

ON THE GROUND IN MYANMAR

mizzima WEEKLY

Analysis & Insight

THE HIGH PRICE OF CONNECTION

How internet shutdowns and
surveillance suppress Myanmar
women's family links, freedom
and mental health

Vietnam is deepening its complicity in the Myanmar junta's
international crimes, says Justice for Myanmar

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DIGITAL MAGAZINE

Our relaunched magazine Mizzima Weekly provides readers with a more focused read on what matters in Myanmar and the wider region, with an emphasis on analysis, insight and providing key talking points.

THE UNSEEN TRAUMA

The most devastating consequences of Myanmar's crisis are not always visible. Buildings can be rebuilt, villages can be repopulated and roads repaired, but the psychological wounds carried by millions may remain long after the fighting stops. More than five years after the military coup, Myanmar is facing an unseen mental-health crisis that deserves far greater attention – one alluded to in our cover story this week focused on women.

For civilians living under airstrikes, arbitrary arrests, displacement, poverty and constant insecurity, fear has become part of everyday life. Families have been separated, loved ones killed and homes destroyed. Millions have been forced from their communities, while economic collapse and the destruction of public services have removed many of the foundations that normally provide stability.

The United Nations says more than 3.6 million people are internally displaced, while recent UN reporting describes continuing attacks, arbitrary detention, torture and other abuses.

The psychological consequences are profound. People who repeatedly experience violence do not simply "move on" when the immediate danger passes. Anxiety, depression, grief, post-traumatic stress and a persistent sense of insecurity can become part of daily existence. Children are particularly vulnerable. Growing up amid violence and displacement can affect their sense of safety, education, relationships and prospects for the future.

The World Health Organization estimates that almost everyone exposed to an emergency will experience some psychological distress, while about one

in five people who have experienced war or conflict develops a mental-health condition such as depression, anxiety or post-traumatic stress disorder. In Myanmar, however, the scale of need is colliding with a severely disrupted health system. WHO says mental-health services are highly centralized and that access has been badly affected by conflict and other emergencies.

There is also a danger that mental suffering will be dismissed as secondary to the physical catastrophe. It is not. A person who survives an attack but cannot sleep, function, work, care for their children or escape persistent fear is still suffering the consequences of war.

Myanmar therefore needs more than food, shelter and medicine. It needs sustained psychological and social support, including community-based services, trauma counselling and assistance for children and displaced families. International humanitarian programmes should treat mental health as an essential component of emergency assistance, rather than an optional addition.

The military conflict may eventually end, but its psychological legacy could last for generations. If the world waits until the guns fall silent before addressing that damage, it will already be too late for many. Myanmar's invisible wounds are real wounds - and they must be treated with the same seriousness as those that can be seen.

Take the women in our cover story to gain a glimpse of the challenges.

EDITORIAL

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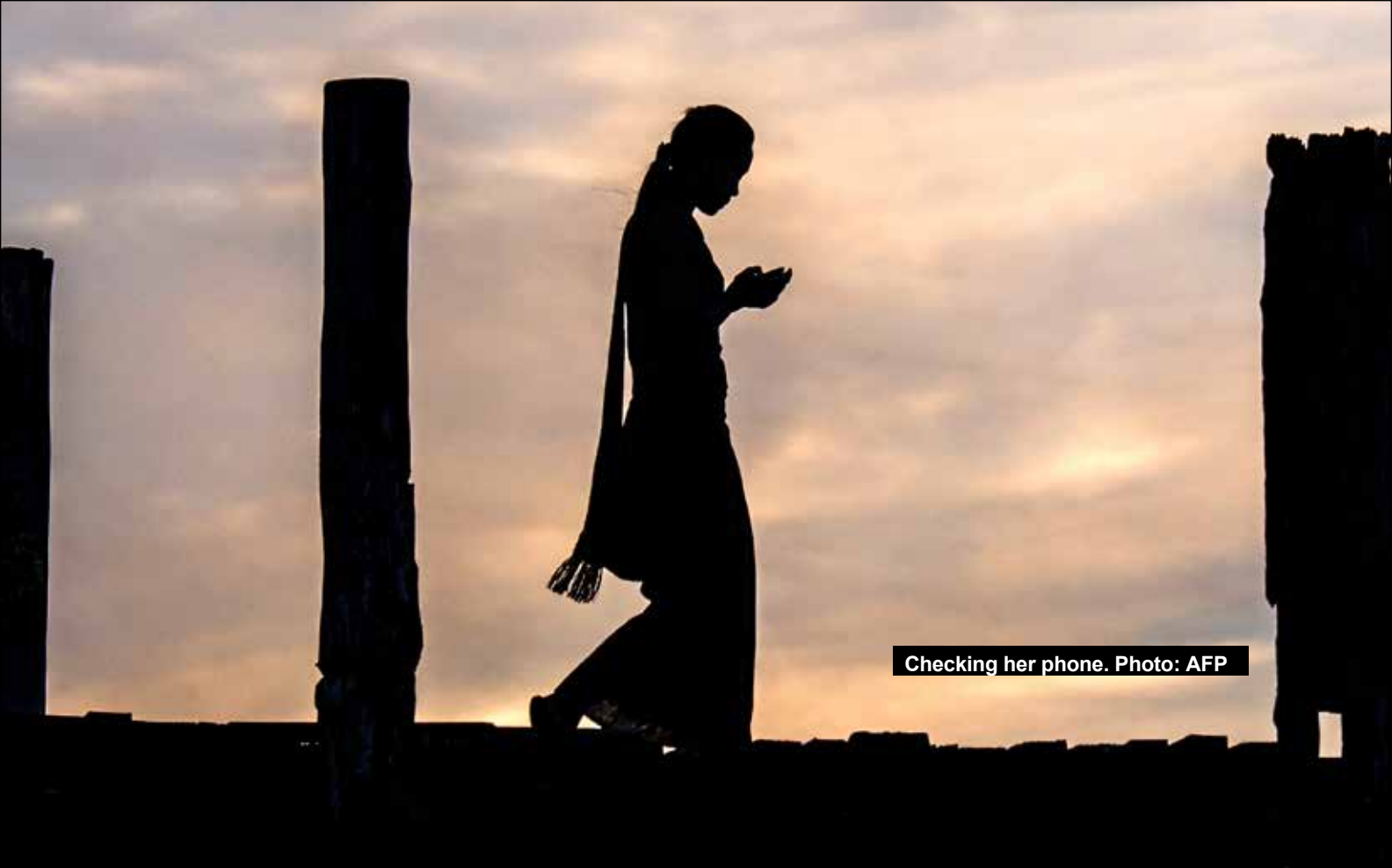
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Cover photo by Danny Lines



Checking her phone. Photo: AFP

THE HIGH PRICE OF CONNECTION

**HOW INTERNET SHUTDOWNS
AND SURVEILLANCE SUPPRESS
MYANMAR WOMEN'S FAMILY
LINKS, FREEDOM AND MENTAL
HEALTH**

SRI FOR MIZZIMA

It was a dark, rain-soaked night. On a road in a border area of Myanmar, a woman walked step by step, clutching her phone tightly, searching for a spot where she might catch an internet signal.

Ma Kyi Pyar wasn't logging on to her phone for a movie. She wasn't looking to browse social media. All she wanted was a few seconds of signal, the hope that it might carry some news from her family, some words from her friends.

In the area where Ma Kyi Pyar was staying, there were no regular phone lines and no internet. Phone use was restricted during People's Defence Force training; normally the phones were only handed back for a short while on weekends. That night was a weekday, but because an event was being held the next day, they had been returned briefly.

What Ma Kyi Pyar and other trainees used was a phone line bleeding over from across the border. Outside the jungle barracks, near a single iron post, they could sometimes catch it. Even then it was only 2G or 3G, so they had to hold the phone above their heads and move from one spot to another. Now and then one or two messages would pop into Facebook Messenger.

Searching for a Signal

With a fine rain falling and mosquitoes biting, Ma Kyi Pyar stared at the phone screen over and over. Finally, a signal appeared, and unread messages began arriving in Messenger one after another. Between the connection dropping and returning, she managed to read one.

"Mom passed away. I thought you should know."

After reading it, Ma Kyi Pyar ran out along the rain-swept path.

To every friend she passed on the track, she kept repeating the same words: "My mother is dead."

In the end she asked a woman with a working Myanmar SIM card for help and was allowed a single call to her father. Because of the communications blackout, the news of her mother's death reached her three days late. She did not sleep at all that night.

"There was no one to turn to. It was just me."

This was not the first time the impact of a communications blackout had entered Ma Kyi Pyar's life.

Flash back to 1 February 2021 and she was living with her family in Yangon. She was 20 years old and a first-year psychology student. She had been running a small online business since she was about 17. She wanted to be an entrepreneur, and she dreamed of becoming a model and an actress. When Covid-19 closed the schools, she taught children for free in her spare time.

On the morning of the military coup led by military commander Min Aung Hlaing, Ma Kyi Pyar was on her way to a photoshoot, her first step toward becoming a makeup model. While she was still on the road, phone and internet lines went dead across the country. She couldn't call her family; her family couldn't reach her. Her mother - who worried easily and always feared the worst - walked the streets searching for her. Not until around 5:30 that evening, when Ma Kyi Pyar made it home, did mother and daughter find each other again.

"We were left in the dark, with no idea what was happening or how," Ma Kyi Pyar says, remembering that day.

It was the day she felt how much a few hours without phone lines and internet could shake daily life and the safety of a person living in the city.

"It was as if everything had gone completely dark. We knew nothing about who was going through what, what was happening to our own country."

Later, after joining the public protests against the coup - the start of what many in Myanmar call the Spring Revolution - Ma Kyi Pyar moved to join the armed resistance: fighters, often organised into People's Defence Forces, who took up arms against the military government that had seized power in the coup. She lived at a jungle camp run by a resistance group and took basic military and medical training.

Since the military coup, internet and telecommunication shutdowns in Myanmar have grown far beyond temporary emergency measures. Nightly internet curfews, mobile data cutoffs, restrictions on social media platforms, and blackouts lasting days, months - and even years in conflict areas - have become part of daily life.

According to the digital rights group Access Now, Myanmar recorded at least 95 internet shutdowns in 2025, 76 of them carried out by the military.

A single shutdown can be the hour someone cannot call a hospital, the hour a danger warning never arrives, or the hour they learn too late what has happened to a member of their family. Sometimes that phone is the only thread by which they can know a family member is still alive.

A Family Held Together by One Phone

Just as Ma Kyi Pyar waited in the forest for a signal, miles away in a Yangon apartment another woman was waiting for her phone to ring.

Daw Khet Nwe is in her fifties, and her family has been scattered by the country's political storm. Her husband is struggling to get by in a rural town. Her son is in a liberated area. Her daughter is in Thailand. She herself lives in an apartment in downtown Yangon. A family of four who once sat around the same dinner table is now flung across four different places.

When military conscription law began, a summons arrived for her son through the ward office. Daw Khet Nwe didn't want him joining the military junta. But she couldn't calmly accept his decision to flee to the jungle, either. In the end, unable to stop him, she took him herself as far as he wanted to go. Mother and son rode the bus together from Yangon to a liberated area near Myawaddy. About a year later, when her daughter came of age and her safety became a worry too, Daw Khet Nwe took her across to Thailand herself.

After that, the only thread left holding the family together was a single phone. But even that thread was not always strong.

For safety, her son stopped using his old Facebook Messenger account. He changed his name. He no longer used his own photo on his profile, putting up pictures of footballers instead. He would contact her from new accounts. Eventually he dropped Messenger altogether and switched to another messaging app he thought was more secure. Sometimes days would pass with no word at all.

"I never know what day, what time, or what might happen to my son tomorrow. I'm always waiting on this one phone for news of them," Daw Khet Nwe says.

So, her phone always had to be ready. Battery charged. Internet package topped up without fail. She asks her niece to keep checking whether the data is running low. In Yangon, where the electricity is unreliable and the internet lines flicker, her anxiety climbs higher still.

One day the Wi-Fi at home stopped working and Daw Khet Nwe called the service provider, her voice sharp with anger, demanding they fix it immediately. Her older sister said to her, "Why are you so upset? The internet is always like this."

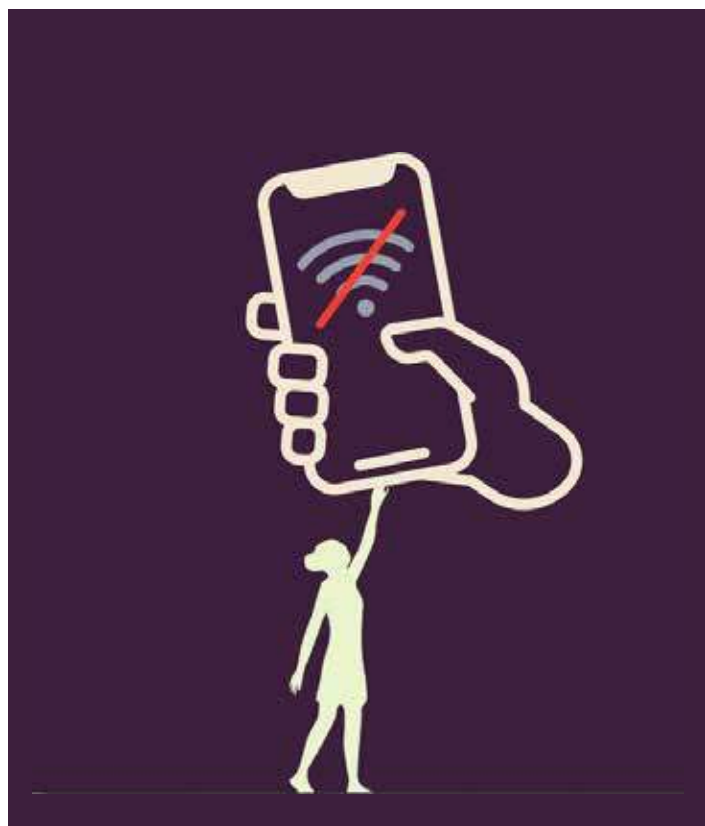
What she was upset about was missing an incoming call she had no way of predicting.

"I'm not upset. What if my daughter calls me and can't get through?"

Even when the line came back, she couldn't speak freely. Her son had warned her never to talk about him over a Myanmar phone line. To the neighbours she has to say that her son and daughter are simply working in Thailand.

On an ordinary call, all she can say is: Have you eaten? Are you well? Even to talk with her husband about their children, she has to use the secure messaging apps her daughter installed on her phone.

She calls it simply "being alone"



Just as Ma Kyi Pyar searched for a signal in the rain, Daw Khet Nwe waits inside an apartment, day after day, for the phone to ring. Their circumstances are different, but the same uncertainty presses on both their daily lives: Is my family still safe? When will I be able to reach them again? What happened in the hours I couldn't know about?

Question after question, worry after worry, with no answers, this has become grinding normality.

What Uncertainty Does to Mental Health

Dr. Khin, from a consortium of psychotherapy practitioners based inside Myanmar, has spent more than a decade treating people carrying trauma in conflict areas. She says this kind of uncertainty plays a central part in the stress most of her patients live with.

Uncertainty under conflict, she explains, can produce stress responses such as constant worry, disrupted sleep and difficulty concentrating.

Not knowing whether a family is safe when communications go down makes that uncertainty sharper still, she says. And it doesn't end with a moment of confusion. As days and months pass, symptoms can gradually surface: constant anxiety, a racing heart, sleepless nights, an inability to focus on a single task.

According to the therapist, the sorrow people feel in situations like these is no longer ordinary grief.

"Thoughts like 'if only I had called,' 'if only I had known in time,' 'if only I had been there beside her' keep coming back, over and over."

Whether it is Ma Kyi Pyar or Daw Khet Nwe, none of this was within their control. But a brain that has been through trauma is always searching for a reason, she explains.

And the weight of this uncertainty, she goes on, is not carried equally by everyone.

In Dr. Khin's professional experience, women who hold the role of primary caregiver within a family end up worrying not only for themselves when communications are cut, but chasing news of the entire family – a burden they typically face alone.

"Most women who take on the caregiver role end up checking on everyone's situation by themselves and carrying all that worry alone. Over time that pressure leads to burnout and to anxiety."

This feeling has not been studied directly, but research published in 2025 documents the link between conflict-related stress and the mental health of girls in Myanmar.

