

MYANMAR'S NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT NOMINATED FOR NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

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## WEEKLY

myanmar news & insight



# IN THE HOT SEAT

**UN Special Envoy caught in storm over  
Myanmar junta 'power sharing'**

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# SENSITIVE GROUND

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**mizzima**  
WEEKLY

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**MIZZIMA MAGAZINE**

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**T**he United Nations' handling of the Myanmar crisis has - according to critics - left a lot to be desired.

One year after the February 2021 military coup, the Golden Land is in dire straits both in terms of the threat to human rights and lives posed by the illegal junta and the toll the crisis has taken on employment, business and the overall economy.

Myanmar looks set to become a basket case unless something drastic is done.

Given the call by Myanmar citizens for an end to brutal junta rule and the sensitivity of the situation, it is not too surprising that there was an explosion of anger over the Channel News Asia interview with UN Special Envoy Dr Noeleen Heyzer last week.

Given its importance, Mizzima Weekly has highlighted the issue in our cover package this week.

Many Myanmar citizens have been protesting for an end to the military regime and the return of democratic rule, a growing number of the younger generation joining the ranks of the resistance movement under the label People's Defence Forces or PDFs.

Given the public anger, many - including hundreds of CSOs - were upset by the stated notion, voiced by the interviewer, that the UN Special Envoy was advocating for a "power sharing" arrangement with the military junta as a path to peace. In addition, what also ruffled feathers was the suggestion that young people, who are putting their lives on the

line to fight against the junta, should somehow moderate their stance.

More detail of the spat can be found in our stories in this issue. But in essence, there appears to be a flawed understanding on the part of the UN Special Envoy as to the gravity of the situation and the frustration of the Myanmar citizens caught up in this dire and frightening situation.

As Mizzima Weekly has noted before - the UN blue-helmeted cavalry is not coming to the rescue. Many Myanmar citizens have been calling on the UN to send in peacekeepers and to operate no-fly zones in conflict-ridden areas of the country. Yet, the UN seldom steps in physically to intervene, as can be noted with many other conflicts around the world. All we are seeing is a verbal intervention and the entertaining of sanctions.

Special Envoy Ms Heyzer is obviously trying to advocate for peace and a way to put the country back onto its democratic track. There is no suggestion that malice is at work in the way she is trying to bring all players to the negotiating table. But the suggestion that the junta must be involved in this process has riled everyone from the alternative National Unity Government (NUG), to CSOs, to PDFs - the latter dying on the battlefield as they seek to end military rule once and for all.

This puts Ms Heyzer in a tricky spot. The UN Special Envoy has only just taken up her role and has been immediately embroiled in controversy. Going forward, she will have to be extra-careful in weighing her words.



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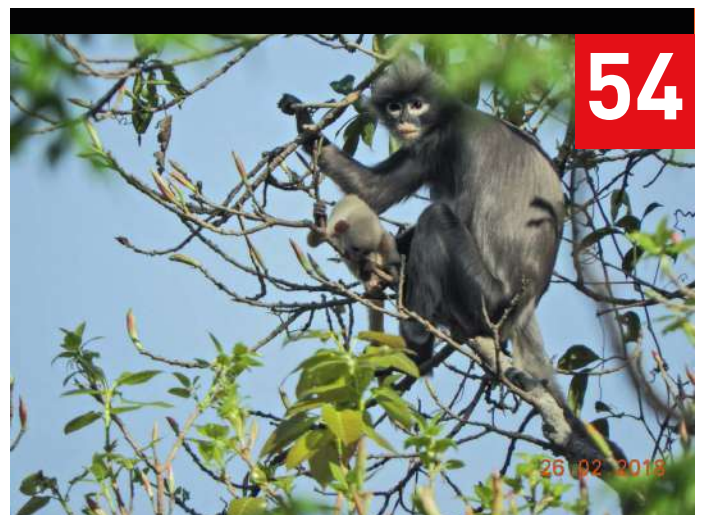
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**COVER PHOTO OF UN SPECIAL ENVOY  
DR NOELEEN HEYZER BY THE UN**











## OUTSIDE UK PARLIAMENT

**B**urmese and local protesters stand outside the British Parliament in London last week to protest against the Myanmar military junta that grabbed power just over a year ago on February 1, 2021. Photo: EPA

## TWO KILLED, 38 INJURED IN ATTACK ON PRO-GOVERNMENT RALLY IN MYANMAR'S TACHILEIK

**T**wo people were killed and 38 injured in a grenade attack on a pro-military rally in eastern Myanmar on Tuesday, a security official told AFP, as anti-coup protests were held across the country on the first anniversary of the military's power-grab.

No group has so far claimed responsibility for the attack, which took place as anti-coup activists marked the coup's anniversary with a silent strike and clapping protests, defying junta orders.

The military takeover that ended the Southeast Asian country's brief democratic interlude and toppled civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi has triggered mass protests and a crackdown on dissent.

Struggling to contain the backlash and contending with daily clashes, the junta has killed more than

1,500 civilians, according to a local monitoring group. Swathes of the country are under the control of anti-coup fighters.

Residents across commercial hub Yangon and in the city of Mandalay clapped en masse at 4 pm (0930 GMT), AFP correspondents and locals said, marking the end of a "silent strike" against the coup.

"We were clapping," one Mandalay resident said. "Other houses in my neighbourhood clapped as well."

Ten people were arrested for taking part in the clapping protest in Yangon, local media reported.

The junta had ordered shops to stay open Tuesday but the streets of Yangon began emptying at 10 am, a scene that was repeated in Mandalay and the southern Tanintharyi region.

Mandalay's famous jade market had opened in the morning but saw little traffic, a resident told AFP.

"I'm staying at home playing online games to participate in the silent strike."

A similar shutdown in December emptied the streets of cities and towns across the country, but Tuesday's was also marked by violence against the junta.

Two people were killed and 38 injured in a grenade attack as crowds returned from a pro-military rally in the eastern town of Tachileik a security official told AFP.

Local media also reported the incident that took place around noon in eastern Shan state, a region of the country that has seen comparatively little coup-related violence.

## MYANMAR TROOPS 'BURN SIX VILLAGERS ALIVE' IN SAGAING'S WETLET TOWNSHIP

**M**yanmar junta soldiers have allegedly set fire to six hostages in Thit Sein Gyi village in eastern Wetlet Township, Sagaing Division, according to local villagers.

About 100 Military Council troops entered Thit Sein Gyi village by boat and arrested six villagers at around 2 am on January 29.

"Six local men were handcuffed and taken away as human shields. When junta soldiers left yesterday, the arrested villagers were found to have been set on fire," a local resident said Friday.

An eyewitness confirmed that six villagers from Thit Sein Gyi had their hands tied and were burned to death.

Following the arrest of the villagers, the troops camped in the forest near the village for five days.

The People's Liberation Army (PLA) in Wetlet Township demanded the release of innocent villagers arrested on February 1 by the military troops and or the Military Council to confront the local People's Defense Forces (PDF) bravely without using villagers as human shields.

On January 9, junta troops entered Thit Sein Gyi village and arrested about

50 women in the village.

The military council has been using helicopters to attack the eastern part of Wetlet township since December 2021.

Locals fled from the old town of Hanlin Pyu as troops invaded and destroyed villages in the eastern part of Wetlet Township on February 3.

In one incident, a local man from Mingone village in Wetlet Township was hit by an artillery shell fired by the Military Council while returning home to feed cattle, according to local people.



# MYANMAR COURT HEARS TWO CORRUPTION CHARGES AGAINST MANDALAY CHIEF MINISTER

**M**andalay Region Chief Minister Dr. Zaw Myint Maung was arraigned in a special court in Obo Prison on February 4 on two counts of corruption by the Military Council court over the allocation of office space for the National League for Democracy (NLD) party, according to prison sources.

Among the five corruption cases filed against Dr Zaw Myint Maung by the Military Council, the current two cases involve the allocation of land for an NLD office in Myingyan and one in Pysin Oo Lwin.

Two prosecution witnesses,

Myint Lwin, secretary of the Mandalay Division government, and Khin Win, assistant director of the Magway division government, were questioned today.

“Divisional Secretary U Myint Lwin was examined as a prosecution witness. After that, Daw Khin Win from Mandalay Region, the assistant director who moved to Magwe, was interrogated. According to departmental procedures, who allocated the land in connection with the case was investigated. How were these plots of land valued? The prosecution is examining how it was organized. It has not yet reached the

stage of a criminal investigation,” according to a prison source.

Dr. Zaw Myint Maung is in good health and his wife Dr May Yu Lwin, visited him today.

The 70-year-old former Chief Minister for Mandalay is suffering from leukemia and was earlier sentenced to four years in Obo Prison under Section 505 (b) of the Penal Code and Section 25/30 (a) of the Disaster Act by the Military Council.

In addition, he faces five charges of corruption and seven charges of voting fraud.

---

## MYANMAR JUNTA OUTPOST SEIZED IN KACHIN STATE

**T**he Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and the People's Defence Force (PDF) seized a Myanmar Army outpost in a joint operation near Sum Pian village in Kachin State.

The KIA soldiers from Battalion 7 under KIA Brigade 1 and PDF coalition forces raided the military junta's

outpost which was on the Mytkina to Putao road between Prabum and Putao townships. and set it on fire at 10am on February 1. Villagers fled from the area of the fighting according to local residents who said that there are frequent clashes between junta troops and KIA and PDF forces in the area and that currently the KIA has full control of the road.

In mid-January KIA and Putao's People's Defence Force fought against junta troops in Northern Myanmar.

However, the KIA announced in late January that it would suspend military operations along the border at China's request.

---

## KIA AND PDFs ATTACK AND SEIZE MILITARY BASE IN KACHIN STATE'S SUM PIAN VILLAGE

**T**he Kachin Independence Army (KIA) led a joint local people defense force to seize the military base in Sum Pian village on Putao Road at around 10:30 am on February 1.

A video of the attack on the camp has been circulating on social media since yesterday.

A soldier was arrested and large quantities of ammunition were confiscated. Moreover, the camps in

Longshayan village were cleared and the army camp and police station

Joint forces of the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and People's Defence Forces (PDF) stormed three camps in Putao, Kachin State, including the Sampian military base that is strategically important for Military Council, occupying and burning it.

The Military Council launched a series of bombings at around 4:30 pm on February 3 as part of an attempt to

try to retake the KIA-occupied military base in Sum Pian village.

The military bombed the area with two jet fighters, damaging five houses and injuring five villagers in Sumpian village, according to local people.

Since February 1, one-year after the military coup, fighting between junta military troops and the allied forces of the KIA and PDFs have intensified to seize military bases in Putao.



UN Special Envoy Ms Noeleen Heyzer, left, seen here in an earlier role with the UN, has been placed in a difficult situation due to her interview with CNA. Photo: CNA

# IN THE HOT SEAT

## UN Special Envoy caught in storm over Myanmar junta 'power sharing'

Marc Jacob

It has been a tough 10 days for the United Nations Special Envoy tasked with attempting to bring peace to crisis-ridden Myanmar. In the wake of a high-profile interview with Channel News Asia on February 1 – on the occasion of the Myanmar military coup anniversary – UN Special Envoy Dr Noeleen Heyzer's office was forced to issue a statement attempting explain a "misrepresentation" in the interview that prompted an angry response from Myanmar civil society organizations and the wider public.





Dr Heyzer issued a statement on February 3 saying her office regretted a misunderstanding over a suggestion in the interview – made by the interviewer – that she had used the term “power sharing” with the Myanmar junta and proposed it as a solution in the context of the political crisis in Myanmar.

Dr Heyzer’s office said the envoy had “never proposed power sharing as an option and has consistently advocated for a Myanmar-led process that is reflective of the will and the needs of the people, as reflected in the 2020 elections.”

Civil society groups were up in arms following the interview on the Singapore-based CNA news channel last week given the suggestion presented in the interview that “the

Myanmar military junta cannot be ignored and left out of any upcoming peace process.”

This is apparently anathema to Myanmar’s civil and armed resistance battling to get rid of what they view as a brutal illegal dictatorship.

#### **CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS UPSET**

In a joint statement, 247 civil society organizations said they “rejected UN Special Envoy Dr Heyzer’s proposal that those defying the military must negotiate a power sharing as a solution to the current political, human rights and humanitarian crisis created by the terrorist military junta.”

The CSOs were prompted to respond following the interview with CNA.

In the CNA interview, the UN Special Envoy discusses finding “commonalities”, a political transformation requiring process and a “need to negotiate what this power sharing could look like”.

She says the Myanmar junta – which came to power in a military coup a year ago – has a role to play in any effort to find peace in Myanmar.

“The military, when I say that they are not legitimate, it doesn’t mean that they have no role. They have a legitimate role. But they are not the legitimate government at this time,” Ms Heyzer, a former under secretary-general of the United Nations who was named its special envoy to Myanmar a few weeks ago, told CNA.

Ms Heyzer said this in the wake of statements by the pro-democracy National Unity Government (NUG) who insist that the military, with its record of violence, should be totally excluded from any talks about the future of the country.

"The killing will even get worse, unless we find a way to actually stop it," Ms Heyzer told CNA.

However, Ms Heyzer also emphasised that while the military will have to be part of any upcoming peace process, the junta cannot be the force leading the process going forward.

And she urged youth activists protesting against the Tatmadaw or

Myanmar military to moderate their stance and think in the long-term.

