

## MYANMAR: Timeline post-independence

BANGKOK, 29 March 2012 (IRIN) - As millions go to the polls across Myanmar, IRIN took a brief look at a chronology of key events that have impacted this nation of around 50 million since the country gained its independence from Britain in 1948.

1948: Burma gains independence from British rule. Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL) leader U Nu becomes the first prime minister.

1958-60: A military-led caretaker government is formed with General Ne Win as head.

1962: A government lead by U Nu, who won elections two years previously, is ousted in a military coup lead by General Ne Win. A single-party state with the Socialist Programme Party is established.

1974: A new constitution that transfers power from the military to a People's Assembly, led by Ne Win and other former military leaders, is drawn up.

1982: The Burmese Citizenship Law is adopted, stating that anyone who arrived after 1823 is not considered a citizen. This law isolates ethnic groups such as the Kachin, Karen, Chin and Rohingya [LINK TO WHAT NEXT FOR ROHINGYA] as "associate citizens" denied the rights/relief offered to full citizens, including the right to serve in public office.

1988: Around 3,000 people are killed in anti-government protests. The State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) is formed with the "mission to eliminate all forms of internal dissent or rebellion" [ <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,USCIS,,MMR,,3df097254,0.html> ]

1988: Border trade between China and Myanmar officially opened.

1989: SLORC arrests thousands, including National League for Democracy (NLD) opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who is put under house arrest. The government changes the country's name from Burma to Myanmar.

1990: The NLD wins 392 out of 429 seats in the first free general election held in 30 years, but the military government does not recognize the results.

1991: Aung San Suu Kyi, still under house arrest, is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

1993: The US imposes an arms embargo on Myanmar "in light of the human rights abuses being committed by the current Government of Burma." [ <http://www.pddtc.state.gov/FR/1993/58FR33293.pdf> ].

1994: A ceasefire agreement is signed between the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and the government.

1996: The EU adopts a Common Position on Burma [ <http://eur->

[lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2010:105:0022:0108:EN:PDF](http://lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2010:105:0022:0108:EN:PDF) ] which includes a ban on the sale or transfer of arms and weapons expertise to the country, visa restrictions on members of the military regime and their families and allies, and a freeze on officials' overseas assets. It also suspends all bilateral aid other than humanitarian assistance.

1997: US expands sanctions to include all new investments.

July 1997: Myanmar joins the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). [ <http://www.aseansec.org/> ]

2001: The government releases over 200 political prisoners from jail, motivated by pressure from the international community. [LINK TO POLITICAL PRISONER ARTICLE]

2003: In mid-2003 international aid inflow is below US\$70 million, or less than \$1.50 per capita. [ <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/75910/MYANMAR-Aid-in-a-tight-space> ]

2003: The US Burma Freedom and Democracy Act [ [http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Documents/bfda\\_2003.pdf](http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Documents/bfda_2003.pdf) ] bans Burmese imports, restricts financial transactions, freezes the assets of some financial institutions and extends visa restrictions on officials.

2004: Peace talks between government and Karen National Union (KNU) lead to an informal ceasefire.

2005: The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria [ <http://www.theglobalfund.org/en/> ] withdraws from Myanmar, citing travel restrictions imposed by the government that limit access to their projects. The Fund's projects were to have received \$98.4 million over five years, \$11.8 million of which has already been distributed. [ <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2626419/pdf/16283044.pdf> ]

2005: A third-country programme is implemented to resettle officially registered Burmese refugees living in camps in Thailand to the US, Canada and Australia. [ <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/92281/MYANMAR-THAILAND-Thai-border-camp-population-constant-despite-third-country-resettlement> ]

Since 2005, more than 58,000 Burmese refugees have been resettled under this programme. [ <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/92445/THAILAND-MYANMAR-Concern-over-refugee-camp-closure-plans> ].

2006: Government restrictions on foreign aid workers tighten out of fear they may provide support to the opposition. [ <http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?reportid=75910> ]

October 2006: To fill the need left by the withdrawal of The Global Fund, the UK government [ <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/60357/MYANMAR-UK-provides-US-37m-to-fight-HIV-AIDS-and-other-diseases> ] gives the multidonor Three Diseases Fund [ [http://www.3dfund.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=1&Itemid=2](http://www.3dfund.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1&Itemid=2) ]

\$37 million to fight HIV, tuberculosis and malaria as part of an expected \$100 million, five-year pledge by all donors.

