

ON THE GROUND IN MYANMAR

mizzima WEEKLY

Analysis & Insight



TURNING TARIFFS INTO THEATER

How Myanmar's Junta Spins U.S.
Punishment into False Legitimacy

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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.

TRUMP'S LETTER MUDDIES MYANMAR JUNTA STANDING

The decision by US President Donald Trump's White House to send a letter to Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, the leader of Myanmar's military junta, was a significant diplomatic misstep by the US government administration for several reasons. This action inadvertently granted a level of legitimacy to an individual who illegally seized power through a military coup, undermining democratic principles and the international consensus on Myanmar's political crisis.

First and foremost, addressing Min Aung Hlaing directly and officially from the White House confers a degree of recognition that is diplomatically powerful – even if it is referred to by analysts as a “form letter” similar to others sent out to South East Asian leaders. After the February 2021 coup, in which Myanmar's military overthrew the democratically elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi, most of the international community – including the United States – condemned the junta and refused to recognize its legitimacy. By sending a formal communication to the general, especially one discussing bilateral trade matters, the Trump administration deviated from that unified stance. Even if the intent was to express displeasure via trade penalties, the act of corresponding as if with a “legitimate head of state” undercut efforts to isolate the junta.

Second, the timing and tone of the letter matter. A message regarding higher trade tariffs – essentially an economic negotiation – implies a willingness to engage diplomatically. Rather than emphasizing human rights violations, the suppression of democratic institutions, or the violent crackdown on protesters, the focus on trade could be interpreted as prioritizing economic interests over democratic values. This could weaken the moral authority of the US position and embolden the junta, who it seems immediately jumped in to use such

correspondence to bolster their domestic and international legitimacy – calling for permission to send an official delegation to Washington DC to hold trade talks.

Third, the letter risked sending confusing signals to both allies and the people of Myanmar. The US had been an outspoken critic of the coup and had implemented targeted sanctions in response. Communicating directly with Min Aung Hlaing contradicts the message that the military regime is an illegitimate power not worthy of diplomatic engagement.

For the people of Myanmar, especially those resisting the junta, the letter could be perceived as a betrayal, reducing trust in the US commitment to democratic values and potentially disheartening civil society actors and the pro-democracy movement.

Furthermore, from a geopolitical standpoint, the letter could be exploited by rival powers. Countries like China and Russia, which have taken a supportive stance toward the junta, could use the incident to argue that the West is not consistent in its support for democracy or human rights. This could weaken US influence in Southeast Asia and complicate efforts to present a united international front against the military regime.

What is clear is the White House letter sent to Min Aung Hlaing was a strategic and symbolic error. While it may have been intended to signal economic consequences, the form and nature of the communication inadvertently lent legitimacy to a military leader widely condemned for undermining democracy. In the complex arena of international diplomacy, perception often matters as much as intent – and in this case, the perception was damaging to US credibility and to the cause of fighting for democratic governance in Myanmar.

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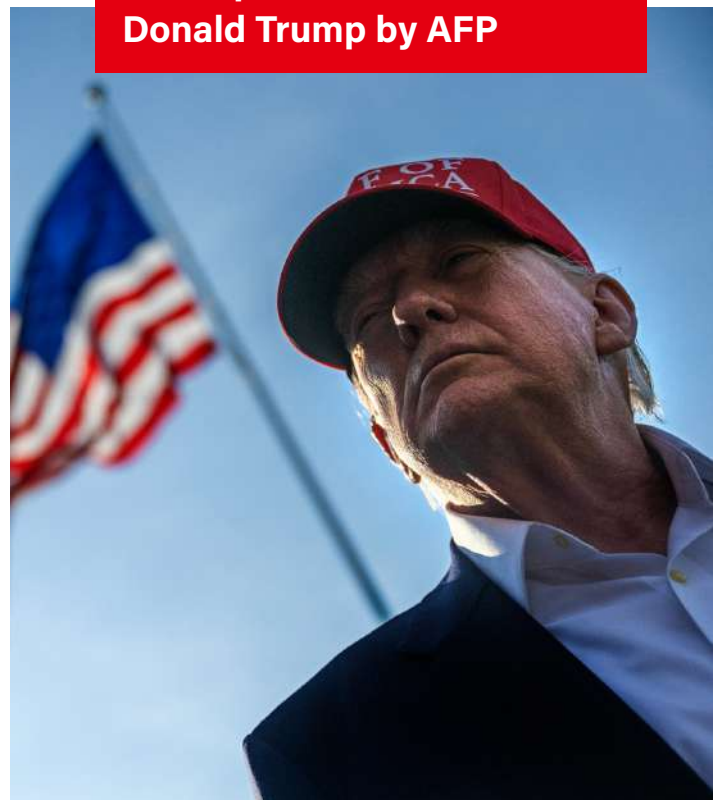
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Cover photo of US President Donald Trump by AFP





US President Donald Trump.
Photo: AFP

TURNING TARIFFS INTO THEATER

**HOW MYANMAR'S JUNTA
SPINS US PUNISHMENT
INTO FALSE LEGITIMACY**

OPINION BY JAMES SHWE

How to Turn a Punitive Measure into a Publicity Stunt

Myanmar's State Administration Council (SAC) is at it again—this time spinning a 40% U.S. tariff, a clear punitive measure, as a sign of international engagement and legitimacy. When the White House issued its routine trade notification – in a “form letter” signed by US President Donald Trump – the junta wasted no time in pretending it was an invitation to the diplomatic dance, not a penalty for its anti-democratic actions.

Instead of acknowledging the tariff as a financial blow, the generals responded with effusive thanks and calls for “reciprocal negotiations,” as if the U.S. had just rolled out the red carpet. The letter from Trump, however, appears to be in the same format as the other letters sent out to Southeast Asian nations, the wording almost “friendly”.

The reality? This is a penalty, not a partnership.

The Junta's PR Playbook: From Penalty to Parade

- A 40% tariff? “Thank you, America, for your generosity! We're so grateful you didn't make it 44%.”
- Diplomatic isolation? “Look, the U.S. is writing us letters! We must be back in the club.”
- Routine trade notice? “Surely this is a secret handshake of recognition.”

Notice what's missing: any mention of the 2021 coup, the crackdown on democracy, or the ongoing U.S. sanctions. Instead, it's all about “friendly relations” and “mutually beneficial trade” – a restaurant review that skips over the food poisoning.

Beijing: The Junta's Fairy Godparent (with a Shovel)

While the junta is busy spinning U.S. penalties into PR gold, China is backstage, providing diplomatic cover, cash, and enough rare earth mining equipment to turn Myanmar's hills into open pits. The China-Myan-



Myanmar junta leader Min Aung Hlaing, seen here with Russian President Vladimir Putin, has spun a letter from The White House into an international opportunity to attempt to improve his dire international standing. Photo: AFP

mar Economic Corridor and support for sham elections aren't about the welfare of the people—they're about securing ocean access and extracting resources, with little regard for Myanmar's sovereignty or environment.

The Real Agenda: Lobbying for Sham Elections and Premature Peace

This latest charm offensive is part of a broader, well-funded campaign – backed by international business interests – to push for sham elections and premature peace negotiations. The goal? To rebrand military rule under a new appearance and secure international legitimacy before any real democratic change can occur.

- Stage "elections" with all the suspense of a rigged game with known results.
- Push for peace talks while the military still holds all the cards.
- Convince the world that a new uniform means a new regime.

A Note to the Resistance: The Junta Is Playing Chess While You're Playing Musical Chairs

To Myanmar's pro-democracy forces: while you compete among yourselves, the junta is using every opportunity – every letter, every handshake, every photo op – to strengthen its position and twist international gestures into proof of its "legitimacy." Unity is essential, and exposing every attempt to turn punitive measures into parades is critical.

The Impact of the 40% Tariff

On the Junta:

- Reduced Export Revenue: Burmese goods will be less competitive in the U.S. market, cutting off a vital source of foreign currency and increasing financial pressure on the regime.
- Increased Isolation: The tariff is designed to punish the military regime, not to open doors for dialogue or recognition.

On the People of Burma:

- Economic Hardship: Workers and small businesses in export sectors may face job losses and reduced incomes as U.S. demand falls.
- Unintended Consequences: While targeting the junta, broad tariffs can spill over to the general population if the regime shifts the economic burden onto civilians.

What the World Needs to Do

- Call out the charade: Make it clear that punitive measures are not pats on the back.
- Reject lobbying for sham elections and premature peace: Don't let business interests or diplomatic spin sell out Myanmar's future.
- Support the real Myanmar: Back civil society and pro-democracy groups, not the junta's PR machine.

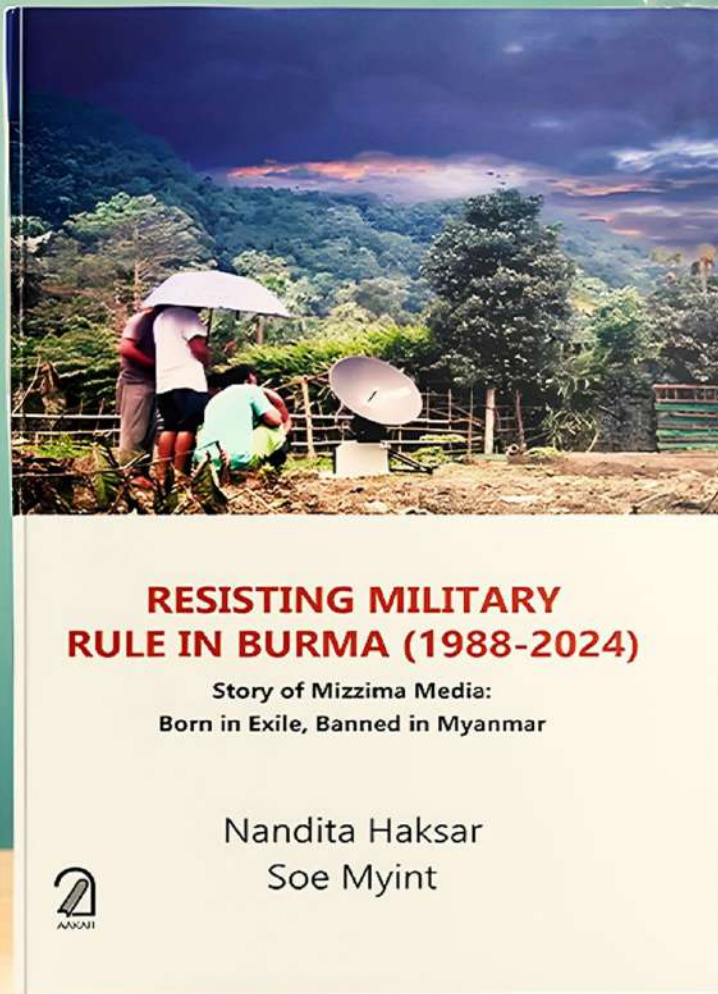
Curtain Call

Myanmar's generals may be masters of make-believe, but the world shouldn't be their audience. The people of Myanmar deserve more than a regime that turns punishment into pageantry. Only a united resistance and an international community committed to real democracy – not cosmetic change – can keep Myanmar from slipping further into authoritarianism under a different guise.

