

BURMA BULLETIN



A month-in-review of events in Burma



ALTERNATIVE A S E A N N E T W O R K O N B U R M A
campaigns, advocacy & capacity-building for human rights & democracy

Issue 65

May 2012

- The Tatmadaw intensifies war in Kachin and Northern Shan States, tripling the number of battalions stationed in Kachin State.
- Tatmadaw soldiers continue to rape and torture civilians as part of their military offensives against the Kachin Independence Army (KIA). IDPs lack sufficient food and adequate shelter.
- Chronic power shortages trigger peaceful protests across Burma. The regime responds to the protests by blaming KIA and insufficient conservation efforts by Burma's people.
- Vice-President Tin Aung Myint Oo resigns amid increasing speculation over a cabinet reshuffle.
- President Thein Sein reorganizes the regime's team responsible for negotiating with ethnic armed groups.
- Daw Aung San Suu Kyi takes her seat in Burma's Parliament and makes her first overseas visit in 24 years.
- US President Barack Obama suspends a ban on US investment and financial services in Burma, while maintaining the legal framework underpinning US sanctions.
- Statements by President Thein Sein and a report by a UN panel cast doubts over the regime's claim that it severed military ties with North Korea.
- Delhi and Naypyidaw strengthen business ties during Indian PM Manmohan Singh's visit to Burma.
- Workers in Rangoon's industrial zones strike to demand better pay and benefits.
- Migrant workers from Burma rescued from slavery in Thailand's Samut Sakhon while Thai authorities arrest and deport undocumented migrants.

IN THIS ISSUE

KEY STORY

- 1 Kachin conflict intensifies
- 3 IDPs in need of food & shelter

INSIDE BURMA

- 3 Electricity protests
- 5 Daw Suu makes history
- 5 VP resigns
- 5 Negotiating team reorganized
- 6 More agreements signed

HUMAN RIGHTS

- 6 Freedom of information
- 7 US human rights report
- 7 Unfair trial, death sentence

DISPLACEMENT

- 8 Rohingya get Indian visas
- 8 Rohingya flee Burma
- 8 Migrant workers in Thailand

INTERNATIONAL

- 9 US suspends sanctions
- 9 Regime-S. Korea cooperation
- 9 Regime-N. Korea cooperation
- 10 India & regime strengthen ties
- 10 Ban Ki-moon meets Daw Suu

ECONOMY

- 11 Labor unrest hits Rangoon
- 12 IMF highlights economic issues
- 12 Risky business in Burma

12 OTHER BURMA NEWS

14 REPORTS

Receive the Burma Bulletin monthly!
email publications@altsean.org
Online copies are available for
download at www.altsean.org

KEY STORY

Conflict intensifies in Northern Burma

In May, fighting between the Tatmadaw and the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) intensified in Kachin State and Northern Shan State. The Tatmadaw deployed about 2,000 additional troops and more artillery in preparation for an offensive on the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) headquarters in Laiza, Momauk Township, Kachin State.¹ In Kachin State, the number of Tatmadaw battalions has now increased almost threefold - from 46 to 130 - as a result of the ongoing conflict.²

¹ RFA (03 May 12) Kachin Fighting Escalates; AFP (03 May 12) Kachin rebels say Myanmar army poised to attack

² SHAN (02 May 12) Burma Army making war on Kachin to protect "foreign" interests

- **Early May:** KIA and Tatmadaw engaged in heaving fighting in Chipwi Township, Kachin State, as a result of the Tatmadaw's efforts to regain control of Pangwa, a strategically important town on the Sino-Burma border which had been seized by KIA forces on 25 April.³
- **2-3 May:** Tatmadaw and KIA forces engaged in heavy fighting near Hka Garan Yang Village, Sumprabum Township, Kachin State, and Daw Hpum Yang, Momauk Township, Kachin State.⁴
- **6 May:** KIA forces killed over 30 Tatmadaw soldiers from LID 99 in a series of bomb attacks along the Bhamo-Namkham road near Man Win, Bhamo Township, Kachin State.⁵
- **7 May:** KIA forces killed around 40 Tatmadaw soldiers in a series of bomb attacks along the Bhamo-Loije road at Lawmun and Sinlum Villages in Momauk Township, Kachin State.⁶
- **10 May:** KIA Brigade 2 forces killed eight Tatmadaw soldiers during heavy fighting in Hka Garan Yang Village, Sumprabum Township, Kachin State.⁷
- **12-13 May:** KIA Battalion 4 forces killed at least two Tatmadaw soldiers during clashes near the site of the Myitsone dam project on the outskirts of Tang Hpre Village, Myitkyina Township, Kachin State.⁸
- **15 May:** KIA Battalion 34 forces killed four Tatmadaw soldiers from LIB 502 in a clash in Namhsan Township, Northern Shan State.⁹
- **17 May:** Tatmadaw forces fired artillery rounds at Laiza, Momauk Township, Kachin State.¹⁰
- **28-29 May:** Tatmadaw troops and KIA forces clashed in Hpakant Township, Kachin State.¹¹
- **29 May:** KIA Battalion 9 forces killed four Tatmadaw soldiers in an ambush near Nampakha, Kutkai Township, Northern Shan State.¹²

Civilians continued to bear the brunt of the Tatmadaw's military operations against the KIA.

- **1-3 May:** Tatmadaw troops from LIB 347 and IB 118 gang-raped and tortured a 48-year-old local woman in a church in Luk Pi Village, Chipwi Township, Kachin State.¹³
- **2 May:** Tatmadaw soldiers burned at least seven homes and destroyed crops in Zi Kahtawng Village, Momauk Township, Kachin State.¹⁴
- **4 May:** It was reported that Tatmadaw and BGF soldiers gang-raped several women in Chyi Chya Village, Chipwi Township, Kachin State.¹⁵
- **12 May:** Tatmadaw soldiers from IB 137 severely beat a local Baptist preacher in Putao Township, Kachin State.¹⁶
- **15 May:** About 100 families fled Hka Garan Yang Village in Sumprabum Township, Kachin State, following the arrival of Tatmadaw reinforcements.¹⁷

Despite ongoing Tatmadaw attacks, the KIO remained engaged in talks with the regime. On 21 May, KIA Deputy Chief-of-Staff Brig Gen Gun Maw met with regime negotiator and Rail Transportation Minister Aung Min in Chiang Rai, Thailand.¹⁸ Gun Maw described the meeting as "a preliminary discussion in order to make future meetings possible."¹⁹

³ Kachin News Group (05 May 12) Burma army flies in reinforcements in bid to retake Pangwa; Kachin News Group (09 May 12) NDA-K's Ting Ying declares Burma army will wipeout KIA

⁴ Kachinland News (04 May 12) Burmese Army gang-raped Chyi Chya villagers

⁵ Kachin News Group (09 May 12) Burma Army suffers high casualties along Loije route

⁶ Kachin News Group (09 May 12) Burma Army suffers high casualties along Loije route

⁷ Kachin News Group (11 May 12) Kachin army takes control of key Burma army post on Putao route; Kachin News Group (14 May 12) 2 Burma army soldiers dead after Myitsone dam clash

⁸ Kachin News Group (14 May 12) 2 Burma army soldiers dead after Myitsone dam clash

⁹ Kachin News Group (16 May 12) 4 Burma army soldiers killed in Shan state clash

¹⁰ Irrawaddy (18 May 12) Govt to Hold Talks with SSA-South; Meeting with KIA Next Week

¹¹ Irrawaddy (31 May 12) Govt and KIA to Hold Informal Talks

¹² Kachin News Group (31 May 12) KIA 9th Brigade ambush government military trucks

