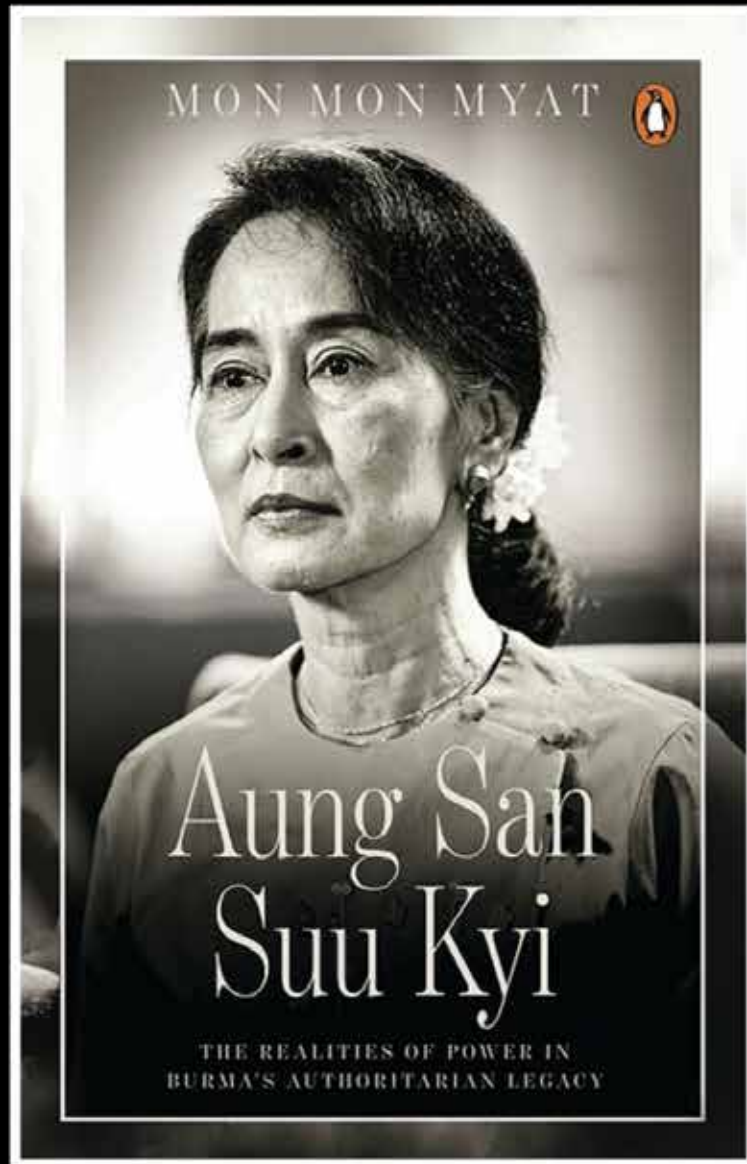


ON THE GROUND IN MYANMAR

mizzima WEEKLY

Analysis & Insight



The Complex Legacy of Suu Kyi's Political Philosophy

BOOK REVIEW

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.

VAN'S VICTORY SENDS MESSAGE TO THE BURMESE PEOPLE

Sport cannot end a war, bring political prisoners home or repair a shattered economy. But at moments of profound national hardship, sport can do something else that is also important - it can give people a reason to smile, to celebrate together and to remember that their country is capable of producing moments of achievement as well as suffering.

Joshua Van's latest victory has provided precisely such a moment for Myanmar. On September 19, Van defeated former champion Alexandre Pantoja by unanimous decision at UFC 331 in Los Angeles, firmly establishing himself as the UFC flyweight champion. He is the first UFC champion from Myanmar, and the victory took on an importance far beyond the Octagon.

For Myanmar people living through conflict, displacement, economic hardship and political uncertainty, there are precious few occasions when millions can focus on the same thing without being divided by politics, geography or circumstance. A major sporting victory can provide that rare common ground.

Van himself understands the significance. Before the fight, he spoke proudly about representing Myanmar, saying that many people around the world do not know enough about the country because its people have not always had opportunities to show what they can achieve. He wore custom shorts incorporating Myanmar's national identity as he entered the Octagon.

That symbolism matters. For a country whose international image is so often dominated by military rule, war, refugees and humanitarian crisis,

Van offers another image of Myanmar - determined, talented, resilient and capable of competing at the very highest level.

His victory also carries a powerful message about perseverance. Van's first fight with Pantoja ended after only 26 seconds when the Brazilian suffered an elbow dislocation, leaving some questioning whether Van had truly earned the championship. Nine months later, Van answered those doubts himself, going five rounds and defeating the former champion decisively.

For people facing seemingly overwhelming difficulties, that story can resonate. It is not a solution to Myanmar's crisis, but it is a reminder that setbacks do not necessarily determine the future.

Perhaps most importantly, sport creates shared experiences. Myanmar people at home, in neighbouring countries and across the diaspora can watch the same fight, cheer for the same fighter and feel, briefly, part of something larger than their individual struggles.

That is why Joshua Van's victory matters. It is a moment of happiness in a time when happiness can be difficult to find. It gives Myanmar people something to celebrate rather than mourn, something to unite around rather than argue over, and a young champion who can carry the name of Myanmar proudly onto the world's biggest sporting stage.

For a country desperately in need of hope, that is no small achievement.

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** The Complex Legacy of Suu Kyi's Political Philosophy: Book Review
- Reviewed by Joseph Ball

10 ON THE GROUND IN MYANMAR

Analysis & Insight

14 CORE DEVELOPMENTS

Na Kaung Moo: A Shan State Village Shaped by War and Shifting Alliances

- 16** BRI urges immediate US action after Burmese military allegedly kills Christian Pastor Dal Thawn Tuang in Burma
- 17** Myanmar: Human rights defenders and journalists remain at risk while torture and ill-treatment of political prisoners persist
- 19** Vendors in Myingyan flee due to inability to pay debts as authorities ban villagers buying food and groceries from town
- 20** Revolutionary outpost in Karenni's Hpruso bombed by drone, killing 5 fighters
- 21** ASEAN Regional Forum must ban Myanmar junta from drone workshop and save lives: Justice For Myanmar
- 23** US includes Burma in countries of concern in illegal drug trafficking



- 26** Around 10 prisoners of war detained by PDF-Zoland return to Myanmar military junta in Tedim
- 27** ICA reports over 1,300 conflict-related deaths in Chin State over more than 5 years
- 29** Over 200 children killed and injured during Myanmar junta's illegitimate election period
- 30** Three killed, including two women, in Myanmar junta airstrike on Sagaing's Pale
- 31** Myanmar ranks on the bottom of world democracy scores
- 32** Myanmar deports US citizen detained over business dispute: presidency
- 33** Jade Land: Money, Power, Conflict and the Lives of the People Behind One of the World's Most Valuable Natural Resources
- 37** Norway charges Telenor over data handover to Myanmar junta, opens sanctions probe
- 38** Myanmar junta conducts deadly daily bombings on IDP shelters in Mandalay's Ngazun
- 39** Kyaw Moe Tun assumes role as rotating chair of UN Asia-Pacific group
- 40** Combating Myanmar forced conscription programme crucial, says NUG minister Yee Mon
- 43** **ASIAN & INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**
India court grants bail to US citizen accused of illegal entry
- 44** Two killed in latest attack in India's restive northeast
- 45** Baby orangutans in India expose 'frightening' scale of trafficking with possible Myanmar link
- 47** China Tightens Exit Controls, Extends Scrutiny to Officials' Families
- 49** **COLUMNS**
INSIGHT MYANMAR – The Sum of Small Cuts
- 50** **JUNTA WATCH**

Cover photo of the book: Aung San Suu Kyi: The Realities of Power in Burma's Authoritarian Legacy by Penguin Books



Aung San Suu Kyi remains a symbol of defiance in the face of military dictatorship. Photo: AFP

THE COMPLEX LEGACY OF SUU KYI'S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY: BOOK REVIEW

JOSEPH BALL

What influences lie behind the political posturing of world leaders? It is a question that has fascinated the mind for centuries. Whether it is the inspiration of Joan of Arc on Indira Gandhi, or the subtle guidance of Dream of the Red Chamber on the thinking of Mae Zedong. To this end, Aung San Suu Kyi: The Realities of Power in Burma's Authoritarian Legacy (henceforward referred to as The Realities of Power) is Mon Mon Myat's extensively researched answer to this question with respect to the embattled Burmese democracy icon. It refreshingly deviates from the typical hagiographical biography of Suu Kyi and instead asks – and attempts to answer – some very difficult questions and sometimes apparent contradictions in the thinking and approach to how she views and seeks to exercise power in Burma.

To the author, Suu Kyi epitomizes “a political thinker with a deeply rooted, cohesive vision – one aimed at awakening the political conscience of a long-subdued people and restoring the nation's dignity through reclaiming moral and political selfhood.” According to Myat, “The philosophical foundations of Aung San Suu Kyi's political thought may be fruitfully examined through three interwoven dimensions: religious, moral, and spiritual.”

In so doing, “What Aung San Suu Kyi aims to promote is a Buddhist version of government based on the social contract, similar to the ideas of U Hpo Hlaing, Aung San, and other modern politicians in Burma.” The thinking and writing of U Hpo Hlaing in particular, a 19th century Burmese intellectual and civil servant, occupies a central role in Myat's thesis. His Rajadhammasangaha, or Rules of Kingship, sought to reform the authoritarian tendencies inherent in monarchial Burma, introducing a type of ‘Burmese democracy.’ Ironically, in Suu Kyi's efforts to establish a rule-based Buddhist

view of governance in Burma echoing the duties of Buddhist kingship, she is competing with the narrative of the modern Burmese army, which has also sought to turn to the legacy of Burma's former kings for legitimacy. Albeit with a distinctly different interpretation of the merits and demerits of monarchial rule from Suu Kyi.

One thing that stands out in Myat's portrayal of Suu Kyi is the diversity of influences said to contribute to her political philosophy. Unsurprisingly, this list includes the usual suspects associated with non-violent liberation struggles such as Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. As the author observes, “Aung San Suu Kyi's leadership is rooted in a philosophical foundation that blends traditional Burmese values with a vision of peace and national reconciliation, highlighting the transformative potential of spiritual renewal in politics.” And the critical element to take away from this assessment is that Suu Kyi's thinking is first and foremost shaped by the Burmese Buddhist culture and the country's complex modern and authoritarian history.

Few will argue with Suu Kyi's record as a champion of peaceful resistance to authoritarian rule, calling for a “spiritual and conceptual reorientation of political life in Burma.” But where Suu Kyi's political philosophy, and legacy, is left open to more scrutiny is in the interpretation of the efficacy and wisdom of her overtly political posturing and actions. “Her thought,” acknowledges Myat, “is not rooted in an abstract cultural limbo but arises from a historically grounded effort to reconcile conflicting moral and political visions within the lived experience of Burmese modernity.” The Realities of Power even goes so far as to hypothesize that it is the very ethic of responsibility – “anchored in prudence, restraint, and an awareness of historical and cultural particularities... that renders Suu Kyi's role as a political leader ultimately unsustainable.”

Make no mistake, Suu Kyi made a deliberate decision to enter the maelstrom of formal Burmese politics, an assessment that *The Realities of Power* wrestles to reconcile with Suu Kyi's political philosophy, which is said to embody the spirit "that real change comes not from taking power, but from transforming people's inner lives." Despite Myat's assertion that "Her 'revolution of the spirit'...requires no flag, no party, and no permission – only the steady resolve of ordinary citizens who dare to live as if they are already free," Suu Kyi set out to do exactly that, putting her own persona firmly forward as the rightful heir apparent of the country. A stance she made abundantly clear – among other instances – during her initial press conference upon release from house arrest in 2010.

Throughout Suu Kyi's political tenure, one can discern the strain of the competing demands of her inner principles with the harsh realities of Burma's political theatre. This is clearly on display in her struggle to re-

concile the realities of Burma's authoritarian legacy with the need to appreciate grand strategy, defined by John Lewis Gaddis as the alignment of aspirations with necessarily limited capabilities. A focus on amending the, admittedly much flawed, 2008 constitution, for example, arguably failed to appreciate the limits of what could be accomplished, sacrificing precious political capital that could possibly have been redistributed to better effect.

