THE ISSUES....

WHAT LIES BENEATH

Little public attention has been paid to the devastating impact landmines have on the people of Burma. This is despite the fact that Burma is second only to Afghanistan as the country faced with the most critical landmine problem in Asia and is now believed to surpass even Cambodia in the number of landmine casualties. Two foremost experts on the subject describe how the failure to eliminate or curb landmine use and manufacturing gives rise to a growing human tragedy.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Burma has produced a wealth of literary artists throughout the centuries. One of the country's most honored and prolific poets and essayists is U Tin Moe. Having left Burma in 1999, after nearly four years in prison for his support of the democracy movement, U Tin Moe continues to work at his craft. His poetry and writings are now banned in his home country, fortunately however, his words can still be heard and read by the world at large.

THE PRICE OF SURVIVAL

The more than one million Burmese migrants currently in Thailand represent one of the largest population flows in Asia. Many of these migrants were subjected to a range of hardships and human rights abuses in Burma and once in Thailand, their illegal status leaves them vulnerable to further exploitation and new dangers. Although the migrants are from diverse ethnic backgrounds, often lacking a common language even amongst themselves, a recently published study reveals a striking commonality: violence and the fear of violence dominates their lives, even their decisions concerning their health and well-being.
THE DEBATE

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Two Burmese Defense Products landmines found in Karen State. On left, the MM1 and in the center, the MM2. The MM2 is flanked by mines of unknown manufacture.

By Yeshua Moser-Paungsuwan

The decades-long conflict between Burma’s central government and its ethnic minorities over the control of ethnic states has resulted in landmine pollution that now ravages the country and its borders. A weapon that maims indiscriminately and whose vigilance never slackens, the landmine has become the source of prolonged suffering for the Burmese people. The number of landmine casualties in Burma is now believed to surpass even that of Cambodia, while at the same time, the manufacture of anti-personnel landmines is on the rise.

Since Burmese independence in 1948, fighting between the Burmese Army, the Tatmadaw, and armed insurgent groups or ethnic armies has involved a continued use of anti-personnel landmines. Landmine Monitor, a civil-society-based reporting network, has confirmed that the Tatmadaw and ten different ethnic armed organizations have used anti-personnel landmines within the country, despite the fact that the International Campaign to Ban Landmines defines these weapons as illegal under existing humanitarian law. Landmine pollution is now believed to affect 10 out of 14 of the states or divisions of Burma, in areas near its borders with Bangladesh, India and Thailand, where continuing conflicts have made the landmine a weapon of choice by both ethnic militias and the Burmese Army.

The Burmese military regime, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), has neither signed the Mine Ban Treaty nor participated in the Ottawa Process, an international effort instituted in 1997 to create a legally binding ban on the production, transfer and stockpiling of anti-personnel mines. According to the Landmine Monitor Report 2000, the government abstained from the 1999 UN General
Assembly vote in support of the Mine Ban Treaty describing the measure as "unnecessary and unjustified," and declaring that "the problem is the indiscriminate use of mines, as well as the transfer of them." The government maintains that, while it uses mines, it does not do so in an unregulated fashion.

Not only has the government failed to eliminate or curb its manufacture and use of anti-personnel landmines, confirmed sources report an increase in both.

Reports from other Burmese governmental agencies, however, contradict this contention. The Office of Strategic Studies (OSS) and the Directorate of Defense Services Intelligence (DDSI), the two governmental intelligence agencies, both deny that the army uses landmines, maintaining that the Tatmadaw no longer has need to do so. These agencies state the demise of the Communist Party of Burma in 1989, the surrender of drug lord Khun Sa's army in 1996, and the numerous ceasefires that have been negotiated with ethnic insurgent groups as reasons why landmines are no longer being used. According to the Landmine Monitor Report, the Myanmar Red Cross states that it has no plans to launch landmine awareness campaigns or direct research towards the assessment of mine victim needs. "The problem is going away," the Myanmar Red Cross has stated, implying that scarce resources should not be "wasted" on the problem.

Regardless of these differences in official policy, not only has the government failed to eliminate or curb its manufacture and use of anti-personnel landmines, confirmed sources report an increase in both. Myanmar Defense Industries currently is believed to manufacture at least five types of landmines — though only the MM-1 and MM-2 have been positively identified — that are highly explosive and are more likely to kill than to maim.

The indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines by all parties makes it impossible to ascertain the total number that has been laid in Burma during the last 50 years of conflict. While there is also no accurate method of determining how many victims landmines have claimed, the Landmine Monitor Report 2000 estimates that conflict in Burma resulted in approximately 1500 mine victims in 1999 alone. A calculation based on a 1998 compilation of statistics suggests that Karen State alone produced nearly one civilian landmine amputee per day.

The report also estimates a ratio of one civilian death for every two military casualties. It documents allegations that "the SPDC lays mines on KNLA [Karen National Liberation Army] supply lines, escape routes to the Thai border used by refugees, and around villages and fields that Karen people have fled or been forcibly [removed from]." While the Burmese government denies that the Tatmadaw has directed mining against civilians, the mining of cleared villages is a popular way to enforce the relocation of local populations. This strategy, called area denial, enables the Tatmadaw to obstruct access to food, supplies, and intelligence.

The Tatmadaw has been known to use the particularly gruesome practice of "human minesweeping." When the Burmese Army operates in areas that are suspected to contain mines, they sometimes require villagers of the local ethnic group to walk or drive their bullock carts in front of the soldiers in order to detonate mines. How many victims this practice has produced is unknown, but a Danish medical group, in a survey of refugees along the Thai/Burma border, claimed that either military portering or forced minesweeping was responsible for half of the landmine casualties. The SPDC maintains that the Tatmadaw does not engage in
human minesweeping.

The toll that landmine use has taken on the ethnic civilian populations is increasingly visible among the ethnic communities on the border. According to the Landmine Monitor Report, "in December of 1999, the Shan State Army (SSA) said that they have a military policy of 'no offensive mine use,' stating that it is 'dangerous for [Shan] villagers.'" When asked how many Shan people have been killed by their own mines, one ethnic military commander stated, "Half kill the enemy." After reflection on the matter, he went on to say, "The other half kill soldiers, kill our people and kill our animals. For us, mine warfare really doesn't make much sense."

The fallout of Burma's landmine pollution affects Bangladesh and Thailand, both of whom are party to the Mine Ban Treaty and have abolished the use or possession of anti-personnel landmines. The frontier Burma shares with Bangladesh hosts the longest minefield in the country. The junta laid the majority of these mines in 1991 after the mass exodus of Rohingya people [Burma's Muslim minority] from Rakhine State. In retaliation to reproach from the international community, the Burmese border patrols placed anti-personnel landmines along the length of its border with Bangladesh.

While the stated goal of this minefield is to prevent insurgent infiltration, most observers feel its main purpose is to halt the migration of Rohingya people by passing a de facto death sentence on asylum seekers. The Bangladesh Rifles have documented over 100 Bangladeshi citizens killed or injured by mines placed by the Burmese border force.

The government of Bangladesh has often voiced its rancor towards Burma's apathetic stance on the removal of the border minefield, most recently when an SPDC Foreign Minister visited Dhaka.

Humans are not the only mine victims.
Elephant victim in mined region of Burma-Bangladesh border 1999.
Although the reply from Rangoon over the years has always been conciliatory, no action has been taken. On the contrary, the Na Ka Sa division of the Tatmadaw assigned to the Bangladesh border actively maintains the minefield. Minefield pollution extends northward to Burma’s borders with the southeastern Indian states, where the warfare between the Tatmadaw and the Chin National Army continues.

Thailand has also suffered casualties from mines laid along the border with Burma, with a record of nearly 1,000 victims over the past 20 years. Thai authorities informed Landmine Monitor researchers that the Tatmadaw actively mines within the Thai border, charges that the SPDC denies. The report also states that mines laid by the government forces in 1999 and early 2000 resulted in Thai border officer casualties.

Not only are humans the victims of anti-personnel landmines, but more than 25 elephants on both the Bangladesh and Thai borders have also died or been maimed in recent years. Last year, Thai newsmedia championed the recovery of a female elephant landmine victim named Motala, inspiring donations for her care from across the nation. As of November 2000, Motala has survived and has been fit with a specially-built prosthetic leg.

The plight of landmine victims in Burma’s border regions has been compounded by the severe state of disrepair of the government healthcare efforts, as well as the nation’s fiscal problems. Care for landmine victims places yet another long-term economic strain on Burma’s devastated social system. The International Committee of the Red Cross estimates that over the lifetime of an amputee, costs for rehabilitation, prosthetic fitting and replacement costs over US$1,000 in a country like Burma. For a national healthcare system that has been ranked by
the World Health Organization just above Sierra Leone’s as the world’s most underresourced and that faces a rapidly intensifying battle with AIDS, the prospects for survivor assistance remain ominous. The SPDC currently spends about US$.50 per person, per year on healthcare.

Add to this bleak picture the border regions' shortage of healthcare resources and continual security problems, and the situation takes on an even grimmer tone. “I remember taking in an SPDC porter who stepped on a landmine. We could not contain his bleeding. He died,” a surgeon working on the Burmese/Thai border reported. The Landmine Monitor has recorded cases of mine victims en route to hospitals intercepted by Tatmadaw soldiers and instructed to turn back and not to disclose the cause of their wounds to others. According to the report, medical practitioners estimate that 50% of all landmine victims die before receiving medical care. An account from the Landmine Monitor Report tells of the efforts of an itinerant, ethnic-based medical organization called Back Pack Health Worker Team, whose medics are all trained in emergency amputation, often performed on plastic sheets inside huts. When encountered by Landmine Monitor researchers, they asked for bone saws, as theirs had long since grown dull.

The continued indiscriminate use of landmines augurs the protraction of the bloodshed and violence that has plagued Burma for decades. Furthermore, the growing production of munitions promises to fan the flames of the indiscriminate mine warfare in Burma. To combat these trends, the SPDC and all armed groups should be consistently pressed to cease mine use. Neighboring states who are party to the Mine Ban Treaty are being asked by the International Campaign to Ban Landmines to take a more pro-active diplomatic stance toward Burma’s use of mines. UN Agencies and other humanitarian aid groups should also call for an immediate halt to mine use by all ethnic combatants and the Burmese military. As long as the government and ethnic armies fail to heed these recommendations, they sow seeds of a destruction that will remain long after the fighting ends.

This article is drawn from the Landmine Monitor Report 2000, for which the author was the primary researcher on Burma. Landmine Monitor was established by the International Campaign to Ban Landmines to systematically monitor and document nations' compliance with the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty and the humanitarian response to the global landmine crisis. Landmine Monitor, which is made up of civil-based organizations, complements the existing state-based reporting and compliance mechanisms established by the Mine Ban Treaty. The Landmine Monitor Report 2000 is the network’s third annual report and was released just prior to the Third Meeting of States Parties in mid-September 2000.
It has been estimated that there are currently about 110 million uncleared anti-personnel (AP) landmines around the world, scattered through more than 70 countries. The serious social, economic and humanitarian problems posed by these weapons, and the thousands of casualties they cause every year, have prompted a major international campaign to ban their use. So far, 135 countries have signed or acceded to the 1997 Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction, commonly known as the Mine Ban Treaty (MBT). Ninety-four countries have formally lodged instruments of ratification.

