

ON THE GROUND IN MYANMAR

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Myanmar relations

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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.

MYANMAR JUNTA ‘BOMBING EVERYWHERE’

It is hard to get away from the conclusion that the Myanmar junta is deliberately targeting civilians in their desperate efforts to hold onto power.

Three-and-a-half years after Min Aung Hlaing conducted a military coup to grab control and kick out the government of Aung San Suu Kyi, civilians are squarely in the junta's sights.

At a time when parts of the country are reeling from serious flooding and the major clean-up work, the junta is using its air force and artillery to hammer civilian targets, plus reportedly blocking aid supplies.

One ethnic armed group has chipped in on this issue. The Myanmar National Democratic Alliance (MNDAA) said in a press statement last week, "the junta is indiscriminately and continuously bombing everywhere across the region and disregarding people's lives, possessions, and security."

The junta has continuously launched airstrikes on Lashio after they lost their Northeast Regional Military Command HQ in the city in August. The bombing raids against Lashio in the past month resulted in three civilians killed and 39 injured.

The press statement says that Lashio had begun to flourish again as townspeople's livelihoods recovered and rehabilitation works but has become a target for aerial attacks by the junta. Some local residents in Lashio said people had to flee their homes after encountering repeated bombing raids. The people

previously fled their homes when the MNDAA launched their offensive to occupy Lashio. They returned home after the MNDAA occupied the town and kept it under their complete control.

After occupying Lashio, the MNDAA began performing rehabilitation and reconstruction work in the town. The junta began escalating their airstrikes since 21 September and Lashio is now under daily devastating bombing raids.

A similar pattern can be seen elsewhere in the country. The junta is conducting aerial bombing raids across the country in areas such as Karenni, Karen, and Rakhine States and Sagaing, Mandalay, and Magway Regions. Hundreds of innocent civilians have been killed and many injured in bombing raids in September this year alone.

All this while holding out an olive branch. The junta's recent call for talks with the resistance – or "terrorists" as they call them – smacks of deceit. There is no indication the military is slackening off its attacks. On the contrary, they are continuing or may be increasing.

The conclusion – as the junta bombs "everywhere" – is the junta is not serious about negotiating a peace settlement and that a call for "talks" is merely part of their gameplan to hang on to power.

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Cover photo of Japan and Mount Fuji by Tianshu Liu





Tokyo. Steven Diaz

DOWNGRADE

JAPAN SENDS MESSAGE ABOUT MYANMAR RELATIONS

Japanese media reports that Japan will not send a new ambassador to Myanmar when its current ambassador completes his diplomatic tour, downgrading diplomatic ties with the junta.

Japan is changing its diplomatic status in Myanmar for the first time after the military coup.

Japanese ambassador, Mr. Ichiro Maruyama, completed his diplomatic tour in Myanmar this month.

Diplomatic sources said that sending a new ambassadorial level diplomat to Myanmar would mean recognizing and supporting the junta which ousted the elected civilian government of Aung San Suu Kyi.

Japan reportedly explained this matter to the junta and that the importance of Myanmar for Japan remained unchanged.

Mr. Shogo Yoshitake of the Japanese embassy would continue to serve in Myanmar as chargé d'affaires.

Japanese Ambassador Ichiro Maruyama has been in the Myanmar embassy since 2018.

JAPANESE NATIONALS ARRESTED

Japanese media reported that at least three Japanese nationals were arrested in the nearly four years since the military staged a coup in February 2021.



FLASHBACK - Aung San Suu Kyi with former Japanese PM Shinzo Abe, who was later assassinated in 2022. Photo: AFP

Two of them are journalists and another one is an executive of Aeron Company in Myanmar.

Japanese reporter Yuki Kitazumi was the first Japanese arrested in Myanmar after the coup and has been arrested twice. He was beaten and arrested by junta troops in February 2021 and he was released later. He was rearrested in April that year.

Another Japanese reporter, Toru Kubota, was arrested with Myanmar demonstrators in 2022 during a protest demonstration staged in South Dagon township.

Japanese businessman and Aeron executive, Hiroshi Kasamatsu, was detained in June 2024 for allegedly selling rice at a price over the junta's prescribed rate.

All three of them were released through intervention and mediation by the Japanese embassy in Myanmar.

Unlike countries in the West, Japan did not impose economic sanctions against the Myanmar junta and businesses related to them.

After the military coup, the US, most EU countries and South Korea downgraded diplomatic ties with Myanmar. The US, UK, Canada and EU also imposed sanctions against the coup leaders, high ranking military officers, individuals, and organizations which have close relations with the military.

JAPAN'S RELATIONSHIP WITH CHINA

Meanwhile, Japan's new Foreign Minister Takeshi Iwaya said Wednesday last week that Tokyo wants a "stable relationship" with China based on common interests, although "what we need to assert will be asserted".

"We hope to mutually work towards building a constructive and stable relationship," Iwaya said in his first press conference after being nominated by Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba on Tuesday last week.

The minister said he hoped to meet his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi "as soon as possible" for "frank exchanges and dialogue", but a date had not yet been decided.

Relations between the neighbours have worsened as China builds up its military presence around disputed territories, and as Japan boosts security ties with the United States and its allies.

"Between Japan and China, there are many outstanding issues and challenges, but at the same time there is much possibility and potential," Iwaya said.

Both are "major countries holding an important responsibility jointly for achieving peace and prosperity for this region and the entire international community".

But also, “we seek China to behave responsibly”, Iwaya added.

“We are seeing attempts to unilaterally change the status quo in the East Asia region, so we need to build a system that can firmly deter such attempts,” he said.

On Wednesday last week, Chinese President Xi Jinping congratulated Ishiba, who was approved as prime minister by parliament the day before after winning a ruling party leadership vote.

Echoing comments made by Ishiba earlier, Iwaya also expressed “deep concern” over missile attacks by Iran on Israel.

“We strongly condemn this kind of escalation, and... strongly urge all parties concerned to calm the situation.”

Japan and China – and other nations – fear an expansion of the war in the Middle East could lead to the blocking of the Strait of Hormuz and attacks on oil wells and refineries in the region, which could have a devastating effect on fuel supplies and the world economy.



The Japanese Embassy entrance in Yangon. Photo: AFP



Taking shelter in Rakhine State. Photo: AFP

HAS FLOODING AID BEEN GETTING THROUGH?

In the wake of recent floods in Myanmar, people-to-people donations have emerged as a crucial source of relief for affected communities. Charity teams, as well as private individuals, have played a central role in both rescuing victims and providing essential aid. However, victims have voiced concerns over the lack of response from the regime authorities, citing insufficient government assistance with aid distribution and resettlement efforts.

Many of the victims are relying solely on local donors, but in remote areas, where reaching these donors is difficult, shortages of food and aid have been reported. Among the prominent local donors are two well-known figures: a charity activist and a traditional boxer.

The charity activist, a former actress, has made substantial contributions to victims in both central plains and ethnic areas. Her donations included essential supplies and cash to help with resettlement, though her team faced obstacles from junta authorities during the delivery process. Meanwhile, traditional

boxer Tun Tun Min sold his championship belt to raise over 100 million kyats for flood victims. He personally delivered the aid, along with his friends, to the severely affected Inle Lake region.

Despite these efforts, local donors continue to face restrictions from the junta. In Taungoo Township, aid can be freely provided to victims, but those wishing to deliver assistance to areas east of the Sittaung River must first secure approval from the regime. These approvals come with limitations, such as capping the amount of rice that can be provided to each family.

A charity team member expressed frustration with the bureaucratic hurdles, stating, "We are busy with paperwork, applying for recommendations from local authorities. We are not on either side – resistance or regime – we just want to help the actual victims of the flood."

The reliance on local donations and the challenges posed by regime restrictions highlight the critical role of community-driven efforts in Myanmar's disaster response.



JUNTA OFFER OF TALKS FLIPS TO BOMBING

As we reported in our cover story last week, Myanmar junta surprised people by announcing an invitation for peace talks with Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs) and People's Defense Forces (PDFs) on the evening of September 26. The invitation referred to these groups as "insurgents" and "terrorist organizations," sparking widespread skepticism. Despite the offer for dialogue, within hours and days the junta launched a series of airstrikes and escalated fighting in key conflict zones, undermining its call for peace.

Hours after the peace talk announcement, the junta targeted Lashio, a town now controlled by the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), with an airstrike on the morning of September 27. This attack marks a continuation of intense fighting between the MNDAA and junta forces in Mongyai and Hoya in northern Shan State. The regime deployed two fighter jets to bomb Hoya village, forcing locals to flee as clashes intensified.

The recent escalation follows the junta's redeployment of troops from central to northern Shan State, where it has lost significant ground to the MNDAA. Lashio was captured by the MNDAA in early August, prompting the junta to temporarily reestablish its Northeastern Command in Mongyai. Local residents reported seeing around 30 military trucks heading toward Mongyai in late September, signaling further military buildup in the region.

