

ALTSEAN- BURMA BULLETIN- April 2008

Tuesday 6 May 2008, by [Altsean-Burma](#) (Date first published: April 2008).

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REPORTS ON BURMA

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- The SPDC announces that the constitutional referendum will be held on 10 May. Pro-democracy groups and ethnic organizations call for "No" vote.
 - Defiant campaign gains momentum across Burma despite arrests of at least 48 activists including 25 NLD members for promoting "No" vote.
 - Harassment, intimidation, vote-buying, and propaganda characterize the SPDC's "Yes" vote campaign. Voting irregularities and voter fraud are pervasive as referendum day draws closer.
 - In Thailand, 54 migrant workers including children from Burma, suffocate while being trucked to jobs in Phuket. The incident sparks protests and rekindles debate on the migrants' rights in Thailand.
 - Departures of Rohingya boat people to Malaysia end as the monsoon season begins. The exodus of people from Arakan State to Bangladesh continues.
 - US, UK, and France seek new UN Security Council presidential statement on Burma. EU Parliament calls for expanded sanctions and international arms embargo on the SPDC.
 - SPDC Vice Sr Gen Maung Aye visits India and inks a US\$135 million investment deal on transport links between Akyab port and India's Northeastern States. India sweetens the deal by delivering military equipment to the SPDC.

- SPDC PM's visit to Thailand sets off alarm bells. Thai PM Samak Sundaravej says he has no problem with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's continued house arrest.

KEY STORY

Referendum: no chance to read the constitution

On 9 April, the SPDC announced that the constitutional referendum would be held on 10 May(1). On the same day, the regime distributed copies of the constitution to bookshops to be sold for 1,000 kyat (US\$1) a copy(2). However, the 194-page document, which contains 457 articles, has not been widely distributed among the people(3). The SPDC printed 465,000 copies of the constitution for a voting public of over 30 million (4). In addition, the SPDC did not translate the constitution into any of the ethnic nationalities' languages or English. It would appear that the SPDC does not want Burma's people or the international community to know what is in the constitution.

For more detailed information and analysis on the SPDC's May referendum and draft constitution, please see Altsean-Burma briefer The SPDC constitutional referendum: A dead end for democracy in Burma, available at: <http://www.altsean.org/Reports/SPDCReferendum.php>

"No" vote campaign gains momentum

In April, more of Burma's pro-democracy groups and ethnic organizations urged people to vote "No" in the referendum.

- **2 April:** National League for Democracy (NLD) called for a "No" vote. The party also issued a short guide explaining to voters how to cast their ballots (5). On 10 April, the NLD called on the SPDC to allow international observers to monitor the referendum proceedings (6).
- **4 April:** All Burma Federation of Student Unions (ABFSU) urged Burmese people to vote "No" (7).
- **7 April:** Ethnic Nationalities Council (ENC) urged people to vote "No" because the constitution will result in prolonged military rule and further political, economic, and social crises (8).
- **18 April:** Kachin Women's Association Thailand (KWAT) urged Burmese people to vote "No" (9).
- **30 April:** United Nationalities Alliance (UNA) urged voters to cast a "No" vote (10).
- An umbrella group representing students from the University of Marine Technology, Eastern Rangoon University, and Thanlyin Government Technical College, urged voters to vote "No" (11).
- Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD) called on Shan people to vote "No" because the draft constitution was the result of an illegitimate process (12).
- The Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) ceasefire group said it would abstain from voting (13).

Activists also stepped up the "No" vote campaign across Burma's States and Divisions, with most

simply using “X” to mean “No” (there is only one box in the ballot – voters must clearly mark X for “No”; anything else will be interpreted as a tick, meaning “yes”):

- **Arakan State**

- o 24-26 April: Anti-referendum pamphlets were distributed in Akyab, Kyaukpru and Rambree (14).

- o Anti-referendum campaigners tied “No” posters around dogs’ necks in Akyab, provoking hilarity as police chased the canines (15).

- **Kachin State**

- o 14-15 April: All Kachin Students and Youth Union (AKSYU) launched an anti-referendum poster campaign in Myitkyina, Waingmaw, and Bhamo Townships (16).

- o 20 April: AKSYU pasted “No” vote posters and distributed anti-referendum leaflets in Bhamo, Momauk, Shwegu, and Mansi Townships (17).

- **Karen State**

- o Campaigners in Pa-an distributed anti-referendum pamphlets to local people (18).

- **Karenni State**

- o “No” leaflets, posters, and VCDs emerged in Loikaw, Dimawso, and Moebye Townships (19).

- **Magwe Division**

- o Activists wrote “No” on the walls of a pagoda compound and on the Township USDA chief’s house (20).

- o Activists painted “X” marks on dogs in Pwint Phyu Township. “No” graffiti appeared on the walls of a local primary school (21).

- o Activists distributed leaflets urging people to vote “No” in Myaing Township (22).

- **Mandalay Division**

- o “No” graffiti appeared in Mandalay’s streets, around Mandalay Hill, and on roads to Sagaing (23).

- o Villagers painted their walls and fences with “X” marks in Myingyan Township. “X” posters appeared on the walls of local Buddhist monasteries (24).

- **Mon State**

- o Activists campaigned against the constitution in Moulmein, Mudon, Thanbyuzayat, Paung, Kawkareik, Ye, and Chaungzon Townships (25).

- o 14 April: Activists spray-painted “No” on walls, roads, and bus stops along the Moulmein-Kyaitmayaw road (26).

- o 24 April: Activists distributed “No” flyers in Thanbyuzayat (27).

- **Rangoon Division**

o The Rangoon-based student organization Generation Wave called on students and youth to write “X” on the school walls and other public buildings to urge for a “No” vote (28).

o 7 April: An activist painted “No” on the entrance sign of the Mya Yeik Nyo Royal Hotel in Rangoon. The hotel is owned by regime’s crony Khin Shwe (29).

