

ON THE GROUND IN MYANMAR

# mizzima WEEKLY

Analysis & Insight



**Critics grit their teeth as India and China tighten their grip on Myanmar**

**Min Aung Hlaing visits India**

# 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.

# WORLD GIANTS SEEK RARE EARTH MINERALS FROM MYANMAR

Myanmar's rare earth mineral deposits have emerged as a focal point of strategic competition among the major countries of China, India and, increasingly, Russia, reflecting the growing importance of critical minerals in global geopolitics. Rare earth elements such as dysprosium and terbium are indispensable for electric vehicles, renewable energy systems, advanced electronics and defence technologies. As demand for these materials rises, Myanmar's resource-rich border regions have become a crucial source of supply for regional powers seeking to strengthen industrial resilience and reduce vulnerabilities in critical supply chains.

China remains the dominant external actor in Myanmar's rare earth sector. The country depends heavily on Myanmar for supplies of heavy rare earths and has integrated Myanmar's production into its vast refining and manufacturing ecosystem. Recent reports indicate that Myanmar supplies more than half of China's imported rare-earth feedstock, while Chinese companies and associated actors continue to expand mining operations in both Kachin and Shan states. Beijing's efforts to secure access have intensified following disruptions caused by conflict in northern Myanmar, prompting the development of new mining sites in areas controlled by allied ethnic armed groups. China's interest is driven not only by commercial considerations but also by its desire to maintain its global dominance in rare earth processing and magnet production.

India has become increasingly concerned about its dependence on Chinese-controlled rare earth supply chains, a subject discussed with visiting Myanmar junta leader Min Aung Hlaing

on his recent visit. As New Delhi seeks to develop domestic manufacturing capabilities in sectors ranging from electric vehicles to defence systems, securing alternative sources of critical minerals has become a strategic priority. Reports suggest that Indian officials and companies have explored opportunities to access rare earth deposits in Myanmar, particularly in areas outside direct junta control. This reflects India's broader effort to diversify supply chains and reduce exposure to Chinese export restrictions and market dominance.

Russia's interest in Myanmar's mineral sector is linked to its expanding economic relationship with the military regime and its search for new sources of strategic resources amid Western sanctions. Although Russia's role remains smaller than that of China, growing bilateral cooperation in mining and resource development suggests that Moscow sees Myanmar as a potential long-term partner in securing access to critical minerals and expanding its economic footprint in South East Asia.

The competition for Myanmar's rare earths underscores how the country's natural resources are becoming increasingly intertwined with regional power politics. Yet while external actors pursue strategic advantages, the rapid expansion of mining has generated serious environmental damage, local grievances and cross-border pollution concerns. See the recent protest walk by Thais complaining about the pollution of rivers that drain into Thailand.

Unless stronger governance mechanisms emerge, Myanmar's rare earth wealth is likely to remain a source of geopolitical rivalry rather than sustainable national development.

EDITORIAL

**mizzima**  
WEEKLY

**Managing Director and Editor In-Chief**  
Soe Myint

**Managing Editor**  
Thaw Zin Tun

**Network Engineer**  
Wai Min Han

**Video and Graphics Editor**  
Wai Yan Shein Zaw

**General Manager**  
No No Lin

**Mizzima Weekly is published by**  
**Mizzima s.r.o**

**Address:**  
Salvatorska 931/8,  
Stare Mesto, 11000,  
Praha 1, Czech Republic

**Contact email:**  
sm@mizzima.com

**Phone/Signal/WhatsApp**  
+420 608 616688

## 3 EDITORIAL

**6 Critics grit their teeth as India and China tighten their grip on Myanmar**

**10 ON THE GROUND IN MYANMAR**  
Analysis & Insight

**14 EXPLOSIVES DISASTER**  
Families displaced by Namhkam warehouse explosion face long-term recovery challenges

**15 ASEAN DEVELOPMENTS**  
ASEAN Committee on Consumer Protection must reject the Myanmar junta's membership and uphold its mandate to protect consumers

**17 Myanmar junta chief Min Aung Hlaing to skip upcoming Russia-ASEAN summit**

**18 INDIA-MYANMAR AFFAIRS**  
New Delhi's pragmatic embrace: Junta chief returns from India with diplomatic lifeline

**19 Resumption of India-Myanmar border commerce signalled as catalyst for fiercer ground offensives**

**21 MYANMAR-US AFFAIRS**  
McConnell presses U.S. Secretary Rubio on Burma; Rubio reaffirms support for democracy, but action must be taken: BRI

**22 MINING & RESOURCES**  
China and Russia race for tungsten on Shan State's highest mountain



- 23 HUMANITARIAN AID**  
Myanmar humanitarian crisis cannot be solved without political change, civil society groups say
- 24** Canada briefed on revolutionary mechanisms designed to bypass junta and deliver direct humanitarian aid, states minister Zin Mar Aung
- 26 CORE DEVELOPMENTS**  
ICG says Myanmar's new administration entrenches military rule despite civilian façade
- 27** Myanmar junta using digital repression to target journalists and civilians, rights group says
- 28** KNU and Karenni IEC issue joint statement for World Environment Day
- 30** Mizoram Chief Minister says ongoing influx of Myanmar displaced persons imposes major strain on state
- 31** Over 30 bodies of slain civilians recovered after Myanmar junta arson and raids in Pakokku District
- 32** Myanmar junta forces advancing toward Mindat kill two locals and burn down 10 houses
- 33** Three Myanmar migrants in Thailand's Tak Province killed by errant war drone
- 34** Myanmar junta airstrikes target displaced persons in Rakhine State, leaving civilians dead and sparking mass flight
- 35** Myanmar photojournalist Sai Zaw Thaike awarded Courage Prize at RSF Press Freedom Awards
- 36** Prominent Myanmar filmmaker and ex-political prisoner Min Htin Ko Ko Gyi dies at 64
- 37 BUDDHISM IN MYANMAR**  
Asia Centre says Buddhist fundamentalism fuels post-coup crackdown on gender rights in Myanmar
- 39 COMMENTARY**  
The River Between Worlds: Along Myanmar's Border, the Voices of the Displaced Ask Whether the World Still Knows How to Listen – Alan Clements
- 42 ASIAN & INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**  
Politicization of Chinese Traditional Festivals: How the Communist Party remakes Qingming and the ritual calendar
- 45 COLUMNS**  
**INSIGHT MYANMAR** – The Social Contract
- 46 JUNTA WATCH**
- 47 SOCIAL WATCH**

Cover photo of Myanmar junta leader Min Aung Hlaing and Indian PM Narendra Modi by AFP



Myanmar junta leader Min Aung Hlaing shakes hands with Indian PM Narendra Modi in New Delhi. Photo: AFP

# **CRITICS GRIT THEIR TEETH AS INDIA AND CHINA TIGHTEN THEIR GRIP ON MYANMAR**

***MIZZIMA COMMENTARY***

**A**s Myanmar junta leader Min Aung Hlaing and Indian PM Narendra Modi walked across the artificial grass laid outside the Hyderabad House on 1 June, it was clear New Delhi was pulling out the stops for an official visit that had supporters and critics in a tizz and analysts emphasizing a pushback against China.

Pomp and pageantry were in abundance in India's invitation to Myanmar's leader but one that demonstrated the current Indian government's concern about a neighbour that is important to it on a geopolitical level and as part of its Act East Policy.

Min Aung Hlaing's five-day visit from 30 May to 3 June to India has thrown a wrench in the works when it comes to the call by the Myanmar resistance and opposition not to offer legitimacy to a dictator who has blood on his hands in the wake of the 2021 coup that has plunged Myanmar into chaos and ousted its democratically-elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

Critics were aghast. The visit represented a highly strategic pivot for Myanmar's leadership following years of intense global isolation and Western sanctions.

India has offered a handshake to Myanmar's leader, seemingly putting pragmatism ahead of humanity. This visit matters to Min Aung Hlaing but it also matters to Indian PM Modi, who appears to have used the recent "sham" election in Myanmar as an excuse to engage after several years of not playing ball on a senior leader level. This was Min Aung Hlaing's first visit abroad since he transitioned from being the military junta chief to a civilian "president". He last visited India in 2019 in his former capacity as the commander-in-chief of the Myanmar Armed Forces.

Modi told the Myanmar leader that "India remains Myanmar's trusted neighbour, a reliable partner and steadfast first responder in times of crisis", Indian fo-

reign ministry spokesman Randhir Jaiswal said. Modi also "reaffirmed India's readiness to support peace and dialogue in Myanmar", Jaiswal added.

New Delhi's top career diplomat, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri, told reporters after the Modi-Min Aung Hlaing meeting that discussions included border security and the impact of the civil war in Myanmar, which borders India's northeastern states.

"Stability and peace in Myanmar is obviously a major interest for India," Misri said. "Not just for the security of the northeast and the safety and security of people living along the 1,643-kilometre (1,020-mile) long border that we have with them, but also for our interests - such as connectivity to South East Asia," he said.

But he also stressed that any solution to the conflict in Myanmar would have to come from its citizens themselves. "Eventually, the difficulties that face Myanmar will have to be sorted out by the people of Myanmar talking amongst themselves," he said. "This will have to be a Myanmar-led solution and a Myanmar-owned solution."

## Diplomatic breakthrough

For the Myanmar administration, receiving an official state welcome from the world's largest democracy is seen as a significant diplomatic breakthrough. Former Indian Ambassador to Myanmar, Rajiv Bhatia, told the BBC that the visit "serves as a vital validation of international respectability for Naypyidaw".

For India, the reception underscores a long-standing foreign policy doctrine that prioritises regional stability, national security, and cross-border commerce over the domestic political architecture of its neighbours.

Min Aung Hlaing's visit also matters as a way for Naypyidaw to balance its relations with China, another important regional neighbour with heavy interests in



The two leaders played up the visit.  
Photo: AFP

Myanmar – with Beijing viewing the territory as a crucial land and fuel pipeline bridge to the Indian Ocean.

## **Geopolitical reality**

Recent India–Myanmar discussions on security, border management, trade, and connectivity underscore a broader geopolitical reality: Myanmar has become one of the most strategically important states in Asia for both India and China. Its location between South Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Bay of Bengal makes it a critical arena where the interests of the two Asian powers increasingly intersect.

For India, Myanmar is central to its "Act East Policy" and serves as the only ASEAN member sharing a land border with India. During Min Aung Hlaing's visit, PM Modi described Myanmar as lying at the convergence of India's "Neighbourhood First," "Act East," and MAHASAGAR regional strategies.

India's strategic objectives in Myanmar include connecting India's northeast to Southeast Asian markets; completing the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project linking India's eastern seaboard to Myanmar and onward to Mizoram; advancing the India–Myanmar–Thailand Trilateral Highway, which would eventually integrate India more deeply into ASEAN supply chains, and enhancing maritime access through Myanmar's Bay of Bengal coastline.

These connectivity projects are viewed in New Delhi as both economic initiatives and strategic instruments to reduce the isolation of India's northeast while increasing India's regional influence.

## **A critical security partner for India**

The talks highlighted Myanmar's growing importance to India's security calculations. Modi raised concerns about insurgent groups operating along the India–Myanmar border, refugee flows, cybercrime networks, and cross-border instability stemming from Myanmar's civil conflict. Myanmar reportedly assured India that its territory would not be used against Indian security interests.

Several factors are driving closer security cooperation, namely the 1,600-kilometre shared border is vulnerable to insurgent movements and smuggling; fighting in Myanmar's Chin and Sagaing regions directly affects India's northeastern states; both countries seek greater intelligence sharing and border management cooperation; and maritime security cooperation in the Bay of Bengal has become increasingly important.

India's continued engagement with Myanmar's military-quasi civilian regime reflects a calculation that border stability and strategic interests outweigh diplomatic isolation.

## **Why China sees Myanmar as indispensable**

For China, Myanmar offers something equally valuable: direct access to the Indian Ocean.

Through the China–Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC), Beijing has invested heavily in infrastructure linking China's southwestern province of Yunnan to Myanmar's coast. Myanmar allows China to reduce its dependence on the Strait of Malacca, one of the world's most important maritime chokepoints.

China's interests include access to the deep-water port of Kyaukpyu on the Bay of Bengal; energy pipelines transporting oil and gas from the Indian Ocean into China; trade routes connecting Yunnan to global markets; and influence over ethnic armed organizations and political actors within Myanmar.

As Myanmar's civil war continues, Beijing has increasingly acted as a mediator among various armed groups while simultaneously maintaining relations with the military government, preserving its influence regardless of the conflict's outcome.

China–Myanmar analysts and political observers point out that the Chinese government is now in a position where it can effectively control and manage both the Myanmar government and ethnic armed organizations (EAOs). A political analyst told CNI News Agency that the government, the military, and ethnic armed groups cannot afford to ignore China's stance, suggesting that Beijing is handling Myanmar through political maneuvering.

