

Security Council and Burma Resolution

Editor

Rebound 88

While activists and government ministries alike are debating whether Burma issue should go to UN, Security Council, Burma is hit by another crisis again. This time is the diesel scare, diesel is no where to buy, while the price of a gallon of it shot up 900 kyats in 5 days--4000kyats a gallon today. This time again, the crisis was due to government mismanagement, miscalculation, wrong timing and lack of knowledge. The fiasco was another proof that wrong men are at the wrong positions--Army men are not competent to run the economy.

A diesel merchant was arrested in Singapore who implicated high ranking government officials in Burma to his crime. The government ordered a crackdown on illegal racket and instructed the police to arrest road side diesel sellers. They are the major suppliers of diesel while the government's distribution system is very unreliable. For police in Burma, it is a windfall when they make waves of arrest which will attract bribe money from those affected to get a better treatment in the police custody.

The high price of diesel makes movements of goods difficult and expensive. Merchants mark up already high commodity prices, that trigger a panic among public to buy and store important commodities before the price goes further up. How long this inept handling will go on? one wonders. It will be as long as the army is in control of state's power. A diesel merchant in Singapore has done a few bad things that is quite normal; nothing extraordinary. The remarkable thing is the shaking of economic infrastructure of a nation because of this thievery. No solution coming in sight, the residents worry about survival in the difficult world.

Laying out a road map, the ruling council promised that they are working on to build a democratic state and organize a

National Convention to draw up a constitution. The plan was drawn up in arrogance; First they said the president has to be from army, 25% of delegates have to be appointed by the army, no auditors can check the army expenses, the army can take the state power any time they think it is

necessary. The constitution was a failed document right from the start. Delegates are hand picked, guidelines are not negotiable. It is an unitary system which none of the ethnic people will accept. There are so many rules and regulations that it does not make sense for NLD to continue who later quit from the convention. NLD insisted that the rules must change and they will wait till Convening committee answers



**UNSC in Session: US, UK, France, China, Russia (Per: Five)
Algeria, Argentina, Benin, Brazil, Denmark, Greece,
Philippines, Japan, Romania, Tanzania**

It is during this crisis time that the call for UN intervention by Czech President Vaclav Havel and Bishop Desmond Tu tu appeared in an attempt to end the stalemate in Burma. It has several effects and spurred a flurry of activities; some of them are taking shape now.

General Than Shwe is a depressed man. He was troubled by the news of his wife, the first lady, accepting bribes from ex-minister Nyunt Tin. His family members have many misadventures with various ministries, since the fall of Khin Nyunt. The mental state of Supreme leader was stressful, creating rumors that he had been forced to step down.

Since Independence, Burma has a history of sending its heads of states to prison—starting from the President Man Win Maung and the Prime Minister U Nu, who were put into prison by Ne Win. Ne Win and General Saw Mg were put into custody by Than Shwe himself. The country has seen a lot of fanfare when Than Shwe sent the incumbent Prime Minister Khin Nyunt to prison as well.

With this precedence, it is hard to imagine that General Than Shwe will surrender his power voluntarily. Having said that only viable path we can see to solve this problem peacefully is through UN. Preferred way of solution by democratic forces is nonviolence. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was inspired by Gandhi and professed peaceful means.

We are not asking to send American troops or Air craft carriers to Burma. We are just asking UN to take ownership of the problem and talk to the military junta to stop nonsense and start democratic reforms right away. Hopefully the regime can not be wishy washy anymore and be serious about transfer of power to the democratic government.

A call from two distinguished personalities has changed the mentalities of politicians in US significantly. Three staffers from House Committee on International Relations subcommittee on Asia and Pacific, (Jamie Mc Cormick, Kristian Gilley and Hans Hogrefe) will be visiting Rangoon to access the situation.

UN has 15 countries in its security council and we need nine votes to get a resolution through. US, UK, France China and Russia have veto power and other alternate countries have to support the agenda. US is actively seeking the council to discuss the resolution. UK will let its position known soon, probably this week. Its representative Michael Ryder, who presided over the Wilton Park conference in Britain, was recently in Ragoon on a fact finding mission. UK government undertook an initiative "Investing in Prevention" to study "failed states" in general.

During Mr Ryder's visit, British Ambassador in Ragoon Vicky Bowmen invited guests to her residence at 62 Alanpya pagodas Road on 9th October for a day long discussion about the political situation. Although Min Ko Naing, or Ko Ko Gyi, 1988 generation student leaders are missing, there are about 40 people from different classes of Burmese society. NLD was not there too--NLD and student leaders met with Ryder separately. The Ambassador is actively involved in Burmese politics, who once clashed with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and belived to be teaming up with anti sanction groups who are happened to be from anti Daw Aung San Suu Kyi camp.

We do not know exactly where UK stands today but we have seen that during October, the British representative wrote a letter to the then UNSC president (Greece) about Zimbabwe human rehabilitation issue and the resolution was subsequently passed from the UNSC council.

In October as well, Denmark had called for the Burma issue to bring up, but we do not hear anything about it so far. In December, UK will be the president of the council and we have a good chance there.
The obstacles are not a small matter anyway.

Russia and China are vehemently opposing the issue because of their own domestic problems; Tibet and Chechnya. They do not want the similar call to get attention to these territories by other countries.

Philippines is strenuously opposing as well. Philippines saw Burma, not a threat in the region. Japan is expressing its displeasure for the visa refusal for Burmese minister to travel to Brussels. Supposing we managed to get US, UK, Romania, Greece, France and Denmark, and Algeria, we are two votes away from the resolution to pass through. We have Brazil, Benin, and Tanzania to explore our chances.

Razali Ismail, representative of secretary General Koffi Annan met with US congressional staffers on October 6, 2005. Below is his statement,

- We have no credible reports of a humanitarian crisis in Burma.
- It may be time to move beyond Aung San Suu Kyi
- The SPDC just wanted to talk to US. (Sound familiar like North Korea)
- Sanction policy is not effective, and US has been ineffective on the ground.

Razali should know more than this. There are 2500 villages in the border area, from which families are driven away from their home, more than one million refugees trapped in Thailand, Soldiers are given a license to rape the locals. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's party was terrorized by government organized thugs. Children are malnourished not due to the lack of resources, but mainly due to mismanagement. All these problems can be solved by democratically elected government.

The future of Burma without Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is unthinkable today. SPDC wanted to talk to US, because, like North Korea, they realized no other country in the world except US will bother to do anything to bring about democracy to other countries. US will not rest until Burma becomes a full democracy.

If you take the regime's word and wait for them to bring about democracy, it will take another 40 years before we see the light.

Our chance today stands with UN Security Council. If it issues a resolution calling for the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and political prisoners as well as to start the political changes, it exerts an enormous pressure over the military regime. We have to end this dictatorship, for our nation to claim a proper place in the international community and for the well beings of our citizens as well.

From the Editor, Rebound 88