

# DAWN



**Mon refugee woman and her child in Pa Yaw Mon refugee camp.**

**Ten per cent of children under three suffer from severe malnutrition.**

Vol:6 No:2, March 96

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## **Appeal to Support the Call of the NLD to Convene the People's Assembly**

U Aung Shwe, the chairman of the political party which won the May 1990 election (the National League for Democracy- NLD), officially demanded that SLORC to fix a date for convening the People's Assembly (Legislature) in a March 25, 1996 letter to Senior General Than Swe. This is the corrent political stand for the NLD to take; this is an open challenge of the NLD against the military rule.

The Article 21(3) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights declares that: "The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures."

The will of the Burmese people has been obviously expressed in the May 1990 election in Burma. General Saw Maung, chairman of the SLORC, made a speech to the public on September 23, 1988, explaining the stance of the armed forces towards the elections:

"We promise that the armed forces, after transferring power to a democratically elected civilian government which will emerge from a free and fair election, shall only perform its principle tasks of defense, security of the state and maintaining law and order and etc."

SLORC has never challenged the genuiness of the election; however, it has disregarded the result of it. With an aim to avoid the transfer of power to the duly-elected civilian government, a so-called National Convention (actually a "military" Convention) has been convened by the generals to prolong their rule by framing a state constitution based on principles guaranteeing the perpetuation of military dictatorship in Burma.

On 29 November 1995, the NLD formally declared its boycott of the sham National Convention, and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the Nobel Peace Laureate and General Secretary of the NLD, repeatedly call for establishing "Dialogue" for the purpose of national reconciliation in order to solve the political problems by political means. The SLORC has ignored Daw Suu's call and continues its drive to use the sham National Convention for the purpose of prolonging its power.

The demand of the NLD to convene the People's Assembly (Pyuthu Hluttaw), with the main purpose of the formation of a civilian government, should be regarded, encouraged and strengthened by the global community.

It must be remembered this is not the cause of the NLD alone; but the cause of democrats everywhere; the NLD's cause is the cause of rule of law; the NLD's cause is the cause of justice and human rights. The demand of the NLD for the convening of the People's Assembly is just. It is the will of the Burmese people. It is in accordance with the international law as well as the election law inside Burma.

In reality, those elected at the May 1990 election are the official representatives who have the legal rights to form a People's Assembly. There is no need to wait for a body to convene such an Legislative Assembly and they, themselves, can hold it. This is the time for the global community to deny the legitimacy of the SLORC's National Convention and to extend full support to the action of the NLD in attempting to hold a People's Assembly.

## **ABSDF asks Switzerland to stop selling arms to Burma**

ABSDF called on Switzerland to stop supplying arms to Burmese regime following the use of Swiss-made Pilatus PC-7 training bombers in attacks against ethnic groups and student dissidents in the statement dated March 26, 96.

The ABSDF claimed the Slorc, the ruling military junta in Burma used Swiss-made Pilatus PC-7, which were sold to Burma for training purpose, in operations against the headquarters of ethnic Karenni National Progressive Party and ABSDF's bases on March 9 on Naw Kaw Ki mountain range near Mae Hong Son, Thailand. PC-7s are heavily loaded with rockets and bombs and widely used during the major offensive attacks to the ethnic groups and the student dissidents. Since it assumed power in 1988, Slorc has purchased US\$ 1.5 billion (Bt37.5 billion) worth of arm, ABSDF claimed.

In the ABSDF statement, it said, "Slorc's PC-7s bombarded on March 9, with shells on the Naw Kaw Ki range where the alliance forces were stationing. Four PC-7 fighter planes bombarded shells through the region at 5:00pm on that day and returned back after the 15-minute long attack. On the next day, similar three air attacks with PC-7s were made within a day. Three PC-7s bombarded three rockets and seven bombs during its 25-minute attack on the area at 11:00am and returned back. At 2:30pm, in its second attack, six rockets and eight bombs were again shelled within 15-minute attack of three PC-7s. Another five PC-7s again with seven rockets and eight bombs during 40-minute attack at 4:51pm."

Slorc also used the Swiss-made bombers in offensive against KNU's Manerplaw headquarters in Feb-April 1992.

The ABSDF said continued arms sales to the Slorc will only lead to prolong the civil

war and encourage the junta to kill the civilians in the war zone. "Arm sales to Burma remain a major obstacle to ending the nearly five decades old civil war in Burma", ABSDF said.

ABSDF strongly condemned the Slorc for its use of PC-7s which are sold as the training purpose, during in its counter insurgency operation and requested that the Swiss Government should follow the arms embargo against the Burmese military due to a wide range of human right abuses against its own people.

## **Commemoration of Burma Human Rights Day held**



*Burma Human Rights Day held in Minthamee camp*

Commemoration of March 13, Eighth anniversary of Burma Human Rights Day was held in different ABSDF camps along the border. It is a historic day of Burma as it was the first day when students in Burma began their struggle against the military dictatorship and exposed the human rights violations to the international community.

ABSDF Minthamee camp held the commemoration at the meeting hall of regional working group (Southern region) on March 13, 1996. Thein Saung, member of ABSDF Central Committee presided over the commemoration. The statement of the ABSDF on the occasion of Burma Human Rights Day

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# B W U

## Celebrates International Women Day

No.(1) Regional Organizing Committee of Burmese Women Union organized the International Women Day Celebration in Minthamee camp on March 8, 1996. Ma Tin Tin Win presided over the ceremony and members of Burmese Women Union attended. Ma Hla May explained about the International Women Day to the participants and "the aims and objectives of the BWU" was presented by Ma Pyone Yi.



*BWU member delivering speech at the ceremony.*

The closing ceremony of embroider training sponsored by BWU was also held on the same day and attended by the teacher and trainees. Ma Mu Mu Aye, a trainer of the embroider training delivered a speech to the gathering and awarded prizes to two outstanding trainees. First prize went to Ma San San Nwe while second prize went to Ma Cherry Ju, both are members of BWU from the Minthamee camp. It was known that ten trainees from the Minthamee camp under the leadership of BWU Organizing Committee finished their training successfully.



*Outstanding trainees with the prizes.*

BWU is working on setting up the such training to its members in order to improve the career prospects of the women, imbuing them with the knowledge of potential vocational areas and promoting self-reliance. The knowledge and skills from this training is expected to improve living conditions in the camp by increasing overall income. BWU Central Organizing Committee is planning to organize such trainings in other regions. There are currently five regional committees under the leadership of BWU Central Organizing Committee.



## **ABSDF's statement on the 51st anniversary of Fascist Resistance Day**

ABSDF called on the release of Min Ko Naing and other political prisoners and open dialogue with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in their 51<sup>st</sup> anniversary of fascist resistance day statement, issued on March 27, 1996. It also urged the Slorc to abolish the sham National Convention and to cancel unjust laws.

March 27, 1996 is the remarkable day in Burma as it is the 51st anniversary of the Fascist Resistance Day when the entire people of Burma began their fight against the Japanese fascists. Notorious Japanese fascism spread to Burma under the firestorm of the Second World War and brutally oppressed the entire people of Burma for a number of years. Under the inhuman oppression of the Japanese Fascists, the people of Burma sacrificed their lives with blood, sweat and tears and lost their homes and a prospective peaceful future that was theirs by right.



*Burmese students demonstrating on the  
Fascist Resistance Day in Bangkok.*

"Slorc shamelessly purports that this nation-wide Fascist resistance movement was completely carried out by the *Tatmadaw* (Burma Army) along with the aim to grip the spirit of military domination in the country" ABSDF's statement said. Under the Ne Win's regime, this historical "Fascist Resistance Day" was forcibly renamed as *Tatmadaw* Day (Armed Forces Day).

Since the Ne Win took power in Burma, nearly two generations have had their growth curtailed, and their well being put at risk. Also their hopes and dreams shattered by a despotic government. All peaceful movement calling for democracy and human rights have been brutally put down.

In the statement, students claimed "up to today now, Slorc has been still denying the 1990 election results and continuing their sham National Convention as an attempt to keep a ongoing grip on the power of the state." Furthermore, it said, "Slorc, by practicing their usual divide and rule policy, have been disregarding the move for national reconciliation, but taking the political profit for its cosmetic cease-fire agreement with the incentive of the border development programs and with their pretension of a desired quest for peace."

ABSDF reiterated that it will continue fighting against any brutal and oppressive form of ruling like fascism which perpetuate harassment, and unjust deeds amongst the people, towards the people, by the people in order to uproot it from the ground of the world.

About 20 Burmese students from Overseas National Students Organization of Burma and All Burma Basic Education Students Union, both are based in Thailand staged a protest in front of the Burmese embassy in Bangkok on March 27, 1996, Fascist Resistance Day. They called for the establishment of democracy and an end to human rights abuses in Burma. Similar protests were held by the exile Burmese students and activists in Washington, D.C, USA and Australia, it is learnt.

## **NLD sends protest letter against lawless proceeding**

Burma main opposition party led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi sent a protest letter dated March 28, 1996 to Slorc leader senior General Than against lawless proceeding and harassing the NLD members and supporters through seriously-flawed legal proceedings.

The letter signed by NLD Chairman U Aung Shwe charged the actions of Slorc are not in accordance with the laws but they are consistently of a lawless nature. The NLD has described some of the trials as violations of individual rights, as well as "dishonorable, and moreover, contrary to the law," according to the letter.

One of the incidents of lawlessness, the NLD said on November 18, 1995, three people including U Thein Nyunt, Ko Toe Aung and Ko Myo Zaw of the NLD were charged with obstructing an official in the performance of his duties. "Without adequate evidence, each of the defendant were meted out prison sentences of two years," said the letter. The sentence is the maximum penalty allowable under the offense with which they were charged.

Another member of NLD, Ko Khin Htun, in charge of youth wing of the Pegu Division NLD was arrested on November 6, 1995 while he was visiting a friend serving a sentence in Insein Jail. He had allegedly accused of taken a photograph of his friend whom he saw laboring at a vegetable plot outside the jail compound. Ko Khin Htun was charged under section 5(d) and Section 42 (prison regulations act). "he was not allowed any contact with his family... Only 70 days later, on January 17, 1996, the last day of his trial, he was permitted the service of a lawyer," according to the letter. The film could not be produced nor the member of the prison staff who was the principle witness for the prosecution did not present for cross examination. But he received a heavy prison sentence of four years and three months.

In one incident, the letter said, the March 15 arrest of U Saw Hlaing after a road accident near Taungoo was created to prevent Suu Kyi and other NLD leaders including U Kyi Maung, U Tin Oo and U Win Sein from going to Mandalay to appear as court witnesses in defence of U Par Par Lay, U Lu Zaw, U Htwe and U Aung Soe. U Saw Hlaing was summarily tried within the precincts of Kyungon police station "in a way contrary to existing laws and given the maximum penalty to 5 years imprisonment," the NLD letter charged.

