

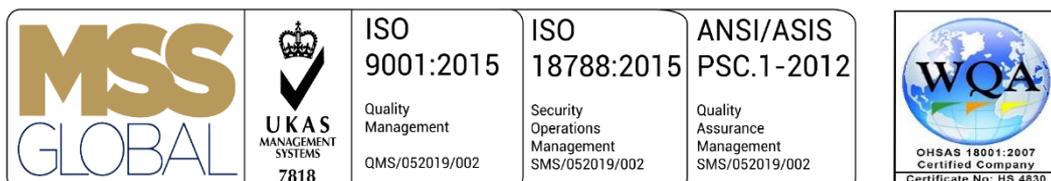
The information in this report is correct as of
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EXERA

Weekly Security Review

Safety and Security Highlights for Clients Operating in Myanmar

Dates covered: 21 May – 27 May 2020



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Covid-19 pandemic

When EXERA released its latest Weekly Security Review (WSR) on 22 May 2020 at 08:00 hrs, Myanmar had a total of 199 Covid-19 patients since the beginning of the pandemic.

As of 28 May 2020, at 07:00 Hrs, 206 people have been contaminated since the beginning of the pandemic, i.e. 7 new cases in 6 days. 126 patients are also considered as cured from the Covid-19.

Internal Conflicts

As in previous weeks, most clashes took place in Southern Chin State (Paletwa Township) and Rakhine State (Mrauk U Township). Although data are sparse and contradictory, *Tatmadaw*, Arakan Army and civilians sustain continued fatalities and injuries.

Drugs

This week yielded an another round of massive seizures of stimulants, ICE, drug related production accessories, raw chemicals and materials. This is a potent reminder that drug production has boomed, becoming a major economic sector in Shan, Rakhine and Kachin States.

INTERNAL CONFLICT

Since our previous report (22 May 08:09 MMT), Northern and Central Rakhine State as well as Myanmar- Bangladesh Border areas have been the scene of severe clashes between the Myanmar Army and the Arakan Army (cf. fig. 1).

The main combat area was Paletwa region:

1. On 23 May, *Tatmadaw* and AA clashed near Yoke Wa village, north of Paletwa Town. Dead bodies of AA fighters, arms and ammunitions were reportedly seized.
2. On the same day, one woman from Yeik Khar ward, in Paletwa Town, was injured by a landmine explosion while farming near her home.
3. 24 May, clashes between *Tatmadaw* and AA troops happened at the foot of the hills, 8 kilometers east of Paletwa Town. *Tatmadaw* seized some guns and ammunitions.
4. On 24 and 25 May, *Tatmadaw* conducted attacks on AA positions west of Laung Kadu village, using air support and long-range artillery fire. *Tatmadaw* occupied that AA position and several dead bodies, arms and ammunitions were reportedly seized. Both sides reportedly sustained casualties.
5. On 26 May, clashes occurred near Mee Let Wa, a village north of Paletwa Town which had been abandoned since February. During this clash, some houses in the village were set ablaze. AA and *Tatmadaw* are accusing each other for those destructions.
6. Since 19 May, *Tatmadaw* has conducted attacks on AA positions at point 602 and point 565, in the mountain ranges south of Paletwa town. *Tatmadaw* has used air support during those attacks. Clashes are still happening in that area at the reporting time.

The other main fighting zone was located between Mrauk U and Kyauktaw, in a zone where heavy fight has taken place for several weeks already. In that same area, Lekkar village was set ablaze on 15 May. This week, 2 clashes occurred:

7. On 24 May, AA conducted landmine attacks against a military convoy and clashes occurred east of Wai Thar Li village, Mrauk-U township area. The *Tatmadaw* lost some soldiers and vehicles were damaged.
8. 26 May, a group of AA fighters was spotted by *Tatmadaw* air surveillance between Ma Di Taung village and Sar Paung village, on the Mrauk U – Kyauktaw roads. *Tatmadaw* columns were then dispatched to the area, resulting in clashes and *Tatmadaw* troops conducted area clearance around that area.

