

# The BURMA DAILY

Volume 2 Issue 102

Tuesday, October 06, 2009

## Ship Sinks as Storm Loiters Off Philippines

REUTERS

MANILA/TAIPEI - A ship carrying refrigerated goods sank in the South China Sea, killing one person and leaving 10 crew missing, as a powerful storm stalled off the Philippines' northwestern coast yesterday, officials said.

Parma, the strongest typhoon to hit the Philippines since 2006, was gathering strength and was likely to remain stationary off the coast of the Ilocos provinces for the next three days, bringing more rains and possible floods and landslides.

It slammed into the northern Philippine mountains on Saturday and has killed 22 people, according to officials and radio reports.

Heavy rain in and around Manila, about 350 km southeast of Parma's center, could worsen the situation in the Philippine capital, which is still recovering from floods brought more than a week ago by Typhoon Ketsana.

Nearly 300 people were killed and half a million were forced from their homes by Ketsana. About \$145 million in crops, mostly rice about to be harvested, were damaged, forcing Manila to consider more rice imports this year.

Rescue teams from China, Hong Kong and Taiwan were searching for the crew of the Panama-registered ship which sank late on Sunday in Taiwan waters, according to coast guard official Shih Ye-che.

Parma is likely to hover off the coast until Thursday, and could then move southwest out to sea, Philippine weather officials said.

"There's a possibility that Parma will gain further strength and intensify into a typhoon again because it remains over the sea," Prisco Nilo, head of the country's weather agency, told a news conference.

Parma's movement was affected by the much stronger Typhoon Melor, which was expected to enter Philippine territory from the east late yesterday, he said.

"The interaction between the two typhoons has prevented Parma from moving out of the country," Nilo said, adding a high pressure area near Hong Kong was also stopping Parma from moving westward.



Reuters

Rescuers look for bodies of people buried in landslides caused by an earthquake in a village in Pariaman, Indonesia's West Sumatra province yesterday. Rescuers and aid workers were fanning out yesterday into the hills of Indonesia's Sumatra island, where hundreds of people were buried in landslides triggered by an earthquake that may have killed 3,000.

## Efforts Turn to Recovery After Indonesia Quake

BY PETER GELLING  
AND NORIMITSU ONISHI  
THE NEW YORK TIMES

PADANG, Indonesia - It was a small sign of normalcy—a few hundred Padang schoolchildren returning to their studies, under the cover of three yellow Unicef tents—but the hopes of thousands of Indonesians searching for missing friends and relatives after last week's deadly earthquake were further diminished yesterday.

International search and rescue teams began wrapping up their work, news agencies reported, as emergency efforts switched from the rescue phase to what aid specialists call the recovery phase—the delivery of food, drinking water, clothing, tents and hygiene kits.

More than 700 people were confirmed dead across the Indonesian island of Sumatra, and thousands remained missing in the wake of the 7.6-magnitude earthquake that hit the western coast on Wednesday.

"We got here quickly but we haven't found any survivors," the head of a Japanese rescue team, Hiroaki Sano, told The Associated Press. "The first 100 hours are crucial."

Emergency workers struggled Sunday to reach several remote villages buried beneath landslides caused by the quake, while a steady stream of bodies, wrapped in yellow bags, arrived by ambulance at Padang's main hospital. Heavy rains continued to hamper rescue efforts in the outlying areas of Padang, the provincial capital of West Sumatra and a port city of 900,000.

In the heart of Padang, with little or sometimes no help coming from the authorities, some affected neighborhoods turned to an informal network of businesses and volunteers to fill the void.

On one block in the city's Chinese quarter, workers at a coal concern and a truck rental company set up a base from which they dispatched much-needed earth-moving vehicles across the city. The two companies responded to private requests, usually from friends and business partners, said Budianto, 38, who supervises shipping at the coal company, Bumi Anyer Wisesa, and had no experience dealing with rescue missions.

