YOU KNOW THIS: QUESTIONS
FOR MEN OF THE
TATMADAW

EDUCATION AND
EMPOWERMENT IN EASTERN
BURMA

THE ASEAN
NON-INTERFERENCE POLICY:
SHOULD THEY INTERFERE
WITH IT

LEARNING TO INTEGRATE:
ERODING DIVISIONS AND
BUILDING A FUTURE FOR
BURMA

NEWS BRIEFS
Men of the Tatmadaw, I come before you to speak of matters of honor and respect. Throughout the history of Myanmar, our warriors have shown their courage in battle and kindness toward the people. They respected their enemies and in turn, received their respect. But sadly, this has now changed. Over the past fifty years, the Tatmadaw has brought dishonor to the warrior heritage of our country and lost the confidence of its people.

You have been asked to uphold the Three Main National Causes - non-disintegration of Union, non-disintegration of national solidarity, and perpetuation of sovereignty. But instead you have contributed to the disintegration of national solidarity - the spirit that binds together our entire national races regardless of their different regions. By the Tatmadaw’s harsh treatment of our brother national race groups, you are causing the disintegration of national solidarity among all of our people. Without strong national solidarity, our Union will surely also disintegrate. Seeing this, your leaders force you to place even harsher treatment on the backs of our people – a cycle of suffering for all. Then the people must seek protection from the national race armed groups from this brutality. If you treat the people kindly as your family, there would be no need for those national race armed groups. They fight you and kill your comrades to protect their people as you would if your people were attacked. In this way, they carry on the honorable traditions of our country’s warriors and have the respect of their people. You know this.

But of course, there are those armed groups who engage in criminal activities – drugs, gambling, and prostitution - and say that they protect their people. They are known to you. They are allowed by the generals to control territories for their criminal activities. Many times, you are asked to fight them and die because your military commanders have not received their bribes. These criminal armed groups have contributed to our loss of national sovereignty by their control over territories within our Union. This is permitted by the senior generals in Naypyidaw and senior military commanders for their benefit, and the benefit of their families and business friends. They get rich while you get little. So you are forced to steal from the people to survive, which is not right. You know of this.

The generals in Naypyidaw have sold our country to the Chinese. The Chinese are taking all of our natural resources – teak, gems, oil, and gas – with the money going into the pockets of those in Naypyidaw and senior military commanders. Look at our Mandalay, Lashio, and other towns and villages in our northeast. Are they not now mostly Chinese? Our country is becoming a colony of China. This is because our country has been sold to the Chinese neo-colonialists by the Tatmadaw generals. They are causing the loss of our national sovereignty to the Chinese. You know this.

So can you truthfully say that our Tatmadaw is upholding the Three Main National Causes by contributing to the disintegration of the Union, the disintegration of national solidarity, and the loss of national sovereignty? You know the answer to this question.

You have been told that you must serve the interests of the people living in the region where you are assigned in accord with the codes of conduct for...
dealing with people. You must regard them as your own parents. But is that what you have done? Are you loyal to the people? Do you protect their life, property and wealth? Do you have courteous relations with people, behaving like “water and moon”? Do you keep foremost in your mind the interests of people? Do you give priority to people by not taking more opportunity for yourself? Do you help the people to feel happy and satisfied in whatever is done for them or whatever is being asked to be done? Do you respect the religion, belief, culture and traditions of all our people? Is it clear and evident to people that the sentiments of the Tatmadaw towards the people are noble? It has been said that those who belong to the patriotic Tatmadaw should firmly safeguard these noble principles as one would to keep the pistol firmly to one’s waist. Can you really say that you uphold these codes of conduct for dealing with the people? You know the answer to these questions.

Every day, you make the act of taking the Four Oaths:

1. We will be loyal to the people and the state.
2. We will be loyal to the fallen comrades.
3. We will conscientiously obey the orders and responsibilities given by our superiors.
4. We vow to sacrifice our lives for our country, our people, and our Tatmadaw.

Good warriors are those who keep these four oaths at risk to their lives. You must say the truth in taking the Four Oaths and follow the Four Oaths without fail. You must never breach the promise you have sworn toward the country and the people. Are your generals loyal to all the people, regardless of national race or religion? Your officers? Your comrades? You? You know the answers to these questions.

