



Weekly Security Review

Safety and security highlights for clients operating in Myanmar

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Activists called for permanent suspension of Myitsone dam project

During the two-day visit of Chinese President Xijiping to Naypyitaw from 17 to 18 January, activists, environmentalists and civil society organizations in Yangon staged a protest in front of the City Hall on 18 January, demanding a complete halt to the Myitsone dam project. Demonstrators previously planned to stage a protest in front of the Embassy of China but the protest permit was denied by the Police for security concerns. Significant increase in security measures around the Chinese Embassy was observed on 17 and 18 January.



Photo via News Watch

The US \$3.6 billion project was suspended by U Thein Sein's government in 2011 over concerns about the social and environmental consequences. Environmentalists from around the country warned that the dam could potentially flood an area equal to the size of Singapore and when that happens, more than 10,000 people are expected to be displaced. The proposed site is located about 40 kilometres from Myitkyina at the confluence of the Mali and N'mai rivers.

On 27 January 2019, Police stopped one activist from burning a Chinese flag in front of the City Hall in Yangon during a protest calling for the permanent suspension of Myitsone dam project.

Chinese President Xijiping signed 33 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) agreements, protocols and exchanges including New Yangon Project and the Kyaukpyu Special Economic Zone (SEZ) and the deep-sea port. There was no



Location of Myitsone Dam

mention of Myitsone dam project during Chinese President's visit at all. The 33 MoUs are as follows:

1. Concession Agreement and Shareholders' Agreement of Kyaukphyu Special Economic Zone and Deep-Sea port Project
2. Handing over of the Muse-Mandalay Feasibility Report
3. Handing over and Receipt of Detailed Feasibility Reports of Mandalay-Tigyaing-Muse Expressway and Kyaukphyu-Naypyitaw Highway
4. Letter of Intent regarding New Urban Development of Yangon City
5. MoU of Feasibility Study for Yangon River Estuary West Bank Protection Project
6. Feasibility Study for Mandalay-Bagan Railway Line Project
7. Letter of Intent for the acceleration of Mee Lin Gyaing Integrated LNG Power Project
8. MoU on Conducting Feasibility Study of the Myanmar-China Power Interconnection Project
9. Exchange Letter for the Feasibility Study on the China-aided resettlement project for Internally Displaced Persons in Kachin State
10. MoU on Accelerating Negotiation on the Framework Agreement on the China-Myanmar Muse-Ruili Cross Border Economic Cooperation Zone
11. Implementation Agreement for Procurement of Passenger Coaches by Interest Free Loan
12. Implementation Agreement for the Kunlong Bridge Project
13. MoU of Feasibility Study for Watalone Tunnel Project
14. Exchange Letter for the Feasibility Study on 3-year Development Plan of Border Areas
15. Protocol on Plant Inspection and Quarantine Requirements for Exporting Rice from Myanmar to China
16. Protocol on Quarantine Health Requirements for Slaughtering Bovine to be exported to China from Myanmar
17. Protocol for Heat Processed Cocoon to be imported from Myanmar to China
18. Exchange Letter for the Project of Agricultural Product Quality Control Centre

19. Exchange Letter for the Project of Hybrid Rice Research Centre
20. MoU on the Establishment of the Working Group for the Promotion of Smooth Trade
21. MoU on Local Cooperation under the Framework of Joint Building China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC) between the Yunnan Province and Mandalay Region
22. Implementation of the China-aided Upgrading of No. 2 Industrial Training Centre Mandalay Project
23. MoU on Enhancing Infrastructure Development Cooperation
24. MoU on Promoting Production Capacity and Investment Cooperation
25. MoU on Human Resources Development Cooperation
26. MoU between the two Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Myanmar and China on Strengthening Cooperation
27. Agreement on Mutual Provision of Embassy Land and Buildings
28. Handover Certificate of the Yangon Police Command Centre
29. Exchange Letter for the Provision of 6 Patrol Boats to the Myanmar Police Force
30. MoU on Cooperation between Chinese and Myanmar Football Federations
31. MoU on the Establishment of Province/Region Friendship between Yunnan Province and Yangon Region
32. Agreement on Cooperation between National Radio and Television Administration of China and Ministry of Information of Myanmar
33. MoU on Co-organizing the Myanmar Day of 2020 Lancang-Mekong TV Week

