

MYANMAR JUNTA RAMPED UP MASS KILLINGS, AIR STRIKES: UN RIGHTS OFFICE

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## **INDIA'S MYANMAR DILEMMA**

**Arms to the Myanmar junta  
and border fencing**

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# CHINA PIPELINE FAILS TO DELIVER PROMISES TO RAKHINE ISLAND VILLAGERS

Put the village residents on Maday Island in impoverished Rakhine State. Forget the promises.

The natural gas terminal on their island made the Myanmar junta \$993 million in eight months since January this year, but the villagers have not seen a single kyat, according to a local news report.

Narinjara, in a report on 27 September, says the General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China (GACC) has revealed a nice little earner for the generals in Naypyidaw.

The GACC statistics also confirm that the amount has increased by over 16 per cent compared to the same period last year. Natural gas from the Rakhine coast is transported through the China-Myanmar gas pipeline that crosses Magway, Mandalay and Shan State. During the period, among all countries exporting natural gas to China through the pipeline, Myanmar became the third largest exporter. Nearly 52 billion cubic metres of natural gas were sent to China through the pipeline in 10 years.

For four villages on Maday Island the promises have come to nought. As the report notes, the villages of Wra Ma, Kyauktan, Prain and Pathem Dam have a combined population of 3,000 people.

They have lost their lands to the Chinese projects and their fishing fields and now are in dire need.

Much fanfare heralded the project with promises of compensation for the villagers who would lose their main sources of food and income. But years on – and post-coup – questions hang over the promises made. Prior to the commissioning of the project, responsible officials from the Myanmar government and China National Petroleum Corporation promised the local residents to provide jobs and electricity. In addition, they were assured of a drinking water supply and concrete roads. Yet, to date, no promises have been delivered.

This should not be a surprise. Myanmar suffers from a string of broken promises where the government offers compensation to people displaced or disadvantaged by local or foreign investment projects but the payout is paltry or non-existent. Take the Chinese copper mine in Letpadaung and how the villagers have been abused, even under the previous civilian government.

The release of GACC's financial report only goes to highlight the inequity. While the Myanmar junta and China benefit, the villagers on Maday Island have nothing to show for the promises made.

EDITORIAL

**mizzima**  
WEEKLY

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## MYANMAR GAMERS IN ACTION

**M**yanmar Esports players participate in the quarter-final game between Myanmar and China during the Hangzhou 2022 Asian Games in Hangzhou, in China's eastern Zhejiang province on September 24.

Photo: AFP



IN FOCUS





## 200 REFUGEES FROM SOUTHERN MYANMAR SEEK SHELTER IN THAILAND

Over 200 people fled from fighting in Maliwan Village, Myanmar's southernmost district, Kawthaung in Tanintharyi Region, to Thailand on 20 and 21 September.

Fighting began in Maliwan Village on 20 September and was still ongoing at the time of reporting on 21 September.

"IDPs from Khamukgyi Town and Maliwan Village have fled to Thailand. We provided them with food yesterday. More are still coming", said Khaing Thwe, a volunteer assisting the displaced refugees.

He said that more than 30 people had fled from Myanmar to Thailand in small boats on 20 September and on 21 September about a further 170 people fled to Thailand, bringing the total to 200, though these numbers have not been independently confirmed.

Currently, the Thai authorities have granted the refugees temporary permission to stay in the country. More are still arriving.

Another person assisting the refugees in Thailand said: "As the Military Council conducted a clearance operation in Khamukgyi on the morning of 21 September, more residents fled and are in need of emergency food assistance."

Unfortunately, a man from Chaungwa Village in Kawthaung Township was killed by an artillery round randomly fired by the junta at 9:00 a.m. on 21 September.

Previously, in August, 100 Burmese people fled from fighting in Maliwan Village to Thailand, but on that occasion, the fighting died down and the refugees were able to return on the same evening.

## CSOS PROVIDING EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT TO DISPLACED CHILDREN IN MAGWAY REGION'S YAW DISTRICT

Civil society organisations (CSOs) Save for Yaw and ANTS have joined forces to provide educational support to over 26,000 internally displaced children in the Yaw area.

The Yaw area encompasses more than 300 villages and townships in Gangaw District, Magway Region. Children there have faced significant challenges in accessing formal education due to COVID-19 and the military coup.

Ma Lili from ANTS (fund-raising organization) said, "Our objective is to provide assistance for the education of IDP children in the Yaw area, including essential items such as writing equipment, school textbooks, accommodations, and the necessary number of teachers."

Yaw and ANTS have developed a two-pronged plan. Firstly, they are donating writing equipment, textbooks, and teaching materials to schools in need across the Yaw area. Secondly, they are identifying which schools in each township require assistance and giving them financial assistance so that they can buy resources and afford to employ a sufficient number of teachers for a year.

"Most of the children in the villages, excluding urban areas, are attending schools under the National Unity Government (NUG). However, due to teacher shortages and other challenges, the education system has not fully recovered since the military coup. Addi-

tionally, the COVID-19 pandemic and the junta's violent actions have severely impacted the area, making the situation even more precarious", said Ko Yaw, a representative of Save for Yaw.

Save for Yaw and ANTS are also focussing on providing classroom education to displaced people in the Yaw area. They plan to offer a series of courses to enhance their skills and knowledge.

Unfortunately, because the junta has cut internet access in the Yaw area, students cannot be taught online and the only educational option is in-person teaching.

Save for Yaw and ANTS are currently also collaborating on a fundraising campaign for the project. They are aiming to raise 50 million kyats a month to support the educational needs of children in the Yaw area.

the Yaw area is in Gangaw District, a thin strip of Magway Region with Chin State to the east and Sagaing Region to the west. It consists of the townships of Gangaw, Htilin, Saw, Kyaukhtu, Kyaw, and Laungshal and over 300 villages.

It is a strategically important area and the junta has been deploying reinforcements to the area in an effort to establish their control. To do this they have been burning down villages that have offered any support to defence forces.



# FATHER AND SON TORTURED AND MURDERED BY MYANMAR JUNTA

**J**unta soldiers tortured and killed a father and son after raiding their house and stealing money and jewellery in Nabuai village, Myinchan Township, Mandalay Region.

About 25 junta soldiers and members of the junta-aligned Pyu Saw Htee militia raided the house where Thein Swe Oo (also known as Katone), age 33, his father U Hla Pe, age 62 and their family lived at around 10:30 p.m. on 24 September, according to locals.

They said that during the raid the junta forces beat Thein Swe Oo and U Hla Pe and confiscated jewellery worn by family members and 10 million kyats in cash.

At around 7:00 a.m. on 25 September, the mutilated bodies of Thein Swe Oo and U Hla Pe were discovered by the side of the road in Myinchan Township.

A villager from Nabuai said, "Thein Swe Oo and his father U Hla Pe were subjected to severe beatings at their home before being taken away by the soldiers. Their bodies were discovered the following morning

by vendors. Initially, their faces were unrecognizable due to numerous wounds and bruises. It appeared that they were brutally tortured before being shot to death. As far as I know the deceased were ordinary people with no affiliation to any resistance groups, and their killings seemed to have occurred without any apparent reason."

