

BLOODSHED IN BAGO | SUBDUED WATER FESTIVAL IN MYANMAR AND THAILAND

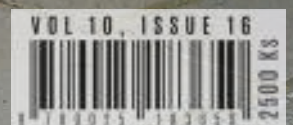
# mizzima | WEEKLY

myanmar news & insight



## AMBASSADOR OUSTED

Myanmar military take control of UK Embassy





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# WORSENING SITUATION

EDITORIAL

**mizzima**  
WEEKLY

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**MIZZIMA MAGAZINE**

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Judging by developments in Myanmar over the last ten days, the military junta appears to be stepping up the violence and the fear in order to attempt to crush the country's entrenched Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM).

The bloodshed in Bago and the sentencing of 19 people to death, using a military tribunal, demonstrates a ratcheting up of pressure on the people of Myanmar.

As we report in this issue of Mizzima Weekly, the bloodshed worsened last week, with accounts trickling out from Bago of the deaths of over 80 civilians in a brutal crackdown bringing heavy weapons to bear.

As we attempt to keep up with the total death toll, it now more than likely stands at 700 or more in what is little short of a civil war pitting armed security forces against a largely unarmed protest movement.

Last week, an international human rights group condemned Myanmar's junta for sentencing 19 people to die, in the first known use of the death penalty since the military seized power.

State media reported Friday that 19 people had been sentenced to death for robbery and murder by a military court, with 17 of them tried in absentia. They were arrested in Yangon's North Okkalapa township - one of six areas in the commercial hub currently under martial law, meaning anybody arrested there is tried by a military tribunal. The six townships are home to about two million people - more than a quarter of Yangon's sprawling population.

While Myanmar has long had the death penalty in its penal code, the country has not carried out an execution in over 30 years, said Phil Robertson, deputy director of the Asia division for Human Rights Watch. He said it indicates the military is prepared to go back to a time when Myanmar was executing people.

Trying cases in a military court means there can be no appeals, and there are no guarantees of a free and fair trial in any way, shape or form, he added. The sentences could be a tactic to force protesters off the streets and back to work, he said, as a nationwide boycott has brought much of Myanmar's economy to a halt.

What is clear, according to Robertson and others, is the junta core mission is to use force and violence to get everybody off the streets and to break apart the civil disobedience movement. Using a combination of violence, intimidation and arrests - the arrests targeted and untargeted - Myanmar's State Administration Council is seeking to crush the freedom and democracy movement and bend the people to their will.

What is clear is that the military junta did not expect the massive public pushback when they executed their coup back on 1 February.

Now the military is demonstrating the lie that they are there to protect the people. Their actions street by street, city by city, indicate they are at war with their people. No PR spin can cover this up.

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**PHOTO OF MYANMAR AMBASSADOR STANDING OUTSIDE THE MYANMAR EMBASSY IN LONDON BY EPA**











## ON THE ROAD IN MANDALAY

**P**rotesters take to the streets last week in Mandalay calling for justice and a return to democracy after the military coup. Photo: EPA



## POPE SHARES SOLIDARITY WITH MYANMAR YOUTH AS PROTESTERS DECORATE EASTER EGGS

**A**nti-coup demonstrators in Myanmar decorated boiled eggs, as Pope Francis in his Easter message expressed solidarity with the country's youth.

Myanmar has been gripped by turmoil since a February 1 coup ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi and derailed the country's tentative transition to democracy.

Security forces have sought to quell a mass uprising with lethal force and the death toll reached 564 as of late Sunday, according to local monitoring group Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP).

On Easter, decorated eggs became the latest emblem of resistance as scores of Myanmar protesters painted political messages on them and left them on neighbours' doorsteps.

Pictures posted on social media showed eggs adorned with images of Suu Kyi and three-finger salutes -- a protest gesture -- while others said "save our people" and "democracy".

"I am Buddhist but I have joined this campaign because it is easy to get a hold of eggs. I spent almost one hour decorating my eggs," a Yangon-based protester told AFP.

"I am praying for Myanmar's

current situation to get back to democracy."

Delivering his Easter message at the St. Peter's Basilica on Sunday, Pope Francis singled out Myanmar youth "committed to supporting democracy and making their voices heard peacefully, in the knowledge that hatred can be dispelled only by love".

Myanmar's most senior Catholic, Cardinal Charles Bo, also shared an Easter message on Twitter: "Jesus has risen: Hallelujah - Myanmar will rise again!"

**AFP**

## TOTAL TO CONTINUE GAS PRODUCTION IN MYANMAR

**F**rench energy giant Total will not halt gas production in coup-hit Myanmar, its chief said Sunday, despite growing calls for foreign companies to sever ties with the junta as it escalates a brutal crackdown on dissent.

Chief executive Patrick Pouyanne said Total had a duty to stay the course because gas it produces supplies electricity to millions in Yangon as well as western Thailand.

"Can a company like Total decide to cut off the electricity supply to millions of people -- and in so doing, disrupt the operation of hospitals, businesses?" he said in an interview with the Journal du Dimanche.

Pouyanne said he was "outraged by the repression" in Myanmar but would refuse to "act to the detriment of our local employees and the Burmese population who are already suffering so much."

Hundreds have been killed in demonstrations since the military ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi on February 1, prompting widespread calls for foreign companies to halt operations that benefit the junta.

Italy's Benetton and Sweden's H&M have suspended all new orders from the country and French energy giant EDF suspended its activities, including a \$1.5-billion project to build a hydroelectric dam.

Demonstrations against the coup -- supported by a widespread strike by civil servants -- have crippled Myanmar's economy, leaving gas exports as one of the junta's main sources of revenue.

The military-controlled Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise has partnerships with Total and US rival Chevron and generates annual revenues of around \$1.0 billion from the sale of natural gas.

Total paid around \$230 million to the Myanmar authorities in 2019 and \$176 million in 2020 in the form of taxes and "production rights", according to the company's own financial statements.

It has not yet paid any taxes -- worth around \$4 million per month -- to the military since the putsch, because the banking system in the country has ceased to operate, Pouyanne said.

He said Total had decided not to put the taxes into an escrow account saying it could put local managers at risk of being arrested and imprisoned.

Total would donate the "equivalent" of the taxes it will owe the Myanmar government to organisations working on human rights in the country, Pouyanne added.

**AFP**



# SOUTH KOREA CONSIDERING MYANMAR TRAVEL BAN

The government could consider banning travel to Myanmar and arrange additional temporary flights to help South Koreans leave the country if the political unrest there worsens, a foreign ministry official said Monday, *Koreabizwire*

reported.

The government has helped organize one or two temporary flights a week from the Southeast Asian nation since the Feb. 1 military coup that plunged the nation into turmoil.

So far, a total of 411 out of some 3,500 South Koreans living there have returned home on those flights, according to the official.

Another 274 people will be flying home this week, the official said.

---

## IS AUSTRALIA FINALLY STEPPING UP TO THE PLATE ON MYANMAR?

The Australian Embassy in Myanmar joined 11 other embassies this week signing a heartfelt statement in support of those on the streets and putting their lives on the line for democracy and freedom.

This is the second statement released by the twelve embassies in Myanmar. Their 12 February statement was conventionally directed state-to-state calling on the military junta 'to refrain from violence against demonstrators and civilians, who are protesting the overthrow of their legitimate government.'

Australian Embassy's signing of the statement aligning itself with the Myanmar people is significant.

The statement positions the Australian embassy in a more friendly and open orientation regarding the civil disobedience movement (CDM) and democracy activists.

It is an effort that may alleviate some frustration of Australian diplomats in Yangon in the face of Canberra inaction.

The statement appears to respond to widespread calls on the streets for R2P; desperate calls for effective international action to stop the military regime's continuing commitment of atrocity crimes.

'Violence has to stop, all political detainees must be released, and democracy should be restored,' the statement demanded.

This is pertinent given the UN

Special Envoy's recent warning to the UN Security Council that 'a bloodbath is immanent.' Indeed, as one commentator observed, the bloodbath is happening.

Australia's co-signing of the Embassies statement parallels the Australian defence force's co-signing of the Joint Chiefs of Defence letter to the military junta released on 27 March.

This was a powerful message to the military junta as Asian countries Japan and Korea were signatories. The last time a joint statement by Chiefs of Defence was issued was 30 years ago during the Cambodian Peace process.

Protocol dictates that the Australian Embassy's signing of the joint statement would have been pre-approved by the Australian Government. However, the statement's empathetic tone contrasts starkly with the overall inaction of the Australian Government to date.

Australia's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Marise Payne (pictured), has released two short statements since the crisis began. On 1 February, Payne expressed deep concern over the military's seizing control of government apparatus. It was not until a 12 February statement by Australian representatives at the UN Human Rights Commission that a government formally declared the junta's actions a coup.

Payne's second statement came on 7th March. Following mounting evidence of atrocity crimes and

pressure from local and global human rights activists, Payne announced the suspension of Australia's limited military engagement with the Junta.

This move came after it appeared that the Australian Government's was unable to secure the release of respected economist and advisor to Aung San Suu Kyi, Professor Sean Turnell who was arbitrarily detained in Naypyidaw on 6 February.

By 9 March, the military junta announced it had charged Turnell under the colonial era official secrets act which carries a maximum penalty of 14 years imprisonment.

Despite new and increasingly strong targeted sanctions imposed by the US, UK, EU, Canada, and New Zealand, the Australian Government has not revised its pre-coup sanctions regime. Australia's limited sanctions fails to target Min Aung Hlaing, the military's cash cow conglomerates, the Myanmar Economic Corporation (MEC) and the Myanmar Economic Holdings Limited (MEHL) or other significant junta figures and their families.

Other Ambassadorial signatories to the statements include Canada; the Delegation of the EU and European Union Member States with presence in Myanmar: the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden; New Zealand; Norway; the Republic of Korea; Switzerland; the United Kingdom and the United States.



Myanmar Ambassador Kyaw Zwar Minn gestures to journalists last week outside the Myanmar Embassy in London. Photo: EPA





# AMBASSADOR OUSTED

## Myanmar military take control of UK Embassy

**M**yanmar's struggle for control played out on the streets of London last week after what was described as a "mini-coup" took place at the Myanmar Embassy. Britain condemned "bullying" by the Myanmar junta after the country's ambassador to London was ousted in an extraordinary diplomatic coup having called for the release of civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

Diplomats loyal to the Myanmar military authorities seized control of the embassy on 7 April, leaving ambassador Kyaw Zwar Minn locked out in the street.



The ambassador said the defence attache had taken over the mission in "a kind of coup", two months after the military seized power in Myanmar, and urged the international community to help his country.

"Please assist our country and help our country as without international assistance we will not be able to get out of this mess," he told reporters outside the embassy.

The junta recalled Kyaw Zwar Minn last month after he issued a statement urging them to release Suu Kyi and deposed civilian President Win Myint.

British foreign minister Dominic Raab tweeted his support for the

ambassador, who spent the night in his car outside the embassy.

"We condemn the bullying actions of the Myanmar military regime in London yesterday, and I pay tribute to Kyaw Zwar Minn for his courage," Raab wrote.

"The UK continues to call for an end to the coup and the appalling violence, and a swift restoration of democracy."

UK sources said the Myanmar authorities had given official notice of Kyaw Zwar Minn's termination as ambassador, and in line with diplomatic policy, the government had no choice but to accept it.

The defence attache has installed

deputy ambassador Chit Win as charge d'affaires.

Myanmar's military spokesman Zaw Min Tun confirmed the country's foreign affairs ministry had been in touch with their UK counterparts in London over the incident.

"We have sent an official appointment letter already for Chit Win as the chief of mission there. They have accepted," he said, adding the ambassador was required to return home.

Daily protests in Myanmar demanding a return of democracy following a February military coup have rocked the country and brought a brutal response from the armed



Myanmar Ambassador Kyaw Zwar Minn stands locked out of the embassy. He spent the night in his car. Photos: EPA





forces, with more than 600 civilians killed according to a local monitoring group.

Kyaw Zwar Minn raised the prospect he could die if he returned to Myanmar. Asked if thought he would be killed if went back as military leadership has requested, he said: "Who knows?"

Britain confirmed that it could no longer recognise Myanmar's ambassador in London after the junta issued a formal notification that he had been withdrawn for supporting the deposed government.

UK sources said the government, in line with diplomatic policy, had to accede to the junta's decision

regarding Kyaw Zwar Minn, after he was locked out of the embassy last week.

Kyaw Zwar Minn, a former colonel of 30 years standing in the military, spoke ahead of a meeting at Britain's foreign ministry at 1:00 pm (1200 GMT), and characterised the move by the UK not to recognise him "a British decision, not mine."

He also said he was in no doubt that the military junta in Myanmar would regard him as a traitor because he condemned the recent coup. He added he had not been in contact with arrested civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi following his removal.

