

# BURMA BULLETIN

XXXXXXXX A month-in-review of events in Burma XXXXXXXX

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

Issue 37

January 2010

- **New report from the Heritage Foundation and Wall Street Journal ranks Burma as fifth worst country in the world regarding economic freedom.**
- **SPDC announces plans to privatize its 256 gas stations across the country, and appoints key business crony Tay Za to oversee the privatization.**
- **SPDC promises the 2010 elections will be free and fair but fails to set a date for the polls. According to a report, SPDC will hold elections on 10-10-10.**
- **International community still concerned over the SPDC's planned elections. US wants to see progress in Burma if dialogue with the junta is to continue.**
- **NLD expands its Central Executive Committee from 11 to 20 members.**
- **SPDC Army attacks cause 2,000 Karen civilians to flee into the jungles in Eastern Burma.**
- **SPDC demotes six high-ranking military officials and reshuffles Foreign Ministry officials. It sentences two officials to death for leaking state secrets.**
- **Palaung Women's Organization says opium cultivation in SPDC-controlled areas is increasing at alarming rates in Northern Shan State.**
- **SPDC agrees to conduct military operations against anti-India armed groups with bases in Burma.**
- **ILO renews MoU with SPDC on forced labor complaints and investigations for another year.**
- **SPDC announces a salary increase for civil servants, sparking off another wave of inflation in an economy crippled by corruption and arbitrary taxation.**

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## KEY STORY

### The SPDC's 2010 resolution: continued economic mismanagement

Despite SPDC claims that it is pursuing a competitive and open market-based economy,<sup>1</sup> Burma was ranked the fifth worst country in the world and second worst in Asia with regard to economic freedom.<sup>2</sup> The "2010 Index of Economic Freedom" published by the Heritage Foundation and the Wall Street

<sup>1</sup> Reuters (25 Jan 10) Myanmar says Suu Kyi to be freed in November: witnesses

<sup>2</sup> Heritage Foundation (20 Jan 10) 2010 Index of Economic Freedom

Journal found that investment and business freedoms in Burma are “extraordinarily weak,” citing corruption and repressive regime interference.<sup>3</sup>

In January, the SPDC moved to consolidate and protect its economic interests in the run-up to its planned elections through deals that put the control of key industries into the hands of its loyal business cronies. These economic policies are designed to allow the regime to maintain control over most of Burma’s wealth and resources. The moves to parcel out key sectors of Burma’s economy to proxies will do nothing to resolve the junta’s oppressive economic mismanagement.

### **The junta way to privatization**

The SPDC has handed or is in the process of handing over the stakes of key industries, including the energy sector, to cronies such as the notorious Htoo Trading chairman Tay Za.

On 26 January, SPDC Energy Ministry officials announced that the SPDC will privatize all of its 256 gas stations across Burma by 31 March.<sup>4</sup> Three days before the announcement, Tay Za established the Fuel Oil Importers and Distributors Association (FOIDA) to oversee the privatization.<sup>5</sup> Tay Za is chair of the FOIDA, while Aung Thet Mann, son of third ranking SPDC member Gen Thura Shwe Mann, is vice-chair.<sup>6</sup>

The junta’s cronies benefited in other sectors as well:

- **Late December:** The SPDC awarded a major contract for construction of two dams for hydro-power plants to Htoo Trading. Htoo Trading became the first private Burmese company to be awarded such a contract in the hydro power sector.<sup>7</sup>
- **21 January:** Htoo Trading subsidiary Information Technology Central Services began selling SIM cards for 800 MHz CDMA mobile phones, which they have exclusive rights for.<sup>8</sup>
- **22 January:** The SPDC’s privatization commission announced that it will sell off more than 100 state-owned buildings and factories, including former Supreme Court buildings and the Inspector General’s Office in downtown Rangoon.<sup>9</sup> Observers pointed out that the bulk of the properties would go to SPDC cronies at bargain prices.<sup>10</sup>

As Sean Turnell, professor of economics of Australia’s Macquarie University, pointed out: a state monopoly selling off its assets to a private monopoly is not market liberalization.<sup>11</sup>

### **Corruption cripples Burmese people**

Outside the junta’s privileged circle, arbitrary taxation, selective law enforcement, and blatant corruption continued to cripple ordinary citizens in their efforts to provide for their families and stifled investment freedom for businesses. In January:

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<sup>3</sup> Heritage Foundation (20 Jan 10) 2010 Index of Economic Freedom; Irrawaddy (23 Jan 10) Burma has been ranked fifth from last in a global survey on economic freedom.

<sup>4</sup> Reuters (26 Jan 10) Myanmar to privatise fuel retailing -energy official; DPA (25 Jan 10) Myanmar to privatize all fuel stations by March, source says; Mizzima News (25 Jan 10) Junta to privatize oil industry; DVB (26 Jan 10) Burmese junta to privatise gas stations

<sup>5</sup> Reuters (26 Jan 10) Myanmar to privatise fuel retailing -energy official; DPA (25 Jan 10) Myanmar to privatize all fuel stations by March, source says; Mizzima News (25 Jan 10) Junta to privatize oil industry; DVB (26 Jan 10) Burmese junta to privatise gas stations

<sup>6</sup> Reuters (26 Jan 10) Myanmar to privatise fuel retailing -energy official; DPA (25 Jan 10) Myanmar to privatize all fuel stations by March, source says; Mizzima News (25 Jan 10) Junta to privatize oil industry; DVB (26 Jan 10) Burmese junta to privatise gas stations; Irrawaddy (27 Jan 10) Burmese Tycoon Takes Over Fuel Imports and Sales; Xinhua (27 Jan 10) Private enterprises to run fuel filling stations in Myanmar

