

ON THE GROUND IN MYANMAR

mizzima WEEKLY

Analysis & Insight



CRIME & PUNISHMENT

IIMM seeks to bring the Myanmar military to book for 'crimes against humanity'

Clashes break out near Myanmar military regional command in Lashio

China is getting hysterical as its economy is faltering

mizzima WEEKLY

Analysis & Insight



DIGITAL MAGAZINE

Our relaunched magazine Mizzima Weekly provides readers with a more focused read on what matters in Myanmar and the wider region, with an emphasis on analysis, insight and providing key talking points.

MYANMAR WOMEN, GIRLS AND LGBT PEOPLE NEED SUPPORT

Tom Andrews, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, has made a strident call in a new report entitled: "Courage amid Crisis: Gendered impacts of the coup and the pursuit of gender equality in Myanmar".

The military coup was a devastating setback for gender equality in Myanmar and has left women, girls, and LGBT people acutely vulnerable to discrimination, violence, and exploitation, according to the report published on 2 July.

The publication describes the terrible toll that human rights violations by the military junta have had on women, girls, and LGBT people. The report also highlights the role of women at the forefront of the revolutionary movement, to embed equality, justice, and non-discrimination into the foundation of a future democratic state.

The Special Rapporteur said the international community must step up support for women, girls, and LGBT people in Myanmar by working with local civil society organisations on delivery of humanitarian aid tailored to the needs of the most vulnerable and funding programmes for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. He urged governments and donors to work with emerging governance structures, ethnic resistance organisations, and civil society to ensure accountability for crimes against women, girls, and LGBT people.

The rights expert said the threat of sexual and gender-based violence is a dark shadow that follows women, girls, and LGBT people in Myanmar. Cruelty and dehumanisation are the defining features of widespread sexual violence perpetrated by junta forces in conflict zones, at check points and in places of detention.

"The junta has carried out a coordinated campaign to dismantle organisations and networks that support women, girls, and LGBT people. These advocates contend with the constant threat of arrest and imprisonment, leading some to continue their work from exile. Vicious online harassment campaigns target women and LGBT leaders with

violent and sexualised threats."

The report describes threats to the economic, social, and cultural rights of women, girls, and LGBT people, including loss of economic independence, shrinking access to education and health care, and impacts of protracted displacement.

"In cities, villages, and displacement sites across the country, women are shouldering their families' burdens. They are skipping meals so their children can eat, taking on new duties in the household, and struggling to keep their families safe in violent and chaotic environments. Facing these challenges, many women and girls are turning to negative coping strategies and are vulnerable to gendered protection concerns, including trafficking, sexual exploitation and early marriage," Andrews said.

The report also highlights the dire situation of Rohingya women and girls, who face intersecting layers of discrimination and grave security risks due to the systematic denial of citizenship and basic human rights, as well as discriminatory beliefs and practices within their own community.

"Facing grave risks and persistent discrimination, women and LGBT leaders refuse to be silenced. They are claiming roles in revolutionary governance structures, tirelessly advocating for meaningful political participation, and bravely developing accountability measures to hold all perpetrators of sexual and gender-based violence to account. Women-led civil society organisations have been the backbone of local humanitarian relief efforts," he said.

"I am inspired by the courage, resilience, and tenacity of women and LGBT leaders, who are advancing a revolution within the revolution, one that seeks to upend patriarchal hierarchies and guarantee gender equality for future generations. The international community must empower them now with the support they need and deserve," Andrews said.

EDITORIAL

mizzima WEEKLY

Managing Director and Editor In-Chief
Soe Myint

Managing Editor
Thaw Zin Tun

Network Engineer
Wai Min Han

Video and Graphics Editor
Wai Yan Shein Zaw

General Manager
No No Lin

Mizzima Weekly is published by
Mizzima s.r.o

Address:
Salvatorska 931/8,
Stare Mesto, 11000,
Praha 1, Czech Republic

Contact email:
sm@mizzima.com

Phone/Signal/WhatsApp
+420 608 616688

CONTENTS **mizzima** WEEKLY

Analysis & Insight

3 EDITORIAL

6 CRIME AND PUNISHMENT IIMM
seeks to bring the Myanmar military to book for 'crimes against humanity'

12 ON THE GROUND IN MYANMAR
Analysis & Insight

16 CORE DEVELOPMENTS
UN expert warns of looming 'genocidal violence' in Myanmar

17 'Can't go back': Myanmar
conscription exiles struggle in Thailand

19 17 political prisoners died in Myanmar jails in first six months of 2024

20 Defence forces seize eight junta bases in Madya Township, Mandalay Region

21 Insecurity Insight records 12 attacks on Myanmar healthcare from 12-25 June

23 Junta's election commission refuses to register Arakan National Party

24 Clashes break out near Myanmar military regional command in Lashio



- 25** US Congressman introduces legislation to protect the people of Burma, strengthen sanctions against junta
- 26** Melinda Good appointed World Bank Country Director for Thailand and Myanmar
- 28** Japan supermarket chain director arrested in Myanmar for price gouging
- 29 INDIA-MYANMAR AFFAIRS**
Question as to whether India should review its Myanmar policy in light of humanitarian crisis
- 31 MEDIA**
BNI condemns five-year prison sentence for DMG reporter and staff member
- 32 CULTURE**
'Fashion power': Zarny, the Myanmar refugee turned Tokyo designer

- 34 ASIAN & INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**
China is getting hysterical as its economy is faltering
- 36** EU slaps Chinese electric cars with tariffs of up to 38%
- 38** Five key takeaways from the UK general election
- 41 COLUMNS**
INSIGHT MYANMAR – Barry Lapping delves into Buddhist meditation
- 42 JUNTA WATCH**
- 43 SOCIAL WATCH**

Cover photo of Rohingya refugees fleeing Myanmar in 2017 by AFP





EXILED: Rohingya children in a refugee camp in Bangladesh. Photo: AFP

CRIME & PUNISHMENT

IIMM SEEKS TO BRING THE MYANMAR
MILITARY TO BOOK FOR 'CRIMES
AGAINST HUMANITY'

Nicholas Koumjian, the head of the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM), has a tough job on his hands.

“This is an investigation. We are supposed to gather evidence to share it with courts that could be willing and able to exercise jurisdiction over the crimes in Myanmar,” he tells Insight Myanmar for their podcast that aims to discuss his role, as well as the ongoing effort of his team as the conflict in Myanmar rages on.

DISTINGUISHED CAREER

Koumjian brings a distinguished history of over 23 years working as a prosecutor in a variety of international courts. He was: involved with the International Criminal Tribunal (ICT) in the Yugoslav tribunal; the Deputy General Prosecutor in charge of the Serious Crimes Unit in East Timor; at the state court in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the war crimes chamber; stationed in Kyiv, Ukraine, on a regional anti-corruption program; head a human rights program in Bogota, Colombia;

with the Special Court for Sierra Leone in the trial of President Charles Taylor; and finally, the international co-prosecutor at the Khmer Rouge tribunal in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

Created by the Human Rights Council, IIMM’s mandate is to collect, print, analyze, and preserve data related to serious crimes that have been committed both in Myanmar as well as along the borders. The evidence is then shared with national, regional and international courts in order to promote accountability of what is happening in Myanmar. Their specific mandate involves overseeing documentation related to serious crimes that have been committed both in Myanmar as well as along the borders.

STEEP CHALLENGE

Koumjian’s current posting poses unique challenges that depart from his past work. “This is the seventh international court or mechanism involving international crimes that I have worked in,” he says.



NO FUTURE: Rohingya children, referred to as a “lost generation”. Photo: AFP

“And frankly, none of those faced the information technology challenges that we have now. This is an ongoing conflict. It is [also] very modern [in its use of social media]. Even in 2017, in the clearance operations, we got thousands of videos because the victims, the Rohingya, were able to take their phone and videotape villages burned and dead bodies floating in the river. Another challenge for us is the textual information we have in various languages, usually Burmese.”

Because there are few Burmese speakers on the IIMM staff, it makes it especially challenging to go over the literally millions of pieces of evidence that they have collected—to date, they have amassed over 28 million! For this reason, IIMM has been building a state-of-the-art, IT system capable of organizing and analyzing the vast amounts of evidence. One especially important feature they hope to incorporate includes a kind of search function that can sift through the many variations of Burmese texts, which appear in a number of different fonts and in handwriting, and find a way to translate it as well.

IIMM’s task is made even more challenging by the fact that they do not have anyone on the ground who is actually inside Myanmar. Instead, they interface

with many different individuals and organizations both inside and outside the country who voluntarily collect and share information, which is then meticulously vetted to the degree possible given the circumstances. Eyewitness testimonies are particularly important pieces of evidence; it can take several days of conversation to make sure that a correct accounting of what the witness actually saw and heard is recorded. Social media posts, aerial photographs showing the burnings and destruction of villages, and other forms of documentation are also valuable. “Certainly, what we want and what we are striving [for] is that the evidence that we collect is used,” he explains. “We do not want it sitting there unused. When we believe that there is a good opportunity for the evidence to be used, we would try to seek ways in order to encourage that use.” Koumjian also touches upon the balance between keeping IIMM data private to ensure confidentiality, and releasing some into the public space so that more people can be made aware of their ongoing work.

NO PROSECUTORIAL MANDATE

IIMM does not have a prosecutorial mandate. “We are not a court,” Koumjian explains. “We cannot arrest anyone or charge anyone. We have to deal with



Local youths on the rampage in Rakhine, burning down Rohingya houses, in 2017. Photo: AFP

other courts that have that jurisdiction and are willing to exercise it." They are charged with investigating alleged crimes that can be traced all the way back to 2011, and in doing so, have found that the atrocities heaped on the Rohingya follow a clear pattern that is consistent with how the military has operated in other conflicts, particularly in Kachin, Chin, and Shan states; Koumjian here makes mention of the notorious "Four Cuts" strategy.

THREE MAIN CASES

IIMM is currently assisting in three major legal processes regarding the Rohingya. The first involves the case that Gambia has brought forward at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), which addresses whether Myanmar has violated the Genocide Convention. Some of the most important pieces of evidence includes hate speech that appeared on Facebook: during the critical period from July to December 2017, when hundreds of thousands of Rohingya were fleeing Myanmar, IIMM documented over 800,000 instances of the Myanmar military actively promoting enmity and inciting violence against the Rohingya, spread over 43 Facebook accounts.

