

BURMA BULLETIN



A month-in-review of events in Burma



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- **Daw Aung San Suu Kyi travels to the US. During her trip, which involves various receptions in her honor and several high-level meetings, she makes numerous statements regarding a broad range of key policy issues.**
- **Tatmadaw-KIA fighting continues in Kachin State, resulting in 10,000 additional IDPs. Tatmadaw troops continue to target civilians during their operations.**
- **Despite the release of 88 political prisoners, 311 dissidents remain behind bars.**
- **Since January, the regime has arbitrarily arrested over 200 activists, with about 60 cases resulting in prosecution.**
- **The regime continues to impose severe restrictions on peaceful assembly, arresting demonstrators across the country. Authorities increasingly use the much-publicized Peaceful Gathering and Demonstration Law to legalize repression.**
- **Regime continues to subject Rohingya to arbitrary arrest and forced labor. More Rohingya flee persecution by attempting to cross into Bangladesh.**
- **Parliament concludes its fourth session without making any significant progress on legislative reforms.**
- **Cabinet remains dominated by retired military officers despite ongoing reshuffles. Thein Sein appoints 11 new ministers and creates six ministries within the President's Office.**
- **Parliament approves the Foreign Investment Law but President Thein Sein bows to pressure from local business leaders and sends it back to Parliament.**

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KEY STORY

In September, both Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and President Thein Sein traveled to the US. Daw Suu's first visit to the US after more than 40 years spanned six states and involved various receptions in her honor and several high-level meetings - including a private meeting with President Barack Obama. By contrast, Thein Sein's trip was limited to New York, where he addressed the UN General Assembly (UNGA) and held routine meetings on the sidelines of the UNGA.¹

¹On 27 September, Thein Sein met with Bangladeshi PM Sheikh Hasina; UN General Assembly President Vuk Jeremic; European Council President Herman Van Rompuy, and EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton. On 29 September; Thein Sein met with UN Sec-Gen Ban Ki-moon. NLM (29 Sep 12) President U Thein Sein meets President of 67th session of UN General Assembly, President of European Council, Bangladeshi Prime Minister; NLM (29 Sep 12) President U Thein Sein meets President of 67th session of UN General Assembly, President of European Council, Bangladeshi Prime Minister; NLM (01 Oct 12) President U Thein Sein meets UN Secretary-General

Daw Suu highlights key policy issues during US tour de force

On 16 September, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi left Burma to visit the US for more than two weeks.² During her tour, which included nearly 100 engagements, Daw Suu had the opportunity to make numerous statements regarding a broad range of key policy issues.³

On the Arakan State situation

Daw Suu urged for the removal of the “roots of hatred” that fueled sectarian violence between Rakhine and Rohingya in Arakan State.⁴ She stressed that the issue should be resolved through respect for human rights, which needed to be applied to “everybody and equally.”⁵ Daw Suu also said that Burma’s citizenship laws should be reviewed in an effort to ensure they comply with international standards and basic human rights requirements.⁶ She added that the NLD did not want to make political capital out of the situation in Arakan State but wanted to “help the government in any way possible” to bring about peace.⁷

On sanctions

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said that sanctions had been a very useful tool for putting pressure on the military regime and had helped the struggle for democracy.⁸ However, Daw Suu said she now supported the easing of sanctions because Burma should not depend on US sanctions to keep up the momentum for democracy.⁹

On reforms in Burma

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi praised the role of President Thein Sein in the reform process and said she believed the President was “keen on democratic reform.”¹⁰ However, she stressed the need to gauge democratic reforms by examining progress not just in the executive but also in the legislative and judicial branches.¹¹ Daw Suu also said that Burma’s changes were not irreversible until the military “clearly and consistently” supported the democratic process.¹² She insisted that the 2008 constitution should be amended because it allowed the military to retain “extraordinary powers.”¹³

On Burma’s relations with the US and China

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said that US engagement with Burma should not be seen as “a hostile step towards China.”¹⁴ Daw Suu said that friendly US-China relations would also help Burma “a great deal.”¹⁵ She also asked Washington to assist with promoting the rule of law in Burma.¹⁶

On political prisoners

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said that all remaining political prisoners in Burma should be released. “If you talk about genuine democratization, there should be not a single political prisoner,” she said.¹⁷

On truth and reconciliation

When asked whether regime officials should face prosecution for human rights abuses committed before the country began to open up, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said solutions should be restorative, rather than retributive.¹⁸

² Xinhua (16 Sep 12) Aung San Suu Kyi leaves for first historic visit to U.S.

³ RFA (17 Sep 12) Suu Kyi Arrives in US; AFP (22 Sep 12) Aung San Suu Kyi visits UN, New York

⁴ RFA (18 Sep 12) 'Remove Roots of Hatred'

⁵ RFA (18 Sep 12) 'Remove Roots of Hatred'

⁶ AP (18 Sep 12) Myanmar's Suu Kyi supports easing of US sanctions; Irrawaddy (19 Sep 12) Suu Kyi Backs Govt to Diffuse Arakan Tensions

⁷ RFA (18 Sep 12) 'Remove Roots of Hatred'; Irrawaddy (19 Sep 12) Suu Kyi Backs Govt to Diffuse Arakan Tensions

⁸ Reuters (18 Sep 12) Suu Kyi, in U.S. visit, says Myanmar reforms 'first hurdle'; VOA (18 Sep 12) Aung San Suu Kyi Says Burma Reforms Not Yet Irreversible; Irrawaddy (19 Sep 12) No Need to Keep Sanctions: Suu Kyi

⁹ RFA (18 Sep 12) 'Remove Roots of Hatred'

¹⁰ AP (18 Sep 12) Myanmar's Suu Kyi supports easing of US sanctions; Irrawaddy (19 Sep 12) No Need to Keep Sanctions: Suu Kyi

¹¹ AFP (18 Sep 12) In US, Suu Kyi says Myanmar to shape 'own destiny'; IPS (18 Sep 12) Suu Kyi Backs Lifting of Final U.S. Sanctions on Myanmar

¹² VOA (18 Sep 12) Aung San Suu Kyi Says Burma Reforms Not Yet Irreversible

¹³ AP (27 Sep 12) At Yale, Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi emphasizes Myanmar's need for rule of law

¹⁴ RFA (18 Sep 12) 'Remove Roots of Hatred'; IPS (18 Sep 12) Suu Kyi Backs Lifting of Final U.S. Sanctions on Myanmar

¹⁵ AFP (18 Sep 12) In US, Suu Kyi says Myanmar to shape 'own destiny'

¹⁶ IPS (18 Sep 12) Suu Kyi Backs Lifting of Final U.S. Sanctions on Myanmar

¹⁷ IPS (18 Sep 12) Suu Kyi Backs Lifting of Final U.S. Sanctions on Myanmar

¹⁸ Washington Post (20 Sep 12) Aung San Suu Kyi urges easing of U.S. sanctions on Burma

Daw Suu's tour in brief

17 Sep: Arrived in Washington, DC.¹⁹

18 Sep: In Washington, DC: Met with US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton;²⁰ visited VOA and RFA headquarters;²¹ received Asia Society's Global Vision Award.²²

19 Sep: In Washington, DC: Received the Congressional Gold Medal at the US Capitol;²³ met with US President Barack Obama at the White House.²⁴

20 Sep: In Washington, DC: Spoke at a gathering organized by Amnesty International;²⁵ met with members of the local Burmese community;²⁶ received an honorary doctorate at the American University;²⁷ attended the Democracy Award ceremony organized by the National Endowment for Democracy.²⁸

21 Sep: In New York: Met with UN Sec-Gen Ban Ki-moon at the UN headquarters;²⁹ received the Atlantic Council's 2012 Global Citizen Award.³⁰

22 Sep: In New York: Spoke to about 2,000 US-based Burmese at Queens College;³¹ attended a discussion meeting at Columbia University.³²

24 Sep: In Louisville, Kentucky: Spoke at the University of Louisville.³³

25 Sep: In Fort Wayne, Indiana: Spoke to about 3,000 members of the local Burmese community at the Memorial Coliseum.³⁴

26 Sep: In New York: Addressed a high-level UN meeting on education on the sidelines of the General Assembly.³⁵

27 Sep: In New Haven, Connecticut: Spoke at Yale University.³⁶ In Cambridge, Massachusetts: Spoke at Harvard University.³⁷

