

ON THE GROUND IN MYANMAR

mizzima WEEKLY

Analysis & Insight



CHINA'S HISTORIC CHOICE IN MYANMAR

**An Appeal to Xi Jinping to
Stand with the People, Not
Merely the Government of
the Moment**

Alan Clements

In Taste, We Unite

Tea & Coffee
Across Asia

Connecting growers, buyers, cafés, investors, diaspora
communities, and ethical-product markets.

Thailand 2026 | Prague 2026

Join the Conversation



United By Culture



Connected Forever

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.

DON'T IGNORE THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE

Try as he may, Myanmar junta leader Min Aung Hlaing cannot get away from the fact that he is at war with his people. The 2021 coup, the sham election, the rigged presidency, and the ongoing bombing and shelling of civilians speak volumes about the illegitimacy of the former military commander's ugly reign.

Supporters of this charlatan should recognize that a solution to the Myanmar crisis must involve engaging with the people of Myanmar and the opposition bodies that are seeking to rid the country of military rule hiding under a civilian cloak.

MizzimaWeekly'scoverstorythisweek highlights a call by American Buddhist scholar and journalist Alan Clements for China to take a more pragmatic line and engage with Myanmar's opposition and people's representatives. Sure, Chinese leader Xi Jinping may not hear this call – but Clements' message needs to be aired, in part because it highlights a more pragmatic approach aimed at trying to end the crisis in Myanmar.

International political players need to engage with the Myanmar people and recognize that Min Aung Hlaing's regime does not represent the future of the Golden Land and in the long-term is doomed to fail. It represents the past. The Myanmar people have had enough of the decades of military rule – and the outcome of the 2020 election with Aung San Suu Kyi flying the National League for Democracy flag made clear where the people's heart lies.

It is therefore shortsighted of Myanmar's neighbours and major international players – including China, India and Russia – to ignore the people's voice, while engaging with a despot. That people's voice can be heard from the fighters on the battlefields, the opposition politicians, and the humanitarian workers, all of whom are calling the international dialogue to understand the people's views and recognize the possibility of a future absent of oppression.

Sure, it is easier for some players to engage with the authorities in Naypyidaw, rather than the range of opposition players,

particularly given unity amongst the opposition ranks remains a challenge.

Who should be dealt with? The National Unity Government is the most important civilian political body emerging from the 2021 coup. It draws heavily on elected lawmakers and officials from Aung San Suu Kyi's ousted government and has sought to present itself as Myanmar's legitimate alternative government.

The NUG has also become closely associated with the People's Defence Forces (PDFs), which it helped organise and support. It has developed foreign-relations, humanitarian and administrative structures, although its actual control over many armed forces is uneven. ASEAN stakeholder discussions have included the NUG alongside the NUCC, CRPH, ethnic resistance organisations and other representative bodies.

Now we have the Steering Council for the Emergence of a Federal Democratic Union (SCEF), which is arguably the most important development in the opposition landscape in 2026. Formed in March 2026, the SCEF brings together the NUG, the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH) and four major ethnic resistance organisations, namely the Kachin Independence Organisation/Army (KIO/KIA), Karen National Union (KNU/KNLA), Karenni National Progressive Party/Army (KNPP/KA), and the Chin National Front/Army (CNF/CNA). The significance is that it puts important civilian and ethnic actors under one political umbrella.

And then there are the local humanitarian aid organizations, who have a good sense of the difficulties on the ground, and should be treated as potential conduits for food, medicine and shelter for the millions in need in the country.

If neighbours and international players are intent on ending the Myanmar crisis, reaching out to these organizations represents a pragmatic approach that takes into account a future, free, federal democratic union.

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

CONTENTS **mizzima** WEEKLY

Analysis & Insight

3 EDITORIAL

6 China's Historic Choice in Myanmar: An Appeal to Xi Jinping to Stand with the People, Not Merely the Government of the Moment - Alan Clements

12 ON THE GROUND IN MYANMAR Analysis & Insight

16 CORE DEVELOPMENTS

THE MYTH OF THE CLEAN SWEEP: How Myanmar's Scam Empire Evolved Into a National Shadow State – Sai Wansai

19 From Opium to Scam Centers: How Crime and Conflict Shaped Lives in Shan State – Antonio Graceffo

22 Myanmar's land crisis cannot be separated from war: TNI

23 Ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun highlights Myanmar's food crisis at the UN Security Council

24 Human rights in Myanmar hitting a 'new low' according to UN report and discussion

27 EU urged not to channel aid for over 1.2 million flood victims through Myanmar junta

28 Women replacing men in Myanmar water delivery jobs due to military conscription

29 Political prisoners tortured, families scammed for money in Mandalay's Obo prison, reports say

31 Nearly 200,000 Chin IDPs face difficulties returning home and meeting livelihood needs



- 32** Mae Tao Clinic prepares to open SCBU as number of newborns requiring special care rises
- 33** Myanmar junta launches offensive towards Sinkhan from Shwegu with four columns
- 34** Three PDF members killed by Myanmar junta forces in Bago
- 35** Chin Christian pastor killed by Burmese military; BRI urges Trump Administration to protect persecuted Christians in Burma
- 36** Joint Statement of Concern for US Citizen & Academic Min Zin's Detention in China
- 37** Deaths of MPs in prison and while fleeing rise during 5.5 years of the Myanmar military coup
- 38** 12 leading workers fired after complaining about bonus cuts at Myanmar's Spring Moon factory
- 39** Farmers face difficulties in Myingyan District due to fuel purchase restrictions
- 41** Despite Myanmar junta control of India-Myanmar border trade route, reopening remains uncertain
- 43** **ASEAN AFFAIRS**
Vietnam expresses support for Myanmar's government and expands defense and digital cooperation
- 44** Philippines Launches ASEAN Energy Business Forum 2026, Drives Regional Clean Energy Investment
- 45** **ROHINGYA CRISIS**
UN chief urges renewed global action on Rohingya crisis on 9th anniversary
- 46** 9th Rohingya Genocide Remembrance Day: A Call for Justice and Accountability: WPN
- 48** Rohingya refugees protest dire conditions in Bangladesh camps
- 50** One in three Rohingya refugees face crisis hunger as funding cuts deepen nine-year displacement
- 51** Malaysia to repatriate first group of Myanmar nationals in September
- 52** **TEA & COFFEE FESTIVAL**
Tea & Coffee Across Asia 2026 Business Matchmaking Expo
- 53** Indian Consul stresses the importance of the tea and coffee trade at Tea & Coffee Across Asia 2026 meeting
- 55** Tea & Coffee Across Asia 2026 Expo in Prague
- 57** **ASIAN & INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**
Rescuers dig into tunnel as missing toll from Nepal, China flood tops 3,000
- 59** Iran attacks US targets despite Trump threats
- 61** **COLUMNS**
INSIGHT MYANMAR – Ground Rules
- 62** **JUNTA WATCH**
- 63** **SOCIAL WATCH**

Cover photo of Chinese leader Xi Jinping by AFP

CHINA'S HISTORIC CHOICE IN MYANMAR

AN APPEAL TO XI JINPING TO
STAND WITH THE PEOPLE,
NOT MERELY THE
GOVERNMENT OF THE MOMENT
BY ALAN CLEMENTS

以人
为本
和合
共生



A NATION AT A CROSSROADS



A REGION WATCHING



HISTORY REMEMBERS

There are moments in the history of nations when the ordinary arithmetic of power becomes inadequate to the magnitude of what is unfolding. Borders, pipelines, ports, military alliances, trade routes and strategic interests remain real, but suddenly another measure enters the room: the measure of conscience, memory and the judgment of generations not yet born. A leader is confronted not simply with the question of what his country can gain, protect or control, but with the rarer question of what its power might make possible. I believe President Xi Jinping and the leadership of China have arrived at such a moment in neighboring Myanmar, a country whose suffering has become so prolonged that the language of crisis scarcely contains it anymore.

I write this not as an adversary of China, nor as someone asking China to imitate the United States, Europe or any other political system. I have no interest in forcing the tragedy of Myanmar into the exhausted vocabulary of East against West, democracy against China, or one geopolitical bloc against another. I write from a life profoundly intertwined with Myanmar: first as a young man who entered the country seeking the teachings of the Buddha, later as a Buddhist monk, and eventually as a writer and witness who listened to political prisoners, dissidents, monks, students, ethnic peoples and ordinary families whose lives had been shaped by military rule. I spent many hours in intimate conversation with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. I have wat-

ched people I love disappear into prisons, exile, silence and fear. What I am asking of China therefore arises not from ideology but from proximity to human beings whose country has been asked, generation after generation, to sacrifice its future to the preservation of military power.

PROPOSAL FOR XI

Nor am I asking President Xi to "take the side of the people" in the simplistic sense of abandoning China's relationship with the authorities in Naypyidaw or choosing one Burmese constituency against another. China occupies a far more complicated position, and potentially a far more consequential one. Its influence derives precisely from the fact that it can speak to actors who will not speak to one another. My appeal is that Beijing enlarge the meaning of its relationship with Myanmar: that it recognize that enduring friendship with a neighboring civilization cannot finally be identical with support for whichever government happens to control the ministries of state at a particular moment in history.

President Xi, your own words provide the opening for such an approach. When you received Min Aung Hlaing in Beijing in June, you spoke of the pauk-phaw friendship between China and Myanmar, a phrase evoking the intimacy of siblings born from the same womb. More importantly, you stated that China's policy of friendship toward Myanmar is intended for all the people of Myanmar, and you affirmed China's support for peace and reconciliation through dialogue. Those

words need not be interpreted as an invitation for China to interfere in Myanmar's internal political life. They can mean something subtler and more consistent with China's own diplomatic traditions: that Beijing's deepest relationship is with Myanmar as a country and civilization, not merely with the temporary custodians of its state.

Myanmar is its farmers and poets, its monks and mothers, its Rohingya and Rakhine, its Kachin, Karen, Chin, Shan and countless other communities, its soldiers and prisoners, its young people who have known almost nothing but upheaval, and its millions of ordinary citizens who continue, somehow, to imagine a life beyond fear.

THE SUFFERING

The suffering is no abstraction, nor can it any longer be contained within the tragedy of any single people or region. Myanmar itself has become a country profoundly traumatized by violence. Across the nation, villages have been burned, towns emptied, families scattered, schools and livelihoods shattered, and millions driven from their homes into forests, temporary shelters, borderlands and unfamiliar cities. Hunger and insecurity have entered ordinary life while armed conflict has spread across regions that once seemed distant from the country's long-running wars. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi remains imprisoned, largely hidden from the world, while roughly 20,000 other political prisoners remain behind bars. Beyond them are countless families living with the absence of someone detained, killed, conscripted, displaced, disappeared or forced into exile. The crisis is no longer adequately described as a confrontation between a military government and its political opponents. It is a wound running through the body of an entire nation.

Statistics can tell us how many millions have been displaced, how many thousands imprisoned and how many communities consumed by war, but numbers eventually become a strange form of distance from the suffering they describe. Behind them are interrupted childhoods, abandoned kitchens, photographs left in burning houses, medicines that could not be carried, grandparents moved across mountains and borders, farmers separated from their fields, young people exchanging universities for battlefields, and mothers waiting for children who may never come home. This is the Myanmar that stands before China: not an abstraction of geopolitics, but tens of millions of human beings living inside a national emergency whose deepest casualty may be the ordinary expectation that tomorrow will be safer than today.

WHAT MYANMAR NEEDS

Min Aung Hlaing now carries the title of president. He was sworn into that office in April after an election widely criticized outside the military establishment as entrenching military power, and he has since presented a five-year program promising peace, development and a federal democratic system. Yet changing the title of the man who seized power in February 2021 cannot, by itself, transform the political reality created by that seizure. A civilian jacket does not erase a military history, and the vocabulary of democracy cannot substitute for the freely given consent of a people. The central question is not what office Min Aung Hlaing now occupies, but whether the political order over which he presides can produce the reconciliation, legitimacy and peace that Myanmar desperately requires.

Here, China's predicament and China's opportunity converge. Beijing understandably seeks border security, reliable trade and energy corridors, protection of Chinese citizens and investments, and an end to the criminal economies that flourish amid political disintegration. None of those interests requires China to become the ideological champion of Myanmar's opposition, nor would such a posture necessarily help. The more difficult question is whether continued reliance upon military dominance can deliver the very stability China requires. Five years after the coup, Myanmar itself has supplied the answer in burned villages, fractured authority, expanding armed conflict and millions of displaced people.

China understands better than most nations that endurance is different from immediacy. Infrastructure can be built in years, but a relationship between civilizations is measured across generations. A pipeline can be protected by soldiers for a season; a railway can be guarded at checkpoints; an investment can be guaranteed by signatures obtained from the government of the day. But legitimacy cannot be engineered from concrete, and friendship cannot be secured by force. The most valuable Chinese asset in Myanmar will never ultimately be a port, a road, a mine or a pipeline. It will be the degree to which the people living around those things believe that China regarded them as human partners rather than obstacles surrounding an investment.

NOT DEMOCRACY VS AUTHORITARIANISM

This is why I would ask President Xi not to approach Myanmar through the binary language of democracy versus authoritarianism, much less China versus the West. That frame is too small for the country and too

crude for China's position within it. The deeper issue is whether Myanmar's people can participate meaningfully in creating a political order sufficiently legitimate that the country can stop devouring itself. Human dignity does not become Western because Washington speaks of it, any more than compassion becomes Buddhist because the Buddha taught it. The desire not to be imprisoned without freedom, driven from one's home, silenced by fear or excluded indefinitely from one's country's future precedes ideology.

FREEDING THE LADY

And here, President Xi, I believe there is one action whose urgency should transcend every other recommendation in this essay.

Use China's influence now to secure the immediate and unconditional release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

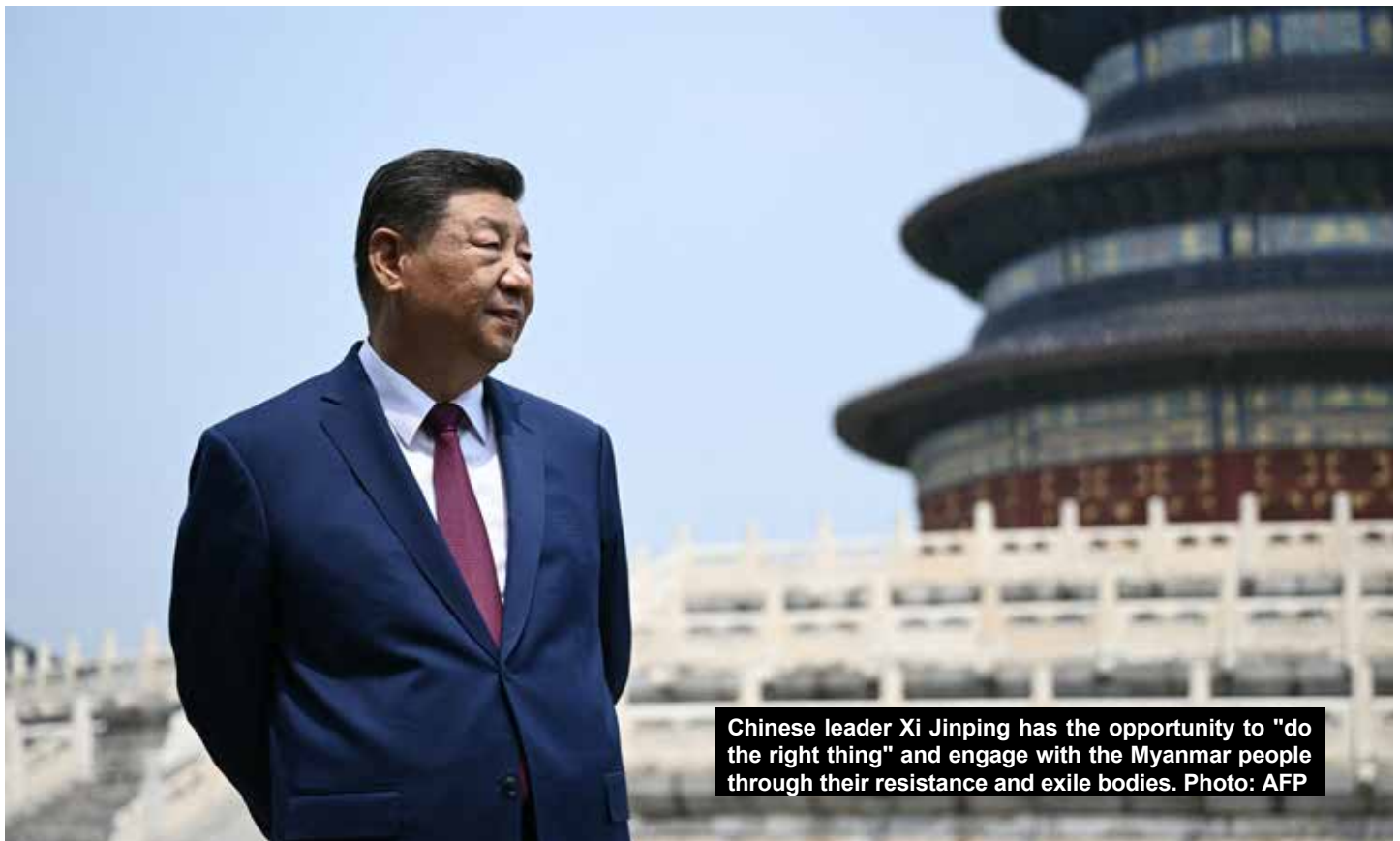
Not someday after another negotiation. Not as the final concession in a distant political settlement. Now, while she is still alive.

Her freedom cannot solve Myanmar's catastrophe, and no serious observer should pretend that one individual, however symbolically powerful, can resolve the country's immense ethnic, constitutional, military and historical complexities. But her imprisonment has become a moral and political obstruction to any credible language of reconciliation. One cannot persuasively invite a nation into dialogue while keeping one of the most consequential political figures in its modern history behind prison walls.

