

mizzima |

WEEKLY

myanmar news & insight

AT THE GATES?

**Do resistance forces
pose a threat to
Myanmar's capital
Naypyidaw?**



mizzima

WEEKLY
myanmar news & insight

OUT EVERY
THURSDAY

PRINT VERSION

PDF ONLINE VERSION

For more contents to read
Follow us on:

Our Websites:

www.mizzima.com

www.mizzimaburmese.com

www.mizzima.tv

SUBSCRIBE HERE

KEEP UP ON WHAT MATTERS



Available at...

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

Contact Us!



► Subscription
(95) 9 421010101

MYANMAR'S KIDS UNDER ATTACK BUT IS THE CULPRIT THE SMARTPHONE?

Arguably the biggest challenge for children in Myanmar is insufficient nutrition, if international assessments of those in poverty are anything to go by. The numbers are said to run into the millions. But a new problem has popped up prompting doctors to scratch their heads.

Judging from reports, a significant and growing number of children are turning up at the doctor's surgery or eye clinic in Myanmar suffering from eye pain, red eyes, blurred vision, clouding of the eyes, squinting and weakness of the optic nerve.

A recent local media report on Rakhine State highlights a problem that may be popping up all around Myanmar, one that might be hard to tackle. One eye clinic in Sittwe reports that 30 per cent of eye patients are children, shockingly many of them under five years old, some faced with getting a prescription for glasses.

The threat to children appears to be posed by parents or relatives who allow young children to use smartphones and small screens for video games as a way to keep the kids occupied. And the proof appears to be in the numbers of children brought into clinics.

The excessive use smartphone use can lead to eye strain, discomfort, and fatigue, poor posture, and reduced physical activity. Constant connectivity and instant gratification from smartphones can lead to addiction-like behaviours. Excessive use has been linked to increased anxiety and depression in children.

The blue light from screens can disrupt sleep patterns, leading to sleep issues. Overuse of smartphones can lead to reduced face-to-face interactions and hinder the development of communication skills.

Excessive smartphone use might decrease the ability to understand and empathize with others.

All of this is a serious worry.

Over the last decade, there has been a major change in Myanmar with the massive growth in the purchase and use of smartphones that have helped immeasurably in allowing people access to the news and media – a revolution in communication. But there is a dark side. People are getting addicted to smartphones, with all the negative repercussions that come with it.

This is a serious challenge for the people. But it appears that slack behaviour by parents and relatives in giving small children a smartphone to “keep them occupied” could lead to serious physical and mental problems.

Children's experts say that as the times have changed, nearly everyone is using social media, and with the pros and cons, it is necessary for parents to guide children's use of smartphones and video and games devices – if not ban their use altogether.

Instead of going out in the street to play, many children end up glued to a small screen, with all the problems that might cause. The World Health organization says children who use mobile phones and tablets to excess are at higher risk of obesity, developmental delay, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), slowed decision-making and writing, and lagging creativity.

Myanmar's children need the right support in terms of nutrition, medical help, and a good mental environment. Of course, solving poor nutrition will make the headlines, given the crises in the country.

But this new threat needs attention. Parents and relatives need to stop providing the easy child pacifier – the less-than-smart option of handing them a smartphone.

EDITORIAL

mizzima
WEEKLY

Editor In-Chief and Managing Director
Soe Myint

Contributors
Sai Wansai,
Andrew Landen, Marc Jacob

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

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

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

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

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

CONTENTS



mizzima WEEKLY

NEWS & INSIGHT

- 3 EDITORIAL
- 6 IN FOCUS
- 8 NEWS ROUNDUPS
- 10 AT THE GATES? Do resistance forces pose a threat to Myanmar's capital Naypyidaw?

HUMANITARIAN AID CRISIS

- 14 Delivering aid to populations being slaughtered: The UN must rethink its approach to Myanmar
- 16 NUG calls on UN bodies to include role of EROs, CSOs in delivering aid to Myanmar
- 17 CSOs criticize UN OCHA's current approach that 'supports the Myanmar junta's war of terror'



- 18 UN Security Council condemns Myanmar junta airstrikes, calls for humanitarian aid
- 19 Award-winning anti-Myanmar junta movie 'The Way' to debut in USA
- 20 Myanmar extradites seven suspects to China over online scams
- 22 Despite takedowns, pro-military doxing rampant in Myanmar Telegram channels





25 Rapper Byuhar receives 20-year prison sentence for criticising blackouts

ROHINGYA GENOCIDE REMEMBRANCE

26 Women's Peace Network remembers 2017 'genocide against Rohingya' in Myanmar's Rakhine

28 Sixth anniversary of 'Rohingya Genocide' marked at Burmese event on Thai border

29 Bangladesh protests mark six years since Rohingya exodus

30 Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh need urgent support as crises multiply: UNHCR

BRICS MEETING

32 BRICS hails 'historic' entry of new members amid bloc rivalry

34 At BRICS Summit, Guterres global unity call in face of 'existential' challenges

36 US plays down BRICS bloc expansion

Cover photo of Myanmar tanks by AFP

CHINA FOCUS

38 US hits China on 'forced assimilation' of Tibetan children

COMMENTARY

40 Six years on, still no justice for Myanmar's Rohingya

42 ETHNIC NEWS ROUNDUPS

43 LAST WEEK IN NAY PYI TAW

BUSINESS

44 US sanctions on Myanmar state-owned banks have impact on the country, junta admits

45 ADB cuts inflation forecast for developing Asia

47 Inflation, Covid pushed nearly 70 million Asians into extreme poverty: ADB

47 BUSINESS ALERTS

CULTURE & LIFESTYLE

48 IN FOCUS

50 Book highlights conflict, complexity and climate change in post-coup Myanmar





TAKING SHELTER

People affected by the flood take shelter at a monastery in Bago, Myanmar this month. Tens of thousands of people have been affected in Myanmar as heavy rains continue to cause flooding in the Kayin, Rakhine, Mon and Bago areas.

Photo: EPA



IN FOCUS



MYANMAR JUNTA COMMANDER SHOT BY CARELESS SOLDIER IN BAGO

A junta company commander was killed by one of his own soldiers who fired his gun at him to prove it was not loaded.

Aung Myo Thu was the Company Commander of Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) 6 stationed in Tein Myoke Village, in Bago Region's Okpho Township.

On 11 August he asked a soldier if his gun was clear of bullets. The soldier asserted that there were no bullets in his gun and, somewhat overconfidently, fired directly into his commanding officer's face to prove his point.

A source in the military said: "The soldier said that he was asked to clear his gun but he was unaware that there was still a loaded bullet [in the gun]. When his superior asked him if he had cleared his bullets he

turned to his superior and fired at him to prove he had cleared his gun. The bullet hit his [commander's] neck killing him."

Aung Myo Thu died on the way to the hospital and the soldier who shot him was arrested. As for his fate, the military source said: "I heard that he will be executed in custody."

An officer from an Okpho Township anti-junta guerrilla force did not believe the shooter's explanation. He thought it far more likely that he had a grudge against his commander.

Unfortunately, Mizzima has, so far, not been able to independently verify the claims made by the military source.

DOLLAR TRADING DIFFICULT IN MYANMAR AFTER CENTRAL BANK REVOKES MONEY CHANGER LICENSES

Foreign currency exchange is growing more difficult in Myanmar.

The Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) recently announced that it had revoked the foreign exchange money changer licenses issued to 13 companies.

The Military Council ordered the people to buy foreign currencies officially but the dollar trading became difficult as they closed many money changer counters in recent days.

An export import merchant said that they could not buy foreign currencies from these official money changer counters freely and then they had to rely on the open market only. He said they were facing difficulty in buying dollars, noting the foreign currency black market was growing in the country.

The CBM under the control of the Military Council revoked licenses of 45 money changer counters in this year without any wrongdoings by these banks in their attempt to contain the rising US dollar exchange rate but the FOREX market wholesalers and retailers said that the US dollar black market was growing in the country.

The banks which have Authorized Dealers

(AD) license and their customers (exporters and importer) can exchange US dollars from online trading as permitted by the CBM and the people who are leaving the country can buy only petty cash (imprest money) in limited amounts from the banks.

The CBM is taking action against speculators in the FOREX market and illegal money changers to contain the rising gold prices and dollar exchange rate. They warned against speculation in the FOREX market.

After the US government put two state-owned banks namely Myanmar Foreign Trade Bank (MFTB) and Myanmar Investment and Commercial Bank (MICB) in their targeted sanctions list, the dollar exchange rate fluctuated wildly in the market and it rose from about 2,800 Kyat to over 3,000 Kyat against the dollar.

In addition, the news of the leading bank in Singapore, United Oversea Bank (UOB), planning to sever contacts with Myanmar-based banks appeared and announced by the UOB Bank and then the US dollar exchange rate soared to about 3,700 Kyat against the dollar.

MYANMAR JUNTA ANNOUNCES STRONG TEAK EXPORT FIGURES

The Forest Department under the Military Council said that Myanmar exported over 4,800 tons of teak in the first half of this year.

“Myanmar teak was exported mainly to India, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and China in the first half of this year,” the Forest Department said.

Myanmar teak was exported in over 480 containers and the country earned nearly US\$14 million in the first half of this year from these exports.

According to the data released by the Forest Department, the Myanmar timber was exported to 41 companies dealing with 52 countries during the first half of this year of which over 2,610 tons of teak was exported to 41 companies from 20 countries during the 4-month period from April to July this year.

The report issued by US-based Forest Trends says that the EU, UK, US, Switzerland and Canada imported forest products from Myanmar worth US\$90.5 million, although they have imposed economic sanctions on Myanmar.

China stands as the largest importer of Myanmar timber with imports worth nearly US\$280 million, followed by India with US\$96 million, Thailand with over US\$37 million, Japan with US\$4.5 million, Singapore with US\$10.3 million and Australia with about US\$3.5 million respectively.

Forest Trends issued a statement in March 2022 which says that despite the western countries imposed economic sanctions against Myanmar, Myanmar Timber Enterprise (MTE) continued the timber and forest products export to these countries and it received US\$37 million from these exports.

Forest Trends said that MTE received US\$190 million from timber exports to foreign countries during the period from February to November 2021, despite being on a sanctions list. About US\$22 million income came for EU countries.

Myanmar exported timber to foreign countries during two years since coup in early 2021 and the country earned over US\$500 million from these exports of which 17 per cent of them were exported to the countries which imposed economic sanctions against Myanmar, Forest Trends said.

Though the MTE was listed in the economic sanctions the export and trading of timber and forest products is still continuing and timber prices rose by 30 per cent after the sanctions.

The report issued by the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) says that Myanmar exported 2,500 tons of teak during the two years since the military coup.

FOUR JUNTA SOLDIERS EXTORTING MONEY KILLED IN MONYWA TOWN

Defence forces killed four out of five junta soldiers extorting money from pedestrians in Monywa Town Sagaing region on 20 August.

At 7:00 a.m. on 19 August defence forces attacked the five junta soldiers who had parked up their vehicle and were extorting money from passing pedestrians on Union Road in Monywa Town .

“We conducted a close-range attack on Army soldiers. In the attack, four army soldiers lost their lives, and we were able to seize one gun”, said Lieutenant Lin Yone of Golden Eagle Force-Monywa, one of the groups involved in the attack.

He explained that the remaining soldier fought back meaning that the defence forces could not seize the car before withdrawing for their own safety.

The defence forces involved in the attack were Golden Eagle Force-Monywa, Ponnaka Guerilla Force, Monywa District Battalion 24, Brother Revolution Force - Monywa, and Ka Naung Min Thar Gyi - Monywa.



AT THE GATES?

Do resistance forces pose a threat to Myanmar's capital Naypyidaw?



Myanmar military tanks fire blanks on Armed Forces Day in the capital Naypyidaw. Photo: AFP

A question has been raised as to whether Myanmar resistance forces operating in the Bago Region pose a threat to the Myanmar generals residing comfortably in the capital Naypyidaw.

The question comes as the National Unity Government (NUG) hypes up the rhetoric in its Spring Revolution war against the illegal military government that grabbed power in 2021.

