

Report Card  
Burma  
1 Jan~31 Mar 2003

# CHARM OFFENSIVE



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- \* Burma's Banking Crisis \* Price Hikes \*
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ALTSEAN  
BURMA

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## **CHARM OFFENSIVE**

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Amid fading hopes for reconciliation, the deepening economic crisis has spurred the junta to exploit every opportunity to wheedle aid and investment from the rest of the world.

While Burma's people dealt with tragic consequences of the burgeoning banking crisis, price hikes and ongoing human rights abuses, the first quarter of 2003 had quite a few triumphs for the generals. A flurry of international visits by governments and international organizations ensued, and the EU even lifted its visa ban temporarily to allow the SPDC to attend the EU-ASEAN summit<sup>1</sup>.

A major publicity coup was landed with the first ever visit of an Amnesty International delegation. However, the junta played games with them as they did with other prestigious visitors, with political arrests and rapes occurring during the visit. Instead of committing to real change, the junta trained villagers to lie to international monitors and threatened dire punishments for those who reported abuses.

While the EU and US appear to be losing patience with the regime's empty promises, the SPDC has coordinated a series of goodwill visits to shore up support from Asian neighbours. The visits produced new trade deals with Bangladesh, India, and Thailand, with big brother China continuing to roll out the dough for the generals. Thai PM Thaksin in his self-proclaimed role as 'mediator' has also helped out by applying more pressure on refugees, dissidents and armed ethnic groups in Thailand.

The SPDC clearly hopes that speeches and handshakes with international leaders will distract the world from the ongoing political stalemate. In February, the generals asked the US to enter a 'constructive dialogue' with them, however they continue to refuse to talk with the NLD. Instead the regime has stepped up harassment of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and her colleagues, marking the end of any 'confidence-building' stage. Meanwhile, UN Special Envoy Razali Ismail, who has been trying to enter Rangoon since November 2002 has been sidelined, with the regime telling him not to contact them for the time being. Releases of political prisoners have slowed to a trickle.

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 3

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Despite international political and economic pressure, no readiness for negotiations can be detected. How much more external and internal muscle-flexing is necessary to get the junta to the negotiating table?

## DEMOCRACY & DIALOGUE

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Improving

Stagnant

Deteriorating

The junta released Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in May 2002 as a bargaining chip to receive much-needed aid and investment, but the deal did not pay off. Angered by the warm welcome Daw Suu received by tens of thousands of supporters as she travelled around the country, the generals have continued to step up harassment and surveillance of the NLD.

On 5 February, Daw Suu received the 2002 Al Neuharth Free Spirit Award carrying a US\$1 million prize. "I have been given many awards, but I don't think I've ever been given an award for freedom of spirit," she stated.<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile, political prisoners continue to be used as bargaining chips by the regime. New arrests were made – 14 pro-democracy activists, including Buddhist nuns and township NLD leaders were recorded, while only 4 prisoners were released prior to the visit of the UN Special Rapporteur. In a disturbing development, an activist group reported that 15 prisoners went missing last year; they are believed to have been executed. [see Human Rights]

### THE DIALOGUE THAT NEVER WAS

We do not accept a process in which one side only takes and the other is made to give. It is also important that a negotiation process does not compromise one's principles and policies ~ NLD, 4 January 2003.

Ignoring international and domestic calls for change, the junta continues to demonstrate its unwillingness to share power or even negotiate. On 21 January, just days before being promoted to Secretary 2, Lt Gen Soe Win clearly indicated the regime's position, stating: "The SPDC not only will not talk to the NLD but also would never hand over power to the NLD."<sup>3</sup>

In late March, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said: "I see it very simply. The SPDC is just not ready to talk. We've been trying to get to the negotiating table for 14 years but they have never been keen on the idea...We want to reach the kind of settlement that will be beneficial to everybody, including members of the military."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Freedom Forum (6 Feb 03) Aung San Suu Kyi: Video Transcript

[<http://www.freedomforum.org/templates/document.asp?documentID=17541>]

<sup>3</sup> DVB (28 Jan 03) No plan to talk to NLD and we are not afraid of USA – SPDC

<sup>4</sup> Bangkok Post (24 March 03) Junta looks in no hurry in talks with Suu Kyi

During a February visit by fellow Nobel Peace Laureate Jody Williams, Daw Suu also reiterated her call for pressure both inside and outside the country, and stressed that it already had made a difference.<sup>5</sup>

While earlier urging tolerance for the junta, by the end of March, UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Paulo Sergio Pinheiro had turned increasingly pessimistic, noting “From all my meetings both with the NLD and the government, my impression is that there was no substantial progress in the dialogue.”<sup>6</sup> Days later he concluded: “It is a serious setback that dialogue between the Government and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has not yet taken place at the highest level.”<sup>7</sup> [See Human Rights]

### **INVITING THE US, KEEPING THE UN OUT**

In an obvious rejection of the UN-brokered dialogue, the SPDC continues to postpone UN Special Envoy Razali Ismail’s visit, and has reportedly told him not to contact them for the time being.<sup>8</sup>

On 15 February, Japan hosted a UN-sponsored closed-door seminar in Tokyo aimed at defining ways out of the deadlock. It was attended by Razali and high-level officials from the US, Europe, Australia and Japan, however China and ASEAN members responded to SPDC protests and did not attend, or sent only low-level officials. No significant outcomes were announced.<sup>9</sup>

Instead of talking to the opposition and Razali, on 19 February, the junta boldly invited the US to lift sanctions, start a “constructive dialogue” and “to roll up its sleeves, open its heart, and join with us to bring a better life to the people (of Myanmar).”<sup>10</sup> The real message from the regime was for the international community to stop intervening, as the junta blamed US sanctions for unemployment and failures in the health care and education systems. [see International Relations].

<sup>5</sup> Nonviolence International (18 Feb 03) Nobel Peace Laureate visits Burma

<sup>6</sup> AFP (26 Mar 03) UN rights envoy "very frustrated" over lack of prisoner releases

<sup>7</sup> 59th Session of the Commission on Human Rights (31 March 03) UN Statement by Mr. Paulo Sergio Pinheiro

<sup>8</sup> Bangkok Post (24 Mar 03) Junta Looks In No Hurry In Talks With Suu Kyi

<sup>9</sup> DVB (17 Feb 03) Mr Razali to hold a meeting on Burma in Japan, and DVB (18 Feb 03) Mr Razali in Japan

<sup>10</sup> AFP (20 Feb 03) Myanmar rejects US scepticism of reform, sanctions threat & MT (24 Feb-3 March 03) US urged to 'roll up sleeves' and help

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NLD spokesperson U Lwin rejected the need for mediators: “We don’t need anybody, US or whoever, for the talks. What is important is to have a will. We can do it [have dialogue] right now by ourselves.”<sup>11</sup>

### **SPDC LASHES OUT AT OPPOSITION**

The regime’s mounting hostility towards Daw Suu and the opposition shows the hypocrisy of their alleged commitment to the dialogue. In February, the regime launched its first serious media attack in over 2 years with a speech by Information Minister Brig-Gen Kyaw Hsan in the Myanmar Ahlin Daily. “Internal and external destructive elements are impeding development work in the country. Destructive elements must be annihilated,” Kyaw Hsan stated.<sup>12</sup>

Local authorities have also stepped up surveillance of the 70 NLD offices that were permitted to reopen.<sup>13</sup>

On 26 February, local authorities harassed NLD members in Kawthaung Township, Tenasserim Division, claiming that their office and political activities were illegal. The officials admitted their orders came from higher authorities.<sup>14</sup>

On 24 January, 2 NLD members were sentenced to 2 years in prison for complaining when denied their rice rations.<sup>15</sup>

### **HARASSMENT OF DAW SUU**

Direct harassment of Daw Suu has also resurfaced. On 2 January, her phone line was cut, preventing her from delivering a message to the 1st Asian Social Forum Summit.<sup>16</sup> A 22 January phone conversation with UK Foreign Office Minister Mike O’Brien was also disrupted and finally cut off by the SPDC.<sup>17</sup>

Pamphlets attacking Daw Suu were distributed in Sagaing Division, Tenasserim Division, Shan State and Arakan State, after NLD township meetings and during the Union Day ceremony.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Irrawaddy (25 Feb 03) Opposition: Sincerity over Third Party

<sup>12</sup> AP (14 Feb 03) Myanmar’s ruling junta attacks opposition

<sup>13</sup> DVB (18 Feb 03) New Political Prisoners & Economist (20 Mar 03) Deadlocked: Talks with the junta are going nowhere

<sup>14</sup> DVB (1 March 03) NLD harassed in Kawthaung

<sup>15</sup> DVB (30 Jan 03) Two NLD members imprisoned

<sup>16</sup> The Hindu (6 Jan 03) Suu Kyi not allowed to phone in message

<sup>17</sup> AP (24 January 03) Myanmar ‘hinders’ British dial-up diplomacy

<sup>18</sup> DVB (29 Jan 03) Pamphlets against Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in Monya, and DVB (18 Feb 03)

New Political Prisoners, and DVB

During Daw Suu's December trip to Arakan State, the SPDC obstructed her movements and blasted crowds with music like "Give Up Lady." The US and EU strongly criticized this state-sponsored harassment and on 10 January, the All Women's Movement Committee of Burma (AWMCB) stated: "The obstruction, limitation and irritation to her on private visits to pagodas and monasteries, and during public gatherings, violated her (Daw Suu's) dignity and her political movements."<sup>19</sup>

However, Daw Suu said her trip to Arakan State was a great success, as people showed "they would continue to support us in spite of all the difficulties, in spite of the oppression and the intimidation."<sup>20</sup>

### **Daw Suu Sentenced in Court Case**

On 21 February, a court sentenced Daw Suu to a 500 kyat fine or 7 days in jail for 'unlawfully preventing her cousin, Ko Soe Aung from entering their compound,' in May 2002. The suit was lodged after Daw Suu filed a complaint against her cousin for physically assaulting her. The regime is using the case as another way of harassing Daw Suu who never filed the complaint in the court, but only to the police, according her attorney. She protested against the unfair trial by choosing the prison term, but the SPDC suspended the sentence.<sup>21</sup>

### **COMMITTEE REPRESENTING PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT (CRPP)**

In January, the Committee Representing People's Parliament (CRPP) accepted two applicants, including a new party, the Patriotic Veterans, and an independent MP, U Thein Pe of Kantbalu Township, Sagaing Division.<sup>22</sup> [See Appendix 1]

### **SPDC REFUSES TO RECOGNIZE ETHNIC PARTIES**

On 6 January, members of the Military Intelligence officially warned United Nationalities Alliance (UNA) leaders that the SPDC would not recognize the alliance. The UNA is a coalition of 8 ethnic nationality political parties that won seats in the 1990 elections. Member organizations include: Arakan League for Democracy, ALD; Chin National League for Democracy, CNLD; Kachin State National Congress for Democracy, KNCD; Karen National Congress for Democracy, KNC; Kayah State all Nationalities League for Democracy, KNLD;

<sup>19</sup> AFP (10 Jan 03) Myanmar women's group denounces harassment of Aung San Suu Kyi

<sup>20</sup> Freedom Forum (6 Feb 03) FF announces 2002 AI Neuharth Free Spirit of the Year

<sup>21</sup> Irrawaddy (March 03) Suu Kyi's day in court, and DVB (25 Feb 03) Lawyer denies Aung San Suu Kyi filed lawsuit against cousin

<sup>22</sup> DVB (8 Jan 03) CRPP accepts new members



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Mon National Democratic Front, MNDF; Shan Nationalities League for Democracy, SNLD; and Zomi National Congress, ZNC.<sup>23</sup>

### MILITARY THREAT

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**Alarming!**

**Stagnant**

**Decreasing**

While taking an increasingly hard stance against the opposition, SPDC Chairman Sr-Gen Than Shwe continues to expand the military and to cement his power base by surrounding himself with supporters. Deputy Sr-Gen Maung Aye, in the meantime, has temporarily disappeared from the political stage, as he receives treatment for prostate problems in Rangoon and Singapore.<sup>24</sup>

Arms and equipment continue to be delivered to Burma, even as the economy further deteriorates. The notorious NaSaKa was upgraded. The regime also apparently attempted to consolidate loyalty amongst public servants by promising a five-fold pay increase [see Economy].

### RESHUFFLE

In a surprise move on 1 February, Sr-Gen Than Shwe appointed Air Defense General Lt Gen Soe Win as Secretary 2, the 4th highest-ranking position in the 13-member SPDC hierarchy.<sup>25</sup> Lt Gen Soe Win is an honorary USDA official and considered a hardliner in his views on the opposition. His promotion came days after a defiant speech confirming that the regime had no intention to engage in dialogue with the NLD. [See Democracy & Dialogue] The Secretary 2 position had been vacant since Lt. Gen Tin Oo died in a helicopter crash 2 years ago.<sup>26</sup>

#### **Nine Regional Commanders were promoted at the same time as Lt Gen Soe Win to the following positions:**

- Lt Gen Thura Shwe Mann (ex-Southwest Command Commander) Chief of Staff of the Defense Services, officiating immediately under Vice Commander in Chief of Defense Services Vice-Senior General Maung Aye.

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<sup>23</sup> DVB (13 Jan 03) Burmese authorities refuse to recognize United Nationalities Alliance

<sup>24</sup> Japan Economic Newswire (14 Mar 03) Myanmar general discharged from Singapore

hospital  
<sup>25</sup> AP (12 Feb 03) Myanmar reshuffles cabinet

<sup>26</sup> AP(3 Feb 03)Myanmar reshuffles cabinet

- Lt Gen Thein Sein (ex-Triangle Region Command Commander) Adjutant-General.
- Lt Gen Thiha Thura Tin Aung Myint Oo (ex-Northeast Command Commander) Quarter-Master General.
- Lt Gen Tin Aye (ex-Southern Command Commander) Military Weapons Production General.
- Lt Gen Kyaw Win (ex-Northern Command Commander) Director of Military Training.
- Lt Gen Ye Myint (ex-Central Command Commander) Bureau of Special Operations-1 Commander.
- Lt Gen Aung Htwe (ex-Western Command Commander) Bureau of Special Operations-2 Commander.
- Lt Gen Khin Maung Than (ex-Rangoon Command Commander) Bureau of Special Operations-3 Commander.
- Lt Gen Maung Bo (ex-Eastern Command Commander) Bureau of Special Operations-4 Commander.<sup>27</sup>

#### **New Bureau of Special Operations Commanders**

- Lt Gen Ye Myint
- Lt Gen Aung Htwe
- Lt Gen Khin Maung Than, Lt Gen Maung Bo.<sup>28</sup>

#### **Appointment of Deputy Chief Justice and Supreme Court Justices**

- Thein Soe Deputy Chief Justice.
- Khin Maung Aye Supreme Court Justice.
- Tin Aye Supreme Court Justice.
- Thet Tun Supreme Court Justice.
- Kyaw Win Supreme Court Justice.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> NCGUB NewsDesk (4 Feb 03) The Top Commanders

<sup>28</sup> SPDC (1 Feb 2003) Declaration No 1/2003. Signed by Khin Nyunt

<sup>29</sup> SPDC (2 Feb 03) Order No 1/2003. Appointment of Deputy Chief Justice and Supreme Court Justices. Signed by Khin Nyunt

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### **Appointment of Deputy Attorney Generals**

- Dr Tun Shin
- Han Shein
- Myint Naing.<sup>30</sup>

### **New Appointments and “Retirements” of Ministers**

- Pan Aung, Minister for Rail Transportation, reassigned to Minister at the Prime Ministers Office.
- Assignment of Maj-Gen Aung Min as Minister for Rail Transportation, Dr Kyaw Myint as Minister for Health, Maj-Gen Hla Tun as Minister for Finance and Revenue.
- Maj-Gen Ket Sein, Minister for Health.
- Khin Maung Thein, Minister for Finance and Revenue, “permitted to retire”.<sup>31</sup>

### **NE WIN FAMILY DEATH SENTENCE APPEAL REJECTED**

In January, Burma’s Supreme Court rejected an appeal against death sentences handed down in September to a son-in-law and 3 grandsons of former dictator General Ne Win.<sup>32</sup>

### **EXPLOSION ON KANBAUK-MYAINGKALAY GAS PIPELINE**

On 11 February, a section of the Kanbawk-Myaingkalay pipeline exploded in Northern Ye Township, Tenasserim Division, which is the 3rd explosion in little over a year. As a result, local authorities have increased security along the pipeline, forcing local villagers in Mudon and Thanbyuzayat Townships to serve as guards and threatening that villagers will be punished if insurgents blow up the pipeline.<sup>33</sup>

### **18 VILLAGERS KILLED IN SHOOTING BETWEEN ARMY AND PEOPLES’ MILITIA**

18 villagers were killed and 25 injured in a skirmish between SPDC army troops and members of the SPDC-backed people’s militia (Pyithusit) in Taung Thon Lon

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<sup>30</sup> SPDC (2 Feb 03) Order No 2/2003. Appointment of Deputy Attorneys General. Signed by Khin Nyunt

<sup>31</sup> SPDC (1 Feb 2003) Declaration No 1/2003. Signed by Khin Nyunt

<sup>32</sup> NYT (3 Jan 03) Myanmar Appeal rejected in treason case

<sup>33</sup> Mon Forum (31 Jan 03) Civilian Guards along Kanbawk-Myaingkalay Gas Pipeline & Kao Wao (17 Feb 03) Gas Pipeline explodes in Mon State

village, Tenasserim Division. The fight occurred on 30 March, when soldiers began harassing a dancer during a stage show.<sup>34</sup>

## **BOMBS**

On 11 March, it was reported that authorities postponed the Mandalay Industrial Exhibition after allegedly finding 4 bombs at the exhibition site and receiving information that ‘destructive elements’ were planning to carry out terrorist acts during the exhibition.<sup>35</sup>

On 27 March, the SPDC’s Armed Forces day, a bomb exploded in central Rangoon killing 2 people and injuring 2 others. Another explosive device was found and defused in a park opposite the US Embassy.<sup>36</sup>

## **ARMY VS NASAKA**

On 19 March, soldiers from SPDC Battalion 919 ransacked a Nasaka tollgate near Ann Township, Arakan State in revenge for harassment by the Nasaka. There is general discontent with Nasaka extorting bribes at their tollgates.<sup>37</sup>

## **NEW EQUIPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

### **Russian fighter jets**

In late December, 4 of the 10 MiG-29 fighter jets ordered from Russia in 2001 arrived at Shante Air base, Meiktila Township, Mandalay Division. On 13 March, an additional 2 jets arrived at Mergui Air base, Tenasserim Division. Russian pilots have provided flight training, and there are reports of assistance from Chinese and French military engineers.<sup>38</sup>

### **Chinese Air Force weapons**

On 10 January, it was reported that 3 truckloads of Chinese-made air force weapons were delivered to Shante Air base.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Karen Monthly Human rights Situation Report Tenasserim Division (March 03)

<sup>35</sup> DVB (11 March 03) Burma postpones Mandalay Industrial Expo fearing terrorist attack

<sup>36</sup> DPA (27 Mar 03) Bomb kills two, injures two others in Yangon, and AFP (28 March 03)

Myanmar blast was a bomb, says Yangon

<sup>37</sup> Narinjara News (28 March 03) Burmese Army ransack Nasaka Security and Toll Gate

<sup>38</sup> DVB (9 Jan 03) More Russian Mig-29 Fighter Jets Arrive In Meiktila, and DVB (15 Mar 03)

Two Russian-made fighters arrive at southeast base, company opens office

<sup>39</sup> (10 Jan 03) New Weapons arriving from China

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On 27 January, missiles and missile launchers were distributed to battalions under the command of 505 Heavy Artillery Base and 303 Heavy Artillery Base at Khamauk Kyi, Tenasserim Division.<sup>40</sup>

### **Artillery base and helicopter pad**

A new artillery base and a helicopter pad were constructed with forced labor on Kalae-koke Island, Mon State in December and January, respectively. The base is used by LIBs 31 & 62, and is equipped with five 81mm mortars.<sup>41</sup>

### **Mon State's nuclear reactor**

Progress continues on the construction of the SPDC's Russian-supported nuclear reactor. On 31 March, 5,000 tons of Russian equipment arrived via 2 freighters at the Zadetkyi Kyun Naval Base in Kathaung Township, Mon State. Between 25 March and 3 April, 32 Russian experts surveyed the proposed building site at Kalagok Kyun. The SPDC has reportedly already confiscated more than 300 acres of land from local people for construction.<sup>42</sup>

### **UPGRADING NASAKA**

Since January 2003, the regime has reorganized the 'Border Supervisory Companies,' or Nasakas into 'Border Supervisory Battalions' (BSB), or Nasayas. This force is being expanded from 5 to 7 BSBs, comprised of immigration, police and intelligence personnel. No 2 BSB led by Lt Col Win Zaw is already stationed in Shan State in Lashio with companies in Mu-se, Kyu Hkok, Kunlong, Chin Shwe Haw, and Lweje.

