

BURMA BULLETIN



A month-in-review of events in Burma



ALTERNATIVE ASEAN NETWORK ON BURMA
campaigns, advocacy & capacity-building for human rights & democracy

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- **NLD-led government advances on 100-day strategies, but mainly for public security, rule of law and crime suppression.**
- **National Reconciliation and Peace Center replaces Myanmar Peace Centre; will become government organization.**
- **Clashes recommence in Shan State; with incidents of civilian abuse and hundreds of villagers forced to flee fighting.**
- **120 labor right protesters march on capital to demand government intervention for better conditions.**
- **Ma Ba Tha lead protests against the US Ambassador for uttering the word “Rohingya” whilst interfaith protesters counter-march for unity and tolerance.**
- **At least 24 people killed with 70 missing in two separate landslides in Hpakant, Kachin state. A one-year national logging ban is proposed to reduce deforestation.**
- **Rohingya refugee shot dead during detention center breakout by 21 in Thailand, with 14 recaptured; call for investigation into use of force against refugees.**
- **International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) publish second installment of the Panama Papers linking 16 names and one entity to Burma; US eases sanctions but blacklists more companies.**

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100-day policy plans come into focus

In May, the NLD-led government advanced further on 100-day strategies, mainly for public security, rule of law and crime suppression. When the NLD took power on 30 March, it urged all ministries to submit 100-day strategies of the top priorities, however the details and timelines of many ministerial plans have not yet been announced.¹ Progress on the 100-day plans reported in May:

Coordination (National): On 13 May it was reported that NLD senior official, Win Htein, confirmed the government decided to move ahead on the 100-day policy plans that ministers have already submitted to State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi.²

Tourism: On 5 May it was reported the Ministry for Hotels and Tourism announced a three-pronged strategy for the country's tourism industry: to expand community-based tourism (CBT), build the capacity of the tourism human resources pool and develop existing popular destinations, and promote less frequented locales.³

Information: On 12 May, the Ministry of Information announced that state media would release details on a daily basis of ministerial plans including through its Facebook account and a telephone hotline.⁴

Foreign Affairs: On 17 May, Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Kyaw Tin said the ministry aimed to relax visa restrictions of former citizens who left the country for political reasons and to remove former citizens from a blacklist.⁵

Immigration: On 20 May, the Minister for Labour, Immigration and Population Thein Swe confirmed in Parliament that the citizenship scrutiny process is a priority in his ministry's 100-day plan. He was responding to a proposal from Arakan National Party (ANP) MP, Khin Saw Wai, who urged compliance with the 1982 Citizenship Law.⁶ U Myint Kyaing, permanent secretary of the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, confirmed that issuance of green cards for those who passed the citizenship verification process for Muslims in Rakhine state, suspended in 2014 and resumed on 1 May, was part of the ministry's 100-day plan.⁷

Police-National: On 17 May it was reported the national Police Force distributed pamphlets in public gathering areas, railway stations, port terminals, airports and border entries to explain ways to prevent human trafficking and ways to contact the Anti-trafficking in Persons Division. The Division also announced plans to carry out public awareness programs until 8 August.

Rangoon/Yangon Region: On 12 May, Phyo Min Thein, the region's recently appointed chief minister, said he would prioritize a crackdown on illegal activities and police corruption as part of the ministry's 100-days timetable. He said that police numbers would be raised and modern equipment provided.⁸

Police-Yangon: On 10 May, Brigadier-General Win Naing said since May 1, police had seized 70 suspects, including deserters from the police and army, "escapees from labor camps", and fugitives.⁹ On 22 May, it was reported Region police force had prosecuted over 900 criminal cases in just 20 days.¹⁰

Rangoon Confusion: While the region prioritized law and order in its 100-day approach, there were some contradictions: On 11 May, Rangoon Police Major, Thein Aung, announced an 11pm closing time

¹ The Nation (27 Mar 16) Suu Kyi tells ministers to draw 100-day plans

² Myanmar Times (13 May 16) Details on 100-Day plan to be released soon

³ The Irrawaddy (05 May 16) New Tourism Plans Highlights Local Communities

⁴ Myanmar Times (13 May 16) Details on 100-day plan to be released soon

⁵ Burmanet.org (25 May 16) Democratic Voice of Burma: Government to ease visa rules for 'foreign' Burmese

