

Thura NewsViews

Politics

■ US imposes new sanctions against top official

The United States Treasury Department has imposed additional sanctions on top military officials for alleged human rights abuses.

The move coincides with the three-day hearing against Myanmar at the International Court of Justice. The sanctions blacklist Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, deputy Commander-in-Chief Soe Win, Major General Than Oo and Maj-Gen Aung Aung, the US Treasury Department said in a statement on December 10th, which marks International Human Rights Day.

“Today’s action supports U.S. efforts to support Burma’s democratic transition, civilian-led economic reform, and civilian control of the military,” the statement said.

The Treasury Department explained its motives for the sanctions against each of the military officials, detailing their roles in the 2017 clearance operations that pushed around 750,000 Rakhine Muslims, who call themselves Rohingyas, across the western border to Bangladesh. A United Nations fact-finding mission labeled the operation “genocide” and called for a global boycott against the many businesses associated with the Myanmar military. But both the military and civilian government have denied those claims. When the statement was released, State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was in the Hague defending Myanmar before the International Court of Justice.

The United States has taken the side of the UN fact-finding mission. “There are credible claims of mass-scale rape and other forms of sexual violence committed by soldiers under Min Aung Hlaing’s command,” the statement said of Myanmar’s top military official.

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This Week’s Highlights

EU’s Generalised System of Preferences in jeopardy according to President of UMFCCI’s declarations.

Hong Kong firm CNTIC Vpower to invest USD 500 million in power generation and supply says DICA’s Director General.

European companies’ confidence in the business environment improving says 2019 Eurocham Business Confidence Survey.



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Companies & Investments

Hot news regarding investments in Myanmar



Upcoming Events

International Conference on Economics and Finance Research
December 29, 2019 - December 30, 2019

Digital Learning Myanmar Conference 2020
January 19, 2020

Mobile Money & Financial Inclusion Summit
February 18, 2020 - February 19, 2020

International Conference on Future Computer and Communication
February 26, 2020 - February 28, 2020

■ Thousands march in support of Daw Suu

Tens of thousands of people took to the streets in support of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi as she defended Myanmar before the United Nation's highest court.

On December 10th, the supporters marched to Yangon City Hall to mark the beginning of the three-day hearing before the International Court of Justice (ICJ). On that day, the Gambia presented a case against Myanmar for its treatment of Rakhine Muslims, who call themselves Rohingya, along the western border. The Muslim nation asked the 16 ICJ judges to mandate "provisional measures" to protect the Rohingya. It is unclear what these measures would be, but the United Nations has already called on a boycott of all businesses dealing with the Myanmar military.

On the following day, Aung San Suu Kyi denied the Gambia's accusations, saying it had presented an "incomplete and misleading picture of Myanmar."

The demonstrations punctuated the curious position the case has put Aung San Suu Kyi in. Hailed as the champion of Myanmar's budding democracy, she has since lost her status as an international human rights icon. However, at home the state counsellor remains immensely popular, with a majority of Myanmar people supporting her government and the actions of the military. Although Aung San Suu Kyi had no political power to halt the 2017 "clearance operations" against the Rohingya, she denied allegations of widespread human rights abuses. Her NLD government went so far as to suggest that Rohingya people had been burning their own homes in order to draw the global media gaze and make the military look worse.

■ Daw Suu meets with Chinese foreign minister

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi met with Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi in Nay Pyi Taw last week. The two discussed China and Myanmar's ongoing economic and political partnerships. The meetings marks one of the state counsellor's last official meetings before departing for the Hague.

The two leaders reaffirmed their enthusiasm for the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor, part of China's larger Belt and Road Initiative. Mr Wang argued that the time is ripe to move from "conceptual planning to the stage of substantive construction," according to an official report from the Chinese government. "The two sides should also speed up the Kyaukphyu Special Economic Zone and the China-Myanmar Border Economic Cooperation Zone, and so on," the report continued.

It has been an important year for China-Myanmar relations. In the same year that the United Nations urged a boycott against military-linked businesses, China moved forward with plans for new highways, railroads and river shipping infrastructure in Myanmar's north. It has continued to buy Myanmar rice and other agricultural products. In turn, Hong Kong-listed VPower Group won five high value tenders to supply Myanmar with liquid natural gas as it scrambles to meet demand for electricity.

Next year will be the 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Myanmar and China. In anticipation, Mr Wang called for the two countries to "have a

Myanmar in Figures

GDP (PPP): \$330.88bn (2017)

GDP (official ex.rate): \$59.5bn (Jan 2018)

GDP growth rate: 6.2% (2018)

Population: 54.22 mn people (Apr 2019)

Inflation: 7.1% (2018)

Foreign trade: \$35.9bn (2017-2018)

FDI: \$80.9bn (30/06/2019)

International reserves: \$5.2bn (Jan 2018)

CBM rate Kyat/\$ = 1,513K/1\$ (12/12/19)

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series of celebration activities, plan and prepare high-level exchanges, and promote cooperation in economy, trade, people-to-people areas.”

