

# DAWN



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"... no project could be successfully implemented without the willing cooperation of those concerned..... Love and truth can move people more strongly than any form of coercion."

(Aung San Suu Kyi)

Burma's economy will heal only after political reform

The key to a successful open-market economy

Nightmare in "Visit Myanmar Year"

Tourism in Burma; Magnifying Despair

Cheap and vulnerable: Dilemma for Thailand

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## Store's "Economic Boom" Spells doom for the people

The State Law and Order Restoration Council (Store) is currently claiming Burma is experiencing an "economics boom." But who is really getting benefits?

More than one hundred foreign companies have now invested in Burma to the tune of over two million dollars\* According to a recent Slorc statement, the official growth rate of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is 6.4 per cent Despite this investment and so-called growth, the economic situation of the average person has been steadily declining in recent years. Benefits of any money flowing into the country never reach the average person. The two million dollars in foreign investment has created only ten thousand jobs in a country of over forty-five million. This lack of job creation also indicates that the investment is capital rather than labor intensive. Even tourism, which at first appears labor intensive, has little long term benefits for the average person. Hotel construction is in fact capital intensive, and those jobs which the tourist industry does create are not high paying and offer no new skills for the local people.

The growth and foreign investment also had no impact on Store's use of forced labor for large scale development and infrastructure projects such as road and railways. Forced labor is commonly used all over the country, especially in rural and ethnic areas. On the rare occasion when Slorc do not use forced labor, they pay extremely low wages to the workers, making even basic survival difficult.

Reports that the cost of rice recently reached Kyat 80 per *pyi* ( a small basket which can feed a family of four for one day) are particularly troublesome. As rice is the staple food of Burma, this price increase puts peoples' basic food source at risk because wages remain extremely low. Generally, a civil servant earns between 750 and 2,000 kyats a month ( 20 dollars at the black market rate.) At 80 kyat a day for rice, this salary will not feed a civil servant's family of four, a small family by Burmese standards. To exacerbate matters, the price of basic consumer goods also continues to rise. In some areas, imports are abundant, but most people do not have the means to purchase them. Economic growth is also limited only to some towns and cities while most of the population in the countryside remains very *poor*. Finally, to make matters worse, inflation is running at 40-50 percent a year. Trying to feed a family and provide them with simple needs has become extremely difficult in today's Burma.

Individuals and intellectuals which make up the small Burmese middle class also do not get a chance to do business freely or benefit from the growth. Despite foreign investment, the middle class which is traditionally the source of democratic political change will never have a chance to grow because the ruling military regime strictly supervise virtually all aspects of the economy. A further indication that the Slorc "economic boom" is not reaching an overwhelming majority of the people of Burma, is the mass influx of illegal Burmese laborers into neighboring countries and the departure of Burmese academic and professionals abroad. People would not leave their homes if they were enjoying economic stability in their own country.

All indications lead to one simple conclusion- the current foreign investment "boom" is serving to strengthen only Slorc and further entrench it which makes efforts to move towards political dialogue and democracy that much more difficult. Burma's current economy is a monopoly of the military for the military, and it is having a devastating impact on its own people. Foreign investors should therefore refrain from investing in Burma until clear signs of democratization emerge.

## Political Short-term training held

Short term training of "Promotion of Political Awareness Among the Rural People (No. 1/96), organized by the ABSDF Regional Working Group (Southern) was held at Pyi Char village, Palaw Township on January 14, 1996.

Win Htein, ABSDF CEC member, Kyaw Kyaw, representative of ABSDF southern region and Hla Oo, company commander presided the opening ceremony while Min Zaw Shwe served as master of ceremonies. The training was attended by 42 participants from fifteen villages in northern Palaw township region.

The aims and objectives of ABSDF, the Slorc's "National Convention", current situation in Burma, the abuses on the local populace by Slorc and the rights and responsibilities of the individuals were discussed by Cho Too, Thet Nyo Htwe, Kyaw Kyaw and Ye Min Aung, members of ABSDF. The participants also discussed their points and views with the ABSDF members.

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## Diplomacy training held in BKK.

22 representatives of different regional organizations from 10 countries attended the 1996 Diplomacy Training Program (DTP) for the Asia-Pacific region which was held in Bangkok from Jan 9-Feb 2, 1996.

The training, affiliated with the University of New South Wales, Australia for peoples of the Asia-Pacific region is organized every year. This year, training was held at Thammasat University in Bangkok in cooperation with the Asia Forum of Thailand. Subjects covered included human rights, International Law and UN mechanism.

The Graduation Ceremony was held on February 2, at the Student Christian Center of Thailand. The ceremony was attended by Mr. Withaya Kaewpareda (Chairman of the House Committee on Justice and Human Rights Committee, Thailand), Dr. Gothom Arya (The Program for the Promotion of Non-violence in Thai Society) and Lawyer Somchai Honolaor (Secretary General of Forum Asia). Mr. Lasari Fernando and Ms. Alison Tate (Coordinators of the DTP) presented certificates to the participants who successfully accomplished the training.

Different participants from Burma, Thai-

land, India, Bangladesh, Cambodia, West Papua, East Timor, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Australia joined the training. Soe Aung from ABSDF and San San Cho from Burmese Women Union (BWU) were among the Burmese participants at the training.

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## Global boycott of Burma urged at an international conference

To make the world aware of the situation in Burma and to mount a global campaign for restoration of democracy in Burma, an international convention was organized in New Delhi from 4 to 6 January 1996. The convention sought to bring together those involved in or supporting the struggle of the Burmese people- democratic forces of Burma, Nobel Laureates, Burma support groups, Burmese members of Parliament, lawyers, activists and students living in exile, and leaders of public opinion from all over the world. A special message from Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was read out and inaugural speech was given by Shri Chandra Shekhar, former Prime Minister of India during the opening ceremony.

The convention discusses on (a) Constitutional Issues (b) Human Rights (c) The theory of Constructive Engagement (d) The China-Burma Axis and Peace in South Asia. George Fernandes, a well-known India Member of Parliament was the Chairman of the Convening Committee and Shri B.N Pande, eminent historian and Indian Member of parliament was the Chairman of the Reception Committee. In the statement of the Delhi Convention, it said, "the Convention believes that a tripartite dialogue involving the Burmese democracy movement led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the ethnic nationalities, and the military, is the best way to achieve national reconciliation and the restoration of democracy in Burma. The Convention strongly supports the NLD's withdrawal from the sham National Convention in Rangoon, and urges all governments not to recognize any conclusion adopted by the National Convention."

The Delhi Conference demanded Slorc to immediately release all political prisoners and called an end to all international investment and trade with Burma.

The Convention also called upon countries in the region, particularly India, to recognize that a democratic Burma with a strong civil society is the best means to ensure stability and guard against

the possibility of the domination by regional super power.

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## "Students and youth Conference of Burma" held in Delhi

With an aim to upgrade the role of the students and youths and to establish solidarity among various forces that are struggling against the military dictatorship in Burma, "Students and Youth Conference of Burma" was convened from 7 to 8 January in New Delhi, India. All Burma Students' Democratic Front (ABSDF), the All Burma Students League (ABSL), Karen Youth Organization (KYO), All Arakan Students and Youth Congress (AASYC), Democratic Party for New Society (DPNS) and Chin Students' Union (CSU) came together and agreed to establish "Students and Youth Congress of Burma," as an umbrella alliance. The students groups reviewed and analyzed the current political, social and economic situations in Burma and eventually reached a firm agreement that all group participating would join in hand in the future to continue to carry out the democratic struggle.

The student conference reached to the consensus to- stand against the Slorc's national Convention and its consequences; support the activities of the National League for Democracy led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi; destroy the economic and military elements of the Slorc; promote the political awareness of the people concerning democracy and human rights for all the people and equal rights and self-determination for all the ethnic nationalities in Burma and encourage the solidarity among all revolutionary forces by strengthening the unity and understanding among various ethnic students and youths.

The Congress warmly welcomes all youth and student democratic forces of Burma who agree with its ideas and plans and want to join it.

The Congress also demanded the Slorc- to release student leader Min Ko Naing and all political prisoners immediately and unconditionally; to stop the ongoing National Convention which is illegal and illogical; to set up the tripartite dialogue that is to be composed of the democratic forces led by Daw

• Aung San Suu Kyi, representatives of ethnic nationalities and to declare the nationwide cease-fire.

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## Malaysians call for Burma Boycott

A group of demonstrators in Kuala Lumpur representing 17 local NGOs (Non Governmental organizations) condemned Burma's Slorc regime for its continuing human rights violations and called on their fellow Malaysians and other citizens of ASEAN nations to boycott the Slorc's "Visit Myanmar Year" campaign. They also called on people in other part of the world to join the boycott.

The group of concerned Malaysians condemned the Slorc for its refusal to hand over power to a democratically elected civilian government at a rally which was held outside the Burmese Embassy in Kuala Lumpur, at 11.30am on 12 February (Burmese Union Day) Activists who displayed posters and placards highlighting the crisis in Burma attempted to deliver an open letter to Slorc Chairman General Than Shwe, but found the Embassy closed.

The 17 participating local NGOs represented a range of human rights, youth, environment, religious, student and development interests. They include ABIM (Islamic Youth Movement of Malaysia), ALIRAN, CENPEACE, SUARAM, Malaysia Sociological Research Institute, Third World Network, South East Asia Forum for Development Alternatives, Tamil Support Group for Human Rights, Malaysian Gurdwara Council, World Tamil Relief, Jammu-Kashmir Forum for Human Rights, Society for Christian Reflection, Jaffnese Cooperative Society, National Union of Malaysian Muslim Students, Malaysian Youth Council, International Islamic Federation of Student Organizations (East Asia), and Parti Rakyat Malaysia.

The open letter described the July 1995 release of Burmese opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi as " a tactical move to placate growing international and domestic opposition against (the) brutal and corrupt regime, in a last desperate attempt to perpetuate illegal and illegitimate and unrepresentative power in Burma."

The rally was organized as part of a series of actions in the region to mark Burma's Union Day. On 10 February, a public meeting was held in Penang to raise awareness of the Burma crisis and discuss the Slorc's tourism and foreign investment campaign.

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## No More Military Interference In Civilian Rule

# *Parliamentarian Delegation on Burma mission*



An investigatory team from the International Parliamentary Delegation held the meeting with the representatives of the National Council of the Union of Burma and heard firsthand testimony from the ethnic minority refugees of human rights abuses in Burma.

The five-member parliamentarian delegation led by former Norwegian foreign minister Kjell Magne Bondevik was presented with a position paper prepared by the NCUB at the meeting. In a prepared joint statement to the delegation, the NCUB described the worsening political and human rights situation in which the Slorc continued "to intimidate, arrest and torture the NLD leaders and their political supporters." "At present, hundreds of political prisoners are still being detained and subjected to inhumane treatment," it added.

The NCUB also called on the United Nations and members of the world community to throw support and assistance to Burmese pro-democracy movement. "Clearly the policy of the Slorc is to suppress all opposition and the entire people of the country by force and military power, refusing to address the basic problems of the country in an open and honest manner."

The parliamentarians later met with Naw Say Mu, 56, a Karen refugee women who fled to Thailand over six months ago because of violent harassment by Burmese troops; Nai Son Thorn, coordinator of Mon Relief Agency; Than Naing and Myint Wai both were Tavoyan whom were forced to work on the Ye-Tavoy railroad and Kyaw Si Thu, board member of the democratic opposition newspaper, the New Era journal. Each of them gave a brief account of how they had suffered at the hands of Slorc troops.

After having been denied visas to visit to Burma, the delegation decided to travel to Thailand on a fact-finding mission where they want to obtain firsthand information on the latest political and human rights situation in Burma as well as the condition of Burmese refugees in Thailand.

Speaking after the meeting, Mr. Bondevik, parliamentarian leader of the Norwegian Christian Democratic Party and former foreign minister, said the trip was aimed at giving support to the Burmese opposition movement and that he and other parliamentarian colleagues from Bangladesh, Japan, Sri Lanka and Sweden also wanted to disseminate the information they acquired to the public in their respective countries. "Of course we want to inform the public in our home countries about the situation in Burma so that the struggle will not be forgotten," he said.

Other members of the delegation included Mr. Lennart Bodstrom, former Foreign Minister of Sweden and current ambassador, Mrs. Yasudo Takemura of the Japanese Socialist Party and a Diet member; Sri Lankan MP Neelan Tiruchelvam; and Adbul Hasan Chowdhury, International Affairs Secretary in the Bangladesh Awami League. Two members of the group who failed to make the trip because of political commitments in their countries are Mrs. Sheikh Hasina, president of the Awami League from Bangladesh and US Congressman Bill Richardson.

Asian countries, including Thailand, have long argued that Western values cannot govern human rights. Referring to "constructive engagement" Mr. Bondevik said, "The main point for the Thailand is to get Burma out of isolation. But my question is how will this affect the democratiza-



*Some human rights victims testified before the delegation*

tion of Burma." He cited South Africa as an example of where a combination of pressure, economic sanctions and support for the opposition led to the restoration of democratic law and order.

He also expressed disappointment at the ongoing investment by foreign companies, including two from his country which are contemplating doing business in Burma. Investing in Burma would only "strengthen the regime" he said. And he recommended Norwegian companies not to invest in Burma because of the oppressive political climate.

## ASA Conference urges Slorc to begin tripartite talk

The 13th Conference of Asian Students Association (ASA) was held in Hong Kong from 27th to 31st January, 1996. Delegates representing student organizations from 20 countries such as Bangladesh, Burma, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Nepal, Palestine, Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Australia, Aoteroa (New Zealand), Fiji, PNG, Japan, South Korea, Mongolia, South Africa and Hong Kong participated in the conference.

The ASA is a student umbrella organization that supports and works toward the cause of democracy and human rights in the Asian-Pacific region. The conference began with keynote speeches given by prominent activists and authors from the USA, Philippines, and South Africa.

After a series of subregional workshops, political discussion and country reports a Free Burma Motion was included amongst those adopted by the conference.

### RESOLUTION ON BURMA

ASA called for SLORC to:

1. Respect the result of the national elections of 1990.
2. Free all political prisoners including student leader Min Ko Naing.
3. Withdraw repressive laws and regulations imposed on the people of Burma.
4. Stop the military campaign against students camos.

5. Begin tripartite dialogue with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and leaders of ethnic nationalities.

ASA also calls for the Thai government to stop forcing Burmese students into the restricted area in Ratchaburi province and free Burmese students and dissidents who are serving indefinite sentences in Special Detention Center and Immigration Detention Center.

### Political Actions

The ASA calls for the United Nations and individual countries to impose economic sanctions, an arms embargo and tourism boycott against Burma.

ASA will launch a "Free Burma" and "Boycott Burma" campaign (1996- 1998) that includes actions, posters, petitions, etc.

ASA declare 8 August as "free Burma solidarity action day" and urge all member countries to rally on the day.

The ASA secretariat and all member organizations join the Free Burma International students Solidarity Network in order to struggle hand in hand with Burmese students for Democracy and Human Rights in Burma.