More isolated incidents also took place:

9. The most striking was perhaps the stabbing to death of the administrator of Nar Zi Ward (Sittwe Town). The murder happened on 25 May, in broad daylight and in public. He was attacked by two men on a motorbike in Maw Leik Ward, in the downtown of Sittwe. AA is believed to have organized this murder.

10. On 22 May, a landmine blew off on Maungdaw – Taung Pyo road south of Taung Pyo Let Yar, in Maungdaw Township. It appears the ordnance was planted by AA to cut the road instead of inflicting damages to the *Tatmadaw*.
11. On 24 May, clashes between *Tatmadaw* and AA troops broke out near BP 65, Myanmar – Bangladesh Border post. *Tatmadaw* resorted to air support.
12. On 24 May, 2 residents from Kan Thit village (Ponnagyun Township) got injured by a landmine, 2 mile west of their village.

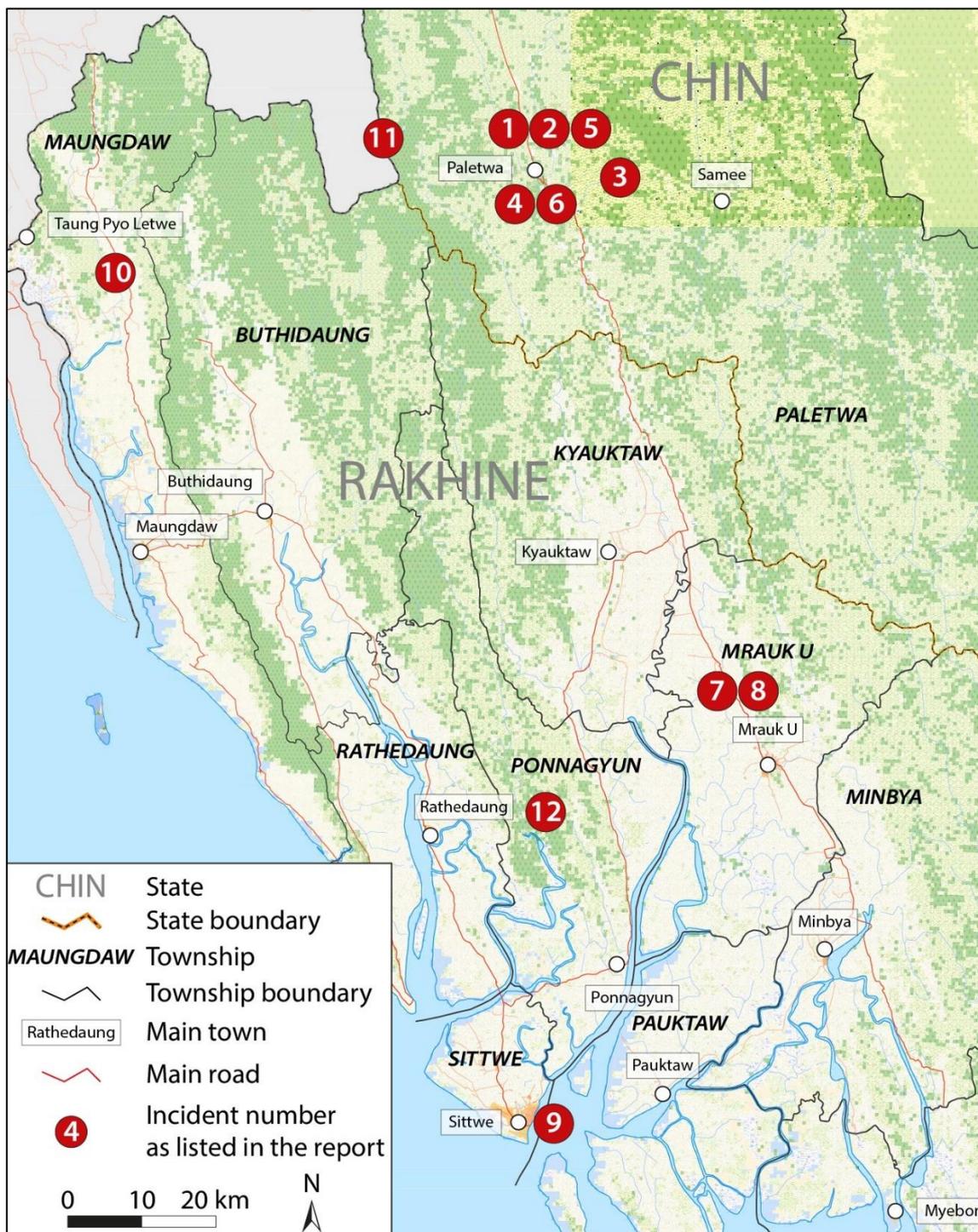


Figure 1: Clashes in Rakhine State between 21 May and 27 May 2020

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In the last week, videos have circulated of alleged AA fighters attacking military facilities in Rakhine State, wearing plainclothes. This may come to support the *Tatmadaw's* claim that AA blends in the local population, and therefore implicitly justifies the mass arrests of civilians that have taken place recently. In 2019, more than 500 civilians were arrested by the Myanmar Authorities for alleged links with AA. The armed organization itself is accused of abductions and torture, notably in Paletwa region.

On 23 May, Myanmar handed out its first report to the International Court of Justice (ICJ). It explains the actions taken by the Myanmar Government to investigate about the violence that took place in Rakhine State in 2016-2017 with accountability and to defuse the communal tension in the region. In that context, it was learnt that the Bengali/Rohingya camp of Kyauktalone, in the outskirts of Kyaukphyu, would be relocated to a better site. The camp was set up in the wake of the 2012 inter-communal riots. It currently hosts 1,000 people.

In Sagaing Region, one incident occurred within this reporting period: on 23 May, one villager was killed and another one injured by Shanni Nationalities Army (SNA) soldiers in Homalin township. The two men were riding a motorbike. The incident took place at a checkpoint manned by 5 SNA soldiers.

In Northern Shan State, tension has run high in Muse area in the last weeks, as drugs and weapons seizures happen almost every day, with regular bomb attacks. It is uncertain to what extent those seizures are linked to EAOs, or to drugs syndicates:

1. On 20 May, security forces seized found one pistol, one sub-machine gun, ammunitions and three hand grenades from a house in Kaung Hmu Ton ward. The owner of that house was not captured.
2. On 20 May, the authorities searched a vehicle in Ho Mun ward, and found a pistol, 0.22 mm long barrel gun and some ammunitions.
3. On 22 May, security forces searched a suspicious house at 105 miles, at the exist of Muse Town and seized 3 M-22 guns, 69 bullets and one bomb.
4. On 23 May, Security forces discovered 2 assault rifles, a pistol and ammunitions near Nawng Mon village.
5. On 24 May, acting on a tip-off, a joint security team searched a house in Nawng Mun village and arrested one man with 3 pistols and ammunitions.
6. On 25 May, 95,400 components of detonators were seized in a car at Man Weing gate
7. On 26 May, two explosions occurred in Swan Haw ward. These explosions occurred at an empty ground near the Muse Township Union Election Commission Office. No one was injured.

Elsewhere in Northern Shan State, sound of small firearms was heard on 26 May northwest of Namhsan Town, in Palaung Self-Administrative Zone. No further detail was received.

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On a different note, the Covid-19 response has allowed the Myanmar government and some major EAOs to draw closer. Distinct meetings between Myanmar officials, the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and the United Wa State Army (UWSA) have been held in the last few days. However, KIA officials lament that engagement appears limited to supply donations, but that little planning or cooperation was discussed.

Assessment for clash areas

This week, clashes in Rakhine lowlands somehow receded, focusing on Mrauk U and Paletwa Townships. However, some concerning trends also appear. First, it seems that village arson is getting more and more frequent. Some analysts consider that the *Tatmadaw* is responsible for this scorched earth campaign to deprive AA from popular and logistic support. Second, there seems to be a growing confusion between civilian population and AA troops; in that context, violence towards civilian population may become systemic, therefore fostering the distrust from Rakhine people towards the Myanmar Army. Third, landmine contamination is now a major problem, as those ordnances will remain dangerous for years. Lastly, the IED explosion north of Maungdaw Township may indicate that AA is infiltrating deeper west, widening the frontline. As a consequence, the threats and risks assessment can be identified as Very High Level for Rakhine and Southern Chin areas.