What is more, using keyword searches, 10,000 posts fit the IIMM definition of hate speech. "The findings of this report tie to Facebook accounts controlled by the Myanmar military," he says. "This is a very significant conclusion, particularly for the proceedings at the International Court of Justice, because that's a case about state responsibility, not individuals." This evidence is vital for the ICJ, which examines whether Myanmar took all reasonable actions to prevent and punish acts of genocide. For Koumjian, it is essential to ensure that the judges at the ICJ have access to the most comprehensive and accurate evidence, thereby enhancing the prospects for justice and accountability for the atrocities committed against the Rohingya.

Koumjian next addresses a case in front of the International Criminal Court (ICC). A challenge has been that Myanmar is not a signatory to the Rome Statute (a topic taken up in previous episodes with Isabel Todd, Matthew Wells, Peter Morris, and Hunter Marsten), which means that the case would not normally fall within the ICC's jurisdiction, as it is confined to crimes committed within the territories of signatory states and/or by their nationals. However, an exception was made in this case because Bangladesh, which is a signatory state, was directly affected by the mass exodus of



Rohingya fleeing Myanmar. The prosecutor argued that the crime of forced deportation, which involves crossing an international border, occurred partly on the territory of Bangladesh. The pre-trial chamber of the ICC accepted this argument, allowing the investigation to proceed. This investigation encompasses events leading up to and including the forced deportation of the Rohingya from Rakhine State to Bangladesh. "It's very active," Koumjian says, "and we are cooperating with that. Our teams are in weekly contact. It's important for people in Myanmar not to give up hope, because there are many situations in the world that don't have any such processes going on. But now for Myanmar, there are three ongoing processes!"

The third concerns the Argentine Federal District Court's involvement in the Rohingya crisis. A petition to take up this case was made by some victims of clearance operations in 2016-2017 in Myanmar who at the time of the petition were living in the UK and Bangladesh. Initially, the lower court in Argentina declined to take up the case due to a lack of connection to Argentina. However, upon appeal, the court reversed its decision. The appellate chamber—with a supporting letter from the IIMM explaining their mandate and expressing willingness to share evidence with the Argentine process—agreed with the contention that the case involved crimes against humanity and under the Argentine constitution, required investigation despite the lack of direct ties to Argentina. This broad exercise of jurisdiction is influenced by Argentina's history during its "Dirty War," where many felt the world turned a blind eye to their suffering and now seek to prevent similar complacency. "It's extremely difficult to investigate a crime halfway around the world in a different language than spoken in your country," says Koumjian. "But they started that we were available to help, and we have been helping them since then."

POST COUP RESPONSIBILITIES

IIMM was already overwhelmed with its existing responsibilities when the Burmese military launched a coup in 2021. Koumjian explains that initially, it was not something that fell within their jurisdiction. "We said that the coup, itself, is not within our mandate, because it did not fit the subject matter of our jurisdiction [which] is international crimes, defined in our terms of reference as war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. [But then] about six weeks into the post-coup [period], the regime started to use lethal violence against demonstrators in different places. At the same time,

we also saw systematic targeting of specific groups of individuals, such as journalists, healthcare workers, and NLD supporters. So based upon that preliminary evidence, we felt that our mandate was involved as it fit on the subject matter [of international crimes]." This dramatically altered the trajectory of their work. "Since the coup, we have been collecting evidence of crimes that are ongoing in Myanmar," he says. "There has been so much violence post-coup that this is taking up a great deal of our time and efforts." At that point, their team divided into two: one group continued to look into and share evidence with the three ongoing international justice processes regarding the Rohingya genocide, and a second gathered data about everything else that was relevant, including the post-coup atrocities.

A growing concern has been a number of aerial bombings that seem to have no clear military target. Deliberately bombing a target of no military value, or if civilian casualties would knowingly exceed a target's military value, are war crimes. However, it is not just the military they are looking into, but the actions of all armed groups involved in the conflict. Koumjian explains that they focus on "command responsibility": how those with authority take—or not—all necessary and reasonable measures to prevent or punish conflict-related crimes. "Our mandate is not limited to the Myanmar military, and unfortunately, it is not only the Myanmar military that is committing crimes," he says. "Our message to any armed group out there committing crimes, or assassinations of non-combatants, is that we are watching. We will do everything possible to see that there is accountability, and that those responsible for crimes are held to account."

OTHER ATTEMPTS

Koumjian adds that there have been several attempts by other countries to hold Burmese leaders accountable for their actions. For example, in Germany, a complaint was filed against Myanmar's military officials; however, the German prosecutor chose not to open an investigation, citing the lack of a direct connection to Germany...even though this connection is not strictly required under German law. In Turkey and the Philippines, similar complaints have been filed, but as of now, there have been no decisions regarding these cases, and their outcomes remain uncertain.

"If you do not prosecute them, you get more of these crimes occurring," Koumjian says in closing. "We

hope that we do act as a deterrent force. Part of our mandate is to preserve evidence because we know that international justice can be a very slow process... But still, it is clearly very important. It's so much better than having no justice! It's very important to establish that historical record. Very important that young people in that country learn more and understand better about what actually happened before they were born, but not that long ago, and that affected their parents, and grandparents, so that they understand them better, and so that it never happens again. And so that is what we hope to be contributing to in our work in Myanmar. We can break the cycle of impunity that has led to such crimes happen over and over again in Myanmar's history."

REQUEST FROM IIMM

We also share the following message directly from the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar:

The IIMM encourages anyone who has information about serious crimes committed in Myanmar to contact the Mechanism through its secure and confidential

channels. The testimonies of witnesses and survivors of crimes are vital for the Mechanism's work to build criminal cases against perpetrators. Equally important are people with knowledge of illegal orders or policies. The Mechanism welcomes any type of information in any language, and it does not need to be sent in a specific format or template.

For any confidential and sensitive communications or sharing of information, please either: a) download the Signal app to set up a Signal account and send the Mechanism a secure message via Signal at +41(0)76 691 12 08; or b) create a Proton Mail account and contact the Mechanism via Proton Mail at contact@myanmar-mechanism.org. For additional information on sharing information securely and confidentially, please visit the IIMM website.

CHECK OUT THE PODCAST

Here is the link to the Insight Myanmar Podcast:

<https://player.captivate.fm/episode/2c8de3e7-1805-4031-af4a-49b435b86b00>

mizzima WEEKLY

Analysis & Insight



**3 month
Subscription
for 12 Issues
\$9 USD**

Our relaunch of Mizzima Weekly will provide readers with a more focused read on what matters in Myanmar and the wider region, with an emphasis on analysis, insight and providing key talking points.

- COVER STORY
- ANALYSIS & INSIGHT
- CORE DEVELOPMENTS
- ASIAN & INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
- WEEKLY COLUMNS

Click here to get 3 months Free Subscription!

[SUBSCRIBE](#)



TNLA fighters in action in northern Shan State. Photo: AFP

'SECOND WAVE' OF OPERATION 1027 RATTLES MYANMAR JUNTA

Under the banner of the "Second Wave" of the Three Brotherhood Alliance's Operation 1027, the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) renewed attacks on Myanmar junta positions in northern Myanmar at the beginning of this month.

Starting on 2 July, the TNLA has seized a total of 31 posts of the State Administration Council (SAC) across six townships. These include Nawngkhio, Kyaukme, Mongmit, and Hsipaw in Northern Shan State, as well as Mogok and Madaya from the Mandalay region. The seized posts included strategic positions, battalion headquarters, police stations, checkpoints, and frontline outposts.

During a week-long operation in Mogok urban area, the TNLA successfully seized 15 prisoners of war (POWs) and 43 weapons and ammunition from junta troops. On the sixth day of the operation, the TNLA

occupied the western part of Mogok Town by taking control of a strategic post and important posts held by the junta forces. This victory, however, came at the cost of several TNLA soldiers' lives.

A significant clash between the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) and SAC forces erupted on June 29 in Lashio, the site of the junta's Northeastern Military Command. The confrontation took place 16 miles from Lashio City, with battalions from Lashio providing artillery support. The battle between them intensified on July 2 in the areas surrounding Lashio. As of July 3, all flights to and from Lashio airport were reported to have been suspended.

The conflict has had severe consequences for civilians, with SAC airstrikes resulting in at least 22 deaths and around 30 injuries among civilians over the past week in Northern Shan State. On June 27,

social aid organizations reported collecting 21 bodies in Kyaukme township, with only two being civilians and the rest SAC troops. A junta airstrike on June 30 targeted a hotel in Kyaukme town, misinformed to be hosting TNLA troops. It contained no TNLA personnel. The junta's reckless firing of multiple rockets led to one missile hitting a civilian house, killing five members of a Kachin family and one student relative.

In the other part of the "Second Wave" operation, the Mandalay People's Defense Force (MDY-PDF) seized the No. (1014) Air Defence Battalion on June 25 with support from the TNLA in Madaya Township. Additionally, the MDY-PDF captured a strategic post on a dominant hill just 19 miles or a 50-minute drive from the heart of Mandalay, where the junta's Central Command is located. This proximity to Mandalay has raised concerns among residents about the potential for urban warfare.

FIGHTING INTENSIFIES IN KACHIN STATE

Fighting has intensified in Kachin State, though recent heavy rain and flooding has hampered some militant activity.

On June 24, the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and allied forces successfully seized three strategic posts in the Indawgyi region. These posts, located along the critical road connecting the Indawgyi and Hpakant regions, were captured following an offensive that began on June 22. The capture of this 20-mile-

long road allows the KIA to control access to Hpakant and use it as a strategic point to penetrate the Monyin plain. Currently, the KIA controls the west bank area of Indawgyi Lake.

In a separate development, a fierce battle erupted between junta troops and KIA-led revolutionary forces near Sengtawng village. On June 26, KIA forces used drones to drop bombs on the Hpakant police battalion during a meeting. This attack resulted in the deaths of a police battalion commander and nine of his associates, while six others were wounded. The recent skirmishes indicate that the KIA is aiming to establish control over the Hpakant area, known for its valuable jade.

In the eastern part of the state, skirmishes between the junta and KIA also intensified since the third week of May. KIA-led forces have seized the junta's No. (321) Light Infantry Battalion, leading to intensified clashes around Waingmaw and Myitkyina, where the SAC's Northern Command headquarters is situated. Skirmishes around Waingmaw continued until June 30, when rising water levels in the Irrawaddy river temporarily halted the fighting.

NEW CONSCRIPTS 'SENT TO THE FRONTLINES'

Newly-conscripted soldiers in Myanmar are reportedly being sent to the frontlines immediately after completing basic military training, often without their families' knowledge. Families usually discover their sons' deployment only when contacted by them



en route to their destinations using random phones.

