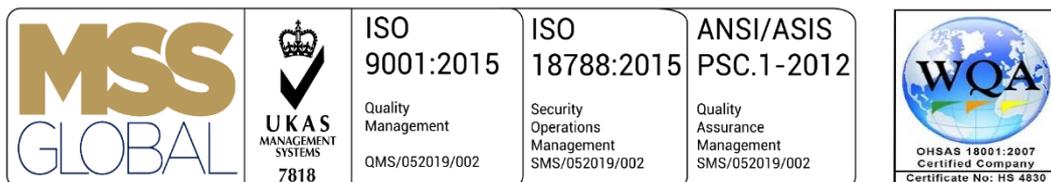


EXERA

Weekly Security Review

Safety and Security Highlights for Clients Operating in Myanmar

Dates covered: 2 July– 8 July 2020



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Covid -19 pandemic

When EXERA released its latest Weekly Security Review (WSR) on 2 July 2020 at 10:09 hrs, Myanmar had a total of 299 Covid-19 patients since the beginning of the pandemic, i.e. 7 more than the previous week.

As of 8 July, at 08:00 Hrs, 316 confirmed cases have been reported since the beginning of the epidemic, i.e. 17 new cases in the last week. All of them came back from other countries.

The week was marked by the laudatory comments of UNWHO representative in Myanmar about the crisis management by the government, by the suicide of one man in quarantine centre, by the lawsuit against Pastor David Lah, and by the postponement of debt repayment by Myanmar decided by EU countries.

Internal Conflict

This week saw a relative lull of armed clashes in Rakhine State. However, disappearances and arrests of civilians went unabated. The situation of IDPs is increasingly concerning. In Northern Shan State, last week clashes went to a temporary stop.

In the rest of the news, the next Panglong Conference will take place on 12-14 August; the Tatmadaw reshuffled some senior positions; UK sanctioned Senior-General Min Aung Hlaing and his deputy; Senior-General Min Aung Hlaing slammed foreign powers for supporting EAOs; the Army will launch investigations against soldiers suspected of being involved in 3 massacres in Rakhine State in September 2017.

Myanmar General Elections

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and President U Win Myint will participate in the NLD campaign, thereby putting them at odds with the 2008 Constitution, which bars State leaders from committing into party politics. The NLD gave some hints about its election manifesto and dispelled rumours of a “presidency for Constitution reforms” deal with Senior-General Min Aung Hlaing. The Arakan National Party (ANP) is very ambitious to continue its domination over Rakhine State, while NLD meets challenges to file its own candidates. The Myanmar nationals living abroad must register before 5 August if they want to cast their votes. The Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) claims its ambitions and hopes to regain the majority at the Parliament to bring its Chairman U Than Htay to presidency. In Yangon Region, 11 independent candidates will run to protect the rights of labourers and farmers.

INTERNAL CONFLICT**Rakhine State**

The main incidents collected through news outlets, reliable social media accounts and informers on the ground are the following (fig. 1):

- 1) 1 July, Kyauktaw Township: two boys disappeared on the way back to their village of Pein Hne Chaung. According to one of the boys' mother, they were arrested by security forces at Kispnadi bridge. The victims' families and the local lawmaker asked about their whereabouts to soldiers on the bridge, who denied having any information.
- 2) 2 July, Kyauktaw Township: one villager, 31-year-old Ko Kyaw Hlaing, was arrested by the military near Kispnadi bridge. His remains were found in the river on 7 July.
- 3) 2 July, Naypyidaw: the Myanmar Army True News Information Team denied the accusations by Rakhine Human Rights groups that 3 Tatmadaw soldiers had raped a woman at gunpoint in U Gar village, Rathedaung Township.
- 4) 3 July, Mrauk-U Township: 6 Rakhine people and 15 Bengali/Rohingya were arrested at 7:00 Hrs by the Myanmar Army in Than Hmyar Gyi, Kaing Taw and Tan Pyin Gyi villages. The army reportedly shot gunfire when entering the villages; 700 people escaped from those settlements. 18 detainees were released on the same evening, and 3 on the following day.
- 5) 3 July, Kyauktaw Township: Myanmar Army arrested 3 men accused of having ties with the AA. They have been handed over to the police, which will charge them under anti-terrorism law.
- 6) 3 July, Kyaukphyu Township: 12 people who had been arrested after a landmine attack against a Tatmadaw convoy on 30 June were released for lack of evidence. Those people are farmers who were tilling their fields near the attack site when the landmine blew off. A 67-year-old farmer was shot by the military during the attack. According to the Tatmadaw, he was a member of the AA, an accusation rebuffed by his wife.
- 7) 4 July, Kyaukphyu Township: the Myanmar Army released 2 of the 9 people they had arrested on 28 June in Kat Tha Pyay village. They were all arrested while watching a video deemed pro-AA on a mobile phone. The 7 other detainees were handed out to the police, and they should be charged for association with a terrorist organization.

- 8) 4 July, Kyaukphyu Township: on that day, it was learnt that a retired military had been kidnapped on 24 June, in Shauk Chaung village, by members of the AA.
- 9) 6 July, Ann Township: 5,000 people from Dar Let village tract fled from their villages for fear of conflict. Reportedly, Tatmadaw officers informed local monks and community leaders that clearance operations would be held in the region. Villagers took shelter in Zu Kaing and Kanhtaungkyi villages, located near the headquarters of the Military Western Command in Ann town. Local authorities struggle to cope with this fresh flow of IDPs and face difficulties to meet their needs. In Dar Let village tract, food shortage is getting very severe. on 7 July, the Chin University Students in Rakhine State (CUSR) complained that their shipments of rice to that area were blocked by the Army.

