



# BURMA REPORT

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Burma Digest - "BURMA DIGEST" <[tayzathuria@gmail.com](mailto:tayzathuria@gmail.com)>

Editorial: - **Won all** By Taisamyone

January 21st, 2007 (Editorials, Contributors, Special Contributors, Tai Sam Yone)

The wishes of the people of Burma for a binding UNSC resolution have been ignored by the cynical power-game played by Russia and China. The junta can chortle away in the New Light of Myanmar at their ability to influence their commercial partners in crime - Russia and China. South Africa as a new face in the UN Security Council with a history of colonial and racist authoritarian rule might have been considered a friend of the people of Burma, but felt unsure about voting for such an apparently contentious resolution. The argument that Burma threatens regional peace and security cannot be considered as serious as some if it is measured in comparison with the antics of North Korea - South Africa took the view that the matter should be addressed as a Human Rights Council issue. But other areas of conflict and 'regional' security have given rise to resolutions within the UNSC; the situation in Somalia, Liberia, Sierra Leone or Côte d'Ivoire. There is a strong argument for taking the case of Burma to the newly formed Human Rights Council in Geneva, but this body can only be considered subsidiary to the Security Council. The US, UK and many others believe that the Security Council is the right place from which to send a clear message to the regime of the need for change.

The result of the voting reflects what we would expect given the stance taken by China when Burma was placed on the agenda of the UNSC. It seems that the US had spent some weeks trying to word a resolution that was acceptable to China - i.e. one that didn't say anything at all. China played this game when the whole world wanted to condemn the insane regime in North Korea over its nuclear bomb test - China wanted to protect its 'sphere of influence' regional pals. Burma isn't on the front page of world newspapers and TV screens every day with the world shouting for immediate action, so China can sit back and do nothing, while the US, the UK and other countries who wish to help Burma, work hard to get a good vote.

What many people find incredible is that the UNSC can condemn aggressive action by Israel, civil wars in Congo or Côte d'Ivoire, but cannot agree to condemn the Burmese junta? Do China and Russia want to encourage the junta to continue their imprisonment of DASSK, Khun Htun Oo and over 1100 other political prisoners? Do China and Russia want the regime to be allowed to continue its ethnic genocide and abysmal human rights record? Do China and Russia want to encourage the junta to continue with their nonsensical 'National Convention' and not to undertake the tripartite dialogue that the UNSC resolution calls for? In short, China and Russia are not concerned for the suffering and repression of the people of Burma, nor for freedom and democracy. What they are concerned about is manipulating the junta to their own commercial and political advantage. When it comes to the issues at hand, both China and Russia could find themselves on the Security Council agenda for their own appalling abuses of human rights, freedom and democracy - if the UNSC could agree to place them there!

The junta responded with the usual drivel in New Light of Myanmar, drumming up support from their puppet cease-fire groups - the Kachin Development and Security Army (KDSA) and the Myanmar Writers and Journalists Association (MWJA), among numerous other pro-junta groups that seem to appear out of the swamp like slippery eels. The KDSA is one of the cease-fire groups who are under the control of the junta and do not reflect the views of anyone other than the junta, unless they want to find themselves being persecuted by the junta. The MWJA discuss such topics at their conferences as „Correct thinking and heightened morale, and Safeguarding national character and the role of Myanmar literature“. We can gather from this that they are puppet writers who have been brainwashed by the junta at their regular 'training' sessions reported regularly in NLM, to say what they are told to say - or risk 15 years imprisonment.

The NLM have gone all out to attack the US and those who voted for the resolution, and those opponents inside Burma who welcomed the US-led resolution. They even take offence at being called a 'fascist army', claiming their origins from the army that turned against their erstwhile friends and attacked the almost defeated Japanese Imperial army. While the army of Burma that Aung San built may lay claim to that past, the army of today has been manipulated by a group of fascist generals starting with Ne Win who took over control in 1947 - a lot can happen in 60 years!

The attack on DASSK and the NLD invokes the memory of Aung San as their justification for their new constitution and for denying DASSK the right to be elected in the Pyithu Hluttaw. My guess is, is that if Aung San were alive today he would not keep his daughter under house arrest on the basis of being a 'danger from destructionists'. I suspect that Than Shwe and his cronies would be the ones under arrest for failing the people of Burma, for genocide, unlawful killing, corruption, extortion, war crimes, money-laundering, drug-trafficking and numerous other crimes.

