
WEEKLY NEWS UPDATE NO. 84

Inside Burma

NLD Says “No’ to Election

Burma's main opposition party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), announced on 29 March that it has decided against registering for the general election this year because the junta's election laws are unjust. NLD leader Aung San Suu Kyi had said she was against the party registering, but that it was up to the party to decide its course of action. Nearly 160 party representatives from across the country gathered at the party's headquarters to discuss the issue and vote. The party decision would appear to ensure that the NLD will cease to exist as a legal entity as of the 7 May deadline for party registration, according to the election law. - [Irrawaddy](#) - 29 March 2010

[Many Won't Vote Without NLD](#) - [Irrawaddy](#) – 6 April 2010

[NLD Apologizes for Failed Struggle](#) - [Irrawaddy](#) – 6 April 2010

[NLD to plunge itself headlong into social work](#) - [Mizzima](#) - 2 April 2010

Opinion / Analysis

[NEWS ANALYSIS: In Opting for Poll Boycott, NLD Goes for Broke](#) - [Irrawaddy](#) – 31 March 2010

[Revisiting the political significance of Aung San Suu Kyi](#) – [By Joseph Ball](#) - [Mizzima](#) - 16 March 2010

Burmese-American Freed Because of ‘Friendship’

Nyi Nyi Aung (aka Kyaw Zaw Lwin), a naturalized American citizen and pro-democracy activist originally from Burma, was released from prison and sent home to the US on 18 March, a month after he was given a three year sentence of hard labour. According to the state media *The New Light of Myanmar*, the ruling military junta decided to release Nyi Nyi Aung because of its friendship with the United States, saying the government pardoned and deported him after giving “special consideration to bilateral friendship in accordance with the request made by the U.S. State Department” to free him. - [AP / New York Times](#) – 19 March 2010

[‘Prison is the only place where we can speak freely’](#) - [Irrawaddy](#) – 19 March 2010

[US activist was denied sleep ‘for 14 days’](#) - [DVB](#) - 19 March 2010

Eleven Political Parties registered for Elections

Since the promulgation of the Electoral Laws, political parties have slowly but steadily started registering to contest the polls later this year. Eleven parties are now registered with the Commission and are awaiting approval to launch their election campaigns. They include:

1. 88 Generation Students of the Union of Myanmar (88GSUM)
2. Union of Myanmar National Political Force (UMNPF)
3. National Unity Party (NUP)
4. Democratic Party (Myanmar)
5. Kayin People’s Party (KPP)
6. National Political Alliances League
7. Difference and Peace Party (DPP)
8. New Era People’s Party (NEPP)
9. Kachin State Progressive Party (KSPP)
10. Myanmar New Society Democratic Party
11. Pa-O National Organization (PNO)

[- Irrawaddy – 7 April 2010 & Irrawaddy – 24 March 2010](#)

[Burmese PM May Lead Political Party - Irrawaddy – 6 April 2010](#)

[Chairman of Burma’s Election Commission on EU blacklist - Mizzima - 2 April 2010](#)

[Than Shwe Sets Ground Rules for Polls - AP/Irrawaddy – 27 March 2010](#)

[Technical Regulations Favor Wealthy Candidates - Irrawaddy - 17 March 2010](#)

[Elections laws cause international tug of war - DVB - 17 March 2010](#)

Opinion / Analysis

[CONTRIBUTOR: New Beginning for the Opposition – By Dr. Zarni - Irrawaddy – 8 April 2010](#)

Junta issues new ultimatum to ceasefire groups

Three ethnic armed ceasefire groups have been issued a fresh deadline by the Burmese military junta to convert their armed wings to the Border Guard Force (BGF) by the end of April. The regime's representative, Lt. Gen. Ye Myint, has told the Shan State Army (North) (SSA-N), United Wa State Army (UWSA) and Eastern Shan State Special Region 4 or Meng La group to respond not later than April 22 and 28. Meanwhile the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) Vice-Chairman Gawri Zau Sai has met Lt. Gen. Ye Myint again, but the impasse is yet to be resolved. The junta wants a meeting yet again and wants KIO to transform its armed wing into the BGF before 28 April. - [Mizzima - 5 April 2010](#)

[Former Kachin rebel leaders advise KIO to accept BGF - KNG - 5 April 2010](#)

[Fearing War, People Leave Wa Region - Irrawaddy – 25 March 2010](#)

[Burmese Army wraps up first phase of militia training in Kachin State - KNG - 24 March 2010](#)

[Chinese officials meeting junta on Wa - S.H.A.N. - 18 March 2010](#)

[Junta’s forced labor forcing militia men to run away - SHAN - 18 March 2010](#)