⁶ The Irrawaddy (21 May 16) This Week In Parliament (May 16-20)

⁷ Frontier (03 Jun 16) Untangling the Rakhine Citizenship Mess

⁸ Myanmar Times (12 May 16) Yangon Police crackdown widens

⁹ Myanmar Times (12 May 16) Yangon police crackdown widens

¹⁰ GNLM (22 May 16) Over 900 Crimes prosecuted in 20 days in Yangon

for bars would be enforced as part of the new government's 100-day crackdown and that illegal massage parlors had already been raided, closed and would be prosecuted.¹¹ Yet, Yangon Region Minister for Security and Border Affairs Col Tin Aung Tun told press the same day that the government did not issue "any orders" to ensure that restaurants, KTVs or nightclubs close at 11pm.

Mandalay Region: On 26 May, Chief Minister Zaw Myint Maung proposed the appointment of an ombudsman to the local courts. The proposed ombudsman would monitor cases pertaining to political issues, press freedom, land rights, human rights, drug abuses, public tranquility and other proceedings that were mishandled in the past. The proposal was developed during meetings Zaw Myint Maung held with local administrators, police, civil society organizations and activists, and requires approval of the regional parliament and central government.¹²

Police-Mandalay: On 19 May, Police Captain Han Tun said that the Mandalay Region Police Force operation to combat narcotic drugs and related crimes in cooperation with partner organizations was underway. Han Tun said that the 100-day plan is also set to reform the region's police force.¹³

Other objectives that have been outlined as 100-day plan priorities include, digging wells for villagers facing water shortages across the country [see Humanitarian section] and ending fighting in the Rakhine State [see Ethnic Affairs and Conflict section].¹⁴

No 100-day policy for peace, human rights?

Meanwhile, legislators and activist advocating for peace and human rights to be included in the government's 100-day strategies were disappointed. Nan Moe, a Ta'ang National Party lawmaker who sought to submit a proposal to the Union Parliament to stop fighting in Shan State so that children in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps could attend school this year, found her efforts denied with very little information provided as to whether or not, or in what way parliament would be addressing aid for IDPs within the 100-day plan framework.¹⁵

On 28 May, Ko Bo Kyi, joint secretary of the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, said there were 64 political prisoners currently in prison and 100 political prisoners facing trial. He said the parliament should define 'political prisoner,' so that they could be treated with respect in prison and permitted certain entitlements. He also added that it would be beneficial for the government to amend laws that could turn anyone into a political prisoner at any time [see Human Rights section].¹⁶

ETHNIC AFFAIRS & CONFLICT

Parliament sets up committee in response to Arakan/Rakhine clashes

On 30 May, the President's office announced that a new committee designed to help resettle internally displaced persons (IDPs) and to coordinate the activities of UN agencies and INGOs would be set up. The Central Committee for Rakhine State Peace, Stability and Development, will be chaired by State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi.¹⁷ On 3 May, Parliament approved an urgent proposal to discuss clashes in Arakan/Rakhine State, despite objections from military MPs.¹⁸

Peace talks progress with National Reconciliation and Peace Center

On 14 May, State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi visited the recently dissolved Myanmar Peace Center (MPC) with mediator Dr Tin Myo Win to progress plans to transform it into the National Reconciliation

¹¹ Myanmar Times (12 May 16) Yangon Police crackdown widens

¹² The Irrawaddy (26 May 16) Mandalay will appoint Court Ombudsman

¹³ GNLM (19 May 16) Mandalay Region Police Force releases 100-day plan

¹⁴ The Irrawaddy (25 May 16) As Lines form for water, Burma Pins hopes on Suu Kyi

¹⁵ The Irrawaddy (27 May 16) Efforts to help State IDPs Hampered in Parliament

¹⁶ The Irrawaddy (28 May 16) Dateline Irrawaddy: 'There should be No Political Prisoners in a democratic country'