### **New Locations for Border Supervisory Battalions:<sup>43</sup>**

- No 1 BSB at Myitkyina in Kachin State
- No 2 BSB at Lashio in Shan State (already established)
- No 3 BSB at Keng Tung in Shan State
- No 4 BSB at Taunggyi in Shan State
- No 5 BSB at Pa-an in Karen State

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<sup>40</sup> DVB (5 Feb 03) Chinese weapons sent to southern Burma

<sup>41</sup> DVB (10 Jan 03) Forced Labours in Mon State, and Mon Forum (31 Jan 03) Forced labour for the helicopter landing pad construction

<sup>42</sup> DVB (5 Apr 03) "Nuclear reactor" equipment reportedly shipped to Burmese naval base

<sup>43</sup> DVB (11 Jan 03) Rangoon said to establish seven new border supervisory battalions

- No 6 BSB at Mergui in Tenasserim Division
- No 7 BSB at Kalemyo in Sagaing Division

### **Carrot and Stick conscription**

In January, the Nasaka Headquarters ordered each of the nine Nasaka units in Arakan State to conscript at least 5 members. Servicemen wishing to retire are now forced to find 2 new recruits to replace them.<sup>44</sup>

On 31 January, it was reported that the No. 4 Military Training School in Thanbyazayat Township, Mon State, offered rewards of 20,000 kyat for civilians and promotions for soldiers who were able to enlist new recruits. Captain Than Tun told local villagers that new recruits would receive 7000 kyat monthly, as well as food rations and even money for wedding ceremonies. Military schools accept recruits of all ages, including young boys.<sup>45</sup>

In the same month, in Tavoy, Tenasserim Division, SPDC troops forced villagers to join the Pyithusit (SPDC-backed people militia) for 3 weeks at a time. To be exempted from the duty, people have to pay 3,500 kyat per shift or 30,000 kyat per year.<sup>46</sup>

## **DRUGS**

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Improving

Stagnant

Deteriorating

### **THAKSIN'S WAR ON DRUGS**

On 1 February, Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra initiated a 3-month 'drug war.' The crackdown that followed targeted low level addicts and dealers, while failing to deal with major drug lords and key centers of amphetamine production in Burma. While Thaksin has no problem ordering a drug crackdown that by 25 March had caused almost 1,900 deaths, he continues to pussyfoot around the junta and their ethnic allies involved in drug production and trafficking.<sup>47</sup> In January, the Thai military estimated that one billion methamphetamine tablets would be

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<sup>44</sup> Narinjara News(20 Feb 03) New Conscription for the Burmese Army

<sup>45</sup> Mon Forum (31 Jan 03) award for new soldier recruit

<sup>46</sup> Karen Monthly Human Rights Situation Report Tenasserim Division (Jan 03)

<sup>47</sup> AFP (25 Mar 03) Estimated death toll in Thai war on drugs nears 1,900

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smuggled into Thailand from Burma in 2003. Thai Privy Council chairman Gen Prem Tinsulanonda expressed concern that the United Wa State Army (UWSA) shows no sign of curtailing drug production across the border.<sup>48</sup> However, in December, the US-trained, Thailand based Task Force 399, was relieved of its drug suppression role reportedly because the SPDC was unhappy about their activities.<sup>49</sup>

The drug war has caused the price of methamphetamines in northern Thailand to soar as much as six-fold to 500 baht (US\$11.68) per pill.<sup>50</sup> Following report of shortages in methamphetamines, millions of pills in Burma were moved to easy-to-access locations opposite northern Thai provinces.<sup>51</sup> In March, Pithaya Jinawat, head of Thailand's Northern Narcotics Control Office, said that due to the drug war, about 50 major drug dealers on Thailand's blacklist had escaped to Burma.<sup>52</sup>

### **UWSA DENY PUTTING CONTRACT ON THAKSIN**

In March, Thai Deputy Prime Minister Chavalit Yongchaiyudh said there was "reliable" intelligence that Bao Youxiang, commander of the UWSA, was responsible for putting a bounty on Thaksin's head.<sup>53</sup> Bao Yuxiang said the charges were groundless and the UWSA was not involved in the production or trafficking of drugs. The SPDC came out in Bao's defense and 'strongly hinted' that further Thai accusations against Bao would endanger future relations.<sup>54</sup>

### **WA CONTINUE PRODUCTION**

At the end of March, Thai Col Apichart Meesommon, commander of the 5th Cavalry Regiment, reported that 500 Red Wa soldiers were sent for training at a military school in New Yawn town, opposite Chiang Rai's Mae Fa Luang. This is an increase from 100-200 soldiers, which he believed reflected their preparations for drug trafficking. About 3 million speed pills were ready to be smuggled at Ban Na Mon, opposite Mae Hong Son, 2 million at a Burmese town opposite Chiang Mai's Wiang Haeng district, and one million pills at Laos' Bo Keo, opposite Chiang Rai.<sup>55</sup> Thailand estimated that about 50 methamphetamine factories along the Thai-

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<sup>48</sup> Association Press (13 Jan 03) Bangkok police arrest 13, seize 1.5 million speed pills

<sup>49</sup> Irrawaddy (16 Jan 03) New Visa Regulations for Burmese

<sup>50</sup> Agence France Presse (14 Mar 03) Speed pill prices soar as Thai drugs blitz bites

<sup>51</sup> SHAN (12 March 03) Speeds awaits to be sped across Thailand

<sup>52</sup> Bangkok Post (28 March 03) Police Holding 14,445 Dealers; 467 Killed

<sup>53</sup> AFP (14 Mar 03) Deputy PM says Wa drug lord put bounty on Thaksin's head

<sup>54</sup> BBC (17 Mar 03) Warlord denies Thai PM plot

<sup>55</sup> Bangkok Post (30 Mar 03) Red Wa gearing up for big drugs push into Thailand

Burma northern border belonged to drug kingpin Wei Hsueh-kang and the ethnic Red Wa in Burma.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Bangkok Post (28 Mar 03) Police Holding 14,445 Dealers; 467 Killed



### **SSA JOINS WAR ON DRUGS**

The Shan State Army (SSA), at its annual meeting in January, resolved to continue with its fight against drugs.<sup>57</sup> On 5 February, the SSA claimed to have seized 280,000 methamphetamine tablets made by the UWSA en route to Thailand. SSA Commander Yawd Serk said his group had adopted an anti-drug policy to help Thailand's fight against drugs, in gratitude for providing shelter for Shan refugees.<sup>58</sup>

Col. Yawd Serk, who the SPDC claims is a drug trafficker, has offered to testify to an international court that the SSA is not involved in the narcotics trade and said that he is willing to show international officials where the drug factories are located, using information gathered through SSA intelligence.<sup>59</sup>

### **LESS OPIUM, MORE METHAMPHETAMINES**

In the past few months, the SPDC has paraded diplomats, foreign businessmen and journalists around Shan state to show isolated results of opium eradication projects, however, there is little talk of growing methamphetamine production.<sup>60</sup> In January, James Kelly from the U.S. Dept of State said that while the area under poppy cultivation in Myanmar had decreased, "unfortunately, methamphetamine production, which strikes worst at Burma's Southeast Asian neighbors, has likely increased."<sup>61</sup>

In its 2002 annual report, the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) praised Burma's reduction in opium cultivation, but warned "there continue to be indications that manufacturers of heroin are increasingly shifting their attention to methamphetamine, particularly in Myanmar."<sup>62</sup>

### **US FAILS TO CERTIFY BURMA**

On 31 January, the U.S. announced that they would not certify Burma's anti-drug efforts.<sup>63</sup> President George Bush reported to Congress that Burma failed during the previous 12 months "to adhere to their obligations under international counter-

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<sup>57</sup> SHAN (5 Feb 03) Shan rebels rejoin war on drugs

<sup>58</sup> The Nation (22 Jan 03) Shan Army intercepts drugs shipment headed for Thailand

<sup>59</sup> The Nation (22 Jan 03) Yawd Serk willing to testify on drugs trade

<sup>60</sup> BBC (17 Mar 03) Warlord denies Thai PM plot

<sup>61</sup> AFP (17 Jan 03) Myanmar to host drugs meet with India, China

<sup>62</sup> AFP, Feb 26 Illicit production of methamphetamines rising sharply in SE Asia: UN report

<sup>63</sup> Washington File (3 Feb 03) Report Says Burma, Guatemala, Haiti Not Strong Fighters in Drug War

narcotics agreements and to take the measures set forth in U.S. anti-drug law,” the White House stated.<sup>64</sup>

The U.S. said large-scale poppy cultivation and opium production continued, large quantities of methamphetamines were produced in and trafficked from Burma, SPDC seizures of methamphetamines had decreased and the regime had failed to take significant steps to curb UWSA involvement in drug trafficking.<sup>65</sup>

The regime deflected responsibility by saying the only people celebrating would be the drug traffickers. “Our regret is that without US co-operation, the timeframe to totally eradicate drugs in Myanmar is significantly longer,” said spokesman Hla Min.<sup>66</sup>

### **US NOT INVITED TO OPIUM SURVEY**

In March, the SPDC and the UN will conduct a survey on opium poppy cultivation in Shan State. However, Pol Col Hkam Awng said “the Myanmar government has no plans to conduct further surveys with the US, in protest against Washington’s lack of recognition of the achievements in Myanmar’s narcotics eradication effort.”<sup>67</sup>

### **INDIA & CHINA**

In January, the junta hosted a meeting with India and China on the issue of chemicals used in the production of methamphetamines.<sup>68</sup> In March, Pao Yu Chan, leader of the UWSA, blamed China and Thailand for producing the chemicals used to make methamphetamine tablets.<sup>69</sup>

On 19 March, a 12-member Chinese delegation led by President of Yunnan People’s Security College Professor Deputy Police Maj-Gen Mr Luo Bingsen arrived in Rangoon at the invitation of the SPDC Central Committee for Drug Abuse Control (CCDAC). They discussed matters relating to narcotic drugs and mutual cooperation between the police forces.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Kao Wao News (17 Jan 03) The Power Maniacs And Narco-Barons Of Burma

<sup>65</sup> Washington File (3 Feb 03) Report Says Burma, Guatemala, Haiti Not Strong Fighters in Drug War

<sup>66</sup> South China Morning Post (8 Jan 03) Regime's lobbying effort on drug eradication fails to win over the US

<sup>67</sup> Myanmar Times (24 Jan 03) Poppy survey in March

<sup>68</sup> Agence France-Presse (17 Jan 03) Myanmar to host drugs meet with India, China

<sup>69</sup> Bangkok Post (10 Mar 03) Burma Moving Against Opium, Not Speed, Says Former Envoy

<sup>70</sup> MIC (21 Mar 03) Burma, China Discuss Drug Control

## AID FOR CROP SUBSTITUTION

Japan granted US\$1.2 million in March to support agricultural training of opium farmers under the Drug Control and Development Project in the Wa Region of the Shan State.<sup>71</sup>

China donated US\$12,000 to the SPDC Central Committee for Drug Abuse Control (CCDAC) for the “construction of a model training school for poppy substitute crops cultivation and livestock breeding in Kokang region, Northern Shan State Special Region 1.”<sup>72</sup>

Germany and Italy in January donated US\$1 million and US\$100,000, respectively, as an extra fund for a 4-year drug control project in the Wa region, of Shan State.<sup>73</sup>

## ECONOMY

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Improving

Stagnant

Deteriorating

While a new banking crisis drags Burma further into poverty, in February the SPDC announced plans to build a second Information and Communication Technology Park in Mandalay at a cost of 4 billion Kyats (about US\$4 million).<sup>74</sup>

Despite the dark economic outlook, the regime continues to paint a rosy picture of economic growth. In January, the SPDC reported that over 200,000 new private sector jobs were created in 2002, 4,000 of which were in joint venture projects.<sup>75</sup> In March the regime gave the vague report that 14% or 5,600 of the country’s private industries were running “successfully.”<sup>76</sup> To maintain the façade, however, the SPDC reportedly planned to pass off goods made in China, India and Japan as ‘made in Myanmar,’ at the March Mandalay Industrial Exhibition.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> UN News Centre (31 March 03) Grant to help rid Myanmar of poppy cultivation, UN anti-drug office says

<sup>72</sup> TV Myanmar (1 March 03) China gives Burma aid for drug control programme

<sup>73</sup> Xinhua News Agency (7 Jan 03) Germany, Italy fund Myanmar’s drug control project

<sup>74</sup> Xinhua (24 Feb 03) Myanmar to set up second ICT park

<sup>75</sup> Xinhua (6 Jan 03) Over 3 million employed in private sector in Myanmar

<sup>76</sup> Xinhua (21 March 03) Over 5,600 private industries run successfully in Myanmar

<sup>77</sup> DVB (11 March 03) Burma postpones Mandalay Industrial Expo fearing terrorist attack

**PRICE HIKES**

In January it was reported that the price of transportation, communications, housing, cars, construction materials and basic commodities had risen dramatically. The junta blamed the price hikes on the strengthening US\$ and the rising price of fuel. However, other analysts say it is due to a combination of over-exporting, uneven distribution, increased transportation prices and rumors that civil service employees will receive a five-fold salary increase beginning in February.<sup>78</sup> The rise in prices has reportedly sparked an increase in crime, especially in Rangoon. One well-known Burmese author recently noted: “These crimes are a signal of the current situation, that people are on the brink of starvation.”<sup>79</sup>

Commodity/Service	Increase
Rice	Price increased over 70% from Jan 02-Jan 03 <sup>80</sup>
Train and Plane fares	Price doubled from 1 Jan 03 <sup>81</sup>
Peanut oil	Price rose from 1,800 kyat (US\$1.80) for one viss (1.63 kg) in Dec 02 to 2,400 kyat (US\$2.40) per viss in Jan 03 <sup>82</sup>
Fixed phone rates	Myanmar telecommunications authorities raised rates 5 times on Feb 1 <sup>83</sup>
Cellular phone rates	Myanmar telecommunications authorities raised rates 6 times on Feb 1 <sup>84</sup>
Rents in Rangoon	A room renting for 600,000 kyats (US\$600) in Dec 02 rents for 1,500,000 (US\$1,500) in Jan 03 <sup>85</sup>

**PAY RAISE FOR CIVIL SERVANTS**

On 8 January, Brig-Gen Tha Aye, Commander of the Coastal Region Military Command and Chairman of the Tenasserim Division Peace and Development Council, announced that civil service employees nationwide would receive a pay increase of up to 500% beginning in February. Employees believe this is an attempt

<sup>78</sup> DVB (11 Jan 03) Pay increase rumour causes fall in kyat, rise in commodity prices; DVB (8 Jan 03) CRPP accepts new members & Boston Globe (16 Mar 03) Within Burma's outward smiles, wincing of pain

<sup>79</sup> Irrawaddy (29 Jan 03) Up Up and Away

<sup>80</sup> World Markets Analysis, (27 Jan 03) Economic Isolation Hits Hard as Myanmar's Inflation Rises

<sup>81</sup> AP (13 Jan 03) Myanmar increases fuel rations for private cars and taxis

<sup>82</sup> Irrawaddy (29 Jan 03) Up Up and Away

<sup>83</sup> Xinhua (4 February 03) Myanmar raises phone call charges

<sup>84</sup> Xinhua (4 February 03) Myanmar raises phone call charges

<sup>85</sup> DVB (14 Jan 03) The Rise and Rise of Commodity Prices

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to bribe them to support the regime's stalling of the talks, or else a compromise before new 5,000 kyat notes are issued. In January, rumors of the salary increase pushed the value of the kyat down still further.<sup>86</sup>

### **FORCED SALE OF CROPS**

#### **Shan State**

On 29 January, it was reported that the SPDC was continuing to force farmers to sell their rice at extremely low prices.<sup>87</sup> On 25 March it was reported that near Taunggyi approximately 50 people were imprisoned for not meeting the quotas, and these policies have caused many farmers, including Shan, Yanglai (Striped Karen) and Pa-O to flee their villages.<sup>88</sup>

#### **Sagaing Division**

Due to a poor harvest and the huge difference between the regime's price and the market price many cotton farmers are saying they will be unable to fulfil the set quota they must sell to the SPDC. On 30 January, it was reported that 5 farmers from Pale township were arrested for failing to fulfil their quotas; they were released after paying bribes.<sup>89</sup>

#### **Arakan State**

The SPDC has set 'rice collection' goals, forcing farmers to sell 12 bushels of rice per acre of paddy at only a fifth of the market price. The owners of shrimp farms, salt fields and fruit orchards are also forced to sell ten tins of rice to the regime per acre of farmland. The price paid by the junta is less than the cost of growing the rice, and those who cannot sell the amount of rice demanded are fined 1,500 kyat (US\$1.50) for each tin of rice they fail to provide. One village councillor said: "This is clean state-sponsored extortion down to an inhuman scale."<sup>90</sup>

In Ramree (Rambree) Island Township farmers who cannot fulfill their quotas are forced to purchase rice at the market price of 2,000 kyat (US\$2) a tin to sell to the regime at 350 kyat (US\$0.35). As a result of increased rice quotas and a poor

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<sup>86</sup> DVB (11 Jan 03) Pay increase rumour causes fall in kyat, rise in commodity prices

<sup>87</sup> DVB (29 Jan 03) Forced rice sales in Shan State

<sup>88</sup> SHAN (25 Mar 03) Failure to fill rice quota sends farmers to the can

<sup>89</sup> DVB (30 Jan 03) Farmers forced to sell cotton

<sup>90</sup> Narinjara, (3 Feb 03) Burmese junta's gangs of rice robbers & Narinjara, (6 Feb 03) Rice collection from non-cultivators of rice – Burmese junta's new tricks to squeeze people dry

harvest as of 15 January only one out of 15 Townships in Arakan had been able to meet most of the rice quota.<sup>91</sup>

In Maungdaw Township, Nasaka have confiscated 1,140 acres of paddy land from local farmers, however, they still force the farmers to sell the rice quotas from their own lands.<sup>92</sup>

### **Magwe Division**

Local officials in Pwintphyu Township have reportedly confiscated land from farmers who failed to meet rice quotas, and forced rice mills to close down. As a result people in the area are facing a rice shortage.<sup>93</sup>

### **Mon State**

On 28 March, it was reported that a 78-year-old farmer was arrested and tortured at Nyaungpin Seik Police Station for failing to meet his rice quota.<sup>94</sup>

### **SPDC EXTORTION**

Beginning December 2002, local Military Intelligence in and around Ponnagyun Township, Arakan state have been forcing fishermen to pay regular tolls or else face fines and jail sentences.<sup>95</sup> In March, it was reported that at a number of tollgates in Karen State, DKBA, Military Intelligence, SPDC troops and local officials are forcing drivers to pay tolls of up to 10 times the set rate.<sup>96</sup> [See also Human Rights]

### **OIL & GAS**

#### **Oil and Gas Production Up**

In March, the SPDC Ministry of Energy reported that production of crude oil was up 21.2 % in the first 10 months of 2002 over the previous year, and natural gas production was up 2.64%. According to regime figures, since 1988, contracted

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<sup>91</sup> Narinjara (24 Feb 03) Mobile rice 'purchase' Drive Unit

<sup>92</sup> Narinjara (15 Mar 03) The tale of the confiscation of rice paddies

<sup>93</sup> DVB (19 Mar 03) Farmers in trouble

<sup>94</sup> DVB (28 March 03) Farmer tortured in Mon State

<sup>95</sup> Narinjara (19 Feb 03) Burmese Military Intelligence agents extort tolls from Fishermen

<sup>96</sup> Mizzima (20 Mar 03) Burmese toll bridges levying extravagant tax

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foreign investment in the country's oil and gas sector has reached US\$ 2.607 billion.<sup>97</sup>

### **BANK CRISIS**

This is the worst financial situation since 1988...The situation is now critical...the bottom line is people have no confidence in the banking system, the economic system or the government system. ~ Sann Aung, a member of NCGUB, 20 February

Burma's private banking crisis began in February with the collapse of a number of private financial institutions. This sparked a run on private banks, which responded by limiting withdrawals and canceling account transfers and credit card services. As strict laws prohibit people in Burma from using foreign banks, the banking crisis has affected a large number of people with savings and/or outstanding loans in private banks.<sup>98</sup> In addition, many businesses have been forced to shut down or lay off workers. The regime's failure to respond to the crisis has only made things worse.