Further articles of interest:

[Belarus in Burma for arms talks - DVB - 8 April 2010](#)

[Australia-Burma trade ‘up 160 percent’ - DVB - 7 April 2010](#)

[Vietnam PM Visits Burma - Irrawaddy – 2 April 2010](#)

[Indonesian FM Visits Burma - Irrawaddy – 30 March 2010](#)

[Monks and Riot Police Clash in Maungdaw - Narinjara News – 26 March 2010](#)

[Construction of Gas and Oil Pipelines in Arakan Underway - Narinjara News – 26 March 2010](#)

[Thai Princess Visits Naypyidaw - Irrawaddy – 16 March 2010](#)

[CNN reporter again expelled from Burma - DVB - 29 March 2010](#)

[Appeal lodged for jailed DVB reporter - DVB - 18 March 2010](#)

Outside Burma

UN Security Council, Group of Friends on Myanmar divided on Burma

In a discussion over Burma's upcoming election, the Chinese ambassador said that the general election in any country is a matter of a sovereign state and should be respected, adding that “we think it's a very important step in the process of a national reconciliation, in the process of a democracy in that country”. However, according to the British Ambassador “...the instability that could be caused by a flawed electoral process is a threat to international peace and security” and that his country would support any move to refer the Burmese military junta to the International Criminal Court, but conceded that the Security Council lacks the unanimity necessary for such a referral. Observers said that the

session was a useful opportunity for the council to take stock for the first time since August 2009 when Burma was last discussed by the Security Council. - [Irrawaddy – 25 March 2010](#)

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has said that the Burmese military junta's effort to make the upcoming election inclusive, free and fair is “frustrating” and “disappointing.” Speaking after a meeting of the Group of Friends on Myanmar [Burma], Ban said that he is grateful for the continuing support and commitment of the members. According to sources the 15-member group is sharply divided and was unable to arrive at a unanimous decision as to what should be the next step forward for the UN and, in particular, the good offices role of the UN secretary-general. It is likely that the UN will try to send a high-level official to Burma in another effort to inform the military junta of the aspirations of the international community. - [Irrawaddy – 26 March 2010](#)

[Czech Republic Supports UN War Crimes Inquiry on Burma - Irrawaddy – 8 April 2010](#)

[Dissident Groups Call for UN Security Council Burma Session - Irrawaddy - 23 March 2010](#)

[U.N. Creates Center for Asian Disaster Relief - New York Times – 21 March 2010](#)

[Burma, North Korea Defend their Human Rights Records - Irrawaddy – 16 March 2010](#)

US Will Continue Burma Engagement Policy

The Obama Administration has said it would continue its new policy of engaging the Burmese leadership despite the fact that the military junta has ignored, and often directly contradicted, the advice of the international community. “We are engaging Burma,” said P J Crowley, US Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs. “Other countries in the region are engaging Burma, obviously, in a variety of contexts, including through Asean [The Association of Southeast Asian Nations].” Crowley said the Obama Administration has been talking with India and China regarding Burma, but did not provide details. “I think everybody has an interest in stability in the region, seeing Burma emerge from its isolation. But clearly, there are steps that Burma has to take, and we will continue our regional dialogue and encourage everyone to provide Burma the same message”. - [Irrawaddy – 9 April 2010](#)

[US echoes Burma opposition ‘failures’ - DVB - 7 April 2010](#)

[US agency accused of sanctions busting - DVB - 5 April 2010](#)

[US Urged to Take 'Middle Path' on Burma - Irrawaddy – 1 April 2010](#)

[Strategic Report Suggests Long-range US-Burma Policy - Irrawaddy – 31 March 2010](#)

Opinion/Analysis

[Interview with Kurt Cambell: Deeply Disappointed - Irrawaddy – 23 March 2010](#)

100 ASEAN MPs demand Burma to be expelled

On the eve of the ASEAN summit in Vietnam, over 100 ASEAN Members of Parliament have demanded that Burma be expelled from ASEAN and for sanctions to be imposed as the junta has clearly ignored the plea to conduct free and fair elections with the announcement of its harsh electoral laws. - [Mizzima - 7 April 2010](#)

[Amnesty calls Asean to task over Burma abuses - Mizzima - 8 April 2010](#)

[Burma ‘to escape criticism’ at ASEAN summit - AFP/DVB - 6 April 2010](#)

[Junta on Collision Course with Asia - Irrawaddy – 29 March 2010](#)

[Activists Urge Asean Commission to Probe Abuse - Irrawaddy – 29 March 2010](#)

Opinion/Analysis

[EDITORIAL: Asean should take a stand on Burma - Bangkok Post – 21 March 2010](#)

