

B. U. R. M. A.

BURMA RIGHTS MOVEMENT FOR ACTION

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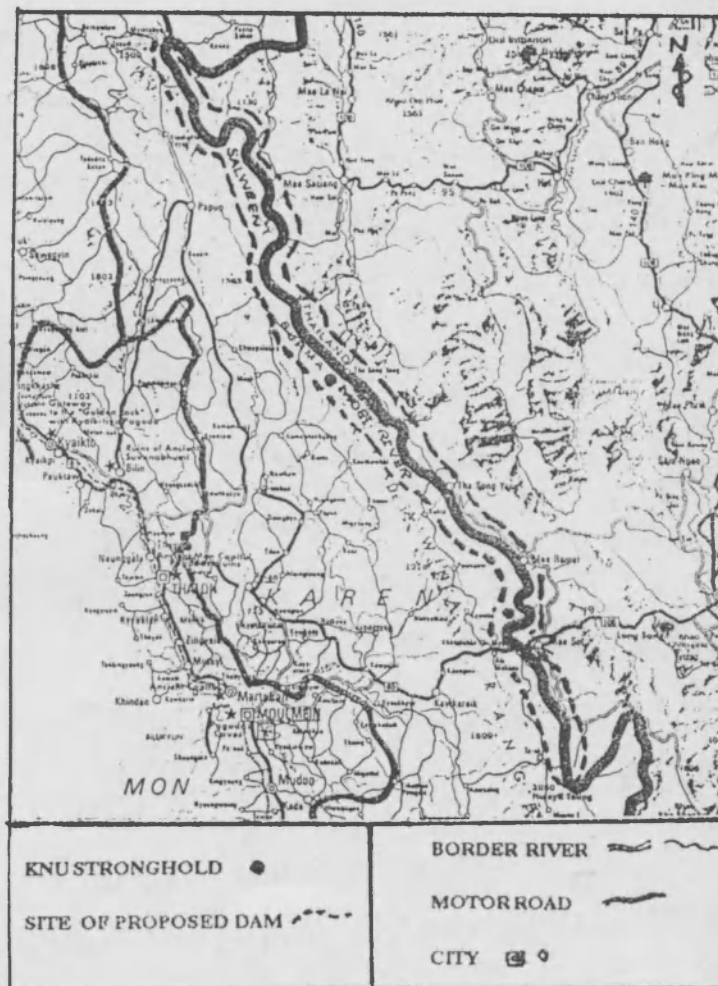
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Map showing Salween and Moei River areas

See ENVIRONMENT on page 4 for information about plans to build hydro-electric dams along these rivers which will have a negative effect on the environment of Burma.

Civil War

The junta's dry season offensives seem not to have been so effective against dissident groups in several parts of Burma. Recently, the rainy season has begun and this presents some serious problems for the junta in terms of logistics to the front line. The rainy season in Burma lasts from the middle of May to November. Civilians in Burma often see the government operations on TV but the government does not admit their heavy casualties but announces a very small number of casualties. The junta's previous offensive against Manerplaw, the headquarters of the KNU as well as the Democratic Alliance of Burma (DAB), caused the most heavy casualties to the Burmese military.

Kachin State (DAB's Northern Military Zone)

According to a report from the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), the Burmese army has begun two major offensives code named "Operation Scupper" or "Ye Peat Sit Sin Ye" and "One Hundred Outpost Planing" or "Za Cann Ta Ya Si man Cain" in KIA-controlled areas. "Operation Scupper" actually means "the fish can not survive in the empty water". In this operation, the junta is trying to destroy the civilian support bases so that the insurgents will be left out in the cold. In essence, they will try to cut off food, finance, intelligence and new recruits provided by the civilian population to the Kachin Independence Army (KIA). So far dozens of villages have been destroyed, and civilians forcefully relocated closer to major towns under the control of Burma Army garrisons.

