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# UN ENVOY HIGHLIGHTS MYANMAR JUNTA'S 'DEADLY THREESOME'

**V**olker Turk, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, was blunt in his assessment last week of the challenges facing the Myanmar people as a result of the actions of the Myanmar military junta.

“Each day, the people of Myanmar are enduring horrifying attacks, flagrant human rights violations and the crumbling of their livelihoods and hopes,” said Mr Turk, briefing the Human Rights Council – the UN’s primary body for the protection and promotion of rights globally, including findings since his July Myanmar report was issued.

As UN rights envoy highlighted, the Myanmar people are subject to a deadly threesome of strategies clearly aimed to kill, maim and demoralize. These strategies are: air strikes, massacres, and village burning.

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 told the council. “Senseless military attacks are exacerbating the human rights crisis with interconnected humanitarian, political, and economic impacts, imposing an unbearable toll on the people in Myanmar.”

The Myanmar junta is being deliberate in the targeting of anybody opposing its rule or thought to be sympathetic with the Spring Revolution resistance movement that sprung up after the military illegally grabbed power on 1 February 2021.

Deliberate brutality and ruthless repression are the hallmarks of the three main weapons. These include air strikes against soft targets, deliberate torture and slaughter of civilians, and the burning down of people’s houses. This deadly threesome is designed to instill fear – yet it encourages the resistance to fight back even harder in a never-ending cycle of violence.

The UN envoy said 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, he said.

“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.

The deadly threesome – air strikes, mass killings and burning of villages – are causing an “unbearable toll on the people of Myanmar,” he said, calling for an end to the suffering.

**EDITORIAL**

**mizzima**  
WEEKLY

**Editor In-Chief and Managing Director**  
Soe Myint

**Contributors**

Sai Wansai,  
Andrew Landen, Marc Jacob

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**Contact:** Mizzima Media Group  
Email: [sm@mizzima.com](mailto:sm@mizzima.com)  
Phone: +95-9421010100



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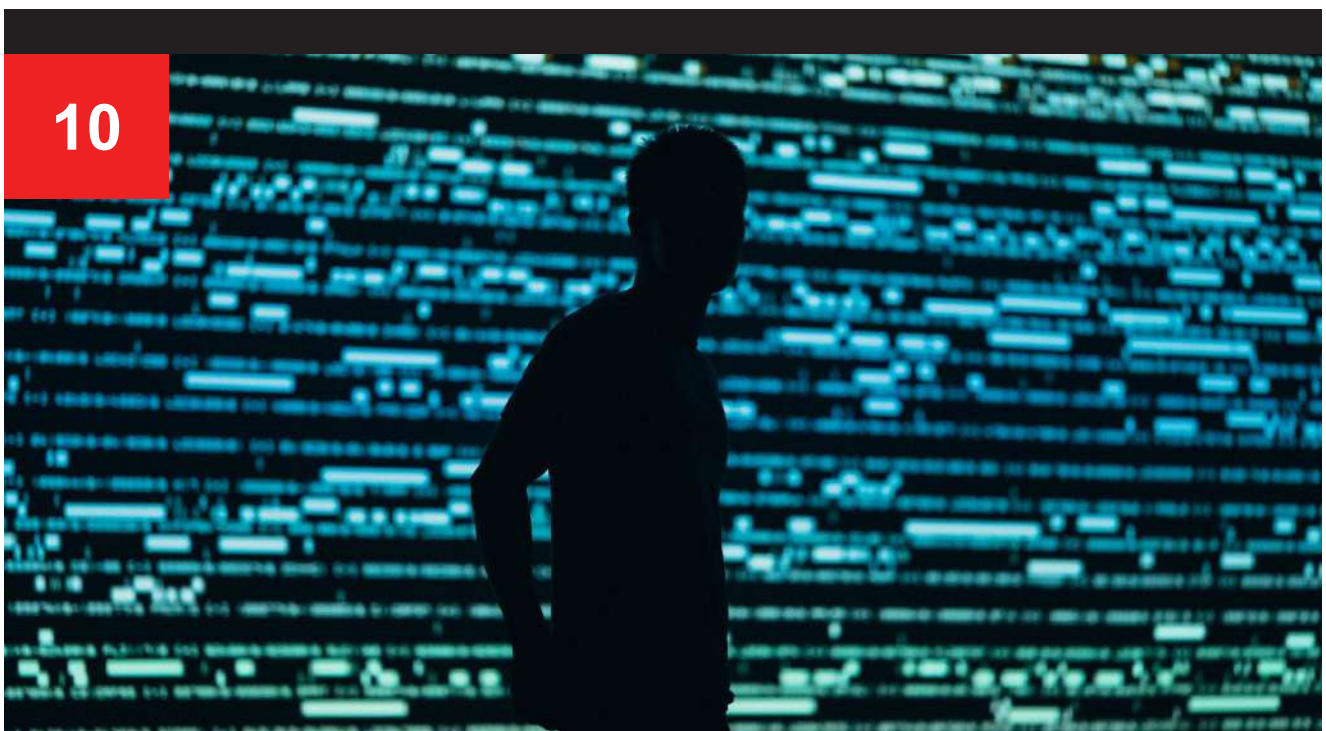
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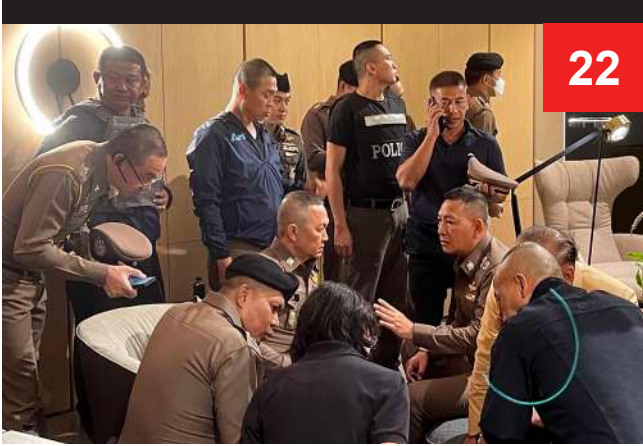
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# IN FOCUS







## YANGON SNACKS

A young woman seller with her choice of cooked crickets for sale on a Yangon street.

Photo: AFP

## 19 MYANMAR NATIONALS DETAINED IN RANONG FOR ILLEGALLY ENTERING THAILAND

The Thai authorities apprehended 19 Myanmar nationals who had illegally crossed into Thailand in Ranong Town in Ranong District, southern Thailand at 6:30 a.m. on 2 October 2023.

The Myanmar nationals who had illegally come into Thailand by boat from Kawthaung on the Myanmar side were arrested by soldiers from Thai Infantry Battalion 25, according to a social media post by the Battalion 25.

It said that the illegal immigrants were found hidden in two cars. The Thai army thought that the transport had been arranged by brokers who were transporting the migrants to Bangkok for work.

Currently, the 19 illegal migrants are being questioned at Pakchan Police Station in Ranong District. Appropriate legal action will be taken against them.

Many Myanmar people migrate to Thailand for work. While the vast majority of migrant workers are there legally, some enter the country and work in Thailand illegally.

In recent years the Thai and Myanmar authorities have cooperated and established bilateral agreements in an attempt to make it easier for Myanmar people to legally work in Thailand and to try to ensure that migrant workers have better rights and welfare.

## POLITICAL PRISONERS IN SAGAING'S MAWLAIKKALAY PRISON IN URGENT NEED OF MEDICAL ATTENTION

Prisoners, some of whom were tortured, are in urgent need of medical attention in Mawlaikkalay Prison, in Sagaing Region's Kalay Township, according to the Kalay Town Strike Committee.

Four Kalay Town Strike Committee members, Ko Than Soe Oo, Ko Myo Ko Win, Ma Hnin San, and Ma Kyan Dait Kame were tortured during their interrogations and some now have problems with their vision and hearing, according to Ko Bitepu, a member of the Kalay Town Strike Committee.

He said: "Our members were subjected to inhumane torture by interrogators, resulting in severe physical and mental injuries. During their trial on 25 September, we observed that our members are now experiencing visual and hearing impairments. They urgently need medical treatment."

The four were arrested in April 2022 and sentenced on 25 September 2023 to 12 years in prison for breaching Section 505 (a) of the Penal Code and Sections 50 (j) and 52 (a) of the Counter Terrorism Law.

There have also been reports saying that many Mawlaikkalay Prison inmates are suffering from eye infections and seasonal flu and not receiving ade-

quate medical treatment.

"Those who are in Mawlaikkalay Prison do not even receive proper medical treatment", said Ko Bitepu.

Political prisoners who are transferred to Mawlaikkalay Prison from other prisons are not provided with adequate and nutritious food, according to the Kalay Strike Committee which said the prisoners' diet mainly consists of fish paste and urgently needs to be improved.

