

# MONTHLY ARAKAN REVIEW

Monitoring a brief situation of political tension, economic, social, and humanitarian issues in Arakan in February 2026

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## Inhumane Air Strikes and Civilian Suffering Continue in Arakan



Photo Credit to Western News (Scene of the victims killed and grieving family members in Yoe Ngu village, Ponnagyun Township, during the junta's airstrike at around 2 PM on February 24, 2026)

# Executive Summary

# February

- In February 2026, over five years post-coup, Arakan Army (AA) strengthened control in Arakan (Rakhine) through governance and alliances, inflicting heavy junta losses in Kyaukphyu clashes. The junta escalated airstrikes and blockades while pushing a disputed election narrative (announcing 1,025 MPs), high turnout claims, and Min Aung Hlaing's leadership role amid forced conscription, international rejection, and EU condemnation on the coup anniversary.
- Arakan's economy under AA/ULA (United League of Arakan) showed resilience but faced collapse from conflict: paddy market failure caused farmer debts and reduced planting, met by ULA paddy purchases and fertilizer aid. Mizoram-Paletwa border trade halted briefly due to incidents, spiking prices before reopening; the V-Power plant's relocation from Kyaukphyu signaled FDI risks, alongside market volatility (high spare parts, charcoal surges, cash shortages).
- February 2026 compounded Arakan's social strain with two strong earthquakes disrupting conflict-hit areas, deepening IDP education crises (school closures, access barriers, resource gaps for Muslim students), though AA/ULA launched nursing/policy programs and fostered reform hopes. Healthcare advanced with Nipah prevention after Bangladesh cases, outbreak responses (hepatitis, skin diseases), and free services for around 500 displaced, highlighting governance efforts amid war-induced vulnerabilities.
- February 2026 saw a severe humanitarian escalation in Arakan from junta airstrikes, causing mass civilian deaths (e.g., 17-20 killed in Ponnagyun's Yoengu market bombing on 24-Feb), a monthly toll of more than 90 affected via drones/artillery/landmines, and widespread trauma (especially children). IDPs endured shelter collapse, starvation risks, repeated flight, and aid disruptions (internet blackouts), offset by community donations and local support, while UN agencies reported nearly 2 million in need.

## A. Politics: Three Key Highlights

### 1. Intensified Clashes in Kyaukphyu and Heavy Junta Casualties/Reinforcements

Repeated heavy fighting in Kyaukphyu Township, with AA-led forces inflicting major casualties on junta troops (e.g., over 70 in [one skirmish](#) on 17-Feb, 20 plus killed in convoy attack on 25-Feb). Junta sent reinforcements, used airstrikes/drones, fortifications, and offensives to [retake positions](#) (e.g., Point 666 base attempts on 16-Feb), but faced retreats and failures. This highlights AA's strong control and junta's desperation in a strategic area (near Chinese projects/coast).

### 2. Junta Airstrikes and Crimes Against Civilians in Arakan

Frequent State Security and Peace Commission (SSPC) airstrikes, drone strikes, and village burnings (e.g., 7 bombs on 18-Feb in Kyaukphyu; reports of [471 airstrikes](#) in Arakan since coup by 23-Feb; torching of 11 plus villages in Kyaukphyu over the past year on 11-Feb). Culminated in major civilian casualties, aligning with real-world reports of airstrikes [killing 17](#) plus civilians (including women/children) in Ponnagyun Township around late February. This underscores accusations of crimes against humanity.

### 3. Post-Election Developments and Junta Consolidation Efforts

UEC announced 1,025 elected MPs (4-Feb); Min Aung Hlaing positioned for State Counsellor role (21-Feb); claims of successful elections with high turnout (26-27 Feb, over 24 million ballots); [preparations](#) for parliament (24-Feb). Contrasted with widespread denials of legitimacy, forced conscription spikes (thousands arrested, including Rakhine youth), and international condemnations (e.g., EU statement on 1-Feb for 5th coup anniversary). This reflects the junta's attempt to legitimize its rule amid ongoing resistance.

## General Overview

In February 2026, marking over five years since the February 2021 military coup, the log documents escalating conflict in Arakan, where the AA maintains strong territorial control in most areas (including governance, infrastructure repairs, traffic enforcement, wildlife protection, and cultural events like Chin National Day support). The junta (SSPC) faces heavy losses in clashes (especially Kyaukphyu, Sittwe outskirts, Sagaing extensions, and borders with Bago/Ayeyarwady/Magway), relies on airstrikes, naval/armored reinforcements, forced conscription (targeting Rakhine youth via arrests, brokers, and returns from abroad), travel/shipping blockades, and propaganda to counter AA advances.