Due to a heavy Burmese Army presence in the KIA 12 Battalion area in Bahmo district, about 800 villagers have fled to an area near the China-Burma border. The new arrivals have added an extra burden on the already growing refugee problem along the border.

In April 1991, 28 villages in Mohnyin and Bahmo districts of Kachin State were destroyed, leaving thousand of people homeless. Also, 324 villages from Kuitkai district of Kachin Sub

State (Kachin-inhabited areas of northern Shan State) were destroyed and the inhabitants were forcefully relocated to government controlled towns.

On the 24th of April, DAB column No. 29, led by Maj. Zaw Tan of KIA, occupied Kya Yi bridge and one post near Bamaw city where the junta's troops from Infantry Regiment No. 47 had settle to defend their transportation routes. The DAB column confiscated three G-3 assault rifles, one carbine and one home-made gun from the local militia.

On the 6th of May, the same DAB column attacked a junta troops' post of Infantry Regiment No. 47 and confiscated 3 China-made heavy machine guns and 9 German-made G2, G3 and G4 assault rifles. A junta captain was killed and no casualties in the DAB column were reported as a result of the attack.

On the 7th of May, DAB column No. 27 clashed with Company No. 2 from Infantry Regiment No. 23 and three soldiers were killed and another 3 wounded. There were no casualties in DAB.

The junta is trying to upgrade their relations with Beijing in order to push the KIA troops into a corner. In the recent fighting between the KIA and Burmese troops, the KIA used mainly homemade bombs out of lead pipes. In response to the Burmese junta's complaints about this, the Chinese merchants on the Sino-Burma border are now prohibited from selling large quantities of lead pipes to the local Kachin population. There have been reports of Rangoon's acquisition of military aircraft and vessels and also heavy convoys of war material being trucked across the Sino-Burma highway to supply the Burmese military.

Shan State

After the surrender of the Pa-O on the 23rd of March, the second ethnic dissident group, the PaLaung who are also a member of the DAB, gave up its arms on the 23rd of April. The Palaung State Liberation Army (PSLA) led by Aik Maung, was founded in 1963 to fight for autonomy

in the Shan State. The PSLA announced that they agreed to the joint Border Races Development Program of the junta. Palaung is one of the small groups in Shan State where the Shan nationality make up the majority of the population. Currently, the Shan State Army, led by Sai-Leik is still active in the Shan State.

Karen State

Government troops are facing a shortage of food and difficult transportation because their supply routes are being cut by the KNU and dissident student groups. From April to May, the KNU could retake the junta's outposts leading to Manerplaw. Two civilians were killed by junta air raids and 15 others were wounded. Another 21 civilians were killed by the junta's troops. From the 2nd of April to the 7th of May, the KNLA's various operations resulted in 62 junta troops as well as one family member killed and 72 wounded. Four members of the KNLA were wounded.

On the 17th of April, a special sabotage group of the DAB could successfully blow up the main supply boat of the junta on the Jai river. The river is the main natural obstacle for the government troops' transportation. Subsequently, the government troops chased the saboteurs who led the government troops into a trap where they were ambushed by a DAB column. Eleven soldiers were killed in the battle. The DAB troops are still holding the government troops in the trap.

• Thaton District

From April 4 to May 7, the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) clashed twelve times with various Infantry Military Regiments in Thaton District. As the results of the clashes, 40 government soldiers were killed including one column commander, one captain and one army family member. Four KNLA members were wounded and 36 government troops and two porters were wounded.

(continued CIVIL WAR page 3)

Persecution by the Junta

Although the junta has set up its so-called "Border Development Program" to build roads, hospitals and school for the minorities living along the borders with Burma's neighboring countries, in fact the ethnic people are still suffering tremendously under the junta's systematic harassments.

