

CLAWS Newsletter



Myanmar Snippets | Volume I | Issue No. 006

by Dhanapriya Devi Chungkham

INTERNAL AFFAIRS

19 October (Reuters): Authorities Release Rare Images of Aung San Suu Kyi

The significance extends beyond Suu Kyi's personal circumstances. Her treatment remains closely watched by foreign governments and international organisations as an indicator of whether Naypyidaw is prepared to make even limited political concessions. Carefully managed access can generate diplomatic optics without altering the wider structure of political detention or opening a substantive dialogue with the democratic opposition. Myanmar's military-backed authorities released rare photographs of detained former leader Aung San Suu Kyi after officials delivered books and correspondence from Britain's King Charles III. The images offered an unusual public glimpse of Suu Kyi, who has remained largely isolated since the 2021 coup.

20 October (Al Jazeera): Myanmar's Detained Ex-Leader Suu Kyi Receives Package from King Charles III

The significance extends beyond Suu Kyi's personal circumstances. Her treatment remains closely watched by foreign governments and international organisations as an indicator of whether Naypyidaw is prepared to make even limited political concessions. Carefully managed access can generate diplomatic optics without altering the wider structure of political detention or opening a substantive dialogue with the democratic opposition. Officials delivered two books and sealed diplomatic correspondence from King Charles III to Aung San Suu Kyi. The authorities also released photographs of the meeting and described her as a "special female prisoner".

22 October (Reuters): Aung San Suu Kyi Speaks to Son for First Time in More than Five Years

The significance extends beyond Suu Kyi's personal circumstances. Her treatment remains closely watched by foreign governments and international organisations as an indicator of whether Naypyidaw is prepared to make even limited political concessions. Carefully managed access can generate diplomatic optics without altering the wider structure of political detention or opening a substantive dialogue with the democratic opposition. Kim Aris said he spoke directly with his mother through Myanmar's embassy in London, their first conversation in

more than five years. He called for regular private family contact, independent medical access and the release of political prisoners.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

2 October (Reuters): Myanmar Ships Carrying Returnees from Malaysia Enter Home Waters

The development also exposes a widening gap between ASEAN's original punitive response to the 2021 coup and the more pragmatic approach now emerging among several regional governments. Migration pressures, transnational crime, border security and commercial interests are pushing states toward direct engagement. Whether this creates leverage over Naypyidaw or simply normalises the military-backed order without political concessions will be an important regional question. Nearly 1,500 Myanmar nationals returned from Malaysia aboard Myanmar naval vessels and entered Myanmar's territorial waters. The return proceeded despite warnings from the United Nations and rights groups about the dangers facing returnees in a country still affected by widespread armed conflict.

5 October (Al Jazeera): Nearly 1,500 Migrants Arrive in Myanmar from Malaysia despite UN Warnings

The development also exposes a widening gap between ASEAN's original punitive response to the 2021 coup and the more pragmatic approach now emerging among several regional governments. Migration pressures, transnational crime, border security and commercial interests are pushing states toward direct engagement. Whether this creates leverage over Naypyidaw or simply normalises the military-backed order without political concessions will be an important regional question. Al Jazeera reported that 1,479 Myanmar refugees and migrants deported from Malaysia arrived in Yangon under a repatriation scheme criticised by rights groups and the UN refugee agency. UNHCR said it had not been able to verify whether decisions to return were genuinely free and informed.

6 October (Al Jazeera): Malaysia's Anwar to Host Myanmar Leader as Repatriations Near 10,000

The development also exposes a widening gap between ASEAN's original punitive response to the 2021 coup and the more pragmatic approach now emerging among several regional

governments. Migration pressures, transnational crime, border security and commercial interests are pushing states toward direct engagement. Whether this creates leverage over Naypyidaw or simply normalises the military-backed order without political concessions will be an important regional question. Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim said around 10,000 people had been returned to Myanmar since January and announced that Min Aung Hlaing would visit Kuala Lumpur. Malaysia said Myanmar had given assurances regarding the treatment of returnees.