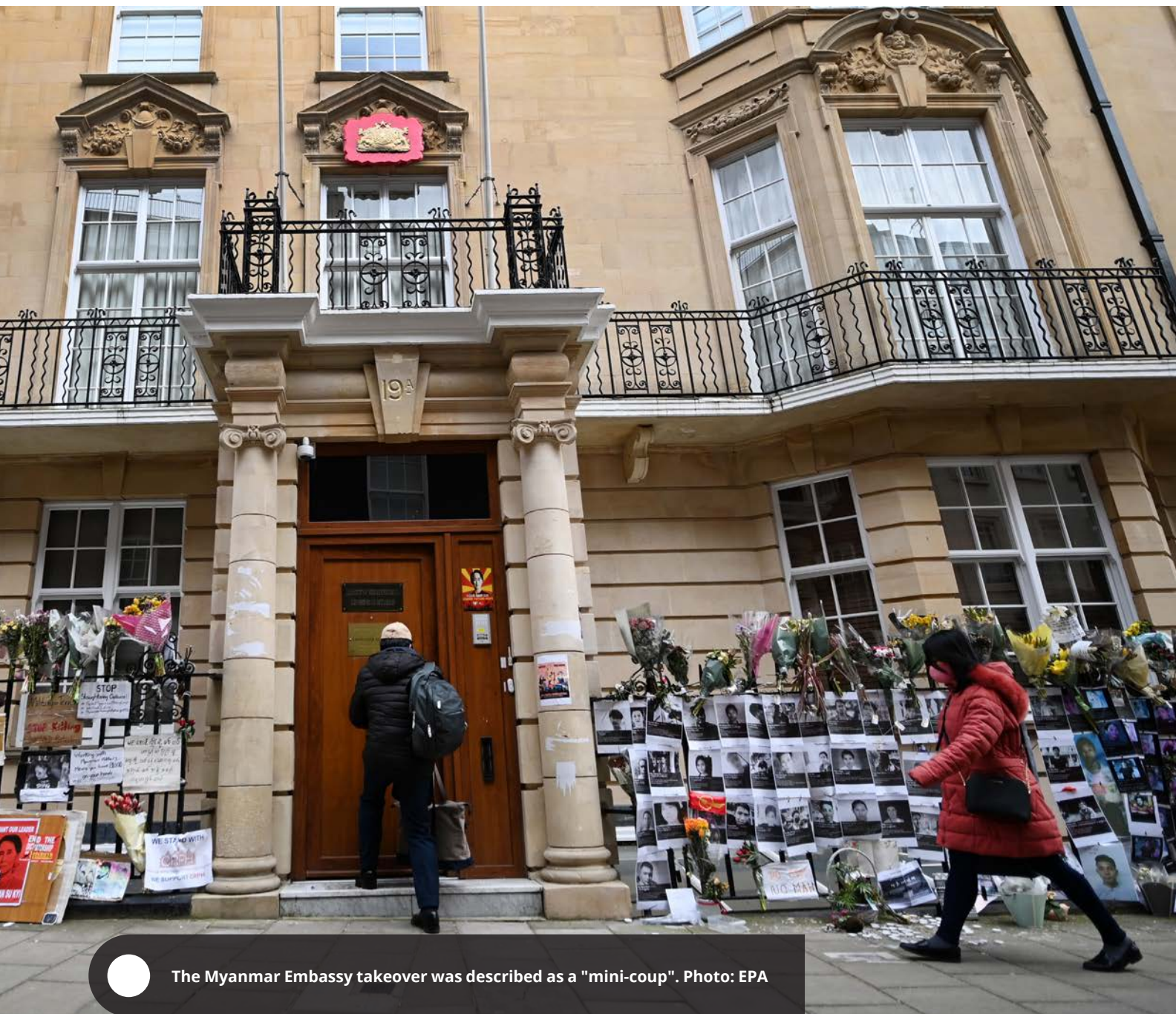
In a statement read out earlier on

Thursday on behalf of the ambassador by Min Hein, a member of the Myanmar community in London said the ousted envoy's defence attache, Chit Win, had taken over the mission in "a kind of coup", two months after the military seized power in Myanmar

"We have also learned that Chit Win's team are threatening embassy staff with severe punishment if those staff do not continue to work for the military junta," Min Hein added.

Britain has reportedly offered the former Myanmar Ambassador Kyaw Zwar Minn safe shelter.

**AFP, additional reporting by Mizzima**



The Myanmar Embassy takeover was described as a "mini-coup". Photo: EPA

# BLOODSHED IN BAGO

There was shock last week after reports seeped out that the Myanmar security forces had used rifles and heavy weapons to kill over 80 people in a district in Bago city.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since the military ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi in February, with protesters refusing to submit to the junta and demanding a return to democracy.

After over two months of military rule, efforts to verify deaths and confirm news of crackdowns have been curtailed by the junta's throttling of mobile data within the country -- shunting most of the population into an information blackout.

## Shocking attack

Details of a brutal crackdown in the city of Bago, 65 kilometres (40 miles) northeast of Yangon, took a full day to emerge, as residents told AFP of continued violence by the army which forced them to flee to nearby villages.

By Saturday evening, the Assistance Association of Political Prisoners -- a local monitoring group tracking deaths -- confirmed "over 80 anti-coup protesters were killed by security forces in Bago on Friday".

AFP-verified footage shot early Friday showed protesters hiding behind sandbag barricades wielding homemade rifles, as explosions could be heard in the background.

Authorities had refused to let rescue workers near the bodies, said a resident.

"They piled up all the dead bodies, loaded them into their army truck and drove it away," he told AFP.

State-run New Light of Myanmar newspaper on Saturday blamed the crackdown on "rioters" and reported only one dead.

The United Nations office in Myanmar tweeted late Saturday night that it was following the bloodshed in

Bago, where medical treatment had been "denied" to the injured.

"We call on the security forces to allow medical teams to treat the wounded," it said.

Bago's violence will add to AAPP's current death toll of 618 civilians killed since the coup.

The junta has a far lower number: 248, according to a spokesman Friday.

## 'They will not rule us'

Unrest also erupted Saturday in the northwestern town of Tamu, near the Myanmar-India border, where protesters fought back when soldiers tried to tear down barricades erected to protect their community.

Two civilians were killed when soldiers started randomly shooting, said a local, with protesters retaliating by throwing a bomb that exploded and overturned a military truck, killing over a dozen soldiers.

"Some are in hiding - we are worried that our people will be hurt as a reprisal" she told AFP, adding that all Tamu's residents are calling for is "down with the dictatorship".

Despite the daily bloodshed, protesters have continued to take to the streets, with demonstrators manifesting their discontent in pointedly creative ways.

In commercial hub Yangon, crimson paint - representing the blood already spilled - was splashed across the streets in view of the historic Shwedagon Pagoda.

Flyers with the words "They will not rule us" were scattered across Yangon neighbourhoods.

State-run media announced Friday night that 19 people had been sentenced to death for robbery and murder under a military tribunal - with 17 of them tried in absentia.

Human Rights Watch condemned the sentences Saturday as a way to sow fear in the anti-coup movement, as Norway's foreign minister called

the use of capital punishment "unacceptable".

## 'Fight the common enemy'

The mounting bloodshed has also angered some of Myanmar's 20 or so armed ethnic groups, who control swathes of territory mostly in border regions.

Unrest erupted Saturday in northern Shan State, as Ta'ang





National Liberation Army (TNLA), an ethnic rebel group, mounted a pre-dawn attack on a police station, said TNLA's Brigadier General Tar Bhone Kyaw, who declined to say more.

Local media reported more than a dozen police officers were killed, while TNLA said the military retaliated with air strikes on their troops, killing at least one rebel soldier.

State-run television reported in the evening that "terrorist armed groups" attacked the police station with heavy weaponry and set it on fire.

The attack comes the same day TNLA's ally, the Arakan Army (AA) - also a prominent rebel group based in western Rakhine state - issued a statement reiterating their support for

the anti-coup movement.

Two other outfits - the Karen National Union (KNU) and the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) - have stepped up attacks on military and police in recent weeks.

The military has retaliated with air strikes in KNU's territory, which the rebel group said has displaced more than 24,000 civilians in Karen state by Saturday.

#### 'At the brink of state failure'

"Your collective, strong action is needed immediately," Myanmar's Ambassador to the UN Kyaw Moe Tun told a Security Council meeting on Friday, proposing a no-fly zone, an arms embargo and more targeted sanctions against members of the

military.

An independent analyst with the International Crisis Group, also warned the council that Myanmar was "at the brink of state failure".

"(The junta's) actions may be creating a situation where the country becomes ungovernable," said Richard Horsey.

China and Russia wield veto power at the Security Council and generally oppose sanctions.

But Beijing - the top ally of Myanmar's military - has voiced growing concern about instability, and has said it is speaking to "all parties".

**AFP**



Over 80 people were reported killed in the fighting in Bago. A protestor fires a firework at security forces. Photo: Facebook

# ASTROLOGICAL STARS BRING STRENGTH TO WOMEN IN FACE OF BRUTALITY

Zin Min Maung

With the coming out of the Thingyan letter or an annual prediction based on astrological aspects for the coming year of the Myanmar calendar which begins in mid-April, Myanmar people, mostly women, have gained strength from the predictions based on the astrological aspects of Myanmar astrologers amidst the military's crackdown on the people.

While trying to summon up the strength from the optimistic predictions of the astrologers since the coup, some Myanmar women are looking to the predictions for hope.

"The god of Sunday Planet will descend to the human abode while

holding a water pot in one hand and a flower branch in other hand while riding a buffalo," said Daw Cho, a mother of two, living in Yangon.

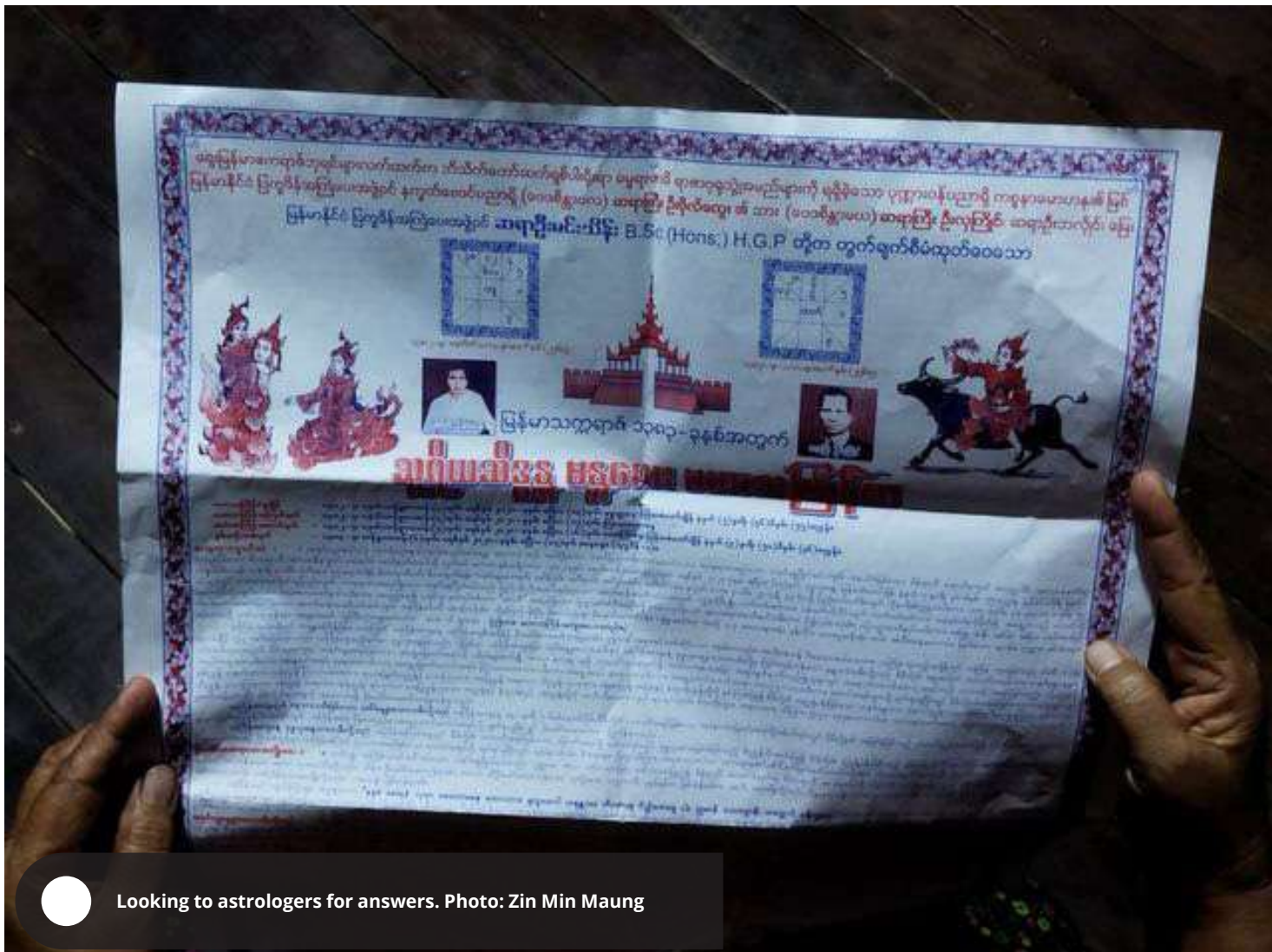
"It brings a good omen that a peace will prevail in our country soon," she said. "According to my experiences, a pot filled with water in the hand of the god of Sunday Planet means clashes and brutal crackdown will end soon," she said, hopefully.

