The Second Panglong Peace Conference concludes with plans to meet again.

Clashes between the joint forces of the Tatmadaw and the Border Guard Force, and the Na Ma Kyar, cause the displacement of about 4,000 villagers in Karen/Kayin State.

Protests greet the Advisory Commission, led by Kofi Annan, on its first trip to Arakan/Rakhine State.

The Arakan State Government issues an order to demolish “illegal” mosques, homes and schools.

Prisoners continue to face forced labor, exploitation, and extortion in labor camps.

Parliament votes to dismiss three members of the National Human Rights Commission for mishandling a case in which two underage domestic workers were abused.

A man is jailed for nine months for calling President Htin Kyaw “crazy” on Facebook.

The hydropower commission finishes reviewing the Myitsone dam contract, but a decision will not be made soon.

The Tatmadaw releases 68 child soldiers.

A military tribunal finds members of the Tatmadaw guilty of murdering local villagers in Northern Shan State in July.

President Obama announces the lifting of economic sanctions against Burma/Myanmar and its reinstatement to the Generalized System of Preferences during Aung San Suu Kyi’s first state visit to US.

For the first time in twenty-five years, the European Union is not tabling a human rights resolution on Burma in the United Nations General Assembly.
Second Panglong Peace Conference concludes without clear outcomes

On 3 September, the 4-day Panglong Peace Conference concluded with Aung San Suu Kyi calling the event a “proud landmark” and a successful step towards resolving the country’s armed conflicts.⁴ The 1,400 participants included government officials, lawmakers, political party delegates, military officers, and representatives of 17 ethnic armed groups, including signatories and non-signatories of the nationwide ceasefire agreement (NCA).²

Although promoted as an all-inclusive process, some ethnic armed groups (EAGs) did not attend the Conference - notably the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDA), the Ta’ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) and the Arakan Army (AA) - after the Tatmadaw objected over the groups’ refusal to disarm.³ The biggest armed ethnic group in Burma/Myanmar, the United Wa State Army (UWSA), left the Conference after one day because they were given only “observer” nametags.⁴

The Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process (AGIPP) reported that only 13%⁵ of the official participants of the Conference were women.⁶ The government delegation had only seven women (9%).⁷

A total of 72 representatives from the government, the Tatmadaw, political parties and ethnic armed groups delivered 10-minute presentations on proposals that covered a range of topics including federalism, constitutional change, women’s participation in political leadership, and formal programs for security and defense.⁸ A leader from the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO), a non-signatory to the NCA, noted that they were able to present proposals “but nothing important happened”.⁹

There will be a follow-up peace conference in six months' time.¹⁰ In the meantime, government officials would encourage EAGs to sign the NCA,¹¹ while the Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee (UPDJC) would hold a national-level political dialogue at the state and region levels to finalize the dialogue framework.¹²

Clashes in Karen/Kayin State continue to displace villagers

On 30 August, fresh clashes broke out causing the displacement of about 4,000 villagers from 20 villages in Karen/Kayin State around the Mae Tha Waw and Myaing Gyi Ngu areas of Hlaingbwe Township, Hpa-an District; many fleeing to Thailand’s border areas.¹³ The recent fighting between the joint forces of the Tatmadaw and the Border Guard Force (BGF) against the Na Ma Kyar, a splinter group of the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA), began with a disagreement over a business deal that led to the death of their leader Maj Na Ma Kyar.¹⁴

Na Ma Kyar said that seven of their troops and several more from the Tatmadaw and BGF were killed.¹⁵ No civilian casualties have been reported yet. There were claims that the joint forces of the

