

# Myanmar sliding towards conflict

## Report sees 'fear, distrust and hostility' spreading in the country

REUTERS, Geneva

Myanmar is sliding towards conflict as the government backtracks on pledges to protect human rights and "fear, distrust and hostility" spread, a UN investigator said in a report published on Monday.

Yanghee Lee, UN special rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar, saw "no improvement" for displaced Rohingya Muslims since her previous visit last July to investigate allegations of mistreatment of them by the Buddhist majority in Rakhine state.

She observed "a growing atmosphere of fear, distrust and hostility" during her latest visit in January, when she was publicly denounced as a "whore" and a "bitch" by a prominent Buddhist monk.

Lee witnessed "abysmal" conditions at a camp where displaced Muslims were being held "for their own security", Rakhine's chief minister told her.

"Many people told the Special Rapporteur that they had two options: to stay and die or to leave by boat," said Lee's report to the UN Human Rights Council.

Human rights violations in Rakhine were

### UN REPORT ON MYANMAR

- No improvement for displaced Rohingya Muslims
- Buddhist majority-ethnic minority tensions could rise

causing a "domino effect" in the region as people were smuggled or trafficked out to Thailand or Malaysia.

The mostly stateless minority was likely to be the main loser from a new law initiated by the Rakhine National Party that restricts political party membership to full and naturalised citizens, she said.

Moreover, Myanmar's Constitutional Tribunal had stripped voting rights in an upcoming constitutional referendum from all temporary registration card holders. President Thein Sein has said these cards would expire this month.

Lee said this was a backward step for reform and called for "all habitual residents of Myanmar" to be able to vote in the election and

referendum.

"The government should focus on creating an empowered population, including the youth and women, to ensure that a new generation can work together to create a prosperous and stable country and reverse the current slide towards extreme nationalism, religious hatred and conflict," Lee wrote.

Ethnic tensions could worsen because of draft bills on religious conversion, inter-faith marriage, monogamy and population control, she added.

There was also an alarming escalation of violence near the Chinese border, prompting a state of emergency that Lee said must observe "strict accountability and safeguards for human rights".

She cited information that Myanmar's security forces were still recruiting children and that the number of political prisoners in Myanmar could be "much higher" than the official total of 27.

She also cited the use of live ammunition by the police, restrictions on media and evictions of farmers protesting against a proposed copper mine.

# Tokyo firebombing anniversary marked

BBC ONLINE

Japan has marked the 70th anniversary of the firebombing of Tokyo by US forces that killed more than 100,000 people during World War Two.

On 10 March, 1945, American B-29 planes rained down bombs destroying large parts of Tokyo.

The death toll was higher than the 70,000 people that died in the Nagasaki atomic bomb attack the same year.

The incident receives relatively little attention in Japan, overshadowed by the atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

On Tuesday, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, and several hundred others, gathered in Tokyo Memorial Hall.

"We will humbly face the past and will do our best to contribute to the world's eternal peace by keeping the lessons from the tragic war in our heart," Mr Abe said at the ceremony.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel is in Japan for a two-day visit and met with Abe.

Yesterday she touched on the sensitivities surrounding Japan's relations with China and South Korea, urging Japan to resolve the issue of "comfort women" - Japan's wartime military brothels.

On Monday, Mrs Merkel told a news conference that Japan should follow Germany's example and that settling wartime history was "a prerequisite for reconciliation".

Merkel's comments come as Japan prepared to mark the 70th anniversary of its defeat in WW2.

# RSS Defamation Court rejects Rahul's plea to quash case

THE HINDU ONLINE

The Bombay High Court yesterday dismissed a petition filed by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi seeking quashing of defamation complaint against him. He had made an election speech in Bhiwandi in the neighbouring Thane district, wherein he had accused "RSS people" of "killing Mahatma Gandhi."

Rajesh Kunte, an RSS functionary from Bhiwandi, had filed a complaint against him in the Bhiwandi court. The Congress leader had sought quashing of the complaint after the Bhiwandi court had summoned him for evidence last year.