"Operation 1027 partly aimed to crack down on online scams (cyber-crime syndicates) that were harming Chinese interests, which is why China subtly gave the green light to the Three Brotherhood Alliance's offensive," the analyst said. "However, the Three Brotherhood Alliance achieved unexpected victories, capturing Lashio and Mogoke, while the Arakan Army (AA) managed to seize almost the entire Rakhine State. China likely didn't expect them to achieve that level of success."

## **Bridge to South East Asia**

Both Asian giants recognize the value of Myanmar. Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri confirmed on 1 June that both nations agreed to expedite the 1,400-kilometre highway corridor. The project aims to link Manipur in north-eastern India directly to Thailand through Myanmar, unlocking a critical land-based trading vein into South East Asia.

While the geopolitical corridor has faced chronic postponements due to domestic political turmoil and security instability inside Myanmar, New Delhi and Naypyidaw have renewed diplomatic pressure to resolve these bottlenecks.

Alongside the highway, both Modi and Min Aung Hlaing pushed for the swift completion of the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport project to solidify regional supply chains.

Meanwhile, we can expect China to also step in to put more pressure on Naypyidaw for the safety and completion of their projects and investments.

Myanmar occupies a unique geopolitical position between the world's two most populous countries.

For India, Myanmar is a bridge to South East Asia and a buffer protecting its northeastern frontier. For China, it is a gateway to the Indian Ocean and a critical component of regional connectivity networks. At the same time, some analysts see Myanmar as a potential platform for limited India-China cooperation, particularly in trade and infrastructure development, although competition remains the dominant feature of the relationship.

## Competition over critical resources

Myanmar's strategic value has risen further because of its natural resources. Recent military operations have focused on areas containing major rare-earth deposits near the Chinese border. Reuters reported that Kachin State accounts for roughly half of global heavy rare-earth production, materials essential for electric vehicles, wind turbines, and advanced technologies.

India's recent discussions with Myanmar also included cooperation in mining and critical minerals, reflecting New Delhi's desire to diversify access to strategic resources currently dominated by China.

The India-Myanmar security and connectivity discussions demonstrate that Myanmar's importance extends far beyond bilateral relations. As China seeks secure access to the Indian Ocean and India pursues greater integration with Southeast Asia while protecting its northeastern frontier, Myanmar has become a pivotal state in the emerging Asian strategic landscape. Control of trade corridors, access to critical minerals, border security, and maritime influence in the Bay of Bengal will ensure that Myanmar remains a focal point of both Indian and Chinese strategic planning for years to come.

## Opposition dismay over visit

However, Myanmar opposition and resistance groups expressed their dismay over Min Aung Hlaing's warm reception by India. Myanmar's opposition National Unity Government (NUG) sent a formal objection letter to India's foreign minister expressing serious concern over junta leader Min Aung Hlaing's planned visit to India.

The letter was sent on 27 May by NUG Foreign Minister Zin Mar Aung. According to the letter, the NUG said it was "deeply concerned" by reports regarding the visit of "terrorist junta leader Min Aung Hlaing" to India, describing the situation as alarming for the people of Myanmar.

The NUG pointed out that since the 2021 military coup, Myanmar has been suffering from prolonged conflict, instability and a severe humanitarian crisis. Under such circumstances, it urged India not to engage in any action that could be interpreted as granting political legitimacy to the military regime.

The letter also stated that any election organized under the junta's control could never override the legitimacy of Myanmar's 2020 general election and called on India not to support any electoral process that would prolong military dictatorship.

The NUG emphasized that India has long upheld democratic governance, rule of law and regional stability, and urged the Indian government to carefully consider the consequences of engaging with a regime accused of normalizing military rule in Myanmar.

It also appealed to India not to encourage what it described as an unconstitutional seizure of power and an illegitimate political system established through force.

The letter further stated that the long-standing friendship between Myanmar and India is rooted not only in state-to-state relations but also in deep ties between the two peoples, adding that a sustainable partnership can only be built on democratic values and respect for the will of the people.

The NUG urged India to continue engaging with Myanmar in ways that prioritize democracy, peace, human rights and the aspirations of the Myanmar people, stating that standing with the people of Myanmar during this critical period would help strengthen future bilateral relations between the two countries.

Mark Farmaner, the director of the Burma Campaign UK, told The Independent newspaper that Mr Modi's current policy is driven by a desire to counter China's influence, but that New Delhi would be better served in the long run by supporting a democratic Myanmar which might be less dependent on Beijing.

"Modi will be calculating that being the first to invite general Min Aung Hlaing since he appointed himself president will buy more goodwill and influence for India," he said. "India's current approach to Myanmar has doomed them to play second fiddle to China, as India can't compete economically or politically with China and its UN Security Council seat and global clout."

Meanwhile, the Chin Human Rights Organization stressed that India often describes itself as the world's largest democracy and a natural partner of democratic movements across the globe. Yet, in Myanmar, New Delhi appears increasingly willing to embrace a military regime accused of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide, while overlooking the democratic aspirations of millions of people who overwhelmingly expressed their will in the 2020 elections.

"This is not simply a question of diplomacy. It is a question of values, legitimacy, and the kind of future India wishes to support in its neighborhood. The people of Myanmar have not stopped extending their hand. The question is whether anyone is willing to take it," the NGO said.

Sources: Mizzima, AFP, Press Information Bureau, The Nation, The Times of India, Reuters

## ANALYSIS &amp; INSIGHT



## ASEAN'S GROWING DEBATE OVER ENGAGEMENT WITH MYANMAR AUTHORITIES

**F**our ASEAN foreign ministers will have visited Naypyidaw within less than two months, signaling a renewed push by regional governments to engage Myanmar's military authorities while simultaneously exploring broader dialogue with ethnic armed organizations and other stakeholders. The flurry of diplomacy reflects ASEAN's continuing search for a workable approach to Myanmar's protracted crisis.

ASEAN appears to be moving toward a more inclusive approach to Myanmar's crisis as member states intensify diplomatic engagement while increasingly emphasizing dialogue with a broader range of stakeholders beyond the military authorities.

The shift comes amid renewed debate within the regional bloc over how best to address Myanmar's worsening political and humanitarian crisis. Thailand's Foreign Minister Mr. Sihasak Phuangketkeow recently stressed that Myanmar should not be isolated from ASEAN, arguing that regional peace and prosperity depend on the organization's unity and centrality. His remarks reflect a growing discussion among ASEAN members about balancing engagement with pressure on the military regime.

Diplomatic activity has accelerated in recent weeks. Indonesian Foreign Minister Sugiono visited Naypyidaw on June 8 and met junta chief Min Aung Hlaing and senior military officials. According to Indonesia's Foreign Ministry, Sugiono delivered a message from

President Prabowo Subianto calling for an immediate cessation of violence, the release of political prisoners, and inclusive dialogue involving all stakeholders. Indonesia also reaffirmed its support for ASEAN's Five-Point Consensus (5PC), the bloc's primary framework for addressing the crisis.

Regional engagement is continuing. Laos Foreign Minister Thongsavanh Phomvihane is scheduled to visit Naypyidaw on June 12-13, underscoring ASEAN members' efforts to maintain channels of communication with Myanmar authorities despite the limited progress in implementing the Five-Point Consensus.

At the same time, ASEAN's current chair, the Philippines, has signaled that engagement should extend beyond the military leadership. Philippine Foreign Secretary Theresa Lazaro, who also serves as Special Envoy of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. for Myanmar, has said she plans to meet ethnic armed organizations and other stakeholders as part of efforts to support a political solution. Her remarks suggest growing recognition within ASEAN that any

sustainable resolution will require broader participation from Myanmar's diverse political and ethnic actors.

These developments mirror conclusions presented by an ASEAN expert during a recent discussion on the organization's response to Myanmar. The expert emphasized that ASEAN is not a monolithic actor but a grouping of states with differing priorities and approaches. While some members prioritize democracy, human rights, and political inclusion, others focus on stability, dialogue, and non-interference.

Since the 2021 military coup, ASEAN has continued to rely on the Five-Point Consensus while excluding political representatives of the military regime from high-level summits and foreign ministers' meetings. Under Indonesia's chairmanship in 2023 and subsequent initiatives by member states, ASEAN also expanded consultations with resistance groups, ethnic organizations, and other political actors.

According to findings from the State of Southeast Asia survey cited in the presentation, support among ASEAN policy elites has increasingly shifted toward



Kim Aris is pushing for "Proof of Life" for his mother, Aung San Suu Kyi as she approaches her 81st birthday. Photo: AFP

engagement with all Myanmar stakeholders rather than limiting discussions to the military authorities. The 2026 survey showed stronger backing for inclusive dialogue and relatively little support for restoring full political participation by the junta in ASEAN meetings.

While ASEAN's consensus-based diplomacy often attracts criticism for moving slowly, the expert argued that important precedents have emerged since 2021. As Thailand, Indonesia, Laos, and the Philippines pursue different but complementary initiatives, ASEAN appears to be gradually broadening its approach—maintaining engagement with Myanmar authorities while recognizing that long-term peace will require dialogue involving all stakeholders.

## Aung San Suu Kyi's house arrest situation and political implications

More than a month after the Myanmar military junta announced the transfer of deposed civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi from prison to a "designated house" on April 30, her exact whereabouts remain a closely guarded secret. The lack of transparency has cast deep

doubt over the nature of her 18-year sentence, fueling widespread skepticism that her relocation is merely a superficial gesture rather than a genuine step toward reconciliation.

The skepticism has intensified following a highly controversial photo released by the regime showing Suu Kyi meeting with junta officials. Critics have questioned the timeline of the photograph, with some suspecting it is old, while others suggest it could be a sophisticated artificial intelligence creation. In response, her son, Kim Aris, has launched a prominent "proof of life" campaign to raise his mother's current situation.

Political analysts argue that the junta's shifting of Suu Kyi is timed to cultivate an image of flexibility for its newly established administration. National Unity Government (NUG) Foreign Minister Zin Mar Aung dismissed the move as a deceptive tactic designed to gain geopolitical leverage. "It seems the junta is trying hard to create a political trick to ease the international pressure, to regain diplomatic fields, and regional and international collaboration slowly," she remarked.



The situation for displaced people in Myanmar is dire. Kachin IDP camp. Photo: Mizzima

Despite the regime's political maneuver, international and regional pressure for direct access to the Nobel laureate is mounting. On May 6, Philippine Foreign Secretary Theresa Lazaro, serving as the Special Envoy for the ASEAN Chair, formally requested a meeting with Suu Kyi to foster an environment conducive to an inclusive national dialogue. Concurrently, Suu Kyi's legal team continues to experience total neglect; they have submitted multiple visitation requests over the past five months, all of which remain pending or ignored.

The Western community has maintained a firm stance, with the EU, Australia, Canada, and Norway demanding regular access for her family, legal counsel, and medical teams, alongside her unconditional release. Similar calls have been echoed by the US, UK, Japan, and France.

Even regional neighbors, balancing strict pragmatism, are raising the issue. During a controversial state visit to New Delhi by junta chief Min Aung Hlaing, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi directly questioned the military leader regarding Suu Kyi's welfare - a exchange later confirmed to the media by Indian Foreign Ministry Secretary Vikram Misri. Misri noted that Modi emphasized that long-term national peace and unity in Myanmar can only be achieved by integrating all ethnic groups equally, signaling that even the junta's partners recognize that isolating its most prominent political figure remains an obstacle to stability.

## Ongoing conflict, displacement, and humanitarian developments

As the annual monsoon season begins to batter Myanmar, internally displaced persons (IDPs) across the country are facing catastrophic shortages of basic necessities, including shelter, food, medicine, and clean water. The adverse weather conditions have exacerbated a long-standing crisis, leaving hundreds of thousands of civilians exposed to severe disease and malnutrition.

The deepening hardship coincides with June 9, marking the 15th anniversary of the resumption of the Kachin conflict. According to the World Kachin Congress (WKC), this protracted war has claimed nearly 3,000 civilian lives and left over 200,000 IDPs

linguishing in temporary camps across Kachin and northern Shan states. The WKC has sharply criticized international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) for disproportionately funneling humanitarian aid through junta-controlled channels while ignoring the reality on the ground. The Congress urged the international community to formally recognize and collaborate with emerging local administrative mechanisms capable of bypassing regime blockades.

Meanwhile, the conflict has intensified significantly in western Myanmar. The junta has deployed a force of roughly 2,000 personnel in a heavy offensive aiming to recapture lost territory in southern Chin State and neighboring Saw Township in western Magway. Initiated in mid-May, the military campaign relies heavily on the devastating "four-cut" strategy, an approach explicitly engineered to starve local populations of food, funding, intelligence, and recruits.

