

**STATUS OF HUMAN RIGHTS & SANCTIONS IN MYANMAR**

**NOVEMBER & DECEMBER 2018 REPORT**

**Summary.** This report reviews the November & December 2018 developments relating to human rights in Myanmar. Relatedly, it addresses the interchange between Myanmar’s reform efforts and the responses of the international community.

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## **I. Political Developments**

### **A. Rohingya Refugee Crisis**

The plans of the Bangladesh and Myanmar governments to commence repatriating Rohingya to Myanmar have been stalled until 2019.<sup>1</sup> Originally scheduled to begin on November 15, 2018, the plans were postponed because officials were unable to find any Rohingya who were willing to return to Myanmar.<sup>2</sup> Bangladesh and Myanmar had originally agreed to begin repatriating a first batch of approximately 2,200 refugees who had been “verified” for return by Myanmar officials. However, the decision led to large protests by Rohingya refugees as well as objections by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (“UNHCR”) and human rights groups, who warned that the safety of the refugees could not be guaranteed in Myanmar under current conditions.<sup>3</sup>

Protesters demanded justice and restoration of their citizenship in Myanmar, chanting “We won’t go back,” as officials with five buses and three trucks waited at Unchiprang refugee camp in Cox’s Bazar to carry families to the Myanmar border.<sup>4</sup> None of the refugees on the “verified list” agreed to return if their demands for justice, citizenship and the ability to go back to their original villages and lands were not met, and the Rohingya were not consulted regarding this first round of repatriation plans.<sup>5</sup> Abul Kalam, Commissioner of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commission, believes that a new course of action regarding repatriation needs to be adopted – one that takes into account refugees’ key demands.<sup>6</sup> In addition, Kalam called upon the international community to pressure Myanmar to accept certain “logical and acceptable” demands in order for any repatriation to take place.<sup>7</sup> The United Nations has said that prior to repatriation, the Rohingya still living in Rakhine State first need to be granted citizenship and free movement.<sup>8</sup> The houses of the Rohingyas have been razed to the ground and the villages destroyed – such conditions are not conducive for “voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable” repatriation.

Bangladesh has vowed not to force anyone to return.<sup>9</sup> In Dhaka, Foreign Affairs Minister H. Mahmud Ali repeated assurances that Bangladesh would not repatriate any Rohingya by force, adding that “efforts for their peaceful repatriation will continue.”<sup>10</sup> Bangladesh officials say that they have asked UNHCR officials to confirm whether the selected Rohingya would like to return.<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile, in Sittwe, the capital of Rakhine State, Myanmar’s minister for social welfare, relief, and settlement, Win Myat Aye, said Rohingya who wanted to return were being prevented from doing so.<sup>12</sup> He asserted that those who wanted to return were stopped or threatened in the refugee camps by those who do not want to return, that some did not receive the forms that they are required to complete and that some were not allowed to complete the forms. Furthermore, he stated that those in camps who wanted to return were threatened, beaten up, and killed in some cases.<sup>13</sup> Win Myat Aye has not confirmed the basis for his assertions. In a statement on November 15, Human Rights Watch urged Bangladesh to halt the repatriation effort, stating that “the Myanmar authorities have done nothing to create conditions for safe and dignified returns or to address the root causes of the crisis, including systematic persecution and violence, statelessness, and impunity for grave violations by the military.”<sup>14</sup>

## B. Corruption

Myanmar recently amended the definition of “corruption” in its Anti-Corruption Law. Originally, the definition of “corruption” for which persons could be punished under the Anti-Corruption Law applied to “an authoritative person.” Following the recent changes, the provision applies to “any person,” and corruption can now also occur by “other means,” so that acts by any person, not only government officials, are prohibited. Commentators believe that this change in the definition of corruption means that private acts of corruption (that is, acts of corruption between private parties) are now punishable under the amended Anti-Corruption Law.<sup>15</sup> The Anti-Corruption Law was enacted in 2013 to address acts of corruption by public servants, government officials, and public office holders, with punishments for violators including up to 15 years in prison and fines.

During a trial session of a lawsuit brought by the Anti-Corruption Commission (“ACC”) against then-Yangon Region attorney general, Han Htoo, a judge of the Yangon Eastern District Court, and five other law officers, an ACC inspector testified that the father of one of three suspects accused of the murder of a popular Facebook comedian, Yell Htwe Aung, offered 150 million kyats to the comedian’s family, asking them to drop the case.<sup>16</sup> The three detained murder suspects were released on July 25 before any charges could be brought against them, after the Yangon Eastern District Court accepted an appeal from the victim’s family asking them to settle the case.<sup>17</sup> The officials and Han Htoo are suspected of taking bribes from the families of the Yell Htwe Aung murder suspects.<sup>18</sup> The defendants had previously objected to the ACC member’s testimony on the basis of the Evidence Act.<sup>19</sup>

A new tax bill expected to pass Parliament will aim to reduce corruption in the country’s tax system.<sup>20</sup> The law will bring tax collection law in line with international standards, and will stop requiring taxpayers to work with staff.<sup>21</sup> Instead, taxpayers will be able to complete taxes electronically, reducing the opportunities for corruption.<sup>22</sup>

In December, Aung Kyi, the ACC chairman, gave a speech at a forum called “Enhance Accountability to Prevent Corruption.”<sup>23</sup> In his speech, Aung Kyi stated, “With a vow to fight corruption completely, we will keep making it happen in accordance with our anti-corruption strategy.”<sup>24</sup>

As part of the celebration of International Anti-Corruption Day, President Win Myint approved the establishment of Corruption Prevention Units (“CPUs”) by the ACC.<sup>25</sup> These CPUs will reside within government departments and will have the power to take action by themselves or to transfer cases to the ACC.<sup>26</sup> Further, CPUs will conduct corruption risk assessments with the goal of finding the causes of corruption and creating appropriate mitigation measures.<sup>27</sup> The establishment of CPUs is part of the ACC’s 2018-2021 strategy plan.<sup>28</sup> The ACC will also add over 500 staff members.<sup>29</sup>

In 2019, the ACC will open its first two branch offices.<sup>30</sup> The Yangon and Mandalay offices will join the current office, which is located in Naypyitaw.<sup>31</sup>

