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the challenges for Myanmar today**



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MYANMAR: 'THE FIGHT NOW IS THE PEOPLE'S FIGHT'

Rumours were in the air last week swirling around incarcerated democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi and the steps the Myanmar military junta might take to mark the Buddhist holy day Wason Full Moon on 1 August.

Just before 1 August, Myanmar watchers were sharing rumours of what might transpire.

An extension of the state of emergency was on the cards, but also the suggestion that the junta might bring in an interim government – along the lines of the Thein Sein administration of 2010 – with the aim that this would be in place in the run-up to the announced elections. In the end, this did not transpire.

In the end, Myanmar was saddled with an extension of the state of emergency. But what really gained attention for all the wrong reasons was the “partial pardon” for Aung San Suu Kyi and whether she was now under house arrest.

In what one commentator called “hostage diplomacy”, the 78-year-old former leader had six years shaved off her 33-year prison sentence, a joke by any score, effectively a “life sentence”. Former president Win Myint had four years shaved off his 12-year sentence.

The response from Myanmar watchers was damning.

Former UN envoy Yanghee Lee told media that this “pardon” means “Min Aung Hlaing and the junta are out of ideas” and are “going back to their old playbook”. The junta leader is trying to win over the Myanmar people and reach out to the international com-

munity, she said. It is time the international community really wakes up, this is a decades-old trick, as the junta never has the support of the people, she noted. Others lambasted the “cruel” punishment.

But one message came through, an echo of the line now being followed by many Myanmar people who have lost patience. On the subject of the minimal pardon of Aung San Suu Kyi, Yanghee Lee said the Myanmar people have “moved on”. The people respect Aung San Suu Kyi, she said, but the fight now is the people’s fight.

This is particularly important at the junta appears to be pushing “dialogue” as part of a strategy to attempt to break up the Spring Revolution movement. As Burma News International (BNI) pointed out in its latest weekly report, the junta is trying to use a call to dialogue and an outreach to ASEAN to neuter the forces arraigned against it, including the PDFs, EROs and EAOs.

The junta appears desperate but hopes to use the Thai foreign minister’s claim that Aung San Suu Kyi “encourages dialogue” to dampen resistance. Yet the Myanmar people are not aware of the words The Lady spoke when she met the Thai foreign minister and whether she even tried to convey a “message”.

The tide has turned. As Yanghee Lee notes, the people respect The Lady but the fight now is in the hands of the people.

EDITORIAL

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WEEKLY

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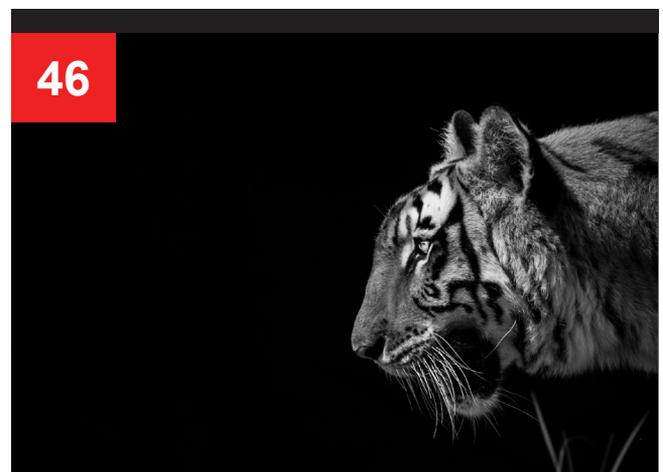
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Cover photo of former US Ambassador Scot Marciel meeting then State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi courtesy of Scot Marciel/Insight Myanmar





WAITING IN ANTICIPATION

Family and friends wait outside Insein Prison in Yangon for the release of prisoners on 1 August.

Photo: AFP



FIVE JUNTA SOLDIERS KILLED IN BAGO REGION'S KYAUKTAGA TOWNSHIP

Five junta soldiers were killed in fighting with Kyauktaga Township People's Defence Force (PDF) near Nanza Village, in Kyauktaga Township, Bago Region, on 25 July.

Kyauktaga Township PDF detonated Claymore mines as a junta convoy of about 40 soldiers was passing near Nanza Village at around 9:00 p.m. on 25 July.

After the Claymores detonated the PDF fighters attacked the junta soldiers and there was fighting. Five junta soldiers including a captain were killed and seven others were seriously injured. The injured are being treated at Taungoo Hospital, according to a soldier from Kyauktaga Township PDF.

"During the fighting, we seized one BA-94 sub-machine gun from an army soldier. Our members re-treated safely", said a Kyauktaga Township PDF official.

After the attack junta troops set fire to Nanza Village several times and stole villagers' belongings, according to a Kyauktaga Township PDF member.

A Nanza villager said: "The Military Council's army repeatedly set fire to Nanza Village, destroying nine houses. Military Council soldiers also took away threshing machines, motorcycles, and other valuables."

Around 8,000 people have fled villages in Kyauktaga Township due to the junta firing artillery and torching houses. The current situation is tense.

Kyauktaga Township is located on the Yangon to Naypyitaw highway. According to a Bago-based resistance force, the junta has increased security along the Yangon to Naypyitaw to Mandalay highway.

GIRL KILLED BY JUNTA MORTAR FIRE IN SAGAING'S MONYWA TOWNSHIP

A girl was killed and three women were injured when the junta fired 60mm mortar rounds into Ma-U Village in Sagaing Region's Monywa Township on the evening of 29 July.

Soe Win Swe of the Sagaing Public Support Network, an organisation formed by the National Unity Government (NUG) to offer humanitarian support for people in conflict areas, said: "The Military Council soldiers opened fire with 60 mm mortars. One of the shells landed on a house and killed 15-year-old Ma Htet Ei immediately. Other shells hit other houses in the village and injured three women in their forties."

The three injured women are currently receiving treatment at Monywa Hospital, two of them are in a critical condition.

According to Soe Win Swe, a unit of about 30 junta soldiers stationed at a farm near the Monywa to Mandalay highway in Monywa Township fired at least three mortar rounds into Ma-U Village, despite there being no fighting in the area.

He explained: "Junta soldiers frequently fire artillery into civilian areas without engaging in combat with resistance forces. They also inspect pedestrians and demand money. Worst of all, they attempt to assault women pedestrians."

Just over two weeks ago, also in Ma-U Village, a 45-year-old woman was killed by a mortar round fired by the same junta army unit.

JUNTA SOLDIERS DETAIN AND USE 48 TANINTHARYI VILLAGERS AS HUMAN SHIELDS

Junta soldiers have detained at least 48 residents of Yebyu Township in Tanintharyi Region and forced them to act as human shields to protect junta troops.

A junta military column of about 500 soldiers entered Zar Di Village in Yebyu Township at 5:00 a.m. on 27 July. The soldiers immediately started carrying out patrols and detaining people in surrounding areas and the forest.

By the end of the day, they had reportedly already detained 30 local people and by 30 July they had detained 48 people, according to locals.

“The junta made the detained locals wear [junta army] uniforms and carry weapons and ammunition. The detained have not yet been released”, said a Tanintharyi-based resistance fighter.

The detained were men and women aged from 18 to 60 years old. They came from the villages of Kaung Pyan, Dite Dagaw, Kha Yin Chaung, and Htwet Wa in Yebyu Township’s Kan Pauk Village Tract. This has caused residents of those villages to flee, according to a Kan Pauk resident.

The soldiers in the column are from Mawya-wadi Navy, based in Kan Pauk and Infantry Battalion 273, according to local defence forces.

DEFENCE FORCES KILL FIVE MEMBERS OF VILLAGE ADMINISTRATOR’S FAMILY IN MANDALAY

Local defence forces killed five relatives of a village administrator including three immediate family members when they attacked the administrator’s house on 29 July in Mandalay Region’s Mahlaing Township.

The defence forces attacked the administrator’s house in Thetkeikyin Village and killed five of the administrator’s relatives, but not the administrator or his wife, as they were not at the house when the attack happened.

“The administrator and his wife escaped. A total of five: the administrator’s daughter, a brother, a sister, and two other relatives died. Many people’s defence force [PDF] members came to the village and took part in the shooting”, said a Thetkeikyin villager.

The killed were named as the Thetkeikyin Village administrator’s daughter Daw Thu Zar, his sister Daw Kyi Lwin, his brother Ko Sein Win, and his relatives Ko Nay Htet Aung and U Khin Soe. They were all killed on the spot. Natogyi Township PDF claimed that all five were members of the junta-aligned Pyu Saw

Htee militia.

After killing the occupants of the house, the defence force fighters exchanged fire with junta soldiers stationed at Thetkeikyin Village School killing three soldiers, according to Natogyi Township PDF.

The PDF said that the attack was carried out to clear the area of Pyu Saw Htee members. During the attack the defence force fighters seized a homemade .22 gun, 16 bullets and a phone.

During the month of July, more than 25 civilians were detained by junta soldiers and Pyu Saw Htee members and they killed at least one person, according to Natogyi Township PDF.

Mizzima has been unable to confirm casualty numbers.

The defence forces that carried out the attack included Natogyi PDF, Mahlaing Township PDF, Natogyi Township PDF and Bo Sar Guerrilla Force (Myingyan).



FLASHBACK: US Ambassador Scot Marciel meets then State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi in Naypyidaw. Photo: Scot Marciel/Insight Myanmar

A photograph showing three men in dark suits and ties standing in a room with large windows. The man on the left is smiling and looking towards the other two men. The man on the right is looking back at him. A third man is partially visible in the background. The text is overlaid on the image.

REFLECTIONS ON US-MYANMAR RELATIONS

**Former US Ambassador
Scot Marciel discusses
the challenges for
Myanmar today**



US Ambassador Scot Marciel hands out an award.

The future of Myanmar lies with the people of Myanmar. That is the verdict of a former US Ambassador with a depth of experience following Myanmar affairs.

Scot Marciel is the author of a newly-published book entitled “Imperfect Partners” that examines developments in Southeast Asia, including reference to his tenure as ambassador in Myanmar.

He sat down with Insight Myanmar for a podcast to discuss the era of hope that led up to the Myanmar military coup in February 2021 and the resulting crisis.