According to a report from the Palaung area of the Shan State, covering January 1 to March 15, 2342 houses in 21 villages worth 49,100,000 Kyats (almost US\$ 7 million) were burnt down by the Burmese military. These villages are Yebon, Yaung Ban, Upper Manbon, Lower Manbon, Pan Swe, Kayaygi, Mankan, Hofan, Manmauk, Takyat, Manson, Shweli, Tawnay, Lwe Ya, Yaung Kay, Ho Nan, Taunggyi, Mannan, Kayko, Mentub and Mankali.

In addition, twelve Buddhist monasteries were burnt down in the region. Seventeen Buddhist monks

were ill-treated by the soldiers of the junta, including 6 abbots and 6 young monks (less than 20 years of age).

One hundred ninety four people were brutally killed by the soldiers and 21 women, including seven Buddhist nuns and 7 school teachers, were raped and 19 of them subsequently killed. Two women are still been taking medical treatment because of their ill-treatment. Totally 91,900,000 Kyats were lost by the people while the junta has spent only about 70 million Kyats (US\$ 11.1 million) for the development program.

The soldiers also looted the possessions of the people with a total value of approximately 60,000,000 Kyats (about US\$ 8 million).

Atrocities in Civil War Zones

On the 3 of May, soldiers led by Maj. Man Shwe of the Light Infantry

Regiment No. 14, attacked Hti Se Baw village of the Karen State and 7 villagers were killed as well as one villager was seriously wounded. Following the massacre, three women were raped.

The dead villagers are:

Name	Father's name
1. Pha Pa Tay Lay	Te Tun Maung
2. Saw Kyaw Hlaing ..	Te Tun Yin
3. Saw Maw Tot	Te Maw Maw
4. Saw Maw Taw	Te Mng Mng
5. Saw Pu lay	Te Ku Hte
6. Saw Maung Thein	Te Kyaw Ko
7. Saw Pho Lone Ne	Te Mng Mng

Seriously Wounded

1. Saw Al Thel Unknown

The Raped Women are:

1. Naw Mu
2. Naw Maw Lo
3. Naw Ye Htoo Mo

(CIVIL WAR from page 2)

The junta's four trucks, three cars of a train and one industry were destroyed.

• Taungngu District

On the 1st of May, one of the Junta's Infantry columns stepped on the trap mine and two were killed and 4 seriously injured.

• Dupala District

KNLA's Division No. 6 exchanged fire with the junta's troops at Takaye and Phudon village and nine soldiers were killed and 13 were wounded. There were no casualties on the KNLA side which confiscated rounds of heavy artillery shells and equipment.

• Paan District

On the 1st of May, one of the junta's troops stepped on a trap mine on the way between Maw Pho Ka Lar and Takaw villages and two soldiers were killed and two wounded.

As a result of attacks by KNLA Special Regiment No. 101, three junta troops were killed and 7 were seriously wounded.

• Papun District

Four clashes between the KNLA and the junta troops on the 6th, 10th, 28th

April and 3rd May, caused the death of 7 junta troops and 8 wounded in various places of the district.

The junta's troops rounded up a number of villagers in Peephadopha Village, 10 miles from Papun Village, to work as porters, and 14 villagers were shot-dead when they tried to escape.

The fighting is still continuing as there are about 2,000 junta troops in Pawhta area.

Arakan State

Thousands of Muslims have fled from their village to neighboring India and Bangladesh and Thailand in the recent months according to the All-Burma Muslim Union (ABMYU) and the Arakan Rohingya Islamic Front (ARIF). Muslims make up 20% of the total population of 41 million in the country.



Photo 1 Villagers by their burned village

Environment

According to the May 3rd issue of "The Nation", a Bangkok-based English language newspaper, the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT) has a plan to build more than ten new hydroelectric power dams throughout Thailand and along the Burmese border. Private consultants and foreign funding agencies are conducting feasibility studies for this project.

Several dams will be built along a 90 mile-stretch of the Salween river and along the 140-mile Moei river. Both are long term projects which are only in their initial stages. Dams on both rivers would be international in that they cover both Thai and Burmese territory, but the flood zone would be mainly inside Burma. The upper and lower Salween projects have a potential generating capacity of between 4,000 and 7,000 megawatts, while three projects along the Moei River, a tributary of the Salween, would have a generating capacity of about 500 megawatts.