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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The Myanmar junta prepares for a nationwide election at the end of this year, or beginning of the next. Photo: AFP

JUNTA SEES ELECTION AS WAY TO CEMENT POWER

Myanmar's military regime is pushing forward with its planned general election, presenting it as a means to mediate the country's prolonged political crisis rather than a transition to democratic governance. However, widespread skepticism persists regarding the legitimacy and intent of the process.

Junta leader Min Aung Hlaing recently told local elders and government staff in Meiktila District that the State Administration Council (SAC) is committed to holding a "free and fair" election. He claimed the administration is preparing accurate voter lists and has invited international observers to monitor the process. While he did not name the countries, Russia, China, and Belarus have publicly voiced support for the junta's electoral plans and pledged assistance.

Despite these claims, critics question the credibility of an election held by a regime that invalidated the results of the 2020 vote and overthrew the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi. Observers argue the election is being used to reinforce the junta's political

dominance rather than offer a genuine democratic pathway.

Veteran political figure Ko Ko Gyi acknowledged ongoing negotiations between political parties and the junta, which have reportedly resulted in 43 points of agreement. However, he noted these points remain unsatisfactory to many stakeholders. "We don't know the military's full intention—whether Min Aung Hlaing wants the presidency or something else—but it's clear they see this election as a political opportunity," he said. "Given the current global chaos, I don't see other options for resolving Myanmar's crisis."

Meanwhile, the junta's Union Election Commission (UEC) is conducting electronic voting system training for volunteer poll officers, mainly drawn from non-Civil Disobedience Movement (non-CDM) government staff. However, participation has been limited. Many employees are reportedly reluctant to attend and are attempting to avoid involvement by delegating responsibilities to lower-ranking or newly recruited staff.



Myanmar's various resistance forces have rebuffed the Myanmar junta's call for "peace". Photo: AFP

As the SAC presses ahead, resistance from the public and political opposition remains strong, with critics warning that an election conducted under military rule lacks both domestic trust and international legitimacy.

Resistance forces respond to junta's call for peace

Myanmar's armed resistance groups have firmly rejected the junta's recent call for peace talks, dismissing it as a strategic attempt to sow division among revolutionary forces and maintain its grip on power.

On July 5, the State Administration Council (SAC) issued an invitation to People's Defence Forces (PDFs) and other armed resistance groups, urging them to lay down arms and cooperate in preparing for elections. The junta's statement claimed that both sides share

a common goal — the formation of a federal union — and encouraged resistance forces to abandon armed struggle in favour of political participation.

However, multiple armed groups across the country responded with skepticism and outright refusal.

Resistance forces from Southern Shan State and Karenni State denounced the SAC's offer and reaffirmed their commitment to overthrowing the military regime. A representative from the Karenni People's Liberation Army (KPLA), Battalion 262, told Mekong News, "We have a clear stance that we will not surrender to the SAC. We chose this path with strong commitment. We don't want any dictatorship and will march until the end. The dictator sees peace as his political exit, but we will resist any system that perpetuates his power."

Similarly, a spokesperson from the PDF's No. (2) Operation Region dismissed the peace call as part of the junta's long-running divide-and-rule strategy,



particularly in light of recent internal tensions between ethnic armed organizations and revolutionary forces. "The junta keeps using this tactic to split its enemies," the spokesperson told People's Spring. "This isn't a genuine call for peace but a calculated move to weaken the resistance from within."

Comrade Ni Ni Kyaw, spokesperson for the People's Liberation Army (PLA), echoed these concerns. "This is not a peace process—it's a political trick," she said. "The military always does this when it feels pressure or when there's a major political turning point. They want a break from the fighting to weaken us, not to negotiate real peace."

She further criticized the junta's hypocrisy: "If they truly want peace, they should stop all operations, airstrikes on civilians, and release all political prisoners. Calling for peace while continuing violence is a lie — it's meant to mislead the people and impress the international community. We do not trust them."

The unified rejection underscores the widening credibility gap between the junta and the resistance movement, as well as the deep mistrust rooted in decades of military oppression.

China puts pressure on Myanmar junta over scam centres

China is ramping up diplomatic and investigative efforts to pressure Myanmar's military regime to crack down on cross-border online scam operations, particularly those targeting Chinese nationals.

On July 3, China's Assistant Minister of Public Security, Liu Zhongyi, met with Myanmar's Foreign Minister Than Swe in Naypyidaw. While Myanmar's state media did not disclose details, the meeting reportedly focused on bolstering cooperation to combat transnational crimes and dismantle scam centres operating along the countries' shared border. Stability in these border regions was also a key point of discussion.

Further signaling its concern, China's Investigative Bureau dispatched a team to Myawaddy via Thailand on July 7. The delegation plans to hold meetings with officials of Myanmar's military regime, advocating for more effective enforcement against online scam operations. They also aim to assist Chinese nationals who have fallen victim to fraud networks based in the region.

Despite a significant crackdown on online scam hubs in Myawaddy Township earlier this year, illicit operations persist in Muse Township in northern Shan State, an area still under junta control. According to reports, a major fraud operation in Muse is run by a militia leader and involves over 1,000 Chinese nationals and more than 50,000 Myanmar workers.

A woman who recently escaped from the compound spoke to local media, describing harsh conditions and deception. "They promised us a salary of 20,000 yuan, and we did get paid," she said. "But they seized our phones and we couldn't contact our families. When my friend secretly called home, the boss found out, beat her, and cut her salary. We weren't allowed to go outside."

China's continued engagement suggests rising frustration over the ongoing scams and the slow progress of Myanmar's enforcement efforts. Beijing is increasingly treating the issue as a threat to both regional stability and domestic security.



Not an appropriate time for dancing as Myanmar's junta leader offers thanks to The White House. Photo: AFP

MYANMAR JUNTA THANKS TRUMP AFTER RECOGNITION IN TARIFF LETTER

Myanmar's military leader lauded Donald Trump and asked him to lift sanctions, the junta said on 11 July after a tariff letter from the US president believed to be Washington's first public recognition of its rule.

Min Aung Hlaing endorsed Trump's false claim that the 2020 US election was stolen, and thanked him for shutting down funding to US-backed media providing independent coverage of conflict-wracked Myanmar.

The military ousted Aung San Suu Kyi's elected civilian government in 2021, plunging the country into civil war.

The US State Department sanctioned the junta chief and others for using "violence and terror to oppress" Burmese people and "denying them the ability to freely choose their own leaders".

US diplomats do not formally engage with the junta, but Trump sent a letter to Min Aung Hlaing by name on Monday telling him the US would impose a 40 percent tariff from August 1, down from a threatened 44 percent.

"It's certainly the first public indication I've seen of US acknowledgement of MAH and the junta," said Richard Horsey of the International Crisis Group.

Any earlier private communications "would almost certainly not have been from Trump of course", he told AFP.

Min Aung Hlaing seized the opportunity to respond with a multi-page letter released in both Burmese and English by the junta information team Friday.

In it, he expressed his "sincere appreciation" for Trump's letter and praised the US president's "strong leadership in guiding your country toward national prosperity".

He sought to justify the military's seizure of power, saying: "Similar to the challenges you encountered during the 2020 election of the United States, Myanmar also experienced major electoral fraud and significant irregularities."

Both Voice of America and Radio Free Asia -- created by the United States with a mission to deliver news in countries without free media -- have shut down their Burmese-language operations since the Trump administration cut their funding.

Min Aung Hlaing said he "sincerely appreciated" Trump's move.

The junta is increasingly dependent on its allies China and Russia for economic and military support.

Min Aung Hlaing asked Trump to "reconsider easing and lifting the economic sanctions imposed on Myanmar", and sought a tariff of 10-20 percent.

He thanked Trump for the "encouraging invitation to continue participating in the extraordinary Economy of the United States, the Number One Market in the World".

Trump's punitive tariff letters have left many nations scrambling to secure last-minute deals with Washington before they come into force next month.

AFP



ASIA NUMBER ONE TARGET OF TRUMP'S TARIFF LETTERS

Donald Trump sent letters to 14 countries, mainly in Asia, informing them that higher import tariffs will kick in on August 1 unless they reach a deal with the United States.

It is the second time the US president has set a deadline after he postponed tariffs on almost all countries in April for 90 days.

Countries that have large trade imbalances with the United States have been key targets, including Japan (\$68.5 billion surplus in 2024), South Korea (\$66 billion), Thailand (\$45.6 billion) and Indonesia (\$17.9 billion).

Here is what Trump's letters mean for these countries:

South Korea: Optimistic for a deal

South Korea, already burdened by levies on steel and automobiles, is facing a 25 percent tariff hike on its remaining exports to the United States, but is cautiously optimistic for a deal.

Washington "hoped the two sides could reach an agreement before then (August 1)", South Korea's national security adviser Wi Sung-lac said after meeting US Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Monday.

South Korea, one of the world's biggest shipbuilders, agreed to "coordinate closely" with the United States to achieve "tangible and mutually beneficial outcomes", he said.

Japan: Elections, rice and autos

A close US ally and its biggest investor, Japan has to deal with a 25 percent levy on its key auto industry.

It is facing similar tolls on other goods, up from 24 percent announced in April, but better than the "30 percent, 35 percent or whatever the number is that we determine" threatened by Trump last week.

Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba told a cabinet meeting Tuesday that the tariff set out in the letter was "genuinely regrettable", local media reported.

The reason for not making a deal, he said, was "the Japanese government has avoided making easy compromises, firmly demanding what should be demanded, protecting what should be protected, and has conducted rigorous negotiations".

Trump has criticised Japan for not opening its market enough to US rice and vehicles. The Japanese government says it is defending local farmers' interests and has taken a hardline approach to talks.

"We have no intention of negotiating at the expense of agriculture," Japan's tariffs envoy Ryosei Akazawa said Tuesday.

