

BURMA ALERT

Associates to Develop Democratic Burma

**AUGUST 1996
Volume 7, No.8
ISSN: 1182-0454**

RR.4, Shawville, Quebec, JOX 2Y0, Canada

DAW SUU OBSERVES MARTYRS' DAY

On 19 July. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi participated in the official Martyrs' Day ceremony in Rangoon. She arrived in a government car accompanied by Lieutenant-Colonel Thein Tun, the man who used to be her SLORC liaison officer when she was under house arrest. After placing three baskets of flowers at her father's tomb at the Martyrs' Mausoleum, she bowed before it and then left the ceremony. Minister of Culture Aung San represented the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) at the ceremony. Unlike other years, there was no official media coverage. Instead, editorials and commentaries in state-run newspapers attacked Daw Suu for trying to hurt the country with her calls for economic sanctions against SLORC [HKS960719].

DAW SUU LETTER TO A.S.E.A.N.

Indonesia's Foreign Minister, AH Alatas, acknowledged receipt of a letter from Burmese democracy leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi but declined to reveal its contents. However, Thep Devakul, permanent secretary of the Thai Foreign Ministry, said that Daw Suu had requested the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to use its good offices to promote national reconciliation through a dialogue amongst SLORC, her National League for Democracy (NLD) party, and other political movements in Burma. Thep also revealed that Thai Prime Minister Banharn Silpa-archa had sent a letter to Senior General Than Shwe expressing Thailand's concern over the massive military crackdown against the NLD [B960717, N960717].

EUROPEANS FAIL TO AGREE

At the initiative of Denmark, the European Council of Ministers met on 15 July to consider sanctions against SLORC but failed to reach a consensus. They, however, condemned human rights abuses and anti-democratic action by SLORC [VOA960718].

E.U. MINISTER MEETS SLORC

Irish Foreign Minister Dick Spring, in his capacity as chairman of the EU Council of Ministers, met with Ohn Gyaw at the ASEAN Regional Forum in Jakarta and expressed concern over the situation in Burma [Reu960722],

SLORC ACCEPTED AS OBSERVER

SLORC was formally granted observer status in ASEAN on 20 July at the 29th annual Ministerial meeting in Jakarta. In SLORC's maiden address, Foreign Minister Ohn Gyaw assured member states that SLORC would be able to integrate into the organization. Ohn Gyaw said SLORC is committed to a market economy and a multiparty democratic system [VOA960721].

TOKYO DICTATES TERMS

Japanese Foreign Minister Yukihiro Ikeda told Ohn Gyaw on 22 July that, "Public opinion in Japan is extremely concerned about human rights in Burma," and expressed concern about current tensions in Burma, especially the recent law banning public gatherings. He also said that Burma's ties with Japan will only be strengthened if SLORC begins a dialogue with pro-democracy groups [B960723, N960724].

U.S. SANCTIONS FOR SLORC

The US Senate on 26 July passed a US\$12.25 billion foreign aid bill that includes limited, conditional economic sanctions against SLORC. Senator Mitch McConnell, Republican-Kentucky, and Senator Daniel Moynihan, Democrat-New York, had earlier called for sanctions banning any U.S. public or private investments in Burma until SLORC gives up power and allows free elections. The watered-down amendment was sponsored by Senator William Cohen, Republican-Maine, and Senator Dianne Feinstein, Democrat-California, and backed by the Clinton administration. By a vote of 54-45, the Senate adopted the Cohen Amendment. The Senate also adopted an amendment to the foreign aid bill that would increase spending on international counter-drug efforts, as requested by President Clinton. The Amendment cuts off US foreign aid to SLORC except for humanitarian aid, counter-narcotics assistance under certain circumstances, and assistance in promoting human rights and democratic values. Under the Cohen amendment, the US president will have to prohibit all new US investment in Burma if SLORC harms or exiles Daw Suu or if it commits large-scale repression or violence against the Burmese pro-democracy opposition [AP960726].