Meanwhile, more and more incidents are currently reported in Muse area, although it remains hard to say whether they are linked to EAOs or to drug dealers. Tension is increasing, and some bombs attacks have already been carried out. Therefore, the risk level is high.

Comments and recommendations

Travel by road should be avoided in Northern and Central Rakhine State as well as in Southern Chin State. Even major towns' outskirts have become high-risk areas. Awareness and vigilance should be priority before planning or performing any activities in these regions. Considering the incidents in Muse area, we also advise our clients to avoid the region for the moment. EXERA remains at your disposition to offer tailor-made security diagnostics and secure travel plans throughout Myanmar.

SOCIAL STABILITY

Although no demonstration nor rally can be held in Myanmar at the moment because of the Covid-19 pandemic, its impact on the economy is also a factor of risk. Indeed, the activities slowdown has fragilized whole swathes of the population. Although the situation is currently getting back on track, and although many factories reopen, low level opportunistic crim is set to remain high in the near future.

TRANSPORTATION

Main Incidents

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

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1. 21 May – Mon State: A vehicle hit a motorbike at milepost 136/1-2 on Yangon - Mawlamyine Highway, Thaton Tsp and 4 people got injured.
2. 22 May – Kayin State – A truck overturned on Myawaddy – Kawkaeik Highway due to brake system failure and 2 people died on spot.
3. 23 May – Magway Region: A speeding vehicle hit a tree and overturned near milepost 249/0, Sinabaungwe Township on Magway – Aunglan Highway and 8 people, including the driver got injured.
4. 23 May – Bago Region: collision between a cargo truck and a fuel truck near milepost 113, on the old Yangon – Mandalay Highway, killed one person.
5. 26 May – Yangon Region: A reversing vehicle hit and killed a pedestrian in Thingangyun Township. That person got injured and died on spot.
6. 26 May – Yangon Region: a truck collided with a ferry bus in Taik Kyi Township. 2 people died on the spot and 10 people got seriously injured.
7. 26 May – Shan State (East): a truck carrying construction workers fell down a 60-meter gorge on Mong Hsat – Tachileik Road; 9 people died on the spot and 10 people got seriously injured.
8. 26 May – Rakhine State: A 3-wheeler motorcycle overturned in Maungdaw Township, killing one person.

Comments and recommendations

Road accidents are a major risk in Myanmar. The Yangon – Mandalay Highway is especially dangerous; keep your distances, keep clear distance from Motorbikes and be careful of light vehicles or cattle on the road. Make sure to use properly-trained drivers and well-maintained vehicles. Always fasten your seat belt. Avoid speeding, even on good roads. Accidents are even more frequent during rainy season. Assess road and climate conditions before starting your trip. At night, keep in mind that many vehicles, especially motorbikes, drive without any light; drive slowly and be extremely cautious

CRIME

Main incidents

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

1. 21 May – Shan State (South): security forces raided an illegal logging camp, 15 kilometers north of Kyeing Khan village, in Lawksawk township. A small firearm was seized.
2. 22 May – Yangon Region: a man was stabbed after a quarrel at Hlaingtharyar Township and sustained injuries; the offender was arrested.
3. 24 May – Yangon Region: a car driving from Hlegu to Htauk Kyeint was searched by the security forces. They found one long barrel 0.22 rifle with silencer and ammunitions hidden in the vehicle's trunk.
4. 24 May – Karen State: a soldier from BGF Karen Force shot warning shots to stop a man knife-wielding attacking passers-by. One person was killed and 4 people injured, reportedly by those shots.

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5. 26 May – Yangon Region: A pregnant girl was murdered by her boyfriend after a quarrel in Mingalartaungnyunt Township. That criminal was arrested.

EXERA also reminds its clients that on 17 April 2020, a mass presidential amnesty resulted in 25,000 inmates freed from jail throughout the country. This may significantly increase crime rate.

Comments and recommendations

As a rule, take the usual precautions: do not carry large amounts of cash; be cautious when you withdraw money at the bank or when you step out of a money changer; avoid ostentatious displays of wealth in a public area; avoid routine times and routine routes in the matter of going-out from your apartment or house. We encourage you to use taxi booked through Grab app rather than taxi hailed from the street, especially at night; in suburbs; if you're alone; if you're a woman; if you are alcohol-intoxicated or drowsy, etc. Be extremely careful when travelling, especially in industrial zones and poor neighbourhoods: keep your doors locked, make sure you are not followed, attract attention or take shelter if you have any doubt.