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¹ Irrawaddy (3 Sept 16) State Counselor Tells Peace Conference Participants Not to Dwell in the Past
² Irrawaddy (3 Sept 16) State Counselor Tells Peace Conference Participants Not to Dwell in the Past
³ Irrawaddy (29 Aug 16) Three Armed Groups Barred from Peace Conference
⁴ Myanmar Times (01 Sept 16) UWSA pulls out of Panglong
⁵ Myanmar Times reported 13% [Myanmar Times (05 Sept 16) Alliance wants creation of committee to push for women in peace process] while The Guardian reported 14% [The Guardian (20 Sept 16) Why so few women in peace talks, demand Myanmar campaigners]
⁶ The Guardian (20 Sept 16) Why so few women in peace talks, demand Myanmar campaigners
⁷ The Guardian (20 Sept 16) Why so few women in peace talks, demand Myanmar campaigners
⁸ Myanmar Times (05 Sept 16) Why so few women in peace talks, demand Myanmar campaigners
⁹ Irrawaddy (03 Sept 16) Not without wrinkles, peace conference lauded for taking landmark ‘first steps’
¹⁰ Myanmar Times (21 Sept 16) Panglong Peace Conference ends with long road ahead
¹¹ Myanmar Times (05 Sept 16) Not without wrinkles, peace conference lauded for taking landmark ‘first steps’
¹² Myanmar Times (05 Sept 16) Not without wrinkles, peace conference lauded for taking landmark ‘first steps’
¹³ Irrawaddy (15 Sept 16) Thousands flee, casualties reported in Karen State
¹⁴ Irrawaddy (22 Sept 16) Civilians Bear the Brunt of Ongoing Karen State Conflict
¹⁵ Myanmar Times (19 Sept 16) No end in sight to deadly Kayin State clashes
Tatmadaw and BGF were forcibly conscripting locals as porters to carry food, supplies and ammunition to the frontline. On 15 September the Tatmadaw and BGF took at least three bases from the Na Ma Kyar and on 23 September, seized more bases. However, the Na Ma Kyar said that it was now using guerilla tactics to launch counter attacks against the Tatmadaw and BGF.

Other developments:

Sept 8: The Karen National Union (KNU) and the New Mon State Party (NMSP) clashed for the first time in 28 years. Tensions between the two groups were reportedly running high following recent land disputes. Yapu Village Administrator Khin Maung Oo reported that one KNU fighter was injured.

Sept 12: The Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS) and the Ta’ang National Party (TNP) attended a half-day meeting aimed at resolving hostilities between ethnic Shan militia and the Ta’ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

Sept 12: Deputy Defense Minister Maj Gen Myint Nwe admitted that the Tatmadaw continued to use and produce landmines but kept it to a minimum. The Landmine Monitor reported that Burma/Myanmar, which was not a signatory to the 1997 Mine Treaty Ban, was the third-worst country in the world for landmine injuries.

Sept 13: The seventh Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Committee-Union Level (JMC-U) 3-day meeting began at the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre in Rangoon/Yangon. The meeting covered the possible formation of a Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Committee-State level (JMC-S) in Bago Region and Chin state, respectively. On 15 September, the Tatmadaw proposed to set Karen/Kayin State as a pilot area for removing landmines.

Sept 15: The Tatmadaw fired 80 rounds of artillery including 60mm, 80mm and 120mm shells and engaged in attacks against outposts near Kachin Independence Army (KIA) headquarters in Laiza. KIA spokesperson Col Naw Bo stated that military attacks on ethnic armed groups were detrimental to the ongoing peace process.

Sept 17: Thousands of ethnic Tai Leng, also known as Red Shan, led by Tai Leng Nationalities Development Party (TLNDP), marched the streets of Homalin in Sagaing Division demanding a self-administered Tai Leng state.

Sept 19: A 9-member working group - composed of representatives from government, nationwide ceasefire agreement signatories, and political parties - began writing the Terms of Reference (ToR) for national-level political dialogues to be held “ethnically, regionally and topically” in states and regions.

PARLIAMENT WATCH

Upper House debates two controversial laws

On 9 September, four Upper House lawmakers challenged the decision by the Lower House of Parliament to remove Article 9(i) from the Peaceful Assembly and Procession Law. Article 9(i) is the

16 Irrawaddy (16 Sept 16) DKBA splinter group lose several bases to Burma army and Border Guard Force
17 Myanmar Times (28 Sept 16) Displaced families in Kayin allowed to return home after landmine clearance
18 Irrawaddy (22 Sept 16) Civilians Bear the Brunt of Ongoing Karen State Conflict
19 DVB (9 Sept 16) KNU, NMSP troops clash in Tenasserim
20 Irrawaddy (13 Sept 16) Leaders meet to resolve Shan State Conflict
21 Myanmar Times (13 Sept 16) Tatmadaw insists landmine use kept within reasonable minimum
22 GNLM (14 Sept 16) Union joint ceasefire committee meets to form sub-committee in Bago region
23 GNLM (16 Sept 16) Tatmadaw proposes removal of landmines in Kayin State
24 DVB (16 Sept 16) Burma army launch artillery attack on Kachin outposts near Laiza
25 DVB (19 Sept 16) Thousands of Red Shan march for self-rule
26 Myanmar Times (21 Sept 16) Drafting of national-level dialogues’ terms of reference under way
27 Myanmar Times (12 Sept 16) Upper house MPs object to removal of ban on protest inducements
clause that prohibits giving and taking money to encourage individuals to join a protest. With the two Houses unable to reconcile their differences, the Upper House Speaker announced that they will discuss their disagreements in the National Parliament.²⁸

