

Displacement and causes of displacement in Rangoon Division

Documents

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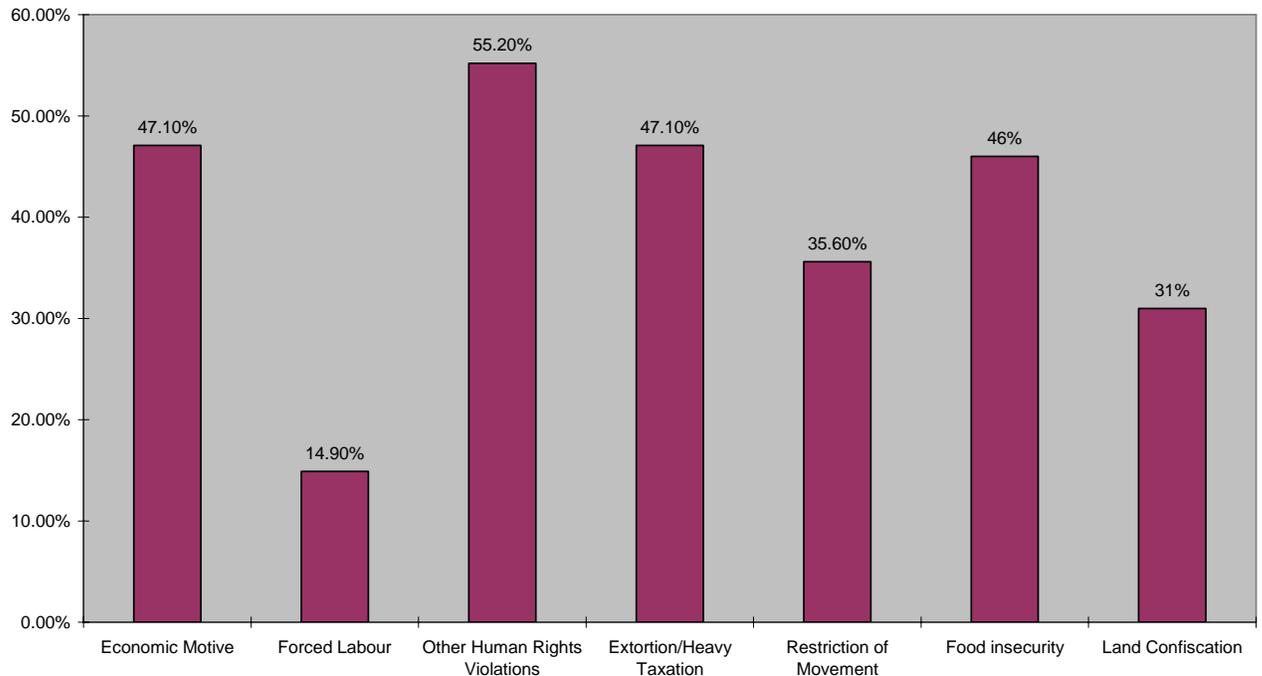
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Survey results (86 respondents)

9) Rangoon Division (percentage)



Forced relocation/eviction (rural)

Burmese farmers prepare to report land grabbing to ILO

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 12 July 2006

Nearly 200 farmers from Hmawbi Township in Rangoon Division are preparing to report the confiscation of more than 2000 acres of their farmlands to the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

1700 acres of paddy fields in Myaungtaka, Kankalay and Kalakone Hamlets in Hmawbi Township were started to be confiscated by Qtr Master Maj-Gen Tin Hla from September 19, according to the farmers who received no compensations.

Tin Hla confiscated the lands with the excuse of building No.2, Steel Factory and the factory manager Col Aung Moe told the farmers that they have to pay 5 ‘tins’ (bushels?) of paddy (un-husked rice) per acre. The farmers who had nothing else to make a living with continued to work on their farms and paid the extortion money to the army every year.

Then, Aung Moe sold off more than 200 acres of the lands for 700m Kyat recently. In stead of addressing the grievances of the farmers, the local authorities and the factory officials confiscated another 500 acres of paddy fields from the farmers early this year and sold them off to property developers **leaving the farmers jobless and homeless.**

The farmers were feeling helpless until they heard the news of the recent release of lawyer Aye Myint from Pegu who was sentenced to seven years in jail for reporting the plights of the farmers to the ILO, and the farmers recovered the courage to report their plights to the organisation again.

Forced relocation/eviction (urban and peri-urban)

Resettlement and industrial zones in Burma

-- Extract from “Industrial Zones in Burma and Burmese Labour in Thailand” by Dr. Guy Lubeigt, in *Myanmar: The State, Community and the Environment*, forthcoming (as of April 2007), Asia Pacific Press, Canberra.

The military government’s concerns with the industrialisation of Burma can be observed through the example of the development of satellite-towns around Rangoon before the events of 1988 (Lubeigt, 1989) and after them (Lubeigt, 1993, 1994, 1995). The population surplus of downtown Rangoon and the squatters living around the pagodas and monasteries compounds, who had provided scores of demonstrators during the anti-socialist revolt, were expelled and forcibly resettled into the new townships created *ex-nihilo* in far away paddy fields.[1] Potentially explosive crowds of the Central Rangoon were dispersed to South and North Dagon, Shwepyitha, and Hlaingthaya, by a junta keen to get rid of these trouble-makers. Small private industries causing nuisances in residential quarters subsequently were also resettled in special areas which became *ipso facto* industrial zones. Meanwhile, bigger enterprises, mostly textile joint ventures established with foreign capital under the market oriented economy successor of the failed socialist economy, were set up in Mingaladon Township on the eastern side of the main Rangoon-Pegu (Bago) road.

The location of these factories was not chosen at random, as Mingaladon is the main military cantonment of the capital. Military families could provide an excellent and obedient workforce for these enterprises. Meanwhile, the construction of factories since

the beginning of the 1990s had been quite limited and insufficient to provide many job opportunities for the civilian population. Therefore, with a growing population in search of a living, the gap between unemployment and job opportunities increased dramatically. The newly designed industrial zones were intended to bridge this gap.

[1] It takes one to two hours for the residents of these townships to travel by dilapidated buses to reach the downtown.

Burma: Country Report on Human Rights Practices - 2006

-- US State Department, 6 March 2007 (extract)

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.

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.

Displacement of Population in Rangoon Division -- Updated 3 January 2007

No.	Year	From	To	Affected house-holds	Affected population	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 TS,	Those who had National Registration could get a room after completion of High-Rises in other places.		>20000	Built Royal City Hotel;
4	86-87	Malaria Campaign Centre	Bayint Naung Rd			Replacement for Mayangone Police Station
5	1991	Burnt down Saw Bwa Gyi Kone	To New satellite towns		15000	Built new bus terminal for distance

		Insein TS				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/ Thingangyun TS	Dagon(South) 140 th Ward	300	1500	----
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>

Residents forced out of their homes in Rangoon
-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 17 April 2006

Some residents of Rangoon Mayanggone Township's Ward (6), have been forced to dismantle their homes and leave the area by the order to the local army commander, causing them untold miseries and difficulties and leaving them homeless as they are not given new places to live.