The Thingyan letter for the 1382 ME predicts for every month. Its prediction for Tagu (which starts in mid-April and the beginning month of Myanmar calendar) says "With high prestige and success at home and abroad, the image of the country will be higher and improved.

The friendship with big democratic countries would be strengthened, and trade and investment would be improved. People's power and activities would bring a good result and the aspirations of the people will be realized. Philanthropic activities will be alive with more participation from the people."

"According to this prediction for Tagu month, I am confident that our country will be reeling back to normal after new year's day," Daw Cho said, "Not only the Thingyan letter, other astrologers have predicted that our country will recover from bad situation after 12 April."

Like other women, Daw Cho and neighbouring housewives have been



Looking to astrologers for answers. Photo: Zin Min Maung



struggled for a livelihood since the COVID-19 pandemic which started to hit Myanmar in March 2020.

The military coup on 1 February was another blow to lives of the people given the problems caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Another housewife operating a teashop together with her husband is Daw Moe, 52, living in Bago, about 50 miles northeast of Yangon.

She put high hope on the vaccines to recover from the pandemic because her business has been damaged by the pandemic.

"I felt hopeless when the coup happened. I gained strength from predictions of the astrologers," said Daw Moe while browsing posts on her Facebook. "Whenever I see optimistic predictions for the country's future I shared it to others so that they can also gain strength."

Daw Moe has also sought strength from a man and she called him "special customer" because his wife is a professional traditional astrologer. Whenever he came to her tea shop to sit for tea, she requested him to tell her what his wife translated concerning the stars of Myanmar and the public movement.

"Whenever he conveyed a good message from his wife that the people will win in this revolution, I feel that I escaped from choking with stress for a while," said Daw Moe.

Special instruction from local astrologer

Meanwhile, a group of women went to a prominent traditional astrologer in their circle of acquaintances for several times to translate the stars of the country's leader Aung San Suu Kyi and the country.

They conveyed the optimistic messages from the astrologer to their friends and requested them to follow the special instructions of the astrologer in attempts to turn the country's dark star to bright.

"I offered six red Thitsarpan (Truth) flowers to the Buddha and I solemnly made a wish for escaping from the rule of the military as soon as possible by swearing by my morality," said Daw Htay.

Myanmar's star to shine?

A prominent astrologer aged over

[www.mizzima.com](http://www.mizzima.com)



Seeking advice from an astrologer. Photo: Zin Min Maung

## The military coup on 1 February was another blow to lives of the people given the problems caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

70 in Bago noticed that five planets came to close together on 27 January and another planet "Tuesday" came to the group, forming a six cluster of planets on 9 February.

Then, the astrologer wrote a post on his Facebook Page and warned the people to take care of themselves starting from 3 March as the stars are pointing out that atrocities and killings will happen.

"The dark plane has formed between the Rahu Planet and Keith planet. It reflects that brutal activities or atrocities will happen. These two planets encourage wars and bloodshed. Due to the effects of the dark plane between the two planet, I predicted that black colour would be popular among the people and the death toll will be high," said the astrologer on condition of anonymity.

After his FB post, the astrologer

received phone calls from his friends asking about the country's situation.

After the deadly crackdown, the people turned to black clothes and a black campaign against the military junta and also hoisted black flag giving the message to the troops that they will abandon peaceful protest and will fight back against them.

According to the astrologer, the six planets which came close together will depart from each other as from 14 April and Myanmar will return to normal as from 18 April.

"It means people will win in the revolution and those who did brutal killings will drop down after our new year," he said.

Many may be looking to the stars and astrologers for salvation, but it is unclear how the situation will roll out in the coming weeks and months.

# MYANMAR GROUP COMPILES JUNTA RIGHTS ABUSE DOSSIER

A group representing Myanmar's ousted civilian government said last week it has gathered 180,000 pieces of evidence showing rights abuses by the junta including torture and extrajudicial killings.

The country has been in turmoil since the army deposed civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi on February 1, with nearly 600 people killed in a crackdown on anti-coup protests.

The Committee for Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH) - a group of MPs from Suu Kyi's party -- said its lawyers would meet UN investigators to discuss alleged atrocities committed by the junta.

"CRPH has received 180,000 items of evidence. This evidence shows widescale abuses of human rights by the military," the group said in a statement.

They include more than 540 extrajudicial executions, 10 deaths of

prisoners in custody, torture, illegal detentions and disproportionate use of force against peaceful protests, the statement said.

Demonstrations calling for the return of democracy and the release of Suu Kyi from detention have rocked Myanmar almost daily since the coup.

Civil servants, doctors and other key workers have downed tools as part of a civil disobedience movement aimed at preventing the military from running the country.

In response, the security forces have used rubber bullets and live rounds to break up rallies and detained thousands of activists, some in night raids.

The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP), a local monitoring group, says 581 civilians have been killed in the crackdown and more than 2,700 arrested.

Nearly 50 of the dead were children.

With many protest supporters and NLD activists now in hiding to escape arrest, the junta is increasingly taking their family members hostage, according to AAPP.

## UN meeting

International powers have voiced anger and dismay at the junta's brutal approach, and imposed sanctions on key officials.

But while the UN Security Council has condemned civilian deaths, it has stopped short of considering sanctions.

Both China and Russia have come out against sanctions, arguing they risked making the situation worse.

And so far, the diplomatic pressure appears to be having little effect, as deaths and detentions continue every day.

The CRPH, which claims the right to speak for the country instead of the junta, said its lawyers are to meet the UN's Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar on Wednesday.

"This meeting is intended to discuss the modalities of dialogue and cooperation between Myanmar (acting through CRPH) and the IIMM in relation to the atrocities committed by the military," the statement said, without giving details of when and where the meeting would take place.

Rights group Amnesty International last month reported that the junta was using battlefield weapons on unarmed protestors and carrying out premeditated killings orchestrated by their commanding officers.

The growing bloodshed has prompted warnings that Myanmar could slide into broader civil conflict, particularly after 10 ethnic rebel armies came out in support of the protest movement.

As well as breaking up protests and making arrests, the security forces have also sought to shut off news of the crisis.

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**The Committee for Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH) - a group of MPs from Suu Kyi's party -- said its lawyers would meet UN investigators to discuss alleged atrocities committed by the junta.**



Internet access has been throttled, and independent media outlets raided and shut down.

In response, some activists have started a daily two-page newsletter called "Voice of Spring", rounding up independent media reports and

publishing on Twitter.

The military insists that it is responding proportionately to what it says are violent, armed protesters.

It has defended seizing power, pointing to allegations of voting fraud

in the November election which Suu Kyi's party won comfortably.

**AFP**



Photo: EPA

# US URGES UN SECURITY COUNCIL ACTION ON MYANMAR

The United States on 9 April demanded swift action from the UN Security Council on Myanmar amid a push for a resolution to pressure the military junta to restore democracy.

"The military needs to feel the cost associated with its horrific actions. The stability and prosperity of the region depends on swift action," US Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield told a Security Council meeting.

"The military has ignored our condemnations, posing a test for the Security Council," she said.

"Will the Council quibble over language in yet another statement or will we act to save the lives of the Burmese people?" she said, using Myanmar's former name of Burma.

Estonia, a non-permanent member of the Security Council, said that the 15-nation body needed to start drafting a resolution that could include sanctions on Myanmar including an international arms embargo.

"The United Nations Security Council is the only entity in the world, which has the legitimate power to protect nations at risk and must explore every tool in its toolbox to end

this horrible situation," said Estonia's ambassador, Sven Jurgenson.

Russia and China both hold veto power and have historically opposed international sanctions, although Beijing -- the military's primary ally -- has voiced increasing concern about the instability in its neighbor.

The military on February 1 toppled democratic leader Aung San Suu Kyi and has since violently suppressed pro-democracy protests, with the United Nations saying that more than 600 people have died.

**AFP**



The UN Security Council meets. Photo: EPA



# RIGHTS GROUP CONDEMNS MYANMAR DEATH SENTENCES

An international human rights group condemned Myanmar's junta Saturday for sentencing 19 people to die, in the first known use of the death penalty since the military seized power.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi was ousted on February 1, with security forces killing more than 600 people as protesters refuse to submit to military rule.

State media reported Friday that 19 people had been sentenced to death for robbery and murder by a military court, with 17 of them tried in absentia.

They were arrested in Yangon's North Okkalapa township -- one of six areas in the commercial hub currently under martial law, meaning anybody arrested there is tried by a military tribunal.

The six townships are home to

about two million people -- more than a quarter of Yangon's sprawling population.

While Myanmar has long had the death penalty in its penal code, the country has not carried out an execution in over 30 years, said Phil Robertson, deputy director of the Asia division for Human Rights Watch.

"It indicates the military are prepared to go back to a time when Myanmar was executing people," he said.

Trying cases in a military court means there can be no appeals, and there are "no guarantees of a free and fair trial in any way, shape or form", he added.

The sentences could be a tactic to force protesters off the streets and back to work, he said, as a nationwide boycott has brought much of Myanmar's economy to a halt.

"Their core mission is to use force

and violence to get everybody off the streets and to break apart the (civil disobedience movement)," Robertson said.

Norway also reacted to the death sentences on Saturday, calling them "unacceptable and a deeply worrying development".

"Norway strongly urges Myanmar not to carry out the executions, to stop the violence and allow the UN Special Envoy to visit," said Norwegian foreign minister Ine Eriksen Soreide in a tweet.

United Nations officials say the special envoy, Christine Schraner Burgener, is in neighbouring Thailand hoping to enter Myanmar for face-to-face meetings with the generals to negotiate a path out of the crisis.

The junta has so far refused her entry.

AFP



Protesters in California speaking out against the Myanmar military junta. Photo: EPA

# AMBASSADORS TO MYANMAR JOINTLY ISSUE STRONGEST STATEMENT TO DATE

In a statement released last week, Ambassadors to Myanmar decried the deaths of over 600 civilians while protesting for “hard-won democratic rights and freedoms.”

Those in the statement included ambassadors from Australia; Canada, EU, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, New Zealand, Norway, South Korea, Switzerland, United Kingdom and the United States.

Their statement referred to the deaths of those killed by Myanmar security forces since the military coup, which took place on 1 February.

“We are humbled by their courage and dignity. We are united to accompany the grief of their families and friends.”

The Ambassadors stated, “(w)e stand together to support the hopes and aspirations of all those who believe in a free, just, peaceful

and democratic Myanmar, where the rights and the potential of all people can be fully respected and developed.”

“Violence has to stop, all political detainees must be released and democracy should be restored.”

*The statement appeared this morning on social media accounts of the various signatories.*



UK Ambassador Dan Chugg



# UN ENVOY TO MYANMAR STILL BARRED FROM VISIT DURING ASIA TOUR



UN Envoy to Myanmar Christine Schraner Burgener, left, with Aung San Suu Kyi. Library photo by AFP

The UN envoy to Myanmar is expected to begin a tour of Asia in the coming days but is still barred from visiting the Southeast Asian nation, in turmoil after a military coup, a spokesman said last week.

Christine Schraner Burgener will start her trip in Thailand and will also visit China, UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said, but did not give details on dates and any other country that might be on the agenda.

He said the junta in Myanmar has not yet given Burgener a "green light" to visit the country, where hundreds have died in mass protests demanding a return to democracy after the February 1 putsch.

"She, of course, stands ready to resume dialogue with the military to contribute to a return to Myanmar's democratic path, peace and stability," Dujarric said.

He said Burgener continued to be in written contact with Myanmar's

generals but added that there had been no telephone conversations for weeks.

The goal is to resume "face to face" discussions, he said.

"She is ready to visit Myanmar any time," said Dujarric, recalling that with the support of the Security Council she wants to meet detained civilian leaders, including President Wint Myint and Aung San Suu Kyi.

The envoy will begin her tour in Bangkok where she will meet Thai authorities, UN officials in the region and ambassadors accredited to Myanmar, said Dujarric.

Discussions are underway for a visit to other member countries of the regional association Asean, and states in the region, the spokesman also reported.

"As she has highlighted repeatedly, a robust international response to the ongoing crisis in Myanmar requires a unified regional

effort involving neighboring countries who can leverage influence towards stability," he said.

According to diplomats at the UN, Asean countries at times have divergent positions on Myanmar.

"At one end, there are Thailand, Laos and Cambodia, who are in the mode of 'back off, there's nothing to see, it's a question of internal politics,'" one diplomat said.

"And at the other end, Singapore, Malaysia or Indonesia, who are more open to a more active role of Asean to try to find a solution to this crisis."

An Asean summit on Myanmar is scheduled for the end of the month.

The UN Security Council is set to meet informally Friday on the initiative of Britain to hear, among others, Daw Zin Mar Aung, an elected civilian member of Myanmar's parliament, and an academic, Sai Sam Kham.

