time trying to win over more of the Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAO).

Min Aung Hlaing's desperate junta may seek to win hearts and minds, locally, regionally and internationally. But these moves may not mean a stop to the "shock-and-awe" military tactics being used against PDFs and civilians in the hell-holes of Sagaing, Magway, Bago, Chin State and elsewhere. The continuation of a State of Emergency indicates the possibility that the junta may double down on their efforts to wipe out resistance groups.

At the same time, Min Aung Hlaing hopes Myanmar can return to the regional stage and be once again represented in the ASEAN forum, with the help of friendly neighbours who appear to have broken ranks over the failed and disappointing ASEAN Five-Point Consensus agreement.

All of which leaves The Lady stuck between a rock and a hard place. The Nobel Laureate who won her prize for her efforts to bring peace and democracy to Myanmar will be torn between the entreaties of peace and compromise and the underlying war fought by the brave Spring Revolutionaries who seek to once-and-for-all end the draconian era of the generals.

For now, the Myanmar people suffer and wait.

Reporting by Mizzima and AFP

***This is an updated version of our story
that ran on 31 July online.***

ASEAN DIVIDED ON THE MYANMAR CRISIS



Developments last week appeared to confirm that ASEAN is divided on its approach to the Myanmar crisis after two years of failure under the Five-Point Consensus.

First it was Thailand with a bilateral move to engage with the junta and Aung San Suu Kyi. Then, last Wednesday, Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim said Southeast Asian countries should be given some latitude to engage informally with Myanmar on an individual basis to help resolve the deepening crisis there, according to a media report.

Anwar said he and visiting Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. agreed during talks on the need to strengthen the role of the ASEAN in ending the violence that started after Myanmar's army seized power.

At the same time, Anwar said neighbouring countries should be given some flexibility, room and

space to engage with Myanmar on an informal basis. But he said it must not come at the expense of sacrificing the issues of human rights and the treatment of minorities, particularly the ethnic Muslim Rohingya and others.

Going forward, certain ASEAN members – including Thailand, currently under a caretaker government – may favour the Myanmar junta taking a seat in upcoming ASEAN meetings as the Myanmar generals take new steps to attempt to improve their image regionally and worldwide.

LOWEST OF THE LOW: ROHINGYA REFUGEE WOMEN IN INDIA

Muslim Rohingya refugee women living in India are arguably living in one of the most precarious positions in the world.

Rohingya women trying to survive day-to-day in small refugee communities in India have it hard. And the uncertainty of their legal position in India does not help. They face a myriad of challenges that compound their already vulnerable and precarious situation. As members of a marginalized and displaced community, these women encounter a host of obstacles that hinder their access to basic rights, social services, and economic opportunities.

These problems have not gone unnoticed. Outlook India magazine, in a recent article entitled: What Life After Displacement Means For Rohingya Women In India? by Samanwita Paul, tells the story of Amina. The mother of two girls lives in a Rohingya camp in Delhi's Kalindi Kunj, which houses almost 50 families. The camp lacks toilets and a good water supply.

This forces women like Amina to limit their water intake and restrict their toilet usage. The location of the camps and the difficulties in accessing sanitation facilities make women especially vulnerable to harassment and abuse. Women are scared to go out

alone especially during night due to repeated instances of abuse.

In many ways, Amina's position is a "life on hold" – getting by with the daily chores with the hope of improvement – yet with the fear their host country might expel her and her family, forcing them to return to crisis- and war-torn Myanmar.

Amina's situation is better than it was in Rakhine State that she fled from in 2012 when there were attacks on the Muslim Rohingya by local Buddhists. And she avoided the horror of the Myanmar military war in Rakhine in 2017 that saw over 700,000 Rohingya flee to Bangladesh.

At first, Amina said she was relieved in part due to initial sense of safety she felt in her host country.

India – a country of 1.428 billion – is the world's largest democracy with a major mix of ethnic and religious groups jostling for position as it tries to drag itself from the developing into the developed world. There is little doubt that the red-carpet treatment of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on a recent visit to Washington was justified, in part due to the country's burgeoning economy and trade prospects it presents, and as a counterweight to China.



Rohingya women and children in a refugee camp in Delhi. Photo: AFP

But India faces serious challenges on a political, ethnic and religious level that have communities within this vast landmass competing for resources and influence. And, much like the removed but still-present caste system, certain groups suffer from the wrath of the majority, a steaming cauldron exacerbated by smartphones and ugly social media posts and messages.

This can be bad news for minorities.

Muslim Rohingya are caught up in a social hierarchy that views them as interlopers desperately hanging on to the bottom rungs, under pressure to be expelled. A large part of this prejudice comes from a Hindu political base that is sensitive to the growth of the overall Muslim population in India, still a hangover from 1947 Partition. In addition, different ethnic or national immigrant groups are lined up in a pecking order – with Tibetans at the top, and Rohingya at the bottom – an echo, as noted, of form of caste system.

One of the most pressing challenges for Rohingya like Amina is the lack of legal recognition. There are currently about 40,000 Rohingya in India, with about half registered with the UNHCR. India does not formally recognize the Rohingya as refugees, which denies them access to essential services such as education, healthcare, and formal employment. Consequently, refugee women like Amina and their families often live in destitution and are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

As Outlook India magazine notes, most of the Rohingyas currently residing in India were forced to leave Myanmar in 2012 following a round of ethnic violence in Rakhine. This was the same year that the community was able to access the Refugee Status Determination (RSD) facility in India and received the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Refugee Cards. Despite not being recognised by the Indian government as refugees, they were permitted to live freely and receive assistance from the UNHCR. Between 2012 and 2017, they were even granted Long Term Visas (LTVs). The LTVs were crucial for accessing identification documents such as the Aadhaar cards and basic public and private services. The LTVs granted the Rohingya refugees more avenues for house rental, purchase of SIM cards and access to open bank accounts. However, since 2017, the LTVs have neither been renewed nor new ones issued and they have been explicitly forbidden from holding Aadhaar cards. This has made them victims of hate speech, arbitrary detentions and forced evictions.

At present, Rohingya refugees are officially categorised as “illegal or irregular migrants”. This creates chances of arbitrary arrest, detention and harassment for the community. Despite being a signatory of the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women, Universal Declaration

of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and several other humanitarian treaties, India refuses to provide its refugee women with requisite protection and assurances.

Another major concern for women like Amina is gender-based violence and discrimination. Rohingya women are at a heightened risk of physical and sexual violence, both within the refugee community and at the hands of the host population. Limited access to legal recourse and fear of deportation further discourage them from reporting abuses.

Due to this, women have to largely rely on men to pursue activities outside the household. They seldom go to hospitals without male members and going to markets is out of the question. During times of childbirth or other medical contingencies, women might sometimes seek the help from UNHCR volunteers, who accompany them to health facilities.

