

Bi-Weekly
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ISP ကပြင်ရပ်ဝန်း

No. 28, November 25, 2023

All Armed and on the Verge of Breakdown

Once-renowned reporter, *A Htauk Taw* U Ohn Myint, wrote a collection of articles on the scenes of post-independence insurrection, entitled 'All Armed and Leading to Trouble', and the great performance artist, the Great U Po Sein, acted in a drama with a similar title. The current situation in Myanmar is similar to this scenario. This week's ISP Insight Email No. 28 reports **intensifying armed conflict in Myanmar**—fighting in 67 percent of all townships of Myanmar—and **the total number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) has reached more than four million since the coup**. In addition, the society in Myanmar is encountering **the crisis of deprivation and hunger**. For Rohingya refugees, the new sailing season has led to **more exodus of boat people fleeing from the camps and several of their miserable stories**. The bulletin also reports the **urgent and momentous crackdown against online fraudulent crimes after 'Operation 1027'** and the development around the UN Climate Summit at the end of this month in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).



Displaced persons from Pauk Taw Township of Rakhine State on November 19, 2023. (Photo: AFP)

Key takeaways

The Number of IDPs Has Reached Four Million

The Crackdown Against Cyber Slavery Is Intensifying

A Series of Rohingya Boats Have Landed in Indonesia

Trends to be watched

Ravenous Lives in Myanmar

What ISP is reading?

The Development Around the UN Climate Summit 2023

Key takeaways

1. The Number of IDPs Has Reached Four Million

The number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) has increased to more than four million along with intensifying conflict after almost three years since the 2021 coup in Myanmar. The number of IDPs has surpassed seven percent of the country's total population, since the war is waging in multiple fronts, in 67 percent of all townships. Among these four million IDPs, 301,000 have recently been displaced following the launch of 'Operation 1027' in northern Shan State. Distinctively from the previous armed resistance movements, 'Operation 1027' has been conducted in populated areas close to towns, and thus, the number of IDPs has dramatically increased. Some IDPs fled from 'Operation 1027' and related fighting have sought refuge in the United Wa State Party's (UWSP) controlled area, and some fled to neighboring Chinese soil. In the temporary shelters close to the China–Myanmar border post no. 125, there are reportedly 35,000 displaced persons from the Laukkai area—which is seemingly the target of the operation—▶

