

The Mon Forum

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Some Acronyms in This Issue

- SPDC-** State Peace and Development Council,
SLORC- State Law and Order Restoration Council,
IB - Infantry Battalion (of Burmese Army),
LIB- Light Infantry Battalion (of Burmese Army),
LID - Light Infantry Battalion (of Burmese Army)
KNU- Karen National Union,
KNLA- Karen National Liberation Army,
NMSP- New Mon State Party,

News

Arrests of Hundreds of Porters in Mon State and Karen State

(October, 1999)

Due to dissatisfaction to Thai government and its authorities for their release of 5 Burmese students who seized the Burmese Embassy in Bangkok for 2 hours, the Burmese military regime, SPDC, blocked the border and also beefed up armed forces along the border in southern part of Burma with purposes to arrest the five students and launched offensives against the KNU and other opposition groups.

After the Embassy was seized on 1st October and the five students returned to their bases, the Burmese Army had prepared to launch a new offensive. In mid-October, the Burmese Army sent about 2,000 troops from LID No. 33 and LID No. 88 and started offensives against armed oppositions who were taking bases in the border area. During this offensive many hundreds of Mon and Karen villagers were used as civil-



The villagers at porter service for Burmese Army: *many thousands of rural civilians are daily arrested for porter service in many part of Burma when Burmese Army operates offensives*

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ian porters in dangerous front-lines to carry ammunitions and food supplies.

Among many military operations for offensives, the army has used many Karen and Mon porters when they launched offensives to Three Pagoda Pass area and east of Karen State area or KNU's 6th Brigade area. On 15 October, 1999, about 2,000 troops of LID No. 33 and LID No. 88 arrived to Moulmein, the capital of Mon State and the local military battalions have to provide the with the set number of porters. Before these large numbers of troops arrived to Mon State, at least 2 porters from even a small village were asked to send to the concerned battalion headquarters.

Not only Mon State, Pa-an Township and other townships under the firm administration of the government in Karen State was asked for porters. Each village had to provide about 2-5 porters for the army. Those porters were taken by the local battalions and sent to the respective military operations. The porters in Pa-an Township were requested by LIB No. 310 that bases in Pa-an town and were sent to LID No. 33 troops who launched offensives against KNU and other democratic forces in east part of Kya Inn Seiky town, Kawkareik and Phapon township area of Karen State.

According to reliable source, on October 21, 1999, about 1,000 troops from LID No. 88 and some hundreds of porters with 37 military trucks moved from Thanbyuzayat town along the motor road to Three Pagoda Pass, a well-known border point with Thailand. The purpose of LID No. 88's offensives to keep control the border and to clear all opposition forces who were taking bases in Three Pagoda Pass and along motor road areas. Similarly, on October 22, 1999, about 1,000 troops from LID No. 33 and some hundreds of porters with 32 military trucks moved from Mudon

town of Mon State to Kya Inn Seiky town of Karen State.

In demanding porters, the troops from LID No. 33 and LID No. 88 themselves have not asked for porters in White Area (*the government firm control area*) by themselves and let the local battalions in every township take this responsibility. However when those troops entered into Black Area (*the so-called free fire zone*), the troops arrested all men to be front-line civilian porters. The Karen and Mon villagers in Karen State, have been suffered more from such type of arrest. Soon after the villagers were arrested they were always beaten when the government soldiers interrogated about the activities of the rebel armies around their villages.

Sometimes, to avoid the torture, the village headmen always tried to negotiate with army, to agree on the number of porters or tried to keep better relationship with army. However, at the end, the headmen could not manage to provide the required number of porters and have to escape from village. According to experience of a village headman of Koedokwae village, when a column of LID No. 33 troops entered into his village, he discussed and agreed to provide 20 porters for army for three days. Although the army promised they would take the villagers for three days and released, the villagers were taken for more than 10 days. During these 20 villagers were along the previous group of troops, another column of troops went into village and requested another 30 porters again. After he could not manage, he had to escape from his village and the troops arrested the villagers as they liked to use them as porters. After the soldiers did not get the set number of porters they also arrested women and used them as porters.