The podcast can be found here: <https://insightmyanmar.org/complete-shows/2023/7/31/episode-181-scot-marciel>

Marciel was the US Ambassador to Myanmar during the pivotal years of 2016 to 2020, until just before the coup. This was the period that welcomed the democratic transition process, but also witnessed the Rohingya genocide and its fallout.

While the podcast conversation focuses only on his time in Myanmar, *Imperfect Partners* covers Marciel’s 37-year career as a diplomat, with chap-

ters devoted to the Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, Cambodia, and Thailand, along with commentaries on ASEAN and China. Today, Marciel is the Oksenberg-Rohlen Fellow at Stanford University’s Walter H. Shorenstein Asia Pacific Research Center and Senior Advisor at Bower Group Asia.

BURMESE DAYS

Marciel already had extensive experience with Myanmar before he became Ambassador. He first visited there in 2005, and he still vividly recalls his impression of the city: “Yangon at the time seemed—I hate to use the term sleepy, but it just seemed like it hadn’t moved for a long time.” During the 2007 Saffron Revolution, Marciel was serving as the Deputy Assistant Secretary in the East Asia Bureau at the State Department. The military’s violent crackdown prompted the Bush administration and Congress to find ways to pressure the military junta to bring about change. The White House convened regular meetings, led by the deputy national security adviser, to strategize ways to sanction Myanmar and seek support from allies in the region. “I spent a huge amount of my time... traveling around the region, trying to drum up support for more pressure on the generals,” he tells Insight Myanmar.

Around this time, Marciel describes how most of the aid coming from the US was delivered cross-border from Thailand, which was limited in its geographic scope and reach. However, after Cyclone Nargis caused enormous devastation in 2008—exacerbated by the military’s ineffective response—there were signs of an emerging civil society. Although some in Washington were advocating ending aid several months after the cyclone, Marciel strongly argued for continuing aid. “It doesn’t matter whether they’re overtly political or not, but helping to support this nascent civil society was probably one of the best things we could do,” he recalls thinking, adding that then this planted seeds for the approaching transition period. “Once there was an opening, you had some organizations that were already in place and experienced that could build on it.”

SANCTIONS DILEMMA

The question over providing aid or imposing sanctions reflects the wider challenges and limitations of Washington’s approach when dealing with problematic regimes, such as Myanmar’s military junta. Typically, there is a push to pressure, squeeze, and impose sanctions, but Marciel explains that while this may pro-



● Scot Marciel at a children's home.

vide moral satisfaction, it isn't always very effective. "In the late 2000s, our policy was driven by anger, an anger that I shared, that the military was just hurting people, and killing people! Maybe it's an American thing, or maybe it's a universal thing, but you just feel this is so wrong, and you want so much for things to get better... The trouble is sometimes it gets in the way of thinking analytically about what actually might be helpful. So the anger and frustration just says, 'Now let's keep punishing with sanctions,' and after a while when you realize that's not working, it becomes harder to offer a different approach or to convince other people to take a different approach."

When Marciel was appointed US Ambassador in 2016, Myanmar was in the midst of a dramatic transformation. The country was experiencing a transition towards openness, with increased access to information, of freedom of travel and formation of political parties, expansion of media outlets, and the growth of a civil society, as well as substantial economic reforms. "I was walking into a country that was in the

middle of what was significant change," Marciel states. Moreover, the National League for Democracy was just about to be voted into power for the first time in history. This was the moment when expectations and euphoria were at their peak.

MILITARY DIGS IN

However, according to Marciel, this picture is incomplete. "This is a country [where] the military has been digging the country into a very deep hole for 50 years," he says. "It's just begun to climb out of that hole. So, you can look down and say, 'Wow, look how far we've climbed.' Or you can look up and say, 'Oh my God, look how much more we have to do!' And that's exactly where Myanmar was." Marciel was particularly concerned about military's continued influence, ongoing human rights violations, as well as the lingering effect of the problematic 2008 Constitution, the general lack of strong institutions, and a weak rule of law. Yet despite these obstacles, he also observed that many people remained hopeful about the prospect of things getting better and moving in the right direction.

Marciel also admits that he had much to learn about the country's complexity. He notes how the international community often perceives the situation in reductionist terms, such as "the pro-democracy movement led by Aung San Suu Kyi against the military regime." However, he says, "It wasn't as simple as the military mindset versus the pro-democracy mindset." For example, he became more appreciative of the significant struggles faced by ethnic minority communities and their ongoing efforts to address grievances. He also experienced how many people, especially the Bamar, reacted quite negatively even to the mere mention of the word "Rohingya," insisting that the correct term was "Bengali," which carried the stigma of an outsider who had illegally crossed the border. This developed into a deeper understanding of not only the country's complex diversity, but also how ethnicity had historically been used as a means of dividing the Burmese people.

MEETING THE GENERALS

During the dark days of military dictatorship, the US had such limited relations with the regime that very little was known about its individual leaders, and so the transition period also presented American diplomats with the opportunity to become acquainted with the country's leading personalities. Marciel met with many of them, including: Shwe Mann, the speaker of the lower house of parliament, who he remembers as "thoughtful" and "quite a different type of thinker" who asked a lot of questions; Navy Vice Admiral Soe Thein, who "very much seemed to be one of the people who was most open to engaging and promoting reforms"; Aung San Suu Kyi, who was "a fascinating figure and obviously very intelligent, very charismatic," and had a "tendency to be a little bit firm or tough," though tempered by a sense of humor; and finally, future dictator Min Aung Hlaing, who seemed to be "superficially smooth and reasonably polished," but untrustworthy, and who had "pretty strong racist views that most clearly manifested itself vis-à-vis the Rohingya."

When Marciel first took up his post, the issue of sanctions was a major topic. He explains that the US felt that the gradual easing of sanctions they had been effecting since 2011 had not had their desired impact, which was to reinvigorate the Burmese economy. As the country's economic development was seen as a crucial support for political reforms they hoped would follow, discussions arose about the possibility

of lifting sanctions entirely to facilitate accelerated economic growth. Marciel fully supported this view, arguing that when a country undergoes significant, positive change after a prolonged period of stagnation, waiting for a complete transformation before acting is not practical. Additionally, the prior sanctions that had been in place had never managed to prevent the junta from engaging in widespread human rights abuses anyway, largely against ethnic populations. "You can't wait until it's Norway or Switzerland to act, you've got to come in and try to do what you can to support and encourage more change! And so I think it was the right move, because again, if you want to have influence at all, you got to be there."

With this in mind, the US eventually decided to remove all sanctions, a decision that Marciel acknowledges had many detractors. "We all knew there was a lot of work to do, and a lot more that had to happen," he notes. "But the argument, and I believe it to this day, was that the NLD needs to succeed, and... part of succeeding means delivering economically. If we've got sanctions in place that are inhibiting that, then we should lift those sanctions to give them the best chance. And that was the basis for the decision."

ROHINGYA CRISIS

Another urgent issue facing Marciel and the American mission was the serious turn that the Rohingya crisis had taken. In October 2016, ARSA (Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army) attacked several police outposts, and the military hit back hard, with disproportionate force, mainly targeting Rohingya civilians. Along with other diplomats, Marciel traveled to the region, where he visited several burned-down villages. While talking to a survivor, the military intervened and actually tried to arrest the man for alleged involvement in the attacks! Marciel objected, stating that arbitrarily arresting people who spoke to diplomats would hinder access and create an impression of withholding information. This incident highlighted the significant gap in understanding and perspectives between the Myanmar government and the diplomatic community. "I was just shocked," Marciel admits. "And I said, 'Minister, if you arrest this guy, that's the end of the trip! We're not going to continue on with this.'"

In all of Marciel's years as a diplomat, he hadn't faced anything even remotely close to how devastating the Rohingya crisis turned out. "It was certain-

ly, by far, the most difficult period of my career,” he notes, adding that people at the Embassy were barely sleeping during that time. “Very few people in the society shared our views or offered any support for the Rohingya community. It was very difficult to fathom and to deal with.” Additionally, some outside observers began to blame foreign diplomats for being complicit in what was later determined to be a genocide, a charge Marciel responds to strongly: “I just think that’s nonsense! It’s one thing to say the international community made some mistakes. Fair enough. Again, we should be open to criticism. But it was Myanmar that carried out this horrific operation against the Rohingya, led by the military. Of course, that wasn’t the international community! So I think people get a little carried away on that front, and I feel strongly about that.”

As the crisis worsened, it became critical for the Embassy to gain a better understanding of what was really happening on the ground, yet that was no easy task. They found themselves under intense pressure from both sides, with the military (and much of the Bamar population) trying to convince them that the alleged atrocities had been exaggerated, and human rights groups urging them to immediately corroborate their findings of mass killings and forced migrations. “Thant Myint U wrote at some point that you can’t fix Rakhine if you don’t fix Myanmar,” he recalls. “I took that to heart, and so that’s what we tried to do. But it was a struggle. It was a lot of anguish, and not everybody agreed, and there weren’t any great options.”

TURNING POINT

When he left in 2020, Marciel felt that the challenges the country was facing could be categorized into three basic areas: the military’s power, the grievances of ethnic minority communities, and the need for a generational change in thinking. Only months later, all three were borne out: the military reversed the prior years of democratic progress and launched its brutal coup; there has been a significant generational change in the resistance, indicating that many people who experienced greater liberty, democracy, and economic opportunities in the 2010s are now taking active part in pushing back against oppression; and ethnic minority populations are asserting their rights and fighting back. “It’s horrific to see the coup, the violence, the day-to-day suffering of so many people who were displaced or lost their jobs and are victims of violence. It makes me feel even more strongly! I both admire the courage and

resilience of people in Myanmar and hope and wish that somehow they can find a way to move forward.”

As a diplomat, Marciel certainly believes in engagement, but he finds that the current situation in Myanmar is different. Because the military junta is waging brutal war against its own population and seems impervious to reason, he believes any form of engagement would be unproductive. He believes that the military should be the ones to show a genuine desire for dialogue if there is any possibility for it in the future; until then, there is no reason to talk to the junta directly, as it would only legitimize them. Instead, he suggests putting more pressure on the regime to try and weaken it, to enable key players in the military to seek an exit strategy.