Burma News:**THAN SHWE VISITS MALAYSIA**

Senior General Than Shwe, SLORC Chairman, accompanied by Lieut-Gen Khin Nyunt, Head of Military Intelligence, arrived in Malaysia on 12 Aug for a 5-day visit at the invitation of King Tuanku Abdul Rahman, Malaysia's constitutional monarch. He met Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad and signed an economic, scientific and cultural agreement. The pact intensifies cooperation in technical training and education, allowing more Burmese workers to come to Malaysia, and encouraging business partnerships in construction, oil and gas exploration, mining, tourism and manufacturing. Since becoming SLORC Chairman in April 1992, Than Shwe has visited Laos, Vietnam, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand and China. Malaysian Foreign Minister Abdullah Badawi told reporters that Mahathir wanted to see Burma become a full member of ASEAN next year for its 30th anniversary [AP960809, Reu960812].

MALAYSIANS PROTEST SLORC VISIT

A group of major Malaysian organizations on 14 Aug delivered a statement to the Malaysian Foreign Ministry objecting to the visit by SLORC Chairman General Than Shwe. The group's press statement expressed shock at the willingness of their government to 'consort with a regime that is notorious for its atrocities and disregard for the basic human rights of its citizens'. The group said that, while Malaysia is welcoming Than Shwe, tens of thousands of Burmese Muslims are being oppressed in humiliating and life-threatening ways. The group pointed to Malaysia's excellent record in Bosnia and South Africa and called on the government not to jeopardize its credibility by unconditionally supporting a regime 'smeared with the blood of hundreds of thousands of our fellow Asians.' It is clear that the situation in Burma is not an internal matter, the statement said. The group included ABIM (Malaysian Youth Muslim Movement), ASA Media Centre, Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development, Burma Solidarity Group Malaysia, Cenpeace, Center for Orang Asli (Indigenous Peoples) Concerns, Democratic Action Party Socialist Youth, Ideal Time, INSAN, JUST World Trust, Labour Resource Centre, Parti Rakyat Malaysia (Peoples Party Malaysia), Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall Youth, SUARAM, Support Committee for Urban Pioneer Settlers,

and the United Chinese School Teachers Association.

AMNUAY ARRIVES IN RANGOON

Thai Foreign Minister Amnuay Viravan arrived in Rangoon on 4 Aug for a four-day official visit accompanied by officials as well as a group of 30 Thai businessmen looking for opportunities in Burma. Amnuay, who is also Deputy Premier for Economic Affairs, will co-chair with Ohn Gyaw the third meeting of the Thai-Burmese Joint Commission [B960805].

THAI FISH BAN TO BE LIFTED

Thai Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Amnuay Viravan met with Prime Minister Senior General Than Shwe and Lieut-Gen Khin Nyunt, SLORC Secretary 1, on 6 Aug. SLORC subsequently agreed to lift the ban against the sale of fish to Thailand. The ban had been in effect since early 1996 following the deaths of three Burmese fishermen in a clash off the coast of Ranong in August 1995. Amnuay confirmed that Rangoon had also agreed to re-open a checkpoint for trade in Mae Sot 'in the near future'. For its part, SLORC wants a road link between Rangoon and Mae Sot, and between Kengtung and Mae Sai. A joint project to develop a sea port at Tavoy is also being planned [B960807].

SLORC URGES NON-INTERFERENCE

SLORC Foreign Minister Ohn Gyaw, speaking at a press conference in Jakarta, urged ASEAN governments not to have contact with the Burmese democracy movement. He reminded them that ASEAN observes the principle of non-interference in others' internal affairs. Ohn Gyaw said that he had no objection to Rangoon-based diplomats meeting Daw Aung San Suu Kyi as long as their 'intention' is not to interfere in Burma's domestic affairs. Diplomats from Thailand, the Philippines and some Western countries attended the NLD party congress in May [N960723].