However in all the literature produced on this subject to date and discussions of the mine problem in various international forums, mention is rarely made of Burma. This is despite the fact that anti-personnel landmines have long been, and are still being, manufactured and laid in large numbers in that country, with serious consequences for both combatants and non-combatants alike.
Landmines Used in Burma

A wide range of anti-personnel (AP) and anti-vehicle (AV) landmines have been used in Burma over the years. Details are hard to obtain, but it would appear that before 1988 the Burma Army had access to common Eastern-bloc stake-mounted fragmentation mines such as the Soviet-designed POMZ-2 and POMZ-2M.4 (China also makes versions of these mines, designated the Type 58 and Type 59 respectively.) ...Over the past few years the Tatmadaw’s supplies of these mines have apparently been boosted by a locally produced version of the POMZ-2, designated the MM-1. Another kind of stake-mounted fragmentation mine, quite similar in appearance to the POMZ-2 and POMZ-2M, has also been made and used in Burma in the past, but has yet to be fully identified.5

Before 1988 Burma’s arms factories also made a simple pressure-activated AP blast mine, which was issued to the Tatmadaw for use against insurgents. This weapon, however, has not yet been identified. Given the seminal influence of the Germans on mine warfare, and the technical assistance
provided to the Burmese arms industry by the German government during the 1960s and 1970s, it is possible that the Tatmadaw’s AP blast mine around this time was a modified German design. Alternatively it could have been a copy of one of the more common Eastern-bloc mines, like the Soviet PMN AP blast mine.

China, Singapore, Pakistan and Israel all produce landmines and are the most likely countries to have included such weapons in their arms shipments to Burma.

Before the collapse of the CPB [Communist Party of Burma] in 1989, China provided it with large numbers of Type 58 AP blast mines (a close copy of the Soviet PMN mine). These mines appear also to have been acquired by other insurgent groups, some of which have continued to use them to this day. More recently, they have been adopted by the Burma Army as one of its standard landmines. The Type 53, or at least a very close copy, is now being manufactured in Burma at a new Chinese-built factory in central Burma, under the local designation MM-2. According to the Karen Human Rights Group and International Campaign to Ban Landmines, the MM-2 is ‘modeled on a cheap Chinese-made mine which is flat, round and partly made of plastic; however, the Burmese version is made of metal.’ This type of mine usually weighs about 550 grams, almost half of which is the TNT explosive charge. In recent years, insurgent groups have encountered large numbers of these mines, and the Royal Thai Army has cleared many mines of this type, with recognizable Burmese government markings, from along the international border.

It appears that before 1988, the Tatmadaw also imported (or was given as part of military aid packages) a number of other AP and AV landmine types. These would have probably come from countries like the United Kingdom, the United States, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, all of which provided arms to Burma at one time or another. It is also believed that the United States and perhaps a number of other countries (like Yugoslavia) provided anti-tank mines to Burma in the 1950s and possibly the 1960s. For example, the US M-7 A2 anti-tank mine was once widely employed by the Burma Army, but it is not known if this is still the case. Given the restrictions placed on U.S. arms sales to Burma since 1988, this seems unlikely, unless copies have been manufactured locally or acquired on the black-market.

Since the Tatmadaw took back direct control of the country in 1988, and created the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), it has faced an arms embargo at the hands of its traditional suppliers. This embargo has continued under the SLORC’s successor, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), which was created in 1997 to give the impression of a change in government, and a new set of policies. As a consequence of this ban, the Burmese armed forces have been forced to look further afield and now rely on a much wider range of sources for their arms and military equipment. Most have come from China, which since 1989, has become Rangoon’s staunchest ally, but Singapore, Pakistan, Israel, Russia, have also supplied arms and ammunition to Burma’s military regime over the past 12 years. Few have done so openly, and a number have even denied their relationship with Rangoon in order to escape international criticism. China, Singapore, Pakistan and Israel all produce landmines and are the most likely of these countries to have included such weapons in their arms shipments to Burma.

For example, there is strong evidence that since 1989, after the CPB collapsed and bilateral relations with China rapidly improved, the Beijing government has supplied Burma with a variety of anti-personnel landmines. In addition to those weapons noted above, one well-informed source in Rangoon has suggested that arms shipments from China have included the Type 69 AP bounding fragmentation mine, similar in design and function to the American-made M-16, popularly known as the “Bouncing Betty.” Both U.S. and Chinese mines of this type have been used by the Tatmadaw in oper-
LANDMINES USED IN BURMA

The following table lists all those landmines known or believed to have been used by the Tatmadaw and insurgent groups in Burma since 1948. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the details provided, the dearth of reliable information about this subject means that the list cannot be considered exhaustive. It is suspected, for example, that the United Kingdom or the United States provided Burma with a quantity of war surplus landmines after independence. Nor does this list include the landmines and improvised explosive devices manufactured by the various insurgent groups.

The identification of the type, original design and current manufacturer of these mines has been based on all the information available, but should not be considered authoritative. Where it has been difficult to differentiate between close copies of the same mine (such as the Russian POMZ-2 and Chinese Type 58) all major variants have been listed. Mines designed by the former Soviet Union have been listed as 'USSR', but have been widely copied by other members of the old Eastern bloc. For consistency, hyphens have been inserted in the designations of some mines, for example MM-1.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>TYPE</th>
<th>DESIGN</th>
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ations against Karen insurgents in Irrawaddy and Tenasserim divisions. Large numbers of Chinese Type 72 AP landmines have also been acquired by the Burma Army in recent years. This cheaply-produced, plastic-bodied blast mine is small enough to fit into a person's hand, but has a potent TNT/RDX explosive charge. In addition, there has been at least one report of a Chinese Type 59 'shoebox' AP mine (a copy of the ubiquitous Russian PMD-6 mine).

Like the armed forces, Burma's various insurgent groups have acquired their landmines from many sources. They have bought U.S., Russian and Chinese mines on the black-market or, as in the case of the CPB, were directly supplied by China. [Black-market sources] seem to have included large quantities of US M-14 AP blast mines (or at least copies of the M-14 made in Singapore or Vietnam). These small, plastic-bodied mines contain nearly 30 grams of tetryl explosive and are very difficult to detect. At least four different insurgent groups have them in their inventories. Chinese Type 58 and Type 59 stake mines, and Type 58 AP blast mines are also common. Other weapons obtained from black-market traders have included US M-18 Claymore directional mines and possibly even the smaller Thai version of this mine, known as the Model 123 "mini-Claymore." Sometimes a number of insurgent groups have joined together to obtain supplies. Other mines suspected of having been supplied to Burma since 1988 include the Italian VS-50 blast mine and Valmera 69 bounding mine, but to date this has not been confirmed. Both are modern, minimum-metal weapons, with proven capabilities. The Defense Services Historical Museum in Rangoon, which has recently added a large display about mine warfare in Burma, includes exhibits of the Chinese Type 59 AT mine, the Israeli No. 26 AT mine, and the Italian VS 1.6 mine. The Type 59 mine (a copy of the Soviet TMN-46 AT blast mine) could have been acquired during operations against the CPB before 1989, or alternatively could have been provided to the Tatmadaw by a range of other countries (like Israel) which also produce this particular weapon. It is possible that the more modern Italian and Israeli mines are currently being used by the Burma Army, but this cannot yet be confirmed.

There have been several reports of at least two other AP mines being used in Burma, which have yet to be clearly identified. A number of organizations in close touch with villagers along the Thai-Burma border, such as the Karen Human Rights Group, Non-Violence International and the Jesuit Refugee Service, have all reported that the Burma Army uses a landmine [that] they have described as the M-76. This is in fact the LTM-76. There is also an almost identical mine known as the LTM-73. There is some confusion over whether these mines are imported by the Tatmadaw or are manufactured locally.

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Supplies of black-market mines have tended to fluctuate over the years, but there has always been someone willing and able to provide them to Burmese insurgent groups. For example, the wars in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia over the past 40 years saw a massive influx of weapons into the region, many of which were diverted to the black-market by Vietnamese, Khmer, and Thai traders. Additional arms were stolen from RTA [Royal Thai Army] armories, or from aid shipments to Thailand by the United States. Sometimes a number of insurgent groups have joined together to obtain supplies.
Prices have varied but many mines are now very cheap. For example, according to the ICBL, in 1999 a U.S.- or Vietnamese-made M-14 anti-personnel mine cost about US$5.00, while a M-18 Claymore mine sold for about $11.00. The Chinese Type 72 AP blast mine is widely available on the world market for about US$3.00 each. It is sometimes sold for as little as US$1.00. While Burmese insurgent groups had goods to sell, and could tax the cross-border trade with Thailand, trade in such weapons was brisk. Since 1988, however, the income of some groups has dropped markedly, forcing them to rely more on locally made IEDs. Those insurgent groups trading in narcotics, however, still have the funds to buy large numbers of commercially made landmines.

**Landmine Manufacture in Burma**

While the military regime in Rangoon has always been able to find countries willing to sell it arms, even after the imposition of an embargo by the Western democracies, it has never been comfortable relying on foreigners for essential military supplies. Since the late 1950s, the Tatmadaw has gradually built up an extensive network of its own defense industries, capable of producing a range of basic arms and ammunition, including anti-personnel and anti-vehicle landmines. There is strong evidence that in recent years this capability has been significantly increased.

For many years before the SLORC’s takeover in 1988, Burma had the means to produce its own landmines. From 1957 onwards, with considerable help from the West German government, General Ne Win’s military regime built a number of factories capable of manufacturing automatic rifles, machine guns, grenades, mortars and small-arms ammunition. In the late 1960s, the Germans helped to build a plant designed to make high explosives for both military and civilian use. A second high-explosive filling plant, based on the manufacture of TNT, was constructed in the early 1980s. Most of these factories were situated in a heavily guarded defense industrial complex on the western side of the Irrawaddy River near Prome. There were a number of other plants near Magwe. Known as Ka Pa Sa factories (after the initials of Karkweye Pyitsu Setyou, the Burmese name for the Directorate of Defense Industries), these factories were under the direct control of the Ministry of Defense. Given their level of sophistication, and the quality of technical advice available from Germany, these factories would have found the manufacture of basic AP and AV landmines a relatively simple task.

While details are difficult to obtain, it would appear that most of the mines produced in these factories were copies of proven models with which the Burma Army was already familiar. These included common Eastern-bloc, stake-mounted, fragmentation AP mines, like the POMZ-2 and P0MZ-2M. As noted above, Burma has also manufactured another stake mine, very similar to the POMZ-2, which has yet to be clearly identified. It is possible that it is a local variant, perhaps modeled on a Yugoslav AP stake mine like the old PMR-1. A blast AP mine was also produced, although it has been described by a Burmese army officer as being: “…of poor quality, little better than those used by the insurgent groups. The trip plates were steel and tended to rust. It did not last more than six years.”