In the porter service for the Burmese Army in these offensives, the civilian porters were also used as mine-sweepers or human-shields. The torture against the porters by soldiers when they could not afford to carry ammunitions and food supplies was a common abuse in the front-lines. According a Karen porter who recently escaped from the porter service told our human rights workers, that:

"I was arrested on October 23, 1999, when I came back to my home. I was taken by army for five days and escaped from them because they



Displaced Karen villagers: Many Karen villagers are displaced when the Burmese Army launch military offensives

used us as human-shields in the battlefields. When fighting happened with Karen guerillas, the Burmese soldiers pointed to us to move advance of them. One man on the left side of me was hit by a bullet and was killed on the spot. I was too afraid of being killed and then escaped. As I knew the area well, I reached to this village (another Karen village near border).

"There were many types of torture to porters I met before I escaped. A sergeant who holds a catapult also shot the porters who walked slower from a distance. He shouted the line of porters to walk fast and if someone walked slowly, he shot to the leg or other parts of the body. I also met some porters was beaten severely by soldiers. As I was young, I was not beaten. An old Mon man about 55 years old was inhumanely beaten by soldiers. When he could not walk they also kicked him with jungle boots to his testicle and bladder. Then when he was dying, they left him behind. I don't know the name of this Mon man "

Generally, many porters who have experience in the Burmese Army's porter service explained that they were forced to carry about 20-30 viss (*1 viss weight is about 1.4 kilograms*) and it is too heavy to climb the mountain. And, they were fed with only inefficient foods and could not get enough sleep. In this situation, some old aged porters got sick in the battlefields and they were beaten and killed or were left behind. Therefore, the situation in porter service is harder than forced labour in general construction of roads, military camps and others.

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Conscription of Forced Labour in Ye-Tavoy Motor Road and Railway

(September, 1999)

During nearly for the whole rainy season, from July until the end of September, the local villagers have been continuously forced to grow trees along Ye-Tavoy motor road and at the same time, many hundreds of villagers in Yebyu Township area were ordered to rebuild the ruin parts of Ye-Tavoy railway's embankment. The conscription of forced labour was normally instructed by the Military Operational Control Command No. 8, and ten military battalions from LIB No. 401 to No. 410 under this command had to take responsibility to conscript the villagers to contribute the labour. These battalions were shared with work-duties by the military command and some of them based in motor road while another base in railway road.

During the rainy season, in July, while the local villagers were busy with their own works in paddy growing farms or fruit plantations in Yebyu Township, the villagers were forced through their headmen to grow some hardwood trees along the motor road and clear all grasses along the road. The battalions that took bases along the motor road brought many thousands of hardwood trees and forced the villagers to grow along the road. Each family was provided with 50 trees to grow them. Each tree must have a distance of 50 feet from the motor road track, and they must be at a distance about 12 feet from one to another. After they grew the trees, they also had to make a 3 feet square and 3 feet height fence round all trees. Then, the villagers are also instructed to clear all small wild trees and grasses



Forced labourers in Ye-Tavoy motor road: Many hundreds of Mon villagers in Yebyu township area forced to re-build or widen the motor road



Malawe-taung area: *In where the embankment of the Ye-Tavoy railway is regularly destroyed in rainy season*



from the road to the newly grown trees, with purpose to see the trees easily. To complete all processes of growing trees, making fences and clearing small trees and grasses, one family who could provide only one member would take about 20 days to complete the work duties. Normally, about 15 villages from Yapu and Kalein-aung village tracts, which are situating along the motor road, were forced to grow these trees.

Continuously, in August, some parts of Ye-Tavoy railway road was also collapsed near Malawe-taung area, where the rail road passes between two high mountains, because of heavy rain and flood. Accompanied with road collapse, some wooden bridges were also thrown by water. Initially, in July, about 100 villagers from the whole village of Paukpingwin village, which has about 60 households, were forced to re-build the embankment. Later when the road was in worst conditions, some hundreds of villagers from another villages were forced to work in re-building the railway's embankment.

Therefore, about 500-700 villagers from 30 villagers from Natkyisin, Kwethonyima, Mintha, Eindayaza and Kalein-aung village tracts were forced through their headmen to send the requested number of villagers to contribute labour in re-building embankment, without payment and providing foods. The villagers had to carry their own foods and tools to work-sites, and they had to work at least 7 days. On a rotation basis, the headmen had to manage in sending the villagers to the work-sites. Sometimes, the villagers had to work for 10-15 days in one round. The army has not shared the exact work-duties to each village and they just instructed to fill the earth in holes and broken part of embankment, until one part of embank-

ment was completely repaired. When they were re-building embankment, they also have to repair the broken bridges. If one village had to rebuild the large part of the road, they may need to take many days to complete. Some villagers lasted about 20 days in the construction. Since August, until the second week of October, the railway re-building processes have been continuous and some villagers had to work 2 rounds to 3 rounds.