The NUG's Minister for Defence said in June that their resistance forces are carrying out offensives throughout the country, and have begun their mission of "All Roads Lead to Naypyidaw".

After this declaration by the NUG, the Military Council reportedly tightened security at the capital's security checkpoints and increased its defensive capacity.

WORDS OF WAR

How much is this a threat to the capital and how much is this merely the rhetoric of war?

The NUG said that since early 2023, armed conflicts between the Military Council and the joint forces of ethnic revolution organisations (EROs) and People's Defence Forces (PDFs) have intensified in Bago Sub-military command that is included in Southern Military Command of the NUG.

The PDFs conducted guerilla warfare against military troops between 2021 and 2022, but now in

2023, they are launching counterattacks and offensives, the NUG says.

The uptick has prompted some military analysts to remark that as Bago Region borders Naypyidaw, armed struggle in this region is "threatening the capital of the military generals".

INCHING CLOSER

Whether this is a serious threat is unclear but the actions of the resistance forces over the last two years have prompted the Military Council to tighten defences.

The Southern Command of the NUG said that battalions from Bago Region Command are fighting with its battalions and the KNU's forces against the military.

A spokesperson for the KNU, Padoh Saw Kale Say, told Mizzima that the geographical factor of Bago Region is strategically important for the Military Council.

"We found that Bago Region is strategically vital for the Military Council in terms of their administration, power and military operations for their control in lower Myanmar," he said.

Political and military analyst Than Soe Naing said that as the eastern part of Bago is located between Naypyidaw and Yangon, the control of resistance forces in this area will cause an escalation of



● A city of checkpoints. Photo: AFP

battles.

“Bago and Naypyidaw are like a head and neck of a body. The resistance forces could threaten the military if they control Bago Region,” he remarked.

Armed clashes have occurred in all 28 townships of Bago Region after the military took power. Out of 14 townships in the eastern part of Bago, armed conflicts are intensifying in Yedashe, Taungoo, Kyaukyi, Kyauktaga, Nyaunglaybin and Shwegyin townships, while the western Bago townships of Paungde, Okpa, Nattalin and Minhla frequently suffer from armed clashes.

THREATENING THE CAPITAL?

Resistance activity in Bago is not the only threat to Naypyidaw. The capital is surrounded by Shan State in the east, Mandalay in the north, Magway in the west, Bago in the south and Karenni State in the southeast.

Armed clashes are now escalating in Karenni State, the Shan-Karenni border and Bago Region at present. The KNU and the NUG Ministry of Defence stated that there were many casualties in July amongst Military Council troops during armed conflicts in the eastern part of Bago and Yedashe, which is very close to Naypyidaw.

Moreover, joint forces of the EROs and PDFs blew up the Nat Than Gwin Bridge which is crucial for junta military logistical support in 2023.

Ko Wai Yan, a spokesperson of the resistance's Bago region Sub-military command, told Mizzima: “The military took advantage of their air force in Bago Region, while the advantage of our resistance force is public support.”

An official of a PDF battalion in eastern Bago Region told Mizzima that good results on the missions depend on the participation of the public, noting: “Public support is crucial for our victory.”

Ko Wai Yan claimed that resistance forces in Bago Region are successfully threatening Naypyidaw.

“Our forces are capable of entering Naypyidaw in an hour. The conflicts in Bago region are threatening Naypyitaw,” he said.

Although the Military Council has 11 divisions, each of them has a declining capacity at present, said analyst Than Soe Naing.

A convoy from the Quartermaster General was attacked by resistance forces on the Yangon to Mandalay highway between Yangon and Mandalay last month. Since then, the Military Council has tightened security on this route.

ACTIONS IN NAYPYIDAW?

Armed conflicts have significantly intensified in the first seven months of this year across the country. Local resistance forces and military analysts remarked that conflicts are expected to increase in the coming months and will spread to Naypyidaw.

“Military activities of resistance forces in Bago Region can support more operations of the alliances. Although decisive battles may not occur in every place, collaborative efforts will make strategic objectives successful,” Than Soe Naing told Mizzima.

What analysts need to keep in mind is the relatively new city of Naypyidaw was built by the generals with defence in mind, prompted by fear, and the guidance of astrologers. Hit and run actions by guerrilla groups might rattle the junta on the outskirts, or occasional incidents in the city. But anything approaching an invasion – that PDFs currently do not have the capacity to carry out – would be heavily repelled, given the military's strength in terms of tanks, armoured cars, missile launchers, fighter jets and helicopters.

All roads may lead to Naypyidaw, as the NUG makes clear, but the practicalities of actually invading the capital pose a serious challenge for Myanmar's resistance forces at this stage or in the foreseeable future.



Uppasanti Pagoda in Naypyidaw.
Photo: AFP

DELIVERING AID TO POPULATIONS BEING SLAUGHTERED: THE UN MUST RETHINK ITS APPROACH TO MYANMAR

CHRIS GUNNESS



Limited foreign humanitarian aid getting through. Aid depot in Sittwe, Rakhine State. Photo: AFP

In my long UN career, I worked in places that will go down in history as emblems of man's inhumanity to man, where mass killings were a regular occurrence - the Balkans during the war in the early 1990s, Gaza, the West Bank and Syria from 2006 to 2020.

During that time, I was part of a system that witnessed and reported daily on some of the most heinous crimes of our age: the Srebrenica massacre in 1995, the siege of Yarmouk that began in 2012 and successive Israeli bombardments of Gaza which included attacks on crowded UN schools.

The UN had numerous cross-referenced eyewitness accounts, multiple monitoring and evaluation reports, endless humanitarian trend documents showing beyond doubt that under the very noses of thousands of UN workers, violations of international law

were being committed as a matter of policy.

Our reports were circulated all over the system, from the Secretary General's Office in New York, to Security Council delegations, the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council and other UN Agencies. There was no shortage of prima facie evidence of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

In time there was a criminal tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and an international inquiry on Syria. Israel, under Western protection got off Scot free.

But cut to Myanmar today and it's clear that accountability has fallen off the agenda. Last month, the UN's top rights official, Volker Turk said "the path out of this crisis must be anchored in accountability", but it seems no one is listening, least of all the UN's own sprawling humanitarian office, OCHA.

The press release about the recent visit to Myanmar by OCHA's boss, Martin Griffiths, is proof positive of the UN's institutional amnesia.

Aid deliveries dominated the agenda, rather than the humanitarian disaster being inflicted by the junta.

In its account of Mr Griffith's meeting with coup leader, Min Aung Hlaing, it says in addition to the 'need for expanded access', Mr Griffiths raised 'protection risks facing civilians'.

This is perhaps the only reference to the gravest threat facing the people of Myanmar – the military. Reading this release, you might not have guessed that since the coup in February 2021, security forces have killed nearly 4,000 people and arrested over 24,000, according to the most conservative estimates, nor that massacres, mass arson attacks and indiscriminate aerial bombardments against civilians are a near daily occurrence.

So what must the international community do?

Put the people of Myanmar front and centre. Their immediate needs must be met, but they want their rights, full political rights not just UN handouts. Aid is not a replacement for justice and dignity.

Do not allow the discourse to be dominated by humanitarian issues. Focus equally on the underlying cause of the country's long-term crisis: the refusal of the military to hand over power after an election it lost overwhelmingly and to end the war it is waging against its own people.

Do not put the regional group, ASEAN, in sole charge of resolving Myanmar's political crisis. Their interventions to date have been laughably ineffective.

Britain as the penholder for the UN's Myanmar policy must push for follow-up action in the Security Council after its unprecedented resolution last December. Regular public reporting to the Council to hold the junta accountable would be a good start.

Britain and other engaged UN member states must enforce a global arms embargo, naming and shaming violators such as Russia and China.

Targeted sanctions must be tightened and further pressure put on UN member states in South East

Asia, such as Singapore, not to allow the junta to use their banking systems to finance atrocity crimes.

Promote accountability. Peace will be partial if war criminals are at large. UN member states must fund investigators and legal experts at the International Criminal Court, empowering the ICC to pursue justice in Myanmar just as it is in Ukraine.

Member states must open their courts to cases against the junta under the principle of universal jurisdiction. The UN's Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar has a wealth of evidence. Far fuller use must be made of it.

Donor governments must force the failing UN country team in Myanmar to implement root and branch reforms as recommended by the so called 'Rosenthal Report' which the Secretary General has accepted in full. There must be coherence in the UN's engagement with Myanmar, integrating the political and the humanitarian.

Donors must also find new and innovative ways to work outside the confines of a UN country team and around the junta, which is forcing the UN to deliver aid largely to areas it controls. Cross border assistance to non-junta-controlled areas must be ramped up, as must cash assistance through Myanmar's nationwide network of formidable citizens-based organisations.

UN member states must isolate the junta diplomatically and work more closely with Myanmar's democratically elected National Unity Government, not just on aid delivery to areas it controls, but to resolve Myanmar's political crisis as a full stakeholder in the country's future.

Myanmar is a test case for the UN, a test it could pass with flying colours. But unless there is a paradigm shift, Myanmar will become another of those places where the UN presides over the delivery of humanitarian aid while the people it serves are being slaughtered.

Chris Gunness was Deputy Spokesman for the UN in the Balkans in the mid-1990s and UN Director of Communications in the Middle East from 2006 to 2020. He is currently director of the Myanmar Accountability Project.

NUG CALLS ON UN BODIES TO INCLUDE ROLE OF EROS, CSOS IN DELIVERING AID TO MYANMAR

Two ministers of Myanmar's National Unity Government (NUG) held an online meeting on 21 August with the head of the UN humanitarian assistance body regarding his recent visit to Myanmar to negotiate with the military regime to allow the provision of humanitarian assistance, according to a statement on 22 August.

The meeting of NUG Minister for Foreign Affairs Zin Mar Aung and Minister for Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management Dr Win Myat Aye with the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) Mr Martin Griffiths focused on "effective delivery of humanitarian aid to the areas in need" across Myanmar, including Rakhine State in the aftermath of Cyclone Mocha.

The NUG ministers called for equally balanced communication between the UN bodies and ethnic resistance organizations (ERO), civil society organizations (CSO) and other relevant stakeholders operating on the ground, in addition to providing aid through the military regime.

Mr. Griffiths has come in for criticism over alleged pandering to the military regime and failure to publicly criticise the junta's human rights abuse and abuse of power that have caused the humanitarian

crisis in Myanmar in the first place. In addition, a number of commentators have called on the UN to funnel a substantial portion of humanitarian aid through the NUG and related bodies so it gets to the millions in need.

The 22 August NUG statement included concern voiced by the NUG ministers that the UN agencies are enabling the junta to manipulate and weaponise humanitarian assistance. It said that now the Myanmar people realise that the junta is deceptive and exploits humanitarian aid delivery mechanisms for its own legitimacy at the expense of the people.

After the three-day visit of Mr Martin Griffiths to Myanmar last week, the UNOCHA issued a report on 17 August, calling for expanded humanitarian access and increased funding from donors to assist the 18 million people in need of aid across Myanmar.

In the report Griffiths said, "Successive crises in Myanmar have left one third of the population in need of humanitarian aid, and they expect more and better from their leaders and from the international community."

The report also said that Griffiths held meetings with military chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and aid workers for humanitarian assistance. His Myanmar visit involved talks in Naypyidaw and in Cyclone Mocha-hit Rakhine State.

CSOS CRITICIZE UN OCHA'S CURRENT APPROACH THAT 'SUPPORTS THE MYANMAR JUNTA'S WAR OF TERROR'



UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Martin Griffiths meeting with the Myanmar junta in Naypyidaw. Photo: GNLM

A joint statement of 514 civil society organisations (CSOs) said that the current approach of UN OCHA will embolden the Myanmar junta to further its war of terror across the nation.

On 22 August, the Burma Campaign UK published the statement in response to the report of UN OCHA after three-day visit of its chief to Myanmar, including a meeting with coup leader Min Aung Hlaing in capital Naypyitaw. It was covered on the front pages of state-owned newspapers as a propaganda exercise of regime in an attempt to gain international recognition and legitimacy.