Education is a significant barrier for Rohingya girls, though Amina's two girls are getting a rudimentary education. Many lack access to schools, and cultural norms may prioritize early marriage over formal education, perpetuating a cycle of poverty and disempowerment. Healthcare is also a major concern. Limited access to reproductive health services and maternal care can lead to high rates of maternal mortality and infant morbidity. In addition, cultural and language barriers further isolate Rohingya women, making it difficult for them to integrate into Indian society and seek support.

As India grows in importance on the world stage, and seeks to juggle the influence of Washington and Beijing, it would be wise to cool the tensions within communities inside its borders.

To address the challenges of the most disenfranchised – namely Rohingya women - a comprehensive approach is needed, involving the Indian government, international organizations, and civil society to ensure protection and empowerment. Efforts should focus on legal recognition, access to education and healthcare, as well as initiatives to combat gender-based violence and discrimination.

Only through a collaborative and empathetic effort can vulnerable women like Amina rebuild their lives with dignity and hope.

IS MYANMAR AMMUNITION KILLING UKRAINIANS?

An artillery ammunition manufactured by Myanmar was spotted in service with the Russian military, according to a 26 July report by Militaryni, reporting on the Ukrainian defense industry.

Analysts from Ukraine Weapons Tracker showcased photos and said that the Russians use 120mm mortar rounds from Myanmar. Most of the markings on the ammunition were erased, but it was possible to identify the 120ER mortar rounds due to the specific shape of the fins, residual markings and fuses, according to the report.

Most weapons and ammunition deals involve Russia supplying the Myanmar junta, not the other way around. But the Myanmar military does operate weapons-making factories in Myanmar.

After the coup in February 2021, the Myanmar junta expanded nuclear and defense cooperation with Russia. Last September, junta leader Min Aung Hlaing visited Russia to participate in the Eastern Economic Forum and agreed with Russia on a roadmap for nuclear cooperation, including the possibility of implementing a small modular reactor project in Myanmar. Last December, a Russian delegation of about a dozen senior military officers led by Colonel General Alexei Kim visited Myanmar. According to Myanmar's state media, the parties focused on defense cooperation.

THREE MYANMAR STUDENTS KILLED IN MILITARY RAID IN SAGAING'S BUDALIN TOWNSHIP



PDF fighters in Sagaing.
Photo: AFP

At least three Myanmar students were killed in an early morning military raid in Sagaing's Budalin Township in the country's northwest, a student union said Friday last week.

The Southeast Asian nation's junta has unleashed deadly violence on its opponents since the military ousted Aung San Suu Kyi's civilian government in a February 2021 coup.

The junta is facing resistance from anti-coup "People's Defence Force" militias and long-established ethnic rebel armies.

The All-Burma Federation of Student Unions said in a Facebook post that the students had been killed in a Friday raid on an office where activists stayed in the Sagaing region's Budalin township.

The region - a hotbed of anti-junta resistance - has seen heavy fighting in recent months.

The student union last week had posted pictures on social media of student activists protesting

the junta with banners and flags.

A local villager who declined to be named due to fear of reprisals said the three student activists, aged late teens to early 20s, had died from stab wounds.

"They stabbed knives into their chests. They cut out their tongues," the villager told AFP, adding that at least five houses had been burnt down in the incident and an unknown number of people arrested.

AFP has sought comment from the junta's information team.

More than 3,800 civilians have been killed since the putsch in the junta's deadly crackdown on dissent, according to a local monitoring group.

The junta puts the death toll at about 5,000 people, including teachers.

AFP

UK DEPARTMENT STORE 'WILL STOP SOURCING GEMS FOR BURMA' SAYS NGO



John Lewis Partnership, a highly regarded department store chain selling a wide range of products, has informed Burma Campaign UK that it will stop sourcing gems from Burma, according to a press release issued last week.

Burma Campaign UK had written to John Lewis and around 40 other retailers asking them to ensure that if they sell gems from Burma, they make sure the gems they sell have not helped fund the Burmese military.

In an email received on 25th July 2023, John Lewis stated: "We remain extremely concerned to learn of developments around the conflicts that have taken place, and that continues to take place in recent years in Burma/Myanmar...Our suppliers source a very small proportion of gems from Burma/Myanmar but we are in the process of urgently seeking alternative sources of supply."

The decision by John Lewis follows TJC, one of the biggest TV shopping channels and online jewellery retailers in the UK, telling Burma Campaign UK it was withdrawing Burmese gems from sale.

Following the attempted military coup, which began in February 2021, the Burmese military now dominates Burma's gems industry, which is potentially worth \$2bn per year. Through its own private companies, control of the state-owned enterprises and government ministries, control of trade routes into areas not under its control, legal and illegal trade, and the business interests of military family members, the Burmese military extracts revenue from the gems industry in numerous ways.

Burma Campaign UK is not calling for a blanket ban on Burmese gems. We are calling on companies to make sure the gems they sell haven't been sourced in a way that provides money to the military and helps pay for weapons and the human rights violations committed by the Burmese military.

"John Lewis have done the right thing by deciding to stop sourcing from Burma," said Mark Farmer, Director of Burma Campaign UK. "Retailers must ensure that the gems they sell haven't helped pay for the bombs and the bullets the Burmese military are using against the people of Burma."

US ANNOUNCES \$345 MILLION MILITARY AID PACKAGE FOR TAIWAN

The United States on Friday last week unveiled a \$345 million military aid package for Taiwan designed to quickly bolster the island's ability to deter a Chinese invasion.

The package - which an official said features intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance equipment and small arms munitions - will be drawn from the US' own reserves, allowing it to be delivered on a faster-than-usual timeline.

These are "capabilities that Taiwan will be able to use to bolster deterrence now and in the future," a Pentagon spokesperson said.

Elements of the package "address critical defensive stockpiles, multi-domain awareness, anti-armor and air defense capabilities," he added.

"We are working expeditiously to deliver the military assistance announced today."

Taiwan's defense ministry thanked Washington "for its staunch commitment to Taiwan's security."

"The Presidential Drawdown Authority is another important support for Taiwan's self-defense in addition to weapons sales," ministry spokesman Sun Li-fang said.

"Taiwan and the US will continue to cooperate closely in safety issues in order to maintain peace, stability and the status quo in the Taiwan Strait."

Congress has authorized President Joe Biden to draw aid for Taiwan from American military stocks -- the same way that Washington has provided large quantities of assistance to Ukraine since Russia invaded in February 2022.

In the past year, the Chinese military has held two major drills around Taiwan, simulating targeted strikes and a blockade of the island.

China, which is an increasingly assertive diplomatic and military power, claims the democratic, self-ruled island of Taiwan as part of its territory and has vowed to take it, by force if necessary.