Human Rights Watch calls on the G8 to discuss Burma

Human Rights Watch (HRW) has urged ministers to include Burma on the agenda of the June summit of the G8 group of industrialised countries (US, Japan, Italy, Canada, the UK, Germany and Russia). HRW is encouraging more unanimity on Burma from the G8 in order for an international policy to have more effect. They would like four issues to be addressed: an UN-recommended commission of enquiry into the junta's alleged crimes against humanity, targeted financial sanctions, the upcoming elections, and increased international humanitarian assistance. - *DVB - 26 March 2010*

[G8 Foreign Ministers discussed Burma as activists demand election law reforms - Chinland Guardian - 1 April 2010](#)

Japan 'to freeze aid' unless Suu Kyi walks

Japan's foreign minister Katsuya Okada has said that Tokyo will freeze aid to Burma unless the junta releases opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi and allows her to participate in elections this year. Japan has been one of the biggest aid-giving nations to the whole Southeast Asia region, including Burma, but the election to office in 2009 of the left-leaning Democratic Party of Japan raised questions as to how strong Japanese support of the military government would remain. - *DVB - 31 March 2010*

600 Karen Refugees Return to Burma as NLD calls for landmine ban

About 600 Karen refugees have returned from Thailand to Burma, despite what has been described as the "very unstable" situation. The Karen Information Center (KIC) has said the refugees had returned voluntarily but after pressure by Thai authorities and according to the Thailand Burma Border Consortium (TBBC) it was going to be difficult for any returning. Many human rights groups, including the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, have appealed to the Thai government not to repatriate the refugees in areas where there is the risk of landmines, forced labour and army recruitment. Burma's National League for Democracy (NLD) party has called for an end to the use of landmines in Burma following a rise in the number of mine-related deaths. - *Irrawaddy - 31 March 2010 & DVB - 6 April 2010*

[Letter From Burma: Forced Relocation - Irrawaddy - 1 April 2010](#)

[200 left homeless after storm ravishes refugee camp - Mizzima - 31 March 2010](#)

[US pressure bodes ill for Burmese migrants - DVB - 15 February 2010](#)

[Political turmoil halts nationality verification in Thailand - Mizzima - 13 March 2010](#)

Indian vehicle giant Tata invests in Burma

India's largest vehicle maker Tata Motors announced that it has signed a contract with Myanmar [Burma] Automobile and Diesel Industries to set up a heavy truck plant, which would be set up at Magwe, nearly 480 kilometres from Rangoon, and will be operational in the last quarter of the financial year ending March 2011, it said in a statement. Tata Motors, which owns the formerly British brands Jaguar and LandRover, said the plant would have a capacity of 1,000 vehicles per year, which could be expanded to 5,000 vehicles. - *AFP/DVB - 23 March 2010*

[India looks east, prepares to arm junta navy - DVB - 26 March 2010](#)

[Indo-Burma border awash with narcotics - Mizzima - 22 March 2010](#)

Rohingya minority given ID cards

Identity cards are being issued to Burma's Rohingya minority in the west of the country in a move likely aimed at securing votes prior to elections. However, the government's decision to categorise the Rohingya as "Burmese Muslims" and not Rohingya has inflamed locals in Arakan state who claim it will only heighten racial tension. A member of staff at the Arakan state immigration office however denied

that the cards have been issued, but said that the office head had gone to the capital Naypyidaw for a meeting, although didn't elaborate on what was being discussed. Chris Lewa, head of the Arakan Project, said that a Rohingya representative had also travelled to Naypyidaw in the past week to discuss the ID card issue. - *DVB - 9 April 2010*

[Arakanese Rohingya to be a bigger problem in future: expert](#) - *KPN - 25 March 2010*

[Thailand denies Rohingya abuse](#) - *DVB - 18 March 2010*

[Rohingya 'pushed out to sea' by Thais](#) - *DVB - 16 March 2010*

Further articles of interest:

[Public discussion on Burma's present crisis](#) - *Mizzima - 22 March 2010*

[Gathering strength Burma's ethnic groups meet in Malaysia](#) - *Chinland Guardian - 22 March 2010*

[Burma's ethnic minority counts cost of war](#) - *Financial Times - 17 March 2010*

[Burma urges new Bangladesh sea boundary](#) - *DVB - 23 March 2010*

[Dhaka to tackle Burma gas dispute](#) - *DVB - 16 March 2010*

[Human Trafficking Increases on Sino-Burma Border](#) - *Irrawaddy - 26 March 2010*

[China delivers hundreds of military trucks to Burma](#) - *KNG - 23 March 2010*