¹⁷ Myanmar Times (30 May 16) Government negotiators to lead overtures to non-signatory ethnic armed groups; Irrawaddy (31 May 16) Suu Kyi Heads New Committee for Troubled Arakan State

¹⁸ Myanmar Times (03 May 16) Parliament approves urgent debate on Rakhine fighting

and Peace Center (NRPC).¹⁹ On 16 May, it was confirmed that the NRPC would be a government organization under the State Counsellor's Office. While peace talks would be based on the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), the agenda would be reset through reviewing the political dialogue framework.²⁰

Dr Tin Myo Win is expected to oversee the set up of the NRPC.²¹ He confirmed that a "21st-century Panglong Conference" [see April 2016 bulletin] will be held by the end of July.²² On 2 May, following talks with the NLD, the United Wa State Army (UWSA) indicated that it was willing to take part in the peace process as long as China was involved as well.²³

Armed conflict: clashes, civilian abuse

In May, hostilities resumed in Shan State between the Restoration Council of the Shan State (RCSS) and the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), with the TNLA accusing the Tatmadaw of helping the RCSS to expand its area of control into the north of Shan State.²⁴ There were also reports of the Tatmadaw using civilians as human shields in their offense against the Shan State Progress Party/Shan State Army (SSPP/SSA).²⁵ This included the use of 43 villagers, including women, as human shields; severe torture of 5 villagers; and extrajudicial killing of at least 3 civilians, with 5 other bodies yet to be identified.²⁶ Elsewhere other hostilities remained significantly reduced, however a Tatmadaw attack was also reported in Kachin State.

- **1 May:** The Restoration Council of the Shan State (RCSS) clashed three times with the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) near Sai Lain village in Mong Ton Township, Shan State.²⁷
- **3 May:** 500 soldiers from the Tatmadaw (LIB 114, 325, 502 & 503) attacked SSPP/SSA in Kyaukme Township, Shan State.²⁸
- **5 May:** The RCSS clashed with the TNLA in three townships within Shan State; Namkham, Kyaukme and Manton. The TNLA accused the Tatmadaw of helping the RCSS.²⁹
- **9 May:** It was reported that clashes between the RCSS and TNLA since the start of the month have displaced up to 2,500 villagers in 5 different townships within Shan State: Namkham, Mong Ton, Hsipaw, Namsan and Kyaukme.³⁰
- **10 May:** A village, near Namhkam Township in Shan State, was torched, displacing 275 residents and killing one. Both the TNLA and the Shan State Army-South (SSA-South) have accused the other side of the crime.³¹
- **17 May:** Three Tatmadaw aircraft attacked positions of the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) near Mansi Township, Kachin State.³²
- **18 May:** Tatmadaw aircraft attacked positions of the Shan State Progressive Party (SSPP) near Lashio, Shan State.³³

¹⁹ Myanmar Times (16 May 16) Tatmadaw sets out peace conference conditions; GNLM (17 May 16) New Name For Peace Centre

²⁰ GNLM (17 May 16) NRPC to become a government organisation

²¹ GNLM (01 May 16) Peace mediator expresses commitment to achieving eternal peace

²² Myanmar Times (23 May 16) New govt to walk old peace platform

²³ Myanmar Times (02 May 16) UWSA wants China in peace process

²⁴ Myanmar Times (06 May 16) Fighting flares in Shan State ahead of peace talks with NLD leader

²⁵ Shan Human Rights Foundation (01 June 16) Torture, extrajudicial killing, and use of civilians as human shields by Burma Army during new offensive

²⁶ Shan Human Rights Foundation (01 June 16) Torture, extrajudicial killing, and use of civilians as human shields by Burma Army during new offensive

²⁷ Myanmar Times (02 May 16) After lull, clashes resume in Shan State; DVB (02 May 16) SSA-South, TNLA resume clashes

²⁸ Shan Human Rights Foundation (01 June 16) Torture, extrajudicial killing, and use of civilians as human shields by Burma Army during new offensive

²⁹ Myanmar Times (06 May 16) Fighting flares in Shan State ahead of peace talks with NLD leader

