

MYANMAR CONFLICT
Junta chief
under pressure
three years
after coup

REUTERS
In mid-January, at a small gathering in a cantonment town in Myanmar, hard line pro-military monk Pauk Kotaw suggested that the country's junta chief Min Aung Hlaing step down and his deputy take over. The crowd cheered in agreement, according to videos of the event posted on social media.
Online, pro-military journalists and bloggers have been similarly direct. "He should resign as commander-in-chief," Ko Maung Maung, a pro-military Youtuber said in a post.
Such public utterances against Myanmar's powerful junta leader and the chief of its armed forces would have been unthinkable just a few months ago.
But after seizing power in a dawn coup d'etat on February 1, 2021, Min Aung Hlaing finds himself in his weakest position



Displaced Palestinians fleeing Khan Younis due to the Israeli ground operation, sit on a vehicle as they move towards Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

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since deposing the democratically elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi.
Questions about the 67-year-old's leadership are being asked after a series of battlefield defeats for the military in a sweeping offensive by rebel groups that started in October, dubbed Operation 1027.
So far, the junta has lost control of at least 35 towns, according to the media collective Myanmar Peace Monitor, although a Beijing-mediated ceasefire has halted clashes near the Chinese border. In other parts, fighting continues.
The junta has previously acknowledged some loss of control of territory.
"There is deep frustration within the military, which extends to Min Aung Hlaing personally," a diplomat in Southeast Asia told Reuters, asking not to be named.

'No threat will be left unanswered'

Iran warns as Biden says he has decided on response to killing of three US troops in Jordan

REUTERS, Dubai

Iran will respond to any threat from the United States, Iranian Revolutionary Guards' chief Hossein Salami said yesterday, as Washington weighs its response to the killing of American servicemen by Tehran-aligned militants.
"We hear threats coming from American officials, we tell them that they have already tested us and we now know one another, no threat will be left unanswered," Salami said, according to semi-official Tasnim news agency.
In January 2020, the Revolutionary

Guards targeted the Ain al-Asad US base in Iraq following a US drone strike in Baghdad that killed Qassem Soleimani, the commander of the elite Quds Force of Iran's Revolutionary Guards.
Iran's envoy to the UN, Amir Saeid Irvani, also warned yesterday that Tehran would respond decisively to any attack on its territory, its interests, or Iranian nationals outside its borders.
The comments from Iranian officials come a day after United States President Joe Biden announced he has decided how to respond to a drone attack by Iran-aligned Iraqi groups that killed US service

members in Jordan.
Biden, speaking to reporters as he left the White House on a campaign trip to Florida, did not elaborate on his decision, which came after consultations with top advisers at the White House.
But John Kirby, White House national security spokesperson, told reporters the US could respond more than once.
"It's fair for you to expect that we will respond in an appropriate fashion and it is very possible that what you'll see is a tiered approach here, not just a single action, but essentially multiple actions," he said.



A migrant child seeking asylum kneels in front of a member of the Texas National Guard and asks to be allowed to enter the United States, after crossing razor wire deployed to prevent the crossing of migrants, as seen from Ciudad Juarez, Mexico on Tuesday. PHOTO: REUTERS

Five countries confirm they are joining BRICS

Says South Africa

REUTERS, Johannesburg
Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have confirmed they are joining the BRICS bloc after being invited last year, South Africa's Foreign Minister Naledi Pandor said yesterday.
The five countries were extended invitations along with Argentina at a summit in August in Johannesburg to join the bloc comprising Brazil, Russia, China, India and South Africa. Members say the move would help reshuffle a world order they view as outdated.
Argentina has since declined the invitation to join. "Argentina has written to indicate that they will not act on this successful application...." Pandor said.

