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Free all political prisoners, free Aung San Suu Kyi, free Burma.

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ASEAN ups the ante, but who for? - By LARRY JAGAN

<http://www.dvb.no/analysis/asean-ups-the-ante-but-who-for/10876>

Burma's foreign minister Nyan Win has left Vietnam early and is back in Naypyidaw relatively relieved that he has escaped further criticism from his counterparts at the series of regional meetings in the capital Hanoi this week. The foreign minister will not be representing his country at the regional security ministerial conference – the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) – which meets today on Friday, and which will certainly mention Burma.

In an unexpected move the Asian foreign ministers gave Burma a battering at this year's regional meeting of ministers, and it was Nyan Win who bore the brunt of the verbal bashing in the retreat and ministerial meetings – details of these are supposed to be confidential but have a habit of seeping out.

Many Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) ministers, who are more media-savvy than their more uncommunicative colleague from Burma, were happy to tell journalists details from these sessions – putting their spin on what was said. It is quite clear though that the ministers were keen to impress upon the Burmese that a lot was expected from the elections and that Burma and ASEAN's reputation was at stake.

"The Myanmar [Burma] minister got an earful from his ASEAN colleagues and was left in no doubt that they expected the election [later this year] to be credible and inclusive," the ASEAN Secretary General Surin Pitsuwan told me on the sidelines of the meeting.

Burma was pressed on the election date, the conduct of the election and the recent reports that the regime was planning to build nuclear weapons. There is also little doubt that behind the scenes the Asian diplomats are getting quite irritated by the Burmese minister's lack of openness in dealing with his colleagues. But there is no doubt that ASEAN knows that, for better or worse, they are stuck with Burma; and to make matters worse, it remains on Burma's terms. So all the Asian ministers can do is hope that the junta at least listens to their concerns.

"Once the generals take off their uniforms and they have to win votes and kiss babies and tend to local needs, their behaviour will change and the economy will gradually open up," Singapore's foreign minister George Yeo told journalists earlier this week after meeting his Burmese counterpart. "We don't see a sharp break from what it is today [after the elections] but we will see an important turning which will lead Myanmar into a different situation."

"The election's will offer a wonderful chance for Myanmar to prove that it has entered a new era and use the opportunity for national reconciliation," Indonesia's foreign minister Marty Natalegawa said in an interview. "We told Myanmar that the elections must be free and fair, and inclusive," he said, though added that the calls were not necessarily universal. It is clear that several countries in the region – Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand – all went on the record to stress the need for Burma to hold credible elections before the end of the year.

ASEAN views these forthcoming elections as a chance for transition to democracy in Burma. "ASEAN is very much interested in the peaceful national reconciliation in Myanmar and whatever happens there will have implications in ASEAN, positive or negative," said Surin.

"Myanmar listened intently to what was said, and nodded approvingly at times, and agreed to take the region's concerns back to the top guy," he added. But Burma's representative was far less talkative, and completely shunned the press, refusing to answer any questions at all. The journalists' constant questions on the election timing were all greeted with stony silence.

After persistent attempts, Nyan Win eventually told me that he was not the "election commission", implying that he could not decide the election date. He also told his ASEAN counterparts, behind closed doors, that when the party registration process was finalised, the electoral commission would announce the actual date, and that should be in the next couple of months, the Indonesian foreign minister confided to me. But he told the Bangladeshi foreign minister, Dipu Moni – with whom he had a 20-minute bilateral – that "we are still hoping that the election will be in October".

It is hard to understand the minister's optimism, for the Election Commission has to give 90 days' notice of the start of the

election campaigning, and allowing 15 days for electioneering, it would seem impossible for the election to be held before mid-November. "No one really knows the election date, not even the minister," a senior Burmese diplomat with the delegation told me during one of the coffee breaks.

But Burma's foreign minister is obviously preparing for the polls. He is going to become a politician, he told his ASEAN colleagues Surin Pitsuwan and George Yeo, who told me that Nyan Win was entering politics and intended to run for parliament. But when asked about whether he would become an MP, he waved away the question and either grunted or smiled. This attitude and behaviour will have to change, according to the ASEAN ministers, and maybe this will be start of a more fundamental shift of approach.