On December 18, Kyaw Thura Hling, former administrator of Kin Mun Chaung Village, was sentenced by a local court to seven years in prison for bribery.<sup>32</sup>

A complaint for failing to maintain impartiality in a past case has been raised against the new Chief Justice of the Yangon Region's High Court.<sup>33</sup> Chief Justice Hla Aye's nomination was confirmed to the court in December.<sup>34</sup> The complaint will be investigated and, if found to be true, Justice Hla Aye's appointment can be terminated by signature of at least a quarter of MPs.<sup>35</sup>

### **C. International Community / Sanctions**

Amnesty International announced on November 13 that it is stripping Aung San Suu Kyi of its highest honor, the Ambassador of Conscience Award. The politician and Nobel Peace Prize winner received the honor in 2009, when she was living under house arrest. The rights group said it was profoundly dismayed at her failure to speak out for the Rohingya minority, some 700,000 of whom have fled a military crackdown. This is the latest honor in a string of awards Suu Kyi has lost. Amnesty's Secretary General Kumi Naidoo wrote in a letter to the Myanmar leader that "[Her] denial of the gravity and scale of the atrocities [against the Rohingya] means there is little prospect of the situation improving." The organization, which once feted her as a beacon for democracy, announced its decision on the eighth anniversary of her release from house arrest.<sup>36</sup>

Bangladesh has renewed its call for continuing international pressure on Myanmar for safe and dignified repatriation of the Rohingya refugees who had fled to Bangladesh to escape atrocities. "A continued and sustained international pressure on Myanmar would be catalyst for a long term solution" to one of the worst humanitarian crisis created by Myanmar and forcing Bangladesh to bear its brunt, Bangladesh High Commissioner to India Syed Muazzem Ali said on November 13, in a briefing to more than 60 diplomats in India on the Rohingya crisis.<sup>37</sup>

U.S. Vice President Mike Pence and Aung San Suu Kyi met at the ASEAN summit in Singapore on November 14. At a joint media meeting with the two leaders, Pence criticized Myanmar's military for the persecution of the Rohingya and said he was keen to hear that those responsible for the violence would be held accountable. "The violence and persecution by military and vigilantes that resulted in driving 700,000 Rohingya to Bangladesh is without excuse," he told Suu Kyi. "I am anxious to hear the progress that you are making of holding those accountable who are responsible for the violence that displaced so many hundreds of thousands and created such suffering, including the loss of life," he added. Suu Kyi, responding to Pence, said: "Of course people have different points of view but the point is that you should exchange these views and try to understand each other better." Pence also said that Washington wanted to see a free and democratic press in Myanmar, and the jailing of two journalists last year was "deeply troubling" for millions of Americans. "In America, we believe in our democratic institutions and ideals, including a free and independent press," he said. Pence raised the case of two Reuters journalists "in particular and raised the request that a pardon could be made," a senior White House official told reporters. The official declined to comment on Suu Kyi's response in a closed-door meeting.<sup>38</sup>

At the end of the ASEAN summit, on November 15, Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha of Thailand, the incoming chair of ASEAN, told his colleagues that the regional bloc is capable of playing an important role in addressing the situation in Rakhine State in a constructive, tangible and sustainable manner. Prayut suggested the enhancement of the ASEAN

Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management — to provide humanitarian assistance to the affected people, as well as support the repatriation of Rohingya refugees and to ensure the improvement of the quality of life for all communities in Rakhine State. He said that the engagement of ASEAN member states should not be seen as an interference in the internal affairs of a member state, but that Myanmar needs to open its doors for ASEAN to collectively help to address the problem, as the Rohingya crisis has become a regional and international issue.<sup>39</sup>

In early November, the European Commission announced that it is considering temporarily removing the existing trade preferences to Myanmar amid urgent concerns over the country's compliance with fundamental international human and labor rights conventions. Myanmar is the beneficiary of duty and quota-free access to the EU market through the "Everything But Arms" ("EBA") agreement of the Generalised Scheme of Preferences ("GSP"). Under the EBA scheme, least developed countries can sell any products, with the exception of arms and ammunition, to the EU market without facing tariffs or quotas. That access comes with conditions, however, namely that those countries must fulfil their obligations under international conventions on human and labor rights, such as those set out by various UN accords and International Labour Organisation ("ILO") conventions. Should the EU find significant violations of these conditions, it may temporarily suspend these trade preferences until the situation improves.<sup>40</sup>

In December, the UN Security Council considered action to address the Rohingya refugee crisis. The British-drafted resolution would impose a timeline on Myanmar to allow the return of more than 700,000 Rohingya Muslim refugees from neighboring Bangladesh and addresses accountability. The draft resolution contemplates further action by the Security Council, including sanctions, if there is not enough progress made. It is unclear if or when the draft resolution will be put to a vote. The draft resolution does not include a referral of the situation in Myanmar to the International Criminal Court.<sup>41</sup> On December 19, 2018, the Asia Times reported that Russia and China, two permanent members of the UN Security Council, are boycotting talks on the British resolution and may veto any move that would force Myanmar to take affirmative action or impose sanctions. A vote on the resolution would need nine in favor and no vetoes from any of its five permanent members — the U.S., Britain, France, Russia and China — to pass.<sup>42</sup>

On December 21, 2018, the EU added seven people to its Myanmar sanctions list, imposing asset freezes and travel bans on these individuals. The sanctioned individuals are part of the Myanmar army and border guard police and were sanctioned for "serious human rights violations committed against the Rohingya population, ethnic minority villagers or civilians."<sup>43</sup>

Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey was criticized in December after he published several tweets promoting Myanmar as a tourist destination, despite international accusations against the country's military leadership of ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya population. Dorsey later said in response to the criticism, "I'm aware of the human rights atrocities and suffering in Myanmar. I don't view visiting, practicing, or talking with the people, as endorsement ... I didn't intend to diminish by not raising the issue, but could have acknowledged that I don't know enough and need to learn more."<sup>44</sup>

## II. Civil and Political Rights

### A. Freedom of Speech, Assembly and Association

A local court in Rakhine State sentenced a man to two years in prison for launching a hot air balloon adorned with a portrait of the chief of the Arakan Army (“AA”), a Rakhine State-based armed organization denounced by the Myanmar Army as an insurgent group.<sup>45</sup> Tun Hla Kyaw, a resident of Leik Ka Maw Village in Kyaukphyu Township, launched the hot air balloon with a picture of the AA’s commander-in-chief Maj-Gen Tun Myat Naing during the Tazaungdaing Festival in November 2017. The balloon had “Happy Birthday General” written on it and was said to have been launched to celebrate the 39th birthday of the AA chief. Officers of Kyaukphyu Township Police Force arrested Tun Hla Kyaw soon after the incident and charged him under Article 17 (1) of the Unlawful Associations Act. “He was sentenced to two years in prison under Article 17 (1) of the Unlawful Associations Act. We think this verdict is unfair and have plans to appeal it,” said defense lawyer Tin Myint. Section 17(1) of the Unlawful Associations Act carries a penalty of up to three years in prison for “whoever is a member of an unlawful association, or takes part in meetings of any such association, or contributes or receives or solicits any contribution for the purpose of any such association or in any way assists the operations of any such association.”