- **Shan State**

o 16 April: Activists distributed leaflets urging people to vote “No” on the streets of Namkham (30).

Thousands of expatriate and exiled Burmese held anti-referendum protests in Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Bangladesh, South Korea, Japan, Australia, Canada, and US (31).

SPDC campaign: Intimidation, vote-buying, and propaganda

In addition to the ongoing arrest and harassment of the “No” vote activists [See below Atmosphere of oppression], the regime resorted to intimidation as well as incentives in order to get people to vote in favor of the constitution.

Threats against voters if they failed to vote “Yes” included:

- Prosecution, fines, and imprisonment (32).
- Dismissal for civil servants and school teachers (33).
- Land confiscation for farmers (34).
- Closure for business owners (35).
- Barring students from continuing their studies (36).

In exchange for a “Yes” vote, the regime offered incentives that included:

- Release from prison before 10 May for some inmates in Rangoon’s Insein Prison (37).
- Rice, salt, mobile phones for villagers in various Townships in Kachin State (38).
- Less taxation for rice farmers in Kyauktaw Township, Arakan State (39).
- Exemption from housing tax for slum dwellers in Myingyan, Mandalay Division (40).
- No toll collection and freedom of movement for traders in Northern Arakan State (41).
- Free eye check and treatment for villagers in Namkham Township, Shan State (42).

The regime stepped up the “Yes” vote propaganda, while barring media from publishing the views of supporters of a “No” vote.

- SPDC-run MRTV has been constantly broadcasting programs and songs urging a “Yes” vote (43).
- Regime-controlled newspapers have also been carrying slogans, editorials, cartoons, and poems

calling for a “Yes” vote (44).

- The SPDC Censorship Board imposed restrictive rules on media coverage of the referendum (45).

Rigging the vote

Despite the regime’s claims that the polling would be conducted in a free and fair manner(46), serious voting irregularities and fraud have been pervasive in the weeks leading up to referendum day:

- The SPDC included 33,000 USDA members who were under the age of 18 in the voters’ roll in Myitkyina Township, Kachin State(47). According to the regime’s Referendum Law, citizens under the age of 18 are ineligible to vote (48).
- SPDC authorities provided temporary ID cards to thousands of Chinese citizens in Namkham, Muse, and Panghsai Townships in Northern Shan State (49). According to the regime’s Referendum Law, foreign nationals are barred from voting (50).
- SPDC authorities cast advance “Yes” votes on behalf of numerous individuals, including factory workers and school teachers, without their knowledge (51).
- The regime forced elderly citizens to cast advance “Yes” votes in Bhamo Township, Kachin State, and in areas near Mandalay (52).
- SPDC authorities reportedly issued identity cards to monks detained in Rangoon’s Insein prison to force them to vote “Yes”(53). According to the regime’s Referendum Law, the Buddhist clergy is barred from voting (54).
- SPDC authorities in Mrauk-U, Kyauktaw, Rathidaung and Minbya Townships, Arakan State, provided training to polling booth staff on how to persuade people to cast “Yes” votes (55).
- On 27 April, Burmese Embassy staff in Singapore prevented many Burmese nationals residing in the island-state from voting because they were wearing “No” t-shirts. In addition, only 10,000 were listed on the voters’ roll while over 30,000 Burmese legally reside in Singapore (56).

Atmosphere of oppression

In April, the regime arrested at least 48 activists including 25 NLD members for campaigning against the SPDC’s constitution.

- **1 April:** SPDC Special Branch police arrested NLD youth coordinator Aung Htun and Thingangyun Township’s NLD chairman Tin Myint in Rangoon (57).
- **6 April:** Police arrested Thein Lwin, NLD member from Rambree Township, Arakan State, for possessing statements against the referendum (58).
- **13 April:** SPDC authorities arrested more than 20 NLD activists for campaigning against the

referendum in Akyab, Arakan State. The activists were released the next day (59).

- **15 April:** SPDC authorities arrested NLD youth member Myo Nyunt near Rangoon (60). SPDC authorities also arrested NLD member Tin Win for posting “No” signs on billboards during the Thingyan festival in Rangoon (61).

- **22 April:** SPDC authorities arrested at least 23 people wearing “No” t-shirts in Akyab, Arakan State (62).

Since the beginning of 2008, the regime has arrested and imprisoned at least 101 activists, including NLD members, journalists, poets, Buddhist monks, and students (63).

USDA and Swan Arr Shin thugs also increased attacks against NLD members and political activists. Harassment of NLD members were reported in Rangoon, Mandalay, and Irrawaddy Divisions as well as in Arakan State (64).

- **3 April:** Two thugs armed with clubs attacked and injured NLD member Tin Yu in Rangoon (65).

- **7 April:** Village Peace and Development Council Chairman Aung Myint accompanied by about 200 workers ransacked the shop of NLD member Ba Sein in Akyab, Arakan State (66).

- **16 April:** Thugs armed with clubs attacked Thi Han, an NLD youth leader from Rangoon’s South Dagon Myothit Township. Thi Han was wearing a “No” vote t-shirt when the attack occurred (67).

- **20 April:** Thugs on motorcycles threw rocks at the homes of senior NLD members Myint Soe and Aung Ko Ko in Mandalay (68).

- **22 April:** SPDC officials and police raided the homes of three NLD members in Rangoon’s South Dagon Myothit Township (69).

International reactions to the referendum

- **2 April:** India urged the SPDC to push forward the national reconciliation process (70).

- **2 April:** The US condemned the new arrests of political activists which contributed to a “climate of fear and repression” ahead of the referendum (71).

- **9 April:** US President George W. Bush and Singapore Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong urged the SPDC to begin talks with opposition forces (72).

- **17 April:** US President George Bush and UK PM Gordon Brown called on the SPDC to invite international observers to the referendum (73).