Indonesia: 'Very optimistic'

Indonesia, facing 32 percent tariffs, said Tuesday it was optimistic of striking a deal as chief economic minister Airlangga Hartarto headed to the United States to resume talks.

With several weeks breathing room, Jakarta was "very optimistic about the negotiation", presidential spokesman Hasan Nasbi said.

Indonesia plans to increase its agricultural and energy imports from the United States to finalise an agreement, Airlangga recently told AFP.

Indonesia already announced Monday it had agreed to import at least one million tons of US wheat annually for the next five years, worth \$1.25 billion.

Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos: China allies face heavy levies

Trump announced 49 percent tariffs on Cambodia in April, one of the highest levies in his blitz. Monday's letter to the country that hosts many Chinese owned factories, reduces this rate to 36 percent.

Prime Minister Hun Manet assured the White House of Cambodia's "good faith", with reduced tariffs on 19 categories of US products.

Myanmar and Laos, which face 40 percent tolls, rely on Chinese investments, while their supply chains are closely intertwined with Asia's largest economy.

Washington has repeatedly highlighted the risk of Chinese products passing through Southeast Asian countries to avoid US tariffs targeting China.

Thailand, Malaysia: Making pledges

Thailand was told it faces 36 percent levies. Bangkok is offering more access to its market for US agricultural and industrial products, increasing its

energy purchases, and boosting orders for Boeing airplanes.

Acting prime minister Phumtham Wechayachai told reporters Tuesday he wanted a "better deal", adding that "the most important thing is that we maintain good relations with the US".

Bangkok aims to reduce its US trade surplus by 70 percent within five years, achieving balance in seven to eight years, Finance Minister Pichai Chunhavajira recently told Bloomberg News.

Thai Airways could commit to purchasing up to 80 Boeing planes in the coming years, according to Bloomberg.

Malaysia faces a 25 percent tariff and the trade ministry said Tuesday it would continue negotiations to reach a "balanced, mutually beneficial, and comprehensive trade agreement".

Bangladesh: Textiles at risk

The world's second-largest textile manufacturer is facing a 35 percent tariff on its goods but was hoping to sign an agreement by early July.

Textile and garment production accounts for about 80 percent of Bangladesh's exports, and supplies US brands including Vans, Timberland and The North Face.

Dhaka has proposed to buy Boeing planes and boost imports of US wheat, cotton and oil.

"We have finalised the terms," Commerce Ministry Secretary Mahbubur Rahman told AFP, adding that negotiators were set to meet Tuesday.

Other targeted countries

Kazakhstan (25 percent), South Africa (30 percent), Tunisia (25 percent), Serbia (35 percent), and Bosnia (30 percent) are among the other recipients of the letters made public by Trump on Monday.

AFP



SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS TO EXPRESS 'CONCERN' OVER US TARIFFS

Southeast Asian nations will express "concern" over "counterproductive" US tariffs, according to a draft statement shared with AFP on Tuesday, after Donald Trump threatened more than a dozen countries with higher levies.

The president's trade war will likely be high on the agenda as foreign ministers from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) gather in Kuala Lumpur for talks this week.

"We expressed concern over rising global trade tensions and growing uncertainties in the international economic landscape, particularly the unilateral actions relating to tariffs," ASEAN foreign ministers said, according to a draft Joint Communique.

Without directly naming the United States, the ministers said tariffs were "counterproductive and risk exacerbating global economic fragmentation and pose complex challenges to ASEAN's economic stability and growth".

Trump sent letters to 14 countries announcing that duties he had suspended in April would snap back -- even more steeply -- in three weeks.

Among those targeted were top trade partners Japan and South Korea, which each face 25 percent tariffs.

Indonesia, Laos, Thailand, Malaysia and Myanmar -- all members of the ASEAN -- face duties ranging from 25 percent to 40 percent if they do not strike a

deal with Washington by August 1.

Export-dependent Vietnam, which is also an ASEAN member, is one of only two countries to have reached a tentative agreement that spares it from Trump's measures.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio will join his ASEAN counterparts on Thursday and Friday as part of his first trip to Asia since taking his post.

'Uplifting' message?

Rubio will likely tell leaders that the United States wanted to "rebalance" its trade relationships, a senior State Department official told reporters on condition of anonymity.

His visit coincides with that of his Russian and Chinese counterparts, Sergei Lavrov and Wang Yi.

But an analyst told AFP that Rubio is expected to play a placating role after Trump's latest tariff announcements.

"We can be hopeful for an uplifting message by Rubio, which reaffirms the importance of Southeast Asia to US foreign policy," said Mustafa Izzuddin, an international affairs analyst with consultancy Solaris Strategies Singapore.

But he added: "Deepening engagement of the US in Southeast Asia may be stymied by Trump's transactional approach to internationalism."

The US leader had unveiled sweeping tariffs on imports on what he called "Liberation Day" on April 2, including a baseline 10 percent tariff on all countries.

But after turmoil on markets he quickly suspended all those above 10 percent for 90 days to allow for talks.

At a summit in late May, Southeast Asian leaders expressed their deep concern at Trump's protectionist offensive.

The tariffs were due to kick back in on Wednesday and Trump sent the letters in advance of that deadline.

Malaysia's trade ministry said Tuesday it would continue negotiations to reach "a balanced, mutually beneficial, and comprehensive trade agreement".

Thailand's acting prime minister Phumtham Wechayachai told reporters Tuesday he wanted a "better deal", adding that "the most important thing is that we maintain good relations with the US".

AFP



ASEAN MEETING CONDEMNS MYANMAR VIOLENCE

A meeting involving top diplomats from Southeast Asia, China, Russia and the United States condemned violence against civilians in war-torn Myanmar, according to a statement.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has led diplomatic efforts to end Myanmar's many-sided civil war sparked by a military coup in 2021.

But ASEAN has struggled to implement a five-point peace plan previously agreed by all bloc leaders, including Myanmar's junta.

As fighting between the military and a myriad of armed groups rages, ASEAN foreign ministers met with their US, Chinese, Russian and other counterparts in the Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur on Friday where the issue was discussed.

"The Meeting denounced the continued acts of violence against civilians and public facilities," according to a draft chairman's statement of the ASEAN Regional Forum seen by AFP.

Malaysia is this year's rotating chair of ASEAN -- long derided by critics as a toothless talking shop.

The meeting will express "its deep concern over the escalation of conflicts and humanitarian situation in Myanmar".

It will also urge "all parties involved to take concrete action to immediately halt indiscriminate violence, exercise utmost restraint, ensure the protection and safety of all civilians and civilian infrastructures," according to the draft.

Junta chief pledges elections

More than 6,600 people have been killed since the coup, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners monitoring group, and millions displaced.

Myanmar's junta pledged a temporary ceasefire from early April to June "to continue the rebuilding and rehabilitation process" after a magnitude 7.7 quake in the country's central belt killed nearly 3,800 people and left tens of thousands homeless.

However, the truce was repeatedly broken by air strikes by the junta and attacks by armed groups.

Myanmar's junta chief Min Aung Hlaing last month said the country would hold an election in December and January, the first in the war-torn nation since the military coup four years ago.

International monitors have said any elections under the junta would be a sham, while analysts say polls would be targeted by the military's opponents and spark further bloodshed.

Junta forces have suffered stinging territorial losses to pro-democracy guerrillas and powerful ethnic armed groups in recent months.

Military backing from China and Russia is letting it stave off defeat, analysts say, but huge areas of the country are set to be beyond the reach of any junta-organised democratic exercise.

AFP



MYANMAR JUNTA ATTEMPTS TO FORM THINK TANK IN AUSTRALIA TO BOOST INTERNATIONAL IMAGE

Myanmar's military junta is reportedly planning to establish a think tank in Australia in a bid to improve its international reputation, according to investigative findings by Mizzima.

An informal meeting to lay the groundwork for the initiative was held on 7 July at The Chairman Restaurant, a Chinese eatery near the Australian Museum in Sydney, according to a source who attended the gathering.

"This was just an informal gathering, but the plan to set up a think tank in Australia is gaining importance for us," said one of the participants, in a written response to Mizzima. He confirmed that the initiative remains in its early stages.

The meeting was reportedly led by a senior Myanmar military officer with the rank of colonel. Although the total number of attendees was not officially disclosed, Mizzima's investigation confirmed that 23 individuals participated, including a major and his military aide.

A source added that similar informal meetings are planned in other major Australian cities.

"Only after these meetings will we be able to provide a clearer statement. It's premature to comment in detail," he said.

Requests for photographs from the Sydney meeting were declined by the source, who cited the informal nature of the gathering and its unsuitability for media publication.

This move appears to follow the junta's domestic efforts to craft a favourable narrative through the Myanmar Narrative Think Tank, chaired by U Ko Ko (Ko Ko-University of Technology), which has actively worked to shape public opinion in support of the regime.

On 30 May, junta chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing participated in a roundtable discussion on economic recovery after the March earthquake, co-organized by the Myanmar Narrative Think Tank and the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI).

Political analysts say such efforts are part of a wider soft-power strategy by the military to reposition itself domestically and internationally through propaganda and strategic messaging.

A BBC report published on 28 June revealed that the Myanmar Narrative Think Tank intends to invite foreign scholars to future events, including individuals connected to Chinese President Xi Jinping and a former prime minister of Nepal.



Photo: AFP

JUNTA COMMITS OVER 500 HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN MYANMAR IN ONE MONTH

The National Unity Government's Ministry of Human Rights released data showing 532 cases of human rights violations by Myanmar's military junta from June 1 to 30, 2025.

Key violations included 114 extrajudicial killings, 110 incidents of property destruction, 53 cases of forced labour, 40 arbitrary arrests, and 27 incidents of forced displacement. Other recorded abuses were torture, restrictions on freedom of movement and expression, destruction of religious buildings, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, attacks on medical centres, sexual violence, and unfair trials.

Mandalay Region recorded the highest number with 116 violations, followed by Sagaing and Magway regions. Airstrikes were reported 55 times in Mandalay

alone. Junta airstrikes destroyed 50 houses and 8 schools nationwide, with 6 Buddhist religious buildings and 3 medical centres damaged in Mandalay.

Fatalities from airstrikes included 90 deaths, with 47 unidentified, 36 adults above 18, and 7 under 18. Injuries totalled 296, affecting 47 children, 70 adults, and 179 unidentified victims. Seven massacres resulted in 55 fatalities, killing 26 males, 9 females, and 20 other unidentified individuals.

The Ministry of Human Rights noted these figures may underrepresent the actual situation due to access challenges in conflict areas.