The junta seem totally paranoid about the demands of the people of Burma for self-determination and autonomy - they are frightened of federalism, which is why they took control in 1962 - the 1988 uprising was cynically manipulated by Ne Win to allow the people to let off steam and allow the junta to identify the opposition more clearly - they never intended it to be anything else and were just playing 'cat and mouse'. The junta continue to churn out their views on federalism as if it would be the end of the world - well, it will be for them - but it will be the beginning of the new world for the rest of the people of Burma and it is what everyone who can do so is working towards. (Country size isn't so important these days - Abkhazia

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on the Black Sea coast has a population of about 150,000, Nauru less than 14,000.) The junta seem lost in a time warp, mouthing the old slogans of their 1960s centralist government dogma. Any thought of offering a differing view, suggesting a dialogue, allowing individual groups to participate in politics in a free and open manner seems anathema to them. What they can't control, they don't like - and if they don't like it, they shoot it, or imprison it, or just persecute it and write nasty articles about it. The world is changing from the old authoritarian centralised control to local smaller countries - over the last 20 years, we have seen numerous new countries being created from old monolithic blocks like the USSR, or from quite small countries which are created from similar ethnic and cultural groups - this is still happening in Russia, whilst China manages to keep the lid on its enormously diverse peoples, albeit with brutal military repression. For instance, the separatist movements in Chechnya and East Turkistan are referred to as 'terrorists', in similar diatribes to those used by the Burmese junta.

The NLM gave us an insightful look into their fantasy world - fairy tales that we come to expect from the junta's toadies in the MWJC! They ran one article about Khun Sa and the Mong Tai Army. In this fanciful version, Khun Sa meets with US diplomats and CIA agents who persuade him to declare independence for Shan State. The US apparently wanted to install missile bases and troops in Shan State as a buffer against communist China. I think the NLM writers have been reading too much 'cold war' era Soviet and Chinese propaganda and that they actually still believe it. Khun Sa made it very clear that he wanted to deal with the US government - to sell the entire Opium and Heroin production from Burma to the US government and keep it off the streets, rather than sell it through the usual drug trafficking routes. The US reasoned that this would be an unacceptable route to take - paying the world's most notorious drug warlord several million dollars to deliver the illicit drugs, as well as direct unauthorised intervention in another country's sovereign territory. When Khun Sa 'surrendered' (because he realised the dangers of the US plot according to the NLM!), he was held in Rangoon where he siphoned his drug money into legitimate businesses, and the junta's very deep pockets. He is currently thought to be kept under sedation in house arrest. He is obviously worth more to the regime alive than just the US\$2million ransom on his head. He is now just a pawn in the regime's sick game, a hostage to political badinage.

The UNSC resolution posed three crucial areas of concern for the UN - freedom, democracy and a humanitarian crisis. Why does not every country in the world want this for Burma? We may wonder why the world's leading government organisation, the UN, can disagree about something so fundamental to human rights. But then to do so would assume that government ambassadors and diplomats are appointed as responsible adult leaders who act in an altruistic and distinguished manner - whereas in fact many of them act out of self-interest, for themselves or their national interest - the representatives from China and Russia were acting out of their own national interests in gaining access to Burma's raw materials and energy, and of making foreign exchange cash out of massive arms and construction projects. While the UNSC permanent members have a veto, and UNSC ambassadors are appointed to consider only their own national self-interest (and not that of the country and the people under discussion), we cannot expect the UNSC to act in a more enlightened manner. Reformation of the UN and the way that it operates may be called for. But while the old 'superpowers' with their old mindset of self-interest have a permanent veto on the UNSC, it seems unlikely that the UN's worthy declarations (Geneva Convention, Human Rights, Rights of the Child, etc.) will be used as the cornerstone for judgement and decision making.

While the generals have won this round, there may be many more 'bouts' in the fight for freedom - it is important to remember that the struggle for freedom goes on until the people of Burma have thrown out the junta and have free and fair elections. This day will come - not today, thanks to China, Russia and South Africa - we can continue to fight for freedom, democracy and human rights - the day of victory will be ours one day soon.