"By free and fair elections, we mean allowing the international press in to cover the elections, less restrictions and censorship on political material published by the local press and the political parties' propaganda," Natalegawa said. "But we haven't raised this issue directly with them."

The real issue that concerns the Asian foreign ministers is really how to present the Burmese election as credible, though Indonesia has a more active desire to influence Burma's approach because they recently went through their own transition to democracy, and understands that this not an easy process. "We naturally empathise with their situation," Natalegawa said.

Indonesia has taken the lead on this – as it did at the last summit in April – in pushing for international or regional observers or monitors. It was one of the key issues that ASEAN foreign ministers impressed upon the hapless Nyan Win earlier this week. "We suggested quite strongly to our Myanmar colleagues that they consider having ASEAN observers at the elections, bringing in members of the family into what is really their own domestic affair," Yeo told reporters in Hanoi.

"I prefer to use the term visitors and deliberately avoid the term observers or monitors," Natalegawa said. "But certainly it would be great to have parties other than the country itself being able to experience the election so we can have our own independent impressions," he said. That was what Indonesia has done since its first real democratic elections in 1998.

Of course Nyan Win is used to this – he has heard it all before – but perhaps the appeal to the regime was more insistent and stronger than ever before. "Most of the ministers persistently pressed this issue," Surin confided. And the Burmese minister promised to report it back to the top leaders, according to Natalegawa, Surin and Yeo. But when pressed – "You raised it last time and there has been no movement or answer" – Natalegawa smiled and said "we have to be hopeful."

Now Nyan Win is back in Burma, where he has a lot to do before he can turn his attention to the elections. He had to leave Hanoi early because he is accompanying junta supremo, Than Shwe, to India this weekend, and his return will be hosting the North Korean Foreign Minister Pak Ui Chun who will be visiting Burma next week. But there is no doubt that ASEAN this time gave Burma a piece of their mind – but the reality is that the regime does not care about their views – China and India are more important.

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China risks backlash with Myanmar investments – NGO

BEIJING (Reuters) - Chinese companies who have poured billions of dollars into energy or other projects in Myanmar risk a violent backlash if they do not address the concerns of local ethnic groups, the head of a non-government group said on Friday.

The risk could be worse in regions that are not ethnically Burmese that have for years run their own affairs and maintained their own armed forces, said Emma Leslie, Cambodia-based director for the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies.

Those people could resent deals that are cut between Chinese firms and Myanmar's central government without any perceived local benefit, she said.

Beijing is the former Burma's third-biggest foreign investor and trade partner. Chinese firms are building a port and energy pipelines that will feed oil and gas into China's landlocked southwest, and are involved in numerous other projects.

Despite the diplomatic cover China has provided for its isolated, military-run southern neighbour in the face of pressure from the West over a slew of human rights issues, Chinese investment has proved controversial in Myanmar.

Rights groups say Chinese companies ride roughshod over environmental concerns, and that Myanmar's army has forced people out to make way for China's investments.

In April, a series of bombs exploded at a controversial hydropower project site being jointly built by a Chinese company in northern Myanmar's Kachin state.

"There is a real concern that the grievances of ethnic communities along the China-Myanmar border is a real risk for Chinese investment," Leslie told the Foreign Correspondents Club of China. "There are already indications of that. A bombing of a hydro-dam is an alert signal. People are not getting the benefit of that investment."

Leslie said that a lack of information about what was happening to land earmarked for development fuelled anger.

"There's one part of Kachin State called the 'confluence', which is very well known for families going for picnics, and it's a very favoured place among the Kachin to hang out together," she said.

"But that will soon be a hydro-dam, and nobody knows when it happens, how it happens, who gets to benefit from it. All people know is that it's Chinese-backed," Leslie added.

"When you're in a situation where you can't retaliate against your own government, you can retaliate against perhaps investment by outsiders."

(Reporting by Ben Blanchard; Editing by Alex Richardson)

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Mizzima News, July 16, 2010 -

Authorities impose tighter controls on lawyers visiting Suu Kyi – Phanida

Chiang Mai – The Burmese junta has imposed tighter restrictions on meetings between opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi and her lawyers, one of which will in effect extend to a week the lag between a request to consult her and their actual visit to her house in Rangoon.