7 October (Al Jazeera): Min Aung Hlaing Visits Malaysia amid Concerns over Repatriations

The development also exposes a widening gap between ASEAN's original punitive response to the 2021 coup and the more pragmatic approach now emerging among several regional governments. Migration pressures, transnational crime, border security and commercial interests are pushing states toward direct engagement. Whether this creates leverage over Naypyidaw or simply normalises the military-backed order without political concessions will be an important regional question. Min Aung Hlaing arrived in Malaysia for a two-day visit focused partly on the return of Myanmar nationals. The visit was his first to Malaysia since the 2021 coup and came amid criticism from the UN and rights organisations over repatriations.

8 October (Al Jazeera): (Malaysia Says It Will Work toward Myanmar's ASEAN Reintegration

The development also exposes a widening gap between ASEAN's original punitive response to the 2021 coup and the more pragmatic approach now emerging among several regional governments. Migration pressures, transnational crime, border security and commercial interests are pushing states toward direct engagement. Whether this creates leverage over Naypyidaw or simply normalises the military-backed order without political concessions will be an important regional question. Anwar Ibrahim said Malaysia would do what it could to support Myanmar's reintegration into ASEAN following talks with Min Aung Hlaing. Senior Myanmar officials have been excluded from high-level ASEAN meetings since the military failed to implement the bloc's Five-Point Consensus.

10 October (Al Jazeera): US Lifts Sanctions on Daughter of Military-Linked Myanmar Businessman

This forms part of a wider shift from near-total Western isolation toward selective, interest-based engagement. Cyber-scam compounds, detained citizens and critical-mineral supply

chains create incentives for direct contact even while sanctions and human-rights disputes remain unresolved. For India, renewed US involvement could intersect with competition over rare earths, China's entrenched influence and the strategic geography of the India–Myanmar frontier. The United States removed sanctions on the daughter of a Myanmar businessman linked to the military. The delisting came as Washington was beginning renewed direct contacts with Myanmar's military-backed authorities.

13 October (Al Jazeera): China Sentences Three to Death for Running Myanmar Scam Centres

China's role is especially important because Beijing combines economic leverage, border-security interests and relationships with both the central authorities and ethnic armed organisations. Myanmar's resources and transport corridors are therefore embedded in a wider strategic relationship rather than being purely commercial assets. Any diversification toward the United States, Russia, Japan or other partners will be judged partly by how it affects this asymmetric dependence on China. A Chinese court sentenced three members of a criminal network to death for operating scam centres in Myanmar. Other defendants received life terms or lengthy prison sentences for crimes including telecommunications fraud, trafficking, illegal gambling and murder.

4 October (DVB): Naypyidaw Launches ASEAN Affairs Committee to Restore Myanmar's Standing

The development also exposes a widening gap between ASEAN's original punitive response to the 2021 coup and the more pragmatic approach now emerging among several regional governments. Migration pressures, transnational crime, border security and commercial interests are pushing states toward direct engagement. Whether this creates leverage over Naypyidaw or simply normalises the military-backed order without political concessions will be an important regional question. The military-backed administration held the first meeting of a newly created ASEAN Affairs Committee chaired by Foreign Minister Tin Maung Swe. The committee said it would work to restore Myanmar's role and rights within ASEAN.

16 October (Reuters): US Holds More Secret Talks with Myanmar's Military-Backed Rulers in Tokyo

This forms part of a wider shift from near-total Western isolation toward selective, interest-based engagement. Cyber-scam compounds, detained citizens and critical-mineral supply chains create incentives for direct contact even while sanctions and human-rights disputes

remain unresolved. For India, renewed US involvement could intersect with competition over rare earths, China's entrenched influence and the strategic geography of the India–Myanmar frontier. US and Myanmar officials held a second round of talks within a month, this time in Tokyo. Reuters reported that US priorities included the release of an American businessman, action against scam centres and interest in Myanmar's heavy rare-earth resources.

