

ON THE GROUND IN MYANMAR

mizzima WEEKLY

Analysis & Insight



MYANMAR'S MORASS

**When Realpolitik Becomes a
Shtick for Policy Reversals**

Nicholas Kong

mizzima WEEKLY

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DIGITAL MAGAZINE

Our relaunched magazine Mizzima Weekly provides readers with a more focused read on what matters in Myanmar and the wider region, with an emphasis on analysis, insight and providing key talking points.

HAS WASHINGTON MISCALCULATED IN ITS MYANMAR PIVOT?

The Trump administration's low-key renewed engagement with Myanmar's military leadership may offer short-term opportunities on cybercrime and critical minerals, but the political, strategic and practical risks are considerable – including sending the wrong signal.

The reported September 2026 visit to Naypyidaw by US Assistant Secretary of State Michael Vance marked a significant shift in relations since the February 2021 coup. According to Reuters, discussions included tackling scam centres targeting Americans and exploring potential access to Myanmar's rare-earth deposits. The visit also helped secure the release of an American businessman, Adam Castillo. These are legitimate US interests, but many argue against engaging the military leadership.

The first potential mistake is confusing access with influence. Myanmar's military ruler, Min Aung Hlaing, has strong reasons to welcome American attention. Following years of international isolation, direct contact with Washington offers an opportunity to present his administration as a legitimate interlocutor. The danger is that the junta gains diplomatic recognition in practice without making meaningful concessions on political freedoms, civilian protection or the release of political prisoners. After all, the junta remains at war with its people and continues to detain rightful democratic leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

This is not simply a question of symbolism. Washington has imposed sanctions on Min Aung Hlaing over human rights abuses, including the persecution of the Rohingya. As the Council on Foreign Relations argued in its 8 October assessment, the policy shift could confer legitimacy on the military leadership while delivering few strategic gains.

The second potential mistake concerns the scam centres. These criminal operations cause enormous financial harm to Americans and involve allegations of human trafficking, forced labour and organised crime. Washington should judge cooperation by independently verified arrests, prosecutions and protection for trafficking victims, not by promises made behind closed doors. Recent investigation

by Mizzima, for example, indicates scam centres continue to operate in the "badlands" of Shwe Kokko despite the crackdown claims of the junta.

Rare earths present an even more complicated calculation. Reducing dependence on China for critical minerals is an understandable American objective. Yet many of Myanmar's valuable deposits lie in conflict zones, particularly in Kachin State, where ethnic armed organisations hold substantial territory and China dominates the existing supply chain. The US government has itself warned that Myanmar's rare-earth industry carries serious environmental, labour and human-rights risks. An agreement with the military leadership in Naypyidaw cannot automatically deliver access to mines beyond its effective control. This is not going to happen.

There is also a wider strategic danger. By prioritising minerals and immediate security interests, Washington could weaken its relationships with Myanmar's democratic opposition, ethnic resistance organisations and civil society. These actors cannot simply be bypassed in determining the country's future. Nor should the military's ability to provide selective cooperation be confused with its ability to bring peace or govern the country with broad public consent.

The US administration may argue that direct engagement is a practical necessity in a world where American interests compete with China's influence. But engagement requires leverage, clear objectives and measurable conditions. Washington should retain targeted sanctions where justified, insist on humanitarian access and civilian protection, and maintain substantive dialogue with democratic and ethnic representatives. Any commercial arrangements must also meet rigorous environmental and human-rights standards.

If Washington offers diplomatic legitimacy and commercial opportunity before securing verifiable results, the Myanmar junta may emerge with a valuable political victory while the United States receives little or nothing in return.

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**Cover photo of people in Yangon
by AFP**



MYANMAR'S MORASS: WHEN REALPOLITIK BECOMES A SHTICK FOR POLICY REVERSALS

NICHOLAS KONG

Myanmar's junta chief-turned-president, Min Aung Hlaing, illustrated a recurring contradiction in international diplomacy during his October 7–8 visit to Malaysia: governments can insist that they have not recognized a regime while taking actions that enhance its international standing. Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim said the visit did not amount to recognition of Myanmar's military-backed government. Yet he pledged to work towards Myanmar's reintegration into ASEAN and publicly praised Min Aung Hlaing's cooperation in repatriating Myanmar nationals.

The formal disclaimer preserves Kuala Lumpur's stated position, but it does not erase the political signal sent by a high-level reception and a public commitment to bring Myanmar back into the regional fold.

Anwar expressed appreciation to the self-appointed president for accepting the return of 10,493 Myanmar nationals from Malaysia since January, including nearly 1,500 returned on October 4. That group was the first in a staged process, involving approximately 5,000 people who had agreed to be repatriated. Malaysia presents repatriation as practical cooperation over migration and the burden of accommodating undocumented migrants. Yet the United Nations and human rights groups have warned that returning people to a country engulfed in armed conflict may expose them to persecution and forced conscription.

When repatriation becomes a diplomatic achievement, the risks facing returnees can be overshadowed by the perceived usefulness of the military-backed administration as a partner.

Stated Principles, Diplomatic Practice

The question is not simply whether Malaysia has formally reversed its Myanmar policy. Its own statements expose a more subtle tension. On June 25, Fo-

reign Minister Mohamad Hasan told Parliament that Malaysia did not recognize Myanmar's post-election administration and that engagement with Naypyidaw had not altered Malaysia's or ASEAN's position on the Five-Point Consensus (5PC). On July 2, Anwar called for a more pragmatic ASEAN approach involving all stakeholders, explicitly including the authorities in Naypyidaw, opposition political parties, ethnic armed organizations and local non-governmental organizations.

Malaysia's earlier engagement demonstrated that such inclusiveness was possible. On April 17, 2025, Anwar met Min Aung Hlaing in Bangkok. The following day, he held a teleconference with National Unity Government (NUG) Prime Minister Mahn Winn Khaing Thann. The two discussions were not equivalent in format or diplomatic protocol, but they reflected an attempt to maintain channels with different parties to the conflict.

The October visit raises a different question: whether the balance of that engagement is changing. A government can maintain that it recognizes neither a particular administration nor its claims to political authority while providing its leader with the visibility, protocol and bilateral platform associated with normal state-to-state relations. The issue is not merely what Kuala Lumpur calls its policy, but what its actions enable.

That concern was already evident within Malaysia. On July 11, former foreign minister and parliamentarian Saifuddin Abdullah criticized ASEAN's decision to hold an informal meeting with a representative of Myanmar's military authorities, warning that the move risked normalizing relations with the junta. His intervention preceded the July 12 meeting, at which ASEAN foreign ministers reaffirmed the 5PC and called for concrete progress on ending violence, releasing political detainees and delivering humanitarian aid.

The concern, therefore, is not that ASEAN has formally abandoned its framework. It is that the framework may lose practical force when bilateral engagement moves ahead without corresponding progress on its stated conditions. If the former commander-in-chief receives increasingly prominent access to regional leaders while other Myanmar stakeholders struggle for comparable opportunities, the result is an uneven diplomatic environment even if official declarations continue to endorse inclusion.

Performative non-recognition

A similar tension is emerging in Washington. US Assistant Secretary of State for Intelligence and Research Michael Vance met the coup leader in Naypyi-daw in mid-September. The immediate objective was reportedly to secure the release of detained American businessman Adam Castillo, but the contact also opened the possibility of broader cooperation concerning online scam operations and rare-earth resources.

Securing the release of an American national and combating transnational crime are legitimate government responsibilities. The problem arises when a limited practical purpose becomes the entry point for broader political accommodation without measurable reciprocal progress. Washington's approach illustrates how quickly an ostensibly narrow national interest can create an opening for the junta seeking to improve its international standing.

The US case and Malaysia's approach are not identical, but both raise questions about the relationship between immediate practical gains and longer-term political consequences.

This is where the distinction between *de jure* recognition and *de facto* political normalization matters. Formal recognition is not the only measure of how an authority is treated internationally. High-level receptions, public expressions of cooperation and pledges of

reintegration can confer political standing even when governments insist that their legal position remains unchanged. A disclaimer can clarify intent, but it cannot by itself neutralize the practical signal sent by official conduct.

Beyond Condemnation

For the Steering Council for the Emergence of a Federal Democratic Union (SCEF) and other resistance actors, condemning such engagement will not, by itself, alter the diplomatic environment. They must demonstrate effective governance in territories they administer, strengthen civilian protection against air attacks, and develop credible cooperation with foreign governments on shared concerns such as online scams, transnational crime, trade and regional security. Practical capacity and sustained engagement will matter alongside appeals to principle.

Governments, for their part, should be judged not only by whether they formally recognize Myanmar's military-backed administration, but also by the consequences of their engagement. They can pursue humanitarian, consular, economic and security objectives without allowing one bilateral channel to become a substitute for inclusive political engagement. ASEAN's 5PC commitments will have little practical value if their conditions are repeatedly affirmed in statements but lose influence in diplomatic practice.

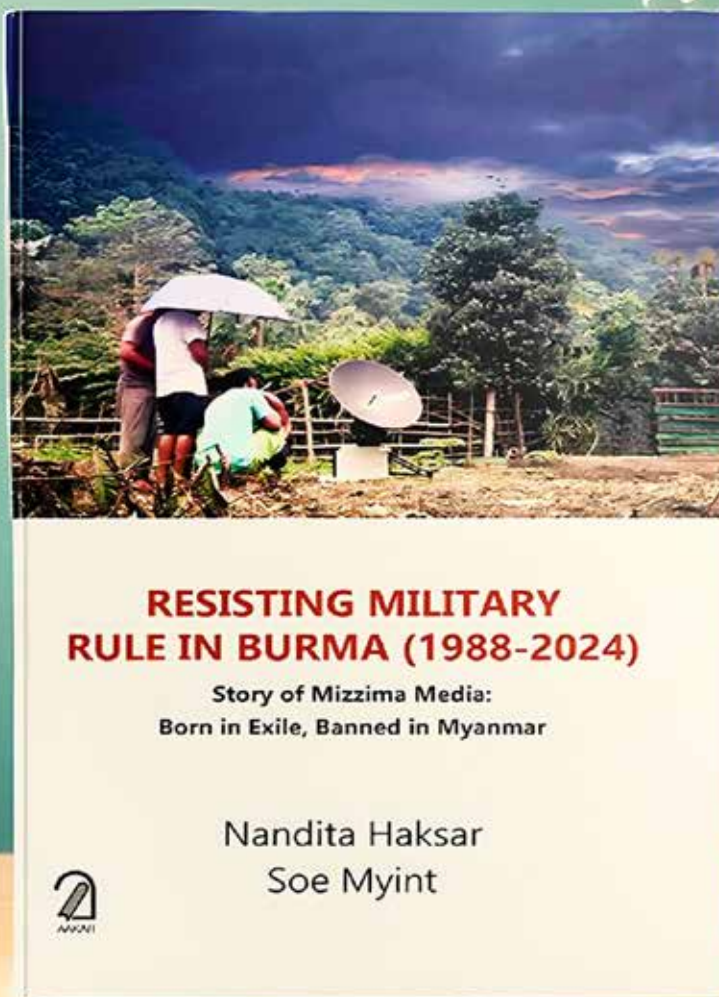
Realpolitik is not inherently illegitimate. Governments must reconcile principles with security, economic and humanitarian interests. But realpolitik becomes a convenient shtick when declarations of unchanged policy are used to obscure a shift in practice. Diplomatic credibility rests not on the disclaimers issued by governments, but on whether their actions match their stated principles and produce demonstrable results.

This commentary was originally published in Eurasia Review.

RESISTING MILITARY RULE IN BURMA (1988-2024)

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

by Nandita Haksar and Soe Myint



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ANALYSIS & INSIGHT



Photo: EPA

LABOUR SHORTAGES WORSENERD BY CONSCRIPTION DRIVE IN MYANMAR

Myanmar's forced conscription drive is worsening labour shortages and placing additional pressure on businesses already struggling amid economic difficulties. In major commercial centres such as Mandalay and Monywa, the arrests of young workers have disrupted business operations, while military recruitment has increased uncertainty for the country's remaining workforce.

In Mandalay, Myanmar's second-largest economic centre, factories and businesses are facing serious labour shortages as young men are detained for conscription. During August, the junta reportedly arrested more than 100 youths across seven townships. Detainees were allegedly asked to pay around 10 million kyats for their release, while those unable to pay were sent directly into military service.

Businesses in Mandalay's No. 1 Industrial Zone, along with small and medium-sized enterprises, hotels and restaurants, have reportedly lost more than half of their male employees. The loss of workers threatens production and services, leaving some businesses at risk of suspending operations.