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Asia Times - 31 January,2007 - "Shan-EU" <[shaneu31@yahoo.com](mailto:shaneu31@yahoo.com)> Tue, 30 Jan 2007 23:57:56 -0800 (PST)

## The generals fall out in Burma

-By Larry Jagan -previously covered  
Burma politics for the BBC. He is currently a freelance journalist based in Bangkok.

BANGKOK - Burma's top generals are in the throes of a full-blown power struggle as they grapple with how best to introduce significant political reforms, including a planned move toward some form of democracy, and hand political power to a new generation of military commanders.

Senior General Than Shwe, head of the ruling State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), is of failing health and in recent months has become increasingly reclusive amid growing international pressure for political change - including the United States' recent failed attempt to impose sanctions against the regime through the United Nations Security Council.

Against that backdrop, the SPDC's top three generals - Than Shwe, Maung Aye and Thura Shwe Mann - reportedly cannot agree on how to move forward, according to Western diplomats who spoke with Asia Times Online.

"It's a stalemate," said a Western diplomat based in the former capital Rangoon. "The three generals don't trust each other and are closely watching each other. It's like a giant chess game, and as a result nothing is happening."

Big changes were in the cards. Top military rulers recently met in the new capital Naypyidaw - some 400 kilometers north of Rangoon - for their quarterly meeting, where Than Shwe's plans to prepare the government and military for constitutional reform were discussed. The top general significantly was not present for the meeting, and the SPDC's second in command, Maung Aye, reportedly refused to accept some of the proposed changes, according to people

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familiar with the meeting.

Burma's National Convention, which is drawing up a new constitution, finished its latest session in December and Western diplomats in Rangoon believe that in the next few months the charter will be formally drafted and by year's end put to a national referendum. In anticipation of those reforms, a massive shakeup of the army and government is planned for the coming months to pave the way for constitutionally mandated civilian rule.

The changes, if fully implemented, will be the most dramatic since the military seized power more than 18 years ago and have been designed to ensure that the draft constitution is democratically approved during a national referendum. Significantly, they will also pave the way for general democratic elections, which are expected to be held some time in 2008.

The ruling junta annulled the results of the 1990 general election, which was won overwhelmingly by the National League for Democracy, and it remains unclear whether the opposition party will be permitted to compete in next year's planned polls.

As part of the reform plan, Than Shwe is reportedly planning to give up his command of the army, but retain the key post of chairman of the SPDC. However, Maung Aye, perhaps sensing Than Shwe's declining health and tenuous grip on power, is now refusing to retire along with the senior general - as was earlier planned. His refusal promises to complicate the political transition and heighten intra-military rivalries in the months ahead.

Maung Aye "fears he will be completely sidelined if he accepts retirement", said a relative of the general. "He still wants to be No 1."

Than Shwe's protege, General Thura Shwe Man, was tipped to take command of the armed forces, while Than Shwe and Maung Aye retained their top posts of chairman and deputy of the junta's ruling council, which is expected to change its name to the State Democracy and Development Council (SDDC) to mark the start of a new political era.

Once established, the SDDC will be charged with overseeing both the military command and the civilian government, which unlike the current administration will have split authority structures. Over the past two years, Than Shwe has frequently told Thailand's top army commanders that he planned to retire soon and that Thura Shwe Mann would take over his position as the country's top military leader. Prime Minister Soe Win, meanwhile, has already shed his army khakis for a civilian business suit and his ex-military cabinet ministers have officially left the armed forces.

#### Last legs

Now Than Shwe's deteriorating health promises to alter, or potentially even scupper, those grand plans as new competitive divides open inside the SPDC. The changes have been in the planning pipeline for at least a year, according to senior Burma military sources. But the recent massive move of all the government's offices and the armed forces' central command to Naypyidaw - started more than a year ago and completed last February - have delayed the full transition from SPDC to SDDC rule.

Than Shwe suffered a mild stroke nearly two years ago, but since has fully recovered. He also suffers from hypertension and is a diabetic, which causes him frequent violent seizures when his sugar levels get out of control, according to an army doctor familiar with the situation. According to one foreign visitor who met with him recently, Than Shwe is often short of breath.

