BURMA BULLETIN

A month-in-review of events in Burma

ALTERNATIVE ASEAN NETWORK ON BURMA
campaigns, advocacy & capacity-building for human rights & democracy

Issue 7 **July 2007**

- **The National Convention reconvenes for its "final" session. It continues to be characterized by lack of legitimacy, inclusiveness, and transparency.**
- **Ethnic groups denounce the junta's attempt to legitimize military rule through the proposed new constitution. They call for a more inclusive process and submit amendments to the draft constitution. Groups warn that the result of the convention will destabilize Burma's ethnic regions.**
- **The SPDC takes a new tack in its restrictions on humanitarian aid, accusing the ICRC of "clandestine relations." The EU urges the junta to restart dialogue with the ICRC.**
- **Bird flu outbreaks in Mon State, Pegu Division, and in India's border areas.**
- **In Thailand, crackdowns on undocumented Burmese migrant workers intensify. Refugees living in camps in Thailand also experience increased scrutiny.**
- **ASEAN will set up a regional human rights body under its new Charter, despite opposition from the SPDC.**
- **US Congress votes to extend sanctions on Burma for another year.**
- **Gambari travels to Asia to promote democratic reform in Burma. But China says that Burma is not a threat to regional security and "must be allowed to solve its own problems".**

IN THIS ISSUE

NATIONAL CONVENTION
1 New session, old story
2 Ethnic groups unhappy
INSIDE BURMA
3 NLD ignored
4 KIO under pressure
4 SSNPLO ends ceasefire
5 ICRC under attack
5 Bird flu more widespread
5 Dengue fever
HUMAN RIGHTS
6 Arrests and imprisonments
6 Releases
DISPLACEMENT
7 Migrant workers in Thailand
7 Refugees turned away
INTERNATIONAL
7 ASEAN Charter
8 Gambari's travels
8 US: sanctions extended
8 Bangladesh and the SPDC
9 India and the arms embargo
ECONOMY
9 SPDC corruption
9 Food shortages
10 Gem sale
10 **CHRONOLOGY**
12 **REPORTS**

Receive the Burma Bulletin monthly!
email publications@altsean.org
Online copies are available for download at www.altsean.org

KEY STORY

NATIONAL CONVENTION

New session, old story

On 18 July, the SPDC opened what it said would be the final session of the National Convention. 1,058 delegates gathered at the Nyaunghnapin military compound,

approximately 45 kilometers north of Rangoon.[1] On the same day, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon encouraged the military regime to ensure that the constitution-drafting process is "inclusive, participatory and transparent [...]"[2]

As the convention got underway, it was immediately clear that Ban Ki-moon's appeal had fallen on deaf ears. The National Convention remains oppressive, illegitimate, unrepresentative, and tightly controlled by the junta.

- In his opening speech, SPDC acting Prime Minister and National Convention Convening Committee Chairman, Lt Gen Thein Sein, warned that legal action would be taken against anyone who tries to derail the constitution-drafting process.[3] Thein Sein also ordered delegates not to introduce amendments to the constitutional guidelines.[4]
- The SPDC refused to commit to a timetable to complete the constitution drafting process.[5] SPDC Information Minister Brig Gen Kyaw Hsan vaguely indicated that the convention would take about a month and a half to complete, adding that a referendum as well as elections would follow "quickly."[6]
- As in previous sessions, the overwhelming majority of the delegates attending the convention were carefully handpicked by the regime. "Only 12 of the convention representatives are elected members of parliament. The rest were hand-picked by the SPDC," NLD elected MP and former National Convention delegate Khun Myint Tun said on 15 July. Another former delegate, Khu Shay Rae, admitted the junta had forced him to take part in the convention as a representative for farmers even though he was a teacher.[7]
- In its effort to exert complete control over media coverage, the junta backtracked at the last minute on its plan to grant visas to Bangkok-based foreign journalists to report on the convention.[8] Only local Burmese journalists were granted limited access to the convention's opening day. They were forbidden to carry tape-recorders or mobile phones, they were not allowed to spend more than a few minutes in the convention room, and they were prevented from interviewing any of the participants.[9]
- As with the four previous sessions, delegates convened at the secluded and tightly guarded Nyaunghnapin military camp. Delegates are rarely allowed to leave the compound and have no contact with the outside world throughout the entire session.[10]

[For detailed background information and analysis on the National Convention, see ALTSEAN's briefers: *National Convention: roadmap to instability*; *National Convention - The SPDC delusion of democratic reform*; and *Burma's National Convention – Illegitimate, unrepresentative and oppressive*]

Ethnic groups unhappy

The junta also resorted to bullying ethnic ceasefire groups in an attempt to get the groups to surrender their arms.[11] [See *KIO under pressure* and *SSNLPO terminates ceasefire agreement*