# RUSSIA WARNS MYANMAR SANCTIONS COULD SPARK 'FULL-BLOWN CIVIL CONFLICT'

Russia said last week it opposed sanctions against the junta in Myanmar, warning that punitive measures could spark a large-scale civil war in the country.

"A course towards threats and pressure including the use of sanctions against the current Myanmar authorities has no future and is extremely dangerous," news agency Interfax quoted a Russian foreign ministry spokesperson as saying.

Such policies would "push the Burmese towards a full-blown civil conflict."

Myanmar has been in turmoil since a February 1 coup ousted civilian

leader Aung San Suu Kyi and derailed the country's experiment with democracy.

According to a local monitoring group, more than 550 people have been killed in anti-coup unrest.

International powers have sought to pile pressure on the military by hitting its sprawling business interests, which include the lucrative jade and ruby trade.

But so far neither sanctions nor calls for restraint have shown any sign of holding back the junta as it struggles to quell the widespread unrest.

Last week the UN Security Council

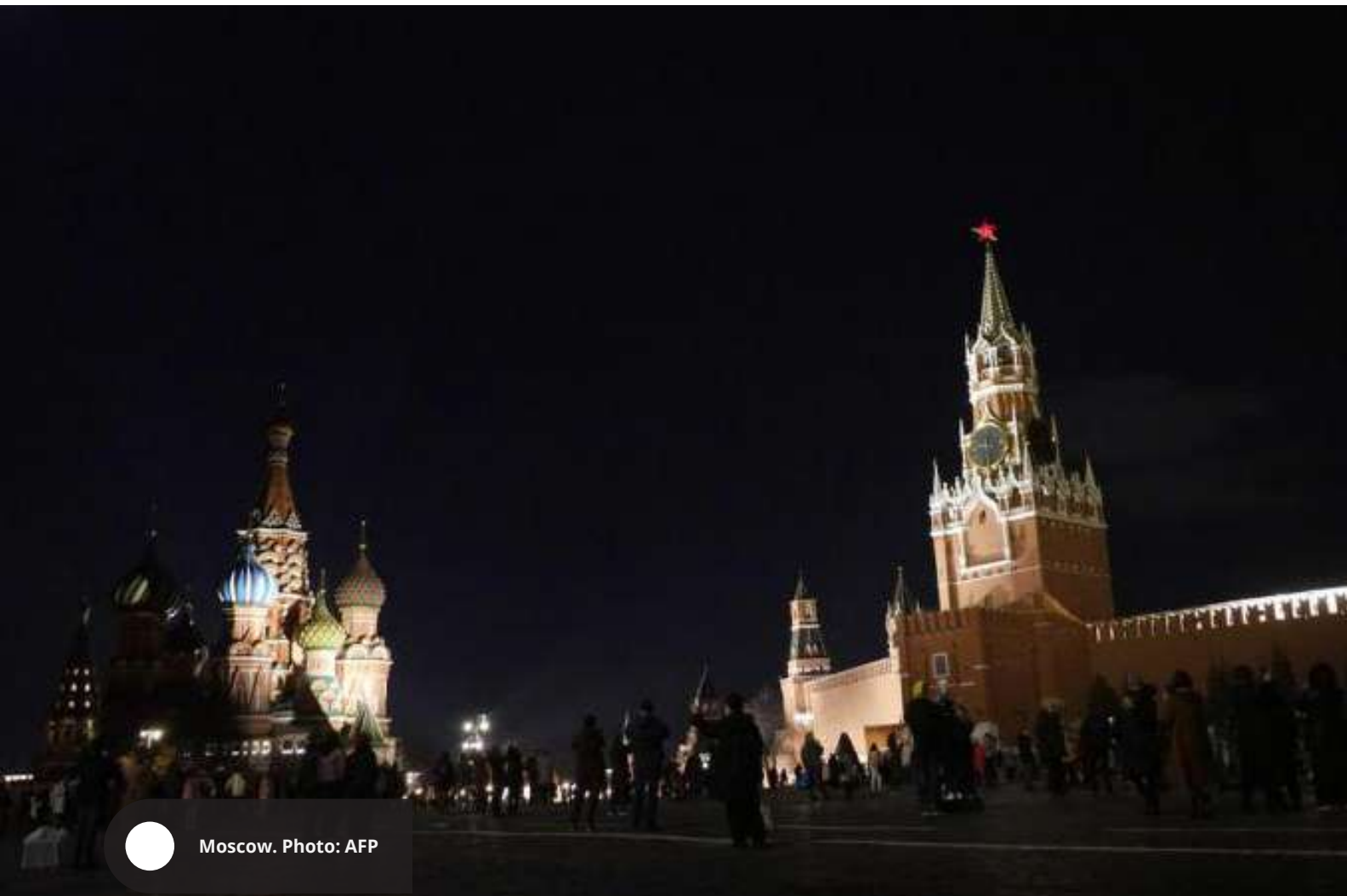
unanimously "expressed deep concern at the rapidly deteriorating situation."

Russia has sought to develop ties with the military junta and Russian deputy defence minister Alexander Fomin joined last month's annual parade showcasing Myanmar's military prowess.

As the regime held the parade for Armed Forces Day more than a hundred people were killed.

At the parade Russia showcased its equipment including T-72 tanks, MiG-29 fighter jets and Mi-24 helicopters.

**AFP**



Moscow. Photo: AFP



# ARRESTS OF MYANMAR CELEBRITIES CONTINUE

A popular poet and comedian is the latest in Myanmar to fall foul of the military junta. The military, led by General Min Aung Hlaing, has recently targeted poets, comedians and celebrities in order to silence protest against its power grab following democratic elections last November in which Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party won a landslide victory.

The military authorities recently published a list of 120 celebrities

wanted for arrest, some of whom have since been detained, according to Index On Censorship.

Popular comedian, poet, actor and director Maung Thura, known commonly as Zarganar, was arrested and detained on 6 April without charge. Zarganar spoke to Index On Censorship in 2012, a year after his release from an earlier 59-year prison sentence imposed in 2008 by the former military dictatorship in the country.

In the article, he describes his time in prison and told Index: "Freedom of speech and freedom of expression is very important for our country, for openness and transparency."

"Over the 40 years [of the last military regime], we were living in a dark room. People could not see us," he said. "Free art, free thought, freedom. It is very important."

Zarganar is just one of a growing number of celebrities that the military junta is putting behind bars.

Myanmar Peace Center



Zarganar has been arrested. Photo: Mizzima

# MYANMAR YOUTH FIGHT INTERNET OUTAGES WITH UNDERGROUND NEWSLETTER

**M**yanmar youth are fighting the junta's internet shutdown and information suppression with an explosive underground printed newsletter they are secretly distributing across communities.

For 56 days straight there have been internet outages in coup-hit Myanmar, according to monitoring group NetBlocks.

The country has been in turmoil since democratically-elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi was ousted in a February 1 coup, triggering a mass uprising that has resulted in a brutal security crackdown and more than 700 civilian deaths.

Thirty-year-old Lynn Thant, not his real name, started the underground newsletter and gave it the edgy name

Molotov to appeal to young people.

"This is our response to those who slow down the flow of information - and that's a threat to us," he told AFP.

Thousands of readers across the country are downloading the PDF version of the publication and printing out and distributing physical copies across neighbourhoods in Yangon and Mandalay and other areas.

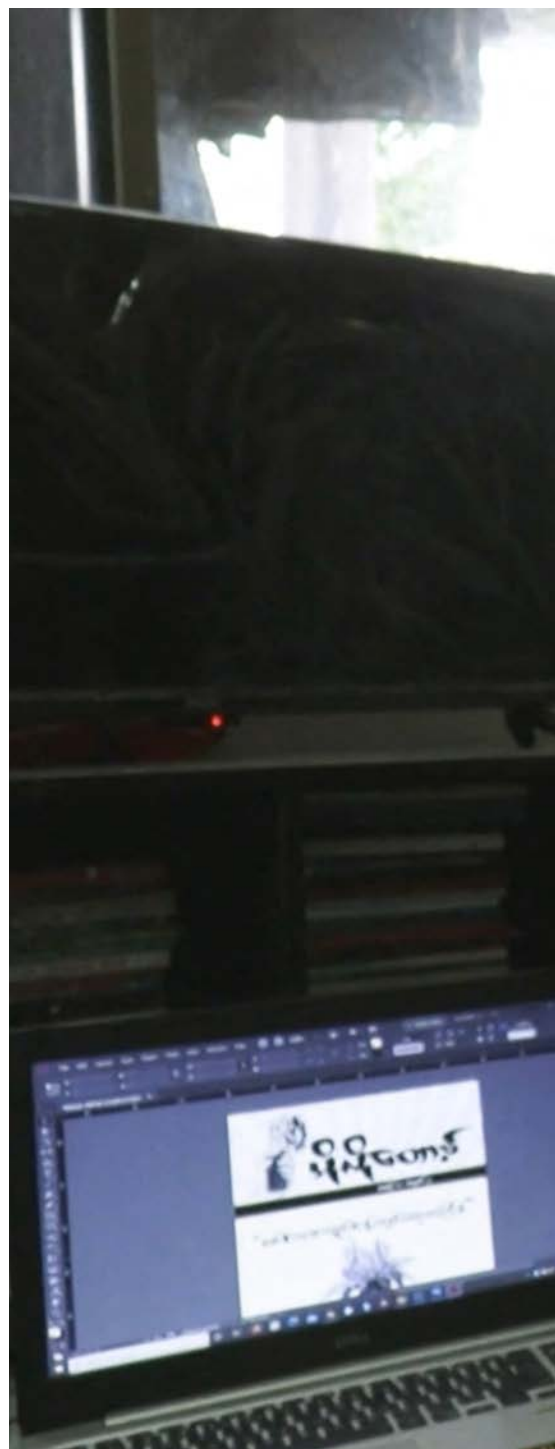
Lynn Thant is conscious of the risks involved.

Police and soldiers arrested more than 3,000 people since the putsch, according to local monitoring group Assistance Association for Political Prisoners.

About 180 high profile celebrities including actors, singers and social media influencers are on an arrest



The underground newsletter is being shared widely. Photo: AFP





warrant list and could face three years' jail if convicted of spreading dissent against the military.

"If we write revolutionary literature and distribute it like this, we could end up in prison for many years," he said, his face concealed by one of the Guy Fawkes masks popularised by the dystopian movie "V for Vendetta".

"Even if one of us is arrested, there are young people who will carry on producing the Molotov newsletter. Even if one of us is killed, someone else will come up when someone

falls. This Molotov newsletter will continue to exist until the revolution is successful."

He said the publication had a reach of more than 30,000 people on Facebook so far and the main audience was Generation Z activists.

Copies of the newsletter are also being distributed under the radar at produce markets.

Myanmar lived under military rule for 49 years before it transitioned to democracy in 2011.

The country has a long history of underground publications attempting to circumvent junta suppression.

Independent media is under threat, with 64 journalists arrested since the coup and 33 still in detention, according to monitoring group Reporting ASEAN.

The junta has also revoked the licences of five media outlets including Mizzima.

**AFP, additional reporting by Mizzima**



One of the editors of the underground newsletter, hiding his identity behind a mask. Photo: AFP

# MAJOR NEW CRIMINAL SYNDICATE TRAFFICKING ILLEGAL MYANMAR TIMBER INTO CHINA

**D**espite meaningful efforts by China to stem illegal timber trafficking from Myanmar, a sophisticated new criminal network is openly smuggling timber across the Myanmar-China border, according to the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA).

The syndicate named by EIA is headed by a Mr Da Shi Naw and involves at least five other sawmill owners in the processing and transportation of the timber, from which the military junta continues to benefit financially.

Scrutiny on the trade over the last decade and increasing action by Chinese authorities have led to the slow of illegal timber trafficking through the border town of Ruili in Yunnan province.

Action taken by the Chinese authorities included a seizure in August 2019 of more than 100,000

tonnes of wood worth tens of millions of dollars.

While enforcement in China has significantly affected the criminal syndicates in Myanmar almost halting illegal logging in Kachin State, criminal syndicates have now shifted operations to the Government-controlled Sagaing Division.

EIA alleges a significant cut of this money is being taken by the Myanmar Forest Department and military, who at various stages demand taxes, road fees and bribes.

The agency also outlined how the European Union, Asian and US-based traders' further profit from this crime through illegal importation practises aimed at skirting regulations.

Following the military coup on 1 February, EIA alleges the Dazu syndicate had resumed operations on the China-Myanmar border and expanded to now include sawmills

and warehouses to process timber, presumably on order from traders in China.

Further information indicates that a new syndicate is now involved in the processing and transporting of the timber led by Mr Da Shi Naw, this operation involves at least five other sawmill owners - Ah Chying, Ah Ba, Kawn Gam, Kyang Hping and Sham Maw.

EIA argues that, "the sheer scale of this operation can only take place with the knowledge and involvement of the State."

Since the 1 February coup, it has been impossible for timber monitors to continue working with local partners and Forest Department officials to strengthen forest governance. The agency has called on China to increase its monitoring and enforcement action.