## B. Economic Downfall: Three Key Highlights

### 1. Paddy Market Collapse and Farmer Hardships, Prompting ULA Intervention

Arakan farmers faced severe struggles as the paddy (rice) market collapsed, with no buyers, mounting debts, and low prices due to conflict-related blockades, restricted access to markets, high input costs, and [overall economic stagnation](#) (5-Feb entry). This led to reduced planting of crops like beans and mustard (9-Feb, 19-Feb). In response, the ULA began purchasing paddy from farmers in controlled areas [to address shortages](#) and stabilize supply (12-Feb), and earlier provided natural fertilizer to support farming in Kyauktaw Township (9-Feb). This highlights AA/ULA efforts to mitigate civilian economic distress in agriculture-dependent regions.

### 2. Temporary Closure and Reopening of India-Myanmar Border Trade Routes via Mizoram-Paletwa

Trade halted due to security incidents (e.g., death of an Indian driver on ~12-Feb, leading to closures starting [16-Feb](#) in Lawngtlai and others). This caused concerns over rising commodity prices, supply shortages (e.g., perishables, fuel, rice), and economic strain in Rakhine/Chin areas (16-18 Feb). Partial reopening occurred in Siaha in Mizoram (17-18 Feb), with [full resumption](#) by 20 Feb after negotiations. Merchants sought better access to Indian markets (9-Feb), underscoring the critical role of cross-border trade for goods flow and price stability amid junta blockades.

### 3. Relocation of Chinese-Owned V-Power Power Plant from Kyaukphyu Amid Escalating Conflict

Equipment from the V-Power Plant (supplying power to Kyaukphyu SEZ and grid) was fully relocated due to [intensifying fighting](#) near Chinese investment sites. This reflects broader FDI risks in conflict zones, potential energy disruptions, and economic uncertainty in strategic areas like Kyaukphyu (near major projects). Other market strains included skyrocketing motorbike parts (7-Feb, due to tighter rules), charcoal sales surge after firewood ban (12-Feb), and cash shortages leading to [more gold selling](#) (20-Feb).

## General Overview

In February 2026, Arakan's economy under AA/ULA control showed resilience through local governance but faced severe challenges from ongoing war, junta blockades, and external disruptions. Agriculture suffered from paddy market failures, low demand/prices, high debts, reduced planting (e.g., beans, mustard), and input shortages, though AA/ULA intervened with fertilizer distribution, direct paddy purchases, and grading systems to support farmers and stabilize supply in controlled areas. Market affairs reflected volatility: price spikes (e.g., motorbike parts, cooking oil, firewood/charcoal surges post-bans), illicit sales (restricted alcohol), and cash shortages driving gold trading.

### C. Social Crisis: Three Key Highlights

#### 1. Two Strong Earthquakes Strike Arakan

Two powerful earthquakes (measuring around 6.0 and 5.2-5.9 magnitude, with epicenters near Mrauk-U and the Rakhine-Magway border) [jolted the area](#), causing tremors felt widely (including in parts of Sagaing, Mandalay, and even Bangladesh/India in related seismic activity). This natural hazard event disrupted daily life in an already conflict-stressed region, potentially exacerbating vulnerabilities for displaced populations and infrastructure. It stands out as the only major natural disaster in the log, highlighting environmental risks alongside man-made crises.

#### 2. Ongoing Education Crisis for IDP Children and Youth, with AA/ULA Initiatives and Restrictions

Deepening challenges for internally displaced persons (IDP) children included free schools struggling to stay open due to [funding shortages](#) (21-Feb in Ponnagyun/Rathedaung), limited access to higher education from junta travel restrictions (6-Feb), and broader crises like lack of teachers and resources for Muslim/Rohingya students (9-Feb). Positive steps included AA [opening applications](#) for a nursing science school (1-Feb) and ULA recruiting for policy/administration education programs (2-Feb); Hindus expressed hope for reforms under AA (20-Feb). This reflects AA/ULA efforts to build local education amid barriers, but persistent IDP hardships remain critical.

#### 3. Proactive Healthcare Responses to Disease Risks and Community Needs

ULA/AA strengthened public healthcare (3-Feb), distributed masks/pamphlets in response to a Nipah virus death in [nearby Bangladesh](#) (8-Feb in border areas like Maungdaw), conducted awareness/prevention for Nipah (10-12-Feb in Taungup, Thandwe, Minbya), addressed skin diseases/hepatitis outbreaks (8-Feb, 23-Feb), and expanded HIV prevention/[services for sex workers](#) (27-Feb). Free services reached nearly 500 displaced people in Sittwe (28-Feb). These actions show governance focus on public health amid external threats (e.g., Nipah case in Rajshahi Division, Bangladesh, confirmed by WHO around early Feb) and local issues like high hepatitis in children.

