

ON THE GROUND IN MYANMAR

mizzima WEEKLY

Analysis & Insight



CHINA VISIT

Myanmar junta chief discusses civil war and border security with key ally China

mizzima WEEKLY

Analysis & Insight



DIGITAL MAGAZINE

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

MYANMAR JUNTA USES STARVATION AS 'WEAPON OF WAR'

The illegal Myanmar military junta has a number of powerful weapons of war including fighter jets, tanks and artillery. But one less obvious potential killer is control over food production and supply.

In a number of areas of Myanmar, agricultural production and food supply have been badly hit by a combination of junta "scorched earth" tactics and control over the roads, a situation recently compounded by monsoon flooding and Typhoon Yagi.

The situation is a particularly acute in Rakhine, Sagaing, Magway, and Chin states and regions. It negatively affects both residents and displaced people. On the latter, the United Nations has been warning for some time how close to three million people are displaced within the country and largely reliant on handouts. The troubled economy further compounds the situation.

The Myanmar junta's actions are nothing new, but the situation is arguably the worst it has ever been since the military grabbed power in 2021. Mizzima has highlighted the brutality of the junta – the air strikes, artillery strikes and the horrifying behaviour of troops, brutalizing civilians – but the deliberate targeting of agricultural production and food supply is a less obvious example of how they are trying to force people to their knees.

One particular state is in dire straits. As we report in this issue, the United Nations is reporting that Rakhine State's economy has stopped functioning, a crisis that could lead to famine conditions by mid-2025 if current levels of food insecurity are left unaddressed. In this region, about two million people are at risk of starvation, the UNDP predicts.

Amid the fighting roiling the country, international and domestic trade routes leading into the already impoverished state have been closed, leaving the

entrance of aid and goods severely restricted. In addition to intense fighting, people in Rakhine are facing absence of incomes, hyperinflation and significantly reduced domestic food production, the UNDP report warns.

Clashes have rocked western Rakhine since the Arakan Army (AA) attacked security forces in November 2023, ending a ceasefire that had largely held since the junta's 2021 coup.

With the farming economy in crisis, the UNDP predicted local food production would only cover 20 percent of the state's needs by March or April.

Internal rice production is plummeting, it said, due to a lack of seeds, fertilizers and severe weather conditions, notably storms, heavy winds and flooding. A "steep rise" in internally displaced people, meanwhile, means many fields are unable to be worked.

According to UN figures, Rakhine state recorded more than 500,000 displaced people in August, compared to just under 200,000 in October 2023. Facing particular risk are populations including members of the long-persecuted Rohingya Muslim minority and displaced people.

Similarly, the Sagaing region has been heavily targeted by the junta with attacks on civilians and the burning of crops, houses, and food stocks, leading many people to flee and left unable to tend to their crops. Many farmers typically live "on the brink" in this region, and the threats and instability have forced many people to live on handouts – or what little can be supplied by NGOs, given the road blocks and dangers that make it hard to deliver.

Given these developments, "starvation" could well prove to be the buzzword as Myanmar heads into 2025.

EDITORIAL

mizzima
WEEKLY

Managing Director and Editor In-Chief
Soe Myint

Managing Editor
Thaw Zin Tun

Network Engineer
Wai Min Han

Video and Graphics Editor
Wai Yan Shein Zaw

General Manager
No No Lin

Mizzima Weekly is published by
Mizzima s.r.o

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

Contact email:
sm@mizzima.com

Phone/Signal/WhatsApp
+420 608 616688

CONTENTS **mizzima** WEEKLY

Analysis & Insight

3 EDITORIAL

6 CHINA VISIT Myanmar junta chief discusses civil war and border security with key ally China

10 ON THE GROUND IN MYANMAR
Analysis & Insight

14 CORE DEVELOPMENTS
Famine looming in Myanmar's Rakhine State

15 UNDP calls for immediate removal of trade and aid restrictions in Rakhine State

17 Save the Children urges regional action as Rohingya refugee arrivals in Indonesia surge 700%

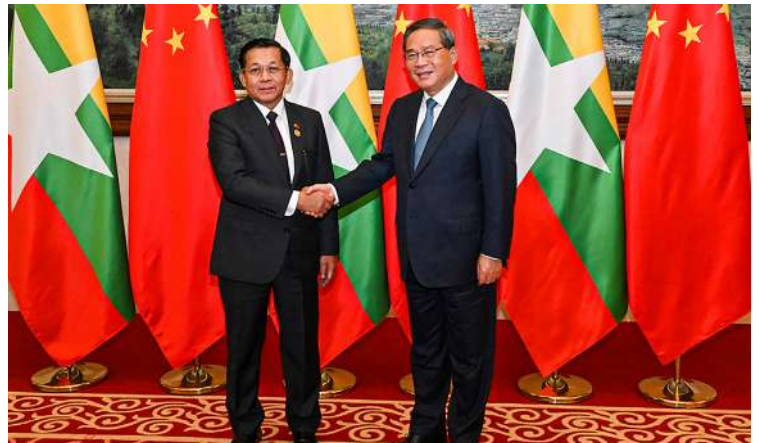
18 Arakan Army captures key military camps in Ann township amid intensified clashes

19 Myanmar moved up a level by the Financial Action Task Force

20 Inle Lake villages face renewed hardships as strong winds hit flood-affected areas in southern Shan State

21 Myanmar junta launches unprovoked airstrikes on townships in Sagaing Region, damaging homes and school buildings

22 Myanmar military airstrike on Pale Township village kills four, injures six



23 NGO Report says over 1 million affected as unsafe shelters increase risks for women and girls in Myanmar

24 NUG's Ministry of Education condemns killing of Kani Township education officer and family, vows to pursue justice

25 Myanmar Thingyan festival included in UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list

26 NUG minister states negotiations possible if military officials willing to accept political objectives for power transition

27 KNPP secretary declares junta crumbling under revolutionary pressure

28 Myanmar junta continues crackdown on illicit trading

29 MYANMAR JOURNALISM
Journalism under the junta in Myanmar

33 ASIAN & INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
Asia, the world's economic engine, prepares for Trump shock

35 Iran urges Trump to change 'maximum pressure' policy

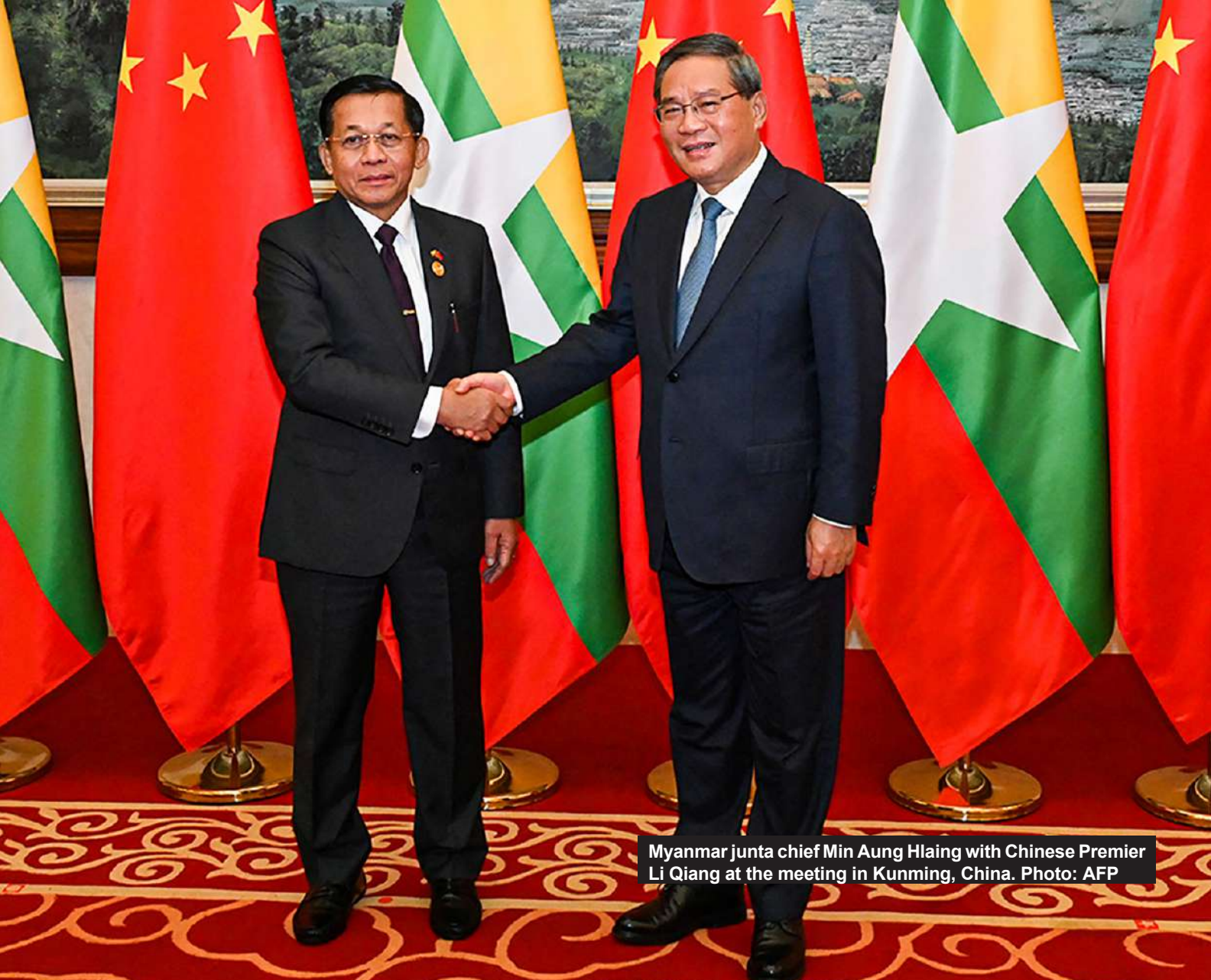
37 COLUMNS
INSIGHT MYANMAR –
Mindfulness from the ashes

38 JUNTA WATCH

39 SOCIAL WATCH

Cover photo of Myanmar junta leader Min Aung Hlaing by AFP





Myanmar junta chief Min Aung Hlaing with Chinese Premier Li Qiang at the meeting in Kunming, China. Photo: AFP

CHINA VISIT

**MYANMAR JUNTA CHIEF
DISCUSSES CIVIL WAR AND
BORDER SECURITY WITH
KEY ALLY CHINA**

Myanmar's embattled junta chief visited China last week during which he had the opportunity to discuss the civil war and border security with Chinese government representatives.

