Meeting expressing the people's sentiments
Wishes of the masses
(Monywa, Sagaing Division 29-9-98)

- Safeguarding the already-achieved State stability and peace
- Safeguarding the already-achieved progress in the economy and food, clothing and shelter situation of the national people
- Opposing and crushing all those perpetrating destructive and disruptive acts to the country when it is stable, peaceful and going on the right path of economic development
- Deporting Suu Kyi who is plotting and attempting to break up the Union
- Abolishing NLD party that is attempting to put the people under servitude and get the country into flames
- Crushing as the people's enemy Suu Kyi and NLD that are conspiring and collaborating with destructive armed terrorists
- Removing and getting rid of NLD Gang of Ten that is perpetrating a plot to enable external elements to put pressure on Myanmar and interfere in internal affairs
- Fiercely opposing and combating any lawless interference from another country
- Preventing recurrence of anarchic riotous acts like those of 1988
- Continuing implementation of the tasks for modern development of the nation by the Tatmadaw and the people with might and main
RELIEF OR REFORM?

The debate as to whether the international community should provide assistance to a country where the government's treatment of its own people has been widely condemned is not unique to Burma. As the economy in that country plummets, however, and political repression intensifies, the needs of the Burmese people grow more desperate. Once again, this becomes a high profile issue. In fact, the possibility of using such assistance to move the regime toward political reform has now been floated by the United Nations and multilateral lending institutions. This proposal raises numerous questions: To what degree does a regime benefit, both financially and politically, from the influx of capital and the presence of international agencies? If assistance is provided in such a setting, can it effectively reach those most in need? And should aid be used as a "carrot" in an attempt to bring about democratic reforms?

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Over the past several months, the regime has accelerated its media campaign aimed at discrediting the political opposition. Cartoons, often derisive, appear daily in the government-controlled English and Burmese language newspapers depicting the demise of the National League for Democracy and Aung San Suu Kyi. Are these meant to tickle the funny bone? Or send chills up the spine?

THE BRITISH VIEW

At a London conference organized by aid organizations and democracy activists in October, Derek Fatchett, a minister of the state foreign and commonwealth office, outlined British policy on Burma. Great Britain, often in conjunction with its European Union partners, has taken a number of steps to express its condemnation of actions by the Burmese military: discouraging investment by British companies, banning visas to Burmese officials and threatening to recommend suspension of Burma from the International Labour Organization. Predictably, the speech was not well received by Burmese authorities. In a letter to Mr. Fatchett, Burma's Ambassador to Washington D.C., U Tin Winn, articulates his government's reaction.
DEVELOPMENT & DEMOCRACY
The UN's Burma Dilemma  
By Thomas R. Lansner

Do YOU REALLY LOVE YOUR NATION?
From The New Light of Myanmar  
By Daw Mya Mya Win

IN THEIR OWN WORDS
Cartoons from The New Light of Myanmar

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OUTRAGE IS NECESSARY
BUT NOT ENOUGH
Speech by Derek Fatchett, Minister of State

OPEN LETTER FROM MYANMAR EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON, D.C.
By Ambassador U Tin Winn, Union of Myanmar
A November United Nations initiative to promote democratic reform in Burma reportedly ties over a billion dollars in humanitarian and development assistance — including World Bank funds through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) — to the lifting of pervasive repression by the country's army junta. The idea faces immense obstacles, however, from World Bank requirements to junta recalcitrance, and raises key questions of UN political and development involvement in Burma.

BY THOMAS R. LANSNER

The United Nations Special Rapporteur for Human Rights cannot visit. The International Labor Organization is banned. The Secretary General’s special envoy is allowed only occasional and grudging access. Yet the UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) is accorded facilities for a regional conference its director calls — at least as quoted in Burma’s official (and only) news media — “the grandest” ever. And the World Health Organization earns front page applause in the state-run The New Light ofMyanmar for bestowing a special award to a nominally non-governmental organization headed by the spouses of junta generals and said to be controlled by army wives to the village level.

Burma's ruling junta, the State Peace and Development Council, is decidedly ambivalent about the United Nations. Some of its activities and agencies are denounced and denied, others welcomed and feted. The junta is urgently seeking development assistance from the United Nations while striving to utterly evade international norms and standard practices that help ensure such aid is used honestly and well, and that basic rights of recipients are
the results of May 1990 elections and for the Secretary General to work toward democratic reform in the country. The UN special rapporteur for human rights in Burma states flatly that abuses "are so numerous and so consistent" that they must be "the result of policy at the highest level, entailing political and legal responsibility." And an ILO commission of inquiry reported in July that "a system built on force and intimidation" allows "the impunity with which government officials, particularly the military, treat the civilian population as an unlimited pool of unpaid forced labor and servants at their disposal."

**CRONIES TO CATASTROPHE?**

Yet in the midst of an economic meltdown and a human rights catastrophe, UN agencies like the FAO and WHO bring conferences and prizes and offer legitimacy to the junta and its cronies. "The secretary general has told UN specialized agencies to coordinate their policies on Burma," complained a senior UN official, "but it seems they refuse to listen."

The FAO conference held in Rangoon in April proceeded despite public protests from the Burmese democratic movement, trade unionists and NGOs, and quiet pressure by some governments. One Western diplomat evinced little surprise, saying, "The political attitude at the top of the FAO is not in sync with the rest of the world," adding that sometimes UN agencies "just rush in and jump in bed with the government." The National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB), the country's democratic government-in-exile, described the situation more pointedly: "An FAO meeting in Burma is particularly inappropriate," said NCGUB UN representative Dr. Thaung Htain. "Our country's small farmers today respected. It is also pressing the World Bank to resume lending, but refusing to pay arrears or to make fundamental economic and financial changes that are the Bank's base line borrowing requirements around the world.

The United Nations system appears equally at odds with itself in dealing with Burma. The UN's political agenda is annually made explicit by General Assembly resolutions calling on the junta to honor
suffer arbitrary expropriation of their crops and forced relocation and compulsory labor at the whims of army authorities who mock the rule of law."

The World Health Organization's September award to the Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association (MMCWA) for "primary health care development" evoked astonishment even among strong proponents of increased humanitarian assistance to Burma. It was, a UNDP official marveled, "well beyond the call of duty." The MMCWA is headed by the wives of top junta members, and even UN documents complain of its heavy centralization. Outside of Rangoon, its leadership is largely a spousal mirror of the junta's military and political chain of command. "To call it an NGO is a farce," says an expatriate who worked on UNDP projects in Burma.

According to Dr. Chris Beyrer, director of the Johns Hopkins Fogarty AIDS International Training Program, and an expert on HIV/AIDS in Southeast Asia, the junta "has nationalized or co-opted" all NGOs in Burma. Worse, he says, such local groups as the Myanmar Red Cross, the Myanmar Medical Association and the MMCWA have been purged of known pro-democracy supporters. Membership in the junta's mass political organization, the Union Development Solidarity Association (USDA), Beyrer and other observers say, is now a requirement for joining other groups. "By forcing NGO members to join the USDA and then have the UN work with these re-formed 'NGOs,' the SPDC is clearly using UN programs to support its militia arm," Beyrer said.