- **18 April:** Michael Williams, British Prime Minister Gordon Brown’s envoy on Burma, said an “atmosphere of intimidation” was clouding the referendum (74).

- **25 April:** French Human Rights Minister Rama Yade said that she hoped the referendum would be held under clear and transparent conditions (75).

- **28 April:** Thailand’s FM Noppadon Pattama said he hoped the referendum would be “credible” (76).

INSIDE BURMA

Arms flowing into Burma

In April, new reports of arms delivery to the SPDC surfaced:

- **2 April:** Japan's public broadcaster NHK reported that North Korea had been selling the SPDC multiple rocket launchers with a range of about 65 kilometers. The report said that "full-scale" exports of the weapons had been handled by an unnamed Singapore trading company (77).
- **11 April:** Over 50 Chinese-made military trucks were seen on the Sino-Burma border town of Ruili. The trucks are designed to tow artillery and transport military supplies (78), believed to be part of a larger truck consignment from China to the SPDC.⁷⁹ [See January 2008 Burma Bulletin].
- **Mid-April:** Trucks transporting military equipment including artillery shells, bullets, and guns secretly entered Burma from Moreh in India's Northeastern State of Manipur. Citing military sources, the India-based newspaper Sangai Express said that the equipment was delivered as part of the trade deals reached between Delhi and the SPDC.⁸⁰ [See below India deal].

HUMAN RIGHTS

Prison sentences

On 2 April, Rangoon's Western District Court sentenced NLD member Ohn Than to 20 years in prison for demonstrating against the military regime in front of the US embassy in Rangoon on 23 August 2007 (81). A day earlier, Amnesty International said the SPDC had sentenced at least 40 people to prison terms, including seven Buddhist monks, for protests during August-September 2007 (82).

Death and suffering in Burma's prisons

- **1 April:** SPDC authorities in Rangoon's Insein prison enacted new regulations that bar visitation rights for non-family members. The measure ended the NLD's assistance program that provided food and other items to inmates who were unable to receive visits from their relatives (83).
- **19 April:** Azizullah, a 30-year-old man from Rathidaung Township, Arakan State, died in Akyab prison. He reportedly did not receive proper medical treatment (84).
- **21 April:** Detained HIV activist and NLD member Than Naing suffered paralysis over half of his face in Insein prison. His health is said to be deteriorating (85).
- Detained Human Rights Defenders and Promoters (HRDP) member Myo Thant's health is said to be poor following his 13-day hunger strike in Insein prison (86). [See March 2008 Burma Bulletin]

- In Insein prison, 88 Generation Students leader Min Ko Naing suffers from a serious eye problem, but has been denied medical treatment (87). 88 Generation Students leader Ko Ko Gyi has been suffering from stomach problems (88).

DISPLACEMENT

Fifty-four migrant workers suffocate in Thailand.

On 9 April, 54 undocumented migrants including children from Mon State died in Thailand while being transported from Ranong to Phuket in a sealed freezer truck (89). Sixty-six survived (90). 14 child survivors were handed over to immigration authorities for deportation. The adult survivors received two-month suspended sentences and a 1,000 baht fine for violating Thailand's immigration laws (91).

The incident focused attention on the problems associated with smuggling and trafficking of people from Burma to Thailand. According to the Migrant Worker Group, more than 100 people have died while being transported to Thailand in the past year (92). Provincial authorities ordered stricter controls on undocumented migrant workers from Burma (93). However, there was some recognition of the need for a more humane approach. Thai Foreign Minister Noppadon Pattama, the Department of Special Investigation (DSI), and the Human Rights Commission called for the survivors to be permitted to stay on in Thailand and assist police in identifying the traffickers (94). Noppadon also called on the SPDC to cooperate with Thailand in combating human trafficking (95). The International Labor Organization called on the Thai government to overhaul its system for employing foreign workers, saying the current system had allowed trafficking to flourish (96).

Rohingya continue to flee

As the "sailing season" for Rohingya boat people came to an end, on 20 April a boatload of 50 young Rohingya men drifted ashore at Hnitkayin village, Southern Mon State(97), [See November 2007 and March 2008 Burma Bulletins] Rohingya continue to flee Arakan State for Bangladesh. In April, the Bangladesh Rifles deported at least 93 people caught crossing into Bangladesh from Burma (98).

Rohingya boat exodus

In the past two years, 8,765 Rohingya people boarded unseaworthy vessels in Bangladesh and Burma heading for Thailand and Malaysia. Many departures are not recorded, and many others never arrive. In the 2007/2008 season, at least two boats sunk, and 250 to 500 people drowned. At least three boats were caught in Burma and at least 21 (about 1,400 people) in Thailand. Another boat was rescued off the coast of Sri Lanka, but 20 of the 91 passengers were already dead.

Riot in Bangladesh

On 2 April, a riot broke out in Nayapara refugee camp in Bangladesh after the Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) - Holland medical unit decided to hand over their operations to a local NGO. During the riot, refugees clashed with local police (99). Eight refugees and two police were injured (100). Police filed charges against 60 refugees in connection with the incident (101).

Riot in Malaysia

On 21 April, 72 Burmese detainees in Lenggeng camp, south of Kuala Lumpur, forced their way into an administrative building and set it ablaze (102). Malaysian officials admitted that overcrowding was one of reasons for the unrest. However, Home Minister Syed Hamid Albar said the solution was tighter border security, not new facilities (103).

In late March, authorities increased round-ups of Burmese people living in Malaysia. Those arrested included refugees with UNHCR documentation and migrant workers with legal permits (104). Offices of ethnic organizations were also raided (105).

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

US, UK, and France push for new UNSC presidential statement

During April, the US, along with France and the UK, attempted to get the UN Security Council to issue a new presidential statement on the SPDC's referendum. However, China and Russia continued to block the effort to get the non-binding presidential statement passed (106).

