BURMA BULLETIN

A month-in-review of events in Burma

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

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- **Deadly religious violence hits Central Burma, with anti-Muslim attacks reported in four townships in Mandalay Division and eight townships in Pegu Division.**
- **International community voices concern over religious violence in Central Burma. UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma Tomás Ojea Quintana says reports suggest regime authorities are complicit in anti-Muslim attacks.**
- **Regime-appointed commission recommends that the Monywa copper mine's expansion proceed on the condition that adequate compensation is paid to villagers adversely affected by the project.**
- **Parliament approves the 2013-14 fiscal year budget which increases military spending by 19% from the previous year.**
- **Tatmadaw continues to attack KIA forces in Kachin and Northern Shan States. Talks held for the second consecutive month fail to produce a ceasefire.**
- **Restrictions on the press contained in a new draft law and the reconstitution of the Censorship Board raise concerns that the regime will continue to severely curb media freedom.**
- **UN Human Rights Council adopts by consensus a resolution on the human rights situation in Burma and extends the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma for another year.**
- **President Thein Sein eyes aid, trade, and investment opportunities during meetings with leaders in Europe, New Zealand, and Australia. In a bid to firm up international support, Thein Sein claims there is "no more fighting all over the country."**

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KEY STORY

Anti-Muslim violence hits Meikhtila

Between 20 and 28 March, deadly religious violence hit Central Burma, with anti-Muslim attacks reported in Mandalay and Pegu Divisions.

On 20 March, an argument between a Muslim shop owner and two Buddhist customers in Meikhtila, Mandalay Division, escalated and triggered riots that quickly spread to several areas of the city.[1] Police

[1] RFA (20 Mar 13) Curfew Declared as Riots Erupt in Meikhtila; Reuters (21 Mar 13) New curfew declared after 10 killed in central Myanmar riots; RFA (21 Mar 13) Violence in Burmese City Takes Deadly Toll; NLM (22 Mar 13) Meiktila placed under curfew as from 8 pm, 20 March Effective action to be taken against those who led riot

failed to contain the violence and stood idle as attacks unfolded.[2] In a bid to restore order, regime authorities imposed a dusk to dawn curfew.[3] Despite the measure, violence continued during the next two days.[4] Rioters predominantly targeted members of the Muslim community.[5] Buddhist mobs rampaged through the town's Muslim quarter.[6] Rioters, including some Buddhist monks, also attacked and threatened several reporters who were covering the unrest for local and foreign news agencies.[7]

On 22 March, President Thein Sein declared martial law in Meikhtila, Wundwin, Tharzi, and Mahlaing Townships, Mandalay Division.[8] On 23 March, hundreds of Tatmadaw troops took up positions in key areas in Meikhtila and restored a tense calm in the city.[9]

On 25 March, the regime set the death toll of the violence in Meikhtila at 40[10] but it was not known how many were Muslim or Buddhist.[11] Over 800 buildings and 13 mosques were destroyed as a result of the unrest.[12] On 27 March, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said that violence in Meikhtila displaced over 12,800 people.[13] The majority, who were Muslims, took shelter at a football stadium, schools, and several Buddhist monasteries.[14]

Attacks spread, Thein Sein warns of "use of force"

Anti-Muslim violence quickly spread from Meikhtila to three other townships in Mandalay Division and to eight townships in Pegu Division. The attacks caused extensive destruction of property but no loss of life:

- **23 March**: A mob torched a mosque and over 40 houses, most of which belonged to Muslims, in Yamethin Township, Mandalay Division.[15]
- **23 March**: A mob set fire to a mosque and several buildings in Lewe Township, Mandalay Division.[16]

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[2] RFA (20 Mar 13) Curfew Declared as Riots Erupt in Meikhtila; Irrawaddy (21 Mar 13) Killed, 24 Injured as Buddhists and Muslims Clash in Central Burma; RFA (21 Mar 13) Violence in Burmese City Takes Deadly Toll; NYT (23 Mar 13) Toll Rises as Sectarian Violence in Myanmar Spreads to Nearby Villages; DVB (22 Mar 13) Martial law declared in Meikhtila as mobs threaten journalists

[3] NLM (22 Mar 13) Meiktila placed under curfew as from 8 pm, 20 March Effective action to be taken against those who led riot; Xinhua (21 Mar 13) Death toll raises to 4 in violence in central Myanmar: official

[4] AFP (22 Mar 13) Mobs roam streets of riot-hit Myanmar town; VOA (22 Mar 13) Buddhist-Muslim Clashes in Burma Continue; Reuters (22 Mar 13) Myanmar riots stoke fears of widening sectarian violence; DVB (22 Mar 13) Martial law declared in Meikhtila as mobs threaten journalists; AP (22 Mar 13) Emergency declared in Myanmar town where riots left 6,000 homeless

[5] AP (22 Mar 13) Death toll rises to 20 in Myanmar riots; Irrawaddy (22 Mar 13) State of Emergency Declared as Death Toll Rises in Meikhtila; RFA (22 Mar 13) Emergency Declared in Riot-torn Burmese City; VOA (26 Mar 13) Burma Warns Religious Conflict Threatens Reforms

[6] NYT (21 Mar 13) Sectarian Clashes Are Reported in Central Myanmar; NYT (23 Mar 13) Toll Rises as Sectarian Violence in Myanmar Spreads to Nearby Villages; Irrawaddy (23 Mar 13) Army Restores Calm in Meikhtila after Deadly Sectarian Clashes

[7] EMG (21 Mar 13) Curfew imposed to contain religious riot in Mandalay Region town; NYT (23 Mar 13) Toll Rises as Sectarian Violence in Myanmar Spreads to Nearby Villages; AFP (22 Mar 13) Bodies in streets of riot-hit Myanmar town; AP (22 Mar 13) Death toll rises to 20 in Myanmar riots; DVB (22 Mar 13) Martial law declared in Meikhtila as mobs threaten journalists; Irrawaddy (22 Mar 13) State of Emergency Declared as Death Toll Rises in Meikhtila; RFA (22 Mar 13) Armed Burmese Monks Threaten Journalists in Meikhtila; CPJ (25 Mar 13) Journalists threatened in sectarian violence in Burma

[8] NLM (23 Mar 13) Declaration of State of Emergency; Xinhua (22 Mar 13) Myanmar President declares state of emergency in Meikhtila after three-day riot; BBC (22 Mar 13) Myanmar declares state of emergency to stem sectarian clashes

[9] Reuters (23 Mar 13) Troops impose uneasy calm on violence-torn Myanmar city; RFA (23 Mar 13) Move to Restore Order in Meikhtila After Violence; VOA (23 Mar 13) Burma Army Patrols Riot-Struck City; AP (23 Mar 13) Myanmar's army takes control of central city, imposing tense calm after violence kills dozens; AFP (23 Mar 13) Soldiers patrol riot-hit Myanmar town; Irrawaddy (23 Mar 13) Army Restores Calm in Meikhtila after Deadly Sectarian Clashes

[10] **Note: On 29 March, the regime revised the death toll to 43. However, it was not immediately clear whether the figure referred to the violence in Meikhtila or included casualties from attacks in other parts of the country.**

[11] NLM (26 Mar 13) Tatmadawmen, staff clear debris in Meiktila; Xinhua (26 Mar 13) Death toll rises to 40 in Myanmar riot: media; AP (26 Mar 13) Death toll from Myanmar religious riots up to 40

[12] HRW (01 Apr 13) Satellite-Based Damage Assessment for City of Meiktila, Mandalay Region, Burma; RFA (26 Mar 13) Burma Told to Take Swift Action Against Rioters

[13] OCHA (27 Mar 13) Myanmar: Meikhtila inter-communal violence Situation Report No. 2 (as of 27 Mar 2013)

[14] AP (25 Mar 13) Five mosques and dozens of homes torched in Myanmar; Irrawaddy (26 Mar 13) Govt Vows to End Anti-Muslim Riots, As Fresh Violence Hits Pegu Division; RFA (22 Mar 13) Emergency Declared in Riot-torn Burmese City; AP (22 Mar 13) Death toll rises to 20 in Myanmar riots; AP (23 Mar 13) Myanmar's army takes control of central city, imposing tense calm after violence kills dozens; Irrawaddy (23 Mar 13) Army Restores Calm in Meikhtila after Deadly Sectarian Clashes; NLM (24 Mar 13) Meiktila restores calm, aids being provided to victims; NYT (23 Mar 13) After 3 Days of Violence, City in Myanmar Counts the Dead; Mizzima News (25 Mar 13) Meiktila 'like a war zone' in aftermath of rioting

