

The Mon Forum

Issue No. 10/2000

October 30, 2000

The Publication of Human Rights Foundation of Monland (BURMA)

Contents

News:

- (1) **SPDC's MI No. 5 attempted to close Mon National Schools,**
- (2) **LIB No. 299 demanded fund to buy walkie-talkie machines,**

Report:

- (1) **Land confiscation and continuous civilians' suffering in Ye Township.**

Some Acronyms in This Issue

- SPDC-** State Peace and Development Council,
- SLORC-** State Law and Order Restoration Council,
- MI-** Military Intelligence (*of SPDC military regime*)
- IB -** Infantry Battalion (*of Burmese Army*),
- LIB-** Light Infantry Battalion (*of Burmese Army*),
- NMSP-** New Mon State Party,
- MNLA-** Mon National Liberation Army,

News

SPDC's MI No. 5 Attempted to Close Mon National Schools

(October, 2000, Kawkareik Township, Karen State)

On September 22, 2000, No. 5 military intelligence (MI No. 5) of SPDC, which based in Gyaing (cross river) bridge, ordered the village headmen from many Mon villages in Kawkareik township of Karen State, to send the detail information of the operation of Mon National Schools tried to close down the schools in October, by threatening the teachers in there.

In an order given by MI No. 5, the area intelligence officer of Gyaing bridge, it mentioned that he has known there was a teaching of Mon language in the village by the help of village headmen, or an establishment of Mon National School in these villages. Therefore, he needed to know detail information including details who or which organization ordered for the opening of Mon schools; the responsible person's name and position; the names of all teachers in each school; their ages and ID number; the names of their parents and addresses; the number of students for each class in schools. MI No. 5 also set deadline to all headmen to send all these detail facts on September 23 without failure. So, some village headmen whose villages were close



The Mon students who are learning the writing and reading of Mon language.

to MI No. 5 base sent the lists of teachers, children and other information to intelligence officer, while some village headmen did not send. However, in the first week of October, MI No.5 sent another order that mentioned all teaching activities in Mon schools must stop and if not, the teachers must be arrested. It also declared the schools were illegal and ordered the headmen to stop the children to not attend the schools and to give warning to their parents.

MI No. 5 sent this order to over 10 Mon villages, in which the Mon community has operated the own National School to teach their children with Mon language accordingly to the courses and system adopted by Mon National Education Committee and Education Department of New Mon State Party (NMSP).

Along Gyaing river, which flows from Karen State to Mon State and enters into Andaman Sea, there are many Mon villages are residing along riverbank, which are in the part of Kawkareik Township of Karen State. Most Mon local inhabitants are farmers and fishermen. Since over 20 years when the NMSP and its military faction, MNLA, operated the administrative and military activities in this area, Mon education system was established and the local communities including monks and headmen have maintained this system to help providing children with Mon education.

Many Mon villages in this area including Zathapyin, Kaw-pauk, Min-ywa, Kaw-bein, Kaw-go, Kaw-kyaik, Thayet-taw and other small villages have operated Mon education system by the help of community leaders, Buddhist monks and educated people. NMSP's Education Department also found to provide teachers for schools in their villagers by paying possible salaries to hired teachers. From these Mon schools, all children in the villages could get education at free charge.

During NMSP-SLORC ceasefire in 1995, although SLORC's Secretary No. 1, Lt. Gen. Khin Nyunt agreed allowing the teaching of Mon language in both government schools and private Mon National Schools, actually, both SLORC and SPDC never kept their promise for the promotion of Mon literature role in Mon community and still operate their assimilation policy.



LIB No. 299 Demanded Fund to Buy Walkie-talkie Machines

(September, 2000, Ye Township, Mon State)



Forced labourers by LIB No. 299 are used to clear bushes along the Ye-Tavoy motor road

With objectives to take security of the villages, to have regular radio contacts with the nearest military battalion, and to report all conditions of the villages to SPDC authorities and army, LIB No. 299, which takes base in the southern part of Ye Township ordered all Mon villages in southern part of Ye Township on September 26, to buy walkie-talkie machines with their own village money. They instructed the village headmen in the southern part of Township, to collect fund, from 10000-30000 Kyat, in each village and give the army to buy a walkie-talkie machine for each village.

LIB No. 299 ordered nearly 10 villages in this area where they have firm control and asked the headmen to meet them and explained the objectives of buying machines and using them in each village. For the headmen, they could never refuse the order of local military commander accepted the decision and agreed to buy machines.

The battalion also requested different amount of fund from different villages. The army asked from the largest village, Hangan, to pay about 30, 000 Kyat, other larger villages, Kalort and Kaw-hlaing village to pay 20, 000 Kyat, while many villages less than 100 households were asked to pay 10, 000 Kyat. Thus, every household in these villages had to pay about 200-500 Kyat to headmen. According to army officer, after they bought machines, they would provide them to with machines and to regularly make contacts between the villages and army battalion for the area security.

Additionally, with objectives of area security, LIB No. 299 has constantly conscripted forced labour since July, the clear bushes along the Ye-Tavoy motor road, in Ye Township part. The villagers from the above mentioned villages have been constantly suffered from this forced labour all the time.