On the other hand, *The Realities of Power* makes a strong argument that when confronted with the Rohingya crisis, Suu Kyi very much acted as a grand strategist, appreciating Burmese politics through its unique authoritarian past. "In a nation still haunted by the shadows of military dictatorship and fragile democratic institutions," pens Myat, "her words – had they directly condemned the military – could have triggered consequences far worse than even the tragic expulsion of the Rohingya." In this sense, Suu Kyi's reasoning appears



A grainy ICRC photo of its representative meeting with Aung San Suu Kyi who is reported to be under some form of house arrest. Photo: ICRC

almost Kissingerian in its acceptance of an inevitable tragic element to policy making as opposed to a steadfast adherence to moral conviction.

However, her response to the Rohingya saga, roundly ridiculed by liberal critics who may not fully appreciate the Burmese context, does not necessarily preordain the 2021 coup as a mere fait accompli. It remains an open question of whether Suu Kyi could have reached some kind of less-than-ideal accommodation with the Tatmadaw, and specifically Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, that would have averted the ensuing five-plus years of carnage. With, what must be the final break between Suu Kyi and her father's army, Burma has now burned the one bridge that could possibly have led to reconciliation, and not revenge, paving the way forward. The irony for the Burmese military being that they lost the one civilian leader who genuinely cherished their link to the armed forces and who might have been willing to negotiate a privileged position in the country for the armed forces.

So, what to make of Suu Kyi's philosophical legacy today, rooted as it is in spiritual and moral development, as Burma continues to convulse in the bowels of a civil war with no end in sight? Maybe she would think similarly to her fellow Burmese statesman U Thant. Thant would often speak of the need to find freedom from fear while cultivating moral and spiritual development to confront the crises facing humanity. But, on at least one occasion, when confronted by the actions of white supremacists in 1960s/70s southern Africa, the then-UN Secretary General lamented that the situation was no longer suitable for peaceful change.

Anyone looking for an insightful and thought-provoking exploration of the foundations and influences of Suu Kyi's political philosophy is strongly encouraged to read *The Realities of Power*. In addition to summarizing, and responding to, the work of modern academics who

have attempted to delve into the inner machinations of the National League for Democracy Leader, Myat's work offers an impassioned argument that Suu Kyi's political thought be understood "not as a disembodied set of liberal ideals, but as the product of a historically embedded struggle shaped by Burma's moral, religious, and political inheritance."

Myat does not try to hide the fact that her personal story is interwoven with that of Suu Kyi and the country's struggle for democracy. "Aung San Suu Kyi has, for decades," she writes, "stood as an icon of courage for the Burmese people – not only because she introduced us to the concept of freedom from fear but also because of her ability to demonstrate what courage truly is." But herein lies the key, "Whether this fight can evolve into a lasting democratic order depends...on whether the spiritual foundation she laid can be translated into enduring institutional reform."

Maybe, one day, Burma will realize a spiritually awakened country free from fear, exhibiting a democratic order reflective of its unique past and having expunged the "authoritarian traditions in Burma's history, such as royal authoritarianism, British colonial authoritarianism, and military authoritarianism from the nineteenth to the twenty-first century." As Myat paraphrases the thinking of Johan Galtung, founder of the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), "within complex conflicts lie the greatest opportunities – for creativity, dialogue, and transformation." That, at least, is a voice of hope.

ANALYSIS & INSIGHT



KIA OFFENSIVES AGAINST THE MYANMAR JUNTA INTENSIFY

Fighting between the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and allied forces and junta troops has intensified across Kachin State, from the far north to the southern areas along the Irrawaddy River. Recent developments indicate that the conflict is increasingly focused not only on individual military outposts but also on the junta's ability to maintain supply lines to areas that are under pressure from KIA-led forces.

In the far north, KIA and allied forces captured a strategically important junta and militia outpost in Khaunglangphu Township on September 19, after reportedly launching three offensive operations against the position. The outpost has a helipad, making it an important logistical base for supplying forces around the No. 30 Border Stone area. The position had been jointly occupied by junta troops and local militia forces. Although the KIA announced that the outpost had been seized, it did not provide details on casualties suffered by either side.

Further south, the Irrawaddy River has become a major military supply corridor and a key battleground. In early September, a junta naval convoy attempted to transport reinforcements, food and other supplies to Bhamo, which has been surrounded by KIA and allied forces. Before the convoy entered Kachin State, junta ground forces based around Shwegu reportedly attempted to secure the river route in the end of August.

KIA and allied forces responded by targeting the military movement with FPV drones and other attacks. The junta's advance forces reportedly suffered heavy losses during the first week of September. On September 2, KIA and allied forces attacked the main convoy near the Second Irrawaddy Defile, with four vessels reportedly destroyed. According to the

KIA, around 190 people were on the vessels, including 151 military personnel, with the remainder comprising junta administrative staff and family members.

Only five vessels reportedly managed to reach Bhamo. The convoy subsequently came under further attack during its movement between Shwegu and Bhamo. On September 16, the KIA said it had destroyed around 20 vessels from the convoy. Images and videos showing damaged or sinking military vessels subsequently circulated widely on social media.

The junta responded with extensive air support for the river convoy. According to the KIA, the military carried out more than 1,000 air-dropped bombs, including 1,000-pound and 500-pound bombs and cluster munitions, over a period of about three weeks. The KIA also claimed that it shot down a junta Y-12 aircraft near Hsinhkan village on the morning of September 16.

The fighting has also had a direct impact on civilians along the river. Following the heavy losses suffered by the convoy, junta aircraft reportedly attacked villages in Shwegu Township. On September 18, three villagers, including a woman, were reportedly killed, while another ten people were seriously injured. In Bhamo Township, Kaungton village was reportedly destroyed

by a junta airstrike on September 12.

After the convoy reached Bhamo, a junta ground column moved toward KIA-controlled territory on the outskirts of the town on September 13. The KIA and allied forces reportedly attacked the column, killing more than 40 troops and capturing more than 30 personnel. According to local reports, most of those killed or captured were conscripts, with only a small number of permanent soldiers among them.

Some vessels from the convoy eventually returned to Mandalay, its point of departure, on September 21. More than 300 wounded soldiers were reportedly brought back. The returning troops were publicly welcomed as victorious soldiers by the commander of the Central Military Command.

Against this backdrop, reports emerged on September 4 that the junta had offered peace talks to the KIA. However, KIA spokesperson Colonel Naw Bu told the media that he was unaware of any such invitation and had no special announcement regarding the matter.

The recent fighting therefore shows the growing importance of the Irrawaddy River as a military lifeline. The junta's efforts to reinforce Bhamo have faced sustained resistance, while KIA and allied forces are



Sagaing is under siege. Photo: Mizzima

attempting to consolidate control over territory and disrupt military logistics. At the same time, intensified airstrikes and fighting along the river are increasing the risks for civilian communities caught between military operations and resistance activity.

Attacks on civilians in Sagaing increase

In Sagaing Region, recent developments indicate that attacks on civilian communities are increasingly outnumbering direct armed clashes between junta forces and resistance groups. While People's Defence Forces (PDFs) continue to carry out operations against junta troops and pro-junta militias, airstrikes and drone attacks are also striking villages where no fighting is taking place.

People's Servant Revolution Wetlet said it killed more than 100 junta troops during seven months of fighting along the Irrawaddy River. The group also claimed to have shot down two drones and seized one jumper car, four other vehicles, as well as weapons and ammunition.

PDF groups have also conducted drone attacks against pro-junta militias. On September 17, Shwe Bo Crocodile PDF reportedly carried out two drone attacks against militia scouts providing security for a food transportation route in Shwebo Township. The number of casualties was not immediately known.

However, several recent junta attacks have occurred in areas without reported ground clashes. On September 7, junta forces carried out suicide-drone attacks on civilian villages in Wetlet Township. On the same day, junta aircraft reportedly attacked Tinteinyan village in Ye-U Township, killing seven civilians. The attacks were reportedly carried out by three gyrocopters and an Mi-35 helicopter operated from the Northwestern Military Command.

A local resident told media: "They drop bombs without battles. Seven people died. All are civilians. Houses and cars were also damaged."

Another deadly incident occurred in Hnamasaryit village, Shwebo Township, on September 16. A junta airstrike reportedly killed three people, including an abbot, and injured eight others. The victims were reportedly setting up a drinking-water machine for villagers when the attack occurred.

After the airstrike, troops from No. 42 Regiment in Shwebo reportedly fired three rounds of artillery into the village.

"There is no battle. The junta attacked while people were setting up a drinking-water machine. Three people, including an abbot monk, died," a local resident told Khit Thit.

These incidents illustrate a broader pattern in parts of Sagaing: civilian communities are increasingly exposed to airstrikes, drone attacks and artillery fire even in the absence of active ground battles, making everyday activities such as securing drinking water potentially dangerous.

Battles increase on multiple fronts in Rakhine

Fighting between the Arakan Army (AA) and junta forces has intensified across several fronts in Rakhine State, with the junta attempting to regain access to AA-controlled areas while the AA continues to expand pressure on military positions. Recent developments around Ponnagyun, Sittwe, Kyaukphyu and the borders with Magway and Ayeyarwady regions suggest that the fighting is increasingly spread across multiple fronts.

In the Ponnagyun area, the junta launched an offensive informally known as "Operation 4926" on September 4, apparently referring to the revolutionary forces' Operation 1027. The operation aims to penetrate AA-controlled territory around Ponnagyun. After two weeks of fighting, the junta had not publicly announced the results of the operation. The AA, however, released photographs and video clips showing captured junta personnel, weapons and large quantities of ammunition and military equipment. Four prisoners of war were shown in photographs.

While junta forces have concentrated on attempting to advance toward Ponnagyun, the AA has launched counteroffensives around Sittwe. The AA seized several junta positions during the same period and on September 18 reportedly captured two additional outposts. The junta responded with airstrikes involving six fighter jets. After two weeks of the offensive, the AA said it had captured at least three outposts and four other strategic positions around Sittwe.

In Kyaukphyu, one of the main areas of fighting in Rakhine, junta offensive columns have faced AA counterattacks. Junta forces based around the Taung Maw Oo area have been attempting to advance toward Sane, an AA-controlled town, with aerial support. However, AA attacks near Awataung village, close to the entrance of the junta Navy's Taung Maw Oo base, reportedly caused significant losses to the advancing forces during the third week of September.

Another major front is around the Natyekan strategic post on the Rakhine-Magway border. The post has reportedly remained encircled by the AA for more than a year, with supplies including food reportedly being delivered by drones from villages in Magway Region. Junta attempts to reinforce the position have repeatedly been intercepted.

On September 20, a junta column of more than 100 personnel attempted to reach Natyekan using an alternative route but was reportedly attacked by the AA. Meanwhile, the junta has been opening another route through Mindon Township as it seeks access to western Rakhine.

Since the end of August, three junta columns have reportedly been maneuvering near the foothills of the Rakhine mountain range in western Mindon. The junta launched a larger offensive in June involving thousands of troops, but AA counterattacks forced some forces back toward their bases. The junta subsequently sent an estimated 1,500 reinforcements, leaving potentially several thousand troops in western Mindon.

The AA said junta forces suffered significant losses in fighting near Kankyo village, Point 948 and Thaphanyaun village on September 20 and 21. On September 22, the AA released images showing more

than 30 weapons, ammunition and bodies that it said belonged to junta troops.

Pressure is also increasing along the Rakhine-Ayeyarwady border. AA and allied forces have reportedly advanced to within about one mile of No. 344 Artillery Regiment. Fighting is occurring across Yegyi, Thabaung and Lemyethna townships on the western bank of the Ngawun (Pathein) River. Junta troops reportedly suffered casualties and wounded soldiers were transported to Pathein Civilian Hospital and No. 4 Military Hospital on September 17.

The junta has deployed thousands of troops to the area, apparently seeking to prevent further AA advances from Rakhine. Around six military trucks reportedly withdrew after suffering casualties. The junta reportedly deployed 600–800 troops in late July and another 1,000–1,500 in late August as part of an effort to contain southern Rakhine and support an amphibious operation.