On 14 September, the Upper House of Parliament began discussing the bill annulling the controversial 1950 Emergency Provisions Act.²⁹ The Lower House of Parliament approved the bill on August [see August 2016 Bulletin]. During the term of the previous government, opposition parties tried three times to revoke the said law because it was widely used to jail political activists for up to seven years for a range of vague offenses against the state.³⁰

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<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
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<td>Amendment of the Gemstones Law</td>
<td>Sept 22</td>
<td>Submitted</td>
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<tr>
<td>Annullment of the Emergency Provisions Act [see Parliament Watch]</td>
<td>Sept 14</td>
<td>Debated</td>
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<td>Education for ethnic minorities</td>
<td>Sept 7-8; Sept 12</td>
<td>Debated; Rejected</td>
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<td>Peaceful Assembly and Procession [see Parliament Watch]</td>
<td>Sept 9; Sept 19</td>
<td>Debated</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amendment of the Civil Service Law</td>
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<td>Amendment of the Ward or Village-Tract Administration Law</td>
<td>Sept 19</td>
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<td>E-government</td>
<td>Sept 8</td>
<td>Proposed; Debated</td>
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²⁸ Myanmar Times (19 Sept 16) Union legislature to tack protest law differences  
²⁹ Myanmar Times (15 Sept 16) Emergency Provisions Act debated in the upper house  
³⁰ Irrawaddy (2 Sept 16) Upper House Bill Committee Backs Abolishment of Controversial Emergency Law  
³¹ Myanmar Times (15 Sept 16) Emergency provisions act debated in upper house  
³² Myanmar Times (09 Sept 16) MPs want ethnic languages taught during school hours  
³³ DVB (14 Sept 16) Upper House votes against ethnic literacy proposal  
³⁴ Myanmar Times (12 Sept 16) Upper House MPs object to removal of ban on protest inducements  
³⁵ Myanmar Times (21 Sept 16) Amyotha Hluttaw approves civil service law tweaks  
³⁶ Irrawaddy (20 Sept 16) Lower House abolishes overnight guest registration  
³⁷ Eleven (8 Sept 16) MPs claim e-government will cut graft
Interpretation of Statutes  

Sept 2  

Approved  

The Lower House approved the bill amending the Law on Commission for Interpretation of Statutes.  

Investment Law  

Sept 28  

Approved  

The Lower House approved the Myanmar Investment Bill submitted by the Ministry of National Planning and Finance.

Privacy Protection  

Sept 8;  

Sept 20  

Proposed;  

Approved  

The Lower House submitted and approved a bill protecting citizens from state surveillance and intrusion, despite objections from military MPs. The bill protects against unwanted surveillance, unwarranted arrests and inspections, unless specified by the President or Union Ministers. No one can request or provide personal communication logged by telecom operators, unseal private letters and parcels, intrude on private affairs and family life, or seize citizens' property. Punishment includes imprisonment (6 months - 5 years or a fine of K300,000 - K2.5 million (US$247 - $2058).

Arakan/Rakhine Advisory Commission [see Ethnic Affairs & Conflict]  

Sept 6  

Rejected  

The Lower House rejected the proposal to replace the international members of the Arakan State Advisory Commission with local academics.

Other developments:

Sept 6: Ministry of Health and Sport Director Dr. Thuzar Chit Tin, stated that the 2006 Control of Smoking and Consumption of Tobacco Products Law is in the process of being updated, with fines to reflect the current economy and act as a bigger deterrent.

Sept 12: The Legal Affairs and Special Cases Assessment Commission asked the Parliament to prioritize enacting 48 laws, with legislation tackling violence against women topping the list. Other priorities include laws on copyright, intellectual property, child rights, compulsory education, expatriate workers, and the Border Guard Force (BGF) and Police Force.

Sept 9: The Movement for Democracy Current Force (MDCF) called for the removal of the military from the military-run Ministry of Home Affairs and from the judiciary at a demonstration in front of North Oakkalapa Township Court, Rangoon/Yangon Division. MDCF criticized the judiciary for failing to act against the privileged despite being presented with sufficient evidence.

Sept 15: The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) urged the signing and the ratification of the United Nations Convention Against Torture and any other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UNCAT).