Despite the two men having no affiliation with resistance groups the junta accused them of having ties to the resistance and being involved in the killing of U Maung Maung, the junta-appointed village administrator of Shwe Bom Tha Village in Myinchan Township, who was killed near Nabuai village on 19 September.

Thein Swe Oo worked for the Department of Agriculture under the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Irrigation and he was taking part in the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM).

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## NUG FOREIGN MINISTER DISCUSSES GLOBAL SANCTIONS ON MYANMAR MILITARY

**T**he Foreign Affairs Minister of Myanmar's National Unity Government (NUG) Zin Mar Aung discussed possible action against Myanmar's military regime in a series of meetings with the permanent representatives of the United Kingdom, Canada and Lithuania to the United Nations (UN) in New York.

During the meeting with Dame Barbara Woodward, the UK Permanent Representative to the UN, on 25 September, Zin Mar Aung expressed her appreciation for the leading role of the UK in adopting United Nations Security Resolution 2669, and discussed imposing an arms embargo on the supply of arms and military equipment to the Myanmar military.

Zin Mar Aung also talked with Bob Rae, the Canadian Permanent Representative to the UN, about putting external pressure on the Myanmar military.

She led the Myanmar delegation, including Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Moe Zaw Oo, and Myanmar's Permanent Representative to the UN Kyaw Moe Tun, in a meeting with the Foreign Minister of Lithuania Gabrielius Landsbergis on 22 September. She talked about the important role of fledgling democracies in regional stability.

At the office of Myanmar's Permanent Representative to the UN in New York, they also held a meeting with senior members of The Elders led by its Chair Mary Robinson, former first woman President of Ireland, former Mongolia president and prime minister Mr Elbegdor Tsakhia, and former president of Columbia Juan Manuel Santos, to discuss the Myanmar crisis.



Rescue services in action in India's Imphal after communal rioting and arson.  
Photo: AFP



A person wearing a helmet is silhouetted against a bright, intense fire at night. The fire is consuming a vehicle, likely a bus or truck, which is the source of the light. The person is standing in the foreground, looking towards the burning vehicle. The background is dark, with some trees and a utility pole visible. The overall atmosphere is one of chaos and destruction.

# **INDIA'S MYANMAR DILEMMA**

**Providing arms to the Myanmar junta and  
fencing the border**



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi stood tall last month as he hosted the 9-10 September G20 Summit in New Delhi, a crucial player rolling out the red carpet to the world's leading countries, a man who heads the world's largest democracy with a sizeable and growing economy.

But it is a country that recognizes it has challenges within its borders, particularly communal tensions, and high levels of poverty in some areas. And it faces issues with its neighbours, not least Pakistan and China, but also the "spillover" from the crisis in Myanmar – a crisis that has complicated Delhi's slow-moving Act East Policy outreach.

### **'ACT EAST' ON HOLD?**

India faces a dilemma over Myanmar as it prides itself on democratic values but feels the need to be pragmatic with its bilateral relationships, and its bigger picture goals including the country's Act East Policy that seeks to strengthen relations with countries

to the east, including Myanmar and others in South-east Asia.

Modi, 72, led the G20 leaders at the start of the world gathering in a barefoot homage to revered Indian independence hero Mahatma Gandhi. After a rendition of a Hindu devotional hymn, he and the other leaders stood for a moment's silence before leaving wreaths at the marble plinth where an eternal flame commemorates Gandhi's memory.

Modi, a tea seller's son who over the decades rose through the political ranks to the apex has a lot on his plate. India looks set to become a major world economic growth driver over the coming years and decades and a growing political and trading partner. This involves a juggling act with the West and the Global South, including alignment with the BRICS caucus, the latter challenging US world dominance. During the summit, India unveiled an MoU for a planned India-Middle East-Europe trade and communications



Indian security forces fire tear gas at protesters in Manipur. Photo: AFP





Indian PM Narendra Modi continues to push forward with his Act East Policy and engagement with Myanmar - whoever is in power. Photo: AFP

link that seeks to counter China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), ironically using some of China's BRI infrastructure including ports in the Middle East and Europe.

Pragmatism rather than diplomatic nicety drives the Tiger's interactions with the Golden Land, at least on the surface. While Modi may recognize the importance of independence and democracy – including the legacy of Gandhi's messages to the world – “India first” matters including protection of the country's sovereignty and borders. This means government-to-government interaction for Delhi, even if this shrugs off public interaction with Myanmar's National Unity Government (NUG) and resistance forces.

### **WEAPONS FOR THE JUNTA**

Naturally, India's stance on Myanmar has many rights and democracy activists peeved.

Burma Campaign UK last week expressed its distress that UK PM Rishi Sunak did not raise the issue of Indian weapons for the Myanmar junta with Modi at the G20 Summit. Through the eyes of pro-democracy

activists, it is appalling that Delhi not only maintains an active diplomatic relationship with the generals in Naypyidaw but is also supplying weapons and parts that help the junta kill Myanmar citizens.

### **BORDER PROTECTION**

Delhi is conservative in its approach. Last week, Chief Minister of India's Manipur State N Biren Singh in a post on X, formerly Twitter, said his state is planning to construct an additional 70-kilometer border fencing along the Indo-Myanmar border. The plan is aimed to control the rise in illegal immigration and drugs smuggling from Myanmar, he wrote 24 September.

“Held a meeting with the officials of BRO and deliberated the plan to begin construction of an additional 70 km of border fencing along the Indo-Myanmar border,... In view of the rise in illegal immigration and drugs smuggling from the neighbouring country, safeguarding our porous borders has become an urgent necessity.”

The NDTV reported on 23 September that the Manipur chief minister asked the Home Ministry to cancel the free movement regime along the India-Myanmar border and complete its fencing.

“The government will continue to deal with the influx of ‘illegal immigrants’ and highlighted the need for complete fencing of the India-Myanmar border,” Singh told reporters, adding that India’s internal Manipur crisis was the result of unplanned policies of the previous governments, and not an immediate aftermath of any recent decision. Manipur State shares a 400-km border with Myanmar and the fence is set up for less than 10 percent, making around 390 km porous and unguarded, which favours drug smuggling. The India-Myanmar border is 1,600 km long in total.

Delhi casts a wary eye in Myanmar’s direction when it struggles to deal with bloody communal violence that broke out in Manipur between the Meitei and Kukis since the first week of May.

Meiteis are the largest ethnic non-tribunal community in Manipur, and they account for about 53

per cent of the state’s population. They mostly inhabit the Imphal Valley, while tribals — Nagas and Kukis — constitute another 40 per cent of the population and typically reside in the hilly areas.

The move to build fencing comes as nearly 60,000 Burmese civilians from Chin State and the northern Sagaing Region have fled across the border into India’s Manipur and Mizoram states since the military ousted Myanmar’s democratically elected government in a February 2021 coup, according to ethnic Chin civil society organisations. Myanmar junta forces have bombed and conducted armed attacks on Myanmar civilian areas while trying to root out resistance fighters.