Aside from one soldier who stood guard on a side street where

a tractor had started to clear rubble on Sunday morning, officials had yet to reach the neighborhood.

"There's no coordination with the government at all," Budianto said.

A colleague was driving around the city, trying to assess the requests streaming in, but Budianto was unable to reach him because of erratic cellphone service.

"It's difficult because there's no clear command," he said. "Sometimes someone in a damaged house will come and plead with our truck operators for help."

Not far away, a group of church volunteers had been treating about 350 patients a day, mostly for less serious injuries.

A Malaysian aid truck, apparently noticing the sign outside the volunteers' temporary facilities, stopped by with some medical supplies. It was the first time the church volunteers had received outside assistance, said Sam Soh, who was coordinating the group's efforts.

"We are running out of food and medication," Soh said. "We can't give people less than five days of antibiotics for the medication to be effective."

## REGIONAL

# Climate Change Threatens Many in Mekong Region, WWF Says

REUTERS

BANGKOK - Changing weather patterns and rising seas are already affecting many people in Southeast Asia's Greater Mekong Basin and climate change threatens the livelihoods of millions more, a report released yesterday shows.

Intense floods and droughts, coastal erosion, higher seas and heat waves in coming decades threaten rice, fruit and coffee crops and fisheries on which many of the basin's 65 million people depend, says the report by global conservation group WWF.

"Across the region, temperatures are rising and have risen by 0.5 to 1.5 degrees Celsius in the past 50 years," says the report issued on the sidelines of UN climate talks in the Thai capital.

"While rainy seasons may contract over parts of the region, overall rainfall is expected to rise. This means more intense rain events when they occur," it says, threaten-

ing crops and triggering floods and landslides.

The basin runs from the Tibetan plateau in China, to Burma, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam, where the Mekong empties into the South China Sea.

The delta produces about half Vietnam's rice crop and 60 percent of its shrimp harvest. But rising seas and salt water intrusion threaten harvests and would likely displace farmers.

"Large human populations living in low-lying coastal areas and floodplains make the region highly vulnerable to floods, saltwater intrusion, and rising sea levels," the report said, referring to Ho Chi Minh City, Bangkok and Hanoi.

Delegates from about 180 nations are meeting in Bangkok to try to agree on steps to expand a global effort to fight climate change. The officials are trying to refine a negotiating text that will form the

basis of a new climate pact the UN hopes will be agreed in December.

Trying to help poorer nations adapt to the impacts of climate change is a key part of the puzzle.

In the Thai capital about 2,000 farmers, fishermen and indigenous people protested in front of the UN conference center yesterday demanding rich nations step up efforts to curb greenhouse gas emissions.

"Climate justice now," the crowd chanted, as some beat bamboo drums attached with posters reading: "Protect mother earth, no to corporate greed."

Indigenous people from countries including the Philippines, Malaysia and Nepal joined the protest.

"We've come to bring the farmers' voice to the UN," shouted a representative from a farmers' group in Indonesia as farmers in green shirts milled around the gate of the UN building.

Developing countries accuse the rich of failing to take the initiative in agreeing to deep emissions cuts and want them to pledge billions in funds to help them adapt to climate change and to green their economies.

Eight protesters in black suits marched with masks of each of the G-8 leaders, including US President Barack Obama. On the back of the masks were pictures of demons.

The WWF report said more frequent and damaging droughts and floods would lead to major damage to property and loss of life. Access to water would also become tougher in the dry season.

"Warmer temperatures have contributed to declining crop yields. Storms, floods and droughts are destroying entire harvests in the Mekong basin.

"Water scarcity will constrain agricultural production and threaten food security," it added.

## Relief Efforts Are Improving in Flood-Afflicted, Central Vietnam

BY GEOFFREY CAIN  
GLOBALPOST

DANANG, Vietnam - "Attention passengers. This is your captain speaking. We're starting our descent into Danang, with heavy winds and rain. Things could get bumpy. As always, we thank you for flying with us."

