

BURMA ALERT

Associates to Develop Democratic Burma

JULY 1996

Volume 7, No.7

ISSN: 1182-0454

RR.4, Shawville, Quebec, JOX ZYO, Canada

POPE SPEAKS OUT ON BURMA

On 5 July, Pope John Paul II urged the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) in Burma to respect human rights. He also said the Catholic Church in Burma must not neglect the role it could play in alleviating the situation. Speaking to Burmese bishops at the Vatican, the Pope encouraged Roman Catholics to become more aware of the part they can play in their country's development. He said that a country's development should embody respect for human rights and respect for cultural and religious values, as well as the promotion of justice and service for the common good. "The safeguarding and promotion of human dignity and inalienable human rights, and in particular the right to religious freedom, is a task which the Church must never neglect," the Polish pontiff added [Reu960706].

PROFESSOR YOKOTA RESIGNS

The United Nations announced on 28 June that Professor Yozo Yokota, the UN's Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Burma since 1991, had resigned. U.N. sources said Yokota resigned because of planned career changes in Tokyo as well as frustration at the lack of logistical support for human rights staff in Geneva. Yokota will be replaced by Rajsoomer Lallah, an Oxford-educated judge from Mauritius, who has frequently served on U.N. human rights bodies and as a special rapporteur for the Geneva-based U.N. Human Rights Commission. Yokota's reports over the past few years were responsible for critical General Assembly resolutions adopted against Burma's military rulers [UN960629].

JAMES LEANDER NICHOLS DEAD

James Leander 'Leo' Nichols, a 65-year-old Anglo-Burmese businessman, arrested by SLORC on 5 April (BA, Vol.7, No.5) died on 22 June. According to the NLD, he died of a haemorrhage in a prison hospital. Other reports said he died of a stroke. According to the explanation given by SLORC to Joergen Reimers, Denmark's Ambassador to Thailand, Nichols suffered a heart attack in jail and was examined by a prison doctor. He

was then moved to Rangoon General Hospital where he died. Nichols was arrested for allegedly possessing nine 'illegal' fax machines and charged with the infringement of the telecommunications act of the early 1930s. He was sentenced to three years in prison on May 18. Most observers believe the real reason for Nichol's arrest was his association with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi [AP960624/0622, Reu960623].

SLORC REASSURES JAPAN

Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Seiroku Kajiyama told a news conference on 19 June that the SLORC embassy in Tokyo has reassured the Japanese Government that the Rangoon military junta had no intention of arresting democracy leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. The Mainichi Shimbun, quoting unidentified sources in Tokyo, had reported earlier that the arrest of Daw Suu was possible and could take place by the end of this week. Kajiyama said Japan would continue to monitor the situation in Burma "not because we don't believe the Burmese government's statement, but because the situation could change in the future." If Daw Suu is arrested, the United States is likely to impose tough economic embargoes against Burma and urge Japan and other allies to follow suit, a Japanese government source said [Reu/MS960619].

NORWEGIAN ENVOY TO RANGOON

The Government of Norway announced on 21 June that it was sending its Charge d'Affaires in its Singapore Embassy to Rangoon to spend as much time as possible with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. This was in response to persistent reports and rumours the week of 17 June that SLORC was about to re-arrest her [VOA960624].

BUSINESSMAN HEADS RALLY

Thein Tun, Vice-chairman of the Myanmar Chamber of Commerce, chaired a mass rally in Rangoon in support of SLORC. Thein Tun is also Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Pepsi Myanmar and owner of Tun Foundation Bank. He urged Burmese businessmen to unite to crush 'destructionists' who are threatening the stability and economic progress made by SLORC [Reu/N960617].

Burma News:**JOURNALIST VISAS RESTRICTED**

On 6 June, Rangoon issued an order to all SLORC embassies that all journalists' visas must be approved by the Foreign Ministry. Previously, SLORC embassies could grant visas unless there were special circumstances. Under the new rules, 14-day journalists' visas must be used within seven days of issue. An airline ticket with a fixed arrival and departure date is also required to get the visa. Previously, the 14-day visa was valid for three months on issue. It was not clear how long it would take to get approval from Rangoon. Over the past few weeks SLORC embassies, particularly in Bangkok, have not been granting journalist visas. Despite efforts to block journalists from entering the country in late May, many foreign reporters who already had visas were able to get into Burma to cover the NLD Congress [HKS960606].