The other projects include the 130 megawatt Klong Kra project in Ranong province (southern Thailand opposite Victoria Point in Burma) and

the 20 megawatt Nam Mae Sai project in Chiang Rai province. These two projects are the result of former army chief Gen. Chavalit Youngchaiyudh's 1989 visit to Burma.

These two international projects are being negotiated by the Thai-Burma Border Committee, which had its third meeting at the end of March. EGAT began surveys on Klong Kra late last year with the help of the Thai army. The Asian Development Bank has agreed to finance a feasibility study.

Two other projects, on the Yuam and Ngao rivers in Mae Hong Son province, would have a combined generating capacity of 380 megawatts. The Japanese International Cooperation Agency has completed a feasibility study for these hydro projects. Construction of the projects could begin in a decade. The World Bank is funding Chiang Mai University to conduct a feasibility study of the project.

One of the reasons for so much interest on the part of EGAT to build dams inside Burma (as well as inside Laos) is that there is more and more local popular resistance against the build-

ing of big dams in Thailand. Environmental groups from Thailand as well as many other countries, have successfully stopped the construction of several dams in Thailand, citing environmental destruction as their main reason for protest.

The dams being planned along the Salween and Moei rivers would create serious environmental damage in Burma as these rivers pass through thick forests of teak wood and other precious hard woods. They would also displace many villages of Karen people. Some observers believe that the construction of the dams is seen as a double benefit for both Thailand and Burma. Thailand would be able to get much needed electricity for its rapidly developing industries while not having to deal with protesting environmental groups. The Burmese military would get much needed money to carry out its war against the ethnic minorities and at the same time be able to secure much Karen territory, with the help of Thailand, in all the areas surrounding the dams.

In the end, the Burmese people, and especially the Karen and other ethnic groups in the area, would suffer more.

Repatriation

On the 22 of May, the Thailand government started an operation to repatriate illegal Burmese in Mae Sod, opposite the site of the Burmese border city of Myawady. According to Thailand's plan, Mae Sod is divided into six areas which are being searched thoroughly by soldiers, immigration officials and Border Patrol Police. The Thai Border Patrol Police also set up check points along the Thai-Burmese border and are pushing back any new Burmese who try to enter Thailand. Those Burmese people who came to Thailand before March 1976 are not affected by Thailand's repatriation plan.

According to one Burmese student in Mae Sod, there are about 5000 illegal Burmese and an unknown number of students and other dissidents living in Mae Sod and most of them are working

in building construction and mining businesses as cheap laborers. About 3,000 Burmese political asylum seekers, including about 1,000 Burmese students, are living in Bangkok.

According to one eyewitness, since Thailand's repatriation plan started on 22nd May, until 24th of May, Thailand had handed over more than 200 Burmese from Mae Sod to Burmese military authorities in Myawady. There fate is not yet known to the public.

On the 3rd of January, Chamnan Pojana, Interior Deputy Permanent Secretary, said that Thailand can not give refugee status to the Burmese students because the move could end up with Thailand having to take care of people not chosen for resettlement in third countries and third countries usually accept only educated refugees for resettlement.

At the same time, Burmese people who have been placed in the Thai immigration jail are suffering from persecution by the Thai authorities according to one eye witness.

Along the Thai/Burma border, some Burmese are arrested and then end up working on farms in the area as unpaid laborers. For example, if the Thai landowners do not want to pay for laborers to work their land, they inform the Thai police who arrest illegal Burmese and take them to the detention center. A land owner will come to the detention and pay for the release of the imprisoned Burmese who then must work on his farm until he feels that the fine has been paid back in full. The Burmese have no way to resist.

