

BURMA ALERT No.5 (Vol.2, May 1991)

Burma News:

ARMY WILL NOT TRANSFER POWER TO ELECTED PARLIAMENT

On April 22, General Than Shwe, Vice Chief of Staff, Defence Services (Army), officially ruled out a transfer of power to the parliament elected on May 27, 1990. In a radio speech, Than Shwe branded the political parties as "subversive" and "unfit to rule". He said, "At present, we cannot find any organization that can govern the country in a peaceful and stable manner." Than Shwe, 56, is also Vice-Chairman of the ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC).

This is the latest manoeuvre in SLORC's campaign to discredit the National League for Democracy (NLD) which won 392 of the 485 parliamentary seats in last year's general elections. To date, almost all of the NLD's leaders have been arrested including 80 elected candidates and nearly all of its party offices have been closed by SLORC [F910502].

DAW MYINT MYINT KHIN RESIGNS FROM NLD EXECUTIVE

Daw Myint Myint Khin, 58, an NLD Central Executive Committee (CEC) member, who reportedly signed the NLD statement accepting SLORC Order No.1/90 (*Alert No.12, Vol.1*), resigned her position. SLORC Order No.1/90 forbade the NLD from introducing a constitution and forming a government. Only 3 of the NLD's 12 original CEC members remain free [A910405].

NLD LEADERS OPPOSED TO SLORC ARE REMOVED

On April 23, SLORC announced that acting NLD Chairman U Aung Shwe (ex-Brigadier General) and acting Secretary U Lwin (ex-colonel) have been confirmed as Chairman and Secretary of the NLD respectively by the Election Commission. This in effect removes Chairman U Tin Oo, 65, General Secretary Daw Aung San Suu Kyi (under house arrest), 46, Acting Chairman, U Kyi Maung, 72, and Acting Secretary, U Chit Khaing, 69, who are all under arrest, from the leadership of the NLD.

This confirms earlier reports that SLORC was secretly pressuring the NLD to repudiate its leaders who are opposed to SLORC [F910404]. In March, members of parliament elected in May 1990, were also made to answer 300 "top secret" questions regarding their political views. Analysts suspect that once the NLD has been neutralized, SLORC will set up a puppet "civilian" coalition government made up of "loyal" elected representatives and SLORC appointees.

DAW AUNG SAN SUU KYI PRESSURED TO LEAVE BURMA

According to the *Far Easter Economic Review*, 25 April 1991, SLORC recently sent a senior Buddhist abbot to persuade NLD General Secretary Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to leave Burma. She reportedly agreed to leave if four conditions are met. First, all political prisoners must be released. Second, the military must transfer power to a civilian government. Third, she must be given 50 minutes of radio and television time, and fourth, she must be allowed to walk from her home to the airport. SLORC has not responded to her demands. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was originally placed under house arrest for a year on Jul.20,1989 and barred from contesting the May 27,1990 elections. After the NLD won a landslide victory at the polls her detention order was extended for 6 months to Jan.19, 1991. It has now been extended a further 6 months to Jul.19,1991 which is the 44th anniversary of her father's assassination.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi will be 'celebrating' her 46th birthday alone on June 19. Although mail for her is intercepted, readers are urged to tend her greetings. Address: 56 University Ave., Rangoon, Burma.

BURMESE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT IN INDIA

SLORC has identified the 3 MPs who escaped to India (*Alert No.4, Vol.2*) as U Than Sein, NLD Member of Parliament for Pale (1), Sagaing Division, Dr. Tint Swe, NLD Member of Parliament for Pale (2) and Zahle Thang, Chin National League for Democracy MP for Falam (2), Chin State [P910222-23].

DR. SEIN WIN RESHUFFLES NCGUB CABINET

On April 25, Dr. Sein Win reshuffled the cabinet of the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB) to fill the vacancies caused by SLORC's abduction of two NCGUB ministers (*Alert No.2, Vol.2*) and to include other Members of Parliament who have since joined Dr. Sein Win at Manerplaw. U Hla Pe, Minister of Education, Health *it* Information is now Minister of Information *it* Culture. U Tun Oo, Minister of Social Welfare *it* Labour is now Minister of Social Services. Newcomers are: U Maung Maung Aye (*Alert No.2, Vol.2*), Minister of Trade & Co-operatives, Dr. Sann Aung (*Akr* *No.2, Vol.2*), Minister of Education & Health, U Mvint Maung, Minister for Agriculture, Forests *it* the Environment and U Hla Oo, Minister for Labour. U Myint Maung is NLD Member of Parliament for Einme (2) constituency, Irrawaddy Division and U Hla Oo is NLD Member of Parliament for Kyauktada (1) constituency, Pegu Division.

