

# The Mon Forum

Issue No. 3/2004

March 31, 2004

The Publication of Human Rights Foundation of Monland (BURMA)

## Contents

### News:

- (1) Mon National Conference condemned to SPDC for 'human rights violations' in Mon areas

### Report:

- (1) Eviction by Salween Bridge (Moulmein) Project and Rangoon-Moulmein Railway Project in Mon State

## Some Acronyms in This Issue

SPDC-	State Peace and Development Council,
SLORC-	State Law and Order Restoration Council,
IB -	Infantry Battalion (of Burmese Army),
LIB-	Light Infantry Battalion (of Burmese Army),
BBC-	British Broadcasting Cooperation
MOMC-	Military Operational Management Command
PDC-	Peace and Development Council,
IMNA-	Independent Mon News Agency (IMNA)
DVB-	Democratic Voice of Burma

## News

### Mon National Conference condemned to SPDC for 'human rights violations' in Mon areas

In statement issued after the meeting of Mon National Conference in New Mon State Party's controlled area, the Mon representatives condemned for the human rights violations committed by the Burma's regime and its armed force, Burmese Army.

The statement which described the current political situation in Burma, about the Mon political prisoners, and the SPDC's coming National Convention also expressed that the human rights violations happened in various parts of Mon areas especially in southern part of Ye Township, Mon State, are connected to the militarization policy implemented by the regime.

In the statement, it said, "most lands belonged to the Mon civilians have been confiscated because of military extension in Mon areas. We found that especially human rights violations in the southern part of Ye Township is also a restraint to the National Reconciliation that all of us plan to build up. We, from the Conference, also urge (the regime) to stop all human rights violations and to give full compensation for all confiscated lands."



The conference on Mon National affairs and Mon State constitution

## Political Development and Human Rights Issue

After adopting 7-points road map, the current military regime in Burma, State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) plans to convene a National Convention in May 2004 with their majority hand-picked representatives and to draw a Constitution that guarantees the right of the army to involve in the politics.

While the regime, SPDC, is planning to convene the National Convention, the pro-democracy leader, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and many political detainees are still in house arrests and in notorious prisons countrywide.

At the same time, many political parties are banned since 1990 general elections, the representatives of those political parties including some parties which won the elections are not allowed to attend this Convention. Similarly, the regime has totally oppressed the rights of freedom of expression, freedom of association, and other basic human rights.

On the other hand, the regime's Burmese Army still launches the intensive military offensives against the ethnic nationalities in the border areas, many innocent civilians are suffered from the summary killing, arbitrary arrest and detention, degrading or inhumane torture, forced labour, sexual violations against women and offering of unofficial tax. The fighting between the Burmese Army and the different ethnic nationalities is still on-going situation. Hence, the representatives of armed fighting organizations are not invited to this convention.

The holding of National Convention should aim for the National Reconciliation and for the long-term and sustainable political settlement, and it should respect the political opinions and ideas of all different political organizations. If the NC does not aim these things, the restoration of human rights and 'rule of law' will be neglected at all.

Over 100 representatives from various parts and various civil society organizations, political organizations, and overseas Mon organizations, attended the Conference, which held from March 14 to March 18.

In southern part of Ye Township, while the Burmese Army has been launching military offensives against a Mon splinter group, the civilians have been inhumanely suffered from summary execution, arbitrary arrests and detentions, (women were) sexually violated, restriction of movement, looting, etc. (See in *The Mon Forum*, Issue No. 1/2004, 2/2004 in the HURFOM's Web-site: [www.rehmonnya.org](http://www.rehmonnya.org).)

Since 1999, the Burmese Army has been confiscated many thousands acres of land, which are with orchid and rubber trees, belonged to the Mon farmers in northern, eastern and southern part of Ye Township. Until now, the Burmese Army did not give any compensation cost to those farmers. (See the details in HURFOM's report: *NO LAND TO EARM*; or in HURFOM's Web-site: [www.rehmonnya.org](http://www.rehmonnya.org).)

Besides human rights violations and land confiscation issue, the Conference also called to unconditionally release the Mon leaders, who are in prison since 1998, because of their political belief and supports to the Committee for Representing People's Parliament

(CRPP). CRPP was formed Burma's main democratic party led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, National League for Democracy (NLD) and other ethnic parties that comprised of the members of parliament or people representatives who won seats in 1990 General Elections.

Three Mon political leaders from Mon National Democratic Front (MNDF) are currently in jails. They are Mr. Nai Ngwe Thein, an Executive Committee member of MNDF; Dr. Min Soe Lin, General Secretary of MNDF and MP from Ye Township of Mon State; and Dr. Min Kyi Win, Joint-Secretary of MNDF. Among three political leaders, Mr. Nai Ngwe Thein is over 80 years old and he suffers from worst health situation of urinary infections and hypertension.

