

ON THE GROUND IN MYANMAR

mizzima WEEKLY

Analysis & Insight

A photograph of a woman with dark hair, wearing a yellow t-shirt with star patterns, holding a young child in her lap. The child is wearing a blue t-shirt and is eating something. They are in a dimly lit room with large white plastic bags in the background.

FLEEING FIGHTING

What Displacement Looks Like
On the Ground in Burma

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.

ECONOMY AND BUSINESS

FLOUNDER IN MYANMAR

Myanmar's economic crisis is a tragic tale of compounded misfortune. Since the 2021 military coup, the country has faced escalating conflict, economic mismanagement, and just recently, a devastating natural disaster. Little wonder the World Bank reported last week that the country's GDP is expected to see an annual drop of 2.5 per cent.

The military junta's rule has led to a significant economic downturn. Agriculture shrank by 4 per cent, while industry and services showed no growth, according to media reports. The formal economy contracted, and informal and illicit sectors expanded. Myanmar became the world's largest opium producer and a major hub for synthetic drugs and online scam centres. Foreign investment plummeted, with FDI approvals dropping from over \$5 billion in fiscal year 2019-20 to \$662 million in fiscal year 2023-24.

International sanctions, financial blacklisting, and growing regulatory opacity further discouraged engagement. Poverty surged nationwide, with 77 per cent of households now poor or near-poor, up from 58 per cent in 2017. High inflation, driven by extensive money printing, peaked at 35 per cent in 2022 and remains elevated, particularly for food and transport. Real wages have fallen across sectors, deepening household vulnerability.

Labour shortages have worsened due to mass outmigration, particularly after the 2024 conscription law was brought in. An estimated one-fifth of the population has left their communities due to conflict or hardship, draining the workforce and reducing productivity. Trade declined in 2023 after a brief rebound, with exports down \$4 billion and land border trade sharply reduced in 2024.

The financial sector remains weak, with liquidity shortages, low public trust, and a shrinking microfinance industry.

When the kyat fell by a third of its pre-coup value, the central bank then sold \$600 million worth of foreign reserves – 10 per cent of the entire country's total – to prop up the kyat. By April 2022, reserves dwindled, foreign investment fell and remittances plummeted. This led the junta to impose capital controls and import restrictions which led to shortages of diabetes and cancer medicines.

The overall loss of skilled workers has contributed to a 9–11 per cent GDP contraction since 2020, with the World Bank's latest report painting a grim picture. With the junta prioritizing military aims over economic and human development, it is clear that Myanmar faces a prolonged human resource crisis that could impact its economic recovery for decades.

The recent 7.7 and 6.4 magnitude earthquakes on March 28, 2025, have exacerbated Myanmar's economic woes. The World Bank estimates that the disaster caused approximately \$11 billion in damages, equivalent to 14 per cent of the country's GDP. The quake affected 17 million people, with nine million severely impacted and over 3,900 confirmed dead. The hardest-hit regions, Sagaing, Mandalay and Naypyidaw, are expected to lose up to a third of their economic output between April and September. The earthquake may increase the national poverty rate by 2.8 percentage points, worsening the pre-quake estimate of 31 per cent.

Myanmar's economic decline is a result of a combination of factors: political instability, economic mismanagement, and recently, a devastating natural disaster. The country's future depends on a return to stability, effective governance, and international support to rebuild and recover. This is unlikely to happen under the present military regime.

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Cover photo of an internally-displaced woman and her child in Lashio by AFP



People flee from the fighting near Pekhon Lake in Karen State. Photos: Karen People's Voice

FLEEING FIGHTING

WHAT DISPLACEMENT LOOKS LIKE ON THE GROUND IN BURMA

ANTONIO GRACEFFO

The procession stretched for miles: three-wheeled farm vehicles with families perched precariously on top, trucks overloaded with people sitting on rice sacks and wooden crates, and motorbikes weaving between larger vehicles, their riders wearing expressions of exhaustion and fear.

Thousands of civilians were fleeing after Burma Army forces launched a systematic assault on villages east of Pekhon Lake, forcing entire communities into desperate flight.

Burma's displacement crisis is well known and often reported. The UN and other international organizations have published stark data to show the scale of the emergency. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), more than 3.5 million people were internally displaced by the end of 2024, a 72% increase in just one year. Looking a-

head to 2025, 19.9 million people across the country will require humanitarian aid. Among them are 7.8 million children who are now out of school, with enrollment dropping by as much as 80% in some regions. In addition, 55% of children now live in households that have fallen below the poverty line.

Speaking from the front lines on June 10, David Eubank, head of Free Burma Rangers, reported that there had been 11 wounded the previous day and that heavy shelling had occurred that night from both rocket-assisted 120mm mortars and regular 120mm mortars.

International organizations and monitors will add those 11 to the official tally of war wounded, but for local communities, these aren't just numbers. They're faces—family members and neighbors who are now injured, helpless, and in danger of losing their lives. What's more, the wounded have to be carried, slowing down



the entire exodus and forcing families to make hard choices: carry more food or abandon possessions, all while doing everything they can to help the elderly, the children, and the wounded keep up.

Whether they stay or go, they remain inside a country at war, and the slow-moving caravan of the displaced becomes an easy target for junta aircraft. These people are essentially fleeing from a known unsafe place, an active battle zone, to an unknown place that could be bombed at any moment.

Dozens of displaced families sought shelter in a concrete building along the roadside, huddled among rice sacks and plastic bags containing the few posses-

sions they had left. Fear, exhaustion, and an overwhelming sense of loss left many silent, with tears rolling slowly down their faces. David Eubank reassured the people that his team would help evacuate those unable to walk, offering a brief moment of hope and relief in what is otherwise a hopeless situation.

Through the efforts of the Free Burma Rangers, and through their own bravery, these families would be able to put some distance between themselves and the mortars raining down on their village, but then what? Separated from their homes, livelihoods, and possessions, they would become internally displaced people (IDPs), adding to yet another UN statistic.



Internally displaced people take a break.

And the statistics on displacement are staggering. The UNDP reports that over 49% of the population now lives below the poverty line. Save the Children and UN human rights experts note that more than 40% of children aged 6 to 23 months lack access to diverse, nutritious meals essential for healthy development. Education is in freefall, with about half the country's children out of school, and the junta continues to bomb schools and hospitals.

The World Health Organization warns that the crisis has spread so widely that 56 million people in Burma are now facing some level of need, whether medical, nutritional, educational, or humanitarian. WHO estimates that 12 million people will require humanitarian health assistance. Enrollment in schools is down across the board, with as many as 43% of children missing the chance to attend school nationwide, and in some regions, that number reaches 80%.

In Karenni State, the situation is even worse. More than 80% of the population has been displaced, entire communities uprooted with little hope of return.

On June 13, David Eubank reported that a total of 12,000 people had been displaced by the attacks on villages east of Pekhon Lake, which took place from June 9 to 11.

"There has been mortar and machine gun fire every day," he said, "but most of the civilians have been evacuated."

Now, the battle appears to be shifting toward Moby, a key town near the border of Shan and Karenni states. Located along the strategic Pekhon-Moby-Loikaw supply route, the town has been hotly contested between Myanmar's military (Tatmadaw) and Karenni resistance forces as part of the broader Operation 1111 campaign to retake Kayah State. Moby has changed hands multiple times, and each wave of fighting has forced thousands to flee.

During the worst clashes, the town was nearly emptied as families escaped however they could, many taking the same roads now crowded with civilians displaced by the June 9 assault near Pekhon Lake.

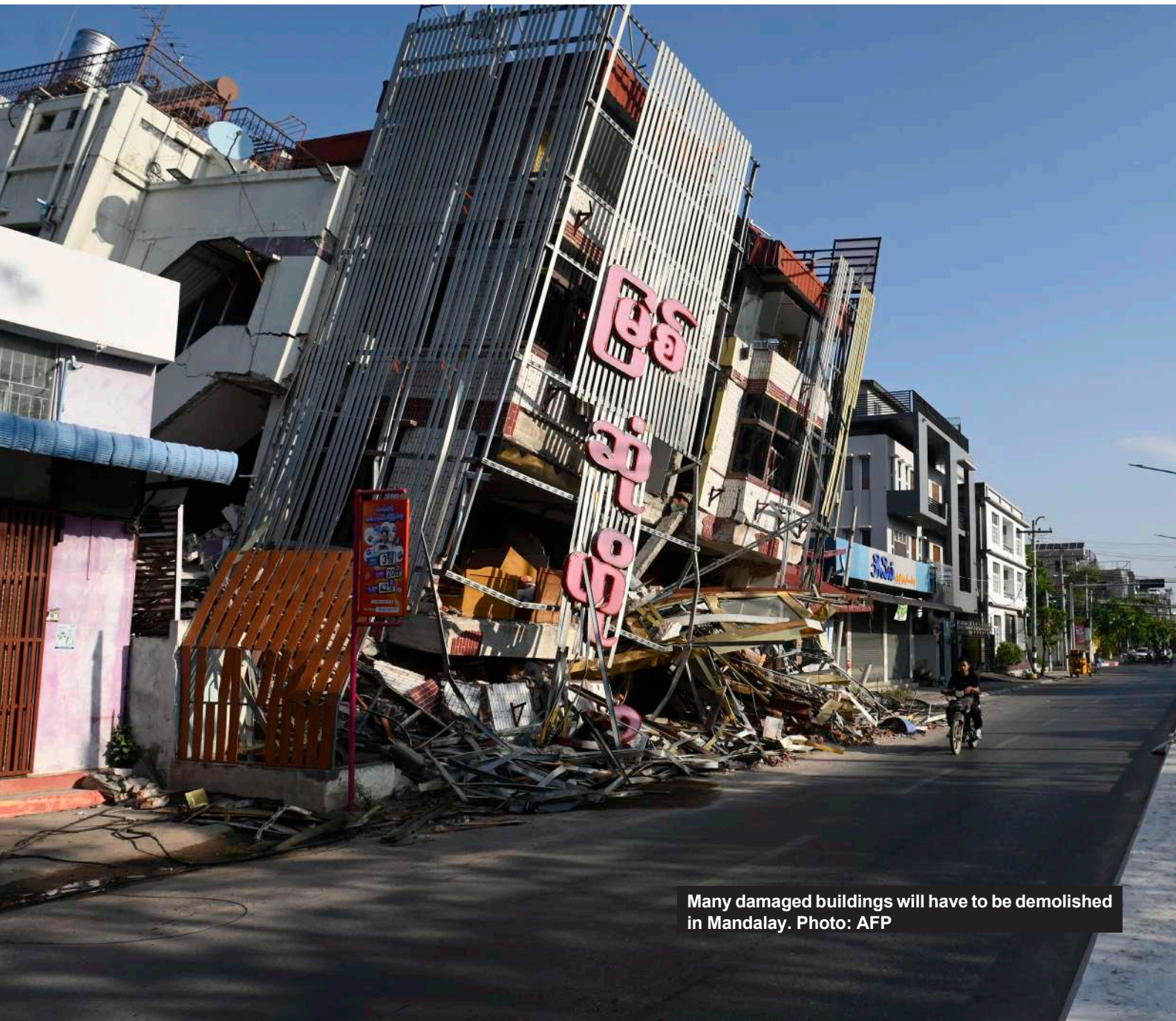
Antonio Graceffo is an economist and China expert who has reported extensively on Burma.



The junta has been attacking many civilian targets.



A woman close to tears takes shelter from the fighting.



Many damaged buildings will have to be demolished in Mandalay. Photo: AFP

MANY EARTHQUAKE VICTIMS RECEIVE LITTLE OR NO AID

The State Administration Council (SAC) has pledged financial support for around 40,000 houses damaged by the recent earthquake in Sagaing Region, according to Vice Senior General Soe Win. He made the remarks during a meeting of the National Natural Disaster Management Committee, held in Naypyidaw.

The SAC reported that over 63,000 homes were affected by the powerful quake. Authorities also claimed they have received 144 billion kyats in donations from both domestic and international sources, in addition to approximately five million US dollars contributed by foreign governments and Myanmar diaspora communities. These funds, according to the junta, have been added to the national disaster management fund for earthquake recovery efforts.

Junta officials stated that more than 264 billion kyats have already been spent to assist victims, and that 2,472 tons of humanitarian aid have arrived from 19 countries.

However, many earthquake victims report that they have received little to no assistance from the junta. Most say their only support has come from private charitable organizations and local donors, rather than through official aid distribution.

Meanwhile, the European Union has donated five million euros to support food assistance for victims through the World Food Programme (WFP). The funding decision followed a joint field assessment by EU and WFP teams. According to estimates, nearly



A cloud hangs over the embattled town of Myawaddy. Photo: AFP

2.8 million people affected by the earthquake are now facing severe food insecurity.

Military update for Karen State, including the situation in and around Myawaddy

Fierce fighting has intensified in Karen State as the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), the armed wing of the Karen National Union (KNU), and its allied resistance forces continue their coordinated attacks on junta outposts along the Thai-Myanmar border. The offensives have been ongoing since early 2025, following months of supply route blockades in areas under the KNLA Brigades 6 and 7.

Between May 23 and June 3, the resistance forces successfully captured six junta positions in Brigade

6 territory, including Kaledo, Kanelay, Wameetha, Bayinnaung, Mawkhee, and Thebawbo. In Brigade 7's area, the campaign began earlier in March, resulting in the seizure of seven strategic outposts: Pulutu, Kaledo, Mawphathu, Takhawbehkwee, Tale, Mela, and Mawphoekay.

