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## WEEKLY NEWS UPDATE NO. 82

### **Inside Burma**

#### **High Court Rejects Suu Kyi's Appeal**

Burma's highest court has rejected Aung San Suu Kyi's appeal against her continued detention under house arrest. Her lawyer said that he will make a final appeal to Burma's chief justice in the following days. Suu Kyi's lawyer argued that her house arrest extension was unlawful because it was based on provisions from the 1974 Constitution which was no longer in effect. Government lawyers countered that the 1974 Constitution could still be cited since it was not officially abolished. There was widespread international outcry upon the news of the rejection. - [Irrawaddy](#) – 26 February 2010 & [Chinland Guardian](#) - 27 February 2010 & [Mizzima](#) - 28 February 2010

[Burmese PM Resumes Media Attacks on Suu Kyi](#) - [Irrawaddy](#) – 24 February 2010

#### **Elections: Two Burmese Politicians Urge Support for Election**

Two Burmese opposition actors, Thu Wai and Khin Zaw Win, have urged Burmese political parties and organizations in exile to support the planned elections. Both former political prisoners who are now based in Rangoon attended the 7th Conference of the Burma Media Association, sponsor by *Voice of America (VOA)*, in Chiang Mai, where media representatives and politicians discussed the 2008 Constitution on which the elections are based. Thu Wai, the chairman of the recently formed Rangoon-based Democratic Party, encouraged participants to seize the opportunity to find the solutions to long-term problems and to vote for democracy. He said the military regime which has held state power for more than 20 years will hold the election because it wants to reform the country, and that a civilian government will emerge after the election, in spite of the flawed Constitution. Khin Zaw Win said that the public must be involved in the formation of democracy through the elections, after which efforts could be made to amend the Constitution. He noted that the junta still prohibits freedom of speech in the media, and for the election to be fair there must be more free expression, adding that the exiled media must try to provide relevant information and explore topical issues if Burma's domestic newspapers and journals are not allowed the freedom to select stories and to provide a forum for opposing views. - [Irrawaddy](#) – 26 February 2010

[Chin political leaders urge people to restore democracy](#) - [Khonumthung News](#) - 25 February 2010

[USDA Promises Big Spending in Rangoon](#) - [Irrawaddy](#) - 22 February 2010

#### **NLD CEC approves 100 CC members**

The Central Executive Committee (CEC) of the National League for Democracy (NLD) in Burma has approved 100 members of the new Central Committee (CC). The final list has been sent to the party Chairman U Aung Shwe for his approval, to be announced the first week of March. When the NLD was first formed in 1990, there were 80 CC members, but most were arrested by the regime in 1997, greatly hindering party activities and party work. Aung San Suu Kyi has insisted that detained opposition party members who deserve to be in the party's central committee must be included. Around 430 NLD members are currently behind bars, however NLD vice-chairman Tin Oo was recently released after serving a 6-year sentence. - [Mizzima](#) - 26 February 2010 & - [DVB](#) – 25 February 2010

[US Chargé d'Affaires Meets NLD](#) - [Irrawaddy](#) – 25 February 2010

### **Junta Highlights Beijing Ties, as Talks with Armed Groups Continue**

Burma's state-run media has highlighted Beijing's importance to the ruling regime by giving extensive coverage to a new Sino-Burmese hydropower project as well as to a meeting between Chinese military officials, Burmese negotiators and ethnic Wa leaders over the issue of forming border guard forces. All three official regime news sources carried front page stories on the agreement between Burma's Ministry of Electric Power and two Chinese companies involved in the Upper Salween (Kunlong) Hydropower project which will be located near the Chinese border and the territory of the cease-fire United Wa State Army (UWSA). After many false starts, the UWSA leader Bao Youxiang finally met the junta's top negotiator, Lt-Gen Ye Myint, to discuss the regime's plan to dismantle cease-fire armies and reconstitute them as border guard forces under Burmese command.

Meanwhile, negotiations between Ye Myint and the eastern Shan State-based National Democratic Alliance Army (NDAA) appear to be on hold, after the group's leader Sai Lin said that he could not travel to Kengtung, the headquarters of the Triangle Regional Military Command, for a planned meeting. However, three senior NDAA officials met Col Than Htut Thein, a chief of staff, who pressured the NDAA officials to agree to become a border guard force saying that time was running out, but not saying whether the junta would resolve the issue politically or militarily. The junta also had planned talks with the Kachin Independence Organization, another cease-fire group that is resisting calls to transform its armed wing into a border guard force. - *Irrawaddy* – 26 February 2010 & - *S.H.A.N.* - 1 March 2010

[KIO to thrash out BGF issue at central committee meet](#) - *KNG* - 27 February 2010

[Burmese artillery and other units, seen advancing towards the Thai/Burma border](#) - *IMNA* – 26 February 2010

[DKBA Reportedly Opposes Border Force Plan](#) - *Irrawaddy* – 24 February 2010

[SPDC pressures KPF to form Border Guard Force](#) - *Kaowao* - 21 February 2010

[Burmese army in north told to be ready for combat](#) - *KNG* - 19 February 2010

[China worried over losing investments in Burma in event of civil war](#) - *KNG* - 17 February 2010

### **Atrocities in Karen State 'Systematic': KWO**

In the ongoing military conflict in Karen State in eastern Burma, Karen women face ongoing systematic abuse including beatings, torture and gender-based violence, according to a report released by the Karen Women's Organization (KWO). The report, *Walking Amongst Sharp Knives: the Unsung Courage of Karen Women Village Chiefs in Conflict Areas of Eastern Burma*, details 95 cases of women who served as village chiefs in Papun, Kwakareik, Thaton, Nyaunglebin and Pa-an districts in Eastern Burma, whose testimonies "show a consistent pattern to the Burma's Army's treatment of local communities".

*Irrawaddy* – 25 February 2010

[Report: Walking Amongst Sharp Knives: the Unsung Courage of Karen Women Village Chiefs in Conflict Areas of Eastern Burma](#) – *KWO* – 25 February 2010

[Displaced Villagers Continue to Get Pushed Around](#) - *Kantarawaddy Times* – 26 February 2010

['Most serious penalties' for child soldier case](#) - *DVB* – 24 February 2010

### **Burma opposition downcast over UN visit, Junta Bans Reporting Quintana's Comments**

Opposition activists and politicians have lamented the "fruitless" visit to Burma by Tomas Ojea Quintana, the UN rapporteur on human rights. Quintana was denied a meeting with imprisoned opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi during the five-day visit, despite being allowed to hold talks with the recently released opposition vice-chairman, Tin Oo. Observers have echoed Quintana's reflections on the apparent intransigence of the Burmese junta, and said that the visit failed to reap any concrete

results. Quintana said that “there is no sign, no indication that the government is willing to respect human rights and in that sense the election won't be acceptable”. - [DVB – 22 February 2010](#) & [Irrawaddy – 22 February 2010](#)

[UN envoy meets ministers but not Than Shwe](#) - [AFP / DVB – 19 February 2010](#)

[UN Envoy Visits Insein as Prisoners Demand Better Conditions](#) - [Irrawaddy – 18 February 2010](#)

[Junta Plans to Tighten Controls on Monks](#) - [Irrawaddy – 20 February 2010](#)

[Six on hunger strike in Insein prison](#) - [DVB – 23 February 2010](#)

### **Pervasive drug production linked to rebel groups: UNODC**

According to a United Nations Office of Drug Control (UNODC) report, the eradication of drug production in Burma is contingent upon a reduction in the number of ethnic armed forces, and that drug cultivation and trafficking is critical to the survival of ethnic armed forces. Shan State is said to be the biggest region for drug production, an area which is also home to several ethnic armed forces. About 330 tons of raw opium were produced in Burma in 2009, earning end sales of USD 360 million, estimates the report. - [Mizzima - 26 February 2010](#)

[Burmese, Thai Officials Discuss How to Combat Drugs Trade](#) - [Irrawaddy – 23 February 2010](#)

### **Further articles of interest:**

[70 percent of Burma property goes to junta cronies](#) - [DVB – 1 March 2010](#)

[India to spend Rs. 660 billion for Mizoram-Myanmar road](#) - [Khonumthung News - 26 February 2010](#)

[Junta to raise salaries of government employees](#) - [Khonumthung News - 24 February 2010](#)

[Cameroonian Flees to Rangoon's French Embassy](#) - [AP/Irrawaddy – 24 February 2010](#)

[S Korean firm signs \\$1.4bn Burma gas deal](#) - [AFP/DVB – 23 February 2010](#)

### **Outside Burma**

#### **Elections: ASEAN Secretary: Burmese Election Expected to be Credible**

In an interview on the BBC's “*Hardtalk*” program, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Secretary-General Surin Pitsuwan has said that he expects credible and transparent elections in Burma in 2010, but that ASEAN cannot interfere in the details of the elections. He added that they will not be at the international level that many people would like to see, due to country's recent history, but it is positive that the regime is committed to holding elections. He said that ASEAN has communicated with the Burmese regime very openly in lobbying for political change and national reconciliation. Burma became a member of ASEAN in 1997. - [Irrawaddy - 24 February 2010](#)

#### **MSF: Bangladesh launches 'violent crackdown' on Rohingyas**

Bangladesh has unleashed a crackdown of unprecedented violence against Muslim refugees from neighbouring Burma, according to the humanitarian group Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF - Doctors Without Borders). MSF has reported that authorities in Muslim-majority Bangladesh have begun a campaign of repression against unregistered Rohingyas who are estimated to number 200,000. Those living outside of an official Rohingya camp in Kutuplaong on the Burma border have been subject to “unprecedented levels of violence”, which has also forced unregistered Rohingyas in local towns to flee to a unofficial, makeshift camp where conditions are rapidly deteriorating. - [AFP/DVB – 18 February 2010](#)

[Report: Bangladesh: Violent Crackdown Fuels Humanitarian Crisis for Unrecognized Rohingya Refugees – MSF – 18 February 2010](#)

[Muslims in Arakan state get Temporary national ID cards - Mizzima - 22 February 2010](#)

**Thaksin Found Guilty over Burma Loan**

Ousted Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra has been found guilty of approving a low-interest loan to Burma by Thailand's state-owned Exim Bank. Thailand's Supreme Court said that Thaksin had abused his power while in office to pressure the Foreign Ministry to approve a 4 billion baht (US \$127 million) loan to Burma so that his Shinawatra Satellite Co could profit from telecoms contracts. In 2004, Shinawatra Satellite leased a satellite service for broadband Internet access and telephone service to Bagan Cybertech, a Burmese company owned by the son of former Burmese Prime Minister Gen Khin Nyunt. The Supreme Court ruled that in four out of five cases presented to it, Thaksin had used his authority as the country's leader from 2001 to 2006 to implement policies that benefited him, sometimes at the expense of the state. - [Irrawaddy](#) – 27 February 2010

**HRW: 'Halt abuse of migrant workers in Thailand'**

In a new report Human Rights Watch has made a fervent appeal to the Thai government to halt abuses by the police and withdraw discriminatory laws and policies against migrant workers from neighbouring countries. The report, *From the Tiger to the Crocodile: Abuse of Migrant Workers in Thailand*, details the widespread and severe human rights abuses faced by migrant workers in Thailand, including killings, torture in detention, extortion, sexual abuse, and labour rights abuses such as trafficking, forced labour, and restrictions on organizations. - [Mizzima](#) - 24 February 2010

[HRW report: From the Tiger to the Crocodile: Abuse of Migrant Workers in Thailand](#) – 23 February 2010

[S Korea blocks Burmese migrants - DVB](#) – 26 February 2010

[Returned Burmese Migrant Killed by DKBA - Irrawaddy](#) – 19 February 2010

[Thai Human Rights Officials Visit Karen Camps - Irrawaddy](#) – 19 February 2010

**Further articles of interest:**

[Fiancé of Burma prisoner 'betrayed' by US - AFP/DVB](#) – 22 February 2010

[Dhaka Lures ADB for Road to Burma - Narinjara News](#) – 19 February 2010

**Opinion / Analysis**

['Our Movement is Unique for Women' - Irrawaddy](#) - 26 February 2010