Similar conditions have emerged in Monywa, a major trading centre in Sagaing Region. More than 30 youths were reportedly arrested for conscription within a few days. Even workers travelling in vehicles transporting employees to and from industrial zones were targeted. A local source told Khit Thit Media that women returning from work had also been arrested, while workers travelling in a ferry vehicle were beaten and detained.

The junta's conscription programme has reached its 29th training batch, whose opening ceremonies were held at respective military commands on October 12. With each batch reportedly comprising around 5,000 recruits, the junta may have conscripted approximately 145,000 people. However, it has not publicly disclosed how many recruits remain in service or how many have completed their military duties, making the programme's actual impact difficult to assess.

While independent media report the effects on the domestic workforce, junta-controlled newspapers

have presented conscription differently. One report described a former conscript being sent to Malaysia for overseas employment through Golden Plant Services Co., Ltd., reportedly at his own request.

Meanwhile, Labour Minister Maung Myint told overseas employment agencies that additional charges for migrant workers' remittances might be imposed and treated as state donations. At an October 10 workshop on migrant workers' welfare, he said workers must demonstrate remittances of at least 2,000 baht per month for three months and pay 1,800 baht in annual income tax to obtain a Certificate of Identity (CI).

Together, forced recruitment, labour shortages and remittance requirements are placing workers and employers under growing pressure. Rather than addressing employment insecurity, the combination risks weakening business activity, reducing household choices and further complicating Myanmar's already fragile economic recovery.



Photo: EPA

Households suffer due to food and commodity price rises

Rising food and commodity prices are forcing Myanmar households to adjust their daily spending, with even middle-income families cutting back on essential items. Instead of buying cooking oil in larger quantities for a week or a month, many now purchase small packs for daily use to manage limited cash. The growing pressure is particularly evident toward the end of each month, when salaries have largely been spent and families struggle to afford basic kitchen necessities.

A housewife who also works as an accountant said she had to buy only small portions of household essentials at the end of the month because of financial constraints. Such changes suggest that rising living costs are affecting not only low-income households but also people who previously had greater financial flexibility.

Onion prices, a key indicator of everyday food costs, rose sharply in September. In Naypyidaw, a viss (approximately 1.6 kilograms) of onions reached 12,000

kyats by the end of the month, up from around 7,000 kyats. In Yangon, the price doubled within a month, climbing from 6,000 to 12,000 kyats per viss.

Other essential foods have also become more expensive. A housewife in Pyay, Bago Region, told Mizzima that a bunch of vegetables had risen from 500 to 700 kyats, while fish and meat prices increased from 18,000 to 20,000 kyats. Cooking oil and other basic ingredients have also become increasingly costly.

Consumers attribute the price increases to several possible factors, including flooding and other natural disasters, higher cultivation costs and excessive transportation charges. However, the simultaneous rise in prices across multiple food categories is making it increasingly difficult for households to maintain their usual diets and spending patterns.

The strain is also affecting people's emotional well-being and interactions in markets. A housewife told Myanmar Pressphoto Agency that she dreaded shopping, particularly near the end of the month when little of her salary remained. Sellers are also



Queuing for fuel. Photo: AFP

experiencing anxiety as customers become less able to afford necessities. One seller said growing financial pressure was making people less tolerant and contributing to frequent disputes among vendors and between sellers and buyers.

Myanmar's rising food prices are therefore more than a cost-of-living issue. They are eroding household purchasing power, intensifying everyday stress and increasing tensions in local markets.

Myanmar faces renewed fuel supply pressures due to Middle East war

Myanmar is facing renewed fuel-price pressures amid the war in Iran and volatility in international oil markets, while foreign-currency shortages and government import restrictions continue to constrain domestic supply. Despite efforts to reduce dependence on imported fuel, rising prices are increasing costs for consumers and businesses.

Fuel prices climbed sharply from the fourth week of September. Petrol rose from around 3,800 kyats to 4,500 kyats per litre within a week, while prices of related fuel products increased by approximately 600–750 kyats per litre. In the second week of October, ordinary diesel reached around 5,000 kyats per litre, while premium diesel cost approximately 5,600 kyats. These prices approached the peak of around 5,000 kyats per litre recorded during an earlier period of conflict in the Middle East.

The junta administration has reduced fuel import quotas by up to 30 per cent because of foreign-currency constraints. However, an oil businessman told The Irrawaddy that the restrictions remained in place while businesses connected to the authorities could obtain the quantities they needed. He attributed the latest price increases largely to movements in global oil prices and the Singapore market, a major regional reference point for fuel trading.

Seeking to reduce reliance on imports, the junta leader visited the No. 1 oil refinery in Thanlyin and called for domestic refining to replace imported fuel, which consumes substantial foreign currency. The refinery's first phase is intended to process 500,000

tonnes of crude oil annually, with the stated aim of reducing imported fuel requirements by up to 30 per cent. The second phase is planned to expand annual refining capacity to three million tonnes, potentially covering 60 per cent of domestic petrol demand and 50 per cent of diesel demand.

The junta has also set a target of reducing imported fuel to 25 per cent of national consumption within five years by accelerating domestic crude-oil exploration and production. It is additionally seeking to produce aviation fuel at the Thanlyin refinery with technical assistance from China. Chinese companies are reportedly involved in technology, machinery, construction and pipeline infrastructure.

Earlier this year, the junta introduced measures to curb fuel consumption, including an odd-and-even vehicle registration system and QR-code controls on fuel purchases. Although the vehicle restrictions were withdrawn, the QR-code system remains in operation. The junta leader said the measures had helped reduce foreign-currency spending on fuel imports to around US\$3 billion during the programme period.

However, import restrictions and consumption controls have not insulated consumers from international price fluctuations. Reports that mixing domestically refined fuel with imported products can damage machinery and engines also raise concerns about fuel quality.

Myanmar's challenge is therefore not simply securing sufficient fuel, but ensuring affordable prices, reliable distribution and consistent quality. Domestic refining could reduce import dependence over time, but its effectiveness will depend on actual production capacity, crude-oil availability and whether the benefits reach consumers.



MYANMAR JUNTA LEADER GETS REFUGEE DEAL BUT NOT OFFICIAL RECOGNITION FROM MALAYSIA

Myanmar junta leader Min Aung Hlaing ended a two-day official visit to Malaysia on 8 October with Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim's pledge to send about 3,000 more Myanmar detainees home, though statements from both governments reviewed by Mizzima mention no signed agreements.

The ceremonial side of the visit carried weight of its own. On arrival at Kuala Lumpur International Airport, Min Aung Hlaing received a guard of honour from the Royal Malay Regiment, and the programme in Putrajaya included an official welcoming ceremony at Perdana Putra, bilateral talks with Anwar and a lunch hosted by the prime minister.

Myanmar described the trip as the junta leader's fifth visit to an ASEAN country and his first to a maritime member of the bloc. ASEAN has not changed its position of excluding Myanmar's leadership from its summits.

The clearest outcome concerned repatriation. According to a transcript published by Myanmar's Ministry of Information, Anwar said Myanmar would

take back about 3,000 more people once the two countries' home ministries had verified their records, and Myanmar navy ships would collect them during the coming good-weather season. Anwar said 10,493 Myanmar nationals had already been returned by air and sea this year.

Beyond repatriation, the two sides listed areas for cooperation rather than concrete commitments. According to the ministry, these included trade and investment, agriculture, education, health, the digital economy and the halal market, along with joint efforts against online scams and drug trafficking.

The two leaders also discussed defence and security cooperation in a private meeting, and the ministry's transcript referred to real-time cooperation between the two countries' police and security forces. Myanmar invited Malaysian businesses to invest and invited Anwar to visit Myanmar, but neither invitation drew a public commitment in the statements reviewed.

The two governments described the meaning of the visit differently. Myanmar presidential office spokesperson Dr Khaing Khaing Soe said on 9 October that the trip had warmed frozen relations and was a diplomatic and political success. Communications Minister Fahmi Fadzil said on 8 October that the talks did not amount to recognition of the Myanmar government, and Malaysia's Foreign Ministry framed the visit as consistent with the 48th ASEAN Summit's decision to continue engagement with Myanmar under the Five-Point Consensus.

"This meeting does not mean we recognise the Myanmar government. It is intended to find a solution to the longstanding issue of Myanmar refugees in our country," Minister Fahmi said.

PM Anwar appeared to put on a positive spin to his government's message.

"Malaysia will do whatever is possible to make sure that we ... ultimately, take Myanmar as part of our community of nations, without prejudice, and particularly in the context of ASEAN," Anwar told media after meeting Min Aung Hlaing.

Photo: AFP

MALAYSIA: PRESS MYANMAR JUNTA LEADER TO END ABUSES, SAYS HRW

Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim should press Myanmar's junta leader, Min Aung Hlaing, to end human rights abuses during his visit to Kuala Lumpur on October 7, 2026, Human Rights Watch (HRW) said 7 October.

The Malaysian government should also halt plans to forcibly return ethnic Rohingya and other people from Myanmar, where they face persecution and other rights violations, according to HRW.

Malaysian authorities deported about 1,500 Myanmar nationals on September 29 in coordination with junta authorities, the first batch in a series of phased returns.

"Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim's invitation to Min Aung Hlaing to coordinate the forced return of people who fled military atrocities in Myanmar is an invitation for further abuse," said Elaine Pearson, Asia director at Human Rights Watch. "The Malaysian government, which has provided protection to Rohingya and other refugees from Myanmar for decades, should halt any more returns and urge the junta leader to stop the abuses that have caused millions to leave the country."

On September 16, Prime Minister Anwar announced that he was inviting Min Aung Hlaing, who led the February 2021 military coup, to discuss the return of Myanmar nationals from Malaysia. This is Min Aung Hlaing's sixth bilateral visit to an Asian country since he installed himself as president in April following sham

elections and after stepping down as commander-in-chief of the Myanmar military. Min Aung Hlaing has been implicated in many abuses, and the International Criminal Court prosecutor has requested an arrest warrant for his alleged crimes against humanity.

On September 29, Malaysian authorities sent back 1,476 Myanmar nationals—1,370 men, 79 women, 20 boys, and 7 girls, ages 8 to 60—according to Malaysia's state news agency, Bernama, aboard two Myanmar navy ships and a hospital ship from Lumut naval base in Malaysia's Perak state.

The deportations come amid a wave of public hostility in Malaysia toward refugees, particularly Rohingya, that government officials have fomented. The Home Ministry has described refugees as a financial burden, a social problem, and a security threat. Online hate speech and misinformation targeting Rohingya and migrants generally have surged this year, leading to harassment and the closure of community schools.

The transfer was the first phase of an arrangement between the Malaysian government and the Myanmar junta to return 5,000 people, initially announced by Malaysian officials in July. Based on media reports, Malaysia's Home Ministry said the Myanmar junta authorities had identified those slated for return. It did not disclose their ethnicity or refugee status, or say whether Rohingya were among them. The ministry was quoted as saying that further phased returns would follow once identification, documentation, and

verification were complete.

Malaysian authorities have claimed the returns were strictly voluntary. But those deported were taken directly from immigration detention centers—where former detainees have reported physical abuse and psychological harm—raising serious concerns about whether consent was freely given.

The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) said it had no role in the operation and was not involved in identifying those deported. Since 2019, the Malaysian government has denied UNHCR access to immigration detention centers, preventing the agency from reviewing asylum claims or assisting detainees who are registered refugees. Consent given while in indefinite detention, without access to UNHCR or a meaningful protection assessment, cannot be truly voluntary, Human Rights Watch said.

A representative of the ethnic Chin refugee community in Malaysia told the media that community leaders knew of several asylum seekers among those deported, including one who had been recognized by UNHCR as a refugee.

There are no authoritative figures on the number of Myanmar migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers in Malaysia. More than 224,000 refugees and asylum seekers are registered with UNHCR in Malaysia, about 90 percent from Myanmar, the vast majority ethnic Rohingya.

Since Myanmar's 2021 military coup, Malaysia has summarily deported thousands of asylum seekers to Myanmar without assessing their asylum claims or other protection needs, and in violation of a Malaysian court order. In May 2024, UNHCR issued guidance stating that people fleeing Myanmar "are likely in need of international refugee protection."

Conditions for safe, dignified, and voluntary return to Myanmar do not currently exist, Human Rights Watch said. The Myanmar military continues to commit war crimes and crimes against humanity. Junta authorities have arbitrarily arrested tens of thousands of people since the coup, and thousands have experienced torture and ill-treatment or died in custody. A day before the September deportations took place, Myanmar's military carried out an airstrike near a market in the town of Kyauktaw, Rakhine State, killing 50 people.

Rohingya face particular danger if they are forcibly returned. Myanmar authorities have long denied them

citizenship and subjected them to atrocity crimes, including the ongoing crimes against humanity of apartheid, persecution, and deprivation of liberty. In Rakhine State since late 2023, Rohingya civilians have been caught in the fighting between the junta and ethnic Arakan Army forces. Both parties have carried out grave abuses, including extrajudicial killings, widespread arson, and unlawful recruitment.

