

Displacement within Urban and peri-urban areas of Burma

Documents (draft)

General/mixed reports and articles

[Burma: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - 2006](#) US State Department,
6 March 2007

f. Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

Weak private property rights and poor land ownership records facilitated involuntary relocations of persons by the government. The law does not permit private ownership of land but recognizes only different categories of land use rights, many of which are not freely transferable. Postcolonial land laws also revived the precolonial tradition that private rights to land were contingent upon the land being put to productive use.

Reports of forced relocation in urban areas continued to decrease; however, the government reportedly continued to forcibly relocate households for "security" reasons. In Rangoon persons were forced to leave homes or dwellings located on property that could be used for commercial gain. In some cases those forced to move were poorly compensated. The government in Bago forced residents to move off their land so that authorities could build an urban development project. The land was later deemed unsuitable, but the residents were not allowed to return. In November 2005 the government ordered most civil servants to relocate without their families to its new administrative capital Nay Pyi Taw near Pyinmana, Mandalay Division, and would not allow them to resign their jobs in lieu of moving. At year's end many civil servants were forced to live separately from their families in Rangoon, due to lack of family housing and schools.

[Burma: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - 2005](#) US State Department,
8 March 2006

1.f. Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence ...

Reports of forced relocation in urban areas lessened; however, the government reportedly continued to relocate forcibly households for "security" reasons. In Rangoon, persons were forced to leave homes or dwellings located on property that could be used for commercial gain. In some cases those forced to move were poorly compensated. In 2004 the government gave notices to retired civil servants to move from at least two locations in Rangoon by 2005. At the end of the year, they remained in their homes. In November the government ordered civil servants to relocate without their families to a new administrative capital in Pyinmana.

There were numerous reports that government troops looted and confiscated property and possessions from forcibly relocated persons, or persons who were away from their homes. These materials often were used for military construction. *US State Dept*

[Burma: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - 2004](#) US State Department, 25 February 2005

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Reports of forced relocation in urban areas lessened; however, the Government reportedly continued to forcibly relocate households for "security" reasons. In Rangoon, persons were forced to leave homes or dwellings located on property that could be used for commercial gain. In some cases, those forced to move were poorly compensated. During the year the Government gave notices to retired civil servants to move from at least two locations in Rangoon by 2005. In 2003, the Government forced retired civil servants, who had lived for generations in downtown Rangoon, to move out with inadequate compensation. Senior Government officials ignored appeals, and under duress many residents accepted relocation to apartments estimated to be worth approximately 10 percent of the value of their vacated homes. There were numerous reports that government troops looted and confiscated property and possessions from forcibly relocated persons, or persons who were away from their homes. These materials often were used for military construction. *US State Dept.*

[Housing, Land, and Property Rights in Burma](#) (extracts), Nancy Hudson-Rodd, School of International, Cultural Community Studies, Edith Cowan University, Mt Lawley Campus, WA., Centre for Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE), October 2004

Urban evictions

Since 1989, the military junta has followed their 'beautification' program in Rangoon and other cities forcefully relocating and inducing voluntary relocation of residents to new

satellite towns. In one 12 month period (1988-1989) 260,000 squatter residents were evicted from around Yangon. They were provided with plots and some services at their new locations on the urban periphery (UNCHS, 1990). About half a million people were moved to ten satellite cities around Rangoon in the 1990s. In 1994, at least 500 families were evicted from their homes in Rangoon in preparation for 'Visit Myanmar Year'. The SPDC claim that most of those people were squatters who lived in poorly constructed hovels which were fire traps. "Yangon had to be cleared twice of congestion created by squatters who have now been given their own land and helped to build their own houses in the new towns" (Aung Thein Lynn, 2003).

However, Burmese nationals claim that people evicted were often regular house owners and evicted from these homes, not from squats. Residents were offered little compensation, far below market value, and were asked to pay for the new plots of land in satellite towns. If they could not pay, people were moved further away and forced to settle in towns with no resources. People are given little advance notice and no option but to move. "Never before in the history of Yangon had so many projects for urban development been undertaken in so short a time. From 1988, vast areas of Yangon teeming with hutments and low grade housing were replaced by apartment buildings, private towers and condominiums" boasts Aung Thein Lynn the Mayor of Yangon, (2003: 35).

Rangoon is being groomed again to represent the regime's perspective of a city worthy of hosting the 2006 ASEAN Summit, chaired by Myanmar. This focus necessitated a special seminar 'Tall buildings: A challenge for Myanmar architects & engineers to promote knowledge about high-rises (May Thandar Win, 2004). Houses of teak and brick are being destroyed to make space for high rises in central Rangoon. In light of the December 2005 "deadline for all new buildings, just before the ASEAN Summit" (Kyaw Zwa Moe, 2003), there have been several commercially motivated forced relocations.

Civil servants who have lived for generations in downtown Rangoon have been moved with little compensation for their houses. Senior Government officials refused to listen to appeals and many residents simply accepted relocation to apartments estimated at about 10% the value of their lost homes. In one new satellite town, there was land granted to firemen, policemen and government employees. The land, former paddy land is situated about 30 minute drive from Rangoon. Given the low salary of government employees, and for a doctor in a public hospital earning less than a rickshaw driver, loss of house, property, and access to central Rangoon is especially damaging to survival.

Pp20, 21

[...]

Relocations for Tourism

Villagers and residents living in ancient towns, now tourist sites such as Mandalay, Pagan, and Amarapura in Upper Burma were relocated for the purpose of renovating these cities as tourist attractions. Since 1988, Burma's tourism infrastructure expanded rapidly. From 1988 to 1995, the number of hotels increased from just 19, with a total of

800 rooms to 256, with a total of 4,000 rooms. There is now a surplus of hotel accommodation in Rangoon and it is speculated that people with close ties to opiate growing or opiate exporting organizations continue to invest in hotel construction for the purpose of “whitening” foreign currency that cannot be shown to have been legally earned (USA Embassy, 1996: 19).

In Mandalay people who lived in traditional wooden homes were forced to convert these structures into modern, two-storey buildings. Residents were forced to leave their homes in Mandalay to accommodate new commercial ventures and construction of hotels. If residents could not afford this re-construction, they were displaced to satellite towns. Liberalized border trade since 1992 has led to Yunnanese transactions dominating the Mandalay Commodity Exchange, the largest in Burma, which handles 70% of total border trade in non-rice products (DFAT, 1997: 135). The presence of Chinese (20% of the population) merchants is notable with Mandalay known as the yuan zone. Easing of foreign trade restrictions and increased trade with China has brought a boom-time atmosphere with building of hotels, office buildings and department stores. Hsue Hgnet (2003) writes about dramatic streetscape changes in contemporary Mandalay.

“Like the new buildings replacing the old ones, new developments have made the native residents of old Mandalay leave their long-residing homes, departing from this block from that block, this win, that win..... Whenever these Mandalay-thas who have moved away meet among themselves they reminisce about their cherished past...this quarter, this festival, this home, this Win and its residents” (Hsue Hgnet, 2003: b). Long-time residents have been forced out of their homes to make way for development of buildings not fully used. Residents occupy spots on the edge of the city in new satellite towns pushed out from the centre as modernisation continues. These residents travel along muddy roads with few transportation links each day to work in the city centre arriving exhausted back home in their new houses. The four lane tracks linking new satellite cities with the centre are transformed into pools of mud and water and bicycles are means of movement.

The changing ownership of property is described by Hsue Hgnet, (2003: 186) with reference to Theikpan Street symbolising change bridging the old and the new Mandalay, the rural and the urban. Theikpan Street runs into the new satellite town where 60 by 40 foot land plots emerge from small rice fields into new thatch roofed huts. Hsue describes a large commercial development by the Mandalay Municipals Department built in 1992 at a cost of Kyats 58.2 million opened as a super market specialising in Chinese-made goods. The Ar-Thar-Wadi super market paid a rent of Kyats 950,000 a month to Municipals. The super market closed after 1 year of operation not supported by local residents. The space is to become a five star hotel.

On Theikpan Street: hotels, stores, karaoke bars, country spirit shops, petrol station, and name-changing service for motor-car driving licenses. There was a heroin bust on this street. ... There are several unoccupied beautiful buildings, companions who agree to sleep for a night at the price of about kyats 10,000, men who blackmail kyats by stopping bicycles under the dark shade of the trees, a sedan car carrying bags of cash to buy a

telephone and two storey building built on 100 by 100 feet plots of land, old bicyclists who buy four cans of rice after receiving a day's wage (Hssue Hgnet, 2000:189).

Mandalay is recognised as a major international distribution centre for illegal drugs, a centre of gambling and of prostitution and investment from the profit of these activities which allows for the purchase of real estate. Tourists do not visit these satellite towns but are attracted to a Mandalay of restored royal palaces, seeking a Myanmar cultural experience.

A central feature of these towns created across Burma is that modern homes of military commanders and high ranking government officials are built along main highways and railway tracks with access to electricity, telephone, and water supply. In contrast, the homes of the evicted residents are built with traditional bamboo and thatch and located far away from main roads with no electricity or water supply. Military elites and high ranking officials are able to secure low-interest mortgage loans from state banks and building materials at subsidised prices to build two to three homes in the best sections of satellite towns. They have the option to sell these homes to make good profits or maintain absentee ownership of unoccupied houses and rent them out to foreign businessmen and diplomats as means of earning foreign exchange (Hudson-Rodd, Myo Nyunt, Saw Thamain Tun & Sein Htay, 2003).

The current military regime SPDC claims that only when Myanmar was placed under military rule did the people of Yangon get proper housing. In 1958, three satellite towns, South Okkalapa, North Okkalapa, and Tharketa, were created around Yangon. In 1988, the military renewed its urban re-development of Yangon, and continues to move people from central Yangon to areas around the city. New directives, laws enacted by the military ensure that men are directly appointed by the State to "enjoy full authority" (YCDC, 2003: 38). Citizens have no voice in urban development. They have no rights to determine their home ownership or place of home.

In 1990, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) enacted Law No. 11/90 which invested the Yangon City Development Committee with authority to convert "Yangon with the characteristics of the city of international standards". The committee was authorized to:

- Re-demarcate the territorial limits of the city municipality limits;
- Operate works independently with funds owned by the Committee;
- Prescribe, revise, assess and collect duties and taxes and specify rates relating to development works;
- Utilize foreign currency derived from the lease of buildings, lands, or other means of development work.

Directive No. 7/90 and Yangon City Development Law (14 May 1990) gave the chairman, mayor of the Yangon City Development Committee ministerial power being directly responsible to the Head of State. All members of the YCDC are directly appointed by the State. The Department of Human Settlement and Housing Department (DHSHD) works closely with the YCDC. The DHSHD is responsible for sub-division

and allotment of land, construction of houses, buildings and development of infrastructure.

The Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC) jurisdiction extends to 33 townships covering an area of 300 square miles. In his address to the 25th Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly for the Overall Review and Appraisal of the Habitat Agenda, U. Tint Swe (2001) explained the role of the private sector working with the government to develop land for the increased demand for housing. The main focus was squatter upgrading through the 'hut to apartment' projects. To achieve this aim, people living in 'squats' are removed and 'accommodated' in new apartments. To remove increased population pressure from the central business areas of the two largest cities of Yangon and Mandalay, a city development committee was formed under direct supervision of the chairman of the SPDC and the Prime Minister. This new level of authority and control has in these two largest cities has benefited a few select 'national entrepreneurs', construction firms, given special import permits for vehicles, equipment, and low interest rates to build new apartments, condominiums, and housing developments.

The SPDC (Myanma Myo Pya, 1992) estimated demand for housing (brick, timber, timber & bamboo, bamboo & other) and land (5 houses per acre) for the year 2003 for each city with a population over 20,000. The greatest demand for housing and land was predicted to be in Yangon (20, 951 houses on 4,910 acres) and Mandalay (6, 189 houses on 1,239 acres). The military junta claim to "thoroughly clean the city, to dismantle the slums and encroachments and to resettle them in satellite towns" (YCDC, 2003: 21). The YCDC asserts that squatters who lived in the back-yards of "hospitals, offices, schools, and temples" were moved to six satellite cities, Shwepyithar, Hlaing Thayar, Shwepaukkan, Dagon (North), Dagon (South), Dagon (Port) and Dagon (East). Each township is supposed to be self-contained with markets, hospitals, restaurants, condominiums, places of worship. About 246, 000 households were allocated plots and housing loans. (pp 22-26)

[State-Induced Violence and Poverty in Burma](#) (extract, pp 31-32) Nancy Hudson-Rodd, Saw Thmain-Tun, Sein Htay. ILO June 2004

The SLORC declared the year 1996 as "The Visit Myanmar Year" to capture foreign exchange from the tourists. Since 1989, the military junta has been launching the beautification program of Rangoon and other cities across Burma by forcefully relocating and inducing voluntary relocation to new satellite towns. There are ten satellite towns around Rangoon alone to which almost half a million population has been relocated. Similarly, satellite towns were created around the famous ancient city of Mandalay in Upper Burma, forcefully relocating the residents to attract and accommodate Chinese and other foreign investors as well as tourists. The junta claimed that most of the evicted were squatters and fire victims who were not allowed to reacquire their old plots of land. However, the Burmese nationals reported that among the forcefully evicted were

regular homeowners. The forcefully their homes were well below their market values. They were also asked to pay for the new plots of land in satellite towns. If they could not pay, they were moved further away and forced to settle in shabbier satellite towns outside Rangoon division.

Villagers and residents living at ancient tourist sites, such as Mandalay, Pagan, and Amarapura in Upper Burma, were forcefully relocated for the purpose of renovating these sites for tourist attraction. The central feature of the satellite towns created across Burma is that modern homes of military commanders and high ranking government officials are built along the main highways and railway tracks with access to electricity, telephone, and water supply. On the other hand, the homes of forcefully relocated people are built with traditional bamboo and thatches that are located far away from the main roads with no electricity and water supply. Military elites and high ranking officials secured low-interest mortgage loans from state banks and building materials at subsidized prices to build two to three homes in the best sections of these satellite towns. They would either sell these homes to make abnormal profit or maintain absentee ownership of unoccupied homes or rent them out to foreign businessmen and diplomats to earn foreign exchange.

[Burma: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - 2003](#) US State Department, 25 February, 2004

1. f. Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence ...

To make way for commercial or public construction and, in some cases, for reasons of internal security and political control, the SPDC forcibly relocated citizens to "new towns." This practice of setting up new towns has become somewhat less common in recent years. Persons relocated to new towns generally suffered from greatly reduced infrastructure support. Residents targeted for displacement generally were given no option but to move, usually on short notice (see Sections 1.c. and 2.d.).

2.d. Freedom of Movement Within the Country, Foreign Travel, Emigration, and Repatriation

Reports of forced relocation in urban areas lessened on the whole; however, since late 2002 there were still reports of the Government forcibly relocating households for "security" reasons. In Rangoon there were several commercially motivated forced relocations. In one case, the Government forced retired civil servants, who had lived for generations in downtown Rangoon, to move out with inadequate compensation. Senior Government officials ignored appeals, and under duress many residents accepted relocation to apartments estimated to be worth approximately 10 percent the value of their vacated homes. There were numerous reports that Government troops looted and confiscated property and possessions from forcibly relocated persons, or persons who were away from their homes; these materials often were used for military construction. US State Dept.

[Ready, Aim, Sanction!](#) ALTSEAN-Burma, November 2003 (extract pp 90-92)

Keeping It In The Family: Industrial Estates

Despite the supposed decrease in fully state-owned businesses, the regime remains heavily involved in business through alternative means including ownership of industrial estates that host a significant number of factories and businesses. There are 18 industrial zones in 9 states and divisions. The Ministry of Industry 1 controls 5 industrial estates - Thanlyin, Hmawbi, Daik-U, Bago, and Sagaing Industrial Estates and has part or full ownership of more than 75 factories.²⁴² *(All footnotes here¹)*

A 1994 U.S. State Department report estimated that the regime forcibly relocated more than 500,000 residents from Rangoon to new satellite settlements, better described as slums, which are on the outskirts of the city.²⁴³ Much of the land has been used for commercial purposes and industrial estates. Many of the key industrial estates built in and around Rangoon are built by the Department of Human Settlement and Housing Development (DHSHD), which is under the regime's Ministry of Construction. DHSHD has allegedly played a significant role in those forced relocations.²⁴⁴

The Myanmar Industrial & Commercial Directory 2000 stated the DHSHD "is developing industrial zones in Yangon (Rangoon) division for the local investors as well as the foreign investors."²⁴⁵

DHSHD developed Shwe Paukan, Dagon, Dagon Seikkan Township, Hlaing Thayar and Shwe Pyi Thar Industrial Zones.²⁴⁶

¹ 242 American Center for International Labor Solidarity (Nov 2000) Connections Between Garment Manufacturing and Military Interests in Burma

243 Burma Ethnic Research Group [BERG] (July 1999) Internal Displacement in Myanmar

244 American Center for International Labor Solidarity (Nov 2000) Connections Between Garment Manufacturing and Military Interests in Burma

245 American Center for International Labor Solidarity (Nov 2000) Connections Between Garment Manufacturing and Military Interests in Burma

246 American Center for International Labor Solidarity (Nov 2000) Connections Between Garment Manufacturing and Military Interests in Burma

247 Burma Campaign UK and Federation of Trade Unions – Burma (12Nov 02) Campaigners Target BAT over Burma Factory

248 American Center for International Labor Solidarity (Nov 2000) Connections Between Garment Manufacturing and Military Interests in Burma

249 BBC Night News 1997

250 AP (8 May 03) Myanmar garment manufacturers call for end to U.S. ban

251 Burma Campaign UK (28 Jan 02) Campaigners force Triumph International's withdrawal from Burma

252 Guardian (12 Nov 02) Clarke embarrassed as attack on Burma goes up in smoke

♦ Hlaing Thayar Industrial Zone – 17 garment factories, including Myanmar Yes, Apolo Garment, and Jong Lih backpack factory, which were all reported to have violated labor and human rights.

♦ Shwe Pyi Thar Industrial Zone – 9 garment factories According to public directories, the factories in these two industrial zones account for 20-30% of garment factories.

The regime-controlled Union of Myanmar Economic Holdings (UMEH) has close connections with industrial zones and many major garment factories in Burma. The UMEH fully owns Pyinmapin (Bhinmarpin) Industrial Zone that also has many garment factories. Construction crews using child laborers upgraded the zone in 1996.²⁴⁷ A UMEH joint venture with Myanmar Land & Development Ltd does a lot of the construction of industrial estates in Burma.

The UMEH is in joint ventures with Daewoo, Unimix, Segye, and with Triumph before they were pressured out of Burma. In addition UMEH did project financing for Daewoo and Segye.

It Gets Worse

About 650 acres was leased from the army regiment in Mingaladon for the Pyinmapin Industrial Zone. Pyinmapin is military designated area. While UMEH profits from joint ventures, the army and gets money for providing the resources: electricity, water, land rental, etc, just as DHSHD and Ministry of Industry 1 get revenue for those resources from the business ventures that operate on the industrial zones it operates.²⁴⁸

In a BBC hidden-camera investigation of Burma's apparel industry, an SPDC official asserted that the regime controls "all the [garment] factories."²⁴⁹ It has been reported that 95% of the factories represented by Myanmar Garment Manufacturers' Association are state-owned. The Association reported that 75% of their goods were imported by the U.S. and 25% by the EU.²⁵⁰

Prior to their withdrawal in January 2002, Triumph International's factory was located on military owned land, which was upgraded with forced labor, including child labor. Triumph, which exported nearly all its production, paid 5% tax to the regime on all its exports and in addition paid rent and commercial taxes directly to the UMEH.²⁵¹

British American Tobacco's (BAT), Burmese subsidiary is Rothmans of Pall Mall Myanmar, is in a 60/40 joint venture with UMEH and is located in Pyinmapin Industrial Zone, which was upgraded with child labor. The Myawaddy Trading Co, a subsidiary of UMEH, distributes BAT cigarettes.²⁵²

[Burma: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - 2002](#) US State Department, 31 March, 2003

1. c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment ...

In early March, in downtown Rangoon, residents of 25 homes in Weggi quarter were ordered by the regional military commander to vacate their houses by the end of the month. These persons, many of whom were long time residents, appealed the order to senior SPDC officials to no avail. Under military threats, many accepted relocation to apartments estimated to be worth approximately 10 percent the value of their vacated homes. On April 5, armed military authorities forced remaining tenants to leave their houses, arresting those who refused. The homes were destroyed, reportedly to make way for construction of new residences for families or companies connected to the regime.

1. f. Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence ...

To make way for commercial or public construction and, in some cases, for reasons of internal security and political control, the SPDC forcibly relocated citizens to "new towns." This practice has become somewhat less common in recent years. Persons relocated to new towns generally suffered from greatly reduced infrastructure support. Residents targeted for displacement generally were given no option but to move, usually on short notice (see Sections 1.c. and 2.d.). ...

In 2000 in Rakhine State, the regime forcibly relocated several largely Muslim villages and resettled the area with Buddhist Burmans, who were forced to move from Dagon township in Rangoon division.

