

CLAWS Newsletter



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INTERNAL AFFAIRS

June 30 [\(The Irrawaddy\)](#) Myanmar Junta Strengthens Digital Surveillance and Online Monitoring

Myanmar's military regime has established a new committee to monitor online activity around the clock, reinforcing its efforts to curb criticism of military rule. Led by Deputy Home Affairs Minister Major General Min Thu, the committee will oversee digital surveillance, targeting what the junta describes as "fake news," misinformation, and anti-government content.

The move reflects a broader expansion of digital repression since the 2021 coup. According to the regime, more than 21,000 individuals have faced action over online activities since 2024, with many prosecuted under counter-terrorism and sedition laws. Rights groups warn that the initiative, alongside growing cooperation with China on surveillance technology, further restricts freedom of expression and digital rights in Myanmar.

July 1 [\(The Irrawaddy\)](#) Myanmar Conflict Death Toll Surpasses 100,000 Since 2021 Coup

Conflict-related fatalities in Myanmar have exceeded 100,000 since the military coup in February 2021, according to data from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED). The prolonged civil war has evolved into one of Asia's deadliest ongoing conflicts, involving the military, ethnic armed organizations, and pro-democracy resistance groups, while displacing more than 3.7 million people and deepening the country's humanitarian crisis.

The conflict has become increasingly fragmented, with over 1,200 armed groups reportedly active across the country. Continued military airstrikes, compulsory conscription, and widespread insecurity have intensified civilian suffering, while the violence has also contributed to large-scale refugee movements, expanding transnational crime, and worsening regional instability.

July 6 (The Irrawaddy) Arakan Army Advances Administrative Reforms in Rakhine State

The Arakan Army (AA) is preparing to rename several towns in Rakhine State, including Pauktaw and Minbya, as part of a broader effort to reinforce Rakhine historical identity and consolidate its parallel administration. The proposed changes draw on names associated with the ancient Arakan kingdoms and coincide with wider governance initiatives, including reforms in education and local administration.

The AA, which currently controls 14 of Rakhine State's 17 townships, has also reorganised its administered territories into new districts and is developing a Rakhine-language curriculum for schools. The measures reflect the group's efforts to institutionalise its authority while continuing military operations to capture the remaining junta-held townships in the state.

July 10 (The Irrawaddy) Myanmar Parliament Formally Rejects ASEAN's Five-Point Consensus

Myanmar's military-backed parliament has officially rejected ASEAN's Five-Point Consensus (5PC), the regional bloc's peace framework adopted in 2021 to address Myanmar's political crisis. Lawmakers aligned with the junta argued that the plan no longer reflects Myanmar's political realities and infringes on the country's sovereignty, reinforcing the regime's longstanding opposition to the initiative.

The decision further widens the divide between Myanmar and ASEAN, whose leaders have continued to exclude junta chief Min Aung Hlaing from high-level summits over the regime's failure to implement the peace plan. Despite signs of limited bilateral engagement between some ASEAN members and the junta, the parliamentary resolution is likely to complicate Myanmar's efforts to restore its standing within the regional organisation.

July 10 (Mizzima) Myanmar's Pro-Democracy Resistance Faces Growing Challenges

Five years after Myanmar's 2021 military coup, the pro-democracy resistance movement is facing mounting military and political setbacks. While the People's Defence Forces (PDFs) initially achieved significant battlefield gains with the support of ethnic armed organisations,

recent China-brokered ceasefires involving key ethnic groups have weakened the resistance and enabled the military to regain strategic territory and key trade routes.

The changing battlefield has been accompanied by shifting regional diplomacy, with China and some neighbouring countries increasing engagement with the junta's new civilian administration. Analysts suggest that the resistance's diminishing territorial control and reduced international visibility have strengthened the regime's position, even as armed conflict and political instability continue across Myanmar.

July 16 ([UN News](#)) Hundreds Feared Dead After Rohingya Boats Capsize Off Myanmar Coast

More than 500 people are feared dead after two boats carrying Rohingya refugees reportedly capsized off Myanmar's coast in early July. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the vessels departed from Myanmar's Rakhine State during hazardous sea conditions, with many passengers seeking to escape conflict, persecution, and deteriorating humanitarian conditions.

The incident highlights the growing risks faced by Rohingya refugees amid Myanmar's ongoing conflict and worsening conditions in refugee camps in Bangladesh. UN agencies warn that continued violence, limited humanitarian assistance, and funding shortfalls are driving increasing numbers of Rohingya to undertake dangerous maritime journeys in search of safety.