[15] AP (25 Mar 13) Five mosques and dozens of homes torched in Myanmar; AFP (24 Mar 13) Myanmar communal unrest spreads: officials; Reuters (25 Mar 13) Myanmar government struggles to contain anti-Muslim hostility; RFA (23 Mar 13) Move to Restore Order in Meikhtila After Violence

- **24 March**: About 20 men destroyed a mosque and four houses in Tatkon Township, Mandalay Division.[17]
- **25 March**: A mob of about 200 people destroyed a mosque and about 60 houses belonging to Muslims in Okpho Township, Pegu Division.[18]
- **25 March**: A mob damaged a mosque and about 30 houses in a Muslim quarter in Gyobingauk Township, Pegu Division.[19]
- **26 March**: A mob of about 200 people destroyed a mosque and homes in Nattalin Township, Pegu Division.[20]
- **27 March**: A mob destroyed a mosque and Muslim-owned property in Minhla Township, Pegu Division.[21]
- **27 March**: A mob of about 100 people ransacked a mosque and attacked Muslim-owned property in Zeegone Township, Pegu Division.[22]
- **27 March**: A mob destroyed a mosque and Muslim-owned property in Padigon, Thegon Township, Pegu Division.[23]
- **27 March**: A mob destroyed a mosque and ransacked about 100 Muslim-owned houses in Mon Township, Pegu Division.[24]
- **28 March**: A mob destroyed two mosques and a dozen Muslim-owned houses in Minhla Township, Pegu Division.[25]
- **28 March**: Attacks were reported in Letpadan Township, Pegu Division.[26]

On 26-27 March, the regime imposed a 6pm-6am curfew in Pegu Division's Gyobingauk, Minhla, Okpho, Nattalin, and Zeegone Townships.[27] On 28 March, in a televised address to the nation, President Thein Sein blamed "political opportunists and religious extremists" for sowing hatred between faiths and warned that he would "not hesitate to use force as a last resort" to quell religious violence.[28] On 29 March, the regime said it had arrested 68 people in connection with attacks in Mandalay and Pegu Divisions.[29] On 30 March, President Thein Sein appointed five regime ministers and five deputy ministers to a 10-member committee responsible for tackling the ongoing violence.[30]

Anti-Muslim violence did not spread to Rangoon. However, the situation in the former capital was tense as rumors swirled of imminent anti-Muslim attacks.[31] The regime dispatched police to areas with

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[16] AP (25 Mar 13) Deadly violence between Myanmar's Buddhists, Muslims spreads to 2 more towns in heartland
[17] AP (24 Mar 13) Buddhist-Muslim violence spreads in Myanmar; Reuters (25 Mar 13) Myanmar government struggles to contain anti-Muslim hostility
[18] Irrawaddy (26 Mar 13) Govt Vows to End Anti-Muslim Riots, As Fresh Violence Hits Pegu Division; DVB (26 Mar 13) Sectarian violence spreads as mobs target Muslim communities in Pegu
[19] Irrawaddy (26 Mar 13) Govt Vows to End Anti-Muslim Riots, As Fresh Violence Hits Pegu Division
[20] AFP (27 Mar 13) Mob torches mosque in fresh Myanmar unrest: police; Irrawaddy (27 Mar 13) More Anti-Muslim Riots Reported Overnight
[21] AP (27 Mar 13) Myanmar security forces fire warning shots to break up new religious violence; RFA (27 Mar 13) Warning Shots Fired in Bago Clashes; EMG (27 Mar 13) Simultaneous riots break out in western Bago; Mizzima News (28 Mar 13) Mob violence spreads in Bago
[22] DVB (27 Mar 13) Mob assaults mosque, houses in Pegu division; Irrawaddy (27 Mar 13) More Anti-Muslim Riots Reported Overnight; RFA (27 Mar 13) Warning Shots Fired in Bago Clashes; EMG (27 Mar 13) Simultaneous riots break out in western Bago
[23] Irrawaddy (28 Mar 13) Anti-Muslim Attacks Hit Two More Pegu Division Towns; DVB (28 Mar 13) Two more Burma towns under curfew as violence spreads; RFA (28 Mar 13) Burmese Security Forces Fire on Rioters
[24] Irrawaddy (28 Mar 13) Anti-Muslim Attacks Hit Two More Pegu Division Towns; DVB (28 Mar 13) Two more Burma towns under curfew as violence spreads
[25] RFA (28 Mar 13) Burmese Security Forces Fire on Rioters
[26] NLM (29 Mar 13) Strict security measures taken in Minhla, Moenyo; Xinhua (29 Mar 13) Riot intensifies in 3 areas in Myanmar central part
[27] Xinhua (26 Mar 13) Myanmar imposes curfew on 3 townships in Bago region; AP (26 Mar 13) Myanmar clamps down with new curfews after religious violence edges toward Yangon; NLM (27 Mar 13) Gyobingauk, Okpo, Minhla townships placed under curfew; Xinhua (27 Mar 13) Myanmar imposes curfew on two more towns as violence spreads; EMG (28 Mar 13) Curfews imposed in five townships in western Bago
[28] AP (28 Mar 13) Myanmar's president says force could be used to end unrest; NLM (29 Mar 13) As a nation it is our firm belief that only an inclusive democratic society based on equality for all citizens will ensure peace and stability, especially in a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-faith country such as ours
[29] NLM (30 Mar 13) NLM Announcement of warning about rioting in some areas in Myanmar; DPA (30 Mar 13) Death toll in Myanmar sectarian clashes hits 43
[30] NLM (31 Mar 13) Formation of Central Management Committee for Emergency Period
[31] AP (25 Mar 13) Myanmar warns violence could threaten reforms; NYT (25 Mar 13) Worries Over Violence Prompt Shutdown in Myanmar; Irrawaddy (25 Mar 13) After Rumors, Rangoon Muslims Fear Attacks; Xinhua (26 Mar 13) Death toll rises to 40 in Myanmar riot: media; DPA (25 Mar 13) Agitators try to spread sectarian unrest to Yangon, politician says; EMG (26 Mar 13) Jittery township in Yangon unnerved by rumours of mosque attacks

a large concentration of Muslim residents.[32] On 25 March, regime authorities ordered businesses in Tamwe and Pazundaung Townships to close by 9pm.[33] On 26 March, authorities extended the measure to Mingala Taungnyunt and Thaketa Townships.[34]

Int'l community expresses concern, calls for regime to take action

In March, the international community expressed serious concern over the religious violence in Central Burma. The UN cited several troubling aspects of the violence, including possible regime-complicity. On 26 March, UN Sec-Gen's Special Advisor on Burma Vijay Nambiar said that Muslims were "clearly targeted" during the violence and that the attacks were carried out with "brutal efficiency."[35] On 28 March, UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma Tomás Ojea Quintana said that he had received reports of "state involvement in some acts of violence."[36] Ojea Quintana also said that the regime had "not done enough" to address the spread of discrimination and prejudice against Muslim communities across the country or to tackle the "organized mobs" that incited hatred and attacked Muslim communities.[37]

While ASEAN was conspicuous only for its silence on the issue, other international actors voiced concern and called on the regime to restore order, protect communities, and address the underlying causes of the violence.