[Burma: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - 2001](#) US State Department, 4 March, 2002

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To make way for commercial or public construction and, in some cases, for reasons of internal security and political control, the SPDC has relocated forcibly citizens to "new towns." Prevalent during the early 1990's, this practice has become somewhat less common in recent years. Persons relocated to new towns generally suffer from greatly reduced infrastructure support, and residents targeted for displacement generally are given no option but to move, usually on short notice . *US State Dept.*

[Burma: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - 2000](#) US State Department, 23 February, 2001

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towns." Prevalent during the early 1990's, this practice has become much more restrictive. Persons relocated to new towns generally suffer from greatly reduced infrastructure support, and residents targeted for displacement generally are given no option but to move, usually on short notice. *US State Dept*

[Burma: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - 1999](#) US State Department, 25 February, 2000

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To make way for commercial or public construction and in some cases for reasons of internal security and political control, the SPDC continued to relocate citizens out of cities to new towns; however, this occurred on a much smaller scale than during the early 1990's. Persons relocated to "new towns" continued to suffer from greatly reduced infrastructure support and living standards, and residents targeted for displacement continued to be given no option but to move, usually on short notice.

In a number of urban areas, residents were compelled to cede use of land for road widening and a host of other projects approved without any public consultation or endorsement. Other long-term city residents were required to cede use of land for commercial redevelopment and were compensated at only a fraction of the value of their lost homes. *US State Dept*

[Internal Displacement in Myanmar](#) Burma Ethnic Research Group (BERG), 1999

According to a 1994 report of the US State Department, an estimated half million residents in Rangoon [Yangon] had been forcibly relocated from the city centre to new satellite settlements on the outskirts of the city between 1988 to 1994. Prior to this, a 1990 UNCHS/Habitat report indicated that between 1989-1990 some 1.5 million people throughout the country (4% of the entire country's population) had been relocated or resettled. Given the small urban population of Myanmar this represents some 16% of the urban population. More than half of this massive social engineering exercise took place in only four cities – Rangoon, Mandalay, Bago [Pegu], and Taunggyi. (BERG 1998) In secondary towns the populations relocated accounted for 22% percent of the total town populations, respectively 120,000 out of 754,520 persons.

Considered by UNCHS/Habitat in their 1990 report as unprecedented internationally, for both the scale and the time period involved, these urban relocations or resettlements were undertaken by the government for purposes of land development planning and other urban works. These included development of: housing for civil servants; road, rail and pedestrian passageways; parks and gardens; commercial and residential use; clean up and beautification; and drainage systems and water bodies. An additional cause for much concern, was the accelerated forced relocation of poor communities to new, ill-prepared

relocation sites, which was combined with a heavy handedness on the part of the military government to impose law and order standards in newly resettled areas.

Urban displaced people, particularly those- poorest households, have frequently been described in government documents as squatters, although some of them were previously renters or owners of permanent houses. They were often evicted at their own expense to new resettlement sites where conditions were difficult and where social services were lacking or scarce. Some such squatter clearance projects in Mandalay and Rangoon appear to have taken place to punish people after the 1988 upheavals, while 'fire' became an effective way of clearing squatters, as old plots are rarely returned to fire victims.

The most controversial of these urban displacements were those which concerned the relocation of urban communities to schemes designed as new rural communities. Throughout the early 1990s the government moved squatter communities and other urban populations from urban to border areas where people were to inhabit low population density areas and provide labor for construction and other infrastructure or development activities. Examples of this have been reported in the Kabaw Valley of Sagaing Division and in the Dimosoe area of Karenni State.

[Hunger in the City](#) From *The Voice of the Hungry Nation*, the report of the People's Tribunal on Food Scarcity and Militarization in Burma, 1999

Food scarcity also affects Burma's cities. The Tribunal heard of high food costs, endemic corruption, forced labor, and dislocated rural villagers drifting into cities in search of work or simply to beg for food.

The cost of food rose steadily through the 1990s. By 1998, most poor families in the capital city could manage only one meal per day, though food security was by no means elusive only to the urban poor. In January 1997 a former office worker from Rangoon reported,

The biggest problem is feeding our families. Nearly everyone in Rangoon is struggling just to eat. Since we need money for other things as well, usually we eat less or eat very simply. This is a general economic condition, not the problem of only poor people. My house, for example, could be called middle-class, but we face the same problems with food as everyone else. Poor urbanites earn their food one day at a time:

Sundry workers include petty vendors, tri-shaw drivers, hired laborers, and the like. They earn between 50 to 180 kyat per day, barely sufficient to cover the cost of rice. They purchase only 2-3 pyi at a time. Agricultural laborers working for the government get only 20 kyat per day, but have the privilege of purchasing 12 pyi of polished rice for only 20 kyat. Sometimes they get afternoon meals free. Most are women and teenage children. Only the combined income of all members in a household enables people to survive.

[Burma: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - 1998](#) US State Department,
26 February, 1999

1. f. Arbitrary Interference With Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence ...

To make way for commercial or public construction, and in some cases for security reasons, the SPDC continued to relocate citizens out of cities to new towns, although on a much smaller scale than during the early 1990's. While facilities in these areas have improved over time, residents targeted for displacement continued to be given no option but to move, usually on short notice. ...

In a number of urban areas, residents were compelled to cede land for road widening and a host of other projects approved without any public consultation or endorsement. Other long-term city residents were required to cede land for commercial redevelopment and were compensated at only a fraction of the value of their lost homes ...

In urban Rangoon, previously confiscated land was developed into high-density housing that previously evicted tenants could purchase only at prices beyond the means of many.
US State Dept

[Burma: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - 1997](#) US State Department,
30 January, 1998

1. f. Arbitrary Interference With Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence ...

To make way for commercial or public construction, and in some cases for security reasons, the SLORC continued to move people out of cities to peripheral new town settlements, although on a smaller scale than during the early 1990's. While facilities in some of these areas have improved over time, residents targeted for displacement continued to be given no option but to move, usually on short notice.

In a number of urban areas, residents were compelled to cede land for road-widening projects approved without any public consultation or endorsement. Other long-term city residents were required to cede land for commercial redevelopment and were compensated at only a fraction of the value of their lost homes. For example, the Government forced residents in the Hledan market area of Rangoon to relocate to make way for an apartment complex without paying compensation for their homes; residents were given the option to buy new apartments outside the city. *US State Dept*

[Burma: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - 1996](#) US State Department,
30 January, 1997

1. f. Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, and Correspondence...

The SLORC continued to move citizens out of cities to peripheral new town settlements, though not on the same scale as in the early 1990's. While facilities in some of these areas have improved over time, residents targeted for displacement continued to be given no option but to move, usually on short notice. In Hlaing Thaya township near Rangoon, residents were relocated again after having been moved in 1992.

Those in established cities and towns were subject to arbitrary seizure of their property. In a number of urban areas, residents were compelled to cede land for road-widening projects decided upon without any public consultation nor endorsement. Other long-term city residents were required to cede land for commercial redevelopment and were compensated at only a fraction of the value of their lost homes. In rural areas, military personnel at times confiscated livestock and food supplies. Even the resting places of the dead were not spared as the Government took over several cemeteries for development and gave families only a few weeks to relocate their ancestors' remains.

[Burma: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - 1995](#) US State Department,
March 1996

1. f. Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, and Correspondence ...

The SLORC continued to move people out of cities to peripheral new town settlements, though not on the same scale as in the early 1990's. While facilities in some of these areas have improved over time, residents targeted for displacement continued to be given no option but to move, usually on short notice. The military also continued to relocate forcibly some rural villages, especially in ethnic minority areas.

Those able to remain in established cities and towns were subject to arbitrary seizure of their property. In a number of urban areas, residents were compelled to cede land for road-widening projects decided upon without any public consultation or endorsement. Other long-term city residents were required to cede land for commercial redevelopment and were compensated at only a fraction of the value of their lost homes.

[Burma: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - 1994](#) US State Department,
31 January, 1995

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The Burmese Way: To Where? Makhadoom Ali Kahn, International Commission of Jurists, 1991 (extract)

When the ICJ asked about forced relocations, a foreigner living in Myanmar offered an explanation: "If you had read your guidebook you would know this is nothing new. Burmese kings were constantly moving their populations." Indeed, this is true.

A minority leader at Manerplaw, on the Thai-Myanmar border, offered a different perspective: "The Burmese army has been moving the populations of villages, in the

areas of the ethnic minorities, from one place to another since independence. Forced relocations are not a new phenomenon. Only now what has been happening in the forests and villages of Myanmar for decades has become more visible. SLORC has replicated in the cities what the army was doing in the villages for a long time. The world has started taking notice now."

It is difficult to say how many people have been forced out of their homes and moved to far-away places. People inside Myanmar put the figure beyond a million. Diplomats talk about hundreds of thousands of people being moved from the heart of urban centres to the outskirts of these towns. The United States State Department 1990 Country Report on Myanmar states that "it is difficult to estimate accurately the number forcibly resettled but a figure in excess of 500,000 is reasonable". The relocations have taken place in most major cities: Yangon, Mandalay, Patheingyi (Bassein), Prome and Taunggyi.

The government justifies these relocations on the ground that those moved were squatters. The action, it asserts, was necessary to clean up the cities and make beautification and development possible. Not all those moved were squatters, however. Not all lived in shanty towns or bamboo huts. A number of people had title deeds to their properties. Most of the others had acquired title through adverse possession under the laws of Myanmar. Though some settlements were on government land, a number of other people had moved into properties vacated by Indians, decades ago, and were now the owners, in fact as well as in law. Such legal niceties, however, could not stand in the way of SLORC once it had made up its mind. Concrete houses as well as bamboo huts were bulldozed. Those who had title by adverse possession, those who had title deeds and those who had no title were all treated equally unjustly. They were all compelled to move at very short notice.

Those who demonstrated reluctance in moving were threatened with the use of force. Those who protested were arrested. The Government of Myanmar has characterised these measures as standard economic development tools to clean up the cities and provide housing to squatters. The relocations have been carried out for the reasons stated by the Government as well as for reasons not so stated. A number of settlements which were active in the 1988 pro-democracy movement have been razed to the ground and the people moved out. Some of the first victims were those living near the offices of the Defence Ministry in Yangon. Many of them had participated in the 1988 movement. The dense population, the network of winding narrow streets, is now plain ground.

Hundreds of families were evicted from Bahan Township in Yangon in early 1990. Aung San Suu Kyi had announced her candidature in the May 1990 elections from this area. More than 500 houses in the area were demolished. Not all relocations are political. The price of real estate in the urban centres is high, and there are allegations that the Tatmadaw officers have made money in real estate speculation in areas vacated as a result of the relocation programme.

People who lived in the heart of urban centres were moved to new towns, sometimes as far as a hundred miles away from their places of residence and work. The new towns

have not been developed, however. Many of them are not connected with the city by transport. There are no sewage facilities, no water connection, no schools, no hospitals or doctors, no electricity and no places of work nearby. Many of those re-settled spend more than half their wages travelling to and from work. Many of these new towns were in the middle of abandoned rice paddy land and are flooded in the rainy season. The occupants, exposed to the elements and deprived of all sanitation and medical facilities, fall victim to various diseases.

The military claims that it gave people money and materials to build new houses, and transported their building materials and household effects. While in some cases people confirm that the army provided transport for them and their families, they deny having been given either money or building material to construct the new houses. Virtually all those whom the ICJ interviewed denied having received any compensation for the loss of their home.

In the new town of Shwe Pyi Tha near Yangon, people claim that they had to pay kyat 3,000 to 5,000 to obtain a piece of land. The cost of building a small ten foot square bamboo hut is as high as kyat 1,000. Since most of these people are on subsistence wages, they had to borrow money at high rates of interest. Their average daily income is kyat 15. A round trip to Yangon alone costs kyat 10 a day. This creates a cycle of adversity and suffering which is difficult to break.

Those who could not afford the expense of Shwe Pyi Tha moved to Aye Mya Tha Ya, another new town, 150 miles from Yangon. The cost of buying land, building a house and going to town to work leaves little money even for the daily bread, and there is nothing left for the schooling of children. In many cases the children had to be taken out of schools and sent to work to make the two ends meet.

A person in Pagan showed the ICJ a place which was now open land. "I used to live here. In June 1990, the whole village was moved. We were given no money as compensation and little help from the government. We were given some money for transportation. The authorities gave us no notice. They demolished our houses and we carried the bamboos and our belongings to where we were ordered to go. We are very poor people. It was raining. We were tired. Children cried, women wept but the authorities were not moved. We were moved to a place across the river. Ours was not the only village to be moved. Others were moved as well." The justification for the move was to clean up a city which is of great tourist interest.

The usual notice given to those moved was seven to ten days, insufficient time for a person to make the necessary arrangements to move house. In some cases in Pagan, a questionnaire was circulated asking the people where they would like to go to. Some wrote New York, Chicago, Washington. They were moved to worse places. The authorities first disconnected the electric and water supplies, then bulldozed the houses. "Except in a few cases," said a diplomat, "facilities had not been set up in the new towns. Living conditions were worse than sub-human. I have seen people cooking while standing in waist deep water."

The same diplomat claimed that the object of relocating these people may not have been a bad one. The military is in a hurry to develop roads and other facilities. Everywhere one sees projects under way. The relocations became inhuman because these were so poorly planned and badly executed. "You see, SLORC is quite short on imagination. It is working on old blue prints. In 1958 also a lot of people were moved to satellite towns. Yangon has spread since then and the satellite towns are now integrated with the city. The intention this time too may have been to discourage squatters, develop a better city and house people in proper places with proper facilities. But it all went awry. Instead of achieving these results, SLORC compounded the problem of the people and violated human rights."

Another person in Myanmar explained the relocations as an attempt to set up cleaner new cities and clear up unpleasant squatter settlements. The manner in which the people were moved, he conceded, was extremely brutal. People were moved at very short notice and dumped on open lands in rural areas without any facilities. He doubted if the relocations were politically motivated. "You see, your approach is wrong. You do not understand them. They are a bunch of fascists. They have a fascist approach. They think of public works. They don't think of people. They have little education, are simple-minded and think of things in absolutely black and white terms. They may not have done much in areas they have cleared. There may not be many facilities available in the new areas. But these SLORC chaps don't think in such terms. The adverse effect on the education of children, the likelihood of these people being gripped by disease, the social and moral implications of these moves do not feature in SLORC thinking. They are oblivious to all this. They are not wicked. They are ignorant. A lot of the harm they do is simply due to misplaced zeal." A spokesperson for SLORC told a news conference in Yangon, "About 50,000 households have been relocated in the new towns, where they are to have their own lands for their homes".

Human Settlements Sector Review, Union of Myanmar UN Habitat, 1991 (extracts).

The post-1988 Urban Works Programme

Through highly critical press reports, mainly based on limited site inspections and interviews with embassy personnel, international attention was focused during the early months of 1990 on the Yangon resettlement programme launched by the Government in 1989. The Mission found that the programme is not limited to Yangon, but has broad national coverage. The scale and characteristics of the land- development and other works was considered by the Mission to be of such overwhelming significance to the present and future urban situation that the Mission concentrated its resources on attempting to assemble a comprehensive record of the programme and assessing the impacts and implications.

The programme consists of: (a) land development for sites-and- services resettlement schemes, and for complete housing units for public servants; (b) new and improved

roads; (c) urban rail transport; (d) road, rail and pedestrian bridges; (e) parks and gardens; (f) redevelopment for commercial and residential uses of sites cleared as a result of resettlement and fires; (g) clean-up campaigns, building renovations, and repainting of facades; and (h) rehabilitation of drains and water bodies.

Given the size of the population of the country overall and an urban population of less than 10 million, the scale of works within the time period allocated is probably unprecedented internationally. Based on visits to selected towns, analysis of maps and layout plans, and the data supplied by GAD [General Affairs Department of the Ministry of Home and Religious Affairs] and HD [Housing Development Division of the Ministry of construction], the Mission estimates that the total population affected by the resettlement and new housing components is in the order of 1.5 million, or 4 per cent of the total population and 16 per cent of the urban population. Roughly 50 per cent of this number is in Yangon, Mandalay, Taunggyi and Bago, all centres visited by the Mission. A further 8 per cent is made up by 10 towns for which HD has prepared projects. According to GAD, about 80 per cent of all towns and municipalities have similar programmes. Using this advice, together with the average proportion of existing populations in the smaller towns for which new resettlement plots are provided (around 20 per cent) in schemes where layouts were made available, the national total has been calculated. This could, however, be on the low side; there is evidence that where HD prepared layouts, the ultimate scale of the works has been dramatically increased using local planning teams. For example, the HD project for Taunggyi was expanded from 4000 to 12,000 plots in this way by the Divisional LORC, without reference to HD.

Adopting gross average densities of around 7.5 plots or 45 persons per acre, based on plans inspected by the Mission, the total land area involved is in the order of 34,000 acres (13,700 ha) or 53 square miles (137 sq km).

The scope of the other components is difficult to quantify. However in Yangon alone, the value of new roadworks is K 250 million. In Mandalay a 35-mile urban light rail system has been installed. The entire Central Business District (CBD) of Yangon covering an area of 2.64 square miles had all facades repainted on the instructions of the military authorities, and 300 buildings renovated.

In interviews with government personnel and from press statements, the complete set of objectives for the programme can be summarized as follows:

- (a) To implement large-scale home-ownership policies, shifting from rental to purchase schemes;
- (b) To remove illegal land uses and provide new planned housing opportunities for the squatters relocated, involving serviced plots with security of tenure through 30-year leases;
- (c) To reduce dramatically the waiting lists for public service housing;
- (d) To reduce congestion, thereby improving public health conditions and reducing fire risks;

- (e) To free important sites for public uses such as parks, and for commercial redevelopment;
- (f) To obtain land for new roads and widened roads, and improve transport systems;
- (g) To enhance the general physical appearance of urban areas;
- (h) To improve the ability of the authorities to introduce better standards of law and order.

The total land-development estimates do not include projects commenced between 1985 and 1988 for fire victims, public servants' programmes and resettled squatters - 13,000 plots in Yangon, 5000 in Mandalay. If these are included, the population affected in the five- year period commencing 1985 increases by at least a further 75,000.

The post-1988 programme is by no means an innovation for the people of Yangon. It differs only in degree from earlier population redistribution measures. It replicates in motivation, implementation speed, management style, political climate, and development standards, the 1958-1960 squatter resettlement. Three new townships were then developed on what was at that time the periphery of the city. A total of 60,000 plots were provided in Thakita, and North and South Okkalapa. Although these areas still suffer from inadequate services, especially drainage and sanitation, they have merged into the socio-economic fabric of the city. They are fully occupied and have been described by United Nations experts (UNCHS (Habitat) project personnel) as successful urban development initiatives. What makes the current programme particularly significant is its increased scale, its national coverage and the incorporation of extensive schemes for public servants. It is also understandably a much more emotionally charged phenomenon, coming as a government reaction to the September 1988 events and in the context of the controversial lead-up to the elections in May 1990.

Detailed descriptions of specific components of the current programme are presented within the following sections devoted to profiles of selected urban centres. From the viewpoint of the overall situation, taking account of the statements from official government sources and from several donor representatives, and bearing in mind the limited resources available to the Mission, the following assessment may be made:

(a) The accelerated relocation without community consultations and adequate preparation has severely stressed the socio-economic conditions of the poorest households. Relationships between employment opportunities and housing have been strained. Daily transport costs have drastically increased. Although some squatters are public servants eligible for credit to purchase plots/houses or for construction materials, the majority are obliged to find downpayments of up to K 3500 for the plot, plus cash for materials and for assistance in the construction labour involved. Those who could not or would not resettle in the new peri-urban areas have been forcibly removed to rural areas (see sections D.4 and E.9). Life savings have been drained and informal high interest debts have been incurred. Vulnerable groups, such as single-parent families have been particularly hard-hit. In several interviews with resettled families, the opportunity of owning a plot was seen as a long-term advantage, providing a marketable asset to be later

sub-let in whole or in part, or sold off. This benefit, in most cases, however, is likely to be offset by the immediate extreme hardships and by fears that the expected long-term security of tenure through leaseholds may not be formally granted.

(b) The scale of the programme, taken together with a timeframe which has concentrated construction works within a nine-month period, has rapidly increased demand for materials, labour and transport. Original estimates for civil works have been exceeded. The embryonic private-construction industry has suffered from an artificial financial climate where in some cases extra money has been found by government regardless of budgetary allocations and in other cases contractors have been obliged to continue with little or no profit margins. Inflation in construction costs has affected both the land-development components (initially priced at levels below all-in estimated costs and now leading to even higher subsidies) and the house-construction costs for sites-and-services allottees. A typical self-built timber house, which with labour was costing K 30,000 at the end of 1989, had risen to K100.000 by mid-1990.

(c) The layouts and subdivisions based on designs prepared by HD employ principles and standards related to the work of UNDP/UNCHS (Habitat) project BUR/80/005. The regular plot size of 40' x 60' can accommodate two households, each with a 20' frontage and with ample space for the dwelling, for external domestic activities and the pit latrine. Space provisions, in terms of road reserves, allocations for community land uses and back access lanes to plots, are generous by international standards. In most layouts inspected, drainage networks incorporating bridges and culverts, have been planned and are in the process of being implemented. The highest levels of water-supply provision are around 1 water point for 50 plots. In some areas this reduces to 1 per 80 plots and there are cases where water is being transported to the resettlement areas by tankers. Sanitation is the immediate responsibility of each household. Pit latrines are the norm, although some households are constructing septic tanks. There is access to the standard UNICEF latrine slab, concrete rings and plastic pipes. Health and education services are planned, but are not keeping pace with the rate of plot occupations. On paper, the resettlement schemes compare favourably with international sites-and-services experience. There are, however, critical defects which will result in severe deterioration in the physical environment and in the quality of life generally. The locations selected in Yangon are low-lying and adjacent to major water courses. They are on poorly drained soils and subject to seasonal flooding combined with tidal flows. Only the road surfaces are above flood levels. Floor levels of many dwellings and latrine slabs are such that water will enter buildings and latrines will overflow. The drainage systems are not incorporated with flood protection and control. Drainage operations and maintenance performance throughout the city was inadequate prior to the current programme. There is already widespread evidence of waterlogging, with high levels of pollution, in the new areas before the start of the mid-1990 rains. The impact of the sudden expansion of urban-management responsibilities and the public-health implications resulting from the rapid development of new and expanded townships with a total target population in Yangon alone of around 500,000, has neither been examined nor acknowledged by the authorities. Following the initial demonstration of capital-investment capabilities, it is very likely that operations and maintenance, and community development will be severely neglected.