ASA called for international students and members to support Burmese students and refrain from visiting Burma and drinking Pepsi.

## **Suu Kyi makes new appeal for international pressure**

Aung San Suu Kyi has again appealed for the moral and practical support of the international community to help Burma attain democracy. She asked for "firm commitment" to the United Nations resolution on Burma which has called for an early restoration of democracy to Burma.

"So seeing how the people of Burma are omitted to democracy, we would like to international community to help in every way possible to bring about an early implementation of the terms of the UNGA resolution" she said. She also said that although she depended mainly on the "strength of our own people to achieve our aims."

She was well aware of the contribution the international community could make in this respect. "We will not unaware of the fact that today the world is getting smaller and smaller and that we are all linked to each other by bonds of humanity," she said.

*Nation February 12, 1996*

## **Focus on Trade**

Burma has formed a high-level committee to increase already strong economic New Light of Myanmar state-owned newspaper. The 12-member committee includes key government ministers and is headed by Lt-Gen Khin Nyunt, secretary of the ruling military council. The Sino-Myanmar Economic promotion Committee, formed last Wednesday (Jan 31), was designed to boost economic cooperation with China and help implement Burma's own five-year economic plan.

According to the Chinese Embassy, trade between the two countries reached US\$600 million last year, an increase of 18% over the value in 1994.

*Bangkok Post, February 6, 1996*

## **' US firm accused of diverting profits to arm Burmese junta**

The US-based Burma Action Committee (BAC) accused Poland-based Columbia Sportswear of being involved in an arrangement where profits from manufacture of its clothing in Burma are being used for weapons purchases by the country's military regime.

According to BAC, the Defence Ministry Directorate of Weapons Procurement of Slorc owns 40 per cent of the Korean-Burmese joint venture that was contracted by Columbia to manufacture sportswear.

"Columbia's written statement on Jan 9 falsely stated that the factory it contracts with for production in Burma is independently-owned, and the statement misleads people into thinking there is no connection between the Columbia's business and the military dictatorship," the committee said. BAC's Brain Schmidt calls Columbia's statement "the worst violation of any possible business ethic" and called on the company to pull its investment out of Burma.

According to the statement, Columbia has a contract with a joint venture between a Korean multinational and a Burmese cooperation called Union of Myanmar Economic Holding (Umeh) which holds 40 per cent of the joint venture.

BAC claimed that Umeh was set up in 1990 by the Burmese army to control foreign investment in the country and added that the firm was managed by retired and active military personnel.

The US-based committee also claimed that 40 per cent of the shares in the Umeh was owned by the Directorate of Procurement, which is responsible for the weapons purchase of the Slorc.

*Nation, February 7, 1996*

## **Bo Mya vows to carry battle to the streets of Rangoon**

The leader of the last major ethnic rebel group holding against Burma's military government vowed to carry their battle to the streets of the country cities.

Gen Bo Mya said he planned soon to launch an urban guerrilla campaign to try to relieve pressure from government troops on his outnumbered Karen fighters in their stronghold along Burma's eastern border. This shift in tactics is the only way the Karens can expect to win autonomy from the military rulers, he said. "We have to use conventional warfare. We have to use guerrilla warfare. We are going to make more attacks in the cities," he said.

Bo Mya refused to say what kind of targets would be chosen in Rangoon and other populating centres. But he said his fighters would take care not to attack civilians.

*Bangkok Post, February 2, 1996*

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### **Suu Kyi slams Asean Burma policy, tourism**

In an interview with AFP, Aung San Suu Kyi on Monday (Jan 29) also suggested tourists avoid Burma to show they support calls for democratic reforms. She disputed government claims that economic development was on a sustainable upward track and would eventually lead to the country's democratization.

Economic "half-measures" taken by the junta would not bring democracy, she said. "It will only lead to a widening gap between the haves and the have-nots which is, in fact, inimical to democracy."

Only by spreading wealth throughout all segments of the nation can democracy be bolstered, she said. "But actually, it works both ways. You won't get that kind of economic development without democracy," she added.

Aung San Suu Kyi said she regretted that the constructive engagement policy followed by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) seemed to ignore the opposition but courted the junta. "Constructive engagement, to be effective, should be engaged with all parties concerned," she said.

In any case, she said, "Economics and politics are interdependent and, whether or not you recognize the fact, you cannot escape the consequences of certain political policies." She said "she believed the average six to eight per cent economic

growth rate was already beginning to tail off. There are some very, necessary structural changes that would have to take place before there can be real economic development."

"I do not think that it would help very much if the coming of tourists is taken to mean that people don't care whether or not there is democracy in Burma" she said.

Referring to her earlier statements that it was too soon for foreign investors to come to Burma she added: "I think for tourists, too, there is a time to come and a time not to come."

*Nation, January 31, 1996*

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### **Total Compound attacked in Burma**

On February 8th, 1996, an unknown armed group using a 107 rocket launcher attacked the field office of the French oil company TOTAL. Confirmed reports state that four local staffs were killed in the attack and five other were wounded. One French citizen was allegedly killed.

The attack took place in the Kan Bauk area where TOTAL has set up its field office of the proposed gas-pipeline that is due to run from the Yadanagas field, through thnic land and into Thailand.

According to local sources on the 12th February, Slorc Light Infantry Battalion 273 (LIB 273), entered the Karen village of Eindayaza close to where the attack occurred and took 11 Karen civilians including the village headman and beat them to death. Two women were also taken by SlorG troops, stripped naked and tortured, one woman is now unrecognizable. Two other women and one man, Naw Ser Ser, Mugar Theh Ner and Saw Gon Ray have been arrested and are currently being held in the local Slorc jail. It is believed that these human rights atrocities have been conducted as retaliation for the attack on the TOTAL field office.

It was the second attack to the TOTAL company by the unknown armed group. In the first week of March, 1995, a group of TOTAL company staffs was attacked. Five were killed and 11 were wounded.

The State Law and Order Restoration Council (Slorc) of Burma, as encouraged by ASEAN nations, is attempting to overcome its political crisis by creating economic development. Economic reforms by Slorc in Burma can not be expected to reproduce the economic development experienced in ASEAN nations. The peculiarities of Burma's situation must be taken into account when considering if economic development in Burma can really be obtained.

Firstly, Slorc and government infrastructure in Burma are not good enough to efficiently run a market oriented economy. Slorc members have expertise in shooting, but are unfamiliar with market economics. Good infrastructure is essential prior to any economic reform and development. Infrastructure and services under the present military government in Burma can not meet the actual needs of economic development. All the ASEAN nations started economic planing and building up infrastructures long ago in the 1960's during the days when Burma was the richest country in the region. China, a country experiencing rapid economic development, started changes and implementation of necessary policies twenty years ago.

Second, a properly functioning legal system and respect for the rule of law also plays an important role. It is needed to enforce laws, through the concept of the rule of law, to guarantee private ownership and the legality of contracts between individuals and private firms. Daw Aung San Su Kyi, in recent interviews with the BBC (Burmese Service) and AFP, stressed the importance of the rule of law for economic development. Burma is at present incapable of providing not only infrastructure and government services, but also a legal system to meet the standards of a market economy.

Third, a crucial weak point which deters Slorc's economic development is a lack of knowledge by people about the market economy due to the mismanagement of the education system. This is a result of the system of education by the totali-

tarian regime that forced all the students to learn the so-called Burmese Way to Socialism. The Generals of the totalitarian government propagated capitalism as an economy of exploitation and social injustice. On the other hand, the regime provided a planed economic system for every body in the country that had to learn in all levels of education. The people who have to play an important role in Slorc's designated market economy are the students who have learnt about nothing but the planed economy for three decades. The education system under Slorc went from bad to worse. Universities, colleges, institutes and all school levels are often closed and reopened depending on the political needs of Slorc. Even schools are often closed in some parts of Burma in order to force the students to work on government projects such railway construction in Tenisseriam region, southern Burma. An adequate educational program or reform has not yet been designed for a basic knowledge of the market economy. In economically developing countries like

ASEAN nations, computer science training and vocational training providing knowledge and methods to run private firms, are occasionally arranged, but not in Burma. Employees in Burmese tourist agencies are not expected to receive proper training; government services are not ready yet, but Visit Myanmar Year has come. According to Prof. Khin Maung Kyi, a Burmese Economist who contributed to Burma Debate Bulletin about Visit Myanmar Year,

the promotion will result in negative rather than positive publicity.

Fourth, one obstacle to Slorc's market economy is the regular increase of inflation. There may be several reasons for inflation in other economies but in Burma it is due to high government expenditure. In a market economy, the input of money into the market is ideally balanced with the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This method, also known as monetary policy, is important in controlling inflation. Burma's GDP declined with the introduction of the planed economy while government expenditure regularly increased because

incapable of providing not only infrastructure and government services, but also.....

the regime extended its coercive agencies such as the army, police and intelligence networks. As it is common in most planned economies, the Burmese government financed expenditure by printing more money without upholding or balancing the GDP. Finally it results in regular increase in inflation. Burmese totalitarian governments also exercised a unique method to solve the inflation problem. That was to outlaw particular bank notes and this happened three times in thirty years.

Even though some of Slorc indicators show increase of GDP at 6- 8 percent annually, assumed GDP increase can not meet government expenses. After Slorc came to power, the extension of the army from 150,000 to 500,000 troops and the increase of military offensives against armed ethnic and democratic groups expended much of the national income; between 50-70%, according to some commentators. It is an obvious fact that the inflation problem has moved from bad to worse under Slorc due to government expenses exceeding national production. In an interview with the BBC (Burmese Service), Prof. Mya Maung of Boston College, a Burmese Economist, emphasized the inflation problem of Burma's market economy as Slorc is injecting more money into the market than the control of monetary policy allows.

When China transformed its economy into a functional market economy, its currency was devalued to lower inflation. Many economist have advised Slorc to devalue the Burmese currency "Kyat". Something between the black and official exchange rates is often advocated, the most preferential rate is 60 Kyats for 1 US\$(official 1 US\$= 6 Kyats, black 1US\$= 130 Kyats). Slorc does not dare to devalue because the problem predictable after devaluation. The immediate jump in the price of goods, basic foods and essential services may lead to another mass upheaval. Furthermore, foreign loans will be another big problem.

Fifth, foreign investment can not increase the number of jobs because the investments being made are neither labor-intensive nor involve technology transfer. Slorc is perhaps expecting too much from foreign investments. Economists like Prof. Khin Maung Kyi have pointed out that

foreign investments in Burma are not labor-intensive industries which create more local jobs, but capital-intensive industries which create few jobs. According to Prof. Khin Maung Kyi, 12.7 million US\$ investment in tourism, a capital-intensive industry, will create only 200 jobs while the same amount of investment in an electronics plant or garment factory creates incomparably more jobs. Slorc officers and investors from TOTAL explained to local people how the gas pipeline project, which overall cost of first phase is one billion US\$, will create jobs for them: but only a few dozen local people have been employed. Inflation in other economies often coincides with full or a reasonable rate of employment. In contrast, Burma's inflation coincides with a high rate of unemployment. This is proved by the fact that laborers and sex workers are leaving for Thailand, intellectuals are leaving for Singapore, Malaysia, Japan and some western countries to seek employment they cannot find in Burma.

The assumption Slorc has to agree is not "let-us do" that Slorc can not be able to do, but letting the problem to be solved in the proper way which nature of problem requires. Nonetheless Slorc may know reality, its ego not to accept reality is real problem.

Only switching from planned economy to so-called market oriented economy will not easily bring the country into economic prosperity which Slorc is expecting in order to overcome the present political crisis. Burmese people will not allow the military to control the economy again as successive military governments have controlled last thirty four years- the experiment resulted in Burma becoming one of the world's poorest countries. The present army is still the same army of last the thirty four years. What Slorc must do now is to agree to solve political problems through the genuine dialogues which Aunt San Suu Kyi is demanding. Despite the fact that ASEAN nations insist upon economic development prior to any political reforms, Burma must reform politically before any economic reforms stand any chance of turning Burma into a prosperous country. Burma's economy will heal only after political reform.

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## THE KEY TO A SUCCESSFUL OPEN-MARKET ECONOMY: A NOTE ON ECONOMIC POLICY

### Letter from Burma (No. 11) by Aung San Suu Kyi

Interviews with members of the media have become part of my normal work schedule over the last seven months. Some interviews are brief, 15 minutes or so, limited to a particular topic which is the specialty of the newspaper or magazine concerned. Other interviews are longer and ramble over a wider range of subjects. There are a number of standard questions related to the period of my house arrest and the work of the National League for Democracy (NLD) which are asked in almost every interview. Then there are questions which relate to current developments.

In recent weeks many journalists have asked about the economic policies of the NLD. One or two have even asked if we believed in an open-market economy. It brought home to me the fact that few foreigners knew of the existence of the Manifesto brought out by our party for the 1990 elections. And as there has been no official English translation of the Manifesto, even those who knew of it might not have known much about its contents. (The authorities have not permitted the NLD to bring out any publications since about two months after the elections.)

In view of current media interest, I would like to put down here the economic objectives of the NLD as stated under 11 clauses in the sections of the Manifesto on the economy:

- a) Stability in prices, currency and employment; a national currency in which the people can have confidence
- b) Appropriate monetary and fiscal policies and an effectively controlled budget
- c) A review of the exchange rate followed by necessary revision
- d) Priority given to the import of fuel, vehicles and other goods that will contribute toward a fall in prices
- e) Diversification of export goods
- f) Amendments in foreign investment laws with a view to increasing the volume of investments
- g) Reductions of foreign debts and resumption of aid and assistance from abroad
- h) Review and, where necessary, revision or repeal of laws, decrees, regulations and other restrictions which circumscribe economic activities
- i) Review and revision of the tax system to make private enterprise more profitable
- j) An economy in which all the component parts are based fully on the market economy; encouragement of the speedy development of private enterprise
- k) Promotion of a more efficient tourist industry.

Of course, it is easy enough to set down economic objectives, the question is how one sets about achieving them. I have found the opinions expressed by Dr. David Dapice, associate faculty fellow of the Harvard Institute for International Development, in his reports on the Burmese economy to the United Nations Development Program very similar to the views of the NLD. In "Prospects for Sustainable Growth in Myanmar/Burma" Dr. Dapice comments that "economic reform is not simply setting an interest rate or exchange rate. It is establishing a shared vision of where the policies should lead and

creating credibility and confidence that most movements will be in the right directions." [1]

Credibility and confidence are basic to good business and this is what we have to establish first if we want our policies to lead to a successful open-market economy. It is for this reason that the NLD believes that essential to sound economic development is apolitical system firmly rooted in the rule of law. Here again I would like to refer to Dr. Dapice, who holds that to reverse the trend in Burma toward "serious and difficult-to-reverse economic, social, and political problems" there would need to be "a strong and effective legal system, and a set of policies and institutions that engender confidence enough for people to save in banks and invest in the future without fear that they will, effectively, lose even if they succeed." [2]

When I am questioned as to my views on foreign investment I reply that now is not yet the time to invest. And to those who would query what the alternative would be to "investment now," I would say: "Invest in the future." That is to say, invest in democracy for Burma if only for the sake of your own profits. Businesses that frame their investment policies with a view to promoting an open, secure political system based on confidence and credibility will find they are also promoting an open, secure economy based on confidence and credibility where optimum returns can be expected by investors. A democratic Burma will be an economically dynamic and stable Burma.

