

# BURMA BULLETIN

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

ALTERNATIVE A S E A N N E T W O R K O N B U R M A  
campaigns, advocacy & capacity-building for human rights & democracy

Issue 28

April 2009

- NLD unequivocally states its official line on the SPDC's 2010 elections, setting three conditions: release all political prisoners, review of the Constitution, and "inclusive free and fair" elections "under international supervision."
- The NLD adopt its position after holding its first general meeting in more than 10 years.
- More Burmese pro-democracy groups reject the SPDC's 2010 polls, as pro-junta organizations mobilize to campaign for the election.
- The SPDC detains seven activists, including two NLD members, and sentences six cyclone Nargis relief workers to prison terms.
- While KNU calls for UN-facilitated tripartite dialogue, joint SPDC and DKBA forces carry out a three-week offensive on a KNLA base in Karen State. Attacks spill over to Thailand.
- "Bali Process" meeting fails to provide solutions for Rohingya boat people. Meanwhile, they continue to be persecuted by the military regime in Burma.
- UN Sec-Gen Ban Ki-moon's report to the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflicts says that the SPDC Army is still recruiting child soldiers.
- EU extends sanctions on SPDC for another year; US says sanctions will stay.
- UN Sec-Gen Ban Ki-moon, the US, and the Philippines call for Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's release.
- European Commission's EuropeAid chief critical of SPDC's refusal to engage donors, preventing development projects.
- Rangoon hit with serious diarrhea outbreak.
- The ADB predicts faltering growth for Burmese economy, inflation rate of 30% to continue.

Please sign the petition to free  
Burma's political prisoners  
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## KEY STORY

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### NLD sets conditions for 2010 elections after first general meeting in 12 years

On 28-29 April, about 150 NLD members from across Burma, including 95 elected MPs, convened its first general meeting in more than a decade to discuss political issues, including the SPDC's 2010 elections. Dozens of plainclothes police monitored the event from across the street.<sup>1</sup> Following the meeting the NLD adopted an official position on the SPDC's 2010 election.

The "[Shwegondaing Declaration](#)", issued on 29 April, outlined the NLD's conditions for participating in the polls. The NLD said it would take part in the elections only if the SPDC released all political prisoners, reviewed the Constitution, and held "inclusive free and fair" elections "under international supervision." The NLD also said that it would have to wait until the publication of the election and party registration laws before deciding whether to contest the polls which is obviously linked to their demand for a free and fair election. In addition, the NLD urged the SPDC to resume dialogue with pro-democracy forces and ethnic nationalities parties in order to solve Burma's ongoing political crisis.<sup>2</sup>

The NLD position on the 2010 elections is consistent with the party's previous calls for genuine political dialogue and the release of all political prisoners. The last time the NLD was able to hold a general meeting was in September 1997.<sup>3</sup> Following that meeting the NLD called for "meaningful dialogue" with the junta as the only way to "solve the nation's problems."<sup>4</sup>

The NLD position echoed demands made by other pro-democracy forces and ethnic groups. On 26 April, the Karen National Union (KNU) issued an 18-point statement that called for genuine tripartite dialogue facilitated by the UN as a condition for holding general elections.<sup>5</sup>

Meanwhile, there were several reports of attacks on NLD members by junta-backed thugs:

- **12 April:** Seven thugs led by a local USDA member attacked an NLD member in Twante Township, Rangoon Division.<sup>6</sup>
- **16 April:** An unknown assailant attacked and injured NLD Central Executive Committee member and elected MP Thein Nyunt, 65, in Rangoon's Thingangyun Township.<sup>7</sup>
- **18 April:** About 30 thugs led by a local SPDC official assaulted two NLD youth members in Twante Township, Rangoon Division.<sup>8</sup>

## INSIDE BURMA

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### 2010 elections

On 4 April, following a three-day meeting on the Thai-Burma border, the exiled pro-democracy Seven Alliances\* said they opposed the SPDC's 2010 elections.<sup>9</sup>

In Burma, the regime geared up for the election campaign:

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<sup>1</sup> AFP (27 Apr 09) Suu Kyi party members meet; AFP (27 Apr 09) Aung San Suu Kyi party members meet in Myanmar: spokesman; Irrawaddy (28 Apr 09) NLD Hold First General Meeting in a Decade; AP (28 Apr 09) Myanmar opposition meets on next year's election; AP (28 Apr 09) Myanmar opposition to decide later about 2010 poll

