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## Burma profile

### A chronology of key events

**1057** - King Anawrahta founds the first unified Burmese state at Pagan and adopts Theravada Buddhism.

**1287** - Mongols under Kublai Khan conquer Pagan.

**1531** - Toungoo dynasty, with Portuguese help, reunites Burma.

**1755** - Alaungpaya founds the Konbaung dynasty.

**1824-26** - First Anglo-Burmese war ends with the Treaty of Yandabo, according to which Burma ceded the Arakan coastal strip, between Chittagong and Cape Negrais, to British India.

**1852** - Britain annexes lower Burma, including Rangoon, following the second Anglo-Burmese war.

**1885-86** - Britain captures Mandalay after a brief battle; Burma becomes a province of British India.

**1937** - Britain separates Burma from India and makes it a crown colony.

### Japanese occupation

**1942** - Japan invades and occupies Burma with some help from the Japanese-trained Burma Independence Army, which later transforms itself into the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL) and resists Japanese rule.

**1945** - Britain liberates Burma from Japanese occupation with help from the AFPFL, led by Aung San.

**1947** - Aung San and six members of his interim government assassinated by political opponents led by U Saw, a nationalist rival of Aung San's. U Nu, foreign minister in Ba Maw's government, which ruled Burma during the Japanese occupation, asked to head the AFPFL and the government.

### Independence

**1948** - Burma becomes independent with U Nu as prime minister.

**Mid-1950s** - U Nu, together with Indian Prime Minister Nehru, Indonesian President Sukarno, Yugoslav President Tito and Egyptian President Nasser co-found the Movement of Non-Aligned States.

**1958-60** - Caretaker government, led by army Chief of Staff General Ne Win, formed following a split in the ruling AFPFL party.

**1960** - U Nu's party faction wins decisive victory in elections, but his promotion of Buddhism as the state religion and his tolerance of separatism angers the military.

### One-party, military-led state

**1962** - U Nu's faction ousted in military coup led by Gen Ne Win, who abolishes the federal system and inaugurates "the Burmese

Way to Socialism" - nationalising the economy, forming a single-party state with the Socialist Programme Party as the sole political party, and banning independent newspapers.

**1974** - New constitution comes into effect, transferring power from the armed forces to a People's Assembly headed by Ne Win and other former military leaders; body of former United Nations secretary-general U Thant returned to Burma for burial.

**1975** - Opposition National Democratic Front formed by regionally-based minority groups, who mounted guerrilla insurgencies.

**1981** - Ne Win relinquishes the presidency to San Yu, a retired general, but continues as chairman of the ruling Socialist Programme Party.

**1982** - Law designating people of non-indigenous background as "associate citizens" in effect bars such people from public office.

#### **Riots and repression**

**1987** - Currency devaluation wipes out many people's savings and triggers anti-government riots.

**1988** - Thousands of people are killed in anti-government riots. The State Law and Order Restoration Council (Slorc) is formed.

**1989** - Slorc declares martial law, arrests thousands of people, including advocates of democracy and human rights, renames Burma Myanmar, with the capital, Rangoon, becoming Yangon. NLD leader Aung San Suu Kyi, the daughter of Aung San, is put under house arrest.

#### **Thwarted elections**

**1990** - Opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) wins landslide victory in general election, but the result is ignored by the military.

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**1991** - Aung San Suu Kyi awarded Nobel Peace Prize for her commitment to peaceful change.

**1992** - Than Shwe replaces Saw Maung as Slorc chairman, prime minister and defence minister. Several political prisoners freed in bid to improve Burma's international image.

**1995** - Aung San Suu Kyi is released from house arrest after six years.

**1996** - Aung San Suu Kyi attends first NLD congress since her release; Slorc arrests more than 200 delegates on their way to party congress.

**1997** - Burma admitted to Association of South East Asian Nations (Asean); Slorc renamed State Peace and Development Council (SPDC).

#### **Release of pro-democracy supporters**

**1998** - 300 NLD members released from prison; ruling council refuses to comply with NLD deadline for convening of parliament; student demonstrations broken up.

**1999** - Aung San Suu Kyi rejects ruling council conditions to visit her British husband, Michael Aris, who dies of cancer in UK.

**2000 September** - Ruling council lifts restrictions on movements of Aung San Suu Kyi and senior NLD members.

**2000 October** - Aung San Suu Kyi begins secret talks with ruling council.

**2001** Ruling council releases some 200 pro-democracy activists. Government says releases reflect progress in talks with opposition NLD leader Aung San Suu Kyi who remains under house arrest.