The residents were forced out of their homes after the Great Nile jewellery company and Nang Htaik Taw restaurant bid for the area in an auction.

“The houses were forced to be dismantled by the order of Maj-Gen Hla Myint Htay, the commander of Rangoon Division,” a resident in the receiving end of the order told DVB. “After the order of dismantlement, no place for rebuilding was given. Moreover, the problem is, the those whose homes were dismantled were dragged onto prison vans with the ruins.”

“We are sleeping on the ground. There is not cover or protection. The weather is very bad,” the homeless resident told DVB.

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 (para 13.3)

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).

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.

Rangoon fire victims forcibly relocated out of town

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 12 December 2005

The homeless victims of Rangoon Hlaing Township fire which occurred on 28 November, have been forcibly relocated to new locations out of town by the local authorities.

Without warning, they were moved out of the temporary shelters at sport stadiums, interrogation centres and guest houses and taken to No.3, Ward near No.4 Hmawbi Road, around 20 miles away from their original homes.

To make the matter worse, only some people with homes were given new places to live and their tenants are finding it hard to survive on open fields as the authorities gave them only 35,000 kyat compensation. A victim who doesn't want to be named told DVB that it costs at least 10,000 kyat a month to hire a room on top of a 100,000-150,000 kyat deposit.

Some victims claimed that rich people were able to prevent their homes from being swallowed by the fire by bribing fire fighters, and the fire was a deliberate act of the authorities to clear the slum areas.

Burmese civil servants kept within barbed wires at new capital

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 23 November 2005

Burmese civil servants who were transferred from Rangoon to the new capital at Kyappay region near Pyinmana in central Burma, have been surrounded with barbed wires and guarded by armed soldiers, it has emerged.

The drastic action of Burma's military junta, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) came after some home-sick civil servants fled from the area which is said to be infested with malaria carrying mosquitoes. The civil servants are carrying out their official duties in an area which looks more like a police-controlled hard labour camp (gulag), rather than a site designated as the new capital of Burma, a civil servant from Hotel and Tourism Ministry who doesn't want to be named, told DVB.

Many civil servants who fled Kyappay have returned to Rangoon and many more are ordered to go there. Those who refuse to obey the order are threatened with prosecutions under the Emergency Provision Act - 5J for treason and insubordination.

“Some people from the Interior Ministry returned with malaria, I was told. According to him, water is also scarce,” a woman civil servant told DVB. “Women are among the third and fourth batches. There were none in the first and second batches. They are in the list of those who have to go there. They only know that they will have to go, but they do not know the exact date. They are in trouble. I have a small child who is attending a kindergarten. The younger girl is only two months old.”

Pregnant women, mothers with young babies and female civil servants with poor health are said to be refusing to go. Relocated civil servants were also forced to take part in a bizarre action similar to that of a warding off evil ceremony, the woman added.

“When they reached Pyinmana, at 6 o'clock and 37 minute, all the civil servants have to shout, ‘We have gone! We have gone!’ . I don't know why. I wonder of they are warding off evil.”

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

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. 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. 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. 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

[...]

Given the central role of students in political activism, one of the most important cases of population relocation was the 1993 establishment of a new institution of higher education, Dagon University, in East Dagon Township. While in 2004 the historic main campus of Rangoon University remains largely unoccupied (despite the fact that universities are officially open), the arts and sciences faculties of Dagon University have an enrolment of as high as 20,000 students. Its large campus is distant from the city centre and students cannot easily associate with townspeople, as they did, with explosive results, in 1988. Other civilian campuses (as distinct from military tertiary institutions) are being established in remote areas, including a new Institute of Economics in Ywathargyi, which also has few public transportation links to downtown. The Yangon Technological Institute (formerly Rangoon Institute of Technology) is also being relocated: the old, Soviet-built RJT campus in Insein Township, close to where the Sanda Win Teashop incident took place, is now largely deserted.

Because of the stagnation of the BSPP economy, Rangoon during 1962-88 remained largely unchanged in terms of urban space, though facilities steadily deteriorated. Old neighbourhoods and communities, including a steadily growing number of university students (whose numbers expanded from 19,855 in 1961-62 to 97,757 in 1977-78), were left largely to their own devices in an environment of deepening poverty and frustration. After 1988, the SLORC/SPDC recognized the dangerous potential of this restless urban mix and sought to neutralize it through major and largely involuntary movements of the population from the city centre to the periphery. (pp 265-268)

Forced Relocation in Hlaine-Tha-Ya Township,

-- *Human Rights Year Book, Burma 2004*, Human Rights Documentation Unit of the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (para 13.10)

On 1 May 2004 at 9:00 am, approximately 400 soldiers led by department authority director General Htin Aung Kyaw and the secretaries of the Section, Township and District Development Councils, including (Swun-ah-shin), raided and destroyed the houses of villagers in Shwe-li-ban village, Hlaine-tha-ya Township, Rangoon Division. While the soldiers were destroying the houses, the villagers attempted to defend themselves and fight back as they did not agree. As a result, 1 policeman was seriously injured. On 3 May 2004 at 8:00 pm, the same group kidnapped villager U Tin Shwe and took him to the VPDC office and then handed him over to the police station.

There were approximately 40 families living in Shwe-li-ban village. The village had existed for approximately 50 years. The villagers were forced to relocate to a field by the riverside, approximately 800 yards from the original village site. According to U Thein

Naing, who lived in Shwe-li-ban village, "We have been living and earning our lives in this village for over 50 years in peace. Now, our village has been destroyed by the authorities who claim that the village is situated where the road goes although it is not near the road. This will also affect the 2 second year students at my house who are going to have examinations. The authorities totally destroyed the houses in Shwe-li-ban village then forcibly relocated the villagers as the result." The villagers were not provided with any compensation for their loss of property. (Source: "Forced Relocation Village in Hlaine-Tha-Ya Township," *Yoma*3, 15 May 2004) .

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)

Residents Evicted, Detained

-- *Human Rights Yearbook – Burma 2002-03* (para 13.9 - extract) Human Rights Documentation Unit of the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma

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.

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. (Source: *Irrawaddy*)

Junta Demolished Homes

Dozens of houses have been demolished and at least 13 people were arrested-including three children-in Rangoon's Shwe Leikpyar quarter, also know 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. (Source: *Irrawaddy*)

Seized Land Sold

Only a month after residents were forced from their homes, Shwe Than Lwin Company has purchased the vacated real estate from authorities. Last April, 25 homeowners and their families in Rangoon's Waggi quarter of Kamaryut Township were told to relocate, although no reason has been given by the authorities. Some Waggi residents were detained for over a week for speaking about their relocation on Radio Free Asia broadcasts. Shwe Than Lwin Company is a large investment and import company, led by Kyaw Win. They are engaged in business with some ethnic ceasefire groups, particularly the DKBA. Authorities said they would give evicted homeowners an apartment room and 100,000 kyat as compensation. But these would be in remote areas, making transportation difficult. (Source: AP).