- **21 March**: UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Burma Ashok Nigam said he was "deeply concerned" over violence in Meikhtila Township, Mandalay Division, and called on political and religious leaders to calm the situation and for all sides to exercise "tolerance and restraint."[38]
- **21 March**: UK FCO Parliamentary Under Secretary of State Alistair Burt said the UK was "deeply concerned" over violence in Meikhtila Township, Mandalay Division, and called on the regime to take action to protect civilians and work with communities to address underlying issues.[39]
- **23 March**: EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton called on all parties concerned to end the violence in Mandalay Division and for the regime to protect all civilians and investigate the underlying causes of the violence.[40]
- **26 March**: UN Sec-Gen's Special Advisor on the Prevention of Genocide Adama Dieng urged the regime to promote reconciliation and tolerance between communities in Burma and take measures to prevent any further escalation of the violence.[41]
- **26 March**: The US State Department said it was "deeply concerned" over violence in Central Burma and urged the regime to "restore order and maintain peace" while respecting human rights and due process.[42]

In addition, two Muslim-majority countries, as well as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), issued statements regarding the violence. Turkey and Iran called on the regime to take action to end the violence in Meikhtila, protect Muslims, and apprehend the perpetrators.[43] The OIC strongly condemned the violence against Muslims in Central Burma and called on the regime to address underlying issues and safeguard the lives of all civilians.[44]

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[32] RFA (25 Mar 13) Rangoon Placed on Alert Amid Spreading Riots; DPA (25 Mar 13) Agitators try to spread sectarian unrest to Yangon, politician says
[33] Xinhua (26 Mar 13) Death toll rises to 40 in Myanmar riot: media; AFP (26 Mar 13) Death toll from Myanmar unrest hits 40: state media; AP (26 Mar 13) Death toll from Myanmar religious riots up to 40; Xinhua (26 Mar 13) Myanmar extends shop business hours restriction to more townships
[34] Xinhua (26 Mar 13) Myanmar extends shop business hours restriction to more townships
[35] VOA (26 Mar 13) UN Official Says Muslims Targeted in Burma
[36] OHCHR (28 Mar 13) Religious violence in Myanmar, the consequences of Government inaction in tackling prejudice and discrimination – UN expert
[37] UN News Center (28 Mar 13) Myanmar authorities must do more to stop spread of violence – UN independent expert
[38] UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Myanmar (21 Mar 13) Statement on unrest in Meiktila by Ashok Nigam, United Nations Resident Coordinator in Myanmar
[39] UK FCO (21 Mar 13) Foreign Office expresses deep concern over violence in Burma
[40] EU (23 Mar 13) Statement by the spokesperson of EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on the violent clashes in the town of Meiktila town in Burma/Myanmar
[41] VOA (26 Mar 13) UN Official Says Muslims Targeted in Burma
[42] KUNA (26 Mar 13) US "deeply concerned" about anti-Muslim violence in Myanmar
[43] FNA (23 Mar 13) Iran Voices Concern about Fresh Clashes in Myanmar; Anadolu Agency (23 Mar 13) Turkey calls on Myanmar to act against violence on Muslims
[44] OIC (25 Mar 13) Press Release

Monywa copper mine's expansion to proceed

On 11 March, the regime-appointed commission chaired by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi released its report on the viability of the Monywa copper mine in Salingyi Township, Sagaing Division.[45] The report acknowledged that the mine lacked strong environmental protection measures and would not create more jobs for local people.[46] However, it recommended the expansion of the mine's operations continue in order to avoid creating tension with China and discouraging future foreign investment.[47] The report found that the original compensation to farmers of 5.80 kyat (US$0.09) per acre had been inadequate.[48] As a result, it recommended that authorities provide compensation for a total area of 6,784 acres at the rate of 1.5 million kyat (US$1,730) per acre before the project went ahead.[49] With regard to the 29 November crackdown on anti-mine protesters, the report said that police used "smoke bombs" that contained phosphorus and acknowledged that "dozens of people, including monks" had been injured in the incident.[50] The commission faulted the police force for failing to understand how the smoke bombs worked and it recommended police receive riot-control training.[51]

Villagers and activists who had been protesting against the Monywa copper mine's expansion rejected the report's findings and said they would continue to campaign against the project.[52] Activists and some Buddhist monks also criticized the report for failing to address the issue of accountability for regime authorities responsible for the 29 November crackdown.[53]

On 11 March, President Thein Sein appointed a 15-member committee responsible for the implementation of the report's recommendations.[54] The commission comprised of 13 regime officials and representatives from the mine's two operators - China's Wanbao and the military conglomerate Union of Myanmar Economic Holdings (UMEH).[55] In mid-March, regime authorities began paying compensation to farmers for land confiscated due to the mine's expansion.[56] Some farmers refused to take compensation, saying the amount was still far below market price, while others refused to accept the compensation offered because they continued to oppose the project.[57] On 1 April, the state-run newspaper New Light of Myanmar reported that from 16 to 29 March, 536 farmers had received a total of 1.7 billion kyat (US$1.9 million) in compensation.[58]

On 13-14 March, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi visited Monywa and Salingyi Townships, Sagaing Division, to urge residents to end their protests against the mine's expansion and to accept the report's

[45] AP (11 Mar 13) Report: Myanmar police used phosphorus at mine; RFA (12 Mar 13) Mine Commission Findings Draw Criticism in Burma
[46] AP (11 Mar 13) Report: Myanmar police used phosphorus at mine
[47] AP (11 Mar 13) Report: Myanmar police used phosphorus at mine
[48] Reuters (12 Mar 13) Myanmar copper mine told to compensate for land grabs; RFA (12 Mar 13) Mine Commission Findings Draw Criticism in Burma
[49] Reuters (12 Mar 13) Myanmar copper mine told to compensate for land grabs; NLM (21 Mar 13) Compensation of farmers continue; RFA (12 Mar 13) Mine Commission Findings Draw Criticism in Burma
[50] RFA (12 Mar 13) Mine Commission Findings Draw Criticism in Burma
[51] AP (11 Mar 13) Report: Myanmar police used phosphorus at mine; Reuters (12 Mar 13) Myanmar copper mine told to compensate for land grabs
[52] AP (12 Mar 13) Myanmar mine protesters reject official report; RFA (12 Mar 13) Mine Commission Findings Draw Criticism in Burma; DVB (12 Mar 13) Locals decry Latpadaung commission's report; Irrawaddy (12 Mar 13) Activists, Locals Reject Letpadaung Inquiry; Mizzima News (13 Mar 13) Activists condemn Latpadaung report
[53] AP (12 Mar 13) Myanmar mine protesters reject official report; Irrawaddy (12 Mar 13) Activists, Locals Reject Letpadaung Inquiry; VOA (12 Mar 13) Recommends Controversial Mine Continue; EMG (14 Mar 13) Buddhist monks say words against the Letpadaungtaung final report
[54] NLM (12 Mar 13) Republic of the Union of Myanmar President Office Notification No. 28/2013; Xinhua (12 Mar 13) Myanmar gov't forms copper mine project investigation report implementation committee
[55] NLM (12 Mar 13) Republic of the Union of Myanmar President Office Notification No. 28/2013; DVB (12 Mar 13) Locals decry Latpadaung commission's report
[56] Irrawaddy (19 Mar 13) Villagers Accept Compensation, but Some Still Hold Out; Mizzima News (20 Mar 13) Latpadaung farmers disagree over compensation
[57] EMG (18 Mar 13) Farmers receive compensation for land grabbed for copper mine; Irrawaddy (19 Mar 13) Villagers Accept Compensation, but Some Still Hold Out; Mizzima News (20 Mar 13) Latpadaung farmers disagree over compensation
[58] NLM (01 Apr 13) Union Minister U Hla Tun meets relocated villagers in Letpadaungtaung

recommendations.[59] Hundreds of villagers confronted Daw Suu and voiced their dissatisfaction over the commission's recommendations.[60] On 15-16 March, demonstrators shut down the three remaining protest camps near the Monywa copper mine after regime officials ordered them to end their protest.[61]

Military expenditure increases

For the second consecutive year under Thein Sein's administration, Burma's national budget contained an increase in military spending. On 21 March, the National Parliament approved, by a vote of 555 to zero with two abstentions, the national budget for the 2013-14 fiscal year.[62] The budget was projected to spend 16.7 trillion kyat (US$19 billion) with a deficit of 2.9 trillion kyat (US$3.3 billion).[63] Military expenditure amounted to 2.24 trillion kyat (US$2.5 billion), an increase of 367 billion kyat - or 19% - from 1.87 trillion kyat allocated in the 2012-13 fiscal year.[64] Military expenditure made up 13.4% of the total.[65] By contrast, education and healthcare expenses accounted for 5.4% and 2.9% of the total respectively.[66] The budget earmarked 385 billion kyat (US$436 million) for a 20,000-kyat (US$23) monthly salary increase for civil servants and a pension increase for retired civil servants.[67]

Parliamentary session concludes

On 21-22 March, Parliament concluded its sixth session and will be in recess until 25 June.[68] In addition to approving the 2013-14 fiscal year budget [See above *Military expenditure increases*], highlights of the parliamentary proceedings in March included:

- **4 March**: The National Assembly rejected, by a vote of 88 to 76, a proposal to establish a Ministry of Ethnic Affairs introduced by USDP MP Kyaw Din aka Htay Yei.[69]
- **18 March**: The National Parliament approved the Foreign Investment Law's implementing regulations.[70] The rules set a 20% foreign ownership cap in joint ventures operating in 11 restricted sectors, including: agriculture; livestock; fisheries; manufacturing and services operations that Burmese "are capable of handling"; and industries that could "affect public health."[71]
- **20 March**: The National Parliament approved a proposal introduced by USDP MP Aye Myint in the People's Assembly five days earlier to set up a commission to review the military-drafted

[59] AP (13 Mar 13) Myanmar villagers unhappy that Suu Kyi backs mine; RFA (13 Mar 13) Burmese Villagers Protest Copper Mine Decisions; AFP (13 Mar 13) Myanmar's Suu Kyi defends protest-hit mine; VOA (13 Mar 13) Suu Kyi Supports Villagers' Right to Protest Mine; Irrawaddy (13 Mar 13) Stop Protests against Copper Mine, Suu Kyi Tells Communities; DVB (13 Mar 13) Suu Kyi stands by commission's report during Monywa visit; RFA (14 Mar 13) Suu Kyi Promises Compensation for Copper Mine Villagers; Myanmar Times (18 Mar 13) Fury over Letpadaung copper mine report

[60] Mizzima News (14 Mar 13) Suu Kyi blocked by angry protesters at Latpadaung; Irrawaddy (14 Mar 13) Suu Kyi Confronted by Hundreds of Angry Anti-Mine Protesters; Mizzima News (14 Mar 13) Se Tel villagers protest against Suu Kyi; RFA (14 Mar 13) Suu Kyi Promises Compensation for Copper Mine Villagers; DVB (14 Mar 13) Suu Kyi squares off with protestors for second day; AFP (15 Mar 13) Myanmar's Suu Kyi faces protests over copper mine backing; Reuters (14 Mar 13) Suu Kyi draws rare rancor over Myanmar mine report; AP (14 Mar 13) Bitter Myanmar villagers vent their hostility to Suu Kyi for backing copper mine; Mizzima News (15 Mar 13) Angry protests continue as Suu Kyi leaves Sel Tel; Myanmar Times (18 Mar 13) Fury over Letpadaung copper mine report

[61] DVB (18 Mar 13) Protestors close rally sites near Latpadaung mine; EMG (18 Mar 13) Copper mine protesters dismantle camps

[62] Xinhua (21 Mar 13) Myanmar parliament approves 2013-14 re-drawn state budget; EMG (26 Mar 13) Government to spend more on health, education and raise staff salaries

[63] Xinhua (21 Mar 13) Myanmar parliament approves 2013-14 re-drawn state budget

[64] Xinhua (21 Mar 13) Myanmar parliament approves 2013-14 re-drawn state budget; EMG (26 Mar 13) Government to spend more on health, education and raise staff salaries

[65] Xinhua (21 Mar 13) Myanmar parliament approves 2013-14 re-drawn state budget; EMG (26 Mar 13) Government to spend more on health, education and raise staff salaries; Irrawaddy (01 Mar 13) Burma Parliament Approves Controversial Defense Budget

[66] Xinhua (21 Mar 13) Myanmar parliament approves 2013-14 re-drawn state budget; EMG (26 Mar 13) Government to spend more on health, education and raise staff salaries; Irrawaddy (01 Mar 13) Burma Parliament Approves Controversial Defense Budget

[67] Xinhua (16 Mar 13) Myanmar mulls pay raise for civil servants; EMG (26 Mar 13) Government to spend more on health, education and raise staff salaries

[68] EMG (23 Mar 13) Myanmar parliament approves budget bill and 14 others

[69] Myanmar Times (11 Mar 13) Proposed ethnic affairs ministry voted down; KIC (08 Mar 13) Burma parliament votes against forming Ministry of Ethnic Affairs

[70] RFA (18 Mar 13) Burma's Parliament Approves Foreign Investment Rules

[71] RFA (18 Mar 13) Burma's Parliament Approves Foreign Investment Rules; EMG (22 Mar 13) Union Assembly finalises controversial rules on foreign investment

constitution.[72] USDP MPs who backed the initiative indicated that they sought to change provisions concerning local governance to allow ethnic nationalities increased self-rule.[73]

NLD congress elects Daw Suu as party leader

On 8-10 March, the NLD held its first-ever national congress in Rangoon.[74] Roughly 900 party delegates from over 250 townships across Burma attended the proceedings.[75] Numerous diplomats, ethnic leaders, as well as members of other political parties attended the congress as observers.[76] NLD delegates elected a 120-member Central Committee, which, in turn, elected the party's Central Executive Committee (CEC).[77] The new CEC, which was expanded from seven members to 15, still includes all seven former executives but now has a larger representation of women (4) and members from ethnic areas.[78] On 10 March, the Central Committee unanimously elected Daw Aung San Suu Kyi as party leader.[79]

Regime-KIO talks fail to stem fighting

In March, the Tatmadaw continued to attack Kachin Independence Army (KIA) positions despite a further round of talks between the regime and the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO). On 11-12 March, a regime delegation led by President's Office Minister Aung Min met with KIO representatives in Ruili, Yunnan Province, China.[80] Shan State Army-South (SSA-S), National Democratic Alliance Army (NDAA), and United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC) representatives, as well as three Chinese government officials, were among those present as observers.[81] As with the last round of talks held in February [See *February 2013 Burma Bulletin*], the two parties failed to conclude a ceasefire. Both sides agreed to coordinate troop movements; open liaison offices; and hold further talks by 10 April.[82]

Continued Tatmadaw attacks against the KIA in March undermined the latest round of talks.

- **5 March**: Tatmadaw troops launched air strikes on KIA positions near Pangwa in Chipwi Township, Kachin State.[83]
- **5 March**: Tatmadaw troops attacked KIA forces near Gat Shang Yang south of Myitkyina, Kachin State.[84]

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[72] AP (20 Mar 13) Myanmar parliament agrees to review constitution; DVB (21 Mar 13) Parliament agrees to form committee to review constitution; AFP (16 Mar 13) Myanmar to review disputed constitution: state media; Xinhua (15 Mar 13) Myanmar's Lower House agrees to review constitution; EMG (17 Mar 13) Myanmar to review the 2008 Constitution; AP (20 Mar 13) Myanmar parliament agrees to review constitution; DVB (21 Mar 13) Parliament agrees to form committee to review constitution; EMG (21 Mar 13) Parliament takes step towards reviewing Myanmar's 'military' Constitution

[73] AP (20 Mar 13) Myanmar parliament agrees to review constitution; DVB (21 Mar 13) Parliament agrees to form committee to review constitution

[74] DPA (08 Mar 13) Myanmar opposition party kicks off its first congress; RFA (08 Mar 13) NLD Holds First Ever National Congress; EMG (10 Mar 13) Myanmar's 25-year-old opposition party holds first congress

[75] Xinhua (10 Mar 13) Myanmar opposition party to pursue policy of practicing democracy

[76] WSJ (09 Mar 13) Suu Kyi Calls for Party Unity; Irrawaddy (09 Mar 13) Choose Capable Leaders, Suu Kyi Tells NLD Congress; Myanmar Times (09 Mar 13) Suu Kyi urges party unity at first national congress; Xinhua (10 Mar 13) Myanmar opposition party to pursue policy of practicing democracy

[77] WSJ (09 Mar 13) Suu Kyi Calls for Party Unity; Irrawaddy (09 Mar 13) Choose Capable Leaders, Suu Kyi Tells NLD Congress; EMG (10 Mar 13) NLD holds press conference on its congress; Xinhua (10 Mar 13) Myanmar opposition party to pursue policy of practicing democracy; AP (10 Mar 13) Myanmar's opposition party shakes up leadership; RFA (11 Mar 13) Rainsy Cites Differences Between Burmese and Khmer Leaders; EMG (10 Mar 13) NLD holds press conference on its congress; Irrawaddy (10 Mar 13) Suu Kyi Elected NLD Chairperson at Historic Congress; Xinhua (10 Mar 13) Myanmar opposition party to pursue policy of practicing democracy