The study was carried out by the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), University College London (UCL) and the Myanmar-based non-governmental organisation "Girl Determined". It included 750 girls and young women aged 10 to 21 from Mandalay, Yangon, Kachin, Shan and Tanintharyi. All of them were taking part in Girl Determined's Circles programme, which brings together girls at higher risk of exclusion in small groups to learn from one another and build their capacity.

The survey found that those who had experienced one or two conflict-related stressors were nearly twice as likely to report more symptoms of depression as those who had experienced none. For those who had experienced three or more, that likelihood was close to three times higher.

Separation from parents or caregivers because of conflict, the loss of a family member, direct exposure to fighting and displacement from home were all significantly associated with a greater number of depressive symptoms, the research found.

"Given the severe restrictions on research and humanitarian access in Myanmar, these findings provide rare and much-needed insight into the mental health impact of conflict on adolescent girls across the country," said Isabelle Pearson, the study's lead author, in LSHTM's statement on the research.

These findings do not represent all Myanmar women. But among those who took part, they are evidence of the link between conflict, displacement, family separation and mental health.

When the Line Closes, the Income Closes Too

For some women, the anxiety of being unable to reach family does not stop inside the house. It reaches all the way into how they earn a living.

For Ei Ei, who sells clothes online in Yangon, the internet is not only a way to reach her family. It is her shop. From dawn until dusk the phone stays in her hand. Even when she wakes in the middle of the night, she checks whether new orders have come in. About 60 percent of her buyers are outside Yangon, in provincial towns. After the 2021 coup, when Facebook could only be reached through a VPN, most of her rural customers found the VPN too difficult, and her sales fell sharply.

On top of that, shortly after the coup her husband's company became one of those that pulled out of Myanmar. With her husband out of work, Ei Ei became the main earner for two school-age children. But her income kept falling. She had to sell off, piece by piece, the gold she had saved for years, and she could keep only one of the two assistants she had hired to help at the shop. The sleepless nights piled up.

"These internet shutdowns, these restrictions we have to live with - it feels exactly as if someone is walking into my shop and smashing it to pieces."

Thit Nyan, a digital rights expert at the Myanmar Internet Project, says that for people who depend on being online to earn a living, the impact of a shutdown never stops with one person. It carries on to the family, he says, and from there it ripples out to affect society as a whole.

For Ei Ei, the worst part was not the fall in income. After seeing repeated news of people being arrested over a single comment on social media, she no longer dared to go live to sell from her shop. It wasn't what she herself might say; it was the fear that someone else might type something political in the chat.

Selling on live video is meant to draw as much attention as possible. But, she says, "I'm frightened of my products getting attention. And attention is exactly the thing I want."

"I've shut myself in."

Footprints in a Phone, and the People Arrested for Them

While shutdowns are severing human connection, digital threats in areas where the internet still works are lowering the voices of some women.

Mulan experienced first-hand how the digital footprints left in a phone can turn into the reason a person loses their freedom.

Mulan had been a civil society activist since before the coup, and she continued human rights work afterwards.



Women are playing an important role in the revolution but many are suffering due to the repression. Photo: AFP

One day after the coup, soldiers searching her house found some communications data on an old phone. That digital footprint became the reason for her arrest.

"Once they found that phone, they started connecting things and asking questions. That's how they got their reason to arrest me."

Inside the prison, she says, the communications data of some of the women she met there exposed the people they had been in contact with, and led to further arrests.

She recalls one woman jailed alongside her who was hunted down at her own home for doing nothing more than giving a "heart" reaction to a comment her husband had written under a Facebook page linked to the resistance. From other inmates, Mulan heard of others who had been questioned or detained over a single comment or a single "like".

Mulan's arrest reached her daughter too. According to Mulan, on the night the soldiers came to the house, her seven-year-old daughter, who had been playing outside, ran into the room and warned her: "Mum, hide the phones and the laptops."

"That's what a seven-year-old understood. She was only seven," Mulan says.

After all this, every person Mulan had contacted by phone, every word she had spoken, every piece of data she hadn't deleted, every footprint she had left online became a warning: one day, any of it could rebound and threaten her.

After her release from prison, Mulan no longer keeps a single Facebook account. She has one account for going out in public, one for resistance-related work, and one for her private life. Her profile picture is gone. She no longer shares where she is, what she is doing, or anything about her family.

"Posting about yourself on Facebook is the same as handing your own information to the military. So, I keep as low a profile as I can."

The Women Who Fell Silent

This gradual lowering of the voice is not Mulan's experience alone, says Tin Zar Aung, founder of Myanmar Women in Media.

Since the coup, women journalists, women who host programmes online and women activists have faced not only the risk of arrest but daily threats online. Doxxing - sexual abuse and the circulation of personal information has increased, along with deepfakes made with AI and sexually harassing phone calls.

Because those who do it face no consequences, she says, they have grown bolder.

"A digital threat isn't a threat that stays inside the digital world. We're seeing it reach mental health too."

Digital security training is good, she says, but psychological support needs to be built into it. Otherwise, women reach the point of saying: "I'm not doing this anymore. I don't want to keep doing this work."

For people who have to calculate risk constantly, responses such as excessive caution, being easily startled, and dread at an unknown number appearing on the phone can surface.

Dr. Khin explains that this state of always staying alert to danger is called hypervigilance.

A ringing phone makes you jump. An unknown number brings dread. You find yourself going over what you are about to say, again and again. Some people gradually shut their feelings down altogether.

According to Dr. Khin, when some people face trauma and pressure, their emotions can tighten up. This response is called emotional numbing, she explains, a way the mind tries to protect itself while under strain.

There are very few studies measuring mental health in Myanmar on a broad scale. One available study surveyed 1,038 adults through random phone dialing between July and August 2021. Of those who took part, 34.9 percent met the screening criteria for PTSD, depression or anxiety.

Researchers found a significant statistical association between probable PTSD symptoms within the survey sample and political stress, as published in The Lancet Regional Health - Southeast Asia in 2024. But because the survey was conducted by phone, people without phone lines and people in areas where communications were cut were less likely to be included, and the results cannot fully represent their experience.

The Ecosystem of Digital Repression

The communications blackouts Myanmar faces cannot be explained by a single cause. In some areas the military cut the internet or mobile data directly. In others, fighting led to the severing of fibre cables and destruction of telecom towers. In some places the shortage of fuel and electricity stopped the towers and the networks working at all.

According to Access Now's 2025 record, Myanmar had at least 95 internet shutdowns, 76 of them carried out by the military. For the remaining incidents, Access Now records perpetrators it could not identify, along with some armed groups fighting the military, local administrative bodies, and authorities in a neighbouring country.

For civilians on the ground, the immediate loss of contact and the loss of emergency information may look the same. But the scale, the duration, the intent, and the ability to control the country's communications infrastructure are not the same. The military, led by coup leader Min Aung Hlaing, is the principal actor responsible for the majority of shutdowns.

In some places without regular internet, including parts of Sagaing Region where the conflict is intense, residents rely on Starlink.

Those who can afford it buy Starlink terminals, set them up and share access for a fee based on how long you use it, a resident of Sagaing said.

In circumstances like these, "being able to connect" is no longer a matter of technology. It becomes a privilege determined by where you live, who controls that place, and how much money you can afford.

Thit Nyan, spokesperson for the Myanmar Internet Project, says the military's digital repression should not be viewed as a series of separate incidents. His group's research finds that legal restriction, deliberate internet shutdowns, and the building and use of surveillance machinery link together and operate as a single "digital repression ecosystem".

Laws connected to the digital sphere, including the Cybersecurity Law, were not drafted to support people's digital rights and development, Thit Nyan explains, but are laws "prepared to be used as a weapon".

The data left in Mulan's phone, for example, beca-

me the reason for her arrest. But behind one person's digital footprint there was also a wider system - the telecom company that collected and stored the data, the authority that demanded it, and a parent company abroad.

On 8 April 2026, the Sweden-based non-profit Justice and Accountability Initiative sued Telenor ASA in Norway's Asker and Bærum District Court in a class action for damages. The plaintiffs allege that Telenor Myanmar handed the military data relating to at least 1,253 phone numbers after the coup.

According to the lawsuit and internal Telenor documents reported to have been seen by the British newspaper The Observer, on 31 October 2021 the military requested the call records of one phone number belonging to Phyo Zeya Thaw, a former lawmaker and hip-hop artist. Although the company's internal risk assessment warned that handing over the data could lead to his arrest, the plaintiffs say Telenor Myanmar notified its parent company and then provided the data requested.

A few weeks later, on 18 November 2021, Phyo Zeya Thaw was arrested. The military charged him under the counter-terrorism law with leading attacks on targets linked to it, and a military tribunal sentenced him to death. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have criticised that closed trial held without public or legal access as highly secretive and unjust.

In July 2022 he was executed by the military along with three other activists.

The plaintiffs allege that Telenor's handing over of the data helped identify Phyo Zeya Thaw's location and contributed to his arrest. Telenor has responded that



the lawsuit is unlikely to succeed, and the court has not ruled on that connection.

Telenor says it was legally obliged to comply with the military's data requests and that refusing would have put its staff in Myanmar in serious danger.

Telenor was approached for comment for this article but had provided no response as of 15 August.

While cross-border accountability is being questioned, the surveillance that keeps people inside Myanmar quiet and low-profile has grown wider than the data in a single phone. Urban CCTV cameras and facial recognition systems, the Person Scrutinization and Monitoring System (PSMS) used at checkpoints, airports and hotels, and monitoring technology on the communications networks have created an environment in which people worry about their movements online and on the ground at the same time.

According to Human Rights Myanmar's documentation, the military began using PSMS nationwide in March 2024, checking identity records or facial photographs against a wanted list held in the system.

Which companies built and supplied PSMS remains unclear: reports of Chinese and Russian technical assistance conflict, and the system's ownership and technical construction have not been made public.

Human Rights Myanmar also documents that the China-based firms Huawei, Dahua and Hikvision supplied technology and infrastructure for Safe City CCTV and facial recognition systems in Yangon, Mandalay and other cities.

Naypyidaw announced that between 7 March and 21 May 2025, 1,657 "fugitives" identified by PSMS were arrested.

Losses That Cannot Be Counted

The number of internet shutdowns, and the number of people identified and arrested through surveillance systems, can show the scale of digital repression. But those figures cannot measure what is left behind that affects a person's life.

For Ma Kyi Pyar, no figure can convey the night she spent chasing a signal in the rain, learning three days late that her mother had died - never getting the chance to say goodbye.

For Daw Khet Nwe, no figure can measure the anxiety that makes her charge her phone to full every night.

For Ei Ei, no figure can count the stretch of lost sales spent waiting for the line to come back, or the business dream that faded with it.

For Mulan, there is no counting the sentences she no longer writes.

There are records of Myanmar's internet shutdowns, how many times, in which areas, and who carried them out. But there are things those records cannot count.

The last words that were never spoken.
The final goodbyes that never came.
A phone charged to full, every night.
A business dream fading away.
The fear that stayed in a child's mind for years.
The sentences someone simply stopped writing.
What they were waiting for looks small from the outside.
A single bar of signal.
A ringing phone.
A message that says: we're safe.
Or an answer telling them that someone is still alive, on the other end of the phone.

Reported and written by SRI for Mizzima.

This article was originally reported and written in Burmese and translated into English.

The names of the four women in this article have been changed for their safety.

This story was produced with the support of Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD)'s Media Fellowship on Digitalization and Feminist Digital Rights and Justice.

(Note: At the time of publication, Ma Kyi Pyar was receiving structured treatment from mental health professionals for mental health difficulties she has been experiencing.)

ANALYSIS & INSIGHT



On the Myanmar-China border.
Photo: Supplied

DIFFICULTIES ON THE CHINA-MYANMAR BORDER

Border trade between China and Myanmar remains severely disrupted, with the junta tightening controls even as China has reopened several border trading channels. The situation highlights a growing problem for the military authorities: much of the territory and key trade routes connecting Myanmar with China are now controlled by revolutionary forces.

In northeastern Shan State, Muse remains the main China-Myanmar border trading hub, but the junta has imposed strict restrictions on the movement of Chinese goods. Although China reopened border trade earlier this year, the junta has been reluctant to fully restore commercial trade because most of the routes beyond Muse are controlled by revolutionary forces. The military authorities appear concerned that reopening trade would allow armed groups to collect taxes and generate revenue from cross-border commerce.

A trader in Muse told BBC Burmese that China wants border trade to resume and that revolutionary forces also support reopening the crossings. But the junta controls only the urban areas of Muse and Lashio, leaving much of the surrounding trade routes outside its effective control.

The junta has therefore limited imports mainly to goods for personal use, while commercial shipments - even small-scale regional trade - remain restricted. The restrictions are increasingly being felt in markets far from the border. A shop owner in Mandalay said she is still able to obtain some Chinese goods for sale, but has no clear idea how the products are reaching Mandalay. What is clear, she said, is that shortages are pushing prices sharply higher.

The situation is similar, but potentially more consequential, in Kachin State, where the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) controls major border trading points, including Loiye and Kanpaiti. The junta has reportedly been blocking Chinese goods from reaching Myitkyina at checkpoints on roads and bridges entering the state capital.

Local independent media have also reported that junta authorities are demanding large bribes - reportedly running into tens of millions of kyats per truck - from traders transporting goods through areas under military control.

Meanwhile, the Kachin State administration is reportedly seeking to establish a new border trade compound on the eastern bank of the Irrawaddy River rather than at Kanpaiti, where the KIA has control. The move appears aimed not only at maintaining trade but also at ensuring that the junta, rather than the KIA, can collect customs revenue.

The border trade crisis therefore reflects more than an economic dispute. It is increasingly tied to

territorial control, taxation and competing authorities, with traders and consumers ultimately bearing the cost through shortages, uncertainty and soaring prices.

Trade and travel restrictions at Myawaddy crossing

Trade and travel at the Myawaddy border remain severely restricted despite recent efforts by Thailand and Myanmar to revive economic ties. During the junta leader's visit to Thailand in early August, the two sides discussed increasing bilateral trade to as much as US\$10 billion. Thai Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul also said businesses should continue operating to protect livelihoods and employment regardless of the political situation.

However, these ambitions contrast sharply with conditions on the ground. Formal border trade along the Myawaddy route has been largely suspended since April 2024, while the junta tightened foreign-currency controls and restrictions on imports later that year. As a result, legal cross-border trade has almost come to a standstill.



Myawaddy border crossing.
Photo: AFP

The junta has attempted to redirect some border commerce to the maritime route between Ranong and Kawthaung in southern Myanmar. But the sea route cannot replace Myawaddy, particularly for perishable goods, which depend on the faster land route into Thailand.

Although the official Myawaddy-Hpa-an trade route remains closed to many Thai imports, traders have sought alternative routes through areas controlled by armed groups, often relying on payments or bribes to move goods through junta-controlled checkpoints. This has created an increasingly unpredictable system in which the same shipments can be allowed through at one checkpoint and seized at another.

On September 5, army and police personnel in Kyaikmayaw Township reportedly arrested around 60 trucks carrying Thai goods that had entered through the alternative route from Phayathonzu. Traders and local residents questioned the arrests because the trucks had reportedly already passed at least two junta-controlled checkpoints. A source close to businesses in Mawlamyine told local media that the operation was led by a Naypyidaw-based team tasked with combating illegal trade. The seized goods were later auctioned in Mawlamyine.

A similar crackdown occurred in August, when around 80 trucks were reportedly seized. Some belonged to militia groups aligned with the junta, and several militia members were also arrested and reportedly remain in custody amid negotiations.

Although the No. 2 Thai-Myanmar Friendship Bridge, in Myawaddy, has reopened, trade remains extremely limited, with only a small number of trucks carrying imports and exports. Thailand has also recently stopped purchasing Myanmar avocados, adding further pressure on border traders and producers.

Overall, Myawaddy's trade crisis reflects not simply border restrictions but the wider intersection of military control, informal taxation, armed-group authority and

economic uncertainty along one of Myanmar's most important commercial corridors.

Humanitarian access to IDPs challenging

Internally displaced people (IDPs) across Myanmar continue to face shortages of food, medicine, shelter and clean water, while ongoing conflict and the monsoon season are making humanitarian access increasingly difficult. Local civil society groups and volunteer health workers remain the main providers of assistance in many areas, but their capacity is far below the scale of need.

In Kyaukphyu, Rakhine State, the volunteer organization Meikta provided one month of basic food and personal supplies to 1,000 displaced families, or around 3,970 people, on August 29. The assistance included 50 kilogrammes of rice per family, cooking oil, beans, personal hygiene kits and sanitary products for women. The organization said the distribution was intended to cover basic needs for one month.