Forced Relocations in Rangoon,

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 2 November 2002

According to DVB sources, local SPDC authorities in Rangoon have ordered people and families who live around the old government secretariat office building in downtown Rangoon to leave their homes on the 15th of this month at the latest. The houses were built during the colonial period to house the employees of the high-ranking government officers. During the periods of U Nu's government, Burmese Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) [1962-88], government officials were also accommodated there. But during the

present SPDC period, due to the soaring price of land, contractors are bribing the city's Civil officials and planning to pull down historical buildings and build new homes.

To find out more about the development we contacted a local resident in Rangoon:

Resident : They used to call it Secretariat. There were some residential homes for employees of the Secretariat. In 45, 46, 47, the area was freehold area. They existed since the English colonial period. They left them behind.

After the independence of Burma, during the period of the AFPFL government of U Nu the employees of the Secretariat were sheltered there. Then, during the period of BSPP, people who worked in the Ministerial Offices were given places there. And now, the SPDC time, since April 2002, they gave them (residents) notice. All the people who live there have to leave. The government officials and contractors are re-building the whole area and transform it into luxury residential area. The evicted family will be given 5,000,000 kyats to find a new plot in the outskirts of the city near north and south of Dagon Township in the east.

Htet Aung Kyaw : Are many people to be removed?

Resident : Yes. Many. The whole area of Maha Bandoola Road and Anawrahta Road, and if you say from east to west, Bo Myat Htun Road , formerly Craig Road, to Theinbyu Road.

Htet Aung Kyaw : How many families do you estimate to be there?

Resident : There must be a lot. The size of the house is not small. Two rooms downstairs and two rooms up. There are about ten houses on each side of the street and there must be more than about eighty families.

Htet Aung Kyaw : Would 5,000,000 be sufficient for a family to survive on?

Resident : Impossible. Just around the corner... a 12 ½ ft. x 40 ft costs 1,400,000 kyats. Try to imagine.

Htet Aung Kyaw : Do you know some people there and what do they say about it?

Resident : I have many acquaintances there. I usually go to drink tea and the like there. I grew up there as a child. I also have friends and relatives there now. There are new people there. You can't do anything with 5,000,000 kyats these days.

Junta Demolished Homes

-- Naw Seng, *The Irrawaddy*, 27 June 2002

Jun 27, 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 Kye 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.

Relocation orders in Rangoon Division,

-- National League for Democracy, via *Human Rights Yearbook – Burma 2000* (para 14.9)

On April 2 2000, the authorities ordered 36 households to relocate from Dagon Myothit township, Rangoon Division to Arakan State. The heads of the household were summoned to the office of the Police Superintendent. They were told that if they immediately gave their household particulars they would be granted 5 acres of agricultural land, a pair of cows, one cart, clothing, utensils, twenty thousand kyats cash and one year's provision of rice, oil and salt. Those households that failed to give the required particulars would face examination of their household census list and eviction after fourteen days imprisonment. The same night the households were subjected to "household list examination" and heads of 4 households were illegally arrested and hauled away. They were U Po Htwe, U Tin Win, U Kyaw Soe, Daw Tin San, Daw Ngwe Thein, and Daw The Ye.

These 36 households had built their current homes after the Myothit Expansion program had forced them off their former hands in 1994 without compensation. In 1999, they were accused of trespassing and ordered to relocate for the first time. Daw Khin Win Ye,

(head of one household) refuted the allegation that they were squatters for which she was charged under Section 51 (f) (g) by the Township court and sentenced to imprisonment for 51 days and an additional movement restriction for 6 months.

Fear and Hope: Displaced Burmese women in Burma and Thailand,

-- Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, March 2000 (extract)

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.

Eviction of people from New Dagon Township

-- Statement No: 23 (2/99) Central Executive Committee National League for Democracy
15 February 1999

1. Information received is that the very poor residents of Kyisu western ward which surrounds Ywa-thar-gyi, North New Dagon township and South New Dagon township, Rangoon Division were invited to attend a meeting held on 29th January 1999 by the group headed by U Thein Tun, Chairman of the administration unit in North New Dagon.

2. The explanation given was that as they were trespassers they would have to vacate the land and return to where they came from. Arrangements would be made only for groups of ten households. Individual households would have to make their own arrangements. On the other hand they were given the option to move to the new scheme called Arakan Development (New Living Project) which would entitle them to a pair of cattle and agricultural land at the going price. If they preferred to move towards wetlands in Nyaungdon they would have no ownership rights to the land but would have to work as labourers. The choice was to either go for a new scheme without any proper definitions or to make their own plans. " There was the Insein jail for those who refused to be relocated" was the unmistakable threat given in no uncertain terms. Date of meeting was 29 January 1999 and the last date by which they were to be cleared out was 30 March 1999.

3. The residents of the area refused to sign the document that was presented to them to indicate their approval of the terms. They appealed and asked that consideration be given because of the children who were attending schools in the area. The reply given was that this was not an important issue because all the children will be promoted without having to take any exams. Some of the people have lived in this area for over 10 years, others for over five and others for over three years.

4. On the 31 January, 1999 (the next day), those "power holders" entered the area at a time when most were away at work. They demolished all the houses that had no occupants despite the pleas from the neighbours. The total population in that area is 1700 to 2000.

5. To proceed against people who refuse to be removed from their usual place of residence under the prevailing law is not appropriate because of the great distance and the unfamiliarity of the new sites, and the vagueness of the terms offered. These people have no idea how and if they will be able to make a living at the new location. All their plans and business will be lost . They are now miserable and the tears flow readily because of the enormity of the tragic circumstances they will face. They are daily wages earners relying entirely on what they can earn. Somehow they had trusted the authorities and hoped that they could rely on them as on a parent, but no so. There is no compassion for them in their distress. We earnestly urge the authorities to take into consideration the social consequences and the dire distress of these people and to find a peaceful and equitable solution with compassion for fellow human beings.

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 he 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 official 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"

The Dagon New Town, a Town of Servicemen

-- Dagon Than Myint, *The Working People's Daily*, 7 February, 1993

In this world, man is a creature who aspires to be able to live like human beings. I must begin my article with a sincere declaration of thanks, on behalf of myself and on my family's behalf, to the State Law and Order Restoration Council for enabling us to live like human beings with our own house on our own land in the Dagon New Town.

Man desires to live long and in health. What are essential for a long and healthy life are food, clothing and shelter. It is my opinion that one of the most important aspects of life for a public serviceman is housing. The housing problem is very acute in Yangon City.

I am a mere humble clerk with over thirty years of service. For over twenty years I have been living together with a huge family in a twelve by twenty feet room allotted to me by my Department. This narrow accommodation was not so bad when I had only a couple of children but as the brood burgeoned and it became my turn to take care of my aged parents I came to get beset with all sorts of difficulties having to live in such cramped quarters. When family members multiplied and when the cost of living soared, my wife, my son and my daughter had to go out to earn an honest living.

