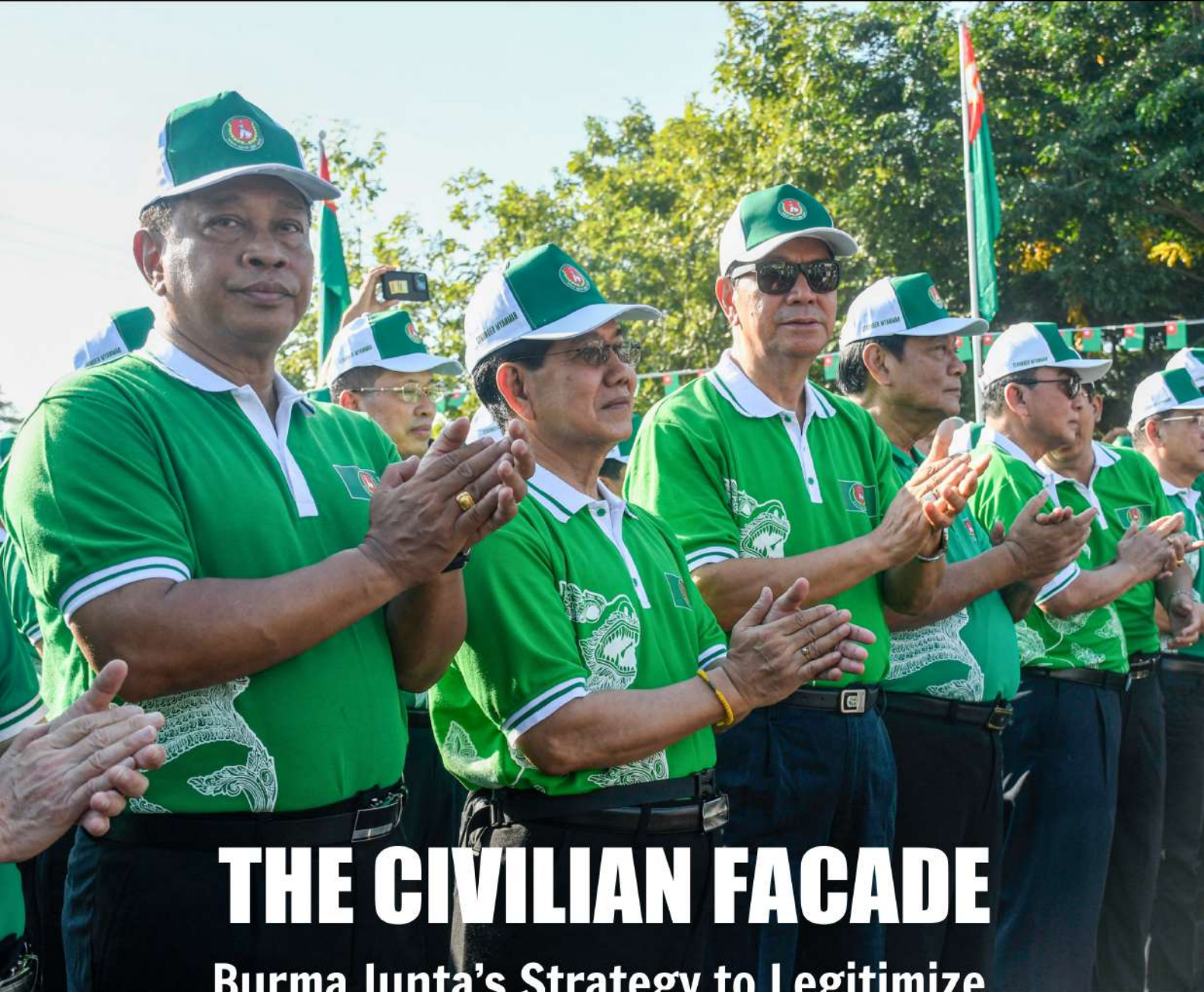


ON THE GROUND IN MYANMAR

mizzima WEEKLY

Analysis & Insight



THE CIVILIAN FACADE

Burma Junta's Strategy to Legitimize
Military Rule Through Elections

ELECTION UPDATE

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.

ENTRENCHING MYANMAR MILITARY DOMINANCE

The unfolding political landscape in Myanmar, with the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) poised to take control following the December-January elections, illustrates a deeply troubling strategy, one in which the military junta, led by Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, seems intent on cloaking continued authoritarian rule under the veneer of civilian democracy.

Rather than marking a genuine transition towards pluralistic governance, the country's most popular party the National League for Democracy (NLD) is absent and these elections appear designed to deepen the junta's grip on power under the guise of legitimacy. The USDP, far from representing an independent political force, is widely considered to be a direct proxy of the military, filled with former generals, sitting ministers, and top security officials aligned with Min Aung Hlaing's junta agenda.

The USDP's campaign is structured to reinforce, not challenge, military dominance. The party has flooded the electoral field with over a thousand candidates, dwarfing any genuine opposition. At the same time, dozens of seats will go uncontested, many of them guaranteed for USDP candidates. These developments, coupled with the fact that major opposition forces – such as Aung San Suu Kyi's NLD – are sidelined or blocked, reinforce the image of elections as a staged exercise rather than a meaningful contest – a “sham” as critics refer to it.

At its core, this gameplan signals that the military has no real intention of surrendering power. Min Aung Hlaing remains in charge, reshuffling roles – possibly taking the presidency – and not relinquishing control. By embedding loyal “men in green” within the USDP and inflating its parliamentary presence, the regime is engineering a political system

where real dissent is impossible to achieve – a one-party state reliant on the military.

The Myanmar military continues to push for its “disciplined democracy” with the USDP's campaign rhetoric promising a “Stronger Myanmar” under the rule of law. The USDP's leadership insists the upcoming vote will confer legitimacy on the government, yet the surrounding conditions render that legitimacy hollow, with the Union Election Commission (UEC) wholly under junta control, and the playing field clearly skewed.

In addition, observers say the USDP is actively courting ultranationalist hardliners, aligning itself with ultra-right players in an attempt to strengthen its position, moves that build authoritarian nationalism while masking it behind a democratic façade, a manipulative strategy designed to generate both local and international acceptance of what is a reviled junta.

The military is effectively manufacturing a democratic façade. This not only undermines meaningful political opposition but also risks perpetuating the cycle of repression under a more polished, but ultimately as ruthless, guise – with the civil war continuing.

Given these circumstances, the international community must not fall for the junta's game. What is underway is not a restoration of democracy but a calculated strategy to entrench the military's “disciplined democracy”. The USDP's rise – after being trashed in the 2020 poll – rather than signaling hope for peace, may mark the next phase of a game where the military junta's dominance remains entrenched.

The world needs to stay alert as the Myanmar junta oversees a transition from green to white but the boot continues to stomp on the people of the Golden Land.

EDITORIAL

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Cover photo of USDP members campaigning for the Myanmar junta's election by AFP



Pro-military USDP members out campaigning ahead of the December-January election. Photo: AFP

CIVILIAN FAÇADE

BURMA JUNTA'S STRATEGY TO LEGITIMIZE MILITARY RULE THROUGH ELECTIONS

ANTONIO GRACEFFO

The Burma junta is preparing to hold general elections in an attempt to legitimize its rule before international observers, hiding behind a civilian façade.

Scheduled to begin on December 28, 2025, the vote will unfold in four phases through January 2026. The first phase will cover 102 townships mostly under military control, while 121 constituencies, including 56 entire townships, will be excluded. In total, elections are planned in over 270 townships out of 330, even though the junta controls less than half of Burma's territory, with some estimates placing control at only 21 percent.

The framework for the junta's planned "civilian government" rests on the 2008 Constitution, which guarantees military dominance. It reserves 25 percent of parliamentary seats for the armed forces, requires the ministries of home, border affairs, and defense to be led by serving officers, and allows the military to appoint one of the country's two vice presidents. The National Defense and Security Council can impose martial law, disband parliament, and assume direct rule during a state of emergency. The junta also replaced the first-past-the-post electoral system with proportional representation, allowing it to maintain power with just over one-third of the popular vote when combined with its constitutionally reserved seats.

In October 2024, the junta conducted a nationwide census, claiming it was to compile voter lists. In reality, it functioned as a counterinsurgency tool to identify

opposition activists and conscript recruits. The questionnaire contained 68 questions, far more than the 6 to 10 typically required for electoral purposes. Officials later admitted the census was completed in only 145 of Burma's 330 townships, less than half the country.

The junta has manipulated the electoral process through restrictive legislation. In January 2023, it enacted the Political Parties Registration Law, raising membership requirements from 1,000 to 100,000 and mandating party funds of at least 100 million kyats (about \$45,000). Parties had 60 days to re-register or face dissolution. The National League for Democracy (NLD) and 39 other parties were dissolved in March 2023 for missing the deadline, while many others suspected of ties to resistance groups were banned outright. The law also bars anyone previously convicted of a crime from joining a political party, effectively excluding opposition leaders such as Aung San Suu Kyi and President Win Myint, both serving politically-motivated sentences. More than 22,000 political prisoners remain detained and barred from participating in the election.

Of the 49 parties approved for registration, only nine plan to campaign nationally, while the rest will compete at regional or state level. Among roughly 4,900 registered candidates, more than 1,000 represent the military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), the army's proxy. Composed of former generals and senior officers, the USDP has nearly twice as many candidates as its closest rivals. At least six are



People's Party chairman Ko Ko Gyi, a democracy activist and former political prisoner, is taking part in the Myanmar junta's election. Photo: AFP

serving Tatmadaw lieutenant generals, while recently retired officers such as Lt. Gen. Thet Pon - who led the violent crackdown on anti-coup protesters in Yangon - have also joined the party.

The junta further tightened control through new laws designed to suppress dissent. The "Law on the Prevention of Disruption and Interference with Elections" imposes harsh penalties, including death, for acts deemed "sabotage" or "disruption." A July decree banned protests and criticism of the election, also carrying capital punishment, while a cybersecurity law criminalized VPN use and punished access to banned social media platforms.

The current election closely mirrors 2010, when the Union Election Commission, led by former general Thein Soe, oversaw a vote held under military control that excluded major opposition parties and faced widespread boycotts. Yet the 2025 process differs in key ways: the junta now controls far less territory, and the country is engulfed in civil war, with 91 towns and 167 military battalions lost. International isolation is deeper than ever, with only authoritarian allies offering support.

Democratic nations have condemned the process. The European Union has refused to send observers, dismissing the process as a "regime-sponsored exercise." On October 11, several former ASEAN foreign ministers issued a joint statement urging the bloc to "unequivocally reject" the junta's planned "sham election."

On July 31, 2025, the junta ended the state of emergency and dissolved the State Administration Council (SAC), replacing it with a new "interim government" cal-

led the State Security and Peace Commission (SSPC). Despite the change, Min Aung Hlaing retains the power to decide when elections will be held and which parties may participate. Just hours after lifting the nationwide emergency, the regime imposed martial law and new states of emergency in nine of the country's 14 regions, covering 63 townships largely under resistance control.

It remains uncertain whether Min Aung Hlaing will continue as commander-in-chief or pursue the presidency, as the Constitution prohibits holding both roles. With major pro-democracy parties, including the NLD, banned, the December election will effectively be uncontested, paving the way for the USDP and its leader, Khin Yi, to help Min Aung Hlaing achieve his goal of becoming Burma's "elected president." Regardless of his formal position, analysts expect he will retain control as either president or armed forces chief, solidifying his rule as the country's de facto leader.

In recent months, the junta has intensified military operations nationwide, targeting both civilians and civilian infrastructure in an effort to seize more territory before the election. Between January and May 2025, the regime carried out 1,134 airstrikes, up sharply from 197 during the same period in 2023 and 640 in 2024. Following the election announcement, forces launched major offensives to secure key trade routes and towns, including Kyaukme and Hsipaw along the corridor to China.

In August 2025, after a three-week campaign, the military recaptured Kyaukme, which had been held by the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) for a year.



Whatever the result of the Myanmar election, the result will mean continued military rule. Photo: AFP

However, a junta spokesperson admitted it would be difficult to retake areas controlled by the Three Brotherhood Alliance, stating, "We cannot take it back during one year."

In 2025, Burma's primary international allies remained China and Russia. Moscow continued to provide consistent political and military backing since the 2021 coup, while Beijing, after years of balancing ties with both the junta and resistance groups, appeared by late 2025 to have concluded that supporting the regime offered the best path to stability. The junta's selected observers include Russia, China, India, Belarus, Cambodia, Thailand, and Laos, all friendly to the regime. Min Aung Hlaing announced that Russia and Belarus would send officials to monitor the elections, while China was expected to supply an electronic voting system and technical support.

A vote monitored by Russia and Belarus "cannot be considered free and fair," noting that neither country "has a good reputation for democratic, free, and fair elections." Min Aung Hlaing's attendance at the 80th anniversary of the Soviet Union's Victory in the Great Patriotic War in Moscow, where he was received by Chinese leader Xi Jinping, signaled the junta's growing international acceptance. Support from countries aligned with the BRICS bloc has also fueled speculation that the regime may seek BRICS observer status or future membership.

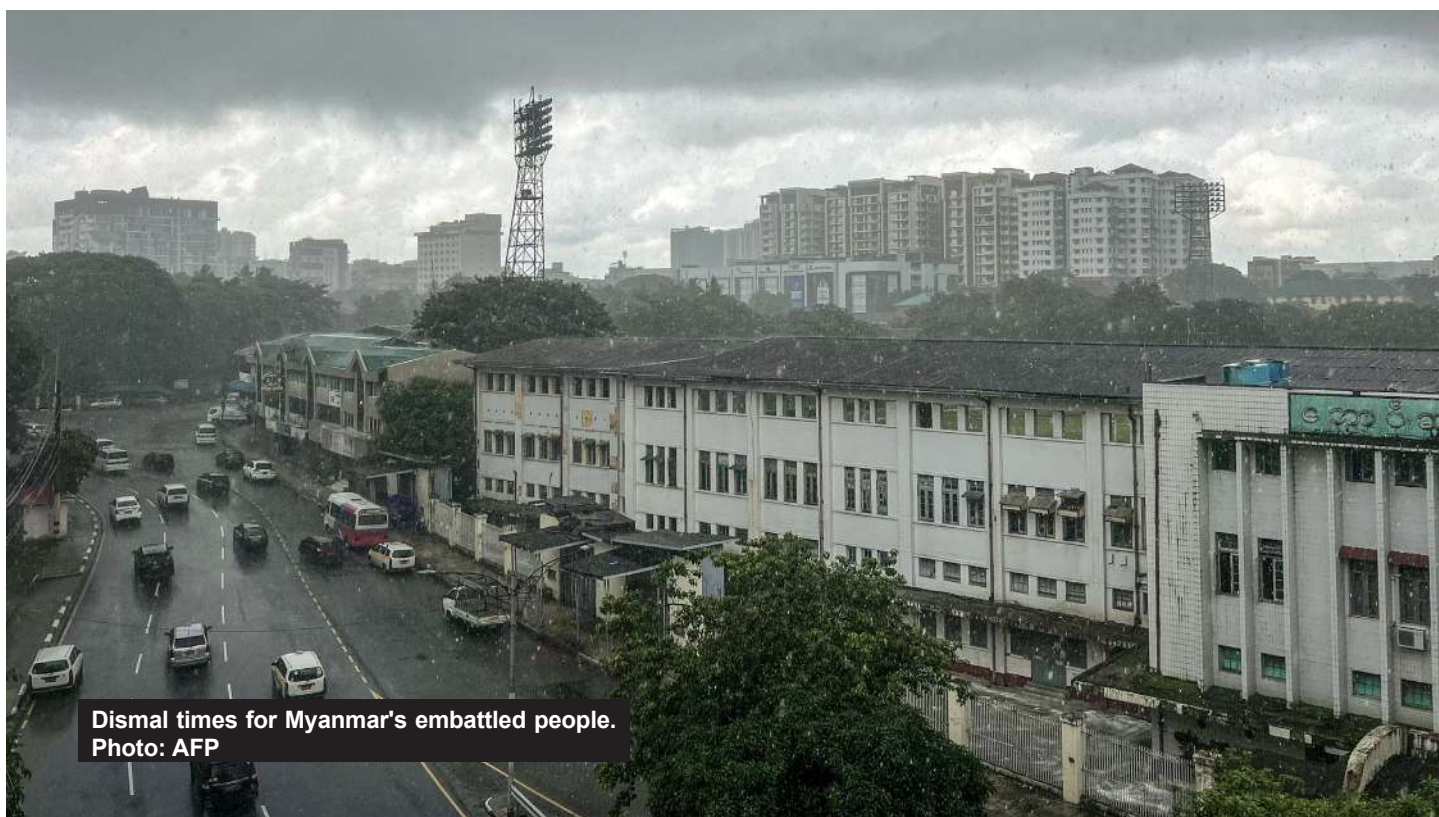
The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) expressed "deep concern" but refrained from

directly condemning the junta's plans. Malaysian Foreign Minister Mohamad bin Haji Hasan stated that any legitimate election must be "held throughout the country with the participation of all political parties and stakeholders," conditions clearly absent in Burma. ASEAN has acknowledged that elections are "not a priority" and could worsen the crisis. A joint statement from several Southeast Asian figures reminded governments that Burma's military has twice ignored the people's will, nullifying the 1990 vote and staging another sham election in 2010 to entrench dictatorship.

