

## RAIN DOES NOT QUELL BAY AREA SUPPORT FOR PRO-DEMOCRACY BURMESE MOVEMENT

Activists with Friends of South Asia and Burmese American Democratic Alliance urge Indian Government to end ties with Burmese military junta



**October 12 2007, San Francisco**, Amid persistent downpour, 40 activists with the Burmese American Democratic Alliance (BADA, [www.badasf.org](http://www.badasf.org)) and Friends of South Asia (FOSA, [www.friendsofsouthasia.org](http://www.friendsofsouthasia.org)) staged a rally in front of the Indian consulate in support of the Burmese pro-democracy movement, and to protest the Government of India's growing ties with the military junta in Burma. South Asian activists also submitted two petitions to the Indian Consul of Community Affairs, Mr. Prabhat Kumar Singh, urging the Indian government to immediately end its ties with the military regime in Burma and to use its authority in the region to demand that the Burmese military cease its repressive crackdown on protestors and monks in Burma. One petition had been endorsed by several Bay Area community groups including FOSA, BADA and ASATA (Alliance of South Asians Taking Action, [www.asata.org](http://www.asata.org)), and had already gathered over 300 individual signatures, while the other was an independent petition that originated with Indian activists, and had also collected over 300 signatures from across the world. Both these petitions are addressed to the Prime Minister of India and available at <http://www.petitiononline.com/fosaburm/> and [http://www.petitiononline.com/myanma\\_2/](http://www.petitiononline.com/myanma_2/)

“It is shameful that the Indian government is signing deals worth hundreds of millions of dollars with the Burmese military regime, even as that regime slaughters peaceful pro-democracy protestors,” said Nyunt Than, President of BADA. The Indian government is in the final stages of signing an agreement with the Burmese regime for US \$103 million investment in developing the port of Sittwe. In recent years, India has signed large contracts for gas exploration in Burma, prosecuted pro-democracy Burmese rebels in India and sold military equipment to the Burmese military junta.

This warming of ties between the Indian and Burmese regimes stands in sharp contrast with India's role as a leader of the Non-Aligned Movement and a supporter of non-violent, mass movements for political rights worldwide. Until a decade ago, India was a staunch supporter of the Burmese pro-democracy movement and conferred the prestigious Jawaharlal Nehru Award on Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in 1993; several hundreds of Burmese activists exiled by the military junta for participating in the pro-democracy movement are still living in India.

“We are demanding that the Indian government wake up to its moral obligation of supporting the non-violent movement for democracy in Burma, and demand that all political rights are restored to Aung San Suu Kyi and hundreds of other political activists like her who face severe repression at the hands of the brutal military regime. We believe that the strategic interests of the Indian people can never be served by maintaining close and friendly

ties with a government that has shown scant regard for the lives and rights of its own citizens,” said Yasmin Fatimah, who is a member of FOSA and originally from India herself.

Since the peaceful protests in Burma began in August, hundreds have been detained and up to 200 protesters and monks have been killed in the violent response of the military regime. The crackdown on the protesters is reminiscent of the military’s killing of thousands during the 1988 pro-democracy uprising spearheaded by students.

BADA and FOSA are community-based organizations in the San Francisco Bay Area. BADA has been advocating democracy and freedom for all the people of Burma since its founding in 2001. FOSA works towards a multicultural, pluralistic, and hate-free South Asia where the rights of all citizens are respected.

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