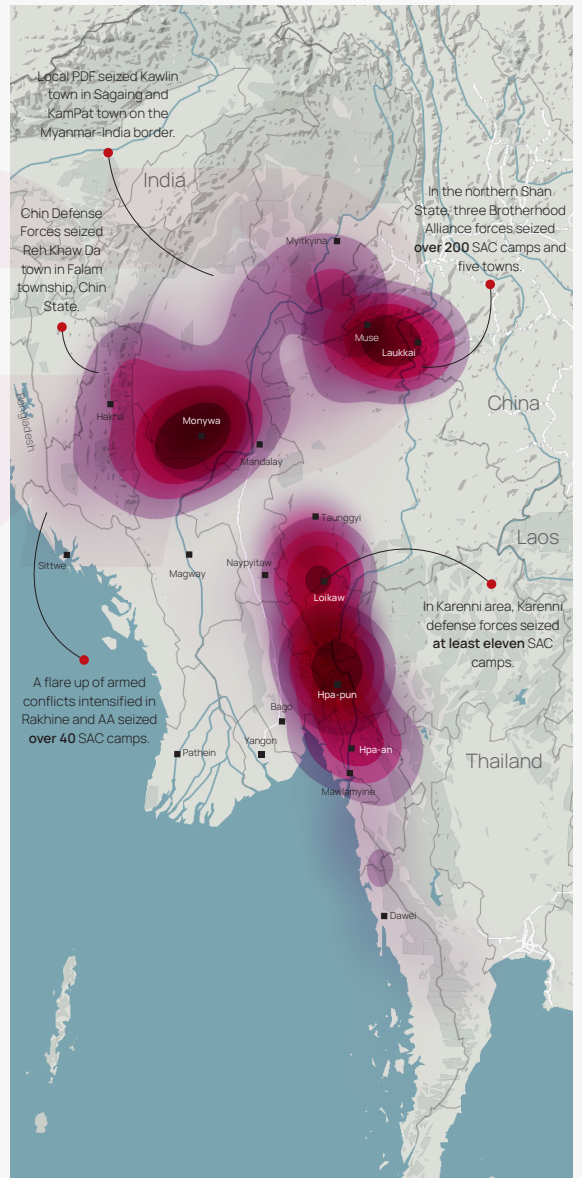
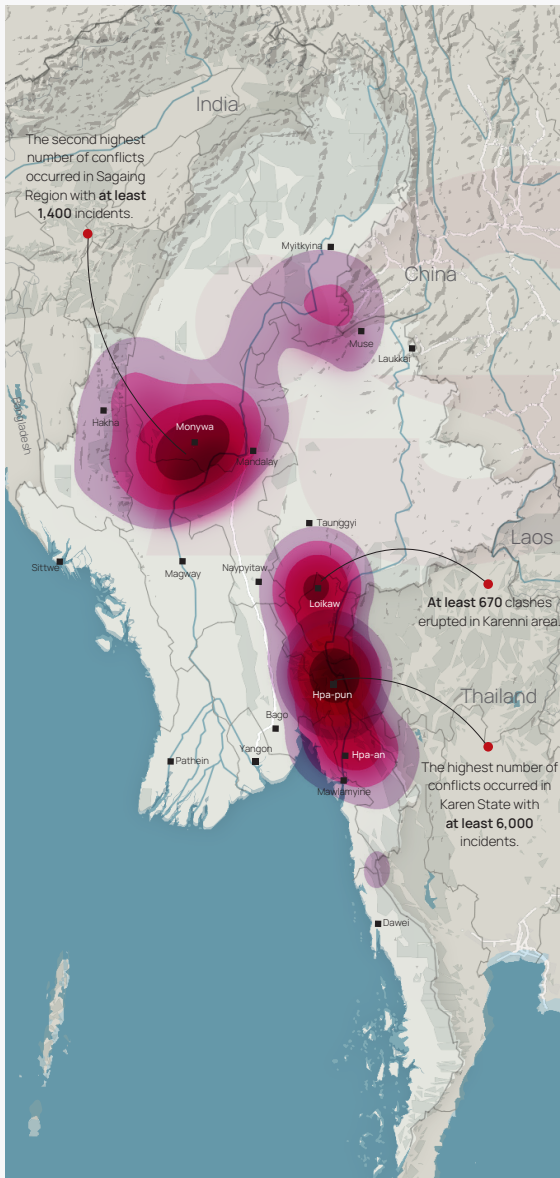
This Insight Email is published on **November 28, 2023**, as a translation of the original Burmese language version that ISP-Myanmar sent out to the ISP Gabyin members on **November 25, 2023**.

■ War Expanding Post 'Operation 1027'
(Feb 2021 - Nov 22, 2023)

A total of at least 12,225 post-coup armed conflicts occurred in at least 221 townships across Myanmar. Since the launch of 'Operation 1027' by the three Brother Alliance and its allies on October 27, 2023, the map of armed conflicts has expanded across the country. Within a month of the launch of the operation, at least 525 clashes took place in northern Shan, Sagaing, Rakhine, Karen and Karenni areas.

■ Before 'Operation 1027'
(Feb 2021 - Oct 26, 2023)

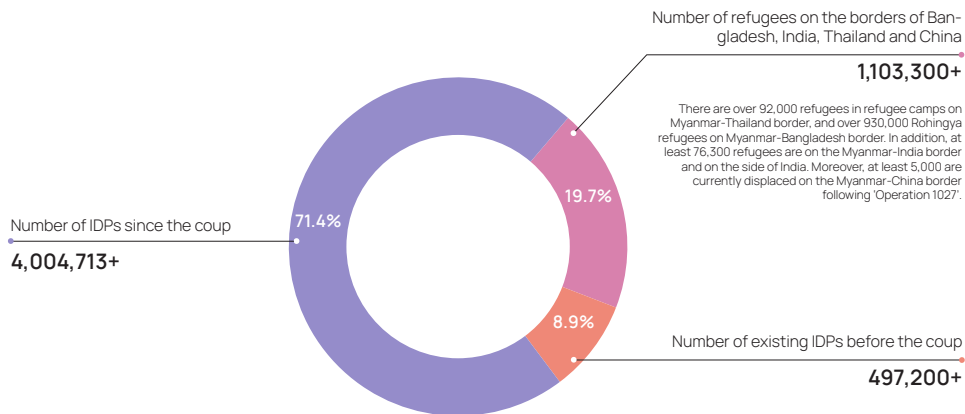
■ Since 'Operation 1027'
(Feb 2021 - Nov 22, 2023)



Source: Data is collected in accordance with ISP-Myanmar's system for documenting information in armed conflicts and is cross-checked with reports from various independent organizations. Actual figures and exact locations may differ.