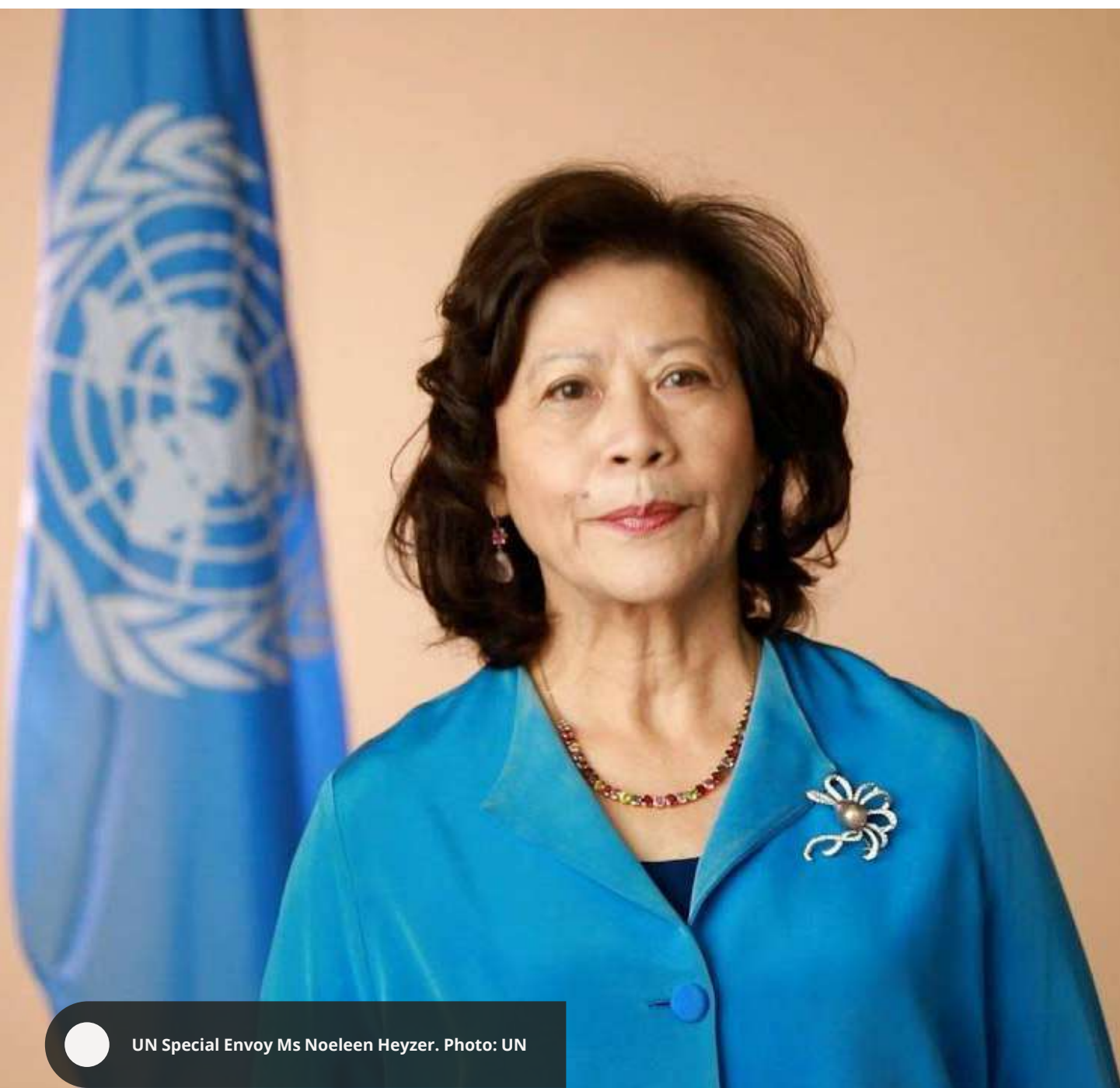
"I know that many young people, especially the young, they're willing to die fighting for a total political transformation," she said. "Any political transformation requires a process and it's not going to happen overnight. And therefore, I want them to have something to live for, not to die for."

#### THE ROLE OF THE JUNTA

Coming on the first anniversary of the coup, the UN Special Envoy's comments have been met with strong reactions, according to the statement by the CSOs.

In addition to the concern over the suggestion of power sharing with the military junta, the CSOs further raise alarm at the comments she made during her interview in which she claims that "The military is in control at this particular time".

The CSOs say: "These statements could set a dangerous precedent, that those who take control through brutal means – massacring, killing, raping, arresting, torturing, burning villages and people, targeting civilians using airstrikes and shelling – be welcomed to share power. Such suggestions send a signal to the military that the UN is willing to act as a broker for their power despite the grave crimes they have committed, and further embolden them to commit atrocities



UN Special Envoy Ms Noeleen Heyzer. Photo: UN



with total impunity.

“The youth who are continuing to call for an end to the military’s terror are not being unrealistic in their efforts to see their human rights and fundamental freedoms protected. Their calls reflect the principles laid out in the UN Charter and deserve the full support and respect of UN mandate holders.” (See the full press release in the accompanying story)

### COUNTRY IN CRISIS

What is clear from the CSO response and the comments of pro-democracy activists is that many of the Myanmar public are frustrated by the failure of the United Nations to crack down more heavily on the brutal

Myanmar junta that is guilty of war crimes and human rights abuse. Over 1,500 civilians have been killed and about 10,000 arrested over the last 12 months.

The knee-jerk response of hundreds of CSOs is indicative of the frustration that the international body appears unable to do much more than just talk – typical in regards to many conflicts around the world. Proposals that the UN should send in peace-keeping troops or enforce a “no-fly zone” over conflict-ridden areas of Myanmar have been met with silence.

While the UN Security Council has debated the Myanmar crisis on several occasions, little has come out of these deliberations in part due to the voting power of China and Russia, countries that maintain cordial relations with junta chief Min Aung Hlaing and the Myanmar military.

### TAKE THE CASE TO THE ICC

As the CSOs mentioned in their statement: “The Special Envoy should advise the UN Security Council to immediately refer the situation in Myanmar to the International Criminal Court so that these grave crimes committed by the Myanmar military can be investigated and prosecuted. Offering them a seat at the negotiating table is not in accordance with the ‘will and interests of the people of

Myanmar’ as adopted in resolutions at the UN General Assembly.”

The CSOs took issue with the Special Envoy’s characterization that the junta had “taken over” or had a tight grip on power.

“Such mistakes have been a persistent problem for the UN in Myanmar as outlined in the Rosenthal report, which found that systemic and structural failures rendered the UN impotent in the face of the Rohingya genocide. The UN must not make the same mistakes, and once again, fail the people of Myanmar.”

The focus, they say, should be on the Myanmar people, according to the CSO statement.

Seven decades of brutal military rule in Myanmar appear to have finally come to a head - for the Bamar majority and the ethnic minorities.

“If the Special Envoy is genuinely committed to a ‘Myanmar-led process’ and engaging ‘directly with and listen carefully to all those affected by the ongoing crisis’, she must understand the root causes of the current crisis and genuinely listen to the calls of the people of Myanmar. Their calls have been clear. The military must never rule.”

“The killing will even get worse, unless we find a way to actually stop it,” Ms Heyzer told CNA.



Myanmar security forces on the street in Yangon. Photo: EPA

# JOINT STATEMENT: CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS REJECT UN SPECIAL ENVOY'S PROPOSAL



The following is the joint statement made on February 2 by 247 in which they raise alarm over the suggestions made by the UN Special Envoy over power sharing and the claim that the military are in control.

247 civil society organizations reject UN Special Envoy, Dr Noeleen Heyzer's proposal that those defying the military must negotiate a power sharing as a solution to the current political, human rights and humanitarian crisis created by the terrorist military junta.

In an interview with Channel News Asia, the Special Envoy discusses finding "commonalities", a political transformation requiring process and a "need to negotiate what this power sharing could look like". Her comments have been met with strong reactions.

We further raise alarm at the comments she made during her interview in which she claims that "The military is in control at this particular time".



These statements could set a dangerous precedent, that those who take control through brutal means – massacring, killing, raping, arresting, torturing, burning villages and people, targeting civilians using airstrikes and shelling – be welcomed to share power. Such suggestions send a signal to the military that the UN is willing to act as a broker for their power despite the grave crimes they have committed, and further embolden them to commit atrocities with total impunity.

The youth who are continuing to call for an end to the military's terror are not being unrealistic in their efforts to see their human rights and fundamental freedoms protected. Their calls reflect the principles laid out in the UN Charter and deserve the full support and respect of UN mandate holders.

In addition, it is not required of revolutionary movements to end in a power sharing agreement with those that have committed genocide and continue to commit war crimes and crimes against humanity. History has shown us that coups around the world have failed, and revolutions have succeeded. Those who have committed grave international crimes must be held accountable, not offered more power, a seat at the table and legitimacy by the international community. This will only embolden them to continue to commit grave crimes with total impunity.

It has been over a decade since the military initiated their political process of power sharing. This consisted of unelected military officials holding 25% of the seats in parliament and control over key ministries that were integral to the governance of Myanmar, under a military-drafted 2008 Constitution that undemocratically ensured their place in the corridors of power.

They stole the wealth of the people of Myanmar for decades during the military dictatorship and throughout the military orchestrated political process of the past decade. They exploited natural resources, while continuing to commit war crimes against people who live in resource-rich ethnic areas.

For over 70 years the military has waged a fierce war against ethnic peoples, committing war crimes and crimes against humanity. While sharing limited power with the National League for Democracy, they

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## **They stole the wealth of the people of Myanmar for decades during the military dictatorship and throughout the military orchestrated political process of the past decade.**

committed war crimes and crimes against humanity against ethnic people and genocide against the Rohingya.

The Special Envoy should advise the UN Security Council to immediately refer the situation in Myanmar to the International Criminal Court so that these grave crimes committed by the Myanmar military can be investigated and prosecuted. Offering them a seat at the negotiating table is not in accordance with the “will and interests of the people of Myanmar” as adopted in resolutions at the UN General Assembly.

The Special Envoy's misinterpretation that “the military is in control” could not be farther from the truth. Over the past year, Myanmar people's revolutionary movement has successfully prevented the military from grabbing power over the country, despite all its brutal efforts. The military are, however, conducting fierce airstrikes in ethnic areas where they are losing territorial control; shooting and shelling people forcing them to flee across the border into neighboring countries, threatening international peace and security; burning bodies including children and staff of international organizations in an attempt to instill terror. These are not acts of a military who are in control.

International experts on Myanmar have previously stated in response to

UN officials inaccurately suggesting that military has “taken over” or that it has an “iron grip on power”, that “Misinterpretation leads to misrepresentation, misrepresentation leads to misunderstanding, and misunderstanding leads to mistakes”.

We could not agree more.

Such mistakes have been a persistent problem for the UN in Myanmar as outlined in the Rosenthal report, which found that systemic and structural failures rendered the UN impotent in the face of the Rohingya genocide. The UN must not make the same mistakes, and once again, fail the people of Myanmar.

If the Special Envoy is genuinely committed to a “Myanmar-led process” and engaging “directly with and listen carefully to all those affected by the ongoing crisis”, she must understand the root causes of the current crisis and genuinely listen to the calls of the people of Myanmar. Their calls have been clear. The military must never rule.

The UN Special Envoy and other mandate holders, as well as UN agencies, funds programs and entities, must support the calls of the people of Myanmar and their efforts towards a future federal democratic Myanmar. They must respect their will and work to ensure that the military is never again allowed to have power.



# ‘WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY’ FOR UNITY OPENS IN MYANMAR

**O**ne year on from Myanmar’s military coup, violence and brutality has only intensified, but “a window of opportunity” does exist, “to build upon a unique unity across religious, ethnic, and communal lines”, the UN’s top envoy for the country said on Monday last week.

Speaking to journalists in New York, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Noeleen Heyzer, urged the international community to “use this opening to help Myanmar work towards a common vision for their country.”

“The road ahead will be long and difficult, but the time to act is now”, she said.

## Escalation

According to her, there has been “a broad-based resistance movement built against the military regime” and all sides are now hardening their positions.

The situation has also become increasingly unstable as military operations intensify, including with recent aerial and artillery attacks.

Around 1,500 civilians have been killed so far, and the number of internally displaced, continues to increase.

By the end of 2021, more than 320,000 people had been internally displaced. In just the past month,

the number has increased to over 400,000.

## Humanitarian crisis

Almost half of the country’s population, around 25 million people, now live in poverty, and more than 14.4 million people are estimated to be in need of humanitarian assistance and protection.

While Myanmar faces another potential COVID-19 surge, the public healthcare system is in disarray.

“We are also witnessing an unprecedented level of drug manufacturing and trade while human trafficking and illegal mining and logging have increased”, Ms.





Photo: UN

Heyzer said.

She believes the expansion of illicit activities further fuels the conflict and has wide-ranging security, health and environmental consequences that go beyond Myanmar, affecting the entire region.

“A generation of young people that thrived under the democratic transition is now sacrificing their lives for freedom and for the love of their country”, the Special Envoy said.

For her, “the painful uprooting of Myanmar’s democratic gains will have lasting repercussions.”

#### International support

Reiterating the Secretary-General’s appeal, Ms. Heyzer urged the international community to stand firm with the people of Myanmar and act beyond just expressions of solidarity.

Following consultations with all stakeholders, the Envoy has been working with the Association of

Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to support the implementation of the ASEAN’s Five-Point Consensus, a plan devised in April of last year to end the violence.

The Envoy has also introduced several proposals, including the need of a “humanitarian pause”, and action from the Security Council to help lay down the building blocks of a national dialogue.

For this to happen, she said, aerial operations must cease immediately, and there must be credible progress in the eyes of the people.

“The people of Myanmar need to see tangible improvements on the ground in order to put their trust in any home-grown process towards a peaceful resolution reflective of their will and needs”, Ms. Heyzer argued.

#### Rohingya

The Special Envoy also addressed the situation with the Rohingya, hundreds of thousands of whom have fled for Bangladesh since 2017, amidst

brutal persecution by the military and security forces.

She asked for international support to create conditions for voluntary, safe and dignified returns for the Rohingya, as well as urgent protection for refugees fleeing Myanmar, saying it should be part of broader efforts to find peaceful political solutions.