The joint statement was published by Burma Campaign UK for the CSOs said that the visit of UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Martin Griffiths, lacked significant achievements although he tried to negotiate humanitarian access across Myanmar, including to Rakhine State following the deadly Cyclone Mocha.

The CSOs also asked UN OCHA and other UN humanitarian agencies to cut ties with the illegal criminal junta which is weaponizing aid and is the root cause of human suffering in Myanmar, and to officially engage and partner with legitimate stakeholders of Myanmar and civil society service providers to deliver humanitarian assistance.

The joint statement also pointed out that UN OCHA's statement omitted that the Military Council is the root cause of the escalating humanitarian crisis, while it committing violence and atrocities, or weaponizing humanitarian assistance, blocking access to Cyclone Mocha's victims.

The statement mentioned, "We further note OCHA's recognition of the Myanmar military's unconstitutional body of the 'State Administration Council' in its statement which is inconsistent with the language used by the UN Security Council and UN General Assembly in their resolutions."

These CSOs also suggested that to fulfill its mandate and principles to do no harm, UN OCHA must immediately pivot to delivering aid in collaboration or partnership with local humanitarian and civil society groups, ethnic service providers, diaspora communities, local administration forces of the Spring Revolution, members of the Civil Disobedience Movement, Ethnic Revolutionary Organizations, and the National Unity Government who have been effectively providing life-saving services on the ground, including through cross-border channels.

UN SECURITY COUNCIL CONDEMNS MYANMAR JUNTA AIRSTRIKES, CALLS FOR HUMANITARIAN AID

The UN Security Council (UNSG), except China and Russia, has condemned the Myanmar military killing civilians and continuing airstrikes, reaffirming the need to respect international law, protect civilians and provide humanitarian aid.

The joint statement of the Security Council was released on 23 August after its closed consultations to discuss the situation in Myanmar, and hearing briefings from Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths following his visit to Myanmar and Assistant Secretary-General Khiari for an update on efforts to resolve the crisis.

The statement said that more than two and a half years after the state of emergency imposed by the military in Myanmar on 1 February 2021, the UNSG remains deeply concerned at the situation in Myanmar and its impact on the people of Myanmar.

The statement includes the following:

“The last months have seen unrelenting violence across Myanmar. We strongly condemn the killing of civilians and in particular the continued use of air strikes, and reaffirm the need to respect international law and protect civilians.

“Over 18 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance in Myanmar; 2 million are displaced; and over 15 million people are food insecure. We reiterate the call this Council has repeatedly made on the need for full, safe and unhindered humanitarian access to all people in need, including to ensure aid reaches those most vulnerable, including ethnic and other minority populations.

“We remain deeply concerned about the situation in Rakhine State. It has been six years since

nearly a million Rohingya were forced to flee their homes in Myanmar. We encourage international partners to support the provision of humanitarian assistance to displaced Rohingya. We express our support for diplomatic efforts to create conditions conducive to the voluntary, safe, dignified, and sustainable return of Rohingya to their homeland. We urge Myanmar to address the fundamental causes of the crisis and restore the rights of Rohingya.

“The Council set out its expectations clearly in UN Security Council Resolution 2669, including: for the immediate release of all arbitrarily detained prisoners, including President Win Myint and State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi; on the need to fully respect human rights and uphold the rule of law; on respect for the democratic will of the people of Myanmar; on the swift and full implementation of ASEAN’s Five Point Consensus; on the need to address the root causes of the crisis in Rakhine State; and for the rights of persons belonging to minorities to be fully protected. We note with concern that there has been insufficient progress against these calls.

“We reiterate our strong support to ASEAN and the efforts of the ASEAN Chair, and call again on the Myanmar military to take concrete and immediate actions to effectively and fully implement the Five Point Consensus.

“In closing, we call again for the full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2669 and underline our commitment to using all tools at the Council’s disposal to support ASEAN’s efforts to find a peaceful solution to the crisis. We reaffirm our strong support for the people of Myanmar.”

AWARD-WINNING ANTI-MYANMAR JUNTA MOVIE ‘THE WAY’ HAS ITS DEBUT IN USA



An award-winning Myanmar short film entitled “The Way” created by the Myanmar singer and composer Lynn Lynn had its premier last weekend in the USA.

The musical film had its screening at the New United Federal Union fundraising event. This event also showcased ethnic family films and ethnic dances. The fundraising event was held on 26 August from 3 pm to 8 pm at Folsom City Hall 50, Natomas St, Folsom CA 95630, Sacramento, California, USA, according to a post on the film’s Facebook page.

On his official Facebook account, filmmaker and singer Lynn Lynn announced that the musical film was screened for “revolutionaries abroad” at this time. The proceeds from the film will be dedicated to providing healthcare, education, and rehabilitation support to elderly internally displaced persons (IDPs) and children in Myanmar.

The musical is a groundbreaking film that showcases the talents of 19 revolutionary individuals, including Lynn Lynn’s wife renowned actress Chit Thu

Wai, Myat Noe Aye, and actors Aung Myint Myat and Russell. Remarkably, the entire film was captured using only two mobile phones, adding to its unique and innovative approach.

Arrest warrants were issued for Lynn Lynn and Chit Thu Wai over their opposition to the 2021 military coup, and their house was sealed off by the Military Council after the takeover, according to a media report. Since that time, the couple have participated in the revolution against the junta through their art and promotion of fundraising campaigns.

“The Way” has received remarkable success and acclaim in the film industry. It received the prestigious Best Mobile Phone Feature Film Award at the renowned Cannes World Film Festival. Additionally, the film was honoured with the titles of Best Musical Film and Best First Time Director (Feature). Its outstanding soundtrack also earned recognition, winning the Best Song award at the esteemed international Festigious Film Festival. Furthermore, “The Way” triumphed at the World Film Carnival in Singapore, securing three awards.

Due to pressure from the Myanmar Military Council, all the individuals involved in this film are reported to be currently seeking refuge on the Thai border as they face the threat of arrest and violence.

MYANMAR EXTRADITES SEVEN SUSPECTS TO CHINA OVER ONLINE SCAMS



Two of the suspects with a Myanmar and a Chinese official. Photo: GNLM

Myanmar authorities have handed over seven people suspected of involvement in online scams targeting Chinese citizens to Beijing authorities, state media reported Thursday last week.

Criminal syndicates are accused of kidnapping or luring citizens of China and other countries to lawless enclaves along Myanmar's northern and eastern borders and forcing them to work as online scammers.

The scammers typically target their compatriots and groom them for weeks before cajoling them into ploughing money into fake investment platforms and other ruses.

Two suspects were handed to Chinese authorities at Yangon International Airport on Wednesday, according to a statement in the state-run Global New Light of Myanmar.

One of the men was a "pivotal figure in the realm of telecom fraud", the statement added without giving details.

Five more were handed over on Thursday, according to a statement from the Chinese embassy in Yangon.

"The suspects lured victims onto a false online investment platform... and induced them to make large investments after giving them smaller initial prof-

its," the statement said, adding that the suspects had been taken to China.

In June, six other suspects implicated in online scam cases were extradited from Myanmar to China, according to the state-run newspaper.

The latest arrests come after China in July told Myanmar's junta to "root out" scam centres in its lawless borderlands targeting Chinese citizens.

The scams anger Beijing - a major ally and arms supplier for the internationally isolated junta.

Victims have reported travelling to Myanmar, Cambodia, Thailand and Laos on false promises of romance or high-paying jobs, then being detained and forced to work swindling their compatriots online.

Authorities from China, Myanmar, Thailand and Laos had carried out a "special operation" targeting online scammers, the Global New Light and embassy statement said, without specifying if it had led to the recent arrests.

In June, Thailand cut electricity supplies to a Myanmar border town that is home to a billion-dollar development analysts say is a front for illegal gambling and online scam operations.

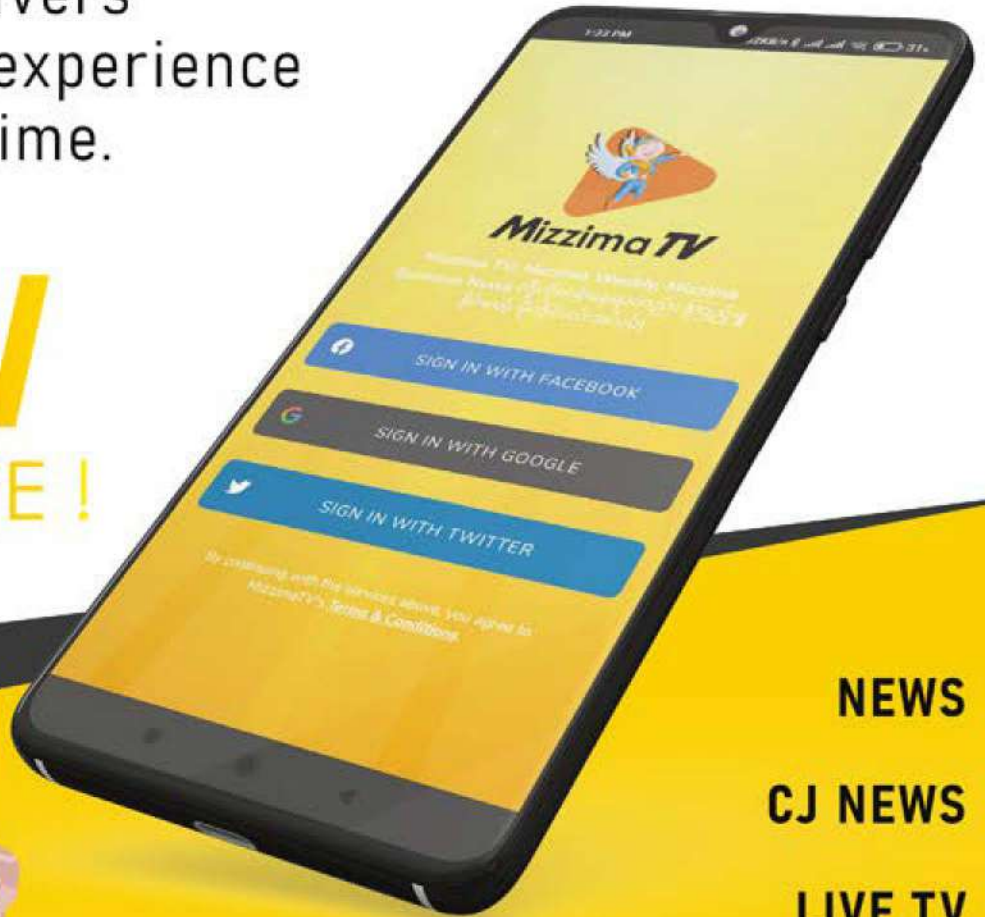
AFP

Proudly Presented by Mizzima Media Group

MIZZIMA TV APP

Mizzima TV delivers the best Video experience anywhere, anytime.

NOW WATCH LIVE!



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

Get the app free!