A statement from the White House announced the package of "defense articles and services of the Department of Defense, and military education and training, to provide assistance to Taiwan."

AFP



Taiwan air force helicopter flies near Taipei.
Photo: AFP

MILITIAS READY FOR LONG FIGHT IN RESTIVE INDIAN STATE

Schoolboys turned militia fighters stare towards their enemies from their hilltop outpost, as the vigilante gunmen dig in for a long fight in India's troubled Manipur state.

Three months ago, 16-year-old Paominthang was a student from the farming Kuki people who dreamed of being a football star -- now he is armed with a .303 rifle and says he is ready to kill rival Meitei community fighters if needed.

At least 120 people have been killed since May in armed clashes between the predominantly Hindu Meitei majority and the mainly Christian Kuki in the northeastern state. Many in Manipur believe the number could be higher.

Paominthang, who gave only one name for fear of reprisal, said he abandoned his books after a

Meitei mob attacked his family.

"They burnt down my house -- I had no other choice," he told AFP, cradling his gun proudly and insisting he had no qualms about using it in defence.

"I will shoot," he said.

Conflict erupted from a mix of causes including competition for land and public jobs, with rights activists accusing local leaders of exacerbating ethnic divisions for political gain.

They deny that, but months into the crisis, divisions are hardening into bitter cycles of revenge attacks that have included killings and the burning of homes, Christian churches and Hindu temples.

The rivals have formed militia forces who insist they will not be laying down their guns any time soon.



● A Kuki militia fighter in Manipur. Photo: AFP

'BURN DOWN OUR HOUSE'

The far-flung states of northeast India -- sandwiched between Bangladesh, China and Myanmar -- have long been a tinderbox of tensions between different ethnic groups.

Kukis make up around 16 percent of Manipur's roughly 2.8 million people, according to India's last census in 2011, but their demands for a separate state administration for them are rejected outright by the Meitei, who form more than half of the population.

Paominthang's base, dubbed "Tiger Camp", is reachable via a thin path up steep and lush hills. Similar camps run by rival forces are dotted across the area.

When clashes began in May, mobs looted police stations, with the Press Trust of India news agency reporting 3,000 weapons and 600,000 rounds of ammunition went missing.

In militia camps in both Kuki and Meitei areas, AFP reporters saw men armed with an array of sophisticated weapons, including Kalashnikov assault rifles and homemade guns crafted out of metal pipes.

"We can't show you, but we have ammunition that can last for more than two months," claimed Phakosat Hokip, 32, a Kuki fighter, who in May worked for an aid agency.

Hokip's group conduct dusk-till-dawn sentry duty from their sandbagged post, staring into the dark using high-powered binoculars, with other militia members resting in shelters made of plastic sheeting attached to bamboo poles.

"If we are not here with guns, they will turn up in thousands and they will come and burn down our house," Hokip said.

'BLOOD IN OUR BODY'

Between the fertile farmland, charred homes line the road between the Meitei-majority Bishnupur district and Kuki stronghold of Churachandpur, an unofficial border between the groups.

The army patrols the road, but even as they do so, the crackle of militia gunfire can be heard nearby.

Across the divide, in the Meitei camp, gunmen

say they are fearful of the Kuki.

"Even the state forces are not able to control it," said KB, a 55-year-old Meitei who spoke on condition of anonymity. "It is a civil war."

Meitei people have long accused the Kuki of supporting undocumented immigrants from Myanmar and poppy cultivation, claims the Kuki deny.

"We used to live together," added KB. "Suddenly, they attacked us, and now want a separate administration -- that will not happen".

India's Interior Minister Amit Shah has promised an "impartial investigation" into the violence and has said the government "stands shoulder-to-shoulder with the people of Manipur".

But the NGO Human Rights Watch accuse state authorities, led by Shah's Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party, of having rolled out "divisive policies that promote Hindu majoritarianism".

DS Hooda, a retired Indian general who served in Manipur, said the government had to tackle the crisis in "a non-partisan manner".

"If civilian vigilante groups are going to take up weapons to protect themselves, it is a sad commentary on the authority of the state," he said.

Hokip, the Kuki fighter, does not trust the government, believing that the state's chief minister N. Biren Singh - a Meitei - is complicit, charges he denies.

"It is state-sponsored ethnic cleansing against the Kukis," said Hokip. "Even if you approach the government, the government is supporting the Meiteis."

KB, his Meitei rival, said fighters would not lay down their guns.

"For as long as we have blood in our body, we will not leave our land and run," he said.

AFP

RUSSIA RETAINS ALLIES, DESPITE THE UKRAINE CONFLICT

Despite the military intervention in Ukraine and efforts by the West to paint Russia as a pariah state, Moscow can still count on support from several African, Latin American and Asian governments, including that of heavyweight China and current pariah, Myanmar.

Visibly satisfied, Russian President Vladimir Putin stood shoulder to shoulder on Friday with a score of African heads of state at a Russia-Africa summit in Saint Petersburg.

The message from the family photo was, he said, that Moscow was working hand in hand with the continent and its one billion people.

“Russia’s attention to Africa is steadily growing,” Putin said on Friday.

He added the relations with each country on the African continent, where the Soviet Union had already forged strong ties, “have a bright future in the emerging multipolar world”.

The previous day, Putin had pulled a diplomatic rabbit out of his hat, offering free grain to six African countries, just as the latter were wondering how to cope with the consequences of Russia’s withdrawal from a Ukraine grain deal.

That pact enabled Ukraine to export its cereal crops to global markets despite the war, thus easing



Russian President Vladimir Putin offers a hand of friendship to delegates at the meeting in Saint Petersburg. Photo: AFP

pressure on food prices in Africa and elsewhere.

Putin's overtures to Africa go back long before the Ukraine conflict.

For several years now, the Kremlin has openly engaged in diplomatic and economic offensives on the continent and offered "security" in the form of the Wagner mercenary army to African governments fending off jihadist insurgencies.

But in recent months, Russia has had to speed up its quest for alternatives to its European partners.

Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has toured Africa twice since January, seeking to draw it into Moscow's camp and presenting Russia as a bulwark against Western "imperialism" and "neocolonialism".

OPPOSITION TO THE WEST

Moscow also continues to enjoy the backing of several Latin American and Asian leaders, including several criticised for their authoritarian rule.

Historic allies of Moscow, like Venezuela and Cuba, refused to condemn Russia's military offensive in Ukraine during this month's summit between Latin America and the European Union.

In their joint declaration, the leaders merely expressed their "deep concern on the ongoing war against Ukraine", without once mentioning Russia, Moscow, the Kremlin or Putin.