All smiles as Min Aung Hlaing considers going into space. Photo: AFP

JUNTA FORMS MYANMAR SPACE AGENCY UNDER MIN AUNG HLAING'S SUPERVISION

The Myanmar junta has officially established the Myanmar Space Agency (MSA) to lead space-related projects, placing it under the direct supervision of junta leader Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, according to the 4 July edition of the Myanmar Gazette.

Formed on 1 June, the agency has been assigned 20 key responsibilities, including overseeing the launch, control, and operation of both government-owned and private satellites. It will also manage the storage and distribution of satellite imagery and provide related services.

The MSA is intended to act as the central authority for all space activities in Myanmar. Experts appointed to the agency will be selected with the approval of the junta leader. However, the names of current members or leadership have not been disclosed.

The junta claims the agency's goals are peaceful. These include cooperation with international organizations, enhancing national security, supporting environmental and resource conservation, improving disaster management, contributing to agriculture, and promoting space science and technology.

The agency is also authorized to sign space-related agreements, work with global space companies, and represent Myanmar in international forums such as the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

The concept of a national space agency is not new. Under the National League for Democracy (NLD) government, a similar plan was introduced in 2019 to establish a space agency in Meiktila Township. During that time, Myanmar launched its first satellite program in partnership with Japan's Hokkaido University and the Myanmar Aerospace Engineering University (MAEU).

However, after the 2021 coup, Japan assumed control of the satellite, citing concerns that the junta might exploit its surveillance capabilities for military operations.

Since seizing power, Min Aung Hlaing has visited Russia multiple times to observe satellite assembly and space technology facilities. Discussions between the junta and Russian entities about cooperation in space and satellite programs have also taken place.



Photo: AFP

UNHCR UPDATE SHOWS ONGOING HUMANITARIAN NEEDS IN MYANMAR POST-EARTHQUAKE

A UNHCR's flash update on 10 July reports that three months after the earthquake in central Myanmar, 6.3 million people still need assistance, including 2.1 million conflict-affected internally displaced persons (IDPs).

UNHCR has declared a Level 2 Emergency for six months after the devastating earthquake in central Myanmar. According to the latest flash update on 10 July 2025, there are 6.3 million total people in need in the worst earthquake-affected areas, including 2.1 million conflict-affected IDPs impacted by the earthquake.

To date, 127,145 people have been assisted with core relief items, shelter kits or multi-purpose assistance, and 140,900 people have been assessed for

assistance. However, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) needs remain a significant concern among the affected population.

UNHCR continues its outreach efforts while balancing the security and access situation and works closely with key stakeholders to identify protection needs and provide appropriate responses. Seasonal flooding has led to the relocation of some sites, adding further challenges to the delivery of essential relief items and shelter support.

HUNDREDS OF MYANMAR TROOPS, CIVILIANS FLEE ACROSS THAI BORDER FROM KAREN STATE

More than 500 civilians and soldiers fled conflict in Myanmar and crossed into Thailand on Saturday after an assault by ethnic fighters on a military base, the Thai army said.

Saturday's attack by the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) targeted a military base in Kayin or Karen State at around 3 pm local time (0800 GMT), Thailand's military said in a statement.

"The Myanmar soldiers attempted to resist and called for supporting firepower to defend their position but were ultimately unable to hold the line," it said.

One hundred Myanmar soldiers and 467 civilians had crossed into Thailand on Saturday, where Thai military and police disarmed them and provided treatment and humanitarian aid, officials said.

Thai forces have ramped up patrols along the border in western Tak province to prevent what officials described as a potential "violation of sovereignty by foreign armed forces".

Saw Thamain Tun, a leader of the KNLA's political wing, confirmed there had been fighting near the border and said that joint forces had "seized some front posts" from the army.

"Some (Myanmar troops) defected to our joint forces, but some of them ran into Thailand," he told AFP.

Armed groups from the Karen ethnic minority have long challenged the military and now play a key role in resisting junta control over border zones.

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

The KNLA has been fighting for decades to establish greater autonomy for the Karen people living along Myanmar's southeastern flank.

AFP



MYANMAR REVOLUTIONARY FORCE MEMBERS ARRESTED WITH DRUGS IN HAKHA TOWNSHIP

Three members of Battalion No. 15 from Yinmabin District, Sagaing Region, along with a driver and an assistant, were arrested in Hakha Township, Chin State, for transporting illicit drugs, according to the Chinland Defense Force–Hakha (CDF-Hakha).

The arrest took place on 8 July. The five individuals, traveling under a permit issued by Battalion No. 15 Commander Phoe Thaung, were found in possession of approximately 3 million stimulant tablets and 110 kilogrammes of heroin.

According to CDF-Hakha General Secretary Salai Za Kyun Lyen, the permit claimed that a group of four, led by Zaw Lat (also known as Win Maw), was assigned to transport explosives to the Bar Bridge in Falam Town using two firearms and two vehicles. However, no explosives were discovered. Instead, large quantities of drugs and three sacks of onions were seized.

“We made the arrests within our territory. We are coordinating with Yinmabin battalions to track down those responsible for the trafficking,” said Salai Za Kyun Lyen.

While legal action is being taken against the arrested individuals, key suspects Zaw Lat and Ko

Pa Te remain at large. CDF-Hakha confirmed that the seized drugs were destroyed by fire on 9 July.

On 10 July, CDF-Hakha issued a public statement reaffirming its commitment to eradicating drug-related activities in the township. It also urged public cooperation in the fight against illegal narcotics.

The Salingyi Special Task Force later verified the authenticity of the travel permit issued by the Yinmabin Battalion and stated it would take full responsibility for addressing the matter.

In a statement, the task force clarified that the drug trafficking was carried out independently by the individuals involved and was not connected to the broader organization. It pledged to apprehend fugitives Zaw Lat and Ko Pa Te and hand them over to the Ministry of Defense under the National Unity Government (NUG) for investigation.

The Salingyi Special Task Force also emphasized that it does not tolerate crimes committed under its name and will take preventative action to avoid similar incidents in the future.

Photo: Supplied

MYANMAR RESIDENTS FLEE NAWNGHKIO AND KYAUKME AS JUNTA AIRSTRIKES AND CLASHES ESCALATE

Residents of Nawngkhio and Kyaukme towns in northern Shan State have been forced to flee due to intensified junta airstrikes and ongoing clashes near Nawngkhio, according to local sources and the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA).

Junta forces have been relentlessly bombing TNLA-controlled territories while advancing toward Nawngkhio, which remains under the control of the TNLA. As a result, the majority of residents have abandoned their homes, said TNLA spokesperson Lway Yay Oo.

"While fighting in Nawngkhio is ongoing and intense, some people are still in the town, but most have relocated to safer areas," TNLA spokesperson Lway Yay Oo said.

In Kyaukme, roughly 40 percent of residents who had returned following Operation 1027 have once again been displaced since 25 June due to mounting security concerns, according to a local resident.

"Each time the military launches an airstrike, there are casualties. People are terrified, so they're leaving

to stay with relatives in other areas," the local resident said.

On 11 July around 3 am, a junta airstrike on Kyaukme killed one displaced person from Nawngkhio and injured two others. A similar bombing on 8 July killed a local man in the town.

Active clashes are currently reported in several villages around Nawngkhio, including Kyaukkyan, Nawnglen, Kyauktaw, Ongmahkar, Narmon, and Yemaungtan. The TNLA has issued a warning to the public to exercise caution when traveling along the Kyaukme-Nawngkhio road due to ongoing fighting.

Despite claims by pro-military Telegram channels that junta forces have captured Missile Battalion No. 606 and Kyaukkyan village, the TNLA said it retains control of these areas and that clashes are still underway.

The TNLA continues to urge civilians to remain alert as the Military Council sustains its air assault on TNLA-held areas.



Photo: Supplied

AT LEAST 30 MYANMAR CIVILIANS KILLED IN JUNTA AIRSTRIKE ON MONASTERY SHELTERING DISPLACED PEOPLE IN SAGAING

At least 30 civilians were killed and around 20 seriously injured when junta aircraft bombed a monastery sheltering displaced people in Lintalu village, Sagaing Township, Sagaing Region, in the early hours of 10 July, according to local sources.

The airstrike occurred around 1 am, when two bombs were dropped on the area by military jet fighters. The monastery had been housing internally displaced civilians who fled ongoing clashes in the region.

"So far, 30 bodies have been recovered. Many more were seriously injured. Military aircraft continue to fly over the area," said a local source.

Due to continuous shelling by the junta's Ohn Taw-based field artillery unit (6005), the exact number of casualties especially the number of children and the

genders of the deceased, has yet to be confirmed, a Sagaing Region MP told Mizzima.

"The junta troops have been advancing from Ohn Taw toward the Sartaung area for about 17 days. Clashes have broken out with local defense forces, which is why so many residents had sought refuge at the monastery," a local resident said.

Junta forces are reportedly carrying out large-scale military operations on both the western side of Sartaung and the eastern side of Mingun in Sagaing Township, forcing residents from more than 20 villages to flee.



Photo: Supplied

THE FLOODWATERS BEGIN TO RECEDE IN RAKHINE STATE BUT FOOD AID STILL URGENTLY NEEDED

Floodwaters have begun to recede slightly in parts of Rakhine State after days of relentless rainfall, but emergency food assistance remains urgently needed in inundated areas, local sources reported.

Continuous monsoon rains since 30 June led to widespread flooding in low-lying areas of Kyauktaw, Minbya, and Maungdaw townships, with water levels beginning to rise from 8 July.

"The continuous rain has caused the flooding in Rakhine State. For over 10 days, it has been raining. As of today, I've heard that water levels have started to recede slightly around the Mahamuni area in Kyauktaw," said author and aid worker Wai Hin Aung.

He noted that while rain continued across the region as of the afternoon of 10 July, its intensity had lessened slightly.

Currently, at least 10 villages in Kyauktaw Township, 14 in Minbya, and 10 in Maungdaw are reportedly affected by the flooding.

Although Maungdaw has faced flood-related impacts this year, seasonal flooding is more common

in Kyauktaw and Minbya townships, locals said.

Residents in the affected areas are struggling with transportation disruptions and food shortages.

"The floodwater in Maungdaw has caused transportation disruptions, making daily living and livelihoods challenging. We're keeping an eye on the relief activities," said Wai Hin Aung.

"We are providing assistance to people displaced by the conflict, but the current flooding has affected more local residents than IDPs, placing added strain on relief efforts," he added.