<sup>7</sup> Irrawaddy (04 Jan 10) Tay Za granted electricity contract; Irrawaddy (07 Jan 10) Regime Privatizing to Retain Control of Resources; Xinhua (05 Jan 10) Myanmar encourages private companies to implement hydropower projects

<sup>8</sup> Mizzima News (22 Jan 10) Businesses accuse Htoo Trading of unfair monopoly

<sup>9</sup> Irrawaddy (22 Jan 10) Junta puts more state-owned properties up for sale

<sup>10</sup> Irrawaddy (22 Jan 10) Junta puts more state-owned properties up for sale

<sup>11</sup> Irrawaddy (22 Jan 10) Junta puts more state-owned properties up for sale

- The SPDC Department of Transportation in Ye Township, Mon State, imposed a new toll charge on vehicles, charging owners up to about 90,000 kyat (US\$90) per vehicle to cover the cargo transport costs of SPDC Army LIB 283.<sup>12</sup>
- Local farmers in Yenanchaung Township, Magwe Division, sold their cows to repay their debt after SPDC officials forced them to buy fertilizer on credit at inflated prices.<sup>13</sup>
- SPDC-run Electric Power Corporation (EPC) in Maungdaw Township, Arakan State, prohibited the use of private generators after it increased power distribution from two hours to four hours at night. However, the EPC charged people more than 150,000 kyat (US\$150) to connect to the power grid.<sup>14</sup>
- SPDC authorities banned the trading of rice from Arakan State to other States and Divisions, even though Arakan State had a surplus.<sup>15</sup>
- SPDC authorities ordered farmers in Tachilek Township, Shan State, to sell rice to the SPDC Army at half the market price.<sup>16</sup>

## INSIDE BURMA

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### Election promises

On 4 January, in his Independence Day message, SPDC Chairman Sr Gen Than Shwe reiterated that the general elections would be held this year and warned voters “to make correct choices” and to “remain vigilant [...] against dangers posed by neocolonialists.” However, Than Shwe gave no specific date for the polls.<sup>17</sup>

On 13 January, SPDC FM Maj Gen Nyan Win told his ASEAN counterparts that the elections would be held this year and would be “free, fair, and credible.”<sup>18</sup> Nyan Win also told Thai FM Kasit Piromya that the SPDC had completed 60-70% of the electoral and party registration laws.<sup>19</sup> Kasit speculated that the junta would hold the elections “in the second half of this year.”<sup>20</sup>

According to a 7 January report in the Japanese daily Asahi Shimbun, the SPDC will likely announce electoral and party registration laws in April and hold elections in October. The Asahi Shimbun, citing a junta source, said that the elections would be held on 10 October.<sup>21</sup> The date (10-10-10) would confirm the junta’s fixation with making key decisions based on numerology.<sup>22</sup>

### Election protests, boycotts, campaigns

Activists and politicians expressed opposition to the elections and dissatisfaction with the junta’s handling of the pre-electoral process:

- **4 January:** Mon youths in Mon State released a hot air balloon painted with slogans condemning the elections.<sup>23</sup>
- **7 January:** Activists in Muse, Northern Shan State, launched a two-day graffiti campaign against the elections.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> IMNA (06 Jan 2) Vehicle owners pay the price for Military shipments in Three Pagoda Pass

<sup>13</sup> DVB (06 Jan 10) Farmers sell livestock to repay loans

<sup>14</sup> Kaladan News (20 Jan 10) Distribution of Electricity from Generators Banned, Students Suffer

<sup>15</sup> Mizzima News (21 Jan 10) Inter-state trading of Rakhine rice banned; Narinjara News (25 Jan 10) Army Prohibits Transport of Paddy in Arakan

<sup>16</sup> NMG (25 Jan 10) Junta; traders buy rice for army at low prices

<sup>17</sup> AP (04 Jan 10) Myanmar chief confirms elections to be held 2010; Reuters (04 Jan 10) Myanmar pushes poll 20 years after ignoring NLD win; NYT (04 Jan 10) Junta confirms elections in Myanmar; BBC (04 Jan 10) Burma leader Than Shwe gives election warning; Bernama (04 Jan 10) Myanmar Top Leader Advises People To Make Correct Choice With Upcoming Election; AFP (04 Jan 10) Burma junta confirms elections; UPI (05 Jan 10) Myanmar reconfirms 2010 poll, with warning

<sup>18</sup> AFP (14 Jan 10) Burma pledges free election

<sup>19</sup> Reuters (14 Jan 10) Reuters: Myanmar polls likely in 2nd half of yr – Thai FM; AP (14 Jan 10) Myanmar tells neighbors elections will be free; Australia Network News (15 Jan 10) Burma promises free and fair 2010 elections; RTT News (15 Jan 10) Myanmar Foreign Minister Pledges Free, Fair, Credible Election: ASEA

<sup>20</sup> Reuters (14 Jan 10) Reuters: Myanmar polls likely in 2nd half of yr – Thai FM; DVB (15 Jan 10) Burma electoral laws ‘70 percent complete’

<sup>21</sup> Irrawaddy (08 Jan 10) Election to be Held in October?; DVB (08 Jan 10) Burma elections to be held ‘in October’

<sup>22</sup> DVB (08 Jan 10) Burma elections to be held ‘in October’; DVB (15 Jan 10) Burma electoral laws ‘70 percent complete’

<sup>23</sup> IMNA (05 Jan 10) Opposition to 2010 election, the writing is on the road