Than Shwe has become far more reclusive since the government finished its move from Rangoon to Naypyidaw last February. For almost the past year, Than Shwe has not gone to the War Office and has only attended crucial meetings, such as the fortnightly joint SPDC cabinet session, according to an Asian diplomat who until recently was based in Rangoon. The senior general also nowadays receives few outside visitors, other than Thura Shwe Mann, through whom he sends directives to Maung Aye and Soe Win.

Last month, the 75-year-old senior general traveled to Singapore for an urgent medical checkup after suffering from chest pains. What was to be a day or two in hospital attenuated to a week-long stay and stoked wild speculation and rumors about his health. Singaporean doctors discovered that Than Shwe is suffering from cancer of the pancreas, according to reliable medical sources in Rangoon. "Than Shwe may only have three to 18 months left to live," predicted one Burma army doctor.

Many inside Burma thought the senior general was already on his last legs when he left for Singapore, and several ranking majors and colonels began jockeying for position in expectation that Maung Aye, rather than Thura Shwe Mann, would soon take the military's top spot.

Since his return to Burma, Than Shwe has moved to allay speculation about his health, and he took the unprecedented step of allowing local television cameras to film the opening of the SPDC's quarterly meeting - the first time ever that the traditionally highly secretive meetings have been allowed public exposure. His hale image has also been splashed almost daily across the front page of the government-mouthpiece New Light of Burma newspaper.

"This is to ensure that as few people as possible are aware of his failing health," said Chiang Mai-based independent Burma analyst Win Min. "Even if Than Shwe officially retires, he will not give up his power. Instead, he'll remain the gray eminence behind the throne, along the lines of Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping in the years before his death."

According to Chinese diplomats, Than Shwe intends to stand down but become the civilian president under the new constitution. "He wants to be president for life," a senior military source close to him said.

However, Maung Aye's refusal to retire has suddenly put a wrench in those works and raises hard new questions about his commitment to Than Shwe's reform plan. Thura Shwe Mann has already been handed effective control over running the country's day-to-day affairs, although he still reportedly consults Than Shwe on major policy issues. At the same time, government ministers have recently started to complain about the political inertia and their inability to make even basic decisions.

From the outset, Than Shwe was aware of the potential dangers involved with backing a transition from pure military to some form of democratic rule. And unless he is somehow convinced that his personal power and his family's fortunes are not at risk through its implementation, the current political stalemate could last at least as long as the senior general's declining health holds out.

[http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast\\_Asia/IA31Ae01.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/IA31Ae01.html)

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## **Interview: On current Karen situation** - Shan-EU <[shaneu31@yahoo.com](mailto:shaneu31@yahoo.com)> 05. Feb 2007

Following news of Col Nerdah Mya's agreement to return to the fold yesterday, S.H.A.N. had interviewed the Karen National Union (KNU)'s representative for Europe and East Timor, Member of Central Committee and Head of Special Warfare Section, Brig-Gen Saw Hsar Gay:(HG:)

SHAN: What was the purpose of this signed document?

HG: The purpose was to unequivocally show where we stood at the time when a lot of speculations about the KNLA wanting to part from the political leadership of the KNU. We all knew that this was not true but at that time it was not prudent to expose who was fabricating these stories which were leaked to the press. It was part of the plan to destabilize the KNU.

SHAN: Was there any doubt about some officers supporting the former 7th Brigade commander?

HG: Not really, we at Headquarters knew that all the HQ officers and brigade commanders were 100 % supportive of KNU central and the leadership. Regarding 7th Brigade I was pretty certain that the battalion commanders were also not supporting the former brigade commander but were supporting the leadership. I met with the battalion commanders of 7th Brigade at that time and discerned no wavering from their part. 2 IC (Second in Command) and a few company commanders I met at that time were also all in tune. We have professional and dedicated commanding officers in 7th brigade who are politically alert and loyal. They all respect the leaders individually as well as the constitution. Our G.O.C has created an atmosphere of consensus within the KNLA so that while we obey orders but we are allowed to speak our minds and we feel that our opinions are listened to which is very motivating.

SHAN: Why did the political leadership not act sooner when 7th Brigade commander started to question the authority of the central leadership?