### **Timeline of the Banking Crisis**

- Feb 1 SPDC Finance and Revenue Minister Khin Maung Thein retires.<sup>99</sup>
- Feb 1-7 Rumors circulate that certain bank notes will be demonetized. Investors rush to withdraw their savings as private investment companies appear increasingly unstable and rumors circulate that major banks are heading for collapse.<sup>100</sup>
- A Rangoon business magazine, "Living Color," reports that Burma's 3 largest private banks: Asia Wealth Bank, Yoma Bank, and Kanbawza banks are heavily overextended.<sup>101</sup>
- Feb 10 The governor of Burma's Central Bank, Kyaw Kyaw Maung, assures the public that the 20 private banks have solid financial backing. Banks begin refusing withdrawal requests by depositors.

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<sup>97</sup> Xinhua (3 Feb 03) Myanmar produces more oil, gas in first three quarters of 2002& Xinhua (2 March 03) Myanmar's oil, gas production up in first 10 months of 2002

<sup>98</sup> Xinhua (Feb 24 03) Myanmar's bank crisis still continues & The Age (20 Mar 03) Burma's Banking Meltdown Goes Unnoticed Beyond Its Borders

<sup>99</sup> Irrawaddy (21 March 03) Burma's Private Banking Crisis—a Chronology

<sup>100</sup> Irrawaddy (21 March 03) Burma's Private Banking Crisis—a Chronology

<sup>101</sup> Irrawaddy (21 March 03) Burma's Private Banking Crisis—a Chronology

- Feb 12 Burma's largest bank, the Asia Wealth Bank, asks the Central Bank for a bailout security bond of 30 billion kyat (US \$30 million).
- Feb 14 The SPDC Press Scrutiny Board imposes a news blackout on the banking crisis. Rumors that Asia Wealth Bank (AWB) lost out on huge investment deals with a Chinese company cause widespread panic among investors. AWB has close connections to top-level regime officials including Khin Nyunt, and AWB vice-chairman, Eike Tun, is reported to be involved in the drug trade.<sup>102</sup>
- Feb 15 Yoma Bank suspends all credit card services.<sup>103</sup>
- Feb 16 Secretary-1 Gen Khin Nyunt blames exiled dissidents for causing the financial crisis by spreading false rumors.
- Feb 17 Banks limit withdrawals by depositors to 500,000 kyat (US \$500) per week and ban account transfers. Asia Wealth Bank suspends credit card services, and Kanbawza Bank announces plans to do the same.
- Feb 18 Investors begin to gather in front of banks demanding their money. After a Rangoon bank is stoned by angry depositors, security forces including traffic and riot police are called in to disperse large crowds and guard banks in Rangoon and Mandalay. A number of businesses reportedly lack cash to pay wages to staff. Some banks further restrict weekly withdrawals to only 200,000 kyat (US\$200).
- Feb 20 As the shortage of hard currency intensifies, the kyat rises 20% in value against the dollar in one week. Some banks again lower weekly withdrawals to 100,000 kyat (US\$100). In addition, some banks demand investors repay 20-25% of outstanding loans in several days.<sup>104</sup>
- Feb 21 The Central Bank pledges 25 billion kyat (US \$25 million) to bail out the 3 largest private banks. Other banks further reduce withdrawals to just 50,000 kyat (US\$50) per week.<sup>105</sup>
- Gen Khin Nyunt publicly declares: "For the people who have unnecessarily withdrawn money, there is no safer place for them to keep money than in the banks."<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Irrawaddy (14 Feb 03) Bankruptcies spur financial panic

<sup>103</sup> Irrawaddy (21 March 03) Burma's Private Banking Crisis—a Chronology

<sup>104</sup> Irrawaddy (20 Feb 03) Kyat strengthens; border trade hit

<sup>105</sup> Irrawaddy (21 March 03) Burma's Private Banking Crisis—a Chronology

<sup>106</sup> Irrawaddy (21 March 03) Burma's Private Banking Crisis—a Chronology



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- Feb 22 Singaporean companies watch the crisis with concern and at least one Singaporean trading firm in Rangoon closes.<sup>107</sup>
- Feb 24 Zaw Win Naing, managing director of Kanbawza Bank, assures the public that: "The problem we face can be worked out soon, and it is a temporary problem."
- Feb 25 Banks again order investors to repay their debts, increasing demands from 25 % repayment to 50 %.
- Feb 26 The SPDC orders that banks cease account transfers.
- Feb 28 Following the SPDC bailout, some businesses are allowed to make sufficient withdrawals to pay staff wages, however, the majority of small accounts and personal investments remain restricted.
- Mar 2 Mizzima News Service reports that the closure of the Burma Economic Bank in Tamu, Sagaing Division, close to the India-Burma border, resulted in large losses for Indian and Burmese traders. While Indian exporters complain of debts owed by Burmese buyers, the vice-president of the Indo-Myanmar Traders Union said: "The Burmese traders are also worried over the developments but they are prevented from protesting."
- Mar 4 Military Intelligence begins investigating former Finance and Revenue Minister, Khin Maung Thein in connection with the financial crisis.
- Mar 14 Financial problems are linked to a rise in robberies. Investors in Rangoon begin selling luxury goods such as cars in order to repay loans. The price of used cars falls by up to 50%.
- Mar 18 The value of the kyat grows as the shortage of currency increases. Rangoon money changers report exchange rates as low as 850 kyat/\$US1.
- Mar 30 Deadline for investors to repay at least 50% of debts from most banks. Asia Wealth Bank warns of reprisals against those who fail to pay back loans.<sup>108</sup>

## FOREIGN TRADE & INVESTMENT

### Foreign Investment and Trade Down

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<sup>107</sup> Irrawaddy (21 March 03) Burma's Private Banking Crisis—a Chronology

<sup>108</sup> Irrawaddy (21 Mar 03) Burma's Private Banking Crisis – a Chronology

In February, the SPDC Central Statistical Organization (CSO) reported that foreign investment fell 14.7% in the first 10 months of 2002. New contracted investment came from Malaysian investors in the oil and gas sector (US\$ 44 million) and Hong Kong investors in manufacturing (1.52 million).<sup>109</sup>

During the same period, the CSO reported that Burma's foreign trade was down by 11.78%. CSO statistics show imports accounting for US\$ 1, 731 million, down 32.47%, while exports were at US\$ 2,409, up 13.3%. Trade with ASEAN members accounted for almost half of Burma's total foreign trade.<sup>110</sup>

**Top Trading Partners (first 10 months of 2002)<sup>111</sup>**

Country	Value of trade (US\$ million)
1. Thailand	1, 095.71
2. China	675.76
3. Singapore	581.87
4. India	388.92
5. Malaysia	231.31
6. Japan	226.72
7. Republic of Korea	147.19

**Regional Free Trade Pact to Boost Economic Cooperation**

On 7 March, Commerce ministers from Burma, Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand set up a team of experts to work out details for a regional free trade pact. The BIMST-EC (Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand Economic Cooperation) ministers plan to institute a framework treaty by February 2004, and are also considering relaxing visa regulations for business travelers between the 5 countries.<sup>112</sup>

**Russia**

In March, Rangoon business magazine, Living Color, reported that the same Russian company which has sold the SPDC 2 MIG-29 fighter jets has opened a branch office in Rangoon. [See Military] The magazine also reported that the

<sup>109</sup> Xinhua, (21 Feb 03) Foreign investment in Myanmar falls in first 10 months of 2002

<sup>110</sup> Xinhua News Agency (28 Feb 03) Myanmar's foreign trade declines in first 10 months of 2002

<sup>111</sup> Xinhua News Agency (28 Feb 03) Myanmar's foreign trade declines in first 10 months of 2002

<sup>112</sup> Kaladan (9 Mar 03) Burma, 4 other countries for free Vtrade agreement

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company was preparing to build an agricultural equipment factory and planning other large joint venture activities.<sup>113</sup>

### Thailand

Thailand continues to push ahead with bilateral and private investments in Burma. In February, the 2 countries agreed to expand account trade, and in March the Thai government announced plans to develop special economic zones to increase cross border trade. A planned zone in Chiang Rai would seek to increase border trade with Burma, Laos and Southern China.<sup>114</sup>

**Oil & Gas:** On 21 January it was reported that Thai Government owned PTT Exploration and Production will invest 92.19 billion baht (US\$ 2.15 billion) over the next 5 years in oil and gas fields in the gulf of Thailand and Burma.<sup>115</sup>

**Salween Dams:** Controversy continues over an agreement signed in December 2002 between Thai corporation MDX and The SPDC Ministry of Energy to construct the Tasarng (Ta Sang) Dam in Shan State. On 22 January, the Shan Herald Agency for News (SHAN) reported that MDX had contracted the Thai Sawad company to construct a road from Tasarng to the dam site. Managing director of Thai Sawad, Somkid Onman "Sia Ord," is reportedly close to UWSA druglord Wei Hsuehkang.<sup>116</sup>

At least 10 villagers have been killed while being forced to labor on the dam project. On 14 February SHAN reported that after forcibly relocating 1,500 villages in the dam area, SPDC authorities were already encouraging the remaining villagers to move as well. One militia leader told villagers in Wan Sala, Mongton Township: "If you continue to stay, you will be forced to work for them with little or no pay. And in the end, after the dam is finished, you will still be thrown out of your homes anyway."<sup>117</sup>

Despite strong opposition by Shan organizations as well as Thai and International environmental and human rights groups, on 13 March Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra gave his support for the Tasarng Dam and 4 other proposed dams along the Salween river. Thaksin maintains that the dams are a crucial part of the 'Asian

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<sup>113</sup> DVB (15 Mar 03) Two Russian-made fighters arrive at southeast base, company opens office

<sup>114</sup> Xinhua, (18 Feb 03) Thailand, Myanmar agree to expand account trade & Bangkok Post (31 March 03) Thailand Plans Special Economic Zones, Promotion of Cross-Border Trade

<sup>115</sup> Lloyd's List, (21 Jan 03) Thai oil budget

<sup>116</sup> SHAN (22 Jan 03) Building Salween dam likely next year

<sup>117</sup> SHAN (14 Feb 03) The Salween Dam Project

Power Grid' project, however, opponents say that the construction will negatively impact 10 million people.<sup>118</sup>

The Thai government controlled Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT) is currently awaiting SPDC approval to construct the remaining dams and soliciting investments from private companies in Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and China. On 19 March, the China National Machinery Equipment company expressed interest in investing 200 billion baht (US\$5 billion) in the project.<sup>119</sup>

**KNU Protests Rebuilding Of 'Death Railway':** The Karen Nation Union (KNU) has protested the SPDC's plans to rebuild the famous 'Death Railway,' linking Mon State in Burma with Kanchanaburi Province in Southern Thailand. The SPDC has asked Thailand to consider rebuilding the railway to promote trade and tourism, however, the KNU states that the project would lead to massive human rights abuses against Burmese villagers in the area. The 'Death Railway' should not be rebuilt before peace comes to Burma," said Padoe Mahn Sha, KNU general secretary.<sup>120</sup>

## Bangladesh

Following Sr-Gen Than Shwe's December visit to Bangladesh, the 2 countries have worked to boost bilateral trade. On 30 January, a shipping service between the 2 countries was instituted.<sup>121</sup> During a 3 March meeting, SPDC Foreign Minister Win Aung and Bangladeshi counterpart M. Morshed Khan agreed to work out the details of a proposed road link and coastal shipping arrangement.<sup>122</sup> Prior to the 19 March visit of Bangladeshi Prime Minister Khaleda Zia to Burma, a trade agreement was announced where Burma would import fertilizer from Bangladesh and Bangladesh would import Burmese rice of corresponding value. During the Bangladeshi PM's 3-day tour, a number of bilateral proposals were expected to be finalized including agreements on accounts trade, a coastal trading deal, and the institution of a joint trade commission and a foreign ministerial joint commission. The new trade agreement prohibits the border trade of 3rd-country products. In addition, during the visit, a Bangladeshi business delegation accompanying Prime Minister Khaleda reported that the SPDC had agreed to lease land for rice cultivation to Bangladeshi

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<sup>118</sup> Nation (14 Mar 03) PM backs damming of Salween

<sup>119</sup> Asian Tribune (19 Mar 03) China eyes up Salawin: A Thailand - Myanmar electricity scheme

<sup>120</sup> Irrawaddy (19 Feb 03) KNU Opposes Death Railway Project

<sup>121</sup> AFP, Jan 30 Bangladesh, Myanmar start shipping service

<sup>122</sup> Narinjara (3 March 03) Burmese Foreign Minister meets his counterpart in Dhaka

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businessmen.<sup>123</sup> A Bangladesh Trade Fair was also held in Rangoon during this time.<sup>124</sup>

In 2002 Burma exported US\$171 million worth of goods to Bangladesh, however because most exports come through Singapore and/or occur in the informal economy, this amount was only officially reported as US\$16.94 million.<sup>125</sup>

**Border Trade Back to Normal:** In February it was reported that border trade between Bangladesh and Burma had returned to previous volume after last year's campaign by Bangladesh to crackdown on cross border smuggling.<sup>126</sup>

**Bridge To Link Burma and Bangladesh:** On 24 March, it was reported that Bangladeshi Communications Minister Barrister Nazmul Huda said that construction of a bridge linking Gundung, Bangladesh with Taungbro, in Burma was a high priority. Huda said that the proposed road from Taungbro to Buthidaung would complete the road link between Rangoon and Dhaka.<sup>127</sup>

**Oil Pipeline to Bangladesh:** On 12 January, Bangladesh State Minister for Energy and Mineral Resources A K M Mosharraf Hossain reported that a proposal for a Burmese gas pipeline crossing through India and Bangladesh had been sent to the Bangladeshi Prime Minister. Natural gas would be piped from a recently discovered gas field between Kyaukpru Island and Sittwe in Arakan State. The SPDC Ministry of Energy, the Daewoo company, and India's Oil and Natural Gas Commission and Gas Authority are joint investors in production of the gas field.<sup>128</sup>

## China - Doles Out the Dough

The latest goodwill visits between the 2 countries have been highly profitable for the junta. In recent agreements China has offered Burma a preferential loan of US \$200 million for economic development, a US\$ 6.04 million grant for technological cooperation and an unspecified amount of debt relief.<sup>129</sup> China has also provided a

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<sup>123</sup> Narinjara (17 Mar 03) Burma to lease out Land to Bangladesh!

<sup>124</sup> Kaladan (6 March 03) Dhaka, Rangoon plan trade expansion & Narinjara (12 Mar 03) Bangladeshi fertilizer for Burma

<sup>125</sup> Xinhua (17 Mar 03) Trade data between Bangladesh, Myanmar likely to change

<sup>126</sup> Narinjara (25 February 03) Burma Bangladesh Border Trade resumes

<sup>127</sup> Narinjara (24 Mar 03) Burma Bangladesh Friendship Bridge in the offing

<sup>128</sup> Narinjara (15 January 03) Burmese gas through Bangladesh

<sup>129</sup> FT (17 Jan 03) China throws Burma a financial lifeline

low interest loan of US\$4.2 million to finance over 8800 tons of steel tracks to improve Burma's rail network.<sup>130</sup>

In March, the China National Machinery Equipment Company expressed interest in investing 200 billion baht (US\$5 billion) in a project to build dams along the Salween River.<sup>131</sup> [See Thailand]

### **Asean - Burma Gears Up to Enter AFTA**

On 9 January, the State-run New Light of Myanmar reported that by 2008, Burma would reduce tariffs to 0-5% on all imports from ASEAN member countries. The move occurs as part of ASEAN's agreement to allow Burma to enter the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) in 2008. Entry into AFTA is expected to boost Burmese exports to other ASEAN members. According to SPDC statistics, in 2002, trade with ASEAN members accounted for 43% of Burma's total foreign trade.<sup>132</sup>

As part of the AFTA agreements, Burma has allowed ASEAN based companies to manufacture all types of production and marketing of furniture, and basic construction materials from teak extracted and sold by state-owned industries.<sup>133</sup>

### **India**

During a January visit to India, Foreign Minister Win Aung invited India to invest in the IT, agriculture, transport and energy sectors in Burma. After the visit it was announced that India planned to send experts to Burma to study the possibility of exploring off-shore oil and gas deposits.<sup>134</sup> [See also International Relations]

**Joint Projects Along The Kaladan River:** On 5 February, the Arakan Independence Alliance (AIA) reported that the Indian government and the SPDC were planning to institute a transport project and build a pipeline along the Kaladan river. The AIA is a coalition of the National United Party of Arakan (NUPA) and Arakan Rohingya National Organization (ARNO). The first foreign companies to

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<sup>130</sup> MT (27 Jan-2 Feb 03) \$4.2 million tracks deal to improve rail network, and AP (14 Jan 03)

Chinese Vice Premier Li visits Myanmar

<sup>131</sup> Asian Tribune (19 Mar 03) China eyes up Salawin: A Thailand - Myanmar electricity scheme

<sup>132</sup> Xinhua (10 January 03) Myanmar to reduce tariffs to 0-5 pct by 2008

<sup>133</sup> Bernama, (31 Jan 03) Asean Broadens Liberalization Of Investment Rules

<sup>134</sup> AP (21 Jan 03) India official: Myanmar says it won't support anti-India insurgent groups

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invest in the project include Daewoo International, ONGC Videsh Limited (OVL), Gail and Korean Gas Company (Kogas).<sup>135</sup>

**Bank Crisis Affects Cross-Border Trade:** In March, it was reported that as a result of the bank crisis, cross border trade between India and Burma had dropped significantly. Only a small quantity of goods was allowed to cross the border, and both Indian and Burmese traders suffered significant losses after the Burma Economic Bank in Tamu, Sagaing Division was shut down.<sup>136</sup>

### Vietnam

On 15-17 March, Sr-Gen Than Shwe conducted an official visit to Vietnam aimed at promoting trade and economic cooperation. [See also Int'l Relations] While trade between the two countries was valued at US\$ 12 million dollars in 2002, both countries are hoping to boost it by US\$30 million by 2005.<sup>137</sup>

### Australia & Canada

On 27 March, the Canadian company Ivanhoe Mines Ltd announced that production of LME Grade A copper from the Monywa Copper Project in Burma could increase by 450% following an independent expansion plan by the Australian company Ausenco. The mines are run by Myanmar Ivanhoe Copper Company Limited (MICCL), a 50/50 joint venture between Ivanhoe Mines and the SPDC's No.1 Mining Enterprise. The plan is waiting for approval from the MICCL board and investors from Australia, Japan, Korea, and China.<sup>138</sup>

### TOURISM

In January, SPDC Minister for Hotels and Tourism, Maj-Gen Saw Lwin admitted that 12% of revenue from private tourist enterprises goes to fund the army. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has also observed that the effort to attract tourists "is responsible for a lot of forced labour."<sup>139</sup>

The regime reported 500,000 foreign tourist arrivals in 2002 with tourism earnings at US\$ 100 million. Up to 90,000 tourists entered via China, while 142,000 arrived

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<sup>135</sup> Kaladan News (5 Feb 03) AIA has released a joint press release about the recent agreement of Burma and India to develop economic projects

<sup>136</sup> Mizzima (13 March 03) Bank crisis takes toll on traders in India and Burma

<sup>137</sup> AFP (17 Mar 03) Myanmar junta leader leaves Vietnam after official visit

<sup>138</sup> Canada NewsWire (27 Mar 03) Ivanhoe Mines Ltd. - New independent scoping study recommends staged expansion of Monywa project to 129,000 tonnes of LME Grade A copper cathode per year

<sup>139</sup> Burma Campaign Austria, (30 Jan 03) Burma-boycott: Campaign against AUA-Lauda Air

from Thailand. The SPDC reportedly plans to begin granting visas-on-arrival for travelers on certain designated foreign airlines.<sup>140</sup>

### **Intrepid Travel back in Burma**

On 10 March, Australian tour company Intrepid Travel announced plans to resume trips to Burma. In 2001, the company discontinued tours, saying “we were concerned that our involvement in Burma was signalling a tacit approval of the SPDC regime.”<sup>141</sup>

### **Expanding Flight Networks**

- 17 Jan Thai Airways International and Myanmar Airways International signed a code-sharing agreement allowing passengers to travel between Rangoon and Bangkok using tickets issued by either airline. Thai Airways has said they are looking to expand flights into Burma.<sup>142</sup>
- 21 Jan Israel agreed to establish a direct air link with Burma with twice-weekly flights between Rangoon and Tel Aviv.<sup>143</sup>
- 2 Feb It was reported that the SPDC is negotiating with Bangkok Airways to begin direct flights between Bagan and Angkor Wat in Cambodia.<sup>144</sup>
- 30 Mar The SPDC announced plans to launch a 2nd national carrier, United Myanmar Air (UMA), in June with flights to Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok, and Singapore. The new airline is a joint venture between Hong Kong-based Sunshine Strategic Investment Company, and the SPDC Ministry of Transport.<sup>145</sup>

