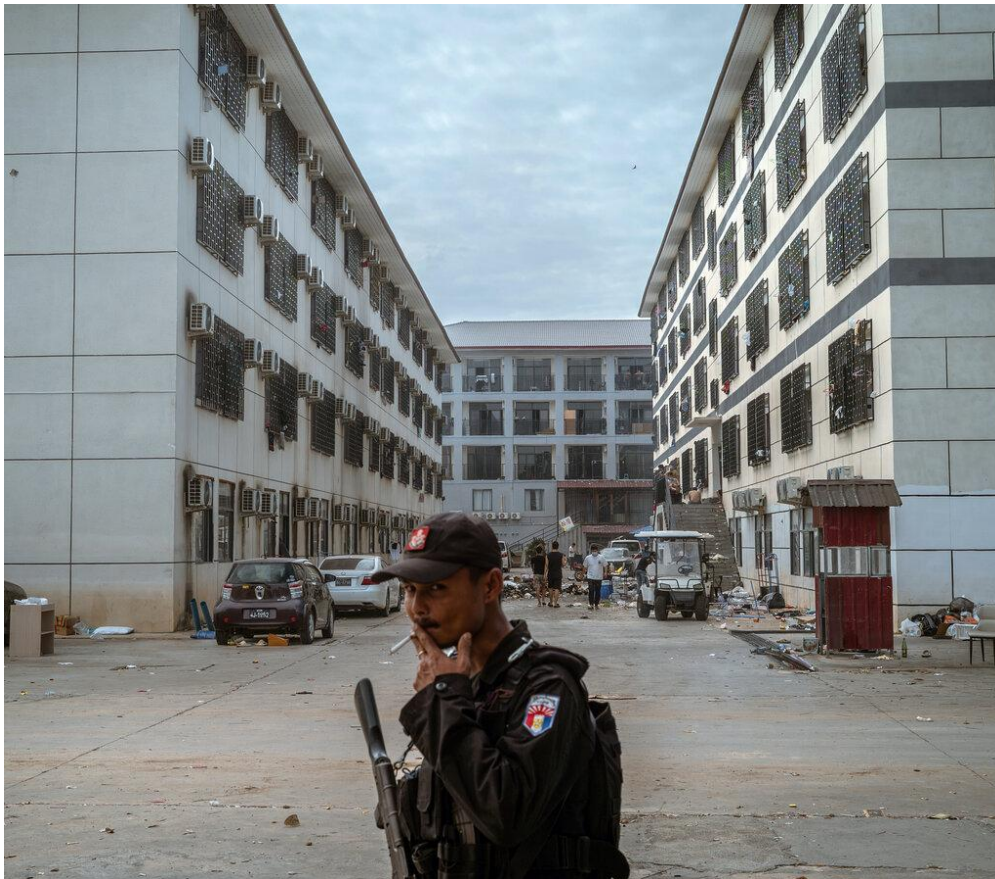




By [Sam Sifton](#)

Good morning. The world's attention this week has largely been on Iran, on Venezuela, on Minneapolis. And we have news from all three below. I'd like to start this morning, though, with a look at some remarkable reporting from Myanmar.



The Shunda Park scam complex in Myanmar. Jes Aznar for The New York Times

Where scams come from

Deep in the densely forested borderlands of war-torn Myanmar, two of our journalists recently visited Shunda Park, an office center that opened for business in 2024 with more than 3,500 workers from nearly 30 nations. Some were there willingly, some had been kidnapped. All were dedicated to the causes of online chicanery and digital scams.

The park was largely abandoned, having been captured and closed by one of the rebel militias that has been fighting the Myanmar military for years. But the militia allowed Hannah Beech, a reporter who covers Asia, and Jes Aznar, a photographer, to document what Hannah called “the inner sanctum of this secretive, highly fortified industry.” They were able to meet some of the scammers as well — some of whom were trying to return to their home countries, and others who were looking for another gig in the gift economy.

What they saw was amazing, just one of Southeast Asia’s compounds of cyberfraud, an enterprise that took at least \$10 billion out of the United States alone in 2024.