MORE SUPPORT

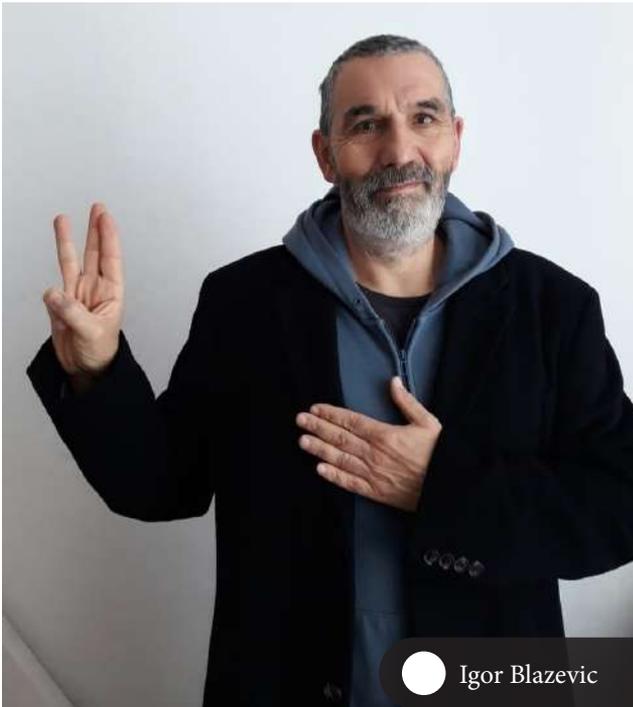
As for the responsibility of the international community, Marciel calls for greater assistance, in the form of financing, training, and support for local governance and public services for the ethnic groups and resistance elements opposing the military junta. Regarding perhaps the most controversial topic, the acquisition of lethal weapons by resistance groups, Marciel is cautious and highlights several factors to consider. Firstly, logistical challenges may arise in delivering weapons to some resistance groups because of their geographical proximity to neighboring countries. There is also a risk that overt US support through weapons delivery could enhance the perception of the conflict as a US-China confrontation, leading China to increase its support to the junta.

“First and foremost, I think 80 to 90 per cent of whatever happens is going to be decided within the country by people of Myanmar, and that’s just a reality,” he says in closing, adding that there are also ways the international community can help. “More thinking about what can be done, longer term planning about economic rebuilding, and so on. Support for local governance, more support for people who are displaced... more money and creative approaches to help provide education to people in Myanmar or people who had to flee Myanmar. Otherwise, you have a whole generation that’s lost.”

Check out the Insight Myanmar podcast here:

<https://insightmyanmar.org/complete-shows/2023/7/31/episode-181-scot-marciel>

REFORMING AN OPPRESSED SOCIETY IN MYANMAR



Igor Blazevic

“We need freedom; we need critical dialogue, critical reflection, to heal to overcome the deep prejudice. And when you have dictatorships, you don’t have these critical mechanisms.”

How does a multi-ethnic country progress from the dark days of oppression under a tyrant to a functioning democracy where human rights are respected and critical dialog can flourish? This is the question that Igor Blazevič brings to his understanding of the situation that Myanmar now finds itself in, according to Insight Myanmar that recently interviewed him for a podcast (see link below).

Blazevič experienced the chaos, violence and fear of the Bosnian War at a young age. Once the war ended, Igor wanted to support others who were suffering from the lack of freedom he had only just escaped from. With this in mind, Igor traveled to such hotspots

as Kosovo, Chechnya, Cuba, Belarus, and eventually to Myanmar.

This work led to a close friendship with Czech President Václav Havel, whose own country had recently emerged from a traumatic past. Havel’s participation at events that Igor sponsored ensured a wider visibility to their cause.

In Myanmar, Blazevič found the oppression similar to what he had seen elsewhere. He stayed in the country for five years, working with former political prisoners and ethnic activists. These were the transition years, and despite the optimism brought by the new period of openness, Blazevič saw red flags from the start. He tried to explain that it was only a superficial democratic façade, but the situation only deteriorated when the Rohingya crisis hit. And as the crisis worsened, things began to play out in a way that was eerily familiar to Igor from his experience with communal violence in Bosnia.

Blazevič saw how military intelligence was infiltrating and radicalizing parts of the Saṅgha, using the highly respected monastic clergy to advance its own fear tactics under the guise of Buddhism, spreading the poison of ethnocentrism and xenophobia. But he wasn’t heard, dismissed as a know-nothing foreigner.

Even so, Blazevič was totally taken by surprise when the military coup was launched in 2021. However, he now found that diverse groups in Myanmar were united in facing a common enemy, and so he saw a chance for building solidarity that had not been possible before. To him the course is clear: recognize that the Tatmadaw is the common enemy, unite to destroy it, and then work together to build a better future after it is defeated.

Check out the Insight Myanmar podcast: <https://insightmyanmar.org/insight-myanmar-blog/2023/6/15/reforming-an-oppressed-society>



Fighting for freedom.

MYANMAR MILITARY JUNTA RESHUFFLES CABINET



Myanmar military's State Administration Council (SAC) announced a major cabinet reshuffle through its mouthpiece Myanmar Radio and Television on 3 August, with the transfer of top generals to different key ministries.

Under the cabinet reshuffle, General Mya Tun Oo was transferred to the Ministry of Transport and Communications from the Ministry of Defence which will be led by General Tin Aung San. Both of them are close allies of military chief Min Aung Hlaing.

Lieutenant General Yar Pyae becomes the Minister for Home Affairs, and its former minister Lieutenant General Soe Htut was moved to the Ministry of Union Government Office (1).

The SAC announced removal of ministers on 2 August, and they were substituted with Nyan Tun for Ministry of Electricity, Ko Ko Lwin for Ministry of Energy, Myint Naung for Ministry of Labour and Tin Oo Lwin for Ministry of Religious Affairs and Cultural.

The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court was substituted with Thar Htay who was the Chairman of Constitutional Tribunal of the Union, and his position was taken up by Aung Zaw Thein.

The reshuffle includes the Union Civil Service Board, the Anti-Corruption Commission, the Auditor-General, the Chairman of National Human Rights commission and the Chairman of Naypyidaw Council.

The new Minister for Hotels and Tourism is Daw Thet Thet Khine and the new Minister of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Daw is Dr Soe Win.

The cabinet reshuffle took place after the military junta extended the state of emergency another six months on 31 July.

MYANMAR MILITARY'S ATROCITIES IN SAGAING AKIN TO GENOCIDAL ROHINGYA MASSACRES IN 2017: NUG



Dr Win Myat Aye

A National Unity Government minister has made a shocking comparison between the tactics of the Myanmar military and an atrocious campaign a few years ago.

The Myanmar military's ongoing abusive operations and atrocities in Sagaing Region is similar to forcing hundreds of Rohingya people to leave to neighbouring Bangladesh in 2017, Dr Win Myat Aye, the Union Minister for Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management of National Unity Government told a meeting this week.

The NUG minister is in a good position to know.

During his gathering with the Myanmar community in Maryland in the United States on 30 July, Dr Win Myat Aye shared his experiences on efforts to deal with Rohingya issue in northern Rakhine State while he was the Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement under the National League for Democracy-led government.

While the Myanmar military was violently oppressing Rohingya labelling them as the ARSA Rohingya armed group in August 2017, Aung San Suu Kyi asked Dr Win Myat Aye to go there immediately to address the issue.

"Daw Aung San Suu Kyi rented a civil helicopter for me to go to Rakhine. She also said, 'You should immediately go there by this helicopter. Don't expect any help from others'."

"Attacks on Rohingya occurred on 25 August.

Our government officials discussed ways to find solutions, and we arrived in Rakhine on 27 August," he said, adding that he failed to solve this problem as minister of the civilian government.

Dr Win Myat Aye remarked that the ongoing operation of the military in Sagaing Region is similar to forcing 700,000 to 800,000 Rohingya people to leave for Bangladesh, and their villages and houses under the mission of a "clearance operation".

The Myanmar military is currently pursuing "slash-and-burn" attacks on villages in Sagaing.

He recounted that officials from the ministries of defence, home affairs and border affairs, as well as general administration department and immigration which are under the control of military did not allow them to make direct contact with Rohingya over "security concerns".

He also told Myanmar community that the military listed all the resistance forces and their opponents into the title of their enemy.

During the meeting, Dr Win Myat Aye responded to the query of the VOA: "Although we were a civilian government, we could not address this issue due to the obstacle of the 2008 State Constitution. Officials from the ministries of defence, home affairs, border affairs, and immigration departments handled this issue. Senior officials of these departments are assigned by the military."

He concluded that the 2008 Constitution was an obstacle for their civilian government to bring justice for the Rohingya people.

A statement of the Ministry of Human Rights under the NUG on 31 July said that the Myanmar military has committed at least 144 mass killings between February 2021 and July 2023, in which 1,595 civilians were killed.

Most of the massacres took place in Sagaing Region during this period, with 90 cases, followed by Magway with 15 cases.

MYANMAR JUNTA BURNED DOWN 2,741 HOUSES IN JULY



Photo: Mizzima

The Myanmar junta burned down 2,741 houses throughout Myanmar in the month of July, according to the Fire Service Department under the National Unity Government's (NUG's) Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration.

The junta burned down houses in Mandalay, Magway, Bago, Tanintharyi and Sagaing regions, as well as Kachin and Karen States, according to the 1 August announcement by the NUG Fire Service Department.

