

ON THE GROUND IN MYANMAR

# mizzima WEEKLY

Analysis & Insight

## Burma in the Balance How China Calls the Shots

**ASEAN frustration over Myanmar**

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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.

# ASEAN FRUSTRATION OVER MYANMAR

Five years after the 2021 military coup in Myanmar, the crisis has become the most serious test of credibility for Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). The regional bloc's frustration is now unmistakable. At the ASEAN summit in the Philippines in May 2026, leaders once again repeated familiar calls for dialogue, humanitarian access, and cessation of violence. Yet behind the carefully worded statements lies a growing recognition that ASEAN's Five-Point Consensus – signed by the Myanmar regime – has failed to alter realities on the ground – a situation where the military is brutally murdering civilians on a daily basis.

The Five-Point Consensus, agreed upon in April 2021 and endorsed by Myanmar's junta leader Min Aung Hlaing, was supposed to provide a roadmap toward de-escalation and national reconciliation. Instead, violence has intensified, civilian casualties have mounted, and millions have been displaced. ASEAN's special envoys have struggled to gain access to all stakeholders, including detained democratic leader Aung San Suu Kyi – said to have been moved to a "designated residence". Even humanitarian assistance has been constrained by political and military obstacles.

The deeper problem is structural. ASEAN operates on consensus and non-interference, principles that have long preserved regional cohesion but are poorly suited for confronting a member state in open civil conflict. Several ASEAN members favour stronger pressure on

the junta, while others prefer continued engagement and quiet diplomacy. This division has produced paralysis. The bloc has excluded Myanmar's political leadership from high-level meetings, but this symbolic punishment has not changed the junta's behavior.

The latest summit – under the Philippines' chair – exposed ASEAN's dilemma. Some members now advocate cautious re-engagement with Myanmar's military-backed administration, especially after recent moves such as placing Suu Kyi under "house arrest" and holding disputed elections. Others warn that any normalization risks legitimizing military rule without securing peace or democratic progress. ASEAN itself still has no consensus on recognizing the junta-organized elections.

ASEAN's frustration stems not only from Myanmar's intransigence but also from the realization that the bloc lacks effective enforcement tools. The organization can persuade, mediate, and isolate diplomatically, but it cannot compel compliance. As the Myanmar conflict drags on, ASEAN faces an uncomfortable choice – continue defending a failing consensus-based approach or rethink its traditional norms in order to preserve its regional credibility. The longer the indecision continues, the greater the damage to ASEAN's claim of centrality and relevance in South East Asia.

## EDITORIAL

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WEEKLY

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**Cover photo of TNLA fighters near Chinese border by AFP**



TNLA fighters on the march.  
Photo: AFP

# **BURMA IN THE BALANCE: HOW CHINA CALLS THE SHOTS**

***ASHLEY SOUTH***

Since before the 1 February 2021 coup, the Pa-laung State Liberation Front-Ta'ang National Liberation Army (PSLF-TNLA) has been seeking to engage with 'the west', in order to hedge against the influence of China. Of the seven northern Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAOs) in the heavily China-influenced Federal Political Negotiation and Consultative Committee (FPNCC), only the PSLF-TNLA and KIO have made serious efforts to provide services to communities, and reform governance administration through more inclusive practises and structures.

Following Operation 1027 in October 2023, the TNLA controlled all or part of 13 townships across Shan State and Mandalay Region, including many non-Ta'ang communities. In a significant effort to provide inclusive governance and services to all civilians in an

expanded Ta'angland, in 2025 the PSLF-TNLA, together with a range of civil society representatives, and the Ta'ang National Party, established the Ta'angland Council (TLC). While the TNLA-PSLF is an armed group, the TLC is a civilian-led governance body. This model of bottom-up governance contrasts strongly with the top-down command style preferred by China, and demonstrated by most other northern EAOs.

The TLC initially received some western support for this experiment in at least partial democratization, but following the destruction of USAID in early 2025 most international aid has ceased. At present, the TLC is in discussion with international partners to support governance and services delivery to vulnerable civilians in Ta'angland, and Ta'ang CSOs have received a little support. However, the overall level of aid from western



TNLA fighters in training. Photo: AFP

donors has been minimal, and in the political sphere almost non-existent.

In this context, since 2024 China has played an increasingly dominant role in Myanmar, particularly in Northern Shan state. The Chinese authorities have already pressured several EROs into giving up territory, including hard-won and strategically important towns to the Myanmar Army. Under intense Chinese pressure, the TNLA signed the Haigen ceasefire agreement in Kunming on 28 October 2025, following which the TNLA withdrew from Mogok and Momeik. Then in March 2026 the MNDAA overran Kutkai, with Chinese connivance. As of April 2026, the TNLA still controls the six core townships of Ta'angland.

The bombshell came on 15 April 2025 (Thingyan day), when the PSLF-TNLA issued a statement congratu-

lating Gen. Min Aung Hlaing on assuming the presidency of Myanmar. The following day, six Ta'ang CSOs in the Ta'ang Civil Society Network issued a statement, sympathetic to the PSLF-TNLA, but denouncing the message sent to Min Aung Hlaing.

The PSLF-TNLA statement was a brutally pragmatic turn, reflecting China's position as the dominant power, in Myanmar and globally. Effectively, China has a strong level of control over Myanmar, at least north of Loikaw – including geo-strategically important oil and gas infrastructure projects connecting Yunnan Province with the Indian Ocean through central Myanmar and Arakan or Rakhine.

These developments raise questions regarding the future of the seven-member FPNCC, and the Three Brotherhood Alliance. Meanwhile, with very limited



A United Wa State Army (UWSA) parade. Photo: AFP

international support, remaining anti-junta resistance forces continue the struggles for self-determination, democracy and human rights – at least in southeast Myanmar - while the Arakan Army (an FPNCC member) continues to control almost the entire Rakhine State.

An anti-junta Steering Council for the Emergence of a Federal Democratic Union (SCEF) was launched on 30 March 2026, four days before the Hlutaw met in Naypyidaw to choose a new Myanmar president. The degree of inclusion was somewhat questionable, with the SCEF composed of already four allied groups (the Karen National Union, Karenni National Progressive Party, Chin National Front and Kachin Independence Organisation), plus the National Unity Government and a group of MPs elected in 2020. Several smaller armed groups took note, having gathered in November 2025 under the Spring Revolution Alliance, while the multi-stakeholder National Unity Consultative Council looked increasingly marginalised.

The new 'Cold War' reality in Myanmar pitches Chinese client groups (mostly in the north), junta proxy militias and the Myanmar Army, against western-aligned pro-democracy groups in the southeast and elsewhere. Unfortunately, while the former receive substantial Chinese support, the west has largely abandoned Myanmar's struggle for democracy. In this context, other anti-junta forces may see little choice but to roll with the times.

After the collapse of a ten-year peace process, and over five years of brutal war, conflict-affected communities and armed self-determination movements will not easily trust the militarized and centralised state again. That was tried in good faith between 2011-20, as epitomized by the 2015 Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA, from which the PSLF-TNLA was excluded). The previous peace process proved the Myanmar government and military to be unable and/or unwilling to

address the grievances and aspirations of ethnic nationality stakeholders. A post-election scenario in which a military-backed ruling party proposes a 'transitional road-map' to supposed peace and political dialogue risks repeating the mistakes of the past – with one very important difference: this time round, EROs are (still) in a much stronger position, militarily, politically and in terms of territorial control, despite continuing air-strikes on civilian targets.

The most effective way to resolve humanitarian and political (and coming climate) crises in Myanmar is for the international community to recognise, and provide political and military support to, key resistance forces. However, if the world follows China's lead and insists on 'peace talks', it is essential that (unlike in the 2010s) any 'peace process architecture' is constructed impartially, with equal recognition of the Myanmar government and Army, and anti-junta resistance forces. Should a push for negotiations emerge, the agenda would presumably be at first limited to ceasefire talks - given that key anti-junta forces (including the SCEF) have made the removal of Myanmar Army from politics a pre-condition of any political settlement.

Through decades of blood and struggle, and despite the failures of the NCA, the previous peace process saw ethnic politics returned to centre stage in Myanmar. This achievement must be defended.

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## ANALYSIS &amp; INSIGHT



Arakan Army fighters. Photo: AA

## ARAKAN ARMY PROVES IT IS A SERIOUS THREAT TO THE MYANMAR JUNTA

Armed clashes between Myanmar's military junta and the Arakan Army (AA) continue to intensify across Rakhine State and adjoining regions, underscoring the military's growing difficulty in containing one of the country's most powerful ethnic armed organizations. Fighting is no longer confined to Rakhine alone, but is increasingly spreading into neighbouring Magway, Bago, and Ayeyarwady regions as both sides seek to secure strategic routes and military positions.

The fiercest recent battles have centered on Kyaukphyu Township, a strategically important coastal area hosting Chinese-backed infrastructure projects and naval facilities. After reinforcing the Taung Maw Oo naval base with around 200 troops, junta forces launched a new offensive into AA-controlled territory on 10 May. The operation immediately triggered heavy fighting as AA forces, already prepared for the assault, mounted strong defensive attacks.

Unlike previous offensives, poor weather conditions limited the junta air force's usual role, forcing naval vessels to provide fire support instead. Local residents say the military turned to the Taung Maw Oo route after earlier offensives through Minpyin and Thaingchaung reportedly suffered severe losses. Dense jungle terrain and unfamiliar geography have further complicated junta operations, according to local accounts.

Despite setbacks, the military has escalated reinforcement efforts in Kyaukphyu, reportedly transporting more than 1,000 troops by helicopter with multiple daily landing operations. The scale of the deployment reflects the junta's determination to prevent further AA advances toward one of its last remaining strongholds in Rakhine State.

Another critical front has emerged around the Natyekan strategic outpost, which has been encircled by the AA. Reinforcement columns advancing from Ngaphe Township have repeatedly encountered fierce ambushes near Pazigy village at the base of the outpost hill. Even after suffering heavy casualties, junta forces continue sending fresh columns, relying on airstrikes and newly conscripted troops to sustain operations. On 8 May, a second reinforcement attempt involving around 200 soldiers was forced to retreat after a major AA counterattack near Pazi village. Later that day, the military renewed the assault with air support from fighter jets and Y-12 aircraft, illustrating the junta's growing dependence on aerial firepower to compensate for battlefield weaknesses on the ground.

Meanwhile, AA and allied forces are tightening pressure on the junta's No. (16) Military Weapon Factory, known as Kapasa (16), advancing to within roughly four

miles of the facility. Between 4 and 7 May, AA forces reportedly captured several key outposts protecting the factory, seizing 14 weapons and recovering more than 20 junta bodies. The remaining defensive positions, including Point 506, Point 535, and Point 268, are now viewed as crucial barriers preventing a direct assault on the weapons facility.

The broader battlefield situation in Rakhine has increasingly tilted in the AA's favour. The junta now retains firm control over only three townships in the state, while fighting continues around Sittwe and Kyaukphyu. Yet despite the AA's rapid territorial gains, questions remain over how regional geopolitics, particularly China's interests, may shape the conflict's trajectory.

Speculation has grown over whether Beijing could pressure the AA in the same way it has influenced ethnic armed groups along Myanmar's northern border. However, AA leader Twan Mrat Naing recently told The Diplomat that China has not exerted pressure on the group.