Economy

■ Government adds to no-travel list

The Myanmar government has expanded its list of off-limits tourist destinations following the death of a German citizen in Shan State.

Areas of Shan, Rakhine, Kachin, Chin, Sagaing and Yangon are on the updated no-travel list from the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism. The government had already taken steps to steer tourists from active conflict zones. In August the military evacuated a group of foreigners from the town of Hsipaw, a popular trekking spot. The tourist who was killed on November 26 had been motorbiking in the same township when he ran over a land mine. The incident led to an inquiry by the German embassy.

Despite the recent setbacks, Myanmar’s tourism sector appears to be picking up, especially with Asian visitors. More than 1.5 million people visited this year, according to official data, a 40 percent increase from 2018. The rise coincides with a relaxing of visa requirements and on-arrival visas for a batch of new countries in both Asia and Europe.

However, recent fighting between the Myanmar army (Tatmadaw) and members of the Northern Alliance of ethnic armed groups threatens both tourism and border trade with China. Following the Hsipaw incident, the government also tightened restrictions on conflict-adjacent areas in Rakhine and Chin State, where the Tatmadaw has tangled with the Arakan Army separatist group.

■ Government sets sights on illegal trade

The Private-Sector Development Committee has announced that it will introduce new measures to curb illegal trade in Myanmar. The committee, which is headed by Vice President U Myint Swe and includes members of the private sector, affirmed during a recent meeting that border smuggling and other black market trading is taking a toll on Myanmar business, and must be curtailed.

Data supports the committee’s arguments: according to the Economist Intelligence Unit, Myanmar ranked the lowest on its 2018 Global Illicit Trade Environment Index, reported the Myanmar Times. It is unclear how much tax revenue Myanmar loses to the black market each year, but illegitimate trade, from currency exchange to beer, has been a key part of the Myanmar market for decades. Myanmar’s numerous self-governing ethnic armed groups often provide havens for illicit border trade.

This year, the government has already taken steps to curb the black market. A second Thailand-Myanmar Friendship Bridge opened on the Thai-Burmese border in Myawaddy, a major smuggling hotspot, and both governments vowed to support legitimate trade there. Myanmar also legalized the first money remittance services outside of the banking sector, a blow against a large, longstanding system of illegitimate money transfers. It has also weighed allowing foreign liquor imports, and Chang Beer, an oft smuggled Thai beverage, is now brewed legally in Yangon.

Companies and Investments

■ Major coal enterprise draws community pushback

A large-scale Thai coal operation in eastern Shan State has drawn the ire of local communities worried for their land and environment. Residents of Mong Hsat Township issued a joint statement against the project, which is a joint venture between the Thailand-registered Sahakol Equipment Co. Ltd (SQ) and Myanmar’s Golden Lake Co. Ltd.

The project, which launched in July, was granted a 28-year government concession, according to the Myanmar Times. It aims to produce 600,000 tonnes of coal per year and eventually establish a 600-megawatt coal-fired power plant. The first tracts of land were cleared in October.

Many local villagers worry that they will be relocated and their lands seized. These fears are not without precedent:

Myanmar's common land laws are ambiguous and seizures of community farmland in favor of large-scale industrial projects are common. Legally, the government is required to compensate displaced residents with money and/or new land. However in the past, bureaucracy and legal loopholes often leave farmers landless and/or inadequately compensated.

On the other hand, the Myanmar government is desperate for power as the country seeks to fill rising demand in time for the dry season. Hydroelectric dams generate more than half of Myanmar's power, and low water volumes during the dry months cause a seasonal lapse in supply. Coal does not have this disadvantage.

