• Second Panglong Peace Conference commences with attendance from 17 groups, and UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon.

• Former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to lead commission in Rakhine State, will submit report within one year providing recommendations to the Burmese Government.

• USDP reshuffles party leadership through internal elections with Thein Sein replaced by Than Htay as Chairman.

• 22 ministries announce achievements in first 100 days at a series of press conferences.

• Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG) publishes report highlighting that impunity is still a key challenge facing women in Karen State.

• 100 workers protest at former government run agricultural machinery factory which fired nearly all of its employees without cause.

• Measles outbreak hits the Naga Self-Administrated Zone, reportedly killing 82.

• Strong earthquake strikes Bagan, kills three and damages 400 pagodas.

• Dams review promised but construction on the Salween River still an urgent concern.

• Over 100,000 people are displaced by flooding during late July and early August.

• Detained Burmese migrant workers begin the planned repatriation process from Malaysia.

• National Parliament votes to borrow US$100 million from the World Bank to develop financial sector.

• Bill amending 2016 Union Budget Law passed, cutting a total of K470billion (around US$389.9 million) from 14 ministries.

• Parliament rejects USDP proposal to challenge US sanctions.

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Second ‘Panglong’ Peace Conference opened by Suu Kyi and Ban Ki-moon

On 31 August, the Second Panglong Peace Conference commenced in Naypyidaw. The conference, attended by 17 groups, was opened by Aung San Suu Kyi and UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon. All armed ethnic groups were invited and most groups agreed to put down their weapons to attend. The three armed groups absent were the Ta’ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDA) and the Arakan Army (AA), following objections to pre-conditions, including the demand that they “Surrender their stance of armed struggle.” The conference was expected to conclude on 4 September.

The conference was to be attended by around 1,800 invited delegates, including non-signatories to last year’s nationwide ceasefire agreement, with the NLD-led government repeatedly stressing an all-inclusive approach. Ban Ki-moon called the event a “Promising first step” of attempting to solve the country’s decades-long armed conflicts and insisted on a minimum of 30% representation of women at all levels of the peace talks.

On 29 August, Rangoon/Yangon Regional Parliament showed its support for the upcoming conference with an event attended by politicians and civil society groups. On 28 August, hundreds of people gathered in downtown Rangoon to support the Peace Conference, joined by the city mayor, the speaker of the Rangoon regional parliament, politicians, activists and celebrities. Similar events were reported around the country, including an event in Mogok, Mandalay Region, where 300 people attended including displaced families from Kachin State, civil society groups and representatives from the Lisu National Development Party, the Ta’ang (Palaung) National Party and the Shan Nationalities Democratic Party (SNDP).

On 11 August, the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) finished a four-day workshop with its former president Thein Sein, and declared the party was ready to participate in the peace conference, where its position on the peace process will be announced.

The authorities ignored calls made ahead of the conference to release about 83 political prisoners, and to drop prosecutions directed at a further 142 people. On 17 August, Tate Naing, Secretary of the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) said most of those jailed were sentenced under the Unlawful Association Act for being relatives of ethnic armed group members.

On 31 August, it was reported that Zaw Khin Lay of the Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process, which has consistently called for more women to be involved in the peace process, said that the alliance was invited to send 10 representatives as observers, and hoped to present a briefing paper. During August, Human Rights Watch (HRW) released a report which noted the exclusion of women in the peace process, with many women’s rights groups “Being treated with disdain or as ‘spoilers’ for pressing for the inclusion of women’s rights” [see Reports section],

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1. Myanmar Times (31 Aug 16) UN chief Ban Ki-moon calls for ‘strengthened’ peace process
2. BBC (31 Aug 16) Myanmar ethnic groups attend government peace talks
3. BBC (31 Aug 16) Myanmar ethnic groups attend government peace talks
4. DVB (17 Aug 16) Govt keeping ‘door wide open’ for ethnic groups at peace talks, Myanmar Times (30 Aug 16)
5. Myanmar Times (30 Aug 16) The high stakes and lofty goals of the Panglong Conference
6. Myanmar Times (31 Aug 16) UN chief Ban Ki-moon calls for ‘strengthened’ peace process, DVB (02 Sep 16)
7. Women’s voices not heard at peace talks
8. DVB (28 Aug 16) Crowds gather to voice support for Burma’s Peace Talks
9. Myanmar Times (29 Aug 16) Yangon and Mogok rally in support of Panglong
10. Myanmar Times (12 Aug 16) USDP ready to have its say at Panglong meet-up
11. Myanmar Times (18 Aug 16) Activists call for release of all political prisoners before Panglong Conference
12. Myanmar Times (18 Aug 16) Activists call for release of all political prisoners before Panglong Conference
13. Myanmar Times (31 Aug 16) As the Panglong Conference begins, where are the women?
14. Myanmar Times (31 Aug 16) As the Panglong Conference begins, where are the women?
Kofi Annan to lead commission on violence in Arakan State

On 24 August, the Office of the State Counsellor announced that former UN general secretary Kofi Annan will head an advisory commission in Rakhine/Arakan State set to write an impartial report and provide recommendations for the Burmese government in accordance with international standards within one year (this information was released in September however it has been updated in this Bulletin for accuracy). The advisory commission has been tasked with finding preventive measures for conflicts, ensuring humanitarian assistance, rights and reconciliation, establishing basic infrastructure, and promoting development plans in the state. It will submit its findings to the government through the state counsellor, and will release that report which will be made available to the public. The commission is made up of three international experts and six Burmese nationals including:

- Kofi Annan, former UN General Secretary,
- Win Mra, Chair of the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission (MNHRC),
- Dr. Thar Hla Shwe, President of Myanmar Red Cross Society,
- Ghassan Salame, former Lebanese Minister of Culture and former UN Special Advisor to the Secretary-General,
- Laetitia van den Assum, the former Special Advisor to UNAIDS, and former Netherlands’ Ambassador to the UK,
- Aye Lwin, a core member and founder of Religions for Peace,
- Dr. Mya Thida, the President of the Obstetrical and Gynecological Society of Myanmar Medical Association (MMA), and a member of the Myanmar Academy of Medical Science,
- Khin Maung Lay, a member of the MNHRC,
- Saw Khin Tint, the Chairperson of the Rakhine Literature and Culture Association, and Vice-Chairperson of the Rakhine Women’s Association.

On 25 August, the Arakan National Party (ANP), called for the commission to be dissolved. The ANP added that “We are an election-winning party representing the people of Arakan State [...] by going ahead and forming a commission without gauging the opinion of the Arakan people and our MPs is acting above democratic principles, and is therefore unacceptable to us.” On 30 August, Aung Kyaw Zan MP, from the ANP, formally objected to the inclusion of foreigners on the commission by submitting an urgent proposal to the People’s Assembly recommending that the body be comprised of only local experts. Speaker Win Myint, of the NLD, moved to accept the proposal for debate in early September.

DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE

USDP re-organizes, Thein Sein steps down but doesn’t leave

The military-aligned Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) held its central conference and elections for new party leadership at the divisional and state level from 22-24 August at their headquarters in Naypyitaw. The three day conference saw a significant reshuffle of party leadership through internal elections. It also culminated in the surprise resignation of USDP Chairman Thein Sein, who was succeeded by Than Htay. It was less than a year since Thein Sein became Chairman of

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15 Irrawaddy (8 Sept 16) Kofi Annan: Commission will not do ‘human rights investigation’ in Arakan State
16 DVB (25 Aug 16) Arakan Commission must address ‘decades of discrimination’: Amnesty, Myanmar Times (29 Aug 16) Anger over international experts appointed to Rakhine commission
17 DVB (26 Aug 16) Arakan nationalists reject Kofi Annan’s Commission
18 Myanmar Times (31 Aug 16) Pyithu Hluttaw to debate foreigners’ inclusion on Rakhine commission following MP’s motion
19 Myanmar Times (31 Aug 16) Pyithu Hluttaw to debate foreigners’ inclusion on Rakhine commission following MP’s motion
20 Irrawaddy (05 Aug 16) USDP to reorganize
21 Irrawaddy (23 Aug 16) USDP reshuffles leadership, ex-military men predominate, RFA (23 Aug 16) Myanmar opposition party changes leadership strategy
22 Myanmar Times (23 Aug 16) U Thein Sein steps down from USDP chairmanship
the USDP in October 2015 [see October 2015 Bulletin] and a year since the ouster of Shwe Mann in August 2015 [see August 2015 Bulletin].

It was speculated that the party changes could be an attempt to rebrand ahead of by-elections scheduled for early 2017. At present, not much is known about the direction Than Htay will take the USDP, or about his history. The USDP further formed a new leadership committee comprised of nine members, Thein Sein as the lead. Newly elected USDP members:

- **Chairman: Than Htay:**
  Ex-minister of the Ministries of Rail Transportation and Energy and former Brigadier General in the Burmese Army.

- **Vice Chairman: Myat Hein:**
  Former General of the Air Force for over 30 years. In February 2013 he was appointed as the Minister for Communications and Information Technology.

- **General Secretary: Thet Naing Win:**
  Through the 2000s he was commander of the Southeastern Regional Command, Mon state. From 2010-2013 he served as Chief of the Defense Ministries Bureau of Special Operations. In 2013 he stepped down from this position and became minister of Border Affairs until August 2015.

- **Disciplinary Officer: Khin Yi:**
  Former Minister for Immigration and Population and former Chief of Police.

- **Head of Operations: Soe Naing**
- **Secretary: Pike Htway**
- **Secretary: Than Tun**
- **Secretary: Kyaw Kyaw Htay**
- **Secretary: Tin Aung Chin**
- **Secretary: San San Nwe**

**Ministries announce achievements undertakings in first 100 days**

Throughout August, the Ministry of Information hosted a series of conferences in Naypyidaw so that 22 ministries could highlight their accomplishments in the 100 days since the NLD officially took power. It became clear that the progress reported was mainly an extension of the previous regime’s goals. Interestingly, neither the President’s Office nor the Ministry of Defense took part in these conferences.

**The Ministry of Electricity and Energy** stated their success in installing new power lines and transformers in various cities and that plans are underway for 1.7 million households to have access to electricity in the next five years.

**The Ministry of Border Affairs** gave details on the progress of access to safe drinking water but was extremely vague about the situation of IDPs in Arakan/Rakhine State which is a serious ongoing humanitarian issue [see Ethnic Affairs].

**The Ministry of Foreign Affairs** listed their developments in terms of bilateral relations with ASEAN countries. They also mentioned the cancellation of names from Burma/Myanmar’s infamous black list.