VERBAL WAR ESCALATES

Military Intelligence Chief and SLORC Secretary 1, Lieutenant-General Khin Nyunt, on 17 June, lashed out at Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and her followers. He described them as unpatriotic and bent on subverting the economy by urging other nations to clamp sanctions on Burma. In another speech on 15 June, Lieut-Gen Tin Oo, Army Chief of Staff and SLORC Secretary 2, also vowed to crush those who were disrupting the country 'under the pretext of democracy'. An editorial in the state-controlled New Light of Myanmar said that "what the handful of axe handles and minions of foreign saboteurs are doing is downright dirty". The military regime has branded the US as particularly hostile, saying it was trying to colonize Burma. The SLORC press often accuse Daw Suu of being a CIA agent [B/AP960617].

SLORC'S POSTER WAR

Burma's military regime has erected red-and-white billboards in English and Burmese across the country denouncing Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the democracy movement. The signs read, "Oppose those relying on external elements, acting as stooges, holding negative views....Crush all internal and external destructive elements as the common enemy....Oppose those trying to jeopardise stability of the state and progress of the nation" and "Oppose foreign nations meddling in internal affairs of the state" [N/Reu960614],

EXPLOSION IN RANGOON

A small bomb planted at the base of a billboard opposite the US Embassy in central Rangoon exploded on 4 July. It caused no injuries and failed to topple the sign but damaged the concrete base of an adjacent fence. It was the first bomb in Rangoon in seven years. SLORC blamed "pessimist (sic) destructionists, bent on marring stability and peace in the country." There was no obvious increase in security and some speculated whether the bomb could have been planted by SLORC to provoke violence. At the height of the confrontation with the NLD in May, a bomb derailed a Rangoon-Mandalay train and killed 9 people. SLORC blamed Karen guerrillas but the Karen National Union denied responsibility for the attack since it had no troops in the area [Reu960705]. There is evidence that much of the street violence in the 1988 democracy demonstrations was instigated by the military, who in turn clamped down to 'restore order' - Ed.

BODYGUARD ARRESTED

Hlaing Eva, one of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's many National League for Democracy (NLD) bodyguards was arrested on 13 June after he left her compound at 8 pm to go to the bazaar. An NLD official said that his whereabouts is not known. Two of Daw Suu's personal assistants, Win Htein and Aye Win, are also still being held by SLORC after being arrested in May [Reu960618]. Instead of arresting Daw Suu and risk provoking an international outcry, SLORC is targetting those near to her - Ed.

NEW PM. IN BANGLADESH

On 23 June, Sheikh Hasina, chief of Awami League, became the new Prime Minister following an election victory. Her Foreign Minister is Abdus Samad Azad. The Awami League was ousted from power in 1975 after the country's independence leader and Hasina's father, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, was killed in a military coup. Azad said that efforts will be made to step up relations with Burma, especially in the field of trade. He also would like to end the Chakma tribal insurgency in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and send home Burmese refugees from Bangladesh. Azad, who was also foreign minister in Mujib's government, said Hasina had pledged to pursue a policy of cooperation with South Asian nations, friendship with Islamic countries and a free market policy to attract investment [IA960711],

Burma News:**JAMES LEANDER NICHOLS BURIED**

James Leander Nichols who died in Insein Prison on 22 June was buried by SLORC on 23 June without informing his family in Australia. They only learned of his death through friends in Rangoon. Nichols was buried at Saw Ba Gyi Christian Cemetery near the airport (Insein Township) following a brief Roman Catholic funeral service. The military warned his relatives not to show up and allowed only two of his many family members to attend his funeral [AP960622/24, Reu960623/25, Net960626].

QUICK BURIAL RAISES QUESTIONS

'Leo' Nichols' son, William Nichols, acknowledged that his father suffered poor health, but said that the unusually quick burial raised questions about the circumstances of his death. "Just the fact that they were unwilling to release the body to the family leaves much to be desired," Nichols said [AP/N960627].

HEALTH AGGRAVATED BY TORTURE

Amnesty International said that Nichols' heart condition and diabetes may have been fatally aggravated by deprivation of sleep during long interrogations. Human Rights Watch voiced similar concerns [Reu960625].

AUSTRALIA BLAMES SLORC

Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer on 29 June joined human rights organisations in saying that prison conditions were likely to have hastened Nichols's death [Reu960629].