- **2 April:** US Deputy Ambassador to the UN Alejandro D. Wolff said that the US, UK, and France would seek a presidential statement on Burma (107). The draft expressed regret at the SPDC's slow progress in meeting previous council demands for political dialogue and release of political prisoners and called for planned elections to be open to all candidates (108).
- **7 April:** Both China and Russia expressed their opposition to the draft statement (109).
- **23 April:** The US, UK, and France circulated a revised draft presidential statement that called on the SPDC to take urgent steps to initiate a dialogue with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and allow all other political actors to fully participate in the May constitutional referendum (110).
- **24 April:** Security Council members met to discuss the second draft.

Pinheiro's parting remark: SPDC's referendum is "surreal"

On 14 April, Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, outgoing UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma, launched a stinging criticism of the SPDC's planned referendum. "How can you have a referendum

when you make repression against those that are intending to say 'no'? This is completely surreal," Pinheiro said. "If you say a real political transition process is taking place in Myanmar, this would be almost offensive to countries in Asia like the Philippines and Indonesia or Thailand that passed through a transition process to democracy. I will end my mandate saying that this is not a democratic political transition," Pinheiro asserted (111).

_ EU MPs call for expanded sanctions and worldwide arms embargo

- **24 April:** The European Parliament adopted a resolution that calls for expanded and more targeted sanctions against the SPDC, a worldwide arms embargo and the release of political prisoners, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi (112).
- **29 April:** The EU FMs agreed to a 12-month extension on sanctions against Burma's regime, threatening to expand sanctions over ongoing concerns about the political situation there. They also endorsed the European Parliament's call for an international arms embargo on the SPDC (113).

_ SPDC PM's visit to Thailand sets off alarm bells

On 29 April, SPDC PM Lt Gen Thein Sein arrived in Thailand for a 3-day official visit (114). Thein Sein told Thai PM Samak Sundaravej the SPDC has no plans to release Daw Aung San Suu Kyi - either before or after the constitutional referendum (115). In what was widely seen as evidence of increasing Thai deference to the SPDC, Samak declared Thailand had no problem with Daw Suu's continued house arrest (116) and reiterated Thailand's support for the SPDC's referendum (117). His statement sent Thai-Burma relations back more than three years, when former PM Thaksin Shinawatra said that Daw Suu's detention was "reasonable" (118). [March 2008 Burma Bulletin has Samak's prior pro-SPDC comments]

_ ECONOMY

_ India deal

On 2 April, SPDC Vice Sr Gen Maung Aye signed an agreement with India on the Kaladan Project. The agreement provides for India to invest US\$135 million in Burma over the next five years in developing transport links between Akyab port and India's Northeastern States (119). Maung Aye held talks on economic cooperation, security and energy (120). He met with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee and Indian army chief Deepak Kapoor (121). Maung Aye expressed gratitude for India's assistance with infrastructure projects, road construction, lines of credit, and establishing an information technology center in Burma (122).

_ Rice exports and shortages

Burma appears to be increasing its rice exports despite the fact that farmers experienced a bad harvest last season. Farmers in Mon State complained that the 2007-2008 harvest was down 20% (123).

- Singapore's Saga Foodstuffs reported the import of 350 tons of Burmese rice in April (125).
- On 5 April, Sri Lanka's Minister of Trade, Marketing Development, Cooperative and Consumer Affairs Bandula Gunawardena and the SPDC signed an agreement for the SPDC to supply 50,000 tons of rice at US\$400 per ton (126).
- More than 2,000 tons of rice were exported to Bangladesh in April (127).
- Beginning in early April, rice smuggling to Thailand from Burma increased through Three Pagodas Pass at a rate of 18,000 kilos a day. The price for a 60-kilo sack of Burmese rice in Thailand increased by 17% during the past month (128).

Gas pipeline leaking

Between 1 and 10 April, two ruptures in the natural gas pipeline from the Yetagun Gas field in the Gulf of Martaban to Thailand forced Thailand's PTTEP to shut down production. The ruptures resulted in the loss of 400-500 million cubic feet of gas per day (129). The pipeline breaks forced PTTEP to secure more than 350,000 liters of fuel oil from Malaysia and postpone routine maintenance (130).

OTHER BURMA NEWS IN APRIL

- SPDC officials arrests four Township-level members of the Myanmar Muslim Council in raids of their homes in Maungdaw Township.
- Two days of meetings between Bangladesh and SPDC officials to discuss maritime boundary issues end with no resolution.
- SPDC Vice Sr Gen Maung Aye arrives in New Delhi on a four-day visit.
- Chin Human Rights Organization says that SPDC officials are confiscating humanitarian aid intended for famine victims.
- Burmese and Indian activists take part in a demonstration in New Delhi against the Indian government's policy on Burma.
- 88 Generation Students group urges the United Nations to take strong action against the SPDC.
- India asks the SPDC to launch military operations against Indian armed opposition groups based in Burma.
- Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono receives a letter from SPDC Chairman Sr Gen Than Shwe which assures there will be a continuing democratic process in Burma.
- Norway's Finance Ministry announces that the Government Pension Fund is now barred from owning.
- Weekly journal Myanmar Times reports that the SPDC has declared over 4 million Rangoon residents to be eligible to vote in the referendum.