Trucks carrying cargo at the China-Myanmar border. Photo: Supplied



# UN CALLS FOR COUNTRIES TO SIGN BAN ON ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES

**U**N Secretary General Antonio Guterres has called on countries that have not done so to sign an international treaty banning anti-personnel mines.

The accord, which went into effect in 1999, bans the acquisition, production, stockpiling and use of the weapons.

The countries that have not signed up include the United States, China, Russia, India, Iran, Israel, Myanmar, North Korea and Vietnam, which called for Thursday's debate.

"More than 160 states are party to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. I call on those that have not yet acceded to the convention to do so without delay," Guterres said during a Security Council debate after a short video featuring the actor Daniel Craig, who works for the UN drive to eradicate anti-personnel mines.

"Our main worry is that this convention only gives a short amount of time for neutralizing mined areas,"

a Vietnamese diplomatic source said. The southeast Asian nation, scarred by the Vietnam War in the 1960s and 70s, needs decades to get that work done, the source said.

Signatories are expected to have ceased production and development of anti-personnel mines, destroyed their stockpiles and cleared all their mined areas within 10 years of ratifying the treaty, although this timeframe can be extended.

Children playing outdoors in former war zones are among the main victims of anti-personnel mines around the world. The weapons can be small and rudimentary or terribly destructive.

Nguyen Thi Dieu Linh, a Vietnamese official working to rid the country of mines, was warmly applauded after addressing the Security Council -- a rare overt show of approval by members.

In his speech Guterres also warned against development of improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

He said these are "the greatest threat" to UN forces in Africa, from Somalia to Mali.

"New explosive threats are emerging in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo," he said.

"Landmines, IEDs and explosive remnants of war represent the worst of humanity. But efforts to eradicate them reflect humanity at its best. Let us today commit to intensify our efforts to rid the world of these inhumane threats," said Guterres.

The council later approved a statement saying it was "deeply concerned" by anti-personnel mines.

It "emphasizes the importance of mine action and the need to enhance international efforts in this field, particularly in situations of armed conflict. The council also calls upon member states to comply with their respective international treaty obligations related to mine action."

**AFP**



Mine-clearing team being given instructions in Cambodia. Photo: EPA

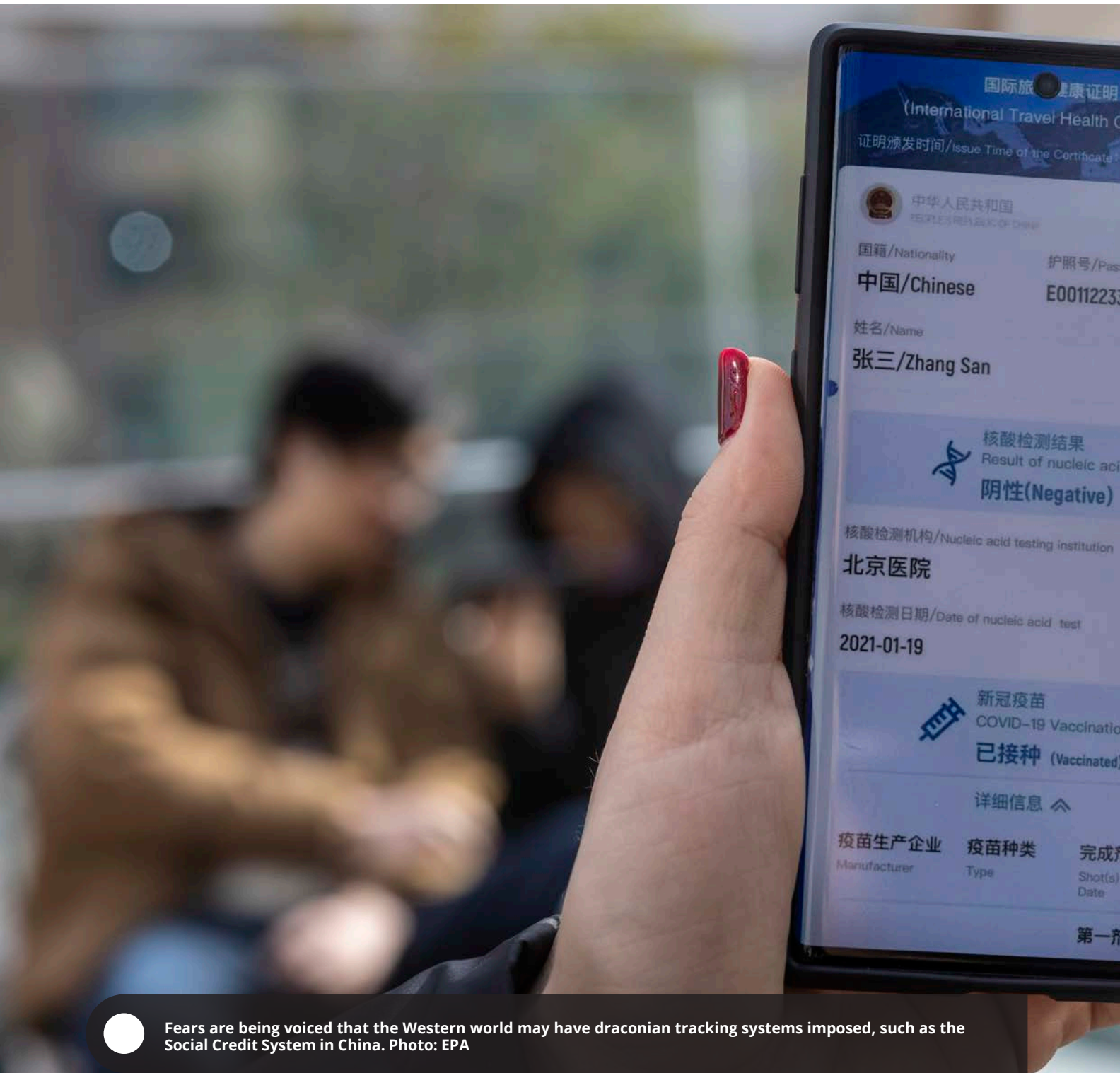
# WHITE HOUSE RULES OUT A US VACCINE 'PASSPORT'

The White House last week ruled out imposing any form of a coronavirus vaccine passport in the United States, but said private businesses were free to explore the idea.

"The government is not now, nor will be, supporting a system that requires Americans to carry a credential. There will be no federal vaccinations database and no federal mandate requiring everyone to obtain a single vaccination credential," Press

Secretary Jen Psaki told reporters.

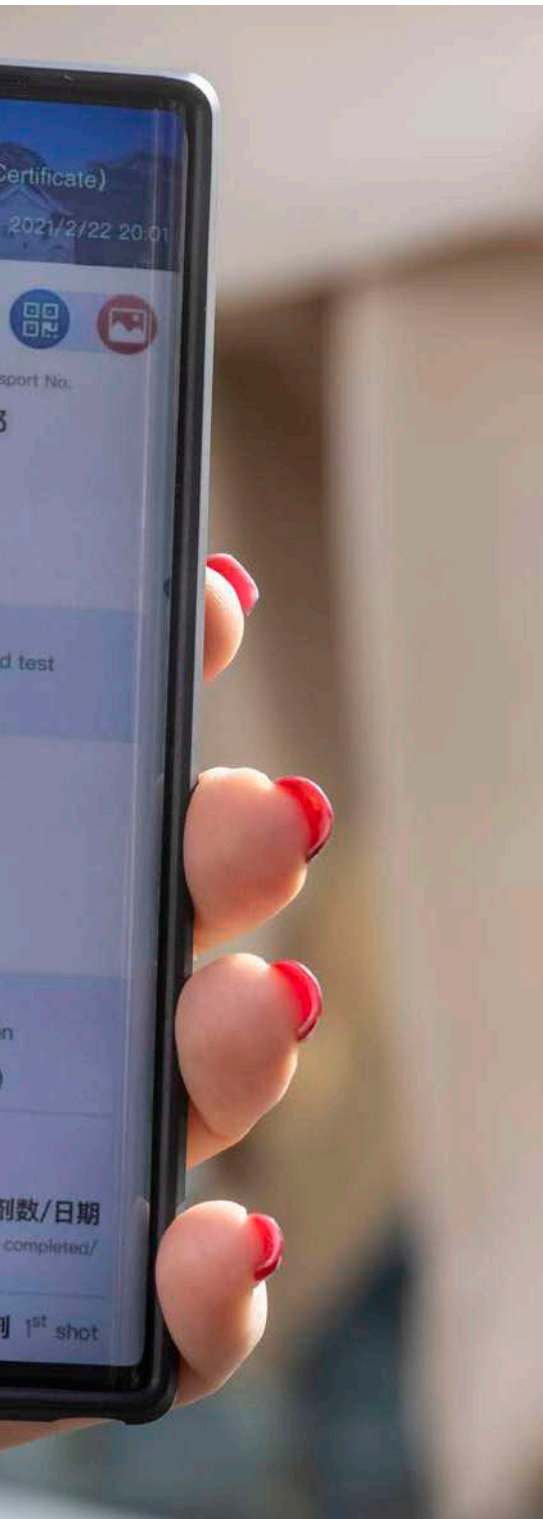
So-called vaccine passports, showing that someone has been inoculated against Covid-19, have been touted around the world as a potentially powerful tool in



Fears are being voiced that the Western world may have draconian tracking systems imposed, such as the Social Credit System in China. Photo: EPA



# COVID-19 Update News



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**The idea has prompted widespread pushback over concerns due to potential privacy or other civil rights abuses.**

safely reopening countries to mass gatherings and travel.

However, the idea has prompted widespread pushback over concerns due to potential privacy or other civil rights abuses.

Psaki said that the strongest interest comes from private businesses looking to reopen sites where "there are large swaths of people," like in stadiums or theaters.

She said the government

will be issuing "guidance" with "important answers to questions that Americans have in particular around concerns about privacy, security or discrimination."

"Our interest is very simple from the federal government, which is Americans' privacy and rights should be protected, and so that these systems are not used against people unfairly," Psaki said.

**AFP**

# ASTRAZENECA UK VACCINE TRIAL IN CHILDREN PAUSED AS CLOT LINK PROBED

**A** British trial of the AstraZeneca coronavirus vaccine on children has been paused, Oxford University said last week, as global regulators rush to assess its possible link to rare blood clots in adults.

The university, which helped develop the embattled vaccine, said in a statement that there were "no safety concerns" in the trial, but acknowledged fears over a potential link to clots by saying that it was awaiting additional data from Britain's

Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) before restarting the study.

"Parents and children should continue to attend all scheduled visits and can contact the trial sites if they



Alarm is growing over the rising cases of adverse effects, including death, arising from the experimental COVID-19 vaccines. Photo: EPA



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**It is the latest drama to hit AstraZeneca, which has been embroiled in controversy over its failure to deliver promised doses to the European Union, and over the jab's efficacy and safety profile.**



have any questions," it added.

It is the latest drama to hit AstraZeneca, which has been embroiled in controversy over its failure to deliver promised doses to the European Union, and over the jab's efficacy and safety profile.

The MHRA is one of many bodies across the globe analysing real world data from the AstraZeneca rollout to see if there is a definitive link between the jab and a rare form of blood clot, after cases were initially reported in Norway and continental Europe.

The MHRA reported over the weekend that there had been 30 blood clotting cases, seven fatal, out of the 18 million doses administered in Britain.

The European Medicines Agency said Tuesday it "has not yet reached a conclusion and the review is currently ongoing".

EU Health Commissioner Stella Kyriakides later said that the agency was expected to make its decision "late Wednesday", adding that she was in "close contact" with the EMA.

The statement came after the EMA's head of vaccine strategy Marco Cavaleri was quoted in Italian media as saying that there was a "clear" connection and that the agency would announce it within hours.

"In my opinion, we can say it now, it is clear there is a link with the vaccine," Cavaleri told Italy's Il Messaggero newspaper in an interview. "But we still do not know what causes this reaction."

Germany and France have both restricted use of the vaccine to older people over fears that younger recipients are potentially more at risk from clots.

Britain and the vaccine's developers had until now resisted any restrictions in its use, saying that there was no proof of any link.

Adam Finn, professor of paediatrics at Britain's University of Bristol, said that the benefits continued to outweigh the risks.

"We need to know more about the people affected and we need to understand exactly how the illnesses came about," he said.

"If you are currently being offered a dose of Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine, your chances of remaining alive and well will go up if you take the vaccine and will go down if you don't," he added.

**AFP**

# CHINA SENTENCES UYGHUR EX-GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS TO DEATH FOR 'SEPARATISM'

Two Uyghur former government officials in China's Xinjiang have been handed death sentences for carrying out "separatist activities", a court said, as Beijing comes under increasing fire for its actions towards minority groups in the region.

Shirzat Bawudun, a former head of the Xinjiang department of justice

has been sentenced to death with a two-year reprieve on the charge of "splitting the country", according to a statement released last week on the Xinjiang government website.

Bawudun had conspired with a terrorist organisation, taken bribes, and carried out separatist activities, Wang Langtao, vice president of the Xinjiang Higher People's Court, said at

a press conference.