CANADIAN A.S.E.A.N. PROPOSAL

The European Union welcomed a proposal by Canada for a Burma Contact Group, a mechanism similar to that set up by the United Nations for Bosnia. S Jayakumar, Singapore's Foreign Minister, speaking for ASEAN dismissed the initiative by Lloyd Axworthy, his Canadian counterpart, by saying that "the proposal was not on the prepared agenda. Therefore, it should be dropped from discussion" [B960725].

Burma News:**DAW SUU URGES SANCTIONS**

In a special video to the European Parliament, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi urged that sanctions be imposed on SLORC. She dismissed suggestions that such measures will only hurt the poor, claiming instead that the most privileged will be the worst affected. She claimed that sanctions will affect business confidence, which in turn will put pressure on SLORC to end its suppression of democracy. She also warned that economic change in Burma is impossible without political change [VOA960718].

"SHUNBURMA" - DAW SUU

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi speaking to Singapore-based Asia Business News on 23 July urged foreign tourists and investors to boycott her country in order to put pressure on the military in Rangoon. "We would like people to keep away during 'Visit Myanmar Year' as a symbol of solidarity with the forces of democracy in Burma." She also urged foreign investors to shun Burma, calling in particular for French oil giant TOTAL to sever its ties with the junta. "We do not think now is the time for any foreign company to invest in Burma because the investments do not benefit the public at large. These investments only benefit a privileged few," she said [AA900724].

DAW SUU NOT ANTI-BUSINESS

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi denied that her movement is anti-business as claimed by SLORC. "We advocate the kind of business which benefits the whole country," she said, adding that economic development promoted by the current regime is endangering the moral fibre of the nation. Meanwhile, SLORC media accused the 1991 Nobel laureate of being a stooge of the US Central Intelligence Agency. SLORC said that the CIA has meddled persistently in 'Myanmar's internal affairs' since independence in 1948 [APP/ST960715].

DR SEIN WIN URGES BOYCOTT

On 8 Aug, Prime Minister Dr Sein Win of the exiled National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma, joined 200 protesters outside the SLORC Embassy in Canberra, Australia, on the 8th anniversary of the democracy uprising against military rule in Burma. He urged foreign businesses to withhold investment from Burma until SLORC restores civilian rule and ends human rights abuses [AP960808].

OHN GYAW RULES OUT DIALOGUE

SLORC's Foreign Minister told a news conference in Jakarta that there will be no dialogue with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi or her party unless they rejoin the National Convention. The NLD walked out of the Convention in Nov.95 saying that it did not represent the will of the Burmese people [VOA960722].

Nichols:**SLORC REJECTS AUTOPSY CALL**

SLORC rejected calls for an independent autopsy on James Leander 'Leo' Nichols, an unofficial consul for several European countries who died in a Burmese prison in June. A SLORC statement issued in Jakarta said that allowing the autopsy would compromise its national sovereignty and be an interference in Burma's internal affairs [Reu960716].

SLORC: NICHOLS MET HIS FATE

A commentary in an official Burmese newspaper said on 15 July said that Nichols, who died in jail last month, was an unimportant crook who met his due fate. "He knew he had a disease. He took medicines...Yet he was reckless with food and lazy and sought luxury so it was not strange that he met his fate thus." The article repeated an earlier statement that Nichols was not mistreated, and that he had masseurs and people fanning him. The article gave a detailed list of pathology results from an autopsy conducted on Nichols. Among other things it said Nichols had a hardening of the arteries, cardiovascular disease, scarred heart muscles, contracted kidneys due to high blood pressure and congestion of the spleen, brain and adrenal gland. The commentary warned foreign governments not to keep harping on Nichols' death [HKS960715].

MEMORIAL SERVICE POSTPONED

A scheduled Catholic memorial service for Leo Nichols, the honorary consul of four European countries who died in a Rangoon prison last month, has been called off indefinitely as local church authorities were 'not eager to organise the ceremony/ Swiss Ambassador Blaise Godet said. Catholic officials in Rangoon have been uneasy about holding the memorial service following the presence of undercover military intelligence agents at Nichols' funeral on June 23, diplomats in Rangoon said [N960723].