Also being Tatmadaw members, you are to uphold the 12 fine traditions of Tatmadaw, even at the risk to your own lives:

1. Patriotic Tatmadaw
2. Disciplined Tatmadaw
3. Loyal Tatmadaw
4. United Tatmadaw
5. Efficient Tatmadaw
6. Tatmadaw which is willing to make

heroic sacrifices
7. Tatmadaw which does not seek personal gain and willing to give priority to national interests over individual interests
8. Tatmadaw of noble spirit and high morale
9. Tatmadaw which possesses true quality of overcoming obstacles
10. Tatmadaw which can endure hardship
11. Tenacious and persevering Tatmadaw
12. Tatmadaw which always upholds Our Three Main National Causes

But you know that Tatmadaw is not loyal to people when they treat them harshly, kill and rape them, and steal from them. How can Tatmadawmen then be considered as good men, noble men, and heroes to the people? How can the Tatmadaw be a worthy heir to the great warrior traditions established by noble Kings Anawarahta, Bayint Naung and Alaung Phaya U Aung Zeya? Or of Mahabandoola and Galon Saya San,? You know the answers to these questions.

They tell you that the ordinary people are lazy and only want to make money. Also they say that Tatmadaw men are killed and injured because our national race brothers and sisters provide the armed groups with money, food, recruits, and intelligence. You know this is not so.

Tatmadaw generals in Naypyidaw are taking all the benefits of the good life while you and your fellow Tatmadawmen are sacrificing your lives on the frontlines. You and your comrades lack food, uniforms, boots, and decent places to sleep while the generals in Naypyidaw and at the regional commands are making millions of dollars through corruption, dealing with traffickers of drugs and our daughters, and the selling of our country’s natural resources. Your families are living very poorly while the families of the generals live in luxury. While they live in luxury, the generals tell you that there is no money because of Western sanctions, Bogoyoke Aung San’s daughter, and the lazy Myanma civilians. You know that the problems of our country are caused by the generals who do not know how to lead our country. They are corrupt and power hungry. Because of them, you and our people are suffering. You know this.

The generals in Naypyidaw force you to be parasites on the backs of the people. You steal their
At the heart of our work here at Burma Issues is the belief that to drive the nation along an achievable and ultimately successful path towards a just and peaceful future, grassroots knowledge, understanding and participation in the democratic process are vital. For this to be realised, communities both inside and outside of Burma need the information and capacity to participate in the movement to effectively rebuild this perpetually troubled nation.

Events should prove to be particularly pertinent in the immediate future as the elections of 2010, the first in two decades, loom.

Unfortunately, the internationally recognised standards that form the backbone of the democratic process: freedom of speech and expression, freedom of assembly and a free media that provides the information necessary to make a choice, are woefully lacking for the Burmese people.

As part of an effort to redress the balance, Burma Issues has recently undertaken a project to educate people within Eastern Burma with the aim of informing “local people of their basic human right to a free and fair election”.

Both Burma Issues Mae Sot – who concentrated on Karen regions – and Burma...
Issues Mae Hong Son – who targeted the Karenni state - worked on the project in conjunction with other groups, specifically the Karen Youth Organisation in the Karen State, with whom we have a strong relationship, to access the widest possible audience. Our goal being the distribution and screenings of a twenty minute film about the democratic process, followed by an open discussion about the regime’s failings. The target was achieved earlier this year.

The events, the culmination of a three-month planning and implementation process, took place in villages of three Karen districts; Nyaunglebin, Mutraw and Doo Pla Ya, and six Karenni townships; Loikaw, Dee Maw Hso, Loi Non Pha, Moe Bye, Mae Set and the Kayan region. In these areas some 450 video CD’s produced in both the Burmese and Karen languages were distributed, and there was a total audience participation of thousands. Importantly, the number of young people who saw the film amounted to hundreds, exposing the next generation to the issues that are keeping them in the dreadful situation in which they continue to exist.

In order to achieve the maximum possible effect of the screenings, the video was used as a tool for discussion and debate about the constant violation of the people’s human rights by the Junta. Further, to help put the issue into the perspective of the people at the grassroots, the 2008 constitution was utilized to highlight how their situation has been ignored.

Undertaken at great risk, the campaign inside Burma entitled “Free and Fair Elections for 2010” had the aim of directly empowering people by giving them access to knowledge and information regarding the democratic process. This empowerment is furthered by the provision of the video CD’s. This gives people access to a mobilization tool that, independent from outside influence, can be used within the communities to provoke discussion and debate and facilitate the organic development of a democratic mindset.