The United Nations Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) is criticized even more harshly. Critics contend it spends freely on programs that can do little in a country where numerous independent analysts say drugs production is officially tolerated or abetted. "The UNDCP monies have bought jeeps for (ethnic) Wa leaders, faxes, telephones and computers, and thus far, at least, done nothing that anyone can document for the farming communities dependent on opium," said an expatriate specialist.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Sadako Ogata, offered another disturbing example of UN agencies publicly at cross purposes. Commenting at a September news conference on the return of Rohingya refugees from Bangladesh to Burma's Rakhine State, Mrs. Ogata minimized reports that returnees are again subject to forced labor, one of the reasons many had initially fled their homes.

"Forced labor is an old tradition," she stated, and, "I am not saying it is good or bad." Asked if forced labor is not a human rights violation, Mrs. Ogata replied, "It depends on how you define forced labor and how you define human rights violation."

Ogata's comments demonstrated not only an apparent dismissal of the July ILO report detailing extensive forced labor under severe conditions in Rakhine State, but also of international standards that prohibit it anywhere. Human rights activists say her interpretation also calls into question UNHCR practices and assessment of conditions for over 100,000 refugees along Burma borders with Bangladesh and Thailand.

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UNDP is today the principle international conduit for aid to Burma. A look at its work reveals the limitations and perils of even the best-intentioned programs in a militarized and repressive environment. The $36.9 million earmarked for its 1999-2001 Human Development Initiative-Extension program (which follows $52 million allocated 1996-98) is paltry compared to international aid programs to far smaller developing countries. This reflects the international community's strong reluctance to allow assistance to a military regime that offers not even a facade of the accountability or transparency that donors increasingly demand.

The UNDP's own mandate, laid out in its governing council's document 93/21, requires that UNDP projects reach the grass roots and engage and empower local participants. Few people, beyond the UNDP's own assessors, believe this is happening in Burma today. A very serious problem is the lack of independent monitoring and evaluation, according to NGO workers with experience in Burma, who say there is often almost no access even for UNDP expatriate staff to its own projects. An NGO representative who worked on a UNDP supported project in Burma recalled months of wrangling and various official obstructions before making a single visit to project site. Once there,

I had an armed military agent in uniform who would not at any moment leave more than four feet of space between us. We were not introduced. I think he was an intelligence officer - he certainly was not your usual young thug with a gun who would lurk about when I went on UNDP monitoring visits with program officers. I had been promised an interpreter from UNDP but that (mysteriously) fell through at the last minute. I had to find interpreters from among the local community, and did not have adequate interpreting services. The intelligence agent constantly interjected in Burmese while I was having discussions with beneficiaries (I don't know what he was saying and he was speaking in an agitated manner). I was not allowed to speak with local church and monastery leaders active in the area, although some of them had been involved in the selection of the project beneficiaries. I was later brought to a large town hall where the villagers were gathered.... I was brought to the front of the hall to stand among some men, some in army gear, and some [local junta officials]. There were some speeches in Burmese and applause. I have no idea what they were saying, as I was not provided with interpretation.

The external evaluation of overall UNDP's performance is also problematic. Some aid experts who have worked in Burma argue that little genuine assessment takes place, as closely monitored delegations are flown about in helicopters and taken largely to "model projects — UNDP 'Potemkin villages'" as one former aid worker said. Evaluators are appointed by UNDP headquarters, with attendant possibilities of conflict of loyalty and interests. Despite numerous criticisms of its overall operations and specific projects, UNDP's hand-picked external evaluators concluded that its governing council's instructions "were carried out remarkably well." The NCGUB has called for truly independent evaluations of UNDP's work by experts appointed directly by member countries of the UNDP executive board. "How can we believe that a report by the UNDP's own appointees is impartial?" asked NCGUB UN representative Dr. Thaung Htun. "Their reports say all UNDP projects are going well, but there is no quantitative evaluation at all."

UNDP Regional Bureau for the Asia-Pacific Director Nay Htun, interviewed by telephone at his New York office, rejected claims of tight controls on UNDP by the Burmese regime. He said that there is broad access, including for foreign diplomats, to UNDP projects. "There is no hindrance whatsoever, about where they can go, who they can meet," he insisted, adding "There is no problem [regarding access]. This has never been the case. Perhaps sometimes people are temporarily not allowed for their own safety."

"Our projects are very carefully scrutinized by the U.S., by Western Europe and by own executive board. We follow the guidelines scrupulously," Nay Htun explained further. "They all deal with the poorest of the poor, water supply, HIV/AIDS, leprosy." He also said the National League for Democracy (NLD), other legal parties and NGOs have been regularly briefed on UNDP activities.

However, the NCGUB and the NLD call for more involvement of NLD representatives in planning and monitoring UNDP programs. This position is clear-
ly supported by US Congressional representatives who hold the purse strings for American contributions to UNDP. "People in Congress who are interested in human rights in Burma will be strongly influenced by the position of the NCGUB and [NLD leader] Aung San Suu Kyi on this issue," said Grover Joseph Rees, staff director of the House of Representatives International Affairs Committee Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights, as he left for a December research trip to Southeast Asia. "Unlike the people of some other countries who have never enjoyed freedom of expression, the people of Burma had an opportunity to elect their leaders, and we should listen to them, even if the junta will not."

"PARTICIPATE, DAMMIT!"

Participation of the properly elected representatives of the Burmese people — that is, the NLD and parties that won seats in the 1990 elections — in planning and evaluating UNDP and other UN aid projects is a contentious political issue. Grass roots participation of individuals and local groups who are targets for such assistance should not be. Involvement of community based organizations and other elements of civil society is a requirement of UNDP's own guidelines, one its own officials and evaluators assert it is achieving.

Anecdotal evidence paints a far different picture. A resident of Burma's Shan state said that local people were barely consulted and local contractors ignored when UNDP launched projects there. His comments to an interviewer reflect a widely held belief among Burma's ethnic minority peoples that perceived policies of ethnic domination by the country's army junta are replicated in UNDP programs. An independent health worker voiced similar concerns of "top-down development." Local facilitators for a recent UNICEF initiative in Karenni State, he said, were all appointed by junta officials. Another expert claimed that participation is now mostly limited to members of the junta's USDA. And a third NGO worker describes attending a meeting at which a local junta official shouted at villagers, "Participate, dammit!"

UNDP's Nay Htun was firm on UN policy regarding participation in UNDP funded projects. "There can be no exclusion of anyone, we have made that clear," he stated, adding that he has no knowledge of USDA entwinement with Burmese "NGOs" or of discrimination against NLD members. "It is up to an organization who to admit," he said, offering the example of a Burmese wildlife NGO which he said excludes government officials and soldiers.
Critics contend that UN aid activities help legitimate military rule in large and small ways; the inclusion of USDA on a UNDP calendar, or the suppression of a UNICEF pamphlet on AIDS prevention prepared by The National League for Democracy are examples. "We have to walk a very fine line just to work there," explained another UNDP official, "and we have terrible arguments with the government all the time."