HG: It was out of prudence and in the hope that he would see that he was being manipulated and enticed and was acting against the cause and the people .

SHAN: Manipulated by whom?

HG: By people who were out to look for their personal agenda: power or influence , money and limelight where the motivations of those who were steering Htein Maung in that direction . Now he will be abandoned as he became useless to their plans and they will be plotting as how to pursue their objectives. They used and misused the name of our great hero General Saw Bo Mya and are using the names of his wife and sons all in order to try to achieve their objectives.

SHAN: After all this what is the final balance of this whole episode which has created so much consternation and speculation around the KNU ?

HG : Well, first of all the KNU and its current leadership have proven to be prudent , cautious yet firm and, above all, through collective leadership and mutual respect the 142 delegates who voted the Central Committee and choose the big 5 of the EC, namely, President , Vice President, General Secretary and Joint Secretaries 1 and 2, have made a good choice if we judge at the performance of our leadership under extremely difficult conditions .

Secondly, it was good to see that our political allies whether the other ethnic nationalities and the Burmese pro - democracy forces, even if they sometimes were worried and confused due to the course of these sad events, have always believed in our ability to handle the situation and supported us politically and morally. It was a victory for what we have stood for six decades!

SHAN: What will the SPDC reaction be you think?

HG: It is difficult to predict but I hope that they will not respond by increasing their military pressure especially in the 7th Brigade area in order to test the new command as this will lead to unnecessary suffering on both sides and as there is no military solution to this conflict but only a political one. We are, as we have always been, ready to negotiate a political settlement but as an organization and not individually, nor geographically and never forgetting Saw Ba U Gyi 's 4 principles, our people and our allies.

SHAN: How do you think that this whole episode has affected the cause internationally?

HG: It promoted our cause and all those who oppose the SPDC but naturally it has promoted the role of the ethnic nationalities proving how crucial and important they are in the arena of the Burma political equation. Every time we survive a crisis like this one, we earn more and more respect from the international community and our allies, and convince our enemies that the greater the pressure, the more united we become.

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Candid Commentary - BURMA DIGEST - <http://www.tayzathuria.org.uk>

## **KNU Split & Resurgent Burmese Secret Service - By Dr. Tayza**

free burma <[freeburma@yahoogroups.com](mailto:freeburma@yahoogroups.com)> - maung maung <[maung20022002@yahoo.com](mailto:maung20022002@yahoo.com)> - 04.02.2007 02:07:17

We can say that Burmese SPDC military regime's secret service has scored another goal by causing another unfortunate, and sad, split among the rank and file of the Karen ethnic resistance force Karen National Union (KNU).

This week we saw a break away group of Karen leaders led by Brigadier General Htein Maung tried to form a new Karen Union called Peace Council. Htein Maung is the leader of KNU 7th Brigade and responsible for KNU activities in Pa-an region. Since the time when the late KNU leader Saw Bo Mya was terminally ill, Burmese military has been wooing Saw Bo Mya's family and some KNU leaders like Htein Maung to surrender. The new Burmese military intelligence service, formed after former spy-master Gen. Khin Nyunt's demise, tried their best to drive a wedge between KNU 7th Brigade and KNU central. Burmese secret service even sent a high ranking agent\_ a Colonel\_ to negotiate 7th Brigade's surrender. They promised a safe passage for Saw Bo Mya to go to the Capital Rangoon to take necessary medical treatments if 7th Brigade agrees to surrender.

But, as we understand, Saw Bo Mya rejected the offer\_ as a true hero of his Karen national liberation movement, he would rather die than surrender and get medical treatment. And he died without surrendering to the enemy. But behind the back of Saw Bo Mya and KNU Central, Brigadier Htein Maung continued his secret negotiations with Burmese military intelligence officers.

Htein Maung accompanied Saw Bo Mya when he went to Rangoon in 2003 to make negotiations with former Burmese spy-master Gen. Khin Nyunt. They got „Gentlemen's Agreement“ for cease fire. But it didn't last long. After the sacking of politically savvy spymaster Khin Nyunt by military supremo Sen. Gen. Than Shwe, new hard-line Generals installed in Khin Nyunt's place increased their demands. Instead of the agreed upon cease fire, they demanded total surrender, and so peace negotiations broke off.

