

ON THE GROUND IN MYANMAR

mizzima WEEKLY
Analysis & Insight

AI

**The Dark Side
of AI for Myanmar**

EARTHQUAKE UPDATE

ISSUE 7, VOL. 2, MAY 22, 2025 | PUBLISHED EVERY THURSDAY | WWW.MIZZIMA.COM

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.

CRACKING DOWN ON THE MYANMAR JUNTA'S JET FUEL SUPPLY

Sanctions targeting aviation fuel suppliers to Myanmar's military are critical in curbing the junta's capacity for deadly airstrikes, such as the shocking recent attack on a school in Depayin, Sagaing Region, which resulted in at least 24 deaths, including 22 children. These sanctions aim to disrupt the military's access to essential resources for conducting aerial assaults on civilian areas, thereby reducing the frequency and impact of such attacks.

Aviation fuel is indispensable for the operation of fighter jets, which the Myanmar military utilizes to carry out airstrikes against civilian targets. Without a steady supply of fuel, the military's air force would be significantly hampered, limiting its ability to execute these attacks. Amnesty International emphasizes that disrupting the supply chain of aviation fuel directly impacts the military's operational capabilities.

The airstrike on May 12, 2025, in Depayin targeted a school, resulting in the deaths of 24 individuals, including 20 students and two teachers, and injuring dozens more. The attack occurred during morning classes, and the school had no reported nearby fighting at the time. The military has denied responsibility, countering that the reports were fake news and affirming that they only targeted threats to peace, blaming insurgents for the violence.

In response to the military's reliance on airstrikes, the United States, European Union, and Canada have imposed sanctions on entities supplying aviation fuel and equipment to the Myanmar military. These sanctions target fuel companies, aiming to restrict the military's access to essential resources for conducting airstrikes.

Despite these efforts, challenges remain in fully severing the military's access to aviation fuel. Amnesty International reports that the military continues to import fuel through opaque supply chains, involving over 100 entities, including major oil traders like Trafigura, and connections to the military regime. This highlights the need for continued international pressure and vigilance to ensure that sanctions effectively disrupt the military's operations.

Sanctions on aviation fuel suppliers are a vital component in the international community's efforts to limit the Myanmar military's capacity for airstrikes on civilian targets. By targeting the supply chain of aviation fuel, these sanctions aim to reduce the frequency and impact of such attacks, thereby protecting civilian lives and upholding international humanitarian law.

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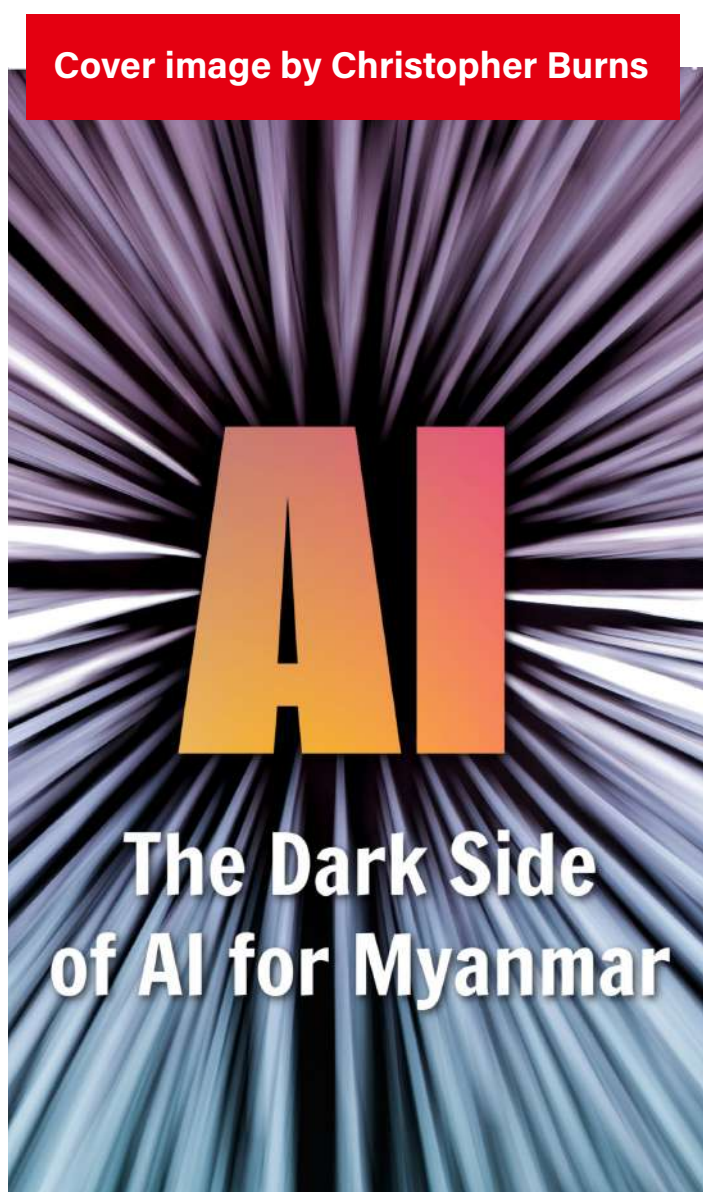
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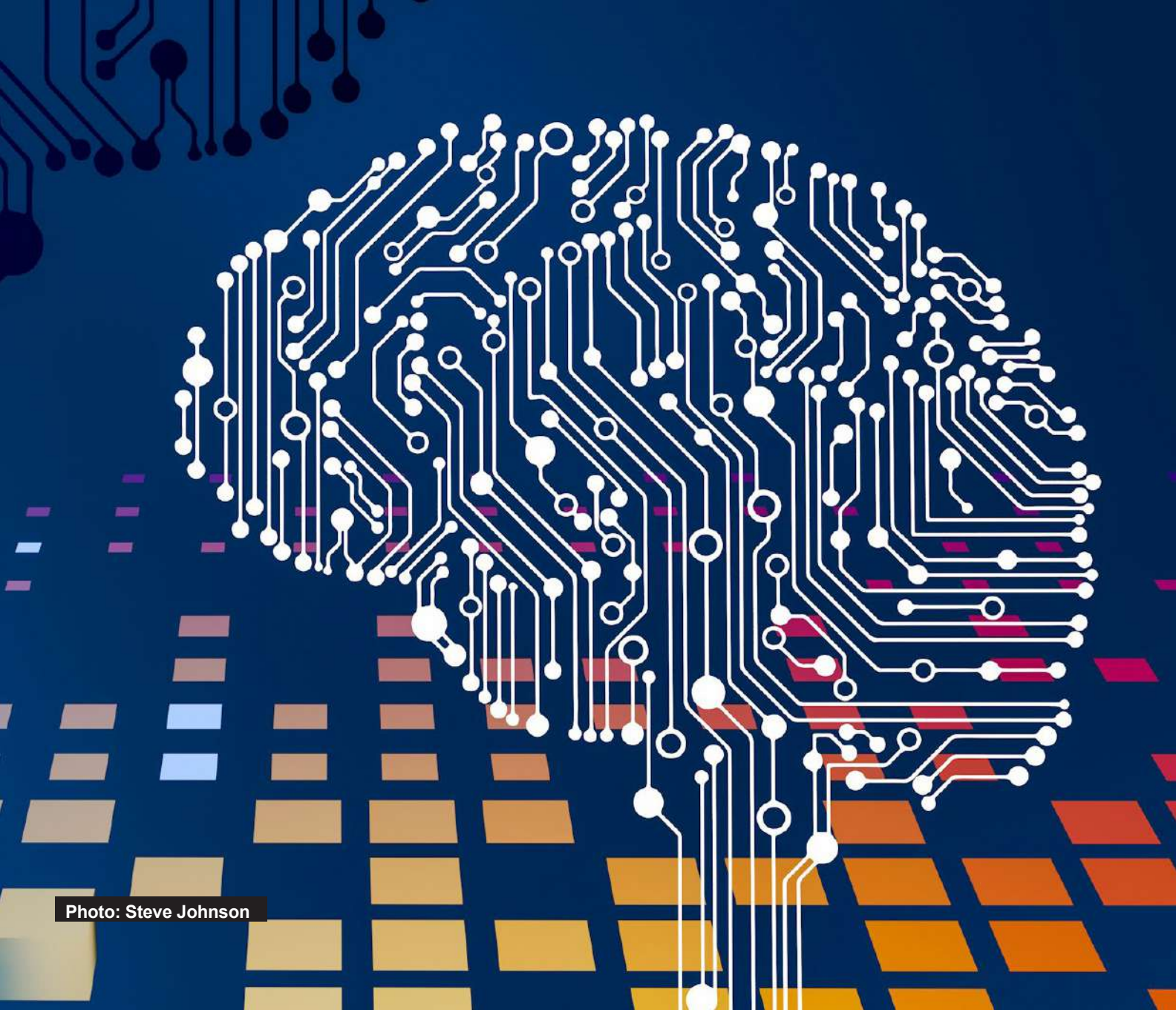


Photo: Steve Johnson

THE DARK SIDE OF AI FOR MYANMAR

A new report by Human Rights Myanmar warns that unchecked use of creative artificial intelligence (AI) in Myanmar risks deepening human rights abuses while offering only limited benefit to the country's cultural and creative sectors.

In a submission to the UN Special Rapporteur in the Field of Cultural Rights, Human Rights Myanmar outlined how creative AI could enable marginalised communities to access and preserve cultural heritage - from digitising Chin oral stories to translating minority-language songs and enhancing health messaging through sign-language animation.

But these promising applications, the group cautions, are overshadowed by serious risks in a country under military rule.

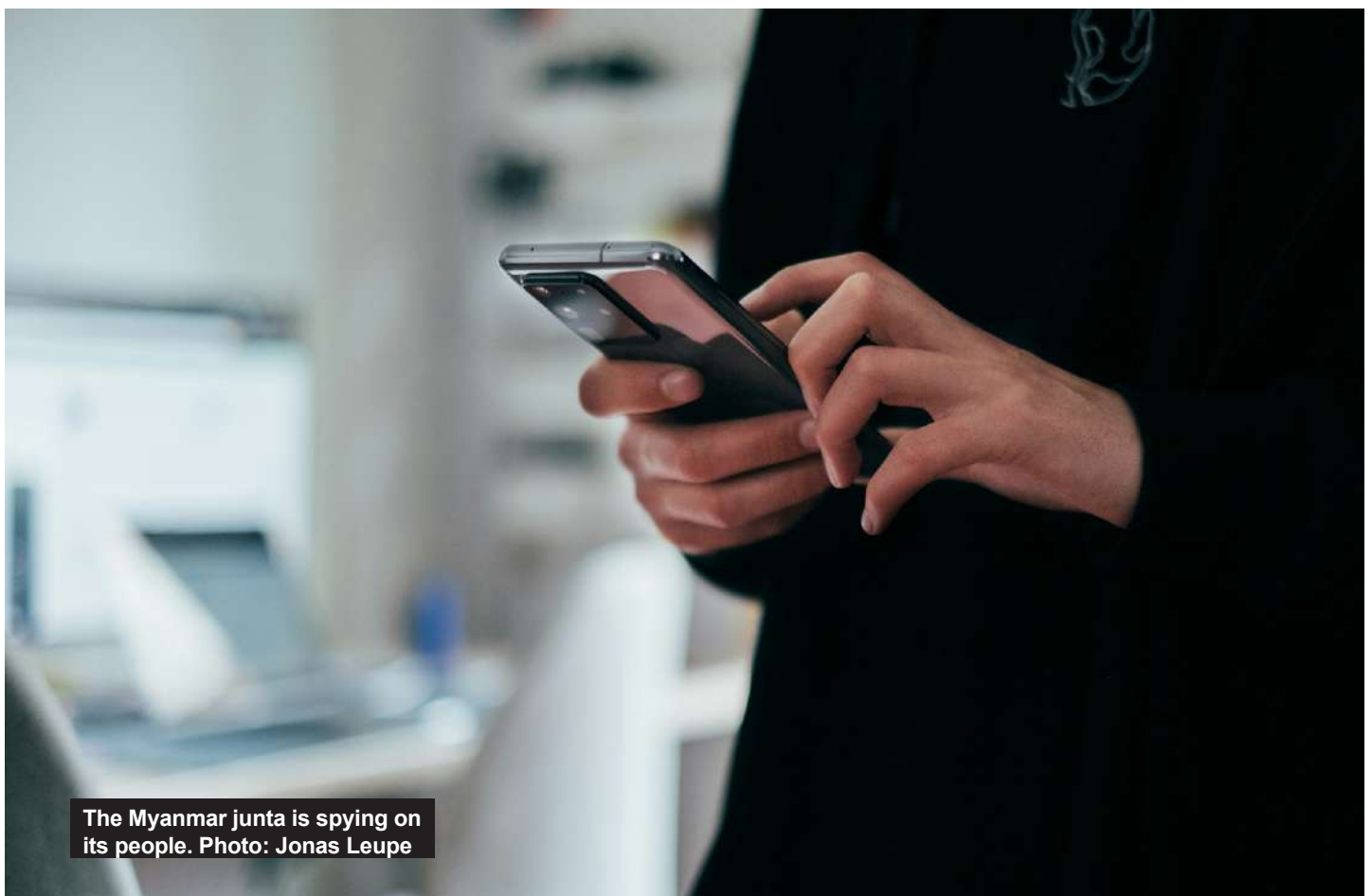
"AI is already being weaponised in Myanmar," the report states. Facial recognition systems supplied by companies such as Huawei and Dahua have been used by the military to identify and arrest dissenters - including artists and performers who attempted to protest anonymously. Additionally, AI-driven internet censors-

hip tools have restricted freedom of expression, disproportionately affecting creative content.