The Nobel Peace prize recipient and the world's most prominent political prisoner has been held under house arrest or jailed by the ruling military government under a variety of spurious charges for at least 14 of the past 20 years.

Suu Kyi's lawyers had needed to submit an application to Special Branch police in Bahan Township for permission to meet their client, the National League for Democracy leader. But from July 10 police told them to submit a request letter to Suu Kyi seeking her consent ahead of any future meetings with her, on top of the usual application.

This new directive meant it would take up to a week, from a previous waiting time of three days, to meet their client, party spokesman and lawyer Nyan Win said.

The lawyers are representing Suu Kyi a special appeal against her current sentence and two other cases are lawsuits against the junta.

"I typed a letter that is to be signed by Daw Suu for her consent to meet us. The police will send this letter to Daw Suu and it will be returned to us," Nyan Win said, using the Burmese honorific for women to refer to Suu Kyi.

Also, from June 25, Special Branch officers also verbally forbade the lawyers from discussing any matters other than those related to her pending cases, Nyan Win said.

Suu Kyi was reportedly planning to protest against these new directives. Lawyers Kyi Win and Nyan Win met her yesterday for about two hours and discussed her special appeal.

She was given a three-year sentence for "entertaining" US citizen John Yettaw, whose family described as mentally unwell after he twice took it upon himself to swim across Inya Lake to visit her. Following his second amphibious landing, Suu Kyi was jailed for "violating" the terms of her house arrest. Had Yettaw not intervened, her sentence of house arrest would have expired two weeks later. After an international outcry, the widowed opposition leader was released from prison and taken home to serve her sentence of 18 months under house arrest.

Her lawyers presented arguments in her special appeal before a three-judge panel at the High Court in Rangoon. The case will proceed to the Supreme Court in Naypyidaw if the High Court justices give her leave to appeal.

Meanwhile, Suu Kyi and the NLD party were planning to sue the military junta's entire cabinet for dereliction of duty to the Burmese people and the nation, the lawyers said.

According to the intended suit, the junta's cabinet members have failed to fulfill their duties as public servants. The suit will seek an injunction enforcing the defendants to perform their duties and will be filed under sections 45 and 54 of the Specific Relief Act.

The NLD and Suu Kyi filed a similar suit in April but the court promptly rejected it.

Another case filed against the regime under section 42 of the same act by 26 NLD members of parliament elected in 1990 asserts that they are still entitled to stand as MPs as they were duly voted in under electoral laws, and that the declaration voiding the 1990 result was unlawful.

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The Irrawaddy - Newsletter, July 5, 2010, news@irrawaddy.org, www.irrawaddy.org <http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=18877&page=1>

Clinton Criticizes Burma at Democracy Conference

KRAKOW, Poland—At a high level conference on democracy, US Secretary Of State Clinton said on Saturday that intolerant governments across the globe are “slowly crushing” activist and advocacy groups that play an essential role in the development of democracy.

She named Burma, Zimbabwe, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Cuba, Egypt, Iran, Venezuela, China and Russia.

Speaking at the Slowacki Theatre, Clinton assured delegates that America continued to support democracy and freedom.



US Secretary of State Hilary Rodham Clinton addressing an international conference promoting democracy in Krakow, Poland, on July 3. (Photo: AP)

Clinton's speech came at the opening of a 10th anniversary celebration of the founding of the Community of Democracies, a 16-member grouping that tries to forge international consensus on ways to support and promote democracy.

Clinton said there are three essential elements of a free nation—representative government, a well-functioning market, and civil society. She said, “[they] work like three legs of a stool. They lift and support nations as they reach for higher standards of progress and prosperity.”

Some critics have accused the Obama administration of being too soft on human rights and democracy violations by rogue countries.

The international community initially welcomed Obama's policy of "engagement with non-

democratic regimes" but so far it has produced little outcome, critics say.

Clinton said, “Democracies don't fear their own people. They recognize that citizens must be free to come together, to advocate and agitate.”

On Burma, Clinton spoke out about activists and civil society groups that helped cyclone victims in 2008. She said, “Some were not trying to change how their countries were governed. Most were simply getting help to people in need, like the Burmese activists imprisoned for organizing relief for victims of Cyclone Nargis. Some of them were exposing problems like corruption that their own governments claim they want to root out. Their offense was not just what they did, but the fact that they did it independently of their government. They were out doing what we would call good deeds, but doing them without permission. That refusal to allow people the chance to organize in support of a cause larger than themselves, but separate from the state, represents an assault on one of our fundamental democratic values.”

