

Election Announcement in Myanmar

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Why in news?

- Recently, Myanmar's military ruler, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, declared that his regime would hold free and fair elections.

- He did not say when, but it is believed that elections will be conducted this year.
- The General made the remarks as the junta observed the 75th anniversary of Myanmar's freedom from British rule.

About Myanmar Coup

- In February 2021, Myanmar's military seized the power after detaining Aung San Suu Kyi and other democratically elected leaders.
- Army seized control following a general election in which Ms Suu Kyi's NLD party won by a landslide.
 - Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) party secured a landslide victory, taking more than 80 percent of the vote.

What is the current situation in Myanmar?

Status of political prisoners

- Recently, NLD leader Aung San Suu Kyi was convicted on five more charges of alleged corruption and given seven years in prison, taking her total jail term to 33 years.
 - Aung San Suu Kyi is considered as an icon of the country's pro-democracy movement.
- Including her, the junta has jailed more than 15,000 political opponents and pro-democracy activists over the last two years.

Spring revolution continues

- Myanmar has remained in violent turmoil since the military takeover as battles rage between pro-democracy forces and the military.
 - Days after the coup, many new parliamentarians organised themselves into the National Unity Government (NUG) and launched what they called a "spring revolution".

What has been the role of international communities to bring normalcy in Myanmar?

Steps taken by Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

- In August 2022, ASEAN banned Myanmar's generals from meetings until the organization's supposed peace plan makes progress.
 - Earlier, in April 2021, ASEAN released a five-point framework on Myanmar crisis.

First-ever resolution adopted by the UN Security Council on Myanmar

- In December 2022, the first-ever resolution was adopted by the UN Security Council on Myanmar.
- The resolution called for an end to violence and for the release of all political prisoners, including Suu Kyi.
- India, along with Russia and China, had abstained from voting on the resolution.

India's role

- India is walking on a diplomatic tightrope on Myanmar since the military coup of February 2021. This strategy is tied to two things:
 - the importance of Myanmar for India; and
 - New Delhi's desire to preserve its channels of communication with the Burmese generals and prevent them from moving further into China's lap.
- India believes that the solution to the crisis in Myanmar needs to come from the region.
- So far, India has abstained from voting on any resolution against Myanmar in the United Nation.
- During his visit last November, Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra made no mention of democracy or prisoners, and did not meet any political leaders.

Should India reconsider ties with the junta?

• Myawaddy job scam

- In this scam, scores of Tamil youth were lured to Myanmar's Kayin after being promised jobs in Thailand, and were put to work in digital scamming centres.
- Controlled by an ethnic militia, Myawaddy is a no-go area for the junta, making the rescue effort more complicated for Delhi.
- This casts doubts on the junta's ability to deliver on any of India's concerns.

• North-east insurgent groups are fighting for Junta in Myanmar

- There are reports that militias backed by the junta to fight the Pro-Democratic Forces (PDFs) are manned by north-east insurgent groups such as the Manipuri People's Liberation Army.
- Local PDFs now control much of the area where India is building a trilateral highway and the Kaladan Multimodal transport project.

• Flow of refugees

- A flow of refugees has made Myanmar's turmoil a concern for India in a more proximate sense.
- According to unofficial estimates, nearly 50,000 people are now taking refuge in the four Indian states, mainly in Mizoram (40,000), but also in Manipur (3,000), Arunachal (150) and Nagaland (250).

Q1) Which Indian states share boundary with Myanmar?

Four North-Eastern States viz. Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram share international boundary with Myanmar. These four states share 1643 km border with Myanmar.

Q2) Why Myanmar is significant for India?

Myanmar is the only ASEAN country adjoining India and is therefore an important gateway to South East Asia. Cooperation with Myanmar is crucial for controlling insurgency in North Eastern states.

Source: [Reading the junta's poll promise](#) | [The Hindu](#) | [MEA](#)

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