Par Par Lay and U Lu Zaw appeared at an Independence Day Celebration at Daw Suu's residence in Rangoon on Jan 4. They were arrested in January with accusation of inciting the audience to unseemly behavior and harming state security by word and action and charged under section 5(e). U Htwe and U Aung Soe who helped the dance troupe were charged under section 109. All four were tried within the prison and each of them were sentenced to 7 years imprisonment on March 18, 1996.

The letter furthermore said among the hundreds of long-term political prisoners, twenty-eight, including U Win Tin Secretary of the NLD are in the process of being retried on the accusation that they had contravened jail regulations. The letter mentioned that during the second week of November they were transferred to police dog cells as a form of punishment and they have been deprived of their rights to receive visitors.

U Aung Shwe in the letter urged General Than Shwe, chairman of Slorc "Which has assumed all state responsibilities, to bring to light all lawless conduct occurring throughout the nation and to effect rectification as soon as possible."

"From studying the cases mentioned above, it can be seen that the authorities at various levels are perpetrating many lawless acts. the NLD regards its national duty to protest against such lawless proceedings," U Aung Shwe said in his protest letter.

## **NLD calls on the fixing date for convening the first Pyithu Hluttaw**

A letter calling on to arrange for the discussion and implementation of the Pyithu Hluttaw representative-elect for fixing a date to convene the first Pyithu Hluttaw was sent to Senior General Than Shwe, chairman of ruling Slorc on March 25, 1996. The letter signed by U Aung Shwe, chairman of the National League for Democracy said the call was by the decision of the Central Committee Meetings of the NLD held on 22 March 1996.

There is no provision for the term of the Pyithu Hluttaw in the Pyithu Hluttaw Election Law and the term is to be decided by the Hluttaw representatives themselves after convening the Hluttaw, the letter said. "Therefore as long as the Pyithu Hluttaw has not convened, the Slorc will not be able to head towards the emergence of 'a genuine democratic system' as it has promised" NLD stated in the letter.

In its letter, NLD pointed out that Pyithu Hluttaw representatives elected at the 1990 Multi-party Democracy General Elections are official representatives. "In accordance with the laws enacted by the Slorc, the Pyithu Hluttaw is to be formed with the Hluttaw representatives who have been duly and unanimously elected by the people so as to express their

wishes and aspiration." NLD said.

NLD won the landslide victory in 1990 election, but Slorc ignores the result of the election and is holding the "National Convention" with the hand-picked delegates. NLD decided to walk-out from the Convention citing that "sham National Convention" without freedom of expression. Slorc is continuously holding the convention to gain the rights to legally prolong its rules by framing a state constitution which will guarantee the leading role of armed forces in the future politics of Burma.

"There is no such practice of neglecting the wishes and aspiration of the people even in states exercising a single party system or an authoritarian system. Taking such a long time to convene the Pyithu Hluttaw not only means turning a blind eyes on the wishes and aspiration of the people but also breaking promises which the Slorc given to the state and its citizens," the letter charged the Slorc for its failing to convene the Pyithu Hluttaw.

NLD called on the Slorc "to arrange for the discussion and implementation of the Pyithu Hluttaw representatives-elect for fixing a date to convene the first Pyithu Hluttaw (legislature) as soon as possible."

## **EU initiates investigation on the forced labor in Burma**

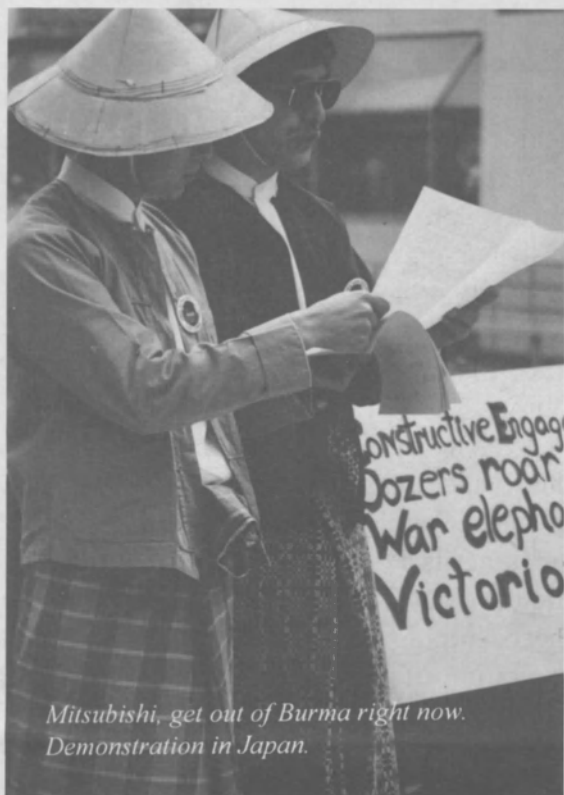
After receiving a complaint alleging practices of forced labor in Burma, the European Union (EU) has initiated a formal investigation of forced labor in Burma, under its Generalized System of Preference (GSP) procedure. The complaint was jointly lodged by the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), pursuant to Article 9 and 10 of Council Regulation, which provides for the possible temporary withdrawal of tariff preferences for certain

industrial products originating in developing countries which *inter alia*, practice any form of forced labor as defined in the Geneva Conventions and International Labor Conventions.

The complainant alleges that there are various forms of forced labor being practiced in Burma which are contrary to International Human Rights, the Conventions of the International Labor Organization (ILO) on Forced Labor and International Humanitarian Law and are therefore in violation of Burma's international obligations. It is claimed that these violations have been committed by or

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# Boycott Mitsubishi in Japan



On March 20, more than forty Burmese democracy activists and members of Burmese Relief Center — Japan from all parts of the country gathered on the historic bridge at Shinsaibashi - Dohtomburi in Osaka to stage a peaceful demonstration targeting the giant Japanese conglomerate, Mitsubishi, for its business dealings in Burma and its destruction of rainforests worldwide.

In the months preceding the demonstration, Burmese Relief Center — Japan, in cooperation with the San Francisco based Rainforest Action Network had received haiku (Japanese -style poems) from around the world focusing on Mitsubishi's activities and calling for democracy in Burma. Some of the best of these poems were reproduced on huge posters and displayed at the demonstration, along with a gigantic protest letter in both English and Japanese which many passers - by stopped to sign.

Both the poems and the letter are being hand - delivered to the head office of Mitsubishi Corporation in Tokyo.

Demonstration organizers deplored the February visit of Mr. Minoru Makihara, President of Mitsubishi Corporation, to Rangoon, including a high - profile meeting with SLORC officials. Although it drew little attention in Japan, Makihara's trip featured prominently in the Burmese press, with many pictures, thus giving untimely support to the military regime.

A highlight of the demonstration was an action - packed performance of street theater that graphically showed how Mitsubishi's investment in Burma creates environmental havoc and enables the Burmese dictatorship, which spends nearly half the national budget on the military, to further enslave the people and to deny them the most basic of human rights.

BRC - J spokesmen read a statement in Japanese and English calling on the Japanese people to join an international boycott of all Mitsubishi products and services until the corporation ceases operations in Burma and rethinks its destructive policies regarding the world's forests.

Participants condemned Makihara's visit as signifying Mitsubishi's contempt for the democratic aspirations of the Burmese people and for the eloquent appeals by Burma's pro-democracy opposition, led by Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, that foreign investors wait until progress has been made towards democratic reform.

The Burmese Relief Center — Japan argues that because foreign investment is tightly controlled by SLORC, it benefits only SLORC. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, whose party won an overwhelming victory in the 1990 elections but has been denied a governing role, has said: "Aid, investment, such things should be dependent and linked to the situation of all the people rather than that of one person. So if you are asking should investment now come pouring in because I've been released, I shall



simply say, 'No.'"

In subsequent discussions on the Internet, Dr. Kyaw Tint, member of BRC-J and founder of International Network for Burma Relief, commented, "As for the Japanese Giant Mitsubishi, we Burmese have bitter memories. Mitsubishi played a major role in pushing the Japanese military government to occupy Burma during Second World War because this group wanted at any cost to seize the rich oil fields in Burma. This war in Burma resulted in the loss of many thousands of young lives. During their days in Burma, the Japanese taught the newly formed Burmese military how to use slave labor, when they constructed a railroad to Thailand and when they marched to Imphal in India. (The SLORC's army is still practicing that bad habit in Burma and wrongly claiming that it is a Burmese tradition.)"

Aung San Suu Kyi, reflecting on her

years in Japan, said, "I felt that many Japanese people cared about more than just business. But I think the consciousness of some Japanese people perhaps needs to be aroused a bit, and (there is a) need to give voice to the many many people in Japan who do care about peace and justice. Perhaps those who care about peace and justice are not speaking loudly enough."

The March 20th activities have aroused strong media interest in Japan, where Burmese issues are little known and boycotts are as yet little understood. Given these positive responses, organizers and supporters feel confident that the campaign against Mitsubishi can make a difference for Burma.

Mitsubishi Conglomerate products and services include Mitsubishi Motors, Mitsubishi Electric, Mitsubishi Bank, Mitsubishi Aluminum, Nikon Camera, and Kirin Beer.

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was read out by camp member Thein Tan and the "History of Burma Human Rights Day" was presented by camp member Zaw Min. Other topics of "What is Human Rights," "Human Rights and Current Burma" and "State Development and Human Rights" were discussed respectively by camp member Ma Tin Yu Swe, Myint Aung and Moe Zaw Aung.

About 80 participants attended the commemoration and it was successfully concluded at 11:30 am. Similar commemorations were held in other ABSDF camps organized by the different regional working groups, it is learnt.

In the ABSDF's statement, ABSDF urged the international community, democratic forces and its supporter, and Burmese people to cooperate in hands with same beliefs and aims along with harmonious strategy and systematic maneuver to uphold the human rights in Burma.



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## **Dana Rohrabacher: Statement on the KNPP**

Dana Rohrabacher, a member of US Congress released a statement on the KNPP in his public address to US Congress on March 20, 1996. The transcript is as followed:

"Mr. Speaker, Karenni freedom fighters are today against the hired thugs of the Burmese Army. Heavily outnumbered and outgunned, the Karenni are fighting to defend their homes along the Thai-Burmese border from the inhuman onslaught of the Slorc regime. The Slorc regime is using air attacks and heavy artillery against the Karenni, a peace loving Christian nation, who defend themselves with a few rifles.

Last year, thousands of Slorc troops attacked the Karen in neighboring territory. Then, the Slorc used brutal methods to systematically terrorize thousands of innocent hilltribe families. The tragic scene is now being replayed in the Karenni State.

Over 6000 Slorc troops are relentlessly attacking less than 1000 Karenni farmers,

fisherman and school teachers. Their men and women are desperately fighting an honorable battle to defend their families, heritage and identity. Although they may think that they are in the jungle alone, our spirit is with them. The heroes in the wilderness should know that we condemn the Slorc regime for its brutal aggression, and that we support their noble struggle for freedom and democracy.

