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BURMA - World weekly news round-up #22: 12 December 2007 – 19 December 2007

Inside Burma

The Burmese military regime quietly released 96 monks, including Abbot Sayadaw U Yevada, last Friday from the Kaba Aye detention centre. The monks had been detained there since the military regime's crackdown of the pro-democracy protests led by monks in September. Half of the monks were allowed to return to the Ngwekyaryan monastery in Rangoon/Yangon, but the rest were ordered to leave the city. (Date: 17 December 2007. Source: Deutsche Presse-Agentur found in the Bangkok Post http://www.bangkokpost.net/breaking_news/breakingnews.php?id=124484)

The Burmese military has been giving riot control training to state-backed organisations/militias, such as the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) and Swan Arr Shin. According to sources, the participants of the training were taught by military instructors how to systematically beat down crowds in the event of mass protests.

(Date: 14 December 2007. Source: Irrawaddy http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=9604)

UN

A day after holding meetings with US government officials in Washington, UN Special Envoy Ibrahim Gambari addressed the General Assembly in New York on Burma. He urged the Burmese military regime to take 'bold steps' to address the concerns of the international community. He repeated UN calls for the military regime to open up the constitutional drafting process in Burma to include groups that have either been excluded from or chosen not to take part in the process so far. (Date: 18 December 2007. Source: UN News Centre <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=25120&Cr=myanmar&Cr1>)

The UN Human Rights Council unanimously agreed a resolution on Burma on 14 December 2007. The resolution included a request for Special Rapporteur Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro to be allowed to return to Burma to conduct a follow-up mission to the country to look into the ongoing human rights violations before the Council's next session in March 2008. (Date: 15 December 2007. Source: Agence France Presse found on ReliefWeb <http://tinyurl.com/yukeip>)

Indonesia

In a meeting with UN General Secretary, Ban Ki-Moon, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono of Indonesia agreed to help the democratic process in Burma in order to ensure national unity and integrity in the country. (Date 13 December 2007. Source: ANTARA News <http://tinyurl.com/24xwfo>)

Thailand

In the run-up to the Thai national elections later in December, Samak Sundaravej, the leader of the most popular political party has proposed that the country would host an international summit on Burma if he becomes Prime Minister. (Date: 13 December 2007. Source: Associated Press found on http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=9586)

EU

Piero Fassino, the EU's envoy to Burma began his tour of Asian states in China to encourage greater regional support for a transition towards a stable democracy in Burma. The envoy had meetings in Beijing on 18 and 19 December, and will visit India, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia and Vietnam early in 2008. (Date: 12 December 2007. Source: Deutsche Presse-Agentur found on <http://www.eux.tv/article.aspx?articleId=19115>)

The European Council re-affirmed its continued support for the UN's envoy, Ibrahim Gambari during the last summit under the Portuguese EU Presidency on 14 December. EU Member States also announced that the EU "stands ready to review, amend or further reinforce restrictive measures against the Government of Burma/Myanmar in the light of developments on the ground". (14 December 2007. Source: EU Presidency Conclusions paragraphs 79-81. http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/97669.pdf)

USA

In light of the Burmese military regime's brutal crackdown of September's pro-democracy protests, US diplomats have announced that George W. Bush is likely to cancel a summit with ASEAN leaders which he was planning to host in his Texas ranch. (Date: 17 December 2007. Agence France Presse found on http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20071217/pl_afp/usaseanpoliticsdiplomacy_071217050651)

Canada

Bolstered sanctions against the Burmese junta agreed last month by the Canadian government came into force on 14 October 2007, making them the strongest sanctions against the Burma army in the world. (Date: 14 October 2007. Source: Agence France Presse found on <http://www.thenews.com.pk/print1.asp?id=86483>)