Over Four Million IDPs Since the Coup (Feb 2021 - Nov 22, 2023)

Since the February 1, 2021 coup, at least 4,004,713 individuals have been internally displaced due to armed conflicts across the nation. Before the coup, there were at least 497,200 internally displaced people (IDPs) and at least 1,103,300 cross-border refugees. Consequently, the total number of displaced individuals in Myanmar now exceeds five and a half million.



Over 300,000 IDPs Increase Following 'Operation 1027' (Feb 2021 - Nov 22, 2023)

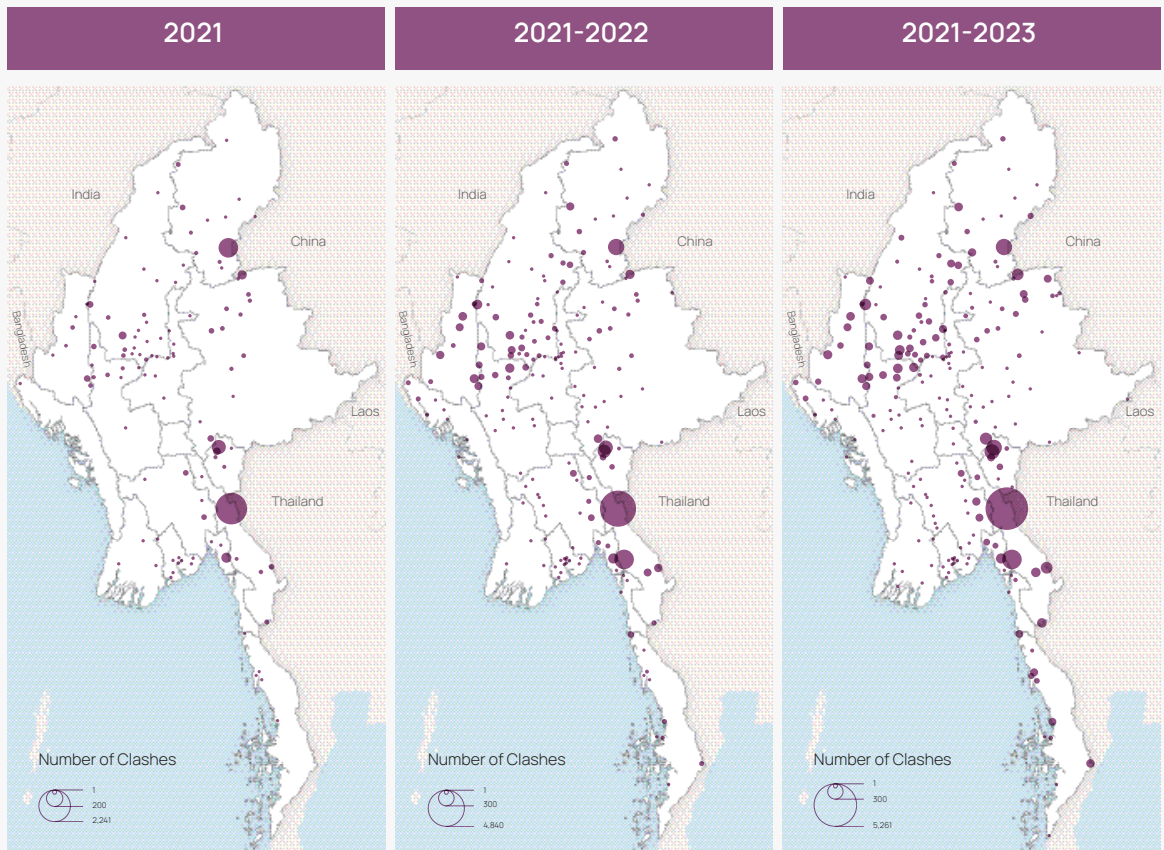
Since the commencement of 'Operation 1027', at least 317,015 individuals have become internally displaced due to armed conflicts across the country. Sagaing Region saw the highest increase with at least 121,000 new IDPs, followed by Shan State with a second-highest increase of at least 93,429.