I knew Daw Aung San Suu Kyi not as a statue or slogan but through conversation: intelligent, disciplined, humorous, stubborn, politically complicated and acutely conscious of the burden history had placed upon her. Whatever judgments one makes of her political record, the image of an elderly woman spending the remaining years of her life in detention should trouble anyone who speaks seriously about reconciliation. Her unconditional release would not determine Myanmar's political future. That is precisely the point. It would return her to the political and human world in which Myanmar's future must eventually be negotiated. It would constitute an opening rather than an outcome.

And China is perhaps uniquely positioned to make that opening possible without presenting it as capitulation to the West. President Xi could frame her release not as ideological victory for one faction, but as an act of confidence by Myanmar itself—a humanitarian and political gesture capable of lowering the temperature of a nation that desperately needs room to breathe. Beijing could quietly make clear to Min Aung Hlaing that releasing an elderly political opponent is not weakness. Under the right circumstances, it can be the first evidence that a government has enough confidence to stop fearing dialogue.

President Xi, you may possess the ability to say something to Min Aung Hlaing that his enemies cannot say because it would be heard differently coming from you. You can tell him that there are moments when re-



Chinese leader Xi Jinping has the opportunity to "do the right thing" and engage with the Myanmar people through their resistance and exile bodies. Photo: AFP

linquishing power is not defeat but the last remaining form of statesmanship. You can tell him that no title is worth the indefinite destruction of one's country, and that history occasionally leaves a door open even for those upon whom it may ultimately judge harshly.

WHAT NEXT FOR MYANMAR?

But the objective should not be to humiliate Min Aung Hlaing, destroy the military as an institution or engineer regime change from Beijing. Such an approach would contradict the very argument I am making. The objective should be to persuade those holding power that Myanmar's survival now requires a larger political architecture than military predominance can provide. China can help create the room; Myanmar must decide what happens inside it.

Such a transition would need to involve democratic representatives, ethnic political and armed organizations, civil society, women, young people and the military itself. The terms must belong to Myanmar and conform to applicable law; China need not write them. Indeed, the legitimacy of China's role may depend upon its refusal to do so. Its historic contribution could instead be to make negotiation possible where mistrust has made negotiation almost unimaginable.

This approach need not be conceived as punishment, humiliation or vengeance. Myanmar has already consumed generations in the terrible metabolism by which grievance produces retaliation and retaliation creates new grievance. The future will require accountability, certainly, but it will also require an imagination capacious enough to distinguish justice from revenge and reconciliation from amnesia. The essential objective is not the destruction of another human being. It is ending a political structure in which an entire country remains captive to the fear of what happens if one man or institution loosens its grip.

This is also why Beijing should be cautious about confusing privileged access to a government with durable influence over a nation. Governments are temporary even when they appear immovable. Geography is not. China will share its long frontier with Myanmar when every present leader—including President Xi, Min Aung Hlaing and all of us writing about them—has passed into history. The question is what kind of memory will remain among the people living on the other side of that border.

CHINA'S LEGACY

People remember. They remember who supplied weapons and who opened doors; who spoke when speaking mattered and who discovered diplomatic reasons for silence; who regarded their suffering as an inconvenience to commerce and who understood that

commerce itself cannot flourish indefinitely amid despair. The deepest Chinese influence in Myanmar will therefore not be measured by how dependent one administration becomes upon Beijing, but by whether Myanmar's people come to believe that when their country stood at the edge of prolonged catastrophe, China used its extraordinary power to help them step back.

There is an opportunity here for China that reaches beyond Myanmar. The international imagination has become impoverished by its obsession with great-power rivalry. China is endlessly interpreted through competition with the United States, as though two vast civilizations containing hundreds of millions of complicated human lives exist primarily to frustrate one another. Myanmar offers China the possibility of demonstrating another conception of power altogether: neither Western interventionism nor passive noninterference in the face of a neighbor's disintegration, but sustained diplomacy grounded simultaneously in sovereignty, stability, relationship and political realism.

That would be a remarkable expression of Chinese confidence. It would require no imitation of the West and no surrender to American pressure. China could formulate an approach distinctively its own: patient, relational, pragmatic and grounded in the recognition that a neighbor at war with itself cannot become the stable partner China needs. Beijing could use its relationships across Myanmar's complicated political and ethnic landscape to encourage a genuine national conversation rather than merely another temporary cessation of fighting. Its role would not be to determine the outcome, but to help create enough political space for Myanmar's people to determine it themselves.

THE RIGHT DIALOGUE

I do not romanticize what such a dialogue would entail. There are wounds in Myanmar older than many of the people now fighting. There are competing nationalisms, legitimate ethnic grievances, atrocities committed by multiple actors, profound distrust, contested territories and incompatible visions of the state. The Rohingya have suffered horrors that no future settlement worthy of the name can evade. Reconciliation will not emerge from a photograph of political leaders shaking hands, nor from another elegantly worded communiqué. It will require years of listening, accountability, constitutional imagination and the almost unbearable work of human beings sitting across from people they have learned to fear or hate.

Yet difficulty is not an argument for continuing catastrophe. Every year of war educates another generation in the grammar of violence. Every airstrike creates memories that will one day enter politics. Every arbitra-

ry imprisonment teaches a family what the state means. Every destroyed village enlarges the constituency of grief. Time does not merely pass during civil conflict; it changes the human material from which eventual peace must be constructed.

That is why Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's release cannot be postponed until Myanmar has somehow become peaceful enough to permit it. Her release should help begin the process of making peace imaginable. I return to her because freedom for one imprisoned woman can carry meaning far beyond one life. It can tell political prisoners that imprisonment need not be permanent, opponents that dialogue has not become impossible, and a traumatized population that history has not closed every door.

President Xi, imagine the meaning if China helped make that possible - not through public humiliation or ultimatum, but through the quiet seriousness of diplomacy backed by unmistakable resolve. Imagine Beijing obtaining her unconditional freedom and then using the political space created by that act to encourage further prisoner releases, humanitarian access, reductions in violence and channels of dialogue among actors who have nearly ceased believing conversation can accomplish anything.

That is the difficult middle ground where statesmanship begins. It is easier to choose a side and describe the other as evil. It is harder to insist upon human dignity while refusing dehumanization, to demand political change without cultivating vengeance, and to understand that peace is made not among people who already agree but among those who have accumulated reasons never to trust one another again.

My appeal, therefore, is not that China turn against Myanmar's government and "side with the people" in a formulation that would inevitably oversimplify China's responsibilities and Myanmar's realities. It is that China stand with Myanmar in the larger historical sense: with the continuity of the nation beyond any government, with its approximately 55 million people in all their astonishing diversity, with political prisoners and displaced families, with ethnic peoples seeking dignity, with ordinary soldiers who should not be condemned to fight their countrymen indefinitely, and with generations not yet born who should not inherit this war as though violence were an ancestral obligation.

After so many years connected to this country, what moves me most is not an abstraction called democracy. It is the memory of particular faces. It is the unmistakable dignity of people who possessed almost nothing except their refusal to surrender their humanity. I have seen courage in Myanmar that embarrassed

my own understanding of the word: people who knew the prison cell was waiting and spoke anyway, people who understood what dictatorship could do and nevertheless insisted upon imagining freedom, people who practiced generosity while living beneath systems built upon fear.

CHINA'S OPPORTUNITY

China now has an opportunity to discover something analogous about power. Power need not prove itself only through endurance, deterrence, economic reach or the ability to make others accommodate one's interests. There is another form of power, rarer because it cannot be compelled: the power to recognize the historical moment in which restraint becomes strength, mediation becomes leadership and the dignity of another people becomes inseparable from one's own long-term interest.

President Xi, you walk a political and geopolitical tightrope of a complexity that those outside China can too easily underestimate. I am not asking you to step off it. I am asking whether, at this particular historical moment, the balance itself might be adjusted—carefully, intelligently, without abandoning China's interests or its political principles—so that China's enormous influence helps move its neighbor away from an abyss that serves neither Myanmar nor China.

You have spoken of friendship with all the people of Myanmar. Perhaps history is asking what those words mean when friendship becomes difficult. The answer need not be choosing the people against the state. It can be something more mature: helping a wounded state recover a relationship with its own people.

I cannot know whether these words will ever reach you. I cannot know whether Daw Aung San Suu Kyi will live to see freedom again, whether Min Aung Hlaing will recognize that there may still be another ending available to him, or whether people presently fighting one another can imagine sitting together before another generation is consumed. What I know is that the present course is producing suffering of a magnitude no geopolitical vocabulary can redeem, and that China possesses influence capable of altering that course.

Begin with the clearest act. Help secure the immediate and unconditional release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Let that act become not the conclusion of reconciliation but its opening sentence. Then use China's relationships patiently and relentlessly to widen the space: other political prisoners, humanitarian access, reduced violence, genuine dialogue, an inclusive Myanmar-led settlement and eventually a political order whose legitimacy does not depend upon permanent coercion.

The choice before China is therefore larger than whether to support democracy or military rule, and more interesting than whether to satisfy Western critics. It is whether one of the world's great civilizations can recognize that its deepest strategic interests may, at this particular juncture, coincide with an act of conscience. A peaceful, legitimate and reconciled Myanmar would be safer for China, more prosperous for China and more capable of sustaining the relationship between the two peoples than a neighbor permanently fractured by war. What is morally courageous and what is strategically intelligent have rarely stood so close together.

SEIZING THE MOMENT

I began by saying that there are moments when the ordinary arithmetic of power becomes inadequate. Myanmar is such a moment because behind every strategic calculation stands the irreducible fact of human life: one consciousness, then another, then another, each capable of terror and tenderness, each wanting to protect a child, bury a parent, return home, speak without fear, love someone, grow old and wake tomorrow without hearing the machinery of war. Politics becomes morally obscene when it forgets this simplicity.

President Xi, China cannot save Myanmar, and it should not try to possess its future. Nor does China need to abandon the government in Naypyidaw in order to recognize that Myanmar is infinitely larger than the government presently occupying it. China can help open the door through which Myanmar's people and institutions might begin reclaiming a shared future themselves.

There would be no greater tribute to the idea of pauk-phaw friendship. China and Myanmar will remain neighbors long after all of us are gone. The question is what memory will cross that border when we are no longer here to explain ourselves.

History may remember China not for choosing one Burmese faction against another, but for something far more difficult and consequential: recognizing when the preservation of a relationship required helping that relationship change. It may remember President Xi as the leader who understood that China's influence was greatest not when it dictated Myanmar's future, but when it made a different future possible.

President Xi, begin with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Ask for her immediate and unconditional release. Help open the prison door while there is still time for her to walk through it. Then help open the larger political door through which Myanmar itself—wounded, divided, exhausted, but still profoundly alive—might finally begin to walk.

Alan Clements

Alan Clements is an author, investigative journalist, spoken-word artist, human-rights activist, and former Buddhist monk whose work has explored the meeting place of consciousness, freedom, spiritual inquiry, and political responsibility for more than four decades. He trained extensively in Buddhist meditation in Burma (Myanmar), where he ordained as a monk in the Mahāsi tradition and studied under some of the country's most respected meditation masters.

Following his expulsion from Burma during the military dictatorship, Clements became an advocate for human rights and freedom of conscience, returning repeatedly to the country and its struggle for democracy. His books include *The Voice of Hope*, based on his conversations with Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi; *Burma: The Next Killing Fields?*; *Burma's Revolution of the Spirit*; *Instinct for Freedom*; and the multi-volume *Burma's Voices of Freedom*, coauthored with Fergus Harlow, among other works.

Across his writing, films, public dialogues, and spoken-word performances, Clements brings contemplative insight into the moral complexities of lived experience, asking what freedom means when tested by mortality, dictatorship, suffering, love, uncertainty, and the irreducible dignity of being human. He is the co-founder and director of the Buddha Sasana Foundation and founder of World Dharma.

His most recent book, *Politics of the Heart: Non-violence in an Age of Atrocity*, continues this inquiry into the relationship between inner transformation and political action, exploring how nonviolence, compassion, courage, and freedom might become practical forces in confronting an increasingly violent world.

The views voiced here do not necessarily reflect the views of Myanmar Media.

ANALYSIS & INSIGHT



Gridlock on the Asia Highway.
Photo: Supplied

FIGHTING HOTS UP IN THE BADLANDS OF MYAWADDY

Fighting has intensified again around Myawaddy, a key trade hub on the Thai-Myanmar border, following a renewed Myanmar junta offensive at the end of August. The offensive is not only reshaping the battlefield but is also disrupting cross-border trade and exposing growing tensions between the junta and armed groups that have generally cooperated with it.

Junta and Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA)-allied columns have advanced toward Kyaukkhet, an area where the DKBA provides security for online scam centres. Local military analysts say the operation is aimed at reaching the junta's strategic outpost at Warlay, which has been surrounded by revolutionary forces for months. The advance toward Kyaukkhet has forced resistance forces positioned around Warlay to withdraw from some of their advantageous positions.

The junta has been attempting to reinforce Warlay since October last year, but its forces have so far managed to advance only as far as Phalu and Minletpan, about 10 miles south of Myawaddy. The military has reportedly deployed thousands of personnel to Lay Kay Kaw to support the offensive, alongside allied groups including the Karen National Army (KNA) and DKBA.

Although the No. 2 Thai-Myanmar Friendship Bridge has reopened, trade remains heavily constrained. Junta checkpoints along the Asia Highway are reportedly imposing

strict controls on Thai goods and demanding bribes, encouraging traders to shift routes through areas controlled by ethnic armed organizations.

The junta has also intensified its crackdown on goods entering Karen State. During the third week of August, junta authorities raided warehouses in Hpa-An under the leadership of the Karen State government's Border Affairs minister and seized about 80 trucks. The operation reportedly targeted goods connected not only to businesses but also to the KNA/BGF, DKBA and KNLA-PC, armed groups that have maintained generally close relations with the junta.

Some members and brokers associated with these groups were reportedly arrested, while negotiations for their release have been unsuccessful. A source close to border traders told Mizzima that a DKBA official and brokers linked to the DKBA and KNLA-PC were among those detained.

The seizures highlight an increasingly complicated relationship between the junta and its border allies. While these groups have helped the military maintain

influence along strategic trade routes, the junta's tighter control over commerce risks turning cooperation into competition.

For Myawaddy, the conflict is therefore no longer simply a struggle over territory. Control of roads, trade routes and border commerce has become inseparable from the military contest, with civilians, farmers and traders bearing the economic costs of the escalating confrontation.

Junta's Karenni State crackdown

Fighting has intensified around Mobye town in Karenni State as junta forces push toward the area, prompting the Mobye People's Defense Force (Mobye PDF) to close the Mobye-Nanmekhone road to prevent civilians and travelers from becoming trapped in the crossfire.

A junta column of an estimated 150–200 personnel, including members of the Pa-O National Organization (PNO) and other pro-junta militia, has been advancing toward western Mobye since August 27. According to the Mobye PDF, the column has used artillery and



KNDF fighters. Photo: Supplied

conducted more than 15 drone operations during the advance. The resistance group claims that more than 10 junta personnel were killed in clashes before the column withdrew, supported by artillery fire from nearby bases and headquarters as well as airstrikes.

The Progress Karenni People's Force (PKPF) separately reported that eight battles had taken place, claiming 25 junta soldiers were killed. The Moby PDF said that fighting over the past three months had resulted in about 30 junta soldiers being killed, one arrested and one junta outpost seized. These figures could not be independently verified.

The latest offensive is also deepening the disruption of civilian livelihoods. Farmers have increasingly abandoned their fields as artillery fire and drone attacks make agricultural work unsafe. One internally displaced person told local media that farms and vegetable fields had been deserted since July, adding that the renewed advance had made the prospect of returning home even more distant.

The threat extends beyond the immediate battlefield. On August 25, a female farmer working in eastern Phruso Township was wounded when a drone-dropped explosive struck near her. A schoolgirl helping her parents on their farm during a school holiday was also wounded in a drone attack on August 22.

"We are very worried now," an IDP woman told local media. "Families who go to their farms are being attacked by junta drones, which are flying almost every day."

According to Kantarawaddy Times, nine civilians, including one child and three women, have been killed and three others injured in the recent violence.

The fighting around Moby illustrates how the junta's attempts to regain territory are increasingly extending the conflict into agricultural areas, making ordinary livelihoods - and even access to farmland - part of the battlefield for Karenni civilians.

Communications crunch

Telecommunications restrictions imposed by Myanmar's junta are leaving communities in conflict-affected areas increasingly dependent on Starlink, while the satellite internet service itself has become unreliable or prohibitively expensive. The result is a growing communications gap in areas where access to information can be critical for civilian safety.

In Karenni State, where the junta has cut conventional phone and internet services in many areas, residents have largely turned to Starlink. But the satellite service has also faced disruptions since July 2. The Interim Executive Council of Karenni State (IEC) has suggested that the disruption could be linked to regional restrictions imposed by Starlink's operator, SpaceX.

A Starlink rental provider told local media that one of his terminals had stopped working completely and that even the seller did not know how to restore the service. He also suspected that some users might have violated restrictions by using the connection for illegal gambling, although this could not be independently confirmed.

Conventional telecommunications remain available only sporadically in some locations, with weak 2G or 3G connections. This leaves Starlink as one of the few viable options for people needing reliable communication.

Myanmar is not currently among the countries where SpaceX officially provides Starlink services. Users therefore commonly register accounts in countries such as Thailand or Malaysia and access the service through roaming plans. SpaceX can restrict service outside the registered country, while global plans are considerably more expensive, putting reliable satellite internet beyond the reach of many ordinary users.

A similar dependence has emerged in Kachin State, where residents have relied heavily on Starlink since July 2024 after junta-imposed telecommunications

blockages. However, the payment system has shifted from hourly access to data-based packages, charging users according to gigabytes consumed. Rising costs have forced users to closely monitor their data, prioritizing family communication and essential business while reducing video calls, social media and entertainment.