As of early June, KNU-led forces are continuing their offensive, tightening blockades on remaining junta positions and launching targeted assaults along the border. Despite the junta's reliance on air support for reinforcements and supplies, its troops have struggled to hold ground or support embattled posts.

On May 28, a junta reinforcement column of about 60 soldiers en route to defend Kanelay was intercepted and defeated by the KNLA and allied forces. The junta's inability to maintain coordinated defense has reportedly led some troops to flee into Thailand, with or



without their weapons. Thai media have reported that soldiers who crossed the Thaungyin (Moei) River were disarmed by the Thai authorities.

Amid ongoing defeats, the junta is reportedly attempting to retake the strategically important Thingannyinaung outpost, which it lost to the KNU in 2024. Preparations are underway at the junta's No. (275) Light Infantry Regiment in Myawaddy, where most of the soldiers are those previously stationed at overrun outposts along the border.

Business and employment situation in Yangon

Since May 1, workers at garment factories in the Yangon area have launched a series of strikes demanding wage increases to keep pace with inflation and rising living costs. The protests were triggered by the steadily declining value of workers' pay, which has dropped from the equivalent of about \$3 per day before the 2021 coup to roughly \$1 under the current military regime.

One of the largest and most visible strikes took place at the Tsang Yih garment factory, which employs 6,800 workers. More than 4,000 workers began striking on May 14, calling for wage adjustments and higher overtime compensation. On May 21, after seven days of protest, workers and management reached an agreement that met the workers' demands, including a wage increase and improved overtime pay. The factory is Taiwanese-owned and produces footwear for the global brand Adidas.

During the strike, SAC Vice Minister of Labour visited the factory but reportedly failed to mediate or offer concrete solutions. According to workers, he only

reiterated existing labour rules rather than engaging in negotiations between management and employees.

Following the Tsang Yih factory's wage adjustment, workers at other factories began pushing for similar increases. Despite the political instability and fear of reprisal, many workers opted to continue protesting inside factory compounds due to the growing gap between their wages and basic living expenses.

A labour activist told DVB, "The factory authorities fired some workers who led the movement. But they were reappointed overnight as the rest of the workers refused to return home. Still, the factory did not discuss wage increases, so the protests continued."

Sporadic strikes are now breaking out across other Yangon-area factories, most of which still pay daily wages of only 6,800 kyats—equivalent to about \$1.50. Workers say this is not enough to cover basic needs, with many calling for a minimum daily wage of at least 10,000 to 12,000 kyats.

Under the ousted National League for Democracy (NLD) government, the minimum wage was set at 4,800 kyats (approximately \$3.50 at the time). Since the coup, inflation has surged, and the junta's Labour Ministry has capped support allowances at just 2,000 kyats. As a result, most workers are struggling with drastically reduced real incomes.



A displaced woman with her child and dog.
Photo: Supplied

MYANMAR ONE OF THE MAIN DRIVERS OF A WORLDWIDE EXODUS DUE TO CONFLICT

Myanmar is one of a handful of countries on the United Nations' radar as they claim the total of 122 million forcibly displaced worldwide 'untenably high'.

While the number of people forcibly displaced from their homes worldwide has dropped slightly from a record peak, it remains "untenably high", the United Nations said on 12 June.

A record 123.2 million people worldwide were forcibly displaced from their homes at the end of 2024, said UNHCR, the UN refugee agency.

But that figure dropped to 122.1 million by the end of April this year, as Syrians began returning home after years of turmoil.

More than 1.5 million Syrians have been able to return home from abroad or from displacement within the war-ravaged country.

But the UNHCR warned that the course of major conflicts worldwide – including Myanmar – would determine whether the figure would rise again.

The agency said the number of people displaced

by war, violence and persecution worldwide was "untenably high", particularly in a period when humanitarian funding is evaporating.

"We are living in a time of intense volatility in international relations, with modern warfare creating a fragile, harrowing landscape marked by acute human suffering," said Filippo Grandi, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

"We must redouble our efforts to search for peace and find long-lasting solutions for refugees and others forced to flee their homes."

Myanmar, Sudan, and Ukraine

The main drivers of displacement remain sprawling conflicts like those in Myanmar, Sudan and Ukraine, UNHCR said in its flagship annual Global Trends Report.

The humanitarian situation inside Myanmar has deteriorated further since February 2021 as a result of increased conflict within the country and its political upheaval. According to UN sources, millions are displaced internally within Myanmar, with the majority

in the Northwest, in Rakhine State and in the Southeast, as well as in Kachin state in the Northeast.

UNHCR is working as part of a wider humanitarian response to internal displacement inside Myanmar, though humanitarian access remains constrained in many areas. In addition to a growing number of IDPs in Myanmar, thousands of refugees are estimated to have sought safety in neighbouring countries since 1 February 2021.

This new displacement comes on top of a protracted refugee situation in the region comprising of refugees from Rakhine State's Rohingya community, of whom majority are currently protected in Bangladesh, with smaller numbers in Malaysia and India. Other refugees and asylum-seekers from Myanmar are also located in Thailand, Malaysia, and India.

In Syria a brutal civil war erupted in 2011 but ruler Bashar al-Assad was finally overthrown in December 2024.

The report said rising numbers of Syrians have since been able to return to their homes.

As of mid-May, more than 500,000 Syrians are estimated to have crossed back into the country since the fall of Assad, while an estimated 1.2 million internally displaced people (IDPs) have returned to their areas of origin since the end of November.

UNHCR estimates that up to 1.5 million Syrians from abroad and two million IDPs may return by the end of 2025.

Sudan is now the world's largest forced displacement situation with 14.3 million refugees and IDPs, overtaking Syria (13.5 million), which is followed by Afghanistan (10.3 million) and Ukraine (8.8 million).

"During the remainder of 2025, much will depend on the dynamics in key situations," the annual report said, including whether peace or ceasefires can be reached in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan and Ukraine.

It also depends on whether conditions for returns improve in Afghanistan and Syria.

Another factor was "how dire the impact of the current funding cuts will be".

The United States was by far UNHCR's biggest donor but has dramatically scaled back its overseas aid, while other countries are tightening their budgets.

"The failure to protect civilians is astounding," said Norwegian Refugee Council chief Jan Egeland.

"Despite the immense suffering of displaced people, we are now seeing many countries turn inwards, making drastic cuts to humanitarian funding."

Myanmar has seen drastic aid cuts – particularly difficult given the ongoing civil war and the recent major earthquake.

One in 67 globally

Globally, the number of people forced to flee persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations and events seriously disturbing public order has almost doubled in the last decade.

The figure of 123.2 million worldwide at the end of last year was up seven million compared to the end of 2023.

"One in 67 people globally were forcibly displaced at the end of 2024," UNHCR said.

In total, 9.8 million forcibly displaced people returned home in 2024, including 1.6 million refugees – the most for more than two decades – and 8.2 million IDPs – the second highest ever.

"We have seen some rays of hope over the last six months," said Grandi.


But countries such as Myanmar, DR Congo and South Sudan saw significant new forced displacements as well as returns.

Two-thirds of refugees stay in neighbouring countries.

Iran (3.5 million), Turkey (2.9 million), Colombia (2.8 million), Germany (2.7 million) and Uganda (1.8 million) host the largest refugee populations.

Myanmar has seen increased pressure by the junta on its population forcing many to flee to Thailand, Bangladesh and further afield.

Mizzima and AFP



Many mining ventures are causing serious environmental damage. Photo: AFP

MYANMAR TRIBE BATTLING CHINESE-BACKED MINING: A CASE OF ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE

SUN LEE

A new episode in the demand for environmental justice has recently emerged from the hilly regions of Myanmar, where the Pradawng tribe is strongly opposing the corporate greed of Chinese and local companies seeking lead ore. It is the emergence of yet another environmental movement, where indigenous tribespeople are fighting for their rights, protecting their lands, preserving the dignity of their tribe, and safeguarding the interests of future generations.

As put by Khun Khine Min Naing, the young protest leader of Pradawng tribe, "We don't want to leave this land environmentally damaged for the next generation... we don't want to be regarded as historical criminals."

Thus, the current turmoil in the region connects to the larger global goal, a long-drawn battle to achieve sustainable development, conserving the ecosystem, denying extractive foreign powers their purpose, and just allocation of economic and environmental resources to the local population.

Since the political upheaval in 2021, post-coup Myanmar has been facing a severe crisis leading to economic collapse, escalating conflict, weakening governance, and deepening poverty. As a result, the loosely governed territories are becoming hotspots for exploitation by unregulated miners. Moreover, the lack of a stable centre has allowed many large-scale mining operations to go untracked.

As a result, Myanmar, especially border region, is turning into an attractive prey, swollen with minerals ready to be extracted by the foreign powers. Thus, enters China. A Chinese company, in joint venture with Myanmar's Four Star Company, has planned a mega-project mining lead in the Shan state of Myanmar east. As per conservative estimates, 49,000 tonnes of lead ore, valued at \$20 million, were already exported to China in 2023.

The hazards of lead ore mining are multi-pronged. First, given the toxic nature of the metal, there is a rampant health risk in the region. Lead infiltration

into land or water bodies leads to serious health repercussions. Secondly, excessive and unregulated mining can lead to heavy environmental damage in the region. Locals are facing the brunt already. They attribute the devastating floods and mudslides to the direct consequences of the rapid increase in mining activities over the past few years. Thirdly, due to the rising scale of disasters, mining-led land erosion, and resulting lead-induced pollution, and the involvement of foreign powers, families inhabiting the region for more than three centuries, now fear their displacement.

The protestors are voicing their dissent by marching to the mining facility, where large-scale milling machinery is located, threatening to block roads and seize the equipment. The slogan put forth by the Pradawng tribe, "no transparency, no responsibility," reflects their plight, calling out the Chinese joint venture for engaging in reckless mining to hoard heavy metals for battery production in electric vehicles, among other uses. In order to reinstate accountability, the protestors are demanding suspension of mining activities till stability in the government is restored, civil conflicts end, and resources are brought under civilian supervision. Currently, the local population is not being included in the decision-making. They were not consulted before mining, despite their indigenous status.

The involvement of mining companies in historically unethical and environmentally vulnerable sites, with elements of human rights violations, is not new for Beijing. In Zimbabwe, the Chinese companies are involved in what is described as a "catastrophic impact" on its environment. In this southern African nation, China is involved in gold, diamond, and chrome mining, and villagers have complained that Chinese companies discharge toxic waste into their water sources. This has resulted in the spread of diseases, a crop yield drop, loss of livestock and fish in the waterbodies, leading to contamination of water for irrigation. Similarly, in Latin America, Chinese presence in Latin America is responsible for heavy strain on its water supplies, rising deforestation, and greenhouse gas emissions

(GHGs). For instance, Chinese projects in Peru are fuelling tensions with residents, adversely affecting human rights and the environment in the mining and infrastructure sector. A decade-old Chinese mining activity by its company Chinalco in New Morococha in Peru, relocated the entire town of 5,000 residents, kilometres down the road, to make way for a copper mine. Now, in retrospect, the entire episode of relocation is being regarded as a reason for air, water, soil, and noise pollution and environmental degradation (and disasters like flooding) resulting from mining practices, along with poverty and unemployment of the relocated residents. These are just selected instances from many cases where China mining is involved in environmental injustice and human rights violations in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and within China itself.

Lessons need to be learnt. The environmental justice movement brewing in Shan state is an old story in a new location, with characters essentially remaining the same: metals (precious, rare, or hazardous), Chinese mining companies, indigenous population, lackadaisical (and often timid) local government. In the current global situation, the sound of mining machines and explosions is drowning out the voices of the indigenous people living in vulnerable ecosystems. It is time for the global community to condemn such extractive actions, which not only oppose the goals of sustainable development but also undermine the current ecological balance and violate the human rights of local populations.

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



Karen National Union



KNLA SEIZES BAWDI BORDER POST ON THAI-MYANMAR BORDER AFTER THREE-DAY BATTLE

Joint forces of the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) captured the junta's Bawdi border post, also known as the Ahmo border post or Point 2566 front-line position, along the Dawei-Htee Khee road in Dawei Township on 10 June, according to a statement from the Karen National Union (KNU).

The post, positioned on the Thai-Myanmar border, had been held by junta troops for nearly three decades since 1997. The KNLA launched the assault on 8 June, and after three days of fighting, overpowered the approximately 40 junta soldiers stationed there.

Following the capture, KNLA fighters discovered the body of one junta soldier while the rest of the troops reportedly fled across the border into Thailand, taking many of their weapons with them.

"Junta troops carried their weapons with them. They could easily flee to Thailand because this camp is on the border line. Only a few weapons were taken by us. We think there might still be some hidden weapons at the camp," said Padoh Saw Eh Nar, district secretary of the KNU's Myeik-Dawei District.

The strategic location of the Bawdi post, directly on the border line, meant junta forces were unable to call

in reinforcements or receive air support. This isolation ultimately led to their retreat.

A civilian was injured during the operation when junta aircraft bombed Ahmo village, located near the contested camp, according to Padoh Saw Eh Nar.

Bawdi is one of several key outposts in the region. On 9 May, KNLA forces also seized the Htee Khee border camp, and earlier on 19 April, they captured the Htee Hta strategic outpost, about five miles from Htee Khee. Arms and ammunition were recovered during both operations.