Over 5,000 of those fleeing the attacks have taken refuge in Manipur State, of which more than 70 have been arrested for immigration violations or other charges, according to India For Myanmar, a group that helps Burmese refugees in India.

Human rights groups and Burmese refugees have decried the move to extend the fence in Mani-



Christians far away from Manipur in Chennai demonstrate calling for an end to communal violence in the northeast. Photo: AFP





Chief Minister of India's Manipur State N Biren Singh, centre, at a press conference. Photo: Supplied

pur because it would keep people from fleeing into a safe area. “The closure of the border is only intended to fence off Myanmar refugees, but I don’t think it will prevent many other crimes and other illegal trade,” said Salai Dokhar, founder of India For Myanmar.

“If India wants to end these illegal businesses, it should cooperate with the western countries and those with strong democratic values to be able to take more effective actions along the border,” he said. In 2018, under Myanmar’s previous civilian-led government, travel was allowed through the Myanmar-India land border to promote trade between the two countries – a bilateral move heralded at the time with much fanfare. But now the Manipur government has accused Myanmar of allowing more arms and drug trafficking on the border, thereby worsening ethnic conflict in the state due to an influx of Burmese civilians fleeing violence at home.

### **KALADAN PROJECT**

A crucial part of India’s government-to-government interaction is the development of the India-funded Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project linking India with Myanmar. This project includes the Sittwe port expansion project, dredging and widening the waterway in Kaladan River to make it navigable by large vessels and the building of a road from Paletwa in Chin State, Myanmar to Zorinpui in Mizoram State, India. In essence that project offers India a vital shortcut from India’s northeast to the Bay of Bengal – doing away with the costly transport of goods through the “chicken neck” in India’s northeast.

In June of this year, Myanmar’s State Adminis-

tration Council (SAC) Minister of Economy and Commerce Aung Naing Oo, on a visit to Delhi, said that the fighting and unrest in Rakhine State would not have an impact on the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project.

India External Affairs Ministry, Minister of State R.K. Ranjan Singh said in March that the domestic situation in Myanmar would cause hindrance to the India-sponsored Kaladan project.

Myanmar Minister Aung Naing Oo said that the road connecting Paletwa in Chin State, Myanmar and Zorinpui in Mizoram State, India was under construction. The road building in the west of Rakhine State was being carried out and he expected it would be completed soon, he said. The operation of Sittwe port in Rakhine State would be started with great momentum soon and the trade between Myanmar and India could be done via this port, he added.

Skeptical analysts have raised their eyebrows over the India-Myanmar trade and communications project. The India and Myanmar governments signed the agreement for the Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Transport project way back in 2008 and the construction work started in 2009. The project has been slow to get off the ground.

Modi needs to engage with the Myanmar junta, despite the grumbles of Myanmar’s political and military resistance forces. Delhi is playing the long game, a pragmatic game in which the Tiger’s interests trump all else.

*Additional reporting by AFP, RFA*

# BRITISH PM FAILS TO RAISE INDIAN ARMS SALES TO BURMESE MILITARY DURING G20 SUMMIT

The British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak did not even raise Indian arms sales to the Burmese military when he met Indian Prime Minister Modi at the G20 summit earlier this month.

According to Burma Campaign UK, PM Sunak's lack of engagement with Modi over the arms sales was revealed in the response to a question raised in the UK Parliament.

It is the official foreign policy of the British government to advocate for an end to arms sales to the Burmese military.

India is one of the few significant suppliers of arms and equipment to the Burmese military. The others include Russia, China, and Singapore.

Since the Burmese military began its attempted coup in 2021, it has unleashed weapons designed for fighting armies against the civilian population of the country, forcing more than 2 million people from their homes, bombing schools and hospitals, and arresting almost 25,000 people.

A report earlier this year by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in



UK PM Rishi Sunak, left, with Indian PM Narendra Modi, meeting at the G20 Summit. Photo: Facebook



Myanmar revealed that India-based entities have supplied \$51 million worth of arms and related materials to the military since the attempted coup in February 2021. India had already faced criticism for continuing to arm the Burmese military after the military offensives against the Rohingya in 2016 and 2017. UN investigators later described these as genocide.

In a written Parliamentary answer to Imran Hussain MP on 22 September, the Foreign Office Minister Anne-Marie Trevelyan said:

“Discussions between the Prime Minister and Prime Minister Modi covered the breadth and depth of the UK-India relationship, ranging from trade to cooperation on education, research and defence. Although the provision of arms to Myanmar was not discussed, we continue to raise this issue bilaterally with those

who are reported to be providing arms to the Myanmar military.”

Speaking on P.M. Sunak’s failure to discuss arms sales to the Burmese military following the Rohingya genocide, Imran Hussain MP, Member of Parliament for Bradford East said:

“The appalling atrocities and brutal crimes against humanity that were committed against the Rohingya by the Burmese military and military-enabled militias created one of the largest refugee crises that the world has seen, left a still unknown number of Rohingya families dead, and inflicted irreparable damage, so it is unbelievable that despite this, some nations are still supporting the Burmese military regime with arms and equipment.”

He added: “Just this week, the UN Human Rights Council heard again of indiscriminate attacks by the Burmese military on civilians, along with the abject failure of the Burmese authorities to investigate human rights abuses and acts of genocide. It is therefore shameful that when presented with the opportunity to raise the supply of arms to the Burmese military with foreign leaders at the recent G20 summit, the Prime Minister once again ducked his responsibility to some of the world’s most vulnerable and persecuted.”

Prior to Rishi Sunak’s premiership, the British government had, with partners, successfully lobbied countries like Serbia, Ukraine and Japan to end arms sales to the Burmese military.

Karin Valtersson, Campaigns Officer at Burma Campaign UK responded: “Instead of human rights, Rishi Sunak appears to be prioritising economic opportunities, and India as a bulwark against China. However, with Modi becoming increasingly authoritarian domestically, as well as supporting brutal regimes internationally, it seems like a flawed approach to be subservient to Modi at the expense of the people of Burma, who want a genuine democracy and to be free of tyranny.

“On China, Foreign Secretary James Cleverly stated that engaging with China ‘doesn’t mean that we shy away from the tough conversations. It’s about voicing our concerns directly - face to face.’ When Rishi Sunak met with Modi face to face, he didn’t voice concerns directly, instead he did shy away.”



# INDIA RESUMES INTERNET BAN IN RESTIVE MANIPUR AFTER PROTESTS



Tensions have been raised in Manipur due to the communal violence. Photo: AFP

India has reimposed an internet ban on restive Manipur state after violent protests erupted following the circulation of photographs of two dead students killed during the months-long conflict, officials said.

More than 150 people have been killed in the remote northeast state since armed clashes broke out in May between the predominantly Hindu Meitei majority and the mainly Christian Kuki community.

The far-flung state has fractured on ethnic lines with rival militia groups setting up blockades.

A nearly five-month long internet ban was lifted last week, but was reimposed late Tuesday after dozens were injured during violent protests in the state capital Imphal.