Overall, the recent fighting shows the junta facing pressure on multiple approaches into Rakhine, while the AA is attempting to consolidate its territorial control and disrupt reinforcement routes from neighbouring regions.



The battle for Rakhine is intensifying.
Photo: Supplied



Photo: Supplied

NA KAUNG MOO: A SHAN STATE VILLAGE SHAPED BY WAR AND SHIFTING ALLIANCES

ANTONIO GRACEFFO

Junta forces and an allied militia attacked a base of the Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS) in Mongping Township, Kengtung District, on September 3.

RCSS spokesperson Major Sai Kham San said approximately 100 junta and militia troops participated in the attack. RCSS forces seized several small arms from junta troops during the fighting. The RCSS is led by General Yawd Serk, who founded its armed wing after the Mong Tai Army surrendered in 1996.

The attack came amid a separate conflict pitting the RCSS against the Shan State Progress Party (SSPP) and the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA). Fighting over a territorial dispute in the Lwel Hun mountain range has continued in northern Shan State since June.

The RCSS is a signatory to Myanmar's Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) and chairs an alliance of seven ceasefire-signatory armed groups. The alliance continues to hold periodic talks with the junta's negotiating body, even as the RCSS fights junta forces in the east and rival ethnic armed groups in the north.

Shan State has become a battleground of shifting alliances. Armed groups sometimes fight alongside the anti-junta resistance and, in other cases, align with the junta against rival ethnic forces. The state also produces methamphetamine and opium for markets in Thailand and beyond.

These shifting alliances and illicit economies have shaped Na Kaung Moo, a village in Mong Ton Township, eastern Shan State, near Thailand's Fang District in Chiang Mai Province. Settled more than sixty years ago

by ethnic Shan farmers, the village has passed under the control of several non-state armed groups, including the Kuomintang, the Shan United Revolutionary Army, and the Mong Tai Army. Each used it as a route for moving goods, and later narcotics, across the border.

Loung Seng, 60, a former Mong Tai Army soldier who has lived in Na Kaung Moo since 1996, left university during his first year to join the Shan armed movement, then known as the Shan United Revolutionary Army (SURA). He handled logistics along the border.

In 1985, Khun Sa's Shan United Army merged with a faction of SURA led by Moh Heng to form the Mong Tai Army (MTA).

Loung Seng said the MTA controlled extensive territory along the Shan State-Thailand border and taxed trade in both directions. Livestock, gemstones, and teak moved from Shan State into Thailand, while manufactured goods, clothing, and pharmaceuticals moved in the opposite direction.

"Khun Sa rose to the top command because he possessed the financial resources required to sustain an army," Loung Seng said.

Under Khun Sa's leadership, the MTA expanded its narcotics networks and territorial reach beyond the Golden Triangle to other points along the Thai border. Its operations were financed by taxes and drug profits. As Khun Sa's international profile as a narcotics trafficker grew, he negotiated a surrender with the Burmese military in 1996. Loung Seng attributed the decision to fears of foreign intervention or the destruction of his forces.

After the surrender, demobilized MTA soldiers were allowed to choose where to settle. "I chose Na Kaung Moo because I was already familiar with the local economy and knew how to make a living here," Loung Seng said.

He worked as a motorcycle taxi driver, transporting passengers and goods across the border, and later married a Shan woman from the village. Their two children grew up in Na Kaung Moo. Their daughter completed her education in Thailand and their son in Myanmar. The family now relies primarily on rubber and teak cultivation, which the children help manage.

According to Loung Seng, breakaway MTA units under commanders including Yawd Serk rejected the 1996 surrender and continued fighting the Burmese military along the border. The military enlisted the United Wa State Army (UWSA) to fight the breakaway units, offering it control of former MTA bases in exchange for support. Fighting continued through 2001, prompting Thailand to close several official and informal border crossings.

Today, the border area is divided among the UWSA, the Burmese military, local militias, and the Restoration Council of Shan State, Loung Seng said. Na Kaung Moo remains under both Wa and Burmese military influence, while informal and illicit economies continue to operate.

Since the 2021 military coup, the village has taken in civil servants participating in the Civil Disobedience Movement, families fleeing active conflict zones, and young people avoiding conscription. Loung Seng described the balance among the armed groups as an uneasy stalemate.

"Any major tactical move by one faction risks triggering a multiparty escalation," he said.

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



The late Reverend Dal Thawn Tuang

BRI URGES IMMEDIATE US ACTION AFTER BURMESE MILITARY ALLEGEDLY KILLS CHRISTIAN PASTOR DAL THAWN TUANG IN BURMA

The Burma Research Institute (BRI) confirms that on September 14, 2026, at approximately 4:00 p.m. Burma time, the Burmese military shot and killed Reverend Dal Thawn Tuang, assistant pastor of Lamzang Baptist Church in Lamzang Village, Chin State, where he had served for 22 years. Pastor Tuang, 49, is survived by his wife and two children. His funeral was held on September 16 at 1:00 p.m. Burma time in Lamzang Village, which is about 5.5 miles from Tiddim town.

In a condolence letter to the bereaved family, churches, and colleagues dated September 16, 2026, the Tiddim Baptist Convention (TBC) — of which Lamzang Baptist Church is a member — honored Pastor Tuang as a faithful servant of God, quoting Matthew 25:21 (NIV):

"His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'"

The TBC's letter did not state a cause of death. According to sources, Pastor Tuang was shot three times by the Burmese military near the Kapte bridge

while returning to his native village of Lamzang after conducting religious activities in Tui Tawh Village. He died from his wounds.

"My prayers and thoughts are with the family of Pastor Dal Thawn Tuang and the Tiddim Chin Baptist Convention. This is an escalating war against Christians," said Rev. Dr. Robin Stoops, BRI Board Chair and former General Secretary of American Baptist Churches USA.

Sources also said that on the night of September 13, around 80 Burmese military prisoners of war escaped from the custody of the resistance group People's Defense Force (PDF-Zoland), triggering clashes between the two sides.

Khonumthung Burmese reported on September 16 that an examination of Reverend Tuang's body found bullet wounds in three areas — the chest, abdomen, and thigh — indicating that the killing was not accidental but deliberate.

Separately, The Irrawaddy's Burmese edition reported on September 15 that prisoners of war escaping from Tiddim shot and killed a pastor.

BRI notes that this killing follows a documented pattern of violence against Christians in Burma. A BRI report released in January 2026 found: 343 Christian churches and buildings damaged or destroyed by the Burmese military since the coup (BRI estimate synthesizing multiple credible datasets); 149 Christians killed and 218 imprisoned (Open Doors totals, 2022–2025, as presented in the report); and repeated attacks on religious sites during Christian holy days, including Christmas, Palm Sunday, and Easter, along with a sustained assault on the Christian town of Thantlang, where 21 of 22 churches have been destroyed and the entire population has been displaced.

Since coup leader Min Aung Hlaing appointed himself President earlier this year, attacks on Christians, places of worship, and civilians have worsened. In August, the Burmese military killed Pastor William of Chunchug Baptist Church in Chuncung Village, Chin State, along with a fellow Christian. BRI issued a statement, and several media outlets covered it

"President Trump should determine that the atrocities against Christians constitute crimes against humanity and war crimes. The White House should also put pressure on the military to release prisoners — including pastors and State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi — immediately and unconditionally," said Zo Tum Hmung, President and CEO of BRI.



MYANMAR: HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AND JOURNALISTS REMAIN AT RISK WHILE TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT OF POLITICAL PRISONERS PERSIST

Myanmar's civic space is rated "closed" by the CIVICUS Monitor in their latest report assessing developments this year.

Since the 2021 coup, thousands of activists and protesters have been detained on fabricated charges including terrorism, incitement and sedition. Many have been convicted by secret military tribunals in unfair trials and given harsh sentences, including the death penalty. Some have been tortured or killed. There has also been an unrelenting crackdown on the media. Many independent civil society groups have had to shut down, operate underground or outside the country.

In March 2026, the UN Human Rights Council issued a resolution where it expressed serious concern at the unilateral convening by the Myanmar military of elections that excluded much of the country's geographical territory and many political parties, at a time when it is clear that there can be no meaningful participation of all political parties and groups, and that they were neither free nor fair.

Tom Andrews, the former UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar released his final report in April 2026. He called on the international community to step up efforts for accountability in

Myanmar, saying that decades of impunity have led the country to a human rights catastrophe. While cases before international tribunals and judicial authorities in other countries offer a glimmer of hope to victims and the people of Myanmar, they are narrow in scope and insufficient to break the system of impunity that shields the military from accountability.

In June 2026, during the UN Human Rights Council session, the High Commissioner for Human Rights presented his report on the overall situation of human rights in Myanmar. In the report he stated that, since the coup, 30,508 individuals had been arrested on political grounds, and 22,799 remained in detention. Individuals were prosecuted ahead of elections, including for minor online criticism, with disproportionate punishment. Access to information remained precarious, with widespread Internet shutdowns.

Investigations by the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM) released in August 2026 show a pattern of deliberate aerial attacks targeting homes, schools, medical facilities, religious buildings and camps for internally displaced persons, causing deaths, injuries and destruction. The IIMM also collected and analysed extensive evidence of arbitrary detention, torture and sexual violence in military-run detention facilities, including cases linked to the 2025 law criminalising criticism of the elections. Numerous individuals have been arrested under the law and face up to 20 years' imprisonment and the death penalty for activities such as posting critical comments on social media.

Also in August 2026, a UN Human Rights report found that the human rights situation in Myanmar, in

particular that of minority communities, has 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.

On 7th September 2026, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk said that efforts to normalise relations without any sign whatsoever that the military are complying with fundamental obligations under international law will only fuel even greater violence and violations against civilians, in Myanmar and beyond. He urged member states to refer the full situation in Myanmar to the International Criminal Court through the Security Council, and to end transfers to Myanmar of arms, ammunition, jet fuel and dual-use items, where there is a clear risk they could facilitate violations of international human rights and humanitarian law.

Since March 2026, there have been reports on the digital repression of human rights defenders (HRDs), challenges for HRDs in Kachin and Northern Shan states and risks, criminalisation, and attacks against environmental HRDs. Torture and ill-treatment of political prisoners and other detainees were reported including in Insein prison. The forced conscription of young people persisted. There has been surveillance of mobile phones and challenges in accessing the Starlink internet. There were reports that independent media outlets were blocked during elections and access to them dropped due to a firewall and surveillance. The licences of three news outlets were revoked, and a journalist was denied medical care. A move to restart the controversial Myitsone dam sparked protests while a court sentenced activists to 37 years over an election protest.



VENDORS IN MYINGYAN FLEE DUE TO INABILITY TO PAY DEBTS AS AUTHORITIES BAN VILLAGERS BUYING FOOD AND GROCERIES FROM TOWN

Local residents and vendors report that as the Myanmar junta has banned people from surrounding villages coming into the town of Myingyan, Mandalay Region, to purchase medicine and basic food items for two weeks, vendors of meat, fish, and vegetables in the town have had to halt their businesses and are fleeing because they cannot pay off debts and daily-interest loans.

Local residents stated that the ban preventing villagers from coming to make purchases in Myingyan started on 5 September and remains ongoing as of 18 September, while the exact reason for the restriction is still unclear.

"Since we can no longer sell goods, we cannot pay our daily-interest loans. If you borrow 300,000 kyats on a daily repayment basis, you have to pay back about 15,000 kyat a day for both principal and interest, which totals to about 450,000 kyats a month. Normally, it keeps circulating smoothly. Now, vegetable vendors and mobile vendors with motorcycles running from village to village have completely stopped going around the villages. Because creditors are demanding payments every day, we are running around for hiding," a vendor told Mizzima.

Vendors noted that perishable goods like meat and fish cannot be sold as usual, causing them to spoil and

rot, leading to situations where they have to be thrown away.

According to local vegetable and grocery sellers, there are 183 villages in Myingyan Township, and under normal circumstances previously, people from over 150 villages would come to Myingyan town to buy food and consumer products.