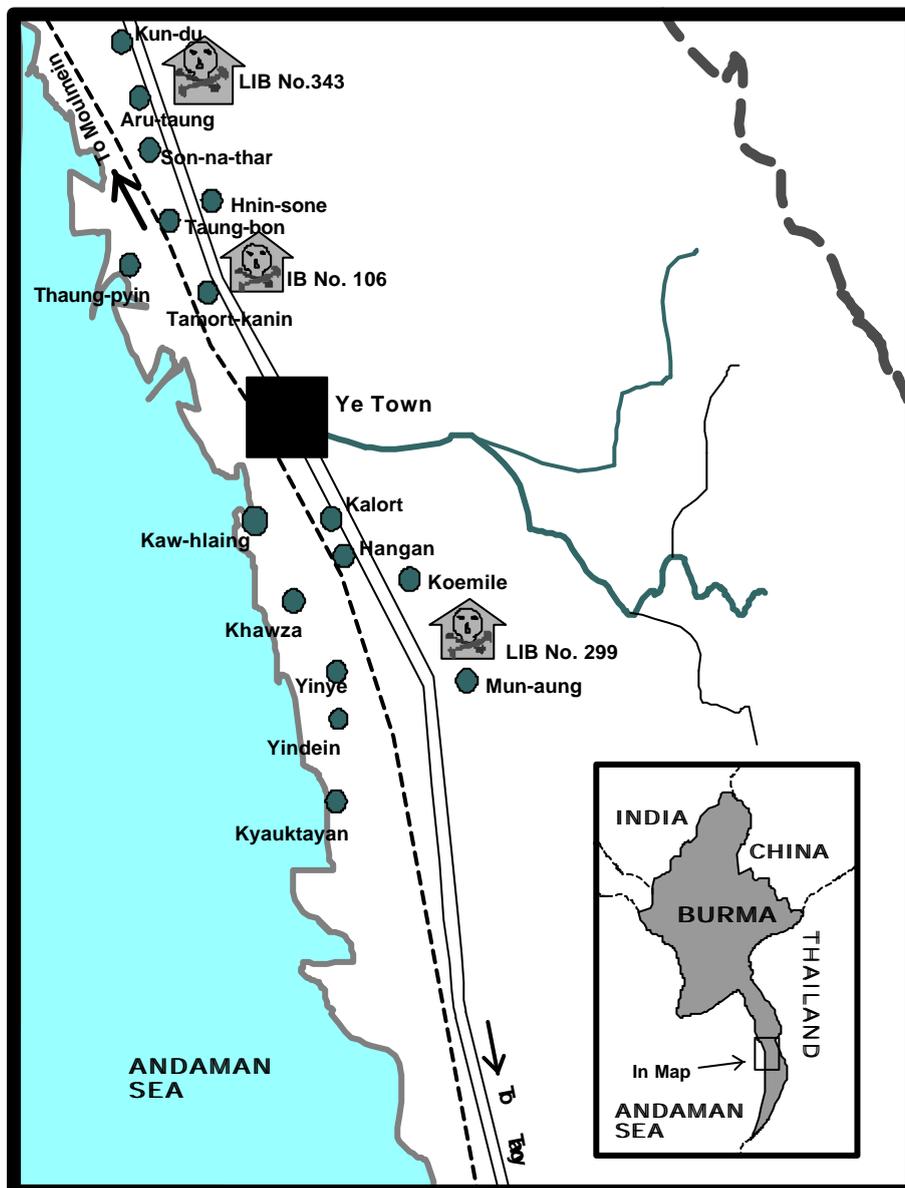


Report

Land Confiscation and Continuous Civilians' Suffering in Ye Township

I. Background of Land Confiscation

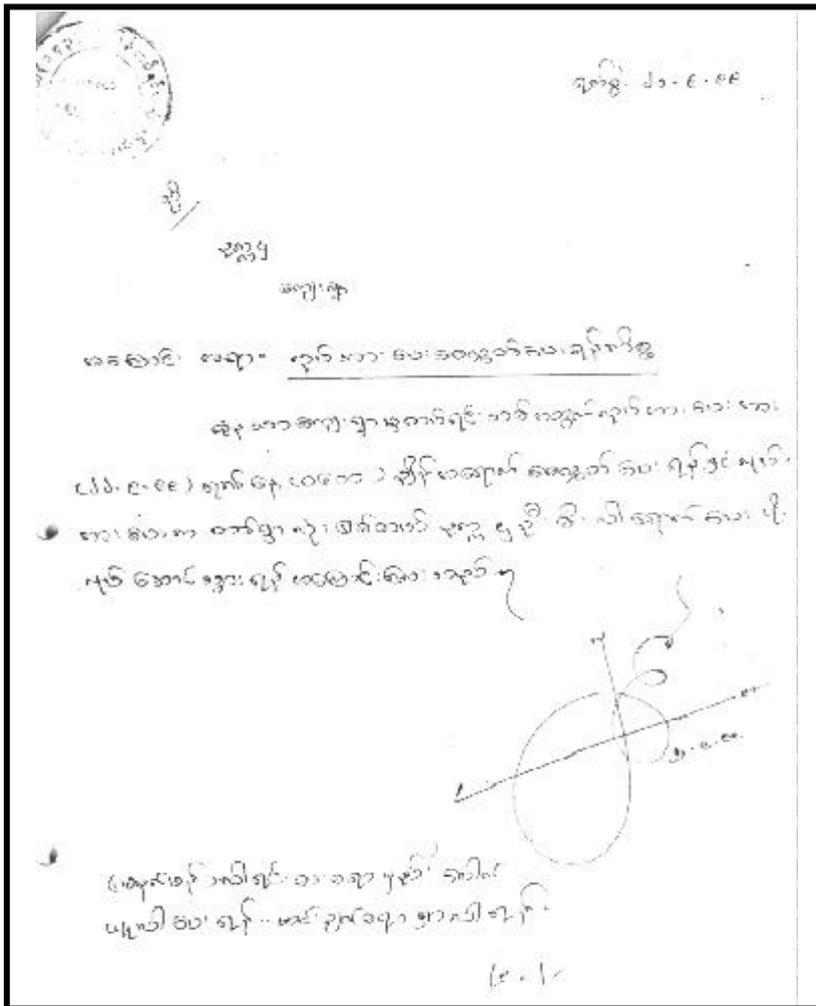
During 1999, with objectives to deploy more army regiments and attempt to control the whole former conflict zone, the Burmese Army or SPDC's Southeast Region Military Command (*Southeast Command*) confiscated some 1,000 acres of land from Mon civilians in Ye Township area. About 200 acres was confiscated in the southern part of township, near Koe-mile village, in early 1999 and another 800 acres of land was confiscated in the northern part of township, near Aru-taung village (*See in the map*). These confiscated spaces of lands are locating along Moulmein-Tavoy motor road and most parts of lands (*about 70%*) are owned by the local Mon civilians. The civilians had grown rubber and other fruit trees such as durian, betel-nut, lime, orange, and created plantations in these lands which have been remained as main livelihood and support their survival for nearly 80 years. However, within one-year, the army took their lands and created them to be land loss and helpless people.