The junta's Meteorological Department announced at 2 pm on 10 July that the strong monsoon system over the Bay of Bengal is expected to bring further rain across the country, including Rakhine State, over the next two days.

Local news outlets in Rakhine report that the recent rainfall is the heaviest seen in a decade, sparking concerns that river levels may continue to rise in the coming days.



YANGON ANTI-COUP ACTIVISTS SENTENCED TO 20 YEARS IN PRISON

Yangon-based anti-coup activists Paing Phyto Min (also known as De Yay) and Shein Wai Aung have each been sentenced to 20 years in prison by junta-controlled courts, according to a 9 July statement from the Universities Students' Union Alumni Force (USUAF).

Paing Phyto Min, the leader of the Anti-Junta Alliance of Yangon (AJAY) and a member of USUAF, and Shein Wai Aung, a former executive of the Dagon University Students' Union, were arrested on 9 October 2024 during late-night guest list inspections carried out by the military junta.

On 19 February, the Insein Prison Court sentenced them to three years under Section 505(a) of the Penal Code. On 26 June, the Botahtaung District Court added 17 more years—seven years under Section 52(a) and 10 years under Section 50(j) of the junta's Counter-Terrorism Law, bringing their total prison terms to 20 years each.

"These lengthy prison sentences are a cruel tool of oppression by the military junta, which is weaponizing

the law to brutally silence anyone who dares to oppose it," a USUAF spokesperson said.

The justice system under the junta is fundamentally unjust. The courts are biased, and the judges serve the regime's interests, the spokesperson added.

"We will continue to fight for our comrades who have been sentenced to long prison terms, as well as for those still unlawfully detained," a USUAF spokesperson said.

Earlier this year, in late January, the Insein Prison Court sentenced Zaw Lin Htut (also known as Po Thar)—a USUAF co-founder and freelance photojournalist—along with Youth Strike Committee (YSC) leader Aung Min Khaing (aka Mae Gyi), member Mya Myint Su, and former political prisoner Hnin Ei Khaing, to three years of hard labour under Section 505(a).



Photo: Supplied

TWO POLITICAL PRISONERS IN MYANMAR DIE IN CUSTODY DUE TO MEDICAL NEGLIGENCE

Two political prisoners have died in separate prisons in Myanmar this month, raising renewed concerns over medical neglect in the country's detention facilities, according to the Political Prisoners Network – Myanmar (PPNM).

U Myint Wai, a member of the National League for Democracy (NLD), died on 8 July at Mandalay's Obo Prison from a ruptured appendix after reportedly being denied timely medical treatment. In a separate incident, political prisoner Ko Hla Min also known as Ko Hla Gyi, died of sudden cardiac arrest on 5 July at Paungde Prison.

According to the PPNM, U Myint Wai had suffered from severe stomach pain since the first week of July. Despite his worsening condition, prison authorities failed to provide adequate medical attention. He was eventually transferred to an outside hospital after a week-long delay, by which time his condition had become critical.

Ko Hla Min, who had no known underlying health conditions, lost consciousness suddenly and was taken to Paungde Hospital, where he died shortly after arrival. An investigation is currently underway to determine whether other factors contributed to his death.

"Their funerals were conducted by the Prison Department," said Ko Thaik Htun Oo, a member of the PPNM Steering Committee.

U Myint Wai was arrested by the military regime on 19 May 2021 in Ywar Thit village, Sagaing Region, and was sentenced to a total of 19 years in prison under Sections 505(a), 50(a), and 61. Ko Hla Min was serving a 10-year sentence under Section 50(j) of the Counter-Terrorism Law.

The PPNM has repeatedly called on prison authorities to improve access to medical care and ensure that critically ill inmates are promptly transferred to external hospitals. However, the group reports that these appeals have gone unanswered.

As a result, approximately 25 political prisoners die each year due to medical negligence, the PPNM said. From 2023 to 2025, a total of 54 political prisoners have died in custody, according to the group's data.



Rohingya refugees. Photo: AFP

150,000 ROHINGYA FLED FROM MYANMAR TO BANGLADESH IN 18 MONTHS: UN

Bangladesh has over the past 18 months registered the biggest influx of Rohingya refugees since the mass exodus of Myanmar's largely Muslim minority nearly a decade ago, the United Nations said 11 July.

The UN refugee agency said up to 150,000 Rohingya had arrived in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar refugee camps since early 2024.

"Targeted violence and persecution in Rakhine State and the ongoing conflict in Myanmar have continued to force thousands of Rohingya to seek protection in Bangladesh," UNHCR spokesman Babar Baloch told reporters in Geneva.

"This movement of Rohingya refugees into Bangladesh, spread over months, is the largest from

Myanmar since 2017, when some 750,000 fled the deadly violence in their native Rakhine State," he said.

Baloch hailed Bangladesh for generously hosting Rohingya refugees for generations.

Even before the latest influx, around a million members of the persecuted and mostly Muslim Rohingya were living in squalid relief camps in Bangladesh, most of them after fleeing the 2017 military crackdown in Myanmar.

Those camps, crammed into just 24 square kilometres (nine square miles), have thus become "one of the world's most densely populated places", Baloch said.

AFP



Photo: AFP

SAC-M WELCOMES UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL RESOLUTION ON ROHINGYA AND MINORITIES IN MYANMAR

Special Advisory Council for Myanmar (SAC-M) released a statement on 7 July, welcoming the UN Human Rights Council's new resolution on Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in Myanmar. The resolution, which was accepted without a vote, continues to raise the pressure on the military junta.

The SAC-M statement continues below.

SAC-M now calls on the UN General Assembly to seize on this momentum by adopting a new plenary resolution on the situation in Myanmar as well as a strengthened annual resolution on the Rohingya and other Myanmar minorities.

The Council's new resolution, an Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) initiative, caps off a June session where the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk and UN Special Rapporteur on Myanmar Tom Andrews jointly briefed the Council on the dire human rights situation in Myanmar.

The High Commissioner presented his new future focused report on Myanmar, which sets out the people's "vision of the future, and pathways to get there." Communities consulted during the report's

development "were united in one message: that the military must play no role in public life. People yearn for a peaceful, inclusive and democratic society, grounded in accountability and human rights."

Special Rapporteur Tom Andrews in his oral update condemned the military junta's exploitation of the catastrophic March earthquake by using "aid as a weapon" and cynically declaring a ceasefire while accelerating airstrikes on villages. He also slammed the junta's planned sham election for later this year: "you cannot hold a democratic election when you arrest, detain, torture and execute opposition leaders—when it is illegal for journalists to report the truth or for people to freely express their opinions." The Special Rapporteur added that the Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis Joint Response Plan remains only 22 percent funded, reflecting system-wide funding cuts that set "a terrible trajectory that is both tragic and dangerous"

Civil society representatives also addressed the Council. Bo Kyi, a former political prisoner and joint secretary of the Assistance Association For Political Prisoners, demanded the unconditional release of all political prisoners and shared a stark message: "living in Myanmar and its prisons is like hell – the military junta does not care who lives or dies." Zue Padonmar,

member of the Karenni State Interim Executive Council (IEC), described Karenni State as a junta “killing field” yet spoke of the IEC’s critical role as a “people-led governance structure” and a “decentralized interim government that prioritizes community participation and decision-making at all levels while ensuring 35% of leadership roles [are] filled by women.” Noor Azizah, a Rohingya refugee advocate, recounted her recent visit to Cox’s Bazar while pressing that conditions for safe, dignified and voluntary returns of Rohingya to Myanmar do not exist: “return without rights is not a solution”.

In the interactive dialogue, the European Union-penholder on the March Myanmar resolution-condemned the junta for acts that “stand not only as gross violations of human rights, but may also constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity”, and called for “stability, peaceful reconciliation, and for the swift establishment of a transparent, inclusive and credible democratic process, including through dialogue between all stakeholders”.

Malaysia, current ASEAN Chair, called for continued support from the international community and for a “durable and peaceful resolution that is Myanmar-owned and Myanmar-led” and “achieved through a genuine trust building process and inclusive national dialogue”.

The OIC expressed its alarm “at the diminishing global attention to the humanitarian needs of Rohingya” as well as its hope that the High-level Conference on the Situation of Rohingya Muslims and Other Minorities in Myanmar to be held in New York on 30 September “will provide a clear pathway for the expedited solution of the Rohingya crisis in a sustainable manner”.

The OIC’s resolution on Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in Myanmar contains strong new language, including:

condemnation of the military junta’s gross, deliberate, widespread and indiscriminate human rights violations and abuses against Rohingya Muslims and other minorities, and of reported violations and abuses including the burning of villages, forced displacement, the deliberate targeting of civilians, forced conscription and arbitrary detention

condemnation of the military’s deliberate obstruction of humanitarian assistance and systematic restrictions of humanitarian access, including the arrest, detention and killing of humanitarian workers and the occupation of aid infrastructure acknowledgement of the ICC Prosecutor’s filing of an application for a warrant of arrest for senior general Min Aung Hlaing, based on the conclusion that there are reasonable grounds to believe he bears criminal responsibility for the crimes against humanity of deportation and persecution of Rohingya committed in Myanmar and in part in Bangladesh recognition of steps taken by States to investigate and prosecute the most serious crimes under international law committed in Myanmar a call on States to protect Myanmar nationals within their borders and to respect the principle of non-refoulement encouragement of the UN system to actively engage in the process leading to the High-Level Conference in order to improve its efficiency and ability to provide support and assistance welcome new references to reparations.

The resolution for the first time acknowledges the National Unity Government’s “Policy position on the Rohingya in Rakhine State”, which recognises that Rohingya are entitled to Myanmar citizenship and pledges to dismantle discriminatory legal frameworks.

It also calls on all parties in Myanmar to immediately cease all forms of violence and violations and abuses of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, and urges OHCHR and the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar to expand their investigative efforts to include recent atrocities.

The resolution’s timing offers strong momentum in the lead up to the UN General Assembly’s 80th session, which in addition to the High-Level Conference will see the EU and the OIC run their annual resolution on the human rights of Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in Myanmar.

The General Assembly must also act in the face of continued Security Council deadlock by adopting a broader resolution on the situation in Myanmar. “Alarming, more than four years have passed since the General Assembly’s last plenary resolution on Myanmar,” said Yanghee Lee of SAC-M. “In that time, the dire situation in Myanmar has descended into a humanitarian and human rights catastrophe”.