According to the Kalay Strike Committee, domestic pressure on the junta is insufficient to ensure that political prisoners are safe and properly looked after. It is calling on the international community to collaborate with organisations helping political prisoners and provide effective assistance to address the bad treatment of prisoners.

Since the February 2021 coup, until 30 September 2023, the junta has arrested over 24,800 people, of which 19,200 are still imprisoned according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP).



# ARMS DEALER SHOT AND KILLED IN DOWNTOWN YANGON

**A** businessman who procured weapons for the junta abroad was shot and killed in downtown Yangon at 10:00 p.m. on 2 October, according to the Urban Owls Guerrilla Force.

The businessman, Nyan Lwin Aung, was shot between Latha Police Station and Lanmadaw Police Station near to the crowded 17th Street in Yangon City's Latha Township.

According to the Urban Owls, Nyan Lwin Aung (also known as Ko Nyan) has procured weapons from abroad for the junta. He has also imported facial recognition CCTV systems for the junta's Ministry of Home Affairs. He described himself as an "entrepreneur from a military family."

He used to frequently travel to Russia with representatives of the Myanmar military and was known to

be close to the Russian Defence Minister.

He also established subsidiaries of his North Gate Engineering and Technology company in various countries including Thailand, China, Russia, and the UAE. He also set up a travel agency called Well and Fair which is believed to facilitate money laundering.

Nyan Lwin Aung also frequently insulted Aung San Suu Kyi and revolutionary forces on his personal social media accounts. He also pressured his employees to recite the junta's four Pledges of Allegiance every morning, according to reports.

Following the shooting, the junta set up a cordon around the area of the attack, but the defence force fighters involved in the attack managed to escape, according to the Urban Owls.

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## MYANMAR JUNTA HAS KILLED 4,137 CIVILIANS SINCE THE COUP

**4**,137 civilians have been killed by the Myanmar junta in the 974 days since the 1 February 2023 coup until 2 October 2023, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP).

Of those killings, 142 were children under the age of 10, of which two were six-month-old girls. One of the murdered girls was from Maungdaw Township in Rakhine State and the other was from Kantbalu Township in Sagaing Region.

A representative of the AAPP said that the Myanmar junta is treating the civilian population as its enemy and is engaging in extrajudicial killings which are war crimes.

They said: "The number of victims is expected to be even higher than reported. In certain instances, the military council has conducted violent raids on villages, resulting in brutal killings. As a result, it has become exceedingly difficult to identify victims' names

or gender. This kind of extrajudicial killing is a crime against humanity."

Amongst the killed, three were Hluttaw (parliamentary) representatives, four were journalists and nine were non-governmental organisation (NGO) employees.

In the same period, the junta has also killed 298 people's defence force members.

According to AAPP's figures, the junta has also arrested 25,198 people since the coup. Of those 5,583 have been released and 19,615 are still detained.



# **GROWING SURVEILLANCE STATE**

**Myanmar census means surveillance and  
preparation for 'sham' election**





● A CCTV camera. Photo: Michael Aleo



**T**he Myanmar military's 1 February 2021 coup proved a shock. Now the junta is moving surreptitiously to build a surveillance state, with the help of the Chinese government, the aim being to further tighten control.

The Myanmar junta is reportedly collecting biometric data in some areas of Yangon for changing the existing national ID cards into an electronic smart card or E-ID. These biometric data include iris scan, face and fingerprints along with name, date of birth, nationality, hair colour, eye colour, height and address.

The Military Council has started the collection of biometric data for issuing E-ID in some areas in the country since the middle of this year for issuing electronic national identity cards. The junta asked the Chinese government for assistance to change the current paper national ID to a computerized machine-readable E-ID smart card.

### **'EFFICIENCY AND SECURITY'**

Digital ID is being "sold" as an idea to improve efficiency and security, as a modern "smart" approach that will help with identity, immigration, censuses, and

planned elections in Myanmar.

The mouthpiece of the junta, English language daily Global New Light of Myanmar, reported on 22 September that Myanmar Minister of Immigration and Population Myint Kyaing discussed this issue with Chinese officials during his recent tour to China.

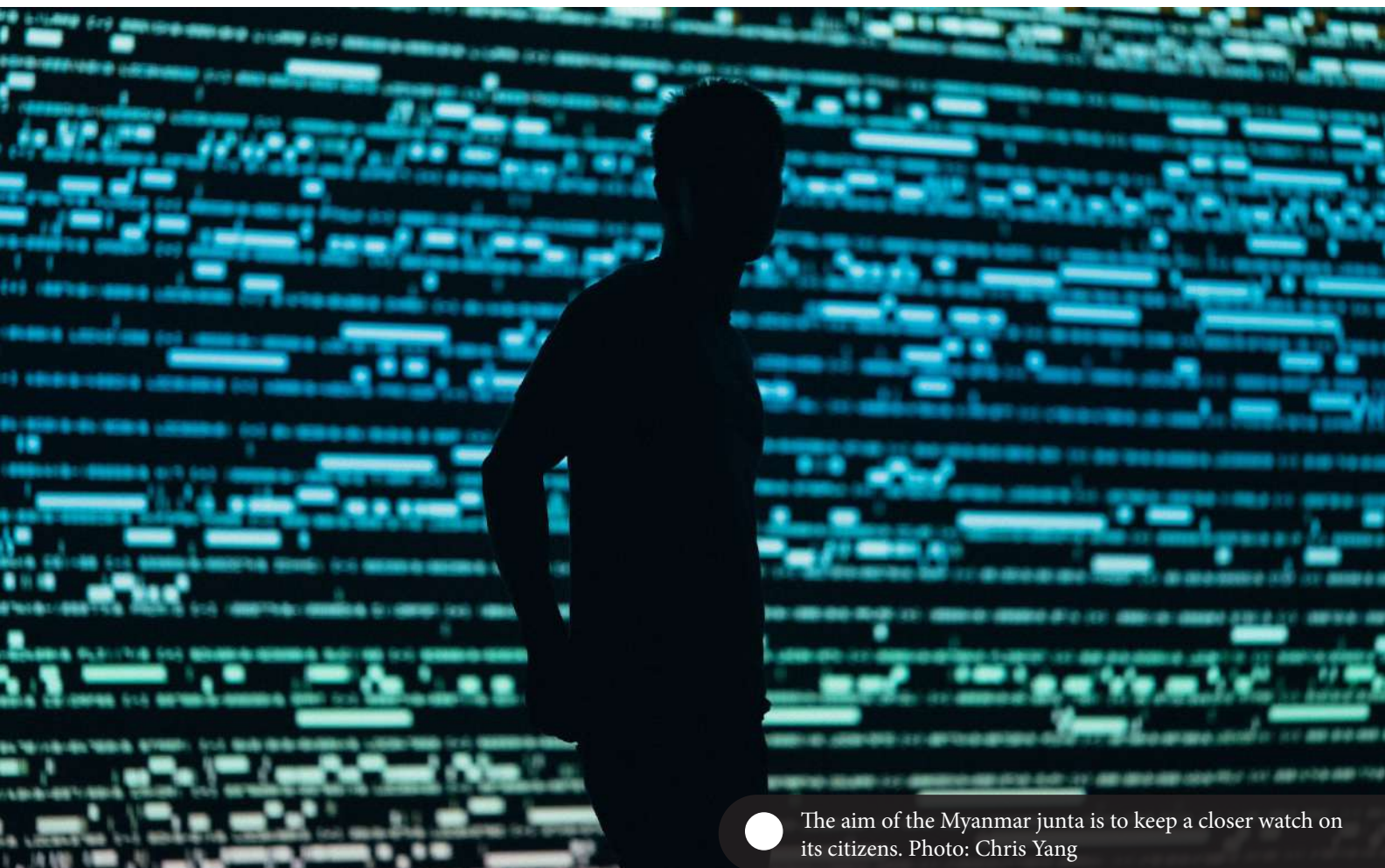
But political observers and revolutionary forces assume that this plan is being implemented when the country is in an unstable situation as a way to monitor the people in the country.

The junta immigration officials said that they were planning to change the existing paper IDs to E-IDs as the former could be easily damaged and torn.

But the revolutionary forces said that their plan was to make monitoring the people easier by collecting this biometric data.

### **THIN EDGE OF THE WEDGE**

Digital ID is essentially the thin edge of the wedge for the junta to monitor and control the Myanmar people. Together with CCTV cameras in cities and towns, digital ID will enable the authorities to tighten



The aim of the Myanmar junta is to keep a closer watch on its citizens. Photo: Chris Yang





The Myanmar junta's Union Election Commission demonstrates the use of its electronic ballot machines at a recent event in Yangon. Photo: AFP

their grip. While it is currently early days, there is little doubt that the Myanmar junta is leaning on China to help because of their experience with the intrusive and controlling “social credit system” that controls the lives of Chinese citizens.