16 October (Al Jazeera): Min Aung Hlaing Wins Back Regional Engagement despite Continuing War

Taken together with other October developments, the story illustrates the increasingly fragmented nature of Myanmar's political economy and security environment. Territorial control, diplomacy, trade, resource access and armed conflict are closely interconnected. Neighbouring states therefore have to address humanitarian risks, border stability, connectivity projects and strategic competition at the same time. Al Jazeera examined Min Aung Hlaing's expanding diplomatic engagement with ASEAN states and other regional powers. Since becoming president, he has travelled to several neighbouring countries while Myanmar's armed conflict and air campaign have continued.

18 October (Al Jazeera): Why the US Is Holding Secret Talks with Myanmar's Military Ruler

This forms part of a wider shift from near-total Western isolation toward selective, interest-based engagement. Cyber-scam compounds, detained citizens and critical-mineral supply chains create incentives for direct contact even while sanctions and human-rights disputes remain unresolved. For India, renewed US involvement could intersect with competition over rare earths, China's entrenched influence and the strategic geography of the India–Myanmar frontier. Al Jazeera highlighted rare earths, a detained American businessman and the fight against cyber-scam networks as key factors behind renewed US engagement with Myanmar's military-backed authorities.

21 October (Reuters): Japanese Envoy Yohei Sasakawa Meets Min Aung Hlaing

Taken together with other October developments, the story illustrates the increasingly fragmented nature of Myanmar's political economy and security environment. Territorial control, diplomacy, trade, resource access and armed conflict are closely interconnected. Neighbouring states therefore have to address humanitarian risks, border stability, connectivity projects and strategic competition at the same time. Japanese philanthropist and Myanmar

envoy Yohei Sasakawa met Min Aung Hlaing in Naypyidaw as international engagement with Myanmar increased after years of isolation.

22 October (The Irrawaddy): China Moves to Cement Myanmar Influence after US Talks with Regime

This forms part of a wider shift from near-total Western isolation toward selective, interest-based engagement. Cyber-scam compounds, detained citizens and critical-mineral supply chains create incentives for direct contact even while sanctions and human-rights disputes remain unresolved. For India, renewed US involvement could intersect with competition over rare earths, China's entrenched influence and the strategic geography of the India–Myanmar frontier. The Irrawaddy reported on Beijing's efforts to reinforce its influence in Myanmar following renewed US engagement with the military-backed administration.

ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE UPDATES

2 October (The Irrawaddy): Chinese-Backed Solar Power and Northern Shan Border Trade

China's role is especially important because Beijing combines economic leverage, border-security interests and relationships with both the central authorities and ethnic armed organisations. Myanmar's resources and transport corridors are therefore embedded in a wider strategic relationship rather than being purely commercial assets. Any diversification toward the United States, Russia, Japan or other partners will be judged partly by how it affects this asymmetric dependence on China. The Irrawaddy's China Briefing examined Chinese-backed energy activity and changing patterns of trade along the northern Shan border, where conflict and shifting territorial control continue to affect formal commerce.

9 October (The Irrawaddy): China Becomes Myanmar's Largest Foreign Investor and Trading Partner

China's role is especially important because Beijing combines economic leverage, border-security interests and relationships with both the central authorities and ethnic armed organisations. Myanmar's resources and transport corridors are therefore embedded in a wider strategic relationship rather than being purely commercial assets. Any diversification toward

the United States, Russia, Japan or other partners will be judged partly by how it affects this asymmetric dependence on China.

15 October (DVB): Thanlyin Oil Refinery Reopens to Reduce Fuel Imports and Support Jet-Fuel Supply

This connects Myanmar's economic constraints directly with its war-fighting capacity. Fuel availability, foreign exchange and access to technology determine not only civilian economic activity but also the military's ability to sustain aviation and logistics. The growing role of Chinese and Russian partners illustrates how Naypyidaw is trying to reduce the effect of Western sanctions through alternative energy, supply and technology relationships. The military-backed administration reopened the first phase of the Thanlyin Oil Refinery near Yangon. DVB reported that the facility is intended to reduce foreign-currency expenditure and dependence on imported fuel, including aviation fuel.