¹³ KWAT (18 May 12) Gang-rape in church highlights Burma Army impunity for sexual violence in Kachin conflict; Chinland Guardian (18 May 12) Kachin Woman Gang-raped in Church by Army Soldiers; Kachin News Group (22 May 12) Burma soldiers gang-rape women in Kachin Church

¹⁴ Kachinland News (04 May 12) Burmese Army gang-raped Chyi Chya villagers

¹⁵ Kachinland News (04 May 12) Burmese Army gang-raped Chyi Chya villagers

¹⁶ Kachin News Group (28 May 12) Burma government soldiers beat Baptist preacher

¹⁷ Kachin News Group (16 May 12) Kachin villagers take shelter in Sumprabum church

¹⁸ RFA (21 May 12) Electricity Cuts Spark Rare Protest; Irrawaddy (21 May 12) Govt Negotiator Meets KIA Leader

¹⁹ RFA (21 May 12) Electricity Cuts Spark Rare Protest

The KIO also called for greater UN involvement in helping to end the ongoing conflict. On 15 May, the KIO addressed an open letter to UN Sec-Gen Ban Ki-moon in which it urged Ban to send “UN observer teams or intermediary teams” to conflict areas.²⁰ The letter also urged the UN Sec-Gen to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance to IDP camps in Kachin State.²¹

Insufficient food and shelter for IDPs in Kachin State

IDPs in Kachin State continued to lack basic necessities as fighting intensified between the Tatmadaw and the KIA.

- **10 May:** Six organizations - UNHCR, WFP, UNDP, UNICEF, Myanmar Red Cross, and ICRC - visited IDP camps in regime-controlled areas in Myitkyina and Waingmaw Townships in Kachin State to assess needs ahead of the rainy season. More than half of the 63 camps, which provide shelter for about 30,000 IDPs, do not have shelters that can withstand the rainy season.²²
- **15 May:** Relief groups in Kachin State said that thousands of Kachin IDPs were facing food shortages. According to groups based in the area, the supply of food and other necessities for thousands of refugees sheltering in Pangwa, Chipwi Township, and Laiza and Majayang, Momauk Township, would run out at the end of May.²³

INSIDE BURMA

Electricity protests spread across Burma

In May, chronic power shortages triggered peaceful protests that underscored the suffering caused by the regime’s protracted economic mismanagement. Protests over electricity shortages started on 12 May and were ongoing as of 28 May. The protests hit Burma’s two major cities, Rangoon and Mandalay, and other locations across the country. [See table *Power protests*]

Burma has been suffering from chronic power shortages for decades despite being energy rich and embarking on mega projects to export electricity to China and Thailand. According to the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, only 25% of the population has access to the national grid and electricity usage averages 104 kilowatts an hour per person, near the same level as the Democratic Republic of Congo.²⁴

While Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said that power shortages in Burma were the direct result of the authorities’ economic mismanagement,²⁵ the regime blamed everyone but itself for the power shortages:

- **22 May:** The regime’s Ministry of Electric Power-2 issued a statement which said that rationing was being applied to cope with greater demand and decreased supply during the hot summer months. The statement also accused the KIA of blowing up several electricity pylons in Northern Shan State, which reduced power supply in several areas.²⁶
- **24 May:** Presidential advisor Ko Ko Hlaing blamed the power shortages on the people’s inability to properly conserve energy. Ko Ko Hlaing suggested that if people lit candles at home to conserve electricity “everything will be alright.”²⁷

²⁰ RFA (17 May 12) Kachin Appeal for UN Observers; KIO (17 May 12) May 15 KIO Chairman's letter to UN General Secretary Ban Ki-moon; Kachin News Group (17 May 12) KIO urges Ban's UN intervene in Kachin conflict

²¹ RFA (17 May 12) Kachin Appeal for UN Observers; KIO (17 May 12) May 15 KIO Chairman's letter to UN General Secretary Ban Ki-moon; Kachin News Group (17 May 12) KIO urges Ban's UN intervene in Kachin conflict

²² Myanmar Times (14 May 12) INGOs survey needs in Kachin camps

²³ Irrawaddy (15 May 12) Food Shortages Loom as Kachin Conflict Intensifies

²⁴ Reuters (23 May 12) Myanmar to boost electricity after protests

²⁵ RFA (23 May 12) Urgent Steps Announced to Restore Power

²⁶ AP (23 May 12) Power cut protests continue in Myanmar's main city

²⁷ DVB (24 May 12) Riot police attack, arrest protestors

Power protests - A map of the protests is available at http://bit.ly/LhR8eY		
Date	Location	Regime response
12 May	About 70 residents of Ma-ei in Taunggoat Township, Arakan State, peacefully protested ongoing power shortages and an increase in rates in front of the regime's electric power office. ²⁸	
20 May	In Mandalay, over a thousand people held a peaceful candle-light protest in front of the regime's electric power office to demand a 24-hour supply of electricity. ²⁹	
21 May	Mandalay residents held a peaceful candle-light protest at the regime's electric power office demanding 24 hour access to electricity. ³⁰ Protests were also held in front of the Sedona Hotel and the Chinese embassy. A total of 1,500 people were involved in the protests. ³¹	On 22 May, Special Branch police briefly detained and interrogated about 40 people in connection with the 21 May protests. ³²
21 May	Peaceful protests over power shortages were reported in Monywa, Sagaing Division. ³³	
22 May	About 400 people defied police orders to disperse and held a peaceful candle-light protest over power shortages at Rangoon's Sule Pagoda. ³⁴	
22 May	Peaceful demonstrations were reported in Dala Township, Rangoon Division, Monywa, Sagaing Division, and Prome, Pegu Division. ³⁵	
22 May	In Mandalay, around 50 motorcyclists shouted slogans from their bikes to protest power shortages. ³⁶	
23 May	Hundreds of residents peacefully protested over power shortages in front of the regime's electric power office in Prome, Pegu Division. ³⁷	
23 May	About 100 people held a peaceful candle-light protest over power shortages in Rangoon's South Dagon Township. ³⁸	Police interrupted the protest and dispersed the crowd. ³⁹
23 May	About 500 people held a peaceful candle-light protest over power shortages in Pegu. ⁴⁰	
23 May	About 250 people gathered for a peaceful candle-light protest at Rangoon's Sule Pagoda. ⁴¹	Police confronted protesters and ordered them to disperse. ⁴²
23 May	In Mandalay, a group of about 40 people held a peaceful candle-light protest at a monastery. ⁴³	
24 May	Peaceful protests over power shortages were reported in Thonegwa Township, Rangoon Division. ⁴⁴	
24 May	About 400 people peacefully demonstrated over inadequate supplies of electricity in Prome, Pegu Division. ⁴⁵	Police arrested and briefly detained six people after attacking and beating protesters. ⁴⁶
25 May	About 300 people peacefully protested over power shortages in Rangoon. ⁴⁷	
26 May	About 200 people peacefully protested over power shortages in Rangoon. ⁴⁸	
27 May	Around 250 protestors held a peaceful candle-light march through the streets of Rangoon and a rally at Sule Pagoda. ⁴⁹	
28 May	Reported that candle-light protests were held in Bassein, Irrawaddy Division. ⁵⁰	
28 May	Peaceful demonstrations over power shortages were held in Rangoon's North Okkalapa, South Okkalapa, Dawpon, Thaketa, Hlaing Tharyar, Shwepyithar, and South Dagon Townships. ⁵¹	

²⁸ Narinjara News (17 May 12) Residents Protest for Electricity in Arakan's Ma-ei

²⁹ Irrawaddy (21 May 12) Mandalay Residents Protest Power Outages; Nation (23 May 12) Myanmar's power supply a political concern