With the fall of Bawdi, the remaining junta-held positions along the Dawei-Htee Khee corridor include strategic camps at Myitta, Ngayant Ni, Taung Thone Lone, and Kyauk Mei Taung, according to military sources.

The KNLA's recent victories underscore the growing momentum of resistance forces in southern Myanmar, particularly along the Thai-Myanmar border where the junta's logistical disadvantages are increasingly evident.



PDF AMBUSH KILLS 10 MYANMAR JUNTA TROOPS IN PAUNGDE TOWNSHIP, WEAPONS SEIZED

Ten junta soldiers were killed and eight others wounded when the Paungde Township People's Defence Force (PDF) carried out an ambush on a junta column near Nyaungnibin village in Paungde Township, the resistance group announced on 11 June.

The ambush occurred on the morning of 3 June between Nyaungnibin and Ma U Pin Kwin villages and lasted for about five hours, from 9 am to 2 pm, according to a Paungde PDF official.

"We were able to attack the junta column because of first-hand information and the good strategy and fighting skills of our comrades," said the official, noting that the operation was carried out with precise coordination.

The targeted column of around 100 junta personnel had previously been involved in the burning and destruction of at least eight villages in neighbouring Paukhaung Township, including Thaik Chaung, Kwan Ohn Su, Aing Sauk, Mye Ni Kone, Thaphan Kaing, Dalamae, Mayoe Kyun, and Pyan Chi Tat.

Following the attack, the junta column reportedly

retreated toward Kyauk Twing village in Paukhaung Township.

During the clash, PDF fighters seized a significant cache of weapons and supplies, including two 60mm commando mortars, two MA-1 rifles, six MA-3 rifles, two hand grenades, multiple ammunition magazines, and military-grade drugs and equipment. Among the confiscated items were 150 WY methamphetamine tablets and 56 rounds of 5.56mm ammunition.

In retaliation, at 3:10 pm on the same day, the junta carried out aerial assaults around the site of the clash, using one jet fighter and two military helicopters to bomb the area, according to the PDF.

The Paungde PDF also noted a prior incident on 17 May, when a junta column reinforcing the Theinkone Tower outpost from the Walgyi Dam area was intercepted, resulting in three junta deaths.

The resistance group warned that more clashes are likely, as the junta continues to deploy forces across Bago Region despite growing resistance activity.



CRASH OF MYANMAR JUNTA FIGHTER JET KILLS FIVE CIVILIANS IN PALE TOWNSHIP AMID ONGOING CLASHES

A jet fighter belonging to the military junta crashed into a monastery in Sapar Sae village, Pale Township, killing four civilians and leaving another dead in a follow-up airstrike, according to local resistance officials.

The incident took place around 12:15 pm on 10 June when resistance forces reportedly shot down the aircraft during ongoing clashes. The downed jet crashed into the monastery compound, striking a nearby house where four civilians had taken shelter.

"The plane flew over the house and crashed into the monastery. Among the four killed were three people fleeing the conflict from the Min Taing Pin area and one local resident. Later, another airstrike killed one more civilian. One of the victims was a woman," said Ko Zaw Htet, a spokesperson for the Pale Township People's Administration.

A member of a local revolutionary group said the junta had been carrying out air assaults using fighter jets and Y-12 aircraft, deploying 1,000-pound bombs

and cluster munitions on civilian areas in and around Sapar Sae.

Fearing more attacks, residents from Sapar Sae and neighbouring villages have begun fleeing to safer areas. The recent airstrikes and clashes have affected more than 20 villages and forced tens of thousands of civilians from their homes.

"We had to flee farther away. Since the plane crashed in the village, there's a chance they might come back and bomb again," Ko Zaw Htet said.

As of 1 pm on 11 June, no additional airstrikes had been reported, but active fighting continues in Kant Daunt village, where resistance forces are battling to seize a police station held by the junta. The offensive, led by the People's Liberation Army (PLA), began on 2 June and has intensified over the past week.

Locals and resistance groups fear the fighting and aerial bombardments may escalate further in the coming days.



Blood on the table and floor where the children were killed. Photo: Supplied

MYANMAR JUNTA AIRSTRIKE KILLS THREE CHILDREN IN KAWKAREIK VILLAGE

An airstrike by the Myanmar junta's air force killed five civilians, including three children, in Paing Yat village, Kawkareik Township near the border of Karen and Mon States, on the afternoon of 9 June, according to local residents.

The bombing occurred around 2:30 pm and struck a house where children had gathered to study. Three children, estimated to be around seven years old, were killed on the spot, along with two adults. Seven others, including six children, were injured some critically.

"There was no fighting in Paing Yat. It wasn't a school either; it was just a place where children gathered separately and were being taught to be self-sufficient," said a spokesperson from the Mon State Liberation Army (MLA). "The teacher also died on the way."

Witnesses reported that the air force used cluster bombs in the attack, weapons known for their wide-area damage and potential to cause high civilian casualties.

In a separate incident earlier the same day, a hospital in Kyi Tauk Pauk village, Singu Township in Mandalay Region, was also bombed by the junta's air force. One woman was killed, and three others were wounded in that strike.

"These airstrikes are a war crime. Children and women are being bombed in their own villages. There was no military presence or battle there, just children trying to learn," said a local resident from Kawkareik.

Both attacks have drawn sharp condemnation from local civil resistance groups and communities, who say the junta is deliberately targeting civilian areas despite the absence of active fighting.



MYANMAR JUNTA AIRSTRIKES KILL ONE, INJURE FOUR IN VILLAGES EAST OF KAWLIN TOWN

A woman was killed, and four others were injured when a Myanmar junta jet fighter bombed two villages east of Kawlin town, Sagaing Region, on the night of 9 June, according to the Kawlin Revolution (KR) group.

The airstrikes, carried out at around 9:20 pm by a jet fighter departing from Tada-U airbase, struck Hpa Lae and Kan Kone villages, resulting in casualties and significant destruction.

In Hpa Lae village, six houses were destroyed and three civilians, a man and two women, were injured. In Kan Kone village, a bomb dropped by a junta aircraft exploded on a house, killing a woman and injuring her father. At least three houses were reported destroyed in the blast.

Kawlin District's Battalion No. 2 stated that the junta used cluster bombs in these airstrikes, munitions

known for inflicting high civilian casualties.

"The junta only controls the urban area of Kawlin town. The surrounding villages are under revolutionary control, which is why airstrikes have become more frequent on both the eastern and western sides," a KR spokesperson said.

This latest attack comes less than a month after another airstrike on the night of 14 May damaged a house in Ka Nyo Inn village, also in eastern Kawlin township.

Residents and resistance groups have condemned the junta's continued use of aerial bombardments, especially targeting civilian areas where no active clashes have been reported.



NUG CONFIRMS CONSTRUCTION OF TWO BOMB-PROOF UNDERGROUND HOSPITALS IN MYANMAR

The National Unity Government (NUG) has begun constructing two bomb-proof underground hospitals in its controlled areas, with plans to build up to eight, according to U Nay Phone Latt, spokesperson for the NUG Prime Minister's Office.

Speaking during a briefing titled Reporting to the People and the International Community on 10 June, U Nay Phone Latt said the exact locations of the hospitals cannot be disclosed for security reasons, but the effort reflects the NUG's commitment to providing safe healthcare amid relentless attacks by the military junta.

"The military junta has targeted not only schools but also hospitals and clinics. We must protect our people by building secure healthcare facilities," he said.

The briefing also noted that on 25 May, the NUG's Ministry of Education temporarily closed all schools under its administration due to increasing threats. U Nay Phone Latt stressed the urgent need for modern

air-raid warning systems and bomb-proof shelters to safeguard children's right to education.

He called on neighbouring countries, the international community, and child rights organizations to support efforts ensuring children in Myanmar can study safely without fear of aerial bombardments.

The NUG's concerns are underscored by recent brutal airstrikes, including a 12 May bombing of a school in Ohteindwin village, Depayin Township, which killed two teachers and 22 students, injuring more than 100 others. On 23 May, an airstrike in Min Su village, Minkin Township, killed 14 people, including seven children and two preschoolers.

Between 30 May and 5 June, the junta carried out at least 10 airstrikes across four regions, including Mandalay and Sagaing, resulting in nine civilian injuries and five deaths, according to a report released on 8 June by the Nyan Lin Thit Analytica research group.



TA'ANG LAND COUNCIL FORMED AS TOP POLITICAL BODY FOR TA'ANG AS REVOLUTION CONTINUES

The Ta'ang Political Consultative Committee (TPCC) announced the formation of the Ta'ang Land Council (TLC) on 9 June, declaring it the highest political authority in self-described Ta'ang State during the ongoing revolutionary period.

Chaired by Tar Aik Bong, the TLC includes two vice-chairmen, four members, a secretary, and a joint secretary, according to the TPCC's official statement. The newly formed council will oversee administration, legislation, and judicial matters within Ta'ang territory under revolutionary control.

The announcement follows a high-level summit held from 1 to 3 June in a location within Ta'ang State.

The summit brought together 83 senior leaders from the Palaung State Liberation Front (PSLF), the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), and civil society organizations. It was during this summit that the

Ta'ang State Revolutionary Government Plan, drafted by the Ta'ang State Constitution Drafting Committee, was adopted and approved.

The TPCC stated that a full-fledged Ta'ang State Revolutionary Government is expected to be formed by 2025, comprising representatives from the PSLF, TNLA, and civil society. The new government will be based in townships liberated during Operation 1027, a coordinated offensive launched by the TNLA and its allies against the junta.

The TPCC also emphasized that the newly formed Ta'ang Land Council will seek cooperation with other revolutionary forces working toward establishing a federal union in Myanmar.



EU SPEAKS OUT FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE IN MYANMAR AT UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

On 10 June, the European Union (EU) and its Member States, through H.E. Ambassador Stavros Lambrinidis, Head of the EU Delegation to the United Nations in New York, delivered a statement at the UN General Assembly informal briefing by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Myanmar, Ms. Julie Bishop.

The text of the statement is as follows.

Mr President, Madam Special Envoy,

The European Union and its Member States welcome this briefing, as mandated by resolution 79/182 on the “Situation of human rights of Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in Myanmar” that was adopted by the General Assembly by consensus last December.

The EU is pleased to work together with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to put forward this important resolution. We first introduced this resolution jointly in 2018 in response to the atrocities against the Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, which forced over a million people to flee the country.

Since then, the situation in Myanmar has gone from bad to worse, particularly after the military coup in

February 2021, and the violent repression that followed. As a result, the human rights situation has drastically deteriorated across the country, with escalation of violence and conflict that is affecting all minorities and communities.

Madam Special Envoy,

As you have outlined in your briefing, the situation has further deteriorated since you took office last year. The Myanmar military is continuing to inflict unbearable suffering on the people in Myanmar, through indiscriminate air strikes and burning of villages, killing and maiming of civilians, forced conscription – and the list goes on. The bombing of a school in Depayin township on 12 May is yet another gruesome illustration of this trend.

The humanitarian situation in the country continues to be alarming – with some 22 million in need of humanitarian assistance and over 3.5 million displaced – even before the devastating earthquake hit on 28 March. Despite the junta’s call to the international community for humanitarian assistance and several announcements of post-earthquake ceasefires, its military operations have continued unabated and humanitarian access continues to be restricted inflicting further suffering on the civilian population.

The intensification of the conflict in Rakhine State, where Rohingya communities are again targeted and intercommunal tension is actively stoked, is deeply concerning.

It is clear that the plight of the Rohingya population cannot be solved in the current context. The voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable return of refugees and displaced persons remains impossible. In order for this to happen, we need peace, stability, safety and a return to the path of inclusive democracy for the people of Myanmar, and we need it now.

Madam Special Envoy,

The EU and its Member States express our full support for your work and efforts to support a better future for the people of Myanmar. Your dialogue and engagement with all parties and stakeholders, including ASEAN, in this regard is important – but we all need to support you in this endeavour.

Let me therefore take this opportunity to reiterate our key concerns and calls for action:

1. We need to be effective in our advocacy and action to ensure that the military regime immediately stops the violence, persecution, and forced recruitment, releases all political prisoners and commits to a real and lasting cessation of hostilities. UNSC resolution 2669 (2022) as well as provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice must be respected and implemented.

2. Countries that continue to supply lethal assistance to Myanmar's military regime must stop doing so. All states must respect their international commitments to prevent these atrocities, by taking meaningful, effective and targeted action to end the military's access to arms and military equipment that enables it to sustain its violent campaign and the repression against civilians. To this end, EU reiterates its call for a global arms embargo.

3. International humanitarian law and humanitarian principles must be respected. All parties must allow immediate, full, safe, and unimpeded humanitarian access so that life-saving aid can be provided to all people in need throughout the country. We also call on all parties to ensure protection of all minorities,

including Rohingya communities, in Myanmar and in host countries.

4. The launch of a genuine, constructive, inclusive, and effective dialogue towards peace, stability and inclusive democracy, in accordance with the will of the people of Myanmar. Prior to any election, is absolutely essential that relevant stakeholders are able to meaningfully contribute to such a political process. As long as opposition leaders remain in detention, these conditions are not met. Addressing the underlying discrimination and treatment of the Rohingya is an indispensable part of a political solution to the crisis in Myanmar.