Burma News:**ANOTHER M.P. DIES IN PRISON**

U Hla Than, 49, a lawyer and an NLD Member of Parliament (Coco Island) elected in 1990, died at Rangoon General Hospital on 2 Aug. He was arrested by SLORC on 21 Oct.90 and sentenced under Section 122 (1) to 25 years in prison for 'attending secret meetings to establish a parallel government.' He is said to have died of tuberculosis, but the exiled National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma alleged that he died of internal injuries due to torture in prison. He was transferred from the prison to the hospital on 9 July [NCG960805].

AUNG KHIN SINT ARRESTED

Dr Aung Khin Sint, an NLD Member of Parliament (Minglataungnyunt 1) was re-arrested on 23 July. Aung Khin Sint, a medical doctor, was Deputy Director of the Health Education Department of the Ministry of Health in 1988. He was dismissed for his role in the pro-democracy uprisings as Chairman of the Health Workers Union. Also a well-known writer, Aung Khin Sint won the National Literary Prize in 1972. As a member of the NLD's Central Executive Committee, he participated in SLORC's National Convention but was arrested in 4 August 1993 for distributing papers critical of the Convention. He was only released on 4 Feb.96 [NCG960805].

DRMYONYUNT ARRESTED

Dr Myo Nyunt, another NLD Member of Parliament (Pantanaw) was also arrested in July under the Medicines Act 18/19. He had been pressured by Military Intelligence to resign from the NLD. It is alleged that he was arrested for refusing to resign. According to the NLD, 41 Members of Parliament have recently resigned under pressure from SLORC [NCG960805].

TOTAL SHARES WEAKEN

The price of shares in TOTAL, the French energy group, fell on 18 July amid concerns about the company's involvement in a gas pipeline project in Burma, stock brokers said. Another broker said the weakness in TOTAL stock was linked to the sale by a major Danish pension fund of its TOTAL shares. Danish fund Kommunernes Pensionsforsikring said it sold its 60 million crown (US\$10 million) share holding in TOTAL to protest against its involvement in the Burmese pipeline project [Reu960718].

TOTAL DENIES FORCED LABOUR

TOTAL has angrily rejected allegations about its activities in Burma. "It is totally wrong to suggest that TOTAL uses, directly or indirectly, forced labour or child labour. To make a link between images of children at work and the gas pipeline of TOTAL amounts to misinformation. It is totally wrong to make a connection between the pipeline, which is being constructed in an east-west axis under the responsibility of TOTAL and with equipment and crews specially put in place, and the future railway between Ye and Tavoy, which is being built under the responsibility of the Burmese army in a north-south axis." TOTAL was responding to a documentary on Burma by Carlton Communications, a British TV firm. The documentary, "Inside Burma - a Land of Fear" was broadcast on 28 May by the British ITV channel [TOT960720].

TOTAL DENIES HELPING SLORC

Daniel Valot, TOTAL SA's Managing Director for Exploration and Production, told the Financial Times that he disagreed with claims made by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi that its US\$1.2 billion Burma project 'contributed to the government's financial equilibrium.' Daw Suu had told the French newspaper 'Le Monde' earlier that she believed TOTAL had become 'the principal support of the Burmese military system.' Valot said the company, which has said it intends to stay in Burma, realized it would not be 'the easiest' country to operate in, but did not expect to have to deal with so much 'disinformation' about its activities [UPI960723].

TOTAL S.A. UNDER SEIGE

TOTAL SA's base in Kanbauk, southern Burma is ringed with guard posts and double barbed-wire fences. In the centre are two underground bunkers. "In case of rocket attack," explains operations manager Jean-Claude Ragot. "We lost five people last year. We have to be careful." TOTAL crews travel with army escorts as they lay the groundwork for a 670-kilometre pipeline that will carry natural gas from wells in the Andaman Sea to a power plant in Thailand. TOTAL has had to build its own roads, airfield and wharf. It has also had to bridge two large rivers in order to bring in its heavy equipment and supplies [F960808].