At the same time, the junta appears increasingly eager for Chinese diplomatic support. During Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi's visit to Naypyidaw in late



Karen fighters. Photo: Supplied

April, junta chief Min Aung Hlaing reportedly requested China's assistance in negotiating the return of lost territory in Rakhine State. Beijing publicly reiterated its support for "stability" in Myanmar, while Min Aung Hlaing is reportedly preparing for a future visit to China, signaling the junta's growing reliance on external backing as battlefield losses continue to mount.

## Fighting for Karen territory

Following the seizure of the junta's Laykay outpost, the Karen National Union (KNU) and allied resistance forces have intensified offensives across multiple fronts in southeastern Myanmar, signaling a broader attempt to stretch military defenses and isolate key junta positions in Karen-controlled territory.

The heaviest clashes are currently centred on the Wintarpan outpost in the KNU's Brigade No. (1) area, where resistance forces are pressing an offensive after consolidating gains around Laykay. According to Brigade No. (1) commander Brigadier Saw Soe Myint Htwe, junta forces have suffered substantial

casualties, including officers, with an estimated 30 to 40 troops killed or wounded during recent fighting and reinforcement attempts. Earlier in April, a junta column dispatched to reinforce the outpost was intercepted, and 24 soldiers, including the regiment's deputy commander, were captured as prisoners of war.

The battles underscore how resistance groups are increasingly targeting not only frontline bases but also the military's supply and reinforcement routes. Despite the pressure, the junta continues to rely heavily on air power to prevent strategic collapse. Airstrikes have accompanied most of the recent defensive operations, highlighting the military's dependence on aerial superiority as ground mobility becomes increasingly constrained.

A similar pattern is emerging in the KNU's Brigade No. (6) territory, where resistance forces have attacked the junta's Warlay strategic base since late April after capturing nearly all surrounding outposts. Junta troops have responded with artillery shelling and airstrikes, some of which reportedly struck civilian wards in



KIA fighters in Kachin State.  
Photo: AFP

Warlay town. Attempts to reinforce the base from Myawaddy have so far failed, as resistance forces continue intercepting military columns around Hpalu and Minletpan.

Meanwhile, the junta appears to be preparing for prolonged operations in the northern Karen and eastern Bago areas. Large-scale troop movements have been reported along the Penwekone-Natthankwin-Kyaukyi road in Brigade No. (3) territory, while another major reinforcement operation involving around 2,000 troops and 50 military trucks recently moved toward Kamamaung, a gateway to Brigade No. (5) in Hpapun District.

The urgency of the deployment suggests growing concern within the military over encircled troops in Hpapun, where resistance forces are tightening pressure. Without timely reinforcement, junta troops stationed there are increasingly at risk of surrender or further territorial losses.

## KIA gains strategic depth

The Kachin Independence Army (KIA) has emerged as one of the Myanmar military's most formidable opponents since the 2021 coup, transforming from a regional ethnic armed organization into a central pillar of the nationwide resistance movement. Beyond its own operations, the KIA has played a critical role in training and equipping People's Defense Forces (PDFs), particularly groups formed by the ethnic Bamar majority from central Myanmar.

Backed by expanded manpower, weapons stockpiles, and battlefield experience gained over the past four years, the KIA has significantly widened its territorial influence across Kachin State, northern Shan State, and parts of Sagaing Region. Among its major gains are areas linked to rare earth mining operations previously controlled by Border Guard Force (BGF)-aligned militias, giving the KIA not only strategic depth but also greater economic leverage.

According to figures released by the KIA, at least 136 clashes were recorded in KIA-controlled territory between mid-April and 2 May. The fighting spread across Putao, Waingmaw, Bhamo, Hpakant, Mohnyin,

and northern Shan State, indicating sustained military pressure on junta positions throughout northern Myanmar. In response, the junta increasingly relied on heavy airstrikes, drone attacks, and artillery shelling, reflecting the military's continuing difficulty in regaining territorial control through ground operations alone.

Some of the fiercest recent fighting has erupted in the jade-mining region of Hpakant. During battles around Lonekhin from 3 to 6 May, local sources reported that more than 100 junta soldiers were seriously wounded. The scale of casualties became evident when over 300 troops were reportedly mobilized to transport injured soldiers in three military lorries toward Namatee, near the Kachin capital, Myitkyina.

At the same time, the junta is attempting to reopen and secure key transport corridors into Bhamo, a strategically important town where intense fighting continues daily. In Shwegu Township, southern Kachin State, thousands of junta troops from Sagaing Region reportedly gathered near Ngaroe in preparation for reinforcement operations. However, resistance forces intercepted the advancing column in early May, forcing it to retreat. By 11 May, junta forces had shifted tactics, relying more on artillery fire and drone surveillance instead of direct troop advances.

Analysts believe the military's push toward Shwegu is directly linked to efforts to prevent the possible fall of Bhamo. The KIA has already warned civilians to avoid traveling at night, while the junta has tightened military administration around the town.

Meanwhile, coordination between the KIA, the Arakan Army (AA), and PDF groups is expanding. On 10 May, allied forces intercepted a junta convoy traveling from Htigyaing to Katha, destroying military trucks and seizing weapons. Although the junta recently retook several towns in Sagaing Region near the Kachin border, resistance attacks continue, underscoring the military's inability to stabilize regained territory despite extensive use of airpower.



Photo: AFP

## TINY SHIFTS SEEN IN DIVIDED ASEAN'S APPROACH TO MYANMAR

**M**yanmar's junta moved deposed leader Aung San Suu Kyi to house arrest last week but that was not enough to ease deep divisions among ASEAN leaders over how best to engage with the pariah state.

Myanmar is still a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations bloc but has been formally excluded from summits such as the one held in the central Philippines this week since the military junta snatched power.

The junta's 2021 coup toppled Suu Kyi's democratically elected government, triggering a bloody civil war and a crackdown on dissent.

Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos said on 8 May that members were "frustrated" by the years-long failure to successfully implement the bloc's five-point peace plan, suggesting a "fine-tuning" was in order.

"One of the arguments that was made is that the world has turned how many times since we started this discussion... and perhaps the context has changed a little bit," he said.

"Unfortunately, we have not seen... any progress in Myanmar," he added, describing an occasionally "emotional" meeting in Cebu.

A Thai diplomat confirmed that Foreign Minister Sihasak Phuangketkeow had suggested ASEAN invite his Myanmar counterpart for a meeting.

"We need to change the way that we are engaging with Myanmar," the diplomat told reporters on Friday.

Maratee Nalita Andamo, deputy spokeswoman for Thailand's foreign affairs department, said the "proposal was for engagement with Myanmar at the political level... and it was the start of a discussion".

She said it had been received "in a positive light".

However, a potential softening of the 11-member bloc's stance is not palatable to every member.

Malaysian Foreign Minister Mohamad Hasan told reporters on Thursday his country did not believe the junta had done enough to reclaim a seat at the table.

"We still feel uncomfortable, because oppression is still taking place, atrocities towards their own citizens are still occurring," he said of Myanmar's junta.

"We want the new government formed after the election in Myanmar to truly follow what we set out in our (peace plan)," he said.

## **A fraying consensus**

"ASEAN consensus on this matter is fraying," said Dr Siew Mun Tang, a senior fellow at Singapore's ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.

There were member states ready to "let bygones be bygones", given the bloc's longstanding lack of progress.

"There's no way you're going to turn back the clock, right? So let's move forward," he said in describing the view of those states.

He said Thailand's porous border with Myanmar made it an "urgent national security" issue.

Sharon Seah, a principal fellow at the same university, said the bloc had limited leverage.

"The only real leverage ASEAN has is letting (Myanmar) play with the big boys at these summits," she said, noting it still attends smaller meetings.

While it is widely believed Indonesia and Singapore are aligned with Malaysia, countries in the middle could tip the scales at some point, Seah said.

"I would say there's a fairly sizeable group of middle-group countries," she said, identifying Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and possibly Brunei as potential "fence-sitters".

"They can go either way if they see that there's actually some strategic sense in getting Myanmar to come back into the fold."

## **'One millimetre'**

Before heading to a gala dinner that ended the summit, Marcos said ASEAN members had left their 8 May afternoon session asking "what more can we do?"

Even a small shift in policy could potentially be of benefit, he said.

"Sometimes, when you move the parameters one millimetre, it makes all the difference," he said, insisting that would not mean abandoning human rights.

"We're asking all the member states, all the leaders and their ministries, what that millimetre shift could possibly be," he said.

"There are no definitive answers as yet, but we are certainly going to work on it very, very hard."

AFP



## ASEAN EYES OIL RESERVE, SHARED GRID AS COUNTERS TO MIDEAST WAR COST SQUEEZE

**S**outheast Asian nations hit by soaring fuel and food prices caused by the Middle East war are weighing solutions that include setting up a regional oil reserve, Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos said on 9 May.

Leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) called for the opening of the Strait of Hormuz, while also debating a series of ambitious projects aimed at stemming the effects of the next global crisis.

Marcos said all member states agreed on the need to act with speed, speaking to reporters hours after an overnight flare-up in the critical waterway.

"We needed it yesterday, if not sooner," Marcos said of the raft of energy proposals. "That's the way we are approaching the problem."

A closing statement called for the swift ratification of the bloc's Framework Agreement on Petroleum Security, a fuel-sharing scheme aimed at ensuring energy stability.

Members also signed off on a push for an ASEAN Power Grid, aimed at connecting national electricity networks to enable cross-border power trading.

Marcos said the idea was agreed unanimously, but conceded the devil was in the details.

"Let's talk about the fuel reserve. Is it going to be in one single place? Is it going to be scattered throughout the whole of ASEAN?" he said.

"Some countries have a surplus of a certain kind of fuel. Other people have a shortage," Marcos said. "We're trying to balance that out."

Singapore Prime Minister Lawrence Wong expressed support during a morning session for both the power grid and the fuel reserve concept, while warning that the effects of the strait's closure would linger long after it was reopened.

"It will take time -- at least months -- for damaged infrastructure to be repaired, for the strait to be demined, and for goods to flow through," he told ASEAN leaders.

## Myanmar frustration

A war closer to home was also hotly debated on Friday, with member states arguing over their approach to Myanmar, which has been formally excluded from high-level summits since its military junta snatched power in a 2021 coup.

The coup triggered a bloody civil war that still rages.

"Many of the members aired their frustration about the lack of progress in the process of normalising the situation in Myanmar," Marcos said.

Thailand, which shares a border with its war-torn neighbour, has spent months pushing for higher-level engagement.

A Thai diplomat confirmed at a briefing that Bangkok's foreign minister was pushing for higher-level diplomatic contact with Myanmar, saying the suggestion had been "received in a positive light" by ASEAN members.

Malaysian Foreign Minister Mohamad Hasan told reporters on Thursday his country remained opposed to high-level talks while "oppression is still taking place".

"There are still atrocities towards their own citizens," he said of Myanmar's junta.

## Code of Conduct

Marcos also said the Philippines had not given up hope of completing its long-planned Code of Conduct meant to regulate disagreements between bloc members and China in the South China Sea.

The Philippines, which has seen its ships engage in repeated clashes with Chinese vessels in the disputed waterway, has previously said it wanted to complete the document.

However, talks have stalled repeatedly over disagreements on the code's scope, enforcement and legal status.

Asked Friday about the prospect of greater economic cooperation with China, Marcos said that largely hinged on finally completing a deal.

"That is one of our aspirations as chair of ASEAN for 2026, that at the end of the year... we actually have a code of conduct."

AFP



## ANFREL URGES ASEAN NOT TO LEGITIMISE MYANMAR JUNTA'S SHAM ELECTIONS

On 6 May, the Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL) urged Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) leaders attending the summit in Cebu, Philippines, to refrain from conferring legitimacy on Myanmar's non-credible electoral process staged by the junta in December 2025 and January 2026.