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23 GNLM (23 Aug 16) By-elections to be held early next year
24 Myanmar Times (23 Aug 16) U Thein Sein steps down from USDP chairmanship
25 Irrawaddy (25 Aug 16) Meet the leaders of the opposition
26 ALTSEAN-Burma, Regime Watch, Cabinet Minister (webpage)
27 Irrawaddy (14 Feb 2014) Former Generals to run Burma’s Telecoms, Border Affairs Ministries, Eleven Myanmar
28 Eleven (19 Sep 15) Thousands attend USDP rally
29 GNLM (13 Aug 16) Reviewing our efforts, three ministries hold press conference on work performance for first 100 days.
30 GNLM (13 Aug 16) Reviewing our efforts, three ministries hold press conference on work performance for first 100 days.
and the repatriation of citizens abroad. While these statements are true, not all the names on the list have been publically released, the total number of names removed is equal to 7% of the total list, and the status of those who have been removed is not publically available.

The Ministry of Home Affairs highlighted the Anti-Corruption Commission work to combat graft. This came after National League for Democracy (NLD) lawmakers called for an increase in efforts to implement Burma’s anti-corruption law and said the Anti-Corruption Committee was ineffectual. The military-run Ministry also boasted of drug arrests and drug confiscation, but made no comment on the systematic nature of the drug problem.

Ministry of Transport and Communication announced the planning of a new policy for the transportation sector, the installation of machinery and radars to monitor storms and weather patterns, the suspension of 16 rail routes due to losses, and improved telecommunications infrastructure.

Ministry of Construction announced the initiation of work on affordable housing, measures taken to reduce road accidents along the Yangon/Rangoon-Mandalay highway, and development of a Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB) laws and construction management regulations.

Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement shared efforts to address water scarcity caused by natural disasters and a planned project to protect street children, the disabled and the aged.

Ministry of Planning and Finance announced the revision of company registration fees, introduction of training courses on planning, finance and investment in regions and states, use of 5% commercial tax on prepaid phone cards for the education sector, and the launch of the Myanmar Automated Cargo Clearance at ports and airports in Rangoon.

Ministry of Religious and Cultural Affairs noted the assistance given to various places of worship and religious education centers, with Bagan being added to the World Heritage Site list, but did not speak of efforts to protect freedom of religion, which falls within its mandate.

Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation gave details on the loans to farmers, the digging of wells, measures to address impacts of excess heat and flooding, and a new forestry law. The Ministry developed not only a national climate strategy but also developed Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) for the natural gas, oil and hydropower sectors.

Ministry of Information announced that they conducted training and workshops for the spokespersons of government ministries, conducted computer training and English language courses, and efforts to upgrade local libraries to community centers.

Ministry of Education announced the implementation of sanitation, health and development programs, access for teachers to access banking, and work with 18 other ministries and 14 regional governments to open short-term vocational training school and increase efforts to cease rote learning.

31 GNLM (13 Aug 16) Reviewing our efforts, three ministries hold press conference on work performance for first 100 days.
32 Burma Partnership (02 Aug 16) Blacklist of border-based pro-democracy and rights activists must be removed to ensure greater civil society space
33 GNLM (17 Aug 16) Three ministries clarify undertakings in first 100 days
34 Myanmar Times (04 Aug 16) Pyithu Hluttaw accepts proposal for anti-graft push, RFA (02 Aug 16) Ruling-party lawmakers call for tougher action on graft in Myanmar
35 GNLM (17 Aug 16) Three ministries clarify undertakings in first 100 days
36 GNLM (17 Aug 16) Three ministries clarify undertakings in first 100 days
37 GNLM (17 Aug 16) Three ministries clarify undertakings in first 100 days
38 GNLM (20 Aug 16) Three more ministries hold press conference on first 100-day work performance
39 GNLM (20 Aug 16) Three more ministries hold press conference on first 100-day work performance
40 GNLM (20 Aug 16) Three more ministries hold press conference on first 100-day work performance
41 GNLM (24 Aug 16) Four Ministries clarify undertakings in the first 100 days
42 GNLM (24 Aug 16) Four Ministries clarify undertakings in the first 100 days
shared enrollment statistics and the amount of schools upgraded during the academic year, which includes the prior nine months under the Thein Sein regime.43

Ministry of Commerce announced the launching of a website of the National Trade Repository, extension of licenses and relaxed trade rules at border trade centers, and implementation of measures to prevent illegal imports, and noted exports have fallen compared to last year.44

Ministry of Industry announced the increased production output of lifesaving anti- venom, the co- opening of a cement factory with the Myanmar Conch Cement Co, and the provision of technologies to various businesses to aid with product development, for example, tea leaf makers and salt makers.45

Ministry of the State Counsellors Office focused their update on the human rights situation in Rakhine state and the formation of the advisory commission led by Kofi Annan. In response to concerns that the Commission would push for the government to accept the Rohingya against the provisions of the 1982 Citizenship Law, NLD spokesperson Zaw Htay emphasized that government will work in line with current laws and the constitution. He said the Commission does not have the mandate to force the government to follow all suggestions.46

Ministry of Health and Sport announced a five year plan to improve health systems, organized occupational health and worksite safety courses, launched a school health program in cooperation with the ministry of education, and opened community clinics.47

Ministry of Hotels and Tourism announced the relaxing of license fees and e-license applications, issued hotel and tour guide licenses and launched a Facebook page to raise awareness of natural disasters.48

Ministry of Ethnic Affairs announced that the formation of this new ministry is 90% complete and its predicted completion date is 16 September.49