This Ye-Tavoy railway was built since 1993 by forcing many hundreds of thousands of villagers to contribute unpaid labour in the construction. As the railway constructing authorities had

not used heavy grader and press heavily on the embankment while they were building the road, it has been easily destroyed during the rainy season. Therefore, in every year rainy season, whenever the rain come, the road is collapsed and the villagers are unceasingly forced to contribute unpaid labour.

Conscription of Forced Labour and Related Tax Extortion by Army In Kya Inn Seikyi Township Area

(October, 1999)

Since the beginning of July, until October 1999, the local Burmese Army of IB No. 32, LIB No. 283 and LIB No. 284 and Karen Peace Organization (KPO) has constantly used forced labour in building the military camps. On July, 1999, with a purpose to build a military camp for IB No. 32 in Kya Inn Seikyi town, the villagers from the villages that close to the town were instructed to send the requested numbers of labourers to the construction site. For the villages that were far from the town, the village headmen had to send bamboo or money to the army. The villages that were effected from this conscription of forced labour were Kyat-tu-yaw-taung, Kyaukpon, Bada-ye, Tawae-pauk, Weithalee (east) and Weithalee (west) and Dayae-gwin. Similarly, the villages such as Win-yaw-seikyi, Miparan, Hteepho-naing, Phaya-nga-su and Naung-tae villages were instructed to send bamboo or tree poles to the construction. A military commander from IB No. 32, Maj. Nyein Chann Aung issued the order and asked for labour or bamboo. As some vil-



Forced labour for army: *A group of villagers are making fences for Burmese Army's outpost*

lages are quite far from the construction site, the villagers were also asked to pay money instead of bamboo. If one village was ordered to provide 1,000 bamboo, the headman had to pay 30,000 Kyat for the total costs of the bamboo.

Similarly, the three battalions, IB No. 32, LIB No. 283 and LIB No. 284 has taken base in Taung-bauk village on a rotation basis in every three months. When the troops reached to this village's army outpost, the villagers were requested to do the different types of works in there. Normally, the villagers from Taung-bauk, Hlaing-kani, Winkapa, Nan-parae, Myin-war-gone, Palaw-gone and Naung-pauk villages were forced to work in the outpost. Every battalion demanded at least 20 labourers from all villages to contribute unpaid labour in building new barracks, making fences, digging trenches and bunkers and other works. The villagers had to work in the outpost at least for three days, when the replaced villagers arrived to outpost, they could return their homes.

Similar to Burmese Army, a surrender Karen group, the so-called Karen Peace Organization (KPO) under the leadership of Saw Thamu Hae, also took base in Than-paya village and demanded forced labour from the rural villages in Than-paya village tract. From July until September, when KPO built a military outpost in Than-paya village, about 50-60 villagers from the villages near that villages such as Nanphapaw, Hteepauklo, Shwe-la-inn, Dayae-gwin, Thayet-gone and Kha-thwin-suu villages were forced to build the KPO army camp.

Normally, those villagers had to build new military camps, clearing the lands and fencing the outposts. Sometimes, the villagers also had to make sharp bamboo and put it outside of outpost compound to prevent from the approach of the enemy.

Besides the use of forced labour, the villagers were instructed to provide a regular tax. Since June, by describing a purpose to hire labourers to take the security of the bridges along the road, from Chaung-htitkwa to Kya Inn Seikyi town, one village in the township area has pay tax 4,000 - 10, 000 Kyat per month.

Similarly the military intelligence and commanders also asked to pay tax from illegal lottery games that separates in the whole township. Actually, the lottery games that follows from the Thai lottery is illegal in Burma or definitely closed by government, but the local authorities have allowed the game and took tax from this for their own profit. Each lottery seller has to pay 6,000 Kyat tax per month and they have permission from the authorities. From this game, the authorities also received many thousands Kyat as monthly tax.

Sometimes, when the soldiers asked for labourers from a village, they also ask for both labourers and money. For example, in early September, when IB No. 32 battalion asked 4 labourers from Winyaw village, but the commander Lt. Col. Ko Ko Aung instructed the village headmen that they would take only 2 labourers but to pay money for another 2 labourers, with 8, 000 Kyat per head.

