

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,
- BSPP- Burmese Socialist Programmed Party, (*the former military regime*)
- IB - Infantry Battalion (*of Burmese Army*),
- LIB- Light Infantry Battalion (*of Burmese Army*),
- NMSP- New Mon State Party,
- MLCC- Mon Literature and Culture Committee

News

New Land Confiscation in Ye Township for Army

In second week of April, with objective to build a new military battalion, IB No. 61, that currently bases in Ye Town of Mon State, SPDC's Southeast Military Command (*Southeast Command*), confiscated some lands owned by Mon villagers, in eastern part of Ye township area, without compensated costs and about 27 villagers from Kyaungywa and Ah-dein villages lost about 81.6 million Kyat of their properties, especially about 153 acres of lands and fruit trees in the lands.

In eastern part of Ye township, there is a river called Ye river flows from border with Thailand and enters into Andaman Sea in Ye town. Before this river reaches to Ye town, there are many small streams or brooks flows into this river. Near Kyaungywa (*Kwan Peir, in map of Bee Ree resettlement site*) village, two small brooks, called Ah-dein and Ah-kan brooks, flow into Ye river from the south. Between these two brooks, the villagers have grown fruit trees, such as betel-nut, lemon, lime, durian trees and some grew rubber trees. So, in early the army from IB No. 61 with the order of *Southeast Command* confiscated the plantation lands between two brooks without compensation for land and plantation owners.

Since January 2001, the commanders from *Southeast Command*



A land confiscation in Mudon Township for a dam construction

planned to confiscate these lands. On January 15, *Southeast Command's* Command-in-Chief, Maj. Gen. Sit Maung came to Ye and had a meeting with commanders from IB No. 61, SPDC township authorities and instructed to choose a place outside Ye town, where they have smooth communication with Ye, and planned to move IB No. 61 base to new place. In the meeting, the army commanders and authorities have decided and chose the current place to deploy IB No. 61 base, where the army could get both trees and lands. The plan had been in a standstill for some months because of helicopter crash and death of Maj. Gen. Sit Maung. However, the plan was not totally stopped.

On April 8, the second commander of *Southeast Command*, Brigadier Myo Hla came to and went to Kyaungywa and ordered to measure the lands. After the lands were measured as they required, the army commander declared they confiscated these lands for the deployment of IB No. 61 and put a signboard of 'army zone'.

The villagers who lost both lands and valuable trees have no chance and no place to complain about their loss. This area is close to NMSF control area and it is also a tactics of SPDC that it has moved its troops and bases closer and closer to NMSF bases and to keep Mon troops to lose chance to revolve against them or resume fighting against them again.

Such large area of land confiscation also happened in late 1999, with the command from *Southeast Command*, a SPDC military battalion, LIB No. 343 also confiscated about 800 acres of lands which mostly grown with fruit trees and rubber trees, in northern part of Ye township, on Ye-Thanyuzayat motor road. After land confiscation without any compensation from SPDC, the battalion of LIB No. 343 was deployed. Because of this land confiscation, the villagers from Aru-taung and Kun-du villages lost about 98 million Kyat worth for their lands and trees.

As a conclusion, according the previous and current experience, whenever *Southeast Command* choose a place to deploy a new military battalion, they have not taken some forest lands, which are large in Mon State. However they have confiscated with rubber or fruit trees. But when they build the military barracks, the army does not cut down all fruit trees and cut only for the place needed for building. They just keep rubber and fruit trees and find fund from those trees. As an instruction from Burmese Army since 1997, that the battalion commander has to take responsibility to seek fund for the own battalion and support the soldiers. If he has no ability, he must resign. Because of this instruction, whenever the army confiscated lands, they chose valuable lands fruit and rubber trees in Mon State.



Forced Relocation for Dam Construction Project in Paung Township

(Paung Township, Mon State, March 2001)

In the first week of March, Township PDC authorities forcibly relocated three Mon villages in Paung Township with a plan to construct a dam and about 3300 villagers of 350 families from these villages have been homeless and helpless.

