

ON THE GROUND IN MYANMAR

# mizzima WEEKLY

Analysis & Insight



## From Dialogue to Decapitation: The Narrowing Spectrum of Human Conflict

Alan Clements

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# 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.

# FOREIGNERS PLAY INSIGNIFICANT ROLE IN MYANMAR'S REVOLUTIONARY FIGHT

The remarks by Indian Home Minister Amit Shah about foreign nationals using India as a transit point, alongside the arrest in Brisbane of a man allegedly intending to support resistance forces in Myanmar, draw attention to a small but symbolically potent phenomenon - the trickle of foreigners attempting to join Myanmar's anti-junta struggle. While numerically very limited, these cases carry outsized political and narrative significance for both the military regime and its opponents.

Home Minister Amit Shar said the one American and six Ukrainians just used India as a transit point to enter Myanmar - they were not a threat to India.

Unlike conflicts such as those in Syria or Ukraine that have attracted thousands of foreign fighters, Myanmar's resistance remains overwhelmingly domestic. The barriers to entry are substantial. Geography is one factor - Myanmar's borderlands are rugged, remote, and often controlled by a patchwork of ethnic armed organizations. Access routes are difficult and closely monitored by neighbouring states wary of being seen as staging grounds for insurgency. Language and cultural barriers further complicate integration into resistance units that are locally organized and deeply embedded in community networks.

There is also the question of legitimacy. Myanmar's resistance, composed of the People's Defence Forces and longstanding ethnic militias, has framed itself as "revolutionary" uprising rooted in the will of its own people following the 2021 Myanmar coup d'état. A large influx of foreign fighters could undermine that narrative, giving the

junta ammunition to portray the "foreign fighters" as externally driven. Even a handful of foreigners can be leveraged in propaganda to suggest international meddling, a claim the Myanmar military - with the help of Russian intelligence - has repeatedly advanced despite limited evidence.

For the individuals involved, motivations appear varied but often ideological. Some are driven by a sense of solidarity with pro-democracy movements, others by personal convictions shaped by globalized media coverage of the junta's brutal war. Yet the practical impact of their participation is likely minimal. Myanmar's resistance does not currently depend on foreign manpower - its needs are more acutely felt in areas such as funding, humanitarian aid, and political recognition.

The response of regional governments underscores the sensitivity of the issue. Countries like India and Thailand have little appetite for their territories becoming conduits for foreign involvement in Myanmar's civil war, fearing diplomatic fallout and security risks. Arrests and public statements serve both as deterrence and reassurance that borders are being controlled.

In the end, the presence of "foreign volunteers" in Myanmar remains more a curiosity than a substantial factor. Their numbers are far too small to shift the military balance, but their stories highlight the global resonance of Myanmar's crisis - and the limits of translating that into meaningful participation on the ground.

## EDITORIAL

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WEEKLY

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Cover photo by AFP



Remembering Myanmar's democracy icon locked up by the military junta. Photo: AFP

# **FROM DIALOGUE TO DECAPITATION: THE NARROWING SPECTRUM OF HUMAN CONFLICT**

***A REFLECTION ON POWER, NONVIOLENCE,  
AND THE DISAPPEARING MIDDLE GROUND***

***ALAN CLEMENTS***

For more than three decades, I have had the rare privilege of knowing Aung San Suu Kyi under conditions that few political leaders in the modern world have been required to endure. Our exchanges were not shaped by the distance of diplomacy or the abstraction of media representation, but by direct encounter within the confines of a political system designed to silence her. She lived for years under house arrest, isolated from her people, surrounded by a military apparatus that governed through coercion, surveillance, and, when necessary, violence.

What distinguished her throughout this period was not simply resilience, but a sustained and deliberate commitment to a principle that is now under profound strain in global political life: the necessity of dialogue, even with those who oppose, detain, or seek to eliminate you.

## WITHOUT DIALOGUE

This commitment was neither rhetorical nor sentimental. It was grounded in a disciplined understanding of how conflict evolves. She recognized that the refusal to engage one's adversary does not neutralize conflict; it alters its form. Without dialogue, conflict ceases to be mediated through language and becomes increasingly expressed through force. What begins as disagreement, if left without communicative channels, tends to harden into positions that are no longer negotiable. The absence of dialogue does not produce clarity. It produces escalation.

This insight places Aung San Suu Kyi within a broader lineage of political and moral thought, most notably articulated by Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi's doctrine of satyagraha, or "truth-force," was not merely a strategy of resistance against colonial rule. It was an attempt to redefine the very terms under which conflict is conducted. He understood that violence, even when justified as a response to injustice, carries within it a tendency to reproduce the structures of domination it seeks to

dismantle. The means are not external to the ends; they are formative of them.

For Gandhi, the challenge was not only to oppose oppression, but to do so in a manner that preserved the possibility of a different kind of political order—one not founded on cycles of retaliation. This required an insistence on dialogue, not as a guarantee of agreement, but as a condition that prevented conflict from collapsing entirely into coercion.

## ENGAGEMENT WITH THE MYANMAR MILITARY

Aung San Suu Kyi's political philosophy reflects this inheritance. Her engagement with the Myanmar military was never premised on the expectation that the generals would relinquish power willingly or respond in good faith. Rather, it was grounded in the recognition that the complete abandonment of dialogue would eliminate one of the few remaining constraints on escalation. Without even the possibility of communication, however limited, the conflict would migrate into forms governed almost entirely by force.

This dynamic is not unique to Myanmar. It is increasingly evident across the global landscape, where the spectrum of conflict appears to be narrowing—from dialogue at one end to decapitation strategies at the other.

In the Middle East, the evolving confrontation involving Israel, Iran, and Lebanon reflects a strategic environment in which dialogue has been progressively displaced by preemptive and retaliatory action. The logic articulated by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is rooted in the perception of existential threat. From this perspective, certain adversaries cannot be managed through negotiation because their objectives are incompatible with the continued existence or security of the state. Under such conditions, the argument for decisive action—targeted strikes, degradation of capabilities, and, where possible, the removal of leader-



The late Iranian leader Ali Khamenei "decapitated" in Israel and America's war. Photo: AFP

ship—becomes not only plausible but, within that framework, necessary.

## **TRUMP AND STRENGTH**

President Donald Trump's approach, while distinct in tone, operates within a related strategic logic. His emphasis on strength as a precondition for peace reflects a long-standing principle in statecraft: that negotiation is effective only when backed by credible force. In practice, this has resulted in a dual posture—public openness to negotiation combined with the willingness to deploy overwhelming military power when dialogue is deemed insufficient or has failed to produce desired outcomes.

The convergence of these approaches reveals a broader shift in the architecture of conflict. Dialogue is not rejected outright; it is subordinated. It becomes conditional, secondary to the imperatives of security and deterrence. When it fails to meet those imperatives, it is replaced by action.

In such an environment, the strategic vocabulary begins to change. Terms such as “neutralization,” “degradation,” and “decapitation” enter the discourse not as metaphors, but as operational objectives. The targeted killing of leadership, the dismantling of command structures, and the use of force to eliminate perceived threats become central components of policy.

## **MYANMAR JUNTA DITCHES DIALOGUE**

This shift is not confined to a single region. In Ukraine, the prolonged war has hardened into a confrontation in which negotiation remains constrained by battlefield realities and political calculations on all sides. In Myanmar, the military junta has effectively eliminated the possibility of meaningful dialogue, choosing instead to consolidate power through imprisonment, execution, and systematic violence against civilian populations.

Across these contexts, a common pattern emerges. Dialogue is not dismissed because it is misunderstood. It is dismissed because it is judged insufficient to address the scale, urgency, or nature of the threat.

From within the mindset of leaders responsible for national security, this judgment is not without logic. States operate under conditions of uncertainty and risk. The failure to act in the face of credible threats can carry consequences that are difficult to reverse. Under such conditions, the appeal to dialogue may appear inadequate, particularly when previous efforts have failed to produce meaningful change.

Yet the structural consequences of this shift are profound and cumulative.

Each escalation reduces the space in which dialogue can occur. Each act of force reinforces the perception that the opposing side cannot be engaged through

communication. Over time, this produces a condition in which conflict becomes increasingly binary. The range of possible responses narrows, leaving fewer alternatives to continued confrontation.

## **SYSTEM OF VIOLENCE**

This is the threshold at which conflict transitions from a contested political process into a self-reinforcing system of violence.

Yitzhak Rabin's trajectory offers a critical counterpoint to this development. An Israeli prime minister, former military commander, and co-recipient of the 1994 Nobel Peace Prize for the Oslo Accords—negotiated in part with American mediation—Rabin embodied the difficult convergence of force and diplomacy. He recognized that even entrenched enemies must eventually be met across a table, not only on a battlefield.

As a military leader, he understood the necessity of force. As a statesman, he came to recognize its limits. His decision to engage in negotiations with Palestinian leadership was not an abandonment of security concerns, but an acknowledgment that permanent conflict offered no viable future. Adversaries do not disappear simply because they are confronted with superior force. They persist, adapt, and often return in forms that are more difficult to address.

His assassination underscores the fragility of dialogue in environments shaped by fear and absolutism. It revealed that the resistance to engagement often emerges not only from opposing sides, but from within communities that perceive dialogue as a threat to certainty and identity.

## **VIOLENCE BEGETS VIOLENCE**

Violence, left to its own logic, does not resolve itself. It reproduces. It echoes. It returns. Violence begets violence—not as metaphor, but as pattern—an inheritance passed from one generation to the next, each act carrying the unresolved residue of the last. What is called victory often contains within it the architecture of the next conflict.

The Buddha named this condition with unsettling precision: samsara—a cycle not only of birth and death, but of repetition, of unexamined causes perpetuating unexamined consequences. In political terms, it is the endless recycling of grievance, retaliation, domination, and collapse. A wheel that turns not because it must—but because it is not understood.

From this perspective, the deepest form of dialogue is not merely between adversaries, but within the human condition itself. The dismantling of the inner architecture that gives rise to war. The recognition that greed, anger, and delusion—unexamined, institutionalized, and weaponized—become systems, policies, and eventually, atrocities.



## ADDRESSING ROOT CONDITIONS

Without addressing these root conditions, dialogue remains fragile, easily abandoned when pressure mounts. But when they are seen clearly—when the mind that seeks to dominate is understood at its source—the possibility of a different order emerges. Not idealism. Not passivity. But a form of intelligence that interrupts the cycle before it hardens into violence.

This tension is central to the present moment. Dialogue requires a willingness to remain in relationship with those one fundamentally opposes. It demands tolerance for ambiguity, for partial outcomes, and for processes that do not yield immediate or decisive results. Force, by contrast, offers clarity. It produces visible outcomes. It satisfies demands for action.

But clarity achieved through force is often temporary. It addresses immediate threats without resolving the underlying conditions that give rise to them.

It is important to be precise about what dialogue does and does not entail. Dialogue is not agreement. It does not require moral equivalence, nor does it demand the suspension of judgment. Gandhi did not legitimize imperial rule. Aung San Suu Kyi did not accept military domination. Rabin did not ignore the security concerns of his state.

What they understood was that dialogue is not a substitute for power. It is a necessary complement to it. It functions as a constraint, limiting the extent to which conflict can escalate beyond the boundaries of political negotiation.

Without that constraint, conflict tends to evolve toward its most extreme forms. Violence becomes easier to justify, and over time, more difficult to contain. The psychological barriers to escalation weaken. Adversaries are reduced to abstractions. The language of engagement is replaced by the language of elimination.

## FROM DIALOGUE TO DEATH

This is the progression from dialogue to death as a means of resolving conflict.

It is not an abrupt transition. It is a gradual narrowing of options—a series of decisions in which communication is incrementally displaced by coercion. By the time violence becomes the dominant mode of engagement, the conditions necessary for dialogue have often already been eroded.

The challenge facing the present moment is not to deny the realities of power or the existence of genuine threats. It is to recognize the limits of a framework in which force becomes the primary instrument of resolution.

## AUNG SAN SUU KYI'S COMMITMENT

Aung San Suu Kyi maintained a commitment to dialogue under conditions that offered little immediate incentive for doing so. Gandhi articulated its necessity

in the face of empire. Rabin acted upon it within a context of ongoing conflict and deep mistrust.

Their shared insight was not that dialogue guarantees peace, but that its absence makes peace structurally unattainable.

The global environment now reflects a growing willingness to operate without that constraint. The consequences are already visible in the scale, intensity, and persistence of contemporary conflicts.

The question is not whether force will continue to be used. It will.

The question is whether dialogue will survive alongside it.

Because once it disappears entirely, the trajectory of conflict changes in ways that are difficult to reverse. Violence no longer functions as an instrument within a broader political process. It becomes the process itself.

And when that occurs, the distance between resolving conflict and perpetuating it becomes increasingly difficult to discern.

This is not a theoretical concern. It is a pattern that history has revealed repeatedly.