Sept 15: Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Minister Dr. Win Myat Aye told the Upper House that work was underway to approve the formation of a National Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

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38 GNLM (3 Sept 16) Pyithu Hluttaw MPs approve Bill to amend the Law and to interpret Statutes
39 Irrawaddy (29 Sept 16) Investment Law Approved in Lower House
40 Myanmar Times (22 Sept 16) Bill on personal freedoms, security passes Pyithu Hluttaw
41 Myanmar Times (22 Sept 16) Bill on personal freedoms, security passes Pyithu Hluttaw
42 Myanmar Times (6 Sep 16) Anti-tobacco law to be upgraded with harsher punishments, fines
43 Myanmar Times (13 Sept 16) 48 laws must be enacted as priority: legal commission
44 Eleven (10 Sept 16) Keep generals away from judiciary: activists
45 Eleven (6 Sept 16) Failing laws ruin the country: MDCF leader
46 Irrawaddy (15 Sept 16) Advocacy group to govt: Join UN Convention Against Torture
47 GNLM (16 Sept 16) National committee on rights of persons with disabilities to be formed soon
WOMEN’S RIGHTS

Women call for gender committee

On 5 September, the Alliance for Gender Inclusion in the Peace Process (AGIPP) demanded that a committee be formed to monitor gender equality and women’s participation in the peace process, and ensure a 30% quota, as female participation in the 21st Century Peace Conference made up 13% of the total participants, only a 6% increase since the January Union Peace Conference.49

ETHNIC AFFAIRS & CONFLICT

Protests at Arakan/Rakhine Advisory Commission’s first meeting

On 5 September, former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, the chair of the Arakan/Rakhine Advisory Commission attended the commission’s first meeting in Rangoon/Yangon. More than 2,000 protestors rallied in the capital of the Arakan State against the inclusion of three foreigners in the 9-member panel [see August 2016 Bulletin].50

Annan flew to Akyab/Sittwe to visit both Buddhist Arakanese and Rohingya Muslim displaced people’s camps where he met with community leaders and refugee representatives.51 At a press conference on 8 September, when asked if he had seen the oppression of the Muslim community, Annan told the media that he had not personally witnessed it there.52

On 6 September, the Lower House of Parliament rejected a proposal to remove the three international experts from the commission, with 250 against and 148 in favor. Those in favor argued that the issues were an internal affair while those against contended that the crisis of the Rohingya had become an international issue.53

On 11 September, around 500 Buddhist nationalists violently protested in Rangoon Region’s Bahan Township against the international members of the commission, with photographer Myat Thu Kyaw being beaten by an unknown assailant.54 He filed a lawsuit against an unknown perpetrator.55

On 14 September, the Arakan State legislature approved a proposal objecting to the commission.56 On 16 September, 11 out of 13 political parties denounced the so-called illegitimate body because the “formation of the commission is not in line with the State Counselor’s authority”.57

Arakan/ Rakhine State govt orders demolition of “illegal” mosques, homes, schools

On 18 September, the Arakan/Rakhine state government ordered the demolition of “illegally constructed” buildings, including mosques and Islamic religious schools in the state’s Muslim-majority townships of Maungdaw and Buthidaung.58 The local immigration office said that 12 mosques, 35 Arabic language-teaching schools, 2,543 houses, 604 shops and 132 other buildings were constructed without official permission.59 Arakan State Security and Border Affairs Minister Col Htein Lin met

48 Myanmar Times reported 13% [Myanmar Times (05 Sept 16) Alliance wants creation of committee to push for women in peace process] while The Guardian reported 14% [The Guardian (20 Sept 16) Why so few women in peace talks, demand Myanmar campaigners]
50 Myanmar Times (05 Sept 16) Alliance wants creation of committee to push for women in peace process
51 Irrawaddy (8 Sept 2016) Myanmn Buddhists Protest Against Advisory Commission on Troubled Rakhine State
52 Irrawaddy (8 Sept 2016) Kofi Annan: Commission will not do ‘human rights investigation’ in Arakan State
53 Myanmar Times (7 Sept 15) Anti-foreigner motion on Rakhine advisory body defeated
54 DVB (12 Sept 16) Buddhist nationalists clash with Rangoon residents
55 Myanmar Times (13 Sept 16) Photographer files lawsuit after being assaulted at protest
56 Myanmar Times (15 Sept 16) Rejection of Rakhine advisory body approved by State Hluttaw
57 Irrawaddy (19 Sept 16) Suu Kyi blames politics for opposition to Arakan Commission
58 Myanmar Times (22 Sept 16) Rakhine State govt announces plans to demolish ‘illegal’ mosques, homes and schools
59 Irrawaddy (21 Sept 16) ‘Illegal’ Mosques to be Demolished in Arakan State
with residents from Maungdaw to explain that the number of illegal buildings had increased in recent years, and the government felt that it should put an end to the situation before it went out of control.  