The text of ANFREL's statement continues below.

As documented in the joint ANFREL-SAC-M report "Old Generals, New Clothes: The Myanmar Junta's Illegitimate 2025-26 Elections and the Way Forward", ANFREL reiterates that the electoral process staged by the military junta did not meet any international or regional standards for credible, inclusive, and legitimate elections. The process lacked the fundamental conditions necessary for genuine democratic participation and cannot be regarded as a legitimate reflection of the will of the Myanmar people.

The continued restrictions on political participation, civic space, and independent scrutiny in Myanmar also highlight the increasingly difficult environment faced

by citizen election observers, civil society groups, journalists, and democratic actors across the region.

Despite these challenges, many continue to document electoral and human rights violations under dangerous conditions in defense of democratic participation and public accountability.

In this context, ANFREL respectfully urges ASEAN leaders to refrain from actions that could confer legitimacy upon a non-credible electoral process.

Instead, ASEAN should continue to pursue a solution that reflects the aspirations and democratic will of the people of Myanmar. This requires meaningful engagement with legitimate democratic actors, ethnic stakeholders, civil society, and affected communities to help create the conditions for genuine dialogue, accountability, and transitional justice. Such efforts are essential in advancing an inclusive process toward a peaceful democratic future grounded in representative governance, human rights, reconciliation, and long-term regional stability.



Photo: AFP

## SUU FOUNDATION CALLS FOR 'FULL AND UNCONDITIONAL' RELEASE OF AUNG SAN SUU KYI BY MYANMAR JUNTA

The Suu Foundation released a statement on 4 May calling on the Myanmar junta to release Aung San Suu Kyi as the only real way to move forward in Myanmar.

The full text of the statement is as follows.

The Board of the Suu Foundation has seen news from junta sources in Myanmar regarding the transfer of State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi from prison to imprisonment at an undisclosed address in Nay Pyi Taw.

We welcome anything that provides her with some measure of human decency. It is essential that she receives the necessary care after enduring her unjust detention.

She must also have access to her family and her lawyers.

But it is only the release of all political prisoners that advances peace in Myanmar. Moving Daw Suu to house arrest is mere hostage diplomacy.

We therefore call for her full and unconditional release from arrest, accompanied by a true cessation of violence. Only in this way can all parties come together in a genuine and inclusive process that leads to national reconciliation.

The old models of divide and rule, including the discredited National Ceasefire Agreement, will not bring peace.

The Suu Foundation maintains its long-standing commitment to Myanmar—to peacebuilding, to healthcare, and to education.

We stand with those who strive for the end of violence and suffering. We support those who are now establishing forms of governance that meet the needs and interests of the people of Myanmar.

We will do all we can to support a Myanmar-led, lasting peace that will bring stability and justice for the people.



Photo: EPA

## APHR SUPPORTS PROOF OF LIFE CAMPAIGN AND DEMANDS UNCONDITIONAL RELEASE OF AUNG SAN SUU KYI

The ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR) demanded the unconditional release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in a statement on 6 May. The group also declared their support for the 'Proof of Life' campaign to verify the pro-democracy icon's health.

The APHR statement is as follows.

As ASEAN leaders convene in Cebu for the 48th ASEAN Summit, ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR) calls for the immediate and unconditional release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and urges the bloc to add its voice to growing global demands.

The UN Secretary-General, UN Human Rights Chief Volker Türk, and governments including the United States, the European Union, Japan, and France have all called for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi. The junta's transfer of the Nobel Peace Prize laureate from Naypyidaw Prison to an undisclosed location under house arrest on April 30—four days before the summit opened—has done nothing to satisfy that demand. APHR views this as a calculated attempt to deflect pressure and generate diplomatic goodwill amid heightened international scrutiny.

APHR also supports the 'Proof of Life' campaign, and underscores the urgent need to verify Aung San Suu Kyi's health and well-being. Kim Aris, leading

champion of the campaign, has had no direct contact with his mother since February 1, 2021. No independent observer has been permitted to verify the health or welfare of the 80-year old former leader.

Moreover, APHR welcomes the Philippines' call, as ASEAN Chair, to meet with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and urges ASEAN to elevate that call into a unified bloc position. The Five-Point Consensus requires the junta to engage in genuine dialogue with all stakeholders. Yet in five years since its adoption, the ASEAN Special Envoy to Myanmar has never once been permitted to meet the leader of the party that won Myanmar's last free election.

APHR calls on ASEAN leaders to:

- Demand Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's immediate and unconditional release, not merely in words but through concrete, coordinated pressure on the junta to act;
- Ensure her family is granted immediate access and independent observers are permitted to verify her condition without delay; and
- Reaffirm that any political process excluding Myanmar's democratically elected representatives lacks legitimacy and must not be recognised by ASEAN.



## PHILIPPINES WELCOMES AUNG SAN SUU KYI'S TRANSFER TO HOUSE ARREST

**O**n 6 May, the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs welcomed Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's move to house arrest and the partial reduction of her sentence by the Myanmar junta, alongside an amnesty for over 1,500 political prisoners to mark the Full Moon Day of Kason.

The text of the statement continues below.

We view these developments as vital steps in a sequence of confidence-building measures necessary for long-term national stability in Myanmar. To further build international confidence, we encourage Myanmar to provide greater transparency regarding this transfer by allowing Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to communicate with her family, which would demonstrate a genuine commitment to national reconciliation.

The Philippines also hopes that Myanmar will grant the request of the Special Envoy of the ASEAN Chair on Myanmar to have brief access to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, as such would be in line with the Special Envoy's role to engage with all stakeholders and parties to create an environment conducive to inclusive national dialogue.

These recent developments offer a good momentum for Myanmar to show further concrete efforts towards the full and effective implementation of the Five-Point Consensus, and to enable them to be part of solutions for national peace and national reconciliation that are Myanmar-owned and Myanmar-led.



Photo: AFP

## MYANMAR MILITARY CLAIMS RECAPTURE OF TRADE ARTERY TOWARDS CHINA

**M**yanmar's military claimed on 7 May to have recaptured a key northern transport corridor towards China after a 15-month battle, touting a counterblow to rebels in the civil war.

The military said it crushed "terrorist insurgent groups" along a route linking the central and second largest city of Mandalay to the northern hub of Myitkyina, about 50 kilometres (31 miles) from China's border.

AFP was not immediately able to verify the claim.

"The operations lasted for over one year and three months, during which a total of 322 major and minor engagements were fought," the Myanmar commander-in-chief's office said in a statement.

It said the bodies of 138 rebels were seized and some military members "also made the ultimate sacrifice" -- without confirming the number of military fatalities.

A combined offensive starting in late 2023 once saw rebel groups surge out of Myanmar's fringes towards areas outside Mandalay, the ancient royal capital.

Analysts say that offensive had the backing of China as it sought to shore up influence along its border, but

Beijing reined in rebels as it feared Myanmar collapsing into a failed state.

In recent months, two of the trio of ethnic minority armies leading that attack signed Beijing-brokered truces, leaving allied, lesser-trained pro-democracy forces exposed and increasingly backfooted.

At the same time, China has enthusiastically backed Myanmar's elections, which this year delivered a walkover win for the military's allies in civilian politics.

After five years ruling as armed forces chief, coup leader Min Aung Hlaing was last month sworn in as civilian president in a transition democracy monitors dismissed as a rebranding of military rule.

The government has pledged to step up trade with China, reviving discussions of long-stalled energy and transport infrastructure projects.

"Regional trade is now moving more smoothly and efficiently," the Myanmar military statement said, announcing the reopening of the Mandalay-Myitkyina route.

AFP



Hpakant. Photo: AFP

## CHILD KILLED, MULTIPLE PEOPLE INJURED AS INTENSE SHELLING TRAPS RESIDENTS IN HPAKANT

A child was killed, and several other people injured following a morning of relentless artillery fire in the Lone Khin village tract of Hpakant Township, Kachin State.

The tragedy occurred on 7 May, amid escalating combat between the Myanmar military and the Kachin Independence Army (KIA).

According to local witnesses, the child was one of three people struck by shells during a heavy barrage in the early hours. Despite attempts to provide aid, the child succumbed to their injuries at approximately 11:30 am.

This death brings the confirmed civilian casualty count in Lone Khin to seven killed or wounded since 4 May, as the township's lucrative jade-mining hub becomes a central flashpoint once again.

The violence has been unceasing for three consecutive days, with residents reporting shelling "day and night." On the evening of 6 May, an artillery shell reportedly tore through the roof of a home in Ward

4, leaving a local man with critical injuries to his head and legs.

"An artillery shell fell through the roof, injuring him in the head and legs. The fighting has continued day and night for three straight days," another local resident said.

The military junta and allied militia forces are currently stationed in the village and have also blocked the Nant Ya and Whay Kha roads, leaving local residents struggling to flee the fighting, effectively trapping them in the area.

"The roads are closed, so there is nowhere to run," a resident told Mizzima. "About half of the residents have already managed to flee, but the rest are effectively trapped because they cannot travel in or out."

As of Thursday afternoon, heavy fighting continued to be reported, with trapped civilians unable to access emergency medical services or secure passage out of the combat zone.



KNLA fighters. Photo: Supplied

## KAWTHOOLEI ARMY BATTALION JOINS KNLA BRIGADE 4 IN TANINTHARYI REGION

In a significant consolidation of resistance forces, 37 members of the Kawthoolei Army (KTLA), including a battalion commander and several high-ranking officers, have officially joined the Karen National Union (KNU) in Tanintharyi Region.

Padoh Saw Eh Na, District Secretary for the KNU's Mergui-Dawei District, confirmed that Major Phoe Ahe, commander of the KTLA's Sakapaw Battalion 2, led the group to integrate with Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) Battalion 27 on the evening of 4 May.

The defecting unit included one company commander, two deputy company commanders, and three platoon commanders who had been operating along the strategic Dawei-Htee Khee route.

"We are pleased to welcome them. At this time, all forces need to unite and fight against the military regime," Padoh Saw Eh Na told Mizzima.

He also stated that the battalion had previously been involved in territorial friction with KNLA-allied forces, but this move effectively reduces the number of independent armed actors in the KNLA Brigade 4 territory to the military junta and the Kaw La Phoe group.

The KTLA was established in 2022 by General Nerdah Mya following his suspension from the Karen National Defence Organization (KNDO) over allegations surrounding the deaths of 25 people in Karen State.

While the KTLA subsequently declared the formation of a separate "Government of Kawthoolei," various units have periodically opted to return to the KNU's unified command structure to strengthen the campaign against the military junta.



Photo: AFP

## **KNHRG WARNS OF MOUNTING CIVILIAN TOLL AND MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS IN KARENNI STATE**

The Karenni Human Rights Group (KnHRG) warned on 6 May of a rapidly deteriorating human rights situation in Karenni State, reporting at least 27 civilians killed and 44 wounded since the beginning of 2026 due to junta airstrikes, drone attacks, artillery shelling, and landmines.

The KnHRG statement continues below.

In the latest report by KnHRG, “Hanging Onto Hope,” civilians repeatedly told KnHRG of their struggles for survival amid ongoing attacks by the military junta.

Fears of drone surveillance and airstrikes conducted by the military junta are an ongoing concern, especially for those who have been repeatedly displaced and have nowhere else to flee. Airstrikes are among the most common and violent attacks carried out by the Burma Army, often targeting innocent, vulnerable groups, such as women, children and the elderly. These assaults occur without prior warning and have caused fear and trauma in communities already suffering from the junta’s criminal actions. As the struggle against the

military regime grows each day, the unfolding mental health crisis also demands urgent attention, particularly as violence triggers trauma and rising cases of PTSD among survivors of attacks and resistance fighters.