This was Min Aung Hlaing's first reported visit to China since leading a coup in 2021, but analysts said the invitation was only a lukewarm endorsement from his key ally and could backfire.

Min Aung Hlaing arrived in the southwestern city of Kunming on 5 November for a summit of the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) - a group including China, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia - that started the next day.

China has been supportive of the Myanmar junta. When the military ousted Aung San Suu Kyi's elected civilian government in 2021, Chinese state media refused to describe it as a coup, preferring "major cabinet reshuffle".

China has stood by the junta since, even as others shun and sanction the generals over their brutal crackdown on dissent which opponents say includes massacring of civilians, razing villages with air and artillery strikes.

EAGER FOR AN INVITATION

Richard Horsey, Crisis Group's senior Myanmar adviser, said Min Aung Hlaing had been lobbying for an official invitation ever since the coup, as a public show of support. But Beijing has stressed the regional focus of the Kunming gathering, saying it wanted to consult "all sides" against "a background of a weakening global recovery and geopolitical turbulence".

"While this (invitation to the summit) still implies recognition as head of state, it does not have the same diplomatic weight as a bilateral invitation to visit Beijing," Horsey said.

Min Aung Hlaing's trip came with the junta reeling from a devastating ethnic armed group offensive, Operation 1027, last year that seized an area roughly the size of Bosnia - much of it near the border with China.

Analysts say Beijing is worried about the possibility of the junta falling and is suspicious of Western influence among some of pro-democracy armed groups battling the military.



Myanmar junta chief Min Aung Hlaing meets with the Cambodian delegation at the Kunming meeting. Photo: AFP

MYANMAR IMPORTANT FOR CHINA

Myanmar is a vital part of Beijing's trillion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative, with railways and pipelines to link China's landlocked southwestern Yunnan Province to the Indian Ocean.

"Beijing has now made clear its intentions for the Myanmar military to succeed," said Jason Tower of the United States Institute of Peace.

China has been reluctant to give a clear show of official recognition since the coup, Crisis Group's Horsey said, but this may be changing.

"China has pivoted to greater support for the regime - not because it is better disposed with the regime or its leader, but out of concern at a disorderly collapse of power in Naypyidaw," he said.

But the relationship is wracked by longstanding mistrust.

The junta's top brass are wary of China, insiders say - stemming from Beijing's support for an insurgency waged by the Communist Party of Burma in the 1960s and 1970s.

China gave its tacit backing to last year's Three Brotherhood Alliance offensive Operation 1027, military supporters say, in return for the ethnic armed groups dismantling online scam compounds in territory they captured. Those compounds were run by and targeting Chinese citizens in a billion-dollar industry and major embarrassment for Beijing.

But the ethnic alliance pushed further and in August captured the city of Lashio - miles from the scam compound heartland and home to a regional military command. The fall of Lashio, home to around 150,000 people to the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) was a step too far for Beijing, said Tower.

China has since cut electricity, water and internet services to the MNDAA's traditional homeland on the border with Yunnan province, a source close to the group said.

NEW PROBLEMS?

A visit to China is "unlikely to resolve Min Aung Hlaing's internal troubles," said Tower. "If anything, it could create new problems, as the general is likely to be perceived as making major economic and geo-strategic concessions to Beijing in exchange for Chinese assistance."



The heads of delegations at the Mekong meeting. Photo: AFP

One demand from Beijing will be speeding up elections the junta has promised to hold, said Tower - polls China's foreign minister announced Beijing's backing for in August.

Opponents of the polls say they will be neither free nor fair while clashes continue across the country and with most of the popular political parties banned.

CHINESE PREMIER MEET

Myanmar's junta chief held talks in Kunming with Premier Li Qiang of key ally China on the civil war roiling his country, Myanmar state media said.

Min Aung Hlaing told Li at the meeting that the military was ready for peace if armed groups would engage, according to an account in the Global New Light of Myanmar (GNLM).

"The door of peace is always open if they genuinely want peace," Min Aung Hlaing told Li, according to the GNLM report. "The armed insurgents should do what needs to be done instead of giving priority to their needs and wishes."

China has been a major arms supplier to the junta and provided Myanmar with political backing even as other countries shun the generals over their brutal crackdown on dissent.

But Beijing is concerned about the chaos unfolding on its doorstep.

Min Aung Hlaing expressed his willingness to engage in peace talks with the Three Brotherhood Alliance - the Arakan Army (AA), Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), and Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) - during the meeting.

However, he stressed that such discussions would only proceed if the alliance demonstrated clear actions signifying their commitment to peace. The specifics of these required actions were not disclosed.

During the meeting, the junta chief underscored the importance of ensuring the safety and security of Chinese investments, citizens, and infrastructure projects in Myanmar. He also announced plans to

commence construction of the Muse-Mandalay-Kyaukphyu railway in regions where local conditions are favourable.

Chinese Premier Li Qiang, in turn, affirmed China's support for the junta's Five-Point Road Map and pledged assistance for the successful execution of military-led elections. He emphasized the importance of stability and peace in northern Myanmar, vowing that China would uphold Myanmar's sovereignty and territorial integrity while preventing any activities within China that might harm Myanmar's interests.

Li Qiang also confirmed that China and Myanmar would continue to jointly manage their border gates in close coordination.

China has currently restricted operations at border gates controlled by the MNDAA and TNLA in northern Shan State seized during the second phase of Operation 1027.

In its report of the Kunming meeting, on the sidelines of the regional summit, China's state news agency Xinhua said Li had stressed the need to ensure the safety of Chinese citizens and projects in Myanmar.

Last month, a blast targeted the Chinese consulate in Mandalay. There were no casualties but Beijing issued a furious rebuke.

Li did not explicitly back the junta's approach to the civil war, according to the Xinhua report. Instead, he told Min Aung Hlaing that China supported Myanmar in "advancing the political reconciliation and transformation".

Myanmar matters to China - given it provides a back door to the Indian Ocean, and given trade and border security issues. Beijing's invitation to Min Aung Hlaing to visit is of note. But there is also a sense that China uneasy about their relationship and wants to see an end to the Myanmar crisis as soon as possible.

Reporting: Mizzima, AFP



Myanmar military on the Asia Highway in Myanmar. Photo: AFP

MYANMAR JUNTA'S AUNG ZEYA OPERATION AROUND MYAWADDY INTENSIFIES

The Myanmar junta's Aung Zeya operation, aimed at reclaiming control over Myawaddy, a critical hub for Thai-Myanmar border trade, has intensified since September. This renewed offensive has seen a substantial influx of newly conscripted soldiers and has sparked fierce clashes with the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and its allied forces along the Asia Highway.

The fighting escalated dramatically on October 30, with both sides engaging in close-quarter combat along the strategic highway. A resistance fighter described the confrontation, stating, "We cleared the area and reached their [Aung Zeya] position, and the close fight broke out. They took significant casualties during the clash. We also lost three members and had another seven wounded." He added that, unable to make further advances, junta forces are now attempting to maneuver around the resistance stronghold by securing support along the highway's periphery.

On November 5, the conflict claimed an innocent life when a 12-year-old schoolboy was killed by a drone strike in Kawkareik. Junta troops reportedly launched the drone bomb near the town, which serves as the base for the No. (12) Military Operation Command Headquarters and is located at the foot of the Dawna Mountain range. Kawkareik has become a hotspot for daily gunfire and artillery exchanges, creating a climate of fear and uncertainty for residents. Despite the danger, many locals feel trapped, unable to flee due to financial constraints and the lack of a clear destination where they can seek refuge. They have reluctantly chosen to remain in town, hoping to endure the fighting unless the violence worsens.

The junta's progress in the Aung Zeya operation has been hindered by the strong resistance and difficult terrain. Analysts observe that the junta's reliance on newly-conscripted troops has led to significant casualties, slowing their advance. The



War-damaged village in Rakhine State.
Photo: AFP

situation underscores the challenges faced by the military in securing the border town, a crucial trade link between Myanmar and Thailand – important to both the Myanmar junta and Thai traders.

Conflict developments in Rakhine State

Rakhine State is witnessing a surge in violent conflict as the Arakan Army (AA) launches a sweeping offensive, capturing strategic military positions and forcing residents to flee. On November 4, the AA seized the position of the Air Defense Force regiment in Ann, one of the most crucial units within the Western Command Headquarters. With mounting pressure from the AA offensive, numerous outposts around the headquarters have fallen, leaving only four still under junta control.

