

BURMA ALERT

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Burma News:

THAILAND WILL INVITE SLORC TO ASEAN MEET IN 1994

Thailand will host the 27th Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Ministerial Meeting in Bangkok next year and will invite representatives of Burma's State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) to attend. Thailand attempted to invite SLORC as an observer to this year's meeting in Singapore. Concerns about SLORC's human rights record and objections by the US and the European Community frustrated the attempt. The decision to invite SLORC next year came about as a result of three factors - Thailand as the host country; the launching of the ASEAN Regional Forum which will be open to ASEAN's seven dialogue partners, as well as China, Russia, Vietnam, Laos and Papua New Guinea; and the tacit agreement by its dialogue partners to allow ASEAN to deal with SLORC in its own way. Although ASEAN and its dialogue partners initially disagreed, the less confrontational stance emerged after two days of talks between foreign ministers of the six ASEAN states and their counterparts from Australia, New Zealand, the United States, Canada, the European Community, Japan and South Korea. US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Winston Lord said, "It's fair to say that all of us share a common concern and the same goal. But there are some differences in tactics. Our tactics in the US are closer to the EC. ... But we would encourage them (ASEAN) to use their 'engagement', as I believe they are, to press Burma to improve its performance." EC Commission President Willy Claes conceded that approaches other than political and economic sanctions were possible for resolving the Burma issue but added that he saw no reason for the EC to change its policy - "I confirm that we are going on with political and economic sanctions." The ASEAN states reaffirmed that they would pursue a policy of 'constructive engagement' to 'encourage' SLORC to change rather than 'pressure' it. Singapore Foreign Minister Wong Kan Seng said that political stability and openness were necessary in Burma in order to develop and stressed the need for countries in the Asia Pacific Region to develop together ... Thai Foreign Minister Prasong Soonsiri said that "even if the changes (in Burma) are slow, they are going in the direction we all want". Malaysia, however, disagreed and proposed that a timeframe be set, so as to 'stimulate' rather than allow change to 'evolve naturally' in Burma [BWR930806].

KACHINS CONCLUDE PEACE TALKS WITH SLORC

Kachin leaders negotiating with SLORC in Myitkyina are reported to have returned to their bases to consult with their members. SLORC is said to have agreed to provide transportation including helicopters in order to expedite the consultation process. Kachin sources insist that any ceasefire agreement they make with SLORC must apply to all armed opposition groups. According to Indian intelligence sources, SLORC is offering the Kachins an elected council with limited legislative powers on tribal customs and law but Rangoon would retain power for defense, foreign affairs, currency, heavy industry and foreign investment. A regional council for smaller ethnic groups like the Nung Rawangs was also proposed. Similar conditions will be offered to other ethnic groups if the Kachins accept the offer. The Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) is a key member of the anti-SLORC Democratic Alliance of Burma (DAB) which supports the elected Members of Parliament who make up the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB). The Kachin leader Brang Seng is reported to be negotiating with members of the non-Burma National Democratic Front (NDF) to join the talks [IA930723, N930803 F930826]. If SLORC manages to separate the NDF from the Burman groups in the DAB and the Burman-led NCGUB, the Burmese democracy movement could be adversely affected. If the Karen, Mon, Karenni and others refuse to talk, a major military offensive on the Thai border once the monsoon ceases is a possibility. Combined with tighter control on access to Thailand and supplies, the NDF might be forced to accept a truce and abandon its Burman allies in the DAB. Even if the truce is a temporary one, it would greatly strengthen SLORC's position at the UN - Ed.