<sup>2</sup> NLD (29 Apr 09) Shwegondaing declaration; AP (29 Apr 09) Myanmar party sets terms for taking part in polls

<sup>3</sup> Irrawaddy (28 Apr 09) NLD Holds First General Meeting in a Decade

<sup>4</sup> Nation (29 Sep 97) Suu Kyi calls on opposition, military junta to being dialogue

<sup>5</sup> KNU (26 Apr 09) Karen National Union Statement on 2010 Elections; DVB (28 Apr 09) Karen group urge end to international support of junta

\* The Seven Alliances include: National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB), National Council of the Union of Burma (NCUB), Ethnic Nationalities Council (ENC), Women's League of Burma (WLB), Forum for Democracy in Burma (FDB), Nationalities Youth Forum (NYF), and Student and Youth Congress of Burma (SYCB)

<sup>6</sup> DVB (20 Apr 09) Police refuse to arrest attackers of opposition members

<sup>7</sup> DVB (20 Apr 09) Police refuse to arrest attackers of opposition members; Irrawaddy (21 Apr 09) Attack on NLD Leader Raises Questions

<sup>8</sup> DVB (20 Apr 09) Police refuse to arrest attackers of opposition members

<sup>9</sup> Mizzima News (07 Apr 09) Burmese oppositions aligned to form a 'United Front'

- SPDC military officers began campaigning in every township of Chin State.<sup>10</sup>
- The SPDC set up a FM radio station in Akyab, Arakan State, to air the regime's election propaganda in the area.<sup>11</sup>
- In what appears to be an attempt to gain support prior to the 2010 SPDC's elections, SPDC ministers recently toured communities in Bogale Township, Irrawaddy Division, with promises to generate electricity from animal and organic waste.<sup>12</sup>

Pro-junta organizations also mobilized:

- On 31 March, the pro-junta Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI) modified its bylaws to allow members – including many businessmen with close ties to the regime - to run in the elections.<sup>13</sup>
- The USDA in Chin State selected retired civil servants, military officers, and National Convention delegates to be fielded as candidates.<sup>14</sup>
- USDA members began campaigning in villages of Kale Township, Sagaing Division.<sup>15</sup>

### Ceasefire talks followed by SPDC attacks

On 6 April, KNU leaders met for talks with Thai FM Kasit Piromya in Bangkok. The talks followed Kasit's offer to mediate future ceasefire negotiations between the SPDC and ethnic armed opposition groups.<sup>16</sup> [See *March 2009 Burma Bulletin*] After the Bangkok meeting, KNU General Secretary Zipporah Sein said that the SPDC should sign ceasefire agreements with all ethnic armed groups, including the KNU, if it wanted peace.<sup>17</sup>

However, the regime continued to show no interest in talks and intensified the offensive against the KNU and its military arm, the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA). On 6 April, joint SPDC Army and Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) forces began a three-week offensive on the KNLA 201<sup>st</sup> Battalion's base in Walakhee near the Thai-Burma border.<sup>18</sup> On 27 April, SPDC attacks spilled over to Thai soil, injuring two Thai soldiers and one civilian.<sup>19</sup> On 30 April, it was reported that SPDC Army and DKBA troops had partially overrun the Walakhee base.<sup>20</sup>

### 88 Generation Students

On 6 April, in an open letter to the SPDC, the 88 Generation Students urged the junta to respect human rights and promote democratic reforms in Burma. The 88 Generation Students also supported the NLD's demands for the release of all political prisoners, the convening of the parliament, the resumption of genuine political dialogue, and the review of the 2008 constitution.<sup>21</sup>

### Thingyan ban

In an attempt to prevent any form of protest against the 2010 elections, the SPDC issued guidelines over the appropriate dress code for the Burmese New Year ("Thingyan") celebrations that took place April 13-16.<sup>22</sup> The regime prohibited wearing clothes displaying political symbols or messages.<sup>23</sup> During the

<sup>10</sup> Khonumthung News (21 Apr 09) SPDC backs USDA candidates for forthcoming general elections

<sup>11</sup> Narinjara News (01 Apr 09) FM radio station set up in Sittwe for 2010 elections

<sup>12</sup> IRIN (20 Apr 09) Counting the chickens in Ayeyarwady Delta

<sup>13</sup> Mizzima News (01 Apr 09) Businessmen encouraged to participate in 2010 election; Irrawaddy (03 Apr 09) Group changes rules to allow political participation