International News:

AUSTRALIA:

Following news reports that Australia will be resuming aid to Burma, a delegation from Burmese community organizations met with Senator Gareth Evans, Q.C., Minister for Foreign Affairs & Trade on April 18. The Minister officially denied that Australia is about to change its policy towards SLORC and re-affirmed Australia's position that aid will not be resumed until power is transferred to a democratic government.

Delegates included representatives from the Burma Support Group, Committee for Democracy in Burma (NSW), Committee for the Restoration of Democracy in Burma (Australia), Committee for the Restoration of Democracy in Burma (Victoria), Overseas Burmese Liberation Front, T.E.A.K. and Tribal Refugee Welfare in South East Asia.

BRITAIN:

Burma Action Group (BAG-UK) and the Burma Affairs Monitor will be holding a demonstration outside the Burmese Embassy, 19a Charles St., London W1, on May 27 to commemorate first anniversary of the general elections in Burma and to press SLORC to transfer power to the NLD. All concerned about Burma are invited to join in and give support to the legally elected representatives of the Burmese people. Contact: BAG-UK, Gerry, Tel: 44 (71) 793-0754 or Burma Monitor, Wi. 44(81)455-9669.

The Oxford Union Society held a meeting on Burma on Feb.15, to focus attention on the plight of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, an Oxford graduate. Speakers were: Martin Smith, journalist, Donna Gues of Amnesty International and MP Jim Lester who is on the Foreign Affairs Committee. Publisher Paul Strachan opened the meeting with a talk on the life of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

International PEN Headquarters including the Writers in Prison Committee has as of April 4 moved to 9/10 Charterhouse Buildings, Goswell Road, London EC1M 7AT. Tel: 44 (71) 253-430. Writers in Prison Committee, Tel: 44 (71) 253-3226 (Sara Whyatt), Fax: 44 (71) 253-5711.

CANADA:

Canadian friends of Burma will be holding a rally on Parliament Hill in Ottawa at 12 noon on May 27 to commemorate the first anniversary of the general elections in Burma. Contact: Terry Cottan Tel: 1 (613) 231-6914

FRANCE:

L'Association France-Birmanie (AFB) which hosted Peter Limbin, Dr. Em Marta and Dr. Thaung Htun in March (*Alert No.4, Vol.2*), is working for peace and democracy in Burma. Members include the Burmese community in Paris and their friends. They would welcome contact and co-operation with similar organizations. Address: c/o J. Collignon, 21 boulevard Henri IV, F-Paris 75004, France.

GERMANY:

The European Alliance of Burma Action Groups (TEABAG) is organizing a Europe-wide Day of Action for Burma on May 27. TEABAG wishes to request all Burmese groups to: 1) Call on the United Nations to a) impose a total aid and trade embargo on Burma and all goods originating there, b) acknowledge the illegitimate status of SLORC by declaring vacant the UN seat it now occupies, c) support the legitimate status of the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB) by at least giving it "observer status" at the UN, 2) Call on the European Community and Parliament to support the above actions at the international and national level, and 3) Call on the general public to a) boycott goods originating from Burma and companies doing business with SLORC, b) boycott tourism to Burma and c) support the local group in their area which is working for the restoration of democracy and justice in Burma. In Germany, contact: CRDB, INDB, NCGUB - U Nwe Aung, Rudolf-Harbig-Weg 13, 4018 Langenfeld. Tel: 49 (2173) 77950, Fax: 49 (2173) 83364 and in the U.K., contact: BAG-UK, David Amott, 218 Liverpool Rd., London N1. Tel: 44 (71) 700-3037

JAPAN:

In March, Bertil Lintner, journalist and author, toured Japan lecturing on Burma and the lack of a strong Japanese government response towards human rights abuses in Burma.

The Buddhist Relief Mission which is concerned about the human rights situation in Burma, particularly as it affects the Buddha Sasana is active in Japan. Address: Ken Kawasaki, Director, 266-27 Ozuku-cho, Kashihara-shi, Nara-ken 634, Japan. Fax: 81 (7442) 4-6254.