The consequences have been immediate and severe. Local residents are enduring severe shortages of basic foodstuffs and fuel, while accessing lifesaving medicine has become virtually impossible. An IDP camp manager from Mindat Township told DVB that under the reinstated four-cut restrictions, stockpiled rice is rotting due to intense seasonal humidity. "Even if the IDPs can afford to buy food, the conditions do not allow it," they stated, explaining that junta troops are blocking aid organizations from accessing vulnerable populations.

A parallel siege is unfolding in Saw Township, where junta forces have occupied strategic points and severed highway access, halting commercial travel and civilian movement while cutting off local telephone networks. Beyond the immediate threat of starvation, the conflict is destroying the future of the younger generation. Displaced children are facing severe barriers to education, lacking secure school structures and encountering dangerous, mud-slicked commutes through conflict zones during torrential downpours.



Clearing up the damage. Photo: AFP

# FAMILIES DISPLACED BY NAMHKAM WAREHOUSE EXPLOSION FACE LONG-TERM RECOVERY CHALLENGES

**D**ozens of families are struggling to get by after the massive warehouse explosion in Namhkam in Northern Shan State that killed more than 50 civilians and 70 hospitalized with severe injuries. Many have been left homeless and traumatized.

Consequently, residents are now facing significant challenges regarding long-term rehabilitation.

The catastrophic explosion at an explosives storage warehouse in Kaung Tat Village, located within the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) controlled territory of Namhkam Township in northern Shan State, occurred on 31 May.

It triggered a sweeping firestorm that completely leveled more than 100 homes, effectively wiping out the entire village and leaving hundreds of residents displaced without basic necessities.

"There are over 70 patients in the hospital. Currently, they are suffering from psychological trauma and urgently require nutritious food as well as social and health-related assistance," a local resident, speaking on condition of anonymity for security reasons, told Mizzima on 3 June.

The source further explained the situation on the ground. "Some families from over 100 households have

absolutely nowhere to live. Everything, from clothing to kitchenware, was lost. Since everything was destroyed, there is a critical need for clothing, utensils, and financial assistance to begin the recovery process."

According to local reports, the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) is currently managing the relocation and housing of those whose homes were destroyed. The Ta'ang Land Council (TLC) has issued a statement informing that those wishing to support the victims and contribute to the rehabilitation efforts can contact and donate through the TLC.



A phone image of the explosion. Photo: AFP

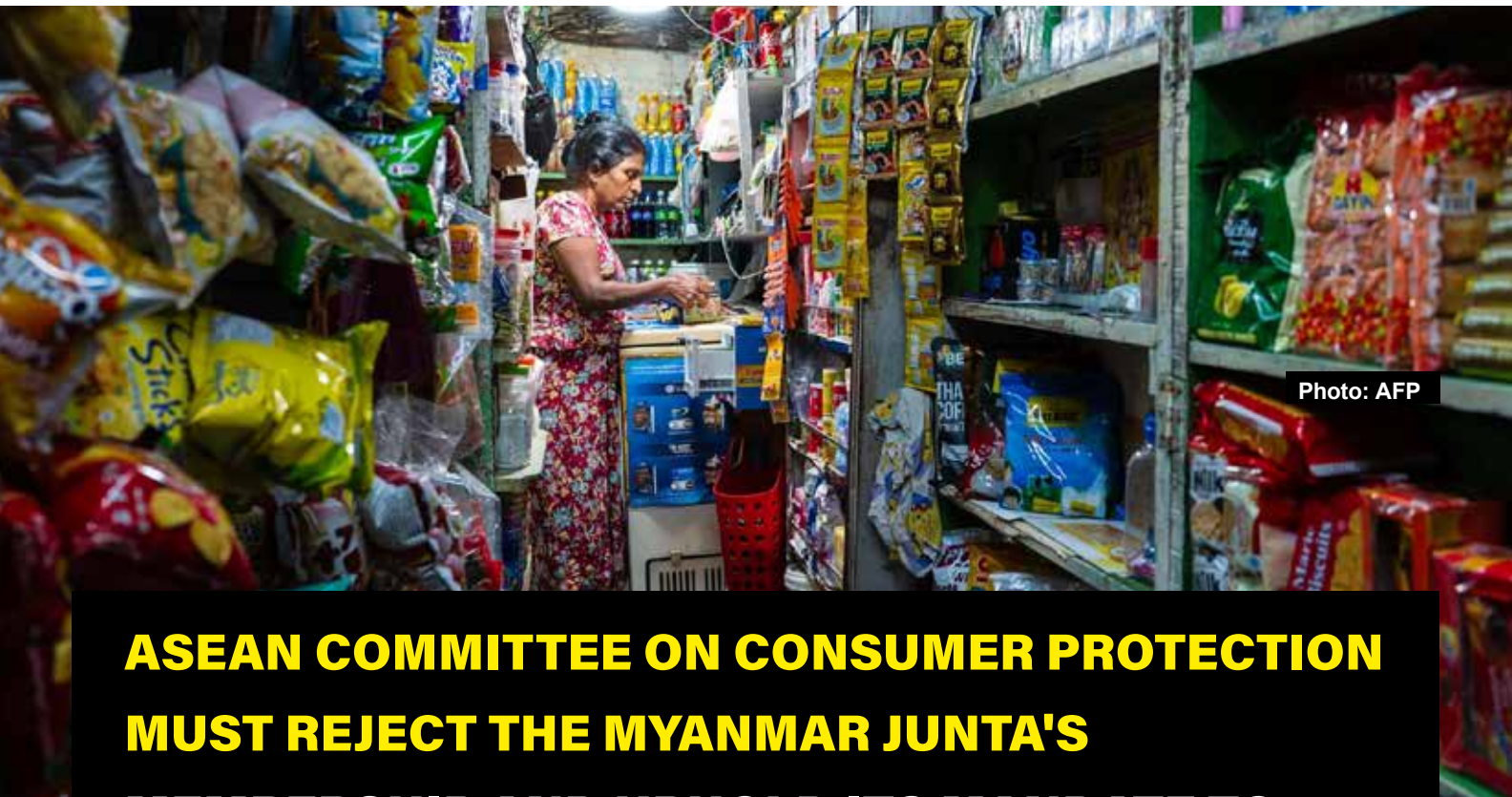


Photo: AFP

## **ASEAN COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION MUST REJECT THE MYANMAR JUNTA'S MEMBERSHIP AND UPHOLD ITS MANDATE TO PROTECT CONSUMERS**

**N**GO Defend Myanmar Democracy has spoken out against an ASEAN consumer protection body over its plan to allow the Myanmar junta to host a meeting in Yangon.

The following is their statement date 1 June:

We deplore the ASEAN Committee on Consumer Protection (ACCP) for allowing the Myanmar military junta to host the 32nd ACCP meeting in Yangon and urge the committee to reject the junta's membership and cease recognizing the junta-controlled Department of Consumer Affairs as the Myanmar representatives.

The ACCP, as the regional consumer protection body is meant to safeguard the well-being of over 600 million ASEAN consumers. It cannot credibly do so while allowing the military junta, that is itself one of the largest sources of cross-border consumer harm in the region, a seat at the table, and working alongside them to develop and implement regional strategy on consumer protection.

The Myanmar military attempted to grab power through a violent coup in 2021, triggering an unprecedented polycrisis. The military junta continues to act with rampant impunity, committing international crimes nationwide, including killing, arbitrary detention, torture, rape and sexual violence and airstrikes targeting civilians, schools and hospitals displacing more than 3.6 million people.

Recently, it has attempted to legitimize its coup through a sham election, which the UN Human Rights Council has strongly condemned. Its impunity and ongoing conflict have driven transnational crime, cyber scam operations, and human trafficking harming ASEAN consumers and beyond. Post 2021, Myanmar has become the epicenter of the cyber-scam industry powered by trafficked workers with an annual value of funds stolen by these scam syndicates worldwide estimated at around US\$64 billion a year.

The illegal military junta have long harbored and nurtured militia and transnational criminal

organizations in their growing operations, making them partners in crime and the linchpin of this transnational criminal ecosystem. The illegitimate junta have also illegally taken over institutions meant to protect consumers from harm. This includes the Department of Consumer Affairs (DOCA), the body representing Myanmar at the ACCP and the host of the 32nd ACCP meeting in Yangon, which sits under the Ministry of Commerce (MOC), a key channel for sustaining the junta's revenue. Ministers from the MOC have been sanctioned in multiple jurisdictions for sustaining the junta's economic activities, including facilitating fuel oil imports while atrocities continue, and for undermining democracy and the rule of law.

The stated agenda of the 32nd ACCP meeting included strategic initiatives under the ASEAN Consumer Protection Strategic Plan (2026-2030), product safety monitoring and enforcement, and the development of an online dispute resolution mechanism. Civil society organizations have consistently called on ASEAN and governments around the world to reject the junta's attempts to gain legitimacy. This call is made more urgent by the junta's sham elections and convening of "parliament" to consolidate its illegitimate coup attempt.

We strongly urge ACCP, its members and the ASEAN Secretariat to:

- Stand with the people of Myanmar and reject military junta's membership in the ACCP, and cease to recognize the junta's officials from DOCA or any other working-level junta officials as Myanmar's representatives in the Committee;
- Suspend and refuse to adopt any outputs, strategies, or work products developed during the 32nd ACCP meeting hosted by the junta as this would also validate the work of a ministry under the junta's illegal control;
- Bar any working-level junta officials from attending, speaking, or holding representational roles

at the upcoming 5th ASEAN Consumer Protection Conference (ACPC) on 8–9 June 2026, the 3rd ACCP–OECD CCP Joint Meeting on 10 June 2026, and all subsequent ACCP meetings, events and dialogues with external partners;

- Ensure that no technical assistance, capacity-building, or support of any kind will be provided to the junta through the ACCP;
- Engage with the legitimate representatives of the Myanmar people, the Steering Council for the Emergence of a Federal Democratic Union, the National Unity Government, ethnic revolutionary organizations and civil society organizations.

We further urge ACCP's development partners to:

- Ensure that no development assistance, technical cooperation, or capacity-building support, whether channeled through the ACCP, the ASEAN Secretariat, or bilateral programs, reaches or benefits the junta-controlled Department of Consumer Affairs, the Ministry of Commerce, or any other institutions illegally controlled by the Myanmar junta;
- Reject the participation of junta representatives at meetings, events and dialogues involving the ACCP and refrain from lending institutional branding to ACCP meetings, conferences, or outputs which the junta participates in or has hosted.

ASEAN leaders and Min Aung Hlaing agreed to the Five-Point Consensus in April 2021. As the junta shows total disregard for ASEAN and commitments it has made, allowing it to represent Myanmar and host ACCP meetings only emboldens a military that continues to commit international crimes with impunity. A committee that seats the junta cannot credibly claim to protect consumers from it. The ACCP has the standing, the mandate, and the responsibility to refuse the junta's seat at its table and stand with the people of Myanmar.



Myanmar junta leader Min Aung Hlaing.  
Photo: AFP

## MYANMAR JUNTA CHIEF MIN AUNG HLAING TO SKIP UPCOMING RUSSIA-ASEAN SUMMIT

**M**yanmar's junta leader Min Aung Hlaing will not attend the upcoming ASEAN-Russia summit scheduled for mid-June in Russia, Mizzima has learned from diplomatic and Naypyidaw-based sources.

The summit, marking the 35th anniversary of ASEAN-Russia dialogue relations, is set to take place in Kazan from 17 to 19 June. The Kremlin extended invitations to Southeast Asian leaders, but sources close to the diplomatic community and Naypyidaw say Min Aung Hlaing will not be among those attending.

It remains unclear whether his absence is due to Russia choosing not to extend an invitation or if other reasons are behind the decision. However, the junta's Foreign Minister Than Swe recently met with the Russian ambassador in Naypyidaw to discuss ongoing preparations for the high-level gathering.

Than Swe is expected to travel to Russia in Min Aung Hlaing's place, where he will hold preliminary meetings ahead of the formal ASEAN-Russia Senior Officials' Meeting (ASOM).

Discussions at the Kazan meetings are expected to cover practical cooperation between ASEAN and Russia across political, security, trade, and humanitarian areas.

The agenda items are also anticipated to include efforts toward combating cross-border crime including rampant online scam operations as well as enhancing information and communications technology (ICT) security and expanding ASEAN's ties with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).



How will Myanmar's junta chief leverage the India visit? Photo: AFP

## NEW DELHI'S PRAGMATIC EMBRACE: JUNTA CHIEF RETURNS FROM INDIA WITH DIPLOMATIC LIFELINE

**M**yanmar's junta leader Min Aung Hlaing returned to Naypyidaw on 3 June following a five-day official state visit to India at the invitation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, culminating in financial sector meetings in Mumbai.