- **11 January:** Amid tight security, All-Kachin State Student Union activists in Myitkyina, Kachin State, put up leaflets that opposed the elections in various locations during the local Manau cultural festival.<sup>25</sup>
- **18 January:** Cho Cho Kyaw Nyein, the General Secretary of the newly-formed Democratic Party, said the party would reconsider its decision to participate in the elections if the SPDC further delayed the promulgation of the electoral law.<sup>26</sup>

Meanwhile, the junta-backed USDA, which is expected to field candidates in the polls, wooed voters with new social benefits:

- **5 January:** Rangoon Mayor Brig Gen Aung Thein Lin, who also heads the USDA in Rangoon Division, announced that the USDA planned to rebuild 500 houses for low-income residents in 10 Townships in Rangoon.<sup>27</sup>
- **5-6 January:** The USDA in Momauk Township, Kachin State, provided free eye treatment to over 1,000 local villagers.<sup>28</sup>

### NLD marks Independence Day

On 4 January, the NLD held a ceremony at the party headquarters in Rangoon to mark the 62<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of Independence Day. About 400 people, including party members, supporters, and foreign diplomats attended the event. Dozens of plainclothes policemen observed and videotaped the meeting from across the street. The NLD issued a statement to reiterate its call for the release of all political prisoners and the reopening of party offices across the country.<sup>29</sup>

### NLD reorganizes CEC

On 11 January, during a meeting at the party headquarters in Rangoon, the NLD decided to expand its Central Executive Committee (CEC) from 11 to 20 members.<sup>30</sup> The move was intended to rejuvenate the party and to enhance communications between the CEC and party members at State and Division levels.<sup>31</sup> On 14 January, the NLD issued a statement to make the CEC expansion official.<sup>32</sup>

On 18 January, the NLD held its first CEC meeting since adding new members.<sup>33</sup> The newly formed CEC passed a resolution to re-establish the Central Committee (CC), the party's larger representative body which the junta abolished in 1991.<sup>34</sup>

New NLD CEC members	
Han Tha Myint (61)	Elected MP from Butalin Township (Sagaing Division)
May Win Myint (59) (F)	Elected MP from Mayangone Township (Rangoon Division)
Nyan Win (67)	Elected MP from Paung Township (Mon State)
Ohn Kyaing (65)	Elected MP from Southeast Mandalay (Mandalay Division)
Than Nyein (72)	Elected MP from Kyauktan Township (Rangoon Division)
Thein Nyunt (65)	Elected MP from Thingangyun Township (Rangoon Division)
Tun Tun Hein (60)	Elected MP from Nawngkhio (Shan State)
Win Myint (58)	Elected MP from Danubyu Township (Irrawaddy Division)
Win Naing (n/a)	Elected MP from Thanlyin Township (Rangoon Division)

<sup>24</sup> SHAN (13 Jan 10) Spray campaign on the Sino-Burma border

<sup>25</sup> DVB (11 Jan 10) Kachin students launch "anti-government" poster campaign in Burma's Myitkyina

<sup>26</sup> Mizzima News (18 Jan 10) Frustration grows over delayed election law

<sup>27</sup> Irrawaddy (15 Jan 10) USDA to Build Homes for the Poor; Mizzima News (18 Jan 10) USDA intensifies organizational work

<sup>28</sup> Kachin News Group (07 Jan 10) USDA woos voters with free eye treatment camp

<sup>29</sup> AP (04 Jan 10) Myanmar chief confirms elections to be held 2010; Irrawaddy (04 Jan 10) Than Shwe Promises Election This Year; Chinland Guardian (04 Jan 10) No National Unity without Reconciliation: NLD on Burma's Independence Day

<sup>30</sup> Irrawaddy (11 Jan 10) NLD Elects 9 New CEC Members; Mizzima News (11 Jan 10) NLD expands central executive committee

<sup>31</sup> DVB (12 Jan 10) NLD senior-level expansion 'undemocratic'; Mizzima News (14 Jan 10) NLD restructures top decision-making body

<sup>32</sup> DPA (14 Jan 10) Myanmar opposition party gets new blood on executive committee; Mizzima News (14 Jan 10) NLD restructures top decision-making body

<sup>33</sup> DVB (19 Jan 10) New NLD central committee holds first meeting

<sup>34</sup> Mizzima News (19 Jan 10) NLD to reconstitute Central Committee; Irrawaddy (20 Jan 10) NLD Plans to Form New Central Committee

## SPDC toys with Daw Suu

The SPDC started the new year by staging another meeting with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and fueled speculations about her early release:

- **15 January:** Daw Aung San Suu Kyi met with SPDC Liaison Minister Maj Gen Aung Kyi at the Seinle Kantha state guesthouse in Rangoon. No details of the meeting were released.<sup>35</sup>
- **21 January:** SPDC Home Minister Maj Gen Maung Oo told a meeting of local regime officials in Kyaukpadaung, Mandalay Division, that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi would be released in November. Maung Oo also said NLD vice-chairman Tin Oo would be released from house arrest on 13 February.<sup>36</sup>

Meanwhile, the bogus trial of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi reached its final stage. On 18 January, Burma's Supreme Court heard closing arguments on the appeals of Daw Suu and her two female housekeepers Khin Khin Win and Win Ma Ma. Daw Suu did not attend the hearing and the SPDC barred journalists from witnessing the court proceedings.<sup>37</sup>

## Goodies from Aussies - new radios for the SPDC Army

On 5 January, reports emerged that despite Australia's embargo on the sale of military equipment to the SPDC, the regime acquired about 50 high-frequency Barrett 2050 radio sets from Perth-based Barrett Communications and has ordered 50 more. It is believed that in recent months the SPDC used the Barrett 2050 radio sets to maintain communications between the Army's headquarters in Naypyidaw and the Central, Eastern, and Northeastern Regional Commands during the military offensives against ethnic groups in Shan State.<sup>38</sup>