<sup>14</sup> Mizzima News (22 Apr 09) USDA prepares list of possible election candidate

<sup>15</sup> Khonumthung News (08 Apr 09) Kalemmyo USDA hits election campaign trail; Khonumthung News (15 Apr 09) Junta officials begin active election campaign in Chin state

<sup>16</sup> Mizzima News (08 Apr 09) KNU accepts junta's offer for peace parleys

<sup>17</sup> Irrawaddy (08 Apr 09) KNU says ceasefire agreements essential for peaceful Burma; Mizzima News (08 Apr 09) KNU accepts junta's offer for peace parleys; Kaowao News (08 Apr 09) KNU Leaders Meet Thai Officials

<sup>18</sup> Irrawaddy (07 Apr 09) Burmese, Breakaway Karen Troops Attack KNLA Base; DVB (09 Apr 09) Army offensive to clear way for deep-sea port; DVB (22 Apr 09) Civilians in crossfire running out of food; Mizzima News (22 Apr 09) More casualties as fighting continues on border

<sup>19</sup> TNA (27 Apr 09) Three Thais wounded after Myanmar border fighting

<sup>20</sup> DVB (30 Apr 09) Karen group lose outpost to army

<sup>21</sup> Irrawaddy (07 Apr 09) 88 Student group sends 'open letter' to junta; DVB (07 Apr 09) Government must reform to lift sanctions

<sup>22</sup> AFP (06 Apr 09) Regime bans horseplay and critics from festival

2008 Thingyan, the regime arrested scores of activists for wearing t-shirts that expressed opposition to the junta-backed constitutional referendum. [See *April 2008 Burma Bulletin*] Students in Moulmein, Mudon, and Thanbyuzayat, Mon State, disregarded the regime's directive. On 15 April, they distributed about 1,500 bandanas carrying the slogan "No free, no happy" to Thingyan revelers.<sup>24</sup>

### **Diarrhea outbreak hits Rangoon**

On 17 April, an outbreak of diarrhea was reported in several Rangoon Townships and in Mandalay.<sup>25</sup> On 20 April, local residents said that a 12-year-old girl and an elderly woman in North Dagon Township died after suffering from severe diarrhea. Doctors said three other people had died in Thaketa Township.<sup>26</sup> On 23 April, a physician in Rangoon's North Okkalapa Township said that some patients have been diagnosed with cholera. SPDC and NGO health officials are maintaining a 24-hour emergency response center in the township after more than 100 residents were admitted into local hospitals suffering from severe diarrhea.<sup>27</sup> Diarrhea outbreaks were also reported in Monywa Township in Sagaing Division, Nyaunglebin Township in Pegu Division, and Pakokku Township in Magwe Division.<sup>28</sup>

### **Global Fund returns?**

On 21 April, it was reported that the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria will accept applications for financial assistance for humanitarian programs in Burma for the first time since pulling out in August 2005.<sup>29</sup>

### **SPDC failing to cooperate with donors**

On 9 April, the Director General of the European Commission's (EC's) EuropeAid Cooperation Koos Richelle stated that the SPDC's refusal to discuss needed country development programs hampered the EC's progress in providing aid to Burma. He added that while the EC was ready to provide more aid to Burma, the SPDC must engage in dialogue with donors. "We are not a money machine throwing envelopes over the fence," he said.<sup>30</sup>

### **UN report on child soldiers**

On 22 April, UN Sec-Gen Ban Ki-moon released his annual report to the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict. Ban cited the SPDC Army and nine other armed opposition groups for the continued recruitment of child soldiers.<sup>31</sup>

## **HUMAN RIGHTS**

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### **Arrests**

- **1 April:** SPDC authorities in Rangoon arrested Zaw Myint Aung, Soe Oo, Tun Nyein, Khine Lin Myat, and Shwe Yi Nyunt. The five had attended a recent meeting of the Federation of Trade Unions of Burma (FTUB) on the Thai-Burma border.<sup>32</sup> They were released on 10 April.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Mizzima News (03 Apr 09) Dress code imposed for singers during water festival

<sup>24</sup> IMNA (20 Apr 09) Students mount protest campaign during water festival in Mon State