Northern Shan State

In Northern Shan State, the main incidents were the following:

- 1) 1 July, Kyaukme Township: four Shan lawmakers sent a letter to the Myanmar Human Rights Commission to demand the truth about the shooting of a couple in Pan Kyan village on 28 June, during a clash between the Tatmadaw and the Restoration Council of Shan State / Shan State Army South. The two people who reportedly shot at close range while escaping. The husband was killed and his wife wounded.
- 2) 1 July, Kutkai Township: 2 men and one 10-year-old boy were captured by the Tatmadaw and forced to guide them in the forest. Such practice is illegal under international law. The boy was released on the following day, but the two men remain prisoners. According to local activists, people in Kutkai Township are increasingly afraid of being arrested to guide troops. 17 people have reportedly been forced to do so in the township since 1 June.

Kachin State

On 1 July, it was learnt that the KIA clashed with the Tatmadaw, west of Bhamo Township, on 29 June. No information has been provided about the number of casualties.

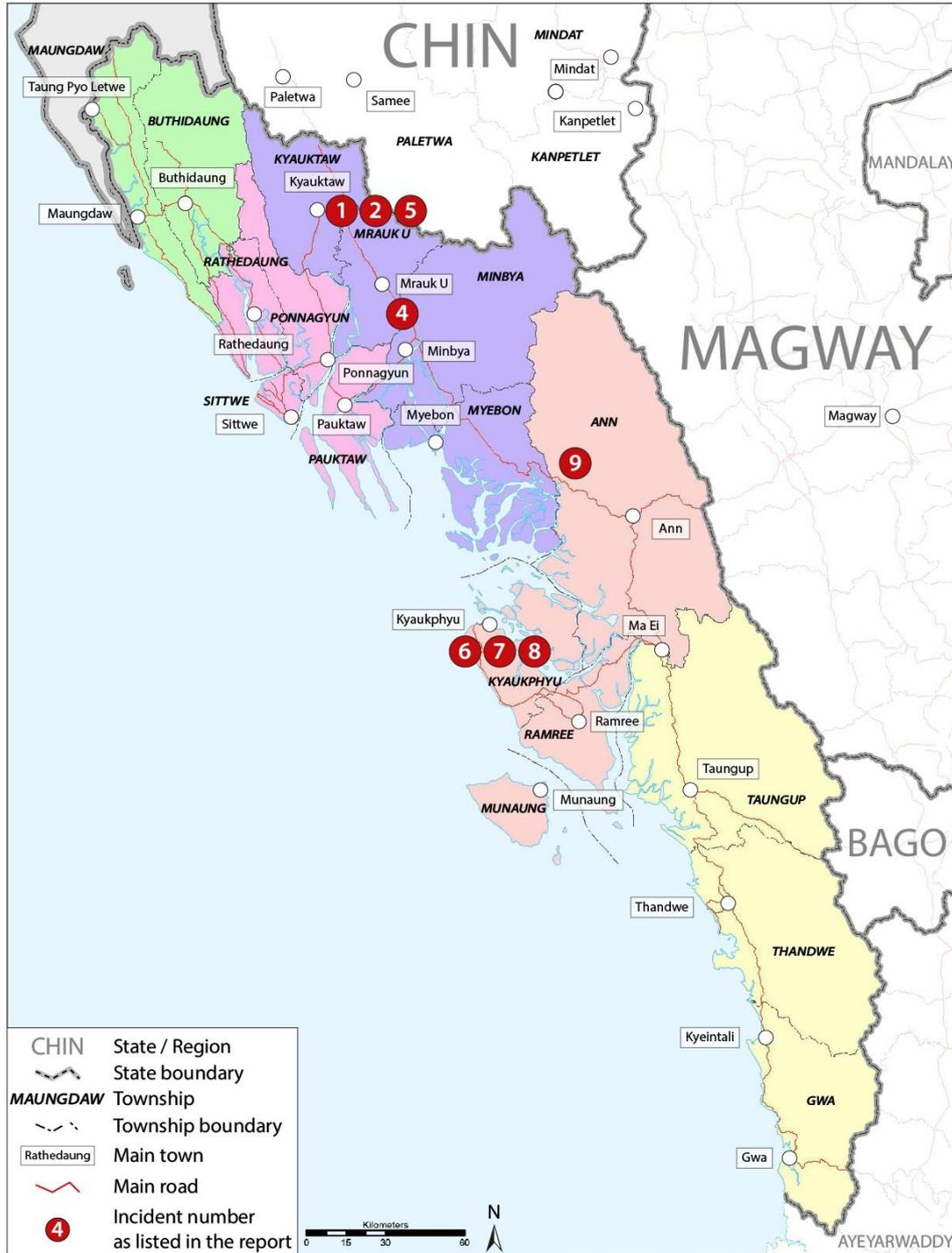


Figure 1: Security incidents in Rakhine State between 1 July and 8 July 2020.

Analysis and comment

Early July, it was confirmed that the 4th edition of the 21st Century Panglong Conference, the main peace forum in Myanmar, would be held from 12 to 14 August in Nay Pyi Taw. It should gather the Myanmar authorities and the 10 EAOs which signed the 2015 National Ceasefire Agreement (NCA). This news was welcomed by observers, as this conference had been held back for 2 years because of lagging

tensions between the Tatmadaw and armed groups, especially the KNU and the RCSS/SSA-S. On 6 July, a senior member of the Arakan Liberation Party (ALP) stated she would raise the issues of IDP living conditions, human right abuses and internet blackout in Rakhine State during that upcoming Peace conference.

On 7 and 8 July, the 19th Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) meeting was held in Yangon. The JMC purpose is to monitor the ceasefire and defuse tensions between the signatories. The previous meeting was held almost one year ago, in September 2018. The resumption of the meeting was saluted by observers.

On 1 July, the Tatmadaw reshuffled some senior positions. One of the most noticeable change was the affectation of Major-General Aung Aung as the head of the Southwestern Military Command. Major-General Aung Aung was leading the 33 Light Infantry Division, accused of war crimes in Rakhine State during the 2017 crisis. He has been sanctioned by Western countries since then. Some analysts consider that this reshuffle is a strategy by Min Aung Hlaing to reinforce his control over his troops ahead of the 2020 elections and prepare the future.