5. Like elsewhere, justice and accountability are an indispensable element for bringing lasting peace and a solution for the Rohingya and all the people of Myanmar, and for preventing future violence. We underline the importance of the work of the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar, and our support for its mandate, the ICC, and ICJ to continue investigating and ensuring accountability for war crimes and crimes against humanity and possibly genocide committed in Myanmar before and after the 2021 coup. Myanmar's military regime still must comply with the provisional measures the ICJ issued in January 2020.

6. We reiterate our full support for the central role of ASEAN in finding a resolution to the crisis, including the work of the ASEAN Chair and Special Envoy, consistent with the Five Point Consensus. We welcome the recent ASEAN Leaders' call for a sustained extension and nationwide expansion of ceasefire in Myanmar, as a step towards de-escalation, with a view to ensure humanitarian access and for creating space for political dialogue.

The high-level meeting that will be held here at the UN on 30 September, as called for by our joint resolution with the OIC (79/182), will be an important opportunity to galvanise further international attention and support for the human rights situation of Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in Myanmar. But as we continue to deliberate, we must always keep in mind the urgency for effective action, now. The lives, prosperity, rights, and dignity of the people of Myanmar depend on it.



Julie Bishop. Photo: AFP

UN ENVOY WARNS MYANMAR ON BRINK OF COLLAPSE AMID ESCALATING VIOLENCE AND HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

In a stark address to the UN General Assembly, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Myanmar Julie Bishop warned that Myanmar is “on a path to self-destruction” as conflict intensifies across the country and humanitarian conditions deteriorate rapidly.

Speaking at an informal session, Bishop painted a grim picture of escalating violence despite repeated calls for ceasefires. “There has been no end to the violence,” she stated, citing ongoing attacks on civilians, schools, hospitals, and places of worship. The crisis has worsened in the wake of a massive 7.7-magnitude earthquake that struck central Myanmar in May, compounding civilian suffering and overwhelming a collapsing health system.

With over 20 million people in need of assistance, Bishop criticized the lack of compliance with ceasefires by all sides, including the military-led State Administration Council (SAC), the National Unity Government (NUG), and ethnic armed organizations. Despite announcements of temporary truces, hostilities persist, “embedding a crisis within a crisis.”

She also highlighted the deteriorating situation for the Rohingya, noting rising poverty, forced recruitment,

and tragic flight attempts by sea. Only 20% of the 2025 Rohingya Joint Response Plan in Bangladesh is funded, leading to food and education cuts in refugee camps.

Bishop emphasized that the junta’s proposed elections lack legitimacy without an inclusive process and the release of over 22,000 political prisoners. She reiterated the UN Security Council’s call for the immediate release of former leaders Aung San Suu Kyi and Win Myint.

Despite the grim outlook, Bishop noted “some openness to political dialogue” and praised ASEAN-UN collaboration, including joint advocacy with ASEAN Special Envoy Othman Hashim. She urged renewed international solidarity, especially ahead of the September High-Level Conference on the Rohingya.

Ending her briefing, Bishop called on the UN and member states to act decisively, warning, “This is a test of our relevance in one of the region’s most complex crises.”



Photo: AFP

TOXIC THAILAND RIVERS PINNED ON MYANMAR MINES

A sprawling new mine is gouged into the lush rolling hills of northeast Myanmar, where civil war has weakened the government's already feeble writ, and pollution levels are rising downstream in Thailand.

The complex is one of around a dozen extraction operations that have sprung up in Shan state since around 2022, in territory controlled by the United Wa State Army (UWSA), one of conflict-wracked Myanmar's largest and best-equipped ethnic armed groups.

A few kilometres away across the border, locals and officials in Thailand believe toxic waste is washing downstream from the mines into the Kok River, which flows through the kingdom's far north on its way to join the mighty Mekong.

Thai authorities say they have detected abnormally high arsenic levels in their waterways, which could pose a risk to aquatic life and the people further up the food chain.

The price fisherman Sawat Kaewdam gets for his catch has fallen by almost half, he says, because locals fear contamination.

"They say, 'There's arsenic. I don't want to eat that fish'," he told AFP.

Tests in Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai by a government pollution agency found levels of the toxic element as high as 49 microgrammes per litre (mcg/l) of river water -- nearly five times international drinking water standards.

Experts say that while the effects on human health would not be visible immediately, the fish-heavy local diet risks a cumulative impact over several years.

"We already know where the contamination is coming from," says fisherman Sawat.

"They should go fix it at the source."

Fivefold rise

Pianporn Deetes, campaign director of the International Rivers NGO, blames the arsenic levels on Shan state's unlicensed mines, which operate outside any regulation or control by the central government.

It was Thailand's "largest-ever case of transboundary pollution", she added.

The mines are believed to be run by Chinese companies with close links to the UWSA, whose members themselves have longstanding ties to China, speak Mandarin and use China's yuan currency.

It is unclear whether the mines are digging for gold, rare earths or a variety of minerals, and it is also difficult to gauge the size of an industry operating in a secretive grey zone.

But videos on Chinese social media suggest much of what is produced in Myanmar ends up being sold to Chinese buyers.

In a report Tuesday citing Chinese customs data, think tank ISP-Myanmar said the country was the source of around two-thirds of China's rare earth imports by value.

The Asian giant had imported five times as much rare earths from Myanmar in the four years since the 2021 military coup than in the equivalent preceding period, it added.

Many modern mines use a system of tailing ponds to reuse leftover waste and water and stop it being released into rivers, said Tanapon Phenrat of Naresuan University's civil engineering department.

But "in Myanmar, they reportedly discharge it directly into natural waterways", he added, increasing the risk of contamination spreading into the food chain.

"What we need is for mines to treat their waste properly and stop discharging toxic substances into shared waterways."

AFP was unable to reach UWSA officials for comment.

'Legal and orderly'

From its Myanmar headwaters, the 285-kilometre (177-mile) Kok River is a vital resource for thousands of people as it winds through Chiang Rai province on its way to feed the Mekong.

In Chiang Rai City, a tranquil place popular with tourists, environmentalists dressed as wart-afflicted fish dance in protest.

The Thai government has proposed building a dam to prevent contaminated water from entering the country, but campaigners say physical barriers alone cannot stop pollution.

Bangkok acknowledges that Myanmar's junta may be unable to stop Chinese companies operating mines in militia-controlled areas.

And Chonthicha Jangrew of Thailand's parliamentary foreign affairs committee met senior Beijing officials last month, urging them to supervise Chinese mining firms "in order to stop the impact on people downstream", she said.

The Chinese embassy in Bangkok posted on Facebook Sunday that it had instructed Chinese companies "to comply with the laws of the host country and to conduct their business in a legal and orderly fashion at all times".

The Myanmar junta did not respond to questions from AFP.

"The water isn't beyond saving yet," said Tanapon of Naresuan University.

"But this is a clear signal," he added. "We need to act now."

AFP



SIEGE OF MYANMAR TRADE TOWN KYONDOE MAKES MISERY FOR SCHOOLCHILDREN

Myanmar's military junta and opposition forces are fighting over control of a lucrative trade route into Thailand, with shells and aerial attacks regularly forcing children to flee their schools, teachers and a parent told AFP.

Kyondoe town has for two months seen fierce fighting between junta troops and guerilla groups attempting to capture highway access to a Thai border crossing 50 kilometres (30 miles) to the east.

Myanmar has plunged into a many-sided civil war since the military snatched power in a 2021 coup, with

much combat focused on trade routes which groups can use to bolster their war chests.

A teacher who works in Kyondoe town, in the eastern state of Karen, said she fled her school on Wednesday after hearing the sound of nearby shelling.

"I have no idea which side is shooting. It scares us a lot," she said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

She said she has been commuting to Kyondoe from a camp for those displaced by fighting which has flared since mid-April.

"Some residents still send their children to schools. If they hear more fighting sounds, artillery sounds, plane sounds, they come to the schools to pick up their children," she said en route to the camp.

"If fighting sounds are far away, schools keep teaching. Children are used to hearing the fighting sounds. It's very sad," added the teacher, who intends to go back to her school.

"I have to come to serve my duty although I'm really scared."

'Future is gone'

A military officer said fighters from anti-coup and ethnic armed organisations were pounding Kyondoe and another nearby town on the same highway with artillery captured from the junta.

"As they are targeting the towns, local military columns are resisting by fighting back," said the officer on Tuesday, also speaking on condition of anonymity.

"We are also sorry for the residents and school children," the officer added. "We will try our best to protect the towns."

Myanmar's military has pledged a truce throughout this month to ease recovery efforts after March's magnitude-7.7 earthquake which killed nearly 3,800.

However, it has told its myriad opponents it will defend its ground against any offensives.

"I'm really sick of fleeing. My children can't go to school because of fighting," said one resident who has been forced to quit Kyondoe to shelter in a nearby monastery.

"I went back to the town a few days ago as I heard there was less fighting. Soon after we arrived, we had to flee again," they said, speaking on condition of anonymity on Tuesday.

"Our future is gone."

Children make up nearly 40 percent of the more than three million people displaced amid Myanmar's civil war, according to UNICEF.

They also frequently fall victim to the violence. A junta air strike on a school in May killed 22 people, including 20 children, according to witnesses.

Opposition fighters in central Myanmar claimed Tuesday they shot down a junta jet on a bombing run, while the military said it had crashed on a practice flight owing to engine failure.

"We want fighting to finish soon," said a teacher from a village on Kyondoe's outskirts on Tuesday, explaining they were recently forced to shut their school.

"We have been hearing artillery fire, gunfire exchanges and air strikes often these days," the teacher added, explaining that monsoon floods make it impossible to dig shelters.

"We have no place to hide."

AFP



Photo: Supplied

MYANMAR JUNTA AIRSTRIKE KILLS ONE, INJURES THREE IN MANDALAY REGION

An airstrike by the Myanmar junta on Kyi Tauk Pauk village in Singu Township, Mandalay Region, killed one woman and injured three others, according to local residents.

The attack occurred at 5:31 am on 9 June, when a jet fighter from Tada-U Airbase dropped a 250-pound bomb on the hospital compound in the village. Women present in the compound were among the casualties. One victim required a hand amputation, and two others sustained thigh injuries. A building was completely destroyed in the blast, according to local media outlet Pyithu Bek Taw Thar.

Just a day earlier, at 2:26 pm on 8 June, another airstrike by a jet fighter from Meiktila targeted the hospital area in Let Pan Hla village, also in Singu

Township. The strike hit the Tae Chaung area of Pin Lal Gyi Ward, though no casualties were reported.

Singu Township is currently under the full control of revolutionary forces. As the junta has lost ground presence in the area, it has intensified its reliance on aerial assaults, often targeting civilian zones. In response, revolutionary groups have urged local residents to remain alert and take precautionary measures.

On 10 May, a previous airstrike on Kyi Tauk Pauk village killed five people, including children, and injured three others, according to the Pyin Oo Lwin District People's Defence Force.



Photo: Supplied

MYANMAR JUNTA AIRSTRIKE KILLS FOUR DISPLACED CIVILIANS IN THANDWE

A late-night airstrike by the Myanmar junta struck a school compound sheltering internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Thandwe, Rakhine State, killing four civilians and injuring at least 10 others, local sources confirmed.

The attack occurred at 10:40 pm on 7 June. Witnesses said a jet fighter dropped munitions directly onto school buildings where IDPs had taken refuge from ongoing fighting in the region. The explosion reportedly detonated near the compound's fence, sending debris into the shelters and wounding those inside.

"There were no clashes nearby. This was a deliberate strike on a civilian shelter," said U Myat Htun, director of the Rakhine Human Rights Defenders Association. "Children and women are among the injured, though not all victims have been identified. This marks the Military Council's fourth clear violation of the Geneva Conventions in Rakhine."

Photos shared by local media show scorched walls and scattered personal belongings near the impact site.

The junta has not responded to inquiries or released any statement regarding the incident.

The strike comes amid a sharp escalation in the junta's aerial campaign across Arakan Army (AA)-

controlled territories. In Kyaukphyu Township, where resistance forces have gained ground in recent weeks, airstrikes and reinforcements have intensified. Heavy fighting continues along key transport routes and coastal areas.

Just weeks earlier, on 13 May, two 500-pound bombs were dropped by a junta jet onto Tun Ra Wai old village in Rathedaung Township, killing 12 civilians and injuring more than 20. Residents say those attacks also targeted non-military zones.

Meanwhile, junta troops in Sittwe have stepped up daily inspections and arrests in IDP camps, heightening fear among displaced families already struggling with limited food, shelter, and medicine.

Local aid workers and rights groups are urging international humanitarian access to Rakhine, warning that thousands of civilians remain trapped in vulnerable areas with no safe corridor out.

As of 8 June, sporadic shelling and air surveillance continued near Thandwe, keeping many survivors from returning to the damaged site.



MYANMAR'S JUNTA PUSHES AHEAD WITH SHAM ELECTORAL PLANS USING NEW ELECTRONIC VOTING MACHINES

Myanmar's military junta is pressing forward with its controversial electoral exercise aimed at sidelining political parties that won overwhelming majorities in the 2015 and 2020 elections. The Union Election Commission (UEC), handpicked by the junta, continues preparations for a nationwide vote slated for December 2025, despite growing criticism that the process lacks legitimacy and fairness.

The junta-appointed UEC has stated that elections will be held in 267 of the country's 330 townships, excluding areas facing what it refers to as "limited geographical conditions" a term widely interpreted as regions currently under resistance control or active conflict.