The Restoration Council of Shan State (“RCSS”) claims that the Myanmar military warned ethnic Shan living in northern Shan State that they could be arrested under the Unlawful Associations Act if they interact with the armed group.<sup>46</sup> The RCSS first made the claim via its media outlet, Tai Freedom. It reported that officers from Military Operation Command No. 1, based in Kyaukme Township, called residents from four township quarters with large Shan populations — Mong Tin, Mang Khar, Sakandar and Naung Bein — to a meeting on Wednesday to issue the warning.

On November 5, 2018, Facebook admitted that its platform is being used to incite violence in Myanmar. Facebook hired an independent non-profit organization, Business for Social Responsibility (“BSR”), to issue a report on the topic. According to a Facebook spokesperson, the report concluded that “we weren’t doing enough to help prevent our platform from being used to foment division and incite offline violence.”<sup>47</sup> According to the report, “In Myanmar, Facebook essentially is the internet” and that “the prevalence of hate speech, disinformation and bad actors on Facebook has had a negative impact on freedom of expression, assembly and association for Myanmar’s most vulnerable users. . . . This has led to the suppression of free speech; violence and hate campaigns; and self-censorship by women, minorities and other vulnerable members of society.”<sup>48</sup> For example, according to an investigation led by the *New York Times*, military officials in Myanmar “were behind a systematic campaign on Facebook to target a mostly Muslim Rohingya minority.”<sup>49</sup>

In connection with the use of social media by military officials to target the Rohingya, UN human rights investigators are investigating how the internet can play a role in modern conflicts.<sup>50</sup> The UN Human Rights Council formed a fact-finding mission to look into military abuses in Myanmar and specifically Facebook’s role in the abuses. According to the head of the

UN fact-finding mission “genocidal intent was apparent in the Facebook posts by military officers.”<sup>51</sup>

Three Kachin State residents, Brang Mai, Seng Hkum Awng and Sut Seng Htoi, were charged under the Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Act for holding a protest without permission from the authorities.<sup>52</sup> They were protesting the sentencing and fining on the same day of three other Kachin activists who were convicted for holding demonstrations earlier in the year calling on the Tatmadaw to release Kachin refugees who were trapped in the jungle during fighting in Tanai Township between the Tatmadaw and the KIO. Sut Seng Htoi was fined 100,000 kyats, and the other two were fined 300,000 kyats each for their protest.<sup>53</sup>

According to Amnesty International, an activist, Tim Maung Kyi, was detained in Myanmar for “staging a peaceful solo protest calling on the international community to arrest senior Myanmar generals.”<sup>54</sup> If found guilty, he will face up to two years and one month in prison.

Hundreds of ethnic Pa-O were forced to join a pro-military rally in Taunggyi, the capital of Shan State, according to a number of community leaders.<sup>55</sup> Khun Soe Myint, general secretary of the United National Pa-O Organization, said that many members of the ethnic Pa-O community living close to Taunggyi live in fear under the control of the authorities and had no choice but to join the rally. “Those who attended the pro-military rally were ethnic Pa-O but they don’t represent the entire Pa-O ethnicity,” he said. There are two types of authorities controlling Pa-O areas in Myanmar—some areas are run by government-appointed village leaders while others are under the authority of village leaders appointed by the Pa-O National Organization (“PNO”). The PNO was originally an armed group serving as a local militia until it signed a ceasefire with the Myanmar government in 1991. Khun Soe Myint said that government authorities involved in the rally forced local Pa-O people to join it. He said that his party is still investigating whether the rally participants—many of whom came from southern parts of Taunggyi Township—were paid to join the event. Saw Khun Kyaw Win, a member of the PNO’s central executive committee, denied that his party was involved in the rally or that it forced local Pa-O people to join it.

A delegation of religious leaders, women’s rights activists and civil society groups from Myanmar calling for action regarding the state of human rights in Myanmar, were hosted by Human Rights Watch and Christian Solidarity Worldwide (“CSW”) in London and Brussels on November 20, 2018.<sup>56</sup> Members of Human Rights Watch and CSW expressed concern about the human rights environment in Myanmar, including freedom of expression and association, and called for the “review, reform and repeal of repressive laws in Burma.”

The human rights NGO, Human Rights Watch, said on December 8, 2018 that Myanmar authorities should “quash the convictions of three ethnic Kachin activists found guilty of defaming the military.”<sup>57</sup> According to the NGO, the three people were sentenced to six months in prison and a fine for raising the alarm about the civilians trapped by fighting between Myanmar’s armed forces and a Kachin armed group. According to the deputy Asia director of Human Rights Watch, Myanmar’s armed forces are “[o]nce again using criminal defamation laws to punish those who criticize its actions” and that “[b]y filing charges against activists who

simply urged help for civilians trapped by fighting, Myanmar’s military shows its unwillingness to curtail serious abuses.” Furthermore, he said, “The prosecution of these three activists strikes at the heart of free speech by restricting the ability of citizens to criticize those ruling the country.”<sup>58</sup>

## **B. Freedom of the Press and Censorship**

A spokesman for the President’s Office said that the Yangon Region government must follow a presidential directive mandating that it adhere to the Media Law in its dispute with three journalists from the Eleven Media Group.<sup>59</sup> The Yangon government filed a lawsuit against the three journalists in October, accusing them of incitement under Article 505(b) of the Penal Code for allegedly publishing false information relating to the use of public funds. The journalists were arrested on October 10 and released on bail later in the month. The lawsuit and arrests drew strong public rebuke from critics who pointed out that the journalists’ article was based primarily on remarks by lawmakers in a Yangon Parliament session about a recent report by the local auditor general. The lawmakers themselves insist the story was accurate. The lawsuit prompted President Win Myint to direct the Yangon government to follow the Media Law, which says the Myanmar Press Council should attempt to settle complaints against the press before they reach the courts. The Yangon government submitted a complaint letter to the Press Council following the president’s directive on October 18. The Press Council then urged the Yangon government to withdraw the lawsuit because its rules forbid it from mediating a dispute that is with the courts. However, the Yangon government has yet to drop the suit.