At this stage, Myanmar may appear to be a long way from being able to bring in a surveillance system on a par with China – but it needs to be remembered that many other countries are moving along the path of tighter surveillance, including the USA, UK and countries of the European Union. London, for example, has a facial recognition system in place that allows the London police to swoop in on suspected criminals.

### **PREPPING FOR ELECTIONS**

The State Administration Council (SAC) Chairman Min Aung Hlaing said at the SAC meeting held on 1 September that the general elections would be held only after carrying out a nationwide census that will be carried out in 2024.

One political analyst pondering the changes from paper IDs to E-IDs, said while this is painted as preparation for general elections, it was more likely that the action was being taken to control the people.

The General Administration Department (GAD) and Immigration Department have reportedly started

changing to smart card IDs in the places where there are no armed conflicts such as parts of Karen State and some towns in Shan State besides the Yangon Region.

The US government have described the poll plans as “sham” elections.

### **TWO-TIER COUNTRY**

What this could mean is that populations in certain areas of Myanmar could end up with digital ID, while substantial numbers of people in resistance-held or ethnic areas could end up as essentially non-persons.

Given the chaos of the Myanmar civil war, the drive for digital ID could lead to a two-tier country – those in the system and more easily controlled and those without digital ID in troubled areas of the country.

On the face of it, the Myanmar junta will sell digital ID, the census, and the planned election as logical steps to modernize and “democratize” the country. But many activists and analysts view these steps with alarm as the junta expands the reach of their surveillance state.

# ILO COMMISSION URGES MYANMAR MILITARY TO END ALL FORMS OF LABOUR ABUSES



The ILO's new Director General Gilbert Huongbo. Photo: AFP

**A** United Nations investigation into Myanmar on Wednesday last week urged the country's military rulers to end forced labour in the army and to halt all violence against trade unionists.

The International Labour Organisation's Commission of Inquiry for Myanmar has recommended the Myanmar military authorities take "immediate action" to stop egregious violations of the two Conventions and prevent further abuses.

The three recent recommendations of the commission to Myanmar military are: to immediately cease all forms of violence, torture and other inhumane treatment against trade union leaders and members; to release and withdraw all criminal charges against trade unionists detained in relation to the exercise of their civil liberties and legitimate trade union activities; and to fully restore the protection of basic civil liberties suspended since the coup d'état.

Myanmar has three months to announce whether or not it accepts the recommendations; and if not, whether it proposes to refer the matter to the International Court of Justice.

The Commission also urges the military authorities to end the exaction of all forms of forced or compulsory labour by the army and its associated forc-

es, as well as forced recruitment into the army.

The Commission also found that Myanmar did not comply with its obligations under the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No.29), since the military continues to exact different types of forced labour in the context of armed conflict. It also said there is a lack of adequate enforcement of the prohibition of forced or compulsory labour.

The findings were collected by three independent experts of the Commission who conducted the inquiry by gathering written submissions from various entities and had direct contacts with persons affected by the complex political, human rights, humanitarian and economic crisis, as well as those having expert knowledge of the issues raised.

The report sets out further recommendations to be implemented once the country returns to a situation of governance through democratic institutions and processes.

It calls on all relevant parties to strive to achieve a peaceful transition to fully democratic rule.

The report of the Commission of Inquiry has been sent to the Permanent Mission of Myanmar in Geneva.



# THAI GOVT INVITES MYANMAR COUP LEADER TO BIMSTEC SUMMIT



Myanmar junta leader Min Aung Hlaing.  
Photo: AFP

**M**yanmar’s military chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing has been invited by the new Thai government to attend the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) summit on 30 November, according to a report by Thai PBS quoting an informed source.

Thailand is chairing BIMSTEC, a regional organisation that aims to deepen cooperation in trade, technology, energy, transport, tourism, fisheries, security, counterterrorism, disaster management and energy.

The countries that are part of BIMSTEC are the South Asian countries of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, and the Southeast Asian countries of Myanmar and Thailand.

During an informal meeting in Bangkok in July, members agreed on the agenda for the upcoming summit to discuss critical issues related to digital

payment systems and trade settlements; strengthening cooperation in cyber security and the prevention of transnational crimes; BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection; agriculture technology; cultural cooperation; youth exchange and diplomatic training, according to the Thai PBS report.

Southeast Asian lawmakers said in June that Thailand’s “re-engagement” with the illegal Myanmar junta is a betrayal of the Myanmar people and an affront to ASEAN unity.

The Geopolitical Monitor also reported in the same month that the Thai government’s intention to host a meeting with Myanmar’s generals in order to “fully re-engage” the junta is a violation of an agreement made in April 2021 among member states to exclude Myanmar’s generals from meetings.

Thailand is the second country in the world after Russia to welcome Myanmar’s military chief after the coup in February 2021.

# THAILAND'S PTTEP CONSIDERING EXTENDING OIL AND GAS EXTRACTION CONTRACTS WITH MYANMAR JUNTA



**P**PTTEP, a petroleum exploration and production company that is a subsidiary of the Thai state-owned PTT Company, is considering extending its production-sharing contracts with the Myanmar junta.

The current contract is due to expire in 2028.

“We are not looking for expansion, we’re just looking for securing the gas needed for Thailand and Myanmar,” said PPTTEP executive Montri Rawanchaikul to Reuters.

Most overseas companies have pulled out of the oil and gas sector in Myanmar since the February 2021 military coup, with the exception of Posco, Interra Resources and PTTEP.

PTTEP’s total production from the Zawtika and Yadana gas fields in Myanmar accounts for about 50 per cent of Myanmar’s electricity consumption and some 20 per cent of Thailand’s consumption, particularly in the west of Thailand.

In March of this year, the shadow National Unity Government (NUG) of Myanmar wrote a formal letter to PTTEP. The letter demanded that PTTEP sus-

pend payments to the state-controlled Myanmar Oil & Gas Enterprise (MOGE) for the gas produced from its offshore Yadana and Zawtika gas fields in Myanmar.

It also called for PTTEP to instead make future payments to the NUG.

The NUG also demanded that PTTEP provide it with information on revenues paid to the junta under the relevant contracts with MOGE, as well as monthly reports and other details of work carried out since the coup.

The NUG’s planning, finance and investment minister, Tin Naing Tun, said in an online press conference that the NUG’s objective was to cut off the money that flows through MOGE to the junta and funds its violence.

MOGE generated revenue of over US\$800 million in the second quarter of 2022, mainly from the Yadana offshore gas field operated by PTTEP in the Andaman Sea.



# MYANMAR AUTHORITIES SAY SEIZE ALMOST HALF A TON OF CRYSTAL METH



**M**yanmar authorities said on 28 September they had seized almost half a ton of crystal meth worth over four million dollars.

Security forces stopped a motorcycle and van in a forest in the northern Mandalay region during the early hours of Sunday, Myanmar's Central Committee on Drug Abuse Control said in a statement.

"The search brought the seizure of 435 kg of crystal meth (ICE) with a local value of 8.7 billion kyats" (\$4.14 million) the statement said.

It said the drugs were being transported from Myanmar's Shan state and authorities were conducting further investigations.

The "Golden Triangle" border region between Myanmar, Laos and Thailand has long been a hotbed of illegal drug production and trafficking, particularly of meth and opium.

This includes Myanmar's Shan state -- South-east Asia's primary source of meth, according to the UN -- home to a patchwork of ethnic rebel groups and militias aligned with the country's army.

Analysts say the military, which ousted an elected government and seized power in 2021, is not serious about ending the lucrative trade.

Earlier this year in a rare admission, the head of Myanmar's CCDAC said its efforts to crush the multi-billion-dollar trade were having no impact.

**AFP**

# WORLD NEEDS TO TAKE ACTION OVER MYANMAR CRISIS: KASIT PIROMYA

In this provocative conversation with Insight Myanmar, Kasit Piromya, a well-known Thai career diplomat, unflinchingly calls out the lack of engagement in Myanmar, not only on the part of elected officials around the world, but also stakeholders, diplomats, and government ministers, and demands that they do better, while offering recommendations as to how the international community should respond.

He expresses disappointment in the West's stable democracies for their hesitation in confronting tyranny because, as he puts it simply, they should know better.

## ***STRONG WORDS***

"It's so blatant! Isn't there enough evidence already for the Western world, the so-called democratic Western world, to [not] still have hesitation and to keep on looking for more excuses of not doing anything?" he says at one point during the podcast with Insight Myanmar, addressing how far Western countries have fallen short of their publicly avowed ideals when it comes to the conflict in Myanmar.

"Then don't come and tell us that you are democratic! Don't come and tell us that, 'We would like to promote democracy around the world.' Where are the



 Kasit Piromya



fighters of Europe that came out against fascist Hitler, or communist Stalin? All disappeared?”

These would be bold words from anyone, but given Kasit's illustrious, 37-year diplomatic career—he served as Thai Ambassador to nearly a dozen countries and was the Foreign Minister under Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva—they are all the more powerful.

