

Burma Alert No.2
February 1990

In response to protest letters, COCA-COLA is denying that it is at present operating in Burma. But this may just be semantics. The Far Eastern Economic Review states: *"Diplomats in Rangoon are convinced that a plan to set up a Coca-Cola bottling plant in Burma will go through, despite public assurances from executives of the soft-drink giant that no decision has been made ... The Rangoon-based diplomats expect the plant to be in operation by the end of 1990"* [F891228]. A naturalized Burmese-American was the broker.

CANADA made this statement at the United Nations on 24 November 1989: *"In Myanmar ... reports of human rights abuses, including systematic torture and arbitrary arrests, continue. Martial law restrictions suppress the right of free assembly and speech. Violence has been used against participants in political rallies."*

Unfortunately, this statement had no impact on the Rangoon regime since Petro-Canada, wholly-owned by Canada, had just signed an oil exploration contract on 6 November 1989. The Working People's Daily in Rangoon reported that: *"signing for Canada was J.M. Stanford, President of Petro-Canada Resources"*. In fact, at the signing, Rear Admiral Maung Maung Khin, Minister for Energy and Mines, said: *"At a time when many donors have adopted a wait and see attitude, Canada has continued its assistance to the economic and social development of Myanmar. A friend in need is a friend in deed"* [Reuter].

38 JAPANESE parliamentarians, led by Satsuki Eda, including former Foreign Minister Masatoshi Ito and Socialist Party Chairwoman Takako Doi, submitted a petition to the Burmese Embassy: *"(we) are deeply concerned about the military's suppression and murder of those who were demonstrating for democracy, freedom of speech and the enforcement of general elections next year."* They demanded that political prisoners including Aung San Suu Kyi and Tin Oo be released and urged Saw Maung to hold *"open and fair"* elections [B891223].

A U.S. State Department spokesman denounced the jailing of U Tin Oo who has been sentenced to 3 years hard labour: *"The Burmese government has chosen to disqualify one of the country's principal opposition leaders by convicting him of obviously politically motivated charges ... (it) seriously undermines international confidence that next May's elections can be free and fair"* [N891224].

THAILAND had been considering a logging ban because of a depletion of its forests but had been opposed by the influential timber industry. Rangoon's decision at the end of 1988 to grant concessions to Thai logging firms in order to earn foreign exchange was, therefore, gladly received by the Thais. A nation-wide logging ban was finally imposed in Thailand in February 1989.

It has been rumoured that some powerful Thai leaders benefit from the timber industry. This may explain why the Thai government had not been able to implement legislation to protect its forests earlier.

The Solidarity Party, Thailand's main opposition party claimed in December 1989 that they have strong evidence that "*some government politicians have collaborated with permanent officials in reaping gains from log imports from Burma*" [N891207]. This allegation and the information in this "*Alert*" seem to confirm the rumours.

The main obstacles in the cross-border logging trade have been the minority armies on the border who oppose the dictatorship in Rangoon and the lack of a highway linking Burma and Thailand. To remedy this, the Burma Army has stepped-up attacks on the border and a two-lane, 350-metre, concrete bridge is being planned to connect Myawaddy in Burma and Mae Sot in Thailand [A900119].

The U.N.'s Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) will help finance the approximately US\$ 4 million project as part of 'the Asian Highway linking Southeast Asia with the Indian sub-continent' [N891204]. However, apart from helping to de-forest Burma, the bridge will not actually further the Asian Highway. There is no highway from Myawaddy to Rangoon. The road ends at Kyondo about 200 miles from Rangoon. There are no roads linking Burma to India or Bangladesh. They end at a 4-5 day walk from the border.

The Myanmar authorities claim that foreign concern for the depletion of Burma's forests are "*slanderous rumours*". According to Forestry Department Director-General U Ba Thwin, production targets are:

	<u>Annual Target</u>	Compare:	<u>1968/69</u>	<u>1958/59</u>	<u>1938/39</u>
Teak	350,000 tons	(Actual	320,000	237,200	453,000
Hardwood	2,200,000 tons	Production)	981,000	597,700	502,000

He claims these production rates are sustainable to the year 2000. What happens after that? [P890331, H710430 & L620306].

Please write to ESCAP and ask why it is supporting a scheme that will only help to deforest Burma. The destruction of Burma's forests will affect the ecological balance in the entire region and is an issue of important international concern.

	<u>Copies to:</u>	
S.A.M.S. Kibria	The Bangkok Post	The Nation
Executive Secretary	968 Arjecheg Bldg., 3/F	59 Soi Saengchan
E.S.C.A.P.	Rama IV Road	Sukumvit 42
Rajdamnoen Ave	Bangkok 10500	Bangkok
Bangkok, Thailand	Thailand	Thailand

The response to the first issue of the "*Burma Alert*" has been tremendous. Thank you. Detailed information on companies doing business in Burma is beginning to come in. Some have been included in this issue while others will be published in subsequent issues.

The '[A890101]' after each item in the "*Burma Alert*" indicates the source. For easy identification, names appearing for the first time in the "*Alert*" are underlined. An (*) asterisk appears before a previously listed name or in *italics* if it is in the same issue.

MALAYSIA:

The correct name of * Burma Holdings is Burmal Holdings Sdn. Bhd. of Malaysia. The joint-venture is Myanmar-Malaysia International Ltd with capital of US\$ 2 million (see January "Alert") [P890831].