Politics

Opposition

Following the removal from the NLD's central body of top leaders, Aung San Su Kyi and U Tin Oo, speculations in Burma began that the junta will turn over power to either Dr. Maung Maung (who ruled Burma from 19 Aug. to Sep. 1988) or Tin Aung Hein, the chairman of the Council of the People's Justice. During the revolutionary council period (from 1962 to 1974), Gen. Nay Win and the military operated without any constitution. In 1974, to legitimize one party rule, a constitution called the "1974 Constitution" was drawn up under the supervision of Dr. Maung Maung and Burma's old politicians. Subsequently, the supreme court was replaced by "the Council of People's Justices". According to some government officials, Dr. Maung Maung is still serving as an adviser on the current political process.

Currently, the people are worried about what will happen in the nation since the two newly elected NLD two leaders, U Aung Shew and U Lwin, were both members of the Revolutionary Council. U Aung Shew is a retired Col. and former ambassador to Australia, Egypt and France. U Lwin is a retired Brig. Gen. and former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Planning from 1969 to 1977.

Maj Gen. Khin Nyunt, chief of the MIS (Military Intelligence Services) also made a surprise announcement on the 14th of May to the public that "if Aung Sann Su Kyi leaves from the country, both the country and her family in England will be good." He added that "Ms Aung San Suu Kyi has been forced into the fore front of politics by both leftist and rightist elements." It seems that the junta is planning to keep pressure on the opposition to force Aung San Su Kyi to leave from the country in order to discourage the people who are still committed to Aung San Su Kyi as their national leader for the movement of freedom and democracy.

Reopening of the Universities

Five months into the year 1991, more than 300 Burmese students who were political exiles in Bangkok, have returned to their homes. Most of them fled from Burma after taking part in the unarmed nation-wide demonstrations in 1988. However, they all felt that there was no hope to seek political asylum in Thailand since the Thai government formally announced that Thailand would not consider any Burmese who are in the country since December 1988, as legal refugees.

Their return to Rangoon coincided with the reopening of the universities which have been closed for almost three years. However, those students who returned from Thailand and applied to continue their education were denied re-enrollment. There is also a serious shortage of teachers in the universities because most of the teachers who were involved in the strikes in 1988 were either dismissed or demoted. There are also only a few students in the class rooms. The returning students are supposed to sign in at the Township LORC office every week to prove that they still exist in their homes where they are being watched by the military intelligence. It is the junta's obvious way to prevent any students' movement in Burma. Moreover, the soldiers and riot police are practicing bayonet-fighting in Burma's main city. This is a way of threatening the people.

Opposition on the Thai-Burmese Border

Since the junta's operation to crush the opposition from various parties and especially from the NLD, many opposition members came to ethnic dissident areas to speed up the struggle against the militarization in Burma. Currently, there are 11 members of the NLD, including elected representatives and one of the Central Executive Committee of NLD at the border.

On the 25th of February 1991, representatives of the NLD and the Democratic Alliance of Burma

(DAB) formed the Anti-military Dictatorship National Solidarity Committee (ADNSC) with a group of seven representatives from each side. The chairman of ADNSC is Gen. Saw Bo Mya of the DAB and General Secretary is U Win Khet. The objectives of the ADNSC are:

- 1. The ADNSC fully supports the National Coalition Government led by Dr. Sein Win.
- 2. The ADNSC will fight against the military dictatorship until it is totally abolished.
- 3. The ADNSC will join hands with any party or organization which is fighting against the military dictatorship in Burma.

Burma will have to suffer for many years to come due to the closing of all universities since 1988. For almost three years there have been no new graduates to enter the job market, leaving many offices and businesses without sufficient new staff to continue their work effectively. Students who lacked only two months to graduation in 1988, must now start their school year over again, if indeed they even want to go back to school.

At the same time, many very well trained and committed professors have finally left the country to seek jobs elsewhere. It is reported that the geology department of Rangoon University which had 5 professors before the universities were closed, now has only two. This loss of both graduates and lecturers will set the educational standards of Burma back many years.