The AA's campaign continued on November 6, with the capture of No. (371) Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) and an Ordnance Depot located within Ann's city area,

both critical to the defense of the Western Command. Although the AA has not officially announced these victories, local sources confirmed the seizures to regional news outlets. Including these recent conquests, the AA has reportedly overrun around ten regiments and battalions in Ann, forcing junta troops to regroup and prepare defenses within the headquarters. Many of the reinforcements—mainly newly-conscripted soldiers—have reportedly been killed in the ongoing battles. A local military analyst speculated that the AA's near-total control over the headquarters' supporting regiments could lead to a full assault on the Western Command Headquarters itself.

In Taungup, intense fighting rages across the Taunggok River, roughly two miles from town. The area hosts No. (5) Military Operation Command (MOC) along with two key battalions, No. (346) and No. (544) LIBs. After securing all surrounding outposts, the AA has begun advancing on the headquarters of these battalions. Residents report continuous artillery exchanges near the command posts, with gunfire



and explosions heard throughout the day. Amid the escalating violence, many locals are desperately attempting to flee the area. Junta forces positioned at Taungup's main bridge have set mines to sabotage the structure in the event of a retreat. On November 9, battles around the regiments intensified, with a continuous exchange of machine-gun fire from 1:00 pm to 7:00 pm, according to local witnesses.

In Gwa Township, the southernmost part of Rakhine State, AA forces have been systematically capturing junta outposts from north to south, forcing the junta troops to fall back toward Gwa town. The Southwest Command, based in the Ayeyarwaddy Region, has been compelled to oversee Gwa's defenses due to the Western Command's limited mobility and capacity.

Reports have emerged of Rohingya militias, reportedly wearing junta uniforms, participating in battles around Ann, including on strategic hills such as Metaung. These conscripted fighters, many of whom are young, were reportedly flown into the area before the AA's offensive intensified.

Throughout Rakhine State, AA forces have been actively targeting junta positions in nearly every township, except for Sittwe, the state capital, Kyaukphyu—home to a strategic Chinese deep-sea port project—and Manaung town. The recent escalation has left towns and villages on edge, with fears of further displacement and destruction as the conflict intensifies.

China's actions and statements regarding fighting in northern Myanmar

Myanmar's junta leader, Min Aung Hlaing, attended the 8th Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) Summit held in China, where he had a sideline meeting with Chinese Prime Minister Li Qiang. During the discussion, Min Aung Hlaing accused the Three Brotherhood Alliance—comprising the Ta'ang National Liberation

Army (TNLA), Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), and Arakan Army (AA)—of violating the Haigen Ceasefire Agreement by carrying out attacks in urban areas.

In response, Li Qiang emphasized China's desire for stability along the China-Myanmar border and reiterated support for the junta's five-point roadmap, including the upcoming general election. He also agreed with Min Aung Hlaing's call to curb illegal border trade that, according to the junta, benefits ethnic armed organizations (EAOs). Li assured Myanmar that China would assist in restoring full state control over border trade operations.

Currently, a majority of trade routes along the 1,300-mile border are controlled by ethnic armed groups such as the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) in Kachin State and TNLA, MNDAA, and the United Wa State Army (UWSA) in northern Shan State. The Muse border trade zone—the largest trade hub between Myanmar and China—remains the only crossing fully under junta control.

Li Qiang also affirmed that China would prevent any actions from within its territory that might undermine Myanmar's interests, a statement welcomed by the junta. Analysts view Min Aung Hlaing's participation in the summit as a diplomatic success, gaining regional nations backing for his administration amidst ongoing domestic conflict.

See lead story in Mizzima Weekly this week for more details.



Photo: AFP

FAMINE LOOMING IN MYANMAR'S RAKHINE STATE: UN

Myanmar's conflict-torn Rakhine state is heading toward famine, the United Nations warned on Thursday last week, as the country's civil war squeezes commerce and agricultural production.

"Rakhine's economy has stopped functioning," a new report from the UN Development Programme said, projecting "famine conditions by mid-2025" if current levels of food insecurity are left unaddressed.

Some two million people are at risk of starvation, it said.

Amid the fighting roiling the country, international and domestic trade routes leading into the already impoverished state have been closed, leaving the entrance of aid and goods severely restricted.

In addition to intense fighting, people in Rakhine are facing "absence of incomes, hyperinflation (and) significantly reduced domestic food production," the UNDP report warned.

Myanmar has been racked by conflict between the military and various armed groups opposed to its rule since the ruling junta ousted Aung San Suu Kyi's elected government in February 2021.

Clashes have rocked western Rakhine since the Arakan Army (AA) attacked security forces in November

2023, ending a ceasefire that had largely held since the junta's 2021 coup.

With the farming economy in crisis, the UNDP predicted local food production would only cover 20 percent of the state's needs by March or April.

Internal rice production is "plummeting," it said, due to "a lack of seeds, fertilizers (and) severe weather conditions."

Some 97,000 tons of rice are set to be cultivated in Rakhine this year, compared to 282,000 tons last year, according to the UNDP.

A "steep rise" in internally displaced people, meanwhile, means many fields are unable to be worked.

According to UN figures, Rakhine state recorded more than 500,000 displaced people in August, compared to just under 200,000 in October 2023.

Facing particular risk are populations including members of the long-persecuted Rohingya Muslim minority and displaced people.

AFP



IDPs take shelter in a temple in Rakhine State. Photo: AFP

UNDP CALLS FOR IMMEDIATE REMOVAL OF TRADE AND AID RESTRICTIONS IN RAKHINE STATE

A United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) analysis of the situation in Rakhine State released on 7 November called for the urgent removal trade and aid restrictions imposed by the junta in Rakhine State. If not removed, the possibility of a famine looms over Rakhine State.

The following is the UNDP analysis of the situation in Rakhine State.

Rakhine stands on the precipice of an unprecedented disaster. A perfect storm is brewing due to a chain of interlinked developments. With restrictions on goods entering Rakhine across international and domestic borders, absence of incomes, hyperinflation, significantly reduced domestic food production, and a lack of essential services and a social safety net, an already highly vulnerable population may be on the brink of collapse in the coming months.

Based on data collected by UNDP across Rakhine in 2023 and 2024, which includes direct data collection, interviews with key stakeholders (e.g., private sector, associations), surveys by civil society organizations, as well as other data regularly provided by the UN system, Rakhine's economy has stopped functioning, with critical sectors such as trade, agriculture, and construction nearly at a standstill.

People's incomes are collapsing because export-oriented, agro-based livelihoods in Rakhine are disappearing as the domestic and international markets are no longer accessible due to blockades. Additionally, the construction sector – a major employer – is shutting down as imports of cement from neighbouring countries have stopped, leading to an exorbitant price increase for this critical intermediate good.

Rakhine could face acute famine imminently. Predictions indicate that domestic food production will only cover 20% of its needs by March-April 2025. Internal rice production is plummeting due to a lack of seeds, fertilizers, severe weather conditions, a steep rise in the number of internally displaced people (IDPs) who can no longer engage in cultivation, and escalating conflict. This, along with the near-total cessation of internal and external trade, will leave over 2 million people at risk of starvation.

Since Myanmar's independence in 1948, Rakhine has ranked as the poorest or second-poorest state in the Union. Deepening inequalities and poverty, along with the absence of central government structures (while alternative Ethnic Organization Structures are still emerging), will further strain the already fragile state of social cohesion. Inter-communal relations in Rakhine had shown localized signs of improvement in the past two years. However, the recent escalation of manipulation of ethnicity along with the imminent economic catastrophe, will deepen marginalization, disenfranchisement, and ultimately put intercommunal relationships at even greater risk than ever before. As the crisis worsens, the lack of resources and opportunities will continue to fuel tensions and trigger a greater exodus of youth and families, with irregular migration (e.g., people without identity documentation and/or no SAC authorization to move within or outside Rakhine) expected to intensify. This would have repercussions both within Myanmar and beyond its borders, where this trend is already observable. Without safe avenues for escape, we anticipate an increase in human trafficking, particularly among the vulnerable Rohingya population. Under these anticipated conditions, the scenario of repatriating over a million Rohingya is simply inconceivable.

While the current restrictions put in place by the SAC are clearly aimed at isolating Rakhine from the rest of the country and exacting 'collective punishment' on an already vulnerable population, the potential continued upsurge in violence in Rakhine State poses serious challenges for neighbouring countries and for the region. Therefore, key stakeholders, particularly neighbouring countries, should consider adjusting their policies and initiatives taking into account international principles. This includes opening borders for trade and aid.

Without urgent action, 95% of the population will regress into survival mode, left to fend for themselves amid a drastic reduction in domestic production, skyrocketing prices, widespread unemployment, and heightened insecurity. With trade routes closed and severe restrictions on aid, Rakhine risks becoming a fully isolated zone of deep human suffering.

The following immediate steps should be taken:

- Goods must be allowed to enter Rakhine. All restrictions currently in place within Myanmar should be lifted, and all parties should ensure commercial goods can enter and exit Rakhine. Furthermore, opening the Bangladesh border for business-to-business channels directly with Rakhine would provide immediate supplies to local markets. The same applies to the Indian border, which is an unpredictable channel for items like rice seeds and fuel that support economic activities in central Rakhine.
- Aid to meet urgent critical needs and restore at least basic livelihoods must be provided without interference by any party to the conflict.
- Unimpeded access and safety for aid workers must be ensured by all parties.
- Sufficient financial resources to support agriculture sector recovery needs must be urgently made available to scale up assistance, over and above immediate life-saving needs.