[1] AFP (15 Jul 07) Myanmar to resume charter talks; Irrawaddy (18 Jul 07) Final NC Session Urged to Stick to Guidelines
[2] UN News Center (18 Jul 07) Daily press briefing by the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General
[3] AP (18 Jul 07) Final constitutional convention begins in Myanmar
[4] Irrawaddy (18 Jul 07) Final NC Session Urged to Stick to Guidelines
[5] AFP (15 Jul 07) Myanmar to resume charter talks
[6] AP (18 Jul 07) Final constitutional convention begins in Myanmar; Irrawaddy (18 Jul 07) Final NC Session Urged to Stick to Guidelines
[7] AP (16 Jul 07) Burmese opposition group in exile opposes constitution plan; IHT (15 Jul 07) Critics of Myanmar's junta say unfinished constitution will bring civil unrest
[8] Irrawaddy (16 Jul 07) Junta nixes visas for foreign journalists; Irrawaddy (17 Jul 07) Rangoon Journalists Invited to Cover NC's Final Session; RSF (19 Jul 07) Press kept away from National Convention
[9] RSF (19 Jul 07) Press kept away from National Convention
[10] AFP (15 Jul 07) Myanmar to resume charter talks; Irrawaddy (18 Jul 07) Final NC Session Urged to Stick to Guidelines
[11] Mizzima News (03 Jul 07) SNPLO terminates ceasefire and returns to jungle; Irrawaddy (04 Jul 07) Burma Ceasefire Groups Face Uncertain Future; Kachin News Group (04 Jul 07)KIO delegates proceed to attend final

below] This has been part of an intimidation campaign to ensure the ethnic nationalities' compliance with the junta's constitution-drafting agenda. Various ethnic groups denounced the junta's attempt to legitimize military rule through the new constitution and called for a more inclusive constitution-drafting process. They warned that the outcome of the National Convention would cause greater instability in the country.[12] Some of the ethnic ceasefire groups also proposed amendments to the current draft constitution.

- The **United Nationalities Alliance** (UNA), which comprises a number of the ethnic political groups that ran in the 1990 elections, said the SPDC needed to make the National Convention more inclusive.[13]
- **11 ethnic parties**, including Shan, Mon, Karen, Zomi, Kachin, Kayah, Arakan, and Kokang groups, argued that tripartite dialogue involving elected MPs, ethnic groups, and the SPDC was the best way of bringing about national reconciliation in Burma. The ethnic groups demanded that the draft constitution be based on the Panglong Agreement, which granted equal rights for ethnic groups and their right to self determination.[14]
- The **Committee Representing the Peoples' Parliament** (CRPP) said the results of the junta's convention would not bring reconciliation in Burma but would only strengthen military rule.[15]
- The **New Mon State Party** (NMSP) said that the draft constitution was yet another "trick" of the junta to perpetuate its military rule. "No matter what we say, they will do what they want with the draft constitution," said NMSP spokesperson Nai Ong Ma'Nge.[16]
- The **Karen National Union** (KNU) demanded the SPDC allow all ethnic and political groups in the country to participate in the constitution-drafting process. The group also said that the military's strangle-hold on the convention's procedures showed that the junta was preparing to hold onto power, not relinquish it.[17]
- The **New Democracy Army-Kachin** (NDA-K) complained that the junta had ignored the group's proposals for the draft constitution.[18]
- The **Kachin Independence Organization** (KIO) complained that basic principles adopted for drafting the new constitution ignored the rights of ethnic groups and the emergence of a genuine national union. On 19 July, the ceasefire group announced it would submit to the National Convention a 19-point proposal to amend the draft constitution. The amendments envisage the creation of a federal system that demarcates the powers of the central government, while enhancing the legislative power allotted to the states.[19]

INSIDE BURMA

NLD ignored

In July, the SPDC ignored the NLD's requests for dialogue while continuing to harass the party's members.

- **13 July**: in a letter addressed to the SPDC, the NLD demanded the junta allow party members to meet with detained leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to obtain her power of attorney in order to submit an appeal against the extension of her detention. The letter was

session of NC; Kachin News Group (18 Jul 07) Political tension may exist between KIO and junta; Kachin News Group (23 Jul 07) Maj-Gen Ohn Myint threatens KIO;
[12] IPS (19 Jul 07) Burma: New constitution in two months - Junta
[13] DVB (13 Jul 07) Ethnic alliance calls for inclusive National Convention
[14] IMNA (12 Jul 07) Eleven ethnic democratic parties call for tripartite dialogue
[15] Mizzima News (17 Jul 07) Junta's convention is 'part of Burma's problem'
[16] Irrawaddy (04 Jul 07) Burma Ceasefire Groups Face Uncertain Future
[17] DVB (17 Jul 07) KNU slams military on eve of National Convention
[18] Irrawaddy (04 Jul 07) Burma Ceasefire Groups Face Uncertain Future
[19] Irrawaddy (19 Jul 07) KIO to challenge regime's National Convention appeal**;** Mizzima News (19 Jul 07) KIO to propose 19-point amendment of the constitution; DVB (24 Jul 07) KIO calls for changes to draft constitution

sent following the junta's failure to respond to a similar request made by the party on 21 June.[20]