This is not the first time universities have been closed under the iron-fisted rule of General Ne Win. Since his military coup in 1962, institutions of higher learning have been closed for almost 20% of the time.

Economic Issues

After crushing the pro-democracy movement in 1988, the military regime began to open the closed door of Burma to foreign investments in order to solve the country's economic problems. This influx of foreign investments does not bring a solution to Burma because the poverty among the majority of the people is created by the insatiable corruption of the military officials and continually rising taxes levied against the people. The main suppliers of foreign investments to Burma now are Japan, Thailand, South Korea, China and Singapore. Moreover, joint ventures with foreign companies are dominated by the junta who recently set up the Burma Holdings Corporation, an entity with capitalization of up to 10 billion kyats (over 20% of the GNP at the official exchange rate). This corporation is completely in the hands of the military as an institution and individual service personnel. These joint ventures also create jobs for people who are related in any way with military. Consequently, even if a civilian government could get power, the military would basically continue to ineptly control the economy of the country with the assistance from the foreign corporations. An ever growing economic gap exists between the 5% of the population who make up the upper class, including high ranking military officials and their relatives and the 70% of the people who are poor farmers. Many young people and intellectuals are leaving the country to seek jobs abroad. According to one observer, 1700 Burmese are legally leaving the country each month.

Agriculture

Burma's agribusiness is worsening following Gen. Saw Maung's military government put down the nation-wide demonstrations in 1988. From 1974 to 1988, Gen. Nay Win's military government levied a crop tax of 30% of rice production of one acre. The junta currently abolished this "Crop Tax" but forces the farmers to sell their rice only to the junta and other authorized departments at a low price. Even though the agribusiness in Burma is

failing, the junta formally announced that the agribusiness growth rates developed 6% over the previous year.

According to one farmer, U Tin Ngwe aged 42, from Mudon Township of the Mon State, although there are abundant farms in his area, the farmers who have one acre of rice paddy must sell 20 rice bags to the military government, 5 bags to the army, 5 bags of rice to the government cooperative and the last 5 bags to the village LORC (village Law and Order Restoration Council). That means that the farmers are supposed to sell a total of 35 rice-bags from one acre of rice paddy to the junta and other authorities. The junta and authorities pay 26 Kyats (about US\$ 4) but in the market, the real price for one bag of rice is 135 Kyat (US\$ 18). However, the average production of one acre of paddy is only 40 bags in Burma. If the farmer fails to sell their quota to the military, the farmer would be detained. One bag of chemical fertilizer is 700 Kyats (about US\$ 100) at the official rate which is too expensive for the Burmese farmers.

The junta's exploitation of the farmers forces the young people from the rural areas to leave their farms and go to urban areas to seek jobs. Unfortunately, the scarcity of jobs is pushing them to become the human resources for the army as the army can give sufficient salaries - at least 450 Kyats per month with free army barracks for their shelter. Even a junior teacher's salary is only about 500 Kyats monthly without any housing except in the areas very far from the urban area.

Corruption

Both army officers and privates are demanding to go to the front line zones in Kachin State and Shan State where major trade routes exist along the China-Burma border. Here they can earn a lot of extra cash by asking bribe money from both legal and illegal merchants. The illegal merchants are mostly smuggling out the precious stones and banned animal products to Ruili, a border city in China. The legal merchants are exporting food products from Burma to

China. In fact, both legal and illegal merchants are not so different as they both must give bribes to army and customs officials.

On the 15 of February 1991, 76 illegal Chinese teak loggers were arrested by the junta's troops in Bahmo Division of Kachin State. A 300,000 RMB (US\$ 60,000) ransom has been demanded and half of the ransom will go to the forestry department and half to the Burmese army. If the ransom is paid, the loggers will be allowed to cut the trees from that area but the indigenous Kachin people who have lived their for generations are banned from cutting trees for their fuel wood.