Burmese activists also attended the conference. Dr Khin Zaw Win, a scholar and former political prisoner, called for more assistance inside Burma.

In a panel discussion, "*Activists for Democracy*," he spoke about Burma's coming election, its longest running civil war, ethnic conflict and the coming election.

"Things are changing in Burma," he said. He said there is a space for civil society inside Burma. Known to be a critic of trade sanctions and in support of the upcoming election, some Burmese activists expressed surprise to learn of his presence at the conference.

Zoya Phan, a Karen activist who also attended the conference, said she was disappointed that Khin Zaw Win did not speak about Burma's worsening human rights violations in ethnic regions, its flawed Constitution, lack of press freedom and more than 2,000 political prisoners.

On July 2, several leading members of opposition groups inside Burma, including the National League for Democracy (NLD), sent a complaint letter to conference organizers criticizing Khin Zaw Win, saying that he does not represent the pro-democracy movement, according to Tin Oo, deputy chairman of the NLD.

In her remarks, Clinton hit out at Venezuela and other countries in her speech.

She said, "Venezuela's leaders have tried to silence independent voices that seek to hold that government accountable."

Touching on Russia, she said, "In Russia, while we welcome President Medvedev's statements in support of the rule of law, human rights activities and journalists have been targeted for assassination, and virtually none of these crimes have been solved."

She also criticized China's human rights record. "And we continue to engage on civil society issues with China, where writer Liu Xiaobo is serving an 11-year prison sentence because he co-authored a document calling for respect for human rights and democratic reform. Too many governments are seeing civic activists as opponents, rather than partners.

And as democracies, we must recognize that this trend is taking place against a broader backdrop."

Poland's Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski, in his opening speech, mentioned Aung San Suu Kyi and said that democracy is not as happy as it used to be and said that enemies of democracy have been emboldened.

Canada's foreign minister, Lawrence Cannon, Indonesian foreign minister, Marty Natalegawa, and ministers from Spain, Sweden, Chile and South Korea also attended the meeting and joined a panel discussion, "Is democracy losing ground? What is to be done?"

Indonesia's foreign minister said that governments and civil society should be partners to strengthen democratic values and institutions. He said media, civil society, the government and parliament should all walk on the same path towards the goal of a democratic society.

In Southeast Asia region, authoritarian governments are reluctant to engage civil society and instead imposed restrictions and stringent registration if not outright crackdowns.

Zin Linn <zinlinn@cscoms.com>, Thursday, 01 July, 2010 [NLDmembrsnSupportersofCRPPnNLDnDASSK] News & Articles on Burma

The Irrawaddy – Newsletter, Thursday, July 1, 2010 – news@irrawaddy.org, www.irrawaddy.org

US Senate Committee Votes to Renew Burma Sanctions

By LALIT K JHA Thursday, July 1, 2010 - <http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=18850>

The US Senate Finance Committee votes to renew a ban on the import of products to the US from Burma for one more year.

WASHINGTON — The US Senate Finance Committee voted overwhelmingly on Wednesday to renew a ban on the import of products to the US from Burma for one more year, citing human rights abuses by the Burmese military junta.

"As long as the Burmese junta continues to abuse and suppress its people, the United States needs to continue to join our trading partners in standing up for the Burmese people and supporting human rights," said Senator Max Baucus, the chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, soon after the committee voted 22-1 to renew import restrictions contained in the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003.

"These sanctions, together with the sanctions imposed by several of our trading partners, put necessary pressure on the Burmese junta to stop its gross mistreatment of the Burmese people and abide by international human rights standards," Baucus said.

The committee statement said that since 1988, Burma has been ruled by an autocratic military regime known as the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). The State Department reported that the SPDC maintains its power by suppressing opposition groups, severely limiting freedom of speech and other personal freedoms of the Burmese people, committing gross human rights violations and interfering with the judiciary.

The US Senate Finance Committee has voted to renew the import ban every year since 2003.

