

BURMA BULLETIN



A month-in-review of events in Burma



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

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- The SPDC completes its transformation to the façade of a civilian regime. The junta is dissolved and Sr Gen Than Shwe's yes-man Thein Sein is sworn in as President.
- The international community's reactions to Burma's transition to a new regime underscore the need for genuine democratic reforms.
- While an ineffective parliamentary opposition is bogged down in a fruitless political process, the NLD steps up its activities to promote broad political participation across Burma.
- Fighting between the Shan State Army-North and the SPDC Army results in civilian casualties and the displacement of hundreds of civilians in Shan State.
- A 6.8-magnitude earthquake in Eastern Shan State kills dozens and causes widespread damage. The regime restricts aid delivery and tightly controls information.
- UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma Tomás Ojea Quintana says the human rights situation remains "serious." The Human Rights Council condemns the SPDC's ongoing abuses and calls for an end to impunity.
- Latvia and Denmark add their support for the creation of a UN-mandated Commission of Inquiry on crimes in Burma.
- US drug reports says that Burma's production of heroin and amphetamines has increased and that the regime still launders drug money.
- Thousands of workers strike in Rangoon to demand better pay and working conditions.

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KEY STORY

New regime takes office

On 30 March, the SPDC completed its transformation to the façade of a civilian regime. President-elect Thein Sein was sworn in along with Vice-Presidents Tin Aung Myint Oo and Mauk Kham and 30 new cabinet ministers.¹ The ceremony also marked the dissolution of the SPDC.² To complete the cosmetic

¹ AP (30 Mar 11) Myanmar's junta is 'dissolved' after new, military-dominated government is sworn in; AFP (30 Mar 11) Myanmar swears in new president; AFP (30 Mar 11) Myanmar military rule ends, but army retains grip; DPA (30 Mar 11) Myanmar's new president sworn in, junta disbands; BBC (30 Mar 11) Burma's new parliament and head of military sworn in; Xinhua (30 Mar 11) Myanmar's new president sworn in, previous ruling body dissolved; DVB (30 Mar 11) President sworn in, junta dissolved; Mizzima News (30 Mar 11) Thein Sein sworn in as Burma's president

² NLM (31 Mar 11) Notification No. 5/2011; AP (30 Mar 11) Myanmar's junta is 'dissolved' after new, military-dominated government is sworn in; AFP (30 Mar 11) Myanmar swears in new president; BBC (30 Mar 11) Burma's new parliament and head

makeover, “Peace and Development Council” offices across Burma were renamed as “General Administrative Departments.”³ In addition, state radio and TV announced that Gen Min Aung Hlaing succeeded Sr Gen Than Shwe as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces.⁴

Parliamentary debate a sham

On 30 March, the new Parliament’s first session concluded.⁵ After being in session for over five weeks, on 9 March MPs in both Houses of Parliament were finally allowed to discuss motions and pose questions to the relevant ministers.⁶ However, it was readily apparent that the process was just for show:

- Ministers brushed off questions that dealt with important issues such as the release of political prisoners, land ownership rights, and education in ethnic nationality areas.⁷
- The ministers’ responses included a large amount of statistical and background information but failed to address the substantive issues raised by the MPs.⁸
- The Speakers rejected many questions because they were deemed “irrelevant.”⁹

NLD still a key political player

While an ineffective parliamentary opposition was bogged down in a fruitless political process, the NLD stepped up its activities to promote broad political participation across Burma:

- **3-18 March:** NLD Central Executive Committee members held talks with its Township Committee representatives from 13 States and Divisions at the party headquarters in Rangoon.¹⁰
- **22 March:** It was reported that NLD members from 19 townships established a farmers’ network in coordination with the NLD Central Executive Committee.¹¹ The network was formed to provide legal advice and important information to farmers.¹²
- **27 March:** About 300 people, including NLD members, ethnic leaders, veteran politicians, and foreign diplomats attended a ceremony to mark the 66th anniversary of Resistance Day at the NLD headquarters in Rangoon.¹³ Daw Aung San Suu Kyi marked the event with an appeal for better relations with the new regime “for the sake of the country.”¹⁴ Daw Suu also urged the authorities to create “fair political conditions by holding politically meaningful dialogue and releasing all political prisoners unconditionally.”¹⁵

of military sworn in; AFP (30 Mar 11) Myanmar military rule ends, but army retains grip; Xinhua (30 Mar 11) Myanmar’s new president sworn in, previous ruling body dissolved