In mid-February 2000 this landmine was uncovered on a hillside path near Yah Aw in central Shwegyin township, Nyaunglebin District. It is a Burmese-made MM2 anti-personnel landmine. The path is reportedly used by internally displaced villagers in the forest.
cle mines were probably also made, although the nature of the insurgent wars being fought in Burma would have meant that priority was given to the production of AP mines.32

While the output from these factories was probably able to satisfy the Burma Army’s basic needs before 1988, it does not appear to have been enough for the new generation of military leaders [that] came to power that year. About two years ago, a secret agreement was reportedly signed with China for the construction of a completely new factory near Meiktila, in central Burma, solely to produce landmines. Although different sources disagree on the progress made on the factory since then, it is clear that serial production of some basic mine types is already well advanced.33 This initiative seems to have been prompted in part by the expansion and modernization of the Tatmadaw since 1988. Despite the reduction in threats to the Rangoon government, Burma’s military capabilities are being dramatically increased in almost all categories. The construction of this new factory also seems to be part of a wide-ranging import substitution program, aimed at reduction of Rangoon’s dependence on foreign military suppliers.34 Rangoon’s very close relationship with China, particularly as an arms supplier, would make the People’s Republic the logical choice to build such a plant.

From the limited information available, this new factory produces at least two types of AP landmines, designated the MM-1 and the MM-2. Some reports list as many as five types in production. As noted above, the MM-1 is essentially the Chinese Type 59 stake-mounted fragmentation mine with slight modifications to the detonator and weather cap. As the Chinese Type 59 is a close copy of the old Soviet POMZ and POMZ-2M mines, it would already be familiar to the Burma Army. The MM-2 design closely follows that of China’s Type 58 AP blast mine, itself a copy of the old Soviet PMN landmine. Two variants of the MM-2 have been confirmed. One has the usual arming assembly and detonator plugs on opposite sides of the mine body. The other, found on the Bangladesh border, appears only to have the arming mechanism on the side of the mine.35 All these mines can be manufactured very cheaply, using relatively simple technology. The characteristics of the MM-3, MM-4, and MM-5 landmines are still unknown, although it is possible that one is an anti-vehicle mine. Burma’s locally produced directional mine may have also been given a new “MM” designation (possibly the MM-5). Following the practice adopted by Burma’s defense industries in the past, it is presumed that these “MM” designations mean (in English) Myanmar Mine 1, Myanmar Mine 2, and so on.36

Most informed Burma-watchers believe that China is still providing technical assistance and spare parts for the Meiktila factory, as well as some of the key components used in the manufacture of these mines.37 There are also rumors in Rangoon that Singapore (which manufactures its own range of plastic-bodied AP an AV mines, including some foreign designs under license) may have assisted in the establishment and operation of this plant. Singapore is secretly assisting Burma in other areas of arms manufacture, for example in the production of a new family of infantry weapons, but claims that it is also helping to produce landmines in Burma cannot be substantiated.38 If Singapore is involved in this trade, it is more likely to be exporting finished mines to Burma from its own factories. It is expected that even-
tually the Burmese armed forces will seek to become completely independent in the production of basic types of anti-personnel and anti-vehicle landmines.

Most Burmese insurgent groups have maintained workshops in which to repair and manufacture weapons, including landmines. Before the fall of Manerplaw in early 1995, for example, each KNLA brigade had its own arsenal and there was a large and well-equipped workshop in the headquarters compound. Through long familiarity, trial and error, and even some assistance from foreign mercenaries, the KNLA and other insurgent groups have become well acquainted with a wide range of civil and military explosives, including gunpowder (black powder), dynamite, gelignite, TNT, RDX, amatol, C-4 and nitro-methane compounds. Some groups are known to have shared their knowledge about the manufacture of landmines and other IEDs.

After the collapse of the CPB in 1989, however, the drug lord Khun Sa probably had the greatest capacity among all of Burma's insurgent groups and narcotics-based armies to manufacture and use landmines. At his Ho Mong base camp he established a well-equipped arsenal, with lathes and furnaces for smelting iron, reportedly staffed by 200 MTA [Mong Tai Army] technicians. This arsenal also stored about 40-50 tons of TNT. When Khun Sa surrendered in 1996, the Burma Army took possession of, and reportedly destroyed, more than 2,000 landmines. Most appear to have been small AP mines but Khun Sa also had a stock of large AV mines that he claimed was to protect his camp from "external aggression." It is not known what specific kinds of mines were being manufactured at Ho Mong or held in the MTA's inventory, but they are most likely to have been copies of the simpler locally produced AP mines, like the POMZ-2. According to one weapons expert, these sorts of mines are "simple enough to be produced in back-street workshops."

Other insurgent groups have not had the funds, expertise or facilities to make landmines of this kind, or on this scale. Most have tended to rely on booby-traps and other Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). Explosives have been manufactured, obtained commercially, bought on the black-market or stolen from quarries in Burma and surrounding countries. They have been placed in any available container — usually plastic pipes, empty food tins or even pieces of bamboo. Sometimes bottles have been used, since the glass readily fragments. Metal waste, shotgun pellets and nails have been added as shrapnel, to give the IED greater lethality. Electric detonators have been obtained from the same quarries or industrial sites. Trip plates are usually made of wood and wire and linked to a common dry cell battery. These improvised mines are quite effective at close ranges, but usually have a limited life, often no more than six months, as the batteries tend to run out of power after that time. Also, they are often susceptible to the weather. Some insurgent groups are also reported to make crude directional mines, while mortar bombs and unexploded ordnance of all calibers have been rigged to function as landmines.

A number of insurgent groups have also purchased or made anti-vehicle landmines, some powerful enough to blow up trucks and even derail trains. In 1993, for example, Mon insurgents were held responsible for a number of civilian deaths when a landmine blew up a transport train in Burma. More recently, the KNLA was accused by the Rangoon regime of laying a landmine that blew up a minibus, killing seven civilians and injuring ten others, (the KNU denied the charge, claiming that the mine had been set by the Burma Army, or DKBA as a way of extorting money from civilian busline operators.)

While the manufacture of IEDs usually suggests difficulties in obtaining commercially produced landmines, some insurgent groups are adept at making such weapons in large numbers. For example, two stockpiles of landmines currently in the hands of...
ethnic military forces, mostly of indigenous construction, are estimated to number in the thousands.

Such is the demand for landmines in Burma, that all stocks produced appear to have been used in-country. There have been no reports of either the Rangoon regime or any insurgent group exporting landmines to another country. The Tatmadaw has, however, transferred landmines to pro-Rangoon groups like the DKBA for use against other insurgents. It has also been reported that the Burma Army provides landmines to Lahu mercenaries whom the regime has employed against insurgent groups in the Shan State.

Conclusion
In these circumstances, the outlook for Burma is not encouraging. Indeed, [the outlook] is for the continuing manufacture and indiscriminate use of antipersonnel mines by the Burmese armed forces, including in populated areas. It is highly unlikely that the regime will accept any restrictions on the use of these weapons, particularly if they are proposed by outside agencies like the United Nations. Non-governmental organizations, like the International Campaign Against Landmines, are not likely to fare any better in their attempts to persuade Burma's military leadership to accept restrictions on the way it wages war. While some of Burma's insurgent groups have negotiated ceasefires with the regime, others will continue to employ landmines and explosive booby traps in their long-running struggle against the central government, using whatever resources they can obtain. Even in areas where ceasefires prevail, no demining programmes are likely to be introduced.

Thus, all the signs [point to the likelihood] that landmines will remain a major feature of armed conflict in Burma for many years to come. Even if mine warfare doctrines improve and greater care is taken to record the whereabouts of minefields, the inevitable result will be further casualties, as both combatants and non-combatants alike are killed and maimed by these weapons, in a part of the world which has not known peace for more than 60 years.

This is an excerpt from Working Paper No. 352 of the same title, published by the Strategic Defense Studies Centre of the Australian National University, Canberra, November 2000.
Ever since Burma began manufacturing its own munitions, it has tended to use designations based on set prefixes, (such as BA for 'Burma Army' and MA for 'Myanmar Army') and a number — sometimes related to the date of the first manufacture. For example, the BA-52 sub-machine gun was first manufactured by the Burma Army in 1952. The designation BAAC-87 was given to the Burma Army Armored Car developed in 1987. With some modifications, this style of naming locally-produced weapons and ammunition seems to have survived the advent of the SLORC in 1988. See also Supradit Kanawanich, 'Caught in the crossfire', Bangkok Post, 30 August 1998.

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One of the country’s leading writers and a Poet Laureate of Burma, U Tin Moe has published over 30 books. Born in 1933, he began writing poetry and essays in 1959 and has won numerous literary awards throughout his career. U Tin Moe became involved in the pro-democracy movement during 1988. As a result, he was imprisoned in Insein jail from 1991 until February of 1995. All his published works are banned in Burma. U Tin Moe left the country in April of 1999 and currently lives abroad.

The following interview was aired on Radio Free Asia (RFA) in September 2000, and conducted by RFA correspondent Dr. Kyi May Kaung. The interview and poetry were translated for Burma Debate by Dr. Kaung. It appears here with the permission of RFA.
**Sobs**

An intake of breath  
A sliver of glass  
Old decades of years  
cannot consider  
In these years the bees cannot  
make honey the mushrooms  
cannot sprout  
All the fields are out of  
crops Dry.

The mist is damp  
The storm is dim  
The dust rising in clouds.  
Along the road where  
the bullock cart  
has traveled.

Encircled by thorns  
the Ula-naung tree its trunk  
cat’s-claw scratched is trying  
to bloom.

It does not rain.

When it does — it’s not enough  
to soak the earth.

In the monastery at  
the edge of the village  
bells  
are not heard. If they are  
they do not enter the ears  
blissfully  
There are no novices  
orange-clad  
zilch of sounds of young  
voices  
reciting the scriptures only the  
*kappi/a* attendant  
with his  
shaved head falls between the  
pillars and the columns of the  
building.

The earth doesn’t dare  
to put forth fruit  
It abandons all  
and looks at me  
at once feeling embarrassed  
and frightened as if she  
cannot talk.

When will the sobs change  
and the bells ring sweetly again?
U TIN MOE • I first started writing poetry at about age 15 or 16. I would write and then try sending out my compositions to magazines. My main influence was reading Minthuwun *The bye nyo*. That gave me the desire to write poetry. As for how to write, I learned to compose poetry at the university. We also had selected prose samples and examples of poetry to read in [the] monastery.

I like reading historical poems, also *khitsati* poetry (contemporary poems of the colonial period). As far as contemporary work, I take great pleasure in reading the poetry of Dagon Ta Yar and Kyi Aye. Now, poetry is my main pursuit and obsession.

DR. KYI MAY KAUNG • Have you written prose, too?

U TIN MOE • I have written some short essays, also articles about literature for newspapers. Later on I had these essays compiled and published as *The Seven Stars*. And I've written a few short stories. I could say the genres in which I am most comfortable are essays and poetry.

DR. KYI MAY KAUNG • When did you start writing poetry?

U TIN MOE • I didn't dare to call myself a poet for quite some time. It's not so easy to call oneself a poet, but in 1959 — while I was at Mandalay University — I brought out my first poetry collection. This collection was called *Poems of the Glass Lantern*. When I published this collection I was quite tentative; I had quite a bit of trepidation. In those days you didn't publish a poetry collection just like that. Peer pressure was quite strong. Saya Zawgyi, Saya Minthuwun, Ngwe Tar Yi, Daw Nu Yin, Min Yu Wei — there were very few real poets. But I took a chance and tried publishing my poetry and this little poetry book won the National Poetry Prize of the Burma Translation Society, which had been founded by U Nu. After that I had more confidence and courage and I was able to keep writing poetry consistently.