Oops! They forgot to mention we're landing in a typhoon. Of course, the news was spreading since we took off, but the cabin crew managed to feign cluelessness with their Barbie-doll smiles. What typhoon? You mean that drizzle out there? Ha!

The government had evacuated three nearby provinces, and yesterday afternoon the winds were already ripping through our village on China Beach, about 24 km south of urban Danang.

But on the ground, the locals didn't seem to care much either. "Yes, just another storm, no worry," laughed one motorbike repairman as he sluggishly nailed wood to his window. "Ah, storm. We in central Vietnam have many storm," a sculpture merchant boasted. "Store still open."

Indeed, with its long coastline and extensive river deltas, Vietnam is one of the countries most affected by natural disasters. Six to eight typhoons smack Vietnam each year on average and this year looks to be no different—except that the region has learned from past disasters and relief efforts are improving.

Boom! A sound jolted me awake in the wee morning hours of Tuesday—a tree had fallen outside my room and shattered a window. The guesthouse owner burst into my room. "We go downstairs now!" he shouted. Typhoon Ketsana had arrived.

Outside winds rip-roared through the alleyways, catapulting metal scraps dangerously close to my body. When the sun rose, I could better make out tree trunks and roofs littered around the roads, and the aluminum huts that had collapsed across the village. Ketsana continued through the day, peaking between 2 and 4 pm.

The damage was staggering, but Ketsana affected our area lightly compared to the nearby areas. Hoi An, a small town 40 km away from my area, was flooded up to my shoulders, with some houses completely submerged. In the central highland provinces of Quang Ngai and Quang Nam, relief workers reported entire villages were cut off due to the floods and tree trunks obstructing roads.

World Vision, a Christian aid organization, said in a statement on Wednesday that more than 5,800 houses had collapsed and 163,000 houses lost their roofs. The organization distributed 1,000 food aid packs to 5,000 people this week, but had difficulty reaching areas isolated by floods.

As of Friday, Typhoon Ketsana

had left 99 people dead in Vietnam with another 14 missing, mostly in the hardest-hit central provinces of Quang Nam, Thua Tien Hue and Quang Tri. In the Philippines 300 people died, a number that spiked after the "super-typhoon" Parma hit on Saturday. Parma struck the remote northeastern Philippines, killing at least five people and forcing more than 130,000 along the eastern seaboard to flee their homes.

Catastrophic floods have long afflicted central Vietnam, with typhoons becoming more powerful and recurring more in recent years, according to a report published last year by the UN Development Program. The most devastating recent floods came in 1999 when 750 people were reported dead or missing. The region is fraught with a nightmarish, remote geography that in previous years has hampered relief efforts.

Yet despite this year's wreckage, NGOs are touting the success of the relief efforts, which owe much to the lessons of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami in Indonesia, which left 230,000 people dead.

Le Van Duong, a relief coordinator for World Vision, said food relief and staff are now pre-positioned in disaster-prone areas, rather than being transported to the areas every time disaster strikes. "The local capacity to take care of disasters has quite improved, and relief is done better than in the past," he said.

That's not to mention the speedy evacuation before Ketsana hit, a move that possibly saved thousands of lives. Local media reported that on Monday the government dispatched five helicopters, and a fleet of cars and boats, to evacuate 350,000 people from the three most vulnerable provinces.

"The planning, and the number of people evacuated, is what really prevented so many deaths," said Huynh Duc Truong, head of the Danang Union of Friendship Organization, a Vietnamese NGO that is helping to coordinate a reconstruction plan for Danang. "This is remarkable even with the limited resources of the local government and the local NGOs."

Yet with officials broadcasting their gloom and doom warnings, I still can't figure out how the locals were so nonchalant about the situation before Ketsana hit.

Maybe it's just life. "Every year in central Vietnam we've suffered from horrible things—famine, droughts, floods, storms and war" said Huynh Thi Kem, 53, referring to the French and US wars that rocked central Vietnam in the 20th century. "Death is a part of our lives every day. We are poor, and when we hear about storms, we still have to keep up with our daily lives or we starve." During the storm, her aluminum hut collapsed, leaving her homeless for two days.