The report also highlights the potential for AI to supercharge disinformation and hate speech in formats far more persuasive than text. This includes manipulated images, videos, and music that can subtly embed ethnic nationalism or incite violence. These dangers are magnified by Myanmar's low levels of media literacy and limited capacity among civil society to counter such narratives.

Another major concern is cultural marginalisation. Most AI systems are trained on data from the global north and in dominant languages like English and Chinese. This sidelines Myanmar's diverse linguistic and cultural traditions. This bias, according to Human Rights Myanmar, risks "cultural hegemonisation" and disempowerment of local creators, many of whom are already struggling economically.

The report calls for urgent international regulation to prevent AI misuse in conflict-affected settings. It urges technology companies to apply "heightened due



diligence,” conduct human rights impact assessments, and ensure AI supports, rather than replaces, human creators. Without such safeguards, the group warns, creative AI may deepen authoritarian control and further erode Myanmar’s cultural freedoms.

So, what are the details of the key threats according to this report?

AI as a tool of military repression

To date, AI applications in Myanmar have overwhelmingly served State repression. Given that the military actively targets everyone who expresses themselves, creatives are often primary targets of the regime and therefore have already been victims of AI-powered human rights violations.

For example, the military deploys AI-powered facial-recognition cameras supplied by companies such as Huawei and Dahua to monitor people, identifying and tracking individuals of interest. Since the coup, many creatives who have tried to anonymously protest

against the military have been identified using such cameras, arrested, and imprisoned.

The military has also used AI-based deep-packet inspection systems to censor the internet, filtering and blocking communications and digital content nationwide. Creative content has often been the focus of these systems, invading the rights to privacy and freedom of expression.

Amplifying harm from text to creative AI

Myanmar has a tragic recent history of propaganda, disinformation, and incitement to hatred leading to atrocity crimes against the Rohingya, much of which spread through predominantly text-based social media.

The emergence of AI, however, vastly expands the formats in which false or inflammatory content can be created, including images, audio, video, and even interactive “deepfake” experiences. AI is capable of creating vast amounts of manipulative content, including,



Photo: Bolivia Inteligente

for example, racist imagery, extreme religious songs, or videos celebrating violence against women. The adage “a picture conveys a thousand words” is correct, and can be extended with “and is a thousand times more believable”. AI cannot only create manipulative content in different formats, but can also quickly and cheaply embed it in cultural content, which is often more hidden and more influential than, for example, text-based news content. For instance, ethnonationalism can be hidden within AI-generated artworks or even full movies.

Civil society and media outlets in Myanmar already struggle with countering manipulative text-based content in a society with few digital or media literacy skills. They will struggle to counter mass-produced AI-generated audio-visual content, too.

Furthermore, AI-generated content is much harder to identify the source. It can be anonymously created, anonymously distributed, difficult to trace, and therefore weaponised to inflame public sentiment and further marginalise vulnerable groups.

Cultural hegemonisation and the marginalisation

AI models, particularly large language models, are predominantly trained on data originating from global north sources and are predominantly in English, or to a lesser extent, Chinese. Very little will be from Myanmar or in any of the languages spoken in the country.

This inherent bias in training data leads to AI systems that are inevitably more attuned toward dominant cultural norms and languages, resulting in the further marginalisation of creative content from the global south, including from Myanmar’s many communities.

The proprietary algorithms that govern how AI systems prioritise and present creative content are often kept secret. It is highly likely that these algorithms, consciously or unconsciously, prioritise content that aligns with the dominant training data and the interests of technology companies, further deprioritising creativity originating from Myanmar. This can lead to cultural homogenisation and hegemonisation, undermining the



The Myanmar junta is tightening its grip through building a surveillance state. Photo: AFP

right of Myanmar's diverse communities to participate freely in cultural life and to express their unique identities.

Copyright and the right to remedy

AI-generated creativity relies on vast existing works, raising issues of consent, compensation and copyright. In Myanmar, limited digitised content means AI outputs are more likely to mirror original creations so closely that they blur the line between transformation and infringement.

While Myanmar's national Copyright Law may offer some recourse, global model training routinely circumvents local protections. Most AI companies are headquartered outside Myanmar's jurisdiction, leaving creators with no effective remedy. A Myanmar creative would have little choice if trying to enforce their copyright.

Economic disempowerment of Myanmar creatives

Even before AI, many Myanmar creatives struggled to earn a stable income. If their clients and consumers can replace paid commissions with "zero-cost" AI outputs, the result will be widespread job losses and further contraction of an already precarious creative sector.

The effect is likely to be worse for those marginalised creatives already excluded from using AI, either due to a lack of access to the internet or due to a lack of relevant skills to take advantage of the technology. It is also likely that the effect will further hinder the development of a vibrant and diverse national creative sector.

Intersectional and sectoral impacts

AI's effects will vary across creative fields and social groups. For instance, AI-generated content can amplify sexist stereotypes or normalise violence against women, while automated moderation algorithms can mislabel feminist content as hostile. Creatives with disabilities may find that "accessible" AI platforms still

exclude them if user interfaces lack inclusive design.

Traditional crafts and oral history practices—already threatened by urbanisation and migration—risk further erosion if digital preservation projects neglect local knowledge holders. There is a need for intersectional and sector-specific impact studies. Dedicated impact studies are needed for each sector and vulnerable group.

Due diligence and conflict-sensitive risk management

Under the United Nations' Guiding Principles (UNGPs), AI companies must apply "due diligence" when working, and "heightened due diligence" in conflict-affected areas like Myanmar, where the risk of gross human rights abuses is elevated.

However, Myanmar's experience has been that technology companies often fail to conduct adequate due diligence before rolling out new digital applications, particularly in countries in the global south. When companies do assess risks, they often prioritise consultation in the global north markets.

Given that creative AI poses a potentially significant risk, at the very least, AI companies should consult with independent experts to assess new AI applications for their potential to fuel serious human rights violations. The UNGPs include the principle "if in doubt, carry it out".

Assessments should be started before deployment. Companies should also implement "sunset clauses" whereby any AI system deployed is automatically reviewed and re-approved at regular intervals and based on fresh impact data.

Globally responsible regulatory approach

Any regulatory approach to AI must consider two critical concerns. Firstly, States may design AI regulations to address concerns within their borders, but in practice, have a global impact on how digital companies operate worldwide. AI regulations must therefore

undergo their own form of due diligence to ensure they do not inadvertently harm human rights in other contexts, including in repressive conflict zones like Myanmar.

Secondly, not all States can be trusted to regulate AI in a manner that prioritises the public interest, including the protection of human rights. Allowing a military regime like the one in Myanmar, which has a documented history of human rights abuses, to regulate AI without international oversight would be detrimental to the protection of fundamental rights and could further entrench its authoritarian control.

Therefore, any regulatory framework must involve international human rights bodies and civil society organisations to ensure accountability and prevent misuse by oppressive regimes.

Bad news for Myanmar

The intersection of AI and creativity presents profound implications for human rights globally, and the situation in Myanmar serves as a critical case study. The failure of technology companies to conduct adequate human rights due diligence in the past has had devastating consequences, and the deployment of AI in the current repressive conflict-affected environment carries significant risks of exacerbating existing human rights violations and undermining fundamental freedoms.

It is therefore imperative that AI companies, States, and the international community adopt a human rights-centred approach to AI governance, prioritising due diligence, transparency, and accountability. Learning from past tragic lessons from countries like Myanmar, we must ensure that the development and deployment of AI technologies are guided by international standards and a firm commitment to protecting the safety, dignity, and fundamental rights of all individuals.

Report recommendations

- Embed human rights in AI design: Require human-rights impact assessments with affected commu-

nities. AI must augment - not replace - human creators, and recommendation algorithms must prioritise reliable, context-appropriate content.

- Mandate transparency and oversight: Oblige AI firms to publish model-training data sources and moderation rules by region. Creators must have the right to know and consent. Establish independent review bodies for AI harms.

- Apply heightened due diligence in conflict zones: Remind States and companies that the UNGPs demand extra scrutiny. In Myanmar, pause or alter AI deployments that enable surveillance or repression.

- Safeguard creators and cultural diversity: Insist on informed consent and fair pay when artists' works train AI. Support UNESCO-backed legal and financial measures, and secure platforms for diaspora and underground artists.

- Defend online expression: Call on all States to guarantee an open internet, condemn shutdowns and censorship, and insist platforms resist undue takedown demands under consistent global standards.

- Strengthen international norms and enforcement: Urge the Human Rights Council to adopt binding standards - building on Res. 54/21 - for mandatory AI impact assessments and victim remedies. Establish a UN crisis-monitoring mechanism and integrate rights-based AI controls into UPRs, treaty reviews, and similar processes.



Civilians flee the fighting. Photo: Supplied

ARMED CLASHES ESCALATE IN THE THANINTARYI REGION

Resistance forces led by the Karen National Union (KNU) have seized a key junta outpost near the Thai-Myanmar border, marking a significant escalation in armed clashes across the region.

On 9 May, KNU-led forces captured the Htee Hkee post, a strategic outpost located in Dawei Township along the border trade route. The seizure followed the successful takeover of another junta position, Htee Hta, situated approximately five miles away. Resistance fighters reportedly fought for 10 consecutive days to capture Htee Hta before advancing on Htee Hkee.