The only uncertainty is whether it will be recognized in time to alter its course.

## DANGEROUS TRAJECTORY

Because the trajectory from decapitation over dialogue does not end where it begins. It escalates. It compounds. It normalizes thresholds that once held. And at some point—whether by intention, miscalculation, or clandestine design—the logic of elimination reaches its terminal expression.

Nuclear.

Not as abstraction, but as consequence.

At that threshold, there are no victors. No strategic gains. No narratives that survive their own premises. The human race loses—not metaphorically, but materially—along with the animals, the birds, and the fragile web of life that sustains us. What remains is not conflict resolved, but a silence imposed—one that may endure for thousands of years, if anything remains to remember it.

This is what is at stake when dialogue disappears.

## About the Author

Alan Clements is an author, former Buddhist monk, and human rights advocate who has written extensively on authoritarianism, nonviolence, and Myanmar's struggle for democracy. He is the author of seventeen books, including *Conversation with a Dictator*, *Unsilenced: Aung San Suu Kyi—Conversations from a Myanmar Prison*, and *Politics of the Heart: Nonviolence in the Age of Atrocity*. He has worked closely with Burmese democracy leaders for more than three decades, and his writing has appeared in international media across Asia, Europe, and the United States.

## ANALYSIS &amp; INSIGHT



## PRESSURE INCREASES FOR MYANMAR MILITARY CONSCRIPTION

**M**yanmar's military junta is intensifying its forced conscription drive across both urban and rural areas, employing a range of measures that critics say are designed to tighten control over the country's youth population and limit their ability to evade recruitment.

In a recent move, the authorities enacted a new "Passport Law" on March 17, just days before the planned sitting of a parliament formed through a widely criticized election. Under the law, Myanmar citizens living abroad without a Unique Identification (UID) number are now required to return to the country to renew or obtain passports. The UID application process, introduced more broadly since 2022, can only be completed at township-level immigration offices inside Myanmar and is not available at embassies overseas.

A Home Affairs Ministry official told Khit Thit Media that the UID has become mandatory for all passport applications and extensions. "Without a UID number, embassies cannot process passport renewals," the official said, adding that those lacking the number must return home to complete the procedure.

Analysts argue that the measure is aimed at restricting the movement of young people of conscription age, as well as monitoring individuals involved in the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) and others deemed politically sensitive. By forcing citizens abroad to

return, the junta is seen as increasing its ability to identify and potentially detain eligible recruits.

At the same time, authorities are stepping up efforts to compile lists of conscription-age group in major cities. In Yangon, ward administrators are reportedly collecting names for the upcoming No. (23) conscription batch, particularly in townships such as North Okkalapa, Tamwe, Hlaing, and Mayangone. Selection is often conducted through a lottery system, though reports indicate that coercion and corruption are widespread.

A Yangon resident told Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB) that arrests linked to conscription continue across multiple townships, including Kamaryut, Kyimyindaing, Ahlone, Thanlyin, Thaketa, and Hlaingtharyar. "Police and ward authorities are working with local gangs to detain young men and sell them into conscription," the resident said.

Bribery has also become a common feature of the process. Families are often asked to pay between 3 million and 7 million kyats to secure the release of detained individuals. However, sources say that as new training batches approach, detainees are increasingly sent directly to military facilities without the option of paying for release.

The crackdown extends beyond Yangon. In Monywa, Sagaing Region, junta forces arrested more than 60 young men on March 10 and 11. The arrests reportedly targeted commuters between the ages of 25 and 35 at major junctions and within residential wards. Those detained were subsequently transferred to the Northwestern Military Command headquarters.

The developments highlight a growing pattern of systematic forced recruitment, raising concerns among observers about human rights violations and the increasing pressure faced by Myanmar's youth amid the ongoing conflict.



Queuing for petrol in Yangon.  
Photo: AFP

## Update on power cuts and fuel shortages

Myanmar is facing worsening electricity shortages and a deepening fuel crisis as the hot season intensifies, placing additional strain on households and businesses across the country.

In the commercial hub of Yangon, junta authorities have reduced electricity supply by introducing a rotational distribution system divided into two groups, A and B. Under this arrangement, each group experiences at least eight hours of power cuts per day. The system was implemented on March 18, shortly after the completion of the national matriculation examinations, a period during which authorities typically try to maintain more stable electricity access.

According to a statement from the electricity authorities, Myanmar's daily power demand averages around 4,660 megawatts. However, due to damage to key components of the national grid and a decline in natural gas supply, current production has dropped to approximately 3,600 megawatts. Only areas connected to liquefied natural gas (LNG) power plants have been exempted from the rotational outages.

The electricity shortfall is compounding an already severe fuel crisis. Ongoing instability in the Middle East has disrupted fuel supply chains, leading to shortages and rising prices domestically. With reduced access to electricity, many residents and businesses are increasingly reliant on fuel-powered generators, further driving demand for already scarce supplies.

A businessman told Voice of Myanmar that while power shortages are a recurring issue, this year presents a more difficult situation. "We have to be careful with fuel consumption, and the power cuts make it even harder. Even electric vehicle charging now depends on generators," he said.

The situation is further exacerbated by rising temperatures during the peak of the summer season, increasing the need for electricity for cooling. At the same time, fuel shortages have led to long queues at petrol stations nationwide, with many people waiting for hours under extreme heat.

Reports indicate that by the fourth week of March, at least three people had died and several others had collapsed while queuing for fuel in direct sunlight. A



The price of food and other essential supplies has been rocketing. Photo: AFP

young man waiting at a fuel station told Mizzima that even younger individuals are struggling to endure the conditions. "If young people cannot bare the heat, it is even worse for the elderly. Motorbike users suffer the most because we have to wait for hours, and when our turn comes, the fuel quota is very limited," he said.

Adding to the crisis, data from Eldorado Weather shows that four cities in Myanmar ranked among the world's 15 hottest locations at the end of March.

The overlapping challenges of power outages, fuel shortages, and extreme heat are creating increasingly difficult living conditions, with observers warning of further hardship in the months ahead.

### **Update on food supplies and rising cost of living**

Food prices in Myanmar are rising sharply ahead of the traditional Thingyan, with this year's increases significantly higher than usual due to the ongoing fuel crisis and supply disruptions.

While price hikes during the pre-Thingyan period are common, the cost of essential goods such as rice, cooking oil, meat, and vegetables has surged beyond seasonal norms. The situation is being driven in part by global fuel instability linked to tensions in the Middle East, which has affected transportation and distribution across the country.

The junta has set a reference price of 6,600 kyats for palm oil, but market prices have climbed to around 17,000 kyats—nearly three times higher. This gap highlights the limited effectiveness of official price controls amid widespread shortages and rising demand.

Staple food items are also becoming increasingly expensive. Morning glory, a widely consumed vegetable in Myanmar, now costs over 1,000 kyats per bunch. At the same time, seafood supplies have declined as fishing boats reduce operations due to high fuel costs, leading to shortages of fresh fish in urban markets.

A housewife in Yangon told the Ayeyarwaddy Times that prices for basic cooking ingredients—including salt, monosodium glutamate (MSG), and fish sauce—have increased by 500 to 1,000 kyats. "I don't even

want to go to the market anymore," she said, reflecting growing frustration among consumers.

Fuel shortages are also disrupting supply chains between rural producers and urban consumers. Farmers and growers are struggling to transport vegetables to cities, resulting in reduced availability and higher prices. At the same time, those in rural areas face mounting losses as unsold produce spoils or cannot be delivered in time.

The crisis is particularly acute for farmers during the current harvest season for summer paddy and beans. Many report difficulty obtaining fuel at official prices and are forced to purchase it on the black market at significantly higher rates, increasing production costs. Local media reports indicate that some farmers are bringing water pumps to fuel stations with recommendation letters from village authorities, as restrictions prevent the purchase of fuel in portable containers.

Beyond food, shortages are also affecting essential goods such as medicines. Prices for pharmaceuticals have risen by 5 to 10 per cent, with some drug stores forced to close temporarily due to supply constraints. A seller told the Myanmar Pressphoto Agency that high prices and limited availability are making it difficult to sustain business operations. The situation has been worsened by earlier junta restrictions on imports of medicines and other goods through border trade routes.

Meanwhile, government distribution programs for subsidized palm oil and rice—previously sold at controlled prices in limited quantities—have been suspended due to rising fuel costs.

The combined impact of inflation, supply shortages, and reduced purchasing power is intensifying economic hardship for households, particularly as the country approaches one of its most important festive periods.



Arakan Army fighters. Photo: AA

## ARAKAN ARMY INTENSIFIES SIEGE OF SITTWE AND KYAUKPHYU AS FIGHTING REACHES STRATEGIC NAVAL BASES

Violent clashes between the military junta and the Arakan Army (AA) have escalated to the doorstep of the Rakhine State capital, with reports indicating a significant assault on the Shwe Min Gan naval base.

According to military sources and local reports, the AA launched a coordinated attack on the base around 9:00 am on 23 March, utilizing heavy weaponry and snipers.

"The naval base at Min Gan was attacked from across the river, from Zawmatat and Ye Yoe Pyin villages. The fighting on 24 March killed around 30 or 40 soldiers. There were about 80 personnel at the base, and the attackers were very close, only about 400 to 500 feet away," the source said.

The fighting has effectively moved from the outskirts into the inner administrative zones of Sittwe. Clashes are currently concentrated around Shwe Min Gan Port and the Sat Yoe Kya Creek, located just over a mile from the city centre.

Former military officials and residents report that the junta is struggling to maintain its positions due to the difficult terrain and the proximity of AA fighters, who have advanced to within 500 feet of the naval installations. Wounded personnel are reportedly being transported to the 100-bed military hospital in Sittwe.

Fighting in the rural areas of Sittwe Township began on 23 February, with clashes in Shwe Min Gan becoming particularly intense since early March.

The Shwe Min Gan naval base plays a key role in

supplying military operations in Sittwe Township via waterways.

During curfew hours, The junta has been reinforcing its troops with large naval vessels under the cover of nightly curfews, often arriving around 8 pm, when civilians are not allowed to be outside, the source added.

In Kyaukphyu Township, fighting is also intensifying in villages near Min Pyin, with the AA reportedly advancing toward naval bases, according to another military source.

"In Kyaukphyu, clashes are intense in the villages of Kyaukpyauk, Wahmaung, and Ngaoak. We expect significant developments before the army's anniversary on 10 April," the source said.

The AA is currently active in both Kyaukphyu and Sittwe but has not yet launched attacks on Munaung.

Sittwe hosts a strong military presence, including more than 10 warships and at least 10 battalions, including the Regional Command Headquarters, Infantry Battalions 20, 270, and 232, Light Infantry Battalions 344 and 354, as well as Police Battalions 12 and 36.

Kyaukphyu Township houses key junta military installations, including the Dhanyawady Naval Headquarters, Light Infantry Battalions 542 and 543, Infantry Battalion 34, Police Battalion 32, and the Taungmawgyi Naval Branch.

The Arakan Army currently controls Paletwa in Chin State and 14 townships in Rakhine State.



Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh.  
Photo: AFP

## ROHINGYA REFUGEES IN BANGLADESH WORRY AHEAD OF FOOD AID CUTS

Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh expressed concern on Wednesday as the cash-strapped UN World Food Programme (WFP) prepares to cut aid for large portions of the 1.2 million-strong group.

Bangladesh's vast refugee camps shelter Rohingya who fled persecution in neighbouring war-torn Myanmar, with more than 150,000 new arrivals since 2024, according to the WFP.

The agency is the sole provider of monthly food assistance for the community. But with global funding stretched thin and more people needing aid, resources are already under pressure.

Currently, Rohingya in the Cox's Bazar camps receive food aid equivalent to \$12 per month.

From April 1, rations will be cut to just \$7 for groups deemed to be at lower risk, and \$10 for a middle category.

Only those deemed "extremely food insecure", who make up around a third of the current beneficiaries, will maintain the same \$12 payment. The designation includes households headed by children or women, or the elderly or physically challenged.

WFP spokesperson Kun Li said the changes aim to "deliver assistance more equitably and in line with real needs".

"Every household continues to receive support according to their food gap, with the most food-insecure receiving the highest level," she added.

But refugee representative Sayed Ullah, president of the United Council of Rohingya civil rights platform, said people were already struggling on meagre rations.

"Do you think \$12 is enough for a person to have food for an entire month?" Ullah told AFP.

"How on earth will a person survive on \$7 to \$10 worth of food assistance?"

Refugees are officially not allowed to work, and Ullah said smaller rations may push many to engage in "illegal activities just to survive".

Bangladesh's Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner Mohammad Mizanur Rahman acknowledged that aid agencies are "facing a funding crisis" but warned of the potential fallout.

"The ramifications of this decision will be reflected on multiple fronts," he said.

"Hungry people are angry people, and there may be law and order issues."