Assessment

Should the issue remain unresolved, there is a high likelihood protests in Myitkyina and area near the project site and in major cities. Clients are advised to avoid similar demonstrations and are reminded to refrain from taking photographs or participating in political rallies, even those deemed peaceful.

Yangon sees large protests calling for \$6.66 minimum wage

On 19 January, two waves of large demonstrations occurred separately in rural parts of Yangon Region over the same cause; an increase in minimum wage. More than

5,000 workers from Hlaingthaya Township marched demanding an increase in minimum wage to 9,800 MMK (6.66USD). Current minimum wage is 4,800 MMK (3.26USD). More than 1,700 workers from four industrial zones in Shwepyitha rallied and demanded the minimum salary to 8,000 MMK (5.45USD).

According to section 5(h) of Minimum Wages Law, that rate is to be defined every two year, but in the second time rate specification, it took two years and eight months before the minimum was set.



Photo via Eleven Media Group - Protest in Hlaingthaya

Protest in Shwepyitha

On 8 September 2019, more than 10,000 employees from six garment factories from Patheingyi Township, Ayeyarwady Region staged a protest calling for measures to reduce disputes between employees and employers and demand mechanism to promote to seek solutions.

Assessment

Labour-related demonstrations have been ongoing in recent months but this is the first time workers had demanded an increase in minimum salary since representatives of labour, business and the government had begun discussion on the minimum wage in December 2019, following a mandatory review of the rate every two years. The last daily minimum wage was set in May 2018.

An increase in labour-related demonstrations is possible, though it is unlikely demonstrations will impact foreign interests outside the manufacturing sector.

Student-led protests in Yangon and Mandalay

On 20 January, more than 100 students from Mandalay and Monywa Universities rallied from the corner of 35th x 66th Street to Manawraman Ground in Mandalay to oppose the Ministry of Education's decision to extend school period. According to the Director General of the Basic Education Department said political campaigns are behind the students' protest.

A demonstration organized by teachers and locals is reportedly planned for 24 January in Magway Region over the same cause. Demonstrators will gather in front of the Magway Education Department around 8am (local time).

Similar demonstrations are anticipated to eventuate in several other cities for the time being.

Clients operating in the region are advised to avoid the protest area, including spectating from afar or taking photographs.



Photo via The Voice and RFA-Yangon University students protest (left) Mandalay University students protest (right)

On 20 January, Yangon University students rallied inside university campus to express their solidarity with Mandalay University students over the construction of a food court inside Mandalay University campus which the students claimed was lack of transparency.

Students from Mandalay University staged sit-in protests in September 2019 and on 9 January 2020 to demand an investigation over the food court construction on the University campus, which they claimed was lack of transparency. Members of the university student union sat in front of the main building carrying placards and banners that denounced the construction project. The student union submitted a letter to the Education Minister to form an investigation team to inspect the student's claim that the contractors didn't have permission for the project. The students also sent letters calling for an investigation of the project to the State Counsellor's Office, the Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House), Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House), the Anti-Corruption Commission, and the President's Office.

Assessment

Tensions in Yangon and Mandalay universities and on campuses in major cities are likely to remain high in the short term.

Source Information

This product represents highlights from a comprehensive review of Myanmar and English language print, electronic, and social media as well as information obtained from sources in law enforcement, government, diplomatic missions, the United Nations, international NGOs and other Exera partners active in the region. Supplementary research is conducted by Exera investigators and analysts.

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