I still remember the occasion. My office superiors called for applications for twenty by forty feet plots of land from service personnel with a minimum of twenty years of service. The notice however said that applicants were expected to pay a sum of from eight to ten thousands kyats to defray the cost of land reclamation. We had a family conference on this matter but we were worried if we would be able to find that much cash to pay for the land and to build a house on the allotted plot. We wavered and vacillated. We did not desire any more to live in the cramped quarters with a huge family. We would have to have somewhere to live after I went on superannuation pension. I had not the money to pay for huge deposits being demanded by landlords. At last we decided to cross the bridge when we come to it and put in an application with our eyes shut.

At that time we did not know where this Dagon New Town was going to be. We knew that it would be somewhere near Tocgyaung Gyi Village and Tocgyaung Gale Village. There would be no water nor power supply. The roads were to be dirt roads. The climate was harsh. The place was said to be infested with poisonous snakes. It would be in arid and dusty stubble fields. I heard all sorts of speculations and conjectures and all these worried me. But I thought of our future and decided to persuade my family. There were bound to be some difficulties when an altogether new town was to be constructed. Where were our huge family to live after I went on retirement? To have a shelter was of prime importance, was it not? There is also a saying of the sages: "Live not where you enjoy,

live where it is equitable." The middle daughter shed tears thinking of the prospects of having to move to the new town.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that that day was one of the happiest days of my life. I said that as some one responsible for insuring the future well-being of a big family.

When lots were drawn I became entitled to a plot of land in Dagon New Town (South). Our family was asked to produce a group photograph and a Land Permit was eventually issued to me. Servicemen who received plots of land when lots were drawn were greatly pleased.

During the thirty years of my service I had never dreamt of eventually owning a plot of land and a house on it. This was really true. But I have in fact received a forty feet by sixty feet plot of land. Then I began to worry about the eight thousand kyats or the ten thousand kyats I would have to pay for the cost of land and some more money build a house.

Our officer summoned those of us who had been allotted plots of land and informed us that land reclamation charges were not required to be paid in a lump sum but would be deducted from our monthly salaries in equal installments for five years. We began to jump with joy and as for myself I promptly fled back home to tell my family the good news. The whole family of mine rejoiced as it had never rejoiced before. It became a veritable family festival.

My wife and I joined in the happiness though not yet unreservedly. When were we going to build the house? Where were we going to get the money required to build the house? Should we borrow some money from outside? In that case, would we be able to repay the capital plus interest regularly? There was no money to spare at home. Nor had we any valuables to pawn or mortgage or to dispose of. Our heads began to spin and to that extent we worried.

I did not take too long however. We were notified that those who received plots of land would be given bank loans repayable in installments in ten years. We were told that departments concerned would undertake to construct low-cost houses on our behalf or would sell as much building stores as possible. We were so happy at this announcement that tears almost streamed out of our eyes.

I have now achieved something I have never even dreamt of in my whole life. It is not a dream either. It is an actual qualitative change of live. Oh, how so grateful to the government I was.

We low-paid clerical staff generally live in a perpetual fear of having a place to live. As tenants living in rented houses they have to keep placating the landlords. Those who live in Staff Quarters have to squeeze their whole families into inadequate space. We could go easy on the way we eat and on the way we dress but not in the way we have to live. The depth of the problem of a shelter could be known only to those who are experiencing it.

But the State Law and Order Restoration Council has not only created this Dagon New Town for servicemen but is also providing plots of lands to servicemen in almost all townships and towns. Non-public servicemen clinging precariously on to squatter quarters and encroachment lands are being now provided with own plots of land to be able to live in keeping with the dignity of a human being. This is in fact a recognition of the services being rendered by these persons to the State.

The Dagon New Town where I now live will in future surely become a Servicemen's Town. My own plot of land is now flush with fruit trees, perennial plants and flowering plants. As family members return home from work every afternoon each of them begins to improve the house and the compound. Ours is now a happy family living as new persons with new outlooks in a new way of live. Our house is a Home Sweet Home.

At the present time, the government is striving to develop the Dagon New Town into a City of Public Servicemen by implementing planned programmes for provision of water and power and for improvement of roads and means of communications. Not every thing has yet been done. Efforts must first have to be concentrated to provide home lighting and street lighting, to improve roads and to further facilitate transport. The Dagon New Town is to remain in history as a monument to the nation-building services undertaken by the State Law and Order Restoration Council.

National leaders are frequently coming to Dagon New Town to see progress of work being done and there is no doubt that in no time the Dagon New Town is going to develop into a City of Public Servicemen.

We public servicemen as well as non-servicemen should therefore be loyal and faithful to the government that is sincerely striving to build up the whole country in all aspects. All of us must take part in establishment of a truly democratic system that the government is at present striving for. (*Loktha*. 31 Jan 93) (*Translation: AM*)

[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...

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 fagades; 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)

[...]

Squatter locations and resettlement programmes in Yangon

(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 Seinpanmaying, 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
Padamyia	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 Waibagyia (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)

[...]

Forced Relocations

-- Extract from *The Burmese Way – to Where?* International Commission of Jurists, 1991

Forced Relocations

SLORC has also relocated more than half a million people. They were moved from their homes in the cities without notice and without compensation to areas which were sometimes more than ten to fifteen kilometres outside the cities. The Government justified this action on the ground that it was removing squatters and cleaning up the cities. Not all the people moved were squatters, however. Some claimed that they had title deeds. The fact that most of these people, even if they did not have title deeds, had been living in these houses for decades and may have acquired title through adverse possession was conveniently overlooked.

Most of the people were moved to lands which were old paddy fields, were flooded during the rainy season and were often infested with malaria. The areas had not been prepared to receive people and there was no water, sewage connection or electricity; there were no schools, hospitals or other amenities. Most of those moved were poor and had jobs in the cities and were further burdened by the costs of fares. In many cases, these areas were not linked with the city centres or job centres by any means of transportation. In some cases, the persons who had been moved to these places had to spend hours travelling to and from work.

Those who showed reluctance to moving were threatened with force. Those who protested were arrested. The relocations were carried out for the reasons stated by the Government and also for other reasons. A number of settlements which had been active in the 1988 pro-democracy movement were razed to the ground, the people moved out, and where there had been a dense population there is now plain ground.

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.¹⁸ 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.

Report on direct contacts with the Government of the Union of Myanmar,

-- Professor Sadako Ogata, Independent Expert, 27 December 1990 -- UN Commission on Human Rights (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.

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 of 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 oppress 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 pay 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)

-- Human Rights Watch, May 1990 (extract)

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 I
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-htaing 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-htauk-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, Jivitadana 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, 1953"

-- Robert Redick (description of his unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, 1961, University of Chicago)

“According to Robert Redick, governments have tried to promote resettlement out of the Central Business District of Rangoon 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.”

Punishment for non-compliance with orders

Forced labour continues in Rangoon

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 13 December 2005

Dec 13, 2005 (DVB) - Burmese authorities at a ward in Rangoon North Okkalapa Township, have been subjecting the local people to forced labour practices, it has emerged.

The authorities have been forcing the people to take part in 'volunteering' activities once a week on Saturdays, and they have been making good incomes for themselves from imposing a 10,000 kyat fine on each household which could not oblige, according to a local resident.