Auditor-General’s Office announced the commencement of accounting reforms and international financial reporting standards to be applied to the private sector.50

Union Civil Service Board announced they carried out reforms in the Board’s examinations and teaching methods of the central institutes of Civil Service, curriculum review and development of course syllabus, and prepared for the establishment of a Civil Service Academy.51

Ministry of Labor, Immigration and Population Minister Thein Swe stated that the citizen scrutiny process is a priority for the ministry in the 100 days plan [see May 2016 Bulletin]. National verification cards were issued to 7,957 people in regions and states and 2,223 in some townships in Rakhine State and a national verification process was carried out.52

Attorney General’s Office gave legal advice on 52 of 55 draft laws as well as sending 130 agreements for review by government organizations.53

Bill to repeal Emergency Provisions Act approved

43 GNLM (24 Aug 16) Four Ministries clarify undertakings in the first 100 days
44 GNLM (24 Aug 16) Four Ministries clarify undertakings in the first 100 days
45 GNLM (24 Aug 16) Four Ministries clarify undertakings in the first 100 days
46 GNLM (27 Aug 16) Ministries clarify undertakings in first 100 days
47 GNLM (27 Aug 16) Ministries clarify undertakings in first 100 days
48 GNLM (27 Aug 16) Ministries clarify undertakings in first 100 days
49 GNLM (27 Aug 16) Ministries clarify undertakings in first 100 days
50 GNLM (31 Aug 16) Sixth press conference on governments first 100-days held in Naypyidaw
51 GNLM (31 Aug 16) Sixth press conference on governments first 100-days held in Naypyidaw
52 GNLM (31 Aug 16) Sixth press conference on governments first 100-days held in Naypyidaw
53 GNLM (31 Aug 16) Sixth press conference on governments first 100-days held in Naypyidaw
On 24 August the Lower House of Parliament approved a Bill aimed at repealing the 1950 Emergency Provisions Act. The Bill was proposed by Bill Committee member Ba Shein on 1 August. The Emergency Provisions Act carries the death penalty and up to seven years in prison for a range of vague offences against the state. It has been commonly used to stifle political dissent.

**Labor, Immigration and Population Minister refuses to relax 1982 Citizenship Law**

Union Minister for Labor, Immigration and Population Thein Swe, told the Upper House of Parliament on 3 August that he would not relax the provisions in the 1982 Citizenship Law when it came to the identification of residents of Kokang, Northern Shan State. Thein Swe warned that the language, appearance and traditions of Kokang are very similar to those "Of a neighboring country who can easily immigrate to Myanmar. There is concern [...] of making false representation or concealment to acquire citizenship.

**MNHRC heavily criticized for poor performance of duties**

In a joint session of the Union Parliament in Rangoon on 28 July, lawmakers criticized the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission (MNHRC) for its poor track record regarding government ministries’ compliance with their recommendations. Ma Thandar, award winning human rights defender and widow of late journalist Par Gyi who died in military custody in 2014, noted that of 19 recommendations made to 14 ministries in 2014, the Commission failed to publish which ministries responded to them transparently. MNHRC Chairman Win Mra admitted that Ministry cooperation has been weak and only 32% of recommendations had received responses within 30 days. Of the remaining 68%, only 32% responded in 90 days, and more than 100 letters went without any response at all. The MNHRC were further criticized for their weak collaborative efforts with the civil society, weak promotion of prisoner rights, and the reluctance to investigate human rights abuses on their own initiative. Chairman Win Mra promised to take on all suggestions and criticisms and present a comprehensive report next year.

**WOMEN’S RIGHTS**

Women facing fewer opportunities, as impunity remains uncontrolled in Karen State

On 3 August, the Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG) published a report titled “Hidden Strengths, Hidden Struggles” detailing the experiences of nearly 100 women in Karen/Kayin State from 2012 to early 2016. Whilst the report concludes that some of the worst wartime abuses have subsided, such as forced labor and killings, it identifies a new set of challenges which have emerged while a culture of impunity still grips Burma/Myanmar’s rural communities [see Reports section].

The report described new and ongoing abuses ranging from gender-based violence to loss of land and limited access to justice, and noted that offenders “Routinely enjoyed impunity.” It found that women who had taken on leadership positions in their wards and villages while men were away during conflict were now being squeezed out of those roles.
KHRG called on the government to urgently enact the Protection and Prevention of Violence Against Women Bill, which has been stuck in drafting committees for several years. 

**ETHNIC AFFAIRS & CONFLICT**

**Armed conflict: clashes, civilian abuse**

In August, clashes continued to be small in number prior to the planned Second Panglong Peace Conference, however hostilities continued in Shan State between the Restoration Council of the Shan State (RCSS) and the Ta’ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), as well as in Kachin State.

- **3 August:** Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA) and the Border Guard Force (BGF) clashed in Kawkareik Township, Karen/Kayin State, injuring at least four residents, including a pregnant woman and an eighth-grade school student, after artillery shells landed and exploded in the village. 
  
- **8 August:** The Kachin Independence Army (KIA) attacked a police convoy, injuring nine officers near Hpakant, Kachin State, in an area where the Tatmadaw and the KIA recently exchanged fire. 
  
- **18 August:** The Tatmadaw launched artillery attacks against KIA posts near its Laiza headquarters in Kachin State. 
  