Region	Number of IDPs before 'Operation 1027'	Number of increased IDPs following 'Operation 1027'
Sagaing	2,161,349+	121,000+
Shan	121,711+	93,429+
Rakhine	12,922+	46,286+
Karenni	263,603+	40,300+
Magway	351,550+	5,000+
Chin	101,685+	5,000+
Bago	256,939+	3,000+
Mandalay	55,859+	3,000+
Karen	201,326+	-
Mon	75,547+	-
Tanintharyi	65,386+	-
Kachin	18,821+	-
Ayeyarwady	1,000+	-

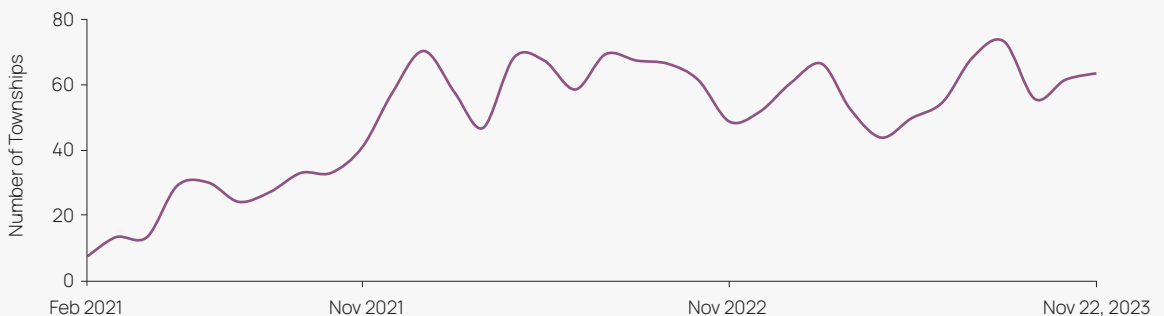
Source: Data is collected in accordance with ISP-Myanmar's system for documenting information in armed conflicts and is cross-checked with reports from various independent organizations. Actual figures may differ.

Clashes Across 67% of Myanmar's Townships (Feb 2021 - Nov 22, 2023)

Since the February 1, 2021 coup, at least 12,225 clashes have erupted, affecting at least 221 townships, constituting 67% of the total townships in Myanmar. In 2021, clashes unfolded in 110 townships nationwide. The intensity escalated, reaching additional 77 townships in 2022 and further 34 in 2023, marking a total expansion of 111 townships in the conflict landscape.



Ongoing Clashes in Over 50 Townships Monthly (Feb 2021 - Nov 22, 2023)



Source: Data is collected in accordance with ISP-Myanmar's system for documenting information in armed conflicts and is cross-checked with reports from various independent organizations. Actual figures and exact locations may differ.

- ▶ seeking refuge. Many of them passed through the experiences of fighting in the area in the years 1992, 1995, and 2009.

According to ISP-Myanmar's data, before 'Operation 1027', within two and a half years since the military coup, there were almost four million IDPs throughout the country, mainly in Sagaing, Magway, Mandalay, Bago Regions, and Shan, Rakhine, Karenni, and Chin States. Particularly because of 'Operation 1027', the numbers of IDPs dramatically surged in northern Shan State, and as a result, the number of IDPs in the whole Shan State increased by 93,000 from 121,711—an increase of almost 77 percent.

On the other hand, the number of IDPs in Sagaing Region is swelling, adding to the largest IDP population in the country since the beginning of the coup. The number of IDPs in Sagaing Region has increased by more than 121,000 since 'Operation 1027' began. Notably, this rate of upsurge in Sagaing Region is larger than in Shan State. Previously there were 2.1 million IDPs in Sagaing Region, and the area experienced a surge of 100,000 IDPs with the fighting to seize towns in the region, collaborating simultaneous attacks with 'Operation 1027'. At the same time, since the fighting is resuming in Rakhine State, many residents need to flee from the fighting areas. But the military has blocked travel by land and water and access to safe places, and IDPs as well as other residents of Rakhine State struggle to acquire basic items. The number of IDPs also surged in Karenni area. The numbers could be swelling, as the war is raging in many parts of the area. Moreover, due to the particular blockade strategy of the military, the refugees could encounter delays and difficulties in their access to international humanitarian assistance and other survival necessities.