Facing unprecedented territorial losses to resistance forces at home, the military chief secured a major political victory as New Delhi rolled out the red carpet, signaling that India prioritizes its own border security and regional stability over democratic ideals.

By treating the junta as the official government, India has handed the regime a powerful propaganda tool to project international legitimacy while inadvertently dampening the diplomatic momentum of the opposition National Unity Government (NUG).

The high-stakes visit signals an impending spike in intelligence sharing and defense coordination along

the volatile 1,600-kilometer frontier, where India is desperate to secure its northeastern states like Manipur and Mizoram from drug trafficking, arms smuggling, and refugee spillovers originating in Chin State and Sagaing Region.

To solidify these security guarantees, New Delhi may clamp down harder on Myanmar resistance fighters and activists taking refuge on the Indian side of the border.

Min Aung Hlaing concluded his trip by courting investors at the Myanmar-India Business Dialogue in Mumbai, bypassing Western isolation by anchoring commercial ties in banking, logistics, and agriculture before departing on a private aircraft.

## RESUMPTION OF INDIA-MYANMAR BORDER COMMERCE SIGNALLED AS CATALYST FOR FIERCER GROUND OFFENSIVES

**M**ilitary sources and regional political observers have assessed that if India-Myanmar border trade is resumed, ground fighting along the trade routes is likely to intensify.

During his official visit to India at the invitation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, military leader Min Aung Hlaing attended the India-Myanmar Trade and Investment Forum, where he actively courted foreign capital for major regional infrastructure networks.

Addressing Indian business leaders, he invited strategic investment along both the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project (KMMTTP) and the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway, asserting that these under-development transit arteries present immense commercial opportunities to expand bilateral trade and strengthen economic connectivity across the broader India-ASEAN corridors.

Analysts suggest that conducting trade along these highways could lead to more severe clashes between the military junta forces and the resistance groups who currently control various sections of these routes.

"Fighting is currently ongoing in Chin State. There are military activities all along the lowland trade routes. If trade is to resume, the war must be fought to a conclusion first," a member of a People's Defence Force (PDF) based in the Kalay-Kabaw region told Mizzima.

The area between Tamu and Kalay, known as the Kalay-Kabaw region, is a strategic segment of the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway.

The trade route begins in Moreh in India's Manipur State, passes through the Myanmar towns of Tamu, Kalewa, the Yagyi-Monywa road, Mandalay, Naypyidaw, Bago, Hpa-an, Kawkaik, and Myawaddy, eventually connecting to the highway in Mae Sot, Thailand.

Military sources report that the Nanphalong market in Tamu is currently closed due to the military situation, and the stretch of road along Tamu-Kalay-Yagyi-Kalewa-Monywa is under intermittent control by both the military junta and local resistance forces.

Territorial control over the critical transit networks linking India and Myanmar remains highly fractured, with junta troops and their affiliated militias dominating Pantha village between Tamu and Kalay, while Khampat town and its surrounding areas are firmly held by revolutionary forces.

Furthermore, local PDFs maintain operational control over the majority of the 120-kilometer Yagyi road, a vital economic artery where India has been funding and managing extensive earthworks and asphalt paving operations.

Amid these setbacks, state-controlled junta media outlets have reported a sweeping strategic directive outlining plans to fully reclaim southern Chin State by the end of 2026 to systematically retake lost territories, including the highly prized Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project area, before utilizing those positions to launch subsequent military offensives into neighbouring Rakhine State.

To launch an offensive into Rakhine State, junta columns numbering in the thousands have been advancing since the first week of May through Kyaukhtu and Saw townships in the Magway Region into Kanpetlet and Mindat townships in southern Chin State.

Military sources report heavy fighting as these columns are met by Yaw, Chin, and allied defence forces, with the junta utilizing massive air support.

Similarly, the military junta which recently retook Falam and Tonzang in Chin State, is reportedly preparing to attack Rikhawdar, the India-Myanmar Border Trade Gate No. 2, which is currently held by Chin resistance forces. Border sources stated that the military has already conducted drone bombings on nearby villages.

"They [India] will engage with whoever controls the territory for the sake of their own interests. It comes down to who has the upper hand on the ground. If the junta loses territory, India won't recognize their authority there. Therefore, the outcome of the battles will be the deciding factor," said a regional observer.

The observer added that while India maintains formal relations with the military junta, it has also held discussions regarding a federal democratic constitution with the Kachin, Rakhine, and Chin resistance groups, as well as defence forces from the central "Anyar" region.

Vikram Misri, Foreign Secretary of India's Ministry of External Affairs mentioned on 1 June that India-Myanmar trade exceeds \$2 billion, with \$1.5 billion in exports from Myanmar and over \$600 million in imports from India.

Myanmar exports various pulses, teak, hardwood, marine products, rubber, and tin to India, while importing pharmaceuticals, machinery and spare parts, iron and steel, fertilizers, and chemicals.

Currently, these goods are shipped from the Yangon port to Indian cities like Kolkata and Chennai via sea routes. However, merchants prefer land routes due to the high costs and time delays associated with maritime transport.

During his five-day trip from 30 May to 3 June, the military leader is scheduled to visit Maharashtra State today (2 June) to meet with the Chief Minister and hold business discussions in Mumbai.

India and Myanmar share a land border of over 1,600 kilometres and a maritime boundary of over 1,000 kilometres (nearly 600 nautical miles).



Senator Mitch McConnell. Photo: Supplied

**MCCONNELL PRESSES U.S. SECRETARY RUBIO ON BURMA; RUBIO REAFFIRMS SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY, BUT ACTION MUST BE TAKEN: BRI**

**A**t a Senate Appropriations hearing in the U.S. on Wednesday, Senator Mitch McConnell (R-KY) questioned U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio about delays in Burma Act funding and concerns that U.S. policy is shifting away from supporting Burma's democratic movement, according to the Burma Research Institute (BRI) 4 June.

Secretary Rubio responded by reaffirming the Administration's support for democratic civilian rule in Burma over continued military control backed by Beijing. He also said the Administration is working to identify democratic partners who can help shape Burma's future.

"Senator McConnell has always been a strong supporter of democracy and human rights in Burma, and we are grateful for his leadership," said Zo Tum Hmung, President and CEO of BRI. "His support for the bipartisan BRAVE Burma Act reflects his ongoing commitment to the people's struggle for freedom, which BRI also supports."

"I welcome Secretary Rubio's reaffirmation of the U.S. preference for democracy in Burma," Zo Tum Hmung added. "The Min Aung Hlaing-led Burmese military seized power from the people of Burma in February 2021. The Administration must now support its stated preference for democracy with decisive action."

In the statement, BRI calls on the U.S. Administration to:

- Recognize and engage with the Steering Council for the Emergence of a Federal Democratic Union (SCEF), formed March 30, 2026.

- Unfreeze approximately \$1 billion in Burma funds held at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York and transfer them, with accrued interest, to SCEF, and implement the \$121 million in FY2026 Burma assistance through SCEF.

- Formally determine that the Burmese military's atrocities against ethnic and religious minority Christians constitute crimes against humanity and war crimes.

- Demand the immediate and unconditional release of State Counselor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Christian pastors, and all political prisoners.

The Burma Research Institute (BRI) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based in Ellicott City, Maryland, United States that conducts research and advocacy. BRI primarily focuses on freedom of religion or belief, human rights, and protection and assistance of refugees and internally displaced people in Burma. Formerly known as the Chin Association of Maryland, BRI also empowers the local Chin community in Maryland and across the United States to successfully integrate into American society. ([www.burmari.org](http://www.burmari.org))



A rare earth mine in Shan State.  
Photo: Supplied

## CHINA AND RUSSIA RACE FOR TUNGSTEN ON SHAN STATE'S HIGHEST MOUNTAIN

A Chinese company operating with the United Wa State Army has begun extracting tungsten from a large mine in Mong Ton township, eastern Shan State, while a Russian company is preparing to mine the same ore on the opposite side of the mountain in partnership with the junta, the Shan Human Rights Foundation said on 4 June.

The two projects sit on Loi Khi Lek, the highest mountain in Mong Ton at 1,970 metres and about 20 kilometres from the Thai border. The Chinese mine lies to the south, in Mong Jawd tract, while the Russian project is planned for the northern slopes, according to SHRF. In Shan, "Khi Lek" means "mineral residue".

The Chinese mine began production in February 2026 and is already affecting the health and farming of villagers living downstream, the group said. Locals first noticed survey work in 2022, when Chinese engineers visited the site. Roads and tunnels followed in 2023 and 2024, and during 2025 a processing plant and a water storage dam on the Pak Goot stream were completed.

Around 100 Chinese managers and technicians and about 250 Shan and Bama workers are employed at the three-kilometre site, according to SHRF. Mined rock is crushed, ground and chemically separated into tungsten powder before being trucked to China. Equipment was shipped down the Mekong River to Wan Pong port east of Tachileik — the country's main international customs gateway on the Mekong — and then driven to the mine.

Tungsten began leaving the site after Chinese New Year in February, carried in convoys of covered

12-wheel trucks to the Chinese border at Mong La through Tachileik and Mong Phyak, areas the military controls, SHRF said. Locals have also heard that gold and lead deposits have been found at the site.

The nearest village, Wan Wa, sits about one kilometre below the mine on the Pak Goot stream. Since 2025, children there have developed skin infections after contact with the stream water, according to SHRF. At the end of the 2025 rainy season, sand and sediment from mining run-off buried rice fields near Mong Jawd, leaving them uncultivable, while the new dam dried up the stream below it and cut off water that villagers had relied on. The Pak Goot stream feeds the Jawd River, which flows into the Salween, raising concerns that contaminated run-off could reach communities far downstream.

On the northern slopes, villagers saw three Russians survey for minerals in May 2025, escorted by junta soldiers, police and militia, SHRF said. About ten Russians returned on 28 January 2026 with the local military commander to measure the land, and told village leaders that Naypyidaw had already granted them a tungsten permit. A UWSA administrator from Huay Aw later urged villagers to oppose the project. The Russians have also reportedly secured a concession to mine antimony about 15 kilometres to the northeast — what would be the first known Russian mining projects in eastern Shan State.

Tungsten is valued for its hardness, density and the highest melting point of any metal, and is used in aerospace, electronics, defence and mining, according to SHRF. China dominates global supply, producing 67,000 tonnes in 2025, close to 80 percent of the world total.

Mong Jawd was once a small farming village of Shan, Lisu and Lahu households. The military seized the area from the Mong Tai Army in 1994 and later allowed the UWSA to establish bases there, and during 1999–2001 more than 14,000 Wa villagers were resettled to the southern Mong Ton area. Most original residents have since fled to Thailand, SHRF said. The village is now under joint UWSA and military control.

Russia has long pursued mining in Shan State. In 2004 its state-owned Tyazhpromexport formed a joint venture with the military-owned Myanmar Economic Corporation to mine iron and build a steel plant at Pinpet in Hopong township, a project local communities have long opposed and which has faced repeated delays.




Photo: Supplied

## MYANMAR HUMANITARIAN CRISIS CANNOT BE SOLVED WITHOUT POLITICAL CHANGE, CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS SAY

**M**yanmar's worsening humanitarian crisis cannot be addressed through aid alone and requires urgent, fundamental political change, a coalition of Myanmar civil society organisations said in a commentary published by the Transnational Institute (TNI) on 5 June.

The commentary states that five years after the 2021 military coup, humanitarian needs have reached new heights due to armed conflict, mass displacement, economic collapse, and military restrictions. The groups warn that international responses focus on symptoms rather than the crisis's deep political roots.

They stress that Myanmar's humanitarian emergency is inseparable from its political and military crisis, and aid efforts will not succeed without confronting the sources of displacement and suffering.

According to the commentary, millions in Myanmar are in desperate need as conflict relentlessly engulfs new areas. Communities in ethnic minority and resistance-held regions face severe obstacles to food, healthcare, education and protection. The authors warn military-imposed restrictions are critically blocking life-saving aid, leaving many of the most vulnerable at severe risk.

The commentary is critical of international aid strategies that rely heavily on engagement with military-controlled institutions. It directly calls on international actors to urgently shift their support to local civil society organisations, ethnic service providers, and

community-based networks, and to demand increased resources and recognition for these groups as primary agents of effective humanitarian response.

The authors urge international donors to immediately adopt a longer-term approach that meaningfully connects humanitarian relief with support for local governance, social protection, and democratic participation. They warn donors not to treat the crisis as only a technical humanitarian challenge and instead demand sustained political engagement that addresses the root causes of decades of militarisation, exclusion and armed conflict.

The commentary insists that only urgent inclusive political dialogue and recognition of Myanmar's diverse actors will make sustainable recovery possible. Without bold action to address root causes, humanitarian needs will multiply, overwhelming any amount of aid.

The publication comes as aid agencies warn that funding shortfalls are threatening humanitarian operations across Myanmar and among displaced Myanmar communities in neighbouring countries.