28 Sep: In San Francisco, California: Spoke at the Asia Foundation;³⁸ attended the San Francisco Freedom Forum.³⁹

29 Sep: In San Francisco, California: Spoke at the University of San Francisco, where she received an honorary doctorate.⁴⁰

Thein Sein touts democratic credentials at the UNGA

On 25 September, President Thein Sein arrived in New York to attend the UN General Assembly.⁴¹ On the same day, Thein Sein met briefly with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.⁴² On 26 September, Thein Sein held separate meetings with US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Thai PM Yingluck Shinawatra.⁴³

On 27 September, in his address to the UN General Assembly, President Thein Sein went overboard touting his administration's democratic credentials. Thein Sein said that Burma's judiciary, military, and ethnic nationalities had been taking "irreversible steps in the democratic transition" since he took office as President.⁴⁴ Thein Sein also absolved his administration of all responsibility for the sectarian

¹⁹ AFP (17 Sep 12) Hero's welcome as Suu Kyi starts US tour

²⁰ RFA (18 Sep 12) Suu Kyi, Clinton Discuss Refugees

²¹ VOA (18 Sep 12) Aung San Suu Kyi Says Burma Reforms Not Yet Irreversible; RFA (18 Sep 12) 'Remove Roots of Hatred'

²² AFP (18 Sep 12) In US, Suu Kyi says Myanmar to shape 'own destiny'

²³ RFA (19 Sep 12) Suu Kyi Meets Obama

²⁴ RFA (19 Sep 12) Suu Kyi Meets Obama

²⁵ AP (20 Sep 12) Myanmar's Aung San Suu Kyi says it's noise, not issues that keep her up at night

²⁶ VOA (20 Sep 12) Aung San Suu Kyi Seeks Support From Burmese Diaspora

²⁷ American University (21 Sep 12) Burma Opposition Leader Finally Able to Accept AU Degree

²⁸ RFA (20 Sep 12) Honors After Passport Row

²⁹ AP (21 Sep 12) Suu Kyi: Cooperation is key to genuine democracy

³⁰ AFP (22 Sep 12) Aung San Suu Kyi visits UN, New York

³¹ NYT (22 Sep 12) In New York, Reverence for Myanmar's Opposition Leader; AFP (23 Sep 12) Suu Kyi: help us complete path to democracy

³² NYT (22 Sep 12) In New York, Reverence for Myanmar's Opposition Leader

³³ Courier-Journal (24 Sep 12) Aung San Suu Kyi, Burmese democracy leader and Nobel Prize winner, speaks in Louisville;

Louisville Cardinal (24 Sep 12) McConnell Center hosts Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Sue Kyi

³⁴ AP (25 Sep 12) Suu Kyi cautiously optimistic for Myanmar's future in speech to Burmese community in Indiana

³⁵ UN News Center (26 Sep 12) UN chief unveils \$1.5 billion initiative to achieve universal education

³⁶ AP (27 Sep 12) At Yale, Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi emphasizes Myanmar's need for rule of law

³⁷ Reuters (27 Sep 12) Myanmar's Aung San Suu Kyi tells Harvard students: I'm no icon

³⁸ Mercury News (28 Sep 12) Burma democracy leader asks for 'helpful' investment

³⁹ Mercury News (28 Sep 12) Burma democracy leader asks for 'helpful' investment

⁴⁰ AP (29 Sep 12) Myanmar opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi in San Francisco during landmark visit to US

⁴¹ NLM (27 Sep 12) President U Thein Sein in New York

⁴² NLM (27 Sep 12) President U Thein Sein in New York; Bernama (27 Sep 12) Thailand, Myanmar To Jointly Develop Dawei Deep Seaport

⁴³ FT (27 Sep 12) US to ease Myanmar import ban

⁴⁴ NLM (28 Sep 12) Myanmar will be participating more actively in activities of United Nations in various fields - Standing as a responsible and respectable nation on the world stage, we will take challenges of 21st century in a bold and resolute manner

violence in Arakan State and described it as an “unfortunate and unexpected” issue.⁴⁵ Later the same day, during a panel discussion at the Asia Society, Thein Sein blamed the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) for failing to end hostilities in Kachin State. He also defended the 2008 constitution, which he said was drafted through a “very inclusive” process.⁴⁶

INSIDE BURMA

Fighting, displacement, and human rights abuses continue in Kachin State

Fighting between the Tatmadaw and the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) raged on in Kachin State as the conflict entered its 15th month. The regime estimated that 90,000 people had been displaced due to the ongoing conflict.⁴⁷ On 28 September, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said fighting in Kachin State forced at least 10,000 people to flee their homes in September, including more than 8,000 people in Hpakant Township and over 1,000 people in Chipwi Township.⁴⁸

- **5 September:** Tatmadaw troops clashed with KIA forces between Yumar and Sai Taung in Hpakant Township, Kachin State.⁴⁹
- **7 September:** Tatmadaw troops clashed with KIA forces in Mawhan, near Myitkyina, Kachin State.⁵⁰
- **10 September:** KIA forces captured a Tatmadaw military outpost near Pangwa in Chipwi Township, Kachin State.⁵¹
- **12 September:** Tatmadaw troops clashed with KIA forces in Pang Shan, Waingmaw Township, Kachin State.⁵²
- **17 September:** The Tatmadaw shelled a KIA post near Laiza in Momauk Township, Kachin State, and killed one All Burma Students’ Democratic Front (ABSDF) soldier.⁵³
- **18 September:** The Tatmadaw shelled KIA positions around Laiza in Momauk Township, Kachin State.⁵⁴

A sustained Tatmadaw offensive against the KIA that began in mid-August targeted civilians in Hpakant Township.

- **4 September:** Tatmadaw mortar fire killed a 27-year-old villager.⁵⁵
- **5 September:** Tatmadaw soldiers shot and killed a Kachin villager who was searching for jade stones at a mine.⁵⁶
- **7 September:** Tatmadaw soldiers shot and killed a 21-year-old Kachin man who was returning to his village after seeking refuge at a local church.⁵⁷
- **7 September:** A 20-year-old villager was presumed dead after Tatmadaw soldiers from IB 51 arrested him, placed him in a rice sack, and tossed him into a quarry.⁵⁸
- **13 September:** Tatmadaw artillery fire killed a 14-year-old girl who was returning from school.⁵⁹

On 6 September, in response to a question by a National Assembly MP on the ceasefire talks with the KIA, regime Deputy Defense Minister Cdre Aung Thaw claimed that Tatmadaw troops never attacked

⁴⁵ NLM (28 Sep 12) Myanmar will be participating more actively in activities of United Nations in various fields - Standing as a responsible and respectable nation on the world stage, we will take challenges of 21st century in a bold and resolute manner

⁴⁶ AP (27 Sep 12) Myanmar leader praises Suu Kyi at UN

⁴⁷ DVB (13 Sep 12) Aung Min: ‘We will take full responsibility’

⁴⁸ UNHCR (28 Sep 12) Thousands flee homes in northern Myanmar as fighting intensifies

⁴⁹ Mizzima News (07 Sep 12) Burmese gov’t fires on looters, one man dead in Phakant

⁵⁰ EMG (08 Sep 12) Mandalay-Myitkyina railway schedules suspended due to Kachin fighting

⁵¹ Kachin News Group (11 Sep 12) KIO captures strategic Burma army post in Pangwa

⁵² Kachin News Group (12 Sep 12) KIA strike kills 26 government troops on Bhamo to Loije route

⁵³ Kachin News Group (17 Sep 12) Student rebel dies during Kachin battle

⁵⁴ DVB (19 Sep 12) Fighting erupts near Kachin group’s base

⁵⁵ Mizzima News (07 Sep 12) Burmese gov’t fires on looters, one man dead in Phakant

⁵⁶ Kachin News Group (06 Sep 12) Burmese troops kill unarmed Kachin civilian in Hpakant jade mine

⁵⁷ Mizzima News (10 Sep 12) Kachin refugee shot dead by government army: report

⁵⁸ Kachin News Group (10 Sep 12) Kachin man feared dead after Burma army throws him in mine pit

⁵⁹ Irrawaddy (14 Sep 12) Girl Killed in Crossfire between Govt Troops

the KIA after Thein Sein ordered a halt to all offensives against the ethnic armed group on 10 December 2011.⁶⁰

Tatmadaw and SSA-S clash in Shan State

In early September, clashes between the Tatmadaw and the Shan State Army-South (SSA-S) occurred in three townships in Shan State and continued to jeopardize the ceasefire process.

