

BURMA BULLETIN

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- **China and the SPDC cement ties with the signing of key economic deals aimed at securing Beijing's energy supply and guaranteeing Naypyidaw's much needed cash flow.**
- **Beijing conveys its concerns to the SPDC over stability in Burma's regions bordering China to ensure that major Chinese investments in Burma will not be adversely affected by internal instability.**
- **UNODC's latest report says that opium poppy production in Burma has risen by almost 50% since 2006 and poppy cultivation is up for the third year in a row.**
- **The UN General Assembly condemns the SPDC's ongoing human rights violations and calls on the junta to undertake a transparent, inclusive, and comprehensive review of the 2008 constitution.**
- **Four hundred forty-two MPs from 29 countries call for the UN Security Council to create a Commission of Inquiry to investigate war crimes and crimes against humanity in Burma.**
- **The regime accuses Daw Aung San Suu Kyi of being "dishonest" and "insincere" as she meets SPDC Liaison Minister Maj Gen Aung Kyi and is allowed to pay her respects to three senior NLD colleagues.**
- **Russia beats China's competition and sells 20 MiG-29 fighter jets to the SPDC for nearly 400 million Euros (US\$570 million).**
- **At an economic forum in Naypyidaw, Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz urges the SPDC to drastically increase spending on health care and education and to use revenues from oil and gas to promote access to agricultural financing.**
- **Gambari no longer UN Special Advisor on Burma.**

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KEY STORY

In December, China and the SPDC cemented ties with the signing of key economic deals aimed at securing Beijing's energy supply and guaranteeing Naypyidaw's much needed cash flow. At the same time, Beijing conveyed its concerns to the SPDC over stability in Burma's regions bordering China to ensure that major Chinese investments in Burma would not be adversely affected by internal instability.

Beijing presses SPDC on stability

On 20 December, visiting Chinese Vice President Xi Jinping told SPDC Chairman Sr Gen Than Shwe that he hoped that Burma would achieve "political stability, economic development and national

reconciliation” at a meeting in Naypyidaw.¹ Xi pressed the SPDC on stability along the China-Burma border, and urged the SPDC to resolve “the relevant problems through peaceful ways such as dialogue and consultation.”²

On 5-10 December, Chinese Army’s Chief of Staff for the Chengdu Military Region Lt Gen Ai Husheng traveled to Naypyidaw and Shan State to discuss stability on the Sino-Burma border. Ai Husheng met with SPDC Commander of the Bureau of Special Operations-2 Lt Gen Min Aung Hlaing, who is responsible for military affairs in Shan State.³

China and SPDC sign key economic deals



Beijing’s public statements over Burma’s political stability and national reconciliation stem from economic concerns. On 20 December, with Xi and SPDC Vice Sr Gen Maung Aye in attendance, China and the SPDC signed 16 Memorandums of Understanding.⁴ The MoUs included five agreements on development of trade, economy, transport infrastructure, technological cooperation, and purchase of machinery; seven financial agreements; three agreements on hydro-electric power; and one agreement in the energy sector.⁵

This final MoU was the most noteworthy. The SPDC Energy Ministry awarded exclusive rights to build and operate the China-Burma crude oil pipeline to China’s oil and gas firm China National Petroleum Company (CNPC)-controlled Southeast Crude Oil Pipeline Company.⁶ The SPDC will guarantee pipeline safety and will also grant the Chinese company tax concessions and customs clearance rights.⁷

CNPC started building a crude oil port in Burma at the end of October as part of the 771-km pipeline project aimed at bypassing the Malacca Strait.⁸ The crude oil pipeline, cutting across most of Burma, will start from Maday Island in Arakan State, pass through Arakan State, Magwe and Mandalay Divisions and Shan State, and will finally enter China’s Yunnan Province. The pipeline will cost about US\$2.5 billion and will have a capacity of 84 million barrels per year. Once completed in 2013, it will channel about 85% of China’s energy imports from Africa and the Middle East.⁹

In addition to the oil deals, in December Beijing also reaped the benefits from controversial hydro-electric dam projects in Burma. Chinese developers conducted tests on the 790-megawatt capacity Yeywa hydro dam nearing completion on the Myitnge River in Mandalay Division. In addition, on 21 December, the SPDC inaugurated the construction of the Myitsone dam on the Irrawaddy River in Lahpe, 22 miles north of Myitkyina, Kachin State. These dams, besides their social impacts on local

¹ Irrawaddy (21 Dec 09) China Tells Than Shwe it Wants 'Stability, National Reconciliation'; Xinhua (21 Dec 09) China puts forward four-point proposal to further ties with Myanmar; Xinhua (22 Dec 09) Myanmar official media hail Chinese vice president's visit

² Irrawaddy (21 Dec 09) China Tells Than Shwe it Wants 'Stability, National Reconciliation'