Kachin Human Rights Watch has warned that prolonged communication blackouts deprive civilians of access to information and undermine basic rights. Although junta-controlled communication networks can sometimes be accessed in isolated areas, connections remain unstable.

The communication restrictions also have a security dimension. According to an Athan report, the junta is implementing a Central Equipment Identity Register (CEIR) system intended to monitor mobile

devices and users, including information about handsets and network activity. Rights advocates have raised concerns that such surveillance could be used for security operations.

For civilians in conflict zones, the danger is particularly acute. Reports that airstrikes sometimes follow telecommunications shutdowns have heightened fears that communication blackouts may not merely isolate communities but could also make it harder for residents to warn others, seek help or document attacks.

The struggle over connectivity has therefore become another dimension of Myanmar's conflict: cutting communications can isolate communities, while the remaining channels of access are increasingly costly, unstable and vulnerable to surveillance.



Checking social media. Photo: AFP



Rescued scam centre workers on the Myanmar-Thailand border. Photo: EPA

THE MYTH OF THE CLEAN SWEEP: HOW MYANMAR'S SCAM EMPIRE EVOLVED INTO A NATIONAL SHADOW STATE

SAI WANSAI

Recent reports of Shan Herald Agency for News and Khit Thit Media on cyberscam and scam center operations have made headlines, raising questions about whether Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi's claim that the illicit trade is being eradicated is credible or just state propaganda aimed at portraying China as in control. Let's take a closer look and compare it with the reality on the ground.

The Displacement from Border Compounds to Urban Ghost Hotels

The narrative spun by the military junta in Naypyitaw has long been one of a valiant struggle against transnational crime. Following the major offensives of late 2023 and the subsequent "1027 Offensive" campaign, China's Foreign Minister declared victory, claiming that the notorious scam compounds of the borderlands had been dismantled and the criminal syndicates routed. Yet, the latest reports from August

2026 tell a starkly different story. The scourge of cyber-scramming has not been uprooted; it has mutated. It has fled the exposed border compounds only to burrow deep into the heart of Myanmar's urban centers, transforming from a localized border nuisance into a sophisticated, decentralized, and deeply entrenched shadow state that now permeates the very fabric of the nation's economy and security apparatus.

The displacement of these operations from the wilds of Shan State and Karen State to the manicured streets of Yangon is not merely a change of address; it is a strategic evolution. In the borderlands, the old model of massive, walled compounds housing thousands of trafficked workers was a visible target for airstrikes and ground offensives. Today, the industry has adopted a strategy of camouflage. Chinese syndicates, now operating with the blessing of local power brokers, have purchased or leased high-end hotels in Hlaingthaya, Bahan, and Tamwe, turning

them into “ghost” compounds. These venues, often bearing the names of legitimate hospitality chains or IT training centers, serve as fronts where the upper floors function as secure, windowless fraud factories. The victims are no longer confined by barbed wire in the jungle but by digital locks and guarded elevators in luxury apartments, while the illicit funds are laundered through the purchase of real estate and local business licenses.

The Tatmadaw’s Cynical Charade and Systemic Complicity

This metamorphosis would be impossible without the active, indispensable participation of Myanmar’s entire armed ecosystem. The notion that these criminal enterprises operate in a vacuum, outside the control of the state or its rival factions, is a dangerous fallacy. The reality is that the scam economy has become the lifeblood of the country’s fragmented military landscape, binding together the junta, ethnic armed organizations, and private militias in a web of mutual benefit and complicity.

The Tatmadaw, or Myanmar Army, and its affiliated militias are not merely bystanders to this crisis; they are architects and beneficiaries. The central government’s public posturing as the sole defender against organized crime is a cynical charade. The military’s own command structure has long been entangled with the very networks it claims to fight. In border regions, the army has historically provided the “protection” that allowed these compounds to thrive, often in exchange for a significant share of the profits. Even as the regime publicly raids a few low-level compounds to appease international pressure, the upper echelons of the military continue to reap the rewards of the wider network. The seizure of over 140 Starlink terminals in eight months is a testament to the industry’s resilience, but it also highlights the military’s selective enforcement, targeting only those operations that have failed to pay their “taxes” or those that threaten the regime’s diplomatic standing.

The Militia Network: Security, Lodging, and Profit-Sharing

The complicity extends far beyond the junta’s regular forces. The ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) and the various ethnic resistance organizations (EROs) have found themselves in a complex, often contradictory position. While some resistance groups have publicly condemned the scam industry, the economic reality on the ground has forced many into a pragmatic, if not direct, involvement. In many contested border areas, the EAOs provide the security and the logistical space necessary for these operations to continue. Without the tacit approval or direct protection of these groups, the large-scale trafficking and confinement of workers would be impossible. The revenue generated from these scams has become a critical funding source for the ongoing civil war, creating a perverse incentive where the continuation of the conflict ensures the continuation of the criminal economy.

Particularly disturbing is the role of the militia groups that remain loyal to or allied with the military junta. Groups such as the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA), the Border Guard Force (BGF) and the Karen National Army (KNA) led by the controversial Bo Chit Thu, have been identified as key facilitators in this new era of urban infiltration. These militias, often operating in the buffer zones between government and resistance territory, have leveraged their local influence to provide the security, lodging, and administrative cover for scam syndicates. In some cases, they have moved beyond simple protection rackets to become direct profit-sharing partners. The DKBA and BGF, for instance, have been instrumental in facilitating the movement of workers and the laundering of funds, using their control over local checkpoints and administrative zones to shield operations from scrutiny. The involvement of these groups, which are ostensibly part of the state’s security architecture, underscores the depth of the corruption that now defines the Myanmar conflict.

The Urban Infiltration: From Border Lawlessness to Yangon's Elite Neighborhoods

The recent migration of these operations into Yangon, the country's economic capital, signals a dangerous new phase. The syndicates are no longer content with the lawless borderlands; they are embedding themselves in the heart of the nation's most affluent neighborhoods. They are buying up luxury apartments, establishing front companies, and bribing local administrators, police, and neighborhood watch leaders to turn a blind eye. The reports of Chinese nationals paying hundreds of thousands of dollars for local business licenses and the presence of rigged casinos in the upper floors of Yangon hotels are not isolated incidents. They are symptoms of a system where the line between legitimate business and organized crime has been completely erased.

According to a Yangon-based business community, some Chinese citizens who previously held (ID code number) 3/ registrations from Karen State and 13/ registrations from Shan State have been exchanging them for Yangon Region-based 12/ registrations and census records by paying large sums of money. Many of these individuals, who don't even speak Burmese, are reportedly involved in the cyberscam trade and have obtained 12/ registrations and census records from Yangon's outskirts, such as Htan Tabin, Shwe Pyi Thar, Hlaing Tharyar, and Dagon Myothit. They have now registered as hotel owners and businessmen under these 12/ registrations, reported Khit Thit Media recently.

This pervasive involvement of all armed factions creates a paradox that makes the eradication of the scam industry nearly impossible. The very institutions tasked with enforcing the law are the ones profiting from its violation. The Min Aung Hlaing government, in its desperate attempt to maintain a veneer of legitimacy, has launched performative crackdowns that

target only the most visible or uncooperative elements of the network. These raids serve as a pressure valve, releasing just enough steam to satisfy international observers while leaving the core of the operation intact. The government's reliance on the revenue from these illicit activities to fund its war effort and sustain its crumbling economy means that it has no genuine incentive to dismantle the system.

The Future of a Narco-Scam State

Looking ahead, the trajectory for Myanmar is bleak. The scam industry is no longer a temporary aberration; it is a structural feature of the country's political economy. In the near term, we can expect the operations to become even more sophisticated, utilizing advanced technology and deeper local integration to evade detection. The "ghost hotels" will multiply, and the rigged casinos will become more common, further eroding the social fabric of urban centers. In the long term, the country risks becoming a permanent "narco-scam" state, where the economy is inextricably linked to criminal enterprise, and the armed forces, both government and non-state, are locked in a cycle of violence fueled by illicit profits.

The path to a solution requires more than just military raids or international pressure. It demands a fundamental reckoning with the role of all armed organizations in the country's illicit economy. As long as the Tatmadaw, the militias, and the EAOs continue to view the scam industry as a vital source of revenue, the problem will persist. The myth of the "clean sweep" must be exposed for what it is: a lie told by a regime that is deeply complicit in the very crime it claims to fight. Until the political and economic incentives that drive this shadow state are addressed, Myanmar will remain a haven for cyber-criminals, and its people will continue to pay the price for the greed of their leaders.

Courtesy of Shan Herald Agency for News



An opium poppy farm in Shan State.
Photo: EPA

FROM OPIUM TO SCAM CENTERS: HOW CRIME AND CONFLICT SHAPED LIVES IN SHAN STATE

ANTONIO GRACEFFO

For more than six decades, Burma's (Myanmar's) wars have been closely connected to illicit trade. Opium and heroin financed armed organizations, including Khun Sa's Mong Tai Army (MTA), as well as government-aligned militias, traffickers, and corrupt officials in Shan State. Successive military regimes, including the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), the State Administration Council (SAC), and its short-lived successor, the State Security and Peace Commission (SSPC), presided over an economy in which control of territory often meant control of illicit revenue.

By the early 2000s, methamphetamine had overtaken opium as the region's most profitable drug, with production concentrated largely in Shan State and frequently linked to territories controlled by the United Wa State Army (UWSA) and other armed organizations.

More recently, international attention has shifted to industrial scam centers in Shan State and along the Thai border, particularly around Myawaddy in Karen State, where criminal syndicates have trafficked workers and defrauded victims worldwide of billions of dollars.

From the 1960s through the 1990s, however, opium was Myanmar's most prominent illicit product. Although it later declined in relative importance as methamphetamine and online fraud expanded, the opium trade remains active, and many people whose lives it shaped are still living with its consequences.

One of the people shaped by this trade is Pa Kham Aung, a 60-year-old Shan woman originally from Ban Yerng Village in Laikha Township, Loi Lem District, Southern Shan State. Her journey took her from opium farming and the death of her husband from addiction to forced displacement, undocumented work in Thailand, and the creation of a new life for herself and her three daughters.

Before 1996, Pa Kham Aung explained, Ban Yerng Village was under the control of the MTA. At the time, opium cultivation was the main source of income for many families in the village.

According to Pa Kham Aung, the area's geography made it difficult for villagers to cultivate other crops. The village was located in a mountainous region with steep terrain and deep valleys. Crops such as rice, sesame, groundnuts, and corn were difficult to grow successfully. Some villagers cultivated tea, but tea plants took a long time to produce income, and the earnings were insufficient to support their families.

"Opium was the quickest way to make money, and it was easy to sell," she explained.

After harvesting their opium, villagers sold it to brokers and were required to pay taxes to the MTA. For many families, opium cultivation was therefore not simply a choice made for profit but had become an important part of the local economy.

Pa Kham Aung's life changed dramatically when her husband became addicted to opium. In 1997, he died as a result of his addiction, leaving her alone to care for their three daughters. At the time, her oldest daughter was only 12 years old, while her youngest was four.

After her husband's death, Pa Kham Aung found it increasingly difficult to provide food and other necessities for her family. She stopped cultivating opium and instead worked as a daily wage laborer on other people's opium farms. Her oldest daughter worked alongside her.

The work was demanding. According to Pa Kham Aung, it took approximately three months from the beginning of cultivation until the opium was harvested. However, the income was still insufficient to meet the family's basic needs. Facing increasing poverty and insecurity, she began considering leaving Myanmar in search of safety and a better life for her children.

In 1996, the MTA surrendered to the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), the military government at the time. Pa Kham Aung said that several months later, people living in areas previously

controlled by the MTA were forced to relocate closer to military bases or into towns.

She recalled that villagers who refused to move faced serious consequences, including threats, punishment, and the destruction of their homes and villages.

Pa Kham Aung and her children moved to Laikha town. However, life there remained extremely difficult. They did not have enough food, and according to her account, soldiers restricted residents from leaving the town. People who attempted to travel outside without permission risked being shot.

After several months, Pa Kham Aung and some of her friends decided that remaining in Laikha was too dangerous. They fled toward Thailand in search of safety and opportunity.

The journey was long and dangerous. Pa Kham Aung and her companions traveled mainly at night through forests and mountainous areas to avoid military patrols.

They walked from Laikha to Namsang Township, a journey that took approximately three days. After staying in Namsang for two days, they traveled for another four days to Mong Pan Township. From there, they made their way toward Mong Ton and eventually reached Ban Na Kaung Mu, near the Thai-Myanmar border.

When they arrived in Ban Na Kaung Mu, they stayed for several months and worked on local farms. Pa Kham Aung earned approximately 50 Thai baht per day as a farm worker. Although the income was low, it allowed her family to survive while they considered their next step.

Pa Kham Aung and her daughters still hoped to reach Thailand. After saving enough money, they paid people to help them cross the border and travel to Fang District in Chiang Mai Province.

They had heard that workers were needed on orange farms in Fang. After arriving, Pa Kham Aung and her family worked on the farms for several years.

However, living in Thailand without legal documents created new difficulties. According to Pa Kham Aung, police inspected the farms approximately every three months. Undocumented workers were vulnerable to informal fines.

"We had no documents or work permits. When the police came to check us, we sometimes had to pay thousands of baht. The money we had earned by working for several months could disappear in one day."

For a family already living on low agricultural wages, these payments placed a significant burden on them.

During this period, her oldest daughter moved to a city to find work and became employed as a restaurant cleaner.

After spending several years in Thailand, Pa Kham Aung was unhappy with her situation. The lack of legal documentation, insecurity, and financial difficulties made her question whether Thailand could provide the stable future she wanted for her family.

Eventually, she decided to return to Ban Na Kaung Mu with her daughters.

Upon arriving, Pa Kham Aung approached the village head and asked for help finding a place to live. He provided her with a small piece of land where she could build a home.

She constructed a simple bamboo house and later asked for permission to cultivate land. The village authorities allowed her to farm on land that did not have another owner.

For Pa Kham Aung, returning to Ban Na Kaung Mu marked the beginning of a new chapter in her life.

Over the following years, she gradually formed friendships with her neighbors and became increasingly comfortable and happy living in the village.

An unexpected opportunity soon gave Pa Kham Aung hope for a better future.

When a female neighbor injured her arm and could not use it properly, Pa Kham Aung offered to help.

She had learned basic massage techniques from her mother as a child.

"I asked her, 'Please let me see your arm. Maybe I can help you.' She agreed."

After Pa Kham Aung massaged her arm several times, the woman began to feel better. Grateful for the help, she told other villagers about Pa Kham Aung's skills.

Soon, other villagers began coming to her for treatment. What began as an act of kindness gradually became her main livelihood, allowing her to support herself without performing the physically demanding agricultural labor she had relied on for many years.

Pa Kham Aung's story is one of loss, displacement, survival, and adaptation. Her life was shaped by the political and economic conditions of Shan State, including the opium economy, taxation by armed groups, her husband's death from drug addiction, forced relocation, migration, undocumented work in Thailand, and eventual resettlement in a border community.

After returning to Ban Na Kaung Mu, she rebuilt her life using the massage skills she had learned from her mother. This provided her with a stable livelihood and allowed her to support her three daughters, who have since grown up and established families of their own.

Her experience highlights an important reality in conflict-affected communities. When traditional livelihoods become impossible or unsafe, people often rely on informal economies, migration, community networks, and personal skills to survive. Her journey from an opium-growing village to a refugee-like life along the border and eventually to becoming a massage practitioner reflects her determination to overcome years of conflict, poverty, and displacement.

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



MYANMAR'S LAND CRISIS CANNOT BE SEPARATED FROM WAR: TNI

For the farmers in the Pa-O region of Myanmar, "land is their life." However, due to multiple compounding pressures, the agricultural economy is currently on the verge of collapse.

The following is an assessment based on "Land Is Our Life: Why Myanmar's Land Crisis Cannot Be Separated From the War" published on 27 August by the Pa-O Youth Organisation and Transnational Institute.

In Myanmar, land is far more than a piece of property. It is livelihood, identity, security, inheritance and, for many ethnic communities, an essential part of culture and collective survival. That is why the struggle over land has become inseparable from the country's wider political conflict. The central message of the Transnational Institute's work on Myanmar's land crisis is that treating land simply as an economic commodity ignores the lives and communities that depend upon it.

For generations, farmers and rural communities have developed relationships with land that extend well beyond ownership documents. Land provides food and income, but it also connects families to their ancestors and gives younger generations a future. In ethnic areas, land can carry an even deeper meaning, linking territory with language, culture, community and political identity. Losing land can therefore mean much more than losing an agricultural asset. It can mean losing the foundations of a community.

Myanmar's long history of armed conflict has repeatedly disrupted these relationships. Land

confiscation, displacement and resource exploitation have affected communities across ethnic states and other rural areas. The problem has been intensified by competing visions of development in which powerful political and economic actors see land primarily as something to be commercialised, extracted from or converted into profitable projects. The people who already live and work on that land can consequently be treated as obstacles to development rather than as its rightful participants.

This conflict over competing visions has become even more significant since the 2021 military coup. Myanmar's farmers now face a combination of armed conflict, military repression, economic crisis, rising costs, labour shortages and continuing pressure on agricultural land. TNI's recent reporting from Mon State shows how land is increasingly being treated as a market commodity, while farmers continue to regard it as their lifeblood.

The danger is that displacement can become permanent. When farmers lose their land, they may be forced into precarious wage labour, migration or displacement. Families become separated, children can lose access to education and communities lose the economic base that once allowed them to sustain themselves. The consequences therefore extend far beyond the individual who loses a plot of farmland.

Myanmar's future political settlement will have to confront this reality. Any discussion of federalism, peace, reconstruction or economic development that ignores land rights will remain incomplete. Communities need meaningful rights over land and natural resources, recognition of customary tenure, protection against arbitrary confiscation and mechanisms that allow displaced people to reclaim or receive meaningful restitution for land taken from them.