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



SCAN QR WITH PHONE CAMERA OR SCANNER APP FOR DOWNLOAD



Mizzimaburmese.com

Mizzima.com

Mizzima TV app

Mizzima Free to Air Satellite Channels

Mizzima English Weekly Magazine

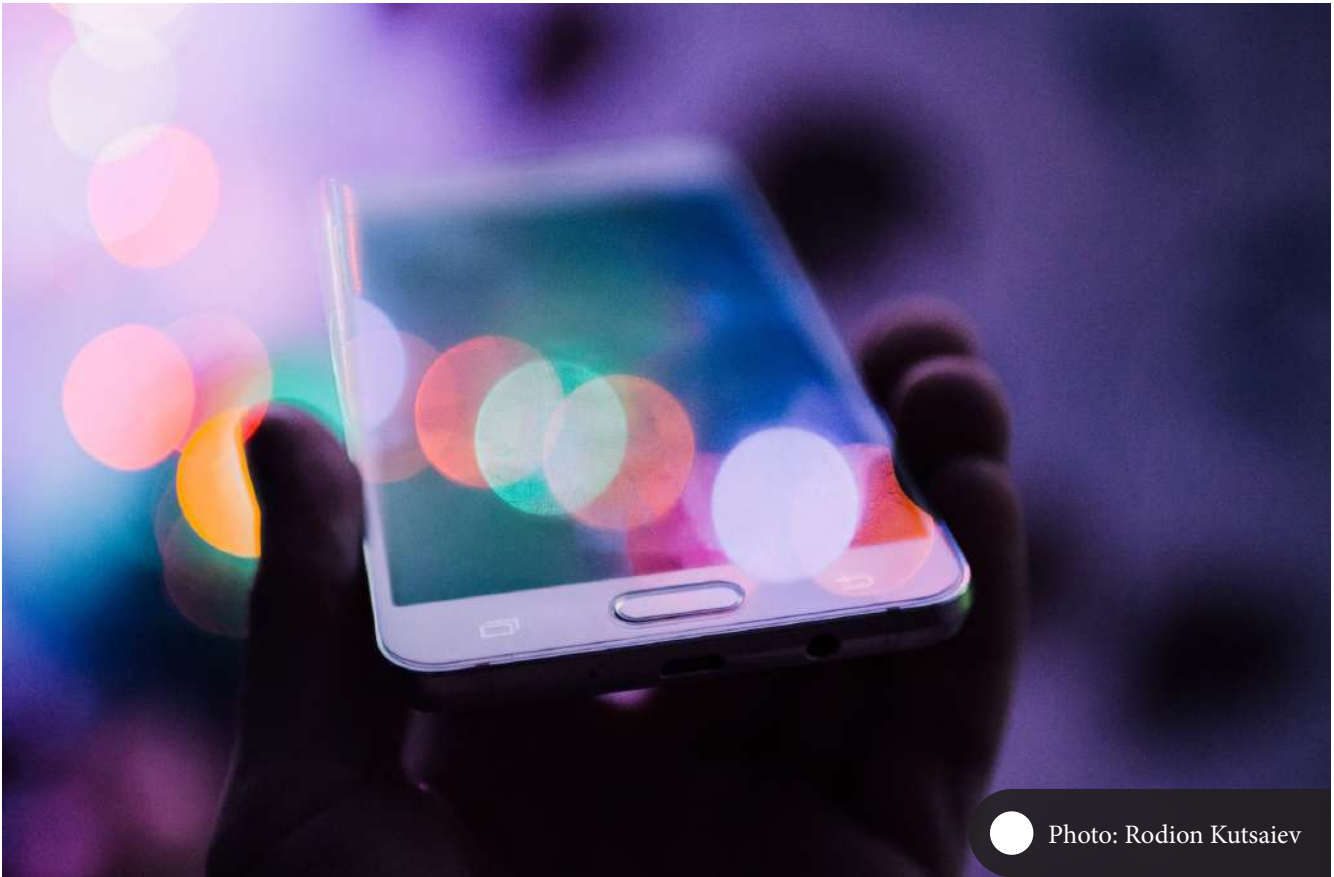
Mizzima Facebook Pages

Mizzima Radio

Mizzima 108FM Radio

DESPITE TAKEDOWNS, PRO-MILITARY DOXING RAMPANT IN MYANMAR TELEGRAM CHANNELS

NANG FOR MIZZIMA



Despite takedowns, pro-military doxing is rampant in Myanmar Telegram channels. Channels involved in the leak of personal information of dissenters are still active. These data leaks have led to arrests.

On May 24, 2023, a popular rapper singer “Byuha” was arrested for criticizing on Facebook Live the Myanmar military junta power outages. He was later charged for defamation of state under Article 505(a), a new provision in the Myanmar Penal Code.

Prior to Byuha’s arrest, a message posted in the pro-military Telegram channel “Ka Ka Han” urged the junta to have the singer arrested because his opinion was critical of the junta military council, which seized power in February 2021.

Byuha’s case is not unique. At least 23,410 political prisoners in Myanmar have been arrested since the February 2021 coup, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma), based in Mae Sot, Thailand. Many well-known celebrities, demonstrators, and political activists have also been detained, brutally interrogated, and thrown into various prisons after being charged with similar accusations.

Many of the arrests happened after posts they made, which were deemed critical of the junta, were reported to pro-military Telegram channels like Ka Ka Han.

For instance, a month before Byuha was arrested, popular Burmese singer May La Than Zin was also charged under the same law. Her crime: posting a ‘black profile’ sticker and on her social media account after commenting on the military bombing that killed 175 civilians, including women and children in Pazi Gyi village, Kanbalu Township in the Sagaing Region on April 11, 2023.

INDISPENSABLE PLATFORM

Telegram is currently considered one of the most indispensable social media platforms in Myanmar. Many people in Myanmar read it to stay updated on the latest news. It is popular because the platform can be accessed without a Virtual Private Network (VPN), unlike others.

This was not always the case. Before 2018, even the Myanmar military was on Facebook. Facebook then was criticized by various international bodies for its failure to prevent hate online. In August 2018,

bowing to pressure, Facebook implemented a number of takedowns in Myanmar for coordinated inauthentic behavior.

In removing a total of 425 pages, 17 groups, 135 accounts on Facebook, and 15 accounts on Instagram which appeared to be independent news, entertainment, beauty and lifestyle pages, Facebook said the social media assets actually had links to the Myanmar military.

After the military seized power in February 2021, Facebook expanded the takedowns to include military-controlled businesses.

When protests against the coup were forcefully dispersed by the military, people resorted to using social media to communicate with each other, organize strikes, share information, and run high-profile campaigns.

All of this prompted the junta to impose restrictions on social media sites like Facebook, Messenger, Instagram, YouTube, and others, soon after the Myanmar Spring Revolution, and months after the 2021 coup.

They have been lifted for some sites but until now, without a VPN, Facebook and Messenger still cannot be accessed online.

PRO-MILITARY ATTACK CHANNELS

The social media landscape in the country changed drastically. From 27 million users in January 2021, Facebook's user base dropped to 14.5 million users in early 2023.

There is little available information on the exact number of Telegram users in Myanmar. However, a 2022 study by consumer intelligence company Standard Insights showed that more than two out of every five respondents (41.6%) had discovered a new social media app. Of these newly-discovered apps, Telegram was the most popular social media app, figured out by more than one in every four respondents (about 25%).

Telegram became the military's platform of choice in disseminating information and propaganda. One particular Telegram feature which has been used by military propagandists is channels – introduced by the platform in 2015 which allows users to broadcast public messages to large audiences.

There are at least 40 popular channels promoting military propaganda within the encrypted messaging app. These channels command between 10,000 to 90,000 subscribers each. The Ka Ka Han channel, which was created on October 1, 2022, is just one of these.

Usually, these channels provide viewers with a mix of battle news, phone bill lucky draw programs, movie links, and health information. These are typically blended into speeches and information about events

and press conferences organized by the junta military council.

But this is not their sole purpose. The Myanmar junta has also been using these platforms to get reports from the public on people behind social posts that appear to be critical of the junta.

The Ka Ka Han channel was used to repeatedly attack members of the National League for Democracy (NLD), the party that won the 2020 elections and was previously in power before the military coup. The NLD has since been dissolved because it refused to comply with the new party registration law imposed by the Myanmar military.

COORDINATED NETWORK?

Checks on TGStat, a tool that analyzes engagement in Telegram channels, show linkages between the different pro-military channels which routinely promote each other through mentions.

For instance, in its post, Ka Ka Han (accessible through <https://t.me/KaKaHan777999>) tagged five other Telegram channels (Kyaw Swar, Han Nyein Oo, Ba Nyunt, Ko Hla Shwe, and Linn Nay) to send NLD supporter information to them.

Citations data tracked by TGStat show that Bya Nyunt and Kyaw Swar are among the channels that mentioned Ka Ka Han, with both tagging Ka Ka Han hundreds of times each.

Another channel that repeatedly tags Ka Ka Han, is Ko Thet (@Kothetjournalist). It is one of the channels that has been posting attacks against critics. Launched on February 10, 2021 after the coup, Ko Thet has 69,000 subscribers as of writing.

The Ko Thet channel also benefits from repeated citations by Telegram channels Kyaw Swarmmmmm, DGF21News, and Ba Nyunt. It also appears to be mentioned hundreds of times by other pro-military Telegram channels.

In turn, Ko Thet has also promoted over 200 channels through outgoing mentions. These channels include military lobby channels, state-specific channels, and news media channels that favor the military.

DOXING, DATA LEAKS

There have been a number of incidents where in people who posted comments against the military on Facebook had their addresses, businesses, and other personal information revealed through these Telegram channels.

One such incident, which happened in February 2023, involved the leak of personal information of hundreds of students who were enrolled in the Free Online Education Institution Myanmar (FOEIM). Initially posted on the pro-military Ba Nyunt channel in Telegram, the post with the leaked personal data was eventually forwarded to the Ka Ka Han channel.

The FOEIM is the education unit of the National Unity Government (NUG). The NUG was formed by former elected members of the NLD. It is linked to the revolutionary movement that was formed, following the crackdown on the peaceful anti-coup protests in 2021.

The leaked information included the identities and other details concerning parents of the students whose data had been exposed. A number of those whose information were leaked were arrested.

Among those arrested was a 72-year-old woman Tin Ye Tun from Shwebo Town in Sagiang Region. She was charged under Section 52 (A) of the Counter-Terrorism Law for registering her grandchildren in FOEIM.

Following the leak, the military council announced that parents who send their children to NUG schools will be prosecuted under the Anti-Terrorism Act. Prior to this, the junta mandated that children may only be enrolled in schools recognized by the military council.

Aside from the individuals whose information were exposed in the FOEIM school case, there were hundreds more whose data have been exposed by the Ka Ka Han channel to authorities from January to May 2023. Within days of the posts on Telegram, 32 people were arrested.

“People who wrote about opposing [the] military coup on social media, supporting NUG/CRPH, advocating to participate in protests and fundraisers [were] mainly targeted [for] arrest and [imprisonment],” Zee Pe, director of Athan-Myanmar’s Freedom of Expression Activist Organization, said.

“Anyone who is against military junta or military coup can be arrested, and tortured at any time,” she added.

VIOLATING HUMAN RIGHTS

Once a critic has been arrested, the law allows the police and military intelligence officers to detain the accused in military interrogation centers for as long as they wish.

Such harsh punishment for mere online comments by famous celebrities and media professionals could not help but make ordinary citizens feel afraid to express their opinions and comments on online digital platforms, according to Myanmar media development consultant Toe Zaw Latt.

“It is not acceptable that individuals or the majority of people are being watched, and hate is growing,” added Toe Zaw Latt, who is now based in Thailand. “What the military is doing is a violation of human rights. These are “completely against the law – local and international.”

“We have been facing different types of hu-

man rights violations every day in Myanmar. We don’t have the right to freedom of expression, which is a fundamental right,” according to Zee Pe.

She also said, “People in Myanmar are also in fear of being arrested when they express something against the military junta, even their daily life [faces] challenges.”

WHAT IS TELEGRAM DOING?

On March 11, 2022, Telegram took down some pro-military channels, including Han Nyein Oo’s channel, for violating the platform’s terms of service. The newly-opened Han Nyein Oo channel was taken down again on May 25, 2022.

Human rights advocates, however, said this is not enough. “Telegram is not doing enough to put down state-sponsored hate speech and incitement deliberately produced by SAC against civilians and dissidents,” Toe Zaw Latt said.

Indeed, despite the March takedown, many pro-military propaganda channels remain on the encrypted platform.

In March 2023, following the initial takedown, UN experts called out Telegram. “Since the coup, pro-junta actors have taken advantage of Telegram’s lax approach to content moderation and gaps in its terms of service. They have attracted tens of thousands of followers by posting violent and misogynistic content,” the experts said.

According to them, more needs to be done to address hate in the messaging app. “Unless Telegram fundamentally changes its approach to content moderation in Myanmar, it is likely that pro-military actors will simply open new accounts and continue their campaign of harassment,” they said.