Initially, the SAC authorities assured recruits and their families that the soldiers would be posted according to their preferences or within their respective regiments.

However, after just over a month of military training, conscripts from the Ayeyarwady Region, under the command of the Southwestern Command, were dispatched to the Rakhine frontlines, where junta troops have been facing significant defeats. Over 100 new soldiers were sent to Rakhine State on June 28.

An anonymous military source confirmed to a local media outlet that the new soldiers would be sent to military commands that are currently facing defeat on the frontline. The SAC has issued secret instructions to relevant military training centres to send the new soldiers to commands that are experiencing a manpower shortage.

Amid the intensifying conflict, the Arakan Army (AA) is making significant advances into the northern Rakhine town of Maungdaw, seizing the town's outer posts from SAC control. As a result, recently conscripted Rohingya soldiers – fighting for the junta – have been left in a precarious situation. Some have surrendered to the AA, while others have fled to border areas to escape the conflict.

CHOLERA OUTBREAK REPORTED IN YANGON

A significant increase in the number of patients suspected of being infected with cholera has been

reported in several townships within the Yangon Region, according to reports from social assistance organizations, local people, and doctors, as well as a junta spokesman.

Six people in Yangon have tested positive for cholera, the junta spokesman said on Saturday, adding it had ordered the temporary closure of restaurants in the area. Nine people living in a “squatter ward” in the commercial hub of Yangon were hospitalised for severe diarrhoea and one later tested positive for cholera, according to spokesman Zaw Min Tun.

An official from a social aid association in Thaketa Township reported that one person has died from cholera, a disease that causes severe diarrhea and dehydration. Over 40 cases have been reported in Anawmar (1) ward and more than 10 in Htuparyone ward, both in Thaketa Township in 5 July.

Additional cases have been reported in Dawbon, Botahdaung, Pazundaung, and North Okkalapa Townships.

“We are working on the planning and treatment process. The infection is not yet too fast,” said an official from a social assistance association in Thaketa Township.

On 5 July, the Yangon Region Department of Medical Services issued a directive to private general hospitals and outpatient clinics, instructing them to transfer patients suspected of severe cholera to Wai Bar Gi General Hospital in North Okkalapa Township, Yangon.



Photo: Hush Naido Jade Photography

“To identify cholera suspected patients, the patient’s stool samples will be sent to the National Health Laboratory. If the diagnosis is confirmed as cholera, the patients must be transferred to Wai Bar Gi General Hospital, the designated facility for controlling infectious diseases,” said a CDM doctor.

A doctor from a private hospital said that cases of diarrhea are on the rise, with patients being admitted to various hospitals, including Yangon General Hospital.

“My father is infected, but private hospitals are refusing to admit him. We had to send him to the public hospital, which is already overcrowded,” said a woman from Yangon.

A CDM doctor explained that diarrhea can be caused by consuming unclean food, drinking contaminated water, and eating undercooked meat and fish. Poor personal hygiene, such as inadequate hand washing, can also contribute to the spread of the condition.

“A severe and rapidly contagious diarrheal disease is currently spreading. You can distinguish between ordinary severe diarrhea and cholera by the colour and consistency of the stool. Cholera stools often appear different from normal stool; they are not clear like water and have a distinct fishy smell. If you notice these symptoms, it’s best to go to the nearest health centre,” said the doctor.

An official from a pharmaceutical company reported a rise in the incidence of diarrhea, leading to increased demand for related medications. This surge in demand has caused shortages and price hikes in the market for these drugs.

People who come into contact with victims of severe diarrheal disease can protect themselves by wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) or Level 2 protective clothing.

Rumours suggest that multiple deaths due to cholera have occurred in Yangon, but these reports have not been independently confirmed by Mizzima.

Social media reports claim that the current diarrheal disease is cholera, but the Ministry of Health under the Military Council has not yet confirmed these claims.

TOP MIZZIMA BURMESE VIDEOS

Please find the most popular Mizzima Burmese videos over the last week below:

Where is Aung Zeya of the Military Council?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ib_uP_Rtj4

The election of the military council and the census. Common Ground: Episode (48)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0-TNuRYDukg>

Second wave of 1027 leading to war council

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hL1JJC3JBik>



စစ်ကောင်စီရဲ့
အောင်လေးယု
ဘယ်ရောက်နေလဲ



Danger of genocide? Photo: AFP

UN EXPERT WARNS OF LOOMING 'GENOCIDAL VIOLENCE' IN MYANMAR

Myanmar's Rakhine State is facing a terrifying situation similar to the run up to "genocidal violence" eight years ago against the persecuted Rohingya minority, a UN expert warned Thursday.

Speaking at the United Nations Human Rights Council, Thomas Andrews, the special rapporteur on the situation in Myanmar, voiced deep alarm at recent events in the western region.

"The situation in Rakhine State, where the junta is rapidly losing territory to the Arakan Army, is terrifying," Andrews said.

"For Rohingya people -- oppressed, scapegoated, exploited, and stuck between warring parties -- the situation carries echoes of the lead-up to genocidal violence in 2016 and 2017."

Clashes have rocked Rakhine State since the Arakan Army (AA) attacked security forces in November.

That ended a ceasefire that had largely held since a military coup in 2021 after a short-lived experiment with democracy.

AA fighters have seized swathes of territory, piling pressure on the junta as it battles opponents elsewhere.

Andrews, an independent expert appointed by the rights council who does not speak on behalf of the UN, said the military had been conscripting "thousands

of Rohingya youth and mobilising them against the Arakan Army".

"Even though many Rohingya young men have been taken to the front lines of the conflict against their will, the potential for retaliation by members of the Arakan community, and a downward spiral of violence, is enormous," he cautioned.

Andrews said there were reports linking AA soldiers to rights violations against Rohingya civilians, at a time when the humanitarian situation for both Rohingya and Rakhine people was "extremely dire".

He said "tens, if not hundreds of thousands, have been displaced in Rakhine State".

In May, the AA said it had seized the town of Buthidaung in northern Rakhine, home to many Rohingya Muslims.

Several Rohingya diaspora groups later accused the AA of forcing Rohingya to flee and then looting and burning their homes -- claims the AA called "propaganda".

The AA, which says it is fighting for autonomy for the state's ethnic Rakhine population, has vowed to capture the whole of the state.

AFP



Khaing hides out in Thailand.
Photo: AFP

'CAN'T GO BACK': MYANMAR MILITARY CONSCRIPTION EXILES STRUGGLE IN THAILAND

When Myanmar's junta announced a conscription law to help crush a popular pro-democracy uprising, Khaing knew there was only one way to escape its clutches, and began planning her escape.

Weeks later the former teacher was hidden in a smuggler's van heading into Thailand with little more than some clothes, cash and an ID card, not knowing when she would be able to return.

Now scraping a living in Bangkok without papers, Khaing worries constantly about a tap on the shoulder by Thai police and deportation back to the junta.

She is one of tens of thousands of young people rights groups estimate have fled Myanmar since the military introduced conscription in February to shore up its depleted ranks.

The junta is battling widespread armed opposition

to its 2021 coup and its soldiers are accused of bloody rampages and using air and artillery strikes to punish civilian communities.

It says it wants to enlist 50,000 people aged between 18-35 a month, but details on how they will be chosen, and where and how they will serve are vague.

Media reports of young men being dragged off the streets and into the army -- which the military denies -- have further added to the panic.

"The conscription law means we have to kill each other," said Wai Yan, 26, from eastern Karen state, who crossed into Thailand in May.

"We are not fighting a war against foreign enemies," he said from the Bangkok restaurant where he also works without documents.

"We are fighting each other."

SMUGGLED FOR \$220

Shortly after enacting the law, the junta tightened requirements for people crossing Myanmar's land borders, and temporarily halted issuing foreign work permits for young men.

Yangon-based film critic Ngwe Yan Thun, a pseudonym, said he had "no choice" but to leave illegally.

Through friends he contacted a "broker" who said he could be smuggled over the border into Thailand for around \$220.

Ngwe Yan Thun sold off all of his belongings, arranged for friends to look after his dog and bought an air ticket to Tachileik on the Thai border.

At the airport, he had to pay "tea money" to officials at the airport who were suspicious of why he was travelling to the remote provincial town.

He was dropped at a safehouse near the border where around 30 others were waiting to be taken into Thailand.

Then, at short notice, he was crammed into a car with eleven others and they set off.

"I didn't feel like a human being, I felt like I was black market goods," Ngwe Yan Thun said from Thailand's Chiang Mai.

'AM I IN MYANMAR?'

Thailand has long been home to a sizeable Myanmar community, with a bustling market in Bangkok and towns along the border.

The conflict has made it difficult to conduct surveys or verify how many young people had fled abroad to escape conscription, said an official from the International Labour Organization.

But, the organisation said had received estimates from ground sources that suggested "hundreds of thousands" had fled the law.

Wai Yan said he was surprised at how many people from Myanmar were in Thailand.

"I even joke with my friends 'Am I still in Myanmar?'"

'CRIED EVERY DAY'

After arriving in Bangkok, Khaing was unable to reach her parents as fighting around her home village cut internet and mobile networks.

"I was worried about getting caught by the Thai police. So, I didn't dare to go outside when I arrived," she told AFP.

"I cried every day in my first month here."

She found part-time work at a friend's shop and returns in the evenings to her sparse room where she sells medicine and beauty products on TikTok.

A large teddy bear gifted to her by a friend who knew she was feeling lonely takes up much of the bed.

The first batch of conscripts finished their training and would soon be sent to their posts, state media reported last week, as fighting rages in the west and north of the country.

Ngwe Yan Thun is grateful he is far away, but is kept up at night wondering what to do next.

"I think about what I should do if I don't get a job and official documents to stay," he said.

"I can't go back to Myanmar. I feel overwhelmed by thoughts and worries all the time."

AFP



Insein Prison. Photo: AFP

17 POLITICAL PRISONERS DIED IN MYANMAR JAILS IN FIRST SIX MONTHS OF 2024

At least 17 political prisoners died in prisons across Myanmar from January to June 2024 according to the Political Prisoners Network Myanmar (PPNM).

According to PPNM, eight of the deaths resulted from insufficient medical care provided inside the prisons. The remaining nine prisoners died because they were not transferred to hospitals outside the prisons in a timely manner, after being tortured by prison staff.

PPNM said that these figures highlight the dire conditions and inadequate medical care in Myanmar's prisons.