After the judgement, Rahul will now have to remain present in the Bhiwandi court for the defamation complaint trial.

Rahul had said in his petition before the Bombay High Court that the complaint against him was motivated and mala fide.

He had said during the final arguments that there are books in support of this theory, which have explained it. He said that no criminal case was made out against him.

The Maharashtra government too had opposed the petition filed by Rahul, on technical grounds. The government counsel had told the court that since the lower court was already conducting trial in the matter, Rahul should remain present there are lead the evidence.



### EDU REFORM PROTESTS

Police hit a student protester during violence in Letpadan March 10, 2015. Inset, Student protesters fight with police while trying to break a police line. Myanmar police beat students, monks and journalists with batons yesterday as they dispersed a protest against a proposed new education law after a standoff that lasted more than a week, a Reuters witness said. About 100 people were detained.

PHOTO: REUTERS



### BBC sacks Top Gear Clarkson

BBC ONLINE

Top Gear host Jeremy Clarkson has been suspended by the BBC "following a fracas" with a producer.

The corporation said the 54-year-old presenter had been suspended "pending an investigation".

"No one else has been suspended. Top Gear will not be broadcast this Sunday," it said.

Clarkson was given what he called his "final warning" last May after claims he used a racist word while filming the popular BBC motoring show.

At the time, he said the BBC had told him he would be sacked if he made "one more offensive remark, anywhere, at any time".

The presenter himself has remained silent, however last month he tweeted a post saying a "new presenter for Top Gear" was wanted.

Former Top Gear presenter Chris Goffey told BBC Radio 5 live while discussions on the programme sometimes became heated when he worked on the show, "it must have been something fairly serious behind the scenes to warrant his immediate suspension."

Clarkson has courted controversy on several occasions during his time hosting Top Gear.

An incident in Argentina where the presenters and crew were forced to flee the country after trouble erupted over a number plate reading H982 FLK - which some suggested referred to the Falkland conflict of 1982.

Last year the show was also censured by Ofcom for breaching broadcasting rules after Clarkson used a derogatory word for Asian people during its Burma special programme.

# Call for first woman UN chief grows



AP, United Nations

At a private working lunch for the five most powerful members of the United Nations security council, the conversation turned to the question of the next UN secretary-general.

A European ambassador reminded colleagues of a General Assembly resolution nearly as old as the 70-year organization itself, a guiding document for a selection process for UN chief that has remained secretive and almost completely male. The January 1946 resolution says a "man of eminence and high attainment" should hold the post.

Perhaps, the ambassador suggested, some might want to add the words "or a woman."

No doubt. Just three female candidates have been included in past closed-door votes and straw polls that

the security council has used to make its choice for decades, but now two campaigns are launching to make sure the next "Your excellency" is a she.

Ban Ki-moon will remain in office through December 31, 2016, but the talk about his successor has already started.

"There have been eight men and no women. To me, it's time," said Jean Krasno, a lecturer at Yale who leads the new "Campaign to Elect a Woman Secretary-General." On Sunday, the campaign will launch WomanSG.org to feature around a dozen women it says are outstanding possible candidates with political experience. Every few weeks, another group of possible candidates will be posted online.

Next month, the international women's rights group Equality Now

will launch a similar Time for a Woman campaign, said the group's legal adviser, Antonia Kirkland.

Women that they're pointing out include Helen Clark, former New Zealand prime minister and the head of the UN Development Program; Bulgarian European commissioner Kristalina Georgieva; Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė; Danish Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt, and Chilean President Michelle Bachelet. German Chancellor Angela Merkel and IMF chief Christine Lagarde's name are also being considered.

A female secretary-general "will be a cherry on top," the head of the UN agency promoting equality for women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, told reporters Friday.

# Wikimedia sues NSA over mass surveillance prog

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Organisations including the Wikimedia Foundation, which runs Wikipedia, have filed a lawsuit against the NSA and the US Department of Justice over its surveillance programmes.

The lawsuit was filed on the organisations' behalf by the American Civil Liberties Union, and says that the agency's monitoring of internet traffic violates the First Amendment, which guarantees freedom of speech and association for Americans. The ACLU also says that the monitoring goes against the Fourth Amendment, which protects citizens from unreasonable search and seizure.