Just last week, Bangladesh and Myanmar resumed talks on repatriation of these refugees, agreeing to cooperate on the process of verification of past residency of refugees.

“The people of Myanmar have come together in solidarity with the Rohingya and there is important momentum for their inclusion in a democracy that has become an unprecedented aspiration”, Ms. Heyzer said.

*Courtesy of UN News*

# UN SECURITY COUNCIL URGES "IMMEDIATE" END TO MYANMAR VIOLENCE

The UN Security Council called Wednesday last week for an "immediate cessation of all forms of violence" in Myanmar and expressed hope that a special envoy would be allowed to travel there to mediate the crisis.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations wants to send its representative, Cambodia's foreign minister Prak Sokhonn, to Myanmar, where last year's coup triggered mass protests and a deadly crackdown on dissent.

The UN Security Council looks forward to the minister's visit to Myanmar "at the earliest opportunity

to meet with all parties concerned and carry out mediation that facilitates the dialogue process, as well as the provision of humanitarian assistance," the body said in a statement.

In the statement, drafted by Britain and passed unanimously on the first anniversary of the deadly coup, the Council "expressed deep concern at further recent violence in the country and expressed alarm at the large numbers of internally displaced."

More than 1,500 people have been killed by security forces and more than 11,000 arrested since the coup, according to a local monitoring

group.

The country's former civilian leader, Nobel prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, and former president Win Myint have been jailed.

In its statement, the Council renewed calls for the two leaders to be released and "reiterated the need for full, safe and unimpeded humanitarian access to all people in need, and for the full protection, safety and security of humanitarian and medical personnel."

**AFP**



Security forces on guard in Naypyitaw. Photo: EPA



# UN EXPERT TO IDENTIFY SOURCE OF MYANMAR JUNTA WEAPONS

**T**he UN expert on rights in Myanmar announced Tuesday last week he is preparing to release a report exposing where the country's "criminal" ruling junta have been getting their weapons from.

Exactly one year on from the February 1, 2021 military coup, Tom Andrews said the junta was inflicting a widespread campaign of terror on the country's people - and seemed to be getting away with it.

The United Nations special rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar urged the international community to step up and cut off the junta's access to weapons, funds and legitimacy.

"The fact that one year has elapsed with no Security Council resolution imposing a comprehensive arms embargo - as arms continue

to flow to the junta and kill innocent people - is unacceptable," he said in a statement.

The former US congressman said he would soon release a report detailing the weapons that continue to flow into the hands of the junta - and identify where they come from.

"The military junta is functioning as a criminal enterprise, committing murder, torture, abductions, forced displacement, all the while stealing the revenue and seizing the assets that rightfully belong to the people of Myanmar," Andrews said.

"What is worse, they appear to be getting away with it. Their attacks continue unabated. The suffering of the Myanmar people is steadily increasing.

"Recent months have seen an even further escalation of violence,

and a campaign of terror now widespread across the country. I have received more reports of mass killings, attacks on hospitals and humanitarian targets, and the bombing and burning of villages."

Andrews does not speak for the UN but is mandated to report his findings to the global body.

He said that despite the risks and hardships, the people of Myanmar had responded to the last 12 months with courage and tenacity, saying he was "amazed" by their resilience in the face of aerial assaults, and mass arrest and torture.

"On this first anniversary of the illegal coup by the military junta, the best and worst of humanity is unfolding in Myanmar," Andrews said.

**AFP**



Soldiers on the street in Yangon, 2021. Photo: EPA





Aid supplies provided for IDPs in Rakhine State, 2021. Photo: EPA

# UN APPEALS FOR RECORD \$826 MILLION IN AID FOR MYANMAR

**T**he UN appealed last week for \$826 million to get humanitarian aid to 6.2 million people in Myanmar in 2022, saying the country had plunged into unprecedented suffering since last year's coup.

Exactly a year on from the February 1 military takeover, the United Nations said the economic chaos following the coup had left many unable to feed their families.

The UN estimates that out of 54 million people in Myanmar, 25 million are living in poverty and 14.4 million need humanitarian aid - including five million children.

Of those, the UN hopes to reach the 6.2 million most severely in need, with a plan that seeks a record amount for the country - more than twice the money requested last year.

"The economic and political turmoil of 2021, combined with the devastating impact of Covid-19, has driven half the population into poverty," Jens Laerke, a spokesman for the UN's humanitarian agency, told reporters in Geneva.

"Many can no longer afford to

feed their families because of job and income losses, and price increases."

Myanmar's military seized power one year ago, ousting the civilian government and arresting its de facto leader, Aung San Suu Kyi.

The UN Human Rights Office said that since the coup, at least 1,500 people had been killed by the military in a brutal effort to crush dissent, while thousands more would have been killed in the wider armed conflict and violence.

## 'Appalling conditions'

Laerke said more than 400,000 people had been displaced since the coup d'etat.

"Thousands of displaced people are living in appalling conditions, many in camps and displacement sites, others with host communities. And some have crossed the borders with Thailand and India or have sought refuge in the jungle without adequate food, shelter, sanitation, protection or medical care," he said.

He called for humanitarian agencies to be allowed access to displacement sites to deliver life-

saving food, water and healthcare.

Ramanathan Balakrishnan, the UN resident and humanitarian coordinator in Myanmar, said the outlook was "grim" and many of the country's gains of the last 15 years were under serious threat.

"2021 has been a traumatic year for the people of Myanmar, characterised by unprecedented levels of human suffering," he said in the document outlining this year's response plan.

"Poverty is back to levels not seen since 2005, with almost half the population now unable to make ends meet."

He said more than 13 million people were now in moderate or severe food insecurity.

"The outlook for malnutrition is dire unless we intervene now," Balakrishnan said.

"People are increasingly resorting to dangerous coping strategies to survive, leading to worsening protection risks."

**AFP**



# MYANMAR JUNTA SLAMS 'DICTATING' UN RIGHTS CHIEF MICHELLE BACHELET

Myanmar's junta on Thursday slammed "dictating" remarks by the United Nations human rights chief and accused the body of interfering in its affairs after it called for the world to ramp up pressure on the generals.

Myanmar on Tuesday last week marked a year since the military seized power in a coup that ousted Aung San Suu Kyi and sparked huge pro-democracy protests and a bloody military crackdown.

Days earlier Michelle Bachelet urged the world to ramp up the pressure on the junta to compel it to cease violence and "ensure that perpetrators of systemic human rights violations and abuses" were held to account.

The junta slammed the "provoking" release and accused the world body of interfering in its internal affairs, according to a statement released by its ministry of foreign affairs.

Myanmar "cannot accept dictating comments and criticism by foreign countries", it added.

The statement also accused UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar Tom Andrews of making "unethical and inciting remarks".

On the anniversary of the coup, Andrews also called for more international action against the military and said he was preparing to release a report exposing where the ruling junta have been getting their weapons from.

Myanmar is increasingly isolated on the international stage, with Cambodian ruler Hun Sen's January visit the only one by any foreign leader since the generals seized power.

The junta's latest diplomatic blow came Thursday, as regional bloc ASEAN barred its top diplomat from attending an upcoming meeting of foreign ministers.

Earlier last week its main allies Russia and China endorsed a UN Security Council resolution calling for an "immediate cessation of all forms of violence" in the country and expressed hopes an envoy would be able to travel to Myanmar and mediate.

In a speech marking the coup anniversary, Min Aung Hlaing said the junta had discussed prospective visits by ASEAN and UN special envoys to the country, according to state newspaper Global New Light of Myanmar.

But he added any cooperation with the international community would be done "without harming the sovereignty of the State, national interests and the future plans of the government".

More than 1,500 people have been killed by security forces and over 11,000 arrested since the coup, according to a local monitoring group.

**AFP**



Myanmar junta leader Min Aung Hlaing. Photo: EPA

# ASEAN URGES 'IMMEDIATE' END TO MYANMAR VIOLENCE

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations urged an "immediate" end to violence in Myanmar last week and for the junta to allow a special envoy tasked with facilitating talks to visit as soon as possible.

The 10-nation regional bloc has led diplomatic efforts to end the chaos unleashed in Myanmar by coup last year, which triggered mass protests and a deadly crackdown on dissent.

But violence has continued, with anti-junta groups clashing regularly with the military and the World Bank warning Myanmar's economy had likely contracted by almost a fifth last year.

The bloc called for the "immediate cessation of violence and for all parties to exercise utmost restraint" in a statement released by Cambodia,

the current chair.

Its special envoy - Cambodia's foreign minister Prak Sokhonn - should also be allowed to visit the country as "soon as possible to meet with all parties concerned", it added.

It made no mention of ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who has been detained since the coup and faces a catalogue of charges in a junta court that could jail her for more than 100 years.

The junta cited Suu Kyi's ongoing trial as a reason for refusing to allow ASEAN's previous special envoy to meet with the Nobel laureate, which prompted the bloc to exclude junta chief Min Aung Hlaing from a high-level October summit.

Myanmar is increasingly isolated on the international stage, with

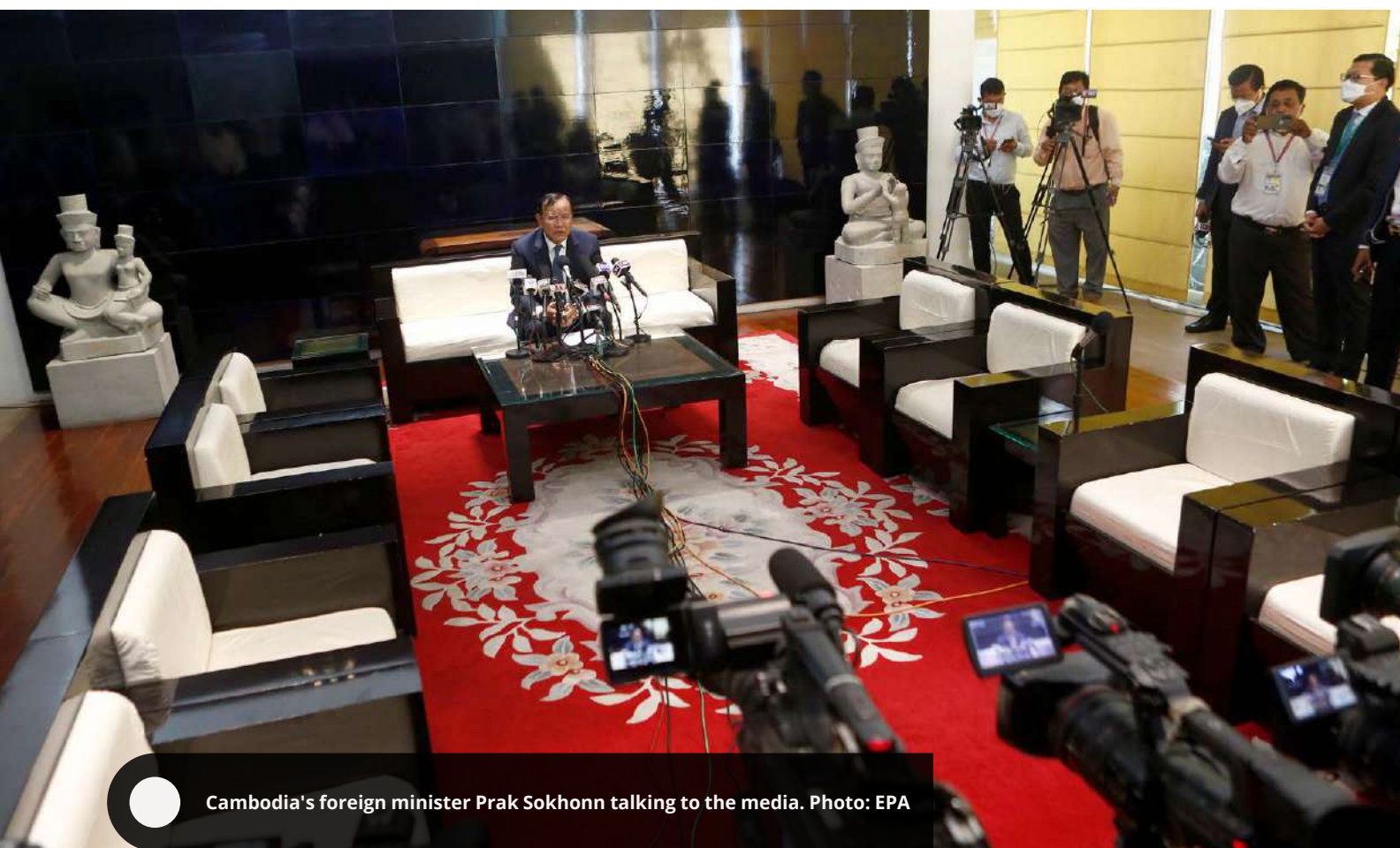
Cambodian strongman ruler Hun Sen's January visit the first by any foreign leader since the generals seized power.