November 2006: The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is forced to shut down five field offices outside the economic hub of Yangon, providing care to mostly border populations. [ <http://www.infosud.org/spip.php?article810> ]

2007: International aid nearly triples since 2004 to around \$200 million [ <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/75910/MYANMAR-Aid-in-a-tight-space> ].

January 2007: China and Russia veto a US resolution in the UN Security Council urging Myanmar to stop persecuting opposition and minority groups.

April 2007: Myanmar and North Korea restore diplomatic relations.

June 2007: ICRC publicly denounces the government for abuses against civilians, and closes offices serving ethnic communities [ <http://www.irinnews.org/InDepthMain.aspx?indepthid=85&reportid=85288> ], telling local media [ <http://ipsnews.net/2007/03/rights-burma-red-cross-considers-pull-out/> ] its operations have reached "near paralysis".

September 2007: A government crackdown on peaceful anti-government protests led by Buddhist monks draws diplomatic condemnation. [ <http://www.irinnews.org/printreport.aspx?reportid=75910> ]

October 2007: The UN Security Council issues a statement "deploring" the military crackdown. [ <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2007/sc9139.doc.htm> ]

December 2007: The government forces the UN resident and humanitarian coordinator in Myanmar, Charles Petrie, to leave his post after the release of a statement on 24 October linking the September 2007 protests to widespread frustration at the hardships of day-to-day living in Myanmar and a "deteriorating humanitarian situation". [ <http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?reportid=75910> ]

April 2008: The government presents a new constitution that assigns a quarter of the parliamentary seats to the military and prohibits opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi from holding office. [ <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/88133/MYANMAR-Political-uncertainty-pushes-out-ethnic-minorities> ]

May 2008: Tropical Cyclone Nargis hits Myanmar [ <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/78042/MYANMAR-Assessment-hard-in-wake-of-Cyclone-Nargis-destruction> ] affecting some 2.4 million people, killing an estimated 140,000 and destroying over 700,000 homes.

The cyclone is one of the deadliest storms in recorded history but the government initially refuses

foreign aid. [ <http://www.irinnews.org/printreport.aspx?reportid=85049> ]

May 2008: The Tripartite Core Group (TCG) [ <http://www.asean.org/21691.htm> ] - a partnership between the UN, the government of Myanmar and ASEAN - is formed to coordinate the response to Nargis and humanitarian assistance, including facilitating visas for aid workers [ <http://www.irinnews.org/printreport.aspx?reportid=85049> ].

January 2009: The Thai military forcibly expels approximately 1,000 Rohingyas arriving in Thailand by boat. Several hundred more are rescued off the coast of Indonesia.

March 2009: The government tightens its visa policy, making it more difficult for international aid workers to secure a visa to assist hundreds of thousands still in need of assistance almost a year after Cyclone Nargis. [ <http://www.irinnews.org/printreport.aspx?reportid=85049> ]

May 2009: US President Barack Obama renews existing sanctions against Myanmar.

June 2009: Some 1,000 Rohingyas are evicted from Bangladesh. [ <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/85050/BANGLADESH-Some-1-000-Rohingyas-evicted-from-makeshift-huts>] According to UNHCR, there are some 200,000 Rohingyas in Bangladesh, [ <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/88145/BANGLADESH-Rohingya-humanitarian-crisis-looms> ] of whom only 28,000 are documented refugees living in two government camps and assisted by the agency. [ <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/91726/THAILAND-Concern-over-Rohingya-boat-people> ]

October 2009: The Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund (LIFT) [ [http://www.lift-fund.net/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=1&Itemid=2](http://www.lift-fund.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1&Itemid=2) ] of \$100 million is established in Myanmar by multiple donors to channel aid through local partners and strengthen external assistance after Cyclone Nargis.

October 2010: Cyclone Giri strikes the west coast of Myanmar, killing 45 people and affecting an estimated 260,000. [ <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/90876/MYANMAR-Cyclone-Giri-tests-government-aid-agency-relations> ]

7 November 2010: Myanmar holds its first general election in 20 years - without international election observers - and transfers power from the military to a nominally civilian government. The military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USPD) wins a landslide victory that opposition groups and a UN human rights committee call fraudulent. The election triggers ethnic violence, causing some 20,000 people to flee to Thailand. [ <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/91032/THAILAND-Thousands-flee-Myanmar-fighting> ]

13 November 2010: Pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi is released after spending 15 of the last 21 years under house arrest due to her open opposition of the military junta.