Even this lowest-common-denominator phrasing failed to garner unanimous support, faced with Nicaragua's refusal to endorse it.

While not going so far as to back Moscow, Brazilian President Luis Ignacio "Lula" da Silva refused to send weapons to Ukraine or to impose sanctions on Russia, calling instead for Europe and the United States to stop "encouraging" the offensive.

"Russian isolation is a construction invented in the West," Fyodor Lukyanov, a political analyst close to the Kremlin, told AFP.

"Russia is perceived as a country that might be right or might be wrong but is, in any case, opposed to the West," he said.

"In this new international environment, this standpoint is more efficient and more attractive than one could have imagined."

TELL-TALE SILENCE

Certain countries prefer to remain silent, which speaks volumes.

On February 24, the anniversary of Russia's military operation in its pro-western neighbour, a majority of countries at the United Nations urged Russia to withdraw its troops from Ukraine.

Moscow's historic allies - Belarus, North Korea and Syria - voted against the motion.

Around 30 others abstained.

Among them were two heavyweights -- India, one of the top purchasers of Russian oil, and China, another staunch partner.

Chinese President Xi Jinping was received with great pomp in Moscow in March for a visit designed to usher in a "new era" of Sino-Russian relations.

Since then Russian and Chinese armies have conducted a string of joint military exercises.

In another sign of a partnership designed to counter US hegemony, Putin is scheduled to visit China in October, his first trip to a G20 country since the start of the conflict in Ukraine.

In recent months the Russian leader has travelled to Iran and Central Asia.

But an international arrest warrant against him, issued by the International Criminal Court, may hinder future movements.

It has already forced him to abandon plans to take part in the BRICS summit of emerging economies, due to be held in South Africa in late August.

AFP

HOPES FOR CHANGE IN CAMBODIA ‘ILLUSION’: OPPOSITION LEADER

Any hopes that Cambodia could become more democratic or friendlier to the West after Prime Minister Hun Sen’s departure are misguided, leading opposition figure Sam Rainsy said.

Hun Sen, one of the world’s longest-serving leaders, this week said he would resign and hand power to his eldest son, Hun Manet, after almost four decades of hardline rule.

The former Khmer Rouge cadre has run the kingdom since 1985, eliminating all opposition to his power, with rival parties banned, challengers forced to flee and freedom of expression stifled.

“Some people think that with Hun Manet, Hun Sen’s son, it will be better than with the father, the regime will be better, the Cambodian people will have more freedoms. The new government would be less hostile to the West, would distance itself from China,” Rainsy told AFP in an interview from his exile base in Paris.

“I think this is pure illusion.”

‘NOTHING WILL CHANGE’

Rainsy, who is leader of the Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) and lives in exile in France to avoid charges he says are politically motivated,



● Opposition player Sam Rainsy, who lives in exile. Photo: AFP

said Hun Sen was “preserving the current system” by next month handing the premiership to Hun Manet, a 45-year-old four-star general.

“You can change leaders many times but nothing will change because the system remains the same,” Rainsy said.

Hun Sen’s Cambodian People’s Party (CPP) last week won a landslide victory in an election with no meaningful opposition, paving the way for a dynastic succession to his eldest son that some critics have compared to that of North Korea.

Western powers, including the United States and the European Union, condemned the poll as neither free nor fair.

But Rainsy said that the Cambodian people’s desire for more democracy remained intact, even after the decades of Hun Sen’s rule.

“I think nothing can resist the aspiration of the Cambodian people to have more freedoms, to have a new system that is more free and more just, in short to have democracy,” Rainsy said.

“The only obstacle to democracy in Cambodia is Hun Sen and his plan to implement a family succession, to found a political dynasty.”

He claimed that “even within the ruling party, concerned people feel the same way”, adding: “We all want democracy.”

‘LIKE A MATCH’

The government is blocking his return home, a sign that Hun Sen had a “fear of my presence in Cambodia”, Rainsy said.

“Hun Sen knows that my return to Cambodia would be a danger to his regime. This means that the Cambodian people (are) waiting for an opportunity and for a leader, at least a symbolic leader, to rise up,” he said.

“I am the symbol of this resistance, and when the symbol of resistance is on Cambodian soil, that’s like a match being put to a powder keg,” he said.

Rainsy said he thought the Cambodian army, “which is poorly paid, which suffers from injustice”, would join such a movement.

“They will stand with the people and this is

how a peaceful revolution, how a democratic change can take place in Cambodia,” he said.

Cambodia ranks 150th out of 180 in Transparency International’s corruption perception index. In Asia, only Myanmar and North Korea rank lower.

After stepping down as prime minister, Hun Sen has said he will become president of the senate and act as head of state when the king is overseas.

“Hun Sen will still be there, he will continue to pull the strings from behind the curtain,” Rainsy said, adding that Hun Manet has “lacks personality and charisma and his father’s authority”.

AFP

TRUST FUND HELPS VICTIMS AND CHILDREN BORN OF SEXUAL ABUSE, APPEALS FOR CONTINUED SUPPORT

A new report reveals how projects supported by the UN Trust Fund for victims of sexual exploitation and abuse by UN personnel, are helping victims regain their dignity, learn new skills, and improve their livelihoods.

Information on the projects and the positive impact they are having on the lives of victims, and children born as a result of sexual exploitation, are contained within the fund's fifth annual report released earlier this week, covering 2022.

Contributions to the Trust Fund can be made by governments, inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations, private institutions, or individuals.

"The Secretariat is grateful to the 24 Member States which support the Trust Fund and looks forward to continued contributions. I encourage Member States and others to contribute," said Catherine Pollard, UN Under-Secretary-General for Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance (DMSPC).

REBUILDING LIVES

Since its establishment in 2016, the Trust Fund has received \$4.8 million in contributions from Member States and from payments withheld from personnel against whom sexual exploitation and abuse cases have been substantiated.

"This has helped fund assistance and support services to victims and children born of sexual exploitation and abuse by UN and related personnel", UN Spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric told correspondents in New York.

So far, over 43,000 affected victims and community members have participated in income-generating activities or received various forms of support. Additional funding will help victims and their children rebuild their lives, break stigma, and facilitate reintegration within their communities", he added.

NEW PROJECTS IN THE PIPELINE

In the seven years since it was set up, the



Photo: UN News

Trust Fund has financed 17 projects which are either completed or still being implemented.

In 2022, six Trust Fund projects got underway in locations affected by political and other insecurity as well as environmental disasters, including earthquakes and floods.

The projects were implemented in the Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Haiti, Liberia, and South Sudan. They provided support for 1,224 direct beneficiaries.

In April 2023, the Trust Fund's Review Committee approved 12 new projects to be carried out in the CAR, the DRC, Guatemala, Haiti, Iran, Myanmar, Somalia, and South Sudan.