The fundamental question is therefore not simply who owns Myanmar's land. It is whose vision of Myanmar's future will prevail. One vision sees land as an investment opportunity and a source of revenue. Another sees it as the foundation of life, dignity, culture and community. For a country seeking a democratic and peaceful future, the latter cannot be dismissed.

Land is not merely where Myanmar's people live. For millions, it is what allows them to live. Any genuine effort to rebuild the country must begin by recognising that distinction.

To read the original report, click here:

<https://www.tni.org/en/article/land-is-our-life>



Ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun.
Photo: AFP

AMBASSADOR KYAW MOE TUN HIGHLIGHTS MYANMAR'S FOOD CRISIS AT THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL

Ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun, Myanmar's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, has called on the UN Security Council to take decisive action, saying food insecurity in Myanmar is a direct consequence of the illegal military coup and the violent acts committed by the military junta.

Kyaw Moe Tun made the remarks during an open debate held by the UN Security Council on 25 and 26 August, titled "Food Under Fire: The Security Council's Role in Mitigating Global and Local Food Crises."

He said that since the coup, soaring prices for essential commodities, fertilizers, and fuel have severely worsened an already dire humanitarian crisis and food insecurity.

He said the junta's actions, including burning farmlands, crops, and agricultural and livestock assets, as well as conducting airstrikes on local markets, are deliberate acts directly destroying civilian livelihoods and food production.

He added that the junta's indiscriminate violence against civilians has caused massive forced displacement, severely disrupting agricultural production and the socio-economic lives of people across the country.

Citing estimates from the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP), Kyaw Moe Tun said approximately 12.4 million people in Myanmar are projected to face acute food insecurity at IPC Phase 3 (Crisis) or above, with about one million expected to fall into IPC Phase

4 (Emergency) conditions. He said an estimated 360,000 children could suffer from acute malnutrition by September.

To address the crisis, Kyaw Moe Tun urged the Security Council to take concrete, decisive action in accordance with Resolution 2417 (2018) and Resolution 2669 (2022) on Myanmar.

He demanded that the junta be compelled to comply with its obligations under international humanitarian law, and urged the Security Council to impose appropriate measures against those obstructing the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

He also strongly urged UN member states to cut off the flow of weapons, ammunition, aviation fuel, dual-use items, and related technologies to the junta.

"Short-term humanitarian assistance cannot substitute for a long-term political solution, and merely treating the symptoms of the conflict will not resolve its root causes," Kyaw Moe Tun said.

He also said that to address ongoing crises, including food insecurity and natural disasters, the National Unity Government (NUG) and partner democratic forces are coordinating under the Steering Committee for the Establishment of a Federal Democratic Union (SCEF).

As the people of Myanmar work to end military dictatorship and establish a federal democratic union, Kyaw Moe Tun urged the international community to actively support these efforts.



HUMAN RIGHTS IN MYANMAR HITTING A 'NEW LOW' ACCORDING TO UN REPORT AND DISCUSSION

The already dire human rights situation in Myanmar has plunged to a "new low", particularly for minorities, the United Nations warned in a new report and discussion on Tuesday.

The UN human rights office denounced the "ever-worsening brutal abuse" of the Rohingya minority, and the "devastating impact" of illicit economies, notably illegal mining for rare earths, according to the report.

Myanmar's ruling junta seized power in a coup on February 1, 2021 that ousted Aung San Suu Kyi's elected government, ending a 10-year experiment with democracy and plunging the southeast Asian nation into bloody turmoil and a humanitarian crisis.

Over the past five years, more than 100,000 people are estimated to have been killed across all sides as the military battles an array of pro-democracy and ethnic minority rebels.

In the report covering June 1, 2025 to May 31 this year, the UN rights office drew the connection between violence and a conflict economy, and civilian suffering.

"This report depicts a picture of suffering, misery, and cruelty on multiple levels and across the country that is heartbreaking," UN rights chief Volker Turk said in a statement.

"I call on all states, companies and investors to undertake serious soul-searching with respect to their actions -- or inaction -- to ask: is this fair and just for the people of Myanmar?"

Coup-leader Min Aung Hlaing took over as Myanmar's civilian president in April -- surrendering the office of armed forces chief to a key aide.

Min Aung Hlaing is currently spearheading a diplomatic blitz to shake off Myanmar's post-coup pariah status and gain diplomatic recognition abroad.

India, China, Laos and Thailand have all openly embraced him with visits to their capitals -- drawing criticism from campaigners who complain they have granted him undue legitimacy.

"The military's persistent quest for control and legitimacy has only deepened the suffering and the multiple life-threatening protection and humanitarian concerns civilians face," the UN report said.

"Military tactics aimed at imposing fear and control, facilitated by the use of new technologies to expand surveillance, permeate every aspect of life."

The report highlighted military violence against civilians, through the persistent use of airstrikes, arson attacks and displacement.

It also said illicit economies were helping to finance the conflict, with human rights crises multiplying due to illegal mining, drug production, human trafficking, and scam centres.

Alessandra Vellucci, Director of the United Nations Information Service in Geneva, chaired a hybrid press briefing in Geneva on 25 August, which was attended by the spokespersons and representatives of the United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Children's Fund, and the World Health Organization.

During the meeting, the following human rights situation in Myanmar including that of the Rohingya was discussed.

Ravina Shamdasani, for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), stated that the new OHCHR report found that the human rights situation in Myanmar, in particular that of minority communities, had plummeted to a new low, from the ever-worsening brutal abuse of the Rohingya population to the devastating impact of illicit economies, notably illegal mining for rare earths. The report detailed how unrelenting violence and a conflict economy worked

together to expose civilian populations to untold misery.

Highlighting acts of military violence against the civilian population, the report noted the persistent use of airstrikes, arson attacks, displacement and denial of assistance. It also detailed the commission – by both the Myanmar military and the Arakan Army – of widespread and systematic violations and abuses against the Rohingya, nine years since the terrible violence of 2017 that had forced hundreds of thousands of Rohingya to flee.

Across northern Rakhine, the Arakan Army had perpetrated arbitrary arrests, torture, sexual and gender-based violence, instances of enforced disappearance, forced labour and recruitment, unlawful confiscation of land and residential property, and the destruction of villages, religious and cultural sites, caused renewed Rohingya displacement. Children were systematically used for labour, with witnesses describing workers as young as six years old clearing jungle, constructing buildings and doing menial work for Rakhine families. In one case, for example, a child had been forced to clear bones and skulls of victims of a massacre.

The absence of the rule of law across Myanmar had acted as an enabler for illicit economies in the country, helping to finance the conflict, worsen the crisis, and with impacts on the wider region. Economic collapse and conflict-induced displacement had also generated a labour market that was easy for economic actors and criminal organizations to exploit, finding that civilians were lured into a system marred by endless human rights violations and abuses.

Unregulated exploitation of natural resources had destroyed the environment, livelihoods, and traditional community-based systems in a growing number of areas in the country, particularly minority areas. Findings indicated a peak in trade flows in

2023 amounting to USD 1.4 billion. Lack of economic opportunities, displacement and forced conscription have also triggered an influx of women into the mining sector, which aggravated risks of sexual violence and harassment by supervisors, guards, and militia members who operated with absolute impunity. OHCHR called on all States, companies and investors to undertake serious soul-searching with respect to their actions – or inaction; to ask: is this fair and just for the people of Myanmar? Their own reputations and their credibility were on the line.

James Rodehaver, Chief of the Myanmar Team at the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), speaking from Vienna, said that today marked nine years since the operation in which over 10,000 Rohingya had been killed and displaced over 700,000 to Bangladesh. The Rohingya community was still being abused in numerous manners. Thus far, in the 5.5-year long ongoing conflict in Myanmar, over 8,300 civilians had been killed by the military, he said.

Just in the last 100 days, at least 146 civilians had been killed in airstrikes. The Myanmar military had said that the past 100 days would be dedicated to bringing peace to Myanmar, but the period had instead seen increased airstrikes on civilians and other violations of international humanitarian law. Mr. Rodehaver said that the crisis deserved the world's attention as it was only worsening and tearing civilian lives apart.

Answering questions from the media, Mr. Rodehaver said that almost all cases referred to in the report were on young Rohingya children being exploited and abused, but there were also cases of children from other ethnic minorities. The UN had still not recognized the Myanmar military as the legitimate government of the country, an action which would need to be taken by the UN Credentials Committee.

Ms. Shamdasani added that the military's persistent quest for legitimacy was deepening the crisis.

Mr. Rodehaver said that rare earth materials were leaving Myanmar and going to other countries. OHCHR had reached out to both to the Myanmar military and the Arakan Army, for the purposes of this report, but it had not received responses from either. The figure of 140,000 put forward by UNHCR referred to the movement of Rohingya since January 2024.

Regarding the scam centres in Myanmar, he said that thousands of people still remained in the clutches of the system, and oftentimes these did not shut down, but simply moved elsewhere within the country. Those centres were sometimes building local infrastructure as a way to endear themselves to local communities. Many scam centres were profitable for the military and border guards, he reminded. There was no progress in establishing who the individuals behind those centres were.

Alessandra Vellucci, for the United Nations Information Service (UNIS), referred to the Secretary-General's Spokesman's statement in which he called for renewed global attention and action to the plight of the Rohingya.

Sources: UN, Mizzima, AFP



Photo: Supplied

EU URGED NOT TO CHANNEL AID FOR OVER 1.2 MILLION FLOOD VICTIMS THROUGH MYANMAR JUNTA

MAUNG KHET NWAY FOR MIZZIMA

The Sagaing Region Strikers' Force sent an open letter on 24 August, demanding that the €10.5 million in humanitarian aid to be provided by the European Union (EU) for over 1.2 million flood-affected people in Sagaing Region not be channelled through the Myanmar military junta.

The open letter was jointly submitted to the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, and the Director-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), Maciej Popowski, by a coalition of 43 alliance groups, including strike committees and student unions in Sagaing Region.

According to the letter, on 5 August, the military junta released water from the Thaphan Seik and Kabo dams without prior warning, causing severe flooding that affected over 1.2 million residents across 11 townships, including Kantbalu, Kawlin, Khin-U, Ye-U, and Depayin.

Furthermore, the strike coalition pointed out that the military junta has carried out airstrikes targeting flood rescue operations, arrested aid workers, confiscated medicine and food supplies at the Sagaing Bridge checkpoint, and targeted flood-hit areas with helicopters and kamikaze drones.

Ko Shin Thant, a member of the Emergency Disaster Response Team of the Sagaing Region Strikers' Force, told Mizzima: "First and foremost, we warmly welcome and appreciate the EU's assistance for the people of Myanmar. However, if this aid is delivered through the wrong channels, it could lead to even greater difficulties. For instance, as we have stated, if it is channelled through the military junta, it will not reach the public and will likely benefit only to the military."

To ensure the effectiveness of the upcoming funds, the strike coalition urged the EU not to distribute the aid through the military junta, but instead to collaborate with the National Unity Government (NUG), the Sagaing Federal Unit Interim Government, and local civil society organizations (CSOs) through cross-border channels.

"Channelling aid through alternative routes - such as the National Unity Government, which is genuinely elected by our people, the Federal Unit governments, and trusted local organizations - is what will truly benefit the public. This is how effective assistance can genuinely reach the hands of the suffering population," Ko Shin Thant added.

The European Union (EU) announced on August 13 that it would allocate an additional €10.5 million in humanitarian aid to Myanmar.



WOMEN REPLACING MEN IN MYANMAR WATER DELIVERY JOBS DUE TO MILITARY CONSCRIPTION

Residents report that forced military recruitment and arrests are taking place day and night, extending deep into neighbourhoods and streets in Sagaing, Sagaing Region. Consequently, women are stepping in to replace men in drinking water delivery jobs, which were previously performed by men, according to local sources.

A local source from Sagaing stated that conscription has intensified since early June, with arrests escalating this month, potentially resulting in over 40 men being taken in the past two months. This figure is based on data gathered within their reach, and the actual number on the ground could be much higher. Mizzima is still independently investigating the exact numbers.

As a result, men no longer dare to work in local urban services, goods delivery, and carrying 20-litre drinking water bottles, the source told Mizzima.

"It is extremely brutal. They are snatching people right from the city's neighbourhoods. No one dares to go out day or night. For example, water delivery is a physically demanding job where guys usually have to carry the bottles, but now only girls are doing the deliveries. They don't dare to go from street to street; they only dare to work inside factories and workshops," the source said.

During these forced recruitments (locally referred to as 'porter sweeps'), the majority of those arrested are young men aged between 18 and 20, with those around 30 years old being the second most targeted age group.

According to families of police personnel, the recruitment is most severe in Ohbo Ward, where even the children of ordinary police constables are being arrested.

"They don't even spare the children of police personnel, I mean ordinary constables, not officers. It has gotten really bad. Because of this, many government employees have had to send their children to other cities," a police family member told Mizzima.

According to information gathered by Mizzima, forced recruitment is taking place not only in Sagaing but also in other cities. Notably, the military junta has been carrying out more frequent arrests for forced conscription in mid-2026, arresting people directly from their homes in Yangon, as well as on highways and in urban wards including Myingyan, the Bagan-Nyaung-U road, the Myingyan-Meiktila-Mahlaing-Yangon highway, Taungtha Township, Meiktila, Thazi, and Pyawbwe in Mandalay Region.

Similarly, in Magway city and most townships across the Magway Region, especially at the Magway-Minbu checkpoint, youths are being inspected, pedestrians on the streets are being stopped and searched, and travellers are being intercepted and arrested at city entry and exit gates, according to various sources.

Under the compulsory military service law enforced by the coup military, recruitment has reportedly reached 27th Batch. Furthermore, news has emerged that advance recruitment is already underway for the upcoming 28th Batch.



Photo: Supplied

POLITICAL PRISONERS TORTURED, FAMILIES SCAMMED FOR MONEY IN MANDALAY'S OBO PRISON, REPORTS SAY

Low-ranking prison staff at Mandalay's Obo Prison are beating and torturing political prisoners, denying them medical treatment, and extorting money from their families, according to a statement by the Justice Network for Political Prisoners (JNPP) and its spokesperson, Ma Yu Mi San.

JNPP released a statement 27 August stating that from the 2021 military coup until early 2026, over 4,000 male and female political prisoners have been detained in Obo Prison, where they are being deprived of their basic human rights.

Upon their arrival at the prison, those charged under Sections 52(a) and 50(j) of the Counter-Terrorism Law

are beaten by sergeants and lower-ranking staff, while female prisoners are placed in solitary confinement, according to the JNPP.

"As soon as political prisoners, both men and women, arrive at the prison, they are asked about their charges. If they say '52-A' or '50-J', they are accused of supporting or being associated with terrorists, and are subjected to various forms of abuse, torture, beatings, and forced punitive drills," Ma Yu Mi San, the spokesperson of JNPP, told Mizzima.

Furthermore, some prison staff contact the families of political prisoners via phone and Viber, demanding up to hundreds of thousands of kyats under the false

pretences of arranging hospital visits or ensuring more comfortable living conditions for them inside the prison, Ma Yu Mi San added.

Although families transfer the money, they only find out during prison visits that the prisoners themselves had never requested any funds.

Regarding healthcare inside the prison, she explained that only minimal amounts of painkillers and antibiotics, such as Diclo (diclofenac), Amoxicillin, and Burmeton (antihistamine), are provided for all kinds of illnesses. Consequently, detained political prisoner doctors have to treat their fellow inmates using medicines collected through donations.

The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) pointed out that such financial scams targeting families and the denial of medical treatment are not isolated to Obo Prison, but are systematically committed in prisons across the country.

"We cannot focus on Obo Prison alone. Prisons use various methods to extort money from the families of political prisoners. In some prisons, they demand money, promising to keep prisoners in the hospital ward. Since staying in the hospital offers a more comfortable environment, people end up paying, but this is highly inappropriate for political prisoners," Ko Aung Myo Kyaw, an official from AAPP, told Mizzima.

He further stated that the prison authorities must take full responsibility for the healthcare of political prisoners, and families should not have to bear these expenses.

"It is absolutely unacceptable for prisons to demand money when a sick prisoner needs hospital or clinical care. However, we hear about such cases in most prisons. Families who cannot afford it do not even get medical treatment. Prisoners just have to support each other, and many have lost their lives because of this. These acts are intentionally committed against political prisoners by prison authorities who act as the henchmen of the military junta. All responsible individuals must be held accountable and punished for these violations," Ko Aung Myo Kyaw commented.

In addition, the JNPP reported that food provided in Obo Prison consists of mushy rice mixed with husks. Furthermore, even when the upper floor of a building cracked during an earthquake, prisoners were not evacuated to safety and were left in the hazardous structure.

JNPP confirmed that the information regarding prison conditions was verified based primarily on first-hand testimonies of political prisoners who were released in April 2026.

The JNPP stated that they investigated and exposed these lawless abuses and financial scams by prison staff to raise awareness both locally and internationally. They will continue to submit this evidence to international bodies and allied organizations to ensure perpetrators are held accountable in the future.

Since the military coup in February 2021 up to 27 August 2026, a total of 31,838 people have been arrested, of whom 14,751 remain in detention, according to records updated by the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) as of July 27.



NEARLY 200,000 CHIN IDPS FACE DIFFICULTIES RETURNING HOME AND MEETING LIVELIHOOD NEEDS

Nearly 200,000 Chin internally displaced persons (IDPs) inside and outside Chin State are facing major obstacles to returning to their places of origin due to the ongoing revolutionary situation, livelihood struggles, transportation issues, financial constraints, and the threat of junta airstrikes, according to Salai Za Thawng, Minister of Social Development for the Chinland Council's government.

He made the remarks in response to an inquiry from Mizzima during an online press conference on 28 August, held to introduce a report titled "Report on Administrative Implementation during Two Years and Six Months of Exercising the Self-Determination of the Chin People," compiled by the Chinland Council (CC) with support from the US-based Center for Peace and Reconciliation (CPR).