#### General Overview

In February 2026, the AA/ULA's governance in controlled areas emphasized civilian welfare through education, healthcare, and religious harmony despite ongoing conflict, displacement, and junta restrictions. Education faced severe strain: IDP children lacked stable schooling (funding shortages, access denials), though AA/ULA launched recruitment for nursing and policy programs and supported cultural/religious education (e.g., for Muslim students). Healthcare saw active interventions—strengthening services, Nipah awareness (triggered by the Bangladesh case), outbreak responses (hepatitis, skin diseases), and free care for displaced—reflecting efforts to fill gaps left by war.

## D. Humanitarian Issue: Three Key Highlights

### 1. Devastating Airstrike on Yoe Ngu Village Market in Ponnagyun Township

Junta airstrikes hit a crowded civilian market/village in Ponnagyun, [killing at least](#) 17-20 civilians (including women and multiple children, with death toll rising in reports) and injuring 14 more. The AA and local sources described it as targeting displaced families/homes; UNICEF expressed [deep alarm](#) over child deaths/injuries in airstrikes around 23-24 Feb. This incident exemplifies indiscriminate aerial attacks on non-military sites, causing mass casualties and drawing international condemnation for violations of humanitarian law.

### 2. Rising Civilian Casualties from Airstrikes, Drones, Artillery, and Landmines/ERW

Cumulative toll [included nearly 70 civilians](#)/POW families killed/injured in one month (early Feb); specific strikes killed 7 (including infant) in Kyauktaw/Mrauk-U (13-Feb), 2 women in Kyaukphyu (17-Feb), and 2 in Ramree (19-Feb). Landmine/ERW incidents injured/killed in Ann, Thandwe, Minbya, and Sittwe (e.g., 2 Muslim villagers died from a remnant explosion on 15-Feb). By month-end, [over 90 civilians](#) were affected in Rakhine (42 deaths, 50 injuries per some tallies), with airstrikes/drone attacks dominant. This highlights the junta's heavy reliance on aerial/indiscriminate weapons, inflicting widespread fear, trauma (especially on children), and psychological harm.

### 3. Severe Humanitarian Needs and Displacement Crises for IDPs

IDPs faced collapsing shelters, inadequate latrines, [starvation risks](#) (e.g., over 1,000 in Ponnagyun unable to offset prices via firewood sales on 16-Feb; over [200 without](#) shelter/food on 24-Feb), repeated displacement (Kyaukphyu IDPs fleeing again on 28-Feb), and livelihood collapse (e.g., female-headed households, zat pwe performers, Hindus facing job shortages). Internet blackouts also hampered aid (26-Feb). Positive responses included community donations (e.g., Muslims donating 50 million Kyats to bomb-damaged Mrauk-U hospital on 9-Feb; aid for skin diseases, toilets in camps on 22-27 Feb). OCHA/UNICEF noted that nearly 2 million people in Arakan needed aid, with children bearing the brunt.

## General Overview

February 2026 portrays a dire humanitarian emergency in Arakan amid intensified junta offensives against AA-held areas, five years post-coup. The military escalated airstrikes, drone attacks, artillery, and landmines, causing dozens of civilian deaths/injuries (e.g., 90+ in month per local counts, including children/infants/women), targeting villages, markets, shelters, and historic sites. This led to mass fear, psychological trauma (especially children), forced repeated flight, and destruction of homes/pagodas, stalling rehabilitation.

## About the Report

This report is part of the CAS's monthly series, which delves into four key areas of the state of Arakan. The first section addresses political concerns, including the armed revolution, junta activities, and issues of political freedom. The second examines the state's economic climate, focusing on rising prices, declining demand, foreign direct investment, and border trade. The third and fourth sections cover social and humanitarian issues, respectively; these include education, health, migration, and the internally displaced persons (IDP) population.

Key data in the report are sourced from local media outlets, such as DMG, Western News, among others. The aim of this report is to shed new light on the situation for observers endeavoring to comprehend the dynamics at play in the region.

## About Center for Arakan Studies (CAS)

The Center is an independent, non-partisan research institution established in December 2021 by a group of young professionals, including journalists, political analysts, researchers, and social workers.

The Center aims to promote understanding of human rights, political, economic, and social dynamics in Arakan and related issues within Myanmar and beyond. Through rigorous research and reporting, the Center seeks to address the policy gaps with analysis and recommendations to support democratic change and collective solutions.

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