³ Irrawaddy (11 Dec 09) Chinese, Burmese Military Leaders Discuss Border Security

⁴ Asia News (19 Dec 09) Economy and energy at the centre of meeting between Beijing and the Burmese junta; Mizzima News (21 Dec 09) Xi concludes Burma visit with handful of MoUs; Xinhua (22 Dec 09) Myanmar official media hail Chinese vice president's visit

⁵ Mizzima News (21 Dec 09) Xi concludes Burma visit with handful of MoUs; Xinhua (22 Dec 09) Myanmar official media hail Chinese vice president's visit

⁶ Reuters (21 Dec 09) CNPC gets Myanmar backing on China-Myanmar oil pipe; Mizzima News (21 Dec 09) Xi concludes Burma visit with handful of MoUs; Times of India (21 Dec 09) China extracts more concessions from Myanmar for oil pipeline; Xinhua (21 Dec 09) CNPC gets exclusive operating rights of China-Myanmar oil pipeline; China Knowledge (21 Dec 09) CNPC subsidiary to build, manage China-Burma oil pipeline; DPA (22 Dec 09) Chinese company wins ownership of Myanmar-China pipeline project

⁷ Reuters (21 Dec 09) CNPC gets Myanmar backing on China-Myanmar oil pipe; Irrawaddy (26 Dec 09) Chinese Oil Firm says Burmese Military Responsible for its Cross-Country Pipeline

⁸ Mizzima News (21 Dec 09) Xi concludes Burma visit with handful of MoUs; Times of India (21 Dec 09) China extracts more concessions from Myanmar for oil pipeline; Xinhua (21 Dec 09) CNPC gets exclusive operating rights of China-Myanmar oil pipeline

⁹ Times of India (21 Dec 09) China extracts more concessions from Myanmar for oil pipeline; Xinhua (21 Dec 09) CNPC gets exclusive operating rights of China-Myanmar oil pipeline; DPA (22 Dec 09) Chinese company wins ownership of Myanmar-China pipeline project; China Knowledge (21 Dec 09) CNPC subsidiary to build, manage China-Burma oil pipeline; Asia News (19 Dec 09) Economy and energy at the centre of meeting between Beijing and the Burmese junta

communities, are likely to benefit the SPDC and the Chinese and not the people directly impacted by these massive projects [See below *Power to China*].

INSIDE BURMA

Ethnics prepare for conflict, chemical warfare

As the extended 31 December deadline for ethnic armies to transform into SPDC Army-controlled Border Guard Forces (BGF) approached, the United State Wa Army (UWSA) showed no sign of accepting the junta's ultimatum.¹⁰

In addition, media reported that Chinese Vietnam war veterans have crossed into Burma to fight alongside the UWSA.¹¹ The UWSA is also reportedly recruiting and mobilizing retired soldiers from the former Communist Party of Burma (CPB) in Shan State in anticipation of an offensive by the SPDC Army.¹² On 25 December, sources close to the UWSA and the National Democratic Alliance Army (NDAA) said that the groups were purchasing thousands of protective suits in the event of chemical warfare by the SPDC Army.¹³

Opium cultivation in Burma increases

On 14 December, the United Nations' Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) released a report titled "Opium Poppy Cultivation in South-East Asia - Lao PDR, Myanmar." The report's findings with regard to Burma included:¹⁴

- Opium poppy production has risen by almost 50% since 2006;
- Opium poppy cultivation is up for the third year in a row, and the area under cultivation increased by 11% from a year ago;
- More than one million people are now involved in opium poppy cultivation in Burma, most of them in Shan State, where 95% of Burma's poppy is grown;
- The estimated number of households involved in opium poppy cultivation increased by 14% from a year ago;
- Opium addiction prevalence rate in Shan and Kachin States (population aged 15 and above) increased by 36% from a year ago;
- Increased instability in Northeast Burma seems to be affecting the opium market. There are indications that ceasefire groups are selling drugs to buy weapons, and moving stocks to avoid detection.

SPDC snubs Daw Suu

Despite Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's recent attempts to cooperate with the SPDC for the benefit of Burma's people [See *November 2009 Burma Bulletin*], the junta failed to positively respond to Daw Suu's conciliatory moves. On 9 December, the three state-run newspapers published a commentary that accused Daw Aung San Suu Kyi of being "dishonest" and "insincere" in dealing with the SPDC by leaking her two letters to SPDC Chairman Sr Gen Than Shwe to the media.¹⁵ [See *September and November 2009 Burma Bulletin*]

The regime granted Daw Aung San Suu Kyi only small concessions for public relations:

¹⁰ SHAN (03 Dec 09) Junta, Wa both placed high alert

¹¹ Mizzima News (19 Dec 09) UWSA reinforces army with retired personnel; SHAN (19 Dec 09) Chinese volunteers return; Kachin News Group (15 Dec 09) Thousands of Chinese Vietnam war veterans join Wa

