

Special Study of Arakan Affairs

Resurgence of Armed Conflicts and the Situation of Higher Education in Arakan

No. (4), 2026

Education Sector



Photo- Arakan Army troops seen in front of Taunggye University in December 2024

April 30 , 2026

1. Introduction

(a) Topic	The Evolving Landscape of Higher Education in Post-Conflict Arakan
(b) Targeted Geography	17 townships in Arakan/Rakhine State
(c) Time Period	October 2023 to April 2026

Arakan has a total of 9 universities and colleges. The Capital, Sittwe, hosts Sittwe University, the University of Distance Education (Sittwe), the University of Computer Studies, the Technological University, and the Nursing College in Sittwe Township, as well as the Education College and the Government Technological Institute. Furthermore, Kyauktaw Township is home to an Agricultural College, while Taungup Township hosts Taungup, and another Government Technological Institute is located in Thandwe Township.

Following the 2021 military coup, the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) spread rapidly across Myanmar. However, students in Arakan largely abstained from joining the movement, in line with the policy of the United League of Arakan (ULA/AA).

However, following the resumption of conflict in November 2023, higher education, alongside most public service sectors, has come to a near-total standstill. Consequently, students pursuing higher education in Arakan have faced various hardships and an uncertain academic future.

In response, the ULA, which now governs 14 of the 17 townships in Arakan, has begun developing a higher education system that includes universities and colleges within its controlled territories.

This study is based on analysis of local media reports, statements from student unions, official ULA/AA announcements, and interviews conducted by the Center for Arakan Studies.

2. Summary

October 2023

(A) Launch of Law and Public Policy Training in Arakan Army-Controlled Areas

- The Arakan Army (AA) has issued a call for trainees for [Law and Public Policy programs](#) within its controlled territories. The initiatives include the Legal Studies course, which is

which is designed to span seven months and open to individuals aged 20 to 32 who are either university graduates or have at least passed the matriculation examination. Similarly, the Arakkha School of Public Policy and Administration launched a 17-month program, accepting applications from individuals between the ages of 18 and 32 who have completed at least a high school education.

March 2025

(B) Arakan College is established for Students Unable to Pursue University Education

- The establishment of [Arakan College](#) is underway to provide study opportunities for youths in Arakan who have completed high school but are currently unable to pursue university-level studies. The college aims to offer programs, alongside vocational training, tailored to local community needs. The initiative aims to foster intellectual growth among youth and contribute to long-term regional development. The institution intends to collaborate with experts across various professional fields.

June 2025

(C) Low University Enrollment in SAC-Controlled Sittwe

- Reports indicate that [university enrollment](#) has reached critically low levels in Sittwe, despite the State Administration Council (SAC) maintaining open campuses. Although Sittwe University, the Technological University, and the University of Computer Studies remain operational, student attendance has plummeted. This decline is largely driven by ongoing conflict in Sittwe Township, which has forced many students to flee to either liberated areas or central Myanmar. A source close to Sittwe University disclosed to Narinjara News that attendance is extremely low, with some departments recording as few as five to ten students per major.

July 2025

(D) The Health Department of the Arakkha People's Government Launches Public Health Supervisory Training

- On July 11th, 2025 the Health Department of the Arakkha People's Government announced the commencement of a [Public Health Supervisory Training program](#). This eight-month course is designed to enhance the department's capacity to deliver public health services more effectively. Graduates will be formally appointed to positions within rural health departments based on staffing requirements.

August 2025

(E) Arakkha People's Health Department Opens Midwifery Training

- In August 2025, the Health Department of the Arakkha People's Government opened

applications for its [Midwifery Training Program](#). To be eligible, candidates must be under the age of 25 and hold a minimum qualification of having completed Grade 12 or passed the matriculation examination under the previous national education system.

August 2025

(F) Arakan Army Outlines Vision for a New University System

- During a formal press conference, U Khaing Thukha, spokesperson for the Arakan Army (AA), announced that a new educational framework tailored specifically for the region is currently being drafted to facilitate learning across various townships and eventually establish an [independent higher education system](#). He stated: “The Arakkha Education Department is developing short-term educational plans, long-term policies, and high-quality curricula to implement a modern, equitable education system aligned with our state's needs. The Arakanese educational framework has been drafted up to Grade 7, and further curricula are being developed.”

December 2025

(G) “Invisible Schools” and the Education in Arakan

- The ongoing inability to reopen universities has severely restricted educational opportunities, creating significant barriers to students' ability to achieve their professional aspirations. [One student expressed](#), “Even though I passed the exams, there is no joy in it. There are no universities left to help me achieve my goals.”

January 2026

(H) Establishment of the First Medical School by the Arakkha People’s Government in Arakan State

- The Education Department of the Arakkha People’s Government announced that applications for the state’s [first medical school](#) opened on December 24, 2025. Parallel to the medical school launch, the department is also recruiting for specialised diploma programs in Agriculture, Statistics, and English Language.