DR. KYI MAY KAUNG • How many poems have you written?

U TIN MOE • Well I haven't counted them, but I write poetry all the time, even when I am traveling. And also when I was living in Rangoon. Whether I got permission to publish from the junta or not, I myself was continuously writing poetry.

DR. KYI MAY KAUNG • Do you have time set aside to write?

U TIN MOE • In the past I never had time specifically set aside to write — I could "write" as I went about my work, as I walked about, and so on. Then the first opportunity I had, I would sit down and use that little piece of inspiration to write a poem.

But now, the mornings have become my time for writing poetry — when I first get up, around 5 am. During the day, everything I see or feel gets stored up in my brain and then I write it down as poetry.

DR. KYI MAY KAUNG • Has your style or subject matter changed over time?

U TIN MOE • It has. When I was younger I wrote about my village, my neighborhood, about the place I came from. About upper Burma — the customs, the pagoda festivals. About harvesting peanuts. I was born and grew up in Taungtha Township — so I wrote about it with a sense of great affection. But as I grew older and more educated, [my] world...
New Pages

With one great sigh
so early in the morning
I heave myself out
of bed.

Among the skyscrapers that hit the clouds
the car horns going pipi pipie
the trains full of people la sisie
the world that stays current with the age
with rapid rat feet
I have to find a place
where
I can reside
and be safe.

Find my own cool pot
of village water, on
a stand for strangers, by the roadside
Ye kyan sin.

Only in old age
when infirmity is catching up with me
do I have to undertake
this long journey
of many steps.

On yesterday's pages
I wrote out the history
so many instances of
so many mistakes
how bitter the taste
of all those mistakes.

Among the ruined temples
of Pagan the ox cart wheels' axles
make a squeaking
sound.

Here, the car engines cough
into action, in an airplane ( have arrived
at the edge of the continent of
North America.

Will I be able
old and alone as I am
to change the course of history
to edit the past
how will I manage to do
all
this.

But old as I am
I still have the unrended flag
of my heart's spirit still
waving undaunted.

I can raise up my spirits.

Holding my hand
a lantern of light
drinking a potion to keep me
forever young, I go again to battle singing
a song
of my own
devising.

That sigh that is let out
it's not
the sign of a deep depression
it is only
the swish of another page turning
another page
of my own and my country's
dark history.

This poem was recently composed by U Tin Moe and is published for the first time in Burma Debate. Translation © 2000 Kyi M. Kaung
Before 1988, I did not write much that could be said to be political, but after the mass pro-democracy movement that started in 1988, politics became a part of the lives of the people of Burma. And so I, as one man, one person, amongst the people of Burma — I also wanted to be free. I was dissatisfied with the oppression. I do not like being bound up. I also wanted to breathe the zephyrs of freedom, the little fresh breezes. And in 1988, I wrote the most poems because of these feelings. And till now I want to be free. I have the desire for freedom. I value freedom and peace.

I want my country to develop and be prosperous. Because of these thoughts I have been writing more since 1988, and of course the subject matter has been changing.

**DR. KYI MAY KAUNG** • Do you have a favorite among your poems?

**U TIN MOE** • Well, I don't really have a favorite poem — it's rather hard to say. There are quite a few poems, and it's not that I like some more than others, but the poem that was presented for the 10th grade (standard) curriculum, To Grandfather Thakin Kodaw Hmaing (Ah Hpo Thakin Kodaw Hmaing), I liked quite a lot.

Also the poems I wrote after 1970 — in the seventies — about 1972, The Desert Years. I don't know if they are good or not good, but yes, there are certain poems I like better than others.

**DR. KYI MAY KAUNG** • You have devoted a portion of your creative energy to composing children's poetry. Do you have any particular inspiration in pursuing this genre?

**U TIN MOE** • Yes, I have been able to write quite a bit of children's poetry. My mentors in this were Saya Zawgyi and Saya Minthuwun. For me, these two fine gentlemen are the two great poets whom I hold in the deepest respect. I grew up with their poems and I like their work so much. Minthuwun's "Younger brother get up, dawn's bright beams are here" or his poem "The seller of flowers" or poems like:

In the months of Wasoe, Wagaung
The waters will flood
And let us pick up
Ripe Thabye fruit
I always feel that Saya Minthuwun's children's poems are so pure and clean, so full of the fresh breath of metta. And so I, too, felt like I wanted to write such clean and wholesome poems for young children. I kept Minthuwun's work as my model, my yardstick of excellence. And I started to write children's poetry myself. I have published several collections of children's poetry. But I began to feel that I could never really measure up to Saya Minthuwun's standards of purity and transparency.

DR. KYI MAY KAUNG • How old were you when you were arrested?

U TIN MOE • I was 58 or 59. I am now 66.

DR. KYI MAY KAUNG • Do you have plans to write about your prison experiences?

U TIN MOE • Yes, I do, but I went through so much in prison and had so many difficult emotions, that I haven't yet written specifically about being imprisoned. If I were really going to write about it, it could be divided into categories such as: prison and students, prison and the clergy, prison and the literary community, prison and politicians, and so on. There is so much to talk about. Prison and the yebet camps [special prison camps]. Yes the yebet camps. It breaks my heart to talk about these camps. It is all so pitiful. I doubt if even during the feudal times or the middle ages it was that bad. Only when I saw it myself, did I believe it. People suffer so much.

To be imprisoned. It's not just the one person who is arrested, but it's as if the whole family were incarcerated. There is so much anguish and trouble. Not only does the family lose the support of the one person in prison — and it's worse if that person is the principal "ricewinner" and the family depends on him — but the family has to send htung win sar or money for food and necessities for the one in prison and to earn that money. They have to struggle so hard. The life of the whole family changes, even if only one person, one family member, is imprisoned. It gives pain and suffering to the whole family.

Miss Red with Little Umbrella

Gracefully she comes
with her little umbrella.
Come on over come on over
Teacher is calling.

With her head held up at an angle
stridently she sings
recites her lessons In her
excellent recitations
Miss Red
is always
First.

Translation © 2000 Kyi M. Kaung
The impact of violence and fear on migrants' reproductive health

BY THERESE CAOUETTE

The Burmese soldiers would come to the village and force men and women to carry their ammunition that was very heavy. They would beat anyone who was slow and could not keep up. They treated women very badly and in the night they would rape us. They caught seven women from our village. They raped them all and one girl they kept for three days. Two of my nieces were among them. After that I left with my nieces and others from my village.

Shan woman, age 22, construction worker in Chiangmai

I tried to help some people out of the Thai police station. I went there and paid 13,000 baht for the release of two people. The people there asked me to help two women, a mother and her daughter whom the police and senior prisoners were raping all the time. The daughter was only about 17 or 18 years old and very beautiful. Before I could help, they both hung themselves. People said there were four other girls in police custody in a similar situation. It happens everyday.

Mon man, age 23, laborer in Mahachai

* A Shan Proverb
Migrants near Mae Sot, Thailand. Their illegal status makes them vulnerable to deportation.
INTRODUCTION

The massive influx of migrants from Burma into Thailand is one of the largest migrant populations in Asia. Over one million migrants from Burma are currently residing in Thailand. An ethnically diverse group coming from all over Burma and speaking many different languages, these migrants often lack a common language even among themselves. What they do share are encounters of fear and violence, that affect most facets of their lives.

During 1998, an Assessment of Reproductive and Sexual Health Perspectives, Concerns and Realities of Migrant Workers from Burma in Thailand was conducted under the guidance of Mahidol University’s Institute of Population and Social Research (IPSR). The recently published results of the study reveal that a fear of violence and a preoccupation with staying safe determines almost every aspect of the migrants’ lives, including their health care options and decisions.

The study highlights the extremely limited health services that exist in Burma as well as the problems encountered by migrants in Thailand such as the ready availability of medicines without access to health services or education. Consequently, people from Burma suffer from easily treatable conditions, presenting a health care crisis on both sides of the border. Most migrants from Burma in Thailand reside illegally and are generally unable to communicate in Thai. They are often in situations which leave them vulnerable to violence and abuse by employers, authorities and even each other. These experiences, coupled with fears of violence and exploitation, create a vacuum in which the migrants have few or no options for health services. This reality is further compounded by cultural mores and the lack of basic and reproductive health education, which lead to high maternal mortality and morbidity rates, unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions and sexually transmitted diseases (including HIV/AIDS).

GOVERNMENT POLICIES

In order to provide a context for analyzing the results of the study, it is important to examine the way in which official policies and governance in Burma and Thailand directly impact migration flows and the reproductive health status of the people from Burma. Recognition of these policies and conditions under which people live is critical to understanding why and how people migrate from Burma.

Migration in Burma

The one-party political system has been in place in Burma for nearly forty years repressing all opposition to its power and policies. The ethnic minority populations in particular have faced extensive violence and repression as a result of civil war and a nationalistic political system, which has not been open to cultural diversity, but rather has imposed a national language, culture and religion. In addition, the government of Burma has harassed, arrested and even killed many of those who in any way challenge this political system. The policies and violence that have suppressed the people of Burma has led to the displacement of millions both internally and across the borders into neighboring countries.

In 1987, the United Nations designated Burma as a Least Developed Country. The government of Burma’s policy, known as the Burmese Way to Socialism, promoted isolation that sealed the country off from the outside world and policies that further impoverished its citizens over decades. In 1988, the government of Burma introduced its "Open Door Trade" policy following its crackdown on the pro-democracy uprisings and subsequent international sanctions, in an effort to secure foreign exchange, cross-border trade and foreign investment. These policies led to officially opening border crossings and expanding infrastructure to support trade, particularly with China and Thailand. This in turn led to migration. However, the government of Burma still maintains restrictive laws on movement that are often enforced solely at the discretion of local officials, leaving traders and migrants increasingly vulnerable to arrest and violence as they seek covert routes to cross the border.

In promoting its "Open Door Trade" policies, the government of Burma has sold concessions for timber, rubies, oil and fishing. These concessions have also led to mass migration and relocation in order to make room for such ventures or as people search for work with these businesses.
Reproductive Health Policies and Realities in Burma

Burma has some of the highest rates of maternal morbidity and mortality in the world. In 1997, the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF estimate that the maternal mortality rate in Burma was as high as 500-580 per 100,000 live births. With abortion illegal in the country and contraceptives only legal since 1991, the Ministry of Health and UNFPA estimated in 1999 that one-third to one-half of maternal deaths have been the direct result of unsafe abortions. Given these high rates of maternal mortality, safe motherhood is a critical issue throughout the country with basic health services available to 209 of the 320 townships nationwide. In 1994, the Ministry of Health and UNFPA found that even in townships with basic health services only 48% of the population was reached. Since 1991, the government began a "birth spacing" program that has expanded in 1999 to 117 of the 320 townships. This highlights the unmet need for safe and effective contraceptives in Burma and recognition of the constraints that lie not only in the limited availability of health services, especially reproductive health commodities, services and information, but also in their quality and delivery.