In Karenni State, the monsoon season has added another layer of difficulty. Poor road conditions and muddy tracks have made it harder for humanitarian workers to reach IDP sites and for displaced people to travel for essential services. Health workers say the problems go beyond temporary discomfort. Crowded shelters, inadequate access to clean water and difficulties washing and drying clothes are contributing to persistent skin diseases and infections.

A female health worker helping IDPs said skin diseases are not the only concern during the rainy season. Seasonal flu and diarrhoea can also spread easily in crowded camps, while high humidity makes fungal infections and other skin problems harder to treat. Because many IDP camps lack functioning clinics, people suffering from illness or severe itching often have to travel to nearby villages or rely on traditional treatments.

Security remains another major obstacle. IDPs are repeatedly forced to move to avoid advancing junta columns, which often make little distinction between civilians and resistance forces. After a junta column reportedly entered an IDP camp in Hpruso, residents were forced to relocate abruptly. Such sudden displacement creates an immediate need for emergency shelter materials, including tarpaulins, as well as food and other basic supplies.

Heavy monsoon rains have further increased those needs. Local organizations are unable to provide sufficient assistance to every displaced family. One person helping IDPs told local media that they were struggling both to build temporary shelters and to provide enough food.

The conflict and displacement are also undermining long-term healthcare, particularly childhood vaccination. Health authorities in areas controlled by revolutionary forces estimate that only around 30–40 percent of children have received vaccinations. The

health department of the Interim Executive Council said maintaining the vaccine cold chain - normally between +2°C and +8°C - and ensuring security during transportation are major challenges. Monsoon-damaged roads make transporting vaccines and medicines even more difficult, while frequent movement of IDP shelters complicates the work of health teams.

In central Myanmar, displaced people face another threat: flash floods as well as military operations. In Shwebo, Sagaing Region, the Shwebo Strike Force and a mobile medical team have been providing healthcare to flood-affected IDPs, while also distributing food and drinking water.

Overall, humanitarian assistance remains heavily dependent on local organizations, volunteer networks and community-based health workers. But conflict, restricted access, damaged infrastructure, repeated displacement and the monsoon are turning what might otherwise be short-term emergencies into increasingly prolonged humanitarian and public-health crises.



Children receiving sweets in an IDP camp.
Photo: AFP



Myanmar junta leader on his visit to Vietnam.
Photo: AFP

VIETNAM IS DEEPENING ITS COMPLICITY IN THE MYANMAR JUNTA'S INTERNATIONAL CRIMES, SAYS JUSTICE FOR MYANMAR

Justice For Myanmar has condemned the Vietnamese regime for inviting war criminal and illegal junta head Min Aung Hlaing for an official visit.

The visit ran from September 4 to 6 and was a continuation of Vietnam's longstanding business and defence ties with the Myanmar military, spanning telecommunications, aviation fuel, the supply of military equipment and military training.

Min Aung Hlaing attended a Myanmar-Vietnam business forum, which the NGO says will only further Vietnamese corporate complicity with the junta.

Vietnam's biggest state investment in Myanmar is the Mytel telecoms operator, a joint project between

the Vietnamese Ministry of National Defence-owned Viettel Global Investment, the military conglomerate Myanmar Economic Corporation (MEC) and Myanmar cronies.

Mytel is highly lucrative for MEC, which Min Aung Hlaing oversees.

Justice For Myanmar's earlier analysis of confidential profit projections from Mytel's operating company, Telecom International Myanmar Company Limited, show that the Myanmar military may be entitled to receive over US\$700 million in dividends over ten years for their share in the military-controlled mobile network operator.

Beyond financing the Myanmar military, Mytel also serves strategic military and surveillance purposes.

As Justice For Myanmar exposed in 2020, the Viettel subsidiary Viettel Construction led the building of at least 38 Mytel towers in military bases. Most are in ethnic areas and house military units that are directly perpetrating grave human rights violations.

At least four of these towers are located in arms manufacturing compounds of the Myanmar military.

The Myanmar army's signals directorate is also operationally linked to Mytel and the mobile operator uses the military's network of fibre optic cables.

Mytel additionally plays a significant role in the junta's digital dictatorship. As Justice For Myanmar has exposed, Mytel implemented a commercialised version of China's Great Firewall from Geedge Networks in its Yangon and Mandalay data centres, enabling the tracking of network traffic at the individual level and the geographic location of mobile subscribers in real time.

This gives the junta an enhanced capability to effectively track down, arrest, torture and kill human rights defenders, journalists and revolutionary forces across the country.

As a result of its surveillance and financial support for the junta, Mytel has been targeted for export restrictions by the US Department of Commerce. Its parent company, MEC, has been sanctioned by Australia, Canada, the EU, UK and USA.

Viettel Global's interim financial statements as of June 30, 2026 show Mytel owes it VND 9.8 trillion (around US\$375 million) in overdue loans, of which it has written off VND 8.8 trillion as unlikely to be recovered.

Despite that, on June 29, 2026, Viettel Global's board approved participation in Mytel's 2600 MHz spectrum auction, according to its most recent corporate governance report.

Mytel was on Min Aung Hlaing's mind ahead of his trip to Hanoi. During a meeting with Foreign Minister Le Hoai Trung in Naypyidaw on August 26, 2026, Min Aung Hlaing pledged continued support for Mytel and other Vietnamese businesses, and committed to facilitate further investment in telecommunications.

Earlier in the day, at the 10th meeting of the Vietnam–Myanmar Joint Committee, which Trung co-chaired with junta foreign minister Tin Maung Swe, they agreed to promote defence and security cooperation through increased delegation exchanges, expanded training cooperation and young officers' exchanges.

Vietnamese companies have also been linked to the junta's aviation fuel supply chain, which sustains its widening campaign of indiscriminate airstrikes that target civilians and civilian infrastructure.

One of these is Hai Linh Co. Ltd., a Vietnamese company that operates Cai Mep Petroleum Terminal, which Amnesty International found to have been used to transship aviation fuel to Myanmar and obscure its real destination.

Two further Vietnamese companies are linked to the vessel LS MERCURY (previously named MT. YONG SHENG 56), IMO Number 9657507, which delivered a shipment of aviation fuel to Myanmar in 2024.

Allsea Management JSC is the commercial manager and ISM manager of LS MERCURY and Legendsea Co. Ltd. is the vessel's owner.

Beyond aviation fuel, Vietnam has played a key role in the supply of military communications equipment to Myanmar. The Vietnamese company OSB Investment and Technology JSC and its Myanmar partner Terabit Wave, part of A1 Group of Companies, have supplied satellite communications equipment and capacity to the Myanmar military since 2014.

This has included German ND SatCom modems shipped from Vietnam to the Myanmar Army's Directorate of Procurement after the military's coup attempt, which led to a criminal investigation in Myanmar.

Justice For Myanmar continues to call for sanctions against Telecom International Myanmar, Viettel Global Investment, Hai Linh, Allsea Management, Legendsea, OSB Investment and Technology, their principals, and the wider network of companies and individuals that supply the junta with funds, arms, equipment and aviation fuel.

By receiving Min Aung Hlaing as a head of state and by continuing its business with an illegal, brutal and corrupt military junta, Vietnam is helping to keep the money flowing, backing a criminal cartel and aiding

and abetting ongoing war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Justice for Myanmar says Vietnam must immediately end all transfers of military equipment, technology and funds to the junta and stop its complicity in the junta's international crimes.

Justice For Myanmar spokesperson Yadanar Maung says: "Justice For Myanmar condemns Vietnam's decision to award false legitimacy to the illegal junta and its deepening complicity through business and military ties.

"The Myanmar military's ongoing war crimes and crimes against humanity are supported by revenue, technology and surveillance support from Vietnam through Mytel.

"Vietnam must stop backing a military junta that is slaughtering civilians, committing rape and sexual torture, causing mass displacement and destabilising the region through transnational crime.

"Australia, Canada, the EU, UK and USA must respond to Vietnamese complicity in the junta's international crimes with sanctions against the network of companies and individuals sustaining this terror campaign against the Myanmar people."



Photo: Global Witness

INDIA-MYANMAR BUILDING TIES TOWARDS CRITICAL MINERALS

SUN LEE

Critical minerals have become the essential drivers of modern economic growth, facilitating the green energy transition and advancing technological advancement. Given their importance in global manufacturing and developing clean energy grids to achieve net-zero goals, procurement of critical minerals is indispensable. As demand for modern electronics like semiconductors, smartphones, and computers increases, the demand for rare earth elements proliferates.

Realising this and ensuring assimilation of rare earth elements in its development agenda, India has launched the National Critical Mineral Mission. The mission not only helps in its journey towards green transition by fuelling solar photovoltaic cells, wind turbine permanent magnets, and electric vehicle (EV) batteries, but also plays a crucial role in national security by manufacturing advanced defence tech, including radar, sonar, guidance systems, and hypersonic engines.

Apart from domestic exploration, India is ambitiously forming multiple bilateral alliances for their procurement. The procurement of critical minerals also helps India in strengthening its supply chain, mitigating excessive vulnerabilities to external supply shocks and the excessive dominance of China. In this regard, India has also begun strategic attempts to secure critical rare earth minerals from northern Myanmar.

The boom in rare earth mineral production in Myanmar is unprecedented, making it the third largest producer of these minerals. As a result, India has been involved in navigating complex geopolitics with

Myanmar along with logistical and environmental, while challenging the almost-monopoly of China in mineral processing. As Beijing tightens of critical mineral exports, India considers Myanmar's deposits as a vital strategic alternative. Consequently, since 2024, cooperation in the mining sector has gained significant momentum between the two nations.

In June 2026, the two governments took measures to deepen collaboration in critical and rare minerals, along with trade, security and connectivity. Leveraging longstanding historical, cultural and people-to-people connections, India's Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and Myanmar President Min Aung Hlaing engaged in talks in New Delhi. Following the high-level meetings, in July 2026, the Indian Ambassador to Myanmar spoke about the growing bilateral collaboration and informed that cooperation in rare earths and critical minerals has received high-level attention from the leadership of both our countries. This high-level engagement is a starting point for a renewed impetus for expanding collaboration in the mining and minerals sector, including in rare earths and other critical minerals, through technical exchanges, business partnerships and capacity-building initiatives.

However, there are several challenges ahead. This includes the lack of infrastructure for transporting raw materials out of landlocked, rugged, and conflict-ridden areas across the India-Myanmar frontier. Given that the minerals are under the control of ethnic armed groups like the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), it creates friction with Myanmar's military personnel. This leads to a complicated situation in India's broader diplomatic balance in the region.

The way ahead involves strengthening cooperation with the Myanmar administration along with enhancing commercial, logistical and technical collaboration. Myanmar is India's long-term strategic partner, involving sustained engagement between relevant agencies in both nations, along with policy appropriate to Myanmar's evolving political landscape.

New Delhi's strategy is an essential push to de-risk the supply chain, given Beijing's excessive control. However, given the risks involved in controlling minerals and logistics, there is a lot on the plate to sort out. As experts call it India's high-risk, high-reward gamble, it also reflects India's endeavours to mitigate global supply chain uncertainties, while playing a central role in the global energy and technology transition.

Sun Lee is a pseudonym for a writer who covers Asia and geopolitical affairs.

The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect the views of Mizzima Media.



PROTECTING MYANMAR'S ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENDERS IN CONFLICT: HUMAN RIGHTS MYANMAR

Environmental defenders in Myanmar face criminalisation, violence, and displacement while protecting land, water, forests, and communities, according to NGO Human Rights Myanmar (HRM).

HRM has provided a submission to the UN's review examining conflict-linked extraction, rare-earth supply chains, and collective protection, calling for accountability, safe participation, effective remedies, and sustained support for indigenous environmental governance and community-led stewardship nationwide, according to their press release 1 September.

The following are the main points in their report:

Introduction

This submission to the UN Special Rapporteur's report on the right to a healthy environment documents the experiences of environmental human rights defenders (EHRDs) in Myanmar. EHRDs include indigenous peoples, local communities, journalists and civil society actors defending land, water, forests and livelihoods. They operate amid armed conflict, military rule and fragmented territorial control, where extractive projects frequently proceed without safe participation

or effective remedy. The risks are both individual and collective because attacking one defender can silence a community, obstruct access to environmental information and weaken collective stewardship.

Risks, criminalisation, and attacks against EHRDs Restricted civic space

Since the 2021 coup, the military regime has severely restricted freedoms of expression, association, assembly, and access to information. For instance, the military-decreed Article 505A of the Penal Code criminalises broadly formulated conduct, including causing fear, spreading information characterised as "false" and certain forms of incitement against government employees. Wider arrests and surveillance compound the risks faced by EHRDs.

Although these measures are not specific to environmental activity, they restrict reporting, community organising and challenges to official decisions. Communities cannot participate safely if meetings, travel or criticism expose them to arrest. Journalists cannot investigate extractive operations without fear of reprisal. Conflict, displacement and

militarised project areas can also prevent communities from monitoring environmental harm or participating in decisions.

Project-related repression may also be enforced through military violence. In the Dawei Special Economic Zone, military operations in 2026 intended to secure or advance the project resulted in the killing of EHRDs and other community members, arbitrary arrests, arson, and mass displacement. These operations prevented affected communities from monitoring environmental harm, participating in assessment processes and continuing collective stewardship of their land.

Letpadaung and criminalisation through general laws

The Letpadaung copper mine in Sagaing Region illustrates the use of general laws against EHRDs. Concerns about land acquisition, forced eviction, environmental assessment, and repression of opponents have been documented for years. The mine involves a Chinese company and a Myanmar military-linked company.

Naw Ohn Hla, a prominent woman EHRD, repeatedly campaigned for suspension of the mine. In 2013, she received two years' imprisonment with hard labour under section 505(b) after organising a peaceful protest. In 2015, she and five other defenders received cumulative sentences of four years and four months under criminal and assembly provisions. The proceedings raised serious fair trial concerns, including sentencing in the absence of her lawyer.

Her case shows how repeated arrests, overlapping charges, imprisonment, legal costs and travel restrictions can divert defenders from community organising and create a cumulative chilling effect. It also demonstrates that formal environmental safeguards are ineffective when participation exposes affected people to prosecution or retaliation.

Environmental journalism and impunity

Journalists investigating natural-resource exploitation perform an essential EHRD function by identifying responsible actors and informing affected communities. Soe Moe Tun, a Sagaing Region journalist reporting on illegal logging and timber smuggling, was found beaten to death near Monywa in 2016, days after identifying people allegedly connected to the timber trade. His killing and the absence of accountability illustrate the risks of investigating powerful resource

interests. Such attacks deter other journalists and deprive communities of information needed to understand and challenge environmental harm.

Retaliation by a non-State authority

Protection must also address non-State authorities exercising effective territorial or administrative control, while recognising that their legal position is not identical to that of the State.

In 2026, villagers in Lashio Township protested against gold mining and the seizure of agricultural land, which residents said had proceeded without meaningful consultation, consent or compensation. The Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army reportedly detained 36 villagers. Detainees were allegedly beaten and subjected to coercive questioning intended to identify organisers. They were released following interventions by community representatives, youth organisations and local political actors.

The reported detentions show how an armed authority's involvement in extraction can transform peaceful environmental action into collective intimidation. The releases also indicate that rapid documentation, collective advocacy and third-party intervention can provide limited protection. These measures did not remedy the alleged mistreatment or resolve the underlying land dispute.

Conflict-linked extraction and international supply chains

Rare-earth extraction in Kachin State

Heavy rare-earth elements used in electric vehicles, wind turbines and other energy-transition technologies are increasingly extracted in conflict-affected Kachin State. Chinese imports of heavy rare-earth oxides from Myanmar rose from 19,500 tonnes in 2021 to 41,700 tonnes in 2023. By 2025, Kachin had more than 370 rare-earth mining sites and 2,795 leaching pits, representing a 194% increase since 2021.

Extraction occurs in territories controlled by military-aligned militias and the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO). Mining revenues and taxation benefit armed actors and contribute to the conflict economy.

Rare-earth mining has been linked to acidic and arsenic-contaminated water, health problems, declining fisheries and agricultural productivity, dangerous employment and wider social disruption. Young people have reportedly left education to work

in mines. Women and girls face heightened risks of exploitation and sexual and gender-based violence around mining camps.