Malaysian Communications Minister Fahmi Fadzil said on September 30 that 3,524 people had been approved for a second phase of deportation from a list Myanmar authorities submitted in a diplomatic note dated August 13. Malaysia is awaiting a date from Myanmar. About 10,400 Myanmar nationals are held in Malaysian immigration detention, according to recent reports from the Malaysian Home Affairs Ministry.

Malaysia has not ratified the 1951 UN Refugee Convention or its 1967 protocol, but it is still obligated to respect the international law principle of nonrefoulement, which prohibits countries from returning anyone to a place where they would face a real risk of persecution, torture or other serious ill-treatment, a threat to life, or other comparable serious human rights violations.

The Malaysian government should immediately suspend all deportations to Myanmar, including its planned second phase, and grant UNHCR full and unimpeded access to all immigration detention centers.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) should maintain the ban on Min Aung Hlaing and other junta leaders participating in the regional bloc's meetings. ASEAN members should refrain from organizing bilateral visits that undermine their collective ban on junta officials.

Concerned governments should press Malaysia to halt the returns, and expand resettlement places and support for countries hosting refugees from Myanmar. They should not treat returns arranged with Myanmar's military-backed authorities as evidence that the country is safe.

"The Malaysian government should not be outsourcing the decision about who can safely return to Myanmar to the junta authorities," Pearson said. "Prime Minister Anwar should stop the next ships before they set sail, and provide the UN refugee agency access to refugees and asylum seekers."



Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim.
Photo: AFP

FROM REFUGE TO REPATRIATIONS: MALAYSIA'S MYANMAR U-TURN

Malaysia's Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim once urged his Muslim-majority nation to show solidarity with the persecuted Rohingya who fled Myanmar en masse, but this week rolled out the red carpet for the man accused of orchestrating their genocide.

Min Aung Hlaing touched down on Wednesday, invited for a two-day visit to discuss thousands of Myanmar migrants being sent back under a repatriation scheme touted by Anwar.

Malaysia has historically offered safe haven to those exiled from Myanmar by persecution or conflict.

The nation hosts 190,000 Myanmar refugees or asylum seekers according to the United Nations (UN), two-thirds of them from the Muslim Rohingya ethnic group.

But experts say fears that they burden Malaysia have been amplified by a cocktail of misinformation and an embattled Anwar, who hopes to capitalise on anti-Rohingya sentiment ahead of upcoming elections.

To carry out the repatriation plan, he has welcomed Min Aung Hlaing -- previously shunned and credited with ordering the 2017 crackdown that sent legions of Rohingya fleeing to Malaysia in the first place.

Domestic hostility

Myanmar says it has repatriated around 8,000 citizens by air and 1,500 by sea so far this year, while Malaysia announced it is preparing 3,500 more to go back.

Kuala Lumpur has declined to say what proportion of returnees are Rohingya.

But experts say Malaysian attitudes towards migrants, particularly the Rohingya, soured during the Covid-19 pandemic when they became targets of misinformation about the disease.

"That hostility did not simply disappear afterwards," Khoo Ying Hooi, an associate professor at Universiti Malaya, told AFP.

"This year there was another very visible surge in anti-Rohingya rhetoric online, alongside harassment."

Newer resentments include claims that Malaysians are losing jobs to migrants, as well as the narrative that they are straining public resources or involved in crime.

"The early sympathy was very strong because Malaysians largely encountered the Rohingya through the language of persecution," said Khoo.

"They were Muslims fleeing horrific violence in Myanmar, so religious solidarity and humanitarian sympathy came together quite naturally."

But James Chin, a Malaysia expert at the University of Tasmania in Australia, said the nation was now dealing with popular backlash against "allowing too many Rohingya to come".

"This is ironic, because the only reason they were allowed to come in the first place is due to Islamic solidarity," he told AFP.

"It has now changed completely the other way around."

'Election ploy'

In the past, Anwar appealed to Malaysians for solidarity towards migrants who fled upheaval in Myanmar credited to Min Aung Hlaing.

He was the leader of the military when it began a 2017 crackdown evicting Rohingya in droves from their homes in western Myanmar.

The campaign is currently being weighed as a potential genocide by the International Court of Justice, but many rights monitors and some nations already deem it one.

Anwar's about-face welcoming of Min Aung Hlaing and returning back migrants is partially due to a shift in domestic politics, experts say.

His Pakatan Harapan coalition has suffered setbacks in recent state elections in the runup to regional and national polls, which must be held by February 2028.

Among their defeats were losses to a coalition fronted by the United Malays National Organisation, a formerly dominant party which draws much support from the Malay majority.

Yap Lay Sheng, a senior human rights specialist with NGO Fortify Rights, said Anwar's repatriation push was an "election ploy" to court the vote of ethnic Malays.

"Anwar is being outflanked from the right in Malaysia. The conservatives and the nationalists have fashioned themselves as champions of the Malay majority interests."

Targeting immigrants allows him "to be seen as a defender of the collective interest against outsiders", said Yap, a powerful message for political campaigning.

'Greater scrutiny'

Malaysia says all migrants despatched home have been sent from detention centres where they made voluntary decisions to return to Myanmar.

But the UN has panned the scheme for being opaque and failing to provide guarantees of safety on return, as required by international law.

Min Aung Hlaing staged a 2021 coup which plunged the country into a grinding civil war, causing a fresh wave of upheaval sending yet more citizens fleeing abroad.

He is now making a push to normalise diplomatic ties after being installed as civilian president in April, following elections staged by his military junta and derided by democracy watchdogs.

Deals with him to return migrants may improve Anwar's electoral prospects at home, but experts say it could tank Malaysia's credibility abroad.

The repatriation came days after Malaysia spoke at the United Nations General Assembly, advocating for international law to come to the aid of Palestinians -- a majority Muslim group.

"Malaysia speaks so strongly about the protection of civilians, humanitarian principles and the consistent application of international law in Palestine," said Khoo of Universiti Malaya.

"There will inevitably be greater scrutiny of how those same principles are applied closer to home."

AFP



Migrants return.
Photo: AFP

MYANMAR SAYS 10,000 MIGRANTS RETURNED FROM MALAYSIA THIS YEAR

Myanmar has repatriated nearly 10,000 migrants from Malaysia this year, state media said on Monday, a day after a flotilla returning almost 1,500 of its citizens docked in the country.

The United Nations (UN) has sharply criticised Malaysia's push to return migrants to Myanmar under an opaque scheme it says cannot guarantee safe homecomings to the war-torn nation.

A group of 1,476 returnees arrived by ship outside Yangon on Sunday, the first of 5,000 that Kuala Lumpur says Myanmar agreed to take back amid a wave of anti-migrant sentiment in Malaysia.

Rights monitors have raised concerns that members of the Rohingya minority may be sent back to Myanmar, where they have faced violent persecution, but Malaysia has not commented on the ethnicities of returnees.

Myanmar revealed on Monday that a parallel and larger repatriation push has also been taking place by plane.

Between January and August this year, "8,041 citizens were repatriated by air", state newspaper The Global New Light of Myanmar said.

While the ship returns have been highly publicised in Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur has not commented on the returns Myanmar says it organised by weekly flights.

The total number of migrants Myanmar has said returned by plane and ship this year is 9,517.

Malaysia insists returnees under its scheme agreed to voluntary repatriation from detention centres, where Myanmar says they had "faced difficulties" after serving sentences for immigration offences.

But rights groups report dire conditions in the facilities, and the UN refugee agency says staff were not allowed to verify that decisions to return were "were genuinely free and informed".

More than 100,000 people are estimated to have been killed in Myanmar since a military coup in 2021 unleashed civil war, according to monitor organisation ACLED.

The Rohingya started fleeing the country en masse to Malaysia before that, escaping a military crackdown starting in 2017 deemed a genocide by rights groups -- a charge the armed forces have always denied.

The Rohingya make up two-thirds of the 190,000 Myanmar refugees and asylum seekers in Malaysia, according to UN data, and have been the focus of recent anti-migrant sentiment.

After the ships carrying the 1,476 migrants docked Sunday in Thanlyin, just south of Yangon, AFP journalists saw dozens moved to a monastery holding centre for ID and health checks.

"Necessary arrangements are continuing to facilitate their swift reunion with relatives and family members, ensuring their safe return to their respective hometowns," The Global New Light of Myanmar said.

AFP

Photo: AFP

JUSTICE FOR MYANMAR SAYS MALAYSIAN FIRMS SOUGHT TO SUPPLY JUNTA'S AIR FORCE, AS JUNTA CHIEF VISITS KUALA LUMPUR

Justice For Myanmar (JFM) said Malaysian companies, including two with links to state bodies, have supplied or sought to supply aircraft parts and repair services to Myanmar's military since 2023, as junta leader Min Aung Hlaing visits Malaysia.

In an investigation based on leaked documents and trade records, JFM said FJ Global Aeroparts (M) Sdn Bhd sought to supply parts for the military's K-8W jets, Orlan-10E drones and Russian-origin helicopters. It said the company secured financing in February 2026 from Perbadanan Usahawan Nasional Berhad, a company under the Prime Minister's Department that is chaired through its parent foundation by Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim.

JFM also said, citing its own sources, that Myanmar military engineers visited Asia AeroTechnic Sdn Bhd, which is owned by a Malaysian rural development agency, in February 2026 about repairs to an Airbus A319. A third firm, Danish-owned Skyways Technics Asia Sdn Bhd, shipped aircraft parts to Myanmar arms

brokers that JFM assessed were likely destined for the Myanmar Air Force.

JFM said Malaysia has also invited a Myanmar junta delegation led by Special Branch director Brig. Gen. Hlaing Min to the ASEAN Intelligence Community Conference in Kuala Lumpur from 2 to 6 November, with Malaysia covering the delegation's travel and accommodation.

JFM called on Malaysia to stop companies from supplying the Myanmar military and to investigate the three firms, and urged Australia, Canada, the European Union, the United Kingdom and the United States to sanction four Myanmar suppliers it named. It also demanded Malaysia halt the return of Myanmar nationals, including Rohingya, which it said would be discussed during Min Aung Hlaing's visit.

"It is deplorable that Malaysia is awarding false legitimacy to the war criminal Min Aung Hlaing," JFM spokesperson Yadanar Maung said.

**US OPENS DIRECT
TALKS WITH MYANMAR
JUNTA OVER SCAMS
AND RARE EARTHS
LARGELY HELD BY ITS
ARMED OPPONENTS**



Mr Michael Vance, the Assistant US Secretary of State for Intelligence and Research

The United States has opened direct talks with Myanmar's military regime, with a senior State Department intelligence official meeting junta leader Min Aung Hlaing in Naypyidaw last month, Reuters reported on 8 October. The meeting was the highest-level contact between Washington and the generals since the February 2021 coup.

According to Reuters, which cited seven current and former officials and others familiar with the policy shift, Michael Vance, the Assistant Secretary of State for Intelligence and Research, joined talks with the junta leader on 15–16 September. The outreach has centred on shutting down scam centres that target Americans, and US officials have also raised access to Myanmar's heavy rare-earth deposits.

The Naypyidaw visit was aimed at securing the release of Adam Castillo, a former head of the American Chamber of Commerce in Myanmar who was detained at Yangon airport on 11 June. He was deported on 16 September, and state media said he had been freed in consideration of "friendly relations" between the two countries.

One person told Reuters that Myanmar asked for nothing in return except an official engagement with the US government at the right level.

The September talks followed a June meeting between US and Myanmar officials in Tokyo that also involved Vance, according to Reuters. Vance has also

met the democratic opposition and ethnic armed organizations fighting the military, both in person and online, and the FBI has had direct contact with Myanmar authorities on cyber scams, the news agency reported.

The State Department said it engages with all groups in Myanmar on issues affecting US interests, and presses for an end to violence and the release of political prisoners. "You don't solve problems by ignoring them," spokesperson Tommy Pigott said. A spokesperson for the regime did not respond to Reuters' request for comment.

The junta chief remains under US sanctions for human rights abuses, including the 2016–2017 military operations against the Rohingya that Washington formally declared a genocide in 2022. Twelve days after the Naypyidaw meeting, a military airstrike on a crowded market in Kyauktaw Township, Rakhine State, killed at least 50 people and injured at least 58 on 28 September, according to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

The rare-earth deposits Washington is interested in lie mainly in territory held by ethnic armed organizations fighting the regime, US officials acknowledged to Reuters. Much of this mining is concentrated in Kachin State along the Chinese border, where the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) took control of the Pangwa mining hub from a junta-allied militia in 2024.