Republic of the Union of Myanmar
National Unity Government

CHIN GROUPS BACK NUG PRESIDENT'S CALL FOR PEACEFUL RESOLUTION BETWEEN THE GROUPS AMID ONGOING FALAM CLASHES

Three Chin resistance groups have expressed support for National Unity Government (NUG) Interim President Duwa Lashi La's call to end internal conflict through peaceful political dialogue, following recent armed clashes in Chin State.

In a statement on 8 July, the NUG interim president urged Chin revolutionary forces to cease fighting and resolve their disputes through negotiation, warning that continued armed conflict would undermine their shared goals.

The Chin National Front/Army (CNF/CNA), Chin Defence Force–Hualngoram (CDF–Hualngoram) under the Chinland Council, and the Chin National Organization/Chin National Defence Force (CNO/CNDF), a member of the Chin Brotherhood (CB), have all voiced support for the president's appeal.

"We welcome the NUG interim president's concern over the Chin issue and are making every effort to resolve it," CNF/CNA spokesperson Salai Htet Ni told Mizzima.

CNO/CNDF Secretary Salai William Chin also confirmed ongoing talks aimed at defusing tensions. "We welcome it. We are now moving in that direction and are engaged in negotiations," he said.

Despite continued fighting and rising military tensions in Falam Township, talks are reportedly moving forward with mediation efforts led by the Advocacy

Group for Peace, coordinated by the Chief Minister of Mizoram, India.

Clashes erupted on 2 July over territorial disputes in Falam, with CNDF forces seizing several camps, including Ri Khor Da—a vital India–Myanmar border trade post previously held by CDF–Hualngoram. The conflict intensified when CNA forces launched an attack and captured the CNDF headquarters.

The interim president emphasized that revolutionary forces must reject violence and instead cultivate a political culture rooted in dialogue and unity. He called for an immediate end to armed confrontation, urging all Chin organizations to pursue peaceful resolution in line with the will of the Chin people.

Tensions on the ground have raised concerns among local communities that further escalation could draw in larger alliances such as the Chin Brotherhood and the Chinland Council, potentially sparking broader conflict across Chin State.

Local reports indicate that more than 3,000 Myanmar nationals have fled into Mizoram, India, seeking refuge from the fighting.

Also on 8 July, the National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC) issued a statement urging all Chin revolutionary forces to halt hostilities and pledged support for mediation and dialogue efforts.



Duwa Lashi La
Acting President

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi
State Counsellor

U Win Myint
President

Mahn Winn Khaing Thann
Prime Minister

A STRIKE LEADER URGES URGENT REFORMS WITHIN NUG TO SUSTAIN THE REVOLUTION

Dr. Tayza San, a prominent leader of Myanmar's anti-coup movement, has called on the National Unity Government (NUG) to urgently implement reforms in order to secure the success of the ongoing revolution before it is too late.

In a social media post on 7 July, Dr. Tayza San stressed that while the NUG still enjoys strong public support, it continues to face major weaknesses in building a cohesive military command structure.

He warned that prolonged conflict is exposing critical issues in discipline and coordination among the so-called "three armed wings."

Dr. Tayza San, who led the first protest against the 2021 military coup outside Mandalay Medical University, said the NUG needs to clearly differentiate between the People's Defence Force (PDF) and the People's Defence Teams (PDT). PDTs operate as local guerrilla units. He added that it is necessary to reinforce

the PDFs and allow some units to fully transition into structured PDF forces.

He further argued that political legitimacy alone is no longer enough for the NUG to lead the revolution effectively. Reforms are urgently needed in financial transparency, administrative efficiency, and adaptability to new developments on the ground.

"With the Military Council pushing to legitimize itself through sham elections and reinforcing its ranks under the People's Military Service Law, the NUG must respond with immediate and strategic reforms," he said.

In recent months, the NUG has encouraged its overseas officials to return. On 26 November 2024 and again on 1 January 2025, Acting President Duwa Lashi La publicly urged members to come back and contribute to operations within the country. Following those appeals, Dr. Zaw Wai Soe, the NUG's Minister of Health and Education, returned to Myanmar.



JUSTICE FOR MYANMAR URGES RESPONSIBLE WITHDRAWAL FROM MEDIA PROJECT

Justice For Myanmar released a statement on 8 July, urging Japanese public-private funds to be transparent and responsible in their withdrawal from a Myanmar media project linked to Myanmar's military crony network.

The statement is as follows.

Japanese and Myanmar civil society organizations are calling on Japan International Broadcasting Inc. (JIB), and two Japanese public-private funds – Cool Japan Fund Inc., and the Fund Corporation for the Overseas Development of Japan's ICT and Postal Services (JICT) – to provide full transparency and uphold human rights standards in their recent exit from the Myanmar-based Dream Vision Co., Ltd.

Dream Vision was established with the involvement of Shwe Than Lwin Media Co., Ltd. (STLM), a crony company with longstanding ties to the Myanmar military. The project aimed to increase the presence of Japanese media content in Myanmar and open

advertising opportunities for Japanese companies. To achieve this objective, it has supported the provision of broadcasting equipment for Myanmar National TV (MNTV), a terrestrial television channel operated by Shwe Than Lwin Media. Myanmar Business Central is also an investor.

The call comes amid growing concerns that their withdrawal may have benefited the Myanmar crony conglomerate linked to military propaganda networks, while failing to address serious human rights risks following the military's February 2021 coup attempt.

In response to letters sent on June 2, 2025 by seven civil society organizations, JIB – a subsidiary of Japan's national public broadcaster NHK – Cool Japan Fund and JICT confirmed that they had completed their exit from the project. However, the responses failed to clarify whether any human rights due diligence was conducted following the 2021 military coup attempt, or whether Dream Vision's potential role in supporting the military's propaganda was considered.

Shwe Than Lwin Media is understood to be a subsidiary of Shwe Than Lwin Group (STLG), identified by the UN Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar as a crony conglomerate that profits from its close ties with the Myanmar military. STLG was among the companies that donated to support the military's 2017 "clearance operations" against the Rohingya – operations that displaced over 700,000 people to Bangladesh and are the subject of a genocide case at the International Court of Justice.

In addition to these concerns, a joint venture between STLM and the now military-controlled Myanmar Radio and Television (MRTV), called Myanmar International Television (MITV), has played a key role in promoting military propaganda since the 2021 coup. Dream Vision has provided infrastructure to strengthen MNTV's broadcasting capabilities, which risks also benefiting MITV.

Cool Japan Fund and JICT invested in Dream Vision through a Japanese holding company and received ministerial approval to dispose of their shares in February 2023. However, the completion of the procedures of withdrawal did not take place until June 24, 2025 – about a month after the civil society letter was delivered. JIB provided a minimal response, stating only that it had completed its withdrawal in December 2024.

The lack of transparency is especially troubling given that over 90% of Cool Japan Fund and JICT's investments come from the Japanese government's Fiscal Investment and Loan Program Special Account, which is managed by the government for industrial investment purposes – which makes the Japanese public the effective majority shareholder. In the case of JIB, its main shareholder is NHK, Japan's public broadcaster, which is funded through reception fees. As such, these institutions bear heightened accountability to the Japanese public and the international community.

Civil society organizations have since issued a follow-up letter raising further questions, including whether the shares by the three entities were transferred to Dream Vision that is owned by the subsidiary of STLG, and whether the equipment provided to MNTV by Dream Vision such as broadcasting equipment were transferred to STLG at the time of withdraw. The groups

reiterated their original inquiry about whether proper human rights due diligence was conducted, including an assessment of possible direct or indirect support to the military's propaganda, and if so, requesting the release of such due diligence.

Yuka Kiguchi, Executive Director of Mekong Watch, said, "It is unacceptable for publicly funded entities like the Cool Japan Fund and JICT– or JIB, a subsidiary of NHK, Japan's public broadcaster – to quietly withdraw from a project that may have bolstered military propaganda and lined the pockets of cronies linked to the Myanmar military junta, without addressing these issues. Projects funded with public money must meet higher standards of transparency and accountability than those of private enterprises. The three companies involved have a duty to provide further, detailed explanations regarding this project."

Yadanar Maung, Justice for Myanmar's spokesperson, said, "JIB, Cool Japan Fund, and JICT need to respond fully and promptly to our concerns regarding their exit from Myanmar and clarify whether their exit from Dream Vision involved any human rights due diligence, whether it benefited cronies that support the military's international crimes, and what, if any, mitigating measures they took. Their failure to answer these questions only deepens concerns about the unacceptable lack of transparency and whether Japanese investors have upheld their human rights responsibilities."



MYANMAR PRO-DEMOCRACY MONK SHWE NYA WAH SAYADAW DIES AT 60

Prominent pro-democracy Buddhist monk and former political prisoner Shwe Nya Wah Sayadaw passed away at 2:45 am on 10 July at Asia Royal Hospital in Yangon while receiving treatment for liver disease. He was 60.

"The Sayadaw had several illnesses and also sustained injuries during his two imprisonments," one of his female devotees told Mizzima.

His body is being transported to the monastery in Hmawbi Township, Yangon Region, where he had resided. It will remain there for seven days as funeral preparations are underway, she added.

Renowned for his support of political prisoners and former detainees, Shwe Nya Wah Sayadaw had recently visited earthquake-affected areas to provide social assistance. Following the 2021 military coup, he was arrested by the junta and sentenced to two years in prison under Section 505(b) of the Penal Code.

In 2011, the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee banned him from delivering public sermons for one year. The following year, he was forced to vow to vacate Sadu Monastery. In 2015, the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee issued a permanent ban on his sermons, stating that his political preaching conflicted with Buddhist doctrine.

Shwe Nya Wah Sayadaw was widely respected among pro-democracy activists and known for his outspoken stance on justice, human rights, and religious integrity.

MANDALAY QUAKE PROMPTS STRATEGIC HERITAGE DAMAGE MAPPING FOR FUTURE CONSERVATION

Myanmar's Department of Archaeology and National Museums is deploying a post-disaster strategy that combines traditional survey techniques with GIS technology to assess heritage damage following the recent Mandalay earthquake.

The nine-zone field operation covering culturally significant areas like Inwa, Pinya, and Sagaing, reveals alarming figures: 629 heritage structures negatively affected in Inwa, 280 in Pinya, and 249 in Paleik. These findings signal a need for urgent, data-informed restoration planning.

Using a methodology that incorporates satellite imagery, historic inventories, and on-site surveys, the department is building a robust, multi-layered GIS database. This includes monument attributes, geospatial coordinates, condition assessments, photographic documentation, and sketch renderings.