³⁰ Myanmar Times (09 May 16) Fighting in two states leads to more IDPs

³¹ DVB (10 May 16) TNLA accused of burning down village

³² DVB (18 May 16) Burma army carrying out airstrikes on KIA positions

³³ Myanmar Times (18 May 16) Old conflict flares again in northern Shan; DVB (20 May 16) Clashes continue in Burma's north, as EU delegation visits

Labor rights protesters march on capital, demand government intervention

On 18 May, police officers arrested 86 labor rights protesters near Nay Pyi Taw as they marched upon the capital to meet with the government.³⁴ Starting on 29 April, 120 factory workers from Myanmar Veneer and Plywood Private Ltd commenced the march from Sagaing to Nay Pyi Taw to demand better working rights, an increase in salary and the reinstatement of 161 workers recently fired for taking part in the initial protests.³⁵ Some workers were left behind due to the over 40 degree Celsius heat, however the remaining protesters made it to within 5 miles of the capital.³⁶

On 19 May, 51 of the protestors were charged under Articles 143, 145, 157 and 505(b) of the Burmese Penal Code, with the latter carrying a sentence of up to two-years' jail for disturbing the public order.³⁷ Some protestors were sent back after they opted not to stay and face charges.³⁸

Min Thway, secretary of the All Burma Federation of Student Unions (ABFSU), said five of those arrested were ABFSU students who had been asked help the workers with food, money and physical protection.³⁹

Ma Ba Tha lead protests against the US Ambassador over "Rohingya"

On 13 May, over 500 protesters in Mandalay, including monks from the extremist Ma Ba Tha, demanded that the government condemn the US Government over US Ambassador Scot Marciel's use of the word "Rohingya" when he extended condolences to families of 21 people killed in a boat accident on April 19.⁴⁰ On 11 May, Scot Marciel stressed that Muslims in Rakhine State have the right "to choose what they want to be called."⁴¹

On 22 May, State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi told reporters that she did not support the use of either of the terms "Bengali" or "Rohingya" as the use of both had made it very difficult to find a peaceful resolution to the issue.⁴²

On 14 May, about 70 interfaith protesters defied police and marched in Rangoon/Yangon calling for unity and tolerance, despite permission being rejected for the route they had chosen.⁴³ Police Lieutenant Major Than Oo (Mingalar Taung Nyunt Township) and Police Lieutenant Major Win Tin (Kyauktada Township) have both said those involved in the march will be charged under the Peaceful Assembly and Procession Law.⁴⁴

End cycle of repression; update on political prisoners

On 25 May, the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) and the Former Political Prisoners Society (FPPS) urged the government to amend various laws and the constitution, to reduce the number of political prisoners and prevent wrongful detentions.⁴⁵ Since the NLD-led government came to power on 1 April, the AAPP reported that 235 political activists have been released following a series of presidential amnesties, whilst two political activists were arrested, and 16 more were sentenced.⁴⁶ The NLD has repeatedly vowed to release all political prisoners.⁴⁷

³⁴ Myanmar Times (18 May 16) Police arrest Sagaing protest marchers

³⁵ Myanmar Times (03 May 16) Angry workers continue march despite negotiations

³⁶ Myanmar Times (18 May 16) Sagaing protesters reach Nay Pyi Taw outskirts

³⁷ RFA (20 May 16) Myanmar Police Charge Workers Involved in Labor Rights Protest

³⁸ Irrawaddy (19 May 16) Charges Filed Against Labor Rights Protestors

³⁹ RFA (20 May 16) Myanmar Police Charge Workers Involved in Labor Rights Protest

⁴⁰ RFA (13 May 16) Myanmar Nationalists Stage Protest in Mandalay Against Use of Term 'Rohingya' by U.S.