## Military reshuffles

During the first week of January, the SPDC demoted six military officials with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel from the War Office in Naypyidaw to positions in frontline commands. In addition, the regime reassigned about 30 high-ranking Foreign Ministry officials.<sup>39</sup> The reshuffles are believed to be linked to the leak of information about military ties between the SPDC and North Korea.<sup>40</sup> [See below *Death sentences*]

## Regime officials sentenced to death

On 7 January, the Northern Rangoon District Court sentenced retired SPDC Army Maj Win Naing Kyaw and Foreign Ministry official Thura Kyaw to death for leaking details of SPDC generals' visits to North Korea and Russia as well as information on the regime's tunnel project near Naypyidaw. Another Foreign Ministry official, Pyan Sein, received 15 years in prison for a related offense.<sup>41</sup> On 23 January, the SPDC transferred all three from Rangoon's Insein prison: Win Naing Kyaw to Tharrawaddy prison

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<sup>35</sup> NLM (16 Jan 10) Relations Minister meets Daw Aung San Suu Kyi; AP (15 Jan 10) Myanmar democracy leader Suu Kyi meets official; AFP (18 Jan 10) Suu Kyi meets Burma junta liaison officer; VOA (15 Jan 10) Burma's Opposition Leader Meets Government Liaison; Irrawaddy (15 Jan 10) Suu Kyi Meets Junta Liaison Officer; Mizzima News (15 Jan 10) Aung San Suu Kyi meets junta's liaison minister

<sup>36</sup> Reuters (25 Jan 10) Myanmar says Suu Kyi to be freed in November: witnesses; AP (25 Jan 10) Myanmar party plays down Suu Kyi release report Irrawaddy (25 Jan 10) 'Suu Kyi Will Be Released': Home Minister; Mizzima News (25 Jan 10) NLD doubts junta will release detained party leaders; DVB (25 Jan 10) Suu Kyi 'to be freed in November'

<sup>37</sup> AFP (18 Jan 10) Burmese court hears final Suu Kyi appeal; BBC (18 Jan 10) Burma's Supreme Court hears final Suu Kyi appeal; UPI (18 Jan 10) Suu Kyi's detention appeal heard; Mizzima News (18 Jan 10) Defense counsels optimistic of Suu Kyi's release; Irrawaddy (18 Jan 10) Supreme Court Hears Suu Kyi Final Appeal; DVB (19 Jan 10) Western envoys at Suu Kyi hearing

<sup>38</sup> SMH (05 Jan 10) Burmese Army tunes in to Australian technology; VOA (05 Jan 10) Australian firm sells radios used by Burma military; Mizzima News (05 Jan 10) Junta buys radio sets from Australian company; Irrawaddy (05 Jan 10) Tatmadaw 'Using Australian Radio Technology'; UPI (14 Jan 10) Barrett at center of military radio storm

<sup>39</sup> Irrawaddy (16 Jan 10) Is War Office Reshuffle Related to Info Leak?

<sup>40</sup> Irrawaddy (16 Jan 10) Is War Office Reshuffle Related to Info Leak?

<sup>41</sup> BBC (07 Jan 10) Burmese whistle-blowers sentenced to death; Reuters (08 Jan 10) Two sentenced to death in Myanmar for document leak; NYT (08 Jan 10) Myanmar Is Reported to Sentence 2 to Death; DVB (09 Jan 10) Death sentences over Myanmar leaks; DVB (08 Jan 10) Death sentence for Burmese whistleblowers; Times Online (08 Jan 10) Burma to execute two over secret tunnels leak

in Pegu Division, Pyan Sein to Mandalay prison, and Thura Kyaw to an unspecified prison in Shan State.<sup>42</sup>

### **Opium poppy cultivation increases**

On 26 January, the Palaung Women's Organization (PWO) released a report titled "Poisoned Hills," which said that opium poppy production and opium addiction in Northern Shan State has increased at levels well in excess of the data published by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime. [See *December 2009 Burma Bulletin*] Key findings in the report included:

- The growth in opium poppy cultivation is occurring in SPDC-controlled areas and not just in ceasefire areas as claimed by the UNODC. The UN has failed to update their maps of Shan State to note the areas that have been ceded by ceasefire groups to SPDC Army control when the groups disarmed or became part of the SPDC's Border Guard Force;
- Surveys in Namkham and Mantong Townships in Northern Shan State found that the total area of cultivated for opium poppies increased almost five-fold - from 963 hectares in 2006-07 to 4,545 hectares in 2008-09;
- In a village surveyed in Mantong Township, it was found that that the percentage of men aged 15 and older who were addicted to opium increased from 57% in 2007 to 85% in 2009;
- SPDC "anti-drug teams" in the region extorted large sums of money from opium farmers in exchange for allowing them to grow and harvest their crop;
- The "anti-drug teams" submit falsified data to SPDC officials in Naypyidaw to inflate the area of opium poppies fields destroyed.<sup>43</sup>

### **SPDC continues to press ethnic militaries on BGF**

After its second extended deadline passed on 31 December, the SPDC continued to pressure key ethnic ceasefire groups in Shan and Kachin States to transform into Border Guard Forces (BGF) under the junta's control. At the end of January, the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) and United Wa State Army (UWSA) had still not accepted the SPDC's demands.