In the past, the Slorc regime has justified aggression against the Karenni as a necessary first step before it could control the activities of Khun Sa, the infamous drug thug. Now, the Slorc regime has allowed Khun Sa to retire in luxury, while the aggression continues. It shouldn't surprise anyone that the Slorc regime was lying. Their entire system is based on lies.

I intend to visit the Karenni during the upcoming Easter break. Until then, I wish them success against their evil oppressors. Freedom loving people in the United States are on your side, and we will remember you in our prayers. Because you strike for democracy and justice, remember. Your victory is our victory."

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## **Press Release of Australian Minister Downer on 20 March 1996**

I am aware of reports about alleged ill-treatment of returning Burmese refugees, including today's report from the Australian Council for Overseas Aid (ACFOA) and I will be considering the material ACFOA and others have gathered. It is beyond doubt that there remains an urgent humanitarian need in the Burmese border refugee camps.

I am pleased to announce that AUAID, the Australian Government's AID Agency, is providing a further AUD 2 million package of assistance to Burmese refugees living on the borders of Thailand and Bangladesh.

This package will help meet the basic needs of refugees. On the Thai-Burma border an estimated 90,000 people have found sanctuary in 18 camps. Since the military staged

coup and establishment of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) in 1988, thousands of indigenous Karen and Mon people have fled to Thailand in fear for their safety.

There are still 55,000 Rohingya people living along Burma's border with Bangladesh. AUAID recognizes that these people are in need of such basics as clean water. As well, work in immunizing mothers and children must continue.

AUAID's grants are to be provided to key relief organisations operating in the areas. In Thailand, the National Council of Churches will receive AUD 844,000 to support the Burma border Consortium (BBC) which coordinates relief supplies to the camps. A further AUD 156,000 will go to AUSTCARE to

support medical programs provided by Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF).

In Bangladesh, a grant of AUD 500,000 will go to the World Food Programmes for feeding and rehabilitation

programs for the Rohingya refugees. A second grant of AUD 500,000 will go to the UNICEF Committee of Australia for their universal child immunization program in Rakhine State.

## **CHILDREN ARE A COUNTRY'S FUTURE, WHAT ABOUT BURMA?**

"Children are the country's future." "Today's children are tomorrow's adults" and other such common sayings illustrate the importance of children to the nation's future development. A nation's children grow up to become valuable members of society who contribute to its development.

International and national laws are intended to guarantee children protection from exploitation and abuse and to safeguard their well being. Many government policies and programs are promulgated to implement children's rights recognized in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which states "Every child has inherent rights, and nation-states shall ensure the maximum survival and development of children."

Tragically, however, the plight of Burmese children is everywhere worsening. Children are the innocent victims of military's gross mismanagement of the country. They often suffering more severely than adults. The ruling military regime is incapable of solving the political, economic and social problems they themselves have created. Rampant human rights violations and the on-going civil war are contributing to worsening conditions of children in Burma.

Burma ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991. This was seen as a positive sign, and improved Slorc's image for the world community, but the actual treatment of children can be shown to be absolutely contrary to the object and purpose of the Convention, according to the report on the situation of human rights in Myanmar

by UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights. Interestingly, in Burma, children, minors, who protest against the Slorc face the same harsh treatment as adults.

In a report by UNICEF, the plight of Burmese children is directly linked to the country's economic collapse: "Due to inflation and declining living standards, social problems such as early childbearing, marital disruption, migration and urbanization are likely to worsen, contributing to a rise in child abandonment, labor, homelessness, abuse and neglect."

The desperate state of Burma's children was noted in a confidential draft report by UNICEF officials in 1992. The opening appeal gave an alarming warning of the scale of human rights abuses children in Burma face: "Many children are orphaned, abandoned, trafficked, exploited in the labor force, institutionalized or jailed. Some are used in drug running, while others are targets of ethnic discrimination. In the civil war, children have become victims or participants in armed conflicts, at times used as porters, human shields or human mine-sweepers. Although we do not know exactly how many children suffer these conditions, our knowledge has increased recently from new reports."

Children under 14 represent an estimated 36 per cent of Burma's population. The infant mortality rate in Burma is 94 per 1,000 live birth, the fourth highest among the nations of the East Asia and Pacific region. The mortality rate for those under the age of five is the fourth highest in the region, 147 per 1,000. And the maternal mortality rate is the third highest in

the region at the official rate of 123 per 100,000 live births. (United Nations agencies surmise that the actual maternal mortality rate is in fact higher, 140 or more per 100,000)

The reasons for these high mortality rates are malnutrition, lack of access to safe water and sanitation, lack of access to health services and lack of caring capacity, which includes programs for childhood development, primary education and health education. In a country once known as the "rice basket of Asia",

and across the country many children enjoy no childhood at all; they are simply put to work. UNICEF deduces that as many as four million out of a total of 11.8 millions six to 15 year-olds may be working today.

The over four-decades long civil war between the ruling regime and armed ethnic groups is another burden worsening conditions for many Burmese children. The military routinely violates human rights, including torture and summary execution, in the context of

its counter-insurgency activities against various ethnic minority groups, which have been struggling for greater autonomy since 1949. The ethnic people suffer greatly as a result of human rights abuses committed during Tamadaw operations, especially during the forced relocation of villages, enforced portering and the seizure of land and property.

Women and children are the most vulnerable victims of



ten per cent of children under three suffer from severe malnutrition, according to UNICEF's draft report in 1992.

Obviously, there is a great need in Burma for greater investment in health and education. Yet government expenditure in both sectors, as proportions of the budget, has been falling steadily. Education accounted for 5.9 per cent of the budget in 1992-93, 5.2 percent in 1993-94 and only 5 percent in 1994-95. Similarly government spending on health care has dropped from 2.6 per cent in 1992-93 to 1.8 per cent in 1993-94 and down to 1.6 per cent in 1994-95.

The plight of Burma's children, as clear from these statistics, is symptomatic of the general deprivation and exploitation of children taking place throughout Burma today. There is little welfare support, even for those who have lost parents in the armed conflicts. Less than 20 per cent of school children complete more than four grades of primary school,

human rights violations by the military in the war zone. There is clear evidence that the majority of the refugees from Burma who have fled to Thailand to seek asylum are women and their children. The global situation of children is reflected in Burma: most of the casualties of war are women and their children; most of the refugees and displaced persons are women and their children; most of the poor are women and their children in Burma.

Once children from Burma reach refugee camps along the border, although they may be more secure, they find their lives in these primitive camps harsh with severe restrictions on movement, trade and access to land. Living almost in isolation, deprived of proper education, without a homeland, the children's lives are without a future.

Naw Phaw Mu, now 12-year-old, came with her family from Papun district and reached Shoklo Refugee camp on the Thai-Burmese



border when she was only 6-year-old.

"I can't recall what my native village looked like. I just remember that there were some paddy fields outside my village and a church where my father always took me every Sunday. The other thing I can recall is the day the soldiers came and beat some villagers in front of all the others." She does not remember the reason for the beating. Her voice quavered. "The soldier beat the villagers again and again. The villagers were so bloody. I was afraid and wanted to cry loud but my mother told me not make a noise. Otherwise, they soldiers would beat me too."

"I feel this is my home," she continued. "I have been living here for long time. I know many people and have many friends. But I don't know when I can go back to my real home in Burma. I don't know what will be tomorrow. My parents told me we may have to move somewhere else sometime soon because of yellow band gang (DKBA)."

Inside Burma all members of the population are liable to seizure by the army for forced portering and forced duties. There was a time when women and children might have been spared, but in the past few years there is increasing evidence of children being taken in the forced labor projects across the country. As the Slorc

has opened up the economy to international investments, it has forced civilians to rebuild the country's infrastructure which has been badly neglected by the previous government.

Hundreds of thousands of local people have been forced to work without pay constructing roads, railways and bridges across the country; forced laborers include children as young as 12 year-olds. Publicly Slorc has claimed that no children under 16 work in the labor projects but child forced labor is common and well - documented. In Mon State and Tenassarim Division where forced labor is widely practiced, every person between 16- 60 from every household are ordered to work for two week each month. When the adults cannot fulfill this quota, they are required to find and hire their own laborers at prices ranging from 1,500 to 3,500 kyats per person or to pay to the authorities the same price for the cost of hiring their substitute laborers. The able - bodied men are mostly the bread-winner of their own families and are under great pressure to provide for their families because of the ever - escalating cost of living and widespread unemployment in the country.

Understandable, the family breadwinner cannot afford to spend much of time working on forced labor projects without payment. This means that many children in the rural areas must to go and work in place of their parents so their parents can devote their time to the family's livelihood.

Due to the economic hardships and human rights abuses back home, many youth and children with their family migrate to neighboring countries, mostly to Thailand, with the dream of a better life. Political and economic difficulties in their homeland are the significant factors that forced these children to seek



*Children amidst the ruins of what was, until a recent DKBA cross-border attack, their home in Bornor refugee camp, Thai border. (Photo by BRC)*

refuge in Thailand. The political upheavals in Burma is the "big push" that has driven many Burmese and Karen children out of their own country- sometimes literally at bayonet point. In general, children migrate to big cities in Thailand with their families or alone. Often they must beg or drift on the street in order to gain a living and will consider any work that enables them to survive. While their

parents are illegally work-ing odd jobs in Thailand, some children also have to find jobs or end up as street children. Without language skill and because of their parents' illegal status, many Burmese children are found in the streets of Bangkok and other cities in Thailand begging money from pedestrians.

According to a Thai NGO working with street children, the majority come from Laos, with most of the rest from Cambodia and Burma. Less frequently children from Bangladesh and Pakistan are spotted begging in Bangkok. For these street children, child prostitution is a common fate.

Many Burmese and Karen children are working in places such as construction sites, gas stations, restaurants and fishing boats in the provinces along the border such as Tak and Ranong.

The life awaiting immigrant child laborers in Thailand is extremely harsh. Most children don't dare to escape because they entered Thailand illegally and don't know who they can ask for help. Employers prefer children as they are cheap, productive and obedient. Children working in the industrial sector have no contract of employment and so find it difficult to stand up for themselves and fight for their rights. The demand by Thai



*Women and Children: Forever victims of unfinished civil war in Burma.*

factories for child laborers is increasing all the time.

When these "illegal alien" children are arrested in Thailand, they are held at the Immigration Detention Center until their cases are processed and they can be sent home. Often this takes from six months to one year. There have also been many complaints from NGOs working for children's welfare that the children at the Immigration Detention Center are treated badly. Children are confined under appalling conditions, crammed together with adult detainees into small, dark, stuffy rooms.