[78] AP (10 Mar 13) Myanmar's opposition party shakes up leadership; AP (08 Mar 13) Aung San Suu Kyi vows to bring new blood into her Myanmar party, decentralize decision-making; BBC (10 Mar 13) Suu Kyi re-elected Burma's opposition NLD leader; EMG (10 Mar 13) NLD holds press conference on its congress; Xinhua (10 Mar 13) Myanmar opposition party to pursue policy of practicing democracy; RFA (11 Mar 13) Rainsy Cites Differences Between Burmese and Khmer Leaders; Mizzima News (11 Mar 13) Little change in NLD as old guard stands firm; Narinjara News (12 Mar 13) 5 Arakanese members elected as central committee member posts of NLD; Irrawaddy (10 Mar 13) Suu Kyi Elected NLD Chairperson at Historic Congress

[79] AFP (10 Mar 13) Myanmar opposition reappoints Suu Kyi as leader; BBC (10 Mar 13) Suu Kyi re-elected Burma's opposition NLD leader; VOA (10 Mar 13) Aung San Suu Kyi Elected Head of Her Party; Xinhua (10 Mar 13) Aung San Suu Kyi re-elected as Myanmar opposition party leader

[80] AFP (12 Mar 13) Myanmar and Kachin rebels agree talks to reach ceasefire

[81] EMG (11 Mar 13) Myanmar Peace Committee and KIO/KIA renew talks in Ruili; NLM (13 Mar 13) Peace talks between the Union Peace-Making Committee and KIO held

[82] NLM (13 Mar 13) Peace talks between the Union Peace-Making Committee and KIO held

[83] Kachin News Group (06 Mar 13) Burma govt and KIO to meet in China next week, as fighting and airstrikes continue

- **9 March**: Tatmadaw troops clashed with KIA forces in Lajayang, Momauk Township, Kachin State.[85]
- **13 March**: Tatmadaw troops from LIB 241 clashed with KIA forces between Huhpyet and Ja Chyai Yang near Kutkai, Northern Shan State.[86]
- **19 March**: Tatmadaw troops from LIB 432 shelled the KIA's Kung Law post in Momauk Township, Kachin State.[87]
- **24 March**: Tatmadaw troops clashed with KIA forces in Mongmit Township, Northern Shan State.[88]
- **25 March**: Tatmadaw troops clashed with KIA forces near Pangwa in Chipwi Township, Kachin State.[89]
- **28 March**: Tatmadaw troops from IB 69 clashed with KIA forces in the Pangsai area of Muse Township, Northern Shan State.[90]

In addition, in March it was reported that a UN aid worker said the Tatmadaw was taking advantage of the safe passage afforded by the KIA to UN aid convoys to "take new positions" in Kachin State.[91]

Tatmadaw continues to target SSA-S, SSA-N

In March, fighting continued between the Tatmadaw and both the Shan State Army-South (SSA-S) and the Shan State Army-North (SSA-N) in Shan State.

- **11 March**: Tatmadaw troops clashed with SSA-S forces in the Kenglom area of Kunhing Township, Shan State.[92]
- **12 March**: Tatmadaw troops from IB 291 overran a SSA-N base in Loi Zay, Tangyan Township, Shan State.[93]
- **15 March**: Tatmadaw troops shelled SSA-S positions in the Loi Naga mountain ranges in Mongpan Township, Shan State.[94]

Dam protests in Eastern Burma

On 14 March, to coincide with the International Day of Action for Rivers and Against Dams, protesters across Kachin, Karenni, and Karen States gathered to voice their opposition to regime-backed dam projects that adversely affected local communities and the environment. Regime authorities responded by thwarting the activities of some protestors.

- **Myitkyina, Kachin State**: More than 100 villagers gathered to pray for the permanent closure of the Myitsone dam project and for residents displaced by the project to be able to return home.[95]
- **Pasawng Township, Karenni State**: Activists gathered at a Buddhist monastery to pray for a halt to the Ywathit dam project in Bawlakhe Township, Karenni State.[96] On 12 March, regime authorities sent a letter to the Love Salween Group refusing them permission to hold a larger prayer ceremony on 14 March in Wan Awn, Pasawng Township, Karenni State.[97]
- **Papun Township, Karen State**: Around 2,000 Karen gathered on the banks of the Salween River at Ei Htu Hta IDP camp to demand the regime halt plans to construct six dams on the river.[98]

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[84] Kachin News Group (08 Mar 13) Burma army's Kachin offensive continues despite President's claims, says KNO
[85] Irrawaddy (12 Mar 13) New Frontline Discussed in Kachin Peace Talks
[86] Kachinland News (16 Mar 13) Battles renew in northen Shan State, more government troops deployed
[87] Kachin News Group (20 Mar 13) Burma army continues shelling and looting Kachin state
[88] Kachinland News (28 Mar 13) Skirmishes continue between KIA and Burmese government troops
[89] Kachinland News (28 Mar 13) Skirmishes continue between KIA and Burmese government troops
[90] Kachin News Group (29 Mar 13) Burma army clashes with KIO in Shan state continue
[91] Myanmar Times (11 Mar 13) Tatmadaw using aid convoys to reinforce troops
[92] SHAN (14 Mar 13) Peace vs Burma military build-ups and clashes in central Shan State
[93] SHAN (14 Mar 13) Peace vs Burma military build-ups and clashes in central Shan State
[94] SHAN (19 Mar 13) Burma army shell heavy artilleries at RCSS/SSA Homong bases
[95] KIC (22 Mar 13) Kachin villagers pray that Myit Sone Dam stays shut
[96] EMG (15 Mar 13) Myanmar ethnics pray for an end to a Chinese-backed dam
[97] Love Salween Group (20 Mar 13) Love Salween Group condemns blocking of free expression in Karenni state
[98] Mizzima News (18 Mar 13) Fate of Salween Dams remains unclear; Karen News (19 Mar 13) 2,000 Karen call for stop to Salween dams

On 15 March, Karenni State Chief Minister Khin Maung Oo claimed that international experts would carry out an environmental impact assessment on the Ywathit Dam and, if potential issues were found, the dam's construction may be stopped.[99] The Love Salween Group condemned this approach as exhibiting a "top-down process of development" in which the regime relied on international experts to decide whether dam projects should proceed rather than consult with local communities.[100]

HUMAN RIGHTS

New press law slammed, Censorship Board reconstituted

Restrictions on the press contained in a new draft law and the reconstitution of the Censorship Board raised concerns that the regime would continue to severely curb media freedom.

On 7 March, the regime introduced new press legislation - the Printing and Publishing Bill - in Parliament.[101] The regime drafted the bill, which would replace the 1962 Printers and Publishers Registration Act, without consulting any media organizations, including the Myanmar Press Council and the Myanmar Journalists Association.[102] The legislation contained numerous prohibitions, including restrictions on the publication of reports that "jeopardize community tranquility and prevalence of law and order" and "break the provisions" of the constitution.[103] It also laid out strict penalties of up to six months in jail for those operating without a valid license.[104] Regime Information Minister Aung Kyi defended the Printing and Publishing Bill in Parliament, claiming that legislative restrictions were aimed at protecting the national interest and preventing "poisonous writings in magazines and journals."[105] Burmese journalists and media organizations vigorously rejected the legislation because they said it severely limited press freedom.[106] As a result of mounting criticism, in mid-March, People's Assembly Speaker Shwe Mann decided to postpone the debate on the Printing and Publishing Bill until the next parliamentary session.[107]

In early March, it was also revealed that on 23 January the regime had replaced its Censorship Board - the Press Scrutiny and Registration Division - with a very similar body called the Central Supervisory Committee for Registration and Distribution of Printers and Publishers (CSCRDPP).[108] The newly-created committee was responsible for monitoring publications and issuing, suspending, and revoking publishing licenses.[109] The 12-member committee is headed by Information Minister Aung Kyi, and includes officials from the Information, Defense, and Home Affairs ministries as well as members of police and military intelligence.[110] The regime failed to make any official announcement or to inform Parliament about the creation of the CSCRDPP.[111]

UN: "Human rights shortcomings" remain

On 8 March, in his periodic report to the UN Human Rights Council, UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma Tomás Ojea Quintana said that "significant human rights shortcomings" remained unaddressed in the country.[112] The report included the following key issues of concern:[113]