An unusual aspect of the UNDP's work in Burma is the very close engagement of its Asia-Pacific Director Nay Htun, a Burmese national. UN rules normally bar any officials from substantive involvement in policy matters relating to their own country. UNDP describes as "coincidental" Nay Htun's latest visit to Burma in November, just after a UN reform plan was presented to the junta by UN special envoy Assistant Secretary General Alvaro de Soto. Nay Htun himself insists, "There is no conflict of interest. I tell all my colleagues I use two criteria in whatever I do or decide. One, will it benefit the people? Two, will it benefit the country according to UNDP regulations?" One UNDP official says Nay Htun visits Burma and meets with junta officials, because the generals "know and trust and respect him," and that he is doing what any bureau chief would in a difficult situation.

Some UNDP workers express private dismay at what they call Nay Htun's "interference," and another UN official, speaking on condition of anonymity, complained, "I do not understand why he is still permitted to travel and stick his nose into Burma's political affairs, despite our repeated protests."

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**AID FOR CHANGE: NO TAKERS?**

The dual strands of international engagement with Burma — political pressure for respect for human rights and democratic reform, and desperately needed international assistance for both immediate humanitarian needs and long term development — are woven into a new initiative by the UN. Yet UN and other diplomatic sources insist the initiative is so far little more than an "idea" or "concept," rising from an October meeting attended by representatives of 17 countries and the UN at Chilston Park, Britain.

The not-so-big stick of limited economic sanctions and the Asian economic crisis have further weakened Burma's mismanaged and corrupted economy. But the very highly conditional "carrots" now dangled demand that the junta radically alter its policies, its worldview, and, essentially, itself.

Details remain sketchy. American chargé d'affaires in Rangoon, Kent Wiedemann, told the Voice of America on December 9 that the proposal requires reforms "so fundamental that it would result in a process leading to the end of military rule." The concessions mooted include release of political prisoners and permission for the opposition National League for Democracy (NLD), winners of the never-honored 1990 elections, to operate freely as a political party — presumably with the freedoms of expression, association and movement that open politics requires. It is hardly clear that the regime could quickly or ever easily accept this "concept" or its attendant concessions.

Junta members appear to dismiss international aid linked to reforms. "Did the United Nations
ensure stability in Cambodia after injecting billions of dollars? No," junta minister General Maung Maung told the International Herald Tribune. "We welcome any unconditional assistance you are willing to give us, but like Cambodia, we need to solve our problems ourselves." In an interview with Asiaweek, Burma's new foreign minister, Win Aung, added, "Giving a banana to the monkey and then asking it to dance is not the way. We are not monkeys." And on 11 December, the regime's New Light of Myanmar commented, "National objectives cannot be enticed and bought with the dollar. To obey such condition is beneath one's dignity."

Follow the Money

Where a billion dollars in aid could come from is also uncertain. Short of extraordinary changes in Burma's fiscal and economic practices needed to qualify for World Bank loans, or a major shift in Bank policy itself, it cannot be the World Bank. The World Bank ceased lending to Burma in 1987 because of the country's unsound economic policies, which have not improved since, explained Bradley Babson, senior advisor in the office of the vice president for the Asia and Pacific Region at World Bank headquarters in Washington, DC. "There are two separate problems," Babson said. "Burma is now in arrears on its repayments to the Bank. But that money is less important than the distortionary macroeconomic environment that would not allow good use of external resources." Significant changes would be needed before any new lending, Babson emphasized. The value of the local kyat, worth only about two percent of its official value on the open market, is closely watched. "The [grossly overvalued] exchange rate reflects protection for the privileged elite," Babson remarked, "and is a bellwether for bad economic policy."

The World Bank is eager to become involved in Burma, and recent changes in Bank philosophy, which now defines governance and corruption as economic issues, could "expand the dynamic of bank relations" with the Burmese regime, Babson said, adding, "Any new ideas and new solutions are welcome. The collective frustration is that there are 45 million Burmese who are good people, and you have to be able to work with government to solve big problems."

Frustration and Isolation

Babson's frustration is shared by many other people who strongly believe that something must be done to alleviate the suffering of so many people in Burma. But how international assistance can be delivered without lending legitimacy and materially strengthening the military regime is fiercely debated. There is no doubt that many people in Burma are suffering and dying because of misrule. The UNDP 1998 Human Development Report lists Burma's infant mortality rate as 105 per thousand, over treble that of neighboring Thailand and more in line with chronically impoverished lands like Equatorial Guinea. Military spending is listed — and some analysts believe grossly underestimated — as 222 percent of health and education outlays, a ratio comparable to Iraq's. Only about a third of children complete primary school. Health services have largely broken down. UNICEF East Asia and the Pacific Director Kul Gautam warns that with no serious anti-AIDS program, Burma faces an AIDS epidemic of "Africa-like" proportions. NGO activists say the junta, with its claims of less than 2,400 AIDS cases in the entire country at the end of 1997, remains in deep denial over the extent of Burma's health crisis.

Burma's people clearly and desperately need international assistance. And any initiative that brings responsible and effective use of such assistance closer should be welcomed. Yet structures for delivering even minimal aid within the country, and sound economic underpinning to ensure aid is not diverted or wasted, do not yet exist. "Our concept of human rights is based on our own values, traditions and cultures," SPDC Senior General Than Shwe declared in October. The junta's concept of economics is equally iconoclastic, and the values the generals impose seem much more the military's than rooted in Burmese tradition. Blandishments from outside—carrots or sticks—are unlikely to promote quick change. "This regime has locked itself into an intellectual and political isolation," worries an American diplomat, "and it is not clear how anyone can force them to break out."

Thomas R. Lansner teaches at Columbia University School of International Public Affairs. He specializes in issues of democratization, civil society and media in developing nations.
left New Tokyo International Airport for London, England, by ANA airlines' NH 201 flight on 11 October 1998. I learned that representatives of 18 nations including Japan, England and the United States plus the United Nations, the World Bank and European Commission would be discussing Myanmar and I set out for England with the expectation to express my personal experience about Myanmar Naing-Ngan from which I had just returned. Since I was not a government representative I did not get the opportunity to attend that meeting. I was on my way to England in a hurry after learning that I would be allowed to meet the representatives outside the meeting hall.

I arrived in London later in the evening. I checked into a downtown hotel of London. The meeting was scheduled to be held at Lenham Village in Kent District, one hour's train ride from London. I did not know how to get there. So, I rang Ma Ma, a friend of mine in London and requested her favor. She was pleased to help me. She said she would come to my hotel in the morning and take me to the venue of the meeting hall.

The following morning, we set out for Lenham. On the train, I told her about the meeting that though I was on my way to the meeting I was worried. She looked at me and replied, "I also went to Myanmar last year for a brief visit. The people were more interested in earning their livelihood with peace of mind than in the question which government would come to power. I was unhappy about a lack of water and electricity. I thought then that the government was responsible for solving the problems of the people and fulfilling their wishes: But it would be helpful to the people and the government if those in the public, especially those residing in foreign nations like you, Mya Mya Win, could help find solutions. You'd better persuade those at this meeting not to impose sanctions on humanitarian assistance to Myanmar. I'm very happy to help people like you, Mya Mya Win, who have come to a small village from Japan which is miles and miles away from England."