A local resident stated that among vegetable traders, there are no less than 150 buyers per day, with at least two people from each village typically visiting the town to make purchases.

Sometimes, buyers also come from neighbouring townships to Myingyan.

"With a single motorcycle, they come to buy at least 1,000,000 kyats worth of goods. Now, street vendors don't even dare to sell. Seeing people coming makes them expect debt collections, so they are avoiding the lenders," another vegetable vendor told Mizzima.

Vendors mentioned that meat sellers normally sell between 30 to 50 viss of meat per day, while major wholesalers can record sales reaching hundreds of viss. (one viss approximately equals to 1.6 Kg)

Therefore, as the current continues, they state they are facing immense hardships.

Additionally, vendors and merchants reported that checkpoints at the town's entrances and exits have involved discarding rice, beatings, and threats to life if rice purchases are discovered, resulting in villagers completely stopping their trips to buy goods in town.

Locals stated that although similar restrictions were imposed in neighbouring Taungtha and Natogyi towns, they were relaxed on 11 September, whereas Myingyan continues to face a strict ongoing ban to this day.

Sources indicate that it is currently becoming increasingly difficult to obtain food and medicine in the villages, and prices are also gradually rising.

Furthermore, while people are allowed to pass through, it is known that travel restrictions are imposed on village youths aged 14 to 30 heading to Myingyan town.

Local residents report that since 2025 within Myingyan District, essential food items among vegetables and grocery such as rice, cooking oil, and salt, have only been permitted for purchase under limited quotas.



Photo: Supplied

REVOLUTIONARY OUTPOST IN KARENNI'S HPRUSO BOMBED BY DRONE, KILLING 5 FIGHTERS

A revolutionary group's military outpost in Hpruso Township, Karenni State, was bombed by a drone from the air, resulting in the deaths of five comrades. Additionally, sources report that the military junta conducted airstrikes on areas along the Phaikhon-Moby area border 18 September.

A source reported that yesterday 17 September, a revolutionary group's outpost near the Mother Mary cave in Moso village, Hpruso Township, was bombed from the air by a drone, killing five comrades, including a company commander.

Although the bombed outpost is understood to be a forward guard outpost of the Karenni Nationalities Defence Force (KNDF), Mizzima has not yet been able independently verify this.

Furthermore, sources said that the military junta has continued airstrikes on 18 September on areas along the Shan-Karenni border near Phekhon and Moby.

"Today, they are bombing inside the Moby area on the western side of Phekhon near the Shan border. The full situation is not yet known. They are using an airplane. They bombed the KNDF camp yesterday. Five people, including the company commander, fell. There were no other casualties," a Karenni military source said.

According to a Karenni military source, because the military junta has been launching offensives in territories controlled by allied revolutionary forces, frequent clashes have broken out in September between the military junta and Karenni-based allied revolutionary forces in several townships, including Hpruso and Demoso.

Additionally, on 16 September, the military junta bombed an orphanage in Demoso Township using a suicide drone, resulting in the death of one child and injuries to three others, according to reports.



ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM MUST BAN MYANMAR JUNTA FROM DRONE WORKSHOP AND SAVE LIVES: JUSTICE FOR MYANMAR

The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) has consulted and is set to invite the illegal Myanmar junta to a workshop on unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), according to a Justice For Myanmar report based on sources with knowledge of the plans.

The workshop is to be co-chaired by Australia, Singapore and the USA and is planned for 2026 or 2027 under the ARF's counter-terrorism cooperation framework.

Proposed by the USA, it would bring together practitioners in policymaking, law enforcement, civil aviation authorities, border security forces and international experts to discuss the "terrorist" acquisition and use of consumer and industrial grade UAS and ways to counter the free cross-border movement of readily available UAS technologies.

The workshop preparation comes as UN investigators have warned that the Myanmar junta has ramped up its campaign of indiscriminate airstrikes and its use of drone warfare against civilians in its ongoing

deliberate attempts to crush the democratic resistance movement and seize territorial control of the country.

Junta airstrikes remained the leading cause of civilian casualties in 2025, according to another UN report, which reported at least 982 deaths from airstrikes, including 232 children, a 52% increase compared with 2024.

A July 2025 report on drone warfare in Myanmar by an independent monitor recorded more than 570 military drone strikes resulting in at least 158 civilian deaths.

Junta-operated UAS have been used in deadly attacks targeting civilian infrastructure including schools and places of worship, in blatant violation of international humanitarian law.

As recently as September 16, a junta kamikaze drone attack in Demoso township, Karenni State, killed a nine-year-old boy and injured three other children, one of whom was in a critical condition.

The Myanmar junta has also used drones to deliver improvised chemical weapons in Moe Bye in southern Shan State.

Alongside adapted commercial systems, the junta also employs domestically designed and assembled UAS that are largely constructed using commercially available, off-the-shelf components.

Inviting the junta to the ARF UAS workshop would therefore present a foreseeable and significant risk of unintended technology knowledge transfer to the junta.

The inclusion of the junta in the proposed workshop would also put the USA and Australia at odds with public positions they have previously taken against the military junta.

Australia and the USA have withdrawn from defence meetings and activities with the junta, including the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus Experts' Working Group on Counter-Terrorism when it was co-chaired by the militaries of Myanmar and Russia.

The co-organisers, including Singapore, have also publicly condemned the junta's attacks on civilians, including its use of airstrikes.

Singapore has a particularly significant responsibility. As a member of ASEAN, the ARF Chair and incoming ASEAN Chair in 2027, Singapore must use its position to ensure that the junta is not further emboldened by ASEAN's multilateral platforms.

ASEAN defence and counter-terrorism forums have previously been used by the junta to seek regional support for its campaign of terror, by falsely presenting it as "counter-terrorist".

Justice For Myanmar demands that the ARF bar the Myanmar junta from all meetings and activities,

including the UAS workshop, and ensure that no technical or security-related knowledge is shared with it.

Justice For Myanmar spokesperson Yadanar Maung says: "It is deplorable that the illegal and illegitimate military junta is to be included in a workshop on drones while it is using that very technology for the commission of international crimes against civilians in Myanmar.

"The co-organisers of the ASEAN Regional Forum workshop must ban the junta's participation and ensure that it cannot access any knowledge, technology and tactics, which would only aid its campaign of terror.

"The inclusion of the Myanmar junta in ARF and ASEAN meetings and activities awards it false legitimacy and emboldens its capacity to further intensify its campaign of terror against Myanmar's people. This prolongs the Myanmar crisis that the military engineered and exacerbates mass scale suffering.

"Singapore as the incoming chair of ASEAN and ARF chair has a heightened responsibility to end ASEAN's complicity in the junta's international crimes.

"ARF members must comply with their international obligations and immediately take a stand to save the lives of Myanmar's people by banning the junta from the drone workshop.

"ARF members must also make concerted efforts to develop a concrete plan to cut the junta's access to legitimacy, funds, arms, equipment, technology and aviation fuel."

US INCLUDES BURMA IN COUNTRIES OF CONCERN IN ILLEGAL DRUG TRAFFICKING



The office of the spokesperson of the US President has released the Presidential Determination on Major Drug Transit or Major Illicit Drug Producing Countries for Fiscal Year 2027 on 16 September.

The following is a Presidential Determination submitted to Congress September 15, 2026:

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, including section 706(1) of the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Year 2003 (P.L. 107-228) (FRAA), I hereby identify the following countries as major drug transit or major illicit drug producing countries: Afghanistan, The Bahamas, Belize, Bolivia, Burma, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, India, Jamaica, Laos, Mexico, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, and Venezuela.

A country's presence on the foregoing list is not necessarily a reflection of its government's current counterdrug efforts, or coordination with the United States. Consistent with the statutory definition of a major drug transit or drug producing country set forth in the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, major drug transit or illicit drug producing countries are placed on the list due to a combination of geographic,

commercial, and economic factors that allow drugs or precursor chemicals to transit or be produced, even if a government has engaged in robust and diligent narcotics control and law enforcement measures.

Pursuant to section 706(2)(A) of the FRAA, I hereby designate Afghanistan, Bolivia, Burma, and Colombia as having failed demonstrably during the previous 12 months to make substantial efforts to adhere to their obligations under international counternarcotics agreements and to take the counternarcotics measures required by 22 U.S.C. § 2291h(a)(1). Included with this determination are justifications for the designations of Afghanistan, Bolivia, Burma, and Colombia as described in section 706(2)(B) of the FRAA. I have also determined, in accordance with section 706(3)(A) of the FRAA, that provision of United States assistance to Bolivia, Burma and Colombia is currently vital to the national interests of the United States.

My Administration has made historic progress in protecting the American people from deadly drugs and vicious narcoterrorist organizations. Under my Administration, our southern border is the most sealed and secure in American history, thanks to the largest investments in border security and law enforcement in our Nation's history. After four years of open border chaos, seizures of fentanyl and other drugs being

smuggled into the United States have been reduced by more than half, and drug overdose deaths have plunged. My Administration has saved tens of thousands of American lives from this scourge. The narcoterrorists responsible for this invasion are either dead, in jail, or living in fear knowing they will be next to face American justice. I have unleashed the strongest military in the history of the world to strike narcoterrorists wherever they threaten our country. Behind the might of the American military, my Administration has destroyed cartel infrastructure, shut down former trafficking highways across sea and land borders, and captured and killed hundreds of the most vicious narcoterrorists. Under the Americas Counter Cartel Coalition, an alliance with over a dozen countries in the Western Hemisphere, we have achieved historic results, drastically reducing United States-bound drug flows and seizing billions of dollars of illicit cartel finances. United States law enforcement agencies are reporting record drug seizures, and our allies are extraditing more cartel bosses to the United States than ever before. We have inflicted unprecedented losses on our enemies, and we are just getting started.

While my Administration has successfully secured our borders from invasion, Canada and Mexico need to do far more to stop the flows of deadly drugs into our country. Fentanyl continues to be illicitly produced in clandestine Canadian labs, and precursor chemicals and synthetic drugs continue to enter the United States through Canada. Canada needs to take meaningful action to dismantle drug labs, strengthen supply chain security, and degrade criminal networks and Chinese gangs operating along our northern border. We recognize Mexican President Sheinbaum's administration for seizing greater volumes of drugs, dismantling clandestine laboratories, and deploying additional law enforcement and military resources to our shared border. Additionally, United States-Mexican security cooperation has helped eliminate some of the world's most notorious cartel bosses, including "El Mencho." However, Mexico must take additional action against the narcoterrorist organizations that dominate vast areas of its territory and continue to threaten the American people. Mexico needs to bolster supply chain integrity by soliciting greater private industry participation and significantly increasing inspections

at its ports of entry. Additionally, Mexico's current investments in its security forces are insufficient to sustain and expand its campaigns against narcoterrorists, their finances, and their criminal networks. This includes exposing, arresting, and prosecuting the many corrupt public officials that have aided and abetted the cartels and betrayed their own country's security and sovereignty.

The drug threat to America extends beyond our northern and southern borders. The PRC continues to be the world's largest producer of many of the precursor chemicals used to illicitly produce fentanyl, methamphetamine, and other deadly synthetic drugs. I have raised this directly with State Chairman Xi Jinping, and last year, at my request, the PRC implemented new requirements for its companies to obtain licenses before exporting designated precursor chemicals to North America. However, criminals continue to find ways around these controls through the use of unregulated precursor chemicals. The PRC needs to take more aggressive action to effectively reduce the flow of these substances by scheduling additional chemical precursors and substances requested by the United States. This enhanced cooperation will enable timely prosecution of the criminals responsible for supplying drug traffickers with deadly precursor chemicals.

Other governments have taken measures to confront drug trafficking and narcoterrorism. Dramatic political changes in South America over the past year have created historic openings for United States cooperation with governments in the region. In Venezuela, thanks to my Administration's arrest and removal of former illegitimate dictator and drug trafficker Nicolás Maduro, we are already seeing the results of growing cooperation with the country's interim government against cartels, including the elimination of Tren de Aragua leader Niño Guerrero. Given the positive steps taken under interim President Delcy Rodríguez, I have determined Venezuela should no longer be designated as having failed demonstrably to fulfill its drug control commitments. I expect to see continued, measurable progress from the interim government in dismantling narcoterrorist groups and stopping drug trafficking through Venezuela to the United States.