In Burma, children regardless of their race, religion and color are exploited and abused, unprotected by the government. Further, Slorc, the ruling military junta, is itself an abuser and exploiter of Burma's children. Children are crying while Slorc is enjoying the profits from foreign investment. Children are dying while Slorc is building hotels and developing other tourist sites. Children are starving while Slorc is proudly claiming that the Burmese economy is booming. The life and future of Burmese children cannot be bright until Slorc relinquishes power and a democratic government attends to the needs of Burma's future, her own neglected children.

## Khun Sa, Opium, and Slorc; the National Struggle in the Shan State

The announcement made at the beginning of January 1996, that Burma's opium warlord Khun Sa had surrendered to the country's ruling junta, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (Slorc), caught virtually all parties by surprise. Since his surrender it has become clear, as suggested by many Burma watchers over the years, that Khun Sa's departure will not change the opium situation in Burma. The reality that Burma supplies 50% of the world's heroin has never depended on one man, or one organization. In the United States, 60% of heroin sold on the streets originates from the Golden Triangle. The region has been a major focus of anti-narcotic agencies and governments for decades, with little apparent effect. It has been no secret that Khun Sa was involved in the drug business, but he can hardly have been thought to be acting alone.

The previous General Ne Win led governments, and the Slorc in turn, have approached the drug problem in Burma by playing a two-faced game. Requests from the West for support to eradicate drugs and do battle with Khun Sa on one side, and lucrative deals with drug kingpins on the other. Indeed, it is almost impossible to think that there has been no involvement by the junta in the opium trade; Burma's most lucrative cash crop. Given that Slorc have now secured military cease-fires with all ethnic rebel groups where dependence on the opium economy has meant survival, the surrender of Khun Sa will ensure that the spotlight again goes back to Rangoon. But will it?

Since Khun Sa's surrender the Slorc have stated that they will remain a military presence and will control the territory previously held Khun Sa and his Mong Tai

Army (MTA). Slorc has further promised that there will be 70% reduction in the flow of heroin from Burma., now that the prime growing areas have "joined the legal fold." Time will tell. But given that the Slorc have repeatedly reiterated their hatred for the "notorious drugload Khun Sa," and that their past statements have ruled out both dialogue and any agreement with him or with the MTA, such statements must be taken with more than a grain of salt.

The Shan people are not alone in their struggle with warlords, the Slorc, and with dependence on the opium economy. Other ethnic nationalities, such as the WA and Kokang, have long been involved in the cultivation of opium to fund their fight for independence from Rangoon.

In the late 1980's, cease-fire agreements were made by both the Wa and Kokang with

Rangoon. In both areas, the cultivation and sale of opium continues essentially unchanged. The Slorc used military force to drive both ethnic groups to sign these cease-fire agreement; no significant political settlements have been made.

For years the United States used Khun Sa as their bogeyman of the Golden Triangle; Khun Sa was public enemy number one. Other drugloads in the areas, meanwhile, have become more influential but have kept much lower profiles. Despite considerable evidence that other groups and individuals were involved in the multi-billion dollar industry, there were many who believed Khun Sa's capture would severely damage the flow of heroin. The logical next step was that working closely with the Slorc on anti-narcotics activities was the only way to have an impact on the export of heroin. This position did not accept that the Shan people themselves, or the rank and file of the

**FAITH DOHERTY**  
*Southeast Asian Information Network*

MTA, saw their struggle not as a drug war but as a national struggle for self-determination. There is now an uncomfortable silence from those who pushed to empower the Slorc. Anti-narcotic officials are now forced to admit that Khun Sa's surrender will likely have little or no impact on the flow of heroin.

In 1989 and 1992 indictments were handed down in New York Courts against Khun Sa. After his surrender, the Slorc announced that it would not hand him over to US authorities for extradition and trial. The US responded by offering US\$ 2 million for any information leading to his arrest. According to sources in Rangoon, the last thing the authorities would do is hand the drug baron over. This is for the simple reason that he knows far too much and would be in a position to expose too many influential people, including Slorc members, involved in the trade.

Recent reports published through wire agencies in Bangkok have revealed that Khun Sa has been paying a Burmese regional commander a monthly fee of 500,000 kyat a month. (The black-market rate of exchange is 110 kyat to the dollar, the official is 6.4 kyat.) Apparently, in order to secure his surrender and peaceful retirement, a "large sum" of money was paid to a Burmese army General. Reports of this kind have not surfaced so openly in the last several years, but it is widely

known that there are members of the authorities in Rangoon on the payroll of many drug traders, including those prominent past Kingpins, such as Lo Hseing Han.

As this writing, it's time to pick the opium harvest in Burma. Khun Sa is not there to send his men to pick, nor are the mule trains lined up to carry the crop through his territory to his refineries. What will happen with the thousands of tons of opium currently being picked by ethnic people, people who now depend entirely on the business Khun Sa, and others, have created? With other drug dealers only to ready to step in, it is unlikely this vast harvest will go to waste. For the Slorc, their apologists are stating that this is the time for them to show their sincerity about drug control. And indeed, it is.

Corrupt Generals are nothing new in Burma, but Slorc control of the Shan growing regions is new. it is now up to Slorc to turn off the heroin spigot, if this is their true intention. the world is waiting. If heroin continues to flow unabated onto the streets of New York, Los Angeles, and Rangoon, there will be only one culprit now. We can only hope the Khun Sa's departure wakes up all those concerned with the Golden Triangle heroin problem to its only real solution; an end to the political crisis in Burma.





# INTERVIEW WITH A SLORC DEFECTOR

Name	Moe Khine
Age	21-year-old
Rank	Lance Corporal
Serial No.	BC. 775784
Base	Division (3), IB.102, based in Demawsoe township, Karenni State
Address	Htein Tabin village, Naunglaybin township, Pegu Division
Education	Eighth standard
Nationality	Burmese
Date of arrival	March 23, 1996
Date of Interview	March 28, 1996



I arrived at KNPP Division (2) on March 23, 1996 with one G.3 rifle, 20 rounds of ammunition for that rifle, one bullet box and two 79 grenade. The discrimination between the military officials and low rank soldiers, abuses towards the local people and corruption in the army made me upset and finally drove me to defect.

When I was 16-year-old in 1990, I failed my eighth standard. I also had a problem with my parents and decided to enlist in the army. The advertisement for new recruits could be seen everywhere and I thought joining the army would be the best way for a better life, especially since I did not have a good education background. I went to the new Taungoo recruitment center and stayed there one week.

Then all of us, about 100 new recruits, were transferred to central recruitment center in Mingladon, Rangoon. Of the new recruits there many were very young. I was 16 years old at that time but some looked much younger than me. They appeared to be around 14 years old. The official age for new recruits is 18 but nobody cares about it. When I enlisted at the Taungoo center, the official did not even ask my age. They just did a medical check-up.

As soon as we arrived at Mingladon,

we were grouped by the region we came from. Each group numbered 250 recruits. During a week's stay there, some fled due to the harsh treatment by the army trainers. Then our group was sent to LIB 8, Pegu by army truck where we were given basic equipment. Our new recruitment training began on October 31, 1990. It was the 6/90 intake of the new recruitment training. Again, many people attempted to run away. Some were able to escape but some not. Those who were rearrested were given two options; to continue undergoing the training or to face a sentence of from 6 - 12 months imprisonment in the civil prison. Immediately after being rearrested, the attempted escapee was forced to lie face down on the ground. All the other new recruits were ordered to beat him on the hips and buttocks with wooden sticks. If the beating was not harsh enough, the trainers beat both.

When we could not carry out the training, we were beaten by the trainers. Besides the training tasks, we had to do gardening work at the trainers' houses. On Saturday and Sunday, we were required to work extra, cutting the wood from the nearby forests and carrying it back to the base. We left on Friday night and spent one day and one

night in the forest and returned back on Sunday evening. All the hardwood we cut was sold to merchants as fund for the battalion. We were paid only 5-10 kyats for this extra work. During the term of training, we got 350 kyats per month but later many fees for many reasons such as for the closing ceremony, parade uniform, instruments for the battalion, etc were deducted from our pay. Usually we got only 50-100 kyats left every month after these deductions.

After the closing ceremony on April 31, 1991, I was assigned to Infantry Battalion (102) based in Ngwe Taung village, Demawsoe township, Karenni State. I was promoted to Lance Corporal on April 9, 1994.

During my service in the army, I experienced many examples of discrimination by the officers toward ordinary soldiers, and many instances of power abuses, corruption and human rights abuses towards the local people. With their unlawful orders and regulations, officers treat privates like their own personal slaves. Privates do not have any right to speak up against an order or complain about it. The common saying in the army is "Do as you are ordered, don't ask any questions, and get one's superior in order to get privilege." Privates are subject to punishment without any specific reason if an officer does not like him. Officers often accuse privates of disobeying army orders and regulations; whenever that happens the ordinary soldiers are disciplined by being put in army cells.

Forced portage was commonly used by the army while I was in service. All civilian are subject to work for forced labor in the army barracks and forced portage for military columns. Several times I was assigned to a mobile military column in Demawsoe and Prusoe townships in Karenni State. Whenever we wanted porters for the column, we just informed the village headman to find the exact number of people we wanted. It would be his responsibility to supply the people for us. If he could not get the people, we searched for able-bodied men in the village and took them

by force. Sometimes, we just arrested people on the road and forced to them to work carrying things for us.

Usually the military column takes 4-5 months. We need porters to carry the arms, ammunition and food for us during the whole period of military column. For the regular mobile column, we use porters for two or three weeks and let them go back. Then we find new porters from another village. But for the military operation column, we use the porters longer, sometimes until the whole operation is over. They are treated much worse and are forced to work much harder.

In 1992, the "Tai Long Hein Operation" was launched to attack the bases and headquarters of KNPP. Fierce fighting occurred in the region. The frontier base of IB 102 in Hway Pon Long was attacked and captured by KNPP troops on September 2, 1992. They stayed there for a week and then retreated. About 3,000 soldiers from seven divisions involved in the offensive operation were deployed in Dawtakhet (Naung Lon) region. During the operation, civilians from Demawsoe, Prusoe, Loikaw in Karenni State and even Mai Shu from Shan State were conscripted and used as porters. More than 1,000 civilians and 500 prisoners from Loikaw prison were used as porters during the operation. Porters were ordered to carry the shells such as 120 mm, 60mm, 81mm and 64 mm as well as other heavy artillery. They carried the shells according to the weight and size of the shell. For example, one person carried two 120mm shells while another carried eight 81mm shells. We were authorized by the officers to kill any porters who attempted to run away. Beating of porters was common. They were beaten if they could not carry the load or could not continue walking. Sometimes, they were beaten without any reason at all. Some died of illness and over-work. We had no time to bury their dead bodies so we just left them in the forest. I saw 30-40 dead bodies of porter along the way left by the other troops. Our column did not kill porters in this operation but I found at

least two dead bodies with obvious gun shot wounds. I supposed they were shot and killed by another column. None of the porters were allowed to return to their homes until the operation was over. I think many of them died during the operation.