The gaps in the provision of health, education, and awareness-raising services on the ground are being filled by local civil society organizations. However, securing sustainable, long-term funding remains a challenge. International stakeholders, including donors, must acknowledge the situation and the many areas that require financial support to assist conflict-affected communities, including refugees and IDPs.

KnHRG is calling for an urgent response that prioritizes the protection of civilians and aligns with the calls being amplified by human rights defenders, including sanctions on aviation fuel and a long-overdue referral of the human rights situation in Burma to the International Criminal Court. There must be an end to impunity and justice for all who have suffered under the regime’s tyrannical rule.



AA Commander-in-Chief Major General Twan Mrat Naing.  
Photo: AFP

## ARAKAN ARMY CHIEF: AIRSTRIKES MAKE POLITICAL DIALOGUE IMPOSSIBLE

Meaningful political dialogue between the military junta and the Arakan Army (AA) remains "extremely" difficult as long as the junta continues to use airstrikes against civilians, according to AA Commander-in-Chief Major General Twan Mrat Naing.

In an exclusive interview with *The Diplomat* aired on 4 May, the Major General dismissed recent junta invitations for political talks. He argued that the military is attempting to negotiate from a position of perceived strength while simultaneously escalating violence against civilian populations in AA-controlled areas.

"As long as the military keeps bombing civilians, it will be very difficult for us to explore the political process," Twan Mrat Naing stated.

He emphasized that any future negotiations must move beyond unrealistic demands such as those made by the junta during previous China-mediated talks and instead focus on genuine, inclusive dialogue grounded in the realities on the ground.

On the Myanmar Spring Revolution, Major General Twan Mrat Naing highlighted the significant role of the National Unity Government (NUG) and expressed his respect for the NUG.

He expressed hope that all revolutionary forces will unite for a clear political future, stating that the outcome of the revolution cannot be determined by the vision of the AA alone. He added that the realities and hardships faced by people in mainland must also be fully understood and taken into consideration.

Addressing perceptions that China is pressuring the AA, he said it should not be seen as pressure, but rather as China seeking stability in Myanmar while safeguarding its own national interests, similar to any other country.

Regarding allegations about recruitment in Rakhine State, he rejected the claims, saying that while emergency measures are unavoidable during wartime, recruitment is conducted cautiously and only after clearly explaining duties and responsibilities to recruits.

Looking ahead, the AA Commander-in-Chief pledged to build greater trust and strengthen cooperation with diverse communities, including Chin and Muslim (Rohingya) populations.



## MYANMAR JUNTA FORCES RECAPTURE STRATEGIC KENNEDY PEAK IN CHIN STATE

**M**yanmar junta forces have reclaimed control of the strategically vital Kennedy Peak in Tedim Township, Chin State, following an intense week of fighting that saw the use of heavy aerial bombardment against resistance positions.

Rising over 8,800 feet and holding strategic military significance, Kennedy Peak was recaptured by junta forces on the evening of 5 May following intense clashes with Chin resistance fighters.

“We can confirm that junta forces have retaken Kennedy Peak; we were forced to withdraw due to heavy aerial bombardment,” the Chief of Staff of Chinland Defence Force-Civic Defence Militia (CDF-CDM) Siyin told Mizzima on 6 May.

He said both the military and Chin resistance forces suffered casualties in the fighting but did not provide further details.

Although Chin resistance forces held the advantage on the ground, they withdrew after the military launched at least eight daily airstrikes using fighter jets and carried out drone bombardments across the area.

On 2 May, a military column of around 200 troops advancing from Thaing Ngin village in Tedim Township struck a landmine, and when junta forces attempted to push toward high-ground positions held by Chin resistance fighters, they were driven back to Leh Than Kone by a counteroffensive.

The military re-entered the area on the morning of 3 May following heavy airstrikes, triggering intensified clashes, and by 5 May Chin forces had relinquished control, according to Chief of Staff of CDF-CDM Siyin.

The Chief of Staff of Tedim-based PDF-Zoland, which fought alongside CDF-CDM Siyin in the clashes, confirmed the loss of the camp but provided no further details on the situation.

Pro-government social media accounts have circulated photos purportedly showing the occupation of Kennedy Peak in Tedim Township, urging Chin forces to surrender.

According to Mizzima records, Kennedy Peak, a strategic communications and military stronghold hosting junta broadcast towers and communication facilities, has changed hands four times amid intense clashes between Chin resistance forces and the military junta.

Chin resistance forces first seized Kennedy Peak in November 2023, but it was retaken by the military on 5 November 2025. Days later, Chin forces launched a counteroffensive and regained control on 28 November, before the military, after months of heavy airstrikes, recaptured the position roughly six months on.

Although the military has seized the camp, tensions remain high in Tedim Township, with renewed clashes widely expected at any time.

## MYANMAR JUNTA OFFENSIVE IN MAGWAY REGION LEAVES THREE DEAD AND SIX VILLAGES BURNED

A military junta column, reportedly comprising troops from the Light Infantry Division 101, has conducted a destructive offensive across Salin Township in Magway Region, resulting in the deaths of three civilians and the widespread destruction of homes, according to the Salin Township People's Administration Team.

The violence unfolded over several days as the column advanced through the township.

Local residents and administration officials report that the junta forces set fire to Htanoung Kone, Kan Swe, Thanat Kone, and Kyu Wun villages on 1 May. The campaign continued on 4 May, with troops torching Sint Tu Kan and Pyoe Khin Kone villages.

"Six villages have been set on fire so far. Many homes were destroyed," an official from the Salin Township People's Administration Team stated. The human toll has been confirmed at three: one man was reportedly shot dead by soldiers, while two elderly women perished in the fires after their homes were set ablaze.

The offensive involved intense combat, as the junta column reportedly numbering around 100 troops and supported by heavy artillery clashed with local revolutionary forces near Kan Tai Kway, Thee Kone, and Pyoe Khin Kone villages on 4 May.

Witnesses described a prolonged firefight starting around 3:30 pm, noting that military aircraft were observed circling the area even before the ground assault commenced.

The escalation has triggered a mass displacement, with residents from Nat Sin Kone, Kan Baung, Shar Taw, Sint Tu Kan, Thee Kone, and Pyoe Khin Kone villages forced to flee their homes to escape the advancing troops.

Investigations into the identities of the victims and the full extent of the property damage are ongoing.



## ACTING PRESIDENT DUWA LASHI LA CALLS FOR PERSEVERANCE ON FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF PEOPLE'S DEFENCE FORCE

National Unity Government (NUG) Acting President Duwa Lashi La marked the fifth anniversary of the People's Defence Force (PDF) on 5 May, by calling on resistance forces to maintain their resolve despite the "highs and lows" of the ongoing Spring Revolution.

"We are confronting numerous political challenges and are also experiencing frequent military setbacks. The nature of a revolution involves both highs and lows, including times when progress means taking two steps forward and one step back," said Duwa Lashi La.

Despite these fluctuations, he urged the PDF not to overlook the realities on the ground, but to continue overcoming obstacles with determination and perseverance until they achieve the goal envisioned by the people.

He noted that, despite achieving unprecedented successes in the history of armed resistance throughout this difficult revolutionary journey, the PDF has not yet reached its ultimate goal.

He also stressed that, while PDF members are currently fighting as revolutionaries, they must be prepared to take on the role of "nation-builders" in the post-revolution period, contributing to the establishment of a new federal democratic union.

To fulfil these responsibilities, Acting President Duwa Lashi La, instructed PDF members to strengthen their intellectual resilience and continue building a well-organized, disciplined army that the public can trust and rely on.

The NUG) also pledged that, as a genuine government of the people, it will keep fighting resolutely alongside the PDF until military rule is completely dismantled.

According to statements from the NUG's Ministry of Defence, the PDF was established on 5 May 2021. Over the past five years, it has systematically formed 10 regional military commands, one division, and 360 battalions under a unified command structure nationwide.

## MON STATE RESISTANCE FORCES SHOOT DOWN MYANMAR JUNTA PARAMOTOR; SEIZE WEAPONS IN ONGOING OFFENSIVE

Revolutionary forces in Mon State announced on 5 May, that they successfully shot down a military junta paramotor following a series of retaliatory strikes against the regime's aerial campaign.

According to a statement from the Special Operations Forces (SOF) of the 1st Operation Area, the aircraft was downed on 26 April after resistance fighters opened fire on the paramotor as it was conducting bombing raids over Win Tar Pan and Kyauk Pyar villages in Bilin Township. The downed aircraft reportedly crashed approximately three miles from the junta's Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) 3 base.

The statement said a paramotor belonging to the military, which had been bombing villages, crashed about three miles from LIB 3 after coming under fire from revolutionary forces. It added that on 4 May, the forces seized a 122 mm shell and 18,000 rounds of 5.56 mm ammunition from a military airdrop.

In April, combined forces of the SOF, Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), Karen National Defence Organisation (KNDO), and Local Defence Forces (LDFs) attacked and captured the Let Yek camp

in Shwe Kyin Township, Bago Region, and the Lay Kay camp in Bilin Township, Mon State.

During the battles to seize the camps and in subsequent pursuits of retreating troops, 18 prisoners of war, including Deputy Commander Aung Zaw Moe, were captured, while seven others were killed.

The statement added that an interception attack on a military column of about 200 troops advancing from the Pain Nae Taw strategic base left 25 soldiers dead and six more captured, bringing the total number of prisoners of war to 24.

Weapons and ammunition seized during the fighting included 42 firearms, a drone jammer, 51 rounds of 81 mm ammunition and other munitions.

The statement said the captured prisoners of war are receiving medical treatment in line with the Prisoner of War Law and are being held under systematic custody, while operations to clear the area and assist displaced civilians are ongoing.



## MYANMAR JUNTA OFFENSIVE DISPLACES TENS OF THOUSANDS ACROSS MYINGYAN AND MYAUNG TOWNSHIPS

**A** military junta column of approximately 300 troops has triggered a mass exodus in the Mandalay Region, forcing tens of thousands of residents from 14 villages to flee their homes since 1 May.

The offensive began in the early hours of 1 May when the military column moved from Taung Pu to Sin Chaung village. By that evening, troops had looted the village and set it ablaze, destroying 56 houses. The campaign of destruction continued into 2 May with the torching of Gin Gae village.

“There are many villages, so there are around tens of thousands of locals. As the column is still present, locals are still unable to return,” a local resident said at around 1:00 pm on 4 May.

Junta troops have reportedly been setting fire to villages, forcing residents to flee across the Ayeyarwady River and take shelter in Myaung Township.

According to Ko Nway Oo, leader of the Myaung Township People’s Defence and Security Group, the junta column opened fire with both heavy and small arms while civilians were crossing the river, although no injuries were reported.

“The number of houses burned in Gin Gae village is lower than in Sin Chaung, but the exact figure is not yet known,” said Ko Nway Oo.

Due to the presence of the junta column, tens of thousands of residents from 14 villages in Myingyan Township – Ta Loke, Taw Pu, Kyar Tine, Sint Kut, Their Ywar, Kan Taw, Ma Yoe Kone, Phet Pin Aing, Kan Par Ni, Sin Chaung, Nyaung To, Ya Nan To, Kaing, and Gin Gae – have been forced to flee their homes.