The United States and Germany have both stated that the upcoming election will not be free or fair. Germany warned that the junta's actions could intensify violence and further destabilize the country. United Nations human rights experts urged member states to denounce the process as "a fraud."

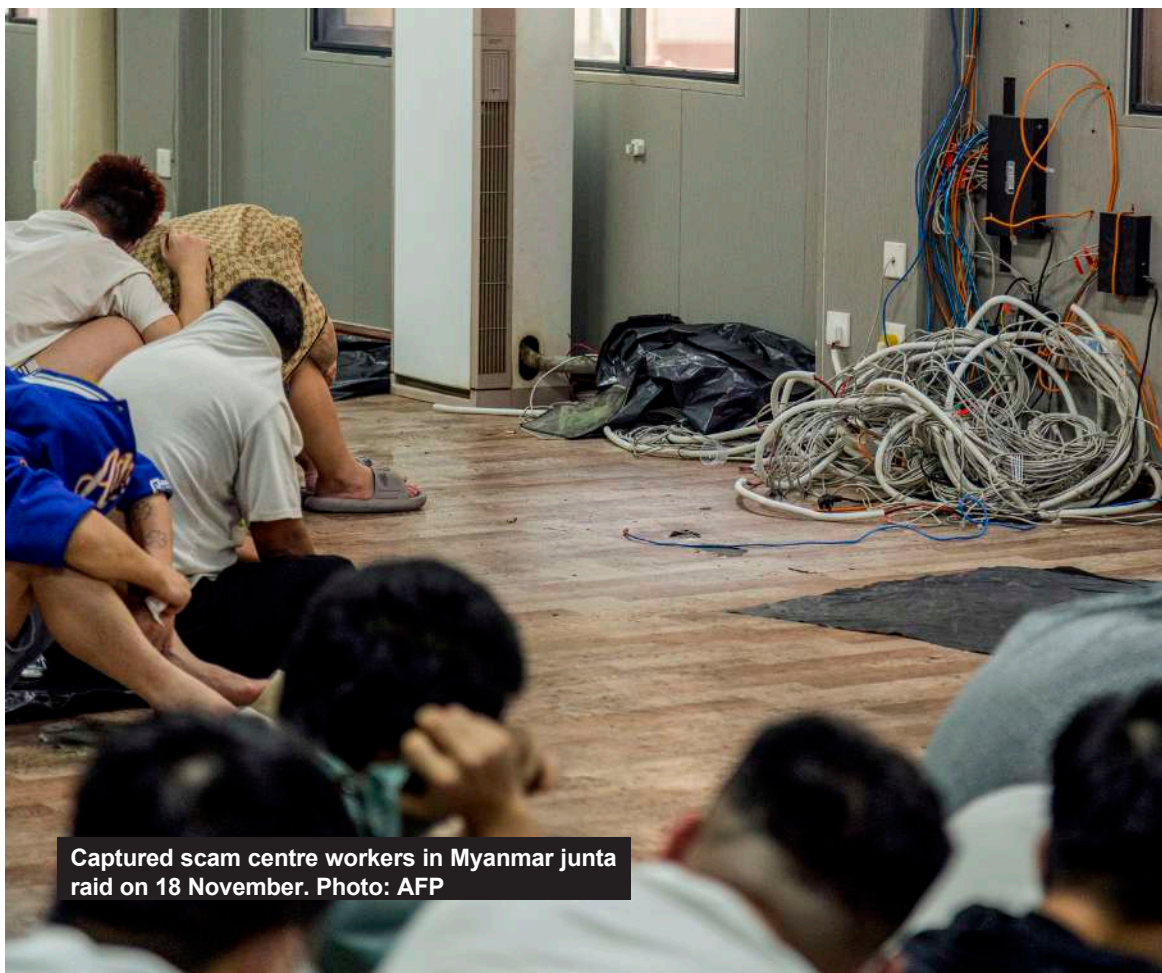
Despite regime assurances that power will be transferred to the election's winner, analysts believe Min Aung Hlaing will refuse to step down, holding on to either the presidency or the position of commander-in-chief to consolidate power. The process is widely viewed as a sham designed to provide a façade of democracy while preserving military rule through constitutional means.

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



Dismal times for Myanmar's embattled people.
Photo: AFP

ANALYSIS & INSIGHT



PANIC IN KAREN STATE'S SHWE KOKKO OVER SCAM HUB CRACKDOWN

A sudden announcement by Lt. Col. Naing Maung Zaw, a senior officer of the Border Guard Force (BGF)/Karen National Army (KNA), has triggered mass flight and confusion across Shwe Kokko, one of Southeast Asia's most notorious hubs for online scam operations. Speaking to the media on 17 November, the BGF commander declared that the group would "end scam centers within days," framing the move as a matter of "five dignities" — the Nation, State, Race, the organization, and its leaders.

He added that while operations would target scam syndicates, the BGF did not plan to demolish buildings, saying they could be repurposed for housing homeless families.

However, despite the strong rhetoric, analysts remain skeptical. The BGF has long been linked to She Zhijiang, a powerful gambling tycoon and central figure in the region's scam economy, whom Thai authorities transferred to China last week. Observers also note that high-level operatives have reportedly relocated to new BGF-controlled facilities rather than being arrested or expelled.

The BGF's declaration immediately set off panic across Shwe Kokko. Workers fled their compounds overnight, leaving the once-bustling enclave in disarray. Most of those

fleeing were Chinese nationals, and Chinese-language storefront signs were quickly covered or removed.

"Around side No. 4/5, Hongthoo, and the areas near the park are in chaos," one witness told Mizzima. "People were rushing out with luggage. Most of them were Chinese, and no one knows where they were heading."

Locals say the panic began when BGF units brought junta troops into Shwe Kokko to enter several scam compounds. A motorcycle taxi driver described scenes of buildings going dark as vehicles entered and exited scam compounds. "Cars rushed out of the sites after entering," he said. "I don't know where they were moving, but clearly they relocated to other places."

While Chinese workers escaped, many Myanmar and other foreign workers were trapped inside buildings that had been locked from the outside by scam-center security staff. A 22-year-old female Myanmar worker told Mizzima that all exits had been sealed. "They do not let us go. All the doors are locked. There are no Chinese inside, only Myanmar and other foreigners. Electricity is cut, and we are not allowed to use our phones. I think we are being held as hostages to secure the release of Chinese workers."

Myanmar's military descended on Shwe Kokko on 18 November morning, according to state media The Global New Light of Myanmar.

"During the operation, 346 foreign nationals currently under scrutiny were arrested," it said. "Nearly ten thousand mobile phones used in online gambling operations were also seized."

The turmoil comes days after the United States launched its Scam Center Strike Force, intensifying international pressure on regional governments and armed groups to tackle the multi-billion-dollar crime networks operating along the Thai-Myanmar border.

Amid the scrutiny, junta leader Min Aung Hlaing made a rare visit to Karen State on 15 November, promising locals and its officials that the military would "defeat scam centres" in the KK Park enclave — a site long associated with Chinese criminal syndicates. He also attempted to shift blame onto Karen armed organizations, including the BGF, signaling an effort to distance the junta from the scam economy that has flourished in military-controlled zones.

During Min Aung Hlaing's visit, the junta barred the BGF and other signatories of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) from entering Hpa-An, underscoring



tensions between the military and its semi-autonomous allies as regional criminal operations come under unprecedented international attention.

Poorly-trained conscripts sent to the frontline

Myanmar's military has significantly increased its combat manpower through forced conscription, drawing thousands of young people into frontline service despite minimal training and worsening battlefield conditions. Former military officers who joined the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) say the junta's fighting units have grown notably since conscription began earlier this year.

Before the conscription law was activated, an average battalion or regiment reportedly operated with around 120 personnel. Now, CDM officers estimate that frontline battalions have expanded to 160 or 170 troops, mostly due to newly-recruited conscripts. In the Natyekan-based battalion, conscripts make up 120 out of 160 soldiers, according to sources familiar with the unit's structure.

Despite their lack of proper training, many conscripts are deployed directly into major offensives, including operations against the Arakan Army (AA) in Rakhine State. In one strategic post currently under siege, commanders from the junta's No. 99 and No. 17 Light Infantry Divisions have been trapped for weeks after AA and allied revolutionary forces encircled the base. With supply routes cut, food shortages have become severe. Some conscripts stationed there reportedly receive only one proper meal every six days, according to families in contact with the soldiers.

In Sagaing Region, forced conscription resumed at full intensity in the second week of November, especially in Monywa, the regional capital. Most of those taken are factory workers from nearby industrial zones. More than 30 workers returning home from their shifts were detained by junta soldiers and forced into military trucks, witnesses said. On 14 November, additional youths were seized on Kyaukka Road in another raid. A local resident told People's Spring Media: "Even though the youths begged on their knees, they were ignored and pushed onto the vehicles."



An internet user in Yangon. Photo: AFP

Residents say army officers are now targeting public gatherings and traditional events where young people tend to gather. Local organizers in Monywa claim the junta is preparing stage shows and exhibition events throughout November to lure youths into locations where troops can easily detain them.

Similar patterns have emerged in Myingyan, Mandalay Region, another stronghold of resistance activity. Since early November, junta authorities have forcibly conscripted villagers who came into the city for shopping, work, or study. Forced recruitment has been reported in Wards 1, 2, 4, 6, 14, 16, 18, and 19, with several homes reportedly raided at night.

While the exact number is difficult to verify, local sources estimate that up to 100 youths may have been taken in Myingyan as of the third week of November.

In an attempt to ease public anger, junta-controlled newspapers have recently highlighted cases of conscripts completing their service. Those eligible for an early one-third reduction have been issued completion certificates, which the junta claims will help them secure priority in private and public sector employment.

Military analysts argue that this narrative is misleading. Under each conscription batch of around 5,000 people, only a few hundred have been officially discharged. Experts believe the remaining 4,000 or more are either still deployed in frontline positions, or are missing, injured, or killed. Analysts warn that the military is using conscripts as “human shields” to slow the advance of resistance forces.

In a related incident, four young men conscripted not into the army but into a pro-junta militia led by a Buddhist monk escaped from the Kantbalu police station’s prison. Three of the escapees are aged between 19 and 21, while the fourth is 33.

Their escape underscores growing desperation among forcibly recruited youths as the junta expands both formal and informal conscription networks amid escalating battlefield losses.

Spotty internet and slow speeds impact online access

Internet users across Yangon, Mandalay, Taunggyi, and several other major cities have faced widespread Wi-Fi disruptions since the afternoon of 1 November, with service interruptions continuing into the following days. Many users report that although their home Wi-Fi signals appear connected, the internet remains extremely slow or entirely inaccessible.

A manager from an anonymous Wi-Fi company told Mizzima that the outage stemmed from a major cable failure. “The main cable was cut. The whole connection is out. All customers are inquiring to us,” he said. Some service providers issued brief notices about the disruption, while others made no public statements.

The problem has not been limited to home Wi-Fi. Mobile internet users say that VPN services — essential for accessing blocked platforms — have stopped functioning altogether. A resident of Thakayta Township told BBC Burmese, “There are two issues: Wi-Fi is still down and VPN cannot be used on mobile internet. No VPN works.”

Internet providers have attributed the problems to an underwater cable cut, but no official explanation has been released. Telecommunications observers note that previous cable incidents were resolved more quickly, raising questions about whether the current disruptions are due to technical faults or deliberate restrictions.

In Taunggyi, connectivity issues began as early as late October. Residents there have been forced to rely on mobile data, which is significantly more expensive. One user told local media that phone credit drains rapidly when switching to mobile internet. “Prepaid is gone without heavy use. If you turn on mobile data, all the phone bill disappears. I just opened mobile data for a moment and my balance was cut because I didn’t buy a package,” he said. “Using the SIM card for internet is not worth it. But Wi-Fi is disconnected all the time.”

Digital rights advocates are expressing growing concern. Some believe the disruptions may be linked to the junta’s preparations for its planned election. A digital activist from the Myanmar Internet Project told DVB that evidence suggests the military is deploying Geedge Networks, a Chinese surveillance and network-filtering technology. “According to the facts I received and the current situation, it is clear the junta is using Geedge Networks,” he said. “But it cannot be confirmed whether the internet slowdown is due to installing or testing this system.”

As outages continue with no transparent explanation, fears are rising that Myanmar’s already restricted digital space is being further tightened in advance of political events.



Volker Turk. Photo: AFP

HOLDING MYANMAR ELECTIONS NEXT MONTH 'UNFATHOMABLE': UN RIGHTS CHIEF

With Myanmar in disarray, under heavy bombardment and rights abuses rampant, there is no way it can hold free and fair elections next month, the UN rights chief said 10 November.

Myanmar's military seized power in a 2021 coup, sparking a civil war, but is trumpeting elections as an opportunity for reconciliation.

The ruling junta has touted polls scheduled to start on December 28 as a path to peace, but the vote will be blocked from rebel-held enclaves and monitors are dismissing it as a ploy to disguise continuing military rule.

"The situation in Myanmar, unfortunately, does not get enough media attention, and people have been suffering," Volker Turk, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, told AFP in an interview in Geneva.

He said the military had "restricted entirely the civic space, with those who are in opposition being detained, with journalists being killed", all the time with "heavy bombardments of civilians" and the ongoing civil war, notably in Rakhine State.

"To hold elections under these circumstances is unfathomable," said Turk.

"How can anyone say that they're free and fair, and how can they even be conducted when considerable parts of the country are actually not in anyone's control, and with the military being party to the conflict and having suppressed its population for years?"

Rights groups have said the election cannot be legitimate, with democratic figurehead Aung San Suu Kyi deposed and jailed in the coup, and her vastly popular National League for Democracy party dissolved.

The junta seized power making unsubstantiated claims of fraud in a 2020 election that the NLD won in a landslide.