SLORC ASKED TO EXPLAIN DEATH

Norway, Denmark, Finland and Switzerland made separate calls on 25 June for SLORC to investigate the death of Nichols. Finnish Foreign Minister Tarja Halonen said that SLORC was well aware that the honorary consul was suffering from a heart condition. Joergen Reimer, Denmark's Ambassador to Thailand who covers Burma, confirmed that his government had asked Rangoon to improve prison conditions for Nichols and let him be examined by a doctor, but the requests were ignored. In Bangkok, Swiss Ambassador Blaise Godet, who also handles Burma, said, "we are asking ... for a full medical report on the circumstances and cause of the death" [N960626].

FAMILY WANTS INQUIRY

In Perth, Australia, the Nichols' family joined the European Governments and Amnesty International in calling for an independent inquiry into his death [N/AP960627].

DIPLOMATS TO RANGOON

European diplomats based in Bangkok and Singapore visited Burma 28 June to investigate Nichols's death. They have requested a formal explanation from SLORC [Reu960629].

PRESSURE ON SLORC FOR AUTOPSY

Denmark and Switzerland on 1 July stepped up calls for an autopsy on Nichols by an international forensic expert. Foreign Minister Neils Helveg Petersen said Denmark received "verbal and totally incomplete" answers about his death from SLORC. Swiss Ambassador Blaise Godet said, "The precise cause of the death has not been given." A SLORC official told Denmark that Nichols, who was suffering from diabetes, high blood pressure and a heart condition, had been examined 8 times by a doctor since his arrest [N960703].

E.U. DEMANDS EXPLANATION

The European Union has called on SLORC to explain the death in custody of Nichols. The Irish EU Presidency said that it wanted a full and satisfactory explanation of Nichols' death and also called for an investigation by the United Nations [N960709].

DAW SUU ATTENDS SERVICE

Democracy leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the Danish Ambassador to Thailand and Burma, Joergen Reimers, were among about 30 people who attended a Buddhist ceremony to honour James Leander (Leo) Nichols [Reu960628].

SLORC ACCUSES DAW SUU

SLORC accused Daw Suu of exploiting the death in prison of Nichols for political purposes. An article in the SLORC-controlled New Light of Myanmar alleged that Daw Suu attended a Buddhist service to honour Nichols "merely to assemble a crowd. This stunt proves she is not serious about religious belief." It was the first mention in Burma's heavily censored media of Nichols' death in Insein Prison. The newspaper article also made several accusations against Nichols, including one that he seduced women in exchange for getting them jobs overseas [AP960709].

Burma News:**NICHOLS DIED IN PRISON!**

According to the Norwegian Foreign Ministry, it has evidence that Nichols, its former honorary consul in Burma was "subjected to sleep deprivation in prison and he was not given adequate medical treatment." Sleep deprivation is a commonly used torture technique. Norway also claims that it has evidence that Nichols died in jail and not in a hospital as claimed by SLORC [GoN960711]. Norwegian sources allege that an intravenous drip was attached to the already dead Nichols to indicate that he was still alive. Some time after his arrival at the hospital, Nichols was 'found' dead - Ed.

MEMORIAL SERVICE POSTPONED

The Nichols family's plans to hold a Roman Catholic memorial service for James Leander Nichols on 30 June was granted permission by SLORC. However, it had to be postponed because churches were 'fully booked'. Diplomats and NLD sources said that SLORC had been putting pressure on churches not to hold the memorial service [N960626, NdT960628].

WHITE HOUSE STATEMENT

June 26, 1996

The special envoys on Burma sent to the Asia-Pacific region earlier this month reported to the White House that ASEAN members and Japan share fundamental U.S. concerns on Burma, as well as the U.S. view that peace and stability can only come about through a process of dialogue between the authorities and Aung San Suu Kyi and the democratic opposition. The envoys also communicated to senior leaders in the region continuing U.S. interest and commitment to these issues. The envoys - Stanley Roth and former Ambassador William Brown - believe their mission enhanced the basis for productive discussion on the link between political dialogue, stability in Burma and Burma's successful integration into the region. The envoys met with Foreign Minister Ikeda in Japan, President Ramos in the Philippines, President Suharto in Indonesia, Prime Minister Goh in Singapore, Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim in Malaysia, and Deputy Prime Minister Amnuay in Thailand.