- Veteran writer and journalist Lodu Daw Amar dies in Mandalay at the age of 93.
- US First Lady Laura Bush presents Vital Voices Global Leadership Awards to Burmese activists Charm Tong and Khin Omar.
- Burmese activists conclude a 13-day anti-referendum walk from Dhaka to Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh.
- Robber steals 900 million kyat from Rangoon's Thingankyun Township Myanmar Economic Bank.
- Thai FM Noppadon Pattama makes a one-day visit to Burma and reportedly discusses a project to build a deep sea port at Tavoy, Tenasserim Division.
- Thailand's PTTEP reaches an agreement with China's CNOOC Ltd to swap stakes in oil and gas blocks in Burma.
- Scot Marciel, the prospective first US envoy to ASEAN, says that his key priority is to get ASEAN to press the SPDC to embrace democratic reforms.
- Singapore's Foreign Affairs Minister George Yeo says that he believes the SPDC's proposed constitution will not be to the liking of many.
- A person with alleged ties to the Shan State Army throws a hand grenade into a crowd in Wanpun Village in Shan State. Five people are wounded in the attack.
- UK PM Gordon Brown's envoy on Burma Michael Williams says that ASEAN must take action against Burma regarding its human rights situation if it wants to avoid future problems with the EU.
- The world's oldest and longest wooden bridge collapses in Mandalay under the weight of Thingyan festival revelers.
- A Mon splinter group led by Nai Ein Dae fires on a passenger bus in Southern Ye Township, seriously wounding three Mon villagers.
- Kyaw Zin Naing, the 26-year-old man who set himself on fire protesting against the military regime, dies in Rangoon as a result of injuries.
- An 18-year-old refugee woman from Dum Dum Meah camp, Bangladesh, is raped while fetching water.
- SPDC authorities in Monywa, Sagaing Division, arrest rapper Yan Yan Chan.
- About 30 Rohingya demonstrate peacefully in front of the Burmese and Thai embassies in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
- Thai police raid a coconut plantation in southern Thailand and arrest 27 undocumented migrant workers from Burma. Three reportedly drown attempting to escape.
- The SPDC declares Burma "bird flu free".
- SPDC Deputy Home Minister Brig Gen Phone Swe orders the release of Myanmar Muslim Council members of Maungdaw, Arakan State.
- Two small bombs explode in downtown Rangoon. No injuries are reported.

- SPDC asks New Mon State Party, the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army, the Karen Peace Front, and the Pa-O National Organization ceasefire groups to provide security during the referendum.
- SPDC Army orders 350 villagers in Namkham Township, Shan State, to perform forced labor to repair the collapsed bank of the Shweli Hydropower Dam Project.
- A 26-year-old villager from Shwekyin Township, Pegu Division, dies as a result of a landmine explosion.
- Over 100 Burmese nationals demonstrate in front of the Burmese embassy in Tokyo demanding their right to vote in the referendum.
- SPDC accuses the Vigorous Burmese Student Warriors of 20 April Rangoon bomb blasts.
- Twenty-six-year-old USDA member Tun Thein is stabbed to death in Akyab, Arakan State.
- Burmese nationals demonstrate against the referendum in front of the Burmese embassy in Kuala Lumpur.
- Diplomats from the UK, EU, Netherlands, Switzerland and Italy, and UNHCR country representatives visit Nayapara and Dum Dum Meah camps in Bangladesh.
- US Senate votes to award Daw Aung San Suu Kyi the Congressional Gold Medal.
- Germany adopts changes to immigration law to require Burmese citizens to obtain a transit visa for stopovers at German airports.
- Malaysia's Astral Asia Bhd announces that it has terminated an oil palm plantation MoU with Myanmar Combiz Services Co Ltd and Green Futue Co Ltd.
- Over 200 people take part in an anti-referendum demonstration organized by the International Burmese Monks Organization in Sydney, Australia.
- Ten people are injured following a clash between Burmese migrant workers and policemen outside the Burmese embassy in Tokyo.
- International Burmese Monks Organization in Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh, organizes a signature campaign against the referendum.
- SPDC authorities prevent monks from gathering for a demonstration in front of Rangoon's Shwedagon Pagoda.
- About 100 activists hold an anti-referendum demonstration in front of the Burmese embassy in Bangkok, Thailand.
- Freedom House says the media environment in Burma remained among the most tightly restricted in the world during 2007.
- Thailand and SPDC sign an agreement on joint cooperation in drug suppression.

_ REPORTS ON BURMA RELEASED IN APRIL

"Living Ghosts: The spiraling repression of the Karenni population by the Burmese military junta", Burma Issues

<http://www.burmaissues.org/En/reports/livingghosts.html>

"Growing up under militarization: Abuse and agency of children in Karen State", Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG)

<http://www.khrg.org/khrg2008/khrg0801.html>

"Global overview of trends and developments in 2007", Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre/Norwegian Refugee Council

http://www.nrc.no/arch/_img/9267337.pdf

"FMR30: Burma's displaced people", Forced Migration Review

<http://www.fmreview.org/burma.htm>

"Atrocities Continue in Karen State, Burma", Free Burma Rangers (FBR)

<http://www.freeburmarangers.org/Reports/2008/20080419.html>

"Lives Lost and Homes Destroyed: Villagers Suffer Under the Brutal Oppression of the Burma Army", Free Burma Rangers (FBR)

<http://www.freeburmarangers.org/Reports/2008/20080406.html>

"The Human Cost of Energy: Chevron's Continuing Role in Financing Oppression and Profiting From Human Rights Abuses in Military-Ruled Burma", Earthrights International

http://www.earthrights.org/files/Burma%20Project/Yadana/HCoE_pages.pdf

"Rich Pickings: how trade and investment keep the Burmese junta alive and kicking", International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)

<http://www.ituc-csi.org/spip.php?article2023>

"Outlook 2008", ADB

<http://www.adb.org/Documents/Books/ADO/2008/>

notes:

(1) AP (10 Apr 08) Myanmar junta sets May 10 for holding constitutional referendum; AFP (09 Apr 08) Myanmar sets constitutional referendum for May 10; Mizzima News (09 Apr 08) Junta sets referendum date on May 10.

(2). AP (10 Apr 08) Myanmar junta sets May 10 for holding constitutional referendum; AP (10 Apr 08) Myanmar publishes text of military-backed proposed constitution; AFP (09 Apr 08) Myanmar sets constitutional referendum for May 10.