In an interview to the Russian media Zvezda late June, Senior-General Min Aung Hlaing pointed out “strong forces behind terrorist organization”, i.e. foreign powers. Some analysts interpreted this statement as a clear signal to China. In the same interview, he indirectly acknowledged the “four-cut” policy the Tatmadaw pursues in Rakhine State, stating that “we have to cut off factors that contribute to their existence. We have to make sure they can’t get recruits, weapons, funds or popular support by exposing their true colors. It requires wide-ranging approaches.”

On 6 July, the UK imposed sanctions against Senior-General Min Aung Hlaing and his deputy Vice Senior-General Soe Win, for their involvement in the 2017 wave of violence in Rakhine State. Those two officers had already been sanctioned by other countries, including the US.

On 7 July, the Tatmadaw spokesperson Brigadier-General Zaw Min Tun announced that the army court of enquiry would start investigating possible war crimes reportedly committed in 3 villages of Rakhine State in September 2017. According to local witnesses, 600 people were killed in Min Gyi and 200 in Maung Nu (Buthidaung Township), while 100 were executed in Chut Pyin (Rathedaung Township). In May, 3 unknown soldiers were sentenced to unknown sentences for crimes committed in Gutar Pyin (Maungdaw Township), where 400 civilians were reportedly killed.

On 8 July, Amnesty International stated that in-depth investigations prove that the Tatmadaw committed war crimes in Southern Chin State in March 2020. The crimes mentioned by the INGO are indiscriminate airstrikes, arbitrary detention and torture.

On the ground in Rakhine State, the reporting period did not feature any major clash. However, the underground, low-burning conflict is continuing, with successive disappearances on Kispandadi Bridge (Kyauktaw town) and arrests. Those arrests have been criticized as concerningly opaque. On 1 July, the families of 2 people arrested in Hpar Pyo village (Minbya Township) on 1 March complained that they had not had any news from them in 4 months. Likewise, on 1 July, the relatives of 2 men from Shwe Pyi village (Kyauktaw Township) who died in custody on 29 February said that they are yet to receive any satisfactory explanation from the Tatmadaw.

The IDPs also face severe difficulties. On 5 July, 200 IDPs from Rathedaung Township arrived in Aw Ra Ma village (Ponnagyun Township). Some of them are from Kyauk Tan area, in Rathedaung Township, the scene of heavy clashes on 26 and 27 June. They lamented that the Tatmadaw looted at least 30 homes in their village, which is a war crime under international law. Authorities in Aw Ra Ma reportedly do not have the resources to meet the IDPs' needs. On 6 July, over 400 IDPs had to evacuate their camp in Yet Chaung village because of a flood of the nearby river, due to heavy downpours. Such an incident already took place on 17 June.

On 29 June, 21 INGOs urged the Tatmadaw and the AA to stop further escalation of violence, protect civilians and adhere to international laws.

Assessment and recommendations

In spite of the relative lull in armed clashes this week, the risks in Rakhine and Southern Chin States remain very high. Travel by road should be avoided at all cost. Even major towns' outskirts have become high-risk areas. Awareness and vigilance should be priority before planning or performing any activities in these regions.

In Northern Shan State, no major clash broke out between the Tatmadaw and local EAOs. However, the situation remains volatile. The risks are therefore very high, especially in Kyaukme, Kutkai and Muse areas, and we advise our clients to avoid the area.

EXERA remains at your disposition to offer tailor-made security diagnostics and secure travel plans throughout Myanmar.

SOCIAL STABILITY

Although no demonstration can normally be held in Myanmar at the moment because of the Covid-19 pandemic, the recent economy downturn is also a factor of risk. Indeed, the activities slowdown has fragilized whole swathes of the population. On 3 July, the Chinese owner of a garment factory in Shwepyithar industrial zone (Yangon Region) abandoned his factory and his 700 workers, without paying any salary. Such incidents may happen again in the near future.

On 1 July, Aung Ko Ko, a reporter for Eleven Media Group, was prosecuted under Section 68 (a) of the Telecommunications Law for a Facebook post on Covid-19, in which he lamented that the Ministry of Health and Sports (MoHS) underreported Covid-19 cases and delayed news releases. The plaintiff, Police Captain Ye Aung, said that the reporter spread misinformation with intent to harm the State image.

On 7 July, 3 people were injured by rubber bullet shot by security forces during a brawl in Pale Township, in Sagaing Region. The villagers confronted the police to protest against the seizure of land to build a contraband checkpoint. Land issues are one of the burning problems of transitional Myanmar and can result in violence.

ELECTION WATCH

On 8 November 2020, Myanmar will hold its general elections. In Myanmar, the general elections take place every five years. The 34 million of Myanmar voters choose their representatives at the Upper House and Lower House of the Parliament¹. According to the 2008 Constitution, on top of those elected members, those two chambers comprise 25 % of MPs directly appointed by the Senior-General of the Tatmadaw. The Constitution can be amended only if more than 75 % of the MPs agree for it, which gives the Army a decisive veto.

The elected and appointed members of the two chambers (664 members) elect the President of the Republic. The latter is therefore not elected directly by the Myanmar citizens, but indirectly, through the Parliament.

The two main parties in Myanmar are the National League for Democracy (NLD), led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), a military-aligned party which used to rule the country from 2011 to 2016.

¹ They also cast their votes for regional functions: their representative at their respective Regional/State Parliament ; their representative at the municipal level ; ethnic minorities can elect their representatives in the regional government if their ethnic group accounts for more than 0.1 % of the regional population. In Self-Administered Zones (SAZ), people also elect the local administrators.

In 2015, the NLD won 78 % of the elected seats nationwide. However, because of the 25 % of military appointed in the Parliament, this landslide results in 59 % of the total seats.