Asked by Mizzima about the population, difficulties, and ongoing assistance for IDPs within and outside Chin State, Salai Za Thawng said: "The primary need is essential food supplies for basic survival, such as rice, cooking oil, salt, and fish paste. Additionally, the displaced populations urgently require tarpaulins, mosquito nets, basic healthcare services, and emergency medicines."

He said Chin IDPs are located not only within Chin State but also in Sagaing and Magway regions, as well as across the Indian border in Mizoram State.

Although officials from the Ministry of Social Development and the Chinland Council's government have been visiting and assisting displaced people, with

further support from the National Unity Government (NUG), it remains insufficient to meet the massive demand, Salai Za Thawng said.

IDPs remain unable to return home due to the ongoing political and revolutionary situation in Chin State, combined with livelihood struggles, disrupted travel routes, financial hardship, and the persistent threat of junta airstrikes.

Salai Za Thawng said the Chinland Council's government is prepared to do its utmost to welcome and support anyone who wishes to return to areas under its control.

Mizzima also asked about the status of the Chinland Council's administrative, judicial, and legislative control, given that junta forces have recently retaken several areas in Chin State.

Dr. Shwe Khar, the Chinland Council government's Minister of Foreign Affairs, said: "They have only retaken Tonzang and Falam towns. The junta has absolutely no administrative influence in the surrounding villages, and even in those towns, they do not have complete, absolute control." He added that merely occupying a town does not equate to controlling the entire township.

Dr. Shwe Khar said that although the routes between Kalay-Tedim and Kalay-Hakha were previously clear of junta outposts, the military has now stationed troops at over 30 outposts along these routes, leaving the regional security situation highly unstable. He said that while the junta has declared full control over these routes, that control is not absolute, and Chin revolutionary forces retain the ability to operate and move through the areas at any time.

There are approximately 1,350 villages in Chin State, and the Chinland Council currently provides administrative and public services to 829 of them.

During the press conference, Dr. Sui Shwe Par, the Chinland Council government's Minister of Health, delivered a slideshow presentation detailing the activities of government ministries, enacted legislation, and achievements in local and central administration. Officials then addressed questions from the media and distributed the 33-page report.

The Chinland Council (CC) is composed of members of parliament who won seats in the 2020 election and opposed the military coup, representatives of the Chin National Front (CNF), and delegates from township and regional community groups. It has been implementing public administrative functions since adopting the Chinland Constitution on 6 December 2023.



Mae Tao Clinic.
Photo: Mizzima

MAE TAO CLINIC PREPARES TO OPEN SCBU AS NUMBER OF NEWBORNS REQUIRING SPECIAL CARE RISES

At the Mae Tao Clinic (MTC) in Mae Sot on the Thai-Myanmar border, the number of hospitalized newborns requiring special care has been gradually rising since 2021, and preparations are currently underway to open a Special Care Baby Unit (SCBU).

According to data from Mae Tao Clinic, the number of hospitalized newborns requiring special care rose from 143 cases in 2021 to 290 in 2023, and reached 330 in 2025.

Premature babies, low-birth-weight newborns, and severely ill infants in particular require specialized medical care, specialized equipment, and close monitoring, which has posed operational challenges for the clinic in delivering these services.

As a result, some newborns have had to be referred to Mae Sot General Hospital for more advanced treatment. These hospital referrals not only incur higher costs for families but also place an additional burden on the neonatal special care services of Mae Sot General Hospital.

To address this and minimize unnecessary referrals, Mae Tao Clinic has initiated efforts to establish a Special Care Baby Unit.

In 2025, the clinic conducted a needs assessment and began renovations to integrate the SCBU into its Reproductive Health Inpatient (RH IPD) Ward. The renovations include upgrading electrical systems, preparing infection prevention and control (IPC) systems, and structuring patient care layouts.

Essential neonatal equipment, including incubators, phototherapy devices, patient monitors, infusion pumps, and neonatal resuscitation devices, has also been procured and prepared.

Training healthcare staff for the SCBU, alongside the development of clinical guidelines and standard operating procedures (SOPs), is currently underway, with a pilot run scheduled to begin in September 2026.

Once operational, newborns requiring special care will be able to receive enhanced treatment directly at Mae Tao Clinic, reducing expenses for families and minimizing unnecessary referrals to Mae Sot General Hospital.

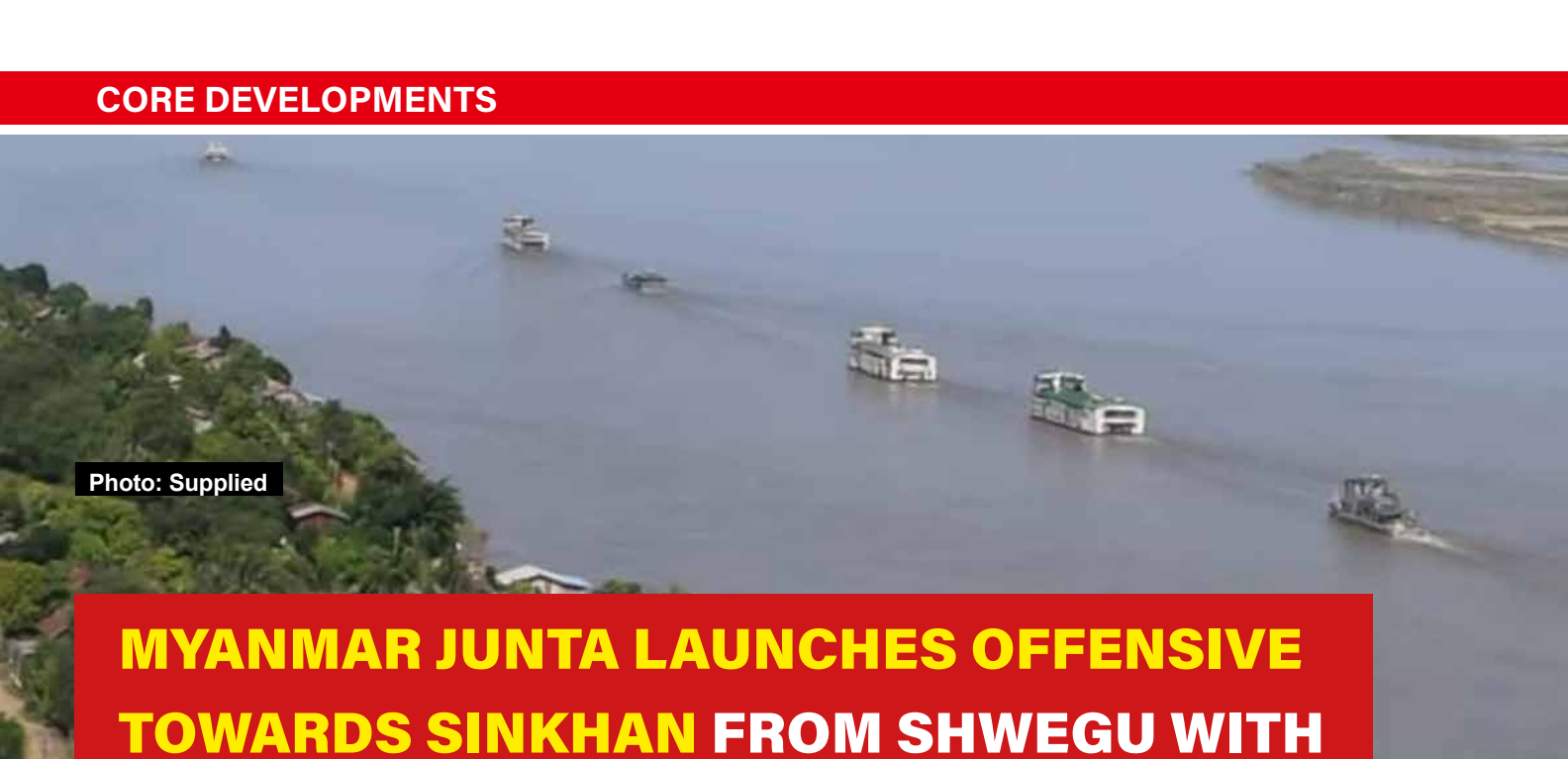


Photo: Supplied

MYANMAR JUNTA LAUNCHES OFFENSIVE TOWARDS SINKHAN FROM SHWEGU WITH FOUR COLUMNS

The military junta is launching an offensive towards Sinkhan in Shwegu Township, Kachin State, using three columns on the eastern bank of the Ayeyarwady River and one column on the western bank, while joint forces of the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and the Kachin Region People's Defense Force (KPDF) are putting up a resistance, a military source told Mizzima.

These junta columns are primarily targeting the Shwegu-Sinkhan highway, with each column consisting of approximately 200 troops, the source said.

"There are about 200 troops in each column. They are mainly pushing along the Shwegu-Sinkhan highway," the military source said.

It is reported that the joint KIA and KPDF forces are mainly defending and engaging the columns departing from Shwegu towards Sinkhan along the Tawlan and Zinbon mountain ranges.

"The columns are advancing from Shwegu. The KIA and KPDF are mainly putting up resistance along the Tawlan and Zinbon mountain ranges. The Shwegu-Sinkhan highway also runs parallel to the river," the source added.

Another column is advancing from the Thinbaw Inn area on the western bank of the Ayeyarwady River in Shwegu, moving towards Sinkhan alongside the three columns from the eastern bank.

Sinkhan is a strategically important location between Shwegu and Bhamo, serving as an intermediate transit route to send military reinforcements and supplies to

Bhamo via Shwegu.

The military source opined that the current offensive along the Shwegu-Sinkhan road is likely aimed at clearing the route and securing the area for a military flotilla sailing up the Ayeyarwady River toward Kachin State.

"They are clearing the route with infantry first to allow the ships to pass. They will sail up along the Katha-Shwegu-Sinkhan route. Their objective is to reach Bhamo," the source said.

The military flotilla, which sailed up from Mandalay along the Ayeyarwady River, had reached Katha and has now departed from there, the military source added.

The flotilla is transporting military reinforcements, weapons, ammunition, and supplies to Kachin State, and has faced interceptive attacks by revolutionary forces along the river.

Furthermore, the KIA and allied forces recently launched a drone attack on a junta column crossing from Shwegu to the western bank of the Ayeyarwady River by motorboat, striking a boat carrying reinforcements.

The military junta is launching ground offensives through Shwegu as well as utilizing the Ayeyarwady River route to replenish troops, weapons, ammunition, and rations to Bhamo.

Clashes between the junta forces and the KIA joint coalition continue near Shwegu.



Photo: AFP

THREE PDF MEMBERS KILLED BY MYANMAR JUNTA FORCES IN BAGO

Three members of the People's Defense Force (PDF) were captured and killed by military junta forces in Waw Township, Bago Region, according to sources confirming the incident.

On 25 August, the three PDF members, who appeared to be traveling by motorcycle, were captured by junta forces near Ekarat village in Waw Township and shot dead on the spot. The bodies of the deceased were cremated at Ekarat village cemetery the same day.

An official from the Waw Township People's Defense Organization (PDO/Pa-Ka-Pha) confirmed that the incident involving the three PDF comrades

was true, but clarified that they were not members of their local unit and that they are still investigating by contacting other groups.

"The killing is confirmed. They are not from our Waw unit. We have not been able to identify which group they belong to yet," the official said.

According to a local source, the victims were captured and killed due to an information leak while traveling by motorcycle toward Bago town; however, Mizzima has not yet been able to independently verify this.



CHIN CHRISTIAN PASTOR KILLED BY BURMESE MILITARY; BRI URGES TRUMP ADMINISTRATION TO PROTECT PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS IN BURMA

Ellicott City, Maryland, USA — Reverend William, senior pastor of Chungcung Baptist Church in Chin State, was killed along with Mr. Nam Ceu by the Burmese military on June 4, 2026, according to the Burma Research Institute (BRI) in a press release 27 August.

A memorial service was held in Chungcung on August 26, 2026, at approximately 1:30 p.m. Burma time, attended by local residents and pastors from Hakha — more than three months after his arrest. He had served as senior pastor for 25 years and is survived by his wife and five children.

"We grieve with his family, his congregation, and our Chin brothers and sisters everywhere. This was an extrajudicial killing, carried out without due process or trial. But grief demands action. We call on the international community, and especially the United States, to hold those responsible accountable," said Rev. Dr. Robin Stoops, BRI Board Chairman and former Associate General Secretary of American Baptist Churches USA. Dr. Stoops had traveled through Chungcung village during a visit to Hakha before the 2021 military coup.

On May 16, 2026, Reverend William — who used no surname — was arrested along with Nam Ceu by the

77th Light Infantry Division, based in Bago (Pegu), at a farm tent one mile from the village. Five people were present at the tent; three fled. Reverend William did not flee, believing his pastoral identification card would protect him.

Two credible sources from Hakha, speaking on condition of anonymity for security reasons, told BRI that Colonel Hluan Moe Naing held the two men, who were with him in Hakha on June 2 and in Thantlang on June 3. The church and their families have concluded that Reverend William and Nam Ceu were killed that day.

Christian leaders in Hakha appealed to military authorities in Hakha and Falam, and to the commander of the 77th Light Infantry Division, for information on the men's whereabouts. The sources also stated that Reverend William was killed on accusations of supporting the Hakha Chinland Defense Force (CDF). The church's repeated requests for information about his whereabouts went unanswered.

Chungcung, a village of about 300 houses located 15 miles from Hakha, the state capital, sits along the route Burmese soldiers travel from Kalaymyo to Hakha. Since the 2021 military coup, the army has burned or destroyed 118 houses in Chungcung, killed 16 civilians, and wounded 5 others, and has previously destroyed property belonging to Chungcung Baptist Church.

This is not the first attack on Chungcung Baptist Church. On October 14, 2021 — eight months after the February 2021 military coup — Burmese military forces occupied the church, looting and destroying part of its property, as documented in BRI's (formerly CAM) October 2021 report.

Under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, Burma has been designated a Country of Particular Concern since 1999 for successive military regimes' systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom. Despite this designation, the United States has taken no meaningful action against the ruling military junta.

"We call the Trump administration to protect the persecuted Christians in Burma," said Zo Tum Hmung, President and CEO of BRI.



Min Zin

JOINT STATEMENT OF CONCERN FOR US CITIZEN & ACADEMIC MIN ZIN'S DETENTION IN CHINA

The Scholars at Risk Network has published a letter on 27 August, signed by over 100 US professors in the US and abroad, that expresses grave concern for scholar of political science and US citizen Min Zin, wrongfully detained in China on June 3, 2026 while traveling to an academic event.

Joint Statement of Concern for US Citizen & Academic Min Zin's Detention in China

We are scholars of Asia and international affairs who support academic freedom, including the freedom to carry out research and disseminate and publish the results thereof, and who believe academic institutions in both the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the United States benefit from the free and open exchange of ideas, high quality scholarly research, and critical analysis. We are, therefore, gravely concerned by the wrongful detention of our colleague Min Zin, who was detained upon arrival in Kunming, Yunnan Province (PRC), on June 3. Min Zin traveled to Kunming to participate in an academic workshop.

Min Zin is a scholar of international regard who is widely respected for his depth of knowledge, his analytical abilities, and his eagerness to engage in dialogue.

As a teenager, Min Zin spent years in hiding from Myanmar's military regime for his pro-democracy activism before fleeing to Thailand and from there, to the U.S. In 2001, he attended the School of Journalism

at the University of California (UC), Berkeley as a Visiting Scholar. In 2008, Min Zin returned to Berkeley as a Carnegie Teaching Fellow. He so deeply impressed faculty with his writings and intellectual gifts, that the university granted him a special admissions waiver into the Master's Program in Asian Studies, a rare distinction for an applicant without traditional preparatory degrees.

Min Zin proved to be an exemplary student. After completing his master's studies, he won a highly competitive place in UC Berkeley's Department of Political Science, where he held the Chancellor's Graduate Fellowship. In 2013, Min Zin was awarded an Institute of East Asian Studies Fellowship to support his dissertation research in Myanmar.

Inspired by the intellectual freedom he had experienced at Berkeley and motivated by a desire to advance critical thinking in Myanmar, Min Zin co-founded the Institute for Strategy and Policy-Myanmar (ISP-Myanmar) as an independent think tank in Yangon in 2016. Its flagship publication, Myanmar Quarterly, rapidly became a definitive resource for regional experts and the public alike. Under Min Zin's leadership, ISP-Myanmar earned an international reputation for rigorous, independent, and non-partisan research and analysis.

Following the February 2021 military coup, Min Zin and his research team relocated to Thailand where ISP-Myanmar continued to produce data-driven, open-source research and balanced, evidence-based analysis on Myanmar's political, socioeconomic, and security landscape, and its relations within the region. In keeping with the institute's commitment to public engagement, all of ISP-Myanmar's publications are freely accessible on its website.

We believe it is vital that independent, open-source researchers, such as Min Zin and those at ISP-Myanmar, be able to conduct their work without fear of intimidation or arbitrary detention.

We are grateful that Secretary of State Rubio has formally designated Min Zin as wrongfully detained. We call on the US government to continue to make Min Zin's case an urgent priority. We also call on the relevant authorities to facilitate Min Zin's immediate and unconditional release, and for his safety to be guaranteed, so that he may return to his family and to his team at the Institute for Strategy and Policy-Myanmar.

We stand with Min Zin, his family, and the principles of academic freedom.

Photo: AFP

DEATHS OF MPS IN PRISON AND WHILE FLEEING RISE DURING 5.5 YEARS OF THE MYANMAR MILITARY COUP

Over 8,300 civilians have been killed due to the violence and unlawful killings of the Myanmar military junta in the nearly five and a half years since the military coup, according to separate reports released by the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH) and the Human Rights Documentation Team of the National League for Democracy (HRDT-NLD).

According to data released by the CRPH on 25 August, four regional members of local legislative assemblies (MLAs), including Mandalay Region government Chief Minister Dr. Zaw Myint Maung, died in prison due to torture during interrogation, harsh prison conditions, and inadequate medical treatment while in detention.