Many of the Rohingya escaped Myanmar during a brutal military crackdown in 2017.

The campaign, which saw Rohingya villages burned and civilians killed, is the subject of a genocide case at the United Nations' top court in The Hague.

Worldwide WFP funding fell by about 40 percent in 2025.

US President Donald Trump slashed foreign aid after taking office last year, dealing a heavy blow to humanitarian operations worldwide.

In March 2025, following the cuts, the WFP said it would have to cut monthly aid to \$6, but the measures were not implemented.

AFP



## **BMC SAYS AIRSTRIKES HAVE KILLED OVER 4,000 CIVILIANS, MAKES URGENT CALL TO CUT OFF AVIATION FUEL**

**O**n 26 March, the Blood Money Campaign called for international action to stop aviation fuel supplies to Myanmar's military junta, warning that this access fuels escalating airstrikes on civilians and contributes to war crimes.

The statement said that the military junta has carried out 6,986 airstrikes over more than five years since the coup, resulting in the deaths of 4,299 civilians, including infants.

The text of the statement is as follows.

On February 28, 2026, following the outbreak of conflict in the Middle East (Gulf region) initiated by the United States and fascist Israeli forces, Iran's retaliatory blockade of the Strait of Hormuz has caused disruptions to crude oil supplies, leading to shortages in countries around the world. As a result, nations facing fuel crises, including aviation fuel, are striving to secure energy supplies. Meanwhile, the illegitimate Myanmar military junta has been forcibly seizing civilian aviation fuel and continues carrying out airstrikes against civilians across the country.

On March 5, 2026, in Kayin State's Nyaunglebin District, residents from the villages of Yaetwinkone, Khrukone, and Kyaungkone were forcibly detained and treated as human shields. Subsequently, airstrikes

carried out using jet fighters and drones resulted in the deaths of at least 25 civilians, including five children under the age of 10. On March 8, in Rakhine State's An Township, an airstrike targeted a prison holding Prisoners of War (POWs). The attack, carried out using four combat aircraft and four Y-12 transport planes, killed 116 Prisoners of War (POWs) and injured 32 others, including many civilians among the casualties.

On March 10, in Kachin State, near Hsinhkan village to the west of Bhamo, a jet fighter and a Y-12 aircraft hovered and carried out airstrikes on a gold mining site for a period of time. As a result, the attack killed at least 30 people and injured no fewer than 20. On March 20, in Upper Sagaing Region, a jet fighter bombed a monastery sheltering internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Ward (3) of Katha Township at around 11 a.m. while monks were having their meal. The bombing killed at least 50 displaced civilians, including monks and children.

**T**he criminal military junta carried out more than 6,900 (6,986) aerial bombing attacks over the five-year period from February 2021 to 19 March 2026, killing over 4,200 (4,299) civilians, including infants. In March 2026 alone, at least four airstrikes that killed no fewer than 20 civilians in mass-casualty incidents resulted in the deaths of over 200 people, including children, women, and monks, and caused injuries to many more.

The illegitimate (illegal) Myanmar military junta has bypassed sanctions imposed by international governments and continues its bombing attacks by using aviation fuel it has procured internationally and by forcibly confiscating fuel from civilian airlines. These airstrikes highlight the lack of effective action by the international community and expose the gaps in coordinated sanctions among countries. At the same time, the criminal junta is attempting to regain international legitimacy on the international stage by convening a sham parliament after merely removing military uniforms, while continuing to operate its authoritarian governing apparatus.

ASEAN, the EU, the UK, and other international governments must not recognize the criminal military junta as the legitimate government of Myanmar under any circumstances. They must act in a unified and coordinated manner to hold the junta accountable and bring an end to its aerial bombings and ongoing war crimes against civilians. We further call for urgent, coordinated sanctions across countries to cut off the junta's access to aviation fuel and maritime insurance services provided by international companies.





Mandalay after the quake.  
Photo: AFP

## SHALLOW MAGNITUDE 4.2 EARTHQUAKE RATTLES MANDALAY ON EVE OF 2025 DISASTER ANNIVERSARY

A shallow magnitude 4.2 earthquake struck approximately 30 kilometers southeast of Mandalay at 7:36 pm on 26 March, sending panicked residents into the streets just two days before the first anniversary of the country's deadliest seismic event in a century.

According to the Department of Meteorology and Hydrology (DMH), the tremor's epicentre was located roughly two miles east of Mahaangmyay Township at a depth of 12 kilometres.

The earthquake was felt strongly throughout Mandalay and in the nearby hill station of Pyin Oo Lwin.

Residents in high-rise buildings reported significant shaking and a loud rumbling sound, with many evacuating their homes in fear of a repeat of the 2025 catastrophe.

A local woman described the experience as a terrifying reminder of the previous year, stating that the intensity and sound of the tremor prompted her to run immediately onto the road.

The timing of this latest tremor has heightened psychological distress across central Myanmar as

the region prepared for the one-year anniversary of the 28 March, 2025, earthquake. That magnitude 7.7 disaster claimed over 3,800 lives, displaced more than 1.3 million people, and caused nearly \$11 billion in damages across five states and regions.

Recovery efforts remain ongoing, with hundreds of families still residing in temporary shelters and iconic structures like the Ava Bridge and various religious buildings awaiting full reconstruction.

Commemorative events are scheduled for 28 March, to honour the victims of the 2025 disaster. The Mandalay Region Government will lead morning merit-sharing ceremonies at local monasteries, followed by an afternoon session to recognize the rescue teams and volunteers who served on the frontlines of the relief effort.

In the wake of this latest 4.2 magnitude tremor, authorities have reiterated safety warnings, advising residents to maintain earthquake preparedness as the region continues to experience sporadic seismic activity along the Sagaing Fault.



## MYANMAR JUNTA PARAMOTOR ATTACK KILLS FOUR VILLAGERS IN MANDALAY REGION

Four villagers were killed and a young child was seriously injured during a targeted airstrike by military junta forces on Nyaung Kone village in Mahlaing Township, Mandalay Region. According to the Mahlaing Public Information Network, the attack occurred at 2:45 pm on 26 March, when two military paramotors dropped four bombs on the residential area.

The victims included one woman and three men, while the injured child has been transported for emergency medical treatment.

The strike caused significant destruction to civilian property, with at least eight houses damaged and electricity poles destroyed, leading to widespread power outages in the vicinity.

"Since this is the first time the local people have experienced such an event, they are in a state of shock and fear," the official said.

Local officials emphasized that there were no active clashes or presence of resistance forces in Mahlaing Township at the time of the attack, describing the

incident as a deliberate assault on a peaceful civilian population. This event marks the first time residents in this specific area have experienced such an aerial bombardment, leaving the community in a state of severe shock and fear.

The Mahlaing Public Information Network stated that although Mahlaing Township is an area under the control of the Military Commission forces and there were no nearby clashes or presence of PDF members, the airstrike was a deliberate attack targeting civilians.

The Mahlaing Public Information Network has urged the public to disperse immediately and avoid gathering in groups if they hear aircraft, as the Military Commission forces frequently carry out airstrikes on hospitals, schools, monasteries, and public gathering spots.

Military Commission forces have conducted at least five airstrikes on villages in Mahlaing Township. Local organizations have advised residents to dig bomb shelters in anticipation of further potential air attacks.



Photo: AFP

## UNCERTAINTY CLOUDS POTENTIAL REOPENING OF MYAWADDY-KAWKAREIK ASIAN HIGHWAY

Reports are circulating on social media that the Myawaddy-Kawkareik Asian Highway, a vital trade artery between Thailand and Myanmar, is preparing to reopen. While some sources suggest repair work is underway at the Myawaddy Trade Zone and the Thai-Myanmar Friendship Bridge No. 2, local entrepreneurs and traders remain skeptical about a definitive timeline.

Mizzima contacted trade entrepreneurs based in Myawaddy, who said that while they have heard reports of the Asian Highway reopening, there has been no official confirmation or indication of a specific timeline.

Many believe the road will reopen, and while some territorial control has been restored, the situation is not what it once was. Considering current conditions, reopening is possible.

However, although there is widespread expectation it will resume operations, no exact date has been confirmed. Overall, the chances are about 50-50, a source close to the Myawaddy Chamber of Commerce told Mizzima.

Meanwhile, despite reports of repair work at the trade zone and Bridge No. 2, a local trader said that in reality only routine, rotating cleaning operations are currently taking place.

Buildings within the trade zone have sustained significant damage and will require extensive, long-term repairs before they can be brought back into use.

“The buildings in the trade zone have been looted, electricity cables stripped, and much of the infrastructure left in ruins. Restoring the area will require major renovations that could take around a year and a half. There has been no systematic cleaning of the trade zone, although a district official in Myawaddy has instructed that it be cleaned once a week,” a trader based in Myawaddy said.

Procedures and regulations for reopening the Asian Highway and resuming trade remain unclear. Traders said no directives have yet been issued regarding foreign exchange use, the issuance of import licences, or how to handle goods that were previously licensed but not imported.

Additionally, the ongoing fuel crisis is seen as a further obstacle to the resumption of trade.

At present, with the Asian Highway closed, goods are being imported via alternative routes, including Kyat Oo Taung Road and Road 1018.

There are also instances of goods being held up due to high taxes and the confiscation of Thai products by the Military Commission.

On March 25, a meeting was held at the Ratchamanu Special Task Force Headquarters in Mae Sot, Tak Province, between Thai authorities and the Military Commission led by the battalion commander of Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) 275, based in the Myawaddy garrison. Following the meeting, local residents, traders, and drivers expressed hope for the reopening of border trade routes.

However, military tensions persist in northern Kawkareik Township near Out Bo Te and along the old Dawna Taung Kyaw Road, with the security situation remaining unstable amid ongoing airstrikes.

As a result, even if the Asian Highway reopens, concerns remain over whether the safety of civilians and the security of goods can be ensured.



Photo: AFP

## **JUNTA IMPOSES STRICT BLACKLIST AND REPORTING MANDATES ON MYANMAR'S OVERSEAS WORKFORCE**

The military junta's Ministry of Labour issued a stern warning on 25 March, targeting migrant workers who attempt to bypass official recruitment channels. Under the new directive, workers who submit fraudulent reports such as posing as returning employees on leave to avoid mandatory pre-departure training and medical exams will be blacklisted and prohibited from traveling abroad for a specified period.

Both individual workers and the organizations or brokers assisting them will face investigation and prosecution under the 1999 Overseas Employment Law and other relevant regulations.

This crackdown follows a 2025 policy that strictly limited the number of workers foreign employment agencies could send abroad, with some agencies restricted to just 15 recruits per month.

As a result, some new workers began making their own arrangements, as there were not enough slots available through official agencies, according to the owner of a foreign employment agency.

"If you register with the agency, it can only register 15 people per month, leaving some workers unregistered. So, they just make their own arrangements. In the past, when supervision was weak, this couldn't be monitored. Later, when checks were reinstated, many didn't return from leave. They knew these were new workers planning to leave, which is why regulations were tightened," an owner of an agency said.

After enacting the People's Military Service Law in February 2024, further restrictions were imposed on workers' rights to work abroad.

In January 2026, holders of the Overseas Worker Identification Card (OWIC) were instructed to obtain permission from the junta's Department of Labor before traveling abroad, and those returning from overseas were required to report at the airport arrivals counter.



Photo: AFP

## MAGWAY AIR FORCE BASE ATTACKED WITH ELEVEN 107MM ROCKETS

**B**rave Warriors for Myanmar (BWM) said it had carried out an attack on the Magway Air Base in Myanmar's Magway Region, using eleven 107mm rockets.

The Magway Air Force Base was struck in a coordinated attack with allied forces at 11:20 pm on 25 March.

The intended targets included oil tanks, bomb depots, aircraft depots, and air force personnel, a BWM official told Mizzima.

Explosions were reported within the air force base, and a steady number of ambulances moving in and out throughout the night suggested that at least some of the targets had been successfully struck.

The rapid pace of the attack may have damaged the internal systems of stored munitions, potentially rendering them unstable, he said. As a result, the bombs could detonate unpredictably during reinstallation on aircraft, posing a serious risk of secondary explosions and endangering military personnel.

The BWM official said the airstrikes targeted the Central Dry Zone, known as Anyar and regarded as the heart of the revolution, adding that the junta was attempting to counter intensified attacks in the region. He added that as the junta concentrates its efforts on Anyar, revolutionary groups must also provide effective support.

In a statement released on 26 March, BWM said the operation was conducted in coordination with allied groups, noting that the targeted Magway Air Base is a key military hub used to store and distribute aerial bombs produced by Defence Equipment Factory No. 21 to bases across the country.

The statement added that the strike on the air base, home to stationed aircraft, was carried out on behalf of the people and aimed to bolster the local revolution, even amid global and national oil shortages. The attack was intended to strengthen popular resistance and support revolutionary forces, countering actions that targeted civilians and insurgents.