“Even though [an account] is taken down... they can open it again,” Zee Pe said, referring to the pro-military accounts.

The only way the problem can be resolved, she said, is if Telegram establishes more rigorous processes for monitoring violations of privacy and human rights on its channels.

With Gemma B. Mendoza and Saw Pe / Rappler.com.

Nang is a #FactsMatter Fellow. She reports for Myanmar’s Mizzima Media Group. This story originally appeared on Rappler.

RAPPER BYUHAR RECEIVES 20-YEAR PRISON SENTENCE FOR CRITICISING BLACKOUTS



Byuhar in custody. Photo: Supplied

Myanmar rapper Byuhar was sentenced to 20 years in prison on 23 August for criticising the junta over electricity blackouts on social media.

His father, the renowned composer Naing Myanmar, said: “I wasn’t present in the courtroom. Like everyone else, I heard about the verdict. He received a 20-year sentence.”

Following a long blackout in Yangon, on 23 May, the rapper posted a video to social media criticising the junta’s management of the power supply, comparing it unfavourably to the way power was supplied under the NLD government.

Byuhar was then arrested at his home in North Dagon Township on the night of 24 May and held incommunicado for a week.

According to Byuhar’s wife, Khin Chit Kyi, he was imprisoned for violating sections 505 (a) and 124 (a) of the penal code.

According to a legal expert the 20-year prison sentence was deliberately vindictive. They explained that originally Byuhar had only been prosecuted for violation Section 505 (a) which carries a maximum sentence of three years. It was only later that charges

were also bought under Section 124 (a), a violation of which carries a far longer maximum sentence of 20 years.

They said, “The Military Council’s decision to charge him with the most severe section [Section 124 (a)] complicated the case. The penalties associated with that section are harsh. This situation should not have occurred. Using Article 124 did not balance the crime with the punishment.”

Byuhar’s father, Naing Myanmar is a famous Burmese musician. During the 1988 uprising his song, *The World Will Not End*, became an anthem that resonated with the student activists who spearheaded the uprising. Since the February 2021 coup, the song has again become popular.

According to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP), between 1 February 2021, and 23 August 2023, 24,410 people have been arrested in Myanmar. Out of those, 19,895 remain in detention, and 7,175 have already been sentenced to prison terms.

WOMEN'S PEACE NETWORK REMEMBERS 2017 'GENOCIDE AGAINST ROHINGYA' IN MYANMAR'S RAKHINE

Burma's Women's Peace Network marked Rohingya Genocide Remembrance Day on 25 August six years after the carnage that took place in Myanmar's Rakhine State.

The following is their statement:

This August 25, we, Women's Peace Network, remember the victims and survivors of the 2017 attacks of genocide against Rohingya in Arakan, and call for justice and accountability for them and the end to all forms of impunity in Myanmar.

Six years ago, the Burmese military launched its "clearance operations" in Arakan, killing over hundreds of thousands of Rohingya, committing arbitrarily

arrest and detention, and rape and sexual violence, burning down over 300 of their villages, and forcing over 700,000 of them to flee their homes. The attacks of genocide against Rohingya followed waves of state-sponsored violence against them, thereby exacerbating the decades-long, systematic and targeted persecution against them as a people of Myanmar.

Today, six years later, the survival of the ethnic Rohingya remains at risk now more than ever.

In Myanmar, over two years since its attempted coup, the military that led the 2017 attacks of genocide is now committing crimes amounting war crimes and crimes against humanity across Myanmar ac-



Photo: Women's Peace Network

According to the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and many other international bodies and entities. The military is also issuing and implementing measures specifically restricting their freedom of movement and other fundamental freedoms against the 600,000 Rohingya remaining in the country, including the 140,000 Rohingya confined in internally displaced persons' camps. In over two years, the military has used these measures to arbitrarily arrest and detain over 3,100 Rohingya. The military further drastically exacerbated the apartheid-like situation of Rohingya following the arrival of Cyclone Mocha, which devastated Arakan in May 2023, by restricting the full provision of international aid to them.

Across South and Southeast Asia, over one million Rohingya refugees remain denied reliable access to basic needs and livelihoods, as well as safety and security. In Malaysia and India, the refugees also risk detention and forcible deportation to Myanmar. Nearly one million Rohingya refugees are forced to starve to death in Bangladesh without proper access to food; in the camps, Rohingya women refugees particularly risk sexual and gender-based violence, child and forced marriage, and extortion from gangs and militant groups from their community, as well as from local security forces. And if executed, the Burmese military's so-called "pilot repatriation project" will confine these refugees into concentration and forced labor camps, as well as risk them with further attacks of genocide, in their home: Arakan. As a result, many of these victims and survivors of genocide have had no choice but to face human trafficking, death, rape, and other grave abuses to find safety elsewhere.

Therefore, six years since the 2017 attacks of genocide, the time is now for the international community to act for Rohingya. Countries must support ongoing justice mechanisms, including by referring the situation of Myanmar to the International Criminal Court, as well as explore Universal Jurisdiction to prosecute

the Burmese military for its international crimes. Governments must issue economic sanctions targeting the military, its businesses, and access to aviation fuel. The UN Security Council must build its resolution 2669(2022), and urgently exercise its Chapter VII mandate and power to end the human rights and humanitarian catastrophe and bring peace and security to Myanmar and the region, including by referring the situation of Myanmar to the ICC.

We also urge all international and Burmese stakeholders to ensure that the voices and agency of the ethnic Rohingya people, especially women, youth, and other marginalized communities are thoroughly respected. Rohingya must be consulted for any decision related to their situation and future as a people of Myanmar. In this context, all these stakeholders must ensure adequate material and financial assistance to Rohingya and its civil society; recognize the ongoing genocide against Rohingya; recognize Rohingya as an ethnic and religious group indigenous to Myanmar; restore their equal rights, and their access to land and property; guarantee reparations to them; and uphold the representation of Rohingya – particularly women – in its decision-making processes. A just, sustainable, and durable solution for the Rohingya community is one that fully centers on its members, their needs, their hopes, and their vision of justice and accountability.

Six years since the 2017 attacks of genocide, it is time for the world to finally act for comprehensive justice and accountability for Rohingya, as well as their safe, voluntary, dignified, and sustainable return home.

SIXTH ANNIVERSARY OF 'ROHINGYA GENOCIDE' MARKED AT BURMESE EVENT ON THAI BORDER



Ms Chalida Tajaroensuk, right, speaking at the event.
Photo: Mizzima

The Burmese community marked the sixth anniversary of the start of the “Rohingya Genocide” at an event 24 August entitled “Never Again: Coup and Genocide” at a venue on the border with Myanmar.

At the event, Ms Chalida Tajaroensuk, a long-time Burma supporter and Chairperson of People’s Empowerment Foundation in Thailand called for solidarity amongst all Burmese people in the wake of the 2021 military coup.

“There should be solidarity with all of the Burmese to fight for democracy in Myanmar,” Khun Chalida told people at the event.

“I am waiting and would like to see the NUG (National Unity Government) come out with a statement on the issue of the Rohingya,” she said.

Khun Chalida said she hoped “the NUG would take the issue of the Rohingya as a priority,” noting that the Muslim minority are “one of the citizens of Myanmar.”

The Rohingya Genocide Remembrance Day is on 25 August, six years after the start of the onslaught by the Myanmar military in 2017.

On 25 August 2017, the Myanmar government announced that 71 people, one soldier, one immigration officer, 10 policemen and 59 insurgents had

been killed overnight during coordinated attacks by up to 150 insurgents across 24 police posts and the 552nd Light Infantry Battalion army base in Rakhine State. The Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) claimed they were taking “defensive actions” in 25 different locations and accused government soldiers of raping and killing civilians. The group also claimed that Rathedaung had been under a blockade for more than two weeks, starving the Rohingya, and that the government forces were preparing to do the same in Maungdaw.

The following onslaught by the Myanmar military appeared to use the ARSA insurgent attacks as an excuse to attack and slaughter thousands of Rohingya and drive over 700,000 into exile in Bangladesh.

The violence is the subject of an ongoing case accusing the Myanmar military of “genocide”. On 11 November 2019, The Gambia, with the support of the 57 nations of the Organization for Islamic Cooperation, filed a lawsuit against Myanmar in the UN International Court of Justice on behalf of the Rohingya. The Rohingya are arguably the most suppressed ethnic group in Myanmar, unable to obtain citizenship.

BANGLADESH PROTESTS MARK SIX YEARS SINCE ROHINGYA EXODUS



Rohingya protesters in a refugee camp in Bangladesh. Photo: AFP

Thousands of Rohingya refugees rallied at camps in Bangladesh on Friday last week to demand their safe return to Myanmar on the sixth anniversary of the violence that drove them from their homes.

Bangladesh is home to around a million members of the stateless minority, most of whom fled the 2017 military crackdown now subject to a genocide probe at the International Criminal Court.

Frustration is widespread over rampant lawlessness in the refugee settlements, along with cuts to international humanitarian aid and the lack of progress in a much-hyped repatriation deal.

“We demand citizenship back from Myanmar. It’s nothing new, we were and are the citizens of Myanmar,” Kamal Hussain, a Rohingya community leader, told AFP.

“They are slowly trying to wipe out our name from the history of Myanmar.”

Several protests were staged across the sprawling patchwork of settlements near the Myanmar border despite monsoon downpours.

Around 10,000 refugees were present at the largest one, according to the Armed Police Battalion, which is tasked with maintaining security in the camps.

“We have insecurity and increasing frustration here,” refugee Mohammad Imran, 19, told AFP. “We want to go back home with our full rights.”

Budget cuts forced the UN World Food Programme to steeply reduce humanitarian aid to the Rohingya camps this year, with rations now \$8 per refugee, per month.

Malnutrition was already rampant among the refugee population and rights groups say the cuts have deepened existing hardships.

Violence has continued to plague the camps, which are home to armed groups and are used as staging posts for regional drug trafficking networks.

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

“As humanitarian conditions in the world’s largest refugee settlement worsen... the challenges surrounding this protracted crisis continue to increase,” the UN refugee agency said in a statement this week.

Bangladesh and Myanmar are working on a pilot programme to begin returning the Rohingya to their homes, despite concerns from rights groups who say conditions are not safe for their return.

Widely viewed as interlopers from Bangladesh, Rohingya who remain in Myanmar are denied citizenship and access to healthcare, and require permission to travel outside of their townships.

Myanmar junta chief Min Aung Hlaing - who was head of the army during the crackdown - has dismissed the term Rohingya as “imaginary”.

Bangladesh has repeatedly said any repatriation would be voluntary.

The pilot scheme has not begun, and Bangladesh refugee commissioner Mizanur Rahman told AFP his country was still working out details with Myanmar authorities.

ROHINGYA REFUGEES IN BANGLADESH NEED URGENT SUPPORT AS CRISES MULTIPLY: UNHCR

The UN refugee agency, UNHCR, is calling on the international community to renew its commitment to the nearly one million Rohingya refugees who have fled persecution in Myanmar for neighbouring Bangladesh.

This week marks six years since over 700,000 mostly-Muslim Rohingya men, women, and children joined the hundreds of thousands of others already sheltering in Bangladesh, following a brutal crack-down by security forces in Myanmar.

As humanitarian conditions in the world's largest refugee settlement worsen, however, the challenges surrounding this protracted crisis continue to increase.

FUNDS RUNNING OUT

Steep declines in funding are forcing humanitarian actors to focus on only the most critical of humanitarian needs, said UNHCR.

This – for the first time - has led to a reduction of food assistance, raising concerns over consequences such as rising rates of malnutrition, child labour, and gender-based violence.

“In Bangladesh, funding shortfalls are already adversely affecting the wellbeing of nearly one million Rohingya refugees. Any further cuts to the Rohingya response will severely impact access to food, shelter materials, cooking fuels, sanitation facilities, and livelihood activities,” said UNHCR in Bangladesh.