<sup>25</sup> Mizzima News (23 Apr 09) Diarrhea outbreak in Rangoon and Mandalay

<sup>26</sup> Irrawaddy (23 Apr 09) Diarrhea Outbreak Raises Fears of Cholera

<sup>27</sup> Irrawaddy (24 Apr 09) Diarrhea deaths confirmed in Rangoon

<sup>28</sup> Mizzima News (29 Apr 09) Diarrhea outbreak in Monywa; DVB (30 Apr 09) Diarrhea outbreak claims three lives

<sup>29</sup> Mizzima News (21 Apr 09) Global Fund re-allows Burma to apply for aid

<sup>30</sup> DPA (21 Apr 09) European Commission willing to provide more aid to Myanmar

<sup>31</sup> UN Secretary-General (26 Mar 09) Children and armed conflict – Report of the Secretary-General, UN Doc A/63/785–S/2009/158

<sup>32</sup> ITUC (14 Apr 09) Burma: Fears for Safety of Five Union Delegates; ITUC (15 Apr 09) Burma: Five FTUB Members Released; FTUB (14 Apr 09) Unlawfully detained trade union members released

<sup>33</sup> ITUC (15 Apr 09) Burma: Five FTUB Members Released

- **21 April:** SPDC authorities in Twante Township, Rangoon Division, arrested local NLD members Chit Pe, 60, and Maung Soe Wei, 40, for organizing a prayer vigil at a local pagoda for the release of all political prisoners, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.<sup>34</sup>

### Prison sentences

- **10 April:** A court in Rangoon's Insein prison sentenced six relief workers, Dr Nay Win, Phyo Phyo Aung, Aung Thant Zin Oo, Shein Yarza Tun, Aung Kyaw San, and Phone Pye Kywe to prison terms ranging from two to four years under the Unlawful Association Acts.<sup>35</sup> The regime arrested the six in June 2008 for cremating cyclone Nargis victims.<sup>36</sup>
- **29 April:** It was reported that an SPDC court sentenced private tutor Aung Pe to one year in prison for calling for the release of political prisoners and the re-opening of all NLD offices on 27 March.<sup>37</sup>

### Rohingya persecuted

Rohingya continued to suffer persecution at the hands of the military regime:

- **7 April:** Na Sa Ka in Maungdaw Township, Arakan State, detained a 30-year-old Rohingya religious leader on charges of theft.<sup>38</sup>
- **12 April:** A teenage Rohingya girl died of starvation at Teknaf after crossing the Burma-Bangladesh border. The victim fled Arakan State into Bangladesh on 10 April, after facing days of starvation in her native village in Maungdaw Township.<sup>39</sup>
- **23 April:** Na Sa Ka personnel in Maungdaw Township, Arakan State, detained about 200 Rohingya from Balukhali Village. Local Rohingya had clashed with SPDC Army personnel on 22 April, after soldiers had stolen fish from villagers.<sup>40</sup>

### Burma – worst country to be a blogger

On 30 April, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) released the report “10 Worst Countries to be a Blogger.” CPJ’s report identified Burma as the worst place in the world to be a blogger due to the SPDC’s extensive restrictions on blogging and other internet activity.<sup>41</sup>

## DISPLACEMENT

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### Bali Process fizzles

On 14 April, a two-day meeting of the “Bali Process” regional forum began in Indonesia. The forum was created to address human trafficking and smuggling issues in the Pacific region. ASEAN had referred the issue of the Rohingya boat people to the Bali Process in hopes that the forum could resolve the matter, since ASEAN itself was hamstrung by the SPDC’s inflexibility. [See *February 2009 Burma Bulletin*] However, the change in forum to address the plight of the Rohingya did not change the SPDC’s unwillingness to acknowledge their responsibilities and obligations.<sup>42</sup>

During the meeting SPDC Deputy Minister for Home Affairs Brig Gen Khin Yi denied that Rohingya were from Burma or that they faced persecution in Burma.<sup>43</sup> Indonesia’s FM Hassan Wirajuda pointed out to Brig Gen Khin Yi that “social and economic problems” were behind the Rohingya exodus from

<sup>34</sup> Mizzima News (21 Apr 09) Junta arrests two opposition members for praying; DVB (22 Apr 09) Police arrest opposition members during prayers; Irrawaddy (23 Apr 09) NLD Members Arrested after Praying for Suu Kyi’s Release