Ei Mon Lwin, dressed as a Buddhist nun

## MISS GRAND MYANMAR CONTESTANT EXPELLED FOLLOWING BACKLASH OVER RELIGIOUS COSTUME

**M**iss Grand Myanmar Organization announced on 5 May, that it has officially expelled contestant Ei Mon Lwin, who represented Tachilek, after her appearance in a Buddhist nun's outfit during a preliminary National Costume competition sparked nationwide outrage.

The controversy erupted after Ei Mon Lwin performed on stage at the Eravati Sule Grand Hotel in Yangon on 4 May wearing traditional Buddhist nun's robes. During the segment, she depicted a traditional ear-piercing ceremony and performed scenes of meditation.

Videos of the performance went viral on social media, drawing sharp criticism from the public, who viewed the use of sacred religious symbols in a beauty pageant as deeply disrespectful and offensive to Buddhism.

National Director U Mahran Seng Naw confirmed that the contestant had been expelled for violating

her contract and ignoring strict guidelines requiring contestants to avoid styling that could tarnish Myanmar's dignity or disrespect any religion.

The organization noted that the costume was not showcased during rehearsals, nor was it approved by pageant officials.

The fallout has extended beyond the pageant stage. According to reports from local media outlets, the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture has begun coordinating with the Ministry of Home Affairs to investigate the incident.

The Miss Grand Myanmar 2026 pageant continues with its remaining contestants, with the grand final scheduled for 9 May, where the winner will be selected to represent the country at the Miss Grand International 2026 competition.



## KACHIN CIVIL SOCIETY OPPOSES MYANMAR JUNTA'S PUSH TO RESUME MYITSONE DAM

On 05 May, 49 civil society organizations and Kachin residents demanded the permanent cancellation of the Myitsone Dam project, opposing the Myanmar junta and Chinese state-owned company SPIC-YN's attempts to restart construction, which has been on hold since 2011.

The statement is as follows.

The attempts to forcibly resume the stalled Myitsone Dam project, which has been suspended since 2011 under former President Thein Sein's administration, are in direct opposition to the will of local Kachin people and the citizens of Myanmar.

According to the junta's order 214/2025 (December 16, 2025), individuals or organizations expressing opposition and rejection of the project without firm evidence will face legal actions under the existing law. Conducting fake public referendum according to the junta's order is the antithesis of freedom of speech and expression.

The Myitsone Dam project agreement is made between the Chinese government and a series of authoritarian ruling groups, forcibly proceeding with implementation in the name of development while prioritizing their own business interests, without consent from the people.

The Myitsone Dam project is 139.5 metres in height and 1,310 metres in width, and the project uses techniques that could potentially flood the area which is the size of Singapore. According to the "Independent Expert Review of the Myitsone Dam EIA (2013)", the project would not only destroy water sources but also the bio-diversity of the area. Additionally, the project has

forcibly displaced 12,000 people. As a consequence, ancestral homes, beliefs and lands that have been inhabited and cultivated for generations have been forcibly seized, resulting in the total loss of traditional livelihoods including agriculture and livestock.

Therefore, we issue this opposition statement demanding the total cessation of the Myitsone Dam project, as it offers no benefits to the public and will only result in the severe destruction and loss of people's lives, homes, and properties.

1. The Chinese state-owned company (SPIC-YN) must immediately cease its lobbying efforts to resume the project, which disregard the clear opposition of the Myanmar people to the construction of the Myitsone Dam project.

2. To immediately stop threatening civilians who oppose the Myitsone Dam project and stop conducting fake public referendum by using force and intimidation against the public.

3. To permanently cancel the Myitsone Dam project that can adversely impact the well-being of local Kachin people and the whole of Myanmar.

4. To completely cancel construction of the project, as building the massive Myitsone Dam project while Myanmar is embroiled in nationwide war will only intensify the conflict.

5. We hereby declare that no government shall forcibly implement any project or investment under the guise of development without genuine consent of local communities in Kachin State.



## FOUR CHINESE NATIONALS ARRESTED IN THAILAND FOR BRUTAL TORTURE OF MYANMAR MIGRANT

Thai authorities have apprehended four Chinese businessmen in connection with the abduction and horrific torture of a 27-year-old Myanmar migrant worker in Rayong Province. The victim, identified as Ko Thar Thar, was allegedly subjected to a prolonged assault that included being doused with boiling water after he attempted to claim unpaid wages.

Two additional suspects remain at large, according to the Myanmar Light Social Assistance Organization, which is assisting with the case.

"One more suspect was arrested today. In total, four people involved in abusing this child, Ko Thar Thar, have now been detained," Ko Nay Lin Thu of the Myanmar Light Social Assistance Organization told Mizzima on the afternoon of 8 May.

The remaining two suspects, among the six Chinese businessmen accused of torturing Ko Thar Thar, remain at large, although authorities have reportedly obtained information regarding their identities and whereabouts.

"These two suspects are still on the run, but they will not escape. Now that the other four have been arrested, we are confident these two will also be caught," Ko Nay Lin Thu said. "Even if they are not immediately apprehended, arrest warrants will be issued against them under Thai law."

Thai police are currently investigating the four arrested Chinese nationals, who have not yet been formally charged. The case has not yet been submitted to the court, and authorities said the charges will be announced after the court issues its order.

Ko Nay Lin Thu said he would pursue the case "to the end" to ensure justice is served under Thai law. "We are all migrant workers. Thailand does not tolerate torture cases, which is why we will continue pursuing this case until the truth is fully revealed," he said.

Ko Thar Thar, 27, worked as a Chinese interpreter at a construction site in Thailand, earning 20,000 baht per month. He reportedly resigned after requesting 16,000 baht in unpaid wages owed over a two-month period.

"On April 30, at around 3:30 p.m., they came to Thar Thar's workplace and told him they were taking him to collect his wages," Ko Nay Lin Thu said. "Two people arrived to pick him up — a man claiming to be his employer and a young Chinese interpreter who had been training him."

He was later taken to a Chinese restaurant in Rayong District, where he was allegedly confined in the restaurant's office and subjected to continuous physical abuse.

A Chinese woman, said to be the shop owner, allegedly poured as many as four kettles of boiling water over Ko Thar Thar. He was then reportedly beaten by a group of assailants using golf clubs and iron pipes. The captors are also said to have forced him to watch videos depicting "Zha Pian" cyber-scam torture methods, including fingernail removal and limb amputation. Ko Thar Thar eventually managed to break free and escape as they were allegedly about to pour boiling water directly into his mouth.

Among those arrested by Thai police are the alleged businessman who brought Ko Thar Thar to the location and a Chinese woman accused of pouring boiling water on him.



## INTERFERENCE BY MYANMAR'S JUNTA IN THE JUDICIARIES OF EAST TIMOR AND INDONESIA CONDEMNED BY RIGHTS GROUPS

**M**yanmar junta leader Min Aung Hlaing is accused by several rights groups of an escalating campaign to influence and intimidate members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in an attempt to evade criminal accountability over human rights violations against the country's citizens.

The Rohingya Maiyafuinor Collaborative Network, the Chin Human Rights Organisation, and the Myanmar Accountability Project released a joint statement on 5 May condemn the actions of the junta in the strongest possible terms.

The statement continues below.

These efforts have included direct pressure on governments, interference in domestic legal processes, and coercive diplomatic actions. Of particular concern was the removal of Timorese diplomats in January, an act that signaled a clear attempt to exert political leverage over Timor-Leste at a critical moment, as legal proceedings related to international crimes were advancing.

At the core of this conduct lies a fundamental absurdity. A self-appointed regime, instituted without any political mandate or legitimacy, is attempting to act in the name of a sovereign state in order to shield individuals from criminal liability. The invocation of

sovereignty in this context is not only legally flawed; it is an abuse of the very principle it seeks to rely upon.

This pattern reflects a broader strategy by the regime to shield itself behind the state, exploiting claims of official capacity to deflect individual criminal responsibility. More recently, this has been reinforced by an attempt to rebrand the military junta as a civilian administration, projecting a false image of legitimacy to gain diplomatic ground and weaken international resolve.

Under this manufactured facade, the regime has launched a coordinated campaign to pressure governments to disengage from ongoing legal cases. This includes attempts to interfere in the independent judicial processes of Timor-Leste and Indonesia, where cases against Min Aung Hlaing for genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity are currently under active consideration.

Such actions constitute a blatant attempt to pervert the course of justice and undermine the rule of law. They also represent an unacceptable intrusion into the internal affairs of ASEAN member states, threatening judicial independence and eroding regional norms.

The cases filed in Timor-Leste in January and in Indonesia in April are grounded in substantial and credible evidence. Submissions in Jakarta demonstrate that Min Aung Hlaing was the architect of the 2017 clearance operations against the Rohingya and that genocidal acts continue to this day. In Timor-Leste, evidence establishes command responsibility for acts including mass killings, sexual violence, attacks on civilians and religious institutions, and indiscriminate aerial bombardment.

The individual responsible for these crimes should face justice in a court of law, not seek refuge behind state institutions or diplomatic maneuvering.

We urge the governments of Timor-Leste and Indonesia to firmly reject any external pressure and uphold the independence of their judicial systems. We further call on all UN member states and ASEAN partners to resist this attempt to normalize impunity under the guise of diplomacy.

The regime's so-called diplomatic offensive is not reform. It is obstruction. It must be rejected unequivocally.



## MODERNIZED YANGON TO MANDALAY RAIL SERVICE LAUNCHES AMID DEEPENING ECONOMIC TURMOIL

**M**yanmar Railways recently launched its No. 5 Up and No. 6 Down express service between Yangon and Mandalay, utilizing modern air-conditioned Diesel Electric Multiple Unit coaches.

This service improvement follows the completion of the Yangon-Taungoo railway section through a Japanese Official Development Assistance loan, with the remaining stretches to Mandalay upgraded via state funding.

The new schedule significantly improves efficiency by reducing the total travel time between the two major cities to approximately 10 hours. The No. 5 Up train departs Yangon at 6:00 am and arrives in Mandalay at 4:00 pm. On the return journey, the No. 6 Down train leaves Mandalay at 6:00 am and reaches Yangon at 4:10 pm.

Each train is configured with six coaches capable of carrying 312 passengers. The layout includes four first-class coaches and two upper-class coaches. Regarding the fare structure, first-class tickets are priced at 34,000 kyats while upper-class seats cost 48,000 kyats.

The express route services several major regional hubs along the line. Scheduled stops include Toe Kyaung Kalay, Bago, Nyaunglebin, Taungoo, Pyinmana, Naypyidaw, Yamethin, Thazi, and Kyaukse.

Global oil shocks, compounded by the regime's mismanagement of foreign exchange and dwindling reserves, have pushed gasoline and diesel prices to record highs. In recent weeks, fuel prices at the pump jumped by nearly 66% in a single month, with black market rates in some regions doubling official prices.

This fuel crisis has paralyzed private logistics and bus companies, making traditional road travel prohibitively expensive for most residents.

Train tickets, which are significantly cheaper than bus fares, have begun selling out days in advance as commuters and businesses seek to bypass the "transport paralysis" affecting the nation's highways.



Junta leader Min Aung Hlaing looks at the ruby. Photo: AFP

## MYANMAR SAYS MASSIVE 11,000-CARAT RUBY DISCOVERED

**A** huge 11,000-carat ruby has been discovered in Myanmar, state media reported on 9 May, one of the largest ever found in the country renowned for its precious gemstones.

Coup leader turned president Min Aung Hlaing was pictured on the front page of the state-run Global New Light of Myanmar newspaper, examining the 2.2-kilogram (4.8-pound) rock at his office.