This reporting period was also punctuated by drug seizures throughout the country. The huge volumes reported are a reminder that Myanmar is a major hub for drug production and trafficking.

1. 21 May – Shan State (North): security forces searched a suspicious warehouse near Pan Khan village, in Muse Township. They seized more than 20,000 liters and 4 tons of chemical precursors, as well as 10,900 kg of heroin and 1,250 kg of opium.
2. 21 May – Shan State (North): police searched an empty compound near Naung Yan village, Muse Township and seized more than 1500 kg of precursors, 400 kg of heroin and 5 vehicles.
3. 24 May – Shan State (South): police intercepted a vehicle on Loilem – Taunggyi Road and seized 1615 kg of ICE, worth 40 billion (MMK). People who involved in that case are arrested and charged under Anti-Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law.
4. 24 May – Kachin State: police seized massive quantities of stimulant tablets, worth 760 million MMK and one gun in Hpakant Township.

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 very heavy sentences. Northern, Eastern Shan State, as well as Rakhine State are major drugs 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 22 May 2020, 8 earthquakes have been measured, but no fatality and injury has been reported:

1. 21 May: a slight earthquake with a magnitude of 3.3 was recorded in Sagaing Region.
2. 22 May: three earthquakes were recorded: two in Sagaing Region (magnitude 3.8 and 3.7), one in Magway Region (magnitude 3.7).
3. 23 May: two earthquakes were recorded: one in Sagaing Region (magnitude 3.6) one in Magway Region (magnitude 3.8).
4. 24 May: two earthquakes were recorded: one in Eastern Shan State (magnitude 3.5) and one in Sagaing Region (magnitude 3.6).

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.

Fire Breakouts

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

1. 23 May 2020 – Mon State: 4 houses were burned down in Mawlamyine. The fire broke out because of a fan overheat. No one got injured.
2. 27 May 2020 – Yangon Region: fire broke out at PMG alcohol manufacturing factory, Shwepyithar Township. No one got injured.
3. 27 May 2020 – Ayeyarwady Region: 6 houses were burned down in Laputta Township. No one got injured.

Comments and recommendations

Fire is a severe risk in Myanmar. 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 or mosquito coils.

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 22 May at 08:00 hrs was 199 confirmed cases since the beginning of the epidemic, i.e. 18 more than the previous week.

As of 28 May, at 07:00 Hrs, 206 confirmed cases have been reported since the beginning of the epidemic, i.e. 7 new cases in the last week. However, all of them are imported cases: 4 migrant workers from India and 2 from Malaysia and 1 from Italy. All of them had been repatriated to Myanmar recently and were staying in quarantine facilities. This may mean that those cases are under control.

Based on MoHS statistics, the number of positive patients went through a sustained growth in the first 3 weeks of April, before reaching a plateau. On 7 May, a spike could be noted, but more linked to preventive measures than an acceleration of the epidemic (cf. 20 May WSR). Since mid-May, the increase of new figures has been chiefly driven by imported cases: from 16 May to 28 May at 07:00 hrs, 25 new cases were confirmed, out of which 24 imported cases, 11 migrant workers from Malaysia, 8 from UAE, 4 from India and 1 from Italy.

