



BURMA REPORT

March 2007

မြန်မာ့ - မှတ်တမ်း

Issue N° 45

February 12, 2007 Irrawaddy - <http://www.irrawaddy.org/> -

Burma's -Union Day- marked at NLD headquarters - Khun Sam

BurmaNet News, February 10-12, 2007 -Issue # 3140 - "Editor" <editor@burmanet.org> - www.burmanet.org

The Committee Representing the People's Parliament (CRPP), an umbrella organization for opposition groups inside Burma, on Monday marked Union Day with an appeal to the regime to solve the country's problems. A Union Day celebration planned by another group, the United Nationalities Alliance (UNA), was banned by the regime.

Observances of the anniversary, the 60th, were held at the headquarters in Rangoon of Burma's main opposition party, the National League for Democracy. About 800 people attended, including members of the CRPP, the NLD, the 88 Generation Student Groups and ethnic political leaders, according to CRPP Secretary Aye Tha Aung

A Union Day statement called on the military regime to honor the spirit of the Panglong Agreement of 1947, which laid the foundation for modern Burma. The Panglong Agreement was signed by General Aung San, Aung San Suu Kyi's father, along with several ethnic leaders. Monday's statement also called for the release of NLD leader Aung San Suu Kyi, NLD Vice-Chairman Tin Oo, Shan Nationalities League for Democracy Chairman Hkun Tun Oo and ethnic leaders.

Foreign diplomats, members of the NLD and 88 Generation Student Groups, veteran politicians and ethnic leaders had been expected to attend a dinner on Monday night but the regime's municipal department wrote to the UNA ordering it to call off the event, according to UNA spokesman Fu Cin Sian Thang, who is also chairman of the Zomi National Congress. The UNA comprises eight ethnic-based political parties that ran in the 1990 election

In a phone interview with The Irrawaddy, Aye Tha Aung said: "Although we say Burma is a union, there is still no physical and ethical form of union. We need to build a genuine union.

"We need a constitution that respects and protects the rights of every ethnic people. Only then can we have a genuine democratic union."

Fu Cin Sian Thang told The Irrawaddy: "It is far from building a genuine union when we can not even hold a gathering for dinner. These are obstacles to political resolution."

<http://www.irrawaddy.org/aviewer.asp?a=6683&z=163>

The Irrawaddy - February 14, 2007 -

What Does Union Day Mean to Ethnic Minorities? - By Nehginpao Kipgen

[NLDmembrsnSupportersofCRPPnNLDnDASSK] - Kukiforum News <kukiforumnews@yahoo.com>

Burma's 60th Union Day was celebrated inside and outside of the country, but many people question why the event is celebrated at all, since the ideals expressed in the Panglong agreement have never been achieved.

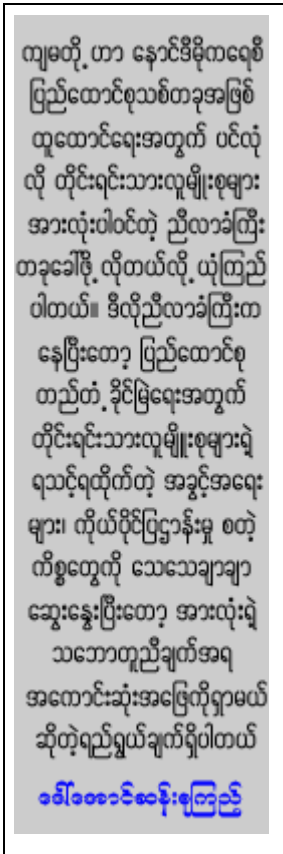
Union Day history starts at Panglong in southern Shan State on February 12, 1947, when 23 representatives from the Burman government, Chin Hills, Kachin Hills and Shan States signed an agreement in the presence of representatives from the executive council of the governor of Burma, to form an interim government.*

The emergence of Union Day initially, though, did not include all the ethnic nationalities of present day Burma, yet it has served as a threshold for a unified Burma. The agreement was aimed at establishing a federal Burma on the basis of socio-political equality and self-determination for all ethnic nationalities.

Had not Aung San promised political equality and self-determination to ethnic minority groups, the Union of Burma might have never been born.

During the drafting the Union of Burma's constitution, hopes were abruptly shattered with the assassination of Aung San, along with six of executive councilors on July 19, 1947. Aung San was the architect of the Panglong Agreement, and his departure dashed the dream of having a federal government: the constitution was hastily created on the model of a quasi-federal organization, categorically downplaying the visions of the Panglong signatories. This mischievous turn of events has become a source of lingering distrust between the Burman government and ethnic minorities of today.

With the adoption of the amended constitution on September 24, 1947, ethnic minority groups realized that the quasi-federal constitution did not guarantee their equality of rights and self-determination, as agreed upon at Panglong. Subsequently, the non-Burman ethnic nationalities, after a series of consultations and meetings amongst themselves and with Burman government leaders, demanded changes to the 1947 constitution to include the principles of political equality



and self-determination. Article X of the 1947 constitution states: "every State shall have the right to secede from the Union".?