Location Map of Ye Township, Mon State

Since NMSP-SLORC ceasefire in 1995, the Burmese Army has tried to take more control in Mon State by deploying more army, police and militia forces. Actually, the Burmese Army and SPDC have taken this chance accordingly a point within the ceasefire agreement. According agreement, the two sides agreed to create troop location zones and NMSP must keep all its MNLA troops only in the designated troop location zones. **"12 permanent ceasefire zones"** for NMSP were recognized by SLORC/SPDC and NMSP agreed to keep its troops in these places and only surrounding areas. That meant their administrative powers only have influences only in the permanent ceasefire zones and surrounding areas.

Among 12 zones, nearly half of them locate in eastern



The Burmese version of Order No. 1

part of Ye township area, along Ye river. The remaining zones locate in Three Pagoda Pass, Kya Inn Seiky and Kawkareik townships. After establishment of ceasefire zones, NMSP withdrew its MNLA guerrilla forces or troops or bases, which were in many parts of Mon State, Karen State and Yebyu Township of Tenasserim Division, into the designated permanent ceasefire zones. SLORC agreed to create NMSP liaison office in cities in Mon State to communicate each other for the several purposes during ceasefire period.

Thus, NMSP lost total control or semi-control in many parts of Mon State, where they have been active before ceasefire. MNLA troops from Mudon, Thanbyuzayat and Kyaikmayaw townships of Mon State and Yebyu township of Tenasserim Division withdrew and moved into permanent ceasefire zones. This happened during 1995 and 1996. By taking as a good chance, SLORC/SPDC has attempted to keep more

control in the previous NMSP total control and semi-control areas.

When SLORC/SPDC or the Burmese Army extent their base and deploy new military regiment, the concerned military command in the concerned area confiscated some lands and took responsibility to deploy new battalion. Under the instruction of the concerned military command the regular battalion or permanent battalion in the township also has to take responsibility to provide fund for new military battalion. For example, when LIB No. 299 was deployed in southern part of Ye township during the beginning of 1999, the township regular battalion, IB No. 61, had collected various types of tax and used them as battalion funds for LIB No. 299's building of military barracks and feeding soldiers and their families.

In both land confiscation in 1999 in Ye township to deploy LIB No. 299; and LIB No. 343 and one artillery regiment, Southeast Command paid small amount of compensation to land owners of LIB No. 299 and never paid any compensated costs to land loss villagers because of deployment of LIB No. 343, or did not find any new lands for them. Because of land loss situation, it resulted to villagers that they have facing hardship for survival and tried to get new works, which they had no experience. Some young villagers also migrated into Thailand and sought works in Thai cities to support their families who were in hardship situation in Burma.

The detail of land loss, the complaints from civilians and response from Southeast command, the collection of fund for the battalions and the continuous conscription of forced labour accounts are mentioned as below:

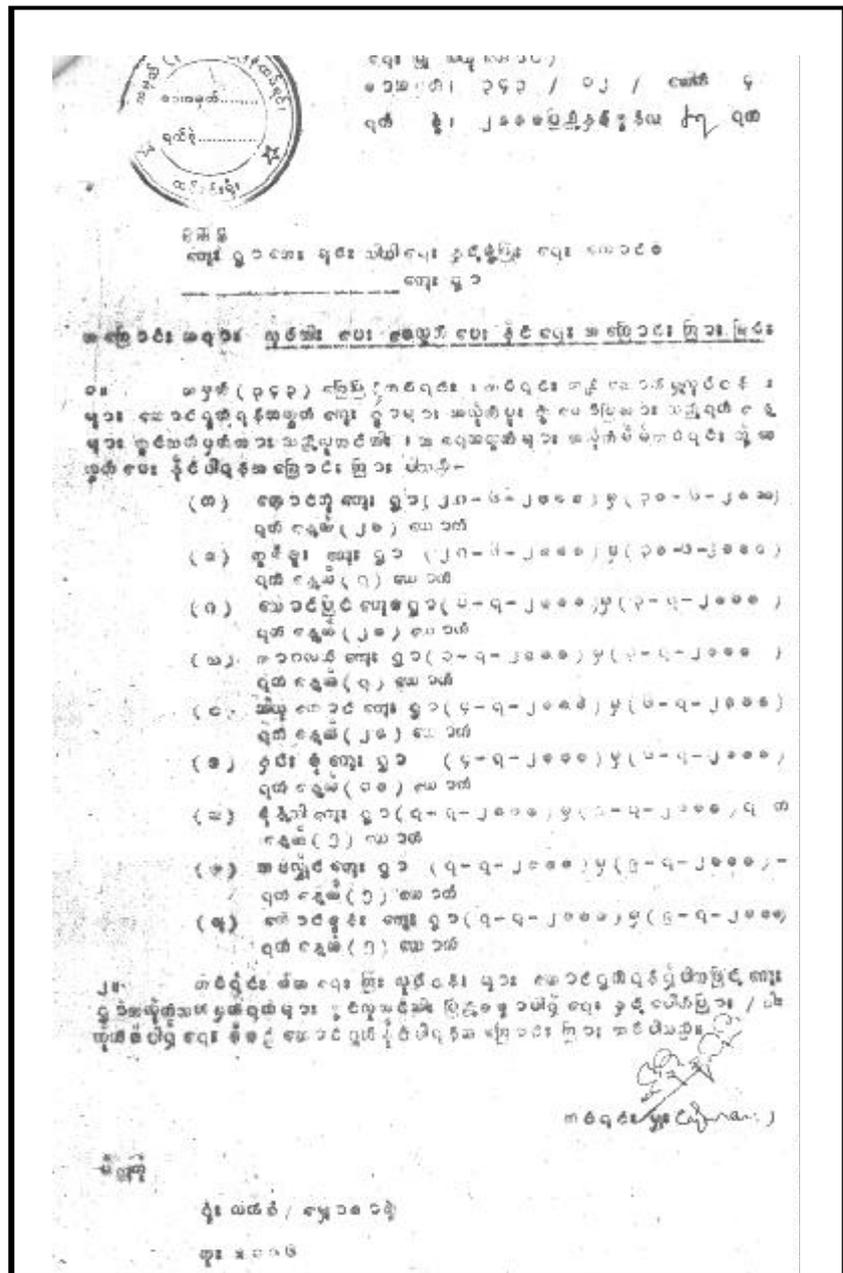
II. Losses after Land Confiscation

Like the majority Mon inhabitants in Mon State, some parts of Karen State and Tenasserim Division, Ye township civilians are traditional paddy-cultivated farmers; and rubber and fruit planters. Most low land Mon farmers grow paddy in many thousands acres of farmlands in western part of Moulmein-Tavoy

railway and the inhabitants normally grow rubber and fruit trees between the railway and motor road and eastern part of Moulmein-Tavoy motor road. The Ye township inhabitants get income and survive from the producing the main paddy crops, rubber and other fruits including a huge amount of betel-nuts, which sell and distribute in many parts of Burma. If there is no army or government's huge and different types of tax, the township would remain in good economy with its rich resources.

However, since 1997, the Burmese Army local military battalions and South-east Command confiscated lands from villagers. According self-reliance program by SLORC and instruction to the local military battalion to support themselves, IB No. 106, based in Kamort-kanin village, northern part of Ye township confiscated about 50 acres of land from farmers. Additionally, according a satellite town establishment program, the SLORC township authorities confiscated about 200 acres of lands just outskirts of the town. The paddy cultivated farmers and palm tree planters lost their lands. The authorities made land plots for housing in these confiscated lands and distributed among themselves of government authorities and servants, battalion commanders and police officers and even giving as gifts to higher commanders in Southeast Command.

In 1998, the local military battalion, IB No. 61, in Ye township planned to confiscate some lands in southern part of Ye township following the command came from Southeast Command, actually, they confiscated lands in early 1999. IB No. 61 confiscated about 200 acres of lands that owned by Koe-mile, Hangan and Kalort villagers and most lands were with rubber, bel-el-nut and durian trees. After land confiscation, the battalion stopped all plantation owners to not go to their plantations and to not collect any crops and said all lands, trees and crops were owned by the new battalion, LIB No. 299. About 17 families lost the lands and in estimation they lost about 20 million Kyat totally. A biggest plantation has about 2000 cashew nut trees and it could sell about 1.5 million Kyat according to market price. To avoid condemnation for compensation reason, the battalion paid compensation with 7 Kyat per trees to some plantations, which had big trees and could product fruits or rubber juice. So, the plantation owner who had about 2000 trees with cost 1.5 million Kyat receive only 14, 000 Kyat totally. With that compensation cost, the villagers could not buy new lands or could not hire labour to clear a new space of wild land. (Look the list of villagers' loss due to land confiscation for LIB No. 299 deployment, on Page 7.) Besides plantation, the



The Burmese version of Order No. 2

battalion also confiscated about 15 acres of paddy farmlands later and forced the villagers to cultivate paddy for them.

After that land confiscation and little amount of compensation cost, LIB No. 299 took all planters' fruits and rubbers and sold them in markets and used for battalion fund. Since initially, Southeast Command instructed every concerned battalion to create self-reliance program already and this was also related to the program.

After about six months, another similar Burmese Army's land confiscation happened in northern part of Ye Township area again. Following the order from Southeast Command, a local battalion, LIB No. 343 and Tactical Command No. 3 that based in township confiscated about 800 acres, in which about 600 acres were owned by Mon fruit and rubber planters from Kun-du and Aru-taung villagers. Most confiscated lands were planted with durian, betel-nut, lime, orange and rubber trees.

After land confiscation, the Burmese Army planned to deploy a battalion, LIB No. 343 and an artillery regiment. Recently, LIB No. 343 based in Ye town and then the battalion moved to new place after land confiscation and started taking base there. After LIB No. 343 has strong base in there, another an artillery battalion will deploy its troops. According some source close to Southeast Command, after a battalion and an artillery regiment take bases, the Burmese Army would deploy a new air base close to these bases and the battalion and regiment will take security for air base. This information is believable, because there is an old air base made by Japanese air force during World War II and SPDC planned to repair that base and deploy their air forces.

Because of this land confiscation, about 83 families of villagers from Aru-taung and Kun-du villages lost about 600 acres of lands which were grown with rubber and various kinds of fruit trees. Some big plantation, over 10 acres of lands have about 2000 rubber trees and its cost for the current price is about 2 million Kyat and some lands with 2000 betel-nuts also has price about 1.5 million Kyat. Even a small of plantation, the owner has about 200 rubber trees. Therefore, the civilians from two villages lost about 98 million Kyat totally from this land confiscation. (*Note: Unofficial exchange rate is about 1 US D = 350 Kyat in estimation.*)

Form these lands, the planters could produce a lot of rubber and other fruits, mainly betel-nut. According a experienced villager, who lost a big plantation said:

"From this confiscated plantations, the planters could produce many thousands pounds of rubber juice and, many hundreds of thousands of betel-nut fruits and many thousands of durian fruits. I estimate, rubber plantations could produce about 10, 000 pounds of rubber juices on the daily basis, bebel-nut plantations could produce about 1.5 million fruits for the whole year, while durian plantations could produce about 2000-3000 fruits everyday for two months harvest season. So, this was a huge loss."