The Conference also called for 'tri-partite' political dialogue for the best solution of national reconciliation in Burma. Tri-partite dialogue is a resolution adopted by UN General Assembly for years, to have a political dialogue among three groups: democratic force, armed force and ethnic nationalities force in Burma.

■ ■ ■

## Report

# Eviction by Salween Bridge (Moulmein) Project and Rangoon-Moulmein Railway Project in Mon State

## I. Background of forced relocation and eviction in southern Burma

During five-decade-long civil war in Burma, there have been many separate and compiled reports and pieces of news on forced relocation of the local ethnic civilians in Burma. In the war between the non-Burman ethnic groups and the troops of Burmese Army (the armed faction of successive military governments in Rangoon), the local ethnic Karen, Karenni, Mon, Shan, Kachin, Palaung, and etc. are always accused as 'rebel-supporters', and so that as a result, a lot of their village communities have been forcibly relocated to not get any contacts by the Burmese Army.

The local ethnic civilians have been suffered by this types of 'eviction' or 'forced location' related to war and violence conflict since 1970s. During these years, the Burmese Army adopted a 'four-cuts campaign' strategy in their attempts to cut information, recruitment, food supplies and sheltering that support by the ethnic civilians to rebel soldiers.

In the implementation of this campaign, the Burmese Army set up many 'concentration relocation camps' round their army bases and in the main roads where their soldiers could easily control. Then they forced the local ethnic villagers into these camps. Currently there are many relocation camps in Shan State, Kayeh (Karenni) State, Karen State, Mon State, and Tenasserim Division along Thailand-Burma border.

The eviction of rural ethnic villagers or forced relocation along with four-cuts campaign have been conducted mainly by the Burmese Army since 1970s until now. Although there is the forced relocation of the ethnic villagers have decreased after ceasefire, but it still happened in the last offensives launched by the troops of Burmese Army against a Mon splinter group in southern part of Ye Township<sup>1</sup>.

During the BSPP<sup>2</sup> or Socialist Era (1962-1988), there were less 'eviction' in cities or in the areas under the control of the regime, because the military regime at the time do not have any program of development or investment.

In 1988 after the pro-democracy uprising and power seizure by the military regime in Burma, the eviction of the city residents was implemented by the then military government, State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC). The SLORC created many satellite towns outside of Rangoon, the capital of Burma, during 1990-1992, and forced thousands of civilians from the city to those towns. The regime claimed that they did not any 'slum' wards in town and forced them to stay in the new places of satellite towns, where the regime could not provide sufficient water and electricity. However, the people in Rangoon, believed that eviction was planned under a SPDC's strategic plan to have easy control over Rangoon residents if there was another uprising.

During 1988 pro-democracy uprising, the civilians from almost slum city wards or quarters were actively involving in the demonstration because they wanted restoration of democracy in Burma. Most of them are unemployed, poor, lack of income, oppressed and so that they expect that if there was 'democracy' in the country, their life would be better. Hence, they were active in the pro-democracy uprising.

Since 1988, after they seized political power from pro-democracy demonstrators, the regime declared that Burma changed the economy system from centralized economy to open market economy<sup>3</sup>. Then, it have invested foreign companies in Burma's in real estates, construction, energy exploration, logging, fishing, etc. Many foreign companies arrived to Rangoon and Mandalay, the second largest city of Burma. Many Chinese business people also mainly invest their businesses in Mandalay, upper Burma.

<sup>1</sup>See The Mon Forum No. 1/2003 and No. 2/2003, "Terror in Southern Part of Ye Township"

<sup>2</sup>BSPP stands for Burmese Socialist Programme Party led by the former military dictator, Gen. Ne Win and rule Burma for 26 years until the student led pro-democracy uprising in 1988

<sup>3</sup> Although the regime claimed it opened up the country economy, but in reality, it just sold the country's natural resources, logs, fishes, gas, lands, plantations and others to foreign companies. Most profits went into the pockets of the generals

The cities' residents suffered again for eviction when the foreign investments arrived into Burma. The households of the civilians in many city were forced to move and the military government sold those lands to foreign companies. As Burma has been ruled under the iron fists of the regime, no city residents shout out in the streets because of eviction. Some received a small amount compensation, while so many families could not get any compensation for their lands or houses.

Recently with a plan to construct 'Asia Railway' the governments of India, Bangladesh, Burma, Thailand, Vietnam have discuss to connect a railway from India to Vietnam. If this railway is actually built, it passed through into Mon State.