Thaik Tun Oo, a member of the PPNM Steering Committee said: "The prison authorities said the political detainees died of heart illness. Some of them may not have had serious diseases but they may have had high body temperatures and died as a result of not receiving prompt medical attention. Some died as a result of not being transferred to outside hospitals."

For this report, PPNM monitored 38 Myanmar jails housing political prisoners. It said that it faced challenges in gathering information, particularly in areas where military tensions were escalating.

Thaik Tun Oo said that he was deeply concerned about the deteriorating conditions in prisons and prison hospitals and said that they are increasingly perceived as places of oppression and death rather than facilities for temporary detention and rehabilitation.

Though the law states that inmates must receive appropriate medical treatment prisoners say that the only treatment they are ever offered in hospital is paracetamol.

Aiming to raise awareness and prevent future deaths among political prisoners due to inadequate medical care, PPNM held its 7th Online Photo Campaign called "Open lives, don't close them" on 1 July. It also called on prisons to maintain sufficient stocks of medicines and for prison authorities to allow inmates to receive foreign medication sent to them by their families.

PPNM has also called for the immediate implementation of measures that provide proper medical care to sick and injured inmates and expedite the transfer of critically ill prisoners to hospitals outside prisons.

PPNM said that these revelations underscore the urgent need for reforms in the treatment of political prisoners and the provision of adequate healthcare to ensure prisoners' well-being.



Photo: MDY-PDF

DEFENCE FORCES SEIZE EIGHT JUNTA BASES IN MADYA TOWNSHIP, MANDALAY REGION

Local defence forces seized eight junta army bases in Madya Township, Mandalay Region and confiscated 125 weapons and ammunition, between 25 June and 2 July 2024.

The bases were captured as part of the Shan-Mann Operation, which began on 25 June, according to a statement by the Mandalay People’s Defence Force (MDY-PDF), one of the defence forces involved in capturing the bases.

It said that during the taking of the eight bases 64 junta soldiers surrendered and that 117 other people caught up in the fighting, including army family members, women, the elderly, and children are currently being looked after by the defence forces.

“We seized a lot of enemy corpses from the camps. 64 soldiers were captured alive from those eight camps”, said Ormond, a MDY-PDF spokesperson.

A member of MDY-PDF said, “We are fighting together with local resistance forces, including the Madaya Myo Hman local resistance force and the Security and Special Task force (SSTF). I will not speak about future plans for the revolution, I just tell people to look forward to victory.”

MDY-PDF named the captured camps as: the (1014) Ingyin Myaing Military Council Air Defence Camp, the Sel Taw Military Camp, the Pan Thale Taung Military Camp, the Ye Soe Taung Camp, the Nay Kyaw Taung Camp, the Shwe Pu Htoe Camp, the Kyauk Khalote Camp, and the Myay Ni Taung Camp.

MDY-PDF, in collaboration with the Ta’ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), has been attacking military targets in Nawnghkio, Kyaukme, and Mogok townships in Shan State and Madaya Township in Mandalay Region.



Bomb-damaged clinic.
Photo: Supplied

INSECURITY INSIGHT RECORDS 12 ATTACKS ON MYANMAR HEALTHCARE FROM 12-25 JUNE

Data aggregation organisation Insecurity Insight has collated a list of 12 recorded attacks on Myanmar healthcare facilities from 12-25 June 2024.

Below is a list of the incidents recorded by Insecurity Insight.

13 June 2024: In Ye-U Town, Township and district, Sagaing Region, a traditional medicine hospital occupied by the Myanmar military was attacked with drop-bombs by the PDF using armed fixed-wing drones. Three soldiers were reportedly killed. Source: Khit Thit Media

13 and 14 June 2024: In Kyaiko Town and township, Thaton District, Mon State, five health LNGO (Local non-governmental organisation) volunteer aid workers and three civilian men were arrested by the junta police

force on accusations of links to the PDF. Sources: Karen Information Centre and Radio Free Asia

14 June 2024: Near Aung Thar Wa Ra Village, Thin Baw U Village Tract, Tanintharyi Township, Myeik District, Tanintharyi Region, a makeshift hospital and two buildings of the ethnic armed group Karen National Defence Organisation (KNDO) were damaged and a female nurse and a woman killed by bombs dropped by a Myanmar military fighter jet. The attack occurred following the take-over of a base camp of the Myanmar military camp by KNDO in the area. Sources: Dawei Watch, Karen Information Centre and Than Lwin Times

As reported on 17 June 2024: In Shwe Pyi Village and village tract, Singu Township, Thabeikkyin District, Mandalay Region, a sub-rural health centre was occupied by the Myanmar military. Source: Khit Thit Media

As reported on 17 June 2024: In Maungdaw Township and district, Rakhine State, about 600 Mro ethnic IDPs sheltering inside a Buddhist monastery and schools have been facing shortages of food and medical supplies. Due to the presence of both junta forces and the Arakan Army, aid workers are unable to rescue the IDPs because they do not know which conflict party is responsible for granting them permission to rescue the IDPs. Sources: Radio Free Asia I and Radio Free Asia II

As reported on 19 June 2024: In Madupi Town, township and district, Chin State, a township hospital was damaged by bombs dropped by Myanmar military fighter jets from 9-17 June, during the mission of Chin ethnic armed groups under the command 'Chin Brotherhood' to take over the base camps of Myanmar military battalions near the town. The hospital was functioning until the fighting broke out in this area. Sources: Khonumthung Burmese and Mandalay Free Press

21 June 2024: In Shwe Hlay Village and village tract, Thandwe Township and district, Rakhine State, a station hospital, a school, a monastery, and a police station were damaged by bombs dropped by a Myanmar military fighter jet. The hospital was functioning before the armed clashes between the Myanmar military and the Arakan Army in the area. Sources: Development Media Group, Dwarawaddy – Sandoway and Sittway Thu

22 June 2024: In Myingyan Town, township and district, Mandalay Region, an LNGO-owned ambulance was reportedly shot by the Myanmar military, injuring the ambulance driver and killing a 49-year-old monk onboard. The ambulance was on its way back from Myingyan Town to Sa Kha Ma Village, Myingyan Township after dropping off a patient. Sources: Khit Thit Media, People's Spring, and Voice of Myanmar

25 June 2024: In Nawngkhio Town and township, Kyaukme District, Shan State (North), a township hospital, a toll gate, a police station, a meteorological station, and a fire brigade office occupied by the Myanmar military were attacked and taken over by a joint force of the ethnic armed group the Ta'ang National Liberation Army and a PDF. The hospital was functioning at the time of the attack. Sources: Ayeyarwaddy Times, Myanmar Pressphoto Agency, Shan News and Telegram

25 June 2024: In Kyaukme Town, township and district, Shan state (North), a district hospital, the Myanmar military light field artillery battalion, and ten junta government offices were taken over by a joint force of an ethnic armed group Ta'ang National Liberation Army and the PDF. The hospital stopped functioning just before the heightened clashes. The offices were functioning at the time of the attack. Sources: Democratic Voice of Burma, Mandalay Free Press and Myanmar Pressphoto Agency

As reported on 25 June 2024: In Kyaukpyu Town, township, and district, Rakhine State, sales of medicines and consumables such as cotton, gauze, bandage, methylated spirit, and povidone-iodine by pharmacies and clinics were banned by the junta. The Myanmar military inspected pharmacies and clinics for holding the banned items; and if found, the items were confiscated. Source: Western News

25 June 2024: In Mogoke Town and township, Thabeikkyin District, Mandalay Region, an LNGO-owned ambulance was found with a large pool of blood and flat tyres; and three male LNGO volunteer aid workers who operated the ambulance missing. The ambulance operated a short-distance in-town trip on 25 June and safely dropped off the patient at the hospital. The damaged ambulance was found on the morning of 26 June. Sources: Democratic Voice of Burma and CJ Platform

Insecurity Insight documents attacks on health workers, facilities and patients for the Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition (SHCC), a group of international nongovernmental organisations working to protect health workers, services and infrastructure.



JUNTA'S ELECTION COMMISSION REFUSES TO REGISTER ARAKAN NATIONAL PARTY

The Arakan National Party (ANP), a prominent Rakhine State political party has had its application to become a registered political party denied by the Myanmar junta's Union Election Commission (UEC).

The UEC announced its decision on the evening of 1 July, citing non-compliance with Section 7 of the Political Parties Registration Law as its reason for rejecting the ANP's application.

The ANP had been trying to become registered under the new Political Parties Registration Law since March 2023.

There are several reasons why a political party may be denied registration, according to the junta. Parties can be rejected if they are deemed to: be unlawful, have been involved in insurgent or terrorist activities, have

misused state resources or received aid for political purposes.

U Khaing Pyi Soe, general secretary of the ANP said he was frustrated by the decision.

Following the introduction of the Political Parties Registration Law in January 2023 the junta dissolved 40 political parties, including the National League for Democracy (NLD), for failing to register under the law.

Currently, 49 political parties have successfully registered with the junta, while 80 have had their registrations cancelled, according to UEC statements.



Bomb-damaged house on outskirts of Lashio. Photo: Supplied

CLASHES BREAK OUT NEAR MYANMAR MILITARY REGIONAL COMMAND IN LASHIO

Clashes broke out near a regional military command in northern Myanmar on Wednesday last week, residents and local media said, in what appeared to be a widening offensive against junta troops.

Gunfire has rocked the northern Shan state town of Lashio, home to the military's northeastern command, since late Tuesday, one resident told AFP.

"Since last night we have been hearing shooting targeting the regional military command... we dare not to go outside," they said, requesting anonymity.

Fighting was happening outside the town, another resident told an AFP correspondent, who heard one explosion down the phone.

She said the military had closed all roads into Lashio but that some shops in the town were still open.

Videos uploaded to social media showed a wooden building destroyed and partly in flames, and local media reported six civilians had been killed in shelling.

Lashio sits on a major highway that runs from the second city of Mandalay to China's Yunnan province.

All flights to Lashio from commercial hub Yangon had been cancelled since Wednesday morning, an airport source in Yangon told AFP, without giving further details.

The so-called "Three Brotherhood Alliance" of ethnic armed groups launched an offensive last October against the military near Lashio and along the China border.

The alliance seized swaths of territory and lucrative border crossings, dealing the junta its biggest blow since it seized power in 2021.

China brokered a ceasefire between the military and the alliance in January -- made up of the Arakan Army (AA), the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) and the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA).

Late last month, the TNLA launched fresh attacks in Shan state and neighbouring Mandalay region.