#### endnote

[1] David Dapice, "Prospects for Sustainable Growth in Myanmar/Burma" (A Report to the United Nations Development Program, September 12, 1995), p. 15 [2] Ibid.

## Nightmare in visit Myanmar year 1996

"Visit Myanmar Year 1996" doesn't officially begin until this October. This delay is a good thing as the government has some major challenges to work out. But at least Myanmar Immigration has been order to "be nice to tourists". Apparently their officials have created great difficulties for foreign visitors. Certainly they did for my cycle tour group while we were in Burma, Dec. 31, 1995 to Jan. 19, 1996.

My fiance, Tracy Horsman ( who is English, fm American ) ,and I had successfully led two bicycle tours of Burma last year, Nov. 1994 to Feb. 1995. Our first visit to Burma was in Jan. 1994, when we met with the Myanmar Cycle Federation ( MCF ) in Rangoon. We proposed the idea of bring an English cycle team to Burma following year and in true Burmese hospitality, they eagerly helped us set up the route. We cycled this route along the Irrawaddy river to Pagan and Mandalay and fell in love with the kind Burmese people we met along the way. The remainder of 1994 was spent busily looking for the right sort of cyclist to take to Burma and happily anticipating our return.

In 1995 MCF again extended a formal letter of invitation to lead our cycle tour in Jan. 1996. We wanted to express our gratitude for all of their previous help and this time we brought a new Italian track bicycle for the MCF. The bike along with the other cycling gifts we brought totaled US\$ 1000. At a formal ceremony at Aung San stadium in Rangoon, our tour group of 12 presented the bike to the Lt. General of the Sports and Physical Education Department which regulates the MCF. A photo of Tracy, the Lt. Gen, and the bike appeared in the "New Light of Myanmar" news paper on Jan. 2. We would have preferred to present the bike directly to the cyclists who would be riding it. But the MCF was as warm and welcoming as ever and we felt this would indeed be an exceptional tour.

And it was exceptional in ways we never imagined. After three days of cycling north of Rangoon, we were abruptly stopped by the police in Aunglan Myo, Magwe Division. We were ordered by Immigration to return to Rangoon immediately. No explanation. The next morning after a generous breakfast in a friend's home, we were kept locked inside our rest house where we had spent the night. Interestingly, that same night a Swiss couple stayed there also. They were cycling to Rangoon alone. While we were locked up, Immigration spent much time on the telephone to Prome. The local general in Prome supposedly promised us that if we would all backtrack to Prome, we would be given a mysterious "travel pass". Then

we could return to Aungmye Mye that evening and carry on one day behind schedule. Meanwhile our friends, in Aungmye Mye were shocked and mystified by our treatment. Tracy and I had stayed in their town five times previously and corresponded with them throughout the year.

Eleven of us returned to Prome by cars that afternoon, leaving one American, Chuck, in Aungmye Mye with our bikes and gear as he was ill. In Prome we were dumped off in empty hall while our licensed guide ( who was interpreting for us ) and Immigration went to talk to unseen higher-ups. In true SLORC fashion, we were never to see anyone in command making decisions who could explain the situation to us. An order came down from Rangoon and the low men on the SLORC totempole had to enforce it.

This order demanded that we return to Rangoon. We were then taken to the Prome Hotel eventually where we awaited for the arrival of Chuck and our bikes. We phoned the British and American Embassies until we were cut off from using the phone. At 11 pm two trucks pulled in with Chuck and our bikes. Chuck told us how all the locks on our bikes and all our room doors had to be sawn off, hence the delay. We had the keys in Prome. Our expensive bikes were scratched and nicked from the bumpy truck ride. This added to everyone's disgust and we went to bed furious as numerous men in longyi's milled around our hotel for our "security". Suddenly at midnight loud banging at our doors demanded that we board an overnight bus to Rangoon. Sure enough, in front of our hotel was a dilapidated local bus filled with Burmese. We again insisted to talk to a general and were told he was sleeping. We retorted that we were sleeping too and slammed our doors shut. The bus eventually departed without us.

The next morning no official in Prome materialized to offer an explanation or apology. Still a multitude of men in longyi's stood around our hotel. Grudgingly, we decided to return to Rangoon to get some answers from central government since it was they who were so eager to get us back there.

We boarded a bus which had been abruptly emptied of its local passengers, our bikes in yet again another truck. The seven hour trip was made in sorrow and frustration. Why did we have to re-

turn to Rangoon? Why we were being treated like criminals in "Visit Myanmar Year 1996"? No answers were forthcoming.

To our amazement, after 48 hours of harassment to return to Rangoon, no officials greeted us upon our arrival. It was late in the day and scrambled to find a hotel for our group, wondering when we would get an explanation. Little did we know then, we would still be wondering why our tour was forcibly stopped when we flew out of Burma fourteen days later.

The following day was Sunday, Jan. 7. While I took our frustrated tour members for a ride across the Pegu River, Tracy paid a visit to Myanmar Travel and Tourism (MTT). The MCF

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## Why we were being treated like criminals in "Visit Myanmar Year 1996"?

### No answers were forthcoming.

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representatives accompanied him. At MTT they found that all officials were on the golf course. Since the MCF was also in the dark, they went to the Ministry of Defense for answers. To their surprise and dismay, they

learned there was a new law effective April 1, 1995. It forbade independent travel in Burma. After much coercion, the MCF representative was allowed to see the law in writing. Back at our hotel, he dismally gave us the news.

It was a law so secret that no one knew about it. Certainly not the MCF, the Dept. of Sports and Physical Education, and not even Myanmar Travel and Tourism! We were the victims of one of SLORC's evil tricks to make up all kinds of laws and apply them on whim. On our three trips to Burma, Tracy and I have seen hundreds of independent travelers, almost all brandishing the "Lonely Planet" bible to independent travel in Burma.

An appointment was made to meet Htay Aung, the Director of MTT, and Lt. General Kyaw Ba, Minister for Tourism, at 9:30 am Monday. Our entire tour group was at MTT at the appointed hour. After a two hour wait, Tracy had an unapologetic meeting with these two men. They accused the Lt. General of the Sports and Physical Education Department of not informing MTT about our tour and advised Tracy to "take the track bike back". We were not allowed to our cycle tour route and we were wasting valuable days waiting for vague excuses for our tour cancellation. Htay Aung said that of course we could return to Burma next year providing we went through MTT (who know ab-

solutely nothing about cycle touring).

Meanwhile, four of our tour members were fed up with "Visit Myanmar Year's" hospitality and flew to Bangkok on Jan. 9. Chuck, due to his recently diagnosed gout, opted to fly around Burma and travel independently (which he did successfully). The remaining tour members were two English couples on tandem bikes and my cousin, Dave. With MTT's "blessing" we took the night train to Mandalay, arriving Jan. 10. At the train station we were politely but forcibly detained for over one hour by the local Sports Officers. Cars and motorbikes escorted us to our hotel. Tracy and I know Mandalay quite well and we certainly didn't need help finding our hotel. I took our group out for a cycle tour of Mandalay city while Tracy tried to find reasons for all of this unwanted attentions. My group was followed by a motorbike "for our security". These two men on motorbike followed our every move, even regularly telephoning unknown sources about our locations. This was frustrating not to mention degrading. This motorbike was actually causing accidents to happen by trying to keep people away from us. Later they followed us up Mandalay hill. One of our man lost his cool and yelled at them in exasperation. They slunk off never to be seen again.

But there were plenty of other "security guards" watching over us. We decided to get away from all this unwanted attention and take the tourist boat to Pagan the next day. We bought boat tickets from MTT at US\$10 each. At 9:30 pm an Immigration official appeared at our hotel stating we did not have "permission" to take the boat to Pagan. (This is a boat for tourists and locals alike, Pagan is an open tourist area.) We asked if we were under arrest? No. Then WHY??? The only explanation was "orders from Rangoon".

Since it was apparent that we would be forcibly prevented from boarding the boat at 5 am, we decided to stay in Mandalay and get some clarification from Rangoon and contact our Embassies. (Pagan is Burma's number one tourist attraction but it is in a telecommunication vacuum.) The next boat did not sail for Pagan for four days. The following day Tracy tried to distract our group with another tour of Mandalay (we were absolutely NOT permitted to leave the city boundary, however all of Mandalay District and city is open to tourists). Why were we denied access to tourist sights like Sagaing or Pwin Oo Lwin? Why were we followed absolutely everywhere by men in sunglasses and longvis on motorbikes? Why were one

of our tandems threatened with handcuffs when they reached the city limits? I sent a three page fax to Kyaw Ba reporting our treatment. Htay Aung faxed back stating yes, we could take the boat to Pagan and no, we could not cycle from Pagan to Thazi (again, open to tourists) to catch the train to Rangoon. End of fax.

Meanwhile, Mandalay officials continued to tell us we could not take the boat to Pagan. Secret police were posted in the building across from our hotel and there was always a group of five to seven men sitting in the tea shop next to our hotel, ready to jump on their motorbikes and follow us. At one point, Tracy had five motorbikes following him. He went directly to the MTT office and demanded to know why he was being followed. A bus load of curious tourists took photos of his frustration at receiving no answers. This stress was also manifesting in our tour members. Tempers were short. The oppression of our outright unexplained harassment was draining our energy dramatically. I sent another fax to Htay Aung. Hours later he replied, short and cut, he was not interested in our situation.

At this point we were in daily contact with our embassies. The American Embassy told me not to get thrown in jail as they have no consular agreement with Burma (meaning Slorc does not have to tell the US Embassy if an American citizen is in jail). The British Embassy was outraged at our treatment and said we had every right to take the tourist boat to Pagan.

To try and salvage something interesting out of Mandalay, Dace paid his US\$5 and entered Mandalay Palace accompanied by the usual shadows. He turned his back on his bike to take some photos, then discovered missing from his handlebar bag were his passport, US\$800. in traveler's checks, US\$200 of Kyats and US\$500 of sapphires. When the police eventually arrived, he was told that he would probably get his passport and traveler's checks returned to him in the mail!

Finally on Saturday night, Immigration stated we were allowed to take the tourist boat the following morning to Pagan. We had already changed our ticket date and were determined to go. Two of our Mandalay Cycle Club (MCC) friends were to accompany us, much to our delight. We boarded the boat and our bikes were put under lock and key "for our security" (Slorc was afraid we'd jump ship and cycle away from their clutches). We elected our seats amongst other tour

*(continued to page No. 17)*

# Burma Freedom And Democracy Act

S 1511 IS  
104th CONGRESS  
1st Session  
To impose sanctions on Burma.

**IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES**  
December 29, 1995

**Mr. MCCONNELL** (for himself, Mr. MOYNIHAN, Mr. D'AMATO, and Mr. LEAHY) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

**A BILL**  
To impose sanctions on Burma.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

## **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

This Act may be cited as the 'Burma Freedom and Democracy Act of 1995.

## **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

Congress makes the following findings:

(1) Since 1962, Burma has been ruled by a military dictatorship.

(2) As part of a crackdown against the Burmese pro-democracy movement, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) was established by the military dictatorship in 1988.

(3) On May 27, 1990 the people of Burma voted overwhelmingly in a free election for Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy (NLD).

(4) Despite numerous pledges, the SLORC has failed to honor the results of the 1990 elections.

(5) The United States has not sent an ambassador to Rangoon in protest of the failure of the SLORC to honor the 1990 elections and the continued human rights abuses suffered by the Burmese people.

(6) In response to the massacre of thousands of Burmese participating in peaceful democratic demonstrations, Congress adopted

a provision as part of the Customs and Trade Act of 1990 requiring the President to impose appropriate economic sanctions on Burma.

(7) Currently the United States has suspended economic aid to Burma, placed an embargo on arms sales, denied GSP trade preferences, and decertified Burma as a narcotics co-operating country.

(8) On April 30, 1994, the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 1994 and 1995 (Public Law 103-236), placed Burma on the list of international 'outlaw' states that includes Libya, North Korea, and Iraq and which is set forth in section 307 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2227(a)), thus mandating that voluntary United States funding for any United Nations agency will be automatically reduced if the agency conducts programs in Burma.

(9) On July 15, 1994 the Senate adopted Senate Resolution 234 calling on the Administration to encourage members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to work with the United States to achieve the transfer of power to the winners of Burma's 1990 democratic election.

(10) On July 10, 1995 after six years of unlawful detention, the SLORC released Nobel Peace Prize winner Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the leader of the NLD.

(11) Since the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, SLORC has rejected her efforts to establish a timetable for dialogue and national reconciliation and has denied the NLD a meaningful role in a credible political process.

## **SEC. 3. DECLARATION OF POLICY.**

Congress declares that it is the policy of the United States—

(1) to support actively the prompt transition from a military dictatorship to a democratic government in Burma;

(2) to encourage the State Law and Order Restoration Committee to immediately and unconditionally release all political prisoners and allow them to participate in the political process;

to recognize the individuals who won

the 1990 democratic election as the legitimate representatives of the Burmese people; and

(4) to expand contact with the democratically elected leaders of Burma through the United States mission in Rangoon in order to facilitate the democratic process in Burma.

#### **SEC. 4. SANCTIONS.**

##### **(a) PROHIBITION-**

Until such time as the President determines and certifies to the appropriate congressional committees that an elected government of Burma has been allowed to take power—

(1) the sanctions described in subsection (b) shall be imposed on Burma; and

(2) the appropriate Government officials may apply the sanctions described in subsection (c) against Burma.

##### **(b) MANDATORY SANCTIONS-**

**CO INVESTMENT SANCTION-** United States nationals shall not make any investment in Burma.

(2) **UNITED STATES ASSISTANCE-** United States assistance for Burma is prohibited.

(3) **MULTILATERAL ASSISTANCE-** The Secretary of the Treasury shall instruct the United States executive director of each financial institution to vote against any loan or other utilization of the funds of the respective bank to or for Burma.

(4) **ADMISSION TO UNITED STATES-** Except as required by treaty obligations, any Burmese national who formulates, implements, or benefits from policies which hinder the transition of Burma to a democratic country, and any member of the immediate family of such national, shall be ineligible to receive a visa and shall be excluded from admission into the United States.

##### **(c) DISCRETIONARY SANCTIONS-**

**CO IMPORT SANCTIONS-** The President is authorized to prohibit the importation into the United States of articles which are produced, manufactured, grown, or extracted in Burma.

(2) **Ban ON TRAVEL TO BURMA-** The Secretary of State may prohibit the use of United States passports for travel to Burma, except for travel by United States officials.

(3) **DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATION-** The President is urged not to accept diplomatic representation from Burma at a level greater than the level of diplomatic representation accorded the United States in Burma.