The civil society groups insist humanitarian assistance is essential but urge all international actors and governments to prioritise political change, accountability, and the establishment of an inclusive federal democratic system. They demand firm commitments to address decades-long grievances and support a pathway to lasting peace and stability.



SCEF meeting in Canada.  
Photo: Supplied

**CANADA BRIEFED ON REVOLUTIONARY MECHANISMS DESIGNED TO BYPASS JUNTA AND DELIVER DIRECT HUMANITARIAN AID, STATES MINISTER ZIN MAR AUNG**

**D**uring a diplomatic visit to Canada by the Steering Council for the Emergence of a Federal Democratic Union (SCEF), Union Minister for Foreign Affairs Daw Zin Mar Aung emphasized that existing operational networks between ethnic regions and the National Unity Government (NUG) are fully prepared to effectively channel international humanitarian aid directly to those in need.

"The main point was that we were able to explain to the countries and international agencies providing humanitarian aid that there are practical mechanisms for cooperation already working among our revolutionary forces. We conveyed that we are ready to cooperate if they intend to provide aid in a practical manner," she told Mizzima.

As the military junta intensifies ground strikes despite Canada's firm calls for an immediate end to violence and unhindered humanitarian access, NUG Foreign Minister and SCEF Secretariat member Daw Zin Mar Aung detailed to Mizzima the specific, operational methods designed to bypass the regime and deliver aid directly to the public.

"As everyone knows, while various countries have other global issues and priorities, we discussed how to make the available humanitarian aid most effective through our 'localization strategy' and humanitarian platforms. These mechanisms already exist in ethnic regions and within the NUG. We discussed how we can work effectively through these integrated mechanisms and emphasized our readiness to cooperate," Daw Zin Mar Aung said.

This trip marks the first in-person meeting between SCEF and high-ranking international government and parliamentary officials since the council's formation.

Regarding the mission, Daw Zin Mar Aung stated: "This marks our inaugural trip to personally engage with foreign government and parliamentary officials since the establishment of SCEF.

While we have previously held press conferences and formally notified the global community of SCEF's formation through official correspondence, this visit provided a vital opportunity to exchange perspectives, address direct inquiries, and articulate our organizational objectives, the current trajectory of the Myanmar revolution, and our vision for the future."

The Minister added that the international community welcomed this consolidation of forces, noting that the delegation was able to demonstrate a commitment to unity despite the inherent diversity among revolutionary groups.

"They welcomed this kind of unification. We acknowledged that differences exist among us, which is natural. However, we are striving for unity amidst these differences. The formation of SCEF is both a symbol of that and a demonstration of our commitment. I would like to say we received positive responses in this regard," she said.

During the high-level meetings, Robert Oliphant, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada, reaffirmed Canada's steadfast solidarity with the people of Myanmar in their pursuit of a peaceful and inclusive future, while underscoring the

critical necessity for an immediate halt to hostilities to guarantee full, unhindered humanitarian access.

Additionally, the SCEF delegation engaged with Members of Parliament Garnett Genuis and Adam Chambers, prominent leaders of the Parliamentary Friends of a Democratic Burma, to coordinate efforts on strengthening the rule of law, terminating violence against civilians, and identifying strategic areas for bilateral cooperation.

Furthermore, a statement from SCEF noted that meetings with civil society organizations in Ottawa focused primarily on humanitarian aid delivery and matters related to the federal system.

According to the SCEF statement, the delegation also engaged in academic discussions with professors and researchers at the University of Toronto, and hosted public town halls with the Myanmar diaspora in Canada to conduct extensive dialogues on the current crisis and future strategic plans for the nation.

The SCEF delegation representing this Canadian diplomatic mission comprised SCEF Secretariat member and NUG Foreign Minister Daw Zin Mar Aung, alongside SCEF Foreign Affairs committee members Neh Neh Plo from the Karenni State Interim Executive Council (IEC), Saw Nimrod from the Karen National Union (KNU), and U Kyaw Zaw, Advisor to the NUG President's Office.

Khin Yi, House speaker.  
Photo: AFP

## ICG SAYS MYANMAR'S NEW ADMINISTRATION ENTRENCHES MILITARY RULE DESPITE CIVILIAN FAÇADE

Myanmar's new administration has strengthened military rule rather than initiated a political transition, according to a 3 June International Crisis Group (ICG) report, which warns of ongoing conflict, an economic crisis, and isolation despite the military's efforts to project stability.

The Brussels-based think tank said the government formed after the military-organised elections of December 2025 and January 2026 had provided coup leader Min Aung Hlaing with a "procedural basis" to continue his grip on power while preserving the appearance of civilian rule.

"The elections brought about not a political transition or a reduction in conflict, but rather a consolidation of abusive military rule," the report said.

Min Aung Hlaing formally became president in April after the military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) secured a landslide victory in tightly controlled polls that excluded major opposition forces, including the National League for Democracy. According to ICG, the USDP won 339 of 420 contested parliamentary seats, while military appointees continue to occupy 25 percent of seats under the 2008 constitution.

The report said the elections had failed to confer legitimacy on the regime or address the grievances that fuelled resistance following the 2021 coup. Large parts of the country were excluded from voting due to conflict, while turnout remained low amid widespread public hostility to the process.

While the military has regained some momentum

on the battlefield after major setbacks in 2023 and 2024, ICG said this was largely due to conscription, improved drone capabilities and growing support from China. Beijing's intervention helped secure ceasefires with powerful ethnic armed groups in northern Myanmar, allowing the military to redeploy troops to other fronts.

China has emerged as the regime's most important international backer, according to the report. Following a 2025 meeting between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Min Aung Hlaing, Beijing expanded diplomatic, economic, and military support while helping ease the junta's international isolation.

Despite those gains, ICG warned that Myanmar faces mounting economic pressures. The report said the spillover effects of conflict in the Middle East had exacerbated fuel shortages and inflation, exposing the vulnerability of an economy already weakened by years of war and political turmoil.

The organisation said prospects for nationwide peace talks remained bleak, with neither the military nor its opponents showing willingness to make meaningful concessions. Instead, any future ceasefires were likely to be tactical arrangements aimed at managing conflict rather than resolving it.

ICG urged foreign governments to maintain sanctions on the military leadership while expanding humanitarian assistance, supporting civil society and increasing cooperation to combat transnational crime, which it said was increasingly spilling across Myanmar's borders through scam centres, narcotics production, human trafficking and illicit financial flows.

## MYANMAR JUNTA USING DIGITAL REPRESSION TO TARGET JOURNALISTS AND CIVILIANS, RIGHTS GROUP SAYS

A Myanmar human rights group says the military junta systematically uses digital surveillance, censorship, and legal repression to target journalists, women, and children, with technology now enabling human rights abuses and shielding perpetrators from accountability.

In two submissions to the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Human Rights Myanmar (HRM) reported that the military transformed state institutions and digital infrastructure into tools of repression after seizing power in the 2021 coup.

The organisation reported that authorities detained at least 221 journalists from more than 100 media outlets since the coup, prosecuted 175, and sentenced 88 to a combined 497 years in prison. As of early 2026, more than 30 journalists remained behind bars, according to the submission.

HRM argued that Myanmar lacks mechanisms to protect journalists and alleges the military co-opts institutions and weaponises laws against independent reporting.

The group also warned that the military is constructing what it calls a "digital dictatorship"

that combines biometric databases, AI-enabled surveillance, internet censorship, and restrictions on virtual private networks (VPNs).

In a separate submission on women and children in conflict, HRM alleged that the military increasingly uses digital technologies in its campaign against civilians. The report describes a "digital-physical loop of violence," where authorities employ surveillance and online targeting to enable arrests and other abuses.

According to the group, military forces killed at least 380 women since the coup, and over 500 women experienced documented sexual violence. The report also documented the deaths of at least 117 people with disabilities and nearly 700 older people during the conflict.

HRM further accused pro-military networks of running a "dox-to-arrest" pipeline: these networks publish personal details of women activists and journalists online, enabling security forces to find and detain them.

The organisation urged the international community to strengthen journalist protections, preserve digital evidence, support independent civil society groups, and pursue accountability for abuses since the coup.



## **KNU AND KARENNI IEC ISSUE JOINT STATEMENT FOR WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY**

**T**he Karen National Union (KNU) and the Interim Executive Council of Karenni State (IEC) issued a joint statement on 5 June for World Environment Day 2026 reaffirming their responsibility and commitment for protection of natural heritage, ancestral lands, and the environment which has been entrusted to their care, including the ecosystems and waterways connecting the peoples of Myanmar and Thailand.

The text of the statement continues below.

Today, we publicly reaffirm our commitment to addressing growing environmental concerns that affect our communities and threaten the well-being of present and future generations throughout our shared region.

### **Grave Concern Over River Contamination and Environmental Degradation**

We are closely monitoring, with deep concern, the growing public attention to reports of contamination in rivers and waterways, as well as broader environmental impacts associated with mining and other extractive activities in the region.

We recognize that poorly regulated resource extraction and the discharge of pollutants into the environment can pose serious risks to food security, public health, local livelihoods, biodiversity, and the ecological integrity of river systems. Such impacts

may extend far beyond their immediate areas of origin, affecting downstream communities and shared ecosystems across borders.

We take seriously the concerns raised by local communities, civil society organizations, environmental networks, researchers, and the public regarding environmental challenges affecting the Kok River, the Salween River, and other transboundary waterways. These concerns deserve careful attention, credible investigation, and constructive cooperation among all relevant stakeholders.

### **Commitment to Collaborative Solutions**

The KNU and the Karenni IEC firmly believe that environmental protection requires cooperation, transparency, and collective responsibility.

We are willing and ready to work collaboratively with local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), community-based organizations, environmental networks, academic institutions, technical experts, and relevant authorities to better understand environmental challenges and identify practical pathways toward long-term solutions.

We welcome dialogue, information sharing, and cooperative efforts aimed at strengthening environmental protection and safeguarding the health of our shared river systems.

The KNU and the Karenni IEC are prepared to support and facilitate collaborative initiatives undertaken by local CSOs, community-based organizations, researchers, and technical experts within our respective areas to monitor environmental conditions, collect relevant information, and improve public understanding of environmental risks affecting our communities and waterways.

Furthermore, the KNU and the Karenni IEC will continue engaging with local communities, civil society organizations, researchers, and technical experts to support community-based environmental monitoring, information sharing, and public awareness efforts. We believe that strengthening cooperation among stakeholders will contribute to a better understanding of environmental conditions and support informed responses to emerging environmental concerns.

We believe that reliable information, scientific evidence, and community knowledge are essential foundations for identifying environmental problems and developing effective responses. Strengthening cooperation among communities, researchers, and relevant stakeholders will contribute to more informed decision-making and practical solutions that reflect both local realities and broader environmental concerns.

### **Commitment to Responsible Mining and Environmental Governance**

The KNU and the Karenni IEC reaffirm our commitment to responsible and sustainable natural resource governance. We believe that economic development and natural resource extraction should not come at the expense of environmental protection, public health, community wellbeing, or the rights of future generations.

We therefore commit ourselves to strengthening environmental safeguards and improving governance frameworks related to mining and natural resource management within our respective areas. We will continue working toward the development and implementation of policies, regulations, and management practices that are appropriate to local contexts while being informed by internationally recognized principles and standards.

We recognize that responsible environmental governance requires accountability, transparency,

community participation, and respect for the rights and interests of affected communities. These principles will continue to guide our efforts as we work to balance development needs with environmental protection and social wellbeing.

### **Protecting Our Shared Future**

The rivers and ecosystems of our region sustain millions of people and form an essential foundation for food security, livelihoods, cultural heritage, and biodiversity. Protecting these resources is not only an environmental responsibility but also a matter of human security, social justice, and sustainable development.

The environmental concerns affecting the Kok River, the Salween River, and other waterways remind us that rivers do not recognize political boundaries. What happens upstream can affect communities downstream, and environmental challenges in one area can have consequences throughout an entire river basin.

For this reason, addressing environmental concerns requires cooperation among communities, civil society organizations, researchers, authorities, and all relevant stakeholders. Sustainable solutions can only be achieved through dialogue, mutual respect, transparency, and a shared commitment to protecting the environment upon which our peoples depend.

As we observe World Environment Day, we call upon governments, civil society organizations, local communities, researchers, development partners, and the international community to work together in addressing environmental challenges through cooperation, scientific inquiry, evidence-based decision-making, and mutual respect.

The KNU and the Karenni IEC remain committed to supporting constructive efforts that contribute to the protection of our rivers, our environment, and the wellbeing of our peoples.

Together, we can build a future in which environmental protection, responsible resource governance, and sustainable development go hand in hand for the benefit of current and future generations.