Burma News:**TENSIONS RISE ON BURMA-BANGLADESH BORDER**

On 30 June, the Bangladesh Rifles 9th Battalion arrested Zahir Ahmed, 33, and four other Burmese nationals as they crossed over to Bangladesh by boat. Ahmed and his aide Lal Miah were detained on charges of heroin smuggling and spying. The other three returned to Maungdaw. Burmese reaction the next day was unexpectedly strong. SLORC troops unilaterally suspended the issuing of transit passes for border residents until Ahmed and his companion were released unconditionally. 30,000 Bangladeshi fishermen were affected by the pass suspension. At an official meeting with their Bangladeshi counterparts in Maungdaw on 5 July, the SLORC forces repeated their demand. Bangladesh refused to comply and Ahmed was transferred to Dhaka. To pressure Bangladesh, a company of regular troops was deployed by SLORC on 6 July, 3 miles from the Shahpuri Dip area of Teknaf. On 14 July, SLORC Lon Htein paramilitary police units crossed over into southeastern Bangladesh and kidnapped 12 Bangladeshi fishermen, 8 woodcutters and 8 muslim Rohingya refugees. Bangladesh has lodged an official complaint [ARIF930731, X930713]. According to the Bangladeshi intelligence sources, Zahir Ahmed is referred to as "Bogyi" or Captain by the Lon Htein indicating the level of his relationship with them. They also claim he was the scout who led the Lon Htein into Bangladesh on 21 Dec.91 when they attacked a Bangladesh Rifles outpost at Rejupara, killing a soldier and a civilian. The Rohingya refugees claim Zahir Ahmed is a traitor and news of his arrest was greeted with joy in the refugee camps. Zahir Ahmed is reported to have made frequent trips to Bangladesh and to Dhaka. Bangladeshi authorities are investigating his links with Bangladeshi drug smugglers. This perhaps explains the strong SLORC reaction to his arrest - Ed.

US AMBASSADOR TO THE UN CONCERNED ABOUT BURMA

US Ambassador to the United Nations Madeleine Albright told reporters in Bangkok on 5 July that the US is "very concerned about what is going on in Burma" and called on SLORC to bring change to its "abominable" human rights record. Ambassador Albright made the comments after meeting with Thai Foreign Minister Prasong Soonsiri. She was in Bangkok en route to Cambodia after having observed UN peace keeping operations in Somalia [BWR930716]. Albright's statement of US concerns about Burma were reinforced on 10 Jul when US President Clinton addressed the National Assembly in Seoul, South Korea. He said, "Today, some argue democracy and human rights are somehow unsuited to ...Asia ... they mask some cultural imperialism on the part of the West. My ear is drawn to more compelling voices - ... to Aung San Suu Kyi, whose eloquent opposition to repression has stirred the entire world" [UFDHRB930719].

BURMA HIV INFECTIONS COULD SURPASS NUMBER IN USA

Daniel Tarantola, Harvard School of Public Health AIDS specialist, warned that Burma is facing a critical AIDS situation with 300,000 to 400,000 people already infected with the HIV virus, the precursor to AIDS. "Within 2 years, that country with a population of 42 million could surpass the number of HIV infections in the United States." Tarantola accompanied Albina du Boisrouvray, president of Swiss-based Association Francois-Xavier Bagnoud (FXB), to Burma to verify rumours of HIV-positive prostitutes being executed by SLORC. In Apr.92, Thai police reported that 25 AIDS-infected Burmese prostitutes from Ranong repatriated in Jun.91 had been injected with cyanide. The Director of an Emergency Home in Bangkok also reported that Thai police in Mae Sai said that 20 Burmese prostitutes repatriated in 1991 were injected with 'something' and buried. In July 1992, FXB assisted in the repatriation of 95 prostitutes from Thailand. Du Boisrouvray was able to locate and interview 16 of the women. She said she did not find any evidence that the women had been mistreated by SLORC. However, she did not know if any of the 16 she interviewed had tested positive for HIV. It is known that half the women repatriated tested positive for HIV. FXB has sent 6 doctors and nurses to the US for specialist AIDS training and has also distributed public health information, including 20,000 booklets in Burmese for families of AIDS victims and health workers [AFP930731].

Burma News:**UN REFUGEE CHIEF SADAKO OGATA VISITS RANGOON**

UN High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata accompanied by Warner Blatter, UNHCR Asia and Oceania Bureau Director, and Desk Officer Kyaw Zin Hla, arrived in Rangoon on 28 Jul. They were met by SLORC Foreign Minister U Ohn Gyaw and the Japanese Ambassador Takashi Tajima. She will meet with Lieut-Gen Khin Nyunt, SLORC's Secretary 1 and Chief of Intelligence. The UNHCR has been particularly concerned about the repatriation of the 300,000 Rohingya Muslim refugees from Bangladesh. Others speculated whether her visit might be related to international pressure for the release 1991 Nobel Peace laureate Daw Aung San Suu Kyi [B930731].