Arakan State is home to more than 1 million Muslim Rohingya, who are called “Bengali” as a way of labeling them as illegal immigrants from neighboring Bangladesh.

On 23 September, Muslim groups condemned the demolition project as “part of their long-drawn-out annihilation and ethnic cleansing policy of the defenseless Rohingya people,” and called on the State government to not proceed with the plan.  

**Arakan National Party prepares to split**

Almost three years after merging with the Rakhine Nationalities Development Party (RNDP) to form the Arakan National Party (ANP), the former Arakan League for Democracy (ALD) is moving to break away. The ANP was created in January 2014 in readiness for the elections.

On 11 September, ALD faction members assembled in Rangoon/Yangon to discuss the separation. Senior ALD member Myo Kyaw stated that members have felt squeezed out of the ANP since the expulsion of six senior officials in March. In October, members will decide whether to re-form as a new party or integrate with the less popular Arakan Patriot Party (APP).  

There have been policy clashes between the ALD and the ANP. The ANP has increasingly sided with nationalistic and radical Buddhist Rakhine, and adopted a hostile stance to the international community, while the ALD was less prepared to take this route.

**HUMAN RIGHTS**

**Prisoners in labor camps face forced labor and exploitation**

On 1 September, Myanmar Now reported that around 20,000 convicts continued to suffer from abuses in prison labor camps across Burma/Myanmar. Prisoners were forced to perform back-breaking manual labor, extorted, and forced to work for commercial enterprises to generate revenues for camps.

On 25 September, the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) reported that prisoners were plagued by diseases which ranged from heart disease, malaria, high blood pressure and tuberculosis, to dysentery and scabies, which were considered "normal" in prison.

**Parliament dismisses three Human Rights Commission members**

On 26 September, the Lower House of Parliament passed a proposal to dismiss three members of the National Human Rights Commission (MNHRC) for mishandling the abuse case of two underage domestic workers. After negotiations mediated by the MNHRC, Thazin and San Kay Khine, now 16 and 17 respectively, agreed to accept compensation totaling K5 million (over US$4,000) instead of filing legal action against their abusers. It was reported that three MNHRC members, including Zaw Win, Mya Mya, and Dr. Nyan Zaw, facilitated the mediation.

Their employers reportedly tortured the young domestic workers for five years and did not pay their wages. Five members of the family that employed them were taken into police custody.

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60 Myanmar Times (22 Sept 16) Rakhine State govt announces plans to demolish 'illegal' mosques, homes and schools
61 Mizzima (24 Sept 16) Muslim groups call for halt to demolition of mosques in Rakhine state
62 Myanmar Times (13 Sept 16) Arakan National Party prepares to split
63 Irrawaddy (13 Sept 16) ALD members give nod to part with ANP
64 Myanmar Times (13 Sept 16) Arakan National Party prepares to split
65 Myanmar Times (22 Sept 16) Arakan National Party prepares to split
66 Myanmar Times (27 Sept 16) Activists report dire state of Myanmar’s prison system
67 Irrawaddy (26 Sept 16) Lower House Votes to Dismiss MNHRC Members
68 DVB (22 September 2016) A sordid case of enslavement and torture at a Rangoon tailor shop
69 DVB (22 September 2016) A sordid case of enslavement and torture at a Rangoon tailor shop
Lawyer Robert San Aung said that he intended to sue the MNHRC. The President’s Office announced that it would review MNHRC’s involvement in the case, and instructed the Ministry of Home Affairs to provide security for the teenage victims and their families.71

**Man jailed after calling President Htin Kyaw “crazy” on Facebook**

On 23 September, Aung Win Hlaing, a Myawaddy resident, was convicted and sentenced to nine months in prison for calling President Htin Kyaw “crazy” and an “idiot” on Facebook, over a presidential order shutting down a township committee that he chaired.72 In June, Yin Yin Htar, a member of the National League of Democracy (NLD) in Karen/Kayin State central committee, filed a case against him for violation of Article 66(d) of the Telecommunications Law. Yin Yin Htar clarified that she filed the case in her private capacity.73