## **PRESSURE AND DIVESTMENT**

### **SPDC Stalls Premier Withdrawal**

Six months after announcing plans to sell its 26.7 % stake in the Yetagun pipeline project, Britain’s Premier Oil Company has yet to finalise its withdrawal from Burma. The SPDC continues to delay Premier’s withdrawal by denying the

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<sup>140</sup> Xinhua (24 Jan 03) 500,000 foreign tourists visit Myanmar in 2002

<sup>141</sup> The Guardian (7 March 03) City diary

<sup>142</sup> Nation (17 Jan 03) Thai signs Burma deal & Xinhua (28 Jan 03) Myanmar, Thai air carriers' code sharing to facilitate passengers

<sup>143</sup> Xinhua (17 Feb 03) Myanmar to establish air link with Israel

<sup>144</sup> Xinhua (3 Feb 03) Thai carrier to fly between Myanmar and Cambodian cities

<sup>145</sup> AFP (30 March 03) Second national airline for Myanmar to launch this year: report



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company written permission to hand over local assets to its partners. Reportedly, Petronas of Malaysia, PTT of Thailand, Nippon Oil of Japan, and SPDC-controlled MOGE are all interested in taking over Premier's share of the project.<sup>146</sup>

### Divestment Campaigns

**Lauda Air** - On 31 March, human rights organizations, trade unions and activist groups throughout Europe launched a campaign to protest Austrian Airlines/Lauda Air flights to Rangoon.<sup>147</sup>

**IHC Caland** - On 26 February, it was reported that a number of banks have agreed to stop financing projects in Burma run by Dutch oil drilling supply company IHC Caland. IHC Caland says it will not withdraw from its project being carried out in collaboration with Britain's Premier Oil, but will not take on any new projects.<sup>148</sup>

**British American Tobacco (BAT)** - Under increasing pressure from human rights groups to pull out of joint investments with the SPDC, in January, British American Tobacco contributed US\$50,000 to fund a 4-day human rights awareness workshop. The workshop reportedly focused on "capacity building that may help the country to move closer to international conventions on women's human rights."<sup>149</sup>

### 2 More Retailers Join Garment Ban

In March, 2 major US retailers, Saks Incorporated and May Department Stores agreed to ban products made in Burma from their shelves.<sup>150</sup> The bans follow a sustained campaign by US human rights and activist groups, which has led to a total of 40 stores to date choosing to ban products from Burma. As a result, the US Dept of Commerce reported in February that total clothing imports from Burma fell from US\$ 411 million in 2001 to US\$303 million last year.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Guardian (26 March 03) Burma's military halts Premier exit

<sup>147</sup> Burma Centrum Nederland ( 31 March 03) International Campaign against Austrian Airlines/Lauda Air

<sup>148</sup> Burma Centrum Nederland (26 Feb 03) Dutch banks agree not to finance IHC's Burma's projects

<sup>149</sup> Inter Press Service (4 Mar 03) Tobacco Giant under Pressure for Joint Venture & Ethical Corporation magazine (9 Mar 03) British American Tobacco under human rights pressure

<sup>150</sup> FBC (13 Mar 03) Saks Sacks Burmese Products & FBC (28 March 03) May Dept. Stores

"Makes the Right Choice," Joins Burma Boycott

<sup>151</sup> AFX-GEM (25 March 03) Human rights group hails drop in US clothing imports from Myanmar as victory

## **AID**

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**Increasing**

**Stagnant**

**Decreasing**

### **UNITED NATIONS**

In late February the UN World Food Programme sent 1,200 bags of rice to Maungdaw, Arakan State to be distributed among the poor and to refugees repatriated from Bangladesh.<sup>152</sup>

In the same month it was reported that the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (UNFAO) allocated US\$238,000 for a study of the competitiveness of Burma's agriculture sector in international markets.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Narinjara News (26 Feb 03) Rice Bags from UN World Food Programme arrive at Western

Burma

<sup>153</sup> MT (3-9 Feb 03) FAO funds farm sector study

## **JAPAN**

Japan's overseas aid agency will spend about US\$20 million on Burma's basic education and health care sectors during the fiscal year 2003-04 beginning in April. Burma figured as Japan's 9th largest aid recipient in 2002, up from 13th largest in 2001 and 27th largest in 2000.<sup>154</sup> In the fiscal year 2001-02, Japan extended US\$18.33 million in grant assistance to Burma, not including debt relief.<sup>155</sup> [See Int'l Relations]

In February, Toshio Matsui, chairman of the Altech Corporation, donated US\$2.5 million to fund 3-month computer training courses at the Rangoon ICT Park.<sup>156</sup>

Japan also pledged US\$1.2 million for drug substitution [see Drugs].

## **ISRAEL**

As part of a bilateral technical cooperation program, Israeli consultants held a 12-day course on the uses of Geographic Information Systems in Yankin Township, Rangoon Division. Twenty-two employees from the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation attended.<sup>157</sup>

## **HELEN KELLER INTERNATIONAL/ TOTALFINALELF**

In February, Helen Keller International and French Energy Concern TotalFinalELF donated US\$94,822 to buy equipment for eye cataract operations.<sup>158</sup>

## **FEDERATION OF INTERNATIONAL FOOTBALL ASSOCIATIONS (FIFA)**

Under FIFA's Goal Project providing assistance to nearly 20 countries, Burma has received US\$400,000 to upgrade its football stadiums to an international standard.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Xinhua (10 Feb 03) Japan to fund Myanmar's education sector

<sup>155</sup> Xinhua (23 Jan 03) Japan extends over 18 mln USD aid to Myanmar in FY 2001-02

<sup>156</sup> MT (17-23 Feb 03) Japanese man gives \$2.5m for IT training

<sup>157</sup> MT (3-9 Feb 03) Israel offers GIS training course

<sup>158</sup> MT (3-9 Feb 03) \$94,822 donation to aid cataract patients

<sup>159</sup> MT (3-9 March 03) FIFA funds work on Mandalay stadium

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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Improving

Stagnant

Deteriorating

While the US and EU are losing patience with the regime's empty promises, the SPDC exchanged a flurry of official visits with China, Bangladesh, Thailand, Vietnam, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia.<sup>160</sup> In addition, the regime hosted visits by the Asean's Secretary-General, the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights, and missions from AI, ILO and ICRC. All the speeches and hand-shaking with foreign leaders are intended to distract international attention from the regime's continuing refusal to talk to the opposition and commit to serious reform.

### US - RUNNING OUT OF PATIENCE

While the corrupt military junta has recently been conducting a propagandistic offensive to convince naive Western diplomats that Burma can be a responsible member of the international community, the continual flow of evidence regarding Burma's gross abuses of human rights illustrates how hollow recent Burmese reform has been. ~ US Senator Mitch McConnell, 4 March, 2003

In recent months, US leaders have increasingly taken a harder line towards the junta. On 3 January, State Department spokesman Richard Boucher criticised government-sponsored harassment of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and called for political change.<sup>161</sup> On 15 February, Assistant Secretary of State, Lorne Crane noted: "We remain highly skeptical about the regime's commitment to any political transition...Our patience for positive change is beginning to run out and we, along with the UK and others, are considering all options, including further sanctions."<sup>162</sup>

The SPDC responded by stating that sanctions will only make things "worse" and urging the US to instead "roll up its sleeves" and help by "cooperation rather than confrontation."<sup>163</sup> However, the SPDC failed to follow up these vague demands with any specific proposal for 'constructive' US assistance.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> See Appendix 3 for details

<sup>161</sup> AP, (3 Jan 03) US assail harassment of democracy activist in Myanmar

<sup>162</sup> AFP (16 Feb 03) US questions the commitment to reform in Myanmar

<sup>163</sup> Myanmar Times (24 February -3 March 03) US urged to 'roll up sleeves' and help

<sup>164</sup> US Dept of State (20 Feb 03) Daily Press Briefing: Reported Proposal for "Constructive Dialogue" with US

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The strongest US statement came at end of March with Matthew P. Daley, US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, testifying that “efforts to foster peaceful democratic change have come to a halt.” Mr. Daley also stated that: “Absent progress, we will be forced to consider, in conjunction with the international community, additional sanctions and/or other measures.”<sup>165</sup>

### **Bye Bye DCI**

On 28 February, it was reported that the SPDC’s contract with US lobby firm DCI Associates was abruptly terminated.<sup>166</sup> The move occurred less than a month after the SPDC failed to receive US certification for anti-drug efforts.

### **UNOCAL Update**

On 26 March, the California 2nd District Court of Appeal denied Unocal’s request to dismiss the case. “That was Unocal’s last hope to avoid trial,” said Katie Redford, a lawyer and co-founder of Earthrights International.<sup>167</sup>

### **VIETNAM-STRENGTHENING ‘CLOSE FRIENDSHIP’**

From March 15-17, Sr-Gen Than Shwe travelled to Vietnam at the invitation of Vietnamese President Tran Duc Luong. Prior to the visit, a senior Vietnamese military delegation paid an official visit to Rangoon on February 17-21.<sup>168</sup> Than Shwe’s trip was aimed at “promoting bilateral relations,” and the two leaders agreed to work to boost co-operation, especially in the sectors of economics, trade, agriculture, forestry, health and education.<sup>169</sup> President Luong emphasized the two countries’ “close friendship” and his desire that the two countries continue to work together both bilaterally and in the context of ASEAN.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Statement to House International Relations Committee (26 Mar 03) U.S. Interests and Policy Priorities in Southeast Asia

<sup>166</sup> Washington Post (28 Feb 03) DCI, Burma and D.C.

<sup>167</sup> LA Times (29 March 03) Unocal may be tried on abuses, state court rules; panel says the oil firm may face trial in LA in a case brought by Myanmar refugees

<sup>168</sup> Vietnamese News Agency (21 Feb 03) Vietnamese Defense Delegation concludes Burma visit 21 February

<sup>169</sup> AFP (11 Mar 03) Myanmar junta head to visit Vietnam

<sup>170</sup> Voice of Vietnam (17 Mar 03) Vietnamese leader welcomes “fruitful” visit, bids Burmese leader farewell

## **RUSSIA**

In February, Russian Envoy to Burma Oleg Kabanov urged the international community to extend more aid to Burma, and to recognise the junta's achievements. "A policy of pressure and interference in the internal affairs (of a country) is counterproductive and unjust, he said."<sup>171</sup>

## **MALAYSIA**

In February, Malaysia held a 2-week training for 17 SPDC diplomats and administrators. The program was sponsored by the Malaysian Government and Japan as part of an effort to foster positive relationships among Asean officials.<sup>172</sup>

## **CHINA - EXCHANGING GOODWILL VISITS**

The SPDC continued to strengthen ties with China through the exchange of high-level visits. An SPDC delegation led by Sr.Gen Than Shwe visited China between January 6-11 and Chinese Vice Premier Li Lanqing reciprocated, leading a 75-member group to visit Rangoon from January 14-16.

During his visit, Than Shwe stated: "We place great importance upon developing good relations with China," and expressed support for the country's "one China" policy.<sup>173</sup> For his part, Chinese president Jiang Zemin said that China would support Chinese companies with plans to invest in co-operative ventures in Burma and suggested that the 2 countries expand co-operation in a wide range of sectors, including, economic, technological, public health, and sports.<sup>174</sup> During the visit, the two countries signed 3 bilateral agreements focusing on economic and technological co-operation.<sup>175</sup> The visits also resulted in increased financial support from China. [See Economy]

On 2 March, Lt-Gen Soe Win met with a delegation from the Chinese Association for International Understanding (CAIU). The head of the delegation, Wang Jiarui, stated the ties between China and Burma continued to strengthen to the benefit of both countries as well as the region.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Xinhua (18 Feb 03) Russia: More aid to build a better Myanmar & MT (17-23 Feb 03)

International community should do more, says Russian envoy

<sup>172</sup> New Straits Times (18 Feb 03) Myanmar can learn from Malaysia, says ambassador

<sup>173</sup> AFP (8 Jan 03) China lends Myanmar 200 million dollars & Xinhua (8 Jan 03) China's Vice-President meets visiting Burmese leader, vows to enhance ties

<sup>174</sup> Xinhua (7 Jan 03) Chinese president holds talks with Myanmar head of state

<sup>175</sup> DPA, (7 Jan 03) China, Myanmar leaders pledge closer economic ties

<sup>176</sup> Xinhua News (2 March 03) Myanmar leader meets Chinese delegation

### **UK - GROWING CRITICISM**

Like the US, the UK has become increasingly critical of the regime's failure to engage in dialogue and its continued harassment of Daw Suu and other democracy advocates. On 22 January, the UK Foreign Office complained of SPDC interference, which cut short a phone conversation between Foreign Office Minister Mike O'Brien and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.<sup>177</sup>

During a 10 March meeting with UN Special Envoy Razali Ismail, O'Brien noted that "UK policy towards the regime will have to toughen unless the Burmese authorities show real commitment to reform." Mr. O'Brien also warned SPDC ambassador to Britain Dr. Kyaw Win that "we needed to see tangible signs of progress if relations were not to worsen."<sup>178</sup>

### **ASEAN**

On 17 January, Burma hosted the 2nd Asean Ministerial Meeting on Science and Technology on January 17.<sup>179</sup>

Foreign Minister Win Aung attended the Asean Foreign Ministers' Informal Meeting in Malaysia on March 18-20. The Ministers discussed regional issues, specifically focusing on the war in Iraq.<sup>180</sup>

Asean's Secretary-General Ong Keng Yong met Sen Gen Than Shwe and SPDC ministers, including Win Aung, in Rangoon on March 30.<sup>181</sup>

### **EU-ASEAN MEETING**

For the first time, an SPDC representative, the Deputy Foreign Minister U Khin Maung Win, was permitted to attend and participate at the EU-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (AEMM) in Brussels on 27-28 January.<sup>182</sup> Commissioner Chris Patten said EU-ASEAN relations shouldn't be held 'hostage' anymore by the issue of Burma, and noted that the EU had challenged the SPDC minister "in a very assertive way" about human rights and restrictions placed on Daw Suu.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> AP (24 January 03) Myanmar 'hinders' British dial-up diplomacy

<sup>178</sup> Int'l M2 Presswire (10 Mar 03) UK fears grow over the stalled political process in Burma

<sup>179</sup> New Light of Myanmar (17 Jan 03) Secretary 1 receives ASEAN ministers, senior officials to 2nd Informal Asean Ministerial Meeting in Science and Technology.

<sup>180</sup> DPA (19 March 03) Southeast Asian countries divided over Iraq, focus on war aftermath

<sup>181</sup> Irrawaddy Online Diplomatic Trips to Burma 2003 & New Light of Myanmar (31 March 03)

Senior General Than Shwe receives ASEAN Secretary-General

<sup>182</sup> AFP (24 Jan 03) Myanmar to attend high-level talks in Europe despite sanctions

<sup>183</sup> AFP (28 Jan 03) EU looks beyond Myanmar in ASEAN talks

Both the International Confederation of Trade Unions (ICFTU) and the European Trade Union Confederation spoke out strongly against the SPDC's attendance. "The EU decision risks conferring some degree of respectability on one of the world's most repressive regimes and sending a signal to the junta that their duplicitous actions, talking about dialogue but in fact increasing repression, can lead to international credibility," said ICFTU General Secretary Guy Ryder.<sup>184</sup>

Two EU statements in February and March also reiterated EU concern over continued harassment of Daw Suu and lack of progress in the dialogue.<sup>185</sup>

### **BANGLADESH - VISITS STRENGTHEN TRADING TIES**

A slew of official visits have boosted Burma-Bangladesh relations and trading ties. SPDC Sr-Gen Than Shwe's official visit in December was followed by a visit by Win Aung in March. During the visit, Win Aung reportedly assured Dhaka that the regime would take back all refugees [See Displacement]. After Win Aung's visit, Bangladeshi Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, Foreign Minister M. Morshed Khan and a 16-member business delegation travelled to Rangoon.<sup>186</sup> These visits led to the establishment of a joint trade commission and new agreements on bilateral trade and coastal shipping [See Economy].

In February, the NaSaKa and the Bangladesh Rifles border security (BDR) forces held a flag meeting at the Bangladesh border town of Teknaf, including an exchange of prisoners. The BDR also handed over a boat and six-member crew operated by SPDC Military Intelligence battalion MI-18 that was reportedly used for cross-border smuggling.<sup>187</sup>

### **JAPAN DEFENDS POLICY**

On 20 and 21 January, Japan's Deputy Foreign Minister met with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and General Khin Nyunt, respectively, for the first time.<sup>188</sup> Japanese Ambassador to Burma Yuji Miyamoto defended Japan's policy towards Burma as consistent regardless of the political climate, and stated that Japanese aid is focused on basic human needs. [See Aid]

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<sup>184</sup> ICFTU (27 Jan 03) Burma: Trade unions protest at waiver of EU visa ban on Burmese dictatorship

<sup>185</sup> AFP (21 Feb 03) EU urges Myanmar to release political prisoners

<sup>186</sup> Kaladan (22 March 03) Bangladesh PM back from Burma

<sup>187</sup> Narinjara News (26 Feb 03) Bangladesh returns a Burmese Military Intelligence-owned Smuggling vessel at a Flag Meeting

<sup>188</sup> DVB (22 Jan 03) Japan Deputy FM met Daw Aung San Suu Kyi



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### UN

On 12 February, UN Sec-Gen Kofi Annan expressed concern over the SPDC's arrest of 12 opposition members and once again called on the regime to engage in substantive dialogue.<sup>189</sup>

### Pinheiro's Visit

In contrast, in March, UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Myanmar Paulo Sergio Pinheiro called on the international community to recognize the SPDC's moves towards transition and respond with "engagement not isolation." "The people of the country should not be held hostage to a political transition," he stated.<sup>190</sup>

Pinheiro experienced a reality check when he found a listening device in a room where he was interviewing political prisoners during his mission. [See Human Rights].

### INDIA

On 19 January, SPDC Foreign Minister Win Aung travelled to India for bilateral talks with Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, on the first official visit by a Foreign Minister since 1988. Win Aung called for increased Indian investment and vowed to prohibit anti-India insurgent groups from operating from Burma. The visit resulted in a protocol agreement on bilateral consultations, a framework for increased private sector co-operation, and an agreement by India to provide SPDC with US\$25 million in credit.<sup>191</sup>

### Soe Myint Charged With Hijacking

On 14 January, a West Bengal court filed hijacking charges against Burmese activist and editor of Mizzima News Service Soe Myint. The reopening of the case after a 12-year hiatus has been seen as a move to cosy up to the regime. Under India's tough anti-hijacking laws, Soe Myint will face life imprisonment if convicted.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> UN News Centre (12 Feb 03) Concerned at arrests in Myanmar, Annan says dialogue is key to reconciliation

<sup>190</sup> AFP (2 March 03) UN Envoy Urges World to Recognize Change in Myanmar

<sup>191</sup> AP (21 Jan 03) India official: Myanmar says it won't support anti-India insurgent groups & Xinhua (28 Jan 03) Myanmar-India relations get closer

<sup>192</sup> Irrawaddy (15 Jan 03) Burmese journalist charged in India

**AUSTRALIA**

On 5 March, Australia announced the appointment of Paul Grigson as ambassador to Burma starting in June 2003. Foreign Minister Alexander Downer also announced plans to expand Australia's human rights programs in Burma in 2003.<sup>193</sup>

**THAI-BURMA RELATIONS**

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 **Improving** **Stagnant** **Deteriorating**

The government has bent over backwards to please the generals in Rangoon, the Burmese are dictating to us ~ Kraisak Choonhavan, Chairman of the Thai Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, 17 January 2003.

