

Impact of Myanmar's Violent Chaos on India

Why in news?

Foreign ministers from member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have planned a meeting to discuss on Myanmar crisis, months after agreeing a peace plan with its military rulers.

How did the power siege happened in Myanmar?

- The military had a tight grip on Myanmar as the constitution guarantees it a quarter of all seats in parliament and control of its most powerful ministries.
- In the last general election, military-backed party (USDP) performed poorly whereas the National League for Democracy (NLD) did even better than in 2015.
- This created tensions between the armed forces and the government.
- The opposition raised allegations of widespread fraud in the election which was not backed by the electoral commission.
- Later, Myanmar's military seized power after detaining Aung San Suu Kyi and other democratically elected leaders.

MYANMAR MILITARY BACK IN POWER: TIMELINE OF EVENTS



2010

Nov 9

Military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) wins election by landslide. Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) boycotted election

Nov 13

Aung San Suu Kyi freed after 7 years of house arrest

2011

Jan 31

Elected parliament convenes for first time in half a century, charged with choosing first civilian president since 1962 coup

2015

Nov 8

NLD wins by landslide in Myanmar's first openly contested general election since 1990; Aung San Suu Kyi becomes de facto leader

2020

Nov 8

NLD captures 396 of 476 seats in lower and upper houses of parliament in general election*
USDP alleges voter fraud, challenges results

2021

Jan 26

Military ramps up demands for investigation into alleged voter fraud, doesn't rule out coup possibility

Jan 30

Military says it will protect the constitution and act according to the law amid coup fears

Feb 1

Early morning

Military detains Aung San Suu Kyi, other leaders from ruling NLD party

About 10.30am

Military declares state of emergency for a year, hands power to Senior General Min Aung Hlaing

What about the follow up of the power siege?

- The junta has unleashed a [reign of terror](#) claiming thousands of lives.
- In cities, protests turned into armed fighting between pro-democracy protesters and security personnel, while in the jungles, anti-junta groups joined hands with rebels for

military training.

- The situation was so grave that the UN Special Envoy warned that Myanmar had descended into a civil war.
- Twenty months on, the junta has not been able to establish full control over the country.
- Many of Myanmar's ethnic armed organisations have joined armed civilian groups called People's Defence Force (PDF), which are allied to the self-declared National Unity Government (NUG) in exile.
- In Rakhine State, the military is fighting the Arakkan Army, with the violence sometimes spilling over to Bangladesh.
- Aung San Suu Kyi, who was jailed after the coup, has been convicted in multiple cases and sentenced to 20 years.

What is the effect on India?

- **India-Myanmar** - India has a 1,643 km border with Myanmar stretching from the India-Myanmar-China trijunction in Arunachal Pradesh to the India-Myanmar-Bangladesh trijunction in Mizoram.
- Border regulations have been formulated keeping in view the ethnic and family ties across the international boundary.
- Under a Free Movement Regime (FMR), citizens of the two countries living within 16 km on their sides of the border can cross over with a permit and stay up to 2 weeks at a time.
- **Fallout in India** - India has walked a fine line between expressing concern at the interruption of democracy and engaging with the junta to protect its vital interests.
- **Security** - New Delhi's justification for engaging with the Myanmar military is that it ensures the security of India's Northeast by persuading the generals to deny safe havens to insurgent groups.
- **Refugee influx** - For India, the main concern is the influx of refugees into Mizoram, which is straining the state's resources.
- **Effect on Indian projects** - The coup and resultant unrest have arrested Indian projects in Myanmar, such as the trilateral highway to Thailand and the Kaladan waterway project.
- These projects were already well behind their deadlines and their completion looks farther away now.

India is not a signatory to the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention or its 1962 Protocol and does not have a domestic policy on refugees.

What is the role of ASEAN in this aspect?

- ASEAN's peace effort is the only official diplomatic process in play, but the junta is unwilling to implement a so-called "**five-point consensus**" that it agreed to with ASEAN in 2021.
- The agreement includes
 - An immediate end to violence in the country

- Dialogue among all parties
- Appointment of a special envoy
- Humanitarian assistance by ASEAN
- Special envoy's visit to Myanmar to meet with all parties
- The United Nations has backed the ASEAN plan, but there is a suspicion that the generals are buying time to consolidate power and crush opponents before a 2023 election.

How has the junta responded?

- The military government has accused critical ASEAN members of meddling and warned them not to engage with the NUG.
- It has accused its opponents of trying to sabotage the ASEAN plan and has justified military offensives as necessary to secure the country and enable political talks.
- Instead of advocating for the five-point ASEAN plan, the generals have been pushing a five-step roadmap of their own towards a new election, with few similarities.

What approaches might ASEAN take?

- Suspending Myanmar as an ASEAN member would be extremely unlikely, as would any trade sanctions
- The junta has demonstrated it will not respond to threats.
- Modifying the plan could be interpreted as concessions to the military.
- ASEAN has so far opted to [bar the generals from key summits](#) and invited non-political representatives instead, which the junta has declined.

References

1. [The Indian Express | The violent chaos in Myanmar](#)
2. [The Indian Express | ASEAN holding a special meeting on Myanmar](#)
3. [Human Rights Watch | ASEAN's Failed '5-Point Consensus'](#)

Quick facts

ASEAN

- The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was established in 1967 in Bangkok, Thailand.
- It came in with the signing of the ASEAN Declaration (**Bangkok Declaration**) by the founding members: Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.
- Brunei Darussalam, Vietnam, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Cambodia joined in the course of time.



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