The community mutual-support systems which have been dislocated by the forced resettlements will take time and assistance to re-establish themselves. It is unlikely that sufficient official finances will be available for constructing, equipping and operating health and education facilities to the extent required to match minimum basic needs. A massive mobilization at the national level of community-based resources, tapping voluntary initiatives, will be necessary if widespread, critically deteriorating conditions are to be avoided.

(d) The hastily planned resettlement and transport projects have, in some cases, followed urban structure plans prepared by HD. In all the urban centres affected (whether or not plans exist and whether or not projects are in accordance with these plans), the impacts are such that new physical, social and economic planning systems need to be urgently formulated and applied. Urban development priorities have been reordered. River bridges in Yangon, for example, and reorganized public transport to service new population distribution patterns, have become high-priority needs.

(e) Theoretically, an oversupply of serviced urban land should stabilize residential land values, housing prices and rental levels. However, given the distances of the new resettlement areas from the main commercial centres and from informal employment opportunities, there will be increased pressures on the remaining accommodation in the inner-city zones. The distorted financial structures, the parallel official and informal market economies, the closed information/statistics systems, and the recent sudden shift towards a more open mixed economy are all factors limiting the ability of planners and economists to predict the outcome of the programme on land and housing markets, and on the urban economy generally. To give some idea of the funds mobilized partly by government allocations and partly by residents' advance payments, the total national land-development cost using a low average estimate of K 4000 per plot (excluding land-compensation costs, off-site infrastructure and transport for resettlement) is estimated by the Mission at around K 1 billion, or \$US 155 million at the official exchange rate. The published public capital expenditure allocations for the Town and City Development Committees for 1988/89 and 1989/90 are K 201 million and K 212 million respectively. Most of the land development expenditure was incurred in 1989/90, although work is still continuing. The K 1 billion estimate is equivalent to around 9 per cent of the total public capital expenditure budgets, all sectors combined (excluding defence), for 1988/89 and 1989/90 of K 12.1 billion. Whatever the analysis, the impacts will most certainly be widespread and will be felt over many years.

(f) Setting aside the negative aspects resulting from the manner in which the work has been implemented, the Mission sees the overall programme as a potentially promising (if currently fragile) national asset. **Sensitively handled by a government which recognizes the role of community participation and acknowledges the urgency of remedial priority actions and the importance of self-sustaining operations and maintenance systems,** [emphasis added] the new townships could develop into balanced and well-managed communities. The major obstacle to implementing policies for mass home-ownership in most developing countries has already been bypassed. The nationalization of rural land under previous Governments allowed acquisition of urban

peripheral areas quickly and at little financial cost. The ability of residents to construct their own dwellings without imposed design standards is recognized. (pp 61-64)

[...]

Taunggyi and other secondary towns

Introduction

Field visits were made to secondary towns within the population range of 100,000 to 500,000. Taunggyi had the highest 1973 to 1983 growth rate in this group, with an average of 3.7 per cent per annum. Advice received from HD and other sources confirmed that this rate has been sustained and possibly increased. Bago had one of the lowest at 1.9 per cent. The primary reason for examining first-hand the mid- 1990 conditions in selected secondary towns was to record the form and extent of the post-1988 public works programme, with particular reference to squatter clearance and related land-development schemes.

Taunggyi

Situated at an altitude of 4690 feet, the hill town of Taunggyi is the administrative centre of Shan State. The town's population has grown from 74,995 in 1973 to 108,231 in 1985. Taunggyi township is amongst the smallest in area but has the highest population (219,516), the highest density, and the largest percentage of urban population (57.7 per cent).

Shan State covers the largest area of any district or state in Myanmar. It has 52 townships, 304 wards and 1632 village tracts. The population density has increased from 53 persons per square mile in 1973 to 62 in 1983. The total state population (3,716,841 in 1983) has grown at 1.57 per cent since 1973. For the state as a whole, only 17.7 per cent of the population is urban.

Amongst ethnic groups, Shans are the majority (76.4 per cent), followed by Burmese (11.1 percent). Kachin, Kayah, Chin, Mon and Rakhine make up 6.2 per cent. The rest (6.3 per cent) are of mixed and foreign origin. Of the total population over five years of age, 46.2 per cent are literate, 70 per cent have had not formal education, and 19.8 per cent have completed standard 1 -A. Agriculture, animal husbandry, forestry, fishing and hunting occupy 80.5 per cent of the employed population. Production transport and equipment labourers make up 8.3 per cent, and professional and technical 1.5 per cent.

Taunggyi is a focus of trade from neighbouring China, the Laos People's Democratic Republic and Thailand. It has also prospered, no doubt, from smuggling and other illegal activities, although the main local products are cheroots and garlic. Insurgents and opium warlords operating between the township and the eastern borders explain the large military headquarters in the town.

A branch line from Thazi off the Yangon-Mandalay railway ends at Shwenyaung, 12 miles short of Taunggyi and almost 3000 feet below. The airport for Taunggyi is Heho, 25 miles from the town on a road running parallel to the railway.

The town sits on a rocky pine-covered shelf looking down 2000 feet to a fertile plateau on the west, and up to a craggy line of rocks 1000 feet higher on the east. There are remnants of colonial building, a mixture of Buddhist, Sikh and Hindu temples, mosques, churches and a main street which features more recent buildings in the international socialist-realist style.

Housing is mixed, with individual dwellings of wood, "brick nogging", reinforced cement frame and mainly corrugated galvanized iron sheet roofs. There are some very extravagant villas and some blocks of two- or three-storey government apartments dating from the late 1950s. There are two large older markets.

Water supply is from a reservoir of 56 million gallons fed by rainwater and a spring three miles from the town. It delivers 1.2 million gallons per day through a pipeline following the contours and which is said to lose more than 50 per cent along the way. Most private houses have their own hand-dug wells. The water contains large amounts of calcium bicarbonate. Stormwater is carried in open drainage channels to the main north-south drain along the main street. From there it flows down the hillside and eventually into the lake at Khyu Kan, 7 miles away in a direct line. Those homeowners who can afford them build septic tanks, otherwise pit latrines are used in the town.

The public works programme directed by SLORC since 1988 has transformed the town itself and established a completely new settlement of 12,000 plots on the first step of the plateau 1500 feet below and six miles to the west of Taunggyi.

All squatters and temporary buildings - so called "encroachments" - have been removed from the upper town and resettled on 4000 plots, each 40' x 60', in the new area. There were conflicting reports as to whether or not the squatters had to pay K4000 for their plots, but the Mission was told that they would be given a lease when Taunggyi's boundary was extended to include the new town.

Plans for Taunggyi's expansion had already been prepared by the Housing Department before 1988 on part of the same lower site. That project proposed 4000 plots on either side of the main road with an internal configuration following the contours of the site (see Figure D.6.1.1.). Two additional sites, each of 4000 plots and including the squatter resettlement, were planned by the Construction Corporation of the Taunggyi Public Works Department after 1988. Plots have been set out at all three sites and the main roads constructed of compacted earth. All the squatter sites are occupied by bamboo-and-thatch buildings.

Site A, the one originally planned by the Housing Department, consists of 4040 plots mainly of 60' x 75' for "Gazetted Government Officers:", i.e. high-level civil servants from all departments. Some plots are 100' x 75'. The charge for these plots is K. 8000.

Although three of the twelve deep tubewells for the entire new town are on this site, only a few houses have been built, apparently because the water supply is inadequate.

Site B, the squatter resettlement, appears to have only one of the tubewells constructed by AMD. There are other hand-dug shallow wells but no drainage channels have been provided. Latrines are also the responsibility of the resettled families.

Site C, which is only partly settled, consists of 4000 plots, each 40' x 60', for lower ranks of the army and government employees at a cost of K. 4000 per plot. This site is furthest from the main road.

Ten buses make 150 trips each day between Taunggyi and the new town. The six-mile climb is steep and slow. Government employees pay K.3 for the return journey, the resettled squatters K.6.

The 12 wells at the new site produce a total of 1500-2500 gph. At some of the wells the water is pumped into concrete tanks containing 6000 gallons. There are eight watertaps at each one. This water also contains high levels of sodium bicarbonate, and well water is considered by the Town Development Committee to be inadequate as a long-term solution.

A project has been prepared by the Irrigation Department, MOAF, to construct a new gravity-flow piped water supply from a spring and catchment reservoir 7.7 miles from the new site. Preliminary tests carried out during the rainy season suggest that the whole system could produce 1,078,272 gpd.

The estimated cost of the project is K10,403,000 (\$US1.2 million at the official rate). The Town Development Committee claims it needs foreign exchange to buy suitable materials for the project.

Since 1988, SLORC has directed the expenditure of K40 million on public works projects in old Taunggyi. These include: road widening, footpaths and drains - K20 million; a new three-storey market building covering a four-acre site - K1 million; a new town hall to seat 1000 people - K4.2 million; a new swimming pool (which has problems with algae in its water) - K1.2 million; and four new parks and playgrounds, two of them linked by a 300'-long suspension bridge across a ravine - K5.8 million. The normal, pre-1988 annual income of the town from taxes, was K.8 million, and its annual expenditure K.7 million.

Bago

Using the intercensal growth rate, the 1990 population is around 122,000. The town is made up of 22 urban wards within the township of the same name which contains 86 village tracts in addition to the wards. Out of the 1983 population of the Division, 3.8 million, the urban sector accounted for 19.46 per cent or 740,000. The next largest urban

centres in the Division are Peji with 83,332 in 1983 and Toungoo with 65,860. Bago is located on a road, rail and river junction, on the main northern route connecting Yangon with Mandalay.

The public works programme is composed of a resettlement scheme, a major new market, a bypass road, and various drain and water-body rehabilitation works. Town revenues for 1989/90 totalled K371.000. The roadworks within the resettlement scheme are being financed with a K3.5 million grant.

The structure plan prepared by HD has been used as the guideline for the resettlement zoning, but the plan's location of the bypass road has been switched to the western side of the town to serve the resettlement areas. The gross land development area is 2700 acres, providing 6000 plots with sizes varying from 40' x 60' to 80' x 100'. The work commenced in November 1988 and is being implemented by the Public Works Department (previously the Construction Corporation). Management is the responsibility of the Divisional LORC, not the municipality. Completion is scheduled for late-1991. Of the 4789 plots allocated, 2,000 were occupied by mid-1990. The layout generally follows that prepared on request by HD. Water-supply works at the time of the field visit were not complete. A tanker is used to supply water on a daily basis at no charge. Two deep tubewells are being installed, to be supplemented by 50 handpumps.

Apart from the roadworks within the scheme, all land-development costs are covered by advance payments. Relocated squatters in this case are allowed to pay in two installments. The minimum charge is only K500 for a divided plot of 20' x 60' which can be occupied with an advance payment of K250. Public servants have been allocated the larger plots, which are priced at K.6000 for 60' x 80', and K9000 for 80' x 100'. As for the other towns with similar programmes, public servants have a deferred repayment system and access to credit for construction materials. On all plots, whether for relocated squatters or for public servants, households are required to construct their own dwellings. The low-cost plots are located on the perimeter of the scheme with poor access conditions on hilly terrain. The cost of constructing a bamboo house with thatch roofing is around K10,000, while timber construction with metal roof sheeting is K100,000. (pp 89, 91, 92)

Mandalay

Karaoke Fascism: Burma and the Politics of Fear Monique Skidmore, 2004 (extracts)

The lack of facilities and infrastructure that initially confronted the newly relocated residents of the New Fields meant that the toll on the physical and psychological health of the residents was significant. There were no bridges and insufficient roads connecting the townships to the cities from which they had been evicted. Residents speak of the sorrow and pain of loss of former neighborhoods, felt most acutely in the months and years following their sudden departure. Many of the residents of the poorest Mandalay

townships lived their lives in the shadow of major Burmese Buddhist monuments, such as the Mandalay Hill Pagoda. They lived in streets full of relatives, and among long-established friendships and fictive kin relationships. Like almost all Mandalay residents and many people throughout Burma, the people of the New Fields count distances according to measurements of the old Mandalay Fort. Inside the Fort lie the ruins of the Mandalay Palace. The last Burmese monarch, King Thibaw, was removed from the ornate wooden palace by British imperial soldiers. The palace burned to the ground during fighting between the Japanese occupying force and Indian and British troops seeking to recapture the Fort in 1945. It is now the headquarters of the Burmese military in Mandalay and the beautiful entrances over the encircling moat are overshadowed by propaganda signboards extolling the virtues of the blood and sweat of Tatmadaw men that is sacrificed to the "unity" of the nation. The walls of the Fort are almost the only remaining structures. In the middle of the nineteenth century, King Mindon Min ordered the eight-meter-high walls to be built around the palace. Now that the palace has burned to the ground, it is only the walls that intimate the past wealth of the monarchy. The formidable fired brick walls are three meters wide at the bottom and narrow to one and a half meters at the top.

Five bridges and three gates provided entry through each of the four walls. The palace was a miniaturization of the Buddhist cosmology, where the gates symbolized the portals to the other three "countries" that exist in this *loki* (mundane world). Atop each of the original gates is an ornate wooden pavilion with a tiered roof called a *pyatthat*. Smaller versions of the pavilions adorn the corners of the wall and lie equally spaced between the main *pyattat*. Each wall is two kilometers long. The distance between large *pyattats*, is about 400 meters. This distance in Burmese is called a *pya* (or *da pya*), and it is the way in which Mandalay people have come to describe distances: "Is it a long way?" "No, just a *pya*." A *pya* means roughly the length of a street. It is a little longer than the most common distance in Burma, *da khaw deh*, or hailing distance, derived from the distance between which two people in the paddy fields can call to each other.

The harshness of relocation is expressed somatically by older residents as back and joint pain related to sleeping on wooden pallets or on the ground while weaving bamboo walls to construct a house. Any savings were quickly spent on creating the house and weatherproofing it for the coming monsoon season. Money for mattresses and other relative luxuries was spent instead on food now that families were not receiving incomes. Residents speak of mist falling in the paddy fields, and according to the humoral medical traditions of Southeast Asia, this cooling influence can cause weakness and sickness.

Residents felt as if they had been moved a great distance. The distance between the Mandalay walls is considered about as far as one would wish to walk. Any farther is a long way. A short distance is considered to be the same as a length of bamboo. To walk a long way would be to walk for as long as it takes a pot of rice to boil (about thirty minutes). Such distances require a bicycle or other form of transportation. Very few people could afford the transportation costs to continue to work in the city. The longer commuting time was also something people could ill afford, now that child minding could not be performed by members of the extended family who had previously lived

together in the same compound. The inhabitants of the New Fields conceptualize the Fort, its *pyattat*, and the towering form of the Mandalay Hill pagoda as the spatial, hierarchical, and cosmological dimensions of their worldview made manifest. Living in the shadow of Buddhist monuments, surrounded by more than half of all the monks who live in Burma, is exactly as a Buddhist should wish, with multiple opportunities for making merit ever present. All this changed when city dwellers became peri-urban shantytown inhabitants.

The geography of the townships is panoptic in that the central roads open out into the township square which is lined with official buildings, the preeminent one being that which houses the township peace and security office. In Rangoon there was no sacred geography outside of the suburbs immediately surrounding the Shwedagon Pagoda, but in Mandalay, the city was divided into quarters and a hierarchical system of Sayadaws, monks, local leaders, deputy leaders, and assistant leaders ruled the city and its surrounding districts from key political and strategic monasteries (Myo Myint 1987: 177-78). The Taikdaw monastery was one such Buddhist political stronghold, surrounded by 20 smaller monasteries and 33 resting buildings for Buddhist pilgrims (Chaturawong 2002: 25-28). In these ways, the structure of the Buddhist hierarchy mirrored the Palace hierarchy and the two forms of power were inscribed upon the landscape of central Burma from the epicenter of the royal palace and its monasteries outward to villages like Aung Pin Le (Lehman 1987).

At night, Mandalay Hill is illuminated by fairy lights. It can be seen for almost fifty kilometers on a clear evening, and it is a beacon on the hill for hundreds of thousands of Burmese who attend, until the early hours of the morning, the annual Taunbyon Nat pwe (festival). Taun-byon is a village about thirty kilometers from Mandalay and is located deep in the terrain of the *Nats*. Residents in the New Fields know that they are much farther away from the heart of Burmese Buddhism than their previous neighborhoods and they view the new landscape as in need of Buddhification. *Nat* spirits inhabit the area around Mandalay and reside in trees remaining in the paddy fields, and malevolent spirits also inhabit other features of the landscape such as canals.

Through the elaborate cycle of *Nat* festivals that occur throughout the cool and hot seasons, a series of negotiations of identity occur where village and peri-urban residents reposition their relationship with their local environment and with larger polities (Brac de la Perriere 1992b, 1998). This includes the relationships that residents of the New Fields have with their local Nat-infested environment, and the sundering of these Buddhists from their place in the sacred cosmography of Mandalay. Minor *Nats* are believed to be everywhere in the densely populated spiritual landscape of the New Fields. Certain routes must be avoided and at night residents wrap bright yellow fabric or plastic around themselves and their bicycles to ward off bad spirits. Pregnant women return to the safety of their homes as dusk falls. (pp 151-154)

(For another study of displacement as a sociocultural process rather than simply a spatial movement, see [*Sovereignty, Survival and Resistance: Contending Perspectives on*](#)

[Karen Internal Displacement in Burma](#) by Kevin Heppner, Karen Human Rights Group, 1 March 2005)

[The squatter clearance and resettlement programme \(Mandalay\)](#) UN Habitat 1991

The programme has a target of 25,000 new plots. Between 1985 and 1988, 5000 plots within the MCDC boundary were developed and occupied. The location of these is in conformity with the 1978 structure plan, which recommended the designation of 1600 acres for 13,000 plots. Of these, 6000 were to be reserved for relocated squatters. Under the current Government, 2500 plots have been completed within the boundary. Land outside the boundary but adjacent to the earlier schemes is being developed and incrementally occupied for a further 10,000. Also, in the same south-west zone, land has been set aside for 7500 additional plots. Beneficiaries are a mixture of relocated squatters and public servants.

The layouts follow the grid pattern adopted for the town as a whole. All occupants are required to construct their own dwellings. Water-supply provision is currently by tubewell, with an average provision of one point per 80 plots. Plot sizes are standardized at 40' x 60', with a single advance payment required for squatters of K 4000. This is an increase in the original price, fixed in 1986, of K 1800. Payment conditions for public servants are as for Yangon. Unlike the areas in Yangon, the land is not subject to flooding. Taking advantage of the land conditions, the most recently developed areas have graded and surfaced road construction only on the main access routes. Elsewhere, road reserves have not had topsoil removed. Reserves are simply pegged out, and there are no constructed roadside drains.

In the earlier phase, there is already a flourishing small- business sector based on furniture and construction-component manufacturing. A part bamboo/part teak two-storey dwelling costs around K25.000 to construct.

No budgetary allocations were required. The two special committees set up to identify new development areas and to undertake implementation responsibilities established a self-financing system for land development using the advance payments. Subdivision planning and survey work was carried out by MCDC and SLRD. A formal tendering procedure was followed, with five firms bidding for the most recent land development contract.

All squatters in Mandalay are not automatically relocated to the new resettlement areas. Following a fire in 1989, some squatters have been temporarily accommodated on nearby monastery land, pending a decision on final rehousing arrangements. Others with claims to land rights have been allowed to rebuild on the original site in accordance with a new plot layout. In comparison with Yangon, the general impression is that the Mandalay operation is more flexible and there is less of an atmosphere of urgency in clearing and resettlement. Farmers previously working the land acquired for the schemes were promptly compensated, while it is reported that in Yangon the bulk of the compensation payments have yet to be made. (pp 86, 88)

Naypyidaw/Pyinmana

[Naypyitaw: Dictatorship by cartography](#) Photo Feature by Siddharth Varadarajan, *Himal Southasian*, Vol. 20, No. 2, February 2007



Click on image for bigger image

Vast and empty, Burma's new capital will not fall to an urban upheaval easily. It has no city centre, no confined public space where even a crowd of several thousand people could make a visual – let alone political – impression.

Naypyitaw, then, is the ultimate insurance against regime change, a masterpiece of urban planning designed to defeat any putative 'colour revolution' – not by tanks and water cannons, but by geometry and cartography. 320 kilometres to the south, Rangoon, with five million people, is home to one-tenth the country's population. But even if that city were brought to a standstill by public protests and demonstrations, Burma's military government – situated happily in the middle of paddy fields in the middle of nowhere – would remain unaffected.

Of all the possible reasons why the junta chose to relocate their capital to this isolated, dusty place, this is perhaps the most plausible. And judging by the pace and scale of construction underway here, the transfer of capital is intended to be as final and irrevocable as the grip on political power of the Tatmadaw, the Burmese military.

On 6 November 2005, at a time and date apparently chosen by an astrologer close to Senior General Than Shwe, the process of shifting Burma's seat of government to a vast but barren tract of land near Pyinmana village in Mandalay Division officially began. A

little more than a year later, every single ministry has moved here. Naypyitaw is still very much a work in progress, but the amount of road-building and construction that has been completed is nothing short of impressive.