AROUND \$2.3 MILLION REQUIRED

An estimated \$2.3 million will be needed for these newly approved projects.

As of this May, the Trust Fund has disbursed/committed more than \$2.7 million for completed or on-going projects.

The Secretariat has appealed for voluntary financial contributions to the Trust Fund and seeks to raise \$3 million for the 12 projects that were recently approved and to prepare for the next proposal cycle.

SUPPORTING INCOME GENERATION

The Trust Fund was created by Secretary-General António Guterres in 2016 to strengthen the response and support of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse by UN personnel. To avoid stigmatization, beneficiaries include not only victims but also those at risk, or who are in the most vulnerable situations in their communities.

The fund provides for a wide range of assistance for victims. This includes immediate assistance such as medical care and psychosocial support, to longer term projects such as vocational training and income-generating activities, as well as assistance with school fees for children born out of exploitation and abuse.

Victims experience harmful consequences which go well beyond the psychological and the physical.

STIGMATIZATION COMMON

They are often stigmatized by their families and community members, and may be abandoned without support to provide for themselves. To address this, Trust Fund projects support income generation by providing victims with knowledge and tools which empower them to become economically active and self-sustaining.

According to one beneficiary in the DR Congo: "After attending a sewing workshop and business training. I was able to elaborate a business plan. The trainers will continue to coach us. Now, after a few months, I can support myself and my family."

SCHOOLING SUPPORT

The provision of educational support to children born of sexual exploitation or abuse is another very important of the Trust Fund and is carried out in several countries.

According to a beneficiary living in Haiti: "With this project, my child's schooling has been paid without any difficulty. The support also provide food for my child during the whole school year."

The Fund also supports community outreach to raise the local population's awareness of their rights and of support available to them.

Courtesy of UN News



Photo: Dinis Batgutdinov

KAREN STATE

Defence forces seize all junta bases in Kat Taung area of Myawaddy Township

Following fierce fighting combined defence forces took control of all the junta army camps in the area of Lat Kat Taung Mount in Myawaddy Township, Kayin (Karen) State, on 21 July.

“The fighting started on 10 July. Lat Kat Taung was their [the junta’s] key military base where heavy weapons and artillery were stationed. Now, we have seized the base. The junta’s military personnel cannot go there or back because we have closed off the routes since the fighting started. It took us more than ten days to fend off their reinforcements”, said a representative of KNLA Brigade 6, one of the defence forces involved in the fighting.

The Defence forces took control of the five junta bases in the Lat Kat Taung Mount area: Byuhar Hill, Tower Base, Botahtaung Base, Taitar Kone, and Phayarphyu Kone.

The defence forces, under the command of KNLA Brigade 6, started attacking all the five junta bases on at 6:00 a.m. on 20 July. They finally took control of the whole Lat Kat Taung area after 25 hours of fighting, at around 7:00 a.m. on 21 July.

There had reportedly been fighting in the Lat Kat Taung area since 10 July. During the 10 days of fighting the junta suffered many casualties and some resistance force fighters were also injured, according to the resistance forces involved in the fighting, KNLA Brigade 6 and Federal Wings.

The area of Lat Kat Taung is in the southern part of Myawaddy Township and there has been frequent fighting in the surrounding areas.

JUNTA CHIEF MIN AUNG HLAING MEETS CHINESE ENVOY DENG XIJUN IN NAY PYI TAW AMIDST SEVERE POLITICAL CRISIS IN MYANMAR

The junta chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, received a delegation led by Deng Xijun, Special Envoy for Asian Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, at the junta's office in Nay Pyi Taw on July 28, reported junta-controlled media.

They held discussions on the progress of friendly ties and cooperation between Myanmar and China, according to the newspaper. They also addressed Myanmar's political crisis, too.

In the discussion, particular emphasis was placed on peace and stability in the border region, regional peace restoration, China's aid to Myanmar for mitigating the losses and damages caused by storm Mocha, preparations for re-accepting Rohingya refugees returning to Rakhine State, and plans for cooperation in minimizing online gambling and cyber deception.

Deng Xijun's latest visit to Nay Pyi Taw marks his third visit to Myanmar. Previously, he visited the country in December 2022 and March 6 this year. His visit on July 28 coincided with the Myanmar junta's efforts to extend the state of emergency.

MYANMAR JUNTA FACES CRITICISM AS STATE OF EMERGENCY EXTENDED AGAIN, AMID ONGOING CONFLICTS AND INTERNATIONAL CONCERNS

The Myanmar military junta has faced harsh criticism from various quarters as it decided to extend the state of emergency for the fourth time, further delaying the promised return to the so-called civilian rule.

The decision, announced by junta's Acting President Myint Swe, came after a meeting of the National Defense and Security Council, the junta's supreme decision-making body, as reported by junta media. The extension was met with condemnation from the United States, with the US State Department expressing deep concern over the junta's actions and their impact on the country's stability and aspirations for democracy.

Since the coup in February 2021, Myanmar has been plunged into turmoil, with citizens' peaceful protests being met with brutal military crackdowns. The situation has escalated into armed resistance, leading to thousands of casualties and arrests. The detained civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi, a Nobel Peace laureate, has been subjected to a controversial trial on multiple charges.

The junta's justification for extending the state of emergency was cited as the ongoing conflicts and security conditions in the country, which they claim hinder their efforts to hold elections and restore civilian rule. However, critics argue that the junta is using these conflicts as a pretext to retain its grip on power and suppress democratic voices.

Junta media presented a report on the endeavours of the State Administration Council during the extended period, claiming that several terrorist attacks and violence had occurred in the regions under their control. They pointed fingers at the National Unity Government (NUG) and other groups for the attacks and destruction of infrastructure, justifying their own counteractions. They also highlighted the government's efforts to promote economic stability and an upcoming election, emphasizing the importance of a peaceful and stable environment for voting.

The United States, a vocal critic of the military regime, voiced its disapproval of Myanmar junta's state of emergency extension. The US State Department spokesperson expressed deep concern over the junta's actions, citing the regime's brutal tactics, airstrikes, displacement of millions, and disregard for democratic aspirations. The US reaffirmed its commitment to holding the regime accountable through political and economic measures while advocating for an end to violence, release of detainees, humanitarian access, justice for survivors, and inclusive dialogue towards a democratic future for Myanmar.