A many-sided civil war has since consumed Myanmar, with the junta having lost swathes of the country to pro-democracy guerrillas and powerful ethnic-minority armed factions.

There is no official death toll for Myanmar's civil war and estimates vary widely.

Rebel groups have pledged to block the polls from their enclaves.

Protesting against the poll has been made punishable by up to a decade in prison.

AFP



Photo: AFP

POLL SHOWS 96 PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS REJECT VOTING IN MYANMAR JUNTA'S UPCOMING ELECTION

An overwhelming majority of Myanmar citizens say they will not participate in the upcoming junta election, according to a recent survey by the Platform for People Movement.

The poll, released on 8 November, found that 96 percent of respondents said they would not cast their votes, while 99 percent rejected the 2021 military coup. Another 98 percent said the junta's election was unfair and believed it would fail to solve the country's ongoing crises.

The survey gathered responses from 3,663 participants – 85 percent currently residing in Myanmar and 15 percent Myanmar citizens living abroad.

Respondents represented 271 townships across the country, with the highest expected participation recorded in Sagaing Region at 29 percent and Yangon Region at 16 percent. The lowest participation rates were in Rakhine State and Nay Pyi Taw.

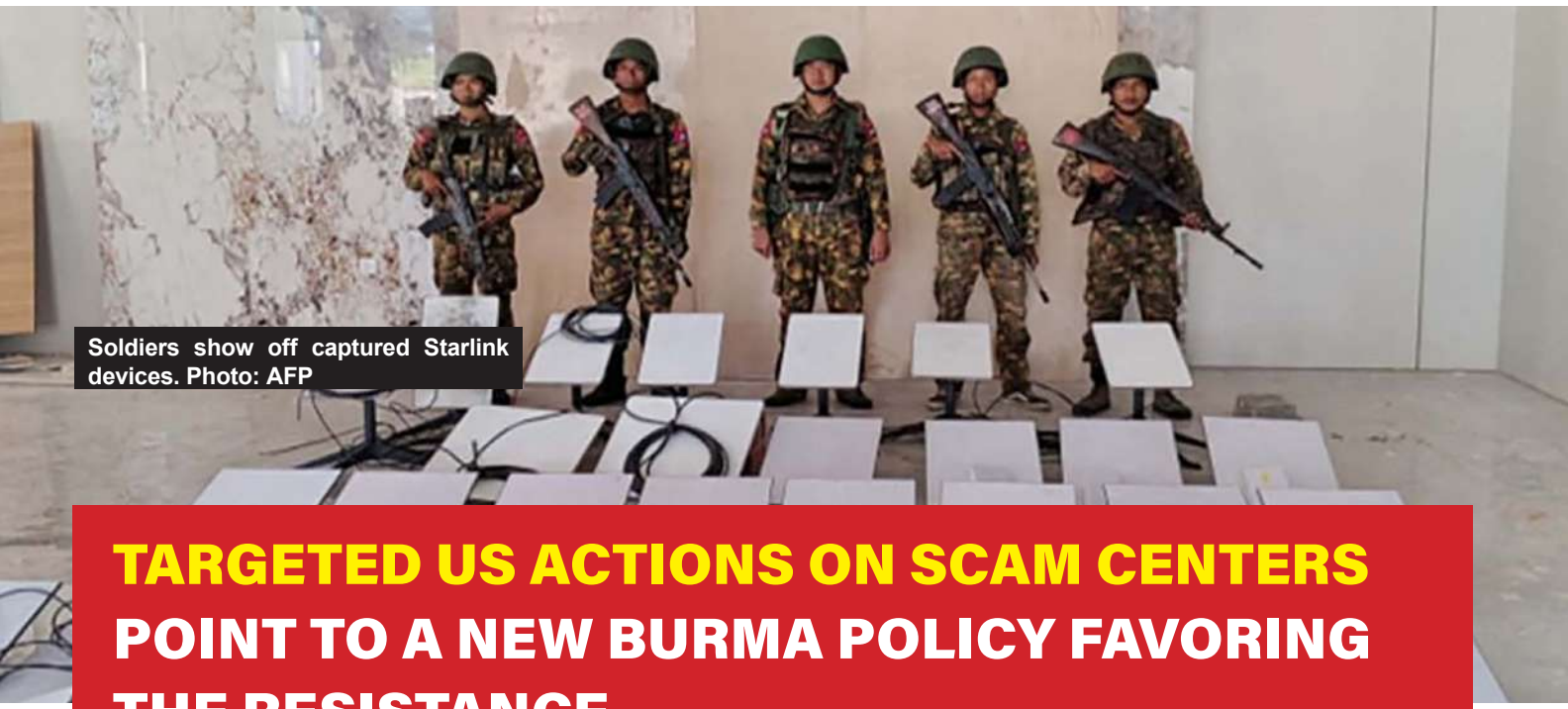
According to the findings, 51 percent of respondents lived in urban areas, while 24 percent

were migrants. Seventy percent were under the age of 45, and 6 percent were over 60. The gender distribution included 50 percent male, 48 percent female, and 2 percent who identified as LGBTQI+ or preferred not to disclose their gender.

The poll was conducted from 27 October to 5 November by the Platform for People Movement's independent research team, using both online surveys and fieldwork carried out by trusted local volunteers.

Researchers said the survey was independently organized by Myanmar citizens inside and outside the country, with no affiliation to any political organization, armed group, or government. Its goal was to assess public opinion and attitudes toward the planned military commission election in December.

According to the organizers, no personal data was collected, and all responses were handled confidentially.



Soldiers show off captured Starlink devices. Photo: AFP

TARGETED US ACTIONS ON SCAM CENTERS POINT TO A NEW BURMA POLICY FAVORING THE RESISTANCE

ANTONIO GRACEFFO

The targeted nature of U.S. sanctions against the DKBA and BGF signals that the Trump administration has a more nuanced understanding of the Burma (Myanmar) war, possibly opening the way for a policy of engaging EAOs individually.

The U.S. Treasury Department imposed sanctions on the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army and four of its senior leaders, along with the companies Trans Asia and Troth Star, for supporting cyber scam centers targeting Americans. Treasury officials said criminal networks operating from Burma are stealing billions of dollars from Americans through large-scale online investment schemes. These networks rely on trafficked workers who are coerced into targeting Americans through messaging apps and fake investment platforms designed to appear legitimate, with Americans losing an estimated ten billion dollars per year.

Treasury investigators traced stolen funds to Tai Chang, a major scam compound near Myawaddy in Karen State. The compound sits inside DKBA-controlled territory and is overseen by Brigadier General Sai Kyaw Hla. U.S. officials say Tai Chang is one of several scam centers developed through cooperation between DKBA leaders and Trans Asia, a Thailand-based company that acts as a front for China-linked transnational criminal organizations. Trans Asia and Troth Star have also been tied to other scam facilities, including the Huanya compound and the notorious KK Park complex, both of which have repeatedly targeted Americans.

The United States sanctioned several senior figures of the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army, also known as the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army, DKBA Brigade 5, the Kaloh Htoo Baw Armed Group, the Karen Klo Htoo Baw Organization, the Klo Htoo Baw Battalion, DKBA 5, or KKO, for their roles in these operations. Those sanctioned include Saw Steel, the group's Commander-in-Chief; Saw Sein Win, its Adjutant General; Saw San Aung, its Chief of Staff; and Brigadier General Sai Kyaw Hla, a senior leader who controls the Tai Chang scam compound. Treasury also sanctioned Chamu Sawang of Trans Asia International Holding Group Thailand Company Limited, which finances DKBA-linked scam centers. The DKBA, headquartered in Sone See Myaing Village near Myawaddy, was also designated for its involvement in human trafficking, cyber fraud, and destabilizing activities inside Burma.

The sanctions were announced alongside the creation of the Scam Center Strike Force, a joint effort led by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia with the Justice Department, the FBI, and the Secret Service. The Strike Force is investigating scam compounds across Burma, Cambodia, and Laos, focusing on key leaders and seizing infrastructure used to defraud Americans. U.S. Attorney Jeanine Pirro described it as a coordinated campaign to dismantle Southeast Asian cryptocurrency fraud networks run by Chinese transnational criminal organizations. The operation also involves the DOJ Criminal Division,

the State Department, Treasury's OFAC, and the Department of Commerce. Its mission includes pursuing Chinese organized crime affiliates in Cambodia, Laos, and Burma, seizing U.S.-based infrastructure used in the scams, and partnering with American companies to block access to U.S. systems.

Officials said the Strike Force has already seized more than four hundred million dollars in cryptocurrency tied to these operations, with forfeiture actions underway for another eighty million. The team has disrupted scam centers in Burma by seizing websites and seeking warrants for satellite terminals used to run the compounds. Treasury designated the DKBA and related entities as sanctions targets for their involvement.

The Strike Force is also assisting regional partners by supporting prosecutions linked to scam centers in Bali and embedding FBI agents with Thai police working against compounds such as KK Park in Burma. Officials said they will continue to use every available tool to disrupt these networks, recover stolen funds, and educate Americans on how to recognize and avoid the scams.

Since returning to office, President Trump has expressed interest in possibly purchasing rare earth minerals from the Kachin Independence Army directly, bypassing the junta. In August he imposed a 40 percent tariff on Burma exports to reduce the junta's income, and now these targeted sanctions against a specific EAO that is on the junta's side all suggest that the Trump administration is taking a more critical approach toward Burma and will hopefully continue to do so.

Based on recent actions and the broader context of U.S.-Burma policy, Burma's pro-democracy forces might see the DKBA sanctions on Border Guard Forces and junta proxies, as well as the scam center crackdowns, as hopeful signs. The DKBA and BGF sanctions target an armed group supporting the military junta, and the revenue generated by scam center workers funds organized crime and enables the DKBA and BGF to finance their activities. This represents the United States targeting groups that sustain the junta's war effort.

This benefits pro-democracy groups because the DKBA is a junta-aligned militia, not a resistance EAO. Cutting off their scam revenue weakens their ability to fight against resistance forces, and it demonstrates U.S. willingness to target the junta's proxy forces and financial networks. U.S. action also suggests that

the government understands the scam economy is separate from the pro-democracy resistance.

Another promising sign is that the Interagency Strike Force signals sustained commitment. Sanctions are pieces of paper signed in Washington that may have little meaning on the battlefield, but the strike force appears to involve the FBI and other U.S. agencies working in the region, actively working against the junta's interests on an ongoing basis.

In recent weeks, the Starlink situation provided an example of how careful analysis by the U.S. government has produced better outcomes for pro-democracy forces. After the junta's raid on KK Park in October 2025, where soldiers discovered 30 Starlink devices, the U.S. Congress Joint Economic Committee opened an investigation into Starlink's alleged involvement in scam centers. Some Democrats in Congress pushed Elon Musk to shut down Starlink in Burma entirely. That initial pressure risked a blanket shutdown, which would have harmed legitimate users, including aid organizations, civilians, and pro-democracy forces.

According to the Myanmar Internet Project, about 13.3 million people, roughly 28 percent of the population, have no access to conventional internet services and rely on Starlink. For these users, Starlink is essential for communication, education, humanitarian work, and economic activity. Instead of a blanket shutdown, SpaceX announced it had identified and disabled more than 2,500 Starlink devices located near suspected scam centers in Burma while maintaining service for legitimate users.

These developments suggest the U.S. government has the ability to distinguish between junta-aligned EAOs and resistance EAOs, understand the armed-group landscape, and potentially open pathways for direct engagement with resistance forces and their civilian governments. The U.S. Strike Force represents interagency coordination, bringing together law enforcement, intelligence, diplomatic, and financial tools in a way that could be applied more broadly. There is also bipartisan potential, since combating transnational crime appeals to both the United States and regional partners across Southeast Asia, opening the door for a coordinated international effort to support the Burma resistance.

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



US ANNOUNCES SANCTIONS AGAINST MYANMAR'S DKBA OVER CYBER SCAM OPERATIONS

JAMES SHWE

The U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) has announced sanctions on 12 November against the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA), a Burmese armed group, for its involvement in cyber scam operations that target Americans. The sanctions also extend to four of the group's senior leaders: Sai Kyaw Hla, Saw Steel, Saw Sein Win, and Saw San Aung.

Two companies, Trans Asia International Holding Group Thailand Company Limited and Troth Star Company Limited, along with Thai national Chamu Sawang, were also designated for their connections to Chinese organized crime and for collaborating with the DKBA to establish these scam centers.

These criminal networks are responsible for stealing billions of dollars from Americans and other nationals through fraudulent investment schemes and are involved in human trafficking, with proceeds funding the DKBA's activities and contributing to the civil war in Burma.

In conjunction with these sanctions, the U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia, along with the Department of Justice, FBI, and Secret Service, has established a Scam Center Strike Force. This new initiative will focus on investigating, disrupting, and prosecuting the most egregious scam centers and their leaders operating in Southeast Asia, particularly in Burma, Cambodia, and Laos.

The sanctions block all property and interests in property of the designated individuals and entities that are within the United States or controlled by U.S. persons.

These actions are part of a broader U.S. government effort to combat transnational criminal organizations and protect American citizens from large-scale cyber scams originating from Southeast Asia.



She Zhijiang. Photo: AFP

ALLEGED CHINESE SCAM KINGPIN EXTRADITED FROM THAILAND: POLICE

An alleged Chinese racketeer linked to a hugely lucrative scam hub in Myanmar was extradited from Thailand to China on 12 November, a police official in Bangkok told AFP.

She Zhijiang had been in Thai custody since 2022 after spending more than a decade on the run from Chinese authorities, accused of ties to the Myanmar gambling and fraud hub Shwe Kokko.

A Thai appeals court upheld China's extradition request this week for the 43-year-old, who also holds Cambodian nationality, after lengthy legal wrangling.

He was flown out of Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi Airport around 4:30 pm (0930 GMT), the police official said.

The businessman was escorted from the airport's police station with his hands braced behind his back by armed and masked Thai police, an uncommon practice for local officers.

An Interpol red notice published in May 2021 and obtained by AFP said She faced criminal charges in China related to running online gambling and fraud operations.

She and his company Yatai have already been hit with sanctions by Britain and the United States.

Washington says he transformed a village on the Myanmar-Thai border into Shwe Kokko -- "a resort city custom built for gambling, drug trafficking, prostitution, and scams targeting people around the world".

The gleaming city is one of the most infamous of the hubs thriving in Myanmar's border regions, which

have devolved into hives of black market activity since a civil war consumed the country in 2021.

The hubs gained international notoriety for housing internet fraud factories where workers -- some of them trafficked -- rob foreigners with romance and business cons worth billions of dollars annually.

In pleas written from a Bangkok prison and seen by AFP, She denied all allegations of criminality and insisted his company was simply an "urban developer".

His attorney Daniel Arshack has told AFP the allegations against She were "fabricated" and, once in China, "it is expected that he will be deprived of due process, tortured, and ultimately disappeared".

She's Thai lawyer Sunya Eadjongdee declined to comment on Wednesday, saying the extradition was a confidential matter.

Scam victims in Southeast and East Asia alone were conned out of up to \$37 billion in 2023, according to a UN report, which said global losses were likely "much larger".

Beijing has led an international pressure campaign to crack down on the scam hubs, irked at its citizens being lured to work in the industry and targeting other Chinese with their cons.

China sentenced five people to death this month for their involvement in a violent criminal gang with fraud operations in Myanmar's Kokang region.

AFP



Photo: AFP

IMAGES SHOW MYANMAR SCAM HUB LARGELY STANDING DESPITE CRACKDOWN

A declared military crackdown has left some destruction at a major scam compound in Myanmar, satellite images analysed by AFP show, but most buildings are still standing in pictures taken up to 9 November.