Photo: UN News

SUSTAINABLE RETURN

A dignified and sustainable return to Myanmar remains the primary solution to the crisis, the refugee agency stressed. Many Rohingya refugees say they want to return to Myanmar but only when it is safe for them to do so voluntarily; and the international community must now renew its efforts to make that possible.

UNHCR is calling for access to education and vocational training for refugees. This will not only equip them for their eventual return to Myanmar, but also ensure their dignity, safety, and productivity while in Bangladesh.

While the UN remains ready to support a sustainable return of refugees, it is crucial that UNHCR and partners are provided unimpeded access to Rakhine State in Myanmar, so they can assist and monitor returns.

Until refugees can safely do so, they remain

in camps off the coast of the Bay of Bengal, a region vulnerable to extreme weather events and the impacts of climate change.

As a result, UNHCR continues to prioritize a climate action strategy, advocating for weather- and fire-resistant shelter materials. The strategy can also save millions of dollars in maintenance and rebuilding costs.

RESPONSIBILITY TO ACT

With nearly one million Rohingya refugees within its borders, Bangladesh has demonstrated humanitarian commitments and a generosity that must be acknowledged through continued investment in both the refugee and host communities, the agency stressed.

International stakeholders will have a chance to boost support and commitments to the Rohingya at the Global Refugee Forum in Geneva in December.

As of mid-August, funding for the Joint Response Plan for the Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis totalled less than a third of its \$876 million overall appeal.

“The Rohingya response is facing a severe funding crisis, illustrated by two recent cuts in food assistance. There is an urgent need to invest in collective efforts to allow Rohingya to become self-reliant as they cannot, and do not wish to, remain dependent on humanitarian aid,” said UNHCR Representative in Bangladesh Johannes van der Klaauw.

Courtesy of UN News



BRICS HAILS 'HISTORIC' ENTRY OF NEW MEMBERS AMID BLOC RIVALRY

BRICS leaders announced on Thursday last week the “historic” admission of six new countries, as the bloc seeks to reshape the Western-led global order and expand its influence in an era of strategic competition.

BRICS - Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa - agreed at their annual summit to make Argentina, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates full members from January 1.

“This membership expansion is historic,” said Chinese President Xi Jinping, whose nation is the most powerful in the group of large and populous economies.

“The expansion is also a new starting point for BRICS cooperation. It will bring new vigour to the BRICS cooperation mechanism and further strengthen the force for world peace and development”.

Beijing has campaigned to rapidly expand and strengthen the BRICS as a counterweight to US and Western dominance of world affairs, and the push to extend membership headlined the summit agenda in Johannesburg.

Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed hailed what he called “a great moment” for his country, the second most populous in Africa.

“The benefits of Iran’s membership to BRICS will make history, and open a new chapter and a stronger step towards fairness... and lasting peace on the international stage,” said Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi.

Egypt and the UAE also broadcast their readiness to work with the loosely defined group, which represents billions of people on four continents and a quarter of the world’s wealth.



While the announcement indicated all six countries would join, the Saudi response was non-committal, with Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan saying Riyadh was “awaiting details” about the invitation and would “take the appropriate decision”.

‘FIGHT FOR A NEW ORDER’

BRICS makes decisions by consensus and agreed on the six nations after approving rules for admission during three days of bilateral talks and closed-door meetings.

Officials said months of pre-negotiations were needed to reach the breakthrough, though the exact criteria for entry or why these nations were selected from dozens of candidates has not been made public.

It paves the way for future expansion of a disparate group of big and small economies that encompasses both the world’s largest democracy and its largest authoritarian state.

More than 20 countries had formally applied to join and about the same number from non-Western nations across the so-called Global South have expressed interest.

Some 50 world leaders attended the summit, underscoring what BRICS leaders say is the attractiveness of its message and growing relevance on the world stage.

BRICS has risen to prominence at a time of intense geopolitical rivalry and analysts foreshadowed that its 15th summit could be pivotal.

The United States played down the admission of six new members - including arch-nemesis Iran since the 1979 Islamic revolution - saying it would keep working with partners around the world.

“The United States reiterates its belief that countries may choose the partners and groupings with whom they will associate,” a State Department spokesperson said.

US officials have played down the likelihood of BRICS emerging as a geopolitical rival, describing the bloc as a highly diverse grouping of both friends and rivals.

“Our diversity strengthens the fight for a new international order,” said Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who supported Argentina’s membership.

‘SHOT IN THE ARM’

Michael Kugelman, director of the South Asia Institute at the Wilson Center, said the summit had giv-

en BRICS “a shot in the arm”.

“In reality, BRICS does have something approximating a common vision, and that is providing alternatives to the West,” he said.

“I think it’s a goal that’s gained momentum amid greatly intensifying power competition.”

BRICS leaders championed its New Development Bank as a fairer lender for emerging markets than US-based institutions like the World Bank.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said an overhaul of the world’s “outdated, dysfunctional and unfair global financial architecture” was necessary “but it won’t happen overnight”.

“In the absence of such reform, fragmentation is inevitable,” he told leaders in Johannesburg.

Analysts said Brazil, South Africa and India would need to balance their proximity to China and Russia without alienating a strong trading partner in the United States.

The admission of oil-producing giants Iran, Saudi Arabia and UAE would boost the BRICS economic heft but some observers said Tehran’s inclusion risked colouring the bloc with an anti-American hue.

The summit also underlined divisions with the West over the war in Ukraine.

South Africa, China and India have not condemned Russia’s invasion, while Brazil has refused to join Western nations in sending arms to Ukraine or imposing sanctions on Moscow.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, who is the subject of an international arrest warrant, was the only leader not present in Johannesburg and addressed the summit via video link.

AFP

AT BRICS SUMMIT, GUTERRES GLOBAL UNITY CALL IN FACE OF ‘EXISTENTIAL’ CHALLENGES

The UN chief on Thursday last week underscored the urgent need for unity and justice to tackle humanity’s pressing challenges, which range from the climate crisis to economic disparities and conflicts with global implications.

Addressing the BRICS Summit, taking place in Johannesburg, South Africa, Secretary-General António Guterres commended the Rainbow Nation’s “extraordinary path to unity through action and justice.”

“That’s what our world needs: unity for action and unity for justice; we are confronting existential challenges,” he said, drawing attention to worsening impacts of climate change and rising poverty, hunger and inequalities.

The BRICS group of world economies made up of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa which joined in 2010, represents more than 40 per cent of the world’s population, and all five States are also members of the wider G20 bloc.

Mr. Guterres spotlighted the risks posed by emerging technologies without a comprehensive global framework, while also shedding light on the geopolitical divides and conflicts, especially the impacts stemming from the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

‘MULTIPOLAR WORLD’

In his address, Mr. Guterres outlined the global shift towards a multipolar world, cautioning that multipolarity alone cannot ensure a peaceful and just status quo. He called for robust and effective multilateral



Johannesburg, South Africa. Photo: AFP

institutions to support this shift.

Drawing parallels, he highlighted the lessons from the early 20th century when Europe's multipolarity without strong multilateral mechanisms contributed to the start of the First World War.

"As the global community moves towards multipolarity, we desperately need – and I have been vigorously advocating for – a strengthened and reformed multilateral architecture based on the UN Charter and international law," Mr. Guterres said.

Pointing out that today's global governance structures were established in the aftermath of World War Two, excluding many African countries still under colonial rule, he stressed the necessity for these institutions to reflect contemporary power dynamics and economic realities.

WITHOUT REFORMS, FRAGMENTATION 'INEVITABLE'

The UN chief warned that without such re-

forms, fragmentation becomes inevitable.

"We cannot afford a world with a divided global economy and financial system; with diverging strategies on technology including artificial intelligence; and with conflicting security frameworks," he said.

Mr. Guterres went on to note that low-income countries, particularly in Africa, would bear the brunt of the impact of such a fracture.

"I have come to Johannesburg with a simple message: in a fracturing world overwhelmed by crises, there is simply no alternative to cooperation," he said.

REDESIGNING GLOBAL FINANCIAL ARCHITECTURE

Addressing Africa's unique challenges, the Secretary-General said that as an historic victim of slavery and colonialism, the continent continues to confront "grave injustices", including economic disparities and rapid climate change.

He called for a redesigned global financial architecture and stepped-up climate action, highlighting his Climate Solidarity Pact and Acceleration Agenda.

"Developed countries must also finally keep their promises to developing countries: by meeting the \$100 billion goal, doubling adaptation finance, replenishing the Green Climate Fund, and operationalizing the loss and damage fund this year," he said.

CALL FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION

Mr. Guterres concluded with a call for collective action, stressing that humanity will not be able to solve its common problems in a fragmented way.

"Together, let us work to advance the power of universal action, the imperative for justice, and the promise of a better future."

Courtesy of UN News



US PLAYS DOWN BRICS BLOC EXPANSION

The United States on Thursday last week played down the admission of six new members to the BRICS bloc of developing nations, saying it would keep working with partners around the world.

At a summit in South Africa, the BRICS - which includes key US adversaries China and Russia - said it would admit new members including Iran, an arch-nemesis of the United States since the 1979 Islamic revolution.

“The United States reiterates its belief that countries may choose the partners and groupings with whom they will associate,” a State Department spokesperson said.

“We will continue to work with our partners and allies in bilateral, regional and multilateral fora to strengthen our shared prosperity and uphold global peace and security. “

One closely watched player has been India, another BRICS member which has also been assiduously courted by the United States.

India will lead a summit next month in New Delhi of the Group of 20, which brings together major developed as well as emerging economies.

Jake Sullivan, US President Joe Biden’s national security advisor, discussed the G20 summit as well as support for Ukraine in a meeting at the White House on Thursday with counterparts from Britain, France, Germany and Italy.

The Western powers want “strong outcomes” in New Delhi that will work to “demonstrating the G20’s role as the premier forum for economic cooperation, driving an affirmative and ambitious agenda for developing and emerging countries,” a White House statement said.

The BRICS - Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa - agreed at their annual summit to make Argentina, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates full members from January 1.

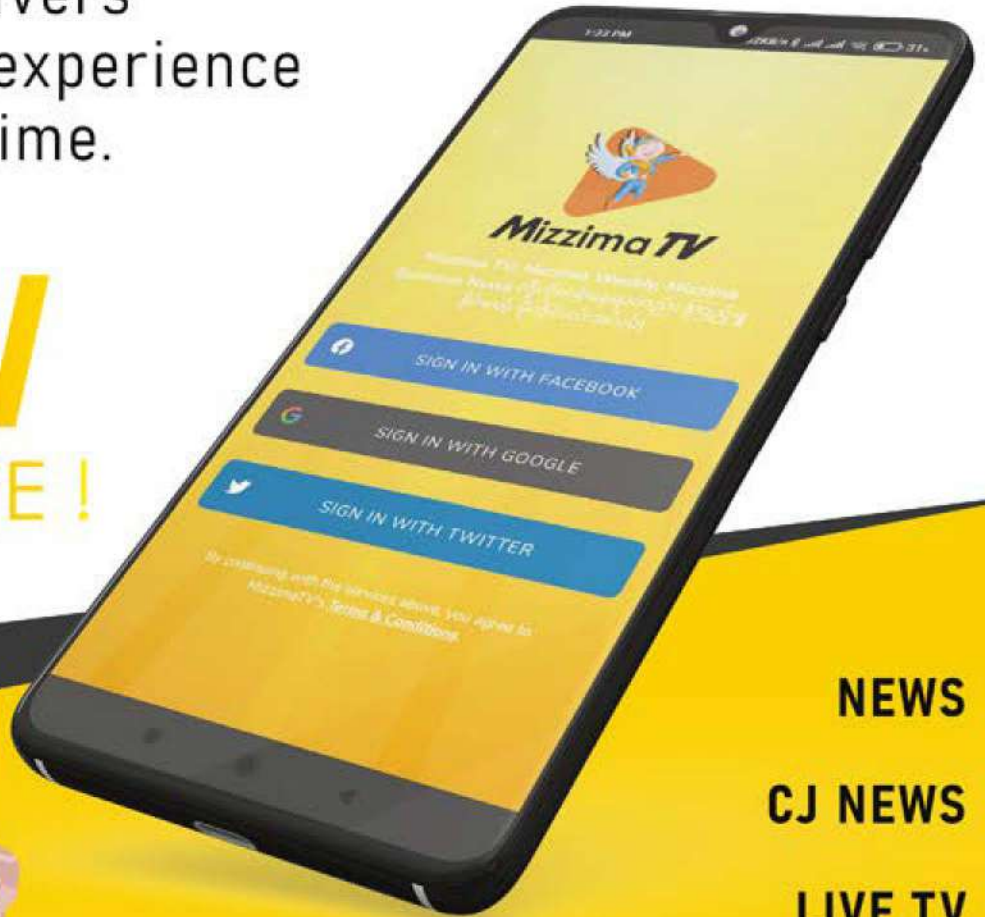
AFP

Proudly Presented by Mizzima Media Group

MIZZIMA TV APP

Mizzima TV delivers the best Video experience anywhere, anytime.