(3). Kaladan News (28 Apr 08) Deputy home minister orders release of arrested MMC members.

(4). NLM (17 Apr 08) Commission for Holding Referendum meets with sub-commissions at different levels in Sagaing, Magway, Bago, Bago (West), Ayeyawady Divisions; UNICEF (Jan 08) State of the World's Children 2008.

(5). AFP (02 Apr 08) Aung San Suu Kyi's party calls for 'no' vote on Myanmar constitution; BBC (02

Apr 08) Call to reject Burma constitution.

(6). Reuters (10 Apr 08) Myanmar crackdown on “no” campaign begins: opposition; Mizzima News (10 Apr 08) Nothing ‘free and fair’ in run up to referendum: Opposition; Irrawaddy (10 Apr 08) NLD Wants International Observers at May 10 Referendum.

(7). DVB (07 Apr 08) ABFSU joins calls to vote “No” in referendum.

(8). Ethnic Nationalities Council (07 Apr 08) Statement on the forthcoming SPDC’s referendum; DVB (08 Apr 08) ENC fears constitution will erode rights.

(9). Kachin News Group (18 Apr 08) KWAT urges people to cast “No” vote.

(10). Kachin News Group (30 Apr 08) UNA urge people to reveal their desire in referendum.

(11). DVB (08 Apr 08) Youth activists urge “No” vote in referendum.

(12). DVB (21 Apr 08) Shan party urges “No” vote for genuine democracy.

(13). Mizzima News (21 Apr 08) Authorities in Kachin state campaign for ‘Yes’ vote.

(14). Kaladan News (28 Apr 08) Anti-referendum paper distributed in Arakan.

(15). Narinjara News (30 Apr 08) Dogs enlisted for anti-referendum campaign.

(16). Kachin News Group (17 Apr 08) Junta collects list of supporters of referendum.

(17). Kachin News Group (21 Apr 08) Vote ‘No’ posters appear in more towns in Northern Burma.

(18). Irrawaddy (09 Apr 08) Activists Take “Vote No” Campaign to Countryside; IMNA (25 Apr 08) Referendum campaigns speed up in Mon state.

(19). Kantarawaddy Times (28 Apr 08) Vote ‘No’ campaign begins in Karenni state.

(20). DVB (28 Apr 08) “Vote No” campaign continues across Burma.

(21). DVB (28 Apr 08) “Vote No” campaign continues across Burma.

(22). DVB (28 Apr 08) “Vote No” campaign continues across Burma.

(23). Irrawaddy (09 Apr 08) Activists Take “Vote No” Campaign to Countryside; DVB (28 Apr 08) “Vote No” campaign continues across Burma.

(24). Mizzima News (28 Apr 08) Villagers paint cross signs on walls, reject constitution.

(25). IMNA (17 Apr 08) Referendum campaigns wide spread in Mon state during water festival; IMNA (09 Apr 08) Vote “No” and wait a decade for elections: Referendum Commission; IMNA (21 Apr 08) Junta desperate to have constitution approved: MNDF leader; IMNA (25 Apr 08) Referendum campaigns speed up in Mon state.

(26). Kaowao News (21 Apr 08) Songkran graffiti campaign continues through Mon State.

(27). IMNA (25 Apr 08) Referendum campaigns speed up in Mon state.

(28). DVB (08 Apr 08) Youth activists urge “No” vote in referendum; Irrawaddy (09 Apr 08) Activists

Take "Vote No" Campaign to Countryside.

(29). Irrawaddy (08 Apr 08) Security tightens around 'vote no' campaign.

(30). SHAN (18 Apr 08) Youth group distributes 'Vote No' leaflets.

(31). Narinjara News (04 Apr 08) Long March Activist Reach Second Largest City of Bangladesh; Mizzima News (11 Apr 08) New York rally to support Burmese democracy movement; Mizzima News (22 Apr 08) Burmese overstaying stage protest at Burmese embassy in Tokyo; Mizzima News (23 Apr 08) Protests over referendum in Malaysia; Irrawaddy (25 Apr 08) Burmese Abroad to Demonstrate Against Constitution; Mizzima News (27 Apr 08) Activists protest as embassy conducts polling; SHAN (27 Apr 08) Burmese monks denounce referendum; AP (28 Apr 08) Overseas Burmese protest Constitution.

(32). Irrawaddy (23 Apr 08) Military commanders join referendum "vote yes" campaign; IMNA (27 Apr 08) If you not vote "No" you go to jail: TPDC member; IMNA (21 Apr 08) Junta desperate to have constitution approved: MNDF leader; IMNA (09 Apr 08) Vote "No" and wait a decade for elections: Referendum Commission; SHAN (11 Apr 08) Many townships forced to support the draft constitution; Mizzima News (28 Apr 08) Forced advance 'Yes' voting in Bhamo; Irrawaddy (24 Apr 08) Junta using threats to win referendum vote, says NLD; Kachin News Group (29 Apr 08) KIO receives junta's vote commission training.

(33). Khonumthng News (19 Apr 08) Constitutional training for government employees; SHAN (11 Apr 08) Many townships forced to support the draft constitution; Irrawaddy (24 Apr 08) Junta using threats to win referendum vote, says NLD.

(34). DVB (28 Apr 08) "Vote No" campaign continues across Burma.

(35). DVB (30 Apr 08) Businesses threatened with closure for 'No' vote.

(36). Irrawaddy (24 Apr 08) Junta using threats to win referendum vote, says NLD.

(37). DVB (02 Apr 08) Prisoners offered sentence reductions to vote "Yes"; DVB (09 Apr 08) Detained monks to be given lay identity cards.

(38). Mizzima News (21 Apr 08) Authorities in Kachin state campaign for 'Yes' vote; DVB (22 Apr 08) Rural Kachin offered incentives to vote "Yes"; AsiaNews (23 Apr 08) In the Burmese countryside, elderly and sick forced to vote "yes"; Irrawaddy (23 Apr 08) Military commanders join referendum "vote yes" campaign; Kachin News Group (24 Apr 08) Junta woos rural people with rice and salt in referendum campaign.