“People must take part in the volunteering. They must clean the gutters. Those houses that could not come must pay a 10,000 kyat fine – they said like that properly with a loudspeaker,” the resident said. “It was the order of U Toe Kywe of the ward Peace and Development Council.”

The resident added that the authority members have been allowing illegal gambling syndicates to flourish by collecting money from them and giving them protection. Because of the extortions and forced labour practices, ordinary people are facing many kinds of difficulties, the resident said.

People arrested for refusing to paint fences

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 10 January 2004

5 people from Twante in Rangoon Division were arrested by the authorities of Burma's military junta, State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) for refusing to paint their fences white.

Daw Nu Phyu, U Aung Sein, U Saw, Ko Naing Oo and an unnamed person were arrested on 24 December 2003, according to a report by the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma.

The local authorities ordered them to 'beautify' their homes at the beginning of December by painting their fences white but the people refused to do so because they have no money.

Other threats to human security

Land confiscation

Land confiscation a problem in Burma, says labor rights lawyer

-- *The Irrawaddy*, 16 March 2007

Forced land confiscation and labor rights abuses remain a problem in Burma, according to a leading Burmese labor activist and lawyer.

"I have more than 600 cases on my hands—most of which are land confiscations by authorities," says Aye Myint, a labor lawyer who was imprisoned for representing damaged citizens and accused of "spreading false information."

Aye Myint, who lives in Pegu, said he is only able to file a small number of cases in Burmese courts. Most of his cases occur in Rangoon, Pegu and Irrawaddy divisions, where local businesses are mainly agricultural.

"Farmers face takeover of their lands and paddy fields—in some cases cattle and buffaloes were confiscated," he says.

He said military groups and businessmen, who have close ties to the authorities, are mainly responsible for the land confiscations.

Labor activist Aye Myint was sentenced to death on a charge of treason for communicating with the International Labour Organization. He received a 7-year sentence for allegedly "spreading false information" by representing farmers whose land had been confiscated.

Following the International Labour Organization's appeal for his release, he was freed in July last year after serving one year in Pegu Prison.

Aye Myint and six other Burmese lawyers recently announced the formation of a social rights group called "Guiding Star," which monitors and documents rights abuses in Burma.

He noted that despite the military regime's human rights abuses, the ILO reached an agreement with the government last month to investigate complaints of forced labor. Such practices still take place across the country—particularly in rural areas where locals are unable to file complaints against the authorities for fear of reprisals.

The ILO launched a website this week that provides information on the forced labor issue and explains how to make complaints. A Burmese language version of the site will be available soon.

Rice paddies seized for Thilawa SEZ

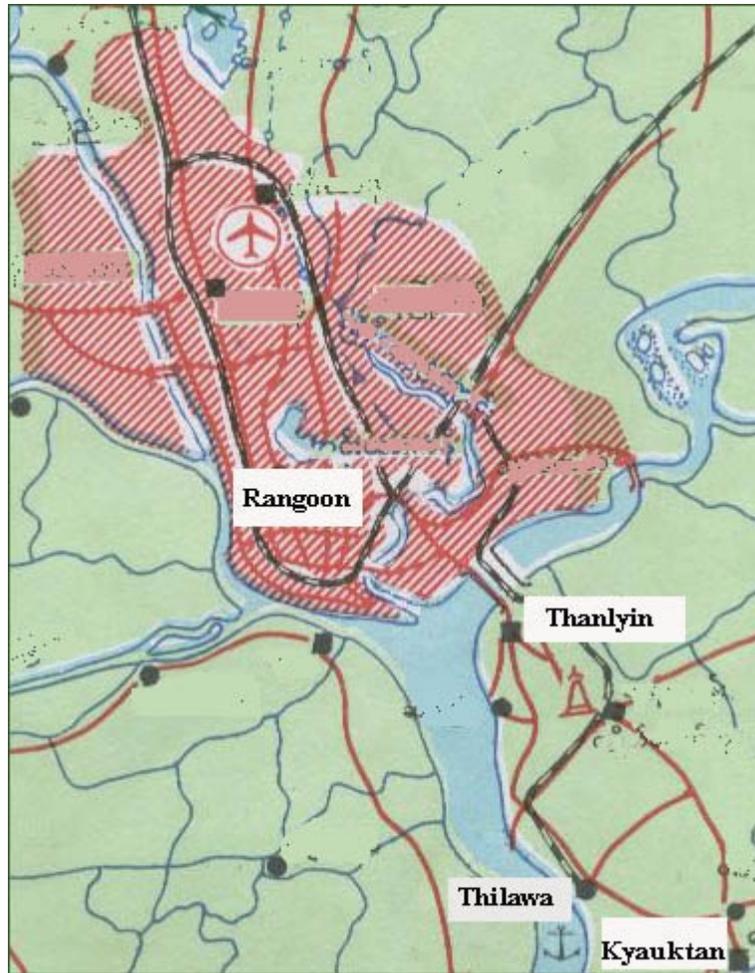
-- *S.H.A.N.*, 14 March 2007

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).



Thilawa SEZ attracts more foreign interest

Ye Lwin, *The Myanmar Times*, February 12 – 18, 2007

LAND at the proposed Thilawa Special Economic Zone south of Yangon is being set aside for investors from Japan and Singapore as well as China, an official from the Ministry of Commerce said last week.

“Previously, only China was interested in establishing factories there, but Japan and Singapore have also shown interest,” said the official.

Vietnam will also invest in one of Myanmar’s special economic zones (SEZs) with high-tech industries, the Pyi Myanmar journal reported late last month without specifying in which of Myanmar’s six planned SEZs it would invest.

The Thilawa zone in Kyauktan township will be established once the draft Myanmar Special Economic Zone Law is enacted. The proposed zone is near Thilawa international port, one of the biggest in Myanmar.

China and Japan have each been allocated 3176 acres at the 7000-acre zone and another 247 acres has been set aside for investors from Singapore.

“The Thilawa zone will meet international standards and will be the biggest of six designated free trade areas,” the official told The Myanmar Times on January 30.

The Minister for Forestry, Brigadier General Thein Aung, announced early last month that apart from Thilawa, the other free trade areas would be at Kyaukphyu, Myawaddy, Hpa-an, Pyin Oo Lwin and Mawlamyaing.

All the basic infrastructure of the zones is expected to be completed by 2020. The Thilawa site is expected to attract an initial investment of US\$700 million. Foreign direct investment in the zones will include the establishment of labour-intensive factories aimed at creating job opportunities.

Vietnam’s expression of interest in one of the SEZs followed a recent meeting in Nay Pyi Taw of the Myanmar-Vietnam Joint Trade Committee, the Pyi Myanmar journal said.

The two countries pledged to work towards raising their bilateral trade volume to US\$100 million in the 2007-08 financial year beginning April 1, up from about \$60 million in recent years, the report said.

To help reach this target, trade fairs would be held in Myanmar and Vietnam’s major cities, it added.

Burmese farmers prepare to report land grabbing to ILO

Democratic Voice of Burma 12 July 2006

Nearly 200 farmers from Hmawbi Township in Ragoon Division are preparing to report the confiscation of more than 2000 acres of their farmlands to the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

1700 acres of paddy fields in Myaungtaka, Kankalay and Kalakone Hamlets in Hmawbi Township were started to be confiscated by Qtr Master Maj-Gen Tin Hla from September 19, according to the farmers who received no compensations.