After decades of inept socialist governments, the United States welcomed the Bolivian people's democratic choice in the 2025 elections and the opportunity to open a new chapter in United States-Bolivia relations under President Rodrigo Paz. Cooperation between Bolivia and the United States has significantly expanded over the last year, and I welcome the resumption of law enforcement coordination between our governments to target illicit drug production and criminal networks. Bolivia's extradition of narcoterrorist Sebastián Marset to the United States in March 2026 highlighted our growing friendship and cooperation and prevented one of our hemisphere's most notorious drug traffickers from shipping more drugs to American communities. However, the new government has not yet had sufficient time to reduce coca cultivation that increased under the previous government. Corruption in Bolivia continues to facilitate drug trafficking and impede investigations. If Bolivia can demonstrate progress in reducing illicit drug production in the coming year, and make substantive progress in tackling the endemic corruption weakening Bolivia, I will consider revisiting its status as having failed demonstrably to uphold its counterdrug commitments.

The people of Colombia made the courageous choice to elect Abelardo de la Espriella as President. He has pledged to lead an aggressive campaign against coca cultivation and cocaine production, which reached record levels under the failed socialist policies of his predecessor. Colombia is poised to resume its place as our foremost security partner in the hemisphere, and the country's military, police, prosecutors, and courts now finally have a worthy champion in President de la Espriella. If, as expected, Colombia makes progress on aggressive coca eradication and dismantling its narcoterrorist networks over the coming year, I will consider lifting the country's "failed demonstrably" status, which remains in place solely due to the incompetence and chaos produced by the previous far-left government in office throughout the bulk of the past year.

I welcome Prime Minister Modi and the Government of India's efforts to address illicit opium poppy cultivation and bolster supply chain integrity. I look forward to continued cooperation through the United States-India

Drug Policy Framework. In Peru, I likewise welcome the commitment of new President Keiko Fujimori to work with the United States and other allies to destroy the criminals ailing Peru and reduce cocaine flows bound for the United States. I also applaud three of America's greatest allies in our hemisphere – Argentina, Ecuador, and El Salvador – for their leadership, resolve, and success in the fight against narcoterrorism.

While many governments in the Western Hemisphere are taking courageous action to reduce drug flows and eradicate cartels, the Government of Brazil has failed to confront the designated foreign terrorist organizations Primeiro Comando da Capital and Comando Vermelho, which have transformed Brazil into a hub for global cocaine flows. These Brazilian terrorist organizations are a growing threat to peace and security around the world, and Brazil's government urgently must take aggressive measures to confront and defeat them before they spread and grow. Unsurprisingly, for a socialist dictatorship, the illegitimate Ortego-Murillo regime in Nicaragua has failed to take sufficient action against drug trafficking and the complicity of regime actors in the drug trade.

In Burma, the military regime has made little discernible effort to crack down on its drug economy, making the country the world's largest source of opium poppy and one of the largest suppliers of methamphetamine. Despite the Taliban's announced opium poppy ban, Afghanistan continues to supply drug markets across the world, likely funding Islamist terrorism. For these reasons, I am again determining that Burma and Afghanistan have failed demonstrably to uphold their drug control obligations.

You are authorized and directed to submit this determination, with the accompanying memoranda of justification, under Section 706 of the FRAA, to the Congress, and to publish this determination in the Federal Register.



Photo: Supplied

AROUND 10 PRISONERS OF WAR DETAINED BY PDF-ZOLAND RETURN TO MYANMAR MILITARY JUNTA IN TEDIM

Around 10 of the prisoners of war (POWs) who escaped while being detained by the Chin defense force, PDF-Zoland, have arrived back to the military junta in Tedim, according to Chin revolutionary military source.

Around 80 POWs captured during the Battle of Kennedy Hill and other regional clashes escaped on the night of 13 September after attacking PDF-Zoland guards and seizing weapons.

While a search was underway for the escaped prisoners, about 10 of them returned to the Tedim-based Light Infantry Battalion (LIB-269) on 15 September, the military source said.

"They clashed with those pursuing them, and under the exchange of fire, they scattered and fled in different directions. About 10 have arrived to their military units, and search operations are underway to recapture the remaining ones," the Chin revolutionary military source told Mizzima.

According to the source, local residents witnessed military trucks driving toward the LIB-269 base on the morning of 15 September, carrying individuals in military uniforms as well as POWs dressed in civilian clothes.

The escaped POWs had attacked the detention guards, leaving some guards with non-critical injuries, and had taken several weapons with them.

A clash broke out between the escaping POWs and Chin defense forces around 4:00 PM on 14 September. Due to gunfire from the POWs, Reverend Dal Thuang Tuang from the Lanzan Village Baptist Church, who was traveling for religious works, was shot and killed, while his older brother sustained injuries, the military source added.

Pro-military supporters posted online that some junta soldiers who broke out of the PDF camp in Tedim Township have successfully reunited, and military columns are continuing efforts to retrieve the remaining escapees.

Furthermore, they counter-alleged that the death of the pastor during the clash was caused by gunfire from the Chin defense forces.

To assist the escaping POWs, the Tedim-based military junta launched a military column of about 30 troops, which has now entered and stationed itself in Lanzan village, the military source said.

Additionally, to facilitate the escape of the POWs, the junta forces have restricted the Tedim-Kalay road, allowing only one-way traffic descending from Tedim while blocking vehicles ascending from Kalay, and are currently operating in the area, according to an official from the Chin defense force.

PDF-Zoland is a member of the Chin Brotherhood (CB), which operates in Tedim and Tonzang townships of Chin State.



Photo: Supplied

ICA REPORTS OVER 1,300 CONFLICT-RELATED DEATHS IN CHIN STATE OVER MORE THAN 5 YEARS

A total of 1,344 people have died in connection with the conflict in Chin State over the five years following the 2021 military coup, according to a statement released by the Institute of Chin Affairs (ICA) on 16 September.

The ICA documented these deaths related to airstrikes, clashes, arrests, and killings in Chin State over a five-year and six-month period from 1 February 2021 to August 2026 under the title "A Study of Conflict-Related Deaths in Chin State."

Of the 1,344 deceased, ICA's study indicates 700 were revolutionary resistance fighters and 644 were civilians.

Among the 644 civilian deaths, airstrikes claimed the highest number of lives at 306. Additionally, 58 died from landmines, 40 were raped and killed after being arrested, 178 were killed arbitrarily, 17 died due to medicine shortages, and 45 died from other causes.

Regarding the deaths of the 700 revolutionary fighters, combat-related deaths were highest at 485, followed by 176 killed in airstrikes, 29 by landmines, 14 whose bodies could not be retrieved, 12 due to lack of medical treatment, and 11 who were burned to death, according to the ICA report.

The study categorizes conflict-related deaths by cause, age, and gender, with the aim of highlighting the humanitarian impact of the conflict, ICA said. However, ICA noted that since these records are based on available data, they may not fully represent the actual total number of casualties.

Salai Van Sui San, ICA's information officer, told Mizzima that compared to when they first began documentation, it has become increasingly difficult to connect with people on the ground and gather data. "Our documentation is mainly based on reports from the ground and online media, which we thoroughly verify before recording. Recently, connecting with the ground and verifying facts has become harder. In some areas, communication has become difficult as the military junta's troops have reoccupied positions," he said.

He added that while incidents of death can be confirmed, there is a rising number of cases where real names and ages cannot be verified, due to declining trust among local people toward NGOs, the UN, and the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM).

The study also found that, in addition to the fatalities, junta airstrikes injured 1,226 people and

destroyed 2,321 residential buildings, 108 government offices, and over 77 religious buildings.

Of those killed, 101 were under the age of 17, 575 were between 18 and 35, 168 were over 36, and 500 were of unknown age. Of the total, 1,160 were male and 184 were female.

ICA said the high male mortality rate is likely linked to direct participation in combat, but the conflict has also affected children and youth not of combat age, with women and children primarily losing their lives to airstrikes, arrest-killings, and other forms of violence.

Salai Van Sui San said ICA is continuously engaging with international organizations to pursue accountability for attacks on civilians. "We are carefully documenting these facts and striving to bring about effective actions. Although no effective action has been achieved yet, it is crucial for the public to cooperate with the ICA and send accurate information to make it happen," he said.

ICA stressed the importance of protecting civilians, ensuring unhindered humanitarian access, and facilitating independent, credible investigations into human rights violations during the conflict. Ongoing documentation and accountability for perpetrators remain a vital foundation for securing justice for victims and survivors, the report said.

The Institute of Chin Affairs (ICA) is a US-based non-profit organization providing educational services, humanitarian assistance, and research on Chin State.



Photo: Supplied

OVER 200 CHILDREN KILLED AND INJURED DURING MYANMAR JUNTA'S ILLEGITIMATE ELECTION PERIOD

A total of 214 children were killed or injured during the military junta's sham election period, according to a statement released 15 September by Myanmar Witness.

The data was featured in a Myanmar Witness report titled "Child Casualties During the Military-Led Election Period," which compiled and documented incidents before, during, and after the election period.

Myanmar Witness collected and documented data spanning from the pre-election phase, starting 28 September 2025, to the post-election phase, ending 25 April 2026.

Celia Powell, Editor & Investigations Manager at Myanmar Witness, a project under the UK-based Centre for Information Resilience (CIR), told Mizzima: "We hope this report will help foster a deeper understanding of the conflict's impact on children in Myanmar, and highlight why it is so crucial to document these events at a time like this."

According to the report, child casualties occurred across the different phases as follows: in the pre-

election period, 37 were killed and 73 injured across 41 incidents; during the election period, 13 were killed and 12 injured across 17 incidents; and in the post-election period, 33 were killed and 44 injured across 38 incidents.

The report found that airstrikes were the primary cause of casualties, occurring nearly five times more frequently than heavy artillery shelling, the second most common cause. Children were killed or injured in 61 attacks carried out by the junta's air force and 29 attacks conducted by the junta's army.

Sagaing Region suffered the highest number of attacks leading to child casualties, with 23 recorded incidents, followed by Rakhine State with 13. Mandalay Region and Shan State recorded the third-highest toll, with 12 incidents each.

The junta targeted civilian homes, villages, schools, educational facilities, religious buildings, and internally displaced persons (IDP) camps.



THREE KILLED, INCLUDING TWO WOMEN, IN MYANMAR JUNTA AIRSTRIKE ON SAGAING'S PALE

Three people, including two women and one man, were killed when military junta forces launched an airstrike using two gyrocopters on Kan Bauk (East) village in Pale Township, Sagaing Region, according to local residents.

The attack occurred 15 September at around 12:00 PM, when two gyrocopters from the Northwestern Military Command dropped bombs twice on the village.

"One woman was blown onto the roof of a house, and another was thrown onto the compound wall. The man's body had to be collected in pieces," a local man told Mizzima.

Another resident said the victims were members of the same family: a mother, her son, and her daughter-in-law.

Four other residents were injured in the attack. The bodies of the deceased were cremated yesterday evening, according to local sources. The Anya Myay Pale group posted on its social media page that the casualties occurred during one of the two bombing runs, while the other strike caused no casualties.

The targeted village is located about five miles from Pale town, and the airstrike reportedly occurred without any active ground clashes in the area.

Junta forces are currently stationed in Pale town at the police station and General Administration Department office as well as in Min Taing Pin, In Ma Htee, and Zee Phyu Kone villages. As a result, around 3,000 local residents have been forced into long-term displacement.



Photo: AFP

MYANMAR RANKS ON THE BOTTOM OF WORLD DEMOCRACY SCORES

Myanmar is sadly on the bottom with Afghanistan and North Korea when it comes to the state of democracy in the country.

After eight consecutive years of declining scores, the 2025 EIU Democracy Index showed a stabilization of democracy around the world. In the latest edition, almost 75 percent of countries either saw their score improve or remain stable compared to 2024, as the global average score across 167 countries and territories improved slightly to 5.2 out of 10.