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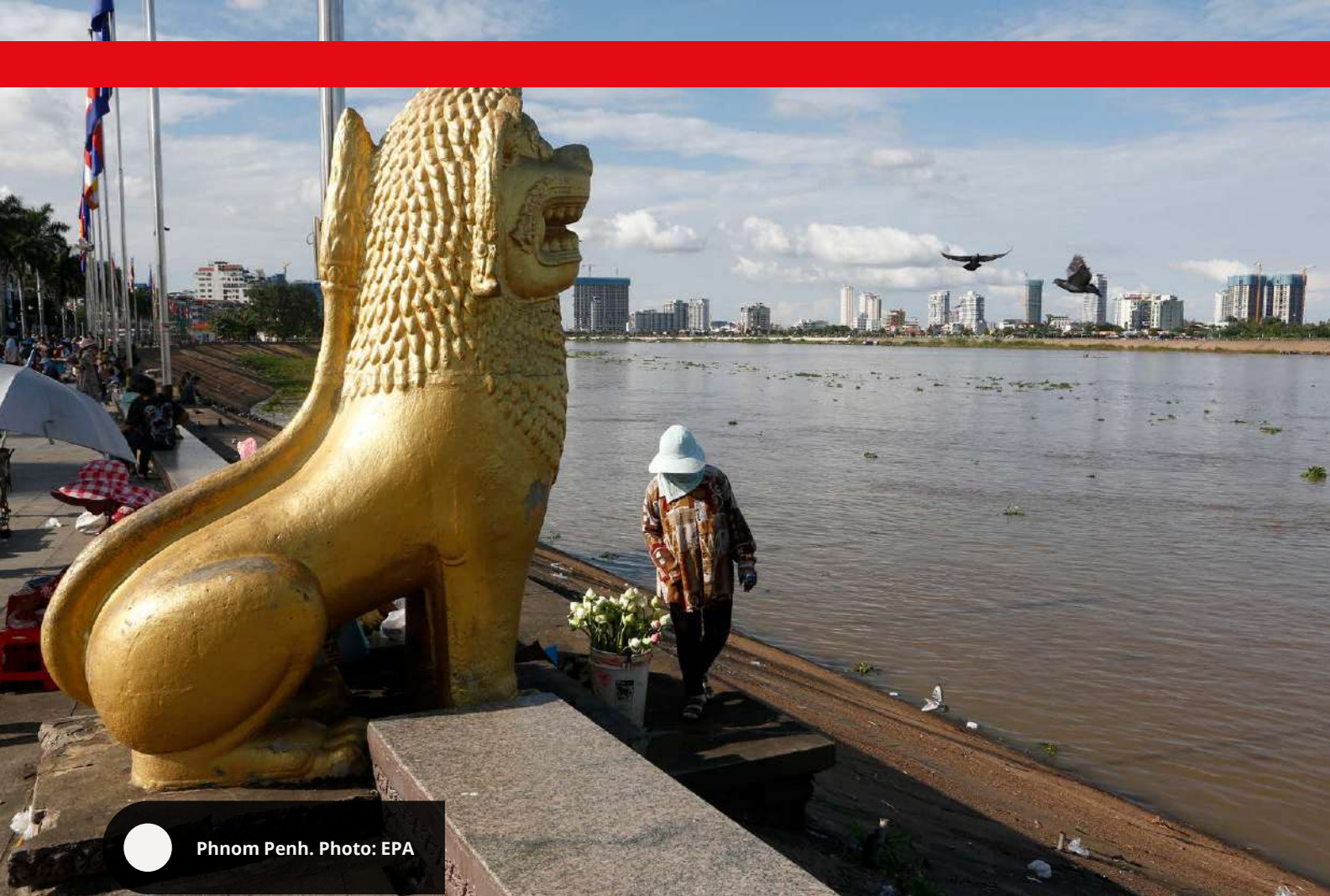
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AFP



Cambodia's foreign minister Prak Sokhonn talking to the media. Photo: EPA





Phnom Penh. Photo: EPA

# ASEAN CHAIR CAMBODIA SAYS MYANMAR FM NOT WELCOME AT THIS MONTH'S ASEAN MEET

**A**SEAN's chair Cambodia says the Myanmar junta's Foreign Minister Wunna Maung Lwin will not be invited to attend the ASEAN foreign ministers' meeting in Phnom Penh this month.

Cambodia, which currently holds the bloc's rotating chairmanship, said there had been too little progress on a "five-point consensus" agreed by leaders last year to try to defuse the crisis gripping Myanmar.

The country has been in turmoil since the military ousted Aung San Suu Kyi's civilian government a year ago, with more than 1,500 civilians since killed in crackdowns on anti-junta protests, according to a local monitoring group.

"Since there has been little progress in carrying out ASEAN's Five-Point Consensus, the ASEAN member

states did not reach a consensus to invite Myanmar SAC's foreign minister [Wunna Maung Lwin] to participate in the upcoming foreign ministers' retreat," Cambodia foreign ministry spokesman Chum Sounry said.

Myanmar's military government calls itself the State Administration Council, or SAC.

"We have asked Myanmar to send a non-political representative instead," Chum Sounry said.

The snub comes after the 10-nation Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) took the unprecedented step of barring junta leader Min Aung Hlaing from a summit in October.

It represented a rare rebuke from ASEAN, long seen as a toothless talking shop, but which has sought to

lead diplomatic efforts to tackle the Myanmar crisis.

Myanmar is increasingly isolated on the international stage, with Cambodian strongman ruler Hun Sen's January visit the first by any foreign leader since the generals seized power.

But violence has continued, with anti-junta groups clashing regularly with the military, and the World Bank has warned Myanmar's economy likely contracted by almost a fifth last year.

In a statement on Wednesday, ASEAN called for an immediate end to violence and for its special envoy to be allowed to visit the country soon.

**AFP, Mizzima**

# COUNTRIES RELEASE JOINT STATEMENT TO MARK MYANMAR COUP ANNIVERSARY

Statements supporting the Burmese people's struggle against the military were released last week by the United States of America and other countries.

A statement of support for the people of Myanmar on the one-year anniversary of the military coup was made in a personal message by US President Joe Biden.

The following is his message:

"To the people of Burma: We have not forgotten your struggle. And we will continue to support your valiant determination to bring democracy and the rule of law to your country. The following statement was also issued on behalf of the European Union, and the Foreign Ministers of Albania, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Norway, Republic of Korea, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States:

"On 1 February 2021, the military seized power in Myanmar, denying the

democratic aspirations of Myanmar's people. One year later, the devastating impact on the people of Myanmar is clear. Over 14 million people are in humanitarian need, the economy is in crisis, democratic gains have been reversed, and conflict is spreading across the country. The military regime bears responsibility for this crisis, which has gravely undermined peace and stability in Myanmar and the region. We once again call for the immediate cessation of violence and for constructive dialogue among all parties to resolve the crisis peacefully. We reiterate our call on the military regime to immediately end the State of Emergency, allow unhindered humanitarian access, release all arbitrarily detained persons, including foreigners, and swiftly return the country to the democratic process.

"On the anniversary of the coup, we remember those who have lost their lives over the past year, including women, children, humanitarian personnel, human rights defenders, and peaceful protesters. We strongly

condemn the military regime's human rights violations and abuses across the country, including against Rohingya and other ethnic and religious minorities. We express grave concern at the credible reports of torture and sexual and gender-based violence. We express serious concern over the more than 400,000 additional people who have fled their homes since the coup. We also express grave concern at the deepening humanitarian crisis across the country and urge the military regime to provide rapid, full, and unhindered humanitarian access to vulnerable populations, including for the purposes of vaccination against COVID-19. We express grave concern over the large number of persons arbitrarily detained and the sentencing of State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and other political detainees.

"We call on all members of the international community to support efforts to promote justice for the people of Myanmar; to hold those responsible for human rights violations and abuses accountable; to cease the sale and transfer of arms, materiel, dual-use equipment, and technical assistance to the military and its representatives; and to continue supporting the people of Myanmar in meeting urgent humanitarian needs.

"We emphasize our support for the ASEAN Five-Point Consensus and the efforts of the ASEAN Special Envoy to support a peaceful resolution in the interests of the people of Myanmar. We call on the military regime to engage meaningfully with ASEAN's efforts to pursue full and urgent implementation of the Five-Point Consensus, which includes ensuring that the ASEAN Special Envoy has access to all parties in Myanmar, including pro-democracy groups. We also welcome the work of the UN Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Myanmar and urge the military regime to engage constructively with her."



US President Joe Biden. Photo: EPA



# SALWEEN PEACE PARK CALLS ON INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO INTERVENE AFTER DEADLY MYANMAR JUNTA ATTACKS

Salween Peace Park (SPP) representatives have expressed outrage following deadly attacks by the Myanmar junta in Karen State.

Speaking out in a press release on Saturday, the SPP said that at 1 am the Burma Army launched an airstrike on a Karen village in the Salween Peace Park, killing two civilians and injuring six civilians including children, elders and one young girl. The attack took place in the eastern part of the SPP at Ta Dwee Koh village, Ma Htaw village tract, Dweh Lo Township, Mutraw district, Karen State. At the same time, the Burma Army dropped three bombs in another village tract in the centre of the SPP, where no deaths have been reported.

As the SPP notes, the Myanmar Army, which has taken over the country as the State Administration Council (SAC), has been launching indiscriminate airstrikes, bombings, and artillery shelling continuously in the Salween Peace Park (located in Mutraw District, Karen State) every day since January 1, 2022.

In addition to this morning's incident, another attack also took place on January 29, when the

Karen State Border Guard Force

(BGF) - which serves directly under the Myanmar Army's command launched mortars into Htee Law Thee Hta village, (in the eastern side of the SPP) and killed a three-month-old baby girl and a 20-year-old woman in the Salween Peace Park.

The SAC also launched an airstrike on a KNLA camp along the Salween River on January 31 - which is Karen Revolution Day - destroying one library and several houses. This area is close to a number of Karen villages and IDP camps.

In summary, from January 1 until now, at least 7 civilians have been killed and no less than 26 civilians

Injured - including elders, children, and women as a result of these bombings and attacks.

The people of the Salween Peace Park hope that the international community will intervene and help oust the dictatorial SAC-Myanmar Army which has illegally taken control of the country, killed countless of civilians, and endangered the lives of millions of civilians in Burma.

As the majority of the country have joined the resistance against the military dictatorship, we the people of the Salween Peace Park call for the

international community including the United Nations and others to assist us through military and economic actions in our long struggle against the Myanmar Army for the sake of civilians caught in the crossfire.

As one indigenous man from the Salween Peace Park has stated: "We hope that the powerful countries and the UN will support the ethnic armed groups and PDFs in their fight against Burma Army. For decades we have been taking care of our lands using our indigenous methods of conservation and governance. Our leaders have tried to build peace through political dialogue and peaceful actions. But the Burma military continued to use violence to sustain their power to exploit the resources of our country. Now the whole country is standing up to fight against them. We need the support of powerful countries for things like anti-aircraft weapons, so we can defend against the Burma Army's jets. We have been calling for no fly zones and bans on selling weapons to the Burma Army, but no one has listened to us. We hope that international actors will help us in the same way they joined together in their fight to eliminate other evil and illegitimate regimes, such as the ISIS, so that we can finally have a taste of peace."



A village damaged by the bombing. Photo: SSP





# ARE MULTI-NATIONALS ABANDONING MYANMAR MERELY SUPPORTING CHINA'S AMBITIONS?

Andre Wheeler

The National Unity Government (NUG) policy statement in August 2021, in which it welcomed international companies leaving Myanmar as an effective means to bring Myanmar's Military junta to heel, may well be a significant "own goal" in its fight to address autocratic governance.

This self-defeating policy direction, lauded by inner city elites and political activists, took another step forward late last month with the Australian oil and gas major, Woodside, announcing that it is divesting of its gas and oil interests in the country. This withdrawal follows that of Total Energies and Chevron.

## REGIONAL RAMIFICATIONS

Those applauding these companies for taking a stance for "human rights", shows a naivete and a lack of understanding of the geo-political ramifications of such actions in a region undergoing significant economic and political alignment.

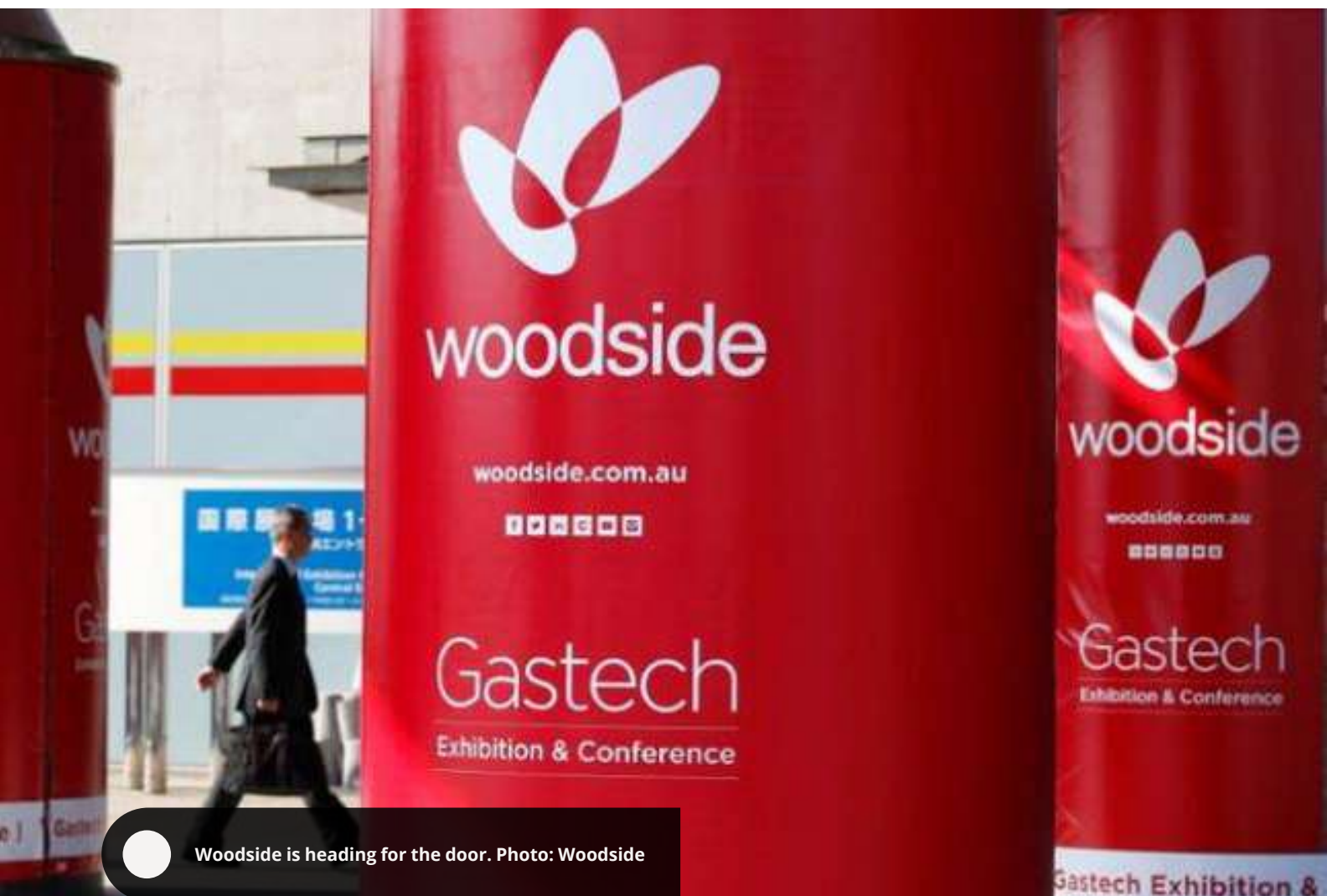
This is a region that is feeling the rise of China, a decline of Western influence and increasing tensions as India and Japan respond to this significant geo-political reset. Myanmar's central role in shaping the new focus on the Indo-Pacific

## POLITICAL

was discussed in a previous article: <https://www.mizzima.com/article/why-myanmar-needs-be-aware-economic-significance-china-geo-political-focus-moves-asia>.