THAILAND:

The All Burma Students Democratic Front is appealing to all democratic groups to celebrate the first anniversary of the people of Burma's victory at the polls on May 27. Please a) stage demonstrations in front of SLORC embassies, b) issue statements condemning SLORC and supporting the democracy movement, c) organize press information to highlight your position on Burma, a) petition your government to exert political and economic pressure on SLORC, e) send a protest to China for its arms sale and to companies dealing with SLORC, f) send news of your activity to the Burmese section of the British Broadcasting Corporation, the Voice of America and the All India Radio.

The *DAB Bulletin* published by the Democratic Alliance of Burma has been replaced by the *The Eastern Yoma Bulletin* which is published by the Anti-Military Dictatorship National Solidarity Committee. Address: P.O.Box 168, Mae Ping Post Office, Chiang Mai 50001, Thailand.

Burma Underground Rights Movement for Action (BURMA), is an organization documenting human rights violations in Burma against monks, NLD members, porters and villagers. Its publication, *BURMA* is available from 1/11 Soi Piphat 2, Bangkok 10500, Thailand. Donations appreciated.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

Amnesty International in co-operation with the Burma Forum is holding a candlelight gathering May 27 at the John Anson Ford Theater, 2580 Cahuenga Blvd. East, Hollywood, CA.90068 from 6:30 pm to 9:00 pm to seek the restoration of human rights in Burma and to request the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and all prisoners of conscience. Invocation by the Venerable Rewata Dhamma. Burmese food, music and cultural entertainment provided. Contact: AI, 1 (213) 388-1237.

On April 28, the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights released a 62-page report entitled "*Summary Injustice: Military Tribunals in Burma (Myanmar)*" detailing violations of international fair trial procedures by military courts in Burma. The report concludes that "trials before military tribunals amount to little more than sentencing hearings." The Lawyers Committee found "no reported instances where a military tribunal has handed down an acquittal." Copies of the report are available for US\$8.00 from the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, 330 Seventh Ave., New York, NY.10001, USA. Tel: James Ross, 1 (212) 629-6170. Fax: 1 (212) 967-0916.

The Lawyers Committee has since 1978 worked to promote international human rights and refugee law, holding governments to the standard affirmed in the International Bill of Human Rights.

Environment:

FORESTRY:

The following is from "A Report on the Forestry Activities of Burma (Myanmar) and the Stability of the Moulmein Watershed and Tenasserim Uplands", published in Nov.1990 by the Environmental Research Division of the Manila Observatory.

FOREST COVER - According to an FAO report [FA01983], in 1980, Burma had 47% (318,660 sq.km) forest cover including extensive areas of overcut forest and scrub. Using forest cover loss figures for 1967-80, an annual deforestation rate of 5,200 sq.km can be calculated. Extrapolating these figures gives Burma a forest cover of 39% (266,660 sq.km) in 1990. *(Note: This does not take into account increased logging since 1989 - Ed.)*

GOVERNMENT POLICY - SLORC has announced its intention to improve the enforcement of forest practices and reforestation programs but the basis for implementing them is lacking and it has dramatically increased commercial logging - "Such logging trivializes earlier intentions of better management."

LOGGING - 46 concessions covering 400 sq.km on the border have been granted to Thai firms. Over 1.2 million cu.m of logs are to be extracted by the Thai annually between 1989-1991. This alone has doubled the country's total annual logging.

LOG EXPORTS - Burma exported an average of 0.36 million cu.m of logs annually between 1985-89. The Thai contracts have increased exports threefold. *(This does not include logging on the China border. See following story under Investments, China - Ed.)* In addition, on Oct.5, 1990, Lt.Gen. Chit Swe, Minister for Forestry, announced that Burma has the potential to annually produce over 8 million cu.m of teak and hardwood logs (7 times the Thai total log extraction rate).

MOULMEIN WATERSHED - The land area within Burma drained by the Salween river is approximately 150,000 sq.km (17% of the country), nearly all mountainous except for the last 120 kms to the Gulf of Martaban. Twenty-six of the 46 Thai concessions are in this area. "At present, the greatest damage is due to the construction of roads along narrow river beds and over ridges. It is evident that many of the eastern tributaries and banks of the Salween and Moei will be eroded by over 1,200 km. Soil from the bulldozed sites and the logged areas is being eroded and washed down the river by the heavy rains in the order of millions of tons. This additional sediment will only increase flooding and add to the extending sandbanks in the estuary near Moulmein.