Photo: AFP

SAVE THE CHILDREN URGES REGIONAL ACTION AS ROHINGYA REFUGEE ARRIVALS IN INDONESIA SURGE 700%

Save the Children reported on 6 November that at least 395 Rohingya refugees, including 173 children, reached Indonesia by boat in October. This is a significant increase compared to the 49 recorded during the same month in 2022, according to figures from UNHCR. The organisation predicts a rise in sea crossings to a new high in 2024.

The number of Rohingya refugees arriving in Indonesia by boat in October rose more than 700% compared to a year ago, said Save the Children, with boat journeys predicted to increase to record highs in coming months as monsoon winds drop and seas are calmer.

At least 395 Rohingya refugees, including 173 children, arrived in Indonesia by boat in October, compared with 49 recorded in the same month in 2023, according to figures from the UNHCR [1]. Three boats arrived in October, with the latest landing in Aceh on 31 October carrying 90 Rohingya refugees, including seven children. Six people are reported to have died, with bodies found on the shore and floating in the sea.

At least 221 Rohingya refugees have lost their lives or were reported missing at sea so far this year. Since February 2022, 985 people have died or gone missing

during boat journeys from Bangladesh or Myanmar [1].

One of the factors driving Rohingya people onto boats is deteriorating security in the refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. Children and their parents described rising violence in the camps in a series of interviews with Save the Children earlier this year [2], sharing their fears and experiences of kidnappings for ransom, abductions and the recruitment of children by Rohingya armed groups in Bangladesh.

For seven years, Rohingya refugee children in Bangladesh have gone without formal education, parents and caregivers don't have jobs, and all refugees have become more vulnerable to deaths and injuries from large-scale fires, flooding and landslides - and now violence and insecurity in the camps.

Those attempting sea journeys are at the mercy of traffickers and at risk of abuse at sea. Smugglers often use boats that are poorly equipped for the long sea journeys and often carry insufficient supplies of food and water which run out before they land.

Around 1,000 Rohingya refugees who arrived in Indonesia are still living in temporary shelters and camps [3]. Save the Children is supporting the Geutanyoe Foundation in Aceh to strengthen community awareness and local government support for Rohingya refugees.

Sultana Begum, Asia Head of humanitarian policy and advocacy for Save the Children, said:

"This staggering rise in Rohingya refugees arriving in Indonesia in the last month alone should be a wake-up call for the region. No child should have to endure weeks at sea in a flimsy boat. No child should have to put their life on the line.

"With predictions that the number of refugee boats will be at a record high this year, regional governments must act urgently. This is not the responsibility of Indonesia alone - all governments in the region must allow Rohingya refugee boats to land safely and honour their international obligations and commitments outlined in the Bali Declaration.

"It's time for a swift and unified regional effort to enhance cooperation, save lives at sea, guarantee safe disembarkation, and provide people with access to humanitarian aid and procedures to determine their refugee status. The needs of Rohingya refugees have never been greater - the international community must scale up their humanitarian and long term assistance."



IDPs cooking in the open in Rakhine State. Photo: AFP

ARAKAN ARMY CAPTURES KEY MILITARY CAMPS IN ANN TOWNSHIP AMID INTENSIFIED CLASHES

The Arakan Army (AA) seized the No. 757 Workshop Company and Combat Training School in Aut village, Ann Township, following the withdrawal of junta troops on 5 November. A junta lieutenant colonel, serving as a Quartermaster Staff Officer (Q1), was killed during clashes at Dai Gyi village near the Ann-Sittwe highway, according to military sources.

A source said, "The officer was struck by a sniper while leading resistance against the AA forces at Dai Gyi village, which is near the local golf course."

The battle reportedly continued until the evening of 6 November as retreating junta troops regrouped at the Light Infantry Battalion 371 (LIB 371) camp, where heavy fighting persisted. Regime forces, retreating from the Workshop Company and Combat Training School, fortified their positions at LIB 371, near Mawsisaing Hill.

Meanwhile, sources close to the military reported that the injured commander of LIB 372 and a General Staff Officer (G1) were evacuated by helicopter to Magway for medical treatment after sustaining injuries during clashes in October.

Elsewhere in Ann Township, junta troops stationed near Kan Date Mountain, close to Ann Airport, have reportedly relocated to the central outpost of a Battlefield Engineer (BE) battalion near the Pepadon

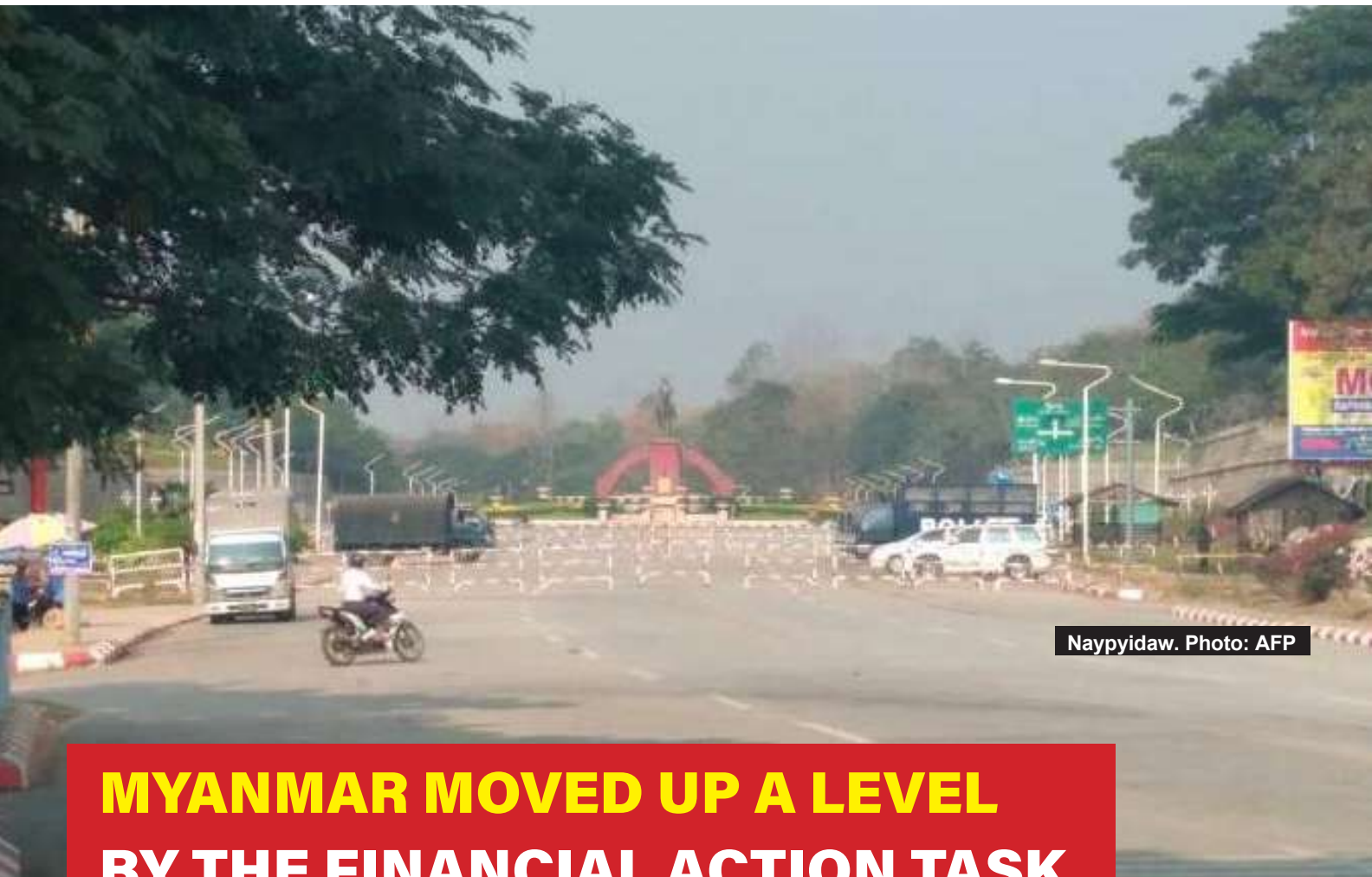
checkpoint on the Ann-Padan road. Fierce fighting was previously reported in the area, and defensive preparations are ongoing.

AA forces have also taken control of Taw Hein Taung and Me Taung strategic hills, crucial outer defensive positions of the Western Regional Military Command Headquarters. Clashes continue as the AA pushes to capture the remaining battalion camps under the Western Regional Military Command.

Ann Township, home to the Western Regional Military Command headquarters and over 10 battalion camps, has seen most of its military installations fall under the control of the Arakan Army, sources report.

Residents of Ann Township confirm the intensity of the ongoing conflict, which mirrors broader escalations across Rakhine State. The AA has attacked and seized key locations in at least 10 towns, with fierce battles currently unfolding near the Maungdaw-based No. 5 Border Guard Police Battalion and along the Gwa-Ayeyarwady border.

Mizzima attempted to contact the AA for comments regarding the battles and recent captures, but no response has been received at the time of publication.



Naypyidaw. Photo: AFP

MYANMAR MOVED UP A LEVEL BY THE FINANCIAL ACTION TASK FORCE

The Central Bank of Myanmar (CBM) announced to the public that according to a mutual evaluation by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), Myanmar's implementation of Anti-money Laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) has moved the country up a level by the FATF and the Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering (APG).