In its latest move, the UEC is advancing the rollout of the Myanmar Electronic Voting Machine (MEVM), a system the junta claims will ensure transparency. A demonstration of the MEVM was held at the

Technological University in Magway from 2 to 4 June. Magway Region Chief Minister U Tint Lwin attended the final day, overseeing the training process.

According to junta-linked media, the demonstration covered MEVM setup, vote casting, result compilation, and post-vote machine handling. Officials emphasized that the machines do not connect to the internet and use a microcontroller-based operating system, which they claim is simple and secure.

On 7 June, the UEC convened a coordination meeting at its office in Naypyidaw to discuss updates to household registration lists and voter records. UEC Chairman U Ko Ko stressed that compiling an accurate and complete voter list remains a priority, with data sourced from immigration records and ground-level household surveys.

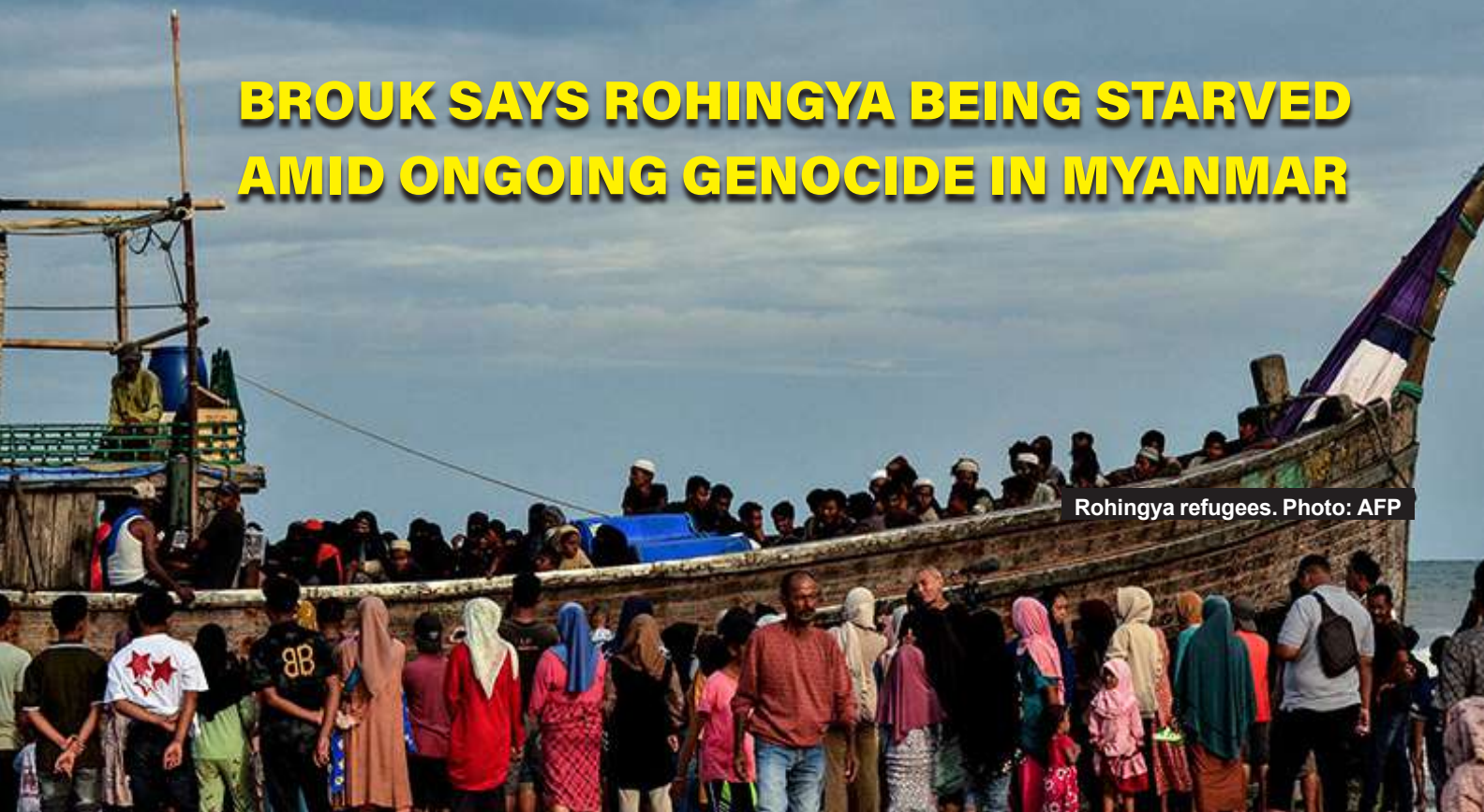
Critics, however, argue that the entire electoral process is a facade to reinforce military control under the guise of democratic transition. The inclusion of both First Past the Post (FPTP) and Proportional Representation (PR) systems in the upcoming election has raised concerns about possible gerrymandering and dilution of opposition votes.

Justice For Myanmar and other watchdog groups have repeatedly warned that the planned election is a political tool to entrench military rule, not a genuine attempt to restore democracy. They call for the international community to reject the process outright.

Opposition parties and civil society groups have been sidelined, and no independent observers have been allowed to monitor the system's implementation.

With the junta facing resistance across multiple fronts and under increasing international isolation, the planned election appears to be less about citizen representation and more about regime survival.

BROUK SAYS ROHINGYA BEING STARVED AMID ONGOING GENOCIDE IN MYANMAR



Rohingya refugees. Photo: AFP

The Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK (BROUK) released a new report on 12 June entitled 'Starving to death: the latest phase of the Rohingya genocide' detailing the use of deliberate starvation as a strategy by the Myanmar junta and calling for action by the British government and international community.

The text of the press release for this report is as follows.

The report calls on the British government, as penholder on Burma at the UN Security Council, to urgently convene a meeting to take action on the Burmese military's continued obstruction of humanitarian aid in Rakhine State and Burma as a whole. This obstruction is in direct breach of UNSC Resolution 2669 as well as the International Court of Justice's provisional measures order to protect the Rohingya.

"Starvation has replaced bullets as the main tool of genocide against the Rohingya," said Tun Khin, President of the Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK. "US cuts in humanitarian aid are assisting the Burmese military in their genocidal policies of using starvation as a weapon against us."

More than five years have now passed since the International Court of Justice's 2020 legally binding provisional measures order to protect the Rohingya. It's also been three years since the UN Security Council passed Resolution 2669, which urged 'full, safe and unhindered humanitarian access' in Burma. Yet the regime continues to block life-saving humanitarian aid for people across Burma, including Rohingya, without facing any consequences. The UN Security Council has not even convened a meeting to discuss the breaches of the court order, let alone taken action to uphold the order.

The Burmese military is threatening the staff of UN and international aid agencies to prevent them from releasing data on the true scale of the food crisis in Burma and starvation in Rakhine State. Governments know this, but the lack of data – and the absence of the pressure that would be created if the data were to be made public – also suits those members of the international community unwilling to pay for international aid.

Starvation is spreading among the almost 145,000 Rohingya who have been confined to internment camps in central Rakhine State by the Burmese military since 2012, entirely dependent on international humanitarian assistance for their survival. The regime

has repeatedly refused to allow food and medicine to be delivered to 25,000 Rohingya in Pauktaw township since it lost control of the area to the Arakan Army in January 2024. So far this year, 25 Rohingya adults are reported to have died from starvation in the area, and a further seven died due to lack of medical care for other chronic conditions. 10 Rohingya children are known to have died of diarrhoeal disease in December last year, on top of dozens more who died earlier that year.

In the Sittwe camps, the last time that all 112,000 Rohingya IDPs received food rations was in late February, according to ground reports. In March, the World Food Programme publicly announced it would be forced to cut off life-saving food assistance to people in Burma, including Rohingya confined to camps, due to a \$60 million funding shortfall.

By late April, as many as 70 percent of Rohingya IDPs were reported to be facing starvation in some Sittwe camps. BROUK understands from sources on the ground that WFP food rations will restart in June, but only until September due to ongoing funding shortfalls.

Rohingya in northern Rakhine State are also starving after living under the regime's trade and aid blockade for 18 months, since the resumption of armed conflict in November 2023. BROUK's research highlights that both Rohingya children and adults are showing signs of severe acute malnutrition, which requires immediate life-saving treatment. Humanitarian workers in Bangladesh have confirmed that new arrivals from Rakhine State exhibit visible signs of severe malnutrition, including uncontrollable shaking.

BROUK warns that its findings likely represent the tip of the iceberg in terms of the prevalence of severe acute malnutrition and starvation among Rohingya in Rakhine State, due to the rolling communications blackout imposed by the Burmese military.

With most of the areas where Rohingya in Rakhine State live now under the control of the Arakan Army, much greater international attention needs to be given to the serious human rights violations they are committing.

BROUK's report contains detailed information about the Arakan Army's highly discriminatory policies and practices that are applied exclusively to the Rohingya on the grounds of their identity. These are iterations of very similar policies and practices applied by the Burmese military and amount to policies of persecution. The AA is reported to have banned people from using the term "Rohingya" in the areas it controls in Rakhine State. AA officials have verbally warned that those who disobey this rule will face severe punishment.

Large-scale human rights violations committed by the Arakan Army against Rohingya include forced displacement, land-grabbing, acts of collective punishment, forced labour, forced recruitment, as well as abduction, incommunicado detention, and torture, amounting to atrocity crimes. The Arakan Army has denied thousands of Rohingya IDPs the right to return to their homes in Buthidaung township and has seized their land.

At the same time, BROUK has received multiple reports of the Arakan Army profiteering from the Rohingya's desperation to flee. Only those who are close to the AA and pay bribes to the AA are reportedly allowed to operate as people smuggling groups and human trafficking gangs in both Buthidaung and Maungdaw townships.

"The Arakan Army are committing the same human rights violations as the Burmese military but not facing the same sanctions, which gives them a sense of impunity and emboldens them to carry on," said Tun Khin.

The report is the latest in a series of biannual reports documenting how the provisional measures to protect the Rohingya ordered by the International Court of Justice are being routinely violated, and how the UN Security Council, which has the responsibility to uphold the orders of the court, has failed to do so.

"There are no easy solutions to ending the genocide of the Rohingya, but the current approach of doing nothing is not a neutral decision – it is an active decision to allow genocide to continue and let Rohingya children die of starvation," said Tun Khin. "All we are asking for is the UN Security Council to carry out its responsibility to uphold international law."



Photo: Supplied

PNO ORDERS OVER 6,000 RESIDENTS TO RELOCATE IN SOUTHERN SHAN STATE

The Pa-O National Organization/Pa-O National Army (PNO/PNA) ordered more than 6,000 residents from seven villages in Hsihseng Township, southern Shan State, to relocate to Hpa Yar Phyu village, according to a statement released by the PNO on 7 June.

The directive applies to residents from Tapuu Hto, Kaung Hto, Lwel Ngun, Naung Bo, and Pin Set villages in the Naung Kyaw village tract, as well as Naung Htaw and Kalar Lum villages in the Taung Shay village tract. The relocation deadline is set for 15 June.

According to the PNO/PNA announcement, those affected must move exclusively to the grounds of the Mwetaw Pagoda in Hpa Yar Phyu village, and not to hillside agricultural areas or internally displaced persons (IDP) camps.

"This is essentially equivalent to detaining and locking up every resident in those villages. The PNO should reevaluate this move," said Khun Rein Yan, spokesperson for the Pa-O National Liberation Army (PNLO/PNLA).

Attempts by Mizzima to contact the PNO/PNA for clarification on the forced relocation order were unsuccessful.

The PNLA and allied revolutionary joint forces seized control of Hsihseng Township on 22 January 2024. However, the junta forces, along with members of the Pa-O National Army, regained control of the township approximately two months later.

Since then, frequent clashes have reportedly occurred whenever PNA soliders attempt to advance in the area.