Fighting also flared in Kachin State. On September 29, the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) launched an offensive in Chihpwe Township, successfully capturing the area by late afternoon. Simultaneous attacks in Tsawlaw led to the capture of the junta's No. (298) Light Infantry Battalion's post after four days of intense fighting. Therefore, KIA seized two towns during four

days. These areas are primarily controlled by the junta and its allied militias, including the Kachin sub-ethnic Lacid-led Border Guard Force.

In southeastern Myanmar, the junta continued its airstrikes against Karen ethnic armed groups. On October 2, two jet fighters bombed Hpapon Township, killing a mother of six and damaging a clinic and a school. Though the students managed to escape after the first bomb hit near the school, the incident highlighted the continued dangers faced by civilians.

In Rakhine State, the military has not only targeted Maungdaw in the north but also conducted airstrikes in Gwa, the southernmost part of the state. On October 4, an airstrike in Taunggoke Township killed four people, including a child and an elderly individual.

Meanwhile, in central Myanmar, clashes between junta forces and PDF groups continue to escalate. On September 30, a combined PDF force defeated a junta column of around 100 soldiers in a significant victory for the resistance.

Despite the junta's call for peace talks, their reliance on airstrikes and intensified military offensives against resistance forces has raised doubts about the sincerity of their offer. The ongoing violence casts a shadow over any potential for a negotiated settlement to the conflict.

ARAKAN ARMY PRESSES FORWARDS IN RAKHINE

The Arakan Army (AA) is pressing forward in its efforts to capture Maungdaw, Myanmar's key border trade town with Bangladesh. As Maungdaw has a predominantly Rohingya population and sits along the Naf River and Bay of Bengal, the junta and previous governments had fortified the area with Border Guard Police (BGP) stations. The AA launched an offensive on 2 June 2024, swiftly seizing four BGP headquarters (Nos. 6, 9, 4, and 2) within a month.

Currently, the AA is attempting to overrun the No. 5 BGP headquarters, which also houses the commander of the No. 15 Military Operations Command. The commander is leading a defensive effort composed of remaining junta soldiers and local pro-regime Rohingya militias.

The AA began its assault on No. 5 BGP on 7 July after capturing the No. 2 BGP headquarters just two miles away. The junta responded with airstrike reinforcements as ground forces struggled to contain the AA's offensive. By late July, 500 junta soldiers had retreated, and the AA urged the remaining forces to surrender by mid-August. On 13 August, another 600 SAC troops withdrew by naval transport.

Despite heavy airstrike defenses, the AA renewed its offensive on 11 September and again on 27 September. Locals believe the base may soon fall, as the junta is relying on airstrikes from four fighter jets to maintain control. The AA had previously declared its intention to seize Maungdaw, but as of now, the No. 5 BGP headquarters remains under junta control. If the AA captures the base, it will gain control of Myanmar's entire 168-mile border with Bangladesh.

TOP MIZZIMA BURMESE VIDEOS

Please see the top Mizzima Burmese videos for the last week:

How was the entire column of around 100 strong defeated?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bQ8NRPfvFwo>

"Anyone who expects the results of the discussion will be stupid" (Editorial Talk)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1NQLmhZYeN0>

A military council using the Karenni flood to control the area

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IgU1gMGvGJ0>



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Mandalay. Photo: Mizzima/Brave Warriors for Myanmar

BRAVE WARRIORS FOR MYANMAR ATTACK CENTRAL REGIONAL MILITARY COMMAND WITH ROCKET FIRE

The Brave Warriors for Myanmar (BWM) announced they launched an attack on the junta's Central Regional Military Command, located within the Mandalay Palace, using six 107-mm rockets. This assault, named "Mission 22," took place at 2:30 am on 29 September.

"Out of the six rockets fired, four successfully struck their targets within the Central Regional Military Command, hitting two barracks occupied by soldiers and injuring 20 personnel," said an official from BWM.

The remaining two rockets landed in a field, and BWM is currently assessing the deaths and damage to Military Council personnel.

The BWM official added that they fired the rockets from within the inner security zone, managing to infiltrate checkpoints. This surprise attack left junta forces scrambling. They began searching for the attackers after about 15 minutes using two vehicles equipped with searchlights.

The BWM explained that the attack was a response

to the military's recent reinforcement of forces at the Central Regional Military Command and its attempts to target both revolutionary groups and civilians under the so-called "Yan Naing Min" operation.

According to a BWM official, while revolutionary forces are gaining strength, the junta is weakening and attempting to broker a ceasefire with northern resistance groups through Chinese intermediaries. At the same time, it is reinforcing its Central Regional Military Command. The junta has been conducting airstrikes daily against resistance-held areas.

Amid increasing pressure, urban guerrilla forces are focusing more on targeting regional military headquarters, which are crucial for disrupting the command structure.

This was the third attack by the guerrilla alliance on the Central Regional Military Command, following previous assaults in December 2023 and on 3 September, 2024. The BWM has carried out 22 missions targeting military facilities across Nay Pyi Taw, Yangon, Mandalay, Bago, and Magway regions.



Bombing destruction in Lashio. Photo: AFP

JUNTA CONDUCTS AIRSTRIKES ON LASHIO, CAUSING DAMAGE AND FEAR AMONG RESIDENTS

An airstrike by the Myanmar Army on Lashio in northern Shan State caused significant damage to homes and other buildings, according to local residents. The attack, which marks the eighth aerial bombardment on Lashio since it came under the control of the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), was confirmed by an official from the Lashio Reconstruction Department.

On 28 September, at around 8:30 pm, two 500-pound bombs were dropped from a jet fighter onto a car workshop in Lashio's Ward- 8, locals reported.

"There were only two bombs, but the explosion was extremely powerful. I haven't been able to sleep well since," said one resident.

The bombardment led to the destruction of roughly 10 buildings and 11 cars in Ward-8, but no casualties were reported, stated Ko Nay Wai Soe, another resident of Lashio.

Reports also suggest that the airstrikes have caused some residents to flee Lashio.

"After the eighth round of bombings, some people left the town, but most of us dug bunkers and decided to stay," said Ko Nay Wai Soe.

No casualties were reported in the recent attack, according to the Lashio Reconstruction official. Three people have died, and 23 others seriously injured in junta airstrikes since the MNDAA took control of the town in August.

The MNDAA issued a public warning about air raid precautions and local reports indicate that the injured treated as emergency patients.

SIX CIVILIANS, INCLUDING A CHILD, KILLED IN MYANMAR JUNTA AIRSTRIKES ON KANBALU TOWNSHIP

Six civilians, including a five-year-old child, were killed in two days of drone strikes by junta forces on villages in Kanbalu Township, Sagaing Region, according to the Kyun Hla activist group in the region.

Junta forces based in Sapal Nantha village bombed Yay Shin Gyi, Aung Taing Lal, and Hmyanni Pin villages on 27 and 28 September, leading to civilian casualties, reported the activist group.

On the morning of 27 September, three bombs were dropped on Yay Shin Gyi village, resulting in the death of a man named Khin Swe. Four men and three women were injured. On the same morning, a drone attack on Aung Taing Lal village killed Daw Shwe, a woman in her 50s.

The following day, on 28 September, junta forces dropped two bombs on Hmyanni Pin village, resulting in the deaths of Ei Ei Khaing (35 years old), Ei Ei Naing

(25 years old), Daw Hlaw (50 years old), and Phoo Wai, a five-year-old child.

“Drone bombardments are happening even without any fighting. The drone has been hovering daily,” said an official from the Kyun Hla activist group.

The activist group reported that residents living near Sapal Nantha village, where the junta forces are stationed, have been fleeing to safety due to the ongoing drone strikes.

“All residents within three to four miles of Sapal Nantha village have fled. It’s difficult to estimate the exact number of those displaced,” the official said.

Additionally, on 27 September, junta forces and members of the Pyu Saw Htee militia from Sapal Nantha attacked Nyaung Kwai village and set houses on fire.

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Photo: Mizzima

MYANMAR JUNTA AIRSTRIKES IN SAGAING REGION LEAVE 8 DEAD AND 19 INJURED

Myanmar's military junta carried out airstrikes in Kawlin town, Sagaing Region, on 29 and 30 September, resulting in the deaths of eight civilians and injuries to 19 others, according to a report from Kawlin District's Battalion No. 2.

On the morning of 29 September, military aircraft dropped two 500-pound bombs near Ywarthit village, killing one resident and injuring 15 others. The following day, at approximately 11:50 am, two jet fighters bombarded the northern part of Okkan village, dropping four 500-pound bombs that killed seven more residents and injured four others.

The attacks have left several homes damaged, and details regarding the casualties are still being verified, according to Kawlin District's Battalion No. 2.

"There has been no recent fighting near the village, and there are no People's Defense Force (PDF) troops in these areas. Only local residents and displaced people who fled the town are staying here. The junta aircraft deliberately dropped bombs," said a man assisting internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the western part of Kawlin town.

Kawlin was previously attacked and taken over by the Joint People's Defense Forces in November 2023. They remained in control for around three months. The military junta launched a counteroffensive on 4 February 2024, with support from the Air Force, and recaptured the town.