Burma News:**CARLSBERG/HEINEKEN BANNED**

On 5 Aug, SLORC banned the import and sale of Carlsberg and Heineken beers, after the brewers withdrew from proposed joint ventures in Burma under pressure from critics of Burma's military regime. SLORC told beer drinkers that it is their patriotic duty to boycott Carlsberg (Danish) and Heineken (Dutch) [AP960805].

SLORC MEDIA: 'ARREST SUUKYI'

An open letter in SLORC's "Mirror" on 28 July accused Daw Suu of blatantly violating the law (passed by SLORC last month) that prohibits political activity which obstructs its National Convention, and called for her arrest. A commentary in the Mirror also advocated legal action against Daw Suu and her supporters for falsely accusing SLORC [AFP960729].

SLORC BANS JOURNALISTS

SLORC's Foreign Minister Ohn Gyaw confirmed on 22 July that SLORC keeps records on foreign journalists and denies them visas if their reports reflect badly on the regime. "If there is no goodwill, why should the government let them come and write bad things?" he asked. Visa requests by reporters who 'persistently attack or write bad things' are referred by embassies to Rangoon. "And if we have records that say this particular person is continuously writing and attacking, then of course, we will not allow (a visa)," Ohn Gyaw said [AP-DJ960722].

SLORC WARNS JOURNALISTS

Major General Aye Kyaw, Minister of Information, meeting with 17 Burmese stringers of foreign news agencies at the Foreign Correspondents Club of Myanmar (FCCM), warned the correspondents that, as Myanmar citizens, they must be patriotic. He deplored what he called biased reports sent by members based on false accusations by the democracy movement against SLORC. He accused the correspondents of deliberately creating misunderstandings. He warned that while no investigations have as yet been carried out on the biased reporting of some foreign correspondents, he is aware who they are. He also accused Daw Aung San Suu Kyi of using the whole spectrum of the foreign media to attack the military government. He urged the journalists to report accurately on the situation in Burma and give credit where it was due. Aye Kyaw said the military, despite facing numerous obstacles, was committed to turning Burma into

a peaceful, modern and developed state where multi-party democracy prevails [AFP960715].

NEW REFUGEES TO BANGLADESH

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that 5,500 Rohingyas have fled to Bangladesh since March; while relief agencies say there may be up to 10,000. The influx is something of an embarrassment for the UNHCR, which is trying to meet its target of repatriating the last 50,000 of 250,000 Rohingyas who fled to Bangladesh in 1991 and 1992. The UN agency, keen to anchor the 200,000 returnees to their villages in Arakan State and head off a fresh exodus, fears that any move to help the newcomers will spur others to follow. "If we give food to this group, we'll attract 50,000 more the next day," UNHCR representative Vanh Nguyen-Tang said in Dhaka. Bangladesh, at first unwilling to admit the existence of any newcomers, now says they are illegal immigrants fleeing poverty, not persecution, and must be deported. UN officials said economic conditions for Rohingyas, mostly uneducated farm workers, had worsened after a cyclone in November cut rice output by up to 20 per cent. Rangoon helped push up prices by demanding the same rice tax as before. Dick van der Tak, representative of the medical relief agency Medecins Sans Frontieres said that classifying the Rohingyas as economic migrants does not take into consideration the reasons for their poverty and the whole human rights situation in Burma. The UNHCR is hoping that its staff stationed in Burma's neglected Arakan State can intercede with its military rulers to ease the plight of Rohingyas and encourage them to stay put. The new arrivals must seek shelter where they can and are vulnerable to summary deportation and abuse. In April, an attempt by a river patrol of the paramilitary Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) to force a boatful of incoming Burmese back across the river ended in disaster. The boat capsized and 15 people - five women and 10 children - drowned. Anjuma, a 12-year-old Rohingya girl who arrived in the second week of May, said she had been gang-raped by three BDR soldiers. An examination by a doctor working for an international relief agency appeared to confirm sexual assault. Major Lai Mohammad at BDR headquarters in Teknaf said a military investigation was under way. "If it is true that our soldiers were involved, they will be punished," he added [N960726].