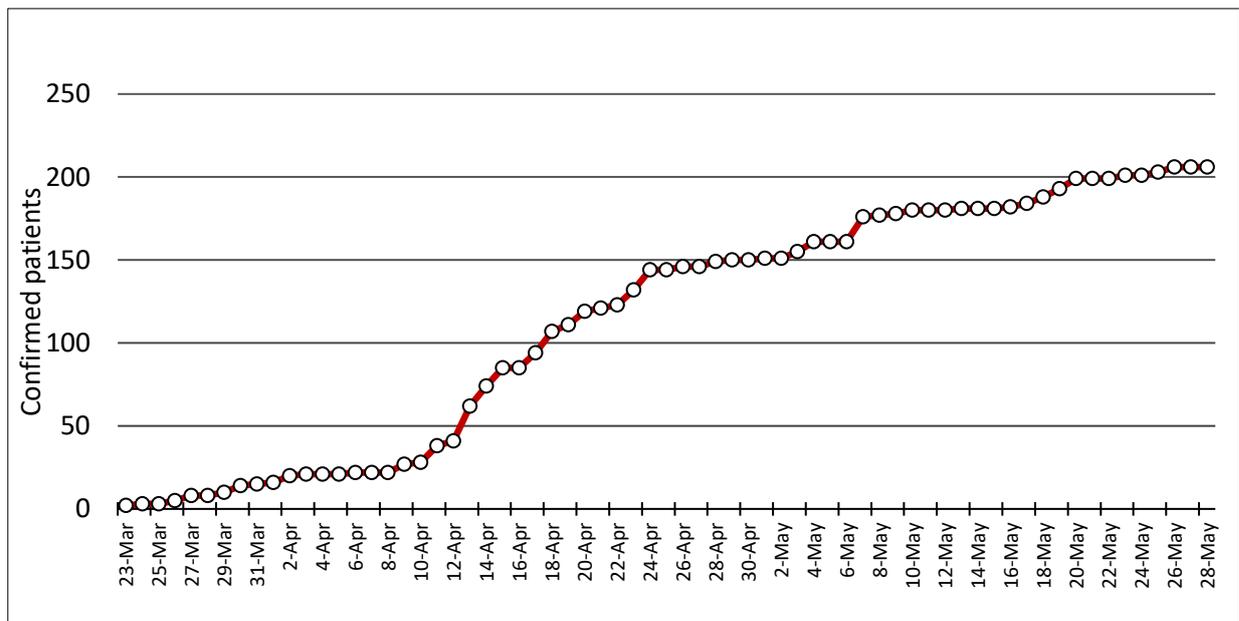


Figure 2: Total Covid-19 cases in Myanmar since the beginning of Covid-19 pandemic. Source: MoHS

As of 28 May 2020, at 07:00 hrs, MoHS has tested a total of 23,098 people since the beginning of the epidemic. Since the publication of the latest WSR, 6632 Persons Under Investigation have been tested, i.e. an average of 947 per day, versus 569 in the previous reporting period.

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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 28 May, at 07:00 hrs, a total of 206 people had been contaminated in the country.
- the current number of active patients, which is the immediate risk indicator. As of 28 May, at 07:00 hrs, there were 74 active patients in the country, out of whom 65 in Yangon Region (i.e. 89 %).

In Yangon, the main clusters are:

- Insein Township, with 49 cases since the beginning of the epidemic, i.e. 1.44 case for 10,000 inhabitants
- Mayangone Township, with 16 cases, i.e. 0.81 case for 10,000 inhabitants
- South Okkalapa Township, with 13 cases, i.e. 0.81 case for 10,000 inhabitants
- Tamwe, with 10 cases, i.e. 0.61 case for 10,000 inhabitants
- Bahan, with 9 cases, i.e. 0.93 case for 10,000 inhabitants
- Pabedan, with 7 cases, i.e. 2.1 case for 10,000 inhabitants

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.

On 6 May, more than 600 people led a thorough sweep of Insein Township, checking all the inhabitants' health conditions, and sending suspicious cases to hospitals. This allowed to identify preventively 13 cases. Based on that success, similar initiatives took place in Hlaing Thayar (16 May) and Tamwe (17 May). During the reporting period, 116,000 people in 5 wards of Mayangone Township were tested by health workers on 23 May. No suspicious patient was found.

In Yangon, positive patients are currently directed to 2 hospitals:

1. Waibargi special Hospital, with 30 Covid patients as of 27 May morning
2. South Okkalapa Hospital, with 35 Covid patients

Outside of Yangon Region, the most affected townships of Myanmar since the beginning of the epidemic are:

1. Kalay (Sagaing Region), with 7 cases.
2. Tedim (Chin State), with 7 cases.
3. Bago (West) Region with 7 cases.
4. Sagaing Region, with 7 cases.