The junta Air Force frequently targets townships under the control of revolutionary forces in Shan State, Mandalay Region, Kachin State, Karen State, Chin State, Rakhine State, Karenni State, and Sagaing Region.

During the High-Level Plenary Session of the United Nations General Assembly on 26 September, Myanmar's UN ambassador, U Kyaw Moe Tun, urged the international community to halt the transfer of weapons, ammunition, and military equipment to the junta. This appeal was made in an effort to curb the regime's ongoing violence, as part of the session commemorated the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.



Tsawlaw town. Photo: Supplied

KACHIN INDEPENDENCE ARMY GAINS FULL CONTROL OF TSAWLAW TOWN IN KACHIN STATE

The Kachin Independence Army (KIA) took complete control of Tsawlaw town in Kachin State at around 7:30 am on 2 October, according to KIA spokesperson Colonel Naw Bu.

“We have fully captured the town this morning. There are no longer any significant military positions in the areas around Chipwi and Tsawlaw. Both towns are now under our control,” Colonel Naw Bu said.

Key facilities, including the police station, government offices, and a junta battalion base in Tsawlaw, were seized by the KIA.

“From the beginning, only a small part of the town remained under junta control. The road has been blocked for over a year, and at times they had to rely on airdropped supplies,” said a KIA military source.

The source added that the KIA captured weapons, ammunition, and prisoners of war from the junta during the battle, though further details are still being confirmed.

In a related offensive, the KIA captured the district-level town of Chipwi on the evening of 30 September. Chipwi is located about 40 miles from Tsawlaw and lies within Kachin Special Region 1. The town is also known for rare earth mining and houses a hydropower project.

Following these victories, the KIA is conducting clearance operations in both Tsawlaw and Chipwi, according to Major Naw Bu.

The KIA now controls 10 townships in Kachin State, including Chipwi, the China-Myanmar border town of Lwegel, and other towns such as Dawthphoneyan, Myothit, Myohla, Hsinbo, Injangyan, Sumprabum, and Sadung.



Aerial view of part of Chipwi. Photo: Supplied

KIA GAINS FULL CONTROL OF CHIPWI TOWN IN KACHIN SPECIAL REGION NO. 1

Chipwi town in Kachin Special Region No. 1 fell under the control of the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) on 30 September around 3:00 pm, as confirmed to Mizzima by Colonel Nawbu, spokesperson for the KIA.

The last remaining strategic base of the junta, Infantry Battalion 105, situated at the entrance of Chipwi town, was completely seized by KIA joint forces later that same day. In addition, the KIA successfully captured the junta's Shangaw camp, located between Chipwi and Waingmaw townships.

"The final junta camps in both Shangaw and Chipwi have been captured. We took control of them at around 3 pm," said Colonel Nawbu.

According to a KIA front-line source, several junta personnel, including the tactical operation commander, were captured during the battle for Chipwi. The body of a military officer was also recovered from the site.

"Some junta troops were killed, and their weapons were seized. This camp mainly housed soldiers, with minimal presence from militias. The tactical operation commander was wounded and captured, and the body of the deputy commander was found. Police officers have also been taken into custody," a frontline source said.

Chipwi is located on the eastern bank of the Maikha River, approximately 88 miles northeast of Myitkyina, the capital of Kachin State. The western side of the Maikha River falls under the direct control of the KIA Brigade 7 headquarters.

Situated about 40 miles away from the China-Myanmar border, Chipwi is near the Pangwa border trade zone to the southeast.

Chipwi is known for its extraction of rare earth minerals. The Chipwi Small Hydropower Project, located six miles from the town, is a significant source of electricity for Myanmar's national grid and is largely funded by China.



Mindat with houses on fire. Photo: Supplied

MYANMAR JUNTA TROOPS TORCH OVER 30 HOUSES IN MINDAT TOWNSHIP, CHIN STATE

Myanmar military junta forces set fire to more than 30 houses in Mindat Township, Chin State, according to local sources.

On 1 October, junta troops began torching houses from Bayinnaung intersection in the western ward of Mindat township along the Mindat-Matupi road.

Soldiers from Infantry Battalion 274, based in Mindat, used three motorcycles to carry petrol and set fire to properties, resulting in the destruction of over 30 houses along the route from Bayinnaung intersection to the Vitoria hostel.

Locals attempting to extinguish the flames were unable to get close, as junta troops and police stationed at San Min Thiri Pagoda hill camp opened fire on them, local source said.

“Junta troops burn down houses almost daily. For them, torching homes has become a routine task. They are destroying everything of interest to the people,” said a commander with the Chin Defense Force-Mindat (CDF-Mindat).

According to the commander, most of the houses destroyed were unoccupied, and the attacks are part of the junta’s continued efforts to destroy civilian property.

The commander also reported that the military situation in Mindat is currently stable, with no clashes taking place. However, he vowed that the CDF-Mindat would continue fighting until Mindat township is free from junta control and can defend itself.

The CDF-Mindat reported that junta troops are regularly setting fire to homes in Mindat township, torching 36 houses in Western, San Pya, and Ah Shay Pyin wards between 22 August and 27 September.

The CDF-Mindat has advised people to avoid spreading unverified information, warning that fighting could erupt at any moment given the junta’s ongoing airstrikes and drone attacks.

MYANMAR JUNTA REORGANIZES NORTHEASTERN REGIONAL MILITARY COMMAND

The Myanmar junta is restructuring its Northeastern Regional Military Command after losing ground to the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA). In an effort to establish a new command base in Mongyai township, the junta has reinforced its troops while also conducting aerial bombardments, causing residents to flee, according to local sources.

On the night of 20 September, airstrikes were carried out by the military over Ho Ya and Kawng Mawng villages in Mongyai township. The attacks resulting in 12 injuries, including seven in critical condition, and forced villagers to flee.

"The junta bombed two villages, with three bombs falling in Ho Ya village and seven in the other. Locals fled their homes, leaving one person in each house to guard their property against theft," said a resident of Kawng Mawng village.

Local sources report that troop deployments from both the MNDAA and the junta have heightened tensions in Mongyai township, and displaced residents are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance.

CDM Captain Zin Yaw, who joined the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) said, "The current commander of the Northeastern Regional Military

Command in Mongyai is Major General Myint Kyaw Tun. They have gathered between 2,000 and 3,000 troops there."

Mongyai township is located approximately 60 miles southeast of Lashio city. The heavily bombarded Ho Ya village lies along the route between Mongyai and Lashio.

Ongoing clashes have rendered the main routes from Hsipaw, Hsenwi, and Namtu townships to Lashio inaccessible, making the Mongyai route the only viable passage to Lashio.

Hsenwi and Namtu townships have already been captured by Northern Alliance forces, and fierce fighting is ongoing in Hsipaw. As a result, the junta has focused on reorganizing its Northeastern Regional Military Command in Mongyai, according to military analysts.

Thousands of troops from the Shan State Progress Party/Shan State Army (SSPP/SSA) were previously stationed in Mongyai township, according to an SSPP statement in July. However, local media reported in September that the junta had strengthened its presence in Mongyai after the SSPP reduced its forces in the area.

WATERMELON MAILBOX LAUNCHED TO FACILITATE SECURE TRANSFER OF MILITARY INFORMATION IN MYANMAR

A new website called “Watermelon Mailbox” was officially launched on 1 October to securely facilitate the transfer of internal information about Myanmar’s junta. The term “watermelon” is commonly used by Myanmar’s revolutionary forces to refer to informants within the military who secretly pass information to the opposition.

The Watermelon Mailbox, accessible at www.thadinpay.com, was developed exclusively for the revolution by Myanmar IT students studying abroad. The platform allows users to share confidential information, including text, images, and video. The content can include sensitive details from the junta’s ministries, reports of corruption, and other internal activities.

“We’ve designed the system to allow not only internal military information to be shared, but also civil news. It’s built to be user-friendly, even for those with limited technical skills,” said a representative from the Watermelon Mailbox.

Although the platform has been operational since the military coup, it is now being introduced publicly as a critical tool in advancing the revolution. One notable success using the information provided through

the Mailbox occurred on 29 January, 2024, when the revolutionary Cobra Column shot down a Eurocopter 365 military helicopter in Thingannyinaung town, Karen State.

The representative assured that the platform takes full responsibility for safeguarding the identity and location of informants, including non-Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) personnel, who provide crucial information on the junta. Ensuring the secure and timely transmission of intelligence to revolutionary forces is a priority for the website.

The information gathered through the Watermelon Mailbox is also intended to serve as legal evidence in future cases. Non-CDM members working in various ministries under the leadership of top military figures, including Min Aung Hlaing, are encouraged to submit internal data safely and securely.

The Watermelon Mailbox team is currently coordinating with People’s Defense Force battalions, revolutionary groups, ground strike teams, and CDM officials across different ministries to strengthen their efforts against the military council.