On the other hand, the porter fee was regularly asked separately from other costs. Depending on the population number in a village, the request for porter fee was also different from one to another. A village with 300 households like Than-baya village had to pay 20,000 Kyat as porter fee and in addition, this village also had to add another 20,000 Kyat for sport fee in August especially. The other small village was also requested to pay at least 10,000 Kyat for monthly porter fee and added 5,000 Kyat as sport fee in August.

Because of the regular demand for forced labour and various types of fee, some poor villagers could not afford to pay. Some poor family members were often used in porter service for army for their failure to pay the requested amount of tax. At the end, these poor families had to flee from the village and moved to other areas where they were treated less cruel.

New SPDC Troops Deployment and Land Confiscation in Ye Township Area

(September, 1999)

With a plan to deploy a new battalion and an air base in northern part of Ye town, about 800 acres of lands owned by Mon villagers nearby are confiscated and all landowners are stopped to continuously work on their lands. The Mon villagers from Aru-taung and Kun-dune villages owned these lands, they used them as fruit and rubber plantations for many decades as traditional work for income. The place of confiscated lands is on the Thanbyuzayat-Ye motor road, that space of land is far about 15 miles in the north of Ye Town.

The lands are used as rubber, durian and betel-nut plantation and all villagers who owned these plantations have only one source of income for their families' survival. In land confiscation, the army took 51 spaces of plantations owned by Aru-taung villagers, which cost about 65 million Kyat, according to the current price. Similarly, 19 spaces of lands, which owned by Kun-dune villagers, are also confiscated and these lands with big fruit and rubber trees cost about 24 million Kyat according to calculation from the local source.

The confiscated lands are close to an old Japanese air base during Second World War and considerably, SPDC will repair that air base and will use it as new air base. To secure the new air base, the SPDC also requires some troops to be deployed in the surrounding area of the air base and so the lands near the planned air base was confiscated. Not only the lands along the motor road owned by the villagers, the SPDC also took hills and mountains in east side of the motor road to deploy artillery forces to defend from the attacks of the KNU/KNLA.

In October, when the Burmese Army try to de-

ploy an Infantry force in the new confiscated lands, they also instructed to the village headmen to send many bamboo and hardwoods to the construction site. Every village with 200 households and over near the planned base has to give 1,000 bamboo, 10,000 thatches and 500 pieces of wooden poles to construction and the headmen are instructed those materials must be gathered before the end of October. The villagers who newly lose the lands are also forced to provide these materials although they are quite disappointed and in helpless situation.

According the source from the Burmese Army, they extend a new air base in southern of Burma and will create it as a important air base like air bases in Mingaladon, Hmaw-bi, Mattila and Myintkyina town. Before the army started building air base, they will have to deploy more infantry forces near the planned area and equipped the artillery guns on the top of the mountains and hills nearby. Some army commanders said the main aim of deployment of air base, ground base and artillery forces in the area is to protect it from the attack of KNU/KNLA.

But some Mon leaders said that SPDC took a good chance during it has ceasefire agreement with NMSP and tried to get more control in Mon areas where NMSP had used as its administrated area during war. After ceasefire, many Mon troops took base near the motor road had to withdraw and gather in the agreed troop location. Since then the activity of the Mon army has been weaken and SLORC/SPDC took a good chance to deploy more troops in the area.

There has been some evidence that the Burmese Army has gradually moved into Mon area and deployed more and more troops. Although the military governments have deployed three battalions such as IB No. 61, LIB No. 343 and IB No. 106 in Ye Township area alone, they deployed more troops during 1999. In the early 1999, SPDC confiscated about 300 acres of land in southern part of Ye Town and deployed a new battalion LIB No. 299. To deploy the new battalion, about 300 acres of fruit and rubber plantation lands owned by Mon villagers from Hangan and Koe-mile villages were confiscated. Later about 4 months, the lands for air base was confiscated and the Burmese Army has planned to build new base again.

Another reason of land confiscation and troop deployment is to keep the NMSP and Mon army to not revolt the Burmese Army again. Due to military strategy, the Mon army is blocked at border area and they has lost communication and contact with their own people from the villages in Mon State and if the NMSP resume fighting against the government, it must lose many support from the people. If the Burmese Army gets more control in the area, the Mon army will also lose some area to launch their military operations.

Report

SPDC's Plan to Get Yearly Paddy Tax From Paddy Peasant Farmers in Mon State

Introduction

Generally, with purposes to make profit and to feed many thousands of soldiers, government servants and authorities, and local militia troops, the military regime, SPDC, has tried to get the set amount of paddy tax from the local paddy growing farmers in the whole country. Actually, the government has bought paddy crops from the farmers at low price and the farmers are normally forced by authorities, soldiers and village militia to give or sell the defined amount of paddy to government. The price set by the government paddy buying authorities is low as only 30-40% of the price in the market and all farmers have no desires to sell to the government. However, they are forced to sell and so the defined amount of paddy that to be sold to government is also considered as a type of tax by farmers.