December 12, 2018 marked the one-year anniversary since two Reuters’ journalists, Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo, were arrested in Myanmar and eventually sentenced to seven years in prison.<sup>60</sup> The reporters had been working on an investigation about the killing of ten Rohingya Muslim men and boys by security forces. Students, journalists and writers took to the streets in protest. “The fact that they remain in prison for a crime they did not commit calls into question Myanmar’s commitment to democracy, freedom of expression and rule of law,” said Reuters’ editor-in chief.<sup>61</sup> The US embassy in Yangon released a statement saying, “After spending a year in prison, it is past time for journalists Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo to go home to their families.”<sup>62</sup> The journalists’ appeal was heard on December 24 and the ruling will be issued in January.<sup>63</sup>

Journalists and media advocacy organizations condemned Information Minister Pe Myint over a speech in which he championed the role of government-owned media, questioned the very possibility of editorial independence at private news outlets and made other statements the groups said were unacceptably at odds with their ethical standards and the goals of the very forum at which his comments were delivered, the 7<sup>th</sup> Media Development Forum. In response to his comments, 16 organizations participating in the forum, including the Myanmar Journalist Network, PEN Myanmar, the Center for Myanmar Media Development, Article 19 and Free Expression Myanmar, issued a statement, pointing out that the minister’s comments ignored the media’s customary role in a democracy as a “fourth pillar” ensuring the transparency of the other three pillars, the legislature, executive and judiciary. News provided by government-owned media, they said, is propaganda that fails to legitimately criticize government wrongdoings.



### **III. Economic Development**

#### **A. Economic Development—Legal Framework, Foreign Investment**

Myanmar's President Win Myint proposed the formation of a new Ministry for Investment and Foreign Economic Relations. The President's request for the ministry suggested that it would promote sustainable, accountable and responsible investment on behalf of the state and its citizens and would also manage economic assistance from the United Nations and international organizations.<sup>64</sup> The establishment of the new Ministry of Investment and Foreign Economic Relations was approved by Parliament in November to pave the way for better coordination between related ministries and organizations on local and foreign investments and development projects implemented with foreign aid or loans.<sup>65</sup> The new ministry will merge the Foreign Economic Relations Department and the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration.<sup>66</sup> The new ministry will be helmed by Thaug Tun, who is also chair of the Myanmar Investment Commission and National Security Adviser. The Ministry for Investment and Foreign Economic Relations will create a single window system, enabling businesses to apply for and complete all the necessary procedures through a one-stop center, or single window, to make foreign investment in Myanmar an easier process. Under the single-window system, the ministry will make the necessary decisions based on a list of standard operating procedures agreed on by all the relevant ministries.<sup>67</sup>

Myanmar attracted the most foreign direct investment of any of the world's so-called "least developed countries" in 2017. The \$4.3 billion worth of realized FDI that went into the country put it on top of the global economy's bottom division of 47 nations, according to a report by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. Investment in Myanmar grew more than 45% last year, an increase that is three times faster than investment in Cambodia. The report noted that three nations – Bangladesh, Laos and Myanmar – are poised to be upgraded from least developed country status in the coming years.<sup>68</sup> Myanmar's deputy minister for planning and finance also announced that foreign investment in Myanmar is on the rise, stating the country has attracted more than \$12 billion in foreign investment since the NLD government took office in 2016.<sup>69</sup> He claimed that from 2016 to 2018, Myanmar has seen 360 foreign investments, totaling \$12.37 billion in 10 sectors, ranging from agriculture to industry to tourism. In the last six months, Myanmar received \$2 billion in foreign investment, with more than \$700 million coming from Singapore alone in manufacturing, real estate, transportation, energy and tourism.<sup>70</sup>

Myanmar's integration into the ASEAN Economic Community ("AEC"), along with Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, at the start of 2019 is expected to translate into an upgrade in the regulatory environment, attracting further regional investments, according to a leading Singapore group. Representatives of the Singapore group said that protectionist policies across a wide range of sectors remain a barrier for foreign investors.<sup>71</sup>

State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi also invited ASEAN countries to invest in Myanmar, saying she has confidence they will receive good returns thanks to major economic reforms recently undertaken by the government. ASEAN member countries play a major role in economic cooperation with Myanmar where, as of September 2018, investments from ASEAN account for about 45% (\$35.5 billion) of total investment in the country. The State Counselor

invited investment in various industries, including agriculture and its related services, value-added production of agricultural products, livestock production, breeding and production of fishery products, export promotion industries, import substitution industries, the power sector, logistics industries, education services, the health care industry, construction of affordable housing and the establishment of industrial estates. According to the government investment body, Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (“DICA”), as of September 2018 Singapore is the second largest investor in Myanmar, while Thailand is third, Vietnam is seventh and Malaysia is eighth. The government has recently emphasized foreign investment from eastern countries, with Myanmar Investment Commission (“MIC”) planning to hold a summit targeting investors from East Asia before the end of the year, according to DICA. MIC has already engaged numerous East Asian countries in its investment promotion activities, including Japan, Hong Kong and South Korea.<sup>72</sup>

Myanmar showed no improvement in its overall ranking in the World Bank’s latest ease of doing business index, retaining the No. 171 spot it held last year—and remaining the least favorable ASEAN member country in which to conduct business. The Myanmar government has set a goal of reaching the top 100 by 2020. Although its rank was unchanged, Myanmar’s latest score improved to 44.72 points from 44.21 in the 2018 index. The score takes into account 10 indicators—starting a business, dealing with construction permits, accessing electricity, registering property, obtaining credit, protecting minority investors, paying taxes, trading across borders, enforcing contracts and resolving insolvency.<sup>73</sup>

There is widespread pessimism among foreign businesses in Myanmar. 46% of European companies believe economic conditions are worsening, according to a survey conducted in September and October by the European Chamber of Commerce in Myanmar. The figure rose for the second straight year. According to government statistics, \$3.1 billion in foreign investments were approved in the year through October, down 60% from the same period in 2017. The International Monetary Fund cut Myanmar's economic growth forecast to 6.4% from an earlier 7% for the year to September 2019.<sup>74</sup> Similarly, the World Bank predicts that growth in gross domestic product will slow by half a point to 6.2% in the 2018-19 fiscal year ending in March.