Tin Hla confiscated the lands with the excuse of building No.2, Steel Factory and the factory manager Col Aung Moe told the farmers that they have to pay 5 ‘tins’ (bushels?) of paddy (un-husked rice) per acre. The farmers who had nothing else to make a living with continued to work on their farms and paid the extortion money to the army every year.

Then, Aung Moe sold off more than 200 acres of the lands for 700m Kyat recently. In stead of addressing the grievances of the farmers, the local authorities and the factory officials confiscated another 500 acres of paddy fields from the farmers early this year and sold them off to property developers leaving the farmers jobless and homeless. The farmers were feeling helpless until they heard the news of the recent release of lawyer Aye Myint from Pegu who was sentenced to seven years in jail for reporting the plights of the farmers to the ILO, and the farmers recovered the courage to report their plights to the organisation again.

Burmese farmers bullied by authorities in Rangoon Division

Democratic Voice of Burma, 2 October 2005

The village authorities at Ingalon, Rangoon Division Koonchankone Township have been subjecting local farmers to various kinds of forced labour practices and making them landless by grabbing their farmlands and taking possession of their cattle.

Village authority chairman Aung Thein and member Thein Win have been charging millions of Kyat from farmers each year for growing paddies.

Farmers were forced to clear some wild tracts of land and grow paddies on them. And when the yields were good, they were forced out of their lands and their harvests confiscated as the possession of the village chairman.

Moreover, the authorities have been siphoning off subsidised diesel, fertilisers and other agricultural equipment intended for farmers. They also impose fines on villagers when it comes to law and order, and keep the fines for themselves, and confiscate the farmers' lands and animals, according to a local farmer.

Lands Seized for Army Bases

Democratic Voice of Burma, 5 November, 2002

Recently, the SPDC has hurriedly been building new artillery bases and air defence commands. According to instruction from the Rangoon Central Command, all 12 military regional commands has to build an artillery base and one air defence base each.

The project started at the end of the last year and the artillery, the air defence and anti tank departments are to be built under the control of the directorate of army, formerly artillery and tank defence forces. The air defence forces are based in Mawbi and artillery commands are being built in all military command regions.

According to the latest reports, No. 505 Artillery Base is in the Costal regional command, Beik, No. 606 is in the South-East regional command, Thaton, No. 707, in the Western regional command, Rakhine State, No. 808 in the North-East regional command, Lashio, No. 909 in the Triangle regional command, Kengtung, and No. 903 in the Eastern regional command, Taunggyi.

Other sites are also being selected for this purpose. Ten artillery bases will be built under each regional command centre. There are 5 bases under the command of No. 505, 10 under No. 606, 3 under No. 707, 5 under No. 808, 10 under No. 909, and 4 under 903 currently under construction.

Land are being seized from local people to build these bases. 300 acres of lands in Khamtee, Sagaing Division and 200 acres of rubber plantation near Lamaing Village, Ye District in Mon State have been seized so far.

Grazing land converted to agricultural land in Htan-ta-bin Township,

Human Rights Yearbook, Burma, 2000, Human Rights Documentation Unit of the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma

According to statements made by ward and village authorities of Ye-pyu village tract (Bawle Island), Htan-ta-bin township, Rangoon Division, about a thousand acres of grazing land in Ba-le-gone-taw was given to two members of the Police force by orders from the chief Htan-ta-bin township police officer at the rate of a return of 7 baskets of paddy per acre. These two in turn have sub-let the lands at the rate of 11 baskets per acre and over 300 acres are under cultivation to this day.

The villagers of Aing-gyi, Aing-le, Taw-nyo, Kaw-hmu, Ta-khun-taing, Ye-phyu-kyaung-su, Ye-dwing-gone-oke-su from Ye-pyu village tract and the villagers of Ye dwin-gone, Paya-kyun and those from the Nyun-baung village tract graze their cows and buffaloes in this Bal-le-gone-taw. The authorities are aware that this has been demarcated as grazing ground, yet they have converted it into agricultural land, which is a loss to the owners of the livestock. If cattle and cows are found grazing on the crops the penalty to be imposed on the owners is 3 years imprisonment and a fine of kyats 3500. (Source: NLD)

Forced labour

Forced labour continues in Rangoon

Democratic Voice of Burma, 13 December 2005

Burmese authorities at a ward in Rangoon North Okkalapa Township, have been subjecting the local people to forced labour practices, it has emerged.

The authorities have been forcing the people to take part in 'volunteering' activities once a week on Saturdays, and they have been making good incomes for themselves from imposing a 10,000 kyat fine on each household which could not oblige, according to a local resident.

“People must take part in the volunteering. They must clean the gutters. Those houses that could not come must pay a 10,000 kyat fine – they said like that properly with a loudspeaker,” the resident said. “It was the order of U Toe Kywe of the ward Peace and Development Council.”

The resident added that the authority members have been allowing illegal gambling syndicates to flourish by collecting money from them and giving them protection. Because of the extortions and forced labour practices, ordinary people are facing many kinds of difficulties, the resident said.

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Moreover, the authorities have been siphoning off subsidised diesel, fertilisers and other agricultural equipment intended for farmers. They also impose fines on villagers when it comes to law and order, and keep the fines for themselves, and confiscate the farmers’ lands and animals, according to a local farmer.

Intervention by the ILO with the SPDC dated 15 February 2005

International Labour Organisation, 15 February 2005

This intervention concerned two alleged cases of forced recruitment of children into the army. In the first case it was alleged that a boy now aged 15 had been kidnapped off the street in Yangon by an army sergeant in 2002 at the age of 12 and had been recruited against his will into the army. After undergoing basic military training he was assigned to an army battalion and sent on a number of military operations during which he contracted malaria. The second case concerned a boy from Yangon who was allegedly recruited against his will in January 2005 at the age of 15. According to the allegation, he was currently undergoing basic military training.

Robbery, extortion, arbitrary taxation

Fleeced: Local residents forced to give donations for soldiers at Rangoon

Democratic Voice of Burma, 11 August 2006

While the price of rice is hitting the roof in Burma at the moment, the local military authorities of No. 19 Ward, Hlaing Thayar Township in Rangoon, are forcibly collecting 3 condensed milk cans of rice from each household for Burmese infantry, naval and air force soldiers.

The forced collection started from No. 19 Ward, but other wards are likely to be under the same practice soon, a local resident told DVB.

He added that the rice collected could be given to soldiers who are running out of rations or used in publicity stunts during donations giving ceremonies for fire and flood victims at monasteries and school, by claiming that rice is donated by soldiers.

Meanwhile, the majority of the victims of forced donation like this are surviving on boiled rice washing water every day, the local residents told DVB.

For many years, Burma's ruling military junta, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) has been forcing its soldiers to grab lands and properties from local residents and forcing their former owners to work for them without pay, while top level army officials are fattening themselves and families with bribery money and shady business contracts.