Unearthed in the Mogok area, the ruby was "exceptionally large, rare, and difficult to find," the new military-backed government said in a statement.

"The giant ruby has a purplish-red colour with yellowish undertones and is considered to have a high-quality colour grade," it added.

While smaller than a similar 21,450-carat ruby found in the same area in 1996, the recently discovered

stone is more valuable "due to its superior colour, clarity, and overall quality," the government said without giving a precise value.

Emperors, kings and warlords have long fought over the valley of Mogok in Mandalay region, where the unique "pigeon-blood" stones lie hidden.

The Mogok rubies are the most expensive in the world, with the highest-quality jewels fetching multi-million-dollar prices in an industry notoriously bereft of regulation.

Myanmar has been ruled by a junta since a 2021 coup that triggered a civil war, but former military chief Min Aung Hlaing was sworn in last month as civilian president after a tightly restricted election.

AFP



Roger Stone. Photo: AFP

## MYANMAR ACTIVISTS BLAST TRUMP ALLY ROGER STONE FOR LOBBYING ROLE

**M**yanmar campaigners denounced on 5 May US lobbyist Roger Stone, a close confidante of President Donald Trump, for accepting \$50,000 a month to "rebuild" the Myanmar regime's relations with Washington.

Myanmar's leaders have been considered political pariahs in many Western nations since 2021, when the military staged a putsch deposing the democratic government of Aung San Suu Kyi and triggering civil war.

The United States has imposed economic sanctions targeting Myanmar's top brass and their associates, as the nation suffered a half-decade human rights backslide that has crushed political dissent.

Filings under the Foreign Agents Registration Act last week revealed conservative political consultant Stone has been commissioned through consulting firm the DCI Group to provide "public affairs services" to Myanmar's information ministry.

Campaign group Justice For Myanmar said in a statement that Stone and DCI "are profiting from a heavily sanctioned junta that is committing war crimes and crimes against humanity with total impunity".

US government documents said Stone will work on "rebuilding relations between the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and the United States, with a focus on trade, natural resources, and humanitarian relief".

The revelation comes as Myanmar's post-coup authorities are touting a new chapter for the country, a campaign which rights monitors are treating with deep scepticism.

After five years of direct military rule, the junta oversaw tightly restricted elections returning a walkover win in January for its allies in civilian politics.

The polls excluded detained Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party.

A new parliament voted for coup leader Min Aung Hlaing to serve as the regime's president, buttressing critics who describe the administration as a civilian fig leaf for military rule.

The new military-backed regime is using the appearance of political reform to rehabilitate its image and reboot diplomatic ties, analysts say.

Justice For Myanmar said the lobbying work was registered "after the junta's last rebrand".

"Roger Stone has joined this contract with international criminals, which benefits US-sanctioned natural resource state-owned enterprises that the junta has illegally seized and is using to fund its widening attacks against schools, churches, monasteries and hospitals," their statement added.

Stone is a long-time firebrand conservative activist who served as a Trump campaign consultant.

In 2020 he was sentenced to 40 months in prison for hindering a congressional probe into whether Trump's first electoral bid conspired with Russia.

The sentence was commuted by Trump, sparing Stone jail time.

AFP

# THE SILENCE AROUND AUNG SAN SUU KYI IS THE STORY

PROOF OF LIFE IN AN AGE  
OF MANUFACTURED REALITY

By **ALAN CLEMENTS**

 TRUTH OVER PROPAGANDA |  JUSTICE OVER FEAR |  SOLIDARITY OVER SILENCE

There are moments in history when the lie becomes so grotesque, so elaborately choreographed, so dependent upon the obedience of otherwise intelligent people, that the lie itself becomes the central revelation. The deception ceases to conceal reality and instead exposes the moral collapse required to sustain it. We are living through such a moment now with Myanmar.

For over five years, Aung San Suu Kyi—the democratically elected civilian leader of a nation of more than fifty-five million people—has effectively disappeared into the architecture of dictatorship.

Hidden.

Silenced.

Isolated from the world.

Denied meaningful access to journalists, diplomats, independent physicians, human-rights observers, and often even her own legal counsel.

An eighty-year-old Nobel Peace Prize laureate

reduced to a phantom within a state-manufactured void, administered by armed men who overthrew an elected government and proceeded to imprison, torture, bomb, and massacre thousands of their own citizens.

And now, suddenly, the world is told—through carefully calibrated leaks, diplomatic insinuation, and state-managed rumor—that she may have been transferred from prison to what is being described as “house arrest.”

House arrest.

Even the phrase feels morally contaminated. As though moving an elderly political prisoner from one form of captivity to another constitutes humanitarian progress. As though confinement inside a heavily guarded military compound surrounded by surveillance, soldiers, and razor wire should be interpreted as mercy. As though the international community is expected to applaud a regime for modifying the dimensions of a cage while refusing to unlock the door.

This is not reform.

It is not reconciliation.

It is not democratic transition.

It is theatrical repackaging. A dictatorship changing costumes while preserving the machinery of terror beneath the fabric.

The architect of this catastrophe, Min Aung Hlaing—absurdly repackaged as a civilian president while continuing to command the full coercive apparatus of military domination—understands something with absolute clarity: he does not want the death of Aung San Suu Kyi in prison permanently fused to his historical legacy.

Dictators understand symbolism instinctively. They fear it precisely because symbolism outlives bullets.

Which is why the current spectacle surrounding her alleged transfer reeks not of transparency, but of strategic panic.

First came a wave of diplomatic signaling surrounding Aung San Suu Kyi.

After meetings with Myanmar's junta leadership, Sihanak Phuangketkeow, Thailand's deputy prime minister and foreign minister, publicly stated that ASEAN governments were concerned about Suu Kyi's wellbeing and said that Min Aung Hlaing had assured him she was being "well looked after" and that the regime was considering "good things" regarding her situation.

The remarks immediately fueled international speculation that diplomatic movement was underway behind the scenes.

Around the same period, reports and diplomatic rumors circulated suggesting that Wang Yi, China's foreign minister, had discussed Aung San Suu Kyi's circumstances with Myanmar authorities, while other reporting later claimed that he had reportedly met her.

China's Foreign Ministry, however, did not publicly confirm such a meeting. When asked, spokesperson Lin Jian said only that Suu Kyi was "an old friend of China" and that her circumstances had "always been

on our minds."

Yet amid the growing global impression that high-level diplomatic contact with her had somehow occurred, no independently verified evidence emerged.

No photographs.

No audio recording.

No transcript.

No public statement from Suu Kyi herself.

No independently corroborated confirmation that any foreign official had actually met with her directly.

What the world received instead was the contemporary currency of authoritarian politics: implication without verification, narrative without transparency, spectacle without accountability.

Then came another carefully staged flourish.

Reports began circulating internationally that Suu Kyi's lawyers planned to meet her that weekend following reports of her transfer from prison to "house arrest." The suggestion electrified observers desperate for even the smallest indication of humanity breaking through the walls of secrecy.

For a brief moment, the atmosphere shifted from despair toward cautious hope.

But as subsequent reporting clarified, the legal team had said it planned to meet her; there was still no independently verified public confirmation of a completed, unrestricted meeting with Suu Kyi, and the broader picture remained profoundly opaque.

Another mirage.

Another manipulation.

Another performance calibrated to generate ambiguity while producing no verifiable truth whatsoever.

And now, increasingly, even regional governments appear to understand that the performance itself is becoming unsustainable.

Now even the Philippines, serving as ASEAN's 2026 chair, has publicly urged Myanmar's authorities to permit ASEAN's special envoy direct access to

Aung San Suu Kyi and to allow communication with her family as evidence of a “genuine commitment to national reconciliation.”

The statement marks a subtle but important shift: the question is no longer merely diplomatic engagement with the junta, but verification itself.

In diplomatic language—especially within ASEAN’s historically cautious culture—this is not insignificant. It is a quiet acknowledgment that the world is being asked to accept extraordinary claims in the absence of extraordinary evidence.

And the truly astonishing dimension of this crisis is not that a dictatorship lies.

Dictatorships lie because lies are their oxygen.

Falsehood is not incidental to authoritarianism; it is infrastructural.

The astonishing part is how much of the international community appears willing—through caution, exhaustion, economic dependency, or diplomatic cowardice—to participate in the fiction.

Governments speak in euphemisms.

Diplomats murmur about “engagement.”

International institutions recycle procedural language while an entire nation remains hostage to organized criminality masquerading as governance.

What exactly are we witnessing?

We are witnessing the normalization of unreality.

Myanmar is no longer merely a political crisis. It has become one of the defining psychological and moral case studies of the modern era: a living demonstration of how authoritarian systems manufacture confusion in order to dissolve resistance.

The regime does not require the world to believe its narratives entirely.

It requires only enough ambiguity to paralyze urgency. Enough uncertainty to fragment moral consensus. Enough diplomatic theater to transform atrocity into something endlessly debatable.

This is the deeper pathology of modern

authoritarianism.

Not simply censorship, but cognitive destabilization itself.

Truth becomes fragmented into competing narratives.

Reality becomes increasingly unlocatable.

Language itself becomes contaminated.

And once language collapses, conscience soon follows.

Myanmar’s military junta learned something from Russia. Something from China. Something from the broader architecture of twenty-first century propaganda everywhere.

Modern authoritarianism no longer depends solely upon brute force.

It depends upon psychological saturation.

Flood the public sphere with contradictions. Manufacture uncertainty faster than truth can stabilize itself. Exhaust attention spans. Blur the distinction between reality and performance until populations lose confidence in their own perception.

The result is a civilization drifting toward moral dissociation.

And nowhere is this more obscene than in the world’s response to Aung San Suu Kyi herself.

Consider the sheer absurdity of the current situation.

One of the most recognized political prisoners in modern history may or may not have been seen by foreign officials. May or may not be under house arrest. May or may not even be alive in the condition being implied to the world.

And yet there exists no unified international demand for immediate proof of life.

No coordinated insistence that she speak publicly.

No emergency diplomatic coalition demanding independent verification of her physical condition.

No sustained global mobilization insisting upon the release of all political prisoners in Myanmar.

Why?

What level of collective moral anesthesia has overtaken the modern world that such passivity now passes for realism?

Imagine Nelson Mandela vanishing for years into a military prison while vague rumors circulated that unnamed officials had “met with him,” but no evidence was ever produced.

Imagine Václav Havel disappearing into total isolation while governments quietly accepted secondhand assurances from authoritarian intermediaries.

Imagine the world shrugging while the fate of Martin Luther King Jr. remained hidden behind military secrecy.

This would once have been unthinkable.

Today it is discussed as geopolitical complexity.

And beneath it all lurks the oldest pathology of authoritarian power itself: domination sustained through intimidation, humiliation, surveillance, and the strategic management of fear.

Myanmar’s military system is not merely politically corrupt.

It is psychologically disfigured—rooted in paranoia, narcissistic control, militarized masculinity, and the pathological inability to tolerate genuine democratic participation.

The junta cannot permit authentic freedom because authentic freedom dissolves the mythology upon which dictatorship depends.

Democracy asserts that human dignity is intrinsic.

Dictatorship insists dignity is conditional.

Democracy says power belongs to the people.

Dictatorship says power belongs to those capable of violence.

Democracy tolerates plurality, uncertainty, dissent, contradiction.

Dictatorship demands obedience disguised as stability.

This is why authoritarian systems fear women like Aung San Suu Kyi at a level far deeper than ordinary politics.