## **JAPAN'S RELUCTANCE**

Another nation that Piromya expresses disappointment in is Japan. He firmly believes that as a regional power that is also a democracy, they could be taking a much stronger stand in supporting the resistance movement, similar to how they are calling out Russian aggression in Ukraine. He wonders if Japan might not be prioritizing its economic investment in Myanmar over the concerns of the people. “They are not carrying out their global responsibility on democracy, human rights and sense of decency.”

But Kasit certainly finds fault all around, especially in Myanmar's own backyard. First off, he calls out the cozy relations that the Thai General, Prayuth Chan-ocha, has long had with the Myanmar military. Kasit believes that this is because nine years ago, Prayuth staged his own coup, after which the Constitution was amended to provide a legal framework for his becoming Prime Minister. For this reason, the Thai government has worked “to maintain the relationship and cordiality and cooperative relationship with their Myanmar military counterpart, ignoring altogether the aspiration and struggle for the return of democracy by the Myanmar people.” Although Prayuth has since been replaced as Prime Minister by Srettha Thavisin, Kasit is not hopeful, as Srettha's new coalition government includes parties with military allegiances, meaning that there will continue to be a reluctance to take actions which pressure the Myanmar junta.

## **ASEAN CHALLENGED**

Kasit singles out the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), in particular, because in his

opinion, they should be doing more than anyone given their geographical, cultural and political proximity to Myanmar. While he shares a litany of concerns, his main criticism centres around the role of the ASEAN Special Envoy for the Myanmar crisis. As presently constructed, this position is under the aegis of the ASEAN chair (currently Indonesia), which rotates every year between member states. One issue is that past envoys have represented countries that themselves are undemocratic, and so they are hardly in a position to call for the Burmese junta to reform. Moreover, Kasit believes it would be far more effective if there was a permanent envoy representing the collective decisions and mandate of the ASEAN members who could engage in shuttle diplomacy across the region, rather than a rotating envoy beholden only to the current ASEAN chair country. This rotating system also prevents any institutional knowledge or sustained relationships from accruing, both of which are essential to successful diplomacy.

Still, even if all these suggestions were instituted, Kasit is far from naïve in thinking that the soft touch of diplomacy would magically resolve the stubborn brutality of the junta.

“So what is needed now is hard language and tangible action,” he acknowledges, pointing to the need for a series of hard-hitting, ASEAN-enforced sanctions to further cripple the military's capacity to survive, as well as for greater coordination with the NUG on delivering humanitarian missions to vulnerable populations.

## **ASEAN CHAIR**

Some hope that in its role as ASEAN chair, Indonesia may be able to push for more progress, as it is recognized as one of the region's more democratic countries. But again, Kasit does not see much cause for optimism. “I think both [the Indonesian President and Foreign Minister] have been underperforming, not reflecting the true nature of Indonesia as a democratic entity... a big disappointment!” This is compounded by the fact that “there is no common ideology about democracy” within ASEAN, and indeed, Piromya





● Kasit Piromya calls for action over the Myanmar crisis.  
Photo: Braden Jarvis

points out that member nations span a broad range from monarchies to communist states. “The Five Point Consensus for the past two year has been more or less a total failure,” he continues, referring to the 2021 political agreement that ASEAN struck with Min Aung Hlaing shortly after the coup.

### **SLIDE TOWARDS AUTOCRACY?**

As unfortunate as ASEAN’s poor response has been vis-à-vis Myanmar’s democracy movement, Kasit points out that its inaction has far-reaching consequences that will likely impact the organization itself. For example, he is concerned that their inaction in this case will serve as a precedent for passively allowing a slide towards autocracy in the region. “If you are a gladiator in the Roman Colosseum of the past, you have got to fight for your life! And now it’s time for ASEAN to fight for human rights for the Myanmar people, and for democracy as a whole.”

Kasit sees a parallel between this situation and the current challenges that the European Union is facing with Poland’s and Hungary’s slide into authoritarian rule, noting that if they were allowed to remain

in the EU without consequences, “that would be the beginning of the end of the European Union as a democratic entity... There must be some sort of a courage for the rest of the European Union leadership to tell Hungary and Poland what is black and what is white, and what is authoritarianism and what is democracy. But for us, we haven’t gotten to that level yet.”

And pointing to the postwar history of Chinese and American interference throughout the region, Kasit stresses that ASEAN must work to better define their own values going forward so they are less prone to outside influences... and to him, this must involve supporting democracy and advocating for human rights. As China prefers to spread its influence nation-by-nation in a kind of divide-and-conquer strategy which allows them to exert maximum pressure, Kasit believes that if ASEAN could form a united bloc that promoted a consistent, pro-democratic message, China would have a harder time maintaining their influence in the region— and he adds that this would hold true in similarly decreasing India’s and Russia’s support for the junta as well.



## **IN HIDING**

Kasit acknowledges a complicating factor in actively supporting the democracy movement in Myanmar is that many activists as well as NUG ministers are either in hiding in Myanmar, or living illegally in border areas. This puts large constraints on their ability to communicate with relevant stakeholders, yet without that, the hope for successful conflict resolution and diplomacy initiatives are markedly decreased. He therefore calls on ASEAN member state— in particular, Thailand— to provide them all necessary travel documents so that they can attend meetings in the region and speak out.

Turning his attention to the NUG's quest for legitimacy and support, Kasit has little sympathy for those international actors who move at a snail's pace towards a resolution while complaining about the complexity of the situation.

"The NUG is the result of the defunct demise of democracy, which came from the hands of the junta!" he exclaims. "You need any more explanation as a democratic politician? So in that sense, you have to go and support the NUG or whatever it is that was denied the democratic right to rule the country."

## **CONCERNS ABOUT NUG**

Finally, Kasit doesn't hold back in criticizing what he sees as the NUG's failures, either.

"They're quite amateurish and quite idealistic, but not realistic," he says, and calls for a clearly articulated vision and consistent messaging. His vision for this has three components.

First, he says that the NUG needs to choose leaders who are willing to speak out in a much more visible way—even if they run the danger of facing targeted assassination attempts at the hands of the Myanmar military.

"They have to take the risk of their life because that is a noble thing called service to the country," he says. "So their life is secondary, because this is a very crucial time for them to take the mantle of leadership

and take the risks, even to their physical well-being to their life."

Second, Kasit says that democratic leaders must finally be willing to move beyond Aung San Suu Kyi, and forge new identities and new values.

"They have to cut off themselves from the aura of Aung San Suu Kyi," he says. "And we all must tell Aung San Suu Kyi that she can retire from politics, because her leadership of the past five years before the coup d'état was a total failure, at least from the eyes of the international community. So there should not be any more nostalgia about [her] coming back into politics."

## **NO TO BURMANIZATION**

Finally, Kasit explains that the NUG must firmly reject all past Burmanization policies, both those that the junta has promoted, but also the NLD in prior administrations. He would also like to see federal democracies, like Germany, Canada, and the United States, play a more active role in helping to formulate a charter in Myanmar.

"The odds are very much against us," he admits in closing. "But there is a larger undertaking. We have to overcome the odds and try to meet the odds as much as we can. We have to have that determination and not to be disheartened and give up, or to do things in a [half-hearted] manner. You have to have the self-belief that in spite of the odds, we can overcome the odds and bring back democracy into Myanmar. You have to have that self-belief!"

Please check out the full podcast at Insight Myanmar: <https://insightmyanmar.org/complete-shows/2023/9/28/episode-192-no-country-for-democracy>

# FUNERAL HELD FOR MURDERED BURMESE SALES ASSISTANT AS TWO ARRESTED FOR SELLING GUN TO THAI MALL SHOOTING SUSPECT

The funeral has been held for Moe Myint, 31, a Burmese national who worked as a sales assistant in Bangkok's Siam Paragon, who was shot dead together with a Chinese national on Tuesday by a 14-year-old gunman on 3 October, according to Thai media reports.

Moe Myint sent 10,000 Thai baht (\$269 USD) to her parents in Burma every month, her employer told

Thai media. The company expressed its condolences to Moe Myint's family and said it will provide compensation to them. The Thai government expressed its condolences to the victims' families.

The funeral was held Wednesday last week at Wat Phasuk Manedchan in Nonthaburi Province. There was no sign of the parents of the gunman, both university lecturers, according to a report by Khaosod.



The alleged 14-year-old shooter, bottom right, in police custody. Photo: AFP



The victim's employer, who introduced herself as Nada, said she will continue to send 10,000 baht monthly to the victim's family in Myanmar on her behalf as she had done when she was alive and has instructed her attorney to seek the severest punishment from the gunman and his family.

## ARRESTS

Meanwhile, Thai police on Thursday arrested two men accused of selling a gun to the 14-year-old suspected of carrying out a shooting attack at a Bangkok mall that left two people dead.