(39). Kaladan News (22 Apr 08) MOCs woo people to cast the "Yes" vote in Kyauktaw.

(40). Mizzima News (28 Apr 08) Villagers paint cross signs on walls, reject constitution.

(41). Narinjara News (28 Apr 08) Army stops toll collection in western Burma.

(42). SHAN (27 Apr 08) Junta offers eye treatment for free.

(43). Reuters (21 Apr 08) Myanmar arrests keep pressure on "no" campaign; New Straits Times (23 Apr 08) No room for No amid the junta's Yes drive.

(44). Reuters (21 Apr 08) Myanmar arrests keep pressure on "no" campaign; New Straits Times (23

Apr 08) No room for No amid the junta's Yes drive.

(45). AFP (24 Apr 08) No press freedom for Myanmar constitution vote: RSF; DVB (04 Apr 08) Censors restrict media reporting on referendum.

(46). Xinhua (24 Apr 08) Over 4 mln Yangon population declared as eligible voters for Myanmar referendum.

(47). Kachin News Group (14 Apr 08) Junta includes underage people in voters' list

(48). NLM (28 Feb 08) The Referendum Law for the Approval of the Draft Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, 2008, Chapter 5.

(49). SHAN (25 Apr 08) Junta issues ID cards to Chinese citizens.

(50). NLM (28 Feb 08) The Referendum Law for the Approval of the Draft Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, 2008, Chapter 5 .

(51). DVB (25 Apr 08) Officials vote "Yes" on behalf of civil servant; DVB (28 Apr 08) Government workers forced to vote "Yes"; DVB (24 Apr 08) Factory workers pressured to cast multiple "Yes" votes; Irrawaddy (30 Apr 08) Pre-marked ballots issued in Burmese referendum.

(52). Mizzima News (28 Apr 08) Forced advance 'Yes' voting in Bhamo; AsiaNews (23 Apr 08) In the Burmese countryside, elderly and sick forced to vote "yes".

(53). DVB (09 Apr 08) Detained monks to be given lay identity cards.

(54). NLM (28 Feb 08) The Referendum Law for the Approval of the Draft Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, 2008, Chapter 5.

(55). Kaladan News (12 Apr 08) SPDC's referendum training concluded in Arakan.

(56). Bangkok Post (27 Apr 08) Burma bars anti-constitution group from voting; Mizzima News (27 Apr 08) Irregularities in absentee voting in Singapore, Malaysia.

(57). DVB (02 Apr 08) NLD youth coordinator arrested; Mizzima News (02 Apr 08) Junta arrests more opposition members.

(58). Narinjara News (11 Apr 08) NLD member arrested for statement; Irrawaddy (09 Apr 08) Activists Take "Vote No" Campaign to Countryside.

(59). Reuters (16 Apr 08) Junta briefly detains "No" campaigners; Guardian (15 Apr 08) Burmese junta arrests opposition aide; Irrawaddy (18 Apr 08) Pro-Junta Thugs Continue Attacks on Activists.

(60). AFP (15 Apr 08) Myanmar detains at least 20 activists; AP (15 Apr 08) Myanmar Detains at Least 20 Activists.

(61). Irrawaddy (18 Apr 08) Pro-Junta Thugs Continue Attacks on Activists; DVB (18 Apr 08) NLD member beaten and arrested for "No" placards.

(62). New Straits Times (23 Apr 08) No room for No amid the junta's Yes drive.

(63). AFP (02 Apr 08) Myanmar junta arrests 52 activists in 2008: watchdog.

- (64). Reuters (10 Apr 08) Myanmar crackdown on “no” campaign begins: opposition; Irrawaddy (18 Apr 08) Pro-Junta Thugs Continue Attacks on Activists.
- (65). Irrawaddy (04 Apr 08) More opposition activists attacked by thugs; DVB (07 Apr 08) Second NLD member attacked in Hlaing Tharyar; Mizzima News (04 Apr 08) Another NLD member beaten up.
- (66). Kaladan News (11 Apr 08) NLD member’s shop destroyed and looted in Sittwe.
- (67). Irrawaddy (18 Apr 08) Pro-Junta Thugs Continue Attacks on Activists.
- (68). DVB (23 Apr 08) NLD secretary’s home attacked; Irrawaddy (24 Apr 08) More harassment, attacks on opposition activists underway.
- (69). Irrawaddy (24 Apr 08) More harassment, attacks on opposition activists underway.
- (70). AFP (03 Apr 04) India urges Myanmar to push reconciliation.
- (71). AFP (02 Apr 08) US condemns Myanmar arrests of political activists.
- (72). IHT (09 Apr 08) Bush condemns Myanmar after meeting with Singapore minister.
- (73). Irrawaddy (18 Apr 08) Bush, Brown Call for Referendum Observers.
- (74). AFP (18 Apr 08) ‘Atmosphere of intimidation’ clouds Myanmar polls: British envoy.
- (75). AFP (25 Apr 08) France wants ‘transparent’ Myanmar referendum: minister.
- (76). The Straits Times (28 Apr 08) Thailand hopes Myanmar referendum is ‘credible’.
- (77). AFP (02 Apr 08) N Korea exporting multiple-launch rockets to Myanmar; Reuters (03 Apr 08) N Korea sells Rocket Launchers to Burma; Irrawaddy (03 Apr 08) N Korea Sells Rocket Launchers to Burma.
- (78). Mizzima News (11 Apr 08) Chinese trucks to tow howitzer arrive on border.
- (79). Irrawaddy (19 Apr 08) Burma’s Trading Neighbors Offering Military Gifts.
- (80). Irrawaddy (19 Apr 08) Burma’s Trading Neighbors Offering Military Gifts.
- (81). AP (04 Apr 08) Activist who staged solo protest against Myanmar junta gets life sentence; Mizzima News (03 Apr 08) Solo protester sentenced to life imprisonment; DVB (03 Apr 08) Solo demonstrator given 20-year sentence.
- (82). AFP (01 Apr 08) At least 40 protesters convicted in secret Myanmar trials: Amnesty.
- (83). DVB (04 Apr 08) NLD banned from visiting prisoners.
- (84). Kaladan News (28 Apr 08) Prisoner dies in Akyab jail.
- (85). Mizzima News (29 Apr 08) Imprisoned Burmese activist paralyzed.
- (86). Mizzima News (09 Apr 08) Burmese rights activists remanded without appearing in court.

