

OFFICIAL NAME: Union of Myanmar

CAPITAL: Yangon

SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT: Military Dictatorship

AREA: 678,576 Sq Km (262,000 Sq Mi)

ESTIMATED 2000 POPULATION: 50,438,300



LOCATION & GEOGRAPHY: Myanmar is located on the mainland of South East Asia. It is bound by China to the north and northeast, Laos to the east, Thailand to the east and southeast, India to the northwest, Bangladesh to the west and the Andaman Sea to the south. The country can be divided into four topographical zones. (1.) The Eastern Shan Plateau which is a highland region that merges with the Dawna and Tenasserim Yoma Ranges. (2.) The central belt zone which covers the valleys of the Irrawaddy, Chindwin and Sittang Rivers as well as a mountainous region in the north and a low lying delta to the south. (3.) The western mountain zone, also known as the Arakan Mountains, which is a series of ridges that start in the northern mountain area and extend to the southwestern corner. (4.) The Arakan coastal zone which is a narrow alluvial strip lying between the Arakan Mountains and the Bay of Bengal. The other main river is the Salween. Major Cities (pop. est.); Rangoon 2,513,000, Mandalay 533,000, Moulmein 220,000, Pegu 150,500, Bassein 144,100 (1983). Land Use; forested 49%, pastures 1%, agricultural-cultivated 15%, other 35% (1993).

CLIMATE: Myanmar has a tropical climate with three seasons, (1.) a monsoon or rainy season between May and October, (2.) the hot season between April and November, and (3.) the cool season between December and March. Temperatures are hot all year round with fairly high humidity while rainfall is regulated by the SW Monsoon with at least 75% of it occurring during the monsoon season. The coastal and high mountain precipitation varies between 2,500 to 5,000 mm (98 to 196 inches) annually with the interior receiving 1,000 mm (39 inches) or less. Average temperature ranges in Yangon are from 18 to 32 degrees Celsius (64 to 90 degrees Fahrenheit) in January to 24 to 36 degrees Celsius (75 to 97 degrees Fahrenheit) in April.

PEOPLE: There are over 100 indigenous tribes and sub tribes, with the principal ethnic group the Burmans who account for around 69% of the population while the Karens account for 6.2%, the Kachins for 1.4%, the Shans for around 8.5%, the Chins for around 2% and the Rakhines for around 4.5%. Other ethnic minorities include Indians who account for around 6% and Chinese for around 3% of the population. The majority of the population is located in the valleys of the Irrawaddy, Chindwin, Salween and Sittang Rivers.

DEMOGRAPHIC/VITAL STATISTICS: Density; 63 persons per sq km (163 persons per sq mi) (1991). Urban-Rural; 25.0% urban, 75.0% rural (1993). Sex Distribution; 49.6% male, 50.4% female (1988). Life Expectancy at Birth; 56.0 years male, 60.0 years female (1993). Age Breakdown; 37% under 15, 30% 15 to 29, 17% 30 to 44, 10% 45 to 59, 6% 60 and over (1988). Birth Rate; 33.0 per 1,000 (1990). Death Rate; 13.0 per 1,000 (1990). Increase Rate; 20.0 per 1,000 (1990). Infant Mortality Rate; 80.0 per 1,000 live births (1991).

RELIGIONS: Over 89% of the population are Theravada Buddhists while 5% are Christians of the Roman Catholic, Baptist and Protestant churches. In addition, around 4% of the population are Muslims.

LANGUAGES: The official language is Burmese which is spoken by over 80% of the population, although each ethnic minority group also has its own language.

EDUCATION: Aged 25 or over and having attained: no formal schooling 55.8%, primary 39.4%, secondary 4.6%, religious 0.1%, higher 0.1% (1983). Literacy; literate population aged 15 or over 16,472,494 or 78.5% (1983).

MODERN HISTORY - WWII TO 1993: In 1945 Britain returned to Burma (Myanmar) and on Jan. 4, 1948 granted Burma complete independence outside the Commonwealth. Almost immediately there was an uprising of communists, principally by the People's Volunteer Organization (PVO) as well as other ethnic insurgents. By 1951 the unrest was under control and the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL) controlled the government through elections until 1958 when the party split. As a result Gen. Ne Win was installed as caretaker of the government until fresh elections in 1960, which returned the AFPFL to power. In Mar. 1962 Gen. Ne Win as head of the Revolutionary Council (RC) led a coup and overthrew the government. Gen. Ne Win suspended the constitution and parliament, then nationalized all private enterprises and abolished free trade. In July 1962 the Burma Socialist Program Party (BSPP) was formed and became the country's only legal party. On Mar. 1974 Gen. Ne Win dissolved the RC and established a single party state under the terms of the new constitution. Ne Win became President while anti-government demonstrations, riots and floods plagued the country's economic problems. The army became more heavily involved in counterinsurgency campaigns against ethnic rebels as they united under the National Democratic Front. In 1981 Pres. Ne Win retired and was replaced by San Yu who was also reelected in 1985. In Sept. 1987 students held demonstrations and the ensuing unrest resulted in a crackdown by the army in mid-1988 killing as many as 3,000 people involved in a pro democracy demonstration. In July, Ne Win and San Yu resigned from their posts. In Sept. 1988 Gen. Saw Maung of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) took power. The SLORC announced the planned introduction of a multiparty system of government. In 1989 the country's name was changed from Burma to Myanmar while the