A mining delegation led by Ibrahim Menudin of the Malaysian Mining Corporation visited Burma in July [P890731] and another mining delegation led by Shaari Mat Jihin visited in October 1989 [P891031].

A delegation headed by Air Force Chief Lt.Gen. Tan Sri Mohamed bin Ngah Said visited Burma Dec.6-10 [P891231].

Ten Burma Army Captains have been sent to Malaysia for training on how to handle C130 transport aircraft. This training program was likely agreed upon during the above visit. At present Burma does not have any of the US-made aircraft but they could be purchased at a later date from Malaysia, Singapore, Pakistan or Thailand [F900215].

National Padi and Rice Authority Director-General Mohamed Amir Yaakob announced that Malaysia will import rice from Burma [N90014].

Maj.Gen. Chit Swe, Minister for Agriculture & Forests on a visit to the Klang Port Authority headquarters announced that Malaysia will be importing Burmese timber and semi-finished timber products [N900119].

S. KOREA:

* Daewoo Corp. hosted 10 trainees from Myanmar Textile Industries for a 2-month management and technical training course. Project Manager U Than Tun Oo and the trainees left on Nov.20/89 [P891130].

SINGAPORE:

The 24-man delegation led by Lt.Gen. Than Shwe that went to China visited Singapore Oct.27-30/89. First Deputy Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong had discussions with them and hosted a lunch [P891104].

A 10-man delegation led by Chairman Philip Yeo Liat Kok of Singapore Technologies Industrial Corporation visited Rangoon Nov.20-24/89. They met the Ministers responsible for: Industry 1, Industry 2, Social Welfare, Labour, Transport & Communications, Energy, Mines, Planning & Finance, and Trade, and visited the Myanmar Gems Enterprise. During Lt.Gen. Than Shwe's visit to Singapore, the company hosted a dinner for the delegation [P891130].

Singapore Computer Systems: General Manager Tay Suw Choon and manager Chang Yew Kong called on Maj.Gen. Tin Tun, Minister for Transport & Communications; Social Welfare; and Labour on Nov.3/89 [P891104].

A 40-member Trade delegation visited Burma from Dec.4-9/89. It was headed by Mah Bow Tan, Minister of State for Trade & Industry and for Communications & Information. They met with General Saw Maung and the Ministers responsible for: Industry 1, Industry 2, Energy, Mines, Planning & Finance, Trade, Livestock Breeding & Fisheries, and Agriculture & Forests [P891231].

THAILAND:

Thai Fisheries Department Director General Dr. Prodprasob Suraswadi and the research ship RV Chulabhorn arrived in Rangoon on Nov.2/89 to study and survey fish resources in the coastal waters in the Burma Exclusive Economic Zone during November and December 1989 [P891130].

The Ministry of Agriculture is inviting Thai firms to participate in a Baht 25 million (US\$ 1 million) joint-venture company to negotiate fishing deals with Burma. Suphachoke Fishing Co., * Atlantis Co., Narong Canning Co., Golden Fishery Co., and Siam Andaman Fishery Co. have expressed interest [N891223]. The Thai-Burmese Fishery Joint Venture Co., a Thai investment firm has agreed to put up 60% of the capital required to form a joint-venture with Myanmar Fisheries Enterprise. The firm will concentrate on fishing during the first two years. A fishmeal processing plant and an ice factory will be set up in the third year. A preserved sardine factory and a cold storage facility will be added in the fourth year [N900110].

Skyline Travel Service Co. has formed a joint-venture with Myanmar Hotels & Tourism Services to handle global tourism promotions starting Jan.1/90 after its first appearance in Dec.89 at the WORLD TRAVEL MART in London. The new company is called Mandalay Myanmar Tours Co. and its Managing Director is Aung Khin, Managing Director of Skyline. He started Skyline Travel in Bangkok in 1977 as part of the Skyline Shipping Services group in Singapore [B900110].

Mandalay Myanmar Tours will concentrate on large and medium-scale international tourism events this year including INTERTOUR in Hong Kong, the INTERNATIONAL TOURISM EXCHANGE in Berlin, and similar events in France and Italy. The company will also be responsible for promoting the name 'Myanmar' worldwide. It expects the annual number of tourists to increase from 45,000 to 150,000 in 3 years. Tourist visas have been extended to 14 days and visa fees have been reduced by half to Baht 400. Burma Airlines began weekly Rangoon-Penang-Singapore flights in Dec/89. Malaysia and Singapore are being promoted as a second gateway in addition to Bangkok [B900110].

The Bangkok Metropolitan Transit Authority is bartering 600-1,000 old buses for teak from the Myanmar regime [F900222 & B891100].

Sea Exploration & Mining Co. has been awarded the first offshore tin-dredging concession in the Mergui archipelago [F900222].

* Thip Tharn Thong Co. which had been bartering second-hand cars for Burmese gems, has entered into fishing and timber contracts. It is also going to renovate the Strand Hotel in Rangoon [F900222].

* Union Par Co., which is about 50% owned by Pricha Navawong (General Chaovalit Yongchaiyuth's son-in-law) and has 2 timber concessions in Karenni State, is also renovating the Inya Lake Hotel [F900222].

U.K.:

Kirkland Resources has been awarded an oil and gas exploration and production sharing contract. The contract area is around Thaton and Moulmein where oil shale deposits were found in 1921 [F900208]. END