As a connection of this Asia railway, currently, the military regime in Burma, State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) planned to build a bridge across a main river in Burma, Salween<sup>4</sup>, and the regime also built a railway on the bridge and will continues into the middle of the city. The regime calls it as 'Salween Bridge (Moulmein) and Rangoon-Moulmein Railway Project', because of this Project, over one thousands families in Moulmein, the capital of Mon State, recently face 'eviction'.

## II. Location Bridge and Railway and a Major Eviction

The Salween Bridge and the extent railway is locating in north-western part of Moulmein, the capital of Mon State, in southern part of Burma. When this bridge is built across the mouth of the Salween river it became the longest bridge in Burma. The bridge is long 11575 feets and the construction have taken place for four years. *(Please see the location map of Salween Bridge on Page 6.)*

There is a formal railway from Rangoon to Mottama, on the other side of the Salween River, this is the main route for the civilians in Mon State to travel from Mon State to Rangoon, the capital of Burma. The trains in this route are used to transport, passengers, goods and other things from Mon State to Rangoon then to upper Burma. Currently, the regime is planning that after completion of the bridge, they would extend the Rangoon-Mottama railway up to the middle part of Moulmein city. Thus, it is also well-known as 'Rangoon-Moulmein Railway', which will be long about 178 miles.

If the railway is built, it passes through about 6 City Wards<sup>5</sup> to reach in the middle part of city. The building



The construction of Salween Bridge (Moulmein)

of this railway is aimed for the future business and transports in the region. It plans to have railway road from Moulmein then to Thailand along the Japanese era's death railway, which was built during WWII<sup>6</sup>.

Recently, in Burma, whenever eviction of the civilians happened in the any parts of city, there was no compensation to those families. In the recent a minor eviction when the regime cleared the areas to build the bottom of 'Salween bridge', about

100 families of civilians in the bottom of the bridge were relocated. Those families were not paid any compensation cost. Those families were forcibly relocated in eastern part of the city.

This is not the end of the story. In 2001, the Mon State authorities and SPDC's Construction Ministry conducted a survey to build the railway across into the city. Under this plan, the people in Moulmein have

<sup>4</sup> Salween river is the longest river in Burma that passes eastern part of Burma and flow across most ethnic nationalities: Kachin, Shan, Karenni, Karen and Mon areas

<sup>5</sup> Use term City Ward because in almost wards they have big population, rather than using term City Quarter

<sup>6</sup> During the WWII, thousands of POW (prisoners of war) were forced to build a Japanese railway from Thailand's Kanchanaburi town to Burma's Thanbyuzayat. Thousands of POW died in this railway.

known that there would be major relocation of civilians and many of them concerned they would suffer from this development project.

Before the eviction was really taken place, the Mon State authorities have unofficially released some information that 'there would be a major development occurred in Mon State, and the people will have better opportunity for communication and transport' after building of the bridge and railway.

The plan of building of the railway really occurred at the beginning of 2003, and the Mon State authorities, and Engineers from SPDC's Construction Ministry set the route of the Rangoon-Moulmein Railway that connects southern part of the Salween Bridge into the city. Normally, as about 8 miles long railway is long is measured in straightway, it passes across many houses in six city wards in middle of Moulmein, where the residents' houses and population are crowded.

Moulmein is an old city of Burma, which was established by British colony during Anglo-Burmese second war in 1880s, it has overcrowded with 240, 000 population<sup>7</sup>. There is about 15 city wards in the city and houses are built so close. Even though the route for the set railway is not so long passes through into the city, however, the route crossed into about 1200 families' houses.

The official orders came up to relocate these houses in September 2003. The officials and the engineers actually set the route and ordered that the houses along the route must be moved as quick as possible. The authorities also promised they would pay compensation cost to every house accordingly to the actual market prices.

### III. Eviction of Houses and City Residents

The railway passes through into six city wards in Moulmein. It started from the southern part of 'Salween Bridge', crosses into six city wards and then terminated in Myay-ni-gone city ward. Because of this Rangoon-Moulmein railway project, the civilians who have lived along the route between the 'Salween Bridge' and terminal stations were ordered to relocate themselves.

No.	Names of city ward	Household number	Population
1.	Madalay	100	530
2.	Out-kyin	250	1300
3.	Hlaing	400	2200
4.	Myay-ni-gone	250	1250
5.	Zay-cho	100	520
6.	Thiri-myaing	100	500
<b>Total</b>		<b>1200</b>	<b>6300</b>

The *approximated* household number and population, who suffered from this Rangoon-Moulmein railway project are as below<sup>8</sup>:

Under this plan, thousands of civilians were suffered and the order came out that all of them must be completely moved from their houses within one-month, in September 2003. Civilians were ordered that they must destroy their own houses and moved with their own arrangement.