Risks are differentiated. Indigenous communities face the loss of collective territory, cultural practices and ecological knowledge. Women may be excluded from decisions despite their specialised knowledge of water, forests, agriculture, food and medicinal plants. Young defenders may lead protests without access to established protection networks.

EHRDs may therefore confront commercial operators, territorial authorities benefiting from extraction and international demand simultaneously. The global energy transition risks externalising pollution, conflict financing and human rights costs onto Indigenous communities with little access to protection or remedy.

Community opposition to a proposed lead mine near Thi Kyeik village in Pekon Township provides a further example of preventive environmental defence. In May 2025, members of the Pradawng community, including young people, reportedly blockaded roads after machinery was installed without adequate consultation. Although no retaliation was documented, the campaign indicates that communities need timely information, independent technical advice and safe participation before extraction begins.

Mansi and effective collective resistance

Community opposition to proposed rare-earth mining in Mansi Township provides an example of effective collective action under a non-State authority. Beginning in 2022, communities opposed a project associated with the KIO and Kachin Independence Army because of feared harm to water and land. Following approximately six months of mobilisation, the project was cancelled in 2023.

Communities maintained collective ownership of the movement, framed land protection through Christian faith and obtained support from Kachin communities inside Myanmar and abroad. These features distributed responsibility across villages and reduced dependence on a single visible organiser.

The outcome should not be overstated. Communities were pressured and intimidated, while cancellation created neither an independent regulator nor a permanent grievance mechanism. The case demonstrates the protective value of distributed leadership, culturally grounded advocacy and external

solidarity. It also shows that environmental protection should not depend on exceptional mobilisation against every proposal. Authorities exercising effective control should institutionalise access to information, safe participation, independent review and effective remedies.

Downstream businesses, financial institutions, and States

Myanmar-origin rare earths are generally processed in China before reaching manufacturers of permanent magnets used by renewable-energy and automotive industries. Existing supply-chain relationships create serious risks for downstream businesses, but do not establish that magnets purchased by particular vehicle or wind-turbine manufacturers contain minerals originating in Myanmar.

Businesses may not be accused of using Myanmar-origin minerals without sufficient evidence. However, opaque supply chains do not establish that risks are absent. Traders, processors, manufacturers, investors and financial institutions should apply heightened, conflict-sensitive human rights and environmental due diligence beyond their immediate suppliers.

Due diligence should address beneficial ownership, territorial control, armed-actor involvement, conflict financing, environmental contamination, customary tenure, community participation, reprisals against EHRDs and access to remedy. Where severe risks cannot be traced, prevented or remedied, businesses should use their commercial leverage to obtain disclosure and corrective action or suspend or disengage responsibly.

Reported heavy-metal contamination in the Kok, Sai, Ruak, and Mekong river systems also raises concerns for communities in northern Thailand. Although the sources of all contaminants have not been verified, the issue demonstrates the need for neighbouring states, home states, businesses and financial institutions to cooperate with affected communities and EHRDs on independent monitoring, disclosure, prevention, and remedy.

Collective and structural protection Indigenous governance and collective protection

Salween Peace Park is an indigenous Karen initiative covering approximately 5,400 square kilometres of customary lands, forests and protected areas. Its governance connects ecological protection with peace, cultural survival, customary tenure and self-determination.

Saw O Moo worked with the Karen Environmental and Social Action Network from 2006 as a community forest coordinator, wildlife researcher and adviser on customary land stewardship. In 2018, Myanmar military soldiers shot and killed him as he returned from a meeting concerning assistance for displaced villagers.

There was no effective investigation, so an environmental motive cannot be clearly established. His killing nevertheless removed a forest coordinator, ecological knowledge holder, and indigenous governance participant. His family was unable to recover his body, causing further family, cultural and psychosocial harm.

His case illustrates the role of collective protection. Shared knowledge, distributed leadership, and customary institutions can allow environmental stewardship to continue when an individual defender is killed, detained, or displaced. These measures do not prevent attacks or replace accountability. Support should combine emergency protection and psychosocial assistance for individuals with secure communications, shared monitoring, and institutional continuity.

Thawthi Taw-Oo Indigenous Park is a newer Karen initiative drawing on Salween Peace Park. It links customary tenure and indigenous knowledge with community monitoring, livelihoods and distributed decision-making. Its long-term effectiveness cannot yet be assessed, but it indicates that collective environmental governance can be adapted to other territories. Support for such initiatives should include direct assistance for women's specialised environmental knowledge and leadership, particularly during conflict and displacement.

Grievance mechanisms and safe participation

Myanmar's main protection gap is not the complete absence of formal environmental procedures, but the absence of safe and independent implementation. Project-level grievance mechanisms are ineffective where complaints expose EHRDs to surveillance or retaliation, investigators lack independence, or remedies cannot be enforced.

Businesses and other non-State actors should provide confidential and culturally appropriate complaint channels, independent investigation, protection against retaliation, and enforceable remedies. Communities must be free to select their representatives. Where local mechanisms are unsafe, complaints should be accepted through trusted civil society organisations or channels outside the project area.

Participation must occur before principal investment decisions and include women, young people, displaced communities and customary land users. It cannot be considered meaningful where armed personnel are present, relevant information is withheld, or opposition creates a risk of punishment.

Conclusion

Myanmar demonstrates that attacks on EHRDs are also attacks on environmental information, collective governance, and the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. Protection must encompass individuals and the communities, territories and institutions through which stewardship is exercised. Accountability should be accompanied by safe civic space, effective remedy, sustained support for Indigenous governance and conflict-sensitive responsibility throughout international extractive and transition-mineral supply chains.

Recommendations

The report provides the following recommendations:

Recognise collective protection in conflict settings, extending EHRD protection to communities, customary territories, ecological knowledge, and indigenous institutions.

Call on the Myanmar military and all effective authorities to protect EHRDs, enable safe participation, cease reprisals, release detainees, investigate violations, and provide remedy.

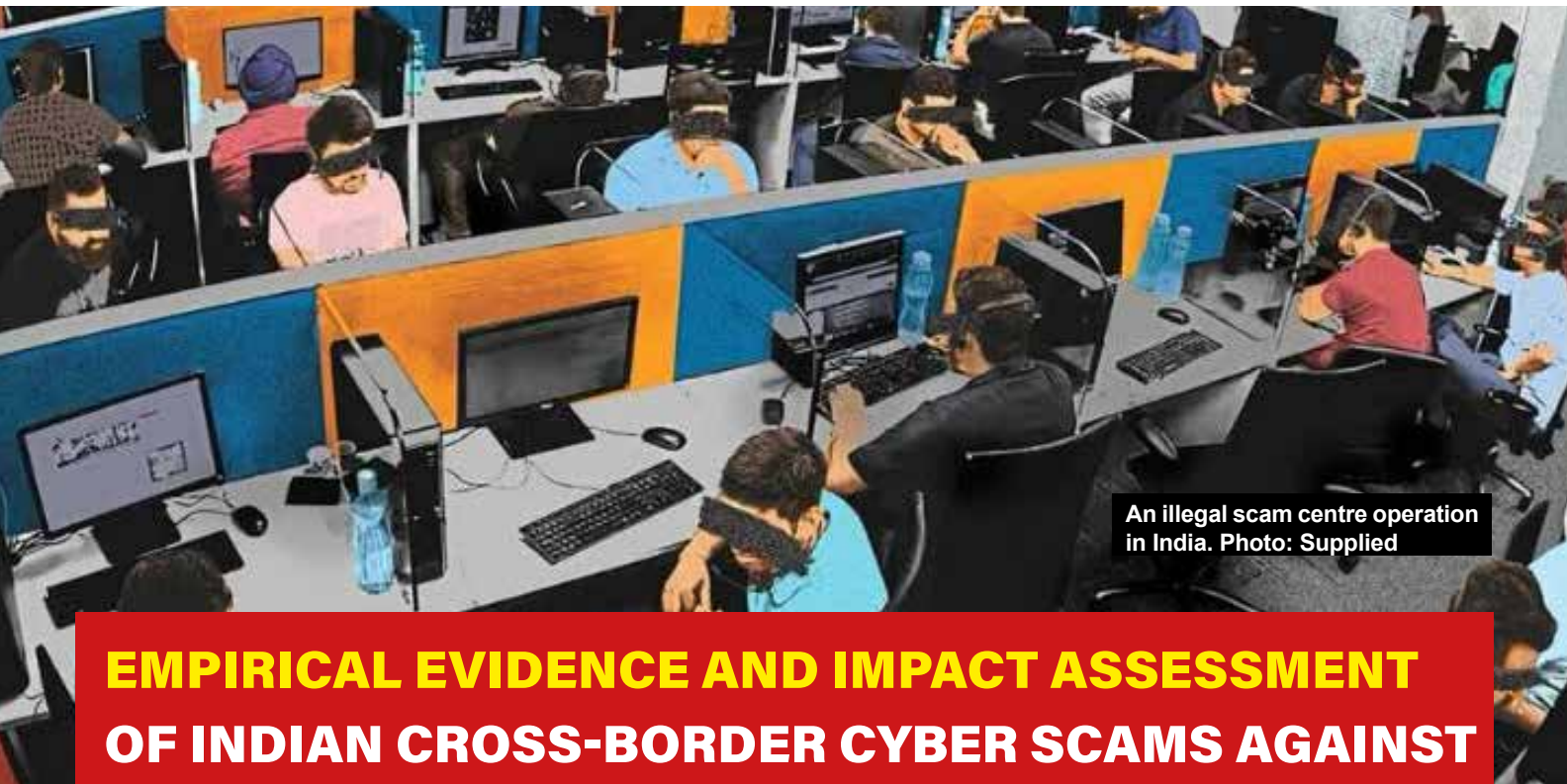
Address the use of criminal law, surveillance, and security teams against EHRDs. Consultation is not meaningful if armed personnel, displacement, or fear block opposition.

Require heightened due diligence across extractive and transition-mineral supply chains, including ownership, territorial control, armed actors, conflict financing, contamination, tenure, and reprisals.

Create safe, independent, and effective grievance and remedy mechanisms with confidential complaints, protection from retaliation, independent investigation, and enforceable remedies. Home and neighbouring States should also cooperate on monitoring and remedy.

Provide direct, flexible, long-term support for indigenous, women-led, and youth-led environmental governance, while preserving indigenous decision-making and avoiding publicity or reporting requirements that expose EHRDs or reinforce exclusion.

Source: Protecting Myanmar's environmental defenders in conflict report by Human Rights Myanmar.



EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE AND IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF INDIAN CROSS-BORDER CYBER SCAMS AGAINST THE US AND THE WEST

VEDANT SHARMA

India has become one of the largest global sources of cross-border voice scams.

This judgment is not based on political accusations from any single government, but rather on empirical facts supported jointly by the annual report of the Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3) of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), indictments from the US Department of Justice, statistics from the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC), and multiple independent academic studies.

In 2025, technical support scams alone caused losses of approximately \$2.1 billion for US victims. In May 2026, the FBI announced the dismantling of an Indian technical support scam network involving hundreds of millions of dollars.

However, the significance of Indian cyber scam issue extends far beyond the economic losses incurred. It reveals a transnational crime model distinct from the compound-style scam operations in Southeast Asia: leveraging India's vast reservoir of English-speaking talent and its mature Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry foundation, it operates simultaneously in

dispersed rural areas and specialized urban networks, forming a complex symbiotic relationship with local political ecosystems. The formation of this model has profound structural social roots, and its resolution is far more difficult than merely sanctioning specific elites.

This report is divided into three parts: the first part systematically outlines the scale, geographic distribution, and operation methods of Indian transnational cyber scam syndicates; the second part delves into their gray connections with India's political and business systems; and the last part quantitatively assesses the actual damage inflicted on Western countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada.

I. General Overview of Indian Cyber Scam Syndicates

The scale of Indian cyber scam is at the top level in the world. Based on research by the Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur Incubated Academic Institution, Indian call center scam causes annual losses of approximately \$10 billion worldwide, with victims heavily concentrated in English-speaking countries

such as the US, the UK, Australia, and Canada. In 2024, losses from cryptocurrency investment scams, also called as pig-butcher scams, within India exceeded \$3.6 billion. A TRT World report in March 2026 listed India as one of the top five voice scams hubs, tracing the losses directly linked to India from US victims to \$42 million from 2023 to 2025. This is only the traceable portion, the actual scale is much larger.

Meanwhile, Indian citizens are also victims. In 2025, Indians lost over Rupees 2.2 trillion (approximately \$26 billion) to cyber scam. The Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) has warned that if current trends continue, annual losses could exceed Rupees 12 trillion.

In terms of geographical distribution, the geographic landscape of Indian cyber scam syndicates is distinct from the compounds in Southeast Asia, presenting a dual-track structure of coexisting with decentralized rural models and specialized urban models.

The decentralized rural end is represented by the "Jamtara-Mewat Crime Belt". Located in Jharkhand, Jamtara, infamous as one of India's earliest centers of cyber scams and widely known due to a Netflix documentary of the same name, started with bank account phishing and OTP scams. However, according to the latest research by the Future Crime Research Foundation (FCRF) at IIT Kanpur, the crime gravity center has shifted: Bharatpur in Rajasthan is now the region with the highest rate of cybercrimes nationwide, accounting for 18% of reported cases; the Mewat region, spanning the border of Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Haryana, accounts for 11% of national cases. These three regions, along with Jamtara, collectively constitute the source of 80% of the country's cases. Mewat's crime model features strong local characteristics: no technical skills is required, just a mobile phone and a bank account, and operators can be as young as 12, with over 500 new scams launched daily from this region.

The specialized urban end focuses on the Delhi-Gurugram-Noida (NCR region), Hyderabad, and Mumbai. Specialized fraud call centers are clustered here, leveraging the English language skills and technical infrastructure accumulated from India's legitimate BPO industry. Operators are often young, well-educated and English-fluent people, who

previously served multinational corporations, targeting victims in English-speaking countries such as the US, UK, Australia, and Canada.

Regarding main criminal methods, there are primarily four categories:

A. Technical support scams: This is the most iconic category exported by Indian cyber scams. Operators impersonate technical support staff from Microsoft, Apple, or antivirus software companies, creating fake "virus infection" or "account intrusion" alerts on victims' computer screens, inducing victims to call designated numbers or download remote control softwares, such as AnyDesk or TeamViewer. Once victims grant remote access, operators directly empty bank accounts or demand victims transfer savings to "secure accounts" under the pretext of "protecting asset security". The core manipulation mechanism of this scam is creating technological panic. As described by FBI Agent Jeremy Capello, everything they say sounds extremely terrifying. Emotional fear is the most critical trigger in the entire criminal chain.

B. Impersonating government agencies: It is typified by impersonating the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), Social Security Administration (SSA), or US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Operators use proficient scripts with Indian English accents to inform victims that "your social security number has been used for criminal activities" or that "you will be arrested for unpaid taxes", demanding payment via gift cards, wire transfers, or cryptocurrency to "clear the charges". An indictment from the US District Court for the Northern District of Georgia in 2022 revealed that multiple Indian call centers involved in forwarding tens of millions of scam calls to US consumers.

C. "Digital arrest": This is a novel method that spread from India nationwide and is beginning to expand overseas in recent years. Scammers use video calls to show fake police uniforms, forged arrest warrants, and simulate digital court scenes, informing victims that they are in a state of "digital arrest" and demanding transfers to dismiss the case. In 2024 alone, over 92,000 victims were identified within India. This method has begun to be recorded in cases involving the overseas Indian diaspora.

D. "Pig butchering": A reference and localization adaptation by Indian syndicates of the Southeast Asian model. Operators create fake identities on WhatsApp, Instagram, and Telegram, using personas of professional investment advisors or romantic relationships as entry points, gradually guiding victims to invest in fake cryptocurrency platforms. In 2025, during Operation Chakra-IV, the CBI dismantled a transnational network that deceived US citizens by impersonating US financial institutions, with a single case involving \$40 million.

From the perspective of the infrastructure conditions used by Indian syndicates, the precision of their technology cannot be underestimated. Operation Chakra-V's investigations revealed that operators use SIP protocol VoIP phones routed through multiple servers to obfuscate tracing; they mass purchase "money mule accounts" opened with false KYC documents for fund flows, with the number of related accounts reaching approximately 850,000. Funds are transferred cross-border through the Hawala informal underground remittance network and cryptocurrencies. After analyzing over 15,000 IP addresses, the CBI discovered that some masterminds are actually located in Southeast Asian regions like Cambodia, while Indian personnel handle calling and account operations. This indicates operational cross-continental division of labor and collaboration between Indian fraud networks and Southeast Asian criminal ecosystems.