- **16 July**: SPDC officials in Magwe Division warned local NLD leaders against commemorating Martyr's Day. NLD members in some townships were reportedly forced to sign agreements saying that they would not publicly mark the event.[21]
- **17 July**: NLD spokesman Han Tha Myint said the party had asked the SPDC to amend some of the constitution's 104 basic principles and six objectives.[22]
- **19 July**: the NLD marked Martyr's Day with a ceremony at the party's headquarters in Rangoon. In a statement issued during the ceremony, the NLD urged the SPDC to reopen NLD offices around the country, unconditionally release all detained political prisoners including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and hold inclusive political discussions with political parties from all ethnic groups.[23] About 350 people including party members, diplomats, and UN representatives attended the ceremony. Security officials watched and videotaped the event from across the street.[24]
- **24 July**: four family members of NLD MP Than Lwin appeared in a Mandalay court to defend themselves against a lawsuit filed by the Maddaya USDA secretary Kyaw Min. Mandalay NLD members Nyo Gyi, Kyaw Swe, Thaung Naing, Nyo Lay and Nyi Nyi also appeared in court in connection with the case. Kyaw Min accused them of threatening to attack the USDA offices if the assailant of Than Lwin was not handed over. Than Lwin, was attacked by a man believed to be linked to the local USDA on 15 June.[25] [See *June 2007 Burma Bulletin*]

KIO under pressure

Relations between the SPDC and the Kachin Independence Organizations (KIO) remain tense, as the junta pressured the ceasefire group into supporting the National Convention's agenda.

- During the week of 9 July, SPDC Army Commander Maj Gen Ohn Myint banned the KIO main business of gold mining and teak logging in some areas of Kachin State.[26]
- In early July, Maj Gen Ohn Myint threatened to "kick" the KIO "to the mountains" if they persist in their demand for an autonomous Kachin State at the ongoing session of the National Convention.[27]

SSNPLO terminates ceasefire agreement

On 3 July, a splinter group of the Shan State Nationalities People's Liberation Organization (SSNPLO) terminated their ceasefire agreement with the SPDC because of mounting pressure from the regime to disarm.[28] On 16 July, it was reported that the SSNPLO splinter group had entered into merger talks with the Shan State Army-South (SSA-S).[29] On 26 July, the

[20] AP (13 Jul 07) Myanmar junta ignores colleagues' request to meet with Suu Kyi, thwarting appeal; Mizzima News (13 Jul 07) NLD wants junta to meet Suu Kyi for consent over legal action; AFP (24 Jun 07) NLD seeks to meet Suu Kyi living under house arrest
[21] DVB (18 Jul 07) NLD warned against celebrating Martyr's Day; Mizzima News (18 Jul 07) Heightened security around opposition party offices
[22] San Diego Union Tribune (18 Jul 07) Final constitutional convention begins in Myanmar – without pro-democracy leader
[23] IHT (19 Jul 07) Myanmar's Aung San Suu Kyi misses ceremony marking father's assassination; DVB (20 Jul 07) NLD marks Martyr's Day with calls for inclusive dialogue
[24] IHT (19 Jul 07) Myanmar's Aung San Suu Kyi misses ceremony marking father's assassination
[25] DVB (26 Jul 07) Family of bashed NLD member sued for intimidation
[26] Kachin News Group (18 Jul 07) Political tension may exist between KIO and junta; Kachin News Group (17 Jul 07) Maj-Gen Ohn Myint bans gold mining, logging in Kachin
[27] Kachin News Group (23 Jul 07) Maj-Gen Ohn Myint threatens KIO
[28] Mizzima News (03 Jul 07) SNPLO terminates ceasefire and returns to jungle
[29] DVB (16 Jul 07) Shan rebels discuss possible merger

remaining 137 SSNPLO members, led by Chairman Chit Maung, unconditionally exchanged arms for peace with SPDC authorities in Hsihsang Township, Southern Shan State.[30]

ICRC under attack

On 4 July, the SPDC-controlled press rejected the International Committee of the Red Cross' (ICRC) late June statement [See *June 2007 Burma Bulletin*], saying that accusations of human rights abuses were unfounded. The SPDC's attacks and insults to international humanitarian efforts in the country continued. Than Than Nwe, president of the Myanmar Women's Federation and wife of Gen Soe Win, accused "personnel of the five regional offices of the ICRC had clandestine relations with insurgent groups."[31] In fact, there are now only two instead of five regional offices of the ICRC operating Burma. The Taunggyi office closed at the end of June because of SPDC restrictions.[32]

The EU urged the SPDC to lift restrictions against the ICRC and denounced SPDC moves to restrict the group's humanitarian work in the country. On 4 July, the EU urged SPDC authorities to restart dialogue with the Red Cross as soon as possible.[33]