<sup>35</sup> Mizzima News (11 Apr 09) Junta sentences six relief volunteers

<sup>36</sup> Mizzima News (11 Apr 09) Junta sentences six relief volunteers

<sup>37</sup> DVB (29 Apr 09) Solo demonstrator sentenced to one year

<sup>38</sup> Kaladan News (11 Apr 09) Nasaka arrests religious leader

<sup>39</sup> Kaladan News (14 Apr 09) Rohingya girl starves to death in Teknaf

<sup>40</sup> Kaladan News (25 Apr 09) Rohingya men still in custody of army authority in Northern Maungdaw; Kaladan News (27 Apr 09) Authority announces prize money for garnering information

<sup>41</sup> CPJ (30 Apr 09) 10 Worst Countries to be a Blogger; Irrawaddy (30 Apr 09) Irrawaddy: Burma named worst online oppressor; Mizzima News (30 Apr 09) Burma worst internet oppressor: CPJ

<sup>42</sup> South China Morning Post (14 Apr 09) Regional talks to tiptoe around Rohingya crisis

<sup>43</sup> Irrawaddy (16 Apr 09) Rohingya Issue Remains Unresolved

Burma.<sup>44</sup> Bangladeshi FM Dr Dipu Moni stated that Rohingya had lived in Burma for centuries and even held positions in government, strongly refuting the SPDC's claim that Rohingya were not an ethnic group of Burma.<sup>45</sup> She went so far as to call on the SPDC to take back the about 28,000 recognized Rohingya refugees remaining in Bangladesh.

The SPDC's intransigence on the Rohingya boat people resulted in more inaction instead of meaningful solutions. The delegates at the meeting ultimately decided to form a team to establish whether Rohingya are economic migrants or refugees.<sup>46</sup> The failure of the Bali Process has highlighted the need for ASEAN to solve this burning human security issue.

### **US slams Malaysia on trafficking**

On 22 April, the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee submitted to the Malaysian government its report investigating allegations of abuse and trafficking of Burmese refugees at the hands of Malaysian immigration officials.<sup>47</sup> According to the report, Malaysian officials transported migrants and registered UNHCR refugees from detention centers to the Thai border for deportation. At the border, migrants who were unable to buy their freedom were turned over to human traffickers. Contrary to past denials, Malaysia's PM Najib Razak said his government will investigate the serious accusations put forth in the US year-long investigation.<sup>48</sup>

### **Migrant workers in Thailand**

On 31 March, the Thai government reversed an earlier decision to restrict the number of migrant laborers in the country and announced it will offer 400,000 permits to foreign workers. The change followed the realization by Thai authorities that Thai citizens are reluctant to work in low-paying, menial work.<sup>49</sup>

### **Chin abandoned in India**

On 3 April, the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) released a report titled "Waiting on the Margins: An Assessment of the Situation of the Chin Community in Delhi, India," finding that hundreds of thousands of Chin asylum seekers in India faced prolonged wait periods in extremely poor conditions with little access to humanitarian relief. CHRO called on the Indian government and the UNHCR to ensure that Chin asylum seekers enjoy access to expedient and fair protection mechanisms as well as basic human necessities.<sup>50</sup>

### **Oil exploitation causes displacement**

On 22 March, the SPDC Army Western Command Commander Maj Gen Thaung Aye ordered the relocation of 160 households in Nyo Raung Chaung and Mi Loung Wra Villages, Akyab Township, Arakan State. The two villages faced relocation because they are located near an oil drilling site operated by the Indian oil company Essar.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> SMH (16 Apr 09) Rohingya not our problem, Burma tells Bali meeting

<sup>45</sup> New Nation (17 Apr 09) Myanmar requested to take back remaining Rohingyas

<sup>46</sup> Jakarta Post (15 Apr 09) RI expects Myanmar to speak up on Rohingya issue at Bali meeting

<sup>47</sup> FT (22 Apr 09) Malay officials accused over human trafficking

<sup>48</sup> Times of India (25 Apr 09) Malaysia vows action on Myanmar human trafficking

<sup>49</sup> IMNA (03 Apr 09) Workers applaud Thai plan to register workers, but worry about increased unemployment

<sup>50</sup> News Track India (08 Apr 09) Chin suffers from inadequate access to protection in India

<sup>51</sup> Narinjara News (07 Apr 09) Two Villages Face Relocation for Oil Exploration

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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### Renewed calls for Daw Suu's release