The teenager has been charged with murder over Tuesday's attack at the Siam Paragon mall, which police say was carried out with a blank-firing pistol

modified to shoot live rounds.

Officers in Yala province in Thailand's deep south arrested two men in the early hours of Thursday on suspicion of selling a gun to the boy.

"Police raided their houses to find more evidence connected to the case," a senior Yala policeman told AFP. "They were sent to Bangkok for questioning."

Hundreds of shoppers fled the packed upmarket mall in fear as shots rang out on Tuesday afternoon.

Seven people were shot in total, and a woman from China and Burmese Moe Myint were killed.

The 14-year-old suspect has been charged with attempted murder, carrying and firing a gun in a public place, and owning an unlicensed firearm.

He is undergoing psychiatric testing to see if he is fit to stand trial -- he had previously been receiving treatment for a mental illness but had stopped taking medication, according to police.

The shooting has sparked fresh calls for tighter gun control in a country awash with both legal and illegal weapons.

It came days before the first anniversary of the deadliest massacre in modern Thai history, in which an ex-policeman armed with a gun and knife attacked a nursery in the country's north, murdering 24 children and 12 adults.

According to an international database, Thailand has an estimated 10 million guns in circulation -- one for every seven citizens, and one of the highest rates of ownership in the region.

In 2020, a soldier gunned down 29 people in a mall rampage at Nakhon Ratchasima.

Thai Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin on Wednesday vowed to bring in "preventative measures" to prevent further tragedies.

*AFP, Thai media*



# INDIAN GOVERNMENT EXTENDS DEADLINE FOR COLLECTION OF MYANMAR REFUGEES' BIOMETRIC DATA

**T**he Indian Ministry of Home Affairs is extending the deadline for the collection of biometric and biographical data from Myanmar refugees in Mizoram and Manipur States by six months, according to All India Radio News Aizawl.

The ministry started collecting the data on 29 July and originally it planned to finish the process by September, but it has now extended the end date to March 2024.

The extension was granted because of the violence and riots in Manipur and the upcoming November elections in Mizoram.

A Myanmar refugee in Mizoram said: "It seems that the central government may have deliberately extended the deadline to see if the incoming [Mizoram] government will continue [collecting data] after the forthcoming elections."

An official from the Burmese Refugees Committee (Kabaw Valley Region) in Manipur said that local organisations and refugee support groups had

collected biometric data from the refugees prior to inter-ethnic violence between the Meitei people and the Kuki tribal community.

But, when the violence started the collection of biometric data from the refugees stopped. The records of the already collected biometric data have since been confiscated and no ID cards have been issued. The refugees are now concerned about who their biometric data will be shared with.

India for Myanmar, an independent grassroots advocacy movement made up of experts and members of different organisations in Myanmar and India, is protesting the forced collection of Myanmar refugees' biometric data saying that it is a violation of their right to privacy and an intrusion into their private lives.

Local sources estimate that over 50,000 Myanmar people have sought refuge in Mizoram state, while more than 5,000 have taken refuge in Manipur State since the February 2021 coup in Myanmar.



# INDIAN FLOOD TOLL UP TO 77 AS WATERS RECEDE



A significant death toll from the Indian flooding. Photo: AFP

**A**t least 77 people are confirmed dead in the floods that hit India's northeast, authorities said Sunday, with destroyed roads and bridges leaving thousands more still cut off despite waters receding.

Violent torrents struck Sikkim state on Wednesday after a high-altitude glacial lake suddenly burst.

Scientists warn that similar disasters will become an increasing danger across the Himalayas as global temperatures rise and ice melts, spurred by climate change.

"A total of 29 bodies have been retrieved from different parts of Sikkim," state relief commissioner Anilraj Rai told AFP by phone.

In neighbouring West Bengal state, Jalpaiguri district police told AFP that another 48 bodies had been recovered.

More than 100 people are still missing, according to official figures.

Water levels along the Teesta river "returned to normal" four days after the floods hit, an official from Sikkim's state disaster control room told AFP.

The office said more than 2,500 people stranded in the floods had been rescued.

But evacuations have been complicated by the destruction of roads, bridges and telephone lines across much of Sikkim.

Another 3,000 people were still stranded in several relief camps in the state's north with airlift rescues delayed by bad weather, the office said.

More than 1,200 houses were damaged by the floods, according to the state government.

## LOOSE ORDNANCE

Among the dead were eight Indian army soldiers posted to Sikkim, which sits on India's remote frontiers with Nepal and China and boasts a sizeable military presence.

India's defence ministry said in a Saturday statement that the floods had washed away "firearms and explosives" from military camps.

Local media reports on Friday said that two people had been killed and four others injured by a mortar shell that exploded while flowing through the flood waters in West Bengal.

The water surge came after intense rainfall burst the high-altitude Lhonak Lake, which sits at the base of a glacier in peaks surrounding the world's third-highest mountain, Kangchenjunga.

Water powered downstream, adding to a river already swollen by monsoon rains, damaging a dam and sweeping away houses.

Himalayan glaciers are melting faster than ever due to climate change, exposing communities to unpredictable and costly disasters, according to the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) research group.

"The root cause is climate change," ICIMOD's Arun Bhakta Shrestha told AFP on Thursday. "Similar glacial lake outbursts flood events are very likely."

Earth's average surface temperature has risen nearly 1.2 degrees Celsius since pre-industrial times but high-mountain regions around the world have warmed at twice that pace, climate scientists say.

AFP

# CHINA SAYS 'DEEPLY CONCERNED' OVER 'ESCALATION' OF VIOLENCE BETWEEN ISRAEL, PALESTINIANS



A building in Gaza bombed by an Israeli jet. Photo: AFP

China said on Sunday it was “deeply concerned” by the weekend’s dramatic escalation of violence between Israel and the Palestinians, urging all sides to show “calm”.

“China is deeply concerned about the current escalation of tension and violence between Palestine and Israel,” Beijing’s foreign ministry said.

Beijing “calls on all parties concerned to remain calm and exercise restraint, cease fire immediately, protect civilians and prevent further deterioration of the situation”, it said.

More than 200 Israelis died in a surprise large-scale attack by the Palestinian militant group Hamas on Saturday, the Israeli army said.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed to reduce the group’s Gaza hideouts to “rubble”, with intense Israeli air strikes on the coastal enclave killing at least 232 Palestinians, Gaza officials said.

It is the conflict’s bloodiest escalation in decades.

Beijing said Sunday that “the repeated clashes between Palestine and Israel fully demonstrate that the long-term stagnation of the peace process is unsustainable”.

“The fundamental way out of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict lies in the implementation of the ‘two-state solution’ and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state,” it added.

China called on the international community to “enhance its sense of urgency, increase its participation on the (resolution of the) Palestinian issue, promote the early resumption of peace talks between Palestine and Israel and seek a way for lasting peace.”

“China will continue to make unremitting efforts with the international community to this end,” it said.

AFP

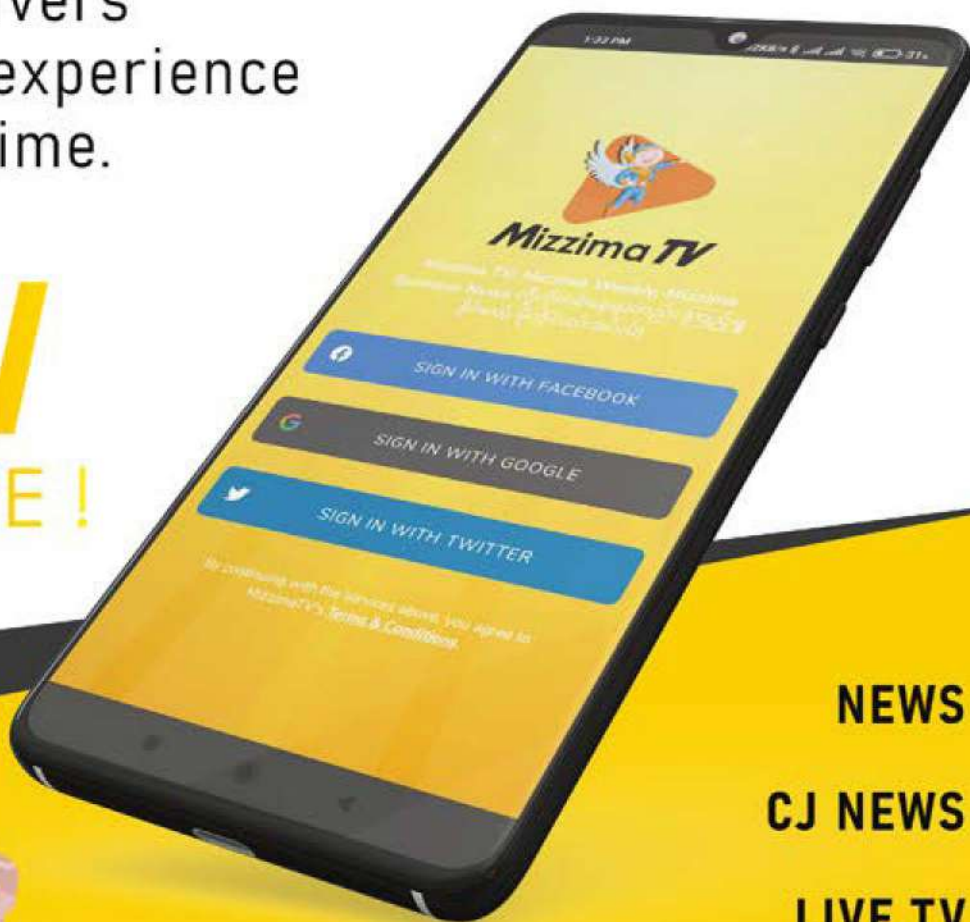


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# RECORD-BREAKING CHINA BRINGS CURTAIN DOWN ON BIGGEST ASIAN GAMES

**H**osts China racked up a record 201 gold medals before the curtain came down on two weeks of tears and triumphs at the Asian Games in Hangzhou on Sunday.