97 parties ready to contest the 2020 elections; 79 will run nationwide, 18 will focus on one specific State or Regions. NLD is not expected to fare as good as in 2015, and observers consider it is very unlikely to get the majority at the Parliament. It will therefore have to make alliances, possibly with ethnic parties, which may have a decisive influence in the next tenure.

During the reporting period, the main news about the elections were the following:

- 1) 1 July, Naypyidaw: according to the NLD Central Executive Committee, State Counselor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and President U Win Myint are now launching the electoral campaign. On 5 July, they both attended the opening of the temporary NLD headquarters. However, according to the article 64 of the 2008 Constitution, State leaders cannot engage in party's activities. This article was even put forward by the NLD in 2015 to point out the involvement of then-President U Thein Sein in the campaign. NLD opponents were swift to point out the contradiction. This matter will probably remain a bone of contention in the next few months.
- 2) 1 July, Rakhine State: the chairman of the Democracy and Human Rights Party (DHRP) asked the Union Election Commission to let Muslims holding temporary citizenship cards cast their votes in Rakhine State. Although those people were allowed to vote in 2010, their citizenship cards were revoked for the 2015 poll.
- 3) 2 July, Mandalay Region: according to U Zaw Myint Maung, the Chief minister for Mandalay Region, the fact that Myanmar soldiers will for the first time vote outside of their barracks, in public polling stations, should provide the NLD more votes from their ranks. In the same interview, he indicated that the NLD would publish its manifesto in August; it should focus on health and education. He admitted that his party fell short of some of its 2015 promises. He also dispelled rumours that the NLD may agree to give the presidency to Senior-General Min Aung Hlaing if the latter agreed to reform the Constitution.
- 4) 2 July, Kayin State: The chairman of the Karen National Democratic Party (KNDP) stated his party would struggle to campaign amidst the Covid-19 crisis. He lamented that UEC is yet to provide any clear guidance on that topic, for instance about the maximum amount of people allowed to attend rallies.

The KNDP was formed in February 2018. It is a merger of 4 ethnic political parties:

- The Phalon-Sawaw Democratic Party (PSDP)
- The Karen Democratic Party (KDP)
- The Karen State Democracy and Development Party (KSDDP)
- The Karen United Democratic Party (KUDP).

Its agenda focuses on peace-building in Kayah State, including between competing armed groups and political parties.

- 5) 3 July, Rakhine State: a spokesperson of the Arakan National Party said that, as in 2015, his party is confident to win the majority votes. In 2015, his party won:
- 10 seats out of 12 at the of the Upper House Union Parliament
 - 12 seats out of 16 at the Lower House of the Union Parliament
 - 23 seats out of 35 elected ones at the regional Parliament.

However, the spokesperson lamented that the current political situation would hamper the election, with more than 80,000 displaced. On 8 November, the party will also contest the seat for Paletwa Township (Chin State), as well as the elections for ethnic affairs representatives in Yangon and Ayeyarwaddy regions.

Conversely, the NLD admits it faces difficulties to recruit candidates for the elections. The local security context and the wide popular support to Rakhine ethnic organizations make potential candidates reluctant to contest the local seats. According to local rumours, candidates will need the AA approval to register

- 6) 3 July, Southern Chin State: Paletwa Township residents worried that the elections may not take place in their township, due to the security situation.
- 7) 3 July, Chin State: the Zomi Congress for Democracy (ZCD) announced it would contest 9 constituencies in Chin State and 3 in Sagaing Region, according to the party's general secretary. The ZCD won 6 constituencies in 2015.
- 8) On 6 July, the UEC announced that Myanmar nationals living abroad will have to register before 5 August to be allowed to cast an advance vote. More than 4 million Myanmar people live abroad, but their vote remains virtually inexistent: only 6,000 of them voted in 2010 and 20,000 in 2015.
- 9) 7 July, Yangon Region: labourers and farmers right activists will run as independent candidates in 11 townships of Yangon Region. Daw Su Su Nway, a prominent right activist, will run for the Lower House in Kawhmu township, Yangon Region. This constituency is highly symbolic, as it is Aung San Suu Kyi's. Similarly, U Htay, a lawyer defending labourers, also plans to run for the Lower House seat for Hlaing Thayar Township.

10) On 8 July, the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), the military-aligned party which ruled Myanmar from 2011 to 2016, announced its ambitions for the poll. According to its spokesperson Nanda Hla Myint, the party is confident to get enough seats to secure the presidency and form a government. If this were to happen, the president of Myanmar would be USDP’s chairman U Than Htay, former minister of rail transport and minister of energy under U Thein Sein. In the same interview, he stated that the USDP top leaders would not handpick local candidates, and that it would not favour retired officers anymore. According to him, candidates will be selected locally by USDP committees.

The pro-establishment parties are at advantage in the elections: thanks to the 25 % of military appointees in the Parliament, the USDP just needs to secure 25 % of the total seats in the Parliament (i.e. 33 % of the elected seats) to have a chance to win the presidency.

The Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) was formed in 2010 by the military to contest the first elections since 1990. It is considered as a military proxy, led by former Tatmadaw officers. Its political agenda is conservative and nationalist. It has well-established ties with the Buddhist extremist organizations.

Until August 2015, it was chaired by Thura U Shwe Mann, before his ousting in the run-up to the November 2015 elections. Since then, it has been chaired by U Than Htay (picture below). In the November 2015 poll, it suffered a humiliating defeat, with only 10 % of the elected seats nationwide, including in its strongholds. Since then, it has struggled to renew itself, offer legitimacy and constructive opposition to the NLD.