Burma News:**MYANMAR AIRWAYS CRASH**

At least 8 people were killed and 14 others seriously injured when a Myanmar Airways plane crashed as it landed in bad weather at Mergui airport in southern Burma. MA Flight 307 from Rangoon was carrying 44 passengers and 5 crew members. The Fokker-27 aircraft crash-landed short of the runway. No foreigners were on aboard the flight [N960725].

WORK PERMIT FOR BURMESE

The Thai Cabinet on 25 June approved the National Security Council's proposal to allow illegal immigrants to work legally in half of Thailand's provinces. According to Labour Ministry statistics, more than 700,000 illegal foreign workers live in Thailand. More than 300,000 come from Burma, impoverished by decades of military rule. "It does not mean we turn on a green light for them to immigrate into our country," said one Labour Ministry official. "But this way, we can organize and control those who have been lurking in our country better" [AP960627, B960727].

SHANS UNITE TO FIGHT SLORC

The Shan State National Army, the United Wa State Army, the Shan State Army and the Shan Revolutionary Army agreed in June to merge and be known as the Shan State Peace-keeping Council. Together, they have more than 10,000 soldiers [B960701].

KAREN-SLORC TALKS

On 27 June, a Karen National Union delegation led by Gen. Tamlabaw left for cease-fire talks with SLORC. It met three times with a SLORC delegation led by Col. Kyaw Win in Moulmein. On 3 July, the KNU delegation arrived in Rangoon and met with SLORC Secretary 1 Lt-Gen Khin Nyunt. The delegation returned to KNU headquarters on 8 July. The talks were inconclusive [KNU960723].

KARENS REJECT DEMAND

The Karen National Union rejected SLORC's demand that it lay down its arms before signing a peace agreement. The decision was announced after a meeting of KNU leaders including KNU President General Bo Mya, KNU Vice-President, Shwe Yahai, and General Secretary Pado Ba Thein [B960717].

BO MYA ELECTED D.A.B. CHAIR

The Democratic Alliance of Burma, the umbrella group of pro-democracy organizations opposed to military rule in Burma, elected General Bo Mya as chairman of the Alliance on 29 June. Bo Mya is also the chairman of the National Council of the Union of Burma, and the Karen National Union. Forty-six representatives from 18 democracy groups attended the meeting in Karen State. The D.A.B. will continue to support Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's political movement against SLORC [B960630].

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT UNION

14 Members of Parliament elected in the 1990 election, formed a Members of Parliament Union in May 1996. The main objectives of the MPU are as follows:

- (a) to implement the will of the people by upholding the result of the 1990 multi-party democratic General Election, and
- (b) to work together with the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma.

Members of the MPU are:

Daniel Aung, Australia	Lahu Natl Dev Party
Sann Aung, Thailand	Independent
Maung Maung Aye, Thailand	NLD
Marko Ban	Dem Orgn fr Kayan Natl Unity
Bo Hla Tint, USA	NLD
Bo Thaung, India	NLD
Teddy Buri, Thailand	NLD
Maung Maung Latt, Thailand	NLD
Tha Noe, India	Arakan League fr Dem
Thein Oo, Thailand	NLD
Than Sein, India	NLD
Tint Swe, India	NLD
Sein Win, USA	Party for Natl Dem
Zahlethang, India	Chin Natl League fr Dem

○

NEWS SOURCES THIS ISSUE: AA = Asian Age, AFP = Agence France Presse, AP = Associated Press, AP-DJ = Associated Press-Dow Jones, B = Bangkok Post, BT = Business Times, F = Far Eastern Economic Review, FBC = Free Burma Coalition, HKS = Hongkong Standard, KNU = Karen National Union, Kyodo = Kyodo News Agency, LACFB = Los Angeles Coalition for a Free Burma, N = The Nation, Bangkok, NCG = National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma, Net = BurmaNet, Reu = Reuters, SCMP = South China Morning Post, ST = Straits Times, TOT = Total, S.A., UPI = United Press International, and VOA = Voice of America.