The complaint relates to the NSA's "Upstream" programme, which listened in on communications from people outside of the US. The programme allows the NSA to store and search through internet traffic, looking for what it says are dangerous keywords but without warrants.

"This kind of dragnet surveillance constitutes a massive invasion of privacy, and it

undermines the freedoms of expression and inquiry as well," said ACLU Staff Attorney Patrick Toomey. "Ordinary Americans shouldn't have to worry that the government is looking over their shoulders when they use the Internet."

As well as the Wikimedia Foundation, the ACLU is acting on behalf of the conservative Rutherford Institute, The Nation magazine, Amnesty International USA, PEN American Center, Human Rights Watch, the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, Global Fund for Women, and Washington Office on Latin America. Together, they argue that the monitoring interferes

with their ability to do their jobs, which require them to conduct sensitive communications with people around the world.

The lawsuit has been filed in Maryland, where the NSA is based. It partly follows a case in the supreme court, where the ACLU challenged the NSA's wiretapping programme, which the US Supreme Court dismissed in 2013 through a 5-4 vote.



WIKIPEDIA The Free Encyclopedia

# Our priority is country's security, not J&K tie-up

Says Indian HM Rajnath Singh

PTI, Ghaziabad

Amid the raging controversy over release of a Kashmiri separatist leader, Indian Union home minister Rajnath Singh yesterday asserted that his government's top priority was national security and not the continuance of the government in the state where BJP is an alliance partner.

His remarks come a day after Narendra Modi made it clear in Parliament that release of separatist leader Masarat Alam was not acceptable and that the government won't tolerate any compromise with the nation's integrity.

Singh maintained that he was not satisfied with the official version that the state government sent to his ministry earlier on this subject.



Tibetan exiles shout slogans during a protest outside the Chinese embassy in New Delhi, yesterday. Inset, cops detain a female protester. Hundreds of Tibetan exiles yesterday held a protest outside the Chinese embassy to mark the 56th anniversary of the Tibetan uprising against Chinese rule, according to the organizers of the protest.

# Pak has more nukes than India, reveals infographic

IANS, Washington

Pakistan had about 120 atomic weapons, 10 more than India, in its nuclear arsenal last year, according to a new interactive infographic unveiled by the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists.

Designed by the Bulletin, founded in 1945 by University of Chicago scientists who had helped develop the first atomic weapons in the Manhattan Project, the infographic tracks the number and history of nuclear weapons in the nine nuclear weapon states.

The Nuclear Notebook Interactive Infographic provides a visual representation of the Bulletin's famed Nuclear Notebook, which since 1987 has tracked the number and type of the world's nuclear arsenals.

Having reached a peak of over 65,000 in the late 1980s, the number of nuclear warheads has dropped significantly to a little over 10,000, but more countries now possess them, it shows.

According to the infographic, the United States and Russia both have about 5,000 weapons each.

France has 300, China 250, the United Kingdom 225 and Israel 80. North Korea has only conducted nuclear tests in 2006, 2009 and 2013.

"I don't think people truly understand just how many of these weapons there are in the world," said Rachel Bronson, executive director of the Bulletin.

"The Interactive is a way to see, immediately, who has nuclear weapons and when they got them, and how those numbers relate to each other. It is a startling experience, looking at those comparisons."

The authors of the Nuclear Notebook are Hans M. Kristensen and Robert S. Norris, both with the Federation of American Scientists.

In the most recent edition of the Nuclear Notebook, the authors discuss the Notebook's 28 year history and describe how sometimes host countries learned of foreign nuclear weapons on their soil from the Nuclear Notebook.

Over 28 years of weapons analysis, the Nuclear Notebook column has revealed surprise nuclear activity and spot-on arsenal estimates while becoming a daily resource for scholars, activists and journalists.

"We wanted a way to communicate those numbers visually, because the world we live may be data-driven, it's also visual," said John Mecklin, editor of the Bulletin.

"The new infographic makes this vital information even more accessible."