One expert said the images were evidence that military raids were limited in order to preserve the hugely profitable illicit industry, but highly publicised to imply meaningful action had been taken.

AFP analysis of satellite images of KK Park, one of the highest-profile scam centres in war-torn Myanmar's loosely governed border regions, showed recent damage to around 100 buildings.

That amounted to about a quarter of the complex.

An AFP investigation in October revealed construction at KK Park had continued apace following another much-publicised crackdown earlier this year, suggesting the black market business was still booming.

The military subsequently announced raids, with state newspaper The Global New Light of Myanmar saying Sunday: "Currently, all the buildings are being demolished."

The satellite images from Planet Labs PBC were taken between October 30 and Sunday, and showed 22 buildings destroyed and some 80 damaged or probably damaged.

There did not appear to be destruction in the complex's central section, which has been extensively developed in recent months.

Some areas, obscured by cloud cover, could not be analysed and satellite imagery can provide only limited

insight to the extent of the destruction. AFP was not able to verify the situation directly on the ground.

Residents near KK Park and have reported hearing intermittent explosions since the latest raids were announced, and state TV this weekend showed buildings being detonated and excavators demolishing structures.

But Jason Tower, senior expert at the Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, told AFP the military was conducting a "PR stunt in KK Park" -- creating the illusion of a crackdown.

The military has ruled Myanmar since snatching power in a 2021 coup that sparked civil war, and has been accused of mustering the support of powerful militias by allowing them to profit from the scam hubs.

The junta's key international backer China has also lobbied it with pressure to shut them down, analysts say, requiring a balancing act to keep both crucial allies on side.

Many scam hub workers are willing employees, while others claim they were trafficked by criminal syndicates who target cons at foreigners ranging from gullible bank managers to widowed housewives.

While the current upheaval caused around 1,500 workers to flee over the border to Thailand, experts say many more likely remained behind and went to work at other nearby scam hubs.

"The Myanmar military's claims that it has dismantled scam syndicates are entirely false," Tower said.

AFP



STARLINK, UTILISED BY MYANMAR SCAM CENTRES, SEES USAGE FALL NATIONWIDE

Elon Musk's Starlink, whose internet services have been utilised by Myanmar scam centres, has seen its use across the country plummet since the end of September, according to estimates from regional internet registry Apnic.

An AFP investigation recently revealed the presence of the US company's receivers on several of the centres.

Up to 14 percent of Myanmar's Internet users connected using Starlink this summer, making it the most popular provider, but that share fell to less than 7 percent by November 10, according to Apnic.

Drone footage captured as part of an AFP investigation published in mid-October revealed long rows of Starlink satellite antennas on the rooftops of the KK Park scam centre, on the border with Thailand.

Shortly afterwards, Starlink's parent company SpaceX announced it had deactivated more than 2,500 of its internet receivers "in the vicinity of suspected 'scam centres'" in Myanmar.

Starlink has also been the subject of a US Congressional investigation since late July over its role in providing internet access to the centres, which have victims worldwide.

The company became the country's most popular

Internet service provider for the first time on June 26, 2025, two months after its initial listing with Apnic.

The satellite internet service held this top position until the end of September, except for a few days, but dropped to fourth on November 9.

Most of the scam centres, which tend to involve romance and commercial fraud, are controlled by Chinese criminal groups in collusion with Myanmar militias.

Since mid-October, the military junta has conducted high-profile raids on KK Park.

An analysis of satellite images by AFP this week revealed damage, even demolition, to around 100 buildings.

But three-quarters of the surface of the complex -- as seen from above -- appeared to be intact, as of Sunday.

Experts say that the Myanmar junta turns a blind eye to the scam networks. In return, its militia allies control border areas on its behalf.

The country has been ravaged by civil war since the February 2021 coup.

AFP



OUR REVOLUTION'S MESSAGE IS SIMPLE: THE MYANMAR JUNTA MUST GO

JAMES SHWE

Myanmar junta leader Min Aung Hlaing.
Photo: AFP

Our struggle for a free Myanmar is being deliberately complicated. The junta's propaganda is expected, but a more insidious challenge is the discordant chorus of voices abroad that distorts our mission. From single-issue lobbyists demanding the spotlight for the for-profit advocates cloaked in ethnic, religious or humanitarian benevolence, a narrative of endless, intractable division is being spun. When other people with agendas join this chorus, they amplify a message that benefits only one group: the crony-funded lobbyists in Washington and other capitals who seek to protect the military status quo. It is no coincidence that all these complicated narratives lead to the same outcome - paralysis.

We must counter this with a simple, powerful truth. First, the will of our 55 million people is the only mandate that matters. The vast majority of us are united in our demand for a federal democracy or confederation, and we are finished with military rule.

Second, our primary request to the international community remains direct: help us remove the military junta. While others demand impossible preconditions and a perfect consensus - delay tactics that serve the

junta and its backers - our ask is clear. Trust us, the people of Myanmar, to build our own future once the boot is off our necks.

The reality on the ground tells a different story than the one spun by special interests. The spirit of cooperation among our people is stronger now than at any point in the last seventy years. This unity is our greatest weapon, and it directly refutes the manufactured narrative of a hopelessly divided nation.

This is why all international support must be strategic and not fall into the traps set by those who profit from division. We call on donors to tie all humanitarian assistance directly to initiatives that strengthen our revolutionary unity. Aid must empower our cooperation, not inadvertently fuel the agendas of those who wish to see us fail.

Let us reject the self-serving, complex narratives pushed by this defacto coalition of special interests - whether they are ethnic extremists, religious profiteers, or the junta's paid proxies. Our path is clear. Our message is simple: the military must go. The people of Myanmar will handle the rest.



Photo: Supplied

FIVE DISPLACED CIVILIANS KILLED IN MYANMAR JUNTA AIRSTRIKE ON SCHOOL IN SINGU TOWNSHIP

A military junta fighter jet bombed a school sheltering displaced civilians in Mar Lae village, Singu Township, Mandalay Region, killing five people and injuring five others, the People's Defence Force of Pyin Oo Lwin District said on 13 November.

The airstrike took place at around 5 pm on 12 November, when a jet that took off from Tada-U airbase dropped bombs directly on the school, the group said.

The explosions killed five displaced civilians both men and women and destroyed three buildings, including the school itself, according to local residents.

"They were individuals fleeing from Madaya Township. Both men and women are among the dead," a local resident said.

Residents said many civilians from Madaya Township have sought refuge in Singu Township as junta forces continue their offensives and intense clashes with revolutionary groups.

On 7 November, junta aircraft also bombed Nyaung Kone village and a school in Shwe Pyi village in Singu Township, killing four displaced civilians who had fled from Madaya Township.



Mizoram. Photo: Supplied

SEVEN DEAD AS CHOLERA OUTBREAK SPREADS AMONG MYANMAR IDPS AND LOCALS IN MIZORAM

Seven people, including Myanmar internally displaced persons (IDPs) and local residents, have died following a cholera outbreak in Mizoram State along the India–Myanmar border, according to local youth organization officials.

The infections have been reported in Kakhi, Tuidan, Lawngmasu, and Lonedar villages in Shaha District, where many IDPs from Paletwa Township, Chin State, are sheltering.

Between 4 and 12 November, seven people died – two Myanmar IDPs, identified as U Lawm Pa (in his 70s) and U Khai Lawk (48), along with three local residents from Hakhi village, one person from Lawngmasu village, and one from Lonedar village.

“Five people have died in our village, and about 40 people are infected. The Lawngtlai authorities have issued an order prohibiting entry and exit to the villages in the affected area,” said Larr Hlaw Mar, president of the Youth of Lai Association (YLA) in Hakhi village, speaking to Mizzima on 13 November.

He said the outbreak began around 4 November but was initially underestimated. The infection rate began to spread rapidly starting from 8 November.

Symptoms among the infected include diarrhoea, dysentery, vomiting, and a subsequent decline in immune resistance, he added.

Medical officials from Lawngtlai District are visiting the affected villages to provide treatment and investigate the cause of the outbreak, according to All India Radio (Aizawl) on 13 November. Local authorities have urged residents to drink clean water, maintain hygiene, and follow medical advice.

Officials are conducting tests, including blood sampling, to determine the source of the outbreak, with results expected soon, according to the YLA.

YLA President Larr Hlaw Mar also expressed concern over misleading media reports claiming the entire village had been infected or that daily deaths were occurring, urging journalists to verify facts with local authorities.

Hakhi village, home to about 250 households and more than 800 residents, includes both IDPs from Paletwa Township and local inhabitants.

Local sources said the cholera outbreak has also spread to parts of Myanmar’s Paletwa Township, including Shinletwa sub-township, affecting residents and traders. The Arakan Public Health Department, in cooperation with NGOs and civil society organizations, is implementing control and prevention measures.

About 300 people have reportedly been infected in total, with around 30 receiving inpatient treatment and currently recovering, according to local health sources.

THAILAND HANDS OVER CRIME BOSS BUT MYANMAR FRAUD HUBS REMAIN ACTIVE

A high-profile court ruling in Thailand saw Chinese criminal suspect She Zhijiang extradited to China for alleged massive online-gambling and scam operations linked to Myanmar's border region. While this might be seen as a positive step, many scam centres in Myanmar are still very much active, especially near the Thai border.

In places like Shwe Kokko, these centres are thriving, employing thousands of workers, some of whom are believed to be trafficked. The centres are accused of conducting various scams, including romance, investment, and gambling schemes designed to defraud victims abroad.

In recent weeks, Myanmar's military claimed to have carried out a significant raid where over 2,000 people were arrested and 30 satellite internet units seized from one of these locations.

On social media, many users have noted the irony of the situation. They note that even though the extradition of She Zhijiang is making headlines worldwide, for many in Myanmar, the reality is quite different.

Comments are posted noting the hypocrisy. One poster said, "It's a staged drama. It's their man 'Saw Chit Thu' running the business," reflect common sentiments.

And in Facebook, for example, one user wrote, "They say there are no more scams in Shwe Kokko, but it they have established huge scam centres across Myanmar."

Although online sentiments among Myanmar social media users is sceptical, political experts believe this extradition could represent a shift towards stronger regional action against transnational crime networks.



Photo: AFP

UN HIGHLIGHTS ABUSES AGAINST PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES BY MYANMAR'S JUNTA IN NEW REPORT

The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar issued a new report on 13 November calling attention to the difficulties faced by persons with disabilities in Myanmar as a result of the junta's ongoing acts of violence and repression.

The text of the press release accompanying the report is as follows.

Junta forces have executed, tortured and sexually assaulted persons with disabilities while their relentless repression and violence are trapping many in a daily fight for survival according to a new report issued today by Tom Andrews, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar.

"Dozens of persons with disabilities have been burned alive in their own homes as junta forces carried out campaigns of mass arson throughout the country," Andrews said. "Survivors of the junta's attacks are often displaced and severed from their support networks and struggle to survive in hostile, inaccessible environments. Many face high barriers in accessing life-saving humanitarian aid."

The Hidden Crisis: Disability Rights in Post-Coup Myanmar reveals how the 2021 military coup has devastated the lives of persons with disabilities in Myanmar, compounding historical stigma and discrimination. The new report describes the immense challenges facing persons with disabilities in Myanmar, including deep-rooted religious and cultural beliefs that perpetuate their isolation and disenfranchisement. It also spotlights the remarkable efforts of persons with disabilities and their organisations to address these

conditions and support those caught in a vicious cycle of repression and discrimination.

"The primary drivers of exclusion for persons with disabilities are not their impairments but the social, cultural, political, and physical barriers pervasive throughout Myanmar society," Andrews said. "The widespread belief that impairments result from misdeeds in a past life not only fuels discrimination but is also internalised by persons with disabilities, leading many to withdraw from community life out of shame and an erosion of personal dignity."

Early progress towards protecting the rights of persons with disabilities was swiftly reversed following the coup. Reform efforts came to a halt as the junta cracked down on civil society, driving many disability rights advocates into exile. Even so, a remarkable network of organisations, many led by persons with disabilities, continue to work against all odds to provide essential services and defend the rights of persons with disabilities.

"As a distracted world fixes its attention on other crises and conflicts, the situation of persons with disabilities in Myanmar has truly become a hidden crisis within a forgotten humanitarian catastrophe," the Special Rapporteur said. "It is critical that the world pay attention."

The expert urged the international community to deny the military junta the means to continue its violence and partner with persons with disabilities to save lives and break the barriers of repression and discrimination.



AAMIJ RELEASES STATEMENT CONDEMNING MYANMAR JUNTA LAWSUIT

On 12 November, the Assistance Association for Myanmar-based Independent Journalists (AAMIJ) released a statement condemning the lawsuit filed against its news agency by the military junta. They characterized the lawsuit as a violation of press freedom and the public's right to access information.

AAMIJ News Agency firmly issues the following statement regarding the lawsuit filed against it by the military junta:

The lawsuit will not deter AAMIJ News Media from exposing human rights violations. In line with AAMIJ News Agency's core policy, which is "No human rights violations is acceptable," the agency will remain steadfast in its commitment to continuously expose and report on human rights violations by mitigate media bias on plural discourse.

The current case where AAMIJ News Media is being sued stems from an investigation and factual

reporting that revealed an election candidate, who should be speaking on behalf of the public, was, in fact, a drug distributor.

AAMIJ News Media firmly views that being sued for exposing the truth that the public needs to know is a direct violation of the fundamental principles of democracy by the military.

Therefore, regardless of any lawsuits or threats, AAMIJ News Media explicitly declares that it will continue to expose and report on human rights violations to ensure the public is informed and to achieve justice.

Furthermore, AAMIJ News Media additionally affirms its commitment to continue striving to the best of its ability, in the face of any threat, to restore Myanmar to the democratic path and bring about a complete end to the military dictatorship.



Captured soldiers. Photo: Arakan Army

AT LEAST 71 MYANMAR JUNTA SOLDIERS SURRENDER OR CAPTURED AMID CLASHES WITH ARAKAN ARMY

At least 71 Myanmar junta soldiers have surrendered or been captured during ongoing clashes with the Arakan Army (AA), the ethnic armed group announced on 11 November.

Fighting has been intensifying across several fronts, including the Laylar Mountain area near Naungkyo village in Padaung Township, Bago Region; around the Defence Equipment Manufacturing Factory 16; Natyaykan strategic hill along the Ann-Padan highway on the Magway-Rakhine border; near Thabaungkalay village in Thabaung Township; and around Set Set Yo and Chin Le villages in Lemyethna Township, Ayeyarwady Region.

The AA said that many newly recruited junta soldiers were unwilling to fight and fled the battlefield daily, with some surrendering to AA forces and others being captured.

Between 8 and 10 November, a total of 31 military personnel either surrendered or were captured,

including Corporal Myo Min Tun from the Field Medical Battalion 9 based in Kholan, 20 soldiers from clashes near Defence Equipment Manufacturing Factory 16, and 10 from fighting around Laylar Mountain, according to the AA statement.

In addition, more than 40 junta soldiers were either captured or defected between 3 October and 7 November during fighting near Thabaungkalay village in Thabaung Township and in the Set Set Yo and Chin Le areas of Lemyethna Township, the group said.

Nearly all of those who surrendered were reportedly forcibly conscripted by the junta in 2025, including minors and high school students.

The Arakan Army said that surrendered soldiers are being held in accordance with the Prisoner of War Law and reiterated that newly conscripted junta troops can safely surrender on any frontline by raising a white flag and contacting AA units.