Partly due to the discontent of the non-Burman ethnic nationalities during 1951 to 1961, the civilian government was confronted with many constitutional challenges. At the same time, there was a leadership crisis within the ruling Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League?the party splitting into two factions?AFPFL-clean and AFPFL-stable in May 1958.

Consequently, U Nu, the prime minister, asked the army chief, Ne Win, to form a caretaker government and conduct general elections. During the 1960 election, U Nu's AFPFL-clean faction returned to power. Sticking to their demands, leaders of ethnic minorities demanded discussions with Prime Minister U Nu about amendments to the constitution. This demand was reasserted at a conference when the Ethnic States Unity and Solidarity Organization convened in 1961.

Construing the political maneuver as a threat to the integration of the country based on a federal model, Ne Win seized power by military coup on March 2, 1962, which led to the arrest of U Nu and other leaders, including Sao Shwe Thaik, the first president of independent Burma.

The non-Burman ethnic nationalities largely saw the military regime as the Burman government. Having little hope for any peaceful agreement with a military-dominated government, many ethnic minority groups resorted to armed struggle.

Under Ne Win's Revolutionary Council government, the 1947 constitution was replaced by the 1974 constitution which stressed a unitary form of government. On September 18, 1988, the military-led government transformed itself into the State Law and Order Restoration Council and then to the State Peace and Development Council on November 15, 1997. The name is expected to change again in the ongoing process of the military regime's seven steps toward a "disciplined democracy".

In remarks on the 60th anniversary of Union Day, SPDC chief Snr-Gen Than Shwe, said: "Certain powerful countries desirous of gaining dominance over the Union of Myanmar are stirring up racial conflicts to break up national unity and cause the recurrence of armed conflicts."

Our view, however, is that successive Burman military governments have dominated the ethnically diverse country with very little tolerance and absolute, dictatorial control.

Despite the observation of Union Day for the past 60 years, the true spirit of the day has never been honored by the Burman government: guaranteeing the ethno-political equality and self-determination of ethnic nationalities.

This does not, however, give a clean chit to secessionism, but rather stresses the intrinsic importance of establishing a unified Burma under a federal system. History tells us that prior to the British conquest and the subsequent Panglong Agreement, all nationalities of present day Burma had already established themselves, in one organizational form or another.

As long as the present and future leaders of Burma fail to recognize the principles of the Panglong Agreement, the true spirit of Union Day will never be realized.

Therefore, every nationality in the Union of Burma has the right to claim or proclaim its pre-independence status.

This fact needs to remain as a focal point of all political stakeholders, regardless of ethnicity or religious affiliations. The emergence of a unified and peaceful country rests on the shoulders of all the peoples of Burma. To achieve political equality and self-determination, all ethnic groups must work together.

Nehginpao Kipgen is the general secretary of the US-based Kuki International Forum and a researcher on the rise of political conflicts in modern Burma (1947-2004).

*[Burman representative: Aung San; Chin representatives: U Hlur Hmung, U Thawng Za Khup, U Kio Mang; Kachin representatives: Sinwa Nawng, Zau Rip, Dinra Tang, Zau La, Zau Lawn, Labang Grong; Shan representatives: Tawnpeng, Yawnghei, North Hsenwi, Laika, Mong Pawn, Hsamonghkam and representatives of Pawnglawng, Tin E, Kya Bu, Sao Yapa Hpa, Htun Myint, Hkun Saw, Hkun Htee.]

<http://www.irrawaddy.org/aviewer.asp?a=6689&z=165>

BurmaNet News, February 24-26, 2007 - February 24-26, 2007 Issue # 3149 - "Editor" <editor@burmanet.org>

Revolutionary Forces' Sixth Strategic Consultation Meeting Statement

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Revolutionary Forces' Sixth Strategic Consultation Meeting Statement

The Sixth Strategic Consultation Meeting of the revolutionary forces was held successfully from February 21 to 23, 2007 at a certain place in the liberated area. Leaders of the NCGUB, NCUB, ENC (Union of Burma), the democratic forces of Burma, WLB (Burma), SYCB and NY Forum attended the meeting and, in addition to making an in-depth review of the current domestic and international situations, the meeting explored and determined the courses for freeing the country from the crises it is facing. Subsequently, this Strategic Consultation Meeting would like to state its positions regarding the current political situations, as follows.