I felt very bad on the treatment of civilians during the military operation by my fellow soldiers. I was also fed up with the power abuses and corruption in the base by the officials. Our battalion commander Lt-Col Kyaw Tin and supply officer Captain Ne Maung were very notorious for their corruption. The battalion's rations and supplies were taken by those two for their own use. Everybody knew about this but no one dared to complain. Officially we were entitled to get eighteen tins of rice, one tin of condensed milk, three tins of beans, fish paste, dried chilli, and .20 viss each of cooking oil and sugar and 35 kyats per week besides our privates base pay of 420 kyats. The officers reduced all those amounts and used our rations for their own purposes. We never got a full quota either at the base or at the frontier. We experienced worse treatment at the frontline. When the food arrives at the front, the officers always

from page 7

with the consent of the authorities of Burma in the context of forced labor exacted from the civilian population. These practices include forced civilian portering to assist military offensives, military labor, major development and infrastructure projects, tourist development projects and army-owned commercial ventures.

European Union is planning hold one or several formal hearings on the subjects of forced labor at which groups and individuals can present testimony. the EU's inquiry on Burma is a very important step in increasing pressure on the Burmese military regime. Burma likely to face withdrawal of tariff preferences for certain industrial products originating in Burma which practice any form of forced labor as defined in the Geneva Conventions and International Labor Conventions.

take more than half of the supplies even though they are very few number compared with the number of private soldiers. If a private asks for more, the officials accuses him disobeying orders. Some are put in jail when they return to the base.

When we are back in the bases, there is a wide range of jobs to do like working in the battalion farms, cleaning the compound and also doing the officers' personal work. It is overwork for us. We have to finish our assigned work within a very short time. It is impossible to do the job by the deadline given by the officers. But they do not care about it. They are just concerned that the work must be done within the time frame. If the soldiers could not fulfil their job quota, they are beaten and scolded by the officers. I have been beaten up by the officials for failing to finish my job.

These abuses and mistreatment led me to defect here. I had been thinking about escaping before but failed to do so. But this time, while I was taking security at "Htee Pwint Kan" village nearby my base on March 9, 1996, there was a chance. I walked three hours to Hti Po Klow village in Demawsoe township and then to KNPP area.

*"Unity is something that  
cannot be gained through the  
use of force or by arbitrary  
power."  
Daw Aung Sun Suu Kyi  
from the speech on the 49th  
anniversary of Union Day*

# SLORC DEFECTORS IN KARENNI AREA DUE TO THE ABUSES IN ARMY

The defection of the Slorc soldiers occurred in Karenni area due to the abuses and corruption of the army officials. During the "Pyi Nyein Aye operation" in which from 2000-3000 troops from 27 battalions were used, 18 soldiers from Slorc have fled and defected with their weapons to the KNPP forces as of March 1996.

Many stories of human rights abuses by the military officials, corruption and discrimination against low ranking soldiers have been reported from those defectors lucky enough to escape to the KNPP.

Among the Slorc defectors, a five man platoon led by its leader from Slorc's division (2) of Light infantry Battalion (72) under the commander of Eastern Military Command defected to KNPP Battalion (2) on March 15, 1996. Platoon leader Corporal Maung Win (BC. 676053), Ye Win Hteik (BC. 880179), Myo Min Aung (BC. 963954), Kyaw Win (BC. 980955) and Win Htay (BC. 980961) defected to KNPP forces with one M.79 launcher and twelve shells, four G-3 assaulted rifles, a hundred and twentyfive 7.62mm bullets, twenty rounds of ammunition, two assault weapons, and two mines.

Corruption and abuse of power by the high ranking officials are common in the Slorc army, according the defectors. Privates are ordered to work unpaid for business ventures run by the army officials in the name of Self-reliance programs of the battalions. All the money and benefits earned from these programs are shared among the officers but not with low ranking soldiers. "Our LIB 72 runs several businesses such as a sawmill, logging, and mines at Dawsee village in

Lawpita. Every soldier is required to work unpaid in these business. No inquiry can be made. All money is shared among the officers," said Myo Min Aung, a 18-year-old private from LIB 72 based in Lawpita. He was ordered to work in the lead mine in Dawsee village along with fellow soldiers for the so-called "project for Battalion's fund." The lead mined by the soldiers was taken back to the battalion and sold, one viss for 15 kyats, to local merchants. Everyday the soldiers mined at least 100 visses but no money was allocated for the welfare of the soldiers. Likewise in the logging project, soldiers were ordered to work without pay. They had to cut the hardwood and carry it back to the battalion. Local people were also ordered to provide bullock carts for carrying logs. Although all facilities and working forces were free and unpaid, no money went to the battalion. Everything was for the officers' own benefit, according to Myo Min Aung. Besides these



*A group of Slorc army defectors. "We could no longer tolerate the abuses and mistreatment by the superior official in the army."*



money-making projects, soldiers were assigned to do private work for their superior officers. Former (72) Battalion commander Lt-Col. Win Myint ordered 10 soldiers in every day to work making bricks for the construction of his house. Soldiers were ordered to make 2,000 brick and could not return to the barracks until their quota was finished.

Myo Min Aung was only 15 - year - old when he first enlisted into army in June 1994. The official age for new recruits is 18, but he had no problem enlisting. "Some are even younger than me," he said. He also reported being beaten frequently, sometimes as punishment, but often merely as entertainment for drunken superior officers.

"Soldiers are asked to massage the officers at night or cook for their family. When they are not satisfied with the service, the officers beat them," he said in his interview. "Captain Lin Oo was the worst person in my battalion. He treated the soldiers like animals. He always looked for the weakness of the privates and loved to beat them. He sometimes assigned soldiers to take a guard at the post which was an hour's walk from the battalion. He did not order the other to give meal or food for the soldiers on guard duty. Nobody dared to bring food for them without his order. When the soldiers came back to the barracks to get food, he beat them up for disobeying his order" Myo Min Aung reported.

"Corruption was rampant among the officials," said corporal Maung Win from the same battalion. "For example, I was promoted to lance corporal position in 1990. According to army rules, I was to get the 850 kyats corporal salary after one year service in corporal position. I got my promotion salary after three years. Capt. Nyan Htun who was the finance official concerned received my salary in accord with the laws. But instead of giving it to me, he took for himself," he explained.

Another defector, Win Htay added "when a soldier dies in battle, the headquarters compensates 10,000 kyats to the surviving

family. But Capt. Nyan Htun always took that money and told the family that the soldier had defected to the ethnic forces."

Rations are routinely stolen by the officers in charge and sold at the market. When food and other supplies arrived, the supply officer sold them and replaced them with lower quality food. The money was shared among the officers. "All privates know about that, but these very same corrupt officers are the ones who we have to report to, so nobody says anything," explained Ye Win Hteik, 24-year-old private who defected to the KNPP. The situation was worst at the front. Soldiers got only rice and very basic rations while officers were enjoying good food stuffs. That situation led soldiers to use force towards the local people to supply them with food. No action would be taken against soldiers who committed robbery or other abuses towards the local civilians. According to them, many of soldiers used in the offensive attack against the KNPP were as young as 14-15 years old and sent to the frontlines as soon as they finished their four-month basic training. Most were recruited at random. Recruitment is often done by a quota system; new soldiers are demanded from each village or township per year. If the quota is not reached, the local people will face punishment. Recruitment depends on the size of village or townships. For villages of less than 100 houses one youth must be supplied; for villages of up to 200 houses two youth- and so up to maximum five youths for villages of more than 400 houses.

Due to the lack of training and experience, many of these young soldiers were killed and some fled during the offensive. Young soldiers are deliberately placed in danger during operations.

This five - man platoon decided to defect after the platoon leader Corporal Maung Win had a quarrel with Sergeant Khin Maung Win over rations distribution to the soldiers in Dawwi Moe outpost on March 10, 1996. The next day when the sergeant returned to his other outpost, Corporal Maung Win led his troop to defect. Before they were left, they burned down and destroyed their outpost.

# Sagaing Division

## Kin Tat Sluice Gate And Forced Labor

Local people have been used as the forced laborers in the construction of Kin Tat sluice gate in Kabalu township, Sagaing division.

People from Tant Se, Ye-U, Depeyin, Butalin, Shweba, Atadaw and Khin-U township have been working on this forced labor project since late 1994. People are being forced to dig the ground, build the canal, and construct the embankment without pay. The main job is digging the ditch. The number of ditches depends on the type of people involved. For government servants two ditches are required. If there is a government servant or retire person in the family, four ditches are required. For the ordinary family, six ditches are required. If someone fail to provide labor for the project, 100 kyats per ditch could be paid to the local LORC. People are asked to bring their own tools and their own food to the worksite. No shelter is provided and people have to stay in makeshifts near the worksite.

During this forced labor, U Ko Lay, a retired secondary school teacher from Aung Zeya ward, Ye-U town, died. In last year, two laborers from Seik Khwe village, Shwe Bo township and two laborers from Ye-U township were killed when the earth collapsed while they were digging the ditch at night.

## Forced Labor in Min Kin township, Sagaing division

Local people from villages in western Min Kin township, Sagaing Division have been forced to work two forced labor projects at the same time and made their daily lives more miserable. People

have left very small extra time, hardly enough to work for their daily needs as they have been forcibly ordered to contribute unpaid labor both in Kyauk O-Ye Poke Chaung embankment and Kyauk O-Min Kin motor road construction project.

About 1,800 local people from all six villages in Kyi Nyine village group, Kyauk O village group, Ain Kyin Taung village group and Min Sar village group have worked at the two-mile-long Kyauk O-Ye Poke Chaung embankment project since May 1995. One person from each household was ordered to work one week in every month. People were grouped in which ten person each included. Each group were assigned to dig 5 x 49 x 6 ft embankment.

People who fail to do so have to either hire the another person to replace which cost 75 Kyat per day or pay 100 Kyat per day for fine. For those who could not effort to do either way were subject to beat or torture by the local LIB 228 for failing to comply the order.

Same requirement to work forced labor was imposed on the local people at the same time. People were ordered to work forced in 4-mile-long Kyauk O-Min Kin motor road. They were ordered to build 6 ft high, 15 ft wide and 4 miles long motor road for a week in every month. People in the region usually had to spend one week in embankment project and another one week in motor road project that led only two weeks to work for their families.

## School drop out rate high in Sagaing Division

While the Slorc is claiming that the education standard in Burma is being upgraded and extra expenditure for the

education sector are allocated, there are high rate of school drop out of children among the townships in Sagaing Division in the 1995-96 academic year.