BWM said it will continue efforts to undermine the junta's air force, leveraging the global oil shortage as a strategic advantage to advance the revolutionary cause.

The attack marked BWM's 53rd operation and was conducted in collaboration with No More Dictatorship (NMD-PDF), Infinity (Anyar), Justice Brothers Force, Daung Sit Aung Group, and Myaing Pa Ka Pha. A BWM official extended special thanks to the local groups that supported the strike on Magway Air Force during its first challenging operation.



Photo: Supplied

## MYANMAR JUNTA AIRSTRIKES TARGET MYAWADDY TRADE CORRIDOR AND TANINTHARYI REGION

Myanmar military aircraft launched a series of intense airstrikes on the morning of 26 March, targeting the strategic southern Myawaddy corridor near the Thailand–Myanmar border.

According to local sources and frontline reports, jet fighters circled the area multiple times before dropping bombs on positions surrounding Minletpan, Hpalu, and Yathaegu villages.

“The planes circled three or four times and dropped bombs on areas near Bokalanakone and Yathaegu. These locations are frequently targeted, as the heaviest fighting is taking place there,” said a source from Minletpan.

The military is reportedly attempting to launch an offensive using ground troops, artillery, drones, and airstrikes in the southern areas of Myawaddy Township, and the tensions remain high in the Minletpan and Hpalu areas amid ongoing clashes between the junta army and the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA).

Since October 2025, the junta has been conducting a large-scale offensive along three military fronts, supported by airstrikes and artillery, in an effort to gain full control of the area.

According to revolutionary military sources, the army has advanced along these fronts using a large number of conscripts recruited under the People’s Military Service Law. However, the army has been unable to advance due to blocking attacks by KNLA

joint forces, and casualties among newly recruited conscripts have been mounting.

The military has carried out airstrikes not only on active conflict zones but also on civilian-populated areas and camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs), using aircraft, drones, suicide drones, and heavy artillery. These attacks have resulted in civilian casualties and damage to buildings, forcing residents to flee and relocate during the third week of March.

Furthermore, due to airstrikes and heavy artillery shelling by the military, shells have landed and exploded inside online scam compounds in the Hpalu area, causing deaths and injuries. As a result, these operations are now being relocated along the Son See Myaing–Kyaikdon route to areas where no fighting has been reported. This includes the headquarters of the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA) in Son See Myaing, as well as DKBA-controlled areas such as Kyaukkhat and farther south at Three Pagodas Pass.

Myawaddy Township is part of the KNLA’s Brigade 6 in the Kaaren National Union (KNU)-designated Doolaya District.

According to a source, on the same day, the military carried out airstrikes dropping more than 30 bombs not only in Brigade 6 territory but also in areas near Gonnyinseik village in Thayetchaung Township, Tanintharyi Region, which falls under KNLA Brigade 4 of the KNU’s Myeik–Dawei District.



Drone warfare. Photo: Supplied

## MYANMAR JUNTA SUICIDE DRONES HIT VILLAGE MONASTERY, CAUSING HEAVY DAMAGE

Two suicide drones deployed by the military junta reportedly struck a village monastery in the Karen National Union (KNU)-designated Mone (Moo) Township, Nyaunglebin District in Bago Region, causing its complete destruction. The attack took place on the afternoon of 23 March.

According to KNU reports, the drone was launched by the junta's Light Infantry Battalion 439 and struck a monastery in Nobokhe village. Photos released by the KNU show that the monastery's roof and ceiling sustained significant damages in the drone strike.

"Heavy artillery, drones and aircraft are being used in deliberate, daily attacks on civilian villages and workplaces, leaving residents in a constant state of fear," the KNU said in a statement.

Beyond Mone Township, the junta has also carried out drone and airstrikes in other townships across Nyaunglebin District.

According to the KNU, the junta carried out drone and Y-12 aircraft bombings in Kyauk Kyi (Ler Doh) and Shwegyin (Saw Hti) townships between 19 and 22 March, injuring one person and damaging 16 houses.



Photo: Mizzima

## MYANMAR RAILWAYS EXPAND YANGON-NAYPYIDAW ROUTE WITH NEW DEMU SERVICES

**M**yanmar Railways (MR) has announced a significant expansion of its express services between Yangon and Naypyidaw, introducing additional modern, air-conditioned Diesel Electric Multiple Unit (DEMU) trains to meet growing passenger demand. The new service, designated as Train No. 33 (Up), officially commenced operations, 26 March 2026.

According to the Ministry of Transport and Communications, a full standardized schedule for all trains on this route will go into effect starting 27 March.

The expansion increases the frequency of the popular DEMU service from two to three daily round-trip services. The newly added pair, No. 33 (Up) and No. 34 (Down), will operate alongside the existing No. 7/8 and No. 31/32 DEMU sets. These Japanese-imported

trains have become a preferred choice for travellers due to their reduced travel time approximately five and a half hours and modern amenities compared to older rolling stock.

In a move to modernize the passenger experience, tickets for the new services are being integrated into the Online Railways Ticketing and Payment (ORTP) system.

This digital platform, which transitioned from a pilot phase earlier this February, allows passengers to purchase tickets up to seven days in advance for full-route journeys and three days in advance for intermediate stations. The system is accessible via a web browser at [ortp.railways.gov.mm](http://ortp.railways.gov.mm) or through QR codes available at major stations.





## UK SANCTIONS CRYPTO NETWORK LINKED TO SOUTHEAST ASIA SCAM CENTRES

**O**n 26 March, the UK Government imposed sanctions on a cryptocurrency network linked to scam centres in Southeast Asia to combat online fraud, disrupt illicit financial flows, and address human rights abuses involving trafficked workers in cybercrime.

The UK government statement is as follows.

A cryptocurrency network through which stolen personal data can be sold to fraudsters is sanctioned today as part of efforts to dismantle a network of 'scam centres', protect British nationals from online fraud, and prevent the exploitation of trafficked victims.

Across Southeast Asia, scam centres are using sophisticated schemes, including scams in which people are lured into fake romantic relationships, to defraud victims on an industrial scale, including in the UK.

Those conducting the scams are often trafficked foreign nationals, who have been lured into purpose-built scam compounds under the pretence of legitimate

jobs, only to be trapped and forced to carry out online fraud under the threat of torture.

Last year, the UK, in coordination with the US, announced sanctions against the Prince Group and its Chairman Chen Zhi, who are responsible for a huge network of scam centres, triggering a wave of investigations and arrests across the region and freezes and seizures of assets worth over £1 billion.

Today the government has stepped up its fight against these scam centres, targeting the owners and operators of a recently identified facility known as '#8 Park', believed to be Cambodia's largest scam compound, with capacity to accommodate 20,000 trafficked workers.

The UK is also the first country to sanction Xinbi, one of the largest illicit marketplaces in Southeast Asia, which provides cryptocurrency-based services to scam centres – including #8 Park. These services include selling stolen personal data, which can be used to target scam victims, and satellite internet equipment, which is used to contact victims.

The UK's sanctions will isolate the platform from the legitimate crypto ecosystem, significantly disrupting its operations by affecting its ability to send and receive cryptocurrency transactions. BYEX, another cryptocurrency platform that had been used to launder the proceeds of scams, shut down following the UK's sanctions last year.

Minister of State for Europe, North America and Overseas Territories, Stephen Doughty said:

"Our sanctions today send a clear message: We will not allow British people to become victims of these dreadful scams or tolerate the awful human rights abuses perpetrated in these scam centres.

"We must keep up the pressure on dirty money and those who benefit from it. At the Illicit Finance Summit in June, the UK will drive international action to tackle the ways in which ill-gotten profits are laundered and moved around the world."

The individuals and entities targeted today include:

- Legend Innovation Co.: the operator of #8 Park, a recently identified scam compound linked to the Prince Group and thought to be Cambodia's largest. Legend Innovation Co.'s director, Eang Soklim, is also sanctioned Xinbi: a Chinese-language online marketplace that enables the operation of scam centres in Southeast Asia by offering cryptocurrency-based services. It is one of the largest such marketplaces and has facilitated the laundering of stolen crypto assets by North Korea
- Thet Li: a key lieutenant of Chen Zhi who has managed the Prince Group's international financial network, including in Taiwan
- Hu Xiaowei: a long-term associate of Chen Zhi who has been unmasked as involved in the Prince Group's financial network under 3 different aliases

Today's sanctions will have an immediate effect, further immobilising this scam network and its financial enablers, who have profited from the exploitation of vulnerable people.

A number of London properties will be frozen as a result of today's sanctions. This is in addition to the substantial UK assets already frozen by previous action against the network, including a £100 million office block in the City of London, 2 multi-million-pound mansions, and a helicopter.

Lord Hanson, Fraud Minister said:

Fraud is a global crime run by organised networks operating across borders and targeting victims at scale. That is why we are acting both at home and abroad.

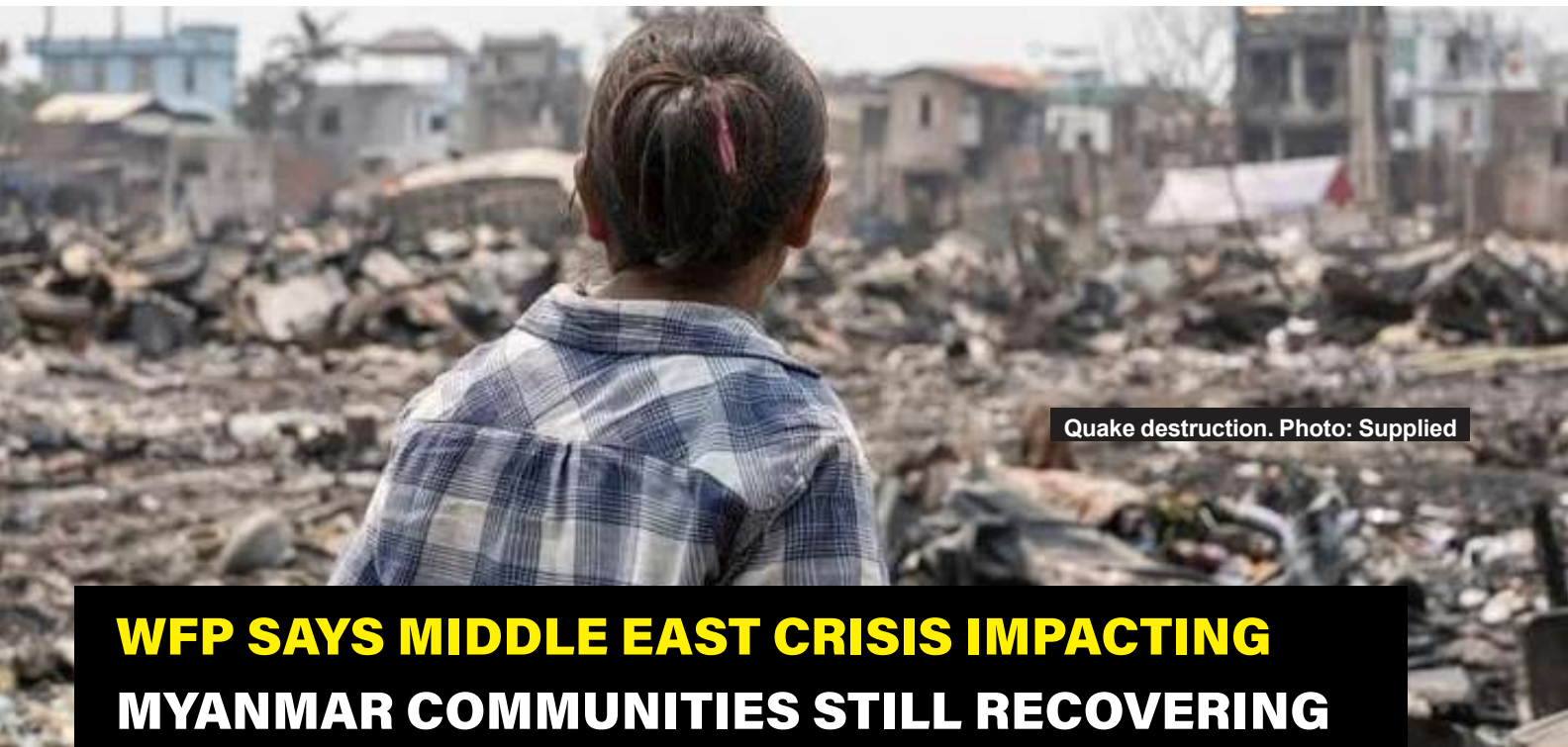
The launch of our new Online Crime Centre will bring together the police, intelligence agencies and the private sector in the UK to shut down the channels scammers rely on.

Actions like these sanctions and working with international partners through the recently launched UK-backed INTERPOL Global Fraud Taskforce demonstrate our commitment to protect the public and disrupt criminals worldwide.