first multiparty elections took place on May 27, 1990 with Aung San Suu Kyi of the National League for Democracy (NLD) winning the elections. The military Junta promised to hand power over to the NLD after a new constitution was drafted. In Nov. 1990 a UN human rights investigator visiting the country condemned the government for not handing over power to the elected civilians. Since the elections the Junta has arrested most of the opposition party leaders and in April 1991 Gen. Than Shwe announced that there were no immediate plans to hand power over in the foreseeable future. In May 1991 universities were reopened after being closed in 1988 and in Oct. 1991 Aung San Suu Kyi was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, although she remained under house arrest. In 1992 the Junta initiated talks with civilian politicians to prepare for a national convention on a new constitution, although nothing further developed from them. In April 1992 Gen. Saw Maung resigned as head of the SLORC due to a nervous disorder and was succeeded by his deputy, Gen. Than Shwe. In Sept. 1992 the SLORC repealed a martial law decree in which civilians were tried by military tribunals. Also in 1992 the Junta released some 200 political prisoners throughout the year, but refused to free Aung San Suu Kyi from house arrest while some 265,000 Muslims emigrated to Bangladesh to escape persecution. Additionally, a Myanmar patrol attacked a Bangladesh border post killing two soldiers. In Jan. 1993 the Junta opened a 700 delegate constitutional convention that approved plans for the military to actively participate in the government and to take over in emergencies. In May 1993 Foreign Minister U Ohn Gyaw criticized the West for attempting to impose its human rights standards on the country following an Amnesty International report condemning Myanmar's human rights abuses. On July 20, 1993 the Junta extended Suu Kyi's house arrest for a fifth year and ignored international calls to release the pro-democracy and elected civilian leader. In Oct. 1993 the military sentenced two dissidents, Ma Thida a novelist and Aung Khin Sint a convention delegate, to long prison sentences for their alleged political activities.

CURRENCY: The official currency is the Kyat (K) divided into 100 Pyas.

ECONOMY: Gross National Product; USD \$30,707,000,000 (1993). Public Debt; USD \$5,135,000,000 (1993). Imports; K 4,059,000,000 (1992). Exports; K 2,633,000,000 (1992). Tourism Receipts; USD \$19,000,000 (1993). Balance of Trade; K -195,800,000 (1994). Economically Active Population; 15,737,000 or 37.2% of total population (1991). Unemployed; 4.3% (1988).

MAIN TRADING PARTNERS: Its main trading partners are Singapore, Western Europe, China, the UK and Japan.

MAIN PRIMARY PRODUCTS: Beans, Chromium, Coal, Cotton, Ground Nuts, Gold, Gypsum, Jute, Lead, Limestone, Nickel, Oil and Natural Gas, Precious Stones such as Jade, Rubies, Sapphires, Pulses, Rice, Rubber, Sugar Cane, Tin, Tungsten.

MAJOR INDUSTRIES: Agriculture, Fishing, Fertilizers, Food Processing, Footwear, Forestry, Mining, Oil and Gas Production, Pharmaceuticals, Textiles.

MAIN EXPORTS: Base Metals and Ores, Jute, Rice, Rubber, Teak.

TRANSPORT: Railroads; route length 3,137 km (1,949 mi) (1989), passenger-km 4,140,000,000 (2,572,000,000 passenger-mi) (1989), cargo ton-km 504,000,000 (345,190,000 short ton-mi) (1989). Roads; length 23,200 km (14,416 mi) (1985). Vehicles; cars 27,000 (1989), trucks and buses 42,000 (1989). Merchant Marine; vessels 142 (1990), deadweight tonnage 1,245,759 (1990). Air Transport; passenger-km 214,471,000 (133,266,000 passenger-mi) (1988), cargo ton-km 2,146,000 (1,470,000 short ton-mi) (1988).

COMMUNICATIONS: Daily Newspapers; total of 2 with a total circulation of 414,000 (1993). Radio; receivers 3,300,000 (1994). Television; receivers 1,000,000 (1994). Telephones; units 80,000 (1993).

MILITARY: 286,000 (1995) total active duty personnel with 92.7% army, 4.2% navy and 3.1% air force while military expenditure accounts for 3.8% (1992) of the Gross National Product (GNP).