

Press Release

November 11, 2025

**Japanese payment company JCB's silence over Myanmar military-linked crony
bank draws civil society criticism**

ayus:Network of Buddhists Volunteers on International Cooperation

Pacific Asia Resource Center (PARC)

Friends of the Earth Japan

Justice For Myanmar

Japan International Volunteer Center (JVC)

Network Against Japan Arms Trade (NAJAT)

Mekong Watch

Justice For Myanmar, Mekong Watch and five Japanese organizations have criticized Japanese payment company JCB Co. Ltd. for failing to respond to a letter of inquiry regarding partnership with UAB—a Myanmar crony bank that has been linked to the military's international crimes and is exposed to sanctions.

The letter was sent jointly by the Myanmar and Japanese organizations on July 17, 2025. It raised urgent human rights concerns over JCB's continued business relationship with UAB, which acts as a local acquirer for JCB cards in Myanmar. To date, JCB has remained silent.

UAB's role in the Myanmar military's indiscriminate airstrikes

In June 2024, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar named UAB, formerly known as *United Amara Bank*, as one of the financial institutions used to make payments to companies supplying aviation fuel to the Myanmar military, noting that the junta's "ability to terrorize civilian populations through indiscriminate airstrikes is directly dependent on its ability to access the aviation fuel required to fly its jets and helicopters."

The Special Rapporteur specifically urged financial institutions to freeze existing relationships with UAB.

As the military junta prepares a sham election for December 2025, it has intensified its indiscriminate airstrikes that have massacred civilians, including children and destroyed villages, schools and hospitals.

UAB's ties to sanctioned IGE Group

UAB is deeply connected to the IGE Group of Companies. The group's core entity, International Group of Entrepreneurs Co. Ltd. (IGE) is a major crony conglomerate sanctioned by the EU in 2022 for its close relationship with top leaders of the Myanmar military and its financial support for the 2017 "clearance operations" in Rakhine State. Myanmar has been brought before the International Court of Justice for violating the Genocide Convention over these operations, which forced over 700,000 people to Bangladesh.

IGE's founder and chair, Ne Aung, who is sanctioned by both the EU and Canada, resigned from UAB's board of directors, just four days after IGE's EU sanctions. According to Myanmar's company registry, a few weeks after EU sanctions, he and his wife transferred their shares in UAB to two shell companies—entities widely suspected of being proxy shareholders.

As of 2022, UAB remained tied to IGE Group through its CEO Than Win Swe, who also serves as a director of UAB, and another UAB director, Thant Zin, who sits on the board of Future Creator Group Construction, a UAB subsidiary.

These connections strongly suggest that Ne Aung and IGE continue to exercise control over UAB through proxies, meaning that UAB remains part of the crony IGE economic network and subject to EU and Canadian sanctions.

The timing of the ownership transfer indicates an attempt to evade sanctions by creating a false appearance of separation between UAB, IGE, and Ne Aung.

JCB's silence on human-rights due diligence

In the letter, the civil society organizations asked JCB three key questions:

1. Whether JCB has conducted human rights due diligence in relation to its business activities in Myanmar since the coup attempt on 1 February 2021 and if so, to disclose the findings;

2. What concrete steps JCB has taken to assess and mitigate the risk of contributing to, or being complicit in, international crimes through its ongoing partnership with UAB; and
3. Whether JCB intends to end its partnership with UAB, given the UN Special Rapporteur's explicit call for financial institutions to do so.

As of November 2025, JCB has failed to respond to any of these questions.

Yuka Kiguchi, Executive Director of Mekong Watch, said, "Japanese companies must not look the other way while their business partners are potentially supporting airstrikes and human rights violations causing mass suffering in Myanmar. JCB, which ignored questions about its partnership with UAB, publicly claims that its credit card is Japan's only internationally recognized credit card brand. However, in its business practices, it is failing to meet even the most basic international standards of corporate transparency and human rights responsibility. We urge JCB to immediately respond to our inquiry."

Yadanar Maung, Justice for Myanmar's spokesperson, said, "JCB's ongoing partnership with a sanctioned, crony-owned bank that is linked to the junta's aviation fuel supply chain is unacceptable. This business has continued as the junta escalates airstrikes across the country ahead of its sham elections. JCB cannot continue to stay silent and continue business as usual. It must abide by its international human rights responsibilities and ensure it is not supporting any business that is aiding and abetting war crimes in Myanmar."

Read the letter from civil society sent to JCB on July 17, 2025.

[Letter](#) (English version below Japanese)

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