- **5 September:** Tatmadaw troops from LIB 360 attacked the SSA-S's base in Mong Pu Awn, Mong Pieng Township, Shan State.⁶¹
- **7 September:** SSA-S forces killed more than 10 Tatmadaw soldiers during a clash in Tong Lao, Mongkeung Township, Shan State.⁶²
- **8 September:** Tatmadaw troops clashed with SSA-S forces near Mai Niu in Maukme Township, Shan State.⁶³

Regime and KNU sign draft code of conduct

On 4 September, a regime delegation led by chief negotiator Aung Min and a Karen National Union (KNU) delegation led by Gen Sec Zipporah Sein signed a draft code of conduct during the second day of talks in Hpa-an, Karen State.⁶⁴ A KNU request for the relocation of Tatmadaw bases in KNU-controlled areas remained unresolved, with Aung Min describing it as a “difficult issue.”⁶⁵

Human rights abuses against Rohingya continue in Arakan State

In September, Na Sa Ka personnel, Tatmadaw soldiers, and police in Maungdaw Township, Northern Arakan State, continued to arbitrarily arrest local Rohingya for their alleged involvement in the June riots.⁶⁶ In addition, according to an Arakan Project's report made public on 13 September, Na Sa Ka and Tatmadaw personnel continued to subject Rohingya, including children, to forced labor in Northern Arakan State.⁶⁷ Forced labor practices included sentry duty, portering, road repair, camp maintenance, and construction work.⁶⁸

From 7 to 15 September, the regime-appointed commission tasked with investigating unrest in Arakan State visited Akyab, Kyauktaw, Rathidaung, Buthidaung, Maungdaw, Mrauk U, Rambree, Pauktaw, and Taunggoat Townships.⁶⁹ Commission members met with regime officials, Rohingya and Rakhine IDPs, leaders of both communities, and NGO representatives.⁷⁰ On 17 September, during a press conference in Rangoon to discuss their visit to Arakan State, the commission shared few details about their investigation.⁷¹ The commission was expected to return to Arakan State in October to further assess the situation.⁷²

⁶⁰ NLM (07 Sep 12) Like other armed groups, KIA may ink peace agreements if they follow internationally and generally-accepted peace processes

⁶¹ SHAN (11 Sep 12) Ceasefire only “with government, not with army”

⁶² SHAN (10 Sep 12) Reshuffles in the military, war goes on; SHAN (11 Sep 12) Ceasefire only “with government, not with army”

⁶³ SHAN (11 Sep 12) Ceasefire only “with government, not with army”

⁶⁴ Irrawaddy (04 Sep 12) KNU Signs Code of Conduct with Govt

⁶⁵ Myanmar Times (10 Sep 12) Govt, KNU sign code of conduct

⁶⁶ Kaladan News (03 Sep 12) More Rohingya villagers arrested in Maungdaw south; Kaladan News (06 Sep 12) Village head arrested by police

⁶⁷ AlertNet (13 Sep 12) Forced labour restarts for Myanmar's Rohingyas – report; Arakan Project (31 Aug 12) Forced labour during the Arakan crisis: An overview of forced labour practices in North Arakan, Burma (June to August 2012); DVB (14 Sep 12) Forced labour flourishes in post-conflict Arakan state

⁶⁸ Arakan Project (31 Aug 12) Forced labour during the Arakan crisis: An overview of forced labour practices in North Arakan, Burma (June to August 2012)

⁶⁹ NLM (09 Sep 12) Investigation commission to enquire firm evidence in Rakhine State; Irrawaddy (11 Sep 12) Govt-backed Inquiry into Arakan Violence Underway; NLM (14 Sep 12) Investigation Commission probes into incident in Rakhine State; DVB (17 Sep 12) Arakan commission completes ‘fact-finding’ tour

⁷⁰ Irrawaddy (11 Sep 12) Govt-backed Inquiry into Arakan Violence Underway; Myanmar Times (24 Sep 12) Rakhine investigation team discusses first visit; DVB (17 Sep 12) Arakan commission completes ‘fact-finding’ tour

⁷¹ Myanmar Times (24 Sep 12) Rakhine investigation team discusses first visit

⁷² Irrawaddy (18 Sep 12) Arakan Commission Holds First Press Conference

As the situation on the ground remained tense,⁷³ villagers in some local Rakhine communities continued to push an anti-Rohingya agenda. On 25-26 September, around 2,000 people, including representatives from political and social organizations, attended a public meeting in Rathidaung, Arakan State, to discuss recent sectarian violence.⁷⁴ The meeting produced a number of anti-Rohingya resolutions intended to be submitted to the regime for consideration. The resolutions included: implementing measures to control the birth rate among Rohingya; forming a Rakhine people's militia; strictly upholding the 1982 citizenship laws; segregating Rakhine and Rohingya communities; and removing Rohingya MPs from Parliament.⁷⁵

Reshuffle boosts presidential powers

In September, the National Parliament approved President Thein Sein's cabinet reorganization that had begun during the last week of August. [See *August 2012 Burma Bulletin*]

- **4 September:** The National Parliament approved, by a vote of 511 to 41 with 45 abstentions, the creation of four more ministries within the President's Office.⁷⁶ However, some MPs expressed concern over the excessive centralization of power in the President's Office.⁷⁷ MPs also approved the merger of the Ministries of Electric Power 1 and 2 and the abolition of the Ministry of Industrial Development.⁷⁸

- **7 September:** The National Parliament approved, by a vote of 509 to 49 with 40 abstentions, Thein Sein's nomination of 11 new ministers to fill the positions left vacant as a result of the August reshuffle.⁷⁹ [See table *New cabinet ministers*] Thein Sein promoted five deputy ministers to ministers, including one woman, Myat Myat Ohn Khin.⁸⁰ The appointments added four civilian ministers, bringing their total to 12 in a 36-member cabinet that remained dominated by retired military officers.⁸¹ The National Parliament also approved Thein Sein's nomination of former regime Mines Minister Thein Htaik as the new Auditor General.⁸²

New cabinet ministers		
Ministry	New Minister	Previous Position
Defense	Lt Gen Wai Lwin	Rangoon Division Parliament's military-appointed MP
Culture	Aye Myint Kyu	Deputy Sports Minister
Construction	Kyaw Lwin	Deputy Construction Minister
Hotels & Tourism	Htay Aung	Deputy Hotels & Tourism Minister
Finance & Revenue	Win Shein	Deputy Finance & Revenue Minister
Mines	Myint Aung	Civil Service Board member
National Planning & Economic Development	Kan Zaw	Deputy National Planning & Economic Development Minister
Labor	Maung Myint	Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister
Social Welfare, Relief & Resettlement	Myat Myat Ohn Khin	Deputy Health Minister
Rail Transportation	Zeyar Aung	Tatmadaw Northern Command Commander
Science & Technology	Ko Ko Oo	Deputy Science & Technology Minister

⁷³ RFA (28 Sep 12) Kidnap Rumors Fuel Tensions

⁷⁴ Narinjara News (29 Sep 12) Arakan public meeting successfully concludes in Rathidaung

⁷⁵ Narinjara News (29 Sep 12) Arakan public meeting successfully concludes in Rathidaung

⁷⁶ Myanmar Times (10 Sep 12) Hluttaw approves cabinet reshuffle

⁷⁷ Myanmar Times (10 Sep 12) Hluttaw approves cabinet reshuffle; EMG (09 Sep 12) Parliament approves more presidential ministries despite criticism

⁷⁸ Xinhua (04 Sep 12) Myanmar parliament passes gov't proposal for reformation of ministries

⁷⁹ NLM (08 Sep 12) Appointment of Union Ministers; NLM (08 Sep 12) Appointment of Union Minister; Irrawaddy (07 Sep 12) 11 New Ministers Sworn In; Myanmar Times (10 Sep 12) Hluttaw approves cabinet reshuffle

⁸⁰ Irrawaddy (07 Sep 12) 11 New Ministers Sworn In

⁸¹ AP (07 Sep 12) Myanmar government appoints first female minister, adds more civilians to Cabinet; Irrawaddy (07 Sep 12) 11 New Ministers Sworn In

⁸² Irrawaddy (07 Sep 12) 11 New Ministers Sworn In

Little progress on legislative reforms

On 7 September, the USDP-dominated Parliament concluded its fourth session.⁸³ Despite being the second-longest session since Parliament first convened in January 2011, MPs achieved little progress with regard to legislative reforms. MPs failed to approve any of the 24 new bills (10 in the People's Assembly and 14 in the National Assembly) introduced. MPs approved only seven bills - all introduced during previous sessions.⁸⁴ In addition, the regime failed to introduce the much-heralded media law for debate in Parliament. Parliament will reconvene on 18 October.⁸⁵