(4) **CONTRIBUTIONS TO INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS-** The President is authorized to withhold from each international organization that funds activities in Burma other than humanitarian activities an amount equal to the United States proportionate share of that funding.

#### **SEC. 5. REPORT ON BURMESE LABOR PRACTICES.**

Not later than 90 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Labor, in consultation with the Secretary of State, shall submit a report to the appropriate congressional committees on—

(1) Burmese compliance with international labor standards including the use of forced labor, child labor, slave labor, and involuntary prison labor by the junta;

(2) the degree to which foreign investment in Burma contributes to violations of fundamental worker rights;

(3) labor practices in support of Burma's foreign tourist industry; and

(4) efforts by the United States to end violations of fundamental labor rights in Burma.

#### **SEC. 6. DEFINITIONS.**

As used in this Act:

(1) **APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES-** The term "appropriate congressional committees" means the Committee on Appropriations and the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate and the Committee on Appropriations and the Committee on International Relations of the House of Representatives.

(2) **INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS-** The term "international financial institutions" includes the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the International Development Association, the Asian Development Bank, and the International Monetary Fund.

(3) **INVESTMENT-** The term 'investment' includes any contribution or commitment of funds, commodities, services, patents,

processes, or techniques, in the form of—

(A) a loan or loans;

(B) the purchase of a share of owner ship;

(C) participation in royalties, earnings, or profits; and

(D) the furnishing of commodities or services pursuant to a lease or other contract.

#### (4) UNITED STATES ASSISTANCE-

The term "United States assistance" means assistance of any kind which is provided by grant, sale, loan, lease, credit, guaranty, or insurance, or by any other means, by any agency or instrumentality of the United States Government to any foreign country.

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(From page No. 14 )

ists when eight of our usual secret police shadows sat down immediately behind us. I was livid and demanded that they leave. I took deep breaths to calm myself, reflected on Gandhi and Aung San Suu Kyi, and applied "passive resistance." After two hours they went below deck for the remainder of the 15 hour journey. (The upper deck is reserved for dollar paying tourists) A weight was lifted off my shoulders temporarily.

It was dark in Pagan when we finally arrived. We cycled alone to our hotel that we always stay in and did not receive our usual warm greeting. Who knows what people had been told about us? Later I learned the hotel staff were very worried and frightened for us. In Pagan no one followed us constantly but at every exit point from the archaeological area were police, ready to stop us from leaving. Our friends from the MCC told us repeatedly that the secret police and immigration officers were actually nice people and were "just following orders". Absolutely no one in Mandalay District seemed to have any idea of why we were harassed continually. But our contact was limited to those who do not make decisions. Tracy and Dave had gone to the immigration office while we were still in Mandalay. Men that saw them walk in all ran away. Finally an English speaking officer meekly directed them to the main officer's quarters. They were not permitted to see him as he was far too busy.

After two days in Pagan, we were basically forced to fly to Rangoon. The expected expenses for train, boat, and plane travel were mounting up. Interestingly, we paid MTT our US\$90 in kyats at the black market rate of 126 kyats/dollar vs. The official 5.9 kyats/dollar for each airline

ticket. MTT normally only accepts US dollars or FEC's (tourist currency). They were blatantly involved in the black market.

Back in Rangoon, still no answers. Tracy met again with Htay Aung and Kyaw Ba. They flatly denied our harassment and stated "of course you were free to travel outside of Mandalay at/d Pagan." Then they hurried him from their office as many men in uniforms were waiting for them. Sadly, we did not see anyone from the Cycle Federation. It must have been a tremendous loss of face for them.

I have purposely not described many of our Burmese friends and their reactions to our ordeal. To say they were puzzled and astonished at our treatment is an understatement. They were also worried for us because we had the nerve to question and criticize our harassment. The government has built up "Visit Myanmar Year 1996" to such an extent that some Burmese started to believe 1996 would indeed be a perfect year for tourists. Many Burmese were trying to cash in on tourism. We were stunned by the number of new hotels in New Pagan. Many hotel owners will end up going bankrupt as the promised hordes of tourists will simply not fill all those rooms. From what I've observed in my three visits to Burma, the generals grow richer and fatter while the average citizens are increasingly less well off. Inflation continues to increase while salaries remain low and stagnant.

Obviously we will not be leading any more cycle tours in Burma while SLORC retains its evil grip on what I consider to be some of the finest people in the world. We will not return bearing suggested gifts of satellite receivers to bribe generals. We dream to see our Burmese friends someday in a healthy political climate, living their everyday lives without fear and paranoia, sharing our love of cycling together, laughing together with the joy of freedom.

Diane Guest

**" The DAWN News Bulletin is published by ABSDF (Dawn Gwin). It is funded by the Asian-American Free Labor Institute (AAFLI) through the FTUB."**

# *Tourism In Burma: Maanifu incj D&sjiuir*

In desperate need of foreign currency, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (Slorc) has launched a campaign diligently promoting tourism and investment in Burma.

The Slorc has been targeting its northern neighbor, collaborating with officials in China's Yunnan province to encourage Chinese businessmen to invest in the tourist industry in Burma.

In Mandalay, the character of the city is changing. Chinese companies and entrepreneurs continue to build hotels and guesthouses. They have renovated and opened up storefronts selling merchandise made mostly in China. They have built homes for themselves, and their families have moved into neighborhoods and put their children into the local school system.

The Mandalay Hotel has been renamed the Mandalay Swan Hotel and its restaurant, Mahn Thurin has been changed to the Peking restaurant. However, the owners are not from China, but Rangoon, and the hotel is government-run.

At present there are no guidelines for salary standards or minimum wages for workers in Burma. This has made it especially attractive to foreign investors and gives Slorc ultimate control and destiny over its workforce. Considering that forced labor and conscripted portering is still widely practiced by the regime, a construction job which pays 50 kyats (0.50 US\$) a day, is usually not turned down.

Most families outside the public sector, more than 80 percent of the population, barely subsist on these wages. Inflation is at an all time high and basic essential products, such as rice and cooking oil, double in price every year.



*What are the differences between the people in general and the prisoners? Both of them have to work for the 'State'.*



Child labor is commonplace in Burma. The military elite and their supporters can afford to send their children to school abroad, but the others are needed by their families to earn money for their survival.

Visitors can see young girls and boys working on the road construction projects and at government-owned buildings under construction or repair. Children are also seen begging on the streets of Mandalay, asking for pens and pencils; Some are seen at their mothers' side —others with their baby siblings in their arms.



Begging amongst children is an increasing problem. In Mandalay, Boys dressed in saffron robes beg for money, not food, in the mornings and early evenings. Other children just simply extend their small hands or point with their finger to their mouth and whisper "hungry."

Most tourists do not hesitate to donate 100 kyats (more than 1 US\$) to a child in need. Some earn up to 1 000 kyats a day. But

*No facilities in schools. But some are provided with untimely labour.*

due to this well meaning altruism, children are forced into lives of perpetual begging as their parents come to depend on such donations.

This open door policy to investors and tourists will profit only the military junta and its alliance, while Burmese people live in poverty and SLoRC creates ignorance and illiteracy for future generations.



*The need for  
militarisation clearly  
proof there is no peace  
in Burma*

**Photo by Baird**



***Forced laborers  
were seen  
along the  
railway road  
in Mon Slate.***

***Photo by SAIN***

Name	Soe Oo
age	28-year-old
sex	male
ethnicity	Mon
religion	Buddhist
marital status	married with two children
native	Mintha village, Kanbauk township, Tanessarim Division
place of interview	Payaw refugee camp
date of interview	Feb 3, 1996

I arrived here on Jan 28, 1996 along with my whole family. There were also five households from my village who came together. I decided to come because of increased taxation and many forced labor orders by the SLORC to our local people. My village was in Kanbauk township, Tanessarim division. There are six village groups in our region, including my village. They are Mintha, Legyi, Maw Gyi, Kyak-khet, Sin Swe and Sein Hlaing village. All the local villagers from these villages faced the same fate like me. The soldiers were from the army outpost based in Pauk-pin-gwin.

There has been more taxation and various fees levied by the army and village Law and Order Restoration Council (local authority) to our villagers. We were required to pay taxes before, but right now numerous more taxes have been added. For example, in previous times, we had to pay about 2,000 kyat for porter fee per household in every month. Now they asked 8,000 kyat monthly.

Another kind of tax is a paddy tax which we had to sell 7-12 baskets of rice per acre to the Lore in the government-fixed price. They bought one basket of rice to 120-130 kyats while the price in market was over 300 kyat. Some have been arrested for failing to sell their quota of rice. The Lore and soldiers came to the village and arrested the people who failed to sell the rice and detained until the remaining family could find their quota and give it to the authorities.

Similarly, the demands for forced labor for their projects is getting more frequent. Since last year 1995, all the people between 16-60 years-old were ordered to work at Kin Mon village near Pauk Pin Gwin for two weeks. Before that, we had to go and work at Chaung Son. Our village had 80 households. 40 households were required to work at that work-site for two weeks and stayed home for two weeks. Then they had to go and work for another two weeks. It was a rotating system for every two weeks. In previous times, only one person had to work, but now all adults in the household were ordered to go. When you were not able to work as they demanded, you must pay 3,000 kyat to hire the people in order to replace your duty. Otherwise you must work there even though you are sick.

When the military column came to villages, villages experienced more demands and orders. All households were ordered to give at least two pyi of rice and other expenses the soldiers ate. They took all the animals in the village they found. They also took chilli and vegetables too. Most of our villagers were crop farmers for their living. We cultivated chilli and sugar cane. Every time the soldiers came, each one took handfuls of chilli

and cut the sugar cane as much as they could. For 20-30 soldiers each time, it was quite a lot for us. They said they would pay for that but we never get it back from them. All villagers had to collect the money and pay to the owners. We also dare not say even a word to the militia equipped by the Slorc. They also behaved like the Slorc soldiers. We could not prevent them because they would have reported to the Slorc soldiers and we would be in big trouble. If the militia report to the Slorc that we have connections with the KNU and students, we would be arrested and tortured by the soldiers.

When we had to go and work at Kin Mon village in the Ye-Tavoy railway project, each laborer had to dig five rock pits which is 10 x 10 x 1' wide. They had to dig the rock out and carry it to the nearby railway. The ground in that region was so hard and full with rock. We were ordered to finish our quota of work within two weeks. If we failed to finish within this time frame, we had to stay and continue the work until we finished their quota. In addition, we also had to dig the bushes out and clear the ground around the railway project. Some people attempted to escape from the work site. Unfortunate people were rearrested and beaten up by the soldiers from the (406)LIB based in Yebyu township who taking security guard there.

All the laborers were required to bring their own food for two weeks and also their own instruments for working. In case of sickness, no proper medical assistance was given. There was one small clinic at the work site run by one nurse and one medic, but no medicine. Whatever the illness was, they just gave aspirin.

Besides the monthly taxes for various reasons (it cost 800 kyat per month for each family and this did not included the porter fees of 8,000 kyat) 400 kyat was ordered to pay for the building of new government offices or buildings in Ohn-Pin-Gwin which was three miles away from my village. All six villages in our group were forced to pay for that reason. I did not know what building they were building there. I just knew that if we failed to pay, we would be punished. I dare not say "no." Ohn-Pin-Gwin was the same place where TOTAL company had a field office. The TOTAL was building up a 6-mile-long motor road between Pyin Gyi village near the coast and Ohn-Pin-Gwin. There were 10 soldiers in my village standby. They told me that in addition to the pay from the army, TOTAL paid 500 kyat for each

soldier for taking security guard in the region.

We cannot bear the increased taxes and forced labor orders imposed upon us. We have to work every two weeks in every month. Within the remaining two weeks at home, we have to work for our own survival which is hardly enough to meet daily needs. How could we pay for the increasing amount of taxes? Therefore, I decided to leave for the refugee camp. There are only about 20 households left in my village which used to have 200 households before. In Moe Gyi village, only 60 households are left which had over 100 before.

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Name	Ma Sein Aye
age	25-year-old
sex	female
ethnicity	Mon
religion	Buddhist
marital status	married, wife of Tun Soe
native	Mintha village, Kanbaw township, Tanessarim Division
place of interview	Payaw refugee camp
date of interview	Feb 3, 1996

I just wanted to add to what my husband said. My cousin Ah Htun, 30-years-old and married with three children, was arrested by the Lore and soldiers from LIB(406) on January 25 for failing to give 2,000 kyat for the porter fee. Five soldiers who were stationed in our village came to his house, along with the Lore authorities. The five soldiers beat him up with their rifle butts into his head in front of his house. His wife and children were present at that time. His wife asked to me to borrow some money to get her husband relieved. Our relatives and I helped her and she gave it to the soldiers. He was immediately released when they got money. I heard that he was also on the way to Payaw refugee camp.

My brother Ah Pu, 30-years-old, was killed because he stepped on a land mine while he was being conscripted as a porter for the military mobile column at Nat Ein Daung in 1992. There was a major offensive attack to the KNU base in Nat Ein Daung at that time. Seven men from my native village, Moe Gyi village, were conscripted as porters for the military column in December 1992. They were forced to carry food and ammunition for the army to Chaung Son. All six escaped from the portage, but unfortunately he did not. It is reported that he was killed when he stepped

on the land mine. No medical help was given by the army.

iName UIIlaKhin  
 I age 57-year-old  
 jsex male  
 jethnicity Mon  
 I religion Buddhist  
 [marital status married, five daughters  
 native Moe Gyi village,  
 Kanbauk township,  
 Tanessarim Division  
 place of interview Payaw refugee camp  
 date of interview Feb 3, 1996

I was 57-years-old and could not work very hard. However, I was not spared for forced labor. I fell under the category of 'under 60' so I was on the list for forced labor. My wife was the same age as me but she was ailing. My three daughters were not on the list but sometimes they had to go when I could not go or was sick. So I had to go for her too.

Since 1993, we had been ordered to go and work at Nat-kyi-Zin but recently we have been ordered to work in Ye-bon. This time was not like previous orders. According to previous orders, one person from each household had to work, but not all persons between 16-60 years except one for housekeeping must work for that. It was a great burden for the farmers to go during the harvest season. Some had to hire other people because they had to harvest their crops. The price of hiring people went up during that time as everybody was busy for their own work during these times. Normally it cost 2,000-2,500 kyats but during the harvest time it cost over 3,000 kyats. We could not ignore the order. The local Lore threatened that if we failed to do so, they would inform the army and we would be punished harshly. We dare not ignore it.

On December 15, 1995, 12 people of my yard who did not have money to hire people went to work at Ye-bon, in Yebyu township. Some could pay money to the Lore so that they did not have to go. We brought our own food and instruments to the work site. We took a boat from our village to Kanbauk and paid with our own money. It cost 60 Kyat each. The village Lore ordered us to wait at the Independence Monument at Kanbauk. When we arrived, we saw over 500 people from Maung Ntjo. Kan taine. Thinoan Taw. Sin-eu. Payat.