## Fatah, Hamas Eye Truce, But Hurdles Remain

REUTERS

GAZA STRIP - Hamas and Fatah, the warring parties that have divided the Palestinian territories, may agree this month to an Egyptian-brokered deal that sketches out a path to peace between them, but which also faces many further obstacles.

Officials close to the negotiations, which have been going on for much of the two years since Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip in a brief civil war, said on Sunday a deal may be signed in Cairo on Oct 22. Talks are due to begin on Oct 19.

Despite frequent meetings in Egypt, the Islamist Hamas and secular Fatah, led by President Mahmoud Abbas, have missed several previous deadlines. The deal would map out a process of reconciliation, intended to culminate in presidential and parliamentary elections.

Both sides are sounding more positive on the chances of signing an accord this time, which would start the countdown toward elections in late June. But officials are still cautious on the chances of seeing the process through, given the deep resentments felt on either side.

Mohammad Dahlan, a Gaza-born senior figure in Fatah, now based with Abbas in the Israeli-occupied West Bank said much depended on clarifications Abbas would be seeking on Hamas' final offer when he met Egyptian intelligence chief Omar Suleiman in the Jordanian capital Amman yesterday.

"There is a difference between what we are hearing from our brothers in Egypt and the positive statements by Khaled Meshaal," Dahlan said of the Egyptian mediators and the Syria-based leader of Hamas. The Islamists have said they expect to sign a revised reconciliation pact later this month.

"There are still sticking points," Dahlan said on Sunday.

Among these was Fatah's rejection of a call in the draft pact for a joint committee of members from Hamas, Fatah and other political parties that would liaise between the internationally isolated Hamas government in Gaza and Abbas's Western-backed Palestinian Authority in Ramallah.



Reuters

A girl displaced by the ongoing fighting in northwestern Yemen washes clothes in al-Mazraq refugee camp near the Saada province. The camp's roughly 6,000 inhabitants left their villages due to the conflict between rebel Shiite Muslims and the government forces.

## UAE On Track for First Nuclear Plant 2017

BY NOUR MALAS  
THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

ABU DHABI, United Arab Emirates - The United Arab Emirates on Sunday issued a nuclear-energy law that brings the oil-rich Persian Gulf state a step closer to implementing a peaceful nuclear-energy program and establishes a local regulatory authority to oversee it.

The Federal Law Regarding the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy provides for "the development of a robust system for the licensing and control of nuclear material," and criminal penalties for its misuse, the Ministry of Presidential Affairs said in a statement.

Federal Law No 6, which was issued by UAE President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, establishes the independent Federal Authority of Nuclear Regulation to oversee the country's nuclear energy sector, and appoints the regulator's board.

It also reiterates the UAE's pledge not to domestically enrich uranium as part of its plans to build nuclear power plants, the first of which is slated for commercial operation in 2017. The law makes it illegal to develop, construct or operate uranium enrichment or spent fuel-processing facilities within the country's borders.

"The Government is in very advanced stages of its evaluation of the potential for a peaceful nuclear energy program in the United Arab Emirates," said Hamad Al Kaabi, the UAE's permanent representative to the International Atomic Energy Agency at a press briefing.

The UAE government "has made a commitment in its nuclear

energy law to forego domestic enrichment and reprocessing of nuclear materials," Kaabi said, adding that the country "can achieve the necessary degree of fuel security through reliance upon the mature and diverse international fuel services market without resort to domestic enrichment or reprocessing."

Kaabi also said the bilateral agreement for peaceful nuclear cooperation between the UAE and the US, or the 123 Agreement, could come into force at the end of October, when a mandatory 90-day period of Congressional review is expected to end.