[99] Karen News (21 Mar 13) Protesting Karenni villagers blocked by Gov't
[100] Love Salween Group (20 Mar 13) Love Salween Group condemns blocking of free expression in Karenni state
[101] NLM (08 Mar 13) Printing and Publishing Bill not disrupt freedom of expression, publishing
[102] RSF (07 Mar 13) Retrograde bill threatens tentative progress; Irrawaddy (04 Mar 13) Govt Sends Controversial Press Law to Parliament
[103] NLM (08 Mar 13) Draft Printing and Publishing Law and voices of media
[104] AFP (02 Mar 13) Proposed Myanmar media law draws criticism; RSF (07 Mar 13) Retrograde bill threatens tentative progress; Irrawaddy (04 Mar 13) Govt Sends Controversial Press Law to Parliament
[105] RFA (07 Mar 13) Burma Defends Draft Media Law Amid Criticism
[106] AFP (02 Mar 13) Proposed Myanmar media law draws criticism; EMG (04 Mar 13) Myanmar media groups say draft legislation marks a return to censorship; Irrawaddy (04 Mar 13) Govt Sends Controversial Press Law to Parliament; EMG (06 Mar 13) Myanmar's media is 'facing its most serious threat yet'; Irrawaddy (13 Mar 13) Journalists Call on Burma to Scrap Controversial Press Law
[107] AP (18 Mar 13) Myanmar holds off on press law following criticism
[108] EMG (03 Mar 13) Press watch body formed with officials from military intelligence
[109] EMG (03 Mar 13) Press watch body formed with officials from military intelligence
[110] EMG (03 Mar 13) Press watch body formed with officials from military intelligence
[111] DVB (06 Mar 13) Govt admits to 'restructuring' censorship board
[112] HRC, 22nd session, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Tomás Ojea Quintana, 6 March 2013, UN Doc A/HRC/22/58

- The "large gap" between reform at the top and implementation on the ground.
- Ongoing attacks against civilian populations, extrajudicial killings, sexual violence, arbitrary arrests, and torture in Kachin State.
- Endemic discrimination against Rohingya in Arakan State.
- Detention of over 250 political prisoners and ongoing torture in places of detention.
- Ongoing arrest and detention of peaceful protesters.
- Misuse of defamation laws to enforce censorship and heavy censorship of public broadcasting.
- Increasing violations of land and housing rights across the country.
- The judiciary's lack of independence from the executive branch.

UNHRC adopts Burma resolution

On 21 March, the UN Human Rights Council adopted by consensus a resolution on the human rights situation in Burma.[114] The resolution expressed concern over the following issues:[115]

- Human rights violations, including arbitrary detention, forced displacement, land confiscation, rape, and torture.
- The situation of Rohingya and persisting "inter-communal tensions" in Arakan State.
- The ongoing armed conflict in Kachin State and associated human rights violations, including desecration of places of worship, sexual violence and torture, as well as allegations of international humanitarian law violations.

The resolution urged the regime to conduct a "full, transparent, and independent" investigation into all reports of violations of international human rights and international humanitarian law.[116] It also called on the authorities to release all remaining political prisoners.[117] The resolution extended the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma for another year.[118]

More land confiscation documented

In March, more evidence emerged of widespread and ongoing land confiscation across Burma.

- **1 March**: The parliamentary commission tasked with investigating reports of land confiscation across Burma submitted its report to the National Parliament.[119] According to the report, from late July 2012 to late January 2013, the commission received 565 complaints that alleged that the military had forcibly confiscated a total of 247,077 acres of farmland.[120]
- **5 March**: The Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG) released a report titled "Losing ground: Land conflicts and collective action in eastern Myanmar."[121] The report, based on data collected between January 2011 and November 2012, found that following the signing of the initial ceasefire between the regime and the Karen National Union (KNU) in January 2012, land confiscation increased sharply in four States and Divisions with a large Karen population.[122] Land was confiscated as a result of infrastructure projects, logging, mining, and commercial agriculture undertaken or facilitated by various regime authorities as well as foreign and local companies and ethnic armed groups.[123]

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[113] HRC, 22nd session, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Tomás Ojea Quintana, 6 March 2013, UN Doc A/HRC/22/58
[114] AFP (22 Mar 13) Myanmar must launch probe into rights abuses: UN body
[115] HRC, 22nd session, Situation of human rights in Myanmar, UN Doc A/HRC/22/L.20/Rev.1
[116] HRC, 22nd session, Situation of human rights in Myanmar, UN Doc A/HRC/22/L.20/Rev.1
[117] HRC, 22nd session, Situation of human rights in Myanmar, UN Doc A/HRC/22/L.20/Rev.1
[118] HRC, 22nd session, Situation of human rights in Myanmar, UN Doc A/HRC/22/L.20/Rev.1
[119] Irrawaddy (05 Mar 13) Military Involved in Massive Land Grabs: Parliamentary Report
[120] Irrawaddy (05 Mar 13) Military Involved in Massive Land Grabs: Parliamentary Report
[121] KHRG (05 Mar 13) Losing ground: Land conflicts and collective action in eastern Myanmar
[122] AlertNet (05 Mar 13) Land grabs rise in Myanmar's ethnic Karen areas – report
[123] AlertNet (05 Mar 13) Land grabs rise in Myanmar's ethnic Karen areas – report

DISPLACEMENT

Rohingya boat people continue to flee

In March, Rohingya boat people continued to flee to Burma's regional neighbors.

- **1 March**: Indian authorities sheltered 108 Burmese nationals on North Andaman Island after having been at sea for two weeks with no food or water for seven days.[124] A three-year-old boy died while at sea.[125]
- **9 March**: Malaysian authorities rescued 138 Rohingya boat people off Penang Island after their 13-day journey at sea.[126] One of the Rohingya men said that a few hundred Rohingya left Burma in four boats shortly after their boat departed.[127]
- **10 March**: Malaysian authorities rescued 136 Rohingya boat people off Penang Island, including 40 children, who had been at sea for 25 days.[128]
- **11 March**: Thai villagers north of Phuket said that Thai authorities turned away two boats carrying Rohingya.[129]
- **22 March**: It was reported that since 12 March three boats carrying Rohingya had arrived in Malaysia.[130]

In addition to the dangers of arduous boat journeys, details emerged of more atrocities committed by the Thai Navy against Rohingya boat people. On 20 February, 133 Rohingya boat people landed on Surin Island in Phang Nga Province.[131] The next day, Thai Navy personnel towed them out to sea from the island and attempted to transfer them into smaller boats.[132] According to witnesses, when about a dozen boat people jumped into the water, Thai Navy personnel opened fire and killed at least two of them.[133]

Burmese migrant workers face workplace abuse

Reports of Burmese migrant workers facing exploitative conditions led to calls from rights activists for the regime to better protect and support its citizens working abroad.[134]

- **2 March**: Garment factory supervisors in Ar Ramtha in Northwest Jordan attacked and injured four of the over 1,200 Burmese migrant workers after they went on strike over poor working conditions and discriminatory salaries.[135]
- **10 March**: A garment factory in Mae Sot in Thailand's Tak Province fired 19 Burmese migrant workers as a result of a salary dispute.[136]
- **16-17 March**: Thai authorities rescued 14 Burmese nationals who were trafficked into the fishing industry in Trang Province.[137]
- **19 March**: It was reported that the regime's Labor, Employment, and Social Security Ministry said that 26 Burmese migrant workers were stranded in Saudi Arabia after they left abusive workplaces but could not return to Burma without their employers' permission to leave the country.[138]

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[124] PTI (02 Mar 13) 108 Myanmarese detained for crossing into Indian waters
[125] PTI (02 Mar 13) 108 Myanmarese detained for crossing into Indian waters
[126] AFP (11 Mar 13) Malaysia rescues 136 Myanmar refugees; Star (12 Mar 13) Rohingyas leave homeland only to face uncertain fate at sea
[127] Star (12 Mar 13) Rohingyas leave homeland only to face uncertain fate at sea
[128] AFP (11 Mar 13) Malaysia rescues 136 Myanmar refugees
[129] Phuketwan (11 Mar 13) Boatpeople Who Say They Witnessed Shooting Disappear North of Phuket
[130] Phuketwan (22 Mar 13) Rohingya Dies in Thai Hospital, Crowded Conditions Threaten Others
[131] Bangkok Post (17 Mar 13) Mystery on Rohingya's 'fatal shore'
[132] ABC (08 Mar 13) Thai military accused of shooting fleeing refugees
[133] Phuketwan (06 Mar 13) Thai Military Opened Fire and Killed Rohingya North of Phuket, Say Boatpeople, Villagers; ABC (08 Mar 13) Thai military accused of shooting fleeing refugees; HRW (13 Mar 13) Thailand: Fleeing Rohingya Shot in Sea by Navy
[134] Irrawaddy (15 Mar 13) 10 Percent of Burmese Work Abroad: Migration Expert
[135] Irrawaddy (04 Mar 13) Burmese Workers in Jordan Prepare to Sue Factory; NLM (02 Mar 13) Jordanian factory agrees to better food and more entitlements as Myanmar workers' protest continues
[136] KIC (15 Mar 13) Migrant workers get half pay, threatened and sacked by employer
[137] Irrawaddy (25 Mar 13) Thailand Rescues Trafficked Burmese Fishermen
[138] EMG (19 Mar 13) Myanmar mulls labour consuls for Mid East countries