Underground Business

In Burma's two main cities of Rangoon and Mandalay, the blackmarketing of documents related to joint ventures is now very popular. With these documents, people are allowed to hold foreign currency. In fact, the people have to give bribes to government authorities to get these documents from joint venture between the junta and foreign companies. Without them, the people could not use foreign currency legally.

The official exchange rate for US\$1 is about 7 Kyats (Burmese currency) but US\$1 is around 60 Kyats on the blackmarket. The military authorities who control these documents are allowed to run business in the blackmarket. The inflation rate currently in the nation is 20% according to government figures, but some foreign diplomats in Rangoon say it is more like 200%.

Taxation

Recently, on the 31th of March, the junta issued the "Law Amending the Profit Tax". It seems to be aimed at saving the junta's extended military expenses due to the larger number of military combatants in the civil war. According to the newly amended law, the people are "generously making donations for development activities

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Human Rights

Extra Judicial Executions in Rangoon

On March 17, 1991, a sergeant major led seven soldiers, who were on security duty at Nebin rice mill in Kemmendine, Rangoon, to a place near No. 3 Rangoon college compound in Kemmendine, at about 12 p.m. saying that they were to check the guest list. They told Maung Myint Naing, who was a member of the local volunteer fire brigade unit and also a member of the NLD, and his younger brother to come with them. (Everywhere in Burma, guests staying overnight have to report to the local authorities.) As the two men came out into the street, they were beaten by the soldiers. In great fright, the younger brother ran back into the house.

In addition to the beating, Maung Myint was bayoneted and then he was told to come to Neiban rice mill in the morning. About 6 the next morning, Maung Myint Naing died from the bayonet wound and injuries sustained from the beating.

The funeral on March 19, 1991, was attended by a large crowd. According to those who attended, a large number of troops were seen in the streets of the ward, apparently to quell any possible disturbances. Many secret police (military intelligence) were also said to be positioned in Kyandaw cemetery where the burial took place.

When the dissatisfied members of the local volunteer fire brigade unit and the Ward Law and Order Restoration Council reported the matter to the police, the police took seven pictures of the dead body and filed the case under Criminal Act 302 concerning homicide, along with the signatures of 14 civilian residents of the ward.

According to subsequent reports, the military authorities concerned, were trying to appease the people by saying that two soldiers who were responsible for the death had been put under arrest and a tribunal presided over by high ranking officials from the Public Relations and Psycho-Warfare Department had been formed to try the case, and the matter would be announced over the radio and television.

On the other hand, however, SLORC military are trying to prevent the spread of the news in earnest. To personnel in the army, navy and air units, they are saying that Maung Myint Naing had to be killed for his actions so that such an incident might not occur in the future.

According to reliable sources, the people in the ward are prepared and determined to resist any attempts by the military personnel to check guest lists in the future. When they tried to send this news to the foreign media through the embassies, they found that secret police were stationed around the embassies.

Since the NLD won a landslide victory and the military-supported National Unity Party was soundly defeated in the May, 1990 elections, the military junta (SLORC), has been systematically and brutally suppressing the opposition with intimidation, arrest and imprisonment. Intimidation normally involves terrorizing the population by taking individuals for questioning (they may never be heard of again), beating in public places and random shootings.

Once under arrest, torture is begun on a political suspect with increasing degrees of brutality. Apart from beatings, such cruel methods of torture as plucking out finger nails, driving pins into the finger tips, burning with cigarette stubs, electric shocks etc. are used to extract confessions. Most political suspects are sent to prisons for unlimited confinement, without trial. Any attempt to complain or resist authorities in prison is met with the most brutal suppression and torture. Many become mentally

deranged or die because of prison brutality.

Some opposition members who died in prisons in the recent months because of torture are U Maung Ko, U Tin Maung Win, U Sein Win and Bo Set Yaung. It is said that there are many cases of death of political prisoners that went unreported because of cover-up by the authorities and fear on the part of relatives and friends.