Like the farmers in the whole country of Burma, the Mon farmers from Mon State, Karen State and Tenasserim Division also has suffered the similar conditions from the forced buying of paddy by the government after harvest. While the government has paid with the set price for the paddy they had bought from farmers in White Area (*government's firm control area*), the army always makes a looting of the paddy from the farmers in Black Area (*free fire zone or the government's loose control area*).

In the last rainy season, due to less rain in some areas, the farmers who were depended on irrigated water received less crop products. Those farmers could not completely sell the set amount of crops asked by the respective paddy-buying authorities. Therefore, in mid-1999, the government authorities have prepared to get full amount of paddy in coming early Year 2000 paddy-buying season according to the higher authorities. Learning from 1999 paddy-buying season's experience, the government authorities also adopted a new policy or a strategy to get the set amount of paddy tax from farmers.

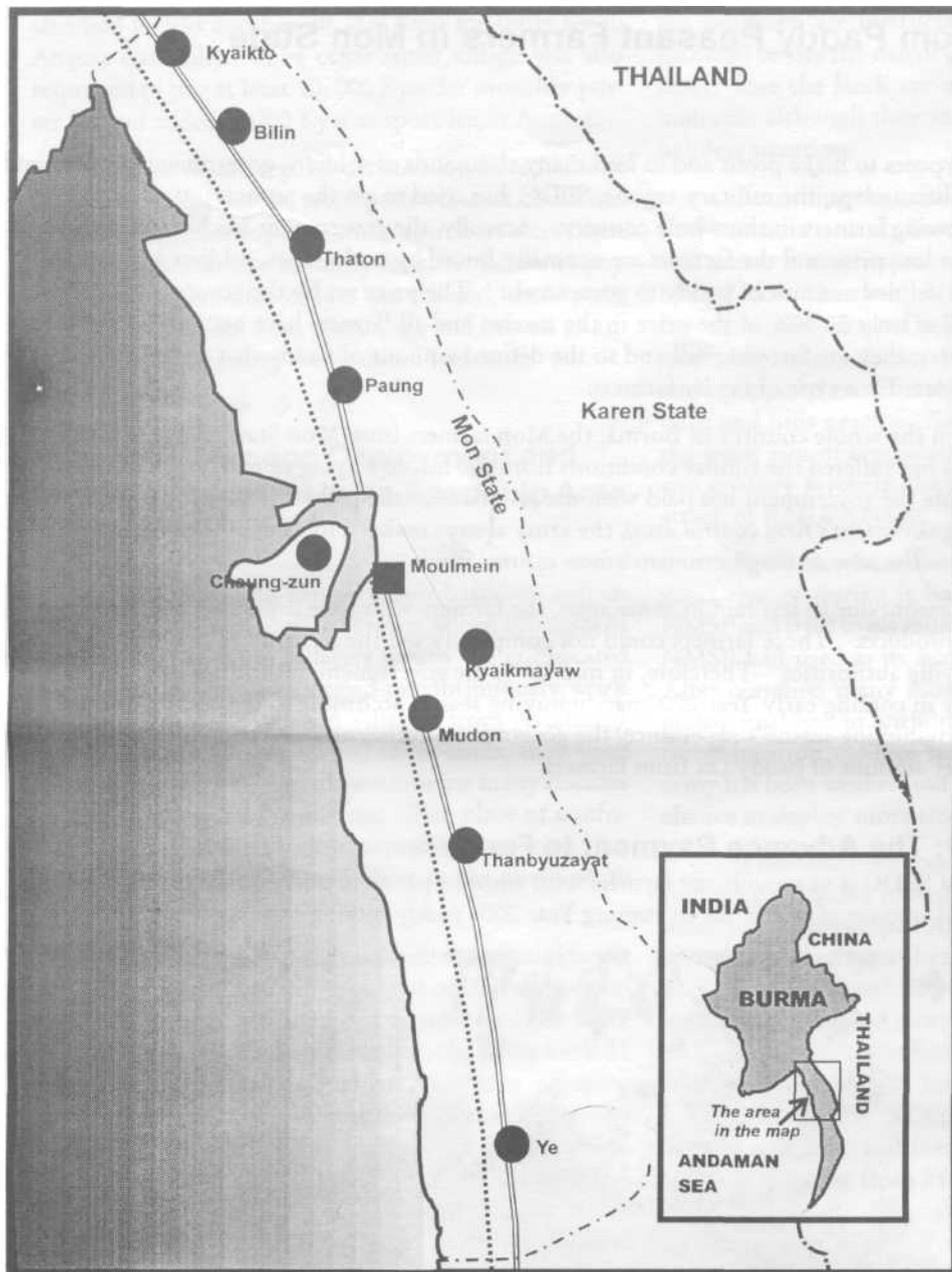
The New Strategy: The Advance Payment to Farmers