So without KNU Central's endorsement, Htein Maung's unilateral agreement to surrender to Burmese military intelligence officers has no weight; in fact it's null and void since it's conception. And Htein Maung knows it very well. So to borrow weight from the late leader Saw Bo Mya, Htein Maung put the names of Saw Bo Mya's wife and son to his Peace Council, which no body apart from himself and Burmese military spies recognizes.

To confuse everybody, Htein Maung even goes a step further and declared that he has taken over-all command of the KNU and scrapped KNU central by his authority. And his Peace Council issued many ridiculous statements this week. We, BURMA DIGEST, got half a dozen or more statements, and requests to publish the statements, from Htein Maung's Peace Council, which we do not oblige because we simply cannot give platform to turn-coats.

We just want to see solidarity inside Karen national movement. And we believe that the Karen National Union will be able to overcome any split and crisis caused by Burmese Regime's military spies, and the Karen national movement will thrive on until Karen people, along with Burmese democrats, can restore true liberty and genuine democracy in our country.

KNU split shows resurgence of Burmese secret services. During the peak era of former master Khin Nyunt, Burmese spies in a similar manner caused a split between KNU's Buddhist and Christian factions. But soon after Khin Nyunt's purge, Burmese spy organization became very weak; let alone causing split in the opposition, they were fully occupied

with patching up splits in their own rank and files. But now after a few years they have regained their strength as well as confidence.

And they are starting to resume their dirty jobs. Burmese military spies recently formed a fake vigilant student organization and they exploded a few bombs here and there inside Burma. They even this week made a bomb attack in Mon State to disrupt Mon National Day celebrations in Mon State. Whenever a bomb explodes, the fake vigilant or vigorous student group make claims that they are responsible for the bombings. Their aim is to paint a black picture of the real student pro-democracy activists who never have anything to do with violence.

And with the help of their lap-dogs, the Union Solidarity Development Association or Kyant Phuts, Burmese secret services are successfully orchestrating fake public rallies in Rangoon and other cities to denounce western governments which put forward a formal discussion in UN Security Council to take actions on deteriorating human rights situations in Burma.

As regime's supremo Sen. Gen. Than Shwe now knows that he has at best just a few years more to live, because of his diabetes, hypertension and large-intestinal tumour, he is very eager to make sure a smooth transition to a military-controlled semi-civilian puppet government system under their pro-military constitution as soon as possible; to be able to anoint a trusted protégé as his successor, for the safety of his family and their fortunes after his death. So, accordingly, regime's secret services in collaboration with their militant semi-political Kyant Phut organization are now ready to craft an ultimate elimination of all political opposition inside the country, in the border region and abroad.

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Irrawaddy - February 9, 2007

## **Burmese open their hearts - Shah Paung**

BurmaNet News, February 9, 2007 - Issue # 3139 - "Editor" <[editor@burmanet.org](mailto:editor@burmanet.org)> - [www.burmanet.org](http://www.burmanet.org)

The Open Heart campaign launched in Burma in early January by a pro-democracy group has started to gain momentum, according to members.

The 88 Generation Students group initiated the campaign on January 4 by calling on Burmese to write letters describing their dissatisfaction with the social and political situation in the country.

Min Ko Naing, the leader of the group, says it has already received more than 8,000 letters from monks, retired government officials, students and others.

Many of the letters openly criticize the economic, political and social mismanagement of the country by its military leaders, particularly inadequate salaries and pensions.

Min Ko Naing read selections from the letters to The Irrawaddy by phone >from his home in Rangoon. One letter from a former civil servant complained that retired officials who live in rural Burma spend much of their pensions on transportation costs to and from city banks where they are required to pick up the funds, according to the group.

The pension I receive now is not even enough for a meal, the civil servant continued. We have fulfilled our duty for our country, but the government failed to take responsibility for us.

Some letters were addressed directly to junta leader Snr-Gen Than Shwe and included the names and addresses of the authors.

Others were believed to have been written by monks and urge Than Shwe to address the countrys problems immediately. Life is not permanent, one such letter reads. Do not think it is permanent. Take reform while you have authority and power.