1. We, the political forces, have been struggling for the emergence of tripartite dialogue in accordance with our belief that the most appropriate course for overcoming the general political, economic and social crises is resolving the various problems of the country peacefully through negotiation, on the basis of tripartite political dialogue. However, it is our view that in opposition to the will of the political forces, the international community and the people, the SPDC military clique's implementation of its 7-Step Road Map unilaterally is to avoid the dialogue process. It is striving and merely working for permanence of the evil system of military dictatorship. Accordingly, for the emergence of political dialogue leading towards democratic change and national reconciliation, it is our earnest conviction that the **"SPDC's Road Map must be attacked and destroyed at every step by people's power."**

2. Since the SPDC's ongoing plot to annihilate and decimate the democratic and nationality forces, military campaigns with greater ferocity in the nationalities' areas, violence of burning the villages, relocation of villagers by force, use of forced labor nationwide, conscription by force of children for the army and use of rape of women as a weapon of war are totally against establishment of democracy and the approach to national reconciliation, we strongly condemn them.

3. We would like to express our gratitude to the International Community, including the United Nations, for its sympathy and support for the Burmese democratic movement and we would like to intently urge for unified action, on the basis of common programs, to hold up the Burmese democratic effort. Moreover, we would like to state seriously that the neighboring countries of Burma and regional countries should consult with the International Community and undertake actions more dynamically.

4. We seriously call upon the SPDC to abolish its illegitimate National Convention, release Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and all political prisoners unconditionally, immediately cease its military offensives against the indigenous nationalities and killing, immediately stop its repressions of the people and political parties, and immediately undertake genuine dialogue.

5. We urge the people, made up of various nationalities, to work together for the abolishment of the military clique's sham National Convention, which would provide the military clique with license to murder, in a way, and to courageously struggle for obtaining their basic rights.

6. We, the forces for freedom, declare to relentlessly struggle on firmly together with the International Community, the entire people and within the framework of the forces for the advent of democracy and the federal union.

Date : February 23, 2007

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Press release (ILO/07/04) - 26 February 2007

ILO concludes Understanding with Myanmar -

Euro-Burma Office "EBO" <burma@euro-burma.be>

GENEVA (ILO News) - The International Labour Office (ILO) announced today that it has concluded an Understanding with the Government of Myanmar designed to provide, as previously requested by the International Labour Conference and the ILO Governing Body, a mechanism to enable victims of forced labour to seek redress.

The Understanding provides that alleged victims of forced labour in Myanmar will have full freedom to submit complaints to the ILO Liaison Officer in Yangon. The Liaison Officer will then make a confidential preliminary assessment as to whether a case involves forced labour, in order that such cases can be investigated by the Myanmar authorities and

FOR PEACE, FREEDOM, DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN BURMA

appropriate action taken against the perpetrators.

The Understanding incorporates guarantees that no retaliatory action will be taken against complainants. It also provides that the ILO Liaison Officer shall be accorded timely freedom to travel within Myanmar for the purpose of meeting complainants or other relevant persons.

The mechanism will be implemented on a trial basis over 12 months and may be extended by mutual agreement.

Mizzima News - February 20, 2007- <http://www.mizzima.com>

Tuesday prayer goers nearly beaten up by pro-regime mob

BurmaNet News, February 17-20, 2007 -Issue # 3145 -"Editor" <editor@burmanet.org> - www.burmanet.org

Supporters of Burma's opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi have accused a pro-regime mob of having planned to attack them at the Shwe Da Gone pagoda this morning.

Dozens of junta-backed members of the Union Solidarity and Development Association and pagoda security personnel surrounded and threatened to beat the Tuesday prayer goers in Burma's famous pagoda. Tuesday prayers are organised demanding the release of Nobel Peace Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi.

"I was shocked to see the big mob wearing the pagoda's security uniform who surrounded us. A man with a walkie-talkie shouted that we be beaten up saying that they won't tolerate prayers. Then he shouted that we be driven out of the pagoda compound," said Yin Yin Myat, who participated in the prayer campaign.

"Captain Thein Htike Oo in civilian dress told his guys to beat us up," she added.

However, the palpably tense situation ended without violence after the prayer goers dispersed from the pagoda.

Hla Kyi (77), a die-hard supporter of Aung San Suu Kyi told Mizzima that "I requested them not to beat us as we are the same people when I heard voices saying 'beat them, beat them.'"

"I was sitting inside the compound near a bamboo fence. They threatened us saying 'You old granny get out of here. If you do not go out, we will beat you.' Then a man saw me off to the escalator concerned about my safety," she added.

The campaigners said they saw a man with rubber slings and a screw driver who was among the mob.

"I think were waiting for us to prevent us from praying at the pagoda. But no one from our group retaliated though some were pushed and pulled harshly (by the mob). They want us to give up and stop the praying ceremony," Yin Yin Myat said.

The military junta stepped up the harassment over a couple of weeks apparently to stop the prayer ceremony for releasing Aung San Suu Kyi.

Earlier, throwing water on the floor and raising the volume of the sound box on the pagoda was resorted to while the prayers were on.

The campaigners said that they were committed to face the dangers ahead.

<http://www.mizzima.com/MizzimaNews/News/2007/Feb/28-Feb-2007.html>

The Associated Press - Published: February 27, 2007 - <http://www.iht.com/>

Demonstrators detained for rare Myanmar protest released without charge

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YANGON, Myanmar: All nine demonstrators detained recently for a rare protest against Myanmar's military government were released Tuesday without charge, they and their relatives said.