In terms of spatial design, the emergent city is reminiscent of Islamabad or Brasilia. A 'hotel zone' with several luxury establishments has come up on the city's 'outskirts', a district that the capital's planners say will eventually become "downtown". Further in, a number of brightly painted apartment buildings line the left side of the road, all of which are occupied by civil servants. And finally there is the government district, with ministries separated by a distance of what seems like several kilometres. In the military zone, the four-lane road makes way for one of eight lanes, purpose-built to allow small aircraft to land and take off. Later this year, Rangoon-based embassies will be offered plots in the new capital, and eventually all will be expected to make the move.

While it is likely that Naypyitaw will ultimately grow to fill in the empty spaces between the ministries and to develop the usual civic amenities one associates with a capital, it will always lack the urban cadences and unpredictable rhythms that characterise city life in Rangoon or Mandalay. And this is precisely what makes the new capital so attractive to the generals.

Scholars such as Michael Aung-Thwin and Sunait Chutintaranond have argued that the shift from Rangoon is not irrational but part of a historical tradition. Rulers of the region, they say, have long moved their capitals in order to regenerate their kingdoms. One example from within Burma is that of King Mindon, who moved his capital from Amarapura to Mandalay – a city built for the purpose – in 1859, only to have his son, Thibaw, defeated and exiled by the British. Some thousand years earlier, Burma's most illustrious ruler, the great Anawrhata, had begun his dynasty from Bagan.

Judging by this history, Naypyitaw may not remain the country's capital forever. But there is no doubt that it will endure longer as a city than the regime that ordered it built.

[Burma's new capital, Naypyidaw](#) Google Earth and [Khitpyaing Photos](#) via MingalarInternet 19-June-2006

To access further satellite images of Naypyidaw via Google Earth, first download and install Google Earth (free from [Google Earth](#) but it takes about half an hour to download on a medium-fast connection) then either navigate to Burma and then to Pyinmana or access via [Pyinmana Bunkers](#) From there, you can go to other parts of Burma.

[Inside Myanmar's secret capital](#) Clive Parker, *Asia Times, Southeast Asia*, 28 October 2006

NAYPYIDAW, Myanmar - One year after Myanmar's secretive ruling military junta suddenly relocated the national capital 320 kilometers north from Yangon to Naypyidaw, the motivations behind the dramatic move are still unclear.

Foreign access to the new capital is strictly forbidden. But this correspondent's recent travels through the area showed that the junta has quietly continued to build around the new capital's greenfield site, which is rapidly swallowing the old town formerly known as Pyinmana. And recent construction of key infrastructure in other parts of the country's heartland Mandalay division offers new clues to the junta's grand designs for the region.

Although on a smaller scale than in the new capital, Myanmar's government is concurrently developing military, communications and transport infrastructure in a corridor that runs directly north from Naypyidaw to Pyin Oo Lwin, the town where the army's Defense Services Academy (DSA) training facility is situated.

The regime is building a new military airport just outside of Pyin Oo Lwin in nearby Anikasan town. The single runway, a 3,000-meter-long airstrip, took nearly two years to complete and immediately came into service last October when the junta received India's army chief of staff J J Singh in Pyin Oo Lwin. The Indian official was subsequently taken on a tour of the DSA as well as the Defense Services Technological Academy.

Residents of Pyin Oo Lwin and nearby Mandalay say the new airstrip is more commonly used to ferry high-ranking military officials between Naypyidaw and a newly built luxury housing complex between Anikasan Airport and Pyin Oo Lwin, which reportedly includes a large mansion belonging to State Peace and Development Council chief General Than Shwe. Strictly off limits to visitors, the site was built with the help of Htoo Trading, owned by Tay Za, the military's preferred construction contractor and a renowned arms dealer.

In July, just outside of Pyin Oo Lwin, the junta began construction on the Yadanabon Silicon Village, a new cyber-city that promises to serve as an integral part of the new capital's communication network. Although construction has just commenced, architectural blueprints seen by this correspondent at the site's foreman's cabin show plans for a sprawling complex devoted to software incubation and information-technology hardware suites, along with a modern residential zone.

In August, builders had cleared a channel for a new access road to the site, though construction of the complex itself has not progressed beyond initial landscaping. Builders could be heard by this correspondent blasting the hillside as part of the land-clearing process. As with the new capital Naypyidaw, photographing the site is strictly forbidden.

Military industrial complex

The junta apparently has an eye on concentrating key industry around the region. Old and new military installations line the main road from Pyin Oo Lwin to Mandalay, including the Defense Services Mechanical and Electrical Engineering School, which was built

more than a decade ago. The town is also home to the Defense Services Institute of Technology, the Defense Services Administration School and the Army Training Depot.

Also just outside Pyin Oo Lwin is Myanmar's only iron-and-steel factory, which produces about 30,000 tons of metal a year, according to the Chinese state news agency Xinhua. In a bid to improve access to this increasingly significant military town, the government in 2003 decided to upgrade drastically the notoriously poor Mandalay-Pyin Oo Lwin road with the help of the Asia World Co, another preferred contractor owned by Steven Law, who has widely alleged links to the narcotics trade. It now takes less than an hour by car to reach Mandalay from Pyin Oo Lwin.

Almost equidistant between Pyin Oo Lwin and Naypyidaw is the strategically significant town of Meiktila, home to the country's air force. Meiktila has also seen extensive development in recent years coincident with construction of the new capital. Since 2001, there have been reports that China and Russia have helped upgrade the Shante air base, the country's main military airstrip, a few kilometers northeast of Meiktila.

Reports that both countries have recently sold and delivered fighter jets to the base seem to be confirmed by satellite images downloaded using Google Earth, which clearly show a number of olive-green Chinese Chengdu F-7M Airguard and light-khaki NAMC A-5C military aircraft along with blue Russian MiG-29s - all recent additions to Myanmar's air force. At the nearby Meiktila Airfield, Google Earth images also show a number of what appear to be Russian Mi-17 helicopters.

In addition to supplying military hardware, media reports have suggested, Chinese and Russian aeronautical experts have in recent years made regular visits to the various air force training schools around Meiktila.

The state-run *New Light of Myanmar* newspaper in April 2004 confirmed that lectures were administered by "local and foreign experts" at the Myanmar Aerospace Engineering University in Meiktila, which at the time was still in the process of being completed. This "new and separate university", the report said, would "make the teaching programs more effective by sending teachers going to work at the university to foreign countries for further studies and inviting foreign technicians to the university to give lectures".

Highlighting the military significance of the new facility, Than Shwe said during a 2004 visit, "Only when the university produces future technicians in aerospace and engineering fields for the state will the nation be able to keep pace with others." The military has also relied on Chinese and Russian assistance to help build other significant military installations in and around Meiktila.

In April 2004, around the time construction on the new capital began, the junta signed a US\$500 million deal with Ukrainian state arms company UkrspetsExport to build an APC (armored personnel carrier) factory. Between 12km and 15km outside of Meiktila, according to a former employee of the Ukrainian firm who worked on the deal, the

facility is designed over a 10-year period to receive about 1,000 70%-assembled BTR-3U APCs.

At the factory, Meiktila-based Ukrainian technicians are geared to work hand-in-hand with their Myanmar counterparts to complete the assembly process and pass along knowledge about the vehicles' inner workings, the company's former employee said. Although the deal was designed to run until 2014, Myanmar's failure to meet payments on time has recently soured relations between the two sides.

In a bid to receive past-due payments, Sergiy Korostil, UkrspetsExport's chief representative in Yangon, wrote a letter to Myanmar's Ministry of Defense this year. This was, however, rebuffed when the Myanmar side accused the Ukrainians of violating their side of the agreement when their technicians were discovered to have left their designated military compound without authorization. Whether this tit-for-tat exchange has killed the deal is unclear. Korostil is reportedly still operating out of his office at the Nikko Hotel in Yangon with a small team of staff, and the executive has since made visits to Naypyidaw to meet with government officials.

The hiccup with UkrspetsExport has not dampened other foreign firms' appetite to ink deals with the junta. Many Asian companies have traveled to Naypyidaw to sign a host of state contracts to build communication, transport and perhaps even military infrastructure. In 1998, prior to the UkrspetsExports episode, Myanmar agreed to a deal with China to build a landmine factory just outside of Meiktila, which is reportedly still up and running.

The junta has also made efforts to significantly upgrade transport links to Meiktila. In August, workers could be seen opposite the town's train platform working on the beginnings of a construction project between the two main lines that run through Meiktila railway station. On July 16, the government held a ceremony to launch the new Naypyidaw-Meiktila express-train service, one of a number of recently added routes to the new capital. The project included construction of "13 small and big bridges ... along the railroad", the state-run press reported.

South of Meiktila, the road to Naypyidaw has undergone considerable renovation, at least by Myanmar's poor standards. Although many roads in the new capital remain unfinished, an expansive new highway that leads off the main Yangon-Mandalay road to the new Ministry of Defense compound is nearly complete.

A Western observer who in recent months caught a rare glimpse inside the new 35-square-kilometer defense zone to the north of the new capital noticed giant statues of past Burmese kings along the main parade ground. "Most notable was the four-lane concrete road that passes through the entire complex, [which] becomes six then eight lanes as you enter the military side. Reportedly, this is so it can serve as an airplane runway," said the Western observer, who requested anonymity.

Mysterious motivations

While commentators have offered a host of reasons for the junta's sudden move north, ranging from astrology to military strategy to fears of a possible US-led invasion, the larger field of development in Myanmar's central heartland lends credence to the simpler strategic notion that the junta regards the central heartland as an ideal site to consolidate its resources.

Whether or not the move to Naypyidaw offers strategic military advantages is debatable, according to Andrew Selth, an expert on Myanmar's armed forces. "Building Naypyidaw emphasizes and utilizes that corridor, but there have long been plans to upgrade these facilities, as they are also important for economic and political reasons," he said. "In purely strategic terms, it would have been more sensible to diversify these critical north-south links and build more routes on the western side of the Irrawaddy [River], or in the east of the country."

Selth said the increasing separation of Myanmar's ruling military generals from the civilian population would make it far easier for a potential foreign invader to target the junta through air strikes. Nevertheless, the argument previously put forward that the switch inland from the old coastal capital Yangon reduces the risk to the junta of a land invasion was probably taken into account by the military.

In the past, the junta felt most threatened through its vulnerability at the Bay of Bengal. In 1988, the US moved navy vessels into the area, apparently in the event of the state collapsing during the democratic uprisings. In 1992, junta abuses against Muslims in Arakan state prompted the wrath of Saudi Arabia, whose army chief Prince Khaled bin Sultan bin Abdul Aziz called on the United Nations to intervene and help the minority Muslims.

Selth reasons that relocating inland does not put the military out of reach of advanced missiles and aircraft of its perceived primary threat - the United States. President George W Bush's administration has recently referred to Myanmar as an "outpost of tyranny", though few security experts reckon the US would ever attack, because of China's heavy influence in Myanmar. But "if the external threat was seen as real and imminent, the regime may well choose to consolidate its military strength in central [Myanmar], with a view to a conventional defense of the [Myanmar] heartland," he said.

Whether efforts to expand resources and facilities in the country's central heartland truly shore up national defenses given that the main insurgency threat lies in the surrounding areas controlled by Karen insurgents is debatable, Selth said. "Given its make-up, it is difficult to see the current government doing anything that does not include some consideration of military and strategic factors," he said.

While evidence of massive construction activity in Mandalay division suggests that the junta may well see central Myanmar as the key to its ultimate survival, as ever, only Than Shwe and his inner circle know the real reason behind their dramatic and expensive shift to Naypyidaw.

Clive Parker is a reporter at The Irrawaddy, an online news service and monthly magazine that focuses on Myanmar and Southeast Asia, based in Chiang Mai. He is possibly the first foreign journalist to report from Myanmar's new capital.

Two more villages forcibly relocated for Burma's new capital *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 22 October 2006

Two more villages were forcibly relocated to make way for the expanding new administrative capital Kyappyay/Kyetpyay Naypyidaw of Burma's military junta, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), according to local residents.

The villages, Boo Kweh with more than 200 houses and Thayet Mawkhon with more than 100 houses, were forced to relocate for government offices and buildings supporting military administration mechanism.

Although the authorities promised to rebuild the homes for villagers, it is still not known where they are to be relocated, a villager told DVB.

Previously six villages were relocated to build Ayela Airport for the capital, but the authorities still haven't given a single pya to the villagers for their confiscated farmlands. Moreover, the displaced villagers are in trouble as they were relocated along the motorways where they could not make a living for their families.

Land grabbing for Burma new capital *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 11 September 2006

A Burmese civil servant admitted that the ruling military government's plan to make the new administrative capital Kyappyay Naypyidaw populated by allocating 8000 plots of land for new buildings, involved confiscation of lands from local farmers living between Pyinmna and Lewe.

"Yes. There is a plan to allocate plots of land measuring 80x80, 100x100, 120x120 (feet?). The price has not been fixed. They haven't said it yet," the civil servant from the capital's municipal department said. "There are 4000 plots on the way to Lewe and 4000 plots to be created at the areas adjoining the army and civilian lands. Application forms are not sold, but you could apply for them at Naypyidaw Municipal (office)."

When asked who originally owned the lands, the civil servant said: "There are various kinds in this matter. They are paddy fields of the villages. Some of them are paddy fields. I don't know about that".

But when asked how many acres of paddy fields had been confiscated, the civil servant refused to answer the question.

According to a local resident in nearby Pyinmana, the majority of the people are neither interested in the government's project nor applying for the plots.

Army bases built around Burma's new capital *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 21 January 2006

The constructions of new buildings, arsenals, bunkers and barracks for artillery, supply and logistic and infantry battalions in charge of the security for Burma's new capital Kyappyay near Pyinmana in the central of the country, had started at nearby Ywadow Village.

The buildings are said to be constructed by a company called Original, according to a staff of the company working at site. Similarly, a new artillery battalion has been increased to guard the nearby Paunglaung Stream Hydroelectric Plant and Dam which was designed to supply the new capital with water and electricity.

A local resident told DVB that the junta is planning to finish off the relocations of 40 ministerial departments to the site by March 2006. Then, around 40 villages situated between Bodi-kone and Ayla Airport are likely to be relocated so that new foreign embassies could be built from the end of March. But Indian officials recently told DVB that they are not likely to move their embassy from Rangoon.

Burma's military junta, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) decided, rather suddenly, to move the country's capital from Rangoon to Kyappyay at the end of 2005, triggering assorted speculations, including some outlandish ones, among observers, civil servants and opposition groups. But the real motives of the junta are still unknown.

Farmlands confiscated to build the new Burmese capital Kyappyay *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 19 January, 2006

Many Burmese farmers living around the new capital Kyappyay near Pyinmana in central Burma, are facing untold miseries and some died from sorrow, because their vital farmlands were confiscated without receiving any compensations and their villages were forced to be relocated.

The main villages forced to relocate were, Kway-le-gyi, Kyauk-saung-aing, Lan-thabye-kone, Kyet-su-aing and Kyanfokkone, and the villagers have been resettled near Kyappyay on a sugarcane plantation without having the means to support themselves and their families.

Some farmers who lost all their farms had to move to the suburb of Pyinmana and sell snacks and do other menial jobs in order to feed their families. The farms of the villagers are being used for the construction of accommodations for senior civil servants, ministerial buildings and residents for ministers, which are being built by a company

named ACE, according to local residents.

A local resident told DVB that two farmers named Kyi Shein and Nyunt Sein recently died from anxiety and sorrow, after 40 and 50 acres of their farmlands, were confiscated by the Burmese authorities without receiving compensations.

Relocation of the Capital from Rangoon to Pyinmana *Human Rights Yearbook, Burma, 2005* Human Rights Documentation Unit of the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma.

Erratic civil planning has also required the resettlement of urban communities to rural 'satellite towns.' Most notable in 2005 was the relocation of Burma's capital from Rangoon to Pyinmana District, Mandalay Division, 400 km. north of Rangoon. In conjunction with the move, villagers and farmers have been forced off their land to make way for the building of new administrative offices, residential homes and military barracks. Many were forced into the suburbs of Pyinmana. (Source: "Burmese Junta Grabs Land From Farmers to Build Offices at Pyinmana," DVB, 9 November 2005). The move to Pyinmana has also resulted in the destruction of people's property. On 18 November 2005, the authorities ordered the destruction of 100 households along the U Razat and Maung Khin roads in Pyinmana to widen a road leading to the new capital. The U Razat and Maung Khin roads connect the train station and Kyetpyay, where the new capital is being constructed. The authorities also destroyed the living quarters built for railway workers situated on the new Pyinmana – Kyetpyay road. (Source: "100 Homes Dismantled by Burmese Authorities for New Capital," DVB, 21 November 2005). On 6 December 2005, it was reported that 500 more homeowners lost their homes for road widening projects associated with the Pyinmana move. (Source: "More Homes Destroyed and Relocated at Burma's New Capital," DVB, 6 December 2005)

The sudden relocation of Burma's capital from Rangoon to Pyinmana in southern Mandalay Division beginning on 6 November 2005 introduced forced displacement and relocation in areas previously untroubled by such practices. Forced relocation connected with the move affected residents of both Mandalay and Rangoon Divisions. Land developed for the new capital's infrastructure was expropriated from villagers previously residing in Pyinmana District who were forced to relocate elsewhere. The SPDC initiated a vigorous development program on confiscated land involving the construction of new infrastructure including mansions for senior generals, regime offices, national HQs for ceasefire groups and the USDA, bunkers, tunnels, a large military hospital, apartments, airstrips, a golf course, two luxury hotels and two large supermarkets (source: "UN Takes Big Step to Address Myanmar (Burma) Issues," *Thai Press Reports*, 7 December 2005). Civil servants working at regime ministries in Rangoon were ordered to transfer along with their departments to the new capital.

Following the initial transfer of civil servants on 6 November, the SPDC forbade the resignation of those required to move and stated that anyone caught abandoning their post

would be charged and imprisoned under Article 5(j) of the 1950 Emergency Provisions Act for treason and insubordination (source: "Burmese Civil Servants Kept Within Barbed Wires at New Capital," DVB, 23 November 2005). At the time of the initial arrival of relocated civil servants, infrastructure was still incomplete and regime employees were deposited in a large hall with provisions for only two days, although there were no adequate sources of supplementary food in the vicinity. Although communication lines out of the new capital complex were limited, some relocated workers managed to contact family members in Rangoon from whom they asked for food. One of those relocated said, "There is nothing to eat, drink and nothing to buy. Just nothing." (Source: "SPDC's Leaders Take to the Hills," *Asia Times*, 23 November 2005). In relation to the transfer, one civil servant said, "Government servants who refuse to move there are told they will be fired and therefore cannot expect any pension" (source: "Civilians to Be Moved for New Capital Site in Central Burma," SHAN, 24 June 2005).

The land used for the capital was confiscated from thousands of villagers (source: "Burma's Rulers Take the Road to Mandalay," *The Independent*, 8 November 2005). By October 2005, hundreds of residents living in the area around Ayelar and Leway, two towns south and southwest of Pyinmana respectively had been forcibly displaced. The confiscated land was to be used for the construction of an airport for the country's new capital. The regime ministries of Forestry, Energy, Agriculture and Irrigation, and No.1 Industry and Irrigation received orders in June to resettle on the same land. (Source: "Civilians to Be Moved for New Capital Site in Central Burma," SHAN, 24 June 2005). In mid-November, the authorities relocated, dismantled and destroyed 100 homes in Pyinmana in order to widen a road leading to the new capital at nearby Kyappyay region renamed Naypyidaw Military HQs. The majority of homes earmarked for relocation and destruction, situated on U Razat and Maung Khin Roads which connect the train station and Kyappyay. Moreover, the authorities also destroyed some living quarters and bungalows built for railway workers situated on the new Pyinmana-Kyappyay Road. Plans were also underway to remove a further 5,000 villagers from the area by the start of 2006. (Source: "Burma's Rulers Take the Road to Mandalay," *The Independent*, 8 November 2005). ...

Towards the end of the year, the regime unexpectedly announced the relocation of the capital from Rangoon to Pyinmana. On 6 November 2005, the junta abruptly began moving Ministries from Rangoon to 400 km. north of the capital in Pyinmana Township. In conjunction with the move, reports began to emerge in late 2005 of land confiscations within the area. Villagers and farmers have been stripped of their land in order to make way for the building of new administrative offices, residential homes and military barracks. Villagers were only paid a small amount of money for the confiscated land. Some farmers were also reportedly forced to move to the suburbs of Pyinmana. (Source: "Burmese Junta Grabs Land From Farmers to Build Offices at Pyinmana," DVB, 9 November 2005). Without land to farm and engage in business trades, the ability of residents to maintain stable livelihoods has been seriously undermined.

The move to Pyinmana has also resulted in the destruction of people's property. On 18 November 2005 the authorities ordered the destruction of 100 households along the U

Razat and Maung Khin roads in Pyinmana to widen a road leading to the new capital. The U Razat and Maung Khin roads connect the train station and Kyetpyay, where the new capital is being constructed. The authorities also destroyed the living quarters built for railway workers situated on the new Pyinmana – Kyetpyay road. (Source: “100 Homes Dismantled by Burmese Authorities for New Capital,” DVB, 21 November 2005). It was reported on 6 December 2005 that 500 more homeowners lost their homes for road widening projects associated with the Pyinmana move. The junta provided no assistance or compensation to homeowners who lost their homes due to the activities in Pyinmana. Rather, homeowners were threatened with arrest if they refused to leave their homes by set deadlines. (Source: “More Homes Destroyed and Relocated at Burma's New Capital,” DVB, 6 December 2005).