Military conscripts. Photo: Supplied

MYANMAR JUNTA FORCES ABDUCT YOUTH FOR FORCED CONSCRIPTION IN PATHEIN TOWNSHIP

Myanmar junta authorities have been entering homes and abducting young people for forced military service in Pathein Township, Ayeyarwady Region, according to local residents.

On 1 July, junta forces reportedly arrested a 32-year-old man from Ward 10 and another young person from Ward 6 in Pathein Township, taking them from their homes. Residents said the arrests were carried out by combined teams of junta troops, police, and ward or village administrators.

"This month, young people have been going around in fear of being seized from their homes. The Township Military Service Team is summoning them. The military and police are keeping watch over the youth at night. They are unfairly seizing people. We haven't heard of any wealthy people's sons being called for military service," a Pathein resident told Mizzima.

Ward and village administrators in Pathein have reportedly been going door-to-door to collect the names of those eligible for conscription and forcing

residents to fill out military service forms. Locals said that even 18-year-old students are being required to complete the forms.

Residents also reported that the Township Military Service Team has threatened families with severe consequences if anyone avoids conscription. Those who evade service reportedly risk having a family member conscripted in their place, their homes sealed and confiscated, and legal action taken against them.

"The Township Military Service Team is saying that if the person called up for service runs away, their parents will have to go as a substitute. If the parents also run away, the house will be sealed and confiscated, and they will be sued," said a resident from a village in Pathein Township.

In the Ayeyarwady Region, clashes between the combined forces of the Arakan Army (AA) and junta troops have continued since early 2025 in Pathein, Thabaung, Yekyi, Laymyethna, and Ingapu townships.



MYANMAR JUNTA OFFENSIVE BURNS 12 VILLAGES, DISPLACES THOUSANDS IN WETLET TOWNSHIP

Myanmar junta troops have launched a large-scale offensive in Wetlet Township, Sagaing Region, looting property, torching homes, and displacing thousands of residents, according to the Wetlet Township People's Strike Steering Committee.

Up to 12 villages have been destroyed since the offensive began, the committee said.

Junta forces have reportedly been raiding and setting fire to villages almost daily since 1 November. This follows the arrival at Ywar Thar Gyi village of reinforcements from Sagaing Region-based Light Infantry Division 33.

An official from the Wetlet Township People's Strike Steering Committee said junta forces burned Hla Taw village in the western part of Wetlet Township from the morning of 11 November until the morning of 12 November.

"At around 10 am on 11 November, they began burning houses in two different locations. This morning, they have begun burning once more. We can't determine

the complete amount of the damage because the area hasn't been cleared yet," the official said.

The junta reportedly deployed three separate military columns in Wetlet Township, with the columns torching homes during raids on multiple villages.

According to the committee, the 12 villages already destroyed include Hla Taw, Man Kyi Tong, Myin Taw, Htone Bo, Ywar Taw Kone, Ta Mar Kone, Khaw Taw Tada U, Sai Naing Lay, Muu Gyi, Shwe Kyin, and Lein Pin.

"During their raids on the villages, they also destroyed civilian property. So far, we have only been able to confirm a portion of the number of burned houses," the official added.

Local organizations said the junta's offensive has forced tens of thousands of residents from more than 20 villages in the western part of Wetlet Township to flee their homes. The displaced people are reportedly in urgent need of food and medical supplies.



MYANMAR'S INTERNET FREEDOM DECLINES FURTHER AS JUNTA EXPANDS DIGITAL REPRESSION - REPORT

Myanmar continues to be one of the world's most repressive environments for internet freedom in 2025, according to the latest Freedom on the Net 2025 report released by Freedom House in partnership with Human Rights Myanmar.

Myanmar earned a score of just 9 out of 100 in this year's report. Of note is the junta's adoption of advanced surveillance tools and sweeping new cyber regulations has pushed the country "from basic to advanced digital repression."

The findings portray an environment in which the junta continues to impose localized internet shutdowns, censor online platforms, and arrest users for digital expression.

Nationwide internet disruptions caused by the ongoing armed conflict were compounded by the March 2025 devastating earthquake in Mandalay which severely damaged telecommunications infrastructure.

Myanmar's junta, according to the report, also intensified restrictions on communication tools. In mid-2024, the regime blocked Signal and major virtual private networks (VPNs) – services widely used to

bypass censorship and protect user privacy. By 2024, more than a dozen telecom and internet companies had installed censorship and surveillance systems at the military's direction.

The report highlights the January 2025 Cybersecurity Law as a key driver of deteriorating conditions. The law codifies broad censorship mandates, imposes strict data-retention requirements, and restricts VPN operations, further undermining privacy and freedom of expression.

Human rights violations linked to online activity also increased. In one cited case, courts handed down harsh sentences to journalists, including 10 and five-year prison terms for reporters Htet Aung and Than Htike Myint. This is seen as part of a broader pattern of detentions and disappearances targeting digital dissent.

The internet freedom report describes Myanmar's online environment as "one of the worst in the world." Shaped by entrenched military control over infrastructure, regulation, media, and the information landscape, there seems little prospect for short-term improvement amid the ongoing civil conflict.



OVER 5,000 RESIDENTS FLEE AS MYANMAR JUNTA TROOPS ADVANCE ON KHIN-U TOWNSHIP BORDER VILLAGES

More than 5,000 residents from over 10 villages along the border of Khin-U and Kanbalu townships in Sagaing Region have fled their homes as junta forces advance with three separate military columns, according to the Khin-U Township People's Defence Force (PDF).

The Khin-U Township True News Information Team said the mass displacement began on 11 November following the simultaneous advance of a column of over 100 infantry troops entering from Kanbalu Township and another column of around 80 troops that crossed the Mu River from Ye-U town in the morning and afternoon.

Ko Jo Koe, a member of the Khin-U Township Sector 3 PDF, said a junta column that left its base in Wetoe village, Kanbalu Township, stayed overnight in Nga Yone Gyi village on the evening of 11 November and remained there until the afternoon of 12 November. Another column that departed from Ka Boe Ye Man school in Kanbalu Township has also reached Khin-U Township, he added.

"We are currently rescuing and relocating the people who are caught between the three columns to safe zones. Last night, we were carrying out emergency

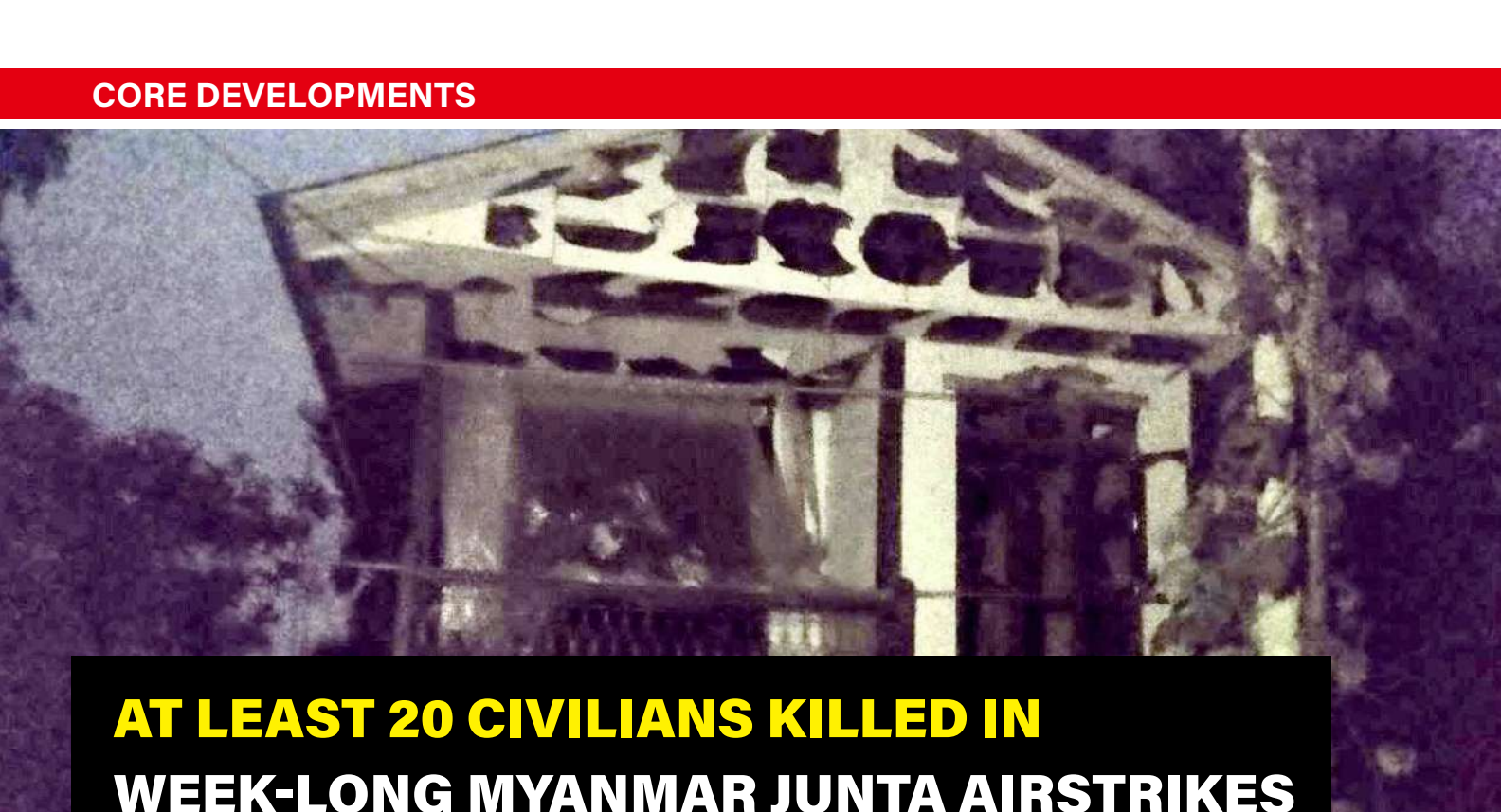
rescue operations until very late at night," Ko Jo Koe said this afternoon.

Residents from several villages along the Khin-U-Kanbalu border including Kyauk Tai, Kyi Su, Mone Hla, Thar Wa Hti, Myin Kya, Thayet Taw, Kin Pyit, Kyun Taw Lay (U Yin), Kyun Taw Gyi, Man Gyi Oak, Yar Taw, Myin Daung, Thayet Pin Su, and Thet Thar Pan Daung, are reportedly fleeing the area.

According to Ko Jo Koe, junta columns had not operated in Khin-U Township for some time, but the current offensive began on 11 November.

"I suspect that this is because of a supply shortage in Pyin Htaung village, which is a stronghold of the Pyu Hsaw Htee (a pro-military militia) on the western side of Khin-U. They are either going to resupply them or evacuate the Pyu members there," he said.

Meanwhile, junta forces conducted airstrikes on Pauk Ai village on the eastern side of Khin-U Township on the evening of 10 November and again on the morning of 11 November, killing one woman and injuring two others, according to the Khin-U Township True News Information Team.



AT LEAST 20 CIVILIANS KILLED IN WEEK-LONG MYANMAR JUNTA AIRSTRIKES ACROSS RAKHINE STATE

At least 20 civilians have been killed and dozens more injured following a week of airstrikes carried out by the Myanmar junta on towns under the control of the Arakan Army (AA) in Rakhine State, according to local sources.

The air raids, which began in the first week of November, have resulted in nearly 30 deaths in recent days, said U Myat Tun, director of the Rakhine Human Rights Defenders Association.

"The military junta has been conducting bombings since 7 November, the birthday of General Twan Mrat Naing, Commander-in-Chief of the AA, and continued through to yesterday," U Myat Tun told Mizzima.

"On 8 November, the junta bombed schools in Pauktaw and Ponnagyun towns, as well as the Kontaung and Yotaroke areas near Ponnagyun and Rathedaung. Prior to this, Panilar village was also bombed. If we estimate the total number of casualties, it could be between 20 to 30," he added. Among the victims were children, students, and teachers.

A local source reported that Ponnagyun Township had been hit hardest.

"Ponnagyun was bombed by jet fighters, and there were also attacks by heavy artillery from the Sittwe side. Since the bombing of Panilar village, around 23 people have been killed, and Ponnagyun has been attacked multiple times," local source said.

The death toll in Ponnagyun was reportedly higher compared to other areas, with at least three airstrikes occurring between 1 and 8 November.

Around 2 pm on 8 November, the military bombed Kyauk Than Chay village in Ponnagyun Township and a school in Pauktaw Township, killing five people, according to local reports.

Additionally, five civilians were killed in separate bombings in Ponnagyun and Minbya townships on 6 and 7 November.

The Arakan Army, which currently controls around 15 towns, continues to engage in fierce fighting with junta forces, particularly in areas along the Rakhine-mainland border. Clashes between the two sides remain ongoing.

FOUR SOLDIERS KILLED IN LANDMINE ATTACK ON MYANMAR JUNTA CONVOY IN MANDALAY REGION

A landmine attack on a Myanmar junta convoy near East Myo Thar village in Ngazun Township, Myingyan District, Mandalay Region, killed four soldiers and injured two others, a spokesperson for the Special Task Force Ngazun (S.T.F.N.) said.

The attack took place at around 5:20 am on 10 November along the Myo Thar Industrial Zone road. The convoy, comprising two vehicles and about 100 infantrymen, was targeted with six cluster landmines, according to the S.T.F.N.

"They came from the Myo Thar police station to attack the villages to the west. We had received the information the day before, so we intercepted them," said the S.T.F.N. spokesperson.

He said four soldiers were killed instantly, and fighting continued for about 20 minutes following the blast.

Mizzima has not been able to independently verify the reported casualties.

After the attack, the same military column reportedly entered Kywe Zein village, looting residents' gold and cash and taking 12 men hostage.

"They were attacked and are finding it difficult to retreat to the town, but there has been no burning of their houses," the spokesperson added.

As the convoy attempted to return to Myo Thar with the hostages, the resistance forces attacked again, using two 40 mm bombs, the statement said.

All S.T.F.N. troops withdrew safely after the assaults, but the 12 hostages remained in military custody as of midday on 11 November.



MYANMAR BORDER TOWN OF MAW TAUNG FALLS TO RESISTANCE FORCES AFTER FOUR DAYS OF FIGHTING

A key trade town on the Thai–Myanmar border was fully seized by resistance forces around noon on 14 November after nearly four days of fighting, according to sources within the Karen National Union (KNU).

Several officers and soldiers from the Military Commission and the Pyu Saw Htee militia surrendered by raising white flags, while at least 20 others fled across the border into Thailand, sources told Mizzima.

“We have captured the town. The joint resistance forces will release a detailed statement,” Comrade Star, commander of the National Unity Government’s Tanintharyi Region Military Command, confirmed to Mizzima.

A resident in Maw Taung said ground clashes had largely died down, although airstrikes were still continuing.

“There’s not much gunfire anymore, but airstrikes are still happening. I heard they are now conducting clearance operations,” the resident said.

Resistance fighters reportedly seized a significant quantity of weapons and ammunition, though the exact amount has not been confirmed.

Fighting first escalated on 11 November between junta troops and the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) alongside allied resistance groups. The capture

of Maw Taung came on the fourth consecutive day of clashes.

Junta forces had launched operations along the Theinkhun–Maw Taung road in Tanintharyi Township, Myeik District, stepping up attacks by firing artillery from their Phaya Kone base and conducting airstrikes with Y-12 aircraft and jet fighters.

By the early hours of 14 November, at least 20 junta personnel had already crossed into Thailand, according to local inquiries. KNU District 4 Secretary Padoh Saw Elna said KNLA joint forces controlled about 80% of the town that morning as they continued clearance operations.