The nine had been brought in for questioning by police after taking part in a demonstration of about 25 people in Yangon last Thursday that urged the country's ruling junta to improve health care, education and economic conditions.

They said were released after signing an undertaking acknowledging police orders that they should not hold any future public demonstrations without first obtaining official permission to do so.

"The authorities wanted to know who sponsored the demonstrations and who provided financial assistance to us," Tun Tun, one of the released protesters, told The Associated Press.

He said he told them no foreign country or organization sponsored the demonstration, and that he had copied the idea from the group that staged rallies last month outside the U.S. and British embassies. He was referring to protests by about 30 supporters of the junta denouncing the countries' attempt to pass a U.N. Security Council resolution demanding faster democratic reforms in Myanmar.

Tun Tun, 45, said he was not physically tortured but he was put under mental pressure during interrogation after he was arrested at his home in Nyaungdone, 64 kilometers (40 miles) northwest of Yangon, on Friday night. He runs a small photo lab, and said he is not a member of Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party or any other group.

Another freed detainee, May Win, 53, said that she was asked "if the intention of staging a protest was to incite a mass riot."

"I told the police that we have no intention to incite unrest but were honestly expressing concern over the hardship and rising consumer prices that we, housewives, are currently facing," she said. May Win worked with immigration department before she was dismissed in 1988 for participating in mass pro-democracy protests.

All nine were released from the Aungthabye police headquarters in a northern Yangon suburb, the relative of one of the protesters told The Associated Press. They asked not to be named for fear of irritating the authorities, who tightly control information.

By targeting economic issues, the demonstration sought the sympathy of many Yangon residents, who are under a financial strain as incomes fail to keep pace with inflation in what is already one of Asia's poorest countries.

Previous public demonstrations in Yangon have usually targeted the legitimacy of the military government and have been associated with Suu Kyi's party or other political activists. The government tolerates little dissent.

The 30-minute demonstration last Thursday ended peacefully after police arrived. Only one participant, identified as pro-democracy campaigner Htin Kyaw, was arrested at the scene, and the others were rounded up later. Three Myanmar journalists were also detained for several hours.

The National League for Democracy said Tuesday that it welcomed the release of the protesters "who had participated in the peaceful expression of people's opinion."

Myint Thein, an NLD spokesman, said the government in the future should permit such peaceful expressions of public opinion, which is one of the basic democratic rights.

Myanmar has been under military rule since 1962. The current junta was installed in 1988 after authorities put down mass pro-democracy demonstrations.

A general election were held in 1990, but the military refused to hand over power after Suu Kyi's party won a landslide victory.

<http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2007/02/27/asia/AS-GEN-Myanmar-Arrests.php>

March 8, 2007 – The Irrawaddy - <http://www.irrawaddy.org/>

Two more activists held in Rangoon

The BurmaNet News, March 8, 2007 - Issue # 3157 -"Editor" <editor@burmanet.org>, www.burmanet.org

Following a press briefing in Rangoon on Thursday, two activists were taken into custody, family source says.

Police arrested Rangoon-based politician Amyotheryei Win Naing, 70, and Htin Kyaw, 44, after alleging that they conducted an unauthorized public briefing on economic and social crises in the country. The location of their detention remains unclear.

A police official said that arresting officers were acting on instructions from Naypyidaw, Burma's administrative capital, according to family sources.

During the press briefing, which lasted more than two hours, Amyotheryei Win Naing and Htin Kyaw explained that a protest held in late February wasn't motivated by politics but by social and economic crisis in the country. Htin Kyaw played a leading role in the protest.

Htin Kyaw had previously been arrested on two other occasions, in late February and early March, in connection with the protest in downtown Rangoon. He had been released on Wednesday.

Today's arrests bring the total number of people detained this week to nine. On Wednesday, seven other activists who

had participated in the February protest were also detained.

Meanwhile, a 65-year-old man in Rangoon's Thingangyun Township who had been arrested yesterday was tried on charges of inciting unrest among the public in the township's court. In late February Thein Zan wrote and posted signs on his fence complaining about high commodity prices.

Aung Thein, the lawyer representing Thein Zein, said he had been charged under section 505(b) of Burma's criminal code, which prohibits inciting public unrest, and his case will be heard on March 14.

<http://www.irrawaddy.org/aviewer.asp?a=6785&z=163>

Agence France Presse - March 9, 2007

Myanmar releases protest leader - March 9, 2007

BurmaNet News, March 9, 2007 - Issue # 3158 - "Editor" <editor@burmanet.org> - www.burmanet.org

Military-run Myanmar on Friday released the leader of last month's protest demanding better living conditions a day after he was arrested for the third time in three weeks, an activist said.

Htin Kyaw, 44, was detained Thursday after holding a press conference in Yangon to urge the junta to improve Myanmar's dire living conditions and release seven people still under detention over the demonstration.