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Foreign Trade & Investments:**CHINA:**

CHINA will provide SLORC with a US\$8.7 million interest-free loan for development projects. The agreement was signed on 30 Jul.93 by Brig-Gen David Abel, Minister of Planning & Economic Development and Li Shi Zhong, Sec-Gen of China's State Council [AP-DJ930730].

CHINA agreed on 4 Jun to provide a US\$30 million interest-free loan to SLORC. The loan will be used by the Transport Ministry's Inland Water Transport to purchase 14 double and triple deck passenger vessels and tugboats, and 28 barges from the YUNNAN MACHINERY IMPORT AND EXPORT CORP [RR930604].

FRANCE:

A delegation led by Michael du Wolf, Vice Chairman of the External Relations Dept of the Social and Economic Council, met with Brig-Gen David Abel to discuss bilateral relations and economic cooperation. The delegation was accompanied by Ambassador Alain Briottet [RR930529].

S KOREA:

YUKONG signed a second oil and gas exploration agreement with SLORC. Yukong's first contract for Block C was unsuccessful [B930731, Ny930731]

SINGAPORE:

MYANMAR AIRWAYS INTERNATIONAL, a joint venture backed by Singapore interests (Alert No.5, Vol.4, May 1993), began operations on 15 Aug with an inaugural flight from Rangoon to Singapore. The new airline's only aircraft, a 179-seat Boeing 757-200er complete with cockpit crew and cabin staff, is on lease from Royal Brunei Airlines. Three flights per week each to Bangkok and Singapore and two to Hong Kong are planned. Next year, flights to China, India, Malaysia and Indonesia will be added. State-owned Myanmar Airways will only operate on domestic routes. The MAI representative in Bangkok is Win Oo, the younger brother of Moe Zaw who is married to General Ne Win's youngest daughter [FTUB, BM, B930801, A930825].

THAILAND:

According to O.N.K. MINING & CONSTRUCTION Chairman Karin Tongpatchote, the Thai logging companies that hold 47 concessions in Burma are seeking joint ventures in saw milling and plywood manufacturing with SLORC to keep their businesses alive. SLORC announced recently that the border concessions will not be renewed after 1993 (Alert No.6, Vol.4, Jun.93). O.N.K. is proposing a plywood, parquet, veneer, and furniture joint venture with SLORC and it is willing to invest Baht 600 million (US\$24 million) to produce 2.4 million sheets of plywood per year [BWR930716]. Thai Deputy Foreign Minister Surin Pitsuwan confirmed on 18 July that SLORC wants joint ventures with Thai firms to replace cross-border concessions [BWR930730].

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

AMOCO signed a second oil and gas exploration agreement with SLORC. Amoco's first contract for Block B was unsuccessful [B930731, Ny930731].

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Foreign Trade & Investments:**UPDATE: FOREIGN FIRMS IN BURMA - 2**

Source: Burma Alert

FRANCE:

ALG AEROLEASING via S'pore subsidiary 88	Private jet leasing - Transport
ANDAMAN CO (FRANCE) Mar.92,	Wants to sell machinery - Trade
BANQUE FRANÇAISE DU COMMERCE EXT(S'PORE)	VISA card - Tourism
COLUMBIA	Air transport for oil companies - Oil & Gas
COMPAGNIE GENERALE DE GEOPHYSIQUE, Aug.92	Oil Industry Service - Oil & Gas
ESSILOR Jan.90	Spectacles and accessories - Trade
FRANCE Jul.91	ODA loan debt relief, US\$82 million - Aid
HELI UNION	Helicopter transport for oil companies - Oil & Gas
MV OCEAN PEARL, Nov.92	Cruise ship - Tourism
SCHLUMBERGER thru GECO-PRAKLER, Aug.92	Oil Industry Service - Oil & Gas
SETRACO Jan.90	Supplied 200 Renault buses - Transport
SOGA, Mar.91	Renovation of 1981 pre-stressed concrete pipe plant - Industry
TOTAL, Block M-5 and M-6, Jul.92	Exploration - Oil & Gas

GERMANY:

FRITZ WERNER via MYANMAR FRITZ WERNER Feb.90	Selling machine tools - Industry
HAPAG-LLOYD from Jan.92	Charter flight to Rangoon - Tourism
HAPAG-LLOYD 1987	Charter flight to Rangoon - Tourism
TRANS-OCEANIC TOURS (Bremen) Feb.91	MV Odessa visited Rangoon & Pegu - Tourism
PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE, Dieter Schanz, Jul.92	Discussed aid, health, education - Aid
SIEMENS via MYANMAR ELECTRONICS SYS Dec.91	60% share, US\$ 1.4 million - Trade

HOLLAND:

FOKKER AIRCRAFT Nov.91	Proposed sale of F-27s - Transport
G VAN DEN BRINK 1988	Farm to breed rhesus monkeys for experiments - Trade
HEINEKEN Dec.91	Interested in beer market - Trade
SHELL EXPLORATION, Block G, Oct.89	Found limited gas, spent US\$80 million - Oil & Gas.
SHELL EXPLORATION, RSF-3,4, & 5, 1992	Production - Oil & Gas.
KLM Apr.92	Interested in air link - Transport

POLAND:

POLAND, Dec.90	Sold 12 Mi-2 and 12 PZL Swidnik W-3 Sokol Attack helicopter - Arms
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PORTUGAL:

INDUSTRIAS NACIONIAS DE DEFENSA, Nov.92	3 shipments, mortars & shells - Arms
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SWEDEN:

FFV via CHARTERED INDUSTRIES (S'PORE)	Sold Carl Gustaf rockets - Arms
NOBEL INDUSTRIES via ALLIED ORDNANCE (S'PORE)	Sold arms - Arms
BOFORS Oct.90	40mm & 57mm cannons on 'Koncar' patrol boats - Arms

SWITZERLAND:

PILATUS FLUGZEUGWERKE 1990	Supplied Pilatus aircraft - Arms
KARAWEIK SA since 1962	Raw material & manufactured goods - Trade
SAMOURAI SA since 1962	Cultured pearls, gems and diamonds - Gems

International Action:**BURMESE STUDENTS IN INDIA GAIN SUPPORT**

A delegation from the BURMA STUDENTS LEAGUE in May and June travelled to southern India to attend seminars on Burma. The seminar in Mysore, "Save Democracy - Safeguard National Integrity" was organized by Prof K Ramadas of the FEDERATION OF SECULAR ORGANIZATIONS. The seminar supported the Burmese democracy movement and called for the Indian government to suspend its ties with SLORC. Over 150 people signed a petition calling on PEPSICO to withdraw from Burma. The BSL delegation was received by Mr Druvakumar, the newly-elected Mayor of Mysore. A memorandum was also submitted to the 6th NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON WOMEN'S STUDIES being held at Mysore University. The Conference adopted a resolution demanding the unconditional release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. In Madras, the "Seminar on Burma" was organized by the FEDERATION OF HUMANISM and presided over by Mr Dalavai, president of the FREEDOM FIGHTERS' ASSOCIATION, TAMIL NADU. Representatives of all ten organizations attending the seminar expressed concern about the situation in Burma and promised long-term support for the struggle for democracy. "We will give you both moral and material support until Burma can be delivered from the clutches of the military thugs", said Mr R Dhanasekaram, a worker- union leader and a Burmese expatriate. The delegation met with the national executive of the ALL INDIA CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY FEDERATION in Madras and was promised support. "We will extend our support to them in terms of whatever we can" said Fr Manuel Alphonse, National Advisor to the AICUF.

YOUTH MEET IN NEPAL SUPPORTS BURMESE DEMOCRACY

Representatives from the ALL BURMA STUDENTS UNION and the BURMA STUDENTS LEAGUE attended a 2-day International Seminar on "Development Models for Employment" in Kathmandu, 1-2 Jun.93 organized by the NEPAL STUDENTS UNION and the German FRIEDRICH-EBERT-STIFTUNG. G P Koirala, Prime Minister of Nepal inaugurated the seminar. The SLORC Embassy attempted to disrupt proceedings by calling the Burmese student representatives, 'terrorists' and asking the organizers to de-recognize them. SLORC's protest was rejected. Following the seminar, the Burmese student delegation attended the "Asian Socialist Youth Meet" organized by the INTERNATIONAL UNION OF SOCIALIST YOUTH and the NEPALI SOCIALIST PARTY. K P Bhattarai, president of the Nepali Congress and former Prime Minister of Nepal opened the youth meeting. The Asian youth gathering passed a unanimous resolution condemning SLORC and called for the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. After the meeting, a youth delegation marched to the SLORC embassy and delivered the resolution as well as the more than 3,000 signatures collected during the seminars calling for democracy in Burma. AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL (NEPAL) also took the opportunity to organize a special seminar on Burma in Kathmandu.