- **2 April:** Philippines Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo said that the SPDC should free all political prisoners and fulfill a long-standing pledge to democratize. Romulo also reiterated his call for the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.<sup>52</sup>
- **9 April:** The US Senate Women's Caucus on Burma urged UN Sec-Gen Ban Ki-moon to step up pressure on the SPDC to scrap its 2010 elections plans and to immediately and unconditionally free all political prisoners, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.<sup>53</sup>
- **17 April:** Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo urged the SPDC to free Daw Aung San Suu Kyi from house arrest as a gesture of national reconciliation.<sup>54</sup>
- **22 April:** UN Sec-Gen Ban Ki-moon reaffirmed his concern over the current situation in Burma and reiterated his call to the SPDC to release all political prisoners including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.<sup>55</sup>

### US says sanctions to stay

A report on 28 April indicated that the US will not change existing sanctions on the SPDC as part of its Burma policy review. Richard Verma, the US State Department Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, sent a letter to US Congressional Representative Peter King that said earlier reports that the US would lift sanctions were incorrect. Verma stated that the sanctions that the US and other countries maintain against the junta are an important part of the efforts to support change in Burma.<sup>56</sup>

### EU extends sanctions on SPDC

On 27 April, the EU extended its sanctions on the SPDC for another year. Along with the extension of sanctions, the EU called on the SPDC to release Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and to take necessary steps to make its 2010 election a credible, transparent, and inclusive process.<sup>57</sup>

### SPDC border activities cause more friction with Bangladesh

On 20 April, the SPDC began construction of the earthen embankment within 80 yards of Border Pillar 20, opposite Palongkhali village in Ukhia District, Cox's Bazaar, ignoring objections from Bangladeshi Rifle (BDR) officials. BDR protested that the location of the structure violated international law.<sup>58</sup> On 27 April, it was reported that the SPDC had suspended the building of the embankment but continued to increase its military presence in the area.<sup>59</sup> The SPDC began the construction of fences along Burma's border with Bangladesh and fortified its military presence along the border following a dispute over territorial waters in the Bay of Bengal. [See *November 2008 Burma Bulletin*]

## ECONOMY

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### Investment

On 31 March, Canadian Friends of Burma identified China's state-owned Chinese Aluminum Company as the buyer of Canada's Ivanhoe Mines 50% stake in the Ivanhoe Copper Company. The finding stands contrary to previous statements by Ivanhoe, claiming they had placed its 50% stake in the hands of an "independent" trust and had received no money from the deal.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> AP (02 Apr 09) Philippines urges Burma to Protect Human Rights

<sup>53</sup> AFP (15 Apr 09) Women US senators urge UN pressure on Myanmar

<sup>54</sup> AP (17 Apr 09) Arroyo urges Myanmar junta to free pro-democracy leader

<sup>55</sup> PTI (15 Apr 09) Ban reaffirms concern over Burma

<sup>56</sup> AFP (28 Apr 09) US not to lift Myanmar sanctions in review: official

<sup>57</sup> DVB (27 Apr 09) Burma suspends border fence construction

<sup>58</sup> Bdnews24.com (24 Apr 09) BDR, Nasaka talks end in discord

<sup>59</sup> Mizzima News (27 Apr 09) EU extends sanctions on Burma for another year

<sup>60</sup> Irrawaddy (03 Apr 09) NGO Names Chinese Firm in Blacklisted Burma Copper Mine

## Economic reality check

On 17 April, the Asia Development Bank (ADB) predicted that Burma's economic growth will falter in 2009 due to weaker performance by the country's key trading partners - China, Thailand, and India.<sup>61</sup> The ADB also projected that inflation remained at nearly 30% for the most recent Fiscal Year which ended on 31 March 2009.<sup>62</sup> The ADB's analysis sharply contradicted earlier statements by SPDC PM Gen Thein Sein who stated that Burma will not be affected by the global economic crisis because Burma is built on the SPDC's model of self-reliance.<sup>63</sup>