- **28 March**: It was reported that about 500 Burmese migrant workers protested at a shrimp factory in Thailand's Rayong Province because their employer did not provide them with the agreed upon salary and housing and had confiscated their passports.[139]

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Thein Sein's sales pitch to int'l leaders

In March, President Thein Sein met with international leaders in Europe, New Zealand, and Australia during two overseas trips [See box *Thein Sein's travels*]. His trips focused on securing lucrative aid, trade, and investment deals, as well as lobbying for the lifting of sanctions.[140]

On 8 March, Thein Sein arrived back in Burma after an 11-day European tour which began on 26 February in Oslo, Norway, and included stops in Finland, Austria, Belgium, and Italy.[141] In his efforts to woo potential investors and gain international legitimacy for the regime, Thein Sein gave a blatantly false account of the situation in Burma. On 4 March, during a joint-press conference with Austrian President Heinz Fischer in Vienna, Thein Sein claimed that there was "no more fighting all over the country."[142] Despite Thein Sein's positive spin, EU officials continued to highlight outstanding issues in Burma.[143] On 5 March, European Commission President José Barroso said that "significant challenges" remained in Burma, including ending conflict, improving fundamental freedoms, and addressing the humanitarian situation in Kachin and Arakan States.[144]

Thein Sein's travels

Europe

1 March: In Helsinki, Finland: Held talks with Finnish President Sauli Niinisto.[145]

4 March: In Vienna, Austria: Held talks with Austrian President Heinz Fisher.[146]

5 March: In Brussels, Belgium: Held separate talks with European Commission President José Barroso, European Council President Herman Van Rompuy, and EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton.[147] Addressed the European Parliament.[148]

6 March: In Rome, Italy: Held separate talks with Italian President Giorgio Napolitano and PM Mario Monti.[149]

8 March: Arrived back in Burma.[150]

New Zealand/Australia

14 March: Arrived in Auckland, New Zealand. Held talks with New Zealand Governor-General Jerry Mateparae.[151]

15 March: In Auckland, New Zealand: Held talks with New Zealand PM John Key.[152]

18 March: In Canberra, Australia: Held respective talks with Australian PM Julia Gillard and Governor-General Quentin Bryce.[153]

19 March: In Sydney, Australia: Held talks with Australian Trade Commission CEO Bruce Gosper.[154]

21 March: Arrived back in Burma.[155]

[139] Irrawaddy (28 Mar 13) Scammed Burmese Migrant Workers in Thailand Protest Exploitation
[140] NLM (07 Mar 13) Work towards a new and more inclusive Myanmar; AFP (02 Mar 13) Finnish Nobel laureate sees peace prize for Myanmar govt; Mizzima News (07 Mar 13) Govt works 'tirelessly' for peace, Thein Sein tells Brussels; NLM (07 Mar 13) President U Thein Sein meets Presidents of European Council, European Parliament
[141] NLM (09 Mar 13) People extend hero's welcome to President U Thein Sein on return from Europe trip; AFP (26 Feb 13) Myanmar leader in Oslo on first Europe trip
[142] AFP (04 Mar 13) Myanmar leader urges EU to lift sanctions
[143] European Council (05 Mar 13) Remarks by President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy after his meeting with the President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, Thein Sein; EU News (06 Mar 13) President of Myanmar commits to continuing reforms in debate with MEPs
[144] European Commission (05 Mar 13) Statement by President Barroso following his meeting with Mr U Thein Sein, President of Myanmar

From 14-20 March, Thein Sein traveled to New Zealand and Australia. On 18 March, during a joint-press conference with President Thein Sein, Australian PM Julia Gillard announced that Australia would provide an additional A$20 million (US$20.84 million) in aid to Burma.[156]PM Gillard also said that Australia would post a Defense Attaché to Burma and that she hoped to encourage the development of a "modern, professional defense force" in the country.[157] In contrast with the warm reception the Australian government afforded Thein Sein, on 18-19 March, exiled Burmese held protests against Thein Sein's visit in Canberra and Sydney.[158]

ECONOMY

Oil and gas fuel foreign investment

The oil and gas sectors continued to constitute the lion's share of Burma's foreign investment. On 23 March, it was reported that China, Japan, Singapore, the UK, and Vietnam invested more than US$253 million in Burma in February, 75% of which (US$190 million) was in the oil and gas sectors.[159]

On 4 March, state-owned Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE) announced that the regime would launch a tender for the exploration of around 25 offshore oil and gas blocks in April.[160] A senior regime official said that foreign companies could make a 100% investment in offshore oil and gas blocks without having to form a joint venture with a domestic partner.[161]

OTHER BURMA NEWS IN MARCH

1	Chinese authorities in Kunming, Yunnan Province, execute by lethal injection reputed Shan drug lord Naw Kham who was convicted of the murder of 13 Chinese sailors on the Mekong River in October 2011.
1	Regime's Central Supervisory Committee for Registration and Distribution of Printers and Publishers approves eight out of 17 applications for daily newspaper licenses.
1	President Thein Sein says the military is "likely" to retain its quota of seats in Parliament through the next election in 2015.
2	President's Office Minister Aung Min says that the regime should grant regional autonomy to ethnic nationalities and consider resource-sharing arrangements.
2	About 700 villagers demonstrate in Rangoon's Shwepyithar Township to demand the authorities address their complaints that the regime confiscated about 11,000 acres of land from 1,742 farmers since 1986 to make way for development projects implemented by companies owned by regime cronies.
2	President's Office Minister Aung Min say Burma will be able to resolve internal conflicts only if the regime grants autonomy and a share of revenues from natural resources to ethnic nationalities.
4	UK FCO Minister of State Hugo Swire says that significant challenges remain in Burma including the detention of political prisoners; conflict in Kachin State; obstructed humanitarian access; and the regime's continued refusal to grant the Rohingya basic rights and citizenship.

[145] NLM (03 Mar 13) Political reform process is being implemented by means of all inclusiveness of all political parties and peace-making with national races armed groups
[146] NLM (06 Mar 13) Austrian President pledges support for fully lifting of EU sanctions against Myanmar
[147] NLM (07 Mar 13) Work towards a new and more inclusive Myanmar; NLM (07 Mar 13) President U Thein Sein meets Presidents of European Council, European Parliament; Irrawaddy (06 Mar 13) EU Pledges Reform Support during Thein Sein's Visit
[148] Mizzima News (07 Mar 13) Govt works 'tirelessly' for peace, Thein Sein tells Brussels
[149] NLM (08 Mar 13) Italy agrees lifting of overall EU sanctions against Myanmar
[150] NLM (09 Mar 13) People extend hero's welcome to President U Thein Sein on return from Europe trip
[151] NLM (15 Mar 13) New Zealand will help Myanmar to carry out reforms
[152] NLM (16 Mar 13) New Zealand recognizes Myanmar's political and economic reforms
[153] NLM (19 Mar 13) President U Thein Sein holds talks on further bilateral cooperation with Australian PM; NLM (19 Mar 13) Australian Governor-General welcomes President U Thein Sein
[154] NLM (21 Mar 13) President U Thein Sein, Australian Trade Commission hold talks over investment sector
[155] NLM (22 Mar 13) President U Thein Sein arrives back after paying goodwill visits to New Zealand, Australia
[156] AAP (18 Mar 13) Australia offers Myanmar extra aid
[157] Prime Minister of Australia (18 Mar 13) Australia's Support for Reform in Myanmar; AP (18 Mar 13) Australia to restore military ties with Myanmar; VOA (18 Mar 13) Australia Eases Sanctions, Grants Aid to Burma
[158] AAP (19 Mar 13) Protest slams Myanmar president visit; KIC (22 Mar 13) Burmese protest U Thein Sein's Australia trip; AP (18 Mar 13) Myanmar president welcomes closer Australia ties
[159] EMG (23 Mar 13) Investment in Myanmar reaches over 42 billion dollar; EMG (26 Mar 13) British companies fuel jump in investment in Myanmar
[160] Myanmar Times (06 Mar 13) Myanmar oil and gas update
[161] Reuters (06 Mar 13) Myanmar to free up foreign control of some energy blocks -official