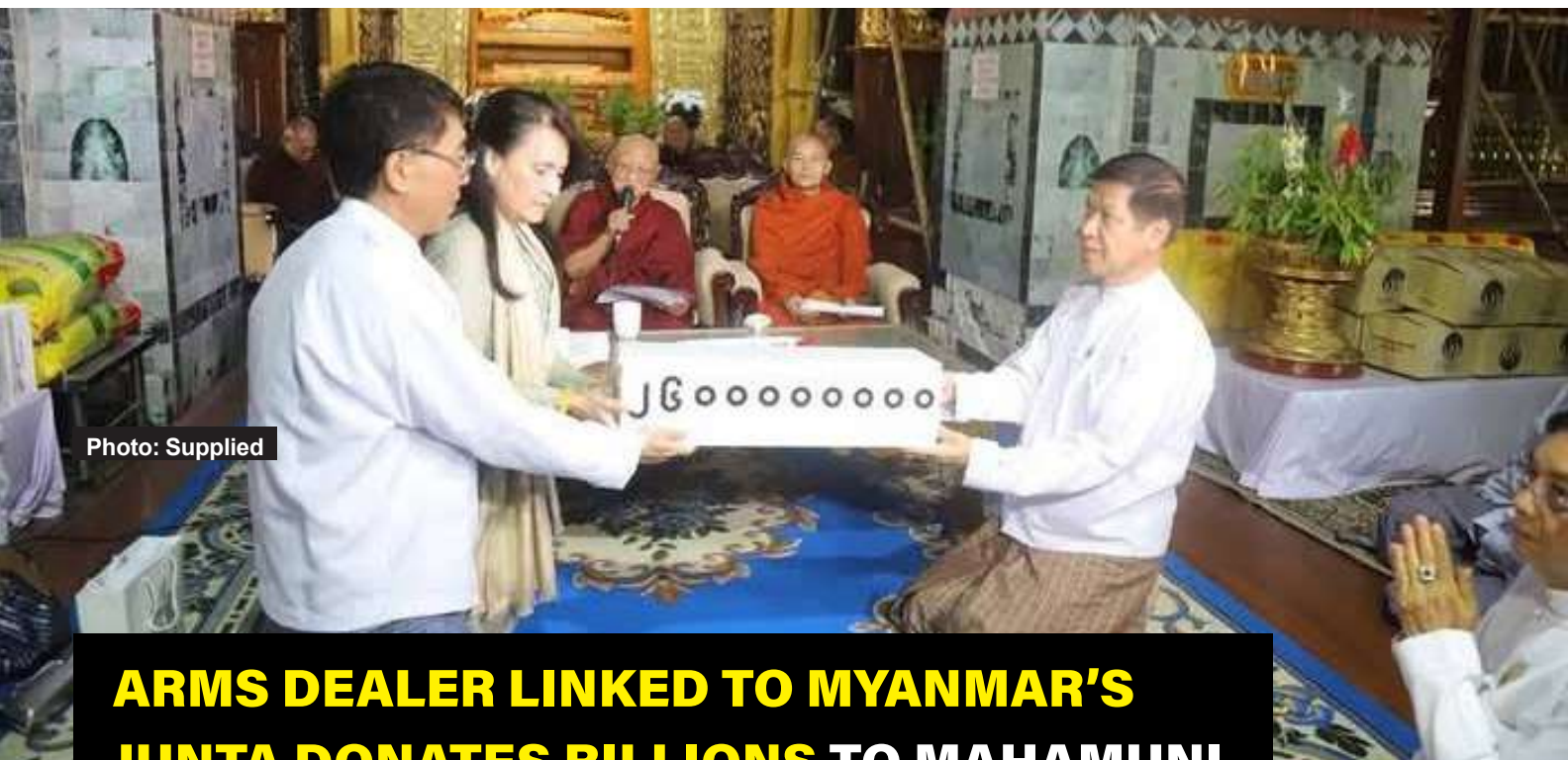


Photo: Supplied

ARMS DEALER LINKED TO MYANMAR'S JUNTA DONATES BILLIONS TO MAHAMUNI PAGODA IN MANDALAY

The family of Dr. Naing Htut Aung, a key arms dealer for the Myanmar military and founder of the International Gateways Group of Companies, donated three viss of gold (worth US\$146,098) and 26,000 lakhs (2.6 billion kyats / US\$1.2 million) to the Mahamuni Pagoda in Mandalay, according to an announcement by the pagoda's Board of Trustees on 7 June.

The donation is reportedly earmarked for crafting a new diamond bud to replace the one damaged during the recent earthquake. It will also fund the construction and repair of the eastern stairway's steeple and six supporting pillars of the temple.

The donation ceremony, held at the historic Buddhist site, was attended by junta-appointed Mandalay Region Chief Minister U Myo Aung, along with other ministers and regional officials, as reported by the Military Council's Ministry of Information on 8 June.

Dr. Naing Htut Aung, along with his wife, has been under scrutiny for his close financial and logistical ties to the junta. Justice For Myanmar (JFM), a rights advocacy group, has listed him as one of the most

corrupt businessmen in Myanmar, citing his central role in arms procurement for the junta.

In its September 2023 report, JFM detailed how Dr. Naing Htut Aung's company was involved in multi-million-dollar transactions that supplied the junta with weaponry and aircraft parts including components for MiG-29 fighter jets.

One such jet, according to JFM, was used by the junta in an airstrike on a civilian gathering in Sagaing Region in early 2023. The bombing killed around 170 people, including many children, whose remains were reportedly found mutilated in the aftermath.

Dr. Naing Htut Aung was sanctioned in 2022 by both the United States and the European Union for his role in enabling military violence and profiting from the junta's war economy. He is also known to act as a key intermediary in facilitating arms deals between China and Myanmar's military.

Critics have questioned the symbolism of the donation, which comes at a time when the junta faces mounting allegations of war crimes and growing resistance across the country.

BURN AFTER REFORMING *INSIGHT MYANMAR*

Mark Farmaner



"Well, the way we describe it now," says Mark Farmaner, Director of Burma Campaign UK, "is that this is just the latest coup, and it's going to keep happening. As long as the military are allowed to have any form of power or influence, it's just a question of time before there'll be another one."

Speaking to the Insight Myanmar Podcast from his decades of experience—starting in 1988 when he first became aware of Burma's crisis while involved in the anti-apartheid movement for South Africa—Farmaner explains how his political awakening was shaped by both global solidarity and personal commitment. Early on, his work focused on raising awareness through stunts like street performances and media campaigns. Over time, it developed into policy-driven advocacy with a focus on disrupting military power structures through economic and political means. Through these various forms of engagement, Farmaner came to the firm conclusion that the fundamental flaw in international approaches to engaging with Myanmar is the misguided belief that the military has any interest in reform. Therefore, any attempt at compromise merely preserves military influence and delays meaningful change: "It's like throwing [them] a lifeline."

TWO MAIN THEMES

As its political sophistication grew, Burma Campaign UK identified two main themes that could be relied on for drawing international attention: Aung San Suu Kyi, and British economic connections to the military. However, Farmaner notes that following Suu

Kyi's fall from grace, most notably after the Rohingya crisis, this caused a dramatic rethinking of the sorts of narratives they were promoting. "Her actions while she was in government have made the international advocacy a lot harder," he says bluntly. Recently, he notes how Burma Campaign UK put out a media release highlighting the fact that Aung San Suu Kyi had by that point spent a total of 19 years in jail, but "nobody was interested."

SUU KYI'S VIEW

Reflecting on Suu Kyi's worldview after having met her in 2012, he was surprised to learn that she views Myanmar as a "Bamar Buddhist country with minorities," as opposed to a multicultural nation. With this perspective firmly in place, Farmaner recounts how she then went on to downplay concerns about military aggression, suggesting all sides were equally culpable. Even her federalism plan, he argues, was a top-down program, and the ethnic politicians complained at the time that she didn't really understand their situation.

Farmaner connects this deterioration of Aung San Suu Kyi's standing in the world's eyes to a broader issue, that international coordination for advocacy in Myanmar has waned, sucked up by the country's many humanitarian crises. Whereas earlier years saw synchronized efforts between exile groups, border-based civil society, and international human rights organizations, this is no longer the case in the wake of the 2021 coup and especially, the March 28th earthquake.

POST-MILITARY FUTURE

Despite these challenges, Farmaner notes that for the first time in two decades, people across the country are discussing a post-military future—not just in theory, but in practical terms. Acknowledging that this will be a long process, and that China has asserted more forceful support for the junta, nonetheless, he believes “there is still that hope.”

Imagining this post-junta Myanmar, Farmaner challenges prevailing assumptions that a stable future requires a single authority ruling from a central capitol. He insists, “There isn’t going to be [...] a strong central government with authority all over the country.” Instead, he thinks it will entail multiple administrations around the country. Ethnic forces will insist that the regions they fought for remain under their control. He stresses this should not alarm the international community, as he firmly believes that a federated model—born not from ideology but practical resistance—represents the most viable path forward.

NUG’S POSITION?

Asked whether the National Unity Government (NUG) could play a unifying role, he responds, “I can’t see them being able to form a central government of the kind that there was pre-coup.” For example, when the NUG recently attempted to establish authority in ethnic areas, they quickly got slapped down by ethnic leaders, indicating they were not welcome to administer their communities. He reports that the general lack of access, funds, and diplomatic success has hindered legitimacy, adding that a lot of behind-the-scenes politics by MPs has further fractured the opposition.

In terms of what the international community can do, Farmaner outlines five key areas: 1) deny the military the legitimacy they crave; 2) restrict their sources of revenue; 3) cut off their sources of arms; 4) press for justice and accountability; 5) humanitarian assistance to contested and liberated regions.

Regarding sanctions as a remedy, he notes that while they were effective early on, their effectiveness has dissolved because they have not evolved. He stresses that they must be updated regularly in response to the military’s actions and behaviors. He criticizes Western countries’ hesitation to sanction third-party enablers like China and Vietnam.

CREATING A CRISIS

Farmaner next turns his attention to the country’s domestic situation, which he warns is dire. He argues that the Burmese military is deliberately creating a humanitarian crisis, yet all the while, international aid

remains far below need—and far below pre-coup levels. For example, the UK cut aid 73% in 2021; this was aid tied to political reform that did not happen. However, here Farmaner points out that rather than pivot to responding to Myanmar’s massive and expanding humanitarian needs, London just upheld the cuts. This neglect only serves to benefit the Burmese military by weakening the resistance, Farmaner says, adding that his organization has tracked Burmese military social media accounts “gloating” about the diminution of US and UK aid.

The recent earthquake gave the regime an opportunity to regain international legitimacy. Regional governments have resumed contact with the regime, and Western countries don’t want to endanger the new access they’ve got. The junta is putting forward a different public face, but leopards don’t change their spots. He hears from inside sources about the obstructions the junta has thrown up around delivering assistance. Another concern for Farmaner is that earthquake assistance from China has dwarfed that from the U.S.: \$136 to \$9 million. What is more, he points to a response from some American right-wing think tanks that suggest that the U.S. change policy to actually consider backing the junta, as a way to counter China’s influence.

BURMESE SURVIVAL

Grassroots efforts, diaspora action, and local fundraising have been the backbone of Burmese survival. “They’re not waiting for aid agencies or UN or someone to come and help.” He notes how remarkable it was following the earthquake, when local organizations immediately stepped in. This has led to a narrative about “the resilient Burmese people,” but while the international community may romanticize survival, the Burmese people would rather have support! For those interested in becoming allies, Farmaner stresses public action: “The most important thing—write to whoever your local representative is!” Officials tend to respond to public pressure, and personal contact.

He closes with an optimistic yet pragmatic message. “I think it’s inevitable that the people of Burma will win their freedom. We just have to make sure the international community does as much as it can to... help the people bring that about sooner rather than later.”

CATCH THE PODCAST HERE:

<https://insightmyanmar.org/complete-shows/2025/5/7/episode-346-burn-after-reforming>



Photo: AFP

SHE IS SIMPLE BUT SACRED: A LIFE INTERRUPTED, A RESOLVE UNWAVERING

NICHOLAS KONG

Aung San Suu Kyi—beloved as “Amay Suu” by the people of Myanmar—is celebrated as a brave, nonviolent champion of democracy and a Nobel Peace Prize Laureate. To the world, she remains a symbol of resilience - to some, a misunderstood icon fallen from grace. On June 19, 2025, she turns 80—held in isolation in an undisclosed location by the military junta. Though physically absent, she will be honored in the hearts of millions.

A Daughter, A Wife, A Mother

The only daughter and youngest child of General Aung San—the father of Myanmar’s independence and founder of its military—Aung San Suu Kyi was just two years old when the thirty-three-year-old national hero was assassinated in 1947. She spent her early years in Rangoon, attending Methodist English High School, before moving to India in 1960, where her mother, Daw Khin Kyi, served as ambassador.

She earned a degree in politics from the University of Delhi in 1964, then studied Philosophy, Politics, and Economics at the University of Oxford, graduating in 1968. Fluent in Burmese, English, French, and Japanese, she worked at the United Nations in New York before marrying British scholar of Tibetan culture and fellow Oxford alumnus Michael Aris in 1972. They had two sons—Alexander and Kim—born in 1974 and 1977. A devout Theravada Buddhist, Suu Kyi valued both scholarship and family—until history called her back.

Accidental but Anointed Leader

Suu Kyi returned to Myanmar in 1988 to care for her ailing mother—just as the historic 8888 Uprising erupted against the military dictatorship of General Ne Win, who had betrayed her father’s vision of a professional, apolitical army. On August 26, 1988, she addressed a crowd of over half a million at the Shwedagon Pagoda. “I could not, as my father’s daughter, remain indifferent to all that was going on,” she declared.

The public instantly embraced her—not only for her lineage but also for her integrity, vision, empathy, eloquence, and courage. On September 27, 1988, she co-founded the National League for Democracy (NLD), which would become the principal democratic force in opposition to military rule.

The Iron Lady of Myanmar

As her prominence grew, the military regime placed her under house arrest or in prison for 15 of the next 21 years:

- July 1989 – July 1995 (6 years)
- September 2000 – May 2002 (1.5 years)
- May 2003 – November 2010 (7.5 years)

Her detention became a global symbol of authoritarian repression. After five visits, the junta denied her husband a visa in 1997—even after his terminal cancer diagnosis. They last met in 1995. Michael Aris died on his 53rd birthday, March 27, 1999. Suu Kyi also missed the formative years of her children, whom she did not see again until after her release.

She once said:

“As a mother, the greater sacrifice was giving up my sons, but I was always aware that others had given up more. I never forgot that my colleagues in prison suffered not only physically but mentally, for the families they left behind in the larger prison that was Burma.”

Her sons accepted her Nobel Peace Prize on her behalf in 1991. She survived two assassination attempts—in 1996 and during the 2003 Depayin Massacre—both orchestrated by the military.