⁴¹ Myanmar Times (11 May 16) US ambassador avoids the 'R' word

⁴² Myanmar Times (23 May 16) State counsellor urges avoidance of words 'Rohingya' and 'Bengali'

⁴³ Myanmar Times (13 May 16) Interfaith walk blocked

⁴⁴ Myanmar Times (16 May 16) Police to charge leaders of peace walk in Yangon

⁴⁵ Myanmar Times (26 May 16) Report on political prisoner rehabilitation released

⁴⁶ AAPPB (20 May 16) AAPP-B monthly Chronology of April 2016 and Current Political Prisoners list

NATURAL RESOURCES

More killed in jade landslides, companies bombed

In May, a total of at least 24 people were killed and 70 missing in two separate landslides in Hpakant, Kachin state. On 5 May, at least 10 miners were buried while scavenging for jade in a refuse pile.⁴⁸ On 23 May, at least 12 people were killed, with more than 70 missing, when heavy rains caused piles of mining waste to collapse.⁴⁹ In the past six months alone, a total of 14 lethal landslides have taken place in the jade mining district, including an 11 November 2015 landslide that buried at least 114 miners.⁵⁰

The NLD-led government announced in May that it suspended the issuing of further jade mining licenses and said reforming the sector was a top priority.⁵¹ On 11 May, Union Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation Ohn Win, said that new laws would restrict jade production in the Lonekhin and Hpakant mining blocks in Kachin State.⁵² Ohn Win said experts would be invited to join a ministerial committee to draft new environmental rules for the jade industry.⁵³

Kachin civil society groups have previously demanded the suspension of all mining activity until authorities enforce existing environmental regulations. It is estimated that in past decades, as many as 50 mountains within the Hpakant area have been reduced to rubble by miners.⁵⁴

Meanwhile, two jade companies in the area have been bombed for apparently refusing to give in to extortionists.⁵⁵ On 15 May, assailants used handmade bombs to destroy machinery, trucks and property at Yadanar Moe Myay Co. Ltd. and Lin Htet Aung Co. Ltd.⁵⁶ Since 8 May, there have been reports of more than 30 explosions in Hpakant area.⁵⁷

One-year logging ban proposed

On May 10, it was reported that the Director General of Myanmar's Forestry Department submitted a proposal for a one-year national logging ban.⁵⁸ It follows the release of an EU-funded report that called for a moratorium on commercial logging in Burma, and the dismantling or privatization of the state-owned Myanmar Timber Enterprise (MTE).⁵⁹ Environmental expert Win Myo Thu said the government could reduce deforestation by allowing logging only in tree plantations instead of natural forests.⁶⁰

Approximately 1.5 million hectares of forest were destroyed in Burma between 2002-2014, at an annual average rate of about 0.3 percent.⁶¹ The watchdog group Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) predicted forest loss could reach 30 million hectares by 2030.⁶² In 2014, logging was reduced by 27% from its annual rate of over a million tons, and the export of raw timber logs was banned. Forestry Ministry data showed that in 2010, forest cover had shrunk to 47% of land area from 58% in 1990.⁶³

More than 17,000 employees in government departments work on timber production in Burma and it was reported that the possible ban on logging has already slowed timber operations in Karenni/Kayah

⁴⁷ Myanmar Times (03 May 16) List of political prisoners prepared

⁴⁸ Myanmar Times (09 May 16) More fatalities after jade mine landslide

⁴⁹ BBC News (24 May 16) Myanmar jade mine landslide kills at least 12 in Kachin

⁵⁰ Irrawaddy (23 May 16) Communities Demand Regulation as Jade Mining Destroys Landscape

⁵¹ Irrawaddy (23 May 16) Communities Demand Regulation as Jade Mining Destroys Landscape

⁵² BNI News (13 May 16) New Jade mining restrictions to be implemented

⁵³ Irrawaddy (23 May 16) Communities Demand Regulation as Jade Mining Destroys Landscape

⁵⁴ Irrawaddy (23 May 16) Communities Demand Regulation as Jade Mining Destroys Landscape

⁵⁵ Irrawaddy (17 May 16) Two Hpakant Jade Mining Firms Rocked by Arson Attacks

⁵⁶ Irrawaddy (17 May 16) Two Hpakant Jade Mining Firms Rocked by Arson Attacks

⁵⁷ RFA (16 May 16) Blasts Rock Two Jade-Mining Companies in Northern Myanmar

⁵⁸ IHB (10 May 16) Log harvesting ban proposed in Myanmar; Frontier (30 May 16) Fallen Timber, Uneasy Officials