- **7 January:** SPDC Army Triangle Regional Command Commander Maj Gen Kyaw Phyo expressed his frustration with the UWSA, saying that the group's intransigence was impeding the SPDC's efforts to recruit the smaller ethnic ceasefire groups into the BGF.<sup>44</sup>
- **20 January:** The UWSA finished a month-long program that trained over 1,000 civilians, including women, in the use of small weapons in 11 townships in the Wa region of Shan State.<sup>45</sup>
- **27 January:** Unidentified assailants killed the National Democratic Alliance Army (NDAA) aka Mongla General Secretary Min Ein aka Lin Hongshen, outside his home in Mongla in Northeastern Shan State.<sup>46</sup> Observers believed that the SPDC may be behind the assassination.<sup>47</sup>
- **29 January:** KIO leaders meet with SPDC Military Affairs Security chief Lt Gen Ye Myint and Northern Regional Command Commander Maj Gen Soe Win in Myitkyina, Kachin State, to discuss the SPDC's BGF ultimatum.<sup>48</sup> The KIO reiterated its counter proposal to transform into an autonomous Kachin Regional Guard Force and maintain its current troop numbers.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> DVB (26 Jan 10) Whistleblower moved to Bago prison; Mizzima News (26 Jan 10) Treason convicts transferred to remote prison

<sup>43</sup> Irrawaddy (26 Jan 10) Opium Addiction 'Poisoning' Palaung, Says Report; DPA (26 Jan 10) Opium cultivation up in northern Myanmar, addiction problem grows

<sup>44</sup> SHAN (12 Jan 10) Junta commander: No more Mr Nice Guy; Mizzima News (15 Jan 10) BGF talks on hold, junta and Wa at impasse

<sup>45</sup> DVB (18 Jan 10) Wa army training 'thousands' of civilians

<sup>46</sup> Irrawaddy (28 Jan 10) Mongla Killing A Blow To Ethnic Cease-fire Groups; SHAN (28 Jan 10) Mongla assassin still at large; Mizzima News (27 Jan 10) Secretary of Mongla-based ceasefire group assassinated; SHAN (27 Jan 10) Mongla top leader assassinated

<sup>47</sup> Irrawaddy (28 Jan 10) Mongla Killing A Blow To Ethnic Cease-fire Groups

<sup>48</sup> Kachin News Group (29 Jan 10) Burma junta and KIO meet to resolve standoff over Border Guard Force

<sup>49</sup> Kachin News Group (29 Jan 10) Burma junta and KIO meet to resolve standoff over Border Guard Force

## HUMAN RIGHTS

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### Reports blast SPDC over rights abuses

- **12 January:** Freedom House released its annual survey “Freedom in the World 2010.” The report, which surveyed 194 countries, described Burma, alongside nine other countries, as the “worst of the worst” in respecting its citizens’ political rights and civil liberties.<sup>50</sup>
- **20 January:** Human Rights Watch released its annual report.<sup>51</sup> The reports said that Burma’s human rights record continued to deteriorate in 2009, with the SPDC systematically denying citizens basic freedoms including freedom of expression, association, and assembly. It also said that the SPDC continued to commit abuses against civilians in ethnic areas, including extrajudicial killings, forced labor, and sexual violence.<sup>52</sup>
- **29 January:** Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) released its annual report.<sup>53</sup> The report said that as of 31 December 2009 there were a total of 2,177 political prisoners in Burma and 129 of them suffered poor health. The report also said that in 2009 the SPDC detained 264 activists and sentenced 129 to prison terms.<sup>54</sup>

### Arrests and prison sentences

- **7 January:** SPDC military intelligence in Thanbyuzayat, Mon State, arrested monk Uk Kong Sah aka Nai Ajjae, 28, for his alleged involvement in a graffiti campaign against the 2010 elections. The monk was disrobed, tortured, and subsequently taken to Rangoon for further interrogation.<sup>55</sup>
- **11 January:** Police detained Aung Min, a 27-year-old villager from Chaungzon Township, Mon State, in connection with the arrest of monk Uk Kong Sah.<sup>56</sup>
- **13 January:** The Rangoon’s Insein Township Court sentenced NLD members Shwe Gyo, Sein Hlaing, and Ma Cho aka Myint Myint San to three years in prison under the Unlawful Association Act.<sup>57</sup>
- **27 January:** The Rangoon Western District Court sentenced DVB reporter Ngwe Soe Lin, 28, to 13 years in prison for making a video that documented the plight of children made orphans by cyclone Nargis.<sup>58</sup>

### ILO to investigate forced labor issues for another year

On 18 January, the SPDC and the International Labor Organization (ILO) agreed to extend the Supplementary Understanding that provides a mechanism for the ILO to process forced labor complaints for another year. The agreement came at a meeting between the ILO’s Executive Director Kari Tapiola and SPDC Labor Minister Maj Gen Aung Kyi in Naypyidaw.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> DVB (13 Jan 10) Burma freedom is ‘worst of the worst’; Irrawaddy (13 Jan 10) Burma Ranked ‘Worst of the Worst’

<sup>51</sup> Reuters (20 Jan 10) Rights activists target of backlash in 2009 - report

<sup>52</sup> HRW (20 Jan 10) World Report 2010 - Burma

<sup>53</sup> Mizzima News (29 Jan 10) Plight of political prisoners deteriorates in 2009

<sup>54</sup> AAPP (29 Jan 10) Annual Report 2009

<sup>55</sup> Irrawaddy (12 Jan 10) Death Sentences a Disgrace: All Monks’ Alliance; Kaowao News (14 Jan 10) 2010 Election: Buddhist Monk and Youth Arrested, Tortured; IMNA (14 Jan 10) Second arrest, villager taken in connection to arrested of monk; IMNA (19 Jan 10) Monasteries shaken by rumors of arrests