## **MIZORAM CHIEF MINISTER SAYS ONGOING INFLUX OF MYANMAR DISPLACED PERSONS IMPOSES MAJOR STRAIN ON STATE**

**M**izoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma noted that the ongoing arrival of displaced individuals fleeing the conflict in Myanmar has turned into a major strain for the state.

The Chief Minister shared these remarks on 4 June while speaking with reporters during the North Eastern Council (NEC) meeting in Shillong, Meghalaya, India.

"Yes, due to geopolitical situations, we currently have many displaced persons fleeing to our side. Furthermore, there is a high likelihood of more people entering our territory to seek safety. This has become a major burden for us (Mizoram)," said Lalduhoma.

He added that the NEC is open to considering proposals aimed at boosting financial assistance for the displaced communities.

According to a Times of India report on 4 June, which cited state authorities, though humanitarian relief is still being distributed to those escaping the violence, managing a large, prolonged displaced population has created substantial financial and administrative strains for the state.

The expanding number of displaced individuals has placed a strain on public infrastructure, social services, and local resources, especially across communities located along the border.

The 73rd NEC meeting was attended by the Chairman (Union Home Minister), along with Chief Ministers, Governors, and high-ranking officials from the eight northeastern states – Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura<sup>7</sup>.

During the meeting, discussions centered on the "North East Vision Plan 2047," aimed at fostering economic development in the northeastern region by the centenary of India's independence.

A long-term Myanmar resident in Mizoram told Mizzima that several factors contribute to the burden on both local citizens and the state government.

"The burden is multifaceted. Differences in lifestyles cause social friction with locals, alongside issues related to drug trafficking. Additionally, their entry into the local labour market impacts local wages and employment opportunities," the resident said.

Officials further noted that active fighting in Chin State's Kanpetlet and Mindat townships, along with the threat of upcoming military junta offensives against the vital border trade hub of Rikhawdar in Falam Township, could spark a new influx of displaced people crossing into Mizoram.

On 3 June alone, the Champhai District Police in Mizoram, which sits along the Myanmar border, reported arresting eight individuals and seizing heroin valued at more than 7 million Indian Rupees (exceeding 320 million Myanmar Kyats).

To curb illegal migration, security threats, drug trafficking, and smuggling, the Indian government has resolved to fence the entire 1,600-kilometer border shared with Myanmar.

Official government records estimate that over 40,000 Myanmar nationals currently reside across 11 districts of Mizoram, while humanitarian aid groups estimate the total number including those in displacement camps and rented homes in urban and rural areas to exceed 70,000.

Photo: Supplied

## OVER 30 BODIES OF SLAIN CIVILIANS RECOVERED AFTER MYANMAR JUNTA ARSON AND RAIDS IN PAKOKKU DISTRICT

**M**ore than 30 bodies of civilians arrested and killed by Myanmar junta forces have been recovered in Myitche and surrounding villages in Pakokku District, Magway Region, according to local aid groups and resident sources.

The violence began on 10 May when a military column of around 500 troops comprising soldiers from the Pakokku-based Light Infantry Division (LID) 101 and Pyu Saw Htee militia members from Aung Tha village entered Myitche.

The forces subsequently torched the central market, municipal wards, and adjacent villages, while executing and arresting local residents.

"As of yesterday (4 June), over 30 bodies have been recovered. They are scattered across the town on the streets, inside residential homes, and even within religious buildings," a female aid volunteer reported today.

Volunteers and residents are recovering the remains, but identification remains difficult as most bodies are severely decomposed, according to responders.

"Although we did not face active gunfire while recovering the bodies, we have to remain highly vigilant about landmine hazards," another displaced-person aid worker said.

According to the Anyar Land Allied Coalition, junta arson campaigns conducted from 10 May to 31 May devastated the Myitche central market, town wards, and 11 surrounding villages, destroying thousands of residential homes.

"Swei Gyi village, which comprised about 500 households, was almost entirely reduced to ashes. Nine bodies have been found there so far," a local resident said.

Due to these military atrocities, tens of thousands of residents from Myitche and surrounding villages have fled to safer areas and are currently sheltering in internally displaced person (IDP) camps.

With their homes completely destroyed by the military's arson campaign, arriving IDPs face critical shortages of basic food, medicine, and emergency shelter.



## MYANMAR JUNTA FORCES ADVANCING TOWARD MINDAT KILL TWO LOCALS AND BURN DOWN 10 HOUSES

Advancing Myanmar military forces moving toward Mindat have reportedly killed two civilian villagers from Htin Chaung and incinerated ten residential homes in Mindat Township, Chin State, according to local community sources.

The military column, which originated from the Kyauktu-based No. 368 Artillery Unit in Magway Region before pushing into southern Chin State, executed two males, aged 16 and 60 in Htin Chaung Village on 30 May, before torching the local residences during the raid.

"One of them was my friend's younger brother, and the other was the father of a church minister. They were ordinary villagers with no connection to any armed groups," a local resident of Mindat confirmed to Mizzima.

Reports indicate that the two victims were captured and subsequently killed by junta troops while attempting to flee Htin Chaung Village during the military incursion. Their bodies were discovered by local residents yesterday, 3 June.

Following the incident, the Catholic Christian News (CCN) released a formal statement regarding the death of the older victim, identifying him as the father of a seminarian from Htin Chaung Village within the Mindat Diocese, and calling for prayers for his soul and for the comfort of the grieving family.

In the wake of the killings, pro-junta Telegram channels and supporters have been circulating propaganda online, posting photographs of the two deceased civilians positioned alongside weapons and ammunition to falsely claim they were members of the Chinland Defense Force (CDF) killed in action.

In Mindat Township, where fighting remains exceptionally intense, a local analyst monitoring regional airstrikes reported that the military conducted heavy aerial bombardments between 10:00 pm and 11:00 pm on 3 June.

A junta fighter jet carried out two strikes, while a Y-12 transport plane conducted eight successive bombing runs over the area.

An official from the Mindat Township Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) Camp Management Committee stated that the number of displaced persons in the township has now exceeded 17,000 due to the rapid escalation of ground fighting and airstrikes.

Military analysts suggest that the Myanmar junta is launching an offensive in Mindat and Kanpetlet townships with thousands of troops, with the strategic intention of advancing further toward Rakhine State.

## THREE MYANMAR MIGRANTS IN THAILAND'S TAK PROVINCE KILLED BY ERRANT WAR DRONE

Three migrants from Myanmar have been killed and two wounded after a drone used in their country's civil war exploded in neighbouring Thailand where they were working, Thai police said Wednesday.

Thai authorities received reports of the blast in Tak province, opposite Myanmar's Karen state, on Tuesday afternoon and rushed to the scene, local police chief Anusorn Dungkong told AFP.

"Three people have died, all of them Myanmar migrant workers, and two others were injured," he said.

The apparent attack drone struck a tree on the Thai side of the border before exploding, killing the labourers who worked on a nearby chilli farm, Anusorn added.

The two injured people, also from Myanmar, were taken to a local hospital for treatment, he said.

Myanmar's armed forces have been fighting myriad pro-democracy guerrillas and powerful ethnic-minority

armed groups since the military seized power in a 2021 coup.

Myanmar's borderlands are home to various ethnic-minority factions, many of which have battled the military for autonomy and control of lucrative natural resources since the country's independence from Britain in 1948.

Both the military and ethnic armies are known to use drones in battle, but it was not immediately clear which side had launched the drone that exploded in Thai territory.

Karen rebel factions control much of the state and heavy fighting with the military on Tuesday sent scores of Myanmar people fleeing across the border into Thailand, local media reports said.

AFP



Photo: Supplied

## MYANMAR JUNTA AIRSTRIKES TARGET DISPLACED PERSONS IN RAKHINE STATE, LEAVING CIVILIANS DEAD AND SPARKING MASS FLIGHT

In a coordinated campaign of aerial violence, military junta aircraft launched successive airstrikes targeting camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) across Ramree and Taungup townships in southern Rakhine State on 1 June, killing at least two civilians and wounding five others.

The first deadly assault occurred at approximately 9:30 pm on 1 June, when two junta fighter jets dropped four heavy bombs directly onto the Kyaung Cha Twin IDP camp in Ramree Township while residents were asleep. The precision bombardment resulted in the immediate deaths of two men, both in their 50s, and left several others clinging to life in critical condition.

A local Ramree resident said, "They dropped bombs using two jet fighters while people were sleeping at night. Since four bombs were dropped, it was a direct hit on the camp, and two elderly men died instantly. Among the injured are also elderly people and women, and their conditions are quite critical.

The nighttime raid followed an earlier aerial offensive conducted at 9:00 am that same morning. The junta deployed four jet fighters and a Y-12 transport aircraft converted for bombing operations to strike

displaced shelters in Sar Pyin and Kin Taung villages within Taungup Township.

A local humanitarian relief worker said, "The military targeted areas explicitly known to house vulnerable civilian populations, causing panic and triggering a fresh wave of displacement as families abandoned their remaining belongings to flee into the surrounding jungle."

Local sources noted that confirming the final casualty toll from the morning strikes remains difficult due to junta aircraft continuously circling the airspace and launching supplementary munitions throughout the day.

The escalating use of airpower against non-combatant enclaves prompted an emergency safety advisory from the United League of Arakan and the Arakan Army (ULA/AA), which urged all citizens across Rakhine State to maintain the highest level of vigilance, construct bomb shelters, and closely monitor local early-warning networks for subsequent air raids as the military commission intensifies its scorched-earth operations.



Sai Zaw Thaïke

## MYANMAR PHOTOJOURNALIST SAI ZAW THAIKE AWARDED COURAGE PRIZE AT RSF PRESS FREEDOM AWARDS

**M**yanmar photojournalist Sai Zaw Thaïke, who is serving a 20-year prison sentence for documenting human rights violations, was awarded the Courage Prize at the Reporters Without Borders (RSF) Press Freedom Awards ceremony held in Marseille on June 1.

The 34th RSF Press Freedom Awards ceremony, part of the 77th World News Media Congress, took place at the Palais du Pharo in Marseille. Sai Zaw Thaïke was honoured alongside four other laureates from Mozambique, Argentina, Guinea, and Gaza.

Since 2012, Sai Zaw Thaïke has been documenting human rights abuses in Myanmar. Following the military coup in 2021, he became one of the country's most endangered journalists. Despite the dangers, he chose to remain in the country and continued to secretly report on the violent repression perpetrated by the junta. He had to constantly move and live underground, risking arrest at any moment.

In May 2023, he traveled to Rakhine State to report on the devastation caused by one of the most powerful cyclones ever recorded in the country. He was subsequently arrested and sentenced by a military court to 20 years of hard labour. He is currently held in Insein Prison in Yangon, where reports indicate he is being tortured by prison authorities, according to RSF.

Other award recipients included Carlitos Cadangue, a journalist with the STV channel in Mozambique, who survived a murder attempt in February 2026 after investigating illegal mining (Impact Prize); Julia Mengolini, founder of the independent media outlet Futurock in Argentina, who continues her work despite facing harassment and disinformation campaigns (Independence Prize); Gaza-based photographer Abdul Hakim Abu Riash, recognized for his series "Gaza's Agony: War, Hunger, and Loss," which documents the humanitarian crisis in the Palestinian enclave (Lucas Dolega-SAIF Photo Prize); and Habib Marouane Camara, a Guinean investigative journalist who was abducted in December 2024 and remains missing (Mohamed Maïga African Investigative Journalism Prize).

The RSF Press Freedom Awards celebrate journalists and media outlets that have made significant contributions to defending and promoting press freedom worldwide, according to the organization.

This year's awards jury consisted of journalists, press freedom advocates, and photojournalists from around the globe, led by RSF President Pierre Haski, a French journalist and political commentator.

The late Min Htin Ko Ko Gyi

# PROMINENT MYANMAR FILMMAKER AND EX-POLITICAL PRISONER MIN HTIN KO KO GYI DIES AT 64

**A**claimed filmmaker, poet, and human rights activist Min Htin Ko Ko Gyi passed away on Tuesday morning following a battle with liver cancer. He was 64 years old.

“In accordance with his family's wishes, a quiet and brief funeral service was held at midday at Yangon's Yay Way Cemetery,” a prominent writer, Thitsa Ni, shared on social media. The ceremony was conducted peacefully, with a small group of close literary and artistic peers attending to pay their final respects.

Min Htin Ko Ko Gyi was widely recognized as a pioneering cultural figure in Myanmar, utilizing cinema to document systemic human rights struggles and advocate for democratic reforms.

He was an influential mentor to a generation of young filmmakers. He served as a core founder of the Human Rights and Human Dignity International Film Festival, which provided a rare platform for social-justice filmmaking during Myanmar's decade of partial democratic transition.

His commitment to political reform made him a repeated target of state authorities. In 2019, under the

National League for Democracy (NLD) administration, he was arrested and imprisoned for publishing social media posts that criticized the military's role in politics and advocated for amending the military-drafted 2008 Constitution.