Meanwhile, filings under the US Foreign Agents Registration Act show that Myanmar's Ministry of Information paid the Washington lobbying firm DCI Group \$1.5 million between late January and late February this year. Roger Stone, a longtime adviser to President Donald Trump, registered in April as a consultant on the account at \$50,000 per month.

Representative Gregory Meeks, the senior Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, criticized the shift, saying that engaging the junta leader while congressionally mandated sanctions and democracy funding go unimplemented hands the regime greater international legitimacy.

The talks come as the regime seeks recognition abroad after elections widely criticized as a sham. Min Aung Hlaing met Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim in Putrajaya on 8 October, his first visit to the country since the coup, following a trip to Thailand in August. The focus of the visit appeared to revolve around the repatriation of Myanmar migrants and refugees held in confinement in Malaysia.

Myanmar Ambassador
Kyaw Moe Tun

MYANMAR WOMEN DEFY VIOLENCE TO LEAD IN REVOLUTION AND INTERIM ADMINISTRATION

Despite facing severe oppression by the military junta in Myanmar including physical violence, sexual violence, and forced conscription, women are playing a crucial leadership role in the revolution and interim administration, said Ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun, Myanmar's Permanent Representative to the United Nations.

He made these remarks on October 6 during the General Discussion on the agenda item "Advancement of Women" at the Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural) of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. Around 50 UN member states, including Myanmar, participated in the session, according to a statement released by the Permanent Mission of Myanmar.

Kyaw Moe Tun stated that since the 2021 military coup, the military junta has been weaponizing sexual violence in conflict, while committing arbitrary detention of women politicians, forced conscription, and human trafficking.

He added that of the more than four million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the country, nearly half are women and girls who are facing the brunt of airstrikes, food insecurity, and deep-rooted patriarchy.

However, Myanmar women and girls are not merely victims of the conflict; they are actively defending their fundamental rights and leading the efforts to build a future democratic nation, Kyaw Moe Tun said.

According to the statement, women hold 25 percent of the leadership positions in the National

Unity Government (NUG), and women's representation is integrated as a core pillar in the leading council for the establishment of a Federal Democratic Union.

Furthermore, the statement highlighted that 70 percent of revolutionary education personnel are women, and 70 percent of frontline civil society organizations providing healthcare and cross-border humanitarian aid are women-led organizations.

He pointed out that global progress and sustainable peace cannot be achieved by excluding women's rights or through systematic violence, and that the full and equal leadership of women is indispensable for peace and human development.

Therefore, he urged the international community to hold perpetrators of sexual violence and atrocities accountable under international law, and to provide direct support to local women-led organizations.

Ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun stated that the military junta, which is committing violence against women in Myanmar, can neither claim legitimacy nor genuinely implement the advancement of women.

He added that genuine advancement of women can only be achieved by ending the military junta's impunity and establishing a Federal Democratic Union in Myanmar.

Kyaw Moe Tun also highlighted that the advancement of women is the cornerstone for sustainable peace, inclusive governance, and human development.

The Kyauktaw Massacre: Aviation Fuel Chains Must Be Severed

28 September - 4 October 2026



PROGRESSIVE VOICE ARGUES AVIATION FUEL CHAINS MUST BE SEVERED TO PREVENT SUCH HORRORS AS THE KYAUKTAW MASSACRE

Progressive Voice has issued a report on 9 October entitled: The Kyauktaw Massacre: Aviation Fuel Chains Must Be Severed, arguing action against the Myanmar military.

The following is the press release:

The barbaric military junta in Myanmar has carried out its 21st civilian massacre since fighting with the Arakan Army (AA) resumed three years ago. According to The Irrawaddy's analysis of aerial bombardments and ground assaults, junta massacres have taken 383 lives and left 393 injured across Rakhine State and AA-controlled areas of southern Chin State. These atrocities will only cease if strict, targeted sanctions are imposed on all stakeholders complicit in the junta's war crimes and crimes against humanity. Central to this is dismantling the aviation fuel supply chains that sustain the junta's air force and neutralizing its capacity to utilize warplanes against civilian populations.

On 28 September 2026, beside the Kissapanadi Bridge in Kyauktaw Township, Rakhine State, the bustling Indian Market was alive with vendors and shoppers—men and women, children and the elderly—buying vegetables and groceries as they would on any ordinary Monday. At around noon, disaster struck: the junta dropped two 500-pound bombs on top of the defenseless civilians, killing 50 people and injuring 58 others—22 of them critically. Among the victims were a

mother and her newborn child, delivered only minutes before both were tragically burnt beyond recognition. The criminal junta has escalated its atrocities against civilian populations throughout Rakhine State in desperate retaliation for battlefield losses.

This horrific massacre was the second-deadliest massacre in Rakhine State in three years, and the fifth in Kyauktaw Township alone—the highest number recorded in the state. In the days that followed, the junta's air force continued striking civilian-populated areas of Rathedaung, Ponnagyun, and Pauktaw Townships, before returning to Kyauktaw Township just three days after the initial attack.

Simultaneous to the Kyauktaw Massacre, junta warplanes murdered four internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Kanbalu Township, Sagaing Region—including two children—and injured nine others. The IDPs, displaced for years by the military's campaign of violence following its failed coup, had briefly returned home to collect personal belongings. Witnesses reported that despite the absence of active fighting, junta warplanes dropped three bombs on Inn Lel Gyi Village.

ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR) condemned the junta's violence, demanding accountability and an end to military violence and impunity. They urged the Association of Southeast

Asian Nations (ASEAN) to uphold its exclusion of junta officials from the 49th ASEAN Summit in Manila this November; to stop extending bilateral legitimacy to the junta through state visits and red-carpet receptions; to reject any attempt to replace Myanmar's seat at the United Nations (UN); to halt the supply of arms and aviation fuel to the military; and to ensure unimpeded humanitarian and medical access to survivors in Kyauktaw and across Rakhine State.

Outraged by the violence, 29 Myanmar civil society stakeholders issued a joint statement condemning the fascist military junta's latest war crime and urging ASEAN member states, the European Union, and other international governments to immediately cut off its aviation fuel supply and impose effective, targeted sanctions that end international companies' involvement at every stage of the supply chain. The Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG) reiterated civil society's warning to the international community: do not be deceived by the junta's frail attempts to gain legitimacy and instead recognize it for what it is—a brutal military responsible for widespread atrocities.

The Philippines, current chair of the ASEAN bloc, expressed concern over the massacre and said it stood ready to facilitate discussions within ASEAN on how to assist the people of Myanmar in a way that is "Myanmar-owned and led." However, it is vital that ASEAN listen to the calls of Myanmar's civil society and refrain from engaging with the war criminal Min Aung Hlaing and his illegitimate junta. In this respect, it is appalling that Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim not only forcibly deported around 1,500 Myanmar refugees directly into the bloody hands of the Myanmar military—just a day after it had committed the horrific massacre in Kyauktaw—but he also rolled out the red carpet to greet Min Aung Hlaing in Putrajaya, Malaysia, on 8 October 2026.

A statement from the UN Secretary General, António Guterres, condemned the attacks, calling for an immediate end to violence, the protection of civilians, and compliance with international law. Similarly, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk said that "this latest attack raises serious concerns about respect for international humanitarian law." Yet such concerns, so often repeated by the UN after every tragedy, will remain meaningless and empty unless accompanied by concrete sanctions against all stakeholders complicit in the junta's crimes. The National Unity Government's (NUG) Ministry of Human Rights has recorded over 14,500 aerial attacks on civilians by the criminal junta since its attempted coup, resulting in over 6,000 deaths, including those of newborns and expectant mothers. This relentless campaign of terror will continue unless international

leaders take immediate action to coordinate measures that cut off the military's ability to wage war on civilians.

According to Blood Money Campaign (BMC)'s latest research-based policy report, "Devil Airbases & Bloody Fuel", junta warplanes consumed over 3.9 million gallons of aviation fuel in just three months between June and September 2025, costing approximately \$10 million USD. Published on 8 September 2026, BMC exposes the aviation fuel networks enabling the criminal junta to perpetrate mass killings and targeted airstrikes on civilians and identifies regional aviation fuel suppliers complicit in heinous crimes against the Myanmar people—including Chevron Singapore and Bangchak Corporation—alongside UK-based insurance companies such as UK P&I, whose marine insurance facilitates the transport and infrastructure of the aviation fuel supply chain. An investigation by Justice For Myanmar has also found that Malaysian companies—some with state links—are complicit in the junta's atrocities by supplying it with spare parts and critical components used in combat jets, drones, and helicopters. The only way to end the junta's cycle of civilian massacres is to strip them of their means to conduct airstrikes by severing the supply chains that sustain their air force capacity through strict, targeted sanctions on all complicit regional and international stakeholders.

UN member states must uphold their obligations under the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights by protecting against abuses linked to business and ensuring that state industries and private companies within their jurisdictions proactively avoid complicity in civilian violence. Furthermore, members must remind themselves of their requirements under the Arms Trade Treaty in relation to international humanitarian law and international human rights law—specifically those arising from Articles 6 and 7—that prohibit the transfer of arms and related parts to the Myanmar military. States should follow Norway's example in prosecuting corporations that facilitate crimes against humanity. ASEAN member states must recognize their complicity in war crimes, end their prioritization of profit over the humanity of Myanmar's people, and confront the hypocrisy of fuelling the junta's atrocities while lamenting refugee flows. Vietnam, which Amnesty International in 2024 found to be shipping fuel to the junta, must also halt all supply. Crucially, the UK government needs to immediately block all direct and indirect involvement in the supply of aviation fuel to the Myanmar military and ban UK-based insurers from providing shipment coverage to vessels, ports, storage tanks, and pipelines connected to aviation fuel delivery.



AA fighters. Photo: AA

AA EXPRESSES GRATITUDE TO THOSE WHO CONDEMNED KYAUKTAW AIRSTRIKE THAT KILLED 50 PEOPLE

The Arakan Army (AA) released a statement on 7 October expressing its gratitude to individuals and organizations that opposed and condemned the military junta's airstrike in Kyauktaw Township, Rakhine State, which claimed the lives of 50 local residents.

On 28 September, shortly after 12:00 PM, the military junta carried out an airstrike near the India Market and the Kissapanadi Bridge in Kyauktaw. The attack killed 50 local residents and injured 57 others.

The AA's statement described the incident as a major war crime committed by the military junta.

"I am deeply shocked by the airstrike on a market in Myanmar on Monday. This is the latest reminder that the Myanmar military junta has absolutely no regard for international law, or for the safety of the people they claim to govern," said Gregory W. Meeks, a ranking member of the U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee.

Similarly, the European Union (EU), the United Kingdom, Switzerland, and various civil society organizations have also condemned the attack.

In addition, Ana Marie Hernand, Assistant Secretary for ASEAN Affairs at the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines, the upcoming rotating chair of ASEAN, also expressed grave concern over the Kyauktaw airstrike.

Civil society organizations, including the ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR), have also strongly condemned the military junta.

The AA stated that the Arakanese people will forever remember and remain deeply grateful to all individuals and organizations who stood in solidarity with them and strongly objected to and condemned the devastating airstrike.

Photo: Supplied

TWO KILLED, INCLUDING A CHILD, IN MOTORIZED PARAGLIDER BOMBING IN MAGWAY'S MINDON

Two residents, including a 12-year-old child, were killed and three others injured on 8 October when Myanmar junta forces bombed Chin Nit village in Mindon Township, Magway Region, using motorized paragliders, known as paramotors, according to People's Defense Force (PDF) Thayet District Battalion 4.

The battalion said in a statement that three paramotors that took off from the Thayet-based No. 12 Defense Equipment Factory (Ka-Pa-Sa 12) dropped nine bombs on the village and fired small arms at about 5:25 p.m. It named the dead as Maung Wai Yan Oo, 12, and U Tun Tin, 83, both of Chin Nit. It said seven cows were also killed and a clinic and several houses were destroyed. The PDF released the information on 9 October with photographs.

Ko Myat, the battalion's information officer, told Mizzima there was no active fighting near the village. He said the junta columns operating in Mindon are in the western Yoma area and that the village lies in southeastern Mindon, east of the Patheingyi-Monywa Road. He said the injured are receiving treatment and their lives are not in danger.

Ko Myat said airstrikes on non-military targets are a war crime and that the PDF will retaliate with all available strength.

He said air-raid warning systems and safety guidelines have been shared but not yet put in place across the whole township, and that the PDF issues periodic alerts to residents depending on the security situation. He urged civilians to take extreme caution given the risk of airstrikes and heavy artillery shelling in Mindon.

On 13 September, three paramotors from the same Ka-Pa-Sa 12 factory dropped eight bombs on Zun Gya village in Mindon Township, killing six people including three children and injuring five, according to a statement by PDF Thayet District Battalion 4.