The index, which assesses electoral processes, governance, civil liberties, political participation and political culture classified 26 countries as full democracies, including all Scandinavian countries, several other European nations as well as Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Mauritius, Taiwan, Japan and Latin American countries Uruguay and Costa Rica.

Notably absent from the top category was the United States, which saw its score fall from 7.85 to 7.65 and was once again classified as a "flawed democracy". Once considered a shining example of democracy in the world, the country now ranks 35th between Poland

and Botswana, as its civil liberties score deteriorated under the Trump administration and its political culture was rated badly due to the intense polarization in the country.

Globally, the three worst-rated countries remained unchanged, with Afghanistan, Myanmar and North Korea at the bottom of the table for non-existing civil liberties, electoral process and pluralism.

At the other end of the scale, Norway, New Zealand and Denmark were ranked as the most democratic countries in the world, with Norway rated particularly highly for electoral process and pluralism, political participation and civil liberties. While the decline of democracy at the global level has been stopped, the share of the world's population living in full democracies is still remarkably low at just 6.6 percent. Meanwhile, 39 percent of the world's population live in countries rated as authoritarian, with China and Pakistan the most populous examples



Adam Castillo

MYANMAR DEPORTS US CITIZEN DETAINED OVER BUSINESS DISPUTE: PRESIDENCY

Myanmar said it deported on 16 September a US citizen detained since June over a lawsuit accusing him of business misdealings linked to the nation's American chamber of commerce.

Adam Castillo, a security consultant and former president of the American Chamber of Commerce in Myanmar, was detained on entry to the Southeast Asian country on June 11.

The Myanmar president's office said Castillo had been accused in a lawsuit of a breach of trust violating the constitution of the business organisation he once led.

Castillo was deported from the airport of the capital Naypyidaw on Wednesday evening, the presidential office statement said.

"In consideration of the bilateral friendly and close relations between the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and the United States of America, he was deported in accordance with prescribed procedures," it added.

The statement did not say where he was deported to. There were no further details about the terms of his release or the status of the case against him.

But his deportation coincided with local media reports that an American delegation had visited the capital.

Myanmar's presidential spokeswoman did not respond to an AFP query over the reported visit earlier on Wednesday.

Since Castillo's detention he had disappeared into Myanmar's justice system, which has become almost entirely opaque following a 2021 coup that ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi.

AFP journalists saw him only briefly in Yangon as he arrived for a court hearing where he was remanded in custody.

Castillo had faced up to a decade behind bars, in prisons criticised by rights monitors for dire conditions.

After five years of military rule following the coup, Myanmar held elections starting in late 2025 which installed a nominally civilian government.

Coup leader Min Aung Hlaing has taken over as civilian president -- a transition which democracy watchdogs describe as a charade rebranding his rule.

Analysts say Myanmar is now keen to shake off its post-coup pariah status, re-engaging with nations which have largely frozen it out since 2021.

AFP



Jade seller. Photo: AFP

JADE LAND: MONEY, POWER, CONFLICT AND THE LIVES OF THE PEOPLE BEHIND ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST VALUABLE NATURAL RESOURCES ATLAS

If we look at Kachin State on a world map, we see a region at the northernmost part of Myanmar, sharing a border with China's Yunnan Province.

But when viewed through the global jade market, Kachin State becomes far more significant than simply a border region on a map.

The reason is that the Hpakant area of Kachin State is one of the world's most important sources of high-quality jadeite, a particularly valuable form of jade.

According to Myanmar's Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (MEITI) 2017–2018 report, Myanmar is the world's largest source of jadeite and is estimated to account for around 90 percent of global jadeite production. The report also identifies Hpakant as a major commercial source of high-quality jade.

This raises a fundamental question:

Who has actually benefited from the wealth generated by the jade produced in Kachin State—wealth that the world places such enormous value on?

Behind that question lies a complex network connecting Hpakant, jade, the Chinese market, the military, ethnic armed organizations, business elites, border trade and, ultimately, the lives of local communities.

Hpakant — The City of Jade Mountains

Hpakant, in Kachin State, is the center of Myanmar's jade industry.

Around Hpakant and Lonekhin, large-scale mining operations using heavy machinery operate alongside small-scale jade scavengers.

Jade mining is not simply a matter of extracting individual stones from underground. Large-scale mining operations remove enormous quantities of earth and rock. The resulting mining waste is then piled into massive dumps that can resemble artificial mountains.

Small-scale miners search through these waste dumps for pieces of jade that may have been left behind.

According to Global Witness research, as large-scale mining expanded in Hpakant, the landscape changed rapidly, while small-scale jade scavengers were pushed into increasingly dangerous mining waste dumps in search of valuable stones.

Therefore, understanding Hpakant's economy requires more than asking, "How much jade is produced?"

It also requires asking:

Who extracts it? Who buys it? Who collects taxes and fees? Who determines its value? And ultimately, who receives the profits?

The Secret Behind the US\$31 Billion Estimate

One of the most widely cited figures illustrating the scale of Myanmar's jade industry is the estimated US\$31 billion in 2014.

According to a 2015 investigation by Global Witness, the value of Myanmar's jade production in 2014 could have reached as much as US\$31 billion.

Global Witness calculated that this amount was equivalent to roughly 48 percent of Myanmar's official GDP at the time and approximately 46 times the government's health expenditure.

However, an important distinction must be made here.

US\$31 billion was not an officially confirmed annual income figure for the Myanmar government.

It was an estimate of the value of jade production made by Global Witness.

Meanwhile, according to Chinese customs data cited by Global Witness and EITI, China officially imported approximately US\$12.3 billion worth of jade and gemstones from Myanmar in 2014.

By comparison, official sales at the Myanmar Gems Emporium amounted to only around US\$1.4 billion.

This enormous gap raises one of the central questions surrounding Myanmar's jade industry:

The important question is not simply how much jade was worth, but how much of that value actually entered Myanmar's formal economy and public revenue system.

The Money Trail of Jade

Global Witness has identified China as the major market for Myanmar jade. Chinese customs data showed that officially recorded imports of jade and

gemstones from Myanmar reached approximately US\$12.3 billion in 2014. Global Witness also noted that this figure may have represented only part of the actual trade.

Therefore, the economic journey of jade begins in Hpakant but does not end there.

While jade remains a natural resource beneath the ground, once it enters the market it becomes a commodity with international value.

Who Benefited from the Profits?

This is one of the central political questions surrounding Myanmar's jade industry.

The industry has never been controlled by a single actor.

Instead, military-linked companies, business elites, ethnic armed organizations, mining operators, brokers, traders and networks connected to the Chinese market have participated at different stages of the industry.

According to Global Witness's 2015 investigation, the allocation of jade mining licences created opportunities for companies connected to powerful individuals and political networks to benefit from the industry.

Tatmadaw-owned businesses, including Myanmar Economic Holdings Limited (MEHL) and Myanmar Economic Corporation (MEC), were also involved in jade mining.

The United Nations Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar reported in 2019 that MEHL and MEC held jade and ruby mining licences in Kachin and Shan states. The mission also reported that 23 MEHL subsidiaries were involved in jade and ruby mining.

Therefore, understanding who benefited from jade cannot be reduced to a simple question of whether "the military benefited" or "the KIA benefited."

The reality was a much broader network of competing and sometimes overlapping economic interests.

Jade and Conflict

Looking at Kachin State's jade industry purely as a natural-resource business would leave out one of its most important dimensions:

conflict.

According to Global Witness research, the jade industry has been closely connected to the Kachin

conflict, with revenues generated by the industry becoming a source of income for actors involved in the conflict.

After the military coup of February 1, 2021, Global Witness reported that illegal mining in Hpakant increased and that systems emerged in which military units, police, armed groups and local power holders collected fees from mining activities.

In its 2021 report, Global Witness also described the KIO/KIA as deriving important revenue from taxes and permission fees connected to the jade sector, while the military and other armed groups were also involved in the industry.

The report further documented allegations of companies mining without licences or operating through informal systems of revenue-sharing.

The relationship between jade and conflict can therefore be viewed as a cycle:

Jade - Revenue - Armed groups / power holders - Military capacity - Conflict.

However, this cycle did not operate exclusively for one side.

The actors benefiting from jade revenues changed according to circumstances and location, and research has documented cases in which opposing groups sometimes entered informal arrangements or cooperation around mining activities.

The Chinese Market — Jade's Final Destination

It is difficult to explain Myanmar's jade industry without discussing the Chinese market.

In China, jade has long held significant cultural and historical value. Jadeite from Myanmar has consequently become one of the most important sources of high-quality jade for the Chinese market.

Global Witness reported that official Chinese imports of jade and gemstones from Myanmar were worth approximately US\$12.3 billion in 2014. However, it also noted that this figure may have represented only part of the actual trade.

In 2021, Global Witness estimated that up to 90 percent of jade produced in Hpakant could have been smuggled into China outside Myanmar's formal system.

This figure is a Global Witness estimate rather than an officially verified trade statistic, and it should therefore be presented as such.

For this reason, it would be misleading to describe the Chinese market as "the only problem behind

Myanmar's jade industry."

The more fundamental question is: Through what channels does the value generated by jade extraction reach domestic and international markets, and how much of that value returns to local communities, government revenue and the formal economy?

What Do Local Communities Receive?

Jade lies beneath the ground in Kachin State, but its economic benefits have not necessarily flowed directly to the people living there.

Global Witness research has documented the loss of livelihoods, land displacement, threats and violence, environmental destruction and increasing dangers associated with mining activities.

There is also a major gap between the wealth generated by mining and the level of local development.

On one side, resources worth billions of dollars have been extracted.

On the other, mining communities continue to face problems related to safety, healthcare, environmental degradation and access to basic services.

This gap demonstrates that resource wealth and public prosperity are not necessarily the same thing.

Landslides — Who Pays the Price for Jade?

No history of Hpakant's jade industry can be complete without examining its deadly landslides.

In November 2015, a landslide in Hpakant's jade-mining area killed more than 110 people, according to Human Rights Watch.

As large-scale mining expanded, small-scale jade scavengers were increasingly pushed toward dangerous mining waste dumps created by heavy machinery.

Then, on July 2, 2020, another devastating landslide occurred in Hpakant.

After heavy rainfall, a huge pile of mining waste collapsed, sending mud and water rushing downhill and burying jade scavengers.

Reuters reported at the time that the death toll had reached 172, while 54 people were injured. Later reports recorded the recovery of 174 bodies.

The disaster demonstrated the enormous human cost hidden behind the economic value of the jade industry.

A piece of jade may be worth millions of dollars on the global market.

But the life of the person who searches for that stone cannot be given a price.

2021 — Myanmar's Jade Economy After the Coup

The military coup of February 1, 2021 also affected Myanmar's jade industry.

Illegal mining, licensing problems and competing economic interests had existed before the coup. However, Global Witness argued that regulatory control weakened further after the military seized power.

Following landslides in Hpakant in December 2021, Global Witness reported that illegal jade mining had expanded after the coup and that military units, police and armed groups were involved in systems of collecting fees from miners.

This situation made the connection between natural resources and conflict even clearer.

Where there is conflict, there is jade.

Where there is jade, there is money.

Where there is money, political and armed interests enter the picture.

In this way, natural resources can become a source of financing for conflict.

"Who Is the Jade For?"

The 2013–2014 Myanmar EITI report reveals the enormous gaps that existed even in attempts to measure the value of Myanmar's jade industry.

According to the available figures:

- Official sales at the Myanmar Gems Emporium: approximately US\$1.4 billion
- Myanmar jade and gemstone imports recorded by Chinese customs: approximately US\$12.3 billion
- Global Witness estimate of jade-sector production value: approximately US\$30.9–31 billion

These differences are not merely discrepancies between numbers.

They also point to the gap between the formal economy, informal economic activity, smuggling networks, vested interests and transparency in natural-resource governance.

Therefore, the more important question is not simply:

"How much revenue does Myanmar receive from jade?"

Instead, the questions should be:

How much of the value created by jade enters the formal economy?

How much contributes to the financing of power and conflict?

And how much ultimately reaches the communities living where the jade is extracted?

Finally — Is Jade a Blessing or a Curse?

Beneath the ground of Kachin State lies jade that the world places enormous value on.