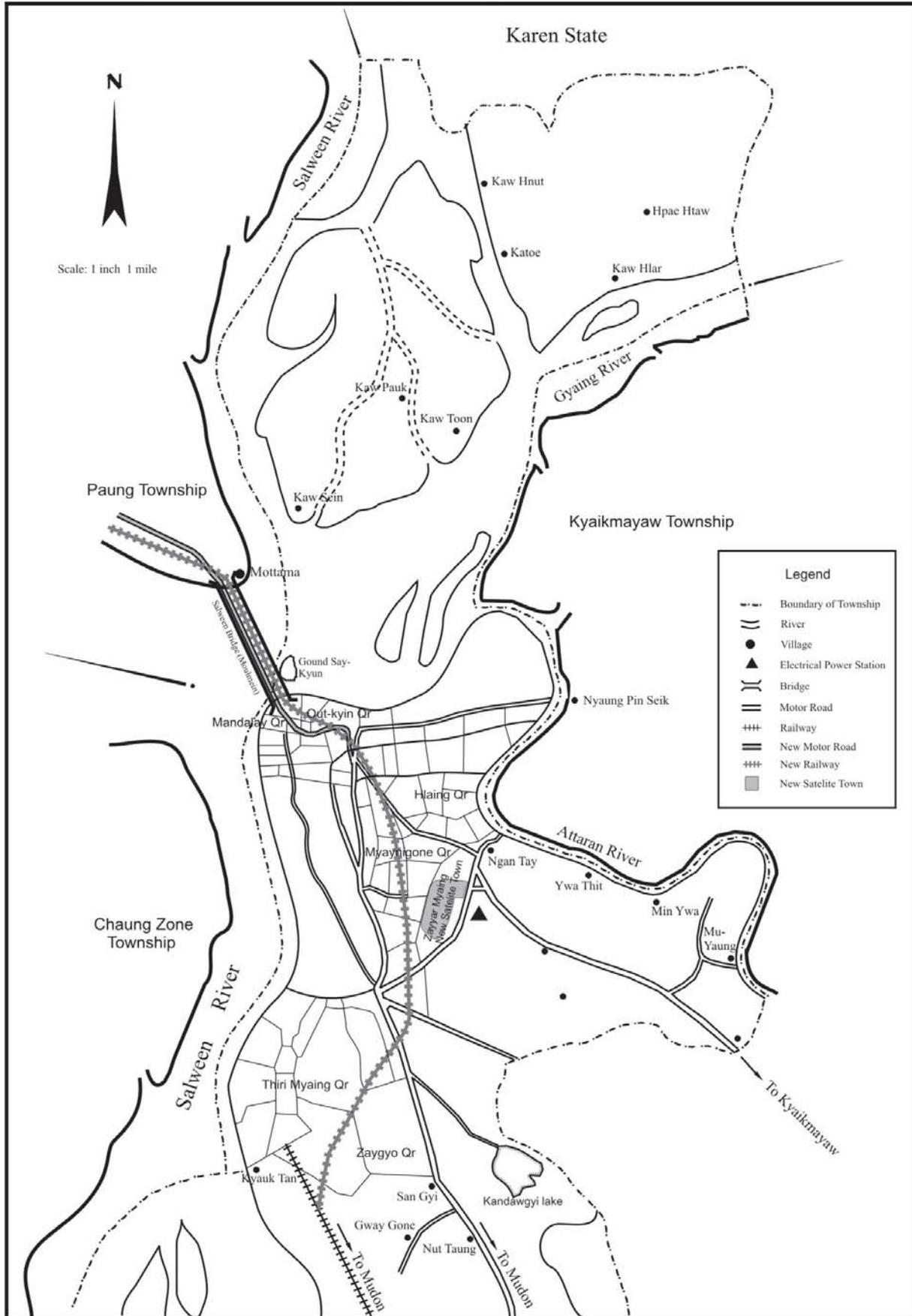
The order by the local Mon State authorities in Moulmein came up in mid-September and at that time, as the authorities were not really setting up a new ward or satellite town to set up these relocated families. The order really made 'shock' to the civilians in the city. Although the authorities set a place, in eastern part of the city, there was no preparation for house and garden spaces, roads, water supplies, electricity and sub-wards in that place.

In September 2003, Moulmein City authorities said that they would not provide any types compensation to the houses and their residents' properties, but they said they would pay only 'labour cost' to quickly destroyed.

<sup>7</sup> In the first Anglo-Burmese War during 1860s, the British colony occupied the lower part of Burma

<sup>8</sup> HURFOM human rights workers could not exactly know number of the population and house holds and just talked with the local communities and estimated the number of households and population

Map of Moulmein Township, Railway Project and New Satellite Town



The household families who were under the order of ‘eviction’ much dissatisfied to the authorities and thought they would lose every thing like the civilians, who suffered from the previous ‘eviction’ for various types of development projects.