'Operation 1027' by the Three Brotherhood Alliance (3BHA) and allied forces is still gaining momentum and has resulted in widespread repercussions. As discussed in the recent ISP OnPoint No. 17, the 'signaling effects' of the operation are noteworthy. ■

2. The Crackdown Against Cyber Slavery Is Intensifying

Along with the intensification of 'Operation 1027', the crackdown against online fraud gangs seems to be gaining momentum and urgency. Since a superpower country like China is serious about the issue, the path of the elephant's crossing has become a road. Before the post 'Operation 1027' actions, on August 15, 2023, ▶

► Chinese, Lao, Myanmar, and Thai officials met in Chiang Mai, Thailand, and formed a task force to tackle online fraud gangs. Actually, the Chinese government had already started arrests of the online criminals by sending investigation officials to Laos since last July.

The Chinese government has incessantly stressed its concerns about the issues of online fraud, human trafficking, and kidnappings targeting Chinese nationals. Despite Myanmar officials' promise to collaborate in crackdowns against these issues, they have produced more smoke than actual fire. In August, Myanmar's junta repatriated only a few persons suspected of committing *Kyar Phant* (online fraud) to China, and gave an excuse that such online fraudulent gangs are based in areas they cannot control.

On the other hand, the United Wa State Army (UWSA) rapidly arrested the fraudulent gangs operating in their area and on September 9, first sent 1,207 suspects to Chinese police. On October 14, UWSA sent another 2,300 suspects to China. Meanwhile, Chinese officials arrested the deputy-military chief of the UWSA charged with involvement with online fraud gangs. Chinese officials also arrested eleven top Kokang businessmen, and soon after these incidents, 3BHA launched their 'Operation 1027' on October 27 (See **ISP OnPoint No. 17 and 18**).

SCAN THIS CODE



Operation 1027:

Will All Roads Lead to Laukkai or
Naypyitaw?



ISP OnPoint No.17

SCAN THIS CODE



Operation 1027:

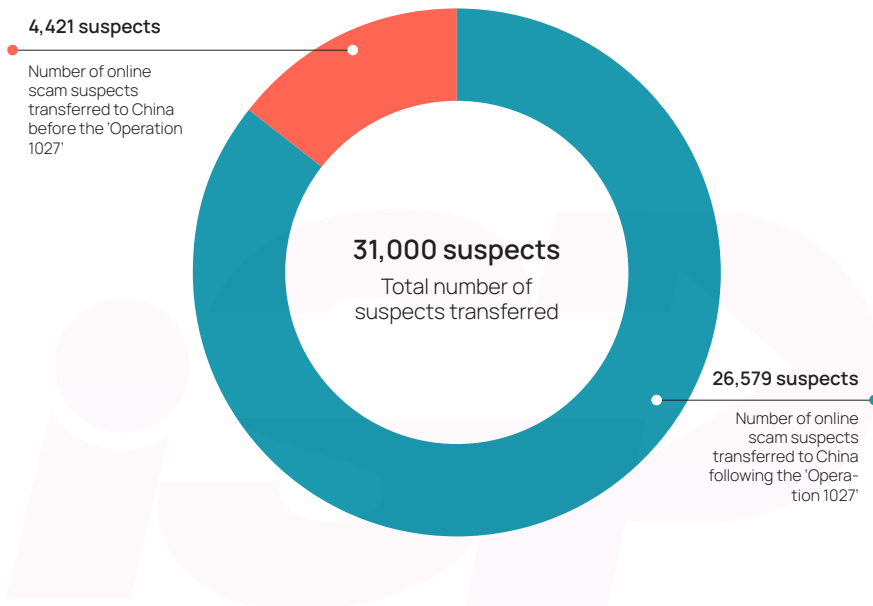
China's Economic Entanglement
With Anticipated and Unforeseen
Risks



ISP OnPoint No.18

■ Over 600% Increase in Transfer Rate of Online Crime Suspects to China

Since the initiation of 'Operation 1027', the number of online scam suspects transferred to China has surged to 26,579, marking an increase of over 600%. According to China's Ministry of Public Security statement on November 20, Myanmar has transferred a total of 31,000 suspects. Notably, prior to 'Operation 1027', only 4,421 suspects had been transferred by Myanmar to China.