- (87). Mizzima News (18 Apr 08) Min Ko Naing needs urgent eye treatment: AAPP; DVB (18 Apr 08) Min Ko Naing requests treatment for eye problems.
- (88). DVB (25 Apr 08) Detained 88 Generation Students' health worsens.
- (89). Reuters (10 Apr 08) Myanmar migrant recalls container horror.
- (90). Bangkok Post (22 Apr 08) No human trafficking here.
- (91). AFP (11 Apr 08) Thai court jails Myanmar container survivors for three days.
- (92). Reuters (13 Apr 08) No light at end of Thai-Myanmar smuggling tunnel - Nopporn Wong-Anan.
- (93). AP (11 Apr 08) Deaths highlight plight of Myanmar migrants DVB (23 Apr 08) NGOs call for justice after migrant deaths.
- (94). Bangkok Post (22 Apr 08) No human trafficking here; Thai Press Reports (15 Apr 08) Thailand DSI to seize assets of Myanmar human traffickers; Thai News Agencies (17 Apr 08) Thai FM: Myanmar survivors should not be prosecuted.
- (95). Nation (11 Apr 08) Thailand sends condolence over deaths of Burmese job seekers.
- (96). AP (11 Apr 08) Thailand Set to Deport Myanmar Workers; ILO (11 Apr 08) Statement Regarding the Deaths of Migrant Workers in Thailand.
- (97). IMNA (21 Apr 08) Fifty Muslims starve for a week after boat runs out of fuel at sea.
- (98). Narinjara News (03 Apr 08) Fifty three Burmese nationals pushed back; Kaladan News (02 Apr 08) BDR arrests 25 Burmese nationals en route to Cox's Bazaar; Kaladan News (01 Apr 08) BDR pushes back five Burmese nationals.
- (99). Kaladan News (03 Apr 08) Refugees and police clash, ten injured.
- (100). Kaladan News (03 Apr 08) Refugees and police clash, ten injured.
- (101). Kaladan News (04 Apr 08) Police file cases against 50 to 60 Rohingya refugees.
- (102). Reuters (23 Apr 08) Malaysia rights panel sees migrant social time bomb.
- (103). AP (28 Apr 08) Malaysia Tightens Borders against Illegal Immigrants.
- (104). DVB (08 Apr 08) Malaysia steps up action against Burmese migrants.
- (105). DVB (10 Apr 08) Malaysia continues crackdown on Burmese migrants.
- (106). Irrawaddy (28 Apr 08) UNSC deadlocked on Burma.
- (107). Reuters (02 Apr 08) West seeks new U.N. council statement on Myanmar.
- (108). Irrawaddy (03 Apr 08) US, Britain and France Seek UN Statement on Burma.
- (109). Irrawaddy (09 Apr 08) China, Russia oppose UN Security Council's draft presidential statement.
- (110). AP (23 Apr 08) UN draft calls on Myanmar junta to take urgent steps to start talks with

opposition's Suu Kyi.

(111). Reuters (14 Apr 08) UN rights expert calls Myanmar vote plan "surreal".

(112). Press Release EU Parliament (24 Apr 08) Burma: broadened and more targeted sanctions needed, say MEPs.

(113). Bangkok Post (04 Apr 08) Europe extends sanctions on Burma.

(114). AP (29 Apr 08) Myanmar PM gets neighborly welcome in Thailand with home-cooked dinner by Thai leader.

(115). Reuters (30 Apr 08) Thai PM says Myanmar's Suu Kyi detention is "OK".

(116). Reuters (30 Apr 08) Thai PM says Myanmar's Suu Kyi detention is "OK".

(117). AP (30 Apr 08) Thai PM jokes that neighbor Myanmar's draft constitution offers a '50 percent democracy'.

(118). AP (11 Dec 04) Thai leader calls Myanmar's reasons for detaining Suu Kyi 'reasonable'.

(119). Reuters (03 Apr 08) India, Myanmar sign tax, transport pacts to boost trade.

(120). AFP (02 Apr 08) India, Myanmar discuss trade, energy.

(121). AP (02 Apr 08) India to build Myanmar port.

(122). AP (03 Apr 08) India, Myanmar sign multimillion-dollar transport deal.

(123). IMNA (04 Apr 08) Rice prices skyrocket.

(125). Earth Times (02 Apr 08) Stalls, restaurants turning to Myanmar for cheaper rice.

(126). Sunday Observer (Sri Lanka) (06 Apr 08) 50,000 metric tons of rice from Myanmar.

(127). Kaladan News (19 Apr 08) Many goods from Burma arrive at Teknaf land port.

(128). Irrawaddy (17 Apr 08) Illegal rice import boom at Three Pagodas Pass.

(129). Oil and Gas Journal (15 Apr 08) Yetagun gas field production resumes off Myanmar.

(130). Irrawaddy (03 Apr 08) Burma's Gas Pipeline to Be Fixed in 5 Days
shares in companies that sell arms to Burma.

P.S.

* ALTSEAN-BURMA, APRIL 2008.

* The Burma Bulletin is a short month in review of events in Burma, particularly those of interest to the democracy movement and human rights activists.