The **TENASSERIM UPLANDS** - is a series of mini-watersheds. Fortunately, not all rivers flow directly to the sea. A second mountain sometimes deflects the river and some sedimentation takes place in the valleys before the rest of the soil is lost at sea. But the slopes are steep, falling 2,000 m in less than 30 km in places. The sedimentation affects irrigation, agriculture, coral reefs and fishing in the area. Twenty of the 46 Thai concessions operate here.

The United Nations Development Programme has set up an office in Rangoon headed by Michael Gautier to support Thai logging operations. Gautier claims that slash and burn activities of local communities are responsible for damage to the environment and denies the destructive effects of Thai logging activities. However, the report states - "Considering the disastrous effect of Thai logging on the watersheds of Thailand, Thai companies cannot be counted on for a sustainable management of the forest in Burma, especially given their short-term two to three-year contracts. Though the Thais are only interested in the mature trees, the cutting and hauling practices are destroying secondary growth. Once an extensive network of logging roads is created and forest cover is removed, soil loss will be immediate and devastating. Therefore, there is much concern for the stability of both the Moulmein watershed and Tenasserim Uplands."

The Manila Observatory plans to study the problem further and is developing a regional scientific research team to support local environmental groups. For more details, contact: ERD, Manila Observatory, P.O.Box 1231, 1099 Manila, Philippines. Tel: 63 (2) 999-417, Fax: 63 (2) 921-7S34.

Foreign Investments:

CHINA:

Seventy-six illegal Chinese loggers were arrested by the Burma Army in mid-February near Bhamo, Kachin State. In return for their freedom, the local Burmese commander asked the Chinese company to pay a Rmb 300,000 (US\$57,500) ransom and convert the illegal operation into an official timber concession. The firm agreed to the unusual proposal and the ransom was divided between the local Burma Army unit and the Forestry Department in Rangoon [F910418].

Such abuses and the de-forestation of northern Shan State is reaching alarming proportions, actually exceeding the much more publicized logging activities along the Thai-Burma border. A group of Yunnan Chinese loggers were recently awarded an 8,000 tonne hardwood concession in Kainggyi, an officially designated catchment area for the Saidawgyi hydroelectric and irrigation project [F910418].

The 1988 Sino-Burmese cross-border trade agreement is also creating other social problems. Prostitution, gambling and drug abuse are rampant. Ruili, the Chinese border town across from Muse, Shan State is now an important transit point for opium and heroin and has the highest incidence in China of AIDS [B910101]. Mandalay and other towns in northern Burma are facing severe shortages of garlic, onion, fruit and even rice as these agricultural produce are exported to China with no restrictions. Land prices in Mandalay have also sky-rocketed as Chinese merchants buy up the land. Genuine Burmese identification papers can be bought in Ruili for Kyat 50,000 (US\$8,200) plus "tea money" to the local Burmese commander across the border [F910418].

GERMANY:

Transoceanic Tours of Bremen and Myanmar Travels and Tours arranged for the tourist ship *MV Odessa* to visit Rangoon and Pegu on Feb.16 and Feb.17. The ship with 390 tourists came from Phuket, Thailand and sailed for Madras, India. The ship last visited Rangoon in 1987 [P910218].

HONG KONG:

*Myanmar-Chan (H.K.) Limited (*Alert No.6, Vol.1*) opened a salesroom on the first floor of C shea in Theingyize market. Myanmar-Chan is a joint venture between state-owned Stationary, Printing and Photographic Stores Trading and Kanlee Trading which is owned by *Tsin Yuen Enterprises whose Managing Director is *Chan Yuen Chiu [P910205].

JAPAN:

A new Irrigation Department Training Centre was opened in Pegu on Feb.18. The US\$10 million centre was funded by Japan. The Japanese government also fundea a planetarium at the Culture Training Centre in Rangoon. The 12-meter dome is equipped with a Goto Planetarium Model GX, a video projector and other special effect projectors supplied by Goto Optical Manufacturing Co., 4-16 Yazakicho, Fuchu-shi, Tokyo 183, Japan. The firm also supplied a Goto Planetarium Model E-5 to the Institute of Marine Technology which was purchased with a grant from Japan [S&T900930].