**HIGH LEVEL VISITS TO BURMA**

On February 9-10, Thai Prime Minister Thaksin met with General Than Shwe on a visit to Burma.<sup>194</sup> The 2 sides agreed on a co-operative framework in 3 key areas of border, economic, and international affairs, and on regular visits of cabinet ministers to monitor the framework.<sup>195</sup> The SPDC pledged to “accept back workers expelled from Thailand” in exchange for an increase in bilateral trade.<sup>196</sup>

From January 30 to February 1, Thai Army commander Somdhat Attanant made his first visit to Burma since being assigned his position in October to familiarize himself with his counterpart Maung Aye.<sup>197</sup> Generals Maung Aye and Somdhat Attanand agreed that differences would be dealt with on a basis of friendship, non-interference and non-infringement of Thai territory for attacks.<sup>198</sup>

**PRINCESS SMOOTHENING RELATIONS**

For the first time in 17 years, Princess Sirindhorn visited Burma from March 10 to 15, at the invitation of the SPDC. She met with Sr-Gen Than Shwe and members of

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<sup>193</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Canberra (5 March 03) Australia names new envoy to Burma

<sup>194</sup> MT (17-23 Feb 03) Thai PM hails outcome of visit

<sup>195</sup> Asian Tribune (10 Feb 03) Myanmar-Thailand agree to cooperate closely in key areas

<sup>196</sup> DPA (10 Feb 03) Thai PM declares Myanmar working visit a success

<sup>197</sup> AFP (31 Jan 03) Thai army commander departs for Myanmar visit

<sup>198</sup> see [http://www.shanland.org/General/Weekly\\_Digest/weekly30.htm](http://www.shanland.org/General/Weekly_Digest/weekly30.htm)

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the Thai business community in Rangoon and was accompanied by Foreign Minister Win Aung during her tour.<sup>199</sup>

### **THAKSIN, THE GREAT MEDIATOR?**

During his February visit, Thaksin offered to mediate a peace agreement between the junta and ethnic nationality armed forces. He said the junta “was pleased” with his offer and that a joint panel would be set up. Ethnic nationality armed groups were guardedly positive about the plan. The United Nationalities League for Democracy (UNLD), an umbrella organization of 23 ethnic political parties, welcomed the Thai PM’s initiative and called for dialogue between Aung San Suu Kyi and the SPDC.<sup>200</sup>

A joint statement by the Karen National Union (KNU), Shan State Army (SSA), Karenni National Progress Party (KNPP), Arakan Liberation Party (ALP) and Chin National Front (CNF) on February 25 set conditions for the talks. This concerned the venue, which should be in a neutral country; the military junta, which “must announce a nationwide ceasefire before meaningful dialogue can take place,” and the ethnic groups, which would only meet with Rangoon’s delegation together.<sup>201</sup>

In early March, the Junta’s Deputy Intelligence Chief Maj-Gen Kyaw Win squashed the plan saying: “We will do these peace talks on a one-on-one basis, not collectively,” while Padoh Mahn Sha of the KNU insisted that “if Burma’s military junta really wants to have meaningful dialogue, they should agree to meet with all five groups at the same time.”<sup>202</sup> [See Ethnic Relations]

### **Playing Hardball**

Meanwhile, the Thai Third Army was ordered to give the ethnic opposition troops a hard time in order to pressure them to the negotiating table. “These troops must be pushed out of the country. We must not allow them to come in, even for goods. Give them a hard time and they will negotiate,”<sup>203</sup> said Defense Minister Gen Thammarak Isarangkura na Ayudhaya.

In March, Picharnmet Muangmanee, commander-designate of Thailand’s 3rd Army, said that Thailand would make arrangements for the Shan State Army (SSA) to

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<sup>199</sup> MT (17-23 March 03) Books, gems captivate a Thai Princess

<sup>200</sup> United Nationalities League for Democracy (23 Feb 03) Letter to Thaksin Shinawatra.

<http://three.pairlist.net/pipermail/burmanet/20030306/000106.html>

<sup>201</sup> Irrawaddy (27 Feb 03) Ethnic Groups Warm to Thaksin’s Offer

<sup>202</sup> Irrawaddy (12 Mar 03) Five Groups Hold Firm on Conditions

<sup>203</sup> Bangkok Post (2 March 03) Army told to give rebels a hard time

move away from the border, while the SPDC would do the same with the UWSA. Picharnmet.<sup>204</sup> Picharnmet, who was named Thailand's 3rd Army chief in a March reshuffle, stressed that Thai soldiers will absolutely not use force in dealing with the SSA.<sup>205</sup> He also said he would "work closely with Myanmar to move the SSA and UWSA from the border area...[as] the clearance of these ethnic minority troops will facilitate joint border patrols by soldiers from Thailand and Myanmar."<sup>206</sup>

A prominent dissident who requested anonymity said that if Thailand continues to impose pressure on ethnic minorities, some armed groups would have no choice but sign individual cease-fire agreements with the SPDC.<sup>207</sup>

Thaksin's bizarre tactic in mediating a peace agreement by cracking down on opposition groups and activists was hard to ignore. On 6 March, a Thai security officer said: "We felt perplexed because the order [to push back the SSA] came right after the Shan and their allies released their official communiqué welcoming the Prime Minister's overture [on 10 February to act as a mediator between the regime and the ethnic armies]... we were completely caught off guard when the Defence Minister responded by ordering the army to get tough with them instead. It has put many of us in doubt whether it was for the rebels' total submission, and not for their coming to the peace talks, that he had agreed with Rangoon in the first place."<sup>208</sup>

### Crackdown on Human Rights Defenders

In efforts to appease Rangoon and safeguard business interests, Thaksin targeted not only armed opposition groups, but also refugees, migrant workers and political activists. [See also Displacement] One Thailand-based aid worker said: "The Thais are being clever. It is being done incrementally so that there is no big international outcry, but all the Burmese who are working to have a democratic country are extremely worried. This could be the beginning of the end here."<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> Xinhua (24 Mar 03) Thai army to cooperate with Myanmar in taking minority troops away from border

<sup>205</sup> Xinhua (24 Mar 03) Thai army to cooperate with Myanmar in taking minority troops away from border

<sup>206</sup> Xinhua (24 Mar 03) Thai army to cooperate with Myanmar in taking minority troops away from border

<sup>207</sup> Irrawaddy (12 Mar 03) Five Groups Hold Firm on Conditions

<sup>208</sup> Asian Tribune (6 Mar 03) Defiant Shans Will Not Submit to Pressure either from Thailand or Burma to Lay Down Their Arms

<sup>209</sup> South China Morning Post (22 Jan 03) Thailand takes a tough line with Myanmar dissidents Pro-democracy supporters fear they are being forced from a land of sanctuary

### **NGOs: A Threat to Peace Talks?**

In January, Thai Army Col Somkhuan Saenpattaranate said, “The government and the army will not allow any foreign groups or nationals to use our territory to launch military raids or conduct unfriendly activities against Thailand's neighboring countries. Their misadventure could seriously affect our national security and relations with our neighbors.”<sup>210</sup>

Following his February trip to Burma, Prime Minister Thaksin stated that support from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) for Burmese ethnic groups was hindering the government's effort to mediate peace talks between Rangoon and the rebels. A senior military source said that surveillance of NGOs would be stepped up as authorities tried to bring the parties to the negotiation table.<sup>211</sup>

It was reported that on 28 December, a 35-member humanitarian team from the Karen Action Group, including British, Australian and Thai adults and children, were detained for several hours by the Thai military after visiting 3 refugee camps on the Thai-Burma border south of Mae Sot.<sup>212</sup>

### **Activists Forced Out Of Sangkhlaburi**

In the lead-up to Thaksin's February visit to Burma, the Thai army began rounding up undocumented migrants, including political activists in Sangkhlaburi at the end of December. A local military office said, "We ordered them (Burmese activists) to close down their offices and leave the country within 48 hours."<sup>213</sup>

On 20 January, at least 9 Burmese activists and a child were arrested while in hiding. Thai Police said they were apprehended for security concerns, not immigration violations. Those arrested belong to pro-democracy groups including Democratic Party for a New Society (DPNS), All Burma Student Democratic Front (ABSDF), National League for Democracy – Liberated Area (NLD-LA), Dawei Women's Union and the Myeik-Dawei United Front.<sup>214</sup> Seven were deported on 22 January, and 1 was sentenced to 48 days in Thai prison for harboring illegals, who were fined about US\$95 each.<sup>215</sup>

By the end of January, Kyaw Kyaw Htet, chairman of the People's Democratic Front, said around 60 of the 100 activists living in Sangkhlaburi had been expelled

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<sup>210</sup> Irrawaddy (7 Jan 03) Dissidents face crackdown; Burmese hiding along border

<sup>211</sup> Bangkok Post (24 Feb 03) NGOs Hampering Burmese Peace Effort

<sup>212</sup> Dictatorwatch (3 Jan 0) A Thai Christmas present: NGO harassment and intimidation

<sup>213</sup> AFP (23 Jan 23 03) Myanmar dissidents living in fear under Thai crackdown

<sup>214</sup> Irrawaddy (20 Jan 03) Fresh Raid in Sangkhlaburi

<sup>215</sup> The Nation (22 Jan 03) Dissidents to be forced out ahead of Burma talks

and 10 offices shut down with their contents confiscated. 23-year-old activist Min Zaw said, "I'm sure that we will face death or be put in jail for decades if Thailand forces us to be repatriated."<sup>216</sup>

National Coalition Union of Burma (NCUB) member, Ko Kaung Zan, said of the crackdown: "I think the Thai government is attempting to cut the hands and legs of our movement fighting against Myanmar military rulers for democracy."<sup>217</sup>

### **No More Visas For Burmese**

On 29 December, the Thai Government ended automatic visa upon arrival rights for Burmese and enacted new visa regulations requiring Burmese passport holders to apply for a Thai visa before entering Thailand. This is a departure from standard practice, when like most ASEAN passport holders, Burmese were allowed to stay for 4 weeks if arriving in Thailand without a visa. It was reported that the Thai Embassies in Cambodia and Laos were instructed not to issue any visas to Burmese passport holders.<sup>218</sup> The move is aimed at limiting the mobility of dissidents traveling on Burmese passports, as visa applicants have been told to return to Burma and apply at the Thai embassy in Rangoon.

### **Army Defectors Returned To SPDC**

On 10 January, 3 SPDC army deserters were handed over by Thai Task Force 23 to SPDC authorities in Mae Sot, reportedly as a result of a Regional Border Committee meeting held in Burma in late December. A former SPDC army officer said that desertion is punishable with a 10-year prison sentence in Burma.<sup>219</sup>

## **BORDER**

### **SPDC Shells Hit Thai Soil**

During a January 5-8 SPDC offensive against the KNU, 2 stray artillery shells landed on Thai soil.<sup>220</sup> During another offensive on 23 January, 2 Thai villages in Phop Phra Township, Tak District received mortar fire, forcing 600 people to evacuate. Local Thai army commander, Major Pongsak Ma-In, reported, "The Thai army has not fired back yet after the seven mortars fell in some Thai villages. Any

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<sup>216</sup> AFP (23 Jan 23 03) Myanmar dissidents living in fear under Thai crackdown

<sup>217</sup> AFP (23 Jan 23 03) Myanmar dissidents living in fear under Thai crackdown

<sup>218</sup> Irrawaddy (16 Jan 03) New Visa Regulations for Burmese

<sup>219</sup> Irrawaddy (10 Jan 03) Thailand Hands Over Deserters

<sup>220</sup> KNU (9 Jan 03) Additional Report on Clashes near U Pota, and Kyodo (9 Jan 03) 10 killed in clashes in Myanmar, and DVB (8 Jan 03) KNU fighters clash with SPDC forces

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quick reaction might hurt relations (with Myanmar), but if another series of shells falls, we will fire warning shots.”<sup>221</sup>

#### **Border Dispute**

On 8 March, the SPDC demanded that Thailand withdraw its 64 troops stationed in the Doi Lang mountain area on the border with Burma near Chiang Mai.

Both Thailand and Burma claim sovereignty over the area, which is considered a strategic military post to monitor drug trafficking. The SPDC finally agreed to allow Thai troops in the area, as long as no new forces were deployed.<sup>222</sup>

#### **Checkpoint Re-Opened**

A border checkpoint was reopened on 10 January opposite Hua Muang town in Mae Hong Son province. Many land plots in the town, a former base of drug kingpin Khun Sa, had been bought up by Chinese Haw and Ko Kang businessmen, and land prices soared with news of the border’s reopening.<sup>223</sup>

## **ETHNIC RELATIONS**

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Improving

Stagnant

Deteriorating

If sectarian views continue to exist, they will cause the collapse of national unity. It is very obvious that some groups, not free of foreign influence, are still turning a blind eye to the goodwill of the military and are holding negative views ~ Sr Gen Than Shwe, Armed Forces Day speech, Irrawaddy, 27 March 2003.

#### **5 ARMIES ESTABLISH JOINT COMMAND CENTER**

In late December, the Shan State Army (SSA), Karen National Union (KNU), Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP), Arakan Liberation Party (ALP), and the Chin National Front (CNF) set up a joint command center at Doi Tailang

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<sup>221</sup> AFP (23 Jan 03) Six Myanmar troops killed in clash with ethnic rebels: Thai military

<sup>222</sup> Nation (8 Mar 03) Burma demands troops leave Doi Lang

<sup>223</sup> Bangkok Post (6 Jan 03) Land snapped up on border

opposite Thailand's Mae Hong Son province to coordinate offensives against the SPDC.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> DPA (17 Jan 03) Ethnic rebels form united front against Myanmar junta



## **DEFECTIONS**

According to the SPDC Defense Ministry, 30 members of KNU, KNPP and Chin National Army (CNA) “exchanged arms for peace” in December. In January, the SPDC reported that an additional 74 KNPP members laid down arms.<sup>225</sup>

## **DIVIDE AND RULE**

In a joint statement on February 25, Arakan, Chin, Karen, Karenni and Shan groups welcomed the Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra’s offer to mediate between the SPDC and ethnic groups.<sup>226</sup> However, they stated several conditions, including a requirement that ethnic groups met the SPDC together [see Thai-Burma Relations].

The SPDC, however, refused to commit to peace talks or deal with ethnic alliance groups. “We’ll do these peace talks on a one-on-one basis, not collectively,” said Maj Gen Kyaw Win, deputy chief of military intelligence.<sup>227</sup>

## **CEASEFIRE GROUPS STRENGTHEN TIES**

In March, 2 ceasefire groups, the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) and the Palaung State Liberation Organization (PSLO) agreed to increase cooperation through strengthening economic ties, upholding national unity, and safeguarding ceasefire agreements.<sup>228</sup>

## **ARAKAN STATE - RANGOON TIGHTENS ITS GRIP**

Several high-ranking SPDC officials have visited Arakan State since Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s tour in December 16-24.

On 22-23 December, Dr Khin Win Shwe, vice-president of the Myanmar Child and Maternal Welfare Association, and the wife of Khin Nyunt, visited Buthidaung and Maungdaw Townships and received a 13 million-kyat ‘donation’ that had been extorted from locals. In a speech, she warned about external ‘interference’.

On 13 January, Brig Gen Kyaw Win, head of the Rangoon military intelligence headquarters, visited Mrauk-U to inquire about local NLD leaders, supporters of Daw Suu and increased cases of desertion in the armed forces.

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<sup>225</sup> Xinhua News (30 Jan 03) 30 More anti-government armed group members surrender in Myanmar, and Xinhua (14 Jan 03) 74 anti-govt armed members surrender in Myanmar

<sup>226</sup> SHAN (12 March 03) Scholar: Rangoon wants truces only, not peace

<sup>227</sup> AFP (10 March 03) Myanmar rejects comprehensive talks with rebels

<sup>228</sup> DVB (28 March 03) Burmese ethnic groups discuss cooperation, maintenance of cease-fire

On 14 January, Gen Maung Aye spoke to military officials at Strategic Headquarters No 9 in Kyauktaw, warning that if the junta gave up power national 'disintegration' would occur.

On 23 January, Brig Gen Kyaw Hsan, Secretariat Member of Union Solidarity and Development Association, spoke to local USDA officials in Sittwe.<sup>229</sup>

### **Nasaka Warned Not To Talk To Foreign Delegation**

In February, the Belgian Ambassador to Thailand led a team of high-level diplomats to visit UNHCR funded projects in Arakan State. Nasaka security forces were reportedly warned not to answer any questions on government policy, but to tell officials that only the SPDC authorities can give the correct answers.<sup>230</sup>

### **Land Confiscation**

Since January, at least 3 battalions in Arakan State have been actively confiscating land in order to grow cash crops. There are reports that in the future all 60 battalions will begin confiscating land. Residents are concerned this is part of a broader campaign to resettle ethnic Burmans to these areas and alter the ethnic composition in Arakan State.<sup>231</sup>

### **Human Rights Workshop For Rohingya and Rakhine Youths**

The Arakan Education and Welfare Association and the National United Party of Arakan organised a workshop on human rights, international doctrines and conventions on February 4-8 in Dhaka.<sup>232</sup>

## **SHAN**

### **Former First Lady Passes Away**

On 17 January, the former first lady of Burma and founder of the Shan State Army, Shan princess Sao Hearn Hkam, died at the age of 87. Her sons, Chao-tzang and Harn Yawngwe continue to work for democracy.<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>229</sup> Narinjara News (4 Feb 03) Burmese Junta leaders come visiting western Burma

<sup>230</sup> Narinjara (27 Feb 03) Belgian Ambassador pays a visit to Rakhine State in Burma

<sup>231</sup> Narinjara (5 March 03) Burmese Army grabs huge tracts of civilian land for newer settlement: Design to tip ethnic balance in Rakhine State?

<sup>232</sup> Kaladan News (20 Feb 03) 20 Rohingya and Rakhine youths jointly completed a human rights workshop

<sup>233</sup> SCMP (30 Jan 03) Touch of nobility dies with a Shan princess The former first lady of Burma shattered many feudal taboos

### **SSA South Open To Negotiations**

In January, the Shan State Army 'South' (SSA) offered to surrender to the SPDC under UN protection. SSA Leader Colonel Yawd Serk also offered to assist international drug eradication efforts and testify in an international court that the SSA was not involved in the drug trade.<sup>234</sup>[See Drugs]

The regime rejected the offer. On 21 January an SPDC spokesperson said "The Government of Myanmar Burma has very explicitly stated that SURA [SPDC's derogative acronym for SSA], being the remnant of the former drug warlord Khun Sa's Mong Tai Army, will have to surrender unconditionally and abide by the rules and regulations stipulated by the government if they wish to sincerely give up narco-terrorism."<sup>235</sup>

### **Arrest Of SNLD Leader**

On 6 February, Sai Nyunt Lwi, Secretary of the Shan National League for Democracy (SNLD), was arrested with 11 other politicians for 'anti-government activities.' [See Democracy & Dialogue]

### **Military Expansion**

In 2002, the SPDC set up 3 new army bases to launch operations against the SSA, and increased troops along the Thai-Burma border by over 50 %. Most troops are forced recruits, including child soldiers.<sup>236</sup> In January, SSA Leader Col Yawd Serk reported the SPDC was moving heavy artillery through recently upgraded roads along the border and predicted SSA-SPDC battles will likely shift deeper inside Shan State.<sup>237</sup>

## **KAREN**

### **SPDC's Annual Dry-Season Offensive**

On January 5-8, SPDC's LIB 315 launched an offensive against KNU Brigade 201 near Myawaddy Township. During the fighting the SPDC burned 5 rice barns and at least 500 villagers fled to Thailand.<sup>238</sup> [See Thai-Burma Relations] On 23

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<sup>234</sup> World Markets Analysis (21 Jan 03) Key Rebel Army Offers its Conditional Surrender to Myanmar's Military, and Nation (22 Jan 03) Yawd Serk willing to testify on drugs trade

<sup>235</sup> MT (3-9 Feb 03) Burmese authorities reject conditional surrender offer of Shan rebel group

<sup>236</sup> CCSDPT open session (12 March 03)

<sup>237</sup> Nation (22 Jan 03) Yawd Serk willing to testify on drugs trade

<sup>238</sup> KNU (9 Jan 03) Additional Report on Clashes near U Pota, and Kyodo (9 Jan 03) 10 killed in clashes in Myanmar, and DVB (8 Jan 03) KNU fighters clash with SPDC forces

January, an estimated 2,000 SPDC soldiers attacked 120 KNU soldiers near a KNU base opposite Thailand's Tak Province. SPDC troops heavily shelled 4 camps, including the KNU headquarters at Waw Lay Khee.<sup>239</sup>

During the January fighting, a number of stray artillery shells landed on Thai soil forcing Thai villagers to evacuate. [See Thai-Burma Relations]

### **New Road Construction**

In January, the Free Burma Rangers reported the regime is constructing 2 major roads in Papun district. One road runs from Kyauk Kyi east to Saw Hta village on the Salween River. Eight battalions and one division are stationed in the area. The other road runs from Paw Gwa to Ley Mu and connects the KyakKy - Saw Hta road with Northern Karen State. Three battalions and one division are stationed along the road. The road boundaries are heavily mined and the construction has further displaced villagers and allowed the SPDC to increase penetration into IDP areas.<sup>240</sup>

## **MON**

### **Party Politics and Leadership Change**

The New Mon State Party (NMSP) held its 5th conference on 15 January – 2 February to discuss the increasing SPDC army presence in Mon State, land confiscation by SPDC troops, national dialogue and reconciliation as well as concerns about the state of their cease-fire with the regime. The NMSP issued a statement calling for the establishment of a nationwide ceasefire, tripartite dialogue, multi-party democratic system and federal union.<sup>241</sup>

After the death of NMSP President Nai Shwe Kyin on 7 March, Nai Kyin, aged 82, was elected as NMSP chairman and Nai Han Thar as general secretary.<sup>242</sup>

### **Letter to UNHCR**

In March, The Mon National Council urged UNHCR to work for the immediate release of 3 ill Mon leaders: Nai Ngwe Thein, Min Soe Lin and Min Kyi Win, imprisoned since 1998.<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> Irrawaddy (24 Jan 03) Junta Seizes KNU Camp

<sup>240</sup> Karen Monthly Human Rights Situation Report, Northern Karen State (Jan 03)

<sup>241</sup> Irrawaddy (16 Jan 03) Mon conference begins & DVB (5 Feb 03) New Mon State Party

[NMSP] News

<sup>242</sup> Irrawaddy (3 April 03) NMSP Elects New Leaders

## HUMAN RIGHTS

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Improving

Stagnant

Deteriorating

Extra-judicial killing, rape, arbitrary arrest, torture, forced labour and forced relocation continue to be reported throughout the country, despite a flurry of international visits by diplomats and human rights groups. The junta obviously prefers hosting initial or preliminary visits by new groups to deepening co-operation and agreement with existing ones. In order to deflect international criticism, the SPDC gives the illusion of working with the UN, ILO, ICRC and AI, however no organisation has free access to all areas and information, and villagers are threatened not to speak out about abuses.

### AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL - INSIDE FOR THE FIRST TIME

In a bid to mollify international critics, the SPDC invited Amnesty International (AI) to conduct its first ever visit to Burma from 31 January - 8 February. During the visit the 2 AI representatives met with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, SPDC officials, and diplomats and also interviewed several political prisoners. After the trip, researcher Donna Guest remarked positively on SPDC co-operation, but stressed "much remains to be done."<sup>244</sup> Of particular concern, she said, are the lack of legal security and SPDC-promulgated laws criminalising certain fundamental human rights.<sup>245</sup>

Revealing any commitment to improve their human rights record as a farce, SPDC officials arrested at least 20 people while AI was in the country.<sup>246</sup> [See Democracy & Dialogue]

### SPDC THREATENS VILLAGERS BEFORE ICRC MISSIONS

From 9 December to 31 January, ICRC conducted 3 visits to Shan State. Prior to their December visit, in Laikha Township, teachers, headmen and ex-government officials were ordered to accompany the ICRC officials and record all questions asked.<sup>247</sup> On 2 February, SPDC troops beat 2 displaced villagers in the township for speaking about abuses to ICRC officials.

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<sup>243</sup> AFP, March 5 UN urged to pressure Myanmar to release ailing Mon leaders

<sup>244</sup> IPS (10 Feb 03) Amnesty Seeks Prisoners' Release, Exiles Skeptical of Visit

<sup>245</sup> Irrawaddy (10 Feb 03) An Interview with Donna Guest

<sup>246</sup> Irrawaddy (10 Feb 03) Crackdown Despite Amnesty Visit

<sup>247</sup> SWAN (6 Jan 03) Burmese military authorities threaten villagers before International

In late December 2002, LIB 524 commanders threatened villagers in Kun-Hing Township that they would cut the tongue or kill everyone who passed on information about human rights abuses “to the outside world.”<sup>248</sup>

During ICRC’s mission in January, local intelligence agents closely monitored ICRC’s activities, and on 28 January a woman was gang-raped by SPDC troops only a few miles away from the ICRC team.<sup>249</sup> [See Women]

In February, army officials held public meetings in several towns to warn villagers not to disclose any information to foreigners.<sup>250</sup> Village and village tract headmen were threatened with large fines and up to 5 years imprisonment, if members of their community spoke about abuses to the foreigners.<sup>251</sup>

### **VILLAGERS TRAINED TO LIE TO INTERNATIONAL MONITORS**

On 16 February, local officials held a training at Yong-Dong village, Mudon Township, Mon State to teach people how to ‘communicate’ with international organizations and to manipulate investigations in rural areas in order to cover up incriminating evidence. Over 100 USDA members attended, with one trainee reporting: “We are told not to tell the truth about forced labour to international organizations...It’s a course on how to lie to people who ask questions.”<sup>252</sup>

### **POLITICAL PRISONERS**

You have to release all the prisoners. I can barely imagine that prisoners 75 years old, in terrible state of health, are a security threat. This is nonsense. This is absurd ~ UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights, Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, UN Wire, 25 March 2003.

The SPDC’s commitment to release political prisoners, as voiced at the time of Daw Suu’s release last May, was pure lip-service. Since June 2002, new arrests have outnumbered releases and a significant number of political prisoners who have completed their sentences remain incarcerated.

At the end of their February visit, Amnesty International (AI) submitted recommendations to improve detention facilities and a list of prisoners whose

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<sup>248</sup> SHRF Monthly report (Feb 03)

<sup>249</sup> DVB (3 Feb 03) ICRC in Shan State

<sup>250</sup> SHRF (March 03) Beating and intimidation of villagers for telling truth in Lai-Kha and Kun-Hing

<sup>251</sup> Asian Tribune (28 Feb 03) No Disclosure to ICRC - Shan State people threatened by Burmese Army Officers

<sup>252</sup> IMNA (27 Feb 03) USDA train villagers to lie to international institutions

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release should have first priority.<sup>253</sup> [See Human Rights] Among them are 4 hospitalized MPs, U Naing Naing, U Ohn Maung, U Soe Myint and U Kyaw San.

In his March report to the UN Commission on Human Rights, Pinheiro stressed a possible “linkage between releases and the lack of progress in the political dialogue, suggesting that releases may be being used as bargaining tools between the SPDC and the NLD. If this is true, it is unacceptable and cruel.” He also criticized the practice of forcing those released to refrain from any political activity.<sup>254</sup>

### **Disappearances**

According to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners in Burma (AAPPB), 15 political prisoners disappeared from prisons in Burma between April and December 2002. It is believed that at least 7, and possibly all 15, were executed.<sup>255</sup>

### **Falun Gong Member sentenced to 7 years**

On 31 January, 71-year old Chan Wing Yuen was secretly sentenced to 7 years in prison for waving a Falun Gong banner during Chinese President Jiang Zemin’s visit to Rangoon in December 2001.<sup>256</sup>

### **NEW ARRESTS**

On 16 January, 2 Buddhist nuns were arrested in Rangoon for staging a peaceful protest in front of City Hall. Three Japanese nun orders have called for the release of the 2 nuns and all other political prisoners.<sup>257</sup>

On 5 and 6 February, during the visit of the AI delegation, 12 members of pro-democracy parties including U Sai Nyunt Lwin, Shan NLD secretary, and Khin Win, NLD vice chairman from Kamayut Township, were arrested for “anti-government activities with financial support from dissident expatriates.”<sup>258</sup> At a press conference on 10 February, SPDC spokesman Brig-Gen Than Tun claimed the detainees had plotted to attack Insein prison and to blow up the Thazi railway

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<sup>253</sup> AI (1 April 03) Limited human rights improvements -- serious concerns persist. AI Index: ASA 16/013/2003 (Public)

<sup>254</sup> 59th Session of the Commission on Human Rights (31 March 03) UN Statement by Mr. Paulo Sergio Pinheiro

<sup>255</sup> AAPPB (27 Jan 03) 15 Political Prisoners Disappeared from Detention and Feared Killed, and SCMP (29 Jan 03) Political prisoners in Myanmar feared killed

<sup>256</sup> Falun Dafa Info Center (24 Jan 03) Burma: Elder slapped with 7 years for “Truthfulness-Compassion-Tolerance” Banner

<sup>257</sup> Reuters 16 Jan 03) Buddhist nuns arrested in Myanmar for protest, and DVB (25 Feb 03) Japanese Buddhist nuns demand the releases of Burmese nuns

<sup>258</sup> AFP (10 Feb 03) Myanmar arrests 12 democracy activists for “anti-government” activity

station.<sup>259</sup> Than Tun accused the “NCGUB group” of supplying weapons to “an armed NLD terrorist camp near Ohn Pyan refugee camp in Thailand.”<sup>260</sup>

### **Releases**

On 16 March, shortly before Pinheiro’s visit, the regime released 4 political prisoners, who were student activists affiliated with the NLD.<sup>261</sup>

### **PINHEIRO’S 5TH MISSION, MARCH 19-24**

On 19 March, UN Special Rapporteur Paulo Sergio Pinheiro arrived in Burma for his 5th visit. In Rangoon, Pinheiro held meetings with Daw Suu and members of the NLD Central Executive Committee, as well as Gen Khin Nyunt, Foreign Minister Win Aung and other SPDC officials.

### **Discovery of Listening Device**

On 22 March, Pinheiro abruptly ended his visit 4 days early after finding a listening device hidden in a room where he was interviewing political prisoners. Pinheiro said he was “flabbergasted and completely out of control” with anger when he found the bug and the prisoner he was interviewing was “scared.” Following the discovery, he stated “the problem with this bug is it gives enormous insecurity to everything we (have done),” but he added “not everything we did was lost.”<sup>262</sup>

The National Coalition Government Union of Burma (NCGUB) stated: “The issue at stake here is not the accidental discovery of a wireless microphone...but the sincerity and trustworthiness of the generals.”<sup>263</sup>

Upon his return, Pinheiro addressed the UN Commission on Human Rights on March 31, criticizing the SPDC’s lack of progress in the talks. “These initiatives are no substitute for real advancement on substantial human rights issues where the progress has regrettably been very limited and not at the pace or level that I had expected,” he said.<sup>264</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> MT (25 Feb 03) Foiled plot prompts plea to members of political parties

<sup>260</sup> SPDC (10 Feb 03) Press conference [<http://www.myanmar.com/press/press2003/10-2-03press/feb10press.html>]

<sup>261</sup> DVB (24 Mar 03) Some political prisoners released

<sup>262</sup> AFP (24 March 03) UN rights envoy cuts short Myanmar visit after bugging incident & The Australian (27 March 03) UN envoy to Burma debated

<sup>263</sup> Discovery of 'Bug' Questions Trustworthiness of Generals, NCGUB 26 March 2003.

<sup>264</sup> 59th Session of the Commission on Human Rights (31 March 03) UN Statement by Mr.

Paulo Sergio Pinheiro



### **Pinheiro Under Fire**

The opposition remains critical of inconsistencies in Pinheiro's statements and many believe he should refrain from political statements, such as calling for engagement and "international dialogue," and stick to his mandate on human rights.<sup>265</sup> NLD spokesman U Lwin said: "We don't see any improvement in the human rights conditions since he took the position. What he says varies from one place to another. He says one thing before he comes to Burma, but he changes it when he arrives in Rangoon. And when he leaves Rangoon and holds a press conference in Bangkok, his statement is different again."<sup>266</sup>

### **US COUNTRY REPORT ON HUMAN RIGHTS PRACTICES 2002**

On 31 March, the US State Department released its annual report on Human Rights Practices in Burma. The report details abuses committed by members of security forces and notes that in 2002 "The regime's human rights record remained extremely poor, and it continued to commit numerous serious abuses."<sup>267</sup>

### **FORCED LABOUR**

Despite international pressure and the presence of an ILO liaison officer, extensive use of forced labor continues. During the period of this report card, incidents of forced labor were reported in Arakan State, Sagaing Division, Chin State, Pegu Division, Karen State, Tenasserim Division, and Mon State. Villagers were recruited by SPDC troops to construct army camps and roads, to work on army plantations, and to serve as military porters.<sup>268</sup> In addition, since February, SPDC

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<sup>265</sup> Irrawaddy (19 March 03) Human Rights Envoy Under Fire

<sup>266</sup> Irrawaddy (19 March 03) Human rights envoy under fire

<sup>267</sup> U.S. State Department (31 March 03) Burma: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – 2002. For full report see <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2002/18237.htm>

<sup>268</sup> Mon Forum (28 Feb 03) Forced labour along Kanbauk-Myaing kalay Gas Pipeline; Narinjara News (10 March 03) The Changing faces of forced labour; DVB (25 Feb 03) Forced labour in Sagaing Division; Narinjara News (25 Jan 03) Burmese Army force villagers to construct their quarters; DVB (25 Jan 03) Forced labour in Karen State; DVB (12 March 03) Forced labour in Karen State; Karen Monthly Human Rights Situation Report Tenasserim Division (Feb 03); Mon Forum (31 Jan 03) Forced labour for the helicopter landing pad construction; Kao Wao (1 March 03) Mon State at war; Mon Forum (31 Jan 03) More porters for LIB No. 273 in Yebyu Township; Mon Forum (28 Feb 03) Forced labour along Kanbauk-Myaing kalay Gas Pipeline; Mon Forum (31 Jan 03) Extorted lumber woods for new battalion, and IMNA (22 Jan 03) Forced Logging for New Army Base; Karen Monthly Human Rights Situation Report Tenasserim Division (Feb 03); Karen Monthly Human Rights Situation Report Tenasserim Division (Jan 03); Karen Monthly Human Rights Situation Report Tenasserim Division (March 03)

soldiers have forced villagers to clear bushes and build a fence along the Kanbauk-Myaingkalay Pipeline, in Mon State.<sup>269</sup> [See Military]

### **International Labour Organization (ILO)**

At the ILO March 6 Governing Body meeting, Liaison Officer to Rangoon Hong Trang Perret-Nguyen said that the use of forced labour continues in spite of the SPDC's official ban, and is particularly serious in areas near the Thai border and in northern Arakan State. She pointed out that military officials tried to cover up the practice by paying minimal 'salaries' and requesting labor verbally instead of in written orders.<sup>270</sup>

While the SPDC has tried to push Hong Trang Perret-Nguyen to endorse its plan of action to end forced labor, she has refused saying "I have not been able to convince the authorities to take steps I consider necessary for the plan to be a credible plan."<sup>271</sup>

In March, Maung Maung, General Secretary of the Federation of Trade Unions-Burma (FTUB) stated that the SPDC continues to threaten and intimidate people from reporting forced labor to the ILO and "examples of punishment of army officers who imposed forced labour on civilians are few and far between."<sup>272</sup>

### **EXTORTION**

The SPDC continues to extort money and other goods from people and to severely punish villagers who cannot meet exaggerated rice quotas. [See Economy] In Tenasserim Division and Mon State, it was reported that villagers were forced to provide local army units with building materials.<sup>273</sup> In March, it was reported that following an attack by opposition forces, SPDC troops in Mergui district,

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<sup>269</sup> Mon Forum (31 Jan 03) Civilian Guards along Kanbauk-Myaingkalay Gas Pipeline

<sup>270</sup> ILO (March 03) Developments concerning the question of the observance by the Government of Myanmar of the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29). ILO report No. GB.286/6

<sup>271</sup> AFP (11 March 03) Myanmar plan to eliminate forced labor not adequate

<sup>272</sup> ICFTU Online, (26 March 03) Spotlight Interview with Maung Maung, General Secretary of the FTUB

<sup>273</sup> Mon Forum (31 Jan 03) Extorted lumber woods for new battalion, and IMNA (22 Jan 03) Forced Logging for New Army Base; Karen Monthly Human Rights Situation Report Tenasserim Division (Feb 03) & Karen Monthly Human Rights Situation Report Tenasserim Division (Feb 03)

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Tenasserim Division extorted 600,000-kyat 'compensation money' from villagers forcibly relocated to Pasaw Oak.<sup>274</sup>

### **LAND CONFISCATION**

Continuing large-scale land confiscation by SPDC battalions has also been reported in Mon State, Arakan State, and Tenasserim Division.<sup>275</sup> In Mon State alone, the SPDC army has seized an estimated 2,500 acres of rubber and betel plantations since 1999.<sup>276</sup>

### **SPDC ORDER TO SHOOT ANYONE IN ARMY SHIRTS**

On 6 January, IB 61 Captain Tin Aung Khaing ordered his troops in Ye township, Tenasserim Division to shoot anyone wearing army-colored shirts or trousers. Prior to this, 2 headman from Sa-kom village were arrested and tortured for wearing army colored clothing.<sup>277</sup>

### **FREEDOM OF PRESS AND EXPRESSION**

In March, Reporters Sans Frontières and the Burma Media Association criticized the junta's blackout of news on the bank crisis as a "flagrant violation of the right of the Burmese people to be freely informed"<sup>278</sup> [see Economy].

On 31 March, The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) released its annual survey "Attacks on the Press in 2002". According to CPJ, at least 9 Burmese journalists, including 72-year old U Win Tin, remain in jail. <sup>279</sup>

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<sup>274</sup> Karen Monthly Human Rights Situation Report Tenasserim Division (March 03)

<sup>275</sup> Narinjara News (5 March 03) Burmese Army grabs huge tracts of civilian land or newer settlement: Design to tip ethnic balance in Rakhine State?; DVB (26 Mar 03) Lands grabbed from Mon people; Karen Monthly Human Rights Situation Report Tenasserim Division (Feb 03)

<sup>276</sup> Irrawaddy (7 Feb 03) Confiscation Spurs Social Unrest

<sup>277</sup> Mon Forum (31 Jan 03) Fire! If wear army colour shirts

<sup>278</sup> Reporters Sans Frontières (17 March 03) Military junta bans reporting on banking crisis

<sup>279</sup> Online at [<http://www.cpj.org/attacks02/attacks02index.html>]

## WOMEN & CHILDREN

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Improving

Stagnant

Deteriorating

The civil war in Burma should be viewed in the context of systematic sexual violence and not just from other angles. As long as others continue to support the regime for one reason or the other, the nightmare of sexual violence continues indefinitely ~ Thin Thin Aung, WLB joint general secretary, and Hseng Nong, SWAN, The Hindu, 6 January 2003.

### RAPE

State-sanctioned abuse, rape and discrimination against women continue unpunished in Burma. Unashamed, the junta continues to deny reports of systematic rape in Shan State and uses visits of international organizations to 'prove' its denials. During the period covered in this report, at least 3 rapes in Shan, Karenni and Mon States were reported.<sup>280</sup> On 17 January, 3 army defectors testified to SWAN that their commanding officer boasted about raping 5 or 6 women in Shan State. In Khaw-Zar village, Ye Township, Mon State, soldiers from IB 273 charged with attempted rape of 3 women in November 2002 told villagers: "This is a black area and we can do anything we want."<sup>281</sup>

On 28 March, the Shan Women Action Network (SWAN) launched the online Burmese version of its "Licence to Rape" report<sup>282</sup>.

### SPDC 'Investigation'

On 3 January, the SPDC launched another "investigation" into the charges of systematic rape of Shan women by SPDC soldiers. Military Intelligence (MI) No 2 based in Taunggyi and the National Intelligence, headed by Colonel Kyaw Moe Htun, allegedly questioned people in Southern Shan State.<sup>283</sup>

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<sup>280</sup> Karen Monthly Human rights Situation Report Tenasserim Division (Feb 03); Narinjara News (27 March 03) Police Constable arrested on charge of rape & SWAN (11 Feb 03) Military gang-rape occurs as International Red Cross visits Shan State

<sup>281</sup> SWAN (Jan 03) License to Rape: Runaway soldiers disclose, and Kao Wao (20 Jan 03) Rape used as a weapon of war

<sup>282</sup> Available online at [<http://www.shanwomen.org/final%20edits.doc>]

<sup>283</sup> DVB (10 Jan 03) SPDC's investigations into rape allegations start

### **Rape Close to ICRC Delegation**

On 30 January, SPDC troops from military base at Kho Lam, Shan State gang-raped a woman only kilometers away from an ICRC delegation in Laikha. “We are very disturbed that such abuses are continuing under the very noses of international monitors,” said Mo Lao of SWAN. “It throws into serious doubt the regime's sincerity about reform.”<sup>284</sup>

### **47th Session Of The Commission On The Status Of Women, New York, March 3-14**

Altsean-Burma's Women's Report Card 2003 entitled “Abused Bargaining Chips” cited 22 violations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights committed by the SPDC against women. The report was distributed at the 47th session of the Commission on the Status of Women in New York<sup>285</sup>

### **CHILD SOLDIERS**

Despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, the regime continues to deny using child soldiers. In February, Col Hla Min claimed “The Myanmar Defense Forces does not recruit underage and, in fact, MDF is a voluntary army.”<sup>286</sup>

In January, a former child soldier reported to SWAN that he was forcibly conscripted at age 16 and that child soldiers as young as 12 were stationed at the SPDC army camp opposite Piang Luang, Shan State. Another escaped child soldier testified that a third of the troops in his regiment, LIB 343 based at Ye, Tenasserim Division, were underage.<sup>287</sup>

In March, Dictatorwatch reported that in the past year the SPDC had increased troops along the Thai border, mostly using forcibly recruited children. Only soldiers of higher ranks were of legal age. In the first 3 months of 2003, the KNU reported that over 30 child soldiers had already escaped.<sup>288</sup>

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<sup>284</sup> SWAN (11 Feb 03) Military gang-rape occurs as International Red Cross visits Shan State

<sup>285</sup> Available online at <http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/womrptcard2003.pdf>

<sup>286</sup> Washington Post, 10 February 2003

<sup>287</sup> SWAN (Jan 03) License to Rape: Runaway soldiers disclose, and Kao Wao (20 Jan 03)

Rape used as a weapon of war

<sup>288</sup> Dictatorwatch Update on the use of child soldiers by the SPDC

[<http://www.dictatorwatch.org/childsoldiers.html>]

The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers is pressing the UN Security Council to add Burma to its agenda and to adopt a strong resolution to protect children from being used as child soldiers.<sup>289</sup>

## RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

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Improving

Stagnant

Deteriorating

As “devout Buddhists”, the generals proudly started preparations to host the fourth World Buddhist Summit in 2004.<sup>290</sup> At the same time, adherents to other faiths, especially the 7 million Muslims in Burma continue to suffer discrimination and oppression.