Aung Win Hlaing’s case is believed to be the third time that someone was prosecuted for defamation under the new government.74

**HUMANITARIAN**

**Disaster Relief developments:**

**Sept 2:** Regional authorities requested K1,167.42 million (US$951 million) from the Central Department of Rural Development for repairs to 11 roads and 52 bridges which were destroyed by floods that hit 19 townships in Bago region in July and August.75

**Sept 3:** The Department of Agriculture announced that loan repayments are to be postponed for farmers whose farms were damaged by severe floods that hit the country's central regions in July and August.76

**Sept 5:** Senior meteorologist Dr. Htun Lwin warned that Burma/Myanmar will suffer from increasingly damaging floods because forests and other ecosystems were being destroyed. Authorities have confirmed that 110,000 families were affected by the flooding in ten states and regions across Burma.77

**Health developments:**

**Sept 6:** It was reported that seven people died between 18 August and 3 September from anthrax after physical contact with the carcasses of infected cows in Chaung-U Township, Sagaing Region.78 Eight people from two villages in Monywa District were hospitalized after showing signs of illness following the consumption of the infected beef.79

**Sept 13:** Council of Naga Affairs General Secretary Aung San stated that the recent measles outbreak in the Naga Self-Administered Zone had killed over 80 people across more than 16 villages. He acknowledged that both the national and regional governments were providing support, but said that the emergency response was “still slow”.80

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70 Irrawaddy (26 Sept 16) Lower House Votes to Dismiss MNHRC Members
71 Myanmar Times (23 Sept 16) President’s Office to investigate rights body following botched child abuse case
72 Myanmar Times (03 Oct 16) After man jailed for calling president ‘crazy’, plaintiff warns others not to defame NLD leadership
73 Myanmar Times (03 Oct 16) After man jailed for calling president ‘crazy’, plaintiff warns others not to defame NLD leadership
74 Myanmar Times (03 Oct 16) After man jailed for calling president ‘crazy’, plaintiff warns others not to defame NLD leadership
75 GNLM (2 Sept 16) Flood damaged infrastructure to be repaired
76 GNLM (3 Sept 16) Loan repayments to be postponed for farmers in flood-hit areas
77 Eleven (5 Sept 16) Prepare for yearly floods: hydrologist
78 DVB (6 Sep 16) Sagaing villagers infected after contact with dead cattle
79 Eleven (6 Sept 16) Seven suspected of anthrax infection in central Myanmar
80 DVB (6 Sep 16) Interview: ‘We are still very concerned’ about Naga measles outbreak
Government continues crackdown on illegal logging

On 1 September, 11 tons of illegal timber was confiscated from a military research compound in Mandalay Region. This is the third cache of timber found in the area, bringing the total illegal timber confiscated there to 500 tons over the past two months.81

On the first day of the resumed parliamentary session, lawmaker Kyaw Oo confronted Security and Border Affairs Regional Minister Col Myo Min Aung with photos of illegal logging to show the assembly the situation in Sae Taw Gyi Lake, Madaya Township.82 Col Myo Min Aung simply denied that such illegal sawmills exist in the area, and suggested that Kyaw Oo was mistaken.

Uncertainties still loom for Myitsone dam

The hydropower commission to review and scrutinize hydropower projects along the Irrawaddy/Ayeyarwady River completed the review of the Myitsone dam contract, but will now need to undertake a field site visit to consult local residents.83 A commission member said in anonymity that a decision on whether to continue the project would not be possible by the first reporting deadline on 11 November: “… A second and third and probably a lot more reports will be sent to the president.”84

More than 50 Kachin civil society organizations continued to lobby for the cancellation of the Myitsone dam. The China Power Investment Corporation (CPI) conducted an environmental impact assessment (EIA) on the Myitsone in 2008 following a request from the Power Ministry. This was only disclosed after protests in 2011, and has been widely criticized for not having an “alternatives analysis”.85

Other developments:

Sept 1: The government announced that permits for 321 jade and gems blocks will expire in September and will not be renewed until by-laws to the Myanmar Gemstones Law have been passed.