NOW WATCH LIVE!



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

Get the app free!

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



SCAN QR WITH PHONE CAMERA OR SCANNER APP FOR DOWNLOAD



Mizzima TV Mizzima+

mizzima WEEKLY



Mizzimaburmese.com

Mizzima.com

Mizzima TV app

Mizzima Free to Air Satellite Channels

Mizzima English Weekly Magazine

Mizzima Facebook Pages

Mizzima Radio

Mizzima 108FM Radio

US HITS CHINA ON 'FORCED ASSIMILATION' OF TIBETAN CHILDREN

The United States said Tuesday last week it was imposing visa sanctions on Chinese officials pursuing “forced assimilation” of children in Tibet, where UN experts say one million children have been separated from their families.

In the latest of a series of US moves on Beijing despite a resumption of high-level dialogue, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the United States would restrict visas to Chinese officials behind the policy of state boarding schools.

“These coercive policies seek to eliminate Tibet’s distinct linguistic, cultural and religious traditions among younger generations of Tibetans,” Blinken said in a statement.

“We urge PRC authorities to end the coercion of Tibetan children into government-run boarding

schools and to cease repressive assimilation policies, both in Tibet and throughout other parts of the PRC,” he said, referring to the People’s Republic of China.

The United States since 2021 has accused China of waging genocide in another region, Xinjiang, through what US officials, rights groups and witnesses say is a vast network of forced labor camps. China denies the charge.

A State Department spokesperson said the new restrictions would apply to current and former officials involved in education policy in Tibet but did not give further details, citing US confidentiality laws on visa records.

The United States separately imposed sanctions in December on two top-ranking Chinese officials, Wu Yingjie and Zhang Hongbo, over what Wash-



Protest against Chinese policies in Tibet held in Delhi. Photo: AFP

ington said were widespread human rights violations in Tibet.

CHINA DENOUNCES ‘SMEARS’

China called the US-backed allegations “smears” that “seriously undermine China-US relations.”

“As a common international practice, boarding schools in China are set up according to the needs of local students,” said Liu Pengyu, spokesman for the Chinese embassy in Washington.

“Boarding schools have gradually developed into one of the important modes of running schools in China’s ethnic minority areas, and the centralized way of running schools effectively solves the problem of ethnic minority students’ difficulty in attending school at a distance where the local people live scattered,” he said.

But Blinken in his statement cited a finding given in February by three UN experts who said that around one million Tibetan children have been sent

into boarding schools, often by force.

The program appears aimed at unwillingly integrating Tibetans into China’s majority Han culture, with compulsory education in Mandarin and no instruction culturally relevant to the Buddhist-majority Himalayan region, the special rapporteurs said.

A separate report this year from UN experts said that hundreds of thousands of Tibetans have also been forced out of traditional rural life into low-skill “vocational training” as a pretext to undermine their identity.

The International Campaign for Tibet, a pressure group close to the region’s spiritual leader the Dalai Lama, applauded Blinken’s action against the “unconscionable” separation of children.

“As the Dalai Lama often says, Tibetan culture, based on peace and compassion, has value to offer to the entire world,” said the group’s president, Tencho Gyatso.

“This boarding school program targets the most vulnerable and impressionable minds and is aimed at converting Tibetans into Chinese, cementing the Chinese government’s control over Tibet and annihilating the Tibetan culture and way of life,” she said.

Tibet has alternated over the centuries between independence and control by China, which says it “peacefully liberated” the rugged plateau in 1951 and brought infrastructure and education to the previously underdeveloped region.

The Dalai Lama, who fled into exile in India in 1959, has won a global following through his spiritual teachings, raising awareness on Tibet.

But the charismatic monk is 88 and has slowed his travels. The Dalai Lama has said he may break Buddhist tradition and pick his own reincarnation or declare the institution over, fearing officially atheist Beijing will identify and groom a pliant successor. However, there exiled Tibetans, and their government, will likely go through the process of “finding his reincarnation” as the position of Dalai Lama is as much political as spiritual.



AFP

SIX YEARS ON, STILL NO JUSTICE FOR MYANMAR'S ROHINGYA

UN human rights chief Volker Türk, on Thursday last week, reiterated the call for accountability and justice for the hundreds of thousands of Rohingya driven from their homes in Myanmar by security forces in 2017, in what has been described as “textbook” ethnic cleansing.

Friday, 25 August, marks the sixth anniversary of the start of a massive offensive by Myanmar’s military against the mainly Muslim minority in Rakhine state.

Some 10,000 Rohingya men, women, children and newborns were killed, more than 300 villages burnt to the ground, and over 700,000 forced to

flee to Bangladesh in search of safety, joining tens of thousands who fled earlier persecutions.

The then High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra’ad al-Hussein called the brutal campaign to drive the community from their homes a “textbook example of ethnic cleansing.”

In all, over a million Rohingya fled persecution and systematic discrimination to seek international refugee protection in Bangladesh, and approximately 600,000 remain within Rakhine state, where they continue to suffer severe rights restrictions and the threat of further violence.



Photo: UN News

In a sign of their desperation, thousands more continue to attempt dangerous sea crossings from Myanmar and Bangladesh, too often ending in tragedy.

A 'MOST FERVENT WISH'

In a statement Mr. Türk expressed his “most fervent wish” for the Rohingya to be able to return to their homes to live in safety, dignity, and freedom, as recognized citizens of Myanmar, with their human rights fully respected.

“This is currently not the case given the precarious conditions in Rakhine State. Furthermore, the military has shown no willingness to address systematic discrimination against the Rohingya.”

Renewing his call for accountability, the UN rights chief urged the international community to continue supporting Rohingya refugees and their host communities in Bangladesh, amid dwindling funds for humanitarian assistance programmes.



“More must be done to hold the military to account for their repeated campaigns of persecution against the Rohingya, and for driving the country into its current human rights and humanitarian crisis.

“In the face of the impunity enjoyed by the Myanmar military for past and present crimes against the Rohingya as well as other groups, I call on States fully to support the ongoing international accountability efforts.”

END 'DEADLY PARALYSIS OF INDIFFERENCE'

Also on Thursday, Tom Andrews, the Special Rapporteur on the situation in Myanmar, appealed to world leaders to end a “deadly paralysis of indifference” and take action to hold accountable the architects and perpetrators of the violence.

“Responsibility for the immense suffering of the Rohingya starts at the top. Min Aung Hlaing, who led the genocidal campaign, is now at the head of an illegal and illegitimate military junta that is attacking civilian populations throughout Myanmar. He must be brought to justice and be made to answer for his crimes,” Mr. Andrews said.

The independent rights expert also chided the international community for failing its responsibilities to the Rohingya, noting that after six years, the Security Council has not referred the situation in Myanmar to the International Criminal Court (ICC), despite overwhelming evidence of atrocity crimes.

ROHINGYA TIRED OF 'EMPTY PROMISES'

Mr. Andrews underscored the need for tangible action.

“The Rohingya are tired of empty promises. Their children cannot eat political rhetoric or UN resolutions that go nowhere. They need and deserve the world to end the deadly paralysis of indifference.”

“We cannot let another year go by without principled and decisive action to support justice and accountability for the Rohingya.”

INDEPENDENT HUMAN RIGHTS EXPERTS

Special Rapporteurs are independent human rights experts, appointed by the UN Human Rights Council as part of its Special Procedures.

They are mandated to monitor and report on specific thematic issues or country situations and work on a voluntary basis. They serve in their individual capacity; are not UN staff and do not receive a salary.

Courtesy of UN News



Photo: Quinn Buffing

KAREN STATE

Junta prepares for large offensive against Myawaddy base

Following a month of offensive operations by the junta against its former Let Khat Taung Hill Base in Myawaddy Township, Kayin State, it is preparing reinforcements for a further attack on the base.

The junta forces attacking the base are currently receiving daily reinforcements and stockpiles of ammunition, which has caused nearby residents to flee the area, according to Myawaddy residents.

The pro-junta Border Guard Force (BGF) militia in Myittarlinmyaing Village has also been preparing to deploy heavy weaponry to attack the base.

Let Khat Taung Hill Base was originally a strategically important base for the junta, but on 21 July it was seized by joint forces from the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), the armed wing of the Karen National Union (KNU), and local people's defence force (PDF) fighters. Since then, junta forces have launched at least 10 attacks on the base in an attempt to seize it back from the defence forces.

The KNU spokesperson Pado Saw Ka Lel Say told Mizzima that the junta is trying to retake the base because it is an important source of income for the military junta and important for trade.

He said: "Let Khat Taung base is their stronghold. It is an important location for the junta. Additionally, Let Khat Taung base's proximity to Myawaddy makes it a strategic hub for trade. This positions the

Myawaddy trade route as a pivotal component of the junta's revenue flow. In essence, they recognize the significance of this route and the base."

On 17 August the junta launched a heavy offensive against Let Khat Taung Base. That resulted in 15 junta soldiers being killed and a further 21 being injured, whilst the forces defending the base suffered two fatalities and five injuries, according to the KNU.

Kyaw Zaw, a spokesperson of the shadow National Unity Government's (NUG) President's Office said: "Let Khat Taung is a junta army stronghold located in a commercially important place in Myawaddy, Karen State. The junta troops withdrew from the base with heavy casualties due to the attacks of the revolutionary forces including Karen ethnic revolutionary organisations. In order to get it back, the junta troops have been fighting for almost a month. I think it's been 27 days."

He said that despite launching many airstrikes the junta forces have been unable to take back the base.

Praising the KNU's defence of the base he said: "As the most experienced and enduring revolutionary force in Myanmar's history, the KNU focuses its attacks on strategically vital targets, prompting the junta to make vigorous efforts to recapture the Let Khat Taung Base, even at the expense of involving the BGF."

In response to the fighting at Let Khat Taung Base the Thai authorities have reinforced their forces on the border, according to the KNU.



JUNTA'S HEALTH MINISTER ATTENDS ASEAN HEALTH MEETING AMIDST DETERIORATING HEALTHCARE SITUATION IN MYANMAR

Myanmar junta's Health Minister, Dr. Thet Khaing Win, engaged in the ASEAN Health Ministers' Meeting, reported junta-controlled media.

The ASEAN Finance and Health Ministers Meeting (AFHMM), held on August 24, 2023, was jointly presided over by Sri Mulyani Indrawati, Finance Minister of Indonesia, and Budi Gunadi Sadikin, Health Minister of Indonesia, according to ASEAN's official website.

In the course of the session, Dr. Thet Khaing Win emphasized the transition of the COVID-19 pandemic from an emergency response to the critical requirements of prevention, management, and treatment, reported the junta-controlled media.

Despite the participation of the Myanmar minister in the ASEAN health meetings, the healthcare situation in Myanmar has significantly deteriorated since the military coup in February 2021.

Following the coup, the junta has taken a harsh stance, leading to the arrest of numerous medical doctors who joined the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) by choosing not to work under the junta.

Moreover, the junta has gone so far as to suspend the business licenses of some private hospitals in Myanmar's central Mandalay Region, all due to these hospitals employing staff affiliated with the CDM.