³⁰ RFA (21 May 12) Electricity Cuts Spark Rare Protest

³¹ Irrawaddy (22 May 12) Protesters Released as Blackout Marches Spread

³² Irrawaddy (22 May 12) Protesters Released as Blackout Marches Spread

³³ RFA (23 May 12) Urgent Steps Announced to Restore Power

³⁴ AP (22 May 12) Myanmar power cuts draw protest in main city; AFP (22 May 12) Myanmar power cut protest spreads to Yangon; RFA (23 May 12) Urgent Steps Announced to Restore Power

³⁵ Irrawaddy (22 May 12) Protesters Released as Blackout Marches Spread

³⁶ AFP (22 May 12) Myanmar power cut protest spreads to Yangon

³⁷ DVB (23 May 12) Protests over power cuts spread across country

³⁸ RFA (23 May 12) Urgent Steps Announced to Restore Power

³⁹ Irrawaddy (24 May 12) Five Detained in Prome as Power Protests Spread

⁴⁰ RFA (23 May 12) Urgent Steps Announced to Restore Power

⁴¹ AP (23 May 12) Power cut protests continue in Myanmar's main city; AFP (23 May 12) Defiant Myanmar protesters return to streets; Irrawaddy (24 May 12) Five Detained in Prome as Power Protests Spread

⁴² AP (23 May 12) Power cut protests continue in Myanmar's main city; AFP (23 May 12) Defiant Myanmar protesters return to streets; Irrawaddy (24 May 12) Five Detained in Prome as Power Protests Spread

⁴³ Irrawaddy (24 May 12) Five Detained in Prome as Power Protests Spread

⁴⁴ Xinhua (24 May 12) Myanmar takes urgent measures to ease power shortage

⁴⁵ Irrawaddy (24 May 12) Five Detained in Prome as Power Protests Spread; WSJ (24 May 12) Myanmar Power Rallies Spread

⁴⁶ AP (24 May 12) Myanmar power-cut protesters clash with police

⁴⁷ AP (26 May 12) Myanmar power protests put new reforms to the test

⁴⁸ AP (26 May 12) Myanmar power protests put new reforms to the test

⁴⁹ DVB (28 May 12) Police assault teenagers at demonstration in Thonse

⁵⁰ Xinhua (28 May 12) Myanmar to hire gas turbines from Japan to ease power shortage

⁵¹ Irrawaddy (29 May 12) Power Protests Continue Despite Turbine Deal

Daw Suu goes to Naypyidaw & Thailand

In May, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi took her seat in Burma's Parliament and made her first overseas visit in 24 years.

- **2 May:** Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, along with 39 other NLD members, was sworn in as an MP in Naypyidaw.⁵² After the ceremony, Daw Suu suggested she would work to reduce the influence of military-appointed MPs in Parliament.⁵³ "It's not because we want to remove anybody, as such. We just want to make the kind of improvements that would make our national assembly truly democratic," she said.⁵⁴
- **29 May:** Daw Aung San Suu Kyi arrived in Bangkok for a six-day visit to Thailand amid great public excitement.⁵⁵
- **30 May:** Daw Aung San Suu Kyi visited a Burmese migrant center in Samut Sakhon Province, Thailand.⁵⁶ In a speech to thousands of cheering migrant workers, Daw Suu said she would work to develop Burma so that they could return home and use their skills to improve the country.⁵⁷
- **31 May:** Daw Aung San Suu Kyi met with Thai authorities, including the Labor Minister and the Deputy PM, to discuss ways to improve the situation of Burmese migrant workers in Thailand.⁵⁸ Daw Suu also returned to Samut Sakhon Province, where she was again greeted by thousands of Burmese migrant workers.⁵⁹ In the evening, she met with Thai PM Yingluck Shinawatra.⁶⁰

Vice-President resigns

On 3 May, Tin Aung Myint Oo, 61, stepped down as Burma's Vice-President.⁶¹ According to some reports, Tin Aung Myint Oo resigned due to health reasons following a trip to Singapore to seek medical treatment for throat cancer.⁶² However, many observers believed Tin Aung Myint Oo was the first casualty of a purge aimed at removing hard-liners from the regime's leadership cadre.⁶³ The regime made no official announcement about Tin Aung Myint Oo's status and banned local media from reporting about his resignation.⁶⁴

Regime reorganizes negotiating team

On 3 May, President Thein Sein reorganized the regime's team responsible for negotiating with ethnic armed groups.⁶⁵ The new team was divided into two committees - a 12-member central committee

⁵² AP (02 May 12) Suu Kyi Sworn In to Myanmar's Parliament; NYT (02 May 12) Myanmar's Opposition Leader Takes Her Seat in Parliament; Xinhua (02 May 12) Aung San Suu Kyi's entry into parliament paves way for working closer with gov't; VOA (02 May 12) Burma's Aung San Suu Kyi Makes History with Parliamentary Oath

⁵³ NYT (02 May 12) Myanmar's Opposition Leader Takes Her Seat in Parliament; VOA (02 May 12) Burma's Aung San Suu Kyi Makes History with Parliamentary Oath

⁵⁴ VOA (02 May 12) Burma's Aung San Suu Kyi Makes History with Parliamentary Oath

⁵⁵ RFA (29 May 12) Suu Kyi Arrives in Thailand; Nation (29 May 12) Full four days for Aung San Suu Kyi; WSJ (29 May 12) Suu Kyi Takes Her First Trip in 24 Years; AFP (29 May 12) Suu Kyi arrives in Thailand; RFA (30 May 12) Vow to Protect Migrant Workers

⁵⁶ AFP (30 May 12) Myanmar migrants welcome Suu Kyi in Thailand; Xinhua (30 May 12) Aung San Suu Kyi visits Myanmar migrant workers in central Thailand; Irrawaddy (30 May 12) Suu Kyi Woos Thousands in Mahachai; Reuters (30 May 12) Myanmar's Suu Kyi gets hero's welcome in Thailand

⁵⁷ Bangkok Post (30 May 12) Suu Kyi talks to migrant workers

⁵⁸ AP (31 May 12) Long fighting oppression at home, Suu Kyi focuses foreign trip on suffering of migrants; CNA (31 May 12) Suu Kyi attends World Economic Forum on East Asia; Bangkok Post (31 May 12) Suu Kyi concerned for Myanmar workers

⁵⁹ AP (31 May 12) Long fighting oppression at home, Suu Kyi focuses foreign trip on suffering of migrants; CNA (31 May 12) Suu Kyi attends World Economic Forum on East Asia; Bangkok Post (31 May 12) Suu Kyi concerned for Myanmar workers

⁶⁰ AFP (31 May 12) Suu Kyi takes centre stage on Thailand trip; CNA (31 May 12) Suu Kyi attends World Economic Forum on East Asia

⁶¹ Reuters (06 May 12) Hardline Myanmar vice president resigns, says report; AP (06 May 12) Burma's hardline VP resigns; FT (06 May 12) Myanmar reports fuel talk of cabinet reshuffle; DPA (10 May 12) Myanmar's "hardliner" first vice president resigns; Mizzima News (07 May 12) Vice President Tin Aung Myint Oo resigns: reports

⁶² Reuters (06 May 12) Hardline Myanmar vice president resigns, says report; AP (06 May 12) Burma's hardline VP resigns; DPA (10 May 12) Myanmar's "hardliner" first vice president resigns; Mizzima News (07 May 12) Vice President Tin Aung Myint Oo resigns: reports; Irrawaddy (11 May 12) VP Quit Rumors Grow with Photo No-Show