Sept 8: Australia’s Snowy Mountains Engineering Corporation (SMEC) confirmed that it has been conducting an environmental and social impact assessment for the proposed Naung Pha hydropower dam on the Salween river.86 However, ethnic Shan, Mon and Karenni environmental activists are protesting that consultation process was not publicly announced.87

Sept 9: Locals from several villages in the Sagaing Township opposed to the Letpadaung copper mine met with two Sagaing Region Ministers. The locals raised issues of inadequate compensation for confiscated lands and environmental degradation during the meeting.88

Sept 13: Forestry Department officials in Sagaing Division’s Katha Township seized 10 tons of timber being smuggled on a boat on the Irrawaddy/Ayeyarwady River.89
**DISPLACEMENT**

**Developments:**

**Sept 6:** The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Labor, Immigration and Population, and members of the Brighter Future Myanmar (BFM) welcomed a group of 137 Burma/Myanmar workers who arrived at Rangoon/Yangon International Airport after being detained in Malaysia. BFM sponsored the workers’ return and gave them K100,000 (US$82) each.

**Sept 13:** Thailand’s Employment Department Dir-Gen Arak Prommanee said that 2,944 undocumented migrants were found working illegally after the Department inspected 2,998 businesses. More than half of them were Burmese. The Department took legal action against 217 employers.

**MILITARY**

**Tatmadaw releases 68 child soldiers**

On 9 September, the Tatmadaw released 68 child soldiers. These were the first discharges of their kind under the new government. The children will participate in various reintegration programs to help them settle back into their lives. The Tatmadaw said that it had taken action against 81 military officers and 402 personnel of other ranks in connection with the recruitment of children up to August 2016, although there is no evidence to back up this claim.

**Military tribunal finds soldiers guilty for murder of villagers**

On 15 September, a military tribunal found seven members of the Tatmadaw guilty of murdering local villagers in Lashio Township, Northern Shan State in July [see July 2016 Bulletin]. The tribunal stripped the convicted soldiers of their rank, which means they will serve their sentences in a civilian prison, and sentenced them to five years in prison with hard labor.

The victims’ families were not satisfied with the length of the sentences and the lack of compensation. However, Wann Lern Kham, a Shan National League for Democracy lawmaker from Lashio who has been assisting the victims’ families, said the exposure of the soldiers’ identities, and their ranks being stripped from them was the “The best punishment.”

**Other Development:**

**Sept 4:** The Assam Tribune and the Asian Age reported that the Indian government was providing weaponry and equipment to the Tatmadaw to evict Indian insurgent groups based in Burma/Myanmar. Burma’s Defense Ministry spokesperson Maj Gen Aung Ye Win denied these claims.

**ECONOMY**

**Parliament approves proposals to take ADB loan**

Three ministries—Agriculture, livestock and Irrigation; Education; and Health and Sport—presented proposals to the National Parliament to take loans amounting to more than US$200 million from the

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90 GNLM (6 Sept 16) Detained Myanmar workers return
91 DVB (13 Sept 16) More than 1,600 Burmese migrants nabbed in Thailand
92 Myanmar Times (12 Sept 16) Tatmadaw discharges 68 former child soldiers
93 Myanmar Times (12 Sept 16) Tatmadaw discharges 68 former child soldiers
94 GNLM (10 Sept 16) Turn in your chevrons, 66 child solders discharged, returned to parents
95 DVB (16 Sept 16) Soldiers get five years with hard labor for Mong Yaw murders
96 Irrawaddy (16 Sept 16) Burma army soldiers sentenced to five years for killing civilians
97 Mizima (5 Sep 16) Burma army soldiers sentenced to five years for killing civilians
98 Myanmar Times (8 Sept 16) Tatmadaw denies India is providing ‘weaponry and gadgets’
Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the French Development Agency. In a discussion in the National Parliament on 16 September, MP Aung Hlaing Win criticized the plan to spend K120 billion (US$9.6 million) on four vocational schools that would have only 3000 students, instead of spending only K5 billion ($4.1 million) on projects to build roads in the entire Arakan/Rakhine State.

The Parliament voted to accept the 24-year loan from ADB, worth US$185.5 million, including an eight-year deferment period.

**INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

**Aung San Suu Kyi visits US, secures the lifting of sanctions**

On 14 September, during Aung San Suu Kyi’s first state visit, President Obama announced plans to lift US economic sanctions first imposed in 1997 against Burma/Myanmar, and reinstated Burma to the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP), which provides duty-free treatment for goods from poor and developing countries.

Burma’s business communities welcomed the move, and said it would deepen trade ties for the country, while human rights activists called the move an “atrocious decision”, arguing that the lifting of the sanctions meant losing an important tool that could be used to resolve persisting rights issues.