On Tuesday, police fired tear gas as hundreds of angry students marched following the release of photographs of two dead bodies on social media, a 17-year old woman and a 20-year old man from the Meitei community, local media reported. The pair went missing in July.

The internet was then cut to curb the “spread of disinformation, false rumours, and other types of violent activities through social media platforms”, a government order read.

Biren Singh, the state’s chief minister, said late Tuesday that officers were investigating the deaths.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been criticised for his administration’s failure to end the violence in the state, which is governed by his Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Human Rights Watch has accused the Manipur authorities of facilitating the conflict with “divisive policies that promote Hindu majoritarianism”.

Mallikarjun Kharge, leader of the opposition Congress party, on Wednesday last week accused the ruling party of turning Manipur “into a battlefield”, in a post on X.

AFP



# MYANMAR JUNTA RAMPED UP MASS KILLINGS, AIR STRIKES: UN RIGHTS OFFICE



Threat from the sky. Photo: AFP

**M**yanmar's military escalated its use of mass killings, air and artillery strikes in the past year as it struggles to crush resistance to its coup, the UN's rights office said on Tuesday last week.

The military's ousting of Aung San Suu Kyi's government in 2021 sparked a huge backlash and it is now battling opponents across swaths of the country.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) had found a "seemingly endless spiral of military violence" between April 2022 and July 2023, it said in its latest report on Myanmar.

Through interviews and open source data it had found "a sharp rise" in serious human rights violations "including the increase... of incidents in which 10 or more individuals were killed".

Investigators had now documented 22 instances of mass killings of 10 or more people, according to rights chief Volker Turk.

The OHCHR cited an air strike on a gathering in a village in an opposition stronghold last April it said killed about 150 people, and the bombing last October of a rebel-held concert in northern Kachin state that killed dozens.

Soldiers had repeatedly carried out rapes and extrajudicial killings of men, women and children in villages suspected of harbouring or supporting anti-coup fighters, according to the OHCHR.

Some troops had displayed "beheaded or oth-

erwise defiled corpses" in order to terrorise local residents, the OHCHR said, echoing reporting by local media and a conflict monitoring group.

Junta troops had also torched nearly 24,000 houses and buildings since the beginning of 2023 as part of a "four cuts" strategy to deny its opponents access to food, funds, intelligence, and recruits, it said.

The junta has previously denied media reports and eyewitness accounts that its troops have torched villages, blaming anti-coup "terrorists" for the blazes.

More than 24,000 people have been arrested during the military's sweeping crackdown on dissent, according to a local monitoring group.

The OHCHR said it had regularly received "reports of torture, sexual violence, and deaths in prisons or during prison transfers".

Anti-coup fighters had also committed rights violations through targeted killings of civilians linked to the junta, the OHCHR said.

But it said "their scale and intensity cannot be compared to the violations committed by the military".

Diplomatic efforts to end the conflict led by the United Nations and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations regional bloc have stalled, with the military refusing to engage with its opponents.

AFP

# BOMB BLAST IN MYANMAR'S SHAN STATE KILLS TWO, WOUNDS OVER A DOZEN

**A** bomb blast in northern Myanmar killed two people and wounded more than a dozen on Wednesday, a military source and a member of a local rescue organisation told AFP.

“According to the initial report, two men were killed and 10 others injured by a blast” that happened around 6 pm (1130 GMT) near a petrol station outside the town of Lashio in Shan state, a military source who requested anonymity told AFP.

The source said the blast, which hit a nearby passenger bus, was caused by a bomb planted on a motorbike.

Local authorities were investigating, they said.

The blast killed two people and wounded 14, a member of a local rescue organisation told AFP, also requesting anonymity.

One body had been found inside the bus, which had been carrying around 30 passengers when it was struck, they said.

Fighting between the military and an alliance of anti-coup fighters and ethnic rebels has rocked parts of northern Shan state, near the China border, in recent days.

A spokesperson for the Ta'ang National Liberation Front, a prominent ethnic rebel group operating in the area, told AFP it was not behind the blast.

Since the military seized power in February 2021, Myanmar has seen almost daily bombings and targeted killings as the military and opponents of its coup battle each other.

Four people were killed in Lashio in April after a series of car bombs exploded at a pagoda where a crowd had gathered to mark the start of the Buddhist New Year.

**AFP**



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# NATIONAL LEAGUE FOR DEMOCRACY ISSUES 35TH ANNIVERSARY STATEMENT

The National League for Democracy (NLD) political party released a statement on 27 September, the 35th anniversary of the party's foundation in 1988.

Below is the statement:

Since the time when the National League for Democracy was originally established, it is the political party that has been founded to stand up for the goals of basic human rights and federal democracy and to

make efforts to ensure that no authoritarian political system that oppresses the people ever emerges.

The National League for Democracy won the elections contested by a landslide with the support of the entire people, under the leadership of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the serious implementation of the will of the people.

As a political party, it is customary to contest in elections but the NLD opposed and stood up against



Over three decades of service to Myanmar.  
Photo: AFP



the 2010 elections due to a lack of democratic standards and unfair election laws; and today the NLD will not recognize and oppose the ham election planned to be held by the military council, which has illegally retained state power.

After the coup d'état on February 1, 2021, the military junta has arrested, detained and imprisoned activists from various regions including the leaders of the NLD and civilians to the present day, resulting in 15,838 civilians who have been detained, including 1,769 members of the National League for Democracy, and 97 members of the National League for Democracy who have been among the 4,011 civilians who have been unlawfully arrested, tortured and killed.



The military junta illegally sealed and confiscated the property of 688 people, including the assets and properties of 373 members of the National League for Democracy. In addition, they invaded various offices of the NLD, including the central headquarters, stole, demolished and burned down properties 160 times.

After the military coup, the National League for Democracy is unable to carry out office work at various levels of the party offices, but we are consolidating and consulting the members of the NLD, using the online digital platform in order to act to achieve the success of the Spring Revolution and we have convened Party Central Committee three times as we are adopting and implementing the way forward for party activities.

In addition, we have formed region and state negotiation/coordination groups and have mandated them to work closely with the regional revolutionary forces as well as political parties that do not cooperate with the military council by working together to find ways to achieve federal democracy and the success of the revolution and working in practical ways to finally eradicate the military dictatorship in Myanmar's politics.

We, the National League for Democracy, call on and urge friendly countries and the international community to support us for the unconditional release of all political prisoners, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, chairperson of the National League for Democracy, who is essential in ensuring that Myanmar crisis does not escalate and spread to the level of regional problem and in building a federal democratic union, the provision of humanitarian assistance to war-affected civilians and stop the military from targeting and attacking of civilians as soon as possible.

We would call on and urge the United Nations Credentials Committee to continue to only recognize Ambassador U Kyaw Moe Tun who was appointed during the civilian government elected by the people of Myanmar with the right to represent Myanmar at the United Nations.

# MYANMAR JUNTA HAS EXECUTED 10 FEMALE NLD MEMBERS SINCE COUP

**T**en women members of the National League for Democracy (NLD) have been arbitrarily executed by the Myanmar junta since the 1 February 2021 coup, according to Dr. Daw May Win Myint, the Chairperson of the NLD's Central Women's Committee.