Photo credit: Myanmar Times

TRANSPORTATION

Main Incidents

Based on the main media, notable road accidents since the last report include:

| N° | Date and time | Location | Incident | Casualties |
|----|----------------------|--|---|---|
| 1 | 2 July, 07:00 Hrs | Magway Region, Magway Township | Car accident | No injuries and casualties |
| 2 | 2 July, 14:50 Hrs | Yangon – Mandalay Highway, between mileposts 114/0 and 114/1 | A car hit the guard rail | 2 people got injured |
| 3 | 2 July, 15:25 Hrs | Chin State, Hakha Township | A truck fell down a 500 ft ravine due to brake system failure | One person died on the spot |
| 4 | 2 July, 16:00 Hrs | Yangon – Mandalay Highway | Car accident | 2 people got injured |
| 5 | 2 July, 20:20 Hrs | Yangon Region, Hlegu Township, Yangon – Bago Highway | Car crash | The driver died on the spot |
| 6 | 2 July, 23:10 Hrs | Yangon Region, Insein Township | Car accident | 3 people got injured |
| 7 | 3 July, 12:30 Hrs | Bago Region, Pyay – Toungup Highway, between mileposts 35/0 and 35/1 | A speeding truck overturned | One person died on the spot and 2 got injured. |
| 8 | 3 July | Bago Region, Thegon Township | A truck overturned | One person died |
| 9 | 4 July, 05:45 Hrs | Naypyitaw, Zayarthiri Township | A truck crashed another one due to brake system failure | One person got minor injured |
| 10 | 4 July, 09:15 Hrs | Magway Region, Minbu Township | A truck hit a pedestrian | The person got seriously injured |
| 11 | 4 July, 11:45 Hrs | Yangon – Mandalay Highway, between mileposts 15/6 and 15/7 | Car accident | One person got injured |
| 12 | 5 July, 13:30 Hrs | Old Yangon – Mandalay Highway, between mileposts 294/3 and 294/4 | A speeding truck overturned due to brake system failure | 2 people got injured |
| 13 | 5 July, 16:15 Hrs | Yangon – Naypyitaw Highway, between mileposts 84/1 and 84/2 | A speeding car crashed the guard rail | No injuries and casualties |
| 14 | 7 July, 16:00 Hrs | Kaya State, Demoso Township | Car Crash | 5 people got injured |
| 15 | 7 July, 12:00 Hrs | Yangon – Mandalay Highway | Car accident | 1 person died on the spot and 23 people got injured |

Comments and recommendations

Road accidents are a major risk in Myanmar, and one has to be extremely careful. The Yangon – Mandalay Highway is especially dangerous. In 2019, there was a total of 524 accidents on that road, killing 108 people and injuring 1,019 others. During the first half of 2020, 183 accidents occurred, killing 35 people and injuring 2020 others. Among other risks, Yangon – Mandalay highway is made of cement, which is known to wear out tyres much faster than macadam. If you often drive on that road, monitor closely the wear and tear of your tyres.

As a rule, avoid speeding, even on good roads. Keep your distances, keep clear from motorbikes and be careful of light vehicles or cattle on the road. Do not assume other drivers have a good command of their vehicles, the right reflexes and know the traffic rules. Make sure to use properly-trained drivers and well-maintained vehicles. Always fasten your seat belt.

At night, keep in mind that many vehicles, especially motorbikes, drive without any light; drive slowly and be extremely cautious. Accidents are even more frequent during rainy season. Assess road and climate conditions before starting your trip.

CRIME

Main Incidents

Based on the main Myanmar media, notable crimes since the last report include:

- 1) 1 July - Ayeyarwady Region: A woman was stabbed to death by another woman after a quarrel in Ingapu Township. The offender was arrested.
- 2) 2 July – Kachin State: 5 family members in a Mansi Township village were murdered. 2 suspects were arrested.
- 3) 2 July – Shan State (East): A 25 years old man riding motorbike was shot to death by 2 other men in Muse Town. The offenders are still on the run.
- 4) 2 and 3 July – Rakhine State: a court in Maungdaw sentenced eleven Rohingya to six months in prison under the immigration act for crossing border illegal between Myanmar and Bangladesh.
- 5) 3 July – Ayeyarwady Region: A former Township officer at at Department of Land Management and Statistics was charged for corruption. He was accused of taking more than 1,800,000 MMK as bribe from farmers.
- 6) 4 July – Magway Region: 2 unknown men riding motorbike robbed a gold necklace from the owner of a grocery shop at Kyaukhtu Town. The shop owner got injured.

- 7) 5 July – Rakhine State: A house in Ponnagyun Town was robbed by 2 unknown men and the jewelry was taken. The offenders are still missing.

Early July also saw the media and the public opinion discuss strongly a case which emerged in late June: Police Brigadier-General Zaw Moe Than was accused of sexual exploitation of female subordinates in exchange of promotions. At least 18 women are reportedly concerned. Brigadier-General Zaw Moe Than was jailed at the beginning of the month.

TRAFFICKING

Main incidents

- 1) 1 July, Northern Shan State: police in Muse Township intercepted a car transporting 120,000 amphetamine tablets, and 1 kilo of heroin, for a total value of 185 million MMK, i.e. 132,000 USD. The 25-year old driver was arrested.
- 2) 3 July, Eastern Shan State: police in Tachileik Township stopped 2 motorbikes transporting 20,000 amphetamine tablets, for a total value of 30 million MMK, i.e. 22,000 USD. The two young riders were arrested.
- 3) July, Southern Shan State: the police in Mongton township seized 20,000 amphetamine tablets from a motorcyclist, for a value of 40 million MMK (29,000 USD). After interrogation, the police could arrest another trafficker in possession of 8,000 amphetamine tabs, for a value of 60 million MMK (43,000 USD).
- 4) 4 July, Southern Shan State: police in Panglong town (Panglong Township) seized 599,400 amphetamine tablets and 5 kg of methamphetamine inside in a car, for a total value of 1.62 billion MMK, i.e. 1.16 million USD.
- 5) 4 July, Eastern Shan State: police in Tachileik Township seized 219,800 amphetamine tablets and guns in Ye Pu San village. The value of the seizure was estimated at 329 million MMK (235,000 USD). A record-breaking seizure had already been performed in that same village on 29 June.
- 6) 4 July, Northern Shan State: Kyaukme Township police found 3,300 amphetamine tablets, with a value of 6.6 million MMK (4,800 USD). One trafficker was arrested.
- 7) 5 July, Southern Shan State: Taunggyi Township found 2,100 amphetamine tablets in the bag of a 32-year-old man. The value of the seizure was 2.1 million MMK, i.e. 1,500 USD.