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Myanmarese mourn death of democracy

By U Aye Myint

On July 19, few in Myanmar (Burma) were allowed to commemorate Martyr's Day. On this day people usually remember the brutal assassination of Myanmar's father of independence, Bogyoke Aung San — also the father of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi — in 1947.

Amid the bloodied bodies of Aung San and his Executive Council, something else also started to die on that day: Aung San's vision of the army to be the servant of the people and for civilian supremacy over the military. Sometime this year, Myanmarese (Burmese) will be forced to elect a military government in a national vote as a means of completing this tragic circle.

After World War II, Aung San was offered the post of deputy inspector general in the reconstituted Myanmarese Army, as part of the transition to full independence from Britain. He turned it down, opting instead to run a civilian administration preparing for full independence within the next year.

This act conveyed the commitment of Aung San, the co-founder of the modern Myanmarese army, and of those in Myanmar's independence movement, to a separation of civilian and military institutions in a democratically governed state.

It is this central component of a free and democratic Myanmar that was severely undermined along with the effective transitional Myanmarese prime minister, Aung San, and six Myanmarese councilors in the venerable Secretariat Building in Yangon (Rangoon) 63 years ago this week.

Against the backdrop of the civil war that erupted a few years after independence in 1948, Myanmar witnessed the increasing domination of the military over civil society, a process which culminated in a coup de' etat by General Ne Win in 1962.

The people of Myanmar have been clamoring for the return of civilian rule ever since. The Tatmadaw (Myanmarese military), conducting war by various means upon its own people, remains omnipotent.

As early as the 1950s, Myanmar's military relentlessly encroached into the civilian life of Myanmar. Then, during a dramatic re-organization of the institution's structure, the priority of protecting the country from external enemies became superseded by a rooting of its own power base and an iron grip on the perks of position.

As part of this, the Defense Services Institute, established in the mid-1950s, took control of trading major goods such as milk, sugar and beer and by 1960, it had expanded to monopolize banking, shipping and import/export operations.

Today, all foreign investors in Myanmar are forced to enter into joint venture arrangements with one of the military's massive commercial enterprises.

Thus maintained, as arguably Myanmar's largest economic force, the military extended its reach into politics.

By the mid-1960s, the military had shifted its focus to "insurgencies" and devised anti-guerilla strategies, which became known as the People's War Doctrine. This included psychological warfare techniques, the extension of populist political platforms and the infamous "Four Cuts" strategy (isolating those communities not toeing the military line by cutting off outside communication, food, funds and recruits to their cause), which is still in use today.

Today, Myanmar's army is the second biggest in Southeast Asia, numbering some 400,000 troops and is widely reported to have nuclear aspirations. For the region's poorest country and one without known external enemies, this seems to suggest that Myanmar's military regime plans to continue its campaign to engage in an internal contest for the heart and soul of Myanmar.

To maintain this massive armed force, the military government resorts to the most heinous acts to recruit its servicemen and women. Thousands of children are press-ganged into armed service, particularly in the campaign against ethnic

groups, and unwitting civilians, both women and men, are forced to provide the military various goods and services — some less savory than others.

This decade's long political crusade has now culminated in the creation of a deeply flawed constitution and an electoral process that will entrench the military even further into the social, political and economic infrastructure of Myanmar. It is a complete rejection of the founding principles of an independent Myanmar — to maintain the separation of the military and the civilian sectors — and a sour insult to Bogyoke Aung San and to democrats everywhere.

As Martyr's Day was observed, largely in silence, in Myanmar, all those who support the freedom of people everywhere also mourned the fact that since that fateful day in 1947, all Myanmarese have been unwitting martyrs to the military's march across our country.

Lt.Col. U Aye Myint (retired) is a senior member of the Patriotic Old Comrades League which joined with other democrats in founding of the National League for Democracy (NLD) after the 1988 democratic uprising in Myanmar.

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The Irrawaddy - Thu Jul 1 19:13:00 2010 - <http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=18854>

We have enough money, USDP tells Australians - Ko Htwe

A leading member of the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) has told visiting Australian officials that the newly formed party has sufficient finances because it has inherited funds from the junta-backed civic organization, the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA), according to a source who attended the meeting but who spoke to The Irrawaddy on condition of anonymity.