A truck on the Asia Highway.
Photo: Mizzima

DISCUSSION TO REOPEN MAJOR THAI-MYANMAR BORDER TRADE ROUTE, ASIAN HIGHWAY

Ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) held an informal discussion on 24 September regarding the reopening of the Asian Highway (AH1) between Myawaddy and Kawkaeik. The road is a major border trade route between Myanmar and Thailand.

The Karen National Union (KNU), Karen National Liberation Army-Peace Council (KNLA-PC), Democratic Karen Benevolence Army (DKBA) and Karen Border Guard Force (BGF) attended the informal meeting.

They discussed a halt to fighting among each other in the region and to together protect against junta military offensives in order to reopen this major highway.

The Asian Highway between Myawaddy and Kawkaeik has been closed for nearly two years after fierce fighting erupted in this region. The highway is a major trade route for the border trade between Thailand and Myanmar.

Traders and trucks previously used the alternative routes of the Myawaddy-Kyaw Koe-Htaw Kaw Koe road, the 1018 highway built by the BGF, and the Kyet Oo Taung road. Currently, however, only the old Dawna Range Road is used by trucks as other roads are too bumpy, slippery, and dangerous.

The freight charge for goods imported from Thailand was around 100,000 Kyats per ton in the past but now it has risen to over one million per ton after the closure of the Asian Highway.

A junta military column is using the Asia Highway as part of its Aung Zeya military offensive in Karen State to reach Myawaddy. Local residents are facing many difficulties in transportation and communication as they have to use alternative routes through the jungle to avoid fighting.

The KNU claim they had over 10,000 soldiers fighting with junta troops in 2023 in Karen State.

The news circulating among Myawaddy traders is that Karen armed groups and Thai traders are negotiating to reopening this highway.

Thai Foreign Minister Maris Sangiampongsa said on 19 September, "Thailand wants to work with warring sides in Myanmar to repair a key highway cutting through the conflict-ridden country...[Thailand] seeks to stabilise borders areas and keep trade routes open."

He commented that negotiations are needed with both the junta and revolutionary forces to repair the damaged sectors on this Asian Highway.

An important trade route, the AH1 stretches more than 1,500 km (932 miles) from Myawaddy on the Thai-Myanmar frontier to Tamu on Myanmar's border with India.

The area around Myawaddy, previously a conduit for more than US\$1 billion in annual border trade, saw fierce fighting earlier this year as resistance fighters pushed the junta out of the frontier town, stalling trade ever since.



Myanmar migrant workers in a truck on the Myanmar-Thailand border. Photo: AFP

MYANMAR WORKERS IN THAILAND UNEMPLOYED AFTER THE TERMS OF THEIR MOU WERE VIOLATED

The Thai-based labour activist group, Worker Assistance Group (WAG), said that 273 Myanmar workers who came to Thailand under an memorandum of understanding (MOU) were in trouble as their employment agency did not give them jobs in accordance with the MOU.

These 273 Myanmar workers were sent to Thailand by an Oversea Employment Agency, but they were not employed in their agreed jobs as electricians and plumbers. Instead, they were forced to shift to other worksites and the workers are now in trouble.

These workers signed 2-year contracts with their employers to work at a company in Lamung town, Chonburi Province, Thailand. However, they were told the company that signed the contract with them went bankrupt. They were then taken to Si Racha District and forced to work in a construction site.

The Zin Tun Win 999 Co. Ltd. is in violation of the terms of the MOU and the Myanmar workers are demanding to work in the originally agreed jobs.

The workers are currently kept on the ground floor of Penrund Condo View in Si Racha and have become unemployed. They are now facing difficulty in their livelihood.

A representative from WAG said they would lodge complaints in accordance with Thai laws against the Thai employment agencies for violating the MOU.

They contacted the Myanmar embassy in Bangkok to take action against the overseas employment agency in Myanmar, but they did not receive a response from the embassy.

There are six million Myanmar migrant workers in Thailand. Many workers who come through an MOU are unable to get the pre-arranged jobs in the MOU. Labour activists in Thailand said these workers do not get the jobs mentioned in their MOUs and are facing many difficulties in their livelihood while staying in Thailand.



Myanmar refugee camp in Mizoram.
Photo: AFP

INDIA'S CENTRAL GOVERNMENT TO PROVIDE RICE ASSISTANCE TO MYANMAR REFUGEES IN MIZORAM

India's central government will supply rice to Myanmar refugees in Mizoram state, according to a report by All India Radio News on 30 September, citing information from a state government official.

The rice distribution aims to support over 40,000 refugees in Mizoram, including Myanmar nationals who fled the conflict after the coup, as well as refugees from Bangladesh and Manipur state.

The Ministry of Food, Civil Supplies, and Consumer Affairs of Mizoram will receive 1,379.34 metric tons of rice, valued at 50 million rupees, from the central government within 60 days, according to the report.

"We haven't received the rice yet, but we're happy to hear this news. I would like to express my gratitude to both the state and central governments for their generosity and support," said Hmone Nga, who oversees the Thazawl Myanmar war refugees camp in Lunglei city, Mizoram state.

The camp, which shelters more than 800 refugees, mainly relies on aid from local and international organizations, according to Hmone Nga. While some

camp residents occasionally find work as daily laborers, such as clearing farmland, guarding farms, or gathering bamboo shoots, the majority depend on external assistance. He added that the promised rice distribution would significantly help support the refugees.

Although the rice provision was announced, local authorities have not yet contacted the camp about the specific arrangements, he added.

The rice distribution process will be coordinated by government officials in collaboration with district councils across the state.

According to social aid organizations, this is the second time the Indian central government has provided assistance to refugees in Mizoram. The government previously provided support worth 30 million rupees.

Records from Mizoram's Ministry of Internal Affairs indicate that there are over 35,000 Myanmar refugees in the state, along with approximately 10,000 refugees from ethnic conflict in Manipur state and around 1,000 refugees from Bangladesh.



A young woman in the floods.
Photo: AFP

UN HIGHLIGHTS THE IMPACT OF RECENT FLOODING ON GENDER IN MYANMAR

The UN in Myanmar's Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group release an update on 1 October providing an overview of gender impacts of flooding in Myanmar.

The UN update looks at the impact on already marginalised groups, especially pregnant and breastfeeding women, children, and the elderly. "Early assessments suggest women and girls accounted for approximately 60% of people affected," stated the report.

Pre-existing vulnerabilities and gender roles meant women and girls were

disproportionately affected by the flooding. The working group says women and girls are at increased risk of gender-based violence, loss of livelihoods, food insecurity, landmines, and limited access to healthcare as well as lack of safe water, hygiene, and sanitary facilities.

There is also a risk of people adopting negative coping strategies. These include many women forced to take on loans, borrow from neighbours, or sell belongings. It also caused men and women to migrate or seek precarious employment, "leaving families even more vulnerable to exploitation and economic hardship.

The Working Group called for the prioritisation of certain needs to protect and support women and girls. These include healthcare, protection, nutrition, safe shelter, and water and sanitation. Various non-food items are also needed such as household kits,

appropriate clothing, underwear, kitchen utensils, and sleeping mats.

In the medium to long term, without sustained intervention existing gender inequalities will likely deepen. These may include livelihood loss and economic exclusion, increased care responsibilities for children and the elderly, education setbacks for girls, a heightened risk of violence, health risks, and a variety of psychosocial impacts.

At present, local humanitarian organisations, including women-led and women's rights organisations are actively mobilised and offering critical support to affected communities.

Torrential rains beginning on 9 September caused by remnants of Typhoon Yagi resulted in widespread flooding and landslides across Myanmar. Seventy townships across 11 states and regions in the country were affected.

The flooding and mudslides impacted about 1 million people and caused more than 360 fatalities with more than 100 still missing. Floodwaters destroyed more than 65,000 homes, 1,500 schools, 200 roads and bridges, and submerged thousands of fields and killed large numbers of livestock.

The most severely affected areas included Naypyidaw, Mandalay, Magway, Bago, Sagaing and Tanintharyi Regions and Mon, Karenni, Karen, Rakhine, and southern and eastern Shan States.



Photo: Supplied

MYANMAR RICE FEDERATION SAYS RICE EXPORT MUST BE CAREFULLY CONSIDERED DUE TO CHANGING WEATHER PATTERN

Myanmar Rice Federation (MRF) said the country needed to carefully consider rice export as weather patterns are changing.

Currently, weather patterns are frequently changing and many countries including Myanmar faced huge impacts from climate change resulting in heavy rainfall and severe floods. The country needs to consider more self-sufficiency and price stability in the domestic market.

Natural disasters and changing weather patterns have a huge impact on the agriculture sector in many countries such as Vietnam, Thailand and India.

Myanmar will continue to export rice at the pre-planned target of 200,000 tonnes per month, but some people point out that the country needs to carefully consider rice export because of the changing weather patterns.

Myanmar has enough rice stock in reserve which is more than sufficient for domestic consumption so there is no need for concern yet.

An official from MRF said that people do not need to worry about a rice shortage due to floods as there was nearly four million tonnes of rice in the buffer stock.