Jes Aznar for The New York Times

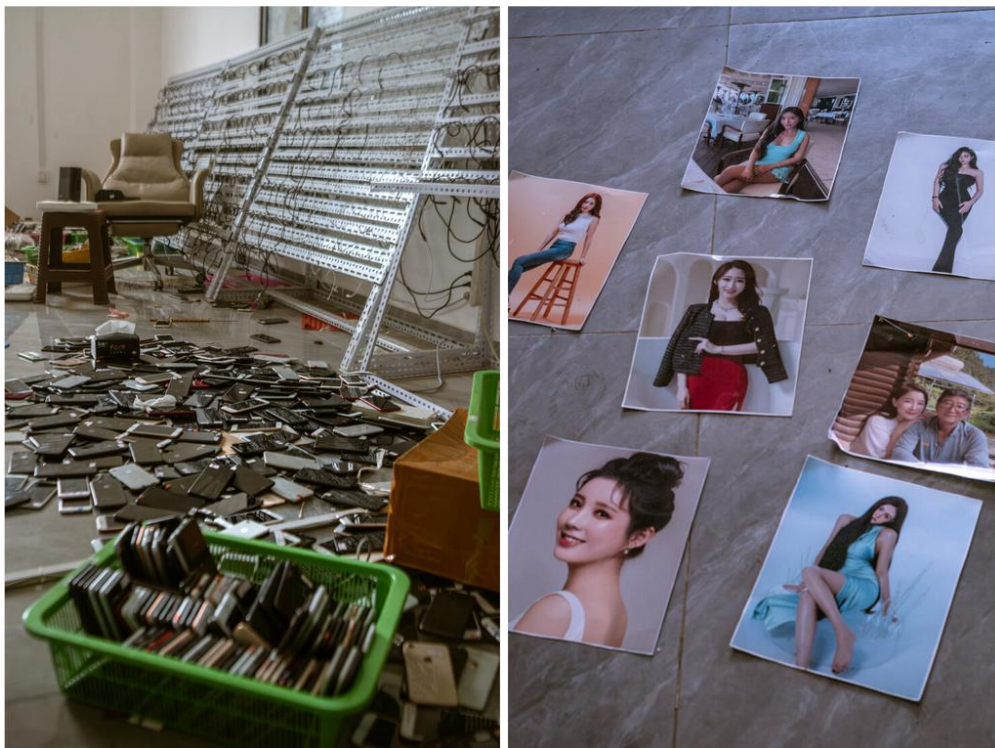
There were huge open-plan work rooms filled with computer monitors, the walls adorned with inspirational, always-be-closing sale slogans: “Keep going,” “Dream chaser,” “Making money matters the most.” Videoconference suites were decorated with (fake) business books and (fake) modern art meant to evoke the boardroom of a successful business concern.

Here were photographs the scammers used to help establish false identities. There were a trio of porta-potty-style boxes that scammers told Hannah were used as punishment chambers, in plain view of the rest of the room. Everywhere were discarded cellphones. “In some buildings, with nearly every step I took,” Hannah wrote, “I crunched on SIM cards, scattered like snow in the tropical heat.”

A Sisyphean loop

Who ran this place? A Chinese transnational crime network — in other words, a gang. The militia doesn’t have the resources to investigate, and no one else has expressed much interest either.

Whoever it was ran the business with brutal efficiency. Hannah spoke with several scammers whose bodies bore scars from beatings or tight shackles. They weren’t paid for their 12-hour shifts. Hannah wrote about that beautifully, tragically: “Life was a Sisyphean loop: sleep, eat, scam, eat, sleep, scam.”



Thousands of cellphones and photographs used in the scamming business. Jes Aznar for The New York Times

One told her his job for more than a year was to send “hellos” to social media accounts. If he didn’t receive responses to at least 5 percent of his greetings, he said, he would be punished physically.

The workers came from all over the world: Namibia, Russia, Zimbabwe, Malaysia, France. Some Chinese scammers were paid, Hannah discovered, though often not what they’d been promised.

Under fire

Hannah and Jes traveled to Shunda Park during what was supposed to be a lull in the fighting between the rebel militia, known as the Karen National Liberation Army, and the Myanmar military.

Mark that word, *supposed*. The thud of mortar rounds and sharp cracks of gunfire provided the soundtrack for their visit. As they worked, shells flew over their heads and landed across the river in neighboring Thailand. The day after they left the compound, a 60-millimeter mortar hit a building where they’d been sheltering, wounding three people, including their guide.

I urge you to read [more](#), and to take in more of Jes’s remarkable photography, [here](#).

Now, let’s see what else is happening in the world.