- 8) 5 July, Southern Shan State: a man was arrested when police found 9,105 amphetamine tablets in his house. The illegal drugs have a value of 9.1 million MMK (6,600 USD).
- 9) 5 July, Eastern Shan State: a major and a sergeant from Myanmar Army were arrested by the police in Tachileik when the police found over 219,800 amphetamine tablets in their car. Those two officers came from their military base in Mong Yawng Township. The illegal drugs had a value of 320 million MMK (USD \$ 230,000).
- 10) 6 July, Ayeyarwady Region: a security officer from a Myaungmya prison was arrested when 244 amphetamine tablets were found in his shoes. The illegal drugs had a value of 732,000 MMK (530 USD).
- 6 July, Southern Shan State: Taunggyi Township police arrested a motorcyclist in possession of 1.95 kg of heroin, with a value of 3.9 million MMK (2,850 USD).

Comments and recommendations

Do not indulge in any drug-related activities in Myanmar, even for recreational and private purpose. It is against the law and can yield every heavy sentences. Northern, Eastern Shan State, as well as Rakhine State are major drug hubs; this can result in violent disputes between traffickers or violent arrests. Extra precaution should be taken when visiting those areas.

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS**Earthquakes**

Myanmar is located on the active Sagaing seismic fault line and is therefore vulnerable to earthquakes. Since our previous report on 2 July 2020, no earthquake has been reported.

Comments and recommendations

Be aware that Myanmar is a seismic country and prepare yourself accordingly. Try to settle down your accommodation or your office in recent, well-built buildings. Adapt the common earthquakes reaction tips to your environment. Keep a survival kit at home and in your office, within reach. Spread those instructions to your family and in your work environment.

Natural disaster

On 2 July, a massive landslide in the jade mining area of Phakant (Kachin State) killed at least 170 people and injured more than 50. The disaster happened when a hillslope collapsed into a large extraction pit full of water, causing a massive wave which swept through a narrow valley. The incident took place after days of heavy monsoon in the region.

Phakant, the global hub of jade mining, is a very dangerous area: beside regular clashes between the KIA and armed forces, high crime rates and drug trafficking, regular landslides sweep some of the scavengers looking for jade in the mine waste dumped by industrial companies. The poor regulation of the local mining sector is often pointed out.

In the wake of that disaster, the Tatmadaw took action against the Kachin State's security and border affairs minister and an officer commanding a Phakant-based military unit.

Fire breakouts

Current Situation

Based on the main Myanmar, the most significant fire since the last report are the following:

| N° | Date and time | Location | Event | Casualties and damages |
|----|---------------------------|---|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1 | 1 July 2020, 11:05 Hrs | Ayeyarwady Region, Ingapu Township | House fire | No injuries |
| 2 | 1 July 2020, 12:00 Hrs | Yangon Region, Shwepyithar Township | House fire | No injuries |
| 3 | 2 July 2020, 01:58 Hrs | Mandalay Region, Myingyan Town | Machine fire | No injuries |
| 4 | 3 July 2020, 09:55 Hrs | Yangon Region, Dagon Myothit (East) Township | YBS bus fire due to wire shock | No injuries |
| 5 | 3 July 2020, 18:05 Hrs | Sagaing Region, Chaung – U Township | House fire | No injuries |
| 6 | 3 July 2020, 13:40 Hrs | Shan State (South) Kalaw Township, Aungban Town | House fire | No injuries |
| 7 | 4 July 2020, 04:32 Hrs | Mandalay Region, Ngazun Township | House fire | No injuries |
| 8 | 4 July 2020, 10:00 Hrs | Sagaing Region, Sagaing Town | Garment factory fire | No injuries |
| 9 | 4 July 2020, 18:48 Hrs | Yangon Region, Thanlyin Township | House fire | No injuries |
| 10 | 4 July 2020, 20:56 Hrs | Yangon Region, Sanchaung Township | House fire | No injuries |
| 11 | 5 July 2020, | Yangon Region, Botahtaung | House fire | No injuries |

| | | | | |
|----|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------|-------------|
| | 09:45 Hrs | Township | | |
| 12 | 5 July 2020, 20:05 Hrs | Mandalay Region, Madaya Township | Car fire | No injuries |
| 13 | 5 July 2020, 23:15 Hrs | Naypyitaw, Pyinmana Township | House fire | No injuries |

Comments and recommendations

Myanmar legal system may hold you responsible for accidental fire and yield heavy sentences. It is therefore necessary to take precautions. Make sure your office or your accommodation comply to satisfactory electric norms and are fitted with a fire alarm; make sure they have a proper and clear evacuation route; equip yourself with fire-extinguishing devices; be extremely careful when dealing with candles.