"Depending on changes in the Congressional calendar, the mandatory review period could end as the last week in October, at which point the agreement would come into force," Kaabi said. The UAE last year first announced plans to pursue a nuclear energy program to meet a projected surge in demand for electricity and sustain its economic development. It set up government bodies and drafted a policy paper and law to evaluate how best to implement the program under the IAEA's guidance.

The law passed Sunday, which had been awaiting the president's signature, "represents a key component of the necessary legal infrastructure" to begin implementing the program, the statement said.

William Travers, a former IAEA technical advisor and executive director of the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission, will serve as the UAE regulator's first director general.

Meanwhile, the UAE cabinet of ministers appointed the authority's

management board Sunday, naming Ahmed Al Mazroui as chairman and eight other officials from across various policy disciplines as members.

"We fully understand the unrivaled importance of safety with regard to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and are committed to ensuring that the benefits of peaceful nuclear energy...are only made available in a manner that does not compromise public safety or the environment," Mazroui said in the statement.

The law provides "mechanisms to preserve [the authority's] regulatory independence and fiscal sustainability," including "significant legal protections designed to prevent any conflict of interests" with the board members' roles as regulators, the statement said.

It also brings into effect parts of the nuclear-energy program outlined in a policy paper in April 2008, in which the UAE outlined its interest in building nuclear power plants to meet soaring electricity demand and pledged to adopt all required international agreements for a peaceful nuclear energy program.

The policy paper outlined six points on operational transparency, commitment to nonproliferation, safety and security standards, cooperation with the IAEA, cooperation with international governments and organizations and long-term sustainability.

Annual peak demand for electricity in the UAE is likely to rise to more than 40,000 megawatts by 2020, which represents a cumulative annual growth rate of about 9 percent from 2007 onwards, according to the paper.

## OPINION

# The European Union Is Finally Coming Together, Sort Of

EDITORIAL  
THE GUARDIAN

The Lisbon treaty has had so many setbacks in the eight long years of its inception that even if it comes into force by the end of the year, it is likely to be the last major treaty the European Union signs. Try as they might to rename the baby, its birth pangs have been so painful that this child will be the EU's last. Its passage has evoked such powerful Euro-sceptic currents that by default it has established the opposite of what it set out to achieve—the limits of European integration and expansion. Croatia and possibly Iceland will join, but Turkey and Ukraine seem less, not more, likely to do so.

That said, Ireland's emphatic endorsement at the weekend will now lead to a rush to conclude the business. At least two remaining obstacles lie in the treaty's path (Finland has an issue with the Aland Islands, an autonomous archipelago in the Baltic sea, but this is being treated by the Swedish presidency as an internal matter). The Czech president, Vaclav Klaus, and his Polish counterpart, Lech Kaczynski, have both to sign the treaty, although their parliaments have approved it.

Of the two, the more serious threat to ratification is presented by the Euro-sceptic, right-wing Klaus, a climate change denier who believes that snowboards, bottled water and backpacks are leftist. A

group of senators close to the Czech president have filed a complaint to the country's constitutional court claiming that the treaty lays the foundation for a superstate. Klaus initially hoped the court would take months to deliver its ruling, giving David Cameron time to come to power as the prime minister who promised a referendum if the treaty was not already in force. But on Saturday at least, Klaus was downbeat about the chances of holding another referendum in Europe on the subject. Klaus told the Tories not to depend on a Czech delay, warning British Euro-sceptics that they may have left it too late.

If Klaus is right to say that his powers are waning then a succession of major decisions will be

taken in relatively short order. Tony Blair, the frontrunner candidate for new post of president, may overcome the doubts of the German chancellor, Angela Merkel, partly because he could be seen as a way of neutralizing the dangers posed by a future Tory British prime minister. Besides, the job of president is what he makes of it. The more defined post is that of the EU foreign policy chief, a foreign minister in all but name, which would probably go to a Christian Democrat.

For Britain, and for Cameron in particular, the message is clear. The EU is getting its act together, and the question once again is whether Britain wants to be part of it. The choice should be obvious.