The new strategy of SPDC is to provide the farmers with advance payment and take promise by signing from them to sell the full amount of paddy tax in coming Year 2000 paddy-buying season. When the



A paddy-buying center: *Such paddy-buying centers are created in the Mon State and forced the farmers to sell their paddy at low price*

government authorities provided advance payment to the farmers, they also forced the farmers to sign on a paper that giving promise to sell the set amount of paddy tax to the respective government's paddy-buying centers. Whether a farmer would like to take advance payment or not, they must take and sign giving promise.



A Map of Mon State

The government authorities expected that by paying the advance payment to farmers, they could get the set amount of paddy they have estimated. Depending on the quality of the lands, the authorities tried to get about 10-16 baskets of paddy acre of land. The set amount of paddy from one township to another is also different in Mon State.

Since July and August, after one month when the farmers started cultivation, the respective township authorities have formed "paddy buying managing committees" in their township area under the leadership of Agricultural Products Trade Department. In-charge or Second In-charge of this department always leads the committees and all managers are appointed to take responsibility as managers in all centers to buy the

paddy from farmers or sometimes to force the farmers to get the set amount of paddy.

When the authorities bought paddy from farmers, the advance payment they have paid is not for all defined amount of paddy that they expect to get from farmers, but paid about 50-60% of the total amount of paddy they set to buy. The price of the paddy for one basket is only 350 Kyat price by government, while the price of the paddy for one basket is about 800-1,000 Kyat per basket in the market.

The operation of providing advance payment to farmers and taking the signed promise began in mid-July. Normally, the farmers were called to a meeting and then were forced to sell the set amount of paddy to them.

As an example:

On July 17, Ye Township's In-charge of Paddy-Buying Managing Committee, U Myint Swe and 6 police officers came to Duya village, a big Mon village with 1,000 households in west of Ye town, and called a meeting with all farmers. In the meeting, he explained about the government's plan to buy 10 baskets of paddy from one acre of farmlands and said to give advance payment. He added the government would give money for the costs of 6 baskets of paddy for one acre and will give another remaining money for 4 baskets of paddy when the farmers sell completely their paddy to paddy-buying centers.

In the meeting, a young farmer also reported to In-charge about his crop conditions and appealed to reduce the set amount of paddy to be sold to the paddy-buying centers. He explained that because of heavy rain in the township area, the paddy plants in some parts of deep land died and so the crop products might be dropped. So he appealed the authorities to reduce the set amount of buying paddy and said he could sell only 6 baskets per acre. But U Myint Swe shout him and told to all farmers that they must sell the set amount of paddy according to the center and no complaint required. If not, those who could not complete the selling duty must be arrested and detained, he said. He also made a threat to farmers like this. And, another farmers also



asked that it is possible to not take advance payment. U Myint Swe explained to farmers, whether they would like to take advance payment or not, they must sell the set amount of paddy fully to the respective paddy buying centers. But he said the department has instruction to pay advance payment to every farmer.

Similarly to Ye Township, the authorities of other township area in Mon State also forced the farmers to take advance payment from the authorities and promise to sell the set amount of paddy. The price of one basket of paddy set by authorities was about

A local Mon farmer: *The farmers are likely the slaves of the government and they are in deep poverty under the rule of the military regime*

350-400 Baht and depending on the quality of crops, the prices are also slightly different. The authorities paid 400 Kyat per basket of paddy to the farmers in Mudon and Chaungzon township areas because their crop quality was considered outstanding.