The floods brought by the remnants of Typhoon Yagi damaged over 780,000 acres of paddy farmland and 176,426 animals perished in these floods, according to data collected up to 27 September.

Myanmar has nearly 15 million acres of monsoon paddy acreage and yearly production is about 1,088 million baskets of paddy [1 basket is 46 lbs].

The junta put the rice export target at nearly two million tonnes in the 2024-25 fiscal year. They expect export earnings from rice exports at US\$1 billion.

Some countries have experienced low rice production because of the El Niño weather pattern that occurred in 2023 and faced rising rice prices in their countries.



Taking the census in Naypyidaw.
Photo: AFP

MYANMAR JUNTA TAKES CENSUS DESPITE CONFLICT, BOYCOTT CALLS

Census takers guarded by police and soldiers took to the streets of Myanmar on Wednesday for a national survey that anti-junta groups have urged people to boycott.

The ruling junta is pressing ahead with the census even though it has lost control of large areas of the country to armed groups opposed to its rule.

Bloody conflict rages across much of Myanmar, but the junta says the survey is needed to update voter lists ahead of promised elections in 2025.

Teams of enumerators accompanied by soldiers and armed police went door to door in Yangon to fill in the 68-question survey.

"School teachers, local authorities, police and local militias members are taking the census. Militias who attended basic military training are helping for security in their area," a military officer told AFP, speaking anonymously because he was not authorised to speak to the media.

"We have tightened security when taking census because of the threats by terrorists."

The census comes as the junta led by General Min Aung Hlaing reels from battlefield defeats to ethnic minority armed groups and pro-democracy People's Defence Forces (PDFs) that rose up to oppose the military's coup d'etat in 2021.

The military has designated many of these groups as "terrorists" but last week issued an unprecedented invitation to its enemies for talks on the country's civil war.

Min Aung Hlaing and other senior junta cadres were among the first to be surveyed as data collection began on Tuesday. It is scheduled to go on until October 15.

ARMED GROUPS CONDEMN

The survey includes questions about family members living away from home -- which critics say is a way for the junta to identify who has joined armed groups or fled the country to avoid conscription into the army.

"They mainly focused on list of family members in the household and they also asked about family members who are living away," Wai Wai, a mother of three in Lewe township near the military-built capital of Naypyidaw, told AFP.

The Chin Brotherhood Alliance, a group of ethnic armed groups in western Chin state, said the census was "only aimed at prolonging the power of the military council" and warned people not to take part.

"Chin Brotherhood hereby issues a warning that effective action will be taken against anyone who participates in the military council's census in our area," the group said in a statement.

The Karen National Union (KNU), which has been battling the military for decades for more autonomy along the border with Thailand, also came out against the census.

Saw Thamain Tun, a KNU leader, said the junta was trying to create political legitimacy for its coup through the census.

AFP



Chin Brotherhood Alliance

CHIN BROTHERHOOD ALLIANCE WARNS AGAINST PARTICIPATION IN MYANMAR JUNTA'S POPULATION CENSUS

The Chin Brotherhood Alliance issued a statement on 30 September, warning that anyone taking part in the Myanmar junta's planned population census would face consequences. The group expressed their opposition to the nationwide census, set to be conducted by the junta from 1 to 15 October.

"We are prepared to take severe actions, depending on how the situation unfolds," said the alliance's information officer.

He emphasized that the census cannot take place in areas controlled by the Chin Brotherhood Alliance. Moreover, if non-Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) staff conduct the census in towns under junta control, they may face arrest as deemed necessary.

The information officer also mentioned they will monitor census participants through informants within the towns. Currently, only urban areas within Chin Brotherhood-controlled regions remain under the junta's control, with many residents having fled due to ongoing fighting. As a result, the number of eligible individuals available for census data collection is expected to be less than 10% of the town's population.

The Chin Brotherhood Alliance argued that the junta aims to use the census as a tool to prolong its hold on power and called on the people and international

organizations not to support or participate in the military's unjust actions. Given the ongoing civil war and widespread crises, including armed conflict and natural disasters, the alliance described the junta's planned census as a prelude to a sham election, intended to facilitate forced military recruitment, and to consolidate their power.

The Chin Brotherhood Alliance works in coordination with the interim Chin National Consultative Council (ICNCC). Its members include the Chin National Organization/Chin National Defense Force (CNO/CNDF), Zomi Federal Union/Zoland PDF (ZFU/Zoland PDF), Chin National Council (Mindat) (CNC/Mindat CDF), Matupi Chinland Defense Force (CDF-Matupi Brigade 1), Mara Territorial Committee/Mara Defense Force (MTC/MDF), and Kanpetlet Chinland Defense Force (Kanpetlet CDF).

Chinland Defense Force (CDF-Hakha) also issued a warning, stating that any non-CDM members participating in the census in Hakha Township, Chin State, would be considered affiliates of the junta and would face repercussions.



Junta chief Min Aung Hlaing. Photo: AFP

JOINT ANTI-SHAM ELECTION COMMITTEE CONDEMNS MYANMAR JUNTA'S FRAUDULENT INVITATION FOR POLITICAL TALKS

On 1 October 2024, the Joint Anti-Sham Election Working Committee of the National Unity Government (NUG) and the National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC) of Myanmar released a statement addressing the fraudulent invitation of the illegal military junta to hold political talks.

1. We strongly condemn the fraudulent invitation of the military junta with the title of "Offer to resolve political issues by political means".

2. The invitation by the military junta was an ineffectual effort to divide ethnic resistance organizations and People's Defense Forces (PDFs) in order to satisfy foreign organizations, which they maintain close relations with. We encourage revolutionary forces to be extremely cautious about this military junta's attempt to undermine our solidarity.

3. To achieve their objectives, different generations of military dictators have used titles such as "exchanging weapons for peace" and "choosing the legal path by ending the armed path", etc. This fraudulent invitation is simply a meaningless action while the military junta continues their brutalities, such as announcing revolutionary resistance forces as terrorist organisations, air strikes on cities, burning down villages, arbitrarily arresting people, and killings.

4. The military junta constantly avoids admitting their atrocities and instead choose sham elections or fraudulent peace talks when faced with international or internal demands. Those efforts perpetuate the cycle of dictatorship rather than bringing about genuine peace.

5. The military junta is an illegal junta that seized power by violating the 2008 Constitution, and they are not authorized to organize elections or to dissolve or reorganize the election commission.

6. According to the Federal Democracy Charter, the National Unity Government (NUG) and National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC) are implementing the 12-point political roadmap toward the elimination of dictatorship and building a federal democratic union.

7. Since the start of the attempted coup, the 2008 Constitution has been dissolved through the power of revolutionary forces and the people of Myanmar. Therefore, we will not accept any political paths which are based on the 2008 Constitution, including the planned census process of the military and the sham election.



EU AND ASEAN DISCUSS EFFORTS TO BOOST INVESTMENTS AND BUSINESSES PARTICIPATION IN THE GREEN TRANSITION

EU-ASEAN businesses and cooperation agencies discussed the opportunities and challenges of ASEAN's green transition in the Partners' Dialogue forum with the Delegation of the European Union to ASEAN, according to a press release 1 October.

Hosted by the Ambassador of the European Union (EU), Sujiro Seam, representatives of EU-ASEAN institutions, Member States, businesses, and cooperation agencies engaged in a knowledge and experience sharing on ASEAN's green transition and the transformative impact of the Global Gateway strategy.

Launched in 2021, the Global Gateway strategy is the EU's strategy to boost infrastructure investments in five key areas: digitalisation, energy, transport, health, as well as education and research. It aims to support the green and digital transitions around the world and to tackle global challenges such as climate change, global health security, sustainable development and stronger supply chains.

Global Gateway has the ambition to mobilise EUR 300 billion worldwide, building on commitments from all Team Europe partners - European Union, its member states, and finance institutions- and from the private sector.

"This year, we launched a EUR 60 million package of new connectivity projects to support the enabling environment for quality and sustainable investments in the region. Under the umbrella of this package

contributing to the Global Gateway in ASEAN, we have new projects planned or starting in areas such as investment, trade, higher education, transport, energy connectivity and digitalization," said Sujiro Seam, EU Ambassador to ASEAN.

"The EU has always recognised the importance of our partnership with the private sector. The EU and ASEAN are currently each other's 3rd largest trading partners, and the EU is also the 3rd external provider of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to the ASEAN region," Ambassador Seam added.

"The European Investment Bank plays a pivotal role in supporting ASEAN's green transition. Through the Global Gateway strategy, the EIB reaffirms its commitment to financing sustainable infrastructure projects that drive digitalisation, energy efficiency, and resilient transport systems. Our investments are designed to not only tackle climate change but also to stimulate economic growth and innovation across the region. By leveraging our financial expertise and resources, the EIB is dedicated to building a sustainable, more connected, and prosperous future for ASEAN," Sunita Lukkhoo, Head of the European Investment Bank (EIB) regional representation for Southeast Asia and Pacific said.

Global Gateway flagship projects involve most of the countries in the ASEAN region.