Following the February 2021 military coup, he was arrested again by the junta under Section 505 (a) of the Penal Code for incitement. He received a two-year prison sentence before being released during a mass amnesty in November 2022.

The filmmaker had been quietly battling deteriorating health in recent months, a struggle he poignantly noted in his final public social media post on 17 May, writing, “I have been away from Facebook for a while due to health reasons. The sad part is that almost no one noticed it.”

Following the announcement of his passing, Myanmar's artistic, activist, and student communities have widely shared online tributes honouring his legacy of creative resistance and lifelong dedication to human rights.

# Religious Fundamentalism in Myanmar

## Post-Coup Repression of Gender Rights



### ASIA CENTRE SAYS BUDDHIST FUNDAMENTALISM FUELS POST-COUP CRACKDOWN ON GENDER RIGHTS IN MYANMAR

**B**uddhist fundamentalism, which refers to a strict interpretation and enforcement of Buddhist teachings and practices, has become an important pillar of repression in post-coup Myanmar. It helps justify legal persecution, online harassment, and physical violence against women, gender, and sexual minority (WGSM) rights advocates, a group that includes individuals who advocate for the rights of women and people with diverse gender identities and sexual orientations. This is according to a report released by the Asia Centre on 3 June.

The report, *Religious Fundamentalism in Myanmar: Post-Coup Repression of Gender Rights*, argues that the 2021 military coup strengthened ties between the junta and Buddhist nationalist actors. It also states that this alliance increasingly targets activists who advocate

for women's rights and gender and sexual diversity, creating a hostile environment.

The Bangkok-based think tank said Buddhist fundamentalism is rooted in decades of state-backed policies of Burmanisation and Buddhisation, and has re-emerged as a central ideological force under military rule. According to the report, military-aligned actors increasingly portray WGSM advocacy as a threat to Buddhist morality, national culture, and social stability.

The report notes that Buddhist nationalist networks that gained prominence during Myanmar's political opening in the 2010s have remained influential despite official crackdowns. It identifies the 969 Movement and Ma Ba Tha as key actors in promoting narratives that link

Buddhism, nationalism, and social conservatism. While Ma Ba Tha was formally banned under the National League for Democracy government, the report says many of its networks and prominent figures continued to disseminate fundamentalist messaging through social media and later re-emerged after the 2021 coup.

To illustrate the consequences of this dynamic, the report identifies three main forms of repression.

First, it says the junta weaponises laws to criminalise activism and expand surveillance. For example, LGBTQ activist Justin Min Hein was sentenced to ten years in prison in 2023 under Myanmar's Counter-Terrorism Law. The report calls this conviction widely viewed as retaliation for his efforts to challenge LGBTQ detainee mistreatment.

The report also highlights that authorities gave prominent gender and sexual minority activist Sue Sha Shin Thant a 22-year prison sentence in 2022 under anti-terrorism provisions for her opposition to military rule.

Researchers further point to the continued use of Section 377 of Myanmar's Penal Code, a colonial-era provision criminalising same-sex relations. Activists say authorities often use it as a tool of intimidation during arrests, interrogations, and surveillance operations.

The report argues that digital spaces have become another major battleground, as pro-military and Buddhist fundamentalist actors use social media to spread hate speech, conduct doxxing campaigns, and incite violence against rights advocates. At the same

time, the military has expanded AI-enabled surveillance systems.

Physical violence remains widespread, according to the report, and activists face arbitrary arrests, intimidation, assault, and sexualised violence by security forces and military-aligned groups. These attacks are frequently framed as efforts to defend religion, morality, and social order.

The report also cites legal action initiated in 2023 against the director and cast of *Don't Expect Anything*, a film that challenges traditional gender roles and examines how women are treated in Buddhist culture. Authorities accused them of insulting Buddhism under Section 295 of the Penal Code.

Despite growing pressure, WGSM organisations continue to operate through informal networks, encrypted communications, emergency relocation systems, and cross-border support mechanisms. Yet the report warns these efforts remain under-resourced as international funding for democracy- and rights-based work has declined.

Asia Centre concludes that religious fundamentalism, military authoritarianism, and gender-based repression have become increasingly intertwined since the coup. Consequently, the Centre calls on international donors, UN agencies, civil society organisations, and Myanmar's democratic opposition to strengthen protection mechanisms for WGSM defenders and challenge narratives used to justify discrimination and violence.

# THE RIVER BETWEEN WORLDS

Along Myanmar's Border, the Voices of the Displaced Ask Whether the World Still Knows How to Listen

BY ALAN CLEMENTS



There are moments when witnessing becomes a moral obligation. Not because one possesses answers, solutions, or influence over the forces that shape history, but because silence itself begins to feel like a form of abandonment.

Today, accompanied by two dear Myanmar friends living in Mae Sot and deeply involved with the work of Joy House, I crossed the Moei River and entered an internally displaced persons camp sheltering approximately 2,000 people.

The camp, like countless others scattered across Myanmar's fractured landscape, emerged from the violence and upheaval unleashed by the military coup of February 2021. Five years later, what was once considered temporary has become a way of life.

The experience defied every category that journalists, humanitarian organizations, and policymakers often employ to describe displacement. Statistics, however necessary, flatten reality. Reports quantify suffering but cannot communicate its texture. They tell us how many people have fled, how many

have died, how many remain displaced, but they cannot convey the emotional atmosphere of a community suspended between endurance and uncertainty.

Walking through the camp, speaking with residents, sharing tea, exchanging smiles, listening to stories translated from Burmese and Karen, I was struck not first by poverty but by dignity. The people I met were not defined by victimhood. They were teachers, doctors, mothers, fathers, elders, artists, and children struggling to preserve their humanity under conditions that would challenge the strongest among us.

The camp itself consists of bamboo structures, tarpaulin roofs, dirt pathways, small gathering spaces, classrooms, and clinics. Everything bears the mark of improvisation. Yet amid material scarcity, social life continues. Women organize communal affairs. Teachers conduct lessons. Volunteers coordinate aid. Children play. Elders share memories of villages left behind. Everywhere there exists the determination to sustain community despite the forces that have sought to dismantle it.

Through a gifted translator, I asked a question repeatedly throughout the day: What would you want the world to understand about your life? The answers varied in detail but converged around a common theme. People wanted to be seen. Not pitied, not romanticized, not reduced to symbols within geopolitical debates, but seen as human beings whose aspirations remain remarkably ordinary. They spoke about safety for their children. They spoke about education. They spoke about returning home. They spoke about peace. Above all, they spoke about dignity. The desire was not for extraordinary privilege but for the basic conditions under which a meaningful life can unfold.

One conversation remains especially vivid. I met with the camp psychiatrist and asked about the psychological realities confronting displaced communities. His response revealed dimensions of suffering rarely captured in international headlines. He described severe depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, anxiety disorders, and profound trauma among both adults and children. When I asked whether suicidal ideation was common, he nodded quietly. Some residents, he explained, had taken their own lives. Years of uncertainty, displacement, grief, and fear accumulate in ways that can overwhelm even the strongest individuals. The wounds of war are not confined to destroyed buildings or visible injuries. They inhabit memory, imagination, sleep, relationships, and the nervous system itself.

Modern warfare leaves psychological debris that often outlasts physical destruction. Entire communities become organized around vigilance. Children learn to distinguish between different sounds in the sky. Families adapt to chronic uncertainty. Fear becomes normalized. Long after the headlines fade and international attention shifts elsewhere, trauma remains embedded within the lives of those who endured the violence.

What struck me most was not merely the scale of suffering but the degree to which residents continue functioning despite it. They teach, care for one another, raise children, and attempt to preserve a sense of normalcy under profoundly abnormal conditions.

The camp doctor offered another perspective. When asked about the greatest challenges facing the community, he described recurring outbreaks of malaria, dengue fever, typhoid, influenza, and diarrheal

diseases. Medical resources are limited. Vulnerable populations remain exposed. During the rainy season, conditions become even more difficult. Yet what stayed with me was not his description of hardship but his response when I asked about his personal dreams. Before the coup, he said, he possessed many ambitions and plans for the future. Today his aspirations have become simpler. He focuses on the patient sitting before him, the conversation at hand, the opportunity to help another human being. There was no bitterness in his voice. Instead, there was a kind of luminous clarity born from experience. In circumstances where control over the future has largely disappeared, he has discovered meaning in presence, service, and relationship.

The camp also exists beneath the constant threat of violence. Residents described how military aircraft and drones periodically force people to flee toward riverbanks and improvised shelters. Schools and clinics are intentionally separated so that a single attack cannot eliminate an entire generation of students or medical personnel at once. Such decisions reveal the extraordinary calculations required to survive in contemporary conflict zones. Education must be planned around aerial bombardment. Healthcare must account for the possibility of attack. Children grow up understanding concepts that no child should ever have to learn.

Yet amid these realities, I encountered one of the most inspiring models of healing I have seen in years. Joy House approaches trauma not solely through clinical intervention but through creativity, community, and human flourishing. Children learn music, dance, theatre, puppetry, martial arts, mindfulness, meditation, and visual arts. At first glance, such activities may appear secondary compared with food, medicine, and shelter. In fact, they address something equally essential. Human beings cannot survive on calories alone. We require meaning. We require imagination. We require opportunities to experience beauty, joy, and self-expression.

Learning that children sing and perform in a displacement camps challenged many assumptions about resilience. Their joy was not ignorance of suffering. It was not denial. It was evidence that the human spirit remains capable of transcending circumstances without denying them. Art became a

form of resistance. Creativity became an affirmation of identity. Music became a declaration that life contains dimensions beyond fear.

As the day unfolded, I found myself reflecting upon a question that extends far beyond Myanmar. Why do the voices of those who suffer violence so often struggle to command the attention routinely granted to those who wield power? Across the world, displaced families, political prisoners, humanitarian workers, and survivors of conflict frequently speak with extraordinary moral clarity. Yet international diplomacy remains fascinated by official titles, ceremonial visits, military leaders, and the rituals of statecraft. The imbalance is striking. We often hear more from those who exercise power than from those who bear its consequences.

Myanmar presents a particularly painful example. While millions have experienced displacement, imprisonment, bereavement, and economic devastation since the coup, members of the military leadership continue to enjoy privileges unavailable to the vast majority of the population. The contrast is impossible to ignore. In one reality, families struggle to secure medicine, education, and physical safety. In another, power remains insulated from the consequences of the decisions it imposes upon others. The moral question raised by this contrast is simple: when will the testimony of ordinary citizens carry greater weight than the narratives advanced by those responsible for their suffering?

The answer matters not only for Myanmar but for the future of democratic values everywhere. Genuine legitimacy does not emerge from uniforms, titles, ceremonies, or international recognition. It emerges from accountability, consent, and respect for human dignity. History ultimately judges leaders not by the grandeur of their public appearances but by the conditions under which their people live.

As evening approached and I prepared to leave the camp, I found myself struggling to articulate what I felt. Sadness was certainly present, but so was admiration. Grief coexisted with inspiration. What remained most vivid were not scenes of deprivation but faces. The teacher determined to continue educating children. The psychiatrist listening patiently to stories of trauma. The doctor who had transformed personal disappointment into compassionate service. The

women organizing community life. The children whose laughter continued to rise above circumstances that should have extinguished it.

Crossing back over the river, I realized that the deeper journey had been internal. The distance separating security from insecurity, privilege from displacement, is far thinner than many of us imagine. Different circumstances, different geography, different historical conditions, and any one of us could find ourselves confronting similar realities. The people living in Myanmar's displacement camps are not distant abstractions inhabiting another world. They are fellow human beings navigating conditions that illuminate both the fragility and resilience of the human condition.

Their stories deserve more than sympathy. They deserve attention. Their aspirations deserve recognition. Their dignity deserves protection. Most importantly, their voices deserve to be heard. In a century increasingly defined by displacement, conflict, and political fragmentation, perhaps the most radical act remains the simplest: to listen carefully to those who have endured history's violence and to allow their humanity to reshape our understanding of what truly matters.

What I witnessed today convinced me of one enduring truth. Tyranny may command armies, prisons, wealth, and fear. Yet it remains incapable of extinguishing the deeper capacities that make us human: compassion, creativity, courage, and hope. In the end, those capacities may prove stronger than any regime that seeks to suppress them.

## 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: Kelvin Zyteng

# POLITICISATION OF CHINESE TRADITIONAL FESTIVALS: HOW THE COMMUNIST PARTY REMAKES QINGMING AND THE RITUAL CALENDAR

**SUN LEE**

**A**cross contemporary China, the Qingming festival is no longer only a quiet day for family grave-sweeping; it has become a platform on which the Chinese Communist Party tells a story of revolutionary sacrifice, patriotic virtue and regime legitimacy. This fusion of private bereavement with public ideology now extends across the traditional festival calendar, from Spring Festival to Mid-Autumn, as the Party-State apparatus seeks to embed its authority in the emotional rhythms of everyday life.