Bird flu more widespread

During July, more outbreaks of bird flu were detected in Burma. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) confirmed that 3,800 birds had been culled in Letpadan Township, Pegu Division and over 300 in Thanphyuzayart Township, Mon State.[34] SPDC authorities also banned the sale of chicken and eggs in the markets and seized all eggs and chicken from shops in Thanphyuzayart and Mudon Townships. Residents reported that only some people knew about the outbreak and the virus, and chicken was still widely available for sale in the state. [35] [See also *February, April and June 2007 Burma Bulletins*)

Outbreaks of bird flu in the Indian State of Manipur bordering Burma indicate that virus might be more prevalent in Burma than reported outbreaks suggest. The Indian Director of the Veterinary and Animal Husbandry Department Dr Th Dorendra, named Burma as the most probable source of India's latest outbreak.[36] 150,000 birds are to be culled and the sale of poultry has been banned.[37] Containment measures have been put in place, and surveillance on imports from Burma has been stepped up.[38]

Killer fever

The neglect of the health care system in Burma continues to lead to unnecessary deaths of the most vulnerable [see *June 2007 Burma Bulletin*). According to doctors at Rangoon Children's Hospital, an outbreak of hemorrhagic dengue fever is killing almost five children per day. Every day, 150 to 200 children are presenting at the hospital with the disease. Doctors report that there are insufficient resources to provide treatment.[39] In Pegu Division, doctors in Min Hla Township reported that 10 children were being admitted to hospital every day.[40] According to official reports, by 9 July dengue fever had killed 30 people of the 3,000 cases

[30] Xinhua (27 Jul 07) Myanmar ethnic peace group surrenders weapons to government
[31] AP (04 Jul 07) Myanmar state press prints accusation of Red Cross links with anti-junta insurgents
[32] Irrawaddy (04 Jul 07) Regime Rejects Red Cross Charges
[33] AP (04 Jul 07) EU calls on Myanmar to lift restrictions against International Red Cross
[34] Xinhua (31 Jul 07) New H5N1 bird flu case confirmed in Myanmar
[35] Irrawaddy (30 Jul 07) New bird flu outbreak in southern Burma
[36] Mizzima News (31 Jul 07) Manipur bird flu suspected to have come from Burma
[37] Narinjara News (28 Jul 07) Bird flu hits Burma bordering Indian state, Age (27 Jul 07) India kills fowl in bird flu fight
[38] Reuters (30 Jul 07) India steps up bird flu vigil after Myanmar cases
[39] DVB (02 Jul 07) Deadly fever kills record numbers of Rangoon children
[40] DVB (26 Jul 07) Deadly dengue fever hits Bago children

in 2007. Dengue fever outbreaks are more prevalent in the second half of the year, so the worst is yet to come.[41]

HUMAN RIGHTS

Arrests and imprisonments

- **1 July**: SPDC authorities in Mandalay arrested Buddhist monk Dhamma Tharmi for publicly criticizing the National Convention and protesting against the detention of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. The 42-year-old monk was detained in Mandalay Prison.[42]
- **10 July**: SPDC authorities arrested Min Min, a former tutor from Prome, Pegu Division, for conducting a human rights workshop the previous day.[43] On 30 July, Min Min received a three years' prison sentence and a 30,000 kyat fine.[44]
- **24 July**: A court in Hintada Township, Irrawaddy Division, imposed prison sentences on six members of the Rangoon-based Human Rights Defenders and Promoters (HRDP). Activist Myint Naing was sentenced to eight years while his five colleagues received four-year prison terms. The activists were charged with inciting public unrest.[45] They were arrested on 2 May, two weeks after two of them had been attacked by a group of USDA members. [See *April 2007 Burma Bulletin*] [46]

Releases

- **2 July**: SPDC authorities released political activist Phyu Phyu Thinn. The 36-year-old HIV/AIDS activist was arrested on 21 May for organizing prayer vigils for the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Phyu Phyu Thinn began a hunger strike on 19 June. She resumed eating a week later after authorities promised to release her.[47]
- **2 July**: SPDC authorities released five activists, including protester Thant Zaw Myint, and prayer campaigners Kyaw Soe Win, San Win, Yan Naing Htun and Mee Thwe. Thant Zaw Myint was arrested on 22 April for staging a protest against high commodity prices.[48]
- **21 July**: SPDC authorities released Maung Kyaw Naing, a demonstrator who had been arrested on 19 June for protesting against the junta's economic policies.[49] [See *June 2007 Burma Bulletin*]
- **27 July**: SPDC authorities released five activists, including protester Htin Kyaw and NLD members Aye Naing, Saw Kyaw Kyaw Min, Aye Lwin and Thant Zin Myo. Htin Kyaw was arrested on 22 April after staging his third protest against high commodity prices. The four NLD members were arrested in May for praying for the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.[50]