July 22 ([Eleven News](#)) Myanmar Regime Holds Peace Talks With NCA Signatory EAOs

Myanmar's National Solidarity and Peacemaking Negotiation Committee (NSPNC) held a two-day meeting in Nay Pyi Taw on 20–21 July with representatives of seven Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) signatory ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) to review the peace process.

The discussions focused on expanding dialogue with both current and former NCA signatories, confidence-building measures, development in conflict-affected areas, possible amendments to the 2008 Constitution, and improving mechanisms for future peace negotiations. Representatives from the participating EAOs expressed support for broader and more inclusive dialogue aimed at advancing the peace process.

July 23 ([AsiaNews](#)) TNLA Becomes First Major Ethnic Armed Group to Join Junta Peace Talks

The Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) has become the first major ethnic armed organization to formally participate in peace talks with Myanmar's military regime since the 2021 coup. On 19 July, a TNLA delegation led by Vice President Tar Jote Jar met the regime's National Solidarity and Peace Negotiating Committee (NSPNC) in Naypyitaw, reaffirming commitment to a China-brokered ceasefire and the regime's peace initiative.

During the talks, the TNLA reportedly sought recognition of an autonomous Ta'ang State within the Union of Myanmar. The regime responded that only Parliament has the authority to grant statehood, noting that the existing Palaung Self-Administered Zone already provides limited autonomy. Analysts suggest the TNLA's engagement reflects growing Chinese pressure, recent battlefield setbacks, and efforts to consolidate control over resource-rich territories, particularly heavy rare earth mining areas in northern Shan State. The development highlights increasing fragmentation within Myanmar's resistance movement, as some ethnic armed groups pursue separate negotiations while broader nationwide political reconciliation remains elusive.

July 24 ([Eleven Myanmar](#)) Myanmar Authorities Seize 1.56 Million Stimulant Tablets in Major Anti-Drug Operation

Myanmar authorities have seized approximately 1.56 million stimulant tablets valued at nearly K2.94 billion during coordinated anti-narcotics operations in Kale and Mandalay. The operation resulted in the arrest of several suspects, with further raids leading to the recovery of additional drugs and the identification of an alleged trafficking network operating between Mandalay and Kale.

Investigations are ongoing to apprehend remaining suspects and dismantle the broader trafficking network. Authorities have also initiated proceedings under Myanmar's Anti-Money Laundering Law to confiscate assets linked to the drug trade, underscoring continued efforts to combat narcotics trafficking in the country.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

July 1 ([The Irrawaddy](#)) Myanmar Migration to Thailand Continues to Rise Amid Conflict and Conscription

A recent International Organization for Migration (IOM) report estimates that nearly 687,000 Myanmar nationals entered Thailand between January and April 2026, driven by armed conflict, compulsory military conscription, and deteriorating economic conditions. Many migrants crossed through key border points in Tak, Ranong, Kanchanaburi, and Chiang Rai, with a significant proportion lacking official documentation.

Thailand remains the primary destination for Myanmar migrants and refugees, hosting an estimated 4.6 million Myanmar nationals. The report highlights that the junta's conscription policy and continued instability have accelerated migration, while Myanmar's growing diaspora in Thailand has also emerged as a significant economic force, contributing substantial purchasing power to the Thai economy.

July 2 ([The Irrawaddy](#)) Myanmar Junta Criticises UN Envoy Over Human Rights Remarks

Myanmar's military regime has launched a public campaign against UN Special Envoy Julie Bishop following her criticism of deteriorating conditions in Myanmar after the junta's recent elections. State-controlled media accused the envoy of bias and questioned her credibility, while rejecting her allegations regarding human rights abuses, displacement, food insecurity, and military airstrikes.

The attacks reflect the junta's continued efforts to counter international criticism and gain diplomatic legitimacy. Although the regime has strengthened ties with key partners such as China, it remains without formal recognition from the United Nations or ASEAN, underscoring its ongoing struggle for international acceptance.

July 6 ([The Irrawaddy](#)) Myanmar Junta Deepens Strategic Alignment with China

Myanmar's military regime has signed memoranda of understanding on all four of China's Global Initiatives during junta leader Min Aung Hlaing's visit to Beijing, underscoring a significant expansion of bilateral strategic cooperation. The agreements cover security,

development, governance, and civilisation initiatives, reflecting the junta's increasing reliance on China for political, economic, and diplomatic support.

