

Press Release

June 2, 2026

KDDI and Sumitomo must end irresponsible partnership with Myanmar junta telecom company responsible for surveillance and censorship

Justice For Myanmar
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Network Against Japan Arms Trade (NAJAT)

Justice For Myanmar, Mekong Watch and five Japanese organizations have raised serious concerns that Japanese multinationals KDDI Corporation and Sumitomo Corporation's continued partnership with the junta-controlled Myanma Posts and Telecommunication (MPT) is contributing to adverse human rights impacts in Myanmar.

The groups have urged KDDI and Sumitomo to end its irresponsible partnership with MPT and to responsibly exit from Myanmar.

Five years after the Myanmar military attempted a coup, the internet in Myanmar is among the most restricted in the world. The military junta's digital surveillance and censorship has been escalated to unprecedented levels, as it staged a recent sham election. The illegal junta imposed cybersecurity and election related laws that criminalized speech, leading to orchestrated prosecutions against more than 400 people, including for online activity.

On February 27, 2026, the groups sent a letter to the companies addressing concerns raised by Justice For Myanmar's investigation into the junta's digital surveillance system, which exposed significant collaboration between the junta and the Chinese company Geedge Networks in implementing a commercial version of China's "Great Firewall". This has given the junta unprecedented capabilities to track down, arrest, torture and kill civilians.

The report highlights that MPT was among the first operators to implement this far-reaching surveillance and censorship technology for the military junta (*1).

MPT also continues to provide web hosting services for junta propaganda sites, including the junta's information and defence ministries, the Office of the Commander in Chief and its propaganda sites Infosheet and Myawaddy News.

MPT is a joint operation between the now junta-controlled Ministry of Transport and Communications (MOTC) and Sumitomo Corporation and KDDI Corporation through the joint venture KDDI Summit Global Myanmar Co., Ltd. (KSGM).

In the letters sent to KDDI and Sumitomo, the groups inquired whether the company is aware of MPT's involvement in the implementation of mass surveillance and censorship; whether it

intends to divest from their business in Myanmar given the increasing human rights risks; and whether they have conducted human rights due diligence on the provision of hosting services to the military junta.

In their responses, the companies recalled that the agreement between KSGM and MPT was revised to reduce the scope of KSGM's support. Yet the companies continue to maintain a commercial relationship with MPT despite its direct responsibility in serious human rights violations.

The companies further noted they remain in a position to support MPT's telecommunications operations. However, they asserted that KSGM does not have a capital relationship with, or participate in the joint operations of MPT, despite having a joint operation agreement. The companies also asserted that they are neither involved in nor in a position to have knowledge of, or comment on, the specific activities concerning surveillance products, and website provision referenced in your inquiry.

The groups criticize this justification as inadequate. Even in the absence of a formal capital relationship, KSGM's ongoing support for MPT and its operations risks contributing to adverse human rights impacts. MPT's telecom infrastructure supports the junta's ability to deploy surveillance systems and censorship tools, and KSGM's continued support risks aiding and abetting the junta's commission of international crimes.

The groups further criticize the companies' justification for maintaining their involvement on the basis of providing telecommunication networks for the people of Myanmar and a "mobile phone ecosystem which offers a competitive choice of provider." Continuing business with MPT risks further sustaining infrastructure that is being used to commit serious human rights violations. Any efforts to engage MPT on human rights concerns appear to have failed, evidenced by MPT's continued central role in the junta's digital repression.

Therefore, the organizations call on KDDI and Sumitomo to immediately and responsibly end their partnership with MPT and ensure their business activities do not contribute to or enable abuses by the Myanmar military junta.

Justice For Myanmar spokesperson Yadanar Maung says: "MPT is a key part of the military's digital architecture of control that is actively being used to surveil, arrest, torture and kill civilians. Sumitomo and KDDI's continued partnership with MPT poses risks not only to the people of Myanmar, but also to the companies and investors through potential liability under international law for adverse impacts. They should immediately end their partnership with MPT and responsibly exit."

Yuka Kiguchi, Executive Director of Mekong Watch, says: "Having provided various technologies to MPT to date, KDDI and Sumitomo cannot evade their responsibility to protect human rights by citing the absence of a capital relationship. The two companies' continued support of MPT while these human rights violations are taking place by the Myanmar military regime cannot be considered a fulfillment of their responsibility to protect human rights."

Read the letter of inquiry from civil society organizations here (February 27, 2026).

KDDI https://www.mekongwatch.org/PDF/Q_20260227_KDDI_Eng.pdf

Sumitomo https://www.mekongwatch.org/PDF/Q_20260227_Sumitomo_Eng.pdf

Read Sumitomo Corporation and KDDI Group's responses:

Sumitomo (The English letter follows the Japanese letter)

https://www.mekongwatch.org/PDF/A_20260326_Sumitomo.pdf

KDDI Summit Global Myanmar Company Limited, Human Rights Policy

https://www.mekongwatch.org/PDF/KSGM_Human_Rights_Policy.pdf

KDDI (Japanese only)

https://www.mekongwatch.org/PDF/A_20260326_Sumitomo.pdf

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Notes:

(*1) <https://www.justiceformyanmar.org/stories/silk-road-of-surveillance>