The Bully and The Brain: Constitutional Trap

The NLD won 81% of parliamentary seats in the 1990 election, but the results were annulled by the junta—then known as the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC). In 1992, General Than Shwe ousted General Saw Maung and later rebranded SLORC as the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), entrenching his rule for nearly two decades.

Than Shwe masterminded the 2008 Constitution, which reserved 25% of parliamentary seats for the military and granted overwhelming power to the Commander-in-Chief and the military-dominated National Defense and Security Council (NDSC). He also handpicked General Min Aung Hlaing as Commander-in-Chief—cementing the military's supremacy over civilian authorities. A managed transition followed. The 2010 election, boycotted by the NLD, was won by the military proxy Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), which formed a quasi-civilian government.

The NLD re-registered in 2011 to reassert people's power in government. Suu Kyi and NLD candidates won 43 out of 45 contested seats in the 2012 by-election. She became Leader of the Opposition. The NLD swept the 2015 general election with 77% of the vote, but the Constitution barred her from the presidency because her children were foreign citizens—a clause clearly designed to target her. She was instead appointed State Counsellor, a newly created role equivalent to Prime Minister.

De Facto Head of Government, in Handcuffs

During her watch, Myanmar's young generation caught a glimpse of democracy and prosperity. However, as head of the civilian government, Suu Kyi faced monumental challenges: reviving a devastated economy, rebuilding broken infrastructure, mediating decades-old ethnic conflicts, tackling corruption, and coexisting with a military that retained full control over defense, borders, internal security, and the NDSC.

In August 2017, after attacks by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), the military launched a brutal campaign against the Rohingya minority, drawing global condemnation. Caught between domestic outrage over religious conflict and international scrutiny, Suu Kyi became the face of Myanmar's defense at the International Court of Justice—despite having no authority over the military. Critics accused her of moral failure; her defenders pointed to constitutional constraints and the ever-present threat of another coup.

An Icon of Accolades and Acrimony

Aung San Suu Kyi has received numerous global honors for her nonviolent resistance and leadership:

- Nobel Peace Prize (1991)
- Sakharov Prize (1990) – rescinded in 2020
- Presidential Medal of Freedom (2000)
- Congressional Gold Medal (2008)
- Olof Palme Prize (2005)
- Companion of the Order of Australia (1996)
- Legion of Honor, France (2012)
- Wallenberg Medal, University of Michigan (2011)
- Chatham House Prize (2011)
- Sultan of Brunei Golden Jubilee Medal (2017)

Yet her international reputation suffered after the Rohingya crisis. Many awards were revoked. Her supporters argue she acted to protect national unity and avoid a coup—while working within a system designed to constrain her.

Snake in the Sleeve

Suu Kyi's gravest miscalculation may have been her hope to reform the very military her father had founded. By then, it had become a deeply corrupt institution—manipulating ethnic divisions to retain power. Her intention to amend the 2008 Constitution after the NLD's 2020 landslide victory triggered a coup by General Min Aung Hlaing.

On February 1, 2021, she was arrested along with other NLD leaders. The military's violent crackdown on peaceful demonstrations sparked nationwide armed resistance by newly formed People's Defense Forces (PDFs), many under the National Unity Government (NUG), in alliance with long-established Ethnic Resistance Organizations (EROs).

Aung San Suu Kyi was sentenced to 33 years in prison—later reduced to 27—on politically motivated charges. She remains in isolation at an undisclosed location, her health reportedly deteriorating. Despite international condemnation, meaningful action from global allies has yet to materialize.

A Choice, Not a Sacrifice

Aung San Suu Kyi has consistently rejected the label of martyr.

"It is not a sacrifice. It is a choice."

She vowed at her mother's funeral on January 2, 1989, to fulfill her father's dream of a Federal Democratic Union.

She is a politician who spent a quarter of her life under arrest; a leader who gave up comfort, wealth, and family for her people; a stateswoman free of corruption and rich in conviction. Critics have called her authoritarian. Admirers see her as pragmatic, principled, and profoundly moral.

She is not perfect. She is not a saint. But in Prudence, Patience, Perseverance, and Probity, she is unmatched.

Let us remember:

A daughter who lost her father at two.

A wife who never got to say goodbye.

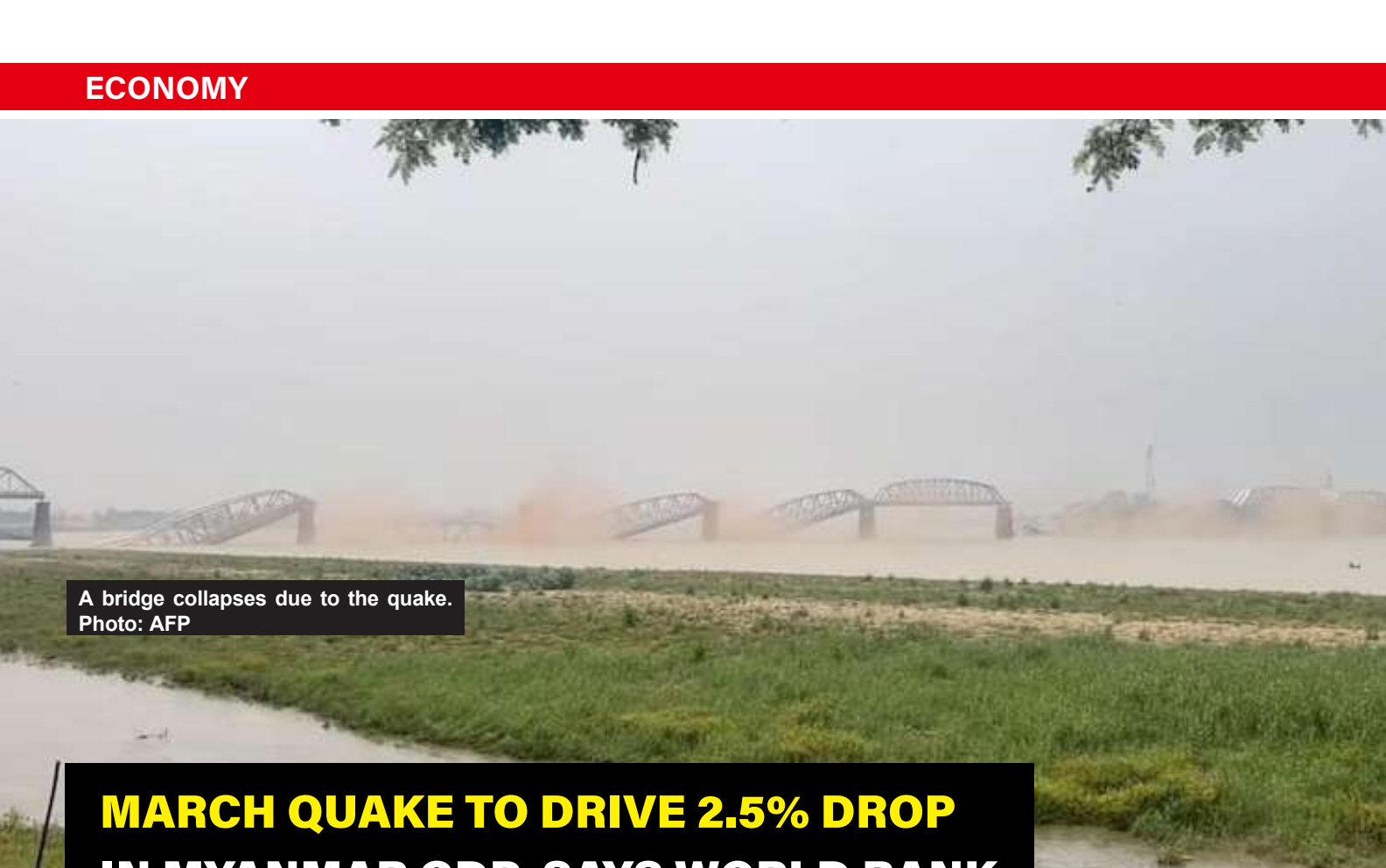
A mother who missed her sons grow up.

An 80-year-old elder living in harsh, unjust captivity.

May we hold space in our hearts for her health, her freedom, and her happiness.

May she live to witness her dream of fulfilling her father's vision come true.

The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect the views of Mizzima Media.



A bridge collapses due to the quake.
Photo: AFP

MARCH QUAKE TO DRIVE 2.5% DROP IN MYANMAR GDP, SAYS WORLD BANK

Myanmar's economy is set to shrink 2.5 percent in the 2025/26 financial year, largely as a result of March's devastating magnitude-7.7 earthquake, the World Bank said on Thursday.

The country's economy had already been battered by four years of brutal civil war when the March 28 tremor hit, killing nearly 3,800 people and destroying swathes of homes and businesses.

A World Bank report predicted GDP will contract 2.5 percent in the financial year ending in March 2026 "mostly due to earthquake impacts", with output \$2 billion lower than it would have been without the disaster.

"Production across all sectors has been disrupted by factory closures, supply chain constraints, labour shortages, and damage to infrastructure," said a World Bank statement.

The tremor also inflicted an estimated \$11 billion of damage, equivalent to 14 percent of GDP, according to the report.

Myanmar's sparsely populated administrative capital Naypyidaw and the second-largest city of Mandalay were the worst impacted by the quake.

The World Bank predicted both regions would suffer from output slashed by a third between April and

September, before being buoyed by reconstruction efforts in the second half of the financial year.

"The earthquake caused significant loss of life and displacement, while exacerbating already difficult economic conditions, further testing the resilience of Myanmar's people," said Melinda Good, World Bank division director for Thailand and Myanmar.

Myanmar's military seized power in a 2021 coup which sparked a many-sided civil war between its troops, pro-democracy guerillas and ethnic armed groups which have long held sway in the country's fringes.

While the military and some of its adversaries have pledged a ceasefire throughout this month to spur aid efforts, intense combat has continued in locations across the country.

The fighting has eviscerated Myanmar's economy. Inflation for the year up to April 2025 was estimated at 34.1 percent, the World Bank report said.

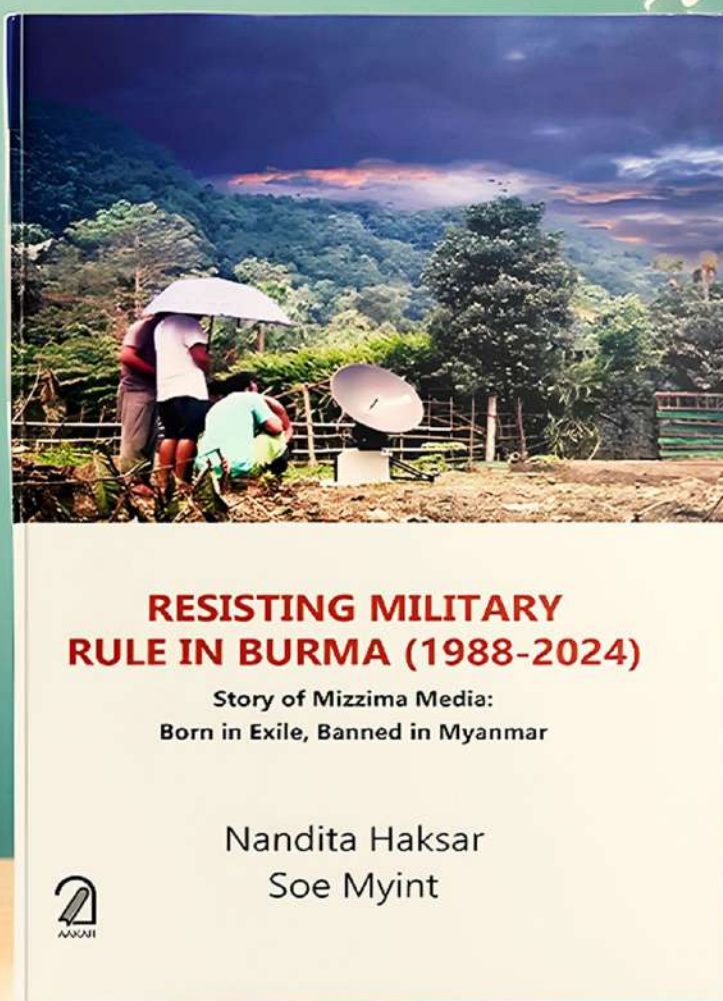
More than three million people are currently displaced in the country and the World Bank said 2024's poverty rate was estimated at over 30 percent.

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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Iran fires missiles at Israel as the conflict heats up. Photo: AFP

IRAN STRIKES ISRAEL AS TRUMP WEIGHS US INVOLVEMENT

Iran launched a fresh salvo of missiles at Israel on Thursday, with a hospital reported hit, as President Donald Trump warned he was weighing US military action in the conflict.

AFP journalists heard violent, sustained explosions in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, and sirens sounded in several parts of the country to warn of incoming Iranian missiles.

Shortly afterwards, the army said citizens could leave their shelters, while the foreign minister said the Soroka hospital in southern Israel's Beersheba had suffered "extensive damage" in a strike.

Israeli rescuers said at least 32 people were injured in Iran's latest missile attack.

The explosions in Jerusalem were the loudest heard by AFP journalists since the conflict began last week. The barrage came after fresh Israeli strikes on Tehran and elsewhere, and with growing speculation about whether Washington would enter the fray.

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei meanwhile rejected Trump's demand for an "unconditional surrender", despite claims from the US leader that "Iran's got a lot of trouble and they want to negotiate".