The FATF announced on 22 October 2022 that Myanmar was moved from the list of countries in the Jurisdictions Under Increased Monitoring category to the list of countries under the High-Risk Jurisdictions Subject to A Call for Action by the FATF.

The FATF announced in October 2022 that given the continued lack of progress by Myanmar and the majority of its action items still not addressed after a year beyond the action plan deadline, the FATF had decided that further action was necessary in line with its procedures. The FATF called on its members and other jurisdictions to apply enhanced due diligence measures proportionate to the risk arising from Myanmar. When applying enhanced due diligence


measures, countries should ensure that flows of funds for humanitarian assistance, legitimate NPO activity and remittances are not disrupted.

The CBM constituted a task force led by its governor for AML and CFT in 2022 to implement the recommendations presented by FATF.

The CBM submits progressive reports on implementation of those processes to the Asia Pacific Joint Group (APJG) once every four months. Myanmar representatives also attended a face-to-face meeting of the APJG and held discussions with the APJG, the CBM press statement says.

After a FATF plenary session held in Paris, the statement says that Myanmar implemented six recommendations out of a total seven so that it was promoted to Enhanced Due Diligence status.

After Myanmar was placed on a blacklist by the FATF along with North Korea and Iran, many foreign investors exited Myanmar and no new foreign investments came into the country.



Flooded house near Inle Lake in late September. Photo: AFP

INLE LAKE VILLAGES FACE RENEWED HARDSHIPS AS STRONG WINDS HIT FLOOD-AFFECTED AREAS IN SOUTHERN SHAN STATE

Homes in Myanmar's Inle Lake Wetland Sanctuary in southern Shan State, already affected by severe flooding due to Cyclone Yagi, suffered further damage from strong winds in recent days, creating an urgent need for rehabilitation support, according to local residents.

On the evening of 3 November, strong winds and rain impacted several villages in the western part of Nyaungshwe Township's Inle area, including Kan Hla village.

A local resident said, "Small huts were destroyed, and some larger homes had roofs blown off. The wind hasn't let up, and floodwaters still haven't fully receded."

About 40 homes were destroyed, forcing many residents to take shelter in nearby homes and monasteries.

Another local resident said, "We didn't receive sufficient support during the flooding, and now the strong winds have returned, making conditions even tougher."

Heavy rain from Cyclone Ragi in September led to widespread flooding across Naypyitaw, Mandalay Region, Shan State, and Bago Region, affecting approximately 170 villages in the Inle area. Despite this, locals report minimal assistance from the junta, leaving residents to rely on self-rehabilitation efforts while facing the threat of additional weather events.

On 5 November, strong winds and rain also hit parts of Mandalay Region and the Naypyitaw area, according to social relief groups. There are no reports of major damage, but residents remain on alert.

"Winds came through around 9:30 pm on 5 November, followed by five minutes of heavy rain. There's been light rain this afternoon, too," a Mandalay resident said.

The low-pressure system in the Bay of Bengal is causing heavy rain and strong winds across several regions. Meteorologist U Win Naing cautioned that further severe weather might affect townships in southern Shan and Karenni States, northern Bago Region, and Ayeyarwady Region from 6 to 8 November.

Myanmar's Meteorological Department, under the State Administration Council (SAC), issued a forecast at 7 am on 6 November, predicting potential heavy rain, strong winds, and hail in Tanintharyi Region, Kachin State, and Rakhine State.

The National Unity Government's (NUG) Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management (MOHADM) also issued a warning for unseasonal rain across Myanmar, with heavy rainfall expected in Rakhine and northern Shan States, Magway Region, Mandalay Region, and Naypyitaw on 7 and 8 November.



Photo: Supplied

MYANMAR JUNTA LAUNCHES UNPROVOKED AIRSTRIKES ON TOWNSHIPS IN SAGAING REGION, DAMAGING HOMES AND SCHOOL BUILDINGS

The Military Council conducted unprovoked airstrikes on Mawlu and Taze Townships in Sagaing Region, damaging residential buildings, according to local residents and the People's Defence Forces (PDF).

A local resident reported that Mawlu Hospital in Mawlu Township, was targeted by an airstrike around 3:30 pm on 5 November, though the extent of the damage remains unclear.

On the same day, between 9:00 and 11:00 pm, three military jets reportedly dropped four bombs and fired rockets on schools, monasteries, and homes in Zee Pauk village, Taze Township. As a result, four houses and a school were damaged in this separate air attack, according to Htoo Khant Zaw, a representative of the People's Defence Comrade.

"The military reportedly used a Y-12 reconnaissance aircraft before the jets arrived. The bombs, estimated at 500 pounds each, shattered walls and left debris scattered across homes," he said.

Zee Pauk village contains approximately 250 homes and around 2,000 residents, who have now fled to nearby farms, fearing further airstrikes.

Mawlu, which came under attack earlier in the day, has been under PDF control since November 2023. Revolutionary forces also reported spotting a Y-12 aircraft conducting reconnaissance over Kalay town in Sagaing Region that evening.



Photo: Supplied

MYANMAR MILITARY AIRSTRIKE ON PALE TOWNSHIP VILLAGE KILLS FOUR, INJURES SIX

The Myanmar Air Force launched an airstrike on Aingma village in Pale Township, Sagaing Region, on 5 November, killing four residents, including three women, and injuring six others, the Pale Township People's Administration reported.

The attack took place around 3:15 pm when a jet fighter dropped three bombs on the village.

According to the People's Administration, the likely target was the local monastery, where a Ka...hina Festival was underway. However, the bombs missed the intended site, instead striking homes to the east of the monastery.

U Zaw Htet, a resident said, "If the bombs had directly hit the monastery, the loss of life would have been devastating."

The victims included two women in their 70s, a 25-year-old woman, and a 40-year-old man. Six others sustained serious injuries. Six homes were badly

damaged in the bombing, according to the People's Administration.

U Zaw Htet added that, while villagers are aware of the risk of military airstrikes on crowded areas, it is difficult to prevent traditional gatherings and religious events.

Aingma village, situated at the foot of Pontung Ponnyar Mountain, has served as a refuge for displaced families from other areas, since the area had seen no active fighting for the past two years.

Despite the unexpected nature of this attack, local defence forces report that the junta has been conducting regular airstrikes in the Yaw region bordering Pale Township, with reconnaissance flights and bombing operations occurring daily.

On 5 November, military jets also bombed Mawlu town in Sagaing Region which has been under the control of the PDF since 2023.



Flood victim in Bago. Photo: AFP

NGO REPORT SAYS OVER 1 MILLION AFFECTED AS UNSAFE SHELTERS INCREASE RISKS FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS IN MYANMAR

The Myanmar Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group (GiHA WG) released a situation report on 06 November, based on information from humanitarian partners, including women-led organizations operating in flood-affected townships across Myanmar.

An overview of the report is included below.

Since early September, more than 1 million people across 70 townships in Myanmar have been affected by flooding due to torrential monsoon rains and the aftermath of Typhoon Yagi. Many of the affected people and communities were already displaced due to ongoing conflict, compounding their vulnerability. Some townships in Mandalay Region and eastern and southern Shan also experienced repeated flooding in early October.

The extensive flooding has caused severe damage, including the loss of crops, farmland, and livestock, which has devastated livelihoods in already vulnerable communities.

As many families have sought refuge in religious buildings, schools, or makeshift shelters, the lack of secure spaces has created unsafe conditions for women and girls. The report indicates that these facilities are often overcrowded and lack adequate lighting and privacy, leaving displaced women and girls at risk of gender-based violence (GBV) and jeopardizing their physical and emotional safety. In some cases, the lack of private sanitation facilities has made basic hygiene a daily struggle, reinforcing the need for gender-sensitive shelter solutions.

The GiHA WG report calls for urgent action to ensure that women and girls have access to safe, private spaces where they can maintain dignity and security. "There is an urgent need for shelters that are well-lit, equipped with privacy partitions, secure locks, and provide easy access to clean water and safe sanitation facilities," the report emphasizes.



The late U Wun Htay

NUG'S MINISTRY OF EDUCATION CONDEMNS KILLING OF KANI TOWNSHIP EDUCATION OFFICER AND FAMILY, VOWS TO PURSUE JUSTICE

The Ministry of Education of the National Unity Government (NUG) has issued a statement strongly condemning the brutal and unjust killing of U Win Htay, the Head of the Board of Education in Kani Township, along with his wife and three-month-old daughter.

The incident occurred on the night of 4 November at their home in Tapong village, Sagaing Region. The NUG has pledged to pursue justice for the victims.

According to the NUG Ministry of Education statement, U Win Htay, his wife Daw Chaing Chaing Thae Wai, and their infant daughter, Shwe Wuttyihlwar, were killed in an attack at their residence. In response, the ministry has vowed to condemn those responsible, whether individuals or groups, and to seek justice for the family.

Tapong village, located roughly 7 miles northwest of Kani town on the west bank of the Chindwin River, is under the control of the People's Defence Forces (PDF), according to local residents.

A Kani resident described the area as typically inaccessible to junta soldiers unless they arrive in large numbers, adding that the community was in shock following the tragic news.

"Tapong village lies on the west bank of the Chindwin River. The entire region is in shock after hearing this news," said a resident of Kani.

Locals in Kani Township have called on the People's Defence Team, People's Security Team, and People's Administration Team to identify and apprehend the perpetrator, ensuring swift action to uncover the truth behind the incident.

