

the rice stock situation is unclear, there have been power cut-offs since the government does not have enough resources to buy oil and lack of rain makes the use of hydro power impossible. Economic hardship might be the catalyst to change.

Some hopes for democratisation were put into Burma's recent joining of ASEAN. It was anticipated that the accession of Burma to ASEAN would lead to some improvement for civil society through a new forum for discussion. However, no progress has been made through this channel either as most of the ASEAN members are wary of upsetting the delicate balance in the region.

The outlook presented by the Ambassador was overall fairly negative, but the efforts at democratisation must not stop. Attempts should be made to get through to the leadership. Signs of some movement have been apparent as senior officials are willing now at least to have discussions.

Canada's influence is circumscribed because trade with Burma is quite minimal (i.e., imposition of unilateral sanctions does not have much impact) and influencing the Burmese government from Canadian values is very difficult. In this context, he asked, what measures and options are there for Canada?

The last speaker was **James Myint Swe**, the Director of the National Coalition of the Union of Burma. He thanked the Canadian government for its consistent support of democracy in Burma (i.e., financial support through the ICHRDD and Minister Axworthy's empathy) as well as Canadian NGOs for their work with the Burmese people and in promoting a sound Canadian foreign policy. He also expressed his appreciation to the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development for helping with a continuing discussion.

Myint Swe described the current situation in Burma to be at a critical point. The brutal military dictatorship – the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) (which recently cosmetically replaced the State Law and Order Restoration Council, SLORC) and an elected democratic opposition – the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB) together with pro-democratic elements represented by the National League for Democracy (NLD), now struggle for control over the future of the country with a backdrop of ethnic divisions. These ethnic divisions could explode if the political and economic situation in Burma gets out of control. It is, therefore, imperative that the NDL's policy of promoting settlement through peaceful dialogue prove successful.

Myint Swe argued that the power relationship between the SPDC and the NDL can be conceptualised as a vertical interdependent relationship. Activities that increase the power of the NDL *vis a vis* the SPDC include actions that affect the regime's ability to govern (i.e., income threatening activities such as sanctions and boycotts and activities threatening the viability of the security apparatus such as demonstrations and arrests or release of political prisoners). Conversely the power of the SPDC *vis a vis* NDL is increased by greater income, marginalisation of the political opposition, and legitimacy in the international community.

The NDL's power waned since 1990 when the pro-democracy mood in the country was strengthened by the elections. Demonstrations and civil disobedience were rampant. However, following an electoral success, the NLD's members were arrested and the movement weakened. Some minimal mobilisation of the movement for democracy is visible now, in response to Daw