The 19th and biggest Asiad concluded at the 80,000-capacity Olympic stadium with China handing over to Japan for 2026 at a celebratory closing ceremony.

Dancers holding lit-up props fanned out towards the audience in a performance evoking ocean waves while the words “love Asia” were projected on a big screen.

The Games are normally every four years but Nagoya-Aichi has a shorter run-up because Hangzhou

was postponed by a year due to China’s now-abandoned zero-Covid measures.

Speaking at the closing ceremony, a spectator surnamed Xia told AFP that the Games made her feel “very moved and proud”.

“The Chinese team did great,” she said.

Taiwan’s Gu Shiao-shuang won the final gold earlier in the day when she successfully defended her title in women’s karate.

But it was the hosts who dominated over much of the fortnight, their 201 golds beating the 199 they collected at Guangzhou 2010.

Their exploits across the 40 sports at the Games reinforced China’s status as Asia’s sporting



The final celebration of the Asian Games.  
Photo: AFP



superpower, topping the medals table at every Asian Games since 1982.

The competition will be much stiffer in less than 10 months at the Paris Olympics.

With about 12,000 athletes, this was the biggest Asian Games in history and had more competitors than the Olympics.

Myanmar won one gold and two bronze medals.

The Games were China's chance to show it was business as usual following the Covid policies that largely sealed its borders.

Crowds waving mini Chinese flags regularly filled the 54 venues.

"Technically we have had one of the finest Asian Games ever," said Olympic Council of Asia acting director general Vinod Kumar Tiwari.

"We have had 97 Games records, 26 Asian records and 13 world records, so the standard has been very, very high and we are very happy with it."

World records tumbled in shooting and weightlifting, with North Korea celebrating their return to the global sporting arena after four years away by hoovering up six weightlifting golds.

But the hoisting of their flag -- in contravention of World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) sanctions -- was a running controversy in Hangzhou that was never resolved.

North Korea's athletes, wearing dazzling white blazers, again waved their flag at the closing ceremony.

The scourge of doping was never far away. Seven athletes failed drugs tests and more will likely be announced in the coming days.

## **PARIS ON HORIZON**

The Olympics on the horizon added extra spice. Nine sports, among them boxing, break dancing and tennis, served as qualifiers for Paris.

Breakdancing was appearing at the Asian Games for the first time, ahead of its Olympic bow, while eSports was a huge hit on its full debut.

Overwhelmingly young spectators packed out the futuristic 4,500-seat eSports arena and tickets

were the most highly sought after at the Games.

Lee "Faker" Sang-hyeok, who was followed by frenzied crowds from the moment he landed, won gold with South Korea in League of Legends -- and earned an exemption from military service back home.

Chinese swimmers Zhang Yufei and Qin Haiyang were named the Games MVPs and it was in the pool where the hosts were especially impressive.

They won 28 swimming golds -- Zhang and Qin accounting for 11 of them -- to send a warning of what they can do in Paris.

Japan were a distant second in the final medals table with 52 golds, down from 75 at Jakarta in 2018, and South Korea third on 42.

India's pinpoint archers and shooters helped propel the country to 107 medals, their best showing ever.

"If you're analysing why we won less medals than last time, China dominated and India did surprisingly well," said Japan's chef de mission Mitsugi Ogata.

The small contingent of women in the Afghan team did not win a medal but their mere presence sent a defiant message to their country's ruling Taliban government.

**AFP**

# UK TO WORK MORE CLOSELY WITH EUROPEAN COUNTRIES AGAINST MIGRATION

**B**ritain signed a raft of deals with several European countries on Thursday last week to work more closely together to halt irregular migration by sea.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and his Italian

counterpart Giorgia Meloni came to the European Political Community summit determined to push migrant boat arrivals up the agenda.

The European Union is working on a law to better share responsibility for handling new arrivals,



Illegal migrants arrive in the UK by sea.  
Photo: AFP



but Italy and former EU-member Britain want action to halt the boats at source.

In Grenada, they agreed the outline of a plan with several countries and bodies, including the European Commission, EU members France and the Netherlands and Albania.

And alongside this, Sunak said Britain signed specific cooperation deals with Belgium, Serbia and Bulgaria to tackle migrant-smuggling gangs.

“Tackling illegal migration is a shared European challenge. Numbers are up everywhere,” Sunak told AFP in an interview at the Granada EPC summit.

“I believe, as do other European leaders, that it should be us who decides who comes to our countries and not criminal gangs,” he said.

Sunak said he was glad that he and Meloni had been able “to talk through this issue to see how more we can work together to strengthen our cooperation to combat this awful crime.”

An EU source shared with AFP an eight-point plan agreed at the summit.

The countries agree to take “robust action ... to close down the supply chains of organised gangs through information exchange, operational cooperation, measures to stop all vessels involved in smuggling and awareness raising campaigns”.

They also plan to “update the legal framework to strengthen our fight against people smugglers”, including by working together at the United Nations.

Some ministers in Sunak’s government have suggested Britain may have to reject the European Convention on Human Rights in order to deport “illegal” small boat migrants.

But Sunak insisted that the plan could reduce regular arrivals without breaking Britain’s treaties and refused to be drawn on leaving the human rights convention.

“You’re speculating on things that well into the future,” he told AFP. “We’re confident that our laws comply with all international obligations.”

AFP





# PROTECT CHILDREN AT ALL TIMES AND AT ALL PLACES, UN ENVOYS TELL NATIONS

Senior UN officials on Thursday last week reiterated the call for protection of children and ensuring their rights at all times, as enshrined in international law, and ending impunity for crimes against them.

In 2022, the UN verified 27,180 instances of grave violations targeting children – use in conflict, killing and maiming, rape and sexual violence, abduction, attacks on schools, and denial of humanitarian assistance, said Virginia Gamba, Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict.

Among these violations, over 2,300 children suffered from multiple abuses, and the total number included 2,880 violations that had occurred before

2021 but were only verified last year.

## ***DISPLACED AT GREATER RISK***

Briefing countries at the General Assembly's Third Committee, Ms. Gamba underscored the increased vulnerabilities of displaced children.

Displacement often leads to violations and abuses against children, such as recruitment, abductions, sexual violence, and trafficking.

Additionally, the displacement of children disrupts their access to health and education while denying them humanitarian assistance.

Climate-related factors, such as environmental disasters and the presence of landmines and unexploded ordnance, further exacerbate these dangers.



Photo: UNICEF



## **ALL UNDER 18 ‘CHILDREN’**

Special Representative Gamba called upon nations to recognize all individuals under the age of 18 as children and to provide them with special protection, as outlined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

She highlighted the specific vulnerabilities faced by those aged between 13 and 18.

“Often treated as adults or subjected to counter-terrorism measures at the risk of having their own rights as children curtailed,” she said.

Ms. Gamba also urged greater efforts to collect accurate data and close information gaps to ensure the protection and assistance of all children, including those with disabilities.

## **THE CLOCK IS TICKING**

Najat Maalla M’Jid, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children, also addressed the Committee, emphasizing that chil-

dren bear a higher price not only during conflicts and humanitarian crises but also amid political instability and economic hardships.

She expressed concern that progress toward ending violence against children by 2030 is slipping away, and called for urgent and effective measures to reverse this trend.

On her part, she has been actively working to advance child protection from violence through advocacy, advisory, and bridge-building roles with countries and communities.

“My engagement with Member States has highlighted the transformative impact and high return on investing in cross sectoral child protection and violence prevention services that are accessible to all children, irrespective of their status,” Ms. M’Jid stressed.

## **RETHINKING TRAVEL AND TOURISM**

Her report to the General Assembly focused on protecting children in the context of travel and tourism.

While crucial for global communities and development, this sector also presents child protection challenges.