According to some members of the PDF, the junta's army maintains only three active outposts within Kani Township; downtown Kani, Yay Lal Kyun, and Yagyi Tower Camp while the rest of the region is controlled by revolutionary forces.

Tapong village, with around 500 households, operates under the administration of these revolutionary forces.

An official from the Yinmabin District Board of Education stated that the Kani Township People's Security Team is leading the investigation to find those responsible for the attack and to bring them to justice.



Thingyan devotees at Shwedagon Pagoda.
Photo: AFP

MYANMAR THINGYAN FESTIVAL INCLUDED IN UNESCO'S INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE LIST

The junta's Archaeology and National Museum Department announced on 6 November that Myanmar's traditional Thingyan festival was included in UNESCO's preliminary list of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH).

The Archaeology Department under the Ministry of Religion and Culture applied to UNESCO in March 2023 to list the Myanmar Thingyan festival on the ICH.

It has now been included in the preliminary ICH list and an official decision for the submitted proposals will be taken at the 19th World Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) Conference to be held in Asuncion, Paraguay from December 2 to 7.

Neighbouring countries, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia, have new year water festivals similar to Myanmar's Thingyan. Thailand's Songkran was approved by UNESCO at the end of 2023. Thailand is currently applying for intellectual property rights for Songkran.

In addition to the inclusion of Songkran on the ICH list last year, Thailand's Prawn Tom Yum soup is on a shortlist to be included year.

Thingyan means transition to new year, and it is the earliest and longest festival in Myanmar. A multi-day celebration that includes family reunions, feasting, cultural performances, processions, music, dance, paying homage to parents and elders, washing hair etc. It has been celebrated since the reign of Myanmar kings in their palaces.

Throwing and splashing water at each other means washing off of evil deeds and spirits and welcoming the auspicious and prosperous new year with meritorious deeds.

Myanmar has not been able to celebrate the Thingyan festival on a grand scale for five years since 2020 due to the COVID pandemic and the ongoing civil war.



Photo: AFP

NUG MINISTER STATES NEGOTIATIONS POSSIBLE IF MILITARY OFFICIALS WILLING TO ACCEPT POLITICAL OBJECTIVES FOR POWER TRANSITION

U Tin Tun Naing, Union Minister of Planning, Finance, and Investment for the National Unity Government (NUG), stated that negotiations would be held with military officials willing to accept the six political objectives outlined by the NUG and its allied ethnic revolutionary forces.

This announcement came during a joint press conference with the Karen National Union (KNU), Chin National Front (CNF), and Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) on 5 November.

The minister stressed that after the junta ends, the Myanmar Army will remain a part of the nation. Therefore, he said, discussions with military officials are essential for a peaceful and systematic transfer of power.

“We must negotiate with Myanmar military officials who accept either the six political objectives or the condensed three objectives that align with our common attitudes. Even though the military coup is over, the Myanmar army will remain. So, we have to talk with them. We need to negotiate with them for a peaceful and systematic transfer of power,” Union Minister U Tin Tun Naing said.

The NUG and the K2C alliance, which includes the KNU, KNPP, and CNF, outlined six political objectives in a declaration on 31 January 2024. According to KNU

General Secretary Padoh Saw Taw Nee, these were condensed into three main goals: eliminate the military coup and remove the military’s influence from politics, abolish the 2008 Constitution permanently and oppose any attempt to revive it, and deliver justice for victims of conflict-related injustices and establish a transitional justice process.

Minister U Tin Tun Naing noted that if military officials agree to these points, 90 percent of the revolution’s objectives would be achieved. However, he emphasized that those directly responsible for injustices would not be part of the dialogue process.

“We would exclude individuals responsible for grave injustices from these negotiations. After addressing leadership issues, the next stage involves peaceful power transfer discussions, which are critical for our common goals,” the minister said.

Meanwhile, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, the leader of the coup, reiterated the need for dialogue to resolve political disagreements in his formal statement on the 69th anniversary of Karen State Day on 7 November. He urged all stakeholders to follow the National Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) and seek solutions through negotiations, emphasizing that ongoing conflict has caused suffering for ethnic communities.



Myanmar junta jets. Photo: AFP

KNPP SECRETARY DECLARES JUNTA CRUMBLING UNDER REVOLUTIONARY PRESSURE

UAung San Myint, Secretary 1 of the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP), stated that nearly four years into the military revolution, the junta is facing significant pressure on military, political, and diplomatic fronts.

He made this remark during a joint online press conference on 5 November, held alongside representatives from the Karen National Union (KNU), Chin National Front (CNF), National Unity Government (NUG), and the KNPP.

Reflecting on the progress since the 2021 People's Revolution, U Aung San Myint remarked that this movement is unlike any previous resistance, highlighting the challenges endured and the substantial successes achieved.

"Given the structure, manpower, and functions of the Military Council, it is clear that everything has been totally destroyed," he said.

The KNPP emphasized that with greater unity among revolutionary forces and the public, the junta's fall is inevitable.

U Aung San Myint said, "If we unite even more closely and stand together, Min Aung Hlaing will be

positioned to fall, whether today or tomorrow."

He urged continued resistance against sham elections and negotiations proposed by the junta as political solutions.

KNU General Secretary Padoh Saw Tah Doh Moo echoed this sentiment, attributing the revolution's successes to unwavering public support. Similarly, CNF spokesperson Salai Htet Ni described the current moment as the best opportunity to end the military dictatorship, calling for collective action driven by the power of the people.

On 31 January 2024, on the three year mark since the military coup, the NUG, KNU, KNPP, and CNF jointly called for the overthrow of the military dictatorship, the abolition of the 2008 Constitution, the establishment of transitional justice, and the building of a federal democracy.

This common agreement has since gained the backing of the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO), as confirmed by NUG Acting President Duwa Lashi La during a cabinet meeting on 6 February.

MYANMAR JUNTA CONTINUES CRACKDOWN ON ILLICIT TRADING

The junta's Illegal Trade Eradication Steering Committee said they have seized illegal goods worth 674.5 million Kyats in 16 cases during the period from 31 October to 3 November.

On 1 November, the committee seized illegal consumer goods and foodstuffs worth approximately 327.8 million Kyats along with the three Mandalay-bound Hino Ranger trucks carrying the goods on the Pindaya-Aungban highway near Ywagnan junction. The traders were unable to produce the required documents for the goods.

Similarly, on 2 and 3 November, illegal goods worth approximately 32 million Kyats in Sagaing were seized in Sagaing along with the two unregistered trucks carrying the goods.

Deputy junta chief, Vice-Senior General Soe Win, once said, "the State Administration Council (SAC) is currently reducing foreign exchange spending on imports and cutting many imports. The traders are taking advantage of this situation and illicitly importing illegal goods from the border. They must be arrested and action taken [against them]."

He also said that illicit goods must be seized not only on highways but also in the warehouses where they were stored.

mizzima WEEKLY Analysis & Insight



**3 month
Subscription
for 12 Issues
\$9 USD**

Our relaunch of Mizzima Weekly will provide 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.

- COVER STORY
- ANALYSIS & INSIGHT
- CORE DEVELOPMENTS
- ASIAN & INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
- WEEKLY COLUMNS

Click here to get 3 months Free Subscription!

SUBSCRIBE



Mizzima Managing Editor Sein Win leads a journalism training session. Screenshot: Al Jazeera documentary

JOURNALISM UNDER THE JUNTA IN MYANMAR

Al Jazeera’s The Listening Post last week focused on independent journalism in Myanmar and the work of Mizzima Media Group in the wake of the 2021 military coup.

The documentary highlights the struggle of independent media in covering the Myanmar crisis and civil war and the work of Mizzima in training young journalists how to stay safe and report effectively in the dangerous conditions in the country.

Here we take you through the report:

In a secluded jungle location close to Myanmar’s border with Thailand a group of journalists met this past August for several weeks of training. They had traveled there from across the country from regions under the authority of Myanmar’s military junta as well as those controlled by rebel resistance forces.

The training programme is run by Myanmar’s largest independent news outlet Mizzima. It aims to equip students with the skills they’ll need to do their jobs in one of the most dangerous places in the world to be a reporter.

“This training school is in Karen State an area controlled by revolutionary ethnic armed groups,” says Mizzima Managing Editor Sein Win. “We couldn’t

even dream of opening such a media institute in military-controlled areas. We want to generate a new generation of journalists. There are less of us since the coup. The students are from all over Myanmar and when they finish, they will take this knowledge back to their hometown.”

One of the recent trainees discussed her situation.

“I was an average student before the coup, I didn’t know much about journalism,” says Mu Philista, who reports for Kantarawaddy Times. “I became a journalist only after the coup when I heard that Mizzima was running this training. I thought it would support my work. I’ve learned how to write stories. I’ve learned how to verify news. They also taught me how to question the government officer in my state which is really useful and all this training is happening with a diverse group of different ages and ethnicities, people I can learn from.”

Life for journalists in Myanmar was turned upside down in February 2021 when a military coup abruptly ended the country’s decade long experiment with democracy. The night before the coup the generals plotted a media blackout. they unplugged Mizzima TV and another channel DVB from the country’s terrestrial TV carrier.

MEDIA TURMOIL

After the coup was announced on February 1, 2021, Mizzima’s journalists, like many others, went into hiding after thousands of people across Myanmar came out to resist the military phones in hand. The generals began implementing an information and internet blackout. What the junta had not accounted for was the level of push back they would receive from citizens and journalists.