⁵⁹ The Irrawaddy (31 March 16) Report Calls for Logging Moratorium, End to State-Run MTE

⁶⁰ GNLM (2 May 16) New government should re-evaluate logging policy: environmental expert

⁶¹ GNLM (2 May 16) New government should re-evaluate logging policy: environmental expert

⁶² Frontier (30 May 16) Fallen Timber, Uneasy Officials

⁶³ IHB (10 May 16) Log harvesting ban proposed in Myanmar; Reuters (28 Apr 16) Myanmar bans lucrative logging in bid to preserve forests

State. Two out of three main logging companies is under the control of armed ethnic groups; the Ah Shae Than Lwin company run by the Karenni National People's Liberation Front, a Border Guard Force under Tatmadaw direction since November 2009, and the Kayah Htarni company owned by the Karenni National Progressive Party, a resistance group.⁶⁴ National Assembly MP, Aung Kyaw Soe (NLD), said there was a lack of transparency over the activities of the MTE in Kayah.⁶⁵

Despite the 2014 ban, illegal logging has continued in northeast Burma, where teak and rosewood is smuggled to neighboring China.⁶⁶ The EIA's 2014 analysis of forestry and trade figures revealed a US\$6 billion "black hole" in illegal logging and timber exports due to widespread criminality and government corruption.⁶⁷ The EIA reported that uncertainty over a logging ban had resulted in a surge of logging in some parts of Myanmar.⁶⁸

HUMANITARIAN

Strong El Niño brings major water shortages across the country

Throughout May, the continued effects of a stronger than usual El Niño [see April 2016 bulletin] led to major water shortages across the country, most notably in Mon State.⁶⁹ On 6 May, it was reported that the public had donated over 1 million gallons of water to 196 villages since the start of 2016⁷⁰; and on 17 May, it was reported that the Burma/Myanmar Police Force had themselves donated 358,572 gallons of water between 25 April and 15 May alone.⁷¹ On 22 May, the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation announced it would spend just over K155 million (US\$130,000) from the government budget to provide clean water to 25 villages in need in the Magwe Region, Mandalay State.⁷²

On 6 May, the Mandalay regional government announced that it would launch a 100-day project to tackle the crisis and ensure that local villages would have better resources in future years.⁷³ The project will involve digging two new lakes, 93 other unspecified activities in 95 villages, and digging wells in 22 villages using funding from the 2016-17 fiscal year.⁷⁴

DISPLACEMENT

Rohingya refugee shot dead during detention center breakout in Thailand

On 23 May, Thai police officers shot dead a Rohingya man who had escaped with 20 others from an immigration detention centre in Phang Nga province.⁷⁵ Major General Worawit Panprung told reporters that the man had been throwing rocks at the police from higher up and police officers "had no choice but to shoot."⁷⁶ Three others were caught as they attempted to escape, and 11 more were re-arrested the following day, with six still missing.⁷⁷ Amy Smith, executive director of Fortify Rights, said that "the police need to demonstrate that a legitimate cause existed to justify the use of lethal force against a group of refugees" whilst UNHCR spokeswoman Vivian Tan said the incident "underscores UNHCR's

⁶⁴ Frontier (30 May 16) Fallen Timber, Uneasy Officials

⁶⁵ Frontier (30 May 16) Fallen Timber, Uneasy Officials

⁶⁶ Reuters (28 Apr 16) Myanmar bans lucrative logging in bid to preserve forests

⁶⁷ Frontier (30 May 16) Fallen Timber, Uneasy Officials

⁶⁸ Myanmar Times (03 May 16) Angry workers continue march despite negotiations; Frontier (30 May 16) Fallen Timber, Uneasy Officials

⁶⁹ GNLM (1 May 16) Mon State villages urgently require donor assisted drinking water; GNLM (2 May 16) Myanmar Police Force donate water to communities in respective water shortage areas; GNLM (05 May 16) Myanmar Police Force supply water to drought-hit-areas; GNLM (08 May 16) MPF moves to combat water scarcity in rural areas; GNLM (11 May 16) Water distributed to villages in drought-stricken Mon State; GNLM (19 May 16) Myanmar Police Force supplies water to communities facing water crises.