Other land confiscations occurred in Mandalay Division in connection with the construction of the Tada-U International Airport. Since 2004, the local authorities have confiscated nearly 2,000 acres of land from Thabetse and Khandu villagers in Sinkkaing Township. On 19 November 2005 the local authorities confiscated another 400 acres of farmland. In an attempt to give the appearance of legitimacy, affected farmers were forced to sign an agreement accepting compensation of 5,000 kyat per acre for land valued at 500,000 kyat per acre. (Source: “Lands Grabbed from Burmese Farmers in Mandalay Sinkkaing,” DVB, 15 December 2005).

100 homes dismantled by Burmese authorities for new capital *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 21 November 2005

Burmese authorities relocated, dismantled and destroyed 100 homes in Pyinmana in order to widen a road leading to the new capital at nearby Kyappyay region named Naypyidaw Military HQs.

The majority of homes earmarked for relocation and destruction, situated on U Razat and Maung Khin Roads which connect the train station and Kyappyay. Moreover, the authorities also destroyed some living quarters and bungalows built for railway workers situated on the ‘new’ Pyinmana-Kyappyay Road.

A Pyinmana resident told DVB that the authorities ordered him and other residents to dismantle up to the length of six feet of their homes facing the new road on the 18th November and they had to carry out the order by the 20th. He added that no help had been given to them by the authorities to help them move their homes and they have to destroy their homes at their own costs.

Moreover, local residents are ordered not to use their motorcycles anymore on the ‘new’ road as it is designated for the use of cars only. He added that 35 homes have been built for ministers and plots of land have been reserved and set aside for the building of US, UK and Chinese embassies.

“On the north of Pyinmana, at a place called Taitchaung, situated on the border of Pyinmana and Tatfone, they built a parade ground,” he continued. “There are reports that they are going to carry out the Resistance Day (March 17) parade there. There are also many residential homes for army officers. Another thing, I heard that the SPDC is holding their quarterly meeting at Pyinmana. I also heard that the referendum due for February is to be held in Pyinmana.”

According to unconfirmed reports, the authorities arrested some military officers and civil servants who are still remaining in Rangoon. Ten army officers up to the ranks of lieutenant-colonel and colonel have been detained and some have gone into hiding, for discussing the move to Pyinmana. Moreover, 17 civil servants from Transport Ministry and two from News and Information (Propaganda) Ministry resigned from their positions and gone into hiding.

Burma's generals build their 'Xanadu' Larry Jagan , *Asia Times*, 22 July, 2005

BANGKOK - For months Rangoon has been rife with rumors that the country's military rulers were planning to retreat to the hills in central Burma for fear of a foreign invasion from the sea.

But according to the blueprints for the new military complex, it is actually going to replace the inland port city of Rangoon, with its famed shimmering pagodas, as the country's capital.

"This is typical of [military ruler] Than Shwe's pretensions to be the new Burmese monarch. Like the Burmese kings who ruled before him he is building a new palace-capital for posterity," said Thailand-based senior Burma analyst Win Min.

But according to diplomats and government officials in Rangoon, the real reason for the relocation inland to Pyinmana, 400 kilometers to the north, is for safety from possible outside intervention.

Burma's military rulers have faced ever-tightening international sanctions since 1997, when the US stopped new investments in the country. On Tuesday, the sanctions were renewed for another year when the US Senate voted overwhelmingly in favor of this action.

The military's headquarters, government ministries and the new parliament are all scheduled to be moved to the new inland location - many people in Burma are already calling it "escape city" - within the next 12 months.

"It's one of the biggest constructions I have ever seen," a Western diplomat in Rangoon told Inter Press Service (IPS), referring to the new complex on an area measuring 10 square kilometers.

Mansions for the senior generals, government offices and national headquarters for the country's ethnic groups are being built. The national headquarters is to be 30 meters high, according to the architectural plans.

Although a new parliament is under construction, it is unclear from the plans whether there are plots allocated to the political parties, particularly incarcerated leader Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy, said the government official.

Bunkers, tunnels, a large military hospital, apartments, a huge airstrip and a golf course are being built, said eye-witnesses.

The plans have been in the pipeline for several years and construction started on it nearly two years ago. "The planned retreat is essentially strategic," said an Asian diplomat who regularly deals with Rangoon.

The US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 reinforced the generals' fear that Washington might attack Burma, according to analysts. Burma's military strategists have long argued that the country's defenses were vulnerable to an attack from the sea.

Burma's generals are said to suffer from a siege mentality. "Than Shwe has a bunker mentality, and when he's completely secure he'll launch his offensives," said Win Min.

Analysts believe that the move inland is also intended to give the regime better access to the frontier areas, especially those of the Chin, Karen, Kayah and Shan, where most ethnic groups that have ceasefire pacts with Rangoon are strong.

"Although the ethnic organizations have ceasefire agreements with the junta, the top generals remain highly suspicious of them and want to be in a better position to control them if they need to," Win Min told IPS.

But now, according to the plans, the whole military and government administration is to be relocated to Pinyinmana. Even foreign embassies are likely to have to follow the government when it is finally transplanted into the hills.

Several ministries are scheduled to move to the new capital in the next few months, according to diplomats.

Civil servants have been panicky about the shift. "The civil servants do not want to move. There's no infrastructure such as schools for their kids," said Win Min.

The lack of accommodation for families at Pinyinmana means only bureaucrats who are single are likely to be transferred in the first phase. As a result, many young public servants are desperately trying to find marriage partners to help postpone their reassignment to the new capital.

Thousands of villagers have been uprooted and relocated to make way for the

construction of the new capital. Over the past 18 months at least 10,000 people are said to have been removed from the site.

At the beginning of May, another 3,000 residents were ordered to vacate their villages. More than 5,000 villagers are scheduled to be relocated at the start of next year.

The International Labor Organization (ILO) has received complaints of extensive forced labor and relocations. In a recent report, the ILO representative in Rangoon said there had been allegations that villagers were forced to construct camps and facilities for several army battalions and an air defense squadrons deployed on the site.

"At least 14 villages had to provide 200 workers each on a daily basis for the work," according to the ILO report. Typically, the Burma government dismissed these allegations as baseless.

The construction work involves several prominent Burma companies, including Htoo Trading owned by the wealthy magnate and arms dealer Te Za, who is reputed to be very close to Than Shwe.

"The delay in the reconvening of the National Convention and the drafting of the constitution may actually be related to the completion of the new capital at Pyinmana," a Western diplomat in Rangoon told IPS.

A political roadmap announced in August 2003 calls for the reconvening the National Convention to draft a new constitution; a national referendum on the draft of the constitution; holding a general election to produce parliament representatives; and formation of a new democratic government

Burma's confusion over capital Kate McGeown, BBC, 17 June 2006

In the fourth of a series from inside Burma, the BBC's Kate McGeown looks at how the government's abrupt decision to move its capital is affecting local people.

When Burma's military rulers began moving their seat of power to a semi-rural area near the town of Pyinmana last year, many people were mystified.

"I don't understand why they decided to leave Rangoon," said one man in the former capital.

"I don't know why they wanted to come here," added a villager not far from the site of the new city.

Many people said they had hoped the move would not actually happen, once the cost and complication became clear.

But now it seems there is no going back. The opening ceremony took place in March, and several locals who have seen the site - which the ruling junta has christened Naypyidaw (Seat of Kings) - said that half the buildings had been completed and were open for business.

But the new capital is not open to everyone. Almost all foreigners, especially journalists, are strictly forbidden from going anywhere near it.

Most ordinary Burmese are also denied access, and two Rangoon-based reporters were given three-year jail terms for attempting to film the area.

Precious cargo

To local people living near the site, many of whom are farmers and agricultural workers, the whole situation must be bewildering.

Until last year they were living in a rural hinterland. Now they are ploughing fields and raising cattle not far from their country's capital.

"I keep seeing new buildings, but I don't know what they're for," said one young woman on the outskirts of the city.

Those living along the main road to Pyinmana have got used to seeing large trucks laden with construction materials passing by, as well as cars carrying important members of the military.

"If you're driving down the road at the time they come past, you have to pull over and let them pass," said one woman.

Other people have been affected more directly by the move. One man said some of his neighbours had been thrown out of their homes, and had their land repossessed, with no compensation.

"I'm really scared that will happen to me, too," he said quietly.

Then there is the issue of who exactly is constructing the new capital. Definite evidence is hard to come by, but there are strong suspicions that the government is using forced labour.

"I've spoken to people who have fled Pyinmana, and have now come over the border into Thailand," said Maung Maung, the general secretary of the Federation of Trade Unions in Burma. "They say they were forcibly made to work on the roads, and clear areas of bush."

'Transfer of power'

Back in Rangoon, there are few obvious signs that the city is no longer the country's capital.

The one direct impact on local people is that the electricity supply - which was already erratic before the move - has now become even more unreliable.

"They've spent millions on the new capital. As a result, the services in Rangoon like electricity are getting worse and worse, but Pyinmana is all lit up," said one Western diplomat. "Locals joke that a 'transfer of power' has taken place."

Behind the scenes, there are other problems too. NGO workers and diplomats say the move is slowing down the process of government.

"Everything is taking twice as long, because you have to go to Pyinmana to get your documents stamped," the diplomat said. "There are containers stacked up in the ports because the necessary paperwork hasn't been signed."

Anyone who visits a government office in Rangoon will quickly notice something has changed. One businessman said that when he went to the Ministry of Culture for a meeting, he found it was virtually empty except for a few stray dogs and children playing games.

The ministers and officials might have gone to Pyinmana, but few seem to have gone willingly. Many were given little or no notice, and had to leave their families behind.

There are reports of several people retiring early, and rumours that an entire government department tried - and failed - to resign en masse.

In fact, many analysts say the enforced move was probably one of the main reasons government salaries were suddenly increased in April - in an attempt to persuade people to stay in their jobs.

There are suspicions forced labour is being used to build roads. Since the announcement of the capital move last November, there has been intense speculation about the reasoning behind it.

Some believe the military wants to move further inland for fear of a foreign attack. Others say that Burma's most senior military general, Than Shwe, wants to emulate the kings of old by building a new capital in his honour.

Others even say it could be due to the advice of fortune-tellers, who play a central role in Burmese life.

So I asked a local soothsayer if the capital move would bring good luck.

After studying his charts and making some calculations, he remained unconvinced.

But whatever the future holds for Burma, it looks likely that a former agricultural backwater near Pyinmana is set to play a pivotal role.

Civilians to be moved for new capital site in central Burma, Chai Sayam, *S.H.A.N*
24 June 2005

Hundreds or more residents in the vicinity of a new Burma government capital and military center in central Burma will be uprooted while an airport planned by the military leaders is constructed, according to sources from the area.

The area around Ayelar and Leway, the two towns south and southwest respectively of Pyinmana, soon to be the government-cum-military base of Burma, has already been charted by the survey department, they said.

Five of the government ministries, namely, Forestry, Energy, Agriculture and Irrigation, No.1 Industry and Information, have already received orders to be resettled by October in the area specified by Rangoon, four miles outside Pyinmana.

"Government servants who refuse to move there are told they will be fired and therefore cannot expect any pension," explained an unhappy government source. "We know there are ready-made lodgings for us there but no one bothers to suggest how we can expect to generate extra income to support our families. In addition, we keep hearing malaria is rampant there."

The War Office, a source was told, would be located in an excavation at the foothills of the Pegu Yoma range, west of Pyinmana. "I was told the generals are merely fulfilling the ideas initiated by generals Aung San and Kyaw Zaw (now in exile in China) during the 1940's," he said. "One officer observed that it would also be easier for the leaders to flee to China (from Pyinmana) in the event of an invasion."

According to the June 14 issue of Irrawaddy, the order to move to Pyinmana was issued by the government the previous day.

Pagan

Burma army forcibly relocates thousands from Pagan *The Nation*, 28 June 1990

Burma's military authorities, who have evacuated hundreds of thousands of people from major cities, are forcing thousands more to leave Pagan, an ancient landmark and the country's most popular tourist attraction, visitors said yesterday. No official reason was given for the latest expulsion, which precedes the opening of the ancient city to direct tourist flights from Thailand next month.

"The main strip of the town has just been emptied," one foreign business-woman said.

The army government, which has ruled Burma under tough martial law since crushing street protests in 1988, has in the name of progress forced up to 500,000 people out of Rangoon and Mandalay into fields outside the city. Others have been jailed for dissent or forced into portering arms for government forces fighting in remote insurgent areas.

Government officials have said the relocation, begun in 1985 but accelerated during army rule, would ease congestion in the cities and give good housing to slum-dwellers and vagrants.

The new towns, most of them located 20 to 30 km outside Rangoon and other cities, have basic facilities. But residents said they were forced to leave their homes at short notice and lost most of their wealth in moving. They said they would return to the city if a new government relaxed restrictions.

During the monsoon rains the main streets are turned to mud and most houses are awash. The only concrete buildings are government offices and some schools. Other public buildings have not been finished.

The army, which held multi-party elections last month that were won overwhelmingly by the opposition, has said it would continue its public works programme until a new government is formed. It has given no timetable for a transfer of power.

Visitors to Pagan, on a sprawling plain littered with hundreds of Buddhist pagodas 450 km north of Rangoon, said most of its 4,000 inhabitants had been forced to leave in recent months.

They said most of those expelled made their living from tourists visiting the ancient city.

Tour operators in Bangkok said they would begin direct flights from Thailand to Pagan and Mandalay next month.

Tourism in Burma, once a favourite stop for backpackers, has dwindled to a trickle since 1988 due to government restrictions on individual travellers.

Rangoon

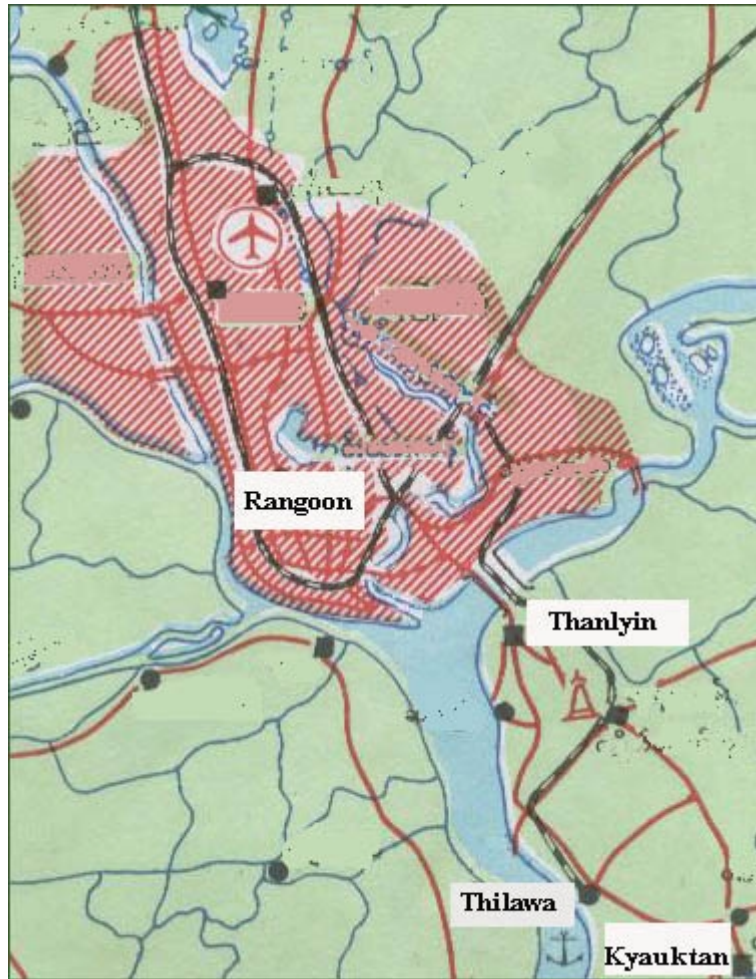
[Rice paddies seized for Thilawa SEZ](#) S.H.A.N., 14 March 2007

Thousands of acres of rice fields in the Thilawa Special Economic Zone (SEZ) project area near Rangoon are being confiscated by junta authorities leaving thousands of farmers landless, reports Chai Sayam from the border:

The seized land is being sold to Chinese, Japanese and Indian investors by auction. Junta announcements have also promised a round-the-clock water and power supply to the entrepreneurs.

Land seized by authorities covers adjoining areas of Syriam (Thanlyin) and Kyauktan townships southeast of Rangoon. One paddy field owner, Daw San Yi, 54, who lived at Bogyoke village in Syriam, took suicide by leaping into a reservoir near her home on 6 March after losing her land.

According to Xinhua, 2 November 2006, the Thilawa SEZ, designed by Chinese experts, covers an area of 12.8 square kilometers (3,200 acres).



Displacement of Population in Rangoon Division Updated 3 January 2007

No .	Year	From	To	Effecte d Houses/	Effected Populatio n	Remarks
1.	1985 -86	Sein Pann Myaing, Mayangone TS	New Hlaing Thayar TS and Dagon (North) TS	5000	Appr: 30000	The area was burnt down and Built Myaing HayWan Park
2	1987	Tatar Lay, Mayangone TS	Hlaing Thayar, Shwe Pyi Thar, Shwe Pauk Kan	>3000	>20000	Built Nawaday Cinema Hall
3	1986 -87	Quarter No (1) Near the Mayangone	Those who had National Registration could get a room after		>20000	Built Royal City Hotel;

		TS,	completion of High-Rises in other places.			
4	86-87	Malaria Campaign Centre	Bayint Naung Rd			Replacement for Mayangone Police Station
5	1991	Burnt down Saw Bwa Gyi Kone Insein TS	To New satellite towns		15000	Built new bus terminal for distance tours
6	1991	Papawin and Gone Cinema Halls				Trader Hotel
7	1991	Yeyint Cinema Hall				Sakura Tower
8	1992	Remain quarters in Tatarlay Junction	Hlaing Thayar and Shwe Pyi Thar		12000	Fire Brigade Office and Sport Ground
9	1992	Salain/Khakawe wards Thingangyun TS	Dagon (South) No88 Ward	600	3000	High Rises
10	1992	Burnt down Kyemyindine Strand Rd	New satellite towns	10000	>50000	High Rises
11	1992-93	Remaining houses of Sein Pan Myaing Quarter/ Mayangone TS	Hlaing Thayar, Dagon (North). Health workers had to move to other appropriate sites by their own programme	2000	15000	Military Hqs
12	1994	Burnt Down the houses in the Western Part of Railway in Kamaryut TS	Satellite towns	10000	>50000	High Rises
13	1994-95	Confiscated Thamine ButarYone (Railway Station Ward)	Those who had National Registration in that area could get rooms		>35000	High Rises with 6000 Rooms/Many people suffered from this and loss
14	1995	Yai Thidar No4 Qtr/ Mayangone TS	People can choose to get a room per household or to get a small amount of compensation (300,000K)		15000 Suffered	Built 10,000 Rooms-High Rises
15	1996-97	Demolished Kyandaw cemetery	Yeway Cemetery (North Okkalapa) Htainpin Cemetery (Hlaing Thayar)			Motorcar market; Anti Drug Centre
16	1996-97	Demolished Nine Mile Chinese Cemetery	Yeway Cemetery (North Okkalapa) Htainpin Cemetery (Hlaing Thayar)			MinDamma Statue
17	1997	Burnt down Webula Ward/	Dagon(South) 140 th Ward	300	1500	----

		Thingangyun TS				
18	1997	Burnt Down Zawana Ward/ Thingangyun TS	New satellite towns	100	600	High-Rises
19	1997	Demolished 8 th ward/ Taketa TS	Dagon (South) 87 th Ward	3000	15000	HighRises
20	1998	Demolished Sethein Ward/ Thingangyun TS	Dagon (North) 133 rd Ward	3000	15000	High Rises & IL-BC
21	2000-01	Confiscated the Psychiatric Hospital	Ywatahgyi/ Dagon (East)			Military HSG qrs (DSGS Office)
22	2000-01	Bawamyint Ward/ (Ex-soldiers) ThingangyunTS	Ywayi Thag Dagon (East)	3000	15000	Mekha and Melekkha Buildings/
23	2002	Bus Station Sawbwagyigone	Buid Aungmingala Bus Terminal Near Yeway Cemetery. North Okkalapa			Serious Impact on Businessmen
24	2003	Farm lands and brick factory	No replacement			Build Navy Military Police Unit; Navy Central Depot and Diving and Navy Hqs
25	2003	Botataung Newspaper House including Staff houses at the corner of BO Aung Kyaw Rd and Ye Kyaw St				
26	2004	No.93 ward Dagon (South)	Dagon(South)		1500	For Thanlin Bridge 2 Project
27	2005	Fire at Eastern Part of railway, Hlaing Kamayut	Dagon(South)	10000	50000	
28	2006	Burnt down Bayint Naung car market			100 million Kyats	Serious impact on Businessmen
29	2006	Burnt down nearby Laydauntkan,Thingangyun				Serious impact on Businessmen. Fire started from MI's Beer shop.

Table supplied by Dr. Kyaw Nyunt

N.B. This table does not include the SLORC Urban Resettlement Programme 1989-1990 which is described in the UN Habitat report of 1991 at

http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs4/Habitat_report.pdf and in other documents at <http://www.burmalibrary.org/show.php?cat=2068&lo=d&sl=0>

Home sites provided for fire victims Wai Phyo Myint and Minn Htut Oo, *Myanmar Times*, 19-25 December, 2005

FAMILIES left homeless by a fire in Hlaing township last month are being resettled at Shwe Pyi Thar township, on Yangon's northwestern outskirts.

The government has provided 1690 plots each measuring 20 feet by 60 feet on Hmawbi Road at Shwe Pyi Thar township for the families. It provided transportation from temporary camps in Yangon on December 11 for families which were able to move immediately.