The program of Myanmar's inside and outside the country shouting the slogan, "Fighting for democracy" is "to persuade other nations to put pressure on Myanmar, to create difficulties for the people in meeting their basic needs by stopping economic and humanitarian assistance, then to incite the people to rise against the government which will have to transfer power to others, and then they will come to power". I do not fully understand if this program or policy is good or not. But there is one thing which I don't like. That is to create difficulties for the people in meeting their basic needs. I, for one, would like to help solve the problems of Myanmar people as much as possible. Although a group of persons has branded me as an anti-democracy element and a traitor, I was determined while I was in Myanmar to extend help as much as possible since I had witnessed the aspirations and difficulties of the people.

I got an opportunity to relate my experiences about prevailing objective conditions, genuine aspirations and difficulties of Myanmar people I had witnessed to the representatives attending the meeting at Lenham Village. All the government representatives attending the meeting were not the kind of people who favored putting pressure on Myanmar government, blocking aid and stopping humanitarian assistance. I was so happy to learn...
that among the government representatives were those who understood the genuine wishes and aspirations of our Myanmar people out of their goodwill. I was so happy that tears welled up in my eyes. It is encouraging to see that there are people who understand and realize our people of Myanmar.

My anxiety did not die down even after the meeting which took place on the 12th and 13th. I had to make preparations for another meeting scheduled to take place at Regent College in London on 15 October. The topic of that meeting was "Burma: Towards Transition?" It was sponsored by the Christian Aid organization and assisted by the Burma Action Group. The significance of the meeting was that citizens from the Western nations constituted the vast majority who were attending it. They were those from non-governmental organizations, researchers and merchants interested in Myanmar Naing-Ngan. The number of Myanmar citizens like me who attended the meeting constituted a small minority who could be counted on one's fingers. Although the meeting was supposed to discuss and find solutions on laying down the program and adopting the policy concerning Myanmar's affairs, most of those present at the meeting favored the old method of putting pressure on Myanmar government and imposing economic sanctions. We were given an opportunity to speak ten minutes before the meeting was over. We said it would be smoother and more appropriate to solve the problems of Myanmar by Myanmar people themselves.

I presented two factors at the meeting which I had known during my stay in Myanmar. 1) "There will be more smoothness only if Myanmar's affairs can be solved among the Myanmar people;" 2) "The government has [the] wish to cooperate with NLD for the benefit of the nation if it stops confrontation and starts coordination." "I think that better results might have come out if foreign nations would make demands not only on Myanmar government but also on NLD to coordinate with the government." I presented my opinion and requested the meeting to read the paper on "My experiences in Myanmar" as a reference. After the meeting, a representative of a foreign nation came to me and said, "I support your suggestion. I have the same opinion. As you have used Myanmar language in presenting your opinions, I felt like it has reiterated the fact that the current discussions are on Myanmar's affairs and that it should be coordinated mainly by Myanmars."

...I remembered the words of a State dignitary [while] I was in Myanmar. What he said was, "One can have dislike of the government. But please don't destroy the nation just because of the dislike of the government alone. It is required to definitely differentiate between the two sectors-the like and dislike of the government and the love for the race."

I like that view very much. We need to differentiate between the two sectors. Thus, I would like to ask a question to the persons who...think that the government they like would emerge only if the people would get into trouble.

"Do they really love the race and the nation?"

Mya Mya Win, a business woman in Japan, is one of a select number of expatriate Burmese allowed to travel back to Burma. The above excerpts are from an article that appeared in the November 7, 1998 issue of The New Light of Myanmar.
The cartoons on these pages appeared in recent issues of *The New Light of Myanmar*, Burma’s state-controlled newspaper. Cartoons are being prominently featured on a regular basis, depicting the demise of the political opposition.

**ABOVE:** A member of the National League for Democracy "hangs himself" with the NLD’s declaration to hold a "Peoples’ Parliament."
To prevent the disintegration of the Union.
To prevent the collapse of national unity.
To perpetuate the sovereignty of the State.

Peace and stability in the country.
The Prevalence of Law and Order.

Oh, come on! Let's go
We should no longer be involved in such a futile exercise. It's a waste of time and energy!

The NLD leadership is shown futilely wielding an axe against the SPDC's self-proclaimed mandabe.

This axe-handle is useless, my wife.

Then, let's throw it into the fire.

The term 'axe-handle' is commonly used by the regime to deride the opposition as colonial "tools."
The NLD is criticized for its association with Western powers, which the regime claims will cause the opposition's ultimate destruction.

Aung San Suu Kyi's marriage to a westerner has been a target of the junta's attacks on her and is also used to rekindle anti-colonial resentment.

"Our enslavement was due solely to the intrigues and disunity within the palace."

"Oh, I see. What she is saying is purely in defense of those white-faced Englishmen who enslaved us."

"She is trying to distort our history. That poses great danger...."

"Our devastation"
Outrage is Necessary but Not Enough

Speech by Mr. Derek Fatchett,
Minister of State Foreign and Commonwealth Office,
to the Christian Aid/Burma Action Group Conference on Burma
REGENT’S COLLEGE, LONDON
15 October 1998

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for asking me to speak today. My thanks go not just to Christian Aid and the Burma Action Group, but to all those charities, non-governmental organizations, and dedicated individuals who take their time to work for the Burmese people both here in Britain and in Burma itself.
I am constantly struck by how important, in the formulation of policy on Burma by this government, the partnership with you all is. I fear that we don't agree about everything. You wouldn't be doing your job properly if you did. But the kind of access you have to ordinary people in Burma, to remote areas, to refugee camps gives you a perspective which complements our own — the daily work on Burma issues with EU [European Union] and other Western colleagues, with ASEAN [Association of Southeast Asian Nations] colleagues, and in the United Nations. I pay a personal tribute — as I am sure would many of you here today — to the small team in the British Embassy in Rangoon watching and reporting on what is happening here and keeping a lifeline open to the National League for Democracy leadership. The Burmese Foreign Minister complained to me in Manila last July that Robert Gordon, the Ambassador, had been in to see Aung San Suu Kyi over eighty times; I take that as a tribute!

THE POLITICAL SITUATION

The political situation in Burma is grim. There must still be some decent people working within the Burmese system, frustrated and angered by it, but it is difficult to identify them. The NLD continue to work bravely for democracy. They continue to offer the hand of partnership to those in authority. But too often the hand of partnership is rudely dismissed. Aung San Suu Kyi is left stranded on a bridge outside Rangoon. Her principles and conviction her only defense against the regime's thugs. Hundreds of Burmese nationals are detained simply for being members of, or associated with, a legitimately elected party. Student protests are crushed within minutes. And there is callous, country-wide human rights abuse. Forced labor; detention and torture without trial; basic human needs as well as basic human rights denied. Every international organization asked to examine the situation returns with a catalogue of abuse.