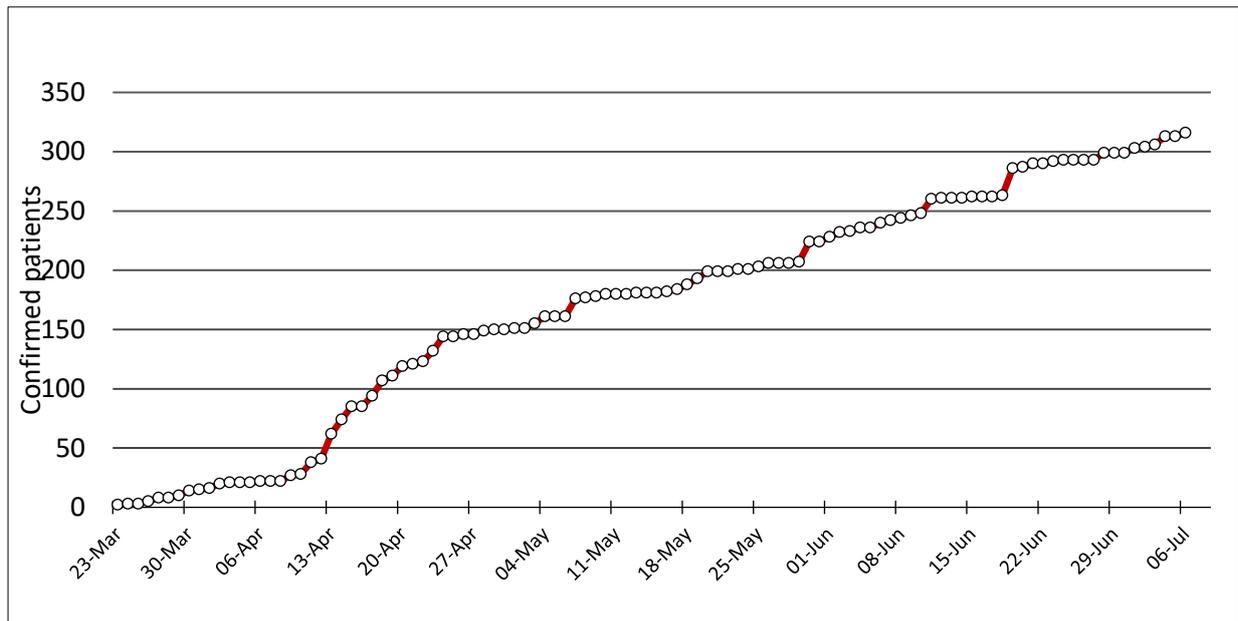
Health Hazards

The sanitary situation in Myanmar is still dominated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

When EXERA released its latest Weekly Security Review (WSR), the figure for 2 July at 10:09 hrs was 299 confirmed cases since the beginning of the epidemic, i.e. 7 more than the previous week.

As of 8 July at 08:00 hrs, 316 confirmed cases have been reported since the beginning of the epidemic, i.e. 17 new cases in the last week. All those cases were imported: 5 from UAE, 3 from Bangladesh, 3 from India, 2 from UK, 2 from Thailand, 1 from Laos and 1 from Singapore. They were repatriated by government-arranged relief flights, put in quarantine on arrival on Myanmar, and tested while in quarantine. In other words, in those specific cases, contamination chains were somehow under control

MoHS statistics indicate that the number of positive patients went through a sustained growth in the first 3 weeks of April, before reaching a plateau. Since mid-



May, the increase of new figures has been chiefly driven by imported cases: from 16 May to 8 July at 08:00 hrs, 135 new cases were confirmed, out of which 130 imported cases: 53 Myanmar nationals back from India, 25 from Thailand, 17 from Malaysia, 13 from UAE, 12 from Bangladesh, 3 from Qatar, 2 from UK, 2 from Italy, 1 from Laos, 1 from Singapore and 1 from China. The high amount of people tested positive while in quarantine suggests that quarantine facilities themselves may be active clusters. This raises the question as to whether quarantine facilities can efficiently contain the epidemic. On 3 July, one migrant worker committed suicide in a Patheingyi quarantine facility; this second suicide in a few weeks in that centre fanned the debate about the living conditions in such facilities.

Figure 2: Total Covid-19 cases in Myanmar since the beginning of Covid-19 pandemic. Source: MoHS

More than 180,000 Myanmar nationals have been repatriated from abroad since the beginning of the crisis, out of whom 70,000 from Thailand. Repatriation was also operated by flight: as of 7 July, Myanmar had repatriated a total of 6,934 people by special relief flights.

As of 8 July 2020, at 08:00 hrs, MoHS has tested a total of 87,148 people since the beginning of the epidemic. Since the publication of the latest WSR, 10,455 people have been tested, i.e. an average of 1493 per day. At the beginning of the epidemic, Myanmar was notorious for its very low number of tests, as it did not have any suitable testing lab; since then, it has increased its capacities, with 5 labs and more systematic testing.

We suggest being careful of the distinction between:

- the total number of patients since the beginning of the pandemic, which combines active cases, deaths and discharged patients. It is the commonly-used and oft-quoted metric. As of 8 July, at 08:00 hrs, a total of 316 people have been contaminated in the country, out of whom 225 in Yangon Region (i.e. 71 %)

- the current number of active patients, which is the immediate risk indicator. As of 8 July, at 08:00 hrs, there were 65 active patients in the country, out of whom 46 in Yangon Region (i.e. 71 %).

In Yangon, the main clusters are:

| Township | Number of cases since the beginning of the epidemic | Number of cases for 10,000 inhabitants |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| Insein | 49 | 1.44 |
| Botahtaung | 22 | 5.37 |
| Hlaing | 21 | 1.31 |
| Mayangone | 18 | 0.91 |
| Dagon Myothit (South) | 15 | 0.40 |
| South Okkalapa | 13 | 3.2 |
| Dagon Myothit (North) | 12 | 0.26 |
| Tamwe | 10 | 0.61 |

As a comparison, EU countries had an average of 3.6 positive cases for 10,000 inhabitants as of 25 March, at the peak of the epidemic. It must be noted that the high number of patients in Botahtaung, Hlaing, Dagon Myothit North and South Townships is mainly ascribable to returnees flown back to Myanmar from abroad and tested positive while in quarantine. In other words, they did not live in their home townships when they got infected.