The main priorities of the projects totaling Euro 300 billion in the period 2021-27 include as follows:

Policy dialogue on common priorities, including new EU-ASEAN dialogue on energy;

Regional Team Europe Initiatives (TEIs) on the green transition and sustainable connectivity and bilateral initiatives such as the Philippines Green Economy TEIs and Digital Economy Package;

Mobilisation of investments through the European Fund for Sustainable Development+ and the ASEAN Catalytic Green Finance Facility;

Global Gateway flagship investments from EU Member States such as Hydro Mekong (France) and the Hydropower reservoir operation in the Red-Thai Binh river basin in Vietnam (Italy)

Transnational research and innovation partnerships under Horizon Europe;

Students and university exchanges through Erasmus scholarships and higher education programmes;

Just Energy Transition Partnerships with Indonesia and Vietnam Bilateral and regional agreements, including EU-ASEAN Comprehensive; and the Air Transport Agreement and EU- Singapore Digital Partnership

Just Energy Transition Partnerships have been developed in Vietnam and Indonesia.

Leaders from Vietnam and the International Partners Group (IPG), including the EU, UK, France, Germany, US, Italy, Canada, Japan, Norway and Denmark have agreed a Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP).

The Partnership, co-led by the EU and UK, will support Vietnam to deliver on its ambitious Net Zero 2050 goal, accelerate the peaking of its greenhouse gas emissions and transition away from fossil fuels to clean energy.

The JETP will mobilise an initial US\$15.5 billion of public and private finance over the next three to five years to support Vietnam's green transition.

In Indonesia, the EU, its Member States, namely Denmark, France, Italy and Germany, and the European Investment Bank are a key contributor to the JETP. Together, they have pledged EUR 3.4 billion to support the decarbonisation of the power sector as part of the overall US\$20 billion public and private JETP pledge.

In November 2023, the Comprehensive Investment and Policy Plan (CIPP) was launched in Jakarta, a significant Global Gateway milestone highlighting the path forward for the energy transition in Indonesia.



The Delegation of the European Union to ASEAN.

Tehran. Photo: Alireza Heydarifarid

IRAN SAYS ITS ALLIES 'WILL NOT BACK DOWN' IN WAR WITH ISRAEL

Iran's supreme leader vowed in a rare address last Friday that his allies around the region would keep fighting Israel, as he defended his country's missile strike on its foe.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's address in Tehran followed Iran's second-ever direct attack on Israel. It was also the first since exchanges of fire between Tehran-backed Hezbollah fighters and Israeli troops escalated into full-blown war in Lebanon.

Speaking ahead of the first anniversary of Hamas's October 7 attack on Israel that triggered the ongoing war in the Gaza Strip, Khamenei defended the Palestinian group's 'logical and legal' actions and hailed its "fierce defence" against Israeli forces.

The unprecedented Hamas attack resulted in the deaths of 1,205 people, triggering global condemnation but also supporting fire from Iran-backed groups around the Middle East, mainly Lebanon's Hezbollah and Yemen's Huthi rebels.

Hezbollah on Friday said it clashed again with Israeli troops on the Lebanese border.

Early Saturday, AFP correspondents in the Lebanese capital heard two explosions and saw smoke rising over Beirut's southern suburbs, after Israeli army Arabic-language spokesperson Avichay Adraee warned residents in part of the area's Burj al-Barajneh neighbourhood to evacuate.

In Jordan and Bahrain, which both have ties with Israel, crowds gathered after Friday prayers in a show

of support for Hamas and Hezbollah.

In Amman, demonstrators carried posters hailing the "glory and dignity" of the October 7 attack.

Nearly a year into the Gaza war, Israel has shifted its focus north, aiming to allow tens of thousands of Israelis displaced by cross-border Hezbollah rocket attacks to return home.

Israel's military launched an intensified wave of strikes on Hezbollah strongholds around Lebanon, killing more than 1,110 people since September 23, and forcing hundreds of thousands to flee their homes in a country already mired in economic crisis.

The attacks have killed an Iranian general, a host of Hezbollah commanders and, in the biggest blow to the group in decades, its leader, Hassan Nasrallah.

Strikes in Yemen

"The resistance in the region will not back down with these martyrdoms, and will win," Khamenei said in Arabic.

He charged that Israel was a "malicious regime" that would "not last long".

There was no immediate response from Israeli leaders as much of the country celebrated the Jewish new year.

Khamenei's address came as Israel weighs retaliation for Iran's missile attack on Tuesday, which Tehran called revenge for the killing of Nasrallah and other top figures.

One person was reported killed in the Iranian barrage.

Satellite pictures of Nevatim air base in southern Israel showed apparent damage to a structure on Wednesday, compared with a photo taken on August 3.

United States President Joe Biden, whose country is Israel's biggest military supplier, on Friday urged Israel against striking Iran's oil facilities, a day after he said Washington was "discussing" the possibility of such strikes.

But Republican White House hopeful Donald Trump said the same day he believed Israel should "hit" Iran's nuclear sites.

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi visited Beirut and said his government backs "the efforts for a ceasefire" that would be acceptable to Hezbollah and come "simultaneously with a ceasefire in Gaza".

Biden said the US was working to "rally the rest of the world and our allies" to prevent the fighting from spreading even further.

The US military on Friday said it struck 15 targets in areas of Yemen controlled by Huthi rebels, who have fired missiles at Israel and repeatedly attacked global shipping in the Red Sea.

US, Qatari and Egyptian mediators tried unsuccessfully for months to reach a Gaza truce and secure the release of hostages still held by Hamas.

Border crossing closed

In Beirut, 35-year-old displaced nurse Fatima Salah said people were "scared for our children, and this war is going to be long".

Sina Toossi, a senior fellow at the Center for International Policy in Washington, told AFP: "Everything right now hinges on Israel's response, whether it escalates into a regional war."

In Lebanon, Israeli bombardment has put at least four hospitals out of service, and on Friday, a first delivery of medical aid organised by the United Nations reached Beirut airport.

Lebanon said an Israeli strike on Friday cut off the main international road to Syria, with Israel saying it aimed to prevent the flow of weapons.

Lebanon's disaster management unit said more than 374,000 people -- most of them refugees from Syria's war -- crossed back into the relative safety of their home country in the final week of September.

In Hezbollah's bastion in Beirut's southern suburbs, US and Israeli media reports said intense bombardment

had targeted the militant group's potential successor, Hashem Safieddine, a week after Nasrallah's killing.

The Israeli military has not commented on that strike.

'Scandalous'

Israel announced last week that its troops had started ground raids into parts of southern Lebanon, a Hezbollah stronghold.

On the Israel-Lebanon border, the Israeli military said its forces had killed 250 Hezbollah fighters this week and hit 'over 2,000 military targets.'

Hezbollah on Friday said its fighters again clashed with Israeli soldiers during 'infiltration' attempts.

The group also said it kept up its rocket fire, and Israel's military reported about 200 projectiles fired into Israel on Friday.

The Islamic Health Committee, a Hezbollah-affiliated emergency service, reported that 11 of its personnel were killed Friday by Israeli strikes in southern Lebanon.

The Israeli military said nine soldiers have been killed in combat in Lebanon.

Separately, a drone launched "from the east" killed two Israeli troops, the army said Friday. An Israeli public broadcaster said the strike originated in Iraq.

In the Israeli-occupied West Bank, which has endured intense military raids throughout the Gaza war, the Palestinian health ministry said an air strike killed 18 people in the Tulkarem refugee camp.

Germany described as "shocking" the number of civilian casualties, and the United Nations rights office called the strike "unlawful". Israel said it had targeted a local Hamas leader.

In Gaza, Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed at least 41,802 people, the majority of them civilians, according to figures provided by the Hamas-run territory's health ministry. The United Nations has described the figures as reliable.

An official with medical charity Doctors Without Borders (MSF) told AFP life was becoming "impossible" in Gaza, urging greater humanitarian efforts.

In a separate statement, MSF denounced the "scandalous inaction and duplicity" of the international community.

AFP



Julian Assange and his wife at the hearing. Photo: AFP

JULIAN ASSANGE SAYS 'PLEADED GUILTY TO JOURNALISM' TO GAIN FREEDOM

Wikileaks founder Julian Assange said on Tuesday last week he was released after years of incarceration only because he pleaded guilty to doing "journalism", warning freedom of expression was now at a "dark crossroads".

"I am not free today because the system worked. I am free today after years of incarceration because I pleaded guilty to journalism," Assange said.

He was addressing the Council of Europe rights body at its Strasbourg headquarters in his first public comments since his release.

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) had issued a report expressing alarm at Assange's treatment, saying it had a "chilling effect on human rights".

Assange spent most of the last 14 years either holed up in the Ecuadoran embassy in London to avoid arrest, or locked up at Belmarsh Prison.

He was released under a plea bargain in June, after serving a sentence for publishing hundreds of thousands of confidential US government documents.

The trove included searingly frank US State Department descriptions of foreign leaders, accounts of extrajudicial killings and intelligence gathering against allies.