"We three (members of the alliance) are together," TNLA General Tar Bhone Kyaw said when asked by AFP if the TNLA was involved in the fighting near Lashio.

He did not give further details.

AFP contacted an AA spokesman for comment, but was unable to reach the MNDAA or the junta.

Myanmar's borderlands are home to a myriad of ethnic armed groups, many of whom have battled the military since independence from Britain in 1948 over autonomy and control of lucrative resources.

AFP



Photo: AFP

US CONGRESSMAN INTRODUCES LEGISLATION TO PROTECT THE PEOPLE OF BURMA, STRENGTHEN SANCTIONS AGAINST JUNTA

US Congressman Bill Huizenga (R-MI) marked the launch of the first-ever bipartisan Congressional Burma Caucus Event at the end of June with the introduction of H.R. 8863, the BRAVE Burma Act.

According to a 1 July press release, this bill addresses the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Burma by cutting off the ruthless military junta from the revenue sources it uses to facilitate acts of genocide against the Burmese civilian population.

Joining Congressman Huizenga in introducing H.R. 8863 was fellow Burma Caucus co-chair Rep. Betty McCollum (D-MN) as well as Rep. Brad Sherman (D-CA) and Rep. Ann Wagner (R-MO).

“The United States can and must do more to protect the people of Burma and stop the genocide being committed by the military junta,” said Congressman Bill Huizenga. “This bipartisan bill moves to cut off the primary source of funding for the regime and diminish its ability to conduct horrific airstrikes on civilian populations.”

“On behalf of the Burmese community and its supporters in the constituency, I express our gratitude and welcome the establishment of the Congressional Burma Caucus. Through this caucus, we hope to spotlight the dire situation and the developing humanitarian crisis in Burma (Myanmar). We urge the United States to lead efforts in restoring democracy in Burma through more vigorous engagement facilitated by the Burma Caucus. The Burmese diaspora also hopes that the Burma Caucus will collaborate closely with Burmese advocacy groups who possess a deeper

understanding of the situation on the ground in Burma,” said Dr. Than N. Oo, Co-Chair, Burma Center of Battle Creek.

The BRAVE Burma Act requires the President to determine, on an annual basis, whether to impose stronger blocking sanctions on Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise, Myanmar Economic Bank, and foreign persons operating in the jet fuel sector of the Burmese economy.

Additionally, BRAVE Burma Act would require the Secretary of the Treasury to limit any increase in Myanmar’s influence at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as long as it is governed by the military junta. Not only will this prevent Myanmar from gaining in voting power, but it will also limit the junta’s ability to borrow from the IMF. Lastly, this bill appoints a Senate-approved Special Coordinator for Burmese Democracy at the Department of State. The goal of this position is to develop a comprehensive strategy for implementing the full range of US diplomatic capabilities to promote human rights and the restoration of a civilian government in Burma.

The Congressional Burma Caucus was established earlier this year on February 1, 2024 to coincide with the three-year anniversary of the military coup. This caucus was created to bolster congressional support for the Burmese people in their fight for democracy and human rights against the brutal military junta. Congressman Huizenga serves as the Republican Co-Chair of the Congressional Burma Caucus.



Photo: AFP

MELINDA GOOD APPOINTED WORLD BANK COUNTRY DIRECTOR FOR THAILAND AND MYANMAR

The World Bank appointed Melinda Good as its new Country Director for Thailand and Myanmar, on 1 July, 2024.

The World Bank said that Good's priority will be to oversee its programs in Thailand and Myanmar whilst continuing the institution's policy dialogues with civil society, academia, the private sector, and other partners.

The World Bank said that in Myanmar it remains committed to supporting the country and people of Myanmar in line with its Fragility, Conflict, and Violence (FCV) Strategy. Under Good's leadership, the focus will be on delivering comprehensive analytical work and providing strategic guidance to expand assistance to the poor and vulnerable.

Below is the World Bank's statement announcing Good's appointment:

The World Bank has appointed Melinda Good as its new Country Director for Thailand and Myanmar, effective July 1, 2024.

Her appointment comes at an important time for both countries.

Thailand is preparing to host the 2026 Annual Meetings of the World Bank Group and International Monetary Fund in Bangkok, and this year the World Bank also celebrates the 75th anniversary of Thailand's membership—a seven-decade partnership to improve social and economic development.

Myanmar's development story is complex, with significant reversals in recent years due to multiple and overlapping crises.

Good's priority will be to oversee the World Bank's programs in Thailand and Myanmar and continue the institution's policy dialogues with civil society, academia, the private sector, and other partners.

Her focus for Thailand will be implementation of a new Country Partnership Framework for fiscal years 2025-2029 that will serve as a blueprint for the World Bank's support for Thailand's transformation to a sustainable high-income economy. The CPF will be

CORE DEVELOPMENTS

aligned with the World Bank Group's mission to end extreme poverty and boost shared prosperity on a livable planet.

In Myanmar, the World Bank remains committed to supporting the country and people of Myanmar in line with its Fragility, Conflict, and Violence (FCV) Strategy. Under Good's leadership, the focus will be on delivering comprehensive analytical work and providing strategic guidance to expand assistance to the poor and vulnerable.

"I am honored to be taking on my new position as Country Director for Thailand and Myanmar and look forward to supporting the people of both countries navigate this complex global environment following the COVID-19 pandemic," Good said.

Good, a United States national, joined the World Bank in 2005 and has worked in several leadership positions, including in South Asia where she was Country Director for Afghanistan and Operations Manager in Pakistan. Before joining the World Bank, Good worked with the Asian Development Bank in the Philippines and the Millennium Challenge Corporation in Washington, D.C. She began her career as a private-sector lawyer in New York and Singapore. She has

worked in South Asia, East Asia, Central Asia, the Pacific Islands, and North America.

The World Bank's knowledge-based partnership with Thailand combines cutting-edge analytics and advisory services to support the country's development agenda. This includes support for the Bank's engagement in conflict-affected areas in the southernmost provinces, and improving Thailand's business environment, fiscal and economic management. With increasing pressure from climate change, the partnership also aims to build Thailand's climate resilience and water resource management. Several collaborations with Thailand's state agencies are also underway to assess the country's innovation policies, improve education quality, and develop resilient urban infrastructure in secondary cities.

In Myanmar, the World Bank is producing in-depth analytical work, building knowledge on the ground, and making it widely available through the World Bank Myanmar Monitoring Platform. In addition, the Bank supports Myanmar's vulnerable communities through the Myanmar Community Support Project (MCSP). The MCSP, implemented by the World Food Programme and the International Committee of the Red Cross, aims to enhance food security and livelihoods in crisis-affected regions.

mizzima WEEKLY

Analysis & Insight



**3 month
Subscription
for 12 Issues
\$9 USD**

Our relaunch of Mizzima Weekly will provide readers with a more focused read on what matters in Myanmar and the wider region, with an emphasis on analysis, insight and providing key talking points.

- COVER STORY
- ANALYSIS & INSIGHT
- CORE DEVELOPMENTS
- ASIAN & INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
- WEEKLY COLUMNS

**Click here to get 3 months
Free Subscription!**

SUBSCRIBE



Shop assistant in a supermarket.
Photo: AFP

JAPAN SUPERMARKET CHAIN DIRECTOR ARRESTED IN MYANMAR FOR PRICE GOUGING

Myanmar authorities have arrested a Japanese national working for retail giant Aeon for allegedly selling rice at artificially high prices, the junta said, with Tokyo demanding his immediate release.

Hiroshi Kasamatsu, director of Aeon Orange, which runs several supermarkets in Myanmar, was detained last week following an investigation into rice mills and supermarkets, the junta's information team said late Sunday.

Kasamatsu and three Myanmar nationals were suspected of breaching the reference price under the Essential Supplies And Services Law and "selling rice at higher price with the aim to make economic chaos", it said.

It did not give details on when Kasamatsu was arrested or where he was being detained.

"It is our understanding that the Japanese national in question is being interrogated at a police station in Yangon," Japanese government spokesman Yoshimasa Hayashi told reporters in Tokyo.

A lawyer had met with Kasamatsu on Sunday and told Japanese embassy officials "that there was nothing wrong with him in terms of health," he said.

"We... call on local authorities to release him immediately," Hayashi said.

AFP was unable to reach Japan's embassy in Yangon for comment.

A spokesperson for Aeon told AFP that Kasamatsu heads the commodity division of Aeon's local subsidiary in Myanmar.

The price of rice, a staple in Myanmar, has more than doubled in recent months, according to traders, with state media blaming the El Nino weather phenomenon and market hoarders.

Conflict between the military and opponents of its 2021 coup has also disrupted the planting, harvesting and transport of rice, analysts say.

Aeon Orange runs several supermarkets in commercial hub Yangon.

The three detained Myanmar nationals work for local retail companies.

AFP

QUESTION AS TO WHETHER INDIA SHOULD REVIEW ITS MYANMAR POLICY IN LIGHT OF HUMANITARIAN CRISIS



Delhi. Photo: Supplied

The Indian newspaper The Hindu last week interviewed two experts Rajiv Bhatia and Nandita Haksar on the Myanmar crisis and whether the Indian government should review its policy, given the humanitarian problems unfolding.

The interviews were carried out by Kallol Bhattacharjee on behalf of The Hindu.

Both experts stressed that India needs to make a “course correction”, raising questions about the status quo.

Nandita Haksar noted important changes on the ground that prompt a reappraisal. She said that since October 2023, the ethnic armed groups and the People’s Defence Forces (PDF) in Myanmar have been coordinated in their effort to resist the military junta. These groups have been fighting the junta for many years, but this is the first time that they have been coordinated and have been able to hold at least 45 per cent of the territory of Myanmar.

As a result of this, she noted that many people have called for a rethink of India’s policy and said that India must have some dialogue with these EAOs because of two reasons. First, the conflict is directly affecting India – there is an influx of refugees here. Second, the EAOs are being supported by China. At the same time, China has good relations with the military junta. Apart from this, many of these resistance groups have actually taken control of all the trading routes that fall on the India-Myanmar, Myanmar-China, and Thailand-Myanmar borders.

Rajiv Bhatia said India’s traditional policy towards Myanmar was to have cordial relations with the military junta and at the same time support democratic forces.

But, as he notes, Myanmar has changed beyond recognition given the strong rebellion and now there is a strong military, political and diplomatic stalemate in the country. This he believes is a forceful argument for a course correction. Secondly, India’s fundamental objective in Myanmar is to develop bilateral relations in

all domains and make sure Myanmar plays a useful role in India's Act East Policy. A balance between Indian and Chinese influences in Myanmar is essential for Indian interests.