○

Economy:**BURMESE ECONOMY UNSTABLE**

According to an economic report on Burma, "Foreign Economic Trends," distributed by the U.S. Embassy in Rangoon, the short and medium-term prospects for Burma's economic growth are uncertain because the military will not adopt economic and political reforms. "The long-term sustainability of Burma's economic growth is still more questionable, due to the persistence of both macroeconomic instability... and the potential for political instability... as well as grossly inadequate human infrastructure development, especially in the field of basic education," the report said. "Each of these problems appears closely related to the high costs of governing by force rather than consent, which appears to be the principal and fundamental economic problem in contemporary Burma. These conditions...appear likely to persist until Burma has a government with sufficient popular support to reduce defence spending in the absence of external threats and to collect internal revenues effectively," it said. The report also estimated that forced labour accounts for approximately 3% of Burma's gross domestic product (GDP). It painted a bleak picture of the economy, with soaring deficits, declining foreign investment, rising and potentially unserviceable debt, rampant military spending and SLORC's increased reliance on income from drug trafficking [N960807].

SLORC DENOUNCES U.S. REPORT

Brig-Gen David Abel, SLORC Minister of National Planning denounced the economic report released by the US Embassy in Rangoon as having no credibility. "The intention of floating such a report is to seed doubt and cause mischief and to maliciously discredit" SLORC, he said. Abel accused the US State Department of orchestrating the publication. Abel claimed that the report was erroneous in many areas, including economic and social conditions, defence spending and drug issues. Abel distributed a booklet giving official economic and social indicators dated March 1996 to show that the US documents did not accurately reflect the economy of Burma. The US figures are presumptuous, he said and warned that the data should not be used.

Investments:**HONG KONG:**

PEREGRINE INVESTMENTS wrote-off its Burma operations by including it in its losses of about US\$ 14 million last year [Net/MB960517].

JAPAN:

The **BANK OF TOKYO-MITSUBISHI** opened an office in Rangoon in Aug.95 [Kyodo960802].

DAI-ICHI KANGYO and **SAKURA BANK** are planning to open representative offices in Rangoon this fall [Kyodo960802].

FUJI BANK opened an office in Rangoon in December 1995 [Kyodo960802].

SANWA BANK opened an office in Rangoon in July 1996 [Kyodo960802].

SUMITOMO BANK and **TOKAI BANK** opened offices in Rangoon in May 1996 [Kyodo960802].

MALAYSIA:

TEKNIK CEKAP SON BHD and the Yangon City Development Committee signed a contract on 17 June to build a modern city square in central Rangoon at an estimated cost of US\$85 million. The square will have luxury apartments, company and banking offices, a shopping mall, a movie theatre, and medical clinics. **TEKNIK** will operate the square for 30 years after completion before handing it over to Yangon City [UPI960618].

NORWAY:

According to Aftenposten', a Norwegian newspaper, **NORWAY'S** imports from Burma increased by 45% in the first half of 1996 to 5.1 million kroner (mostly timber, cork and furniture) and will reach 13 million kroner by the end of the year [AP960808].

SINGAPORE:

PIDEMCO LAND awarded a US\$34.2 million contract to **SYNTECH-WOH HUP PTE LTD** as the main contractor for the **HOTEL EQUATORIAL YANGON** scheduled for completion in mid-1997. Total development cost of the 360-room four-star hotel is estimated at US\$48.3 million. It is a joint venture between **YANGON INVESTMENT PTE LTD (YIPL)** and **Export Services Ltd Yangon**. **YIPL**, which owns 95% of the venture, is in turn 89% owned by **PIDEMCO** and 11% owned by **HOTEL EQUATORIAL PTE LTD** [BT960207].