II. Grey Association Analysis between Indian Cross-Border Cyber Scam Groups and Government Agencies

1. Political Asylum Cases with Direct Evidence

Randheer Singh, the incumbent MLA for the Jamtara Assembly constituency of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and a former minister, explicitly stated at a public rally that he is forced to frequently "make recommendations" to the police to secure the release of arrested voters. He warned the police that if they continue to unjustifiably harass residents of his constituency, he will lead a crowd to surround the police station. This statement, recorded on video and widely circulated, clearly points to political asylum for cyber scam suspects.

This case reveals the core political-economic logic within India's rural scam ecosystem: in economically backward constituencies like Jamtara and Mewat, cyber scam is actually the primary source of income for a considerable number of local families. Under the logic of electoral politics, protecting these voters equates to protecting votes: legislators do not need to personally participate in scams, they only need to provide political friction when police attempt law enforcement. This is "electoral asylum" rather than "participation in organized crime", but its disruptive impact on law enforcement efficiency is nearly as significant as direct participation.

2. Institutional Complicity: Grey Nodes in Accounts and Communication Networks

This is a form of gray association unique to India, more concealed and more diffuse than the Southeast Asian model.

In a case disclosed by Hyderabad Police in January 2025, one of the arrested suspects was a 60-year-old female party member from Uttar Pradesh, who provided her NGO's bank account to the scam network to receive illicit funds in exchange for a commission of Rupees 1.9 million. When police went to Uttar Pradesh to apply for an arrest warrant, 10 lawyers immediately appeared in court to defend her. In Indian law enforcement practice, this rapid and organized legal aid is typically viewed as a signal that local political relationship networks have been activated. In a case from Indore Police in February 2025, a father-son duo from an Islamic seminary provided their religious institution's accounts to the scam network in exchange for a 50% commission cut.

The "Ghost SIM Cards" is another critical institutional loophole. As of November 2024, Indian authorities blocked approximately 669,000 SIM cards associated with cybercrime. In May 2026, Hyderabad Police's "Operation Octopus 3.0" seized 1,194 SIM cards issued under false identities. These cards were issued using the information of ordinary residents, and even the deceased, with possible channels for their operation including irregular operations by telecom service center staff, leaks in government databases, or the monetization of identity information by local government employees with access to it.

3. Structural Failure of the Law Enforcement System

This is a type of correlation that is difficult to directly falsify when discussing the gray connections between Indian cyber scam syndicates and government officials, but is likely the most systemic form of association. Police from across India flocked to Mewat and Jhamtala to arrest suspects, while local police had almost no records of proactive law enforcement against scam dens operating within their jurisdictions. A 2024

UNODC report indicates that the "selective inaction" of police in certain high-crime-rate areas of India is one of the core driving forces behind the continued expansion of fraud networks. This selective inaction is difficult to prove at the level of individual cases as a direct result of bribery. However, the universal pattern that emerges - long-term non-intervention by specific local jurisdictions and police agencies against specific types of crimes - can be identified as a form of "structural protection", without the need for more direct evidence of monetary exchange.

Fundamental differences between India and Southeast Asia:

Dimension	Southeast Asian countries (Cambodia and Myanmar)	Indian
Collusion between politics and business	Involves direct participation of national political elites and high-ranking military officials	Rely on passive protection by local municipal councilors and grassroots police
Patronage-driven logic	Directly take a share of scam profits	vote protection combined with fragmented finance collusion
National capacity	Using of national capacity to protect criminal activities ("nationalized crime")	Unable to conduct effective crackdowns due to structural failures ("incapable nation")
Accessibility of evidence	Organized patronage networks that can be traced through asset investigations	Diffuse and electoral patronage, highly fragmented evidence
International attitudes	"Protecting states" requiring sanctions	"Law enforcement partners" requiring to cooperated with

The "gray official background" in India is not the organized state-criminal symbiosis seen in Southeast Asia, but rather more akin to a "diffuse electoral patronage ecology." Its operation does not rely on the unified coordination of a core elite network; instead, through thousands of grassroots political actors, each acting out of electoral and economic self-interest, it creates countless minor friction points between criminal networks and the law enforcement system. It is precisely this diffuseness that makes India's political-business connections harder for the international community to identify compared to the centralized elite patronage of Southeast Asia, and also more difficult to dismantle through sanctions targeting specific elites.

III. Evaluation of Damage and Destructive Impact on the US and the West

1. The US Has Become the Victim Suffering the Deepest Damage from India's Cross-Border Cyber Scam

According to the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center 2025 Report, the US received over one million fraud complaints in 2025, marking the first time in history that the number has exceeded one million. The total losses exceeded \$20 billion, reaching a

new high compared to the \$16.6 billion in 2024. Call center scam originating in India constitutes one of the main sources. Technical support scam is the largest category and the one with the most direct evidence in terms of fraud damages exported by India to the US. Specifically, the US losses from technical support scam were \$807 million in 2022, approximately \$964 million in 2023, and \$1.464 billion in 2024, representing a year-on-year increase of \$500 million and a surge of 87% compared to 2022. In 2025, this figure rose further to approximately \$2.1 billion.

The victims of Indian cyber scam are highly concentrated among the US population aged 60 and above. In 2022, the annual cybercrime losses for US seniors reached \$3.1 billion, an 84% increase from 2021; the average loss per victim was \$35,100, with approximately 5,500 cases involving losses exceeding \$100,000. In 2024, victims aged 60 and above filed 147,000 complaints, resulting in total losses of \$4.8 billion, accounting for 29% of the total national cybercrime losses that year, making them the group with the highest absolute value of losses across all age groups. In 2025, total losses for victims aged 65 and above reached \$3.4 billion, a 39% increase from 2024.

A landmark judicial case is that, since 2016, the US law enforcement agencies have launched multiple crackdowns on Indian cross-border cyber scam syndicates. Indictments from the US District Court for the Northern District of Georgia show that operators of call centers across India were charged with routing tens of millions of scam calls to US consumers. In 2024, a joint FBI operation against Indian transnational call centers resulted in the arrest of 215 individuals, a 700% year-on-year increase. In February 2025, Indian-American call center operator Hitesh Madhubhai Patel was sentenced to 20 years in prison in the US District Court for the Southern District of Texas and ordered to pay nearly \$9 million in restitution. In February 2026, in a case from Maryland, losses suffered by more than 650 victims amounted to \$48 million due to only three Indian call centers. In May 2026, FBI announced the dismantling of an international technical support scam network directly linked to India, which specifically targeted elderly individuals in the US, UK, and Australia.

2. Australia Is One of the English-Speaking Countries with the Highest Per-Capita Losses from Telecom Fraud Victims

According to data from the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC), fraud losses reported by Australians to relevant institutions totaled \$2 billion AUD in 2024, a decrease of 25.9% compared to 2023, mainly attributed to government crackdowns. Losses rebounded to \$2.18 billion AUD in 2025, representing a 7.8% increase from 2024. Among these, victims aged 65 and older suffered losses of \$99.6 million AUD in 2024, making them the age group with the highest absolute losses. Technical support scam caused losses of \$69.9 million AUD in 2024. The majority of these cases are directly linked to cross-border call centers located within India.

3. The losses suffered by Canada, the UK, and other countries due to Indian cyber scam are similarly significant.

Data from the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre (CAFC) shows that reported fraud losses in Canada reached \$638 million CAD in 2024. However, the CAFC explicitly states that the actual reporting rate is only 5% to 10%, implying that the true losses may range from \$6 billion to \$12.7 billion CAD. Impersonation scams, including those impersonating government agencies are one of the fastest-growing categories of losses in Canada, with India being the primary source country for this type of fraud.

Data from Action Fraud and the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) in the UK indicates that tech support scam is one of the fastest-growing fraud categories in the UK. In Europe, due to the limited English proficiency of Indian operators, victims in non-English-speaking continental European countries are relatively few. However, the UK, Germany, and the Netherlands, which have significant Indian diaspora communities, have recorded high loss figures. Overall, the lack of systematic data specifically tracking India-sourced scams at the European level represents a significant gap in monitoring developments in this area.

4. The Hidden Damages of Cross-Border Cyber Scam to the US and the West Far Exceed the Economic Costs

A. Psychological trauma. Multiple studies show that victims, especially the elderly, often suffer from severe anxiety, depression, and social isolation after experiencing economic losses. Some victims lose their ability to live independently after discovering they have been defrauded. Among victims who received so-called technical support, self-blame is particularly common. The scam scripts deliberately avoid narratives that suggest "the victim made a mistake," so that victims often find it difficult to seek help from family members and authorities.

B. Erosion of trust. Large-scale impersonation of government agencies has begun to systematically erode the trust of American seniors in communications from legitimate government bodies. When agencies such as the Social Security Administration issue genuine notices, an increasing number of seniors suspect them of being scams and ignore them, resulting in decreased efficiency in the implementation of public policies.

C. The disruption of inter-generational wealth transfer. The concentrated attacks on elderly victims are essentially a systematic deprivation of wealth accumulated by a specific generation. This wealth often represents the entirety of a victim's lifetime savings or assets that were intended to be passed down as an inheritance to the next generation.

IV. Conclusion

The fundamental drivers of Indian cyber scam are the synergy of "employment substitution" and "regulatory arbitrage", rather than the simple expansion of violent criminal organizations. India possesses a large population of educated, English-fluent, yet underemployed young people, forming a continuous supply of personnel for scam call centers. In areas lacking formal employment opportunities, fraud becomes a "career choice" rather than merely a "criminal act", endowing it with a unique logic of social reproduction.

The "gray connections" between Indian syndicates and government officials represent an economy-driven patronage relationship embedded within the democratic electoral system. In essence, this reflects an institutional failure of state capacity rather than the proactive criminalization of state power. This stands in stark contrast to the "state-sponsored crime" model seen in Southeast Asia, posing entirely different challenges for the international community when seeking governance pathways.

While joint law enforcement actions by other countries and the Indian government, such as the US FBI-CBI Operation Chakra series, can achieve certain short-term impacts on specific criminal networks, their long-term effectiveness is constrained by the structural conditions of India's domestic political and economic ecology. As long as rural underemployment and the foundational structure of local electoral patronage remain unchanged, the outcomes of these operations will merely be tactical successes akin to "whack-a-mole," failing to achieve systematic and fundamental suppression. Therefore, unlike the cyber scam problem in Southeast Asia, the fundamental solution to India's cyber scam lies not in law enforcement, but in the systematic reform of India's economic development and political governance.

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FOR A NEW STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE EU AND THE LEGITIMATE BURMESE DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

CECILIA BRIGHI AND U MAUNG MAUNG

More than five years after the military coup of 1 February 2021, the European Union's policy towards Myanmar has reached a strategic turning point. The policy framework adopted in response to the 2021 military coup reflected the political and strategic realities prevailing at the time. More than five years later, however, Myanmar's political landscape and the wider geopolitical environment have fundamentally changed.

Until now, Burma has been perceived in Europe primarily as a human rights violation and humanitarian emergency, for which the European Union provided an additional €10.5 million in humanitarian aid for people affected by the conflict, bringing EU humanitarian support for the country to €49.1 million in 2026.

But today, Burma has become a major arena of geopolitical competition, in which Russia, China, and other authoritarians are expanding their political, military, and economic influence, thus disrupting the rules-based international order and challenging European strategic interests in the Indo-Pacific. Proof of this is the fact that since 2021, the head of the Burmese military junta, now elected as the puppet president of a terrorist civilian military government, has visited Moscow five times, striking strategic defence and financial agreements, including financial settlement mechanisms, with two-thirds of commercial transactions now conducted in Russian rubles. Similar official visits took place in India, China, Laos, and Thailand.

Myanmar should be integrated more clearly into the European Union's broader Indo-Pacific strategy. Supporting democratic governance in Myanmar is not only a matter of 1) promoting democracy and human rights but also of 2) strengthening regional stability, 3) maritime security and the 4) rules-based international order in response to the growing influence of authoritarian powers.

Together, these four pillars provide the framework for a Strategic Reset that combines long-term institutional engagement with Myanmar's legitimate democratic institutions, sustained strategic pressure on the military authorities, and a stronger geopolitical role for the European Union in the Indo-Pacific.

The European Union should explore the possible use of a non-lethal support program, similar to the European Peace Facility (EPF) as part of its broader Strategic Partnership with Myanmar's legitimate democratic institutions. It might be seen as a provocation, but subject to the necessary political and legal measures, a program similar to the EPF could contribute to strengthening civilian protection, institutional resilience and governance capacity through support for: logistics, secure communications, medical evacuation, field hospitals, demining, non-lethal reconnaissance, training and other non-offensive capabilities.

A non-lethal technical support programme would require a detailed legal, political and operational assessment by the European External Action Service,

the European Commission and Myanmar's legitimate democratic institutions, including the National Unity Government (NUG), to ensure full compliance with European Union and international law. The establishment of a Strategic Partnership should also envisage a new political framework within which future non-lethal technical support programme, or a similar mechanism could be identified, through the adoption of financial measures that go beyond the traditional humanitarian support to contribute to the strengthening of the democratic forces. Myanmar's internal political landscape has also evolved significantly. Despite continuing armed conflict, democratic institutions have progressively strengthened their coordination, governance structures and administrative capacities. The NUG, the National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC), the establishment of the Steering Council for the Emergence of a Federal Democratic Union (SCEF), democratic State and local administrations, democratic political parties, trade unions, democratic employers organizations, and civil society organisations together constitute an emerging federal democratic governance architecture that increasingly performs representative, administrative and public governance functions across significant parts of the country. These events demonstrate the continued evolution of an alternative democratic governance framework deriving from the popular mandate expressed in the November 2020 elections and aimed at supporting Myanmar's democratic federal transition

A Strategic Reset for EU policy on Myanmar, in response to Myanmar's transformed political reality and the evolving regional strategic environment is therefore needed. At its core is the establishment of a Strategic Partnership between the European Union and Myanmar's legitimate democratic institutions to provide a more effective framework for political dialogue, institutional cooperation and technical backing in areas essential to Myanmar's democratic transition.

The European Union should complement this Strategic Partnership with an updated framework of pressure through strengthening the existing sanctions regime and the adoption of immediate priorities to prevent the normalization of the military authorities and of their illegal institutions; ensuring continued recognition of Myanmar's legitimate representation within the United Nations system; strengthening support for the implementation of the ILO's Article 33 Resolution; and enhancing coordination with ASEAN and like-minded international partners while preserving the clear distinction between democratic legitimacy

and military control. While the Strategic Partnership represents a long-term framework, several priorities require immediate European attention. Together, these priorities would constitute the first practical steps towards implementing the Strategic Reset proposed in this paper.

- strengthening the European Union's restrictive measures to increase the Strategic Pressure on the military authorities, including by adopting financial sanctions, strengthening restrictions on fuel supply chains, including measures that weaken the Burmese military by cutting off access to weapons and dual-use technologies; and addressing sanctions circumvention;
- preventing the international normalization of military rule and of the illegitimate institutions established following the illegal electoral process, while working for the democratic institutions recognition at the UN;
- continued recognition of Myanmar's legitimate representative at the United Nations; maintaining clear political support for Myanmar's legitimate democratic institutions in all relevant international fora;
- supporting the effective implementation and monitoring of the ILO Resolution adopted under Article 33 of the ILO Constitution;
- reinforcing political coordination with ASEAN through measurable benchmarks while maintaining continued engagement with Myanmar's legitimate democratic institutions;
- integrating Myanmar more fully into the European Union's broader Indo-Pacific strategic agenda.

Supporting Myanmar's legitimate democratic institutions is no longer solely a matter of defending democratic values. It has become an essential component of the European Union's broader strategy to strengthen the rules-based international order, reinforce stability in the Indo-Pacific, and respond coherently to the growing convergence of authoritarian powers. Any acceptance of the status quo, as defined by the military regime, would not only lead to the consolidation of a ferocious dictatorship in Myanmar, but would also strengthen the influence of several authoritarian regimes in Southeast Asia and consequently would call into question political and economic interests and values intrinsically linked to the Europe.

Myanmar may be geographically distant from Europe, but its geopolitical consequences are not. Therefore, its crisis can no longer be viewed solely as a humanitarian one or a human rights concern.