Bhatia said that given how difficult the situation is now in Myanmar, the Indian government should consult with experts to develop a new approach, as having stability in Myanmar is in the collective interest of the neighbourhood.

Haksar says change cannot happen overnight. However, one way to test the waters is by providing humanitarian assistance, at least in the border areas of Myanmar and India. Many Myanmar people do not have access to the basics for survival. Some need proper medical attention and surgery for war wounds. She said it would be well worth our while to offer real humanitarian assistance and obtain Myanmar's goodwill that way.

In the past, we have not done that, she said. It is true that in the past, the National League for Democracy (NLD) was allowed to open an office in Delhi. While the National Unity Government (NUG) was allowed to open an office in Delhi, it was not allowed to operate openly. She said providing humanitarian aid is the most non-controversial way of intervening. And then India can negotiate with the military rulers about rebuilding villages which have been bombed and which people cannot return to.

Bhatia said there is still a legitimate government in Myanmar, even if it does not control all the territory. So, if India is going to interfere in areas not under their control, they are not going to like it. To address this problem, it is important to talk to the authorities in Naypyidaw and explain that it is in our traditional mutual interest for the people of Myanmar to be assisted if their own government cannot help them. It makes sense for India's humanitarian image.

Bhatia warns of the dangers of Balkanisation of Myanmar. This is not in the interest of the Myanmar people or the country's neighbours. That is why India has been closely associated with the Track 1.5 dialogue, which was initiated by Thailand, and the Track 2 dialogue among scholars of the region, known as the Bangkok Process.

Haksar referenced blog posts and discussions from the northeast of India about the idea of a Kuki state which would include parts of Myanmar. There are already some Kuki underground groups that are controlling all routes that border Manipur with this intention.

On the question of the NUG holding a dialogue with the Myanmar military junta, Haksar said the NUG are not thinking about reconciliation with the army or the military junta, but they are thinking of a federal union or structure that maintains the integrity of Myanmar as it stands today. This makes sense for India because Balkanisation could have a direct negative impact on India.

She makes the distinction between the NUG's unwillingness for dialogue and certain Western powers who are trying to achieve some reconciliation. This is something the armed groups and PDFs would resist. However, there should be dialogue about the kind of federal structure Myanmar could have. Here, India can play a role because that dialogue is also taking place within India's borders.

Bhatia notes that in regard to advice for the Indian government, it is recognized that India is in close touch with the military government, a relationship of over two decades. At the same time, we have sufficient leverage with the military to convey to them that their own people are suffering and the instability in Myanmar is have a negative impact in the region and on India and therefore there is a need to keep exchanging views on the humanitarian situation.

At the level of people, at the level of communities, and at the level of governments, we have to convey our deep interest in the good health, stability and prosperity of Myanmar, he added.

Source: The Hindu newspaper



Ko Htet Aung. Photo: Facebook

BNI CONDEMNS FIVE-YEAR PRISON SENTENCE FOR DMG REPORTER AND STAFF MEMBER

Burma News International (BNI) and its member organisations denounced the Myanmar junta's sentence of five years imprisonment given to a reporter for the Rakhine State-based Development Media Group (DMG).

DMG news reporter Ko Htet Aung and DMG Media nighttime office security guard, Ko Soe Win Aung, were both sentenced to five years in prison with hard labour under section 52 (a) of the Counter-terrorism law, on 28 June in Sittwe Township, Rakhine State.

"Taking criminal action against media workers for their work is a blatant violation of press freedom. The laws and penalties in place, as well as the arrests of media workers, are wholly unjust", said U Ko Ko Zaw, the chairman of the BNI's policy committee.

Since the arrest and interrogation of Ko Htet Aung and Ko Soe Win Aung, arrest warrants have been issued for 18 other DMG staff, including reporters and editors.

U Ko Ko Zaw said: "Such actions undermine the existence of independent news media, and obstruct the public's right to access information."

BNI also demanded the immediate release of all arrested journalists and called for an end to the crackdown on press freedom and the repression of journalists, not just in Rakhine State but nationwide.

BNI was founded in 2003 and is an umbrella news agency for 15 Myanmar ethnic news agencies based in ethnic areas throughout the country.



Zarny with a model in Japan.
Photo: AFP

'FASHION POWER': ZARNY, THE MYANMAR REFUGEE TURNED TOKYO DESIGNER

Having fled Myanmar for Japan with his parents as a child, Shibuya Zarny began his fashion career as a model in Tokyo and went on to make clothes for royalty.

"Fashion is an art that has enabled me to survive," the designer, whose label recently held a 10-year anniversary show in Bangkok, told AFP.

The runway looks featured nods to Southeast Asian design, from leaf and eye motifs to jewellery worn under colourful jackets by shirtless male models.

Zarny's parents came to Japan as political refugees in 1993 when he was eight. As a teenager, dressing with style became a way for him to avoid being bullied.

His mother first taught him dressmaking, and before long Zarny, with his slim silhouette and intense stare, had been scouted as a model on a dance floor in the capital.

"At the time we had no Instagram," he recalled, so to see and be seen he would hang out at bars, arcades and novelty photo booths called purikura.

Zarny often went to Shibuya, the youthful district he later took as his first name.

"At that time Shibuya was really dangerous. There was a whole underground scene" with yakuza gangsters, he said.

As his career took flight, Zarny launched his eponymous label in 2011, a year before finally securing Japanese nationality.

The fledgling designer gifted 70 longyi to Myanmar democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

She wore a lilac one to accept the Nobel Peace Prize in 2012, a moment which Zarny said "changed my life".

'BRAVE HEART'

Alongside his catwalk endeavours over the following years, Zarny acted as a mediator between Japan and Myanmar.

He even accompanied Japan's Princess Yoko of Mikasa - dressed in a Zarny original - on a visit there in 2019.

Now, with Suu Kyi detained since Myanmar's 2021 coup, he is raising funds for others escaping his native country.

When the junta seized power, Zaryn received a stream of messages asking for help.

“So many refugees from Myanmar came to Thailand, at the border,” said the 39-year-old.

He sprang into action, working with the United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR) and organising events in Tokyo.

“Myanmar people lost their pride, they are sad. So I want to show my fashion power, to give them confidence and a brave heart.”

Zaryn’s professional connections in Myanmar were scattered -- just one challenge he has faced in recent years.

The Covid-19 pandemic put a stop to jet-set parties, decimating demand for his expensive clothes and eventually forcing him to abandon his showroom in Tokyo’s high-end Omotesando district.

One of his top clients - politician Shinzo Abe, for whom he made suits - resigned as prime minister in 2020 and was shot dead two years later.

STARTING OVER

But Zaryn is no stranger to starting over and has branched out into interior design.

He also made a suit for the captain of the refugee

Olympic team ahead of the upcoming Games in Paris, where he hopes to one day present a collection.

These days Zaryn runs his studio from a compact apartment in northern Tokyo, where dozens of small paintings showing bucolic scenes of Myanmar adorn the walls.

“My grandfather, who was an art professor, made these watercolours for me when I was a child, because I was missing Myanmar,” he said.

The recent show in Bangkok has generated demand from Thai customers, leading Zaryn to reflect on his roots.

“I was always thinking: where am I from? Am I a Japanese designer, or something else?” he said.

“I realised finally ‘I’m from Southeast Asia,’” Zaryn said, adding that he wants to focus on this “original” source of inspiration.

AFP



Zaryn’s home Buddhist shrine. Photo: AFP

CHINA IS GETTING HYSTERICAL AS ITS ECONOMY IS FALTERING

SUN LEE



Photo: AFP

China has done it again. On June 17, they attacked a Philippines supply vessel out to service their warship stationed at Second Thomas Shoal within the economic zone of Manila. The term “economic zone” means the sea waters under a national territory. The Philippines has an international award in favour of their control over the region. The area is far away from China, but Beijing goes out to claim anything and everything in the South China Sea.

The reasons behind this barbarism are not unknown either. The region is rich in mineral resources, particularly oil and gas, and a totalitarian Beijing wants it all. While every country in the region suffers the brunt, the new government in Manila under the leadership of President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos showed the courage to resist Beijing’s unilateralism and the democratic world stood by him, creating a new flashpoint – after Taiwan – in the South China Sea.

China’s problems with Taiwan are well known. On May 20 – the day Taiwan’s new president, William Lai Ching-te, assumed office – Beijing launched one of the largest military exercises in recent memory, encircling the island nation with dozens of warships and fighter jets. President William Lai Ching-te later remarked that China views the annexation and elimination of Taiwan as its national cause.

It’s a mad nation that knows nothing but

flexing power and, probably it will not stop until it is overpowered or disintegrates from within. Noticeably, Beijing is getting more hysterical as its economy is failing. The debt-crisis-ridden real estate sector which contributes a quarter of Chinese GDP, is in shambles.

“China’s new home prices fell at the fastest pace in more than 9-1/2 years in May, despite government efforts to rein in oversupply and support debt-laden developers. Prices were down 0.7% in May from the previous month, marking the 11th straight month-on-month decline and the steepest drop since October 2014. In annual terms, new home prices were down 3.9% from a year earlier, compared with a 3.1% slide in April,” Reuters wrote on the same day Chinese forces attacked the Philippines navy.

The fall in prices indicates a lack of demand and, that’s surprising. Because, earlier in May, China announced a US\$42 billion stimulus for the property sector. As per the scheme, the Chinese central bank will fund financial institutions to lend to state-owned enterprises (SOE) so they can buy unsold apartments. Also, the central bank removed a floor on mortgage interest rates and lowered the minimum down payment ratio for first- and second-time home buyers.

Clearly, Beijing tried to pep up demand by clearing the inventory of new houses. The effort has been risky because China is trying to find a solution to its debt

crisis by increasing borrowing. "China's economy is buried under a great wall of debt and Xi Jinping's answer is to add more bricks. The president has sanctioned an extraordinary programme of borrowing by the central government to steer the \$18 trillion behemoth to "high-quality development". In doing so, he is piling risk onto the country's last decent balance sheet," Reuters wrote on June 18.

Nations often step up borrowings in times of crisis and so did China in the past. However, in those days China was the growing engine of the world with booming exports. Its municipalities or city corporations were minting money from land sales. The high revenue potential helped municipalities to borrow from banks at free will. Unending fund flow created a property bubble inflating Chinese GDP year after year.

The fundamentals have now changed. The property bubble had burst. Municipalities lost their source of revenue. Banks are buried under the huge pile of bad debt raised by both the property developers and municipalities. Chinese growth had been slower for more than a decade. Over the last decade, India has become the fastest-growing world economy.