## From family rite to national script

Historically, Qingming was a family-centred rite of “spring sacrifice”, combining tomb-sweeping, ancestor worship and outings in the fresh air. Imperial and early modern sources describe it as an occasion for — “honouring the dead and remembering the distant past” — nourishing lineage ties rather than state rituals. Today, official descriptions still repeat this language, but usually in the same breath as calls to commemorate “revolutionary forebears and martyrs” and to cultivate

patriotism, signalling a redefinition of who counts as “ancestors” of the nation.

## Early politicisation: from Republic to revolution

The politicisation of Qingming predates the PRC. In 1935, the KMT-led Nationalist government designated 4 April as a nationwide “National Tomb-Sweeping Day” to “raise national consciousness” and promote worship for ancestral heroes in the face of Japanese expansion. In 1937, Nationalist and Communist representatives jointly conducted a high-profile Qingming ritual at the Yellow Emperor’s mausoleum, where Mao Zedong’s published eulogy framed the ceremony as a call for a united anti-Japanese front and national salvation. Scholars of “folklore and politics” have outlined how such state-orchestrated Qingming rites altered a largely familial festival into a stage for mass nationalism, providing a model later reprocessed on both sides of the Taiwan Strait.

## Socialist martyrs and the Mao era

After 1949, the Communist Party quickly readdressed Qingming towards revolutionary martyrs. A March 1949 directive by the North China People's Government declared that year's Qingming the "first Martyrs' Memorial Day", ordering local governments to hold memorial meetings, inscribe names on monuments and organise tomb-sweeping for fallen fighters. Through the 1950s, central organs sent delegations to Beijing's Babaoshan Revolutionary Cemetery on Qingming, ritualising loyalty to the new regime through wreath-laying, speeches and carefully choreographed mourning. During the Cultural Revolution, many traditional rites were condemned as "feudal superstition", and unauthorised mourning became politically perilous, yet the 1976 Tiananmen Incident—mass Qingming tributes to demised Zhou Enlai that turned into nationwide protests—showed how sorrow could escape state scripting and had to be violently suppressed.

## Reform, revival and "our festivals"

With reform and opening, the Party shifted from suppressing "old customs" to selectively bracing them under socialist guidance. Qingming was inscribed on the first national intangible-heritage list in 2006 and upgraded to a statutory public holiday from 2008, portrayed as recognition of "excellent traditional culture." Yet these moves unfolded alongside central directives that traditional festivals must serve the construction of the "socialist core value system" and patriotic education: a 2008 Culture Ministry notice urged authorities to "deeply mine" Spring Festival, Qingming, Dragon Boat and Mid-Autumn for ideological content and mix them into national education and "spiritual civilisation" campaigns. More recently, the 2023 Patriotic Education Law explicitly lists Spring Festival, Lantern Festival, Qingming, Dragon Boat, Mid-Autumn and others as occasions when state organs should organise themed activities to "enhance national identity" and "family-nation feeling."

Qingming sits at the centre of this strategy. Under the banner "Our Festivals · Qingming", the Central Propaganda Department and the national civilisation offices direct local governments, schools and work units to run large-scale "Qingming Commemorate the Martyrs" campaigns each year. Policy documents for universities and provincial authorities recommend visits to martyrs' cemeteries, themed class meetings, online "tomb-sweeping" platforms and essay contests as ways to turn Qingming into a recurring vehicle for patriotic and ideological education.

## Orchestrating emotion: cemeteries, classrooms, screens

On the ground, the re-engineered Qingming looks strikingly similar across the country. Party branches, hospitals and universities report organising pre-Qingming trips to local martyrs' cemeteries where participants lay flowers, bow in silence, re-take the Party oath and listen to on-site "micro-lectures" on revolutionary history. Youth groups are placed at the centre: provincial youth leagues and schools stage flag-raising ceremonies, narrations of martyr stories and joint pledges to "inherit red genes" and "follow the Party forever."

Digital tools extend the choreography. Provinces such as Shandong have built VR displays and online memorial halls for hundreds of martyrs' cemeteries, allowing citizens—especially students—to "offer flowers" and leave messages in standardised patriotic language. Xinhua's annual Qingming coverage highlights these campaigns as proof that "Our Festivals · Qingming" is successfully "igniting love for the Party, love for the country and love for socialism," and "forging a shared spiritual home of the Chinese nation."

At the same time, Party disciplinary bodies police the boundary between acceptable mourning and "feudal superstition." Official commentaries on the Party's Disciplinary Regulations warn that cadres who use public cars for private tomb-sweeping, hire bands to "show off" at graves or engage in fortune-telling and other "superstitious" practices at Qingming risk formal

sanctions. The message is clear: grief is permitted, even encouraged, so long as it is frugal, measured and allied with the Party's moral and political narrative.

## Selective remembrance and contested grief

Qingming's political role is most visible in moments of national crisis or contested memory. In 2020, at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, the government turned Qingming into a nationwide day of mourning: sirens wailed, flags flew at half-mast, and media described it as a tribute to "martyrs" and citizens who died in the epidemic, binding pandemic sacrifice tightly to state legitimacy. Yet the same festival period has seen tight controls on remembrances of more sensitive figures: independent reports describe how, on Qingming, security forces heavily restrict public access to the grave of ousted reformist leader Zhao Ziyang, even as the grave of Jiang Qing, a symbol of the Cultural Revolution, is left open to admirers. This lopsidedness underscores that, in the Party's authorised ritual calendar, not all dead are equal—only certain lives and deaths may be publicly mourned.

Comparative cases highlight that this politicisation is not inevitable but a choice. In Taiwan, where the Nationalist regime once used Qingming as a "National Tomb-Sweeping Day" with state-led Yellow Emperor rituals and, after Chiang Kai-shek's death, as "Chiang's Memorial Day", democratisation has seen such political overlays recede and Qingming revert largely to a family festival. The PRC has moved in the opposite direction: from earlier revolutionary rites to a post-Mao synthesis of "traditional culture" and Party-state nationalism in Xi Jinping's "new era" in which Qingming is both a heritage festival and a periodic loyalty ritual.

## Beyond Qingming: a politicised festival calendar

Qingming is part of a broader effort to nationalise and politicise the entire traditional festival cycle. Official commentaries present Dragon Boat Festival as a

commemoration of the loyal, self-sacrificing poet-official Qu Yuan, whose story is used to sensationalize ideals of virtuousness and patriotic commitment, including in anti-corruption and patriotic-education campaigns. Mid-Autumn is reinterpreted as a festival of "family-nation feeling", where the emotional pull of reunion is overtly connected to identification with the state and the "Chinese Dream."

A growing academic and policy literature on "traditional festivals as carriers of ideological and political education" makes this logic obvious. Scholars and Party-school writers argue that the rich symbols and emotions of festivals provide ideal vehicles for spreading core socialist values, especially to youth, and urge universities and schools to systematise festival-based patriotic and moral education. In this vision, the calendar itself becomes a governance technology: each festival a frequent touchpoint where the Party re-arms citizens emotionally and symbolically.

## A tradition captured, not frozen

For many families, Qingming is still first and foremost a day to clean graves, burn incense or offer flowers, and remember parents and grandparents—often at some distance from official rhetoric. Yet the Party's sustained effort to overlay this intimate rite with revolutionary martyrs, patriotic slogans and disciplinary rules means that even the most private acts of commemoration now take place within a thick web of state narratives and expectations. The politicisation of Qingming and other traditional festivals thus reveals a broader project: to weave Party authority into the deepest cultural habits and emotional attachments of Chinese society, so that loyalty feels as natural and cyclical as the turning of the seasons themselves.

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



## THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

“Constitutions need power,” states Henning Glaser, a lawyer based in Bangkok working at the intersection of law and politics, speaking to the Insight Myanmar Podcast.

This is his second appearance on the podcast. In an earlier discussion, Glaser suggested that Myanmar is likely headed toward a prolonged, unstable stalemate — shaped by fragmented resistance forces, a resilient military, expanding criminal economies, and opportunistic regional geopolitics — with no unifying internal or external force strong enough to produce a decisive military victory or a viable constitutional settlement. In the conversation that follows, he argues that constitutional design cannot be separated from the conditions that make a constitution real. He describes that a constitution is “laws, first of all, like any other law,” but it is also “a political community’s vision of a good society crafted in form of a law,” with moral and political dimensions that ordinary legislation does not carry. That doubled character is why Myanmar’s constitutional problem is not only about drafting a better text, but about whether there is a political community capable of living inside it, enforcing it, and accepting its limits.

Glaser treats Myanmar’s constitutional story as beginning with a betrayal rather than a foundation. The first post-independence constitution, he argues, did not translate the pre-constitutional social contract into reality. “There was the Panglong treaty that promised autonomy to the different ethnic groups, or some of them, and that was never really done so from the beginning,” he says, and he calls this “the original sin of constitutionalism and statehood in Myanmar, from which it suffers unto then.” The consequence is not only legal disappointment but a longer inheritance of mistrust, where constitutional promises arrive as language and leave as coercion.

From there, Glaser presses a point he returns to repeatedly: a viable constitutional state “needs a minimum degree of unity,” and that unity is not something a document can conjure from thin air. Historical experience can produce it, ideology can temporarily substitute for it, and state performance can reinforce it, but absent some unifying substrate, the constitutional form becomes brittle. In his view, a republic presupposes a political subject that can be addressed as citizen rather than as ethnic or religious category. “The citizen is a basic unit of the Republic,” he says, and without a shared sense of that unit, constitutional life collapses into competing identities and competing claims.

### CATCH THE PODCAST

Read more and listen to the Insight Myanmar Podcast here:

<https://insightmyanmar.org/complete-shows/2026/5/7/episode-532-the-social-contract>



# MYANMAR SEEKS DEEPER ECONOMIC TIES WITH RUSSIA-LED EURASIAN BLOC

**M**yanmar's quasi-civilian junta is targeting deeper economic cooperation with the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC), aiming to establish alternative trade and investment partnerships in response to Western sanctions, according to state media.

The Myanmar-EEC Joint Working Group meeting highlighted this effort, according to the state-run Global New Light of Myanmar on 2 June.

Officials discussed expanding cooperation in trade, investment, industry, and other sectors as part of the broader effort to strengthen ties with Russia and other Eurasian Economic Union member states.

The Eurasian Economic Commission, the union's executive body, leads a bloc including Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Armenia, and Kyrgyzstan to promote economic integration and trade among members.

Since the 2021 coup, Myanmar's junta has sought support from Russia and other non-Western partners to offset Western sanctions and isolation.

Russia has become one of the junta's closest allies, expanding cooperation in energy, trade, investment, and defence.

These discussions underscore Naypyidaw's deliberate push to diversify economic ties and open new markets in the face of mounting external pressures.

State media announced no major agreements but described the talks as ongoing efforts to strengthen economic ties with the Eurasian bloc.

Analysts say the initiative reflects the junta's broader strategy to deepen engagement outside the Western economic sphere and mitigate the impact of sanctions and reduced Western investment.



## BIG BUDGET KONBAUNG DYNASTY FILM SPLITS MYANMAR SOCIAL MEDIA

Last week, one topic filled Myanmar social media: a new film about the Konbaung Dynasty, the country's last royal family. Shooting has not started yet, but the film's huge budget and famous cast already have people talking — and arguing.

Two companies, Bellarie Production and Shwe Mann Empire Film Production, will make the film together, with director Win Lwin Htet. They plan to shoot it in five parts and spend about 8 to 10 billion kyat, hoping to release it in 2027. A press launch was held recently, and the news spread fast on Facebook.

Many people are excited. They welcome the big stars said to be joining, such as Nine Nine, Myint Myat and Tai Ron. "With actors like them, this film will turn out even better," one Facebook user writes. Another feels national pride: "Neighbouring countries are also filming our history — I want to watch our own country make it like this."

But many others are suspicious. After the 2021 coup, audiences began to boycott films made by companies linked to the military. The best known is

7th Sense Creation, co-owned by junta chief Min Aung Hlaing's daughter, Khin Thiri Thet Mon, who is under US sanctions.

"In such hard economic times, who is spending billions like this?" one commenter asks. Another adds: "Are these just 7th Sense films coming back under new names?" So far, there is no firm proof that these two companies are tied to 7th Sense.

There is also worry about the film's message. People remember that past military governments used historical films to promote the idea of a strong "Burmese Empire." "Will they film history truthfully, or just praise the kings?" one user writes.

The Konbaung Dynasty ruled from 1752 to 1885, when the British ended Myanmar's monarchy. Because this story sits so close to national pride, the question of who tells it — and who pays for it — has quickly become political.

# 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.