³ AFP (30 Mar 11) Myanmar military rule ends, but army retains grip

⁴ Xinhua (30 Mar 11) Myanmar’s new president sworn in, previous ruling body dissolved

⁵ First Pyidaungsu Hluttaw regular session concludes successfully - Elected President, elected Vice-Presidents, Union level organization members make affirmation - President delivers address, his address recorded

⁶ Xinhua (09 Mar 11) Myanmar parliaments due on legislation process

⁷ Mizzima News (08 Mar 11) Parliament to discuss prisoners’ release, right to form associations; Irrawaddy (11 Mar 11) Burmese MPs Question, Get Stonewalled by Ministers; NLM (10 Mar 11) Existing farmland laws most appropriate to safeguard peasants’ rights - Pyithu Hluttaw continues first regular session for sixth day; NLM (16 Mar 11) Education Minister replies to Pyithu Hluttaw representative U Zaw Tun’s question

⁸ Irrawaddy (11 Mar 11) Burmese MPs Question, Get Stonewalled by Ministers

⁹ Irrawaddy (11 Mar 11) Burmese MPs Question, Get Stonewalled by Ministers; DVB (16 Mar 11) Clamp tightened on MPs questions

¹⁰ NLD (05 Mar 11) NLD CEC and Township Committees’ meetings began; NLD (06 Mar 11) Meeting of NLD CEC and Township Committees of Pegu Division held; NLD (09 Mar 11) Meeting of NLD CEC and Township Organizational Committees from Irrawaddy Division held; NLD (10 Mar 11) Meeting with Townships’ Committees continued; NLD (11 Mar 11) Meeting with NLD Townships’ Committees from Mandalay Division; NLD (13 Mar 11) Meeting with NLD members from Rakhine and Chin States; NLD (15 Mar 11) Meeting with Townships’ Committees continued with representatives from Magwe Division; NLD (16 Mar 11) Meeting with Townships’ Committees from Sagaing Division; NLD (20 Mar 11) The meeting with NLD Townships of Kachin State; NLD (18 Mar 11) The meeting with NLD Townships’ Committees in Shan State

¹¹ Mizzima News (22 Mar 11) NLD forms social network for farmers

¹² Mizzima News (22 Mar 11) NLD forms social network for farmers

¹³ NLD (27 Mar 11) 66th Anniversary of Anti Fascist Resistance Day held

¹⁴ DPA (27 Mar 11) Suu Kyi calls for better relations with Myanmar military

¹⁵ Reuters (27 Mar 11) Suu Kyi party seeks talks with Myanmar’s generals

SPDC offensives kill and displace civilians in Shan State

During March, heavy fighting continued between SPDC Army and Shan State Army-North (SSA-N) forces. In addition, the SPDC Army deployed additional troops to Northern Shan State.¹⁶ On 21 March, for the first time in 20 years, the state-run newspaper New Light of Myanmar described the Shan State Army-North (SSA-N) as “insurgents.”¹⁷ The following clashes occurred:

- **13 March:** Two hundred SPDC Army troops clashed with 60 SSA-N soldiers in Monghsu Township.¹⁸
- **14 March:** SPDC Army and SSA-N forces clashed in Kyethi and Monghsu Townships.¹⁹
- **15 March:** SPDC Army troops and SSA-N forces clashed twice in Monghsu and Tangyan Townships.²⁰
- **16 March:** SPDC troops from IB 33 and 291 overran and seized the SSA-N Nam Lao base in Tangyan Township.²¹
- **18 March:** SPDC Army troops and SSA-N forces clashed in Monghsu Township.²²

Civilians bore the brunt of the SPDC Army’s military operations. In addition, the SPDC Army’s attempts to cut support to SSA-N forces resulted in serious abuses and the forcible relocation of hundreds of villagers.