According to the regional chief minister of the Ayeyarwady region, there are now plans to prioritize developments in the agriculture, livestock and marine, forestry, industry, infrastructure, transportation and tourism sectors in the region. The Director General of DICA added that, although much of the country’s exports originate in Ayeyarwady, foreign investments in the region are currently minimal. However, it is expected that these investments will rise in the coming years after a road connecting Ayeyarwady with Yangon is completed and a project to fulfill Myanmar’s electricity needs is constructed in the region. Plans are now being made for the construction of a liquefied natural gas plant project which will generate 1390MW of power when complete.

Myanmar signed agreements on the promotion and protection of investment with the Philippines, Vietnam, China, Japan, Laos, Thailand, India, Kuwait, Israel and South Korea aimed at enhancing trust among investors and promoting business operation. The bilateral investment

promotion and protection agreement between Myanmar and South Korea took effect at the end of October.<sup>75</sup>

In a long-awaited move, on November 8, 2018 the Central Bank of Myanmar (“CBM”) permitted foreign banks in the country to lend to local businesses. In the past, foreign banks were only allowed to lend to foreign enterprises in foreign currencies. Under Notification 6/2018, foreign banks will be able to provide financing to domestic firms in the local kyat as long as interest rates do not exceed the maximum domestic bank lending rate of 13%. Foreign banks are free to set their own interest rates for loans in foreign currencies. They will also be permitted to provide the full suite of trade financing services. From next year on, foreign banks will also be free to expand across the country. There are 13 international banks from China, Japan, Singapore, India, Malaysia and Vietnam with branches in the country currently listed with the CBM, while 49 other banks have representative offices here.<sup>76</sup>

Legal experts from around the world recently gathered in Myanmar for a two-day workshop to help the country improve its legal framework in the fight against environmental crime. The chief justice of the Supreme Court of Myanmar said that the meeting was aimed at boosting Myanmar’s review of environmental and climate change-related legal issues and that the results of the meeting would become a roadmap for the future. Among the participants were chief justices, judges and justice officials from Pacific nations, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and Great Britain, Australia, the US, Brazil, Kiribati and New Zealand. Among the topics discussed were challenges for the Myanmar political framework in environmental conservation and climate change, environmental conservation and human rights, the rapid expansion and settlement of urban areas, the judicial perspective on environmental conservation and climate change and the adjudication of cases.<sup>77</sup>

## **B. Economic Development—Infrastructure, Major Projects**

On November 2, Myanmar and Thailand signed an agreement to jointly upgrade a highway linking the Thai-Myanmar border with the Dawei Special Economic Zone (“SEZ”), an \$8 billion project that includes a deep-water port. The project in southern Myanmar’s Tanintharyi Region is set to be Southeast Asia’s largest industrial complex. Under the Record of Discussion (“ROD”) agreement, the Ministry of Construction will allow Thailand’s Neighboring Countries Economic Development Cooperation Agency (“NEDA”) to conduct survey and design work in preparation to upgrade the two-lane highway. The route will connect the border crossing point at Htee Kee to the SEZ via Myittar. The project will take about eight months to complete.<sup>78</sup>

On November 8, following lengthy and difficult negotiations, the Myanmar government and one of China’s biggest conglomerates, state-owned CITIC Group Corporation Ltd, signed a framework agreement for the development of an SEZ in Rakhine State, which will offer China access to the Bay of Bengal, while enhancing its regional connectivity as part of Beijing’s Belt and Road Initiative through the Kyaukphyu deep-water port project. According to the initial master plan, the Kyaukphyu SEZ will cover a total of 520 hectares—20 for the port, 100 for housing and 400 for an industrial park. Some 50% of the land is allocated to fisheries, 30% to garment factories and the rest to other small enterprises.

Meanwhile, Japan is set to upgrade a rail route linking Yangon, the country's largest city, with Mandalay, its second biggest. Work began in November to upgrade the 620 km of rail linking the two cities. These plans center on urban development in Yangon along with shipping and electricity infrastructure, including the roughly 260 billion yen Mandalay-Yangon rail modernization project.<sup>79</sup>

The Ministry of Transport and Communications, China Railway Eryuan Engineering Group and China Railway Group will conduct a feasibility study of the Muse – Mandalay Railway Project, Minister of Transport and Communications Thant Sin Maung said. An agreement on the feasibility study, part of China's One Belt, One Road initiative, was signed in October. This project aims to connect Ruli East Railway Station in China to Muse, Lashio, Kyaukme, and Pyin Oo Lwin in Mandalay with 43.5 kilometres of railway track.<sup>80</sup>

On November 15, 2018, Yangon Aerodrome Company Limited announced new milestones and plans for further upgrades to Yangon International Airport (“YIA”), the largest and busiest of Myanmar’s three international airports. Over the next two to three years, YIA will further enhance its infrastructure.<sup>81</sup>

Myanmar will implement an elevated expressway project at the inner ring road of Yangon city, and the project’s first phase will be undertaken in the east wing of the city. The tender program, which began in September, was jointly conducted by the Ministry of Construction and the International Finance Cooperation (“IFC”), a member of the World Bank Group. A total of 12 local and international companies submitted prequalification applications to develop Phase 1 of the project. They include two Chinese-Myanmar consortiums, a Thai-Japanese-Myanmar consortium, a Thai-Chinese consortium, four companies from China and one each from France, Korea, the Philippines and Japan. The selected companies will be announced at the end of November. The 47.5-km elevated toll road will connect downtown Yangon, Yangon Port, Yangon International Airport, Mingaladon Industrial Park and the Yangon-Mandalay expressway.<sup>82</sup>