DENMARK INVITES DAW SUU

In a gesture of support for the embattled democracy movement in Burma, Danish Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen officially invited Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, to visit Denmark in September. "We want to send a signal to the dictatorial regime that we follow her situation closely and that we condemn their violation of human rights," said Rasmussen [Reu960629].

DIALOGUE OR SANCTIONS - U.S.

On 11 July, US National Security Adviser Anthony Lake threatened to impose trade sanctions against Burma's military rulers. But he also stressed the need for dialogue between the SLORC junta and the Burmese democracy movement. He said that Burma had a democratically-elected leader, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, who had been prevented from filling the role she deserved in Burmese society [AA960711].

U.S. SANCTIONS CONSIDERED

Following a visit from Danish Foreign Minister Niels Helveg Petersen, US Secretary of State Warren Christopher said that the US government is exploring sanctions against the SLORC regime. But the two countries agreed that sanctions should be deferred for the time being while international human rights groups seek reform in the military-run Rangoon government. Christopher said the aim was "to stem this new tide of repression" in Burma. "There is a need to take a strong stand of principle/" Christopher said [B960713].

U.S. SANCTIONS COULD HELP

U.S. Commerce Secretary Mickey Kantor said that economic sanctions against SLORC could help pressure it into making changes. "There are times when economic restrictions done in an appropriate fashion... can be very helpful," he said, citing Serbia, South Africa, Libya and Iran. He said, "I'm in favour of taking effective action" against SLORC [Reu960628].

U.S. COMMITTEE APPROVES BILL

On 27 June, the U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee approved a foreign aid bill which will require economic restrictions be imposed on Burma, an issue pushed by Foreign Operations Subcommittee Chairman Mitch McConnell, a Kentucky Republican [Reu960628].

Boycotts:**DENMARK SEEKS E.U. SANCTIONS**

Denmark urged the European Union to take a stand on Burma following the death of Nichols, its honorary consul [N/AP960627],

"E.U. SANCTIONS" - PARLIAMENT

On 20 June, the European Parliament urged the European Union to impose economic and political sanctions on SLORC to force it to move towards democracy. The parliament said that SLORC's new law in June which could be used to ban the NLD is a "serious attack on human rights and the freedom of expression." European Commissioner Manuel Marin told the parliament that the Commission had proposed suspending Burma from the EU's list of countries receiving preferential trade terms [Reu960620].

LABOUR AND TRAVEL BOYCOTT

The powerful Danish blue-collar unions' group, the Labour Organization, said on 29 June that it had won support for sanctions against SLORC from other European labour organisations. Danish travel agents have also said that they will no longer promote tours to Burma [Reu960629].

DANISH BOYCOTT

Danish Burma Committee Chairman Anton Johannsen said that the Committee is mounting a major media campaign in mid-August to bring the public's attention to Danish companies operating in Burma and to urge consumers to boycott their products. Johannsen said the campaign will initially be aimed at three Danish firms operating in Burma: EAST ASIATIC, a shipping and wholesale group, LEGO, a toy-maker, and DLH, a timber importer [N/Reu960713].

CARLSBERG DROPS BURMA

The Carlsberg brewing group of Denmark, one of the world's ten largest breweries, announced on 9 July that it was abandoning plans to set up a joint venture in Burma. The move came after human-rights groups threatened a boycott in response to the death in custody in Insein Prison of James Leander Nichols [AP960709].

CARLSBERG ALSO HALTS EXPORTS

Carlsberg Brewery has also halted its beer exports to Burma after the Danish Burma Committee unveiled its plans to stage a consumer boycott campaign [N960714].

THEIN TUN IN TROUBLE

Pepsi Myanmar Chairman Thein Tun is hoping to sign a deal with Malaysia's Asia-Euro Brewery after Carlsberg pulled out of a brewery project. It is the second time that Thein Tun, considered one of Burma's richest businessmen, has been affected by growing consumer pressure in Europe and the United States to stop businesses from operating in Burma. In April, Thein Tun was forced to buy up the holdings of PepsiCo in his bottling operation after the company pulled out of the country following a consumer boycott in the US [IA/B9607].