- **2 March:** SPDC Army troops from IB 66 forced about 200 households in Nansang Township to relocate as part of the preparations for a new regional command.²³
- **7 March:** It was reported that SPDC troops in Nansang Township forced the residents of three villages to abandon their homes and torched at least 300 houses.²⁴ It was also reported that between 200 and 300 villagers from Kunhing Township fled to safety.²⁵
- **14 March:** Clashes between SPDC Army and SSA-N forces caused the deaths of three civilians in Kyethi and Monghsu Townships.²⁶
- **16 March:** During the SPDC Army’s seizure of the Nam Lao base, an artillery shell killed four monks in a local temple. After the clash, SPDC troops detained more than 100 villagers inside the military base and also laid landmines in the area.²⁷ The violence forced between 500 and 600 villagers from Monghsu Township to flee to nearby towns.²⁸
- **17 March:** It was reported that SPDC Army personnel ordered the residents of 11 villages located in Kunhing, Nansang, and Kyethi Townships to leave their homes.²⁹

Fighting in Karen and Chin States

In March, fighting also continued in Karen and Chin States:

¹⁶ Mizzima News (14 Mar 11) Second clash breaks out between junta and SSA-N; Mizzima News (10 Mar 11) Regime troops reinforced in northern Shan State; SHAN (14 Mar 11) Junta, Shan army exchange fire again; SHAN (17 Mar 11) SSA ‘North’ given ultimatum to surrender; SHAN (29 Mar 11) Burma Army deploys more troops on Thai-Burma border

¹⁷ Irrawaddy (21 Mar 11) State Media Calls Shan State Army-North ‘Insurgents’

¹⁸ SHAN (14 Mar 11) Junta, Shan army exchange fire again

¹⁹ Irrawaddy (17 Mar 11) Civilians Killed in Shan State Clashes

²⁰ Mizzima News (15 Mar 11) Burmese Junta and SSA-N fighting continues

²¹ Mizzima News (17 Mar 11) Burmese troops overrun SSA-N base in Nam Lao

²² Irrawaddy (21 Mar 11) State Media Calls Shan State Army-North ‘Insurgents’

²³ SHAN (03 Mar 11) Forcibly relocated people to be forcibly relocated again

²⁴ Irrawaddy (07 Mar 11) ‘Four Cuts’ Forcing Shan Villagers from Homes

²⁵ Irrawaddy (07 Mar 11) ‘Four Cuts’ Forcing Shan Villagers from Homes

²⁶ Irrawaddy (17 Mar 11) Civilians Killed in Shan State Clashes

²⁷ Mizzima News (17 Mar 11) Burmese troops overrun SSA-N base in Nam Lao; SHAN (22 Mar 11) The brunt of the fighting comes to the people – as usual

²⁸ Mizzima News (17 Mar 11) Burmese troops overrun SSA-N base in Nam Lao

²⁹ Irrawaddy (17 Mar 11) Civilians Killed in Shan State Clashes

- **8 March:** Arakan Liberation Army (ALA) troops killed three SPDC soldiers in a clash with SPDC Army troops in Paletwa Township, Chin State.³⁰
- **10 March:** Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) soldiers killed 16 SPDC Army soldiers in an attack on an SPDC Army convoy from Battalion 201 traveling to the Wah Lay area of Myawaddy Township, Karen State.³¹
- **15 March:** KNLA Brigade 7 forces injured three SPDC Army soldiers, including a battalion commander, in an attack on the SPDC Army's LIB 54.³²
- **21 March:** KNLA soldiers killed seven SPDC soldiers and injured three during two attacks on SPDC Army troops near Wah Lay in Myawaddy Township.³³
- **26 March:** Soldiers from Karen National Union (KNU) Battalion 22 killed five SPDC soldiers during a clash with the SPDC Army in Paingkyon, Hlaignbwe Township.³⁴