Three villages, which were relocated: (1) Kadeik, (2) Inn-myaung and (3) Kyaukyetwin and these villages situate in eastern part of township and under a mountain range called "Kalarma". When the authorities planned to construct dam near these villages, at the bottom of mountain range, they planned to move these villages. During relocation of villagers, the authorities did not provide any compensation cost and set a resettlement places for them. They just ordered to leave from their villages and stay anywhere



Forced relocation of civilians in Thanbyuzayat township during a gas pipeline construction

they liked and have not instructed in which they should resettle. So, the villagers have no exact place to resettle and just moved into the villages, where they have relatives and friends. They have about one week time to move from their villages.

There were about 350 families have displaced because of SPDC's development project and about 200 families from Ka-deik village, 150 families from Inn-myaung village and 300 families from Kyauk-ye-twin village respectively. Mon villagers are Mon ethnic people who have stayed in these villages since before Burma retained independence from British.

In Mon State, because of development projects, such as construction of road, dam, water canal, bridge and others, the Mon State PDC authorities always confiscated their lands by force or ordered them to abandon their lands and houses immediately. Most of these projects are implemented under the name "border area development program", and the people have lost their properties and belongings for these projects.

Just recently, there were many evidence of land confiscation and forced relocation of the civilians in Mon State occurred following the SPDC plan of development projects. In Year 2000, with a plan to build a bridge across Salween river from Moulmein, the capital of Mon State, to Mottama, a village in Paung Township, about 50 families of civilians in Mottama, were ordered to leave their houses and lands immediately. The authorities did not give any compensation cost and set a resettlement place for them.

Similarly, when the authorities in Mon State, planned a gas pipeline to provide energy for a cement factory in Karen State, this pipeline passes through a lot of paddy farmlands and plantations or gardens in Mon State. The authorities confiscated all lands along the route without compensation cost. Additionally, when the pipeline arrived close to Thanbyuzayat town, it passed through into two Mon villages, Wae-rat and Wae-thun-chaung villages, about 30 families whose houses and gardens were on the route were ordered to leave their houses within three days. These villagers did not receive any compensation cost from authorities.

Therefore under the name of development projects in Mon State, the civilians not only have to provide fund for the authorities, in most cases, their lands and houses were also taken by SPDC authorities. As an usual complaint from the authorities that these projects could benefit for the whole civilians and so, some civilians should sacrifice for the affairs of the State.

More Restriction against Activities by Ethnic Mon Community in Rangoon

(April, 2001)

Since from February to April 2001, SPDC Rangoon Division authority have restricted the activities of the activities of Mon community in Rangoon

that related to the celebrating of national day, protection and promotion of Mon literature and culture, and celebrating of cultural events, by giving reasons that gathering people is illegal, according to a source of Mon community in Rangoon.

In February, 2001, the Mon community in Rangoon planned to celebrate a 54th Anniversary of Mon National Day in Rangoon, the capital of Burma, and asked permission for ceremony like every to concerned Rangoon Division PDC authorities. They had requested in prior of national day since December 2000 and waited for permission. Even the day was close, the authorities still did not allow and later about 3 days before the national day, the authorities ordered and instructed to its administration offices, that any non-Burman national day was not allowed to celebrate in Rangoon. If the concerned ethnic nationality would like to hold their national day, they must hold only in their State. It meant that Mon National Day celebration in Rangoon that planned by Mon community was not allowed. In recent years, the Mon community were allowed to celebrate Mon national day and only in this national day, the Mon community people in Rangoon could cooperate each other for occasion and Mon community leaders addressed for the maintenance of Mon national identity..

Additionally, Mon Literature and Culture Committee (MLCC-Rangoon), a Mon organization that regularly protect and promote Mon culture and literature, also planned to open a Mon old scripture study course and a Mon literacy training in April and May. They planned to hold study course and literacy training in every Saturday and Sunday of every week in two month period of April and May 2001. Before the course and training were arranged MLCC-Rangoon also requested permission from the local authorities to allow them and asked them to allow advertising about the activities in Newspaper in middle of March. Even at the end of April, the authorities still did not allow the training and not allowed to advertise in Newspaper, by showing reasons they would not allow any gathering in Rangoon.