The planters could get the rubber juice from their plantations for 4-5 months every year and when betel-nut and fruit planters could harvest their crops or take their fruit one round every year. Normally, to become a good plantation, the villagers had to grow these types of trees for over ten years and at least they have to wait for at least 5 years for harvest. They have to invest money and labour during these years before they can harvest. Most lands are provided from their ancestors, grandparents or parents, for over 50 years, but all these gone within a few days. Under the rule of military dictatorship, the civilians have no guarantee for the ownership of their lands.

III. Complaints by Civilians and Responses by Army

Actually, in Ye township, there are many thousands acres of wild lands and these are not used for plantations or other purposes. If the Burmese Army takes these lands and deploys their battalions, it might not effect the traditional livelihoods of the local communities. But, why did the Burmese Army or Southeast Command confiscate lands with rubber and fruit trees? It is not so hard to give answer for this question.

Since 1997, SLORC or the Burmese Army has allowed its military battalions not only in Mon State but also in other areas, to seek new lands or to confiscate civilians' lands according to an objective to create self-reliance program or self-help activities for their own concerned battalions.

So, the community leader, Mon leaders and villagers clearly understood that the confiscation of lands with fruit and rubber trees was the reason that the battalion would like to get lands, and rubber and fruits from there. After confiscation, the army owned these plantations and they could get rubber juice and

Names of Land Loss Villagers after Confiscation by LIB No. 343, the Types of Trees and the estimated Cost

No.	Name of plantation owners	Types of trees and number			Estimate cost of land and trees (Kyat)	No.	Name of plantation owners	Types of trees and number			Estimate cost of land and trees (Kyat)
		betel-nut	durian	rubber				betel-nut	durian	rubber	
<i>A. Aru-taung village</i>											
1.	Nai Lay	500	50	-	1,000,000	37.	Nai Kalor	100	20	2000	1,300,000
2.	Mi Khin Aye Mu	300	20	700	900,000	38.	Nai Kun Ba	3000	50	1000	5,000,000
3.	Nai San Thein	700	40	-	1,500,000	39.	Mi Yee	500	20	700	700,000
4.	Nai Kalaw	600	25	500	2,500,000	40.	Nai Shein	-	-	800	500,000
5.	Nai Hade	1000	100	1000	2,200,000	41.	Nai Gan	600	30	400	700,000
6.	Nai Kyi	300	100	600	1,500,000	42.	Nai Soe Thein	100	10	-	100,000
7.	Nai Kun Kalaw	300	20	-	1,500,000	43.	Nai Myaing	500	20	1600	1,000,000
8.	Monastery land	-	80	-	1,400,000	44.	Nai Moe	-	-	200	100,000
9.	Nai Kyaw Aye	1000	30	-	1,500,000	45.	Mi Swe	700	40	200	1,000,000
10.	Nai Aung San	400	80	1000	4,000,000	46.	Nai Dot	1000	20	1300	700,000
11.	Nai Aung Ba Sar	-	20	-	300,000	47.	Nai Hmaing	700	5	-	600,000
12.	Nai Bala Sein	1500	200	1000	5,000,000	48.	Nai Nyunt	100	7	-	200,000
13.	Mi Pya Khin	1200	60	1000	3,500,000	49.	Nai Pala	-	10	-	100,000
14.	Nai Hadi	1500	45	700	3,500,000	50.	Nai Sone	1000	20	600	2,000,000
15.	Nai Wave	-	-	1200	800,000	51.	Nai Wae	-	-	900	500,000
16.	Nai Wai Aye	-	-	600	200,000	<i>B. Kun-du village</i>					
17.	Nai Han	-	-	800	600,000	56.	Nai Lamaing	150	20	700	600,000
18.	Mi Hnin Shwe	500	15	-	700,000	57.	Nai San Lwin	-	-	1000	1,300,000
19.	Nai Nyein	500	90	800	3,500,000	58.	Nai Dint	-	-	500	400,000
20.	Nai Htun Win	-	-	1200	900,000	59.	Nai Laed	25	7	-	100,000
21.	Nai Pan Tin	700	40	200	2,000,000	60.	Nai Tha Khin	25	3	-	100,000
22.	Nai Aung Kyi	-	-	1000	800,000	70.	Nai Htun Maing	800	15	800	1,500,000
23.	Nai Kun Sein	500	30	-	1,200,000	71.	Mi Ohn	125	5	-	100,000
24.	Nai Min	-	-	2000	1,300,000	72.	Nai Paing Zon	125	10	-	700,000
25.	Nai Halae	-	-	2000	1,000,000	73.	Nai Hla Aung	-	-	500	100,000
26.	Nai Baing	-	-	1500	1,200,000	74.	Nai Pan Tin	-	-	1200	1,300,000
27.	Nai Kun Kadom	-	-	1000	1,000,000	75.	Nai Kya Ohn	1000	40	1700	3,500,000
28.	Nai Shone	500	20	700	1,300,000	76.	Nai Ba San	1200	20	1200	3,000,000
29.	Nai Tone	-	-	500	300,000	77.	Nai Shwe	300	15	500	900,000
30.	Mi Khin San	-	-	800	700,000	78.	Nai Lay	50	7	300	500,000
31.	Nai Nyan Thein	-	-	1200	700,000	79.	Mi Yin Sein	1200	5	-	1,000,000
32.	Nai Maung	-	-	1000	800,000	80.	Nai San	2000	80	-	6,000,000
33.	Nai Shwe	-	-	800	500,000	81.	Nai Lae	1500	25	200	1,200,000
34.	Nai Ru	-	-	1200	900,000	82.	Nai Dot	500	10	200	700,000
35.	Nai Halae	-	-	800	400,000	83.	Nai Lun	-	-	800	600,000
36.	Nai Nyein	-	-	500	200,000						

various types of fruits from there and sell them in the markets for their battalion fund. Although LIB No. 343 required to build about 9 military barracks in the plantations in January 2000, they did not cut all trees but cut some only in spaces they needed to build barracks.