New telephone switchboards were inaugurated in Kyeintale village, Gwa Township, Arakan State (Jan.29); Coco Island (Feb.12); and at Daik-U, Pegu Division (Feb.21) [P910204,13,22]. (*See related story in Alert No.3, Vol.2 - China and Japan. Ed.*)

SINGAPORE:

ECI Minerals Private Ltd. formed a joint venture with state-owned No.3 Mining Enterprise to produce and market barite powder which is used in oil drilling. ECI Minerals will hold 49% of the Kyat 39 million (US\$6.5 million) capital. The barite deposits near Maymyo is expected to yield 250,000 tonnes [F910418]. Managing Director of ECI Minerals is George Yin Soon [P910209].

Myanmar-Inotech Limited, a joint venture between Inotech Industries (Pte.) Limited and SLORC was formed on March 23 to import, manufacture, lease and export semi-finished construction materials [F910418]. Address: Ong Siew Poh, Managing Director, 62A Jalan Jurong Kechil, Singapore [BUR910430].

*Natsteel Trade International Pte. Ltd. (*Alert No.12, Vol.1*) address is: Chiang See Poh. General Manager, No.22 Tanjong Kling Rd., Singapore 2262 [BUR910430].

THAILAND:

On Jan.16, 1990, the *PTT Exploration and Production Co. (PTTEP), a wholly-owned subsidiary of the *Petroleum Authority of Thailand (PTT), signed a joint-venture agreement with *Unocol and *Petro-Canada to develop an oil concession in Burma (*Alert No.5, Vol.1*) [N910117]. The partnership - PTTEP, 10%, Unocol Burma 10%, Unocol Canada 50% and Petro-Canada, 30%, will invest US\$70 million for the first 3 years to develop the 'F' concession around Magwe which was originally granted to Unocol by SLORC (*Alert No.1, Vol.1*).

The PTTEP expects to find an oil reserve of 200 million barrels and to produce 50,000 barrels daily beginning in mid-1994. Its parent, PTT, has offered to buy all the oil produced from the Burmese concession to meet Thailand's rising oil need. The oil might be transported by a pipeline to the Andaman Sea and by oil tankers to Sriracha, via the Straits of Malacca.

At present, Thailand has only one indigenous source of oil which is operated by Shell in the Northeast. The Sirikit oilfield holds a reserve of 83 million barrels and is producing 22,000 barrels daily. The resident manager of Unocol Burma is Ken Bradley [B910117].

Another PTTEP proposal being considered by SLORC is the US\$ 1 billion natural gas exploration project in the Gulf of Martaban and a trans-national gas pipeline project which will cross into Thailand at Kanchanburi (*Alert No.4, Vol.2*).

SOURCES (this issue):

[A910405] Asiaweek	[F910502]	Far Eastern Economic Review
[B910117] Bangkok Post		[P910222] Working Peoples Daily
[FA019M] "Nature Conservation and National Parks", Burma, Interim Report		
FAO, Rangoon, 1983		[SAT900930] Sky St Telescope, Sept.90
[N910117] The Nation, Bangkok		[BUR910430] BURMA Vol.1, No.3, Apr.91

Opinion:

The following is an excerpt from an article written by Dr. Vum Son, representative of the Chin National Liberation Front, resident in the U.S.A. It was first published in the BCD! Quarterly Report 1991.

The formation of a provisional government by popularly elected members of the NLD is a very good foundation for bringing down SLORC and General Ne Win. However, forming a provisional government alone will not defeat SLORC. The following are a few suggestions which may help the provisional government and opposition groups in bringing down the regime:

1. The provisional government's primary objective must be to win over all dissident groups and individuals.
2. The provisional government must negotiate with the military and bring about a constitution that will suit every citizen of the Union.
3. The anti-SLORC movement must promote secret opposition within Burma and provide information to the population about SLORC's lies, tricks and brutalities. The military intelligence network must be infiltrated and the names of officers, NGOs and privates who shot demonstrators must be published.
4. The people must use non-violent means to protest the military's actions. The people should practice non-cooperation and shun military personnel and their collaborators. The people should reach out to their relatives in the military and convince them that their actions are hurting the people and the nation. Concerted action by the provisional government and dissident organizations can and will bring down the Ne Win-SLORC regime.

The opinions expressed above may not necessarily be those of the Associates to Develop Democratic Burma (ADDB). The "Burma Alert" is published monthly by the ADDB. It monitors foreign investment and trade with Burma to provide the Burmese democracy movement with data for their campaigns against the military dictatorship in Rangoon. Subscription Fee is US\$ 25.00 for 1991 payable to ADDB.