- **28 August:** It was reported that the Shan State Progress Party/Shan State Army (SSPP/SSA) clashed with the Tatmadaw near Kong Ark Lieng village, Tangyan Township, Shan State, when the Tatmadaw violated SSPP/SSA territory. 

**HUMAN RIGHTS**

Protests at former government ran agricultural machinery factory

On 7 August, about 100 workers from an agriculture machinery factory in Rangoon/Yangon Region staged a three-hour protest against the Young Investment Group Industry Co Ltd (YIG), claiming the company had fired nearly all of its employees without cause. Protesters said YIG, which was transferred by the government into private hands in 2013, had dishonored the terms of its contract with employees by gradually terminating all but six of the 69 workers employed at the time of the transfer. 

**HUMANITARIAN**

Measles outbreak kills up to 82 in Naga

Starting in mid-July, and throughout August, a measles outbreak hit the Naga Self-Administered Zone, Sagaing Region, with unconfirmed reports that 82 people had been killed by 30 August, according to regional National League for Democracy (NLD) MP, Law Yone. 

On 26 August, the Ministry of Health said its vaccination drive since the outbreak had covered 85% of the region, including 15,054 children. Dr Htar Htar Lin, the Ministry of Health’s deputy director for

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67 Myanmar Times (03 Aug 16) Karen women leader marginalized in wake of ceasefire  
68 DVB (05 Aug 16) DKBA, BGF clash in Karen State, Irrawaddy (05 Aug 16) Four civilians injured in Karen State clash  
69 Myanmar Times (10 Aug 16) KIA admits to ambushing police convoy en route to Hpakant  
70 Myanmar Times (25 Aug 16) Fighting intensifies in Kachin as peace conference approaches  
71 S.H.A.N. (29 Aug 16) Burma army attacks SSPP/SSA ahead of Panglong Conference  
72 Myanmar Times (08 Aug 16) Dismissals at agricultural machinery factory spark protest  
73 Myanmar Times (08 Aug 16) Dismissals at agricultural machinery factory spark protest  
74 Myanmar Times (30 Aug 16) Naga region still grappling with measles outbreak  
75 RFA (11 Aug 16) Authorities Begin Vaccinations to Combat Measles Outbreak in Myanmar’s Naga Zone, Myanmar Times (30 Aug 16) Naga region still grappling with measles outbreak, Myanmar Times (09 Aug 16) Measles vaccine drive launched to stem Naga outbreak
immunization, announced plans to administer 10 other vaccines in October, November and December to protect against other potential health threats in the region.\textsuperscript{76}

**Strong earthquake strikes Bagan, kills three and damages 400 pagodas**

On 24 August, a 6.8-magnitude earthquake struck Magwe region, killing three people and damaging about 400 Buddhist pagodas in nearby Bagan.\textsuperscript{77} The quake, which was felt as far away as Thailand, India and Bangladesh, occurred about 52 miles below the earth’s surface, 15 miles west of the town of Chauk on Irrawaddy River south of Bagan, according Myo Thant, Secretary of the Myanmar Earthquake Committee.\textsuperscript{78}

On 25 August, President Htin Kyaw visited the region and met with the Minister for Religious and Cultural Affairs, Thura Aung Ko, and Mandalay Region Chief Minister, Zaw Myint Maung, in Bagan, who told him that the damaged pagodas would be repaired by local restorers and administrators working in collaboration with experts from the United Nations cultural body UNESCO.\textsuperscript{79}

**UK promises help to tackle and prevent malaria**

On 25 August, UK Minister of State at the Department for International Development, Rory Stewart, announced that the UK Government would provide assistance to help tackle malaria and strengthen Burma/Myanmar’s capacity to respond to humanitarian disasters and extreme weather.\textsuperscript{80}

**NATURAL RESOURCES**

**Dams review promised but construction on the Salween River still an urgent concern**

On 2 August, Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation, Dr. Htun Win, told Parliament that there will be a review of all dams through Burma/Myanmar, to consider efficiency, cost-effectiveness and long term benefit.\textsuperscript{81} Despite this, the construction of dams on the Salween River is an urgent concern to those residing in Shan State. Sai Khur Hseng from the Shan Sapawa Environmental Organization stated “While all eyes were on Irrawaddy Myitsone Dam, Burma has quietly sold off the Salween to China.”\textsuperscript{82}

On 17 August, 26 Shan civil society and environmental organizations issued an open letter to Aung San Suu Kyi which called for the suspension of six dam projects along the Salween River.\textsuperscript{83} The letter described the negative consequences of earthquakes, military conflict displacement and agricultural damage.\textsuperscript{84} This was followed by over 20,000 individuals from communities along the Salween River signing a petition on the matter to Aung San Suu Kyi and a demonstration on 21 August by around 80 farmers calling on Aung San Suu Kyi to block the proposed Nao Pha dam.\textsuperscript{85} A rally held on 5 August demonstrating against the 1,200 megawatt Naung Pha dam was followed by a press conference on 23 August where Shan community groups warned that preparations for the construction of the dam appeared to be moving forward regardless of potential negative effects on the peace process.\textsuperscript{86} Ethnic Shan environmental and human rights advocacy organizations have raised concerns that the dams will be constructed without the proper environmental impact assessments (EIAs).\textsuperscript{87}