Win Naing, a 71-year-old veteran politician who organised the press conference, was also detained along with Htin Kyaw, but he told AFP that they were both released Friday.

"We were interrogated separately at the home affairs ministry. They said we were wrong to hold the news conference," said Win Naing. He did not join the February 22 protest, the first public demonstration against the regime in a decade.

During the 30-minute protest, about 25 people marched through a Yangon market urging lower prices for basic commodities, more jobs and 24-hour electricity.

Win Naing said seven of the protesters were still detained by the junta.

"They were just demanding better living conditions. I don't understand the government's motive for arresting people, including myself and Htin Kyaw," the pro-democracy activist said.

He said he had little information about the detained seven, including their whereabouts.

Protests of any kind are rare in Myanmar, formerly known as Burma, which has been under military rule since 1962.

The ruling junta has long feared that the country's crumbling economy, driven into the ground by decades of mismanagement and hobbled by Western sanctions, could spark urban unrest.

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Intelligence agencies warns of India being shut-out in Myanmar by savvy Russians and Chinese - By Arvind Jayaram

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March 8: 2007 - Indian intelligence agencies have warned of a possible shut-out of Indian interests in Myanmar oil and gas by Russian and Chinese oil firms. The agencies argue that the decision of oil savvy Russia and China to veto a US-led move in the United Nations Security Council to intervene in the Myanmar junta's alleged human right violations was a pivotal point in the changing relationship with Russian and Chinese companies now well entrenched in the country. The agencies have highlighted the recent award of three deepwater offshore blocks -- AD-1, AD-6 and AD-8, along Myanmar's western Rakhine coast and adjacent to India's territory -- as a possible quid pro quo by the State Peace and Development Council to China's CNPC for their support could have a bearing on India's energy security. Russia, too has stolen a march over the Indian contingent, with the Republic of Kalmykia (RoK) of the Russian Federation recently acquiring its first oil and gas E&P asset in Myanmar

-- the B-2 onshore block. Interestingly, Silver Wave Energy Corporation of Singapore -- a privately-owned company headed by the well connected Minn Minn Oung, which has facilitated GAIL's entry into three offshore blocks in Myanmar -- seems to have put its relationship with GAIL on a backburner by signing a tripartite agreement with the RoK and the Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE) for oil and gas exploration. And while the gas pipeline from the A-1 and A-3 gas fields in which OVL and GAIL have a stake has not been altogether ruled out -- the Myanmar authorities are reportedly carrying out a survey to assess the extent of reserves in the block, which is likely to be completed by April or May, 2007 -- it appears that the Myanmar government is keen exploring other options to sell the gas.

The Irrawaddy: <http://www.irrawaddy.org/> - Wed 7 Mar 2007

British MP tells junta minister: „you're a wicked regime“

BurmaNet News, March 7, 2007 Issue # 3156 - "Editor" <editor@burmanet.org> - www.burmanet.org

A leading British opposition parliamentarian branded Burma a „pariah state“ ruled by a „wicked“ regime in the first face-to-face meeting in a decade between the military junta and a senior politician from Britain.

In a Rangoon encounter described by his Conservative Party office as a „heated exchange,“ Andrew Mitchell, Shadow Secretary of State for International Development, told Burma's Deputy Foreign Minister Kyaw Thu that his regime was „wicked and illegitimate“.

Mitchell told Kyaw Thu: „People in the West regard your government as a pariah state. It is wicked and illegitimate. You spend only a dollar a year per head on health and education, and people are suffering terribly up and down the land.“

Mitchell called for the release of all political prisoners and the beginning of meaningful tripartite talks between the junta, opposition leaders and separatist rebel groups. He insisted on an immediate start to the transition process to democracy.

A statement on the meeting issued on Tuesday by Mitchell's office said: „In the heated exchange, U Kyaw Thu denied the existence of political prisoners in Burma, and refused to allow Mr Mitchell to visit Nobel Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi.“

The statement continued: „Speaking after the meeting, Mr Mitchell condemned her continuing detention, saying that she represented a 'beacon of hope' for the people of Burma.“

Mitchell's office said that during his two days in Rangoon, the politician had held „covert meetings“ with senior members of the National League for Democracy and other opposition figures, including leaders of the 1988 student revolt.

He also met NGO leaders who, the statement said, „called for a reconsideration of the isolationist policies of boycotts, travel and investment bans and trade sanctions organized by the West towards Burma. They argued that greater trade and exposure to international influences would help build a more prosperous, open society and eventually help undermine the generals' grip on power.“

Mitchell also travelled to Karen State, visiting the border refugee camp Ei Tu Hta. „He heard fresh evidence of renewed ethnic cleansing and human rights abuses perpetrated by the Burmese Army as part of their 50-year-old war against separatist rebels,“ the statement said. „He heard shocking first-hand accounts of the torture and violence used by the Burmese army in their attempts to suppress the uprising.“

The British government announced this week that it would allow aid it gives to Burmese refugee groups in Thailand to be passed across the border to displaced people inside Burma.