## *In Defense of the Insult, or 'The Right To Offend, Shock or Disturb'*

BY L GORDON CROVITZ  
THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

In today's world of instant global communication, disagreements happen more quickly and resentments get established in real time. Just as the British and Americans have been called two nations divided by a common language, today we all share the Internet, yet we are divided by the instant communicating that digital technology makes possible.

Recall the incident in 2005, when a Danish newspaper printed a dozen cartoons featuring the Prophet Muhammad, including one with a bomb in his turban. Posting the cartoons on the Web resulted in protests in much of the Muslim world, including riots and deaths. The bomb-in-the-turban cartoonist, Kurt Westergaard, has received death threats and lives under 24-hour police protection in Copenhagen. Last week he visited the US, with the message that when it comes to insult and humor, there is little common ground around the world.

"As the Danish tradition is for satire, we say you can speak freely, you can vote, you can speak out any time, but there's only one thing you can't do—you can't be free of being mocked or being offended," Westergaard said in a speech in New York City. "That's the condition in Denmark."

Insults are a longstanding part of free expression in much of the West but are under pressure in our digital era of instantaneous communication. Instead of the Internet adding to freedom as we usually

assume it does, its global reach makes it an excuse for censorship. Many governments lobby for anti-insult laws, even though insults are a key means of criticism. Leaders of several Muslim countries have tried to get perceived insults to their religion reclassified as offenses.

The Jyllands-Posten newspaper solicited cartoons after threats to Danes by Islamists, including physical attacks on authors, musicians and academics. "In this situation the paper felt that it was imperative to test whether we still enjoyed free speech," Westergaard wrote in Princeton University's student newspaper last week. This included "the right to treat Islam, Muhammad and Muslims exactly as you would any other religion, prophet or group of believers. If we no longer had that right, one could only conclude that the country had succumbed to de facto sharia law."

As the cartoons spread on the Web, agitators in several countries fanned the flames by adding mocking cartoons and photos that had not actually appeared in the Danish newspaper. Danish embassies were burned in Syria, Lebanon and

Iran, and its exports were boycotted. Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen, now NATO's secretary-general, refused to apologize.

The issue faded until this August, when Yale University Press decided to remove the cartoons from a book it had agreed to publish called "The Cartoons That Shook the World," by Brandeis University Professor Jytte Klausen. Yale claimed that it was censoring not based on content but because of the risk of violence.

A group of Yale graduates sent a letter objecting. "I think it's horrifying that the campus of Nathan Hale has become the first place where America surrenders to this kind of fear because of what extremists might possibly do," said Michael Steinberg, one of the graduates.

Insults are under threat in many countries. The World Press Freedom Committee earlier this year published a survey, "The Right to Offend, Shock or Disturb," which details how laws against insults are being used to squelch free speech, including opposition to

the government.

Last year, French President Nicolas Sarkozy tried to use a 19th-century law against insulting the president to ban woodoo dolls featuring his likeness. The editor of another website in Saudi Arabia had to flee the country when he was accused of insulting Islam by criticizing the kingdom's religious police. And in 2007, a website in Russia was fined for publishing an article titled "Putin as Phallic Symbol of Russia," satirizing the prime minister's effort to increase the country's birthrate.

Contrast this with the admiration we have for great insults. Winston Churchill was the master of the putdown, dismissing various political opponents as "a modest man, who has much to be modest about," "a sheep in sheep's clothing," and someone who "has all the virtues I dislike and none of the vices I admire."

An article in Heeb, a self-mockingly named Jewish satire magazine, criticized Yale's censorship of the Danish cartoons: "While we would definitely be opposed to Yale University desecrating the Torah, we certainly wouldn't think it inappropriate if, in a book about the subject, they showed some photos of desecrated Torahs." The writer tried to follow Yale's contorted reasoning to justify the removal of the cartoons from a book about the cartoons, but gave up: "Who knows? We have no idea, but one thing is for sure—we know who we're rooting for in this year's Harvard-Yale game." Nice insult.

### The BURMA DAILY

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