Indeed, this organic development is vital if a nation strives to achieve democratic justice. The imposition of the democratic process by anonymous outside forces has historically been, and currently is, short of success. Given the 3 to 4 million Vietnamese and nearly 60,000 US soldiers who lost their lives in an unsuccessful sixteen year offensive designed to bring democracy, and the current shambles that is the attempt to install democracy in Iraq, our past and present inform us that it is the grassroots that affects change. Moreover, is the very notion of installing democracy not necessarily an undemocratic action? Is enforcing ‘Western’ ways onto others political arrogance? Meaningful change comes from within: the grassroots.

The key elements a successful grassroots campaign has to address are varied, but essentially it is about getting people involved and allowing them to make decisions, guiding people to see the root of the issue and moving them to action, building the movement from the bottom up and conducting political education. It is on this foundation that the “Free and Fair Elections for 2010” campaign was built.
During the campaign, people who saw the film highlighted its necessity. In a report from one staff member who was working in the Mutraw district in the Karen state, it was noted that people who were spoken to in the target area were unaware what the election was, what it was for, how it happened and how it related to them. With this being the reality, the execution of a free and fair election with an informed electorate is simply not going to be the case. People who were informed about the imminent events were those in possession of transistor radios that could access the daily BBC broadcasts: information from within was certainly not forthcoming. In terms of the alleged “fifth step of the seven-step road map to democracy” proposed by the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), this seems to be nothing more than propaganda. Information is central to democracy.

The problems facing the team during the campaign were not just those of personal security. The logistics of screening a film to thousands of people across dozens of remote regions, often in very basic conditions creates obvious barriers to success, not least sparse access to electricity and lack of availability of televisions to screen the film. These problems were overcome with the use of a laptop computer taken inside with the team, and needless to say, showing a film to an entire village of onlookers using a small laptop screen is an achievement in its own right. As for power, the computer was charged when there was power, and discharged where none existed. Nevertheless, and with an inevitability that is Burmese daily life, issues of security came to the fore during the operation. As is common procedure when partaking in such an operation, our cameraman called ahead on his walkie-talkie to ask the head in the next location, Ler Doh Township in Nyaunglebin district, if it was safe to visit. Regrettfully, the answer was in the negative as the villagers were on the run, and had been so for around four weeks. The SPDC had arranged for the mobilization of four Light Infantry Battalions ostensibly to clear the area of inhabitants and build military camps to ensure those people stayed away: this being done because of a proposed dam construction nearby that will cause the area to be uninhabitable. An estimated 443 households of almost 3,500 people had been displaced by the army’s activity. Houses have been burnt, food destroyed and animals slain. Two men are known to have died, and due to the current living situation; on the run and hiding in the jungle, malaria and...
Before, during and after the latest Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) summit, held on 9th and 10th April 2010 in Hanoi, Vietnam, yards of column inches in the international and ASEAN press have been dedicated to the ASEAN policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of fellow member states. This being currently a hot-topic with regards to Burma in the context of this years forthcoming election.

The press are suggesting that rather than ASAEN nations maintain this policy, they should become outspoken both collectively and as individual nations against the current situation in Burma. In spite of this, lips remain largely sealed from ASEAN leaders, shying away from publically denouncing the Burmese Junta.

This policy of non-interference is however at the very heart of the operation of ASEAN. In fact it is spelled out quite clearly on the second page of the ASEAN Charter of 2007, coming higher up the list of agreements than such things as “human rights” and “fundamental freedoms”.

ASEAN nations may have failed to openly voice negative remarks against the Junta, not only because of the Charter to which they agreed to comply, but also because of their own questionable records in functional democracy. Take the ASEAN examples: Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, the triplets of Indochina. All of these are an awfully long way from democratic rule, so the likelihood of either of the nations speaking out regarding the Burmese elections is simply unrealistic. The situation in Brunei is much the same whereby an absolute monarch, the Sultan of Brunei, is both head of state and head of government; no attempt is made at democracy.

What about the civilised and successful city-state of Singapore? Since the first prime minister of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew, it has become a bastion of democracy and wealth, but even he has expressed his concerns about the situation in Burma.

There begs the question, what level of success does this achieve and how much good does risking ones own life do? The answer in the long-term will remain to be seen, and only those who are eventually free to read this article in a fair and just Burma will truly be the judges.