When IB No. 61 confiscated lands for LIB No. 299 and paid a little amount of compensated cost for plantations, with 7 Kyat per one tree, the battalion could stop the complaint from villagers. When LIB No. 343 confiscated 800 acres of plantation lands, the villagers from the above approached to NMSP leaders and also asked for new lands and compensation cost as market price, not government price of 7 Kyat for one

tree.

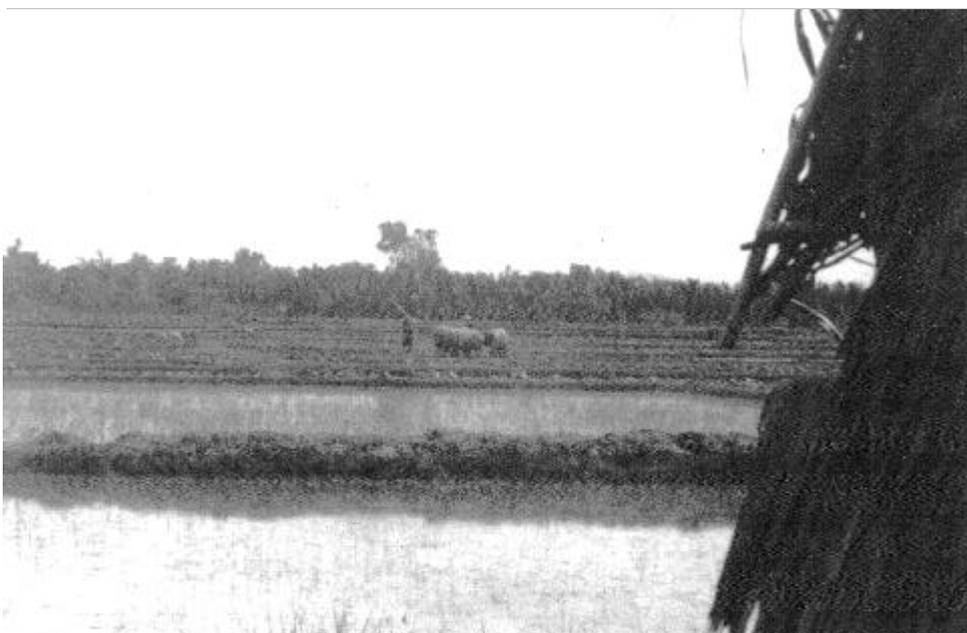
Firstly, the villagers wrote letters and appealed the concerned battalion, to not take their lands, and to take other wild lands instead. However, the battalion or Southeast Command did not accept this appeal and replied they could not withdraw their plan. Secondly, the villagers asked to pay compensated cost for both lands and valuable trees accordingly to market price, but the army still refused. Thirdly, the villagers asked the commanders in Southeast Command, they would like to harvest their fruits and rubber until these trees died. As the ceasefire is on-going situation and the villagers have some protection from NMSP leaders, the army have not create any problems against the villagers who made requests. However, the army still refused the third request.

Because of villagers' serial requests and NMSP pressure, Southeast Command agreed to negotiate with villagers. Thus, Tactical Command No. 3 and LIB No. 343 called a meeting with villagers who lost the lands and also invited the village headmen as witness. The meeting was held on January 30, in a monastery in Kun-du village. Tactical Commander Col. Cho Htun Aung and LIB No. 343's a commander, Maj. Lin Oo attended the meeting. Col. Cho Htun Aung explained that because of the Burmese Army's necessity to deploy a battalion to secure the area, it had to take these (confiscated) lands for the national security. He added because of serial requests by the villagers, he was given responsibility by Southeast Command for explanation to villagers and said as army, it could not allow accordingly the villagers' requests. But it would give permission to villagers to harvest their fruit crops and gather rubber juice for three years at least. He said that was the last decision that the army could allow the villagers to do harvesting for three years.

However, he also made some restriction against the villagers, or the ways (*accordingly to villagers*) to stop the villagers' desire to harvest their crops. He added before the villagers came to fruit or rubber plantations, which were in battalion compound, they must take permission letter from the village headmen. Without permission, the security force would not allow any villagers to go into the compound. If something happened, such as bomb explosion and hiding weapons in the compound, the villagers who were in the plantation or compound must take responsibility for these things, all of them must be punished and all their harvesting activities must be stopped. These restrictions made the villagers to abandon their decisions to go and harvest their crops. Everyday they went to plantation, they needed to find the village headmen and paid some bribe to get permission to go to the plantation. And, the villagers were also afraid of bomb explosion trapped by soldiers and accused the villagers that they were bringing the explosive things into compound.

Additionally, after official meeting with villagers and most explanations were made by Col. Cho Htun Aung, and Maj. Lin Oo of LIB No. 343 also called another unofficial meeting with villagers again in a different place, in a monastery of Aru-taung village. The commander explained to villagers that they were quite lucky that the army still allowed them to harvest their crops and gather rubber juice for three years.