Rising commodity prices led one monk to write that he no longer wants to receive alms from people, as the prices for ordinary staple goods have skyrocketed in recent months.

The letters give voice to many common complaints in Burma: political repression, government corruption, limited educational opportunities, poor healthcare and abuse of rural villagers by the military. One letter about the frequent electricity blackouts contained traces of candle wax.

One letter obtained by The Irrawaddy was written by a student who complained about donations collected by university officials. Some students face many problems because they have no money, the letter said. They [female students] have to think about whether to sell their bodies to continue their studies or just return home. The letter also contained an appeal to the military to show compassion toward students and think of them as they would their own children.

One of the letters received by the group and believed to be sent by a young girl living with her grandmother contained only a list of daily expenditures. The list showed expenses of 600 kyat (47 US cents) per day

but a daily income of only 400 kyat (31 cents).

Local officials have become alarmed by the letters, according to Min Ko Naing, and have tried to pressure people not to submit them, saying that if they have complaints, the government will solve them.

The 88 Generation Students planned the campaign to coincide with the 59th anniversary of Burma's independence from Britain, commemorated on January 4, and set a deadline of one month.

The deadline has since been extended because carriers bringing the letters to Rangoon have faced security problems. The letters are not sent through the post office because people fear being arrested if they are intercepted by government officials.

Official economic statistics and growth figures contrast sharply with information submitted in many of the Open Heart letters. In newspapers, the government claims that national incomes have increased, said Min Ko Naing. But if we compare the young girls daily expenditure list, her account seems more sensible.

Min Ko Naing, a former student activist who led a nationwide pro-democracy uprising in 1988, summed up the purpose and difficulties of the Open Heart campaign this way: Burmese people have a right to tell the truth, but it will be hard for people [to exercise that right], as they have lived under military rule for so many years.

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February 1, 2007 - Irrawaddy

INSIDE BURMA - **Corruption rises in Burma's prisons, rights group says** - Shah Paung  
BurmaNet News, February 1, 2007 Issue # 3133 - "Editor" <[editor@burmanet.org](mailto:editor@burmanet.org)> - [www.burmanet.org](http://www.burmanet.org)

The Burmese government continues to allow torture and corruption in its prison system, and a plan to put prisons on a self-funding basis will encourage even more abuses, according to a human rights report released on Wednesday.

The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners [Burma] report titled "The Situation of Prisons in Burma as of 2006" claims the military regime plans to make prisons self-funded by 2009. Large portions of the report are based on interviews with prisoners, prison authorities and other knowledgeable sources.

"As a consequence, there is much more corruption, maltreatment, unjust fundraising events and more forced labor," by prison authorities and staff, the report said.

It is common practice for prisoners who want relief from beatings and forced labor to pay bribes to prison authorities, according to groups that monitor Burmese prisons.

"We have released this report to let the people know the real situation in prisons," said Bo Kyi, joint secretary of AAPP.

The report gives examples of representative bribes that prisoners or their family members must pay. The time period covered by a bribe was not given.

According to the report, prisoners being transferred from a labor camp to Insein Prison must pay their own bus fare of 1,000 to 5,000 kyat (up to US \$3).

Bribes to prevent beatings cost up to 30,000 kyat (\$22).

To sleep on a wooden platform, prisoners pay about 15,000 kyat (\$11). Those who cannot pay sleep on cement floors without a bed sheet. Those who want to use a private bathroom and toilet pay about 1,500 kyat (\$1) to authorities.

According to family members of former political prisoners, to visit a relative they sometimes paid up to 10,000 kyat (\$7) or more.

Prisoners who do not want to transfer to another prison pay about 150,000 kyat (\$114) to the superintendent of the prison. If they want to transfer to a more comfortable labor camp, they pay about 100,000 kyat (\$76).

Every prisoner must work in the prison compound. Those who want to get easier work, pay about 20,000 kyat (\$15).

Prisoners who get ill pay about 30,000 kyat (\$22) to visit a prison doctor as a first installment.

There are 91 prison labor camps and 42 prisons in Burma, according to the Burmese government. The regime has recently claimed that prison conditions have been improved and fresh water, medicines and other assistance is provided.

"The real situation is totally different from what they [the junta] describe in newspapers and show on the television," Bo Kyi said.