4	Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief Vice-Sr Gen Min Aung Hlaing meets with Russian Defense Minister Gen Sergei Shoigu in Naypyidaw to discuss bilateral cooperation in the defense, economic, and cultural sectors.
5	National Parliament approves signing the 1958 Convention on the Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Arbitral Awards.
7	USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah says that continued US aid and support for Burma is "conditioned" on the regime continuing the reform process.
7	Thousands of people demonstrate in Akyab, Kyauktaw, and Mrauk U Townships, Arakan State, against a plan proposed by Turkish NGO TIKA to build 5,000 homes for Rohingya IDPs.
7	A group of 88 Generation Students led by Min Ko Naing arrives in Tiddim, Chin State, to deliver a series of lectures on Burma's peace process.
7	ADB announces that it will provide a US$225,000 grant to help develop Burmese civil society organizations' skills to increase their participation in ADB-supported consultation processes.
8	UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma Tomás Ojea Quintana says that the establishment of a 'truth commission' for crimes committed under the military junta is not on the agenda of any of the stakeholders in Burma, including the regime, political parties, and ethnic groups.
9	Daw Aung San Suu Kyi meets with exiled Cambodian opposition leader Sam Rainsy in Rangoon.
9	Exiled Cambodian opposition leader Sam Rainsy meets with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on the sidelines of the NLD congress in Rangoon to discuss the promotion of democracy in both nations.
11	A court in Salingyi Township, Sagaing Division, rejects a lawsuit filed by three local villagers against President Thein Sein over his alleged responsibility for the 29 November violent crackdown against Monywa copper mine protesters.
12	Regime Election Commission approves the registration of the Democracy and Human Rights Party.
12	Regime says that it plans to set up labor attachés for Burmese migrant workers in Thailand, South Korea, and Malaysia.
12	Canada-based Centurion Minerals announces that it has signed an MoU with Burma's Eternal Gold Mining Company to explore and develop a gold project in Banmauk Township, Sagaing Division.
12	A delegation led by US Ambassador to Burma Derek Mitchell concludes a two-day visit to Arakan State where they assessed the situation for communities affected by sectarian violence.
13	Japan's Nippon Foundation project coordinator Takehiro Umemura says that plans to deliver aid to communities affected by the conflict in Kachin State have been delayed as the regime has not given the organization permission to travel to affected areas.
14	President's Office Minister Aung Min sends a message to the National Assembly to apologize for the publication of a series of commentaries in state-run newspapers suggesting cannibalism among Chin.
14	NGO Burma Rivers Network says the regime is speeding up construction of 25 dams in Burma in Kachin, Shan, Karenni, and Karen States.
14	US Special Representative and Policy Coordinator for Burma Patrick Murphy says that the regime has to resolve issues such as releasing all political prisoners, ensuring human rights, achieving national reconciliation, and severing military ties with North Korea before the US lifts all sanctions on Burma.
14	UN Sec-Gen Ban Ki-moon welcomes the 11-12 March talks between the regime and the KIO and says that both parties should "redouble their efforts" towards attaining genuine and durable solutions to the conflict in Kachin State.
15	UNHCR says that more than 7,000 people are estimated to have left Arakan State on boats in the first two months of 2013.
15	UN Human Development Index 2013 ranks Burma 149th out of 185 countries, the third lowest ranking of Asian countries.
16	88 Generation Students hold a ceremony in Rangoon to mark the 25th anniversary of the 'Red Bridge' massacre.
16	China's Special Envoy on Asian Affairs Wang Yingfan says that the Monywa copper mine has had "many shortcomings" and that Chinese companies should improve their sense of social responsibility.
17	Na Sa Ka personnel from Area 6 in Maungdaw Township, Arakan State, arrest a 22-year-old Rohingya youth on charges of marrying without the authorities' permission.
20	Thai police arrest 25 Rohingya men and women on a bus in Phuket Province.
20	National Parliament approves the abolishment of Foreign Exchange Certificates.
20	Local regime officials warn 30 villagers in Cha Khan Village, Yebyu Township, Tenasserim Division, that they will face legal action if they continue to refuse to relocate in order to make way for the development of the Tavoy deep-sea port project.
21	European Parliament's International Trade Committee approves, by a vote of 28 to two, a recommendation that the EU reinstate its Generalized System of Preference for Burma.
21	Acting US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Joseph Yun says that "serious challenges" remain in Burma, including conflict in Kachin State and the situation for Rohingya in Arakan

	State.
22	US Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations Assistant Secretary Rick Barton says that the US will provide US$3 million to Burma for landmine clearance operations.
22	A fire in Northern Thailand's Baan Mae Surin refugee camp in Mae Hong Son Province kills 37 people, injures over 115 people, destroys 400 homes, and leaves 2,300 Burmese refugees homeless.
23	Regime delegation led by President's Office Minister Aung Min and PNLO representatives sign a 10-point agreement on the second day of talks between the two sides in Rangoon.
25	Regime's Central Supervisory Committee for Registration and Distribution of Printers and Publishers approves eight out of 11 applications for daily newspaper licenses, including the NLD's D-Wave.
25	OIC opens a Global Rohingya Center at its headquarters in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, with the aim of highlighting the plight of Rohingya in Arakan State.
26	US State Department says that the US will provide US$100,000 to assist the victims of violence in Central Burma.
26	Karen Refugees Committee issues a 10-point statement outlining conditions for refugee repatriation including a nationwide ceasefire; settling political conflicts; and landmine clearance.
27	Daw Aung San Suu Kyi attends the Armed Forces Day's military parade in Naypyidaw.
27	Tatmadaw Commander-in-Chief Sr Gen Min Aung Hlaing says Burma's military adheres to the Geneva Conventions and its soldiers have never committed any war crimes.
28	88 Generation Student leader Min Ko Naing accuses police of "standing around and watching the riot situation calmly" during unrest in Meikhtila, Mandalay Division.
28	Regime Human Rights Commission calls for "humanitarian access and safe passage for humanitarian supplies" in Kachin State.
30	Regime's Information Ministry informs AP news agency and Japanese broadcaster NHK that they have been granted permission to open full-fledged offices in Rangoon.

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"**Burma's facade: An update on conflicts, displacement & human rights violations**", Altsean-Burma http://bit.ly/15JqDer

"**Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar**", Tomás Ojea Quintana http://bit.ly/XTRBOc

"**Report on the Human Rights Situation in Burma (Jan 2012-Dec 2012)**", Network for Human Rights Documentation - Burma (ND-Burma) http://bit.ly/ZfN5aV

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"**Burma/Myanmar: New Forms of Control and Threats to Freedoms of Expression, Assembly and Association amidst Reforms Fanfare**", Forum Asia http://bit.ly/ZZCstL

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"**Too Much, Too Soon? The Dilemma of Foreign Aid to Myanmar/Burma**", Lex Rieffel/James Fox http://bit.ly/YcavNi

"**Losing Ground: Land conflicts and collective action in eastern Myanmar**", Karen Human Rights group (KHRG) http://bit.ly/12qgXYw

"**The Kachin Crisis: Peace Must Prevail**", Transnational Institute (TNI) http://bit.ly/Wovyij

"**Current Status of Dam Projects on Burma's Salween River**", Salween Watch http://bit.ly/XKPA7t

"**Myanmar: Meikhtila inter-communal violence Situation Report No. 1 - 25 March 2013**", UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) http://bit.ly/XCNZwU

"**Myanmar: Meikhtila inter-communal violence Situation Report No. 2 (as of 27 Mar 2013)**", UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) http://bit.ly/10jFfgY

"**Myanmar: Inter-communal conflict Information Bulletin n° 1**", International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) http://bit.ly/YUYSum