On November 20, 2018, Deputy Commerce Minister Aung Htoo announced that the first of three projected economic zones along the Myanmar-China border will be implemented soon between Shan State’s Muse and China’s Ruili. Under an agreement between Naypyitaw and Beijing, three “economic cooperation zones” will be established in Kachin and Shan States along the border as part of Beijing’s ambitious Belt and Road Initiative. The two others will be built in Kanpiketi town, in Kachin State’s Special Region 1, which is under the control of the New Democratic Army-Kachin militia; and Chinshwehaw in Shan State’s Laukkai Township, part of the Kokang Self-Administered Zone. The two countries signed a memorandum of understanding in May last year following State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi’s visit to China in August 2016, and the joint committee for implementation of economic cooperation zones was established in April. The two governments have already started discussions on implementation of the economic zones. Government officials and businessmen of the two countries are set to hold further talks at a border trade expo to be held in December in Muse.<sup>83</sup>

A coastal road stretching 274 kilometers (170 miles) from Rakhine State’s Thandwe to Gaw Yin Gyi Island in Ayeyarwady Region’s Ngapudaw Township will be built at a cost of

around 300 billion kyats (\$187 million), according to Ayeyarwady Region Minister for Finance and Planning Htay Win. The opening ceremony of the first segment of the road, Pathein Bridge No. 2 in Ayeyarwady Region's capital Pathein, took place on October 27, 2018. In November, Kyuauk Kyun Bridge linking Rakhine State and Ayeyarwady Region was opened to the public. Two more bridges are yet to be built in Ayeyarwady Region to connect it to the beaches in Rakhine. Those bridges will be built by the construction ministry, said Htay Win. The coastal road will create a short-cut for traveling between Ayeyarwady Region and Rakhine State and will also enable beach-to-beach travel between Myanmar's most famous beaches. The road will also improve security along Myanmar's western coast as the waters have been known to be used by the stateless Rohingya, who are banned from traveling outside Rakhine State, to access other parts of Myanmar via Ayeyarwady Region's beaches.<sup>84</sup>

On November 22, Hong Kong-listed VPower Group inked a deal with the government to operate a power project in Mandalay Region. The company signed a power purchase agreement with the Ministry of Electricity and Energy's Electric Power Generation Enterprise to run a 90MW gas engine power plant in Myingyan for five years. The company said it plans to build the power plant with an installed capacity of 109.7MW and expects to start commercial operation next February.<sup>85</sup>

On November 23, Hong Kong-listed China Communications Construction Co. Ltd ("CCCC") announced that it has nearly finalized its proposal for the development of \$1.5 billion (2.4 trillion kyats) worth of initial infrastructure for the controversial "New Yangon City" project across the Yangon River from Myanmar's commercial capital, according to a government body established to oversee the project. The proposal is expected to define the scope of nine initial infrastructure projects in the first phase of the mega-project, including a six-lane bridge spanning the Hlaing River from Kyinmyindine Kannar Road near Bargaya Road to the New City; a two-lane bridge spanning the Pan Hlaing River alongside the existing Pan Hlaing River Bridge; 26 km of arterial roads connecting the major nodes of the new city; basic infrastructure and utilities for the five new Resettlement Village Towns; infrastructure for the first 10 sq. km of a planned industrial Estate; power distribution and transmission facilities; a water-treatment plant for the entire New City; a wastewater-treatment plant; and a water intake facility near the Toe River approximately 32 km from New Yangon City plus a water main distribution line. The first phase includes plans to develop 20,000 acres of land, and claims this will generate 2 million jobs. The company says the cost of initial infrastructure work in the first phase is expected to exceed \$1.5 billion. The company and the Chinese firm signed a framework agreement in April this year.<sup>86</sup> The government is building Yangon Dry Port and upgrading Yangon-Mandalay rail tracks for supporting the logistics industry in the country.<sup>87</sup>

On December 1, 2018, Minister of Planning and Finance Soe Win announced that a Project Bank of Public Investment Programs to facilitate major project proposals from the States and Regions has been established under the Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan ("MSDP"). The objective of the MSDP is to connect and align the country's numerous policies and institutions for the purpose of generating implementable solutions to achieve "genuine, inclusive and transformational economic growth." Encompassing five goals, 28 strategies and 238 action plans, the MSDP will also align with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, the 12

Point Economic Policy of the Union of Myanmar and initiatives of the ASEAN Economic Community.<sup>88</sup>

During Ram Nath Kovind’s visit to Myanmar from December 10 to 14, the President of India reaffirmed its commitment to support Myanmar in its efforts to develop and build infrastructure, including the Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Transport Project, under the rubric of the “Act East” and the “Neighborhood First” policies. The Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Transport Project is a transport project on the Indian border to connect the eastern Indian seaport of Kolkata to Sittwe seaport in Rakhine State, by sea from Sittwe seaport to Paletwa in Chinn State, and to the Mizoram State in Northeast India. Currently, construction is occurring on the road from Patewa to Zorinpui on the Indian border and both sides have agreed to facilitate movement of project personnel, construction material and equipment across the border. A memorandum of understanding was also signed on the “Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Transport Project” for appointing a port operator, which would enable the Sittwe Port and Paletwa IWT infrastructure to be used commercially.<sup>89</sup>

On December 10, China celebrated the erection of the railway arch bridge across the Nujiang River (known as Thanlwin/Salween River) in Yunnan Province. The bridge is part of the 220-km-long Dali-Ruili railway which constitutes an important section of the China-Myanmar railway corridor.<sup>90</sup>

On December 21, the German Development Bank, KfW, extended 5 million additional euros to Myanmar for improvement of the country’s agricultural transport infrastructure. Under the financing agreements signed between the bank and Myanmar’s Ministry of Construction in Naypyitaw on December 21, the program will be implemented within the framework of German Financial Cooperation via KfW Development Bank by the Department of Rural Roads Development of the Ministry of Construction and includes upgrading rural roads for the improvement of agricultural products in the southern part of Shan state. So far, Germany has provided Myanmar with a 47 million euro grant aid for developing rural areas by upgrading and constructing rural roads and bridges.<sup>91</sup>

### **C. Land Seizures**

The government has been urged to “keep pressure on squatters” in 2019.<sup>92</sup> A Member of Parliament of Mandalay region has argued that “as much as 90 percent of the squatters are trespassing intentionally,” in some cases for “business purposes.”<sup>93</sup> The MP also expressed concern about overcrowding and rampant drug use by such squatters.<sup>94</sup>