\textsuperscript{76} Myanmar Times (30 Aug 16) Naga region still grappling with measles outbreak
\textsuperscript{77} RFA (25 Aug 16) Earthquake Kills at Least Three People, Destroys Ancient Pagodas in Central Myanmar, Myanmar Times (29 Aug 16) Nearly 400 Bagan pagodas damaged by earthquake: govt
\textsuperscript{78} RFA (25 Aug 16) Earthquake Kills at Least Three People, Destroys Ancient Pagodas in Central Myanmar
\textsuperscript{79} RFA (25 Aug 16) Myanmar President Visits Bagan to Survey Quake-Damaged Pagodas
\textsuperscript{80} Myanmar Times (29 Aug 16) UK pledges to help Myanmar with malaria, natural disasters
\textsuperscript{81} Myanmar times (04 Aug 16) Govt to survey dams nationwide
\textsuperscript{82} Irrawaddy (23 Aug 16) Environmental advocates: Salween River is being ‘Sold off’ to China
\textsuperscript{83} DVB (18 Aug 16) Shan activists call on Suu Kyi to halt Salween damn
\textsuperscript{84} Irrawaddy (18 Aug 16) Citing grave risks, Shan groups demand halt to Salween Dams
\textsuperscript{85} Myanmar Times (23 Aug 16) Shan farmers protest Nao Pha dam project
\textsuperscript{86} DVB (24 August 16) Shan groups warn Salween dam could fuel conflict
\textsuperscript{87} Irrawaddy (23 Aug 16) Environmental advocates: Salween River is being ‘Sold off’ to China
Displacement

Over 100,000 displaced by floods in late July and early August

Between 23 July and 2 August, the Department of Relief and Resettlement reported that over 100,000 people were displaced by flooding in five regions: Sagaing, Magwe, Mandalay, Irrawaddy and Bago, with more citizens affected by the floods in Kachin State as well. Director of the Department of Meteorology and Hydrology, Kyaw Lwin Oo, said the floods were caused by the swollen Chindwin and Irrawaddy rivers during the peak of the monsoon season. Deputy Director of the Myanmar Red Cross Society, Aung Thaung Shwe, said this year’s flooding was not yet as bad as in 2015 [see Reports section].

On 2 August, the Director of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, Than Htut Swe, said that the government was providing three days of basic rations to those displaced by flooding in Mandalay. On 6 August, the Government announced that it is planning to distribute seeds to paddy farmers who faced the loss of crops from the current flooding, with about 20,000 acres of paddy fields underwater at the time of the announcement.

On 5 August, the Australian government announced that they would provide an extra US$9.2 million in aid to help address the legacy of decades of civil conflict and vulnerability to natural disaster in Burma/Myanmar, as well as the current flood situation.

Repatriation of over 2,000 detained workers in Malaysia begins

On 8 August, the planned repatriation of over 2,000 detained Burmese migrant workers in Malaysia began with over 138 returning to Burma with the help of private donors such as the KBZ Brighter Future Myanmar Foundation and Myanmar Airways International. The Labour and Immigration Ministry Permanent Secretary, Myo Aung, expected the repatriation process would be completed within one month with the use of chartered flights. The KBZ Foundation also provided K100,000 (US$82.55) to each migrant worker. Between 12 and 19 August, another 410 migrants returned to Burma with funding from Phoe La Min trading company and the military.

Economy

Burma to borrow US$100 million from World Bank

On 17 August, the National Parliament voted to borrow US$100 million from the World Bank to develop Burma/Myanmar’s financial sector. Controversy struck over allegations that some of the money would be used to increase the salaries of government staff. Spokesperson from the President’s office, Zaw Htay clarified that while the money would pay for government staff salaries, it didn’t mean that salaries would increase.
The 38-year interest free loan would accrue 0.75% of the total amount in service fees per year after a six year grace period. Of the US$100 million, US$75 million will be directed to the Ministry of Planning and Finance as follows:

1) US$60 million towards providing monthly pay and allowance for civil servants,
2) US$7 million towards technical assistance for transforming state owned banks,
3) US$5 million towards the development of microfinance, and
4) US$3 million towards the capacity building of the staff in the Ministry of National Planning and Finance.

The remaining US$25 million will go to the Central Bank who will use it for four projects:

1) US$15 million to upgrade transactions systems,
2) US$6 million for capacity building and the establishment of a monetary training school,
3) US$2 million for a capacity building development plan, and
4) US$2 million towards building the capacity of Central Bank staff.

**Bill amending 2016 Union Budget Law passed**

On 23 August, the Bill amending the 2016 Union Budget Law was passed to cut a total of K470billion (around US$389.9 million). The ministries of education, health, ethnic affairs, defense, and the state counsellor's office were protected from the cut, while the following 14 ministries were affected:

- The President’s Office,
- Border Affairs,
- Religious Affairs and Culture,
- Electric Power and Energy,
- Industry,
- Construction,
- Hotel and Tourism, and
- Home Affairs,
- Information,
- Transport and Communication,
- Labor, Immigration and Population,
- Trade and Commerce,
- Social Welfare,
- National Planning and Finance.

**Parliament rejects USDP suggestion to challenge US sanctions**

Union Solidarity Development Party (USDP) member Than Soe proposed that the government pressures the US to lift their 1997 pro-democracy sanctions. Than Soe argued that the sanctions were no longer appropriate as the country was no longer ruled by a military regime. 219 lawmakers in parliament rejected his proposal to discuss it, with National League for Democracy (NLD) MPs asserting that the sanctions targeted those who obstructed democracy, and not the entire country.

On 23 August, the US tightened sanctions preventing the import of jade.