The remarks were made by Myint Oo, a leading member of the USDP, which is headed by Burmese Prime Minister Thein Sein, and told to Australia's Deputy Secretary of Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Hugh Borrowman on Wednesday during their meeting in Rangoon.

The Australian Embassy in Rangoon would not comment about the meeting when The Irrawaddy contacted it on Thursday.

The meeting was also attended by representatives of three other political parties—the National Unity Party, the Democratic Party and the Union Democratic Party.

Myint Oo also told the Australian delegation that the USDP will provide the registration fees for some of their candidates, but that other candidates were in a financial position to cover the costs by themselves, the source said.

Parties must pay 500,000 kyat (US \$500) for each candidate that it fields in the election.

Short on funds and with limited manpower at their disposal, several political parties in Burma are looking to pool their resources ahead of this year's election. They say they are facing severe financial constraints that limit their ability to function effectively.

The USDA is a state-sponsored mass civic organization formed by the junta in 1993. It claims to have more than 24 million members nationwide, including civil servants and members of the military. The USDA Central Panel of Patrons include Snr-Gen Than Shwe, Prime Minister Thein Sein and other government ministers.

On April 29, Thein Sein and 26 ministers and senior officials formed the USDP to contest the election later this year. The Election Commission officially recognized the USDP as a political party on June 8.

Meanwhile, members of the USDA have been canvassing for donations for the new party. In addition, the USDA has recently offered small loans to many low-income workers and farmers around Rangoon, sources said. Stallholders who lost their businesses when Rangoon's Mingalar Market was destroyed by fire last month have been invited to apply for loans from the USDP.

Two members of the Election Commission, Dr. Tin Aung Aye and Win Kyi, met with the Australian officials in Naypyidaw on Tuesday, according to state-run newspapers.

Zin Linn <zinlinn@cscoms.com>, Dienstag, 27.07.2010 -13:53:52, [NLDmembersnSupportersofCRPPnNLDnDASSK] News & Articles on Burma

BBC – News - ASIA-PACIFIC - <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-10762179>> - 27 July 2010 Last updated at 00:27 GMT

Burma leader expects silence from India visit

As Burma's top leader, General Than Shwe, pays a five-day state visit to India, the BBC's Hindi Service

editor Amit Baruah asks what reaction the military ruler can expect from the world's largest democracy.

Silence. And the absence of disapproval

That is what Burma's Gen Than Shwe will be looking for from Delhi, after touching down in the Buddhist pilgrimage town of Bodh Gaya on Sunday morning.

And he will get it.

As Burma's junta prepares to hold much-criticised elections later this year, the silence of the world's largest democracy on Than Shwe's plans be good enough for the ruling generals, many of whom are shedding their military stripes ahead of the polls.

When Than Shwe meets Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at Hyderabad House in Delhi, **there will be no press conference, not even a sound bite. Silence will be guaranteed.**

After giving its full-throated support to the democratic movement after the 1990 elections in Burma, India has studiously wooed the generals - who lived in Rangoon and now reside in the new capital of Naypyitaw - for over decade.

With the one-party state of China by its side already, Than Shwe will be keen to ensure India's silence - and possibly by extension, support - for the elections, which will not see the participation of jailed pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi's now disbanded National League for Democracy (NLD).

As China's strategic shadow looms large over Burma, India will allow Than Shwe to pay homage for the second time in six years at Mahatma Gandhi's memorial in Delhi during his visit.

Amar Kanwar, a Delhi-based film-maker who sneaked in to capture Than Shwe paying floral tributes at Gandhi's memorial in a short five-minute film during his October 2004 trip, said before the visit that a handful of Burmese activists would be protesting.

In his film The Face, Kanwar said he wanted to show the man who has kept democracy icon Ms Suu Kyi in prison all these years.

"I felt that the world knew Aung San Suu Kyi but did not know what the guy who held her in detention looked like," he said.

Also, in Mr Kanwar's words, he wanted to show "one of the world's most brutal men" offering his respects at the memorial of the apostle of peace and non-violence, Mahatma Gandhi.

"It's a shame that there will be no protests from India's civil society, though some posters have sprung up in Bodh Gaya," Mr Kanwar told the BBC

'No choice'

In recent years, India has built roads in Burma, provided satellite data, supplied military equipment and avoided any criticism of the regime.