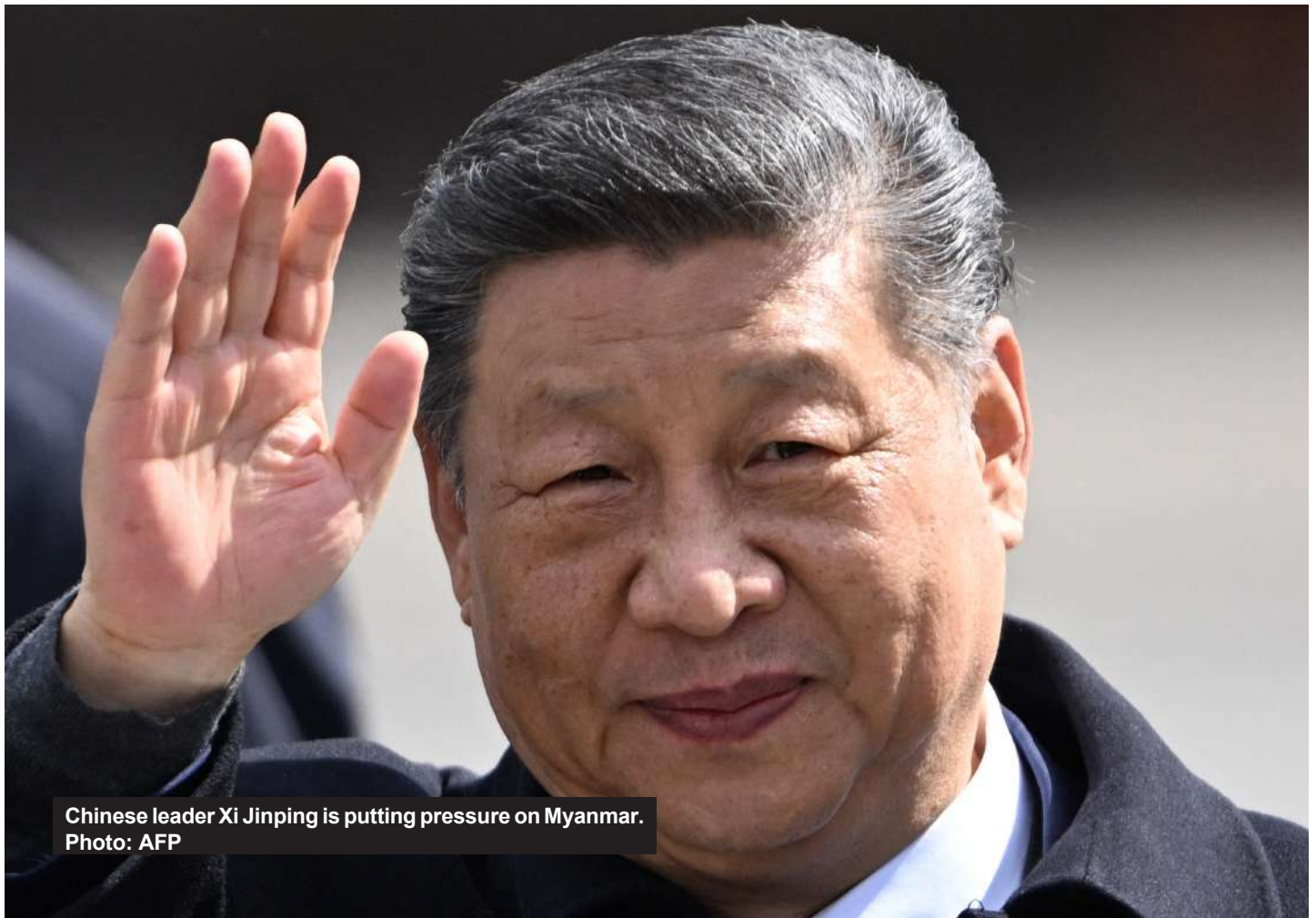
Htee Hkee is considered a crucial location due to its proximity to the Thai-Myanmar border and its role in cross-border trade.

In response to the loss of Htee Hta on 19 April, the junta deployed a 300-strong force to patrol eastern Dawei beginning in the last week of April. Clashes have since intensified across the area.

On 3 May, a unit of the People's Defence Force (PDF) was ambushed by junta troops, resulting in one fatality and four injuries among the PDF fighters.

The following week, on 7 and 8 May, a joint force of KNU and PDF fighters ambushed a military convoy in Bokepyin Township. The convoy, consisting of around 100 personnel from three battalions - No. 224 Regiment, No. 358 Light Infantry Battalion, and No. 432 Regiment - was traveling in five pick-up trucks and two lorries when it came under fire. The ambush lasted roughly 30 minutes. Resistance forces were able to retreat without casualties. According to local resistance sources, one junta soldier was killed and 19 others were injured in the ambush, including the commander of the No. 358 Light Infantry Battalion. The wounded were transported to the Bokepyin military hospital for treatment.

Amid ongoing hostilities, Lieutenant General Saw Baw Kyaw Hae, Vice Chief of Staff of the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), declared the group's intent to



Chinese leader Xi Jinping is putting pressure on Myanmar.
Photo: AFP

drive junta forces completely out of the KNU's Brigade 4 area, which includes Tanintharyi Region.

Public anger over Myanmar junta leader cozying up to China

Myanmar junta leader Min Aung Hlaing's meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Moscow has sparked widespread criticism and concern among analysts and political observers, who warn that the rare diplomatic encounter could lend political legitimacy to the military regime.

The meeting, which took place on the sidelines of Russia's Victory Day celebrations, marked the first time Xi Jinping has met with Min Aung Hlaing since Myanmar's 2021 military coup. Critics believe that a key objective of the junta leader's trip to Russia was to secure a face-to-face meeting with the Chinese president, a goal that had eluded him for over four years.

During the discussions, Xi reportedly pressed Min Aung Hlaing to ensure the safety of Chinese nationals, organizations, and investments in Myanmar—many of which have been disrupted or stalled since the coup. In response, Min Aung Hlaing pledged to safeguard Chinese interests to the extent possible, and reaffirmed his commitment to welcoming Chinese investment, particularly in relation to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Observers say the focus on economic cooperation signals a shift in China's stance. "China reveals publicly that it will take the route [of standing with the junta]," a China-Myanmar relations monitor told BBC Burmese. Analysts point out that while Beijing's alignment with the junta appears more explicit, it also reflects deep concerns about the military's ability to guarantee security amid growing resistance across the country.

Xi's emphasis on protecting Chinese assets has been interpreted by critics as a clear message that



Quake victims wait for food in Sagaing.
Photo: AFP

the responsibility for Chinese safety lies squarely with the junta, casting doubt on the regime's capacity to stabilize the country.

Political analyst Thet Htar Maung commented that Xi's failure to address the junta's ongoing airstrikes against civilians could be interpreted as tacit approval, further emboldening the military. "It gives the junta impunity and encourages more violence," she said to The Irrawaddy.

Jason Tower, a researcher from the United States Institute of Peace, told The Irrawaddy that Xi's decision to meet with Min Aung Hlaing - after years of avoiding official contact - signals China's increasing support for a regime under pressure from mounting attacks by pro-democracy resistance forces.

Following the Moscow meeting, junta forces reportedly intensified aerial bombardments and Min Aung Hlaing held an emergency military meeting with regional commanders. Observers believe the junta is preparing a renewed offensive aimed at reclaiming lost territory, with the goal of staging elections by the end of the year.

Critics also warned of a broader geopolitical implication, noting how both Russia and China appear to be rallying smaller, isolated states into their spheres of influence. "As other leading nations continue to isolate Myanmar's military regime, the junta is seizing any opportunity to align itself with global powers willing to overlook its atrocities," one political monitor remarked.

Limited quake aid gets through to victims

Earthquake survivors in central Myanmar continue to struggle with limited aid, even as China ramps up its rescue and reconstruction support in what observers say is a calculated move to strengthen its influence over the military regime.

According to junta authorities, the international community has contributed over \$2 million and 115 billion kyats in aid since the powerful quake struck in late March. Among foreign donors, China has taken the lead, being the first country to dispatch a rescue team and successfully extract survivors from the rubble, according to announcements by the junta's fire brigade and the Chinese Embassy.

China's contributions are the largest so far, with \$14 million worth of emergency aid already delivered. Additionally, Beijing has pledged one billion yuan (approximately \$137 million) to support long-term restoration efforts in the quake-affected regions.

However, critics have questioned the motives behind China's generosity. In a separate move, Beijing is supplying hundreds of modular prefabricated offices to the junta in Naypyidaw, aimed at ensuring the continuity of administrative functions. Observers say the move underscores China's intent to reinforce its relationship with the military-led State Administration Council (SAC).

Meanwhile, the UN Secretary-General's spokesperson announced that the United Nations has provided \$10 million in humanitarian aid during the first two weeks following the disaster. Yet, reports from the ground indicate that support has not reached many affected communities.

A local volunteer from Pyawbwe Township told the media that survivors in his area have received minimal assistance. "The only aid we saw came from UNDP," he said, referring to the United Nations Development Programme. "Basic necessities were distributed, but it was rare and insufficient."

The disparity in aid distribution has raised further concerns about the junta's control over relief efforts and the potential for foreign assistance - particularly from China - to be used as a tool for political leverage rather than purely humanitarian relief.



Photo: AFP

MYANMAR JUNTA AIRSTRIKES CONTINUE NATIONWIDE DESPITE CEASEFIRE DECLARATION; OVER 120 CIVILIANS KILLED IN MAY

Myanmar's military junta has continued to conduct daily airstrikes across the country despite its declared ceasefire, with at least 126 civilians killed and more than 310 injured between 1 and 15 May, according to data compiled by Mizzima.

The junta carried out aerial attacks in nearly every state and region during that period, sparing only Yangon Region and Mon State. These strikes have destroyed homes, schools, clinics, and community welfare facilities.

On 16 May around 8:00 am, junta airstrikes were reported near Wet Lu village in the northeastern part of Natogyi Township, according to the Natogyi Township People's Administration.


A member of the administration said, "The jet fighter appeared first, followed by a Y-12 support aircraft that dropped over 30 bombs across 14 bombing runs. The

full extent of the casualties and damage from that attack has yet to be confirmed."

A day earlier, on 15 May at 9:48 am, a junta jet fighter targeted an internally displaced persons (IDP) camp situated between Nine Mile and Lam Le Kyt villages in Thabeikkyin Township, according to the Pyin Oo Lwin District People's Defence Organization. The strike killed a 60-year-old man and a woman and left nine others injured, including four children and a monk.

As the junta escalates air assaults, revolutionary groups have urged civilians to build and use bomb shelters to reduce casualties from aerial attacks.

One of the deadliest incidents occurred on 12 May, when a junta airstrike hit a school in Oh Htein Dwin village, Depayin Township, during an examination. Twenty-two schoolchildren and two female teachers were killed in that attack, with a total death toll of 24.



Rathedaung Township from the air.

MYANMAR JUNTA AIRSTRIKE KILLS AT LEAST 12 CIVILIANS IN VILLAGE IN RATHEDAUNG

A Myanmar military airstrike on Tun Ra Wai (Old) village in Rathedaung Township, Rakhine State, killed at least 12 civilians and injured more than 20 others, according to Ko Wai Hin Aung, a local writer and social support volunteer active in the area.

The airstrike occurred at around 10 am on 13 May, when junta aircraft dropped two 500-pound bombs on the village.

"Initially, we confirmed 10 deaths, but during follow-up communication, we received information that two more people had died. I can confirm this," Ko Wai Hin Aung told Mizzima at around 8 pm the same day.

The identities of the newly confirmed victims are still being verified, while two of the wounded are reportedly in critical condition.

U Myat Htun, director of the Arakan Human Rights Defenders and Promoters Association, condemned the attack, saying "This is a clear violation of the Geneva

Convention, which prohibits attacks on civilians during armed conflict."

A local resident from Rathedaung reported that military aircraft were circling the area during the morning.

"We couldn't see them from where we were, but we could hear the sounds clearly," the resident said.

Efforts to contact both the village resident and Arakan Army (AA) spokesperson U Khaing Thukha for further details were unsuccessful at the time of reporting.

Meanwhile, residents of Kyaukpyu Township said the junta has been conducting near-daily airstrikes in their area throughout May, as fighting continues to intensify across Rakhine State.



MYANMAR JUNTA AIRSTRIKES KILL THREE ELDERLY CIVILIANS IN NGAZUN TOWNSHIP, MANDALAY REGION

The Myanmar junta's Air Force bombed civilian homes in Thar Kyin and Yabo (South) villages in Ngazun Township, Mandalay Region, on 15 May, killing three men and seriously injuring five others, according to local sources.

A resident of Thar Kyin told Mizzima that a Y-12 support aircraft dropped bombs on the two villages at around 12:40 pm, despite the lack of fighting occurring in the area at the time of the attack.

"The Y-12 loitered for more than an hour, dropping bombs and then circling over the area. Those who couldn't escape in time were killed. The villagers have been too afraid to leave the bomb shelters all day," Thar Kyin villager said.

The deceased have been identified as 70-year-old U Kyaw Than, 55-year-old U Myint Than, and 53-year-old U Ne Win, all residents of Thar Kyin village. Five others, including women, sustained serious injuries from the airstrikes on Thar Kyin and Yabo (South).

