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SPDC-	State Peace and Development Council,
SLORC-	State Law and Order Restoration Council,
APTD-	Agricultural Products Trade Department,
GONGOs-	Government organized Non-Governmental Organization
IB-	Infantry Battalion (of Burmese Army),
LIB-	Light Infantry Battalion (of Burmese Army),
MOMC-	Military Operational Management Command
PDC-	Peace and Development Council,
USDA-	Union Solidarity and Development Association

News

Women are forced to build embankments

(July 2003, Yebyu Township, Tenasserim Division)

SPDC's a military battalion, LIB No. 273 has forced the majority women in Yebyu Township in the construction of embankments for dikes in Yebyu Township area, Tenasserim Division, southern part of Burma.

LIB No. 273 which bases in Township also forced the villagers nearby to build an embankment that closing 'Ye-ngan' stream near Ye-ngan-gyi in Township area.

Lt. Col. Mee Sar from LIB No. 27 asked the village chairmen from 4 villages in the area to contribute the villagers' unpaid labour in the construction.

The conscription of forced labour took since July 20 and the soldiers took the villagers from an half of the household numbers in the village from these 4 villages.

The instruction was the villagers have to build three embankments by crossing a 100 feet width stream, each embankment must have width to be able for a truck in crossing on it.



Hundreds of women were forced to work in montor road construction in Kawkaeik Township, Karen State

The people in Mon State and Karen State found human rights defenders

In the whole months of June and July, the Burmese Army and local SPDC authorities in Mon State and Tenasserim Division (in southern part of Burma or Myanmar) have continuously provided basic military training to their government servants, members of their hand-picked USDA, firemen from Fire-Brigades, members from Red Cross Society. Later, the Army also trained the men between 18 and 40 years old in villages and towns with basic military training.

The purposes of the training is that firstly accordingly to the regime, if there is anti-government or pro-democracy demonstration, those trained government servants and USDA members need to prevent them. The regime also formed Anti-strike Groups with these trained people and used them when they needed.

Later, the regime also propogandized among the local people that there would be foreign invasion to Burma and therefore forced all aged men to be in training schools to defense Burma from foreign force.

The civilians have been quite busy with these training schools as they protracted two weeks to one-month. The busiest farmers, who needed to plow their lands, and day-labourers, who need to feed their families, and poor government servants were all busy with the SPDC's militarization agenda.

Because of this policy, many problems such as population displacement, food-shortage problem and poverty have been accompanied with it. Hundreds of families also abandoned their native villages and fled into Thailand-Burma border areas, where are under the ethnic rebels' control.

When the majority of men are busy at their farms, women have to go and work the construction site and contribute their labour.

The women from the villages of Sin-swe, Ye-ngan-gyi, Paya-thon-zu, and Sin-chaung are forced to construct the embankment.

Beside forced labour in the embankment construction, the battalion also took the cattle and other farming equipment from the villagers in cultivation of their farms. The villagers are also forced to work in their farms.

Land Confiscation in Kawkareik Township, Karen State

(July 2003, Kawkareik Township, Karen State)

With an objective to deploy a new military battalion in Kawkareik Township, Karen State, SPDC authorities measured some lands belonged to Mon farmers and confiscated as 'army lands', accordingly to the villagers from the area.

The land space, which is confiscated by SPDC authorities, locates near Kaw-bein village and most farms are belonged to Mon farmers from Min-ywa and Pauk-kyuu-gone villages in Kawkareik Township.

The authorities ordered the villagers to bring bamboo because they needed to put fence for die land space that they needed, said by the source. The villagers

nearby are ordered to cut bamboo and bring the requested amount of bamboo for the authorities. The villagers believed the land confiscation happened in their area soon after field visit made by a senior SPDC leader Maj. Gen. Maung Bo from Ministry of Defense.

According to a village, he said,

"This land confiscation happens after the visit of Maj. Gen. Maung Bo on July 4. He made a trip to monitor the Kawbein - Kyonedoe road construction, how many miles completed and how long is ruin (by flood). He also ordered to abandon the previous route of construction and found the new route again. To take the security of the new road construction, then he ordered the authorities to confiscate some lands to deploy a new military battalion. Therefore, they are measuring some lands for confiscation today".

As the lands are still measuring, the villagers could not know how many acres of lands that the authorities will confiscate and whose lands will be confiscated.

SPDC's Southeast Command also constructed a 15 miles long Kawbein-Kyonedoe road with forced labour since March. Some parts of its embankment has been collapsed by flood in June and early July.

In the construction of this road, die authorities from Kawkareik Township Peace and Development Council conscripted the local villagers from 7,000 households to contribute their labour in this road construction.

Report

The Plight of Farmers in Mon State

I. Background of Mon State and the situation of the farmers

Mon State which situates in southern part of Burma, comprises 10 townships, namely Moulmein, Mudon, Chaungzone, Ye, Thanbyuzayat, Kyaikmaraw, Paung, Thaton, Kyaikhto and Beelin and the Mon people is the majority population and the other ethnic are Karen, Pa-oh and Burman. Many Burman people are living in towns or in the urban areas, especially in the Moulmein, the capital of Mon State.

Mon State is a rice-growing region. It also has a large area of rubber plantations. Most of the people in Mon State live on rice cultivation (including low-land and high-land cultivation systems), rubber cultivation, gardening and animal husbandry.

In Mon State, under the name of selling paddy to the state, all rice farmers in the whole state are bound by the law to pay a yearly paddy tax to the government, selling at the low rates and prices set by the government. Any rice farmers who failed to sell the tax paddy fully to the government, are subjected to arrest and detention normally. Sometime, the farmers, who are living in the outer rural areas (Black areas) might even be subjected to torture and other serious treatments by the local regime, when they fail to sell the set amount of tax paddy. Paddy tax rates set by the government have seemed slightly different from one Township to another, based on types of cultivated land and soil. The set amount of tax paddy also increase every year. Several Mon farmers from Mon State said they had to sell 10 baskets to 15 baskets per acre depend on the type of the cultivated land and soil.

Paddy prices set by the government have been slightly different from year to year, probably partly because of the constant rise in all commodity prices in the country under the uncontrolled devaluation of the Burmese current, kyat. In many places, during 200d-03 paddy buying period, the Burma's regime, State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) ordered Agricultural Products Trade Department (APTD) to open many paddy-buying centers in all townships and forced the rice farmers to sell their paddy at the low price which is 8-10 times less than the current market price.

The Suffering of Farmers

2002-2003 Paddy-buying period, flood and labour cost

According to the amount of the last seasons of 2002-2003, the authorities from APTD in Mon State planned to buy over 5 millions baskets of paddy from the rice farmers. (The weight for one basket of paddy is about 46 pounds). Depending on the land and the quality of the soil in each township, the local authorities set amount of paddy are also different. As the Mudon, Paung and Chaung zone townships, where large lands are cultivated with paddy, those areas are the local APTD's main targets.

Geographically, Mon State is locating close to the Andaman Sea and most cultivated lands are very low level that equal to the sea level and the paddy growing areas could be easily under flood during the rainy season.

Because of the water flood in many places of the Mon State since in August and September of the previous year 2002, many rice farmers of Mon State lost their paddy but they have been pressuring to sell their paddy crops to the paddy-buying centers after harvest periods. On the other hand, many farmers tried to refuse to receive the advance payment of the local authorities because they knew that they could not completely sell the full amount of paddy in coming season.

According to the order of the Secretary of Mudon Township which has a large paddy growing lands among 10 townships in Mon State, all farmers had to sell 12 to 15 baskets per acre of land with 350 kyat per basket to the paddy buying centers. At that time, the rice price in the market was 2,000 kyat per basket. According to the calculations from farmers, they lost the paddy crops in over 1,000 acres of agriculture lands during the big flood in mid rainy season. So, the farmers were too disappointed with the order set by the government. In most cases, the Township authorities forced them to sign a contract in order to sell the set amount of

paddy to the government buying centers according to the source of a farmer in that township. In the previous year, only in Mudon Township, the government bought about 1.2 million baskets of paddy from the local rice farmers at low price.

In Mon State, by the type of lands and soil, the farmers usually used many kinds of fertilizer in their farms to promote the rate of high paddy products. According to the experience of the previous growing season, the SPDC's Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation said that they would sell some fertilizers in low price but in reality, the government did not give any fertilizers at low price. The farmers accused the corrupted Township authorities concerned took these fertilizers and sold to traders. So, in order to get the required amount of paddy, the rice farmers have to buy the quite expensive fertilizers from traders at the market. The farmers who were not able to buy to put some fertilizers to their lands would not get the required amount of paddy and so, they faced difficulties to sell the set of paddy to the government.

And also the farmers, who own about 5 acres or above could not work alone. So, they have to hire the laborers to work with them to finish their work. According to a farmer in Kaw-mi village of Kyaikmaraw Township, he explained that he have to hire one laborer for the whole year because he was getting old to work alone at his farm. Thus, he has to pay about 100 baskets of paddy from his product to one laborer. Additionally, during the periods when he started to plant the paddy plantation and reaped the crops, he also have to hire some day laborers by paying 800 kyat per day. Thus, he have to spend another 120,000 kyat for that labor and also have to buy fertilizers about 100,000 kyat every year to provide in 10 acres of his lands. At the end of the year, he left just a few baskets of paddy after giving paddy to the governments' buying centers.

Since the start of cultivation in early June, every farmer have to pay for a lot of expenses. More than 70% of farmers need to hire laborers to help them work and hire oxen to plough their lands. But some farmers have enough buffaloes or oxen to finish their work, but most of them have to hire laborers. The labor cost for year cultivation is 100 baskets of paddy for a person. Depend on the area of the lands, the farmers need to hire 1-10 laborers for one cultivation season. They normally have to pay 700 to 1000 kyat per day to each laborer for a day.

Examples of farmers in Chaung-zone township

Chaung Zone township which situates in the Balue Island of western Moulmein (see in the map), also have a lot of paddy growing lands and the authorities also planned to buy about 700,000 baskets of paddy in the previous harvest season. So most farmers in Chaung Zone village also faced the same problems as the other township's farmers in Mon State.

Because of the regime' policy of the forcible buying paddy in the last harvest season from the local farmers as much as possible, its makes the local rice farmers to face suffering of in the deepest poverty.

According to a Mon Farmer, Nai Yot who have 55.5 acres of paddy lands in Chaung-zone Township, he explained,

"In this year, I worked 55.5 acres of paddy lands and therefore, I was ordered to sell 850 baskets of paddy to the government's paddy buying-center. The authorities from the paddy buying centers set me to sell 15 baskets for one acre of lands. In this year, the product is not so good because of flood and I could only produce about 2,200 baskets of paddy. And since at the beginning of the growing season, I hired 5 laborers with 100 baskets of paddy each man to help my big paddy lands and now, I need to pay them another 500 baskets of paddy for labour cost. I also have to pay 210 baskets of paddy for hiring another 3 oxen in the early season of paddy planting time. Finally, I have to sell about 850 baskets of paddy to the government's paddy buying center that located in my village. For other expenses cost, I have to spend some money too. So, at the end of the year, I could only get 640 baskets of paddy in my paddy store. With this amount of paddy, how can I feed my big family and spend for the whole year. Our life is sometime nonsense and hopeless. We could rather die instead of living under bad government. They have no mercy to us."

Another farmer, Named Nai Pe San, who also have 27 acres of paddy growing lands in Chaung Zone Township added that since the start of cultivation in late May 2002, he had hired 3 laborers to help in his farm with the cost of 100 baskets of paddy to each persons. And then, he hired another 6 oxen for the whole year with the cost of 70 baskets of paddy each { $70 \times 6 = 420$ } and moreover, he had spend another expenses such as planting cost, pounding cost for 200,000 Kyat too. In that year, he could produce only 1,700 baskets of

paddy and after finishing his big duty to sell paddy to the authorities with the set amount of 15 baskets per acre, he left only 536 baskets of paddy in his farm.

Additionally, Nai Pe San need to pay the cost of paddy harvesting, the cost of using fertilizers for his plantations and some transportation cost about 350,000 kyat, he only left about 200,000 Kyat of money (approximately about 250 US Dollar) for his family to spend for the whole year.

The following message are explained by a Mon farmer, Nai Kut who have 10.5 of acres of rice land in Chaung Zone Township said,

"On March 30, 2003, the authorities asked me to finish my selling duty to the local government buying center and so I have to sell them about 157 baskets of paddy (with the set amount of 15 baskets of paddy per acre) because I have 10.5 of acres totally. During the whole year for helping me, I hired one laborer for the whole year period with 100 baskets of paddy. Since the season of planting small paddy plants, I had spent another 400,000 Kyat. For this year, my product is not so good as the previous years and I could only produce about 550 baskets of paddy and after giving the other cost that I must have to pay, I remained only 100 baskets of paddy in my house. We totally are 5 persons in my family and my eldest daughter, now, who are becoming adult, really want to buy some blouses, salons and other living things like many other girls but I couldn't buy for her with that amount of paddy. My wife too, I have ever concern that she has only a pair of dress on her body. Now I'm really disappointed for my business. I have no ideas to solve the problems which are not coming yet in the future."

"Even though the authorities knew about our difficulties and problems, they just ignore and continuously ask for the amount of paddy that they need. If we could not afford to provide the set amount of paddy, then we would be detained and arrested by them." Added by Nai Kut.

Because of a big duty to sell the paddy at low price to the government, the local rice farmers always need to buy some fertilizer to put in their lands to gain increased amount of paddy. Moreover, farmers also have to buy agriculture equipments and other related materials to plough the lands.

In many places in Mon State, arresting, detaining, forcing the local rice farmers have regularly occurred every year. In some cases, not only they arrested the farmers but also confiscated their lands, too. Until in the end of February 2002, nearly 50 plots of rice lands were confiscated by the local regime. Some are threaten against native farmers that if they could not finish selling their set amount of paddy to the buying centers.

According to a farmer from Mudon Township, she explained that in the previous year, she lost nearly half of her crops because of the long periods flood. The authorities from the paddy buying centers set to sell 15 baskets per acre land to them. She has 10 acres of lands and so, she was ordered to sell 150 baskets of paddy. In year 2002, she could produce only about 250 baskets of paddy and she paid for labor cost, fertilizers cost, hiring oxen cost and other expenses. That was why she could sell the government's buying centers only 60 baskets of paddy. For the remaining amount, she complained to the authorities that she could not sell to them because she have no paddy anymore. Instead of selling, she could only pay with the rate of 350 kyat per basket for the remaining 90 baskets of paddy. But the local authorities did not accept her complain and threatened that if she could not complete her duty, they would confiscate her rice lands. So, finally, she had to buy paddy in the market with the current price as 3,000 kyat per basket and sell to the center with the lower prices as 350 Kyat per basket. So, she borrowed 270,000 kyat from her sister's friend to buy the remaining paddy.

USDA involved in buying paddy

In some Townships in Mon State, especially in Kyaikmayaw, Mudon and Ye Townships, the Mon State authorities allowed Township USDA (Union Solidarity and Development Association - the organization that was formed by the regime) members to operate buying center and let them force to the local farmers to sell their paddy at low price during the period of harvest time. Sometimes, SPDC authorities have used USDA members to go and force farmers to sell their paddy as quickly as possible. After they get profit from buying the paddy from the local farmers, the SPDC Township authorities also donate some small amount of profit for their organization. That why all levels of USDA members followed the order of the state to help their policies.

As an example, from January to March of 2003, the Kyaikmayaw Township's Union Solidarity and Development Association started calling the weekly meeting to discuss about their activities in the township and decided to force to the village farmers to sell their set amount of paddy as quickly as possible to the local buying centers. They also planned to arrest the rice farmers who failed to sell their duty tax paddy selling in some villages of Kyaikmayaw Township.

In the last week of February 2003, the members of USDA in Kyaikmayaw Township arrested some farmers in Kha-noung, Noung-lone, Pain-ne-gone and Bein-byaw villages for their failing to sell their set amount of paddy to the local buying centers. According to the weekly meeting report that received by us, the USA use the method of exchanging 'paddy and farmers'. It means they would release the arrested farmers when their family members could sell the complete amount of paddy to the paddy-buying center.

USDA has been more powerful in SPDC era and they could interfere in any cases of administrative affairs. As the members of USDA came from the community, they know about the community better than the SPDC authorities in the office and they are a good ax-handle for the authorities.

Conscription of Forced Labour to Farmers

Forced labour in road construction

Since the military regime SPDC has been constructing or repairing motor roads and railways lines across the Mon State, they used the large numbers used of unpaid labour from the local communities. Therefore, the local rice farmers were also forced to be as unpaid labour by the local SPDC authorities in various parts of Mon State.

Under the SPDC rule, for the farmers, they are not only having to do too much of forced labour but also having to pay the yearly paddy tax duty, and so that the life of local farmers are depressing and hopeless. Many rice farmer families cannot afford to produce enough rice for what they need for their own consumption.

As an instance,

On March 10, 2003, when a road from Kawbein to Kyone-doe was built recently in Kawkareik Township of Karen State, the local SPDC authorities ordered the Mon farmers in that areas to build the road without payment. Lt. Col. Ko Ko Gyi, the Chairman of the Kawkareik District PDC took responsibility to build that road and conscription of unpaid labour. Kyonedoe-Kawbein road is about 16 miles long and it was built 4 miles length completely. Along *the* road, there are about 25 villages and some villages like kha-rit with 300 households was ordered to build 7400 feet.

There are about 2000 households in Kawbein village tract and each households was ordered to build the road in this tract, it was ordered to complete 2 miles length road totally. Some families hired day labor but many families could not afford to pay and so, many old people and children from poor families are involved to work in the road construction.

The villagers from 7000 households in the area are forced to construct this road. Over 90% of the local people are farmers families and fishing, and they have to work for the SPDC authorities even while they are busy with their agriculture and fish livelihood.

Using the local farmers to guard the gas pipeline

To avoid the often explosion of Kanbauk-Myaigkalay gas pipeline and attack by the armed groups, the local SPDC Township authorities ordered the village civilians between Ye and Thanbyuzayat Township to guard the pipeline.

The gas pipeline is coming from Kanbauk gas field in Tenasserim Division and the regime in Burma, SPDC, constructed the pipeline through Mon State and then provided gas to a cement factory in Pa-an Township of Karen State. The pipeline route passes through into many Townships in Mon State such as Ye, Thanbyuzayat, Mudon and Moulmein Townships.

It passes into many crop tree and rubber plantations and paddy fields in these townships. The bad constructed gas pipeline has sometimes exploded and sometimes it was demolished by the rebel force, KNLA (Karen National Liberation Army). Due to this demolition of the gas pipeline, the Burmese Army in the area concerned has instructed the local civilians to take more security in the area.

By rotation system, each household have to guard the pipeline for 24 hours and if failed to guard the pipeline, the households are not allowed to stay in the village ordered by the local village headmen.

Most of the households in these areas are farmers and some of them are rubber tree owner, and because of the order to safeguard the pipeline, the farmers have less free time to work in the farms or plantations. If something happened in the pipeline or if it is demolished or attacked, the farmers nearby could be punished or detained by the soldiers.

An instance of forced labour in this gas-pipeline is:

On March 16, 2003, the Burmese Army's IB No. 31 commander, Lt. Col. Naing Win, ordered the farmers near the Kanbuak-Myaingkalay pipeline route in the southern part of Mudon Township and in Thanbyuzayat Township of Mon State, to take security along the pipeline and if there is explosion near their farms, they must be punished.

According to the March 16 order, the commander instructed the farmers in the area concerned to fence the pipeline, to cover the pipeline to be underground and to take security along it. If they failed to do these works they must be punished.

There are about 500 farmers in the southern part of Mudon Township where the gas pipeline passes through have to take responsibility for the above-mentioned works along the pipeline.

It is a hard work to cover the pipeline with dirt to have under ground. The army believed that if the pipeline is on ground, the rebel soldiers could set the explosive materials and could easily explode. According to the order, if the pipeline is passes through into one farmer's farm, that farmers had to take responsibility to cover the pipeline with dirt, to fence it and take security both day and night times.

Because of this order, some farmers have to hire day-labourers from the village and paid them to dig earth and then cover the pipeline with dirt. If the more pipeline passes into their farms, they have to pay more labourer cost. The labour cost for one day is about 1000 Kyat (~ one US Dollar) and the farmers have to pay for all labour cost.

One farmer from Kwan-hlar village, as the pipeline passes very long in his farm, he has to spend about 80000 Kyat for the labour cost to dig earth and cover die pipeline route. But one farmer spend about 20000 Kyat only as the pipeline passes shortly in his farm. Many other farmers also have to spend, 50000 Kyat, 40000 Kyat and 30000 Kyat respectively depending on the route of the pipeline.

While many farmers are busy to collect materials to send to dieir farms such as natural fertilizers, fire-wood, and other ploughing materials, they are again busy with additional works of taking security for the gas pipeline.

One farmers from Doma village in southern part of Mudon Township said, he has to spend a lot of money in labour cost to cover the gas pipeline with earth and therefore, he remained very less money and would like to abandon his lands and go into Thailand to seek works for his family income.

The Burmese Army in the area did not have enough force to take the security of the gas-pipeline and they have totally forced the civilians in the area to involve in taking security along the pipeline. Since the construction of gas pipeline, the civilians are not only suffered from the land loss, but they also suffered from the constant conscription of forced labour and paying money for the security of the pipeline.

Fored labour for Authorities or Army

When the local farmers whose farms situate close to the authorities' owned farms or Burmese Army's farms, those farmers are always forced to contribute their labour in authorities' farms or army's farms. The farmers are constandy forced to work for all activities in the farms of those authorities or army for the whole cultivation period.

When the authorities or army celebrating an important occasion related to agriculture, the farmers are again forced to contribute their labour.

As an instance

In February 21, 2003, when Kawkaeik township PDC chairman, Lt. Col. Ko Ko Gyi and vice chairman Kyaw Soe Lin planned to arrange a competition for paddy planting in Nyaung-seik village,

Kha-rit village tract of Kawkareik township, they ordered to the village headman to send 20 women farmers for planting paddy and 10 farmers for carrying the paddy plants in Kha-rit village.

The competition of paddy planting was made for a show to the farmers and for reporting to the higher authorities in the township. They also ordered that if the farmers from the villages, who failed to do their responsibilities in Kha-rit village, they would give the authorities money about 4600 kyat each as fine.

The township PDC Chairman, Col Ko Ko Gyi and vice chairman Kyaw Soe Lin also ordered to each headmen of Kyaikkhabine, Kyauk-ye-twin villages which include in Kha-rit village tract, to collect some farmers to help in that paddy planting competition in Nyaung-yeik village. At that time, Most of the farmers are too busy to finish planting their cultivation crops. So, the farmers who are able to pay money the amount of 4,600 kyat to the headmen instead of going and working to that competition to the Nyaung-seik village.

Inhumane treatment to farmers

For several years, when the farmers failed to sell the set amount of paddy to the local authorities, they were always threatened, and were brought to detention center. In many cases, the local village or Township authorities came into farmers' houses, who failed to sell the set amount of paddy, along with soldiers or militia force and forced them, sometimes by pointing guns, to sell the remaining paddy.

In some cases, as punishment to the farmers, the authorities put the group of farmers, who failed to sell the set amount of paddy, under the hot sunshine for a day long and they are burnt with sun ray. Then the farmers were arrested as 'criminals' by putting handcuffs when they brought to the police stations. Normally, the farmers are detained in the police station's cells or in Township's hall or other suitable place until their families members completed selling the set amount of paddy to the paddy-buying center.

Sometimes when the farmers were in detention, they forced them to sign for promise that they would sell the set amount of paddy and then the authorities released them. Therefore, the farmers also bought paddy from the markets at high price and then sold to the authorities' set paddy-buying centers.

While the farmers were in police detentions, they were not fed with any foods, their families have to bring foods from homes. Sometimes, the farmers are also beaten and tortured by the police officers or soldiers while they were in detention or during the arbitrary arrest. The following are the two cases that happened in early of 2003.

Case I: Serious abuse to an old farmer by a drunk local police member

Nai La of 78 years old man was sent to Kyeikmayaw hospital on March 8 after he was seriously tortured by local Deputy Sub-inspector of Police, Maung Toe unlawfully acted in police cell. Local headman Nai Kyan Yit and three militiamen, U Pone, U Chae and U Han Thein arrested Mr Nai La on March 7 with a wrongly claim of fail to provide full amount of paddy to the government buying center.

Nai La, 78, and his wife, have farmed 14 acres in Kyeikmayaw Township for over 38 years. In all that time they have given paddy to the state as required by law. This year, his quota was set at 168 baskets, but as floods destroyed his crop he could get only about 20 baskets of paddy. This he gave to the local headman, Nai Kyan Kyit, and reported that his crop was destroyed and therefore he could give no more. However, local militiamen serving the headman abused him and rejected his argument. The headman then unlawfully fined him 560,000 Kyat. Nai La refused to accept this fine and said that he could only give the value of 100 baskets of paddy, which should be 250,000 Kyat. The headman refused his proposal. Nai La then set about getting cash to buy the paddy he owed for the quota. He requested Nai Kyan Kyit give him more time to get the cash.

However, on March 4, the militiamen under the chairman arrested Nai La for failing to meet the paddy quota, and detained him at the Tarana police station in Kyeikmayaw Township. They held him for three nights there, before transferring him to Nyaung-pin-seik Police Station on March 7. That night, Deputy Sub-inspector Maung Toe (#La-120798) handcuffed Nai La and beat him and kicked him inside his cell until he lost consciousness.

Maung Toe (Membership No La-120798) was drunk. He acted unlawfully to detain farmer Mr U La who is detained at Nyuang Pin Zoet Police Station. He also sways to detained Mrs Mi Daw Myaing with unacceptable words. On March 8, Nai La was sent in critical condition to Kyeikmayaw hospital.

Case II: A drunk Burmese Military Captain tortured on 2 local farmers

On February 8 of 2003, a captain of Burmese Local LIB No. 586 arrested two local farmers for 24 hours in detention and tortured them. They were arrested by the Burmese commander after sending their paddy from Thingangyun village to Sonenatha village of Ye township, Mon State, during performing their duties selling paddy to the government paddy-buying centers.

About 5 p.m. on that day, when the two local farmers Nai R— (about 21 years old) and Nai M— (about 26 years old) returned from sending their paddy to Sonenatha village from their native village, Thingangyun village, a commander from Burmese Army LIB No. 586, Cap. Thaug Htite who drunk the alcohol ordered to stop their bullock carts and arrested them for 24 hours without reason, by putting them in battalion detention cells. Then he started to beat them upon their body for a few hours. The commander accused the farmers used the road in evening time, which was prohibited by the local battalions.

When the families' members of the two farmers arrived, they saw the two farmers were tied by ropes and asked the Cap. Thaug Htite about the accusation of arresting the two farmers. Cap. Thaug Htite said that their returning time and using road near the battalion was not the right time and so that he asked to pay 10,000 kyat and 3 visses (about 5 kilograms) weight of chicken as fine for each man for their release.

"Since I was young, I remember that we can use the road for 24 hours for traveling in every season. As the villagers are all farmers and gardeners, so, we have to use the road anytime that we want. Now, since this new battalion of Burmese army have been deployed near our village, the situation is totally changed and using of this road has been prohibited. This Captain (Cap. Thaug Htite) is really bad and he always gets drunk. Every villager is trying to avoid him", explained by one villager from Kyone-paw village which is a neighboring village to Thingangyun.

Restriction against farmers living in conflict areas

The farmers who live in the rural conflict areas (Black areas) in Ye Township (in Mon State) and Yebyu Township (in Tenasserim Division) have suffered for more serious abuses than the rest of farmers in the other Townships in Mon State because of the security alert. Normally, the local farmers in the conflict areas are always suspected as rebel-supporters to ethnic arms groups or rebel force, which involved in fighting against the regime and Burmese Army. Burmese army always imposed serious restriction against the communities' farmers to not stay at farms and go forth and back to their farms in time-frame.

They are not allowed to go work on their farms fully and freely and that affects seriously to their livelihoods. While working in the farms, they are always faced serious abuses by soldiers of the Burmese Army because of the suspicion as rebel-supporters. Despite they are not allowed to do their crops cultivation fully and freely, but the farmers living in the Black Areas are no exception and having to performance the yearly paddy selling duty to the government.

The farmers in Ye Township have been more seriously suffered from various restriction order set by the Burmese Army, which operated the military activities in the area. Mostly the villagers in the southern part of Ye Township have been suffered more, because a Mon splinter group have launched the military fighting against the Burmese Army in this area.

A Mon splinter group led by the veteran Mon army commanders had operated the military fighting against the Burmese Army since late 1997. They are normally launching their activities in southern part of Ye Township and therefore, the farmers in this area are seriously suffered from the abuses and movement restriction due to suspicion of rebel-supporters.

In May and June, there have been more fighting in the area, and MOMC No. 12 (Military Operation Management Command) sent about 3 military battalions, LIB No. 543, No. 545 and No. 548 to the area and ordered the villagers in the village to not get out from their villages. Therefore, the farmers lost their opportunities to go and work in their farms.

On June 8, the local battalions, LIB No. 543, No. 545 and No. 548 under the command of MOMC No. 12 issued this order and prohibited all activities of farmers to not work at their farms. At that time, these three battalions have attempted to uproot all activities of rebel army in the area.

Recently, the villagers or farmers are allowed to get out from their villages at daytime but were ordered to stay in their villages at night. They could leave to their farms about 6:00 a.m. in the morning and must arrive to their homes at 6: 00 p.m.

This is the first time that the farmers are prohibited to not work at their farms even they were stopped to leave to their farms at daytime.

According to a farmer from Khaw-zar, a big Mon village situates in the southern part of Ye Township: he said,

"The Burmese Army never ordered the farmers to not go to their farms at both daytime and nighttime. Every villager is afraid of this order because we lose our livelihood. Recently the order was not to go out of village after 6:00 p.m. or 4:00 p.m. But we still could work at our farms. Now we need to discuss with our village leaders whether the Army really restricted all of us. If so, we must face a huge difficulty for our livelihood and future (survival)."

After the farmers could not work in their farms freely in their farms, it makes serious effects to the livelihood and survival. Recently they still could work in their farms at daytime without any worry. They could be arrested at their farms and were interrogated to tell about the activities of rebel soldiers.

The farmers, even they are in the villages, after they could not work in their farms, they also faced food-shortage problems. Some farmer families also have to flee from the villages secretly and abandoned their farms.

Farmers' Campaigns

The Mon State's farmers, who have been under the serious oppression for several decades also rose up to claim for the illegal and cruel treatments, by the authorities, soldiers and policemen.

Since under the rule of the regime, Burmese Socialist Programme Party (BSPP), and the later SLORC or the current SPDC, the farmers have no rights to form their own organizations to protect their interests. They never had any rights for protest.

Campaign I:

Recently when an old farmer, Nai La (70 years old man that mentioned above) was beaten by a policeman after he failed to sell the set amount of paddy, many farmers in Kyaikmayaw Township dissatisfied on this case. He was first arrested by three village headmen as a 'criminal' after he failed to sell the set amount of them. The village headmen brought them to the nearest police station, which situates in a village. After 3 days detention in that village's police station, then he was brought again to the police station in Kyaikmayaw Town in Mon State.

While he was in town's police station, he was seriously tortured for one hour by a police officer, Deputy Sub-inspector Maung Toe. Because of the serious torture, the old man vomited blood and was brought to the hospital immediately. This torture news separated to the whole Township area and may farmers dissatisfied for this case and sympathized to the old farmers.

Then the farmers grouped each other and discussed about this issue.

The farmers, as a group did some campaign for 'justice' for this case. First, they wrote letter to the Township's 'Buddhist Monk Association'. In their letter, the farmers informed the senior to ask Township authorities to take actions against the policeman. The executive committee of the Association also witnessed the injuries of Nai La at hospital and asked the Chief Police Officer from Township police station to put the violator to trail.

The farmers by collaborating with monks, also wrote letter to the leaders of New Mon State Party, which has ceasefire with the regime, to put pressure to SPDC authorities to punish the violator. With letter dated on March 23, 2003, NMSP's Liaison Officer in Moulmein, the capital of Mon State, also wrote a letter to Battalion Commander of No 5 Military Intelligence and asked for 'justice' to the old farmer.

On March 25, 2003, the farmers in Township themselves wrote a letter to Chairperson of Mon State Peace and Development Council, Maj. Gen. Thura Myint Aung and informed him about the suffering of Nai La and how the torture was done by the police officer in police station. They also asked the Chairman of Mon State PDC to take actions against the police officer.

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 e-mail as below:

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Webpages: www.geocities.com/monforum2003

With regards,

Director
Human Rights Foundation of Monland

Police Force of Kyaikmayaw Township also conducted 'confidential hearing' about the case and also gave the punishment to the officer, by decreasing his ranks and put in short-term detention. Although the SPDC's Police Force did not take full actions against their man, but this is also the first time they have to take action against their man. In the past, the violators always freed.

Campaign II:

In early of 2003, the farmers are seriously suffered under the command of SPDC's paddy-buying policy. They have been disappointed on the government's paddy-buying for a long time. Therefore, the monks in Mon State found the way, how to stop this policy. In Burma, some monks have influence on SPDC leaders and therefore, they have asked some well known monks in Mon State and Karen State to tell the government authorities to stop their paddy-buying policy.

The farmers from all Townships of Mon State and 3 Townships in Karen State wrote an appeal letter to two well-known Mon and Pa-oh ethnic senior Buddhist monks to stop the military regime, SPDC, from buying paddy from them at low price.

In 4 pages long hand-written letter, which put the name of Mon State's 10 Townships and Karen State's 3 Townships' farmer associations, they sent letter to the Senior Abbots, Rev. Kesara, a well-known monk in Mon State, and Rev. Vinaya (also known as Thamanya Sayadaw), a well-known in Karen State, on April 17. In the letter, first, the farmers expresses how the hardship and poverty conditions of the rural farmers due to the regime's paddy purchasing policy.

In this policy, the SPDC set to farmers that they need to sell 10 to 15 baskets of paddy from one acre of lands, at price 300-350 Kyat per basket, which is 10 times less than in the market prices. They did not listen any reasons from the farmers, such as crop reduction due to flood, rain, or others, but they said to sell a full amount of paddy.

Many farmers, if they did not have sufficient paddy amount to complete selling to the regime, they needed to buy paddy from markets at high price and sold at low price to the regime set paddy-buying centers. In the letter, the farmers also expressed that for a farmer who did not have sufficient paddy, they have to buy the paddy from the markets with price of 2500-3000 Kyat per basket and when they sold to paddy-buying center, they could receive only 350 Kyat per basket. Therefore, for a farmer, he lost 2000 Kyat for every basket. If he needed to sell 100 baskets of paddy to the regime, then he lost about 200, 000 Kyat in total.

The letter also added that there were many farmers who lost the crops in the last rainy season because of flood. Those farmers who totally lost their crops were also forced by the authorities to sell their paddy. Some farmers also had to hide and some fled from their native villages. Some farmers were also beaten by the

police officers and the authorities. The letter also mentioned about an old man, Nai La (78 years old), who was tortured by a police officer in Kyaikmayaw Township of Mon State.

The farmers appealed that the farmers survive in their agriculture activities and they could not work other occupations and could not find income from other sources. If the regime continues their policy of buying rice from the farmers, they could face a big hardship and difficulties for survival.

They demanded the Senior Monks to pressure the regime,

**To cease buying of paddy at low price from farmers, or,
To buy paddy accordingly to the market price**

The farmers also concluded that as they believe in the Buddhism, the donations to monks and other religious affairs are quite. However many poor Buddhist farmers could not make donations and so that poverty conditions among farmers affect to the religion. They also added that they also believe to the two Senior monks to relieve their plight.

Many the farmer associations are formed secretly formed in their communities and the leaders have tried to find the way how to relieve the suffering of the majority farmers.

Expecting the New Rice Trading Policy

On April 23, the Secretary 2 of SPDC, Lt. Gen. Soe Win declared the new policy of rice trading and explained that the government will not buy paddy directly from farmers, and adopt a new policy that the farmers can sell their rice freely at the domestic market. To implement this policy, the SPDC also formed a 'Myanmar Rice Trading Leading Committee' with the government representatives and the representative of private enterprises.

The farmers are a little happy after hearing this new policy. But they never fully trust to the government and still waiting whether the SPDC is really implement this policy or use traders to force the farmers to sell their rice again. Now, they just 'wait and see' whether the new policy is really implemented.



Myo-Ma Paddy-buying Center of SPDC in Kyaikmayaw Township, Mon State

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