The project's integration of technical tools with conservation priorities reflects a forward-thinking model for disaster response in cultural heritage. By digitizing and spatially indexing the damage, the teams can better prioritize restoration efforts, allocate resources, and develop long-term resilience strategies for heritage sites.

This model could serve as a blueprint for future disaster management planning across other culturally rich but seismically vulnerable regions of Myanmar.



Photo: AFP

BUDDHIST LENT SEASON DRAWS LARGE CROWDS TO SACRED PAGODAS ACROSS MYANMAR

As the Buddhist Lent period begins on the full moon day of Waso, Buddhist devotees across Myanmar have flocked to major pagodas, with religious activities and precept ceremonies held at iconic temples like the Shwedagon and Maha Muni pagodas.

In Yangon, the Shwedagon Pagoda saw a surge in pilgrims gathering on the full moon day of Waso, marking the start of Buddhist Lent. The Shwedagon Pagoda Board of Trustees also organized special precept ceremonies for devout visitors.

From January to the end of June 2025, more than 3.5 million pilgrims both local and foreign visited the Shwedagon Pagoda, according to figures released by the pagoda's board.

In Mandalay, crowds of pilgrims gathered at the Maha Muni Pagoda on the Waso full moon day of the Myanmar calendar, which coincides with the Dhammasetkya Festival Day.

Locals noted that the Maha Muni Pagoda is currently open to pilgrims from 7 am to 4 pm, but only the eastern entrance remains accessible. Other entrances are still under repair due to structural damage caused by the 28 March earthquake. The temple reportedly sustained around 70 percent damage from the noon-time quake that struck Mandalay and surrounding regions.

Despite the damage, many Buddhist devotees were seen engaging in acts of merit within the temple grounds—washing the sacred Maha Muni statue, offering flowers and fruits, making wishes and prayers, and feeding the fish and turtles around the temple precinct.

The full moon day of Waso holds deep spiritual significance for Buddhists. It marks several key events in the Buddha's life: his conception, his renunciation of worldly life, and his first sermon following enlightenment.

INDIA LAUNCHES DRONE ATTACKS ON SEPARATIST BASES IN MYANMAR

SUBIR BHAUMIK

Separatist rebels from India's northeastern state of Assam say four of their bases inside Myanmar have been attacked by combat drones launched by the Indian Army early on Sunday.

A press statement from the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) said about 100 combat drones were launched between 2am and 4am local time from Indian Army bases on the Myanmar border.

"The drones hit four of our bases. One of our top commanders Nayan Medhi (Asom) was killed and 19 of our fighters were injured," the statement issued by ULFA media cell said.

Indian military sources confirmed the drone strikes but refused to provide details. They said the bases hit were shared by the ULFA rebels of Assam and the Revolutionary People's Front

(RPF) of the neighbouring state of Manipur.

While some separatist groups in the Northeast of India are involved in ceasefire and dialogues with the Indian government, the ULFA and RPF's military wing PLA have continued to attack Indian security forces.

The Indian Army has occasionally crossed into Myanmar to strike at these rebel bases but such operations by special forces had limited effect because the bases are located in very remote difficult hilly jungle terrain. One such highly publicized operation following a rebel attack on an Indian military convoy led to protests from the Myanmar government.

The Myanmar army, which is fighting multiple domestic insurgencies within the country, have no effective control of these remote locations in Sagaing Division where the bases of Northeast Indian rebels are located.

But under pressure from India, they have occasionally launched attacks on these bases in the past few years.

But after the Myanmar civil war escalated after November 2023, the Burmese army has been forced to fight its own rebel groups who have taken over nearly half of the country's territory.

Analysts say one of India's long-term agendas in Myanmar is to deny border areas of that country to be used by northeastern rebels.

Now equipped with modern technology options like combat drones, the Indian military may have decided to launch surgical strikes on these bases depending on credible intelligence inputs from satellites and human assets. The success of such strikes against Pakistan-based terror groups may have encouraged the Indian military to launch drone strikes in this northeastern border area.

Such strikes carry the element of deniability, unlike action by special forces.



US AND CHINA HAVE 'POSITIVE' MEETING AT ASEAN FOREIGN MINISTER TALKS

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Chinese top diplomat Wang Yi had a "positive" meeting in Malaysia on 11 July both sides said, in an apparent bid to ease tensions between the rival powers.

Rubio and Wang's first face-to-face meeting since US President Donald Trump returned to office came as Washington and Beijing are locked in disputes ranging from trade to Taiwan -- and both countries vie for greater influence in the region.

"I thought it was a very constructive and positive meeting," Rubio told reporters after the hour-long talks in the capital Kuala Lumpur, but stressed "it was not a negotiation".

"I think we left it feeling as there's some areas we're gonna be able to work together on."

Rubio also expressed confidence that a meeting between US President Donald Trump and Chinese leader Xi Jinping would happen.

"There's a strong desire on both sides to do it," Rubio said, adding no date had been set.

Beijing in a separate statement said "both sides agreed that the meeting was positive, pragmatic and constructive".

Both countries agreed to "enhance communication and dialogue through diplomatic channels... and explore expanding cooperation areas while managing differences," China's foreign ministry said.

The sit-down between Wang and Rubio, a longtime China hawk, came as Asian foreign ministers wrapped up three days of intensive talks at an Association of Southeast Asian Nations meet in Kuala Lumpur.

Top diplomats from Russia, the European Union, Britain and Canada also attended.

'Massive deficits'

US officials said ahead of Rubio's first trip to the region as secretary of state that Washington was "prioritising" its commitment to East and Southeast Asia.

While US tariffs overshadowed the gathering, Rubio said he was "warmly received" by Asian partners as he sought to placate concerns over the duties.

"If you look at some of these trade deficits, they're massive. That has to be addressed," Rubio said at the end of his whirlwind trip.

"Everybody here is a mature leader who understands that that's not sustainable."

Trump has threatened punitive tariffs ranging from 20 to 50 percent against more than 20 countries, many of them in Asia, if they do not strike deals with Washington by August 1.

ASEAN expressed "concern" over tariffs, which it described as "counterproductive" and a threat to regional growth, according to a Joint Communique released Friday.

Long-time US ally Japan faces a 25 percent across-the-board levy, separate from similar charges for cars, steel and aluminium that have already been imposed. South Korea faces a similar tariff.

Rubio met his Japanese and South Korean counterparts earlier on Friday, with his spokeswoman Tammy Bruce calling it an "indispensable relationship".

Wang said on Thursday the US tariff drive "undermines the free trade system".

"The United States' imposition of high tariffs on Cambodia and Southeast Asian countries is an attempt to deprive all parties of their legitimate rights to development," Wang said.

Tensions between the United States and China have ratcheted up since Trump took office in January, with both countries engaging in a tariff war that briefly sent duties on each other's exports sky-high.

'Total reset'

At one point Washington hit China with additional levies of 145 percent on its goods as both sides engaged in tit-for-tat escalation. China's countermeasures on US goods reached 125 percent.

Beijing and Washington agreed in May to temporarily slash their staggeringly high tariffs -- an outcome Trump dubbed a "total reset".

However, deep mistrust remains between the two countries, with each suspecting the other of trying to weaken its influence.

US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth accused China in late May of "credibly preparing to potentially use military force to alter the balance of power" in the Asia-Pacific region.

He also claimed that Beijing "trains every day" to invade Taiwan, which China claims as part of its territory.

In response, Chinese diplomats accused the United States of using the Taiwan issue to "contain China" and called on Washington to stop "playing with fire".



Photo: AFP

PAKISTAN POLICE ARREST 149, INCLUDING 48 CHINESE, IN SCAM CENTRE RAID

Pakistan police arrested 149 people -- including 71 foreigners, mostly Chinese -- in a raid on a scam call centre, the National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency said 10 July.

"During the raid, a large call centre was uncovered, which was involved in Ponzi schemes and investment fraud," the agency said in a statement.

"Through this fraudulent network, the public was being deceived and vast sums of money were being illegally collected."

The agency said they were acting on a tip-off about the network, operating in the city of Faisalabad, a manufacturing centre in the east of the country.

The agency told AFP that the raid was at the residence of Tasheen Awan, the former head of the city's power grid, who has not been arrested.

All those arrested were in custody, including 78 Pakistanis and 48 Chinese, as well as citizens from Nigeria, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Zimbabwe and Myanmar.

Some 18 of the 149 were women, it added.

A copy of the police report said victims would initially receive a small return on their first investments, before being persuaded to hand over larger sums of money.

"The charged individuals ran WhatsApp groups where they lured ordinary people by assigning small investment tasks like subscribing to different TikTok and YouTube channels," it said.

"Later, they shifted them to Telegram links for further online tasks requiring larger investments."

AFP



CHINA'S FRAYING SOCIAL ORDER: A SURGE IN PUBLIC VIOLENCE

SUN LEE

China, once synonymous with rigid control and social order, is now witnessing a growing wave of chaos. Acts of random violence, revenge attacks, and expressions of deep-rooted societal dissatisfaction are increasingly frequent, piercing the carefully curated façade of national harmony promoted by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Behind these isolated headlines lies a more disturbing truth, a society under immense pressure and a regime struggling to maintain control.

Over recent months, cities across China have been rocked by incidents of indiscriminate violence. On June 17, a Route 126 bus in front of Shenyang University in Liaoning province veered off course, colliding with multiple vehicles and mowing down pedestrians. Official sources blamed it on driver error, but dashcam footage showed the bus blasting through a red light into turning traffic. Online users immediately speculated that the act was intentional, a form of retaliation against perceived injustices. Eighteen people were injured and several killed in the mayhem.

This was not an isolated act of chaos. On June 4 at Wuhan University, a graduate student allegedly carried out a brutal stabbing spree in a university cafeteria, injuring three. Rumours circulated that his thesis had been rejected, and he had previously hinted online about plans to kill at random as a way to exact revenge. A few weeks earlier on May 19, a man in Chongqing's Kaosimen commercial district hurled Molotov cocktails at a mall entrance, sparking panic and fire before bystanders subdued him. The attack received no coverage in official media; videos shared on Chinese platforms were swiftly scrubbed, though they remained accessible abroad.

Perhaps most chilling was the May 18 shooting at a barbecue stall in Wuhan's Chalukou district, where unconfirmed accounts claimed two police officers were shot in the head. The official narrative downplayed the event as a minor "injury case," censoring user comments and discussions on social media. Another troubling episode occurred on May 15, when a black Tesla reportedly rammed into a crowd outside an

elementary school in Beijing's Haidian district, injuring several children during dismissal. The driver's motive remains unclear, but many suspected another act of lashing out.