Local authorities demand rice and money from Burmese farmers

Democratic Voice of Burma, 2 July, 2006

Rangoon Division, Htantapin Township's junta-affiliated Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) secretary Than Myint has been demanding paddy (un-husked) quota from farmers of Maukthaw and other villages within the township.

Than Myint has been demanding 7 'tins' (bushels?) of paddy from each acre of cultivated land and threatened to report them to higher authorities.

On 1999, 17 farmers from Maukthaw cleared 50 acres of scrublands and planted paddy. In 2005, a land surveyor named Thet Swe Win also demanded 85 'tins' of paddy from the farmers saying that the lands belong to his department. The farmers are also threatening to report the extortion to even higher authorities.

Moreover, villagers at In-Ut in Htan dug fish ponds out of their paddy fields and they were told to pay the villager authority chairman U Kyi 5000 Kyat, land survey department, 10000 Kyat, on the pain of refilling their ponds.

Forced labour continues in Rangoon

Democratic Voice of Burma, 13 December, 2005

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Soldiers and authorities grab cattle of Rangoon Kawmoo villagers

Democratic Voice of Burma, 12 December, 2005

The soldiers and village authorities at Rangoon Kawmoo Township have been confiscating cattle from local villagers and farmers.

According to local residents, all the villagers each had to submit a list of cattle they own to the authorities and when the soldiers came to check the lists, they fined the villagers if the number of cattle is less than said for whatever reason and confiscated the animals if they are more.

These animals are then sold on to cattle bootleggers who ply their black market trade on the Thai-Burmese border.

Burmese farmers bullied by authorities in Rangoon Division

Democratic Voice of Burma, 2 October, 2005

The village authorities at Ingalon, Rangoon Division Koonchankone Township have been subjecting local farmers to various kinds of forced labour practices and making them landless by grabbing their farmlands and taking possession of their cattle.

Village authority chairman Aung Thein and member Thein Win have been charging millions of Kyat from farmers each year for growing paddies.

Farmers were forced to clear some wild tracts of land and grow paddies on them. And when the yields were good, they were forced out of their lands and their harvests confiscated as the possession of the village chairman.

Moreover, the authorities have been siphoning off subsidised diesel, fertilisers and other agricultural equipment intended for farmers. They also impose fines on villagers when it comes to law and order, and keep the fines for themselves, and confiscate the farmers' lands and animals, according to a local farmer.

Unfair levies and taxes

Human Rights Yearbook, Burma, 2000, Human Rights Documentation Unit of the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma

Farmers taxed for school that was never repaired

U Tin Myint, chairman of Kan-ma-la village in Kun-gyan-gon township, Rangoon Division, forced farmers to contribute kyats 100/- per acre of land alleging that the money would go towards the repair of the primary school building. The total number of acres is 2,909. The villagers were then forced to transport paddy husks for baking bricks, and then to knead the clay for the bricks. Yet U Tin Myint proceeded to pocket the money, repaired his own house and sold the bricks to others while the school went unprepared. As of August 2000, the children still attended school without proper shelter from the rain. (Source: NLD)

Bribes for agricultural loans in Kun-gyan-gon and Kauk-hmu townships

As of August 2000, the Agricultural Bank in Kun-gyan-gon township was not complying with regulations. Loans were being issued only to close associates, those who gave bribes and those useful to them. Farmers who defaulted in the previous year had to pay compound interest. At point of sale, a special collection was taken at the rate of kyats 5 per basket. This was under orders of the chairman of the township authority. There was also a demand of kyats 100/- for a farmer's book.

For the year 2000, agricultural loans at the rate of kyats 1000/- per acre were obtainable in Kauk-hmu township, Rangoon division. The limit is kyats 10,000/- for 10 acres. However those who have the right connections can get kyats 15,000/- (special production loan).

People who are unable to collect the loan because they are busy working in the fields can appoint another person in writing to withdraw their money. The penalty imposed by the agricultural bank for this is kyats 200/- per individual. Those who cannot produce a household card are not eligible for such loans unless they give a bribe of kyats 200/-. Those at the most disadvantage are those who continue to work the land that their parents had claimed as original settlers and bachelors and others who return to civilian life from monkhood even though they are genuine farmers but are not entitled to agricultural loans. (Source: NLD)

Compulsory (and frequently ruinous) cropping and marketing policies

Rice farmers hit by military purchase power

Democratic Voice of Burma, 11 December, 2006

Burmese military units have been buying large quantities of rice at lower than market prices, causing a significant decrease in profits, according to farmers in and around Rangoon division.

A farmer from Tharawaddy told DVB, on condition of anonymity, that the military had appointed several businessmen to buy rice on their behalf. But the buyers are purchasing large quantities of rice at a time and demanding special rates.

"Paddy prices have slightly gone down. We are now selling one tin for 2600 kyat . . . It makes things hard for farmers, when the military is buying only rice, pushing the prices down," the farmer said.

According to a rice farmer from Myaung Mya, the military is buying rice from around Rangoon and sending it north to the new capital in Naypyidaw.

"There, they are buying so much that the rice can now barely reach real customers," he said.

Rice traders in Rangoon said since a considerable percentage of paddy land had been damaged by flooding yields are low, further exacerbating rice shortages in some areas.

Farmers forced to sell rice in Rangoon Division

Democratic Voice of Burma, 5 January 2003

Farmers in Rangoon Division are told to sell their new rice crops to the government rice buying centres. Because of the late monsoon rains, acres of crops were destroyed and the farmers are not able to sell rice to the government.

Soldiers and staff from Trade and Farming Department themselves are going to the paddy fields and villages to deliver their ultimatum to the farmers to sell rice to the government centres. In accordance with the order of General Myint Swe, the Commander of Rangoon Division Military Command, platoons of soldiers headed by an officer are being sent to the farmers.

Farmers have to sell their rice at the government centres at 350 kyats per portion and the same amount could fetch 1500 kyats from the outside.

Food insecurity

People in new Burmese satellite towns said surviving on rice gruel

Democratic Voice of Burma, 5 May, 2007 via BurmaNet News

Dear listeners, we have learned that people in many new satellite towns, including Hlaing Thaya, have resorted to eating rice gruel because they cannot afford to purchase rice, and here is a report filed by Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB) correspondent Ko Htet Yarzar:

[Begin recording] [DVB] Small huts with jute bag serving as walls and thatched roofs packed the Hlaing Thaya Industrial Zone, where mills and factories - the pride of the military regime - are located.

People living in these huts are odd job workers and they do not earn enough. A bottle of rice gruel, which cost 100 kyats, is shared among family members or a piece of Bein Moke [pancake made of rice flour and jaggery] constitutes the daily meals for some of these people.

A housewife who survives on rice gruel had this to say to the DVB:

[Unidentified female] It is very difficult to afford anything with what we earn. Since a pyi [eight condensed milk tins] of rice costs 800 to 900 kyats we cannot afford to eat it. We can only afford rice gruel. We have rice gruel about three or four times every week. My health is poor, so also is my family. It is because of lack of nutritious food.