Zardi, Sel-chaung, from Phaungdaw township and Kaw Mo, Lai-Hmaw, Kyel-gone from Kan Bauk township. When all people arrived, all were again taken by trucks to Ye-Bon worksite. Again we paid 60 Kyats for transportation.

The work there was to cut all bushes and trees within 25ft for the proposed railway route. There were about 1,000 in Ye-bon camp. Soldiers from a military outpost in Klaing Aung monitored the workers. Besides the two weeks work for railway construction, sometimes people were conscripted as porters for military purposes. When fighting between KNIJ and Slorc occurred between Klaing Aung and Ye-bon, some laborers from the Ye-bon labor camp were immediately conscripted to the military column. During this portage duty, one laborer from Kyel-gonc was killed by a landmine.

The army came to our village in the third week of December 95 and told us that we have to work as they ordered, as long as we stay here. Thus many villagers fled to the border or went to work in Thailand. Some moved out of the village to Moulmein, Tavov and Mergui. Those who have a business such as a farm and land could not do so. They remained in the village and paid many forms of taxation.

For myself, as an ordinary poor civilian, I paid a minimum 2,000 kyais per month and unpaid labor. If I fail to pay my labor, the money would be 7,000 kyats. The people who have their own land and good business have to pay more. Just before I came here, the village Lore ordered us to contribute 600 kyats for the setting up of a new military base and barracks in Ohn-pin-gvin in Kanbauk township. It is the same place where the natural gas pipeline construction is underway.

Many local people applied to be daily wage workers at TOTAL, but nobody from my village got it. I heard TOTAL pays 200 kyat per day for their workers.

Name Myo Htun  
 age 17-year-old  
 sex male  
 ethnicity Tavoyan  
 religion Buddhist  
 marital status single  
 native Singu village, Kanbauk township, Tanessarim Division  
 place of interview Payaw refugee camp  
 date of interview Feb 4, 1996

I am a second son in my family. I quit school when I was in third standard. Both of my parents were old and it was impossible for them to go and work as forced labor. Since last October 95, people between the ages of 16-60 were ordered to work at the labor camp every two weeks, fifteen days each time. If they failed to do so, people had to pay 3,000 kyats for one person. The military ordered the village Lore to conscript the laborers from the village. They threatened the villagers to go or otherwise face arrest by the military. Nobody dare to say "No." Many people went even if they were sick. I heard that some people died due to the hard working conditions and mal-

were among us because their parents were not able to work like my parents. They were Kyaw Naing Oo, Ah Naing, Soe Naing, Saw Mon, Than Lwin, Myint Thein and Soe Aung. They had been schoolmates of mine when I was in school. We were all between 15-16 years old; all were currently not going to school.

When we got to Nat-kyi-zin, we were assigned to dig 50 pits for each day. That meant one person had to dig one pit daily. They were 10x10 x 1' pits. During fifteen days there, everyone must finish fifteen pits. For young people like us, it was hard to finish one every day. My villagers helped us. Some people were not feeling well or were ill. They also could not finish, but nobody dared to

take a rest. When we took a rest, the soldiers came and scolded us. Even going to toilet, we had to ask permission from the soldiers. They were from LIB (410) Klaing Aung. When we could not finish our daily quota, we had to work overtime until we finished. Sometimes we finished our quota, but some girls could not finish their quota, so we had to help them. Some women brought their infants along with them to the worksite because there was nobody left at their home. They put their babies in cradles while they were working. We all slept in the temporary bamboo hut at night without cover. I



*Laborers lived in the makeshifts near the concentration camp. Children were brought together with their parents as no body left at home.*

*photo by SAIN*

nutrition during their time of working.

I first went to work last October 95 when I was 16-years old. Our family had three adults between 16-60 years old. According to the regulation, my father, mother and brother were supposed to go to work there. As both my parents were ill, I had to work for them. My brother also went there, together with me. He was 20-years old at that time. For my parents, I had to work a month at Nat-kyi-zin (the quota for one person is two weeks, so that by myself, I needed to work four weeks for my parents)

Altogether 50 people from my village went to Nat-kyi-zin by foot. It was a whole day-long walk from my village. Among 50, ten were as young as me. Some were younger than me. They

worked 30 days plus two days spent traveling.

In this way, I worked every fifteen days in a month, and sometimes the whole month, until I fled here. All the young people have left their villages because they are fed up with the unpaid labors. Even whole families moved to other places or left for the border. At first, because of the increasing taxation, we paid the taxes by selling our property, such as cows and farms, but now we have nothing left. The only way is to flee somewhere. So I decided to come here, and when I am settled here, my family will follow.

Name	U Maung Maung
age	60-years-old
sex	male

ethnicity  
 religion  
 marital status  
 native  
 place of interview  
 date of interview

Mon  
 Buddhist  
 married with three  
 daughters and one son  
 Mayan Chaung village,  
 Ye byu township,  
 Tanessarim Division  
 Payaw refugee camp  
 Feb 4, 1996

I arrived here on January 30, 1996 due to the increasing taxation and more demands for the unpaid labor. By paying a lot of taxes, we have nothing left for our survival. Everybody had to work free for fifteen days a month and pay a lot of money. We cannot survive in this way. So I decided to come here with my three daughters. My wife and my son are on their way.

Let me say what is going on in my region. I lived in Mayan Chaung village in Yebyu township. In terms of unpaid labor or forced labor, there are unpaid laborers for the military base, forced laborers for the construction of Ye-Tavoy railway project, forced laborers for the construction of Ye-Tavoy motor road extension, and portage for the military column. Every local villager must work or pay fines for these kinds of labor conscriptions.

There was a military outpost in my village. About 13-14 soldiers were stationed on the hill in the village. They changed their duty every two months. Our village was ordered to send three men each day to the outpost to work for them. The people were ordered to find firewood, carry the water and clean the barracks. My son worked countless times like that.

For forced labor in the Ye-Tavoy railway project, one person from each household must work for 15 days in every month at Nwe Lein labor camp. I think my village was not as harsh as others because I heard in other villages all people between ages 16-60 had to work. For my village, age was no problem. Anyone could go and work to satisfy his/her family quota. My daughter always went there. She has worked three times. She is only 15-years old. My wife and I could not work as both of us were not strong enough to do hard work. If nobody could go, we had to give 2,300 to 3,000 kyats to the village Lore and then we were spared. I had no idea whether the village Lore found the people or what. But some people paid that way.

If anyone could not go and pay the fine, he would be arrested by the army. Soe Thit. a 30-

year old man and married with three children, failed to work because his wife was seriously ill. He also did not have to pay such a large amount of money. He did not even have enough money to buy rice or transportation to the work site if he went to work. He was taken from his house to the military outpost in September 95 and forced to work as a porter for the military column. He worked for over a month. In the case of portage, the duration of service time was unknown so we were afraid of being conscripted as porters.

Now the Slorc is expanding the Ye-Tavoy motor road and local people are being conscripted as forced laborers. Similar to the railway project, the villagers from my village have to provide one person from each household. The army and local authorities measured the dimensions of villages. All the villagers from Raphy, Yarhit, Alel Sakhan, Kyauk-kadin, Kyak Talin and my village also had to work according to our quota measurement. We have to finish the work. The work is to clear and burn the trees, make the ground level, and clear the surface.

Apart from the unpaid labor, all the farmers in my village are required to sell 7-10 baskets of rice per acre at government-fixed prices, which is two times less than the current price. With the order from the army, the village Lore collected all the paddy from house to house and sent it to the rice mill in the village. After that we also had to provide the bullockcarts to take the rice to Ohn-Pin-Gwin, in Kanbauk township.

Recently, the army demanded 200 kyats per month for every household starting from the first week of January 96. Also, every household must dig two pits of rock. I did not know for what reason. It has not started when I came here.

I could not work for a living as usual because we had to work free for these projects. Many more and new taxation and fees were being asked. On the other hand, the production of farming was getting worse. It was hardly enough for my family to survive. I have nothing to sell again. I have sold my two cows and half of my farming lands to pay for these taxes and then I had nothing. So I decided to come here.

Name	Hla Hla Aye (daughter of U Maung Maung)
age	14-years-old
sex	female
ethnicity	Mon
religion	Buddhist

native  
  
place of interview  
date of interview

Mayan Chaung village,  
Yebyu township,  
Tanessarim Division  
Payaw refugee camp  
Feb 4, 1996

away.  
We all got off the truck when we there at noon. I saw that many people had arrived before us. There were about 1,500 people from other villages there. The local authorities ordered us to stay in the barracks. All from my group stayed in one barrack. There were many barracks where people from other villages were living. The first day was off-day and I we slept.

I  
We all were woken up at 4:00am the next day and walked to the worksite at 6:00am. All the people went to the worksite. It took half an hour to reach the worksite. Villagers from Ya-phy and from my village were grouped in one and shared the work place. Then we all were divided into five-member-groups. Normally three women and two men in one group. However, as the number of men was less than the number of female workers, some groups consisted of all



*Children, as young as 13 years old are seen along with others at the forced labor camp. Burma has ratified the "Convention on the rights of child."*

I first went to work at the Ye-Tavoy railway project during last September. I was 14-years-old at that time. My family was ordered to provide one laborer, but my parents were old and my brother was also in another labor service for the military outpost in my village. So I decided to go for my family quota.

The village Lore knew my age, but they did not say anything. I was the youngest among the villagers in that group. There were 15 people from my village. Most were women, and as that time was harvest time, their husbands could not go. Among them, five were my friends and were as young as me.

I took rice, salt, oil and a bamboo basket with me. I also took 800 kyats for expenses. Some people told me that we had to pay for our own transportation and suggested me to bring some money with me. We left our village at 4:00 am by truck. The truck came from Ya-phy village loaded with 25 villagers from there. I later learned that all of them were also going to work together with us. I noticed that among the people from Ya-phy village, some were only 12-13 year-old girls. Later we had to nav 100 kvat each to the carrm 42 miles

five women in their groups. In that case, women had to dig and carry, too. In my group, two men dug for us and three women carried the ground to the designated place. Each group had to finish two pits of 10 x 1 x 10' daily. Sometimes the ground was so hard that it was impossible to finish our quota within working hours. So we had to work longer and get back to the barracks pretty late. The working hours were from 6-1 lam in the morning and from 11-5 pm. We could not take a rest while we were working. The work was so hard for the young girls.

I worked 15 days there and rested at home 15 days. The next time when my family was assigned, I had to go again for the same reason. I did not want to work because it was so hard. However, what should I do? If I don't go, my family will be in big trouble.

Name	San Nam Si
age	52-years-old
sex	male
ethnicity	Karen
religion	Christian

marital status	married, 2 year-old child
native	Ya -Phu village, Yebyu township, Tanessarim Division
place of interview	Payaw refugee camp
date of interview	Feb 4, 1996

Porter fee is one of the taxes we had to pay regularly. Our village had about 40 households and was divided into four groups consisting of 10 households. There was a rotating system for four groups in the village. In every two month, every household in one group was required to pay 3,000 kyats ( for 10 households) or 15 people for two weeks labor. When we could not pay on time, extra fees were added. Our villagers always paid for that because we were afraid to be arrested. Some villagers from Nat Kyi Zin village, nearby ours, were arrested July last year for failing to do so. They all were taken to the military barracks in chains. They worked for one month there for the soldiers and officers.

I have worked as a porter over 20 times when I was in my village, as I was so poor to pay money. This work was quite familiar to me. Let me tell only one story of my porter experience. I was conscripted as a porter in February two years ago, even though I paid the porter fees. It was an emergency order for the mobile column. Altogether 18 men from my village and 4 from Nat Kyi /in were conscripted. The military colum was from LIB (409) based in Klaing Aung village. All 22 were forced to carry bomb shells, ammunitiion boxes, food and other stuff. I had to carry two 60mm shells and also two visses of oil. The column toured in Tuang Khun, Min Zun, Kyauk Kayen, Maiya, Dani Chaung, Metha Taung, Kyel Thone Nyima, Kan Bauk, Mi Chaung Ain, Pay Chaung, Yea Nge, Taung Man Pyaung, Wartaw Chaungpya, Lctwell Kyaung; all in Yebyu township. Sometimes we did not stop to sleep for four days except to cook rice and eat.

When we arrived in Wartaw Chaungpya, Than Lwin, a 35-year-old villager from Nat Kyi Zin, could no longer climb up the mountain. He was sick and too weak after nonstop walking for four days. I got malaria four days before and could not take a rest. He had to carry a rice sack and he was shivering with the chills. He asked the soldiers to let him rest. But the soldier said, "You are lying. You're always lazy and never work hard. I'll kill you so that we don't have to give you more food." Then three soldiers beat him un with a

wooden stick. He walked just behind me so that I saw it all very clearly. He was beaten up until his head was bloody. The soldiers checked his pulse rate and said he was dead. They said, " See this as your lesson. I will do like this to anyone who does not work hard." We worked for two months at that time.

The other form was forced labor which had begun three years ago. Like portorage, I had no choice but to go and work. One time, I was conscripted for two weeks and another two weeks for Ye-Tavoy railway project. I had not a single day working for my family. My wife with our very young baby had to work for our survival. Even though she worked hard, it was hardly enough for the family. We have sold our buffalos first and then later our catties.

For the forced labor in Ye-Tavoy railway, I worked several times at Yabu camp. I could not recount how many times I worked there. So many times for me. It was like my second home. The camp was not so far from my village, only 7 miles away, but all were required to sleep there. We worked one time for 15 people from my Yapu (Karen village) and 30 people from Yapu (Mon) for fifteen days. These 45 people were assigned to finish digging 250 ditches of 30 x 30 x 3 ft within two weeks. Then we had to build up the railway embarkment. There were about 14,000 people from other villages in Yebyu township and I also saw about 500 prisoners in chains at the camp. They were closely watched by the police. For us, local Lore guarded.

Since late May 95, the working site has been changed. The authorities said the previous route was wrong. It was built in the wrong way. So they ordered the people to go and work in Klaing Aung (also in Yebyu township). We had to start from the begining, cutting trees and bushes in the area and burning them, then making clear the route for the railway foliage. The same duty (digging 250 ditches for 45 people) was ordered. People from Yebyu, Long Lon and Kan Bauk township were there, totaling about 8,000. Some were very young children because their parents were unable to come and work; the children had to work for their parents.

Before they started to build up the railway embarkment, new army bases were moved to Klaing Aung. They were LIB (407,408,409,410). All villages in Yebyu township were ordered to work for the setting up of the new army barracks

*(Continued on page No. 38)*

# More new refugees in Pa Yaw camp

Since last month, 9 households from Loh Thaing village and 5 households (total about 100 people) from Rah-Pu village, Yebyu township in Tenassarim Division have fled to Payaw camp on the Thai-Burma border due to the harassment and threats by the Slorc troops. " Many more are on the way to the refugee camp" said San Nhan Si, 52 year old Karen -Christian refugee who arrived last week to the refugee camp.