Mitchell's visit and his meeting with Kyaw Thu went unreported in the official Burmese press, although The New Light of Myanmar on Wednesday accused the NLD of „making continuous contacts with [the] US and British embassies in Yangon [Rangoon], and following the orders of the two embassies to the detriment of the interest of the nation and the people.“

The newspaper accused the NLD of „trying to make the entire nation become a colonialist-enslaved minion.“

<http://www.irrawaddy.org/aviewer.asp?a=6775&z=163>

[NLDmembrsnSupportersofCRPPnNLDnDASSK] - 26.02.2007

Casting the shadow of darkness not peace; China's influence on Myanmar By May Ng
nldmembrsnsupportersofcrppnldndassk@yahoo.com - Nurul Islam <faisalco_ctg@yahoo.com>

China's political power, on the wings of its spectacular economic success, is rising. But because of China's military and financial support for Myanmar's brutal regime, like many nations on the wrong end of this power equation, Burma and its people are facing not the future of peace and security but of continuing conflicts and violence.

China's commercial influence on the current South African government alone has shown its vicious teeth at the latest UN Security Council push for resolution, to end the violence in Burma. South Africa is China's biggest trade partner in Africa and China has no scruple in using its influence to get SA to vote with them at the UNSC, against the poor people of Burma. Instead of listening to their outstanding leader Nobel Peace laureate Desmond Tutu, who was advocating peace and security for the people of Burma, South Africa President Thabo Mbeki voted with China, forgetting the past UN's role in abolishing apartheid in his country and his own warning against allowing ties with China to develop into a "colonial relationship."

China's influence on South Africa however, is minute compared to the power it wields over other more menacing regimes such as North Korea, Burma, Sudan and Zimbabwe. Gordon Chang, the author of 'Nuclear Showdown: North Korea Takes on the World' described North Korea under the influence of China as, "the little autocrat that could neither bark nor bite without China's assistance."

Taking the cue from China's handling of the North Korean Nuclear crisis, the over all take on China's policy in Burma is not only bleak but dark and down right chilling. China has so far refused to acknowledge or act on behalf of a peaceful political settlement in Burma.

Just in the past year alone, over 80,000 Burmese refugees, running away from government assaults, crossed the border into Thailand. Yesterday, the Karen Women's organization reported that the Burmese military's violence on civilians continued while the UNSC rejected a resolution to take action for Burma. They outlined in details, the sexual violence committed by the army against civilians as Myanmar continued to use rape as a weapon of war.

Amidst the poverty and violence, HIV is rampant on the borders, including the border with China. Proliferation, of drug trades, gambling, human smuggling and prostitution on Burma's border, only hardened the evidence which finally brought the case against Burma to the UNSC.

A stalwart supporter of the unpopular regime in Burma, which is bitterly despised by its own people, China has been sending arms, money and infrastructure support.

In November 2005, Elizabeth Economy, director of Asia studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, warned that countries that provide assistance to sustain unpopular regimes for short-term economic or strategic interests often pay a steep long-term political price once these regimes fall out of favour. She said that China should look carefully at its engagement in countries like Sudan, Zimbabwe and Myanmar, among others. Chinese multinationals, too, should consider the longer-term health, safety and environmental welfare of the communities in which they operate, or risk growing local protest.

By October 3, 2006 rioters attacked the Chinese in Zambia, where the political opposition accused China of exploitation and turning Zambia into dumping ground for Chinese slave labour. In less than a decade, over 30,000 Chinese have moved into Lusaka where the riot took place.

Until now China was able to hide behind the headlines about the unsuccessful war in Iraq by the US. But with a careful hard look, the stories about China's fast tract into the heart of Africa and Burma are much more brutal. There are over 100,000 US troops in Iraq and the bloody conflict of the war has been a major concern for US and their allies. But two million Chinese migrants have moved into Burma in less than two decades and it is destabilizing the already explosive political situation in Burma.

Adding to the reality of China's direct involvement in Burma's political affairs, China's continuation in ignoring the threat of HIV, drug, crime and political instability on its border, highlights the underlying, more crucial, failure of the Chinese political leadership. As Gordon Chang has discussed above, what many mistake as 'nuanced' diplomacy is just competing views and interest that result in directionless policy within the Chinese government.

The blind faith in the slogan of 'peaceful rise of political power' has not protected the poor Chinese migrant workers in Chinese cities and abroad. Rupert Wingfield-Hayes of BBC on March 7, 2006 reported that in a system akin to South Africa's apartheid, Chinese migrants are discriminated and exploited. Accurately Elizabeth Economy has labeled China as a rising power exploiting other countries' natural resources, spoiling the global environment, making economic deals but looking away from serious government mistreatment of its citizens and not delivering on promises.