**Medium-Term Debt Management Strategy approved by National Parliament**

On 15 August, the National Parliament approved a Medium-Term Debt Strategy. On 12 August, President Htin Kyaw told the National Parliament that a Medium-Term Debt Management Strategy was essential to ensure the better management of public borrowing to ensure economic development, peace
and stability. According to Deputy Minister of Finance and Planning Maung Maung Win, the strategy would ensure cost effective ways to meet the government's financing needs while promoting the domestic market for government securities.108

OTHER BURMA NEWS IN AUGUST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>News</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28 Jul</td>
<td>MPs called for a reform in tax collection, lobbying for ‘fiscal federalism’ that would share tax collection and revenue more evenly between central government, state and regional governments, and township administrations.110</td>
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<tr>
<td>30 Jul</td>
<td>Myanmar received over US$370 million from Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the past three months from China, Brunei, Germany, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Singapore, Thailand, Taiwan and the United Kingdom.111</td>
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<td>31 Jul</td>
<td>Dr Hun Win, deputy Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation announced upgrades to waterways and irrigation to develop Burma/Myanmar’s agriculture and livestock sectors.112</td>
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<td>01 Jul</td>
<td>The Union Election Commission (UEC) will seek help from Civil Service Organizations (CSOs) and local election observers to ensure an accurate voter list in future elections.113</td>
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<tr>
<td>02 Jul</td>
<td>Lawmakers called for an increase in efforts implement a three year old anti-corruption law. It is believed that the Anti-Corruption Commission, set up in 2014, ignored many cases involving high level officials and cronies. Burma is ranked 147 out of 168 on Transparency Internationals 2015 Corruption Perception Index.115</td>
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<tr>
<td>04 Jul</td>
<td>Burma’s Supreme Courts will work with local courts to fairly distribute cases and manage performance in order to boost public trust in the system. More than 170,000 criminal cases were filed from 01 January to 30 June and nearly 50,000 are yet to go to trial.117</td>
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<tr>
<td>05 Jul</td>
<td>In June, the United Democratic Party (UDP) will provide microfinance loans to those willing to act as secretaries and recruiters to strengthen the Party for the 2020 election.118</td>
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<td>06 Jul</td>
<td>The Ministry of Commerce said that over the last four months, the total value of Burma’s external trade decreased by US$750 million compared to the last financial year.119</td>
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<td>08 Jul</td>
<td>A 10-day peacekeeping training course run by the UN involving the Tatmadaw and Australia was opened in Naypyidaw.120</td>
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<td>09 Jul</td>
<td>Four commissioned officers: Colonel Myo Aung, Major Tin Myo Zaw, Major Aung Nay Myo and Captain Lin Naing Soe, and three lower ranking soldiers from Light Infantry Battalion 362, brought before a court martial in Lashio, Shan State, admitted to the killings of five civilians last month. The four commissioned officers admitted to giving the order and the three soldiers admitted to the killings.121</td>
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<tr>
<td>14 Jul</td>
<td>Myanmar Economic Bank (MEB) is partnering with six private banks to distribute K30 billion (US$24.7 million) in five-year loans at interest rates of between 8.5% to 10.5% to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) which make up 90% of Burmese businesses.122</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 15 Jul | President Tin Kyaw has formed a new Special Economic Zone (SEZ) Central Management Committee and a Central Working Committee review all existing and proposed SEZs, to