Additionally, in June 2022, Kyaw Myo Min, a Mon State MLA, was also killed after being arrested by the military junta's forces.

Currently, a total of 50 elected representatives, including State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, 17 Union-level (Pyidaungsu Hluttaw) MPs, and 33 regional and state MLAs, remain in detention.

Similarly, a total of 34 MPs, comprising 17 Union-level MPs and 17 regional and state MLAs, who were fleeing the conflict died due to a lack of adequate medical treatment, with seven of them passing away within the year 2026.

On the other hand, according to records verified by the HRDT-NLD covering a period of over five years from February 1, 2021, to July 31, 2026, a total of 6,507 civilians were killed by the military junta's actions. Among them were eight NLD MPs, 125 party members,

573 children, and 1,119 women.

The report also stated that 19,378 people were unlawfully arrested for opposing the military coup, which includes 150 NLD MPs and 2,744 NLD party members.

The military junta conducted 827 airstrikes targeting non-military civilian residential areas, killing 1,958 people and destroying 4,469 buildings.

Furthermore, artillery shelling and small arms fire injured 3,545 civilians and damaged 13,279 buildings. Additionally, a total of 77,624 residential houses and buildings were burned to ashes across 1,982 military-led arson attacks.

The NLD records indicate that the military junta destroyed a total of 170 party offices, including the NLD headquarters four times and regional and state offices 15 times. They also unlawfully sealed and confiscated 1,031 properties belonging to MPs, party members, and 847 civilians.

The CRPH noted that the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) still recognizes the MPs elected in the 2020 general election and the CRPH as the legitimate representatives of the Myanmar people. The CRPH has urged ASEAN, the United Nations, and the international community to provide practical assistance to end the military junta's human rights violations and violence.

The HRDT-NLD also clarified that the data in this release was collected to the best of their reach under current constraints, noting that actual figures on the ground could be much higher. They added that these records will be preserved as evidence to pursue justice and ensure accountability in the future.



Photo: Supplied

12 LEADING WORKERS FIRED AFTER COMPLAINING ABOUT BONUS CUTS AT MYANMAR'S SPRING MOON FACTORY

The Solidarity of Trade Unions Myanmar (STUM) announced 25 August that 12 leading workers who filed complaints with labour relations department over wage and bonus cuts at the Spring Moon Garment Co., Ltd. factory in East Hlaing Tharyar Township, Yangon Region, have been dismissed.

Three leading workers were dismissed with compensation on 24 August, and the remaining nine were fired the following day, 25 August, according to STUM.

According to STUM, citing the workers, employees, some with up to eight years of service, initially filed a complaint with the Factories and General Labour Laws Inspection Department (FGLLID) after their bonuses were cut. In response, the employer demoted them. Following their demotion, the workers lodged another complaint with the Department of Labour Relations (DLR), which prompted the factory to immediately dismiss them.

The factory's termination letters, dated 25 August, cited the need for downsizing as the official reason.

"Out of the 12, three have already been paid severance. We are currently negotiating for the remaining nine. The first three did not expect this at all; they were summoned under a different pretext, but when they arrived and were negotiated into being terminated, they took the severance pay," an STUM official told Mizzima today (26 August).

"Among the remaining nine, three are executive committee (EC) members of the labour union. Therefore, even if we can negotiate severance pay, we will continue to file complaints with the Department of Labour (DOL) to take legal action against them for union busting," she added.

Among the 12 dismissed workers are the president, executive committee members, and regular members of the factory's labour union.

"Why do they fire union members? Because they believe that as long as there is a union, there will be demands. They assume that if they get rid of the union, the demands will stop. Labour unions are much more aware of workers' rights and existing laws. If there is no union left in the factory, the oppression of the remaining workers is likely to increase," the STUM official said.

She also objected to the practice of dismissing workers, especially union members, by paying them off under the assumption that compensation makes a dismissal acceptable, emphasizing that legally wrong practices must still be challenged.

STUM also noted that workers at the Spring Moon garment factory had previously returned to work after reaching a mutual agreement on 11 August regarding four key demands, including daily allowances, overtime pay, and production target bonuses. Just days later, the leaders who spearheaded those demands were dismissed.



FARMERS FACE DIFFICULTIES IN MYINGYAN DISTRICT DUE TO FUEL PURCHASE RESTRICTIONS

Local farmers report severe difficulties obtaining diesel for agricultural work as restrictions on purchasing fuel, imposed by subordinates of the military junta, have tightened further during August in Myingyan, Natogyi, and Taungtha townships of Myingyan District, Mandalay Region.

To purchase fuel at official major filling stations, buyers must present a vehicle license or a fuel purchase permit booklet. To obtain this booklet, they must first secure recommendations from the respective Township General Administration Department (GAD) offices in town.

A farmer from Myingyan Township said securing permission to buy fuel has become increasingly difficult due to the challenges of traveling to town, security concerns, and the fact that vehicles commonly used by farmers such as power tillers (trawlargyi) do not have licenses.

"Without the official permit booklet, it's not easy to buy fuel. And getting that booklet itself is no easy task. Since we have to obtain recommendations and process it at GAD offices in town, it is extremely difficult from every angle," the farmer told Mizzima.

Locals also said security checkpoints along the roads strictly inspect and restrict the transport of diesel and gasoline in containers, with authorities sometimes prohibiting the carriage of even four or five gallons of fuel in jerry cans.

Although traveling to town is necessary to obtain the required recommendation, junta troops and Pyusawhti militia members have been arresting and extorting money from residents at checkpoints, leaving many local farmers too afraid to even travel to town.

As a result, the expense, transport difficulty, and time required to purchase fuel have risen sharply, creating significant obstacles for water pumps, diesel engines, and other machinery essential to agricultural work, according to local farmers.

"We use it for pumping water. We use it at home and on our farms. When we plant crops, we have to use diesel-powered engines to pump groundwater into the fields. Now we are in deep trouble trying to get fuel for those engines," a farmer from Natogyi Township said.

Because mills and farming equipment run on gasoline and diesel, major disruptions are being felt in tractor operations, crop irrigation, and fuel-dependent cottage industries.

According to local farmers, rising prices and fuel scarcity have caused losses on local produce, which must be transported through multiple stages, to the point where some are forced to abandon their fields. Livestock farming businesses that rely on imported feed have also faced mounting difficulties for a considerable period.

Even car owners are experiencing difficulties transporting fuel using empty engine oil containers, locally known as "molar cans," according to private vehicle owners.

"Even for car owners, purchases are restricted, and they won't let us carry fuel in molar cans. No matter what rules the higher-ups issue, the officers on the ground do not follow any proper law. It's fuel; we should be able to buy it as we need. But we can't. Since we aren't allowed to carry diesel in containers, how are we supposed to transport it?" a local resident in Myingyan town said.

Locals also noted that they are sometimes unable to even collect free food and aid provided by donors for internally displaced persons (IDPs), because traveling to collect the aid can cost around 9,000 kyats (approx. USD 2.90) in motorcycle fuel, compounded by fuel scarcity and the excessive time required to obtain it.

In Myingyan District, major fuel stations sell fuel at an average of 7,500 kyats (approx. USD 2.42) per liter. Unofficial retailers resell it at 9,000 to 10,000 kyats (approx. USD 2.90 to 3.23) per liter, though residents say purchasing fuel is highly challenging even at these inflated black-market rates.



Photo: Supplied

DESPITE MYANMAR JUNTA CONTROL OF INDIA-MYANMAR BORDER TRADE ROUTE, REOPENING REMAINS UNCERTAIN

Following discussions during Myanmar junta leader Min Aung Hlaing's visit to India from 30 May to 3 June to expedite completion of the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway and the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project, the Myanmar junta launched ground offensives to secure territorial control along the route, according to local sources.

The India-Myanmar border road section, which had been under the control of the People's Defense Forces (PDF) and allied revolutionary groups for over two years, was targeted by junta forces starting 7 June. Using thousands of troops, airstrikes, and heavy artillery, the junta launched a two-pronged offensive from Tamu and Kalay, announcing on 31 July that it had secured control of the route.

"Their control is limited only to the main highway and adjacent camps. The PDF and allied forces are still present in the area, so we cannot say that the trade route will reopen easily," a source monitoring border trade told Mizzima.

The Nanmuntah and Twi Van bridges, damaged during clashes along the now junta-controlled Tamu-Kalay road section, are currently undergoing repairs, with no confirmed completion date, the source said.

Even if the road and bridges are repaired, the source said, clashes could break out again at any time, and trade would not run smoothly without the consent of the local, terrain-expert PDFs, who temporarily withdrew during the fighting to prevent civilian casualties.

Currently, passenger and cargo trucks can travel from Kalay to Khampat, but travelers must bypass through India by motorcycle via Kamma Gyi to reach Tamu.

Junta military personnel stationed along the seized road section and at strategic bases are reportedly being replaced by Special Police Commandos, while the junta is also conducting clearance operations and working to establish Pyusawhti pro-junta militia groups in local villages.

In addition to the Tamu-Kalay section of the Asian Highway, the junta has launched renewed offensives targeting PDF-controlled areas along the Kalay-Yagyi-Monywa road section.

Although the junta claimed to have gained control of this road section on 7 July after launching its first offensive on 2 June, resistance forces told Mizzima this was merely a "rush-and-photo-op" column, and that they have since reasserted dominance over the area.

Since 15 August, two military columns one from Kalewa and one from the Monywa-based Northwestern Military Command have been advancing along this 115-mile road section.

A PDF military official told Mizzima that as of 24 August, the roughly 400-strong column from Kalewa was near Taung Dwin Chaung in Mingin Township, while the column from Monywa, whose strength is still being verified, was in Chaung Ma, Kani Township.

"There have been no major clashes yet; we are still monitoring the situation. We are waiting to see if they will set up permanent camps or just rush through like before," he said, adding that if junta forces establish bases and conduct clearance operations, intense fighting could erupt, and the junta might deploy gyrocopters in addition to fixed-wing aircraft.

Led by India, the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway Project is estimated to cost around 12 billion rupees (approx. USD 125.8 million). The highway will connect Moreh in Manipur State, India, through Myanmar via Tamu, Kalay, Kalewa, Mingin, Yagyi, Kani, Monywa, Mandalay, Meiktila, Naypyitaw, Bago, and Myawaddy, to Mae Sot in Tak Province, Thailand.

Regarding the highway project, Indian Ambassador to Myanmar Abhay Thakur and junta-appointed Sagaing Region Chief Minister U Ko Lay met and held discussions with departmental staff, Indian road construction workers, and civil society organizations at the Theint Hotel hall in Kalay, Sagaing Region, on 26 July.



VIETNAM EXPRESSES SUPPORT FOR MYANMAR'S GOVERNMENT AND EXPANDS DEFENSE AND DIGITAL COOPERATION

Vietnam's foreign minister congratulated Myanmar's military-backed government on what he called a "successful" general election earlier this year, as the two countries agreed on 26 August to expand defence training, telecommunications and digital cooperation during his first visit to Naypyidaw since the 2021 coup.

Foreign Minister Le Hoai Trung, who co-chaired the 10th meeting of the Vietnam-Myanmar Joint Committee for Bilateral Cooperation with junta leader Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, agreed with Myanmar officials to expand delegation exchanges, training cooperation and young officers' exchanges between the two militaries. The two sides also agreed to cooperate on search and rescue, disaster relief, bomb and mine clearance, humanitarian assistance and military medicine, according to Vietnamese state media.

Min Aung Hlaing pledged continued support for Vietnamese businesses operating in Myanmar, including Mytel, a mobile network operator linked to Vietnam's military-run Viettel group. An investigation by the rights group Justice For Myanmar found in January that Mytel could generate more than \$700 million for the Myanmar military over the coming decade, citing leaked documents. The group said Viettel, which is controlled by Vietnam's defence ministry, has provided the military with technology, infrastructure and training under a defence cooperation agreement signed in 2011.

The two sides also agreed to work toward

increasing bilateral trade to \$1 billion and to convene a Joint Trade Sub-Committee meeting soon to address barriers including import licensing, quarantine and customs procedures. Bilateral trade fell from \$853 million in 2020 to \$590 million in 2025, and stood at \$335 million in the first half of 2026. Vietnam has 107 valid investment projects in Myanmar with total registered capital of \$1.4 billion as of 30 June.

At a separate meeting, Trung congratulated Speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw and Union Solidarity and Development Party chairman Khin Yi on Myanmar's "successful" general election in early 2026 and the new government's achievements in stabilising the country. Myanmar's military organised the election after excluding major opposition forces, and the USDP dominated the process. ASEAN has not recognised the result, and Western governments and rights groups have dismissed it as neither free nor inclusive.

The visit follows a broader pattern of individual ASEAN members increasing bilateral contact with Naypyidaw even as the bloc withholds collective recognition. Min Aung Hlaing has also visited Thailand and Laos this year, and Cambodia is preparing to host him on a state visit in September.

Neither government has released the full agreed minutes from the Joint Committee meeting. It remains unclear whether the defence cooperation agreed on 26 August involves any new memorandum beyond the 2011 agreement, or whether it includes new financial commitments related to Mytel.



PHILIPPINES LAUNCHES ASEAN ENERGY BUSINESS FORUM 2026, DRIVES REGIONAL CLEAN ENERGY INVESTMENT

The Department of Energy (DOE) - Philippines, in collaboration with the ASEAN Centre for Energy (ACE) and Leverage International, officially launched the 26th ASEAN Energy Business Forum (AEBF-26), setting the stage for a major regional gathering aimed at advancing energy cooperation, investment, and connectivity across Southeast Asia.

Scheduled from 5 to 9 October 2026 in Metro Manila in parallel with the 44th ASEAN Energy Ministers Meeting, AEBF-26 will serve as a key platform for governments, industry leaders, investors, financial institutions, and other stakeholders to strengthen partnerships and mobilize investments supporting ASEAN's transition toward a more secure, interconnected, and sustainable energy future.

The forum is expected to bring together energy ministers from the 11 ASEAN Member States, global industry leaders, and more than 1,500 delegates from across the region and beyond.

AEBF 2026 will carry the theme "Clean Energy Unlocked: A Stronger ASEAN," with the sub-theme "Driving Innovation and Investment Toward a Sustainable Energy Future." The theme underscores

ASEAN's efforts to accelerate clean energy development while deepening regional cooperation and economic integration, complementing the Philippines' ASEAN-26 Chairship theme, "Navigating Our Future, Together."

Energy Secretary Sharon S. Garin said the Philippines' hosting of AEBF-26 provides an

important opportunity to translate ASEAN's shared energy priorities into stronger partnerships, concrete investments, and projects that benefit the region.

"ASEAN's energy future will depend on how effectively we turn our shared ambitions into concrete investments, stronger regional connections, and projects that deliver reliable, affordable, and cleaner energy to our people. As ASEAN Chair, the Philippines wants AEBF-26 to be a platform where governments, industry, and investors move beyond discussions and build the partnerships needed to unlock the region's enormous energy potential," Secretary Garin said.

ACE Executive Director Dato' Ir. Ts. Razib Dawood underscored the scale of investment required to support ASEAN's growing energy requirements and clean energy transition.

"Our region needs around USD 200 billion in annual energy investment by 2030 and 75 percent of that, roughly USD 150 billion, must go toward clean energy. In 2021, we mobilized just USD 30 million. That gap is precisely what AEBF-26 exists to help close," Dawood said.

"Connecting ASEAN Energy Priorities with Business and Investment Opportunities"

AEBF-26 will feature policy dialogues, high-level roundtables, business-to-business engagements, and exhibitions covering key regional priorities, including the ASEAN Power Grid, Renewable Energy Certificates, energy efficiency, and energy financing and investment.

The Forum will also feature the Philippines Energy Investment Forum and the ASEAN Sustainable Aviation Fuel Conference, alongside the launch of the 9th ASEAN Energy Outlook and the ASEAN

Energy Investment Report, as well as activities under the Sustainable ASEAN Energy Management Accreditation Scheme (SEAMAS) Program for the Energy Efficiency Certification Scheme.

Building on the previous AEBF held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, AEBF-26 will provide a platform for governments and the private sector to advance regional energy priorities, develop partnerships, and help mobilize the capital and technologies required to meet ASEAN's growing energy needs.

The DOE and ACE are inviting stakeholders from government, industry, financial institutions, development organizations, and civil society to participate in AEBF-26 and contribute to discussions on ASEAN's energy future.

UN CHIEF URGES RENEWED GLOBAL ACTION ON ROHINGYA CRISIS ON 9TH ANNIVERSARY

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called for renewed international attention and action on the Rohingya crisis nearly a decade since the 2017 crackdown in Myanmar's Rakhine State, his spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said 25 August.

"Rohingya people in Myanmar, Bangladesh and across the region face deepening insecurity," Dujarric said, citing shrinking protection space and funding cuts affecting life-saving assistance. In Myanmar, Rohingya and other communities remain caught in conflict and displacement, facing grave human rights violations including by the military and the Arakan Army, he said, with hundreds of civilians killed every year and Rohingya exposed to forced recruitment, arbitrary arrest and sexual violence.

Guterres renewed his call for civilian protection under international law and voiced alarm over the rising number of Rohingya deaths at sea, urging regional

cooperation on search and rescue and action against human trafficking. He also expressed concern over misinformation and hate speech targeting Rohingya communities in the region, while thanking Bangladesh and other host countries for sheltering refugees.

The Secretary-General called for an inclusive political solution addressing the root causes of Myanmar's crisis, Dujarric said, noting that UN Special Envoy on Myanmar Julie Bishop continues engaging stakeholders toward ending the violence. Guterres urged continued humanitarian assistance and livelihood support for Rohingya until conditions allow safe, voluntary and dignified returns.



Rohingya refugees. Photo: Supplied

9TH ROHINGYA GENOCIDE REMEMBRANCE DAY: A CALL FOR JUSTICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY: WPN

The Women's Peace Network has just published a call for justice and accountability on the ninth anniversary of Rohingya Genocide Remembrance Day on the 25 August.