⁶³ FT (06 May 12) Myanmar reports fuel talk of cabinet reshuffle; Mizzima News (07 May 12) Vice President Tin Aung Myint Oo resigns: reports; Irrawaddy (11 May 12) VP Quit Rumors Grow with Photo No-Show; WSJ (26 May 12) Myanmar Mystery: A Missing Vice President

⁶⁴ Irrawaddy (11 May 12) VP Quit Rumors Grow with Photo No-Show; SHAN (24 May 12) Why Naypyitaw has yet to address VP resignation; WSJ (26 May 12) Myanmar Mystery: A Missing Vice President

⁶⁵ AFP (09 May 12) Myanmar leader reshuffles peace team

headed by Thein Sein and a 52-member working committee chaired by Vice-President Maung Kham. The working committee also included Tatmadaw Commander in Chief Aung Mye Swe, cabinet ministers, chief ministers, MPs, and Tatmadaw regional commanders.⁶⁶ The new team included negotiator and Railway Transportation Minister Aung Mye Swe but excluded Aung Mye Thaw, the negotiator who failed to broker a ceasefire with the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO).⁶⁷

Tension remains despite agreements

In May, the regime concluded agreements with the Shan State Army-South (SSA-S) and the Chin National Front (CNF) aimed at implementing the 'initial ceasefire agreements' signed with the two groups in December 2011 and January 2012 respectively.

- **7 May:** CNF officials and a regime delegation led by Rail Transportation Minister Aung Mye Swe signed a 15-point agreement during talks in Haka, Chin State.⁶⁸ The 15 points included: the implementation of ceasefire agreement; cooperation against human rights violations; access for domestic and international humanitarian organizations; cooperation on drug eradication; removal of the CNF from the list of unlawful organizations; establishment of liaison offices; and establishment of an independent 'peace monitoring body.'⁶⁹ However, the two parties failed to reach an agreement on the establishment of a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) and the right of the CNF to freely distribute its publications.⁷⁰
- **19 May:** SSA-S officials and a regime delegation led by Rail Transportation Minister Aung Mye Swe signed a 12-point agreement during talks in Kengtung, Shan State.⁷¹ The 12 points included: cooperation on drug eradication; establishment of a peace monitoring group; release of prisoners jailed for their ties to the SSA-S; removal of the SSA-S from the list of unlawful organizations; preservation of Shan culture; and economic development assistance.⁷² However, the two parties failed to reach an agreement on the territorial demarcation of areas controlled by the SSA-S.⁷³

Despite the ongoing talks between the regime and the SSA-S, the situation on the ground remained tense with clashes reported before and after the 19 May agreement:

- **9 May:** SSA-S forces clashed with Tatmadaw soldiers from IB 246 in Loilem Township, Southern Shan State.⁷⁴
- **10 May:** SSA-S forces clashed with Tatmadaw soldiers from IB 64 and IB 286 in Loilem and Mongpan Townships, Southern Shan State.⁷⁵
- **23 May:** SSA-S forces and Tatmadaw soldiers from IB 65 exchanged fire in Ponpakyin Village, Mongton Township, Eastern Shan State.⁷⁶

HUMAN RIGHTS

Freedom of information still restricted

International indexes that monitor media freedom continued to paint a grim picture of media freedom in Burma:

⁶⁶ AFP (09 May 12) Myanmar leader reshuffles peace team; Irrawaddy (08 May 12) Burmese President will lead Peace Committee; NLM (19 May 12) Formation of Union Peace-making Central Committee; NLM (19 May 12) Formation of Union Peace-making Work Committee; Xinhua (18 May 12) Myanmar forms top-level peace-making group

⁶⁷ AFP (09 May 12) Myanmar leader reshuffles peace team

⁶⁸ Chinland Guardian (09 May 12) New CNF-Govt Agreement Defines Terms of Peace Process; Khonumthung (09 May 12) CNF and government sign 15-point agreement

⁶⁹ Chinland Guardian (09 May 12) New CNF-Govt Agreement Defines Terms of Peace Process; Chinland Guardian (17 May 12) Text of CNF-Govt Agreement (Unofficial Translation by CG)

⁷⁰ Chinland Guardian (09 May 12) New CNF-Govt Agreement Defines Terms of Peace Process

⁷¹ Xinhua (19 May 12) Myanmar gov't, SSA-South armed group reach 12-point agreement at 2nd peace talks at central level; NLM (21 May 12) Second Union level peace talks between Union Peace-making Work Committee and RCSS/SSA held

⁷² Xinhua (21 May 12) Myanmar makes progress in peace talks with SSA-South armed group, but not KIA; SHAN (23 May 12) The 12 point agreement

⁷³ Irrawaddy (21 May 12) SSA Signs Peace Deal and Pledges Drugs Purge

⁷⁴ SHAN (14 May 12) More clashes before powwow

⁷⁵ SHAN (14 May 12) More clashes before powwow

⁷⁶ SHAN (23 May 12) Newsflash; Irrawaddy (24 May 12) Shan Rebels Fight Govt Despite Peace Deal

- **1 May:** Freedom House released “Freedom of the Press 2012,” which ranked Burma 187th out of the 197 countries surveyed.⁷⁷
- **2 May:** The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) included Burma in its annual list of the world’s “10 Most Censored Countries.”⁷⁸ In addition to the regime’s pervasive censorship of the media, CPJ said that the regime continued to subject local reporters from international agencies to constant police surveillance. CPJ also said that foreign reporters were regularly denied journalist visas unless the regime wanted to showcase a state-sponsored event.⁷⁹

Despite the regime’s reiterated pledge to lift media censorship, in May the regime Censorship Board warned local news journals that they would face disciplinary action if they published reports of the resignation of Vice-President Tin Aung Myint Oo.⁸⁰

On 15 May, the regime’s Ministry of Information announced that the Censorship Board would be abolished in June and be replaced by the Myanmar Press Council, whose members would be appointed by President Thein Sein.⁸¹ The council would be responsible for enforcing new media laws.⁸² Media organization representatives expressed serious doubts that the council would be able to ensure media freedom.⁸³ In addition, journalists pointed out that many of the new media rules and regulations were derived from the draconian 1962 Printers and Publishers Registration Act and the existing 12-point censorship policies.⁸⁴

US: Significant human rights problems persist

On 24 May, the US State Department issued its “Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2011.”⁸⁵ With regard to Burma, the report said that “significant human rights problems” persisted, including:⁸⁶

- Military offensives against ethnic nationalities which resulted in deaths of civilians, forced relocations, sexual violence, and other serious abuses.
- Ongoing detention of hundreds of political prisoners, often in harsh and life-threatening conditions.
- Extrajudicial killings, rape, arbitrary detention, and torture.
- Restrictions on freedom of speech, press, assembly, association, religion, and movement.
- Forced labor, recruitment of child soldiers, and trafficking in persons - particularly of women and girls.
- Failure to prosecute or punish those responsible for human rights abuses.
- Restrictions on the activities of many domestic NGOs and INGOs.