Assange returned to Australia and since then had not publicly commented on his legal woes or his years behind bars.

Facing a potential 175-year sentence, "I eventually chose freedom over unrealisable justice... Justice for me is now precluded," Assange said, referring to the conditions of his plea bargain.

Speaking calmly and flanked by his wife Stella, who fought for his release, he added: "Journalism is not a crime, it is a pillar of a free and informed society."

"The fundamental issue is simple. Journalists should not be prosecuted for doing their jobs," said Assange.

'More impunity, more secrecy'

The Wikileaks chief said that he could have lost years more of his life had he tried to fight his case all the way.

"Perhaps, ultimately, if it had gotten to the Supreme Court of the United States and I was still alive... I might have won," Assange said.

"But in the meantime I had lost 14 years under house arrest, embassy, siege, and maximum security prison."

"Ground has been lost" during his incarceration, Assange said, regretting that he now sees "more impunity, more secrecy and more retaliation for telling the truth."

"Freedom of expression and all that flows from it is at a dark crossroads," he told the hearing of the PACE legal committee.

"Let us all commit to doing our part to ensure the light of freedom never dims and the pursuit of truth will live on and the voices of many are not silenced by the interests of the few," he said.

Pardon campaign

Assange was still visibly affected by his experiences, tiring towards the end of the session even as he thanked "all the people who have fought for my liberation".

"It was truly exceptional that he came here today... He needs time to be able to recover," Stella Assange told reporters after the committee hearing.

"He's only been free for a few weeks and we're really just in the process of starting from zero, or from less than zero," she added.

Asked what the next moves for Wikileaks might be, the site's editor-in-chief Kristin Hrafnsson told reporters Assange was "committed as ever to the basic principles that he's always abided by -- transparency, justice, quality journalism".

Assange's case remains deeply contentious.

Supporters hail him as a champion of free speech and say he was persecuted by authorities and unfairly imprisoned.

Detractors see him as a reckless blogger whose uncensored publication of ultra-sensitive documents put lives at risk and jeopardised US security.

Assange is still campaigning for a US presidential pardon for his conviction under the Espionage Act.

US President Joe Biden, who is likely to issue some pardons before leaving office next January, has previously described him as a "terrorist".

But Chelsea Manning, the army intelligence analyst who leaked documents to Assange, had her 35-year sentence commuted by President Barack Obama in 2017.

Assange's timing and his choice of venue for his first post-release appearance have puzzled some observers.

The Council of Europe brings together the 46 signatory states of the European Convention on Human Rights, with little say over Assange's legal fate.

Holly Cullen, a law professor at the University of Western Australia, told AFP ahead of the hearing that in criticising the United States, Assange might "need to be a bit more restrained until the pardon issue is resolved".

AFP



Some of the elephants at the sanctuary. Photo: AFP

ELEPHANTS EVACUATED, TWO DIE, IN FLOODS IN NORTHERN THAILAND

More than 100 elephants in Chiang Mai in northern Thailand have been moved to higher ground to escape rapidly rising flood waters, local media reported, but many other animals were still stuck as their sanctuary struggled to evacuate them on Friday last week before they were rescued. Two elephants were reported dead on the weekend.

Saengduean Chailert, director of the Elephant Nature Park in Chiang Mai province, had posted a video of the panic-stricken elephants splashing through muddy waters and asked the government to send "urgent help".

"The water is flooding worse than before. The entire area is flooded. The whole village is flooded... Right now, we have nowhere to go," she wrote on social media last week.

Photos and videos showed brown water rushing through the Elephant Nature Park as staff and volunteers carried dogs in blankets and placed cages on rubber tyres to transport animals to safety.

The park falls under the remit of the Save the Elephant Foundation, one of Thailand's biggest elephant conservation NGOs.

One of the foundation's officers told AFP that aside from 126 elephants, there were around 5,000 animals - including dogs, cats, cows, pigs and rabbits - stuck in the floods.

Local media reported that more than 100 staff and volunteers were able to safely transport 117 of the elephants to higher ground.

Major inundations have struck parts of northern Thailand as recent heavy downpours caused the Ping River to reach "critical" levels on Thursday, according to the district office.

Thailand's northern provinces have been hit by large floods since Typhoon Yagi struck the region in early September, with one district reporting its worst inundations in 80 years.

Thai Elephant Alliance says there are around 3,800 captive elephants in the country, and there are more than 4,000 individuals living in the wild, according to the Thailand Environment Institute.

The Asian elephant is classified as endangered by the IUCN, and contact and conflict between humans and the species is common in Thailand.

AFP

US SAYS WEIGHING BIG CHANGES AT GOOGLE, INCLUDING BREAKUP

The US Department of Justice on Tuesday said it would demand that Google make profound changes to how it does business and even consider the possibility of a breakup, after the tech juggernaut was found to be running an illegal monopoly.

Determining how to address Google's wrongs is the next stage of a landmark antitrust trial that saw the company in August judged a monopolist by US District Court Judge Amit Mehta.

An order to break up Google or require deep changes on how it does business marks a profound change by the US government's competition enforcers that have largely left tech giants alone since failing to break up Microsoft two decades ago.

Google dismissed the idea as "radical."

The government told the judge in a court filing that it was considering options that included "structural" changes which could see them asking for a divestment of its smartphone Android operating system or its Chrome browser.

The Department of Justice also said it could ask for the prohibition of Google's default agreements with third parties that sees it pay tens of billions of dollars every year to Apple.

Requiring Google to make its search data available to rivals was also on the table, it said.

This case, focusing on Google's search engine dominance, is part of a broader legal offensive against the company's alleged antitrust violations in the US.

Google faces additional challenges from the DOJ regarding its advertising technology and recently lost a jury trial to Fortnite-maker Epic Games over its Google Play store practices.

The DOJ's remedy proposals are part of a "high-level framework" outlining how it envisions implementing the court's verdict.

A more detailed request will be submitted in November, followed by arguments from both sides in a special hearing scheduled for April.

Google, in a blog post, criticized the government's proposed remedies as "radical" and expressed concern that the DOJ's requests "go far beyond the specific legal issues in this case."

Regardless of Judge Mehta's eventual decision, Google is expected to appeal, potentially prolonging the process for years and possibly reaching the US Supreme Court.

The trial, which concluded last year, scrutinized Google's confidential agreements with smartphone manufacturers, including Apple.

These deals involve substantial payments to secure Google's search engine as the default option on browsers, iPhones, and other devices.

The judge determined that this arrangement provided Google with unparalleled access to user data, enabling it to develop its search engine into a globally dominant platform.

From this position, Google expanded its tech empire to include the Chrome browser, Maps, and the Android smartphone operating system.

According to the judgment, Google controlled 90 percent of the US online search market in 2020, with an even higher 95 percent share on mobile devices.

AFP



Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba.
Photo: AFP

JAPAN PM TO DISSOLVE PARLIAMENT FOR 'HONEYMOON' SNAP ELECTION

Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba was set to dissolve parliament on Wednesday ahead of October 27 snap elections, banking on his political honeymoon and a fragmented opposition to lead his scandal-tainted party to victory.

Ishiba's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) has governed Japan almost uninterrupted for decades -- albeit with frequent leader changes -- and is almost certain to be re-elected.

But Ishiba, named prime minister just last week, wants to shore up his mandate to push through policies that include beefing up spending on defence as well as on poorer regions hit hard by Japan's demographic crisis.

On Wednesday, his new cabinet approved the dissolving of parliament, local media said, which was due to take place in the afternoon.

The three-year government of Ishiba's predecessor Fumio Kishida suffered record-low approval ratings due to a slush fund scandal and voter discontent over rising prices.

Polls last week gave Ishiba's cabinet approval ratings of 45-50 percent compared with 20-30 percent for the Kishida administration's final month.

Ishiba's backers hope the self-confessed defence "geek" and outspoken critic of the LDP establishment will boost the party's popularity, including by persuading young people to vote.

By dissolving parliament now, the 67-year-old wants to put his party to the test before his "honeymoon" period ends, said Yu Uchiyama, a political science professor at the University of Tokyo.

"It makes sense that he wanted to call a snap election as soon as the 'face' of the party changed, while the momentum is still there", he told AFP.

Uchiyama added that Ishiba also wanted to catch opposition forces flat-footed as the LDP's foes remain undecided about how to coordinate with each other in the election.

But the prime minister's decision to call a snap election this early was also criticised for contradicting his previous vows to prioritise facing the opposition at parliament.

Some voters saw it as a disappointing sign that he had "yielded to the pressure within his party" to dissolve parliament for political gain, Uchiyama said.

Over the weekend, Ishiba announced that the LDP would not endorse some disgraced party members implicated in the political funding scandal in the election.

The announcement reflected his desire to demonstrate to the public that he can be "strict" and "likely regained public trust in him a bit", Uchiyama said.

Fresh promises

To counter China, Ishiba has backed the creation of a regional military alliance along the lines of NATO, although he admitted on Monday it would "not happen overnight".