In March this year, the Tata group announced it would be up a heavy truck manufacturing unit in Magwe, Burma, a line of credit extended by Burma.

Neelam Deo, a former Indian Foreign Ministry official who dealt with Burma, feels that Delhi has no choice but to talk generals.

"If there is no fundamental change in Burma following the elections, it makes no sense for the government of India engage with the military government. And there won't be," she told the BBC.

India, which shares a 1,600-km land border with Burma, faces several ongoing insurgencies in its north-eastern region, where it believes that the generals could be of help.



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Indian officialdom has long believed that Burma not providing any oxygen to these insurgencies is a good enough reason to keep channels open with the junta.

Neelam Deo, however, admits it is difficult to judge whether or not India is gaining in the battle against insurgency from Burmese help. In a sense, India is engaged in "preventive diplomacy" to ensure matters in the north-east do not get out of hand.

She also believes that Western nations have not delivered on dealing with Burma. "[US President Barack] Obama has shown no staying power on Burma or on Iran. Being consumed by an economic crisis doesn't mean you don't pursue issues like Burma seriously."

'Courageous torchbearer'

Thin Thin Aung, a Delhi-based Burmese activist who will be out protesting against Than Shwe's visit, said India should be helping the process of change in her country.

"They should help the people achieve democracy rather than help the generals," she said.

Prakash Karat, general secretary of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), told the BBC that Delhi should convey to Than Shwe the need to restore parliamentary democracy in Burma.

After the 1990 elections, where Ms Suu Kyi's party scored a convincing win, India welcomed with open arms Burmese students fleeing from repression at home.

In 1993, a Congress party government, currently also the leading party in India's ruling coalition, conferred the prestigious Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding on Aung San Suu Kyi.

The award citation read: "Amid the turbulence of an era in transition, Aung San Suu Kyi adhered strictly to a peaceful struggle in her espousal of democracy in her country Myanmar [Burma]."

"India pays tribute to a courageous torchbearer of this tradition of peace and non-violence; and to a luminous example of the indomitable human spirit that can change the course of history."

Ironically, Than Shwe will travel from Bodh Gaya to Delhi where he will once again pay tribute at the Mahatma's memorial, while Ms Suu Kyi remains under detention in her own house in Rangoon at his orders.

For a rising India, the wheel has come full circle on Burma

Zin Linn <zinlinn@cscoms.com>, [NLDmembersnSupportersofCRPPnNLDnDASSK] News & Articles on Burma, 0108.2010, 15:21:04

THE NEWS – INTERNATIONAL - <http://thenews.com.pk/daily_detail.asp?id=254152>

North Korean, Myanmar FMs meet

Sunday, August 01, 2010 SEOUL: North Korea's foreign minister met his Myanmar counterpart during a trip to the country, Pyongyang media reported Saturday, in a visit likely to be watched by Western nations fearful the two regimes could be co-operating on nuclear weapons.

The Korean Central News Agency said a delegation led by Pak Ui Chun met with U Nyan Win and officials on Friday in the administrative capital Naypyidaw.

"At the talks the two sides exchanged views on the issue of developing the friendly relations between the two countries and regional and international issues of mutual concern," KCNA said.

The brief report provided no details on the substance of the discussions.

Pak arrived on Thursday in Yangon, an official in Myanmar said. His visit is expected to conclude on Sunday.

Myanmar severed ties with Pyongyang in 1983 following a failed assassination bid by North Korean agents on South Korea's then-president Chun Doo-Hwan during a visit to the Southeast Asian nation. The attempt left 21 people dead.

„They should help the people achieve democracy rather than help the generals”

Thin Thin Aung
Pro-democracy
activist



Aung San Suu Kyi's life in pictures

But the two countries branded "outposts of tyranny" by the United States have been rebuilding relations in recent years, resuming diplomatic ties in 2007. US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton last week expressed worries about military ties between North Korea and Myanmar, formerly known as Burma.

"We know that a ship from North Korea recently delivered military equipment to Burma and we continue to be concerned by the reports that Burma may be seeking assistance from North Korea with regard to a nuclear programme," she said during a visit to Hanoi.