However, Burma will inevitable be a free country sometime in the future, what we at Burma Issues believe is that our education and empowerment programs are but a small cog in the giant wheel that will drive that process, and without the small cogs giant wheels remain motionless. In that respect, risking oneself to improve the lot of future generations, to move those very same wheels and maybe increase their speed, is a worthy, valuable and admirable undertaking. History again teaches many lessons, one being that without some sacrifice, effort and education in whatever form that may take, the status quo remains, if we, and the other organizations out there keep turning our various cogs, days of the status quo must surely be numbered.
minister was elected in 1959, the People’s Action Party has shown no sign of losing political control: a one-party (police?) state for over half a century. There is no functional democratic system of gaining power in Singapore.

Malaysia, like Singapore, has been dominated by a single party since its independence in 1957. Although the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) is now part of a coalition government, the Malay prime minister has always been from UMNO. The slogan of “race, religion, nation’ coined by UMNO has led to ongoing pro-Malay (i.e. anti-everyone else) policies of legalised discrimination against those who do not fit the native Malay model. This clearly begs questions of human rights and goes little way in qualifying the nation to criticise their neighbours.

Thailand has allegedly been a democracy since 1932, but it still fails to get it right. Dr. Thaksin won elections with huge majorities in 2001 and 2005, the only prime minister to be re-elected in Thai history and the first with an absolute majority since 1957. The military did not like is so a coup was staged. Who is leading Thailand now? Many would argue that it is regime supported by the military, certainly if it isn’t and the military become unhappy, it soon would be, and with the current pandemonium on the streets of Bangkok, this may come sooner rather than later.

The Philippines has been an advertisement of how democracy can be used and abused since the United States granted independence in 1946. Run by successive generations of ‘oligarchs and cronies’ thereafter, with a small selection of surnames running the course. The current election sees both the wife of former leader Ferdinand Marcos - the man who declared martial law and ran the country as a despotic tyrant - running alongside a boxer who seems to find difficulties being tested for drugs. Violence and corruption will inevitably play a part in the elections; they always do in the Philippines. Again this is hardly a foundation from which criticism is realistically eligible. Possibly the only partially healthy democracy in Southeast Asia is Indonesia, and this is against all odds. Ruled for 32 years by President Suharto before his fall in 1998, the nation’s leader demonstrated a strict, centralised, authoritarian, military rule, and during the conflict over East Timor’s sovereignty was responsible for an estimated 100,000 deaths. Nevertheless, what this did seem to breed in Indonesia was an anti-state based, ‘son-of-the-soil’, and decentralisation process that, to date, is showing the best democratic development in the region.

It would seem rather odd for any of these particular countries - perhaps with the Indonesian exception that could rather be used as a model - to take the moral high ground with regards to Burma, when democratically they have previously, or still do, stand on ground that is at the moral sea level.

Is it not foolish for the media to expect nations with such questionable histories to speak out against a neighbour with whom they have signed a charter declaring that this is exactly what they will not do?
Furthermore, would interference with other nation’s internal politics be able to run concurrently with economic cooperation? Economic disengagement in the form of sanctions has been seen to achieve very little in improving the plight of the Burmese people, so taking the opposite route – the current ASEAN policy – could not achieve much less.

Yet others are calling on ASEAN to do the same. Indeed, a petition delivered to leaders attending the latest ASEAN summit, signed by 105 members of parliament within the member states advocated that: “ASEAN should immediately enact strict and targeted economic sanctions against Myanmar’s military government”.

Since the military government controls just about everything that goes in and out of the nation, sanctions would have to be on just about everything, a policy doomed for failure. ‘Constructive engagement’, the economic and trade policy adopted by ASEAN nations with Burma seem to be an unlikely bedfellow with outright and open political criticism. Would the Junta tolerate condemnation and still deal economically with the rest of ASEAN? I suggest they would most likely close shop with ASEAN and deal with the China instead. If this were to be the situation, the generals could quite easily maintain their ostentatious lifestyles, and the chance of any ‘trickle down’ of wealth would be reduced.

Moreover, by ASEAN maintaining the combination of a non-interference policy combined with constructive engagement, it keeps Burma at the ASEAN table. Here, away from the public ear, discussion are said to be ongoing regarding the situation in Burma. An ASEAN press statement in April of this year described the process as “extensive discussions among themselves” with regards to human rights in the region. In fact The Bangkok Post in April went even further to suggest that: “every ASEAN summit for the last decade has been dominated by the Burma issue. Although discussions are usually on the sidelines and in confidential sessions, this year’s meeting in Hanoi was no different”. Although little appears to alter, this has to be more constructive than ostracizing Burma completely from relations with the Association, leaving China to plunder resources without so much as a by your leave regarding human rights.