Source: Based on the November 20 statement by China's Ministry of Public Security, ISP-Myanmar calculated the data by comparing it with its own data. It's important to note that this data should be cross-verified with other independent organizations as variations may exist.

On October 28, the SAC forces and Kokang Border Guard forces arrested almost 2,000 suspects and transferred them to Chinese police through the Yan Lone Kyaing border gate. On November 19, Myanmar junta forces repatriated 266 Thai nationals, six Philippine nationals, and a Singaporean national (in total, 273 persons) to China through No. 218 Talot gate. In addition, the junta arrested four members of the Ming family, who were issued arrest warrants by China, and transferred them to the Yunnan Police. Moreover, the SAC announced that it has arrested more than 7,300 Chinese nationals who are involved in fraud gangs in the Laukkai and Chinshwehaw areas. However, China's Ministry of Public Security made an announcement that it received more than 31,000 suspects from Myanmar on November 21, 2023.

According to one of the UNOCHA reports, more than 100,000 people are forced to work in such online fraud businesses as victims in northern Myanmar and that these actions is leading to cyber slavery. In addition, the report said 65.5 percent of online criminal activities are based in Myanmar, mainly in Muse, Laukkai, Mongla, Myawaddy, Tachileik, and in the Wa region. ■

3. A Series of Rohingya Boats Have Landed in Indonesia

Meanwhile, along with the increasing number of IDPs seen during the intensifying fighting in the country, voyages of Rohingya for their freedom are regularly seen through the neighboring sea. As the new sailing season began, a new round of Rohingya boat people began their escape from desolation, and we can only expect more sad stories to result from their voyages. According to a November 19, 2023 report, over 500 Rohingya refugees on three boats landed on Indonesia's most western coast, in the Bireuen district of Aceh. There were 256 people on one boat, 241 people on another, and 36 people on the last (in total, 533 people), who landed on different shores. Many of the travelers were women and children.

Local Indonesian residents pushed back the boats into the sea and many were stranded at sea for days. News reported that the number of Rohingya that landed on Indonesia's shores was more than 800 this week. Currently, the Rohingya boat people are seeking refuge in temporary shelters until the authorities make a decision about their plight. The locals hardly welcome them and they said there are no more places for them in Aceh. A Rohingya refugee said they were on board for almost sixteen days to reach Indonesia. The latest report said that Indonesian immigration will allow them only to seek refuge for three months.

AFP reported that the boat travel of Rohingya involved a human trafficking business worth millions of USD. During the past years, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) accepted about 2,000 Rohingya from ASEAN countries for asylum. Sadly, about 200 Rohingya couldn't make their trip and lost their lives in the sea. The SAC announced a pilot project with 2,000 Rohingya initially for repatriation, but these refugees have been living very difficult lives for the past six years. ■

Quotes of the week

“The fighter pilots have committed the most obscene killings against civilians, people have accused, and some urge to keep him in accordance with the law of prisoners of war. He has a right to live by basic human rights and we will be taking action according to the necessary law.”

Khun Bedu, Vice-Chairman of the Interim Executive Council (IEC) of Karenni State

Excerpted from a news article of The Irrawaddy Journal on November 22, 2023.

'IEC Vice-chairman Said the Arrested Pilot Will Have a Right to Live by Human Rights.'

“There are two factors in low enrollment, firstly there is low application number and secondly, the students apply in other regions.”

A teacher from Dawei University

Excerpted from a news article of Dawei Watch on November 18, 2023,

'Enrollment for the First Year of Study in Dawei University, Less than a Hundred.'

“It hasn't happened never ever before. We mainly use stream water, and it is not ever harmful to us. Last year, there was rare earth mining started near the village, and from the tanks collecting minerals, they released a discharge like acid water into the stream. Then we used the stream water and it caused sores on the skin.”

A villager from Inkaungpa village

Excerpted from a news article of RFA Burmese section on November 23, 2023,

'Because of Discharge from Rare Earth Mining, Nearly Three Hundred People Have Suffered from Skin-Sores.'