¹² Kachin News Group (15 Dec 09) Thousands of Chinese Vietnam war veterans join Wa

¹³ SHAN (25 Dec 09) Wa, Mongla seek protection against CW

¹⁴ UNODC (Dec 09) Opium Poppy Cultivation in South-East Asia - Lao PDR, Myanmar

¹⁵ AP (09 Dec 09) Junta official meets with Aung San Suu Kyi; AP (09 Dec 09) Myanmar junta official meets Aung San Suu Kyi; AP (09 Dec 09) Myanmar state media scolds democracy icon Suu Kyi; BBC (09 Dec 09) Burma junta official meets Aung San Suu Kyi; DPA (09 Dec 09) Myanmar opposition leader meets with junta representative – Summary; AFP (09 Dec 09) Suu Kyi meets again with junta officer; Reuters (09 Dec 09) Myanmar junta labels detained Suu Kyi "dishonest"; Reuters (09 Dec 09) Dissident Is Criticized; Mizzima News (09 Dec 09) Aung San Suu Kyi meets junta's Liaison Minister again

- **9 December:** Daw Aung San Suu Kyi met with SPDC Liaison Minister Maj Gen Aung Kyi at the Seinle Kantha state guesthouse in Rangoon. Details of the talks were not disclosed.¹⁶
- **16 December:** The SPDC allowed Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to briefly meet NLD Chairman Aung Shwe, Secretary Lwin, and Central Executive Committee member Lun Tin at the Seinle Kantha state guesthouse in Rangoon. Daw Suu paid her respects to the three elders and discussed the reorganization of the NLD Central Executive Committee.¹⁷
- **21 December:** Burma's Supreme Court accepted Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's appeal on her conviction that resulted in a sentence to 18-months of house arrest. The court also agreed to rule on the convictions of Daw Suu's housekeepers, Khin Khin Win and Win Ma Ma who also received sentences of 18-months of house arrest. No date was set to hear the appeals.¹⁸

2010 elections news

- **1 December:** The state-run newspaper New Light of Myanmar reported that the 10-standard exams for the 2009-2010 school year will be held between 10-19 March, 2010, and not in December 2009 as was previously reported.¹⁹ Observers had previously speculated that exams were being held early in order to clear educational institutions before the 2010 elections.
- **19 December:** About 20 Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) members led by Rangoon's Kyimyindine Township USDA Secretary Myint Lwin assaulted and injured five members of the pro-junta Myanmar Federation of National Politics (UMFNP) who were campaigning for the 2010 elections.²⁰
- **20 December:** A commentary in the state-run newspaper New Light of Myanmar said that the SPDC's 2008 constitution cannot be changed before the planned 2010 elections. "A group of people has no exclusive right to amend the constitution that has been approved in a democratic way," said the commentary.²¹

Officials charged with spying

On 3 December, former SPDC Army Maj Win Naing Kyaw and Foreign Ministry officials Thura Kyaw and Pyan Sein appeared at a court hearing in Insein prison. The regime charged the three with espionage for allegedly leaking the details of SPDC generals' visits to North Korea and Russia as well as information on the regime's tunnel project near Naypyidaw.²² [See *June 2009 Burma Bulletin*]

SPDC dooms Burma's next generation

On 11 December, the International Trade Unions Confederation (ITUC) released a report titled "Burma's Children, a Generation Sacrificed." The report said that because the SPDC had no intention of investing in education and health, Burma's future generation is in serious jeopardy. The report stated that while SPDC spends 40% of its total GDP on arms, it spends only 0.9% on education and 0.5% on

¹⁶ AP (09 Dec 09) Junta official meets with Aung San Suu Kyi; AP (09 Dec 09) Myanmar junta official meets Aung San Suu Kyi; NLM (10 Dec 09) Relations Minister meets Daw Aung San Suu Kyi; AFP (12 Sep 09) Myanmar's Aung San Suu Kyi Meets Government Liaison – Official; AFP (09 Dec 09) Suu Kyi meets again with junta officer; Reuters (09 Dec 09) Myanmar junta labels detained Suu Kyi "dishonest"; DPA (09 Dec 09) Myanmar opposition leader meets with junta representative – Summary; Kyodo News (09 Dec 09) Suu Kyi meets with Myanmar liaison minister; BBC (09 Dec 09) Burma junta official meets Aung San Suu Kyi; VOA (09 Dec 09) Burma's Aung San Suu Kyi Meets Government Liaison; Mizzima News (09 Dec 09) Aung San Suu Kyi meets junta's Liaison Minister again

¹⁷ AP (16 Dec 09) Burma's opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi meets NLD party leaders; Reuters (16 Dec 09) Myanmar junta lets Suu Kyi meet party elders; AFP (16 Dec 09) Suu Kyi holds rare party meeting; NLM (17 Dec 09) Daw Aung San Suu Kyi pays respects to elderly NLD leaders; VOA (16 Dec 09) Burmese Democracy Leader Meets with Party Elders; Mizzima News (16 Dec 09) Suu Kyi allowed to pay respects to party elders