As the fourth session came to a close, so did a six-month long dispute between Parliament and the Constitutional Tribunal. On 6 September, the People's Assembly approved a resolution to impeach the Constitutional Tribunal's judges.⁸⁶ Later that day, all nine judges of the Constitutional Tribunal resigned.⁸⁷ The dispute stemmed from the MPs' disagreement with the Constitutional Tribunal's 8 March decision that parliamentary committees were not vested with the power to scrutinize the executive.⁸⁸

HUMAN RIGHTS

Over 300 dissidents still in jail despite latest release

In an effort to persuade the international community to lift sanctions, President Thein Sein ordered another mass prisoner amnesty ahead of his trip to the US to attend the UN General Assembly's annual session.⁸⁹

On 17 September, Thein Sein ordered the release of 514 prisoners from jails across the country.⁹⁰ As in previous mass releases of prisoners [See table *Thein Sein's mass releases of prisoners*], the majority of those freed were common criminals, including 399 foreigners from China, India, Thailand, Laos, and Bangladesh.⁹¹ Only 88 political prisoners were among those released.⁹² They included several NLD members,⁹³ about two dozen monks,⁹⁴ and 19 Karen dissidents.⁹⁵

Thein Sein's mass releases of prisoners			
Date	Total Prisoners	Political prisoners	%
16 May 2011	14,578	58	0.4%
12 Oct 2011	6,359	240	3.8%
4 Jan 2012	6,656	36	0.5%
13 Jan 2012	651	302	46.2%
3 Jul 2012	80	25	31.2%
17 Sep 2012	514	88	17.1%
Total	28,838	749	2.6%

Sources: *New Light of Myanmar*; Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP)

As of 20 September, there were still 311 political prisoners in Burma, of which 57 had serious health problems.⁹⁶ On 20 September, UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma Tomás Ojea Quintana renewed his call for the regime to immediately release all remaining political prisoners.⁹⁷

⁸³ FT (07 Sep 12) Myanmar MPs agree foreign investor law; EMG (09 Sep 12) Parliament concludes its fourth session

⁸⁴ MPs approved the Major Commodity and Service Bill, the Foreign Currency Expenditure Bill, the 1955 Government Housing (Expelling) Act Amendment Bill, the Social Security Bill, the Bill Revoking the Foreign Relations Act, the Import-Export Bill, and the Foreign Investment Bill

⁸⁵ Xinhua (26 Sep 12) Myanmar's two-house parliament to convene 5th session on Oct. 18

⁸⁶ AFP (08 Sep 12) Reforms lift veil on Myanmar's power struggles; NLM (07 Sep 12) No representative has so far claimed the Union minister level rights and emoluments

⁸⁷ AP (06 Sep 12) 9 judges resign after Myanmar lawmakers demand it

⁸⁸ BBC (06 Sep 12) Burmese MPs force out constitutional court judges

⁸⁹ AFP (18 Sep 12) Dozens of political prisoners freed in Myanmar; AP (18 Sep 12) Myanmar activists say almost 90 political prisoners freed, hundreds remain jailed; DVB (19 Sep 12) Thein Sein using political prisoners as "pawns"

⁹⁰ NLM (18 Sep 12) Amnesty granted; Xinhua (17 Sep 12) Myanmar grants amnesty to 514 more prisoners; AP (17 Sep 12) New Myanmar amnesty includes political prisoners

⁹¹ AP (18 Sep 12) Activists say limited prisoner releases show Myanmar is insincere on its much-lauded reforms

⁹² AAPP (20 Sep 12) Released Political Prisoners List on 17 September 2012

⁹³ AFP (17 Sep 12) Political prisoners released in Myanmar: activists; AP (17 Sep 12) New Myanmar amnesty includes political prisoners

⁹⁴ RFA (17 Sep 12) Dissidents Among Freed Prisoners

⁹⁵ KIC (22 Sep 12) 19 Karen political prisoners released

⁹⁶ AAPP (20 Sep 12) List of 424 confirmed Political Prisoners whose whereabouts are verified; IRIN (27 Sep 12) MYANMAR: Final push on political prisoners needed

⁹⁷ OHCHR (20 Sep 12) "None should be left behind" – UN expert welcomes latest release of prisoners of conscience in Myanmar

Despite the release of dissidents, the regime continued to use arbitrary arrest as a tool of repression. On 27 September, the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) said that since January 2012, the regime had arbitrarily arrested at least 200 activists, with about 60 cases resulting in prosecution.⁹⁸

Former political prisoners denied rights, journalists refused visas

On 15 September, 88 Generation Student leader Min Ko Naing cancelled his planned trip to the US to receive a democracy award as a way to show solidarity with his fellow activists who had been denied passports by the regime.⁹⁹ Regime authorities had put the passport applications of 19 members on hold for one year following their release in January 2012.¹⁰⁰ On 19 September, 88 Generation Student spokesperson Soe Tun said that police informed the group that regime authorities had approved the passport applications for 16 of its members.¹⁰¹ The regime had also denied passports to ethnic activists.¹⁰² In addition, in mid-September it was reported that the regime was still refusing visas to some journalists and activists despite having removed their names from a blacklist at the end of August.¹⁰³ [See *August 2012 Burma Bulletin*]

Restrictions on peaceful assembly remain

In September, the regime continued to impose severe restrictions on peaceful assembly. The regime increasingly used the much-publicized Peaceful Gathering and Demonstration Law to legalize repression.

- **20 September:** Police in Mandalay briefly detained local street performer Sue Myint Thein after he walked around Mandalay wrapped in blue duct tape ahead of the International Day of Peace. Police detained him for failing to secure official authorization for his performance.¹⁰⁴
- **21 September:** On the International Day of Peace, several hundred people marched peacefully through 10 townships in Rangoon to call for an end to the ongoing conflict in Kachin State.¹⁰⁵ Regime authorities threatened demonstrators with arrest and prevented a group of Kachin activists from traveling by bus to Naypyidaw to hold a similar demonstration.¹⁰⁶ Activists also held International Day of Peace rallies and events in Moulmein, Mon State, Hpa-an, Karen State, and Taunggyi, Shan State.¹⁰⁷
- **24 September:** It was reported that police had charged at least 13 activists under the Peaceful Gathering and Demonstration Law for participating in International Day of Peace rallies in Taunggyi, Shan State, and Rangoon without obtaining prior official permission.¹⁰⁸ Regime authorities had rejected activists' requests to hold demonstrations in both Rangoon and Naypyidaw.¹⁰⁹

Land confiscation protests continue amid repression

In September, hundreds of villagers in Salingyi and Monywa Townships, Sagaing Division, continued their protest against the expansion of the Monywa copper mine in the Letpadaung mountain range. Villagers demanded that the project's developers - China-owned Wan Bao company and the Tatmadaw-

⁹⁸ AAPP (27 Sep 12) Arbitrary arrests in Burma: a tool to repress critical voices

⁹⁹ AP (15 Sep 12) Prominent Myanmar activist cancels trip to US

¹⁰⁰ AP (15 Sep 12) Prominent Myanmar activist cancels trip to US; AFP (15 Sep 12) Myanmar activist cancels US trip in passport row

¹⁰¹ AP (19 Sep 12) Myanmar activists say they will get passports

¹⁰² HRW (16 Sep 12) Burma: Former Political Prisoners Persecuted

¹⁰³ Irrawaddy (18 Sep 12) Journalists off the Blacklist, but Still Can't Get Visas; DVB (20 Sep 12) Gov't prevents journalists, academics from entering Burma

¹⁰⁴ DVB (20 Sep 12) Performance artist detained in Mandalay

¹⁰⁵ AFP (21 Sep 12) Hundreds join Myanmar peace rally; Myanmar Times (24 Sep 12) Peace marchers face charges; EMG (22 Sep 12) International Day of Peace protesters face action

¹⁰⁶ AP (21 Sep 12) Myanmar blocks peace rally in capital but allows hundreds to march through main city of Yangon; AFP (21 Sep 12) Hundreds join Myanmar peace rally; Irrawaddy (21 Sep 12) Peace Protesters Banned from Leaving Rangoon