The villagers especially from the Loh Thaing Karen village have been subjected to human rights abuses by the Slorc's IB 104, stationed at Kyauk Kadin village commanded by Major Htaung Zar Lian. After the fighting of Slorc troops and KNU troops led by Dah Ley on December 2 between the Loh Thaing and Ra Phu village, the harassment towards Karen local villagers has been intensified. On December 18, 1995, about 40-60 soldiers from IB 104 led by Capt Myint kyaw entered Loh Thaing village and searched for the people in their lists. They all searched one house to house for the suspects who were accused of having contact with Dah Ley's group from KNU or relatives of Dah Ley. Pe Shwe (male over 50 years old) Pho Kel (male, 30-year-old), Pho Khe (male 50-year-old), Yea Shu (male, 24-year-old), Pe Yeo (a) Saw htoo Khe (male, 42-year-old), Pha Pe (male, 21-year-old), Paw Lwe (male, 35-year-old) ChaNa (male, 45-year-old) Bli Na (male, 35), Hel Wah (male, 24), Baw Tho (male, 24-year-old) , Naw Kyel (female, 39-year-old) with her 8-month-old baby, Naw Aye Lo (female, 42-year-old) Naw Phaw Chel (female, over-30-year-old), Naw Deeje (female, over-30-year-old), Saw Htoo Tha (male, 67-year-old) Naw Khlo (female, 29-year-old), Naw Phaw Pla (female, 21-year-old) with her 2-year-old baby, Naw Daw The (female 30-year-old), Naw Lu Phaw (female, 20 year-old) and Kyaw Pho Kho (male, over-30-year-old) were arrested in their house. Some of them were relatives of Dah ley but some were arrested while they were visiting their friends' houses.

Pe Shwe was dragged out of his house and beaten up with the rifle butt into his head. The soldiers asked him whereabouts of Dah Ley and his family. At least three time, he was beaten up. All men were tied up with the rope in their waist and all were taken to Kyak Ka Din village where the military stationed.

" They tied up and tortured us. All the men were forced to stand in the scorching sun for all day long and they were tied both in their hands and legs. The women were forced to strip off their clothes before standing in the sun and interrogated for all day long without giving any food nor water." said Naw Kyel, Karen mother of one child who also fled to Payaw camp last week while she was breeding her child in the refugee camp.

They were kept in the hut and interrogated for four days. Naw Kyel told her nightmare of interrogation. " There are about three soldiers and one captain ( Captain Myint Kyaw) interrogated me. They asked whether my husband (Pe Yeo who also got arrested with her) had a gun or not. I said no. The captain pointed out gun into my head and threatened if I did not say truth, he would have shot right away. I was scare. He slashed into my face several time."

After four-day-long interrogation and torture one by one, all were released except Pe Yeo, Pho Khel and Baw Lwe. The release were ordered to get the information whereabouts of Dah Ley. Pe Yeo managed to escape the next day at night but he stepped on booby traps planted around the army camp and seriously wounded. He could manage to returned back to his village was given a secret treatment at the hut outside his village. He died three days later, according to his wife, Naw Kyel.

On January 12, 1996, a group of soldiers from IB 401 led by Major Htaung Zar Lian again came to Loh Thaing village. They ordered the villagers not to go to the east river side of Ye stream where most of them had the farm. Anybody would be shot with any questioning if found in that area. Major Htaung Zar Lian told the villagers that those who failed to comply with the order of the military in this village would be punished, "we cannot bear any more arrest or torture by the military. Moreover, the army ordered us to work on the extension of Ye-Tavoy motor road. Our village was assigned to work between 71 and 74 miles. Villagers are required to cut and burn the trees and make the ground level of 150 ft for each side of the motor road. How can we work for our survivals. We cannot go and work to our farm and furthermore we have to work without any pay for many forced labor projects. That's why we fled to

the refugee camp." told Saw Htoo Thar.

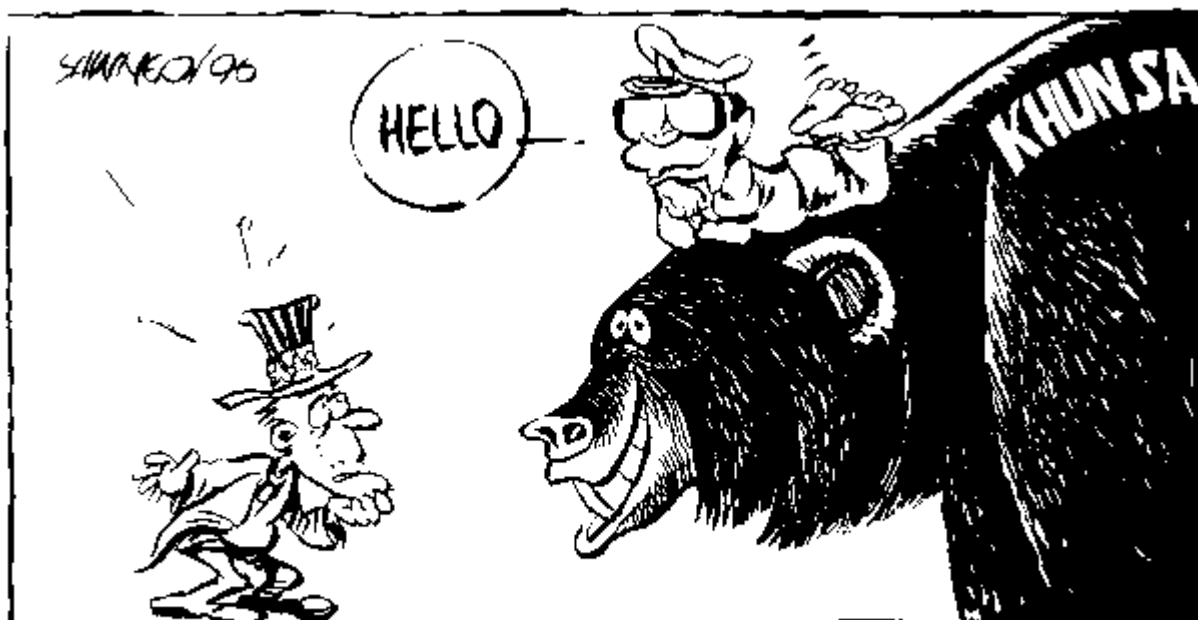
The villagers from Ra Phu village also faced that fate. The soldiers from 401 also came to the village and threatened to the village on the same day. They also were not allowed to go and work their farms in the east side of Tavoy stream. According to the San Nhan Si from Ra Phu village, Major Htaung Zar Lian said " You Christian Karen are trouble-makers. Only you have left to make the destructive things to the State. All other ethnic have returned to legal-fold even the Buddhist Karen. You Christian and students are minion of colony. I will kill all Christians and students for the safe of our state."

Many refugees are on the way to the Payaw camp or in the another camp right on the border. Payaw camp is under order or relocation deeper inside Burma by the Thai authorities. The food and medical supplies to the refugee in the Pa Yaw camp will be cut off in the future and all will be relocated into Burma. The future of refugees is unknown. But the increasing number of new arrivals indicates the ongoing human rights violations inside Burma. There are many human rights violations again the Mon local people although New Mon State Party has reached "cease-fire" agreement with Slorc. Karen villagers are particularly targeted for giving more pressure towards KNU to sign "ceasefire".

## 'Students' Sport Festival 1996' in Tavoy leads more taxation

This year "Students Sport Festival 1996", a yearly festival since Slorc took power will be held in Tavoy, Tanessarim Division. For preparing to successfully and magnificently hold the festival, the Slorc ordered to give 5,000,000 for each township in Tanessarim Division. A special fund collecting and receiving committee led by U Htay Aung (Secretary of Township Lore) in Palaw township was formed. According to the order No 2/95 dated Dec 22, 1995, the committee would levy the taxation to all business owners and people in accordance with the fixed rate until the end of October 1996.

Small business like tailor, beauty saloon, hairdressers, book rental shop, betel-nut shop are ordered to pay 5-10 kyats daily while restaurant, grocery shop and store are required to pay 20-30 daily. All government service sections and departments are also ordered to levy the fixed rate such as 150 kyats for one trip of passenger car in the township, 500 kyats for one trip of boat to Rangoon, 50 kyats for one acre of rubber per day. The rate depends on the size of business. Even the animal are not spare for the tax. Each pig or cattle that passes through the township are levied 15 kyats.



Anyone who need the recommendation letter from the Township Lore are forced to pay 500 kyats for the "Students Sport Festival".

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## **Recent forced relocation in Tanessarim Division**

With the accusation of having contact with the ethnic armed groups in the region, hundreds of villages in Tanessarim Division have been relocated one place to place by the order of Slorc. Many villages in the specific village groups have been ordered to the Slorc's designated area under their control.

The former villages were closed to the villagers' farming land where was convenient for them and rich of natural fertilizers. Recently, military commander from LIB (403) based in Thetyetchaung township has ordered the villages in Ait Ait village group to relocate or burnt down if the villagers do not cooperate with the army. These villages are Ait Ait, Kyauk Takwa, Mee-laung-chaung, malakarChaung, Pa-on (Karen), Pa-on (Mon), Kyauk-Se, Kin Pun Chone, Se Taw, Kamar Ain, Pe-Chaung Pya and Padauk, all from Ait Ait village group.

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## **one more tax for upgrading Tavoy College**

Since they became power, the Slorc has been attempting to build up the new colleges. Some two-academic-year colleges are upgraded into four-academic-year university in every 14 states and divisions. It seems Slorc is promoting the education sector in Burma and all the regions are developing. However, one of the main reasons of the Slorc to do so is to decentralize the student movement and make the students scatter all over the country. In this way, when the student-led demonstration occurs, Slorc can easily handle by all means.

Tavoy College was opened in 1977 and giving two-academic-year courses. Slorc is now upgrading the college into four-academic-year degree college in the future. Unsurprisingly, local people in Tanessarim Division are ordered to contribute for the cost of upgrading Tavoy College. All townships in Tanessarim Division are obligatory to donate 15,000,000 kyats.

## **censorship on theater jokes**

There are about 15 local Burmese traditional theater groups in Tanessarim Division and most are based in Tavoy township. They all are under the control of Division Traditional Theater Art Council according to the Slorc order. A new regulation was imposed on the Burmese comedians to get permission from the local authorities before their performance.

No political jokes or jokes on forced labor and human rights situation in the region are allowed during the performed. Last December, two well-famous local comedians; U O.K (from Thitsa Oo group) and U Pan Pwint (from Shwe Tharapu group) were strongly warned by the Slorc authorities for their jokes about the Ye-Tavoy railway forced labor.

The regulation is less restricted in the rural area but in the urban area, it is so restricted, according to the one comedian from Palaw township. Comedians are only allowed to make jokes which have been permitted by the Slorc.

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## **Fighting resumed in Karenni State**

Fierce fighting between Slorc and Alliance forces of KNPP and ABSDF has been resumed since March 2, in Karenni area, near Mae Hong Son Province of northern Thailand.

On March 2, 96, about 1,500 soldiers composed of Slorc LIB 102, 421, 423 and 424, under the command of Regional Military Strategic Command (7) and tactic strategic command (3) based in Loikaw, Karenni State heavily attacked with over 500 shells of 120 mm, 75 mm, 81 mm and 60 mm grenade mortars to the Karenni bases in Naung Lon range. The fighting began at 7:00 am and lasted five hours. The Slorc troops retreated at 4:30 pm.

The fighting again occurred on March 3 and the Slorc retreated with high casualties. At least ten soldiers from Slorc were reportedly killed and one KNPP was wounded.

The overall offensive attack is being launched by 27 battalions under the 7 military strategic commands from Loi Kaw. It is commanded by the deputy tactic commander Col. Kyaw Khin Soe. Slorc has claimed to take control of the whole Karenni region by March 27, Armed Forces Day in Burma, according to the border source.

**ABSDF News Agency**

# *Cheap and vulnerable: dilemma for Thailand*



*Burmese illegal immigrants rounded up by the Thai police.  
Their future are uncertain.*

ThCtrafficking of Burmese illegal migrant workers for cheap labor was again brought to people's and media's attention when more than fifty illegal Burmese immigrants were injured when they were caught in a fire on a truck inside Thailand.

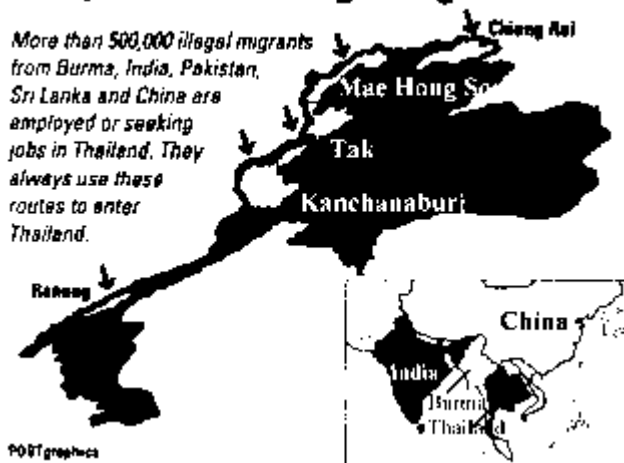
The incident took place on January 14, 1996 on a 10-wheel truck, jammed with about seventy Burmese illegal immigrants hiding under tarpaulin sheets. The fire broke out on a highway in Tambon Bangwan, Khura Buri district of Phangnga province. All of them were picked up in Ranong with the promise to get jobs in Phuket.

According to the victims who were sent to the nearby hospitals, there were about seventy Burmese men, women and children in the truck; the truck was fully covered with tarpaulin sheets which were tied with strings very tightly. Only fifty-three were hospitalized and some escaped from the scene. "Many people suffered bad burns because the fire broke out about thirty minutes be

fore the driver became aware of the incident and then stopped the truck," sub Lt Somchai Boonklob of Kuraburi police told Reuters. The driver neither attempted to put out the fire nor cut off the strings over the tarpaulin sheet, but he fled from the scene. The tarpaulin sheet broke apart and fell down over the victims and burnt them seriously.

Ma Khin Swe, a 15 year-old Mon girl from Nhe Padaw village, Mon State recalled her experience, "Somebody could open a small outlet in the front part of the tarpaulin sheet in back of the driver's cabin and escaped one after another through it. We all were in disarray because the burning sheet was falling down onto our bodies. Some tried to escape through the rear exit which was surrounded by burning sheets. Some jumped down through the rear exit." It was found out that women and children were more severely burned than men as men managed to jump off from the rear exit and front hole. Most of them were burned on their arms, faces and backs.

## Entry routes for illegal migrants



"It was extremely hot in the truck with burning. I would die if I stay inside anymore. So I decided to jump down from the rear exit. I was burnt some part of my bodies. I did not know how many people left inside the truck. Many people hastily run away from the scene because they scared to get arrest when the police arrived to the scene. Some took temporary refuge in nearby plantation farm because they got seriously burnt. I saw a baby about one year old was thrown out from the truck," told Ko Pauk, who was hospitalized in Ampher Takorewapa.