[41] AFP (09 Jul 07) 30 dead as dengue fever epidemic hits Myanmar: report
[42] DVB (03 Jul 07) Military throws monk in prison over protests
[43] DVB (12 Jul 07) Former teacher jailed for discussing human rights
[44] AAPPB (31 Jul 07) Statement on the Creation of ASEAN Human Rights Body to Combat Abuses in Burma; DVB (31 Jul 07) Rights campaigner gets three years in jail
[45] Irrawaddy (24 Jul 07) Burmese rights activists sentenced in Irrawaddy division
[46] AAPPB (01 Jun 07) List of arrested in May; http://www.aappb.org/List_of_Arrested_6_07.html.mht
[47] Reuters (03 Jul 07) Myanmar frees prominent AIDS activist
[48] DVB (04 Jul 07) More activists released in Burma
[49] Mizzima News (11 Jul 07) Solo protestor released
[50] AFP (28 Jul 07) Myanmar frees five activists; IHT (28 Jul 07) Myanmar frees 5 activists held without charges for 2 months; Irrawaddy (30 Jul 07) Five Activists Released in Burma; DVB (30 Jul 07) Burmese authorities release five more activists;.

DISPLACEMENT

Migrant workers in Thailand

On 1 July, the deadline for migrant workers registration passed. This year, about 500,000 registered, down from 700,000 in 2006.[51] The registration process was plagued with confusion and uncertainty because the SPDC refused to cooperate with the Thai authorities.[52] The total number of Burmese migrant workers, both registered and unregistered, is estimated to be between one to two million. Since the passing of the deadline, Thai surveillance of migrant workers and raids on worksites has increased.

- **13 July**: Thai police gassed sleeping Burmese migrant workers (including pregnant women) from their homes near Bangkok. Over 30 were arrested. [53]
- **18 July:** Thai officials arrested over 120 Burmese migrant workers from Southern Burma in Phuket, Southern Thailand for not possessing migrant registration cards. [54]
- **26 July:** 40 undocumented Rohingya were deported from Mae Sot, Thailand, to Burma.[55]

Refugees turned away from Thailand

Refugees living in camps in Thailand are also experiencing increased scrutiny.

- **2 July:** Thai authorities prevented 400 Karenni refugees fleeing forced relocation from crossing from Burma into Thailand's Mae Hong Son Province.[56]
- **20 July:** One hundred Rohingya refugees camping out on Mae Sot's football pitch were urged to return to Burma. On the same day, the Thai Army's General Boonsang announced that Thailand was willing to assist in the resettlement of Rohingya refugees, within their "limited resources."[57]
- **21-22 July:** Star Trek actor Walter Koenig met with refugees and visited a clinic on the Thai-Burma border, in an effort to attract attention to the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Burma.[58]

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

ASEAN to SPDC: democracy and human rights - yes, nukes - no

In an attempt to restore its tarnished credibility, ASEAN took encouraging steps towards dealing with Burma's military regime during the group's Annual Ministerial Meeting in Manila:

- **29 July**: ASEAN Foreign Ministers sharply criticized Burma's military junta for failing to restore democracy and keeping Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in detention. The Philippines was joined by several other nations in calling for the release of Daw Suu.[59]
- **30 July**: ASEAN Foreign Ministers agreed to set up a regional human rights body to promote respect of fundamental freedoms among the 10 member countries.[60] The

[51] Irrawaddy (04 Jul 07) 'Drop Nationality of Illegal Workers from Burma,' Say Activists
[52] Bangkok Post (02 Aug) Burma blamed for verification process failure
[53] NMG (14 Jul 07) Thai police arrest migrant workers using gas
[54] IMNA (19 Jul 07) Unregistered Burmese workers detained in Thailand
[55] Bangkok Post (27 Jul 07) 40 Rohingya forced to Burma
[56] Bangkok Post (02 Jul 07) Security talks held, as 600 Karenni found
[57] Irrawaddy (20 Jul 07) Uncertainty over Rohingyas' fate in Thailand
[58] IHT (23 Jul 07) Star Trek star 'shocked' by plight of Myanmar refugees in Thailand
[59] Reuters (29 Jul 07) SE Asia group urges democracy in Myanmar
[60] AP (27 Jul 07) Myanmar nixes rights body in Southeast Asia – diplomats; AP (27 Jul 07) Myanmar opposes human rights body in Southeast Asia, diplomats say; AP (30 Jul 07) ASEAN to Set Up Human Rights Commission; Reuters

provision for a human rights mechanism, fiercely opposed by the SPDC, is part of the draft charter that will be submitted to the ASEAN leaders in November at their annual meeting in Singapore.[61]

- ASEAN Foreign Ministers adopted a five-year work plan to ensure that nuclear power plants in the region are not used to produce weapons.[62] The move follows reports that the SPDC is seeking to acquire nuclear technology from Russia. [See *May 2007 Burma Bulletin*]
- In their joint communiqué, ASEAN Foreign Ministers reiterated calls on the SPDC to restore democracy and to release political prisoners, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.[63]