Outside of Yangon Region, the most affected States/Regions of Myanmar since the beginning of the epidemic are:

1. Kayin State, with 26 cases, mostly due to returnees from Thailand
2. Rakhine State with 12 cases
3. Chin State with 10 cases
4. Sagaing Region with 9 cases
5. Bago (West) Region with 9 cases

On 1 July, European countries agreed to defer the repayment of 98 million USD worth of debts by the Myanmar government, and urged other countries to follow this initiative. Myanmar has a debt of 10 billion USD, of which 4 billion is owed to China. Early July, in an interview with The Irrawaddy newspaper, Dr. Stephan Paul Jost, the

resident representative of the UNWHO stated that “Myanmar [government] has done extraordinarily well so far”. He praised the early response of the government, the “whole-of-government”, cross-cutting approach, and the strong involvement of leading political figures.

The set of preventive decisions that had been made by the authorities in March and April has been extended several times (15 May, 28 May and 12 June) with gradual relaxing throughout time. On 27 June evening, the set of government-sanctioned preventive measures against Covid-19 in force until 30 June was extended until 15 July.

On 2 July, Pastor Saw David Lah was charged under the Natural Disaster Management Law for holding a series of religious gatherings in March and April, which created contamination clusters responsible for 80 positive cases and 2 deaths, especially in Insein and Bahan Townships. He faces up to 3 years in jail.

The current situation is the following:

- 1) The prohibition of gatherings of more than 5 people has been relaxed since late May. Gatherings are allowed in the following contexts:
 - governmental departments, organizations, companies, factories and workshops
 - in public, private and monastic schools
 - meetings, discussions and classes at governmental departments, organizations, companies, factories and workshops in accordance to the health ministry guidelines
 - food shops which have been allowed to re-open as they follow the ministry’s guidelines
 - essential sectors described in the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population’s May 3 -notice.

Mass gatherings such as marriages, festivals, demonstrations, rallies and conferences remain tightly restricted.

- 1) International commercial flights, as well as the issuance of any kind of visa remain suspended until 31 July at 23:59 hrs Myanmar time. Relief and special flights are not concerned. The flows of international flights to/from Yangon International Airport has dropped by 85 % since the beginning of the epidemic, and the flows of passengers by 96 %.
- 2) A curfew remains enforced from midnight to 04.00 Hrs.
- 3) Wearing facial mask in public spaces remains compulsory.
- 4) On 30 June, Ayeyarwaddy Region government announced the local beaches would remain closed until 15 July.

- 5) On 30 June, the Thai authorities announced it would open its 37 border posts with neighboring countries on 1 July. Myanmar shares 8 passage points with Thailand. However, tourists are still barred from crossing the borders.
- 6) Since 1 July, and the lifting of the semi-lockdown orders in Insein Township, no more township is under restrictive orders in Myanmar.
- 7) On 6 July, the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism announced that 60 % of the hotels had reopened nationwide.

Comments and recommendations

Although the epidemic seems to be receding in Myanmar, precaution level should remain high. Indeed, other countries, especially in Latin America and Africa, are yet to reach the contamination peak, while the epidemic bounces back in some Asian and European countries. On 30 June, a doctor who had been tested positive on Tachileik (Shan State) in April and declared cured in May was tested positive again to Covid-19. This raises the question of Covid-19 immunity and its duration.

We advise you to carefully follow the official instruction and orders:

- wear facial mask in public spaces: it is a compulsory requirement on streets and on buses. According to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, 3,100 people were fined in May for failing to wear facial mask nationwide.
- Abide by the curfew rules, from midnight to 4 am. In the sole Kayin State, 861 people were arrested from 18 April to 16 June for breaching the curfew rules. More than 180 of them were sentenced to one month in jail. Violation of Section 188, which prohibits deliberate disobedience to an order “duly promulgated” by a public servant, is punishable by one month in prison, a fine or both.

According to the spokesperson of the President Office U Zaw Htay, 8,470 people have been sued from late March to late June for breaching the Covid-19 protection rules.

More generally, we invite you to follow the usual precautionary measures:

- Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and water, or with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Practice social distancing: maintain at least 2-meter (6 feet) distance with any other people.
- Avoid crowded places and public gatherings.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.

- Practice respiratory hygiene: wear face mask as much as possible. Cover your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Dispose of the used tissue immediately. Make sure the people around you also follow those good practices.
- Stay home as much as possible. Whether you live in a semi-lockdown area or not, limit your movements to the most necessary tasks.
- If you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing, do not rush to medical facilities, as it may contribute to the propagation of the epidemic. Inform the medical authorities beforehand.
- Stay informed about the latest developments and follow advice given by your healthcare provider, your local and national public health authorities or your employer.

Those precautions should be followed even more closely by people living in cluster areas where Covid-19 is especially active, who visited such regions in the last two weeks, or who have been in contact with a confirmed case.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

AA: Arakan Army

ALP: Arakan Liberation Party

ANP: Arakan National Party

ARSA: Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army

DHRP: Democracy and Human Rights Party

ICOE: Independent Commission of Enquiry

IED: Improvised Explosive Device

ICJ: International Court of Justics

IDP: Internally Displaced Person

EAO: Ethnic Armed Organization

JMC: Joint Monitoring Committee

KDA: Kachin Defense Army

KIA: Kachin Independence Army

KNDP: Karen National Democratic Party

KNLA: Karen National Liberation Army

KNPP: Karenni National Progressive Party

KNU: Karen National Union

MMT: Myanmar Time

MNDAA: Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army

MoHS: Ministry of Health and Sports

NCA: National Ceasefire Agreement

NLD: National League for Democracy

NMSP: New Mon State Party

NSCN-K: National Socialist Council of Nagaland- Khaplang

RCSS: Restoration Council of Shan State

SNA: Shanni Nationalities Army

SSA-N: Shan State Army - North

SSA-S: Shan State Army – South

SSPP: Shan State Progressive Party

TNLA: Ta'ang National Liberation Army

UNWFP: United Nations World Food Programme

UNWHO: United Nations World Health Organization

USDP: Union Solidarity and Development Party

UWSA: United Wa State Army

WSR: Weekly Security Review

ZCD: Zomi Congress for Democracy

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