SPDC hinders aid delivery to quake survivors

On 24 March, a 6.8-magnitude earthquake hit Eastern Shan State.³⁵ Monghpyak, Mongyawng, and Tachilek Townships were the hardest-hit.³⁶ According to SPDC figures, the earthquake toll was 74 dead and 125 injured. Over 300 buildings were destroyed or damaged.³⁷ However, aid workers estimated that at least 150 people had been killed.³⁸ On 30 March, the UN reported that quake left more than 3,100 people homeless.³⁹

As with prior natural disasters, the regime responded to the quake by restricting aid delivery and tightly-controlling information:

- Local SPDC authorities closely controlled the distribution of aid. The junta hampered relief efforts by imposing travel restrictions and requiring aid workers to seek advance permission to make direct deliveries.⁴⁰
- Regime officials turned away local volunteers who tried to provide victims with assistance.⁴¹ Reports also surfaced that local SPDC authorities and soldiers stole relief supplies.⁴²
- The regime failed to fully mobilize its military resources for search and rescue missions. Helicopters, trucks, and other vehicles that could have been used for relief efforts remained at their Shan State bases.⁴³
- The SPDC Censorship Board suppressed news reports of the disaster and barred news outlets from publishing estimates of the number of casualties that differed from the official figures.⁴⁴

SPDC still pushing, profiting from drugs

On 3 March, the US State Department issued its annual Narcotics and Control Strategy Reports. Findings in the reports include:⁴⁵

- Opium cultivation in Burma rebounded from historic lows along with an increase in production of amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS).

³⁰Irrawaddy (09 Mar 11) Three Junta Troops Killed by Arakan Liberation Army

³¹Mizzima News (11 Mar 11) Sixteen Junta troops die in guerilla ambush, says KNLA

³²KIC (21 Mar 11) Burmese Army officers hurt by KNLA guerrilla tactics

³³KIC (22 Mar 11) Burmese Army force attacked near Kanellay Camp

³⁴KIC (31 Mar 11) Soldiers from combined Burmese Army forces killed, injured by KNLA

³⁵AP (24 Mar 11) 6.8-magnitude quake strikes NE Myanmar; 1 dead; CNN (24 Mar 11) 6.8-quake strikes Myanmar; Reuters (24 Mar 11) Large quake hits Myanmar near northern Thailand; AFP (24 Mar 11) Two dead as strong quake hits Myanmar: officials

³⁶Mizzima News (25 Mar 11) Earthquake residents say death toll now 104; Irrawaddy (25 Mar 11) Death Toll Rising from Earthquake in Shan State

³⁷OCHA (27 Mar 11) Myanmar: Earthquake in Shan State Situation Report No. 3

³⁸Irrawaddy (26 Mar 11) Earthquake Death Toll Rising to 150

³⁹Irrawaddy (31 Mar 11) Over 3,000 Homeless after Shan State Earthquake

⁴⁰New Republic (29 Mar 11) Burma: Disastrous; SHAN (28 Mar 11) Aid to earthquake victims remains in high need

⁴¹Irrawaddy (28 Mar 11) Self-Serving Disaster Management Doubles the Suffering

⁴²Irrawaddy (30 Mar 11) Regime Restricts Flow of Information from Earthquake Site

⁴³Irrawaddy (30 Mar 11) Junta's Disaster Response Contrasts with Thailand

⁴⁴Mizzima News (29 Mar 11) New government to lift censorship on some journals; not newspapers

⁴⁵US Department of State (Mar 11) Narcotics Control Strategy Report Volume II, Money Laundering and Financial Crimes; US Department of State (Mar 11) Narcotics Control Strategy Report Volume I, Drug and Chemical Control; Irrawaddy (04 Mar 11) Fight Against Illicit Drugs Not a Priority for Junta: US

- Drug traffickers continued to move Burmese heroin and amphetamines to regional Asian markets and beyond.
- Burma's strategic geographic location, prolific drug production, and lack of transparency make it an attractive transit country for money laundering.