February 2026

(I) The Arakkha People’s Government announced the recruitment for Nursing Trainees

- On January 31, 2026, the Arakkha People’s Government announced the recruitment of trainees for the [Arakkha Nursing School](#). Applicants must be Arakan residents under 25 years old and have passed the Grade 12 examination under the current or previous matriculation system by 2024.

March 2026

(J) Establishment of Arakkha National University

- The Education Department of the Arakkha People's Government announced the establishment of "[Arakkha National University](#)" to provide a pathway for students whose higher education was interrupted by conflict to complete their degrees. The university will offer both distance learning and in-person classes for the 2026–2027 academic year.
- Admission is open to residents of Arakan who have completed their third year of university (Day or Distance) in their respective majors. For Law majors, completion of the fourth year is required for eligibility. The program duration is designed for one year.
- Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) Programs include Myanmar, English, Geography, History, Philosophy, Psychology, Oriental Studies, Law, Economics, International Relations/Political Science, and Social Sciences. For Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) Programs, Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics, Zoology, Botany, Geology, and other science-related subjects are included.
- Upon successful completion, the university will confer degrees including B.A., B.Sc., B.A. (Q), B.Sc. (Q), and LL.B.

March 2026

(K) Myanmar Students Face High Tuition Fees Challenges at ICFAI University in Mizoram

- At ICFAI University in Mizoram, India, students from Myanmar who have completed Grade 11 or Grade 12 are now eligible to pursue higher education. While this provides a vital academic lifeline, many students face severe financial hurdles due to high tuition costs. Depending on the chosen major, semester fees range [from 30,000 to 60,000 Indian Rupees](#) (approximately 1.5 to 3 million Myanmar Kyats).

April 2026

(L) Rakhine Students Call for Cautious Implementation of Arakkha National Education

- The Arakkha National Education Department has introduced a comprehensive higher education framework covering diverse specialisations, including Arts, Science, Politics, Technology, Social Sciences, and Economics.
- "We are delighted to have the opportunity to return to university, especially after our education was interrupted and our career prospects vanished. However, [most students remain deeply concerned about](#) the threat of junta airstrikes on educational facilities," said a female student who had previously suspended her second-year Geography studies at Sittwe University.

3. Findings

1. Following the resumption of conflict in November 2023, the entire education system in Arakan, including higher education, experienced near-total collapse. Throughout the intense armed conflict of 2024, the United League of Arakan/ Arakan Army (ULA/AA) gained control over key townships, including Kyauktaw, Taungup, and Thandwe. As a result, the universities, colleges, and training institutes in these areas came under the ULA control.
2. In townships still held by the State Administration Council (SAC), such as Sittwe and Kyaukpyu, higher education institutions have struggled to remain operational. Due to severe military, political, and logistical constraints, regular operations are nearly impossible. Consequently, a significant number of students have either transferred to universities in regions such as Yangon and Mandalay or relocated to continue their studies in AA-controlled areas.
3. Within ULA/AA-controlled regions, the immense difficulty of maintaining basic primary and secondary education has created even greater challenges for university-level education. Students who were forced to suspend their studies mid-degree have faced a disruption of academic continuity due to the ongoing conflict.
4. Throughout 2025, a few higher education initiatives were introduced. Local media reports indicate that the educational effort primarily focused on programs that produce human resources, such as establishing medical colleges and training programs for medicine, nursing, and midwifery, which are essential for basic service delivery and governance.
5. As of March 2026, the administration has officially announced the opening of “Arakkha National University,” offering numerous programs in both the Arts and Sciences. However, significant challenges regarding security and resources are expected to persist during this period of conflict.

4. Analysis

The implementation of higher education in an active war zone inherently faces significant challenges. Arakan/Rakhine State, which has historically suffered from low educational standards due to systemic oppression and poverty under successive central governments, continues to face severe challenges under the current conflict. Within the ULA/AA-controlled territories, the stability of university operations remains precarious, threatened by persistent security risks and a severe lack of specialised resources.

Despite these obstacles, an alternative pathway can emerge through the development of a new education system by integrating modern methodologies and technologies with collective efforts. Currently, various educational initiatives operating outside the Naypyidaw government’s administration, such as in Kachin, Karen, and other regions, are successfully establishing quality university pathways with the support of regional and international organisations.

A clear and well-defined educational roadmap, along with a shared vision between the local populace and the ULA government, remained essential. Overcoming the existing hardships and challenges facing higher education will require unified collaboration among all stakeholders, such as the government, the academic community, students, and parents.

About Center for Arakan Studies

The Center for Arakan Studies is an independent, non-partisan research organization established in December 2021 by journalists, political analysts, researchers, and social workers. The Center aims to enhance understanding of Arakan affairs by publishing rigorous research on human rights conditions, political, economic, and social developments in Arakan, as well as issues related to Arakan within Myanmar and internationally. The Center produces policy briefs and monthly reports on topics related to Arakan, which are published through its website and various publications.

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