Gambari's travels

In July, UN Sec Gen special representative on Burma, Ibrahim Gambari, traveled to Asia, Russia, and the EU to promote democratic reform in Burma.[64] However, the Asian leg of his tour failed to garner China's support for UN Security Council action on Burma. On 10 July, Chinese officials reiterated that Burma is not a threat to regional security and "must be allowed to solve its own problems."[65] Gambari however said he would revisit Burma in September to encourage the SPDC to implement political reforms.[66]

US: sanctions extended, dialogue halted

On 23 July, the US House of Representatives voted to extend sanctions on Burma for another year, citing the military regime's suppression of political dissent and human rights.[67] On 25 July, the US Senate also voted in favor of extending sanctions for an additional year. The bill will go to US President George W. Bush, who is expected to sign it.[68]

On 26 July, US deputy assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and the Pacific, Eric John, voiced reluctance to restart direct talks with the SPDC until the junta is ready to discuss Burma's full democratization.[69] The US official's stance came as the result of the 26 June fruitless talks with SPDC officials in Beijing. "I don't think we saw anything coming out of them that would indicate, unfortunately, that they had changed their basic opinions," John had said following the Beijing meeting.[70]

SPDC/Bangladesh strengthen ties

A series of meetings between SPDC and Bangladeshi government officials occurred in July.[71] Key proposals being pushed by Bangladesh included:

(30 Jul 07) Myanmar withdraws objections to SE Asia rights body; Mizzima News (30 Jul 07) ASEAN okays creation of human rights commission

[61] AP (28 Jul 07) ASEAN nears landmark charter

[62] Reuters (29 Jul 07) SE Asia group urges democracy in Myanmar; Irrawaddy (30 Jul 07) Asean to Set up Nuclear Plants Watchdog

[63] Reuters (30 Jul 07) Southeast Asia nations tackle Myanmar, but softly

[64] Bloomberg (10 Jul 07) China Pressed by UN to Support Calls for Democracy in Myanmar; Mizzima News (10 Jul 07) Gambari touring three Asian countries for consultations on Burma; Mizzima News (11 Jul 07) Gambari to discuss Burma with Indian Foreign Secretary; Mizzima News (12 Jul 07) Gambari to revisit Burma in September; Japanese officials and UN envoy meet to discuss Myanmar

[65] Daily Times (11 Jul 07) Myanmar can solve its own problems, China tells UN

[66] Mizzima News (12 Jul 07) Gambari to revisit Burma in September

[67] AFP (25 Jul 07) US renews Myanmar ban

[68] Reuters (25 Jul 07) US extends Burma trade sanctions; VOA (25 Jul 07) US Senate Renews Import Sanctions on Burma

[69] Kyodo News (27 Jul 07) U.S. official nixes early resumption of direct talks with Myanmar

[70] AP (28 Jun 07) US Official Raps Myanmar on Human Rights; VOA (28 Jun 07) US, Burma Hold Rare Talks; US State Department (28 Jun 07) US, Burmese Officials Hold Rare Senior-Level Talks in Beijing

[71] Narinjara News (16 Jul 07) Flag Meeting Between Nasaka and BDR Held in Cox's Bazar; Narinjara News (16 Jul 07) Flag Meeting Between Nasaka and BDR Held in Cox's Bazar; Mizzima News (23 Jul 07) Burmese Deputy Foreign Minister meets Bangladesh counterpart; New Age (27 Jul 03) Dhaka-Yangon foreign talks begin today; Narinjara News (24 Jul 07) Burma's Construction Minister to Arrive in Dhaka for Signing

- construction of a friendship road between the two countries;
- promotion of border trade and visa liberalization for businesspeople;
- suppression of smuggling and cross-border trafficking;
- repatriation of Rohingya refugees;
- lease of Burmese farms to Bangladesh; and
- importation of hydropower from Burma.

On 27 July, SPDC and Bangladeshi government officials signed a deal to build a 25-kilometer road (including 23 kilometers inside Burma) connecting the area of Maricha in Bangladesh to Bawlibazar in Burma.[72]

India, EU, and the arms embargo

On 16 July, Amnesty International said that the Indian government's plan to sell military helicopters to the SPDC, with components and technology from European countries, would undermine the EU arms embargo on Burma. Variants of the attack helicopter manufactured by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) contain rocket launchers from Belgium; rockets, guns and engines from France; brake systems from Italy; fuel tanks and gearboxes from the UK and self-protection equipment from a Swedish company. German companies have been crucial to the design development of the helicopter.[73]

ECONOMY

Stop the stealing, SPDC

Worsening economic conditions continue to inspire political protests. More than 100 activists, including NLD and 88 generation students group called for an end to corruption during a ceremony at the Tharthanagonye temple in Rangoon. Saffron robes were donated to monks as activists called for people to follow Budddha's precepts against "stealing and lying."[74]

Too much water, not enough food

New research has calculated that while average household income in Burma is around US$1.10 per day, the average cost of feeding a household is $1.15.[75] Seasonal monsoons and flooding are increasing hardship experienced by ordinary people.