WFP OPENS EMERGENCY TRANSPORT SERVICE TO SPEED FLOOD AID IN MYANMAR'S AYEYARWADY

Communities cut off by flooding in Myanmar's Ayeyarwady Region are set to receive faster deliveries of food, medicine and shelter materials after the UN World Food Programme (WFP) opened its transport network to all humanitarian partners responding to the disaster, the agency announced on 2 September.

The flooding adds to a humanitarian crisis already gripping Myanmar, where more than four years of conflict since the military's February 2021 coup have displaced millions of people and left an estimated 12.4 million people facing hunger nationwide, according to WFP.

The free-to-use cargo transport service is initially focused on Laymyethna, Yekyi and Ngathaingchaung townships, three of the areas hardest hit by this year's monsoon flooding, with plans to expand to other locations as needs are assessed.

WFP Representative and Country Director in Myanmar Michael Dunford said the agency is now acting

as the logistics provider for the wider humanitarian response, not only delivering its own food assistance, so that partner organisations can move supplies to those who need them most. When floodwaters cut off entire communities, he said, logistics becomes "the difference between success and failure of an operation."

The transport fleet is available for all eligible humanitarian cargo, including food and nutrition assistance, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) supplies, medicines and emergency shelter materials. WFP said the service would run for an initial two weeks and could be extended if transport bottlenecks and humanitarian needs persist.

WFP has also launched a separate emergency food response in Sagaing Region alongside its ongoing relief operations in Ayeyarwady, and said it had reached 15,000 people with emergency food rations across both regions so far.



Photo: Supplied

MYANMAR MILITARY COLUMN ADVANCING IN CHAUNG-U HIT BY MINES DURING RETREAT

A Myanmar military junta column with a strength of about 300 troops that had been advancing in Chaung-U Township, Sagaing Region, retreated 3 September, according to a military news source.

Following their retreat, revolutionary forces entered the villages to conduct area clearance operations, during which they discovered the decomposing bodies of three local residents and dead cattle.

"They are already decomposing. Furthermore, I want people to flee immediately as soon as they hear news of an advancing military column. Seeing civilians being killed makes me sad and angry. They could have fled, yet they didn't," the military source said.

Mizzima is still investigating the detailed information regarding the deceased. The retreating

military column also reportedly plundered and carried away the belongings of local residents.

"On their way back after looting, they hit landmines planted by our side. There are likely many casualties. Ambulances were seen rushing back and forth in total chaos," the military source added.

The military column and revolutionary forces clashed for about an hour on 1 September. That same day, two local residents were killed when junta troops fired indiscriminately.

The junta column began its offensive on 29 August and retreated about a week later. Due to the military column's operations, residents from about 10 villages in Chaung-U Township were forced to flee. The military source urged local residents to remain highly vigilant of landmine hazards if they return to their villages.



MANIPUR-MYANMAR BORDER FENCING 55 KM COMPLETE WITH FULL COMPLETION TARGET SET FOR 2028, SAYS MINISTER

About 55 kilometers of the border fencing between India's Manipur State and Myanmar has been completed, with a target for full completion by 2028, Manipur State Home Minister Govindas Konthoujam said on 2 September.

The minister made the remarks in the State Legislative Assembly in response to a calling attention motion from opposition MLA K Ranjit Singh regarding recent reports of a proposed India-Myanmar land exchange.

The minister said the state government has not yet received any official communication from the central government's Ministry of External Affairs regarding the land swap proposal, and added that the government must inform affected citizens before making any decisions regarding territorial sovereignty.

Reports have surfaced that the Indian government has proposed a boundary adjustment involving approximately 1.4 square miles of land between border pillars 65 and 68, located between Manipur's Chandel

district and the Kabaw Valley in Sagaing Region, Myanmar. The reports, first published by The Diplomat on 17 July, emerged following junta chief Min Aung Hlaing's visit to India from 30 May to 3 June, during which border-related issues were discussed.

The minister explained that the border between Manipur State and Myanmar spans about 398 kilometers, from border pillars 32 to 130, and that fencing has been completed along approximately 55 kilometers of this stretch.

He also noted that the Moreh area, situated between border pillars 75 and 79, is of vital strategic importance.

The minister said the fencing project has faced delays due to difficulties transporting construction materials, and that efforts to demarcate some remaining unmarked sections of the border are still underway.

A member of the People's Defense Force (PDF) based in Tamu Township told Mizzima that border fencing is not an issue that can be carried out unilaterally, arguing it should not be forced through given that some areas remain undemarcated and territorial encroachments have occurred.

"The fencing issue cannot be resolved unilaterally. There are undemarcated territories, and there have been territorial encroachments. No matter what, it should not be forced at this time," he said, adding that fencing should only proceed after consultation with

a democratically elected government and with the understanding and acceptance of local residents.

According to the PDF member, there have been about six instances of territorial encroachment from the Indian side, and local PDFs have staged protests at sites where fencing activities were being conducted. These locations include two spots near Myothit town in upper Tamu Township, the area between Moreh and Tamu, and points between border pillars 59-60, 75-76, and 82-83, he said.

He also referenced an unresolved incident near border pillar 59, in which he alleged Indian military personnel crossed into Myanmar and raided a Tamu District People's Defense Team (PDT/PaKaPha) camp, arresting and killing 10 of its members.

India is currently working to fence its entire 1,643-kilometer border with Myanmar in an effort to control drug trafficking, illegal trade, undocumented migration, refugee issues, armed conflict, and national security concerns.

The Mizo, Naga, Kuki, and Zo indigenous communities are opposing India's fencing project, arguing that the physical barrier could divide indigenous populations living along the border, lead to the loss of ancestral and agricultural lands, and negatively affect their ethnic culture and livelihoods.



OVER 200 CIVILIANS KILLED IN ONE MONTH DUE TO MYANMAR JUNTA VIOLENCE, NUG AND AAPP REPORT

More than 200 civilians were killed nationwide in August alone due to the military junta's airstrikes, massacres, and oppression in prisons, according to statements released by the National Unity Government (NUG) and the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP).

During the month of August, the military junta committed 528 human rights violations, with Mandalay Region suffering the worst with 110 recorded incidents.

Eight massacres occurred across Sagaing, Rakhine, Chin, and Karenni (Kayah) regions, killing 68 civilians, including seven children. Additionally, the junta carried out airstrikes 530 times across 13 states and regions, killing 139 civilians, including 18 children, and injuring 266 others. Among these, Sagaing and Magway regions suffered the most from the aerial attacks.

The airstrikes also destroyed 126 civilian homes, 17 religious buildings, 10 schools, and four hospitals/clinics.

The AAPP's statement on September 3 also confirmed that 94 pro-democracy activists and civilians were killed, and 14 others were politically detained during August.

According to the AAPP, the casualties included seven individuals who lost their lives due to torture during interrogation after being arrested by the junta, abuse in prison, and a lack of adequate medical treatment.

U Aung Myo Kyaw, an official from the AAPP, told Mizzima that these incidents were verified by cross-checking ground-level information collected by the AAPP with reliable sources.

He added that about 58 deaths are still pending verification. The verification process and the flow of information have been delayed due to instability on the ground, phone and internet shutdowns, military offensives, airstrikes, and heavy artillery shelling, which have forced local residents to flee to safety.

Furthermore, the number of political prisoner deaths in prisons is reportedly rising due to a lack of nutritious food and adequate medicine, as well as restrictions and bans on medicine sent by detainees' families.

Regarding the conditions inside prisons, AAPP official U Aung Myo Kyaw told Mizzima, "Prison authorities bear full responsibility for these incidents. One day, they will have to be held accountable for all of this."

The AAPP also urged the international community to withhold any recognition of the military junta and to exert more pressure, as the regime is blatantly violating international human rights laws.

Meanwhile, the NUG announced that it has systematically documented evidence of war crimes committed by the terrorist military junta and will make every effort to ensure that both the perpetrators and those who ordered the crimes face appropriate punishment.



Photo: AFP

MYANMAR JUNTA APPOINTS ONLY MILITARY OFFICERS TO VACANT POSITIONS IN MYANMAR SPACE AGENCY

According to the Myanmar Gazette published on 28 August, the junta has appointed 19 military officers from the Ministry of Defence to vacant positions within the Myanmar Space Agency (MSA).

Among the 19 appointed officers are six lieutenant colonels, nine majors, and four captains.

Lieutenant Colonel Myo Tun Hlaing has been appointed Deputy Director-General of the Bureau of Space Science and Technology, while Lieutenant Colonel Ba Win Aye has been appointed Deputy Director-General of the Bureau of Administration, Management, and Strategic Planning, according to the Gazette.

The remaining military officers have been assigned to roles such as Director, Deputy Director, and Assistant Director across various departments within the agency, the Gazette said.

The junta established the Myanmar Space Agency on 1 June 2025. Dr. Soe Myint Maung currently serves as Director General of the agency, and Dr. Myo Thant serves as Deputy Director General.

With these latest appointments, the remaining vacant administrative positions within the agency have been filled entirely by military officers, excluding civilian professionals.

When the agency was first established, it was tasked with 20 mandates, including supervising and coordinating the launching, control, and operation of state-owned and privately owned satellites, and serving as a central hub for the storage, distribution, and provision of satellite imagery and data.

The junta is deepening space-related cooperation with Russia. During junta chief Min Aung Hlaing's trip to Moscow from 17 to 20 August, he and Russian President Vladimir Putin oversaw the signing of 12 bilateral pacts, including a human spaceflight cooperation agreement between Roscosmos chief Dmitry Bakanov and Soe Myint Maung committing to select and train a Myanmar cosmonaut for a launch by 2028. The agreements also include plans for a Russian satellite navigation data station and a near-Earth hazard tracking system, with land already allocated at the Myanmar Aerospace Engineering University in Meiktila, Mandalay Region.



NEW INVESTIGATION FINDS JUNTA TORTURED AND KILLED AID WORKERS TO SECURE RUSSIA-BACKED DAWEI PROJECT

Myanmar junta forces tortured and killed at least five civilians, including three young humanitarian aid workers, during a July military operation to secure the Russian-backed Dawei Special Economic Zone (SEZ), as junta leader Min Aung Hlaing deepened economic ties with Moscow, a new investigation by Fortify Rights has found.

The killings occurred more than five years after Myanmar's 2021 military coup, which triggered a nationwide armed uprising and has left communities across the country under repeated waves of military offensives and displacement.

According to Fortify Rights, a junta military column stopped six passenger vehicles and detained drivers and passengers in Khamaung Chaung village, Yebyu Township, Tanintharyi Region, on 9 July. Among those detained were three humanitarian workers, Eh Thar, 24, Leon, 24, and Myat Thu, 19, from The Ants Humanitarian Aid Team, a group founded by local youth in October 2024 to assist communities displaced by conflict in hard-to-reach parts of the region. Their bodies were found on 20 July in an oil-palm plantation between Aye Ka Ni and Wa Zun Taw villages. A resident who discovered the bodies, identified only as "Leo," told Fortify Rights: "Their throats had been slit. Their faces

had been beaten until they were crushed." The three were cremated the same day.

A farm worker from West Sanchi village was found dead nearby, having reportedly been dressed in a People's Defence Force uniform by soldiers before being shot, residents told Fortify Rights. During the same operation, junta troops occupying Wa Zun Taw village searched and looted homes before burning about 30 houses and a clinic, according to the investigation.

The operation coincided with accelerating cooperation between the Myanmar junta and Russia over the Dawei SEZ, a multi-billion-dollar port and industrial project in Tanintharyi Region first launched in 2008 and revived through a February 2025 memorandum of understanding between the two governments. On 5 June, the junta-controlled Launglon Economic Development Company signed a power plant agreement with Inter RAO, a Russian state-controlled energy company that the European Union sanctioned in July.

Survivors interviewed by Fortify Rights said they believed the military operation was intended to secure territory around the project. Deputy Commander-in-Chief Kyaw Swar Lin had visited the region on 24 June and ordered forces to secure "strategic economic assets," including the Dawei deep-sea port, while also directing troops to clear resistance fighters from a nearby highway.

Fortify Rights also documented concerns over digital security following the killings. A humanitarian worker affiliated with The Ants told the group that the three victims had been carrying laptops and phones containing data about their work, and that their Telegram accounts became active again the

day after their bodies were found, though no one had contacted the accounts. Fortify Rights said this does not independently confirm that the devices were accessed, but flagged it as a signal of possible risk to humanitarian networks operating in the area.

A separate account relayed to Fortify Rights described a monk sheltering displaced villagers in Kone Thar Yar Inn village being forced to remove his robes and killed; the group said it could not independently verify this account due to the continued presence of junta troops in the area.

Russian President Vladimir Putin hosted Min Aung Hlaing in Moscow on 18 August, where the two sides signed agreements covering energy, oil and gas, and satellite navigation. Putin and several senior Russian military officials are currently subject to International Criminal Court arrest warrants over war crimes in Ukraine, while ICC judges are separately considering a similar warrant against Min Aung Hlaing over crimes against humanity in Myanmar.

Fortify Rights drew a parallel to the Yadana and Yetagun gas pipeline projects of the 1990s and 2000s, when the military's use of forced labour and killings to secure the pipeline corridor led to landmark litigation against American oil company Unocal, later acquired by Chevron. The group called on governments and companies involved in the Dawei project to divest. Neither the junta nor Russia's embassy in Myanmar has issued a public response to the findings.



FLOODS HIT KALAY PROMPTING FLOOD VICTIMS TO EVACUATE TO SAFER AREAS

Continuous heavy rainfall has triggered widespread flooding in Kalay Township, Sagaing Region, forcing flood victims to evacuate to nearby safe areas and Kalay downtown, according to local sources.

Due to relentless rain, the Myittha River and the Nat Chung, Aung Myin Thar, Sae Gyi, Nat Nan, Zin Ka Lin, and Upote creeks have overflowed, submerging low-lying wards in Kalay town as well as surrounding villages.

"Since it has been raining continuously, the water level will likely keep rising. The eastern, southern, and northern parts of Kalay Township flood every year. Only Tahan, which is on higher ground, and a small pocket of the downtown center are safe from the water. The number of flood evacuees is increasing," a local resident of Kalay told Mizzima 3 September.

Floodwaters have inundated villages including Phaungku, Kyi Kone, Nan Han Nwet, Nan Sawng Pu, Pyin Taw Oo, Sakhan Gyi, Taung Oo, Pyin Thar, Chin Saing, Hto Mar, and Zin Ka Lin, as well as low-lying urban wards including Mingalar Oo Yin, Nyaung Pin Thar, Aung Mingalar, Aung Thitsa, Aung Zeya, Nay Pyi Taw, Kyo Thon Pin, and Thazin.

Phaungku monastery was flooded, while a church building in Khaikam and makeshift shelters for internally displaced persons (IDPs) along the Myittha River were swept away by the current. Some patients from Kalay General Hospital have also been evacuated to safer locations.

Farmlands and crops have been damaged by the flooding, though the exact extent of the losses cannot

yet be estimated, a local resident said.

In southern Kalay, Ooredoo fiber cables have snapped. Maintenance teams cannot reach the area to repair them due to the severe flooding, resulting in ongoing disruptions to internet and phone communication.

Residents from flood-affected villages are fleeing to nearby safe zones, and a relief camp has been opened at Saint Mary's School (BEHS-3) in Kalay downtown to shelter the victims.

An official from the Kalay Township branch of the National Unity Government (NUG) Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management told Mizzima that they are helping facilitate household evacuations and commuter safety. "At the moment, we are helping move household items from flooded homes. In areas where roads are impassable, we are helping people push or carry their motorcycles across," the official said.

Fighters from the Chin National Defence Force - Upper Chindwin (CNDF-UCR) are also actively participating in relief and rescue operations.

According to a statement released by the NUG on 22 August, continuous heavy rainfall in Upper Myanmar and water discharge from dams and reservoirs have affected approximately 619,786 people across 25 townships in Sagaing, Mandalay, Magway, and Ayeyarwady regions, and Karen State, leaving 32 people dead.



CHOLERA, DIARRHEA RETURN TO MYANMAR'S 2024 OUTBREAK TOWNSHIPS AS FLOODS AFFECT 470,000

Cholera and acute watery diarrhea (AWD) have resurfaced simultaneously in Yangon, Sittwe, Mon State and Ayeyarwady Region, the same areas struck by Myanmar's nationwide 2024 outbreak, according to a Myanmar Health Cluster bulletin covering data through 31 August 2026.