## OTHER BURMA NEWS IN APRIL

1	US government donates 16,000 tons of rice as part of a US\$28 million food aid package to survivors of cyclone Nargis.
1	US Deputy Secretary of State Jim Steinberg says the United States wants a "collaborative and constructive" approach on Burma.
2	About 30 Burmese refugees rally in Tokyo urging the Japanese government to freeze all aid to the SPDC and to stop supporting the SPDC's 2010 elections.
2	KNU urges the international community to take action against the SPDC regime in order to restore peace and stability in Burma.
2	Eight members of the armed ethnic opposition group Nai Chan Dein enter Puck Pin Kwin village in Yebyu Township, Southern Mon State, and shoot dead two local SPDC officials.
2	SPDC Army forces from Play Hsa Lo, Karen State, force villagers to porter food supplies and to act as human minesweepers.
3	UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Burma Bishow Parajuli urges the international community to increase aid to the Irrawaddy delta.
3	A 32-year-old Rohingya from Nayapara refugee camp dies in Cox's Bazaar jail in Bangladesh.
3	Hyatt knitwear factory in Mae Sot, Thailand, dismisses over 200 Burmese migrant workers after they push for better pay and working conditions.
3	Head of the US Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee on Asia Jim Webb says the US needs a "constructive" policy towards Burma with the aim of lifting sanctions.
4	State-run newspaper New Light of Myanmar reports that 71 Karen fighters surrendered to SPDC Army troops on 30 March.
6	KNU leaders meet for talks with Thai Foreign Minister Kasit Piromya in Bangkok, Thailand.
7	Rakhine villagers attempt to attack Rohingya villages in Maungdaw Township, Arakan State.
8	A villager from Bilin Township, Mon State, loses his right leg after stepping on a landmine.
9	Chin National Front says it is ready for another round of peace talks with the SPDC, but that the junta has so far shown no signs of resuming talks.
10	SPDC-owned Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise grants South Korea's Daewoo International 100% development rights on the Bay of Bengal AD-7 block.
10	SPDC Vice Sr Gen Maung Aye tells new army officers that they will be "responsible for the democratic transition, in cooperation with the people, to ensure the successful completion of 2010 elections."
10	SPDC Army soldiers attempt to rape a Rohingya girl in Bawli Bazar Village, Maungdaw Township, Arakan State, but fail after family catches them in the act.
15	Australian FM Stephen Smith pledges more help for persecuted Rohingya.
17	Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao meets with SPDC PM Gen Thein Sein in China's Hainan Province.
18	SPDC lifts an alert after cyclone Bijli veers away from Burma's Western coast.
18	Assailants shoot dead NMSP member Dr Min Naung aka Naing Min Naungis as he returns from Moulmein, Mon State.
20	A landmine explosion injures a 20-year-old villager from Htantabin Township, Pegu Division.
21	The global petition campaign to free Burma's political prisoners reaches 253,524 signatures.
21	A boat with 40 Rohingya from Burma capsizes in the Bay of Bengal while crossing the mouth of the Naff River.
22	Malaysian police, immigration officials, and RELA members arrest at least 200 Burmese migrant workers in Kuala Lumpur.
22	SPDC Army soldiers order local Rohingya to perform forced labor in building the fencing area of Balukhali Village in Maungdaw Township, Arakan State.

<sup>61</sup> ADB (Mar 09) Asian Development Outlook 2009: Rebalancing Asia's Growth

<sup>62</sup> ADB (Mar 09) Asian Development Outlook 2009: Rebalancing Asia's Growth

<sup>63</sup> Xinhua (16 Apr 09) Myanmar PM leaves for Boao Forum for Asia in China

22	UK's Ambassador to Burma Mark Canning says that the release of political prisoners is still the key to progress in Burma.
23	A landmine explosion injures a Karen National Liberation Army soldier while he is on patrol with his unit.
23	SPDC Army soldiers force four villagers from the Maw Thay Der area in Htantabin Township, Pegu Division, to act as human minesweepers.
24	SPDC Minister for Home Affairs Maj Gen Maung Oo and Thai Social Development and Human Security Minister Issara Somchai sign an agreement to combat human trafficking.
24	Local Thai businessmen tell a special Thai Parliamentary Commission of Labor that Phuket needs 58,000 more Burmese workers to sustain its construction and fishing industries.
24	Malaysia's Prime Minister Najib Razak vows to investigate allegations of mistreatment of Burmese refugees by Malaysian immigration officials.
24	Pho Shwe La garment factory in Pegu lays off ten workers for speaking to foreign media about mistreatment in the workplace.
24	State-run newspapers Myanmar Ahlin and New light of Myanmar say that satellite dishes that allow people to get international news and entertainment programs should be banned in Burma because foreign powers are using them to sow unrest and spread immorality.
25	Landmines kill KNLA Col Saw Jay and two SPDC Army soldiers near the KNLA base camp at Walakhee, Karen State.
25	A landmine explosion injures a 51-year-old villager from Thandaung Township, Karen State.
27	Imprisoned comedian Zarganar undergoes a medical check-up at Myitkyina Hospital, Kachin State.

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