According to the leader of the Ngazun Fire Dragon Unit, the junta dropped a total of 21 bombs on Thar Kyin and four on Yabo (South). He claimed the attack

was based on a tip-off.

"People and cattle were killed. Before the airstrike, the military also shelled Thangon with heavy weapons," the leader said.

Earlier the same day, junta forces shelled Thangon village using a howitzer, killing 18-year-old Ko Hein Min Htet, according to local resistance sources.

Residents reported that Thangon had come under repeated shelling between 8 and 15 May, after junta troops suffered heavy casualties when they entered a minefield laid by resistance forces.

Ngazun Township has seen multiple airstrikes this month, including attacks on Sintat and Yele Thaung villages.

The latest strikes are part of a broader pattern of aerial assaults by the military regime in recent days, which have targeted civilian areas across the Sagaing and Mandalay regions as well as Rakhine State, leaving scores of civilians dead or wounded.



KNLA fighters. Photo: KNLA

KNLA SEIZES JUNTA'S MAE LA CAMP NEAR MYANMAR-THAI BORDER IN DAY-LONG ASSAULT

Joint forces of the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) captured the junta's Mae La camp also known as Maw Kwee Lu camp near the Myanmar-Thailand border in a single day, according to military sources.

The assault began around 4:00 am on 15 May, and the KNLA successfully seized control of the hilltop camp by approximately 10:00 pm on the same day.

The Mae La outpost lies just over a kilometre from the Myanmar-Thai borderline, making its strategic location highly significant. After the camp fell, junta forces launched a series of retaliatory airstrikes that continued into the morning of 16 May.

A military source reported that the KNLA joint forces are now pursuing junta troops who abandoned their positions during the attack.

"The KNLA forces were able to reach the hill camp since last night, and the junta is still conducting airstrikes this morning," said the source.

He also stated that a cache of weapons and ammunition was seized during the operation. Mizzima

is continuing to verify further details regarding the seized items.

The fighting triggered a wave of displacement, with more than 400 residents from nearby villages crossing the Moei (Thaungyin) River to seek refuge on the Thai side.

"Evacuation is not convenient. However, the village is not far from this outpost. As a result, the locals had to escape to safety," said a Mae La resident.

The operation is part of a broader offensive led by the KNLA's 7th Brigade and allied forces targeting junta camps along the Dawna Range. Over the past two months, the resistance has captured six military outposts along this border region, including the strategic Mae La camp.

Despite these advances, junta camps such as Maw Phoe Kay and Naw Tayar remain active along the eastern flank of the Dawna Range, near the Myanmar-Thai border.



Bombed school in Tabayin Township.
Photo: AFP

FORTIFY RIGHTS MAKES CALL FOR URGENT ACTION BY ASEAN TO BAN AVIATION FUEL SALES TO MYANMAR'S MILITARY

In the wake of the deadly school bombing by the Myanmar Air Force on 12 May, Fortify Rights issued a statement on 14 May calling on Malaysia, as the current chair of ASEAN, to urgently ban the sale and transfer of jet fuel to the military junta.

The statement by Fortify Rights continues below.

On May 12, at approximately 9:35 a.m., while children were attending school, a Myanmar military junta jet dropped at least two bombs on a school in the village of O Htein Twin, Tabayin Township, Sagaing Region, killing at least 22 children between the ages of seven and 16, as well as two adult teachers. At least 100 others were reportedly wounded in the attack.

"While telling the world that it's engaged in a so-called ceasefire, the Myanmar military junta is bombing schoolchildren in their classroom in a deliberate act of terror," said Sai Arkar, Human Rights Associate at Fortify Rights. "ASEAN member states must abandon their current approach of looking away from the junta's atrocities and instead take action to end these war crimes."

Fortify Rights spoke with three eyewitnesses

to the aerial attack on the school. Fortify Rights also obtained and analyzed graphic photographs revealing the airstrike's devastating aftermath.

"May Pan," 30, a township official working under the National Unity Government (NUG) and one of the first responders following the attack at the school, described the aftermath of the attack to Fortify Rights:

I saw that out of the five classrooms in the one-storey school building, three had their roofs and ceilings completely blown apart. Only two rooms were still partially intact. ... I saw scattered school books, shoes, and small backpacks right in front of the school's flagpole. ... On the floor of the classroom, there were pools of blood. My chest tightened, I could barely breathe, seeing it. When I entered the next room, it was the same. Blood was splattered on the walls. We moved from room to room, and in front of the main school building, there was a small bamboo structure. There, we found another large pool of blood. Near the thin bamboo wall and the school fence, I saw part of a skull.

Later in the day, May Pan went to speak to the parents of the children killed in the attack:

Some parents did not just lose one child. ... We saw two sisters lying side by side [at the cemetery], and their mother was crying beside them. ... That very morning, they had gone to school full of life. In just moments, their mother had lost both of her daughters, one of whom didn't even have a head, and their mother couldn't even say goodbye properly. Nearby, I saw another child who also no longer had a head. Next to him was a grade seven girl. Her mother said they were displaced from their village due to fighting, and her daughter just recently joined the village school.

"Sayar Mg Mg," 37, a teacher and eyewitness who was among the first responders, said: "I saw that jet fighter flying away. I also heard the sound of the explosion. ... We had to pull out the injured children and the dead bodies. ... We held the funerals for all [20 children and two teachers] this evening."

As of May 14, two additional students from Grade 2 and Grade 3 died from injuries sustained in the attack, bringing the death toll to 24, while others remain in critical condition with limited medical assistance. According to media reports and eyewitness accounts, the victims included students from Grade 2 through 11, along with two teachers. More than 100 others were reportedly injured.

All eyewitnesses confirmed to Fortify Rights that there was no active conflict in the area surrounding the school at the time of the airstrike, or any presence of armed fighters or military positions in the village.

On May 12, during an evening broadcast on Myanmar Radio and Television, the state-run television network controlled by the Myanmar junta, officials dismissed reports of the Tabayin Township school bombing as "fake news." However, consistent eyewitness testimonies and verified photographic evidence obtained by Fortify Rights directly contradict this denial.

In response to the attack, the Ministry of Education under the National Unity Government of Myanmar issued a statement the same day, calling on the international community to "impose effective sanctions against the military junta and support the creation of safe educational environments where children can learn without fear."

Fortify Rights documented a separate junta airstrike on another village in Tabayin Township on April 23, which killed five people, including a 13-year-old child.

International humanitarian law, or the law of war, applies to much of Myanmar, where the situation constitutes a non-international armed conflict. Under the Geneva Conventions—specifically Common Article 3—all parties are required to treat civilians humanely and to always distinguish during military operations between legitimate military targets and protected civilians or civilian objects, such as homes and schools not being used for military purposes. Both direct attacks on civilians and indiscriminate strikes that fail to distinguish between civilian and military targets are expressly prohibited under international law.

The Myanmar junta's bombing of a school in Tabayin Township, Sagaing Region, which killed 22 children and two teachers, appears to serve no legitimate military aim and may amount to a war crime, said Fortify Rights. Similar strikes on schools and religious buildings—including monasteries, churches, and mosques sheltering civilians—occurred during the junta's self-declared ceasefire, showing an escalation in attacks on civilian targets during this period.

Despite sanctions by governments, including the United States, targeting the sale and transfer of aviation fuel to the Myanmar junta, the military regime continues to purchase aviation fuel and military supplies on the international market and use them to launch deadly attacks on civilians.

As ASEAN leaders prepare to meet for their annual summit later this month, Malaysia, which holds the rotating chair of the regional bloc, should propose emergency measures to protect Myanmar's civilian population. Such emergency measures should include regional coordination to deprive the Myanmar military junta of aviation fuel, weapons, and munitions, and refuse to recognize the junta, which tried to seize power in a military coup, as the legitimate government of Myanmar.

"ASEAN is keen to find an ASEAN-led solution to the crisis in Myanmar, yet it has consistently turned a blind eye to the junta's atrocity crimes," said Sai Arkar. "There is nothing 'Asian' about inaction by ASEAN while the Myanmar junta continues slaughtering its own people, and strongly worded statements were never going to stop the junta. ASEAN must now, finally, take action."

MYANMAR JUNTA REINFORCES KYAUKPHYU TO PROTECT CHINESE-BACKED DEEP-SEA PORT AMID AA OFFENSIVE

As the military junta continues to lose ground in Rakhine State, it has begun reinforcing Kyaukphyu Township, home to the strategically important Chinese-backed Madaya Island deep-sea port, in an attempt to prevent it from falling into the hands of the Arakan Army (AA), according to military sources and local residents.

On 15 May, a navy vessel carrying reinforcements and military equipment docked at Kyaukphyu's No. 1 port. A local resident, speaking anonymously to Mizzima, reported that around 120 troops and heavy weaponry were unloaded and sent toward Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) 543 near Gonechwin village.

"The navy ships arrived today with a lot of heavy weapons and soldiers at least around 120 troops. The reinforcements headed toward Battalion 543," the resident said.

The weapons and personnel were distributed to both LIB 543 and Police Battalion 32 near Kyaukphyu, which are engaged in heavy clashes with AA fighters. A local military source suggested that the reinforcements might have come from Maungdaw or the Ayeyarwady Region, rather than nearby Sittwe.

"The number of troops is estimated at between 100 and 200. The No. 1 port has a long jetty for docking large navy ships. If they moved toward the creek, there's the Ngapaw port as well," the source added.

This recent deployment follows a series of reinforcements in Kyaukphyu. On 7 May, over 300 troops were shipped from Sittwe to the Dhanyawadi Naval Base. On 25 March, more than 200 troops were airlifted to bolster positions at LIB 542 and LIB 543.

Kyaukphyu continues to witness intense battles between the junta and the AA. Locals reported heavy clashes until the morning of 14 May, though the situation was calmer on 15 May. On 9 May, the junta launched an airstrike on Kinebwe village, near Police Battalion 32.

Military sources say the AA is aggressively attacking with heavy artillery and firepower tactics, while the junta is retaliating with maritime forces and airstrikes, including the use of cluster bombs and thermobaric munitions.

Key junta installations in Kyaukphyu Township include the Dhanyawadi Naval Base, LIB 542 near Kyauk Ta Lone Pagoda, LIB 543 near Gonechwin, Infantry Battalion (IB) 34, Police Battalion 32 near the town, and the Taungmawgyi Naval Sub-Headquarters.

The AA has so far captured 14 towns in Rakhine State, including the site of the Western Regional Military Command responsible for military operations in the state. The group is now attempting to take the last three junta-held coastal towns: Sittwe, Kyaukphyu, and Munaung.

Although fighting in Sittwe has quieted since early May, locals said Police Battalion 12 fired heavy artillery toward Pauktaw and Ponnagyun townships on 13 May, and toward coastal areas outside Sittwe on 8 May.



GNU PURSUES DEPUTY BATTALION COMMANDER WHO FLED STRATEGIC MILITARY OUTPOST NEAR MYANMAR-THAI BORDER

The Karen National Union (KNU) announced that it is actively pursuing a deputy battalion commander who abandoned a key junta stronghold during its fall to resistance forces earlier this week.

The outpost, known as Tarle (also called Tanyarkyo) camp in Paingkyon Township, Karen State, fell to joint forces of the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and allies at around 7 pm on 13 May after a five-day offensive.

According to the KNU, the deputy commander and remaining soldiers from Infantry Battalion 24 fled the scene during the assault. Troops from Field Artillery Battalion 311 were also based at the camp. Nine junta personnel were killed during the fighting, including a captain from the artillery unit.

Photos released by the KNU show a significant cache of seized weaponry, including 120 mm mortars, grenade launchers, dozens of automatic rifles, and large amounts of ammunition. One image prominently features a red sign inside the camp bearing the words: "Bravely charge, bravely fight, and bravely annihilate."

While unconfirmed, early reports suggested that the fleeing soldiers may have crossed into Thailand, approximately seven miles from the camp.

Tarle camp, situated near Karte village, has served as a critical Myanmar military outpost since 1986. Historical markings found at the site suggest units such as LIB 106, LIB 560, LIB 315, and Artillery Battalion 314 were previously based there.

The KNU stated that due to the junta's control of the camp, civilians in surrounding villages had been unable to move freely or search for food. With the camp's recapture, locals are now reportedly able to resume daily activities.