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108 GNL (13 Aug 16) Medium-Term debt management strategy presented to Pyidaungsu Hluttaw
109 GNL (13 Aug 16) Medium-Term debt management strategy presented to Pyidaungsu Hluttaw
110 GNL (29 Jul 16) The tax man cometh, MPs call for effective tax collection reform, Myanmar Times (01 Aug 16)
111 GNL (14 Aug 16) MPs urge government to adopt ‘fiscal federalism’ when collecting taxes
112 GNL (14 Aug 16) $370 million worth of FDI entered Myanmar last month
113 GNL (14 Aug 16) $370 million worth of FDI entered Myanmar last month
114 GNL (06 Aug 16) Myanmar’s waterways to get nationwide upgrade
115 GNL (02 Aug 16) UEC to cooperate with CSOs to ensure accurate voter lists for future elections
116 GNL (02 Aug 16) UEC to cooperate with CSOs to ensure accurate voter lists for future elections
117 GNL (29 Jul 16) The tax man cometh, MPs call for effective tax collection reform, Myanmar Times (01 Aug 16)
118 GNL (29 Jul 16) The tax man cometh, MPs call for effective tax collection reform, Myanmar Times (01 Aug 16)
119 GNL (02 Aug 16) Ruling-party lawmakers call for tougher action on graft in Myanmar
120 GNL (02 Aug 16) Ruling-party lawmakers call for tougher action on graft in Myanmar
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succeed previous committees that expired under the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) law.\(^{122}\)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>16</th>
<th>The government has frozen the renewal of existing jade permits, and suspended the licensing of new ones, after landslides in Kachin State as a result of the environmental devastation caused by the jade trade.(^{124})</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>The Ministry of Resources and Environmental Conservation has imposed a 10-year logging ban for the Bago Region. Forest conservation and reforestation will occur in this area.(^{125})</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Deputy of Commerce Dr. Than Myint announced 12 new checkpoints along known smuggling routes in Kachin, Shan and Karen States and Mandalay, Sagaing and Pegu Divisions to make up for the disbanding of the anti-smuggling taskforce in 2015.(^{126})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>From 18-22 August, Aung San Suu Kyi visited China to ensure friendly relations.(^{127}) Discussions included the peace process, the Myitsone Dam, development of health, agriculture and assistance with natural disasters, the promotion of the rule of law in border areas, the enhancement of trade, economic cooperation and the construction of a bridge in Kunlong Township, Shan State and two hospitals in Rangoon and Mandalay.(^{128})</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>During April to July this fiscal year, Burma had a total trade value of about US$8 billion with a trade deficit of US$1.5 billion.(^{129})</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation confiscated 17,304.33 tons of illegally harvested wood, and 785 related machinery from 2,565 traffickers, between April and August, under its 100-day plan.(^{130}) Efforts were further made to amend loopholes in the existing forest law to implement sustainable forest management.(^{131})</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>The Union Election Commission (UEC) announced by-elections will be held next year to fill seats vacated by MPs who joined the Cabinet, and in constituencies which missed the 2015 elections because they were declared “Not conducive to free and fair elections.”(^{132})</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>Lawmakers in the Lower House of Parliament approved a draft law to amend the Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Law which was proposed by the Upper House of Parliament.(^{133})</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>Japan will lend Burma 100 billion Yen (US$995 million) for infrastructure development including the repair of railways connecting Rangoon/Yangon and Mandalay.(^{134})</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>Lieutenant-General Mya Tun Oo was promoted to General and appointed Chief of Staff of the Burma Army, Navy and Air Force.(^{135}) This came after Senior-General Min Aung Hlaing announced his decision to remain as the army chief for the next five years. Min Aung Hlaing also appointed eight other officers to new posts including several regional commanders.(^{136})</td>
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<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>President Htin Kyaw travelled to India where he met with President Pranab Mukherjee and Vice-President Narendra Modi.(^{137}) Four memorandums were signed on bilateral cooperation in traditional medicine, renewable energy, and infrastructural connectivity. The meeting also included discussions on economics, the cultural and trade sectors, border security, and the peace and national reconciliation process.(^{138})</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{122}\) Irrawaddy (17 Aug 16) New SEZ management committees formed  
\(^{124}\) Guardian (09 Aug 16) Aung San Suu Kyi moves to clean up Myanmar’s murky jade trade  
\(^{125}\) Myanmar Times (09 Aug 16) Rangers face violent loggers to save Bago’s shrinking forests, GNLM (16 Aug 16)  
\(^{126}\) GNLM (16 Aug 16) Trade deficit reaches over US$1.5 billion in four months  
\(^{127}\) Irrawaddy (18 Aug 16) Govt to step up action against illegal border trade  
\(^{128}\) Irrawaddy (16 Aug 16) Suu Kyi goes to China  
\(^{130}\) DVB (18 Aug 16) Joint press release between the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and the People’s Republic of China  
\(^{131}\) GU (20 Aug 16) Joint press release between the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and the People’s Republic of China  
\(^{132}\) GU (16 Aug 16) Suu Kyi goes to China, GNLM (20 Aug 16) Joint press release between the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and the People’s Republic of China  
\(^{133}\) Myanmar Times (23 Aug 16) By-elections to be held early next year, Myanmar Times (23 Aug 16) By-election slated for 2017: UEC  
\(^{134}\) GU (16 Aug 16) Joint press release between the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and the People’s Republic of China  
\(^{135}\) GU (18 Aug 16) Joint press release between the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and the People’s Republic of China  
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11 youth drug rehabilitation centers across the country which aims to educate and rehabilitate young drug addicts.  

The Myanmar Gems Enterprise (MGE) announced that 38 mine blocks are expiring in Lonekhin and Hpakant in Kachin State, 83 in Khamti in Sagaing division, 155 in Mogok, Mandalay, and 13 in Mongshu, Shan State. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation said new licenses or the renewal of expired licenses would not be approved.

*Please visit [www.altsean.org/ChronologyHome.php](http://www.altsean.org/ChronologyHome.php) to access Altsean-Burma’s full database of chronology entries covering Burma-related events.*

**REPORTS ON BURMA RELEASED IN AUGUST**


“Achieving Health Equity in Contested Areas of Southeast Myanmar” The Asia Foundation [http://goo.gl/hDYsf3](http://goo.gl/hDYsf3)

“Militias in Myanmar” The Asia Foundation [http://goo.gl/iLaz83](http://goo.gl/iLaz83)

“Assessing Gender in Resilience Programming: Myanmar (January 2016 Issue no. 2.3)” Building Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Extremes and Disasters [http://goo.gl/PkNIGv](http://goo.gl/PkNIGv)


“Myanmar: Floods - Information bulletin n° 1” International Federation of Red Cross And Red Crescent Societies [http://goo.gl/3wBnCl](http://goo.gl/3wBnCl)


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140 Eleven (28 Aug 16) 14 youth drug clinics to open
141 Eleven (30 Aug 16) MGE releases lists of expiring jade blocks
142 Eleven (30 Aug 16) MGE releases lists of expiring jade blocks

“A Gentleman’s Agreement’: Women’s Participation in Burma’s Peace Negotiations and Political Transition” Human Rights Watch [http://goo.gl/1ka250](http://goo.gl/1ka250)


“INVISIBLE LIVES: The Untold Story of Displacement Cycle in Burma” Burma Link [http://goo.gl/E8akS0](http://goo.gl/E8akS0)