When talking to key economic decision makers in and around Yangon, the mood is one of disappointment – the overwhelming majority believe that the decision by Woodside is a poor one and will not enable a peaceful resolution to the current crisis in Myanmar.

As one such business leader said: "It is a reactionary decision to the crisis".



Woodside is heading for the door. Photo: Woodside

One wonders what strategic or critical thinking has been used by these multi-nationals to make this decision. For example, how can they justify a decision based on “humanitarian grounds” when they continue to support trade and ties with other autocratic countries based on separating politics from commerce. Why can Woodside still engage with LNG sales, not just of gas but of asset ownership with China? Thirty percent of Woodside’s LNG goes into China and the new CEO of Woodside appears to celebrate their relationship with China. Yet China – currently hosting the Winter Olympics – is constantly rapped over its abuse of human rights, including alleged genocidal policies against the Uyghurs in the northwest of China.

#### CLOSER TO CHINA

Taking the argument further, did they not consider that Myanmar, in particular the Military, is adept at working around sanctions and isolation. At a basic level, all this decision does is to subject seventy percent of the population to continue living in poverty. At the same time by trying to use economic coercion to bring an authoritarian regime to heel, potentially pushes the country further down the autocracy road by pushing it closer to China.

In a sense adopting a “poke in the eye” strategy has merely made the parties blind to the consequence of their actions.

The timing of this “poke in the eye until blind approach” could not have come at a better time for China. It is a well-known fact that the relationship between the Myanmar Military junta and China had become strained towards the end of 2021. With little progress being made on key Belt and Road Infrastructure projects within Myanmar, in particular Kyauk Phyu Port, it looked like that this relationship was starting to fracture as the junta needed to show development of some kind as the economy continued to fail under their rule.

With multi-nationals and their respective governments, withdrawing projects strengthens the hand of China when bargaining around investment into Myanmar. Without alternative sources of funding, and China’s interest in investment, China is likely to secure a greater hold on the Myanmar economy.

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**Those applauding these companies for taking a stance for “human rights”, shows a naivete and a lack of understanding of the geo-political ramifications of such actions in a region undergoing significant economic and political alignment.**

#### GRAND CHINA PLANS?

How does all this help China in its ambitions to be the Regional Hegemon and to shape economic engagement within the Indo-Pacific region?

In simple terms, it addresses China’s two major weaknesses in its ambitions: trade and economy and energy security.

In the first place, Myanmar will deliver China access to the important trade and shipping lanes in the Indian Ocean through its China-Myanmar Economic Corridor or CMEC. It gives greater shipping connectivity between the China controlled Hambantota Port in Sri Lanka and the Kyauk Phyu deep sea port. This eliminates a key economic and trade risk for China as it provides a supply line that no longer runs the risks associated with the Malacca Straits being a supply choke point.

This addresses a key concern found in the China CP’s statement of intent, namely trade and economic security.

Secondly, it addresses the other key concern of China, namely energy security. Not only does Myanmar give China greater access to energy supplies out of the Middle East and Africa, but it also offers up significant oil and gas reserves in Myanmar without having to have gone through the expensive exploration and development phase. There are reports

already circulating within Myanmar that China is staking a claim for these oil fields – and with the absence of any competitors, it is almost guaranteed that China will gain greater control.

So, whilst the NUG, activist groups and Governments celebrate another poke in the eye for the Military Junta, they have gone blind to the potential of Myanmar embedding an even stronger and more extensive form of autocracy through adopting everyday business and activity through the lens of Chinese Characteristics.

Perhaps it would be more prudent for multi-nationals, such as Woodside, to look at effective ways of engagement to improve the chances of Myanmar returning to some form of participatory and inclusive form of government.

Who knows, should China get the anticipated trade and energy security from these actions, the Indo-Pacific may well deliver a new hegemon. How ironic would this be?

*Andre Wheeler is CEO of Asia Pacific Connex with more than 20 years’ experience in international business, with a diverse network throughout the USA, Asia, SE Asia, Africa and the United Kingdom. Holding a B. Science (Hons) degree and an MBA, he is currently working towards his Doctorate on the Impact of the China One Belt One Road initiative. Andre has expertise in oil and gas, construction, marine services and mining.*

# MYANMAR JUNTA FILES ELEVENTH CORRUPTION CHARGE AGAINST AUNG SAN SUU KYI

**M**yanmar's junta has filed an eleventh corruption charge against ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi, it said on Thursday, the latest in a slew of indictments against the Nobel laureate who faces more than 150 years in prison.

Suu Kyi, 76, has been detained since the February 1 coup last year that triggered mass protests and a bloody crackdown on dissent with more than 1,500 civilians killed, according to a local monitoring group.

She has already been sentenced to six years in jail for incitement against

the military, breaching Covid-19 rules and breaking a telecommunications law - although she will remain under house arrest while she fights other charges.

Police filed a further corruption charge against Suu Kyi for allegedly receiving \$550,000 as a donation for a charity foundation named after her mother, the junta's information team said in a statement.

Each corruption charge carries a possible 15-year jail term.

The junta statement gave no details on when court proceedings

would begin.

Suu Kyi is already on trial for breaching the official secrets act - where she is accused alongside detained Australian academic Sean Turnell - as well as several other corruption-related charges.

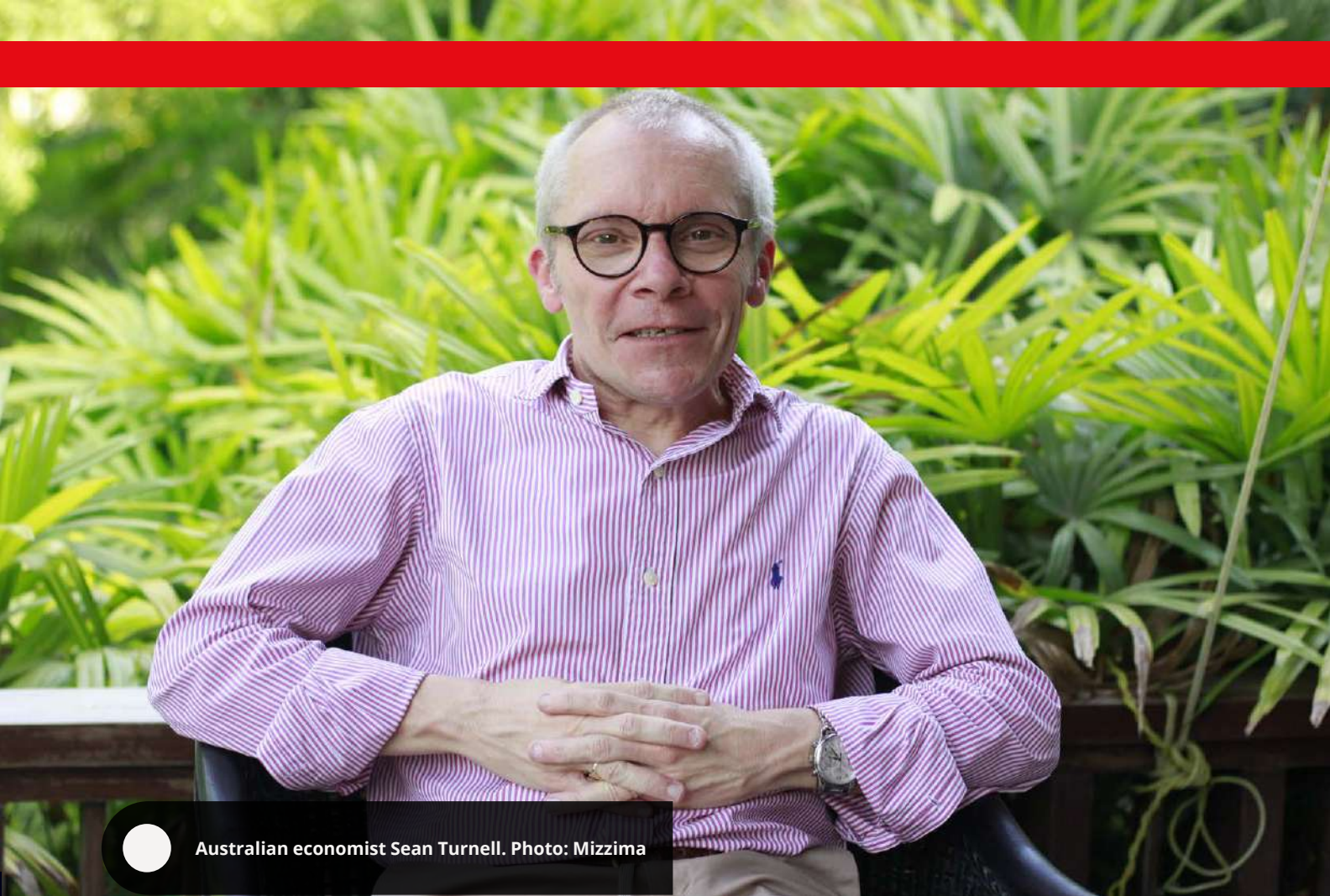
This week the junta announced she will face a further trial beginning mid-February on charges of influencing the country's election commission during 2020 polls that saw her party defeat a military-aligned rival.

**AFP**



Aung San Suu Kyi. Photo: EPA





Australian economist Sean Turnell. Photo: Mizzima

# CONFUSION AS MYANMAR JUNTA DENIES DETAINED AUSTRALIAN ACADEMIC RELEASED

**M**yanmar's junta has denied freeing an Australian academic detained for almost a year after Cambodia's leader Hun Sen on Monday took credit for arranging the release.

Economist Sean Turnell was working as an advisor to Myanmar civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi when he was detained shortly after the coup in February last year.

He has been charged with violating Myanmar's official secrets law and faces a maximum penalty of 14 years in prison if found guilty.

On Monday, Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen said Turnell had "been released" the previous day.

The Cambodian strongman,

who met with Myanmar's junta chief last month, claimed the release had happened after he passed on a request from Australia's government.

"At that time, I made the request to Min Aung Hlaing and Min Aung Hlaing said he would consider it positively," Hun Sen said, responding to questions about his trip to Myanmar.

"Yesterday, he was released," he added, referring to Turnell.

Junta spokesman Zaw Min Tun denied that Turnell had been released, but acknowledged that Hun Sen had brought up the matter during his visit -- the first to Myanmar by any foreign leader since last year's coup.

"Regarding this matter, Senior General Ming Aung Hlaing said he

would think about it after his legal case is finished," he told AFP.

Turnell has appeared in court every Thursday in the military capital Naypyidaw for his trial -- where he is co-accused alongside Suu Kyi.

Human rights groups have raised concerns about his prosecution, particularly after the Australian embassy was denied access to his court hearing in September.

The exact details of Turnell's alleged offence have not been made public, although state television has said he had access to "secret state financial information" and had tried to flee the country.

AFP



# MYANMAR'S NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT NOMINATED FOR NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

Myanmar's self-proclaimed civilian government has been nominated for the 2022 Nobel Peace Prize, the Norwegian lawmaker behind the proposal said on Tuesday last week, the anniversary of the military coup that deposed Aung San Suu Kyi.

"I have nominated Myanmar's 'National Unity Government' for the Nobel Peace Prize. It's the only legitimate government in Myanmar", Ola Elvestuen, a member of parliament for the small Liberal Party, said.

The National Unity Government (NUG), which claims to be the country's legitimate government, was formed last April and is made up of dissident lawmakers in hiding or exile, many of them from ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi's party.

February 1, the junta had grabbed power by alleging massive fraud during elections in late 2020 which Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy won by a landslide.

Suu Kyi, who won the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize, has been under house arrest at a secret location since the coup, ending a brief democratic interlude for the country.

The coup has plunged the country into chaos.

More than 1,500 civilians have been killed by security forces, according to a local aid organisation, and "people's defence forces" have taken up arms against the military across the country.

The NUG has a "democratic legitimacy", Elvestuen said.

institutions and principles afloat", he added.

The deadline for Nobel Peace Prize nominations was January 31. This year's winner will be announced in early October.

Among the other nominations already known to have been submitted are Myanmar's civil disobedience movement, Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg, British naturalist David Attenborough, Pope Francis and Belarusian opposition leader Svetlana Tikhonovskaya.

Thousands of people are eligible to submit nominations for the Nobel Peace Prize, including lawmakers and cabinet members of all countries, former laureates and some university professors.

