

# 7 foreigners arrested in India for training Myanmar rebels: reports

**AFP**

New Delhi

Indian investigators have arrested seven foreigners, including six Ukrainians and an American, on suspicion of illegally crossing into neighbouring Myanmar to train armed militia groups, the public radio broadcaster reported yesterday.

Myanmar descended into civil war after a junta seized power in a 2021 coup, with pro-democracy guerrillas and ethnic-minority armed groups fighting for control of large parts of the country.

India has long been suspicious of certain Myanmar factions that have the same ethnicity as populations on the Indian side of the border, fearing a spillover of violence and unrest.

On Monday, a closed court in New Delhi remanded the seven foreign nationals in custody for 11 days of interrogation after they allegedly illegally entered sensitive Mizoram state without an official permit, All India Radio (AIR) reported.

The seven then allegedly passed

from Mizoram into neighbouring Myanmar, where they were “training ethnic war groups... associated with insurgent groups in India”, according to AIR.

They are also suspected to have illegally transported a “huge consignment of drones from Europe” into India for use in Myanmar, AIR said, without specifying the type of drones or their countries of origin.

After they returned to India, officials from the National Investigation Agency (NIA) arrested the Ukrainians in the cities of Delhi and Lucknow, and the American in Kolkata, the report said.

The Indian Express newspaper reported that they had been charged with conspiring to commit terrorist acts against the Indian state, a crime that carries a maximum penalty of life imprisonment.

Multiple calls by AFP to the NIA spokesman went unanswered yesterday.

The Ukrainian foreign ministry confirmed yesterday its citizens were detained by India on March 13 and requested the country’s authorities to provide “unimpeded

consular access” to them.

“As of now, there are no proven facts confirming the involvement of the aforementioned Ukrainian citizens in illegal activities on the territory of India or Myanmar,” it said in a statement.

“The embassy is in contact with other relevant Indian authorities to clarify all circumstances and reasons for the detention,” it added.

The US embassy in New Delhi said in a statement yesterday they were aware of the matter but “cannot comment on cases involving US citizens” for privacy reasons.

Mizoram’s chief minister claimed last year that “thousands” of Western mercenaries had passed through the state on the way to Myanmar, but the assertion is hard to verify.

India is building a 1,643-kilometre (1,020-mile) fence along its porous border with Myanmar, which runs through remote jungles and snow-capped Himalayan peaks.

Thousands of villagers, mainly from Myanmar’s Chin state, have fled into India since the civil war has intensified.