¹⁸ AP (21 Dec 09) Myanmar's court to review Suu Kyi house arrest; DPA (21 Dec 09) Myanmar Supreme Court accepts Aung San Suu Kyi appeal case – Summary; Reuters (21 Dec 09) Myanmar court agrees to hear Suu Kyi appeal; Mizzima News (21 Dec 09) Court accepts Aung San Suu Kyi's appeal; DVB (22 Dec 09) Burmese court will hear Suu Kyi appeal; Irrawaddy (21 Dec 09) Court to Hear Suu Kyi's Appeal

¹⁹ IMNA (03 Dec 09) Burmese authorities change exam dates yet again

²⁰ Mizzima News (22 Dec 09) Poll campaigners assaulted by USDA members; DVB (23 Dec 09) Pro-junta activists hospitalized after attack; Chinaland Guardian (24 Dec 09) Pre-Elections Political Violence Begins

²¹ AP (20 Dec 09) Myanmar State Press Says No Charter Change for Now

²² DVB (04 Dec 09) Burmese junta 'spies' could face execution

health. As a result, millions of Burmese children cannot afford school, and, the report argues, are forced into begging, prostitution, and work in hazardous conditions.²³

HUMAN RIGHTS

Detention conditions: Malnutrition, torture, death

- **Early December:** It was reported that prisoners in Buthidaung prison in Northern Arakan State were suffering from malnutrition after prison authorities cut food rations.²⁴
- **4 December:** Nyi Nyi Aung aka Kyaw Zaw Lwin, the Burma-born American activist detained in Rangoon's Insein prison, went on a hunger strike to demand better conditions for political prisoners.²⁵ On 7 December, prison authorities put him in solitary confinement in the dog kennels.²⁶ On 15 December, Nyi Nyi Aung ended his hunger strike as a result of his deteriorating health.²⁷
- **23 December:** Political prisoner Tin Tin Htwe, 38, died of a ruptured aneurism in Insein prison.²⁸ She was suffering from heart disease and hypertension.²⁹ Her death in custody adds to the deaths of U Arnanda, 61, in Insein prison, Hla Moe, 48, in Myingyan prison, and Char Late in Thayet prison in 2009.

In and out of prison

- **1 December:** SPDC authorities in Rangoon released 17 cyclone Nargis relief workers associated with aid organization Lin Let Kyae [Shining Star]. Journalists Khant Min Htet, Thant Zin Soe, and Paing Soe Oo, were among those released.³⁰
- **10 December:** The SPDC sentenced Nyan Myint and Thura Aung, two farmers from Allen Township, Magwe Division, to seven years in prison on charges of misappropriation and damages to public property. The prison sentence stem from complaints the two filed with the ILO concerning confiscation of their land.³¹ [See *November 2009 Burma Bulletin*]

Freedom of information

On 8 December, the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) released a report that said that Burma was the world's fifth worst jailer of journalists with nine journalists currently in prison.³²

DISPLACEMENT

Rohingya pushback continue

In December, Bangladesh pushed back at least 87 Rohingya to Burma, bringing the total number of pushbacks in 2009 to more than 1,400.

²³ ITUC (11 Dec 09) Burma's Children, a Generation Sacrificed; Mizzima News (16 Dec 09) Burma's future generation at 'stake': ITUC; International Trade Union Confederation (11 Dec 09) Burma : "Burma's Children, a Generation Sacrificed", the new ITUC report

²⁴ Narinjara News (08 Dec 09) Prisoners in Buthidaung Suffer Malnutrition

²⁵ AFP (11 Dec 09) American on hunger strike in Myanmar jail: lawyer; AP (12 Dec 09) Jailed American in Myanmar in 'poor health'; Irrawaddy (08 Dec 09) Detained US Citizen On Hunger Strike; Mizzima News (08 Dec 09) American on hunger strike in Burmese prison; DVB (08 Dec 09) Detained US citizen on hunger strike

²⁶ Mizzima News (21 Dec 09) Detained Burmese-American thrown into dog-cell; Irrawaddy (22 Dec 09) Jailed US Citizen in Confinement; DVB (22 Dec 09) Detained US citizen moved to 'dog cells'

²⁷ Mizzima News (21 Dec 09) Detained Burmese-American thrown into dog-cell; DVB (22 Dec 09) Detained US citizen moved to 'dog cells'; AFP (11 Dec 09) American on hunger strike in Myanmar jail: lawyer; AP (12 Dec 09) Jailed American in Myanmar in 'poor health'; AP (18 Dec 09) Lawyer: Myanmar-American weak after hunger strike; Mizzima News (11 Dec 09) Family worried over detained Burmese-American's health