### US RELIGIOUS FREEDOM BLACKLIST

On 5 March, the US State Department included Burma as one of 6 countries on its annual list of “countries of particular concern” for severe violations of religious freedoms under the International Religious Freedom Act.<sup>291</sup> The regime accused the US of using “hearsay evidence” to make the determination.<sup>292</sup>

### WCC CHAIRMAN MEETS KHIN NYUNT

Rev. Konrad Raiser, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC), met with Gen Khin Nyunt during a March visit to Rangoon. Raiser reported that Khin Nyunt was aware of allegations of religious discrimination and oppression, including reports of rapes of ethnic minority women, and had “said that his government has sent a team to probe those reports and also offered to take appropriate measures on future complaints.”<sup>293</sup> [See Women & Children]

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<sup>289</sup> Irrawaddy (17 Jan 03) NGOs Push UN to Punish Groups Using Child Soldiers

<sup>290</sup> Xinhua (23 Jan 03) Myanmar to host world Buddhist summit

<sup>291</sup> US Department of State (5 March 03. Designation of “Countries of Particular Concern” Under the International Religious Freedom Act

<sup>292</sup> AP (6 March 03) Christian leader says Myanmar junta sympathetic to complaints of discrimination, and WCC (6 March 03) Raiser points out discrimination against Christian minorities, affirms role of interfaith dialogue

<sup>293</sup> AP (6 March 03) Christian leader says Myanmar junta sympathetic to complaints of discrimination

## **DISCRIMINATION AGAINST MUSLIMS**

On 5 February, anti-Muslim booklets titled ‘We are afraid that our race will disappear’ were being sold openly and given to Buddhist monasteries in Kyaukse, Mandalay Division. People in the area are also reportedly discouraged from buying from Muslims or renting houses to them, and Buddhist shop owners have to display the Buddhist “Arahan” symbol.

Muslims also report difficulty renewing their identity cards or applying for family registration. “Form 10,” a necessary application form can only be obtained by paying at least 50,000 – 60,000 kyats (US\$55 – 66).<sup>294</sup>

### **Muslim Students Kidnapped - Homes and Religious Buildings Destroyed**

On 25 January, Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) members, led by 20 Buddhist monks, burnt down 45 houses, including a mosque and a Madrasah (religious school) in a Muslim village in Katha Township, Sagaing division. At the same time the USDA members and monks kidnapped 32 students who remain missing.<sup>295</sup>

On 6 March, a mosque, a Madrasah and over 12 Muslim houses were burnt down in Kant Ba Lu Township, Sagaing division. Local authorities did not take any action against the culprits.<sup>296</sup> In the same month, local authorities in Kyauk Pyu Township, Arakan State destroyed an old mosque.<sup>297</sup> Another Madrasah was destroyed on 9-15 March by local authorities in Buthidaung Township, Arakan State.<sup>298</sup>

### **Restrictions on Religious Practice**

On 12 February, Muslims in Arakan State were told they had to get permission from local Nasaka officers and pay US\$25 for each sacrificial animal to celebrate Eid-ul Azha.<sup>299</sup>

In February, it was reported that as in previous years, the SPDC allowed only 200 Burmese Muslims to travel to Mecca, Saudi Arabia to perform the Haj (pilgrimage

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<sup>294</sup> DVB (5 Feb 03) Anti-Muslim booklets sold in Kyaukse

<sup>295</sup> MICB (4 Feb 03) USDA sets village on fire and kidnaps 32 Muslim students in Burma

<sup>296</sup> MICB (20 Mar 03) Anti-Muslim riots take place in Burma

<sup>297</sup> MICB (20 Mar 03) Anti-Muslim riots take place in Burma

<sup>298</sup> Narinjara News (26 Mar 03) Islamic School Demolished in Western Burma

<sup>299</sup> Kaladan News (19 Feb 03) Eid- ul- Azha (Eid Festival) Celebrated in Arakan

to Mecca). Reportedly, 70 of these people were selected by the SPDC to monitor activities of the fellow Hajis as well as Burmese Muslim organizations abroad.<sup>300</sup>

### DISCRIMINATION AGAINST CHRISTIANS

In January, Father Vito del Prete, secretary of the Pontifical Missionary Union spoke about discrimination against Christians in Burma, saying "Missions cannot have schools, Christians are prohibited any external manifestation, [and] any kind of apostolate or meeting, and communities are regarded as accomplices of the northern guerrillas."<sup>301</sup>

In January, 5 Christian children from Matupi Township, Chin State fled from Buddhist monasteries in Rangoon where they had been taken after being forcibly 'recruited' by monks.<sup>302</sup>

### FORCED CONVERSION

On 20 December, SPDC IB 228 forced over 100 Nagas in Leshi Town, Upper Sagaing Division to convert from animism to Buddhism.<sup>303</sup>

## DISPLACEMENT

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Improving

Stagnant

Deteriorating

### INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS (IDPS)

**Karen State:** In January, the SPDC's dry season offensive forced hundreds of Karen villagers to flee to escape fighting, forced portering and forced labor. SPDC troops hunted down many of these IDPs and destroyed their hiding places in the jungle.<sup>304</sup>

After a January relief mission, the Free Burma Rangers reported that 8,489 out of a population of 13,969 people in the northernmost part of Papun District were

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<sup>300</sup> MICB (4 Feb 03) Muslim Haj situation in Burma

<sup>301</sup> Zenit.org (19 Jan 03) Burma Not Treating the Church Fairly, Says Missionary

<sup>302</sup> Chin Human Rights Organization (5 Feb 03) 5 Chin Christian children escaped from

Buddhist monastery

<sup>303</sup> DVB (11 Jan 03) Forced Conversion on Naga Nationals by the Soldiers of Lord Buddha?

<sup>304</sup> Karen Monthly Human Rights Situation Report Tenasserim Division (Feb 03)



## 64 Report Card: Charm Offensive

IDPs.<sup>305</sup> In February, it was reported that SPDC military operations and food shortages had caused 698 Karen IDPs from Papun to flee to Mae Kong Kha camp in Thailand.<sup>306</sup>

On 17 March, two IDPs from the Halochanee resettlement site were arrested and tortured by soldiers from LIB 258.<sup>307</sup>

**Shan State:** In January, UWSA Chairman and drug lord Bao Yu-Chang said that the number of Shan State villagers who would be relocated to the Thai border would reach 100,000 in 2003, and added that the UWSA would not stop there.<sup>308</sup>

**Arakan State:** In early January, 37 families were brought from Rangoon 'to be rehabilitated' in Buthidaung Township and in the Thazin-myaing and Padauk-myaing 'model' villages in Rathedaung Township. Local Nasaka security forces and SPDC officials confiscated rice, food and cattle from the nearby villages and distributed them to the new arrivals.<sup>309</sup>

**Tenasserim Division:** On 10 March, LIB 17 ordered 300 people from Met Wah village, Mergui District, to move to a relocation site within 5 days.<sup>310</sup>

## REFUGEES & ASYLUM SEEKERS

### Bangladesh

During his March visit to Bangladesh, SPDC Foreign Minister Win Aung promised to facilitate the safe return of all refugees. [See Int'l Relations] However concerns remain as the SPDC still refuses to recognize the mostly Muslim refugees as citizens and has excluded the UNHCR from bilateral repatriation talks. Repatriation continues slowly, with a UNHCR official reporting in March that 25-35 refugees were being sent back each week. "The repatriation process is at a very slow speed, because of problems with the Myanmar style," he said.<sup>311</sup>

In February, UNHCR submitted a proposal to gradually hand over responsibility for the 2 refugee camps to Bangladeshi authorities. The proposal includes measures to promote "self-sufficiency within the local host community pending voluntary

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<sup>305</sup> Karen Monthly Human Rights Situation Report, Northern Karen State (Jan 03)

<sup>306</sup> CCSDPT open session (12 Feb 03)

<sup>307</sup> DVB (21 Mar 03) Refugees tortured by SPDC

<sup>308</sup> Nation (27 Jan 03) UN, govt turning 'blind eye' to Wa

<sup>309</sup> Narinjara News (17 Jan 03) More Burmese Families arrive at western Burma for rehabilitation

<sup>310</sup> Karen Monthly Human Rights Situation Report Tenasserim Division (March 03)

<sup>311</sup> Irrawaddy (4 March 03) Refugee Repatriation in Limbo

return” to be initially carried out and funded by UNHCR in co-operation with UN agencies and international and local NGOs.<sup>312</sup>

On February 5-7, over 50 refugees held a hunger strike in front of the UNHCR office in Dhaka to demand immediate recognition for asylum seekers and a monthly subsistence allowance.<sup>313</sup> The strike was broken when UNHCR agreed to a meeting with refugee representatives. However, applications continued to be rejected, leading to another hunger strike in March lasting over a week.<sup>314</sup>

### **India - UNHCR Cuts Assistance**

Fleeing the junta’s human rights abuses as well as evictions of refugees in Mizoram, northeast India, in recent months, nearly 500 Chin refugees have arrived in New Delhi to seek protection from UNHCR. However, the UNHCR is decreasing assistance to refugees, claiming budget cuts. In June, the commission announced they would stop subsistence allowances to 30 refugees. In February, 6 Chin refugees in New Delhi held a 3 week hunger strike to demand UNHCR refugee status.<sup>315</sup>

On 17 February, San Pai, General Secretary of All Burma Refugee Committee criticized cuts in assistance, saying “UNHCR has mostly taken unilateral decisions that have detrimentally affected the whole refugee community.”<sup>316</sup>

### **Thailand - Refugees “Not Welcome”**

Responding to pressure from the SPDC, Thai policy towards refugees and asylum seekers has become increasingly hostile. On 29 December, Gen Winai Phattiyakhul, secretary of Thailand’s National Security Council said: "From now on, Thailand would force refugees to go back to where they came from. Thailand would not welcome refugees from Burma and other neighbouring countries anymore."<sup>317</sup> [See Thai-Burma Relations]

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<sup>312</sup> Forum Asia (12 Feb 03) Update on the Bangladesh-Burma border presented at CCSDPT open session

<sup>313</sup> Narinjara News (8 Feb 03) Burmese refugees’ hunger-strike in Dhaka

<sup>314</sup> Narinjara News (10 March 03) Hunger strike demanding subsistence allowance from UNHCR & Narinjara News (18 Mar 03) Burmese refugees’ hunger strike intensifies

<sup>315</sup> Chinland Guardian (4 March 03) Lending a Helping Hand

<sup>316</sup> ABRC (17 Feb 03) All Burmese Refugee calls for continued SA and others allowance

<sup>317</sup> Forum Asia (3 Jan 03) Thai army raided Karen village in Sangkhlaburi

## 66 Report Card: Charm Offensive

At the end of February the Burma Border Consortium (BBC) reported a total of 134,240 registered and non-registered Burmese refugees in Thai camps.<sup>318</sup>

**UK-US camp visit:** On 20 January, an 8-member team including UK House of Lords member, Lord David Alton and US Congressman Joseph Pitts visited Mae La camp, in Tak Province. Likening Burma to “one large concentration camp” Alton stated that forced repatriation was tantamount to “sentencing them [refugees] to death.”<sup>319</sup>

### **Shan Exodus Continues**

On 28 December, SPDC troops from LIB 519 killed 4 refugees who voluntarily returned from Thailand via the river crossing point in Murg-Ton Township, Shan State.<sup>320</sup>

In March, it was reported that villagers fleeing SPDC military expansion and operations in Eastern Shan State continue to arrive at a de-facto refugee camp opposite Mae Fah Luang on the northern Chiang Rai border.<sup>321</sup> In April the BBC reported that about 1,000 Shan refugees arrive monthly in Fang District, Chiang Mai. Most of them flee from relocation sites in Central Shan State.<sup>322</sup>

### **Karen Flee Dry Season Offensive**

Hundreds of Karen villagers fled to Thailand in January due to the SPDC’s dry season offensive. [See Internally Displaced Persons]. 374 of them sought temporary shelter at Wat Yaphaw in the Thai Phop Phra District. “When the situation becomes normal, they will go back to their village,” Nai Charoen Boonpuak, chairman of the Yaphaw Village administration committee said.”<sup>323</sup> On 31 January, over 600 Karen voluntarily returned to Burma from Thailand.<sup>324</sup>

### **100 Karen Refugees Disappear While In Thai Custody**

On 6 March, it was reported that Thai soldiers arrested over 100 refugees who were collecting roofing leaves outside of Mae La camp. While Thai police claimed that

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<sup>318</sup> CCSDPT open session (12 March 03)

<sup>319</sup> Asian Tribune (21 Jan 03) U.S. congressman, British lord, tour camp for Myanmar refugees

<sup>320</sup> SHRF Monthly Report (Feb 03)

<sup>321</sup> CCSDPT open session (12 March 03)

<sup>322</sup> Burma Border Consortium update no 1/2003 (2 April 03)

<sup>323</sup> Irrawaddy (9 Jan 03) Fighting Causes Hundreds to Flee

<sup>324</sup> Irrawaddy (31 Jan 03) Refugees Return Home

the refugees would be handed over to Tak Province's Immigration Office, there are concerns that they will be deported.<sup>325</sup>

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<sup>325</sup> DVB (6 March 03) 100 Karen refugees missing

### **Thais Block Aid Delivery**

In early March, Thai authorities blocked an NGO delivery of food and building supplies to Nu Po refugee camp. No reason was given for the blockage.<sup>326</sup>

### **South Korea**

On 29 January it was reported that for the 1st time South Korea had granted refugee status to 3 people from Burma.<sup>327</sup>

## **MIGRANTS**

### **Thailand**

On 13 January, Thailand officially deported 15 workers from a group arrested in February 2002. Two members of the original group had already died in Thai prisons while waiting for the SPDC to verify their citizenship before accepting them back.<sup>328</sup> The SPDC reportedly forced migrants deported on 19 December to pay 50,000 kyat each or face imprisonment.<sup>329</sup>

A total of 98,673 undocumented migrants were deported via Mae Sot in 2002, and over 8,000 have been deported since October.<sup>330</sup>

### **Migrants Forced Back To Resettlement Site**

On 8 January, Thai authorities working with SPDC troops forced 11 undocumented migrant families in Ban Bongti, Kanchanaburi Province to resettle across the border in a forced relocation site at Kawsawwah village, Tenasserim Division. Despite the fact that this area remains a free-fire zone, the SPDC is telling refugees they can come and resettle in specific villages which are now 'safe' and the Thai government is reportedly planning to send back more Burmese families including those with Thai ID cards.<sup>331</sup>

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<sup>326</sup> Irrawaddy (5 Mar 03) Refugees Continue to Arrive

<sup>327</sup> AP (29 Jan 03) South Korea grants refugee status to asylum-seekers from Myanmar,

Cameroon

<sup>328</sup> Forum Asia (3 Jan 03) Thai army raided Karen village in Sangkhlaburi

<sup>329</sup> DVB (13 Jan 03) Illegal Workers returned to Burma Thai Authorities

<sup>330</sup> Irrawaddy (14 Jan 03) Rapprochement Continues & CCSDPT open session (12 Feb 03)

<sup>331</sup> Karen Monthly Human Rights Situation Report Tenasserim Division (Jan 03)

**Migrants Face Chemical Hazard**

In April, a series of blood tests found that many Burmese migrants working on farms in Tak Province had dangerously high levels of chemicals in their blood from pesticide sprays.<sup>332</sup>

**LANDMINES**

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 Increasing Stagnant Decreasing

During the 13th Summit meeting of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) states in Kuala Lumpur, Burma was listed both as a recent mine user and as one of the 14 remaining mine producing countries.<sup>333</sup>

In February, Nobel Peace laureate Jody Williams, on behalf of the Mine Ban Movement, thanked Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the NLD and the CRPP for their commitment to join the Mine Ban Treaty. Daw Suu stressed that the root causes of landmine use had to be addressed, saying that when peace and reconciliation are achieved in Burma there will be no need to plant landmines, as people can express differences through the open democratic process rather than through the use of weapons.<sup>334</sup>

In March it was reported that SPDC IB 25 planted landmines in Kamoethway area, Tenasserim Division to prevent villagers from traveling to the Thai border. On 3 March, two villagers were injured from a mine.<sup>335</sup>

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<sup>332</sup> Irrawaddy (1 April 03) Burmese workers face chemical hazard

<sup>333</sup> International Campaign to Ban Landmines (26 Feb 03) NAM's Kuala Lumpur Declaration: Mine Users & Producers "deplore" Mine Use

<sup>334</sup> Nonviolence International (18 Feb 03) Nobel Peace Laureate visits Burma

<sup>335</sup> Karen Monthly Human Rights Situation Report Tenasserim Division (March 03)

## HEALTH

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Improving

Stagnant

Deteriorating

### HIV/AIDS

In February, UNAIDS representative Swarup Sarkar said that in some regions in Burma, HIV infection rates are as high as 13%. “For the first time after Africa, we are seeing such high infection rates,” he said. Warning that effective measures must be taken immediately, executive director of Unicef Carol Bellamy said a “disaster is looming over the people of this region.”<sup>336</sup>

Intravenous drug users are particularly at risk. The UN estimates there are 1.2 million drug addicts in Burma, which is 20 times the SPDC official figures for February 2002.<sup>337</sup>

Ignoring the regime’s past efforts to deny the existence of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and/or blame the problem on social ‘outsiders,’ UNAIDS deputy executive director Kathleen Cravero praised the SPDC’s anti-HIV campaign during her January visit. She also called for an expansion of activities on the national level.<sup>338</sup>

### HOSPITALS - FOR THE RICH ONLY

Due to lack of state funding, health care remains out of reach for many in Burma. In January, Rangoon residents reported that many people died because the hospitals could not treat them and they could not afford medicine. Patients are charged 450,000 kyat to give birth at a clinic, and incubators at Rangoon’s Children’s Hospital for prematurely born babies are reserved for the rich.<sup>339</sup>

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<sup>336</sup> Times of India (4 Feb 03) Aids in Asia moving at double the speed of Africa

<sup>337</sup> Xinhua (31 Jan 03) Myanmar opens more drug treatment centers

<sup>338</sup> MT (27 Jan-2 Feb 03) UN official praises progress on AIDS

<sup>339</sup> DVB (14 Jan 03) The fall and fall of health service

## **ENVIRONMENT**

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Improving

Stagnant

Deteriorating

### **DOLPHINS FACING EXTINCTION**

A Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) study in November-December 2002, found that dolphins were at risk of extinction in Burma due to the practice of gillnetting.<sup>340</sup>

[For information about the Salween Dam projects see Economy, Trade & Investment - Thailand]

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<sup>340</sup> Xinhua (6Jan 03) Dolphins face extinction in Myanmar



## CHRONOLOGY

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### Includes events taking place in December 2002 that were only reported in January