She emphasized the need for the revival of the sector post-COVID-19 to prioritize sustainability in environmental, economic, and social aspects, as well as freedom from child violence.

Ms. M’Jid called on societies to adopt a zero-tolerance stance against the exploitation of children in various roles within the travel and tourism industry.

“Children may be in the open, selling souvenirs on the street or beach, carrying luggage or waiting tables. They may work behind the scenes, washing dishes or cleaning guests’ rooms. Or they may be completely hidden from sight in massage parlours, brothels or even their own homes, where they endure sexual exploitation.”

The sector has an “unprecedented opportunity” to embed child protection throughout its value chains and destinations as it rebuilds after the pandemic, she stressed, emphasizing that this opportunity must not be missed.

Courtesy of UN News







Photo: Matan Levanon

## CHIN STATE

### *Primary school children among 60 people arrested in Mindat Township*

The junta detained 60 people, including children of primary school age, in Mindat Township, Chin State between 11 and 26 September according to the Chinland Defence Force.

Zalat Thway from Chinland Defence Force - Mindat said: "The military council in Mindat Township, has arrested residents on multiple occasions, whenever they become suspicious. Additionally, the military has also arrested people in Dantdee Village without providing any reasons or justifications. The arrests have even included children who were attending school in the village."

38 of the arrested people, some of whom were primary school students, were from Dantdee Village and a further 22 were from villages in the western part of Mindat Township. Of the 60 arrested people 50 have been released.

10 adults are still being held in custody but their whereabouts and the reasons for their detention are not known, according to Zalat Thway.

He added that at the time of the arrests, between 9 and 29 September, in Mindat Township there were five battles between defence forces and junta forces, resulting in four junta soldiers being killed and a further nine being injured. One CDF Mindat soldier was killed and another was injured.

During that time, two villagers from Dantdee Village were also injured by artillery shells fired by the junta.

There have been electricity and water outages in Mindat Township for the last four months. Also, it was cut off from the internet, but the junta-run Myanmar Posts and Telecommunications (MPT) recently restored the internet service, though there are still frequent outages.

Chinland Defense Force - Mindat issued a statement urging people in Mindat Township to be vigilant, take precautions and stay away from junta forces as the situation is still volatile.





## TWO ALLIES OF MYANMAR JUNTA CHIEF JAILED FOR HIGH TREASON

Two allies of Myanmar's junta chief have been jailed for 20 years for "high treason" including corruption and abuse of power, the military said on Tuesday.

Moe Myint Tun and Yan Naung Soe were "sentenced to twenty years imprisonment, equal to a life sentence" by a military court, according to a statement from the junta's information team.

Moe Myint Tun -- former chief of Myanmar's investment commission and head of the body regulating foreign exchange -- had committed "high treason by... taking bribes", it said.

He had been found "receiving bribes from companies" and "possessing foreign currencies illegally".

Last month a military source told AFP that Moe Myint Tun -- viewed in some circles as a protege of junta chief Min Aung Hlaing -- was under investigation for corruption.

The same month he was removed from the ruling State Administration Council -- as the junta calls itself.

Yan Naung Soe is a former joint secretary of the junta-stacked trading committee.

The statement did not say when the men had been sentenced.

Myanmar's economy has slumped since the military's 2021 power grab, with the local kyat currency plunging against the dollar and business sentiment and forex reserves hammered by roiling conflict and sanctions.

The official exchange rate for the kyat is currently just over 2,000 per dollar, but in recent months the greenback has fetched up to 3,600 on the black market.

Authorities revoked the licenses of 166 money changers between March to September, for failing to comply with central bank regulations, state media reported last month.

AFP

# MYANMAR TO SPEND OVER 160 BILLION KYAT ON HYDROPOWER PROJECTS THIS YEAR

The budget estimates issued by Myanmar's Budget Department say that over 160 billion Kyats will be spent for hydropower projects in the 2023-24 financial year.

These expenditures include the hydropower projects of Shweli (3), Upper Yeywa, Tha Htay and Upper Kyaington and others. A budget of 162.773 billion Kyat will be spent on these projects in this financial year.

According to the department, over 3,389 billion Kyat will be spent on Myanmar's electric power sector in this 2023-24 fiscal.

Under these budget estimates, 1.449 billion Kyat will be spent for feasibility studies of new hydropower projects, 230.364 billion Kyat for building transmission lines and substations and 127.350 billion Kyat for electric power distribution.

Moreover 2.747 billion Kyat will be spent for maintenance of existing dams, hydropower stations and related hydropower station buildings and 2.964 billion Kyat will be spent for procuring necessary supplies for ongoing hydropower projects.

At the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Energy Forum held for the first time in Astana, Kazakhstan from 3 to 6 October, Myanmar Minister Ko Ko Lwin said that Myanmar had many untapped energy resources and they had limitations in producing

energy so that Myanmar would like to cooperate with the SCO in energy production.

Myanmar has abundant water resources and a substantial percentage of electric power comes from hydropower stations, as well as natural gas stations.

But natural gas availability was limited so that the country had to use coal and other energy resources for power generation and they were trying to do their best to have the least impact on the environment, Myanmar minister said at this forum.

Myanmar Minister Ko Ko Lwin also said that since they had shortages in technology and investments they were trying to explore means for cooperation with others.

Currently Myanmar is generating electricity from natural gas, coal, hydropower, thermal and solar. The country was trying to produce more oil and natural gas in the country, the minister said.

The SCO was established by countries led by Beijing and Moscow in early 2000 and it is the organization for politics, economics, international security and defence for the Eurasia region.

The SCO produces about 20% of world GDP and it has nine permanent countries and 14 dialogue partners. Myanmar joined SCO as a dialogue partner this year.



# MYANMAR JUNTA PERMITS SIX NEW FOREIGN INVESTMENTS INCLUDING RENEWABLE ENERGY ELECTRICAL POWER PROJECT



Photo: Eric Stone

**A**fter the member of State Administration Council (SAC) Gen. Mya Tun Oo took charge of the post of the Investment Commission, six new foreign investments worth US\$72.98 million were permitted.

In addition, the Military Council permitted increasing the paid capital of eight ongoing investments besides six new foreign investments in the electricity, industry, hotel and tourism sectors.

It is learned from the Military Council's Foreign Investment Commission that these six new foreign investments in renewable energy electrical power, industry, hotel and tourism sectors were permitted by the commission on 2 October, creating over 2,600 job opportunities for the people.

Of these new investments, 28% will be in the electric power sector, 24% in the oil and gas sector, 14% in the industry sector respectively.

US energy company Chevron, French Total and British American Tobacco Company which manufactures London and Lucky Strike cigarettes and some foreign companies exited Myanmar after the 2021 military coup.

# MYANMAR TRADE DEFICIT INCREASES TO OVER \$835 MILLION IN THIS FISCAL YEAR



Photo: AFP

According to the data released by the Myanmar Military Council's Ministry of Economy and Commerce, the trade deficit of the country is over US\$835 million in the period from 1 April to 22 September in this 2023-24 financial year as import value is much more than the export value of the country in this period.

The trade deficit in the corresponding period of the last fiscal was over US\$150 million. It has now jumped up to over US\$835 million this year.

The consecutive trade deficits may increase the prices of imported commodities and services and also it may cause falling prices of a country's exports in the global market and moreover it may weaken the Myanmar currency Kyat.

Myanmar's total trade value in this fiscal year from 1 April to 22 September is US\$15 billion and of which the import value in this period is over US\$8 billion and the export value is over US\$7 billion.

The value of seaborne trade declined in this period but the border trade value is over US\$4.589

billion, a rise of over US\$700 million compared with the corresponding period in the last fiscal year.

The export value declined by nearly US\$1 billion than the previous year but the import value rose by over US\$56 million.

Business people put blame on unnecessary trade and monetary policies imposed by the Military Council for the rising trade deficit of the country.

The traders and businesspersons said that instability in the country, difficulties in transport and power shortage and outage in the country had impacts on the country's export and manufacturing.

In the import sector, the imports of consumer goods and CMP garment industry raw materials are declining but rising in other sectors.

Before the coup, the foreign trade value in the first half of the 2019-20 fiscal year was US\$19.603 billion and after the coup it fell to US\$16 billion in the first half of the 2022-23 fiscal year .



**Penrose Thitsa**

## **BUSINESSMEN OPERATING IN MYANMAR ARRESTED IN CHINA**

**E**leven businessmen from Myanmar, including officials from the Kokang Self-Administered Zone, were arrested during a visit to China's Yunnan province over the weekend, Radio Free Asia (RFA) reported citing border traders.

Among those arrested was Liu Zhengxiang, the director of the Fully Light Group in Laukkaing, who is allegedly connected to the Kokang Border Guard Force and involved in nationwide online gambling.

Fully Light Group, a prominent conglomerate engaged in various sectors like jewellery, tourism, and rubber, is the largest business entity in Laukkaing.