²⁸ DPA (25 Dec 09) Myanmar political prisoner dies in jail

²⁹ Mizzima News (24 Dec 09) Woman prisoner dies in Insein prison

³⁰ DVB (04 Dec 09) Detained cyclone aid workers released; RSF (15 Dec 09) Burma - Release of two journalists held for citizen activism; Mizzima News (07 Dec 09) Poet Khant Min Htet released

³¹ DVB (11 Dec 09) Two farmers handed 7-year sentence

³² Reuters (08 Dec 09) Number Of Jailed Freelance Journalists Soars, CPJ Finds; Irrawaddy (10 Dec 09) Detained Journalists Can't Go Back to Old Jobs; Mizzima News (10 Dec 09) Burma: world's fifth worst jailer of freelance journalists

- **21 December:** Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) arrested and pushed back eight Rohingya who had just crossed the Naff River earlier that day.³³
- **22-23 December:** Bangladesh authorities arrested 80 Rohingya at the Ukiya checkpoint as they were going to Cox's Bazaar. Officials pushed back 40 of them to Burma, while they sent the rest to Cox's Bazaar jail.³⁴
- **24-25 December:** Ukiya police arrested 20 Rohingya, who were then pushed back to Burma by BDR.³⁵
- **26 December:** BDR pushed back 19 Rohingya to Burma from the Anziman border point.³⁶

On 29 December, the SPDC agreed to take back 9,000 Rohingya after two-day talks in Dhaka between SPDC Deputy Foreign Minister Maung Myint and Bangladeshi Foreign Secretary Mohamed Mijarul Quayes.³⁷ Bangladesh gave the SPDC a list of 28,000 registered Rohingya refugees, and the SPDC said that it had verified 9,000 as Burmese citizens and will accept them "as soon as possible".³⁸ Quayes said the remaining registered refugees will also be repatriated after nationality verification by SPDC authorities.³⁹

Burmese migrants strike in Thailand

On 18-21 December, more than 3,000 Burmese migrant workers, many of them women, protested at the Top Form Brassiere Mae Sot Factory in Tak Province, Thailand, after four Thai security officers assaulted two female relatives of an employee on 18 December.⁴⁰ On 18 December, workers gathered in front of the plant and demanded that police show them the two Burmese victims, who they suspected had been killed after the assault.⁴¹ On 20 December, after police showed the angry workers that the two victims were alive, the protests subsided. However, protests resumed on 21 December when workers demanded that the plant owner rehire workers sacked because of the protest and provide the workers with welfare benefits.⁴²

Also on 18 December, around 5,000 Burmese migrant workers at the Saha Farm Poultry plant in Samueng Dow, Ratchaburi province, Thailand, went on strike because of labor rights violations including arbitrary salary cuts, and inconsistent overtime pay.⁴³

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

MPs call for Commission of Inquiry

On 10 December, 442 MPs from 29 countries marked International Human Rights Day with a call for the UN Security Council to create a Commission of Inquiry to investigate war crimes and crimes against humanity in Burma. The letter, which was sent to UN Sec-Gen Ban Ki-moon, also urged a global arms embargo against the SPDC.⁴⁴

³³ Kaladan News (22 Dec 09) Rohingyas pushed back to Burma

³⁴ Kaladan News (24 Dec 09) Refugees arrested in Ukiya, Cox's Bazaar

³⁵ Kaladan News (29 Dec 09) More Rohingyas pushed back to Burma

³⁶ Kaladan News (29 Dec 09) More Rohingyas pushed back to Burma

³⁷ BBC (29 Dec 09) Burmese Muslims to be repatriated; Reuters (29 Dec 09) Bangladesh says Myanmar to take back 9,000 refugees; Xinhua (29 Dec 09) Myanmar agrees to take back 9,000 of its nationals from Bangladesh; Mizzima News (29 Dec 09) Burma agrees to accept 9,000 Rohingya

³⁸ BBC (29 Dec 09) Burmese Muslims to be repatriated; Reuters (29 Dec 09) Bangladesh says Myanmar to take back 9,000 refugees

³⁹ Xinhua (29 Dec 09) Myanmar agrees to take back 9,000 of its nationals from Bangladesh; Mizzima News (29 Dec 09) Burma agrees to accept 9,000 Rohingya

⁴⁰ Bangkok Post (21 Dec 09) Bangkok Post: Burmese bra workers resume protest; Nation (19 Dec 09) Some 2,000 Burmese workers protest inside bra factory in Tak; DVB (21 Dec 09) Migrant protest ends in violence