The operation is part of a larger campaign by the KNLA and its allies to dismantle junta positions along the Myanmar-Thai border in the KNLA's Brigade 7 area of central Karen State. Resistance forces launched coordinated attacks in late February, and since then, have captured five heavily fortified camps: Puluutu, Khaledae, Mawpharthu, Takhawbekhwee, and Tarle.

The offensive on Puluutu camp in Hlaingbwe Township began on 25 February and concluded with its capture on 14 March. Khaledae camp, also in Hlaingbwe Township and located just a mile from the Thaung Rin River, fell on 25 March after a three-day battle.

Mawpharthu camp, also known as Laywar and located in Myawaddy Township, was seized on 19 April following an assault launched a day earlier. During that attack, around 25 junta soldiers reportedly fled across the Thaung Rin River into Thai territory.

The KNU confirmed that secret operations for this campaign had been underway since March, aimed at weakening junta presence along the border and restoring safe mobility for local communities.

138 MYANMAR TOWNSHIPS EXPERIENCED PHONE AND INTERNET BLACKOUTS IN APRIL

Photo: Abdi Ms

The Voice-Freedom of Expression Movement Group announced on 15 May that phone and internet lines were cut in 138 townships across Myanmar during the month of April. The group's latest report highlights the continuing efforts by authorities and armed groups to restrict access to communications, particularly in conflict-affected areas.

According to the report, seven townships in Ayeyarwady Region, three in Bago Region, nine in Chin State, 18 in Kachin State, seven in Karenni State, two in Karen State, five in Magway Region, 28 in Mandalay Region, one in Mon State, 17 in Rakhine State, 27 in Sagaing Region, three in Shan State (East and North), and three in Tanintharyi Region were affected by phone and internet service disruptions.

The group noted that five states and regions – Kachin, Karenni, Chin, Rakhine, and Mandalay – saw communication blackouts across nearly all of their townships throughout April. In the case of Mandalay Region, the group cited the powerful earthquake on 28 March as the main cause of widespread disruptions, reporting that nearly all communication lines, except Wi-Fi, were affected. However, the report did not detail which phone services or providers were disrupted.

Mizzima attempted to contact a representative from the Voice-Freedom of Expression Movement Group for clarification on this point but had not received a response at the time of reporting.

The report also highlighted the situation in Nawnghkio Township, a territory under the control of the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), where restrictions on phone usage have reportedly tightened since the last week of March.

It noted that phone lines were briefly restored on 16 March before a junta airstrike targeted the Sein Yatana Pariyatti Monastery in the township's South Quarter. Citing security concerns, the TNLA has since imposed stricter phone usage rules, including penalties of up to 1 million kyat in fines and prison sentences of up to two years for unauthorized use of mobile phones.

The group's statement underscores growing concerns over communication shutdowns being used as a tool of control and warfare across Myanmar's conflict zones.



MYANMAR MENTIONED IN GLOBAL ACUTE HUNGER REPORT

More than 295 million people faced acute hunger last year, a new high driven by conflict along with other crises -- and the outlook is "bleak" for 2025 as humanitarian aid falters, a UN-backed report said Friday, with Myanmar one of the countries mentioned.

It was the sixth consecutive annual increase in the number of people hit with "high levels" of acute food insecurity, according to the Global Report on Food Crises.

A total of 295.3 million people endured acute hunger last year -- almost a quarter of the population in 53 of the 65 countries analysed for the report.

This was up from 281.6 million people in 2023, according to the report, which is drafted by a consortium of international organisations and NGOs.

The number of people facing famine reached 1.9 million, more than double from the previous year, according to the report.

A food security monitor warned on Monday that Gaza was at a "critical risk of famine" after more than two months of an Israeli aid blockade.

"From Gaza and Sudan, to Yemen and Mali, catastrophic hunger driven by conflict and other factors

is hitting record highs, pushing households to the edge of starvation," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said in the report.

"The message is stark. Hunger and malnutrition are spreading faster than our ability to respond, yet globally, a third of all food produced is lost or wasted," he said.

Conflict and violence were the primary drivers in 20 countries and territories, where 140 million people faced acute hunger, the report found.

Extreme weather was to blame in 18 countries and "economic shocks" in 15 nations, together affecting a total of 155 million people.

The deteriorating situations in Gaza, Myanmar and Sudan outweighed improvements in Afghanistan and Kenya.

'Failure of humanity'

The report warned that the outlook was "bleak" for 2025 as major donor countries have substantially reduced humanitarian funding.

"This is more than a failure of systems -- it is a failure of humanity," Guterres said.

"Hunger in the 21st century is indefensible. We cannot respond to empty stomachs with empty hands and turned backs," he said.

The "abrupt termination" of funding in 2025 has disrupted humanitarian operations in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Haiti, South Sudan, Sudan and Yemen, the report said. Funding to humanitarian food sectors is projected to sink by up to 45 percent, it said.

US President Donald Trump's administration has dramatically cut foreign aid spending, but other countries have also reduced their contributions.

The report added that "economic shocks" are likely to be a major driver of acute food insecurity as the global economy faces "high uncertainty" due to US tariffs and a weaker US dollar.

THREE JAPANESE FIRMS TO EXIT THILAWA PORT PROJECT IN MYANMAR

Three Japanese companies – Kamigumi Co., Ltd., Sumitomo Corporation, and Toyota Tsusho – have confirmed plans to withdraw from the Thilawa Multipurpose International Terminal (TMIT) project in Myanmar and have begun liquidation procedures, according to a statement released by Justice for Myanmar (JFM) on 14 May.

On 19 March, civil society organizations sent formal inquiries to Kamigumi, Sumitomo, Toyota Tsusho, as well as to the Japan Overseas Infrastructure Investment Corporation for Transport & Urban Development (JOIN) and Nippon Export and Investment Insurance (NEXI), seeking information about their exit strategies. JFM stated that Kamigumi, Sumitomo, and Toyota Tsusho responded to the inquiry, affirming their decision to exit the controversial project.

While these companies confirmed disengagement, they did not disclose specific details behind their decision to withdraw. However, JFM noted that the firms had taken measures to safeguard employee rights and ensure staff received transitional support during the exit process.

The TMIT project was developed as part of Japan's Official Development Assistance (ODA) to Myanmar and has been operated in partnership with Ever Flow River Group (EFR), a company linked to the military-owned Myanma Economic Holdings Limited (MEHL), which is under international sanctions.

JFM raised concerns about transparency in the withdrawal process, including unanswered questions about asset transfers, whether the junta would receive penalties for early contract termination, and how any future project revenue would be prevented from reaching military-linked entities.

“Withdrawing from high-risk ventures in Myanmar shouldn't be treated as a routine business decision. It is the responsibility of these companies and public institutions to make sure that the junta or its cronies do not profit monetarily from their withdrawal,” said Yuka Kiguchi, executive director of Mekong Watch.

JOIN, a state-backed investment entity in the project, has yet to offer a substantive response to the inquiries, according to JFM.

Meanwhile, NEXI, which previously insured the project, responded that it had classified the project as having “minimal or no adverse environmental impact” and did not conduct a detailed environmental assessment. The insurance coverage for the project has since ended. Despite NEXI's claimed compliance with OECD Guidelines, JFM criticized the agency for failing to address serious human rights concerns tied to the project.



Thai soldiers on the Thai-Myanmar border.
Photo: AFP

400 FLEE TO THAILAND AS MYANMAR REBELS STRIKE JUNTA BASE

More than 400 Myanmar people fled across the Thai border on Thursday as ethnic minority armed groups bombarded a junta base with drones, the kingdom's armed forces said.

Myanmar's military sparked a civil war, seizing power in a 2021 coup and now battling an array of pro-democracy guerrillas and ethnic minority armed groups which have long been active in the country's fringes.

Much of the fighting has focused on control of border crossings where combatants can fill their war chests by running lucrative toll gates controlling trade and smuggling routes.

Thailand's military said the Karen National Liberation Army and the Karen National Defence Organisation "used unmanned aerial drones to launch a bombing attack" on a junta border base around 4:45 am (2145 GMT Wednesday).

"414 displaced people from Myanmar fled across to the Thai side", near Mae La in Tak province, around 250 miles (400 kilometres) northwest of Bangkok, a statement said.

They have been housed in a nearby temple and monastery while Thai troops have stepped up border patrols, the statement added.

Armed organisations recruiting from the Karen ethnic group have been active for decades and have emerged as key challengers to the junta holding control over border crossings with Thailand.

Myanmar's civil war has caused huge waves of population displacement, with 81,000 refugees or asylum seekers from the country currently living in Thailand, according to United Nations figures.

AFP

Photo: AFP

REPORTS OF INDIAN NAVY FORCING ROHINGYAS INTO SEA 'UNCONSCIONABLE': UN EXPERT

A UN expert said on Thursday he was investigating "credible reports" that Rohingya refugees were forced off an Indian navy vessel into the Andaman Sea, in what would be an "unconscionable" act.

"The idea that Rohingya refugees have been cast into the sea from naval vessels is nothing short of outrageous," said Tom Andrews, the United Nations special rapporteur on the rights situation in Myanmar.

"I am seeking further information and testimony regarding these developments and implore the Indian government to provide a full accounting of what happened."

Andrews, who is an independent expert mandated by the UN Human Rights Council but who does not speak on behalf of the UN itself, said he was "deeply concerned by what appears to be a blatant disregard for the lives and safety of those who require international protection".

The mostly Muslim Rohingya have been heavily persecuted in Myanmar for decades.

One million Rohingya live in a string of squalid camps in Bangladesh after escaping a 2017 military crackdown in Myanmar.

Thousands of them risk their lives each year on

long sea journeys to seek refuge elsewhere.

Andrews' statement pointed to reports that Indian authorities last week detained dozens of Rohingya refugees living in Delhi, "many or all of whom held refugee identification documents".

Around 40 members of the group were reportedly blindfolded and flown to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and then transferred to an Indian naval ship, he said.

"After the boat crossed the Andaman Sea, the refugees were reportedly given life jackets, forced into the sea and made to swim to an island in Myanmar territory," he said.

"Such cruel actions would be an affront to human decency and represent a serious violation of the principle of non-refoulment," he said, pointing out that Rohingya "face the threat of violence, persecution and other grave human rights violations in Myanmar".

"The government of India must immediately and unequivocally repudiate unconscionable acts against Rohingya refugees, stop all deportations to Myanmar and ensure that those responsible for these blatant violations of India's international obligations are held responsible," Andrews said.

AFP



Photo: AFP

BURMA CAMPAIGN UK URGES BAN ON MILITARY COMPANIES PROFITING FROM EARTHQUAKE AID

On 14 May, Burma Campaign UK issued a press release calling on international investors, United Nations agencies and international humanitarian organisations operating in Myanmar to make efforts to guarantee that companies owned by the Myanmar military do not benefit from earthquake reconstruction efforts.

The text of the press release is as follows.

It is vital that donations provided to assist earthquake victims in one part of Burma do not help finance Burmese military bombs being dropped in another part of Burma.

The Burmese military has leapfrogged to a focus on the reconstruction stage without coming close to addressing the urgent needs of those who have lost their homes and jobs following the devastating earthquake which struck Burma on 28th March 2025.

The Burmese military has already leveraged the earthquake to try to gain international legitimacy, and also to secure significant international donations and pledges for reconstruction. Now, the Burmese military will seek to 'cash in' on the earthquake through the large number of companies it owns or has stakes or financial interests in.

This includes cement, steel and other industries, and well-known brands such as Rhino Cement, Sinn Min Cement and Flying Horse Cement, as well as Tristar steel. With cement prices more than double what they were pre-earthquake, the military can expect to financially benefit from reconstruction efforts.

Burma Campaign UK calls on international investors, United Nations agencies and international

humanitarian organisations to have policies in place to ensure that they do not purchase any goods or services from Burmese military-owned or controlled companies. This should be a standard policy anyway, not only regarding the earthquake.

Aside from the moral imperative to ensure international companies and non-governmental organisations do not purchase goods and services from Burmese military companies, if there were to be a scandal in which it was revealed that international aid was used to purchase goods from a military-owned company, it would undermine public confidence in donating.