**AFP, Mizzima**

Several months earlier, on

"It is keeping democratic



Photo: EPA



# NUG WITHDRAWS STATE COUNSELOR'S OBJECTIONS TO ICJ CASE AGAINST MYANMAR

The National Unity Government (NUG) announced on February 1 that it would withdraw all of State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi's objections to the Gambia's indictment of the Myanmar military for genocide against the Rohingya at the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

Aung San Suu Kyi had previously called on the court to dismiss the genocide case that was bought by the Gambia and to cancel the interim measures requested by the Gambia at the first ICJ hearing on December 12, 2019.

"The court has been informed that Myanmar has withdrawn its initial objection through the ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun and it has accepted

the jurisdiction of the court. These objections are for procedural purposes only and are not concerned with the case," said the NUG's announcement.

The ICJ has announced that the genocide case against Myanmar will be heard for a second time from February 21 to 28.

Both. The NUG and the Military Council are vying for the right to represent Myanmar at the hearing. The International Criminal Court (ICC) has yet to announce which group will be allowed to represent Myanmar.

The NUG government said in a statement that if the ICJ accepted the Military Council as its representative,

it would be setting a dangerous precedent that was inconsistent with the attitudes of the UN General Assembly.

The NUG informed ICJ that Kyaw Moe Tun, the UN Permanent Representative for Myanmar, is the only person allowed to deal with the court as the Myanmar military has illegally detained members of the Myanmar judiciary and their subordinates.

The NUG said that if the ICJ recognizes the junta, it will encourage them to continue committing the heinous crimes that they commit on a daily basis and will delay efforts to bring them to justice at the ICJ.



The Hague. Photo: Ruddy Media

# THE CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT, MYANMAR'S LONGEST-RUNNING NON-VIOLENT MOVEMENT

Civil servants were not involved in the first protests against Myanmar's military coup, but as the rallying of non-violent youth intensified across the country, they started the non-violent Civil Disobedience Movement. (CDM)

In the immediate aftermath of the February 1 coup there were protests. They were attended by a cross-section of society including young people, students, workers, doctors, teachers and engineers.

About two weeks after the coup doctors, nurses and surgeons from government-run hospitals, health officers from township health departments and others began participating in the non-violent CDM by refusing to go to work.

## Growth of the CDM

"We do not want to serve under a military dictatorship. If we work under them, as professionals we have to show them respect. They don't know how to do anything, and we cannot do our jobs as we normally would," said a doctor from a government hospital in Yangon where the CDM movement has been operating since mid-February.

Many civil servants did not want to work under the coup administration because they could not accept that the military had deposed a popularly elected government, so they stayed at home instead of going to work.

"I have not gone to work since the coup, later I went on strike. I have seen people being shot in front of me. It has

made me stronger in my resolution to not go to work," said an education official who is involved in the CDM movement.

As government departments came under the coup administration, government officials and staff such as health workers, educational staff, social workers, employees from government and privately owned banks, and staff from the Ministry of Electricity and Energy joined the CDM.

The military junta has admitted that the coup's administrative machinery has been hampered by the CDM's non-violent activities.

Estimates say that 30 percent of government employees are taking part in the CDM. Even the Military Council admitted in a press



"We do not want to serve under a military dictatorship." Photo: EPA



conference that government work was being hampered because about 30 percent of government employees were involved in the CDM movement.

A teacher from a technical university in Irrawaddy Division said: "More than half of the teachers in our school are involved in the CDM movement. The total number of technical universities [involved in the CDM movement] is at least 50 to 55 percent."

The Military Council government has told government employees to stop taking part in the CDM and to return to work. Some have returned to work because they were threatened with arrest, but officials have been unable to contact others.

Not only have government employees been joining the CDM movement, government soldiers have also been joining.

"More than two months after the military coup, more than 2,000 soldiers have joined the CDM movement since April. However, the number of soldiers taking part in the CDM is still small," said Captain Nyi Thuta, a soldier who sets up CDMs. Soldiers from the rank of Private to Major have joined the CDM.

#### **How do CDM members survive**

Those who have been involved in non-violent activities since the military coup have been facing hardships that have been going on for almost a year, according to people involved with the CDM movement.

"Since taking part in the CDM, there have been a lot of difficulties. If you cannot [cope with the difficulties], you have to go back to work. Later, I had to take on casual work to earn a living. We struggle to survive every month," said a train attendant who was a CDM participant.

Former government employees now work as, amongst many other things, masonry workers, salesmen and taxi drivers.

"I miss my old life. But, at a time when our children are fighting for their lives, I do not want the title of teacher. They will not respect us anymore if I go back to work and I will not be able to change my reputation," said a former CDM teacher who used to work at a technical college.

He also said that those involved in the CDM were worried about the

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**A teacher from a technical university in Irrawaddy Division said: "More than half of the teachers in our school are involved in the CDM movement. The total number of technical universities [involved in the CDM movement] is at least 50 to 55 percent."**

junta arresting them. "If anyone provides information to the military [about them], CDM participants are arrested. I have had to move from my neighbourhood. If they know you have taken part in a CDM action you will be arrested the next day, as soon as someone informs on you," he added.

Some people are helping CDM participants and others are prioritizing offering them jobs. Despite this many CDM participants are still in need.

"We connect those who need workers with CDM participants and find jobs for them, but there are still CDM participants who need jobs," said a member of the CDM in Yangon.

The National Unity Government (NUG) has been providing assistance to CDM participants and supporting them with the proceeds from the Spring Lottery, but it has not been able to provide sufficient financial assistance.

#### **Was there a CDM Movement in 1988?**

Author Maung Lwin Mon (Katha) writes that there was also a non-violent rebellion in the '88 uprising against the military junta at that time.

He said: "Even though it was not called the CDM movement in 1988, there were protests in the streets, such as people marching in the streets, the chanting of slogans, students not going to school, people not going to work or people working

but refusing to do anything that supported the government."

Newspapers of the day even reported that civil servants were refusing to work for the government.

"I was in charge of the Foreign Trade Bank and I formed a bank union on the 30th of August. For more than a week after its formation, we only took care of the people's financial affairs and all government payments were stopped," said Maung Lwin Mon (Katha).

In those days, trains, bus services, hotels, gas stations, telecommunications infrastructure and newspapers were all state-owned and were shut down for nearly 20 days due to anti-government protests.

#### **How long will the CDM last?**

It has been almost a year since government officials set up the CDM to oppose the dictator Min Aung Hlaing.

Despite encountering many difficulties during that time CDM participants said they would continue to take part in the CDM until the dictatorship is deposed.

"It has been almost a year, and many difficulties have been overcome. There is nothing worse than that [we have been through]. We will have to fight until the dictatorship is over," said a professor at a technological university.

# MYANMAR'S JOURNEY TO PEACE RAISES QUESTIONS ABOUT DURATION

The upcoming February 12 will mark the historic 75th Anniversary of Diamond Jubilee Union Day commemorating the Panglong Agreement that was signed on February 12, 1947. It was a day on which all ethnic representatives from the mainland and the mountains, led by General Aung San, reached an agreement to restore independence as a countermove to the British colonial government's plan back then to divide the territory under the White Paper Project.

In other words, it was the day for the establishment of the Union of Burma, or Myanmar as it became, with Union Day being splendidly celebrated by successive governments over the decades.

In reality, however, is there a sense of real union in Myanmar today? Does it adhere to the words of the Myanmar national anthem: "accompanied with justice and freedom, the nation having equal rights and pure policy"?

## Push for a Union

In the 1947 Parliament, General Aung San, the architect of independence, stated his view of the union: "The union means multi-ethnic union, not a Unitary Constitution." This was his aspiration. However, efforts to forge a comprehensive union deviated from the path after he was brutally assassinated, leading to endless armed conflicts in what became Burma in 1948.

The push for a true union has

been stymied over the decades of successive military regimes.

Analysing the situation, the first point is that the affairs of the ethnic regions and the states are largely ignored. Secondly, there is a lack of meaningful positions for the ethnic groups at the national level in terms of administration and the ability to carry out decision-making on important affairs. Thirdly, critics point out that ethnic people are unable to fully enjoy their indigenous rights, culture and traditions.

Thus, it is necessary to build a federal democratic union with equality and self-determination so that national unity can be established. Only then can Union Day be fully celebrated around the country.



Gathering for the Union Peace Conference. Photo: EPA



## National unity and peace

Over the decades, successive governments have sought to shape this union, only to fail. The main reason is lack of recognition for the equality and self-determination of the ethnic groups. Over the period of 70 years of internal conflict, several ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) have emerged.

During the terms of the two previous governments, peace talks were conducted in efforts to build national unity. The peace process, which started in August, 2011, resulted in 10 ethnic armed groups signing a National Ceasefire Agreement or NCA over a period of a decade. The battles with the signatories were reduced and the union peace conference were held four times. From the first conference to the fourth, up to three components of the union treaty were signed, reaching a total of 71 agreements.

However, this hard-won progress was lost as a result of the military coup on February 1, 2021.



## The push for a true union has been stymied over the decades of successive military regimes.

### 'Peace' of the Military Council

On February 17, 2021, the Military Junta set up three committees on peace. However, in addition to a lack of progress in the peace process during the year, they had battles against some EAOs which are the members of the NCA.

As for the EAOs that are the signatories to the NCA, they announced that political dialogue would be suspended for a year.

The junta leader said at the meeting on January 31 that they had made 20 statements on the ceasefire from December 21, 2018 to February 28, 2022, and they would extend it until the end of this year. In his New Year address for 2022, he invited all the stakeholders to take part in peace discussions.

Despite all these statements on the ceasefire, the junta continues to fight in ethnic regions. The number of clashes have increased since the February 2021 coup.

On January 7, the Karen National Union (KNU) announced that there were 3,052 battles between the military troops and the KNLA under KNU in 2021, causing 2,190 casualties among junta soldiers and leaving 2,084 others injured. According to local sources, there were a great number of battles in Chin State, Kayah State, and Kachin State in 2021 although the local EAOs did not release the data in detail. The junta armed forces have also carried out several airstrikes in some battles.

Therefore it can be said that the junta's view of peace is to throw fuel on the fire.

### Democratic federal union

It is important to recognize that the rights for ethnic minorities will not be fulfilled just by forming the Ministry of Ethnic Affairs and allocating some positions for the ethnic representatives to protect their rights. This is just superficial. A democratic federal union must be established to guarantee the democracy, equality and the self-determination of the ethnic groups.

According to the Global Peace Index issued by the Institute of Economics and Peace (IEP), an organization which monitors peace worldwide, Myanmar stood at 126 in 2020 but, the rank fell to 130 in 2021 among 163 countries around the world.

Right now, there are battles raging all over Myanmar, raising serious concerns about the peace process.

The peace process over the last decade was a struggle. Now it has disappeared in the blink of an eye, following the disastrous coup.

For these reasons, peace in Myanmar is a distant hope.

As long as the brutal military junta exists, it will not be possible to gain authentic peace and the dream of a genuine democratic federal union will remain an impossible hope.

# VILLAGERS IN SAGAING ACCUSE JUNTA TROOPS OF BURNING HUNDREDS OF HOMES

**M**yanmar villagers and anti-coup fighters have accused troops of burning hundreds of homes in Sagaing in the country's restive northwest, as the junta seeks to crush resistance to its rule.

Mass protests against last year's coup have been met with a brutal military crackdown, and violence has flared across Myanmar as civilians form "people's defence forces" (PDF) to oppose the junta.

A woman from Bin village in the Sagaing region, which has seen recent clashes, said troops had arrived in the early hours of Monday.

"They shelled artillery and fired guns before coming in," she said on Friday, adding that the sound had sent villagers fleeing.

Troops then set fire to around 200 houses, including her own, she said, requesting anonymity.

"We could not bring anything with us. We took some warm clothes only, and then we just ran away."

Troops also torched houses in nearby Inn Ma Hte village after a local pro-junta militia was attacked by anti-coup fighters who then fled, according to one of the rebels.

"When the PDF left the village, the army burnt it down," the fighter said, adding that 600 houses had been torched.

Local media also reported that hundreds of homes had been razed in the two villages, and images obtained by AFP purporting to be of Bin village showed the remains of dozens of burnt-out buildings.

AFP could not independently verify the reports from the remote region.

The fires consumed properties, motorbikes and carts, said another local who was helping to coordinate aid for those displaced from Inn Ma Hte.

"For them, it will be difficult to regain their livelihoods," he said, requesting anonymity.

State-run TV ran a report on Thursday accusing PDF fighters of starting the fires, and published images it claimed showed burnt-out buildings destroyed by "terrorists".

Myanmar has been in chaos since a coup last February, with more than 1,500 people killed in a crackdown on dissent, according to a local monitoring group.

In August the junta said it was considering raising village militias to combat opposition to its rule, as it struggles to assert control over swathes of the country.

Sagaing has seen regular clashes and bloody reprisals.

In mid-December the United States and United Nations condemned the junta over what Washington described as "credible and sickening" reports of the killing of 11 villagers, including children, in the Sagaing region.

**AFP, Mizzima**



An aerial view of fire damage in a village in Sagaing. Photo: EPA

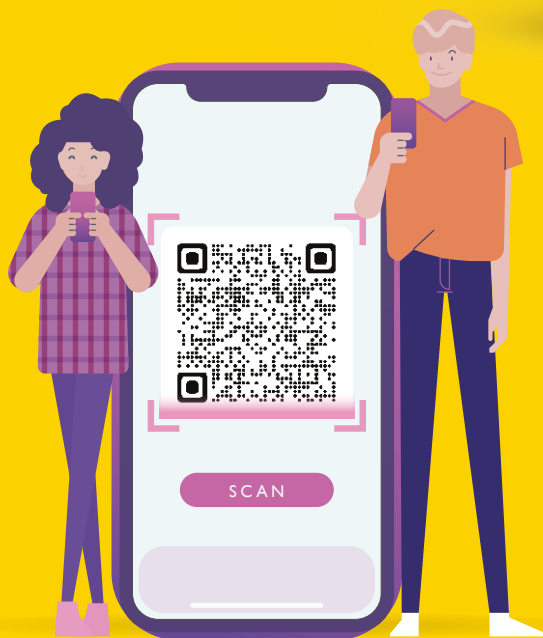


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# MYANMAR'S CHIN REBELS ATTACK MANIPUR PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY BASE

Subir Bhaumik

Myanmar's Chin rebels have attacked a base last month of Manipur's PLA insurgents who killed an Indian Army Colonel in an ambush last November.