Bawudun was found guilty of colluding with the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) -- listed as a "terrorist" group by the United Nations -- after meeting a key member of the group in 2003, according to state news agency Xinhua.

The US removed the group from





its list of terror groups last November, saying there was "no credible evidence that ETIM continues to exist."

Bawudun also illegally proved "information to foreign forces" as well as carrying out "illegal religious activities at his daughter's wedding", Xinhua said.

The court statement said Sattar Sawut -- former director of the Xinjiang education department -- was also sentenced to death with a two-year reprieve after being found guilty of crimes of separatism and taking bribes.

Sawut was found guilty of incorporating ethnic separatism,

violence, terrorism, and religious extremism content into textbooks in the Uyghur language, officials said.

The court said the textbooks had influenced several people to participate in attacks in the capital Urumqi including riots that resulted in at least 200 deaths in 2009.

Others became "key members of a separatist group" headed by former college teacher Ilham Tohti -- a Uyghur economist jailed for life on separatism charges in 2014.

Rights groups believe at least one million Uyghurs and other mostly Muslim minorities have been incarcerated in camps across Xinjiang.

The United States says "genocide" has been inflicted on the Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in the region, while Beijing has denied all allegations of abuses and has insisted its policies in Xinjiang are necessary to counter violent extremism.

China keeps data on its use of the death penalty secret, although rights group Amnesty International estimates the country is the top executioner globally -- with thousands executed and sentenced to death each year.

A death sentence with a reprieve is usually commuted to a life sentence.

**AFP**



Protester at a rally in Turkey raising alarm over the treatment of Uyghur people in China. Photo: EPA

# YOUTUBE SAYS RULE-BREAKING VIDEOS GET SCANT VIEW

**Y**ouTube said last week that rule-breaking videos get looked at very little before being removed by the Google-owned platform.

YouTube added "Violative View Rate" to its quarterly transparency report to indicate what percentage of views come from content that violates its policies, and said the figure was a small fraction of a percent in the final three months of last year.

"It's a very low number," YouTube director of trust and safety Jennifer O'Connor said while briefing journalists.

"Of course we want it to be lower, and that's what my team works day in and day out to try to do."

The rate derived by sampling YouTube content indicated that violating content accounted for 16 to 18 of every 10,000 views on the platform, where the biggest category for rule breaking is typically spam,

O'Connor said.

YouTube did not provide a breakdown of which rules were being violated by videos involved in the calculation.

Automated systems at YouTube detect 94 percent of violating content flagged, removing 75 percent of it before a video gets 10 views, according to the streaming platform.

Internal teams at YouTube have used the VVR as a metric for their efforts since 2017, and it has fallen some 70 percent as the company has invested in technology and workers to catch unwanted videos, O'Connor said.

More than 20,000 people at Google are devoted to keeping the platform safe, she added.

Google and YouTube are among internet services that have been hammered with criticism that they have not done enough to stop the

spread of misinformation and other abuses that can cause real-world harm.

Since it started releasing community guideline enforcement reports in 2018, YouTube has removed more than 83 million videos and 7 billion comments, according to the service.

The VVR is calculated by sending samplings of videos on YouTube to reviewers to determine whether they violate policies in a system O'Connor touted as statistically reliable.

"By sampling, we gain a more comprehensive view of the violative content we might not be catching with our systems," YouTube said in a blog post.

"We believe the VVR is the best way for us to understand how harmful content impacts viewers, and to identify where we need to make improvements."

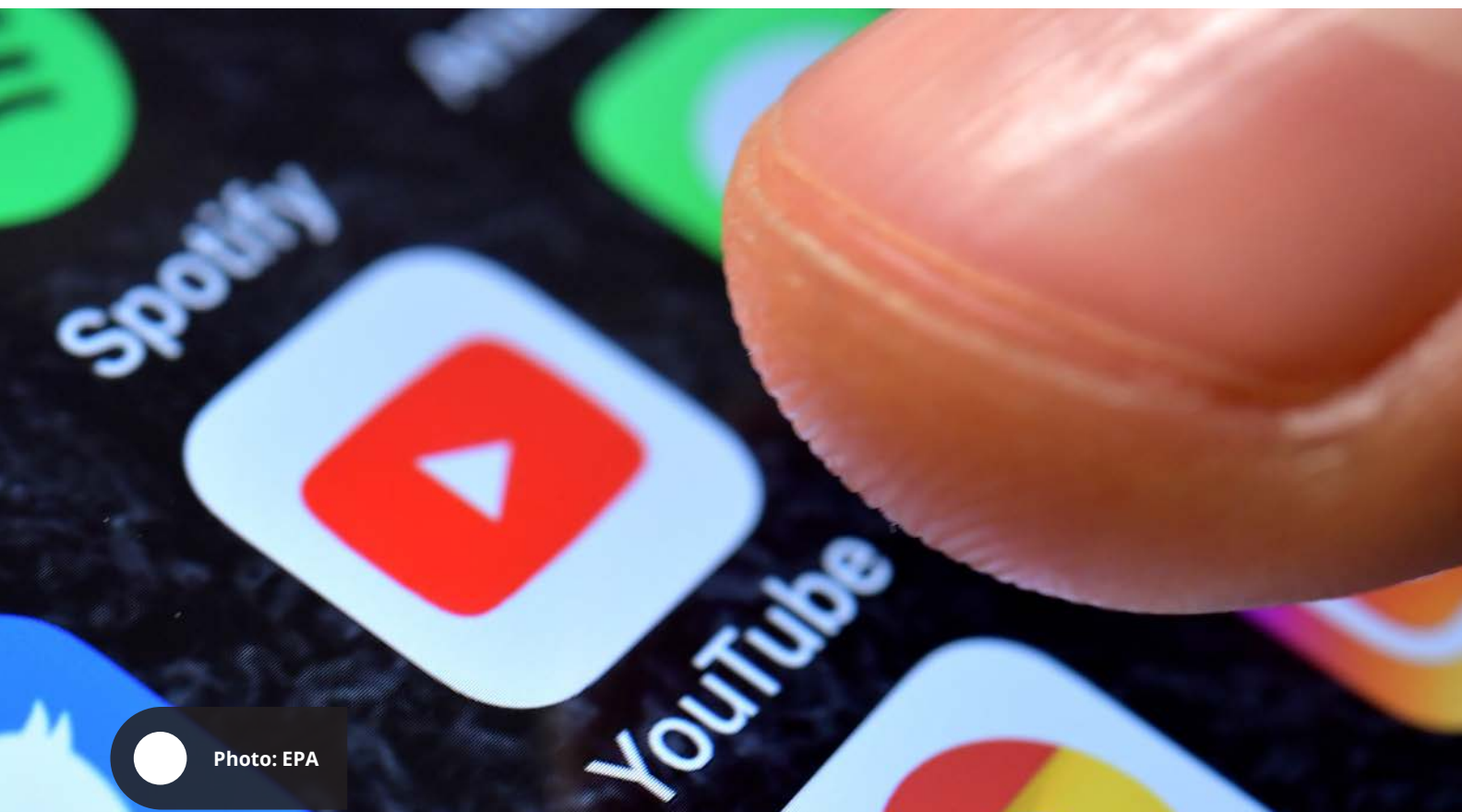


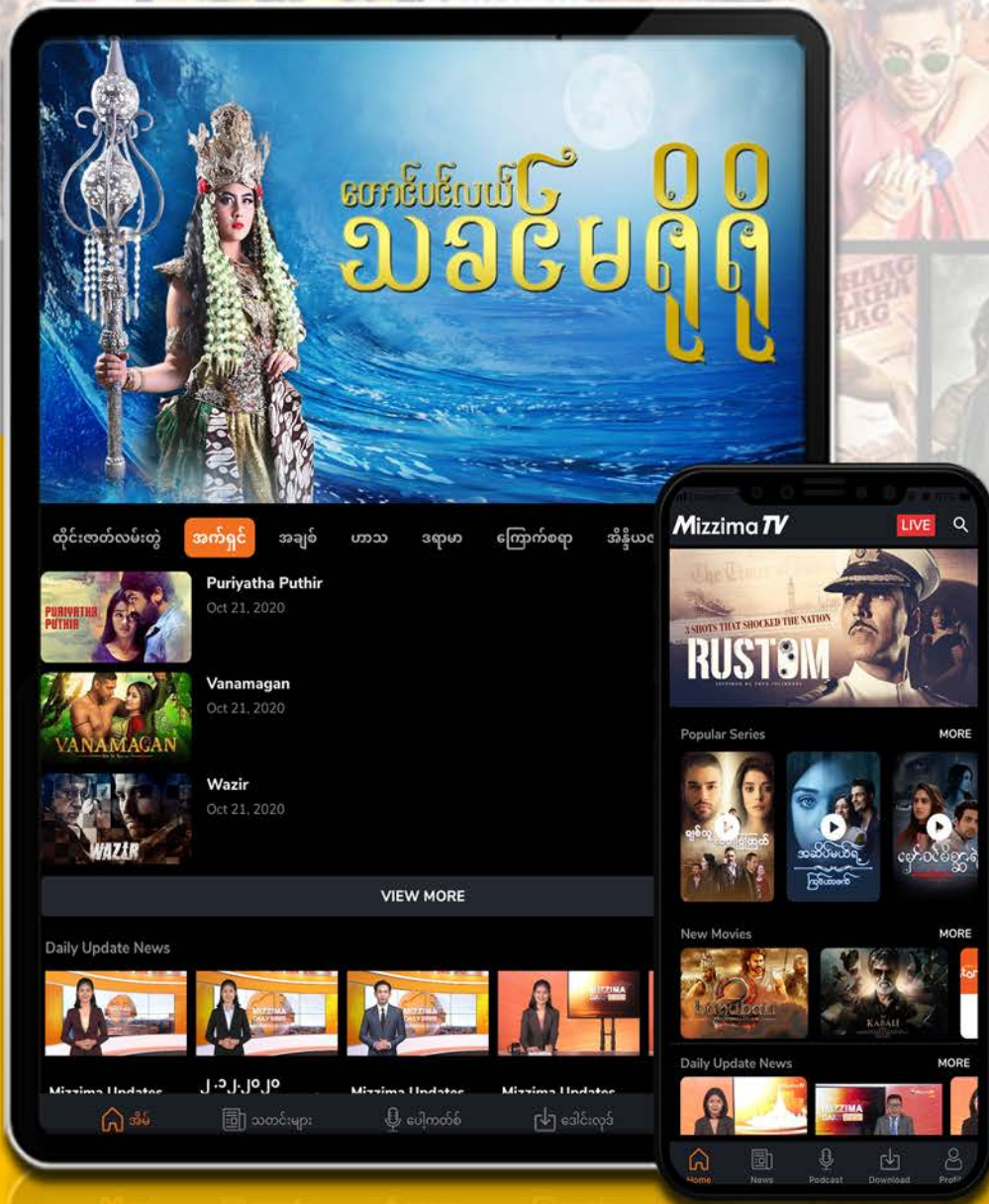
Photo: EPA





# Mizzima TV Application

All In One Entertainment Mobile Application



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# IMF WARNS MORE FUNDING NEEDED TO SAFEGUARD GLOBAL ECONOMY

Heather Scott

**W**arning that the recovery from the pandemic crisis is not yet over, the IMF last week called on policymakers to continue to spend money to shore up the global economy and ensure no one is left behind.

Without that aid, and additional financing from both the fund and the World Bank, developing nations and the poor in many countries could struggle to rebound from the downturn caused by Covid-19, the International Monetary Fund said at the conclusion of its spring meeting.

Continued support is needed to "mitigate and heal economic scars," IMF managing director Kristalina Georgieva told reporters.

"We want to make sure everybody has a fair shot to a better life."

That means accelerating access to vaccines and taking advantage of the opportunity presented by the crisis to invest in green technology, which can create good paying jobs and address climate change.

US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen joined the call, urging "significant" new spending to ensure a solid rebound from the damage inflicted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

While the economic outlook has "improved significantly," especially due to substantial government support, "the job is not yet done, given high uncertainty and the risk of permanent scarring," Yellen said.

"I urge major economies to not just avoid removing support too early, but to strive to provide significant amounts of new fiscal support to secure a robust recovery," she said.

The IMF now projects global growth of six percent this year after the 3.3 percent contraction last year, and credited the \$16 trillion in global public spending during the pandemic with keeping the worst peacetime recession in a century from being three times as severe.

Yellen highlighted the \$1.9 trillion US aid package President Joe Biden signed last month, as well as his proposal announced last week to spend \$2 trillion on infrastructure and jobs.

## Boosting resources

Yellen said that with stimulus already boosting the recovery from the pandemic shutdowns, the US economy "could reach full employment as soon as next year," but many developing countries do not have similar resources to support their economies.

Georgieva warned about a "dangerous divergence" in low-income countries' prospects compared to rich nations, which could worsen if advanced economies like the United States raise interest rates sooner than expected.

She also praised the IMF members who agreed to allow the fund to issue \$650 billion in new Special Drawing Rights, an additional pool of IMF currency that will add to nations' reserves and boost their ability to access financing.