On 10 March, it was reported that Director of China's Yunnan Province Public Security Department Meng Sutie expressed his concern about the increased flow of drugs into Yunnan Province from Burma. Meng said that drug traffickers from Burma were major drug suppliers to Yunnan and were thought to be responsible for 80 to 90% of the drugs smuggled into the province.⁴⁶

Drug seizures for the month supported the findings of drug trafficking to Burma's neighbors:

- **4 March:** Border Guards Bangladesh (BGB) seized 1,200 amphetamine tablets at a border check-point in Teknaf, Bangladesh.⁴⁷
- **9 March:** A joint team of Border Security Forces and Mizoram Police in Aizawl, India, seized 818 grams of heroin worth six million rupees (US\$134,400) from a Burmese national.⁴⁸
- **16 March:** Thai authorities arrested two people entering Thailand and seized 12 kilograms of opium at Huay Pulaung Gate in Mae Hong Son Province opposite Burma's Karenni State.⁴⁹
- **21 March:** BGB arrested a Burmese national and seized 2,000 amphetamine tablets in Teknaf.⁵⁰

HUMAN RIGHTS

UN: Human rights situation "serious"

On 14 March, the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma Tomás Ojea Quintana presented his report to the Human Rights Council.⁵¹ The report's key findings include:⁵²

- Burma's human rights situation remains "serious."
- The 2010 elections "failed to meet international standards."
- In the lead-up to the elections, the number of political prisoners increased.
- As of January, there were 2,189 political prisoners (177 women). Of the total, 142 suffered from serious medical conditions which require immediate attention.
- Restrictions on freedom of expression continue, including the restrictions imposed on MPs and media outlets.
- Multi-billion dollar profits from natural gas sales were deposited in offshore bank accounts and not included as income in the national budget.
- Resources allocated by the SPDC to education are "woefully insufficient."
- Less than 60% of children in Burma completed their primary education.
- Delays in the issuance of visas to aid workers continued to hamper humanitarian efforts.

HRC condemns the SPDC

On 25 March, the UN Human Rights Council passed a resolution that strongly condemned the SPDC's ongoing systematic violations of human rights of the Burmese people.⁵³ It was the 22nd resolution adopted by the Geneva-based body since 1992. The resolution stated that:⁵⁴

- The SPDC ignored urgent calls contained in previous UN resolutions and reports concerning the human rights situation in Burma.

⁴⁶ China Daily (10 Mar 11) Poppy farmers are a growing problem

⁴⁷ Kaladan News (08 Mar 11) BGB seizes more Yaba tablets at Teknaf check-post

⁴⁸ PTI (09 Mar 11) Heroin worth Rs 60 lakh seized in Aizawl

⁴⁹ Kantarawaddy Times (21 Mar 11) Opium from Karenni State seized at Thai border

⁵⁰ Kaladan News (22 Mar 11) BGB arrests Burmese citizen with Yaba tablets at Teknaf

⁵¹ VOA (14 Mar 11) UN Expert Calls For Investigation of Rights Abuse in Burma

⁵² HRC, 16th session, Progress report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Tomás Ojea Quintana, 7 March 2011, A/HRC/16/59

⁵³ Chinland Guardian (27 Mar 11) UN Renews Expert Mandate, Condemns Burma's Rights Record Amidst Quake Disaster

⁵⁴ HRC, 16th session, 18 March 2011, Situation of human rights in Myanmar, UN Doc A/HRC/16/L.11

- The SPDC did not take the necessary steps to ensure a free, fair, transparent, and inclusive electoral process and the elections “failed to meet international standards.”
- The “grave human rights situation” in Burma forced thousands of people to seek refuge in neighboring countries.
- The SPDC did not heed “previous calls to end impunity” and, as a result, should carry out “a full, transparent, effective, impartial, and independent investigation into all reports of human rights violations, some of which may entail categories of crimes against humanity or war crimes” and bring to justice those responsible “as a matter of priority.”

