



BURMA LINKS



MARCH/APRIL 2002

CANADIAN FRIENDS OF BURMA
145 Spruce, #206, Ottawa ON K1R 6P1 CANADA
Phone: (613) 237-8056 FAX 563-0017 e-mail: cfob@cfob.org web: www.cfob.org

Ivanhoe Gets the O' Heave-Ho

"Heave-Ho Ivanhoe!" CFOB is gearing up its campaign to push Canadian company, Ivanhoe Mines, out of Burma. The Monywa copper mine, located in Sagaing Division, is a 50/50 partnership between Ivanhoe Mines and Burma's dictatorship — on par with the Taliban in terms of brutality and repression. It is the biggest foreign mining enterprise in the country.

The international campaign to oust companies from Burma gained momentum when the International Labour Organization (ILO) issued its unprecedented call for sanctions against Burma in Nov.2000 — calling on its constituents to "review...the relations that they may have with Burma and take appropriate measures to ensure that [Burma] cannot take advantage of such relations to perpetuate or extend the system of forced or compulsory labour."

Research done by labour and human rights groups proved without a doubt that Burma's military regime has been systematically using forced labour country-wide on infrastructure projects — many of which are then utilized by foreign companies.

In response to the ILO, the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) and the International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mines and General Worker's Union (ICEM) called on Ivanhoe to clear out of Burma last June, citing examples which they say prove the Monywa mine is con-

nected to forced labour. For example, their joint statement of June 14 states, "According to the ILO, 921,753 people were forced to build the railway connecting Monywa to the town of Pakokku. The Thazi dam hydroelectric plant which is the mine's power source was built using 3,000-5,000 forced labourers."

Forced labour is so prevalent in Burma, it is no wonder that Burma's regime is reviled at home. Despite the extreme repression of opposition parties in advance of the 1990 national elections, the people — including most military personnel — voted overwhelmingly for Aung San Suu Kyi's, National League for Democracy (NLD). But the regime, then called the State Law and Order Restoration Council, refused to relinquish power.

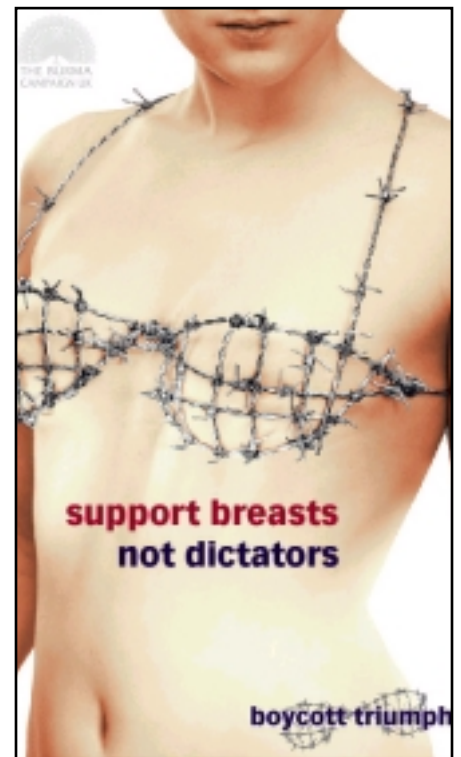
Since then, the NLD has been calling for a halt to foreign business in Burma because of the support it provides the generals. In a video-taped message to Canada smuggled out in 1999, Aung San Suu Kyi stated "We are not against investment per se... We do not think that investment in our country at this time can do our country any good." The global community, as stated in the ILO resolution, backs this call.

But Ivanhoe claims its business operations in Burma are not political and refutes all accusations that its Monywa mine fosters forced labour or other human rights violations. However, in contravening the NLD, they have clearly showed

where their allegiance lies. And in partnering with the military junta, Ivanhoe has become an accessory to its crimes.