16 October (The Irrawaddy): Chinese-Backed Jet-Fuel Refinery Could Help Bypass Sanctions

This forms part of a wider shift from near-total Western isolation toward selective, interest-based engagement. Cyber-scam compounds, detained citizens and critical-mineral supply chains create incentives for direct contact even while sanctions and human-rights disputes remain unresolved. For India, renewed US involvement could intersect with competition over rare earths, China's entrenched influence and the strategic geography of the India–Myanmar frontier. The Irrawaddy reported that Chinese-linked firms were involved in rebuilding the Thanlyin refinery, which could produce significant quantities of jet fuel. The same briefing also documented China's dominant role in Myanmar timber imports.

22 October (The Irrawaddy): Gas Deal with Russia Raises Questions over Energy and Surveillance

This connects Myanmar's economic constraints directly with its war-fighting capacity. Fuel availability, foreign exchange and access to technology determine not only civilian economic activity but also the military's ability to sustain aviation and logistics. The growing role of Chinese and Russian partners illustrates how Naypyidaw is trying to reduce the effect of Western sanctions through alternative energy, supply and technology relationships.

The Irrawaddy analysed Myanmar's expanding energy relationship with Russia and questioned the strategic and security implications of deals involving a country that is itself rich in natural gas.

CONFLICT UPDATES

4 October (Narinjara): At Least Six Displaced Persons Killed in Airstrike on Ponnagyun IDP Camp

The strategic consequences extend beyond the immediate battlefield. Rakhine is linked to the Bay of Bengal, the Bangladesh frontier, China's Kyaukphyu projects and India's Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project. Continued fighting affects displacement, maritime access, regional connectivity and the calculations of both India and Bangladesh. The military's reliance on air power also reflects the difficulty it faces in reversing territorial losses through ground operations alone. Narinjara reported that a military airstrike struck the Byala IDP camp in Ponnagyun Township, killing at least six displaced civilians and injuring others. The Arakan Army said two jets carried out bombing raids on the camp.

5 October (Reuters): Military Airstrikes on Rakhine Displacement Camps Kill Eight

The strategic consequences extend beyond the immediate battlefield. Rakhine is linked to the Bay of Bengal, the Bangladesh frontier, China's Kyaukphyu projects and India's Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project. Continued fighting affects displacement, maritime access, regional connectivity and the calculations of both India and Bangladesh. The military's reliance on air power also reflects the difficulty it faces in reversing territorial losses through ground operations alone. Reuters reported that airstrikes on camps for internally displaced people in Rakhine State killed eight people over two days, according to the Arakan Army and a local youth association.

5 October (Narinjara): Arakan Army Reports Eight Civilians Killed in Two Days of Airstrikes

The strategic consequences extend beyond the immediate battlefield. Rakhine is linked to the Bay of Bengal, the Bangladesh frontier, China's Kyaukphyu projects and India's Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project. Continued fighting affects displacement, maritime access, regional connectivity and the calculations of both India and Bangladesh. The military's reliance on air power also reflects the difficulty it faces in reversing territorial losses through ground operations alone. Narinjara reported that eight internally displaced people were killed and 11 injured in airstrikes on IDP camps and villages in Ponnagyun Township on 4–5 October.

8 October (Narinjara): Myanmar Military Retreats after Failed Tri-Force Offensive on Ngapyi Kyunt Island

The strategic consequences extend beyond the immediate battlefield. Rakhine is linked to the Bay of Bengal, the Bangladesh frontier, China's Kyaukphyu projects and India's Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project. Continued fighting affects displacement, maritime access, regional connectivity and the calculations of both India and Bangladesh. The military's reliance on air power also reflects the difficulty it faces in reversing territorial losses through ground operations alone.

DEFENCE UPDATES

15 October (DVB): Reopened Thanlyin Refinery Has Direct Implications for Military Aviation

This connects Myanmar's economic constraints directly with its war-fighting capacity. Fuel availability, foreign exchange and access to technology determine not only civilian economic activity but also the military's ability to sustain aviation and logistics. The growing role of Chinese and Russian partners illustrates how Naypyidaw is trying to reduce the effect of Western sanctions through alternative energy, supply and technology relationships. DVB reported that the refinery's revival could reduce Myanmar's reliance on imported aviation fuel. Myanmar imported substantially more aviation fuel in 2025 than in the previous year, while international sanctions have sought to restrict supplies used by the air force.