Following the UK actions, Cambodia's government has launched its largest ever crackdown on the scam economy, with local authorities estimating that 2,500 sites have been raided, leading to the closure of hundreds of scam centres and the release of tens of thousands of foreign nationals.

Today's sanctions support the actions being taken by Cambodia and other countries in the region.

At the UK's Illicit Finance Summit in June, the Foreign Secretary will drive renewed international commitment to tackle the misuse of property and crypto-assets to launder dirty money and move it across international borders.



Quake destruction. Photo: Supplied

## WFP SAYS MIDDLE EAST CRISIS IMPACTING MYANMAR COMMUNITIES STILL RECOVERING FOR LAST YEAR'S DEVASTATING EARTHQUAKE

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) released a statement on 27 March calling attention to the impact the Middle East crisis is having on communities still struggling to rebuild one year after devastating earthquake in central Myanmar. The WFP said the crisis is having an impact on fuel, food, and fertilizer prices which are creating potential for hunger among vulnerable families.

The WFP statement continues below.

WFP's latest monitoring shows a fragile recovery from the earthquake. In the affected regions of Sagaing and Mandalay, one in six households continue to face moderate to severe food insecurity.

Half of all families remain only marginally food secure – surviving day to day and unable to absorb even the smallest shock. That additional shock is now taking hold.

"People who survived the earthquake have barely begun to stand again, and now another blow is knocking them back down," said Michael Dunford, WFP Country Director and Representative in Myanmar. "This new wave of global instability is hitting Myanmar at the worst possible moment."

The conflict in the Middle East is disrupting transportation and driving fuel shortages across Myanmar. Rising fuel prices are pushing up the cost of moving food and agricultural goods, placing additional strain on households already struggling to afford basic staples.

The crisis is also striking Myanmar's farmers as they prepare for monsoon crops. With fertilizer demand expected to rise over the next three months, fuel shortages and rising input costs are threatening to push production expenses to double last year's levels.

These compounding shocks are expected to hit hardest in conflict- and earthquake-affected areas, such as Chin, Kachin, Kayah, Rakhine, Sagaing and Shan, worsening the food insecurity in a country where 12.4 million people – nearly one quarter of the population – are already facing acute hunger.

Over the past year, WFP reached half a million earthquake survivors with relief and recovery support. WFP has now transitioned from emergency relief to restoring community infrastructure that provides long-term stability.

WFP needs USD150 million in funding for 2026 to assist 1.5 million people across the country with life-saving assistance and resilience support. Without sufficient funding, WFP will be forced to prioritize the most urgent life-saving needs, potentially scaling back recovery efforts that help earthquake survivors rebuild livelihoods and reduce long-term dependence on aid.

"The people of Myanmar have endured shock after shock – conflict, climate disasters, the devastating earthquake, and now a global fuel crisis," Mr. Dunford warned. "We must stand with them now. One year after the earthquake, they cannot afford another fall."



Photo: Mizzima

## **YANGON RESIDENTS FACE SYSTEMATIC EXTORTION LINKED TO CONSCRIPTION DRIVE**

**A**dministrative officials across several Yangon townships are reportedly using overdue guest registrations as a tool for financial extortion and forced military recruitment.

Reports from residents and the Rangoon Scout Network (RSN) indicate that junta-aligned ward administrators are demanding payments ranging from 50,000 to 300,000 Kyats from those who fail to report overnight guests within the mandatory timeframe.

The extortion appears most concentrated in Thaketa, Tamwe, and Mingala Taung Nyunt townships.

According to local monitors, officials are increasingly using the threat of the People's Military Service Law to squeeze funds from the populace. In

cases where residents cannot afford the "fine," they are reportedly threatened with immediate enlistment into the military's upcoming training batches.

An official from the Rangoon Scout Network (RSN) said, "They usually extort between 50,000 and 300,000 Kyats for overdue registrations. I heard they demanded 50,000 in Tamwe last night."

During an inspection in Thaketa on 13 March they reportedly asked for 300,000. In other townships, they blackmail and demand money based on the location. They seize ID cards and won't return them until the money is paid. During times when the military needs recruits, they threaten to put people in the service if they don't pay."

On the night of 23 March, in Tamwe Township, Meitta Nyunt Ward, on Nay Myo Thura Road, junta forces were searching for an alleged naval deserter at a specific address and simultaneously inspected other nearby homes.

The Tamwe Scout Group (Tamwe Nway Oo) released information stating that homes with overdue guest registrations in that ward had to pay a fine of 50,000 Kyats on the morning of 24 March.

A resident of Phoe Myay Road in Mingala Taung Nyunt Township said that since last year, fines for overdue registrations ranged from 5,000 to 10,000 Kyats, but they have heard of other townships collecting various amounts between 50,000 and 100,000 Kyats.

"Last year, if you went to report and were even one day late, they wouldn't accept it and demanded money. I even told them my father was unwell, and I had trouble getting a bus ticket back to the village, but they didn't care and said it was 'my problem.' Since then, I haven't dared to be late and carefully reported guest registration every two weeks. Friends in South and North Dagon say they also have to pay 50,000 or 100,000. Hostels with many men are charged more; I've heard if you don't pay, you'll have to draw lots for military service," she told Mizzima.

A man living under guest registration in Pazundaung Township said that since late 2024, he has been paying the ward administrator between 50,000 and 100,000 Kyats monthly to stay off the conscription list. This year, in 2026, he had to pay 200,000 Kyats because the administrator blackmailed him with military service when his registration was overdue.

"They demand 50,000 or 100,000 from us every month. Recently they asked for 200,000. When I pleaded with them not to increase the amount since we pay regularly, they said it was specifically for being over a week late with the guest registration. They said if I didn't pay, I'd be at the top of the conscription list, so I had to give it. They didn't ask for extra the next few times, but I'm still paying the regular 100,000," he told Mizzima.

The RSN official mentioned that junta-aligned administrators conduct more frequent inspections whenever they need recruits. They often target suspicious homes, particularly apartments and hostels where groups of men live, and conduct raids based on tips from informers.

In addition to arresting residents without guest registration, they also detain people sitting on the roadside at night on the pretext of drinking alcohol. In secluded areas, they often set people up with drug possession charges to extort those who can afford it. If they can't get money, they send them into military service, the official added.

According to RSN records, the junta arrested 58 people in Yangon during the month of February alone.

As the junta's military service training reaches Batch 23, men taking refuge in Yangon and those living in male hostels are reportedly living in constant fear and anxiety due to the Conscription Law.



## LANDMINE AMBUSH KILLS 10 MYANMAR JUNTA SOLDIERS ON THE FALAM-KALAY ROAD

Approximately 10 military junta soldiers were killed in a targeted landmine ambush near Zaw Kaung village on 19 March.

According to the Civil Defence Militia-Siyin (CDM-Siyin) of the Chinland Defence Forces (CDF), the attack struck a column of roughly 300 troops as they advanced from Kalay, Sagaing Region, toward the strategic town of Falam.

"They walked right into five directional mines we had set up, and an entire squad was wiped out," Thawng Pu, Chief of Staff of the CDF CDM-Siyin said.

A video released by the group shows a squad of soldiers being monitored before the coordinated detonation, which reportedly wiped out an entire unit. In the aftermath of the ambush, the junta launched three retaliatory airstrikes using jet fighters, though no resistance fighters were harmed.

The Chief of Staff added that although this column has been repeatedly targeted with mines, they haven't been able to provide a full report on all incidents yet due to security concerns for their members, internet connectivity issues, and ongoing clashes.

The column continued its advance, and intense fighting broke out on 24 March near Var Lon village in Falam Township. Chin Defence Forces have not yet released details regarding casualties from that clash.

Thawng Pu, Chief of Staff of CDF CDM-Siyin, has requested that the public contribute in any way they

can to make the revolution more effective as they continue to resist columns advancing from Kalay toward northern Chin State.

The junta is currently carrying out an offensive against Falam, a town controlled by Chin revolutionary forces since late October 2025. Over 1,000 troops have been deployed across four routes: Kalay-Natchaung-Gangaw, Kalay-Natchaung-Webula, Kalay-Khampat-Thaing Ngin, and Tedim-Thaing Ngin.

During more than five months of fighting, over 200 junta soldiers have been killed, more than 250 wounded, and over 40 captured by Chin forces. Approximately 50 members of the Chin allied forces have lost their lives, according to a statement released by the Institute of Chin Affairs (ICA) on 9 March.

Despite heavy casualties, the military continues to push toward Falam, a key town on the India-Myanmar border trade route. Troops are currently stationed 10 miles away from the town in Swanthayan to the east and Khomli to the west.

Junta columns are also stationed in Lumbang and Parte villages, 15 miles from Falam. Operations are being conducted through four separate columns, including the one currently at Var Lon.

Nearly 30 civilians have been killed by junta military incursions, airstrikes, and artillery fire. Over 60 buildings including schools, hospitals, churches, and residential homes have been destroyed.



Men rounded up for military conscription.  
Photo: Supplied

## FORCED RECRUITMENT SURGES IN MEIKTILA DISTRICT AS CONSCRIPTION IN MYANMAR REACHES 21ST BATCH

Reports from Mandalay Region indicate a sharp escalation in forced recruitment, with approximately 120 individuals reportedly conscripted by military authorities across Meiktila, Thazi, and Pyawbwe townships between January and March 2026.

Data compiled by Mizzima, in coordination with local sources and the People's Defence Organizations (PDO), reveals a systematic campaign targeting villages such as Tharyarkone, Kyini, and Kwet Nge, where young men are being seized from homes, workshops, and transit gates.

"Even visitors were recruited. Although some could be ransomed back, most were not released. As far as I've heard, there have been about 50 people taken this month alone. They take one or two people per village and target places where youth gather. On the 16th, they entered a family business within a large compound in Kyini village and took 11 people," said a Pyawbwe resident.

Nearly 20 people in Kwet Nge village, over 50 in Kyini village, over 20 in Tharyarkone village, and 23

individuals in Thazi town were forcibly conscripted. The recruitment involved arrests at homes, domestic workshops, and travel transit gates. In Thazi Township, arrests were even reported inside a mosque.

According to residents, "military service fees" ranging from 200,000 to 300,000 Kyats per household are also being collected in these townships. Those recruited from Thazi were previously sent mostly to Light Infantry Battalions (LIBs) 113 and 315 under the Light Infantry Division 99, however, residents say they do not know which units those recruited have been sent to this year.

Due to the continuous forced recruitment by the junta, revolutionary forces in various areas are offering opportunities for youth to join and coordinate with them instead.

The junta activated the People's Military Service Law on 10 February 2024. They announced an intake of 5,000 people per batch, and as of March 2026, the recruitment has reached Batch 21.



Photo: AFP

## MYANMAR JUNTA AIRSTRIKE ON AYADAW RESISTANCE CAMP KILLS FIVE PDO COMRADES, INCLUDING THREE WOMEN

A devastating late-night airstrike by the military junta on 22 March, has left five members of the People's Defence Organization (PDO/PaKaPha) dead in Ayadaw Township.

According to revolutionary sources and local officials from the Monywa District PDO, the attack targeted a camp operating under the National Unity Government (NUG) near the border of Myinmu Township.

The assault began around 7:30 pm when three jet fighters launched a heavy bombardment, dropping four 200-pound bombs and one 500-pound bomb on the site. The massive scale of the explosives caused extensive damage to the camp and the surrounding area along the inter-district road near Min village.

"They inhumanely bombed us in the middle of the night. Since the bombs were so large, the entire camp was heavily damaged. It is deeply saddening that three female comrades, who were like siblings to us, were among those killed," the source said.

Among the five victims, who were all aged between 20 and 30, were three female comrades. Three additional members sustained severe injuries and are currently receiving medical treatment.

"Although we took a heavy hit, we will not back down. They will have to pay for this bloody attack. Currently, we are conducting area clearance and repairing the camp," the revolutionary source said.

Regarding the incident, an official from the Monywa District PDO confirmed that the bombing occurred along the inter-district road near Min village in Ayadaw Township, on the border with Myinmu Township, resulting in the deaths of five PDO comrades.

"I confirm the deaths of the five PDO comrades. The strike did not hit the camp directly but landed beside the main inter-district road between Min village in Ayadaw (Monywa District) and Myinmu (Sagaing District)," the Monywa District PDO official said.

Revolutionary forces have warned that the junta is increasingly relying on airpower over ground battles, targeting defence camps and civilian areas, and urged both resistance groups and the public to remain highly vigilant.

Previously, on 12 February, a PDO camp in Salingyi Township near Phowintaung was attacked by three paramotors, resulting in 11 deaths and approximately 20 injuries among the members.





Protesting against the junta.  
Photo: AFP

## COLLECTIVE STATEMENT ISSUED BY RIGHTS GROUPS URGING JAPANESE FIRMS TO CUT FINANCIAL TIES BENEFITING MYANMAR JUNTA

On 24 March 2026, Justice For Myanmar, Mekong Watch and five Japanese organizations issued a statement urging Japanese financial companies to stop supporting the military junta in Myanmar. The press release highlighted the involvement of the Daiwa Institute of Research and the Japan Exchange Group.