⁴¹ DVB (21 Dec 09) Migrant protest ends in violence

⁴² Bangkok Post (21 Dec 09) Bangkok Post: Burmese bra workers resume protest

⁴³ NMG (19 Dec 09) About 5,000 workers on strike in poultry farm

⁴⁴ DVB (10 Dec 09) Global MPs call for UN action on Burma

UNGA resolution condemns SPDC, calls for constitutional review

On 24 December, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution that condemned the SPDC's "ongoing systematic violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms" of the Burmese people. It was the 19th resolution passed by the UNGA against Burma's military regime since 1991. The resolution called on the SPDC to immediately release all political prisoners including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and urged the junta to undertake a transparent and inclusive review of its 2008 constitution. It also called on the SPDC to allow a full, transparent, effective, impartial, and independent investigation into all reports of human rights violations, and to bring to justice those responsible.⁴⁵

The resolution was passed by a vote of 86-23 with 39 abstentions.⁴⁶ ASEAN members Brunei, Laos, Malaysia, and Vietnam voted against it while Cambodia, Indonesia, Singapore, and Thailand abstained. The Philippines was absent.⁴⁷

Goodbye Gambari

On 2 December, UN Sec-Gen Ban Ki-Moon announced that Ibrahim Gambari would no longer serve in the position of UN Special Advisor on Burma and that a replacement would be sought.⁴⁸ According to a 14 December report by New York-based Inner City Press, veteran Indian diplomat Vijay Nambiar will handle Gambari's Burma portfolio.⁴⁹

US: No progress in Burma

In December, the US noted that its dialogue with the SPDC had not yet produced any tangible outcomes. Human rights abuses were ongoing and no progress had been made on democratic reform. In addition, the SPDC's continued detention and torture of Burma-born US citizen Nyi Nyi Aung remained a contentious issue.

- **5 December:** US Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues Melanne Verwee said that the SPDC must be held accountable for human rights abuses against Burmese women.⁵⁰
- **9 December:** US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and Pacific affairs Scot Marciel said that there are no signs of progress towards democratic change in Burma. "It's perhaps useful that we are talking, but that isn't progress," Marciel said. "Progress will come when there's change on the ground in Burma. So far, there's been none," he added.⁵¹
- **17 December:** Fifty-three members of the US House of Representatives sent a letter to SPDC Chairman Sr Gen Than Shwe that called for the release of Nyi Nyi Aung.⁵²
- **16 December:** US State Department spokesman Ian Kelly said that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's meeting with three senior NLD colleagues should pave the way for her to be allowed discussions with all NLD leaders.⁵³

EU follows US lead and engages the SPDC

On 3 December, Ambassador and Head of Delegation for the European Commission David Lipman said that the EU will begin "sustained political dialogue" with the SPDC following the thawing of

⁴⁵ Reuters (24 Dec 09) U.N. assembly condemns Myanmar rights record; Daily Times (26 Dec 09) UN strongly condemns Myanmar rights violations; Irrawaddy (25 Dec 09) UN General Assembly Resolution Condemns Burma

⁴⁶ Reuters (24 Dec 09) U.N. assembly condemns Myanmar rights record; Daily Times (26 Dec 09) UN strongly condemns Myanmar rights violations; Irrawaddy (25 Dec 09) UN General Assembly Resolution Condemns Burma

⁴⁷ UNGA, 64th session, Situation of human rights in Myanmar, 24 December 2009, UN Doc A/RES/64/238; <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2009/ga10909.doc.htm>

⁴⁸ Mizzima News (03 Dec 09) UN special envoy Gambari quits Burma job; DVB (04 Dec 09) Maligned UN envoy to Burma reassigned

⁴⁹ Inner City Press (14 Dec 09) In UN Round-Up, Nambiar on Myanmar, Nepotism in BONUCA, Cost of Copenhagen Staff

⁵⁰ Irrawaddy (05 Dec 09) US Women's Issues Envoy Seeks Junta Accountability

⁵¹ AFP (10 Dec 09) US official sees no progress in Burma

⁵² Mizzima News (19 Dec 09) U.S. lawmakers demand Burma free detained American

⁵³ Bloomberg (16 Dec 09) Myanmar Should Let Suu Kyi Hold More Political Talks, U.S. Says

relations between the junta and the US.⁵⁴ On 17 December, EU FMs met with SPDC FM Maj Gen Nyan Win in Copenhagen. The EU repeated its readiness to respond positively to genuine progress towards a transition to democracy and respect for human rights by the SPDC.⁵⁵

ECONOMY

Stiglitz offers sage advice to SPDC

On 15 December, Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz attended a seminar on economic development hosted by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia Pacific (UNESCAP) in Naypyidaw.⁵⁶ At the seminar, Stiglitz said the SPDC needed to drastically increase spending on health care and education. He pointed out that the SPDC's revenues from oil and gas can aid development only if used wisely.⁵⁷

Stiglitz also urged the SPDC to promote access to appropriate agricultural financing, boost access to seeds and fertilizers, and create well-paid jobs in construction of rural infrastructure.⁵⁸ The Nobel laureate said that with 70% of Burma's population dependent on agriculture, credit reform could help Burma reach its full productivity potential and enhance development. He stressed that the cost of credit was very high in Burma, with many farmers having to borrow money at interest rates of 10% or more per month.⁵⁹ "If you're going to reduce poverty and meet the Millennium Development Goals [MDGs], a focus on agriculture is absolutely essential," Stiglitz said after his trip.⁶⁰

Despite the reasoned advice from Stiglitz, the reality on the ground was much different. According to a 3 December media report, urgent agricultural aid is still needed in Burma's Irrawaddy delta, with farmers complaining that SPDC funding for the sector is far from adequate. A farmer said that the SPDC's agricultural loan program, which provides a loan of 8,000 kyat (US\$8) per acre of farm, is inadequate. The farmer said that expenses for one acre of farmland runs between 70,000 to 80,000 kyat (US\$70 -\$80).⁶¹

From Russia with love

In a transaction that underscores the SPDC's insatiable urge to continue spending its considerable assets on weapons instead of helping its own people, on 23 December the Russian daily newspapers Kommersant and Vedomosti reported that Russia signed a contract to deliver 20 MiG-29 fighter jets to the SPDC for nearly 400 million Euros (US\$570 million). Russia's deal reportedly beat China's offer to sell the junta J-10 and FC-1 fighter jets.⁶² The junta has acquired a total of 230 military aircraft since 1988.⁶³

Power to China

In December, Chinese developers conducted tests on the 790-megawatt capacity Yeywa hydro dam nearing completion on the Myitnge River in Mandalay Division. The project, which has been under construction since 2004 and has reportedly cost more than US\$600 million, should raise Burma's electricity generating capacity by more than 40%. However, observers believe that with so much

⁵⁴ AFP (04 Dec 09) EU to begin political dialogue with Burma

⁵⁵ EU Press Release (17 Dec 09) EU Ministerial meeting with Burma/Myanmar

⁵⁶ DPA (14 Dec 09) Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz to advise Myanmar; Xinhua (14 Dec 09) Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz to visit Myanmar

⁵⁷ UN News Center (15 Dec 09) UN development partnership seeks to boost agricultural sector in Myanmar

DPA (16 Dec 09) Nobel laureate economist advises Myanmar junta on agriculture; Irrawaddy (17 Dec 09) Stiglitz Advises Regime to Use Oil and Gas Revenues Wisely

⁵⁸ UN News Center (15 Dec 09) UN development partnership seeks to boost agricultural sector in Myanmar

DPA (16 Dec 09) Nobel laureate economist advises Myanmar junta on agriculture; Irrawaddy (17 Dec 09) Stiglitz Advises Regime to Use Oil and Gas Revenues Wisely

⁵⁹ UN News Center (23 Dec 09) Credit vital to boosting development in Myanmar, economist says

⁶⁰ UN News Center (23 Dec 09) Credit vital to boosting development in Myanmar, economist says

⁶¹ DVB (03 Dec 09) Farming in delta remains underfunded

⁶² AFP (23 Dec 09) Russia to deliver 20 fighter jets to Burma; Reuters (23 Dec 09) Russia to sell Myanmar 20 MiG fighters - paper

⁶³ Irrawaddy (26 Dec 09) Junta Buys 230 Military Aircraft in 21 Years

Chinese involvement, including a US\$200 million investment, some of the power might be diverted into China's Yunnan Province.⁶⁴

On 21 December, the SPDC inaugurated the construction of the Myitsone dam on the Irrawaddy River in Lahpe, 22 miles north of Myitkyina, Kachin State. Officials from the two dam construction contractors, Burma's Asia World Company and China state-owned China Power Investment Corporation (CPI), along with senior SPDC officials, attended the ceremony. The Myitsone hydropower project is the first of seven hydropower projects in Mali Hka River and N'Mai Hka River and Irrawaddy River in Kachin State. When completed, the Myitsone dam will generate an estimated 3,600 megawatts of electricity.⁶⁵

While these dams line the pockets of the SPDC and its Chinese investors, the effects on the local populations are far from benign. On 21 December, the SPDC ordered 500 households residing near the Myitsone dam site to relocate.⁶⁶ The construction is likely to displace about 15,000 people in total.⁶⁷ Aside from the displacement, dam projects in Burma, like the pipeline projects, also lead to militarization, human rights abuses, and irreversible environmental damage, threatening the livelihoods and food security of local communities.⁶⁸

Washington sanctions Credit Suisse

On 16 December, the US Justice Department announced that the Credit Suisse Group had agreed to pay US\$536 million to settle an investigation that found that the bank had conducted prohibited financial transactions with numerous regimes subject to US sanctions, including the SPDC.⁶⁹ The bank is said to have processed prohibited transactions worth more than more than \$700 million from the 1990s to 2006. The transactions violated US sanctions on Iran, Sudan, Libya, Cuba, and Burma.