In his expert analysis, David Lampton, Director of China studies at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, said that the Chinese political system does not adequately reflect the diverse interests of the increasingly pluralized society that marketization, urbanization, and globalization have created. Consequently, the Chinese Communist Part's legitimacy is not robust and the Chinese system's appeal, at home and abroad, rests largely on the country's economic success.

Burma is affected by what Mr. Lampton described as, Chinese power, through the massive, often unintended spillover effects, of its appetite for economic growth. And although Beijing's domestic and foreign policies are not malevolent by design, they often have harmful effects, and for those countries on the receiving end of them, intentions may not matter. He concluded that the rise of Chinese political power generates global responses that Beijing cannot fully control and that may not be in its interest.

The Chinese veto at the UNSC along with their friend South Africa, against the resolution to bring a peaceful reconciliation in Burma, was deeply felt by the Burmese people. Even the Myanmar military personnel were said to have been very disappointed in losing the last glimmer of hope for peace. China has cast a long shadow of darkness on Burma, Chinese political power is rising in the east but the long darkness in Burma will not be over soon.

Deutsche Presse-Agentur - 28 February 2007

Activists Call On Thailand To Cancel Salween Dam Plans With Myanmar

Euro-Burma Office - "EBO" <burma@euro-burma.be> - Square Gutenberg 11/2, 1000 Bruxelles, Belgium

FOR PEACE, FREEDOM, DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN BURMA

Thai and Myanmar villagers, backed by activists around the world, on Wednesday appealed to the Thai government to end its collaboration with military-run Myanmar in building five hydro-electric dams on the Salween River.

"We want the authorities involved to halt the projects until proper studies have been done on the impact on the people and environment in the vicinity of the dams," said April Moe, a villager from the Karreni State in Myanmar, one of a score of activists who presented their appeal to Thailand's Ministry of Energy on Wednesday.

In May 2005 the Thai Energy Ministry and Myanmar Ministry of Electric Power signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to build five hydroelectric dams on the 2,800 kilometre Salween River that runs from Tibet through eastern Myanmar and at one point defines the Thai-Myanmar border.

In December 2005 another MOU was signed between the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT) and Myanmar Department of Hydropower to build the one billion dollar Hutgyi dam, on which construction is due to commence in December 2007.

EGAT and China's Sinohydro Corporation will jointly invest in the construction of the dam.

"The entire decision making process for the planning and implementation of the Salween hydropower development projects has been shrouded in secrecy," said a protest letter delivered to the Thai Energy Ministry on Wednesday by NGOs and villagers from northern Thailand.

While the planned dams will undoubtedly displace tens-of-thousands of Myanmar villagers living in the Karen, Karrenni and Shan territories, they will also have an unknown impact on Thai villagers living near the Salween River in Mae Hong Son province.

"I have been living on the banks of the Salween all my life and I still have no idea what the impact of these dams will be," said Nu Chamnankiripai, a village headman from Mae Sariang district.

"The authorities told us we could get jobs in the tourism industry after the dams are built but maybe we will just become refugees," said Nu.

[The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) - Press Release] - Hong Kong, March 1, 2007

BURMA: UN group to examine case of seven detainees

AHRC-PL-009-2007 - AHRC <listadmin@ahrchk.net>

(Hong Kong, March 1, 2007) The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) on Thursday sent a detailed report on the illegal and arbitrary detention of seven persons in Burma to a United Nations specialist group.

The Hong Kong-based regional organisation submitted the 22-page document to the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention on the case of Hkun Htun Oo and six others who were convicted of treason in 2005.

"We have issued a number of appeals on the case detailing the many legal and procedural flaws during the arrest, trial and conviction of the original nine accused," Kim Soo A, urgent appeals coordinator of the AHRC, said.

"They were arrested without warrants, denied access to lawyers, tried at a special tribunal without jurisdiction under inapplicable laws on multiple charges concerning the same alleged offences, and given insufficient opportunities to present witnesses or cross-examine those for the prosecution," she said.

"The working group contacted us and asked that we submit further documentation on the seven men still in detention, which we have done today," Kim said.

"We look forward to its intervention," she added.

Of the two other accused, one died in custody during 2005 while the other appeared as a state witness and was released.

The seven still in prison were sentenced to between 75 and 106 years for their supposed roles in forming an anti-government organisation, which they claim was a body aimed at bringing peace to northeastern Shan state, which borders China, Laos and Thailand.

The region has been plagued by years of civil conflict and remains home to one armed group still at war with the government, alongside numerous ceasefire groups and militias.

Three of the seven are members of the Shan National League for Democracy, a registered political party that was chaired by Hkun Htun Oo.

In its 2006 country report, the AHRC referred to Burma's courts and law-enforcement agencies as a "system of injustice", and said that its judges share responsibility with its generals for "the demoralised state the country is in today".