In addition to the ten female NLD members executed by the junta since the coup until 15 September 2023, a further 192 female NLD members were arrested and 84 had their homes sealed off in the same period.

She also pointed out that women in the NLD party actively participate in various aspects of the revolution, including armed revolution, public administration, vocational education, and the provision of medical assistance.

She said: "The women's organisation promises civilians that it will work hard to establish federalism and democracy."

She added that because the junta has been carrying out targeted arrests many NLD party members have been forced to flee their homes.

According to the NLD, since the coup, the junta has detained 15,838 civilians, of those 1,769 were NLD members. 4,011 civilians have been killed in custody, of those 97 were NLD members. The junta has also confiscated the properties and assets of 688 people and of those 373 were NLD members.



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# ZONED OUT: CHINA-MYANMAR ECONOMIC CORRIDOR STILL GOING NOWHERE

ZACHARY ABUZA FOR RFA

**M**in Aung Hlaing hopes big projects will enmesh China in Myanmar, forcing Beijing to underwrite the junta.

As Myanmar's economy continues to skid, with soaring inflation, a depreciating kyat, and flat revenue, junta leader Min Aung Hlaing seems to be looking for a few Chinese-backed marquee projects to kickstart

growth, and ensure Beijing's long-term commitment to the State Administrative Council, as the regime is formally known.

In August Min Aung Hlaing called for the completion of the Kyaukphyu special economic zone (SEZ) and container port, while engineering work is starting on the 810 km railway connecting Kyaukphyu with



Kyaukphyu special economic zone (SEZ).  
Photo: RFA



Muse, a city on the Myanmar-China border.

The project in western Myanmar has evolved and absorbed different components since a 2011 memorandum of understanding for the Kunming-Kyaukphyu railway led eventually to a set of projects under China's ambitious \$1 trillion Belt and Road Initiative.

But as the BRI prepares to celebrate its tenth anniversary at a summit in Beijing in October, China, unhappy with the slow pace of CMEC implementation, looks unlikely to extend an invitation to Min Aung Hlaing, denying him the recognition that he covets.

Chinese projects in Myanmar were facing trouble before Min Aung Hlaing overthrew the coun-

try's elected government on Feb. 1, 2021. Now they are beset by unrest, power shortages and transport woes.

Kyaukphyu began as a small port for offshore and imported oil, as well as being the land terminus for the Shwe gas field. The 51-49 joint venture between China National Petroleum Company and the Ministry of Oil and Gas Enterprises constructed a pier and 12 tanks, which commenced operations in 2013.

The US\$2.5 billion 750 km oil pipeline and 770 km gas pipeline to Kunming became fully operational in 2017. That year, PetroChina opened up a refinery in Kunming that was able to handle 7% of China's total refining needs.

These pipelines were China's strategic priority, but Beijing had other goals for linking landlocked southwestern China to the Indian Ocean. China saw the project as a way to address what then Chinese President Hu Jintao described in 2003 as the "Malacca dilemma" of vulnerability to a naval blockade of the Southeast Asian waterway which carries two-thirds of China's energy imports and trade flows.

In 2018, the two sides established the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC) to jumpstart the projects as part of the BRI, the signature project of Hu's successor Xi Jinping. Beijing also saw as supporting Myanmar's National Ceasefire Agreement signed by some ethnic armies in 2015 to end years of hostilities with the government.

All existing Myanmar projects were folded into the CMEC, and still there was little movement. Two of the first MOUs were a feasibility study for the first phase of the railway project and an environmental and sustainability impact study of Kyaukphyu.

## **AMBITIOUS PROJECTIONS**

A December 2015 tender between the government of reformist military leader Thein Sein and a consortium of Chinese corporations led by the state-controlled investment company, CITIC, established the Kyaukphyu SEZ and deepwater port. The \$7.3 billion



project was 85% owned by the Chinese consortium.

The phased project included the 1,736 hectare Kyaukphyu SEZ followed by two deep water container ports on Maday and Ramree islands. At capacity, 270 and 237 hectares ports would be able to berth 10 ships at once and handle 4.9 million containers annually.

There were wild promises by CITIC, including projections of adding \$10 billion to GDP annually and the creation of 100,000 new jobs. But little happened.

And there was already pushback from the elected National League of Democracy government led by Aung San Suu Kyi. Fearful of a scenario that played out when Sri Lanka became heavily indebted to China, in 2018, the Suu Kyi administration renegotiated the agreement, lowering China's stake to 70% as well as decreasing the overall debt for the project. But the ethnic cleansing and violence in Rakhine state, the location of the port facility, kept everything at a standstill.

Xi Jinping's January 2020 visit to Myanmar took advantage of Aung San Suu Kyi's diplomatic isolation following the forced expulsion of Rohingya Muslims in 2017 that led to UN genocide charges. More than 30 agreements were signed, many of which related to Kyaukphyu and its rail links.

Days before the February 2021 coup, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with Suu Kyi to push for the quick implementation of CMEC projects, including Kyaukphyu.

Seven months after the military seized power, site work began on the 1,740 hectare site. But there were immediate protests from the 20,000 people who were being displaced and harbored mistrust over promised compensation. Unrest was also fueled by civil disobedience against the coup, and junta crackdowns and arrests of local officials and activists.

Another impediment for the project is the regional shortage of electricity. In 2019, a Hong Kong based firm, VPower, which is partially owned by CITIC, won an emergency tender to provide electricity in

Myanmar. By 2021, it had nine different power projects around the country, including three in Kyaukphyu.

Yet, the firm shut down the 200mw Kyaukphyu II project in mid-2021, despite it being a 60-month contract. By 2022, VPower had shut down the Kyaukphyu I plant. Both were dismantled.

The firm cited a number of factors in the closing of the plants, including irregular supply of LNG, currency controls and other issues related to the post-coup investment climate. Left unsaid was the government's inability to pay for the amount of electricity that it contracted for and to pay the sum in U.S. dollars.

That left only one power plant in Kyaukphyu, a 135mw gas-fired plant, a 2020 joint venture between VPower, CNTIC, and Myanmar's Supreme Group. It was still in operation in early 2023, though there are reports that it has recently closed.

## **UNDERWRITING THE JUNTA**

Without power, little is progressing. In March 2023, a Chinese company signed a MOU to provide 100 mw of wind energy in Kyaukphyu, along with 150mw and 110 mw wind farms in nearby townships. Construction is to be completed in 2025.

An Environment and Social Impact Assessment is supposed to be completed in late-2023, but has received pushback from people being displaced and fishermen who have already been harmed by the oil and gas terminals and will now lose river access.

The junta is certain to green light the project regardless of the findings, and construction on the SEZ and first port are supposed to begin in 2024.

Connectivity to the port is even further behind. There has been very little progress on the 810-km Muse-Kyaukphyu railway, while China has only completed a portion of the railroad from Kunming to the border.