The partnership is expected to strengthen cooperation on securing Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects and critical infrastructure, including energy pipelines and transport corridors. Analysts view the move as further institutionalising China's influence in Myanmar while providing the junta with greater international backing amid continuing conflict and diplomatic isolation.

July 10 (Mizzima) Myanmar Junta Reaffirms Security Cooperation With India

At the 23rd India–Myanmar National Level Meeting held in New Delhi on 7–8 July, Myanmar's junta assured India that its territory would not be used for activities threatening India's security. Both sides agreed to strengthen border security, intelligence sharing, and operational coordination, while reaffirming their commitment to maintaining peace and stability along the India–Myanmar border.

The two countries also discussed accelerating key connectivity projects, including the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project and the India–Myanmar–Thailand Trilateral Highway, during the first high-level security meeting following Min Aung Hlaing's recent visit to India.

July 12 (Mizzima) Rare Earth Mining in Myanmar Fuels Mekong Pollution Concerns

Rapid expansion of rare earth mining in Myanmar's Kachin and Shan States has been linked to rising arsenic contamination in the Mekong River, with toxic metals detected in the river's mainstream for the first time. The mining boom, which accelerated after the 2021 coup, has made Myanmar China's largest supplier of heavy rare earths, raising concerns over the environmental impact of largely unregulated extraction.

The pollution threatens fisheries, agriculture, and livelihoods across the Mekong region, highlighting the growing link between critical mineral supply chains, conflict economies, and transboundary environmental security.

July 16 ([The Irrawaddy](#)) ASEAN's Engagement with Myanmar Junta Faces Widespread Criticism

An informal meeting between ASEAN foreign ministers and Myanmar's regime-appointed foreign minister in Bangkok has drawn strong criticism from Myanmar's opposition groups, human rights organizations, and regional observers. While ASEAN reiterated the importance of implementing its Five-Point Consensus (5PC), the junta rejected the peace framework, arguing that it no longer reflects Myanmar's political realities.

Critics contend that the meeting risks legitimizing the military regime despite its continued military operations and refusal to implement the 5PC. Opposition groups and rights advocates have urged ASEAN to ensure that any engagement with the junta is tied to concrete progress on ending violence, advancing dialogue, and upholding accountability rather than conferring greater diplomatic legitimacy.

July 21 ([The Irrawaddy](#)) Myanmar–Laos Labour Cooperation Overshadowed by Migrant Exploitation

Myanmar and Laos have reaffirmed cooperation on migrant labour issues following high-level bilateral talks, including discussions on worker documentation and labour protections. However, Myanmar migrant workers in Laos report that exploitative working conditions, limited legal protections, and inadequate embassy support continue despite official commitments.

The number of Myanmar workers in Laos has risen sharply since the 2021 coup, driven by conflict, economic decline, and compulsory military conscription. Many migrants remain employed in low-wage sectors under difficult conditions, highlighting the widening economic crisis in Myanmar and the growing dependence of its citizens on overseas employment.

ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENTS

June 25 ([The Irrawaddy](#)) Myanmar Junta Steps Up Security Around Russian-Backed Dawei Project

Myanmar's military has pledged to intensify operations against resistance groups operating along strategic transport routes connected to the Russian-backed Dawei deep-sea port and industrial project in Tanintharyi Region. Deputy Commander-in-Chief Kyaw Swar Lin directed military officers to secure the project corridor, signaling preparations for expanded counterinsurgency operations in southern Myanmar.

The announcement follows the signing of a Myanmar–Russia agreement to develop a power plant for the Dawei Special Economic Zone, reflecting deepening bilateral cooperation since the 2021 coup. Despite ongoing armed conflict, civilian displacement, and uncertainty over the project's financial viability, the junta continues to prioritise the Dawei initiative as part of its broader strategic and economic partnership with Russia.

July 1 ([The Irrawaddy](#)) Myanmar Junta Revives Myitsone Dam Amid Deepening China Ties

Myanmar's military regime has renewed efforts to revive the China-backed Myitsone Dam in Kachin State, presenting the long-suspended hydropower project as a solution to the country's worsening electricity shortages. The initiative gained momentum following junta leader Min Aung Hlaing's visit to Beijing, reflecting the regime's growing dependence on China for political and economic support.

Despite official claims that the project will boost national electrification, the proposal continues to face strong opposition from local communities, civil society groups, and the Kachin Independence Army due to concerns over environmental damage, displacement, and limited domestic benefits. Critics also argue that the project is unlikely to address Myanmar's immediate power crisis and instead underscores Beijing's expanding strategic influence over the junta.