He admitted that army had to confiscate these lands because it needed the battalion funds and to collect battalion fund from selling crops and rubber produced from that compound in the market. However, he said, now the villagers have chance to harvest for three years and instructed that the villagers must give about one-fourth (25%) amount of produced crops to



Villagers are forced to plough lands for LIB No. 299

battalion. If they would not like to give crops they can pay with cash for the cost of the equal amount of crops or rubber they have to give the battalion. After three years, he added, all villagers must stop harvesting, the battalion totally own all plantations and hopefully, the crops and rubber produced from the plantations could provide enough income to feed 700 population including about 300 soldiers and their family members. After the villagers heard his instruction, they were quite disappointed and some decided even to abandon their plantations.

IV. Fund and Unpaid Labour Contribution for LIB No. 299 and LIB No. 343

(a) For LIB No. 299

To get the battalion fund for the deployment of LIB No. 299, IB No. 61 has taken responsibility to collect fund in 1999. Depending on the population and economic conditions of the villages in both southern and northern parts of Ye Township area, IB No. 61 collected fund 100-500 Kyat per household.

Since before the end of 1999, LIB No. 299 had conscripted the local villagers from Mun-aung, Hangan, Koe-mile and Kalort villages to do various types of construction in its battalion near Koe-mile village. First, in June and July, the villagers from these villages were forced to find wood, bamboo, thatches and other materials to construct the military barracks. Then, the villagers themselves cleared the lands, cut some trees for the base of the building. The army ordered the villagers to build about 6 large buildings, which were about 50 feet long and 20 feet wide. Then the villagers had to dig all long trenches and bankers, and fence the compound. These construction works had lasted for three months, and the village headmen from these villages had to arrange in sending the villagers to the construction site on a rotation basis.

Additionally, with a plan to get foods, the battalion also confiscated about 15 acres of paddy cultivated farms from Kaw-hlaing village at the beginning of 2000. In June 2000, when the rainy season started, the commander from the battalions ordered Koe-mile village to send farmers to do cultivation in their confiscated lands. To plough the lands, the headmen had to send both men and oxen to do for army. After ploughing land, they forced the villagers to grow paddy plants again. Possibly, they would force the villagers again to do some harvest in December.

(b) For LIB No. 343

On January 30 meeting, Lt. Col. Cho Htun Aung also explained to villagers that during the deployment of LIB No. 343, it needed to build about 16 large military barracks and he said he would ask 9 village track in northern part of Ye township area and 7 town sections to contribute some fund for buying of building facilities, such as, wooden poles and lumbers, nails and other materials. One barrack would need about 300, 000 Kyat totally to pay for buying facilities. He added after the village tracks and town sections gave fund, the army still required the civilians to contribute their labour in building these military barracks. He instructed that as the villagers had contributed fund, each village track or each town section must complete building one military barrack.

In February, 2000, the concerned headmen of town section and village tracks collected fund from the civilians to pay for the facilities of the barracks. Depending on the households in a town section or in a village track, each household had to provide fund about 500 Kyat to 1, 000 Kyat. Even a poor family they have to pay about 500 Kyat.

After taking fund from the civilians, they have constantly forced them again to contribute their labour in various types of work in the battalion compound. In a battalion base, the villagers were instructed to do the jobs such as cutting trees and clearing grounds, building the military barracks, digging trenches and bankers, fencing the surrounding of the bases, and even cooking for soldiers.

Similarly, LIB No. 343 also asked forced labour from many Mon villages in northern part of Ye Township to do various types of works in the battalion base since before the end of 1999. Started from September 18, the military commanders ordered the villagers from nearby including the villagers who lost the lands, to clear some lands in plantations and build temporary bases for soldiers. The villagers from Taung-zun, Aru-taung, Sone-na-thar, Apa-laing, Tamort-kanin, Kun-du and others were constantly suffered from the conscription of forced labour. Depending on the works, the villagers have to work in the construction, at least for one day base, sometimes, for over two-three days to complete its works. Every time, the commanders asked about 20-30 villagers to contribute their labour while sometimes, the army conscripted the villagers from the whole village, which meant each house in village, must send one villager and work in the base. (*see the below order*) In these various situation of conscription of forced labour, the

villagers had to carry their own foods and sometimes, the commander asked to bring more or special foods for soldiers.

The translated order of LIB No. 343 to some villages in September 1999 is as below: (See the origin order of Burmese version on Page 4.)

Date: September 21, 1999

To
Chairman
----- Village

Subject: To send the set number of villagers for labour contribution

With the purpose of the construction of new military battalion, we request all villagers to come to the base on September 22, 1999 to reach there at 06:00 a.m. in the morning. You must lead the group of villagers together with you.

Signed/-
A commander (LIB No. 343)

P. S. to bring some foods with you for cooking when you come.

LIB No. 343 continuously asked for unpaid labour contribution in October 1999 to January 2000. The set number of forced labourers had been small number from every village except sometime they took



Military barracks built by forced labour in LIB No. 343 base

for the whole village. In January 2000, the army planned to build big military barracks. Accordingly an order given to a village headmen of one village by a LIB No. 343's commander Maj. Lin Oo, he mentioned that "as our battalion now is required to build some temporary military barracks, we need about 25 villagers from you village and they must bring their own 10 digging tools, knives and foods together with them. We inform you that you must arrive to the base about 7:00 a.m. in the morning on January 8, 2000". From reviewing this order, the army just built only temporary bases during January.

On January 30, when the army called a meeting with land loss villagers, the army commanders also mentioned to get fund and labour from the villagers. Accordingly speech by Tactical Commander Lt. Col. Cho Htun Aung, they planned to build 16 military barracks totally and collected fund from the civilians first to cover for all expenses that required to buy all facilities. After his speech, LIB No. 3 commanders were getting momentum to use large number of unpaid civilian labourers in their construction.