JADE WORTH ABOUT US\$4 BILLION EXPORTED TO CHINA IN 2022

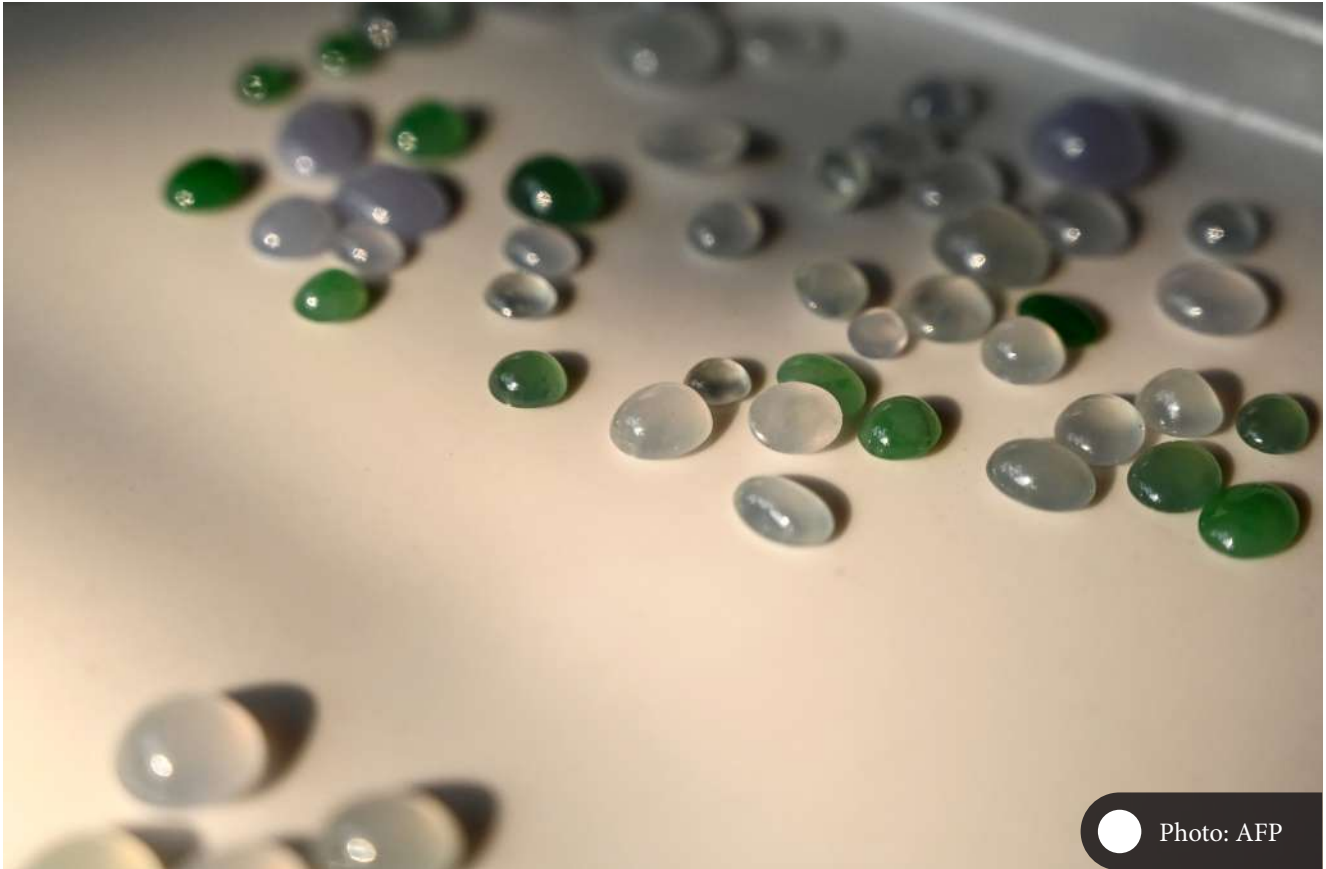


Photo: AFP

The report issued by a watchdog organization said that jade worth about US\$4 billion was exported to China in 2022.

The report titled 'Study and Analysis of export of Myanmar mineral and gems' was released on 21 July.

In 2021, jade worth about US\$1 billion was exported to China and then this export value increased to about US\$4 billion in 2022.

According to the trade figures released by the UNComtrade and China Customs Department, Myanmar earned over US\$3.4 billion from export of mineral and gems in 2021 and then it increased to over US\$6.2 billion in 2022.

In this mineral and gems sector, jade export is the largest and other minerals tin, rare-earth, copper, nickel and other gems share this export value in descending order.

Jade export to China in the period from Janu-

ary to the end of May 2023 has reportedly earned over US\$731 million.

Myanmar Gems Enterprise (MGE) has held the gems emporiums three times since February 2021 until today but they did not disclose how much they received from the sale of these gemstones.

The gems emporiums which are one of the income sources of the military junta were held in Naypyitaw, the capital city.

But it is learned that these gem emporiums were not successful because of boycotts by some countries.

Myanmar Gems Enterprise (MGE) run by the junta is included in the targeted sanction list of the UK and US.

ZARA OWNER INDITEX WILL STOP BUYING GARMENTS FROM MYANMAR



Following demands made by the international trade union called IndustriALL, Spain based Inditex which owns the famous fashion brand Zara announced that they would stop buying garments from Myanmar.

Under the demand made by IndustriALL, the Inditex plans to leave Myanmar phase by phase responsibly. “We will reduce the number of garment factories which are manufacturing for our brand in Myanmar,” the announcement says.

But the Inditex’s announcement did not say anything on how long it would take to leave Myanmar or how many factories in Myanmar at present are manufacturing garments for them.

After the coup in Myanmar, many countries including US, UK, EU, Australia and Canada have imposed many economic sanctions against the junta leaders and military-owned businesses but they spared the garment industry which is giving many jobs to hundreds of thousands of Myanmar workers.

The Burma Campaign UK which is lobbying for exiting Myanmar from oil, gas and natural resources

extraction to cut the income sources of Myanmar military, did not call for the closing of the garment industry in Myanmar and exit from Myanmar but the companies which are following the international standards and norms are facing difficulties in continuing their businesses in Myanmar.

The two international trade unions called IndustriALL Global Union and IndustriAll Europe issued an announcement on 11 July which called for withdrawing GSP (Generalized System of Preferences) given to the EU funded “Made in Myanmar” garment project as it exempted tax on garments imported from Myanmar and this benefited the Myanmar military.

Another Spanish fashion brand Mango told Reuters that they have stopped buying garments from Myanmar.

Like Inditex, other garment companies such as Aldi South, C&A, Primark, Marks & Spencer, Tesco, Uniqlo company owner Fast Retailing and Muji’s parent company Ryohin are also planning to exit Myanmar.

MYANMAR'S NUG OUTLAWS GOVERNMENT BONDS



Photo: AFP

The National Unity Government (NUG) has said that it regards the sale of government bonds as illegal because money from their sale funds the junta.

It also said that those who buy treasury bonds, such as the Tun Foundation Bank and cronies U Zaw Zaw, U Thein Wai, U Ko Ko Gyi, U Aung Ko Win, will be held accountable for abusing the Myanmar people.