Among the houses which were ordered to move, over 50% of the houses were built in bricks and the household would lose every thing and they could not bring these bricks along with them. Those destroyed bricks could not be used while re-building the new houses. The remaining houses are built with wooden materials and roofed by iron sheets. However, the household families had to abandon nearly all of household building materials because these materials were so old and became waste after they destroyed their houses.

There were some rumor appeared that if the Mon State authorities set the new city ward, the relocated families also need to buy those lands. Although the authorities did not say the price of land space, of 80 feet in length and 60 feet in width, in new ward, the civilians thought they would be forced to buy these new lands.

The relocated families felt 'disappointed' and 'angry' for the mis-management and mis-treatment conducted by the authorities.

Such information of 'eviction' and unclear instruction and no plan for compensation appeared up in the media attention. Foreign Burmese language radio, such as British Broadcasting Cooperation (BBC), and an Burmese pro-democracy radio based in Norway, Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB) and the local Mon media groups, Independent Mon News Agency (IMNA) and Kao Wao News Group reported about the regime's ignorance of this forced relocation or eviction, which would suffer over 6000 people in third biggest city of Burma.

Because of media attention, complaints and arguments against the SPDC's mis-treatment, the regime had to decide for a standstill of their activities and asked reports from the Mon State authorities how to manage for the resettlement of the civilians. Because of the disclosure of their mis-treatment to the civilians in the media and information, it also reached to ears of SPDC leaders. As a result, that forced relocation or eviction delayed for months.

At the end, SPDC's top generals have to speak out for this plan of relocation of over one-thousand households and over 6000 population from the middle of Moulmein city because of their bridge and railway project<sup>9</sup>.

Accordingly to an order by Vice-Chairman of the SPDC's Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Commander-in-Chief (Army) Senior General Maung Aye on October 1, those 1200 houses with an insecure promise of full compensation cost to the local city residents. After his order, the local authorities have said, the houses must be destroyed and must be moved immediately which causing a loss of over 1000 million Kyats (about 1.2 million US Dollar) worth of property.

Although the order by a top General came out, the authorities did not pay any compensation cost until the end of 2003, but the Mon State authorities especially Moulmein City Municipal adopted a project of 'Zaya-myaing New Satellite Town, City Extension Project', and set up a Satellite town or City ward, Zaya-myaing, in eastern part of Moulmein.

#### **IV. Setting Up Satellite Town**

The SPDC Mon State authorities set a new satellite town, in eastern part of city, to where the relocated families have to go for 3 miles long. Over 1200 houses were destroyed and their inhabitants relocated by SPDC authorities, in the course of the 11, 575 feet long Salween Bridge construction and Rangoon-Moulmein Railway Project into Moulmein city.

In the new satellite town, Zaya-myaing, the authorities have categorized 3 types of land space, and there are (*See the draft sketch of the Satellite Town – Zayar-myaing on Page 9*):

- 573 plots of 40 feet x 60 feet of land,
- 438 plots of 60 feet x 60 feet of land,
- 181 plots of 60 feet x 80 feet of land,

For the first type plot of lands, the City municipal authorities wanted to resettled the relocated families, who have small houses while they were in origin houses. The families, who have small wooden houses and brick houses were ordered to settle in these plots of lands on the basis of lottery, when they selected their a plot of lands.

<sup>9</sup> Accordingly to the Mon ceasefire group New Mon State Party source, the SPDC selected three routes to build this railway and at the end Senior-General Maung Aye decide to take the route across six city wards in Moulmein. If the regime select one of another two routes which are longer than this one, less number of city residents will suffer

For the second type plot of lands, the City municipal authorities instructed the relocated families who have medium size of houses were ordered to settle in these plots of lands on the basis of lottery in selecting the lands. Whether they have their houses (in medium size) with woods or bricks in their original City Wards, but they have to take these plots of lands without any so many choices.

For the third type plot of lands, the City municipal authorities instructed the relocated families, who have good and big wooden or brick houses to take these plots of lands. The plot of lands also big and it is suitable for the rich people to live in these plots of lands.

Normally, the civilians did not have many choices and complaint to the authorities about the new satellite town. Whether they like to stay at the new satellite town or not, they must have to select the new plots of lands.

This new satellite town is set up in a paddy field where is in flooded situation during the rainy season because it locates in valley areas. In rainy season, accordingly to the local residents, a lot of water from the higher part of Moulmein city falls into the area, where the new satellite city was set up and most of them preferred they would not like to stay. But as they have no choice and they could not make any complaints to the authorities.