In June the ruling junta denied allegations — in a documentary produced by the Norwegian-based news group Democratic Voice of Burma — that Myanmar had begun an atomic weapons programme with Pyongyang's help. The documentary cited a senior army defector and years of "top secret material".

It showed thousands of photos and testimony from defectors that it said revealed the junta's nuclear ambitions and a secret network of underground tunnels, allegedly built with North Korean assistance.

zin linn <zinlinn@yahoo.com.au>, [NLDmembersnSupportersofCRPPnNLDnDASSK] Opportunity slipping away on Burma * U Win Tin, 03.08.2010

The Australian - August 03, 2010 12:00AM

Opportunity slipping away on Burma - U Win Tin

<<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/world/opportunity-slipping-away-on-burma/story-e6frg6so-1225900190575>>

IN the 20 years since Burma's last free and fair election, it has become Southeast Asia's poorest country.

It has continued the world's longest civil war, produces the highest number of refugees per capita in the world and is home to one of the highest numbers of child soldiers. Yet, major powers, regional governments and international bodies seem prepared to allow the election scheduled for this year, a hollow poll driven by the strategic needs of the military, to go ahead and for the military to be self-legitimised as the rulers of some 55 million Burmese.

Without a firm plan of action, this is exactly what will occur.

Last month's summit of foreign ministers of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in Hanoi confirms this laxity. Despite much public cajoling and strong words behind closed doors, ASEAN has once again failed to offer a firm approach or a regionally approved and facilitated road-map.

While demands first formalised by ASEAN in 2003 for the release of the National League for Democracy's Aung San Suu Kyi, remain in place, suggestions from some that she should be released and allowed to participate in the elections have been quashed by the military. And the possibility of a special ASEAN envoy to Burma was not pursued.

As such, these demands remain little more than paper tigers because they are not backed institutionally by ASEAN, nor is there any formalised process to move in any specified direction.

In the words of one senior ASEAN diplomat in Hanoi, reported in local media: "In the end, we (ASEAN) will probably end up being a big rubber stamp."

Meanwhile, the US dithers on the sidelines, unable or unwilling to embolden its position. After taking months to review its Burma policy, it then sought to maintain a policy status quo; a combination of engagement and sanctions.

US engagement has faltered without a special Burma envoy and sanctions have limited effect because Burma's close ties with China have tended to surmount economic barriers to trade and investment.

As such, the US position on the elections has fallen in with that of ASEAN - one characterised by stern words and lofty hopes but lacking the foundation of a solid plan of action.

For the UN, it has been more than a year since the special envoy for Burma has visited and one year since the UN's Secretary-General spoke with us in person. Neither has been to Burma since Suu Kyi was detained yet again, following a sham trial last year.

The Burmese regime has been able to completely ignore and repudiate international and regional actors.

The proposed election will not lead to the reconciliation between various forces in Burma so effectively wedged apart by the military the international community so hopes for, and that the region so needs.

With this election, the regime is playing a zero-sum game. The goal is to completely crush all opposition parties and to completely exclude all relevant stakeholders in Burma's supposed journey to democracy.

The exclusion of major political participants, from ethnic groups such as major Kachin parties to leading political figures denied access to the elections by virtue of being imprisoned (including Suu Kyi herself), is the ultimate in wedge politics, keeping the country on the edge of failed-state status and denying any semblance of reconciliation.

In effect, the election will lead to more chaos in Burma. Tensions will rise as a result of thwarted ambitions and the implications of poverty and the continued violations of basic human rights will possibly boil over.

Increased instability in Burma - an outcome no one wants, even Burma's patrons in Beijing - is the most likely outcome.

The NLD called for a regional dialogue on Burma some years ago. We feel this should be driven by ASEAN, largely via the extended ASEAN Regional Forum, and should be conducted in Asia.

The goal of such a forum is to find ways the international community and the Burmese military can work together to initiate a sincere transition to democracy in Burma. The bottom line is to devise a plan of action. Without such a strategy, Burma's elections will lead nowhere. They do, however, present an opportunity - one that the international community has so far failed to take.

U Win Tin is co-founder of the National League for Democracy and was imprisoned by the military for 19 years

Ten Years On

The Life and Views of a Burmese Student Political Prisoner

by **Moe Aye**

(Former Burmese Student Political Prisoner)

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