The authorities from paddy-buying committees also went around the whole township area into villages and forced the farmers to sell their paddy. On July 3, 1999, Chaungzon authorities went Muiyitgyi village and called a meeting with all farmers and forced them to sell their paddy. Continuously, the authorities went into Mupon, Thatkaw and Kanyor villages respectively on the later days. They also paid advance payment and forced the farmers to sign for a promise that they must sell the set amount of paddy to government as a duty to be completed in Year 2000 paddy-buying season. The farmers in this township were forced to agree to sell 15 baskets of paddy per acre. The authorities also paid 400 Kyat per basket while the price of paddy in the markets is 1,000-1,200 Kyat per basket.

Started on July 20, 1999, the authorities in Thanbyuzayat Township also went around the villages and gave advance payment to farmers and took their promise. The farmers in this township area are instructed to sell 12 baskets of paddy per acre and the authorities paid 350 Kyat per basket of paddy. They will give the remaining money when the farmers to sell the set amount of paddy to the respective paddy-buying center.

The Paddy Buying Plan for Year 2000 in Mon State

In Year 2000, the authorities decided to increase the amount of paddy tax from farmers in Mon State. In comparison with other Townships' farmland quality, the lands in Ye and Kyaikmayaw Township area could not produce good quality crops and that was why the authorities instructed to buy 10 baskets, while they planned 12-15 baskets of paddy per acre in other townships. The authorities decided to buy 15 baskets of paddy per acre from farmers in Mudon and Chaungzon townships and 12 baskets of paddy per acre from farmers in Thanbyuzayat township. Thus, the set amount of paddy to buy in Year 2000 increases about 15-20% than the last year, because the authorities set to buy 8 baskets per acre in Ye Township area, 10 baskets per acre in Thanbyuzayat township and 12 baskets per acre in Mudon and Chaungzon township areas respectively in 1999.

According to reliable source, on July 5, 1999, when an agriculture authority, U Win Aung, of Mudon went to a Mon village, Kwan-hla, in Mudon township, he explained to the farmers in a meeting that the government required about 7 millions baskets of paddy from the whole Mon State. So, the authorities required about 1 million baskets of paddy from Mudon Township alone. In Mon State, Mudon Township has the largest farmlands with about 80, 000 acres of land. The authorities asked the farmers to sell 15 baskets of paddy per acre and so they would get about 1.2 million baskets of paddy totally in Mudon township. However, the authorities expected to get 1 million of baskets of paddy from farmers.

In 1999 paddy-buying season, although the government tried to get about 5 millions baskets of paddy and they received about 4 millions baskets of paddy totally. In Mon State, there are two districts, Moulmein and Thaton Districts, and received about 2.5 millions baskets of paddy from Moulmein district area, which has about 6 townships, alone.

The detail list of paddy bought by authorities in 1999 paddy-buying season is as below:

No.	Name of Township	Total Acre in Township	Total Amount of Paddy	Remark
1.	Moulmein	13, 675	109, 400	<i>In average, thereare 8 baskets per acre sold by farmers</i>
2.	Chaungzon	62, 650	501, 200	
3.	Kyaikmayaw	61, 204	489, 632	
4.	Mudon	78, 790	630, 320	
5.	Thanbyuzayat	26, 580	212, 640	
6.	Ye	64, 850	518, 808	
Total		307, 750	2,462,000	

To implement their plan to get full amount of paddy, each township's Agricultural Products Trade Department and local SPDC Township authorities also formed 'Paddy-buying Managing Committees' before they started paying advance payment to farmers. Along this plan, the paddy-buying centers will be set up in each village tract in the township.

Before the Department started arranging to give advance payment to farmers, the Township authorities also decided to create paddy-buying centers in the whole townships and appointed the purchasing manager for each center. Then paddy-buying managing committees were formed with authority of the Departments. In Mudon Township, there are 4 Town sections and 42 villages totally in administrative area and the authorities set up 11 paddy-buying centers. The managing committee is led by Second In-charge of Mudon Township Agricultural Products Trade Department, U San Hlaing, and formed with 11 managers for all centers. This managing committee plans to buy over 1 millions baskets of paddy from this township alone.

Similarly, in Thanbyuzayat Township, there are 4 Town sections and 38 villages totally in the administrative area and the authorities decided to set up 6 paddy-buying centers. The managing committee is led by In-charge of Thanbyuzayat Township Agricultural Products Trade Department, U Shwe Yin, and formed with 6 managers from 6 paddy-buying centers. This managing committee plans to buy 800, 000 baskets of paddy from this township alone.