Fortify Rights documented 304 paramotor and gyrocopter attacks on civilians in Myanmar between December 2024 and 11 January 2026, with peaks in April, August, October and December 2025.



Photo: Supplied

SCAM OPERATIONS PERSIST IN SHWE KOKKO AS MYANMAR JUNTA DEMOLISHES BUILDINGS, RESIDENTS SAY

Online scam operations remain active in Shwe Kokko New Town, Myawaddy Township, on the Thai-Myanmar border, residents say, even as the junta says it is continuing to demolish buildings used for online fraud there.

The junta-run Global New Light of Myanmar reported on 9 October that 77 of 140 illegal buildings in the Shwe Kokko area were demolished in a first phase, and that the remaining 63 will be demolished in a second phase that it said began on 6 October. The newspaper said 25 of the 63 will be taken down by machinery, four by blasting and 34 floor by floor by workers.

Sources said heavy machinery was used on 6 and 7 October, and that public announcements of scheduled demolitions have been made in the town. A Shwe Kokko resident told Mizzima that a building known as "Chan Seint", opposite Xinyongli near the lower gate, was demolished the day before. The resident said such sites were abandoned and cleared of people last year, and that active operations still exist in both the villages and the town.

According to sources, online fraud operations are still running in several locations, including "Site 4," "Site 5" and the Kyauk Phyar area.

The resident said raids are not currently taking place and that the Karen National Army (KNA), a militia formerly known as the Karen Border Guard Force, no longer provides security for the operators as it once did. The resident said some operators are relocating and that their numbers in Shwe Kokko have fallen considerably.

Mizzima's monitoring of Telegram recruitment channels for scam operations found job postings targeting Shwe Kokko still active.

The Irrawaddy reported on 25 September that scam operations restarted at former Shwe Kokko sites in February and that new compounds advertise vacancies on Telegram. The junta's earlier totals for the operation differed: state media said in May that 77 of 322 buildings identified as illegal were targeted, and on 27 July that all 77 had been demolished.



Photo: Supplied

MYANMAR JUNTA AIRSTRIKE KILLS TWO DISPLACED PEOPLE IN WESTERN MOEBYE, SHAN STATE

A Myanmar junta airstrike on 8 October killed two internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the Done Htoo Htan area of western Moebye, Pekhon Township, southern Shan State, according to local sources. More than 10 others were injured, according to a local resident.

The dead were one man and one woman. Residents had prepared bomb shelters in advance, but casualties could not be avoided, the resident said. "They bombed right inside the village," the resident said, adding that the bombs hit a site where corn was being traded and that residents are living in constant fear.

On the same day, a junta Y-12 aircraft flew reconnaissance over western Moebye and western Demoso, in Karenni State, causing panic among

residents, according to residents. A local resident said junta airstrikes in southern Shan State and the surrounding Karenni area have become more frequent.

The Spring Revolution Database (SRD) recorded 226 junta airstrikes nationwide in September, including 14 in Karenni State and 16 in Shan State, according to its records. The strikes killed 186 people, 170 of them civilians and 16 revolutionary fighters, the SRD said.

The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) recorded 97 people killed by the junta nationwide in September, including 82 killed by airstrikes, according to its 30 September briefing.



IDP camp. Photo: Supplied

TWO IN THREE PEOPLE IN MYANMAR ARE POOR OR ONE SHOCK AWAY FROM FALLING INTO POVERTY, NEW UNDP REPORT FINDS

Years of conflict, economic disruption, displacement and repeated shocks are eroding the foundations that people across Myanmar rely on to survive, cope and recover, according to a new UNDP report released on 8 October.

More than two in three people are now either living in multidimensional poverty or vulnerable to falling into it, leaving millions with little capacity to withstand further crises.

The report, *Layers of Deprivation: Multidimensional Poverty in Myanmar*, finds that overlapping deprivations in health, education and living standards now affect 68 percent of Myanmar's population, with over 37 million people either living in multidimensional poverty or at risk of falling into it.

Using a multidimensional poverty methodology, the findings suggest that Myanmar is facing more than an income crisis. Many of the buffers that once helped families absorb shocks, such as savings, stable

livelihoods, access to services and social support networks, are steadily disappearing.

Deficits in health and living standards account for more than 80 percent of multidimensional poverty, reflecting households' challenges in accessing healthcare, adequate housing, clean water, sanitation and other essential services, particularly in conflict zones.

"Myanmar may no longer dominate international headlines, but the hardships facing millions of people continue to deepen," said Kanni Wignaraja, UN Assistant Secretary-General and UNDP Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific. "We are seeing a depth of poverty in Myanmar that is eroding human development itself. This is a no-win war. Everyone is losing. The core muscle of the country is being systematically eroded."

The report finds that poverty looks different across the country. In some areas, conflict, displacement and restricted access to services are the primary drivers.

In others, long-standing gaps in livelihoods, education, infrastructure and public services remain the dominant challenges.

Rakhine stands out as one of the country's most severe multidimensional poverty hotspots. More than two-thirds of the population are multidimensionally poor and nearly one-third are severely poor. The deprivation among some stateless and displaced populations, including Rohingya communities, may be understated because of limitations associated with phone-based data collection.

The findings also challenge assumptions that poverty is primarily rural. While Yangon records lower regional poverty rates than many conflict-affected states, it contains one of the country's largest concentrations of multidimensionally poor people, reflecting deepening vulnerabilities among urban and peri-urban households.

The report comes at a time when households are confronting an accumulation of shocks. Climate-related shocks (at risk of floods, cyclones, droughts and landslides) affect around one in five households and are expected to intensify as a consequence of El Nino. At the end of August, an estimated 600,000 people were affected by flooding.

Recent external economic shocks have had a significant impact too. Rising fuel prices linked to the Gulf crisis, inflation and increasing food costs are placing additional strain on communities whose resilience has already been weakened by years of conflict and instability. Diesel and gasoline prices remain approximately at 87% and 85% above pre-crisis levels, and there are significant disparities by region, with prices in places like Chin, Rakhine, Kachin and Ayeyarwaddy two to four times higher than in Yangon.

"This global crisis layered itself on top of a local crisis, that was already on top of extreme climate events," said Wignaraja. "Families may be able to cope

with one or two emergencies even with the little they have. Few can absorb conflict, displacement, illness, lost income and loss of crops and income occurring together or in close succession. Repeated shocks have exhausted the small buffers that communities rely on."

Young people, who are coming of age amid conflict, insecurity, deep economic and social stresses, face particular strain. As opportunities shrink and uncertainty grows, many young people lose options on future pathways - on education, jobs, mobility and their futures. At least one million young people may have left Myanmar since 2021, one of the largest losses of human capital in the country's recent history. At the same time, population is aging. As youth leave, the old are left carrying the care burden, keeping food on the table and ensuring family safety. These communities are now increasingly dependent on community support systems that are under severe strain.

Nearly half of households dependent on casual labour are multidimensionally poor. The analysis also shows that households that rely on casual labour, conflict-affected households, and migrant households face the highest poverty levels in the country. Without greater investment in decent livelihoods, education and essential services, these pressures risk pushing more people to pursue illegal activity or other desperate means

"The greatest risk facing Myanmar is not only the deepening of poverty today, but the narrowing of opportunities tomorrow," said Wignaraja. "Myanmar remains one of the world's most consequential crises. In many ways, the world can be losing the recovery of Myanmar. Societal recovery cannot wait for a conflict to end. Investing in livelihoods, education, healthcare, local markets and basic services remains essential to preserving the fundamental human capabilities the country will need to heal and move forward"

03:48

Photo: Supplied

JUNTA DEPUTY MINISTER SAYS CASES OPENED AGAINST EXILED DISSIDENTS AND EXILE MEDIA, INTERPOL RED NOTICES SOUGHT

Min Thu, deputy minister of the Myanmar junta's Home Affairs Ministry, said on 6 October that criminal cases have been opened inside Myanmar against anti-junta activists, supporters and media outlets based abroad, and that the junta is working to have Interpol issue Red Notices for them. Mizzima is among the outlets he named.

He was replying in the Pyithu Hluttaw (lower house) to a question from Than Than Aye, a lawmaker from the military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), who asked whether there were plans to act against exiles accused of undermining the state's sovereignty and dignity.

Min Thu said the cases cover those who formed the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH) and the National Unity Government (NUG), members of the People's Defense Forces (PDF), PDF supporters, people who write material that damages the junta's reputation, and the news outlets Myanmar Now, Khit Thit, Mizzima, The Irrawaddy and the Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB).

He said they have been charged at junta-run police stations and courts under sections 124A, 505(b) and 505A of the Penal Code, section 17(1) of the Unlawful Associations Act, section 33(a) of the Electronic Transactions Law, and sections 50(a) and 50(j) of the Counter-Terrorism Law. He added that the junta is also opening cases against people abroad who

support those efforts or try to disrupt its administrative machinery.

Min Thu said that once cases are opened, arrest-warrant notices sent through the relevant departments are checked for compliance with the rules of Interpol and ASEANAPOL, the ASEAN chiefs-of-police body, before the junta seeks police cooperation through those organizations, including Red Notices and the arrest of suspects.

When Than Than Aye asked how many prominent exiles had been arrested so far, Min Thu said that arrests of the key suspects she described depend on the political stance of the country concerned, and that most arrests and transfers to date have involved drug suspects.

He also said the junta is cancelling passports, blacklisting and placing on watch lists those abroad who oppose it, and that embassies have reported more than 1,300 such people to the Foreign Ministry.

Interpol says a Red Notice is not an international arrest warrant. It is an alert issued at the request of a member country or an international tribunal asking police worldwide to locate a person and provisionally arrest them. A person named in one can face restrictions on crossing borders or temporary detention. Interpol's constitution prohibits the organization from intervening in matters of a political character.



Photo: Mizzima

WORLD TEACHERS' DAY CEREMONY HELD IN MAE SOT

The Myanmar Migrant Teachers' Association held a ceremony to mark World Teachers' Day on 5 October in Mae Sot, a Thai town on the border with Myanmar.

The ceremony was attended by Thai education officials, Mahn Shwe Hnin, headmaster of the Mae Sot-based Children's Development Center (CDC) migrant school, migrant teachers from Myanmar, students and invited guests.

Participants paid tribute to teachers who continue to provide education despite challenges and crises.

They also honoured teachers' dedication and efforts to build a peaceful, developed, open and compassionate society.

Mae Sot-based organisations sent messages of congratulations and goodwill, wishing safety, peace and well-being to teachers worldwide who stand for truth and justice while continuing their work amid adversity.



MORE THAN 20 MYANMAR JUNTA SOLDIERS FROM LID 77 REPORTEDLY CAPTURED IN KANPETLET

More than 20 soldiers from the junta's Light Infantry Division (LID) 77 were captured with their weapons during a clash near Ma Swa Ti in Kanpetlet Township, Chin State, on 27 September, according to military sources.

The clash broke out between resistance forces and a junta column that had entered Kanpetlet Township from Laungshey in Magway Region.

Around 30 junta soldiers were reportedly killed, and more than 20, including a sergeant, were captured, the sources said.

Captain Zin Yaw, who joined the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM), told Mizzima that an entire platoon, including its sergeant, appeared to have surrendered during the battle. He said the unit's structure indicated that platoon sergeants were commanding troops in place of platoon commanders.

A video has emerged showing members of the Arakha Army (AA) questioning soldiers identified as Platoon Sergeant Ye Win Tun and others captured in the battle about their names, ranks and duties.

Local sources said junta forces have been carrying out daily airstrikes on Kanpetlet and Mindat townships.

Zin Yaw said junta forces had established a foothold in Ma Swa Ti despite suffering heavy casualties. He suggested that a division commander could use the location as a base to deploy 122mm or 155mm artillery, bring in reinforcements and expand operations towards Kyindwe and Kanpetlet towns.

A military source said junta forces had previously launched offensives through Mindat and Kanpetlet townships in southern Chin State in an attempt to advance into Rakhine State. After failing to make headway, they were now attacking along the Laungshey Ma Swa Ti route, the source said.

Zin Yaw said LID 77, which is spearheading the offensive, had previously achieved military successes in Falam, Hakha and Tedim in northern Chin State. He suggested that further successes could improve Division Commander Brigadier General Nay Win's chances of promotion to regional military commander.

Junta forces continue to send reinforcements through Laungshey, according to the military source. Local rescue groups said residents of nearby villages were fleeing the fighting and urgently needed emergency aid.



34 PEOPLE ARRESTED IN YANGON WITHIN A WEEK; MAJORITY DETAINED WHILE OUT ON THE STREETS

Within the past week, 34 people were forcibly abducted as forced recruitments in Yangon, according to the Rangoon Scout Network (RSN).