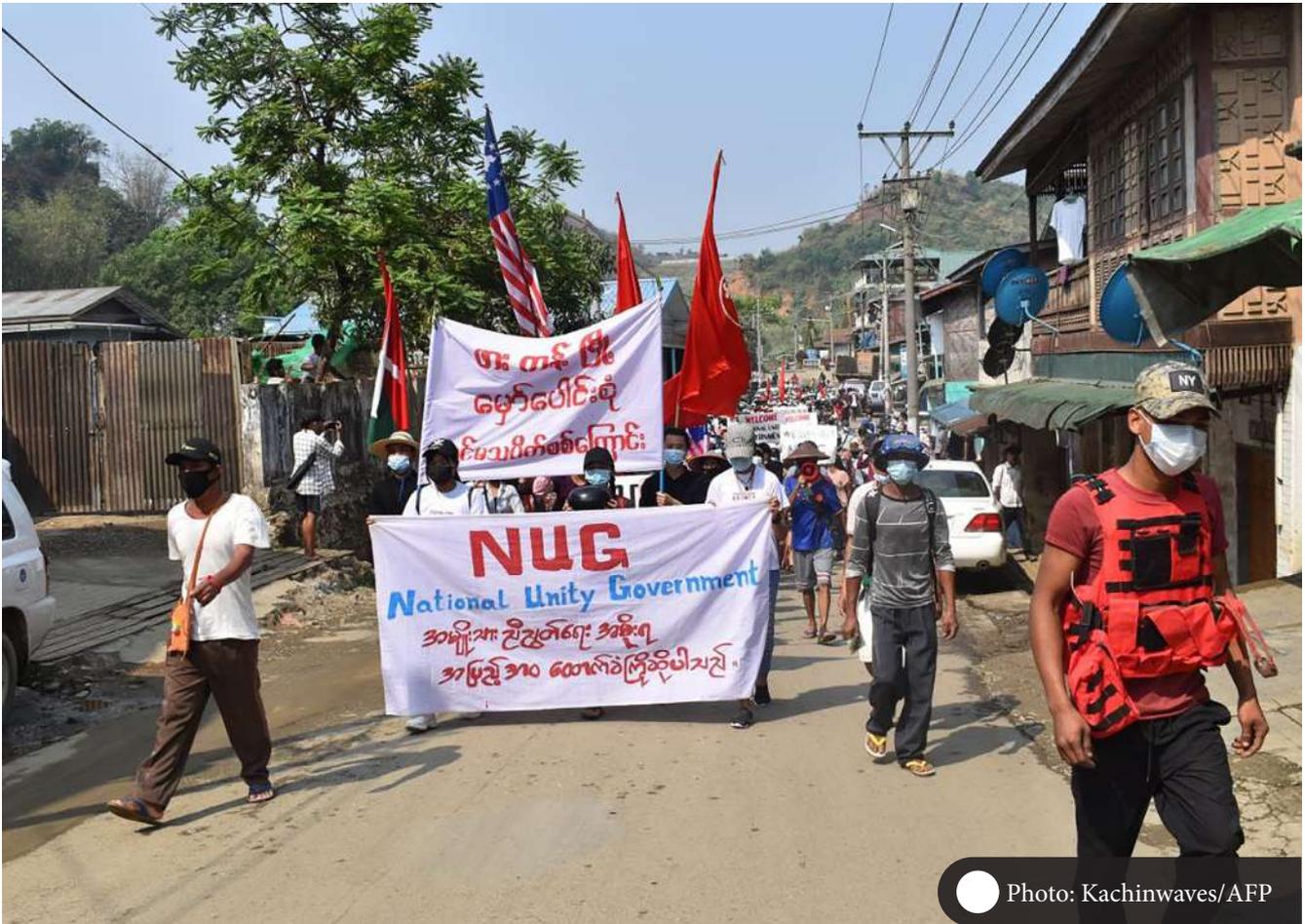
The area that suffered the most burnings was Sagaing Region where 1,750 home, a religious building and a school were burned down by the junta during July. Nine people were burned to death in the fires.

The junta burned down a further 991 houses in Mandalay, Magway, Bago and Tanintharyi regions and Kachin and Karen states.

According to data provided by the nonprofit organisation, the Institute for Strategy and Policy - Myanmar (ISP-Myanmar) at least 81,899 residences were burned down throughout Myanmar between 1 February 2021 and June 2023.

It said that of those 81,899 burnings 59,225, more than 72 per cent, took place in Sagaing Region.

NUG RECORDS 144 MASSACRES COMMITTED BY THE MYANMAR JUNTA SINCE THE 2021 COUP



The Ministry of Human Rights under the National Unity Government (NUG) has released an updated report on the massacre, atrocities and killing of civilians committed by the military after it illegally seized power in February 2021.

The report includes the recorded figures, with 144 massacres - 11 in 2021, 85 in 2022 and 48 in 2023, while casualties of civilians reached 1,595 up to July. The number of victims in these massacres were 920 in Sagaing, 96 in Magway, 58 in Chin, 142 in Kachin, 66 in Shan, 71 in Yangon, 110 in Bago, 48 in Karenni, 20 in Mandalay, 19 in Tanintharyi, 18 in Karen, 22 in Rakhine and 5 in Ayeyarwady.

The numbers of casualties in terms of gender were 153 female, 864 male, 81 boys, 42 girls and 455 people whose gender was not recorded.

Most of the massacres took place in the Sagaing region with 920 victims in 90 cases, 15 in Magway, 7 in Chin, 5 in Kachin, 5 in Shan, 4 in Yangon, 3 in Bago, 3 in Karenni, 3 in Mandalay, 3 in Tanintharyi, 3 in Karen, 2 in Rakhine and 1 in Ayeyarwady respectively.

The report of MHR said that it will try for justice on these crimes of the military, and invited reports from the public on human right abuses and international crimes of the junta with the aim to end the impunity enjoyed by the military.

The latest massacre occurred in Sone Chaung village of Yinmabin township, Sagaing Region, on 21 July when 14 innocent civilians, including four children under 18 years, were brutally killed by soldiers.

NLD WILL WORK TO FREE ALL MYANMAR POLITICAL PRISONERS INCLUDING AUNG SAN SUU KYI



Aung San Suu Kyi's house in Yangon. Photo: AFP

The National League for Democracy (NLD) Central Working Committee has stated that it will work to free all political detainees including Aung San Suu Kyi.

The decision was made during the second interim meeting of the Second Central Committee of the National Democratic League at 9:00 am on 29 July via Zoom.

As was discussed in the meeting, Aung San Suu Kyi, the State Counselor and NLD Chairperson, is one of the most important people who cannot be left out of solving Myanmar's political problems that arose due to the violent coup d'état by a group of military leaders who violated the existing constitution.

The NLD Central Working Committee announced that it strongly believes that all political pris-

oners, including Aung San Suu Kyi, have been unjustly arrested, and it will make every possible effort to free them as soon as possible.

Additionally, it was stated that seven resolutions had been approved without opposition, including the establishment of the Ethnic Affairs Committee, which would strengthen and build mutual trust and cooperation with the ethnic groups in the establishment of a future federal democratic state.

The central working committee meeting was presided over by NLD chairman Mahn Johnny, and a total of 92 people including 44 members of the central committee, 10 reserve members, 20 regional and state executives, and 18 members of the central affairs committees attended.

JUDICIAL PILLAR PREPARED TO SET UP COURTS FOR FUTURE MYANMAR FEDERAL UNION, SAYS NUG

The Ministry of Justice under the National Unity Government (NUG) is providing training virtually or in a hybrid model for judges and law officers in respective areas as part of preparations to establish courts for the federal union of the country, according to its official public release on 4 August.

The document said that the ministry's Alternative Dispute Resolution training is now being delivered to 19 judges, five law officers, and six officers from the headquarters from 3 to 5 August, with expectation to be beneficial in reaching an effective settlement relat-

ed to cases arising in respective communities.

The statement also said that the Ministry of Justice is playing great emphasis on implementing the Rule of Law for the people during the Interim period; likewise, the whole National Unity Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar is exerting effort in every aspect to ensure the success of the people's revolution against the dictatorship.

The Ministry of Justice has been able to successfully carry out Rule of Law activities to some extent during the interim period, and in addition to that,



Photo: AFP

we also have numerous initiatives in the pipeline that will further expand.

The Ministry of Justice recognizes that providing legal services and establishing functional courts, law offices, and prisons are crucial activities during the interim period.

The Ministry of Justice is well aware that it is the people's wish that the secret trials and perversion of the courts by the terrorist junta be swiftly replaced by a fair and just legal system accessible by all. To do that, they need skillful judges, prosecutors and lawyers, and said individuals also need to understand that "the law is the defender of the people, not a tool of the powerful."

The Ministry has been active in training both judges and prosecutors, many of whom are already

providing judicial proceedings in areas where the NUG can safely do so. As the breadth of those areas increases, so too will the need for additional judges, law officers and lawyers. They are cooperating with the Union Ministries, government departments, Parliaments, People's Defense Forces, Ethnic Armed Organizations, and Civil Society Organizations to train those persons who are selected as judges, law officers and lawyers to ensure that they are trained to provide competent rulings under the present constraints that are placed by the situation on the ground during this active revolutionary period.

The Ministry of Justice is working towards delivering prosecution training courses for law officers, orientation training and refresher training courses to enhance the capacity of judges and law officers, as well as legal training courses for military officers and administration officers, in the near future.

The Ministry is also working with the other ministries of the NUG and other organizations to recruit and appoint appropriate persons for the sectors of implementing justice and provide necessary training as the people fight to liberate their homes, townships and districts from the illegal rule of the terrorist Military Council, the press release says.

Despite the challenges that they face, the courts have been active. Up to June 2023, 74 civil cases and 306 criminal cases were heard and tried, with 29 of the civil cases and 173 of the criminal cases being resolved and decided. As a result, the percentage of resolution is 53%.

The structure and procedures of courts that are now operating in accordance with the situations on the ground during the interim period are one of the initial steps towards courts that will be established in the future Federal Union. The people of Myanmar deserve a judicial system that is fair, impartial, and consistent with democratic standards. We, the Ministry of Justice, are committed to achieving that to the best of our abilities with what we have to build that kind of judicial system that the people demand and deserve.



ADMINISTRATOR OF A PRO-JUNTA TELEGRAM CHANNEL IN MYANMAR ARRESTED



The administrator of a pro-junta Telegram channel that published photos of people opposed to the junta so that they could be arrested has been arrested himself.

The Telegram account called Ahnt Bhone Thwin shared photos of anti-military protesters, supporters of the revolution and people taking part in the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) and called for their arrest.