Greenland absorbs more methane than it emits

AFF, Copenhagen

Greenland absorbs more of the greenhouse gas methane than it emits, according to a new study from the University of Copenhagen released yesterday.
"On average and since 2000, dry landscapes of the ice-free part of Greenland have consumed more than 65,000 tonnes of methane annually from the atmosphere, while 9,000 tonnes of methane have been released annually from its wet areas," the university said in a statement.
The findings, which were published in the journal Nature Communications Earth & Environment, are encouraging because methane, the second-biggest contributor to global warming after CO2, is particularly harmful to the environment.
According to the United

Nations, it is responsible for around 30 percent of the rise in average temperatures since the industrial revolution.
The Greenland phenomenon "is partly due to Greenland's widespread dry landscapes, where methane from the atmosphere is consumed into the upper layers of soil," said Bo Elberling, a geologist who led the study.
Elberling said it was also "partly because the ice-free parts of Greenland have only been without ice since the last ice age, meaning that they never stored much carbon, which could lead to large methane emissions, as can be measured elsewhere in the Arctic".
The absorption of methane is possible because of a "unique group of microorganisms" that live in the upper layers of arctic soil.



ANTI-PIRACY OPERATION

India deploys warships east of Red Sea

REUTERS, New Delhi

India has deployed at least a dozen warships east of the Red Sea to provide security against pirates and has investigated more than 250 vessels as Western powers focus on attacks by Yemen's Iran-backed Houthis, Indian officials said.

India has not joined the US-led task force for the Red Sea and does not have any warships there. But it currently has two frontline warships in the Gulf of Aden and at least 10 warships in the northern and western Arabian Sea, along with surveillance aircraft, the officials said.

This is India's largest deployment in the region, they said. Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar said India's growing capability, interests and reputation warranted its help in difficult situations.
"We will not be considered a responsible country when bad things are happening in the surrounding country and we say 'I have got nothing to do with this'," he said at a public event on Tuesday.
Other countries have a naval presence in the region, including the United States, France and China, but Indian officials say India's presence is the largest.

Indian military and defence officials said that navy personnel, including special commandos, have investigated more than 250 vessels and small boats in the last two months, boarding more than 40, as piracy returns after a six-year absence.

At least 17 incidents of hijacking, attempted hijacking and suspicious approaches had been recorded by the Indian Navy since December 1, they said.

ROW WITH INDIA

Maldives turns to Lanka for medical evacuation support

THE HINDU ONLINE

Maldives has sought Sri Lanka's assistance in medical evacuation services — mainly to transport patients to Colombo in air ambulances — amid a persisting strain with India. Maldivian Minister of Transport and Civil Aviation Mohamed Ameen met his Sri Lankan counterpart Nimal Siripala de Silva in Colombo on Tuesday, and said on social media platform 'X', that Sri Lanka has agreed to help the Maldives with medical evacuation.
"We have specifically agreed upon creating a framework for immediate approval process between Maldives and Sri Lanka on urgent requirements, specifically on med evac flights," Ameen said in his post.
"They [Maldives] will use their air ambulances, this is to help keep this channel open and easy for any emergency medical treatment that Maldivians might need in Sri Lanka," de Silva told The Hindu yesterday morning. Sri Lanka and India are among the Maldives's closest neighbours, and Maldivians have always had close ties in Colombo, a city they frequent. The development comes amid President Mohamed Muizzu's apparent efforts to expand and diversify the island nation's partnerships in medical evacuation.

Taiwan warns against China flight path change

AFF, Taipei

Taiwan yesterday condemned China's decision to adjust an aviation route that runs through the Taiwan Strait, warning the change could impact stability in the sensitive waterway. The Taiwanese defence ministry's statement came a day after China's civil aviation authority said it was introducing changes to flights headed southwards along the M503 route starting from February 1. The Chinese authority said the move was aimed at improving efficiency in a congested area. However, Taiwan's defence ministry branded the adjustment as "unilateral and arbitrary". The move, it warned, could "lead to an escalation in tensions", urging Beijing to "immediately" reverse the decision. Transport Minister Wang Kwo-tsai also warned the route runs close to Taipei's flight information region.

Advertisement for Sylhet Gas Fields Limited (SGFL). Includes company logo, name in Bengali and English, and a detailed table of terms and conditions for a tender process. The table lists items like 'মন্ত্রণালয়/উদ্ভিধান', 'সংস্থা', 'নিলামকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের নাম', etc., with their respective details.