“When fighting breaks out, they panic and run. About 80 per cent is clear now — only small pockets remain. We are clearing the area,” he said.

Local sources said key military installations including the junta’s main base, the police station, and several government offices had been overrun and captured.

KNLA joint forces have also secured the road linking Maw Taung to Tanintharyi town. With the fall of Maw Taung, the entire easternmost border zone of Tanintharyi Region is now effectively under resistance control.

Since fighting began on 11 November, residents have fled toward the Myanmar–Thailand frontier near the Maw Taung–Singkhorn border crossing.

Displaced civilians urgently need food, medicine, shelter materials, blankets, mosquito nets, and repellents. Some refugees are reportedly suffering from diarrhea.

Maw Taung sits opposite Singkhorn town in Thailand’s Prachuap Khiri Khan Province. Its border trade gate, opened in May 2013, had been an active commercial route until recent clashes forced the suspension of trade.

According to KNU territorial designations, Maw Taung lies within Brigade 4 of the Myeik–Dawei District in Tanawthari Township.

Since early 2025, KNLA joint forces under Brigade 4 have captured a series of strategic bases along the Dawei–Htee Khee border route, including the Htee Khee and Htee Hta bases, the Bodhi outpost, the Ngayantni outpost, and the Thuka camp, consolidating their control over key frontier areas.



Photo: Supplied

HSIPAW-LASHIO ROAD CLOSED AS MYANMAR JUNTA AND KOKANG FORCES HEIGHTEN TENSIONS

The main bridge at the exit of Hsipaw town toward Lashio in northern Shan State was closed on the morning of 14 November, halting all travel amid rising tensions between junta troops and the Kokang army (MNDAA), according to local residents.

The sudden closure of the Hsipaw Bridge has left passenger buses, private cars, and cargo trucks stranded both inside and outside the town, residents said.

"Both descent and ascent are closed since this morning. There are checkpoints on both sides of the bridge. The junta troops are present from inside the town up to the bridge. MNDAA is on the eastern side of the bridge, not inside the town," a local resident told Mizzima. "Some drivers couldn't wait and turned back."

After Myanmar junta forces recaptured Hsipaw from the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) on 17 October, authorities had reopened the Hsipaw-Lashio road for travel. Residents said the abrupt shutdown on 14 November raised fears of renewed clashes.

"Lashio seems to see fighting again," a resident in Lashio said.

According to sources close to the MNDAA, junta officers and Kokang representatives held a meeting on 11 November at the Twin Elephants Hotel in Lashio. While the outcome has not been disclosed, the talks reportedly did not go well.

The MNDAA seized Lashio during Operation 1027 Phase 2, but in April Myanmar junta forces re-entered the town following Chinese mediation.

Even so, junta forces have remained confined to Lashio town limits, while the MNDAA continues to hold positions around the outskirts.

The MNDAA is currently observing a ceasefire with the junta under a Chinese-brokered agreement.

However, at the group's weekly (1) cadre graduation ceremony on 25 October, the MNDAA's military chief said the ceasefire was merely a tactical arrangement and not a lasting peace.

Residents said the latest bridge closure underscores the fragility of the situation, with both sides positioned near Hsipaw outskirts and uncertainty growing over possible renewed conflict along the Lashio corridor.



Photo: AFP

JFM AND MEKONG WATCH JOIN JAPANESE ORGANISATIONS IN JOINT LETTER CALLING OUT JCB FOR PARTNERSHIP WITH MYANMAR'S UAB BANK

On 11 November, a press release was issued by Justice For Myanmar (JFM), Mekong Watch and five Japanese organisations condemning Japanese payment company JCB Co. Ltd for its failure to address concerns the grouping raised in a letter of inquiry regarding its relationship with UAB Bank in Myanmar. The group alleges the bank is owned by a crony of the Myanmar junta, linking it to the junta's crimes and exposing JCB to sanctions.

The text of the press release continues below.

The letter was sent jointly by the Myanmar and Japanese organizations on July 17, 2025. It raised urgent human rights concerns over JCB's continued business relationship with UAB, which acts as a local acquirer for JCB cards in Myanmar. To date, JCB has remained silent.

UAB's role in the Myanmar military's indiscriminate airstrikes.

In June 2024, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar named UAB, formerly known as United Amara Bank, as one of the financial institutions used to make payments to companies supplying aviation fuel to the Myanmar military, noting that the junta's "ability to terrorize civilian populations through indiscriminate airstrikes is directly dependent on its ability to access the aviation fuel required to fly its jets and helicopters."

The Special Rapporteur specifically urged financial institutions to freeze existing relationships with UAB.

As the military junta prepares a sham election for December 2025, it has intensified its indiscriminate

airstrikes that have massacred civilians, including children and destroyed villages, schools and hospitals.

UAB's ties to sanctioned IGE Group

UAB is deeply connected to the IGE Group of Companies. The group's core entity, International Group of Entrepreneurs Co. Ltd. (IGE) is a major crony conglomerate sanctioned by the EU in 2022 for its close relationship with top leaders of the Myanmar military and its financial support for the 2017 "clearance operations" in Rakhine State. Myanmar has been brought before the International Court of Justice for violating the Genocide Convention over these operations, which forced over 700,000 people to Bangladesh.

IGE's founder and chair, Ne Aung, who is sanctioned by both the EU and Canada, resigned from UAB's board of directors, just four days after IGE's EU sanctions. According to Myanmar's company registry, a few weeks after EU sanctions, he and his wife transferred their shares in UAB to two shell companies—entities widely suspected of being proxy shareholders.

As of 2022, UAB remained tied to IGE Group through its CEO Than Win Swe, who also serves as a director of UAB, and another UAB director, Thant Zin, who sits on the board of Future Creator Group Construction, a UAB subsidiary.

These connections strongly suggest that Ne Aung and IGE continue to exercise control over UAB through proxies, meaning that UAB remains part of the crony IGE economic network and subject to EU and Canadian sanctions.

The timing of the ownership transfer indicates an attempt to evade sanctions by creating a false appearance of separation between UAB, IGE, and Ne Aung.

JCB's silence on human-rights due diligence

In the letter, the civil society organizations asked JCB three key questions:

1. Whether JCB has conducted human rights due diligence in relation to its business activities in Myanmar since the coup attempt on 1 February 2021 and if so, to disclose the findings;

2. What concrete steps JCB has taken to assess and mitigate the risk of contributing to, or being complicit in, international crimes through its ongoing partnership with UAB; and

3. Whether JCB intends to end its partnership with UAB, given the UN Special Rapporteur's explicit call for financial institutions to do so.

As of November 2025, JCB has failed to respond to any of these questions.

Yuka Kiguchi, Executive Director of Mekong Watch, said, "Japanese companies must not look the other way while their business partners are potentially supporting airstrikes and human rights violations causing mass suffering in Myanmar. JCB, which ignored questions about its partnership with UAB, publicly claims that its credit card is Japan's only internationally recognized credit card brand. However, in its business practices, it is failing to meet even the most basic international standards of corporate transparency and human rights responsibility. We urge JCB to immediately respond to our inquiry."

Yadanar Maung, Justice for Myanmar's spokesperson, said, "JCB's ongoing partnership with a sanctioned, crony-owned bank that is linked to the junta's aviation fuel supply chain is unacceptable. This business has continued as the junta escalates airstrikes across the country ahead of its sham elections. JCB cannot continue to stay silent and continue business as usual. It must abide by its international human rights responsibilities and ensure it is not supporting any business that is aiding and abetting war crimes in Myanmar."



Iman Shorif, left, in the rescue boat.
Photo: AFP

TEEN RESCUED DAYS AFTER MIGRANT SHIPWRECK OFF MALAYSIA

Rescued after days stranded on a Malaysian island, weak and shaken Iman Shorif recounted on 11 November how he watched a child drown when their boat carrying migrants from Myanmar capsized.

Iman, who is 18 and from Myanmar's persecuted Rohingya minority, survived last week's shipwreck off the Thai-Malaysian coast that killed at least 26 people.

He was picked up by a Malaysian rescue boat in a bay on Langkawi island, five days after the boat carrying some 70 undocumented migrants sank close to the

maritime border between Southeast Asian neighbours Thailand and Malaysia.

Speaking to journalists after his rescue, Iman said the boat journey "started from Buthidaung", a small township in Myanmar's Rakhine state, and had gone on "for five to six days" before it went down.

When the boat sank, "I saw one death... it was a child, I saw him drowning," said the visibly weak teenager.

Rescuer Mohd Zamri Abdul Ghani said Iman was spotted when he waved with a polystyrene board.

"We were really moved when we found him... Because it's already the fourth day" of the search mission, Zamri told journalists.

"He was excited to see us... Physically, he looked exhausted."

Iman was stranded near a waterfall, meaning he had a source of fresh water, the rescuer said.

Missing boat

Officials say the migrants on the capsized boat were members of the Rohingya community trying to reach Malaysia.

They were likely part of a larger group of some 300 people who had left Myanmar two weeks ago, and were split between at least two boats.

Police reported the second vessel as missing and its fate was unknown.

As search operations continued, Malaysian authorities said another eight bodies had been recovered by Tuesday afternoon, taking the total to 20.

On the Thai side, an official told AFP on condition of anonymity that six bodies had been found, including at least two who carried identification cards issued by the United Nations' refugee agency UNHCR.

Fourteen survivors, mainly Rohingya and Bangladeshi citizens, have been rescued in Malaysian waters since rescue operations started on Sunday.

At least 12 vessels were searching for survivors in an area of around 250 square nautical miles, roughly the same size as the city-state of Singapore.

'Urgent concerns'

Relatively affluent Malaysia is home to millions of migrants from poorer parts of Asia, many of them undocumented, working in industries including construction and agriculture.

But sea crossings, facilitated by human trafficking syndicates, are hazardous and often lead to overloaded boats capsizing.

The Rohingya have been persecuted in Myanmar for decades, and thousands risk their lives every year to flee repression and civil war, often aboard makeshift boats.

In 2024, some 657 Rohingya died in the region's waters, according to UNHCR figures.

Medical charity Doctors Without Borders (MSF) said on Tuesday that the latest shipwreck "raises urgent humanitarian concerns".

"No one leaves Myanmar or Bangladesh by choice -- these are dangerous boat journeys undertaken by people out of fear for their lives," MSF said in a statement.

AFP



ARNC SAYS PERSECUTION BY ARAKAN ARMY IS UNDERLYING REASON FOR MIGRANT BOAT TRAGEDY

The Arakan Rohingya National Council (ARNC) released a strongly worded statement on 10 November accusing the Arakan Army of a systemic campaign of abuse which led Rohingya refugees to flee in a boat which later capsized near the maritime border between Malaysia and Thailand.

The text of the statement is as follows.

The Arakan Rohingya National Council (ARNC) expresses its deepest sorrow and strongest condemnation following the tragic sinking of a boat carrying Rohingya refugees and other migrants off the coast of Malaysia, near the Thailand–Malaysia maritime boundary. According to Malaysian maritime authorities, one body has been recovered and “dozens” remain missing after an overloaded vessel believed to be carrying about 90 people capsized near the area of Tarutao Island, Thailand, drifting toward Langkawi Island, Malaysia.

The incident reportedly involved migrants who initially boarded a larger vessel in Myanmar’s Arakan State carrying 300 Rohingya from Buthidaung Township and then transferred to smaller boats to avoid detection when it came closer to the Malaysian coast.

This horrific event must not be seen as a mere accident. It is another consequence of the ongoing genocidal persecution and campaign of erasure against the Rohingya people in their ancestral land of Arakan State, Myanmar. ARNC has repeatedly warned that the Arakan Army (AA) has undertaken

a systematic campaign to render Arakan Rohingya-free through killings, forced displacement, arbitrary arrests, force recruitment, destruction of Rohingya villages and policies of siege. These brutal tactics have left thousands of Rohingya civilians trapped without food, security or hope, pushing many into deadly sea crossings out of desperation.

This tragedy is not simply an unfortunate occurrence; it is the direct result of the Arakan Army’s atrocities and the sustained persecution that continue to drive Rohingya families into the sea, where countless lives are being lost.

ARNC strongly condemns these inhuman acts and issues an urgent call for international intervention to end the suffering of the Rohingya people.

ARNC hereby appeals to:

- The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to fulfil its humanitarian obligations and establish a regional protection mechanism for Rohingya refugees and migrants at sea and onshore and to establish a joint task force to investigate human trafficking gangs and hold them to account.

- The United Kingdom to immediately convene a meeting of the United Nations Security Council to discuss the crisis in Arakan State, including violations of international law by the Burmese military and Arakan Army, breaches of the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice, starvation in Rakhine State, the crisis for Rohingya refugees impacted by aid cuts, and human trafficking.

- The European Union (EU), the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the United States (USA) and the United Kingdom (UK) to sanction the Arakan Army and its leaders for their role in violations of international law.

- Regional governments, especially Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia, to ensure safe disembarkation, thorough search-and-rescue operations, and humane treatment for all survivors regardless of legal status.

- The international community must not remain indifferent while an entire people are being driven from their homeland, and many are forced to risk death at sea. The Rohingya are facing a renewed wave of genocide under the guise of conflict in Arakan, and global silence only emboldens the perpetrators.

ARNC reiterates its unwavering demand for justice, accountability, and the full restoration of Rohingya indigenous rights in their homeland in Arakan State.

UNHCR AND IOM EXPRESS CONCERN OVER ROHINGYA REFUGEE BOAT CAPSIZE IN ANDAMAN SEA

On 11 November, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) issued a joint statement expressing deep concern and sorrow over the capsizing of a boat in the Andaman Sea, which was carrying up to 70 Rohingya refugees from Myanmar.

The statement is as follows.

Some 13 people have been safely brought ashore by Malaysian authorities, with at least 21 confirmed deaths, including two teenage Rohingya girls recovered by Thai authorities. The rest of the passengers remain unaccounted for.

UNHCR and IOM commend the authorities and local communities in Malaysia for their life-saving efforts in rescuing those from the capsized boat. UNHCR and IOM stand ready to support local authorities by providing assistance to the survivors of this tragic incident following disembarkation.

UNHCR and IOM are extremely concerned about the scale of potential loss of life as at least one other boat is reportedly still at sea, carrying a further 230 people.

So far this year, more than 5,300 Rohingya refugees have embarked on dangerous maritime journeys from Bangladesh and Myanmar, with over 600 reported to be missing or have lost their lives. Limited assistance and opportunities in refugee camps in Bangladesh, along with escalating conflict and a worsening humanitarian

situation in Myanmar, exacerbated by funding cuts, contribute to more and more people attempting perilous sea journeys in search of safety and protection. In recent years, over two thirds of Rohingya embarking on dangerous sea journeys are women and children.

Saving lives and rescuing those in distress at sea is a humanitarian imperative and a longstanding duty under international maritime law. UNHCR and IOM continue to call for more resources and stronger regional and international efforts to enhance search-and-rescue capacity and safe access to asylum to avoid such tragedies.

Greater regional and international support is also needed to achieve a political solution to the crisis and end the hostilities in Myanmar. Until the drivers of onward movement and the root causes of forced displacement in Myanmar are resolved, refugees will continue to undertake dangerous journeys in search of safety.

UNHCR and IOM are working with national authorities to strengthen protection and solutions of refugees, migrants, and stateless people moving along key routes, including South and South-East Asia. This “route-based approach” aims to save lives, protect people and reduce harm, and support States in effectively managing mixed movements.



MYANMAR ON UN WORLD LIST OF 16 HUNGER HOTSPOTS

Two UN food agencies warned 12 November that millions more people around the globe could face famine, with funding shortfalls worsening already dire conditions.