⁷⁰ GNLM (06 May 16) Mandalay Govt tackles water crisis with hundred day project initiative

⁷¹ GNLM (17 May 16) Myanmar Police Force donates water to communities suffering from water scarcity

⁷² GNLM (22 May 16) Over K155 million to be spent on water supply for 25 villages

⁷³ GNLM (06 May 16) Mandalay Govt tackles water crisis with hundred day project initiative

⁷⁴ GNLM (06 May 16) Mandalay Govt tackles water crisis with hundred day project initiative

⁷⁵ Myanmar Times (24 May 16) Muslim man shot dead after Thai jailbreak

⁷⁶ Myanmar Times (24 May 16) Muslim man shot dead after Thai jailbreak

⁷⁷ Khaosod English (24 May 16) 14 Rohingya Recaptured After Escaping Detention

serious concerns on a worldwide basis over the use of detention for dealing with people forced to flee war or persecution."⁷⁸

On 15 May, it was reported that three Rakhine migrant workers were rescued from slave-like conditions on a fishing boat in Thailand. Tin Shwe, Aung Ba Khin, and Tun Maung Thein had been working for five months without receiving any salaries, according to the Myanmar Association in Thailand.⁷⁹

ECONOMY

Panama Papers lists 16 names linked to Burma/Myanmar

On 9 May, the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) published the second installment of the Panama Papers, which leaked the names of thousands of individuals and entities, including 17 that did business in Burma/Myanmar.

While the ICIJ is careful to note that those on the database have not necessarily broken any laws, a significant number of those named used bank accounts in tax havens for various purposes, including to avoid paying tax, to hide their wealth, or to bypass sanctions and domestic laws. One name listed, Joern Kristensen, shareholder and beneficiary of IID Co Ltd, insisted that the account was used for legal, above-board purposes to enable payments to a Singaporean bank account while Burma was still subject to sanctions.⁸¹

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Sanctions: US eases restrictions on trade but blacklists more companies

On 17 May, the United States Department of Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) announced amendments to the Burmese Sanctions Regulations and corresponding updates to the Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons (SDN) List. Most of the amendments ease previous restrictions on personal spending by US persons and restrictions on trade and business-related transactions, as long as they did not relate to any individual or company blacklisted by OFAC.⁸² Most restrictions related to banking in Burma were removed from the updated regulations. Four banks – Myanma Economic Bank, Myanma Investment and Commercial Bank, Innwa Bank and Myawaddy Bank – were also taken off the OFAC blacklist.⁸³ OFAC added six companies to the blacklist because their majority owners remained on the SDN List, including druglord Steven Law and Asia World Co. Ltd.⁸⁴

Acting Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence, Adam J. Szubin, said in the announcement that the U.S. would maintain pressure on targeted individuals, entities and the military in order to incentivize further democratic reforms.⁸⁵

The Panama Papers Myanmar list:⁸⁰

Fong Wai Ha; Whitfield Finance Ltd.
Fong Wai Yee; Whitfield Finance Ltd.
Goldwater Company Limited
Hein Htet Kyaw; Nature Dream Ltd.
Joern Kristensen; IID - Institute for Integrated Development Ltd.
Khin Maung Aye; Yangon Riverside New City Development Co., Ltd
Lai Man Wah, Joseph; Whitfield Finance Ltd.
Lai Wai Sin; Whitfield Finance Ltd.
Lars Erik Larsen; FlexGroup Co., Ltd.
Liu, Man Ho; Swan Sea Development Ltd.
Mo Wan Fong Christine; Charter Devt Ltd.
Richard Xing Xang; Miracle Time Holdings Ltd.
Thinn Maung Aye; Tritanium Investment Holdings Ltd. & Yangon Riverside New City Development Co., Ltd.
Tin Maung Khin; Mariner Shipping Services Ltd.
Tong, Kwok Cheong; OM Consultancy Co., Ltd.
Wong Lui Hiu Herbert; Tong's Master Holding Company Ltd.
Wu Rong; Hopson Technology Ltd.