The bulletin, coordinated by the World Health Organization (WHO), also reports that flooding has affected more than 470,000 people across 16 townships in Sagaing, four in Mandalay, four in Magway, three in Ayeyarwady and parts of Mon State, with new AWD cases emerging in flood-hit areas of Sagaing, Mandalay and Bago.

The recurrence follows a cluster that began in Yangon on 9 August and, by mid-month, had caused at least one death and nearly 200 hospitalizations, according to Yangon's junta-run regional administration. By 18 August, hospitalizations in Yangon had climbed to about 500, with nearly 150 cases testing positive for cholera, and at least one additional death was recorded in Sittwe, the capital of Rakhine State, according to health officials cited by international wire agencies.

The Myanmar Health Cluster, made up of WHO and 49 partner organizations, issues monthly bulletins tracking disease outbreaks, health-service delivery and attacks on health care nationwide. Myanmar's health system has remained strained since the 2021 military coup triggered a civil war now in its sixth year, compounding chronic shortages of medical supplies in conflict-affected areas.

Malaria and dengue cases have also increased in flood-affected regions, with Karenni, Tanintharyi, Kachin, Chin and Sagaing facing acute shortages of bednets and treatment supplies, the bulletin says. In Magway, more than 200,000 people have remained displaced by conflict since May, compounding pressure on health services in a region also coping with flood damage.

Separately, Insecurity Insight recorded 101 attacks on health care across Myanmar between January and August, compared with 53 incidents verified over the same period by WHO's Surveillance System for Attacks on Health Care — a gap reflecting differing verification standards rather than a single count, and one the bulletin does not break down by responsible party.

Health partners say they delivered life-saving health services to more than 813,000 people across 227 townships in the first half of 2026, according to Health Cluster-compiled partner data; combined nationwide reporting from all responding organizations puts the total at nearly 897,000 people across 330 townships, though the bulletin does not specify whether the figures count unique individuals or repeat visits.

The return of outbreaks to the exact townships hit in 2024 raises the question of whether the water, sanitation and disease-surveillance gaps identified after that outbreak have since been closed. WHO and the Health Cluster say more detailed case breakdowns by township, along with confirmation of the current split between cholera and AWD cases, are expected in future bulletins.



KNDF VOWS TO BUILD A FEDERAL UNION BASED ON 'UNION-BUILDING THROUGH STRONG STATES' PRINCIPLE

The Karenni Nationalities Defence Force (KNDF) has announced that it will continue working to establish a federal union based on the fundamental principle of "Bottom-Up Federalism", building a union by first strengthening individual states.

According to a statement issued after the first KNDF Conference, held on 28 and 29 August, the group will continue to pursue power-sharing in local and state-level administrations, the emergence of a genuine federal democratic government chosen by the people, and the establishment of a single, unified state military force.

The conference was attended by 105 delegates, including central committee members and battalion commanders, during which some leadership changes were made within the central committee, according to KNDF.

The statement also said KNDF is an armed force that will operate under a unified civilian government. It clarified that its current roles and duties within various departments of the Interim Executive Council of Karenni

State (IEC) are merely temporary, and that KNDF stands ready to hand over power and responsibilities to a civilian government desired by the public.

KNDF also said it is actively collaborating both militarily and politically with the Spring Revolution Alliance (SRA), the National Unity Government (NUG), the National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC), and the Steering Committee for the Establishment of a Federal Democratic Union (SCEF).

Despite achieving military success in town-capture battles, the conference statement said challenges remain in fostering unity among revolutionary forces, establishing a precise command structure, and organizing into a single unified military force representing the state.

KNDF also declared its commitment to gaining international trust and recognition for its policies and military code of conduct, and said it would allow international monitoring and assessment of its compliance with military ethics.



Mizoram. Photo: Supplied

DECISION MADE TO BAN HOUSE RENTALS FOR MYANMAR REFUGEES IN LAWNGTLAI, MIZORAM

District authorities in Lawngtlai, Mizoram State, India, have decided to ban foreigners, including displaced Myanmar refugees, from renting houses, according to an announcement by the Mizoram Government's Information Department on 31 August.

The decision was made during a law enforcement and security meeting on 31 August, chaired by Lawngtlai District Deputy Commissioner Pu Donny Lalruatsanga.

The meeting was reportedly attended by district-level government officials, representatives from the Assam Rifles, and delegates from local civil society organizations.

According to the meeting's resolution, renting houses to refugees and foreigners in Lawngtlai District will be strictly prohibited starting 1 September.

To enforce this ban, the District Commissioner's office will issue an official order, and field inspections will be conducted at hotels as well as homestays that accommodate guests in private residences.

Furthermore, the meeting resolved to prevent the issuance of fraudulent identity documents within the district and to arrest and take legal action against those involved in such activities.

These initiatives will be monitored and implemented by the District Deputy Commissioner's (DC) office in cooperation with local youth organizations. A resolution was also passed to expedite and enhance anti-drug operations.

The meeting minutes also noted that legal action will be taken against drug offenders and anyone aiding or abetting them.

A Myanmar national residing in Lawngtlai told Mizzima that the detailed terms of the rental ban, including whether it affects current tenants, remain unclear.

"We have only seen the news online. What is not yet clear is whether this includes those who have already rented houses, or if it only restricts new arrivals. We are currently renting a house in the town, and so far, we haven't received any warnings or notices," he said.

He added that if the ban also applies to those who rented houses before 1 September, the refugees will face severe hardships regarding their livelihoods, employment, children's education, and healthcare.

Although there are dedicated refugee camps in Lawngtlai District, some Myanmar refugees choose to rent houses in the town. These individuals include those receiving financial support from relatives in third countries, those earning a living through handicrafts, and families prioritizing their children's education.

According to records from the Mizoram State Home Department, approximately 30,000 Myanmar refugees are taking refuge across 11 districts in Mizoram. Lawngtlai District hosts 6,328 refugees, the second-highest concentration in the state.

Lawngtlai District is a critical hub for border trade with Chin State's Paletwa region and Rakhine State in Myanmar. Following intense clashes between the military junta forces and the Arakan Army (AA), essential consumer goods, medicines, and fuel have been imported through this border area.

A Myanmar trader shared his perspective with Mizzima, suggesting that the recent tightening of regulations might be connected to a recent extortion controversy in Lawngtlai.

"At the Lawngtlai checkpoint, someone posted online about money being collected from a truck carrying scooters bound for Myanmar, with the collectors claiming the District Deputy Commissioner had authorized it. The DC denied any knowledge, stated that no money should be collected, and launched a police investigation. This house rental ban might have been triggered by that incident," the trader said.

The trader also speculated that the restrictions could be a preventive measure to maintain law and order, anticipating potential security issues arising from the constant influx of Myanmar traders and cross-border commerce.

AAPP RELEASES: NUMBER OF CASUALTIES REACHES 8,332 DURING MYANMAR'S SPRING REVOLUTION

The number of people who have lost their lives during the Spring Revolution due to arrests and killings by the military junta after the coup has reached 8,332, according to records updated by the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) up to 31 August.

Among the 8,332 casualties whose names have been verified by AAPP, 2,287 are women and 1,107 are children. Additionally, there are approximately 5,300 deaths that still require further verification.

Furthermore, from 1 February 2021, to 31 August 2026, a total of 31,852 people have been arrested and detained. Of these, 14,765 remain in custody. Among those detained, 6,587 are women and 640 are children, according to AAPP.

The Myanmar military junta continues to commit human rights violations by deliberately targeting civilians. Throughout August, they carried out military offensives into villages, airstrikes, heavy artillery

shelling, burning down homes, and arresting civilians to use as human shields, AAPP stated.

AAPP noted that its figures are based on data they have collected and verified, and that the actual number of deaths and arrests on the ground may be significantly higher than the figures presented. AAPP added that they will continue to update the lists as new information is available.

The association has also urged the public to send information regarding anyone arrested, detained, prosecuted, or killed during the Spring Revolution - including civil society leaders, civilians, activists, journalists, and Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) staff - directly to AAPP.

Information regarding casualties can be sent to <fatality-data@aappb.org>, and information regarding detainees can be sent to <detention-data@aappb.org>, AAPP stated.

MILITARY TENSIONS HIGH IN SHWEGU-SINKHAN REGION AFTER KIA COALITION CAPTURES STRATEGIC HILL OUTPOST

YAMIN PHU PWINT AUNG

Following the capture of a strategic hill outpost near Zinbon and Sinkhan in upper Shwegu Township, Kachin State, by joint forces of the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and the Kachin People's Defense Force (KPDF), the Myanmar junta has launched a counter-offensive with four columns and is conducting airstrikes, according to ground sources.

The junta launched the counter-offensive after the KIA-KPDF coalition attacked and captured a strategic outpost near Zinbon, which controls the Shwegu-Sinkhan road, on 30 August.

"There have been airstrikes around Zinbon and Sinkhan. It is a hill where troops were temporarily stationed to control the road. It was about reclaiming that strategic hill. It wasn't a heavily fortified base yet," a military source said, adding that the outpost was a temporary foothold established by the junta to control the road while advancing from Shwegu toward Sinkhan, rather than a permanently constructed base.

Clashes have continued around Zinbon since the junta launched its counter-offensive the day after the coalition captured the outpost.

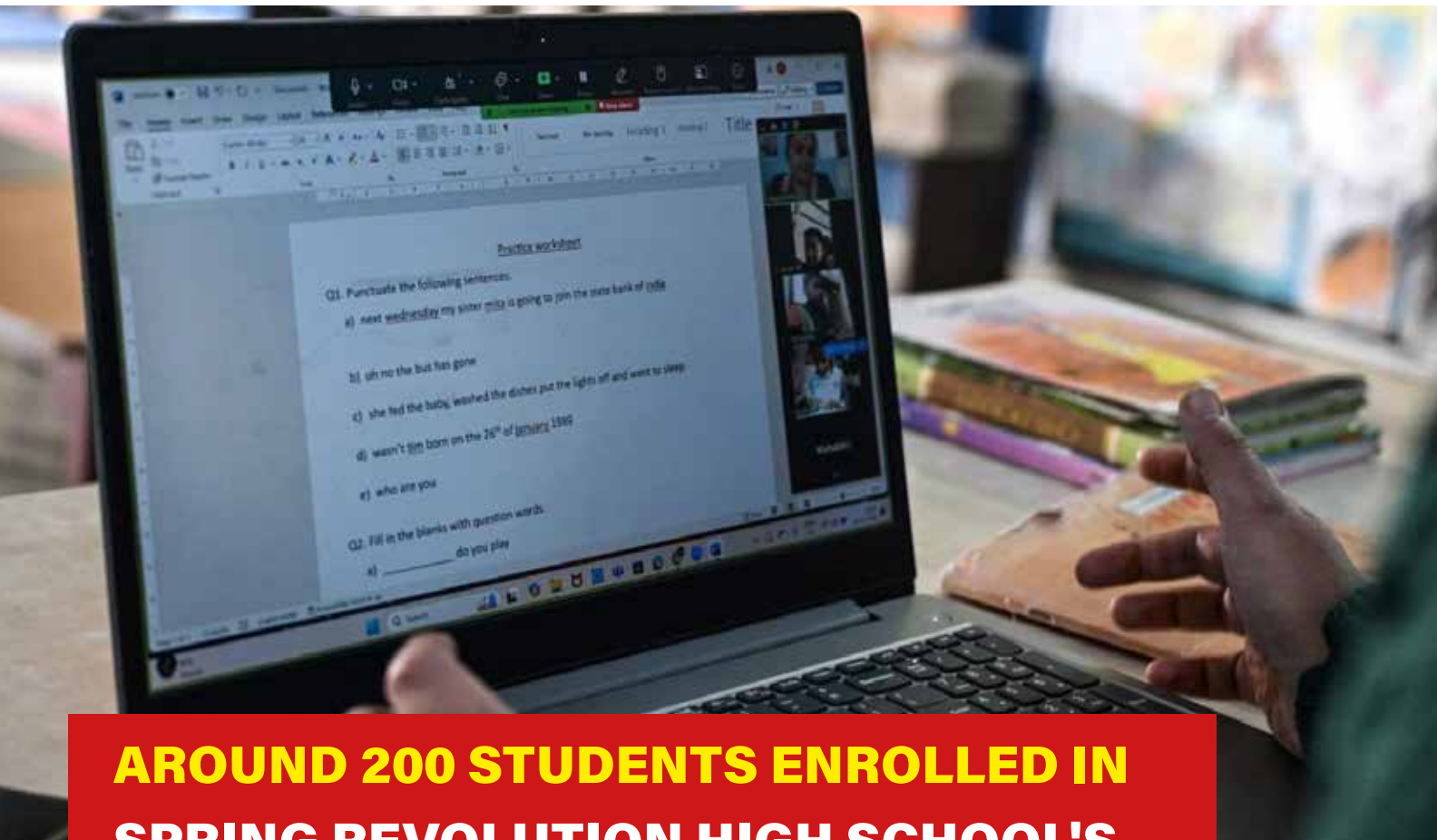
Zinbon is located on the eastern bank of the Ayeyarwady River between Shwegu and Sinkhan, making it a critical point for both the road and waterway connecting Shwegu to Bhamo.

According to military sources, since the last week of August, the junta has been on the offensive toward Sinkhan from Shwegu with four ground columns: three operating on the eastern side of the Ayeyarwady River and one on the western side near Thingaw In. Each column, consisting of approximately 200 troops, has focused its offensive along the Shwegu-Sinkhan road. The KIA-KPDF coalition has engaged and resisted these columns along the Tawlan Mountain and Zinbon Mountain ranges.

A fleet of junta vessels that had been traveling up the Ayeyarwady River remains docked at Shwegu and has not yet continued its journey upstream toward Sinkhan, the military source said. "The ships have not left Shwegu yet," he said. The fleet arrived in Shwegu on 28 August after sailing up the Ayeyarwady River.

Even before the vessels reached Shwegu, the junta had deployed ground columns along the river and the road, launching an offensive from Shwegu toward Sinkhan.

The KIA-led joint forces currently control Sinkhan and the area around the Ayeyarwady River-crossing bridge, a vital route connecting Shwegu to Bhamo. The junta is attempting to regain control of this route to replenish troops, ammunition, and food supplies to Bhamo.



AROUND 200 STUDENTS ENROLLED IN SPRING REVOLUTION HIGH SCHOOL'S INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL PROGRAMME

Approximately 200 students have enrolled in the International School Programme of Spring Revolution High School, according to the school's principal.

The principal told Mizzima that enrollment will remain open until 26 September, meaning student numbers are expected to increase further.

"The school operates on two separate tracks: the Myanmar curriculum and the International School (IS) curriculum. We have an adequate number of teachers," the principal said.

The International School Program follows the Cambridge Curriculum, the GED Curriculum, and IGCSE Edexcel. Classes are conducted online daily from Monday to Friday, between 5:00 PM and 9:00 PM.

The programme launched in the 2023-2024 academic year and has reached Batch (4) in the current

2026-2027 academic year.

"The main challenge is student retention instability. A minority of students think online learning is ineffective and transfer to physical, expensive GED centres and international schools. Others drop out due to difficulties with internet connectivity, security, and livelihoods. There are also some who left because of the military junta's (SAC) Placement Test, which has led to a decrease in student numbers," the principal said.

The principal explained that classes following the Myanmar curriculum are held in the morning, while international curriculum classes are conducted in the evening.

The school is led and taught by Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) teachers. The academic duration is 10 months for regular classes and two years for IGCSE classes.



Bo Kyi

AAPP CO-FOUNDER BO KYI RECEIVES 2026 RAMON MAGSAYSAY AWARD, DUBBED THE 'ASIAN NOBEL PRIZE'

The Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation officially announced 31 August that Bo Kyi, co-founder and joint secretary of the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP), has been honoured with the 2026 Ramon Magsaysay Award, widely regarded as Asia's Nobel Prize.

Bo Kyi told Mizzima that this award is a recognition of the people of Myanmar who are courageously resisting injustice, as well as the political prisoners who remain resilient inside prisons.

"Through this award, we will be able to send more messages to the ASEAN community and international governments about the ongoing situation inside Myanmar, and the critical importance of the unconditional release of all political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi," he said.

The Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation stated that Bo Kyi was selected for the award because of his work in systematically documenting and exposing the conditions and human rights violations faced by

political prisoners behind prison walls, and for raising awareness to ensure they are not forgotten by the outside world.

Bo Kyi was imprisoned for over seven years for his participation in the 1988 pro-democracy uprising. He subsequently co-founded AAPP in 2000 and has spent more than two decades working for the release of political prisoners and providing support to their families.