**2001 February** - Burmese army, Shan rebels clash on Thai border.

**2001** June - Thai Prime Minister Shinawatra visits, says relations are back on track.

**2001** November - Chinese President Jiang Zemin visits, issues statement supporting government, reportedly urges economic reform.

#### **Conflicting signals**

**2002** May - Pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi released after nearly 20 months of house arrest.

Aung San Suu Kyi taken into "protective custody" after clashes between her supporters and those of government.

**2003** August - Khin Nyunt becomes prime minister. He proposes to hold convention in 2004 on drafting new constitution as part of "road map" to democracy.

**2003** November - Five senior NLD leaders released from house arrest after visit of UN human rights envoy.

**2004** January - Government and Karen National Union - most significant ethnic group fighting government - agree to end hostilities.

**2004** May - Constitutional convention begins, despite boycott by National League for Democracy (NLD) whose leader Aung San Suu Kyi remains under house arrest. The convention adjourns in July.

#### **Prime minister ousted**

**2004** October - Khin Nyunt is replaced as prime minister amid reports of a power struggle. He is placed under house arrest.

**2004** November - Leading dissidents are freed as part of a release of thousands of prisoners, including Min Ko Naing, who led the 1988 pro-democracy student demonstrations.

**2005** July - Asean announces that Burma has turned down the 2006 chairmanship of the regional grouping.

**2005** November - Burma says its seat of government is moving to a new site near the central town of Pyinmana.

**2007** January - China and Russia veto a draft US resolution at the UN Security Council urging Burma to stop persecuting minority and opposition groups.

**2007** April - Burma and North Korea restore diplomatic ties, 24 years after Rangoon broke them off, accusing North Korean agents of staging a deadly bomb attack against the visiting South Korean president.

**2007** May - Aung San Suu Kyi's house arrest is extended for another year.

**2007** June - In a rare departure from its normally neutral stance, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) accuses the government of abusing the Burmese people's rights.

#### **Public unrest**

**2007** August - Wave of public dissent sparked by fuel price hikes. Dozens of activists are arrested.

**2007** September - Military government declares 14 years of constitutional talks complete and closes the National Convention.

Buddhist monks hold a series of anti-government protests. Aung San Suu Kyi is allowed to leave her house to greet monks demonstrating in Rangoon. It is her first public appearance since 2003.

Authorities begin to crack down on protests, but demonstrations continue.

UN envoy Ibrahim Gambari meets opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

**2007** October - Normality returns to Rangoon amid heavy military presence. Monks are absent, after thousands are reportedly

rounded up.

After some delay, UN Security Council deplores military crackdown on peaceful protesters.

**2008** January- A series of bomb blasts hits the country. State media blame "insurgent destructionists", including ethnic Karen rebels.

**2008** April - Government publishes proposed new constitution, which allocates a quarter of seats in parliament to the military and bans opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi from holding office.

#### **Cyclone**

**2008** May - Cyclone Nargis hits the low-lying Irrawaddy delta. Some estimates put the death toll as high as 134,000.

Referendum on new constitution proceeds amid humanitarian crisis following cyclone. Government says 92% voted in favour of draft constitution and insists it can cope with cyclone aftermath without foreign help.

Junta renews Aung San Suu Kyi's house arrest.

**2008** November - Dozens of political activists given sentences of up to 65 years in series of secretive trials.

**2008** December - Government signs deal with consortium of four foreign firms to pipe natural gas into neighbouring China, despite protests from human rights groups.

**2009** January - Thailand expels hundreds of members of Burma's Muslim Rohingya minority who appeared off its coast. Burma denies the minority's existence. Several hundred Rohingyas are subsequently rescued from boats off the coast of Indonesia.

UN envoy Ibrahim Gambari meets opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi for the first time in a year.

**2009** March- Senior US State Department official Stephen Blake visits for talks with Foreign Minister Nyan Win in what the US calls a routine visit. The Burmese government said it was notable given his seniority.

**2009** April - The National League for Democracy (NLD) main opposition group offers to take part in planned elections if the government frees all political prisoners, changes the constitution and admits international observers.

**2009** May - The EU extends the 2006 sanctions for another year, but adds that they can be reviewed in the event of moves towards democracy.