At a press conference on 20 September, US Ambassador Scot Marciel added that 104 individuals and companies would be eliminated from the US Treasury Department’s Specially Designated Nationals List—a list that includes ex-military generals and associates of the former ruling junta. Ambassador Marciel said that “All of the 104 SDNs [individuals and companies] will be off the list when the sanctions are lifted… But drug kingpins will remain.”

Before Aung San Suu Kyi’s arrival in the US, Senators Ben Cardin and John McCain introduced the Burma Strategy Act of 2016, which sets guidelines for sanctions relief and calls on the Secretary of State to modify or lift sanctions, depending on the country’s progress in terms of its transparency and other good governance practices.

Despite Aung San Suu Kyi’s achievements from her US visit, US Senator Bob Corker criticized her for appearing to be dismissive toward individuals being trafficked and forced into labor and sex slavery.

**EU drops UNGA Assembly Resolution on Burma/Myanmar, breaks 25-year precedent**

For the first time in twenty-five years, the European Union (EU) did not table a human rights resolution on Burma/Myanmar in the Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). EU Foreign Policy Chief Federica Mogherini cited the government’s commitment to the peace process, the release of political prisoners, and the establishment of the Arakan/Rakhine Advisory Commission as the basis for this decision. She added that Aung San Suu Kyi’s leadership was “powerful testimony to the incredible change [Burma] is going through.”

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99 Myanmar Times (14 Sept 16) Govt seeks foreign loans totalling over $200 million
100 Myanmar Times (14 Sept 16) Govt seeks foreign loans totalling over $200 million
101 Myanmar Times (28 Sept 16) Parliament approves Ministry of Education’s ADB loan
102 Reuters (14 Sept 16) Obama, meeting with Suu Kyi, says U.S. ready to lift Myanmar sanctions
103 RFA (15 Sept 16) In Myanmar, Mixed Reactions to The Lifting of U.S. Sanctions; DVB (15 Sept 16) Activists denounce ‘atrocious’ decision on sanctions
104 RFA (15 Sept 16) In Myanmar, Mixed Reactions to The Lifting of U.S. Sanctions; DVB (15 Sept 16) Activists denounce ‘atrocious’ decision on sanctions
105 Myanmar Times (21 Sept 16) Economic sanctions can no longer power Myanmar’s democratic transition, US Ambassador says
106 Myanmar Times (21 Sept 16) Economic sanctions can no longer power Myanmar’s democratic transition, US Ambassador says
107 Myanmar Times (15 Sep 16) US senators push for softening on Myanmar policy
108 Irrawaddy (15 Sept 16) US senator blasts State Counsellor’s “Dismissive” reaction on trafficking
109 Myanmar Times (16 Sept 16) Dropping UNGA resolution on Myanmar, EU to break 25-year precedent
110 Reuters (23 Sept 16) EU drops Myanmar rights resolution, citing progress under Suu Kyi
In her first address to the UNGA as a national leader, Aung San Suu Kyi pleaded for “the understanding and constructive contribution” of other countries.\textsuperscript{111}

Other developments:

Sept 6-8: Aung San Suu Kyi attended the ASEAN summit in Laos where she had bilateral meetings with Indian PM Narendra Modi, Vietnamese PM Nguyen Xuan Phuc,\textsuperscript{112} and Japanese PM Shinzo Abe.\textsuperscript{113}

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https://goo.gl/1mer9g

https://goo.gl/cElIm2

“Myanmar Humanitarian News Digest – September 2016” UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
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“Responding to disasters before they happen: Trainings build resilience in Myanmar’s Dry Zone” UN Development Programme
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“Situation Analysis of Children with Disabilities in Myanmar 2016” UN Children’s Fund
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“Situation of human rights in Myanmar – Report of the Secretary General (A/71/308)” UN General Assembly
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“Tzu Chi Continuous Medical Care for Survivor of Floods in Myanmar” Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation
https://goo.gl/IYvYve

“UNDP Myanmar Annual Report 2015” UN Development Programme
https://goo.gl/2XBnMZ

“WFP Myanmar Country Brief, August 2016” World Food Programme https://goo.gl/dNNStN

\textsuperscript{111} The Guardian (21 Sept 16) Aung San Suu Kyi makes first UN address as Myanmar’s leader
\textsuperscript{112} GNLM (8 Sept 16) State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi held separate talks with foreign leaders in Laos
\textsuperscript{113} GNLM (8 Sept 16) State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi held separate talks with foreign leaders in Laos