- Dec 02 Task Force 399 relieved of its drug suppression role. Irrawaddy, 16 Jan
- 20 Dec SPDC IB 228 forced over 100 Nagas in Sagaing Division to convert to Buddhism. DVB, 11 Jan
- 29 Dec Thai Government ended visa upon arrival scheme and enacted new visa regulations for Burmese passport holders. Irrawaddy, 16 Jan
- 29 Dec Gen Winai Phattiyakul, Secretary of Thailand's National Security Council said: "From now on, Thailand would force refugees to go back to where they came from." Forum Asia, 3 Jan
- Jan 03 Reported that price of transportation, communications, housing, cars, construction materials and basic commodities had risen dramatically. DVB, 11 Jan & DVB, 8 Jan & Boston Globe, 16 Mar
- 2 Jan Daw Suu's phone line was cut preventing her from delivering a message to the 1st Asian Social Forum Summit. The Hindu, 6 January
- 3 Jan Reported that Burma's Supreme Court rejected an appeal against death sentences handed down in September to a son-in-law and 3 grandsons of former dictator General Ne Win. NYT, 3 Jan
- 3 Jan SPDC launched another "investigation" into reports of systematic rape of Shan women by SPDC soldiers. DVB, 10 Jan
- 3 Jan US State Dept spokesman Richard Boucher criticized government sponsored harassment of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and called for political change. AP, 3 Jan
- 5-8 Jan SPDC LIB 315 launched an offensive against KNU Brigade 201. Kyodo, 9 Jan
- 6 Jan Military Intelligence warned United Nationalities Alliance (UNA) leaders that the SPDC would not recognize the alliance. DVB, 13 Jan
- 6-11 Jan an SPDC delegation led by Sr. Gen Than Shwe visits China. Xinhua, 7 Jan
- 8 Jan Reported that CRPP accepted 2 new applicants. DVB, 8 Jan
- 8 Jan Brig-Gen Tha Aye announced that civil service employees nationwide would receive a pay increase of up to 500% beginning in February. DVB, 11 Jan
- 11 Jan Reported regime has expanded and reorganized the 'Border Supervisory Companies,' or Nasakas. DVB, 11 Jan
- 13 Jan Thailand officially deported 15 workers from a group arrested in February 2002. DVB, 13 Jan
- 14 Jan Indian court filed hijacking charges against Burmese activist Soe Myint. Irrawaddy, 15 Jan
- 14-16 Jan Chinese Vice Premier Li Lanqing led a 75-member group to visit Rangoon. Xinhua, 7 Jan
- 16 Jan 2 Buddhist nuns were arrested in Rangoon for staging a peaceful protest in front of City Hall. Reuters, 16 Jan & DVB, 25 Feb

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- 17 Jan Burma hosted the 2nd Asean Ministerial Meeting on Science and Technology. New Light of Myanmar, 17 Jan
- 17 Jan Reported that China has offered Burma a preferential loan of US \$200 million for economic development, a US\$ 6.04 million grant for technological cooperation and an unspecified amount of debt relief. FT, 17 Jan
- 19 Jan Win Aung travelled to India for bilateral talks with Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee. AP, 21 Jan & Xinhua, 28 Jan
- 20 Jan At least 9 Burmese activists, and 1 child were arrested in Sanghlaburi. Seven were deported on 22 January, and 1 was sentenced to 48 days in Thai prison for harboring undocumented people. Nation, 22 Jan & AFP, 23 Jan
- 20 - 21 Jan Japan's Deputy Foreign Minister met with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and General Khin Nyunt. DVB, 22 Jan
- 21 Jan Reported that Shan State Army 'South' (SSA) offered to surrender to the SPDC under UN protection. SSA Leader, Colonel Yawd Serk also offered to assist international drug eradication efforts and testify in an international court that the SSA was not involved in the drug trade. World Markets Analysis, 21 Jan & Nation, 22 Jan
- 21 Jan SPDC rejects SSA offer and demands unconditional surrender. MT, 3-9 Feb
- 21 Jan Lt Gen Soe Win said "The SPDC not only will not talk to the NLD but also would never handover power to the NLD." DVB, 28 Jan
- 22 Jan UK Foreign Office complained of SPDC interference during a phone conversation between Foreign Office Minister Mike O'Brian and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. AP, 24 January
- 23 Jan Local Thai military officer in Sanghlaburi said, "We ordered them (Burmese activists) to close down their offices and leave the country within 48 hours."AFP, 23 Jan
- 23 Jan Reported that Japan will extend approx US\$20 million in aid to Burma for fiscal year 2003-2004. Xinhua, 23 Jan
- 24 Jan 2 NLD members sentenced to 2 years in prison for complaining when denied their rice rations. DVB, 30 Jan
- 24 Jan Regime reported 500,000 foreign tourist arrivals in 2002 with tourism earnings at US\$ 100 million. Xinhua, 24 Jan
- 25 Jan USDA members led by 20 Buddhist monks burnt down 45 houses and kidnapped 32 students in a Muslim village Sagaing division. MICB, 4 Feb
- 27 Jan AAPPB reported 15 political prisoners disappeared from prisons in Burma between April and December 2002. AAPPB, 27 Jan & SCMP, 29 Jan
- 27-28 Jan SPDC Deputy Foreign Minister U Khin Maung Win permitted to attend and participate at the EU-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (AEMM). AFP, 28 Jan
- 29 Jan&18 Feb It was reported that anti-Daw Suu pamphlets have been distributed in Sagaing Division, Tenasserim Division, Shan State and Arakan State. DVB, 29 Jan & DVB, 18 Feb
- 30 Jan A shipping service was instituted between Bangladesh and Burma. AFP, 30 Jan
- 30 Jan-1 Feb Thai Army commander Somdhat Attanant visited Burma to meet with his counterpart Maung Aye. AFP, 31 Jan

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- 30 Jan SPDC troops from military base at Kho Lam, Shan State gang-raped a woman only kilometers away from an ICRC delegation in Laikha. SWAN, 11 Feb
- 31 Jan the U.S. announced that they would not certify Burma's anti-drug efforts. Washington File, 3 Feb
- 31 Jan-8 Feb Amnesty International (AI) conducts its first ever visit to Burma. Irrawaddy, 10 Feb
  - Feb US Dept of Commerce reported clothing imports from Burma fell from 411 million dollars in 2001 to 303 million last year. AFX-GEM, 25 Mar
- 1 Feb Sr-Gen Than Shwe appointed Air Defense General Lt Gen Soe Win as Secretary 2. Nine Regional Commanders were promoted at the same time. AP, 12 Feb & SPDC 1, Feb
- 1 Feb Thaksin initiated a 3-month 'drug war. AFP, 25 Mar
- 1-7 Feb Rumors circulate that certain bank notes will be demonetized. Investors rush to withdraw their savings as private investment companies appear increasingly unstable. Irrawaddy, 21 Mar
- 4 Feb Reported that HIV infection rates in Burma are as high as 13%. Times of India, 4 Feb
- 5 Feb Daw Suu received the 2002 AI Neuharth Free Spirit Award carrying a US\$1 million prize. Freedom Forum, 6 Feb
- 5 -6 Feb 12 members of pro-democracy parties were arrested for "anti-government activities with financial support from dissident expatriates." AFP. 10 Feb
- 9-10 Feb Thaksin met with General Than Shwe on a working visit to Burma. Thaksin offered to mediate a peace agreement between the junta and ethnic nationality armed forces. MT, 17-23 Feb
- 11 Feb a section of the Kanbauk-Myaingkalay pipeline exploded in Tenasserim Division. Mon Forum, 31 Jan & Kao Wao, 17 Feb
- 12 Feb Burma's largest bank, the Asia Wealth Bank, asks the Central Bank for a bailout security bond of 30 billion kyat (US \$30 million). Irrawaddy, 21 Mar
- 12 Feb Reported UNHCR submitted proposal to hand over running of refugee camps to Bangladeshi authorities. Forum Asia, 12 Feb
- 14 Feb Reported SPDC Information Minister Brig-Gen Kyaw Hsan states: "Internal and external destructive elements are impeding development work in the country. Destructive elements must be annihilated." AP, 14 Feb
- 14 Feb SPDC Press Scrutiny Board imposed news blackout on the banking crisis. Irrawaddy, 21 Mar
- 15 Feb Yoma Bank suspended all credit card services. Irrawaddy, 21 Mar
- 15 Feb Japan hosted UN-sponsored, closed-door seminar in Tokyo aimed at defining ways out of the deadlock. DVB, 17 Feb
- 17 Feb Banks limits withdrawals by depositors to 500,000 kyat (US \$500) per week and ban account transfers. Irrawaddy, 21 Mar
- 18 Feb Daw Suu has reiterated her call for pressure both inside and outside the country. Nonviolence International, 18 Feb

Report card: 1 Jan – 31 March 2003 75

- 19 Feb Junta called on US to lift sanctions, start a "constructive dialogue" and "to roll up its sleeves, open its heart, and join with us to bring a better life to the people (of Myanmar)."AFP, 20 Feb
- 21 Feb Daw Suu sentenced to a 500 kyat fine or 7 days in jail for 'unlawfully preventing her cousin, Ko Soe Aung from entering their compound,' in May 2002. DVB, 25 Feb & Irrawaddy, March
- 21 Feb 21 The Central Bank pledges 25 billion kyat (US \$25 million) to bail out the 3 largest private banks. Feb 18-Investors begin to gather in front of banks demanding their money. Irrawaddy, 21 Mar
- 25 Feb Karen National Union (KNU), Shan State Army (SSA), Karenni National Progress Party (KNPP), Arakan Liberation Party (ALP) and Chin National Front (CNF) released a statement setting conditions for the talks with the junta. Irrawaddy, 27 Feb
- 26 Feb Reported that Nasaka and the Bangladesh Rifles border security (BDR) forces held a flag meeting at the Bangladesh border town of Teknaf. Narinjara, 26 Feb
- 26 Feb SPDC ordered that banks cease account transfers. Irrawaddy, 21 Mar
- 26 Feb Local authorities harassed NLD members in Kawthaung Township, Tenasserim Division. DVB, 1 March
- 28 Feb CSO reported that Burma's foreign trade was down by 11.78%in first 10 months of 2002. Xinhua, 28 Feb
- 2 Mar Reported that Thai Third Army was ordered to give the ethnic rebel troops a hard time in order to pressure them to the negotiating table. Bangkok Post, 2 Mar
- 2 Mar Reported that SPDC claims production of crude oil was up 21.2 % in the first 10 months of 2002 over the previous year, and natural gas production was up 2.64%. Xinhua, 2 Mar
- 2 Mar Win Aung visits Bangladesh and reportedly states that the regime would take back all refugees. Narinjara, 3 March
- 5 Mar The US State department labeled Burma as a country "of particular concern" for severe violations of religious freedoms under the International Religious Freedom Act. US State Dept, 5 Mar
- 10-15 Mar Thai Princess Sirindhorn visited Burma and met with Sr-Gen Than Shwe. MT, 17-22 Mar
- 12 Mar Reported that SPDC Deputy Intelligence Chief Maj-Gen Kyaw Win refused to talk to ethnic nationality groups collectively. Irrawaddy, 12 Mar
- 14 Mar Reported that Thai Deputy Prime Minister Chavalit Yongchaiyudh said there was "reliable" intelligence that Bao Youxiang, commander of the UWSA, was responsible for putting a bounty on Thaksin's head. AFP, 14 Mar
- 15-17 Mar Sr-Gen Than Shwe conducted an official visit to Vietnam. AFP, 17 Mar
- 16 Mar 4 political prisoners were released. DVB, 24 Mar
- 18-20 Mar SPDC Foreign Minister Win Aung attended the Asean Foreign Ministers' Informal Meeting in Malaysia. DPA, 19 Mar
- 19 Mar UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Burma, Paulo Sergio Pinheiro arrived in Burma for his 5th visit. AFP, 24 Mar

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- 19-21 Mar Bangladeshi Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, Foreign Minister M. Morshed Khan and a 16-member business delegation traveled to Rangoon. Kaladan, 22 Mar
- 22 Mar Pinheiro abruptly ended his visit to Burma after finding a listening device hidden in a room where he was interviewing political prisoners. AFP, 24 Mar
- 26 Mar Matthew P. Daley, US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs' testified that "efforts to foster peaceful democratic change have come to a halt." Statement to House International Relations Committee, 26 Mar
- 26 Mar the California 2nd District Court of Appeal denied Unocal's request to dismiss the case against them. LA Times, 29 Mar
- 27 Mar A bomb exploded in central Rangoon killing 2 people and injuring 2 others. DPA, 27 Mar & AFP, 28 Mar
- 28 Mar Reported 50 major drug dealers on Thailand's blacklist had escaped to Burma. BKK Post, 28 Mar
- 30 Mar 18 villagers killed and 25 injured in a skirmish between SPDC army troops and members of the SPDC-backed people's militia (Pyithusit) in Taung Thon Lon village, Tenasserim Division. Karen Monthly Human rights Situation Report Tenasserim Division, Mar 03
- 30 Mar Deadline for investors to repay at least 50% of debts from most banks. Irrawaddy, 21 Mar
- 30 Mar Asean's Secretary-General, Ong Keng Yong met Sen Gen Than Shwe and SPDC ministers in Rangoon. New Light of Myanmar, 31 March
- 31 Mar the US State Department released its annual report on Human Rights Practices in Burma. US State Dept, 31 Mar
- 31 Mar At 59th Session of the Commission on Human Rights Pinheiro says "It is a serious setback that dialogue between the Government and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has not yet taken place at the highest level." 59th Session of the Commission on Human Rights, 31 Mar.

**APPENDIX 1: THE CURRENT COMPOSITION OF THE CRPP<sup>341</sup>**

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Aung Shwe, NLD, MP, Mayangone Township 1, Rangoon Division;

Than Tun, NLD Member of NLD Central Executive Committee, MP, Taungtha Township 2, Mandalay Division;

Aye Thar Aung, ALD and UNLD Member of Secretariats;

Aung San Suu Kyi, NLD General Secretary;

U Tin Oo, NLD Deputy Chairperson;

Lwin, Col.(Retd.) NLD Secretary, MP, Thongwa Township 1, Rangoon Division;

Hla Pe, NLD Member of Central Executive Committee, MP, Mawlamyine Gyunn Township 1, Irrawaddy Division;

Lun Tin, Col.(Retd.), NLD Member of Central Executive Committee, MP, Moulmein 1, Mon State;

Nyunt Wai, NLD Member of Central Executive Committee, MP, Taungoo 2, Pegu Division;

(Thakhin) Soe Myint, NLD Member of Central Executive Committee, MP, South Okkalapa Township 1, Rangoon Division;

Nai Tun Thein, MNDF Chairperson, MP, Thanbyuzayat 2, Mon State;

Khun Htun Oo, SNLD Chairperson, MP, Hsipaw 1, Shan State;

Fu Cin Shing Htan, ZNC Chairperson, MP, Tiddim 2, Chin State;

Thein Pe, MP, Kantbalu Township, Sagaing Division;

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<sup>341</sup> Irrawaddy research pages [<http://www.irrawaddy.org/res/crpp.html>]

**APPENDIX 2: CORE RECOMMENDATIONS  
FROM POSITION PAPER FOR THE 59TH SESSION OF THE UN  
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS,  
SHAN ACTION NETWORK FOR WOMEN (SWAN)<sup>342</sup>**

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- Provision of temporary shelter in neighboring countries for rape survivors and access to services provided by international humanitarian organizations, particularly psychosocial and medical services in Thailand;
- Suspension of forced return of rape survivors seeking asylum;
- Protection for local groups, researchers, witnesses and survivors;
- Capacity-building of women's groups from Burma to address and prevent violence against women through community-based strategies and actions.
- Request the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women to organize a fact-finding expert mission to the Thai Burma border in cooperation with local women's organizations;
- Raise concerns with the Burmese military regime about the systematic use of rape as a weapon of war against ethnic women in Burma;
- Suspension of all investment and aid to Burma through the regime.

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<sup>342</sup> SWAN (March 03) Stop Licence to Rape in Burma. Position Paper for the 59th Session of the UN Commission on Human Rights 17 March-25 April

**APPENDIX 3: LIST OF DIPLOMATIC TRIPS TO AND FROM BURMA<sup>343</sup>****To Burma (2003)**

<b>Date</b>	<b>From</b>	<b>Visitor</b>	<b>Detail</b>
Jan 9	Thailand	Thaksin Shinawatra, Prime Minister	Held discussions with Sr-Gen Than Shwe on issues such as business, refugees, drugs and armed ethnic groups on a one-day visit.
Jan 14	China	Li Lanqing, Vice Premier of the State Council	Met with Sec-1 Gen Khin Nyunt and discussed mutual economic cooperation.
Jan 16	Thailand	Phinij Jarusombat, Science and Technology Minister	Attended the 2nd ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Science and Technology in Rangoon.
Jan 16	Singapore	Vivian Balakrishnan, Science and Technology Minister	Attended the 2nd ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Science and Technology in Rangoon.
Jan 16	Thailand	Adisai Bodharamik, Minister of Commerce	Met with Sec-1 Gen Khin Nyunt and Minister of Commerce Brig-Gen Pyi Sone.
Jan 20	Japan	Hitoshi Tanaka, Deputy Foreign Minister	Met with Sec-1 Gen Khin Nyunt.
Jan 31	Thailand	Gen Somdhat Attanand, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces	Met with top military leaders, including Sr-Gen Than Shwe, and pledged friendly relations in the future.
Feb 9	Thailand	Thaksin Shinawatra, Prime Minister	Met with Sr-Gen Than Shwe and Sec-1 Gen Khin Nyunt. Talk on tourism development topped the agenda.
Feb 17	Vietnam	Sr Lt-Gen Pham Vam Tra, Defence Minister	Met with Sr-Gen Than Shwe.
Feb 23	Malaysia	Dr Lim Keng Yaik., Primary Industry Minister	Met with Sec-1 Gen Khin Nyunt and Commerce Minister Brig-Gen Pyi Sone.
Mar 10	Thailand	Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn	Met with top leaders in the military and visited key places in Rangoon and others areas of the country.
Mar 19	Bangladesh	Begum Khaleda Zia, Prime Minister	Met with Sr-Gen Than Shwe and signed several agreements, mostly on trade and transport links.
Mar 19	United Nations	Paolo Sergio Pinheiro, UN Human Rights Rapporteur	Met with Sec-1 Gen Khin Nyunt, FM Win Aung and Aung San Suu Kyi. Also met with political prisoners at Insein prison, but was shocked to find a microphone hidden in the room where he was

<sup>343</sup> From the Irrawaddy Research Online Pages <http://www.irrawaddy.org/res/diplomat.html>



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			conducting interviews. He lodged an official complaint with authorities and cut his trip short.
Mar 30	ASEAN	Ong Keng Yong, Secretary-General	Met with Sen Gen Than Shwe and ministers, including Minister for Foreign Affairs Win Aung.
Apr 1	Indonesia	Dr N Hassan Wirajuda, Minister of Foreign Affairs	Met with Sen Gen Than Shwe and Foreign Minister Win Aung.

**From Burma (2003)**

<b>Date</b>	<b>To</b>	<b>Visitor</b>	<b>Detail</b>
Jan 6	China	Sr-Gen Than Shwe, Head of State	Accompanied by his wife, Daw Kyaing Kyaing, Than Shwe went to Beijing on a State visit.
Jan 19	India	Win Aung, Foreign Affairs Minister	Official visit to New Delhi.
Jan 25	Belgium	Khin Maung Win, Deputy Foreign Minister	Attended the 14th ASEAN-EU Ministerial Meeting, held on 27-28 January in Brussels.
Mar 1	Bangladesh	Win Aung, Foreign Minister	Met with Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and her counterpart, M Morshed Khan to discuss on trade, road links between the two countries and refugees in Bangladesh.
Mar 6	Sri Lanka	Brig-Gen David Abel, Minister at the Office of the Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council	Attended the fourth BIMST-EC Commerce and Economic Ministers' Meeting in Colombo.
Mar 15	Vietnam	Sr-Gen Than Shwe, Head of State	Met with President Tran Duc Luong and PM Phan Van Khai.
Mar 18	Malaysia	Win Aung, Foreign Minister	Attended the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Informal Meeting, held on March 18-20.

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- 2000 Jun BOOK: Burma ~ More Women's Voices. 108pp. US\$10
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We do not accept a process in which one side only takes and the other is made to give. It is also important that a negotiation process does not compromise one's principles and policies.

~ NLD, 4 January 2003.

Internal and external destructive elements are impeding development work in the country. Destructive elements must be annihilated.

~ Information Minister Brig-Gen Kyaw Hsan, February 2003.

If sectarian views continue to exist, they will cause the collapse of national unity. It is very obvious that some groups, not free of foreign influence, are still turning a blind eye to the goodwill of the military and are holding negative views.

~ Sr-Gen Than Shwe, 27 March 2003.

While the corrupt military junta has recently been conducting a propagandistic offensive to convince naive Western diplomats that Burma can be a responsible member of the international community, the continual flow of evidence regarding Burma's gross abuses of human rights illustrates how hollow recent Burmese reform has been.

~ US Senator Mitch McConnell, 4 March 2003.

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