International Affairs & Security

A recent UNODC report indicates a 17% surge in opium poppy cultivation in Myanmar, expanding to 53,100 hectares, the highest in a decade. The increase is linked to ongoing internal conflict, severe economic stress, and profitable opium prices that push rural communities toward illicit cultivation.

This development is significant for the region, particularly the Golden Triangle, a mountainous zone at the confluence of the Ruak and Mekong rivers spanning Myanmar, Thailand, and Laos. Historically one of the world’s most notorious centres of opium production, the area continues to influence drug trafficking routes and regional security dynamics.

The renewed rise in cultivation underscores the persistent nexus between instability, poverty, and the drug economy in Southeast Asia.