Likewise, other townships' Agricultural Products Trade Departments are similarly forming the paddy-buying managing committees in every township of Mon State. From these committees, the local center would cooperate with village headmen, militia troops, army and police, and force the local farmers to sell the set amount of paddy to the centers. If the farmers refused or failed to sell the set amount of paddy, those farmers must be arrested and detained by authorities.



The paddy plants under flood: *The crop production of the farmers in lowland irrigated farms are depending on the weather conditions. However, the authorities will not listen to farmers' reports.*

In the previous years, the authorities also went to the farmers' houses and broke the paddy stores and looted if those farmers failed to sell the set amount of paddy to the centers. When the authorities, militia troops, army and village headmen took such type of looting from farmers, those farmers did not receive any payment from the authorities for the costs of the looted paddy. In 1998, in Mudon township, after the authorities looted their paddy by this way of breaking the paddy store, four farmers from Kamawet village also applied a letter to Commander of Southeast Region Military Command, Maj. Gen Myint Aung, (*he is also Chairman of Mon State Peace and Development Council*), to take actions against local authorities, no reply or no action was taken to those abusers. Only four men were arrested and detained for some months for the application to commander.

The Loss in the Life of a Farmer

For the paddy peasant farmers, they also have a big loss in their life due to forced buying of their paddy or serving for yearly paddy tax. Each farmer loses about 500 to 650 Kyat for each basket of paddy from selling them to government's paddy-buying centers. For a farmer who owns about 10 acres of land may lose 75, 000 to 100, 000 Kyat every year from selling 100-150 baskets of paddy to government. For the loss money, he could buy about 100 baskets of paddy in the market and could feed his family for the whole year. In many cases, the government authorities do not listen any complaint or explanation on paddy conditions of a farmer and they also use forces to threat farmer to sell the paddy. For the farmer who owns 10 acres of land still has to sell 100-150 baskets of paddy to center, even in some rainy season, his crops from 5 acres of land are destroyed by rain, insects, insufficient water.

During the beginning of cultivation, the government neither assists the farmers with fertilizers at low price nor technical assistance to receive the better quality and better crop production. The farmers in Mon State have remained undeveloped or old method of cultivation and their crop conditions is totally dependent on weather conditions.

In the lowland cultivation in Mon State, a farmer could work only 5 acres of land if he has enough cattle and equipment. If the farmers have more than 10 acres of land, he may need to hire a labourer to help them and so they may have to give about 150 baskets of paddy for the whole cultivation period, from ploughing to harvesting. Or, if they have no cattle, they also have to hire a pair of oxen during ploughing the land and threshing the paddy. The farmers may have to give at least about 50 baskets of paddy. Thus, if a farmer who owns about 10 acres of land receives 500 baskets of paddy in harvest season, he may have to give over 200 baskets of paddy for labour cost. Then he may have to sell 150 baskets of paddy to government. Therefore, he left only 150 baskets of paddy. However, during the beginning of cultivation, that farmer may have to buy

fertilizer with high price, and hire the day labour to grow the small plants of paddy. In the harvest season, he may also have to hire day labourers to reap the crops. By selling the rest 150 baskets of paddy, he may have to pay for fertilizers and day labourers. At the end of the year, that farmer left nothing. If the government does not take big amount of paddy tax from them, the life of farmers must be better.

On the other hand, the farmers have no rights to speak out for their dissatisfaction for the corruption of the authorities. In every year, the Agriculture Ministry also gives some fertilizers to farmers but to buy it at low price. The farmers in every area have not received the fertilizers and the authorities takes all and sell to them with high price. Since the farmers have no choice, but have to that only one source of fertilizer with a high price.

Sometime, when the farmers are in detention for their failure to sell the full amount of paddy to government, the remaining family members are forced to give full amount of paddy for the release of those detained farmers. After the remaining family members sell the lands, cattle, and other belongings and buy paddy and give it to government. Only after all amount of the set paddy is given to paddy-buying centers, the farmers are definitely released from detention. Some farmers who could not afford to give paddy tax also abandon their lands.

In conclusion, the farmers have been used as slaves for government for several years since BSPP era. Although the BSPP and the current government claim that the farmers are not exploited by landlords like parliamentary era after Burma retained Independence, all farmers in the whole country are again and totally exploited by government. The nation landlords, who mainly has exploited from the farmers, have been BSPP, SLORC and SPDC and the economics situation of the farmers are worst and some families also face starvation although they are rice producers.

Information on HURFOM

Invitation for Feedbacks

Dear Readers,

Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM) was founded in 1994, by a group of young Mon people. The main objectives of HURFOM are:

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

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

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

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