To date, reproductive health policies and programs have not taken into consideration the large-scale migration occurring throughout the country. This perpetuates the risks of maternal mortality and morbidity as well as the general health of the larger population of Burma and its neighbors.

Thai Government’s Policies on Undocumented Migration from Burma

Thai government policies related to undocumented migration from Burma have changed markedly over the last three decades as a result of national security measures and improved Thai-Burma relations. During the 1970s and 1980s, most of the migrants settled in the Thai border provinces. Following the government of Burma’s suppression and opening of the country in 1988, hundreds of thousands of people from Burma fled across the borders and in the years that followed, spread throughout the whole country of Thailand. Given the demands for unskilled labor, the Thai government enacted four Cabinet Resolutions (between 1992-1999) to provide a more flexible immigrant labor policy. These resolutions basically allowed employers to legally register migrants for specific jobs according to the type of industry and the province. However, implementation of these resolutions has been problematic with the majority of migrants remaining undocumented and hidden from government’s umbrella.

Migrants from Burma and Access to Health Care in Thailand

Due to their ‘illegal’ status, the majority of migrants from Burma in Thailand are often unable to access government services and live in fear of harassment and arrest. In response to the growing presence of undocumented migrants from Burma, the Thai Ministry of Public Health (MOPH) has sought to understand the health realities and provide basic health services to migrant populations. MOPH data has found that among migrants from Burma in Thailand malaria was the leading cause of death, followed by accidents, especially from workplace injuries and motorcycles. Malaria, along with acute diarrhea and tuberculosis, are on the rise among migrant workers and have become once again a serious health threat to Thai citizens. In 1996, when the number of provinces allowed to employ illegal aliens was expanded from nine to 43, some criticized the Thai government for not adequately adopting public health measures to cope with the burgeoning

| Percentage Distribution of Participants According to Ethnicity |
|------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Ethnicity | Ranong | Chiangmai |
| Dewai | 42.8 | 0.0 |
| Burmese | 41.1 | 0.7 |
| Shan | 0.2 | 96.3 |
| Mon | 12.0 | 0.0 |
| Karen | 1.7 | 0.7 |
| Kachin | 0.2 | 0.7 |
| Others | 1.9 | 1.5 |
| Total: Percent | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| Number | 418 | 409 |
Migrant workers from Burma displaying temporary identification cards issued by the Thai government. Most migrants reside in the country without such documentation.

The Thai government has since begun to initiate new programs in some provinces that provide family planning services and promote disease prevention and environmental sanitation. Even within areas where these initiatives have begun, problems still exist with regards to implementation, and health officials at various levels do not fully embrace these new policies.

Given the sensitivities in acknowledging displaced and undocumented populations and the abusive realities they often encounter (both in Burma and Thailand), migrants tend to be isolated and excluded from the discourse and initiatives of the general public, governments and international agencies. As a result, contact with these populations is extremely limited, making it difficult to provide health information, commodities and services, especially regarding reproductive and sexual health.

STUDY SITES AND PARTICIPANTS

Chiangmai Province is a northern Thai province that borders Karen and Shan States of Burma. Agriculture is the predominant industry in Chiangmai Province, whereas in Chiangmai city, construction, small factories and service sector jobs prevail due largely to the extensive tourist industry. The majority of migrants from Burma working in the Chiangmai are of Shan ethnicity. The Shan spoken language and many aspects of its culture have some similarities to that of northern Thailand, which also has an ethnic Shan population. As a result, it has been easier for Shan migrants to communicate and find their way into Thailand compared to other migrants from Burma.

This study focused on those working in the areas surrounding Chiangmai city. The majority of the participants were construction workers who typically lived on the site where they work. The makeshift housing was generally constructed of tin, had no ceiling or windows, was hot, overcrowded and offered little privacy. People interviewed in the study consistently complained about a lack of clean water, insufficient or filthy toilets and generally unsanitary conditions. Factory workers in Chiangmai who participated in the study also lived at their work sites in housing similar to, although somewhat cleaner than, that of the construction workers. They usually had access to free water and electricity.

Ranong Province borders the Tennasarim Division of southern Burma and is situated opposite Kawthaung, Burma’s southern-most town. Most migrants from Burma residing in Ranong enter Thailand from Kawthaung. The majority of partic-
Participants in Ranong were Burmese of Tavoyan decent, but also included significant numbers of Mon, Karen and Arakanese ethnic populations. In Ranong, fishing or fishery-related jobs and agriculture plantations (mostly for rubber) are the dominant industries.

In Ranong, agricultural workers commonly live together in row houses in the middle of the plantation. Although few workers interviewed in this study were provided work permits, the plantation owners often gave migrants a verbal guarantee of safety on the condition that they remain on the compound. Those migrants working in factories in the fishing industry generally lived in the port area several miles from the center of town. Overcrowding, filth and an ever-present smell of fish are common features of the port area. For example, one of the homes observed housed 35 people. The situation would have been untenable except they worked in shifts and not everyone was home at the same time.

Mahachai, a port city of Samut Sakorn Province, is an industrial area just outside of Bangkok. Mainly factories, predominantly fish processing plants, are located here. Communities of migrants from Burma in Mahachai live in extremely crowded housing, so much so that one could easily mistake Mahachai for a border town rather than an industrial city situated near Bangkok. According to some Thai officials, Mahachai has been home to the largest community of migrants from Burma on the Bangkok periphery. A diverse spectrum of ethnic groups comprises the migrant population from Burma in Mahachai, including Burmese, Mon, Karen, Rakhine, Pa-O and Shan.

Those employed at the larger factories in Mahachai typically rent rooms together (as many as twenty persons might stay in one room, dividing the living space with cloth). Migrants working in the smaller factories often live on the work site in rooms or shacks constructed of tin and wood.

At all three sites, the vast majority of migrants interviewed were receiving far below Thailand’s minimum wage. Men received significantly higher wages than women in similar jobs with children who receiving the lowest remuneration. Wages ranged from 70 baht to 160 baht [approximately US$2.00 to $4.50] per day. From these wages deductions were often taken by the employers for bribes to avoid arrest, water and electricity, and in some cases even for rent. Most people interviewed, and almost all females, reported being afraid of arrest and violence, only emerging from their living quarters to work or when absolutely necessary.
In Ranong and Chiangmai, the majority of migrants enter Thailand by crossing the porous border or with a day pass at the border checkpoint. However, in Mahachai, most of the participants in the study described being brought into Thailand by agents who required fees for providing transport and locating employment, leaving them in debt for several months – even up to a year – upon their arrival. In areas with diverse ethnic composition existed, the lack of common language and culture often allowed employers and agents to cultivate fear and mistrust among the various groups.

### EXTENT OF VIOLENCE

The migrants who participated in this study reported numerous accounts of violence, both in Burma and Thailand. The findings show that violence and the fear of violence directly limited the ability of the participants to address health issues and seek treatment for health-related problems while they were in Burma and after their arrival in Thailand.

In Burma, a wide range of State abuses was reported while some encounters of violence by opposition or minority factions were also noted. These included: war and/or political repression; forced relocation; forced conscription of porters, soldiers and laborers; rape taxation; and other forms of harassment. These abuses were the predominant reasons given for leaving Burma as well as for staying on in Thailand, even when migrants reported not profiting economically from their labor.

*My husband was an assistant headman in our village and he served in the Peoples’ militia. He had to be...*
afraid of different groups. He had to collect rice and money when the insurgents asked for it and if the Burmese soldiers suspected him they would punish us. Some time in the summer of last year, the people of our village were beaten and forced to move to another town by Burmese soldiers. It happened because the insurgents borrowed the large cooking pots from the temple and the monks could do nothing but lend it to them. Then the Burmese soldiers attacked and overran their base. They found the cover of a large cooking pan with our village’s initials on it. They came and beat the villagers and took all the money and gold that was kept with the Abbott at the temple. They even beat the Abbott and forced him to disrobe. They forced everyone to leave in the night.

Shan woman, age 33, construction worker in Chiangmai

Almost one half of the participants in Chiangmai, who were primarily Shan, had been subjected to forced relocations and 60% of them had endured forced conscription as porters. The proportion of participants conscripted as forced labor was high at both the Ranong (67%) and Chiangmai (80%) sites. The fear of rape and arrest by the military or government personnel was also a critical factor in the decision to leave Burma for the migrants from Shan State. Arbitrary taxation and fixed prices for food, often considerably below market value, forced many people into poverty throughout Burma. These factors were cited as the predominant reasons for leaving the country and staying on in Thailand, even though it was difficult for the migrants to sustain a livelihood there.

Fear and violence followed the migrants into Thailand, ... primarily as a result of their illegal status.

In addition, abuses by employers or at the workplace also involved collaboration with agents and traffickers; withholding or refusing to pay salaries; physical and sexual abuse; and lack of general concern for the safety and health of the migrants employed.

We worked for six months without receiving our pay. One day we finally asked for our pay. The employers told us if we wanted their money, we would have to take their guns as well. We were so frightened we ran away.

Tavoyan man, age 18, farm worker in Ranong

Sexual violence and other abuses in the community were also reported, predominantly by female participants. Since single girls and women were considered more vulnerable to discrimination and violence, they often married early or reported having married for protection.

The boss and his wife were kind, but the wife’s brother used to visit them when the university was closed. He always tried to harass me physically. He pretended that he was just kidding by touching my private parts. I was afraid of him so I asked the Burmese caretaker to marry me. He agreed so now there is no problem.

Mon woman, age 22, farm worker in Ranong

Migrants reported high incidences of domestic violence in Thailand. One third of the migrants reported other forms of violence within the migrant community that directly affected their safety and security, such as fights, having their possessions confiscated or stolen, or being coerced or cheated.
IMPACT OF VIOLENCE ON HEALTH

Serious health problems among migrants from Burma in this study included malaria, workplace injuries, diarrhea, skin rashes and depression. The main factors determining migrants' decisions to seek health care (or not to) were their illegal status, financial savings and ability to communicate in Thai language.

We have no identification cards to go to the hospital and we don't speak Thai very well. We have to buy medicine from the drug stores and treat ourselves, and sometimes it gets worse. I have seen people get so sick they have to go to the hospital. They have to hire other people to accompany them, pay for transportation and expensive hospital fees. Every one tries to buy medicine to take care of themselves because it costs so much money to go to the hospital.

Shan man, age 34, construction worker in Chiangmai

People without an ID card die. A girl who lived by the stream died from excessive bleeding. One cannot rely on the business owner. If you have no money or ID, you just die.

Mon woman, age 16, farm worker in Ranong

The majority of migrants first sought to address their health care needs by purchasing drugs or seeking traditional caregivers or healing methods. Many migrants explained that the general trend in their community was to avoid seeking health services until one's health deteriorated and one faced a life-threatening situation. The most common causes of death reported in this study were maternal mortality, malaria and workplace injuries.

IMPACT OF VIOLENCE ON REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Limited information and inability to openly discuss sexuality and reproductive health issues prevailed across all three sites, intensifying the dilemma of seeking medical care. The extent of information and discussion on these topics varied according to gender and level of education. Male participants were more readily able to discuss these issues among themselves than were women. The participants who had received higher levels of formal education (largely Burmese from central Burma) had greater access to information on sexuality and reproductive health. The majority of female participants did not have this access and possessed little to no knowledge of such issues.