It was run by Ashin Suradaza, a monk from the Shwe Maung Tone Monastery in Ywar Bae Village-Tract in Bago's Pyay Township. He was detained by the junta in the last week of July and is currently being held in Pyay Prison and six lawyers are assisting him with his case.

Ashin Suradaza had used his Telegram channel to reprimand Minkyaung Sayardaw, the abbot of Minkyaung monastery, in the last week of July, over his alleged involvement in a land dispute. He was arrested after Minkyaung Sayardaw made a complaint

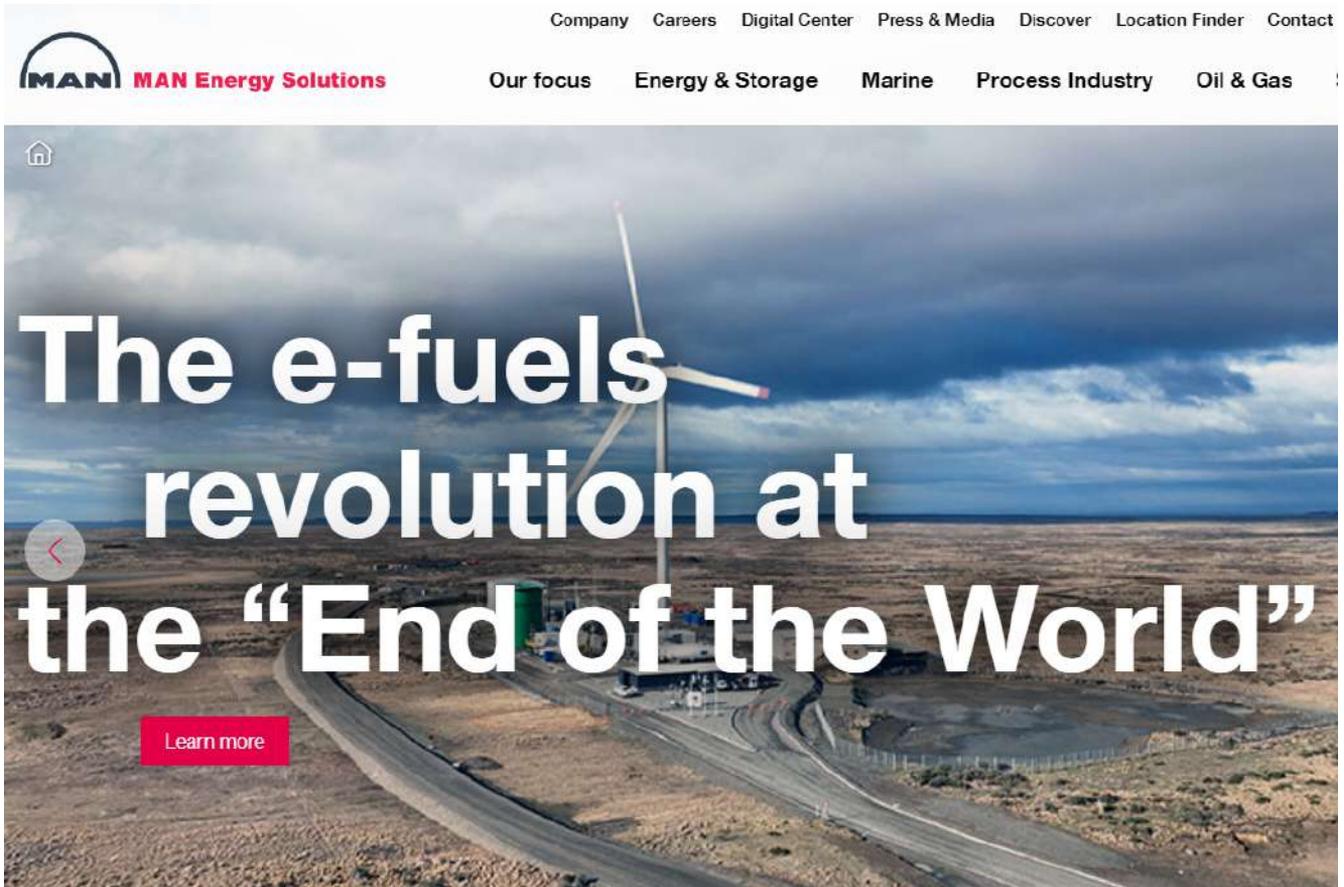
to high-ranking junta officials, according to a person working for Pyay Underground News (PUGN).

They said to Mizzima: "The reason for his arrest is obvious. It is because he insulted Minkyaung Sayardaw, the abbot of the Minkyaung monastery in Yangon Region, which is worshiped by the military regime. He is also incompatible with non-CDM people. Currently, monk Ashin Suradaza is helpless because his defender, Major So Pyae Lin [The commander of Pyay Regional Command Headquarters], has been prosecuted for the immoral pursuit of women."

The Ahnt Bhone Thwin Telegram channel has more than 27,000 subscribers but it has not shared any content since Ashin Suradaza's arrest.

"There were many people, protesters and CDM People arrested because of monk Ashin Suradaza. Although he was working for the Military Council, I just learned that he was arrested by Military Council soldiers", said a Tharyarwaddy District People's Defense Force press officer.

GERMANY LAUNCHES CRIMINAL PROBE INTO MAN ENERGY SOLUTIONS OVER LINKS TO MYANMAR NAVY: NGO



The German state prosecutor in Augsburg has launched a criminal investigation into MAN Energy Solutions, which supplied key components to the UMS Moattama warship, allegedly in violation of Germany's Foreign Trade Law and European Union Dual Use Regulations, according to NGO Justice for Myanmar in a press release last week.

This follows a criminal complaint filed by Greenpeace Germany with the attorney Holger Rothbauer, using evidence and research provided by Justice for Myanmar. The opening of the investigation was first reported by Süddeutsche Zeitung.

The UMS Moattama is a landing platform dock-amphibious assault ship, boosting the Myanmar Navy's capabilities to move troops, tanks, armoured personnel carriers and other arms and equipment to support its ongoing campaign of terror against the Myanmar people.

Since the military's illegal coup, the UMS Moattama has reportedly been used to transport

troops, rocket systems and heavy artillery to Rakhine State, where the military continues to commit atrocities. The Moattama is also used in the junta's Sea Shield military exercises.

The UMS Moattama was built in South Korea and transferred to the Myanmar military in 2019, in the aftermath of its genocide against the Rohingya which involved the Myanmar Navy.

MAN Energy Solutions SE, a subsidiary of Volkswagen Group, supplied the ship's main engine, power consumers, propellor and propellor control system, control and propellor equipment, and also gave training to Myanmar Navy personnel in South Korea, apparently involving its subsidiary in Denmark.



Mizzima today is recognized as the most accessed and trusted source of news for the people of Myanmar. Mizzima boasts over 21 million followers of our main Facebook page in addition to a digital daily newspaper in Burmese, Mizzima TV App, weekly English language magazine, and FM and shortwave radio broadcasting. In addition to the approximately 32 million people reached via Mizzima TV and Radio broadcasting, the following table summarizes the outreach of various Mizzima digital and online platforms:

MIZZIMA MULTIMEDIA PLATFORMS STATISTICS DATA | JULY 2023



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**Free to Air Satellite
TV Channels များကို ကြည့်ရှုလိုပါသလား ?**

၂ပေစလောင်း, PSI Receiver,
Free-to-Air Receiver များဖြင့်ဖမ်းယူလိုပါက
ThaiCom 6 Satellite [78.5E] Ku Band
Frequency : 12728 MHz
Polarization : Vertical
Symbol Rate : 30000

၈ပေ စလောင်း,
C band Receiver များဖြင့်ဖမ်းယူလိုပါက
AsiaSat-7 Satellite [105.5E] C band
Downlink Frequency : 3760 MHz
Polarization : Horizontal
Symbol Rate : 26000

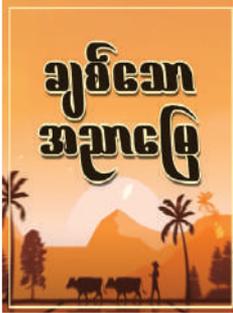


7:30 PM SPECIAL PROGRAMS TO WATCH ON MIZZIMA TV



**ပင်လုံသစ္စာအဖွဲ့
ပတ်ဒရယ်ရေးရာဆွေးနွေးစရာများ**
WEDNESDAY 7:30PM

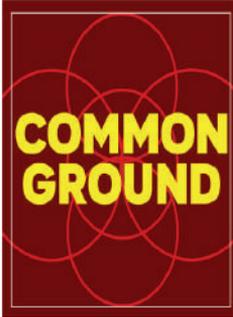
မြန်မာနိုင်ငံမှာ အစစ်မဟုတ်တဲ့ဖက်ဒရယ်စနစ်နဲ့အစစ်မဟုတ်တဲ့ ဒီမိုကရေစီစနစ်တွေ ရှိခဲ့တာကြောင့် စစ်မှန်တဲ့ ဖက်ဒရယ်စနစ်နဲ့ ဒီမိုကရေစီစနစ် လိုအပ်နေပါတယ်။ ဖက်ဒရယ်နဲ့ ပတ်သက်လို့ စဉ်းစားဖို့ လိုအပ်တဲ့ နိုင်ငံရေး သီအိုရီပိုင်းဆိုင်ရာတွေကို အစဖော်ထုတ်ပေးမယ့်ဒီအစီအစဉ်ကို နိုင်ငံရေးသုတေသီနှင့်ပညာရှင် ဒေါ်ခင်မမမျိုး နှင့်အတူ ဖက်ဒရယ်နှင့် အခြေခံဥပဒေရေးရာ လေ့လာသူ ဦးခင်မောင်ဝင်းတို့က ဦးဆောင်တင်ဆက်ပေးထားပါတယ်။



ချစ်သောအညာဇေမြေ
SATURDAY 7:30PM
လက်နက်ကိုင်တိုက်ပွဲဝင်နေတဲ့ လူငယ်တွေရဲ့ ဘဝတွေအကြောင်းနှင့်အတူ အညာကျေးလက်ဒေသရဲ့ မြေပြင်အခြေအနေတွေကို ကိုယ်တိုင်ကိုယ်ကျ လေ့လာသိရှိခွင့်ရမယ့် စကားပိုင်း အစီအစဉ်