But the authorities provided various facilities in the new satellite town. They built three main types of roads: 80 feet in width for 8, 810 feet; 60 feet in width for 1, 097 feet; 40 feet in width for 40, 747 feet; in the section of the town and these roads divided the satellite town in many sections.

The authorities dug about 10 artesian wells in the different and build 10 water tanks for each well and they planned to keep water supply for the whole relocated families. Then they also built 3 small wooden bridges across small streams and about 25 round concrete bridge. They promised they would also provide electricity for those who settled in the town.

The authorities agreed to sell 100 bags of cements for each house to those who planned to build brick house with a low price in order to attract more relocated families to come into the new town. The price of 50 Kilograms bag of cement is 1500 Kyat (1.5 US Dollar) offered by the authorities.

However, as the lands are used to grow paddy previously, the civilians to prepare them again to be able to build houses and create gardens. They have to fill up earth on the plots of lands to get higher to avoid flood.

Until the end of March 2004, among the 1200 families who were ordered to relocate, ONLY around 200-300 families have really completed building their houses and most families still could not decide to stay in the new town, even they have plots of lands. Some families said that they would 'wait and see' what would happen in the coming rainy season.

Although some families wanted to sell these plots of lands to other people, but no body want to buy these lands because it is in low-land areas. Those families who tried to sell their lands have remained 'displaced' after their houses were destroyed because they decided to not move into new satellite town.

The relocated civilians in six city wards as mentioned above were directly effected in this project and the residents in city wards were ordered to relocate as quickly as possible. Nearly 6,000 people (inhabitants of 1200 houses) were displaced while only little number of families decided to stay in satellite town.

## **V. Compensation Process**

At their relocation destination, the displaced people were provided with new lands as compensation depend on their original land size. The relocated families are granted land available for housing in Zayar-myaing new satellite which located in eastern part of Moulmein city, near by Phet-khin and Ngan-tae City Wards. (See the draft sketch of the Satellite Town – Zayar-myaing on Page 9)

As the plan has been well-known accordingly to the media attention and to avoid any blame from the civilians and SPDC's top generals, Mon State authorities have paid full compensation cost. This is so different with the previous 'eviction' and 'forced relocation' happened in the country.

A source from the HURFOM's human rights workers, who learned the whole development of the project confirmed that the authorities compensated for both lands and houses at market price to the residents in all six City Wards. But the set compensated price were varied of the types of houses: 2000 Kyat per square feet for brick houses, but only 200 Kyat for wooden houses per square feet and 140 Kyat for thatch roofed houses per square feet. But the authorities also compensated for the price of lands. There are many good houses in the City Wards and some houses and gardens were worth to 10 million Kyat (about 10,000 US Dollar) and

---

the authorities compensated all costs for them in early this year. The most expensive houses have the price up to 20 Million Kyat (20, 000 US Dollar) and while many houses have the price of less than 0.5 Million Kyat (5, 000 US Dollar)<sup>10</sup>.

For the most expensive houses and gardens, which are worth from 10 to 20 Million Kyat could not get full compensation cost, but have received *approximately* 50-70% of the total cost of their properties.

When the relocated families moved to the new satellite town, they have to transport their belongings, household materials, and others for 3-4 miles. The authorities provided each family with only one trip of transport with ten-wheels trucks. For small families, although they could load up all of their belongings and household materials, with one trip of transport, but many families could not. Those families have to hire private ten-wheels trucks and bring their own properties.

Many of them although decided that they would not move to the new satellite town also received the compensation cost. Some families, who decided to not stay in the plots of lands in the new satellite town also tried to sell their lands. However, the costs for the lands is cheap, they could sell only about only 2-3 million Kyat as a most expensive price.

Map of Zayar Myaing New Satellite Town



## VI. Urban Population Displacement

Of 1200 families, only 200-300 families decided to stay in the new satellite town, about 900-1000 families of 5, 000 population did not decide to stay in the town. Why they did not agree to stay in the new places. As many of them are familiar in the city's livelihood or occupations such as vendors, labourers, drivers of tri-shaws or taxi and others, they could not seek these types of livelihood in the new satellite town – *Zayar-maing*.

Many of the relocated families said that they would sell the plots of lands to other town resident, and if they get money they would invest in some work activities and try to survive in middle part of the city. Those relocated families found rented houses, apartments, rooms, or some lives with their friends or relatives until they could find another space of lands.

Most people in the city are self-employed and they know that if they go and settle far from the locations where they can find the suitable jobs, for example, in the new satellite town, they would lose their employment and regular income. As vendors, they could not find any types of works in the new satellite town, to sell things because there is less population in there.