¹⁰⁷ Irrawaddy (21 Sep 12) Peace Day Protest Goes Ahead in Rangoon; AFP (21 Sep 12) Hundreds join Myanmar peace rally; Myanmar Times (24 Sep 12) Peace marchers face charges; DVB (24 Sep 12) Police to charge peace activists following Friday's rallies

¹⁰⁸ Irrawaddy (24 Sep 12) 13 Peace Activists Charged in Burma; DVB (24 Sep 12) Police to charge peace activists following Friday's rallies

¹⁰⁹ AP (21 Sep 12) Myanmar blocks peace rally in capital but allows hundreds to march through main city of Yangon; Irrawaddy (21 Sep 12) Peace Day Protest Goes Ahead in Rangoon; DVB (21 Sep 12) Activists call for peace in Rangoon

backed conglomerate Union of Myanmar Economic Holdings (UMEH) - return the confiscated land and address the project's negative environmental impact.¹¹⁰ The regime responded to the protest by harassing and detaining demonstrators, including activists and students who had joined the demonstration from Rangoon and Mandalay.¹¹¹

- **5 September:** Several thousand villagers in Salingyi Township, Sagaing Division, demonstrated against the expansion of the Monywa copper mining project.¹¹²
- **6 September:** Regime authorities stormed the protest site in Salingyi Township, Sagaing Division, in search of Rangoon-based land rights activists who had helped organize the 5 September protest.¹¹³
- **10 September:** Regime authorities in Monywa, Sagaing Division, detained 12 female activists who held a prayer vigil at a local pagoda to protest against the expansion of the Monywa copper mining project.¹¹⁴ Police assaulted and beat some of the women while they were in custody.¹¹⁵
- **10 September:** Hundreds of local residents protested in Monywa, Sagaing Division, to demand the release of activists detained in connection with the protests against the Monywa copper mining project.¹¹⁶
- **11 September:** Police in Monywa, Sagaing Division, released nine of the 12 female activists detained on 10 September.¹¹⁷
- **11 September:** Hundreds of villagers protested in Monywa, Sagaing Division, to demand the release of the activists still detained.¹¹⁸
- **12 September:** About 70 people gathered at a monastery in Monywa, Sagaing Division, to protest against the expansion of the Monywa copper mining project.¹¹⁹
- **12 September:** More than 300 residents from 12 villages held a public meeting in Salingyi Township, Sagaing Division, to demand an end to the expansion of the Monywa copper mine.¹²⁰
- **14 September:** Following negotiations between regime authorities and a group of 88 Generation Students, police released on bail the remaining three women detained on 10 September.¹²¹ Police also released activist Wai Lu who had been detained incommunicado in Chaung U, Sagaing Division, since his arrest on 31 August.¹²² Police had charged him under the Religious Offenses Act for participating in the farmers' protests in Sagaing Division.¹²³
- **20 September:** Around 1,000 people living near the Monywa copper mine in Sagaing Division protested after they were prevented from plowing their fields.¹²⁴

DISPLACEMENT

Burma still unsafe for refugee repatriation

In September, Burma's regime and Thai authorities continued to discuss the repatriation of Burmese refugees. On 13 September, following an early September meeting in Naypyidaw with President's

¹¹⁰ Myanmar Times (17 Sep 12) Arrests in Monywa as mine protests escalate; Irrawaddy (03 Sep 12) Family of Detained Rights Activist to Sue; Irrawaddy (03 Sep 12) Family of Detained Rights Activist to Sue

¹¹¹ RFA (05 Sep 12) Thousands Protest Copper Mine

¹¹² RFA (05 Sep 12) Thousands Protest Copper Mine

¹¹³ RFA (06 Sep 12) Police Storm Mine Protest; Reuters (07 Sep 12) Authorities struggle to contain protests at Myanmar mine

¹¹⁴ RFA (10 Sep 12) Dozen Mine Protesters Arrested; Irrawaddy (10 Sep 12) Copper Mining Tensions Rise as Dozen Detained; AP (12 Sep 12) Students join protest against alleged land grab for Myanmar-Chinese mining joint venture; DVB (12 Sep 12) Freed copper mine protesters assaulted by police; AHRC (13 Sep 12) BURMA: Farmers rise up at land grab by army-owned company

¹¹⁵ RFA (11 Sep 12) Hundreds Want Activists Released; Irrawaddy (11 Sep 12) Nine Copper Mine Protesters Released; DVB (12 Sep 12) Freed copper mine protesters assaulted by police

¹¹⁶ Irrawaddy (10 Sep 12) Copper Mining Tensions Rise as Dozen Detained

¹¹⁷ RFA (11 Sep 12) Hundreds Want Activists Released; Irrawaddy (11 Sep 12) Nine Copper Mine Protesters Released; DVB (12 Sep 12) Freed copper mine protesters assaulted by police; Myanmar Times (17 Sep 12) Arrests in Monywa as mine protests escalate

¹¹⁸ RFA (11 Sep 12) Hundreds Want Activists Released; Irrawaddy (11 Sep 12) Nine Copper Mine Protesters Released

¹¹⁹ AFP (12 Sep 12) Hundreds stage sit-in protest against Myanmar mine

¹²⁰ Irrawaddy (13 Sep 12) Copper Mine Protest Earns Nationwide Support

¹²¹ Irrawaddy (13 Sep 12) Copper Mine Protest Earns Nationwide Support; RFA (14 Sep 12) Mine Activists Freed on Bail

¹²² RFA (14 Sep 12) Mine Activists Freed on Bail; Irrawaddy (03 Sep 12) Family of Detained Rights Activist to Sue; AHRC (13 Sep 12) BURMA: Farmers rise up at land grab by army-owned company

¹²³ Irrawaddy (06 Sep 12) Land Rights Activist Charged for 'Religious Offenses'; AHRC (13 Sep 12) BURMA: Farmers rise up at land grab by army-owned company

¹²⁴ Irrawaddy (21 Sep 12) Monywa Copper Mine Protests Continue

Office regime Minister Aung Min, Thailand's National Security Council (NSC) announced that 120,000 refugees could return to Burma within one year.¹²⁵ Despite the discussions between Thailand and the regime on refugee repatriation, Burma remained ill-prepared for the return of refugees due to ongoing instability in ethnic areas and the regime's lack of safeguards to ensure refugees' safe repatriation.

- **8 September:** Human Rights Watch (HRW) said enormous obstacles remained for the return of refugees, including a lack of firm political agreements between ethnic armed groups and the regime as well as the regime's restrictions on the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR's) access to Burma's eastern border region.¹²⁶ In addition, HRW stated that the heavy presence of landmines in many of Burma's border areas prevented refugees from safely returning to their homes.¹²⁷
- **10 September:** Thailand Burma Border Consortium (TBBC) issued a statement that said it was "too soon" to promote the return of displaced persons and that the eventual repatriation of refugees must be voluntary, safe, and undertaken with dignity.¹²⁸
- **11 September:** Karen Community-Based Organizations (KCBO) outlined a number of preconditions which it said should be in place prior to any refugee repatriation. These included: refugees having the free choice of return; a nationwide ceasefire; landmine clearance; the withdrawal of Tatmadaw troops and associated militias; and legal and security guarantees for ethnic communities.¹²⁹
- **14 September:** Karen Refugees Committee (KRC) expressed concern over Thailand's NSC 13 September statement and said it was "impossible" for Burma to adequately and safely prepare for the return of such a large number of refugees in that time period.¹³⁰

Bangladesh push-backs of Rohingya continue

As Rohingya continued to flee persecution in Arakan State, Bangladesh maintained its punitive policy of turning away Rohingya refugees. Between 2-21 September, Bangladeshi authorities pushed at least 120 Rohingya back to Burma.¹³¹

From 11-13 September, a US delegation led by Deputy Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Joseph Yun visited Bangladesh to discuss the plight of Rohingya refugees with Bangladeshi officials and assess the conditions for Rohingya living in refugee camps.¹³² At the conclusion of the visit, the delegation called on Bangladesh to keep its border open and provide basic humanitarian assistance to refugees.¹³³

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

OIC, US, UN remain seriously concerned for Rohingya in Arakan State

In September, US and OIC officials expressed ongoing concern for Rohingya in Arakan State and called on the regime to urgently address the situation. In addition, the UN warned of the potential for unrest in Arakan State to adversely affect Burma's neighbors.