How should Britain — how should the rest of the world — respond to all this? Outrage is necessary but not enough. We need, among other things, to have measures which make clear to the regime that Burma will not be integrated into the world until its government changes its ways.

So what has been done by this government?

THE EU COMMON POSITION

The European Union has a Common Position on Burma. All military personnel in Burmese missions in Europe expelled. An embargo on arms, munitions and military equipment. Suspension of aid or development programs — unless they support human rights and democracy. A ban on entry visas for senior members of the SPDC and their families. Similarly one for senior members of the military or the security forces who impede Burma's transition to democracy. Suspension of all high level bilateral governmental visits to Burma.

That Common Position is up for renewal again in two weeks. We will argue for it to stay in place, and to be strengthened: a point to which I will return later.

NATIONAL ACTIONS

The British government has made clear that we cannot support trade and investment by British companies into Burma. If they ask we explain the atrocious political backdrop — as well as the practical difficulties of operating in the market.

What we cannot do is take unilateral legal measures to prevent them from selling to Burma and investing in Burma. We were in detailed touch with the Burma Action Group earlier this year over suggestions made by Steve Peers in Essex University that loopholes exist which would allow unilateral trade and investment sanctions. We looked very carefully at this. But to take unilateral legal measures to prevent firms selling to Burma or investing in Burma would in our view be contrary to our EU and WTO [World Trade Organization] obligations. The fact is that we would only be able to take such measures where there was an EU consensus together with the requisite Council decision, or in response to a binding UN Security Council Resolution.

We have looked hard, too, at the scope for taking action on tourism in Burma. Those who travel to Burma unwittingly provide the regime with hard currency.

Aung San Suu Kyi knows this. That is why she has said publicly that it is inappropriate in the present circumstances for tourists to visit Burma. And that is why I have written to the major associations
of tour operators in the United Kingdom, summarizing the NLD's position. They have passed this on to their members. The Foreign Office website now holds a copy of my message to the operators. And we have urged our European colleagues to take similar measures — many of the tourists in Burma come from other European countries. Governments should do nothing to encourage them.

As you may know, Aung San Suu Kyi sent a message to the Labour Conference a few weeks ago, in which she said that she was grateful for our consistent support.

EU ACTION

National action is important; but it needs to be underpinned by a concerted international campaign. And that is what we have undertaken, starting with our colleagues in the European Union.

First, we have urged our colleagues to adopt the same national measures as the UK has taken nationally, on trade, investment, and tourism.

Second, Britain has pressed for a visit, soon, to Rangoon by the EU Ministerial Troika, to make clear EU concern to the SPDC, and to express our support for those who press for democracy. Britain is of course a member of the Troika at present. We have not yet received a positive response from the regime. I hope we do. If they turn us down, it will be a further signal to the international community that their declared interest in dialogue is wholly insincere, a sign that they are coming to recognize the bankruptcy of their own arguments.

Third we argue for a strengthening of the EU Common Position. One step would be to include transit visas. Why should European airports or capitals be open to SPDC officials as convenient stopping points — and shopping or tourism havens — on the way to meetings in New York or Geneva? But we are also trying to build consensus for further measures.

And fourth, we initiate and support EU statements to respond rapidly to the political environment. The last, just last week, noted that the opposition have established a committee temporarily to represent the parliament, and hoped that the Burmese authorities reciprocate this initiative by entering into a substantive dialogue with the opposition parties.

There are those in the EU who are reluctant to move forward in these ways. We continue to work with them, to go through all the arguments, to persuade them that it cannot be in the wider interests of the EU to fold our hands and watch events in Burma take their course; that we must act, and con-

The British government has made clear that we cannot support trade and investment by British companies into Burma. If they ask we explain the atrocious political backdrop — as well as the practical difficulties of operating in the market.

UNITED NATIONS ACTION

There are also those in the United Nations system who shy away from action. That will not do. Beyond national and EU action, it is action in the United Nations which forms the third pillar of British policy on Burma.

Britain works hard to ensure that the spotlight is kept on Burma at international human rights meetings. We welcome the excellent report by Judge Lallah, the UN Special Rapporteur on Burma. Even though denied access to the country, he has still been able to provide the international community with an appalling catalogue of human rights violations. At the last Commission on Human Rights the UK, on behalf of the EU, tabled a resolution drawing fully on the Rapporteur's and others' evidence. Let me quote from it. The Commission expressed deep concern 'at the continuing violations of human rights, including extra-judicial summary or arbitrary executions and enforced disappearances... concern that
the government of Myanmar still has not implemented its commitment to take all necessary steps towards democracy... concern at the violations of the rights of women, especially women who are refugees... concern at the continuing violations of the rights of children, and of minorities'.

We will argue for strong action in the International Labour Organisation, including suspension if Burma is shown to have contravened its ILO obligations.

The resolution was adopted without a vote. Burma's isolation was tangible. This November, at the General Assembly, we will again seek the widest support for a resolution urging the regime to reform. I cannot overemphasize how important it is in the minds of the Burmese authorities to find themselves criticized in the court of international opinion like this.

The Secretary General has appointed officials with special tasks. A Malaysian, Mr Razali, has been appointed Kofi Annan’s Special Emissary on Burma. Alvaro de Soto is the Assistant Secretary General with responsibility for the Burmese issue. It is essential that we support them, and press the regime in Rangoon to work with them. Too often it has rejected UN initiatives and UN envoys on the flimsiest ground.

You may know that this week Britain convened a meeting in a country hotel in Kent to try to build more international consensus on Burma and on how to bring progress here. Mr de Soto and other senior UN figures were present. The discussion was private, and frank. Several Asian colleagues were present. There was broad agreement to give greater support to the UN's work in Burma. We need to press the Burmese regime to cooperate properly with those whom the Secretary General has chosen to represent him.

A specific concern which the United Kingdom has relates to the International Labour Organization. Burma has long been a member of the ILO. A long but not a distinguished membership. In a recent report by the ILO the disgraceful standard of labor rights in Burma was highlighted. In many areas the Burmese authorities appear to be in direct contravention of their obligations of ILO membership. The ILO has given the Burmese government three months to implement changes. If they do not, the ILO will have to decide its response. I am instructing the British delegate to argue that the ILO should consider all options, including suspension of Burma from the organization.

CONCLUSION

So Britain is helping to lead the way in pressing for tougher action against the Burmese regime. We do so as friends of Burma; friends of those whose votes for Aung San Suu Kyi were so callously discarded by the regime in 1990; friends of all the ethnic groups which make up the rich fabric of Burmese society; friends of those in the military who dare not voice their anger at the abuses they see and friends of those who dare to voice their anger, even if they are beaten back.

This government has made clear we cannot support investment or trade with Burma; we cannot support tourism in Burma; we cannot support outside assistance which lines the pockets of the regime; we will argue for strong action in the International Labour Organisation, including suspension if Burma is shown to have contravened its ILO obligations.

