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CALLS GROW FOR AUNG SAN SUU KYI'S RELEASE

The National Unity Government (NUG) and the National League for Democracy (NLD) are leading calls on the international community to put pressure on the Myanmar junta to release democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi.

As we know, the Myanmar civilian leader was arrested on 1 February 2023 as the military carried out a coup and she was subsequently sentenced to a total of 33 years, reduced to 27 years, under trumped up charges.

Myanmar's ousted ruling party and the NUG have requested all actors to advance efforts and push for the release of all political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi.

In a statement of the Central Work Committee of the NLD on 14 September, they expressed the appreciation of their party for the efforts of the leaders of the United Nations, ASEAN community and other neighbouring countries, international organizations, and internal and international revolutionary forces on the Myanmar issue.

The statement said that the Military Council is not only keeping Aung San Suu Kyi as hostage, an intermediary for their continued existence, but also detaining her in a secret place without giving her any of the rights of a political prisoner. It is unclear whether she is in prison or in some form of house arrest within a prison compound.

According to the statement, the 78-year-old civilian leader does not have access to adequate medical care, healthy food, and sufficient accommodation, causing risk to her life.

The NLD also warned that the military junta is solely responsible for her declining health that could endanger her life.

Earlier in the month local media have reported the Nobel laureate was suffering dizzy spells, vomiting and unable to eat because of a tooth infection. Her son has also talked to the BBC in London about the worrying health of his mother, and being more prominent in the public eye.

"We are particularly concerned that she is not receiving adequate medical care and they are not providing healthy food nor accommodation sufficiently with the intention to risk her life," the NLD said.

"If Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's health is not only impaired but her life also is endangered, the military junta is solely responsible," the statement said.

Indeed, the Myanmar junta is responsible for the condition and health of Aung San Suu Kyi and recent reports are of serious concern. It is clear that the only decent thing to do, given the junta has made clear their message, would be to allow the unconditional release of The Lady.

EDITORIAL

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MIZZIMA MAGAZINE

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INFORMATION

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

Subscriptions and sales in Myanmar

Mizzima Weekly is currently available as a PDF.

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CONTENTS



NEWS & INSIGHT

3 EDITORIAL

6 IN FOCUS

8 NEWS ROUNDUPS

10 THE RUSSIAN CONNECTION
Russian tourists and fighter jets bolster Myanmar junta's well-being

14 US pressures Laos not to let up on Myanmar crisis

15 Myanmar junta revokes Piti Eain Publishing House license

16 Mandalay medicine supply crisis puts people's health at risk



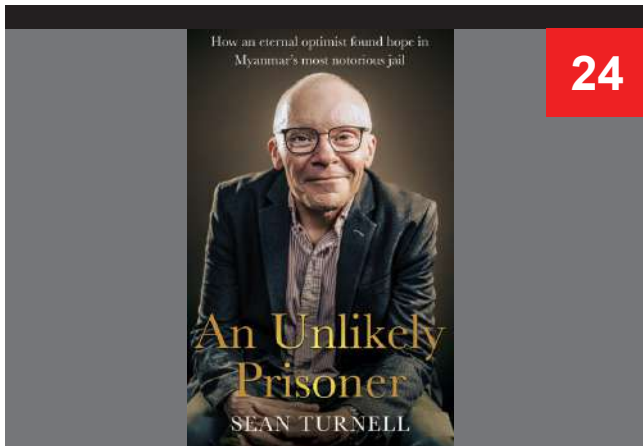
17 UN Special Rapporteur calls for support for human rights in Myanmar

18 UN expert suggests 'collective punishment' to end Myanmar military's war on the people

20 Myanmar's CDM participants support the cause but face hardships

22 Rising edible oil prices in Myanmar spark long queues





AUNG SAN SUU KYI'S STATUS

- 23** Myanmar's ousted NLD calls for foreign help to press junta to release Aung San Suu Kyi

BOOK REVIEW

- 24** 'An Unlikely Prisoner' chronicles Sean Turnell's nightmare and sense of hope in Myanmar's notorious jails

CHINA FOCUS

- 26** G77+China summit in Cuba calls for new global order
- 28** Guterres urges G77 and China to champion multilateralism 'rooted in equality'

INDIA FOCUS

- 30** Global rice prices hit 15-year high after India curbs: FAO

Cover photo of Myanmar junta leader Min Aung Hlaing with Russian President Vladimir Putin at a meeting in Russia in 2022 by AFP

COMMENTARY

- 32** War crimes intensifying: Myanmar human rights investigators

- 34** ETHNIC NEWS ROUNDUPS

- 35** LAST WEEK IN NAY PYI TAW

BUSINESS

- 36** Myanmar to offer visa on arrival to Chinese, Indian tourists

- 37** Yangon Central Station upgrade project stopped

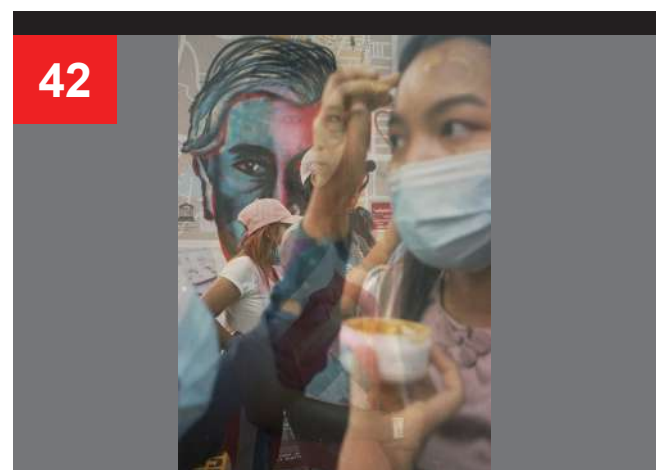
- 38** EU unafraid of trade war with China

- 39** BUSINESS ALERTS

CULTURE & LIFESTYLE

- 40** IN FOCUS

- 42** Picturing a revolution







IN FOCUS

THIN PICKINGS

A woman looks after her sewing machine shop in Yangon as economic woes beset crisis-plagued Myanmar.

Photo: AFP

MYANMAR ENVOY TO UN CALLS ON ASEAN FOR MORE ACTION AGAINST JUNTA

Myanmar's envoy to the UN asked member states of ASEAN to take further action against the junta illegally holding power in his country.

During a recent interview with Kyodo News, Kyaw Moe Tun said, "We thought that the member states of ASEAN could take strong and unified actions against the military...but it just hasn't happened yet."

Referring to ASEAN's condemnation of the Myanmar junta following its summit earlier this month, Ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun added, "To be very frank, it does still not meet our expectations."

The ASEAN Chairman's Statement during the 43rd ASEAN Summit on 5 September included, "We strongly condemned the continued escalation of violence, causing prolonged suffering for the people of Myanmar, humanitarian crisis, the destruction of houses and public facilities such as schools, hospitals, markets, churches and monasteries, and adverse impacts on regional stability, particularly along the border region."

The member countries also decided at the summit that the Five-Point Consensus (5PC) remains as ASEAN's main reference to address the political crisis in Myanmar, and they are gravely concerned by the lack of substantial progress on its implementation by the military regime, although the member countries

made a commitment to the 5PC in April 2021.

During the interview with Kyodo News, the envoy criticized the junta's continued acts of violence and suppression against the people of Myanmar.

"We want the international community to help us in a concrete and effective way. Make sure that no one (is) left behind. Make sure that those who are in need receive assistance."

He continued to say that he is asking the Security Council to impose sanctions on the sale of arms and jet fuel to the junta, block its sources of funding and create an accountability mechanism to provide justice for those who have perished at the hands of Myanmar's military.

"We, the international community, in particular the Security Council, cannot stop the military for their atrocities, cannot stop (them) committing massacres against the people," he said.

The UN Security Council adopted a resolution in December 2022 to release "all arbitrarily detained prisoners" and to end "all forms of violence" in Myanmar.

Kyaw Moe Tun also requested the world not to lose sight of the people of Myanmar, while the global community is shifting to other crises, including the war in Ukraine.

POLICE STATION ATTACKED IN PAUKKAUNG TOWNSHIP, BAGO REGION

Five junta police officers were killed in a grenade attack carried out by defence forces on Kangyi Police Station in Paukkaung Township, Bago Region at about 7.00 p.m. on 9 September.

According to a defence force fighter, the raid was a success, but they were unable to set the police station on fire.

He said: "We were compelled to retreat because we lacked sufficient ammunition and faced adverse weather conditions that prevented us from setting fire to the police station."

Local sources said that resistance forces viewed police stations as symbols of the junta's power and they target them to undermine the junta's power.

Amongst the defence forces involved in the attack on the police station were Bago Region People's Defence Force (PDF) and PDFs from Magway Region and Chin State.

Mizzima is currently investigating to confirm casualty numbers and the precise details of the attack.

NUG ISSUES FLOOD WARNINGS

Warnings of possible late rainy season flooding across Myanmar in September have been made by the shadow National Unity Government's (NUG's) Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management (MOHADM).

It said that torrential rainfall is expected to hit the coastal, central and lower regions of Myanmar from 11 to 17 September.

It warned that as the monsoon starts to recede there could be secondary flooding from swollen streams and rivers.

MOHADM advised people to remain vigilant to the possibility of flooding and landslides, especially in the regions and states of Mandalay, Bago, Ayeyarwady, Yangon, Tanintharyi, Eastern Shan, Chin, Rakhine, Karen, and Mon. Thunder and lightning are also expected.

The junta's Department of Meteorology and Hydrology also made an announcement on 11 September that in the last two weeks of September, there is a possibility of heavy rainfall in many regions of Myanmar.

It said that currently, the water level of the Ngawon River is at a critical level in the towns of Ngathaingchaung and Thabaung in Ayeyarwaddy Region.

During July and August, most regions in Myanmar experienced heavy rainfall and the water levels in many rivers exceeded critical levels. This led to the flooding of many townships in Karen and Mon States.

On 7 September the Myittha River flooded Kalay Town, in Sagaing Region. 1,000 residents from seven wards in the town were affected.