According to government paperwork, approximately one third of Myanmar’s land is “vacant,” “virgin” or “fallow.”<sup>95</sup> However, this view is inconsistent with what observers see – much of this allegedly vacant land is being used for “farms, gardens, orchards, productive forests and communal village land” in ethnic areas “with minimal intrusion by the state.”<sup>96</sup> There is concern that recent amendments to the 2012 Vacant, Fallow and Virgin Lands Management Law “could criminalize and dispossess millions of smallholder farmers in the ethnic borderlands, despite the apparent exemption of customary land use systems from the law.”<sup>97</sup> The amendments require that anyone occupying or using land classified as vacant, virgin or fallow must apply for a land use permit, or risk being treated as a trespasser, which can lead to up to two years of jail

time and a monetary fine.<sup>98</sup> The permits need to be renewed every 30 years and cannot be sold or transferred, even within family groups.<sup>99</sup> A last minute change to the amendment exempts “customary lands designated under traditional culture of ethnic peoples’ from the law’s provisions,” but this is an abstract concept with no legal definitions, and commentators suggest that relying on this provision is a “risky gamble.”<sup>100</sup>

A motion urging the government to “systematically implement town and village planning” will be discussed in the lower house of Myanmar’s Parliament.<sup>101</sup> The MP who submitted the motion indicated that, as part of this process, vacant and fallow land would need to be developed, which may include removing squatters from that land.<sup>102</sup> The number of squatters is increasing as a result of the housing shortage, and this increase in squatters is “resulting in fights between squatters and landlords, which could discourage foreign investment.”<sup>103</sup>

In Mandalay Region, the Ministry of Defence returned over 2,000 hectares of farmland to its original owners.<sup>104</sup> The land was returned to farmers along with temporary land use certificates.<sup>105</sup> In one of the Townships in which land was returned, Pyin Oo Lwin, the plan is to return all seized farmland to original owners by December.<sup>106</sup> The slight delay was caused by ownership disputes over some of the land.<sup>107</sup> An estimated 3,600 hectares of land in Mandalay Region still needs to be returned.<sup>108</sup>

Also in Mandalay, local officials indicated that they will start addressing the problems in rental housing on Strand Road.<sup>109</sup> In particular, some vacant units have become occupied by illegal squatters who do not pay rent, and some squatters are renting out their units to others.<sup>110</sup> Of the 1,500 units, approximately 500 are legally occupied.<sup>111</sup> It is estimated that approximately 3,000 people live in rental units without the required ownership documents.<sup>112</sup>

Meanwhile, residents living near the Latpadaung copper mining area are on high alert after learning that the Chinese mining company that runs the mine has submitted an application to carry out a land inspection of a second potential mining site.<sup>113</sup> Locals are worried about the possibility of environmental impacts and land confiscation.<sup>114</sup> The proposed site is spread over approximately 40,000 acres of land.<sup>115</sup>

The NLD has indicated that it will “take action” against the Karenni State Chief Minister after he was accused of breaking party rules by stealing a small quantity of land from a Catholic church compound in his constituency.<sup>116</sup> The Committee charged with examining the accusations concluded that there were no broken laws although the Chief Minister had failed to follow party policy, especially relating to public relations and negotiation procedures.<sup>117</sup>

In Yangon Region, land owners from the May Yu Housing compound indicated that they will “open a protest camp” if they do not receive compensation for their land by the end of December.<sup>118</sup> The plan was revealed by a 70 person protest in front of the Department of Urban and Housing Development over the land seized by the military.<sup>119</sup> This is their 29<sup>th</sup> protest. Some land owners received compensation in June 2016 for the seizure, but many remain uncompensated.<sup>120</sup>

In Rakhine State, over 1,000 activists marched to demand the right to control certain natural resources in their local area.<sup>121</sup> Activists claim that locals do not receive the benefits of

the exploitation of natural resources and that frequently they are “kept in the dark” about potential projects.<sup>122</sup> The government reportedly continues to ignore the activists’ demands.<sup>123</sup>

Locals near the Dawei Special Economic Zone have complained that they were not informed about the details of the purchase of their land which, in many cases, was purchased through brokers.<sup>124</sup> The source of the compensation the locals were provided is not known, and it is unclear whether the appropriate procedures and protocols were followed.<sup>125</sup>

#### **IV. Peace Talks and Ethnic Violence**

##### **A. Ethnic Violence**

In Kutkai Township, northern Shan State, the Tatmadaw released six Ta’ang locals, which they arrested in late November following the detainment of an army officer by the Ta’ang National Liberation Army (“TNLA”) on November 20, according to local sources.<sup>126</sup> Among those released was a woman who gave birth just 10 days prior and her two-year-old daughter.<sup>127</sup> The Tatmadaw continues to detain four others, one of whom is said to be the girlfriend of the Tatmadaw captain who is currently being detained by the TNLA.<sup>128</sup> The detained locals have no involvement with the TNLA, according to the village head of Pan Ku in Kutkai Township.<sup>129</sup>

Three civilians have died and two others were injured during a clash between the Shan State Army-North and the Shan State Army-South in a village in Shan State’s Hsipaw Township on November 23.<sup>130</sup> On November 15, a clash between the Tatmadaw and the Shan State Army – North forced over 500 people from their homes in Nar Low and Meng Kai villages.<sup>131</sup> The Shan State Army - South clashed with the TNLA on November 21 and 22 in Namtu Township and military tensions are still high in the area.<sup>132</sup>

In mid-December, the RCSS said two soldiers were attacked by a group of Pa-O they had stopped in Loilem Township. The RCSS said the Pa-O were members of another armed group in the area and that one of them is a spy for the Myanmar military.<sup>133</sup> The RCSS said the soldiers fired in self-defense, killing four people and one of the soldiers had been stabbed in the head and died of his wounds.<sup>134</sup> The Pa-O National Liberation Organization (the “PNLO”) claims that the Pa-O were civilians searching for a new water source for their village when the RCSS soldiers detained them.<sup>135</sup> The PNLO says other Pa-O from the village — Seng Ngum, also known as Namp Hu — came to demand their release and that the RCSS soldiers fatally shot five and wounded three others.<sup>136</sup> Locals said tensions between the area’s Pa-O and Shan communities have been high since the shootings, with angry comments flying back and forth on Facebook.<sup>137</sup> The RCSS said it was open to a request from Pa-O leaders to jointly investigate the violence but added that they had yet to make arrangements to do so.<sup>138</sup>