In a statement U Tin Tun Naing, the NUG minister of Planning, Finance and Investment said: "The sale of treasury bonds [is] illegal because the military council is using the money to carry out terrorist acts against the people. Consequently, entrepreneurs, including local private banks, will be held accountable, and the public should know that the money deposited by the people was being used as financial support for the terrorist military army, and that action would be taken in accordance with the law."

The NUG is in the process of building a parallel government including all the main government ministries and departments.

THAI BEVERAGE EXPANDS BEER BUSINESS IN MYANMAR WITH US\$14.4 MILLION INVESTMENT

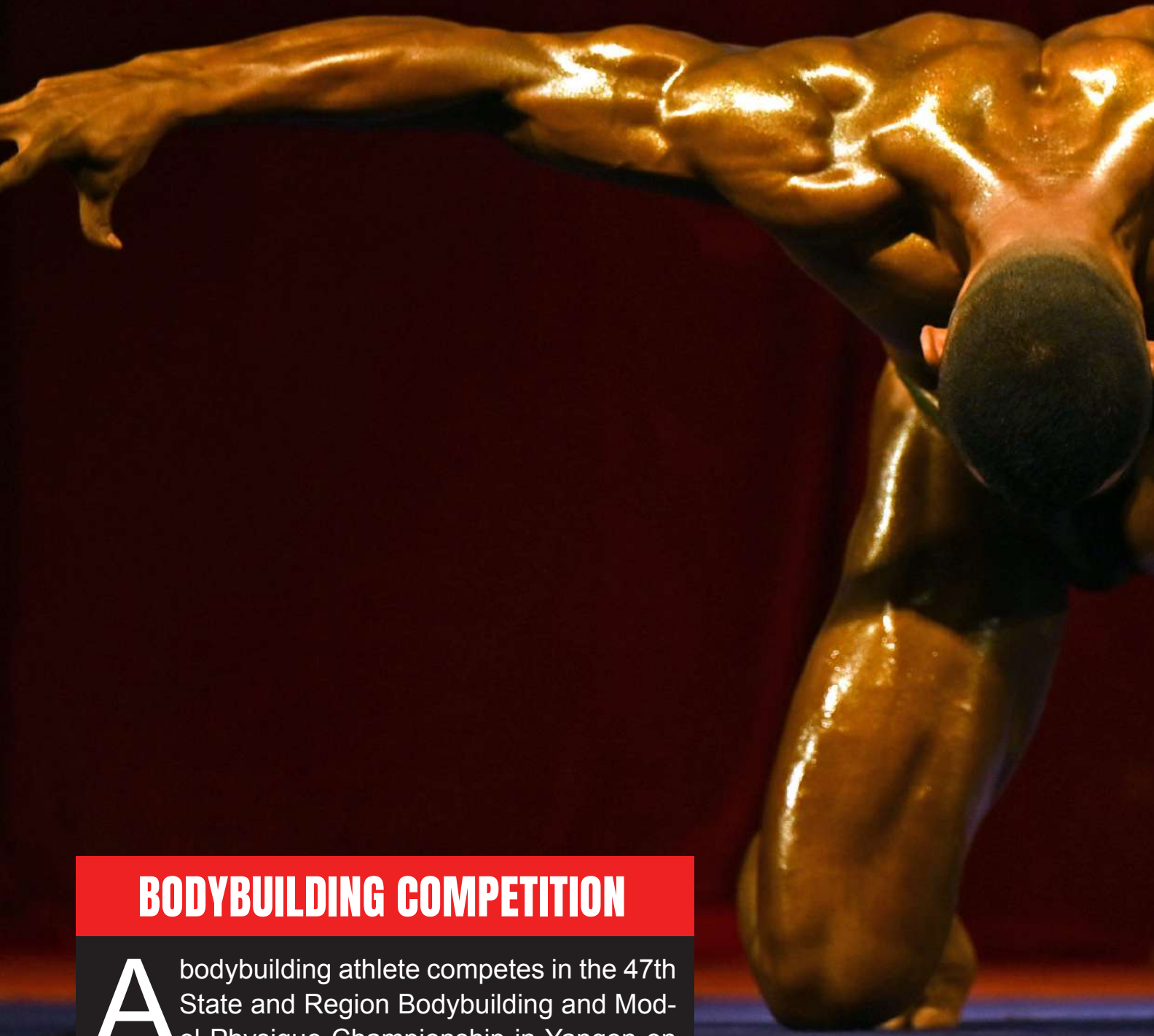
Fraser & Neave (F&N), the renowned Singaporean food and beverage group under the control of Thai Beverage Plc, has set its sights on an expansion of its beer business in Myanmar, reported local news outlets.

Thai Beverage Plc, a prominent company listed on the Singapore stock exchange and renowned for producing the Chang beer, stands tall as one of the esteemed flagships under the stewardship of the Thai billionaire, Charoen Sirivadhanabhakdi.

F&N has decided to invest US\$14.4 million in Myanmar to build a brand new brewery. They will do this by joining hands with a local beverage company called Win Brothers.

F&N has announced plans to build a new brewery on a 35-acre land that they have leased for 50 years.

The Win Brothers Group, founded in 1990 by the Win family in Mandalay, Myanmar, has expanded its integrated operations into various strategic sectors, including alcoholic beverage products, industrial gas, agriculture, sugar, building material, and mining.



BODYBUILDING COMPETITION

A bodybuilding athlete competes in the 47th State and Region Bodybuilding and Model Physique Championship in Yangon on July 23.

Photo: AFP

IN FOCUS



A FORMER US MARINE AND CURRENT MEMBER OF THE FREE BURMA RANGERS, TALKS WAR AND PEACE IN MYANMAR

Looking for an expert on Burmese small arms in this time of crisis?