Trends to be watched

Ravenous Lives in Myanmar

An article in *Frontier Myanmar* reported that 'rampant inflation, low wages and a decrease in the production of staple foods are depriving millions of people of a nutritious diet, creating irreversible health problems and deepening cycles of poverty'. Since the military coup in Myanmar, there has been no comprehensive study on malnutrition. But before the coup, according to a study by Save the Children, the nationwide prevalence of stunting was 35.1 percent, with wasting at 7.9 percent. It is likely that the situation worsened after the military coup.

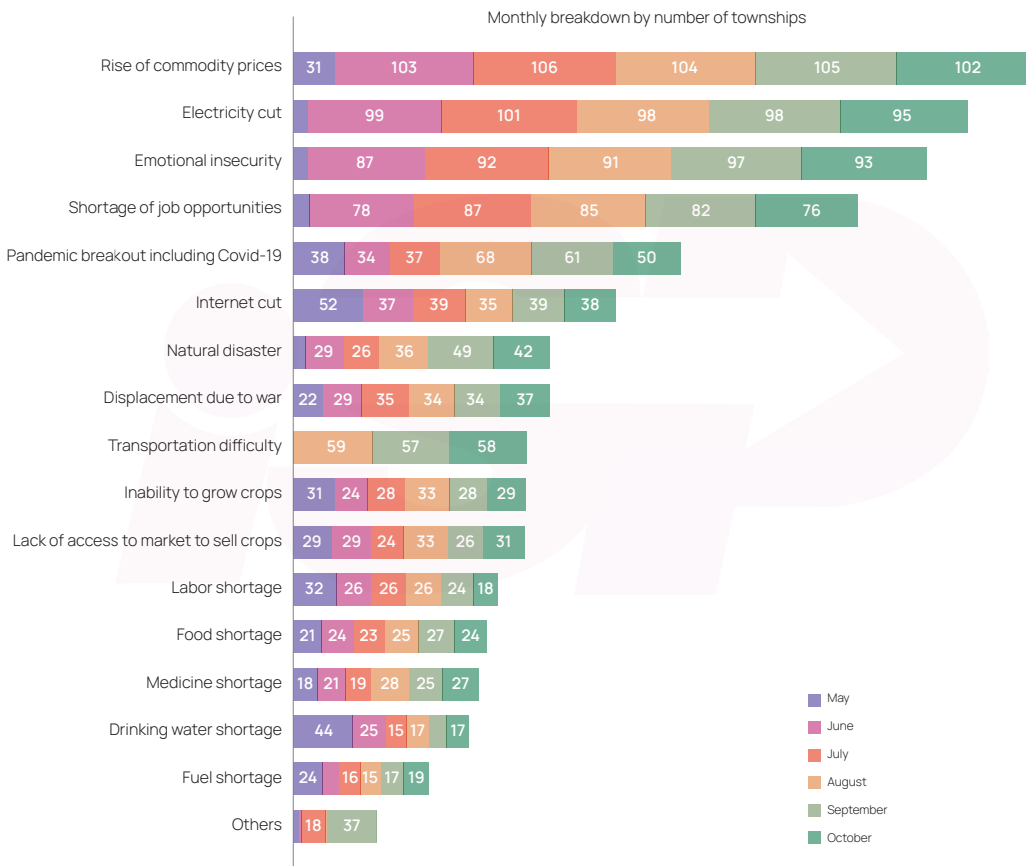
As far as the news received in 2022 and 2023, many people in Magway Region have been surviving on natural edible yams instead of rice. Meanwhile, many people have downgraded their food, mixing the rice with low-quality broken rice.

According to ISP-Myanmar's socio-economic study in order to understand the post-coup situation of Myanmar's society, rising commodity prices are one of the most prevalent problems people encounter in their daily lives. ISP-Myanmar's survey reported that in 102 townships out of 110 townships surveyed identified the most prevalent problem as "rising commodity prices." The issue is related to the news of the SAC issuing a 20,000-kyat bill. Along with these economic hardships, losing job opportunities is increasing the burden on them. Among the 110 townships surveyed, from 21 to 27 face food insecurity.