The data was compiled from arrests made between 28 September and 4 October. It is reported that the majority of those detained were not on official military draft lists but were randomly arrested while traveling on public streets.

According to the RSN, the arrests were carried out by police and plainclothes personnel using police vehicles, private cars, and municipal shuttle buses to target and detain individuals on the streets.

Kyauktada Township recorded the highest number of arrests, with up to 10 people detained.

Additionally, six people were arrested in Kamayut Township; five each in Sanchaung and Insein Townships; two in Thingangyun Township; and one each in East Dagon, North Dagon, Thaketa, Tamwe, and Hlaing Townships, as well as one in another township currently under verification.

"As the commencement of Military Training 29th Batch is drawing close, forced conscriptions are highly likely to escalate. It is expected to begin next week. In the meantime, I want to urge everyone to be extra

cautious. Keep an ear out for updates in your respective neighbourhoods. When going out, avoid deserted areas and late nights. I also advise everyone to memorize emergency contact numbers," an RSN official said.

Arrest incidents have also been reported in other townships, and further details are currently being verified.

Recently in Yangon, in addition to men, women are also occasionally being targeted and abducted as forced recruits.

On 24 September, a female garment factory worker in her 30s was dragged into a vehicle and abducted in Hlaing Tharyar Township.

The incident occurred while she was waiting for a bus at the Bogyoke Bus Stop to return home. Three men arrived in a taxi and attempted to pull her into the vehicle.

"When she was being dragged into the car, both the victim and nearby bystanders screamed for help, which forced the abductors to push her back out of the vehicle. Although she escaped, she sustained minor physical injuries," said U Thet Hnin Aung, General Secretary of the Myanmar Industries, Crafts and Services Trade Unions Federation (MICS-TUSF).

He added that the federation has urged employers not to force excessive overtime and to take responsibility for the security and ferry transport of workers until they safely reach home if late-night shifts are required.

The General Secretary of MICS-TUSF also urged the public to control their fear, respond calmly if confronted with forced conscription, support fellow tenants in the hostels, and seek assistance from relevant organizations.

Since the military junta enforced the military conscription law, aiming to draft approximately 5,000 people per training batch, numerous young people have been arrested through various coercive methods.

According to a statement released by the Rangoon Scout Network (RSN), 131 young civilians were arrested in Yangon alone during the month of September.



Photo: Supplied

MYANMAR AIRSTRIKES KILL EIGHT AT TWO RAKHINE CAMPS FOR DISPLACED PEOPLE

Airstrikes on two camps for displaced people in Rakhine State's Ponnagyun Township killed eight people and wounded 13 on 4 and 5 October, according to a local youth group, less than a week after an airstrike on a market in Kyauktaw Township left dozens dead.

A Ponnagyun Youth Association spokesperson said six people were killed and 11 wounded at one camp on 4 October, and two were killed and two wounded at a second camp the next day. Myanmar Peace Monitor reported that junta jets hit the first camp, known as "Byar La" and located between Thayet Cho and Yoe Ngu villages, at about 5:10 pm, and that the Arakan Army (AA) confirmed six deaths in a statement that evening. The junta did not immediately comment, according to DVB, and the figures could not be independently verified.

Ponnagyun, about 33 km northeast of the state capital Sittwe, has been under AA control since March 2024, and the group now holds most of Rakhine State. Tens of thousands of people displaced from Sittwe, Ponnagyun and Pauktaw townships were sheltering in villages along the Ponnagyun-Kyauktaw highway as of late 2025, according to Development Media Group, a Rakhine-based outlet. Yoe Ngu village was hit on 24 February, when the AA said 17 civilians were killed and 14 wounded in an airstrike on its market.

The AA said the 28 September strike in Kyauktaw hit a market and a nearby bridge, killing at least 49 people and wounding 58.



MYANMAR ISSUES EL NINO POWER OUTAGE WARNING

Myanmar warned citizens to expect scheduled power outages starting on 5 October, saying the electrical grid is being strained by an unseasonable heatwave it blamed on the El Nino weather phenomenon.

Homes and businesses in war-struck Myanmar are regularly plunged into blackouts, some spontaneous and others set on a timetable to ease the burden on the fragile power infrastructure.

Many richer residents use generators or back-up batteries, while the poorer citizens of the tropical nation are left to swelter without fans or air conditioning.

"Due to the effects of severe El Nino conditions, temperatures across the country have risen significantly, resulting in increased electricity consumption," the energy ministry said.

"To balance electricity consumption with available generation capacity during this period, load management and rotational power distribution will be implemented" starting Monday, said a statement in state media.

El Nino is a natural phenomenon recurring every two to seven years owing to the warming of sea surfaces -- bringing worldwide changes in winds, pressure and

rainfall patterns.

Global forecasters predict this year's event will peak at an intensity never observed in the modern era.

Myanmar weather officials have warned the country to expect "abnormal rainfalls and storms, drought, extreme heat, drinking water shortage and extreme weather conditions" as a result of the "Super El Nino".

Late last month the southernmost Tanintharyi Region was lashed by rains which caused widespread flooding and killed at least nine people in a landslide.

Myanmar is currently coming to the end of its wet season, when reservoirs feeding the hydropower plants making up the nation's largest source of electricity generation are filled by plentiful monsoon rains.

The energy ministry said it was "anticipating more significant depletion of water levels in reservoirs at hydropower plants during the coming dry season" which usually runs from October to May.

In a normal year the coming months are generally some of the coolest of the year in Myanmar, seeing a drop in power demand as citizens turn off fans and air conditioners.

AFP

Photo: Supplied

MYANMAR JUNTA AIRSTRIKES TARGET CIVILIANS TO COERCE ARAKAN ARMY INTO PEACE TALKS

RADIO FREE ASIA

Myanmar's military-backed government is increasingly resorting to attacks on civilians as a means to bring the rebel Arakan Army in the western coastal state of Rakhine to the negotiating table, Rakhine politicians and analysts told Radio Free Asia.

The government launched an airstrike on the town of Kyauktaw, dropping bombs on a crowded marketplace and other civilian areas killing at least 50 people, including children and pregnant women, according to the Arakan Army, or AA, an armed ethnic group which controls most of the towns in Rakhine.

The U.N. Human Rights Office released a statement noting that this attack was one of the deadliest airstrikes in Rakhine State since the military took control of the country in a coup in 2021. Fortify Rights Friday released a statement saying that the attack could constitute a war crime.

Several other ethnic groups, some of whom had been allied with and fought alongside the AA after the coup, have begun participating in peace talks over the past few months. The AA is one of several major holdouts nationwide, including the Kachin Independence Army and the Karen National Union.

The attacks on civilians are one of several tactics by the military meant to force the AA into making peace, Sai Kyi Zin Soe, a Myanmar security analyst, told RFA.

"One side has laid out the path it wants. But they are using various forms of coercion to pressure the other side to reach that intended path," he said. "This includes military force. There are also efforts to apply political and economic pressure in coordination with neighboring countries. You can, in other words, say this part of the military's tactics."

He said that attacks causing mass civilian fatalities, like the Kyauktaw attack, may also be intended to intimidate civilians to discourage them from accepting AA authority.

Violence for peace?

The attack only justified the fight against the military, Khaing Thu Kha, a spokesperson for the AA told RFA after the attack on Monday.

"We will continue to seek justice for those we've lost in this violent attack by identifying anyone involved in the act and taking actions against them," he said. We will retaliate against each and every one of them."

The AA reported that over a five-month period from April 21 to September 30 the military government extended an invitation for peace talks while simultaneously killing more than 130 civilians in AA-controlled areas in airstrikes and heavy artillery attacks.

But no faction wants to accept a peace invitation while under constant attack, Zaw Wai Soe, a minister in Myanmar's shadow National Unity Government, made up democratically elected leaders who were ousted in the coup, told RFA.

"The bombing didn't just start now. They've been doing it all along. It has gotten worse in recent days," he said. "They drop bombs despite knowing civilians are present. So who would want to meet them? It's not just the AA, any group would feel the same way."

Current battlegrounds

Since early this month, the AA has engaged in fierce clashes around military-controlled Sittwe, Kyaukpyu, and Manaung townships. Meanwhile,

military government forces are advancing into Rakhine from Chin State, and the Magway and the Ayeyarwady regions. Residents report that airstrikes continue in AA-controlled territories.

Direct military confrontation will continue as long as armed combat persists on the ground, Thien Tun Oo, executive director of the Thayninga Institute for Strategic Studies, a pro-military think tank in Naypyidaw, told RFA.

Victim's bodies are laid out at a cemetery before their burial following a military airstrike on a market and adjacent bridge in Kyauktaw, Western Rakhine state, Myanmar, on Sept. 28, 2026.

Victim's bodies are laid out at a cemetery before their burial following a military airstrike on a market and adjacent bridge in Kyauktaw, northern Rakhine state, Myanmar, on Sept. 28, 2026. (AFP)

"We will hold discussions for peace. However, for those who continue to rely on military means on the ground, they will naturally face head-on military confrontations," he said. "Those relying heavily on military force will encounter military responses."

RFA attempted to contact Brig. Gen. San Nyo Win, military spokesperson for Rakhine state, for comment on the situation, but phone calls went unanswered.

The airstrikes make it more difficult for the AA to accept an invitation to peace talks, Thar Tun Hla, chairman of the Arakan National Party, which represents the interests of Rakhine nationalists, told RFA.

"The peace process requires trust," he said. "Firing on civilian targets cannot be viewed as a trust-building process."

Courtesy of Radio Free Asia



BREAKING BARRIERS: MYANMAR'S WOMEN PUSH FOR PEACE AGAINST VIOLENCE AND EXCLUSION

Progressive Voice have issued a report on 4 October entitled "Breaking Barriers: Myanmar's Women Push for Peace Against Violence and Exclusion" that examines the challenges for women in Myanmar.

Please see the report below:

Women's organizations are challenging the assumption that justice and gender equality can wait until the revolution succeeds.

Women in Myanmar have long organized to challenge the structures that deny them power. This year's International Day of Peace highlighted their insistence that peace requires justice, accountability and women's political leadership. A revolution seeking to dismantle military domination must confront the patriarchal practices that restrict women's authority

and allow violence against them to go unpunished. Peace must mean that women can live safely, exercise their rights and shape the decisions governing their lives.

Accountability is central to that vision of peace, including within revolutionary forces and areas under their control. Naw Khin San Htwe, General Secretary of Burmese Women's Union (BWU), has warned that the democratic resistance movement's armed forces need to enforce their codes of conduct. Meanwhile, Karenni National Women's Organization (KNWO) chairperson Maw Pray Myar has described instances of armed resistance forces shielding affiliated perpetrators.

Women's organizations are challenging the assumption that justice and gender equality can wait until the revolution succeeds. Territorial gains cannot substitute for human security, and institutions that

protect perpetrators undermine both the democratic resistance movement and the future of the federal democracy they are fighting for and claim to build.

These demands emerge from sustained political organizing. Founded in 1995 by young women who fled the military crackdown on the 1988 nationwide pro-democracy uprising, the BWU made women's participation in the democracy movement's leadership and decision-making a central goal. Today, women document abuses, organize communities, support survivors, and advocate for justice, pressing for their contributions to translate into political authority.

In discussions held during the Women's Peace Forum hosted by the Women's League of Burma (WLB) from 16 to 18 September, Zue Padonmar, Joint Secretary of Karenni State's Interim Executive Council (IEC), emphasized that excluding women from decision-making obstructs the institutions the revolution seeks to build. Alongside WLB's discussions, BWU marked International Day of Peace with an online speech competition that enabled women to articulate their priorities for peace and greater participation in decision-making. The Karen Women's Organization (KWO) demanded international action to halt arms and aviation fuel supplies to the junta and ensure accountability for human rights violations, demonstrating women's active role in shaping political demands for genuine peace.

Mu Angela's appointment as chairperson of the Karenni State Consultative Council (KSCC) marks significant progress. Previously a joint secretary of the council executive committee, she brings leadership experience from women's and youth organizations. Such appointments must open space for more women to exercise meaningful authority. Peacebuilding

requires their influence within the institutions being formed today, including those responsible for civilian protection and the pursuit of justice.

Women pursue these advances amid the military's relentless campaign of terror and persecution, and entrenched gendered violence across society at large. The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) verified that the junta killed 89 women and girls between 1 July and 22 September 2026, including 12 girls under 18; 76 died in airstrikes. The military uses rape and other conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) as weapons of war to terrorize communities and punish perceived support for the resistance. Civil society organizations in Magway have reported women, including older women, being groped at checkpoints under the pretext of body searches. These abuses constrain women's movement and expose them to violence even during ordinary journeys.

