

Japan 'to freeze aid to Burma'

Tokyo (AFP) — The Japanese Government will freeze its economic aid to Burma in view of the prolonged political unrest in that country, the financial daily *Nihon Keizai Shimbun (Nikkei)* said yesterday.

The daily, quoting an unnamed high-ranking Foreign Ministry official, said the move followed reported criticism within Burma that Japanese aid has been contributing to maintaining prolonged one-party rule in that country.

Japan accounts for nearly 80 per cent of the total aid extended to Burma by developed countries. Official assistance from Tokyo has been between 40 billion and 50 billion yen (\$300 million to \$375 million) a year.

But Japan's sole economic aid provided to Burma this year was a debt-relief loan totalling 3.6 billion yen (\$27 million) in June, the report said.

The planned extension of an emergency aid programme scheduled for August to help promote food production and improve medical facilities has been stopped because of the political unrest, the report said.

Tokyo will freeze an official 33-billion-yen (\$248-million) loan promised for fiscal 1988, which ends next March, until Burma attains "liberty and democracy", the daily said.

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