Human Rights Barometer
THURSDAY 7:30PM
စစ်ပွဲအတွင်း၊ လက်နက်ကိုင်ပဋိပက္ခများအတွင်း ကျူးလွန်သည့် ရာဇဝတ်မှုများအကြောင်း NUGအစိုးရ လူ့အခွင့်အရေးဆိုင်ရာပြည်ထောင်စုဝန်ကြီး ဦးအောင်မျိုးမင်းနှင့် တွေ့ဆုံမေးမြန်းခန်းများကို ကြည့်ရှုရမယ့် အစီအစဉ်



ငြိမ်းချမ်းရေး၊ သင့်မြတ်ရေးအတွက်ဆွေးနွေးစရာများ
SUNDAY 7:30PM

ဖက်ဒရယ် ဒီမိုကရေစီအရေးအတွက် လုပ်ဆောင်နေကြတဲ့ အဖွဲ့အစည်း အချင်းချင်းကြား ဘေးတိုက်ပဋိပက္ခတွေကိုကျော်လွန်ပြီး သင့်မြတ်မှုပိုကောင်းလာရေး အထောက်အကူပြုနိုင်ဖို့ Common Groundအစီအစဉ်ကို Mizzima TV ကနေအပတ်စဉ် တင်ဆက်ပေးသွားမှာပါ။ ဒီအစီအစဉ်မှာ အကြီးတန်းအယ်ဒီတာ ဒေါ်စုမြတ်နဲ့ ပါရင့်သတင်းထောက် ဦးတိုးဇော်လတ်တို့က အဓိက ပါဝင်ဆွေးနွေးမှာဖြစ်ပြီး၊ အစီအစဉ် တင်ဆက်သူအနေနဲ့ ငြိမ်းပြည့်စုံက ပါဝင်တင်ဆက်ပေးသွားမှာဖြစ်ပါတယ်။



အစိမ်းရောင်လူမျိုးစု
FRIDAY 7:30PM
သေဒဏ်ပေးဖို့ပဲအားသန်နေတဲ့ သူကြီးမင်းနဲ့ သူရဲလူမျိုးစု အစိမ်းရောင်တွေက အပြာရောင်တွေကိုဖိနှိပ်နေကြတဲ့ ခြောက်ခြားစရာ ရွာတစ်ရွာရှိသတဲ့ကွယ် အဲဒီရွာလေးရဲ့ အကြောင်းကို ရသမြောက်စွာတင်ဆက်ထားတဲ့ "အစိမ်းရောင်လူမျိုးစု" အစီအစဉ်

EVERYDAY
6:00 AM to 12:00 MIDNIGHT

ဖျော်ဖြေရေးအစီအစဉ်များအတွက်

နောက်ဆုံးရသတင်းများအတွက်



CHINA RELAXES VISA, URBAN RESIDENCY RULES TO BOOST ECONOMY

China will allow some foreigners to obtain visas on arrival and rural residents to settle more easily in cities as part of a series of measures aimed at boosting its flagging economy.

The relaxations aim to “promote the free movement” of “people, vehicles, information and data”, an official from the Ministry of Public Security said Thursday last week.



China's post-Covid recovery has run out of steam in recent months, dragged down by sluggish consumption and a real estate sector in crisis.

GDP growth increased by just 0.8 percent from the first to second quarter of the year, and youth unemployment has reached record highs at over 20 percent.

In response, the ministry announced 26 new

measures on Thursday, including a new visa policy for foreign businesspeople.

Those who come to China to participate in trade negotiations, expos, conferences or to invest will be able to obtain visas on arrival, provided they present the necessary documents.

Previously, travellers had to apply for a visa at a Chinese embassy or consulate in their country of departure.

Also announced Thursday was a further relaxation of the controversial permanent residence system, or "hukou", which for decades has classified Chinese people as either "urban" or "rural".

Chinese citizens are entitled to settle, live and work in any location across the country.

But because of the residence system, they can only benefit from certain public services, including health insurance and education, where they are registered -- generally their place of birth.

This arrangement, which is nominally aimed at avoiding unbridled urbanisation, in practice causes many Chinese to give up settling in the city due to the difficulties of attaining full access to public services.

To soften these restrictions, China will "further relax registration requirements" and "encourage people from the countryside who have the ability to work and live in the cities to settle there with their family".

AFP



INDIA'S 'LOST TRIBE' OF ISRAEL HIT HARD BY DEADLY VIOLENCE IN NORTHEAST

A “lost tribe” of Israel in northeast India has been swept up in months of deadly ethnic violence, with at least one death, synagogues torched and hundreds forced to flee, members say.

Villages have been “razed to the ground”, with two synagogues destroyed and one death confirmed among the 5,000-strong community in India since fighting in Manipur state erupted in May, Lalam Hangshing, president of the Bnei Menashe Council, told AFP.

The Bnei Menashe community claims to have descended from the Manasseh -- one of the biblical “lost tribes” of Israel exiled in 720 BC by Assyrian conquerors.

But they also belong to the wider ethnic group which includes the Kuki minority, who since May have been battling the Meitei majority in Manipur in armed clashes that have killed at least 120 people.

Conflict erupted from a mix of causes including competition for land and public jobs, with both sides blaming state and national government for failing to stop the violence.

Mainly Christian Kukis make up around 16 percent of Manipur’s roughly 2.8 million people, according to India’s last census in 2011, and the Meitei majority are mainly Hindu.

Proportionally, the Bnei Menashe are the



Demonstration in Manipur, India. Photo: AFP

worst affected.

“Out of 5,000 Bnei Menashe, I would say at least half of them would be seriously impacted,” Hangshing said from the southern Indian city of Bengaluru, adding his home in Manipur had also been destroyed.

“Many of them are in shelters... they’re looking at a blank future”.

Hangshing, a retired government tax officer, said one Bnei Menashe man “caught up in the riots” had died and others injured, but said more could also have been killed.

“When a Kuki dies, they do not mention whether he’s of the Jewish community,” he said.

The Kuki community held a memorial on Thursday for victims of the unrest and intends to stage a mass burial soon, with a Bnei Menashe representative expected to carry out rites alongside Christian priests.

But the ceremony has been opposed by the Meiteis, prompting a heated confrontation Thursday between members of the majority community and security forces near the state capital Imphal.

‘LOST JEWS’

Bnei Menashe oral history tells of a centuries-long exodus through Persia, Afghanistan, Tibet and China, all the while adhering to certain Jewish religious practices, like circumcision.

In India they were converted to Christianity by 19th century missionaries and, in reading the bible, recognised stories from their own traditions that convinced them they actually belonged to the Jewish faith.

From the late 1990s, groups of Bnei Menashe were brought to Israel where they formally converted and settled.

Hangshing, 65, who is also general secretary of the Kuki People’s Alliance, a political party in Manipur, said it was “ethnic conflict” and not anti-Semitic attacks.

“Most people don’t even know we exist -- we are seen as part of the Kuki community,” he said. “You can call it collateral damage”.

But he noted some mobs had chanted slogans

against them specifically.

“Some of the slogans say that... we don’t belong here, we are lost Jews who should go back to Israel,” he said.

‘PEACE IS A FAR CRY’

Isaac Thangjom, project director of the Israel-based Degel Menashe community support organisation, said they were trying to provide aid to between 650 and 700 people.

“Those are people who have been totally displaced, with nowhere to go to -- that is, with their property gone, jobs lost and houses destroyed”, said Thangjom, who was born in Manipur but now lives in Israel.

“People fled with little more than the clothes on their backs,” said Asaf Renthlei, 31, a sociology doctoral student and Bnei Menashe member based in the neighbouring Mizoram state, where he works as a volunteer helping those displaced by fighting.

He began by helping provide wine, bread and candles so people could hold Shabbat celebrations, but after funds raised from Israel were sent, he now gives out rice and cooking oil as well.

Thangjom said the future is bleak and believes others would, like him, seek to come to Israel.

“Hatred has become too deep-seated,” he said.

“Peace is a far cry and most of those 5,000 people have relatives here in Israel -- so it is natural people would want to be safe.”

Hangshing said many were talking about leaving for Israel, although several people had lost their identification documents when homes were burned.

“They’re hoping that they can go get to Israel, where maybe they can rebuild their lives”, he said.