The IMF is expected to present a proposal to its board in June, and Georgieva said the fund is working with rich nations to shift some of their share of those reserves to help aid developing nations, which "face a crucial policy transition from crisis to recovery."





### Vaccines as economic policy

The officials again stressed that ending the health crisis remains central to the economic recovery, and the closing statement from the IMFC, the fund's steering committee, lamented the "uneven access to vaccines."

The committee emphasized "the need for strong international cooperation to accelerate vaccine production and support affordable and equitable distribution to all."

Yellen pledged US support for vaccine rollouts, including efforts to "make sure financing does not become an obstacle for global

vaccination... and to work toward ensuring robust, equitable, and transparent vaccination deployment."

### Shift to green

The crisis offers policymakers a vehicle to capitalize on the need for investments to accelerate green projects that can provide good-paying jobs.

"Government efforts to support the recovery need to take advantage of the opportunity to accelerate the transition towards a low-carbon economy and limit the long-term threat from climate change," said Angel Gurría, head of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and

Development.

Georgieva said those investments could create jobs in growing industries to replace those lost in sectors that are shrinking.

"Climate risks are growing, and they are substantial for macroeconomic and financial stability, climate action can generate green growth and green jobs," she said.

The IMF and World Bank have also announced plans to intensify the focus on green investment and climate-friendly aspects of their lending programs.

**AFP**



Badly thought-out lockdowns and restrictions imposed by governments to combat the COVID-19 virus spread have badly affected economies around the world. Photo: EPA

# BIODIVERSITY 'HOT SPOTS' DEVASTATED IN WARMING WORLD

Marlowe Hood

Unless nations dramatically improve on carbon cutting pledges made under the 2015 Paris climate treaty, the planet's richest concentrations of animal and plant life will be irreversibly ravaged by global warming, scientists warned Friday.

An analysis of 8,000 published risk assessments for species showed a high danger for extinction in nearly 300 biodiversity "hot spots", on land and in the sea, if temperatures rise three degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels, they reported in the journal *Biological Conservation*.

Earth's surface has heated up 1C so far, and the Paris Agreement enjoins nations to cap warming at "well below" 2C, and 1.5C if possible.

National commitments to slash greenhouse gas emissions -- assuming they are honoured -- would still see temperatures soar well above 3C by century's end, if not sooner.

So-called endemic species -- plants and animals found exclusively in a specific area -- will be hit hardest in a warming world.

From snow leopards in the Himalayas and the vaquita porpoise in the Gulf of California to lemurs in Madagascar and forest elephants in central Africa, many of the planet's most cherished creatures will wind up on a path to extinction unless humanity stops loading the atmosphere with CO2 and methane, the study found.

Endemic land species in biodiverse hot spots are nearly three times as likely to suffer losses due to

climate change than more widespread flora and fauna, and 10 times more likely than invasive species.

## Trapped in an enclosed sea

"Climate change threatens areas overflowing with species that cannot be found anywhere else in the world," said lead author Stella Manes, a researcher at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro.

"The risk for such species to be lost forever increases more than 10-fold if we miss the goals of the Paris Agreement."

More and more scientists concede that capping global warming at 1.5C target is probably out of reach.

But every tenth of a degree matters when it comes to avoiding impacts, they say.

Some concentrations of wildlife are more vulnerable than others.

In mountain regions, 84 percent of endemic animals and plants face extinction in a 3C world, while on islands - already devastated by invasive species - the figure rises to 100 percent.

"By nature, these species cannot easily move to more favourable environments," explained co-author Mark Costello, a marine ecologist from the University of Auckland.

Marine species in the Mediterranean are especially threatened because they are trapped in an enclosed sea, he added.

Overall, more than 90 percent of land-based endemic species, and





95 percent of marine ones, will be adversely affected if Earth warms another two degrees, the international team of researchers found.

### Safe havens not so safe

In the tropics, two out of three species could perish due to climate change alone.

The findings may impel conservationists to rethink how to best protect endangered wildlife.

Up to now, the main threats have

been habitat loss due to expanding urban areas, mining and agriculture, on the one hand, and hunting for food and body parts to sell on the black market, on the other.

A key strategy in the face of this onslaught has been carving out protected areas, especially around biodiversity hot spots.

But these safe havens may be of little use in the face of global warming.

"Unfortunately, our study shows that those biodiversity rich-spots will

not be able to act as species refugia from climate change," said co-author Mariana Vale, also from Federal University.

Even before the impact of global warming has truly kicked in, scientists have ascertained that Earth is at the outset of a so-called mass extinction event in which species are disappearing at 100 to 1,000 the normal, or "background", rate.

There have been five previous mass extinctions in the last 500 million years.

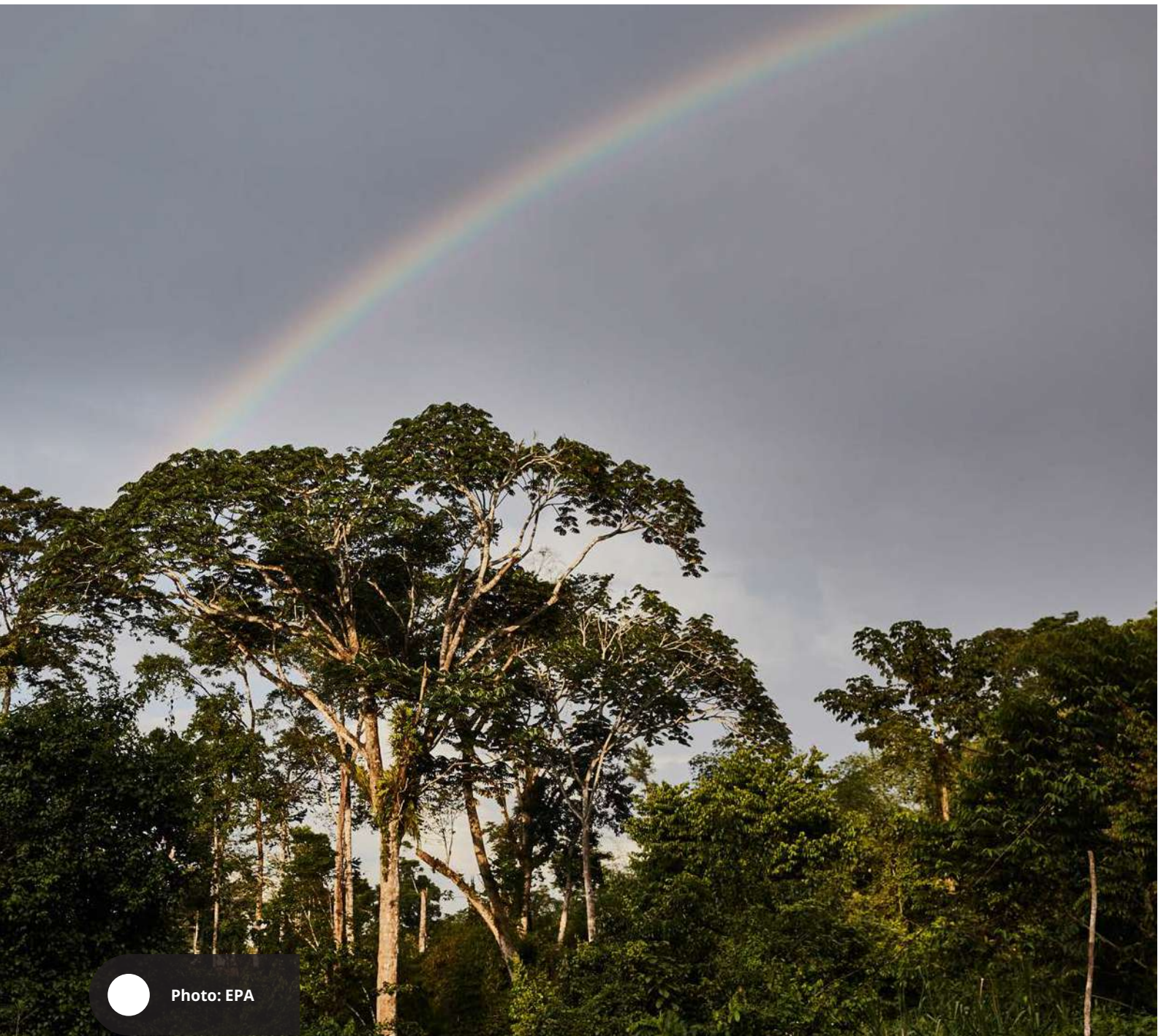


Photo: EPA



# 'SUDDENLY WE HEARD PEOPLE SCREAM: FLOOD!' - HORROR IN INDONESIA

Pedro Paolo

**H**omeless, injured, and with his daughter dead, Sugeng stares blankly as he comes to grips with the devastation left by floods and landslides on Indonesia's Adonara island.

The 60-year-old was asleep with his family on Sunday night as torrential rain battered the community at the eastern end of the vast archipelago nation.

In seconds, their lives changed

forever.

"Suddenly we heard people scream 'flood!'" said Sugeng, who like many Indonesians goes by one name.

He and his wife fled their home,



Flood victims try to deal with the flood waters. Photo: EPA



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## "We buried my daughter yesterday... I'm devastated."



but their 20-year-old daughter Indri did not make it out alive and her body was later found on a beach.

"She was trying to hold on to a cupboard but the current was so strong that she lost her grip," Sugeng said.

"We buried my daughter yesterday... I'm devastated."

Adonara island, home to about 125,000 people, was among the areas hardest hit by the floods and landslides that killed more than 150 in Indonesia and neighbouring East Timor.

The disaster was triggered by heavy rain and wind from one of the region's most destructive cyclones in years, which ripped across a cluster of islands in the neighbouring Southeast Asian nations.

Far-flung Adonara, dotted with beaches and a volcano, is accessible only by boat. It has no local hospital.

More than 50 residents were killed and a dozen were still missing on Wednesday.

### 'Thundering noise'

Indonesia's disaster agency said it is trying to airlift the injured in helicopters to a city and provide shelter for those left homeless.

Among the evacuees was Elisabet Lena Huki, 61, who took refuge at a local government office with her husband, elderly parents, children and grandchildren.

She was coming back from an Easter mass on the predominantly

Catholic island when tragedy struck.

"We had rushed home from church because my elderly parents were there," she said.

"Suddenly I heard a thundering noise... and I screamed to my sleeping husband that there was a flood."

Her neighbours sobbed in fear as chaos struck, while Huki's family searched frantically around their waterlogged home for her nephew Yermias.

"He's still missing," she sobbed, remembering the 33-year-old she thinks of as a son.

"I want him to be found, even if it's just his body... so we can lay him to rest and visit his grave. That's my only hope now."

With just the clothes on their backs, Huki and her extended family also have to think about their own survival in the weeks ahead.

"I need diapers for my elderly parents but the stores are closed," she said.

"We're all exhausted and weary. I'm not thinking about wealth and possessions right now -- I just want my family to have shelter."

**AFP**

# GUTERRES HIGHLIGHTS POWER OF SPORT FOR INCLUSIVE, SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

The United Nations Secretary-General has urged everyone involved in the sport sector to help advance climate action, combat discrimination and prejudice, and ensure that global sporting events leave a positive legacy.

In a message commemorating International Day of Sport for Development and Peace, Secretary-General António Guterres highlighted the power of sport to bring people together, promote healthy lifestyles, and contribute to inclusive and

sustainable development.

“Those involved in sport also have responsibilities: to reduce its environmental footprint; to meet international labour standards; to fight discrimination and prejudice of



Kids benefit from playing sports. Photo: UN News





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**The UN chief also noted that while the COVID-19 pandemic brought new challenges to the sector, sport can contribute to a “safe and sustainable recovery”.**

all kinds; to reject corruption; and to ensure that major global events such as the FIFA World Cup and the Olympic and Paralympic Games, which bring the world together, leave a positive legacy”, Mr. Guterres said.

#### **Helping a safe, sustainable recovery**

The UN chief also noted that while the COVID-19 pandemic brought new challenges to the sector, sport can contribute to a “safe and sustainable recovery”.

“Workers, fans and athletes have felt the pain of absence, of lost revenue and of dreams deferred”, Mr. Guterres noted.

“But many competitions and leagues have found new ways to create opportunities for community and joy despite the crisis ... as vaccines spread hope and spectators begin to return to arenas, the world of sport has crucial contributions to make in forging a safe and sustainable recovery”, he said.

The Secretary-General added that the UN looks forward to continuing

to work with sportspeople and organizations around the world to advance climate action and to promote peace, human rights and sustainable development.

“We will play and cheer again when everyone is safe from the pandemic.”

#### **The International Day**

The International Day of Sport for Development and Peace, commemorated annually on 6 April, was established by the United Nations General Assembly in August 2013, to highlight the importance of sport for promoting peaceful societies and healthy lifestyles.

This year, due to the coronavirus pandemic, the International Day was marked mainly through online and social media events, around the theme of recovery from the pandemic, and the need to build back better for a more resilient and equitable world.