Yet the enormous value of that jade has not translated into equal prosperity for the people living above it.

Instead, jade has become connected to a chain:

Natural resources - Money - Power - Weapons - Conflict.

On one side are the military and military-linked companies, business elites, mining operators and other economic interests.

On the other are ethnic armed organizations, including the KIO/KIA, for whom jade-related revenues have also become part of their economic resources.

And at the end of this entire system are the miners, small-scale jade scavengers, local workers and families living on the ground in Hpakant.

A piece of jade worth millions of dollars in the global market may represent an occupation, a livelihood, a danger - or the last hope of a family - on the ground in Hpakant.

Therefore, "Jade Land" is not simply an article about jade mining.

It is an article about a series of fundamental questions:

Who owns the natural resources?

Who determines their value?

Who receives the profits?

Who uses those revenues to finance conflict?

And ultimately, who pays the price?

Kachin State's jade is valuable to the global market.

But for the people of Kachin, the question of whether that value becomes an opportunity - or another source of conflict - remains unanswered.

ATLAS



NORWAY CHARGES TELENOR OVER DATA HANDOVER TO MYANMAR JUNTA, OPENS SANCTIONS PROBE

Norway's Police Security Service (PST) and Kripas, the national criminal investigation service, charged telecoms group Telenor ASA on 15 September with possible complicity in crimes against humanity and sanctions violations, over its role in giving Myanmar's military junta access to customer data and surveillance equipment.

According to Kripas, the complicity charge covers the period from the 1 February 2021 coup to 25 March 2022, when Telenor completed the sale of its wholly owned subsidiary, Telenor Myanmar Ltd. (TML). The charge stems from TML's repeated handover of historical customer traffic data to the military regime during that period, as the regime carried out abuses against the civilian population, Kripas said.

PST's separate charge concerns the same sale, which the security service says included sanctioned surveillance equipment transferred to the buyer without authorization from Norway's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Investigators searched Telenor's Fornebu headquarters on 15 September, and the two agencies were due to brief reporters later the same day.

The charges follow a complaint filed with Norwegian police in December 2024 by rights group Justice For Myanmar (JFM) and the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) Norway, which alleged Telenor installed and maintained a German-made lawful interception system at Myanmar's state surveillance centre from 2018 before transferring it to buyer M1 Group as part of the 2022 sale.

Telenor entered Myanmar in 2014 and served more than 18 million customers by the time of the coup. According to Norwegian business daily DN, TML repeatedly shared customer data with the junta after the takeover, including on hundreds of opposition figures at risk of arrest.



Photo: Supplied

MYANMAR JUNTA CONDUCTS DEADLY DAILY BOMBINGS ON IDP SHELTERS IN MANDALAY'S NGAZUN

Seven people, including a Buddhist monk, were killed and four others severely injured after the military junta launched airstrikes on forested areas where internally displaced persons (IDPs) are sheltering in Ngazun Township, Mandalay Region.

Despite the absence of active clashes, the junta has been carrying out attacks using drones, Mi-35 helicopters, and jet fighters from 2 September until 15 September, according to a local source in Ngazun.

"They mostly use drones to drop bombs. They come and bomb us every day; it has happened so many times that I lost count. Our village, Thar Kyin, and Kula village have been targeted the most. On the night before last (13 September), they also continuously fired heavy artillery from downtown Ngazun, and no one dared to sleep the entire night," a local resident told Mizzima.

On 6 September, the junta launched an airstrike on Ywar Thit Monastery in Min Gyo village while monks were having their meal, killing seven people: a monk, a woman, and five men. Another monk, a woman, and two men were also injured, according to the local resident.

The junta has been conducting daily rotational airstrikes across almost all parts of Ngazun Township, with the exception of the northern region. Targeted villages include Kula, Thar Kyin, Than Kone, Min Gyo, Min Gyi, Myotha, and Myauk Kyinn.

Homes were also destroyed in Thar Kyin village, and over 30,000 local residents have been displaced and forced to flee.

While the junta is forcibly conscripting citizens for military service in major cities, it continues to launch relentless airstrikes on villages where there are no ongoing clashes.



Kyaw Moe Tun

KYAW MOE TUN ASSUMES ROLE AS ROTATING CHAIR OF UN ASIA-PACIFIC GROUP

Ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun, the Permanent Representative of Myanmar to the United Nations, is serving as the rotating chairperson of the UN Asia-Pacific Group for the month of September, according to a statement released by the Permanent Mission of Myanmar.

The Asia-Pacific Group comprises 55 UN member states from the Asia and Pacific regions, with member states taking turns to assume the rotating chairmanship. Myanmar has taken on the rotating chair duties for September 2026.

In his capacity as rotating chair, Kyaw Moe Tun attended a UN memorial ceremony on the morning of 14 September to mark the passing of King Harald V of Norway, who died on 28 August, where he delivered commemorative remarks on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group.

It is understood that the rotating chairs of the respective UN regional groups traditionally attend such

ceremonies to deliver commemorative speeches.

During the 80th session of the United Nations General Assembly, Kyaw Moe Tun attended and delivered speeches at open meetings of the UN Security Council, meetings of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and sessions of their subsidiary bodies.

The Permanent Mission of Myanmar also said he participated and spoke at regular meetings of UN-affiliated agencies, meetings focusing on development, children, women, and girls, as well as various side events.

According to the statement, Kyaw Moe Tun delivered over 80 speeches in his capacity as Permanent Representative of Myanmar throughout the 80th UN General Assembly.



Minister for Defense of the National Unity Government (NUG), Yee Mon

COMBATING MYANMAR FORCED CONSCRIPTION PROGRAMME CRUCIAL, SAYS NUG MINISTER YEE MON

Union Minister for Defense of the National Unity Government (NUG), Yee Mon, stated that combating the military junta's forced conscription scheme, known as the National Service (NS) programme, is a vital task for the revolution, requiring the active cooperation and participation of the public and eligible youth.

Defense Minister Yee Mon made these remarks during a talk show programme on conscription, military affairs, and the revolution with prominent activist Min Ko Naing.

Yee Mon noted that although the conscription scheme is unlikely to become a fully effective combat force for the military junta, the failure of this programme represents a major vulnerability for the regime.

"If the conscription forces and the scheme collapse, it will be very interesting to see what the military junta will do next. Dismantling this conscription scheme will be a crucial task for the revolution. For this endeavour, it is essential that both our public and eligible youth cooperate and participate," Yee Mon said.

It is understood that the NUG has invited youth facing the threat of forced conscription by the junta to seek refuge in revolutionary territories. Arrangements

have been made for these youths to access education, employment, and opportunities in fields of their interest upon arrival.

For young people who wish to take up combat duties, arrangements will be made for them to join the People's Defense Force (PDF) or local People's Defense Organizations (PDO / Pa-Ka-Pha), Yee Mon said.

He added that those who do not wish to perform combat duties will be facilitated to participate in teaching children in revolutionary areas, community healthcare, assisting internally displaced persons (IDPs), public services, development projects, and production sectors.

Furthermore, Yee Mon stated that advocacy efforts are underway to urge overseas Myanmar community organizations to assist, as much as possible, those who defected from the conscription scheme or took refuge in revolutionary areas to avoid conscription, should they wish to travel abroad.

Since the forced conscription scheme serves as a lifeline for the military junta, it is imperative to dismantle it through various methods, an effort that is currently being executed on the battlefield, Yee Mon remarked.

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



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



Matthew VanDyke in Libya

INDIA COURT GRANTS BAIL TO US CITIZEN ACCUSED OF ILLEGAL ENTRY

An Indian court granted bail on 18 September to a US citizen arrested six months ago for allegedly entering northeastern India illegally before crossing into Myanmar, the man's lawyer said.

Matthew VanDyke was detained in March along with six Ukrainians after India's National Investigation Agency (NIA) accused them of entering the northeastern state of Mizoram without the required permits before heading to Myanmar.

Indian media reports said he entered Myanmar to train rebel groups.

Myanmar descended into civil war after a junta seized power in a 2021 coup, with pro-democracy guerrillas and ethnic-minority armed groups fighting for control of large parts of the country.

India has long been suspicious of certain Myanmar factions that have the same ethnicity as populations on the Indian side of the border, fearing a spillover of violence and unrest.

VanDyke secured bail because prosecutors did not charge him under India's stringent anti-terror legislation, his lawyer Rohit Dandriyal told AFP.

"The NIA could not oppose the bail plea after 180 days of custody under the Foreigners Act," Dandriyal said.

The status of the six Ukrainians was not immediately clear.

Before his arrest in India, VanDyke was known as an American documentary filmmaker and founder of Sons of Liberty International, a US-based non-profit organisation that says it trains local forces resisting authoritarian regimes.

VanDyke joined anti-Muammar Gaddafi rebels during Libya's 2011 uprising, where he was captured and held as a prisoner for several months before escaping, according to his website.

Since the coup in Myanmar, thousands of refugees from have crossed into India, seeking shelter from fighting between junta forces and rebel fighters.

In response to the deteriorating security situation, India is building a 1,643-kilometre (1,020-mile) fence along its porous border with Myanmar, which runs through remote jungles and snow-capped Himalayan peaks.

AFP



TWO KILLED IN LATEST ATTACK IN INDIA'S RESTIVE NORTHEAST

Two women have been killed in India's northeastern state of Manipur, police said 16 September, taking the number of civilian casualties due to ethnic strife there to 10 in the last three weeks.

Unrest has flared between far-flung Manipur's predominantly Hindu Meitei majority and its mainly Christian Kuki minority since 2023, but the violence has spread in recent months and drawn in the Naga group.

The conflict, fuelled by competing claims over land and political influence, has claimed more than 250 lives.

The two women were killed near their home in Tamenglong district, around 150 kilometres (90 miles) west of the state capital Imphal.

"There is an ongoing shutdown in Tamenglong because of the killing of two women... on Tuesday

afternoon," police superintendent Lanmiyo Luikham told AFP.

Luikham said the attack appeared to be linked to recent clashes between mainly Christian Naga and Kuki groups.

"We are carrying out the investigation and necessary formalities, and focusing on maintaining calm in the region," he said.

The attack comes days after eight people were killed in three separate incidents across the state, which shares a porous border with war-torn Myanmar.

Efforts by the Indian government to restore normalcy have had little success.

AFP



BABY ORANGUTANS IN INDIA EXPOSE 'FRIGHTENING' SCALE OF TRAFFICKING WITH POSSIBLE MYANMAR LINK

Five baby orangutans abandoned in an Indian forest have exposed a "massive" exotic wildlife trade, with traffickers smuggling increasingly rare species into the country, experts say.

They warn of a growing multi-million-dollar trade in endangered animals, including apes smuggled through war-torn Myanmar to feed demand among wealthy Indians seeking exotic status symbols to flaunt on social media.

"There have been several instances of exotic wild animals being found or seized across the country, said Sumanth Bindumadhav of Humane World for Animals India. "The scale is massive."

Critically endangered orangutans are native only to Indonesia's Sumatra island and Borneo, which it shares with Malaysia and Brunei.

Yet the five tiny orangutans were found by rangers in Balasore, in India's eastern Odisha state.

Aged around one-and-a-half years old, they are being cared for at a zoo. Indonesia has requested their return.

Bindumadhav's group, in a June 2026 report, detailed what it called a "rising trade in exotic wildlife", demonstrated by a "steep increase in seizures" that reflected a "surge in illegal trade".

The report estimated India's exotic-pet market at \$42.6 million in 2024.

Orangutans and gibbons, small apes, were being "increasingly trafficked into India" from Southeast Asia's rainforests, it added.

'Alarming scale'

A senior official at India's Wildlife Crime Control Bureau said "thousands of social media influencers" were promoting exotic species as pets online, fuelling demand among followers.

"It is a huge market," said the official, who requested anonymity because they were not authorised to speak to the media. "Rich people keep them in their homes."

Under a government voluntary disclosure scheme, more than 40,000 people had registered exotic animals by February 2021, government data shows.

The figure is likely only a fraction of those in private hands, analysts say.

"This is a figure from only those who registered themselves, so the true volume of it is potentially much larger and remains unknown," said Bindumadhav.