All were from Burma, mostly from Moulmein, Thabyuzeyat, Ye township from Mon state and Tavoy, Mergui township from Tane'erim division. They came to Thailand to find jobs and to escape from the economic hardships in their homeland. Some came with their whole family, but some were with a group of friends. Among the 53 patients in five hospitals, there were 36 men and 19 women. Most of them were between 15-20 years old.

They arrived first to Ranong and were later promised by the smuggling rings good jobs in Phuket. Later they were required to pay 3,000 bahts for transportation to Phuket. Many of them borrowed some money or gold from their relatives in Burma so that they could pay in cash right away. For those who could pay cash, the charge for transportation was 2,000 baht. However, those who did not have money were charged 3,000 baht to pay back when they got the job in Phuket. They were separately put in one warehouse at Ganphala area in Ranong, a brick house behind the Ranong market and a rubberplantation site in the outskirts of

Ranong before they were taken into Phuket.

This incident highlights the flood of illegal Burmese migrant workers into Thailand. The presence of an estimated 500,000 illegal workers spread throughout 50 provinces in Thailand, compared with 38,000 in 1987, raises the question of whether Thailand's long-standing policy towards illegal immigrants — prohibition of their employment and deportation when arrested — should be reviewed.

The illegal workers, mostly unskilled or semi-skilled, come mainly from Burma, Laos, Cambodia, India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. According to a survey by the Employment Department, Thailand, the illegal migrants who were Burmese nationals, including ethnic minorities, totaled 300,000; Indians, Pakistanis and Sri Lankans totaled 100,000; Chinese 100,000; and Laotians and Cambodians combined 10,000.

These migrants were most common in ten border provinces: Chiang Rai, Chiang Mai, Mae Hong Son, Tak, Kanchanaburi, Ratchaburi, Chumphon, Phetchaburi, Prachuap Khiri Khan and Ranong. They work mostly as fishermen; on rubber plantations; construction sites and orchards; and in factories, mines and goods transport services in border areas. "There are five sorts of jobs often turned down by Thais— hard, dirty, risky, humdrum and lower paid. Their rejection of this work has caused employers to recruit foreigners cheaply," said Mr. Prasit Chaithonghan, director-general of the Employment Department.

The number of illegal Burmese increased dramatically after 1990, as increasing human rights abuses and economic hardships forced young men and women to leave Burma. The political turmoil and human rights violations against the rural people led the mass flux of refugees and migrant workers into Thailand. Forced labor, portage and unpaid labor in the military barracks for at least two weeks in every month made the people suffer from severe poverty. Moreover, different forms of taxation by the Slorc became a big burden for these people. It was the only way for them, especially for young men and women, to leave their home and work in Thailand. In this way, they could escape from the oppression by the Slorc and economic hardships.

At the same time, a serious shortage of unskilled labor in Thailand has also paved the way for an alarmingly high influx of illegal immigrants

seeking jobs. Currently, several business sectors face increasing labor shortages because of the high economic growth in Thailand. Businesses requiring more labor, especially the unskilled, include construction, fishery, rubber harvesting, domestic labor and farming. High demand for cheap labor is undermining all efforts to stop the inflow of illegal immigrants.

Illegally-employed foreigners, because of their vulnerability and willingness to work for whatever they can get, provide a cheap answer. Employers are known to pay 50-60 baht a day to each Burmese, compared with an official minimum wage for Thais of 145 baht. Moreover, they are also vulnerable to the abuses and exploitation by the Thai police and their employers. Trafficking of illegal immigrants from the border towns in Thailand into other big cities has expanded considerably because of the lucrative rewards. Smugglers receive 1,500-3,500 baht for delivering a Burmese worker to Thailand, depending on the distance to the final destination. In some cases, Thai immigration officials or police officials are involved in "human trafficking rings." Last November 1995, a senior officer of National Security Command's mobile development unit No33 was arrested with his driver at a Huai Yaou checkpoint while he was taking 52 Burmese to various provinces.

There are many methods of trafficking the people into Thailand. Traffickers arrange for the safe passage all the way with relevant officials by paying bribes. Burmese would hide in the trucks or van when they passed the checkpoints. None or very few times the police checked the truck. Sometimes the police in uniform drove a car with Burmese illegal migrants and the car did not even stop at checkpoints. An alternative was to trek through jungle to a pick up point. They would then have to hide under vegetables or other cargo when the vehicles reached checkpoints.

Most Burmese did not bring or did not have any money to pay for their trafficking charges to move from border towns to cities inside Thailand. For these people, traffickers brought them to the worksite and sold them for approximately 8,000- 10,000 baht. Workers had to work without any pay for three to four months in the worksite like debt-bondage. Many are working for much lower than the minimum wage and in deplorable working conditions. From their low pay is deducted



*Some of the young Burmese victims from truck-fire were seen in hospital*

a sum of money for an extra protection fee in order to bribe the local police. The Thai employees pay the bribe which is collected from the Burmese illegal workers and given to the police in order that they turn their eyes. Many Thai employers welcome the illegal workers, knowing they need to pay them only about half the minimum wage. In order to avoid paying these illegal workers, in some cases, the employee deliberately informs the police to arrest his workers on pay day. Thai police are often accused of arresting illegal workers simply to extort money from them.

In much the same way that prostitutes have been jailed while their pimps go free, it was the migrant workers who were penalized, not their employees. Thai firms know the flexibility of using foreign workers as long as labor shortages in Thailand continue, and then upon arrest, authorities would be able to repatriate them to Burma. Following their arrest, illegal immigrants had to pay Bt 2,000 before they would be released from jail and deported from Thailand. When in detention, they faced appalling overcrowding, sexual harassment and inadequate food rations.

Abuses also accompany deportation procedures. Thai officials regularly deport between 250 and 500 migrant workers at the Thai-Burmese border. Having spent some time at the Immigration Detention Center in Bangkok, these people were sent to Kanchanburi, Ranong and Mae Sot police station where they had to stay for a week to a month, in overcrowded and unsanitary conditions. Then they were dropped off on the Burmese border. Some of the unfortunate were rearrested by the Burmese military upon their arrival into Burma for illegal departure from their country. They were

fined for 300-500 kyats or three months imprisonment. In 1995, at least 25,000 Burmese have been deported, half of them from Bangkok, according to the Bangkok Post (Dec 17, 1995).

On the Thai side, the authorities are concerned that the immigrants could pose a threat to national security and to the lives and property of local people. Major crackdowns on the illegal immigrants are launched. The number of illegal immigrant arrested by the Immigration Bureau of Thailand has increased sharply, from 6,000 in 1994 to more than 70,000 last year, resulting in overcrowding of jails and prisons in Bangkok and Provinces bordering Burma. The bureau plans to build six holding centers for illegal immigrants awaiting deportation. The first will be in the southern province of Ranong. The Thai government has already set aside Bt 18 million for the construction of six holding camps. The camps will each hold up to 300 deportees. One center will be built in Chiang Mai and another in Chon buri. The sites of the other camps have not been determined, according to tht Pol Lt Gen Kiattisak Prapawat, commission of the Immigration Bureau.

On the other hand, in order to cure the cheap labor shortage in Thailand, The National Security Council recently decided to allow them to work legally through registration with the Employment Department. Illegal immigrants must receive amnesties from the Interior Ministry before they can work legally. Also employers must then register them with the department and put up a 5,000 baht guarantee for each one, according to Mr. Prasit Chaithongphan, head of the Employment Department.

Ten provinces have been given permission to hire illegal immigrants: Chiang Mai, Chaing Rai, Mae Hong Song, Tak, Kanchanaburi, Phetchaburi, Ranong, Prachuab Khiri Khan, Chumphon and Phang Nga.

Thailand is playing double-sided policy towards the Burmese immisrant workers. They are

using Burmese workforce for the cheap labor and at the same time launching major crackdowns. That double-sided policy leads the Burmese illegal immigrants more vulnerable and more exploited in their daily lives.



*One of the victims at the hospital, he was burned 30%*

Many people immediately classify the Burmese illegal immigrants as the better job-seekers in the foreign land. They fail to focus on the root reason for the flux of illegal Burmese into Thailand. Very few per cent of people are coming to Thailand merely for better opportunity and money. Most of them come here to escape from the economic hardships and poverty in their home land. They could not survive in their home land any-

more. The human rights violations such as forced porter, forced labor and forced relocation, and many forms of high taxation forced them to flee. They decide to leave their home for their own survival rather than for better jobs. One illegal immigrant said "I used to work 15 days for Ye-Taoy railway project as the forced laborer and then another 15 days for other forced labor projects in my region I had no time for my family's survival. I decided to leave for Thailand in order to escape these abuses and get some money for my family. They were starving at home." The poverty of the people and human rights abuses towards them are closely interrelated. Where there is no right to life, there is no way to survive and victims are forced to leave from that situation.

These poverty and human rights abuses forcing the Burmese immigrants to come into Thailand and work any job available for them. Again in Thailand, they face more exploitation for being illegal immigrants. With lack of understanding to their root causes, no one can find the best solution to this problem. Without solving the political dilemma and human rights violations inside Burma, more and more flux of illegal Burmese workers into Thailand would occur in the future.

# *My days in the Camp*

A cry of a child woke me up early in the morning. I tried to keep sleeping but the sound is getting loud. The sound of other people added into my hearing. It was impossible for me to continue my sleep. The two and a half hour walk, climbing hills up and down, made me tired and my whole body requested more rest in bed. Additionally, the cool weather of the mountainous area forced me to stay huddled beneath the two blankets. But I could not sleep anymore. Curiosity opened my eyes and kicked my body out of the bed, 5 am in the morning which was early dawn and still foggy.

How come these babies and people woke up early and were busy? The curiosity made me get out of the barrack where I slept. I was surprised to see there were no people left in the barrack; I was the only one left. I hastily brushed my teeth and washed my face. I gave up the idea to take a bath in the stream. It was still very cool. I thanked my friends who gave me extra blankets before I went to bed last night.

I zipped up my jacket and walked down along the main road of the camp. Surprisingly again, there were no people in any house. The doors were open. However, I heard the noise of the people from the head of the camp. I kept walking towards the voice. I realized where the people were when I saw the crowd near the volley ball playground. All were here — the leaders of the camp, boys, men, girls and women and even their little children. I did not realize at once why all of them were here early in the morning. However, I later understood they were preparing to do something. They all brought their own instruments from their home such as shovels, knives, baskets etc. They were also looking at me. I felt bad that I did not know about this last night. I smiled at them and said "Hi".

One of the students said, "Hi, you are late."

"Sorry, I didn't know you had this. May I join you?" I asked.

"Why not, join and work with us for preparation of 4th January, Independence Day. We are going to have some sports competition here and the ground needs to be cleaned up

"Are there any forced laborers?" I made a joke.

Everybody laughed. One student said, "We all are unpaid but not forced laborers. Hey man, this is ABSDF camp you know. It's not Ye-Tavoy railway projects or other forced labor camps run by Slorc."

We all laughed again.

The male students made the ground level, digging out the stone and roots of the bushes. Girl students cut the grass and burnt the leaves. Children curiously watched what the adults were doing. Some were playing around. Everybody was working, joking with each other and smiling. I got an idea to take a picture of them. I ran back up to my barrack and brought my camera. When I was ready to shoot, one student shouted to the others:

"Hey the guy is taking a picture of us. Let's smile and say cheese." They all smiled and laughed. It was totally different from the photos from Slorc-run New Light of Myanmar. The people in the papers were smiling too, but not as sweet or alive as these people here. They were glad and happy to work towards such a noble contribution for their celebration of 4th January (Independence Day of Burma). That made me recall what Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said in her year-long letter series to Japanese newspapers. Aung San Suu Kyi mentioned in her letter from Burma to the Mainichi Shimbun, Japan that, "... no project could be successfully implemented without the willing cooperation of those concerned. People will contribute both hard work and money cheerfully if they are handled with kindness and care and if they are convinced that their contributions will truly benefit the public. Love and truth can move people more strongly than any form of coercion." Nobody forced these people to work like the way Slorc has been doing. These people, however, were willing to contribute to their cause. The work was completed very fast and nobody seemed tired.

After the work, all were served sticky rice. I had my quota and returned back to my barrack. I cleaned up my hands and lingered around the camp. I had come here three months ago and had become familiar with all the camp members, students and their families. The camp was moving ahead, constructing more buildings and growing more vegetable small farms; it seemed more organized. Even though they had just finished their

work at the volleyball playground, I saw some students were busy with their farms. They were watering the plantation and others were weeding their nurseries. The plantation was diverse, ranging from water green to egg plants and cabbages. I also saw some students and families were busy cooking their breakfast. When I passed by the small farms, my friend invited me to join him for dinner tonight: "Hey, come and let's have dinner together. I'll make a special dinner for you with my home-cultivated vegetables. What would you like to have, green cabbage or eggplant?"

I replied without hesitance: "Anything, no problem for me." I understood that it must be especially generous to invite other people when the supplies were insufficient. However, this was quite common in Burmese custom inviting guests to join them for lunch or dinner at their home. They are very glad to treat the guests, even though they may have a very small amount of food at home.

My friend continued to say, "We have to grow the vegetables for our daily needs. It's our self-reliance program. We raise some chickens and pigs, too. In this way, every household can match their daily needs and run their own programs."

I kept walking to the information department. There was a jungle studio where many programs for DVB (Democratic Voice of Burma), a radio station based in Oslo, Norway, were produced. The daily Burmese language broadcasting program is aired inside Burma. Many students from the ABSDF (All Burma Students Democratic Front) are working as DVB reporters and programmers. This studio is one of the two DVB studios on the border. The students document human rights abuses committed by the SLORC from inside Burma and along the borders. They report to the Norway station. Some make their regular programs for DVB. The studio is not very big nor does it have many instruments. I recalled the amateur studio at my friend's home in the USA. That studio was more equipped and sophisticated than this jungle studio here. This is a basic studio, but amazingly it is producing a lot of excellent programs for Burmese listeners inside Burma. During my chat with the student from the ABSDF Information Department, he explained, "We are producing various kinds of programs besides daily news to Norway. As we are close to the Burmese border, we have a greater chance to meet the refugees and victims who fled the human rights violations by the SLORC to Thailand. Therefore, from their stories and personal testimonies, we can make human rights pro-

grams. We also made a program called 'Letters from inside Burma' and some short story programs with other members of the ABSDF." He seemed proud of the studio's work. Incredibly, the ABSDF students have made numerous excellent music tapes not only for the ABSDF, but for the DVB. "We've just made 'Kayan' (an ethnic group in Karenni state) music tape," he continued.

After spending some time in the studio, I walked to the camp's learning center. It was a hall with a thatch roof and bamboo walls. There were six different levels of English classes running during my time in the camp. One of my Australian friends was teaching the students. The classes were designated from the beginners to the advance levels depending on the students. When I got there, students were role-playing in groups. It was a different learning method from the teacher-to-student method used in Burma when they were in their homeland. The method in Burma was just leaning from the educators, without discussion or participation by the students in the classroom. The method used in this center is learning by participation. Students are urged to participate in the classroom activities and learn a foreign languages by "doing." All students looked like they were enjoying their studies and I reckoned that the relations between the educators and students was good. I also learned that the center is also used for other training and educational programs.