The attack on the Manipur People's Liberation Army (PLA) base near a town on the Manipur-Myanmar

border has reportedly led to PLA casualties. The Chin rebels are upset because the Myanmar Army has been using the PLA against them and other resistance groups in that country. But they could also be signaling to Delhi that they can deliver better on Indian security concerns than the Myanmar military junta.

Fighters of the Chin National Army (CNA) attacked a base of Manipur's PLA near the Burmese border town of Tamu. Sources close to CNA say the attack was launched on January 14 night at the PLA base at Senam, about 10km southeast of the border town of Tamu opposite Manipur's Moreh town. The base served as the PLA's 'general headquarters' and housed

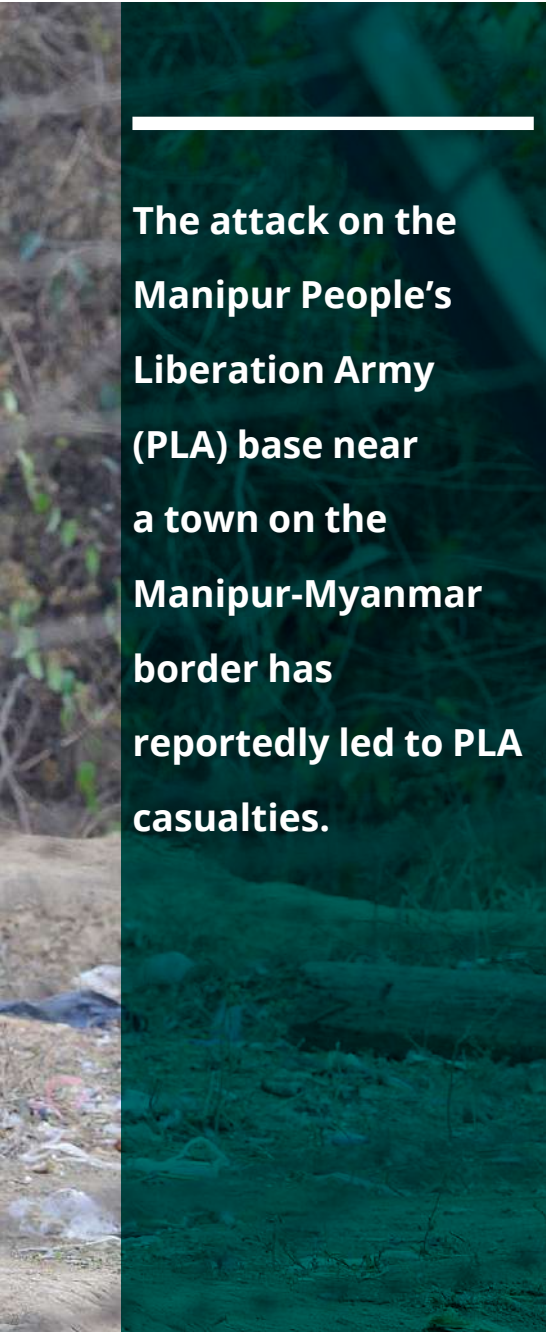


On the Myanmar-India border. Photo: EPA



nearly 100 guerrillas, the sources said.

They said the CNA fighters did not storm the camp or overrun it but directed heavy fire on it and killed at least 10 PLA guerrillas. Though independent verification of the claims of casualties has not yet been possible, the news of the attack has been corroborated by Indian intelligence agencies. The PLA is one of the active insurgent groups in India's North-East, which had claimed responsibility for a brutal attack on a convoy of India's Assam Rifles force in Manipur's southern district of Churachandpur in November last year, in which an Army colonel was killed with his wife and minor child and four troopers.



**The attack on the Manipur People's Liberation Army (PLA) base near a town on the Manipur-Myanmar border has reportedly led to PLA casualties.**

When the rebels launched such a big attack on an Indian army convoy in 2015 and killed 18 soldiers, Indian parachute commandos launched a 'surgical strike' against a rebel base just inside the Myanmar border. They claimed to kill a few rebels but Myanmar objected to the Indian military intrusion strongly. There has been no such Indian military counter-action after the November attack on the Assam Rifles convoy this time. Foreign Secretary Harshvardhan Shringla strongly took up the issue of the use of Myanmar territory by PLA rebels for launching attacks on Indian forces during his recent visit to that country.

"The attack by Chin fighters on the PLA base at Senam does prove the Manipur rebels are maintaining a big base close to an important border town. This is never possible without the collusion of the Burmese Army," said a senior Indian intelligence official on condition of anonymity. He said the Chin rebels are very upset with the Manipur PLA which has helped the Myanmar army in suppression of ethnic insurgencies and public resistance groups in return for sanctuary inside Myanmar.

The 'Tatmadaw' has killed more than 1,500 civilians within a year to suppress the resistance against last February's military takeover. However, many soldiers have also been killed in clashes with resistance forces. They are now having to fight new ethnic Burmese resistance groups like the People's Defence Force (PDF) as well as rebel armies representing ethnic minorities who have come closer to each other to fight the military rule.

"The CNA like other Myanmar resistance groups have also been trying to signal to Delhi that they can deliver better on India's concerns than the Myanmar military junta. Obviously, they seek Indian support not only to fight the Burmese army but also to keep the Arakan Army insurgents out of the Chin Hills which they see as their preserve," the official said.

The Indian Army demolished Arakan Army (AA) bases in Mizoram state last year in a sustained counter-insurgency drive they christened "Operation Sunrise". The Arakan Army, which is fighting for independence in Myanmar's Rakhine province, has attacked contractors working on India's multimodal Kaladan transport project that seeks

to give India's landlocked North-East a sea link through road and the Kaladan river.

The Myanmar Army was then at its wits end fighting the Arakan Army but now has signed a ceasefire with them after last February's coup in the country. India backed Myanmar's Kachin, Chin and Arakanese rebel groups in the 1980-the 90s to deny its own northeastern rebels a free run in Myanmar territory, through which these rebels reached out to China in the 1960-70s for weapons and training. But these covert links were discontinued after the BJP came to power in 1998 and Delhi decided to tackle its own insurgents by developing closer military relations with the Burmese army.

Renewal of the Chinese connection by North-East Indian rebel groups is a constant worry for New Delhi given the bitter border faceoff in the Himalayas. Myanmar is also the prime source of drug trafficking into India's North-East.

The Assam Rifles, which guards India's border with Myanmar, has been seizing huge consignments of narcotics in recent years. The seizures were worth Rs 516 crore in 2019, Rs 688 crore in 2020 and Rs 908 crore in 2021. But Assam Rifles chief Lt Gen P C Nair says this could "well be the tip of the iceberg."

"Exponential rise in seizures of narcotics by our force proves we are vigilant but it also proves more drugs are coming from Myanmar," Lt Gen Nair said in an interview.

"We have been successful in apprehending large volumes of narcotics that have been moving into India lately along the India-Myanmar border. We surely have our intelligence in place, however, we could do better with the added use of technology and greater cooperation among various intelligence and security agencies," he said.

Lt Gen Nair said the Indian government has now extended additional police powers to the Assam Rifles to help it fight the drug menace better.

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# SCIENTISTS URGE TRUE COVID ORIGINS PROBE AHEAD OF OLYMPICS

Nina Larson

Just hours before the Beijing Winter Olympics opening ceremony, a group of international scientists demanded Thursday that China stop blocking an independent investigation into the origins of COVID-19.

Twenty scientists from Europe, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, India and Japan published an open letter harshly criticising Beijing for preventing efforts to truly get to the bottom of how the pandemic began.

Entitled "Allowing a Comprehensive International Investigation of Pandemic Origins would be a True Expression of Olympic Values", the letter warns that failing to uncover the exact origins of the virus that causes COVID-19 puts the world at greater risk of future pandemics.

"The ongoing efforts by China's government to block any meaningful investigation into pandemic origins... have been an affront to the international scientific community and to people everywhere," the letter said.

The scientists urged countries and people around the world to take advantage of the Olympic spotlight to highlight China's obstruction and demand it change course.

"The noble aspiration" of the Olympics "is being undermined through the ongoing efforts of the host government to prevent a comprehensive international investigation into the origins of the Covid-19 pandemic," they wrote.

The scientists accused Beijing of "destroying biological samples, hiding records (and) imprisoning courageous Chinese citizen journalists".

## Protect whistleblowers

They also decried "a series of gag orders preventing Chinese scientists from saying or writing anything about pandemic origins without prior government approval".

Among their recommendations, they urged the World Health Organization to create a "secure whistleblower provision" to make it easier for scientists and experts in China and elsewhere to share information regarding pandemic origins.

Understanding where the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes Covid came from is seen as key to preventing future pandemics.

In the more than two years since SARS-CoV-2 was first detected in the Chinese city of Wuhan, it has officially killed nearly 5.7 million people, although the true figure is unclear.

After much delay, a WHO team of international experts did go to Wuhan in January 2021 to look into the origins of the virus in cooperation with their Chinese counterparts.

## Lab-leak theory

They produced a joint report concluding that the most likely hypothesis was that the virus jumped from bats to humans via an intermediate animal. They deemed a theory that it may have escaped from a laboratory "extremely unlikely".

However, that investigation faced harsh criticism for lacking transparency and access, and for not seriously evaluating the lab-leak theory.

The UN health agency has created a new team of scientists to revive the





stalled probe and to investigate other pathogens that could potentially spur future pandemics.

But Beijing has balked at calls for further investigation on the ground, and has not provided access to raw data from Wuhan laboratories that could potentially help confirm or rule out a connection.

"We really don't know whether it was an accident related to research or whether it was fully natural," Virginie Courtier, an evolutionary geneticist at the Institut Jacques Monod in Paris and co-organiser of Thursday's letter, told AFP.

"We need to investigate more."

The open letter cautioned that "With no established plan in place for a comprehensive and unrestricted international investigation into Covid-19 origins, everyone on earth and future generations remain at heightened and unnecessary risk of future pandemics."

**AFP**



Inside the Wuhan Institute of Virology, Wuhan, China. Photo: EPA

# CHINA SOLDIER IN OLYMPIC TORCH RELAY RAISES IRE IN INDIA

The Beijing Winter Olympics drew a frosty reception in India on Wednesday after a Chinese soldier involved in a deadly Himalayan skirmish took part in the traditional torch relay.

Qi Fabao, a regiment commander for the People's Liberation Army, was among the troops present in 2020 during the high-altitude clash in the Galwan Valley, which is disputed between the world's two most populous nations.

Troops fought a hand-to-hand battle that left at least 20 Indians and four Chinese soldiers dead, though it took Beijing eight months to acknowledge the casualties on its own side.

China's Global Times state media outlet feted Qi - who sustained a serious head injury during the fighting - as a "hero" after reporting his inclusion among the Games' 1,200 torchbearers.

But Qi's reception was less warm among the compatriots of his Galwan Valley adversaries.

"China's aggressive information warfare continues," Indian journalist Abhishek Bhalla wrote on Twitter.

"They took a while to announce their dead but now Qi Fabao... is a torchbearer."

Both countries poured tens of thousands of extra troops into and around the Galwan Valley after the 2020 clash.

High-level talks late last year failed to ease tensions in the region and Indian news website The Wire said Qi's inclusion in the torch relay was "another not-so-good sign of detente" with China.

Qi appeared on Chinese state broadcaster CCTV in December and said he was "ready to return to the battlefield and fight again".

The Winter Olympics opened on Friday but have been dogged by politics and COVID-19 fears.

The United States and several other nations are staging a diplomatic boycott of the Games over human rights concerns relating to the treatment of Uyghurs in the region of Xinjiang.

Skier Arif Mohammad Khan is India's lone entry in the Winter Games, with spectators limited by COVID-19 protocols.

AFP



**China's Global Times state media outlet feted Qi - who sustained a serious head injury during the fighting - as a "hero" after reporting his inclusion among the Games' 1,200 torchbearers.**





The opening ceremony for the Olympics. Photo: EPA

# MYANMAR: 'MEANINGFUL ACTION' NEEDED TO STOP THE SLAUGHTER

**M**arking the first anniversary of the military coup in Myanmar, the independent UN expert monitoring the country implored States on Tuesday to take more robust action, reiterating his call for an arms embargo to stop the killing of innocent people.

"Now is not the time for more rhetoric, it is time for meaningful action", said Tom Andrews, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar.

"The international community must take strong, meaningful steps to cut the junta's access to weapons, funds and legitimacy".

## People 'deserve better'

The UN expert reiterated the urgent need for the Security Council to impose an arms embargo on the Myanmar military and significantly increase financial pressure on the junta.

"The fact that one year has elapsed with no Security Council Resolution imposing a comprehensive arms embargo – as arms continue to flow to the junta and kill innocent people – is unacceptable", he stated.

"The people of Myanmar deserve better from the United Nations".

## 'Criminal enterprise'

The Special Rapporteur said that he would soon release a report identifying the weapons in the junta's arsenal and where they came from.

Mr. Andrews pointed out that the military junta is functioning as "a criminal enterprise", committing murder, torture, abductions and forced displacement – while stealing revenue and seizing assets of the people of Myanmar.

"What is worse, they appear to be getting away with it. Their attacks continue unabated. The suffering of the Myanmar people is steadily





increasing", he continued.

Recent months have seen an even further escalation of violence, and a campaign of terror now widespread across the country.

"I have received more reports of mass killings, attacks on hospitals and humanitarian targets, and the bombing and burning of villages", he added.