A 22 September Human Rights Watch (HRW) report cites approximately 6,600 women and 640 children among more than 30,000 people detained for political reasons since the coup. Former prisoners, including activists, journalists, healthcare workers and aid workers—described beatings with metal pipes, electric shocks, prolonged solitary confinement, rape and other forms of gender-based violence, as well as invasive searches intended to humiliate. Some were coerced into sexual activity in exchange for medicine or other necessities. Surveillance while showering or changing clothes further denied women privacy and safety.

Pregnant political prisoners face additional cruelty. HRW reports that, in July 2025, the Women's Organization of Political Prisoners estimated that about

125 women political prisoners were detained while pregnant or with their children. Interviewees described threats to strike their bellies to extract information and denial of prenatal and emergency care. Some women were left to give birth in cells, with former prisoners reporting maternal and infant deaths and stillbirths. After release, some continued to experience depression, isolation and suicidal thoughts. These consequences demand sustained medical and psychosocial support alongside justice.

Fleeing violence offers no guarantee of safety. Shan Herald Agency for News (SHAN) reports that WLB documented 963 cases of CRSV and SGBV (sexual and gender-based violence) following the coup, while the Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN) recorded 172 SGBV cases in Shan State between 2022 and 2025. Maw Pray Myar warned: "Most of these violations occur in displacement sites and temporary shelters where people have fled for safety." Women seeking refuge confront further violence, stigma and barriers to justice.

On 22 September, a 21-year-old displaced woman who was nine months pregnant died by suicide in western Demoso Township, Karenni State; her unborn child also died, according to the Karen Information Center (KIC). The report describes insecurity, unmet basic needs, mounting family distress and urgent mental healthcare needs among displaced communities. Her death underscores the urgency of protection that encompasses shelter, livelihoods, healthcare and psychosocial support. These needs cannot wait for a future peace.

Amid violence, persecution, displacement and exclusion, women continue to organize, support survivors and push for political change. Democratic and revolutionary actors must ensure women's decision-

making authority, enforce protections against SGBV and enable survivors to seek justice without retaliation. Women's organizations must be able to scrutinize institutions and challenge abuses. Upholding these rights is central to building peace.

The UN Secretary-General's 2026 report reaffirms the Myanmar military's widespread and systematic use of sexual violence, including rape, as a tactic of war and political repression. Following UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk's renewed call to refer the Myanmar situation to the International Criminal Court (ICC), UN Member States, including through the General Assembly, must translate repeated condemnation into concrete action to hold perpetrators accountable and secure justice for survivors.

International partners must back these efforts with sustained political support and flexible, long-term funding for women's organizing, protection work and pursuit of justice. They must ensure women's organizations help shape engagement with democratic stakeholders; cut off the junta's lifelines, including access to arms, dual-use technology, aviation fuel, and finances; and press for the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners. Lasting peace depends on ending violence and impunity, and on ensuring women share equal political and decision-making power. The institutions being built today toward a federal democratic Myanmar must uphold the equality, inclusivity, justice and accountability promised for tomorrow.

Aik Tun, also known as
Liang Wun Mong

MYANMAR JUNTA BLACKLISTS COMPANY OWNED BY MYANMAR CHINESE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE CHAIRMAN

The junta-controlled Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA) announced on 1 October that it had blacklisted Fu Xing Brothers Co., Ltd., owned by Myanmar Chinese Chamber of Commerce (MCCOC) chairman Aik Tun, also known as Liang Wun Mong.

DICA said it had blacklisted the company following a request from the junta's Ministry of Commerce. The announcement did not specify the reason for the decision.

The statement referred to an earlier notice reminding companies registered through the Myanmar Companies Online (MyCO) system to comply with the Myanmar Companies Law. It also said failures to comply with other laws and regulations would be publicised on DICA's website.

Myanmar Now reported on 31 August that three senior officials from the military-owned Myanmar Economic Holdings Limited (MEHL) had been arrested

and questioned over corruption allegations involving the abuse of authority in applications for import licences on behalf of private companies.

The outlet linked the case to attempts by the Fu Xing Brothers Group of Companies to import Chinese-made monosodium glutamate (MSG), a food flavour enhancer, into Myanmar. Myanmar Now described the group as having longstanding business ties with MEHL.

DICA's announcement did not say whether the blacklisting was connected to the case reported by Myanmar Now.

According to DICA records, Aik Tun's wife, Nan Khin Nyunt, is a director of Fu Xing Brothers Co., Ltd. Other directors are Aik San, Aung Kyaw Oo, Khin Than Than, Nan Zin Mar Win, San Myint and Nan Shwe Han.

The announcement did not specify whether the company's directors had also been blacklisted.



RUSSIA'S LARGEST BANK LAUNCHES 'DIRECT SETTLEMENTS' WITH MYANMAR

Russia's largest bank Sber (PJSC Sberbank) and the Ministry of Finance and Revenue of Myanmar have signed an agreement formalizing cooperation in direct settlements, the development of digital financial technologies, and the exchange of regulatory expertise.

The new payments architecture is aimed at helping reduce costs for exporters.

In its 185th anniversary year, Sber is expanding opportunities for Russian businesses and launching new tools for operations in the Southeast Asian market. The bank has completed preparations to launch a direct settlement mechanism with Myanmar, reducing reliance on chains of intermediaries in third countries. The initiative involves establishing a comprehensive infrastructure to service major government contracts and trade flows.

A key element of the scheme is Sber's Indian branch, which provides access to payments in Indian rupees and connects Myanmar companies not only with Russia, but also with the markets of India, Belarus and the CIS countries.

For participants in foreign economic activity, this means a significant reduction in transaction times and lower foreign exchange risks.

The new initiative focuses on moving from fragmented transactions to comprehensive servicing of flows between the two countries. Sber's infrastructure is expected to facilitate settlements for energy supplies and air navigation services. It will also support payments for trade in agricultural products, fertilizers, and machinery.



SAC-M CALLS ON PEOPLE TO FOCUS ON THE COMING OUTCOME IN THE ROHINGYA GENOCIDE CASE

The forthcoming judgment from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in *The Gambia v. Myanmar* case is a landmark opportunity to advance the Rohingya people's fight for justice and to strengthen the international obligation to prevent and punish genocide wherever it occurs.

The international community must prepare now for all possible outcomes, say Legal Action Worldwide (LAW) and the Special Advisory Council for Myanmar (SAC-M).

A new joint position paper by LAW and SAC-M explores a range of plausible judicial outcomes and their respective legal, diplomatic and operational implications for Myanmar's military junta and for states around the world.

At its core, the paper is a call for Myanmar's pro-democracy revolutionary movement, states, international organisations, civil society, donors, and foremost Rohingya communities to prepare now—not after the judgment is delivered—for every plausible outcome.

"The ICJ ruling will be historic for Rohingya survivors and their families around the world," said Yanghee Lee, member of SAC-M. "The international community failed to prevent Myanmar military atrocities against the Rohingya nine years ago. It must seize this opportunity to finally secure justice for the Rohingya and begin to reckon with these failings."

In 2019, The Gambia filed a case against Myanmar at the ICJ for alleged violations of the 1948 Genocide

Convention arising from Myanmar's 2016-2017 "clearance operations" against the Rohingya living in Rakhine State. Public hearings on the merits concluded in January 2026, and the Court is now deliberating. A final judgment is anticipated soon.

The ICJ has never found a state directly responsible for the commission of genocide. The strongest possible judgment in this case—a finding against Myanmar under Article III(a) of the Genocide Convention—would carry unprecedented legal, diplomatic, and reputational consequences for Myanmar's military junta. Such a finding would also carry significant implications for all states, including Myanmar, under international customary law, as set out in the International Law Commission's Articles on Responsibility of States for Internationally Wrongful Acts (2001).

Other plausible scenarios explored in the paper include findings of partial state responsibility under the Genocide Convention, a breach of the Court's 2020 provisional measures order, a mixed judgment, or a finding that the crime of genocide has not been legally established.

"The ICJ judgment could become one of the most significant international legal decisions on genocide in recent history. But it cannot be the end of the accountability process", Antonia Mulvey, Executive Director of LAW, said. "States must be ready to enforce the judgment, support Rohingya communities, strengthen pressure on those responsible, and pursue every available avenue for justice."

The paper explains what the judgment can and cannot achieve. It makes clear that the judgment alone will not deliver justice for Rohingya victims and survivors. It will be the responsibility of states to turn legal findings into concrete diplomatic, political, economic, and humanitarian action, in consultation and partnership with Rohingya communities.

It will also be critical that the Court's judgment, regardless of the outcome, is communicated clearly to Rohingya communities in Myanmar, in Bangladesh and around the world, as well as to the Myanmar public. Without careful engagement, there is a risk of politicisation, division, and disillusionment among these communities. This must include contingency planning for a negative outcome.

"The sexual violence and persecutions we suffered at the hands of the Myanmar military were unbearable", said Salma*, a mother who was part of the Rohingya victims' delegation that attended the full merits hearings in The Hague in January. "We want justice, for us and to improve the lives of the next generation. We don't want anyone else to suffer what we suffered."

Whichever way the Court rules, the international response must be immediate, coordinated, and grounded in the rights of Rohingya victims and survivors. With a judgment imminent, now is the moment for states to move from solidarity to preparation, and from preparation to action.



TRADE WITHOUT BORDERS: HOW SMALL MANUFACTURERS IN DEVELOPING ECONOMIES REACH GLOBAL BUYERS **EXPORTAIN**

A small garment workshop in Dhaka sews shirts that will end up on shelves on another continent. A family-run jute mill spins fiber that will become sacks for coffee growers halfway around the world. The people behind these businesses rarely travel, rarely attend trade fairs, and rarely meet their buyers face to face. Yet their work is part of the global economy — if they can be found.

For developing economies, exports are one of the most direct paths from poverty to prosperity: every new buyer means work for machinists, cutters, packers, and drivers. But the global trading system was built for those who already have scale. Finding a foreign buyer has traditionally meant hiring an agent, paying for a booth at an international trade fair, or hoping a broker knocks on the door. For a small manufacturer, each of these routes is expensive, uncertain, or both.

A new generation of digital marketplaces is trying to change that equation. One of them is Exportain, founded in 2026 in Dhaka, Bangladesh, by MD TAMIM MOHABBAT. Exportain (Exportain Trading Limited) runs a business-to-business marketplace at exportain.com that connects international buyers with Bangladeshi manufacturers and exporters across 20 export categories — from apparel and leather to jute and seafood.

The platform's proposition is unglamorous and practical. International buyers use it to discover products and suppliers in one place; Bangladeshi small and medium enterprises use it as a digital storefront to reach demand they could never access through traditional channels. The focus is on the everyday frictions of cross-border sourcing: understanding minimum order quantities, navigating trade terms, and knowing how to evaluate a supplier from a distance.

Consider what those frictions cost. A workshop owner who cannot read an international buyer's expectations around packaging, labeling, or delivery schedules will lose the order before price is even discussed. A buyer who cannot tell whether a distant supplier can actually meet a 5,000-unit minimum will default to the supplier they already know. Marketplaces like Exportain try to standardize that exchange of information — product listings, category structures, and plain-language explanations of how trade terms work — so that a small business is judged on its product rather than its connections.

This is not a story about one company. It is a story about what happens when the tools of international trade — once reserved for trading houses with offices in three time zones — become available to a workshop with a smartphone and an internet connection. Across South and Southeast Asia, small producers face the same barrier: not the quality of their goods, but the invisibility of their businesses.

Exportain does not claim to have solved trust in cross-border trade — a hard problem that no website can fully resolve. It positions itself as trade infrastructure: a marketplace plus educational resources, including buyer guides and explainers on topics like Incoterms (FOB, CIF, EXW, DAP), supplier verification, and category spotlights on Bangladesh's export strengths.

For readers across the region, the underlying question is familiar: how do the smallest participants in an economy get a fair chance in the largest markets in the world? Technology alone will not answer it. But every tool that lowers the cost of being discovered moves the answer a little closer. Trade infrastructure that starts with the small producer — rather than treating small producers as an afterthought — is infrastructure pointed in the right direction.

The workshop that can be found is the workshop that can compete.

SOURCE: Exportain is a B2B export marketplace connecting global buyers with Bangladeshi manufacturers and exporters (exportain.com).

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



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Asian Tea & Coffee Festival

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IMPORT FROM THAILAND & ASIA TO EUROPE

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23 OCTOBER 2026
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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.)

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Judge Navi Pillay. Photo: AFP

SOUTH AFRICAN JUDGE NAVI PILLAY WINS NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

The Nobel Peace Prize was awarded 9 October to South Africa's Navi Pillay, the judge who headed the Rwanda genocide tribunal and presided over a UN commission which accused Israel of genocide in Gaza -- a laureate immediately blasted by Israel.

The 85-year-old has spent her career defending international law, which is under attack from wars and US President Donald Trump.