Palace, City, and Kant Kaw hospitals in Mandalay had already received notifications to cease admitting patients.

US SANCTIONS ON MYANMAR STATE-OWNED BANKS HAVE IMPACT ON THE COUNTRY, JUNTA ADMITS

Myanmar Deputy Minister of Planning and Finance Maung Maung Win admitted that the economic sanctions imposed by the US government on two state-owned banks namely Myanmar Foreign Trade Bank (MFTB) and Myanmar Investment and Commerce Bank (MICB) have had impacts on their government.

The minister was speaking at a press conference held by the Military Council's True News Information in Naypyidaw on 22 August.

These sanctions had an impact on the country's earning and spending of foreign exchanges and all economic sectors, deputy minister Maung Maung Win said.

The economic sanctions had been imposed by the US government for no valid reasons, he claimed.

The US government sanctions say that they had imposed economic sanctions on MFTB and MICB in June 2023 and all ties with them must be cut and business transactions with these two banks must be stopped by 5 August.

Similarly, one of Singapore's leading banks, United Oversea Bank (UOB), announced early this month that they would cut ties and stop all transac-

tions with banks in Myanmar starting from 1 September this year.

In the same way, Bangladesh state-owned Sonali Bank announced this week that they had frozen the accounts of MFTB and MICB opened at their bank.

The Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) governor Than Than Swe told business people at a meeting held in Naypyidaw on 19 August that the Military Council would do banking transactions with Indian and Thai banks after the Singapore and Bangladesh banks cut ties with Myanmar banks under pressure given by the US government.

The Myanmar Kyat depreciated after the US government-imposed sanctions on the two state-owned banks and also the US dollar exchange rate and gold price are rising sharply.

The US dollar exchange rate was just 1,300 Kyat against the dollar in January 2021 before the coup and it rose by nearly 300% to 3,900 Kyat against the dollar this week.

Junta head Min Aung Hlaing said on 15 August that some countries used dollars as a weapon in relation to the financial security of the country.

ADB CUTS INFLATION FORECAST FOR DEVELOPING ASIA



The Asian Development Bank cut its inflation forecast for developing Asia on Wednesday last week, as food and fuel prices eased, supply chain disruptions waned and interest rate hikes started to bite.

Inflation, which has squeezed household budgets and left millions of poor households struggling to put food on the table, is heading back towards pre-Covid levels, the Philippines-based lender said.

It expects inflation of 3.6 percent this year, compared with its forecast in April of 4.2 percent as prices in China ease sharply, the bank said in its flagship outlook report.

Developing Asia refers to the multilateral lender's 46 emerging member economies, stretching from Kazakhstan in Central Asia to the Cook Islands in the Pacific.

The ADB kept its economic growth forecast of 4.8 percent for 2023, citing robust consumption, travel and investment, even as global demand for the regions' exports weakened.

Further upside to its forecast was possible, the bank said.

"If inflation is tamed more quickly than currently expected in the advanced economies, the authorities there would likely adopt a more dovish monetary policy, which would support growth in the region," ADB said.

At the same time, the lender warned an escalation in Russia's invasion of Ukraine could fuel price hikes, while the return of the El Nino weather phenomenon this year could hurt economies.

The tide was also turning on interest rates, the bank noted.

"With lower inflation in developing Asia and more moderate monetary tightening in the United States, most central banks in the region have kept policy rates steady this year, with signs emerging of a shift toward easier money," it said.

China, the world's second-largest economy, is still expected to grow at five percent this year and 4.5 percent in 2024, the bank said, citing supportive monetary and fiscal policies.

INFLATION, COVID PUSHED NEARLY 70 MILLION ASIANS INTO EXTREME POVERTY: ADB



COVID-19 restrictions proved bad for business and employment. Photo: AFP

Soaring food and fuel prices and the coronavirus pandemic pushed nearly 70 million more people in developing Asia into extreme poverty last year, the Asian Development Bank said in a report released Thursday last week.

The Manila-based lender defines extreme poverty as living on less than \$2.15 a day based on inflation-adjusted 2017 prices.

“Asia and the Pacific is steadily recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic, but the increased cost-of-living crisis is undermining progress toward eliminating poverty,” ADB chief economist Albert Park said in a statement.

The bank said an estimated 155.2 million people, or 3.9 percent of the region’s population, were living in extreme poverty in 2022 - 67.8 million more than would have been without the pandemic and higher living costs.

Developing Asia refers to the multilateral lender’s 46 emerging member economies, stretching from Kazakhstan in Central Asia to the Cook Islands in the Pacific.

Poor people have been hurt the most by higher inflation as they are less able to pay higher prices for necessities, leaving many unable to save money, pay for healthcare or invest in education, the report said.

The ADB estimated that the pandemic pushed 75-80 million more people into extreme poverty in 2020, compared to its pre-pandemic projections.

In July, the bank said that it expects inflation to ease to 3.6 percent this year -- from 4.4 percent in 2022 -- as food and fuel prices softened.

While developing Asian economies should continue to make progress against poverty, an estimated 1.26 billion people, or about 30 percent of the region’s projected population by 2030, will still be considered “economically vulnerable”, it said.

The term refers to a person living on \$3.65 to \$6.85 a day based on 2017 prices.

AFP

MYANMAR'S KBZ AND THAILAND'S K BANK JOIN FORCES FOR REMITTANCE SERVICE ADDRESSING MYANMAR'S MIGRANT WORKERS' NEEDS

Prominent Thai bank Kasikornbank recently revealed its collaboration with Myanmar's Kanbawza (KBZ) Bank to introduce a smartphone-based remittance service, reported The Nekkei.

This service facilitates the transfer of money from Thailand to Myanmar and is particularly aimed at catering to the growing number of migrant workers leaving Myanmar to seek work in neighboring countries, predominantly Thailand.

Since Myanmar experienced a military takeover in February 2021, there has been a dramatic surge in the migration of young people to neighboring nations, including Thailand. Recognizing this trend, Kasikornbank and KBZ Bank have come together to address the demand for a reliable and efficient means of sending money back to families in Myanmar.

The mechanism involves initiating an international remittance through Kasikornbank's dedicated application. The money will be then transferred to a KBZPay account in Kyat, which is the official currency of Myanmar.

As per information published by Myanmar's foreign missions, remittances sent by Myanmar workers, primarily from Thailand, Malaysia, Japan, and Singapore from November 1, 2022, to April 28, 2023, have aggregated to surpass the sum of US\$1.5 billion, Mizzima reported in late May.

BADMINTON CLASH

Thet Htar Thuzar of Myanmar in action against Carolina Marin of Spain (not pictured) during their round of 16 women's singles match at the BWF World Championship in Copenhagen, Denmark, 24 August.

Photo: EPA

IN FOCUS



BOOK HIGHLIGHTS CONFLICT, COMPLEXITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE IN POST-COUP MYANMAR

A new book just published looks at the confluence of conflict, complexity and climate change that provide challenges in post-coup Myanmar,

“Conflict, Complexity & Climate Change: Emergent Federal Systems and Resilience in Post-Coup Myanmar”, written by author and Burma expert Ashley South examines the many problems Myanmar faces in the wake of the 2021 military coup.

Speaking at an event in Thailand, Mr South told the audience of the difficulties Myanmar faces today, exacerbated by climate change and the floods and droughts that annually beset the country.

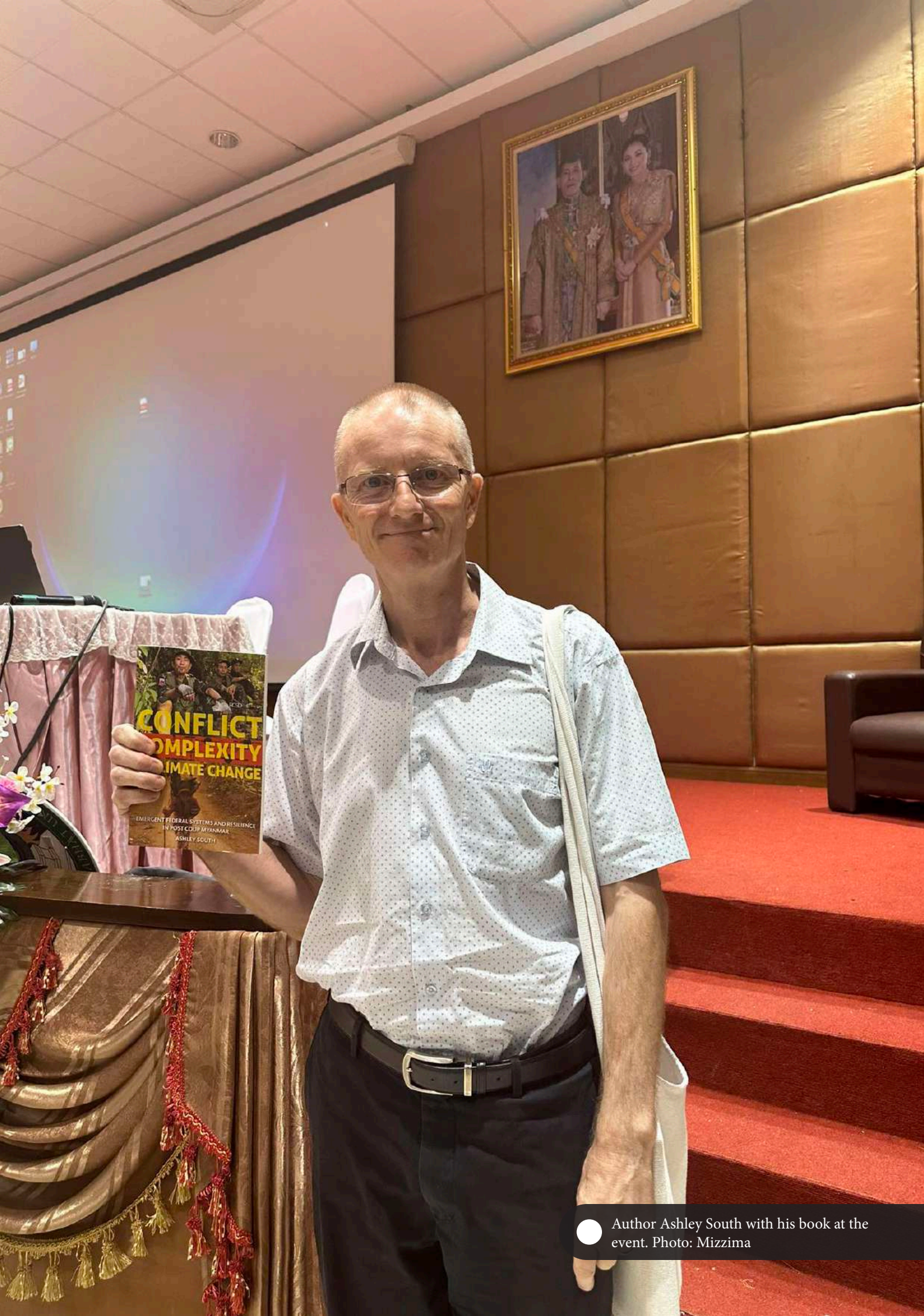
Mr South argues that “the disruptions of climate change will further drive the disarticulation of the state of Myanmar, which was never perceived or experienced as legitimate by many ethnic nationality citizens, especially those living in conflict-affected areas.”

He noted that in the absence of credible and legitimate state authorities in Myanmar following the coup, with the State Administration Council junta pillaging the country, EAOs and CSOs are key climate change actors.

“EAOs and other local stakeholders in and from Myanmar have globally important roles to play in mitigating climate change through nature-based solutions,” he claims.

Mr South has 20 years’ experience as an independent author, researcher and consultant. He has a PhD from the Australian National University, and an MSc from the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, and is a Research Fellow at Chiang Mai University.

The latest bush follows publication of “A New Look at Federalism in Myanmar” published in 2022.



● Author Ashley South with his book at the event. Photo: Mizzima



Mizzima TV

Be Different

FREE TO AIR **DIGITAL TV CHANNEL**

Proudly broadcast by Mizzima Media Group