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NEWS SOURCES THIS ISSUE: AFP = Agence France Presse, AP-DJ = Associated Press - Dow Jones, ARIF = Arakan Rohingya Islamic Front, B = Bangkok Post, BM = Burma Monitor, New York, BWR = Bangkok Post Weekly Review, FTUB = Federation of Trade Unions of Burma, IA = India Abroad, N = The Nation, Bangkok, Ny = New York Times, P = Working People's Daily, now the New Light of Myanmar, Rangoon, RR = Radio Rangoon, UFDHRB = United Front for Democracy and Human Rights in Burma, and X = Xinhua News Agency.

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Opinion:**EXPLOITING THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM**

At its 40th session in Jun.93, the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme approved expenditures for Burma up to US\$18 million for the period Jul.93 to Dec.94. The projects are to be for primary health care, the environment, HIV/AIDS, training and education and food security at the grass roots level. The assistance is to be made available for the benefit of 'all peoples of Myanmar' and the UNDP Administrator in New York is to continue to approve each Burma project on a project-by-project basis.

There were 70 on-going UNDP projects in Burma with a total budget of US\$90 million for 1992-94. Of the total, 27 projects ended in 1992 and 41 were to end in 1993. Only 2 will continue into 1994. A two-man team evaluated UNDP projects in Burma in Oct-Dec.92. As a result US\$8 was re-directed to projects targetted at AIDS prevention and control; dry-zone development; the environment and forestry; and integrated agriculture, community health and education in the Border Areas. For the period Jul.93 - Dec.95, the UNDP requested US\$40 million. The Governing Council reduced the amount to US\$18 million for Jul.93-Dec.94, and it will review the programme again in June 1994. In spite of the care being taken by UN agencies to ensure that UN assistance is not misused by SLORC, the Burmese people are still concerned that the safeguards are not sufficient. The following are excerpts from a letter published in the Bangkok Post, 1 Aug.93. It was written by a UN agency officer in Burma who is willing to testify if necessary.

Under present conditions ... where even UN staff members have to be approved by government officials, all the reports are ...orchestrated ...resulting in good results being written in contradiction to the actual happenings. Most of the government departments are very responsive to aid, project proposals ... and will try to harness as much (foreign) assistance ... as possible as they have been instructed to do so. If ... an evaluation of the impact of the programmes/projects were to be carried, the following will be revealed: Target beneficiaries have not actually benefitted (e.g. essential drugs reach the public after expiry date). In capacity building initiatives, the department and recipients concerned ...hardly benefitted (e.g. vehicles intended for field use end up for the use of the minister's family or other high ranking officials). Those (UN staff) wary ... of the regime form the majority of those ... allowed to leave the country for study tours/training. UN staff who wish to implement and realize their respective ... programmes are frustrated as they cannot work professionally.

Only the opportunist who are unscrupulous enough to take advantage of the situation benefit from the UN programmes. As there is no freedom of speech, professionals do not voice their dissatisfaction probably because of fear in admitting failure in programmes and projects on which their performance will be evaluated. The expatriates ...do not necessarily wish to cut short their stay where they can live comfortably and save enormously (The WHO resident whose personal assistant is a daughter of the ex-Interior Minister, has been stationed there for 10 years).

To bluff the public of recognition by the UN (and) hence their legitimacy ... meetings between SLORC and UN officials are exploited through the army controlled media. The public is disheartened by such news items... As the projects ... have more negative impact (than positive), we request the UN to stop all programmes ...until a democratic government is functioning in Burma.

The people have enough to survive. There is still enough rice and fish in Burma and will be for another 10 years. It is the army that is receiving the direct benefits from the UN programmes and they are the ones who need recognition from the international community. The people can suffer another ten years. Just stop all forms of aid and development and the regime will collapse the next day.

Zarmani
Rangoon

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