In mid-2023, Chinese engineers began field work for the first segment, a 431-km stretch from Muse to Mandalay, expected to cost \$8.9 billion. Apart from topography, there are engineering hurdles, as well as



a surge in fighting in northern Shan State, which has stalled the development of a free trade zone.

Notwithstanding the troubles, China has stepped up its investments since the coup, now totaling 597 projects worth \$21.9 billion, 23.5% of all investment now in Myanmar.

China is clearly pressing for the project's commencement to mitigate their Malacca dilemma. In May 2023, its ambassador in Naypyitaw lobbied for the project, while Deng Xijun, China's special envoy to Myanmar, reiterated the call in each of his four visits, most recently in September.

Deng called on the three ethnic armed groups that form the Northern Alliance members to stop their fighting along Myanmar's border with China and to pledge to protect Chinese investments.

Min Aung Hlaing is hopeful that CMEC will enmesh China in Myanmar's economy, forcing Beijing to underwrite the junta for the duration, so he needs to show progress.

And yet, his call for the expedited completion of the Kyaukphyu project sounds as delusional as the other economic policies in the 32 months since the military coup. The general is failing to accept that foreign investors have pulled out, and that there's neither electricity nor connectivity, let alone any ability by Myanmar to service the debt.

Zachary Abuza is a professor at the National War College in Washington and an adjunct at Georgetown University. The views expressed here are his own and do not reflect the position of the U.S. Department of Defense, the National War College, Georgetown University or Radio Free Asia.

*Courtesy of Radio Free Asia*

# FARM SCIENTIST BEHIND INDIA'S 'GREEN REVOLUTION' DIES



Photo: Piyal Pakira

India on Thursday last week mourned the death of scientist Monkombu Sambasivan Swaminathan, the architect of the 1960s “green revolution” that brought an end to the chronic food shortages then plaguing the country.

The plant geneticist died at the age of 98 in Chennai after an illustrious academic career that garnered him 84 honorary doctorates from some of the world’s top universities.

His work breeding wheat and rice strains with improved yields, and training farmers to cultivate them, helped transform India from a starving nation into a food exporter.

“At a very critical period in our nation’s history, his groundbreaking work in agriculture transformed the lives of millions and ensured food security for our nation,” Prime Minister Narendra Modi wrote on X, formerly Twitter.

“His passion to see India progress was exemplary.”

Swaminathan was awarded his doctorate in genetics from Cambridge University in 1952 but turned down a US professorship after resolving to return to post-independence India and “serve the nation”.

Memories were still fresh of the Bengal Famine of 1943 at the twilight of British colonial rule, when up to 3.8 million people died of hunger.

He began collaborating with US agronomist Norman Borlaug, whose own contributions to improving world food supply won him the Nobel Peace Prize.

After prime minister Indira Gandhi took office in 1966, Swaminathan was given free rein to implement a new agricultural programme.

At the time, India’s economy was hobbled by chronic food shortages that left it dependent on foreign aid, but by the early 1970s the new techniques had made it self-sufficient.

“Crisis is a mother of invention. We faced a crisis in the 1960s and we succeeded,” he told AFP in 2008.

Swaminathan was the 1971 recipient of the Ramon Magsaysay Award, popularly known as Asia’s equivalent of the Nobel, along with a laundry list of other accolades.

Time Magazine ranked him as one of the three most influential Indians of the 20th century, alongside independence hero Mahatma Gandhi and the revolutionary poet and artist Rabindranath Tagore.

His later career saw him briefly serve as a member of India’s parliament.

He was survived by his three daughters following the death of his wife last year, media reports said.

AFP



# THAI POLICE SEIZE DRUGS WORTH \$8 MILLION



Thai drug haul. Photo: AFP

**T**hai anti-narcotics police seized over \$8 million worth of drugs in one of the largest single hauls in the kingdom's history, officers said Thursday last week.

The so-called "Golden Triangle" where Thailand, Myanmar and Laos meet has long been a hot spot for drug smuggling, particularly of methamphetamine, despite repeated crackdowns.

Officers raided a building in central Nakhon Pathom city late Wednesday night, detaining four men at the premises and uncovering a huge stash.

"This is one of the largest amounts of drugs ever confiscated," said newly appointed National Police Chief Torsak Sukwimol, adding the haul was worth roughly 300 million baht (\$8 million).

He told reporters officers had found roughly 15 million "yaba" pills -- methamphetamine tablets that are produced and used across the region.

Last year the police seized around 540 mil-

lion such pills in total, more than double that seized in 2017, according to data from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

The newly appointed deputy police chief said the haul also included around 400 kilogrammes of crystal meth, and nearly 450 bars of heroin.

Officers said the huge stash, which had been brought across Thailand's porous northern borders, was being temporarily stored by the group before being shifted onto smaller traffickers.

"We've been keeping an eye on them for two years, and we had been trying to find this safe house," said Torsak.

"They switched their safe house to here and we'd been looking for this place for a long time."

AFP



# MYANMAR: ‘INHUMANITY IN ITS VILEST FORM’ CONTINUES, WARNS TÜRK

The UN human rights chief on Tuesday presented another grim assessment of the situation in Myanmar, detailing escalating horrors inflicted by the military on civilians in the country.

“Each day, the people of Myanmar are enduring horrifying attacks, flagrant human rights violations and the crumbling of their livelihoods and hopes,” said Volker Türk, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

He was briefing the Human Rights Council – the UN’s primary body for the protection and promotion of rights globally, including findings since his July

report was issued.

## *JUNTA’S RUTHLESS REPRESSION*

Mr. Türk emphasized the military’s blatant disregard for fundamental principles of humanity as well as the Security Council’s repeated demands for an immediate cessation of hostilities and unhindered humanitarian access.

“We are faced here with a system of ruthless repression designed to coerce and subjugate its people and to erode a society so that the predatory interests of the military are preserved,” he said.

“Senseless military attacks are exacerbating



Repairing the cyclone damage. Photo: UN News



the human rights crisis with interconnected humanitarian, political, and economic impacts, imposing an unbearable toll on the people in Myanmar.”

### **MUZZLING FREE PRESS**

He also voiced concerns over the military’s denial of humanitarian access to those affected by Cyclone Mocha in May, particularly in Rakhine state, where widowed Rohingya women have reportedly been forced to beg for food.

The military also threatened legal action against anyone reporting a different death toll from the massive disaster to the junta’s official figure of 116 deaths.

In this context, a photojournalist was sentenced to 20 years imprisonment by a military for covering the post-cyclone situation in Rakhine, the biggest

sentence handed down to a journalist since the 2021 coup.

### **RELIANCE ON FOREIGN SOURCES**

Mr. Türk pointed to three specific military tactics employed against civilians: airstrikes, mass killings, and the burning of villages.

Between April 2022 and May 2023, the military conducted 687 airstrikes, more than double the number in the preceding 14 months.

The report corroborated data confirming that the increased use of air power, along with heavy weaponry, military hardware and aviation fuel, “can only be purchased from foreign sources”, the rights chief said.