The statement is as follows.

Five years after the military's coup attempt, and amid increasing airstrikes and international crimes, DIR and JPX remain involved in financial institutions that have enabled sanctioned entities and businesses with documented ties to military conglomerates to raise funds.

In September 2025, the groups sent letters to DIR and JPX raising concerns about their businesses in Myanmar, inquiring whether the companies had conducted human rights due diligence in relation to their activities since the coup attempt, and whether the companies had any plans to divest in their businesses in Myanmar, among other inquiries.

While both DIR and JPX expressed their commitment to international human rights standards, neither provided a substantive response to questions posed by groups.

### Treasury bonds and stocks financing the junta

Japan has played a central role in the planning, implementation and operation of Myanmar's capital market.

Support for Myanmar's capital market has been historically provided through a comprehensive public-private "All Japan" initiative that included drafting of securities exchange laws and regulations, establishment of a capital market supervisory authority and stock exchange as well as legal support from the Japanese government, its agencies and companies.

DIR has had a long history in Myanmar and has been heavily embedded within this public-private effort.

DIR's then president first entered Myanmar in 1993 under the previous military junta. DIR built relationships with the former military dictatorship, establishing the Myanmar Securities and Exchange Centre (MSEC) in 1996 through a joint venture with the state-owned bank Myanma Economic Bank (MEB), which provides services including brokerage for treasury bonds and over the counter sales of stocks.

Since Myanmar military's 2021 coup attempt, Canadian sanctioned MEB has been illegally controlled

by the junta, enabling its access to foreign currency for military procurement.

The UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Myanmar explicitly recommends financial institutions “terminate or freeze all financial relationships with Myanmar’s state-owned banks, including Myanma Economic Bank”. The UN expert has highlighted MEB’s critical role in financing military procurement as sanctions against other state-owned banks increased.

MEB and MSEC have been appointed as underwriters and sales agents for government securities since 2010. In Myanmar, Treasury bonds are issued by the Treasury Department under the now illegally junta-controlled Ministry of Planning and Finance, while the Central Bank of Myanmar conducts auctions and manages the issuance of bonds.

In trading these bonds, MSEC is facilitating the raising of funds for a junta that is committing international crimes with total impunity.

MSEC has also provided a platform that enables sanctioned entities to raise funds from investors. One such entity that was listed by MSEC is EU sanctioned Forest Products Joint Venture (FPJV). FPJV is partially owned by the Myanma Timber Enterprise, a state-owned enterprise illegally controlled by the junta and which is sanctioned by the USA, EU, Canada and the UK. The listing of FPJV was available on the MSEC website in at least the year following the coup attempt but has since been taken down.

Yangon Stock Exchange (YSX) enables businesses with military conglomerates-links to raise funds

JPX founded the YSX through a joint venture with DIR and MEB in 2015.

Japan’s support for the establishment of YSX was full scale, including institutional and regulatory design, infrastructure building and development of the systems, human resource and operational support.

This included Official Development Assistance funded knowledge exchange program carried out by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) targeting Myanmar stock exchange and regulatory authorities from 2012 to 2021, as well as consultation service provided to new companies listing on the Yangon Stock Exchange (YSX).

Concerningly, since its launch, YSX has listed crony companies including those in business with military conglomerates. YSX lists Ever Flow River Group, a crony company with documented ties to internationally

sanctioned military conglomerate, MEHL.

Another YSX-listed company, First Myanmar Investment Public Co., Ltd. (FMI), owns Yoma Bank, which provides financial services to military companies and projects including the telecoms operator Mytel, partially owned by another internationally sanctioned military conglomerate, Myanmar Economic Cooperation (MEC).

YSX also added to its pre-listing board Myanma Agricultural & General Development Public Co., Ltd (MADPL), a company that invests in Mytel.

By maintaining a business-as-usual approach in Myanmar, JPX and DIR are proving institutional credibility to a security exchange that lists companies with documented links to sanctioned military conglomerates, allowing these companies to raise funds through its platform and are reputation laundering for MEB.

Yuka Kiguchi, Executive Director of Mekong Watch, said, “Both JPX and DIR say they uphold human rights standards, yet neither has disclosed the findings from any human rights diligence conducted or the details of their discussion with the Japanese government, calling into question the credibility of their professed commitments. The Japanese government, which has been actively involved such as by providing ODA, also should be held accountable and has a duty to urge the companies to protect human rights. Japanese companies and the government should not in any way be involved in raising funds for the Myanmar junta which continues to commit grave human rights violations.”

Yadanar Maung, Justice for Myanmar’s spokesperson, said, “It is unacceptable that Japanese companies continue to play a role in facilitating funds that benefit the junta, which is increasing its airstrikes across the country and committing international crimes with total impunity. Japan has had a central role in the development of Myanmar’s capital market and must now take immediate action to stop the flow of funds and financial sector support to the junta. Japanese companies must uphold their responsibilities under international human rights standards and guidelines.”



## SYSTEMIC ABUSE AND EXTORTION REPORTED AT DAIK-U PRISON AS POLITICAL DETAINEES FACE DEHUMANIZING LABOUR

Reports from the notorious Daik-U Prison in Bago Region reveal a deteriorating human rights situation, where political prisoners are allegedly subjected to systemic torture, medical neglect, and dehumanizing labour. Sources close to the facility, including the Political Prisoners Network Myanmar (PPNM), describe an environment where those unable to pay bribes to prison staff are singled out for the most severe forms of oppression.

"A comrade contacted me and said the situation for political prisoners in Daik-U Prison is very dire. They are being moved between wards, forced to carry sewage water, and subjected to excessive forced labour. Even those suffering from injuries caused by torture are not spared," a person close to the prison told Mizzima.

The source added that those who demand prisoners' rights are being put in solitary confinement with shackles. Furthermore, food, medicine, and books from the parcels sent to transferred political prisoners are being confiscated by authorities.

A former political prisoner recently released from the facility stated that the head of Ward 1 beats political

prisoners and subsequently denies them adequate medical treatment.

"While in solitary, prisoners are beaten so severely that some suffer cracked ribs, kidney issues, or even hernias. Even when medicine is sent in, political prisoners don't receive the full amount due to embezzlement. They are fed undercooked or spoiled rice under the pretext of staff shortages," he said.

Additionally, it was learned that on 29 December 2025, prison authorities confiscated a self-funded medical fund worth approximately 3 million Kyats (US\$1,428) established by political prisoners for emergency healthcare.

The Political Prisoners Network Myanmar (PPNM) also released a statement saying that the deputy jailer keeps a blacklist of prisoners who demand sufficient medicine. Those on the list are forced to crawl on all fours and are beaten. Personal supplies of food and medicine are also seized during cell searches.

Daik-U Prison has become notorious since the military coup for the intensified persecution and torture of political prisoners by prison authorities and staff.



Foreign suspects arrested in India.  
Photo: Supplied

## CHIN GROUP IN MYANMAR REBUTS DRUG TRAFFICKING CLAIMS MADE IN INDIAN MEDIA REPORT

The Chin National Organization has issued a rebuttal to claims made by the Indian media organization The Quint entitled: “Inside NIA Arrests: A Global Web of Drugs & War Driving Conflict in Northeast” published on 21 March.

In the Formal Rebuttal to Allegations against CNO/ CNDF leader in Indian Media Report published on 24 March, the group had the following to say:

The Chin National Organization (CNO) and its armed wing, the Chin National Defense Force (CNDF), are dedicated to the self-determination, security, and administrative governance of the Chin people. Our organization operates on a foundation of political integrity and humanitarian service, striving to protect our community while upholding the highest standards of regional stability.

We are issuing this statement to formally rebut what are unsubstantiated and defamatory claims published in a recent article by The Quint titled “Inside NIA Arrests: A Global Web of Drugs & War Driving Conflict in Northeast.”

We strongly refute claims that the CNDF’s operations are financed through narcotics, linked to drug trafficking networks in Chin State, Myanmar, or India, supported through illicit cross-border activities in coordination with armed groups involved in drug production, or significantly backed by foreign

missionary networks. These allegations are entirely false, irresponsible, and without any factual basis. The CNDF does not engage in, support, or benefit from narcotics production or trafficking in any form, and there is no connection between the CNDF and narcotics activities in India or elsewhere.

We also categorically state that Salai Peter Thang, Vice President (1) of the Chin National Organization (CNO), has no involvement in narcotics trafficking or any illicit activities, and these allegations are entirely baseless; we further challenge the publication to produce any credible evidence to support such claims. We also clarify that he has no personal, professional, or indirect association with the foreign nationals recently apprehended by India’s National Investigation Agency (NIA) and has never contacted, met, or seen them. Any attempt to link his name to these cases is fabricated, unsubstantiated, and malicious, and is intended to mislead the public.

Journalistic integrity requires a commitment to truth and verification. We request that The Quint remove these false accusations and issue a formal correction without delay. We reserve the right to pursue further action should these defamatory claims remain unaddressed. We remain open to providing further clarification to ensure that reporting reflects the facts.



## UKRAINIAN EMBASSY IN NEW DELHI ISSUES STATEMENT CONDEMNING RUSSIA'S ATTEMPT TO DISCREDIT ITS INTENTIONS IN INDIA

The Ukrainian Embassy in New Delhi issued a statement on 26 March condemning a Russian attempt to discredit Ukraine in India following the report of the detention of Ukrainian citizens along the India-Myanmar border.

Initial reports on 13 March claimed six Ukrainians and one American were detained by Indian authorities in Mizoram for entering a restricted border state without permission, crossing into Myanmar, training anti-junta armed groups, and facilitating the transfer of drones from Europe to these groups via India.

A senior police official in Mizoram later reportedly stated on 18 March that the suspects had not entered Mizoram through the airport but did not deny they had been detained. Additionally, the charges are still being investigated, and the circumstances remain disputed.

The text of the statement is as follows.

Recently, Russia's Ministry of Propaganda, which also masquerades as its Ministry of Foreign Affairs, issued a comment by its so-called "official representative" regarding the detention of Ukrainian citizens in India.

According to Indian media reports, it was Kremlin-linked provocateurs who passed to the competent authorities of India fabricated "information," concocted within FSB structures, about supposed Ukrainian "terrorists." This bears all the hallmarks of a deliberate disinformation operation typical of the Russian special

services, which systematically use fabrications as a tool of foreign policy and seek to draw India into a political script not of its own making.

It appears that Moscow still operates under the false assumption that it can interfere in the internal affairs of other states and use India as an instrument for advancing its own geopolitical interests. Such an approach is not merely mistaken – it is outright insulting to a nation with a millennia-old civilizational tradition, a strong democratic system, and independent institutions. It reflects a profound disregard for India's sovereignty and a failure to understand that its system of justice neither can nor will operate on the basis of external political instructions.

It is revealing that Russian "official representatives" are issuing "verdicts" before the ongoing investigation has even been concluded. This appears to be an attempt to reduce Indian institutions to mere instruments for the formal validation of decisions already made in Moscow. Yet such conduct is entirely consistent with the behaviour of a totalitarian regime that persecutes its own citizens at home and wages an unprovoked, barbaric war against Ukraine, killing innocent civilians every day in aerial attacks.

Such logic is characteristic of Russian imperial thinking, in which "partnership" is reduced to subordination and "cooperation" to obedience. Within this paradigm, other states are seen not as equal

partners, but as instruments expected to carry out the will of the metropole.

At the same time, it must be made unequivocally clear: India is a sovereign democratic state, and a court in New Delhi is not a branch of Moscow's Khamovnichesky or Lefortovsky district courts, widely known for politically motivated verdicts, grave human rights abuses, and contempt for international law.

We also wish to recall that the leader of present-day Russia is a dictator whom international justice has found to be implicated in war crimes. On 17 March 2023, the International Criminal Court in The Hague issued an arrest warrant for Putin, having found sufficient grounds to hold him individually criminally responsible for war crimes, in particular the unlawful deportation and forcible transfer of population, especially children, from the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine to Russia.

Systematic interference in the internal affairs of other states, manipulation, disinformation, and open contempt for the UN Charter are hallmarks of contemporary Russian foreign policy. Russia continues to export sabotage and terrorism through networks of private military and security structures operating in dozens of countries around the world. This is an internationally recognized fact.

Back in 2021, the European Union imposed sanctions on the Wagner Group for grave human rights abuses and the destabilisation of entire regions, from Ukraine to Africa. After Russia's full-scale invasion, these measures were substantially broadened to target not only Wagner fighters and commanders, but also the economic networks sustaining their operations, including those linked to the illicit extraction of natural resources.

On 23 November 2022, the European Parliament adopted, by an overwhelming majority, a resolution recognising the Russian Federation as a state sponsor of terrorism and as a state that uses means of terrorism.