The joint report from the Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Food Programme said conflict and violence were driving acute food insecurity in the majority of the countries identified at risk.

The Rome-based agencies listed Haiti, Mali, Palestine, South Sudan, Sudan and Yemen as the worst, "where populations face an imminent risk of catastrophic hunger".

Also classified as a "very high concern" were Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, Nigeria, Somalia and Syria, with Burkina Faso, Chad, Kenya and the situation of the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh also making the list.

"We are on the brink of a completely preventable hunger catastrophe that threatens widespread starvation in multiple countries," said WFP Executive

Director Cindy McCain, warning that a failure to act "will only drive further instability, migration, and conflict."

Funding for humanitarian relief was falling "dangerously short", the report said, pointing to only \$10.5 billion received out of a required \$29 billion to help those at risk.

WFP said that due to funding cuts, it had reduced assistance for refugees and displaced people while suspending school feeding programmes in some countries.

FAO warned that efforts to protect agricultural livelihoods were threatened "which are essential for stabilising food production and preventing recurring crises."

Funding was needed for seeds and livestock health service, it said, "before planting seasons begin or new shocks occur."

AFP

Ngu Wah



THE LONG BAHT HOME

HOW BURMESE MIGRANTS SUSTAIN FAMILIES THROUGH REMITTANCES DESPITE LOWER WAGES AND ENDLESS HURDLES

Ngu Wah is currently a Research Fellow from Knowledge Circle Foundation, as well as a PhD candidate in Chiang Mai University studying migration and political economy. In this episode, she offers her findings on the experience of female migrant workers in Thailand, the financial burdens of overseas workers, and the importance of remittances to Myanmar's economy. All her observations impact the future she envisions for Myanmar.

Addressing her studies on Myanmar's political system and on migration into Thailand, Ngu Wah touches upon the conflict driven structures that have developed especially after the 2021 coup. She explains that Myanmar remains largely a resource-based economy, mainly dependent on extractive industries and agriculture. The State Administration Council (SAC) controls the formal sector, while a significant informal sphere involves both state and nonstate actors. Weak infrastructure—including transport, roads, and telecommunications—continues to weigh heavily on national development.

Transitioning from her economic analysis, Ngu Wah explains that her strong, personal desire to help Burmese and migrant workers stems from her own

family background, giving her the motivation to pursue studies in related fields, believing that these migrant workers are truly the “unsung heroes of Myanmar.”

Before pursuing her PhD in Thailand, she studied Burmese migrant workers who had returned home. Ngu Wah wanted to understand their diverse experiences overseas and how their families managed the remittances they sent back. She looked at whether money was used in productive or nonproductive ways, and found that it gave her insight into rural families' spending behavior and how migrant workers support the agricultural sector. For her graduate research in Thailand, she then met migrant workers directly, examining the challenges they faced after the pandemic and amid Thailand's political uncertainty. From these interviews, she uncovered striking evidence of a gender wage gap. To illustrate this point, she explains that although men and women are usually registered and employed in manufacturing, women's basic and additional wages are lower than men's. Yet despite this gap, women often send more remittances home. From her interviews, she found that women create extra income by selling food or clothes in their networks, and they also share skills with one another so peers can earn beyond factory wages. Their use of digital tools lets

them exchange knowledge and broaden opportunities, and living in close community helps lower expenses. Taken together, she believes these factors explain why women are able to remit more even with lower pay.

Ngu Wah also highlights challenges specific to women. In her qualitative study with women's groups, she found that when contracts in Thailand expire, women often face more difficulty than men in finding new jobs. After returning to Myanmar, it is similarly hard for them to reenter the workforce. Because many of these women plan to go back, these limited job prospects at home lead them to consider starting small businesses. As a result, remittances become even more important, functioning as savings and potential startup capital.

One major challenge for migrants of all backgrounds is obtaining proper documentation. While the official fee is not high, the long and bureaucratic process—combined with language barriers—pushes many to rely on agents or, at times, their employers. The fees charged by these middlemen weigh heavily on already tight finances. Because of the added cost and the lack of affordable loan services, some workers fall into debt, while others risk living and working without papers. Yet proper documentation is vital for legal protection, access to essential services, and the ability to remain employed for longer periods. The problem also extends to the documents required to open bank accounts. In facing these challenges, she stresses that the process should not be politicized. "We need to be very practical to solve that issue," she says. "We need to think for the migrant workers," by strengthening financial infrastructure, knowledge, and inclusion. For this reason, she argues that employers should pay closer attention and actively help their workers secure the documents they need.

Ngu Wah shares that in 2018, it was estimated that remittances made up 4% of Myanmar's GDP, and possibly much more if inclusive of the remittances being sent home through informal channels. Remittances have since risen in importance to the economy after the 2021 coup as many have migrated from Myanmar for various purposes, including escaping conflict, and more money is being sent home as remittances. However, financial crimes and the growth of scams have made it far riskier to send money through informal channels. Ngu Wah believes attention should shift to helping migrants use formal channels so they can remit money more safely. However, this is far from easy,

as she references the problem of tightening controls, and acknowledges that changing regulations is far from easy. Still, she argues that mechanisms offering flexibility and security for migrant workers must be established on both sides of the border. At the same time, she stresses the need to consider the actual habits migrants follow when sending money home.

She notes that many people describe the Burmese as 'resilient,' pointing to their ability to withstand repeated hardships, but Ngu Wah no longer embraces this word. She argues that the constant struggles have taken a toll and that resilience should not be romanticized. Instead, she believes that their motivation has been "dragged down" and competing for scarce resources left in the communities has affected social cohesion in "most areas."

Ngu Wah emphasizes that building financial literacy, knowledge, and inclusion takes time, but insists it is essential not just for one regime but for everyone's digital safety in the long run. Reflecting on her fieldwork in Myanmar with migrant returnees and their families, she admits there were many things she could not fully grasp then. With the backing of her university and international organizations, however, she was able to conduct surveys of migrant workers that helped her, as she put it, start to "answer the puzzle." Now she also works with nonacademic networks and organizations assisting migrants in Thailand, aiming to connect what she has learned academically with her own experience in Myanmar so she can better serve her community back home.

Currently, Myanmar still faces many of the same structural problems that existed before the 2021 coup – above all, a knowledge and skill gap that hinders development. As the interview draws to a close, Ngu Wah appeals to Myanmar's neighbors and the international community to reach out and support those suffering on the ground, and to continue strengthening education both within and outside of Myanmar. Against this backdrop of wage gaps, sacrifice, bureaucracy, scams, and fraying social fabric, she offers her final reflection, noting that "[the Burmese] always find a way to survive."

LISTEN TO THE INSIGHT MYANMAR PODCAST

<https://insightmyanmar.org/complete-shows/2025/11/10/episode-430-the-long-baht-home>



Aung San Suu Kyi with the Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, in happier times. Photo: AFP

TWO MOUNTAINS, ONE LIGHT: TIBET AND BURMA'S SHARED STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM

ALAN CLEMENTS

For more than four decades, I have had the honour of being a humble witness and lifelong student of the people of Burma. In the late 1970s, I was ordained as a Buddhist monk under Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw in Yangon — years that grounded my life in the living Dhamma and in the fearless compassion of the Burmese Sangha. That experience awakened in me a sacred devotion to Burma's struggle for freedom and to the spiritual kinship it shares with Tibet — two of the most spiritually rooted civilizations ever to inhabit the earth.

Both nations, heirs to the teachings of the Buddha, now endure unspeakable and unrelenting suffering under oppression. Tibet and Burma — two mountains of conscience and endurance — stand as mirrors of each other's pain and courage: one occupied directly, the other subjugated by proxy; both resisting annihilation not through hatred, but through the boundless, disciplined strength of compassion.

Twin Nations of Spirit Under Siege

Tibet, invaded by China in 1950, has endured decades of cultural destruction — over a million lives lost, monasteries razed, the Tibetan language and faith systematically erased. Its tragedy endures as a sacred warning: the world's long silence became complicity. What was once a flourishing spiritual civilization has been methodically suffocated by occupation.

Burma, by contrast, still stands at the edge between despair and redemption. Once a sanctuary of Theravada Buddhism and mindful culture, it now lies under the iron grip of its own military junta — sustained by Chinese arms, fuel, and diplomatic cover. Since the military coup of February 2021, Myanmar has descended into a nationwide civil war, among the most devastating humanitarian crises of the twenty-first century.

The people, driven to desperation, have taken up arms in defense of their freedom and dignity. No place in the country is safe. Cities, monasteries, schools, and hospitals have become battlefields. Entire communities have been obliterated by air strikes and artillery fire.

Nearly 10,000 civilians have been killed and tens of thousands imprisoned — among them monks, students, artists, and elected officials. Countless villages have been bombed and burned to the ground, millions displaced, and acts of torture and sexual violence documented across the country. Over 22,000 people remain imprisoned as political hostages, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the nation's democratically elected leader and Nobel Peace Laureate, now entering her fifth consecutive year of solitary confinement.

"His Holiness fondly recalls having met Aung San Suu Kyi some years ago in London, as well as in Prague. He remains deeply concerned over her health and current situation. He offers his prayers for her and hopes that she will soon gain her freedom."

These words, shared through the office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, are a gesture of sacred fraternity — a recognition that the struggles of Tibet and Burma are not separate destinies but two expressions of a single vow: to preserve the dignity of the human spirit under tyranny.

A Shared Dharma of Defiance

What unites Tibet and Burma is not only geography, nor Buddhism as religion, but the Dharma of Conscience — the lived truth that the mind cannot be conquered by power.

His Holiness embodies the Mahayana ideal of karuna — compassion as fearless strength.

Daw Suu Kyi lives the Theravada path of metta and sati — love and awareness as moral rebellion.

Both have taught the world that non-violence is not weakness or withdrawal - it is the highest form of courage. Both have shown that freedom from fear is the first step toward political and spiritual liberation.

Their revolutions are not of ideology but of spirit. Their leadership is born not of ambition but of renunciation and service - proof that even within darkness, the awakened heart can still light the world.

The Chinese Shadow and the Global Silence

Behind the suffering of both nations looms the same shadow.

In Tibet, the occupier is overt; in Burma, it acts through the junta's machinery of control. In both, Beijing's influence fuels subjugation — funding propaganda, weaponizing trade, silencing voices, rewriting histories, and monetizing oppression.

Yet the greater tragedy is not only political — it is existential and moral. It is the moral sleep of the world. The silence of governments, faith communities, and international institutions has allowed this suffering to persist — as though the extinction of compassion could ever be contained within a single border.

What is being destroyed in Tibet and Burma is not merely culture or territory; it is the spiritual intelligence and moral imagination of humanity - the living inheritance of mindfulness, loving-kindness, and interdependence that both nations have offered to the world for centuries.

Tibet reminds us of what happens when the conscience of the world falters. Burma demands that it not happen again. This is the last frontier of moral action — a people still fighting, praying, and hoping that the light of their culture, their democracy, and their Dharma can survive.

To save Burma is to honour Tibet. To act for Burma is to redeem the silence that once doomed another sacred nation.

The Revolution of the Spirit

In both lands, monks, nuns, and laypeople continue to resist — not with hatred, but with awareness. They

chant in prisons. They survive. They meditate under fire. They shelter the wounded and forgive their oppressors.

Their revolution is a reclamation of the sacred — a Revolution of the Spirit, a rebellion of conscience against cruelty. It asks no vengeance, only remembrance. It asks the world not to normalize tyranny, not to look away.

As His Holiness teaches: “The true enemy is ignorance, not those who are ignorant.”

And as Daw Suu Kyi reminds us: “The only real prison is fear, and the only real freedom is freedom from fear.”

Two voices, one moral chord — compassion as defiance, wisdom as action, and peace as the ultimate form of power.

Beyond Faith, Toward Universal Freedom

This is not only a Buddhist concern. It is a human one. The oppression of Tibet and Burma violates not only their sovereignty but the very essence of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights — the promise that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.

That promise is the secular echo of the Buddha’s awakening: that no being, no people, no culture should ever be enslaved by fear or erased by force. When His Holiness and Daw Suu Kyi speak of freedom, they speak for all of humanity.

Both nations are woven from profound tapestries of culture and faith.

In Burma, Buddhists, Christians, Muslims, Hindus, and Indigenous peoples coexist — each carrying their own language of the sacred.

In Tibet, the ancient Bön tradition and the vast mandala of Tibetan Buddhism embody a civilizational mosaic of consciousness that has shaped Asia’s moral imagination.

Under tyranny, these differences have been exploited to divide and control, yet they remain the indestructible source of each nation’s inner strength.

True freedom, they remind us, is not the triumph of one culture over another, but the realization that all cultures and all faiths are expressions of a single human longing for dignity and belonging.

This is the Universal Dharma — compassion without boundary, conscience without flag, interdependence without hierarchy. It is what African wisdom calls Ubuntu: I am because you are; we are because the other is.

To defend Tibet or Burma is to defend the sacred reciprocity that sustains the world. When any people are silenced, the moral breath of humanity is diminished. When freedom blossoms anywhere, the world breathes easier.

Their shared struggle is not a distant story of monks and mountains — it is a mirror held up to us all. Every nation, every citizen, every conscience is implicated in what we choose to see, and in what we choose to ignore.

A Global Call to Conscience

Today, as Daw Aung San Suu Kyi endures her fifth year of solitary confinement and as Tibet enters its seventy-fifth year under occupation, the world must decide — with unflinching honesty — which story it will write next.

Tibet has been renamed and silenced [for now]. Burma can still be saved through action.

And if any doubt remains — the countdown is real: the junta-run regime in Myanmar has announced elections for December 28, 2025 — widely denounced by observers as a sham. The hour is later than we think. Each day of silence brings the world closer to another irreversible loss.

I call upon all world leaders — presidents, prime ministers, monarchs, and heads of state — and all

spiritual leaders of every tradition, including His Eminence Pope Leo XIV and every moral voice of our shared humanity, to unite in one collective act of conscience.

Let them call unequivocally and immediately for the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and all unlawfully imprisoned democratic leaders and political hostages throughout Burma. Let them demand an end to the killing, the bombing, and the systemic destruction of civilian life. Let them act now — before another civilization is lost to darkness, before another silence becomes permanent.

The Final Invocation

Let this be the hour when faith becomes action — when compassion becomes courage — when humanity remembers that freedom is not a privilege to be possessed, but a responsibility to be shared.

Tibet is the memory. Burma is the warning. Humanity is the test. If the world can still awaken, it must awaken now. For silence is complicity, and complicity is the slow death of the soul.

May this be the turning point — when the leaders of nations, the elders of faith, and the citizens of conscience stand together and say: Enough. Enough of fear. Enough of apathy. Enough of delay.

Let every government, every monastery, every church and mosque, every heart raise one united voice for freedom — for Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, for the people of Burma, for the sanctity of life itself.

Tibet and Burma — two mountains, one light. Two wounds, one faith in humanity's capacity to awaken.

May the oppressed reclaim their breath. May the oppressors remember their humanity.

May peace and dignity prevail across all frontiers of suffering. And may conscience rise — radiant and unafraid — as the Universal Dharma of our time, the living testament of a world that chose to awaken while there was still time.

And to each reader — each listener — each heart that hears these words — ask yourself: What will you do in this hour?

About the Author

Alan Clements is an author, human rights activist, and former Buddhist monk ordained under Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw at the Mahasi Sasana Yeiktha in Yangon, Myanmar. For over four decades, he has devoted his life to documenting Burma's non-violent struggle for freedom and the universal principles of conscience and compassion that unite spiritual practice and political responsibility.