UN and aid agencies say hundreds of thousands in the Irrawaddy Delta still need assistance a year after Cyclone Nargis. The UN says Burma now allows it to bring in all the staff it needs.

#### **Aung San Suu Kyi trial**

**2009** August - Opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi is convicted of breaching conditions of her house arrest, following visit by an uninvited US national in May. The initial sentence of three years' imprisonment is commuted to 18 months' house arrest.

**2009** September - US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announces plans for engagement with military rulers.

**2009** October - Aung San Suu Kyi begins talks with Burma's military leaders and is allowed to meet Western diplomats.

**2010** February - The authorities free NLD vice-chairman Tin Oo. Aung San Suu Kyi's deputy had spent more than a decade in prison or under house arrest.

**2010** March - Government announces that long-awaited election laws have been passed, with provisions for an electoral commission hand-picked by the junta.

NLD votes to boycott polls. Splinter party - National Democratic Front (NDF) - later gains legal status and plans to compete in

polls.

**2010** October - Government changes country's flag, national anthem and official name.

**2010** November - Main military-backed party, the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), claims resounding victory in first election for 20 years. Opposition groups allege widespread fraud and the election is widely condemned as a sham. The junta says the election marks the transition from military rule to a civilian democracy.

A week after the election, Aung San Suu Kyi - who had been prevented from taking part - is released from house arrest.

**2011** January - Government authorises internet connection for Aung San Suu Kyi.

#### **Junta retires to wings**

**2011** March - Thein Sein is sworn in as president of a new, nominally civilian government.

**2011** August - President Thein Sein meets Aung San Suu Kyi in Nay Pyi Taw.

**2011** September - President Thein Sein suspends construction of controversial Chinese-funded Myitsone hydroelectric dam, in move seen as showing greater openness to public opinion.

**2011** October - Some political prisoners are freed as part of a general amnesty. New labour laws allowing unions are passed.

**2011** November - Pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi says she will stand for election to parliament, as her party rejoins the political process.

**2011** December - US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visits, meets Aung San Suu Kyi and holds talks with President Thein Sein. US offers to improve relations if democratic reforms continue.

President Thein Sein signs law allowing peaceful demonstrations for the first time; NLD re-registers as a political party in advance of by-elections for parliament due to be held early in 2012.

Burmese authorities agree truce deal with rebels of Shan ethnic group and orders military to stop operations against ethnic Kachin rebels.

**2012** January - Government signs ceasefire with rebels of Karen ethnic group.

**2012** April - NLD candidates sweep the board in parliamentary by-elections, with Aung San Suu Kyi elected. The European Union suspends all non-military sanctions against Burma for a year. EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton, British Prime Minister David Cameron and UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon visit for talks on moving the democracy process forwards.

**2012** May - Manmohan Singh pays first official visit by an Indian prime minister since 1987. He signs 12 agreements to strengthen trade and diplomatic ties, specifically providing for border area development and an Indian credit line.

**2012** August - President Thein Sein sets up commission to investigate violence between Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims in the west of the country. Dozens have died and thousands of people have been displaced.

Burma abolishes pre-publication censorship, meaning that reporters no longer have to submit their copy to state censors. In a major cabinet reshuffle President Thein Sein replaces hardline Information Minister Kyaw Hsan with moderate Aung Kyi, the military's negotiator with opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

**2012** September - Moe Thee Zun, the leader of student protests in 1988, returns from exile after Burma removed 2,082 people from its blacklist.

President Thein Sein tells the BBC he would accept opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi as president if she is elected.

**2012** November - Visiting European Commission chief Jose Manuel Barroso offers Burma more than \$100m in development aid.

Around 90 people are killed in a renewed bout of communal violence between Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims.

US President Barack Obama visits to offer "the hand of friendship" in return for more reforms. He urges reconciliation with the Rohingya minority.

**2013** January-February - The Burmese army launches an attack that surrounds Laiza, the biggest town controlled by Kachin rebels near the Chinese border, breaking a short-lived government ceasefire. The government and rebels reach agreement to disengage and begin political dialogue after Chinese-sponsored talks in the southern Chinese town of Ruili.

**2013** March - Rioting has between Muslims and Buddhists in Meiktila, south of Mandalay, leaves at least ten people dead and several mosques burned down.

**2013** April - Four private daily newspapers appear for the first time in almost 50 years as the state monopoly ends, in line with the August 2012 abolition of pre-publication censorship.

Sixteen papers have so far been granted licences, although only four were ready to publish on Monday.

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