Unfair trial results in death sentence

On 8 May, a special court in Rangoon’s Insein prison sentenced Phyo Wai Aung, 33, to death for the deadly bombing in Rangoon in April 2010.⁸⁷ Phyo Wai Aung’s conviction was based on evidence

⁷⁷ Freedom House (01 May 12) Freedom of the Press 2012: Breakthroughs and Pushback in the Middle East; Irrawaddy (02 May 12) Burma Still Among World’s Worst for Press Freedom

⁷⁸ Irrawaddy (02 May 12) Burma Still Among World’s Worst for Press Freedom

⁷⁹ CPJ (02 May 12) 10 Most Censored Countries

⁸⁰ RFA (08 May 12) Burma Stifles News of VP’s Resignation; Irrawaddy (08 May 12) Censor bans reports of VP’s resignation

⁸¹ DPA (18 May 12) Myanmar media censorship to end next month

⁸² Irrawaddy (15 May 12) Media Censorship to be Abolished in Burma; Irrawaddy (17 May 12) Journalist Groups Object to Govt’s Press Council Plans; Myanmar Times (21 May 12) Concerns over national press council role ahead of June 30

⁸³ Irrawaddy (17 May 12) Journalist Groups Object to Govt’s Press Council Plans; Myanmar Times (21 May 12) Concerns over national press council role ahead of June 30; Irrawaddy (15 May 12) Media Censorship to be Abolished in Burma

⁸⁴ Irrawaddy (15 May 12) Media Censorship to be Abolished in Burma; Myanmar Times (21 May 12) Concerns over national press council role ahead of June 30

⁸⁵ US State Department (24 May 12) Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2011; RFA (24 May 12) Rights Worsen in Asia

⁸⁶ US State Department (24 May 12) Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2011

⁸⁷ AP (08 May 12) Myanmar Man Gets Death Penalty for 2010 Bombing; AFP (08 May 12) Myanmar bomb suspect sentenced to death: lawyer

obtained through torture.⁸⁸ Phyo Wai Aung is suffering from advanced liver cancer and is in need of urgent medical care due to his rapidly deteriorating health.⁸⁹

DISPLACEMENT

Rohingya get Indian visas

On 16 May, Indian authorities agreed to issue three-year visas to Rohingya in India after about 2,500 Rohingya had been camping in New Delhi since 9 April to protest for refugee status. The visas would enable the Rohingya to seek asylum in India and to send their children to public schools in India.⁹⁰

Rohingya continue to flee Burma

Rohingya faced arrest for illegal entry into Bangladesh while fishermen in Mon State rescued 85 Rohingya boat people:

- **13-15 May:** Bangladeshi police in Chittagong arrested over 85 Rohingya from Burma on charges of illegal entry into Bangladesh.⁹¹
- **24 May:** Fishermen off the coast of Mon State rescued 85 Rohingya boat people who had been adrift in their boat for two weeks en route to Malaysia. Seventeen of the boat people had died of starvation prior to the rescue.⁹²

In addition, Bangladesh continued its efforts to repatriate its refugee population to Burma.

- **12 May:** In a meeting with UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, Bangladeshi FM Dipu Moni requested that UNHCR help Bangladesh with the repatriation of refugees from Burma.⁹³
- **27 May:** UNHCR Representative for Southeast Asia James Lynch met with Bangladeshi Food and Disaster Management Minister M Abdur Razzak in Dhaka and discussed the repatriation of Rohingya refugees.⁹⁴

Migrant workers from Burma face arrest, slavery in Thailand

Migrant workers from Burma in Thailand continued to face arrest and deportation while 145 migrant workers were rescued from slave labor in a shrimp factory in Samut Sakhon Province.

- **3 May:** The Thai Labor Ministry established a committee on illegal alien workers administration which is tasked with arresting and deporting undocumented workers in Thailand and preventing undocumented migrants from entering the country.⁹⁵
- **10 May:** Thai police arrested 754 undocumented migrant workers from Burma who fled the Dechapanit Fishing Net factory in Khon Kaen during a raid on the same day.⁹⁶
- **12 May:** Thai authorities detained 26 undocumented migrant workers from Burma at a palm and rubber plantation in Chumphon Province.⁹⁷

⁸⁸ Irrawaddy (08 May 12) Phyo Wai Aung Receives Death Sentence

⁸⁹ AFP (08 May 12) Myanmar bomb suspect sentenced to death: lawyer; Irrawaddy (22 May 12) Accused Bomber in Critical Condition

⁹⁰ National (17 May 12) India's Myanmar refugees get visas after month of protests in Delhi; Kaladan News (07 May 12) Rohingya in India seeks refugee status; NYT (18 May 12) Thousands of Myanmar Rohingyas Struggle for Refugee Status in India

⁹¹ Kaladan News (16 May 12) Bangladeshi police arrests 50-Rohingya in two days; Kaladan News (16 May 12) Bangladeshi police arrests 50-Rohingya in two days; Daily Star (16 May 12) 35 Myanmar citizens held

⁹² Irrawaddy (25 May 12) 85 Rohingya Boatpeople Land in Mon State

⁹³ Bangladesh Foreign Ministry (12 May 12) Foreign Minister Dr. Dipu Moni had a bilateral meeting with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Mr. António Guterres

⁹⁴ Kaladan News (28 May 12) Rohingya repatriations discusses again in Dhaka

⁹⁵ Pattaya Mail (15 May 12) Labor Ministry Integrate Works to Tackle Illegal Migrant Workers

⁹⁶ Nation (11 May 12) 700 migrant workers from Burma say that their employer is Dechapanich Fishing Net

⁹⁷ Nation (13 May 12) Illegal Myanmar workers rounded up in Chumphon

- **15 May:** Thai police and representatives from various Thai NGOs rescued 146 migrant workers from Burma who had been locked inside a shrimp factory in Samut Sakhon Province for as long as two years.⁹⁸
- **22 May:** About 20 police trucks left Khon Kaen filled with migrants who numbered around 1,000. Many were believed to be working at the Dechapanit fishnet factory, which was raided on 10 May. The trucks arrived in Mae Sot on 23 May and the migrants were immediately processed into camps controlled by the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA).⁹⁹

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

US suspends sanctions

On 17 May, US President Barack Obama suspended a ban on US investment and financial services in Burma. However, existing laws underpinning other US sanctions remained.¹⁰⁰ US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said the sanctions would remain on the books as an “insurance policy” in the event the country’s political transition stalled.¹⁰¹ Clinton said that US companies would be free to look for investment opportunities in Burma but Washington would ensure that “anyone who abuses human rights or engages in corruption” would not benefit from increased trade and investment with the US.¹⁰² An arms embargo remained in effect as did sanctions on certain individuals associated with the regime.¹⁰³

Despite suspending sanctions, Obama said that the US remained concerned about Burma’s closed political system, its treatment of ethnic nationalities, the detention of political prisoners, and its relations with North Korea.¹⁰⁴ Obama also nominated US Special Representative and Policy Coordinator for Burma Derek Mitchell as the first US ambassador to Burma since 1990.¹⁰⁵

On 21 May, US Congressman Joe Crowley announced that he had introduced legislation to extend the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act which bans all imports from Burma.¹⁰⁶

Burma and South Korea strengthen cooperation

On 14 May, South Korea’s President Lee Myung-bak arrived in Burma for a two-day visit, the first visit by a South Korean president in 29 years.¹⁰⁷ On the first day of his visit, Lee met with President Thein Sein in Naypyidaw and offered to expand existing grants and development loans to Burma. In addition, Lee offered programs for human resources development, scholarships, and the creation of an economic think tank.¹⁰⁸ On 15 May, Lee met with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in Rangoon where he pledged to help Burma achieve both democracy and economic development.¹⁰⁹

Thein Sein admits arms purchase from North Korea

In May, statements by President Thein Sein and a report by a UN panel cast doubts over the regime’s claim that it severed military ties with North Korea.