I returned back to my barrack and had my lunch with my friends. The food was not so special — a vegetable soup and fish paste. However, it was fresh and delicious. As soon as I finished my lunch, I got an idea to go around the library. I did not want to spend all my time reading in the barrack. I wished to see friends in the camp and explore their situation.

The library was not very big. It was near the stream and quiet. Various books were kept on the book shelves systematically. I saw many different books and subjects in this library, both in Burmese and English. The collection included monthly magazines published in Burma, Times, Newsweek and other educational materials. Some students were enjoying reading books in the library. "Some students are book-worms. They want to read as many books as they can. They spend the whole afternoon reading until it's dark," the librarian explained. A former Rangoon Institute of technology (RIT) student, he then went onto say he was fond of reading books himself:

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# Interview with army defector

Name	Tin Win
age	24-years-old
position	Private, motor maintenance section
	Headquarters, LIB 343
serial number	BC.820304
education	7th standard
place of birth	Thingangyun township, Rangoon.

I joined the army in March 1992. I went to school until 1989 when I was in my seventh standard. I also took part in the demonstrations as a high school student in Thingangyun township. When the school reopened, I had a problem with my principal, Daw Thein Yin. She showed my photo taken during the 1988 uprising. She asked me to sign a bond. I had to obey all the regulations of the school and was not allowed to engage in any political activities, she said. On the same day, I had a light with her son who was from 9th standard. She scolded me and ordered me to bring my parents. I had only my father with his second wife and I stayed with my grandmother. I returned back home and told my grandmother that I did not want to go to school anymore. She did not say anything. In this way, I quit school.

I worked at the motor care workshop until 1992. My grandmother died in December 1991. My father and my stepmother moved to my grandmother's house. I had a big problem with my stepmother so I decided to join the army. I had no place to survive except my home. Everybody in my quarter looked down upon me. Joining the army was the only way to escape from my daily pressure. To join the army was also very easy. I noticed many privileges for the soldiers, especially for the officers more than the civil servants. As a teenager, I thought everyone would respect me in an army uniform.

I joined No (1) headquarter of army new recruitment at Mingladon in March 1991. The official checked my health, and gave me a blood test and heart test. It was all right for me. I submitted a short biography of myself in which I wrote my name, address, criminal record, etc. Also I was required to sign a bond for serving 5 years in the army. There were two kinds of time. One was five years service and another was ten years. I

chose five years. Actually, nobody gets pension pay after serving only 5 or 10 years in service. Usually after 20 years in the army. I was asked if I participated in the 1988 uprising and if I belonged to any political organization. I replied no. They also asked me if I had any relatives in the army. After this whole procedure, I had to take an oath saying, "I will keep my faith to the State as I am given food by the State." Then they took me to the barrack.

Around 6:00 the official ordered all our new recruits to gather in the big parade ground. There were about 4,000 new recruits from across the country. We were divided into the group by the place we came from. (e.g. Mandalay division, Rangoon division etc.) All the new recruits from across the country were sent to these headquarters. I was in the Rangoon group of about 500. I saw some were very young like 13-14 years old. The officials from the recruitment center did not take restriction on the age because they desperately needed the new recruitment as many as possible. Only those who failed the medical test were rejected.

I was sent to Division Training School No.(4). We returned back to barrack and made ready to go on trip. At 10:00pm 250 new recruits to No(4) School were called on and sent to raily station with four trucks. The next day at 4:00am we left for Moulmein by train. While the train was stopping at Wan railway statio, about 50 new recruits jumped down from the train and ran away. Later I leant that they got frustrated after spending over one month in the recruitment center in Rangoon. Nobody could follow after the escapees. We slept over night at Moulmein recruitment center and then the nexxt day we took train agin to Thanbyuzeyat from Mupon station. Then we took buses to Welgali village where the No(4) Training School was situated. Only 25-minute drive from village to the school. We all were given with military equipments such as blankets, mosquito-nets, uniforms and military bag. Then the official divided us into five group in which I was assigned as the group leader.

My training was 2/92 intake and took six months. The baisc military training was so hard that many young recruits attempted to run away. I

think about 20 had attempted separately. However, only six of them successfully managed to escape because the neighborhood of the school was very isolated and surrounded by the mountains. If somebody was missing from the group, the remaining group was ordered to gather in the ground. Then they were ordered to stand in naked and then beaten up one by one with canes by the trainers. They beat 15 strokes for the privates and 30 strokes for the group leader like me. I was beaten like that three times because three privates from my group attempted to escape.

When the trainers could rearrest the escapees, the treatment was inhumane. About ten trainers from the school beat him up with military equipment belts, punched and kicked all over the body until he became unconscious. I saw some unfortunate ones vomitted blood from their mouths due to the beating. After the beating, it did not stop. The trainers ordered all remaining people in the school (199 trainees) to beat five strokes of cane each to the escapee. If you did not beat harsh enough, you would be beaten instead. Then the escapees were forcibly ordered to go on the training. I felt bad for them and dissatisfied with the treatment by the officials since then, but I dare not to say against or attempt to run away.

Apart from our training task, we were ordered to cut the trees, cultivate the paddy and sugar canes for the school and so many other works on every weekends or with rotate groups. All the money they earned by selling paddy, sugar cane and logs were taken by the training officials, but not to us. I did not get any money. No out-passes were allowed. Officially we got 400 kyats during the training time but actually not more than 100 kyats left after deducting some taxes and fees.

I finished my training on September 12, 1992. I was assigned to LIB (343) in Ye township. After three months there, I was selected to attend the Intelligence Training in Kan Thone Kan, Moulmein. It was 5/92 Intelligence Training intake. About 70 privates from all the battalions in Mon State, Karen State and Tanessarim Division under the command of southeastern military command participated.

Various subjects relating to intelligence were given such as: the method of interrogation to the POWs, how to use the map and campus, demolition, counter-intelligence, 10 characters of interrogator, method of reporting, how to interrogate the suspects, how to interrogate the enemies found in the battle field, how to interrogate the

counter-intelligence, how to interrogate the enemy found with documents, how to interrogate the political prisoners and etc. The incharge of the training was Cap. Win Swe (Training section, South-eastern command) and the instructors were Corporal Htay Aung and Corporal Maung Maung.

In the lectures we were told how to get the information from the suspects or enemies. That was torture. We learnt the various methods of torture. We were ordered if you arrested the suspect or soldiers from other side, we were allowed to use any brutal torture method in order to get the name of the leaders, the strength, his position, future military strategy and problem among themselves. After that we were ordered to kill immediately if he was not a high official. If he was a high position in his side, we had to transfer him back to the headquarters for further interrogation. We were given authority to torture or kill the suspect those having communication with insurgents. For the political prisoners, our intelligence unit did not involve it, only Special Intelligence Unit or Military Intelligence Service take care of that case. But in general for this subject, we are told to arrest as secret as possible and if the political prisoners died, we had to blackout the news.

We went field trip to the Special Interrogation Section in Intelligence Division No.(5) headquarters in Moulmein. All the trainees were explained about the interrogation methods. We were taken into the building which was 20 x 30 ft wide. There were many instruments such as video, camera, recorder, typewriters, slide and underground cell. The responsible person explained the various methods of torture to us. One instrument was about 3 ft long iron stick used with battery. When you turned it on and touched the victim, he got electric shock. It was made in China. Another one was electric shock machine. It was like a motor cycle helmet with wire. When victim was put on the helmet and turned on the power, he got shock. We were explained about electric shock machine that it could not be used more than 2 sec per one to the human being. In the underground cell, we found out that there was a closed room with air-condition. The temperature could be low down into frozen level. The instructor told us that a cup of water would become ice within half an hour. The temperature was controlled from another control room. There were other buildings in the Intelligence Division (5) compound. All were encompassed with three rows of barbed wire and one

lie was not tortured at that time.

I returned back to my battalion after the training. I was assigned at the Intelligence Unit of LIB (343). There were three privates, two Intelligence Corporal and one Sergeant. Our main task was to go to Ye and nearby villages in order to get information about the activities of insurgents. Then we wrote an intelligence report to Commander of Southeastern command. We had to collect the porter fees from the villages and tax from the trading boats going from Ye to Kawthaung. We taxed 10,000 kyats, two tank of petrol oil and 20 zinc sheets from each trading boat. We also got taxes from the logging and other businesses. When we got all the money, we put half of them aside for our battalion's fund. The remaining half were shared among the rank and file. In every month one private got 2-3,000 kyats from these taxes. For the Commander of battalion, he got over 200,000 kyats and other officials received 50,000 kyats per month.

I was on the military column in November 1994. We went to Kyeik Mayaw to Chaung I Inagwa. We took twenty porters from Mae Khlo, Kyeik Mayaw and other villages. When we arrived Pha Thin pier, we were attacked by the KNU troops. After 10 minute-fighting, they retreated back to U-Lay village. We followed after them. The KNU soldiers fired from the house and retreated again. When we got on the house, we found one Karen old woman and one gun left by KNU soldier. She was so scared and crying. Corporal Kyi Maung pointed gun into her head and was about to shoot. I intervened with him as the old Karen woman was same age with my grandmother. I believed she was innocent too. My intelligence Sergeant Nyi Nyi Moe slashed into my face and accused me for supporting enemy. I could not say because he was my superior. When we arrived Chaung Hnagwa, he put me in police station and the column kept going on. I spent two week as a criminal. When the column returned, Cap. Htein Lin released me and took back to the base. The was transferred to signal unit after that.

In April 95, I was on the column in Taung Kalay. The column commander assigned three privates including myself and Sergeant Nyi Nyi Moe to stay in one house. At night, Nyi Nyi Moe entered the girl's room in the house and attempted to rape her. I heard everything so that I could not tolerate anymore. I shot a gun into air. Other officers came to the house where we were staying and asked me the reason why I shot the gun. I could

not explain the true story so that they beat me up. The next day I was sent back to the base with the supporting column.

I was sentenced for a week in detention cell with hard labor. Also I was cut off my salary for three months. I explained the story to the commander of our battalion, but no action was taken. I was transferred again to motor maintenance unit.

On the Christmas night of 1995, the battalion had a farewell party for our commander. He got promotion to headquarters. All privates were ordered to serve for the visiting army officers. One officer ordered me to bring a cup of whiskey, he was drunk. I spilt out on his uniform, he got mad at me and punched into my face several times. I could not bear anymore so I fought back. It was in a small separate room so not many people there. I stabbed his stomach with the broken bottle and ran away. I did not bring anything with me. I went to Ye and hide one night and took bus to Ale Sakhon and stayed three days. Then I walked to the border arrived Paraw camp. I arrived January 29, 1996 to the border.

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in Klaing Aung in October 94. It was during the harvest time so many people had to leave their farm behind. We were ordered to cut the rubber trees and bamboo and then build up the new barracks. We also had to dig the army trenches in the area. People were ordered to work for a month during the harvest time so that they could not work on their farm. As a result, many faced poor production on their farms.

In addition to building the army bases, we were again to take the security by guarding at the motor bridges in Yebyu township. Five from each village were summoned to guard 24 hours security near the bridge for at least one week.

In last December 95, a new forced labor project was introduced. It was an extension of the motor road from Ye to Tavoy. My village had to take care of that extension between 51 and 52 mile-stones (between Yapu Karen village and Mon). Every family was required to dig two ditches of rock and take it to the road. If they failed, 1,500 kyats per ditch was required.

The KNU troops came to my village on December 1, 1996. The fighting occurred on the next day between the KNU and Slorc. It was between King Chaung village and Nat Ein village near my village. I heard that four Slorc soldiers

were killed and three wounded seriously. Maj. Htaung Zar Lian from LIB 409 was angry at the KNIJ. Another attack by the KNU was launched near Loh Thaing village that caused one soldier to be wounded. The column retreated to our village. They accused our village of supporting the KNU. We really did not know where the KNU troops came from and had no communication at all. Major. Htaung Zar Lian ordered that nobody was allowed to go to the east side of Tavoy stream nearby our village, the place most of our farms were situated. "Anyone found in that region would be killed without any question," he said.

He furthermore said, "You Christian Karen are trouble-makers. Only you are left to make the destructive things to the State. All other ethnic groups have returned to legal-fold — even the Buddhist Karen. You Christians and students are minions of colony. I will kill all Christians and students for the sake of our state."

He also said all Christian Karen could go anywhere they wanted during the next two weeks — to move to another place or go to the border refugee camps. The remaining villagers would be his own and had to obey all his orders. As most of our villagers were Christian Karen, we were scared to stay in the village. He might take a revenge for the KNU attack. So I decided to go to the refugee camp here. Many other villagers also did. They would be arriving very soon. I arrived only two days ago.

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"I enjoy being a librarian because I can read the books and also recommend the ones worth reading to other fellow students," he said with a smile.

The location was very pleasant for me — nice, clean and quiet. Many educational references and materials were available in the library, so that students could spend time in the library for educational purposes after the language classes. I also spent the rest of the afternoon in the library until dinner time.

I got a chance to have a chat with the students after my dinner. The night was terribly cool (it was mid-December). Students set a fire near the barrack in order to fight the chilly weather. We talked about various issues from their daily life to the future perspective of Burma; it was a very frank and open discussion. I understood the morale of the students was still high, even though

they have been struggling for over seven years. Their commitment for the democracy and human rights in their homeland was admirable. "I believe that we have learnt a lot within the past seven years in the jungle. I gained much practical knowledge and ideas that we cannot learn in the classroom. It's a real good knowledge for the future of Burma," one student said emotionally.

They frankly told me that sometimes they felt frustrated especially when they were forced to move to a new place due to the Slorc's attack on the student camps. I sympathized with them. One student who lost one of his legs during the fighting with Slorc commented, "We understand it's a struggle. Struggle does not smooth all the time. Sometimes win and sometimes lose. We have decided to continue our struggle against the military dictatorship until we win. I neither want my next generation to live under the dictatorship in Burma nor still need to fight against it. We want to overthrow the military dictatorship so that the next generation will enjoy the fruit of our sacrifice." His voice was strong and clearly expressed his determination and commitment. So powerful were his words, that silence fell over the group. Everybody was thinking deeply. His words reaffirmed the group's spirit for the unfinished struggle for democracy in Burma.

We talked pretty late on that night. I had a very tight schedule requiring me to leave the next day. I did not want to go back very soon. I wanted to stay with the students in the camp more and share ideas and listen to their views. However, I had to leave the next day so I said "Good night" to everybody. Before I fell asleep, I wondered how to work for these students and their cause of democracy in Burma. No matter where we are in the world, we are on the same path striving for democracy in Burma and must work together. As long as we are unified by shared aims and objectives, we can cooperate, walking hand in hand for the struggle. As an Ethiopian proverb says, "WHEN SPIDERS UNITE THEY CAN TIE DOWN A LION." We can overthrow the Slorc with our solidarity and unity.

*Myo Naing Zaw*

**Government  
by the People  
For the People  
of the people**