But this government also knows that insular grandstanding serves our friends in Burma little good. So we work, hard, to build consensus in the international community, to change minds, and to prick consciences. The process takes time; it is frustrating; its success is partial. But it must be right to work for the widest possible recognition that, without the restoration of democracy, Burma will not be able to come back in from the cold of international isolation.
Open Letter from Myanmar Embassy in Washington, D.C.

to Mr. Derek Fatchett,
Foreign Office Minister of Britain

October 16, 1998

Dear Mr. Fatchett,

I find your statement to the Christian Aid/Burma Action Conference on Burma at Regent's College, London unprofessional. I say this more in sorrow than in anger because your thoughtless remarks reveal your singular lack of understanding of the situation in Myanmar as well as your gullibility.
Who cannot, save those prejudiced few, fathom that something must be terribly wrong when you deem it proper to applaud the British Ambassador in Yangon for seeing Aung San Suu Kyi over eighty times? Surely, you and the British Foreign Office have not lost your sense of proportionality nor abandoned the principal objective of diplomacy to promote good relations between the sending state and receiving state.

The world now knows what we in Myanmar have suspected for years: the British are infatuated with Aung San Suu Kyi and are willing to promote her at any cost.

Consider if you will that it is the present government that has abandoned the single party system in favor of a multiparty system and opted for a market economy over the centrally-planned economic system. It is this government that has created conditions that make it possible for our prodigal sons to return to the fold. I am sure even you will agree that the return to the fold of 17 armed groups is no mean achievement.

No, it is not the State Peace and Development Council that has "rudely dismissed" the hand of partnership. If you care to check, you will find that the government has not been unwilling to extend the olive branch to the NLD. It is the NLD that has spurned the government’s offer to meet and it is Aung San Suu Kyi who seeks to confront the authorities at every turn. She cannot hope to assume the mantle of a true Myanmar leader unless she is willing to shed her aggressiveness and place the good of her fellow countrymen before personal aggrandizement. A sine qua non for her to be able to play a constructive role in Myanmar, is that she must resurrect herself a Myanmar in body and soul. There can be no two ways about it.

Callous, country-wide human rights abuse? Allegations abound mainly because of the fodder fed into the Internet by armed expatriate groups and those who have an axe to grind. But those who know Myanmar well and are not gullible will find that the allegations of widespread human rights abuse have [not] been substantiated.

In fact, the steady stream of visitors to Myanmar gives the lie to the allegations that basic human needs as well as basic human rights are denied to its citizens. Tourists and businessmen alike are awestruck once they set foot in the country — not because of the charm of the people or the legendary beauty of the country, though they are considerable, but because of the realization that they have been duped by expatriate groups and the Western media to believe that things are terribly wrong in Myanmar. In criss-crossing the country they quickly come to realize that Myanmar is a developing country like no other. It is peaceful and tranquil and safe to venture out even late at night. Above all, it is a predominantly Buddhist country where people are imbued with a spirit of tolerance and where traditions and culture ensure respect for the rights of fellow human-beings, regardless of creed, color or religion. So much so that Madame Sadako Ogata, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees who visited the country as a representative of the Geneva-based Human Rights Commis-
sion, was moved to state that religious tolerance is so high in Myanmar, that in this regard it can be considered a model society. It is hardly possible that in such a cultured society, there exists a pattern of gross human rights abuse as alleged.

If the British Government decides to impose sanctions on Myanmar, it will merely be following down the infamous path laid down by the Americans. No amount of pressure can bring a people who value freedom and liberty over worldly goods and life to their knees. Moreover, sanctions are not only blunt but immoral. Sanctions invariably hurt the poorest segment of the population, not least the infants, the sick and the elderly among them.

What right do "human rights activists" have to deprive an entire nation of its right to development? Who is Aung San Suu Kyi to think that she has the divine right to call on foreign nations to disinvest in Myanmar and to discourage tourists from visiting Myanmar? Is she fearful that more and more people will discover the truth and that her bluff will be called? Such words as, open society, democracy and human rights will remain just words unless people in responsible positions are willing to remove their blinders.

That Myanmar has adopted a market-oriented policy, that it encourages foreign direct investment and that it welcomes foreign tourists, speaks volumes for its readiness to let the visitors judge for themselves. Are there tanks in every street corner? Are the smiles on the faces of Myanmar citizens painted on by the authorities?

Myanmar today is seeking its own equilibrium in order to propel it into the ranks of the developed countries in the shortest possible period. At this juncture, no amount of pressure from the UK, the EU or the UN will deter it from its chosen path.

Myanmar does not seek the cold [of] isolation. Myanmar seeks the warmth of international cooperation but one without strings. At the very least, we must be given the opportunity to fashion our own destiny in our way. This is our inalienable right.

Tin Winn
Ambassador
Embassy of the Union of Myanmar
Washington, D.C

This letter was posted on the internet by the State Peace and Development Council's, OKKAR, on October 19, 1998.
WASHINGTON, DC — A Washington Burma Roundtable on October 29 featured guest speaker Jack Dunford, Director of the Burmese Border Consortium (BBC), the lead non-governmental organization providing assistance to Burmese refugees who have fled to Thailand. Mr. Dunford gave an update on the status of the 120,000 Burmese refugees in Thailand and the proposed role of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) along the Thai/Burma border.


NEW YORK — On November 20, the New York office of the Asia Society and the PEN American Center hosted Voices of'88: Burmese Writings Uncensored. Commemorating the tenth anniversary of the pro-democracy uprisings in Burma, the event featured a number of celebrities, including Spalding Gray, Wendy Law Yone, Luc Sante, Rose Styron, Adele Lutz, David Byrne and Michael Paterniti, reading banned and controversial writings of the last decade.

The Asia Society also sponsored a November 23 discussion entitled, Sex, Drugs and Politics in Burma: Implications for the United States with panelists Dr. Chris Beyrer of Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health and author of War in the Blood: Sex, Politics and AIDS in Southeast Asia; Maureen Aung-Thwin, Director, Burma Project of the Open Society Institute; and Dr. Thaung Htun, Representative for UN Affairs, National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma.

The New York Roundtable holds periodic meetings of organizations and individuals interested in Burma. For more information contact: Burma/U.N. Service Office by phone: (212) 338-0048 or fax: (212) 692-9748.

SEATTLE — The panel discussion, Bearing Witness: Issues of Responsibility in Troubled Lands, including speakers Larry Dohrs of the Seattle Burma Roundtable and Jon Garfunkel of Tibet Education Network, was part of the 2-day International Travel Expo November 13 and 14 held at the Seattle Center.

A meeting of the Seattle Burma Interest group was held on December 7. The Burma Interest Group is a non-partisan forum attended by representatives of NGOs, business, academia and other interested parties that meets monthly to discuss Burma related topics. For more information contact Larry Dohrs by phone: (206) 784-6873 or fax: (206) 784-8150.

NEW ENGLAND — The New England Burma Roundtable is an informal group of individuals and organizations working to promote human rights and democracy in Burma. Meetings are held the second Monday of every month. For information contact Simon Billenness of Franklin Research & Development Corporation by phone: (617) 482-6655 or fax: (617) 482-6179.