Similarly, most hard labourers are working at boat or ship harbours along the sea-bank, western part of Moulmein City, to load up and down goods and other things for traders. For those harbour workers, if they moved to the new satellite town, they totally lose their employment and so that nearly all labour families decided that they would not move to the new satellite town.

The regime or Mon State authorities itself could not create any type of works for the relocated families. In the least developed situation of Burma, no industry is available for employment for them or even hard labourers. However, as the military regime in Burma does not allow for freedom of expression and association, there is no trade union or labour union to express their situation and employment opportunity.

Another main reason why the relocated families do not move to the new satellite town is: because of lack of education and health service. Although the authorities planned to build schools, there was still no school until the end of March 2004. Many families concerned the children could not have available school in the new town. Additionally, there is no clinic in the new town and the people have concerned if they are sick or have a serious diseases or epidemic in the new town. Most of the families wished to keep their children at their former City Wards, because they have been familiar with the community and teachers in there. Considerably, it would be a hard work for them if they have to send a student for three miles to attend schools or to send a patient for three miles to reach a clinic.

Accordingly to a 48 years old man, he expressed to HURFOM that:

“In Moulmein, we are so difficult to get a good school. Most schools do not have available teachers and teaching is not so effective. Now, I put my 3 children in this school (a school in Madalay City Ward), it is a very good school. If our families moved to the new town, we might have to withdraw them all. We don't know, whether the new school (in the satellite town) is built or not, good teachers are available or not and whether we have to provide private 'tuition' classes for them.

“If I moved to the town and send three of my children to current school, it is a high cost. Or, it is also dangerous, because they have to come along way. They could not go by buses, as they are only 6-7 years old. I worried they might lose in the city. Thus, I decided to not move to the new satellite town.”

Similarly to this family, many other families have their own reasons, why they did not agree to resettle in the new satellite town, where the Mon State authorities have provided with land plots, sufficient water and some electricity.

About 5000 population have still displaced in the middle part of the Moulmein City and this is an 'hidden displacement' and no one have done any type of assessment for those relocated families. The Mon State authorities believed that as they already paid for the compensation cost and space for the resettlement, they have no more responsibility for these displaced families in city. They have been ignored that why the families did not move, improved condition of satellite town and creation of employment.

## VII. SPDC's Victory

A ceremony to fix the golden bolt at Salween Bridge (Moulmein) being built by the SPDC was held on the pier RP 10 of the main bridge on 26 March 2004, attended by a senior Member of the SPDC Lt-Gen Maung Bo of the Ministry of Defense, appointed by self-appointed Prime Minister, General Khin Nyunt.

Also presence on the occasion were Chairman of Mon State Peace and Development Council, Commander of South-East Command Maj-Gen Thura Myint Aung, Minister for Construction Maj-Gen Saw Tun, Minister for Mines Brig-Gen Ohn Myint, Minister for Rail Transportation Maj-Gen Aung Min, officials of the SPDC Office, departmental heads, engineers and workers of the Salween Bridge (Moulmein) Project, local authorities and local civilians.

At the ceremony, Lt-Gen Maung Bo<sup>11</sup> said steel frame installation work of Salween Bridge (Moulmein) is about to be completed. The bridge lies on the 842-mile Union Highway linking Rangoon and Kawthaung in the southern tip of the nation via Mergue, Tavoy and Moulmein. The total length of the bridge including the 7,699 feet main structure and two 3,876-foot approach structures is 11,575 feet or over two miles. The rail-cum-road bridge can bear up to 60 tons. The total expenditure of the bridge excluding the railroad is over Kyat 20,579 million (US \$ 13 million). The bridge has been built by Burmese engineers without taking assistance from foreign experts, according to Lt-Gen Maung Bo's speech.

<sup>11</sup> Even Gen. Maung Bo does not have any position in cabinet, he is appointed by SPDC directly to take responsibility in development projects and Burmese Army's self-reliance program – that supports soldiers and their families to have general income and stable settlement

### Information on HURFOM and Invitation for Feedbacks from Readers

Dear Readers,

Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM) was founded in 1995, by a group of young Mon people. The main objectives of HURFOM are:

- To monitor human rights situations in Mon territory and other areas southern part of Burma,
- To protect and promote internationally recognized human rights in Burma,

In order to implement these objectives, HURFOM has produced "The Mon Forum" newsletters monthly and sometimes it has been delayed because we wait to confirm some information. We apologize for the delay.