“The military ordered the media not to use the word ‘coup’ but journalists asserted that a coup is a coup and continued using that terminology. The military did not expect such a response,” says Soe Myint, Mizzima Co-Founder and Editor-in-Chief. “They tried to stop this by cutting off internet access, banning Facebook and shutting down the media. They took drastic measures like closing down bank accounts. Such actions are typically associated with authoritarian regimes like in North Korea or Russia. The military believed that these measures would intimidate the population but they underestimated both the resilience of the youth and the power of the media which prevented the military from controlling the narrative.”

REPORTING A COUP

Mizzima Managing Editor Sein Win says he wrote editorials using the term ‘coup’

“I didn’t want to lie to the nation. The coup is illegal. It needed to be said. That’s our job as journalists. We had to consider whether we should leave the country or relocate to somewhere not under the control of the military. We expected our office would be raided. So, everything important had been moved. When they got there, they found nothing but they sealed off the office. After that we asked our journalists to relocate either to liberated areas or neighbouring countries. Some resigned. We didn’t blame them. The work of journalism became a crime. We had to start from scratch. We didn’t have editors. We went into the jungle and had no internet, no electricity.”

As Mizzima Editor-in-Chief Soe Myint notes, seven of their journalists, including Mizzima’s Daw Thin Thin Aung, were arrested.

“One of them was brutally tortured and one person is still in prison. Anyone involved with Mizzima can be indicted for working with us. At a minimum they



“The students are from all over Myanmar and when they finish, they will take this knowledge back to their hometown,” says Mizzima Managing Editor Sein Win.

could face two to three years' imprisonment. Their families and friends are also at risk. Shortly after the coup, we stopped including bylines with journalists' real identities and started using pseudonyms and we cut any connection between journalists operating underground in Yangon and those elsewhere in the country. That way if one journalist is apprehended, they won't be able to disclose any links with the other media workers."

CONSIDERABLE RISKS

Media workers face considerable risks if caught by the military. Many have been imprisoned under sweeping anti-state and false news laws and at least three journalists have been killed while in the army's custody. It's part of what the UN has called a scorched-earth policy against the unprecedented wave of opposition the junta faces across the country. Over the past years, the military has suffered a series of defeats and lost huge swathes of territory to ethnic armed resistance groups and people's defence forces. It's now thought the junta controls less than 100 of Myanmar's 330 townships.

Thousands have been killed and millions displaced in the fighting. There is a sense that the balance of power is shifting in favour of Myanmar's ethnic minorities in ways that will be difficult for the military to undo. Under pressure, the generals have resorted to a time-worn tactic of ethnonationalist messaging to try to shore up support among the Burman majority. Crude narratives that are delivered in sophisticated ways.

PROPAGANDA THREAT

As pointed out, the architect of this psychological warfare project is a colonel, says Sein Win.

"He got a PhD from a Russian University and he's smart. His unit is very organized and very good at technology. You see their presence mainly on Telegram and X. We monitored more than 180 Telegram channels. They create messaging that non-Buddhist religions are dangerous, Muslims are dangerous Christians are dangerous, that they are doing a defensive war to protect Buddhism from other ethnic groups, so they use propaganda based on maintaining the Burman ethnic identity to cover up their atrocities."

"There are Telegram channels that distribute so much propaganda from the military," says journalist Mu Philista. "They'll never post about the violations of the military, only good things. The problem is many people have subscribed to those Telegram channels and many people like them."

BRUTAL DICTATORSHIP

As Soe Myint points out, the Myanmar military is acting like any dictatorship would, however they now have more tools at their disposal, technology they've obtained from China to block VPNs, monitoring software and CCTV for surveillance. "They spread misinformation very enthusiastically. This reflects their belief that if they spread enough falsehoods those lies may eventually be accepted as truth. A similar thing happened after Egypt's military coup. By creating uncertainty the military can claim that they are the only ones capable of solving problems and protecting the country."

One reason the military's propaganda has not proven decisive in Myanmar is because of a young generation that is more tech-savvy and better informed. News outlets like Mizzima have also played their role.

FOUNDED IN EXILE

Mizzima's evolution over the years has tracked the country's tumultuous history with military rule. The



Mu Philista, one of the journalism trainees.

outlet was founded in exile in 1998 with a base in India and Thailand. It has grown from a news service that operated on fax machines to a network with more than 20 platforms.

In 2011, when a democratic transition began in Myanmar, the two men leading Mizzima, Soe Myint and Sein Win, who are brothers, took the decision to return home. Now they find themselves back where they started reporting either covertly in Myanmar or in exile from neighbouring countries.

"I learned many lessons in my life," says Soe Myint. "In Buddhism, it is taught that nothing is permanent. In this everchanging world, we must be innovative to move forward. I believe that struggling against what is wrong can lead to victory and pave the way for positive change. We had a taste of democracy that lasted only a few years. So, we must make twice the effort to achieve lasting change. The dictatorship will eventually fall but we need to prepare in advance for what comes after. Mizzima's mission is also part of the nation-building process. No matter what role we play, we want to collaborate and be involved in this journey together."

WATCH THE AL JAZEERA PROGRAMME

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



ASIA, THE WORLD'S ECONOMIC ENGINE, PREPARES FOR TRUMP SHOCK



Photo: AFP

Some Asian countries stand to gain if US president-elect Donald Trump pushes ahead with his promised massive tariffs on China and triggers a new wave of factory relocations to the rest of the region.

But a trade war between the world's biggest economies would also destabilise markets everywhere, with Asia - which contributes the largest share of global growth - the most affected.

Trump, who won a crushing presidential victory last week, vowed during his campaign to slap 60 per cent tariffs on all Chinese goods entering the United States in an attempt to balance trade between the two nations.

Analysts however question whether the new president will stick to such a high figure, and dispute the blow such tariffs could inflict on the Chinese economy, estimating GDP could be lowered by between 0.7 per cent and 1.6 per cent.

The cooling effect would also make waves throughout Southeast Asia, where production chains

are closely linked to China and enjoy significant investment from Beijing.

"Lower US demand for Chinese goods due to higher tariffs on China will translate into lower demand for ASEAN exports, even if there aren't US tariffs levied directly onto those economies," said Adam Ahmad Samdin, of Oxford Economics.

Indonesia is particularly exposed through its strong exports of nickel and minerals, but China is also the top trading partner of Japan, Taiwan and South Korea.

In addition to China, Donald Trump has also warned of an increase of 10 to 20 percent on duties for all imports, as part of his protectionist policies and fixation that other countries take advantage of the US.

"The extent of these effects likely depends on the direct exposure of each economy to the US," said Samdin, who added that America accounts for a 39.1 percent share of Cambodian exports, 27.4 percent from Vietnam, 17 percent from Thailand and 15.4 percent from the Philippines.

India to be targeted?

Trump first slapped China with heavy tariffs in 2018 during his first administration, leading to the emergence of “connector countries”, through which Chinese companies passed their products to avoid American taxes.

Those countries could be in the line of fire now.

“Vietnam’s electronics exports to the US could also be targeted by Trump, in a bid to halt the diversion of Chinese electronic products to the US via Vietnam since 2018,” said Lloyd Chan, a senior analyst at MUFG, Japan’s largest bank.

“This is not inconceivable. Trade rewiring has notably gained traction in the region’s electronics value chain.”

“India could itself become a target of protectionist measures by the US due to the large share of Chinese components in Indian products,” added Alexandra Hermann, an economist with Oxford Economics.

Trump could also impose higher tariffs on Indian goods in sectors such as “automobiles, textiles, pharmaceuticals and wines, which could make Indian exports less competitive in the US”, said Ajay Srivastava of the New Delhi-based Global Trade Research Initiative.

A trade war would be dangerous for India, said Ajay Sahai, director of the Federation of Indian Export Organisations.

“Trump is a transactional person. He may target higher tariffs on certain items of Indian exports so he can negotiate for lower tariffs for US products in India,” he told AFP.

Supply chain rejig

In the medium term, these negative effects could be counterbalanced by establishing factories outside China to escape the fallout.

The “China+1” strategy initiated during Donald Trump’s first term saw production shifts to India, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam.

With its geographical position and cheap skilled labour, Vietnam has already been one of the main beneficiaries.

The country has notably received investments from Taiwanese Apple subcontractors Foxconn and Pegatron and South Korea’s Samsung, becoming the second-largest exporter of smartphones in the world behind China.

“The likelihood increases that even more businesses will want to... have a second, or third, production base outside China,” said Bruno Jaspert, chairman of the European Chamber of Commerce in Vietnam.

Chinese firms themselves are investing massively from Vietnam to Indonesia in sectors including solar, batteries, electric vehicles and minerals.

“American companies and investors are very interested in opportunities in Vietnam and this will continue under the incoming Trump Administration,” said Adam Sitkoff, executive director of the American Chamber of Commerce in Hanoi.

But whether it is low-end or high-tech production, China’s competitive advantage in terms of price, scale and quality is difficult to reproduce, warns Nomura bank.

A reorganisation of production chains could lead to a “loss of efficiency” and increased prices, “with a negative impact on global growth”, Thomas Helbling, deputy director of the IMF for Asia, recently explained to AFP.

Asian countries could therefore gain export market share but ultimately see their situation deteriorate amid weakening global demand.

AFP

IRAN URGES TRUMP TO CHANGE 'MAXIMUM PRESSURE' POLICY

Tehran. Photo: Omid Armin

Iran signalled an openness towards Donald Trump last Saturday, calling on the US president-elect to adopt new policies towards it after Washington accused Tehran of involvement in a plot to kill him.