The United States responds consistently and firmly to the activities of Russian private military companies, classifying them as "transnational criminal organizations" and as an instrument of Russia's destabilization, violence, and shadow influence in the world.

More than 12,000 instances of Russia's use of prohibited means of warfare against Ukraine have been documented, which has, in particular, drawn condemnation from the Organisation for the Prohibition

of Chemical Weapons.

As regards Myanmar, the international community has repeatedly delivered a clear political assessment of developments in the country. The UN General Assembly Resolution 75/287 of June 2021 condemned the military coup and called upon all Member States to prevent the flow of arms into Myanmar. United Nations Security Council Resolution 2669 of December 2022 explicitly demands an immediate end to all forms of violence against civilians.

Against this background, particular attention should be paid to Russia's role as one of the key suppliers of arms to Myanmar's military structures, which objectively affects the level of tension and the broader security situation in the region. In February 2026, the parties signed a military cooperation programme for 2026–2030. Within this framework, the regime in Myanmar received six Su-30SME fighter aircraft in March this year, while Mi-38T helicopters had already been supplied earlier. In addition, Moscow provides training for Myanmar military personnel.

Despite Russia's attempts to manipulate the situation and use India in its game against Ukraine, the official statements of Indian law-enforcement authorities are particularly telling. On 18 March 2026, Stephen Lalrinawma, Superintendent of Police, CID (Special Branch), Mizoram Police, stated that even under enhanced border surveillance no suspects had been intercepted. He further noted that no terror-related activity had been detected and that there had been no report of any terror link or untoward activity affecting Mizoram so far.

These statements are important because they do not substantiate the allegations being circulated and point to the absence, at this stage, of any established evidence to support them. They also underscore the need for a cautious and measured assessment of the situation based on verified facts, rather than unverified information or disinformation.

Ukraine has confidence in India's system of investigation and justice, which is currently facing unprecedented informational and political pressure from Russian special services and propaganda.

In this context, we call on the competent Indian authorities not to yield to provocations and to ensure an independent, impartial, and fair consideration of the case. The Ukrainian side reaffirms its full readiness to cooperate and to take part in a transparent investigation aimed at establishing the objective truth.



U.S. Embassy's top diplomat in Myanmar, Douglas Sonnek

## US EMBASSY FACES BACKLASH AS CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES ATTENDS YANGON AUTO SHOW

The U.S. Embassy's top diplomat in Myanmar, Douglas Sonnek, has sparked a wave of public criticism following his high-profile attendance at the Yangon International Mobility Show held between 20 and 22 March.

Images of the Chargé d'Affaires socializing with business entities linked to the Myanmar junta have ignited a fierce debate on social media, with many activists accusing the United States of a "policy-practice disconnect."

In an official statement released on 24 March, the U.S. Embassy defended the visit, characterizing it as a standard diplomatic effort to support American commercial interest specifically the Ford Motor Company and to advocate for a "level playing field" for international businesses.

The embassy underscored that their participation was strictly aimed at ensuring fair competition for U.S. brands in the local market.

However, following the release of the statement, revolutionary activists and the Myanmar public began questioning the U.S. stance on social media platforms.

Critics argue that while the U.S. government claims to oppose the military dictatorship and defend

democracy, its involvement in business sectors under the junta shows a discrepancy between policy and practice.

"By shaking hands with the business partners of a terrorist military, U.S. values are being diminished. The U.S. Embassy should not have mutual business interests with the terrorist military," one Facebook user criticized.

Although the U.S. government has repeatedly imposed sanctions on the Myanmar junta and its interests, the personal attendance of the embassy chief at the car show is being viewed as a disappointing event.

The Yangon International Mobility Show, featuring top automotive brands, was held at the Yangon Convention Centre (YCC) from 20 to 22 March.

Douglas Sonnek assumed the role of Chargé d'Affaires at the U.S. Embassy in mid-January of this year. According to a U.S. Embassy announcement on 15 January, he previously led the embassy's Political and Economic Section from 2011 to 2014.



Junta leader Min Aung Hlaing.  
Photo: AFP

# **JUNTA LEADER RESUMES DUTIES FOLLOWING SUCCESSFUL SPINAL SURGERY AHEAD OF PIVOTAL SELECTION FOR MYANMAR'S PRESIDENT**

**S**enior General Min Aung Hlaing has officially resumed his state responsibilities after undergoing successful spinal surgery to treat nerve pain caused by lumbar spondylosis.

The operation took place on 20 March, 2026, at the 1,000-bed Military Hospital No. 2 in Naypyidaw where a specialized team of Indian medical experts collaborated with military doctors.

According to a statement released on 23 March by the National Defence and Security Council (NDSC), the two-hour procedure was a success, and the Senior General has recovered sufficiently to return to his official duties immediately.

This medical update comes at a critical moment for the military regime as it prepares for the 81st anniversary of Armed Forces Day on 27 March. The annual celebration, which commemorates the resistance against Japanese occupation in 1945, typically features a massive military parade in Naypyidaw.

Analysts suggest that Min Aung Hlaing's quick return to the public eye is intended to project stability

and strength during a week of significant political transitions following the conclusion of the three-phase general elections earlier this year.

The political stakes will reach their peak on 30 March, when the Presidential Electoral is scheduled to begin the formal nomination process for the presidency and two vice-presidencies.

Reports indicate that the military delegation is expected to nominate Min Aung Hlaing as a candidate for the vice-presidency, a move that would likely see him eventually assume the presidency once parliament completes the indirect election process.

To comply with constitutional requirements, the Senior General may be required to step down from his position as Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services before the month ends, potentially handing over military control to a trusted protege while he transitions into a formal executive role.





## **YANGON CIRCULAR RAILWAY TO DEBUT BATTERY-POWERED ELECTRIC TRAINS**

**M**yanmar Railways (MR) has announced the official launch of battery-powered electric locomotives on the Yangon circular railway, with operations scheduled to begin on 25 March.

The new service will feature a five-car configuration, consisting of four passenger coaches and one brake van, marking a significant step in the national transition toward sustainable rail transport, according to a junta-affiliated news outlet.

This expansion follows the successful deployment of battery-electric locomotives on the No. 27 Up / 28 Down Naypyidaw-Mandalay-Naypyidaw airbag express, which has been in service since 22 November 2025.

The shift from traditional diesel to battery-electric power is expected to yield substantial operational savings.

According to MR data, the Naypyidaw-Mandalay route already saves over 1.3 million kyats per round trip compared to diesel locomotives. For the Yangon circular route, the transition is projected to save approximately 600,000 kyats per day. These efforts are part of a broader government initiative to reduce reliance on imported fossil fuels and minimize the environmental impact of the public transportation sector.

The official launch ceremony for the new battery-electric service will be held at 7:00 am tomorrow at Platform No. 1 of the Yangon Central Railway Station.

This milestone comes as the military junta continues to prioritize the modernization of the rail network, having recently reached the 21st batch of its national recruitment drive to support various state infrastructure projects.

Photo: AFP

## MYANMAR MILITARY SIGNALS LEADERSHIP CHANGES IN ARMED FORCES DAY

**M**yanmar's junta signalled changes in the military's leadership ahead of the country's annual show of force on 27 March, potentially clearing the way for defence chief Min Aung Hlaing to become president.

Tanks and military trucks laden with rocket launchers and mobile field guns trundled through the streets as thousands of soldiers marched for Armed Forces Day in the capital Naypyidaw, where Min Aung Hlaing made his yearly speech to rally morale.

He has ruled by diktat since ousting the hugely popular government of Aung San Suu Kyi in 2021 -- detaining the Nobel Peace Prize laureate, dissolving her party and triggering civil war.

There will be "leadership changes" in the armed forces after the ceremony, the state-run Global New Light of Myanmar newspaper quoted Min Aung Hlaing's

deputy Soe Win as saying at an official dinner the day before.

Lawmakers are set to begin the process of selecting a president this week following a walkover victory by pro-military parties earlier this year in elections overseen by the junta.

Democracy monitors said the elections were stage-managed to shut out opposition.

Under the constitution, Min Aung Hlaing would have to step down from his military post to become president, and Soe Win's comments reinforce expectations that he will do so.

He is already acting president, but taking the role on a permanent basis would bolster critics who say the transition to a new government is effectively the military transferring power to itself in a civilian disguise.

"Irrespective of who leads," the armed forces "will continue to follow the guidance of successive leaders, advisors and mentors," the newspaper cited Soe Win as saying in indirect speech.

Myanmar's military mythologises itself as the only force protecting the restive nation from disintegration.

The newspaper devoted its front page to the military pageant, with an image of missile launchers before three huge statues of ancient kings that dominate the parade ground.

Marching bands and small submarines atop vehicles emblazoned with the words "Made in Myanmar" paraded past hundreds of spectators as the sun went down on 27 March, state TV channel MRTV showed.

The Armed Forces Day events have progressively shrunk since 2021, as the military's ranks have been sapped by the civil war against anti-coup guerrillas and long-active ethnic minority rebel factions.

But attendance appeared to be higher and the show more extravagant at the parade compared to last year's event, which fell on the day before a devastating 7.7 magnitude earthquake hit the country, killing thousands.

### Forward march

Over the past year, there have been signs the junta is back on the front foot - with a string of moderate victories thanks largely to China-backed truces with ethnic rebels along their shared border.

A Beijing-brokered deal saw the northern city of Lashio returned to the military last spring, after it and its regional command base were captured by the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army in a major humiliation.

Another China-sealed ceasefire in October saw the Ta'ang National Liberation Army pull back from central Mandalay region, where it had seized the lucrative ruby mining hub of Mogok.

Both factions previously fought alongside each other and others in an offensive starting in late 2023 that represented the biggest threat to the junta since the coup.

Analysts say neighbouring China's recent interventions to rein in rebels are a sign Beijing is backing the military establishment to provide some semblance of stability.

While the truces have proven instrumental to the past year of the conflict, violence remains endemic.

Last year witnessed the largest number of military air and drone strikes since the coup, according to monitoring group ACLED, which tallies media reports of violence.

With various armed groups embroiled in the civil war, the conflict is highly compartmentalised and there are regions where the embattled military is surrounded and making its last stand, including strategic positions in Rakhine State.

While there is no official toll for the conflict, ACLED estimates more than 90,000 people have been killed on all sides.

More than 3.7 million people are displaced, the United Nations has said, while about half the country lives in poverty.

AFP



Photo: AFP

## MYANMAR JUNTA MANDATES REMOTE WORK WEDNESDAYS AND NEW RATIONING SYSTEM AMID SEVERE FUEL CRISIS

**M**yanmar's military junta has instructed all state officers and staff to work from home every Wednesday in an effort to reduce fuel consumption.

In a statement released on the evening of 22 March, the junta directed officers and staff under its administration to work from home or from their dormitories instead of commuting to their offices.

The plan will take effect starting 25 March and will be implemented every Wednesday, according to the statement.

"This measure is intended to conserve fuel. Employees and personnel from government offices and departments are not permitted to travel outside their official duties or use vehicles on that day," the statement said.

"I have my doubts about the work-from-home system," said a civil servant in the capital. "Most of our government work is still paper-based and not yet digitized. Even though they've designated Wednesdays for remote work, I think we will probably still have to show up in person."

In addition, private sector organizations have been encouraged to adopt work-from-home arrangements as much as possible, similar to government offices under the junta.

Alongside this announcement, the Ministry of Energy stated that it has secured a 50-day fuel reserve

and is working to import additional supplies through alternative routes, in addition to regular channels.

The ministry also announced that the current fuel distribution system will be revised. Starting next week, a new system will limit the amount of fuel that can be purchased weekly based on a vehicle's engine capacity. This allocation may be purchased either in a single transaction or split into a maximum of two instalments.

Due to the ongoing fuel shortage, some domestic airlines have suspended operations, while rising fuel prices have led to increased airfares.

Long queues have been reported at gas stations. In Naypyidaw, the administrative capital where the junta is based, fuel purchases are currently capped at 50,000 kyats for cars, 10,000 kyats for three-wheeled taxis, and 5,000 kyats for motorcycles.

To further conserve fuel amid global supply pressures linked to conflicts in the Middle East, the junta has implemented a vehicle restriction system.

Private vehicles with even-numbered license plates are allowed to operate on even days, while those with odd-numbered plates may operate on odd days. Electric vehicles are exempt from this rule. Additionally, fuel purchases are limited to once per day per vehicle using a QR code system.



## MIZORAM DISTRICT IMPOSES BAN ON FUEL EXPORTS TO MYANMAR TO PREVENT LOCAL SHORTAGES

The Siaha district administration has officially banned the illegal export of petroleum products to Myanmar, citing concerns over domestic supply stability and the welfare of local residents.

In a directive issued on 20 March, District Administrator VL Hruaizela Kiangte announced that the measure was prompted by reports of individuals purchasing fuel in bulk from local stations to resell across the border for profit.