OTHER BURMA NEWS IN DECEMBER

1	Australian Agency for International Development says that it will provide US\$750,000 over three years for HIV prevention programs in Burma.
1	About 150 HIV-positive people attend a ceremony to mark World AIDS Day at the NLD headquarters in Rangoon.
1	SPDC Ambassador to India Kyi Thein says a tri-nation gas pipeline between India, Bangladesh, and Burma may be built in the next three years.
1	About 150 HIV-positive visitors mark World Aids Day at NLD headquarters in Rangoon.
1	SPDC authorities in Manaung Township, Arakan State, begin confiscating over 100 hand-dug oil wells owned by local villagers.
2	An 18-year-old Rohingya girl who became pregnant after a relationship with a Na Sa Ka official dies after being ordered to have an abortion.
3	Repair work begins on Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's lakeside house.
3	Russian government-owned United Aircraft Corporation Regional Director Gennady Prishchepa says that UAC will supply two Antonov An-148 aircraft to Burma in 2010.
3	A landmine explosion in Taungoo, Pegu Division, kills a villager and injures two.
5	An SPDC Army Sergeant from LIB 283 shoots and kills a fellow soldier in Three Pagodas Pass, Karen State.
9	Women's League of Burma General Secretary Lway Aye Nang says that the SPDC's 2010 elections will prolong poverty and violence against women and should not be supported by the international community.
10	NLD holds a ceremony to mark International Human Rights Day at their party headquarters in Rangoon.
10	All Burma Monks' Alliance, 88 Generation Students, and All Burma Federation of Student Unions release a statement that urges the international community not to recognize the 2010 elections.
10	SPDC Army soldiers from IB 31 severely beat the headman of Magyi Village in Khaw-zar sub-Township,

⁶⁴ Irrawaddy (03 Dec 09) Looking for the Switch to Light Up Burma's Cities Irrawaddy

⁶⁵ Kachin News Group (21 Dec 09) Inauguration of dam construction marred by anti-dam posters

⁶⁶ Kachin News Group (24 Dec 09) First 500 households await relocation from Irrawaddy dam site; Irrawaddy (28 Dec 09) Kachin Villagers Resist Order to Relocate

⁶⁷ Irrawaddy (28 Dec 09) Kachin Villagers Resist Order to Relocate

⁶⁸ Irrawaddy (03 Dec 09) Looking for the Switch to Light Up Burma's Cities

⁶⁹ Reuters (16 Dec 09) Over \$1.6 bln in barred Credit Suisse transactions; AP (16 Dec 09) Credit Suisse Group to pay \$536M in Iran case; DVB (17 Dec 09) Swiss bank fined \$536mln for Burma ties

	Mon State.
10	Maldives President Mohamed Nasheed reiterates his call for the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.
14	Thai government says it will support the opening of four more checkpoints along the Thai-Burma border in 2010 to facilitate trade and tourism between the two countries.
15	SPDC authorities send a large number of security personnel into Wong Hong Hung textile factory in Hlaing Tharyar Industrial zone in Rangoon, after more than 1,000 workers demonstrate to demand an increase in pay and transportation allowances.
15	SPDC authorities transfer more than 100 inmates from Akyab prison, Arakan State, to a labor camp on Ngamanray Kyunt Island.
16	A bomb blast in Papun, Northeastern Karen State, kills six people and injures 12.
19	RELA thugs arrest about 150 Chin refugees in Kuala Lumpur.
21	Aung San Oo, the elder brother of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, submits a letter to the Rangoon City Development Committee to object to the renovation of Daw Suu's lakeside house.
23	The Rangoon City Development Committee orders the suspension of renovation of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's lakeside house as a result of her elder brother Aung San Oo's objection to the repairs.
26	SPDC Army soldiers in Maungdaw Township, Arakan State, force six fishermen to work on the construction of the Burma-Bangladesh border fence.

REPORTS ON BURMA RELEASED IN DECEMBER

“Freelance journalists under fire”, Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)

<http://cpj.org/reports/2009/12/freelance-journalists-in-prison-cpj-2009-census.php>

“Burma’s Children, a Generation Sacrificed”, International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)

http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/Burma_EN_Final.pdf

“Opium Poppy Cultivation in South-East Asia, Lao PDR, Myanmar”, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

http://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/SEA_Opium_survey_2009.pdf

“India: Close the Gap for Burmese Refugees”, Refugees International

http://www.refugeesinternational.org/sites/default/files/120909_india_closegap.pdf

“Status and Potential for the Development of Biofuels and Rural Renewable Energy – Myanmar”, Asian Development Bank (ADB)

<http://www.adb.org/Documents/Reports/Biofuels/biofuels-mya.pdf>

“Global Climate Risk Index 2010”, Germanwatch

<http://www.germanwatch.org/klima/cri2010.pdf>