AFP

BETRAYAL BEST SERVED COLD, AND WITH MINT-CHOC, IN THAI POLITICS

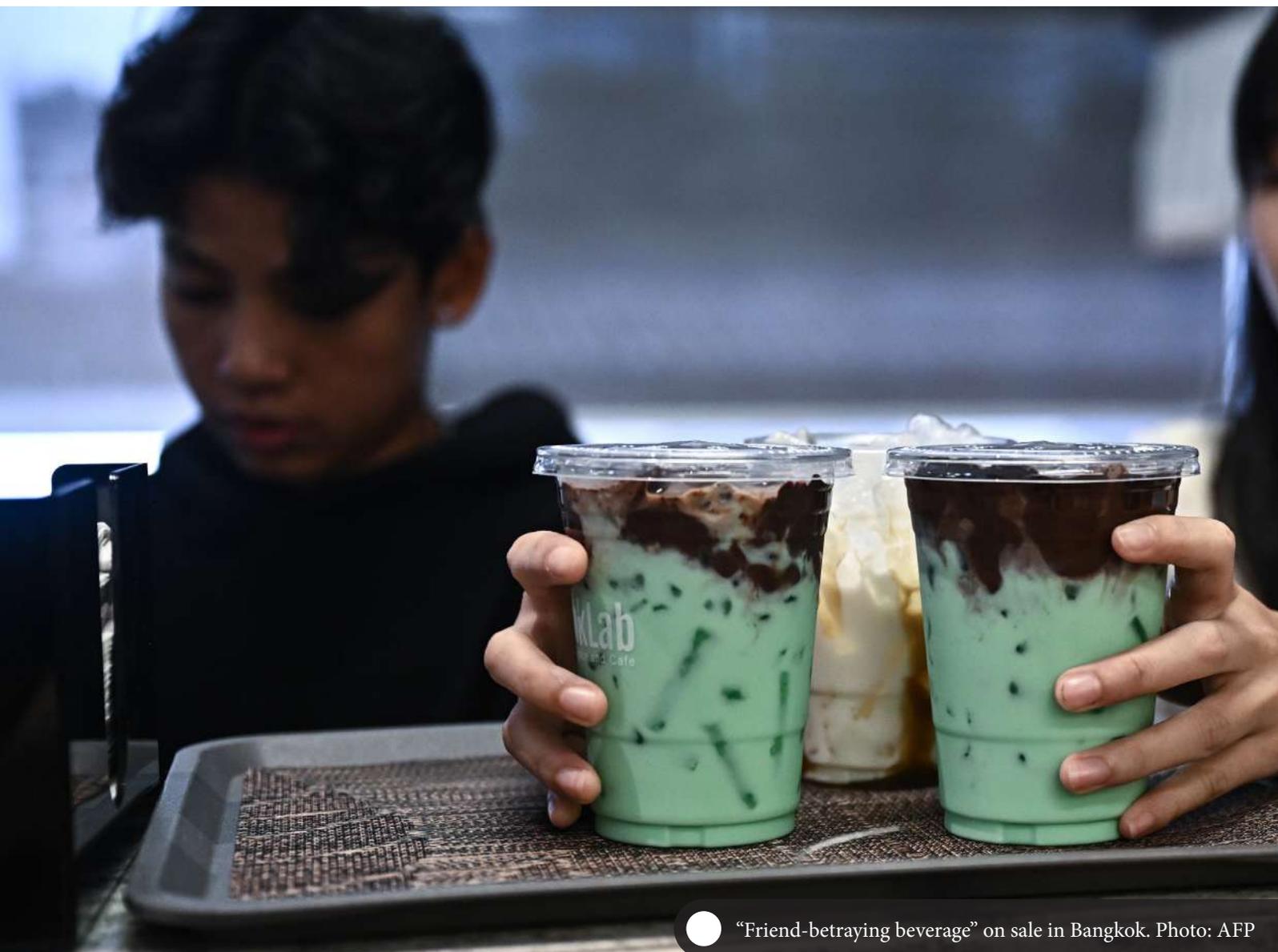
Betrayal is a beverage best served chilled in Thailand, as an innocuous chocolate-mint iced concoction takes the limelight - an unlikely symbol of the kingdom's deep political divisions following May's election.

The country is deadlocked after the Move Forward Party (MFP), buoyed to victory by promises to end nearly a decade of army-backed rule, failed to get its reformist candidate elected PM, forcing it to bow out and allow coalition partner Pheu Thai to try to form a government.

But only last week Pheu Thai leaders were seen in talks with pro-military party figures, with an image of them toasting iced chocolate-mint drinks going viral.

Local media immediately dubbed it a "friend-betraying beverage" and some cafes and shops announced boycotts, even as interest in the drink soared.

Devotees excitedly snapped pictures of the goopy green concoction at the ThinkLab cafe in Pheu Thai's Bangkok headquarters.



“Friend-betraying beverage” on sale in Bangkok. Photo: AFP

Expertly drizzling chocolate over the minty liquid before topping it off with whipped cream, barista Pob Rujikiatkachorn said the 90-baht (\$2.60) drink had never been so popular.

“It’s our best-selling item since it became the talk of the town on social media,” he told AFP.

He was initially surprised by the drink’s popularity but thanked the politicians for his increased sales, saying he has sold roughly 150 a day.

“In the end, it’s just a delicious drink that attracts a lot of customers and spreads happiness.”

‘HURT YOUR FRIEND’

MFP supporters might disagree.

In the wake of the viral image, several cafes



have joined a mint-choc boycott, removing it from the menu and describing it as a “hurt-your-friend” drink.

“I was suspicious of Pheu Thai when I saw that photo. Why did they hold talks with them?” Sasichom Krudhnark Pongphrom, who owns a cafe in Samut Songkhram, southwest of Bangkok, told AFP.

The 42-year-old, wearing MFP’s signature orange colours, said she had removed the beverage from the menu.

“I don’t have anything against the choc-mint drink, but I just wanted to show that I stand by the pro-democracy side of politics,” she said.

Thai politics has a long history of embracing colour coding.

About 10-15 years ago the country was deeply split between royalist “Yellow Shirts” and “Red Shirts” who supported Thaksin Shinawatra, founder of Pheu Thai’s forerunner party.

Some critics have condemned the moves by the junta-appointed senate to block MFP leader Pita Limjaroenrat’s bid for prime minister.

But so far, street protests have been limited - unlike the huge rallies of the Red and Yellow era or the youth-led demonstrations of 2020.

Instead, much of the anger has been vented online.

“The choc-mint drink that is popular now, I definitely won’t drink it,” said one social media user.

Still, some people think customers are reading too much into it.

“It’s just a drink,” said customer Jitphanu Sitthisanguan back in the cafe at Pheu Thai headquarters.

“We shouldn’t involve the drink with political issues.”

AFP

UNESCO EDUCATION REPORT ADVISES APPROPRIATE USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN SCHOOLS

A new UN report raised concerns on Wednesday last week about the excessive use of smartphones in schools worldwide. According to the UN's education, science and culture agency UNESCO, the over-use of mobile phones impacts learning.

UNESCO's report on technology in education urges countries to carefully consider how technology is used in schools.

It emphasises the need for a "human-centered vision" where digital technology serves as a tool rather than taking precedence.

Speaking to UN News, UNESCO's Manos Antoninis also warned of the danger of data leaks in educational tech, as only 16 per cent of countries guarantee data privacy in the classroom, by law.

ABUSE OF DATA

"We know that vast amounts of data are being used without the appropriate regulation, so this data

ends up being used for other non-educational purposes, commercial purposes and that's of course a violation of rights that needs to be regulated."

The UNESCO report also highlights the disparities created by digital learning. During the COVID-19 pandemic, half a billion students worldwide were left out due to the shift to online-only tuition.

Geographically, the report noted a significant imbalance in online resources favouring Europe and North America.

UNESCO is urging countries to set their own standards for the way technology is designed and used in education such that it never replaces in-person, teacher-led instruction and supports the shared objective of quality education for all.

HUGE POTENTIAL

"The digital revolution holds immeasurable potential but, just as warnings have been voiced for how it should be regulated in society, similar atten-



Photo: UN News

tion must be paid to the way it is used in education,” warned UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay.

“Its use must be for enhanced learning experiences and for the well-being of students and teachers, not to their detriment.”

The report, *Technology in education: A tool on whose terms?* was launched at an event in Montevideo, Uruguay hosted by UNESCO and the Ministry of Education and Culture of Uruguay, with additional support from the Ceibal Foundation and 18 ministers of education from around the world. It proposes four questions that policymakers and educators should reflect upon as educational technology becomes increasingly accessible and utilized around the globe.

APPROPRIATE USE

The first question focuses on the appropriate use of technology in class. Disabled children who may struggle in a traditional, in-person setting may also benefit from the option of technological assistance.

“The opportunities it has opened up are incredible, and we are always amazed by the new windows this opens for learners,” said Manos Antoninis, the Director responsible for producing the report.

“We need to learn about our past mistakes when using technology in education so that we do not repeat them in the future,” said Mr. Antoninis.

“We need to teach children to live both with and without technology; to take what they need from the abundance of information, but to ignore what is not necessary; to let technology support, but never supplant human interactions in teaching and learning,” he added.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The rapid shift to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic left out an estimated 500 million students worldwide, mostly affecting those in marginalized, rural communities.

The report underlines that the right to education is increasingly synonymous with the right to meaningful connectivity, yet one in four primary schools do not have electricity. It calls for all countries to set benchmarks for connecting schools to the Internet between now and 2030, and for the primary focus to re-

main on these marginalized communities.

IS IT SCALABLE?

There’s a lack of impartial evidence concerning the added value of tech. Most evidence comes from the United States, where the What Works Clearinghouse pointed out that less than two per cent of education interventions assessed had “strong or moderate evidence of effectiveness.”

The evolution of technology is putting strain on education systems to adapt, UNESCO argues. Digital literacy and critical thinking are increasingly important, particularly with the growth of generative AI.

Additional data in the report shows that this adaptation movement has begun: 54 per cent of countries surveyed have outlined skills they want to develop for the future, but only 11 out of 51 governments surveyed have curricula for AI.

“Let’s not forget that to be able to navigate the digital world, we don’t necessarily need very sophisticated skills. Those who have the best reading skills are those least likely to be duped by a phishing email, for instance,” said Mr. Antoninis.

Moreover, teachers also need appropriate training yet only half of countries currently have standards for developing educators’ information and communication technology skills. Even fewer have teacher training programmes covering cybersecurity, despite five per cent of ransomware attacks targeting education.

Courtesy of UN News



Photo: EPA

MON STATE

Defence force accidentally kill innocent civilian in Mon State's Paung Township

On 25 July Tabinshwehti Column issued an apology for mistakenly killing innocent civilian Ko Sithu Win, on 22 July in Oke Ta Dar Village, in Mon State's Paung Township.

At around 5:50 p.m. on 22 July members of Tabinshwehti Column entered the Kyaw Kyi Restaurant near the Yangon to Mawlamyine Highway, in Oke Ta Dar Village and shot at Phyo Zaw Aung, a surveillance officer from the nearby Zin Kyaik Town Police Station, who was eating at the restaurant.

Ko Sithu Win stood up when the defence forces shot Phyo Zaw Aung Kyaw. Because of this, the defence forces mistook him for a policeman trying to protect Phyo Zaw Aung Kyaw and shot him too.

An official from Tabinshwehti Column said: "When the resistance fighters were shooting at a surveillance officer, Ko Sithu Win stood up. Therefore, the resistance fighters mistook him for a policeman accompanying the surveillance officer and accidentally shot him."

Ko Sithu Win who owned a car repair shop was hit in the chest and abdomen. He died on the spot.

According to Tabinshwehti Column it was an accident that happened because its fighters had not taken the time to verify who Ko Sithu Win was or what he was doing before they shot him.