Alongside Bo Kyi, the co-recipients of this year's 68th Magsaysay Award are Tommy Koh, a diplomat and international legal expert from Singapore, and Runa Khan, a social entrepreneur from Bangladesh. The presentation ceremony will be held on 15 November at the Metropolitan Theatre in Manila, Philippines.

Previous Myanmar recipients of this prestigious award include journalist Law Yone (1958), Dr. Cynthia Maung (2002), human rights activist Ka Hsaw Wa (2009), Lahpai Seng Raw (2013), Kyaw Thu (2015), and Swe Win, editor-in-chief of Myanmar Now (2019).



MALAYSIA TO RETURN 1,476 MYANMAR NATIONALS ON 29 SEPTEMBER, BUT UN REFUGEE AGENCY SAYS IT HAD NO ROLE

The United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR) said 1 September that ongoing conflict inside Myanmar makes safe and sustainable returns impossible, warning it played no role in identifying or screening the 1,476 Myanmar nationals Malaysia plans to send back on 29 September.

The announcement comes more than five years into a civil war triggered by the military's February 2021 coup, during which hundreds of thousands of Myanmar nationals have sought refuge in Malaysia. Malaysia's Home Ministry said the 1,476 were identified by the junta through a diplomatic note dated 13 August, and will be transported on two Myanmar naval vessels and a hospital ship as the first phase of what it calls a "voluntary repatriation programme."

Whether the returns are genuinely voluntary remains unclear. Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim earlier said Myanmar had agreed to receive 5,000 Rohingya, members of a persecuted Muslim

minority from Myanmar; official wording has since shifted to "Myanmar nationals identified by the Myanmar government," with no breakdown of how many are Rohingya, other ethnic refugees, asylum seekers, or undocumented migrants. With UNHCR excluded from the process, there is no independent channel to confirm individual consent.

Malaysia's Home Ministry said 10,388 Myanmar nationals were held in immigration detention depots as of 15 August, though it noted not all are considered refugees. A separate, larger registration programme covering roughly 5,000 more people is expected to conclude later this year under Malaysia's new refugee documentation system.

Neither UNHCR nor Malaysian authorities have said whether independent monitors will have access to the group after 29 September, leaving open the question of what happens to them once they arrive in Myanmar.



The banner features a scenic view of Prague's Old Town Bridge and Charles Bridge over the Vltava River. In the foreground, there is a glass teapot, a cup of coffee with latte art, and a cup of tea. The text 'Mizzima s.r.o.' is in the top left corner. The main title 'Asian Tea & Coffee Festival Prague 2026' is prominently displayed. Below it, a green bar reads 'IMPORT FROM THAILAND & ASIA TO EUROPE'. Further down, it says 'Discover Premium Tea & Coffee | Explore Business Opportunities | Build Global Partnerships'. The date '23 OCTOBER 2026' and location 'PRAGUE, CZECH REPUBLIC' are clearly marked. On the right, a vertical box identifies 'OPERO PRAGUE' as the 'OFFICIAL VENUE PARTNER' and shows an interior view of the venue. At the bottom, five icons represent different target audiences: Burmese Diaspora, Thai & Asian Companies, Premium Products, Business Networking, and Global Connections. Contact information for phone and email is provided, along with a map of Europe highlighting Prague.

Mizzima s.r.o.

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Prague 2026

IMPORT FROM THAILAND & ASIA TO EUROPE

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The Asian Tea & Coffee Festival will be held in Prague in the Czech Republic at the Opero on 23 October 2026. The aim is to bring together those interested in connecting, trading and investing in products from the hot beverage industry in Asia.

The festival aims to bring together those interested in the Asian hot beverage industry in Europe, including Thai and Asian companies, and members of the Myanmar diaspora in Europe.

This will be a great opportunity to look into premium products from Thailand and Asia, and to look into business networking opportunities, and develop global opportunities.

Be part of a movement connecting Asia's finest with Europe's future.

Connect through Mizzima@mizzima.com (Mizzima S.R.O.) Phone: +420 608616688

An Update to Mizzima Readers

Mizzima continues independent journalism for Myanmar despite repression, censorship, security risks and financial pressure.



1. FUNDING REALITY

Donor funding is now almost none, although we continue to seek support.

2. HOW MIZZIMA IS SUSTAINING ITSELF



YouTube and digital monetization



Training and Mizzima Media Training Institute



AI and Mizzima EAE for research, content regeneration and production



Content repackaging across TV, Facebook, YouTube and digital platforms



Mizzima Weekly, Mizzima English and policy products



HH Channel and diaspora community services



Production services, events, partnerships and sponsorships



Agriculture, tea and coffee, restaurants, shops and marketplace initiatives



Thank you for standing with Mizzima.

Mizzima

Truth. Voice. Future.

- YouTube and digital monetization
- Training and Mizzima Media Training Institute
- AI Technology through Mizzima EAE for research, content regeneration and production
- Repackaging content across TV, Facebook, YouTube and digital platforms
- Mizzima Weekly, Mizzima English and policy products
- Home Away From Home - HH Channel and diaspora community services
- Production services, events, partnerships and sponsorships
- Non-media business initiatives.

AI does not replace our journalists. It helps us work faster and smarter, while human editors remain responsible for accuracy, verification, ethics and editorial judgment.

AN UPDATE TO MIZZIMA READERS AND FRIENDS

Since the 2021 coup, Mizzima has continued independent journalism under very difficult conditions — revoked licenses, office raids, frozen bank accounts, arrests, surveillance, censorship, security risks and financial pressure.

But we continue because Myanmar still needs independent, reliable and verified information.

Today, one difficult reality is that donor funding is now almost none, although we continue to seek support wherever possible.

At the same time, Mizzima is working hard to sustain itself through self-generated revenue and new initiatives, including:

Mizzima is not only trying to survive. We are adapting, modernizing and building for the future — through media, technology, community services and practical business initiatives that can support our public-interest journalism.

Thank you to our readers, viewers, partners, friends and supporters for standing with Mizzima.

Truth. Voice. Future.

#Mizzima #Myanmar #IndependentMedia
#PressFreedom #MizzimaEAE #MediaResilience
#MediaSustainability



Opportunity for Myanmar Nationals

E-Learning Course: Introduction to Security Sector Governance and Reform (SSG/R)

Objective: This introductory course provides participants with an understanding and overview of SSG/R, its key principles, actors and contexts within which SSG/R takes place.

Target Audience: All stakeholders from Myanmar.

Registration link: <https://elearning.easygenerator.com/defc3138-fff8-422e-bf8e-e397e4a0813b/>



Photo: AFP

IRAN RETALIATES AFTER US STRIKES OIL TANKERS

Iran said Sunday that its forces attacked a US naval drone trying to enter the Strait of Hormuz, hours after targeting ships in retaliation for American strikes on three oil tankers.

The latest round of clashes, which began with US raids last week, comes amid a deadlock in their six-month war.

Iran has maintained its stranglehold on the strategic Strait of Hormuz while Washington continues a counter-blockade of Iranian ports.

Washington is also seeking to choke Iran's economy, rolling out sanctions on entities with financial links to the Islamic republic in a bid to force it into submission.

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the ideological arm of Iran's military, said Sunday it "attacked an American military unmanned surface vessel" attempting to enter the strait, according to a statement carried by state television.

Hours earlier, the IRGC said its naval forces "targeted three oil tankers on the unauthorised route of the Strait of Hormuz and three vessels affiliated with the child-killing America in other areas".

It warned ships not to attempt to transit by unapproved routes.

On Saturday, US Central Command (CENTCOM), which oversees American military operations in the region, said it struck tankers linked to the Iranian Guards, accusing the most powerful arm of the Iranian military of unsuccessfully firing at American warships.

"Following Iran's failed attacks, CENTCOM permanently disabled the IRGC crude oil carriers M/T Downy off the coast of Kharg Island and M/T Stark 1 near Jask," it said.

"American forces also completely destroyed the unladen crude oil carrier M/T Kylo... in the Gulf of Oman, striking the vessel in multiple critical locations

to render it inoperable after the crew was directed to abandon ship."

Video posted by CENTCOM showed large fireballs and billowing flames after projectiles slammed into the ships.

The three vessels were "part of a multibillion-dollar shadow network that funds the IRGC and its regional proxies", it said.

'Higher economic cost'

The Guards meanwhile claimed the two American warships they targeted had been "forced to retreat" after "suffering damage", but CENTCOM said those ships successfully evaded Iranian attacks.

CENTCOM commander Admiral Brad Cooper said after the operation: "If you shoot at two of our ships, we will impose an even higher economic cost -- taking out three of yours."

The Iranian foreign ministry hit out at Washington over the strikes on oil tankers, calling them "illegal and aggressive actions".

A correspondent for Iranian state TV in Jask in the southern province of Hormozgan said one of the tankers was empty and the second was carrying oil. The crews were transported to shore on lifeboats, they said.

Another state TV correspondent on Kharg Island said the attack there caused no casualties.

Iran's Khatam-al Anbiya central military command warned that if the US continued its attacks, then Tehran's retaliation against US warships would be "more severe than before, and there is a possibility of their expansion".

The administration of US President Donald Trump has tried to downplay the significance of the six-month conflict, which has proven increasingly unpopular at home as midterm elections near.

US Vice President JD Vance went so far as to say that he "wouldn't call it a war".

Trump reiterated that view on Friday, calling the war "small potatoes" for Washington.

Iran's Security Chief Mohsen Rezaei warned this week that the Islamic republic had adopted a "new strategy" against Washington that "will shatter your foundations".

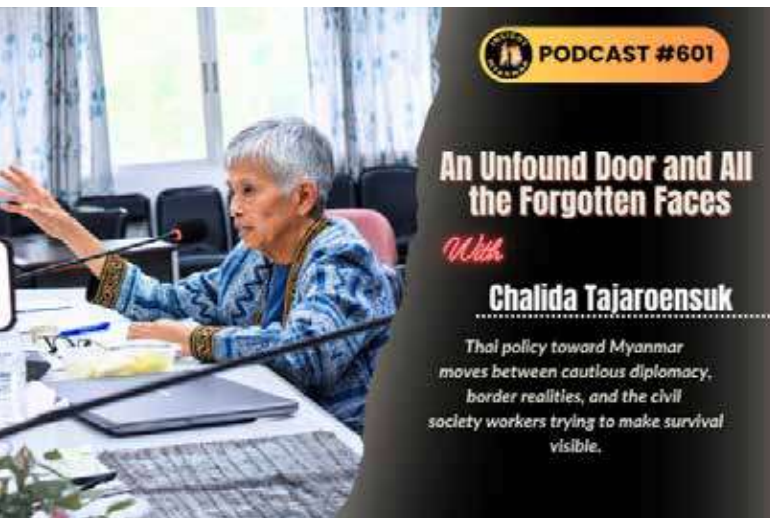
The US has been trying to step up pressure on Tehran in a bid to wrestle control of the Hormuz strait, through which one-fifth of world oil supplies previously flowed.

A fragile ceasefire between the two sides collapsed in July after attacks on commercial ships in the strategic waterway.

Trump has in recent weeks repeatedly threatened to claim sovereignty over the strait, even posting a map showing it as "new US territory".

Vance has insisted the US will not reopen talks with Iran until it ends attacks on commercial shipping in Hormuz.

AFP



AN UNFOUNDED DOOR AND ALL THE FORGOTTEN FACES

Chalida Tajaroensuk, chairperson and founder of the Thailand-based People Empowerment Foundation, argues that responses to Myanmar's post-coup crisis must be grounded in the experiences of refugees, displaced communities, migrant workers, and local civil society organizations rather than shaped primarily through elite diplomacy and state-centered policymaking. This is her second appearance on the platform. In her initial talk, Chalida reflected on a lifetime of Thai human rights work shaped by Buddhism, student struggle, and Myanmar solidarity, insisting that lasting change begins with small acts of dignity, realism, and care across borders. Her work focuses on bringing information from border communities and refugee camps into conversations with Thai authorities and regional actors because she believes policies designed without sustained contact with affected communities often fail to address how people actually live and survive along the Thai-Myanmar border.

Thai policy toward Myanmar, Chalida explains, is shaped by competing pressures that frequently pull the government in different directions. Security institutions focus on border stability and armed conflict, the military has its priorities, business interests emphasize economic relations, humanitarian organizations push for refugee protections, and politicians respond to domestic political pressures and nationalist sentiment. Different governments and foreign ministers therefore prioritize different approaches, causing policy to shift between

economic engagement, diplomatic caution, and border-security management depending on who holds power. Moreover, she argues that Thailand's policy is constrained by corruption, nationalist hostility toward refugees and migrant workers, and political interests that often outweigh humanitarian concerns.

In spite of all this, however, dialog between the two countries does continue, which Chalida supports. She says that while many critics interpret Thailand's engagement with Myanmar's post-coup regime as indirect support for its military rule, she sees it as a strategy intended to preserve channels through which humanitarian concerns and border realities can still be raised. She argues that Thai diplomats who maintain contact with Myanmar's military leaders are not necessarily endorsing the junta's actions, but attempting to navigate a political situation in which direct confrontation may accomplish little. She also believes that domestic political concerns and the weakness of ASEAN encourage regional governments to rely on cautious diplomacy rather than more decisive intervention.

And amid this complex web of factors, Chalida's own organization—People Empowerment Foundation—has created a bottom-up advocacy model centered on direct engagement with affected communities. She explains that it conducts fact-finding missions, organizes consultations with refugee communities and ethnic organizations, and gathers information directly from people living in conflict zones and camps. She says that rather than treating government authorities as permanent enemies, she believes civil society organizations must build working relationships with local officials and frontline military officers in order to influence policy implementation.

CATCH THE PODCAST

Read more and listen to the Insight Myanmar Podcast here: <https://insightmyanmar.org/complete-shows/2026/9/1/episode-601>



MYANMAR JUNTA LEADER SETS CAMBODIA STOP ON DIPLOMATIC TOUR

Myanmar junta leader Min Aung Hlaing will visit Cambodia, his office said on 8 September, the next stop on a diplomatic drive reforming his pariah status.

The former junta chief is set to meet acting head of state Hun Sen and his son Prime Minister Hun Manet on a state visit to Cambodia "in the near future", a statement from Min Aung Hlaing's office said, without providing a date.

The visit aims to promote "mutually beneficial cooperation" across "economic, cultural and various other sectors", it added.

Min Aung Hlaing ousted the elected government of Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi in a 2021 putsch, ending Myanmar's decade-long experiment with democracy and plunging the country into civil war.

Myanmar's leaders were persona non grata in many foreign capitals after the coup, but Min Aung Hlaing is making a drive for regional recognition after taking over as president in April.

He retired as military chief to take the civilian role after highly restricted elections that were blocked from rebel-held areas, excluded Suu Kyi's party and punished dissent with prison time.

While democracy watchdogs described the vote as a charade, countries including China, India, Thailand, Vietnam and Laos have all welcomed Min Aung Hlaing on recent trips since he took over the office.

AFP



NEW RULE BLOCKS NEW SEAFARERS FROM PERSONAL TRAVEL

Myanmar's seafarers are flooding social media with complaints over a new travel restriction. From 15 September, holders of the Passport for Seaman (PS) can no longer travel abroad for personal visits, they must first convert to a tourist passport (PV), the Department of Marine Administration (DMA) says.

The rule applies specifically to new male seafarers and to female seafarers; men who have already sailed and hold prior departure clearance are exempt, DMA says. The department cites unlicensed brokers who place seafarers illegally onto unauthorised fishing vessels or ships carrying banned cargo, leaving workers without proper contracts, unpaid wages, or facing arrest abroad.

The notice comes more than five years after Myanmar's 2021 military coup, as the country's

seafaring workforce has grown as a route to work and travel overseas.

On social media, one Facebook user argues the real target is young men of military-service age, calling it an extension of restrictions already placed on visitor (PV) and job (PJ) passports. Other commenters note that the "new seafarer" rule appears aimed at people using PS status to leave the country without returning, rather than genuine sailors.

Embassies abroad say passport renewals for seafarers now require approval from Naypyidaw. The restriction follows a wider pattern since the junta reactivated compulsory conscription in February 2024, tightening travel and passport rules for men and women of draft age.

mizzima WEEKLY

Analysis & Insight



DIGITAL MAGAZINE

Our relaunched magazine Mizzima Weekly provides readers with a more focused read on what matters in Myanmar and the wider region, with an emphasis on analysis, insight and providing key talking points.