⁹⁸ Irrawaddy (17 May 12) Burmese ‘Slaves’ Rescued from Thai Factory

⁹⁹ Mizzima News (23 May 12) New wave of Burmese migrant deportations underway

¹⁰⁰ RFA (17 May 12) US Eases Burma Sanctions

¹⁰¹ NYT (17 May 12) As Relations Warm With Myanmar, U.S. Will Ease Trade Limits

¹⁰² RFA (17 May 12) US Eases Burma Sanctions

¹⁰³ Reuters (17 May 12) U.S. suspends sanctions on investment in Myanmar; WSJ (17 May 12) Obama Renews Myanmar Sanctions, Eases Some Investment Curbs

¹⁰⁴ White House (17 May 12) Statement by the President on Burma

¹⁰⁵ NYT (17 May 12) As Relations Warm With Myanmar, U.S. Will Ease Trade Limits

¹⁰⁶ Irrawaddy (22 May 12) US Lawmaker Proposes Keeping Burma Sanctions

¹⁰⁷ Xinhua (14 May 12) S. Korean president arrives in Myanmar

¹⁰⁸ Yonhap (15 May 12) Myanmar agrees to free NK defector

¹⁰⁹ Xinhua (15 May 12) S. Korean president ends Myanmar visit

- **14 May:** During a meeting with South Korean President Lee Myung-bak in Naypyidaw, President Thein Sein admitted that Burma had acquired weapons from North Korea in the past but assured that his country never had nuclear cooperation with Pyongyang.¹¹⁰
- **18 May:** Diplomats revealed that a report compiled by a panel of UN experts said that North Korea attempted to ship arms to Burma in June 2009 and in May 2011. The panel also found that military cooperation carried out under a 2008 MoU between the Tatmadaw and North Korea's armed forces could violate UN sanctions.¹¹¹

Delhi and Naypyidaw strengthen economic ties

On 27 May, India's PM Manmohan Singh arrived in Burma for a three-day visit, which focused almost exclusively on strengthening business relations between the two countries. Singh was the first Indian PM to visit Burma in 25 years.¹¹²

- **28 May:** India's PM Manmohan Singh met with President Thein Sein in Naypyidaw. The two signed 12 agreements, which included an MoU regarding the extension of a US\$500 million line of credit to Burma, an air services agreement between India and Burma, and an MoU regarding cooperation in border area development.¹¹³ Singh and Thein Sein also discussed the need for further cooperation on energy security, increased connectivity between the two countries, and India's participation in the development of key infrastructure projects in Burma, such as the Tavoy deep-sea port in Tenasserim Division.¹¹⁴
- **29 May:** India's PM Manmohan Singh met with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in Rangoon.¹¹⁵ After the meeting, Singh said he believed Daw Suu would play a "defining role" in Burma's process of national reconciliation.¹¹⁶

Prominent Indian business leaders accompanying Singh on his visit bagged lucrative contracts with businesses in Burma.

- **27 May:** Burma's Apex Greatest Industrial and India's Tata Motors reached an agreement on distributing Tata Motors' light trucks and dump trucks in Burma.¹¹⁷
- **28 May:** Jubilant Oil & Gas and Parami Energy Development Company signed a production sharing contract for oil exploration with Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise.¹¹⁸
- **28 May:** India's JK Group and the regime's Ministry of Industry signed an MoU for leasing a paper and pulp mill in Burma.¹¹⁹

Ban Ki-moon meets Daw Suu

On 1 May, UN Sec-Gen Ban Ki-moon concluded his three-day visit to Burma [See *April 2012 Burma Bulletin*] by meeting with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi at her home in Rangoon.¹²⁰ Ban said he admired Daw Suu's decision to attend Parliament despite her opposition to the wording of the oath of office.¹²¹ Before leaving Burma, Ban said that he had "profound hope and expectation" for the future of the country, but that the process of opening up was still "uncertain and fragile."¹²²

¹¹⁰ AP (15 May 12) Seoul: Myanmar halts arms buys from Pyongyang

¹¹¹ AP (18 May 12) Diplomats: UN experts say NKorea violates sanction

¹¹² Xinhua (27 May 12) Indian PM arrives in Myanmar on goodwill visit

¹¹³ NLM (29 May 12) Joint Statement on the occasion of the State Visit of Prime Minister of the Republic of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar

¹¹⁴ NLM (29 May 12) Joint Statement on the occasion of the State Visit of Prime Minister of the Republic of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar

¹¹⁵ ANI (29 May 12) Manmohan Singh meets Aung San Suu Kyi, invites her to visit India

¹¹⁶ ANI (29 May 12) Manmohan Singh meets Aung San Suu Kyi, invites her to visit India

¹¹⁷ Xinhua (28 May 12) Myanmar, Indian companies sign contract on trading vehicles

¹¹⁸ PTI (28 May 12) India, Myanmar ink pact on petroleum exploration

¹¹⁹ PTI (28 May 12) India, Myanmar ink pact on petroleum exploration

¹²⁰ Xinhua (01 May 12) UN chief meets Aung San Suu Kyi for first time

¹²¹ Xinhua (01 May 12) UN chief meets Aung San Suu Kyi for first time

¹²² UN News Center (01 May 12) Ban hails Aung San Suu Kyi as 'symbol of hope' during meeting in Myanmar

Labor unrest hits Rangoon

Twenty-two strikes were reported during May, most of which occurred in Rangoon's various industrial zones.

- **9 May:** About 1,800 workers at Hi Mo High Art wig factory in Rangoon's Hlaing Tharyar Township went on strike for higher wages and better working conditions.¹²³
- **10 May:** Workers at Hi Mo High Art wig factory reached an agreement with the company to increase wages and provide better working conditions.¹²⁴
- **15 May:** About 1,300 workers from Myanmar Pearl and Sabei Pwint garment factories in Rangoon's Hlaing Tharyar Township went on strike for better pay and working conditions.¹²⁵
- **15 May:** Workers from Nay Min Aung garment factory in Rangoon's Hlaing Tharyar Township went on strike.¹²⁶
- **16 May:** About 1,500 workers from Myanmar Pearl, Sabei Pwint, and Nay Min Aung garment factories in Rangoon's Hlaing Tharyar Township staged a sit-in demonstration at the local Labor Exchange Office in Mayangone Township.¹²⁷
- **17 May:** Workers at Hi Mo High Art wig factory in Rangoon's Hlaing Tharyar Township resumed their strike for higher wages and better working conditions after the company owner repudiated the agreement reached with workers on 10 May.¹²⁸
- **18 May:** Workers at YJ garment factory in Rangoon went on strike.¹²⁹
- **21 May:** Around 500 workers at Crown Steel Industry in Myandakar Industrial Zone in Rangoon's Hmawby Township went on strike for increased pay and respect for workers' rights.¹³⁰
- **23 May:** Workers from the Brilliant Sky shoe factory in Rangoon went on strike for increased wages.¹³¹
- **24 May:** Workers from the Lucky Shoe and Brilliant Star shoe factories and more than 1,200 workers from the Ngwe Kant Kaw and Asia Hnin Si garment factories in Rangoon went on strike for increased wages.¹³²
- **25 May:** The owners of Asia Hnin Si garment factory, Brilliant Star, and Brilliant Sky shoe factories in Rangoon reached agreements with striking workers and production resumed.¹³³
- **25 May:** Twenty-five of the 400 striking workers at Crown Steel Industry in Myandakar Industrial Zone in Rangoon's Hmawby Township went on a hunger strike to further press their demands for a pay increase.¹³⁴
- **26-27 May:** Workers at Toe Myat Aung knitwear factory, YJ garment factory, Nay Min Aung garment factory, Pearl garment factory, Asia Rose garment factory, Sabei Pwint garment factory, and Miss Tai shoe factory ended their strikes without reaching any agreement and returned to work.¹³⁵
- **28 May:** It was reported that several hundred workers at South Korean-owned EMG garment factory in Taikgyi, Rangoon Division, went on strike for increased wages.¹³⁶
- **29 May:** Workers at Crown Steel Industry in Myandakar Industrial Zone in Rangoon's Hmawby Township ended their strike after reaching an agreement with the company on their demands for better wages and benefits.¹³⁷
- **29 May:** Workers at Taw Win Myanmar embroidery factory in Rangoon's Hlaing Tharyar Township went on strike.¹³⁸