Due to the high sky-rocketing prices of commodities, the daily needs for the family have become a big burden for the working people inside Burma. Only the bread winner could not earn for the whole family members and that forcing the other members including the children at school to the work place. Beside that, the high cost of schooling for the children is an another obstacle for continuing the children at school. Children at school have only one way to drop out from school to help their family. "Because of this problem, the rate of school drop out in Sagaing Division especially under 10-year of age is incredibly increasing in 1995-96 academic year." said one primary school teacher who recently arrived to the Thai-Burmese border. The lives of the children after quitting school are varied. Some children, after drop out from school, have to work with their working parents in order to help the family needs. But some have to quit the school just to take care the household things while the other family members are at work.

The other reason for the high drop out rate from school is the high cost of schooling. Though free education for basic education is available in Burma, many compulsory fees for the schooling lead the common working people in Burma to drop out their children from school. Parents of school children are required to pay many forms of fees when their children register at school in the beginning of the academic term. For example, every student is required to pay 200 kyats for school registration fee, 200 kyats for school fund raising, 35 kyats for township's "Kathina festival" fee, 35 kyats for school sport fees, 200 kyats for renovation of school building, 200 kyats for computer lab in

school and 10 kyats for student sport festival upon their registration at State High School No.(1) Ye-U Township in Sagaing Division. Moreover, many different forms of fees are requested throughout the academic school year.

Insufficient school text books in school is an another obstacle, students are in hard time to buy the text book in black market with extremely high price.

In Min Kin Township, Sagaing Division, students were ordered to contribute some amount of money, depending on the grade for the extension of school building at the Min Kin State High School.

According to the order by Lt-Gen. Khin Nyunt, Secretary-1 of the ruling SLoC and also chairman of the Education Council in Burma, state school were ordered to introduce the extra special education session aiming to abolish the private tuition system in Burma. Again, students were asked to give to 50 kyats for primary school, 75 kyats for secondary school and 100 kyats for high school in every month to the school. Working parents especially who have many children at school could not afford to keep their children at school but drop out from school.

### **compulsory Recital groups of religious verses in Sagaing Division**

Commander of Northwest Military Commander, Gen. Hla Myint Swe recently ordered the 28 townships in Sagaing Division to form the Recital group of religious verses. According to his order, Recital group is a compulsory duty of every township in Sagaing Division.

Every township group were required to recruit at least 5,000 members and wear the yogi (brown color, traditionally symbolic to Buddhist religion). The responsible persons at township level were in very

hard time for recruiting their quota numbers. The recruitment is exactly the same with the work of USDA. People were forced to join this traditionally voluntary and religious group by force, said one resident from Sagaing, a capital city of Sagaing Division.

Recently, the district level competitions of reciting religious verses by township groups were held in Sagaing Division. One eyewitness revealed her experience that every participating groups were asked to donate 5,000 kyat as a fund for competition, and spent their own money again for transportation, food and lodging in Kalay where the competition was held.

First prize winner was awarded 5,000 Kyat and consolation prize winner was awarded 1,000 Kyat. Even the first prize winner received only the cash prize of 5,000 Kyat which was just equivalent to their donation for the competition. "It is merely a publicity stunt of Slorc who wants to show that they are pious," said the member of recital group of religious verses. "They (Slorc) can gain good publicity without spending any pennies, or even some money left for them. Only the people have to spend their money and their time for this work," she added.

### **forced labor in Yer Modern Farm Project in Sagaing Division**

Thousands of local people in Min Kin township, Sagaing Division have been forcibly ordered to work at Yer Modern Farm Project which is aimed to explore the new 3,000 acres of farming land in Min Kin township.

Slorc has introduced this new project in Min Kin township recently and forced thousands of local people to work in this project site. One person from each household in entire Min Kin township was summoned to work daily from morning

6:00am to 6:00 pm.

- There are 188 villages under 64 village groups in Min Kin township, Sagaing Division. Some village groups were ordered to pay tax for the project in addition to the forced labor. Each household were ordered to pay between 350-700 kyat four times.

The new project is to make the Nga Thaw Di swamp which is situated between Mauk Kataw, Let Cheik and Pin Tin village in Min Kin township into cultivable land. Most of the outcoming 3,000 new cultivable areas would be shared to the Slorc military Battalions based in the region. Out of 3,000 acres of new cultivable land, 1,000 acres each are for Slorc LIB 364 and 366, another 500 acres are for Min Kin Township USDA (Union Solidarity and Development Association) and only the rest 500 acres will go to the local people.

In Last month, altogether 15 people including Tin Tun (Min Kin Immigration Office), Tin Thura (Cooperative Department), Maung Maung (office staff from State High School No.1) and one school teacher were beaten up by Corporal from LIB 364 at the labor site. They were beaten because they attempted to intervene the beating to the female school teacher by the Corporal, according to the local people who has escaped to the Thai-Burmese border.

### **Development projects and forced labor**

Under the name of Development Projects, Slorc is carrying out the infrastructure projects across the country with using forced labor practice. Thousands of local people are conscripted to work in these projects such as construction motor road, railway road, bridges and dams without any pay.

Local people in Taungoo township,



Pegu Division have been forced to work in the Pa Thi stream Project where Slorc is dyking and building a dam. Villagers from Kyauk Tyne village, Ngwe Taung Lay village and Khun Hnit Mile village were forcibly worked in the construction of dam for two days in every week. They had to bring their own food and instruments to the construction site. This project is five-year project and people have been conscripted to work since then, said a local villager who has recently arrived to the Thai-Burmese border.

Similarly, about 25,000 local people have been forced to work in the construction of Kan Ni reservoir project in Magwe Division which was inaugurated last year. Under the multi-development of Sittaung

River Basin project, the construction of Kaung Tu reservoir, Bine Dar dam, Kawliya dam, Ye Nwe dam and Baw Ni dam are underway where local people are being conscripted to conduct forced labor. Besides the unpaid labor, people are required to pay taxes for security fees, porter fee and other numerous form of taxation.



People are working in the "forced labor projects" across the country.

## Tenasserim Division

### USDA rally in Palaw Township, Tanasserim Division

Since NLD delegates boycotted the "National Convention" and walked out, Slorc has been organizing USDA rallies across the country to express "unanimous support for the successful conclusion of the National Convention" and the role of military in the future politics of Burma. But the participants to the rallies revealed most of them had been forced to participate.

In the recent months, rallies were held in Mergui and Palaw township in Tenasserim Division but faced people's non-co-operation strategy. Firstly, Slorc supposed to hold on December 16, 1995 but very few shown up so they postponed to December 21. Few people turned out to the rallies. The official rally was finally held on December 27, 1995.

Similarly, the USDA rally in Palaw township was supposed to start at 7:00am on January 25, 1996 but it could start only at 8:00am because participants from northern villages did not show up. The rally was held less participants than it supposed to be.

One township Lorc chairman said that he could not persuade or threaten to the villagers to participate the rally and he reported to the Slorc. As he was suggested by the Slorc authorities, he hired people from Palaw downtown to sit his village banner in the rally for replacing his absent villagers. He paid one person for 50 kyats but the price went up higher to 100 per person as other villages also required to hire the substitute person.

"When, U Win Shwe, the secretary of Palaw USDA and chairman of the USDA rally sought from the mass rally the approval of the motion, no one voiced

yes to his asking. He got mad and yelled at to the participants," said one participant at the rally. "Many people ran away after that. They fled to the gates where the security guarded. Some climbed up the fences. Five schoolgirls were reportedly got injured because of the mass disorder in the rally," one of the eyewitnesses said.

### **Slorc army officials in open market trade with power abuse.**

While the top Slorc leaders are profiting themselves with the foreign investments and import/export business, the lower level of Slorc officers are also having good business using their power or harassing their business rivals.

Major Htun Hla, Division Commander of 3rd Division, LIB 17 based in Palaw township in Tenasserim division is infamous for his avaricious business and harassment to his rival business rivals in Palaw township.

He bases in Kyauk Taung village in Palaw township and monopolizing all the smuggling boats from Kyauk Taung to Kyeikkami and Ranong. He also dominates the sale and trade of betel nut, chestnut, rubber, paddy and hard wood by using his power. Without his permission, no trader could sell or trade these goods in the region.

He was rebuked by Lt-Col. Khin

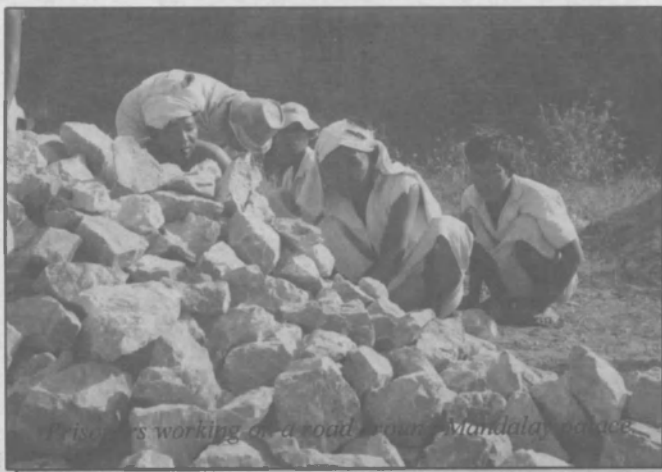
Maung Yin, the Battalion Commander recently but after he gave forced labor fees and porter fees from the local people as the bribe, no action was taken against him, according to the local villagers from Kyauk Taung village. Moreover, he was nominated for the second battalion commander post, it is leant.

### **Christian preacher escapes from Slorc abuses**

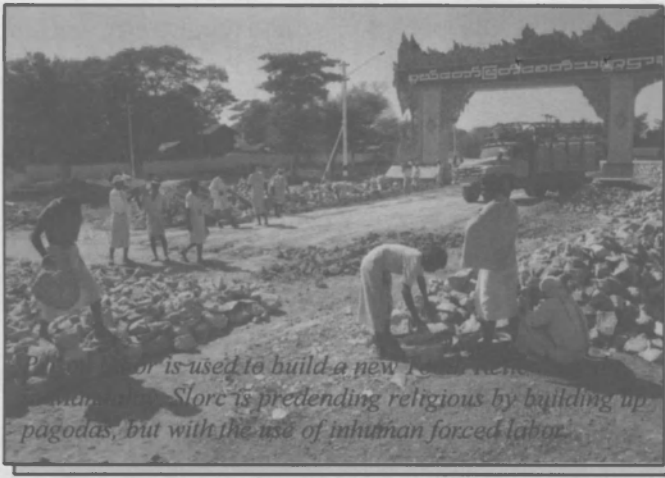
Saw Laywah, 39-year-old Christian preacher from Michaung Theik village in Palaw township escaped to Thai-Burmese border area during the third week of February 1996. He said that he decided to leave his home because he could no longer suffer the abuses and harassment by the Local Slorc Military intelligence.