⁷⁸ Reuters (25 May 16) Inquiry urged after Rohingya shot in detention center breakout

⁷⁹ GNLM (15 May 16) Three Myanmar migrant workers rescued from slave-like condition in Thailand

⁸⁰ ICIJ (May 16) <https://goo.gl/2taODZ>

⁸¹ ICIJ (9 May 16) ICIJ releases database revealing thousands of secret offshore companies; Myanmar Times (17 May 16) Panama Papers list Myanmar names

⁸² U.S. Department of treasury (17 May 16) Publication of Burma General Licenses, Burma Removals, and Burma Designations

⁸³ U.S. Department of treasury (17 May 16) Publication of Burma General Licenses, Burma Removals, and Burma Designations; National Law Review (25 May 16) EU and US Sanctions Updates on Burma/Myanmar

⁸⁴ U.S. Department of treasury (17 May 16) Publication of Burma General Licenses

⁸⁵ U.S. Department of treasury (17 May 16) Publication of Burma General Licenses, Burma Removals, and Burma Designations

OTHER BURMA NEWS IN MAY

5	The President's Office released Notification 17/2016, forming a Committee for the Prevention of Recruitment of Minors in Military Service. The committee includes 12 members, including the deputy attorney-general as secretary. ⁸⁶
7	Eleven companies that invested in the Thilawa Special Economic Zone, located in Rangoon/Yangon Region, are likely to begin operating later this year. ⁸⁷
10	Than Aung Kyaw, the assistant director of the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration, announced this month that the Myanmar Investment Commission (MIC) will be reformed under Burma/Myanmar's new government. ⁸⁸
11	The Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI) announced the possibility of implementing an Industrial Trade Zone within Rakhine State within a five-year period. ⁸⁹
18	Deputy Chief Engineer U Thura Aung Bo announced at a press conference that loans from the World Bank will give the Ministry of Electricity and Energy the financial ability to provide electricity to more than 5,000 villages across the country in two fiscal years. ⁹⁰
19	Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, Ohn Win, warned gold mining companies within Sagaing township that they would be closed down if they were found responsible for negatively impacting the environment, public health or society. ⁹¹
21	The Chin Progressive Party (CPP), the Chin National Democratic Party (CNDP), and the Chin League for Democracy (CLD) agree to merge, in principle, with further meetings due to take place. ⁹²

Please visit www.altsean.org/ChronologyHome.php to access Altsean-Burma's full database of chronology entries covering Burma-related events.

REPORTS ON BURMA RELEASED IN MAY

“Legally and illegally logged out” Oliver Springate-Baginski (University of East Anglia), Thorsten Treue (University of Copenhagen), Kyaw Htun <https://goo.gl/jn1v3i>

“Myanmar: April 2016” UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Shelter Cluster <http://goo.gl/Wm1Cmr>

“Rakhine Operational Brief, May 2016” WFP Myanmar <http://goo.gl/Spjs5C>

“We Want Genuine Peace: Voices of communities from Myanmar's ceasefire areas in 2015” The Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (CPCS) <http://goo.gl/ZTKJYU>

“Management of heat-related illnesses” WHO <http://goo.gl/0vPcTl>

“Country Brief, April 2016” WFP Myanmar <http://goo.gl/srGfiE>

“May 2016 Operational Report” WFP Myanmar <http://goo.gl/oUd1iN>

“Factsheet The Rohingya crisis – May 2016” European Commission <http://goo.gl/LI5CXD>

⁸⁶ The Republic of the Union of Myanmar President Office (13 May 16) President forms committee to prevent conscription of minors

⁸⁷ GNLM (07 May 16) Thilawa SEZ industrial firms to begin operations later this year

⁸⁸ GNLM (10 May 16) Myanmar Investment Commission to be reformed

⁸⁹ GNLM (11 May 16) Rakhine State needs industrial zone to reboot trade development: UMFCCI

⁹⁰ GNLM (20 May 16) World Bank loans to help over 5,000 villages receive electricity

⁹¹ GNLM (21 May 16) Sagaing gold miners receive shut down warning

⁹² BNI (30 May 16) Chin Political Parties to Merge