### **‘INHUMANITY IN ITS VILEST FORM’**

Mr. Türk further reported that ground operations resulted in 22 documented mass killings – involving the murder of ten or more individuals. Witnesses described soldiers using horrific methods to inflicting pain on civilians, including burning alive, beheading, dismemberment, rape and more.

“This is inhumanity in its vilest form,” the High Commissioner said, stating that entire villages were set ablaze, leading to the destruction of over 75,000 structures, driving displacement and increasing humanitarian needs.

### **CIVILIAN RULE HAS VANISHED**

“Civilian rule of law in Myanmar has vanished, with the military deliberately eroding the foundations of governance and justice in the country,” Mr. Türk said, urging the Security Council to refer the situation to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

According to credible sources, 24,836 people have been arrested, 19,264 are still detained, and 150 have been sentenced to death by military-controlled courts that lack any independence or adherence to due process or fair trial rights



Courtesy of UN News



Photo: Supplied

## KACHIN STATE

### *KIA destroy two junta fighter jets at air base in Myitkyina*

The Kachin Independence Army (KIA) claims to have destroyed two Chengdu F-7 fighter jets at Nampong Air Force Base, using a rocket launcher, at about 7:00 a.m. on 24 September.

The two Chinese-made Chengdu F-7 fighter jets were refueling at Nampong Air Force Base, also known as Air Force Base 503, just outside Myitkyina Town, when fighters from the KIA and the Kachin People's Defence Force (KPDF) carried out the attack with a 107mm rocket launcher.

"We launched an attack on the junta's air force base using a 107 mm rocket launcher. All four shells successfully hit our targets inside the air base, resulting in the destruction of two F-7 jet fighters. Interestingly, it was revealed that this occurred while the jet fighters were in the process of being refueled", said

a frontline source from the KIA.

He also explained that the KIA and KPDF carefully observed and monitored the airbase prior to the attack.

The attack also damaged the air communication office near to the airbase, according to sources at the Northern Regional Military Command.

The junta has not made any statements regarding the attack.

The main junta airbases are located in Hmawbi, Mingalardon, Myitkyina, Taungoo, Namsang, Meiktila, Myeik, Pathein, Tada-U, and Magway Township.





## KNU DENOUNCES FORMER LEADER'S MEETING WITH JUNTA CHIEF AS INCONSEQUENTIAL TO MYANMAR'S REVOLUTION

**K**NU said that former Karen National Union (KNU) chairperson Saw Mutu Say Phoe's meeting with junta chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing would not bring any benefits to the military junta, and the KNU had no involvement in the meeting, according to local news outlets.

The talks with the junta also had the participation of Saw Roger Khin, a former member of the KNU Central Committee, and Padoh Shwe MOUNG, a former district chair.

The KNU issued this response in response to reports from media controlled by the Junta regarding a visit by former high-ranking KNU officers to the junta chief and his team at Bayintnaung Villa in Nay Pyi Taw on September 30.

KNU spokesperson Padoh Saw Kler Say said that the visit took place just because the former KNU chairperson and his group had accepted a personal invitation from the military council. However, since these former leaders no longer hold influence within the KNU, it is perceived as having no benefit for the Military Council.

Padoh Saw Kler Say stated that the Military Council was making these invitations with the hope that it might offer them some form of support.

The KNU has also restated its dedication to Myanmar's revolution.

# ABOUT 1,850 MYANMAR MIGRANTS ARRESTED IN THAILAND WITHIN A YEAR



Myanmar migrants in Thailand. Photo: AFP

**M**ore than 3,000 migrants have been caught working without a permit as authorities crack down on those employed in jobs prohibited for foreign workers, according to the Department of Employment, reports the Bangkok Post.

From October last year to Monday, the department randomly inspected 53,732 workplaces which hire migrant workers nationwide and the agency found 3,464 migrant workers were employed without a permit, the report says.

Of them, 1,850 were from Myanmar, 636 from Cambodia, 562 from Lao, 145 from Vietnam and the rest from other countries.

Most migrants without permits and those in prohibited jobs were found in Bangkok and the major provinces of Nonthaburi, Chiang Mai, Chon Buri, Nakhon Pathom and Ranong.

Also, another 1,634 workers were doing jobs prohibited for migrants.

They are working in prohibited jobs allowed only to Thai nationals, the daily paper reported.

Under Thai law, 40 jobs are barred from being offered to migrants.

Migrants found working in the 40 prohibited jobs face a fine ranging from 5,000 to 50,000 baht and they will also be deported back to their home country and have a two-year employment ban in Thailand.



# UPTICK IN ASIAN CYBERCRIME GANGS BASED IN MYANMAR

**A** new report from the United Nations says that the online scammers and fraudsters operating across Asia are basing themselves more in Myanmar.

The cybercrime gangs from China and Taiwan are based in the Mekong region countries and Philippines and they are committing intimidation, coercion, frauds, blackmailing and making investments, by using the internet.

This report also says that the victims of these cybercrime syndicates are forced to work in their scams and frauds in the places which are inaccessible to the security agencies and they have little chance to escape from the clutches of these gangs.

Regional representative of UNODC Jeremy Douglas said that these transnational crime syndicates are very strong in the places where the rule of law and law enforcement are weakened.

The report pointed out that there were crack-downs on cybercrimes in Cambodia and Philippines but in Myanmar which was plagued with conflict, these cybercrime syndicates were growing under the protection of some armed groups.

Most of these cybercrime gangs are based in Shwe Kokko in Myawaddy on the Thai border and some are based in the Wa and Kokang self-administered divisions.

There are many well educated youths among the victims of the cybercrime syndicates and they were lured and cheated with the offer of a handsome salary and good jobs by these gangs.

The report says that the victims have to ask the help from the families, embassies and NGOs for their rescue when they realize they were cheated.

China and some ASEAN countries have agreed to resolve this fraud and scam crisis.

A report issued by the UN in August says that there are hundreds of thousands of victims of these cybercrime networks based in Southeast Asian countries and these victims are forced to work for these gangs under conditions of torture and intimidation.

There are over 120,000 victims of these cybercrime syndicates in Myanmar alone and about 100,000 more are forced to work for these gangs in Cambodia, the report says.

The cybercrime syndicates from China are spreading in the Asia-Pacific region and they are reportedly establishing networks in Philippines, Australia and Singapore too.

US Institute for Peace (USIP) Country Director of Burma Mr. Jason Tower said that the investments made by these cybercrime syndicate networks were in the billions of dollars.

The United Wa State Army (UWSA) and Chinese Police jointly launched an operation in early September this year and they were able to arrest 11 cybercrime syndicate personnel who cheated people out of US\$ 22.5 million.

In these raids, UWSA could arrest 269 people of which 186 were Chinese nationals and they were deported to China.

The Xinhua News reported by citing the Chinese Public Security Department that Myanmar handed over 1,207 cybercrime suspects including 41 fugitives to China.

# MINERAL-HUNGRY CLEAN TECH SEES COUNTRIES SEEKING TO ESCAPE CHINA'S SHADOW

**W**ith a clean energy transition hungry for more minerals, representatives from dozens of countries and industry met in Paris on Thursday looking to shore up deliveries against supply chain snarls and geopolitical tensions.