He was arrested by Sergeant Sein Win from Military Intelligence No. (19) based in Tavoy and sentenced to two years imprisonment for allegedly supporting insurgents. After spending two years jail terms from October 91 to November 93 in Mergui prison, he was continuously harassed by the MI and was not allowed to travel beyond Palaw municipality. "I could not tolerate to these harassment, they are always close-ly watching me, my movement and other activities with other friends. My life was like in the prison again. I could not freely meet my friends, work my own business. The MI were every-where," he said in the Thai-Burmese border.

According to him, many people in Palaw townships face similar fate and arrest. Palaw Township NLD party Chairman U Kyi Shein was arrested and sentenced to five year jail term for allegedly having contact with insurgents, article 17(b). He was jailed in Myinchan and Thayawaddy prison and



*Prisoners working on a road near Mandalay Palace*



*Slorc is used to build a new road between... Slorc is pretending religious by building up pagodas, but with the use of inhuman forced labor.*

Mergui motor road and Mergui-Kaw-thaung motor road. After the tour, new army outpost were planned to set up for LIB 280 and another new battalion in Wah Nwan Oak, Taung Yar Gone and Magyi Gone village region.

In order to build up the new army outposts in the region, the farm lands were confiscated without compensation. In addition, 20 villagers were ordered to come and work manual

released on January 4, 1996. Secretary of Palaw township NLD has also been arrested and sentenced to seven year imprisonment for the same charge. He is still behind the bars.

All the cases with political charges by the Intelligence No (19) can not defend or appeal. They were sentenced without trials. The sentences, directed by the Division Lorc, are read out by the civilian judge.

### Motor road projects in Palaw township

Slorc has ordered the local people in Palaw township, Tenasserim Division to supply at least 100 pits of rock per village for upgrading the motor road between Theyet Chaung and Mergui into 50-ft wide motor road.

Refusal or late comply resulted in a fine of 45,000 kyat per village. The fine gets higher for the big village. For example while Leik Thaung, Kyauk Lon and Wah Nwan Oak village were fined 45,000 kyat, the bigger village like Kyauk Kar and Pala village were ordered 300 pits of rock or 150,000 kyat fine.

During the tour of Slorc Vice-Chairman Maung Aye and party in Tenasserim Division in the first week of March, he inspected the work site and working progress of the Theyet Chaung-

laborers to new army outposts daily. The lives of the people in region is miserable with many forms of compulsory taxation and forced labor.

### Local villagers face forced relocation for the security of TOTAL office

Local villagers from Eindayaza village in Yebyu township, Tenasserim division have been ordered to move out by the end of March, according to the order by the military strategy command Brig-Gen. Zaw Tun. This order was issued after the attack of a French TOTAL oil firm's field office, near Kanbauk village, Yebyu township by the reportedly unknown armed group on February 8, 1996.

Eindayaza village, most of its inhabitant are Karen, is 7 miles far from the TOTAL's field office. Slorc's order of forced relocation requires villagers to move "54-mile" on the Ye-Tavoy motor road which is three miles far from the old place, according to the order. Villagers were allowed to bring only their basic belongings and deprived of their home possessions.

The reason for the relocation remains unclear. But the relocation was viewed a reprisal for the February 8 attack. On February 12, 1996, 11 Karen civilians including village headman from Eindayaza

village were arrested by the troop from Slorc' LIB 273 and tortured for allegedly having contact with the attackers. Twelve villagers from Einda-yaza were coincidentally found while on their way to their hill-side cultivation on the Phya Gone hill, on the same day in which a 107 rocket launcher was used in the attack from the same hill which was only 5 furlongs from the TOTAL's office.

Additionally, claiming for the security of TOTAL's office, ten civilians - mostly - women were summoned from each village in Kanbawk village group by the LIB 273. Over a hundred people were ordered to take security guard between Kanbawk and Eindayaza from early morning to evening daily.

20 villagers each from every village in Kanbawk village group are being conscripted by Slorc LIB 273 to work forced labor in the construction of three-mile-long Kanbawk-Pyin Gyi motor road between TOTAL office and sea port. The road will be used for transportation of the materials for the building of natural gas pipe. While local people are being conscripted in this forced labor construction, TOTAL is paying 50 kyats per day for the each Slorc soldier who are supervising the forced labor.

### **Bayint Naung Palace Project makes the local people homeless**

"Kanbawza Thadi", or Bayint Naung Palace Project, one of the Slorc's promoting "Visit Myanmar Year 1996" projects in Taungoo township, is forcing the local people in region to relocate from their home to new place and also forcibly work in the discovery and renovation of ancient Bayint Naung Palace Project.

Local people from Taungoo township are forced to work in exploring the old ancient place of Burmese King "Bayint Naung" in Taungoo and renovating the ancient style mote, fortress, castle and palace to attract the tourists. Slorc has

initiated to explore and renovate the ancient "Oaktha" City in Pegu township,, "Hanthawaddy" ancient city in Hanthawaddy and "Bayint Naung" ancient palace in Taungoo since mid- 1989, in a preparing for the 1996 Visit Myanmar Year. Since the beginning of the Bayint Naung palace project, many residence near the project have been relocated and local people have been forced to work in the project.

Many houses of the local resident were relocated without compensation and every household were forced to contribute their labor and taxation. According to the local resident from Taungoo, in last year, every household in Taungoo were asked to give 150-600 kyats for the "Bayint Naung Palace project", depending on the size of family. The only exception people are VIP residents from Min Kyi Nyo ward in Taungoo who are the Slorc township level committee members and committee members of USDA.

### **Human right abuses in Thantaung township**

A military column from Slorc's LIB No.539, under the command of western military command raided the Chin Maung Taung Ywama village, 15 mile northeast of Thantaung, Karen State and burnt down the several houses including one Anglican Church on March 23, 1996.

The majority of the local villagers in the village are Gayba Karen and Slorc has accused the villagers for supporting and having contacts with the KNU and ABSDF troops. The Slorc column invaded into the village at 8:00am on that day and blasted the several houses at random. Among them, one Anglican church and some paddy storage of the villager were included. Total 15 million kyats worth of village's property were damaged due to the destructive attack by the Slorc troops.

On March 21, the same Slorc's



column arrested over fifty villagers from Bawdi Gone village, in Thami Tike village group, Thantaung township. Village headmaster of Bawdi Gone village was later killed with accusation of the hard-core of the KNU and the ABSDF, it is reported.

### **Detail story of the murder of ABSDF member by DKBA**

15 armed troops from joint troop of Slorc's LIB 301 under the command of Division 88 and DKBA came and robbed the villagers from Mae La village (Burma side), Tak province, Thailand at 11am on March 23, 1996. After their robbery, they arrested five villagers including two ABSDF members and later killed one ABSDF member.

Among five villagers; Ko Khin Win, Ko Mya Win and Ko Nge were villagers from Mae La village (Burma side) and Ko Aung Toe and Ko Aung Aung were ABSDF members. Ko Aung Aung was killed on the same day of arrest but the other four were released in the evening.

Ko Aung Aung, 25, was from Kyike Latt, Irrawaddy division in Burma. He fled in 1989 to the Thai-Burmese border and became a member of ABSDF Wankha

camp. According to Ko Nge, another ABSDF member and eyewitness, DKBA troop took one video desk machine, 20" TV, one generator and some other belongings from the two ABSDF members' house. These students went to the village to earn fund for their camp from showing video movies to the logging workers.

In the morning of next day, on March 24, another Slorc and DKBA joint troops came back and burnt down the village. The renegade threatened the villagers to move within five days, otherwise they would be killed.

The motive was believed to wipe out the village whose villagers are working in the illegal logging concession inside Burma. The villagers had to pay bribe money to the Slorc troops in the region in order to get working permission. The troops would be transferred on April 2, 1996 with new troops so that the previous troop forced the village to move in order not to leak their secret bribe deal with village. All the 400 villagers fled into Thailand after the burning and they were temporarily given shelter near Thai Mae La village inside Thailand.

## **FORCED RECRUITMENT LEADS TO A HIGH PRICE FOR SUBSTITUTION**

Slorc has been systematically recruiting youngsters into its army and increasing the armed forces from 200,000 to an eventual 500,000 troops under arms. Forced recruitment is being commonly practiced and has resulted in a doubling of the price for a substitute. It now takes 10,000 kyat, up from the earlier price of 5000 Kyats.

Slorc's army bases in the township

ordered the wards or villages in the township to supply youth for recruitment by quota. The village headman or local ward leader has to sent the quota either to the local township LORC or directly to the bases. According to private Naing Win (BC. 862213) from Loikaw-based LIB 250 who recently defected to the KNPP, Slorc demanded eight youth from each ward in his native Myingyan township. His younger brother, studying at school, was selected by lottery but he decided to enlist in the army himself to replace his younger brother.

Another defector, Zin Min Thein (BC.963956) from Loikaw-based LIB.72 also revealed that he was forced to join



*A slogan seen in Mandalay Palace. "Cooperate and crush all those harming the Union" with forced recruitment.*

the army while he was living at Minyard Ward, Pa Daung township, Pegu division.

Many students are selected through the lottery system. In order to avoid their being drafted into the army, their parents have to find

and pay a substitute person, for between 5,000 and 10,000 kyats.

Not only are no allowances made for a youth's lack of physical strength or experience, young recruits, in many cases, are deliberately placed in danger. The casualties among the youthful new recruits are so high that finding a substitute for any money has become difficult. "Those who neither find a substitute nor enlist in the army face six month imprisonment," said Naing Win.

Recently, an order to supply three young recruits from each ward in township for

LIB. 517 based in Shan State's Mine Pun was issued. Similarly, five hundred new recruits were demanded in Loikaw township for the military bases in Loikaw.

## FORCED RELOCATION in *Karenni area*

About 2500 Karenni refugees from Karenni refugee camps 1 and 2, most of them women and children, were forcibly relocated to a new site which is just one hour's walk from the Slorc outpost in Karenni area.

The 537 households are living under a cloud of fear after being forced to move from their camps to the new location by the local Thai authorities on 19 March 1996.

About 12 Thai border police equipped with M16 and HK arrived at Char Le camp (Refugee Camp 2) in the morning of March 19. They demanded the refugees pack all their belongings and ordered them into waiting trucks. The soldiers threatened if the refugees did not obey their orders, they would burn down the camp and kill the camp leaders.

"We did not dare to disobey their order. They were so tough — just

like Slorc soldiers in Burma! We just had to follow their demands even though we did not know where we would be going," said Pha Daw, a Karenni refugee from the camp. Another refugee said, "The Thai soldiers shouted at us



*Karenni refugees after relocation. It is just an hour walk from the Slorc outpost.*



*Moving from one place to another is what the refugees experienced for years.*

and called us 'stray dogs'. I feel bad because I understand Thai. They used really bad words in Thai, shouting their orders at us to obey and be forcibly relocated."