The group also apologised to Ko Sithu Win's family and said it would take responsibility for the killing in a way that Ko Sithu Win's family approves of.

Tabinshwehti Column is a joint force formed by the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and the People's Defence Forces operating mainly in KNLA

Brigade 1 territory. It is under the command of the National Unity Government (NUG) and Karen National Union (KNU).

Talking of the accidental killing Major Saw Kyaw Myint, the KNU Chairman of the Thaton District Alliance Affairs Supervision Committee said: "It was probably a misfire, but we aren't certain of the details because the Zin Kyaik case has not yet been reported to us."

SHAN STATE

Businessmen kidnapped by unknown group in Lashio, Shan State

An unknown armed group allegedly kidnapped three local business owners and their driver on the Lashio to Mandalay highway on 25 July.

The men were detained as they were travelling from Lashio to a business meeting in Mandalay.

"Four people were detained in total, they were three businessmen and a driver. All we know is that they were apprehended by an armed group on their way to Mandalay. There are several claims that they were kidnapped for money", a Lashio resident said to Mizzima on 29 July.

The four detained people are: U Kyaw Win, the owner of a zinc sheet plate factory, U Mutta, the owner of a hardware shop, an unnamed Chinese businessman who owns a grocery store and the unnamed driver.

It is not known which group abducted the men and investigations are still ongoing.

Since the coup there have been frequent thefts, robberies and kidnappings in northern Shan State's Lashio, Kyaukme, Kutkai and Muse townships, according to locals.



JUNTA CHIEF ADMITS MYANMAR'S ELECTRICITY DEMAND UNMET

Junta chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing said that Myanmar's electricity requirements remain unmet, with as much as 50 percent of the demand not being fulfilled, according to local news outlets.

He made the remark on August 8 while meeting with Union-level officials from Union Ministries at the military council chairman's office in Nay Pyi Taw.

He said that several power generation projects that were implemented a decade ago had to be stopped due to various reasons, but he did not disclose the details.

The electricity demand poses a significant challenge for the junta, leading Myanmar to adopt various approaches like solar and wind power generation, as well as utilizing rice husk gas for power generation, he added.

Myanmar's severe power outages are jeopardizing the economic revival of the conflict-torn country.

Following a military coup in 2021, the country has faced difficulties in procuring fuel for its gas-fired electricity plants.

Even in Yangon and Mandalay, major cities of the junta-ruled nation, scheduled electricity cuts have extended to eight hours daily as of April, marking a doubling of their previous duration.

MYANMAR-CHINA GAS PIPELINE SHIPS 52 BILLION CM OF NATURAL GAS IN 10 YEARS: CHINESE MEDIA



Photo: CNC

About 52 billion cubic meters (bcm) of natural gas has been shipped by the Myanmar-China Gas Pipeline over the last 10 years, the Global Times reported on 27 July.

The gas pipeline which connects Kyaukphyu in Myanmar and Yunnan Province in China has been in operation since 28 July 2013.

This Myanmar-China gas pipeline is a pilot project of the Belt and Road Initiative.

“Natural gas shipped by the pipeline has been supplied to power stations and industrial companies in Myanmar, which ameliorated its electricity supply crunch, boosted its economic development and improved living standards,” Chinese state-owned oil giant China National Petroleum Corp (CNPC) said in a statement sent to the Global Times.

But the local residents said that even the people in Kyaukphyu, Rakhine State where the pipeline started were still facing electricity shortage though the Chinese government claimed that gas supplied by this pipeline improved the economy and living standards

of the local people. Moreover, there were numerous land disputes and seizure cases along the route of this pipeline.

The pipeline, with a length of 793 kilometers and a designed annual capacity of 5.2 bcm, runs from Kyaukphyu in western Myanmar to the border city of Ruili in Southwest China’s Yunnan Province. It has investment from six corporations from four countries, namely China, Myanmar, South Korea and India.

This pipeline crosses four states namely Rakhine State, Magway Region, Mandalay Region and Shan State.

The project is operated by two companies - South-East Asia Crude Oil Pipeline Co and South-East Asia Gas Pipeline Co - with CNPC taking a 50.9 percent stake in each.

As of December 2022, its shareholders’ return on investment had reached 165 percent, the Global Times reports.

TIN PRICE SURGES IN WORLD MARKET AFTER MYANMAR'S WA SUSPENDS TIN MINING



The tin price soared in the world market after the International Tin Council confirmed the news of tin mining suspension in the Wa region in northern Shan State, Myanmar, 1 August onwards.

The Wa autonomous region in northeast Myanmar has huge reserves of tin so that Myanmar became the third largest tin producer in the world on account of the mining in the Wa region.

The tin price rose significantly after the confirmation of tin mining suspension in Wa autonomous region. Currently the tin reserves in Wa tin mines in its autonomous region are said to be depleted, but the reasons for the suspension are unclear.

Reuters reported on 17 April that tin price rose by about 11% per tonne in the world metal market after the Wa authorities decided to reduce production.

After that news, the prices of electronics and semiconductors rose immediately as this sector uses tin.

The tin ore produced in Wa region is processed in Yunnan province, China and then exported to the world's leading technology and jewellery com-

panies through Chinese mining companies.

According to international trade figures, China imported 500,000 tonnes of tin from Myanmar at a record-high level in 2016 and then annual imports stood at around 150,000-200,000 tonnes per annum.

The International Tin Council visited and studied tin mines in the Wa region as its production had a high impact on the world market. Myanmar tin makes up 12 per cent of world supply.

Since that time, the international analysts concluded that the metal reserves in Wa mines were depleted.

At the time of falling supply of tin from Wa tin mines, China and Indonesia which are the largest and second largest tin producers in the world have had to reduce their production by tightening regulations as tin mining has high environmental impact in these countries.

Myanmar has the third largest tin reserves in the world and the tin produced in the Wa region last year was estimated to stand at 70% of Myanmar's total tin production.

MYANMAR PETROL PRICES UP 15 PER CENT IN JULY



Petrol prices in Myanmar increased by about 300 kyats a litre, or about 15 per cent, in July, after having been stable for a few months.

“Normally it [the price of petrol] fluctuated but, following the 20,000 kyats banknote chaos, the price went up by 300 kyats in a month. For diesel there has been an increase of about 400 kyats when we compare today’s price to the price on 30 June,” said a fuel distributor.

In Mandalay between 30 June and 30 July the price of 92-octane petrol rose from 1,990 kyats to 2,280 kyats a litre; 95-octane petrol rose from 2,085 kyats to 2,395 kyats a litre; and diesel rose from 1,975 kyats to 2,360 kyats a litre, according to the Petroleum Products Regulatory Department. The price now seems to have stabilised at this new higher rate.

This is still lower than the all-time high for petrol prices in Myanmar which occurred between May and August 2022, when there was no 95-octane petrol for sale and 92-octane petrol cost over 2,600 kyats a litre.

SINGAPORE'S UOB TAKES UNPRECEDENTED STEPS TO RESTRICT FINANCIAL TIES WITH MYANMAR AMID GLOBAL PRESSURE

Singaporean multinational banking corporation United Overseas Bank is discontinuing its correspondent bank relationships in Myanmar, a move that could greatly limit the military regime's global financial access, reported the Nikkei Asia.

In early August, United Overseas Bank sent a secret message to banks in Myanmar, saying it would restrict all incoming and outgoing payments to and from Myanmar accounts, allowing funds to be moved only between accounts held with the bank.

The bank also revealed stricter limits on Visa and Mastercard transactions for people and banks in Myanmar, allowing them to only do business with accounts in UOB. Furthermore, UOB stated that it would shut down Myanmar banks' foreign currency accounts ("nostro" accounts) at its Hong Kong branch, which are used for trade purposes.

UOB is recognized as the preferred foreign bank for Myanmar's military leaders, large companies, rich individuals, international groups, and foreign investors.

Some financial experts view this unprecedented tightening, unusual for a Singaporean bank, as a reaction to U.S. influence urging Singapore to restrict offshore financial services for Myanmar's military junta.

Around mid-July of this year, UOB has intended to close all five accounts belonging to Myanmar Airways International (MAI) by August 15, even after the airline requested to keep them operational, according to the Straits Times.

In a letter signed by MAI's CEO Saravanan Ramasamy and distributed to business associates, the bank has suggested a schedule "to allow a smooth transition and minimize disruption"

The letter said that by July 1, no cash or cheque deposits will be allowed into MAI accounts with UOB.



MODEL OF THE HOLY SITE

People view a model layout of the site of the marble Maravijaya Buddha statue in Naypyidaw.

Photo: EPA

IN FOCUS



ENDANGERED TIGER FILMED IN TANINTHARYI REGION

An endangered Indochinese Tiger was filmed by a camera trap in forest in the Ywarhilu area of Tanintharyi Region, according to the international wildlife conservation charity, Fauna and Flora International (FFI).

In a statement issued on 29 July to celebrate Global Tiger Day FFI released previously unseen footage of a newly discovered Indochinese Tiger taken on 16 May, in the Ywarhilu area of Bokeyyin Township, in Tanintharyi Region. The new tiger, identified by its stripes, which are unique to each tiger, was one of eight captured by the camera.

The footage was filmed by an FFI camera on 16 May. There are believed to be only 22 Indochinese Tigers in Myanmar and only an estimated 196 in the world living in the wild, in Myanmar and Thailand. Until recently their range also stretched to Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia, but no tigers have been recorded in those countries in recent years. They are classified as endangered on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List.

“It is fantastic to have detected a tiger we have not previously seen before roaming in the wild’ said Saw Soe Aung, the Acting Programme Manager of Fauna & Flora, to the Geographical website.

“Unfortunately, this tiger sighting is rarer than we would like. The future of this species is under grave threat, and urgent action is needed to secure its survival”, he continued.

The remaining population of tigers is threatened by hunters because there is a continual demand for tiger parts in traditional Asian medicine. To try and halt the decline in tiger numbers FFI is implementing conservation activities with local communities, in collaboration with the UK Government and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

The first time tigers were recorded in Tanintharyi Nature Reserve was when they were photographed by camera traps in 2018, according to the Myanmar Forestry Department.



Photo: Niket Goswami



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