Currently a judge on the International Court of Justice in a case where Myanmar also stands accused of genocide, Pillay has been "instrumental in ensuring that war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide are prosecuted," said Jorgen Watne Frydnes, the chair of the Norwegian Nobel Committee in Oslo.

Israel's foreign ministry said the award legitimised "anti-Israel hatred", and that Nazi propagandist Joseph Goebbels must be "applauding from hell".

The daughter of a bus driver in a family of Tamil descent, Pillay served as UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (2008–2014).

Her career has taken her from South African courts, where she defended anti-apartheid activists, to the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and the International Criminal Court.

"In historic international court cases, she has shown that legal measures can help prevent acts of war and violence," the committee said.

Pillay's "independence, her expertise and steadfastness have made her one of the most respected international jurists of our time."

She reacted to the news by making a quip about US President Donald Trump's well-documented desire to win the prize himself.

"If you clap a little bit more I may share this prize with Trump," the 85-year-old said during a standing ovation captured by Amnesty International Secretary General Agnes Callamard in Nuremberg and posted on the social network X.

Pillay headed the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI), which does not speak on behalf of the world body, and which last year found that genocide was occurring in Gaza.

Pillay told AFP at the time that her team had shared "thousands of pieces of information" with prosecutors at the International Criminal Court.

Israel had categorically rejected the report's findings, slamming it as "distorted and false".

'Courage to speak the truth'

The Nobel committee said that while its prize honoured Pillay's career of fighting genocide, it was not taking a stand on whether Israel's actions in Gaza constitute a genocide.

"We are not the court," Frydnes told AFP.

"It's her report, the Commission's report... It will be decided by the International Court of Justice," he said.

Speaking on Friday after her standing ovation, Pillay noted that many had paid tribute to her courage in that report.

"You can imagine how surprised I was. Why would you need courage to speak the truth?"

The UN said her prize was a "testament to the need and to the value of human rights in this world more than ever".

The International Criminal Court meanwhile said her award was of "particular significance" given current

attacks on international law.

The Nobel committee echoed that sentiment in its statement, noting that "at a time of existential challenges -- including more wars and conflicts than the world has seen in a long time -- international law is no longer just a supplement to peace and security."

"It is an absolute necessity."

'Needs to stop'

The prize for Pillay is sure to anger Trump, whose administration has repeatedly attacked international justice institutions.

"This is a clear message to those who are putting pressure on these institutions, to those who are sanctioning the judges and are attacking the institutions. That needs to stop," Frydnes told AFP after the announcement.

Since returning to the White House in January 2025, Trump has made no secret of his desire to win the prize, insisting that he was the most deserving candidate and claiming to have ended up to eight wars.

But his war against Iran, his territorial expansion ambitions as in Greenland, his hard line on migrants, and his attacks on multilateralism and the media have, according to experts in Oslo, disqualified him for the prize.

The prize comes with a gold medal, a diploma and a prize sum of \$1.2 million.

The award will be presented at a formal ceremony in Oslo on December 10, the anniversary of the 1896 death of the prize's creator, Swedish inventor and philanthropist Alfred Nobel.

AFP



CHINA HOUSING MARKET: A 'NEW PHASE' OF AN OLD PROBLEM

SUN LEE

The housing sector in China has begun to stabilize over the last few months after being a troubled sector since 2021. The sector, after experiencing a sharp fall in new house production due to a prolonged property market slump, has witnessed a recent phenomenon of a significant rise in the share of second-hand home transactions in overall housing transactions. From 27 percent in 2020 to more than 50 percent in 2026, the share of second-hand home sales has become gigantic.

This sounds like a relief, with the housing market entering a seemingly stabilization phase. However, a sceptical pair of eyes find something unsettling in how Chinese officials frame it as the market entering a "new phase".

First things first, the new phase doesn't change some of the macroeconomic vitals. The rise in second-hand housing still implies that the investment slump remains. With property investment projected to shrink by about 20 percent over the year, with new residential construction having sharply reduced, making stabilization difficult anytime soon.

Second, second-hand housing is merely a transfer of ownership and not new production. Hence, the rise in the second-hand housing market might be a relief; it doesn't contribute to the GDP. GDP estimation measures newly produced goods and services in a given period, and as the physical structure of existing homes was already accounted for when it was originally built, reselling it is just an ownership transfer. The services associated with the sale of second-hand housing, such as brokerage fee, might be added to the GDP estimates. But, new residential construction, which adds heavily to the estimates, is shrinking, thereby pushing down growth. It has deeper fiscal consequences. As the

economy for decades was fuelled by land sales, construction projects, employment, and demand for basic industry goods like steel and cement, it has seen a slow and steady downturn. This downturn further impedes GDP growth.

Third, it is well-established that the Chinese government has mastered the craft of information shaping and management. In a similar vein, the housing resale information disseminated by officials as a "new phase," hoping for stabilisation, is rather hollow.

The rise in house resale has a direct implication on new house construction. It implies that individuals are not incurring investment expenditure on new housing either due to lack of disposable funds or the lack of trust in the markets. A 52 percent rise in second-hand houses implies that there is a drastic slump in the fresh housing market. This is similar to celebrating savings during a recession: rising numbers due to not-so-celebratory reasons.

The market is unstable, and that is what buyers fear, making them highly risk-averse in the fresh housing market. The Chinese pre-sale model, which involved paying for houses years before completion, is an example of market failure. With money locked in for a long period, home buyers found themselves in as unwilling creditors to the building companies. This created an adverse selection-kind problem for the home buyers. Whenever the developers failed, buyers found themselves with home loans against unfinished projects. This led to two subsequent consequences. First, a housing market crash. Second, elimination of the adverse selection problem by the homebuyers, through purchase of existing properties over what is still in the conception phase. The rampant episodes of adverse selection have made buyers highly risk-averse, and this in turn has a bearing on reducing housing investments as a part of GDP. Households with their wealth locked in upcoming properties face severe setbacks with the rise in resale.

On the contrary, the officials are portraying these gaping issues as a structural upgrade. This information dissemination for an image make-over on the domestic and international front needs to be scrutinised. Rising sales of second-hand housing are a structural issue that rises due to high levels of fear and low appetite for risk. The "new phase" is a logical response to an old problem of oversupply.

An economy can dump its overproduction of tradable goods to other countries and mitigate the outcomes, but when it comes to non-tradables, like housing and construction services, it has to bear the direct burden.

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



CRITICAL CONDITION

"I can't leave anymore, because if I were to leave now, I would like never be able to live the same way, because of the comrades who have fallen and the comrades that are still with me... I would not be able to have that guilt with me."

Dr. Sunshine— a pseudonym that reflects both his warmth and resilience— is a Burmese physician whose life has become deeply intertwined with Myanmar's modern struggle for freedom and survival. Born and raised in Yangon, he began with the simple dream of becoming a doctor but soon collided with the realities of systemic poverty and political dysfunction. "Back home in Myanmar, being a doctor doesn't give you much income," he says, explaining that new physicians earn just \$100–150 per month. Like many of his peers, he left medicine soon after graduating from medical school to pursue business, seeking stability. Yet when Myanmar's 2021 military coup shattered the nation, he experienced a moral awakening that drew him back to medicine—this time, not in a hospital, but on the frontlines of revolution.

When the military seized power, peaceful protests spread rapidly across Myanmar. Dr. Sunshine joined them—first as a citizen demanding justice, then as a medic tending to the wounded. In those early days, protesters faced tear gas, rubber bullets, and, eventually, live ammunition. He remembers standing beside a young man who was shot in the head, helpless to intervene. That

moment, he says, changed his life. "This is not okay," he recalls thinking. "We have to do more." He realized that even with a medical degree, he lacked the training to save lives under such conditions. "I found out there's this thing called tactical combat medicine," he says. "I was like, 'Okay, I need to learn that!'"

With the help of foreign friends who sponsored his course, he became one of Myanmar's first civilian doctors trained in combat medicine. He quickly began teaching others— first in person to small protest groups, later online to resistance fighters and medics hiding in the jungle. Even as repression intensified, he continued his work from Yangon while caring for his ailing father, who was too fragile to leave. Only after the regime announced a national conscription law did Dr. Sunshine finally flee to Thailand, with his father's blessing.

Once in exile, he connected with other doctors and activists near the Thai-Myanmar border, particularly around Mae Sot. His mission was not to align with any single People's Defense Force (PDF) unit, but to train as many people as possible. Remaining independent allowed him to travel freely, offering life-saving instruction across ethnic and regional lines. His workshops combined the technical and the emotional: "I'll shoot him in the hand," he would tell trainees in a role playing exercise. "He will have three minutes until he bleeds out. What are you going to do?" The blunt scenario captured the urgency of his purpose.

CATCH THE PODCAST

Read more and listen to the Insight Myanmar Podcast here: <https://insightmyanmar.org/complete-shows/2026/9/21/episode-610-critical-condition>



MOTION TO CONSOLIDATE MYANMAR'S BANKS AROUND TOP LENDERS ENTERED INTO RECORD WITHOUT A VOTE IN MILITARY-BACKED PARLIAMENT

A motion in the Myanmar military-backed parliament calling for fewer domestic banks and a stronger set of large lenders was entered into the record without a vote on 5 October, according to some parliamentary observers.

The motion was submitted on 28 September by Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) MP Aye Chan, who represents Hlaing Tharyar (East) and is the son of former navy commander-in-chief Soe Thein. Parliament accepted it for discussion, but it was dropped yesterday, the observers said.

Some observers said the objective of building a field of large banks lapsed once the motion went no further.

"Parliament agreed to discuss the motion, and even after the discussion, there was no vote. Speaker Khin Yi said the motion would be recorded, asked whether members agreed or not, and since nobody objected, he declared it recorded and closed it," one parliamentary observer said.

Through the military-backed parliament, Aye Chan described Kanbawza Bank (KBZ), owned by Aung Ko Win, AYA Bank, owned by Zaw Zaw, and CB Bank, owned by Khin Maung Aye, as especially trustworthy banks in the current period. He pushed for the government to compel small and medium banks to merge.

Criticism also emerged within the banking sector that the proposal amounted to large banks bullying medium and small ones, Mizzima understands.

"This is monopoly-building, an attempt to take over the market. When bank data was leaked and customers suffered losses, the public knows which banks those

were. He argued that businesses would grow if banks merged, and he cited Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, and Japan. But he left out the countries where mergers over the years failed, such as Malaysia, Japan, Portugal, Italy, and Germany. And when the economy is bad and everything is tight, doing this to the banks could create problems for jobs and the wider economy," a banking expert told Mizzima.

In the discussion, four USDP MPs and one military-appointed MP spoke. Only one supported the motion. Former junta minister Dr. Pwint San and the other MPs opposed it, arguing that it should be pursued later and should not be approved.

"Even inside the military-backed parliament, people are split between those who want to protect cronies' business interests and those who don't. In truth, the Central Bank disagreed. There is also pressure from the medium and small banks. The definitive answer is that a parliament backed by the military cannot go against the military, and the answer is clear," a parliamentary affairs expert said.

During the debate, MPs also raised the need to measure non-performing loans (NPLs) accurately without concealment, to allow independent bodies to inspect all loan books, including loans issued to bank leaders and key CEOs and related parties, and to examine suspicious accounts.

Myanmar currently has seven large private banks, two medium banks, and 18 small banks. As of 31 July 2026, the combined NPL ratio of the country's 27 private banks was 8.87 percent, according to the Central Bank of Myanmar.



Migrants return. Photo: AFP

MYANMAR MIGRANTS IN MALAYSIA PROTEST MIN AUNG HLAING VISIT ONLINE AND OFFLINE

Myanmar migrant workers in Malaysia took their protest online this week as President Min Aung Hlaing made an official visit to Kuala Lumpur on 7 and 8 October.

Min Aung Hlaing led the February 2021 coup that triggered Myanmar's civil war and became president in April after a widely criticised election. His visit followed the return of 1,476 Myanmar nationals from Malaysian immigration detention, despite warnings from the UN refugee agency and rights groups.

Ahead of the trip, the Myanmar Affairs Alliance, a migrant workers' coalition, called for a strike on 7 October. For workers who could not risk their jobs, it offered an online alternative, asking supporters to change their profile pictures to a "Bloodstained Ghost" image.

On 8 October, the alliance held a protest in Kuala Lumpur calling for the release of political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi. The same day, Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim pledged to help bring Myanmar back into the ASEAN fold, while Min Aung Hlaing promised to take back verified nationals "as soon as possible". Malaysia says the talks do not mean it recognises his government.

ASEAN has barred Myanmar's leaders from its top meetings since the coup. Yet Malaysia is the fifth member state to host Min Aung Hlaing since April, and thousands more Myanmar nationals are due to be sent back.

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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.