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ENDING THE SYSTEMATIC VIOLENCE AGAINST ETHNIC PEOPLE: A PRECURSOR TO MEANINGFUL POLITICAL DIALOGUE

By Saw Kapi

It has been months since I read a news release by the Karen Information Center about the horrifying rape and ruthless murder of a 16 year old Karen girl by a Burmese Army company commander. The incident took place on 20th July 1998, around midnight. Aung Myint Sein, from the Light Infantry Battalion 230, entered Tah Paw village with his troops, raped Naw Paw Lu, age 16, then shot her with a carbine. The bullet travelled through her body and lodged in her brain. She died instantly.

It was around that time that I also read of the deaths of the three Irish brothers in a terrorist bomb attack. The news received wide international attention, perhaps because it happened to take place in Great Britain rather than in the jungles of Burma. Yet the consequences of both events are the same: both claimed the lives of innocent children under the age of 18. In the case of the Karen girl, it hardly seems to matter to the governments of neighboring countries, since most of them appear to care more about maintaining stability through military suppression than finding lasting peace. But it is hard to believe that any one of us with a modicum of decency and social consciousness would ignore the suffering of Burma’s innocent people.

I am compelled to conclude that when a whole race becomes the enemy of a cruel military regime, a child is no longer seen as a child. Although the young Karen girl was innocent and harmless, she was seen by the soldiers as an enemy and treated as one.

For the Karen villagers who live in remote areas of the country, this type of grisly act is quite common. Several local and international human rights organizations have documented the regime’s systematic, scorched-earth campaigns which include larceny, indiscriminate burning of entire villages, and massacres. The inhuman treatment and the resulting death of the innocent Karen girl is just part of such barbarous deeds. When members of an army who view themselves as racially superior come to the homeland of ethnic people that they believe are inferior to them, the most grotesque things we can imagine may happen.

One thing will always remain true. Neither the demands of ethnic peoples for their political rights, nor their desire for lasting peace, will vanish under the rule of a military dictatorship. The Karen resistance movement was not born out of hatred of any ethnic nationality. In fact, the nearly half-a-century-long Karen struggle in many ways symbolizes a call for national unity. In his interview with the Bangkok Post on October 6, 1996, Gen. Saw Bo Mya, President of the Karen National Union (KNU), stated clearly: "We, the Karens, don’t hate the Burmans. What we detest is the adoption of a superior race policy, military and authoritarian rule. We have always formed alliances with the Burmans. We once formed a united front with U Nu and now it has been the same with the students [All Burma Students' Democratic Front (ABSDF)]."

If the ongoing ethnic oppression continues, with daily human rights abuses in ethnic areas by the military regime, it is difficult to be hopeful for peace in the near future. The longer the oppression goes on, the harder it will become to achieve durable peace and national reconciliation. The question here is not what is the solution to the problems of Burma, but rather how can we insure that neither military suppression nor ethnic oppression is seen as a desirable means of resolution?

The ruling military junta claims that it has successfully negotiated cease-fire agreements with 15 armed "insurgent groups," with the exception of the Karen National Union (KNU). However, few in the international community, or even inside the country, really know what the agreements contained. The only thing the regime announces is that those groups have returned to the "legal fold" and "exchanged their arms for peace." The fact that the ruling junta refused to reach an agreement with the ethnic groups collectively, through the Democratic Alliance of Burma (DAB) and secretly made separate deals with individual groups reveals the regime's insincerity and unwillingness for genuine peace. Not surprisingly, the Karieni National Progressive Party (KNPP) has resumed fighting again, and so have some factions of the New Mon State Party (NMSP). Despite the cease-fire agreements, they have cited the regime's broken promises and continued military offensives against their people as reasons for returning to armed conflict.

Even though it was one of the first groups to sign a cease-fire agreement, the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) has never agreed to renounce armed struggle nor to enter the "legal fold." Neither has the New Mon State Party (NMSP) made these terms part of their cease-fire agreement. And while the regime had temporarily postponed military engagement with those ethnic resistance groups, it continues to build its army and extensively increased military activities in Karen areas. When the KNU refused to give up armed resistance the regime unilaterally discontinued talks with KNU and ruthlessly resumed its wholesale military offensives against the Karen villages both within and outside of KNU-controlled territories.

What is regrettable at this point, is that merely expanding the strength of the regime's armed forces will not solve the political problems that have plagued Burma, nor can lasting stability and national unity be achieved in this way. Even more perilous for the future of the country is the attitude of the military regime itself. So long as the Burmese military regime is incapable of seeing the country's ethnic problems as political ones, there will be little hope for meaningful dialogue between the regime and ethnic resistance forces. In fact, it is nothing more than a hypocritical, self-glorying conviction of the regime to think that only the military (Tatmadaw) loves the country, and that it is her savior.

I recently came across a very brief article about SLORC's offensive against the Karen in The Nation, an English-language newspaper published in Bangkok, Thailand. That article cited the view of the Singapore Straits Times, which had offered a rather groundless approach to the political problems of Burma. While agreeing that the problem is a political one, the Straits Times stated: "Rangoon's action against the Karen must be understood in the context of its fears over ethnic fragmentation." Boldly enough, it continues, "[s]o long as the KNU uses guerrilla warfare to try and settle its problems with the center, the response will predictably be a military one."

The message articulated in this short article is especially important. It appears as though the author is telling us that the fear of ethnic fragmentation can be removed through ethnic cleansing campaigns and suggests that ethnic cleansing by a military government continued on page 26
with a numerical majority over the minorities is an acceptable, and perhaps the only way, of preventing fragmentation.

If the SPDC was indeed concerned about "ethnic fragmentation" and so desired to build trust with ethnic nationalities in the country as it often attests, it would first stop all military offensives, forced relocations and ethnic cleansing campaigns against the various ethnic nationalities. Most importantly, the regime needs to accept the fact that ethnic nationalities in Burma have been fighting for their political rights, and unless these fundamental issues are sincerely and candidly addressed, their struggles will continue in one form or another.

At this historical moment for Burma, to call for a moratorium on the regime's militaristic and ethnocentric behaviors is by no means to make less important the people's aspiration for a democratic system. The suspension of brutal violence and human rights violations against ethnic nationalities is an essential step that will pave the way for genuine national reconciliation and create a climate where fragile cease-fires and "informal talks" can be replaced with meaningful political dialogue that includes the regime, leaders of ethnic nationalities and NLD members including, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

Saw Kapi is a Karen who left Burma in 1988 after the military crackdown and spent four and half years in the Thai-Burmese border. He currently resides in the United States.

BRIEFINGS AND DEVELOPMENTS

SPDC RESHUFFLES CABINET

Burma's State Peace and Development Council's November 14 reorganization of its cabinet resulted in the naming of a new Minister of Foreign Affairs and a new Deputy Prime Minister in addition to the shifting of several other positions. While no official reason was given for the changes, most analysts see it as an attempt to further solidify the power of Lt. Gen. Khin Nyunt, SPDC's Secretary-I, as well as an attempt to improve the regime's image internationally. U Win Aung, formerly Burma's Ambassador to Great Britain, is a veteran diplomat who has spent years in the West and is viewed as less conservative than the out-going foreign minister, U Ohn Gyaw. Lt. Gen. Tin Hla, a leader during the military crackdown of the 1988 pro-democracy movement, will now preside as both Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Military Affairs.