5. Eastern Shan State with 3 cases.

In the last weeks, new townships have reported their first cases, such as Thandwe or Taungup Townships (Rakhine State), Tanintharyi Township (Tanintharyi Region), Kawkaik Township (Karen State), etc. All those new cases are linked to migrant workers back from foreign countries. Only Kayah State has not reported any case yet.

Around Mandalay, the authorities have set up 7 checkpoints to secure the access to the town: 4 in the south, 2 in the east and 1 in the north (fig.3). No vehicle transporting more than 4 people (driver included) can drive through. Those checkpoints will remain in place until 31 May.

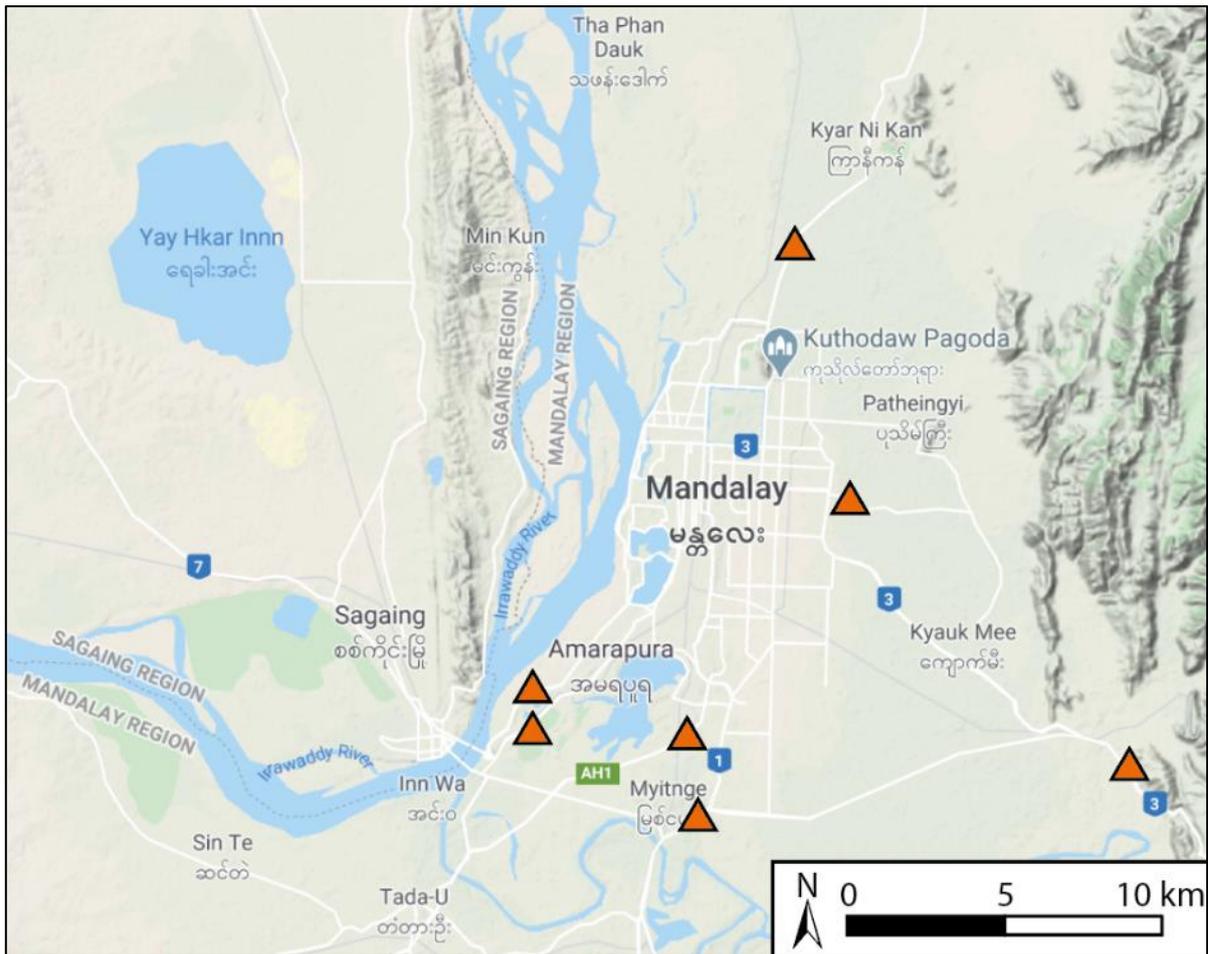


Figure 3: Checkpoints on the access ways to Mandalay.