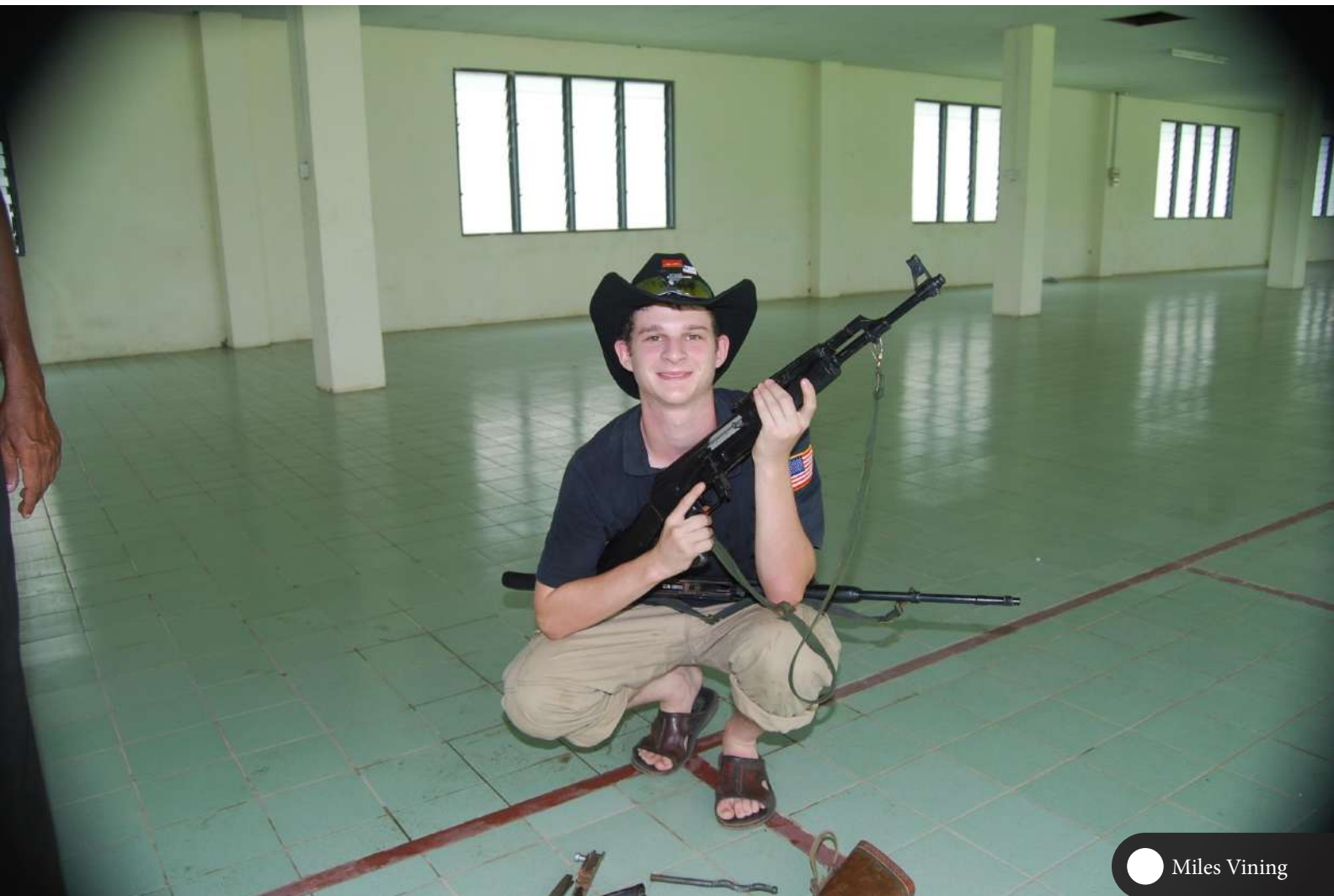
Check out Miles Vining, a former US Marine and current member of the Free Burma Rangers, who spent his teenage years in Yangon, where he saw a very different side of Myanmar than most tourists and expats see.

Check out his story on the Insight Myanmar podcast, Locked and Loaded here: <https://insight-myanmar.org/complete-shows/2023/7/10/episode-178-locked-and-loaded>

Miles attended the elite International School

of Yangon. His classmates ranged from children of diplomats and aid workers, to military cronies and illicit traders. He notes the odd juxtaposition of his adolescent years within the context of an oppressive society. “I was just a teenager going through a really rough time, against the very crazy geopolitical backdrop of a military dictatorship going on! So it was kind of like, ‘Oh, man, this is a military dictatorship, but alright, what am I going to wear for prom?’”

Many of his peers had little awareness—and little interest—in the political and social reality beyond the walls of their school and home, and if anything, took advantage of the prevailing lawlessness.





Miles ended up experiencing the Saffron Revolution in 2007 and Cyclone Nargis the following year brought the political reality of the country crashing down at least in some small way; school was cancelled for extended periods in both years—although for many of his classmates, these were like little more than snow days in a New England winter.

Through his interest in video games and “digital weapons” he eventually ended up chasing down information and the details of weapons in the real world.

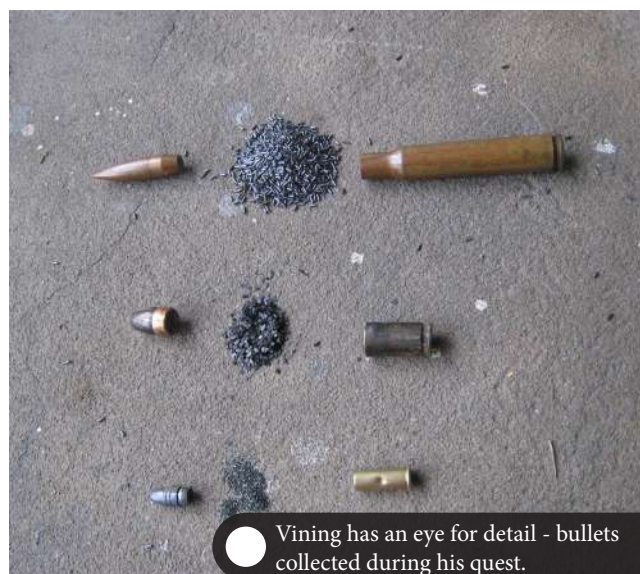
By the time he was 16 years old, Miles had amassed a huge database chronicling specific information on the Burmese military’s collection of small arms, which far surpassed the published work of any professional military analyst up to that point. That year, he happened to meet the editor of Small Arms Review, who, amazingly, suggested that he submit an essay on his findings to the magazine. Adapting the pseudonym “V. Kenneth,” the article immediately put him on the radar of scholars and journalists, and continues to be cited to this day.

Miles continues to keep an eye on small arms, pointing to the many answers that can still be found there. “Diving into small arms research in Burma, you can go down some of the most amazing and fantastic rabbit holes and relationships and geopolitics and then who double crossed who and backtrack to where things are getting made and what secret deals were going on. It’s all there, right? All these crazy things happening! And also developments in small arms use, like, there’s designs that will blow your mind away,

like, wow, this happened!” Miles says in closing. “It’s all there. The whole shebang is there! But it’s untouched, and nobody’s interested in it, because it’s the dark hole that Burma is, so it’s no surprise there. It’s like the world doesn’t care about Burma yet again! The field of small arms research in Burma is just as bleak as the field of everything else to study when it comes to Burmese anything. And that’s the unpleasant truth that I think epitomizes it.”

Check out his story on the Insight Myanmar podcast here:

<https://insightmyanmar.org/complete-shows/2023/7/10/episode-178-locked-and-loaded>





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