Burma Campaign UK has produced a 'Boycott List' of military-owned company brands to help governments, organisations and individuals avoid military-owned companies, and information on military economic interests is available on the Justice For Myanmar website and in the United Nations Fact Finding Mission report. Links are below.

No Burmese military company has a monopoly in any sector in the same way that they did 15 years ago. There are alternatives to military-owned company products and services.

There are many challenges and sensitivities for humanitarian organisations operating in the parts of Burma currently occupied by the Burmese military, and also risks for local partners, which may make it unsafe to make public statements about avoiding military companies. Such policies should be followed privately regardless.

Photo: AFP



MYANMAR JUNTA AIRSTRIKE KILLS AT LEAST 12 CIVILIANS IN VILLAGE IN RATHEDAUNG

A Myanmar military airstrike on Tun Ra Wai (Old) village in Rathedaung Township, Rakhine State, killed at least 12 civilians and injured more than 20 others, according to Ko Wai Hin Aung, a local writer and social support volunteer active in the area.

The airstrike occurred at around 10 am on 13 May, when junta aircraft dropped two 500-pound bombs on the village.

"Initially, we confirmed 10 deaths, but during follow-up communication, we received information that two more people had died. I can confirm this," Ko Wai Hin Aung told Mizzima at around 8 pm the same day.

The identities of the newly confirmed victims are still being verified, while two of the wounded are reportedly in critical condition.

U Myat Htun, director of the Arakan Human Rights Defenders and Promoters Association, condemned the attack, saying "This is a clear violation of the Geneva

Convention, which prohibits attacks on civilians during armed conflict."

A local resident from Rathedaung reported that military aircraft were circling the area during the morning.

"We couldn't see them from where we were, but we could hear the sounds clearly," the resident said.

Efforts to contact both the village resident and Arakan Army (AA) spokesperson U Khaing Thukha for further details were unsuccessful at the time of reporting.

Meanwhile, residents of Kyaukpyu Township said the junta has been conducting near-daily airstrikes in their area throughout May, as fighting continues to intensify across Rakhine State.



EU DEMANDS ACCOUNTABILITY FOR MYANMAR SCHOOL STRIKE

The EU on Wednesday voiced shock at a deadly air strike on a school in central Myanmar, warning the "perpetrators must be held accountable for this atrocity".

A Myanmar junta air strike on Monday killed 20 students and two teachers in the village of Oe Htein Kwin in the country's Sagaing region, according to a school staff member, a local administrator, and other witnesses.

"We are horrified over reports of a massacre in a village school in Sagaing," EU foreign affairs spokeswoman, Anitta Hipper, said on X.

"Our deepest condolences to the families of the victims, most of them children."

The strike took place during a purported truce -- to ease aid after March's devastating magnitude-7.7 quake -- between the junta, which seized power in 2021, and guerrilla fighters.

AFP



Kyaw Zwar Minn outside the property in London.
Photo: AFP

OUSTED MYANMAR ENVOY CHARGED WITH TRESPASS IN LONDON RESIDENCE ROW

Myanmar's ex-ambassador to London has been charged with trespass for refusing to leave his ambassadorial residence, police said Wednesday, after he was stripped of his post by the military junta following a 2021 coup.

Kyaw Zwar Minn, 66, faces a charge of diplomatic trespass and will appear before a court on May 30, London's Metropolitan Police said.

The case comes after diplomats close to the junta in April 2021 seized the embassy in central London. They refused access to Minn, a supporter of Aung San Suu Kyi's civilian government overthrown by a coup in February that year.

Britain's Conservative government at the time indicated it would offer its protection to the ousted ambassador.

The then British foreign minister, Dominic Raab, condemned "the bullying actions of the Myanmar military regime in London" and paid tribute to Kyaw Zwar Minn for his "courage".

Minn's lawyer said after his client was questioned by police in 2023 that the residence remained the property of the Union of Myanmar.

"My client has always maintained that he is more than happy to hand over the keys to a representative of the democratically elected government of Myanmar," he added.

The 2021 coup plunged Myanmar into a conflict that has forced more than a million people to flee their homes, according to the United Nations, with thousands more arrested.

Myanmar's relations with the United Kingdom, the former colonial power, have deteriorated sharply since the military seized power.

It was not immediately clear if Minn was still living at the residence.

AFP



AMBASSADOR KYAW MOE TUN URGES UN ACTION AGAINST MYANMAR JUNTA AFTER AIRSTRIKE

On 12 May, Ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun made an intervention at the United Nations to report the bombing of a school in Oehteindwin village, Depayin Township, Sagaing Region by junta aircraft. The attack resulted in the deaths of 20 students and 2 female teachers. He called on the international community to end all forms of support to the military junta.

U Kyaw Moe Tun is the Permanent Representative of the Union of Myanmar to the United Nations. The intervention was made during the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 Conference 2025 in New York.

The text of the intervention continues below.

I wish to thank the organizers for convening this conference.

I also thank all speakers for their insightful remarks.

The 80th anniversary of the United Nations is just around the corner and we are approaching closer to the SDG deadlines.

Last year, the international community achieved a milestone by adopting the Pact for the Future in the realization of strengthening efforts to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies. Results were yield based

on our collective effort to safeguarding multilateralism. Moreover, many other processes have also been undergoing in parallel discussions on specific or all SDGs on different fora.

Nevertheless, many global turbulences remain unresolved, continue to grow and are alarmingly obstructing SDG achievements.

Among these, authoritarian and conflicts are predominant indicators.

In Myanmar alone, there is a clear lack of progress in implementing SDG 16 targets.

The unlawful military coup in February 2021 and subsequent military junta's atrocities have demolished peace, stability and rule of law in the country.

Justice have been ceased to exist as the perpetrating military continues to commit and intensify atrocities amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Human capital and resources are shrinking under the junta's continued brutalities.

They have been attacking civilians, civilian infrastructure as well as all other democratic institutions, let alone institutions for sustainable development.

Daily indiscriminate aerial attacks and bombings have been causing extensive civilian casualties and infrastructural damages, hitting hard on institutions such as schools and hospitals that are liable for implementing sustainable development ambitions.

Even this morning, the military junta conducted aerial attacks on a school in O Htein Twin Village, Tabayin Township, Sagaing Region, killing two teachers and 20 children and injuring many. It is not an isolated case. Moreover, Sagaing is one of the hardest hit regions by the 7.7 magnitude earthquake just over a month ago.

Some states are supporting the military junta. Supporting the military junta materially or morally will help them to kill more people including children.

Stop bombings; Stop killing people; Stop supporting the military junta.

To enable to find a sustainable solution, we have to address the root causes.

We strongly view that ending the military junta and military dictatorship, and building a federal democratic union in Myanmar will pave a way towards prevalence of sustained peace and justice in Myanmar.

I again appeal to the international community to help our efforts to end the military dictatorship and build a federal democratic union.



Catherine West, UK Minister for the Indo-Pacific

UK MINISTER SHOCKED BY MYANMAR JUNTA'S DEADLY TARGETING OF A SCHOOL IN SAGAING

A UK Minister has expressed horror at reports of a Myanmar junta attack on a school in Sagaing region.

Catherine West, UK Minister for the Indo-Pacific, said: "We are horrified by reports of a Myanmar regime airstrike on a school in an earthquake-affected area at a time when a ceasefire has been announced. Schools are meant to be a place of safety and opportunity, not collateral in a conflict."

She added: "We repeat our call to all parties, particularly the Myanmar military, to refrain from airstrikes, safeguard civilians, and protect civilian infrastructure."

The UK government response came after news was published on the incident.

A junta airstrike targeting a school in Oehteindwin village, Depayin Township, Sagaing Region, on the morning of 12 May has left at least 22 people dead including students and two teachers and over 50 others injured, according to the Depayin township brotherhood. The death toll is expected to rise.

A local resistance source told Mizzima that a military jet dropped bombs on the Oehteindwin village secondary school around 9:40 am while students were sitting for exams.

"Many children and teachers were killed or injured. Some had their eyes gouged out, the situation is horrific," said the source, who was at the scene shortly after the strike.

A Depayin Township People's Administration official confirmed the death toll, telling Mizzima the youngest is an 8-year-old 1st grade student and the eldest a 17-year-old eleventh grade student. The official said their mobile clinic is on standby to provide medical aid, but transporting the wounded to treatment centres remains a serious challenge due to ongoing insecurity.

This is the fourth junta-led airstrike in Depayin Township since April. Previous attacks have also resulted in civilian deaths, including the 23 April bombing of Lethloke village that killed five people. The S&C Group provided aid to those victims on 11 May, just a day before the Oehteindwin bombing, according to the Depayin Township People's Administration.

The Myanmar junta claims to be working under a declared ceasefire, valid until the end of May, but is not adhering to the directive.

MYANMAR JUNTA DENIES BOMBING THAT KILLED 24 AT DEPAYIN SCHOOL, BLAMES 'FALSE MEDIA REPORTS'

Despite mounting evidence and eyewitness accounts, Myanmar's military junta has denied responsibility for an airstrike that killed 24 people including 20 children at a school in Ohtein Dwin (North) village, Depayin Township, Sagaing Region.

The attack occurred at 9:40 am on 12 May, but the junta dismissed reports of the tragedy as "fabricated" during a national propaganda broadcast aired at 8 pm the same day.

"It has been learned that anti-state media falsely reported and spread news that the Myanmar military carried out a bombing attack on a school in Depayin. According to a local security official, the news is not true," the junta claimed. They added that the military does not target civilian sites and insisted the government is committed to "enhancing the education of future generations."

However, documentation and images shared by locals with Mizzima present a far different reality.

Photographs show a severely damaged school building with its roof blown apart, and the bodies of at least ten children in school uniforms lying in pools of blood. Severed limbs, mangled schoolbags, and broken wooden beams were also visible.

The airstrike killed 20 students ranging in age from 8 to 17 and two female teachers. The victims included 15 girls and five boys, and approximately 50 others were injured, with many transported to hospitals in neighbouring Budalin Township.

Locals estimated that a 300-pound bomb was used in the attack based on the remnants found at the

scene, while a report by BBC Burmese suggested the munition could have been a 500-pound bomb.

The school, which had a main building and several extended classrooms totalling 12 structures in all, served as an interim educational institution under the National Unity Government (NUG) and had 289 students enrolled, according to the Depayin People's Administration Team.

A local education official stated that the academic schedule in Depayin is irregular and heavily dependent on military operations. "It's not like a normal school year," they said, highlighting the ongoing instability in the region.

Crucially, there were no ground clashes or resistance activity in the area at the time of the bombing, according to local reports and sources cited by Myanmar Now.

A video report by The Irrawaddy captured the aftermath: bloodstains on floors, empty schoolbags, and white-and-green-painted classroom walls pockmarked with shrapnel damage. Torn zinc roofing sheets and collapsed beams littered the compound.

This marks the second deadliest airstrike on a school in Depayin Township in recent years. On 16 September 2022, a junta air raid on Letyetkone village killed 13 civilians, including 11 children.

As of now, the junta has offered no further evidence to support its denial. The National Unity Government (NUG) and other resistance groups have not publicly responded to the junta's latest claim at the time of writing.



MYANMAR JUNTA AND UNESCO DISCUSS SUPPORT FOR QUAKE-DAMAGED SCHOOLS AND HERITAGE RESTORATION

The junta's Minister of Education, Dr. Nyunt Pe, and UNESCO's Resident Representative in Myanmar, Mr. Ichiro Miyazawa, held talks on 13 May in Naypyidaw to discuss potential cooperation in repairing and rebuilding earthquake-damaged schools, according to the junta-run Myanmar Alin newspaper on 14 May.

During the meeting, the junta's education minister outlined plans to restore damaged basic education schools, degree colleges, and universities in preparation for the new academic term, which is scheduled to begin on 2 June. The discussions also included the construction of new schools and the establishment of temporary classrooms to accommodate students during the rebuilding phase.

The 28 March earthquake, one of the most powerful in recent memory, caused extensive damage across central Myanmar. The junta reported that more than 6,700 schools were affected nationwide, including over 620 of the 750 basic education schools in the capital, Naypyidaw. University facilities also sustained damage, with the main building of Mandalay University and

parts of Kyaukse University of Technology and Kyaukse University among those impacted.