2010: Government efforts to incorporate numerous armed ethnic groups into a single Border Guard Force heighten tension and reignite fighting. [ <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/91221/MYANMAR-Border-guard-plan-could-fuel-ethnic-conflict> ]

January 2011: The Supreme Court rejects an appeal by Aung San Suu Kyi to reinstate the NLD.

March 2011: An earthquake of magnitude 6.8 strikes the northeastern Shan State, killing 74 people and affecting 18,000. [ <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/92785/MYANMAR-Urgent-need-to-prepare-for-earthquakes> ]

May 2011: The UN Special Rapporteur, Tomas Ojea Quintana, spends a week assessing the human rights situation in Myanmar and documenting human rights abuses, stating: "The situation of ethnic minority groups in the border areas presents serious limitations to the government's intention to transition to democracy." [ <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/92797/MYANMAR-Rights-abuses-continue-unabated-activists-say> ]

May 2011: Thai officials start a headcount of Burmese refugees living in three of 10 camps along the Thai-Burmese border to get a sense of the number of registered and unregistered migrants living there. Aid workers hope this census will allow them to address the problems of thousands who are unregistered, and thus missing out on vital services. [ <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/92941/MYANMAR-THAILAND-Aid-workers-welcome-Burmese-refugee-census> ]

June 2011: A 17-year ceasefire between Myanmar government forces and the Kachin Independence Army is broken when fighting erupts along the northern border. [ <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/93121/MYANMAR-War-flares-in-Kachin-State-say-locals> ]

September 2011: Myanmar suspends construction of a hydroelectric dam project financed by China Power Investment Corporation in northern Kachin State that would have forced more than 15,000 people in 60 villages to relocate. [ <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/93891/MYANMAR-Blocked-dam-project-raises-hopes> ]

12 October 2011: Myanmar releases over 200 political prisoners. [ <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/93951/MYANMAR-Political-prisoners-among-those-released-in-amnesty> ] [LINK TO POLITICAL PRISONER STORY]

19 October 2011: Flash floods hit the Magway, Mandalay and Sagaing Regions of Myanmar, affecting some 35,000 people and killing 78.

December 2011: After visiting the country, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton pledges US support of recent reforms and challenges Myanmar to continue the pace of change, hinting at further diplomatic openings.

December 2011: A government official participates in an international landmine ban meeting in Cambodia for the first time [ <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/94366/SECURITY-Mixed-report-on-mine-action-progress> ]. Myanmar has the fifth highest number of landmine casualties in the world. [ <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/94417/MYANMAR-Landmine-survivor-needs-outstrip-aid> ]

December 2011: The government allows a UN convoy access to Kachin State to distribute

humanitarian relief for the first time since the armed conflict broke out in June. [  
<http://www.irinnews.org/Report/95150/MYANMAR-UN-convoy-reaches-Kachin-displaced> ]

January 2012: During the first visit by a UK politician to Myanmar in 56 years, Foreign Secretary William Hague calls for the release of remaining political prisoners, fair by-elections in April, and improved relations between the government and ethnic populations as a foundation for improved UK-Burmese relations.

January 2012: The Burmese government signs a ceasefire agreement with the Karen National Union [  
<http://www.irinnews.org/Report/94603/MYANMAR-High-hopes-for-Karen-peace-talks> ] and holds ceasefire talks with ethnic Kachin fighters.

January 2012: Myanmar releases hundreds of prisoners and grants amnesty to 651 detainees.

The US restores diplomatic relations with Myanmar.

March 2012: Myanmar grants visas to exiled journalists and proposes widespread press reforms.

March 2012: Officials draft a new investment law that allows foreigners to set up businesses in Myanmar without a local partner, and grants new investors a five-year tax exemption.

March 2012: A UN convoy is allowed into Kachin State for the second time to provide food assistance to 1,000 of the estimated 60,000 people displaced by the conflict. [  
<http://www.irinnews.org/Report/95150/MYANMAR-UN-convoy-reaches-Kachin-displaced> ]

1 April 2012: By-elections scheduled in 48 parliamentary seats. Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD will participate for the first time in over 20 years and foreign observers have been invited to monitor.

or/ds/he[END]

This report online: <http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?reportID=95197>

© IRIN. All rights reserved. More humanitarian news and analysis: <http://www.irinnews.org/>

[This item comes to you via IRIN, the humanitarian news and analysis service of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. The opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the United Nations or its Member States. Reposting or reproduction, with attribution, for non-commercial purposes is permitted. Terms and conditions: <http://www.irinnews.org/copyright>

IRIN partners: UAE, Canada, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, UK and the IHC. More information: <http://www.irinnews.org/donors>