Diplomats in Rangoon and Burma watchers, are of the opinion that the removal of U Tin Oo and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi from the position of NLD leadership, forcing civil servants to answer brain-washing questions, personal attacks on leading opposition members, and the arrest even of the lowest level of opposition members and brutality against them are indicative of the military's determination to completely destroy any opposition.

UPDATE

On April 28, 1991, 140 Burmese were taken from Bangkok's immigration jail and sent to Ranong where they were to be repatriated to the Burmese side which is under the control of the Burmese military. (See B.U.R.M.A. Vol. 1 Number 4 page 8)

A later report says that of the 41 students who were placed in the heavily guarded boat to be taken across to Victoria Point in Burma, 39 managed to escape by jumping over board and swimming back to Thailand. Two students, who were unable to swim, were turned over by the Thai navy to Burmese authorities in Victoria Point. They are Khaing Gyi and Tayoke Gyi. From Victoria Point, these two students were taken to Mergui by the military. No word has yet been heard of their present situation, but it is believed that they will face severe torture in prison.

The other Burmese who were not students, were held in Victoria Point and charged 600 kyats (US\$80 approximately) by Burmese immigration for illegally leaving the country. If they could not pay this fine, they were imprisoned for six months.

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being carried out under the auspices of State Organizations at different levels throughout the country and as such, donations made to any religious or charitable organization by those who are paying profit tax to the state shall be taxed on their remaining income.

Inflation

The prices of essential commodities are sharply going up in the country. Even while 14 foreign oil companies are exploring for oil in the country, the people are facing shortages of gas and private cars in Rangoon are allowed a ration of two to four gallons per week. Transportation charges are increasing and the extra fuel needed must be purchased in the blackmarket where the price is 165 and 180 kyats per gallon (about US\$25 to \$28 per gallon) but the official rate is 15 Kyats (about US\$ 2.5).

Fishermen

Burma's main fishing business on the Tennasserin Coast is affected by 12 Thai fishing companies and one US fishing company (MMA Financo Inc) who use special nets in Burmese waters. Theoretically, the Tennasserin coast is restricted for foreign companies. However, there is a thriving underground business of paying bribes to the Burmese Navy by these foreign companies who are then allowed to fish along the coast. The intensive fishing by these companies creates a dearth of fish for the traditional Burmese fishermen who lose their daily income. At the same time, these poor fishermen must pay the "porter fee" to the Burmese Army so they do not have to serve as porters and human mine sweepers. The fishermen finally abandon their homeland and cross the Thai-Burmese border illegally to seek jobs in Thailand. Every day, an average of 30 people from Mon State and Karen State are leaving illegally from Burma to Thailand. Most of them are working as cheap laborers in building construction sites.

Along the Thai-Burmese border, the Thai and Burmese exchange rate is absolutely up side down. The official exchange rate is one Burmese kyat to two Thai baht, but along the border it is one baht to two kyats.

Economic Development

On the 6th of April, U Ohn Gyaw, Director-General of the Political Department of Foreign Affairs, made a speech at the 47th session of ESCAP held in Seoul, South Korea. According to his speech, Burma's rate of economic growth was estimated at 5.6 percent in 1990/91 which is considerably higher than the 3.6 percent growth rate achieved in 1989/90. The foreign trade sector also recorded substantial growth. In fact, Burma's imports are sharply increasing so that now they double exports. In the year ending in March 1991, while the imports increased to 7.18 billion Kyats (US\$1.1 billion), the exports shrunk by 27% to 3.5 billion Kyats. The junta

estimates that Burma's economic development will be up 4.5% next year. Even if they can reach this target, they will lose it all to pay of their US\$1.2 billion debt to China for the purchase of arms and ammunition which they made this year.

PLEASE NOTE

B.U.R.M.A. has changed address. Please note the new address on page 1 and direct all future correspondence to this P.O. Box.