HEINEKEN PULLS OUT

The Board of Heineken NV of the Netherlands announced on 10 July that it has decided to end its business activities in Burma. The beer-maker will stop its involvement in Myanmar Brewery Ltd, a joint venture with SLORC's Union of Myanmar Economic Holdings. Heineken held a 25.5% share in the US\$30 million venture. The shares were sold to Heineken's Singapore partner Fraser & Neave. Karel Vuursteen, Chairman of the Board, said that the company's continued involvement could have a negative effect on the Heineken-brand and on the reputation of the company. Vuursteen said that "Heineken traditionally attaches great value to its responsibility towards society ... Given recent changed circumstances, we have reassessed the situation and have come to the conclusion that we can no longer meet our social obligations" if Heineken remains in Burma [BCN960710].

PEPSICO FACING NEW THREAT

The International Union of Food, Agricultural and Allied Workers Associations (IUF), a major international labour union grouping, said on 12 July that it will focus its attention on Pepsico. "The IUF will actively pursue all the means at its disposal to ensure that Pepsico follows the brewers' (Carlsberg and Heineken) example and quits Burma for as long as the generals remain in power," a statement from the Geneva-based body said. The IUF links 322 trade unions in a wide range of service and light industries with a combined membership of 2.6 million in 107 countries. Affiliate organisations waged the fight against Carlsberg and Heineken. Pepsico is continuing to supply concentrate and license its brand name in Burma, thereby continuing "to directly profit from the agony of the Burmese people," the IUF statement declared [N960714].

Boycotts:**MASSACHUSETTS BARS SLORC**

Massachusetts made history by becoming the first state in the US to enact a selective purchasing law against Burma's ruling military junta. On 26 June, Governor William Weld signed a bill to prohibit the state from buying goods and services from firms that do business in Burma. More than a hundred companies will be affected including such big names as APPLE Computer, TEXACO, ARCO Chemical Corp and Eastman KODAK Co. Under the new law, a list of restricted companies will be maintained by Massachusetts' Executive Office of Administration and Finance. The state's pension funds, however, will not be forced to divest themselves of holdings in the forbidden companies. Instead, the state is expected to take advantage of its shareholder status to try and influence the companies in question. The Selective Purchasing legislation was based on the South African model and was first introduced by Representative Byron Rushing at the request of the Burmese democracy movement and the Coalition for Corporate Withdrawal from Burma [AP-DJ960626].

PEPSICO CHIEF QUILTS ABRUPTLY

Christopher A. Sinclair, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Pepsi-Cola Co, which includes the domestic and international beverage businesses, resigned abruptly on 2 July, just three months after taking control of the US\$11 billion beverage unit of PepsiCo. A company spokesman said the 45-year-old Sinclair was leaving for personal reasons. In his short tenure, Sinclair had to confront fizzling sales in Latin America and criticism of Pepsi's investments in Burma [AP960703].

O

Forced Labour:**FORCED LABOUR ADMISSION**

On 4 June, SLORC Minister of Rail Transport Colonel Win Sein indirectly admitted to using forced labour by stating that as of 31 May, 'people's labour' is no longer being used in laying railway lines. He said that soldiers will instead build railway lines as part of their public welfare duties. Win Sein was speaking at the ceremony to open the new 43-kilometre Banyin-Phamon railway line in southern Shan State [N/Reu960605].

I.L.O. TO INVESTIGATE SLORC

The International Labour Organization (ILO) meeting in Geneva in June, condemned forced labour practices in Burma and set up a three-man commission to investigate. A commission of inquiry is the ILO's most severe sanction short of expulsion. Such steps have been resorted to by the agency only twice before, against the former Communist regimes of Romania and Poland. The SLORC delegation denied coercion and said it was in keeping with Burmese culture for workers to set aside time for building pagodas, monasteries, roads and canals. The U.N. Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Burma, Professor Yozo Yokota, reported to the UN Human Rights Commission in April that forced labour is widespread. Human rights activists say the worst abuses occur in large construction and infrastructure projects. The ILO Commission will seek to visit Burma to investigate [N960622, Reu960618].