Continuously, even a small cultural event of Mon community in Rangoon, a old people repecting ceremony, that MLCC-Rangoon tried to do on April 17, although they have asked permission, the authorities had not allowed by showing the reason to not gather the people.

Normally, in Rangoon, some religion and cultural activities have been arranged by SPDC authorities or Burman communities everyday and most cases were allowed by the authorities and sometimes, no need to inform the authorities. However, they have focused on ethnic communities and have restricted most of their activities that they planned to hold in Rangoon. On the other hand, by restricting literature and culture activities, the SPDC also implements assimilation policy, by assimilating the ethnic nationalities to become Burmese spoken people.

Report

Forcible Buying of Agricultural Crops in Southern Part of Burma

I. Conditions of Agriculture in Southern part of Burma

In southern part of Burma, there are Pegu Division, Karen State, Mon State and Tanasserim Division, over 80% of the total population are paddy and other crops cultivating farmers. In this region along the seacoast of Andaman Sea, the lands have rice soil and as tradition for over thousands years, the Mon, Karen, Burman and Tavoyan inhabitants grow paddy and other crops. In most low lands that close to the sea, the farmers used to grow paddy and bean. And in the area that close to mountainous area along border with Thailand, the farmers grow high land paddy and crops such as sesame and others.

However, after 1962 when Burma's military strongman, Gen. Ne Win seized State power from a democratically elected government, the new military regime, BSPP (*Burmese Socialist Programme Party*) also declared nationalization of agriculture lands with two objectives to confiscate all lands from foreign landlords and to monopolize agricultural products and lands of the nationwide farmers.

Because of the regime's mismanagement in economy and huge expenses for army and civil war, the economic conditions of Burma have been deteriorated since 1962 and as a result, a 1988 pro-democracy demonstration demanding the political reform happened in Burma. Again, the current military regime, SLORC/SPDC seized a bloody coup from the hands of pro-democracy demonstrators.

Both SLORC and SPDC have not changed any policy on agriculture and have continuously monopolized on the agriculture products of the whole country. Due to State monopoly policy, the regime has also bought agricultural crops, including paddy, bean, sesame and rubber at low prices from the farmers in the whole country, and exports some of them with high price to foreign countries. By this way, the regime gets profit from the agricultural crops.