Figures provided the Hlaing township State Peace and Development Council said nearly 500 families out of more than 1700 eligible to be resettled had already moved to the new location.

The resettlement program is only for families who owned houses destroyed in the fire.

About 2000 families were left homeless by the fire, which destroyed more than 1500 houses in Hlaing township's 13th ward on November 28.

The government also provided K34,580 to each family, with most of the assistance having been raised in donations from the public.

Some families at the Armed Forces Checking and Transport Camp on Bayintnaung Road, one of the three sites where temporary accommodation was provided, said they were unable to move to Shwe Pyi Thar township and planned to live with relatives until they found permanent accommodation.

Strategic Redesign of the City. Extract from *The State and the City: 1988 and the Transformation of Rangoon*, Donald M Seekins, *Pacific Affairs*; Summer 2005; 78, 2; (pp265-267)

Regime-instigated evictions and forced relocations after 1988 included not only squatters and slum dwellers but also middle-class families who had lived for generations in substantial housing.¹⁸ Neighbourhoods where residents had sheltered or aided demonstrators seem to have been singled out for redevelopment, such as the area near the Myeinigone Market, site of the 21 June incident, where old dwellings have been pulled down and replaced by shops and multi-storied apartment blocks.

This was part of a comprehensive policy of urban redesign that included establishment of ten new townships on Rangoon's outskirts. The three largest—Hlaing Thayar, Shwepyithar and Dagon Myothit—added substantially to the city's area, incorporating land to the west of the Hlaing River and east of Nga Moe Yeik Creek, the city's traditional boundaries. Relocation from the city centre, both forced and unforced, is

estimated to have involved as many as 450,000 to 500,000 people.¹⁹ Not all residents of the new towns were involuntarily relocated. Civil servants were awarded plots of land for long years of service; investors, many of whom were Chinese or Sino-Burmese, purchased luxury housing in new developments such as Nawaday Garden and FMI City in Hlaing Thayar township. But squatters, victims of fires (who were moved out to the new towns rather than being allowed to rebuild on their old sites) and middle-class people evicted from their homes usually had to suffer great hardship in semi-rural areas lacking basic amenities.

This policy was not new. After the military assumed temporary control of the political system during the 1958-60 Caretaker Government period, the military officer appointed by General Ne Win as the city's new mayor forcibly relocated more than 170,000 squatters to the "new towns" of North Okkalapa, South Okkalapa and Thaketa.²⁰ These three settlements, which had populations of 75,647, 64,441 and 55,050 respectively, represented a major alteration of the city in terms of land area and population distribution.²¹ Thus, the relocations of 1958-60 can be seen as a precedent for the much larger population movements after 1988.

According to a report published by a Burmese opposition organization in 1990, the new town established at Shwepyithar (Shwe Pyi Tha), northwest of the old city centre near the Hlaing River, consisted of paddy land that was confiscated by the SLORC from farmers, who were then obliged to hand over kyats 1,500 (US\$21) to build new houses on land they had originally owned. At the same time, poor city people were being forced to relocate to the area from downtown, as the authorities determined that the land their houses stood on was needed for construction of new highways, buildings and markets. They were not compensated for this exercise in military-style eminent domain. Indeed, they were obliged to pay kyats 3,000-5,000 for the privilege of settling on new town land. The new Shwepyithar residents, who in most cases had no savings and had to use most of their cash income to purchase food, often had to borrow money for these expenses at very high interest rates. The remoteness of the new town also posed great problems, since public transportation to the city centre, where most of them still worked, was expensive due to increases in the price of petrol. School and hospital facilities in the new town were extremely primitive, though facilities and housing were far better in the eastern section of Shwepyithar, a so-called "VIP ward," where army officers and civil servants lived.²² Eviction of people in established neighbourhoods remains an issue in Rangoon today, for a mix of political and economic reasons. In the post-1988 "open economy," land has become a commodity, and people living in prime areas are vulnerable to sudden "redevelopment" without legal recourse.²³ In two instances in 2002, residents were evicted and houses demolished in two neighbourhoods in Kyee Min Daing and Kamayut townships, which are located in older parts of the city near the Rangoon University main campus. People resisting eviction were arrested. Among residents of the area affected in Kamayut were an NLD parliamentarian elected in May 1990, a retired judge and a well-known poet...

Karaoke Fascism: Burma and the Politics of Fear Monique Skidmore, 2004 (extracts)

The demolishing of existing structures and the rapid construction of new edifices most often precede the renaming of roads and parks. Whole city blocks disappear in a matter of days, the population loaded onto trucks and forcibly relocated to the new townships that the government has established on rice fields outside the major cities. One hot morning at the beginning of May 1997 my friend Shwe Shwe and I were walking in a relocated township north of Rangoon when she grabbed my arm and whispered "Shhh!" as she pulled me into a squatting position. We slowly raised our heads to peer above the low bamboo trellis. "Look!" she hissed, "The Tatmadaw are relocating these people. See the tin they've been given for a roof and the planks of wood?" A lanky soldier, his rifle slung over his shoulder, his lips red with betel juice, was supervising the unloading of these gifts of construction materials from a green army truck. They are the compensation paid by the regime for the relocation of the family from a quarter behind the main market in Rangoon. There are seven members of the family headed by the patriarch, U Ba, and over the next month his son Taw Win and daughter-in-law Thin Thin Yu scramble to have bamboo walls woven and a thatched roof completed in time for the monsoon rains that begin in June. physically uprooting families like that of U Ba is a devastatingly successful policy in the short term as it disables people's information and friendship networks, adding to feelings of alienation and psychological isolation. Rewriting and rebuilding the landscape does not erase people's memories, however. Underneath the government names there are local names. For example, although Rangoon residents navigate by a building known as the IBC (the optimistically named International Business Center), there is not a soul in Rangoon who does not know that the large white structure has been built on the site of the "White Bridge" (known throughout the country as the "red bridge"), a scene of brutal repression by the military during the 1988 uprising. University students were raped and murdered here, "so that the white bridge ran red" with their blood (Greenwood 1994).

Relocating, rebuilding, and renaming are, however, effective strategies in the longer term because both life spans and memories are comparatively short in Burma due to high infant mortality, maternal mortality, the prevalence of diseases due to bad or nonexistent sanitation, high accidental death rates, and other poor health indicators. In addition, knowledge has most often been handed down orally, especially during the Ne Win period and the first years of the SLORC regime when paper was extremely rare. Knowledge has traditionally been written on palm leaves and kept in monasteries that, until the British colonial period, were the primary source of written education. It is unusual to find paper and writing implements in Burmese houses (with the exception of the educated elite in the cities), and as of 2003 there was once again a growing paper shortage. A large percentage of the population (28.1 percent) were born after the 1988 uprising (CIA 2002), or remember it as children.² The concept of Burmese memory is such that events that occurred more than about a decade ago quickly reach the category of "a long time ago" or "a long time in the past." Thus the demolishing of structures, neighborhoods, and lifestyles and the rewriting of history to erase the red stains from the White Bridge, eventually wins out in Burma .

Through the renaming, rebuilding, and relocating of familiar landmarks and the heavy presence of the army and weaponry, the military council imposes a new spatial configuration on Rangoon. A second political history is simultaneously being written as the old city is destroyed by these "artists of demolition" (Benjamin quoted in Buck-Morss 1989: 90). The bulldozing of Christian, Hindu, Jewish, and Islamic burial sites and places of worship constitutes a reconquering of the dead (following Robben 2000). The cemeteries tell a truth about Rangoon's colonial past, of the large numbers of people from India and China who were resident in Burma under British colonization. A 1931 Union of Burma census showed that 52 percent of Rangoon's population of 400,000 was Indian (Brac de la Perriere 1992a: 231). This retrospective victory over a history of Buddhist kingship enrages the Generals and they plough through the ghosts and bones of the dead for no ideological or propaganda purposes but for the simple reason that some of them believe the ferocious nationalism and xenophobia extolled in their own propaganda [pp 85-90]

...

Soon after the failed democracy uprising in 1988, mysterious fires swept through neighborhoods in central Mandalay and Rangoon suspected to harbor people with democratic sympathies, as well as those townships abutting sites marked for tourist development. Shanty towns, those bamboo thatch settlements in the shadow of the regime's nation building endeavors, were not allowed to be rebuilt by their former residents, instead, these urban dwellers were shipped, with their belongings and a few pieces of tin and sometimes other building materials, to rice fields on the outskirts of the major cities. Farmers were sometimes compensated for the loss of their acreage and given residential plots of land in what came to be known as the "New Fields" (Allott 1994)...(p147)

Junta Demolished Homes *Naw Seng, "The Irrawaddy", 27 June 2002*

Dozens of houses have been demolished and at least 13 people were arrested—including three children—in Rangoon's Shwe Leikpyar quarter, also known as the Zay Kalay quarter, near Rangoon University's Kyee Myin Daing campus earlier this month. Residents of the neighborhood told *The Irrawaddy* that the demolition had been ordered by the government to make room for a new apartment complex.

According to eyewitness accounts, an estimated 30 men from the military, local police and the junta's de facto political party the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) descended upon the quarter on June 10 and notified the residents that they had 24 hours to move all their belongings from their homes. The residents said no explanation was given but that those who did not cooperate would be arrested.

"They did not want to go, but they were given no choice," said one resident whose home is just outside of the demolished area. He added that he thought the government might compensate the residents.

At least 13 people were arrested after authorities raided the neighborhood, which is in Kyee Myin Daing Township, on June 11 and found them still in their homes, according to a member of the National League for Democracy (Liberated Area). Among those arrested were three members of the opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) as well as three children.

NLD (LA) secretary U Nay Win told the Washington, DC-based Radio Free Asia (RFA) that the residents and their children are being detained at Insein Prison and the Htaung Kyant interrogation center, both in Rangoon. He added that they have been charged under an obscure 1962 housing law.

Shortly after the raid the NLD's headquarters in Rangoon released a strongly worded statement condemning the junta for carrying out such unwarranted and illegal acts.

In April, thousands of riot police and local police raided the Waggi quarter in Rangoon's Kamayut Township and demolished 25 homes. Homeowners and their children who refused to vacate were also arrested.

Under Burma's military regime, forced relocations in urban area have become commonplace. The relocations are often times ordered to eradicate what the government sees as subversive cells or because of business interests. Resident normally receive no compensation from the government.

Authorities Raid Neighborhood Kyaw Zwa Moe and John S Moncreif, *The Irrawaddy*, 8 April 2002

A one thousand member force of army, riot police and local police raided a residential neighborhood in Rangoon's Kamaryut Township on the night of April 5th, according to a Rangoon resident.

As authorities began destroying homes and detaining residents, an elderly woman yelled at the security forces, calling them robbers, said an eyewitness.

The destruction and arrests follow the refusal of the residents to obey an order issued by Col Yan Naing Oo last month. He ordered the twenty-five families of Kamaryut's Waggi quarter to evacuate and move their homes by April 5th or face arrest.

"I think that they have been arrested because of refusing to move their homes and expressing their discontent for the regional authorities, including Col Yan Naing Oo, in the interview with RFA (Radio Free Asia)," the Rangoon resident told the Irrawaddy,

Several residents spoke openly last week while using their real names during interviews with the Washington-based Radio Free Asia (RFA) Burmese service. The interviews

were later broadcast into Burma.

Security forces demolished seven homes and detained the residents and their children. Authorities later separated the children and the adults before sending both groups to different detention centers. The government also sent doctors and nurses to the scene to take care of the sick and elderly, according to the source.

It is not known how many people have been apprehended or where they are being held. Officials ordered the remaining families to vacate their homes by April 7th, the source added.

Included among the detainees was Daw San May (pen name Shwe Gu May Hnin), an author and elected Member of Parliament from the opposition National League for Democracy (NLD); U Win Pe (pen name Maung Swan Yi), a respected critic and poet; Yin Yin Myint, a teacher, and U Sai Hla Kyaw, according to a report from the Burma Media Association.

The government did not give any reason for the forced eviction, according to several Waggi residents. But a former Waggi resident, who sold his property to a business interest two years ago, reported that a deal between investors and local authorities was behind the order to relocate the neighborhood.

The forced relocation of some Rangoon neighborhoods has taken place since the 1988 democracy uprising. Several neighborhoods, which were vocal in their opposition to the government, have been relocated to areas outside of Rangoon for security purposes. Other forced relocations in Rangoon have occurred to make room for well connected business interests. In the rural areas, forced relocation is a commonly employed military tactic to cut support for ethnic insurgents.

The forced relocation has received criticism by Burmese activists' abroad. Yesterday, Burmese activists in Washington, DC gathered in front of the Burmese ambassador's house to protest the government's action.

Inauguration of Panhlaing Housing Estate adds another modern infrastructure to Yangon *The New Light of Myanmar* 26 January 2002



Yangon, 25 Jan- Panhlaing Housing Estate in Sangyoung Township, Yangon, was inaugurated this morning, attended by Secretary-1 of the State Peace and Development Council Lt-Gen Khin Nyunt. It was jointly built by Department of Human Settlement and Housing Development of

the Ministry of Construction and Shwe Thanlwin Construction Company on mutual interests.

The estate includes one three-storey duplex row house and three three-storey quadruple row houses comprising 42 apartments, each measuring 1,222 square-feet and housing an altar room, a visiting room, a dining room, a kitchen and three bedrooms. Thirty-eight units of duplexes comprising 1,300, 1,500, 1,600, 1,900 and 2,500 square-feet apartments have been built. Infrastructures of the estate include a 12,000-gallon tank and one 24,000-gallon ground tank and one eight-inch tube-well. Construction of the remaining buildings, separate houses, shop houses and 10 units of duplexes each measuring 3,500 square-feet, will begin in April 2002. Speaking on the occasion, Minister for Construction Maj-Gen Saw Tun said the State Peace and Development Council is striving from all sectors with greater momentum for emergence of a modern and developed nation.



Public Works of the ministry has been building bridges large and small and new roads and repairing the existing ones with the aim of helping to strengthen national solidarity. In accord with the guidance of the Head of State, the DHSHD in cooperation with the private sector has been implementing the project to enable Yangon to have characteristics of a modern city, regional development projects, modern housing projects to ensure a comfortable life for the people, projects **to relocate people from huts to high-rise buildings**, (emphasis added) projects to develop the slums into modern housing estates and industrial zone projects. A management committee was formed with the participation of the home owners to maintain the estate. A trust fund K 20 million, in which the DHSHD contributed K 5 million and Shwe Thanlwin Company, K 15 million, was set up for the committee. Chairman of the company U Kyaw Win said the company is using its profits to extend business and to provide cash towards the religious and public well-being tasks.

It is concentrating its efforts on ensuring customer satisfaction. Managing Director U Moe Kyaw Thu also gave a speech. Also present at the ceremony were ministers, the Yangon mayor, deputy ministers, officials of the State Peace and Development Council Office, departmental personnel, members of Union Solidarity and



Development Association, Red Cross, Auxiliary Fire Brigade and Maternal and Child Welfare Association, teachers, students and others. Minister Maj-Gen Saw Tun and patrons of the company U Thein Win and Daw Ni formally opened the estate. Director-General of DHSHD U Arnt Kyaw presented K 5 million to the trust fund of the estate management committee and U Moe Kyaw Tun, K 15 million. U Kyaw Win presented commemorative gifts to Secretary-1 Lt-Gen Khin Nyunt and Minister Maj-Gen Saw Tun. The Secretary-1 inspected the scale model of the Panhlaing Housing Estate project. At his meeting with members of the management committee, the Secretary-1 said the project is included in the government's endeavours to further modernize Yangon and to uplift the lifestyle of the Yangonites. The residents have to collectively pay the sanitation and security cost of the estate. The company and the DHSHD contributed K 20 million towards the funds of the management committee to ease the burden of the residents. He then inspected the estate.

Fear and Hope: Displaced Burmese women in Burma and Thailand Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, March 2000

Hlaing Thayar

The delegation visited two areas of forced relocation:

Hlaing Thayar township outside Rangoon and Pagan, a prime tourist destination. Hlaing Thayar is home to about 150,000 people who were moved out of Rangoon after the 1990 elections. It is an extremely impoverished and unhealthy environment, remote from opportunities for productive employment. The delegation's visit was in the dry season and even then stagnant water was everywhere; in the rainy season the stilt houses and plank walkways barely keep people above water. The town abuts an industrial area that displays little economic activity apart from the building of brick fences around mostly empty lots; even more primitive dwellings than in the town fringe the half-built factories and warehouses. Many of the residents in Hlaing Thayar lack residency permits and are, therefore, subject to removal from the area at any time.

Two international NGOs provide humanitarian assistance in Hlaing Thayar, including primary health care, feeding centers, HIV/AIDS prevention/education, water treatment, malaria and cholera treatment and prevention, family planning, micro-enterprise development, community-based rehabilitation and support for street and working children. The demand for these services is overwhelming. Infrastructure is very poor; for example, the more than 100 tube wells installed by UNICEF are no longer functioning and government clinics in the area lack medicines, equipment and adequate staff.

Conditions in Hlaing Thayar are typical of what UNICEF has characterized as a "quiet emergency," with high rates of malnutrition (2.8 percent acute and 12.8 percent "moderate"), maternal and child mortality, disease and poverty. NGO project staff note that mundane indicators of economic desperation are common: women cut off their hair to sell to wig-makers, pawn their clothing (which results in irregular attendance at clinics and other programs), pawn their pots and pans so that they are forced to rely on relatively expensive street food because they can no longer cook at home. But because

this is not a “loud” emergency, international NGO headquarters may be skeptical about the “fit” of this kind of program with their crisis-oriented mandates. There should be no doubt that the situation of internally displaced people in Burma is a chronic crisis.

Industrial belt takes shape around capital B.J. Lee: *The Nation* (Bangkok), January 17, 1997

"We are going to be surrounded by smoke stacks," say a Rangoon resident. On a map of the greater Rangoon area, the source draws circles around five industrial zones being set up in a ring around the outskirts of Rangoon. "I've seen foreign news about a place called Death Valley, where people are choked by the factories surrounding their city. Maybe this is what Rangoon will become in the future.

Government official often herald the five industrial parks as being the foundation of Burma's drive to become the next economic tiger of Asia. But critics, such as the Rangoon resident who is involved in joint ventures and has visited all five sites, warn of impending problems of population and over Asian boomtowns. And sources say that villagers are already being forcibly relocated off prize farmland to make way for bulldozers and engineers.

The largest of the five zones is the Sinmardev industrial zone, 18 kilometers outside of Rangoon. Sinmardev is short for Singapore-Myanmar-development. In an agreement last year, the Burmese government leased the 12-sq-kilometers land site wholesale to Sinmardev for a period of 50 years. Sources say construction managers are currently registering local inhabitants in order to move them off the site. The other zone reserved exclusively for foreign investors has been leased to Mitsui corporation of Japan. The government reportedly agreed to lease the land to Mitsui without demanding any percentage of income from the site.

The government says the zones will bring hundreds of thousands of jobs to Burma. But critics say the companies sweet-talked the government into selling them land around Rangoon for industrial parks. "They tell the government that they will bring jobs and money into Myanmar," says one critic who has visited the sites. "Of course, what the companies really want is cheap labour and relaxed environmental controls. But the government believes them, and money helps do the talking."

Three other zones are set aside for locally-owned factories. Factories at the 1,700-hectare Hlaing Thar Yar industrial zone, 11 kilometers northwest of Rangoon, are already producing plastic sacks, paper, paint, foam rubbers, as well as cleaning beans for export. The Shwepyitha industrial zone, 18 kilometers north of Rangoon, is expected to have 200 factories upon completion making such products as wood, drinking water and liquor. One factory, which kicked into gear last year, takes raw materials imported from firms in Europe, Hong Kong, Thailand and Malaysia, and then produces garments for export to The Netherlands. "Factories like this aren't using local raw materials or even selling to the

local market. The only reason they set up here to use cheap local labour," says the critic. Factories at a third zone, in South Dagon, a kilometers northeast of downtown, use raw materials from Japan and Malaysia to make plastic sacks for export.

Sources say the industrial zones are creating another headache: forced relocations of villagers. The source says that farmers have been forced to give up their prized land in Mingaladon north of Rangoon to make way for Mitsui's industrial park. "There is no negotiation between the farmers and the government. The government simply puts up a sign saying, 'Everybody must move by this date.' Everybody must obey it or else. Villages are silently angry but they don't dare protest." Adds another local resident, explaining the public mentality about reallocations, "We have to obey the king. When the king says move, we have to move."

"They are losing a paradise," says the source who says she had spoken with many relocated villagers. "Having farmland close to the markets of Rangoon, they were among the luckiest people in the country. Now their luck has changed." But the source says that in some cases, farmers don't move. "I've seen cases where farmers will stand in front of their homes while bulldozers start moving in on them. When they see the bulldozers, they quickly pack up their things and go, stunned that they actually have to move."

Villagers don't really understand what an industrial park is," explains the source. "Many of them only know farming, so they are losing not only their land but their way of life. Others take money from the government and smaller plots of land to build new homes in other parts of the city. They have to find new jobs. Where? At the industrial park."

Other Rangoon residents say that the industrial parks are increasing the influx of villagers coming into Rangoon. The relocations are also creating public resentment against the foreign investors. "Employees of foreign investors such as Mitsui don't even realise this. Because news can't be reported in the local press, the officials seem unaware of the relocations and the public distrust it's causing toward them," said the source.

Foreign investors, afraid of losing their deals and their status inside the country, are reluctant to discuss politically sensitive matters on the record. Privately, many investors say they hold firm to the belief that industrial zones are good for the economic future of the country. They also argue that building industrial parks outside the capital is a better alternative to allowing factories to set up downtown and in residential areas.