July 13 ([The Irrawaddy](#)) Junta's Regional Connectivity Plans Face Persistent Security Challenges

Myanmar's military leader Min Aung Hlaing has pledged to complete the India–Myanmar–Thailand Trilateral Highway, the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project, and advance the China–Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC) during his presidential term. The announcement reflects the regime's continued emphasis on regional connectivity and strategic infrastructure despite ongoing armed conflict.

However, resistance groups dispute the junta's claims of securing key transport routes, noting that fighting continues across sections of Sagaing, Karen, Rakhine, and northern Shan states. Continued resistance control over critical areas along these corridors presents significant obstacles to the implementation of major India- and China-backed infrastructure projects.

July 23 ([Reuters](#)) India, Myanmar Step Up Cooperation on Rare Earth Minerals

India and Myanmar are expanding cooperation in the rare earths sector as New Delhi seeks to diversify supplies of critical minerals amid China's dominance in the global market. Speaking at a mining forum in Mandalay on 23 July, Indian Ambassador Abhay Thakur said bilateral cooperation in mining has gained significant momentum over the past two years, with Indian delegations on rare earths and critical minerals visiting Myanmar in December 2024 and February 2026.

Thakur noted that the issue also received high-level attention during Myanmar President Min Aung Hlaing's visit to India earlier this year. He described cooperation in sustainable mining as offering "win-win" opportunities for both countries. The forum was attended by several Indian companies, including IREL, NTPC Mining, Himadri Specialty, Oceanic Sands, PrNd Metal & Magnets, and Jai Puri Holdings. The initiative comes as India seeks to secure access to Myanmar's significant heavy rare earth reserves, a major global source currently linked to China's processing industry.

DEFENCE UPDATES

July 18 ([Mizzima](#)) Russia Conducts First Joint Special Forces Exercise With Myanmar Junta

Russian and Myanmar special forces conducted a joint military exercise, "Tropical Storm," in Naypyitaw from 6–17 July, marking the first land-based special forces training between the two countries since Myanmar's 2021 military coup. According to Russia's Defence Ministry, the exercise included motorcade protection, counterterrorism operations, drone warfare, helicopter rappelling, urban combat, and the use of robotic ground systems, with Russian instructors providing specialized training.

The drills follow a five-year military cooperation agreement signed in February 2026 and underscore deepening defence ties between Moscow and Naypyitaw. The exercise comes amid continued Russian military support to the junta, including fighter jets, drones, and munitions, while the regime simultaneously pursues greater regional diplomatic engagement through renewed contacts with ASEAN.

CONFLICT UPDATES

June 25 ([The Irrawaddy](#)) Arakan Army Expands Offensive into Ayeyarwady as Fighting Escalates

The Arakan Army (AA), supported by allied resistance groups, has intensified its offensive beyond Rakhine State into Ayeyarwady Region, triggering heavy clashes in Yegyí and Thabaung townships. In response, Myanmar's military has reinforced frontline positions with additional troops, artillery, and naval deployments along the Patheingyi River to secure supply routes.

The AA has reportedly captured several military outposts, including a strategic hilltop position at Warhtawkin, forcing regime forces to retreat and consolidate their defences. The armed group now controls most of Rakhine State and continues to expand operations into Ayeyarwady, Magway, and Bago regions alongside local People's Defence Forces (PDFs), while

the junta has increasingly relied on aerial bombardments, resulting in further civilian displacement and casualties.

July 8 ([The Irrawaddy](#)) Civilian Death Toll in Karenni State Nears 900 Since 2021 Coup

According to the Progressive Karenni People Force (PKPF), at least 878 civilians have been killed in Karenni (Kayah) State and adjoining Pekon Township since Myanmar's 2021 military coup. The report also records more than 1,600 armed clashes and over 2,100 airstrikes, resulting in extensive destruction of homes, schools, religious sites, and healthcare facilities, with Loikaw and Demoso among the worst-affected areas.

The conflict has displaced an estimated 250,000 people, severely disrupted agriculture, and intensified humanitarian needs across the region. Despite periods of territorial gains by Karenni resistance forces, sustained military counter-offensives have prolonged instability and contributed to one of Myanmar's most severe humanitarian crises.

BORDER UPDATES

June 26 ([The Irrawaddy](#)) Junta Intensifies Operations Along India–Myanmar Trade Corridor

Myanmar's military has expanded security operations along key transport routes in Sagaing Region as it seeks to regain control of the India–Myanmar–Thailand Trilateral Highway and revive cross-border trade with India. The offensive coincided with Indian Ambassador Abhay Thakur's visit to Naypyitaw, where discussions with senior junta officials focused on trade, investment, banking cooperation, and connectivity projects, including the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project.