Trump has left his intentions on joining the conflict deliberately ambiguous, saying Wednesday: "I may do it, I may not do it. I mean, nobody knows what I'm going to do."

"The next week is going to be very big," he added, without further details.

'Never surrender'

The White House said Trump would receive an intelligence briefing on Thursday, a US holiday. Top US diplomat Marco Rubio is set meet his British counterpart for talks expected to focus on the conflict.

"I have ideas as to what to do, but I haven't made a final (decision)," Trump said. "I like to make the final decision one second before it's due, because things change. Especially with war."

The Wall Street Journal reported that Trump had told aides on Tuesday he had approved attack plans but was holding off to see if Iran would give up its nuclear programme.

Trump told reporters that Iranian officials "want to come to the White House", a claim denied by Tehran.

The US president had favoured a diplomatic route to end Iran's nuclear programme, seeking a deal to replace the 2015 agreement he tore up in his first term.

But since Israel unleashed the campaign against Iran one week ago, Trump has stood behind the key US ally.

The United States is the only country with the "bunker buster" bombs needed to destroy Iran's Fordow nuclear plant, but US military action is deeply unpopular with parts of Trump's base.

Khamenei on Wednesday insisted Iran "will never surrender", and called Trump's ultimatum "unacceptable".

"America should know that any military intervention will undoubtedly result in irreparable damage," Khamenei added.

Dozens killed

On Thursday morning, Israel said it was carrying out fresh strikes on Tehran and other parts of Iran, and warned civilians in two villages, Arak and Khondab, to leave ahead of new attacks.

An Israeli military official, who asked not to be named, said Wednesday that Iran had fired around 400 ballistic missiles and 1,000 drones since the conflict began on Friday.

About 20 missiles had struck civilian areas in Israel, the official added.

Iranian strikes have killed at least 24 people and injured hundreds since they began, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said on Monday.

Iran said Sunday that Israeli strikes had killed at least 224 people, including military commanders, nuclear scientists and civilians.

Both countries have not issued an updated official toll since then.

Israel says its surprise air campaign is aimed at preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons.

Iran had been enriching uranium to 60 percent -- far above the 3.67-percent limit set by the 2015 nuclear deal but still short of the 90-percent threshold needed for a nuclear warhead.

Israel has maintained ambiguity on its own atomic activities, but the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute says it has 90 nuclear warheads.

'Immediate de-escalation'

Israel's strikes have prompted mass evacuations and food and fuel shortages in Iran.

"There are shortages of rice, bread, sugar and tea," a 40-year-old Iranian driver told AFP at the Iraqi border crossing of Bashmakh, seeking anonymity for fear of reprisals.

There was also a "near-total national internet blackout" in Iran on Wednesday, a London-based watchdog said, with Iran's Fars news agency confirming heavier internet restrictions after initial curbs imposed last week.

The military campaign has sparked calls for a return to diplomacy.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said Thursday that a deal to guarantee both Israel's security and Iran's desire for a civilian nuclear programme was possible.

"I believe it would be good for all of us together to look for ways to stop the fighting and seek ways for the participants in the conflict to find an agreement," he told foreign journalists at a televised event.

He said Iran had not asked Russia for military help.

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said his country remains committed to diplomacy, noting Iran "has so far only retaliated against the Israeli regime and not those who are aiding and abetting it".

But there were lingering questions about how the conflict could evolve, with Trump telling reporters that a change in Iran's government "could happen", a day after he had boasted that Washington could assassinate Khamenei, but would not, "at least not for now".

AFP

TRUMP TOUTS 'DONE' DEAL WITH BEIJING ON RARE EARTHS, CHINESE STUDENTS

US President Donald Trump touted ties with China as "excellent" on 11 June, saying the superpowers reached a deal after two days of talks aimed at preserving a truce in their damaging trade war.

Trump said on his Truth Social platform that China would supply rare earth minerals and magnets -- vital elements for US industries -- while Washington would allow Chinese students to remain in American universities.

His post came after top United States and Chinese negotiators announced a "framework" agreement late Tuesday following two days of marathon talks in London.

"Our deal with China is done," Trump wrote, adding that the agreement was still "subject to final approval with President Xi (Jinping) and me."

"President Xi and I are going to work closely together to open up China to American Trade," he said in a second post.

Major US indexes edged higher in early trading.

'Right track'

After negotiations spanning more than 20 hours, US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick said Wednesday that the talks were "totally on the right track."

"They are going to approve all applications for magnets from United States companies right away," he told CNBC, on what should happen after Trump and Xi give the green light to the deal.

He added that Washington would lift its measures once China acts, and that US tariff levels on China would not change from here.

Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent told lawmakers separately that it was possible to rebalance economic relations with China if Beijing proved a "reliable partner in trade negotiations."

"If China will course-correct by upholding its end of the initial trade agreement we outlined in Geneva, and I believe after our talks in London they will, then the rebalancing of the world's two largest economies is possible," Bessent told the House Ways and Means Committee.

The two sides agreed to reduce their tit-for-tat, triple-digit tariffs during talks in Geneva last month, but

cracks appeared in the detente after Trump accused China of violating the deal.

Washington was concerned at slower supplies of rare earths after Beijing in early April began requiring domestic exporters to apply for a license -- widely seen as a response to US tariffs.

'Candid' talks

Rare earths are used in everything from electric vehicles to hard drives, wind turbines and missiles.

On Truth Social, Trump said China will supply "full magnets, and any necessary rare earths" up front.

Washington has also raised Beijing's ire by vowing to revoke the visas of Chinese students, a major source of revenue for US universities.

On Wednesday, Trump said: "We will provide to China what was agreed to, including Chinese students using our colleges and universities."

The US president also said that the United States applies 55 percent tariffs on Chinese goods -- a combination of his 30 percent additional levies this year and the rough average of pre-existing duties, a White House official said.

He said Beijing charges 10 percent duties on US goods.

The rates are the same as those that were previously agreed in the truce, which temporarily brought US tariffs down from 145 percent and those imposed by China from 125 percent.

In a Chinese state media readout of the talks released Wednesday, Vice Premier He Lifeng, who headed Beijing's team in London, stressed the need for the two sides to strengthen cooperation in future dialogue.

"As a next step, the two sides should... continuously enhance consensus, reduce misunderstandings and strengthen cooperation," He said, according to state broadcaster CCTV.

Speaking to reporters in London, China International Trade Representative Li Chenggang earlier said: "Our communication has been very professional, rational, in-depth and candid."

AFP



ON THE FRONTLINES OF DEMOCRACY

"In improbable places, the demand for democracy and the will to fight for democracy remains strong," reflects Dr. Kevin Casas-Zamora, speaking with the Insight Myanmar Podcast. While these words refer to the aspirations of the people of Myanmar, they are sentiments that could apply universally.

Since the 2021 military coup, sustaining focused international attention on the protracted and complex situation in Myanmar has presented a considerable and ongoing challenge. In a global environment characterized by many competing crises and the ever-shifting sands of geopolitical priorities, Casas-Zamora speaks to the fundamental and universal principles at stake in Myanmar's struggle against the forces of authoritarianism, urging the international community to remain engaged and committed to supporting the democratic aspirations of its people. "At a fundamental level, any country's struggle for democracy is every country's struggle for democracy," he says.

As the Secretary-General of International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), a Stockholm-based intergovernmental organization dedicated to advancing democracy around the world, Casas-Zamora's career spans three decades, from his tenure as Costa Rica's Second Vice President and Minister of National Planning to his roles as Secretary for Political Affairs at Organization of American States and Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution. A lawyer by training, he holds degrees from

the University of Costa Rica, the University of Essex, and the University of Oxford. His doctoral research, focusing on political finance in Latin America, earned him the 2004 Jean Blondel PhD Prize. In addition to his role at International IDEA since 2019, he contributes his expertise as a Senior Fellow at a Washington D.C.-based policy research center called Inter-American Dialogue.

Myanmar's struggle directly aligns with IDEA's mission, Casas-Zamora says. "We should try to support the enormous courage of the people, particularly the young people in Myanmar, because they are fighting for something that is bigger than them, bigger than Myanmar, and bigger than each of us. I mean, they're fighting for values that, in the case of International IDEA, are the reason why we do this work," he says. "We're fighting for the only political arrangement that guarantees that the fundamental dignity of people is protected. This is a cause that concerns all of us, and they're on the frontline and fighting for us! It's our duty to support them."

The organization's engagement with Myanmar has been a responsive process, adapting to the country's evolving political landscape. They began operating more in Myanmar in 2012, when the National League for Democracy under Aung San Suu Kyi participated in by-elections (and won by a landslide in the 2015 elections). Even before Myanmar's steps towards democratic reform in 2012, International IDEA recognized the long-term need for democratic development and maintained a foundational presence. It continued to expand its efforts, offering support to the emerging democratic institutions and actors. This included providing technical expertise for electoral administration, facilitating inclusive discussions on potential constitutional reforms, and working to improve the capacity of parliamentary bodies.

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JUNTA MINISTER'S MEDIA TOUR: PURE PROPAGANDA THEATER

While junta's Union Minister for Information Maung Maung Ohn inspected the broadcasting services of Canal+DTH, a joint venture with MRTV-4 and Channel 7 of Forever Group, as reported by the junta's mouthpiece The Global New Light of Myanmar, this choreographed visit exposes the superficial nature of the junta's approach to media governance in a country where digital repression aims to control information, silence opposition, and hide atrocities.

The minister's inspection tour was pure theater. He visited Canal+DTH, Forever Group's Channel 7 studios, and Media N Company's M Channel—all broadcasters that work closely with the state. MRTV-4 is jointly run by state television and Forever Group, while Canal+ operates through junta-approved broadcasting systems. These visits to regime-friendly media companies were carefully chosen to avoid reality.

The minister's emphasis on "the need to follow the permitted media ethics, laws and updated directives" rings hollow when Myanmar authorities deployed a new censorship system to block most VPNs in May 2024, severely restricting people's ability to communicate anonymously and securely and the regime has arrested 209 journalists and news workers from the 2021 coup until December 2024, with 55 currently in detention or

serving jail sentences, according to the Annual Report 2024 of Journalism and Media Safety in Myanmar.

The focus on sports programming and entertainment content during the inspection tour—including plans to purchase and expand the broadcast of English Premier League football matches—highlights the junta's strategy of providing superficial normalcy while systematically destroying press freedom. The junta stripped media licenses of five Myanmar news outlets: DVB, Khit Thit Media, Mizzima, Myanmar Now, and 7Day, and official newspapers are controlled by the military and the country no longer has any independent newspaper in publication.

These entertainment channels operate within a heavily restricted ecosystem where Data for Myanmar reported that between February 2022 and January 2024, 1,480 people were arrested for "criticizing the junta and supporting the opposition forces online", and the authorities banned satellite television on May 4, extending strict censorship restrictions

So, the junta minister's inspection of technical facilities and production capabilities at these studios just represents the junta's attempt to project administrative competence while operating within a broader framework of systematic oppression.



MYANMAR RESISTANCE FUNDRAISER CELEBRITY FACES BACKLASH OVER FINANCIAL MISCONDUCT AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT ALLEGATIONS

A prominent figure in Myanmar's resistance fundraising movement has drawn criticism for financial mismanagement and sexual harassment, sparking debate about accountability within the anti-junta movement.

Recently, problems have emerged in this celebrity fundraiser community. Some have been accused of financial mismanagement, while others face allegations of sexual harassment. Because these influencers are celebrities, they often have supporters who defend or excuse their misconduct. Sometimes, those who expose wrongdoing are even accused of being pro-junta or informants.

The Mauk Kham Wah Controversy

In recent days, Mauk Kham Wah, a photographer who won a World Press Photo award for a battlefield documentation image, has faced allegations of both financial misconduct and sexual harassment that surfaced on Facebook. Mauk Kham Wah

has acknowledged and apologized for the sexual harassment accusation.

Following his apology, a few friends offered support with messages like "fighting" and "admit your mistakes and try again next time." However, others criticized this response as too lenient toward sexual harassment, arguing it shows insensitivity to victims and warning that lack of effective social punishment for misconducts of influencers could lead to more cases of abuse.

A female user who appeared to be Mauk Kham Wah's friend wrote, "Try to make the rest of your life better. You don't need to ruin your life over this incident. Fighting!" However, another user responded critically, "Why did you say 'fighting'? No matter how much he participated in the revolution, this is sexual harassment. There's no reason to accept it and cheer him on. Do you think the victim will recover just because we accept his apology? If we want a federal democratic system, we need to change not just the rulers but also people's attitudes."

Another user commented, "It's amazing how easily people can say 'fighting' when they're not in the victim's position." Yet another wrote, "If some man did inappropriate things to your daughter, sister, or niece, and when that person apologized, would you say 'we forgive you, fighting'?"

Financial Misconduct Details

While details of the sexual harassment case haven't been fully disclosed, the financial misconduct involves Mauk Kham Wah's "Rebels: Coffee & Tea" products. He allegedly sold these items at premium prices but, contrary to public expectations, kept most of the profits for himself rather than donating them to the resistance.

The Rebels brand became popular among the public, with some people even getting Rebels logo tattoos. The brand also ran a tattoo campaign.

A social media user wrote, "People who got those big rebel logos tattooed are now in trouble," while another commented, "The Rebels logo tattoo situation is now worse than having to get tattoo removal for an ex's name."

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.