According to the junta, the quake claimed over 3,700 lives and damaged ministry offices and staff housing. The education minister had earlier stated on 7 May that reconstruction work must be expedited to ensure schools reopen on schedule in June.

In a separate meeting on the same day, Deputy Minister of Religious Affairs and Culture Daw Nu Mya Zan also met with the UNESCO representative. Their talks focused on restoring ancient cultural structures damaged by the earthquake. The junta reported that 1,752 heritage sites have been identified for repair, with restoration prioritized based on severity.

The meeting with UNESCO highlighted potential collaboration on both educational infrastructure and cultural heritage preservation in the wake of the disaster. However, the report did not specify any formal agreements or timelines for UNESCO's involvement.

Premchai Karnasuta. Photo: AFP

THAI TYCOON SURRENDERS OVER DEADLY SKYSCRAPER COLLAPSE

A Thai construction tycoon turned himself in on Friday to face charges of alleged negligence over the collapse of a skyscraper that killed dozens of people in a powerful earthquake, police said.

The 30-storey Bangkok tower crumbled in seconds, killing 89 people, mostly construction workers, when a magnitude-7.7 tremor hit neighbouring Myanmar on March 28.

The building being constructed to house the State Audit Office was the only structure to collapse in the Thai capital, raising serious concerns about safety standards and oversight.

A Thai court on Thursday issued arrest warrants for 17 people on charges of "professional negligence causing death", including Premchai Karnasuta, CEO of Italian-Thai Development (ITD), one of the kingdom's largest construction firms.

Premchai and 14 other suspects reported to Bangkok's Bang Sue Police station where "they denied all charges", district police chief Sanong Sangmanee told AFP, adding the remaining suspects were due Monday.

If convicted, the 71-year-old magnate faces up to 10 years in prison and a fine of 200,000 baht (\$6,000).

Livestream footage from local outlet The Reporters showed Premchai in a wheelchair as officers escorted him from the police station to court.

A court official told AFP that Premchai will be held in pre-trial detention while prosecutors continue their investigation.

This is not the tycoon's first legal tangle.

In 2021 a Thai court sentenced him to three years and two months in prison for poaching protected wildlife, including a black panther.

He was released early in 2023 as part of a group of inmates granted clemency for good behaviour.

According to public filings with the Stock Exchange of Thailand, Premchai owns nearly 12 percent of ITD's shares.

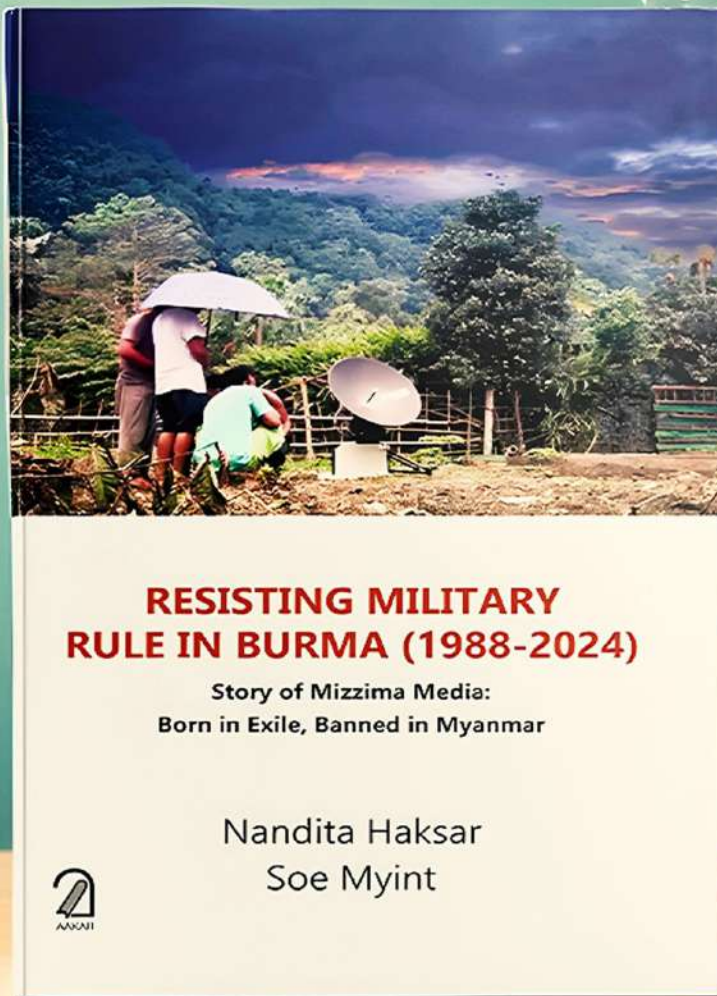
Thai justice department investigators said Friday they will probe cement plates used in the tower's construction to gather further evidence for their case.

AFP

RESISTING MILITARY RULE IN BURMA (1988-2024)

STORY OF MIZZIMA MEDIA: BORN IN EXILE, BANNED IN MYANMAR

by Nandita Haksar and Soe Myint



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Photo: AFP

THE SOUTH CHINA SEA STANDOFF: MANILA'S STRATEGY TO COUNTER CHINA'S MOVES

SUN LEE

China's exclusion of Filipino fisherfolk from the South China Sea presents a serious challenge. One response could be restricting its access to the Philippine seafood market. The Philippine government remains uneasy about escalating tensions in the West Philippine Sea. After the Chinese Coast Guard blocked the BRP Cobra off Zambales on April 6, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. expressed concern but stressed professionalism and patriotism in handling the situation. The Philippines continues strengthening its military and coast guard to counter China's growing assertiveness in the region.

The Philippines has long acknowledged the growing challenge posed by China's Coast Guard and maritime militia within its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Their presence directly affects the ability of Filipino fisherfolk to reach essential fishing grounds, threatening livelihoods. Around 300,000 fisherfolk rely on the waters of the West Philippine Sea (WPS), particularly in key regions like the National Capital Region, MIMAROPA, and Central Luzon, which are both densely populated and heavily dependent on marine resources. The decline in fish catches from the WPS raises serious concerns.

In 2016, an international tribunal in The Hague ruled that China's interference with Filipino fishers violated the Philippines' sovereign rights. It also condemned China's inaction in preventing its fleets from intruding into the Philippine waters.

Despite securing a legal victory, the Philippines has struggled to deter China from infringing on its sovereign rights since the 2012 Scarborough Shoal incident. Even after the 2016 arbitral ruling affirmed these violations, Beijing continues asserting its claims in the South China Sea, restricting Philippine access and jurisdiction. Each effort by Manila to push back is met with escalating retaliation, making it increasingly challenging for Philippine maritime authorities to safeguard territorial rights and protect the livelihoods of Filipino fisherfolk in the contested waters.

While China continues to restrict Filipino fishers from accessing South China Sea waters, Chinese vessels actively engage in illegal fishing within the Philippines' Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). A 2024 Overseas Development Institute study revealed the presence of 77 Chinese-flagged ships in Philippine waters, causing significant economic and social

repercussions. Many participated in illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, leading to a 0.02 percent drop in GDP from mid-2021 to mid-2022. This period also saw 17,000 marine sector job losses and pushed 24,000 Filipinos into poverty.

Despite ongoing maritime tensions, China continues to be a leading supplier of fishery imports to the Philippines. In 2020, Chinese exports accounted for 26% of the Philippines' total fishery import value, surpassing Papua New Guinea (21%) and Vietnam (12%). By 2022, imports from China reached 219,500 metric tons, valued at \$343.8 million, with Vietnam trailing at 77,400 metric tons worth \$133.7 million. Though imports from China declined slightly in 2023, it remained the top source, totalling \$310 million, including mackerel, cuttlefish, seaweed, and carrageenan.

China's dominance in both the West Philippine Sea fisheries and the Philippines' import market calls for a strategic policy review. To address employment, food security, and economic stability, Manila must adopt a sustainability-centered approach. One effective measure would be banning imports of fish and aquatic products linked to illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing. This would not only discourage China's continued exploitation of WPS fisheries but also reinforce ethical trade and responsible resource management.

The Philippines can align its policy with the ASEAN Guidelines for Preventing the Entry of Fish and Fishery Products from IUU Fishing Activities into the Supply Chain, endorsed in 2015, and Republic Act 10654, which seeks to combat IUU fishing. By restricting questionable imports, Manila could assert its maritime sovereignty while safeguarding its fisheries industry.

The ASEAN Guidelines equip member states with measures to prevent fishery products from IUU fishing from entering global trade. Though non-binding, they reinforce the Philippines' duty to combat illegal fishing in the region.

Within the country, RA 10654 strengthens government oversight, particularly through the Department of Agriculture and the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources. It grants them authority to regulate fisheries within Philippine waters, including

the EEZ, and empowers them to implement trade policies that curb the sale of fishery products linked to IUU fishing.

For this policy to succeed, the Philippines must enforce strict regulations, collaborate internationally, and target fishery imports linked to illegal fishing. In the short term, diversifying trade partnerships with countries committed to sustainable fishing—such as Japan, Vietnam, and Indonesia—will reduce reliance on a single source. Strengthening these ties can enhance food security and promote ethical fisheries management.

The government must support local fish traders and processors impacted by import restrictions, helping them transition to domestic supply chains. Assistance programs can ease adaptation while ensuring economic stability. Long-term investment in fisheries is crucial, requiring financial aid for fisherfolk, promotion of sustainable aquaculture, and enhanced fisheries management. Strengthening local production will reduce dependency on imports and secure a resilient, self-sustaining industry for the Philippines.

The Philippines must take firm action against China's activities in the West Philippine Sea, signaling strong opposition rather than enabling continued trade in fishery products. Instead of rewarding China, Manila should impose penalties for illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, which harms the economy, fisheries, and environment.

While modernizing the navy and coast guard is important, it is insufficient on its own. Sustainability and equity must take priority by enforcing strict policies against IUU fishing and strengthening domestic production. This should be central to Manila's South China Sea strategy.

Sun Lee is a pseudonym for a writer who covers Asia and geopolitical affairs.



Indian soldiers in Srinagar, Kashmir.
Photo: AFP

INDIA ASKS IMF TO RECONSIDER PAKISTAN PROGRAMME OVER 'TERROR FUNDING'

Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said Friday the International Monetary Fund (IMF) should reconsider a one billion dollar loan to Pakistan alleging it was "funding terror", a move denounced by Islamabad as proof of New Delhi's desperation.

India and Pakistan last week clashed in the worst military violence in decades, killing around 70 people before agreeing a ceasefire that began Saturday.

The confrontations were sparked by an attack on tourists by gunmen in Indian-administered Kashmir last month that New Delhi accused Islamabad of backing -- a charge it denies.

"I believe a big portion of the \$1 billion coming from IMF will be used for funding terror infrastructure," Singh told troops at an air force base in western India.

"I believe any economic assistance to Pakistan is nothing less than funding terror."

Despite India's objections, the IMF last week approved a loan programme review for Pakistan, unlocking a \$1 billion payment which the state bank said has already been received.

A fresh \$1.4 billion loan was also approved under the IMF's climate resilience fund.

India -- which also represents Bhutan, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh on the IMF board -- abstained from the review vote with a statement from its finance ministry stating, "concerns over the efficacy of IMF programmes in case of Pakistan given its poor track record".

"India was the lone country which tried to stop it

and it failed. It again reflects Indian frustration. Trying to criticise an institution like IMF speaks about this desperation," Pakistan's foreign ministry spokesman Shafqat Ali Khan told reporters.

Pakistan came to the brink of default in 2023, as a political crisis compounded an economic downturn and drove the nation's debt burden to terminal levels before being saved by a \$7 billion bailout from the IMF which sparked further crucial loans from friendly nations.

Removed from watchlist

Pakistan, which has long battled militancy within its borders, has faced scrutiny over its ability to combat illicit financing, including to militant organisations and in 2022 was put on an international money-laundering watchlist.