"The true scale of it is actually quite frightening."

Former India head of global anti-wildlife-trade group TRAFFIC Shekhar Kumar Niraj said the surge in trafficking was also linked to a "rising number" of animals held in private hands.

"Private zoos have violated laws at a very alarming scale across the country," said Niraj.

"Primates are very popular in zoos because they are very intelligent, like to interact with humans, the kind of thing zoos want."

Indian federal authorities did not respond to AFP's requests for comment.

The World Wide Fund for Nature-India (WWF-India) documented 56 seizures involving about 4,000 exotic animals in 2022 alone.

In October 2025, Mumbai customs officers arrested a passenger carrying two endangered gibbons stuffed inside a checked bag.

Other seizures in Mumbai last year included lizards, tree-climbing possums and dozens of venomous vipers.

In 2024, forest officials recovered a trafficked orangutan from a flat in Maharashtra state.

But such seizures represent only a fraction of the trade, experts warn.

'Porous border'

"The scale of it is much, much bigger than what we see actually based on the seizure data," said Jimmy Borah of the environmental advocacy group Aaranyak.

Experts have previously raised concerns over Vantara, a vast wildlife rescue and conservation centre in Gujarat founded by Anant Ambani, son of billionaire Mukesh Ambani, over its intake of endangered species.

Vantara has consistently denied any wrongdoing.

In August, it said it was taking "bold steps to reset its operations", had withdrawn all applications to import live animals, and named former head of the global wildlife watchdog CITES, John Scanlon, to chair its governing council.

Exactly how the orangutans were brought to Odisha -- more than 2,000 kilometres (1,200 miles) by sea, and 7,000 kilometres by land (4,500 miles) -- is not clear. Police have launched a criminal investigation.

Experts say that in addition to airports and formal cargo routes, the land border between Myanmar and India's northeast is a key trafficking route.

"The northeast is important for seizures of live exotic animals, linked to cross border movement from Southeast Asia," said Dipankar Ghose of WWF-India.

Authorities have seized other exotic primates in the region in recent years, smuggled on jungle routes across the frontier.

"We are talking about miles and miles of a very porous border," said Borah of Aaranyak.

AFP



CHINA TIGHTENS EXIT CONTROLS, EXTENDS SCRUTINY TO OFFICIALS' FAMILIES

SUN LEE

New rules broaden grounds for travel bans as internal passport checks reportedly widen to spouses, parents and children, deepening uncertainty over who can leave the country

China's new exit-and-entry regime has come into force with significantly wider powers to prevent Chinese citizens from leaving the country, adding another layer to Beijing's expanding national-security controls over movement, technology and access to information.

The new regulations, issued by the State Council and effective September 15, allow authorities to restrict the departure of Chinese citizens involved in activities that threaten national security or interests, as well as those who violate export-control or technology-import and export rules in ways that could endanger industrial or technological security. The regulations also allow exit restrictions in other specified circumstances and tighten controls over entry and exit documentation.

The formal legal framework is now being accompanied by what insiders describe as a much broader internal screening exercise across parts of China's party-state system.

According to people cited by local Chinese media outlets, government departments, state-owned enterprises, financial institutions, hospitals, and universities have been asking employees to disclose whether they or their family members hold foreign passports, dual citizenship, or foreign permanent residency. The reported questionnaires seek details including the country that issued a passport, the date it was obtained and, in some cases, the number of passports held.

The reported expansion matters because passport controls have traditionally focused more on officials and personnel in sensitive posts. The latest screening, according to insiders, is reaching ordinary employees and their immediate families - including spouses, parents and children.

From individual control to family scrutiny

The reported family-level screening points to a broader concern within the Chinese system: officials and employees maintaining strong personal and financial links overseas.

One issue is the longstanding Chinese term “naked officials” - cadres whose families or assets are already outside China. Such arrangements have attracted scrutiny because they can complicate anti-corruption investigations and create potential channels for information, money or influence to move overseas.

The new approach reportedly goes beyond checking an individual's passport. Officials are said to be compiling information on family members, previous employers, universities attended and social connections, including former classmates and colleagues working in government.

If confirmed on a broad scale, this would represent a significant expansion from controlling the travel of individuals in sensitive positions to mapping the overseas links of an employee's wider personal network.

The chilling effect

The immediate impact may extend well beyond people formally placed under an exit ban.

The regulations require applicants to provide truthful and lawful reasons for travel and allow authorities to seek documents, information and electronic data when verifying identity or the stated purpose of travel. False statements or documents can lead to refusal of travel or entry documents.

This creates a potentially powerful deterrent effect. Employees in sensitive sectors may become more cautious about foreign travel, overseas employment, immigration applications or even maintaining foreign residency.

The reported internal questionnaires add another layer of uncertainty. Because many of these checks are being conducted through internal organisational

channels rather than public announcements, employees may have little clarity about how the information will be assessed, retained or used.

Immigration consultancies are also reportedly being brought under tighter scrutiny. The formal regulations establish a registration framework for agencies providing exit-entry intermediary services and impose penalties for facilitating false documentation or irregular procedures.

A widening security perimeter

The larger significance of the measures lies in the convergence of several controls that were previously more distinct: foreign travel, technology transfers, immigration, state employment, family connections and access to information.

Beijing officially presents the system as a mechanism to protect national security while safeguarding lawful rights and regulating exit-entry procedures. Critics and foreign observers, however, have raised concerns about the breadth of the new powers and the discretion available to enforcement authorities.

The result is a more restrictive environment in which the boundary between an individual's private overseas connections and the state's security interests is becoming increasingly difficult to define.

For China's civil servants, state-sector employees and personnel working in strategically sensitive industries, the question is therefore no longer simply whether they themselves can travel abroad. Increasingly, their passports, foreign residency, family connections and professional networks may also become part of the security equation.

That widening perimeter and the uncertainty surrounding how far it will be applied could prove to be one of the most consequential effects of the new exit-control regime.

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



THE SUM OF SMALL CUTS

"At the moment, there's a big challenge to provide rations and healthcare services in the camps, because as you may know already, Donald Trump cut the funding... there's now a big challenge to provide healthcare services and food for the refugees," Saw Poe Wah tells the Insight Myanmar Podcast.

Saw Poe Wah assists the Karen Refugee Committee (KRC) and has spent much of his life inside the refugee-camp system it helps run along the Thai-Myanmar border. He describes the KRC as a long-standing Karen-led body that coordinates care for displaced communities across nine refugee camps in Thailand's Tak and Mae Hong Son provinces, a system he dates to roughly five decades of continuous operation. The camps were built for people pushed out by conflict and persecution, but his account keeps returning to a more current pressure: the camps are absorbing increased arrivals while the financial scaffolding that keeps them fed, treated, and schooled is thinning.

Saw Poe Wah frames the KRC's work as practical and unglamorous, built around keeping people alive while keeping a community functioning under constraint. The KRC works alongside international and cross-border partners, including UNHCR and the Thai-Myanmar Border Consortium, to provide food and basic support.

What makes the present period unstable is not only the scale of support required, but also the mismatch between need and predictability. Since the military coup, more people than ever before have been crowding into the border zone looking for temporary shelter; and temporary arrangements quickly harden into something longer. "We've seen so many people from inside Burma coming, seeking shelter and care," he says, adding that assistance can be sustained for a short window before "it becomes a long-term issue."

His descriptions move between two geographies that constantly overlap in the borderlands: the formal refugee camps in Thailand and the conflict terrain inside Myanmar, where displacement happens faster than institutions can respond. In the camps, Saw Poe Wah talks about reorganizing limited resources into categories, a form of triage that tries to preserve the most basic protections for those least able to cope. "The KRC tried to reorganize after the [US funding cuts], and we divided the people into three groups," he says, distinguishing between those determined to be the most vulnerable, and others who may be able to work and cover at least some costs themselves. When the latter option exists, it also depends on the Thai state's tolerance and permissions. Saw Poe Wah describes collaboration with Thai authorities that allows some refugees to leave camp boundaries for employment, a partial form of self-reliance that can reduce pressure on rations but also exposes people to the risks and instability of informal labor.

CATCH THE PODCAST

Read more and listen to the Insight Myanmar Podcast here: <https://insightmyanmar.org/complete-shows/2026/9/7/episode-603-the-sum-of-small-cuts>



MYANMAR JUNTA DELEGATION ATTENDS 5TH CONSULTATION ON SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT BANK

Myanmar junta Deputy Minister for Finance and Revenue Than Than Lin and her delegation attended the fifth Consultation on the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Development Bank (SCOB) held in Hangzhou, the People's Republic of China, from 14 to 16 September, according to regime media.

The meeting was co-chaired by Mr Min Liao, Deputy Minister of Finance of the People's Republic of China, and Mr Aslam Chaudhary, Minister of Commerce of the Embassy of Pakistan in the People's Republic of China.

At the meeting, the Interim Secretariat reviewed the draft MoU on the Establishment of the Shanghai

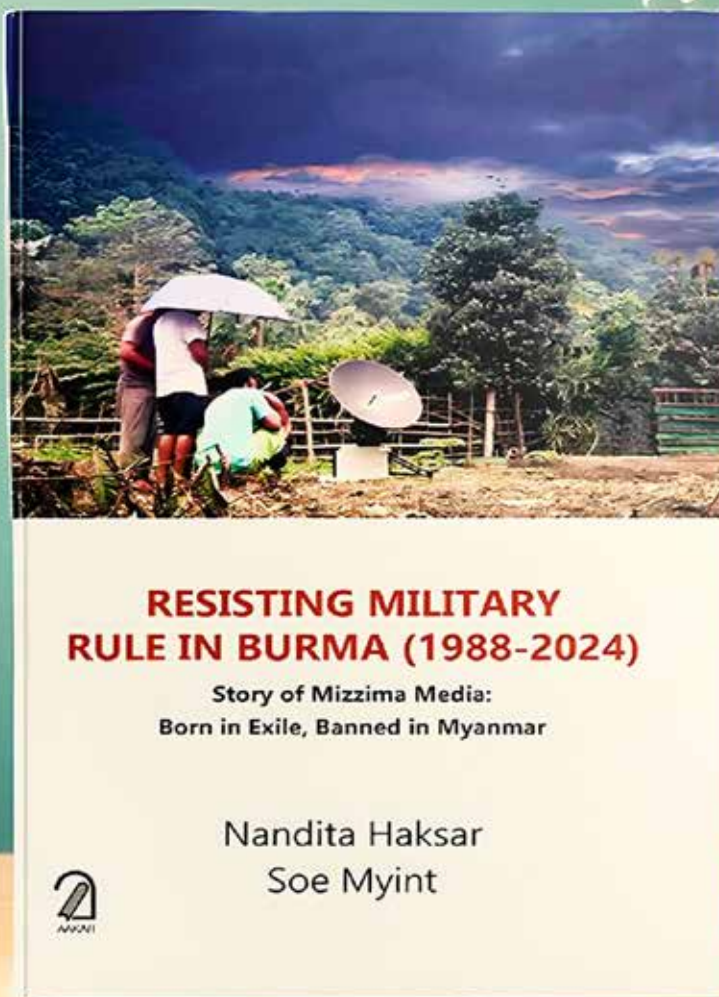
Cooperation and Development Bank, the share allocation, voting rights and decision-making procedures, the procedure for capital contribution to the bank, as well as Mr Jingdong Hua, who served as Vice-President of the World Bank, discussed the Concessional Window and the Future Work Plan on the financial operations of international development banks and the practical implementation of financial innovation by the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC).

The meeting was attended by Deputy Ministers of Finance, Vice-Governors of Central Banks and officials from 29 countries, including ASEAN member countries Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Indonesia and Vietnam.

RESISTING MILITARY RULE IN BURMA (1988-2024)

STORY OF MIZZIMA MEDIA: BORN IN EXILE, BANNED IN MYANMAR

by Nandita Haksar and Soe Myint



Published by
AAKAR BOOKS



TO PURCHASE THE BOOK ON AMAZON, CLICK HERE:

<https://amzn.in/d/5n9Lkhd>

TO DONATE AND HELP MIZZIMA'S WORK:

<https://donate.mizzima.com/>

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.