Events

Name	Details	Organizer/Ministries	Contact Information
International Conference on Economics and Finance Research	Venue: Best Western Chinatown Hotel, Yangon Date: 29–30 Dec 2019	Research World	info@researchworld.org
Digital Learning Myanmar Conference 2020	Venue: Chatrium Hotel Royal Lake, Yangon Date: 19 Jan 2020	Zabai Myanmar	Nyein.chan@zabai.no +959 794395606
TEDxYangon 2020	Venue: Dulwich College (Star City Campus), Yangon Date: 02 Feb 2020	TEDxYangon	edxyangon@chilli.agency +95 (0)95096881 https://www.tedxyangon.org/
Mobile Money & Financial Inclusion Summit	Venue: Park Royal Hotel, Yangon Date: 18–19 Feb 2020	Magenta Global Pte Ltd	enquiry@magenta-global.com.sg +65 6846 2360
International Conference on Future Computer and Communication	Venue: Yangon Date: 26–28 Feb 2020	Science and Engineering Institute (SCIEI)	info@sciei.org
International Conference on Computer Applications	Venue: Novotel Yangon Max, Yangon, Myanmar Date: 27-28 Feb 2020	University of Computer Studies Myanmar	ucsy.admin@ucsy.edu.mm +95 01 610655
International Conference on Management, Economics & Social Science	Venue: Best Western Chinatown Hotel, Yangon Date: 28–29 Feb 2020	Researchfora	info@researchfora.com +91 8895 188531
Myanmar Franchise Expo	Venue: Myanmar Expo, Yangon Date: 6-8 Mar 2020	ALT Exhibitions SDN BHD	support@altexpo.my +60 1233 45696
International Hospital & Healthcare	Venue: Sedona Hotel Yangon, Yangon Date: 7-8 Mar 2020	Dagon Exhibitions	dagonexhibitions@gmail.com +959 450098008
Food & Hotel Myanmar	Venue: Myanmar Expo, Yangon Date: 3-5 Jun 2020	Informa Markets - Myanmar	informamarkets@informa.com

Tenders

■ Ministry of Electricity and Energy: Request for Proposal

1. Department of Hydropower Implementation is in the process of preparing the **consultancy services of the Upper Yeywa Hydropower Project (280 MW)** which is located on Myit Nge River, about 32 km south of Kyauk Me Township, Northern Shan State, Myanmar.
2. The employer requests for proposals to the qualified, well experienced in hydropower projects and eligible international consulting firms on the basis of open tender announcements in order to carry out the consultancy services of the project in MMK.
3. The RFP document can be obtained from the Department of Hydropower Implementation during office hours at **2nd December, 2019** by the authorized representative of the consultant firms upon submission of a written application in the name of the Department of Hydropower Implementation.
4. A consulting firm will be selected under Quality and Cost Based Selection (QCBS) method and procedures as described in the RFP.
5. The proposals shall be submitted in six sets (one original and five duplicates) in two separate and sealed envelopes clearly marked "Technical Proposal" and "Financial Proposal" on or before the **15th January, 2020** not later than **10:00 a.m.** to Tender Receiving and Scrutinizing Committee, Department of Hydropower Implementation.
6. Only technical proposal will be opened on **15th January, 2020** at **10:00 a.m.** at the meeting room of Department of Hydropower Implementation, in the presence of authorized representatives of the firms who choose to be present. Absence of the representative of the firms shall not hinder the opening of the proposal.
7. A pre-proposal conference will be held at **10:00 a.m.** on **10th December, 2019** at the Department of Hydropower implementation, Ministry of Electricity and Energy.
8. Invitation letter and Request for Proposal documents with detailed information shall be available at the following address during the office hours.
9. The address referred to above is
 - Procurement Branch
 - Department of Hydropower Implementation
 - Ministry of Electricity and Energy
 - Office: Building No. 27, Nay Pyi Taw
 - Telephone: +95-67-8104189, +95-67-8104190
 - Email: dirpro.dhpi@moe.gov.mm

■ Ministry of Electricity and Energy: Request for Proposal

1. Department of Hydropower Implementation is in the process of preparing the **consultancy services of the Tha-htay Hydropower Project (111 MW)** which is located on Tha-htay Chung River, about 19 km north-east of Thandwe Township, Rakhine State, Myanmar.
2. The employer requests for proposals to the qualified, well experienced in hydropower projects and eligible international consulting firms on the basis of open tender announcements in order to carry out the consultancy services of the project in MMK.
3. The RFP document can be obtained from the Department of Hydropower Implementation during office hours at **2nd December, 2019** by the authorized representative of the consultant firms upon submission of a written application in the name of the Department of Hydropower Implementation.
4. A consulting firm will be selected under Quality and Cost Based Selection (QCBS) method and procedures as described in the RFP.

5. The proposals shall be submitted in six sets (one original and five duplicates) in two separate and sealed envelopes clearly marked “Technical Proposal” and “Financial Proposal” on or before the **16th January, 2020** not later than **01:00 p.m.** to Tender Receiving and Scrutinizing Committee, Department of Hydropower Implementation.
6. Only technical proposal will be opened on **16th January, 2020** at **01:00 p.m.** at the meeting room of Department of Hydropower Implementation, in the presence of authorized representatives of the firms who choose to be present. Absence of the representative of the firms shall not hinder the opening of the proposal.
7. A pre-proposal conference will be held at **02:00 p.m.** on **11th December, 2019** at the Department of Hydropower implementation, Ministry of Electricity and Energy.
8. Invitation letter and Request for Proposal documents with detailed information shall be available at the following address during the office hours.
9. The address referred to above is
Procurement Branch
Department of Hydropower Implementation
Ministry of Electricity and Energy
Office: Building No. 27, Nay Pyi Taw
Telephone: +95-67-8104189, +95-67-8104190
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