¹²³ Irrawaddy: (10 May 12) Rangoon hair factory strikers win wage hike

¹²⁴ Irrawaddy: (10 May 12) Rangoon hair factory strikers win wage hike

¹²⁵ Myanmar Times (21 May 12) Factories set deadline for workers

¹²⁶ Myanmar Times (28 May 12) Eighteen strikes Yangon in May: activist

¹²⁷ Myanmar Times (21 May 12) Factories set deadline for workers

¹²⁸ Myanmar Times (28 May 12) Eighteen strikes Yangon in May: activist

¹²⁹ Myanmar Times (28 May 12) Eighteen strikes Yangon in May: activist

¹³⁰ Irrawaddy (22 May 12) Over 5,000 Workers Still on Strike in Rangoon

¹³¹ Myanmar Times (28 May 12) Eighteen strikes Yangon in May: activist

¹³² Myanmar Times (28 May 12) Eighteen strikes Yangon in May: activist

¹³³ Myanmar Times (28 May 12) Eighteen strikes Yangon in May: activist

¹³⁴ Irrawaddy (28 May 12) Rangoon Factory Hunger Strike Enters Third Day

¹³⁵ Irrawaddy (28 May 12) Rangoon Factory Hunger Strike Enters Third Day

¹³⁶ Irrawaddy (28 May 12) Rangoon Factory Hunger Strike Enters Third Day

¹³⁷ DVB (30 May 12) Hunger strike ends, owner agrees to workers' demands

- **31 May:** It was reported that workers at the EMG garment factory in Taikgyi, Rangoon Division, returned to work after successfully reaching an agreement with the company on a wage increase.¹³⁹
- **31 May:** It was reported that workers in Rangoon's Hlaing Tharyar Township were involved in strike actions at the following companies: Sunny garment factory, Myanmar Sunny garment factory, S-Square shoe factory, Myanmar CM garment factory, Ngway Gango garment factory, and Gaba garment factory.¹⁴⁰

IMF highlights key economic concerns

On 7 May, the IMF released "Myanmar: Staff Report for the 2011 Article IV Consultation."¹⁴¹ The report, dated 2 March, highlighted key economic issues that should be addressed by the regime's policies.¹⁴²

- Burma's economy was "narrow" and largely dependant on energy and agriculture.
- Agricultural development was suppressed by poor access to credit, lack of private land ownership, and inadequate infrastructure.
- The energy sector surpassed agriculture as the main source of export revenues but it was exclusively under state control and was largely isolated from the domestic economy.
- The manufacturing sector remained stifled by poor infrastructure, inadequate know-how, and extensive administrative constraints.

The IMF report recommended that the regime focus on reducing poverty, building human capital, and increase spending on health and education.¹⁴³

Recent statistics illustrated the regime's over-reliance on the energy sector. On 15 May, weekly journal Eleven News reported that Burma drew over US\$270 million in foreign direct investment in the first three months of 2012. Investment in the oil and natural gas sector accounted for 91% of the total amount.¹⁴⁴

Business still "risky" in Burma

On 18 May, UK risk assessment firm Maplecroft issued a new Burma Country Risk Report that said that foreign firms seeking to invest in Burma faced "complex challenges." Maplecroft said companies faced "virtually intractable risks stemming from excessive state bureaucracy, corruption and inconsistent legal enforcement." Maplecroft also noted that investing in Burma in the near term also posed "reputational risk" for prominent firms as human rights groups closely monitored developments.¹⁴⁵

OTHER BURMA NEWS IN MAY

1	DKBA Brigade 5 leader Na Kham Mwe rejects allegations made by the Thai government of his involvement in drug trafficking.
1	During a ceremony to mark International Workers' Day in Thanlyin Township, Rangoon Division, workers and labor activists say that organizers have faced many obstacles from both employers and regime authorities when trying to organize and register a union.
1	EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton says Burma's reform program has begun but is still not irreversible.
1	In his message on the occasion of International Workers' Day, President Thein Sein says it is "high time" Burma should eliminate all forms of forced labor "once and for all."

¹³⁸ Irrawaddy (31 May 12) Three in Hospital but Hunger Strikers Claim Victory

¹³⁹ Irrawaddy (31 May 12) Three in Hospital but Hunger Strikers Claim Victory

¹⁴⁰ Irrawaddy (31 May 12) Three in Hospital but Hunger Strikers Claim Victory

¹⁴¹ IMF (02 Mar 12) Staff Myanmar 2011 Article IV Consultation, IMF Country Report No.12/104; Reuters (07 May 12) Myanmar needs policy reform for growth: IMF

¹⁴² IMF (02 Mar 12) Staff Myanmar 2011 Article IV Consultation, IMF Country Report No.12/104

¹⁴³ Irrawaddy (08 May 12) IMF Upbeat on Burma, as Long as Reforms Continue

¹⁴⁴ Xinhua (15 May 12) Myanmar draws over 270 mln USD investment in 1st quarter

¹⁴⁵ Maplecroft (18 May 12) Summary of Risk Report on Myanmar; Irrawaddy (26 May 12) Burma Business Roundup

2	US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton congratulates Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and other newly-elected NLD members on taking their seats in Parliament.
2	UK Foreign Secretary William Hague says that NLD members taking their seats in Parliament is a further step towards a fully representative democracy in Burma, but that a number of concerns remain.
2	Canada's FM John Baird congratulates Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD on their historic entry into Parliament.
2	Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Vice Sr Gen Min Aung Hlaing meets with ILO Governing Body Chairman Greg Vines in Naypyidaw.
2	Presidential advisor Ko Ko Hlaing says that President Thein Sein will probably step aside when his term ends following the 2015 general election.
3	People's Assembly Speaker Shwe Mann discusses the implementation of labor laws and cooperation with the ILO during a meeting with a delegation led by ILO Governing Body Chairman Greg Vines in Naypyidaw.
3	KNU Gen Sec Zipporah Sein says that the regime is still using forced labor and burning orchards in Karen State.
3	KNU spokesperson May Oo Mutraw says that current reforms in Burma are not yet irreversible and that it is crucial for the international community to keep monitoring developments.
3	Chinese authorities issue a warning for its citizens in Northern Burma to heighten security measures due to intense fighting between the Tatmadaw and the KIA.
3	Oxfam releases "The Devil is in the Detail," a report that says that Burma has been the top weapons buyer among countries under arms embargoes around the world between 2000 and 2010.
4	About 500 migrant workers from Burma employed at the SD Fashion/Idea Garment factory in Mae Sot, Tak Province, Thailand, reach an agreement with the company for increased wages and benefits.
5	UNFC delegation ends a ten-day visit to Japan and says that Japan must ensure that development assistance to Burma is equitably shared.
5	Seven MPs travel to Germany for an exposure trip to the country's Parliament.
5	Several Rohingya organizations release a joint statement that calls for Burma's 2014 census to be universal and inclusive of the Rohingya population.
5	Italian-Thai Development officials say they will go ahead with the Tavoy project in Tenasserim Division during a meeting with KNU representatives.
6	A delegation of MPs led by People's Assembly Speaker Shwe Mann leaves for an exposure trip to Germany and Belgium.
7	Three NLD MPs discuss development issues in Burma during meetings with various Australian government ministers, including PM Julia Gillard, in Canberra.
7	Regime Commerce Minister Win Myint says that only seven people in 1,000 have cars in Burma due to high prices.
7	A DKBA faction close down at least 10 checkpoints along the Thai-Burma border in Karen State in retaliation for the accusations of drug trafficking made by Thai authorities against its leader Na Kham Mwe.
8	AusAID announces that it will give Burma AUD63.8 million (US\$63.5 million) in ODA for 2012-2013.
8	Indian Parliamentarians' Forum for Democracy in Burma and the Burma Centre Delhi urge Indian PM Manmohan Singh to press the regime for further democratic reforms during his three-day visit to Burma.
8	Poland's FM Radoslaw Sikorski arrives in Naypyidaw for a four-day visit.
9	State-run newspaper New Light of Myanmar says that an investigation conducted by the regime Election Commission found that the NLD's claims of ballot tampering during the 1 April by-elections were "groundless."
9	President Thein Sein meets with Poland's FM Radoslaw Sikorski in Naypyidaw and asks him to push the EU to lift all sanctions against Burma.
10	Regime Election Commission approves the registration of the Tailai (Red Shan) Nationalities Development Party.
10	UNFC issues a statement that calls on the international community not to "suspend or lift" the remaining sanctions on Burma unless the regime stops its offensives in Kachin State by 10 June.
10	Daw Aung San Suu Kyi says that providers of foreign investment and development aid should not only focus on central Burma, but also on ethnic areas.
10	Poland's FM Radoslaw Sikorski meets with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in Rangoon and assures her of Poland's support for democratic change in Burma.
10	EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton meets with People's Assembly Speaker Shwe Mann in Brussels.
11	Poland's FM Radoslaw Sikorski and regime Energy Minister Than Htay reach an agreement on economic collaboration between Burma and Poland, including cooperation in the energy sector.
12	All 12 border crossings in DKBA-controlled areas along the Thai-Burma border reopen after being shut