The vast majority of survey participants (90%) considered complications arising from childbirth delivery to be a major health problem. This was especially true among participants in Chiangmai. The majority of births reported among Ranong (and Mahachai participants), both in Burma and Thailand, took place at home, though more women went to hospitals to deliver in Thailand than they had in Burma.

The woman next door to me at the construction site was pregnant. She had no money and dared not go to the hospital. With the help of her husband they tried to deliver the baby in their room. But there were complications. It was nearly midnight and the husband tried to go to get help. When he came back his wife was almost unconscious. She delivered the baby in the car on the way, but she died before reaching the hospital. It was a baby girl and was adopted by one of the nurses at the hospital with the father’s consent.

Shan woman, age 40, construction worker in Chiangmai

Participants at all three sites reported little or no knowledge of or access to contraceptives while in Burma, [but an] increased use in Thailand. Oral and injectable contraceptives were the most commonly used form of birth control. The majority of contraceptive users purchased them from mobile markets or over-the-counter drug stores, while one third of the participants obtained their contraceptives from a medical clinic or hospital. All the participants were interested in obtaining more information on specific types of contraceptive methods and their side effects, particularly oral and injectable contraceptives.

I got an injection in my womb and they said it would prevent pregnancy. I did this four times, but it didn’t work. I got pregnant again. My sister thinks maybe the medicine had expired.

Shan woman, age 35, construction worker in Chiangmai
My wife asked someone to buy pills for her. There are also injections but because we do not have identification cards and do not speak the language well, we are afraid to go.

Shan man, age 29, construction worker in Chiangmai

Among participants who reported having an unwanted pregnancy, 17% attempted abortions, though only 45% were successful. Reasons given for seeking abortions were typically that the women were not yet married, had too many children or were not in a secure political or financial situation to raise children. Women at all the sites reported serious side effects from abortions.

I first tried to induce an abortion with an injection. But after five days I had no menstruation. So, I paid to go to a midwife. She used an iron rod to abort. I was afraid so I returned home and instead asked my husband to massage and step on my stomach. I also bought medicines that are very hot. But, I still did not abort.

Tavoyan woman, age 42, sawmill worker in Ranong

Sixteen percent of the women and nine percent of the men believed their partners currently had other sexual partners. In addition, changes in sexual attitudes were found, particularly among the women, as a result of exposure to urban life, and migration out of tight social networks. Still, different sexual norms were evident. Strong values of virginity associated with girls and women; loss of virginity for those not yet married often resulted in serious consequences. Boys and men, on the other hand, were considered, by their nature, to have a greater sexual drive and to be more sexually active prior to marriage. Commercial sex patronage by men was described as a common social event. Social norms were supportive of single men visiting sex workers, but it was less socially accepted for married men.

The majority of participants had heard of condoms (91%), however, only 14% had ever used them. Men had more experience with condoms than women. Condoms generally represented mistrust and promiscuity, while not using a condom symbolized trust and loyalty to one’s partner. Many women reacted negatively to condoms while men often did as well, but to a lesser extent. Although many had knowledge of condoms for protecting against diseases, such as AIDS, they expressed a lack of interest in using them.

I am too embarrassed to talk about condoms to my husband. I have no idea really. It doesn’t concern me, so I don’t even think about it. My husband and I don’t
need condoms in our relationship. Men use them only when they go fooling around.

Tavoyan woman, age 33, sawmill worker in Ranong

Almost all of the participants had heard of AIDS. Only 60% of the participants, however, were able to correctly answer questions about HIV/AIDS transmission routes. There was an overall lack of understanding about the differences between HIV and AIDS among all the participants. No one knew of the asymptomatic nature of HIV infection, and it was commonly believed that a healthy-looking individual could not possibly be infected with HIV/AIDS. Most participants felt that one should avoid all contact with individuals who manifested symptoms associated with AIDS. The discussion of AIDS conjured up fear and stigma for most of the study's migrants, however, only a few perceived themselves at risk of becoming HIV positive. The findings strongly suggest that participants perceived AIDS as a disease confined to a risk groups (primarily sex workers), rather than to a sexual behavior. This perceived association fueled fear and discrimination towards sex workers, an already highly stigmatized group.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Migration from Burma is rooted in the country's political and economic problems. Human rights violations and anti-democracy crackdowns perpetrated by the government have not abated. Without addressing these realities directly with government officials, mass migration from Burma into Thailand will continue. Efforts by Thailand alone, such as deportation or repatriation, will not solve this problem. The Thai government must work with the international community, as well as directly with the Burmese government to address the root causes of migration flows from Burma. This can be done at the multilateral level with members of the Association for Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the bilateral level, through such mechanisms as the Bangkok Declaration on Irregular Migration.

The findings of this study suggest that changes in approaches of Thai domestic policy regarding migrant workers and their social status are required to formulate more humane and effective management of the problems. Policies on migrant workers in Thailand must be developed on both the national and provincial levels, with a framework for implementation that includes input and responsibilities from officials at both levels. Health care policy specifically focused on migrant populations is another important consideration necessary to improve the quality of life and the well-being of migrants as well as the larger community.

Various groups of migrants, such as children, trafficked persons and asylum seekers facing human rights violations should be protected. Developing practices to protect migrants from these violations and help them seek redress is desperately needed. Active negotiation to develop and implement a repatriation policy to combat the high number of migrants in Thailand could reduce the number of migrants, but indirectly increase their vulnerabilities to abuse. Therefore, until systems for protection and redress are in place, repatriation will not be a viable option.

The findings of this study were presented for discussion and collaborative recommendations to a wide range of provincial and national government departments, employers and non-governmental organizations in Thailand. The focus of these forums was to provide basic health information and services to migrants, work with employers to improve working and living environments and register migrants and their families to work and reside legally in Thailand. The report concludes with a set of recommendations that are based on the findings of this study and the outcomes of these forums.

Therese Caouette was one of the principle investigators of this research project and has worked with migration issues in Asia since 1982. This article summarized the study report: Sexuality, Reproductive Health and Violence: Experiences of Migrants from Burma in Thailand, published in 2000 by the Institute for Population and Social Research (IPSR), of Mahidol University and co-authored by Therese Caouette, Kritaya Archavanitkul and Hnin Hnin Pyne. It is available in Thai and English from IPSR, Mahidol University, Salaya, Puttanamongthom 4 Road, Nakonprothom 73710, Thailand.
IN BRIEF

WASHINGTON, DC – Ambassador Tan Sri Razali Ismail, the United Nations Special Envoy to Burma, spoke about recent political developments at a February 27th breakfast discussion, which was hosted by the US-ASEAN Business Council and the Asian Studies Program of Georgetown University in the Willard Hotel.

A February 1st conference entitled “Strategic Rivalries on the Bay of Bengal: The Burma/Myanmar Nexus,” held at Washington’s Cosmos Club, included government representatives from India, Thailand and the U.S., as well as experts and academics from around the world. The event was sponsored by The Asian Studies Program and the Center for Peace and Security Studies, Georgetown University; The Center for Strategic Studies of the CNA Corporation, The Asia Foundation; and The Sasakawa Peace Foundation, Japan.

The Art Gallery of the University of Maryland hosted a February 1st reception for the opening of the exhibition of the work of Burmese photographer Chan Chao. The exhibit, entitled Something Went Wrong, features the artist's photographic portraits of Burmese refugees. The gallery also held a February 15th panel discussion on Burma and photography, which included Philip Brookman, John Gossage, and Chan Chao. The exhibit will be open until March 3, 2001.


NEW YORK, NY – Celebrated author Amitav Ghosh kicked off his United States reading tour at the Lighthouse International in Manhattan on February 28th, hosted by the Asia Society and South Asian Journalists Association. The Glass Palace chronicles the life of a man in Mandalay during the British unseating of the Burmese royal family, tracing his and his family’s lives throughout colonial- and World War II-era South and Southeast Asia, finally returning to Burma in contemporary times. Ghosh will read in Seattle on March 6th, San Francisco on March 8th, Boston on March 13th, and Washington D.C. on March 14th. See www.amitavghosh.com for tour details.

The New York Roundtable holds periodic meetings of organizations and individuals interested in Burma. For more information contact the Burma UN Service Officer by phone: (212) 338-0048 or by fax: (212) 338-0049.

LOS ANGELES, CA – On January 6th, Burma Forum Los Angeles and members of the Burmese community staged a demonstration against Suzuki at the downtown LA Auto Show.

The protesters distributed information and educated many attendees about Suzuki’s investment in Burma.

The Burma Forum of Los Angeles meets on the first Wednesday of every month to discuss various ongoing campaigns. For more information, email bfla@freeburma.org.

SEATTLE, WA – The Burma Interest Group, which met February 6th, initiated its fundraising project for schools for Internally Displaced Persons in Burma.

The Burma Interest Group is a non-partisan forum attended by representatives of NGOs, business, academia, and other interested parties that meets monthly to discuss Burma-related topics. For more information contact Larry Dohrs by phone: (206) 784-5742 or fax: (206) 784-8150 or email: burma@u.washington.edu.

BOULDER, CO – The Colorado University International Film Festival will feature two films on Burma, both to be shown on March 14th in Muenzinger Auditorium. The Last Mahadesi details the life of Inge Sargent, wife of a Shan prince. This German documentary begins at 7 pm, followed by a 9 pm screening of Burma Endangered Land. Directed by Boulder resident Trung Nguyen, the latter journeys from the heart of Burma to a refugee camp on the Thai-Burma border, with a look at the people and the land through both a cultural and a political lens. A question-and-answer session with Inge Sargent and Trung Nguyen will follow both films. Proceeds from the event will benefit Burma Lifeline, a non-profit Burma relief organization dedicated to helping Burmese refugees and founded by Mrs. Sargent. For more information, contact Trung Nguyen nguyen.trung@juno.com.

PORTLAND, OR – For more information about the Burma Action Committee contact Jensine Larsen by phone: (503) 239-7726 or email: Jensine@hevanet.com.

NEW ENGLAND – The New England Burma Roundtable is currently working on building support in the Massachusetts state legislature for a bill to ban the state pension fund from owning stock in companies that do business in Burma. The group is also raising support for Burma Border Projects, a new Massachusetts-based NGO that assists and train medics in Thailand.

The New England Burma Roundtable is an informal group of individuals and organizations working to promote human rights and democracy in Burma. Meetings are held the second Monday of every month. For information contact Simon Billenness of Trillium Asset Management by phone: (617) 423-6655 ext. 225, or fax: (617) 482-6179, or email: sbillenness@trilliuminvest.com.

PHILADELPHIA, PA – The Philadelphia Roundtable hosts a monthly activity. For more information contact Dan Orzech by phone: (610) 650-7755 or by email: orzech@well.com.

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ETHNIC VIEWS

ANTI-MUSLIM RIOTS SPREAD TO ALL PARTS OF ARAKAN
February 16, 2001

The anti-Muslim riot that broke out at Akyab on 4th February has now spread to other parts of Arakan. According to reliable information received by phone from Rangoon, the rioting took a heavy toll of lives, destruction of properties and (desecration) of places of religious worship in the towns [of] Rathidaung, Mrohaung, Kyawktaw, Minbya, Ponnagyun and Myebon in north Arakan and Kyawkpyu, Man Aung (Chedube) Sandaway in Southern Arakan. Contrary to the claim of the Burmese junta that the riot has been controlled, it is continuing in three places till today. In the capital city of Akyab as many as 800 people have been killed, over 2,000 injured and several hundred remain missing, most of whom are students of Akyab Degree College staying in dormitories in the city where the riot started.