"While an official order has been issued, it hasn't resulted in a total shutdown of trade," explained a fuel exporter to Myanmar. "Operations are continuing through informal channels and mutual agreements for now, though the future remains highly uncertain."

There are 13 petrol stations across the southern Mizoram towns of Siaha, Lawngtlai and Lunglei, of which only three are government-run.

The trader said the order may have been prompted by suspected illegal fuel transport by private petrol stations seeking to profit.

In addition to fuel, food and medicines are also

being exported from southern Mizoram to Myanmar's Chin and Rakhine States.

Petrol stations have been instructed not to charge above government-set prices and to limit sales to 500 liters of petrol and 1,000 liters of diesel, with any purchases beyond these limits requiring a valid storage license from the relevant authorities.

The directive will remain in force for two months from the date of issuance, with violations punishable under Section 223 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, which carries penalties of six months to one year in prison, a fine ranging from Rs 25,000 to Rs 50,000, or both.

An investigation has found that ongoing conflicts in the Middle East have caused fuel and household gas shortages in India, driving prices up on the illegal black market.

Traders say Chin and Rakhine states rely heavily on food and fuel imports from India, making them vulnerable to shortages and price hikes whenever supply issues arise in India.



Houthi join in the conflict.  
Photo: AFP

## IRAN FIRES MISSILES AT ISRAEL AFTER TRUMP THREATENS WEEKS OF STRIKES

Israel said it came under Iranian missile fire on 2 April after US President Donald Trump threatened to bomb the Islamic republic into the "Stone Ages" with heavy strikes in the next two to three weeks.

In a speech from the White House, Trump sought to reassure war-weary Americans that the military campaign that began on February 28 was coming to an end, vowing "extremely hard" strikes against Iran.

"Thanks to the progress we've made, I can say tonight that we are on track to complete all of America's military objectives shortly, very shortly," Trump said.

The war's "core strategic objectives are nearing completion", he said, warning however that "over the next two to three weeks, we are going to bring them back to the Stone Ages, where they belong".

His address came as Britain was set to host a meeting Thursday with about 35 countries on how to reopen the strategic Strait of Hormuz that Iran has effectively blocked without a deal to end the war.

The US-Israeli strikes on Iran that started the war

killed senior officials in the Islamic republic's military forces and government, including supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, whose son has since replaced him.

Trump, whose approval rating is sinking over the war, indicated that talks may be possible with Iran's new leadership, which he described as "less radical and much more reasonable" than its predecessor.

He warned that if no agreement with Tehran was struck, Washington had "our eyes on key targets including the country's electric generating plants".

Despite Trump's threats, Israel's military said Iran twice fired missiles at the country after his address, part of four barrages detected within six hours on Thursday.

Iran has dismissed Washington's ceasefire overtures, describing US demands to end the conflict as "maximalist and irrational".

"Messages have been received through intermediaries, including Pakistan, but there is no direct negotiation with the US," said Iranian foreign ministry

spokesman Esmaeil Baqaei, quoted by the ISNA news agency on Thursday.

Pro-government Iranians in the capital Tehran were also defiant at the funeral of a Revolutionary Guards naval commander who was killed in an Israeli strike.

"This war has lasted a month. However long it takes, we will continue," said Moussa Nowruzi, a 57-year-old pensioner.

"We will resist until the end."

## Gulf protection

Trump also assured regional allies Israel and Gulf nations that Washington would protect them from Iranian retaliatory fire, as more attacks were reported across the region on Thursday.

He addressed Israel, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the UAE, Kuwait and Bahrain -- all battered by Iranian drone and missile attacks -- that the United States "will not let them get hurt or fail in any way, shape or form".

As Israel prepared for the Passover holiday, which began at sunset Wednesday, air raid sirens sounded repeatedly in the Tel Aviv area.

On Thursday, the United Arab Emirates said its air defences were again responding to missile and drone "threats".

The Revolutionary Guards also confirmed hitting an oil tanker in the Gulf they said belonged to Israel. A British maritime security agency said the vessel was struck off Qatar, reporting damage but no casualties.

In Lebanon, militant group Hezbollah said its fighters launched drones and rockets at northern Israel on Thursday, with the Israeli military's Home Front Command saying air raid sirens were activated across the border.

A day earlier, Israel killed a top Hezbollah commander, two sources told AFP, in a Beirut strike that the Lebanese health ministry said killed seven people.

Authorities in Lebanon say Israeli attacks have killed more than 1,300 people in the country since war erupted between Israel and Iran-backed Hezbollah on March 2.

## Hormuz 'courage'

Hours before Trump's address, Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian asked the American people whether the conflict was truly putting "America First", accusing Washington of war crimes and of being influenced by Israel.

Trump had claimed earlier Wednesday that Iran's president had sought a ceasefire, but said the Islamic republic must first reopen the Strait of Hormuz -- which he said in his address would happen "naturally" once the conflict ended.

In his speech he called for countries that receive oil through the Strait of Hormuz to show "courage" and seize the key waterway.

On Thursday, the British-led virtual meeting of dozens of nations will "assess all viable diplomatic and political measures that we can take to restore freedom of navigation" in the strait, Prime Minister Keir Starmer said.

But Trump's remarks did little to calm energy markets rocked by the waterway's de facto closure, with oil prices surging Thursday. Brent jumped more than four percent to more than \$105, while West Texas Intermediate climbed three percent to hit around \$103.

One-fifth of global oil normally passes through the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards vowed Wednesday to keep it shut to the country's "enemies".

After a wave of anti-government demonstrations that crested in Iran in January over economic grievances, some Iranians still privately long for political change, particularly after Trump himself had promised to come to their aid.

"He betrayed the Iranians," said one woman in her 30s, requesting anonymity for security reasons.

Sounding resigned, she added she no longer expects a change of government, but "if they could grant us more freedoms, we could live with that".

AFP



President Ferdinand Marcos.  
Photo: AFP

## PHILIPPINES' MARCOS SAYS ASEAN SUMMIT WILL FOCUS ON MIDDLE EAST WAR

President Ferdinand Marcos said 27 March that an ASEAN summit the Philippines will host in May will be a streamlined affair, with a focus on how best to handle the economic shocks of the Mideast war.

The May 8-9 meeting of the 11-member Association of Southeast Asian nations will centre around the issues of oil, food and migration, Marcos told reporters after a graduation ceremony for the country's national police.

Marcos said he had consulted with other ASEAN members about the idea of postponing the summit in the face of an energy crisis that has struck the region hard before determining to press forward.

"It is a bare bones ASEAN Summit... We will be talking about three main subjects - about the supply of petroleum and petroleum products, about the supply ... and the price of food, and migrant workers," Marcos said.

"What we really need at this time is for leaders to talk about ... what do we do, how can we help each other, and what is the ASEAN position regarding all of

these shocks that are coming our way," he said.

Marcos declared on 24 March a state of "national energy emergency", citing risks to the Philippines' domestic fuel supply created by the war.

The import-dependent archipelago nation of 116 million has seen the price of fuel hit historic highs since the US-Israeli war with Iran forced the partial closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

The war has also affected millions of guest workers from ASEAN states who are living in countries caught in the crossfire.

It was not immediately clear if other pressing priorities, including the civil war raging in Myanmar or a long-gestating code of conduct between the bloc and China over the South China Sea, would be completely off the table for discussion.

AFP





## THE TRAIN WRECK AHEAD

“There were events going on in the world that I really cared about,” says investigative journalist Emanuel Stoakes. He enters the discussion, speaking as a reporter who has spent more than a decade trying to understand and expose the political, humanitarian, and moral fault lines that shape Myanmar’s modern crises. In this interview, he reflects on his path into journalism and the years he devoted to covering conflicts across Asia, as well as the uncomfortable truths he uncovered about the Burmese military, the failures of the international system, and the narratives that drove the Rohingya crisis and allowed it to spread almost unchecked.

He explains that he begins his career almost by accident. Stoakes abandoned what he describes as a superficial pursuit of authenticity in drama when he decided that global crises require a different kind of attention. He became interested in places where neglected minorities suffer in silence, which led him first to learning about events in Palestine, Sri Lanka, and Western Sahara. But his first, real scoop happened when he was able to verify a leaked document from a senior Sri Lankan military officer, who admitted to atrocities against the Tamils in 2008-9, the final phase of that country’s sectarian violence. Stoakes realized that he was particularly drawn to fact-driven investigative work.

In 2012, he began investigating Myanmar’s unfolding conflicts, starting with the renewed Kachin war. It quickly became clear to him that the military remained the central engine of violence—its default response to dissent was overwhelming force. When he traveled to Rakhine State, he saw early signs of a political and social storm taking shape beneath the optimism of Myanmar’s democratic transition. That optimism, he realized, had masked profound structural dangers. His first visit to the Rohingya camps in 2013 left him shaken. More than 100,000 people were confined to overcrowded settlements, with almost no freedom of movement and minimal access to healthcare or basic services. The human cost of the conflict—especially for children—was impossible to ignore, made worse by a system designed to marginalize and control this Muslim minority.

He recalled seeing a baby lying in a stifling tent, suffering from severe burns that should have been treatable but went unattended because no Burmese hospital would admit Rohingya patients. He met a boy permanently disabled after a bicycle accident—an injury that could have been addressed early, but instead left him forced to drag himself across the ground with his hands after hospitals refused care. He saw children showing signs of polio, a disease nearly eliminated everywhere else in the world. Scenes like these made clear that this was not simply the by-product of communal tension—it was the predictable result of policies and structures built to isolate, restrict, and ultimately break a vulnerable population.

### CATCH THE PODCAST

Read more and listen to the Insight Myanmar Podcast here:

<https://insightmyanmar.org/complete-shows/2026/3/13/episode-501-the-train-wreck-ahead>



# MYANMAR JUNTA ISSUES WORK-FROM-HOME ORDERS AND TRANSPORT CONTROLS TO CURB FUEL CONSUMPTION

**M**yanmar's military junta has ordered civil servants to work from home once a week and stepped-up transport controls as part of efforts to curb fuel consumption amid rising prices, state media reported.

Government departments have been instructed to implement remote working every Wednesday to reduce fuel use, according to the state-run Global New Light of Myanmar. The measure forms part of a broader push to manage energy demand as fuel costs climb and supply pressures persist.

Public transport options have also been expanded, including rail and bus services, and measures to regulate fuel distribution and prioritise essential sectors have been introduced, the report said.

The moves come as Myanmar faces mounting fuel constraints. Junta officials have linked the situation to disruptions in the global energy market. State media cited international factors, including the conflict in the Middle East, as contributing to higher import costs and tighter supply.

Junta authorities have also encouraged commuters to shift away from private vehicles and rely more heavily on public transport systems to ease demand. Additional controls on fuel usage and distribution have also been highlighted, including systems to manage access and reduce non-essential consumption.

The measures signal a growing reliance on administrative controls to manage economic pressures, as the junta seeks to stabilise fuel availability and limit the impact on key sectors.

While the junta has framed the latest steps as temporary efficiency measures, they reflect broader constraints in the country's energy supply and distribution system.

State media reports did not indicate how long the remote working policy would remain in place, but emphasised the need for continued efforts to reduce fuel consumption and support economic stability.



# FUEL RATIONING SYSTEM SPARKS PUBLIC FRUSTRATION ACROSS MYANMAR

**F**uel shortages and new rationing rules have become one of the most discussed issues on Myanmar social media over the last week, as many people report difficulties buying petrol and rising prices across the country.

The military authorities have introduced a new fuel distribution system starting 27 March, limiting how much fuel vehicles can purchase based on engine power. Under the system, private cars are allowed to buy up to 35 litres per week, while taxis can purchase up to 90 litres per week, according to official announcements.

In Yangon, fuel prices have also risen sharply. Within one week, prices of petrol and diesel increased by 800 to over 1,200 kyats per litre, depending on the fuel type. Similar price increases have been reported in other cities, including Mawlamyine, where 92 petrol reached around 4,825 kyats per litre, according to local reports.

On social media, many users shared their experiences of long waiting times and limited fuel access.

"We have to queue for four hours every day. I started at 5 am today and still haven't got fuel. I may

need to wait another hour," one user wrote.

"In Mandalay, they don't follow the official rules. Even though they say motorbikes can get more, stations only give about one or two litres," another user said.

Some users also raised concerns about unfair practices and possible corruption.

"At stations, people can only buy a small amount, but outside fuel is sold at very high prices. It seems like business owners and officials are working together, and only the public suffers," one comment read.

Others said the fuel crisis is worsening daily life, especially as people already face high living costs and transportation difficulties.

The military spokesperson Major General Zaw Min Tun has said Myanmar still has sufficient fuel reserves and that the restrictions are intended to manage usage systematically. However, ongoing shortages, price increases and long queues continue to fuel public concern and criticism online.

# 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.