- Residents of 20 villages in northern Rathidaung Township, Arakan State, report acute rice shortages since Akash cyclone hit Arakan State in May. The price of quality rice has doubled, going from 300 kyat per kilo in May, to 600 kyat. Many private rice stores and other agricultural produce in the area were damaged by subsequent floods.[76] SPDC authorities are not allowing rice to be transported into the area from other parts of the state.[77]
- The SPDC hasn't provided any humanitarian assistance. Instead, the junta has been forcing the Rakhine Rice Merchant Association to supply model villagers with rice at 200 kyat per kilo, giving them a list of people eligible for the reduced price.[78]

[72] BBC (27 Jul 07) Bangladesh Burma road link agreed; New Age (28 Jul 07) Dhaka, Yangon sign road link deal; Hindu (28 Jul 07) Bangladesh signs pact with Myanmar on road connectivity
[73] AP (16 Jul 07) Group: Helicopter Sale May Undermine EU
[74] DPA (15 Jul 07) Rare protest skews Burma inflation
[75] Save the Children (06 Jul 07) Running on Empty: poverty and child malnutrition
[76] Narinjara News (10 Jul 07) People face acute rice shortage in Northern Aarakan
[77] Narinjara News (10 Jul 07) People face acute rice shortage in Northern Aarakan
[78] Narinjara News (20 Jul 07) Authority Pressures Rakhine Rice Merchant Association to Discount for Model Villagers

- In Rangoon, trading at the Bayintnaung rice market ceased after SPDC authorities capped the price of food staples. The caps followed dramatic price increases over the past two months.[79]

Gem sale

From 5 to 16 July, the Myanmar Gems Enterprise held its third gem sale of 2007. It described the sale as its "biggest ever," and further illustrates the junta's lack of funds. Over 70% of some 6,400 lots of jade, gems and pearls were sold, with takings expected to reach tens of millions of dollars.[80] The junta is holding increasing numbers of gem auctions as revenue-raising activity through the state controlled Union of Myanmar Economic Holdings (UMEH).[81]

JULY CHRONOLOGY

2	China Southern Airlines open an air route from Guangzhou to Rangoon.
2	9 SPDC Army soldiers from Light Infantry Battalion 308 are killed and 10 injured during a clash with KNLA troops.
2	SPDC Army forces over 300 villagers to relocate from Bayoun-ngae village in Mon State.
2	Local level police and border security officials from India and the SPDC meet in Moreh, India to discuss enhanced security cooperation.
3	President of Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation Than Than Nwe accuses the ICRC of "clandestine relations with insurgent groups."
3	Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand team arrives at the Hat Gyi dam site, Karen State, to begin a three month feasibility study.
3	A splinter group of the Shan State Nationalities People's Liberation Organization terminates ceasefire agreement with the SPDC because of mounting pressure from the regime to disarm.
4	Torrential rain hit Thandwe Township in Arakan State, flooding hundreds of homes and stranding residents.
4	Five day polio vaccination program begins, with 2.5 million children to be inoculated.
4	Veteran journalist and NLD member U Win Tin marks 18 years in prison.
4	EU urges the SPDC to lift restrictions against the International Committee of the Red Cross and denounces SPDC moves to restrict the group's humanitarian work in the country.
5	11-day Gem Sale begins.
5	SPDC releases three NLD members and one former member of the party who were arrested in May. A protester who was arrested in April is also released.
7	SPDC Army's Light Infantry Battalion 583 imposes curfew in Khaw-zar sub-Township, Ye Township, Mon State.
7	DKBA soldiers cross into Thai territory and attempt to kidnap a Karen villager from Nam Nak Village in Phop Phra District, Thailand.
7	Outbreak of bird flu in Manipur State, India.
8	SPDC Army disarms the remaining members of the Shan State Nationalities People's Liberation Organization.
9	DKBA forces order villagers in Tha Blut Ko Kee and Palah Tah villages in Kawkareik Township, Karen State, to relocate to Mae Ka Nae village within three days.
10	3 Burmese citizens are arrested in Mae Sai, Thailand, charged with operating an illegal telephone service for Burmese workers.
10	Bangladeshi delegation begins 3 day visit to explore hydropower projects.
10	SPDC authorities arrest Ko Min Min, a former tutor from Prome, Pegu Division, for conducting a human rights workshop the previous day.
10	Chinese officials say Burma is not a threat to regional security and must be allowed to solve its own problems.
11	Burmese migrant worker goes missing after jumping in the Moei River while fleeing Thai police round-up.

[79] DVB (13 Jul 07) Rice trading stalls in Rangoon
[80] AFP (17 Jul 07) Myanmar wraps up largest-ever gem auction
[81] See ALTSEAN-Burma (Nov 03) Ready, Aim, Sanction!