A total of six Muslim quarters – Molvipara, Amlapara, Rohingyapara, Kawshypara, Nazipara, and Sakkibazarpara—have been burnt to ashes with total destruction of over 2,000 houses, shops, hotels and other business installations. Six mosques have also been completely burnt down. The extent of the damage, destruction and losses of lives in other towns has yet to be ascertained. However according to reliable sources, at least 15 people have been killed and more than 30 houses have been burnt down in Rathidaung township, some 50-km north Arakan. Although the rioting has now stopped in Akyab after the enforcement of a curfew, the plight of the affected people is very serious. While thousands of injured people are mostly lying unattended in government hospitals [with] shortages of facilities, medicines and equipment, others are sleeping under open sky without receiving any relief material from any quarter. It has been clearly revealed that the ruling military junta had its hands behind the recent anti-Muslim riot of Arakan.

The incident had been pre-planned, motivated and engineered by intelligence agencies of the junta in collaboration with Buddhist/anti-Muslim fanatics. The scheme is part of the ongoing extermination and ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya Muslims of Arakan by the military junta. It is presumed that the junta, encouraged by recent anti-Rohingya crackdown in Bangladesh and media vilification campaign against Rohingya resistance groups, carried out such heinous crimes while taking for granted that the Bangladesh government would not interfere in any anti-Rohingya scheme inside Arakan. We earnestly appeal to UN Human Rights Commission, international human rights organizations, Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) and peace-loving countries of the world – particularly the government of Bangladesh – to take note of the serious situation in Arakan and take necessary steps [to stop] the ongoing carnage against the Muslims.

Sheikh Deen Mohammed
President
Rohingya Solidarity Organisation Arakan, (Burma).


BUSINESS WATCH

INDIA AND BURMA RE-ESTABLISH TRADING TIES

The Burmese government received Indian External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh on February 13th for a three-day diplomatic mission – the first of its kind since Rajiv Gandhi visited Burma as prime minister in 1987. During his stay in Burma, Mr. Singh noted the recent spirit of partnership between Burma and India, commenting on the value of economic engagement in restoring democracy in Burma. This marks a shift in former Indian government policy of isolationism.

These mid-winter developments followed on the heels of the week-long visit to India in mid-November by the SPDC Vice-Chairman, General Maung Aye that yielded discussions of multiple projects between the two nations. According to India’s The Hindu Times, during his visit, General Maung Aye requested help from Mr. Singh in the construction of deep-sea ports and offered to supply natural gas to India. New Delhi also credited 16 million U.S. dollars towards Burma’s purchase of Indian industrial and electrical equipment. India and Burma have already teamed up in the joint-venture construction of the Tamantxi hydel project in Burma, which will generate electricity to be shared between the two countries. The meeting signals the warming of relations mirrored in the recent burgeoning of trade agreements between New Delhi and Rangoon. According to Jane’s Intelligence Review, an agreement between India and five ASEAN countries signed on November 11th and termed the ‘Vientiane Declaration of Mekong-Ganga Cooperation’ focuses on enhancing road transport networks, air links and information technol-
BUSINESS WATCH (CONTINUED)

facility can service large aircraft and up to three million people a year. The industry's prospects brightened yet again when Singaporean businessman Ong Beng Seng's Region Air bought 49 percent of Myanmar Airways International in early December, and is expected to upgrade all aspects of MAI's operation, according to Singapore's The Business Times. The airline currently flies to regional destinations including Kuala Lumpur, Hongkong, Singapore, and Bangkok, and leases a small fleet from Malaysia Airline System. Mr. Ong's Region Air is headquartered in Singapore, Burma's largest trading partner and foreign investor.

CHINESE COMPANY LAUNCHES RANGOON DOCK PROJECT

A Chinese company began construction of a 12,000-DWT (dead-weight ton) dry-dock for state-run Myanmar Shipyards on February 2nd. The Shandong Agricultural Industry and Commerce Group Corporation (SAICGC) construction project, which is scheduled to be completed in two years, is estimated to have drawn one billion Kyats (around 167 U.S. dollars) in investment and is the first Burmese project contracted by Shandong province.

GOOD BYE, THAILAND

I'm going to walk to my freedom.
You have filled my heart with insecurity and hopes,
Sorrow and gratitude, injustice and flexibility,
Corruption and human dignity.
I grew maturer in your arms, being an unwanted refugee.
Good bye, Thailand.
We have many things in common.
We have in common glittering pagodas and gentle rivers,
Gaudy monks and green fields, bald hills and shaved forests,
Smiling faces and generous eyes.
We have in common heroic students who defied our military despotsisms.
We have shared subdued ethnic people who do not have their 01 lands.

After all, we both have been devoured by political animals.
Good bye, Thailand.
You are my aunt, next to my motherland, I love you the most.
Thanks for your tolerance.
Thanks for you ignorance.
Thanks for your sweetest freedom which I illegally enjoyed.
Good bye, Thailand.
I'll be back.
For an unfinished poem, for those eyes full of kindness,
For those who sighed for my continuing struggle,
For those who stayed behind and who died,
And for the freedom of Burma.
Good bye, Thailand.

SPDC SPEAKS

"HARMONY OF FAITHS"

The tinkling of pagoda bells, the chiming of Hindu temple bells, the pealing of church bells, the call to Friday prayers and many other acts of devotion to the faiths peoples of this nation profess to the harmony of faiths. Myanmar is a land of many peoples and many faiths existing side by side, each doing common good and striving for the greater good of others.

It is not unusual to have intermingling of the neighbours of differing faiths in a community getting together to enjoy a religious feast be it Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Muslim or whatever kind of denomination, for the common factor is that all religions teach the faithful to be good, to dispense loving kindness, compassion and other virtues which help diminish enmity and develop greater amity. Pagoda and church spires, minarets, roofs of Hindu temples and other places of variegated worship, including synagogues, dot the skyline here in Yangon and other places evincing the sharing of what is good and wholesome, preserving and perpetuating sound morals for the adherents.

Religion is the foundation of peace and tranquility for those who can seek and win them, and we have been taught by religious masters, all of whom hailed from the East and whose scientific exhortations have been espoused by many in the West because they stand the test. This year's World AIDS Day coincided with the holding of the 83rd Annual General Meeting and AD 2000 Thanksgiving Service of the Kayin Baptist Convention in Yangon, addressing which Secretary-1 of the State Peace and Development Council Lt-Gen Khin Nyunt extolled the virtues of religious kinship and camaraderie for which the peace-makers have contributed largely.

Myanmar is made up of many nationalities and religions but there has been unity in diversity, and goodwill has prevailed to erase disagreement and suspicion that might have cropped up at times, and the government has dispensed legal, administrative and social protection for all, and for the flourishing of all religions. It must, of necessity, be pointed out here that even the acts concerning spread of sex-related infections are faithfully respected. May religion which provides remedies to worldly woes help us all resolve the problems which beset this world.

BRIEFINGS AND DEVELOPMENTS

GRAMMY-WINNERS SALUTE BURMA'S STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY

Irish rock band U2, which took home three awards at this year's Grammy ceremony, has paid tribute to Aung San Suu Kyi by dedicating the song "Walk On" to the democracy leader on their latest album, All That You Can't Leave Behind. The record is banned in Burma for its reference to Daw Suu and the democracy movement. Their website U2.com devotes a page to praising the efforts of Daw Suu and the National League for Democracy and detailing human rights abuses perpetrated by the military junta.

LT. GEN. TIN OO DIES IN HELICOPTER CRASH

A February 19th helicopter crash claimed the life of Lt. Gen. Tin Oo, the fourth most powerful general in the junta and the chief of staff of the army. While on the way to Pa-an, the Russian-made Mi-17 helicopter carrying 22 officials and seven crew members reportedly encountered bad weather and crashed into the Salween River in Karen State. Two Cabinet ministers were among the twelve other passengers killed in the accident.

EU TEAM VISITS BURMA

The EU conducted an observational mission to Burma from January 28-31 to survey the prospects of multilateral relations. The delegation spent two hours on January 30th meeting with democratic opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi in her first confirmed diplomatic contact since UN envoy Razali Ismail visited earlier in the month. Daw Suu was "cautiously optimistic" about talks with the military government and hoped they would "lead to more substantive official [talks]," a diplomatic source informed Agence France-Presse. The delegation also spoke with Lieutenant-General Khin Nyunt, Secretary-1 of the State Peace and Development Council, to press for democratic rule. Led by Borje Ljunggren, the director of the Asia desk in the Swedish Foreign Ministry, Patrick Van Haute of the Belgian Foreign Ministry, and two officials from the European Commission and the Council secretariat, the mission closed. During the live-day visit — the third since he was appointed special envoy in late October. It is believed that Daw Suu is meeting with Lt.-Gen. Khin Nyunt, but the details of their discussions remain undisclosed. During the five-day visit — the third since he was appointed special envoy in April — Razali met with top government officials and Aung San Suu Kyi.

DIALOGUE IN PROGRESS

Upon his return from Burma to Kuala Lumpur on January 9th, UN special envoy Razali Ismail confirmed the initiation of talks between the military junta and democratic opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi. Razali also revealed that the two sides commenced the secret dialogue in late October. It is believed that Daw Suu is meeting with Lt.-Gen. Khin Nyunt, but the details of their discussions remain undisclosed. During the five-day visit — the third since he was appointed special envoy in April — Razali met with top government officials and Aung San Suu Kyi.

MAHATHIR SURVEYS MALAYSIAN INTERESTS IN BURMA

Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad praised the Burmese government and declared Burma ripe for Malaysian investment, according to a January 9th release by Malaysia's Bernama news agency. After conducting a week-long observational mission that ended on January 9th, Dr. Mahathir found the country "blessed with abundant natural resources as well as large agricultural areas," and welcomed the State Peace and Development Council's invitation of Malaysian investment. The prime minister's visit coincided with that of UN Special Envoy, Razali Ismail, who is also from Malaysia.

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MEDIA RESOURCES

BURMA: THE STATE OF MYANMAR
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March 2001
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Tel: 1.800.246.9606 or 410.516.6995
Fax: 410.516.6998
http://www.georgetown.edu/publications/gup
Steinberg explores military presence, geopolitical placement, foreign influence, disintegration of civil society, and prevailing ethnic tensions in his analysis of Burma's post-1988 crises.

BURMESE/MYANMAR DICTIONARY OF GRAMMATICAL FORMS
By John Okell and Anna Allot
Curzon Press
15 The Quadrant
Richmond, Surrey TW9 1BP
England
Phone: 44.(0)20.8948.4660
Fax: 44.(0)20.8332.6735
www.curzonpress.co.uk

Okell and Allot's grammar dictionary comprehensively lists and explains suffixes, prefixes and other bound forms of Burmese. An ideal supplement to standard Burmese/Myanmar dictionaries, this work gives both literary and colloquial examples and is accessible even to beginning language students.