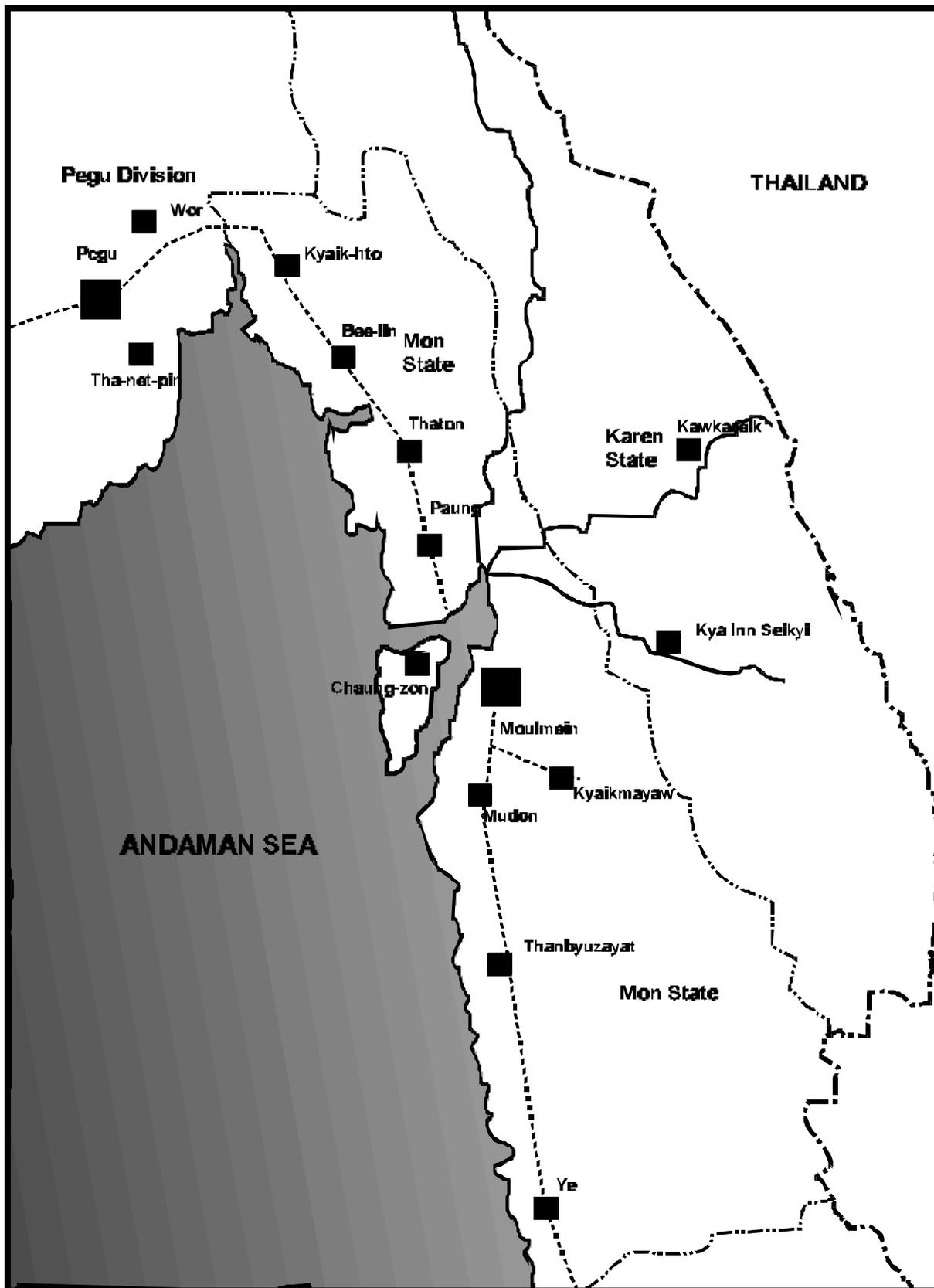
Therefore, the farmers who have been relied on the agricultural lands and traditional cultivation are constantly suffered from the policy of State monopoly. In every year after harvest, the local farmers are forced to sell a half or one-third of their crops to regime's a main "Agricultural Products Trading Department" in their designated crop buying centers. The regime set prices to buy all sorts of crops from the farmers are always at low price and less than 2 - 3 times in the market price.



SPDC's a paddy-buying center in Mon State

Since BSPP era until now, when the authorities is forcing the farmers to sell their paddy, they have used army forces, militia forces and other restriction ways against the farmers to sell their paddy.

The following data are SPDC authorities' activities to buy paddy and beans from farmers from various townships of Mon State, Karen State and Pegu Division.



The location map of lower Burma

Agricultural Products Trade Department managed and ordered the concerned paddy buying committee how many baskets of paddy from which villages they needed to buy.

In this township, because the lands are comparably with good soil, and so the authorities instructed to buy 15 baskets of paddy per acre from farmers. The authorities planned to buy about 1.3 million baskets of paddy from this township area alone. Since December 2000, the authorities tried to buy paddy from all farmers in township.

Normally, after harvest, most farmers carry their paddy crops to their homes in villages. However, in this paddy buying season, as a restriction against farmers to get a promise that they would sell some paddy to the designated paddy buying center first. Township PDC authorities also instructed the village leaders to force their villagers to sell some paddy to the designated paddy buying center first, if not, to not allow them to carry their paddy to their homes.

In buying from farmers, the authorities paid only 350 Kyat per basket of paddy, while the market price was about 850 Kyat per basket in February 2001. Although many farmers did not want to sell their paddy to SPDC, however, because of various pressure and restriction against them, they had to sell.

Similarly, in **Thanbyuzayat Township**, there are 4 town quarters and 38 villages totally in its administrative area. In this township, Agricultural Products Trade Department, also set 6 paddy-buying center in the whole township area and appointed manager for each center. By coordinating with local village headmen and militia troops, the center managers forced the farmers to sell the set amount of paddy to the designated paddy-center. In this township, the authorities planned to buy about 500,000 baskets of paddy. In comparing with Mudon township, Thanbyuzayat township has less paddy cultivating lands and so, the amount of paddy required by Mon State PDC is also less amount than Mudon Township.