She represents a form of legitimacy that force alone cannot manufacture: moral authority rooted in conscience rather than coercion.

That is why, even imprisoned, isolated, and silenced, she remains dangerous to them.

And this is why the world’s indifference is so catastrophic.

Because what is being tested in Myanmar is not merely the fate of one country.

What is being tested is whether humanity still possesses the moral capacity to distinguish reality from propaganda before authoritarian unreality becomes globally normalized.

Myanmar is not peripheral to history.

Myanmar is the mirror.

A mirror reflecting what happens when profit supersedes conscience, when diplomacy mutates into cowardice, when geopolitical convenience overrides human dignity, and when populations become psychologically conditioned to tolerate the intolerable.

China supports the junta strategically because Myanmar remains essential to regional power projection, energy corridors, mineral extraction, and military influence.

Russia supports the junta because authoritarian systems instinctively protect one another through their shared contempt for democratic accountability.

Regional actors hedge, equivocate, delay, and negotiate because economic interests often speak louder than moral clarity.

Meanwhile ordinary Burmese civilians continue to be bombed, tortured, imprisoned, disappeared, and driven into refugee camps.

And still the world debates vocabulary.

House arrest.

Transition.

Stability.

Engagement.

Words become obscene when severed from truth.

So let us speak plainly.

If Aung San Suu Kyi is alive, let the world hear her voice.

If she has truly been transferred, permit independent verification.

If there is genuine humanitarian concern, allow unrestricted access by international observers, physicians, journalists, and legal representatives.

And if the regime refuses—as it almost certainly will—then the international community must finally admit what this spectacle actually is: psychological warfare disguised as diplomacy.

There comes a point when silence itself becomes complicity.

The United Nations cannot continue issuing diluted statements while pretending procedural neutrality constitutes wisdom.

Governments cannot continue speaking abstractly about “all sides” while one side imprisons elected leaders and massacres civilians.

International institutions cannot continue behaving as though authoritarian propaganda deserves equal standing beside observable reality.

What exactly are we waiting for?

For her to die quietly?

For history to close over the evidence?

For the world to move on?

Perhaps the most dangerous consequence of prolonged exposure to propaganda is not that people begin believing lies absolutely.

It is that they cease believing in the possibility of truth with enough conviction to act upon it.

That is the real battlefield now.

Not merely Myanmar.

Human consciousness itself.

The Burmese people have already demonstrated astonishing courage: young resistance fighters, monks, journalists, civil servants, students, mothers carrying children through jungle corridors while fleeing airstrikes, citizens risking torture and death for the possibility of freedom itself.

The question is no longer whether the Burmese people possess courage.

The question is whether the rest of the world still possesses conscience.

Proof of life is not a radical demand.

Freedom is not extremism.

Truth is not negotiable.

And the continued imprisonment of Aung San Suu Kyi—and thousands of other political prisoners—must not be treated as merely another tragic storyline drifting through the algorithmic churn of global distraction.

This is one of the defining moral tests of our time.

And history is already recording who chose to remain silent.

## About the Author

Alan Clements is an author, former Buddhist monk ordained in Burma, and longtime human-rights advocate whose life's work has centered on conscience, nonviolence, and the struggle against authoritarian rule. 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 an Age of Atrocity*.

For more than three decades he has worked closely with Burmese democracy leaders, former political prisoners, monks, and civil-society voices. His essays and interviews have appeared in international media across Asia, Europe, and the United States.



Photo: AFP

## INDIA'S MODI EXPANDS REACH, CLINCHING OPPOSITION STRONGHOLD

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has dominated national politics for years, but analysts say last week's election victory in opposition-held West Bengal state could mark a watershed moment for his party's Hindu nationalist agenda.

Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) swept polls in the key eastern state of more than 100 million people, winning 206 of the 294 assembly seats, according to results announced Monday, for its first-ever victory in West Bengal.

Analysts say the BJP's victory is one of its most significant since Modi was first elected prime minister in 2014, expanding its dominance beyond the Hindi-speaking heartland of north and central India.

While many voters were drawn by a campaign that focused heavily on development and employment, the election also caps a determined party push to win over Indians apprehensive about Modi's nationalist agenda,

fearing it would come at the expense of minority groups.

"It's a consolidation of the BJP in the east of India," political analyst Sushila Ramaswamy told AFP.

"It... establishes the BJP as the dominant party. No doubt about that."

Other election results announced on Monday gave the BJP a thumping win in northeastern Assam state and another term in power in the small coastal territory of Puducherry, representing a "spectacular comeback" after failing to secure a majority in the 2024 general election, according to Rasheed Kidwai, a visiting fellow with the Observer Research Foundation think-tank.

"Since then, they've gotten their alliances right, the issues right," he told AFP.

The results should put Modi on a stronger footing

as he battles a series of economic and foreign policy challenges, including a pending US trade deal, ahead of a general election in 2029.

## 'Huge boost'

West Bengal, a largely Bengali-speaking state, had been ruled by Modi's fierce critic and adversary Mamata Banerjee since 2011.

Banerjee, leader of the regional All India Trinamool Congress (TMC), also lost her own seat in Monday's vote, a steep downfall for the once formidable leader.

The three-time chief minister relied on a strong support base of women, Muslims and urban Hindu residents to hold on to power.

In the last state polls in 2021, the BJP made a major dent in the TMC's majority, but not enough to unseat it.

Eyeing power in West Bengal, 75-year-old Modi has made regular visits and attacked Banerjee in fiery speeches on the campaign trail.

He promised large cash transfers to the poor and expanded welfare benefits, as well as development and employment for the youth.

For Modi, this win could embolden him to further widen his Hindu nationalist agenda, including plans for a uniform civil code to replace religious laws -- an initiative that has fuelled tensions and fears, especially among Muslims who say it would infringe on their freedoms.

Political analyst Nilanjan Mukhopadhyay said clinching West Bengal would push the BJP's vision of "Hindutva" -- the belief that Hindus represent not only a religious group but India's true national identity.

"This is a huge boost to Modi and the BJP," he told AFP.

## 'The last piece'

The party won "in a state where you have a fairly large, almost 30 percent Muslim population... and has been able to correctly harness the anti-incumbent sentiment and whatever shortcomings there were in Banerjee's regime", said Mukhopadhyay.

Partha Tripathi, a Kolkata resident, said the TMC lost in West Bengal because of the "massive unemployment, corruption and lawlessness" in the state.

"Aspirational youth wanting jobs and more economic opportunity voted for the BJP. They wanted a change, change for a better life," Tripathi, 35, told AFP.

Another key issue was the revision of electoral rolls, formally intended to remove duplicate or ineligible voters.

But Banerjee called it a "mass disenfranchisement exercise" affecting minorities, especially Muslims and migrant workers in districts bordering Bangladesh.

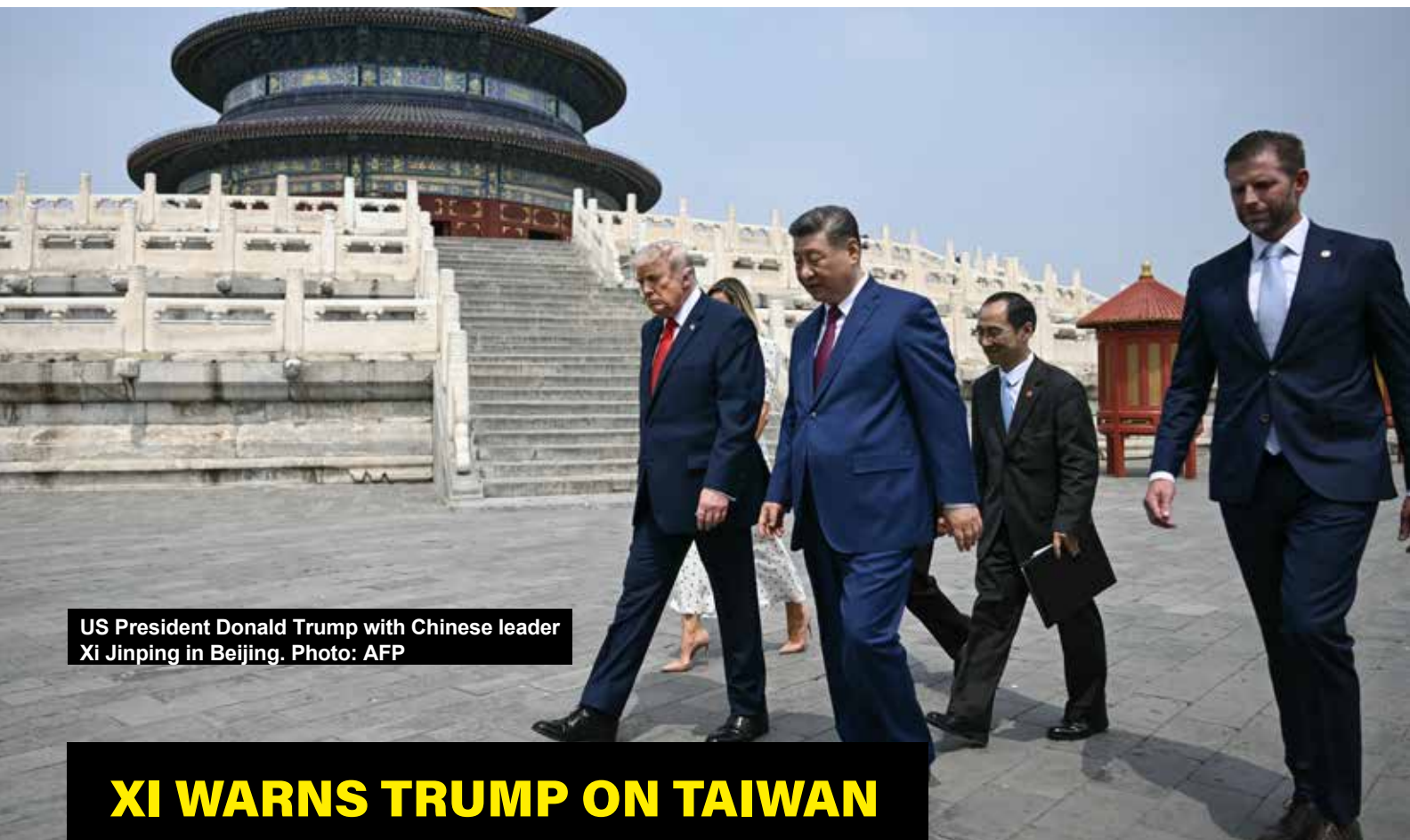
The BJP said it had benefitted from the TMC's failures -- not the revision.

Political scientist Neelanjan Sircar wrote in The Hindustan Times that "the cultural and political impact of this victory for the BJP will be profound".

"Bengal was the last, and most important, piece of the Hindu nationalist project in the east," he added.

"A little more than a decade ago, who would have imagined that the major states of eastern and northeastern India -- Assam, Bihar, Odisha, and West Bengal -- would all be under the BJP?"

AFP



US President Donald Trump with Chinese leader Xi Jinping in Beijing. Photo: AFP

## XI WARNS TRUMP ON TAIWAN AT BEIJING SUMMIT

Chinese President Xi Jinping warned his US counterpart Donald Trump that missteps on Taiwan could push their two countries into "conflict", a stark opening salvo as they met in Beijing on 14 May at a superpower summit.

Trump had arrived in China with accolades for his host, calling Xi a "great leader" and "friend", as he predicted that their countries would have "a fantastic future together".