<sup>56</sup> Kaowao News (14 Jan 10) 2010 Election: Buddhist Monk and Youth Arrested, Tortured; IMNA (14 Jan 10) Second arrest, villager taken in connection to arrested of monk

<sup>57</sup> Mizzima News (13 Jan 10) Three activists sentenced to three years each; DVB (14 Jan 10) Activists sentenced ‘without evidence’

<sup>58</sup> BBC (29 Jan 10) Burma jails journalist Ngwe Soe Lin for 13 years; AFP (29 Jan 10) Myanmar journalist jailed for 13 years; Mizzima News (28 Jan 10) DVB reporter sentenced to 13 years

<sup>59</sup> Mizzima News (20 Jan 10) ILO, Burma renew supplementary understanding

## **DISPLACEMENT**

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### **2,000 Karen flee into the jungle; Thailand plans to repatriate 3,000**

On 23 January, it was reported that some 2,000 Karen villagers had fled into the jungles of Eastern Burma since 17 January, when the SPDC Army LIB 367 shot and killed at least two villagers, burned 13 homes, and recruited villagers to perform forced labor in Kyaukkyi Township, Pegu Division.<sup>60</sup>

Despite thousands more displaced in Eastern Burma in January, on 25 January Thai 3rd Army Area Commander Lt Gen Thanongsak Apirakyothin said that the Thai government will gradually repatriate 2,000-3,000 Karen refugees that fled into Thailand in June 2009 to escape fighting [See *June 2009 Burma Bulletin*].<sup>61</sup> While the Thai government did not elaborate as to whether the repatriation would be forced or voluntary, Thanongsak said that gaining the refugees' consent was unnecessary because there was no longer fighting in Karen State.<sup>62</sup>

### **Rohingya plight worsens**

Frustrated by the continued influx of Rohingya from Burma, Bangladeshi civilians throughout Cox's Bazaar District formed "Rohingya Resistance Committees" in early January. On 18 January, the committees submitted a list of demands to the Bangladesh government. They called on Dhaka to repatriate all Rohingya refugees and to do more to stop Rohingya from crossing over the border.<sup>63</sup> The committees also warned Bangladeshis that they would be punished for assisting Rohingya refugees.<sup>64</sup>

As a result of this pressure, in January Bangladesh authorities arrested more than 600 Rohingya in Cox's Bazaar District. Of those arrested some were sent Cox's Bazaar jail while others were handed over to the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) who then forced the Rohingya back into Burma.<sup>65</sup>

### **Thailand extends migrant nationality-verification deadline**

On 19 January, the Thai government extended to 28 February 2012 the deadline for the 1.4 million migrant workers whose registration cards were due to expire at the end of February to complete the nationality verification and registration process.<sup>66</sup> However, the Thai government said that the migrants would have to begin the controversial process by the end of next month or face deportation.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Reuters (23 Jan 10) Over 2,000 Karens flee Myanmar army raids-aid group; AFP (24 Jan 10) Karen flee Myanmar army attacks: rights groups; Mizzima News (27 Jan 10) Villages burnt, Karen villagers hide in jungles

<sup>61</sup> TNA (25 Jan 10) Thailand to repatriate Karen villagers who fled Myanmar army; DVB (27 Jan 10) Rival groups meet on Karen refugees; Irrawaddy (28 Jan 10) Why Thai and Karen Groups Want To Repatriate Refugees

<sup>62</sup> TNA (25 Jan 10) Thailand to repatriate Karen villagers who fled Myanmar army

<sup>63</sup> Kaladan News (20 Jan 10) Rohingya Resistance Committee Issues Seven Demands; Kaladan News (14 Jan 10) Anti-Rohingya rally in Ukhiya, Cox's Bazaar district ; Kaladan News (18 Jan 10) Local's antipathy towards lack of solution to Rohingya problems; Kaladan News (26 Jan 10) Another Arakanese Rohingya driving committee formed in Ukhiya, Cox's Bazaar

<sup>64</sup> Kaladan News (13 Jan 10) BDR pushes back 17 Rohingyas to Burma; Kaladan News (18 Jan 10) Arakanese Rohingya insecure in border town of Bangladesh

<sup>65</sup> Kaladan News (04 Jan 10) Five Arakanese Rohingyas pushed back, seven jailed; Narinjara News (07 Jan 10) 39 Burmese Citizens Arrested in Cox's Bazaar; Kaladan News (13 Jan 10) BDR pushes back 17 Rohingyas to Burma; Kaladan News (14 Jan 10) Anti-Rohingya rally in Ukhiya, Cox's Bazaar district; Kaladan News (18 Jan 10) Local's antipathy towards lack of solution to Rohingya problems; Kaladan News (18 Jan 10) Arakanese Rohingya insecure in border town of Bangladesh; Kaladan News (19 Jan 10) Arakanese Rohingya face movement restriction in Bangladesh; Kaladan News (20 Jan 10) Seven registered refugee arrested; Kaladan News (20 Jan 10) Rohingya Resistance Committee Issues Seven Demands; Kaladan News (20 Jan 10) Arakanese Rohingya forced to join unregistered camp; Kaladan News (26 Jan 10) Police file case against Arakanese Rohingya refugees as foreigners; Kaladan News (26 Jan 10) Over 60 tents of refugees destroyed by locals and police in Teknaf

<sup>66</sup> Bangkok Post (21 Jan 10) Migrant workers given deadline warning; DVB (18 Jan 10) Migrant passport deadline extended; Mizzima News (19 Jan 10) Thailand extends deadline for passport applications by migrants; Bangkok Post (24 Jan 10) Labour shortage as migrant workers quit jobs to avoid nationality ID; Mizzima News (19 Jan 10) Thailand extends deadline for passport applications by migrants

<sup>67</sup> Bangkok Post (21 Jan 10) Migrant workers given deadline warning; DVB (18 Jan 10) Migrant passport deadline extended; Mizzima News (19 Jan 10) Thailand extends deadline for passport applications by migrants; Bangkok Post (24 Jan 10) Labour shortage as migrant workers quit jobs to avoid nationality ID; Mizzima News (19 Jan 10) Thailand extends deadline for passport applications by migrants



## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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### International concerns over the 2010 elections

- **4 January:** US State Department spokesman Ian Kelly said that the US had doubts on whether Burma's upcoming elections would be credible and urged the SPDC to engage the NLD and ethnic nationalities.<sup>68</sup>
- **6 January:** UN Sec-Gen Ban Ki-moon said that he is closely monitoring the situation in Burma and that SPDC Chairman Sr Gen Than Shwe should set clear deadlines and dates for the elections.<sup>69</sup>
- **13 January:** Philippines Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo called on the SPDC to ensure free, fair, and credible elections and allow Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and other political prisoners to participate in the electoral process.<sup>70</sup>
- **17 January:** Japanese FM Katsuya Okada urged the SPDC to release Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and to hold fair elections.<sup>71</sup>
- **26 January:** The US called on the SPDC open up its political process and reach out to ethnic nationalities.<sup>72</sup>
- **28 January:** The French Foreign Ministry called on the SPDC to make concrete gestures in support of the national reconciliation process prior to the planned elections.<sup>73</sup>

### US: No progress in Burma

- **19 January:** US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Kurt Campbell signaled a growing impatience with the SPDC and noted that the US had received a "mixed bag" of results following its decision to engage the junta. Campbell said, "[...] We're not unendingly patient. We will need some clear steps in due course."<sup>74</sup>
- **21 January:** Campbell testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee and said that engagement with the SPDC can't be a one-way process and indicated the US was not getting an adequate response from the junta. Campbell told the committee, "We are attempting to take that first step [...] but I do want to underscore that one can't dance on the dance floor alone."<sup>75</sup>
- **26 January:** The US again called for the immediate release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.<sup>76</sup>

### SPDC agrees to act on anti-India groups inside Burma

On 19 January, Indian Home Secretary Gopal K Pillai met SPDC officials in Naypyidaw to discuss border issues.<sup>77</sup> On 21 January, after three days of talks, a senior Indian Home Ministry official said that the SPDC agreed to launch "coordinated operations" against anti-India armed groups operating from bases inside Burma. In addition, the junta promised to hunt for United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) commander Paresh Baruah who was believed to be hiding somewhere in Kachin State. The official added that Indian and SPDC security forces would conduct coordinated operations in their respective territories during the next two to three months.<sup>78</sup>

## ECONOMY

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### SPDC placates civil servants with pay hikes

Despite the lack of funding for basic services such as health care and education, the SPDC still found the necessary resources to reward its civil servants. On 31 December 2009, the SPDC announced that it

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<sup>68</sup> AFP (05 Jan 10) US sceptical on Burma elections

<sup>69</sup> Irrawaddy (07 Jan 10) Ban Notes No Election Date Set by Than Shwe

<sup>70</sup> PDI (16 Jan 10) RP asks Burma to allow Suu Kyi to participate in polls

<sup>71</sup> AFP (17 Jan 10) Japan presses Myanmar to free Suu Kyi

<sup>72</sup> Mizzima News (27 Jan 10) U.S. wants Burma to reach out to ethnic communities

<sup>73</sup> France Foreign Ministry (28 Jan 10) Situation of Aung San Suu Kyi

<sup>74</sup> DVB (20 Jan 10) US 'needs clear steps' on Burma reform

<sup>75</sup> Irrawaddy (22 Jan 10) We can't dance alone: US to Burma

<sup>76</sup> Irrawaddy (27 Jan 10) US Wants Burma to 'Reach Out'

<sup>77</sup> Irrawaddy (19 Jan 10) Indian Delegation Visits Naypyidaw

<sup>78</sup> TNN (25 Jan 09) Myanmar nod to joint ops against N-E militants

will raise the monthly salaries of nearly two million civil servants by 20,000 kyat (about US\$20) effective 31 January.<sup>79</sup> After news of the salary increase broke, the prices of basic commodities and services, including the price of rice and phone calls, rose as well.<sup>80</sup>