The International Energy Agency (IEA), which hosted the conference, has noted “spectacular” growth in renewable power and electric vehicles that is likely to cause fossil fuel demand to peak this decade - and also see demand for critical minerals surge.

Copper is a crucial component for wind turbines, while electric car batteries need lithium, cobalt and nickel.

While these minerals are found across the world, the concentration of processing, particularly in China, has caused concerns over sustainability amid trade and geopolitical tensions.

IEA chief Fatih Birol told delegates the “major challenge” countries face is how to ensure more diverse supplies, with other major issues including sustainability - both environmental and social - and how to increase recycling.

And the world needs to move quickly, he said.

“Clean energy transitions are moving faster than many people realise,” he said, adding that more than 80 percent of all new power plants built this year used renewable energy sources.

Delegates from more than 40 countries attended the meeting - though China and Russia, another major producer, were absent - looking to define a new metals diplomacy.

Debates centred on ways to reorganise the system, with memories of the breakdown in global supply chains during the Covid pandemic still fresh.

That and Russia's invasion of Ukraine wreaked havoc in commodity markets, with prices spiking in 2021 and early 2022, though they began to stabilise late last year, the IEA has said.

“We cannot replace the fossil fuel dependency with a raw material one,” said Thierry Breton, commissioner for the EU's internal market, adding that the bloc was considering new legislation aimed at boosting mining and refining capacity.

The United States, which has pledged to be a clean energy leader with its climate and trade policies, also called for increased international cooperation.

## RESOURCE RACE

The IEA has flagged concerns that projects and processing are clustered in a small number of countries.

It says China processed 74 percent of the world's cobalt in 2022, 65 percent of lithium and 42 percent of copper.

In an interview with AFP earlier this month, Birol said this concentration was a key challenge.

“Which is not something against China, but if you put all the eggs in one basket it is really not a sustainable choice,” he said.

Many mineral-rich countries such as Indonesia, Peru and the Democratic Republic of Congo have seen mining booms in recent years, with some aiming to pin their development on these resources.

Indonesia's Energy and Mineral Resource Minister, Arifin Tasrif, also called for a new foundation for global cooperation on critical minerals, highlighting that recycling would also play a crucial role.

The IEA says the energy sector was the main factor behind a tripling in overall demand for lithium between 2017 and 2022, as well as a 70 percent jump in demand for cobalt and a 40 percent rise for nickel.

The IEA predicts that if countries increase their climate ambitions in line with its projections for the energy sector to decarbonise by mid-century, demand for critical minerals will grow by three-and-a-half times by 2030, exceeding 30 million tonnes.



**Penrose Thitsa**

## **THAILAND'S NATIONAL PETROLEUM COMPANY CONSIDERS EXTENDING GAS FIELD CONTRACTS IN MYANMAR**

**T**hailand's PTT Exploration and Production (PTTEP), said on October 2 that the company is considering the possibility of extending its contracts for two gas fields in Myanmar, one of which will expire in 2028, while the other has approximately 20 years remaining, reported Reuters.

In addition to this, PTTEP has submitted bids for two out of three available blocks in Thailand and anticipates commencing gas production from these blocks within the next two years, Reuters reported citing Montri Rawanchaikul, the CEO of Thailand's leading oil and gas company.

Thailand is currently grappling with declining gas production at the Erawan field, which PTTEP assumed responsibility for following Chevron's four-decade-long operation of the field.

In Myanmar, PTTEP wants to extend its contracts for its two fields, as its operations there produce the equivalent of about 50 percent of Myanmar's electricity consumption and 20 percent of Thailand's.

"We are not looking for expansion, we're just looking for securing the gas in need for Thailand and Myanmar," Rawanchaikul told Reuters.



## DOING BUSINESS IN CHINATOWN

A young man sells toys in Yangon's Chinatown.

Photo: AFP



# IN FOCUS





## NAN SU MON AUNG AND INSIDE THE NUG

**N**an Su Mon Aung is the NUG Representative in France, the culmination of a journey that led from rural Karen and Pa'O village life, to completing a master's degree at Sorbonne University in Paris, to her present, high-profile position.

She describes her current duties as ranging from the basic, like locating a physical space for the office and appointing a team, to the political, like navigating the proper channels in the EU and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Her aim is “to engage with the French authorities, so as to inform French society about what is happening in Myanmar, to represent Burmese citizens in France, and to facilitate the contact between the NUG and French society organizations.” Nan Su Mon Aung also tracks such things as the Burma Act in the US, French parliamentary submissions, and what transpires at the UN.

Nan Su Mon Aung expresses gratitude for supporters in the global Burmese diaspora. At the same time, she understands the great personal sacrifice that those in the resistance movement continue to face on the ground, and describes the strain that so many in the country are still confronting. “Arresting the villagers, those things are happening now, again, in Myanmar. This is not new to us! I grew up hearing all those stories. I experienced it myself under the junta! So, all I always wanted, was to experience a true democratic government.”

Before taking the bold step into the world of politics, Nan Su Mon Aung had the aspiration to teach Burmese youth in freer and more open ways, like she had the opportunity to experience while studying in France. She touches on the difficulties with rote memorization as a learning technique, which is very common in Myanmar, and how teacher-centered instruction, coupled with an atmosphere of fear and submission, routinely discouraged critical thinking in her age cohort. As for her former life, she recalls, “I strived to share knowledge with Myanmar students. I grew up under previous dictatorships; I would like for

the new generation to have the experience of learning as easily as at an international university.” To that end, Nan Su Mon Aung launched informational web resources and an international scholarship program for young Burmese. “Step-by-step, I began to get many scholarships for the young students, and I was starting another step, but the coup happened! Yes, that's why all my plans were gone.”

Nan Su Mon Aung also opens up about her experience being of mixed Karen and Pa'O ethnicity. She describes how divisions between the Bamar and other ethnic groups. But she does find that Generation Z is wholly different. “They don't care who; when they meet a friend, they don't care where their friend comes from, what their nationality is, what their religion is. They don't care about that, just that we all are human. They know that!”

For her, this is primarily because this young generation has enjoyed access to information in a way that sets them apart. “After the coup, those younger generations, they couldn't accept it. Because of that coup, basically, the revolution is happening! It is not like before in Myanmar. Before the coup d'état this or that was happening for the revolution, but this time it is very different. These younger generations, they know other countries; they know human rights. They know all those equalities, egalities. So now, NUG; that's why we call it 'inclusive.’”

Before closing, Nan Su Mon Aung wants to remind listeners that this conflict in Myanmar is a global one. “We must not forget the involvement of Russia and China in the crisis in our country. This crisis is a threat to all neighboring countries and to the international community. We can see that tyrants and dictators are supporting each other. I believe that this time it is crucial, and that we must eradicate and stop all kinds of dictatorship in this world.”

Check out the Insight Myanmar podcast here: <https://insightmyanmar.org/complete-shows/2023/8/30/episode-189-the-french-connection-bonus-shorts>









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