CHILD LABOUR - MANDALAY

Burmese children as young as 8-years old are being used by SLORC to prepare for 'Visit Myanmar 1996 Year'. The boys and girls earn US\$0.25 for a dawn-to-dusk day of backbreaking labour. The children work 12 days on followed by two days off. They do not go to school. Photographs of children working on a 50-mile stretch of road from Rangoon to Pegu were published in *The Daily Telegraph* on 20 June. "Forced labour is endemic," said a Western diplomat in Rangoon. "Roads, dams, railways, hospitals - they use forced labour on every new scheme," SLORC counters that it is pursuing the old Burmese tradition of employing 'corvee' (or voluntary) labour in lieu of taxation for schemes that benefit local communities. But several projects - such as cleaning the Mandalay moat and the Rangoon-Pegu road - appear to be preparations for the much-delayed 'Visit Myanmar 1996 Year' that will finally start in November. TOTAL and UNOCAL have both introduced company policies that do not allow forced labour to be used on their project to build a gas pipeline through Burma from the Andaman Sea to Thailand. But investigations have uncovered strong evidence from refugees reaching the Thai border of forced labour and human rights abuses on Burmese road and infrastructure schemes linked to the pipeline. Several villages have been cleared in the area to make way for the projects [DT960620].

Forced Labour/Relocation:**KARENS CHALLENGE U.S. ENVOY**

The Karen National Union (KNU) on 17 June disputed U.S. envoy William Brown's assertions that American companies have helped reduce forced labor in Burma. In a news conference in Bangkok, Brown said one positive development in Burma has been that "the use of forced labor in the economy, and particularly in projects that involve American firms, has been significantly addressed." He added that as the Burmese military has gained control of ethnic areas, "the issue of forced labor for portage diminished." UNOCAL of the USA, TOTAL of France, Thailand's PTTEP and SLORC, are building a natural gas pipeline from the Gulf of Martaban to Thailand. The KNU said that forced labor has increased in the pipeline area since the contract for the project was signed in 1990 [AP-DJ960617],

50,000 SHANS RELOCATED

In the Shan State, over 450 villages (at least 50,000 people) have been displaced since March. The relocations are taking place in an area between Nam San, Mong Nai and Kun Hing. Nam San is about eighty miles east of Taunggyi. Villagers receive written orders from local military commanders to move to areas along roads or near towns under the army's control. They are given a few days notice and the villagers are warned that if they are found in their villages, they would be considered insurgents and shot. Most have been forced to provide free labor to widen and improve roads. Others are working on the military airport at Nam San, and on a new railway line connecting Taunggyi and Hsi Seng. Both the road development and the railway are being built to encourage tourism in the area. None of those who have been relocated have received food, medical supplies or other assistance from the military, leaving them totally dependent on the local community. The villagers reported that they were prevented from bringing their own

rice supplies with them, and in some cases the entire village was burned to ensure they would not return [HRW960709].

20,000 RELOCATED IN KARENNI

In Karenni State, 96 villages in an area northeast of Loikaw, between the Salween and Pun rivers received relocation orders between 31 May and 15 June. The orders, required all villagers to move to Sha Daw town by June 7. Anyone remaining in the area after that date "would be considered enemies and dealt with accordingly," the orders stated. Two men were arrested by the military from Daw Moo Mar village, and one boy from Daw Leh Du village was shot and killed soon after the villagers received the orders to move. Families were not permitted to take their livestock or rice supplies with them and had to leave with just the bare essentials - cooking pots and what clothing they could carry. At the beginning of July, there were signs that further relocations were also taking place south of Ywathit, affecting some 5,000 people. In total, some 20,000 people in Karenni State have been affected by the orders. Around 10,000 of them went to Sha Daw as ordered. The people were housed in schools and churches and others built makeshift shelters. SLORC gave only six small tins of rice for each family. At least 10 children have died from the overcrowding, the lack of food, and the deterioration in health conditions. An estimated 2,300 people fled to Thailand. According to relief workers, new arrivals continue to arrive every day, reporting in some cases that their villages were razed after soldiers had taken all the livestock in the village and destroyed the remaining crops. It was reported that all Bibles in the Roman Catholic church in Ka Ya Kee village were burned. It is believed that the relocations are designed to pressure the Karenni National Progressive Party into signing a new cease-fire agreement that would enable SLORC to open up the area to tourism for 'Visit Myanmar Year 1996' [HRW960709].

