A NEW FRONT: DRUG TRAFFICKING AT THE INDO-BURMA BORDER

An Analytical Review of Data
(2022–2025)

**Chin Center for Peace & Reconciliation·
Salai Van Bawi Mang, Operations Director**

✉ salaivanbawihmang@gmail.com   📷 +66(0)986640993

According to a 2024 survey by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Myanmar has overtaken Afghanistan as the world's top opium producer, with illicit crop cultivation expanding to 116,000 acres in 2023 (UNODC, 2024). This shift has direct implications for India's security, as trafficking networks increasingly utilise the Indo-Burma border as their primary export route from Myanmar to international markets. This analysis examines emerging trafficking patterns along the Indo-Burma border from 2022 to July 2025. The findings are based on CCPR's systematic documentation of seizure cases, which are cross-referenced with official records and field reports.

Production of opium remains concentrated in Shan State, accounting for 88% of Myanmar's cultivation area. Drugs cultivated in Shan are increasingly being routed through Chin State's border areas, transforming this region into a critical trafficking corridor, before entering Indian markets. Chin State's own poppy cultivation occurs primarily in Tonzang Township near the India border, where local governance is weak due to the presence of the transnational armed group/pro-military Zomi Revolutionary Organization/Zomi Revolutionary Army-Eastern Command (ZRO/ZRA-EC).

Between 2022 and 2024, route migration accelerated markedly... documented trafficking cases rose by 89%, from 26 in 2023 to 55 in 2024

Between 2022 and 2024, the route migration accelerated dramatically. **The ongoing civil wars and weakened governance structures enabled trafficking networks to establish new routes away from the heavily monitored Golden Triangle toward the Indo-Burma border.** Following the Manipur conflict in 2023and the continued border crackdown by the Border Guard Bangladesh, traffickers who had been going through Rakhine State to Bangladesh began seeking alternative routes through Chin State. According to our CCPR data, the impact was immediate: a dramatic 89% increase in documented trafficking cases from 26 in 2023 to 55 in 2024.

CCPR has identified specific geographic hotspots where trafficking activities are concentrated. **Champhai District in India's Mizoram State has emerged as the primary entry point**, with 68 cases recorded in our documentation. At the same time, on the Myanmar side, **Falam Township in Chin State has become a major transit hub,** with 12 documented cases. Our analysis reveals that these locations now represent a prominent trafficking corridor that runs from Kalay through Tedim, Rihkhuadar, and Zokhuathar before reaching Champhai and continuing to Aizawl.

The growing scale of operations shows how trafficking networks are becoming more sophisticated and are expanding their market reach. Documented seizures tracked by CCPR show **an estimated 2.7 tons of narcotics with a street value of USD 171 million between 2022 and July 2025.** The findings indicate that the primary substances being trafficked are heroin (1,437.25 kg) and methamphetamine (1,285.426 kg). The total value of seizures jumped from USD 35 million in 2023 to USD 86 million in 2024, showing how these criminal operations are rapidly growing.

The primary trafficked substances are heroin (1,437.25 kg) and methamphetamine (1,285.426 kg). Seizure value rose from USD 35 million in 2023 to USD 86 million in 2024, indicating rapid growth in these criminal operations.

These trafficking networks have grown into sophisticated transnational operations, often working with certain armed groups that have experience in cross-border illicit trade. While these activities existed before the 2021 coup, the post-coup instability and collapse of governance systems enabled networks to expand beyond Shan State into previously secondary corridors.

The complexity of these networks poses significant challenges for traditional law enforcement approaches. The Chinland Council, representing the self-governing territory of Chin State in western Myanmar, has been involved in counter-narcotics efforts in the region as part of its border security operations.

The adaptive trafficking networks and regional instability has created an unprecedented challenge for Indo-Burma border security. These new corridors pose immediate threats to border security, regional stability, and public health.

Champhai District, in India's Mizoram State, has emerged as the primary entry point, with 68 cases recorded in our documentation; on the Myanmar side, Falam Township in Chin State has become a major transit hub, with 12 documented cases.

To address this evolving crisis, a pragmatic, multi-pronged strategy is essential. CCPR recommends that Indian agencies should prioritize direct collaboration with entities on the ground that are already actively engaged in border security and counter-narcotics operations in Chin State for intelligence-led interdiction efforts. **Immediate action is required to prevent further expansion of these trafficking networks.**

ABOUT CCPR

A BRIEF STORY ABOUT CCPR

The Chin Center for Peace and Reconciliation (CCPR) is a local non-governmental organization established in 2016. CCPR envisions a Myanmar that is a **"Peaceful Country and Reconciled People,"** with a mission to empower stakeholders and communities for successful democratization and sustainable peace.

Due to the military coup, CCPR's main office in Hakha and branch office in Yangon are temporarily closed. The organization continues to operate from cross-boundary areas between Burma and India. CCPR engages in peace-building, policy advocacy, technical assistance, secretariat support, and humanitarian crisis and emergency relief responses to address transitional and interim needs.

Currently, CCPR is working on sustainable peace, governance, and justice in Chinland through research, advocacy, and community engagement.

THIS BRIEF IS BASED ON CCPR RESEARCH, AND ACTUAL TRAFFICKING VOLUMES MAY BE HIGHER THAN REPORTED DUE TO UNDETECTED ACTIVITIES.