The heavy hand of sanctions, damnation and disapproval are nothing new to the Burmese rulers, and the collective achievement of such tactics have, for almost half a century, achieved nothing

If the non-interference policy was to crumble the situation in Burma could only deteriorate. They would move away from ASEAN cooperation and effectively introduce sanctions upon themselves. The economy would suffer, but the generals would not. To breed more insularity into an already insular nation would only increase the tightness of the Junta’s seal that already circumnavigates the border. What then would be the plight of the border dwelling refugees? Would Thailand feel any responsibility for helping those from a nation with which it has neither economic nor political ties? One could answer this question humanitarianly, but if the answer were one based on pragmatism, a different conclusion would be reached.

The heavy hand of sanctions, damnation and disapproval are nothing new to the Burmese rulers, and the collective achievement of such tactics have, for almost half a century, achieved the square root of nothing. That is, nothing negative for the rulers, and nothing positive for the ruled.

Whilst clearly it would be wrong to cosy up to such a regime, other approaches have failed, and failed dismally to alter the daily lives of the vast majority of the Burmese population.

The solution? Increased trade with decreased interference, the two policies that the scholars and the learned scorn, but perhaps the only way that the international community could affect a change. The generals are already resplendent with wealth, so an increase in the countries economic inflows can do little harm with regards to their further enrichment, but potentially make huge inroads into the rest of the nation.
Constructive increased trade will not happen if interference in internal politics does. Lessons learned since the formulation of ASEAN show that the road to peace and democracy is a very rocky one in the region. Some nations have stumbled along it, some are still stumbling and others have not even attempted their first stumble. Nevertheless, nine of the ten nations seem to be getting somewhere, somehow. Not necessarily in term of democracy, but in terms of development and justice for those at the bottom rung of the ladder. That said, if there is a map to navigate the pitfalls and potholes along the road to building a peaceful and just nation against all odds, the ASEAN region seems to have it. Dictators, civil war, communism, terrorism, nepotism, corruption, ethnic division, and a whole host of other challenges confront the region, or at least have done in the past generation, and by hook or by crook the problems have been surmounted. Burma remains the last great challenge, and change so far has been limited. Nevertheless, time is infinite and change will happen. The ASEAN nations have so far met with the sternest of challenges that can be thrown at them, and they seem to have developed a handy knack of putting them to one side and progressing. Outside interference with their non-interference would therefore seem to be an unnecessary exercise of futile condescension. Heavy-handed methods have already been tried; perhaps a different approach may actually achieve something.

In Burma, two of the principal issues that stand in the way of the development of a united front against the Junta are internal ethnic divisions and poor standards of education. Both of which are in desperate need of addressing if a cohesive, just and peaceful nation is to be built. Colleges and universities are essential if a country is to progress, but in Burma they have suffered from years of underinvestment and closure, with the ruling State Peace and Development Council fearing they may be a breeding ground of political dissent. Along with this is the long history of conflict between the 135 different ethnic groups that co-exist in Burma. The Junta knows this, and has exploited these differences to keep the people divided. If educational standards are to be raised but ethnic tensions remain, cohesion is unlikely and if ethnic divisions are eroded but education remains weak, Burmese solidarity will continue to be as elusive as ever. The very people trying to help arguably exacerbate the problem of division. Scores of NGOs are run with ethnic, gendered or religious ideologies that do little to unite the nation with a common goal. Nevertheless, there are organisations that, like Burma Issues, have a secular, non-

Learning to Integrate: Eroding Divisions And Building A Future For Burma

By Saw Dar Wee

The greatest threats to global security today come not from the economic deficiencies of the poorest nations but from religious, racial (or tribal) and political dissensions raging in those regions where principles and practices could reconcile the diverse instincts and aspirations of mankind have been ignored, repressed or distorted.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi

Democracy cannot succeed unless those who express their choice are prepared to choose wisely. The real safeguard of democracy, therefore, is education.

Franklin D. Roosevelt
gendered, non-ethnically biased mandate to tackle some of the problems that persist. One of these organisations is the Exam Preparation Outreach Program (EPOP) who take on the two challenges of education and integration and meet them head on. EPOP is a study programme that aims to improve the academic English of its students in order for them pass university entrance exams and gain scholarships for study abroad. After graduation, the students return home with their education, and can then contribute to development in a way they previously could not.