UN PASSES RESOLUTION ON BURMA

The United Nations General Assembly has approved a resolution deploring the human right situation in Burma. Adopted by consensus on November 19, the resolution referred to human rights abuses such as forced labor, extraordinary and arbitrary executions, rape, torture and mass arrests, listed in a report recently released by special rapporteur of the UN Human Rights Commission, Rajsoomer Lallah, who has been repeatedly denied government permission to enter the country. In response to the resolution, State Peace and Development Council Ambassador the the UN, U Win Mra claimed that, "All allegations are baseless and there is nothing concrete to substantiate them," describing it as "highly selective and extremely partial."

BUSINESS WATCH

1000 KYAT NOTES ISSUES

As of November 25, a 1000 kyat banknote will be put into circulation by Burma's military government. Although no official reason was given for issuing the higher denomination of currency, it was widely seen as a response to the country's rampant inflation. Government figures place the rate of inflation at 24 percent, but independent analysts give estimates as high as 60 percent. Burma has been hit hard by the Asian crisis which as curtailed much of the foreign investment that had been responsible for propping up Burma's economy.

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA BANS BUSINESS WITH BURMA

Legislation barring companies doing business with Burma from receiving city contracts was passed by the city of Los Angeles on December 15 despite strong opposition from UNOCAL, the U.S. oil firm which is based in the city and is in partnership with the military government in the construction of a natural gas pipeline. Los Angeles becomes one of 22 cities in the United States to enact sanction measures against the military regime.

INSIDE WASHINGTON

U.S. OFFICIAL KNOCKS JUNTA ON NARCOTICS

Deputy-Assistant Secretary of State for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Jonathan Winer criticized Burma's military regime for allowing known drug-lords to operate with impunity inside the country, citing the examples of Khun Sa and Lo Hsing Han who currently reside freely in Burma. During his November visit to Thailand, Mr. Winer was quoted as saying: "If we get the people who are growing dope and moving it out of Burma; information on their front companies and financial interests; seize their assets and indict them in the States or some other country; imprison some of their network and shut that network down, it would be good for us, our communities and the region." He expressed skepticism, however, about working with the Burmese regime in efforts to combat drugs, "In the case of Burma, you've got a situation that any number of people have tried to work with the Burmese against drugs with very little success. We have not found them to be a reliable partner."

CONGRESSIONAL HUNGER ADVOCATE VISITS BURMA

Congressman Tony Hall, co-chair of the Congressional Hunger Center and long-time advocate on issues surrounding world hunger, will visit Burma January 12-14, 1999. The trip is designed to investigate the humanitarian needs of the Burmese people and discuss the issue with the ruling State Peace and Development Council as well as opposition leaders, including Aung San Suu Kyi. Representative Hall is expected to be accompanied by members of his staff and Ms. Francis Zweng, former director the Burma/Myanmar Forum and now with the U.S.-ASEAN Business Council.
MEDIA RESOURCES

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT 1998
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

UN Publications
Room DC2-253, Dept. 1004
New York, NY 10017, USA
Tel: (800)253-9646
Website: www.un.org/Pubs/catalog.

This report by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) examines consumption from the perspective of human development. It serves as a useful stimulus to the many non-governmental and community movements that lead the way on issues of consumption, poverty, environment and human development.

BURMA AT THE 53RD SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY
New York 1998

Burma UN Service Office
National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB)
777 UN Plaza, 6th Floor
New York, NY 10017, USA
tel. 212-338 0048
fax. 212-338 0049
E-mail: 100307.1735@compuserve.com

This travel book brings together a number of tales by colonial travellers to Burma including titles such as, "Queer Tribes and Old Estonians," "Scarlet Crabs and the Burmese Chicken," "The Salween Swim" and "The Maymyo Hunt."

SHADES OF GOLD AND GREEN: ANECDOTES OF COLONIAL BURMAH, 1886-1948
by Nicholas Greenwood

Selous Books
40 Station Road
Aldershot GU11 1HT
United Kingdom
Tel: 01252-336311
Fax: 01252-342339
E-mail: 100307.1735@compuserve.com

"...The year 1998 also marks the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We in Myanmar fully share the aspirations of the Charter of the United Nations and affirm our faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small. The post cold war era has witnessed significant increase in the organisation's emphasis and activities in the promotion and protection of human rights. While committed to the principles of human rights enshrined in the Charter, we are of the view that accepted norms of human rights should be promoted through cooperation and consensus building. Our concept of human rights is based on our own values, traditions and cultures. We believe that the right to development, the right to decent food, clothing and shelter, the right to live peacefully and in security are of paramount importance for the developing countries like Myanmar."

VOICES OF BURMA

An excerpt from the transcript of a video message delivered by Aung San Suu Kyi on the 50th anniversary of the UN Declaration of Human Rights.

Rangoon, December, 1998

"Coming as I do from a country which suffers from the systematic violation of human rights by those in power, I have come to appreciate deeply the wisdom and vision of those who drew up the articles of the Declaration. There is not one that we can choose to ignore without imperilling freedom, justice and peace. If we are to lead free and full lives, all the articles of the Declaration must be respected.

Perhaps for the people of Burma today, Article 21 has a special poignancy. This article provides for the right of everyone to take part in the government of his country and declares that the will of the people, which should be the basis of the authority of government, should be expressed in periodic and genuine elections. Eight years ago, democratic elections were held in our country but the results of the elections have not been honored by the military regime and the victorious party, the National League for Democracy, has been subjected to the most gruelling persecution. So for us, as for many others, the struggle for democracy has become synonymous with the struggle for human rights.

The preamble of the Universal Declaration proclaims the "advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want" to be the "highest aspiration of the common people". It is also the most basic need for all, regardless of race, religion or nationality. Our struggle for human rights has brought us very close to all members of the human family who are striving for the recognition of their inherent dignity and their inalienable right to life, liberty and security of person.

It is my hope that our common aims and sufferings will create a strong sense of solidarity that surpasses national frontiers and cultural differences. We struggle with a sense of purpose and an unshakable faith in the power of compassion and endeavor and universal brotherhood. As our gratitude goes out to those who have supported us so generously in our times of adversity, we would like to express the hope that one day, soon, our country too may be a source of strength and support for those in need of peace, justice and freedom."
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Mary Pack, Editor

THE OPEN SOCIETY INSTITUTE (OSI) was established in December of 1993 to promote the development of open societies around the world. Toward this goal, the institute engages in a number of regional and country-specific projects relating to education, media, legal reform and human rights. In addition, OSI undertakes advocacy projects aimed at encouraging debate and disseminating information on a range of issues which are insufficiently explored in the public realm. OSI funds projects that promote the exploration of novel approaches to domestic and international problems.

The Burma Project initiates, supports and administers a wide range of programs and activities. Priority is given to programs that promote the well-being and progress of all the people of Burma regardless of race, ethnic background, age or gender.

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