The report is available on line, at: <http://material.ahrchk.net/hrreport/2006/Burma2006.pdf>

About AHRC: The Asian Human Rights Commission is a regional non-governmental organisation monitoring and lobbying human rights issues in Asia. The Hong Kong-based group was founded in 1984.

*****February 23,
2007 – The Irrawaddy -

A dictator's balancing act - Aung Zaw

THE BURMANET NEWS - February 23, 2007 Issue # 3148 - "Editor" <editor@burmanet.org>

Burma's generals are quoted in official newspapers as claiming they want to build a modern and developed nation with "flourishing disciplined democracy." But consider the true picture...

Burma's prisons still incarcerate more than 1,000 political prisoners, according to Amnesty International. Burma's most famous political prisoner, Aung San Suu Kyi, remains under house arrest, and the regime recently announced that her release date hasn't been decided yet.

Residents in many parts of Rangoon still live in semi-darkness as the government can only provide electricity six hours a day. Roads are in an appalling state, and those who have to use them jokingly say it's like driving on the moon.

It doesn't take economists or political scientists to confirm that Burma is in a state of limbo. The slowdown is clear for all to see.

Some, including Burmese political observers, believe the slowdown might lead the country and its government to a complete halt. Their fears are compounded by rumors of a power struggle among top leaders, about Snr-Gen Than Shwe's health and his hesitant departure from the political scene.

Persistent rumors indicate that Than Shwe, who is in his late 70s, wants to relinquish the post in which he has served so long, but might not want to vacate the throne for Vice Snr-Gen Maung Aye. Than Shwe became commander in chief of the armed forces and chairman of the ruling junta, the State Peace and Development Council, in 1991.

Pundits also point out that Than Shwe may also be worried about his family business and the personal safety of his family members. His desire to leave office may, therefore, face the opposition of his wife, Kyaing Kyaing.

Kyaing Kyaing, who has five daughters, two sons and grandsons, is said to call the shots in the family and is considered to wield considerable influence within its circle. Her sons are involved in business, and her eldest grandson, a favorite of Than Shwe, is currently studying in Singapore.

It's likely, therefore, that Than Shwe may remain in power indefinitely. But that possibility didn't prevent his likely successor, Gen Thura Shwe Mann, from making a move after Than Shwe received medical treatment in Singapore in January. Shwe Mann, who is attached to the Defense Ministry, appeared at several state functions, receiving foreign visitors and making an official visit to India.

After graduating from the Defense Services Academy, Intake 11, in 1969, Shwe Mann earned the honorific title "Thura" for his bravery in fighting the Karen National Liberation Army in 1989. He continued his studies at the National Defense Institute, then joined the Ministry of Defense in 2001, becoming joint chief-of-staff. In 2003, he was promoted to general.

Shwe Mann was rarely seen in public, but is known to be Than Shwe's favored choice to lead the armed forces when, or if, he retires. After being given a top job at the Defense Ministry, 59-year-old Shwe Mann kept in the shadows for many years. Than Shwe encouraged this secretiveness, keeping foreign and Burmese observers guessing. It's likely, though, that the top job within the armed forces is being reserved for Shwe Mann, who has been running day-to-day affairs at the Defense Ministry.

Deputy Snr-Gen Maung Aye, army commander-in-chief and one of the two remaining members of the ruling council that staged the bloody coup in 1988, may not ready to embrace Shwe Mann, however.

Recent rumors circulating among political observers say that Shwe Mann and Maung Aye may be at loggerheads. Maung

Aye, a former northern commander who graduated from DSA Intake 1, played a pivotal role in eliminating former Prime Minister Gen Khin Nyunt and his once powerful intelligence apparatus in 2004. The two had been locked in a power struggle for many years, but finally Khin Nyunt lost and was given a 44-year prison sentence for insubordination and corruption. He is now under house arrest.

The Burmese army normally resists the advance of an intelligence chief to its top post, but Khin Nyunt was an exception since he had the blessing of the late dictator Gen Ne Win, who was seen as godfather within the armed forces until the 1990s. If there is indeed a serious rift at the top between Maung Aye and Shwe Mann, it will therefore pose a real threat to the unity of the armed forces. An intervention by Than Shwe can be expected soon.

Than Shwe looked healthy enough at the Union Day ceremony on February 12, although his absence at the Independence Day observances on January 4 fuelled speculation that he may be dying of cancer.

As things stand at the moment, even if Than Shwe wants to leave office he may be forced to make a delicate and difficult decision to balance the power between powerful generals, as well as clearing it with his wife and ensuring the safety of their children. He must still be clever enough to realize that if he fails in this balancing trick the predictions of the pessimists will come true and there will be a dogfight.

<http://www.irrawaddy.org/aviewer.asp?a=6721&z=166>

Published by : Burma Buero e.V., P.O.Box 27 03 66, DE-50509 Cologne Tel: + 49 (0) 221-9522450 Fax: + 49(0) 221-9522470
e-Mail: burmabuero@netcologne.de - <http://www.burmabureaugermany.com>

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