But beyond the pomp as he welcomed Trump, Xi in less effusive tones said the two sides "should be partners and not rivals", while highlighting the issue of self-ruled democratic Taiwan -- which Beijing claims as its territory -- straight off the bat.

"The Taiwan question is the most important issue in China-US relations," Xi said, according to remarks published by Chinese state media shortly after talks began.

"If mishandled, the two nations could collide or even come into conflict, pushing the entire China-US

relationship into a highly perilous situation," he added at the opening talks that lasted around two hours 15 minutes.

Trump's trip to Beijing is the first by a US president in nearly a decade, with the grand reception belying a host of unresolved trade and geopolitical tensions between the two countries.

Xi greeted Trump with a red-carpet welcome at the opulent Great Hall of the People, with military band fanfare, a gun salute and a host of schoolchildren jumping and chanting "welcome!".

Seemingly enjoying the ceremony, Trump said "the relationship between China and the USA is going to be better than ever before".

Xi instead referenced an ancient Greek political theory about the risks of war when a rising power rivals a ruling power.

"Can China and the United States transcend the so-called 'Thucydides Trap' and forge a new paradigm for major-power relations," Xi asked, adding that

"cooperation benefits both sides, while confrontation harms both".

There has been plenty of the latter since Trump's last visit in 2017, with the two countries having spent much of 2025 embroiled in a dizzying trade war and at odds on many major global issues.

## 'Blunt language'

Taiwan is a longstanding sore point.

The United States recognises only Beijing but under domestic law is required to provide weapons to Taiwan so that it can defend itself.

China has sworn to take the self-ruled democracy and has not ruled out using force, ramping up military pressure in recent years.

Following Xi's comments on Thursday, Taipei called China the "sole risk" to regional peace, and insisted that "the US side has repeatedly reaffirmed its clear and firm support".

But Trump said Monday he would speak to Xi about US arms sales to Taiwan, a departure from historic US insistence that it will not consult Beijing on the matter.

Adam Ni, editor of newsletter China Neican, told AFP that while such "blunt language" was not uncommon in Chinese foreign policy, it was unusual coming from Xi himself.

"Xi wants to make it very clear... he thinks the Taiwan issue is the potential powder keg between the two superpowers," Ni added.

China has been "signalling a desire for US compromise on Taiwan in the lead up to the summit," the National University of Singapore's Chong Ja Ian told AFP.

Xi's demand could suggest "they see some opportunity to convince Trump", he said.

## Iran overshadows

A new addition to the list of contentious issues to be discussed, the Iran war, threatens to weaken Trump's position, having already forced him to postpone his trip from March.

The US president said he expected a "long talk" with Xi about Iran, which sells most of its US-sanctioned

oil to China, but insisted that "I don't think we need any help" from Beijing.

However, his secretary of state Marco Rubio, historically a fierce opponent of Beijing, said the US side was hoping "to convince (China) to play a more active role".

Trump is also hoping for business deals on agriculture, aircraft and other sectors.

Elite businessmen in his delegation, including Nvidia's Jensen Huang and Tesla's Elon Musk, were on the stairs of the Great Hall of the People on Thursday for the welcome ceremony.

Musk told reporters afterwards the meeting had been "wonderful", while Huang said the two presidents "were incredible".

Xi later told the delegation that his country's "doors to the outside world will open wider and wider" and that US companies would enjoy "even brighter prospects in China".

On the eve of the summit, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng met in South Korea to seek progress in ending a long-simmering trade war between the two.

Xi said the talks "reached results that were generally balanced and positive", and urged both sides to "safeguard the current hard-won positive momentum".

Trump and Xi are set to discuss extending a one-year tariff truce reached during their last meeting in South Korea in October.

China's controls on rare earth exports and AI rivalry are among other topics expected to be taken up.

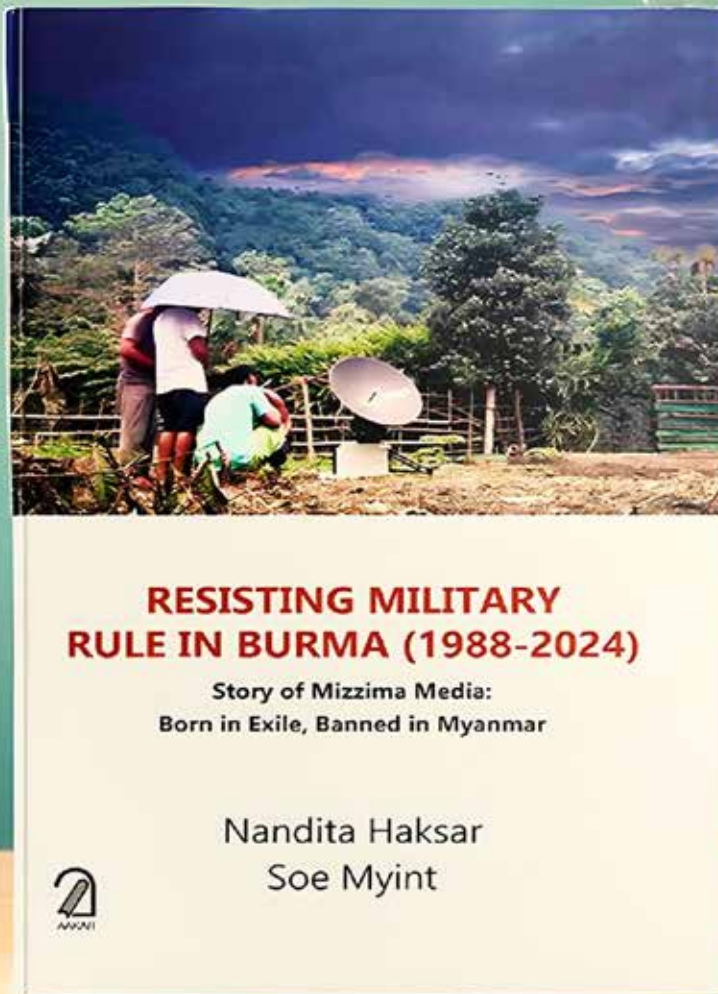
After their morning meeting, the two men took a break from negotiations, heading to the Temple of Heaven, a World Heritage site where China's emperors once prayed for good harvests.

The two will return to the Great Hall of the People this evening for a state banquet.

AFP

RESISTING MILITARY RULE IN BURMA (1988-2024)  
**STORY OF MIZZIMA MEDIA:  
BORN IN EXILE, BANNED IN  
MYANMAR**

*by Nandita Haksar and Soe Myint*



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## VICTIMS OF SUCCESS

“**T**he weapon itself cannot just tell the difference between a soldier stepping on it, or a kid on the way to school, or your grandma on her way to the place of worship.”

For Erin Hunt, Executive Director of Mines Action Canada (MAC), the harms inflicted on civilians by anti-personnel landmine have motivated her organization’s humanitarian work for three decades. MAC was founded in the 1990s “to end the suffering caused by indiscriminate and inhumane weapons such as landmines, cluster munitions, autonomous weapons, explosive weapons in populated areas and nuclear weapons.”

In 1997, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction, which is more commonly known as the Ottawa Treaty or Mine Ban Treaty, was ratified. The campaign behind the treaty won the Nobel Peace Prize the same year and it has since become a model of humanitarian disarmament.

That model today faces serious challenges, including its relevance to war-torn Myanmar, which has recorded the world’s worst casualties from landmines and unexploded ordnance for two years in a row, according to the Landmine Monitor.

In a recent interview, part of the Navigating a Minefield series, Hunt shares that international policy

spaces often overlook “the people who have lived with these weapons, and who are the experts.” She explains that these local actors bring a form of expertise grounded in lived experience—navigating risk as part of everyday life—rather than in formal qualifications or academic training. This perspective has informed MAC’s work with young people and women as leaders in mine action and disarmament, recognizing their knowledge not as secondary, but as essential to shaping effective responses.

While men and boys are statistically more likely to be landmine casualties, women and girls are disproportionately affected in less visible ways. Gender-based violence and trafficking risks are heightened in conflict and communities under attack. And in families that suffer a death or injury, “increased caregiving responsibilities are going to fall on the women and girls,” Hunt says, forcing women and girls to take on additional work or withdraw from school, reinforcing cycles and intersectionality of inequality.

It is for this reason that Hunt emphasizes women are not only affected by landmines, but central to addressing them. “Women can have a massive impact on communities,” she says, referring to clearance efforts, risk education, and gathering insights and research. In many contexts, women mine actors are the only ones who can speak with other women, making them essential to understanding risks that might otherwise remain hidden.

### CATCH THE PODCAST

Read more and listen to the Insight Myanmar Podcast here:

<https://insightmyanmar.org/complete-shows/2026/4/14/episode-521-victims-of-success>



## MYANMAR JUNTA EXPANDS THILAWA PORT STORAGE CAPACITY IN PUSH TO STRENGTHEN TRADE LOGISTICS

**M**yanmar's quasi-civilian military junta is moving to expand storage and logistics infrastructure at the Thilawa Special Economic Zone near Yangon. The move is part of broader efforts to strengthen trade capacity and supply-chain resilience amid ongoing economic strain.

According to the state-run Global New Light of Myanmar, the Myanmar Agro Green Development Public Co Ltd (MAGDPL) plans to invest more than US\$3.7 million in new storage facilities at Thilawa port capable of handling up to 25,000 tonnes of cargo.

The project at one of the country's most important commercial gateways is intended to improve cargo management and support import and export operations.

Officials said the expanded facilities would help improve efficiency in handling agricultural goods and other commodities. It would also strengthen logistics services linked to domestic trade and overseas commerce.

Thilawa, located southeast of Yangon, is Myanmar's largest special economic zone and a key hub for maritime trade. The port and the surrounding industrial

area are central to the country's import-dependent economy.

Its importance has grown as overland trade routes in some border regions have been closed or disrupted by ongoing armed conflict.

The investment comes as Myanmar continues to grapple with economic pressures, including currency volatility, high transport costs, and declining foreign investment following the 2021 military takeover.

The junta's focus on logistics infrastructure reflects efforts to stabilise trade flows and maintain access to essential imports, including fuel, industrial materials, and consumer goods. The expansion also aligns with a current broader emphasis on domestic production, export promotion, and better supply-chain management.

State-run media has increasingly highlighted infrastructure and logistics projects as evidence of economic continuity despite the country's political and security crisis.



Former president Win Myint and his wife. Photo: Supplied

## PUBLIC NOTICES THE SILENCE SURROUNDING FORMER PRESIDENT WIN MYINT

Three weeks after former President Win Myint was released, public attention online is shifting from celebration to concern. People are asking why news about him has grown so quiet and what it may imply.

Win Myint was freed on 17 April under the Thingyan amnesty announced by Min Aung Hlaing and moved to a house rented by his family in Ottarathiri Township, Naypyidaw. Within two days, security around his residence was significantly increased.

This silence has become a topic of discussion on Facebook. One user remarked, "So far, there has been no further news about Win Myint. There must be something behind this." Another commenter stated, "Min Aung Hlaing released the President in name only, just so he can maneuver on the international stage. He

is still controlling him from behind the scenes." Many are calling on regional organizations to intervene, with one comment urging, "ASEAN, please take action regarding President U Win Myint."

This call was amplified on 6 May, when former ASEAN foreign ministers and ex-UN officials released a statement urging ASEAN to abandon the Five-Point Consensus on Myanmar and continue recognizing U Win Myint as the State President of Myanmar.

The statement comes after Aung San Suu Kyi was moved from prison to house arrest in 30 April, further exacerbating public anxiety about the controlled silence now surrounding both leaders.

# 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.