After negotiations with the camp leaders, the deadline extension of four day was agreed upon, but about 40 refugees were loaded into the trucks immediately anyway. The next day, the same soldiers arrived in the morning and took the refugees away in 4 trucks. Some refugees fled at night because they were in great fear for their safety.

Aye Maung, a ward leader of the Char le refugee camp, said Thai security officials came to the camp and ordered them out. "They ordered us not to try to escape from the camp, to pack and get ready to leave. The next morning they trucked us from the camp and dropped us at the new place."

The new site is just dense forest. Upon their arrival, the refugees had to build rough temporary shelters of plastic sheets and bamboo. A single mountain range, which marks the border, is the only barrier between the refugees and Slorc forces.

"I am very scared to live here because it is so close to the Slorc troops. They can come and kill us at any time," said Naw Esther in her crude bamboo hut.

In an interview with Aike Ku, a 30-year-old Karenni from Shardaw township, he expressed the great fear for his safety; if he were sent back to Burma he would surely be arrested by Burmese troops. He had been

conscripted for forced labor at military bases and for portorage several times when in Burma. In 1987, he was arrested and charged with supporting KNPP forces in 1987. During his interrogation, he had been beaten and tortured. He was released only after his village headmaster bailed him out with some amount of money. As soon as he was released he fled to the Karenni refugee camp. He first came to the Nang Aung Karenni refugee in 1988

and six months ago he moved to Cher Le camp. "Most of the refugees in this camp are in the same situation as me. We all would be in great danger if we were sent back to Burma and rearrested by the Burmese troops." said Aike Ku.

Most of the refugees fled to Thailand several years due to the wide ranges of human rights abuses by the Slorc troops in their native territory. Some of them fled recently because of the latest round of fighting between Slorc and Karenni forces.

No reason for the forcible relocation by the Thai authorities was clear, but a KNPP commander, General Aung Myat, said he believed the refugees were driven out of their old camp in response to demands by Burmese authorities. "The Burmese soldiers accused Thailand of sheltering guerrillas in the old camp and they threaten to fire at it with artillery if the Thai authorities did not allow them to search it." Their old camps were about seven kilometer (four miles) inside Thailand while the new location is just on the Thai side of the frontier.

A Thai border security official said all of the estimated 6,000 Karenni refugees in a string of camps inside Thailand would be relocated to the border line. ABSDF family member camp in the Karenni area also faced the similar fate of relocation. ABSDF camp members were evacuated into Thailand to escape an intensive attack by the Burmese army. They were immediately forced to move to the same place as the Karenni refugees.

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## Columbia Sportswear pulls out of Burma

Columbia Sportswear is the latest American company to pull out of Burma or announce its refusal to do business there, according to the press release by Portland - based Burma Action Committee (BAC) dated on April 2, 1996.

The \$300 million per year supplier of outdoor and recreational clothing faced a rapidly growing consumer boycott over its investment in Burma, one of the world's most repressive military dictatorships. In a March 28 letter to BAC, Columbia states, "After reviewing business issues pertaining to our production in Burma, the company decided to terminate our operation there."

Columbia is just the latest American company to pull out of Burma joining Levi

Strauss, Macy's, Eddie Bauer, Coca-Cola, Liz Claiborne, Reebok, Starbucks and Amoco. "These companies" said BAC's Brian Schmidt "have signed on to the principle of business responsibility, placing human dignity before blind profit." Other US companies remain in Burma. UNOCAI, PepsiCo and ARCO have paid ten of millions of dollars that directly support the Burma junta, despite pleas from Burma's democracy movement to stop doing so. Clothing manufacturers Osh-Kosh, Nautica, Leslie Fay and London Fog are reportedly sourcing in Burma. "These companies," said BAC's Schmidt, "are contributing to oppression in Burma and are targeted for consumer boycotts." BAC's Press Release

HRW/Asia condemns sentencing of NLD supporters

Human Rights Watch/Asia, a New York based human rights organization condemned the harsh sentences given on March 18, to four members of the Burmese political opposition and said they were not given a fair trial. Par par Lay, Lu Zaw, U Htwe and U Aung Soe, all members of the National League for Democracy (NLD) were given seven-year prison terms under the 1950 Emergency Provisions Act, according to the press release dated March 20, 1996. Another NLD member, U Saw Hlaing was sentenced to five years in prison on the same day which apparently in relation to a minor traffic accident on March 16. The charges against U Saw Hlaing were politically motivated and his trial was unfair.

"members of the NLD, the party of the Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, have been systematically persecuted since the party won an

overwhelming victory in the elections of May 1990," said HRW/Asia. It also called on the Burmese authorities to release all five members immediately and unconditionally and to allow all Burmese to fully exercise their rights to freedom of association. It also called on the international community at the current session of the Commission on Human Rights in Geneva to press for a representative of the UN to be permanently present in Burma to report on abuses of fundamental rights. Human Rights Watch/Asia's report

## AI: The killing continue in Karen State

Burmese security forces and a rebel splinter faction allied to the government army continue to commit gross violations of human rights in southeastern Burma's Karen State, human rights group Amnesty International said in its recent report.

AI said Karen



civilians fleeing from troops were frequently shot dead while other were executed because of suspected links with a Karen guerrilla group fighting Rangoon for autonomy. "Security forces continue to commit gross human rights violations with impunity," AI said. "The catalogue of these violations is extensive."

The rights group also said a Karen rebel splinter faction allied itself with the Burmese army was responsible for human rights abuses against Karen civilians in Burma and Kare refugees in camps just inside Thailand. The faction killed and abducted dozens of Karen civilians from camps in Thailand in an apparent effort to force the refugees back to area under its control in Burma.

### PEPSI'S BURMA PRESENCE DRAWS STUDENT PROTESTS

Pepsi Co Inc.'s softdrink sales in military-ruled Burma has spawned a wave of student activism against the company

and appears to be a boon to once-politically unpopular rival Coca Cola Co., the Washington Post reports on April 3, 1996.

The paper reports that students at about 75 schools have begun pasting boycott appeals on Pepsi soft drink machines and lobbying for university trustees to join shareholder revolts against business in Burma. Harvard University's director of dining services this week reversed a plan to transfer \$200,000 in business from Coca-Cola to Pepsi after meetings with students claiming that the company contributes to forced labor practices in Burma, the Post reports.

'Burma has become the South Africa of the '90s and the problem that Pepsi has is that they can find people that feel like this on campuses around the world,' the Post quotes Simon Billenness, a senior analyst at the Boston-based Franklin Research & Development Corp., as saying.

Elaine Franklin, manager of corporate

information at Pepsi Co, said the company entered a soft drink joint venture in Burma in 1991 with Burmese entrepreneur U Thein Tun, the paper says. The company's initial investment of \$1 million has grown to one which produces more than \$8 million in revenue each year, the New York Times says.

The company has 240 Burmese employees and is a major sponsor of sporting events in Burma, also known as Myanmar, the paper reports.

'PepsiCo certainly does not support tyranny and terrorism,' the Post quotes Franklin as saying, adding that Pepsi believes 'that we can best promote the well-being of the citizens of a country by providing quality products, employment, social benefits, trading opportunities and introducing new ways of thinking.' April 4, 1996

### Slorc moves show lack of confidence, say Suu Kyi

Burmese dissident leader Aung San Suu Kyi said on March 16,

the military government was trying to prevent her from making contact with the public because it lacks confidence. Suu Kyi said the government dropped her from travelling to the central Burmese city of Mandalay, dismissing an official explanation that she was forced to cancel her trip because the train coach she was booked on had a mechanical problem. "To speak frankly, they did that because they don't want me to be in touch with the people," she said in a regular address to crowds at the gates of her Rangoon home.

"There's no reason to prevent someone being in touch with the people if they (the government) are confident," she said.

Suu Kyi and three senior colleagues from her National League for Democracy (NLD) party were booked to travel to Mandalay by train to attend the trial of several of her supporters, all entertainers arrested by the military after giving a performance at her house in January.

Just before she arrived at Rangoon

station, officials there said the coach she and her colleagues were booked on had a mechanical problem and had to be detached from the rest of the train.

"They have the chance to be in touch with the people every day, why can't they give others equal opportunity?" she said.

*Nation*

*March 17, 1996*

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### **four policemen get life for robbing, murdering Burmese**

Four junior police officers who robbed and killed a Burmese trader on March 15 were sentenced to life imprisonment on March 21.

The life sentence were delivered by the Ranong Provincial Court against L/Cpt Pornchai Mulasarn, 29; L/Cpl Sunthron Nilpetch, 31; Pvt Somchai Toworn, 25; and Pvt Yuthaphum Jorkkaew, 24 for the robbery and murder of New Meng, 40, during his business trip from Burma's Kawthaung to Ranong on March 15. The four officers confessed they had

robbed the Burmese trader of 305,000 baht in cash and more than 400,000 baht in cheques before murdering him.

The court initially sentenced them to death. But the sentences were reduced to life imprisonment after they pleaded guilty to the charges, said Eighth Region Deputy Chief Justice Wasant Soyphisuth.

*Bangkok Post*

*March 22, 1996*

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### **Narcotics trade thrives after Khun Sa's demise**

The surrender of Burma's drugs warlord Khun Sa earlier in 1996 only briefly disrupted the narcotics trade in Burma's Shan State. Large amounts of heroin are now being produced, the Thai anti-narcotics agent said.

"The opium traders halted their business for a short while right after Khun Sa surrendered," one anti-narcotics agent in this northern town. The official estimate Khun Sa was responsible for producing about half the heroin in the Burmese section of the

Golden Triangle. The remainder was produced by former guerrilla groups which earlier agreed to ceasefires with the Rangoon government, such as Wa group.

He said that the Wa were stepping up the refining of opium to process the glut left since Khun Sa's surrender and the subsequent disruption of the market.

The heroin refineries near the Thai-Burma border were also processing opium brought from deep inside Shan State and supplies of the drug were flowing into the international market through Tachilek, one of the official said.

*Nation, March, 26,*

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### **Slorc tries to bar Suu Kyi from office**

Burma's military-run constitutional convention has approved measures that would bar democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi from holding elected office and ensure that army a prominent role in politics.

A spokesman for Suu Kyi said she would not comment on the measure because "

she does not attach much importance to it." Delegates approved guidelines stipulating that only those born of parents who are both Burmese citizens, and do not enjoy rights and privileges as a subject or citizen of a foreign country, will be eligible to run for elections.

Delegates also approved guidelines that would create a bicameral Parliament in which the military would hold 25 per cent of the seats.

The lower House of Parliament - the House of Representatives - would have 330 members, 110 of them from the military.

An Upper House - the House of Nationalities - would have 168 members including 56 military representatives.

Except for those from the military, all representatives would be elected.

The Chairman of the meeting's convening commission, Aung Toe, said that about 30 delegates representing five minor parties objected to the military appointments and said all MPs should be elected.

*Bangkok Post*  
*March 30*



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