The following is their statement:

Today marks the 9th anniversary of the 2017 genocide against the Rohingya in Rakhine State. This Rohingya Genocide Remembrance Day stands as a crucial moment to not only look back at the atrocities that have occurred against the Rohingya in the past, but also a persecution that has continued since. As the conflict between the Arakan Army and Burmese

military junta continues to rage, the Rohingya face a nexus of atrocities perpetrated by both sides.

Reminiscent of the Burmese Army's genocidal campaign in 2017, the Arakan Army has targeted Rohingya populated areas in Rakhine State since 2024. Rohingya in these areas have been subjected to grave atrocities including arson attacks, forced transfer and demographic change, torture, arbitrary arrest and detention, forced labor and recruitment, sexual and gender-based violence, along with massacres of hundreds of Rohingya. At the same time, the Junta commits atrocity crimes against the Rohingya during what they maintain are defensive actions against the

enemy. Like the Arakan Army, these crimes constitute rape, looting, forced displacement, mass-killings, and forced recruitment. The Junta also maintains apartheid like conditions in Sittwe and other junta-controlled territories. Both sides' actions appear to be part of an effort at erasing the identity of the Rohingya: physically, socially, and culturally.

Consequently, besides violent acts, Rohingya are also subjected to systematic barriers to their continued survival. This is due to restrictions on their ability to create a livelihood, barriers to aid and vital resources, and overall conditions degrading the quality of life. The vulnerabilities of Rohingya in this situation make international response imperative. The patterns of persecution in the past persist today because perpetrators of genocide have not been held accountable.

To end the patterns of persecution the Rohingya face, effective accountability measures must be put into place. In order for changes to occur, legal response as well as political, must demonstrate that what has occurred will not be tolerated nor allowed to continue. The perpetrators of the genocide in Myanmar and the ongoing crimes against the Rohingya: including the Arakan Army and Burmese military junta, should be processed. A necessary step for this accountability would be the expedition of the international justice process; including the International Criminal Court (ICC) and International Court of Justice (ICJ) processes, as Rohingya face increasing vulnerability. The United Nations Security Council should refer the situation of Myanmar to the ICC in order to prosecute the entirety of the crimes committed under the Rome Statute.

Besides accountability, humanitarian aid must be increased as Rohingya internally and externally suffer under life threatening conditions. Inside Myanmar, conflict and barriers to resources such as blockages to aid, have left many Rohingya in jeopardy of disease and famine. Cross-border aid should be enabled with support from the international community and local civil society.

Outside of Myanmar in refugee camps, aid has to be given to supporting better infrastructure and creating proper habitation. Additional aid must be given to establish opportunities for Rohingya refugees. Education for children, programs aimed at promoting skills to build livelihoods and founding services to protect the most vulnerable in camps; particularly women and children, are all critical. Protections must also be put into place to serve Rohingya seeking refuge, including by taking measures against human trafficking networks according to the Bali Process, as well as cracking down on hate speech.

Ultimately, for change to occur the international community must involve the voices of the Rohingya who are the greatest stakeholders in plans for Myanmar's future. The Rohingya once again face an existential threat and unless a new approach is taken history will continue to repeat itself.



Aerial view of a Rohingya refugee camp in Bangladesh. Photo: AFP

ROHINGYA REFUGEES PROTEST DIRE CONDITIONS IN BANGLADESH CAMPS

Tens of thousands of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh's sprawling camps protested against dire conditions on 25 August, as they marked nine years since a military crackdown drove them out of neighbouring Myanmar.

More than 1.2 million Rohingya refugees, many of whom fled Myanmar during the brutal crackdown in 2017, live in about 30 overcrowded camps in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar, the world's largest refugee settlement.

Refugee group the United Council of Rohingya (UCR) said it organised the rally to "remember the atrocities committed" and highlight the "ongoing humanitarian crisis".

The protesters held placards, some reading "Justice for Rohingya, Hope is Home" and "Timely justice is our right".

Sayed Ullah, president of the UCR, said the refugees were desperate to return home.

"We can't keep waiting for the international community to facilitate our return," he told AFP. "We will do whatever it takes to ensure our safe return home."

Sabikunnahar, 32, who fled to Bangladesh in 2017, said memories remained painful.

"Beheading our near and dear ones, setting fire to our homes and evicting us from our land -- the military occupied our land around nine years ago," she said.

"On this day, my heart gets torn apart. Look at my eyes -- they are still wet with tears for my country."

Conditions in the camps have deteriorated with funding cuts and reduced food rations, aid agencies say. Children make up more than half the population.

"An entire generation of children is growing up in exile," said Golam Mostofa, who heads the charity Save the Children in the camps.

"Yet instead of seeing progress towards safety, rights and a lasting solution, families are facing worsening hunger, fewer opportunities and deepening uncertainty about their future," he added.

One in three refugees is expected to face "crisis" hunger levels or worse between September and December, according to Save the Children.

'No hope'

Moulovi Abdus Salam, 41, who arrived in Bangladesh last year, said his family fled after gunmen "raped our women, killed my brothers and looted my shop".

Salam said life in Bangladesh has brought new hardships, with food rations covering "a maximum of 20 days".

"We don't want the life of a refugee," he said, questioning whether a proposed repatriation process would guarantee Rohingya rights and safety.

"My request to the international community is to create the conditions for us to return home."

Growing desperation has driven some refugees to attempt dangerous sea journeys.

Sikandar, 75, who arrived in Bangladesh in 2017, said there was "no hope" of a safe return to Myanmar.

"They tortured us, raped our women and killed many of our relatives," he said.

"There is no hope for us to return home. There are no realistic plans that can be implemented."

"It's hard to live in a camp. None of us is living here comfortably -- not a single one of us."

Sikandar said humanitarian aid was insufficient, including food provided by the World Food Programme and healthcare from other organisations.

Bangladeshi authorities say they are already overstretched and have called for the dignified return of the Rohingya to their homeland.

The 2017 Myanmar crackdown, which saw Rohingya villages burned and civilians killed, is the subject of a genocide case at the UN's top court in The Hague.

In a joint statement published by the British High Commission in Bangladesh on Tuesday, diplomatic missions in the country said the conditions in Myanmar did not allow for safe repatriation of the refugees.

"Rohingya refugees have a right to return to their homes in Myanmar," the statement said.

"Regrettably, conflict is escalating across Rakhine and humanitarian need is rising. Deepening insecurity, airstrikes on civilian infrastructure and the Myanmar authorities' blockades on aid and trade are worsening the humanitarian crisis."

AFP



Photo: AFP

ONE IN THREE ROHINGYA REFUGEES FACE CRISIS HUNGER AS FUNDING CUTS DEEPEN NINE-YEAR DISPLACEMENT

More than one in three Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar camps, the world's largest refugee settlement, are expected to face crisis-level hunger or worse between September and December, a five-percentage-point rise from last year driven by international funding cuts, nine years after they fled violence in Myanmar.

According to Save the Children, 35% of the roughly 1.2 million refugees living in the camps are classified under the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) as facing "crisis" hunger levels or worse, including 10% at the more severe "emergency" level, up from 30% a year earlier. The decline follows cuts by international donors that have forced aid agencies to shrink food rations over the past year, compounding overcrowding and limited access to clean water and livelihoods inside the camps.

The camps have swelled since 2017, when hundreds of thousands of Rohingya fled a violent military crackdown in Myanmar's Rakhine State. Nine years on, an entire generation of Rohingya children has grown up knowing only life in displacement, with no resolution in sight for a safe return to Myanmar or resettlement elsewhere. Thousands of refugees marked the anniversary this week with protests in the camps demanding an end to the crisis.

For Ramida, a 30-year-old Rohingya refugee interviewed by Save the Children, the toll has been

direct. She said financial hardship during her pregnancy meant "I couldn't eat as I wanted to and I couldn't get what I needed." Her son Rakib, now three, was born underweight and was later treated for severe acute malnutrition at Save the Children's Maternal and Child Health Hospital in the camp. Malnutrition in mothers raises the risk of low birth weight and lifelong health complications in children, the organisation said.

Conditions in the camps have deteriorated further this year: landslides triggered by monsoon rains in July killed ten children, including students and a teacher, while a record number of about 900 Rohingya, including children, were reported missing or dead at sea in 2025 after attempting dangerous boat journeys in search of safety elsewhere.

Golam Mostofa, who heads Save the Children's Cox's Bazar office, said the hunger crisis was not simply a matter of food scarcity but the consequence of a humanitarian emergency left unresolved for nearly a decade, leaving children without adequate protection, education or a genuine path forward.

Save the Children is calling on the international community to close the humanitarian funding gap and for governments to protect refugee rights and accelerate durable solutions for Rohingya families beyond indefinite displacement.



MALAYSIA TO REPATRIATE FIRST GROUP OF MYANMAR NATIONALS IN SEPTEMBER

Malaysia has finalised the first phase of a voluntary repatriation programme involving eligible Myanmar nationals, with almost 1,500 individuals expected to return home on September 29, the government said on 27 August.

Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim announced in July that Myanmar had agreed to take back 5,000 members of the persecuted Rohingya minority, in a rare repatriation push that has prompted concern from rights groups.

Malaysia hosts more than 215,000 refugees and asylum seekers registered with the UN refugee agency, including more than 126,000 Rohingya from Myanmar, its largest refugee community.

"The first phase of the voluntary repatriation programme will take place on September 29 involving 1,476 Myanmar nationals who have been identified by the Myanmar government through a diplomatic note," Malaysia's home ministry said in a statement.

"The repatriation process will use two Myanmar naval warships and a hospital ship," it said.

The ministry said 4,008 individuals will go through a programme for registered refugees, while 5,000 others will undergo voluntary repatriation as agreed by the Myanmar government.

There were 10,388 Myanmar nationals held at immigration detention depots by mid-August, the ministry said, with not all considered refugees.

Malaysia's immigration department is working with the police to verify the identity, citizenship, immigration status, asylum claims and security background of the

detainees by the end of the year.

"More than 95 percent of refugees in Malaysia are from Myanmar, including Rohingya, Chin, Karen and Mon communities," the ministry said.

Malaysia was also negotiating with Myanmar "to ensure the repatriation process is carried out in an orderly, dignified" manner, it said.

The repatriation plan was announced after Malaysian authorities detained more than 100 Rohingya who had gathered outside the UN refugee agency's office in Kuala Lumpur.

The refugees were being threatened with eviction from an informal settlement in northern Penang state.

They were later released after officials confirmed they held valid UN documentation.

Malaysia's main Rohingya rights group urged the government to halt the plan, saying the refugees' lives would be at risk if returned.

Malaysia, which shelters one of Southeast Asia's biggest refugee populations, is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and does not formally recognise refugee status.

AFP fact-checkers have found that Rohingya refugees in Malaysia have been targeted by online disinformation campaigns that rights advocates say are fuelling xenophobia and intimidation.

Many of the Rohingya, a mostly Muslim group, escaped Myanmar during a brutal military crackdown in 2017.

AFP



TEA & COFFEE ACROSS ASIA 2026 BUSINESS MATCHMAKING EXPO

The Tea & Coffee Across Asia 2026 expo was held at Chiang Mai University, focusing on trade opportunities for exporting tea and coffee products from Thailand and other Asian regions to European markets.

The two-day event took place on 28 to 29 August at the UNISERV Building of Chiang Mai University.

At the opening ceremony, keynote speeches were delivered by Akom Suwanganta, Chairman of Northern Cluster 1 of the Thai SME Federation; Sathin Chuajedton, Vice President of the Young Entrepreneur Chamber of Commerce (YEC) under the Chiang Mai Chamber of Commerce; and Pranav Ganesh, Consul at the Consulate of India in Chiang Mai.

In his opening address, Akom Suwanganta said: "We hope to pave a way to integrate tea and coffee produced in the cold mountainous areas of northern Thailand and the Myanmar border region into the global market. Our aim is to build a network that connects local farmers' products to the highly regulated and hard-to-penetrate European market through multi-sectoral SMEs."

Young entrepreneur Sathin Chuajedton said: "I would like to share my limited experience on how to enter a global market governed by strict regulations."

Indian Consul Pranav Ganesh said: "Today, there is a massive shift among European consumers. They now purchase agricultural products that are responsibly sourced, environmentally friendly, and produced under sustainable, ethical practices throughout the

production chain. The taste of tea originating from Asia's unique geographical landscapes is irreplaceable, it is not merely a taste, but a geographical identity."

A live "Coffee Artist Performance," featuring painting with coffee, was also showcased by artist Susan Chan during the opening ceremony.

The exhibition featured coffee and tea cultivated and produced in Thailand, Myanmar, India, and Taiwan.

The Tea & Coffee Across Asia 2026 Business Matchmaking Expo serves as a platform to help identify international trade and investment opportunities for those in the tea and coffee sectors and related industries.



TEA & COFFEE ACROSS ASIA 2026

From Thailand & Asia to Europe — Creating New Export Opportunities

Consul of India Mr Pranav Ganesh

28-29 AUGUST 2026

UNISERV Building, Chiang Mai University • Chiang Mai, Thailand

INDIAN CONSUL STRESSES THE IMPORTANCE OF THE TEA AND COFFEE TRADE AT TEA & COFFEE ACROSS ASIA 2026 MEETING

A two-day meeting was held in Chiang Mai, Thailand entitled: "Tea & Coffee Across Asia 2026: From Thailand & Asia to Europe, Creating New Export Opportunities" from 28 to 29 August that brings together tea and coffee producers in the region to look at marketing opportunities.

Consul of India Mr Pranav Ganesh gave the following speech:

A very warm good morning to you all.

It is an absolute privilege and an honor to stand before you today at the opening of Tea and Coffee Across Asia 2026. I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations and gratitude to the organizing committee. You have successfully created a premier platform that does not just bring businesses together, but bridges continents, cultures, and traditions.

We gather here in Chiang Mai, a region that is internationally celebrated for its breathtaking landscapes and its deep-rooted agricultural heritage. There could not be a more fitting host city for this cross-continental dialogue. Today, we are mapping out

a clear trajectory for agricultural trade: moving from the highlands of Thailand and the diverse terrains of Asia, straight into the highly sophisticated markets of Europe.

When we look at tea and coffee, we are looking at commodities that carry the very weight of human history. For centuries, these beverages have defined empires, sparked revolutions, and shaped the social rituals of billions. The ancient Silk Road, the historic Tea Horse Road, and the Maritime spice routes were the original networks that carried Asian flavors to Western shores.

Today, Asia is no longer just raw material exporters. Asia is now the global hub for premium cultivation, artisanal processing, and beverage innovation. The theme of this event - creating new export opportunities to Europe - is both timely and strategic. The European consumer market is undergoing a massive paradigm shift. Today's European consumers are not merely looking for a caffeine kick or a comforting hot drink. They are looking for a story.

They demand:

- Absolute transparency in the supply chain
- Ethical and sustainable farming practices
- Geographical indications (GI) that guarantee authenticity
- Health benefits and organic purity

This presents a goldmine of opportunities for Asian producers. From the unique shade-grown coffees of Thailand and the volcanic profile of Indonesian beans, to the historic, mist-shrouded tea estates of India, Asia offers an unparalleled spectrum of flavors. By focusing on quality and compliance, we can firmly establish Asian tea and coffee as the gold standard in Europe.

As the representative of India, it is impossible for me to speak on this topic without highlighting India's monumental role in the global tea landscape. For generations, we have perfected the art of the perfect brew.

Our diverse geography gives birth to unique flavors that cannot be replicated anywhere else on earth. We have:

- Darjeeling: Known universally as the "Champagne of Teas," grown in the foothills of the Himalayas, celebrated for its muscatel flavor.
- Assam: Grown in the lowlands, known for its rich, full-bodied, and malty strength - the backbone of breakfast blends globally.
- Nilgiri: Cultivated in the blue mountains of Southern India, offering a dark, intensely aromatic, and remarkably smooth cup.

These are not just agricultural products; they are protected geographical legacies. India's strict adherence to international food safety standards, sustainable labor practices, and carbon-neutral farming initiatives makes our tea industry fully primed to meet the rigorous demands of the European Union. We are eager to share these frameworks, technologies, and trade insights with our neighbors across Southeast Asia.

However, international diplomacy and global trade cannot rely solely on government-to-government agreements. Real, lasting impact happens when we

build local roots. The Consulate of India believes that to truly promote Indian culture and commerce, we must engage directly with the community here in Thailand.

To bring this philosophy to life at this exhibition, the Consulate has forged a very special partnership. We have teamed up with Fine August Tea, an exceptional local entity right here in Chiang Mai.

Fine August Tea has done incredible work in Thailand. They act as cultural and culinary ambassadors, passionately introducing Thai consumers to the rich, complex, and robust profiles of genuine Indian tea. They understand the local palate, and they know exactly how to blend Indian heritage with contemporary Thai lifestyle trends.

I warmly invite every single one of you to visit their kiosk and taste the depth of authentic Indian teas.

As we look toward the European market, our greatest asset is our collective strength. This exhibition should not just be a marketplace for individual booths; it must be the incubator for new ideas.

I call upon the producers, exporters and policymakers present here today to use these few days to:

- Form regional alliances that can stabilize and strengthen our supply chains.
- Share technological innovations in smart packaging and eco-friendly processing.
- Collaborate on joint marketing efforts to project Asia as the capital of premium, luxury hot beverages.

In conclusion, I would like to once again thank the organizers for their brilliant vision, and express my gratitude to Fine August Tea for standing alongside the Consulate to represent the best of India.

I wish all the exhibitors, delegates and international buyers a highly productive, inspiring and commercially successful event. May your discussions be fruitful, your networks expand across oceans, and your cups always remain overflowing.

Thank you very much. Sawadee Khrap.



Mizzima s.r.o.