[Squatters](#) *The New Light of Myanmar* 19 June 1996 via *The Burma Press Summary*

June 18: Noting the establishment of Dagon Myothit, Hlinethaya, Shwepyitha, and Shwepaukkan new towns near Yangon, and priority settlement of public servants, SLORC Secretary-1 Lt-Gen. Khin Nyunt said the government was "providing the basic needs of the people." "However, he said, there still exist squatters in Yangon, the capital. As dwellings have been illegally set up on State-owned land, access was difficult in such

wards and unhygienic during monsoon, and the threat of fires was grave in summer, he said. Hence, he said, the DHSHD [Department of Human Settlement and Housing Development], Yangon City Development Committee and private construction companies are implementing modern housing projects aimed at sending people in huts to apartments.... The plan to resettle squatters in apartment buildings is carried out with the supervision of the government.... The government, he said, is taking measures to remove squatters or trespassers and provide new homes for them and spoke of the need for the authorities concerned to make sure there emerges no more instances of trespassing"

Economics of Resettlement *Burma Issues Newsletter* Volume 1 Number 11, December 1991 (extract)

Rangoon's new "Satellite Towns" were set up in order to relocate squatters and clean up Rangoon. It was also a way of punishing those communities which were very active during the 1988 uprising. The cost has been high. The budget set aside for three of the satellite towns was over nine million kyats. Yet almost no infrastructure facilities such as roads, hospitals, schools, water and electricity were provided by the military. At the same time, resettled people had to purchase their new plot of land themselves. Daily wage earners have no possibility of paying the price required so many ended up selling their plots off to more well to do people. About ninety thousands plots were divided up for half a million people. The total area required by the three satellite towns is approximately 149 square miles. This land, including at least seven thousand acres of paddy fields was confiscated from the native peasants without any compensation. Thus they lost their inheritance as well as their livelihood...

Squatter locations and resettlement programmes in Yangon (UN Habitat 1991)

(a) Background

Between 1958 and 1961, massive squatter relocations involving 60,000 households established the procedure of providing site-and-services plots to squatters who have to be resettled. Similarly, outbreak of fires, mainly in the squatter areas, have provided for replotting of the old sites wherever possible.

The policy gradually changed due to population increase, scarcity of developed land nearby and security considerations. Starting from the big fires which occurred in late 1986, fire victims, mostly squatter families, were relocated to places other than their own areas, e.g., the Seinpanmayang, Kamayut, Hlaing and Patheinyunt fire victims were relocated at Hlaing Tha Ya new settlement (1st Phase - 3500 plots). It also included a large number of squatter families. However, this relocation took a long time, 1986 to 1988/89.

When the SLORC Government took over, this policy of relocating in new settlements was continued. The pace was-greatly intensified with the adoption of the Squatter Clearance Scheme to implement the task of evicting squatters from:

- (a) Vacant public land;
- (b) Government premises such as factory compounds, railway yards, railway tracks etc.;
- (c) Private lands, needed for public uses, i.e., schools, markets, roads;
- (d) Areas and compounds designated for religious purposes.

The vacated squatter areas were used for the following purposes:

- (a) Widening roads;
- (b) Extension of factories and other facilities;
- (c) Extension or consolidation of existing government offices and other administrative uses;
- (d) Security reasons;
- (e) Beautifying the city, i.e., parks and gardens;
- (f) Land was cleared of conflicting uses, such as squatters in religious compounds, squatters in undesirable places like cemeteries, hazardous places close to factories and railway tracks.

Number of squatters affected

Since no accurate data were readily available (the different ministries and departments, and RCDC handle their own lists of squatters in their jurisdiction) and no overall data are accessible, the number of squatter households affected could only be roughly checked and confirmed from the receiving end, i.e., the new township plot allocations and dates of occupations, are available and published in newspaper articles, as follows:

(a) Squatter relocation after 1988

	Plots
Shwe Pyi Tha	7500
Hlaing Tha Ya (Phase II):	26500
Waibagi	1800
Dagon Myo Thit	12000
Total	47800

(b) Squatter relocation between 1986 and 1988

Hlaing Tha Ya (Phase I):	3500
Htauk Kyaunt	1640
Padamya	1340
Myayadana	600
Gyi Pwa Ye	1200
Thimanda	160
Total	8440

(c) Squatters currently in the city

Estimated at 32,000 squatter households including the squatter land reassembly projects in Dawbon and Dala.

(b) Findings of its Survey

Based on a rapid site survey of squatter areas, the following facts can be summarized:

(a) The overall figure of squatter dwellings/households involved in the massive squatter clearance scheme carried out from late-1988 until the present time can be estimated at about 43,000;

(b) Another 8500 households can be added for the schemes carried out between 1986 and 1988. (Hlaing Tha Ya resettlement: 3500, and the northern resettlement areas of Padamyia, Myayadana, Htauk Kyaunt, Gyi Pwa Ye, Thimanda: 5000);

(c) Squatters still remaining in the city have been briefly identified, and an estimate of 32,000 dwellings/households has been made. This figure includes the squatter land reassembly being currently carried out;

(d) The same 43,000 squatters have been resettled since late-1988. This compares well with the official figures given for new plots in the satellite towns of Hlaing Tha Yar (26,500), Dagon Myo Thit (12,000), Shwe Pyi Tha (7500), and Waibagyi (1800), totalling 47,800;

(e) Another dimension is the allocation of plots to public-service personnel in Dagon Myo Thit. Altogether, about 28,000 to 30,000 plots have been allotted by the respective departments and ministries, and building activities are being feverishly carried out. Although it will ease the doubling-up and over-crowding of extended families and rental dwellings, a lot of the houses will be second homes;

(f) Most of the squatter areas are widely distributed throughout the city in obvious squatter locations, i.e., vacant land beside river banks and railway tracks, and between buildings, on both government and private lands. However, after the current Squatter Clearance Scheme, the most "visible" squatter areas have been removed;

(g) According to the newly created Yangon City Development Committee, a powerful Mayor, reporting directly to the Chairman of SLORC, will handle, among other things, the "desirable" or "appropriate" population number that will be allowed to reside in the capital city. The Squatter Clearance Scheme, resettlement, and creation of new towns will be the ongoing tasks of this new Committee, which will also have the powers of land administration in the city;

(h) The notable points in the current Squatter Clearance Scheme are the following:

(i) The problems of squatters living in the religious compounds, pagodas and monasteries have been tackled, whereas they were ignored previously;

(ii) Massive road-widening schemes have involved squatters as well as leasehold and freehold families. The latter have been given plots and compensation if dismantling of buildings is involved;

(iii) When outbreaks of fire occur, mostly in squatter areas, the fire victims are resettled in new settlements, whereas before they were resettled in their own area;

(iv) Squatter land reassembly has been carried out now in Dawbon and Dala based on experience gained previously. However, squatter upgrading as a concept has still not been accepted generally;

(v) Finally, although squatter families being able to own legally a plot and a house are good, the important fact is that low-income families' first priority is to obtain employment and livelihood. Location and a space to carry out a livelihood is of utmost importance, not the legal concept of a plot and a house to live in. (pp 116, 117-118)

Report on direct contacts with the Government of the Union of Myanmar Professor Sadako Ogata, Independent Expert, 27 December 1990 (E/CN.4/1991/R.3) p19

60. A massive program of housing development has been carried out in four areas adjacent to Yangon. The Independent Expert was invited to observe the Dagon Myothit project comprised of a newly completed suspension bridge, timber enterprise center and 37,000 plots for housing. Housing plots of varying sizes were allotted to sixteen government departments to house officials as well as general administrative officers. The individual officials were expected to pay 5000 Kyats for the respective lots. The Government provided the roads, water supply and public facilities. Some of the housing developments such as the Shwe Pi Tka, is said to consist of smaller plots. Each settlement area was to provide schools, hospitals, shops, meeting centers and transportation to Yangon. Since the project was still in process, the Independent Expert observed many houses under construction and studied the plan of the township. Main roads leading to Yangon have been widened or expanded and Yangon city development projects are also proceeding on a massive scale. Many city squatters who had lived on public grounds and temple sites in Yangon were also taken to the new township. Criticism has been voiced concerning the manner in which these people were ordered to leave their squatter homes and transported to the new towns without adequate preparation either physically or psychologically. The squatters also had to pay 50% of the land price. It was said that some of them lost their jobs as commuting to the main part of the city became no longer feasible.

Outrage Bertil Lintner, White Lotus, 1990 -- extracts on the urban resettlement programmes of Ne Win's Caretaker Government (1958-1960) and the SLORC (1989-1990)

...In a special notification, issued on 29th November 1958, the new military government declared that Rangoon had to be "cleaned up". Rubbish in the streets were ordered to be removed, houses painted and the about 165,000 squatters - mostly refugees who had streamed into Rangoon during the civil war and never left — who previously had been living in pockets all over Rangoon were re-located in a series of new 'satellite towns', including North and South Okkalapa, and Thaketa across the Pazundaung Creek, a tributary of the Rangoon River.

As a result, all the poor people who had been living close to the city where most of them had jobs in the docks, as servants for rich families, as rickshaw pullers or day labourers — now found themselves living far out in new suburbs. While this made downtown Rangoon more pleasant to look at for the urban middle class, and foreign visitors, the move created other problems. Overnight it had become more expensive for those who had regular jobs to get to them; most of the day labourers found it almost impossible to survive. Hardly surprisingly, these new working class 'satellite towns' soon became breeding grounds for anti-army discontent. (pp 35-36)

[...]

... thousands of urban residents have been forcibly evicted from their homes in Rangoon and relocated in shanty towns on the outskirts of the city. Politics clearly lay behind the forced evictions. The first victims of the SLORC's city planning strategy lived near the defence ministry and many of them had participated in the 1988 uprising. In April 1989, 800 households comprising more than 3,000 people were evicted and their houses demolished. These families were resettled in bamboo shacks in Waybagi, a dusty plain north of Rangoon. Ten elderly people died in the move. Since then — and especially in late 1989 and early 1990 — similar 'satellite towns' have been built in Dagon Myothit east of Rangoon, and in Hlaing Thayar and Okpo to the north. Obviously, the SLORC is trying to dilute potential centres of anti-government unrest and to break up opposition strongholds that were active during the demonstrations in 1988. (p 177)

[Interviews in Satellite Villages](#), "Dawn", Vol. 2 No. 13, July 1990

Recently, a report, with, photos was received from friends inside Burma. The report contains interviews with people who were recently relocated, under duress, to areas around Rangoon called "New Towns". Few such reports have been received, so DAWN wishes to give extra space in this issue to this reality of life in Burma today.

July 5, 1990

First Interview

I recently arrived in the Shwe Pyi Tha new town, which is a new satellite village in the outskirts of Rangoon. Previously, the area was all paddy fields for rice production. The land was owned by the farmers themselves. When the military took over state power, the junta confiscated the paddy fields without paying any compensation to the farmers. Thus, the farmers now are landless, have no place to grow the rice for their survival. Even though the farmer's lands were confiscated, the farmers each had to pay 1500 kyats to the junta to build a new home in the new town. Ironically, they built their new homes on land they once owned, but lost to the military government. So, the farmers, not being able to farm any longer, have to search for work every day in order to survive.

Shwe Pyi Tha is divided by the Rangoon-Prome railway into the east area and the west area. In the east area, there are many large comfortable houses, and the area is well decorated in order to serve the high ranking army officers and civil servants. The people call the east area the "VIP ward".

In the west area, there are many huts made of bamboo with thatched roofs. The two areas are very contrasting although near together.

There are 9 wards in Shwe Pyi Tha, not counting the VIP ward. In the VIP ward, construction of the spacious houses has been going on for two years now.

The poor people were forced to shift to Shwe Pyi Tha from their old houses because the military junta told them that their old area was needed to build roads, new buildings (offices and living quarters for the armed forces officers), or to build the new market etc.,. Even though the poor people's houses were destroyed by the junta, the people received no compensation, and still had to pay at least 3000 kyats to 5000 kyats to get a small piece of land in the new town. These poor people have to work very hard every day to get even a small amount of money only for food. Now, they must begin their lives all over again. For example, the people build a small bamboo hut only 10 feet square which costs at least 1000 kyats. Since they can earn enough each day only for mere survival, they must borrow the money with a high interest rate from the rich people. If the people can not borrow the money, they have to move to another place called Aye Mya Tha Ya which is on the Rangoon- Prome highway road, more than 150 miles from Rangoon. Even the people in Shwe Pyi Tha new town can not go to Rangoon area for their jobs because the transportation rate is very expensive. Their average daily income is only around 15 kyats. The round trip to Rangoon area costs 10 kyats. This expensive transportation rate is due to an increase in the price of petrol from 3.50 kyats to 15 kyats for a one gallon. Now, in Burma, all commodity prices are very high because of the expense of transportation.

One boy who is in the 4th standard in school, said that previously his family lived in Sin Min ward in Alon township. Now, the junta built the new Thi Ri Min Ga La market in their old place. One day the township SLORC (State Law and Order Restoration Council) officials ordered the people to move from their old place to one of the new towns. The SLORC told the people to give the money for the new place and the people got one week to prepare to move to the new town. On the last day given for preparations, two army trucks and two fire trucks came to their old place to force the people out. The people did not destroy their house because they did not want to move from their old place. So, the army took the head of the house (most are the fathers of the families) and detained them for one week. Although, the people did not want to move from their old place, they were forced to move to the new town.

In this boy's family, are his parents, his two elder brothers, one younger sister and two younger brothers. The eldest brother is 20 years old (eighth standard in school). The second elder brother is 18 years old (seventh standard), he is 14 years old (fourth standard), his younger sister is 13 years old (third standard), and his two younger brothers are both 7 years old (first standard). Before the eviction, they were all in school. When they moved to the new town, their family had almost no money for survival. Thus, his two elder brothers had to leave school and find hard work to support their family. Each of the two brother's daily income is around 15 kyats. His father sells dry fish and salted fish. The young boy also works to support his family by repairing gas cigarette lighters in his spare time. His mother sells some small commodities in their house. Even though the whole family works so hard for their survival, their living standard is very low. Their daily family expenses are at least 64 kyats.

Most of the family in the new town are starving. The people are suffering from the high inflation rate.

The schools in the new town are a very sad situation. Some schools are still being built. The teachers especially face a very difficult time in traveling to and from the schools. SLORC issues coupon tickets to use for their transportation. The teachers, as well as the government workers, can use the coupons for travelling during office hours. The teachers transportation costs are at least 4 kyats for the round trip to the new town. Their salary is 650 kyats per month. But they pay 189 kyats only for travelling to the school. Thus, the government staff are also suffering from high inflation.

The hospital is being still built in the new town. There is only one clinic to care for the people. There are only a few medicines in the clinic and there is a serious lack of medicine for accident cases. The doctor only comes infrequently to the clinic. There are four kinds of buses for transportation to the new town. Yet the people have difficulty getting rides as there are only a few vehicles available. Most of the people most work in the Rangoon area. So the people must spend a large portion of the money for transportation to go to the Rangoon area. In the evening, during the rush hour, the people pay at least 5 kyats for the bus from Rangoon area to the new town area.

In the VIP ward, the main road divides the area into the high ranking civil servants area and the armed forces staff area. Large houses are being built in both sections of the VIP

ward. Although the high ranking officers build the houses here, they sell them at a very high price rather than live in them. These high ranking officers get bricks and cement at the official rate which is very low. At the same time, they use the state-owned cars for the transportation to carry the building supplies. The army officers even use the army trucks for transportation to build their houses.

In the new town, we can clearly see the junta's tactics of manipulating the people. The junta gives many special facilities to the officers to oppress the people. Although the people understand the junta's brutal tactics, they do not dare to speak out against the junta during this period of rule under the military.

Second interview

We arrived in Nyaung Pin village which is about 10 miles from Mague city in Mague division. One old man said that he was arrested in 1989. According to our conversation with him, the military junta loaned him money to grow his sesame seed crop. During this time, all the farmers are poor and lack money to invest for farming because they are also suffering from high inflation rates. Although the farmers borrowed the money from the junta, the farmers had to pay back the same value in sesame seeds plus interest to the junta who exports the sesame seeds abroad. These exports help the junta earn much needed foreign exchange to buy the ammunition which they use to oppress the people in Burma. The junta sets the sesame seed price at 34 kilo for 220 kyats for the farmers. If the farmers can not pay back the debt in sesame seeds, they must pay money which is 240 kyats for 34 kilo plus penalty. For example, if the farmer has one acre of land planted to sesame seeds, he is forced to pay the quota of sesame seed which the junta needs. When the farmer is seriously sick, faces a disaster or some other destruction, he can not cultivate his field so he can not pay back the debts to the junta.

This farmer said that he, his two friends from his village and 26 other farmers from other villages in the area were arrested because of their inability to pay back the debts to the junta. According to Burmese traditional custom, the farmers are responsible to support their families for everything. Now, their families face starvation. Thus, this farmer had to sell the cows (the essential animals for the farmers in Burma), bullock carts and their house to get the money needed to pay back the money so that the junta would release the farmers from detention. Although the farmers have been released from detention now, they are in a very difficult situation.

In Kwan Gyan Gone Township of Rangoon Division, after the junta took over state power, they forced the villagers to make the fence around the villager's land. One blind man in the village was very poor and could not make the fence. For that reason, the army men kicked him out of the village. When the army men came to the village, they also destroyed the Za Yart (small house to rest for the travellers) without any reason.

In this village, the villagers are not satisfied with the military junta's actions. They are very simple and do not understand politics. But they know about the brutality the military

daily carries out to oppression the farmers in the village. Other villagers in the middle area of Burma are also suffering from the brutal oppression of the junta. But they do not dare to fight against the junta.

Third Interview

After the military took over state power, the military junta confiscated the rice fields owned by the resident farmers to use for building the new town. They did not pay the farmers any compensation. This area is about 25 miles from Min Hla city in Pegu division. The junta named this new town Aye Mya Tha Yar (peaceful and nice place). Even though the land of the farmers was confiscated, the farmers were forced by the junta to build the roads on their own land for the new town. If the farmers could not work to build the new town as volunteers, they had to paid 15 kyats for each day. If the very poor people could not pay the money to get land in the other new town, they were forced to move to this Aye Mya Tha Ya new town by the junta. The other new areas are Hlaing Tha Ya (good smelling place), Shwe Pyi Tha (wealthy place) and Dagon Myo Thit (the name of an ancient city). The junta planned to move the poor people from the Rangoon area. But the poor people were working in Rangoon area. The junta did this because these people were actively involved in the country-wide demonstrations in 1988. After the military took the state power, the junta got the opportunity to take revenge against the poor people by evicting them from their old homes.

After the poor were moved to the new town, they faced the jobless problem. Now they face many difficulties for their survival. The people in this new town have a very low standard of living. Now, 90% of the people are facing the jobless problem and starvation in the new town. Their daily food is only rice soup. With food so very difficult for the poor people to get, how can they even think about education for their children?

One man said that there are six people in his family. Now, they have no jobs for their survival. His mother is 70 years old. He looks for any hard work day by day. When they have no money to buy food for the family, they have to sell even their mosquito nets, blankets and clothing. Sometimes they go without eating for some meals because of their financial crisis. Even sometimes when somebody in the family is sick, they go to the clinic and there is no medicine or doctor there. Constantly the water floods under the houses, so mosquitoes are numerous.

There are only tricycles for transportation for the people.

One young man (16 years old) said that he is a tricycle driver. There are 7 people in his family. His father was a carpenter and his mother was a hard laborer in a construction site. He attended school until the 8th standard. When their family moved to the new town, they became faced with no jobs and with starvation. So, his elder brother joined the army to support his family. Now, his parents are jobless in the new town. The SLORC sells 1.4 kilo of rice to his family for a week. When there is a lack of rice, even the SLORC can not sell the rice to the people.

Burma is a rice-cultivation country. Rice is the main export of Burma. Yet, the people are starving. The rice exports is for only the military expenses. Now, the junta is using about US\$1,500,000 for each day in the civil war.

Fourth Interview

When the military took over state power, the junta confiscated the rice fields in order to build the new town area called Hlaing Tha Ya which is on the other side of the Hlaing river in Rangoon.

Even though the rice fields were confiscated, the farmers did not get any compensation from the junta. The junta violated the 1963 law which was written to protect the farmers' rights (this law was drawn up by the revolutionary government led by former Gen. Ne Win). According to the law No.3/2, act No.1, the government can confiscate land only if:

(a) the farmers took a loan from the government and can not repay it; (b) the settlement of an inheritance can not be done peacefully; (c) law and state order have been violated.

The life of the farmers is only planting and harvesting paddy for survival. When they are landless, their survival becomes almost impossible. Since the BSPP (Burma Socialist Program Party) ruling period, the farmers have had to pay a very high tax in the form of paddy. Because the military and the BSPP are virtually the same thing, this high paddy tax simply goes to support the military. The government corporation sets a very low price for the farmer's paddy, and this makes the tax very high for the farmers. If the farmers want to purchase back their own land to build a house on after their rice fields were confiscated (without any compensation), they have to pay 1500 kyats (about US\$250) for a plot 40 feet by 20 feet.

The people from many different areas were forced to move to this new town. The junta gave many reasons to the people why they had to move, such as they were living in an eviction area needed to build a new road, market etc,. Although the people's old places were confiscated by the junta, the people had to paid 1500 kyats to get the new place in the new town. While the people were moving to the new town, they ran into many troubles. For example, the Hlaing river can be used only during the high tide when boats large enough to carry trucks to the other side of river can float. So, the people had to wait for long hours for high tide in order to move their possessions. They had nothing to eat during this time.

There are more than 5000 people living in this new town.