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# The Great Poet Is Dead But Not Forgiven - By Aung Zaw

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Burma's poet laureate Tin Moe is dead, and Burmese people at home and abroad are still sending condolences and holding ceremonies in Thailand, Japan, South Korea, Europe and California, where he died last Monday.

In Burma, artists, writers, poets, film directors and literary masters, including Ludu Daw Amar and others, expressed sadness and sorrow - except for the military rulers.

The regime still wants to distance itself from Burma's „revolutionary poet“ who stalwartly sided with Burma's democratic movement and detained opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

Colleagues said the regime's newspapers won't publish an obituary for Tin Moe, who died at age 74. The news of the poet's death first reached Burma through Burmese shortwave radio stations based in the West.

Though Tin Moe is greatly adored and loved by the Burmese people, the poet is disliked by the regime. Since he left for exile in 1999, his name was banned in the local press.

In fact, as Tin Moe publicly supported the democracy movement in 1988, the military government imposed strict regulations on him, prohibiting his books from being republished even though his poems had been previously taught in government-approved school textbooks.

Friends and colleagues who want to write about him can sometimes mention „a poet,“ but they are never allowed to reprint his poems.

After learning of his death, the regime quickly sent special branch officers to Tin Moe's house in Insein, a suburb of Rangoon, where he spent his days with his wife and children. The house is still occupied by one of his daughters.

Since the day of his death, friends and admirers have visited the house, often followed by military and police officers who take photographs and keep a list of visitors in an effort to intimidate. But people continue to come.

Several letters, articles and poems have been written in Burma to honor the death of Tin Moe - knowing full well the regime will not allow any of them to be printed. Artists and poets who composed poems about Tin Moe send them through the Internet to friends in exile and foreign-based Burmese publications, including The Irrawaddy. [The Irrawaddy is running a special section of his poetry in its Burmese language version.]

Nevertheless, in spite of the regime's silence and censorship, close colleagues, writers and many of his readers will hold private ceremonies this weekend in Burma.

In fact, names and stories of exiled artists, writers, and journalists are rarely allowed to be mentioned in Burma's local press. The names of Tin Moe and other exiled writers only appear in the regime's mouthpiece publications when authorities want to condemn or attack them. As always, they are branded „enemies of the state,“ „traitor“ and „unpatriotic.“

Among all exiled artists, Tin Moe was highly regarded for his selfless devotion to the democracy movement since 1988. Tin Moe was also close to Khin Kyi, the mother of Suu Kyi.

Interestingly, Tin Moe never shied away from supporting Suu Kyi though there were some Burmese writers who later criticized the Nobel Peace Prize winner and left her party, the National League for Democracy.

Undaunted, Tin Moe backed Suu Kyi wholeheartedly and while in exile wrote several poems about her. It is understandable the regime hates him.

Tin Moe died gracefully, and the nation lost a great national poet who deserves to be honored in his homeland, but the military leaders clearly are afraid of a poet and his poems.

An excerpt from Tin Moe's poem Meeting with the Buddha (2000) captures the power of his spirit and words:

## Meeting with the Buddha

Not for anything in particular  
even me the very Buddha  
along with other antiques  
they've put up for sale  
here in Europe,  
they have such a sharp eye for business  
what business brings you here?  
asks the Buddha



You may not know it  
but if you were in Burma  
you would surely receive  
all kinds of veneration,  
but  
telling only untruths and preaching only falsehoods  
your Holiness would exclaim "Buddha"  
and long to flee

Telling untruths  
you tire yourself out  
on the rounds of births  
A scandal to the whole world  
the generals delivering all kinds of orders  
engaging in all kinds of impropriety  
what if they bind you hand and foot  
and put you under lock and key?

These hare-brained guys  
don't know the truth  
they don't keep promises  
all kinds of lies  
come out of their foul mouths  
they have no respect for the nation  
with their childish mentality  
they're too dirty

An army exists to oppress the people  
who flatter them  
they ask them to sharpen the swords  
it's a haven for thugs  
the king of the master gangsters  
Bo Ne Win's army  
only knows how to shoot and cheat ....

*Translated by Anna J.*

**Free  
Burma,  
free  
Aung  
San  
Suu  
Kyi**

Poems

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