Investments:

SINGAPORE Continued:

Indonesian-born businessman **Sukanto Sia** has taken over the helm at SUM **CHEONG INTERNATIONAL**, the Hong Kong-listed Singapore-based construction and mining company. SUM CHEONG has a gold mine in Burma [BT960216J].

U.S.I. HOLDINGS, owned 45% by **WING TAI CO (Cheung Family)** and 25% owned by **SUN HUNG KAI PROPERTIES (Hong Kong)**, is shifting its garment manufacturing operations to low-cost bases including Burma [SCMP960401].

THAILAND:

Chaijudh Karnasuta is the Chairman of the **ORIENTAL HOTEL** and the **ITAL-THAI GROUP** of companies [F960516].

U.S.A.:

LONDON FOG INDUSTRIES, a US\$ 400 million manufacturer of outerwear, confirmed on 5 Aug that it will not have garments in production in Burma after this month. LONDON FOG also owns the **PACIFIC TRAIL** label [FBC960805].

UNOCAL Chairman John Imle met with Lieut-Gen Khin Nyunt, SLORC Secretary 1, and Generals David Abel and Khin Maung Thein, SLORC's Economic and Energy Ministers. They discussed improvement of bilateral relations, economic cooperation and offshore oil and gas projects [AP960809].

ROSS is selling 'Made in Myanmar' products. Contact ROSS CEO Norman Ferber at Tel: 1 (800) BUY-ROSS [LACFB960215].

APOLOGIES

The August issue of 'Burma Alert' is very late due to recent events in Burma requiring the immediate attention of the Editor.

International:**AMNESTY CONDEMNS SLORC**

A new report released by Amnesty International on 7 Aug, 'Myanmar: Human Rights Violations Against Ethnic Minorities,' claims that SLORC subjected ethnic minorities in the Mon and Shan States and in Tenasserim Division to forced labour, forced relocations, arbitrary detentions, extrajudicial killings, torture and ill-treatment.

GOVTS ACCUSED OF COMPLICITY

According to Amnesty International, the Governments of Britain, France, Germany, China, Russia and the United States of America, are trading in terror by selling arms and security equipment to countries with bad human rights records. It urged them to ban the sale of security equipment to countries where it can be misused. According to Amnesty, more than 4,500 people died last year because of inhuman conditions or torture in custody in 54 nations including Burma, Egypt, Kenya and Turkey [Reu960617].

CAMPAIGN IN SOUTH AFRICA

A group of South Africans have launched a Free Burma Campaign to contribute in whatever way they can to the restoration of democracy in Burma. The campaign was launched on the campus of the University of Durban-Westville on 19 June. They are keen on linking up with fraternal organisations. Contact: Kiru Naidoo <kiru@pixie.udw.ac.za>

"CRIES FROM INSEIN"

"Cries From Insein" is a report on conditions of political prisoners in Burma's infamous Insein Prison, based on the personal experience of Win Naing Oo. He was jailed in May 1990. He was finally released after three years of incarceration, abuse and torture. The book is distributed free of charge but please send postage to PO Box 42, Hua Mark P.O., Bangkok 10243, Thailand: US\$4 (Europe, America) and US\$2 (Asia).

The "Burma Alert" is published monthly by ADDB Inc to provide data for the Burmese democracy movement. In 1995, grants were recieved from the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development, Canada; the Evangelisches Missionswerk, Germany; and the National Endowment for Democracy, U.S.A. "BURMA ALERT" SUBSCRIPTIONS: Institutions - US\$100.00 (or C\$100.00) per annum and Individuals US\$25.00 (or C\$25.00) per annum. Readers are also invited to become 'Associates' and participate in helping to promote democracy in Burma by contributing US\$100.00 (or C\$100.00) per annum. All cheques and money orders payable to ADDB Inc, EO.Box 659, Shawville, Quebec JOX 2Y0, Canada. Fax: 1 (819) 647-5403, Tel. 647-5405. E-mail: yawnghwe@hookup.net