- **5 September:** An Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) delegation arrived in Burma for a 10-day fact-finding mission into sectarian violence. The delegation traveled to IDP camps in Arakan

¹²⁵ AFP (13 Sep 12) Thailand says Myanmar preparing for refugee return; Irrawaddy (26 Sep 12) After decades of waiting, refugees grow anxious about return

¹²⁶ Bangkok Post (08 Sep 12) Giving refugees hope beyond the camps

¹²⁷ HRW (Sep 12) Ad Hoc and Inadequate: Thailand's treatment of refugees and asylum seekers

¹²⁸ TBBC (10 Sep 12) TBBC visits Rangoon/Yangon; Irrawaddy (12 Sep 12) Reforms make refugee return more likely: TBBC; Irrawaddy (14 Sep 12) Refugee could go back within one year: Thailand

¹²⁹ Mizzima News (12 Sep 12) Karen group issues position paper

¹³⁰ Irrawaddy (14 Sep 12) Refugee could go back within one year: Thailand

¹³¹ Kaladan News (03 Sep 12) BGB and Coastguards arrest Rohingyas at border; Daily Star (17 Sep 12) 25 held while going to Malaysia illegally; Kaladan News (15 Sep 12) Over 200 Rohingyas arrested along the Burma-Bangladesh border; Kaladan News (19 Sep 12) 37 Rohingyas push back again; Kaladan News (22 Sep 12) More Rohingyas arrested in Bandarban, Bangladesh

¹³² Daily Star (12 Sep 12) Bangladesh govt urges USA, int'l community

¹³³ AP (13 Sep 12) US wants open Bangladeshi border but safe return of Rohingya to Myanmar in long term

State and met with regime officials.¹³⁴ The OIC relayed the concerns of its member states on the plight of Rohingya and called on the regime to ensure the rule of law, inter-communal cohabitation, and respect for the fundamental human rights of all groups.¹³⁵ On 11 September, the regime and the OIC signed an MoU to allow for the OIC to provide humanitarian aid to those affected by the unrest.¹³⁶

- **8-9 September:** A US delegation led by Deputy Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Joseph Yun and ambassador to Burma Derek Mitchell visited areas affected by sectarian unrest in Arakan State, including IDP camps in Akyab and Maungdaw.¹³⁷ At the conclusion of the visit, the US embassy in Rangoon released a statement which expressed “great concern” at the humanitarian situation in Arakan State and stressed that “urgent needs” should be addressed, as well as progress towards a “sustainable and just solution.”¹³⁸
- **26 September:** The OIC held its first Contact Group Meeting on the situation of Rohingya in Arakan State on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York. The Contact Group called for a special session of the UN Human Rights Council and a UN General Assembly resolution to address the Rohingya issue.¹³⁹
- **29 September:** In a meeting with OIC Sec-Gen Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, UN Sec-Gen Ban Ki-moon warned of the potential for sectarian unrest in Arakan State to harm the “reform” process in Burma and affect neighboring countries.¹⁴⁰

Washington further eases sanctions

In September, the US continued to reward the regime and lifted various restrictions on Burma.

- **19 September:** The US Treasury Department removed President Thein Sein and People’s Assembly Speaker Shwe Mann from its Specially Designated Nationals (SDN) list which blocked their assets and prohibited US persons from conducting business with them.¹⁴¹
- **22 September:** The US Senate approved legislation that would allow Washington to provide financial aid to Burma through International Financial Institutions (IFIs). The bill had passed the House of Representatives on 19 September.¹⁴²
- **26 September:** US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said that the US would begin the process of easing restrictions on imports from Burma.¹⁴³

Beijing seeks regime’s commitment on mega-projects

Chinese officials pressed for ongoing collaboration on various joint infrastructure projects with Burma as Beijing and Naypyidaw exchanged several high-level visits in September. Chairman of the Standing Committee of China’s National People’s Congress Wu Bangguo called on Naypyidaw to implement already agreed upon joint projects during meetings with both People’s Assembly Speaker Shwe Mann and President Thein Sein in Naypyidaw on 13 and 14 September respectively.¹⁴⁴ On 21 September, Chinese Vice-President Xi Jinping called on Burma’s regime to ensure the smooth implementation of major bilateral infrastructure projects during a meeting with President Thein Sein in Nanning, China.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁴ NLM (11 Sep 12) Union Border Affairs Minister, OIC delegation, General Secretary of Indonesian Red Cross Society visit Sittway

¹³⁵ OIC (17 Sep 12) OIC Delegation Concludes Its Visit Of Observation In Myanmar

¹³⁶ Xinhua (12 Sep 12) Islamic organization to provide aid for Myanmar western state

¹³⁷ RFA (10 Sep 12) Great Concern’ Over Rakhine

¹³⁸ RFA (10 Sep 12) Great Concern’ Over Rakhine

¹³⁹ OIC (27 Sep 12) Support for Rohingya Muslims gains momentum at OIC Contact Group Meeting Ihsanoglu: I will visit Myanmar when Government makes its position clear

¹⁴⁰ AFP (30 Sep 12) UN chief says Myanmar tensions could spread

¹⁴¹ Reuters (19 Sep 12) U.S. drops sanctions on Myanmar president, parliamentarian

¹⁴² AP (20 Sep 12) House approves bill to ease restrictions on US aid to Myanmar through development banks; Reuters (26 Sep 12) Clinton says U.S. to ease Myanmar import ban

¹⁴³ AFP (27 Sep 12) US lifting import ban on Myanmar goods: Clinton

¹⁴⁴ Irrawaddy (14 Sep 12) Thein Sein Cements China Ties Before US Trip; Xinhua (14 Sep 12) China’s top legislator meets Myanmar president to promote bilateral ties

¹⁴⁵ Xinhua (21 Sep 12) Xi urges smooth implementation of major China-Myanmar projects

Foreign Investment Law to be amended - again

After several months of parliamentary debate, on 7 September the National Parliament approved the Foreign Investment Law.¹⁴⁶ However, the adoption of the law, which was never made public,¹⁴⁷ will be delayed until the next parliamentary session after President Thein Sein returned the law to Parliament for further amendments.¹⁴⁸ Thein Sein bowed to pressure from local business leaders who expressed unhappiness over the final version of the law.¹⁴⁹

The text approved on 7 September was the result of a struggle between MPs who favored a protectionist approach and lawmakers, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, who pushed for a more liberal law.¹⁵⁰ The latest version dropped several provisions from the previous text that had raised fears of their potential to deter foreign investment.¹⁵¹ One amendment removed a provision that required foreign firms to put up US\$5 million in start-up capital when setting up joint ventures with local partners.¹⁵² The final version also relaxed restrictions on foreign investment in 13 key sectors including agriculture, fisheries, and manufacturing.¹⁵³ In these sectors, foreign investors could now own up to a 50% stake in joint ventures rather than the originally proposed 49%.¹⁵⁴ The law approved by Parliament allowed foreign investors to lease land for up to 50 years with an option to renew, compared to 35 years under existing legislation.¹⁵⁵ In addition, it granted foreign investors tax holidays for the first five years and included guarantees against nationalizing foreign businesses.¹⁵⁶

World Bank prepares Burma grants

In September, the World Bank outlined more details of its plan to reengage with Burma. On 24 September, the World Bank announced that it was preparing two grants totaling US\$85 million for development projects in Burma's rural areas.¹⁵⁷ Funds for a US\$80 million grant would be channeled through the regime for projects in "selected townships" across Burma.¹⁵⁸ Funds for a US\$5 million grant would be channeled through an unspecified NGO to provide assistance to communities in conflict-affected areas.¹⁵⁹

On 14 September, Japan's Finance Ministry said Japan would try to broker a deal on debt relief for Burma on the sidelines of an International Monetary Fund (IMF)-World Bank meeting in Tokyo on 11 October.¹⁶⁰ Japanese banks considered providing a US\$900 million bridge loan to cover Burma's arrears to the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB).¹⁶¹

¹⁴⁶ AP (07 Sep 12) Myanmar's parliament adopts foreign investment law, toning down some limitations; FT (07 Sep 12) Myanmar MPs agree foreign investor law

¹⁴⁷ Reuters (12 Sep 12) Myanmar minister says foreign investment law ready soon

¹⁴⁸ AFP (24 Sep 12) Myanmar leader stalls investment law; AP (24 Sep 12) Myanmar foreign investment law delayed for changes

¹⁴⁹ WSJ (12 Sep 12) Myanmar urged to clarify, rethink investment law; WSJ (13 Sep 12) Myanmar Firms Push Back on New Law