Chinese strategy to corner global manufacturing, by flooding foreign markets with artificially cheap products, has backfired. The US started preparing grounds to resist cheap imports from China in US President Barack Obama's second term between 2013 and 2017. President Donald Trump implemented them creating a high tariff wall against Chinese imports which is further consolidated by President Joe Biden.

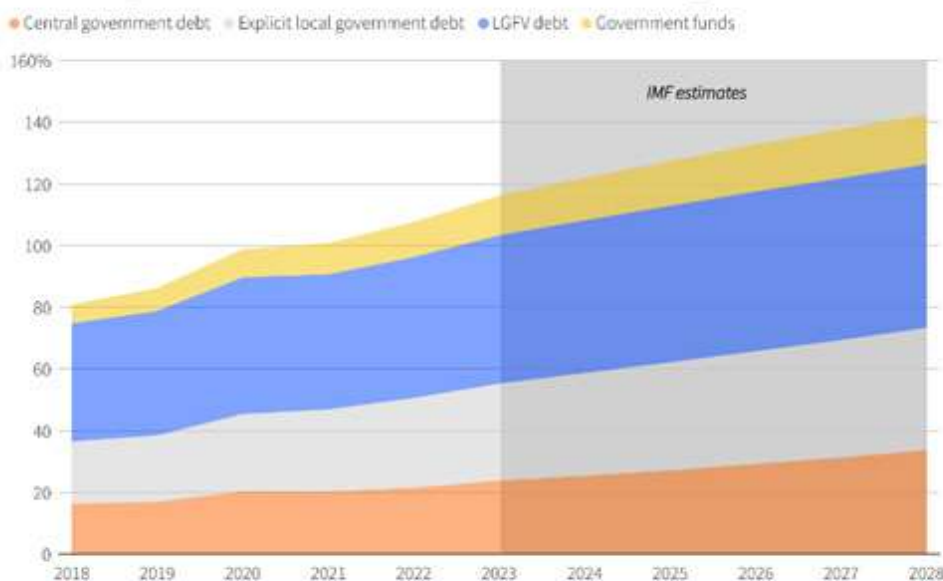
The pandemic made the world realise the pitfalls of centralising production in China and the reverse flow of investments began. From India to Europe and the US; all major destinations are putting up stiff resistance against cheap Chinese imports.

As a natural corollary, Chinese manufacturing has slowed down. As in May, the industrial output grew by 5.6% year-on-year, missing the 6% target. Fixed asset investment rose 4% again short of the target. Beijing thought that the domestic demand can keep the manufacturing tempo up. But that's not happening. Chinese consumers are extremely wary of the outlook of their economy so much so that the personal savings are shifting away from financial instruments to gold. The stock market has suffered sustained collapse for nearly two years now.

To compensate for the weaknesses Beijing is borrowing on an extra long-term basis. According to experts, the latest plan, to sell special sovereign bonds with maturities of up to 50 years is more like gambling. Chinese President Xi Jinping is looking for ways to keep his own stock up by delaying the disaster. But not everyone in China is endorsing that. The Chinese central bank head recently cautioned national authorities about the pitfalls of giving more fiscal stimulus. He wants a moderation of cash flow and painful structural reforms, which Xi is avoiding.

Sun Lee is the pseudonym for a writer who follows Asia developments.

China's government debt-to-GDP ratio is rising



Source: IMF | Chan K. S. | Breakingviews | June 17, 2024
Reuters Graphics



Chinese electric vehicles.
Photo: AFP

EU SLAPS CHINESE ELECTRIC CARS WITH **TARIFFS OF UP TO 38%**

The European Union on 4 July slapped extra provisional duties of up to 38 percent on Chinese electric car imports because of “unfair” state subsidies, despite Beijing’s warnings the move would unleash a trade war.

A European Commission probe launched last year concluded that state subsidies for Chinese EV manufacturers were unfairly undercutting European rivals -- which Brussels wants to shield as they make the transition from thermal to electric power.

The Chinese Chamber of Commerce to the EU slammed the tariffs, coming on top of current import duties of 10 percent, as “politically-motivated” and “protectionist”, while voicing hope the dispute could yet be resolved through dialogue.

Europeans themselves are split on the move, with Germany and its homegrown auto champions, who do significant trade with China, fearing it will do more harm than good if it leads to a clampdown on EU exports as Beijing has already threatened.

German auto giant Volkswagen slammed the move as “detrimental” while the head of BMW said the tariff battle “leads to a dead end”.

France and Italy have pushed for tariffs on Chinese EVs -- whose market share in the EU has skyrocketed -- but Sweden like Germany has expressed reservations, while Hungary is outright opposed.

The provisional tariffs will kick in from Friday, with definitive duties to take effect in November for a period of five years, pending a vote by the EU’s 27 member states.

“Our investigation... concluded that the battery electric vehicles produced in China benefit from unfair subsidisation, which is causing a threat of economic injury to the EU’s own electric car makers,” the EU’s trade chief Valdis Dombrovskis said.

In response, the commission imposed provisional duties on major Chinese manufacturers including 17.4

percent for market major BYD, 19.9 percent for Geely and 37.6 percent for SAIC.

Other producers in China that cooperated with the EU will face a tariff of 20.8 percent, while those that did not cooperate would be subject to the maximum 37.6 percent duty.

US tech billionaire Elon Musk's Tesla -- which manufactures in China -- is the only electric automaker that has asked Brussels for its own duty rate, to be calculated based on evidence it has submitted.

'INTENSIVE' TALKS WITH CHINA

The move comes despite the opening of talks between Chinese and EU trade officials, but Brussels will continue "to engage intensively with China on a mutually acceptable solution", trade chief Dombrovskis said.

China's electric car maker Nio said it still hoped for a resolution with the EU, while fellow EV maker XPeng said it would "find ways to minimise the impact on consumers" without changing its international strategy.

EU officials have indicated that, should a negotiated solution emerge, they may not ultimately need to levy the tariffs.

But Dombrovskis cautioned that "any negotiated outcome to our investigation must clearly and fully address EU concerns and be in respect of WTO rules."

Beijing has already signalled its readiness to retaliate by launching an anti-dumping probe last month into pork imports, threatening Spanish exports, and Chinese media suggest further probes could be in the works.

Chinese officials have also railed against EU investigations targeting state subsidies in the green tech sector, including wind turbines and solar panels.

EXPECTED CUT TO IMPORTS

The United States has already hiked customs duties on Chinese electric cars to 100 percent, while Canada is considering similar action.

But Brussels faces a delicate balancing act as it seeks to defend Europe's auto industry -- the jewel in its industrial crown -- while both avoiding a damaging showdown with China and meeting its targets for slashing carbon emissions.

The EU aims for Europeans to switch massively to electric vehicles as it plans to outlaw the sale of new fossil fuel-powered cars from 2035.

Chinese-made EVs' market share in the EU climbed from around three percent to more than 20 percent in the past three years, according to the European Automobile Manufacturers' Association.

Chinese brands account for around eight percent of that share, it said.

GERMAN DISPLEASURE

Germany's Kiel Institute for the World Economy, alongside Austrian institutes, predicted the provisional higher taxes would reduce vehicle imports from China by 42 percent. They added that electric car prices could rise by an average of 0.3 to 0.9 percent in the EU.

German auto manufacturers fear any retaliation could hurt their activities in China, and Germany's Vice Chancellor Robert Habeck visited Beijing last month on an 11th hour mission to avert a damaging trade war.

Duties were "generally not suitable for strengthening the competitiveness of the European automotive industry in the long term -- we reject them", Volkswagen said in a statement. The EU refused to comment on the criticism.

AFP



INCOMING - British PM Kier Starmer with his wife outside No. 10 Downing Street. Photo: AFP

FIVE KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE UK GENERAL ELECTION

The UK general election marks a turning point for the country with Labour returning to power after 14 years of Conservatives in Downing Street.

Here are the five biggest takeaways from the election outcome.

LABOUR LANDSLIDE, BUT NOT HISTORIC

Labour won 412 seats in the 650-seat parliament with only three seats left to declare, guaranteeing the centre-left party a whopping majority after 14 years in opposition.

Keir Starmer, a 61-year-old former lawyer, became prime minister after steering his party from one of its worst ever performances in 2019 to victory.

His party capitalised on voter anger at the outgoing Tories, particularly in the so-called "red wall" - post-industrial areas that traditionally voted Labour, but which switched Conservative in 2019.

However, contrary to polling throughout the campaign, Labour's landslide will be less spectacular than that won by Tony Blair in 1997 (418 seats) and the party, paradoxically, looks set to win fewer votes than it did in 2019's nadir election.

In fact, Labour's vote share of around 34 percent will be the lowest ever to secure a majority, highlighting the fracturing of the opposition and the quirks of the UK's electoral system.

Starmer will also face former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn in the next parliament, who the incoming prime minister blocked from standing as a Labour candidate for his handling of accusations of anti-Semitism within

the party.

The veteran left-winger stood as an independent and won, and threatens to be a thorn in the side of Starmer's government.

RIGHT-WING BREAKTHROUGH

The anti-immigration Reform UK, led by Brexit talisman Nigel Farage, fired a shot across the bows of the establishment by winning more than four million votes, the third highest vote share of any party.

The party outperformed the Conservatives in many constituencies and performed strongly in "red wall" areas, but only ended up with five seats due to the first-past-the-post voting system.

Farage, 60, was elected for the first time in the constituency of Clacton-on-Sea, south east England, and promised the result would be "just the first step of

something that is going to stun all of you".

CONSERVATIVE CATASTROPHE

"Massacre, catastrophe, Waterloo..." there was no shortage of words to describe the depths of the defeat for the Tories, who won a landslide only five years ago but looked set to be reduced to around 120 seats.

A record nine senior ministers from the outgoing government lost, although several other big names narrowly saved their seats, including finance minister Jeremy Hunt and party chairman Richard Holden, who won by 20 votes.

A final humiliation arrived in the early morning after the election when former prime minister Liz Truss, whose 49-day rule in 2022 ended when the markets turned against her radical tax-slashing plans, lost her seat.



OUTGOING: PM Rishi Sunak says he is sorry as he leaves the post of PM. Photo: AFP

Next will come the brutal post-mortem, as the party decides how it will rebuild and whether it tacks to the right or centre.

SCOTTISH NATIONALISTS IN CRISIS

The Scottish nationalists suffered a terrible evening, with former first minister and independence figurehead Nicola Sturgeon admitting that "it's not a good night" for the Scottish National Party (SNP).