O

The "Burma Alert" is published monthly by ADDB Inc to provide data for the Burmese democracy movement. In 1995, grants were received from the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development, Canada; the Evangelisches Missionswerk, Germany; and the National Endowment for Democracy, U.S.A. "BURMA ALERT" SUBSCRIPTIONS: Institutions - US\$100.00 (or C\$100.00) per annum and Individuals US\$25.00 (or C\$25.00) per annum. Readers are also invited to become 'Associates' and participate in helping to promote democracy in Burma by contributing US\$100.00 (or C\$100.00) per annum. All cheques and money orders payable to ADDB Inc, c/o Harn Yawngghwe, RR.4, Shawville, Quebec J0X 2Y0, Canada. Fax: 1 (819) 647-5403, Tel. 647-5405. E-mail: yawngghwe@hookup.net

Burma News:**MAJOR SLORC-KARENNI BATTLE**

On 30 May, SLORC troops ambushed a 500-600 strong Karenni column as it tried to cross the Taunggyi-Keng Tung highway. The battle lasted more than 6 hours and both sides suffered heavy casualties. The Karenni column had reportedly travelled north to meet with the leaders of Shan troops who had refused to surrender after Khun Sa made his deal with SLORC. The column was returning south to the Karenni State when attacked. It managed to break through the SLORC blockade [SHAN960606].

HYDRO STATION ATTACKED

On 6 June, Karenni troops attacked the hydroelectric power station at Lawpita, near Loikaw [HRW960709].

DAW SUU NOT ANGRY WITH LEE

Daw Suu said that she is not angry with Singapore's former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew. "As a firm believer in democracy," she said, "I accept that everybody has the right to express his opinions and beliefs freely... But I would like Mr. Lee Kuan Yew to understand that we in Burma are in need of a system whereby everyone has the right to free expression." Daw Suu's remarks came in reaction to a speech on 7 June in which Lee said that Daw Suu was incapable of ruling Burma and should "remain behind a fence and be a symbol." Lee said, "I have visited (Burma) and I know that there is only one instrument of government, and that is the army" [N960622, UPVReu960623].

BURMESE PROTEST LEE REMARKS

Lee Kuan Yew's speech about Burma drew the condemnation of democracy supporters. His effigy was burned in New Delhi by Burmese students and a letter signed by philosophy students in Burma said, "We are of the view that Senior Minister Lee ...has interfered in Burma's internal affairs by flattering the military and disparaging civilians ...looking solely at the interests of his own people." Burmese students in Thailand demanded a public apology. Burmese exiles said Lee's comments were "an insult to the Burmese people." In an open letter to the 71-year old Lee, five student groups described Lee's comments as a 'preposterous contradiction', for voicing his opinion about Daw Suu, while the Singaporean Government

has always said that it does not want to interfere in Burma's affairs [N960622, UPI/Reu960623].

GENERAL SAYS N.G.O.S INTERFERE

Lieut-Gen Khin Nyunt, head of military intelligence, speaking at a course for local Red Cross Society executives, accused international social and religious organisations of assisting 'the group opposing the state' and interfering in Burma's internal affairs. Khin Nyunt said that the Red Cross Society needed to cooperate with international organisations that have "pure goodwill" to protect it from being used by "unscrupulous organisations" [Reu960702].

SLORC BLACKMAILING MEMBERS

According to Daw Suu, SLORC is pressuring hundreds of NLD members to quit the party. To date, 14 of the 262 party members arrested in May have resigned but Daw Suu said that the resignations are invalid because they were coerced. "There were threats of prison sentences, loss of business opportunities, evictions from state-owned apartments, dismissal from their jobs of family members who belonged to the civil service," Daw Suu said [AP960701].

O

M.P IN SERIOUS CONDITION

U Hla Than, NLD elected Member of Parliament for Coco Island, was taken to Rangoon General Hospital on 9 July for unknown health reason. He was arrested in October 1990 and put in Insein jail. He was among the 21 political prisoners who were sentenced additional long terms last March for passing information to the UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Burma (see related story, BA, Vol.7, No.1) [Net960712].

O

NEWS SOURCES THIS ISSUE: AA = Asian Age, AP = Associated Press, AP-DJ = Associated Press-Dow Jones, B = Bangkok Post, BCN = Burma Centrum Netherlands, DT = Daily Telegraph, FTUBWB = Federation of Trade Unions, Burma (Western Burma), GoN = Government of Norway, HKS = Hongkong Standard, HRW = Human Rights Watch, IA = IntelAsia, MS = Mainich Shimbun, N = The Nation, Bangkok, NLD-LA = National League for Democracy - Liberated Area, NdT = Nando Times, Net = BurmaNet, Reu = Reuters, SHAN = Shan Herald Agency for News, UPI = United Press International, UN = United Nations, and VOA = Voice of America.

O