However, we also invite your feedbacks on the information we described in each newsletter and if you know anyone who would like to receive the newsletter, please send name and address to our address or e-mail as below:

HURFOM, P. O. Box 11, Ratchburana P. O.  
Bangkok 10140, THAILAND  
E-mail: [hurfomcontact@yahoo.com](mailto:hurfomcontact@yahoo.com)  
Webpages: [http://www.rehmonnya.org/monforum\\_main.php](http://www.rehmonnya.org/monforum_main.php)

With regards,

Director  
Human Rights Foundation of Monland

He also added that transport development is the most basic task in developing a nation. Thus, roads reaching all the directions of the nation have been built, and bridges large and small play an important role in the transport development. The cost of building a bridge is high, but the regime will continue to stand as the valuable heritage for the prosperity of Burma. The bridge will be opened in the coming December 2004.

Minister for Construction Maj-Gen Saw Tun also gave a speech, saying that as the government is building the country as a peaceful, modern and developed democratic country, emphasis is being paid on development of infrastructures such as human resource development sector, industry sector, agriculture and livestock breeding sector, transport sector, etc. In doing so, the transport sector plays an important role. So, roads, bridges, airports and railroads were built as a network throughout the country.

Of the infrastructures, Salween Bridge (Moulmein) where iron frames have already been installed on March 26, 2004 is located on 842 miles long Kawthaung-Mergue-Tavoy-Moulmein-Rangoon Union Highway<sup>12</sup> and it links Moulmein and Mottama. According to the decision of the meeting 1/98 of Special Projects Implementation Committee held on October 26, 1998, construction tasks of the bridge started on Moulmein bank on March 18, 2000 and on Mottama bank on November 1, 2000.

At present, the longest bridge in the country is Irrawaddy Bridge (Ma-gway) which is 8,989 feet long. In future, Moulmein Bridge (Salween) will be the longest one in the nation. It will be rail-cum-road one that will have 11,575 feet long motor road and 21,618 feet long railroad.

In the ceremony, Lt-Gen Maung Bo and other army commanders fixed the golden bolts at the designated steel frames and sprinkled scented water on them. After that, they posed for documentary photos together with the engineer and workers on the bridge. Then, Lt-Gen Maung Bo and party passed through the bridge.

This is the brief event of SPDC's victory for the completion a building of a bridge, however they still remain to build about 8 miles long railway road into the middle of Moulmein city, in where they already relocated 6000 population.

SPDC always proud of implementing this type of development projects: road construction and bridge construction for the smooth communication and transport of the civilians. It also propagandized from its own controlled radio the regime has done a lot of development when they moved forward for disciplinary democracy in Burma.

<sup>12</sup> Accordingly to this Union Highway plan, the regime also adopted a plan to build a railway in Tenasserim Division. This railway also connects to 110 miles long Ye-Tavoy railway in which the regime used hundreds of thousands of civilians as 'forced labourers' during 1994-1998 in the construction

However, the regime has never conducted any assessment of impacts to the local civilians whenever they are implementing the development projects.

### VIII. The suffering of the people

Along with the SPDC's Salween Bridge (Moulmein) Project and Moulmein Railway Project, because of major eviction happened in the middle part of Moulmein city, the civilians who were ordered to relocate have been suffered from the negative impacts as below:



Many good houses were relocated in this Rangoon-Moulmein railway project

1. Most of them has displaced in the city and could not re-establish well housing and shelters, which are available for the members of their families. Currently, they have just relied on compensated cost of their houses in term of their rent houses, daily food costs, expenses for health and education service, and other expenses. Soon after they expended almost of their money, they would face difficulties to have available money to plan for their living in the future.
2. In Burmese and Mon traditions, most of the relatives or parents and children stay closely and take care each other and so that they built their houses close together. In this eviction, the authorities set the families to stay in different sections in the new satellite town and therefore, the relatives, parents and their sons and daughters separated each other. This is a social impact to the civilians and violations to family unification.
3. For the civilians who arrived to the new satellite town, they also had to abandon their former livelihood and tried to seek new works. As the unemployment rate in Burma is already high, the civilians in the new satellite town could not seek works and available income. Economically, those civilians could not be self-reliant and it would affect their living standard, access to sufficient foods, education of the children, health care, etc.

In conclusion, the civilians have always suffered because the regime never applies the public hearing before it implements a development project. As an undemocratic government, the regime does not allow for the participation of the people in decision-making process. Although these bridge and railway projects may benefit the people in the future, however, the people are currently suffered greatly. Not only the people in Mon State are suffered, but also many other civilians in various parts of Burma also suffered.

**HURFOM**  
**P. O. Box 11**  
**Ratchburana P. O.**  
**Bangkok 10140, THAILAND**  
E-mail: [mforum@np.anet.net.th](mailto:mforum@np.anet.net.th)  
Webpages: [http://www.rehmonnya.org/monforum\\_main.php](http://www.rehmonnya.org/monforum_main.php)

**Printed Matter**



**Address Correction Required**