The party has dominated Scottish politics for 15 years, but has now ceded control to Labour and been relegated from third to fourth place in Westminster after returning just nine MPs, compared to 48 at the last election.

It is still under investigation over its financing and now has no clear strategy to win independence from the UK, a dream that seemed revived after the Brexit vote.

LIB DEM COMEBACK

The return of the pro-EU Lib Dems as the third largest party and a major force in Westminster is one of the election's more unlikely stories following its dismal showing in 2019.

Winning more than 70 seats, the party enjoyed its best ever result, eclipsing its success in the early 2000s that led it to forming a coalition government with the Conservatives between 2010 and 2015.

The party also benefited from the rejection of the Conservatives by more liberal and centrist voters, who were turned off by its rightward drift following the Brexit vote.

AFP



OUTLIERS: Reform head Nigel Farage with the party's small number of MPs. Photo: AFP



PODCAST #245

Barry Lapping

The senior vipassana meditation teacher in the S.N. Goenka tradition opens up about his spiritual journey and reflects on the tradition today.

INSIGHT MYANMAR

LONGFORM INTERVIEW

BARRY LAPPING DELVES INTO BUDDHIST MEDITATION

“When I was in eighth grade, my mother asked me, ‘What do you want to be when you grow up?’ And I remember saying clearly, ‘I just want to be happy.’

Although this memory was from many decades ago, Barry Lapping still recalls it vividly, and it remains a key piece of the story that led to his life of spiritual practice. Now the Center Teacher at Dhamma Dhar..., the Vipassana center in the S.N. Goenka tradition located in Shelburne Falls, Massachusetts, he joins the Insight Myanmar podcast to discuss his lifetime practicing—and teaching—meditation.

Barry’s journey is not very different from his friend, Michael Stein, who told his own story last year, both something of a 1960’s counterculture snapshot. Barry attended the famous Woodstock concert, indulged in any manner of intoxicants and psychedelics, and traveled throughout the US. Strongly opposed to the Vietnam War, he went to Israel, where he had aspirations of living out his days on a kibbutz. But the threat of conscription had followed him, as he was told that if he were Jewish and living in Israel, he must serve a stint in the army.

Right around that time, he happened upon an edition of Life magazine that changed everything for him. “I saw a two-page black and white picture of a young American, sitting in the mountains of New Mexico, watching the sunrise come up. He was sitting in full lotus position. Absolutely beautiful picture and

alarms just went off in my head, ‘You got to go to India!’ I knew nothing about India. But I saw that picture, and I was determined.” With this newfound interest, he educated himself on yoga and was particularly struck by its promise of complete psychosomatic purification.

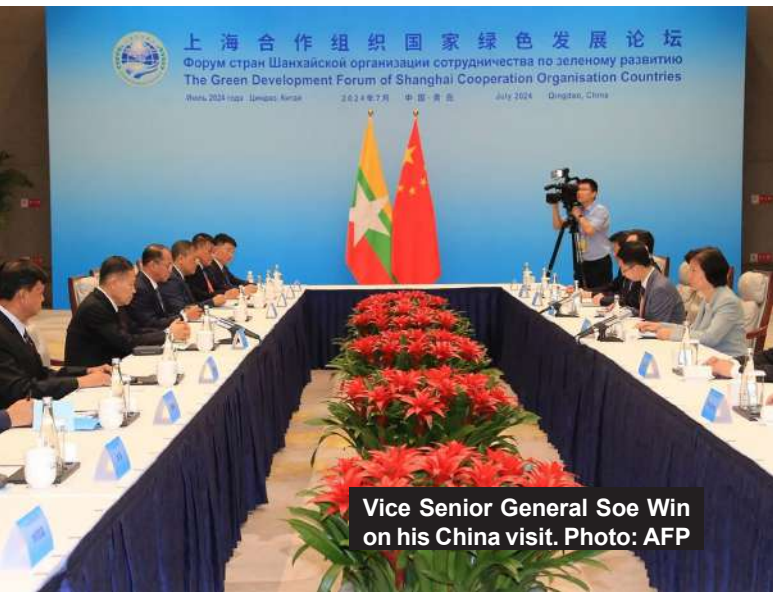
So Barry set off with two college friends, traveling overland through Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan before reaching India. His arrival felt like a homecoming, marked by an immediate comfort he felt in the country. After some traveling, he settled in Kathmandu, where he met a woman heading back to India. Although they were going to different places, they decided to travel together as far as Bodhgaya. As the story would have it, she became ill, so they stopped at the Burmese Vihara... where he became acquainted with Munindra, Grahame White, and Joseph Goldstein (along with his mother), among others. It was fortuitous, to say the least. Munindra introduced himself as a vipassana meditation teacher, and Barry was enthralled. “This is just exactly what I needed to hear! So all of those travels were leading me at that time to Bodhgaya. I spent about two and a half months practicing exactly what Munindra-ji taught me. He was my first teacher. But then one night, he came up to the up to the meditation hall and he said, ‘Tomorrow, my friend S.N. Goenka is coming to teach a 10-day course I want all of you to sit that course.’”

Barry explains how Goenka came to conduct courses in English. The story starts with an American hippie couple who left the Haight-Ashbury in San Francisco to learn how to meditate in Asia, but they had no idea who could guide them. They traveled to Dalhousie, in India, and wrote a letter to several teachers about the possibility of learning from them. One was Sayagi U Ba Khin, who responded that Goenka was his representative in India; he also sent a letter to Goenka telling him to travel to Dalhousie to meet them. It was there in Dalhousie that Goenka taught his first course in English, to a total of 12 or 13 students. However, Goenka was initially hesitant, as he was unsure about his ability to speak English well enough, but he gained confidence as the course stretched on. Soon after, Goenka taught led four more courses in English at Bodhgaya, the first of those being the one Barry joined.

CHECK OUT THE PODCAST

Want to read more or listen to more? Check out the Insight Myanmar podcast here:

<https://insightmyanmar.org/complete-shows/2024/6/22/episode-245-barry-lapping>



JUNTA CHIEF MEETS OUTGOING CHINESE AMBASSADOR AMID DEEPENING TIES

Myanmar's de facto junta leader, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, held talks with the outgoing Chinese Ambassador to Myanmar, Chen Hai, in Nay Pyi Taw on July 4, reported state media.

The talks centered on Myanmar's political crisis, with China's mediation playing a key role. Both sides engaged in cordial discussions regarding the progress of diplomatic relations, friendship, and cooperation between the two strategic partner nations.

Key topics of discussion included the exchange of goodwill visits between high-ranking officers from both countries and preparations for holding what the Myanmar junta describes as a "free and fair multiparty democratic general election."

In a notable development, Myanmar's former President Thein Sein were invited to attend an event in Beijing commemorating the 70th anniversary of the Declaration of Five Principles of Peaceful Co-Existence in late June.

Similarly, Vice Senior General Soe Win, the second chief of Myanmar's junta, arrived in China on July 6 for an official visit.

These official visits underscores the historical ties between Myanmar's military and China, as well as China's continued engagement with various political figures in Myanmar.

JUNTA'S CHILD SOLDIER COMMITTEE: PUBLIC RELATIONS CHARADE OR REAL PROGRESS?

The junta's Committee on the Prevention of Recruitment of Child Soldiers held a meeting on July 3 at the Ministry of Defence, reported the junta-controlled media.

The junta's Deputy Prime Minister and Union Minister for Defence Admiral Tin Aung San presided over the meeting, which was attended by committee members from various ministries.

Admiral Tin Aung San, the committee chairperson, emphasized that the committee remains vigilant, rejecting suspicious enlistments and ensuring prompt return of underage soldiers to their families.

He said that to address concerns raised by the inclusion of the Myanmar army in the UN Secretary-General's report, they collaborated with the Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting (CTFMR) to establish a Plan of Action.

The plan focuses on the protection and prevention of underage children from serving in the military, according to the state media.

The committee was established on 5 January 2004.

However, independent human rights groups have consistently cast doubt on the junta committee's effectiveness.

Reports by independent organizations have alleged that the junta continues to recruit child soldiers, often through force or deception.



Zin Mar Aung, Foreign Affairs Minister of Myanmar's National Unity Government (NUG).

NUG'S FOREIGN AFFAIRS MINISTER MEETS MYANMAR DIASPORA IN AUSTRALIA

Zin Mar Aung, Foreign Affairs Minister of Myanmar's shadow National Unity Government (NUG), recently met with the ethnic organizations and Myanmar diaspora community in Melbourne and Canberra of Australia, updating them on the progress of the political situation in Myanmar and the Ministry's engagements in international relations, reported the official Facebook page of the NUG.

On June 28 and 30, she addressed the Myanmar diaspora community at Oakleigh Townhall in Melbourne and at All Saints Church in Canberra.

During the meeting, she discussed the efforts of the NUG to build federal democracy in Myanmar as well as the recent diplomatic engagements of the ministry.

Facebook users expressed their wishes for the minister and the country. A user wrote "May NUG achieve its goals".

FAMOUS SINGER LAY PHYU FACES BACKLASH FOR IGNORING BOYCOTT CALL, SPARKS SEVERE PUBLIC OUTCRY

Famous singer Lay Phyu is facing severe criticism from fans for saying he doesn't understand the word "boycott" during his solo performance on July 2 at the VIP Bar frequently visited by the junta community in Nay Pyi Taw.

Since the military coup in February 2021, people in Myanmar have been boycotting performers and entertainers who appear at restaurants and bars affiliated with the junta. Additionally, there is a boycott of junta-affiliated brands and products, such as Myanmar Beer and the Mytel telecommunications company.

When news spread that Lay Phyu would perform at the VIP bar, some members of the general public had already called for boycotting him and imposing social punishment.

However, Lay Phyu proceeded to perform at the event on July 2. In a video from the event, he expressed a lack of understanding regarding the concept of boycott, leading the public to believe that the singer disregards ordinary fans and the anti-junta movement, thereby intensifying public criticism.

Even those who were previously neutral towards Lay Phyu began to harshly criticize him after the video circulated.

"If Lay Phyu sides with the enemy, then he is also an enemy. He's callously disregarding the lives and homes lost by people from all over the country who once supported him," wrote a Facebook user.

mizzima WEEKLY

Analysis & Insight



DIGITAL MAGAZINE

Our relaunched magazine Mizzima Weekly provides readers with a more focused read on what matters in Myanmar and the wider region, with an emphasis on analysis, insight and providing key talking points.