CONNECT • TRADE • INVEST

Asian Tea & Coffee Festival

Prague 2026

IMPORT FROM THAILAND & ASIA TO EUROPE

Discover Premium Tea & Coffee | Explore Business Opportunities | Build Global Partnerships

23 OCTOBER 2026
PRAGUE, CZECH REPUBLIC

OFFICIAL VENUE PARTNER
OPERO
PRAGUE

For the Burmese Diaspora in Europe
Meet businesses, build networks, and connect with opportunities.

For Thai & Asian Companies
Expand your market, export to Europe, and grow your brand with new partners.

Premium Products from Thailand & Asia
Tea • Coffee • Accessories
Innovation • Quality • Culture

Business Networking
Meet importers, distributors, retailers, investors, and industry experts.

Global Connections
Build partnerships that create long-term business success.

+420-608616688 | mizzima@mizzima.com

Asian Tea & Coffee Festival Prague 2026 brings together producers, entrepreneurs, importers, and investors from Thailand, Asia, and Europe for a unique platform of trade, networking, and cultural exchange. Discover exceptional tea and coffee, explore investment and export opportunities, and build partnerships that grow together. Be part of the movement connecting Asia's finest with Europe's future.

The Asian Tea & Coffee Festival will be held in Prague in the Czech Republic at the Opero on 23 October 2026. The aim is to bring together those interested in connecting, trading and investing in products from the hot beverage industry in Asia.

The festival aims to bring together those interested in the Asian hot beverage industry in Europe, including Thai and Asian companies, and members of the Myanmar diaspora in Europe.

This will be a great opportunity to look into premium products from Thailand and Asia, and to look

into business networking opportunities, and develop global opportunities.

Be part of a movement connecting Asia's finest with Europe's future.

Connect through mizzima@mizzima.com (Mizzima S.R.O.) Phone: +420 6086i6688

An Update to Mizzima Readers

Mizzima continues independent journalism for Myanmar despite repression, censorship, security risks and financial pressure.



1. FUNDING REALITY

Donor funding is now almost none, although we continue to seek support.

2. HOW MIZZIMA IS SUSTAINING ITSELF



YouTube and digital monetization



Training and Mizzima Media Training Institute



AI and Mizzima EAE for research, content regeneration and production



Content repackaging across TV, Facebook, YouTube and digital platforms



Mizzima Weekly, Mizzima English and policy products



HH Channel and diaspora community services



Production services, events, partnerships and sponsorships



Agriculture, tea and coffee, restaurants, shops and marketplace initiatives



Thank you for standing with Mizzima.

Mizzima

Truth. Voice. Future.

- YouTube and digital monetization
- Training and Mizzima Media Training Institute
- AI Technology through Mizzima EAE for research, content regeneration and production
- Repackaging content across TV, Facebook, YouTube and digital platforms
- Mizzima Weekly, Mizzima English and policy products
- Home Away From Home - HH Channel and diaspora community services
- Production services, events, partnerships and sponsorships
- Non-media business initiatives.

AI does not replace our journalists. It helps us work faster and smarter, while human editors remain responsible for accuracy, verification, ethics and editorial judgment.

AN UPDATE TO MIZZIMA READERS AND FRIENDS

Since the 2021 coup, Mizzima has continued independent journalism under very difficult conditions — revoked licenses, office raids, frozen bank accounts, arrests, surveillance, censorship, security risks and financial pressure.

But we continue because Myanmar still needs independent, reliable and verified information.

Today, one difficult reality is that donor funding is now almost none, although we continue to seek support wherever possible.

At the same time, Mizzima is working hard to sustain itself through self-generated revenue and new initiatives, including:

Mizzima is not only trying to survive. We are adapting, modernizing and building for the future — through media, technology, community services and practical business initiatives that can support our public-interest journalism.

Thank you to our readers, viewers, partners, friends and supporters for standing with Mizzima.

Truth. Voice. Future.

#Mizzima #Myanmar #IndependentMedia
#PressFreedom #MizzimaEAE #MediaResilience
#MediaSustainability



A town damaged by the flood.
Photo: AFP

RESCUERS DIG INTO TUNNEL AS MISSING TOLL FROM NEPAL, CHINA FLOOD TOPS 3,000

Rescuers in Nepal and China battled through leg-sucking mud, as well as the threat of rising rivers and a newly formed lake, on Sunday to search for thousands missing after a deadly wall of water and debris swept through the Himalayas, engulfing entire villages.

Latest figures from both countries put the number of missing at 3,048, including hundreds of foreigners. There were 768 confirmed deaths, with reports of some bodies possibly swept downstream as far away as India.

Nepal said it had begun the grim task of burying some of the hundreds of bodies on 30 August, after first taking DNA samples so that families could later reclaim them and perform traditional funeral rites once they had been identified.

The disaster, which struck the China-Nepal border Wednesday morning, was caused by a glacial collapse, sending a wall of water and debris downstream, the US Geological Survey said.

Nepali army troops and engineers also drilled through debris on Sunday towards hydropower workers believed trapped in a tunnel at the Trishuli 3A

hydroelectric site in the Himalayan river valley after they successfully inserted a pipe into the passage.

They have "started sending air through the small opening", Nepali Home Minister Sudan Gurung said in a statement.

Overnight rain and rising river waters hampered efforts earlier on Sunday, filling the excavation area with water before conditions eased, the Nepal army said.

Nepal's disaster authority listed 933 hydropower workers among the missing in an area home to vast energy infrastructure projects.

Chinese rescuers near the Tibet border port that was hit by a deadly mudslide were "moved to a safe location" on Sunday after a new lake was formed by a landslide, state media reported.

China's state news agency Xinhua reported on Sunday that experts had said "a glacier on the southern slope of Lirung Peak in Nepal" fractured, triggering an ice-rock avalanche.

The torrent plummeted rapidly, forming a massive debris flow that travelled more than 20 kilometres (12 miles) before crashing into Gyirong Port.

"The sudden glacial collapse and flash flood is a devastating reminder of how fragile these mountain environments can be," UN climate chief Simon Stiell said in a statement.

'Nothing left'

Survivors face an agonising wait to learn the fate of missing relatives and the prospect of rebuilding their lives from nothing.

"All the settlements near the river were swept away," resident Buddhi Ram Dangol told AFP in Nepal's Nuwakot district.

"There is nothing left."

Worried relatives crowded around lists of rescued people pasted on a wall at an army base serving as a rescue hub in the district capital Bidur.

Nepal's disaster authority said on Sunday 592 foreigners, including trekkers and Hindu pilgrims to Tibet's sacred Mount Kailash, were among the missing.

The Isha Foundation, led by Indian guru Sadhguru, said in an Instagram post on Saturday that 80 members had been on a group trip in the area.

"At this time, there seems to be no encouraging indications of survivors at the immigration office area," it said.

'Enormous' trauma

The United States and Canada said they would provide \$3.6 million each in humanitarian aid to Nepal.

The UK has offered \$6.8 million, while the UN released \$2.5 million in emergency funding, and aid pledges were made by the European Union, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and others.

Nepal's economy is already under pressure, with limited resources to respond to a disaster of this scale. Foreign Minister Shisir Khanal said the reconstruction bill could run into "billions of dollars".

He appealed for specialised assistance, including heavy-lift drones and technology to help locate people who are trapped.

Malaysia said it would send search-and-rescue specialists to assist.

Khanal also called for forensic testing kits to identify corpses and freezer units to store them, saying bodies that have been in water could decompose at a faster rate.

The deluge of ice and mud caused huge lakes, and one of those formations has become a risk for further floods.

The Chinese and Nepali foreign ministers spoke on Saturday and discussed sharing satellite and hydrological data, both sides said.

In Tibet, where Chinese authorities are the only source of information, rescue operations were paused at the hardest-hit area of Gyirong because of the risk of more flooding from a newly formed lake.

However, state broadcaster CCTV said late on Saturday that the lake was "discharging naturally" and had been "essentially drained", citing China's ministry of water resources.

A total of 2,141 rescuers were near the Gyirong site, the Xinhua state news agency said.

Pilgrimage route

Nepal reported a death toll of 752 people on Sunday, with 2,502 people unaccounted for.

Across the border in Tibet, 16 people died and 546 remain missing, CCTV reported.

Authorities also said they had evacuated 555 stranded tourists and 499 Chinese residents from Tibet.

In India, officials said they had recovered seven bodies from rivers flowing from Nepal, believed to be flood victims.

AFP



Tehran. Photo: AFP

IRAN ATTACKS US TARGETS DESPITE TRUMP THREATS

Iran attacked US military bases in Kuwait on 3 September, despite US President Donald Trump threatening further strikes in a fresh flare-up six months into the war.

Trump said his military was prepared to attack Iran "any time we want" after extensive US bombardment of sites across the country left at least 19 Iranians dead.

Tehran retaliated by hitting US military targets across the Middle East, including in Kuwait, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan region.

The clashes deepen the ongoing impasse in the war, as Iran maintains a stranglehold on the Strait of Hormuz oil export route and the US presses its counter-blockade of Iranian ports.

Security chief Mohsen Rezaei warned the United States that Iran had adopted a "new strategy" in the war that "will shatter your foundations".

Kuwait's army said Thursday it was intercepting a missile and drone attack from Iran, with Iranian state TV confirming that Tehran was targeting US bases in the Gulf state "in response to America's crimes against the Iranian people".

The latest round of fighting began when Washington hit Iranian targets on Sunday, the first known strikes in several weeks, saying it was trying to stop Tehran placing sea mines in the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran said Sunday's strikes resulted in "casualties" and responded by targeting US troops in Jordan and the United Arab Emirates.

Projectiles also struck two oil tankers in unclaimed attacks, one of which killed two Filipino sailors, according to a Saudi shipping company.

'Maximum pressure'

Aside from military action, Washington has vowed to choke Iran's economy, threatening to slap sanctions on its trade partners.

Energy Secretary Chris Wright pledged on Wednesday that a US plan for expanded sanctions targeting the Islamic republic's economic partners would deliver "absolutely maximum pressure".

Trump also suggested on Wednesday renaming the Strait of Hormuz, a strategic shipping lane that Tehran has effectively shut for six months, as "Trump Strait" -- although he implied later that he wasn't serious.

"Now that we have it under U.S.A. control, should we change the name Hormuz Strait to TRUMP STRAIT???" the US president wrote on Truth Social.

Iran's pummelling of US military targets across the region came after a US attack that hit a wedding in the country's south, prompting fury from Tehran.

The Iranian Red Crescent said shrapnel from the missile attack in the coastal town of Kuhestak killed four people, including a child, and wounded more than 50.

The US military did not address the attack directly.

US Central Command (CENTCOM) spokesman Tim Hawkins said "the US military never targets civilians, unlike the IRGC," referring to Iran's Revolutionary Guards.

'Acts like Satan'

Iran's top negotiator Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf lashed out at Washington over the wedding attack, calling the United States "Satan".

"If a power acts like Satan, picks targets like Satan, and kills like Satan, it's Satan," he posted on X.

Iranians expressed regret at the return to hostilities.

Hossein Moazami, 50, who is self-employed, called the attacks "truly distressing."

"I hope they all return to the negotiating table because the only people suffering from this are the Iranian people," he said. "The Americans are on the other side of the world and nothing happens to them."

A video shared by an Iranian government account showed debris and damage at what it said was the wedding site in Kuhestak following the US strike, with people heard screaming in the background.

"It is a very saddening incident," Ali Mallahi, father of the bride and owner of the building that was hit, said in a video carried by state TV.

"Thank God the casualties were not higher."

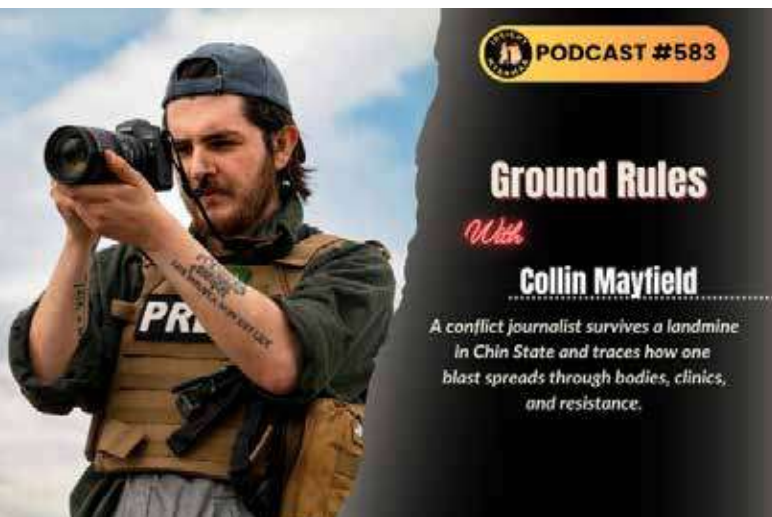
The war erupted on February 28 with US-Israeli attacks on Iran that killed its supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

A fragile ceasefire collapsed after attacks on commercial ships in the Strait of Hormuz, through which one-fifth of world oil supplies previously flowed.

Israel's defence minister said meanwhile that his country was prepared to respond "with great force" if attacked by Iran over the Jewish high holiday season, which begins in mid-September.

"For now, they are striking throughout the region except us," Israel Katz told a conference hosted by Israeli media outlets.

AFP



GROUND RULES

“If you can maim them, you can get multiple people off of a battlefield, and it’s also a terror tactic as well.”

Collin Mayfield, an American journalist and documentary filmmaker, spent months embedded with the resistance group People’s Defense Force Zoland in western Myanmar’s Chin State during visits in 2023 and 2025. After stepping on an M14 “toe-popper” mine during his second trip, he came to understand the weapon not only through the moment of explosion, but through the chain of people, supplies, surgeries, and years of care required to keep one survivor alive. A mine may detonate once, but its damage continues through a medical system the Myanmar military has deliberately deprived of resources. In this episode in our Navigating A Minefield series, Mayfield describes the landmine contamination now facing Myanmar, and his own personal journey of trauma and recovery.

Even before his own injury, Mayfield encountered the threat across Chin State. Locals repeatedly warned him away from mined sections of towns and villages; rain sometimes exposed devices in the soil, and during one journey an explosion in the distance turned out to be a cow stepping on a mine. He personally knows roughly a dozen soldiers who have lost legs, and he doubts that

anyone in the state remains untouched by the weapon through family, friends, or neighbors.

The logic of Myanmar’s military extends beyond removing one person from a battlefield. A wounded fighter requires evacuation, first aid, clinical treatment, rehabilitation, and the work of other soldiers, while a wounded civilian draws on the same resistance-run hospitals and clinics. These groups are not only fighting; they are trying to operate schools, medical facilities, and local administrations. Mining villages sympathetic to the resistance therefore punishes civilians while consuming the limited resources of the structures attempting to govern them.

That threat also disciplines ordinary movement. People continue farming and tending animals because survival leaves no alternative, but a path known to be safe becomes a boundary that cannot casually be crossed. “People have to be exhaustingly vigilant and exhaustingly careful,” Mayfield says. If a cow wanders into an uncertain forest, a family may still have to retrieve it because their livelihood depends on the animal, turning an ordinary decision into a wager against the ground.

Mayfield had already seen what losing that wager meant in 2023. During a reconnaissance mission near Kennedy Mountain, a PDF-Zoland soldier stepped on a mine and suffered a shredded left leg. With no operating room available, medics amputated on a plastic tarp in the forest, searching for torn veins and suturing them while he drifted in and out of consciousness. The scene remained with Mayfield when he returned two years later.

CATCH THE PODCAST

Read more and listen to the Insight Myanmar Podcast here: <https://insightmyanmar.org/complete-shows/2026/8/3/episode-583-ground-rules>



MYANMAR AND THAILAND DISCUSS BORDER SECURITY, TRANSNATIONAL CRIME AND BILATERAL COOPERATION: MEDIA

Myanmar and Thailand discussed ways to strengthen bilateral relations, border security and cooperation in combatting transnational crime during a meeting in Naypyidaw between senior security officials from the two countries, according to the Global New Light of Myanmar.

Tin Aung San, National Security Adviser and Union Minister at the Office of the President, received a delegation led by Mr Chatchai Bangchuad, Secretary-General of Thailand's National Security Council, at the Office of the President in Naypyidaw on the afternoon of 28 August, the newspaper reports.

The two sides exchanged views on strengthening bilateral relations, border security and cooperation,

efforts to combat transnational crime, online scams and drug trafficking. They also discussed cooperation in information security, border crossings and bilateral trade, environmental conservation, and ASEAN regional engagement and development.

Deputy ministers, departmental heads and officials from the President's Office, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, and the Ministry of Commerce attended the meeting.

The relationship between the two countries has improved following a recent state visit by Myanmar junta leader Min Aung Hlaing to Thailand.



MYANMAR FACEBOOK USERS SAY FEAR HAS SILENCED ONLINE SPEECH

Myanmar Facebook users are comparing this week online climate to the surveillance-heavy teashops of military-ruled decades, after two Mon State residents were arrested this month for comments left on a resistance group's Facebook page.

"It's reached the point where we're afraid to do anything now," one user writes. Another draws a direct parallel to the past: people could no longer speak freely in teashops, they say, and "now we can't say anything online either."

The comparison follows the 8 August arrests of Phyu Pwint Wai, 29, and Zin Min Khine, 50, both from Mon State, after authorities reviewed their comments on the Facebook page of Ye Bilu, an armed group in Ye Township. Phyu Pwint Wai had wished the group's fighters safety and success; Zin Min Khine left similar

words of encouragement. Both were charged under Section 52(a) of the Counter-Terrorism Law, a provision used since the 2021 coup against online support for anti-junta groups, including the National Unity Government.

The arrests sit inside a wider system. On 30 June, the military confirmed a new committee, led by Deputy Home Affairs Minister Min Thu, to monitor internet activity around the clock, and officials say more than 21,000 online users have faced action since 2024.

A June study by Human Rights Myanmar found comments on media posts down 42 percent and shares down 63 percent since 2021, evidence, researchers say, of growing self-censorship.

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.