These events are not merely tragic aberrations, they are symptoms of a deeper malaise. The CCP's iron-fisted governance has long relied on censorship, surveillance, and the suppression of dissent to create a perception of stability. However, beneath the surface, China is confronting escalating structural crises. High youth unemployment continues to spike, with millions of educated young people unable to find jobs. Household debt is at a record high. The real estate crisis, which has seen projects abandoned mid-construction and savings evaporate, has pushed many into financial desperation. For countless citizens, hope for personal advancement has been replaced by resentment and nihilism.

In such an environment, suppression of legitimate grievances has only intensified public frustration. Instead of addressing these economic and institutional failings, the CCP has doubled down on information control. Dissidents are jailed, petitions ignored, and protests swiftly quelled. The lack of legal channels for redress has effectively forced some individuals to express their suffering through violence. In many of the incidents mentioned above, the perpetrators left digital footprints, manifestos, cryptic social media posts, or suicide notes that conveyed a consistent message: their violent acts were cries for attention, despair, or revenge against an uncaring system.

Even more alarming is the escalation in tools used to carry out these attacks. While China strictly prohibits private gun ownership and mandates ID verification for knives, violent actors have adapted. They now use Molotov cocktails, vehicles, and even makeshift explosives tools that not only bypass weapon controls but signify growing desperation. The shift from knife stabbings to broader methods of destruction hints at deeper planning and increasing resolve.

The CCP's failure lies not simply in its inability to prevent these incidents but in its unwillingness to confront their root causes. Rather than engage

in introspection or reform, the regime defaults to censorship and superficial crisis management. Each violent event is sanitized in the media, victims are anonymized, and any potential discussion about systemic reform is erased. This blanket denial only magnifies public distrust.

Furthermore, the breakdown of social trust is also reflected in rising tensions between citizens and the state. Police are often viewed not as protectors, but as enforcers of an unjust order. The judiciary, seen as a puppet of the Party, offers little recourse for ordinary people caught in bureaucratic machinery. The absence of institutional empathy has fostered a survivalist mindset, one in which personal grievance turns into public tragedy.

Critically, the CCP's emphasis on "harmony" as a propaganda tool has become hollow in the face of these realities. The Party once held that stability justified its monopoly on power. Yet the growing frequency of public disorder undermines that argument entirely. When citizens no longer believe the state can or will protect them or worse, when they believe it is complicit in their suffering social contract collapses. Random violence becomes both a weapon and a warning.

The cycle now unfolding is dangerous. Economic stagnation breeds hopelessness, censorship masks reality, and acts of desperation erupt unpredictably. Until the CCP acknowledges the magnitude of this societal breakdown and commits to transparency, justice, and reform China will continue to spiral into episodes of chaos disguised as anomalies.

What remains uncertain is whether the regime will adjust course or continue silencing its citizens until the next tragedy pierces the silence.

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



NO NEUTRAL GROUND

"It is an accident of history, why I am here," Duncan McArthur tells the Insight Myanmar Podcast, reflecting a sentiment that underpins his three decades of immersion along the Thai-Burma border, a region that has long been marked by displacement. What began as a brief stop to teach English as a backpacker in a Karen refugee camp some years back has morphed into a lifelong commitment.

This camp, nestled deep within the forest on the Thai border, was devoid of electricity as well as piped water. "It was a little bit of 'romantic poverty' about it," McArthur recalls, "then getting to know the people, and learning Karen language; and then hearing the stories that people are telling and making those human connections with communities."

This immersive experience led him to re-evaluate a host of commonly used terms in the aid world. For example, he "hates the word 'resilience;' it is so overused in international circles." At the same time, McArthur admits that it is precisely this quality that he found most inspiring in the communities he served. He speaks of refugees and migrants who, under constant threat, were still contributing as teachers or camp committee members. Beyond resilience, what struck McArthur most was the humility of the people he worked with. He encountered community members who have done great things for their people, and yet they were happy to remain anonymous about their contributions.

This stands in stark contrast to what he has observed over the years on the part of some international actors, where he has observed a kind of self-congratulatory nature. He believes that "the big challenge is, and perhaps the way that we can show the most respect for people as international aid workers, is to get in touch with our own humility as well."

McArthur believes that the nature of aid should be reciprocal, a dynamic often lost in the one-way traffic mindset of some organizations. "I certainly feel like I learned and grew more as a person than what I have been able to offer," he confesses. The true impact of his work, he believes, wasn't found in sitting at a computer behind the desk but in human relations created through actual interpersonal encounters. And so for him, genuine aid is not merely about giving, but about a mutual exchange where both giver and receiver are transformed in the process. This deep, personal learning, more than any formal education, has shaped his understanding of human rights and the dynamics of conflict.

McArthur's shift from an informal human rights educator to a formal role with The Border Consortium (TBC) in 2003 gave him a distinctive vantage point to witness the evolution of humanitarian aid along the Thai-Burma border. TBC itself emerged as a response to Thailand's refusal to host a large, UN-managed refugee caseload from Myanmar. Instead, the Thai government permitted a network of faith-based organizations to quietly address basic humanitarian needs, allowing assistance to be delivered discreetly and with minimal international visibility. This led to TBC, which started out as a Christian organization, but has since become the primary channel for foreign governments to support a refugee population that peaked at 150,000 on the border with Thailand.

CATCH THE PODCAST

Read more or listen to the Insight Myanmar Podcast here:

<https://insightmyanmar.org/complete-shows/2025/6/23/episode-359-no-neutral-ground>

Photo: Mizzima

JUNTA'S CENTRAL BANK ANNOUNCES MSME LOANS AMID POST-EARTHQUAKE ECONOMIC CRISIS

Junta-controlled Central Bank of Myanmar announced plans for a State Reconstruction Fund to provide lower-interest loans to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) affected by the devastating March 28 earthquake, which struck central Myanmar with a magnitude of 7.7.

The earthquake killed over 5,350 people and caused an estimated \$11 billion in structural damage—equivalent to 14% of Myanmar's GDP, making it the country's deadliest seismic event in nearly a century.

The junta's state media announcement comes amid mounting economic challenges that predate the natural disaster. The World Bank projects Myanmar's economy will contract by 2.5 percent in fiscal year 2025/26, primarily due to earthquake impacts, with inflation running at 34.1 percent as of April 2025. Poverty rates reached 31 percent in 2024, with simulations indicating the earthquake could increase this by another 2.8 percentage points, according to the World Bank.

However, the Central Bank's capacity to deliver meaningful economic relief remains questionable

given Myanmar's broader financial crisis. International sanctions experts noted that the Central Bank has become a critical component of the junta's apparatus of public oppression, with over 70 percent of Myanmar's budget deficit now funded through central bank money printing.

As of July 2024, foreign exchange reserves have dwindled to approximately \$3.5 billion, less than half the 2020 levels.

The timing of the MSME loan announcement appears strategic, as the earthquake affected over 17 million people across Mandalay, Sagaing, Bago, Nay Pyi Taw, Magway, and northeastern Shan State—areas where the military junta continues conducting operations despite declaring temporary ceasefires.

While the Central Bank promotes digital payment initiatives like the February 2025-launched Myanmar Pay (MMQR), critics question whether these programs serve genuine economic recovery or primarily enhance state control over financial transactions in a country where over half the population now lives below the poverty line amid ongoing civil war.



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

July 7, 2025

His Excellency
Min Aung Hlaing
Chairman of the State Administrative
Council and Commander and Chief of
the Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Nay Pyi Taw

Dear Mr. Chairman:

It is a Great Honor for me to send you this letter in that it demonstrates the strength and commitment of our Trading Relationship, and the fact that the United States of America has agreed to continue working with Myanmar, despite having a significant Trade Deficit with your great Country. Nevertheless, we have decided to move forward with you, but only with more balanced, and fair, TRADE. Therefore, we invite you to participate in the extraordinary Economy of the United States, the Number One Market in the World, by far. We have had years to discuss our Trading Relationship with Myanmar, and have concluded that we must move away from these longterm, and very persistent, Trade Deficits engendered by Myanmar's Tariff, and Non Tariff, Policies and Trade Barriers. Our relationship has been, unfortunately, far from Reciprocal. Starting on August 1, 2025, we will charge Myanmar a Tariff of only 40% on any and all Burmese products sent into the United States, separate from all Sectoral Tariffs. Goods transshipped to evade a higher Tariff will be subject to that higher Tariff. Please understand that the 40% number is far less than what is needed to eliminate the Trade Deficit disparity we have with your Country. As you are aware, there will be no Tariff if Myanmar, or companies within your Country, decide to build or manufacture product within the United States and, in fact, we will do everything possible to get approvals quickly, professionally, and routinely — In other words, in a matter of weeks.

If for any reason you decide to raise your Tariffs, then, whatever the number you choose to raise them by, will be added onto the 40% that we charge. Please understand that these Tariffs are necessary to correct the many years of Myanmar's Tariff, and Non Tariff, Policies and Trade Barriers, causing these unsustainable Trade Deficits against the United States. This Deficit is a major threat to our Economy and, indeed, our National Security!

The letter, dated July 7, informed junta chief Min Aung Hlaing that the United States would impose 40 percent tariffs on Myanmar products starting August 1. Despite the threatening nature of the correspondence, Min Aung Hlaing responded with enthusiasm, expressing his "sincere appreciation" for Trump's letter and commending the US president for his "strong leadership".

According to Richard Horsey, a senior Myanmar adviser for the International Crisis Group, this represents the first public formal recognition the Myanmar junta has received from Washington since seizing power in 2021. He described Trump's letter as "a gift to the regime."

The junta's supporters have celebrated what they view as official US recognition of Min Aung Hlaing's junta, prompting widespread mockery from Myanmar social media users.

Junta supporter Phoe Si wrote on his Telegram channel about legitimacy and whether the National Unity Government finally understands its position.

Facebook users responded with sarcasm and criticism: A user wrote about how the junta desperately celebrates when nobody else recognizes their leadership. Another user wrote, "Min Aung Hlaing is happy thinking he's been accepted into civilized society." A third user criticized the junta chief's limited capability and thinking, questioning why he still wants to rule the country with abilities only at the level of a foolish leader.

MYANMAR NETIZENS MOCK JUNTA'S CELEBRATION OF TRUMP TARIFF LETTER

Myanmar social media users have mocked the military junta's celebration after US President Donald Trump sent a letter to junta chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing threatening 40 percent tariffs on Myanmar goods—a communication the junta has interpreted as formal recognition.

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.