	down by a DKBA faction.
12	European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso meets with People's Assembly Speaker Shwe Mann.
15	Daw Aung San Suu Kyi meets with South Korean President Lee Myung-bak in Rangoon.
15	Daw Aung San Suu Kyi says that the international community is becoming "too optimistic" about the reform process in Burma.
15	Regime Information Ministry announces that all books, except for the politics and religion genres, will no longer be subject to censorship, effective immediately.
15	Regime FM Wunna Maung Lwin meets with Singapore's PM Lee Hsien Loong and FM K Shanmugam in Singapore.
17	UNDP Regional Bureau of Asia and the Pacific Director Ajay Chhibber says that Burma will receive US\$144 million in aid to implement a three-year project starting in 2013.
17	About 1,000 residents of Htin Gyi Village, Launglon Township, Tenasserim Division, attend a public meeting with 88 Generation Students to discuss the impact of the Tavoy project on local communities.
17	Myanmar Garment Manufacturers Association says that during 2011 Burma garment exports were worth about US\$770 million.
17	AIPMC urges the US to maintain sanctions on business activities in Burma, warning that a gold rush in Burma could fuel further human rights abuses, risk fragile ceasefires, and arrest ongoing democratic reforms rather than bolster them.
17	UN Sec-Gen Ban Ki-moon calls for an end to fighting in Burma after receiving a letter from the KIO asking the UN to help end its conflict with the regime.
17	President Thein Sein undergoes a "routine medical check-up" in Rangoon.
18	Regime officials say that President Thein Sein is recuperating at his home in Rangoon after feeling unwell.
19	Mizoram Chief Minister Lal Thanhawla says that the smuggling of illicit drugs has been increasing along the Indo-Burma border.
19	G8 leaders praise President Thein Sein and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi for delivering democratic reforms to Burma.
20	Thailand's cabinet approves 203 projects in Thailand worth over 30 billion baht (US\$970 million) to support the development of a deep-sea port and an industrial estate in Tavoy, Tenasserim Division.
22	Regime Election Commission Chairman Tin Aye concedes that there were "shortcomings" in the 1 April by-elections during a meeting with representatives from 15 parties that contested the polls in Naypyidaw.
22	USDP General Secretary Htay Oo says his party hopes to enhance relations with the Communist Party of China during a meeting with China's Vice-President Xi Jinping in Beijing.
22	Tatmadaw officials issue eviction orders for about 600 tenants in Rangoon's North Okkalapa Township.
23	Amnesty International says that some human rights and humanitarian law violations committed by Tatmadaw troops in ethnic areas amount to crimes against humanity or war crimes.
24	Johns Hopkins University awards Daw Aung San Suu Kyi an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree.
24	In a video message to the graduating class of Johns Hopkins University, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi says that reforms in Burma have started to "bear buds" but not yet yield fruit.
24	Indian cabinet approves bus service from Imphal, Manipur, to Mandalay.
24	Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei says power shortages in Burma are due to the country's inadequate power grid and that China is willing to encourage its companies to discuss cooperation in upgrading Burma's power grid.
24	ASEAN Sec-Gen Surin Pitsuwan urges Burma's regime to avoid violence in the face of protests against power outages.
25	Four Malaysian and one German street performers are deported in connection with their 24 May performance in Mandalay.
27	Weekly journal Voice reports that the regime Ministry of Mines has ordered the suspension of all jade mining work by private companies in Hpakant, Kachin State, for security reasons.
29	Regime Election Commission summons the leaders of five political parties, including the NLD, to Naypyidaw to warn them not to get involved in power shortage protests and labor strikes taking place around the country.
29	US Senator Susan Collins meets with President Thein Sein and regime People's Assembly Speaker Shwe Mann in Naypyidaw.
30	Norway's Deputy FM Torgeir Larsen tells representatives of NGO operating along the Thai-Burma border that no refugee will be encouraged to move back to Burma against their will.
31	Regime negotiators led by Rail Transportation Minister Aung Min arrive in Maijayang, Momauk Township, Kachin State for talks with the KIA.
31	An editorial published in the state-run newspaper New Light of Myanmar says that the regime's "reform strategy" is "irreversible" and that there will be no "backsliding or derailment in the road to democracy."

REPORTS ON BURMA RELEASED IN MAY

“Freedom of the Press 2012”, Freedom House

<http://bit.ly/KrAcIH>

“10 Most Censored Countries”, Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)

<http://bit.ly/IF11al>

“Burma (2012): Shifting gears to reforms?”, Southeast Asian Press Alliance (SEAPA)

<http://bit.ly/LkTcCj>

“Annual Report 2012 – Myanmar” Amnesty International (AI)

<http://bit.ly/MqfPs0>

“Revisiting human rights in Myanmar”, Amnesty International (AI)

<http://bit.ly/MNsMyO>

“Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2011 – Burma”, US State Department

<http://1.usa.gov/MKch6v>

“Human Rights Situation in Burma”, Network for Human Rights Documentation-Burma (ND-Burma)

<http://bit.ly/KM8Xmc>

“Extreme Measures: Torture and Ill-Treatment in Burma since the 2010 Election”, Network for Human Rights Documentation – Burma (ND-Burma)

<http://bit.ly/KPmaJQ>

“International Community’s Premature Rewards Fail to Address Armed Conflict and Human Rights Violations in Burma”, Burma Partnership (BP)

<http://bit.ly/IXTnEx>

“Uncertain Ground: Landmines in eastern Burma”, Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG)

<http://bit.ly/KPduoU>

“Catalyst for Conflict”, Ta’ang Students and Youth Organization (TSYO)

<http://bit.ly/LxioZM>

“Grab for White Gold”, Lahu Women’s Organization (LWO)

<http://bit.ly/KiKXtx>

“Briefing on the current reforms in Burma”, Mae Tao Clinic

<http://bit.ly/JyntIL>

“Staff Report for the 2011 Article IV Consultation - Myanmar”, International Monetary Fund (IMF)

<http://bit.ly/KIOUoK>

“Asia’s Heritage in Peril”, Global Heritage Foundation

<http://bit.ly/IKQkUJ>