*Courtesy of UN News*



IDPs in a camp. Photo: EPA

## I KAREN STATE

Despite the unilateral declaration of ceasefire for one month by the Burma military junta, its troops in Karen State continue to use ground and air attacks against unarmed civilians, according to Karen media. The Free Burma Rangers, a frontline humanitarian group, reported on April 5 the military launched two airstrikes on Dwe Loe Township, Mutraw (Papun) District northern Karen State. On the same day as it announced its one-month ceasefire, Burma Army troops indiscriminately fired mortars into villages in Lu Thaw Township. The air strikes and Burma Army bombardments that began on 27th of March in Karen State killed 30 and injured 32 Karen civilians and displaced as many as 20,000 villagers.

## I SHAN STATE

Thousands of civilians who fled from fighting between Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS) and Burma Army in the past are worried they'll have nowhere to go if the Burma Army attacks Shan bases along the Thai border where they now live, NMG reported. Over 6,000 civilians reside in six camps for displaced civilians, and all except one are inside Burma, along the Thai border. If the Burma Army attack, villagers don't have anywhere to go except Thailand, but it is unclear if Thai authorities will accept new refugees. Sai Leng from the Shan Refugee Committee told NMG that Shan groups asked the Thai government to provide shelter for civilians if the RCSS bases are attacked but there's been no response. "At the moment, all the Shan IDPs can do is build bunkers."





Photo: Hong Sar for Mizzima

## Junta invites people fleeing for political reasons to come home amid crackdown

The junta's military council invited Myanmar nationals who fled to various regions for political reasons to come back to their native lands, amid their crackdown against dissidents and arrests. A statement published by the military council, officially known as the State Administration Council, said, "Some student youths, State service personnel and citizens, evaded to areas of EAOs and foreign countries with worries because of incitement and intimidation of NLD members, the extremists who support that party, CRPH unlawful association, incitement of CDM and persons and organizations at home and abroad not wishing to restore peace and stability of the State." The statement said the military council would arrange the returns of Myanmar nationals from evaded areas to various regions of the country. "Information was released that if those who evaded to various areas except the persons who committed any kinds of crime wish to return to their native lands in Myanmar of their own accord, the citizens abroad are to contact nearby ward, village, township and district administration bodies and relevant embassies, military attaché offices and consulates without facing action taken in accord with the law," said the statement.

# SINGAPOREAN BUSINESSES IN MYANMAR FEEL THE PINCH

Singaporean businesses, like other enterprises in Myanmar, have been trying to navigate the turbulent waves created by the military coup on February 1, according to CNA.

The firms' operations have been affected in three main ways: Everyday disruptions brought about by political protests against the coup, challenges raised by the measures taken by the military government to assert control over resistance to the coup, and greater scrutiny of Singaporean businesses and their links with the Myanmar military, according to the

report.

In the first few days after the coup, internet blackouts and communication blocks set up by the military government created communication challenges between Singapore headquarters and their in-country staff. The Myanmar military government has since ordered several temporary internet shutdowns.

CAN reports that in addition, Singaporean businesses are in facing disruptions in workflow and cashflow. Many shops, factories and banks have been closed due to the political

protests.

At the same time, the participation of civil servants in the civil disobedience movement has slowed down the processing of permits, licences and other bureaucratic procedures.

Banks remain closed due to political protests on the part of bank employees. As a result, carrying out financial transactions has become a challenge for all businesses in Myanmar.



Singapore. Photo: Peter Nguyen



# SMALL THAI FIRMS STRUGGLE IN MYANMAR

**T**he Thai Commerce Ministry plans to ask state-owned banks to consider granting low-interest loans to help small Thai entrepreneurs in Myanmar that have been forced to temporarily close for almost a month as a confrontation between the military regime and protesters escalates, reports the Bangkok Post.

Thai manufacturers that use Myanmar as their export base are also

desperate after the US said earlier it would consider suspending the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) programme for Myanmar, making Naypyitaw lose tariff-free access to the US market for certain goods, according to the newspaper.

Thai Commerce Minister Jurin Laksanawisit said Thai businesses in Myanmar lack the funds to support factories and shops and will likely temporarily close.

Mr Jurin said commerce permanent secretary Boonyarit Kalayanamit will act as a go-between for the Thai-Myanmar Business Council (TMBC) and banks, including the Export-Import Bank of Thailand and Small and Medium Enterprise Development Bank of Thailand to jointly find a solution.



Photo: Scott Graham

# KOREAN UNIONS DECRY POSCO & KOGAS INVESTMENTS IN MYANMAR

The Korean Public Service and Transport Workers' Union—including its KOGAS branch, and the Korean Metal Workers' Union have demanded Korean companies POSCO International & KOGAS rethink its gas field project in Myanmar.

The unions demand POSCO cease all contractual payments, including dividends from the Myanmar gas field project and re-examine the project through an investigation with appropriate follow-up measures to ensure they are not crimes against humanity in the country.

POSCO International is one of the Myanmar military's closest international business partners, having a presence in country since 1988, and operates the Shwe gas field off the coast of Arakan State in

a profit-sharing agreement with the state-owned Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE).

The project has been linked to forced relocation, forced labour, militarisation, and sexual abuse.

Discovered by a POSCO subsidiary in 2004, gas from the field is transported to China by a pipeline that is further linked to land confiscation and conflict.

POSCO earned US\$193.9M in revenue for MOGE in 2017/2018 alone.

MOGE is now under control of the military junta and gas is the junta's biggest source of revenue.

The Shwe gas project was the Korea Gas Corporation (KOGAS)- a

public natural gas company that was established by the Korean government in 1983- first investment in Myanmar.

Korean unions have also asked KOGAS re-examine its involvement in the Shwe gas project in accordance with Article 18 (Reorganisation) 3 of Korea's Subsidiary Management Regulations.

According to leaked financial data, POSCO International and KOGAS, respectively have shares of 51% and 8.5% in the gas field project, have produced and sold natural gas since 2013 by establishing a consortium with Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE), a national company, and Indian national oil and gas companies.



Photo: EPA



*Penrose Thitsa*

## People launch watermelon campaign amid rumour that China has stopped buying Myanmar watermelons

**W**hile the unconfirmed news that China has banned watermelon imports from Myanmar were circulating, the people of Myanmar have been staging watermelon campaigns across Myanmar in various forms, according to local news reports. But watermelon traders said that the rumour that China was no longer buying Myanmar's watermelon was false. He said that China paused buying Myanmar's watermelon just for a day on April 10 to conduct COVID-19 tests for their workers. So, the workers did not work on April 10 and that's why the watermelon purchase was paused. Several people in Myanmar bought many watermelons from Myanmar farmers and gave away the watermelons to other people free of charge. Some anti-coup protesters hold placards such as "We will eat our watermelons." Some shared their works related to the campaign on social media. While China seems to support Myanmar's junta, many people of Myanmar are calling for a boycott of Chinese goods. So, the watermelon campaign also reflects anti-Beijing sentiment.

## S&P index to remove India's Adani Ports amid Indian company ties with junta

**S**&P Dow Jones Indices said it has been removing India's Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd from its sustainability index due to the company's business ties with Myanmar's military, which committed human rights abuses and staged a coup in February, reported Reuters. The company has been building a \$290 million port in Yangon on land leased from the military-backed Myanmar Economic Corporation (MEC), according to Reuters. At the time of this writing, the company has yet to clarify the matter. Adani Group said late last month it would consult authorities and stakeholders on the project after human rights groups reported that its ports unit had an agreement to pay millions of dollars in rent to MEC.

ORDINARY CLASS

# IN FOCUS







## SELLING GOODS

**W**omen selling fruit and other food in Hsipaw in Shan State. Photo: Hakan Nural

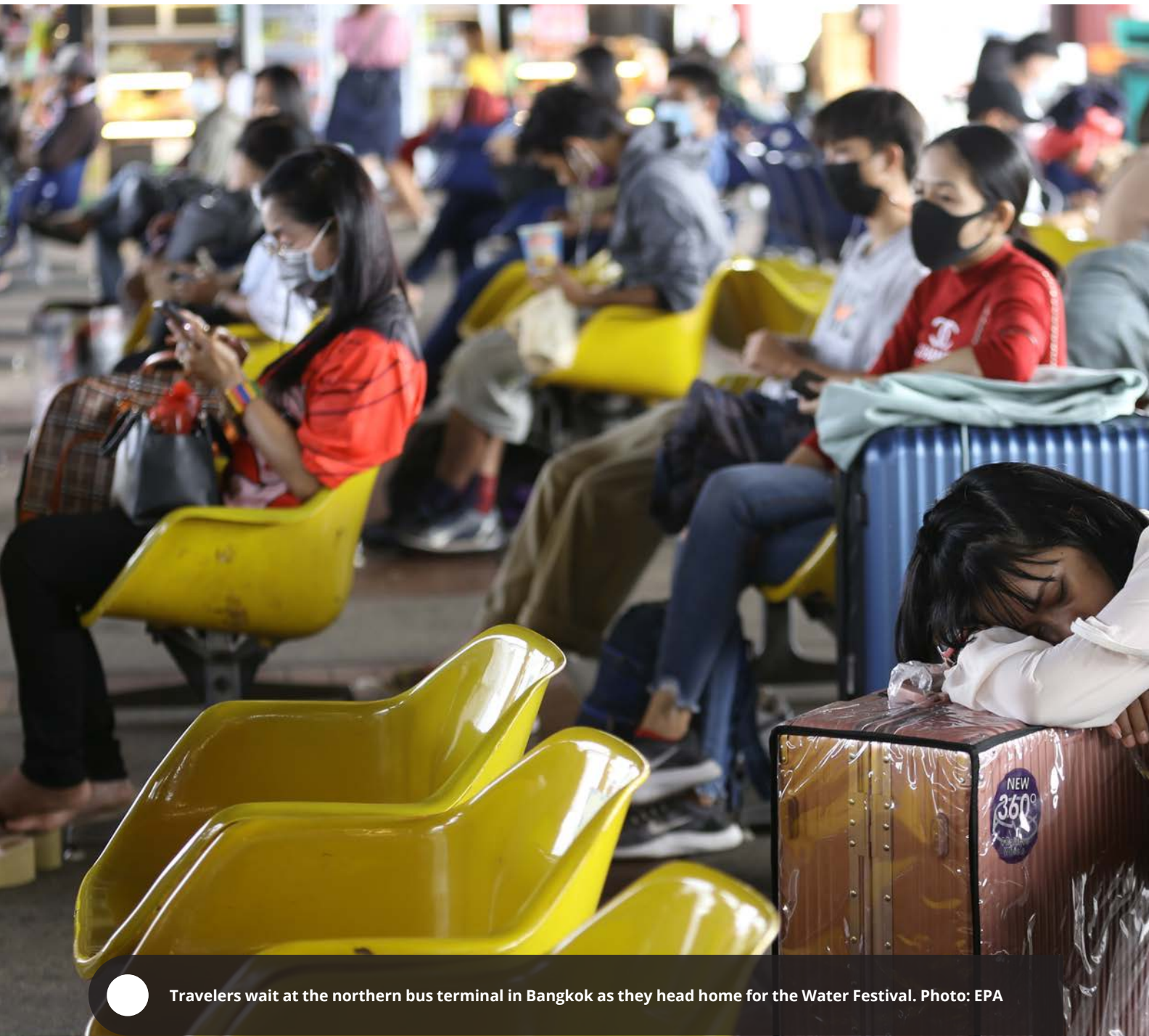


# SUBDUED WATER FESTIVAL IN MYANMAR AND THAILAND

This year has proved to be a subdued one for the traditional Water Festival that is held annually in Myanmar, Thailand and other neighbouring countries.

Thingyan is the Burmese New Year Festival that usually occurs in middle of April. It is a Buddhist festival celebrated over a period of four to five days, culminating in the New Year. The dates of the Thingyan Festival are

calculated according to the Burmese calendar. The dates of the festival are observed as public holidays throughout Myanmar and are part of the summer holidays at the end of the school year.



Travelers wait at the northern bus terminal in Bangkok as they head home for the Water Festival. Photo: EPA



Typically, water-throwing or dousing one another from any shape or form of vessel or device that delivers water is the distinguishing feature of this festival and may be done on the first four days of the festival. The New Year takes place at virtually the same time as the new year celebrations of many countries in South Asia like China (Dai People of Yunnan Province), Laos, Thailand,

Cambodia, Nepal, Bangladesh, India, and Sri Lanka.

This year, the situation is different. While some took the opportunity to pray at temples in Myanmar, the ongoing Myanmar crisis put a halt to any festivities or any desire for people to “let their hair down” as typically happens at this time of year.

In Thailand, the holiday was

dampened by a new small outbreak of COVID-19 positive cases, which saw the authorities issuing orders for people either not to travel or to quarantine when they get to their destination. Thailand has largely escaped the COVID-19 pandemic with only about 60 deaths. But the lockdowns, restrictions and block on international tourist arrivals has shattered the economy, particularly the hospitality industry.



The Water Festival in Myanmar was marked by small gestures of protest against the Military junta and by people offering prayers and merit at temples. Photos: EPA/Mizzima





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