SPDC outlaws internet calls

On 2 March, the SPDC-controlled Myanmar Post and Telecommunications ordered all internet cafés across Burma to stop providing Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) communication services.⁵⁵ The ban affects calls made over the internet through software such as Skype, Gtalk, and Pfingo.⁵⁶ Observers believed that the difficulty in monitoring this form of communication might have been the reason behind the ban.⁵⁷

Ethnic persecution continues

In its 25 March resolution [See above *HRC condemns the SPDC*], the UN Human Rights Council expressed “serious concern” over the continuing discrimination and human rights violations that affect the country’s ethnic nationalities, including Rohingya in Northern Arakan State.⁵⁸ In March, new reports emerged of SPDC’s persecution of Rohingya and Rakhine.

Between 1 and 20 March, Na Sa Ka personnel in Maungdaw Township, Arakan State, arrested about 30 local Rohingya villagers on charges of having ties with an unnamed insurgent group operating from Bangladesh.⁵⁹ Many of the detained villagers were tortured at various Na Sa Ka camps.⁶⁰ In addition, SPDC authorities in Rangoon arrested about 100 Rakhine in connection with a 27 February bomb blast in Rangoon’s Insein Township.⁶¹ Police repeatedly tortured several of those detained.⁶²

DISPLACEMENT

Rohingya in Bangladesh

In March, Bangladeshi authorities detained 32 Rohingya who attempted to flee persecution in Burma.

- **1 March:** Bangladeshi police in Naikonchari arrested 18 Rohingya for not being able to produce identity documents. The police remanded them into the custody of the Border Guards Bangladesh (BGB).⁶³
- **15 March:** BGB in Teknaf arrested 14 Rohingya as they entered Bangladesh and pushed them back to Burma the following day.⁶⁴

⁵⁵ Mizzima News (16 Mar 11) Government bans Internet overseas calls; Irrawaddy (16 Mar 11) Junta Makes Internet Phones Illegal; Chinland Guardian (19 Mar 11) VoIP Services Banned After Junta’s Order in Burma

⁵⁶ Mizzima News (16 Mar 11) Government bans Internet overseas calls; Irrawaddy (16 Mar 11) Junta Makes Internet Phones Illegal

⁵⁷ DVB (17 Mar 11) Internet calls banned as junta loses out; Global Post (21 Mar 11) Burma tries to strangle Skype

⁵⁸ HRC, 16th session, 18 March 2011, Situation of human rights in Myanmar, UN Doc A/HRC/16/L.11

⁵⁹ Kaladan News (05 Mar 11) One baby killed, 17 villagers detained in Maungdaw; DVB (07 Mar 11) Arrests, torture follow Muslim insurgency talks; Kaladan News (21 Mar 11) Linking Taliban is a creation: Nasaka director; Kaladan News (22 Mar 11) Nasaka Director meets locals in Maungdaw regarding Taliban rumors; Kaladan News (25 Mar 11) Western Commander visits Maungdaw; Narinjara News (20 Mar 11) Nearly 80 Suspected Taliban Members Arrested in Burma

⁶⁰ Kaladan News (05 Mar 11) One baby killed, 17 villagers detained in Maungdaw; DVB (07 Mar 11) Arrests, torture follow Muslim insurgency talks; Narinjara News (24 Mar 11) Leaders of Alleged Taliban Group Under Serious Interrogation

⁶¹ Irrawaddy (23 Mar 11) Arakan Nationals Arrested and Tortured in Rangoon; DVB (24 Mar 11) 100 Arakanese arrested, some tortured

⁶² Irrawaddy (23 Mar 11) Arakan Nationals Arrested and Tortured in Rangoon; DVB (24 Mar 11) 100 Arakanese arrested, some tortured

⁶³ Kaladan News (02 Mar 11) Police arrest 18 Rohingya at Burma-Bangladesh border

⁶⁴ Kaladan News (17 Mar 11) 14 Rohingya forced back to Burma from Bangladesh

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

International community urges reforms

While reactions from the international community to Burma's transition to a new regime were scarce, the overall theme was for Naypyidaw to bring about genuine democratic reforms.

- **30 March:**

- UN Sec-Gen Ban Ki-moon said that it was essential for Burma's new regime to respond to the people's desire "for national reconciliation, democratization and respect for human rights."⁶⁵
- US State Department spokesman Mark Toner called the transition "immaterial" and said it was based on a flawed election process that ensured key military figures "continued to dominate the government and all decision-making."⁶⁶

- **31 March:**

- Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu praised the new regime for promoting democracy.⁶⁷
- Japan's FM Takeaki Matsumoto said that Japan hoped that that Burma will become a more open and democratic state and further efforts to accomplish national reconciliation.⁶⁸
- German Chancellor Angela Merkel called on the new regime to release all political prisoners, introduce a peace and reconciliation process, and fully recognize all political parties - including the NLD.⁶⁹

Denmark and Latvia sign-on for a CoI on Burma

On 9 and 10 March, Denmark and Latvia respectively became the latest EU members to support the establishment of a UN mandated Commission of Inquiry on crimes against humanity and war crimes committed in Burma.⁷⁰ There are now 16 countries supporting a CoI on Burma.

ECONOMY

Consumers face price hikes

During the first two weeks of March, the black market price of gasoline increased by 25%, reaching 3,800 kyat (US\$4.30) per gallon in Rangoon and 5,500 kyat (US\$6.20) per gallon in Mandalay.⁷¹ To avoid the black market prices, drivers waited for hours to fill their vehicles at private gas stations where prices are fixed.⁷² On 10 March, the SPDC Ministry of Energy imposed fuel rationing at private stations in an effort to prevent customers from reselling petrol on the black market. Officials said that customers who violated the new rules would be banned from buying gasoline from private fuel stations for six months.⁷³

Strikes in Rangoon

During March, thousands of workers went on strike in Rangoon to demand better pay and working conditions.

- **8 March:** Around 3,000 workers at the Chinese-owned Tai Yi leather factory in Rangoon's Hlaing Tharyar Township went on strike over long working hours and pay cuts.⁷⁴ On 10 March, factory

⁶⁵ UN News Center (30 Mar 11) Ban calls for genuine transition to democracy in Myanmar

⁶⁶ VOA (30 Mar 11) US Dismisses Governmental Change in Burma as 'Immaterial'

⁶⁷ VOA (31 Mar 11) China Urges Respect for New Burma Government

⁶⁸ Xinhua (01 Apr 11) Japan urges new Myanmar gov't to achieve reconciliation with public

⁶⁹ AFP (31 Mar 11) Merkel urges Myanmar to free political prisoners

⁷⁰ BCUK (10 Mar 11) Denmark and Latvia support UN Burma Inquiry

⁷¹ Myanmar Times (14 Mar 11) Petrol prices soar 25 percent; Irrawaddy (02 Mar 11) Burma's Gasoline Prices Peak

⁷² Mizzima News (23 Mar 11) Authorities set maximum daily limit of petrol per day

⁷³ Mizzima News (23 Mar 11) Authorities set maximum daily limit of petrol per day

⁷⁴ Mizzima News (09 March 11) Rangoon workers demonstrate against excessive overtime

owners agreed to raise the hourly pay by 15 kyat (US\$0.01), but workers rejected the offer and continued the strike.⁷⁵

- **22 March:** Around 500 workers at the New Way shoe factory in Rangoon's Hlaing Tharyar Township went on strike after factory management rejected their demands for an increase in pay.⁷⁶

Gem sales rake in US\$2.8 billion for the regime

From 10–22 March, the SPDC hosted the annual Gems Emporium in Naypyidaw. Profits from the event totaled US\$2.8 billion, the highest income in the Emporium's 47-year history.⁷⁷