NARCOTICS CONTROL REPORT: BURMA
By U.S. Department of State
Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs
March 1, 2001
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20520
Tel: 202.647.4000

This report summarizes the current state of narcotics manufacture and trade in Burma, analyzing the situation from a variety of angles. Written in an outline format, the report details points such as Burmese government's actions against drugs, governmental corruption, opium poppy cultivation, drug flow and U.S. policy initiatives.

BURMA/MYANMAR: HOW STRONG IS THE MILITARY REGIME?
By International Crisis Group
21 December 2000
1522 K St. NW
Ste. 200
ALBRIGHT *APPALLED* BY FORCED LABOR IN BURMA

In a January 16th speech against Sweatshop and Child Labor, then Secretary of State Madeleine Albright pinpointed the situation in Burma as a horrifying case, one "unlikely to improve as long as democracy is denied." Albright again stressed the vital role of democracy in putting an end to forced labor in a January 18th statement, advising the U.S. to consider trade sanctions against the military junta in the future, in keeping with the ILO decision last November. Her "Statement on Burma" also encouraged the reconciliation efforts between the SPDC and the NLD, tempering this praise with circumspection. "Burma needs a new beginning, not another false dawn," warned Albright.

STATE DEPARTMENT REPORT DETAILS BURMESE DRUG CRISIS

According to a recently released U.S. government report, Burma remains the world’s second largest producer of heroin and opium, despite declines in production over the past few years. The U.S. Department of State’s Annual International Narcotics Control Report attributes the decline to the Burmese government’s initiatives and adverse weather, but goes on to describe the grim complexion of narcotics trafficking, money laundering and abuse in Burma. Since 1999, the report has traced the expansion of opium poppy cultivation, the sky-rocketing production and trafficking of methamphetamine and the increase of domestic drug use — particularly intravenous — catalyzing the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS. While the report states that there is no evidence of government involvement in drug trafficking or production at an institutional level, the report found, "There are persistent and reliable reports … that officials … are either directly involved in drug production and/or trafficking or are paid to allow others to engage unhindered in drug activities."

U.S. AWARDS AUNG SAN SUU KYI MEDAL OF FREEDOM

Aung San Suu Kyi received America’s highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom in celebration of Human Rights Day on December 7th for her dedication to the struggle for democracy in Burma. U.S. President Bill Clinton lauded Daw Suu as an inspirational leader, saying, “[S]he was arrested, and she has seen her supporters beaten and tortured and killed. Yet she has never responded to hatred and violence and all she has called for is peaceful dialogue.” Alexander Aris received the award on behalf of his mother, who has been confined to her home outside of Rangoon by the military regime since September.

U.S. MILITARY CANCELS IMPORTS

Following a *New York Times* report uncovering the purchase of Burmese-produced apparel and textile goods by the U.S. military, the U.S. Defense Department declared a halt to trade with Burma. The Pentagon’s December 21st announcement was made in the wake of a barrage of criticism from human rights groups, labor activists and Congress. The purchase by the Army and Air Force Exchange Service, one of the nations largest retailers, totaled $138,290. President Clinton’s 1997 ban on new investment in Burma technically does not extend to imports, though Washington policy discourages business of any kind.
January 20th, 2001

Just arrived back from Burma to find the Fall 2000 edition of
Burma Debate waiting for me. This is the best edition of your journal
I've seen. In fact, it's the best thing I've seen on Burma in years. I've
always been amazed to hear some Burma 'experts' say they have no
knowledge of, or interest in Buddhism. I want to ask how can you hope
to understand a country as Buddhist as Burma without examining this
aspect of the culture and the peoples' lives.

Similarly, it was good to see Brooke-Wavell asking for some per-
spective in trying to look at the overall situation. As odious as SLORC
[SPDC] policies have been, and continue to be, they are certainly easi-
er to understand when seen in the longer Burmese historical context.
As several writers point out, it is the democracy movement which rep-
resents a radical break — almost un-Burmese — with Burmese trad-
tion; and removing SLORC only represents the first step in changing a
very deep-rooted historical cultural pattern. Thank you for addressing
the issue of Burmese mental culture. Most of the press and books on
Burma are as one-sided and myopic as are the propaganda announce-
ments of SLORC.

With metta,
H. H.

January 17th, 2001

It's quite a challenge to defend what may well be the world's most
vicious regime. To do so, Derek Brooke-Wavell, in his article 'External
Impacts on Burmese Thinking' (Fall 2000 Burma Debate), relies on the
same method the generals in Burma prefer: linguistic obfuscation.

Let's start with the ludicrous notion that a sensationalist Western
press contributes to the strife in Burma by focusing on atrocities and
distorting Aung San Suu Kyi's message. Brooke-Wavell goes so far as to
say that if the Western media hadn't meddled in Burma, universities
there would have been open a long time ago. If only those mean jour-
nalists would leave the poor generals alone, things wouldn't be so bad in
Burma. Rather than blame the media, here's a radical idea from the West
that the generals might want to consider: a free press. Even SLORC's
[SPDC's] pal, Slobodan Milosovich, permitted the existence — albeit a
tenuous one — of an opposition press in Serbia. Such a concept is
unthinkable in Burma

Most astounding is Brooke-Wavell's attempt to justify SLORC's
Four Cuts campaign against the Karen people by citing historical
precedent. Let's see if I've got this one right: The British did it in
Malaysia in the 1950s, the Americans did it in Vietnam in the 1960s,
so it's ok for the Burmese to do today. Maybe SLORC is simply fol-
lowing the example of the West, but Brooke-Wavell needs to go back
one more decade to find the proper example. Following his logic, if
the SS did it in the 1940s, it's ok for the Tatmadaw to do it today.
"Four Cuts" sounds poetic, but it's nothing more than SLORC-spin
for genocide.

And Brooke-Wavell seems to believe that it is an issue of great
import whether the Tatmadaw learned to "act like fascists" from the
Japanese occupation army of WWII, or the British pre-war colonial
forces. Now THERE'S a question that should be posed to the NLD
member lying on his back on a concrete floor in Insein prison with a bag
over his head, while SLORC guards roll an iron bar up and down his
shins until the skin peels off. There's only one reasonable answer to the
question of whether SLORC learned its torture skills from the British,
from the Japanese, from the Americans, the Chinese or the Chileans:
Who cares? Torture is torture. Genocide is genocide. Pretty words don't
change the ugly truth about Burma today.

Dan Orzech
Philadelphia Burma Roundtable

26 January 2001

As usual, I enjoyed your recent Fall 2000 issue of Burma Debate.
Kudos to you and your staff for continually finding interesting and
qualified people to present their diverse views. I use your quarterly in
my classes at San Diego State University and find them most helpful.
I am writing concerning two points that somewhat disturb me. The
first of these is your "Inside Washington" report (page 49) about the Repub-
lican Party in America supporting democracy in Burma. Your final quote
made by then-president and vice-presidential candidates George W. Bush
and Richard Cheney states, "Advocacy of human freedom... Is a funda-
mental commitment of our country... [We] view free trade as an impor-
tant ally in what Ronald Reagan called 'a forward strategy for freedom.'"

There seems to be a fundamental contradiction in what you have
reported them as saying, Advocating human freedom and free trade, at
least as Mr. Cheney has interpreted it, looks to be an oxymoron. He is
well-known as having reaped the rewards of millions of dollars as head
of Halliburton, a company accused of using forced labor in Burma.
When confronted with this accusation on the Larry King television pro-
gram last October, not only did Mr. Cheney not deny the accusation, he
defended it by saying that "you have to operate in some very difficult
places and oftentimes in countries that are governed in a manner that's
not consistent with our principles in the United States." In other words,
in carrying out free trade one may be forced to accept certain conditions,
such as forced or slave labor, that are practiced by the host country. How
does that fit with human freedom?

A more extensive account that troubles me is the article "External
Impacts on Burmese Thinking" by Derek Brooke-Wavell.... [It] is his
contention that many of the actions taken by the SPDC were, and are in
fact, results of following the advice of foreign (read "the West") sugges-
tions or imitating its practices. Then when the junta is criticized for doing
so, it complains of a lack of fairness and of being bullied by the United
States and other countries "with the aim of gaining control of Burma." At
least, that is the "stated" reason for taking over the country. It is difficult to
imagine that the generals in Rangoon are, even unconsciously, so obtuse.

...There is also the contention that the British sometimes used
unpaid labor 'where there was an urgent need, ... although the British
preferred to pay for it.' Further, the Japanese were notorious for their "use
of local sweat gangs" under "the harshest conditions." ... [W]e seem to be
juggling apples and oranges as the quotes indicate. Japanese atrocities
against all their Asian subjects [are] well documented. While the British
may have been hated by many Burmese, their behavior can hardly equal
that of the Imperial Army. But this misses the point... If the Japanese,
and in some strange way the British, were "templates" for SPDC actions,
does this suffice for excusing its own atrocities?

... Mr. Brooke-Wavell addresses the issue of corruption. He oblique-
ly seems to acknowledge that there is corruption in the Burmese hierar-
chy. But he soft-pedals this by stating that 'the Burmese government was
urged into something like the present market-led system by leading
Western institutions' — and it was this that led to... Burma's inflation.
Unfortunately, he provides little information beyond this assertion of
just how the West prevailed upon the junta to carry out these economic
"reforms." All economists so far have faulted the Burmese generals for
leading their economy into its inflationary spiral. If Mr. Brooke-Wavell believes that the West is responsible for this, then so be it.

The author then goes on to blame the West for the 1997 sacking of generals Kyaw Ba and Tun Gyi. This was because these two had been so tainted (“painted”) in the Western press that, it seems, the regime could have done nothing less. If Mr. Brooke-Wavell is suggesting that two generals were let go because they had received bad press in the West, he is guilty of what the Chinese refer to as yuan mu [qiu] yu – “to climb a tree to look for a fish.” The connection is mind-boggling. In fact, both generals were given the heave-ho because they were correctly believed to be building their own little empires, primarily in the Mandalay area..., that were increasingly oblivious of Rangoon’s concerns. This is common knowledge.

...What is most disquieting about the thrust of Mr. Brooke-Wavell’s point — that there is a lack of balance in how the outside world discerns Burma’s internal situation — is that it fails to take into account the responsibility of Burma’s leaders. There is no mention of accountability. The generals are depicted as moving about as automaton, knee-jerking to every event by aping the previous or current behavior of foreigners. Blaming one’s actions on others is something done only by immature children and irresponsible adults. And that seems to be exactly who is misruling Burma today.

A final point. Mr. Brooke-Wavell refers to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD as the “opposition.” Should it not be the other way around? Since the League won the last election that was overturned when the generals usurped power by ignoring it, doesn’t that render them as the opposition? This to me is one of the more frustrating practices that many journalists adhere to: confusing the rightfully elected officials. Too bad Brooke-Wavell didn’t mention this little bit of journalistic incompetence.

Allen Wittenborn
San Diego, CA.
Burma Debate is a publication of The Burma Project of the Open Society Institute.

Mary Pack, Editor

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The Burma Project initiates, supports and administers a wide range of programs and activities. Priority is given to programs that promote the well-being and progress of all the people of Burma regardless of race, ethnic background, age or gender.

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