11	Local Kyaukpyu Township SPDC forces farmers to commit to selling 2008 paddy at reduced rate.
11	SPDC Army forces arrest three Chin youth near Pulin Kalong Village on the Indo-Burma border on suspicion of being members of the Chin National Front.
11	11 ethnic democratic parties say that a tripartite dialogue is the best way of solving Burma's political stalemate.
12	USAID announces it will be lifting restrictions on cross border humanitarian aid.
12	UN Special Advisor on Burma, Ibrahim Gambari, meets with Indian Foreign Secretary, Shivshankar Menon, to discuss the political situation in Burma.
13	Thai police gas migrant workers from their homes near Bangkok.
13	Unknown assailants kill Maj Tha Shee, a long-time KNU military intelligence officer, near Mae La refugee camp in Thailand.
14	SPDC Kachin State commander announces a total banning on gold mining and logging in the state.
15	Bangladesh ambassador to Rangoon announces plan to import Burmese gas.
17	Thai Deputy spokesperson says the cabinet has agreed to install more than 1,000 CCTV systems to monitor border checkpoints.
18	National Convention reconvenes. National Convention Convening Committee Chairman, Lt-Gen Thein Sein, calls on delegates not to seek amendments to constitutional guidelines.
18	UN Sec Gen Ban Ki-moon calls for an inclusive, participatory, transparent National Convention.
18	SPDC authorities warn NLD leaders in Magwe Division against celebrating Martyr's Day.
18	More than 120 undocumented migrant workers from Burma are arrested in Phuket, Thailand.
19	Kachin Independent Organization releases a 19-point proposal to amend Burma's draft constitution in favor of a federal union.
19	Reporters Sans Frontiers condemns the SPDC's decision to obstruct foreign and Burmese press coverage of the National Convention.
19	NLD marks Martyr's Day, holding a ceremony at the party's headquarters in Rangoon.
20	Thai Army's Gen Boonsang announces the interim authority is prepared to assist in the resettlement of Rohingya and Hmong.
21	Rangoon residents experience their first of 48 hours of non-stop electricity in over a year.
23	Former Star Trek actor Walter Koenig announces he is "shocked" at the plight of hundreds of thousands of refugee from Burma living in camps in Thailand, following a three-day visit.
24	Bird flu detected in Kyaone-kadat village, Thanphyuzayart Township, Mon State.
24	A court in Hintada Township, Irrawaddy Division, sentences six members of the Rangoon-based Human Rights Defenders and Promoters to between 4 and 8 years in prison.
25	International Development Committee calls on the British government to quadruple aid to Burma, fund cross-border assistance, and support pro-democracy initiatives.
26	40 Rohingya are forced to return to Burma from Mae Sot, after being caught working without papers on Thai fishing boats.
26	SPDC Minister of Construction arrives in Bangladesh to sign agreements on road link.
26	Shan State Nationalities People's Liberation Organization surrenders arms with SPDC forces in Hsihsang Township, Shan State.
27	SPDC authorities release five activists, including four NLD members.
29	SPDC Food and Drug Administration admits it does not have the resources to ensure the quality of imported food and medicines.
30	10 people, including two children, are washed away and presumed dead when a small boat carrying 23 from Burma to Thailand overturns near Ranong.
30	About 60 people from Chin State are detained in Malaysia, including 25 UNHCR recognized refugees.
30	Former tutor Min Min is sentenced to three years in prison and fined 30,000 kyat by a Prome court.
31	A 5.7 magnitude earthquake hits central Burma. No injuries or damage are reported.

REPORTS ON BURMA RELEASED IN JULY 2007

"Planning for the Future: the impact of resettlement on the remaining camp population", Committee for Coordination of Services to Displaced Persons in Thailand (CCSDPT)
http://www.tbbc.org/resources/2007-07-ccsdpt-resettlement-impact-study.pdf
New study on the impact of the large-scale resettlement program on remaining camp populations in Thailand. Offers recommendations for the strengthening of camp infrastructure.

"DFID Assistance to Burmese Internally Displaced People and Refugees on the Thai-Burma Border", International Development Committee (UK)
http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmselect/cmintdev/645/645i.pdf
Discusses UK humanitarian aid provision in Burma. Argues for a fourfold increase by 2013, in particular for increases in cross - border assistance to IDPs.

"Families Killed, Girls Raped: Burma Army Brutality in Karen State", Free Burma Rangers
http://www.freeburmarangers.org/Reports/2007/20070715.html
Report on the SPDC Army attacks and atrocities against civilians in Karen State in May-June 2007.

"Indian helicopters for Myanmar: making a mockery of the EU arms embargo?", Amnesty International
http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGASA200142007
Reports on the transfer of military helicopters from the Government of India to the SPDC. Argues that EU and US involvement in the design and production of the helicopters undermines EU and US sanctions and arms embargoes.