*Clements is the author of several acclaimed works on Burma and global human rights, including *Burma: The Next Killing Fields?* (with a foreword by His Holiness the Dalai Lama), *Burma: The Revolution of the Spirit* (also blessed with His Holiness's foreword and endorsed by eight Nobel Peace Laureates), and *The Voice of Hope: Conversations with Aung San Suu Kyi* (endorsed by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and President Jimmy Carter). His later works include the four-volume oral history *Burma's Voices of Freedom*, and the trilogy *Conversation with a Dictator*, *Unsilenced: Aung San Suu Kyi — Conversations from a Myanmar Prison*, and *Politics of the Heart: Nonviolence in an Age of Atrocity*.*

Having met His Holiness the Dalai Lama on several occasions — in Newport Beach, Los Angeles, and Bodhi Gaya — at the very time he was being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize — Clements continues to honour the deep moral kinship between Tibet and Burma and their shared offering to the world: the union of compassion and conscience as the foundation of true freedom.

He is the founder of World Dharma, an international platform dedicated to integrating spiritual awareness with transformative action for human rights, peace, and global conscience, and co-founder (with his long-time colleague Fergus Harlow) of UseYourFreedom.org — a global campaign calling for the urgent release of Aung San Suu Kyi and more than 22,000 political prisoners held throughout Burma. For more information, visit www.AlanClements.com.

CHINA'S CYBER WAR INTENSIFIES — SNEAKING INTO NATIONS WORLDWIDE

SUN LEE

The world is witnessing the alarming scale of China's cyber hacking operations. Ironically, those who create this chilling atmosphere of fear and horror have often escaped accountability. Glaring cases of cyber warfare by Chinese hackers are being reported from different parts of the world. Recently, Singapore uncovered one such network, leading to the conviction of three Chinese nationals as they were found guilty of engaging in organised hacking activities.

Identified as Liu Yuqi, 33, the court sent him to jail for two years, four months and four weeks jail, while Huang Qin Zheng, 37, and Yan Peijian, 39, were each sentenced to two years, four months and one week in jail. Each man had pleaded guilty to four charges, including misusing a computer system and one linked to organised crime. The trio was involved in working for "sites of interest" for vulnerabilities, conducting penetration attacks and obtaining personal information from the exploited systems.

This case in Singapore has again highlighted the reach and sophistication of these operations by Chinese nationals or China state backed hacking ecosystem, that has become the centre of growing global concern.

What was once limited to stealing trade secrets has now evolved into a complex network of intelligence gathering, disruption capabilities, and cyber-enabled coercion. In September 2024, Singaporean authorities had arrested three Chinese nationals — Yan Peijian, Liu Yuqi, and Huang Qin Zheng — for their involvement in a hacking conspiracy linked to an organized criminal group. Working on a tip, the police detained the trio for attempting to probe "sites of interest" for vulnerabilities, conduct penetration attacks, and extract personal data from compromised systems.

The police investigations revealed that their activities were not isolated. The hackers were allegedly hired by Xu Liangbiao, 38, a citizen of Vanuatu, who left Singapore just one day before authorities launched a large-scale operation related to a separate 3 billion US dollars money-laundering case. Xu remains at large, his whereabouts unknown. The police had found Yan's device contained chat messages about potential vulnerabilities in multiple government websites from Australia, Argentina, and Vietnam. Liu's laptop was found containing a confidential email exchange between Kazakhstan's foreign and industry ministries — a clear indication of targeted cyber espionage.

The incident underscored how state-linked hackers from China are increasingly outsourcing cyber operations through proxies and criminal networks across Asia. This case has reflected a broader and dangerous trend about the expanding China's cyber espionage which is no longer confined to traditional state targets. From Australia to Africa, cyber agencies have reported a sharp increase in attacks linked to Chinese state-sponsored groups.

The Australia's cyber espionage agency has recently issued a warning about the attempts by Chinese hackers to infiltrate corporate systems by using remote workers technology. The Australian Signals Directorate (ASD) warned that state-backed actors posed a "serious and growing threat" to national security. In its 2024-25 report, the ASD revealed that the average cost per cybercrime incident against big businesses tripled to \$202,700, with Chinese hackers exploiting vulnerabilities in remote work setups. Experts said that the hackers are turning to artificial intelligence in their cyberattacks on major companies, which include banks, telcos, power and water suppliers.

The US based Cybersecurity company Palo Alto Networks reported that a China-based threat group, Storm-1849 (also known as UAT4356), has been scanning and exploiting Cisco Adaptive Security Appliances (ASA) — firewalls widely used by governments and large corporations in the U.S., Europe, and Asia. These devices perform multiple security functions, and once compromised, give attackers deep access to sensitive systems.

According to Unit 42, the hackers specifically targeted U.S. defense contractors, financial institutions, and government agencies throughout October 2024. By late October, at least 12 US federal IP addresses and 11 state-level government networks had been targeted. In addition, many IP addresses of several other governments were targeted. In September, Palo Alto Networks Unit 42 announced that Phantom Taurus, has been executing a multi-year cyber espionage campaign aligned with People's Republic of China state interests, and is targeting government and telecommunications organizations across Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.

One of the most infamous Chinese hacking groups, APT41 — also known by aliases such as Wicked

Panda, Winnti, Brass Typhoon, and Barium — has been identified as a major player in Beijing's global cyber strategy. The group is known for blending espionage with financial motives, targeting sectors such as telecommunications, energy, healthcare, and education in more than 40 countries.

In July 2024, cybersecurity researchers documented a cyber espionage campaign by APT41 against a Southern African government organization. The attackers infiltrated national IT systems, stealing credentials, internal documents, and source code. What made this attack significant was that Africa had previously seen minimal APT activity — signalling China's expanding digital footprint in regions where it also invests heavily through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). A groundbreaking report released by the McCrary Institute for Cyber and Critical Infrastructure Security at Auburn University — titled "Code Red: A Guide to Understanding China's Sophisticated Typhoon Cyber Campaigns" — details a new, more aggressive phase in China's cyber strategy.

According to the report, Beijing has shifted from traditional espionage to embedding disruptive capabilities within the critical infrastructure of the U.S. and its allies. These operations, collectively known as "Typhoons" (a Microsoft term), combine espionage, sabotage preparation, and psychological warfare. These developments mark a transition from mere information theft to pre-positioning cyber weapons that could be activated in times of geopolitical tension or war.

The time to stay silent is over. China's cyber attacks are no longer just about stealing data — they are about digital control. From Singapore to the US, no country is safe. What started as spying has grown into a system that can disrupt governments and economies. The world must come together — share information, strengthen cyber laws, and build strong defenses. This is not one nation's problem but a global danger. If we don't act together now, the next major crisis may not start with a bomb — but with a single keystroke from Beijing.

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



UK PM Keir Starmer.
Photo: AFP

UK PM SAYS BBC SHOULD 'CORRECT ERRORS' AS TRUMP MULLS LAWSUIT

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer on 12 November warned that the BBC should "get their house in order" after US President Donald Trump said he had an "obligation" to sue the corporation for \$1 billion over a misleading speech edit.

Speaking in parliament, Starmer said he supported a "strong and independent BBC" but he also believed it should "uphold the highest standards to be accountable and correct errors quickly".

"Where mistakes are made, they do need to get their house in order," he said in response to a question calling for him to urge Trump to abandon his legal threat.

Trump's lawyers threatened the British broadcaster with a billion-dollar lawsuit on 10 November, according to a letter seen by AFP, as the BBC apologised for giving the impression the president had urged "violent action" ahead of the 2021 assault on the US Capitol.

In a Fox News interview, which was recorded Monday, Trump said he had to sue the BBC.

"I think I have an obligation to do it because you can't allow people to do that," Trump said, without confirming whether he had officially begun proceedings to file a defamation lawsuit.

"They defrauded the public and they've admitted it."

White House spokeswoman Karoline Leavitt later said the president had been "deeply concerned" by the "purposeful and dishonest editing of his speech", but added that he enjoyed a good relationship with the UK prime minister.

BBC apology

Starmer's government has been performing a tightrope act, backing the broadcaster's independence while avoiding taking sides against Trump.

The BBC director-general and the organisation's top news executive resigned 9 November over the controversy.

The BBC has said it would "review" the letter from Trump's legal team. BBC chair Samir Shah issued a public apology on 10 November for an "error of judgement" made in the editing.

Fifty-seven percent of Britons believe the BBC should apologise directly to the US president, according to a YouGov poll published on 11 November. But a quarter were against such an apology.

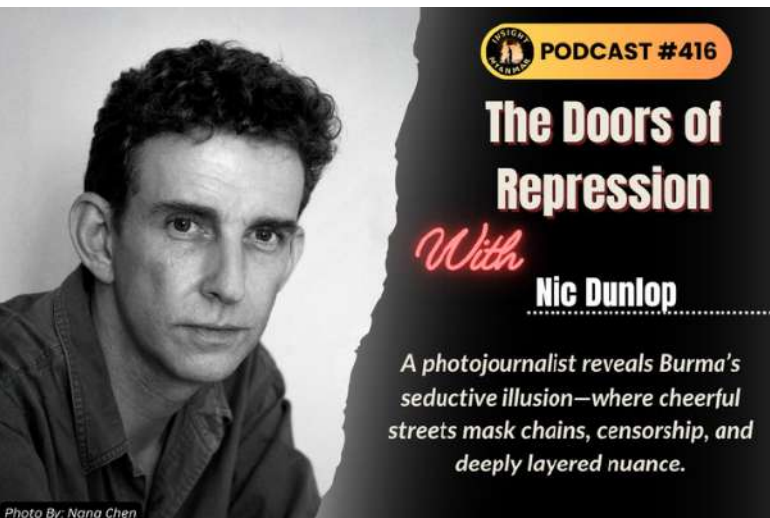
The row comes at a politically sensitive time for the BBC, which is due to renegotiate the Royal Charter that outlines the corporation's governance. Its current charter will end in 2027.

Trump has been accused of launching a number of lawsuits to stifle criticism in US media since returning to power in January.

The BBC documentary featuring the edited Trump speech was aired last year.

It appeared he had told supporters he was going to walk to the US Capitol with them and "fight like hell", but he also told the audience in the intervening period: "We're going to cheer on our brave senators and congressmen and women."

AFP



THE DOORS OF REPRESSION

"Suddenly you have this keyhole into a gulag existence that a lot of [Burmese] people lived in, and then [just as] suddenly it's gone! Almost to the point where you think... 'Did I really see that!'"

Nic Dunlop, author of the book, *Brave New Burma*, recounts to Insight Myanmar Podcast how an unexpected encounter in Bangkok changed the course of his life. It began in 1992, when he ran out of money traveling in Thailand, and was offered a free place to stay by the Jesuit Refugee Service; it was there that he met some Burmese student exiles who had fled the country during the 1988 uprising. Among this group was Aung Zaw, who would soon go on to found The Irrawaddy. "It sparked my interest," Dunlop recalls. "I felt profoundly out of place, and that I needed to understand and learn more." As he describes, his initial "ignorance" gave way to curiosity, which developed into a sense of deep empathy. This fueled forward decades of commitment that Dunlop carried with him as a photojournalist, documenting one of the world's most repressive regimes, with its invisible systems of control, and the stories of its victims.

Dunlop released *Brave New Burma* in 2013, just as the transition was underway, primarily with Europeans and North Americans in mind, to educate them about oppression and what it looks like. Despite receiving little attention upon its release, the book has only grown more relevant since the 2021 coup.

After his encounter with those Burmese students in 1992, Dunlop crossed into Karen State from Thailand, visiting refugee camps and meeting insurgents. Although the experience was profound, he recalls how at that time, he didn't have much of contextual understanding yet for what he observed. Then in 1995, he entered Myanmar again, just after Aung San Suu Kyi's release from house arrest. What struck him was the absence of military brutality and even the mere presence of soldiers, in other words, the eerie normality that pervaded everything. "Everything seemed to be... caught in a different sort of time warp." Expecting coils of razor wire and armed soldiers on every street corner, he then realized that the sense of overwhelming military control was instead being internalized. As Dunlop puts it, coining the observation of an Eastern European dissident, "The censor is no longer at his desk, he's in my head."

That "invisible dictatorship" became a central theme in his book. "It was a mixture of both collusion and coercion," Dunlop explains: spies were everywhere, yet unseen; political conversations would instantly shut down. It was repression not of spectacle, but of subtle, constant surveillance. "How do you photograph that?" he asked himself. "You could have a paranoid conversation on a Rangoon street corner. But how do you photograph that? Of course, you can't!" So began his quest to make the invisible, visible. Commissioned by *The Guardian*, he began documenting signs of forced labor, child labor, prison labor, and social control.

CATCH THE PODCAST

Read more and listen to the Insight Myanmar Podcast here:

<https://insightmyanmar.org/complete-shows/2025/10/17/episode-416-the-doors-of-repression>



MYANMAR JUNTA OPENS NEW TRADE ROUTES AS BORDER POST CLOSURES LEAVE CARGO STRANDED

Myanmar's junta has opened new maritime and overland trade routes in an effort to ease severe cargo backlogs caused by the temporary closure of key border posts with Thailand and China, the Ministry of Commerce said this week.

The Myawaddy border crossing, previously one of the busiest trade gateways between Myanmar and Thailand, has been shut for months due to security concerns, leaving large quantities of goods on both sides of the frontier stranded.

In response, the junta have launched a container shipping line linking Yangon with Kawthaung in southern Myanmar and on to Ranong in Thailand. The new route is aimed at accelerating the movement of imports and exports traditionally routed through Myawaddy.

The junta's Department of Trade said import licences have already been issued for cargo to transit via the new maritime corridor, which is expected to provide a faster and more predictable alternative while land routes remain restricted.

Trade disruptions extend beyond the Thai border. Myanmar-China crossings at Chinshwehaw, Lweje and Muse have also been suspended, prompting parallel efforts to divert goods and reopen logistical channels.

Despite the suspension, limited trade at Muse has continued under special arrangements. For example, there have been recent exports of molasses to China and fuel re-imports into Myanmar.

Director Daw Cho Thet Mu of the Department of Trade was reported by the junta-run Global New Light of Myanmar as saying new overland and maritime routes would be opened according to the current situation to prevent trade flows from stalling further.

Junta authorities are also reportedly assessing the volume and type of stranded cargo, with additional measures expected once a full report is submitted.

Trade through the Tachilek border post with Thailand remains operational, offering another limited alternative for exporters and importers affected by the closures.



THAILAND HANDS OVER CRIME BOSS BUT MYANMAR FRAUD HUBS REMAIN ACTIVE

A high-profile court ruling in Thailand saw Chinese criminal suspect She Zhijiang extradited to China for alleged massive online-gambling and scam operations linked to Myanmar's border region. While this might be seen as a positive step, many scam centres in Myanmar are still very much active, especially near the Thai border – a subject of interest and debate amongst social media users.

In places like Shwe Kokko, these centres are thriving, employing thousands of workers, some of whom are believed to be trafficked. They operate various scams, including romance, investment, and gambling schemes designed to defraud victims abroad. Just recently, Myanmar's military reported a significant raid

where over 2,000 people were arrested and 30 satellite internet units seized from one of these locations.

On social media, many users have noted the irony of the situation, even though the extradition of She Zhijiang is making headlines worldwide, for many in Myanmar, the reality is quite different. Comments like "Staged drama, it's their man Saw Chit Thu" running the business. And a Facebook user says: "They say there are no more scams in Shwe Kokko — but it has put up huge ... scam centres across Myanmar."

Political experts believe that this extradition could represent a shift towards stronger regional action against transnational crime networks.

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.