Chaungzon Township of Mon State also good soil lands because it situates in an island, Balu, west of Moulmein, the capital of Mon State. In this township alone, the authorities tried to buy about 700,000 baskets of paddy totally. Similarly to other area, Township PDC authorities came into every village and instructed the village headmen to force the farmers to sell the set amount of paddy to designated paddy-buying centers. The last deadline of selling paddy was in January 2001. After deadline, some farmers who delayed to sell paddy, were also arrested by authorities to give the promise that they would sell their paddy to Township.

In this township, the authorities paid for the different prices for the different sort of paddy, which they tried to get more attention from farmers. In their paddy-buying center, their managers have bought *Nga-sein* (local name) paddy with 380 Kyat per basket, *Ae-ma-hta* paddy with 360 Kyat per basket, *Me-done* paddy with 350 Kyat per basket. However, the paddy prices for these sorts of paddy in the market was between 800 and 900 Kyat per basket.

In **Kyaikmayaw Township**, as it situates far from the seacoast and has less paddy cultivation lands if compared with township in Mon State (*Look map*). The paddy crop production in this township is not so good like other townships, which are along the seacoast (*See map, in Mon State*). However, Township PDC authorities planned to buy about 348,000 baskets of paddy in this township since December 2000 and forced the farmers to sell their paddy to the designated paddy buying center.

Initially, the authorities planned to buy all amount of paddy they required within two months, December and January. But in the beginning of January 2001, the authorities could buy only 30% of the total requirement of paddy and so that they tried to force village headmen and farmers to sell paddy to designated paddy buying centers as quickly as possible. In their attempt, to get full amount of paddy, the authorities also requested cooperation from teachers, polices, medical workers in villages to force the farmers in villages to sell their paddy.

In an order to police stations and police officers dated on 15th January 2001, Township PDC General Secretary mentioned that "in 2000-2001 paddy buying season, although Kyaikmayaw planned to buy about 348,000 baskets of paddy, but until January 13, we could receive 129,482 baskets of paddy, and so it was about 37.26% of the total. Therefore, our Township was recognized (*by Mon State PDC*) as a least paddy buying township among 10 township and we would like to request your cooperation with managers in paddy buying centers, concerned village headmen to get full amount of paddy from farmers as we planned."

As evidence from this letter, it is clear that Township PDC authorities also used police force to threaten farmers to sell their paddy in time. The authorities also wrote letters to their servants in villages to responsibility in encouraging farmers to sell their paddy. In an order given to servants of a village in township, the translation of the order is as below: (**Look the origin order in Page 6**)

Translation of order

General Administration Department
Kyaikmayaw Township – Kyaikmayaw Town
Letter No. 1/1 – 2/ Ye – 1
Date: January 9, 2001

To

All government servants
_____ Town Quarter/ Village
Kyaikmayaw Township

Subject: To sell the set amount of paddy from Town Quarter/ Village

Reference: Letter from Mon State General Administration Department on December 27th December, Letter No. 5/2 – 4/ Ye 5.

1. As decided by Kyaikmayaw PDC, we planned to buy 348, 000 baskets of paddy from the whole township area, but we could buy only 105, 137. 5 baskets until January 8, 2001, and so it was only 30.21% of the total required paddy.
2. From your village, although we planned to buy 8000 baskets of paddy, we just receive only 2059 baskets.
3. Therefore, to buy the remaining amount of paddy, you must meet with farmers and urged them to sell the set amount of paddy. You must put in your mind that paddy-buying activity is a very important work to implement. We also inform that please come (to Township office) every Monday and report about your implementation and progress (of paddy buying activity).

Signed –

(on behalf of)

Township Chairman

After sending this order, the authorities also instructed the concerned village headmen to send the remaining amount of paddy on the set without failing.

As an instance,

“According to instruction by Township authorities to Than-ga-laung village in township dated on January 15, 2001, that village had to sell about 8000 baskets of the remaining paddy from their village within two weeks. In the instruction, it mentioned that the village must sell and the center must get 3200 baskets of paddy on January 15 (40% of the total), 4800 baskets on January 20 (60% of the total), 6800 baskets of paddy on January 25 (85% of the total) and 8000 baskets on January 30 (100% of the total). At the below of the order, the authorities



also forced the village chairman and other members to sign for promise that they would try to implement accordingly to instruction."

By this way, the village authorities in Kyaikmayaw township have forced the farmers through their village headmen to sell their all paddy before the end of January. So, for the farmers who could not afford to give the set amount of paddy also had to sell their properties, lands, cattle and others and buy paddy and give to paddy buying center.

In **Paung Township** of Mon State, the authorities planned to buy about 800, 000 baskets of paddy because this township has very large paddy farms and the land soil quality in the lands are quite good. Thus, the authorities instructed the farmers in this township area to sell paddy with rate 16 baskets of paddy per acre to designated paddy buying centers.

At beginning of December 2000, when the authorities started buying paddy in this township, the paddy price in the area at market was too low and so the authorities also reduced their buying price in paddy buying center. In market, the paddy price was about 600 Kyat per basket and it was dropped from 800-1000 Kyat per basket. As initial plan, although the authorities would like to pay 350 Kyat per basket of paddy, it reduced to 250 Kyat per basket. Although the farmers have not satisfied with this price, nobody dared to complain.

As a restriction in this township area, if the farmers did not sell any paddy to government designated paddy-buying centers, the farmers were restricted to not husk any paddy owned by them. Normally in Mon State, whenever the farmers needed to husk paddy to get rice for their own foods or for sales, they have to ask permission from the village headmen and then they could husk. Without permission, paddy-husking mills are not dare husking paddy for any farmers because it is against the Township administration's authority.

In pressuring the farmers to sell their paddy, Township also instructed to village headmen that if one farmer had not sold any paddy to paddy-buying center, they must not give any permission to that farmer to husk his/her paddy. Thus, the farmers, who always have no more rice after harvest season, tried to husk their paddy and so they had to sell some of paddy to paddy-buying center first. Then, they could get permission to husk their paddy.

III. Forcible Buying of Paddy in Karen State

Unlikely to Mon State, Karen State has some higher paddy growing lands in many townships along main river such as Gaing River, Zami river and Attaran River (*look in map*). In Karen State, there are 7 townships in 2 Districts of Papun and Pa-an, and all townships had paddy growing. In some townships, such as Kya-Inn-Seikyi, Myawaddy and Kawkreik townships have both lowland and highland paddy growing farms. However, as SPDC and Burmese Army could have control in area of lowland area and Karen State PDC authorities have forced the lowland farmers in all township area to sell their paddy. In Karen State, the authorities planned to buy about 1. 5 million of paddy from farmers at low price.

In **Kya-Inn-Seikyi Township** of Karen State, the farmland soil is not so good like lands in Mon State and the Township authorities asked to sell 10 baskets of paddy per acre at low price from farmers. In this township, the authorities required to buy about 150, 000 baskets of paddy and it instructed to every tract to sell about 20, 000 baskets of paddy from each tract and village tract headmen had to take responsibility to force farmers to sell their paddy to designated paddy buying centers.

As an instance,

"Township PDC authorities sent an order in December 2000 to Htee-paukhlo village tract to sell about 20, 000 baskets. The village tract has about 4 villages totally and each village had to take responsibility from 3000 baskets to 7000 baskets depending on the farmer households and acres of farmlands. Thus, the farmers need to sell about 8-10 baskets of paddy per acre to government paddy buying center."

In this area, the paddy crop production is just around 25-30 baskets per acre and it was quite hard for all farmers to complete selling the set amount of paddy to the centers. However, as the government could not control the whole area of this township, most farmers have not sold their paddy and against the orders of Township authorities.

In **Kawkreik Township** of Karen State, the majority of Mon villagers have stayed along a river called, **Gaing**, and their tradition and main work is paddy cultivation for several years ago. As the soil quality of this township is not so good like some townships in Mon State, the paddy crop production is also not so much. So, the demand of paddy from this area is less than in Mon State. If compared with Kya Inn Seikyi township, the authorities requested more paddy from this township.

From the whole township area, Township PDC authorities requested about 150,000 baskets of paddy totally and they forced for the individual farmer to sell 10 baskets of per acre to the designated paddy buying center. But the center managers paid them only 300 kyat per basket of paddy while the market price was about 650-700 Kyat per basket.

In this area, accordingly to farmers, they could produce only 30 baskets of paddy per acre in average and it is a low production rate. When the farmers have to sell their paddy, 10 baskets per acre or about one-third of total crop products, they remain very few amount of paddy with them.

In this area, as SPDC authorities or Burmese Army could not control the whole part of the area, sometimes, they just ordered the village tract leaders to sell how many baskets of paddy and when. In January and February, 2001, the authorities instructed Kanni village tract that includes about 4 villages to sell 10,000 baskets of paddy. And, village tract leaders had to manage and forced farmers again to sell the set amount of paddy. Similarly, the authorities just ordered the headmen of Kharit village tract, which includes about 6 villages, to sell about 15,000 baskets of paddy. They also ordered remaining village tract to sell the set amount of paddy to paddy buying center.

Additionally, the villagers also had to provide foods for police with free of charge. The police commander in each village tract also ordered the headmen that they must take for the food supplies for polices and their families, because they are providing security for villagers.

As an instance,

“In Year 2000, for the required food supplies for polices and their families in Kharit village’s police station, the police chief of the station also asked over 300 baskets of paddy for villagers in Kharit village tract. In Kharit village tract, there are six Mon villages and village tract headmen also managed to take paddy from every village. So, the villagers from Kharit village had to provide 60 baskets, Mon-hlaing village had to provide 60 baskets of paddy, Kaw-ka-taw village had to provide 60 baskets, Kyaukyetwin village had to provide 40 baskets, Kaw-cha-gone village had to provide 50 baskets and Kyone-ka-pin village had to provide 40 baskets of paddy respectively. The villagers did not receive any payment from that station.”

Similarly to the above mentioned village tracts, the farmers or villagers from other village tract, had to sell their paddy to SPDC paddy buying center at low and they also have to give foods for army and police forces that have operated activities in the area.

IV. Forcible Buying of Bean in Pegu Division

Pegu Division stiuates in northeastern part of Rangoon, the capital of Burma and it is also well know for its large paddy fields. The farmers in Division also work hard in their farms and the area produces a lot of paddy and other crops. In Pegu Division, in **Pegu Township, Thanat-pin Township** and **Wor Township**,



The local army and authorities also confiscated some lands in Kyaikmayaw township for their paddy cultivation.

the soil is quite feasible to grow some sorts of beans after paddy harvest in November/December. As a tradition, the farmers in Pegu Division grow paddy at the beginning of rainy season in May/June like other farmers in many parts of lower Burma and then after harvest, the farmers also grow some sorts of beans such as *Pae-lun*, *Pae-ti*, and *Mat-pae* (as local names of beans) and harvest these beans within two months.

So, in Pegu Division, SPDC authorities have not only created paddy buying center in every township to buy paddy from farmers as low price, but also set bean buying center and try to buy bean as low price. When the authorities bought bean from the local farmers, the bean price was lesser three times than the market price like they have bought paddy from farmers. And, the authorities also bought nearly a half of beans from farmers while they bought paddy about 12 baskets per acre.

Normally, bean-growing farmers could produce about 5-6 baskets of beans from one acre of lands and the authorities forced farmers to sell 3 baskets of bean per acre in January and February, 2001. The authorities also set designated bean buying center and forced the farmers to sell their beans in these places with low price, 2200 Kyat per basket, while the farmers could sell them up 4500-5000 Kyat per basket in the markets.

At the same time, the authorities also monopolize the markets. Although the bean farmers would like to sell their beans to traders, they could not do because the authorities ordered and warned traders to not buy any sort of bean from farmers. If they bought, they must take actions against them. The deadline to farmers to complete selling the set amount of paddy was the end of March. After March, after they received the required amount of bean, they would allow the private traders to buy the remaining beans.

In halting the traders' activities of buying beans, the authorities checked every truck, which uses Pegu-Rangoon motor road. If they met beans on the trucks, they would confiscate all beans from these trucks.

The suffering of farmers in Pegu Division is doubled. In December and January 2001, they were forced to sell their paddy with rate 12 baskets per acre to paddy buying center. The authorities paid them only 300 Kyat per basket while the market price was about 650-700 Kyat per basket. Additionally, they have to sell their beans at low price again. To get good production of paddy and beans, the farmers had to spend a lot of money for investment such as hiring labour, buying fertilizers and insecticides, and tools.

IV. The Plight of Farmers

During British colony and parliamentary eras (*before 1962*), Burma was also well-known for its rice production and quality and the government exported to many foreign countries and make a lot of income for the country.

Under the rule of BSPP and the current military regimes, because of mismanagement and centralized trade policy, the farmers are not happy to work in their farms. They could get only a little crops or income from the paddy cultivation after they had to sell some amount of their crops to government at low price.

When the regimes forced the farmers to sell their paddy at low price and they remain less crops, most of them tried to get more crop products and bought fertilizers at high price. Even the authorities or regimes' Agriculture Ministry claims, it have provide fertilizers to farmers, it could provide only little amount of fertilizers to farmers. On the other hand, because of corruption among the regime authorities, the concerned servants also steal and sell them in the market. Thus, the farmers just to rely on fertilizers in the market.

Normally, in farms in Mon State, although the farmers use natural fertilizers, because of the demand for more crop production, they also need to buy factory made fertilizers.

Accordingly to a farmer, he explained:

"The government does not give us fertilizer enough. They give only 2 sacks of fertilizers for my ten acres of lands. It is not enough. To have better crop production, we have to provide about 3 sacks of fertilizers for one acre of lands. And, we could get about 50 baskets per acre. So, besides a little fertilizer provided from the government, we had to buy a lot of fertilizers in markets. The prices of fertilizers are quite expensive. We have to provide three types of fertilizers in our farms, and they are at prices about 2, 600 Kyat, 4, 000 Kyat and 2, 000 Kyat respectively."

From his explanation, the farmers in Mon State, Karen State and Tenasserim Division have much relied on factory made fertilizers to get possible amount crops to cover the amounts for selling to paddy buying centers and foods for survival.

After the economy conditions are deteriorated, many young people in lower Burma left into Thailand for better works and better income. Every year, many thousands of people migrate into Thailand and seek

works. The result of this migration is that the farmers in low part of Burma faced labour shortage and labour cost are higher and higher.

For a farmer, who has about 10 acres of lands and one pair of oxen, still have to hire one labourer to complete the whole cultivation. That farmer also has to give to that labour with 100 baskets of paddy. Additionally, while the farmers are growing small paddy plants and reaping crops, they also have to hire some day-labourers for 10-15 days depending on the number of labourers. For the hire of labour, a farmer has to pay 500 Kyat per day and if they hire 10 labourers, they have to pay 5000 Kyat per day. So, the farmers have to spend about 20000-40000 Kyat per year for planting and crop harvest.

After combining labour cost, fertilizers and other costs, the farmers left only paddy for their families. If the farmers faced disasters, such as flood, windy and other cases, they also lose crop. Although the authorities knew and received reports from farmers about their problems, but they asked the amount of paddy as they liked. If the farmers could not afford to provide they could be arrested and detained.

Normally, the farmers are always detained in police station like they criminals for several days until they gave promise that they would sell the set amount of paddy. Sometimes, when family heads are detained in cells, the authorities or army or militia troops forced the remaining family members to sell the paddy for the release of their fathers. When the farmers could not afford to sell their paddy by various reasons, they have to sell their lands, properties, cattle and others, buy paddy from markets and then sell them to paddy buying centers at low price.

Actually, the farmers have no choice besides work on in these farms. Most farmers are relying on lands and so, they would not like to abandon them although the oppression measure is quite intensified and their suffering is more and more terrible.



**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:

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With regards,

Director
Human Rights Foundation of Monland

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