He said the security environment in Asia was "the most severe since the end of World War II", and warned in his first policy speech Friday that "today's Ukraine could be tomorrow's East Asia".

Japan is also facing a looming demographic crisis as its population ages and the birth rate stays stubbornly low -- a situation Ishiba called a "quiet emergency" on Friday.

He said his government would promote measures to support families such as flexible working hours.

Ishiba has also pledged to "ensure Japan's economy emerges from deflation", and wants to boost incomes through a new stimulus package as well as support for local governments and low-income households.

The main opposition Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan, meanwhile, seeks to differentiate itself from the LDP on a range of diversity issues, including vowing to legalise same-sex marriages.

It also pledges to allow married couples to maintain separate surnames.

AFP



NAVIGATING A MINE FIELD

"Compassion is such a key value in the meditative practice, and it's a benefit that comes from the practice," Yeshua Moser-Puangsuan told Insight Myanmar Podcast. "The development of compassion by seeing deeply into your own experience, which is the human experience, leads to very deep compassion for the suffering of others. For any real social change to occur, it has to come out of that space of acknowledging our shared human predicament, and that's what gives me the strength to continue doing what I do; just the compassion that's developed. If I didn't do the meditation practice, I probably would have burned out as an activist a long time ago! Also, I don't use anger as my motivation. Anger burns up its own supports. A lot of activists run on anger, and they can only run for so long. Most of the people who were activists when I first became an activist, are no longer activists. They burned out long time ago. Compassion is what keeps me doing my activism."

Yeshua began his meditation practice at the Insight Meditation Society in Barre, Massachusetts. He participated in a three-month meditation retreat there, where he learned from teachers in the Mahasi tradition. This experience led him to visit the Mahasi Center in Burma in the early 1980s. Since then, he has maintained a regular meditation practice, spending about a month or more in intensive meditation practice each year. Aside from his role as a yogi, Yeshua is also an ardent champion of human rights and peace. Since 1995, he has worked for the International Campaign to Ban Landmine; in 1997, this campaign won the Nobel Peace Prize. With some 30 years as an committed

activist, Yeshua brings much-needed insight to the question of how to stay engaged without burning out. His secret? Bury anger, and feed compassion.

Indeed, there are few issues more challenging to maintaining a clear mind and balanced emotions than landmines, and Yeshua is one the world's foremost experts. He notes that despite the increased awareness of landmine harm, and the important 1997 Ottawa Treaty banning anti-personnel mines—credited largely to the passionate advocacy of Lady Diana—landmines are far from a relic of the past. And it is a trauma that has long haunted Myanmar. "I applied to be a researcher on Myanmar because I could see that landmines were causing an enormous amount of suffering around the country. A soldier or a combatant uses a mine for a certain military purpose on a certain day, and then it gets left behind," he explains. "By and large, it's going to be stepped on by a civilian later on. So this is something that is essentially a suicidal policy!"

Yeshua highlights the tragic irony that many landmine victims suffer grievous injuries from mines laid by forces that are ostensibly fighting for their cause. "From a humanitarian point of view, that's a violation of international humanitarian law to use these things, because they're indiscriminate; they cannot distinguish between a civilian and a combatant," he says. "It's a clear form of senseless violence, and it can stop today, if anyone wants to do it! They don't need landmines today, and that would be an act of peace if they [banned them outright]. It couldn't be seen as supporting one side and being against another side to do this, because it affects all sides equally. It is a way to reengage with the conflict and say, 'Hey, think about this. This is not something you have to do. You're creating suffering for your own people.' If I was talking to a group like the Karen National Liberation Army, I'd say 'Who's your enemy?"

Burmans? Are you laying landmines on Burman land? No! You're laying them in Karen state. Who are the victims of this going to be of this suicidal policy?"

CATCH THE INSIGHT MYANMAR PODCAST

Read more or catch the Insight Myanmar Podcast here:

<https://insightmyanmar.org/complete-shows/2024/9/4/episode-267-navigating-a-mine-field>

ASEAN SUMMIT: MYANMAR ATTENDS FOR FIRST TIME IN THREE YEARS AMID ONGOING CRISIS

In a significant shift, Myanmar sent a representative to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) summit in Laos (Oct 8-11), marking its first attendance in three years, according to regional news reports.

A senior foreign ministry official will represent Myanmar at the three-day meeting in Vientiane, Laos.

The move comes as Myanmar's ruling junta grapples with an ongoing civil war and mounting pressure from the international community. ASEAN leaders are expected to prioritize discussions on the Myanmar conflict, which has claimed thousands of lives and displaced millions since the 2021 military coup.

This development follows the junta's recent invitation to its opponents for peace talks.

The bloc had previously barred Myanmar's junta leaders from summits, citing their failure to implement the peace roadmap "five-point consensus" plan previously agreed upon.

While ASEAN's efforts to resolve the crisis have yielded limited results, some member states are pushing for more decisive action. Thailand's Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra emphasized ASEAN's crucial role in restoring peace to Myanmar, calling for swift diplomatic intervention.

As the summit unfolds, participants will also address other regional issues, including tensions in the South China Sea.



MYANMAR JUNTA'S DIPLOMATS ATTEND CHINA'S 75TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS AMID GROWING TIES

Myanmar's consul-general recently participated in events celebrating the 75th Anniversary of the Founding of the People's Republic of China in Kunming and Chongqing, highlighting the ongoing diplomatic relations between the two nations, the junta-controlled newspaper The Global New Light of Myanmar reported on October 4.

Consul-General Thwin Htet Lin attended the celebration in Kunming, Yunnan Province on October 1, joined by high-ranking Chinese officials including Wang Yubo, Deputy Secretary of the CPC Yunnan Provincial Committee and Governor of Yunnan Province. Meanwhile, Consul-General Kyaw Zeyar Linn was present at a similar event in Chongqing.

These diplomatic engagements come at a time of increasing Chinese influence in Myanmar. Since the military takeover in 2021, China has maintained economic ties with Myanmar, becoming a crucial trading partner and investor.

China's growing presence in Myanmar extends beyond economic interests, with Beijing playing a significant role in regional peace negotiations and infrastructure projects under its Belt and Road Initiative.



The late Dr Zaw Myint Maung.

SOCIAL MEDIA MOURNS DR. ZAW MYINT MAUNG: MYANMAR DEMOCRACY ICON'S DEATH SPARKS OUTPOURING OF TRIBUTES

Just-released former Mandalay Region Chief Minister Dr Zaw Myint Maung (medical doctor), a prominent figure in Myanmar's pro-democracy movement and trusted confidant of imprisoned leader Aung San Suu Kyi, passed away on October 7. His death was met with widespread sorrow among the general public and activists alike.

At the time of his death, he was 73 years old. Throughout his life, Dr. Zaw Myint Maung had been an unwavering advocate for democratic reforms in Myanmar, dedicating decades to the cause of bringing about political change in Myanmar.

Prominent activist Tayzar San wrote on his Facebook, "Dr. Zaw was a prominent figure who was continuously imprisoned for nearly 20 years, from 1990 to 2009 (due to his political activities). He was a physician who graduated from Mandalay Medical University and a political prisoner with a remarkable history of resilience during his time in prison. He was also an elected representative in the 1990 election."

"For me, who has been deeply interested in national affairs and politics since my university days, he is a respectable figure who "responded without submitting" to the dictatorship.

After 2015, I have had both agreements and disagreements with his political views. Regardless, he remains a person I greatly respect," he wrote.

A Yangon resident wrote on Facebook: "During the NLD's administration, I was deeply impressed by his management and the orderly beauty of the area around the Mandalay moat, the Mandalay Palace walls, and the city of Mandalay itself. As someone from Yangon, I admired Mandalay city so much that I even daydreamed about moving to Mandalay when I get older. I had such respect and admiration for it. But now... everything seems like a dream. The losses under the military council's rule are immense."

MYANMAR'S NUG CONDEMNS JUNTA'S "FRAUDULENT" PEACE OFFER

Myanmar's National Unity Government (NUG) and National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC) have strongly condemned a recent invitation by the country's military junta to "resolve political issues through political means," according to the statement of NUG and NUCC, published on NUG's official Facebook page.

Recently, the military junta issued a call to ethnic armed organizations and what they termed "terrorist insurgent groups" to engage in dialogue, saying, "to communicate with us to solve political problems politically".

In the statement, the exiled opposition groups described the junta's offer as a "fraudulent invitation" aimed at dividing ethnic resistance organizations and People's Defense Forces (PDF). They warned resistance forces to be cautious of the junta's attempt to undermine solidarity.

The statement highlighted the junta's ongoing brutalities, including airstrikes on towns, village burnings, arbitrary arrests, and killings, calling the peace offer "meaningless" in light of these junta actions.

The NUG and NUCC reiterated that the military junta, which seized power in violation of the 2008 constitution, lacks the authority to organize elections or restructure the election commission.

They emphasized their commitment to a 12-point political roadmap outlined in the Federal Democracy Charter, aimed at eliminating dictatorship and building a federal democratic union.

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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.