Vice President for Strategic Affairs Mohammad Javad Zarif urged Trump to reassess the policy of "maximum pressure" he employed against the Islamic republic during his first term.

"Trump must show that he is not following the wrong policies of the past," Zarif told reporters.

His remarks came after the United States accused Iran of conspiring to assassinate Trump.

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on Saturday called the accusations "fabricated" in a post of social media platform X.

"As a killer does not exist in reality, scriptwriters are brought in to manufacture a third-rate comedy," Araghchi said of the US claims.

Earlier, his ministry described the accusations as "totally unfounded".

Tehran and Washington severed diplomatic relations shortly after the Islamic revolution in 1979.

Zarif, a veteran diplomat who previously served as foreign minister, helped to seal the 2015 nuclear accord between Iran and Western powers, including the United States.

However, the deal was torpedoed in 2018 after the United States unilaterally withdrew from the deal under Trump, who later reimposed sanctions on Tehran.

In response, Iran rolled back its obligations under the deal and has since enriched uranium up to 60 percent, just 30 percent lower than nuclear-grade.

Iran has consistently pushed back against Western accusations that it was pursuing nuclear weapons.

Araghchi in his post said: "Iran is NOT after nuclear weapons, period."

"This is a policy based on Islamic teachings and our security calculations," he added.

'Do the maths'

Zarif said that it was Trump's political approach towards Iran that led to the surge in enrichment levels.

"He must have realised that the maximum pressure policy that he initiated caused Iran's enrichment to reach 60 percent from 3.5 percent, and increased its centrifuges," he said.

"As a man of calculation, he should do the maths and see what the advantages and disadvantages of this policy have been, and whether he wants to continue or change this harmful policy," Zarif added.

Iran insists that it uses nuclear technology for safe and civilian purposes.

During his first term, Trump also ordered the killing of revered Iranian military commander Qasem Soleimani, who led the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps foreign operations arm, the Quds Force.

Soleimani was killed in a drone strike while he was in the Iraqi capital Baghdad in January 2020.

On Tuesday, election day in the United States, Trump told reporters he was "not looking to do damage to Iran"

"My terms are very easy. They can't have a nuclear weapon. I'd like them to be a very successful country," he said after casting his ballot.

On Thursday last week, foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei said he hoped the president-elect's return to power would allow Washington to "revise the wrong approaches of the past", although he avoided mentioning Trump by name.

Trump's election victory came after Iran and Israel attacked each other directly, raising fears of a further regional spillover of the conflicts in Gaza and Lebanon.

AFP



MINDFULNESS FROM THE ASHES

“I started using drugs and alcohol... when I was 14 years old or so. And at that point, I had already been blacking out from drinking on a regular basis, and I was smoking one or two packs of cigarettes a day. And quite heavily into drugs.”

One would scarcely expect that the person speaking these words, Matthew Schojan, would develop into a serious meditation and yoga practitioner one day. In an interview with Insight Myanmar recorded before the pandemic and the military coup, Matthew goes into detail about his spiritual journey, and how it ultimately led him to Myanmar.

Matthew’s parents divorced at an early age. One of his mother’s partners sexually abused him, and his father was an alcoholic. In that terrible environment, he began to be a substance abuser as well, when he was just 11.

He eventually got his life on track when he was 20, and made the commitment to become sober while living in New York. “I didn’t know how to be a human. I didn’t know how to engage in a way that didn’t involve alcohol and drugs and smoking.” Being sober was a terrifying experience, as he was confronted with anxiety and other emotions that the intoxicants had long suppressed. He was uncomfortable with 12-step programs due to their religious component; he eventually took up yoga, later finding refuge at the local Zen center in Brooklyn.

Soon after, he got a job at Wall Street as a runner, earning just \$5 an hour. But then, an entirely unexpected event disrupted his life anew: September 11th. “I was on the Brooklyn Bridge when the towers fell down, and I watched this puff of smoke just overtake the city. It was quite surreal. We were also the first people back into that area,” he recalls. The following days he compared to living in a war zone, and the overall scale of destruction haunted him. With phone lines down, he was unable to reach out to friends or family for support. So Matthew went to the roof of his building and lit a cigarette, his first in three years.

That was a mistake.

“That cigarette evolved over the weeks and months into beers, and then drinking, and then drugs, and the next two and a half years was a very intense time of partying and just really being lost in that space. And then there was a moment that I looked around and I just realized that everything around me was it was empty. There was no fun anymore. There were different faces, but the same experience, and the same cycle. These ups and downs just became so dissatisfying. I just couldn’t bear to go on in that way.”

This time, he found salvation in the form of Dhama Punx, led by Noah Levine. “It was a group of people sitting around meditating with tattoos like me, and talking about life in a very open and genuine way. It was just really authentic.” He began joining weekly meditation sittings in the Bowery, becoming sober once again, and joining a more mindful community, where he eventually met the woman who would become his wife.

CATCH THE PODCAST

To read more or listen to the Insight Myanmar Podcast, click here:

<https://insightmyanmar.org/complete-shows/2024/10/27/episode-280-mindfulness-from-the-ashes>



THAI PM MEETS MYANMAR JUNTA CHIEF IN CHINA AMID ONGOING CRISIS IN MYANMAR

Thai Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra and Myanmar's junta chief Min Aung Hlaing met on the sidelines of summits of the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) in China, marking a rare international appearance for the junta chief who faces widespread armed resistance at home, reported Bangkok Post.

The meeting focused on peace efforts, with Paetongtarn emphasizing Thailand's stance that dialogue is necessary to resolve Myanmar's crisis.

The two nations share a lengthy border where conflict spillover has impacted on Thai security and trade.

Thailand hosts numerous Myanmar refugees, some residing there for decades.

Since the 2021 military coup in Myanmar, the junta has killed nearly 6,000 civilians, including children, as of November this year, and imprisoned over 20,000 political opponents, of whom more than 6,000 have been released.

The regime has lost control of roughly half the country to resistance forces and faces international sanctions and isolation.

While Paetongtarn suggested support for the junta's proposed election, opposition groups and international observers widely reject this as illegitimate, given that major political parties are either banned or boycotting.

Min Aung Hlaing, who rarely travels abroad except to allies like Russia, met with Chinese Premier Li Qiang and Cambodia's Hun Manet during the summit period.

MYANMAR DELEGATION TO ATTEND CULTURAL EXCHANGE IN CHINA AMID ONGOING CIVIL WAR IN MYANMAR

A Myanmar junta delegation led by Information Minister Maung Maung Ohn would participate in the China-Myanmar Culture Exchange Week and Twin City Media Forum in Kunming from November 11-15, according to the state-run newspaper The Global New Light of Myanmar.

The 48-member team would showcase Myanmar's traditional arts, including dance and puppetry performances.

The minister emphasized strengthening bilateral ties through cultural exchange and tourism promotion. The event includes plans for media cooperation, agricultural programming, and tourism partnerships between the two nations.

However, this cultural diplomacy occurs against a backdrop of severe domestic turmoil. Since the military's 2021 coup, independent media outlets have been shut down, with over 170 journalists arrested and many forced into exile.

While state-controlled media like MRTV and The Global New Light of Myanmar continue to operate under strict military oversight, independent journalists face persecution under the junta's harsh media restrictions. The junta delegation to China represents only government-approved institutions, as independent cultural and media organizations have been systematically dismantled since the coup in Myanmar.

MIXED SOCIAL MEDIA REACTIONS AS ILO COMMITTEE APPROVES ACTION AGAINST MYANMAR JUNTA

The International Labour Organization's (ILO) Governing Body 352nd Session has approved a resolution to take action against Myanmar junta for labour rights violations during its meeting on November 6 in Geneva, Switzerland.

According to Maung Maung, President of the Confederation of Trade Unions Myanmar (CTUM), the resolution directs the ILO Conference in mid-2025 to implement measures under Article 33 of the ILO Constitution against Myanmar junta for persistent forced labor violations and worker rights abuses.

Article 33 allows for two potential actions: suspending UN agency support and diplomatic relations while designating the junta as a terrorist army rather than a government, or pursuing international court proceedings against the authoritarian perpetrators.

This marks the second time Myanmar faces Article 33 action, with the first instance occurring in 2000 when the then-junta led by Than Shwe.

Social media responses to the news have been mixed. While some users expressed gratitude to the ILO for "taking action for Myanmar workers," others were more skeptical. "This isn't military intervention, so it won't make much difference," one user commented. Another raised concerns about timing: "By the time they take action, Myanmar might be reduced to ashes."

The ILO Governing Body meeting was held from October 28 to November 7 at the organization's headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland.



SOCIAL MEDIA USERS PRAISE KIA'S RECEPTION OF OVER 100 MILITIAMEN

Posts circulating on social media reported that the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) held a welcoming ceremony on November 5 for over 100 members of a pro-junta militia force who surrendered in Kanhpan Village, Chipwi Township, Kachin State.

The surrender occurred when KIA-allied forces entered Kanhpan Village on the evening of November 4, leading to the peaceful surrender of more than 100 militiamen.

According to social media reports, local residents enthusiastically welcomed the KIA and its allied forces upon their arrival on November 4.

Social media users responded positively to the news, with comments emphasizing ethnic solidarity.

A user wrote, "This is a very appropriate gesture to welcome our own people," while another expressed hope for more such surrenders, noting that "many are still unable to leave the junta despite wanting to."

The KIA now maintains control of Kanhpan Village, according to the reports.

mizzima WEEKLY

Analysis & Insight



DIGITAL MAGAZINE

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