Ivanhoe's Monywa project provides Burma's military regime, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), the foreign currency it so desperately needs to stay afloat. While

(cont'd on page 3)



Another company bites the Burma dust
(See page 4 for details)



UPDATES

JAPANESE AID RESUMES

After a 12-year moratorium, the Japanese government has resumed assistance to Burma. But the project, involving the repair of the Baluchaung hydroelectric power plant, worth US \$26 million has been delayed. Although the Japanese cabinet was expected to approve the plant, located near Hlawpita Falls in Karenni State, by the end of last year, it has apparently still not received final approval. Burma's pro-democracy movement has voiced loud opposition to the project, saying it is too soon to resume engagement with the military regime. Japanese officials have suggested that the anticipated grant is one of the elements that keep open the way for Japan to communicate with Burma's leaders.

MIN KO NAING CONDEMNED TO ANOTHER YEAR IN PRISON

Another year has been added to student leader, Min Ko Naing's prison sentence, which he has spent in solitary confinement since 1989. This is the third time his sentence has been extended for one year since 1999. The State Protection Law allows any prison term to be extended by one year, for a total of five years, by order of the Ministry of Home Affairs. The student leader completed his 10-year sentence in 1999. Min Ko Naing revived the All Burma Federation of Student Unions (ABFSU) and served as its chairman during the 1988 student struggle for democracy. In 2001, he and the ABFSU were awarded the Student Peace Prize (Trondheim, Norway) for their "courageous, enduring and non-violent struggle against one of the world's most brutal regimes". While in prison Min Ko Naing also received the John Humphrey Freedom Award presented by Rights and Democracy of Canada in 1999. Of approximately 1,600 political prisoners still languishing in Burma's notorious gulags, 52, including Min Ko Naing, have completed their sentences but are still being held under the State Protection Law.

MYO MYINT NYEIN FREED AFTER 12 YEAR IMPRISONMENT!

Burmese journalist and NLD member Myo Myint Nyein was freed on February 13, 2002 after spending 12 years in prison. He spent seven years in Insein prison for publishing a poem criticizing the Burmese army in his magazine *Yin-Kyae-Hmu*. While he was still serving his prison term, he was given another seven-year sentence for covertly publishing Rangoon University Diamond Jubilee Magazine and other news magazines. He also helped to write a letter to the UN human rights

special envoy for Burma, Yojo Yokota, regarding the ill-treatment of political prisoners at Insein. In recognition of his extraordinary courage in his fight for a free press in Burma, he was awarded the International Press Freedom Award for 2001 by Canadian Journalists for Free Expression. He was nominated for the award by the Burma Media Association (BMA), an affiliate of Reporters Without Borders (RSF). RSF believes that at least 17 journalists are still in prison in Burma.

CANADIANS CARE

The majority of Canadians believe that government has a vital role in upholding corporate social responsibility, according to a new report by the Canadian Democracy and Corporate Accountability Commission. Led by Ed Broadbent, the Commission heard testimony from a wide range of civil society organizations and business executives throughout 2001. The report stated that an 80% majority of Canadians want Corporate Social Responsibility standards established and companies required to publish what they are doing to meet those standards so shareholders and customers can judge for themselves. An even higher percentage of Canadians want the government to "promote international agreements to set minimum enforceable standards for socially responsible corporate behaviour **in their overseas operations.**" Unfortunately, the Canadian government doesn't seem to be listening.

ANOTHER OLYMPIC SCANDAL

One scandal that did not receive much media attention at this year's winter Olympics was the purchase of official Torchbearer uniforms from Burma by the International Olympic Committee (IOC). In a letter sent to the IOC's president, Jacques Rogge, the head of the Brussels-based International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, said the choice of a Burmese factory to produce the uniforms was particularly inappropriate given the IOC's stated goal to "contribute to building a peaceful and better world." Purchasing products made in Burma help finance the military regime. Most of the 1,000 activists who emailed protests to the IOC, received replies from the Salt Lake Organizing Committee (SLOC—sounds too close to SLORC!) stating "The torch relay clothes were NOT made in Burma. They were manufactured in Myanmar." When SLOC was informed that the two countries were actually one and the same, it then stated that there was nothing wrong with importing from Burma because it's in line with US law. Although the US imposed a ban on all new investments by US companies in Burma in 1997, the policy did not extend to imports.

The Palaung of Burma

A member of the Palaung Women Organization (PWO), Min, recently visited Canada. CFOB had the chance to meet with her and learn about PWO and the general situation of the Palaung people in Burma.

It all started in October 2000 when a group of Palaung women in Thailand, intent on improving their status and quality of life, set up the PWO. By furthering their education, PWO aims to develop the skills needed to analyse the causes of their own oppression. In addition to publishing the Palaung Women's Journal, PWO also works in cooperation with other Burmese women and human rights organizations in their struggle to promote democratization and the status of women in Burma.

One of the oldest ethnic groups in Burma, the Palaung are one of the many groups inhabiting the north-eastern part of Shan State, parts of Kachin State and the South-Western province of China, Yunnan. With a population of over one million in Burma, the Palaung, who also go by the name of "Ta-ang", are part of the Mon-Khmer ethnic group and have ties to other ethnic groups in Burma, Cambodia and Southern China. Famous for their cultivation of tea in Burma, the Palaung often live on the ridges of steep mountains.

In 1990, Burma's military regime, named at that time, the State Law and Order Restoration Council,

Palaung women wearing their extravagant traditional clothes



began to pressure the Palaung State Liberation Army to enter into a cease-fire agreement with them. The military's pressure tactics involved burning down villages, killing people, and raping women, especially young Palaung women. Many Palaung villages were forcibly relocated at the start of the tea season which also caused enormous hardship. Finally the PSLA agreed to make a cease-fire with the regime.

Unfortunately, that was not the end of their suffering. As is the case with many of the ethnic groups in Burma, since the cease-fire was signed, the human rights violations against the Palaung have increased dramatically.

Some Palaung have since fled to Thailand where they are active in the struggle for democracy, human rights and self-determination within a federal union of Burma.

(cont'd from page 1)

health care is virtually non-existent in Burma, ranking second to last by the World Health Organization in 2000, the SPDC spends over 40% of its budget on weaponry. Guns are the prime tool that keep this unloved, unelected regime in control. CFOB's Director, Corinne Baumgarten sums up the debate, "Ivanhoe's denials that it is an accomplice to the SPDC's system of forced labour is paramount to a company, in business with the Taliban, claiming that their operations don't contribute to the oppression of women in Afghanistan."

The Monywa copper project is poised to become a massive income generator for the junta. It is trying to raise \$390 million to expand the mine by excavating a new deposit in Letpadaung. Meanwhile, the junta earns royalties and rent from Ivanhoe amounting to US\$885,000 in 2000.

Most Burma experts believe that the ILO's call for sanctions was the major factor in prompting the regime to enter into talks with Aung San Suu Kyi in October 2000. While the possibility for these talks to develop into meaningful dialogue appear increasingly dismal, letting up on pressure now will topple any chances for political reform.

"We urge you to re-evaluate your direct business relations with the Burmese military junta in light of this global consensus," wrote Ken Georgetti, the President of the CLC to Ivanhoe Mines last June. "It is the position of the global labour movement that it is impossible to do business with the Burmese government or in Burma without subsidizing forced labour and other human rights violations. Certainly in the case of Ivanhoe's partnership with the military junta, foreign investment is directly propping up the regime."

Nuclear reactor in Burma

The Rangoon junta's decision to take Burma into the nuclear age, by buying a research reactor from Russia, alarms most of the rest of the world for at least three reasons:

Safety - the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency, the international regulatory body) reported after a visit to Burma last year that the country's safety standards were "well below the minimum [regarded] as acceptable"; *proliferation* - fissile material has been hijacked by terrorists and thieves, and not recovered, in several other countries, for example Vietnam and Russia; *potential use* - even a research reactor can produce weapons-grade nuclear fuel. Canada's sale of a research reactor to India many years ago started that country on its path to becoming a nuclear weapons state. North Korea's nuclear bomb(s) grew out of technology sold by the former USSR.

A fourth reason for worry is that Burma's partner in this venture - Russia - is hardly confidence-inspiring in nuclear matters. Chernobyl, where the world's worst nuclear accident took place, was at that time under Soviet control. There are still frequent malfunctions among its many reactors, and the amount of loosely supervised nuclear material scattered throughout the country has worried observers for years.

Burma is chronically short of electricity. Frequent interruptions and breakdowns in the present system indicate the country has trouble keeping on top of conventional technology, according to diplomats. But the generals say their new 10-megawatt reactor will be used only to generate isotopes for medical and agricultural purposes. It will be built in central Burma, near Magwe where there are rich uranium deposits, at a cost of about US\$25 million. Between 200 and 300 scientists have been sent to Russia for training.

Burma is a signatory of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty which means it has a right to cooperate in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. It also signed the 1995 ASEAN Nuclear Free Treaty, which bans the production, storage and movement of atomic weapons in Southeast Asia. Except for Laos, all of Burma's five bordering countries possess nuclear reactors.

TG World Energy

Privately held company with close links to Calgary's TG World Energy Corp has acquired three oil fields that will more than double the amount of crude oil produced daily in Burma now. The fields are in central Burma, north of Chauk on the Irrawaddy river. Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprises is the third partner in the contract which includes subsidiaries of China's national petroleum company CNPC. TG World Inc holds a 30 per cent interest.

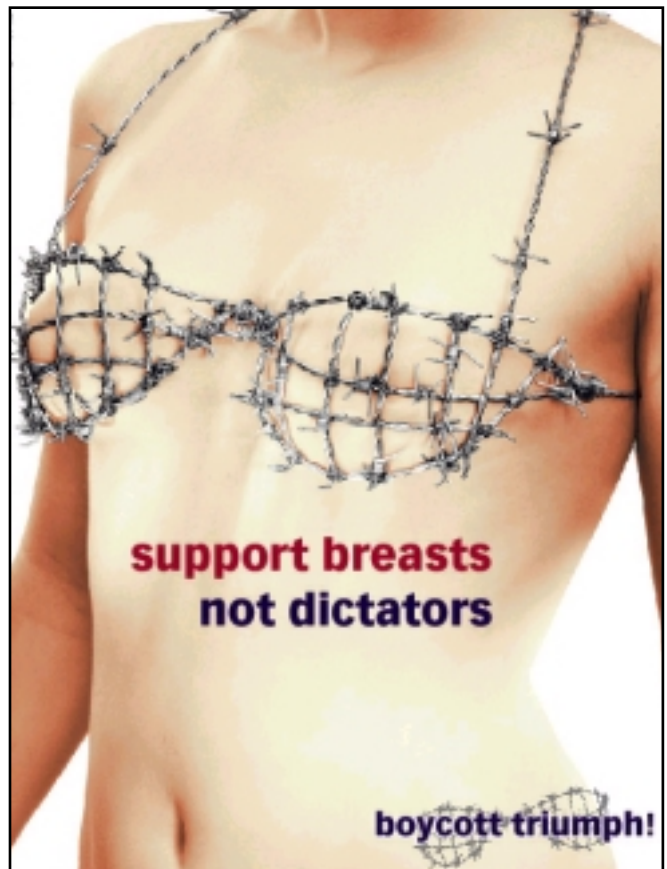
Current inland oil production in Burma has fallen to 9,000 barrels daily. These new fields have total reserves amounting to about 400 million barrels. Operations will start

in a partially developed field that is expected to yield about 10,000 barrels daily, perhaps by the end of this year. The venture will be managed by Chinnery Assets Ltd, which will spend US\$4.4 million in initial preparation and development.

A spokesman for Total World Energy Corp in Calgary said his company set up a private company earlier this year in order to avoid a public outcry similar to that incurred by Calgary's Talisman Oil, which has extensive holdings in Sudan. TG World Inc is under the same management team as TG World Corp, he explained. The company is registered in Bahamas. Talisman has recently announced its intention to sell off its Sudan holdings, but that remains to be seen.

Triumph over Triumph!

Burma Campaign UK has succeeded in pressuring the German, Swiss-based multinational, Triumph, to pull out of Burma—and no doubt also succeeded in turning a few heads with their advertisement campaign. The Norwegian Olympic team also joined in the pressure by refusing to wear the Triumph logo on its products unless the company pulled out of Burma. One of Europe's main retailers of lingerie, Triumph International established a Burmese subsidiary in 1996 and opened a factory in Burma in April 1997. The campaign was swift, beginning in November 2001, it was over by January.



BURMA ACTION

To make "Burma Action" most effective, we need your help.
Please contact us with activity ideas and event information in advance of
our next publication.

Give Ivanhoe the Ol' Heave-Ho!

Heave Ho Ivanhoe!

CFOB is gearing up its campaign to push Canadian company, Ivanhoe Mines, out of Burma. The Monywa copper mine, located in Sagaing Division, is a 50/50 partnership between Ivanhoe Mines and Burma's rulers, a dictatorship on par with the Taliban in terms of brutality and repression. It is the biggest foreign mining enterprise in the country.

- ▲ Write to Ivanhoe Mines and send copies to your MPs encouraging them also to write
- ▲ Make Heave-Ho Ivanhoe the focus of your May Day celebrations this year — so far, Burma activists will be participating in Vancouver, Edmonton, Regina, Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal
- ▲ Dedicate some time, get involved!



What you can do:

While you've got the writing momentum going, why not write to:

Canadian oil company, TG World Energy, — Canada's newest kid on the Burma chopping block — and all those companies listed on the CFOB website telling them to Get out of Burma!

See list:
www.cfob.org/CorpComplicity/corplist.shtml

- Please send a copy of all letters to Canadian Friends of Burma!

To find your Member of Parliament's contact information, go to:
www.parl.gc.ca/common/senmemb/house/members/

For sample letters, see CFOB's website:
www.cfob.org/Campaigns/campaigns.shtml

ADDRESSES:

Ivanhoe Mines

Mr. Dan Kunz, President
Waterfront Centre
900-200 Burrard Street
Vancouver, BC, V6N 3L6,
tel (604) 688-5755,
fax (604) 682-6728
email: info@ivanhoemines.com

TG World Energy

Mr. Clifford M. James, President
736 6th Avenue SW, Suite 2000
Calgary, AB T2P 317

Bill C-36: What Can Canadians Learn from Burma?

by Kyaw Moe

Since September 11, I have been worried about the political direction in which Canada is heading. Although there have been many policy changes affected by September 11, there is one in particular that harkens me back to the troubles in Burma, my country of origin. Although Canada's political situation and history are very different from that of Burma, I can't help seeing similarities between Canada's Anti-Terrorism Law and Burma's Emergency Provisions Act.

It was 50 years ago when the Burmese government passed a bill called the *Emergency Provisions Act*. Burma had achieved its independence from Britain in 1948 but by 1950, the country, under the leadership of Prime Minister U Nu, had been over-run by a variety of insurgencies from ethnic and communist groups. More than 65 per cent of Burma's territory was under the control of armed groups while the government retained control of only Rangoon and a few miles beyond.

Despite the objections of the opposition, U Nu promoted the new bill which was intended to provide increased security to protect citizens. According to the Act, security forces such as police, army and intelligence agents would have the authority to arrest, without a warrant, and imprison without trial, anyone considered to be a threat to national security.

Similar to the arguments used in Canada, the reasons

given by Burma's government for expediting the bill's passing into law was to guard public safety and to prevent insurgent attacks on civilians and public buildings. Prominent leaders opposed the bill asserting that it would give security forces full power to do whatever they want in the name of National Security.

In spite of the numerous objections, the Emergency Provisions Act was passed by Burma's parliament into legislation in 1950. Students and journalists became the primary victims of the Act because they were the most active and critical of government. Over the past four decades—since General Ne Win staged the military coup in 1962—hundreds of thousands of people have been arrested and detained under the Act. Even the Prime Minister U Nu and U Kyaw Nyien, who played lead roles in the making of this law, faced imprisonment under this legislation.

In Burma today, 48 million people are living under the shadow of this law. Almost two thousand political prisoners are being detained by the present military junta and most of them were charged under the Emergency Provisions Act.

Canadians only have to recall the abuses committed by Quebec security forces under the War Measures Act for reasons to be cautious about restricting civil liberties. Who will ensure that security forces in Canada do not violate human rights — like they do in Burma — under the Anti-Terrorism Act?

♦ BURMA CONTACTS IN CANADA

▲ BRITISH COLUMBIA

Vancouver

Burma Democratic Organization
c/o Hla Pe
2-7240 Moffatt Rd., Richmond, BC
tel: 604 642-6201 fax: 604 270-2132 or 642-6201
yhwamt@sprint.ca

Vancouver Burma Roundtable
PO Box 30128, 8602 Granville St
Vancouver BC V6P 6S3
tel/fax: 604 275-0525
email: celsus@axionet.com

Burma Students Democratic Organization
c/o San Aung
13082A, 104 Ave, Surrey, B.C. V3T 1T7
tel/fax: 604-589-0034, burmanews@sprint.ca

Mon Unity League, Cham Toik
204-339 East 7th Ave., Vancouver, BC V5T 1M9
tel/fax 604 540 2727; ctoik@hotmail.com

ABD News, Soe Kyaw Thu
31B-621 East 7th Ave, Vancouver, BC V5T 1N9

tel: (604) 873-1804, fax: (604)874-7020
class88@axionet

East Kootenay Canadian Friends of Burma

c/o Shauna Jimenez
shaunajimenez@cyberlink.bc.ca
Box 139 Wasa Lake, BC V0B 2K0
tel: 250 422-3259, fax 250 489-0713

▲ ALBERTA

Calgary - Tiger Yawnghwe
306-4523 47th St. Innisfail, AB T4G 1P5
tel 403 227-3422 fax 403 227-3537
e-mail yawnghwe@cadvision.com

Edmonton Burma Watch International
c/o Dr. Alice Khin Saw Win
10403 54th Ave., Edmonton AB T6H 0T4
tel 780 492-4547, fax: 780 492-2551
khin_s_w@powersurfr.com

▲ SASKATCHEWAN

Regina Saskatchewan Council for
Inter-national Cooperation attn. Laurie Lada

2138 McIntyre St., Regina SK S4P 2R7
tel: 306 757 4669, fax: 757 3226, scic@web.net

▲ MANITOBA

Winnipeg Dr. B.T. Win and Rosy DT Yee
P.O. Box 2403, Winnipeg, MB R3T 2N2
tel: 204 582-8799 fax: 204-947-2420
e-mail btwin@sprint.ca

Associates to Develop a Democratic Burma
c/o Peter Globensky
66 Cuthbertson Ave., Winnipeg, MB R3P 0N8
w 204 948-2120 h 204 885-0660
beaujess@mb.sympatico.ca

▲ ONTARIO

Thunder Bay

The Sleeping Giant, Willa Jones
639 Grey St., Thunder Bay ON P7E 2E4
tel: 807 623-0717 fax: 807 983-2914
e-mail: candu@microage-tb.com

Sarnia James and Janis Myint Swe
1141 Isabella St., Sarnia ON N7S 1S4
tel: 519 383-0894, fax: 519 383-0763

The 10th Anniversary of Aung San Suu Kyi winning the Nobel Peace Prize was on December 10, 2001: A group of fellow Nobel Peace Laureates celebrated this occasion in Oslo on Dec. 8. Desmond Tutu, Madeleine Albright, Corazon Aquino and Jose Ramos Horta attended the event. **Burma groups across Canada also celebrated with over 30 other cities world-wide.**

Ottawa: Inter Pares held a press conference on Parliament Hill with CFOB, le Fédération des Femmes du Québec and the Canadian Labour Congress on Dec.7 to show solidarity for Aung San Suu Kyi and to highlight the situation of women in Burma. The same evening CFOB held an event featuring renowned Burmese poet and former political prisoner, Saya Tin Moe. The art of Karen painter, Maung Maung Tinn, was on display and traditional Burmese soup, Mohinga, was served to over 50 attendees.

Toronto: Burma activists handed out flyers on Dec.8 in St. Lawrence market and held a press conference on Dec.10 at Queen's Park to honour Aung San Suu Kyi. Members of Provincial parliament, Richard Paten (Liberal) and Peter Kormos (NDP), vowed to do all they could to pass the Burma resolution in the Ontario legislature for which Toronto activists have been lobbying the past two years. Both MPPs asserted that the federal government should also take similar action.

Edmonton: Burma Watch International co-sponsored an event on Dec.1 with the Mahatma Gandhi Foundation for World Peace at which Aung San Suu Kyi's Nobel Peace Prize was commemorated.

Vancouver: On December 8, Vancouver activists held an event at Simon Fraser University's Harbour Centre. Internationally acclaimed authors, Alan Clements and Karen Connelly spoke. Traditional Burmese dance and live music were performed and a video of Aung San Suu Kyi speaking to Canada was presented.

Other Events

Montreal: Le Comité Solidarité Birmanie is gearing up for exciting Burma action: a photo-exhibit featuring a series of pictures from a refugee camp on the Thai-Burma border; a vigil commemorating the arrest of Min Ko Naing 13 years ago on Mar. 23; a benefit concert for the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners on Mar. 26.

Ottawa: A group of about 25 activists braved the cold -17 degree weather early Saturday morning, Feb.2, to protest the imprisonment of Dr. Salai Tun Than, a Chin professor from Rangoon. The group gathered in front of the Indonesian Embassy where Burmese embassy officials were attending a celebration with their ASEAN counterparts. The Burmese Students' Democratic Organization, which initiated the event, joined hands with the Chin Human Rights Organization, and CFOB.

The 74 year old retired rector was imprisoned on November 29, 2001 after calling on the junta to honour the 1990 election results. See CFOB's action page to find out how you can help! www.cfob.org

The **Chin Youth Organization** organized the 54th anniversary of Chin National Day on Feb. 23 in Ottawa. Burmese and non-Burmese friends attended and enjoyed traditional Chin soup, Sabuti. Other celebrations took place in India, the USA, Australia, Chin State, and Rangoon.

Vancouver: Mon National Day took place on Dec. 9, 01 and was celebrated by the Mon Community in Canada and around the world. The Mon Community of Canada, with members in Vancouver, Calgary and Toronto, also launched a new bulletin in Canada and abroad on Dec. 31.

Vancouver: A photo essay, "Journey in Burma", by journalist Leah Briggs, will open Mar. 2 and remain on display throughout the month. The collection features 35 colour and black and white photographs taken during Briggs' trip to Burma. Contact Leah Briggs to bring the exhibit to your city: edit@thenownewspaper.com.

Calgary: At an Amnesty International local meeting on April 11, Paula Duncan will present a talk about Burma with a specific focus on internally displaced persons. Burma letter-writing and other campaigns will be discussed and promoted.

Ottawa Canadian Friends of Burma,
Corinne Baumgarten
145 Spruce St, Ottawa K1R 6P1
tel: 613 237-8056, fax: 613 563-0017
e-mail: cfob@cfob.org

Ottawa Chin Human Rights Organization
c/o Salai Bawi Lian, 50 Bell St.North, #2
Ottawa K1R 7C7 tel/fax: 613 234-2485
email: chokhle@hotmail.com

Toronto Bush Gulati
Burma House, 62 Summerhill Ave
Toronto ON M4T 1A8, tel 416 323-0325
fax 323-0835 burmahouse@sympatico.ca

Burma Canadian Association of Ontario
Timothy Zaw Zaw
40 - 1110 Finch Ave.W., Toronto, ON M3J 3M2
tel: 416 633-7234, fax: 416 633-6616
burmacanadian@aol.com

Burmese Students' Democratic Organization
Htun Htun Oo, 1209 Queen Street East, #49
Toronto, ON M4M 3H4
tel: 416 461-9285 bsdoca@hotmail.com

Elizabeth Shepherd
81 Laing St, Toronto ON M4L 2N4
tel/fax 416 465 3458
mandalay@sprint.ca

▲ QUEBEC

Montreal
Micheline Levesque
Asia programme, Rights and Democracy
1001 boul de maisonneuve est, bur 1100
Montreal Que H2Y 1V7
tel: 514 283-6073, fax: 514 283-3792
mevesq@ichrdd.ca

Comité de solidarité Birmanie
Jean-Michel Archambault-Cyr
5724 Chabot, Montréal QC H2G 2S6
tel: 514 270-0104
birmanie@cam.org www.cam.org/~birmanie

GRIP Quebec PIRG,
Quebec Public Interest Group at McGill,
3647 Universite, Third Floor,
Montreal, Quebec H3A 2B3.
Tel 514 398-7432, fax 514 398-8976.

▲ MARITIMES

Sydney
Dr Brian Tennyson, Ruth Schneider
Centre for International Studies
University College of Cape Breton, PO 5300
Sydney NS B1P 6L2, tel: 902 563-1286

Halifax

Lester Pearson International,
Dalhousie University attn Michael Noonan
1321 Edward St Halifax NS B3H 3H5
tel: 902 494-1734, fax: 902 494-1216
e-mail michael.noonan@dal.ca

Peace Action Group c/o NSPIRG
Student Union Building, Dalhousie University
Halifax, NS B3H 4J2
tel: 902 494 6662, nspirg@is2.dal.ca

Newfoundland and

Labrador Friends of Burma
c/o Oxfam St. John's, P.O. Box 18000
St. John's, NF A1B 1K8
tel: 709 753 2202, fax: 709 753-4110
e-mail duleepa@morgan.ucs.mun.ca



FIRST NUDE PARADISE in Burma: A Thai senator, Vikrom Isiri, has been granted his second 45 year concession business venture to open the first nudist colony paradise in Asia. Located on Burma's St Luke's island in the Andaman Sea, it is part of other related business schemes undertaken by Vikrom who owns two islands in Burma and who has close relations with the Burma junta. The aim of the project is to attract tourism from western travellers. While Burma's generals extoll nationalism and rail against the influence of western culture, the nude beach is one of the many exceptions they have allowed when it comes to lining their own pockets.

PRODUCING LESS FERTILIZER? Burma produced 52,596 tons of chemical fertilizer in the first eight months of 2001, a reduction of 49.56 percent as compared with the same period of 2000. Up to now, the country has only three fertilizer plants which can only produce urea and are far from meeting its annual demand of over 800,000 tons of chemical fertilizer. Those who monitor Burma's situation closely will have difficulty believing these statistics. Surely in 2001, Burma's military regime produced the same amount of **bullshit** generated in previous years.

NO GENDER DISCRIMINATION
Speaking at a meeting of the Myanmar National Committee for Women's Affairs on Dec.17, 2001, Secretary 1 of the SPDC, Lt-Gen Khin Nyunt, said "There has been no gender discrimination in the Union of Myanmar since the dawn of Myanma civilization." He also noted that the SPDC's efforts to promote the role of women in society could be publicized internationally using the Internet and video documentaries. But why is it nec-

essary to promote the role of women in Burma if gender discrimination does not exist?

PASSPORT RULES TIGHTENED:
Burma's Home Ministry has recently tightened its enforcement of passport-issuing regulations and intensified screening of applicants, to make it more difficult for Burmese, with suspected ties to the opposition, to go abroad legally. Most Burmese obtain passports through agents who charge a fee of around 150,000 kyat (about US \$200) for their services, which typically include bribing a multitude of officials. But pressure has also increased to control rampant corruption among lower-level officials in the passport office. Perhaps it would make more sense for the Home Ministry to concentrate their efforts on why so many Burmese opposition members want to leave their home country in the first place.

The **COMMITTEE TO PROTECT JOURNALISTS** (CPJ) released a special report Feb.15, *Burma Under Pressure: How Burmese journalism survives in one of the world's most repressive regimes*. The report discusses a variety of the hurdles faced each day by journalists and editors in Burma including the extensive censorship and topics that are off limits. The report is primarily composed of anecdotes told to CPJ by writers from magazines, journals and newspapers, including individuals who had been imprisoned in Burma for their writings. "If you haven't been in jail you haven't been a reporter here." said a retired newspaper editor in the report. (See report at: www.cpj.org)

To commemorate Aung San Suu Kyi's 10th anniversary winning the Nobel Peace Prize, Montreal's Rights and Democracy published this ad in the Globe and Mail, on Dec.8.

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Canadian Friends of Burma, 145 Spruce St., #206, Ottawa ON K1R 6P1
Tel. 613 237-8056; Fax 613 563-0017; E-mail cFOB@web.ca www.cFOB.org