### Unwavering commitment

"I am amazed at the resilience of the Myanmar people. In the face of aerial assaults, and mass arrest and torture, they continue to strike, to protest, to speak out and to defend themselves. They need and deserve stronger support from the international community", he said. "The best and worst of humanity is unfolding in Myanmar".

Special Rapporteurs are appointed by the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council to examine and report back on a country situation.

The positions are honorary and they are not paid for their work.

### New UN humanitarian response plan

Meanwhile, Jens Laerke, Deputy Spokesperson for the UN humanitarian office, OCHA, noted that the newly published 2022 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for Myanmar requests a record \$826 million to assist 6.2 million people in need.

The 2022 plan represents double the amount requested last year, reflecting a growing crisis that has plunged an estimated 14.4 million people into humanitarian need.

Since the military coup, conflict and insecurity has continued, displacing more than 400,000 people to camps, displacement sites and with host communities. Many others have crossed into Thailand and India or sought refuge in the jungle, lacking adequate food, shelter, sanitation and medical care.

### Sick and hungry

The economic and political turmoil of 2021, combined with the devastating impact of COVID-19, have driven half the population into poverty, with many unable to feed their families.

Over 13 million people are moderately or severely food insecure and malnutrition is expected to worsen among children, unless parental support is increased.

"Our ability to save lives and reduce suffering on this scale will depend on increased funding, improved access and removal of bottlenecks such as visa delays and banking restrictions", said Mr. Laerke.

"Humanitarian agencies must be allowed access to displacement sites to conduct needs assessments and deliver lifesaving aid including food, water and health care", he added.

*Courtesy of UN News*



People line up for aid. Photo: UN News



Photo: Bckfwd

## KACHIN STATE

In a statement last week to mark 61st Kachin Revolution Day, the National Unity Government (NUG) stated that they would join hands with the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) and army for an end to the military dictatorship and the establishment of a federal democracy. A similar declaration was made by the CRPH. At the same time, the chair of the KIO made a statement to say they would work with the NUG. Meanwhile, there have been various clashes in Kachin State. A police station in Mawhan village, Mohnyin Township, was attacked and seized by the KIA and allied PDF groups on the morning of February 3, according to DVB. Local sources said that two officers were killed and a number were arrested during the raid. A resident relayed how the KIA and PDF launched an attack at about 3 am. An exchange of gunfire lasted about two hours... Weapons were seized and the station was set on fire. In addition, there was a report of another KIA-PDF attack on a military outpost in Putao's Sumpian village on February 1. A military camp in Jarayan village, Hpakant township was attacked by a KIA-PDF alliance on February 4, the Kachin News Group reported.





Photo: Hong Sar for Mizzima

## Entertainers, performers criticized for attending opening ceremony of MRTV Diamond Jubilee Museum on Silent Strike day

**M**yanmar's junta chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing launched the MRTV Diamond Jubilee Museum, the MRTV News Channel and the MRTV DTH system at the MRTV compound in Tatkon of Nay Pyi Taw Council Area on February 1, and met with some entertainers and performers. Members of the military council, the junta's ministers, military officers and some famous entertainers, performers and musicians attended the ceremony, reported the junta's media. Photos of Min Aung Hlaing awarding cash and prizes to those performers spread on Facebook, and then the performers were strongly criticized by the general public. Other performers who have participated in the pro-democracy revolution also condemned the performers who attended the junta's ceremony. The junta has arrested and imprisoned actors, singers and entertainers who opposed it. On the other hand, it has financed performers who support them. Several famous Burmese actors including Paing Dagon, Pyay Ti Oo and Ye Dight have still been detained for their pro-democracy activities. On February 1, the majority of the people of Myanmar, to show their objection to the junta, actively and successfully participated in silent strikes which emptied streets across the country on the first anniversary of the coup. The junta used various means to disturb the silent strikes, by threatening shop owners and by holding sports events and ceremonies.

# MYANMAR DIVESTMENT HIT TELENOR PROFITS IN 2021

Profits at Norwegian telecoms operator Telenor tumbled in 2021, the company announced on Wednesday last week, with its divestment from Myanmar following last year's military coup playing a major role.

Annual net profits dropped from 17.3 billion kroner in 2020 to 1.5 billion kroner (153.6 million euros) last year, with the falling profitability of local subsidiary Telenor Myanmar accounting for almost half of the drop.

The remainder of the fall was due to gains on disposals in 2020 and negative currency effects.

Telenor in July said it would sell its local subsidiary Telenor Myanmar to Lebanese financial firm M1 Group after the army ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi in February 2021 and brutally repressed dissent.

The deal remains subject to Burmese regulatory approval.

"That has taken a long time and we are still waiting for that. We don't know what the outcome will be," said chief executive Sigve Brekke.

The group's results, especially fourth-quarter profits of 600 million kroner, fell short of analysts' expectations.

Earnings predictions for 2022 have been "too optimistic" and concerns over the impact of rising energy prices will reduce estimates for this year, according to Norne Securities analyst Zilvinas Jusaitis.

Telenor shares were trading 4.56 percent lower on the Oslo stock market mid-morning on Wednesday.

Media reports claim the junta is hostile to a sale to M1. Civil society

and rights groups have criticised the move as they fear Myanmar's telecommunications network will be controlled by a firm more conciliatory towards the regime.

In September, Telenor said the military junta demanded it install equipment to intercept communications.

Telenor in January also sold its stake in a digital payment service in Myanmar following the coup and the army's crackdown on resistance.

Demand for digital services drove Telenor's results in northern Europe, but stronger competition and the Covid-19 pandemic affected its performance in Asia, with tourism-dependent Thailand suffering in particular.

AFP



Photo: EPA



# YANGON'S SAVOY HOTEL SHUTS ITS DOORS IN WAKE OF MYANMAR CRISIS

**Y**angon's iconic Savoy Hotel has announced that it is permanently closing. In a press release this week, Savoy Hotel Yangon said they were sorry to inform guests and friends that the Savoy will be permanently closed.

"We would like to thank you for all your stays as hotel guests, visits

of our restaurants and Captains Bar, enjoying events and sharing wonderful moments with us," they said in their press release, adding, "We wish you all the best for the future."

The five-star hotel opened its doors 25 years ago, when Myanmar was under military regime rule, with the hope that the then restricted

tourist destination would eventually open up.

A number of hotels in Yangon and around Myanmar have had to close or attempt to tick over due to the drop in foreign and local tourists following last year's February military coup and two years of the COVID-19 scare and restrictions.



Photo: Savoy Hotel.

# INDIA MAINTAINS AID LEVEL TO MYANMAR

India's union budget 2022 has allocated 17,250 crore rupees (\$2.3 billion) towards aid to other nations, including crisis-hit Myanmar and Taliban-led Afghanistan, according to Quartz.com.

Myanmar, under heavy economic pressure due to the COVID-19

measures and last February's military coup, has been allocated Rs 600 crore (\$80 million), the same as last year.

India provides development aid to friendly nations under its key Neighbourhood First policy, in part to offset the influence of China in the region.

India provides aid to Myanmar, Bhutan, Mauritius, Nepal, Maldives, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Mongolia, Eurasian and Latin American countries, and other developing countries.



Photo: Darklabs-India



Penrose Thitsa

## ILO reveals 1.6 m jobs in Myanmar last year

About 1.6 million jobs were lost in Myanmar last year, according to a press release by the International Labour Organization (ILO), with the coup compounding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. One year on from the coup in Myanmar on 1 February last year, the labour market in Myanmar continues to deteriorate. "Key sectors have suffered considerable impacts. Rural farmers were hard hit by armed conflict, violence and insecurity. Construction, garments, and tourism and hospitality were also among the hardest hit industries in 2021, with year-on-year employment losses reaching an estimated 31 percent, 27 percent and 30 percent, respectively," said the press release. Women suffered disproportionately more reductions in working hours and employment than men. Women also accounted for the vast majority of employment losses in the clothing industry, as well as tourism and hospitality. "The military takeover and COVID-19 pandemic have put millions of workers in Myanmar in a grim situation. We are witnessing a reversal of years of progress in the labour market. Should this continue, it can only lead to increased poverty and insecurity across the country," said Donglin Li, ILO Myanmar Liaison Officer/Representative.









## CHINESE LUNAR NEW YEAR IN YANGON

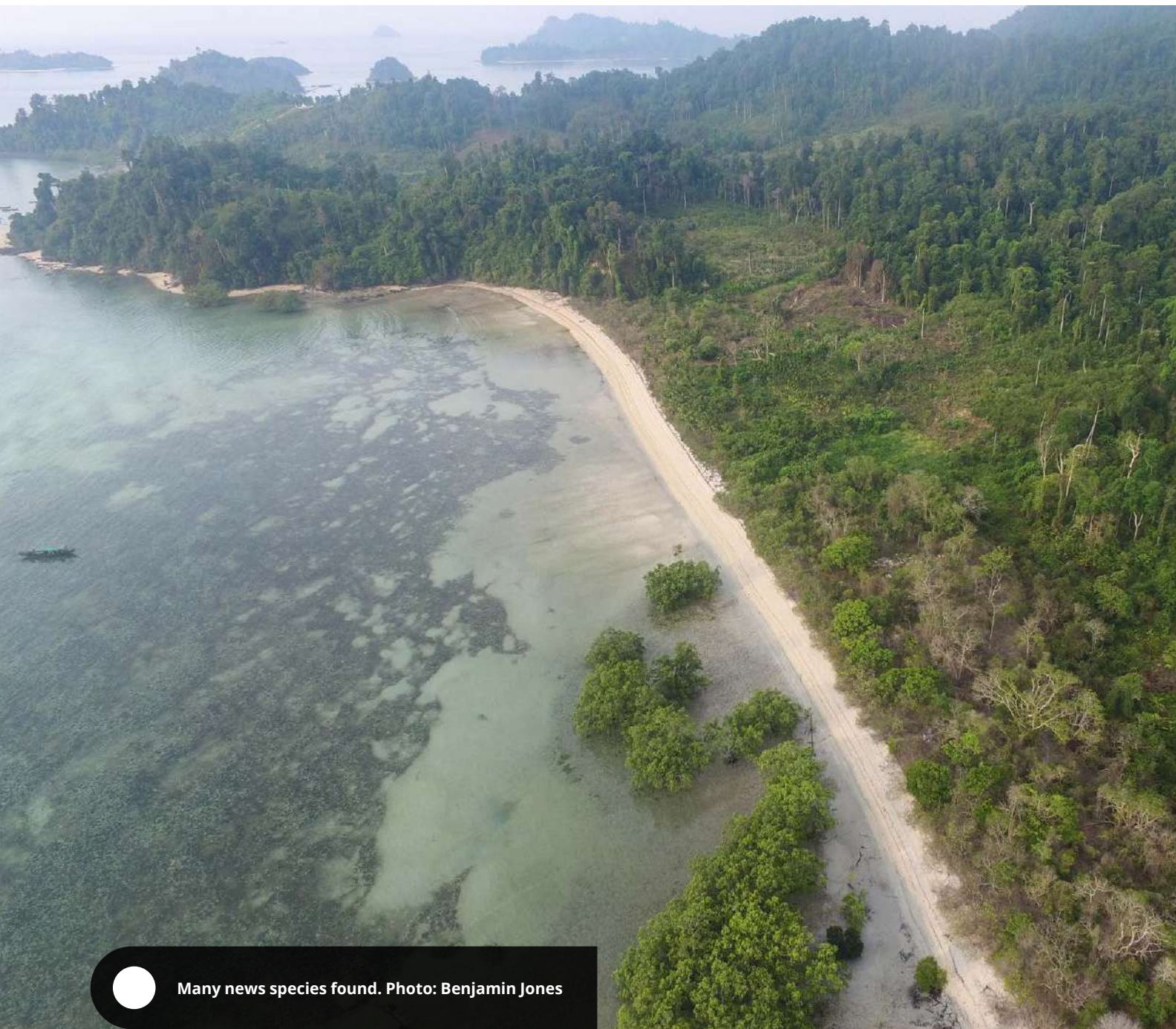
**P**eople pray inside the Guanyin Gumiao Temple, which was built in 1823 by the Cantonese community of Yangon, during the Chinese Lunar New Year's Day in Yangon on 31 January. The Lunar New Year, also known as Spring Festival in China, falls on 01 February 2022, marking the beginning of the Year of the Tiger. Photo: EPA



# MORE THAN 200 NEW SPECIES FOUND IN MEKONG REGION INCLUDING MYANMAR: WWF

Scientists discovered more than 200 new species across the greater Mekong region in 2020, according to a WWF report, despite the threats posed by climate change and human activities such as logging.

**Images of the Popa langur monkey, which takes its name from the extinct volcano Mount Popa in central Myanmar, were caught by camera traps.**



Many news species found. Photo: Benjamin Jones



The finds include a new primate, a colourless cavefish and an iridescent snake with an unusual non-overlapping pattern of scales.

In all, 224 new species of plants and vertebrate animals were found in the region - which includes Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam - WWF said in its "New Species Discoveries" report.

Images of the Popa langur monkey, which takes its name from the extinct volcano Mount Popa in central Myanmar, were caught by camera traps.

The mountain is still home to the largest population of the reclusive simian, around 100 individuals, WWF said.

Only around 200 to 250 of the monkeys - which are threatened by hunting, logging and loss of habitat - are thought to survive in total.

In Vietnam, researchers found the vivid-coloured Mount Ky Quan San horned frog at an altitude of more than 2,000 metres (6,500 feet) on the peak which gives it its name.

The greater Mekong region, with

landscapes ranging from jungles to mountains and karst formations, is a hugely important biodiversity hotspot.

It is home to some of the world's most impressive - and most endangered - species including the tiger, the Asian elephant and the Mekong giant catfish.

WWF have said the rate of discovery of new species - more than 3,000 since 1997 - shows the importance of preserving the region's fragile ecosystems.

**AFP**



Popa langur monkey. Photo: AFP





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