In order to access the program, students must already have a strong command of the language and have proven experience working to develop and make their communities better places to live.

Early one Saturday morning in May of this year I attended an English language class for Burmese migrant students in Tak province, Thailand run by EPOP and their larger than life teacher, Buddy.

Although only a small class, numbering just eight people, the inclusivity was evident on arrival and heightened after introductions. The class consisted of students all in their early twenties and all from very different backgrounds. The gender division was a perfect mix, half male and half female, and the ethnic diversity was a testament to EPOP’s all-encompassing ethics. We had four Karen from the Karen state, which, as it is the closest Burmese state to Tak province is to be expected. However we also had in our class a Karen from Mon state, a Mon from Mon state, an Arakan student and a second generation Shan lady whose Nepalese grandparents had fled one conflict only for their offspring to be greeted by another. There was also a religious mixture of Buddhism and Christianity.

Diversity aside, the students were an example of what the future of a free Burma could be like.

Attending classes on weekend mornings and in the evening during the week, seven of the eight students were currently working for little or no wages at local community based organisations, the eighth had previously worked for a number of such organisations and no doubt will be doing so again in the not too distant future. These are people who are not only trying to further their own education and prospects; they are also giving their time and energy in a benevolent effort to affect the lives of others in a positive fashion.

As the English spoken was already of a high standard, teacher Buddy had no cause to concentrate his efforts on grammar and the like, but instead conducted class as it would be in the Philippine or Hong Kong universities that will hopefully be the students destination should they gain their scholarships.

Splitting the class along gender lines, the question, “In free Burma should 30% of the seats in parliament be reserved for women?” was debated, and interestingly and provocatively the female students were to be against the motion, and the males in favour.

Lively debate ensued, with not only the English language under strict scrutiny, but also the student’s critical thinking by our enthusiastic chair. The students were able to challenge each other freely and openly, a luxury that does not exist in Burma, but hopefully a skill the students will carry with them through their studies and on their return home.

The encouragement and teaching of critical thinking will prove to be an essential aspect of Burmese development. People need to be critical in order to analyse, and analysis is the key tool in surveying your surroundings, identifying the problems and formulating a solution. This is something the internally divided Burmese have been unable to do as a nation for five decades.

The class concluded in a more light-hearted direction with a game of Scrabble. Four teams of two battled it out against each other and a tight time limit, teaching not only vocabulary, but also teamwork and quick thinking. It seemed to be enjoyed by all, and found favour in the competitive nature of our Burmese students.

Saturday morning class was not only a lesson for the eight students, it was also a lesson about how an organisation can address two of Burma’s most pressing issues simultaneously. Bringing Burma’s new generation together, regardless of ethnicity, gender or religion in a mission to enter overseas universities has to give hope for not only their future, but the future of their nation.
The National League for Democracy (NLD) disbanded at midnight, May 6th following a decision not to register for this year’s elections. Win Tin, the 79 years old Veteran leader and 19-year political prisoner said that even “if people vote for us we cannot win”.

More than 25 former senior members of the NLD have broken rank and formed a new opposition party, the National Democratic Force (NDF) who now plan to register and then contest the election.

There is a serious rift developing between opposition parties following Win Tin’s accusation of the NDF shamelessly exploiting the NLD’s name. This comes after a number of the NDF leaders continue to refer to themselves as “former NLD members”.

The problem of a guaranteed 25 per cent of parliamentary seats being reserved for the military has been worsened by a number of senior Junta figures resigning from their posts to contest the election as civilians. This will almost certainly secure more seats for a number of the militaries allies.

As part of the increased high-level political engagement, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Kurt Campbell, the most senior U.S. diplomat in the region, met with Aung San Suu Kyi to discuss the election. He also met with leaders of the Junta. This is no sign however that economic engagement is likely to alter any time in the near future.

Temperatures of up to 47°C have caused the death rates to soar in Rangoon, Mandalay and Magway Divisions. Charity funeral services in Rangoon have reported that funeral numbers last month showed a sixty per cent increase from previous months this year.

---

We would like to request our readers to kindly notify us of any changes to your mailing address. You can inform us at burmaissues@burmaissues.org

Burma Issues  
235/26 Asoke Dindaeng Road,  
Makkasan, Rajtaevee (Rachathewi)  
Bangkok 10400