¹⁵⁰ WSJ (07 Sep 12) Myanmar Passes Investment Law; FT (07 Sep 12) Myanmar MPs agree foreign investor law; Reuters (12 Sep 12) With Suu Kyi's help, Myanmar inches towards investment law; WSJ (12 Sep 12) Myanmar urged to clarify, rethink investment law

¹⁵¹ AP (07 Sep 12) Myanmar's parliament adopts foreign investment law, toning down some limitations

¹⁵² AP (07 Sep 12) Myanmar's parliament adopts foreign investment law, toning down some limitations; Reuters (07 Sep 12) Myanmar parliament passes investment law, now with president; WSJ (07 Sep 12) Myanmar Passes Investment Law; Myanmar Times (10 Sep 12) Hluttaw approves investment law

¹⁵³ Reuters (07 Sep 12) Myanmar parliament passes investment law, now with president; FT (07 Sep 12) Myanmar MPs agree foreign investor law; Myanmar Times (10 Sep 12) Hluttaw approves investment law

¹⁵⁴ AP (07 Sep 12) Myanmar's parliament adopts foreign investment law, toning down some limitations; WSJ (07 Sep 12) Myanmar Passes Investment Law; Myanmar Times (10 Sep 12) Hluttaw approves investment law

¹⁵⁵ AP (07 Sep 12) Myanmar's parliament adopts foreign investment law, toning down some limitations; RFA (07 Sep 12) New Law Invites Investment

¹⁵⁶ Reuters (19 Sep 12) Protracted Myanmar investment law faces further delay; Myanmar Times (10 Sep 12) Hluttaw approves investment law; EMG (09 Sep 12) Union Assembly approves foreign investment bill

¹⁵⁷ World Bank (24 Sep 12) World Bank to support local communities in Myanmar

¹⁵⁸ World Bank (24 Sep 12) World Bank to support local communities in Myanmar

¹⁵⁹ World Bank (24 Sep 12) World Bank to support local communities in Myanmar

¹⁶⁰ Reuters (20 Sep 12) Japan to seek debt relief for Myanmar at IMF meeting

¹⁶¹ Reuters (20 Sep 12) Japan to seek debt relief for Myanmar at IMF meeting

Affordable SIM cards still unavailable

As the regime continued to maintain a monopoly on telecommunication, mobile phones remained unaffordable for the majority of Burmese. On 19 September, the regime's Ministry of Communications, Posts and Telegraphs (MPT) began selling 5,000 kyat (US\$5) MPT prepaid top-up cards - the cheapest on the market so far.¹⁶² However, the price of SIM cards remained exorbitant - 200,000 kyat (US\$231).¹⁶³ On 25 September, it was reported that MPT said that cheaper mobile SIM cards would not be available until March 2013.¹⁶⁴

OTHER BURMA NEWS IN SEPTEMBER

2	Regime Information Minister Aung Kyi says that newspapers will be able to publish daily editions beginning in early 2013. ¹⁶⁵
3	Tatmadaw releases 42 child soldiers from various States and Divisions and hands them over to their respective families. ¹⁶⁶
3	Indonesian police arrest and detain 10 Rohingya in North Sumatra, Indonesia. ¹⁶⁷
3	Thailand's PTTEP announces it has partnered with French Total SA and JX Nippon Oil & Gas Exploration for the exploration of Burma's offshore M-11 Block. ¹⁶⁸
3	President Thein Sein meets with Canadian Trade Minister Edward Fast in Naypyidaw to discuss trade and investment. ¹⁶⁹
4	President Thein Sein meets with South Africa's Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Maite Nkoana-Mashabane in Naypyidaw. ¹⁷⁰
5	Chin Human Rights Organization releases "Threats to Our Existence: Persecution of Ethnic Chin Christians in Burma," a report that documents the regime's pattern of religious freedom violations and human rights abuses against Christian communities in Chin State. ¹⁷¹
5	Regime gives conditional approval for 12 private firms, including subsidiaries of tycoon-run Max Myanmar, Kanbawza Bank, and Asia World, to offer insurance services in Burma. ¹⁷²
6	ILO in Rangoon says it receives about 60 forced labor complaints monthly, of which half relate to the recruitment of children into the Tatmadaw. ¹⁷³
6	Rangoon-based Eleven Media Group reports that natural gas accounted for 37% (US\$1.2 billion) of Burma's US\$3.23 billion total exports from April to August. ¹⁷⁴
6	Regime Election Commission Chairman Tin Aye tells the leaders of three Muslim political parties during a meeting in Naypyidaw to control the high birthrate among Muslims in Arakan State. ¹⁷⁵
7	President Thein Sein meets with all 29 ethnic affairs ministers to discuss their grievances. ¹⁷⁶
7	A businessman close to the Tatmadaw files a lawsuit against 19 farmers from Rathidaung Township, Arakan State, for trespassing on land that authorities had confiscated from the farmers. ¹⁷⁷
7	About 1,000 textile workers march through Rangoon to demand increased pay. ¹⁷⁸
8	A delegation of eight MPs leaves for an exposure trip to the US. ¹⁷⁹
11	Following a meeting at the KNPP liaison office in Loikaw, Karenni State, five representatives from the 88 Generation Students and a three-member KNPP delegation issue a joint statement urging the regime to stop all fighting in Kachin State "as soon as possible." ¹⁸⁰
11	Ethnic Nationalities Council releases a statement calling on ethnic armed groups to suspend their current

¹⁶² NLM (21 Sep 12) Prepaid top up card worth K 5000 come out

¹⁶³ EMG (25 Sep 12) No plan to cut SIM card prices, says govt

¹⁶⁴ EMG (25 Sep 12) No plan to cut SIM card prices, says govt

¹⁶⁵ AFP (03 Sep 12) Myanmar to allow daily newspapers next year

¹⁶⁶ Xinhua (03 Sep 12) Myanmar military releases 42 more child soldiers

¹⁶⁷ Jakarta Post (06 Sep 12) Rohingya arrivals in Indonesia's North Sumatra on the increase

¹⁶⁸ Reuters (03 Sep 12) Thai PTTEP chooses Total, JX Nippon units for Myanmar M11

¹⁶⁹ Irrawaddy (01 Sep 12) Burma Business Roundup (Saturday, Sept. 1)

¹⁷⁰ NLM (05 Sep 12) South African minister's first-ever visit to Myanmar, sign for close ties and cooperation in the future President U Thein Sein South Africa heartened by success of democratization being implemented by Myanmar people South African Minister Mrs Maite Nkoana-Mashabane

¹⁷¹ Irrawaddy (05 Sep 12) Christian Chin 'Coerced to Buddhism by State'

¹⁷² Irrawaddy (07 Sep 12) Tycoons Rush as Burmese Insurance Privatized; Myanmar Times (10 Sep 12) Private insurance companies given go ahead

¹⁷³ Myanmar Times (17 Sep 12) Shift in forced labour complaints from govt to private sector

¹⁷⁴ EMG (06 Sep 12) Myanmar trade hits \$6.6b in April-Aug

¹⁷⁵ Narinjara News (12 Sep 12) Control birthrate, UEC Chairman tells leaders of three Muslim political parties

¹⁷⁶ Myanmar Times (10 Sep 12) President meets ethnic ministers

¹⁷⁷ Narinjara News (17 Sep 12) Lawsuit Against 45 Farmers in Rathedaung to go to Court Again Soon

¹⁷⁸ AFP (08 Sep 12) Myanmar garment workers protest in Yangon

¹⁷⁹ NLM (10 Sep 12) Pyithu Hluttaw Deputy Speaker sees off Parliamentary delegation