WARD ADMINISTRATOR SHOT DEAD IN THONZE TOWN, BAGO REGION

A ward administrator was shot dead in Thonze Town, Thayarwaddy District, Bago Region at about 6.00 p.m. on 11 September.

She was identified as 50-year-old Daw Theint Theint Lwin, the administrator of San Yway Tan Ward in Thonze Town.

"We shot her on Circular Road, which was approximately 70 feet away from the Military Council's Light Infantry Battalion 35", said a representative of the Thayarwaddy Galone Force which carried out the assassination.

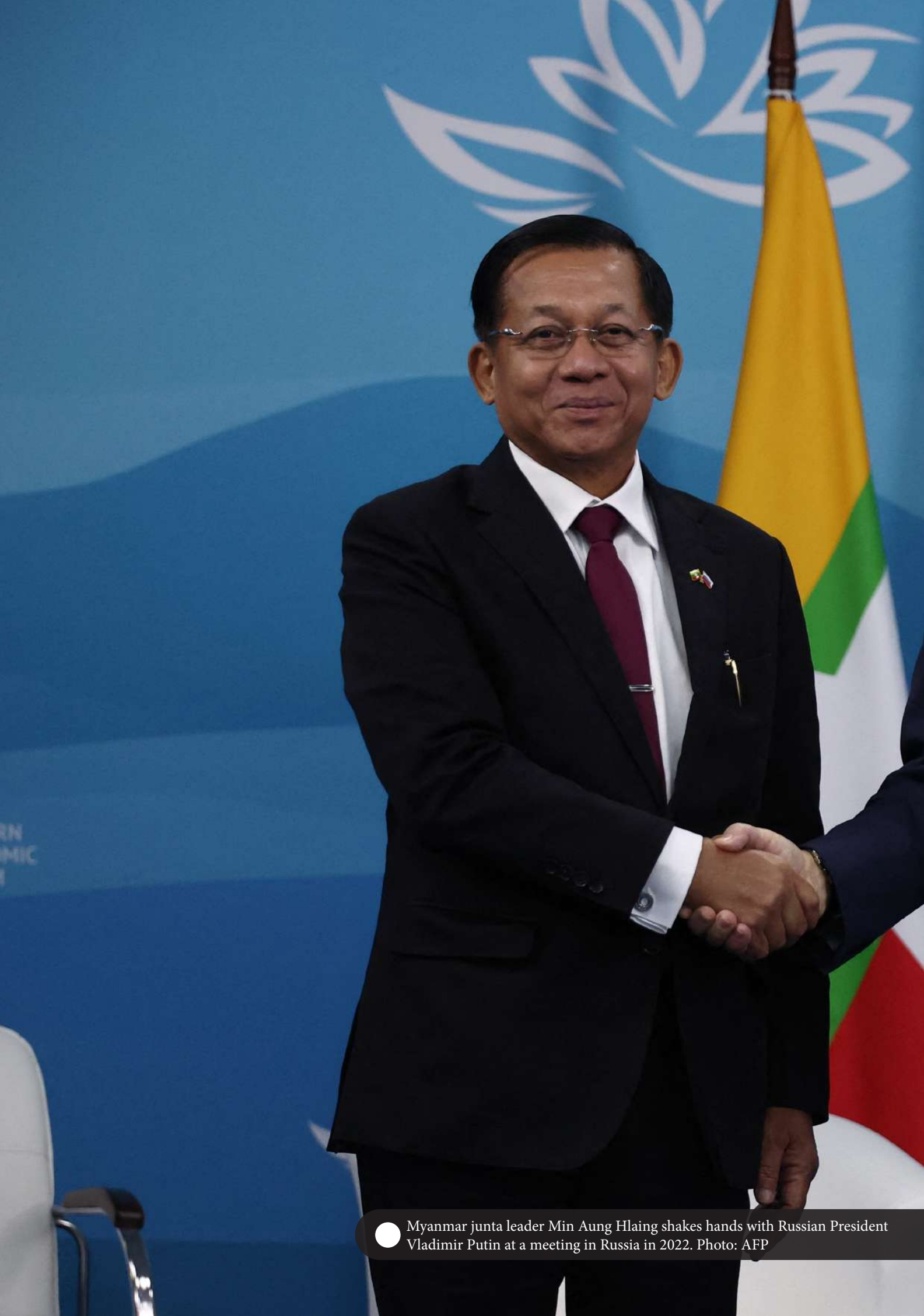
Daw Theint Theint Lwin had only been the ward administrator since December 2022. She took the job following the assassination of the previous ward administrator, San Yway Tan Ward, who was also assassinated at the end of November 2022 by the Thayarwaddy Galone Force.

During the 2020 general election, Theint Theint Lwin served as San Yway Tan Ward campaign leader for the junta-aligned Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP).

The Thayarwaddy Galone Force representative said: "She was identified as a supporter of the military coup d'etat."

After the shooting of Daw Theint Theint Lwin junta troops started searching people in the area and arrested and interrogated some of them.

The Thayarwaddy Galone Force has said that it will target people who support or assist the coup d'etat and its administrative apparatus.



Myanmar junta leader Min Aung Hlaing shakes hands with Russian President Vladimir Putin at a meeting in Russia in 2022. Photo: AFP

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CONGRESS

THE RUSSIAN CONNECTION

Russian tourists and fighter jets bolster Myanmar junta's well-being

Russian tourists, bank cards, fighter jets, misinformation and propaganda, and cooperation over elections are a recipe for the Myanmar junta's well-being as the generals in Naypyitaw try to put on a face that "all is normal" in the Golden Land.

The last two years since the Myanmar generals executed their coup have seen a flurry of engagement with the Russian bear, Chinese dragon and Indian tiger – but it is the engagement with the Russian bear that has raised the most eyebrows, in part due to Russia's "black sheep" image in the wake of the 2022 Ukraine invasion and how it is growing.

The Myanmar junta is trying to put on a show, blaming the former civilian administration of Aung San Suu Kyi for wrecking the economy – not themselves – and welcoming Russian tourists as Western and Asian tourists naturally give the crisis-hit country a wide berth.

Myanmar's delegation to the Eastern Economic Forum (EEF) in Vladivostok in Russia 10 to 13 September signed a number of agreements with Russia, including on tourism. The event follows another Russia conference in April, the forum "Russia-Myanmar: Strategies for Cooperation" that took place in Moscow.

The Eastern Economic Forum, Russia's annual forum aimed at developing economic cooperation in the region and encouraging foreign investment.

Bilateral relations between Russia and the

Myanmar junta have strengthened since the February 2021 military coup in Myanmar. After a 30-year break, direct flights between the two countries resumed on 5 September 2023, when a new scheduled flight was inaugurated between Yangon and Mandalay in Myanmar and Novosibirsk in Russia.

Myanmar carrier Myanmar Airways International said that tourists arriving on the new flight will be able to catch internal flights to major Myanmar tourist destinations such as Ngapali, Heho, Bagan and Nyaung-U. Russian tourists will also be able to catch international flights from Myanmar to Suvarnabhumi and Don Mueang airports in Thailand, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia, Phnom Penh in Cambodia and Kolkata in India. The Myanmar junta relaxed visa requirements for Russian travellers last year and also urged the Russian government to grant similar visa waivers to Myanmar nationals. Discussions have been held on facilitating the use by Russian visitors of Russian bank cards.

Myanmar and Russia have also just signed an agreement focused on tackling misinformation and disinformation – though this media control venture is likely to push the propaganda of the two states.

Then this week Myanmar's junta and Russia signed a memorandum on "cooperation in election activities", as both governments plan for polls that critics say will be neither free nor fair.



Myanmar junta leader Min Aung Hlaing is feted in Russia. Photo: AFP



Myanmar junta leader Min Aung Hlaing claps for Russian President Vladimir Putin at a conference in Russia in 2022. Photo: AFP

Junta chief Min Aung Hlaing met President Vladimir Putin last year during one of several trips to Russia since seizing power. The Myanmar military has described Moscow's invasion of Ukraine as "justified".

Officials from the junta-stacked election commission signed a "memorandum of understanding for cooperation in election activities" with their Russian counterparts during a recent visit to Russia, the Global New Light of Myanmar reported this week. Yet one more bilateral tie.

Then there are the fighter jets. Last week Myanmar received the first shipment of two Russian Su-30 fighter jets, Charlie Than, Myanmar's trade minister, told the Russian RIA state news agency in remarks published on last week. He said two aircraft have already been delivered.

Russia and Myanmar signed a contract in September 2022 for the delivery of six Su-30SME fighter jets, RIA said.

The United States has warned that Russia's backing for the Myanmar junta is unacceptable and destabilising, with its supply of weapons helping to fuel a conflict that has become a catastrophe for the country, and a blot on the region.

The Myanmar junta has been accused of war crimes over air strikes carried out by its jets - mostly Russian and Chinese-built - in support of ground troops

battling opponents of its 2021 coup. The Myanmar junta has been rapped with sanctions and international criticism, including dogged insistence by ASEAN to adhere to the agreed 2021 "Five-point Consensus" that calls for peace and a return to democracy.

Although the Myanmar generals have long had a relationship with China, a major investor and supporter, they appear to be apprehensive about the outsized influence of their large neighbour, a neighbour treating them almost like a vassal state.

Russia, however, appears to offer Myanmar a more balanced relationship, with moves afoot to strengthen humanitarian, economic and socio-political cooperation between Moscow and Naypyidaw.

Both countries appear happy to ignore the criticisms of their military actions - whether Russia in Ukraine or the Myanmar military in the badlands of central Myanmar or the hills in the ethnic regions.

For a regime with few friends, Naypyidaw appears to believe their relationship with Moscow offers handshakes and a lot of benefits without the pressure being brought by other foreign players crying foul over their war against the people.

Reporting: Mizzima, RIA, AFP

US PRESSURES LAOS NOT TO LET UP ON MYANMAR CRISIS



The US government is calling on Laos, which takes up the ASEAN chair next year, to keep the pressure up on the Myanmar junta to bring an end to the crisis engulfing the country.

The message was conveyed by Melissa Brown, the deputy assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs in charge of Southeast Asia affairs in the 13 September Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission hearing on human rights in Burma in the aftermath of the February 2021 coup d'état.

She said that in addition to being less, perhaps, vocal and forward-leaning on ensuring that Burma is held accountable and forced to make progress on the five-point consensus and not getting legitimacy within ASEAN, there's also just the practical staffing capabilities.

Laos is a much smaller country with less capacity, she noted, adding that the United States was providing all the assistance that they can.

According to the US State Department, since

the coup nearly 3,000 people have been killed, nearly 17,000 detained, and more than 1.5 million displaced. Steps taken by the United States, the UN, ASEAN and other international actors with the goal of restoring democracy in Burma, including imposing sanctions, have not succeeded to date. The junta has announced that it intends to hold nationwide elections at some point in 2023, but the State Department has said the elections "cannot be free and fair" under current conditions. Meanwhile, 900,000 forcibly displaced Rohingya, victims and survivors of crimes against humanity and genocide, remain in Bangladesh with no solution to their crisis on the horizon.

Witnesses in the 13 September hearing reviewed the human rights situation in Burma in the aftermath of the coup; discussed the response of the United States and the international community, including implementation of Executive Order 14014 and BURMA Act provisions as well as accountability initiatives; and offered recommendations for policymakers.

MYANMAR JUNTA REVOKES PITI EAIN PUBLISHING HOUSE LICENSE



Photo: RFA

The Myanmar junta has revoked the business license of Piti Eain Publishing House, which was operated by Dr. Phyo Thiha, a doctor who participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) and opposed the military coup, according to junta media.

On 9 September, the announcement was published in the Myanmar Alinn Daily, a newspaper controlled by the Junta.

Regarding the revocation of the business license, Dr. Phyo Thiha said, “They have shut it down solely because I am associated with the publishing house. This means that we are no longer able to publish anything under the name of the publishing house. The books we produce have no political content; they solely focus on the teachings of Buddha and mental health.”

Piti Eain Publishing House was established in August 2020 and has released only three books to date.

The doctor said that Piti Eain mainly focused on publishing books related to psychology and Buddhist teachings, without producing any material that

could be considered anti-junta.

Dr. Phyo Thiha said, “The Military Council will continue to gradually prohibit various aspects of the publishing industry. This is a warning and a threat to the entire publishing community. This is not just my personal problem, but an attempt to suppress the freedom of the people. So, we need to work together for collective action to ensure that our freedom is not lost.”

In light of the fact that many people are enduring even more severe circumstances, the doctor expressed his reluctance to dwell on this matter. Instead, he affirmed his commitment to actively participate in the revolution to the best of his abilities.

Since the coup, the junta has been attempting to exert control over the media and publishing industry. As of now, the Military Council has revoked the licenses of five publishing houses, including Piti Eain.

The licenses of several media outlets including Democratic Voice of Burma, Mizzima, and The Irrawaddy, have been revoked, amounting to a total of 14 affected media organizations.

MANDALAY MEDICINE SUPPLY CRISIS PUTS PEOPLE'S HEALTH AT RISK



Mandalay. Photo: Kentaro Kornado

People in Mandalay have been facing a scarcity of some drugs and medical supplies since the first week of this month, according to the local people.

As the value of the Myanmar Kyat continues to decline, the medicine prices have increased and a number of imported drugs and medical supplies are out of stock after reaching the highest record prices in August.

Those taking medicine are reportedly suffering.

A family member of a chronic diabetic patient said, "The diabetes medicines, in particular, are currently unavailable. Due to the rising prices, these medications have become inaccessible. The mandatory Insulin Injection BP, vital for diabetics, is also out of stock at most shops in Mandalay."

According to customers, diabetes medicines and kidney medicines are currently inaccessible in the market. Additionally, nutritional supplements are out of stock due to increased prices.

A resident said, "The nutritional supplements prescribed for kidney patients are currently out of

stock. While a few stores may still have some available, these products are nearing their expiration dates. It is uncertain whether the lack of availability is due to a halt in imports or a shortage of dollars, which only the company would know."

There is speculation that some pharmacies and drug companies have refused to sell products due to the continuously rising prices, leading to the inability to meet the demand. However, the pharmacies and drug companies deny this claim.

"Some people came to ask whether we are not selling because of the rising prices. Actually, we do not have anything to sell. The drug companies cannot import the products due to the ongoing dollar crisis," said a drug and medicine pharmacy employee near Mandalay Hospital.

Over 80 per cent of drugs and medical supplies used domestically are imported from foreign countries such as India, China and Thailand.

Following the 2021 coup, the Military Council implemented restrictions on the foreign exchange market, which had a significant negative impact on the import of drugs.

UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR CALLS FOR SUPPORT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN MYANMAR



Tom Andrews. Photo: AFP

The UN human rights expert for Myanmar has called for decisive action from the global community in their support for human rights for the people Myanmar.

UN Special Rapporteur, Tom Andrews a former member of the US Congress, told a hearing of the US Congress's Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission at the Capitol in Washington, on 13 September that Myanmar is out of sight, out of mind for most of the most of the world, it has become invisible, and the conditions in this country have gone from bad to worse to horrific.

"I believe that Myanmar is now at an inflection point and that the actions of UN member states to support human rights now could be decisive for the people of Myanmar."

Tom Andrews said that he was alarmed by reports that some donors, including the United States, are likely to reduce their level of support for this fund this year.

He also suggested the United States provide the requisite humanitarian aid for those who are struggling to survive both inside and outside of Myanmar, and help to mobilize support from additional states

while Myanmar military regime severely restricts the distribution of life-saving aid.

"Support is also needed for those from Myanmar who have been forced to flee to neighbouring states. The Joint Response Plan, or JRP, includes food rations for Rohingya children in Bangladesh. That fund is only 32 percent funded up to this point this year," said Andrews.

He also pointed out the need of adequate levels of support to civil society organizations in Myanmar although they have developed very sophisticated networks that can get aid to where it is needed.

He also asked the United States to maintain their current level of support for the JRP.

Andrews also remarked that no single nation is better positioned to move this action forward than the United States.

The Human Rights Commission of the US Congress stated that over 900,000 forcibly displaced Rohingya, victims and survivors of crimes against humanity and genocide, remain in Bangladesh with no solution to their crisis on the horizon.

UN EXPERT SUGGESTS 'COLLECTIVE PUNISHMENT' TO END MYANMAR MILITARY'S WAR ON THE PEOPLE

War on the people of Myanmar can be stopped with a "collective punishment" strategy on the military junta, said the UN Human Rights Rapporteur to Myanmar.

Toms Andrews, the UN Special Rapporteur said to UN Congress's Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission on 13 September, that the best way to stop war on the people of Myanmar is to deny Myanmar military three things - weapon, money and legitimacy.

In his discussion, Andrews referred to Myanmar military as "the hunter".

Andrews said that the billion-dollar death trade, more than a billion dollars worth of weapons have been transferred to the military since the 2021 coup.

He said, "Notwithstanding the evidence that these weapons are almost certainly going to be used to commit war crimes and and and kill and assault innocent people, the 'hunter' has continued to purchase the jet fuel that allows its jet fighters and helicopter gunships to attack villagers in increasing numbers."

Andrews remarked that the junta has increased aerial attacks on civilian targets, including villages, schools, hospitals, encampments for displaced people as they failed to control a widespread resistance across the country, and lost their ground.

Regarding actions through "money", the Special Rapporteur, pointed out that state-owned entity Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise supplies more than US\$1 billion to the regime every year, in addition to extraction of timber, jade and gemstones in other areas of the country.

He expressed his appreciation to the sanctions of the United States on the Myanmar Foreign Trade Bank and the Myanmar Investment and Commercial Bank in June that have highly significant impacts on the military regime before banks in Singapore and Bangladesh froze Myanmar military's linked accounts holding millions of U.S.

Regarding legitimacy, Andrews said that the fallacy of Myanmar military is the claim that they represent the legitimate government of Myanmar.

The majority of democratic governments agreed and have withdrawn diplomats, disinvited "hunter" officials from multilateral meetings, and engaged with the legitimate opposition National Unity Government (NUG), while a few ASEAN members, along with some other governments, have been seeking to reintegrate "hunter" officials into high level regional meetings.

In conclusion, Andrews urged the United States to join the European Union and immediately impose sanctions on this hunter's single largest source of revenue Myanmar oil and gas enterprise; to continue to target the hunter's access to international finance by expanding and enforcing sanctions on state owned owned banks and working with regional partners to ensure that they can't evade these sanctions; to work in coordination with others to block the hunter's access to weapons, materials and jet fuel, while denying it any opportunity to come to claim legitimacy, including by declaring any attempt by the Myanmar military to hold an election to be what it will be, a fraud.

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MYANMAR'S CDM PARTICIPANTS SUPPORT THE CAUSE BUT FACE HARDSHIPS

PAN PAN

At the 30th cabinet meeting of the National Unity Government (NUG) held in early September, the NUG Acting President Duwa Lashi La encouraged the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) to intensify its efforts, recognizing its effectiveness in opposing the military dictatorship.

“During the Spring Revolution, the CDM has become an effective public movement in trying to defeat the military dictatorship. We need to consider how to continue to expand the movement to make it practical in the revolution,” said the Acting President.

During Myanmar’s Spring Revolution, the CDM has been a widespread expression of collective protest. It encompassed public sector employees across various echelons of the civil service, ranging from healthcare workers, educators, and banking staff to railway employees, oil and gas industry workers, engineers, legal professionals, and judges. Furthermore, it extended to encompass even members of the

security forces who steadfastly declined to cooperate with the junta that had orchestrated the military coup in 2021. Additionally, a significant number of students opted to boycott junta-affiliated educational institutions during this period.

The CDM movement is the non-violent element of Myanmar’s Spring Revolution, a contrast to the myriad People’s Defence Forces (PDF) involved in armed struggle.

NUG’s Prime Minister Mahn Win Khaing Than said on 18 April this year that there are already nearly 10,000 soldiers participating in the CDM movement, which means they defected from the junta army.

However, there has been criticism within the CDM, particularly concerning its support for the workers participating in the general strike.

Recently, the NUG said that it blacklisted non-CDM employees from various departments and an-



Photo: AFP

nounced that they [non-CDM employees] will be punished according to the law when the Spring Revolution is successful.

Regarding the challenges faced by employees participating in the CDM, specifically those involved in the general strike, U Ba (a pseudonym), who did not join the CDM said, “My monthly salary is less than 200,000 Kyat [about US\$60]. As a non-CDM, my salary is not sufficient, but this salary helps the household expenses a little.”

Many people need work to survive.

“They are justified in urging employees to participate in the CDM, but it’s crucial to consider the predicament of those at the grassroots level, who possess very little and deserve sympathy. Has the president [NUG’s Acting President] ever lived the life of a working-class person who must make ends meet day by day, only to face uncertainty about the next day’s sustenance? The movement has lasted for nearly three years, so it is difficult to endure the challenges,” said U Ba.

An anonymous university student who participated in the CDM by refusing to attend a junta university now ponders how much certainty their future holds.

“If I complete four years of university, I will graduate. Now, I still don’t have a (university) degree

yet. Everyone already knows why we talk about a degree. The NUG knows it. The Military Council also knows it. Employers also know it. Despite this awareness among employers, they continue to adhere to the convention of hiring only after graduation. Consequently, many of us find ourselves without job opportunities,” he said.

No degree, no job remains an issue.

“To be honest, apart from the students, many people are returning to a relatively normal lifestyle.

Though they are living normal lives, nobody criticizes them. However, the social punishment for students who attend junta-controlled schools remains effective. So far, the most successful aspect of the CDM has been the student boycott in the education sector. I’m curious about the level of assurance available for the students [regarding the future],” he said.

“I understand that we can access various subjects through NUG’s online courses, but it’s crucial to translate that knowledge into real-life recognition,” said the student.

Facebook users also call for effective support for struggling CDM participants in the comment section on the NUG’s official Facebook page.

“We need effective support for CDM participants. It is very difficult for the families of CDM participants at the grassroots level. Please carefully consider the actual conditions, as I am a CDM participant who defected from the army,” commented a Facebook user on the NUG’s official Facebook page.

“You say that the CDM movement is an effective movement. But CDM participants have not been given effective support. CDM participants have encountered hardship due to soaring commodity prices,” said another commentator.

Another Facebook user said, “CDM participants are starving.”

However, there are dedicated CDM participants who persevere despite facing hardships.

“It’s undeniable that we face challenges in securing our livelihoods. However, I voluntarily joined the CDM out of my personal conviction, without any external persuasion. I have no regrets and absolutely refuse to work in schools under this Military Council,” shared an anonymous CDM teacher.

Myanmar’s Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) against the military junta was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for 2022, but did not win the prize.



RISING EDIBLE OIL PRICES IN MYANMAR SPARK LONG QUEUES

PAN PAN



Edible oil is rationed. Shopper in Yangon. Photo: AFP

Due to the increasing cost of edible oil in the market, residents of Yangon are queuing up to purchase it at a limited numbers of affordable shops.

The junta has imposed a reference wholesale price of about 4,160 Kyat per Burmese Viss (1 Viss = 1.63 kg) for palm oil.

In the open retail market, the price of a single Viss of edible oil has soared more than 10,000 Kyat. Recently, affordable palm oil has become accessible only at specific times at some affordable palm oil shops, aligning closely with the junta's reference price, at approximately 4,500 Kyat per Viss. These edible oil shops have introduced a first-come, first-served policy, allowing only a limited number of customers to make purchases. Consequently, this has resulted in long queues for those eager to buy it.

Due to the affordability of palm oil from these shops, people are compelled to wait in line under the scorching sun and even during rain showers. A housewife in Yangon shared that, despite the maximum purchase limit of just one Viss per person, there are instances where they can only procure as little as half a Viss.

"Because those shops sold palm oil at affordable prices, we joined the queue at the shops. But due to the high demand, even if I reach my turn, the palm oil might be sold out. Sometimes I can only purchase only half of a Viss. Our family is large, so we cannot afford to buy enough edible oil at regular shops. At those regular shops, just half Viss of palm oil costs 6,000 to 7,000 Kyat."

It is unclear who requested or mandated these shops to offer palm oil at such affordable prices. Mizzima asked one of the shop owners, but he declined to disclose any information regarding the directive. Ac-

ording to a source with connections to the oil sellers, it is believed that junta authorities exerted pressure on certain edible oil traders to operate these shops as a short-term solution.

A typical grocery store seller commented, "These days, many customers are buying only a small fraction of a Viss, such as one-tenth or two-tenths. The demand for edible oil bottles has significantly decreased. We don't stock many bottles in our store due to their high cost and reduced demand. A half-Viss bottle of palm oil is now priced at around 7,000 Kyat."

Furthermore, a Yangon resident expressed strong criticism regarding the country's deteriorating condition, contrasting it with the days of civilian governance.

"Edible oil isn't provided for free; people have to pay for it from their own pockets. However, because these shops offer it at affordable rates, many reluctantly join the queues, even though it hurts their pride. Additionally, some media outlets capture their faces, which adds to their sense of embarrassment," he remarked. "It feels like waiting in line for charity, and it's truly disheartening. In which country do people have to queue up just to buy basic food? This was unheard of even during the civilian government's tenure in our nation. It is quite disappointing."

In late August, there were reports of the junta summoning edible oil traders and companies with the intention of compelling them to lower the prices of edible oil.

Furthermore, the junta leader Senior General Min Aung Hlaing recently pointed out that due to the substantial domestic demand for edible oil, the country annually imports more than US\$600 million worth of this commodity, leading to significant foreign currency expenditure.

MYANMAR'S OUSTED NLD CALLS FOR FOREIGN HELP TO PRESS JUNTA TO RELEASE AUNG SAN SUU KYI

Myanmar's ousted ruling party requested all actors to advance efforts and push for the release of all political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi.

The statement of Central Work Committee of the National League for Democracy (NLD) on 14 September expressed appreciation of their party for the efforts of the leaders of the United Nations, ASEAN community and other neighbouring countries, international organizations, and internal and international revolutionary forces on the Myanmar issue.

The statement said that the Military Council is not only keeping Aung San Suu Kyi as hostage, an intermediary for their continued existence, but also detaining her in a secret place without giving her any of the rights of a political prisoner.

According to the statement, the 78-year-old

civilian leader does not have access to adequate medical care, healthy food, and sufficient accommodation, causing risk to her life.

The NLD also warned that the military junta is solely responsible for her declining health that could endanger her life.

She has been held since the military coup in February 2021, and has been convicted of 19 offences and sentenced over multiple charges, including incitement, electoral fraud and corruption.

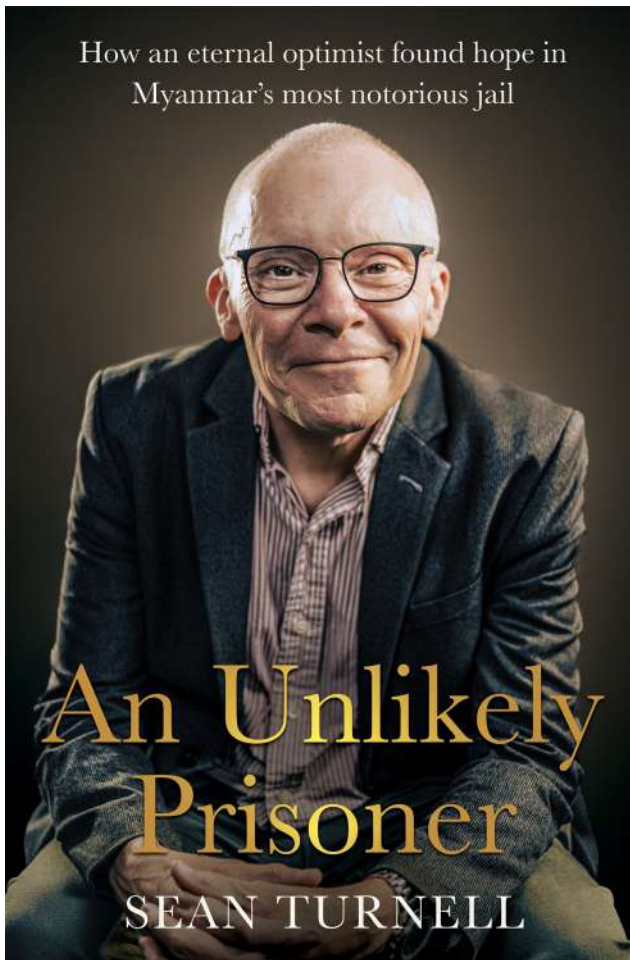
On 1 August, the military dropped five of these charges, reducing her prison term from 33 to 27 years.

Members of UN Security council, excluding China, Russia and India, passed a resolution that called for her release and the end of violence in the country.



Photo: AFP

‘AN UNLIKELY PRISONER’ CHRONICLES SEAN TURNELL’S NIGHTMARE AND SENSE OF HOPE IN MYANMAR’S NOTORIOUS JAILS



An unlikely prisoner, indeed. Sean Turnell is the epitome of a chipper Aussie mate with a zest for life. But, as anybody following the twists and turns of Myanmar’s post-coup crisis knows too well, the well-read Australian economist ended up swatting blood-thirsty mosquitoes in the country’s notorious Insein Prison, accused, incredibly, of being a spy.

“An Unlikely Prisoner: How an eternal optimist found hope in Myanmar’s most notorious jail” by Sean Turnell is a book soon to be released offering the full story of Turnell’s arrest, 650-days imprisonment, and eventual release after the Australian government, and many supporters around the world, called for an end to the absurdity.

As the book suggests, in his darkest hour hope became his closest companion.

Turnell has made it his life’s work to specialize in Myanmar and to throw his scholarly might behind helping Myanmar rise from decades of economic mismanagement – a result of military rule that placed

Myanmar behind all of its Southeast Asian neighbours. In 2009, the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies published his book on key periods in the history of Myanmar’s financial sector, “Fiery Dragons: Banks, Moneylenders and Microfinance in Burma”.

The shock of the Myanmar military coup on 1 February 2021 caught most people off guard, not least Turnell who was due to bad luck in Yangon at the time, not in Australia.

It was the Australian economist’s work as an economic advisor to Aung San Suu Kyi’s National League for Democracy-led government that arguably sealed his fate, as the hours and days ticked by after the 1 February 2021 military coup.

Granted, it would not have been easy to grab a bag and immediately head to Yangon International Airport to try to leave the hotel he was staying in. The generals in Naypyidaw would have thought this through, recognizing a foreign advisor to The Lady could prove a useful pawn in their game to discredit the popular leader.

Little surprise, then, that on 6 February 2021, Myanmar junta officials came to the Yangon hotel to arrest him.

Turnell became the first foreign national known to be locked up in relation to the coup. Within a few days of his arrest, the Australian government called for his immediate release.

Myanmar analysts, observers, and Turnell’s friends were shocked by the turn of events. But it soon became clear, given allegations of breaking the Official Secrets Act and being a spy – allegations that Turnell naturally denied – that the advisor to Suu Kyi would be useful in the military junta’s game to imprison the civilian leader for life and put an end to their now “out of control” democratic experiment they had unleashed starting with the bedrock of the military-written 2008 Constitution.

Turnell’s book “An Unlikely Prisoner” delves into the shock and feelings of an innocent man thrown into Myanmar’s notorious prison system – a legacy of British colonial rule.

Turnell told the Australian newspaper that he was initially kept at Yangon’s Insein prison in a six metre by 2.5 metre concrete cell in which an iron chair with leg irons had been bolted to the floor. He then endured two months of interrogations, sometimes being taken from his bed to be locked in the irons.

Officials accused him of working for British in-



Turnell looks disheveled on his return to his wife in Australia.

telligence and gun-running, and quizzed him about his work for Suu Kyi, the economist was quoted as saying, noting that he had been infected with COVID-19 five times and kept in solitary confinement for months, the light in the cell perpetually on.

In the early days of his confinement, Turnell said he could hear the sounds of people outside banging pots and pans at night in protest against the military coup.

“Then came the explosions and gunfire and people being tortured in rooms nearby. I thought, they’re not going to do that to me surely? Then after a while, I started thinking, maybe they will. I think they wanted me to hear it.”

Turnell told the Australian newspaper that he had expected to be treated “with kid gloves”.

“They didn’t stick electrodes to me, but I was thrown into filthy cells. The food they used to deliver to me (came) in a bucket. For 650 days, I ate out of a bucket.”

In the Naypyidaw detention centre, to which he was later transferred, “it wasn’t even a new bucket, they were paint buckets”, he said. “They didn’t beat me, but they did push and shove me.”

There prisoners were locked away for 20 hours a day, though there were times when he could communicate with some other political prisoners, some of whom he knew.

“In the monsoon, the roof would leak and we would sit there all night sometimes with water just pouring down through the roof, clutching your clothes and blanket to try to keep them dry,” he said.

Turnell said his wife, Ha Vu, an economist at Australia’s Macquarie University, helped him survive with phone chats and by regularly sending books, cookies and cake through the Australian embassy. There are reportedly indications that the military junta were surprised by the level of outside support for him.

He told one radio podcast interviewer that one of this things that kept him going was humming the tune to the classic World War II movie, *The Battle of*

Britain.

The economist was sentenced in September 2022 to three years’ imprisonment for breaching Myanmar’s Official Secrets Act - charges he denied - before being released on 17 November 2022 in an amnesty along with former British ambassador Vicky Bowman and Japanese journalist Toru Kubota.

Turnell says he was surprised by his sudden release, told to grab his things and sent packing to the Yangon International Airport where the Australian ambassador was there to see him off.

Turnell lives in Sydney with his wife, Ha Vu, who campaigned tirelessly for his release. He has dedicated his book to all those unjustly incarcerated by the military junta in Myanmar, including Aung San Suu Kyi, 78, whose health is reportedly failing as she faces 27 years in jail, effectively a life sentence.

The book promotion contains the following comments of support:

“Australia’s most unlikely political prisoner . . . is known as a person of deep optimism, bubbling enthusiasm and infectious warmth,” says Melissa Crouch, *Sydney Morning Herald*.

“What [Sean Turnell] endured in his 650 days of incarceration is something that no human being should have to endure, yet he has done it with grace and, even in inhumane conditions, with profound humanity,” says Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese.

The book can be found at Penguin.com available for pre-order: <https://www.penguin.com.au/books/an-unlikely-prisoner-9781761342929>

Reporting: Mizzima, AFP, The Australian



Movie tune that kept Turnell’s spirits up.

G77+CHINA SUMMIT IN CUBA CALLS FOR NEW GLOBAL ORDER

The G77+China, a group of developing and emerging countries representing 80 percent of the world's population, kicked off a summit in Cuba Friday with a call to “change the rules of the game” of the global order.

The meeting comes at a time of growing frustration with the Western-led world order amid widening differences over the Russian war in Ukraine, the fight against climate change, and the global economic system.

“After all this time that the North has organized the world according to its interests, it is now up to the South to change the rules of the game,” Cuban

President Miguel Diaz-Canel said at the opening of the summit.

Diaz-Canel said that developing countries were the main victims of a “multidimensional crisis” in the world today, from “abusive unequal trade” to global warming.

United Nations chief Antonio Guterres is joining some 30 heads of state and government from Africa, Asia and Latin America at the two-day summit in Havana.

At the opening of the meeting he called for a world that was “more representative and responsive to the needs of developing economies”, stressing that



Cuba. Photo: Spencer Everett

these countries were “trapped in a tangle of global crises.”

The bloc was established by 77 countries of the global South in 1964 “to articulate and promote their collective economic interests and enhance their joint negotiating capacity,” according to the group’s website.

Today it has 134 members, among which the website lists China although the Asian giant says it is not a full member.

Cuba took over the rotating presidency in January.

Latin American leaders such as Venezuela’s Nicolas Maduro, Colombia’s Gustavo Petro, and Argentina’s Alberto Fernandez were present at the summit, alongside Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas, Angola’s Joao Lourenco and Mozambican President Filipe Nyusi.

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva arrived Friday night.

‘UNJUST’ INTERNATIONAL ORDER

China is represented by top Communist Party official Li Xi, who said his country “will always make South-South cooperation a priority” in its dealings with the outside world.

Argentina’s Fernandez said that the coronavirus pandemic marked an epochal change by “exposing the inequality” in countries’ access to vaccines, noting that “90 percent of vaccines were in the hands of 10 countries.”

The meeting should conclude Saturday with a statement underscoring “the right to development in an increasingly exclusive, unfair, unjust and plundering international order,” the foreign minister of host Cuba, Bruno Rodriguez, told reporters on Wednesday.

A draft of the closing statement underlines the many obstacles facing developing nations, and includes “a call for the establishment of a new economic world order,” he said.

Guterres has recently attended a rash of multilateral summits, including a gathering of the G20 club of major economies in India and the BRICS group that includes Russia.

Ahead of the Havana meeting, Guterres said “this multiplicity of summits reflects the growing multipolarity of our world.”

And he warned that “multipolarity could be a factor for escalating geostrategic tensions, with tragic consequences.”

The G77 meeting comes after key changes in global blocs.

The African Union has joined the G20 group of the world’s most powerful economies, and the BRICS -- Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa -- trade group for emerging economies has expanded to admit six new members.

‘A VALID INTERLOCUTOR’

The presence of world leaders on its soil amounts to a recognition for the Cuban government even as the country battles its worst economic crisis in 30 years, one analyst told AFP.

“Despite the difficulties of the moment, Cuba has been recognized as a valid interlocutor,” said Cuban international relations expert Arturo Lopez-Levy, a visiting professor at the Autonomous University of Madrid.

The communist-ruled island is still under the yoke of US sanctions first imposed in 1962.

Diaz-Canel has in recent months represented the G77+China at several international meetings including a June global financial summit in Paris and an EU meeting in July with Latin American and Caribbean states.

AFP

GUTERRES URGES G77 AND CHINA TO CHAMPION MULTILATERALISM ‘ROOTED IN EQUALITY’

UN Secretary-General António Guterres appealed to leaders from the Group of 77 developing countries (G77) and China to “fight for a world that works for all”, in his address to their summit in Havana, Cuba, on Friday last week.

“I count on your Group, who have long been champions of multilateralism, to step up, to use your power, and fight,” he said.

“Champion a system rooted in equality; champion a system ready to reverse the injustice and neglect of centuries; and champion a system that delivers for all humanity and not only for the privileged.”

WORLD FAILING DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Mr. Guterres noted that although these countries have lifted hundreds of millions out of poverty in recent decades, they are now facing myriad crises,

with rising poverty and hunger, rocketing prices, soaring debt, and surging climate disasters.

“Global systems and frameworks have let you down,” he told leaders gathered in the Cuban capital. “The conclusion is clear: the world is failing developing countries.”

He said change will require action at the national level to ensure good governance, mobilise resources and prioritise sustainable development. At the same time, this national ownership will have to be respected.

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

The Secretary-General upheld the need for strong, effective multilateral institutions as the international community moves to “a multipolar world”.

He recalled that many current institutions –



UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres speaking at the event. Photo: AFP

particularly the UN Security Council, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank - were established “when many developing countries were shackled by colonial rule and had no say on their own affairs, or on global affairs.”

He said the summit’s theme of science, technology and innovation can promote solidarity, solve common problems, and help towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, today “they frequently inflame inequalities and entrenched divisions”, he said, pointing to inequities between developed and developing nations in accessing COVID-19 vaccines and digital technology.

Mr. Guterres added that finance is another area for urgent global action. Many developing countries are unable to service their debts due to the lingering effects of the pandemic, the global cost-of-living crisis, and extreme climate impacts.

DELIVER CLIMATE FINANCING

“The world needs climate justice as it needs financial justice,” he said.

“Developed countries must deliver the promised \$100 billion, double adaptation finance by 2025, and recapitalise the Green Climate Fund. Every person on earth must be protected by an early warning system by 2027 against natural disasters.”

Mr. Guterres expressed hope that next week’s Climate Ambition Summit, taking place at UN Headquarters in New York, “will be able to drive real progress”.

He also called for countries meeting at the COP28 UN climate conference this November to operationalise the Loss and Damage Fund, which the G77 and China has championed.

A FAIRER FUTURE

In his speech, the Secretary-General noted that he has proposed measures to make the global financial architecture more representative and responsive to the needs of developing countries.

He has also proposed an SDG Stimulus that would provide \$500 billion annually in affordable long-term finance for sustainable development and climate action in developing countries.

The UN chief has convened the SDG Summit next week and a related Summit of the Future next year.

He said they represent “real opportunities to reshape the international system and international institutions to make them reflect today’s realities instead of the realities that existed after the Second World War to create a fairer future for developing countries.”

The UN has also developed a Global Digital Compact aimed at securing a just transition to a digital economy, and that everyone benefits in the new technological era.

The Compact is being negotiated by countries ahead of the Summit of the Future, and Mr. Guterres urged the G77 and China to play a leading role.

“New rules for new technologies cannot just be written by the wealthy and the privileged,” he said.

Courtesy of UN News



GLOBAL RICE PRICES HIT 15-YEAR HIGH AFTER INDIA CURBS: FAO

Global rice prices reached a 15-year high in August after top exporter India banned some overseas sales of the grain, the Food and Agriculture Organization said Friday.

While global food prices eased in August, those of rice rose 9.8 percent compared to the previous month, “reflecting trade disruptions in the aftermath of a ban on Indica white rice exports by India”, the FAO said in a monthly report.

“Uncertainty about the ban’s duration and concerns over export restrictions caused supply-chain actors to hold on to stocks, re-negotiate contracts or stop making price offers, thereby limiting most trade to small volumes and previously concluded sales,” the

UN agency said.

Rice is a major world food staple and prices on international markets have soared in the wake of the Covid pandemic, the war in Ukraine and the impact of the El Nino weather phenomenon on production levels.

India announced in July a ban on exports of non-basmati white rice, which account for around a quarter of its total.

The consumer affairs and food ministry said at the time that the move would “ensure adequate availability” and “allay the rise in prices in the domestic market”.



Indian farmers planting rice. Photo: AFP

India accounts for more than 40 percent of all global rice shipments.

The ban was expected to hit African nations, Turkey, Syria and Pakistan, all of which were already struggling with high inflation, data analytics firm Gro Intelligence warned in a note in July.

The Philippines, one of the world's top importers of rice, reached a five-year agreement with Vietnam on Thursday to buy rice.

- **EL NINO EFFECT** -

World rice stocks are forecast to reach an all-time high of 198.1 million tonnes, with India and China holding nearly three quarter of this volume like in previous seasons, according to the FAO.

This total represents around 38 percent of rice consumption forecast over the same period.

But aggregate rice reserves held by the rest of the world are expected to end the year with a second

successive contraction, it added.

El Nino could also have a negative effect on the next harvests.

The turmoil in the rice market comes as global food prices have been progressively easing from a peak last year after war broke out between major grain producers Russia and Ukraine.

The FAO's global food price index, which tracks monthly changes in international prices of a basket of food commodities, averaged 121.4 points in August, down 2.1 percent from July.

The index was 24 percent below the summit it reached in March 2022.

Prices of cereal, meat, dairy and vegetable oils all fell in August.

Sugar prices, however, rose by 1.3 percent due to "heightened concerns over the impact of the El Nino phenomenon on sugarcane crops, along with below-average rains in August and persistent dry weather conditions in Thailand".

- **'MODEST' RECOVERY** -

Global food prices had slightly rebounded in July when Russia pulled out of a deal brokered by the UN and Turkey that had enabled Ukraine to ship grains via the Black Sea.

The FAO said on Friday it had lowered its forecast for world trade in cereals in 2023 and 2024 to 466 million tonnes -- a 1.7 percent drop from the previous marketing season.

"Traded volumes of wheat and maize are all predicted to decline, due to a mix of reasons, including falling exports by Ukraine due to trade disruptions associated with the ongoing war," it said.

"FAO has also lowered its forecast for world trade in rice from the July figure considering the stepped-up export restrictions by India," the FAO added.

An expected recovery of the rice trade in 2024 would be "modest" if the India restrictions are protracted and El Nino disrupts production in other Asian exporters, the FAO added.



AFP

WAR CRIMES INTENSIFYING: MYANMAR HUMAN RIGHTS INVESTIGATORS

UN-appointed independent human rights investigators told the Human Rights Council on Monday that Myanmar's people continue to suffer deeply from the effects of horrific crimes committed by the country's military, amid intensifying violence.

"The frequency and intensity of war crimes and crimes against humanity has only increased in recent months," said Nicholas Koumjian, head of the investigation team, formally known as the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM).

'BRAZEN BOMBINGS'

Addressing the forum in Geneva, he described even "more brazen aerial bombings and indiscriminate shelling, resulting in the deaths of innocent civilians including children. We have also seen increased executions of captured combatants and civilians and intentional burnings of homes and villages."

Listing a series of further violations including torture, sexual violence and arrests, Mr. Koumjian highlighted the lack of due process and accountability for war crimes, particularly within the Myanmar military.

The development follows an appeal from UN Secretary-General António Guterres to Myanmar's military rulers who seized power in a coup on 1 February 2021 to "listen to the aspirations of its people, release all political prisoners, and open the door to a return to democratic rule".

EVIDENCE AND INFORMATION

"We continue to face the challenge of not having access to Myanmar. Our repeated requests for information and access have been ignored by the military authorities," Mr. Koumjian told the Human Rights Council.



Civilians fleeing Myanmar military attacks.
Photo: UN News

Delegations including the European Union, Finland, Canada and Costa Rica condemned the violence, while numerous other countries urged the military junta to allow the IIMM access to the country.

Among the Council's 47 Member States, China, Iran and Russia underscored the principle of national sovereignty regarding external intervention.

Despite a lack of physical access to Myanmar, the head of the investigation team highlighted the unprecedented and unanticipated level of information that had been collated - facilitated by witnesses as well as modern technology.

"None of our work would be possible without the courage and commitment of the many individuals and organizations that provide us with information," Mr. Koumjian said.

We understand this Council did not create our Mechanism to simply place evidence in storage," he continued, emphasising that the evidence has been shared with the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the International Criminal Court (ICC) and in Argentina where international criminal proceedings are ongoing,

surrounding crimes against the Rohingya.

PERSECUTED MINORITY

The Mechanism continues to actively investigate the violence that led to the large-scale displacement of the Rohingya from Myanmar in 2016 and 2017.

"We have collected compelling evidence of the widespread burning of Rohingya villages and the assaults and killings of civilians. I have been particularly horrified by the numerous accounts of sexual crimes that we have collected," Mr. Koumjian told the Council.

Just last month, UN human rights chief Volker Türk marked the sixth anniversary of the start of a massive offensive by Myanmar's military against the mainly Muslim minority in Rakhine state, reiterating the call for justice after hundreds of thousands of Rohingya were driven from their homes by security forces.

Some 10,000 Rohingya men, women, children and newborns are believed to have been killed, with 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.

On Monday at the Council, countries including Bangladesh echoed Mr. Türk's earlier call for a sustainable return for the Rohingya to their homeland.

"The Myanmar people are suffering deeply from the effects of these ongoing horrific crimes," Mr. Koumjian said. "I would like them to know that the Mechanism is committed to pursuing justice for them and focusing all our efforts to ensure that the perpetrators will one day be held to account."

THE INVESTIGATORS

The Myanmar investigation team was created by the UN Human Rights Council in 2018 and became operational in August the following year.

Its mandate is to collect evidence of the most serious international crimes and violations of international law and prepare files for criminal prosecution, making use of the information handed over to it by the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar.

The Mechanism is composed of impartial and experienced professional and administrative personnel. It does not have its own police force nor its own prosecutors or judges.

Courtesy of UN News



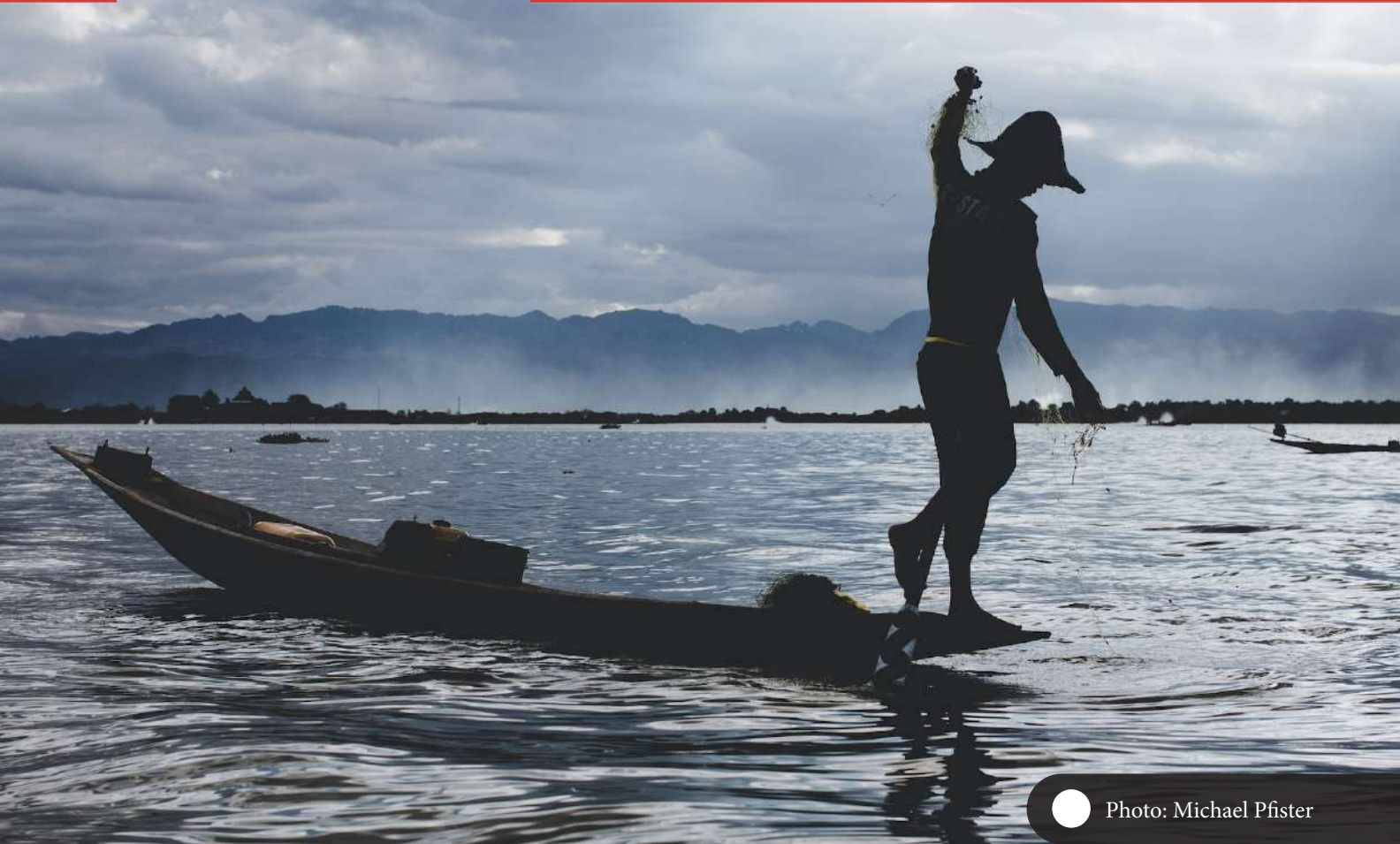


Photo: Michael Pfister

WA STATE

UWSA hands over 1,200 Chinese nationals arrested over alleged scam links

The United Wa State Army (UWSA) handed over 1,207 suspects allegedly connected to online scams linked to Chinese police at a border gate between Myanmar and China on 5 and 6 September.

Nyi Rang, a UWSA liaison officer said to Mizzima that the handover was carried out at the border bridge in Pangsang town.

“All of these suspects are Chinese citizens. They were arrested in Wa State this year, and all of them were handed over to Chinese police on 5 and 6 September. This is the highest number of [of suspects] that we have handed over. It’s more than previous times”, said Nyi Rang, adding that women were among the returned suspects, but their ages could not be established.

Online scam gangs are operating in Pangsang, Mong Pawk and Wane Kaw towns in the territory under the control of the UWSA; in Laukkai and Chinshwehaw in Kokang self-administered region;

and in Myawaddy and Shwekukko in Kayin State.

The Chinese embassy in Myanmar said, in a 26 August press statement, that 24 Chinese citizens involved in online scams were transferred to the Chinese police at Yangon International Airport over a period of four days.

China, Thailand, Myanmar and Laos held a meeting in Chiang Mai, Thailand, from 15-16 August to combat rampant gambling-related fraud and associated crimes in the region.

The four countries agreed to establish a cooperation centre for the operation in Chiang Mai to intensify their efforts against crimes such as human trafficking, kidnapping, and illegal detention, all stemming from gambling and fraud activities prevalent in the region.

The National News Bureau of Thailand reported that the joint mission will seek the cooperation of Cambodia and Vietnam, as well as international entities like Interpol and the United Nations.

Hundreds of thousands of people in South-east Asia have been forced to take part in scam operations, according to the United Nations human rights agency.



ASEAN AIR CHIEFS CONFERENCE IN MYANMAR DRAWS MIXED ATTENDANCE AMID MYANMAR POLITICAL CONCERNS

Air Force chiefs from six ASEAN nations participated in the ASEAN Air Chiefs Conference held in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar from September 12 to 15, reported the Bangkok Post.

This gathering has seen the attendance of air force leaders from Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, and Brunei.

However, absences from the conference include Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines, who had previously declared their boycott due to the event being held in Myanmar and chaired by Myanmar military junta. Singapore also chose not to send a representative.

These four Asean states that opted to stay away have been vocal in their demands for the military junta in Myanmar to cease violence against its citizens and adhere to an Asean peace plan agreed upon in 2021 but subsequently disregarded.

The theme for this year's event hosted by Myanmar junta is "Asean Air Forces' Cooperation for a Sustainable Environment."

Myanmar has been excluded from most high-level Asean meetings over the past two years, including the leaders' summit.

MYANMAR TO OFFER VISA ON ARRIVAL TO CHINESE, INDIAN TOURISTS



Chinese tourists. Photo: Renato Marques

Myanmar will offer visas on arrival to Chinese and Indian tourists, state media reported, as the ruling junta seeks to lure back foreign visitors and their cash.

A start date for the one-year trial scheme “will be announced soon”, the Global New Light of Myanmar reported, citing the junta’s immigration ministry.

Holders of the visas will be “allowed to visit all sites apart from restricted areas for security concerns”, said the report in Thursday’s newspaper.

Currently citizens of both countries must apply for a tourist visa online, or at a Myanmar embassy.

The military is struggling to crush opposition to its 2021 coup and has admitted there are swathes of the country it does not fully control.

Countries such as the United States and Australia advise against all travel to Myanmar, due to the ongoing conflict.

China and India, which both share long and porous borders with Myanmar, have maintained ties with the isolated generals since the coup.

The junta’s tourism ministry is also working to attract travellers from Russia, another major ally and arms supplier.

Earlier this month the national carrier began direct flights to Russia’s Novosibirsk, and the junta has said it is working to allow the use of Russia’s Mir cards for direct payments.

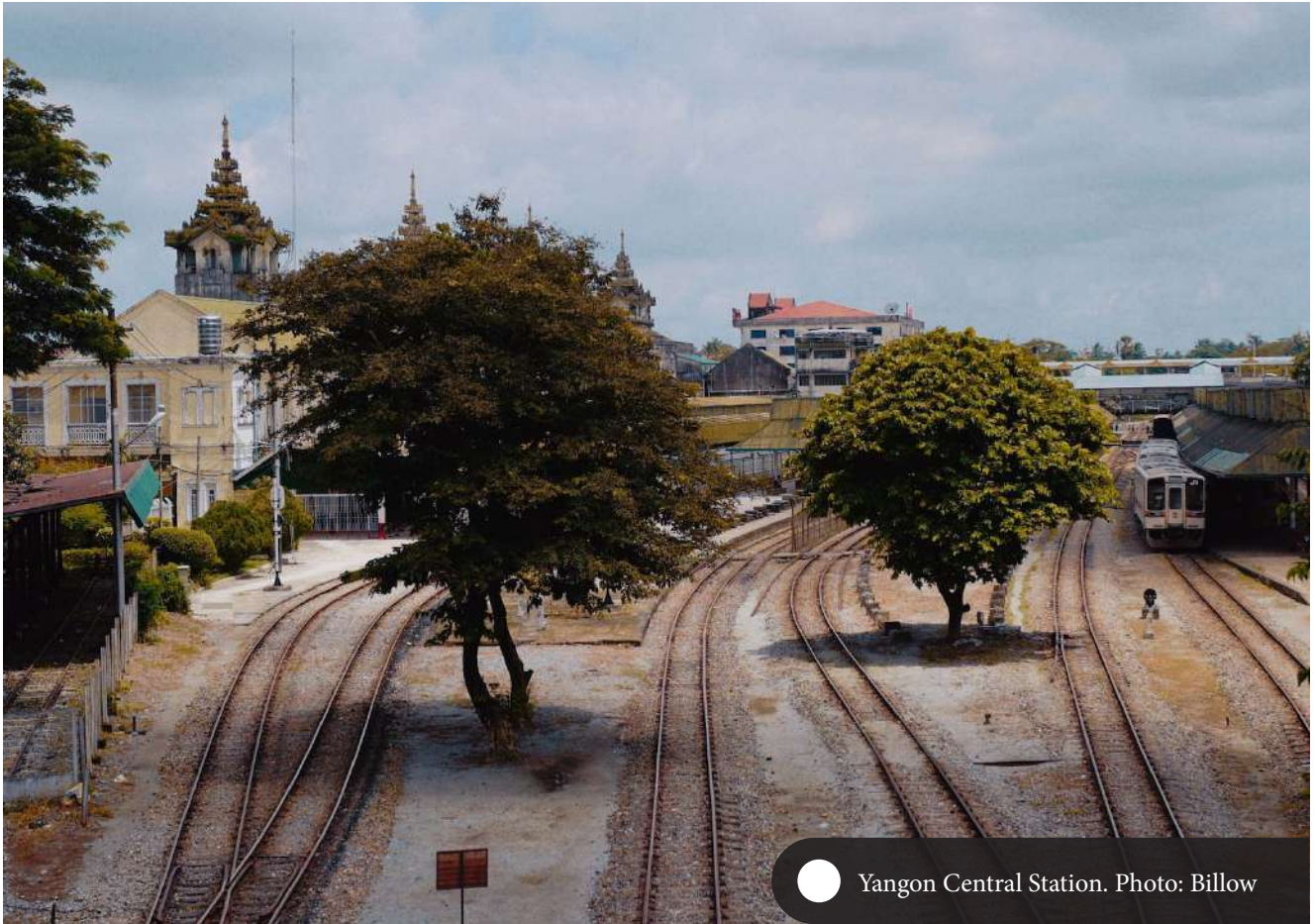
Myanmar opened up to tourists in 2011 following decades of military rule, becoming popular with travellers.

It closed its borders during the coronavirus pandemic and the military’s coup and subsequent bloody crackdown on dissent have kept visitors away.

The economy has slumped, with the local kyat currency plunging against the dollar and rolling power outages roiling major cities, where access to ATMs and foreign exchange counters is patchy.

AFP

YANGON CENTRAL STATION UPGRADE PROJECT STOPPED



Yangon Central Station. Photo: Billow

Myanmar Railways (MR) says the Yangon Central Station Redevelopment Project has been stopped as the successful bidder left the project, according to MR.

This project began under a previous government and the Japanese company Sumitomo was a partner in this project.

MR announced this mega project in May 2014 and then it selected Central Transport Development Consortium (CTDC) as the successful bidder of this project in early 2018.

CTDC consortium consists of Singapore Stock Exchange listed Oxley Holdings, Chinese company Sino Great Wall and Myanmar national owned Min Dhama.

But the Japanese company Sumitomo became a partner of this project after China's Great Wall Company filed for bankruptcy in 2019.

This mega project with the price tag of US\$2.8 billion is a mixed development project comprising a

new central transportation hub that integrates rail and mass transit, surrounded by amenities of housing and commerce.

The project will cover approximately 25.7 hectares, or 63.5 acres, of which 1.09 million square metres of floor space will be developed.

Under this project, MR will get US\$3 million per acre per annum for land use rights and also a housing project worth nearly US\$30 million for MR staff will be built as a part of this project.

The announcement made by the bidding winner CTDC group in 2018 says the project has six zones for development and it would create about 100,000 job opportunities.

In the project area of this Yangon Central Railway Station there will be around 20 high-rise towers of condominiums, office spaces and hotels and in the middle of the project is a futuristic new railway station, which will be built beside the existing, heritage-listed terminal on what are presently railway lines.

EU UNAFRAID OF TRADE WAR WITH CHINA



The EU insisted on Friday last week that its economy could survive any retaliation from China, after Beijing warned that Brussels' probe into Chinese electric car subsidies would harm trade relations.

Europe put itself at risk of a trade war when European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen announced the anti-subsidy investigation on Wednesday, accusing China of keeping car prices "artificially low by huge state subsidies".

The investigation could see the European Union try to protect European carmakers by imposing punitive tariffs on cars it believes are unfairly sold at a lower price.

The day after von der Leyen's announcement, the Chinese commerce ministry hit back at the EU's "naked protectionism", and said the measures "will have a negative impact on China-EU economic and trade relations".

Trade with China makes up around 2.5 percent of eurozone GDP, but economy commissioner Paolo Gentiloni appeared to be unfazed by the warning when asked about whether the bloc's economy could survive any tariffs.

"I'm confident, but we have to address this issue very seriously. I think there is no specific reason for retaliation but retaliation is always possible," he said, before a meeting of eurozone finance ministers in the Spanish city of Santiago de Compostela.

The probe comes after France pushed Brussels to take stronger action to defend European industry against growing threats from China and the United States.

French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire made a passionate defence of the EU's strength as he rejected accusations of protectionism.

"We don't have to fear any country. We are the EU... We are one of the most powerful economic continents," he told Bloomberg TV later Friday.

"We are not here to trigger any kind of trade war," he said, adding: "It has nothing to do with protectionism."

"It's good news that Europe realises the necessity to defend its economic interests," Le Maire

said, pointing to United States and China acting to protect their economies.

Germany, one of the world's biggest carmakers, is more reticent since its large, well-known brands are more exposed to the Chinese market than French manufacturers.

Although Berlin had concerns before the announcement, German Finance Minister Christian Lindner backed the probe in comments on Friday.

"If there are concerns that it is not fair then it needs to be looked at. World trade is based on rules and (they) of course also apply to electric vehicles," he said.

Gentiloni acknowledged that the level of trade with China "is differentiated among member states".

China represents the largest global market for major German car brands such as Volkswagen, Audi, Mercedes and BMW. It is also the main destination for French luxury giants LVMH, Kering and Hermes.

'WORLD TRADE SUPERPOWER'

Spanish Economy Minister Nadia Calvino insisted the EU was "a world trade superpower", and fervently backed the commission's actions against China.

"I am absolutely convinced that the European Commission will continue to drive a trade policy on the basis of an open rules-based trade framework," she said.

Experts believe Chinese cars undercut European competitors by around 20 percent, and Brussels believes this may be due to illegal practices but Beijing argues its industry is reaping the benefits of investment.

In the race to produce more clean tech, the EU is seeking to avoid its past mistakes.

When Russia invaded Ukraine last year, the bloc scrambled to find alternative energy sources and has poured billions of euros into bringing production closer to home.

This year von der Leyen has spearheaded multiple plans, including regulation, to advance the green transition and secure Europe's critical raw materials supply.

The EU this year also agreed a deal for more chip production in Europe to produce the necessary components for electrical goods.

But Brussels also faces challenges from its ally across the Atlantic.

Last year, the United States passed the Inflation Reduction Act, which directs some \$370 billion in subsidies towards America's energy transition, including tax breaks for US-made electric vehicles.

Penrose Thitsa

AYEYARWADDY BARS AND RESTAURANTS FORCED TO STOCK MILITARY-OWNED COMPANIES' PRODUCTS

The junta has been forcing restaurants and bars in Ayeyarwaddy Region to sell beer and cigarettes produced by military-controlled companies.

Junta troops have been carrying out inspections of bars and restaurants in Ayeyarwaddy's Pathein District and coercing those not selling alcohol and tobacco produced by military-controlled companies into doing so, according to a restaurant owner in Pathein.

He said: "The Military Council soldiers inspected the restaurant and questioned why we were not selling beer produced by the Military Council and other military-related items. The soldiers even went as far as threatening to revoke our liquor licence if we did not comply. So, we displayed a vinyl sign advertising the availability of Myanmar Beer in our restaurant, even though we are not actually selling it."

In the second week of September, junta soldiers put pressure on restaurants and beer stations in Ayeyarwaddy Region's Maupin Township to sell beer and cigarettes from military-controlled companies, according to a local political activist.

A restaurant owner in Ayeyarwaddy's Yegyi Township said: "We have no desire to sell military-produced items. However, due to frequent inspections by the SAC [State Administration Council] troops, we are compelled to sell them in our shop."

It is reportedly the second time this year that junta soldiers have put such pressure on bars and restaurants in Ayeyarwaddy Region. This time they have targeted establishments in Ayeyarwaddy's Pathein, Maubin, Yegyi, Pyapon, Ngwesaung, Kyaunggone, and Ngapudaw townships.

Amongst the alcohol brands produced by military-owned companies are Myanmar Beer, Mandalay Beer, Black Shield Beer, Mandalay Rum, Army Rum, Andaman Gold Beer, and Dagon Beer. They also produce Red Ruby and Premium Gold cigarettes.

Since the February 2021 coup anti-junta forces have encouraged the public not to purchase products produced by military-owned and military-supporting companies.



EARLY MORNING CALM

Buddhist monks in Mandalay on their call for alms.

Photo: Richard van Winjgaaden

IN FOCUS



PICTURING A REVOLUTION



Min Ma Naing's work has a surreal feel to it.

Min Ma Naing has found ways to advocate for the Myanmar cause through art, photography, journalism, interviews and conversations.

“As a photographer or artist, whether you’re in Myanmar or outside, sometimes we have society pressure to produce a work, or we have to do a revolutionary project,” Min Ma Naing tells Insight Myanmar. “But sometimes, your emotional and mental health makes you take a break. For me, being alive is also very revolutionary! [The military] wants us to fall down, but we live! So being alive is revolutionary work.”

Catch up with Min Ma Naing on this podcast from Insight Myanmar: <https://insightmyanmar.org/complete-shows/2023/8/30/episode-188-picturing-a-revolution>

Min Ma Naing’s journey through art and advocacy took an unusual trajectory, leading up until today

in this post-coup world.

Some years ago, she received a scholarship to study in Hong Kong. Unfortunately, it was conditional on her studying education and management, two subjects she wasn’t particularly interested in, so while she accepted the scholarship, her academic work was somewhat of a burden. She found some relief by spending time in a nearby park, a quite enjoyable pastime for her since back in Myanmar, it was considered taboo for a single woman to be alone on a bench. Out of politeness, she would smile at passersby. However, that gesture became misinterpreted by more than a few men, who assumed that she was a sex worker making advances. So to discourage that assumption, Min Ma Naing started carrying a camera with her to the park, pretending to be a tourist. Serendipitously, she discovered a love of photography. After her studies, she returned to Myanmar, where she continued to nurture her newfound hobby.

When Muslim-Buddhist riots exploded in Meiktila in 2013, she watched with a heavy heart as she had spent some time living and working there before as a teacher trainer, and she wondered if she couldn’t, perhaps, tell an alternative story to what she saw on the news every day. She wanted to relate the reality that she had witnessed during her time there, of how these diverse ethnicities had actually been living largely in harmony, a contrast to the animosity that media was portraying.

Min Ma Naing covered Myanmar’s twists and turns as it tried and failed to open up.

As difficult as the stories were which she tried to tell before through her art and journalism career, nothing hit as hard as when the military initiated the coup in February, 2021. The protest movement provided her with a platform to combine her honed, technical skills with her evolving belief system. Despite the jubilant atmosphere of early protests that hit the streets soon after, Min Ma Naing chose to convey a sense of



Min Ma Naing has a message to convey.

underlying tension, that foretold an impending violence she felt was inevitable. It also required her to navigate safety concerns with unparalleled caution. She made the strategic decision to employ film photography over digital, which also protected the identities of any individuals she captured on the streets. As a further security consideration, she undertook the meticulous task of developing the film herself, away from prying eyes. She also made the artistic decision to use a “double exposure” technique, which effectively renders figures unidentifiable, thus helping ensure their anonymity. Interestingly, it occurred to her that, symbolically, the complexity of the double exposure process mirrors the complexity of the country’s political situation. She explains it this way: “It [reflected] how complex the political landscape was at the time. The chemical reaction in... the film developing [aligned] with my storytelling.”

For Min Ma Naing, it was important not to cover the developing resistance movement in a way that fit within the prevailing trends—which focused on the bigger protest sites and well-known figures—but

rather to explore the individual experiences of ordinary people. After all, she figured, this was a people’s revolution, so it was their story to tell.

So, Min Ma Naing sought out a diverse array of voices, from factory workers to elderly citizens with their experience of revolutions past, and from Gen Z activists to members of ethnic communities. Linked by their opposition to the coup, each voice contributed to the larger tapestry of the revolution. To facilitate more comfortable sharing, she ditched her pre-planned questions, and undertook a normal conversation with the subjects, allowing a deeper insight into their motivations and background than the exigencies of the commercial news media allow. In her mind, the fact the conventional news media didn’t make room for nuance ultimately inhibited a deeper understanding into the very events they were trying to describe.

Listen to her story on the Insight Myanmar podcast here: <https://insightmyanmar.org/complete-shows/2023/8/30/episode-188-picturing-a-revolution>





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