On December 21, 2018, the Tatmadaw announced a unilateral four-month ceasefire in Kachin and Shan states, in order to allow negotiations with ethnic armed groups.<sup>139</sup> It was unprecedented because only once in Myanmar’s recent conflict history has such an initiative been taken.<sup>140</sup> On January 18, 2013, when the military unilaterally announced a temporary cessation of hostilities in and around Lejayang in Kachin State, it had no specific time frame and was confined to a small geographical area.<sup>141</sup> Currently the truce will expire on April 30, 2019.<sup>142</sup> However, the Tatmadaw said their soldiers stationed in Shan state were attacked by troops from



the Shan State Army – South (the “SSA-S”) — also known as the Restoration Council of Shan State.<sup>143</sup> A statement from the Office of the Commander-in-Chief said, “The Tatmadaw will strongly stand by its...ceasefire declaration and respond in line with the law to the attacks of the SSA.”<sup>144</sup> The Tatmadaw also hit out at local news outlets for publishing reports of skirmishes between itself and other armed groups, threatening “action in accordance with the law.”<sup>145</sup> Despite the declaration of a ceasefire, violence between opposing armed groups continues in Myanmar’s border regions.<sup>146</sup>

## **B. Peace Talks**

The government’s Peace Commission and the Ta’ang National Liberation Army (“TNLA”), Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army, and Arakan Army, all of which comprise the Northern Alliance, reached an agreement on October 31 to reduce clashes in Kachin and northern Shan States.<sup>147</sup> The meeting also included discussion on the possibility of the three groups signing the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (“NCA”) and joining the national peace process. Another meeting is scheduled for December.

During a three-day meeting in Yangon in early November, signatory groups of the NCA sought the participation of non-signatory ethnic armed groups in the peace process.<sup>148</sup> “It’s everyone’s wish for non-signatory groups of the NCA to participate in the peace process,” Salai Lian Hmung Sakhong, representative of ethnic groups which signed the NCA and deputy chair of Chin National Front (“CNF”) said during the opening of the three-day talks. “We [NCA members] are working to negotiate with the non-signatories. Please take into consideration from all sides to get these groups involved,” he added.

In early November, Karen National Union (“KNU”) held a five-day central standing committee emergency meeting to resolve issues involving the implementation of the NCA and ongoing peace talks with the government.<sup>149</sup> The KNU had previously temporarily suspended participation in the peace process until consultations with its senior members could be held.<sup>150</sup> By the end of the emergency meeting, the KNU had failed to resolve issues relating to its participation in the peace process and determined to continue its temporary non-participation in talks with the government.<sup>151</sup>

Government peace negotiators and representatives of the RCSS met informally in Chiang Mai, northern Thailand on November 16 as part of a series of informal peace talks led by the government with the RCSS, the KNU, the Kachin Independent Organization (“KIO”) and the Karenni National Progressive Party (“KNPP”).<sup>152</sup> The RCSS had halted participation in discussions with the Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Committee, the implementing body of the NCA, earlier in November, following the KNU’s decision not to take part in formal peace negotiations. The discussion on November 16 focused on finding new approaches to moving forward with the peace process within the NCA framework.

The Myanmar government will hold another peace conference in December or in early 2019 to maintain the framework of holding two rounds of talks each year.<sup>153</sup> The talks are usually attended by representatives of the government, Tatmadaw and the ten armed ethnic groups that have signed the NCA. Attendance could be complicated for the next round of talks since the KNU and RCSS have temporarily suspended participation in the peace process.

After a meeting with members of the Myanmar government's Peace Commission, the AA, Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army ("MNDAA") and TNLA have expressed a willingness to stop fighting and enter formal negotiations with the government.<sup>154</sup> The three groups also expressed the hope that the Tatmadaw would also pledge to end the fighting. In a statement, the Peace Commission said, "Negotiations will continue with the TNLA, AA and MNDAA in order to reach bilateral ceasefire agreements and have political discussions with them."<sup>155</sup> China has been brokering informal talks between the Peace Commission and the three groups since August 2017.

The National Reconciliation and Peace Center ("NRPC") pledged to continue to strive towards the participation of the eight remaining non-signatory ethnic armed organizations in political dialogue, while strengthening the ceasefire already achieved with ten armed organizations.<sup>156</sup> The NRPC made the pledge in a press release issued in response to a Tatmadaw announcement that the military will suspend of all its military action against armed groups in operation areas in five military command regions for over four months starting from December 21 until April 30, 2019. Welcoming the military's announcement, the NRPC stressed the importance of holding discussions during the peace process to reduce mutual concerns between the armed forces and the armed organizations on military matters.

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- <sup>4</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>5</sup> Dhaka Tribune: <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/rohingya-crisis/2018/11/18/rohingya-repatriation-relocation-plans-pushed-back-to-2019>
- <sup>6</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>7</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>8</sup> BBC: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-46312889>
- <sup>9</sup> Dhaka Tribune: <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/rohingya-crisis/2018/11/18/rohingya-repatriation-relocation-plans-pushed-back-to-2019>
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- <sup>11</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>12</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>13</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>14</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>15</sup> Lexology, December 6, 2018: <https://www.lexology.com/library/detail.aspx?g=f6a3d43f-e409-492b-a706-1547f914bcfc>.
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- <sup>18</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>19</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>20</sup> The Myanmar Times, Nov. 13, 2018, <https://www.mmtimes.com/news/parliament-pass-tax-bill-curb-corruption.html>.
- <sup>21</sup> *Id.*
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- <sup>23</sup> The Irrawaddy, Dec. 6, 2018, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/anti-graft-commission-chairman-vows-fight-corruption-completely.html>.
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- <sup>25</sup> The Irrawaddy, Dec. 7, 2018, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/govt-departments-corruption-prevention-units.html>.
- <sup>26</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>27</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>28</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>29</sup> *Id.*
- <sup>30</sup> The Irrawaddy, Dec. 12, 2018, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/anti-corruption-commission-open-branches-yangon-mandalay-next-year.html>.
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