However, the Financial Action Task Force removed Pakistan from its so-called grey-list in 2022 after "significant progress" which included charges being filed against suspected militants accused of being involved in the 2008 attacks in India's Mumbai.

Singh claimed it was "clear that in Pakistan, terrorism and their government are hand in glove with each other.

"In this situation there is a possibility that their nuclear weapons could get their way into the hands of terrorists. This is a danger not just for Pakistan but the entire world," he said.

Singh on Thursday called for Pakistan's nuclear arsenal to be put under the surveillance of the UN's atomic energy agency, with Islamabad firing back that the international community should investigate a nuclear "black market" in India.

Britain's Foreign Secretary David Lammy met with his Pakistani counterpart Ishaq Dar in Islamabad on Friday, where the two discussed the ceasefire, according to a statement from Pakistan's foreign ministry.

It came as the government also held ceremonies across the country to celebrate the military.

"Pakistan's Armed Forces remain fully prepared and resolutely committed to defending every inch of our territory. Any aggression will be countered," Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said while visiting troops on Thursday.

The disputed Muslim-majority region of Kashmir has been at the heart of several wars between the two neighbours, who administer separate portions of the divided territory.

Militants stepped up operations on the Indian side of Kashmir from 2019, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist government revoked the region's limited autonomy and imposed direct rule from New Delhi.

AFP

CHINA'S HIDDEN GRIP ON CAMBODIA'S LAND AND ECONOMY

SUN LEE

Angkor Wat. Photo: Florian Hahn

The highway extends through the dense forest, leading to the Dara Sakor Seashore Resort—one of the most extensive tourism initiatives in Cambodia. Fifteen years since its inception, the development remains largely incomplete. Conceived as a self-sustaining Chinese-funded tourist city, the project has yet to materialize its grand vision, with an unfinished airport, scattered construction, and a single operational casino. While Cambodia actively participates in the China's Belt and Road Initiative, concerns persist regarding environmental degradation and unsustainable investments. The precedent set by Sihanoukville's economic downturn raises apprehensions that Dara Sakor may encounter similar challenges, exacerbating financial and regulatory uncertainties.

Dara Sakor exemplifies the large-scale development favoured by former Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen, yet its origins remain opaque. The media reports minimal consultation regarding environmental and human impact, while Chinese firms involved provide limited transparency, some carrying questionable reputations. The project raises concerns over China's broader strategic ambitions in the region. Hun Sen's rapid economic push relied heavily on land

concessions to influential figures and foreign investors, reinforcing a system of patronage. In 2008, Chinese firm UDG secured a 99-year lease for expansive land development.

UDG secured control over one-fifth of Cambodia's coastline with minimal financial obligations—paying nothing for a decade and just \$1 million annually thereafter. The deal, involving protected land within Botum Sakor National Park, remained undisclosed, preventing public scrutiny. Since 2008, deforestation has claimed 20% of the park, displacing over 1,000 families, who lost their homes.

The landscape, once a thriving home and rice fields, now stands overgrown, reflecting the loss of a family's livelihood. Only a few cashew trees remain reminders of an orchard that once supplemented farming and fishing income. In 2009, displaced villagers were moved to modest wooden houses, far from the coast. Initial protests erupted, and some continue to reject inadequate compensation. Meanwhile, UDG presents an optimistic vision of Dara Sakor, though studies from 2016 indicate a lack of proper environmental assessments, raising concerns about regulatory compliance and long-term sustainability.

GEI found no records explaining how protected forests were reclassified for development. When concerns were raised with UDG, the company dismissed them, asserting compliance with regulations. This lack of accountability damages China's global reputation, fostering perceptions of resource exploitation. Chinese firms struggle to address local grievances abroad, where government intervention is absent, highlighting a crucial learning curve for overseas operations.

In 2020, the U.S. Treasury Department sanctioned UDG, citing human rights violations against displaced villagers and concerns over potential military use of its airport, which features an unusually long runway. Washington remains wary of Chinese-built infrastructure, particularly projects aligned with Beijing's "military-civil fusion" strategy. UDG dismissed the sanctions as baseless, asserting compliance with legal procedures. Despite ambitious projections for Dara Sakor's growth, scepticism persists, especially given strong backing from Chinese state entities since the project's inception.

China's National Development and Reform Commission approved the Dara Sakor project before the agreement was finalized, maintaining oversight thereafter. Tianjin's Communist Party chief, Zhang Gaoli, played a key role early on, later overseeing the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Though predating BRI, Dara Sakor is now a flagship project. UDG cultivated close ties with Cambodia's ruling elite, yet its financial transparency remains questionable. In 2014, China City Construction Company (CCCC) assumed control, leading development planning, further complicating the project's trajectory.

CCCC is a state-owned enterprise. But it is also a troubled company. In 2016, Hong Kong's financial markets were shaken when CCCC abruptly announced its privatization under Chinese government orders. A little-known equity fund, Huinong, took control, alarming investors holding CCCC's "dim sum bonds." Struggling financially, CCCC saw its credit rating decline and began selling assets. Later revelations tied Huinong to the finance ministry, effectively making CCCC state-owned again. Meanwhile, She Zhijiang, a Chinese investor in Dara Sakor, faced legal troubles, accused of operating casinos linked to human trafficking along the Thai-Myanmar border.

Reports of forced detentions in scam centres within Dara Sakor have led to rescues of victims from Thailand, Taiwan, and the Philippines. Publicized abuses in Chinese investment zones are discouraging tourism, slowing Cambodia's economic recovery. Despite leadership changes, significant reform seems unlikely, as vested interests maintain control. Cambodian PM Hun Manet's recent visit to Beijing reaffirmed ties with China, signalling continuity rather than change. Extensive land concessions tied to political elites further entrench Cambodia's existing development model, making transformation difficult.

Commercial exploitation now consumes 80% of the national park, despite repeated warnings from environmental activists. One activist, a young woman recently jailed for protesting land seizures, took a risk visiting Dara Sakor. She remains defiant, insisting that protecting Cambodia's vanishing forests is worth the danger, even if it leads to imprisonment.

The deterioration of Dara Sakor is a direct consequence of the Chinese government's unchecked economic ambitions and lack of environmental stewardship. Under the guise of development, reckless investment has led to mass displacement, destruction of natural habitats, and exploitation of local resources. While grand promises of prosperity were made, the absence of proper oversight has fostered corruption and deepened local hardships. Without meaningful regulatory intervention, Chinese-led projects like Dara Sakor will continue to prioritize control over sustainability, leaving lasting damage instead of genuine economic growth. The need for transparency and accountability has never been more urgent.

Sun Lee is the pseudonym for a writer who covers Asia and geopolitical affairs.



WHOSE BYLINE IS IT ANYWAY?

"We know that the revolution is our priority," Aung, a female journalist, tells the Insight Myanmar Podcast. "Our priority right now is to take down the military dictatorship. At the same time, however, we should remind people of the value of our [women's] rights, so that they think hard about them. After all, are women's rights not human rights, too?"

Aung's career in journalism began over a decade and a half ago, in 2007, against the backdrop of the Saffron Revolution, and she has worked for a number of national and international news agencies since then. Beyond her commitment to journalism, she has championed women's rights and gender equality in the profession.

Aung begins by examining the improvements that Burmese women enjoyed during the transition period. "For example, in the 2020 elections, [a good percentage] of all parliamentary candidates were women," she says. "Many of the winning candidates were also women." However, following the military coup in 2021, things got a whole lot worse again.

Recently, Aung became the General Secretary of the Myanmar Women Journalist Society, an initiative founded in 2016 that provides a space for female journalists from across Myanmar to connect and share relevant information and resources. In 2023, she and her colleagues launched the "Myanmar Women in Media"

initiative aimed at creating networking opportunities across the media landscape. This effort has been particularly crucial in the aftermath of the military coup, which has severely limited professional opportunities. "We wanted to expand our network," she says. "We intend to include not just more female journalists, but also other more females from similar professions—filmmakers, video editors, podcasters, fact-checkers, newsroom anchors, and newsroom presenters."

Moreover, because of the coup, both male and female journalists face unprecedented challenges in their profession. Arbitrary arrests and detentions have become increasingly commonplace. "It can happen whenever!" Aung exclaims. "You may be sitting here one minute and then, moments later, be put under arrest. You may not even be in the profession anymore, and still be under that threat. The military does not care! In fact, [an informant] could just send the military a message one day, claiming he or she is a journalist or is in contact with the National Unity Government, [leading] to them getting arrested!"

Living in such dangerous circumstances is untenable, and so most journalists—along with their organizations—have been forced to relocate to Thailand and India, and, more recently, Bangladesh. They are often undocumented, especially those in border towns like Mae Sot. Still others have opted to flee to the so-called liberated areas in the thick jungles of Myanmar's countryside that are controlled by the various Ethnic Resistance Organizations (EROs) and People's Defense Forces (PDFs).

CATCH THE PODCAST

Click here to read more or listen to the Insight Myanmar Podcast:

<https://insightmyanmar.org/complete-shows/2025/4/22/episode-339-whose-byline-is-it-anyway>

Photo: KNU

KNU'S BORDER OUTPOST SEIZURES CUT OFF JUNTA'S VITAL REVENUE STREAM: SAYS KNU

The Karen National Union's (KNU) systematic capture of junta army outposts along the Thai-Myanmar border is cutting off crucial revenue sources for Myanmar's military junta, a development that KNU spokesperson Pado Saw Taw Nee said is strategically more significant than seizing major towns from the regime, according to local news reports.

He said that the Mae Sot-Myawaddy and Hteekhee border trade points are extremely crucial locations, so capturing them is equivalent to taking control of an entire town.

He added that they have achieved significant advancement by securing these strategically vital positions.

The KNU's 7th Brigade has been consistently capturing junta outposts in their territory. On May 15, the

KNU Central released details about their earlier seizure of the junta's Tarle tactical camp, while simultaneously launching attacks on another junta army position at Mae La-Mawkwilu.

The camp on the Myanmar side is close to Mae La village in Thailand and houses the junta's 24th Light Infantry Battalion. As is typical during border post seizures, local villagers have fled to Thailand, where Thai soldiers are providing assistance and shelter.

A KNU source said that these operations are part of their strategy to clear all junta camps from KNU Brigade 7 territory.



Khant Si Thu. Photo: Facebook

MYANMAR SOCIAL MEDIA USERS CONDEMN ACTOR KHANT SI THU'S DONATION TO JUNTA'S ELECTION COMMISSION STAFF

Myanmar social media users have strongly criticized actor Khant Si Thu for donating food worth 20 million Kyat (approximately \$4,500) to staff and family members of the Union Election Commission office in Mandalay. The donation has sparked outrage as it comes shortly after a devastating earthquake hit the region.

The March 2025 earthquake measured 7.7 on the moment magnitude scale with its epicenter near Sagaing, close to Mandalay, Myanmar's second-largest city. According to UN reports, the disaster killed at least 3,700 people, injured 4,800 more, and left many thousands of families without shelter, water, or medical care.

Netizens pointed out that while Khant Si Thu chose to support election commission employees, many ordinary citizens in Mandalay continue to suffer severely from the earthquake's aftermath.

Social media comments highlighted that the actor appears to be supporting the military junta's controversial election plans rather than helping earthquake victims.

Myanmar's military junta, led by Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, announced plans to hold a general

election in late 2025 or early 2026, the first since the military coup in February 2021. The junta's opponents argued that any election organized during military rule would be a sham and solve no problems. Pro-democracy forces, including the opposition National Unity Government (NUG), have condemned the planned election as "fake" and a desperate attempt by the junta to legitimize its control.

Facebook users responded with harsh criticism to news of Khant Si Thu's donation. A user said, "We should all boycott this actor in unity and solidarity." Another user remarked, "He's the kind of person who will always side with those in power." A third user wrote, "He's an idiot both in movies and in real life." Another user expressed frustration, stating, "Donating to a fake election commission is not a good virtue."

A particularly critical commenter added, "This actor's reputation is already ruined. I've never seen him donate for earthquake victims, flood relief, or disaster response. I stopped watching his movies long ago because he doesn't contribute anything good."

Actor Khant Si Thu was also among those who welcomed the junta chief during his return trip from China in November 2024.

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.