OTHER BURMA NEWS IN MARCH

2	Activists distribute anti-junta leaflets at the Zeigyo market in Mandalay.
2	Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry officials state that the ban on rice exports is a reaction to rising oil prices caused by unrest in the Middle East.
2	US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Kurt Campbell expresses serious concerns over the growing relationship between Burma and North Korea.
3	ILO reports that it has received 22 cases of forced recruitment of child soldiers so far in 2011.
3	Myanmar Airways International launches its maiden flight between Rangoon and Guangzhou, China.
3	Bangladeshi newspapers report that Burma ceded 15 acres of land to Bangladesh after completing a border survey on 28 February.
4	National Assembly's Speaker removes USDP MP Cho Nwe Oo from office because she does not meet citizenship requirements.
4	People's Assembly's Speaker removes USDP MP Arnt Gyi from office because he does not meet citizenship requirements.
4	Burma's regime notifies the World Organization for Animal Health of an outbreak of porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome in Mandalay Division.
5	SPDC Army soldiers force about 30 villagers from Three Pagodas Pass, Karen State, to porter wounded soldiers and supplies.
7	A court in Rangoon sentences 10 people to death on charges of murder related to a robbery in Rangoon's Kungyangon Township in May 2010.
8	Fifty university students in Moulmein, Mon State, protest over power outages during their exams.
13	EU Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response Kristalina Georgieva visits Mae La refugee camp in Thailand's Tak Province.
15	About 25 diplomats from EU countries meet with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and other leaders of pro-democracy parties to discuss economic sanctions in Rangoon.
15	FIFA president Joseph Blatter opens the football academy in Mandalay and pledges more financial assistance to Burma for the development of football.
16	SPDC Army soldiers from LIB 202 and 254 begin using prisoners to porter food rations from Kyaukyi, Pegu Division, to military camps in Papun Township, Karen State.
17	Daw Aung San Suu Kyi meets with NDF members in Rangoon.
17	UN Sec-Gen Ban Ki-moon's says that he is still considering the appointment of a full-time replacement for the position of UN Special Advisor to Burma.
21	A bomb explosion kills a local 17-year-old boy in Shwegyin, Pegu Division.
22	A group of unknown activists in Akyab, Arakan State, put up posters that express support for a 21 st century Panglong Conference.
22	State-run newspaper Myanma Ahlin says that the SPDC Navy rescued 3,374 fishermen whose boats sank in bad weather between 14 and 17 March.
22	SPDC authorities transfer seven Rakhine political prisoners from Rangoon's Insein prison to prisons in Kachin State.
23	A joint statement by the All Burma Monks' Alliance, the 88 Generation Students, and All Burma Federation of Student Unions criticizes Burmese political parties, ASEAN governments, and some Western countries that advocate lifting economic sanctions against Burma.
23	SPDC immigration authorities deport UK activist Benedict Rogers.
24	A member of the SPDC's Border Guard Force in Three Pagodas Pass, Karen State, commits suicide after shooting a female civilian at a military checkpoint.

⁷⁵ DVB (11 Mar 11) Rangoon workers stage mass strike

⁷⁶ Irrawaddy (22 Mar 11) Shoe Factory Workers in Rangoon Strike

⁷⁷ Xinhua (10 Mar 11) Annual gems fair opens in Myanmar's new capital

25	Thai police arrest more than 400 Burmese workers for working without work permits at the V&K Pineapple Canning Factory in Ratchaburi Province, Thailand.
26	United Wa State Army issues a statement that calls on the SPDC to resume dialogue with ceasefire groups in order to avoid a resumption of hostilities.
27	SPDC holds a low-key ceremony to mark Armed Forces Day in Naypyidaw.
28	US Chargé d'affaires Larry Dinger meets with members of eight opposition parties to discuss economic sanctions.
29	A court in Rangoon's Kamayut Township orders the release Myanmar Times former editor-in-chief Ross Dunkley on a 10-million-kyat (US\$11,780) bail.
30	In his inaugural address to the National Parliament, President Thein Sein urges "some nations" to cooperate with the new regime by ending sanctions and support to anti-regime groups.
31	Four US Senators say that the US should reject calls to ease sanctions on Burma and call on the Obama administration to name a special envoy for Burma.
31	EU Ambassador to Indonesia, Brunei, and ASEAN Julian Wilson says that the EU will not object to Burma's participation at the first ASEAN-EU business summit.

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