On September 30, approximately 30 businessmen hailing from Kokang, Laukkaing, and Chinshwehaw towns participated in a Chinese trade fair held in Yunnan province's Lincang district.

According to an anonymous merchant based near the border, police arrived at their hotel and singled out the most prominent businessmen among them.

In a related development, China has implemented measures to limit the movement of individuals in the border areas of Yunnan province. This action is aimed at curbing the widespread telecommunications fraud conducted by Chinese citizens in remote areas of Myanmar.



## **CALM AT SUNSET**

The sun goes down on the Bagan plain.

Photo: Sergio Capuzzimati



**IN FOCUS**



# MYRA DAHGAYPAW ON WORKING FOR THE US CAMPAIGN FOR BURMA



Myra Dahgaypaw

**M**yra Dahgaypaw works for the US Campaign for Burma in Washington DC and is clearly a well-informed and experienced activist who brings a lot to the table.

“We’re trying to rally and educate the diaspora here in the US, and build up support in the government, in the Congress, as well as in the State Department,” she tells Insight Myanmar in a podcast on her life and her work as the Myanmar crisis continues. “We also have the grassroots support because they are our strength, so the more we can rally, the more support we will get and our voice will get louder.”

## AMIDST STRIFE

Myra was born in the badlands of Myanmar in the midst of strife.

“I was born as an internally displaced person in the Fifth Brigade in Karen state, Eastern Burma,” Myra explains in the podcast (see link below). “And as an internally displaced person, I’ve had to flee for my life since I was a baby, along with my parents, and my three siblings.”

Myra describes how they had to escape from gunfire, airstrikes, and landmines; and whenever and wherever it seemed as though they had finally reached safety, the Burmese military would reappear, and the family would, once again, have to run for their lives.

As these experiences accumulated, so did her fear and hatred of the Burmese military, which spilled over into her feelings about the Bamar people

as a whole. She remembers bristling when asked to enroll in Burmese language class, as she had no wish to speak the language of her tormentor. “When I was a child, I couldn’t think anything good about the Burmese, because the Burmese troops came out to kill us,” she recalls. “They burned down our places, planted land mines, and people were brutally murdered, including even those in my own family: my relatives, my aunts, uncles, and cousins. And so when I was a child, the only thing I could visualize about the Burman is that they look like monsters with big horns and big teeth! Then I later figured, no, they are just like us, they’re fleeing for lives, they are also persecuted. And that’s how I developed my thinking and figuring that we all are needing each other. And that’s how my life as an advocate and activist started off.”

## PARENTS DIE

Tragically, life on the run proved to be too much for her parents. They both died before Myra was a teenager, so she ended up being raised by her uncle’s family in a “refugee” camp in Thailand. “Refugee” is in quotes here because at that point, the UNHCR (UN High Commissioner for Refugees) had not yet officially recognized either the conflict or those fleeing from it, so there was no official term for those staying in that settlement.

Myra became committed to doing what she could to alleviate her people’s suffering, and so as soon as she was old enough, she began volunteering at the local clinic. “I didn’t know anything about nursing, but I had to literally learn quickly how to give injections, measure the temperature and blood pressure, and to use a microscope to check out for viruses and malaria.”

## DANGERS

Yet being on Thai soil didn’t provide any real safety, either. A regime-aligned militia, the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA), would position themselves across the river demarcating the countries, and actually fire live rounds at the refugees. “To the best of my ability, I learned how to shoot,” she explains. “I had to carry a gun along with the men in order to make sure that our people were safe. So literally, when we went out to look after different patients, we always had to carry some kind of safety with us to so that if anything happens, we can protect ourselves.” In other instances, she describes how the DKBA actually crossed into Thailand to burn down refugee huts. Myra remembers her grandmother being so traumatized that she finally turned to a soldier and said, “I cannot walk anymore because I’m too old. If you want to kill me, just kill me



now!” Perhaps due to a pang of conscience or shame, the soldier let them be.

## **THIRST FOR EDUCATION**

While few refugees in their situation are ever able to transcend their circumstances, Myra’s thirst for education became her ticket out. She enrolled in English language classes that the Soros Foundation was offering through their Open Society Initiative. She later became a librarian at OSI, which ultimately paved the way for work and schooling abroad.

Her work eventually landed her in Washington, DC, where she now works for the US Campaign for Burma.

While most of her Burmese colleagues there are volunteers, Myra still recognizes the privilege that they enjoy when compared to their friends and family back home.

“I live a luxurious life compared to the people who are struggling to survive on daily basis, and not knowing when they will be killed by the Burmese military. But of course, if we compare with the lives of the American people, it’s just a normal life.”

And for Americans, who have not experienced firsthand the brutality of life under the military regime but yet are concerned by the emerging armed resistance, Myra has a direct message: “I want to help you all understand that this is not a choice, but this is a life and death situation! You do or die. Do we like guns? I don’t like guns at all! Never ever in my wildest [dreams did I] think that I would have to shoot a gun! But then, when I either had to run away or pick [a gun] up and make sure that my community was safe, then there was no choice, I just had to do it! And likewise, the people in Burma right now, the civilians who never probably have seen a real gun, let alone having to pick it up and shoot it and protect the community. So literally, it is a do or die situation.”

## **FINDING SUPPORT**

This only strengthens her resolve to find support on Capitol Hill, and to undermine the military’s brutal stranglehold on her country. “If you look at every corner of Burma, you look all the way from Chin state going over to Kachin, Shan, and Karen; airstrikes are happening on a regular basis. But the international community is just talking about it a bit here and a bit there! That doesn’t help. You have to get down to the root cause of the problem, which is the military’s brutality.”

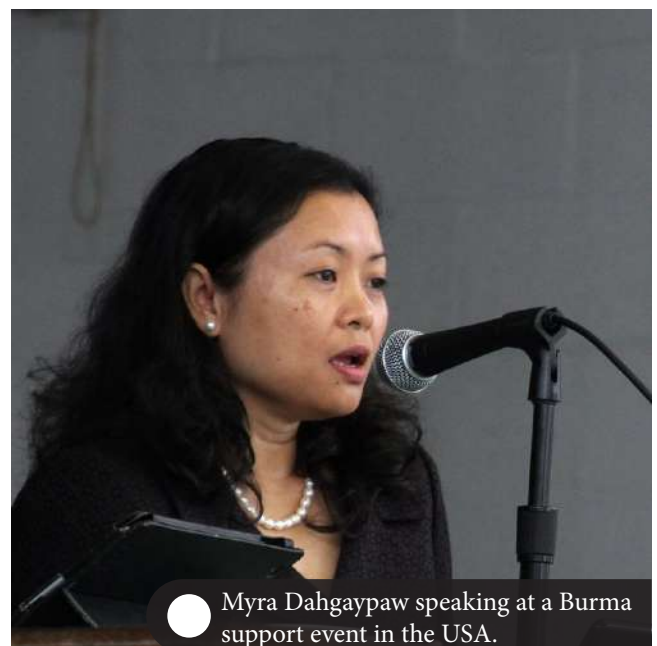
Myra feels that the military’s past success in keeping groups divided and fearful of one another is waning; there’s more solidarity than ever before. This even includes the Rohingya community, which had long been disparaged by the country’s Buddhist majority. Myra, herself, took time to visit their refugee camps and speak out for them in years past. But equally im-

portant to uniting the country’s diverse groups is finding solidarity within ethnic communities themselves. For example, she notes the divisions growing among her own Karen people. “I do want to see the Karen community unite. Because only if we can unite, we will be stronger, and that’ll be somewhat easier to fight the Burma Army. This is what the Burma Army is afraid of most, is when people are united, when people are coming together as a unified entity. That is why they’re using the divide and conquer to keep us apart from each other so that we cannot conquer them, but they can conquer us!”

## **SEEKING UNITY**

Yet to do this, it will take the support of all involved, and for this, Myra makes a direct appeal to the audience. “The people on the ground will do everything they can to keep the community alive! As listeners, I know some of you may be saying, ‘Oh, I can’t do much.’ Yes, you can! You have the voice, you have the liberty. You have your senators, representatives, your policymakers who have so much power that can help us make a difference. We need to build up political will. We need to educate them. And then probably you might say, ‘Well, I don’t know enough.’ Ok, well I understand. I don’t know enough, either. I always feel like I never know enough! But remember, no matter what we say here, no matter what we advocate for, we can still go back to bed at night and sleep peacefully. I know people in Burma are not having this luxury. Next time they’re killed, they’re beheaded, they’re put in jail... just because they are fighting for freedom, they are fighting for their rights and the rights of the people, the civilians of Burma.”

Check out the Insight Myanmar podcast here: <https://insightmyanmar.org/complete-shows/2023/8/31/episode-191-resisting-until-victory>



Myra Dahgappaw speaking at a Burma support event in the USA.



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