## OTHER BURMA NEWS IN JANUARY

1	SPDC Ministry of Commerce says that Burma's exports hit US\$4.3 billion in the first eight months of 2009-10 fiscal year, over half of which came from the sale of natural resources.
1	Lt Col Saw Lik Theint of DKBA Battalion No 7 orders local villagers in Pa-an, Hlaing Bwe and Pai Kyone Townships, Karen State, to reconstruct an army camp.
1	Na Sa Ka personnel in Maungdaw Township, Arakan State, arrest local villagers for failing to perform sentry duty.
2	DKBA and SPDC Army soldiers in Kyar Inn Seik Gyi Township, Karen State, torture villagers from Asoon Village for allegedly assisting six DKBA defectors.
4	SPDC authorities in Myitkyina prison prevent political prisoners from saluting the national flag to mark Burma's Independence Day.
4	UN Sec Gen Ban Ki-moon congratulates SPDC Chairman Sr Gen Than Shwe on Burma's 62nd Independence Day anniversary and extols the general's "support" for UN goals.
4	Kyaw Kyaw Oo, an SPDC Army Sergeant from LIB 234 commits suicide in Chin Let Wa Village in Paletwa Township, Southern Chin State.
4	SPDC awards cronies Tay Za and Zaw Zaw Burma's highest honors, the title of "Thiri Pyanchi," along with 16 senior military officials.
5	The week-long Kachin Manau festival kicks off in Myitkyina, Kachin State, amid restrictions and harassment from the SPDC.
5	SPDC Army forces stationed in Daung Khali village of Na Sa Ka Area 7 of Maungdaw Township, Arakan State, force local villagers to build the Burma-Bangladesh border fence.
7	Local NGO Country Agency for Rural Development releases a survey reporting that 80% of households in central Chin State are in debt because they need to borrow money to buy food.
7	One hundred female workers employed at a shrimp processing factory in Rangoon's Hlaing Tharyar Township go on strike over salaries and worker rights.
7	In a speech at the Defense Services Institute of Nursing and Paramedical Science, SPDC Vice Sr Gen Maung Aye says that Burma would disintegrate if the regime granted the ethnic groups' demands for a federal system of government.
8	A 45-year-old local villager loses his right foot after stepping on a landmine in Thandaung Village, Karen State.
9	Bangladesh and the SPDC agree to accommodate both principles of 'equidistance' and 'equity' to resolve their maritime boundary dispute.
10	SPDC Army violates its ceasefire agreement with the NMSP by posting soldiers from LIB 282 within 10 miles of NMSP central headquarters at Suwanabumi village, Mon State
11	A three-member team of American academics led by Prof. Karl D. Jakson from John Hopkins University meets NLD CEC members Nyan Win, Han Tha Myint, and Ohn Kyaing at the party headquarters in Rangoon.
12	SPDC authorities in Insein prison place political activists Nyi Nyi Aung, Aung Thu, and Min Min Htun in solitary confinement.
12	Additional Director-General of Assam Rifles Maj Gen JP Nehra says that Assam Rifles have decided to raise 26 more battalions to man the Indo-Burma border to counter cross-border terrorism.
15	Japanese FM Katsuya Okada and Thai FM Kasit Piromya agree that an "open and fair" election in Burma is important for the further development of Southeast Asian nations.
18	Christian Kachin in Myitkyina, Kachin State, hold a 24-hour prayer service to protest the Irrawaddy Myitsone hydro-electric power project.
19	SPDC Army soldier from LIB 83 recruits a 14-year-old boy from Taungdwingyi Township, Magwe Division, after promising him that he would receive a US\$60 monthly salary.
20	Four villagers from Maungdaw Township, Arakan State, go into hiding to escape arrest for having more than two children.

<sup>79</sup>AFP (12 Jan 10) Burma boosts civil service salaries; AP (03 Jan 10) Myanmar to give big boost to gov't worker salaries; DPA (03 Jan 10) Myanmar junta hikes salaries ahead of election; Chinland Guardian (02 Jan 10) Burma Marks New Year with Pay Raise; DVB (08 Jan 10) Trade unions attack Burma wage rise; Mizzima News (06 Jan 10) Burmese government staff unhappy despite pay hike; IMNA (23 Jan 10) Burmese civil servants anticipate increased salaries

<sup>80</sup>Irrawaddy (13 Jan 10) Rice Price Increases Halt after Ministry Appeal; Mizzima News (06 Jan 10) Burmese government staff unhappy despite pay hike; AFP (01 Jan 10) Myanmar to double cost of local telephone calls; Irrawaddy (04 Jan 10) Anger over mobile phone charge hike

21	Philippines Senator Aquilino Pimentel, who also serves as President of the IPU's human rights committee, says that the SPDC's rights violations have caused more damage than cyclone Nargis.
22	Veteran journalist and NLD CEC member Win Tin returns to Rangoon after a three-day tour of Mandalay and Maymyo where he briefed NLD members on the party's stand over the elections and the CEC expansion.
22	SPDC Immigration authorities at Rangoon International Airport prevent the Burmese folk group "Tokyo Sakura Happy Ahnyeint" from traveling to Japan to perform an 'Ahnyeint' show.
22	A SPDC Air Force pilot dies when his Chinese-made F-7 fighter plane crashes at Rangoon's Mingaladon airbase during a training flight.
24	Rangoon City Development Committee says that selling unlicensed local and foreign VCD/DVD/EVD discs will now be punishable with a prison term ranging from six months to three years.
26	Two bombs explode in Kyaukkyi, Pegu Division. No casualties are reported.
27	SPDC says it has arrests 11 people in Rangoon's Mingaladon Township on charges of planning bombings to disrupt the upcoming elections.
28	Daw Aung San Suu Kyi calls the SPDC's Home Minister comment that she will be released in November "unfair".
28	Rice traders report that over the first nine months of fiscal 2009-2010 Burma has increased its rice exports to 1.2 million tons, up from 700,000 tons in fiscal year 2008-09.
31	Dr Worawit Tantiwattanasap, director of Umphang Hospital in Tak Province, Thailand, says that hospitals operating along the Thai-Burma border face severe debt incurred by providing free medical services to refugees, migrants, and Thais without identification cards.

## REPORTS ON BURMA RELEASED IN JANUARY

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<http://www.palaungland.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/Report/PoisonedHills%20Eng%20version.PDF>

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"Annual Report 2009", Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP)

[http://www.aappb.org/Annual\\_Report\\_2009\\_AAPP\\_Political\\_Prisoner\\_Review.pdf](http://www.aappb.org/Annual_Report_2009_AAPP_Political_Prisoner_Review.pdf)

"Burma: A Nuclear Wannabe; Suspicious Links to North Korea; High-Tech Procurements and Enigmatic Facilities", Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS)

<http://www.isis-online.org/isis-reports/detail/burma-a-nuclear-wanabee-suspicious-links-to-north-korea-high-tech-procureme/>

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<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=505>

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