On 15 May, the government extended some preventive measures until 31 May. Although no clear information have filtered about the rules that will apply after that date, some decisions show that restrictions are easing:

- According to the ministry of education, schools will open back from 21 July onwards
- Express bus service between the main cities of the country had resumed to some extent, but mainly limited to transport cargo, and on a small range of

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destinations. From 1 June onwards, Yangon-based bus companies should be allowed to operate back to normal.

- More and more domestic airlines are resuming their activities: after Myanmar National Airlines and Air KBZ on 1 May and Golden Myanmar Airlines on 16 May, Mann Yadanarpon resumed its flight from between Yangon and Sittwe on 22 May. According to the Myanmar Times, some international flights may resume in early June.
- In Mandalay, most travelers are now exempted from quarantine upon arrival. Only those back from Yangon or repatriated from abroad will have to stay in quarantine.
- In Mandalay again, the main markets and shopping malls in town (including Zaycho, Yadanarbon and Man Myanmar Plaza opened back on 21 May. However, their opening time is limited, from 8.00 hrs to 16.00 hrs.

Based on recent data, it seems quite clear that the epidemic is receding in Myanmar. However, we also want to alert on recent scientific surveys highlighting very clearly the link between temperature and virus survival. So far, this has been an advantage for Myanmar: dry season was not favorable to the spread of the virus. However, with the monsoon coming, one may expect a cooler weather, especially in the hilly peripheries of the country. If precautions are not relaxed sensibly, a second wave of the epidemic may not be ruled out.

Comments and recommendations

We prompt you to carefully follow the government instructions: any gathering of more than 5 people is prohibited and may expose you to serious legal troubles. Abide by the curfew instructions, from midnight to 4 am. Failing to do so may result in lawsuits and potential heavy sentences. On 28 May, the Myanmar Times reported that more than 700 people are currently jailed in Myawaddy prison (Karen State) for breaking the curfew rules.

If you have any health issue unrelated to Covid-19:

1. After closing for several weeks, International SOS clinic (Inya Lake Hotel) is now opened. However, each patient has to call in advance to make sure the clinic can accept him/her.
2. Grand Hantha International Hospital (Kamaryut) checks the temperature of each patient. Those with high temperature are not accepted and referred to public hospital.
3. Samitivej Clinic in Parami hospital will remain closed until 31 May.
4. Samitivej Clinic at 8 Miles remains opened from 8 am to 4 pm, from Monday to Saturday. However, it will refuse any patient with fever. Patients are encouraged to give a phone call beforehand.

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

1. Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and water, or with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
2. Practice social distancing: maintain at least 2-meter (6 feet) distance with any other people.
3. Avoid crowded places and public gatherings.
4. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
5. 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.
6. Stay home as much as possible. Whether you live in a semi-lockdown area or not, limit your movements to the most necessary tasks.
7. 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.
8. Stay informed about the latest developments and follow advice given by your healthcare provider, your local and national public health authorities or your employer.
9. 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.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

AA: Arakan Army

ARSA: Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army

ICOE: Independent Commission of Enquiry

IED: Improvised Explosive Device

ICJ: International Court of Justics

IDP: Internally Displaced Person

EAO: Ethnic Armed Organization

KDA: Kachin Defense Army

KIA: Kachin Independence Army

KNLA: Karen National Liberation Army

KNPP: Karenni National Progressive Party

KNU: Karen National Union

SNA: Shanni Nationalities Army

MMT: Myanmar Time

MNDAA: Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army

MoHS: Ministry of Health and Sports

NLD: National League for Democracy

NMSP: New Mon State Party

NSCN-K: National Socialist Council of Nagaland- Khaplang

TNLA: Ta'ang National Liberation Army

UNWFP: United Nations World Food Programme

UNWHO: United Nations World Health Organization

UWSA: United Wa State Army

WSR: Weekly Security Review

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