The military's campaign has reportedly displaced over 30,000 civilians and involved the destruction of villages in resistance-held areas. While the junta claims progress in securing sections of the Kalewa–Monywa corridor, resistance groups continue to contest control of the route. The developments underscore the strategic importance of transport connectivity to both Myanmar's military leadership and India, despite the ongoing conflict and humanitarian crisis.

June 26 ([The Irrawaddy](#)) Concerns Rise Over Chinese Border Expansion Near Muse

Residents in Muse, northern Shan State, report that Chinese border markers and fencing have advanced further into Myanmar territory, with new markers now reaching the outskirts of the town near Mingalar Muse Market. Local accounts suggest that the gradual expansion has moved beyond previously reported positions, raising concerns over continued encroachment along the China–Myanmar border.

The reported expansion comes amid increased Chinese border infrastructure development in areas controlled by the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) and the United Wa State Army (UWSA). Despite longstanding bilateral border agreements and allegations that farmland and local infrastructure have been affected, neither the Myanmar military nor the ethnic armed groups have publicly challenged the developments, highlighting Beijing's growing influence in Myanmar's border regions.

July 7 ([The Irrawaddy](#)) Myanmar Border Fighting Spills into Thailand Amid Karen Offensive

Intense fighting between Myanmar's military and Karen resistance forces has escalated along the Thailand–Myanmar border, with artillery shells and explosive drones crossing into Thailand's Mae Sot District. The clashes, centred around Min Let Pan village in Myawaddy Township, have prompted Thai authorities to tighten border security, close informal crossing points, and issue safety warnings to residents.

The junta's offensive, supported by allied Karen militias, aims to regain resistance-held territory but has encountered strong opposition from the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and its allies. The continued fighting has resulted in civilian casualties, displacement, and growing humanitarian concerns, while also creating cross-border security challenges for Thailand.

July 10 ([The Irrawaddy](#)) Resistance Disputes Junta's Claim of Securing India–Myanmar Trade Corridor

Myanmar's military regime has announced that it has regained control of the strategic Monywa–Kalewa section of the India–Myanmar–Thailand Trilateral Highway, paving the way for the resumption of border trade with India. However, resistance groups and the National Unity Government (NUG) reject the claim, asserting that they continue to control key areas along the route and that the military has only established temporary positions.

The highway remains strategically important for both military logistics and regional connectivity with India and ASEAN. While the junta views securing the corridor as critical to restoring trade and strengthening regional ties, continued fighting in Sagaing Region suggests that full control of the route remains contested, delaying the complete restoration of cross-border transport and commerce.

July 14 ([Mizzima](#)) Mizoram Seizes Drugs Worth US\$43.5 Million in Six Months

Indian authorities in Mizoram seized narcotics and psychotropic substances worth approximately ₹414.66 crore (US\$43.5 million) between January and June 2026, registering 219 cases and arresting 312 individuals, including Myanmar nationals. The seizures primarily comprised 315 kg of methamphetamine valued at over ₹252 crore and 34 kg of heroin worth nearly ₹70 crore, along with crystal meth, morphine, raw opium, cannabis, codeine, and alprazolam tablets. A total of 55 foreign nationals were implicated in the cases.

Mizoram Police described the seizures as evidence of the growing scale of cross-border drug trafficking and called for stronger cooperation among law enforcement agencies, civil society, and the public. Assam authorities also highlighted continued smuggling of heroin and methamphetamine from Myanmar through the Mizoram and Manipur borders, with traffickers increasingly using women and children to conceal

July 15 ([Mizzima](#)) India-Myanmar Pangsau Border Trade Gate to Reopen After Five Years

The Pangsau–Nampong border trade gate between Arunachal Pradesh, India, and Myanmar's Sagaing Region is set to reopen on 20 July, more than five years after its closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The reopening is expected to revive cross-border trade, improve access

to medicines and essential goods, support exports of agricultural products and handicrafts, and boost livelihoods and tourism in the border region.

Trade will operate on the 10th, 20th, and 30th of each month under the Free Movement Regime (FMR) for residents living within 10 km of the border. However, concerns remain over tightening border controls linked to India's planned suspension of the FMR and border fencing project, as well as ongoing security challenges stemming from insurgent activity and the risk of increased smuggling along the India–Myanmar frontier.



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