Now, 50% of the houses still have no walls in the new town. Forty per cent of the people are jobless and facing starvation. One dweller said that in his old place, he could do any job and his daily income was from 15 kyats to 20 kyats. Now, in the new town, although he also looks for any kind of hard work, he can not get the job for his survival.

Currently, he is jobless and facing starvation. There is only one clinic in which two nurses attend to the health needs of the people with only a few medicines. The hospital is still being built in the new town. Some serious patients died because the transportation is very difficult to go to the hospital on the Rangoon side. One medical doctor said that he knew of a patient who died for lack of 5 kyats (US\$.60).

There is only one high school and 50 very small schools for basic education. One basic school teacher said that there are three teachers for the 50 students in his school. One high school student said that there are insufficient desks in his school.

There is no cemetery in the town. The people can not take the body to the Rangoon side because of the difficult transportation. So, the people made a cemetery in one rice field.

More resettlement in Burma *Wall Street Journal*, 19 June 1990

Thousands of Burmese have been forcibly resettled to new towns from densely populated areas of Rangoon and Mandalay. Diplomats said the resettlements may have been aimed at breaking up potential centers of anti-government unrest.

Human Rights in Burma (Myanmar)- extract. Human Rights Watch May 1990

C. Forced Relocations

Diplomats have estimated that as many as 500,000 persons have been forcibly moved from their homes since 1988, 150,000 to 200,000 in Rangoon alone. Four resettlement sites have been established in the capital. The Burmese government has characterized these measures as standard economic development tools to clean up the cities and provide housing to squatters.

The government has contended that the relocations are designed to provide safe, clean housing with amenities for persons who previously lacked them. Reports that many of the new sites lack adequate housing, water, electricity and health facilities, and that some of the persons moved previously enjoyed reasonable accommodations, suggest, at the very least, that the government has not, to date, achieved its stated goals.

Furthermore, the government of Burma has failed to satisfy minimal standards of reasonableness in carrying out these forced relocations. Article 148 of the Burmese Constitution of 1974 grants every citizen the right to "settle and reside in any place within the State according to the law," and Article 161 provides that each citizen's "property and residential buildings lawfully earned ... and other lawful possessions shall be protected by law."

Asia Watch believes that these relocations are intended at least in part to serve a military and political control purpose. International human rights and humanitarian law limits the power of governments forcibly to move people from their homes. In situations of internal armed conflict, under Article 17 of Protocol II of the Geneva Conventions, forcible relocation for reasons related to the conflict may only take place to protect the security of the civilians involved or for imperative military reasons. That standard is inapplicable to the relocations underway in Burma.

Outside of the military conflict context, Article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides, "No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence ... Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference ..." Article 12 requires that, especially in the absence of emergency circumstances caused by armed conflict, no relocation should proceed prior to public notice and hearing of the plans, with the opportunity for affected citizens to present evidence before an impartial judicial body. The government should provide transportation and other assistance to facilitate the process of relocation. Those who are forced to leave their homes should be free to reside anywhere outside the zones directly affected by the relocation. Compensation should be provided. Persons who live in the relocated zones should be permitted to return to their homes following the termination of any emergency which may have served as the justification for relocation.

Under such standards, the Burmese government's forced relocations fall short in several respects:

- * The government has provided insufficient notice -- often one to two weeks -- and no opportunity for affected citizens to contest the relocation. Residents expressing opposition to the moves have been ignored or arrested for expressing their views.

For example, on March 22, 1990, the government ordered the residents of Lut Lat Ye Independence Ward in Ahlone township -- a neighborhood of over 300 families -- to dismantle their homes and move to Hlaing Thaya, a relocation site across the Rangoon River from downtown Rangoon. Independence Ward was a working class neighborhood dating from the late 1940s, which had a tradition

of opposition to government policies. In a letter to the local army-controlled Law and Order Restoration Council, eleven heads of households from the neighborhood appealed the order to move. All were reportedly arrested. In early April, fire trucks and special police vehicles arrived in the Ward and ordered residents to commence dismantling their homes. The few persons who protested were arrested. The rest complied with the order. By April 10 the neighborhood had been reduced to rubble.

- * Persons being relocated have been compelled to move to one of a few government-selected sites. A large number of those forcibly relocated have been persons squatting on religious or other property. Although many of these persons lacked adequate housing in their original locations, some have been compelled to move to areas which also suffer from sub-standard housing, as well as an absence of basic amenities

such as water and electricity. Moreover, many of these persons have reportedly been moved far outside city centers, where opportunities for regular employment are fewer than in the cities.

* In many cases, no compensation has been provided for the loss of original property. According to western diplomatic sources, a significant portion of those moved originally owned their own homes. Many of these persons have not been compensated for the land or the property which has been taken from them. Substantial numbers have been forced to pay, at varying rates, for the new property and any new materials they must purchase to build their new homes.

Asia Watch spoke with one man who had been forced to move in January, 1990 from Insein township in Rangoon to Hlaingthaya, eight to ten miles away and accessible only by ferry. The man explained that he and other residents of Insein township were given less than one month's notice by military authorities that they would have to move. When he protested to one military official that he had title to the land and the house upon it, he was told that the military owned all the land in the area, and that almost 10,000 households would have to leave. The man was afforded no opportunity to present his argument in court or to any non-military authority. The man's new house, built with the same materials from his old house, is smaller than the original. There are no medical facilities in the area. Moreover, the man reported that many persons in Hlaingthaya are without work, and are worse off than when they were living in their original neighborhoods.

* The compulsory nature of the relocation process, as well as the failure to provide notice and the harsh response of the authorities to opposition, raises serious questions as to the sincerity of the government's professed intentions. The timing of the relocation program gives cause for further concern. Although the Burmese government had previously carried out relocations in Rangoon to three satellite towns -- South Okkalapa, North Okkalapa and Thaketa -- in the late 1950s, the current wave of relocations commenced shortly after nationwide protests in 1988. Several factors suggest that, in selecting certain areas for relocation, the government has targeted neighborhoods known for their residents' anti-government sentiment.

According to diplomats in Rangoon, many of the neighborhoods targeted for relocation were those which gave widespread support to the 1988 protests. Housing and facilities are reportedly superior in sites set aside for government and military officials who have been moved. Observers have suggested that this may represent an effort to bolster support for the regime among civil servants.

Furthermore, irregularities in the voting registration process have been reported from some of the new relocation sites.

In some cases, persons have reportedly experienced difficulties re-registering as voters in their new homes. One opposition party leader estimated that the forced relocation to four new satellite towns in Rangoon would result in the disenfranchisement of 20,000 voters.

The City of Yangon Development Law State Law and Order Restoration Council, 14
May 1990

**The State Law and Order Restoration Council
The City of Yangon Development Law
(The State Law and Order Restoration Council Law No. 11/90)
The 6th Waning Day of Kason, 1352 M.E.
(14th May, 1990)**

The State Law and Order Restoration Council hereby enacts the following

**Chapter 1
Title and Definition**

1. This Law shall be called the City of Yangon Development Law.
2. The following expressions contained in this Law shall have the meanings given hereunder:-
 - (a) Committee means the City of Yangon Development Committee formed under this Law;
 - (b) Head of Office means the Head of the Service Personnel of City of Yangon Development Committee Office.

**Chapter II
Formation**

3. In order to carry out the development works of the City of Yangon effectively, the Chairman of the State Law and Order Restoration Council shall form the City of Yangon Development Committee comprising a minimum of 7 members and a maximum of 15 members. If necessary, the number of members may be increased. Such formation shall be made with suitable citizens.
4. In forming the Committee under Section 3, the Chairman of the State Law Order Restoration Council shall, at the same time determine the Chairman Secretary of the Committee.
5. The Chairman of the Committee is the Mayor of Yangon.
6. The Head of Office is the Joint Secretary of the Committee.

**Chapter III
Duties and Responsibilities of the Committee**

7. The Committee shall, in respect of the following duties and responsibilities, lay down the policy, give guidance, supervise or implement:-

- (a) preparation of civil projects and establishment of new towns within the limits of the City of Yangon Municipality;
- (b) administration of lands within the limits of the City of Yangon Municipality;
- (c) determining only the population which should be allowed to settle properly in the City of Yangon;
- (d) construction, repairing and demolition of buildings;
- (e) demolition and re-settlement of squatter huts, squatter buildings and squatter wards;
- (f) construction of roads, bridges and maintenance thereof;
- (g) stipulation of conditions for traffic and parking of vehicles and slow-moving vehicles;
- (h) construction of gardens, parks, playgrounds and recreation centres and maintenance thereof;
- (i) carrying out works for lighting of roads;
- (j) carrying out works for water supply;
- (k) construction of reservoirs and pipelines and maintenance thereof;
- (l) carrying out works for sanitation;
- (in) carrying out works for public health;
- (n) construction, maintenance and administration of markets;
- (o) stipulation of conditions in respect of roadside stalls;
- (p) carrying out precautionary measures against fire.

8. The committee shall, in addition to the duties and responsibilities contained in Section 7 also carry out other duties and responsibilities prescribed by the City of Yangon Municipal Act, rules and bye-laws.

Chapter IV **Powers of the Committee**

9. The powers of the Committee are as follows:-

- (a) demarcation and re-demarcation of the territorial limit of the City of Yangon Municipality;
- (b) having the right to operate works independently with funds owned by the Committee;
- (c) prescribing, revising, assessing and collecting duties and taxes and their rates relating to development works, in accordance with the existing laws;
- (d) having the right to apply the foreign currency derived from the lease of buildings, lease of lands or by other means, for development works;
- (e) having the right to carry out works contributing to city development by making contacts with local and foreign organizations and with local and foreign individuals;
- (f) having the right to take loans and grants from the Government or from foreign organizations on its own responsibility;
- (g) having the right to carry out works by forming sub-committee work-wise;
- (h) arranging modern methods and systems in order to carry out development works more effectively;
- (i) exercising the powers conferred under the City of Yangon Municipal Act, rules and

bye-laws;

(j) exercising the powers conferred from time to time by the Chairman of the State Law and Order Restoration Council.

10. Notwithstanding anything contained in the existing City of Yangon Municipal Act, State Housing and Town and Country Development Board Act and other existing laws, powers in respect of formulation and implementation of civil projects, establishment of new towns and administration of town lands within the limits of the City of Yangon Municipality, shall vest in the Committee.

11. The Committee may, in carrying out its duties and responsibilities act in consultation with the departments concerned if necessary.

Chapter V Finance

12. The Committee shall subsist on its own funds. In addition, it shall take responsibility for all its financial matters.

13. The Committee shall open a separate bank account for its funds and shall have the power to apply such funds for development works. Funds not immediately required for use may be invested in a suitable manner.

14. The Committee shall open a separate bank account for foreign currency accrued to it and shall have the power to apply such foreign currency for development works.

15. The Committee shall submit and report to the Chairman of the State Law and Order Restoration Council annual budget estimates prepared and submitted by the Head of Office and the progress of the annual finance and auditing work within 90 days of the end of the financial year. -

Chapter VI Organizational Set-up

16. The Committee shall draw and confirm the necessary organizational set-up based on the duties and responsibilities.

17. The Committee may, in preparing the organizational set-up under Section 16 include the following personnel contributing to the development works, after consultation with the departments concerned:-

- (a) service personnel carrying out the duty of precautionary measures against disease;
- (b) service personnel carrying out the duty of precautionary measures against fire;
- (c) members of Municipal Police Force and other service personnel carrying out the duty of security and maintenance of discipline.

18. The Committee, in appointing service personnel:-

(a) has the power to appoint within the organizational set-up, in accordance with the existing regulations and bye-laws;

(h) may appoint by transfer service personnel who would be able to carry out effectively the development works, in consultation with the departments concerned.

19. In appointing service personnel, the Committee shall not apply in excess of 30 per cent of the annual income accrued.

20. In order that the Head of Office may manage the service personnel, the Committee shall confer as may be necessary powers relating to service affairs to the Head of Office.

Chapter VII

Maintenance of Fund and Auditing of Accounts

21. In order that the Head of Office may maintain the accounts systematically and to enable auditing thereof, the Committee shall prescribe accounts procedures in consultation with the Auditor-General. Accounts shall be maintained in accordance with the accounts procedures so prescribed.

22. The Committee shall cause the accounts maintained by the Head of Office to be audited by the person assigned responsibility by the Auditor-General.

Chapter VIII

Miscellaneous

23. The Committee has the right to carry out the development works at its discretion. However, works involving policy shall be carried out only after obtaining the approval of the Chairman of the State Law and Order Restoration Council.

24. The Committee shall operate under its own name and common seal, and shall have perpetual succession and power to sue and be sued in its corporate name.

25. In order to have speedy trial and disposal of municipal cases involving commission of offences for which proceedings have been instituted in respect of the City of Yangon Municipal Act, rules, bye-laws, orders and directives, the Committee shall carry out in consultation with the Supreme Court for opening of Courts at appropriate places within the limits of the City of Yangon Municipality.

26. Funds owned by the previous Yangon City Development Committee or Board, moveable and immoveable property, works in the process of execution, works which have been completed, assets and liabilities shall devolve respectively on the Committee.

27. The Committee shall apply the following existing laws, rules, bye-laws and orders in so far as they are not contrary to the spirit and concepts of this Law:-

- (a) The City Development Law and orders issued hereunder;
- (b) The City of Yangon Municipal Act, rules, bye-laws and orders.

28. For the purpose of carrying out the provisions of this Law, the Committee:-

- (a) may, with the approval of the Chairman of the State Law and Order Restoration Council, issue necessary rules;
- (b) may issue necessary orders, directives and procedures.

Sd./ Saw Maung
Senior General
Chairman
The State Law and Order Restoration Council

New Town Construction *The Working People's Daily*, 18 and 29 April 1990 via *The Burma Press Summary*

Apr. 17: Speaking in Dagon Myothit, State LORC Secretary (1) Maj-Gen. Khin Nyunt said: "If 25 per cent of the construction work is not completed by 30 April the plot of land allotted to the service personnel will be confiscated. There are over 60,000 applicants for plots of land and confiscated land will be allotted to those among them on priority basis for second time. Those who have been allotted plots of land in the second stage are required to complete the construction work by the end of May this year. Since the Dagon Myothit is too vast an area there will be the Township LORC (North) and the Township LORC (South) for facilitating supervision work."

Apr. 28: In a further speech in Dagon Myothit, State LORC Secretary (1) Maj-Gen. Khin Nyunt said "Service personnel should carry out their construction work on the basis of availability of construction materials. If they do so we will not [rpt. not] confiscate their land plots though 25 per cent of their construction work has not completed yet."

Squatters Warned *The Working People's Daily*, 20 February 1990 via *The Burma Press Summary*

Feb. 16: The Yangon City Development Committee reminds that construction of homes and buildings in Yangon requires a permit from the Committee. "Builders of squatter houses have been asked to dismantle their homes and they have been allotted sites for constructing houses in suitable new towns and villages. If such squatter houses are built again they will be destroyed and action taken against those who did so."

Burma: Clearing out the opposition Bertil Lintner, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Vol. 147, No. 4, 25 Jan 1990

Since the State Law and Order Restoration Council (Slorc) seized power in Burma on 18 September 1988, all major roads in Rangoon have been broadened, many new parks have been built and footbridges have been erected at major intersections. The renovation work in the once-neglected capital is aimed at impressing foreign businessmen, whom the government hopes will bail out the country's shattered economy.

But the cost of the renovation in human terms has been steep. In central Rangoon, hundreds of houses -- many owned by the same families for generations, have been razed and their occupants forcibly evicted with no compensation. Most families have been resettled in shanty towns, located far outside the city, at a cost to them of at least kyats 5,000 (US\$751.8) each.

Rangoon residents claim that some of the houses demolished without compensation -- including those torn down in Hledan township to make way for a road -- were worth as much as Kyats 500,000.

Politics lie behind some of the forced evictions, Burmese sources say. The first victims of Slorc's city planning strategy lived near the Defence Ministry's offices in central Rangoon. Many of them had participated in the student-led, countrywide pro-democracy demonstrations of mid-1988.

In April 1989, 800 households comprising more than 3,000 people were evicted and their houses demolished. These families were resettled in bamboo shacks in Waybagi, a dusty plain on the northern outskirts of Rangoon. Ten elderly people died in the move.

Since then, similar "satellite towns" have been built in Dagon Myothit, east of Rangoon, and in Hlaing Thayar and Okpo to the north.

Observers say hundreds of families were recently evicted from Bahan township in Rangoon, where Aung San Sun Kyi, the detained general secretary of the National League for Democracy, Burma's main opposition party, is registered as a candidate for national elections scheduled for May. In the past month, more than 500 houses have been demolished in Bahan.

There are even reports that the government is planning to relocate Rangoon University and turn its campus into an army camp. The university has always been the centre of political activism in the capital. A new site for the university outside the city is being considered by the government, Burmese sources claim.

New Townships Planned *The Working People's Daily*, 2, 11 & 16 June, 1989 via *The Burma Press Summary*

June 1: Plans for upgrading Dagon Myothit on the east side of Rangoon to township level, before the May elections, were discussed. Dagon Myothit will have 20,000 40' x 60' plots of land, to be given on a priority basis to homeless service personnel from 12 government departments. Ultimately, it will have a population of 200,000, with full services and facilities. Similarly, Hlaing Thaya Myothit is being erected on the west side of Rangoon, "in order to turn Rangoon into a metropolitan city." Other new towns being built around Rangoon are Shwe Pyitha, Waybagi, and Aye Mya Thaya.

June 10: Hlaingthaya Myothit will have an area of 26 sq. miles, and Dagon Myothit 33 sq. miles, the latter subject to increase if needed.

June 15: Dagon New Town has been extended to 107 sq. miles, said Brig-Gen. Myo Thit. Located at the entrance to Rangoon city, and the second largest township [in the Division?], it will thrive after the completion of the Syriam bridge.

Squatters Removed *The Working People's Daily*, 16 December 1988 via *The Burma Press Summary*

Dec. 15: Rangoon Commander Brig-Gen. Myo Nyunt said "7,000 households from squatters in the Rangoon City Development area" had been removed, and that aid was requested in removing the squatter huts.

Rice Shortage in Rangoon *The Working People's Daily*, 14, 16 & 18 September 1988 via *The Burma Press Summary*

Sept. 13: U Nu, Patron of the League for Peace and Democracy, said that there is a rice shortage in Rangoon, but plenty in rural areas, and called for help in resolving transport problems. He asked rice traders to render assistance.
The Working People's Daily, 14 September 1988

Sept. 15: The Yankin Township kyaung-haing Sayadaw-gyi-mya htaukphan-yay Aphwe and the myanma-pyi lungai toetetyay athin (Yankin Township branch) have brought in 565 bags of rice to sell at reasonable prices to people who are really in need.
The Working People's Daily, 16 September 1988

Sept. 15: The ke-ze-haik-pant-yay aphwe (relief committee)—Maha-yangon of the Buddha Sasana Nuggaha Organization was formed at the Mahasi Sasana Yeiktha on Sept. 15, with representation from the Buddha Sasana Organization, Tipitakadhara Niyaka, Jivatadana Hospital, YMBA, Hindu religious association and Burma Muslim

association, to help people buy rice at reasonable prices and to distribute rice free to the poor. Receiving points for donations are given; those wishing to sell and buy rice may enquire at No. 334/336 Strand Street (corner of 28th Street) or telephone to 85790 or 80024. *The Working People's Daily*, 18 September 1988

"A Demographic and Ecological Study of Rangoon, Burma" Robert Redick, 1953.

There is a 1961 University of Chicago Ph.D. dissertation by a geographer named Robert Redick, entitled "A Demographic and Ecological Study of Rangoon, Burma, 1953." It employs historical census data and colonial-era sources such as Pearn's A HISTORY OF RANGOON and makes a couple of points that are relevant for the post-1988 period:

(1) For topographical and political-economic reasons, Rangoon's population since the British occupation began in 1852 has always been densely concentrated in the Central Business District fronting the Rangoon River, causing poor housing conditions, poor sanitation, disease, etc. The area north of downtown has always been less densely populated. The reasons for this are: (i) Rangoon is a "peninsula" bounded by three rivers that have not, until recently, been spanned by bridges; (ii) prime upland areas north of downtown were taken over by the British government and military, including the large Cantonment west of the Shwedagon; (iii) communication from the old downtown to the northern areas was hampered by poor roads and the government "restricted zones"; and (iv) the colonial export-economy required large numbers of cheap migrant laborers, mostly Indians, who worked in the rice mills and on the docks and had to be housed in tenements nearby.

(2) Because of the tumult and unhealthy congestion of the downtown area, governments have tried to promote resettlement out of the Central Business District since at least 1921, when the Rangoon Development Trust reclaimed land along the rivers for residential purposes (previously, they were swamps), established the Rangoon University campus on the southwestern shores of Victoria (Inya) Lake, and opened up new north-south roads to encourage development of the outlying areas. This means that massive urban resettlement schemes such as were implemented by the Caretaker Government in 1958-60 and by the SLORC in 1989-90 were not without precedent, though the methods used by these military regimes seem to have been more coercive than those used by the British.

From my own observation, the post-1988 resettlement may have been as massive as claimed by observers (half a million), but the Central Business District remains extremely crowded, especially with people working in the informal sector as street vendors or day laborers. Some people I have talked to claim that many of these downtown people actually live in the new satellite towns, but because of lack of economic opportunities where they live make a daily commute to the downtown to earn a very small income - a huge hardship for them and their families, since the commute may take 2 hours each way. There are no recent figures on the population of the downtown area (or Rangoon as

a whole), so it is hard to say whether the post-1988 resettlement succeeded in reducing the downtown area's permanent population.