Soon after the meeting, LIB No. 343's commander for base construction, Maj. Lin Oo called a meeting with village headmen and militia leaders from 7 villages nearby and forced them to accept in taking responsibility to build the military barracks, which were not temporary but for permanent base that the villagers had to provide fund and labour. The meeting was named as "the new battalion construction and area security meeting" and the commander chaired the meeting. In meeting, the commander did not allow any complaints from village leaders and but told them that "in any constructions which are instructed by the State, the demanding of labour from the civilians is legal accordingly SPDC policy, to get cooperation from the civilians." In the meeting, the commanders also shared work-duties to all village headman and instructed to them to send how many labourers for every day. As a result, according to meeting decision, there were "10 villagers from Kun-do and Hnin-sone villages, 5 villagers from Tu-myaung village,

5 villagers from Ah-plaing village, 5 villagers from Taung-zon village, 20 villagers from Aru-taung village, 5 villagers from Sone-na-thar village, 20 villagers from Taung-bon village, 10 villagers from Done-bi village and 20 villagers from Thaung-pyin village,” needed to be sent to work-site every day. Thus, the army required about 100 villagers every day and the concerned village headmen had to take responsibility in rotating the villagers in their own villages and send the set number of villagers.

Sometimes, as the villagers were busy with their own works, the village headmen could not manage to get the set number of villagers to send to the base. As the village headmen had to ask large number of villagers everyday, it was quite difficult for them to get the set number of villagers. If that situation happened, the army commander always reminded the headmen to send the set number of villagers.

As an instance,

“In February, 2000, after many village headmen could not manage to send the set number of villager labourers to battalion base for construction, the commander Maj. Lin Oo also wrote a reminding orders to some village headmen who agreed in decision of the meeting. The commander mentioned that according to meeting decision on February 3, some village headmen failed to send the set number of villagers, and that was why some work-duties in the battalion construction had not been completed properly. The commander added, thus, the battalion needed to administrate the situation firmly, and the village headmen must send the exact set number of village labourers without failure on February 22. The order put a paragraph of meeting decision, which village headmen agreed to send the exact number of villagers.

Even in January and February, although the army has used many hundreds of villagers, the construction still did not finish and so it took more villagers again in March and April, 2000. Sometimes, after the village headmen again could not manage to send the set number of villagers or able-bodied men to the work-sites, the commanders dissatisfy much to those village headmen and send a threatening letter to take against them. In letters of in the first week of April, 2000, the Commander Maj. Lin Oo put in the first paragraph that the village headmen must take responsibility according the meeting decision to send the set number of villagers. In second paragraph, he mentioned that some village headmen did not send the villagers accordingly to order, and threatened that the headmen who failed to send the set number of villagers must come to the base and give explanation why they could not send the villagers. It meant if a village headmen's explanation was not believable, he must be detained.

In June, July and August, 2000, the conscription of forced labour still happened for the construction of military barracks. In order, the commander gave rotation of villages and one village had to work in the construction for 2-3 days totally and then another village would replace them. By this system, army have forced many hundreds of villagers from over 10 villages in northern part of Ye Township.

The translation of order that instructed the rotation of villages is as below: *(The origin Burmese version is mentioned on Page 5.)*

No. 343 Light Infantry Battalion
Ye Township, Aru-taung village,
Letter No. 343/12/Htout 4
Date: June 20, 2000

Chairman
Village Peace and Development Council
----- Village

SUBJECT: Informing to send labourers.

1. To do construction works in battalion base, we inform you to send the village labourers accordingly to listed dates, the set number of villagers and the concerned as below:

- (a) Taung-bon village, (from June 28 to June 30) to send 20 villager labourers,
 - (b) Kwan-du village, (from June 28 to June 30) to send 7 villager labourers,
 - (c) Thaung-pyin village, (from July 1 to July 3) to send 20 villager labourers,
 - (d) Zar-ga-le village, (from July 1 to July 3) to send 7 villager labourers,
 - (e) Aru-taung village, (from July 4 to July 6) to send 20 villager labours,
 - (f) Hnin-son village, (from July 4 to July 6) to send 20 villager labourers,
 - (g) Son-na-thar village (from July 7 to July 9) to send 5 villager labourers,
 - (h) Ah-plaing village, (from July 7 to July 9) to send 5 villager labourers,
-

(i) Taung-zun village, (from July 7 to July 9) to send 5 villager labours,

2. We inform that as the battalion has important works to do, the set number of villager labourers from every village must come and everybody must bring tools together with them.

Signed/- Lin Oo
(on behalf of) Battalion Commander

Copies to:

- Office copy
- IB No. 106

Although Maj. Lin Oo, took large number of villagers to do various types of works in the battalion compounds, it still did not complete. From July until August the army had conscripted the local villagers on a rotation. After July 9, the army stopped works only for six days only and then conscripted the villagers again. From July 15 to August 1, another 125 villagers from the above villages again forced to work in the construction again. One village, whether it was big or small, the headmen had to send about 10 villagers to work in the construction for three days. Some normal villages with 100-200 households had to send about 20 villagers for three days.

V. Conclusion

Under the rule of the military regime, SPDC, although ILO complained for its use of forced labour and requested to abandon this practice, the regime has not actually acted to stop the use of forced labour. On the other hand, the government's instruction for the self-reliance activities among the military battalions also encourage the soldiers to use more forced labour because the battalions have no budget to pay. However, the civilians are suffered more and more and have less and less time to do their own works for their families' survival.



Information on HURFOM and Invitation for Feedbacks from Readers

Dear Readers,

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

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

- To protect and promote internationally recognized human rights in Burma,

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

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

HURFOM
P. O. Box 11, Ratchburana P. O.
Bangkok 10140, THAILAND
Fax: (66 34) 595 443
E-mail: mforum@np.a-net.net.th

With regards,

Director
Human Rights Foundation of Monland

HURFOM
P. O. Box 11
Ratchburana P. O.
Bangkok 10140, THAILAND
E-mail: mforum@np.a-net.net.th

Printed Matter

Air Mail

Address Correction Required