In the Burmese language, there is a particular word, *thayawgyi khine* (သရောကြီးခိုင်း), which mean a cumulation of crises leading to famine. According to last year's December survey of the UN Development Program (UNDP) in Yangon's poorest eight townships, a quarter (24.1 percent) of people living in these townships have often not had any income in the last 12 months. Losing income forced people to adopt coping strategies, such as cutting down on how much they eat and consuming less nutritious food. How can they survive at this moment? The trend of food insecurity and malnutrition is a trend worthy of watching. ■

■ Daily Social Challenges (May 2023 - Oct 2023)

At least 102 townships out of 110 surveyed by ISP-Myanmar are facing the rising commodity prices as the most common daily challenge, which is followed by the electricity cuts, emotional insecurity and a scarcity of job opportunities. Notably, 21 to 27 townships are experiencing food shortages.



■ Methodology for ISP-Myanmar's survey

ISP-Myanmar applied an 'observatory method' to collecting socio-economic data from 110 townships (one-third of the nation's total 330 townships) since May 2023. To select a sample of 110 townships, we first selected the 75 townships where district offices are stationed, with the other 35 townships selected according to their population and economic significance. Findings from the survey will be reported in future ISP-Myanmar's Insight emails and the ISP Journal.

What ISP is reading?

The Development Around the UN Climate Summit 2023

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of the Parties (COP) annual summit will be held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE), from November 30 to December 12, 2023. Prior to the summit, the UN Climate program published a report.

The UN synthesis report's best estimate of peak temperature this century is between 2.1C and 2.8C. There is not much time left to delay the overheating of the earth. According to the UN report, in 2030 (compared with the situation in 2010), carbon emissions will increase by nine percent. But with national pledges and strategies to reduce carbon dioxide, this could be accordingly reduced.

UN Climate Summit chairman, Sultan Al Jaber said "COP28 must be a historic turning point in this critical decade. He urged, "there is simply no time left for delays." COP28 is the 2023 UN Climate Change Conference soon to be convened in Dubai (UAE); 195 parties committed to the Paris Agreement will attend the Summit. To attain international commitment to reduce the emission of greenhouse gas, it is required to reduce 42 percent of emissions compulsorily before 2030.

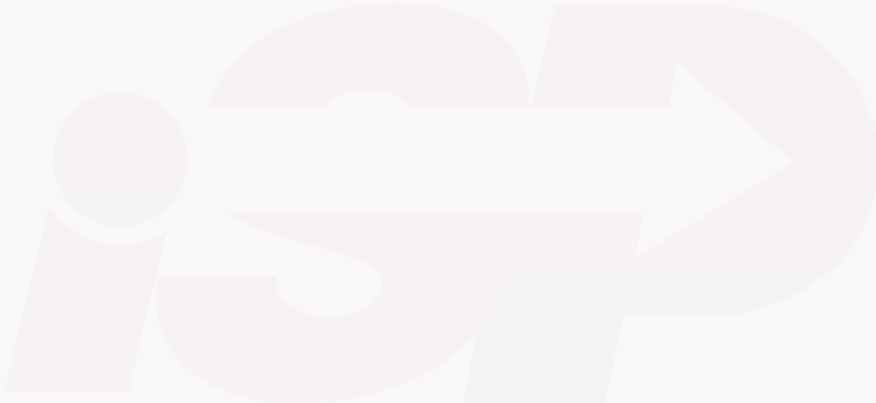
Meanwhile, rich nations are still falling short of providing enough climate finance to poorer countries to help them deal with the impacts of climate change. There are doubts over whether countries can put aside their current differences and growing tensions and collaborate among themselves for the benefit of humankind.

Another report of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), warned that sand and dust storms are "dramatically" more frequent in some places worldwide. It is a costly phenomenon that wreaks havoc everywhere, from Northern and Central Asia to sub-Saharan Africa.

The report, published in the medical journal The Lancet, a study by 114 researchers mentioned that as climate change continues to soar, it will have a worsening effect on health and mortality around the world. Because of global warming, exposure to extreme heat, and resulting losses in productivity or inability to work ▶

- ▶ may have led to food insecurity and income losses as high as USD 863 billion in 2022, with an estimated 127 million more people experiencing moderate or severe food insecurity.

Since the 1990s, the heat-related deaths of people older than 65 have increased by 85 percent. The report said that the older age groups, along with young children, are especially vulnerable to health risks like heatstroke. As global temperatures have risen, people are exposed to twice the number of heat-wave days annually as they were from 1986 to 2005. ■



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ISP Gabyin Community

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+66 80 747 9712



PO Box 149, Chiang Mai University PO, Chiang Mai 50202