16 October (DVB): Myanmar's Nuclear Cooperation with Russia Comes under Scrutiny

This connects Myanmar's economic constraints directly with its war-fighting capacity. Fuel availability, foreign exchange and access to technology determine not only civilian economic activity but also the military's ability to sustain aviation and logistics. The growing role of Chinese and Russian partners illustrates how Naypyidaw is trying to reduce the effect of Western sanctions through alternative energy, supply and technology relationships. DVB reviewed more than two decades of Myanmar–Russia nuclear cooperation, including agreements on research, training and a planned small modular reactor. Russia's Rosatom has said construction activity for a nuclear power project could begin in 2027.

BORDER UPDATES

2 October (Reuters): Return of Nearly 1,500 Myanmar Nationals from Malaysia Raises Protection Concerns

The development also exposes a widening gap between ASEAN's original punitive response to the 2021 coup and the more pragmatic approach now emerging among several regional governments. Migration pressures, transnational crime, border security and commercial interests are pushing states toward direct engagement. Whether this creates leverage over Naypyidaw or simply normalises the military-backed order without political concessions will be an important regional question. Nearly 1,500 returnees transported by sea from Malaysia reached Myanmar waters as part of a wider repatriation programme. UN agencies and rights groups warned that some returnees could face danger after arrival.

5 October (Al Jazeera): Malaysia Continues Large-Scale Repatriation despite UN Warnings

The development also exposes a widening gap between ASEAN's original punitive response to the 2021 coup and the more pragmatic approach now emerging among several regional governments. Migration pressures, transnational crime, border security and commercial interests are pushing states toward direct engagement. Whether this creates leverage over Naypyidaw or simply normalises the military-backed order without political concessions will be an important regional question. The arrival of 1,479 people in Yangon formed part of Malaysia's plan to return thousands of Myanmar nationals. UNHCR said it had not been given adequate access to determine whether the returns were voluntary and informed.

9 October (The Irrawaddy): Conflict Reshapes China–Myanmar Border Trade and Scam Networks

China's role is especially important because Beijing combines economic leverage, border-security interests and relationships with both the central authorities and ethnic armed organisations. Myanmar's resources and transport corridors are therefore embedded in a wider strategic relationship rather than being purely commercial assets. Any diversification toward the United States, Russia, Japan or other partners will be judged partly by how it affects this asymmetric dependence on China. The Irrawaddy reported that trade with China was increasingly using alternative routes as armed groups controlled significant parts of the

northern frontier. The same briefing described continuing Chinese efforts against scam networks in Wa, Mongla, Muse and other border areas.

17 October (The Irrawaddy): Japan's Sasakawa Renews Peace Engagement as Fighting Continues in Western Myanmar

Taken together with other October developments, the story illustrates the increasingly fragmented nature of Myanmar's political economy and security environment. Territorial control, diplomacy, trade, resource access and armed conflict are closely interconnected. Neighbouring states therefore have to address humanitarian risks, border stability, connectivity projects and strategic competition at the same time. The Irrawaddy reported on Japanese envoy Yohei Sasakawa's renewed engagement with Myanmar while the military continued fighting the Arakan Army.



About the Author

Dhanapriya Devi Chungkham is currently serving as a Research Assistant at the Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS), New Delhi. She completed her PhD from Centre of Indo-Pacific Studies, School of International Studies (JNU). Her research focuses primarily on security and strategic studies of India's eastern frontier, with particular interest in the Act East Policy, India-Myanmar relations, borderland dynamics, Northeast India and the evolving geopolitical landscape of Southeast Asia and the Indo-Pacific. She specialises in fieldwork-based research and qualitative methodologies.

All Rights Reserved 2026 Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS)

No part of this publication may be reproduced, copied, archived, retained or transmitted through print, speech or electronic media without prior written approval from CLAWS. The views expressed and suggestions made in the article are solely of the author in his personal capacity and do not have any official endorsement. Attributability of the contents lies purely with author.