[DVB] A resident of Hlaing Thaya also said that he not only consumes rice gruel, but also had to eat a piece Bein Moke on some days to ease his hunger.

[Unidentified male] A bottle of rice gruel costs 100 kyats. The ones we buy come in brown bottles. There are many days that we had to go by with just Bein Moke.

[DVB] A vendor who sells rice gruel says the number of people buying rice gruel has increased and the price of a bottle of gruel has risen from 50 to 100 kyats.

[Unidentified female] Previously, a bottle costs only 50 kyats, then it

rose to 70, then 100 kyats. The current price is 100 kyats.

[DVB] According to the local residents, there are many people in new satellite towns like Shwepyitha and Taung Dagon as well as in Dala on the other bank of Rangoon, who are consuming rice gruel. [End recording]

That was a report by Ko Htet Yarzar about many people surviving on rice gruel.

Hunger in the City

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 [27](#), 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. [28](#)

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. [29](#)

Urban poverty is a serious problem in Myanmar, particularly in peri-urban areas where conditions are very harsh. A random survey of 300 households in each of two peri-urban townships, in Hlianthayar in Yangon and Chan Mya Tharzi in Mandalay, for the period September 1997-October 1998 paints a portrait of considerable hardship (Clawson and Keller, 1999).⁶ Men's earnings were in the 100-200 + Kyats range, and women's earnings were 50-200 Kyats or less. Regular work was scarce, and many people were engaged in activities subject to seasonal or economic fluctuations, like outdoor construction or pedaling trishaws. Women often worked as vendors near their homes, to accommodate domestic and

childcare responsibilities, whereas men often had to commute (an hour each way) downtown. For many of these families, one day's income barely covered the day's expenses or minimal food and transportation costs. One-third of the surveyed families reported that earnings were not sufficient to cover basic food, while 44 percent spent about as much on food as they earned each day.

Myanmar: An Economic and Social Assessment
World Bank, August 1999 (extract)

2.8. There is evidence that conditions have deteriorated even further in peri-urban areas with the economic downturn in the last two years. Employment and income prospects have been adversely affected in such labor-intensive sectors as construction and tourism. Earnings growth has generally not kept pace with prices. Staples' prices are up, as are the prices of such non-food expenses as commuting costs, medical costs (diarrhea, malaria and acute respiratory infections are common), and school fees (see below). In 1998, about 70 percent of families were forced to borrow money at least "a few times" a year, sometimes to cover occasional lump-sum expenses such as school fees or medical costs, but most often simply for food. (p14)

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-htaing 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-htauk-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, Jivitadana 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

Natural disasters, fires

Four killed in Myanmar floods

Agence France Presse, 7 June 2007, via *BurmaNet News*

May 6, Yangon: Four people have been killed after floods caused by the heaviest rain in decades inundated Myanmar's largest city and submerged a number of homes, state-run media and residents said Sunday.

The New Light of Myanmar newspaper said that four people in one Yangon home suffocated in a fire after floods caused a short circuit. Residents confirmed that the four family members had died in the accident.

Another woman was injured when she stepped on a power line that was downed by the extreme weather and was electrocuted, the paper said.

Across the city, walls collapsed and trees toppled over in the worst rain in decades, and "some houses in the townships were submerged by the floods," the newspaper reported.

Yangon, the commercial capital of military-run Myanmar, was hit by heavy rain from Thursday evening to Saturday morning, with the paper reporting two to three feet (600 to 900 millimetres) of water in some areas.

The semi-official Myanmar Times newspaper quoted a meteorology department official blaming a tropical depression in the Bay of Bengal for the heavy rain.

The paper said that a massive storm in Yangon that began late last week brought 344 millimetres of rain to one district between Friday and Saturday, the highest rainfall in 39 years.

Other townships also reported their highest levels of rainfall in decades, but the meteorology department official said the tropical depression that caused the storm was now on the move.

"It is moving northward but is not developing into a bigger storm," she told the Myanmar Times.

Late monsoon downpours destroy crops in Rangoon Thone Gwa Township

Democratic Voice of Burma, 13 December, 2005

Recent late monsoon downpours at Thone Gwa Township in Rangoon Division, combined with the inconsiderate and reckless actions of the irrigation authorities, destroyed nearly one thousand acres of ready to harvest paddy fields of the Burmese farmers, local residents told DVB.

A local farmer told DVB that the authorities let the flood gates of canals open without consulting or warning the farmers, damaging or destroying their precious harvests, and the farmers had to reap their crops from small boats with difficulties in order to salvage some of the harvests.

Moreover, the farmers have been unable to make preparations for the plantation of winter crops as the paddy fields are still inundated with flood waters. The most affected areas are those from Thekhutkone and Nyaungni Ywathit.

The farmer added that apart from 'inspecting' the flooded plains, the authorities did nothing to help alleviate the pains of the farmers who have been under great pressure to pay back their loans and agricultural taxes.

Fire in Rangoon latest

Democratic Voice of Burma, 28 November 2005

A major fire broke out in Rangoon Hlaing Township near Myanmar Information and Communication Technology (MICT) Park, around noon local time.

It is now estimated that more than 1000 homes including schools and factories were destroyed, leaving more than 3000 people homeless.

The blaze lasted more than 3 hours and almost the whole of Ward – 13 was devoured by the fire. But it is not known how the fire started and the exact number of casualty is not known either. Local residents told DVB that the fire started from a kitchen, some said that it started from a slipper factory.

“The fire started from behind Hlaing police station around 12.30pm,” another resident told DVB. But another said that the fire started near a school and both of them said that the 'fangs' of the flames only died down just before 3pm local time.

Another resident told DVB that so many houses were burnt down because the houses were huddled so closely together and the streets are so narrow that fire engines could not enter the area quickly enough to prevent the fire from spreading.

“There are many day labourers living there. They haven't got proper homes there and from there the fire became big. That area is a bit like invasion wards (slum areas) in terms of form and they (the authorities) might want to 'clear' the area. The fire engines were unable to stop the fire. They (the fire fighters) just watch it burn.” In the past, there were rumours and examples of the government authority agents burning down areas they want to seize from the people.

He added that homeless people have been taking refuge inside a nearby football stadium and authorities had cordoned off the area for inspection and letting no one into the burnt down area.

Rangoon fire victims forcibly relocated out of town

Democratic Voice of Burma, 12 December 2005

The homeless victims of Rangoon Hlaing Township fire which occurred on 28 November, have been forcibly relocated to new locations out of town by the local authorities.

Without warning, they were moved out of the temporary shelters at sport stadiums, interrogation centres and guest houses and taken to No.3, Ward near No.4 Hmawbi Road, around 20 miles away from their original homes.

To make the matter worse, only some people with homes were given new places to live and their tenants are finding it hard to survive on open fields as the authorities gave them only 35,000 kyat compensation. A victim who doesn't want to be named told DVB that it costs at least 10,000 kyat a month to hire a room on top of a 100,000-150,000 kyat deposit.

Some victims claimed that rich people were able to prevent their homes from being swallowed by the fire by bribing fire fighters, and the fire was a deliberate act of the authorities to clear the slum areas.