¹⁸⁰ Mizzima News (12 Sep 12) 88-Generation students, KNPP to cooperate in creating Union gov't

	talks with the regime while the Tatmadaw's offensive against the KIA continues. ¹⁸¹
12	Regime Immigration and Population Minister Khin Yi says that Rohingya born in Burma are eligible to apply for citizenship provided at least two generations of their families have lived in the country; the applicant is born in Burma; and he or she can speak Burmese language. ¹⁸²
12	The Dalai Lama says that reports of human rights violations in Arakan State are "very unfortunate." ¹⁸³
13	President Thein Sein meets with UN Sec-Gen's Special Advisor for Burma Vijay Nambiar in Naypyidaw to discuss cooperation between Burma and the UN, socio-economic development, and the fulfillment of the Millennium Development Goals. ¹⁸⁴
14	NCGUB issues a statement to announce its dissolution in an effort to "contribute to the achievement of national reconciliation" in Burma. ¹⁸⁵
14	BGB personnel arrest eight Rohingya in Gundum on the Burma-Bangladesh border. ¹⁸⁶
14	In the annual White House memorandum on US counter-narcotics policy, US President Barack Obama names Burma, alongside Bolivia and Venezuela, as having "failed demonstrably" to fight the drug trade. ¹⁸⁷
14	European Parliament releases a statement in which it expresses alarm at the sectarian violence in Burma's Arakan State. ¹⁸⁸
16	A People's Assembly delegation led by Speaker Shwe Mann leaves Burma for visits to Australia and Singapore. ¹⁸⁹
16	Min Ko Naing and four fellow 88 Generation Students begin a three-day visit to conflict areas in Kachin State. ¹⁹⁰
17	Regime forms a new interim Myanmar Press Council with 29 members - 10 nominated by the Information Ministry and 20 by media representatives. ¹⁹¹
17	Regime Human Rights Commission says it has been admitted as a member of the South East Asia National Human Rights Institution during the group's annual meeting held in Chiang Mai, Thailand, on 12-14 September. ¹⁹²
17	UWSA releases 20 SSA soldiers who have been detained for over six weeks. ¹⁹³
17	EU Commission releases a statement saying that it has submitted a proposal for the EU to remove tariffs and quotas on imports from Burma and to restore Burma's 'Generalized System of Preferences' status. ¹⁹⁴
18	More than 100 people, including dozens of monks, NLD members and 88 Generation Students, gather at a monastery in Rangoon to mark the fifth anniversary of the "Saffron Revolution." ¹⁹⁵
20	Regime charges Voice Weekly editor-in-chief Kyaw Min Swe with libel over the journal's publication of a report that alleged that several ministries misappropriated funds during the 2009-2011 financial years. ¹⁹⁶
21	President's Office Minister Aung Min says that the regime is willing to make all necessary compromises to broker peace with ethnic armed groups, including amendments to the constitution on power and resource sharing. ¹⁹⁷
23	People's Assembly Speaker Shwe Mann begins a four-day visit to Singapore at the invitation of Singapore Parliament Speaker Michael Palmer. ¹⁹⁸
24	Freedom House releases "Freedom on the Net 2012," a report that rates Burma's status with regard to internet freedom as 'Not Free.' ¹⁹⁹
25	Burmese exiled media Irrawaddy announces it has opened an office in Rangoon. ²⁰⁰
25	A ceremony to mark the launch of the Three Millennium Development Goals Fund, which has allocated US\$300 million over five years to fight HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, is held in Rangoon. ²⁰¹

¹⁸¹ DVB (13 Sep 12) Council calls on groups to suspend talks with gov't

¹⁸² RFA (12 Sep 12) Rohingya can 'Apply for Citizenship'

¹⁸³ Phayul (13 Sep 12) The Dalai Lama says reports of human rights violations in Burma 'very unfortunate'

¹⁸⁴ Xinhua (13 Sep 12) Myanmar president meets top UN envoy

¹⁸⁵ DVB (14 Sep 12) Burma's 'exile government' dissolved

¹⁸⁶ Kaladan News (15 Sep 12) Over 200 Rohingyas arrested along the Burma-Bangladesh border

¹⁸⁷ AFP (14 Sep 12) US says Bolivia, Myanmar, Venezuela still failing drug war

¹⁸⁸ KUNA (14 Sep 12) EU Parliament condemns persecution of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar

¹⁸⁹ NLM (17 Sep 12) Pyithu Hluttaw delegation led by Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann leaves for Australia, Singapore to pay goodwill visits

¹⁹⁰ Kachin News Group (23 Sep 12) 88 leader Min Ko Naing visits war torn Hpakant jade district

¹⁹¹ Myanmar Times (24 Sep 12) Press body re-formed following complaints

¹⁹² NLM (18 Sep 12) Statement of Myanmar National Human Rights Commission (MNHRC) concerning its membership in South East Asia NHRIs Forum (SEANF) No. 6/2012

¹⁹³ SHAN (19 Sep 12) Shan troops released by Wa

¹⁹⁴ BBC (18 Sep 12) EU plans to lift trade barriers for Burma exports

¹⁹⁵ AFP (19 Sep 12) Monks lead first 'Saffron Revolution' ceremony

¹⁹⁶ AFP (20 Sep 12) Myanmar newspaper pair to face defamation charge; Myanmar Times (24 Sep 12) 'The Voice' defendants plead not guilty to defamation; AP (14 Mar 12) Gov't lawsuits imperil Myanmar's new press freedom

¹⁹⁷ Reuters (21 Sep 12) Myanmar says will make 'all necessary compromises' for peace

¹⁹⁸ CNA (23 Sep 12) Myanmar parliamentary speaker in S'pore for four-day visit

¹⁹⁹ Freedom House (24 Sep 12) Freedom on the Net 2012

²⁰⁰ DPA (25 Sep 12) Myanmar dissident magazine opens office in Yangon

25	US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Kurt Campbell says that ethnic conflict in Burma remains one of the most challenging issues confronting the country. ²⁰²
26	More than 1,000 Buddhist monks gather in Mandalay to mark the fifth anniversary of the crackdown on the Saffron Revolution. ²⁰³
26	During a meeting in New York, President Thein Sein and Thai PM Yingluck Shinawatra agree to form a joint committee to supervise the Tavoy deep-sea port in Tenasserim Division. ²⁰⁴
27	Police in Shar Khae Gyi Village, Kyonpyaw Township, Irrawaddy Division, kill two people after firing into a crowd of residents gathered in front of the local regime office demanding justice for the death of a villager as a result of a fish farming dispute. ²⁰⁵
27	Regime Election Commission Chairman Tin Aye meets with leaders of 27 political parties in Rangoon to share views regarding preparations for the 2015 general election. ²⁰⁶
27	Twenty-three Kachin organizations send an open letter to Daw Aung Suu Kyi inviting her to visit IDP camps in Kachin State. ²⁰⁷

REPORTS ON BURMA RELEASED IN SEPTEMBER

“**Burma’s Parliament: Fundamental reforms still blocked**”, Altsean-Burma

<http://bit.ly/SdF6LR>

“**Arbitrary Arrests in Burma: a tool to repress critical voices**”, Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP)

<http://bit.ly/Ps3moZ>

“**Myanmar: The Decree on the Right to Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession - Legal Analysis**”, Article 19

<http://bit.ly/PhZfeY>

“**Freedom on the Net 2012 - Burma**”, Freedom House

<http://bit.ly/QASvJo>

“**Myanmar: Displacement in Rakhine State, Situation Report No. 8**”, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA)

<http://bit.ly/Rj1RrI>

“**Forced labour during the Arakan crisis: An overview of forced labour practices in North Arakan, Burma (June to August 2012)**”, Arakan Project

<http://bit.ly/QVz0dm>

“**‘Threats to Our Existence’: Persecution of Ethnic Chin Christians in Burma**”, Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO)

<http://bit.ly/SirGyV>

“**Ad Hoc and Inadequate: Thailand’s Treatment of Refugees and Asylum Seekers**”, Human Rights Watch (HRW)

<http://bit.ly/PkvDgh>

“**Briefing Regarding Myanmar Peace Team’s Meetings with Mae Tao Clinic Team 18 September 2012**”, Mae Tao Clinic

<http://bit.ly/NBhYVo>

“**CSIS Myanmar Trip Report: State of the Nation and Recommendations for U.S. Policy**”, Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)

<http://bit.ly/UITCcR>

²⁰¹ NLM (27 Sep 12) 3MDG launches to reduce maternal and child mortality rate, fight 3 diseases

²⁰² Irrawaddy (26 Sep 12) Lifting Burma Import Ban Close: US Official

²⁰³ Irrawaddy (27 Sep 12) Monks Mark Uprising with Ceremonies, Protests

²⁰⁴ Bernama (27 Sep 12) Thailand, Myanmar To Jointly Develop Dawei Deep Seaport

²⁰⁵ Irrawaddy (28 Sep 12) Two Killed as Police Fire on Crowd in Patheingyi

²⁰⁶ Irrawaddy (28 Sep 12) EC Courts Parties Looking Towards 2015 Poll; NLM (28 Sep 12) Political parties to act in national interests: UEC Chairman

²⁰⁷ Kachin News Group (26 Sep 12) Open letter to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi