

# 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,
- 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

### Forced demand of building materials for Kanbawk-Myaingkalay gas pipeline

(September 2003)

Local Burmese Army's battalion's troops requested more materials from local villagers in Thanbyuzayat Township to build the security huts along and fence Kanbawk-Myaingkalay gas pipeline in Thanbyuzayat Township.

The local Burmese Army battalions in Thanbyuzayat Township, IB No. 61 has always concerned about the possible sabotage of the gas pipeline by the rebel soldiers and ordered the local villagers to provide a lot of bamboo and wooden poles in order to build several huts for guards along the route. Additionally, they ordered the villagers to fence along the pipeline route to prevent the access from the rebel soldiers.

The soldiers from IB No. 61 asked the villagers from 6 Mon villages near Thanbyuzayat Town to provide them two wooden poles and two bamboos from each household. If one household failed to provide the set amount of building materials, they may have to pay 1000 Kyat as a fine.

The soldiers also ordered to the villagers to bring all these building materials to their set places in their bases just



A Gas Pipeline-fence in southern Thanbyuzayat Township, Mon State

## Commentary

### Nation-wide ceasefire and solution for peace and human rights protection

Human rights violations and the related humanitarian crisis such as population displacement, food-shortage problem, health and education problems are connected each other.

Human rights violations by the Burmese Army against the ethnic villagers in the rural village always relates to the civil war. Although many different small armed groups ceased their fighting, many armed groups still remain in fighting. Therefore, a lot of human rights violations are still committed in the ethnic rural areas.

Although many ceasefire groups demand for political talks, however, they have no official response from the regime. Anyhow, the ceasefire is a situation that reduced some human rights violations such as killing, arbitrary arrest and detention of civilians in village communities. However, other violations such as conscription forced labour, illegal taxation, land confiscation still exist.

For the first step to restore 'peace' and reduction of some violations, the nation-wide ceasefire is necessary. Ceasefire could provide time for displaced villagers to return their homes and to establish their life peacefully. But it must ensure that ceasefire proceeds political solution for peace and national reconciliation.

the headmen have to manage to provide full amounts of building materials.

This Kanbauk-Myaingkalay gas pipeline was built since 1999 and it passed a half lower part of Mon State. The gas pipeline brings gas from Yatana gas field, which is exploited by multinational petroleum companies UNOCAL and TOTAL, and provide the required energy for a cement factory in Myaingkalay village, Pa-an Township of Karen State.

During the regime SPDC and local Burmese Army battalions built the pipeline, they also confiscated many hundreds acres of paddy farmlands, rubber and fruit plantations and house gardens. Some villagers in villages near Thanbyuzayat Township were suddenly relocated by the regime authorities.

The gas pipeline often blew up because of low pipeline quality and low quality of technique. Sometimes, the pipeline was also sabotaged by the rebel, especially Karen National Liberation Army(KNLA).

Therefore, the local military battalions, which take responsibility of gas pipeline, have great concerns of possible sabotage. As a result, they have constantly forced the local villagers to provide building materials to build necessary protective guard huts and fence. And the local villagers are also forced to guard the pipeline on a regular basis.

### Demand of more trainees for military training in Mon State

(September 2003)

The Township SPDC authorities and local Burmese Army's military battalions still demand the village headmen to provide more trainees to their military training schools, but the village headmen could not provide.

Although many male villagers between 14 to 50 years old are registered for trainees, but most of them are working in Thailand as migrant workers. In the registration list of local SPDC authorities and the Burmese Army battalions, there are still many people to attend the trainees, after it has about 3-4 rounds of training schools since early June.

Although the village headmen in Thanbyuzayat and Mudon Townships of Mon State complained that there are no more villagers to attend training, however, the authorities and trainers from training schools, anyhow, they needed to provide 6 villagers from each villages to attend training.

Therefore, the local village headmen have to find the substitute and hired migrated labourers from upper Burma or central part of Burma to attend the trainings instead of their villagers.

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## Report

# The Plight of Civilians in Tenasserim Division Due to Armed Conflict and Militarization in the Area

## I. Continual Conflict in Tenasserim Division

The Burmese military regime in Rangoon although claims there has been peace in Burma after 15 armed groups 'entered into a legal fold', however, there has been warring situation in Shan State, Kayah State (or Karenni State), Karen State, Mon State and Tenasserim Division, which covers nearly half of Burma.

Geographically, Tenasserim Division is a large area in the southernmost part of Burma and it has ——— Townships totally. Since the occurrence of civil war in Burma over 50 years ago, most parts of Tenasserim Division had been under the control of rebel groups such as Karen National Union (KNU); New Mon State Party (NMSPP); Burma Communist Party (BCP); and Mergui-Dawai United Front (MDUF), and the successive military governments in Rangoon had firm control only in towns.

However, after the Burmese Army seized the political power in 1988, it has intensified the military offensives against these rebel forces and could overrun several bases and the Burmese Army could have more control than before. On the other hand, the regime State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) invited the fishing and logging companies in the neighbouring countries and sold its fishes in the sea and forests at cheap price. Additionally, the SLORC also sold its natural gas to foreign petroleum companies UNOCAL (USA); TOTAL (France) and Thailand, without needing to listen the local people's opinions.

To keep the most area in firm control and to protect foreign invasions, the Burmese Army deployed more troops in Tenasserim Division. Although the Burmese Army could overrun several rebel bases, however, it could not uproot all rebels' military activities. The guerrilla fighting tactics has been used by the rebels and the whole area is still unstable. Along with the military offensives conducted by the Burmese Army, the killing, disappearance, rape, looting, extortion and other human rights violations that affect the right to life and right to belong the properties are constantly committed.

After May 30 Depeyin incident in upper Burma, the Burmese Army also adopted 'militarization' policy and tried to force most men and some women (in some Township only) to attend the military training school. After training, they are forced to serve in the regime newly formed organizations to support the regime and the Burmese Army to stay on in power. This militarization policy deprives the economic rights and also affects the right to life.

The following are the details account of human rights violations in Tenasserim Division.

## II. Killing and Disappearance

In northern part of Tenasserim Division, a Mon splinter group, which has about 60 troops strong, and Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), have operated the military activities against the Burmese Army. The regime authorities and local Burmese Army have greatly concerned about the demolition of 'Yatana' gas pipeline and since 1994, it deployed about 20 battalions in this area.

Even the 'Yatana' gas pipeline, which brings gas to Thailand, by the multinational companies, UNOCAL and TOTAL was not sabotaged by the rebel soldiers, however, the fighting between the rebel soldiers and Burmese Army often occurred near Ye-Tavoy motor road and Ye-Tavoy railway road. These two roads are the main roads that connect Mon State and Tenasserim Division.

Since the fighting is happening in the rural areas and near the main road, the local Burmese Army always concerns for the security of the whole area. Whenever the fighting happened in the area, they always suspected the local villagers as rebel-supporters. They also tried to get information from the local village headmen and some of their supporters to know who is the contact persons or supporters to the rebel soldiers.

Along with the suspicion, some suspected villagers are arrested and are killed even in front of other villagers. Sometimes, the suspected villagers are quietly arrested by the soldiers and brought away without any acknowledging to their families. They were somehow killed by soldiers in forests or during the military

offensives. In some cases, the suspected villagers are arrested as porters and were killed during the porter service in the battle-fields.

Such killing and disappearance related to the suspicion of rebel supporters has happened in Yebyu, Tavoy and Longlone Townships, which situate in northern Tenasserim Division.

**As an instance,**

On late June of 2002, by order of Col. Myint Htay from LIB No. 409 that bases on Yebyu Township, Tavoy District of Tenasserim Division, a group of Burmese soldiers led by Captain Thet Naing entered into the Hnan-Kye village and arrested 5 villagers including a headman with the suspicion of rebel supporters and later killed them.

The victims who were arrested and killed are; Ko Kyaw Aye (30 Years old), U Thi Pe (44 Years old), Ko Thi Kan (28 years old), Maung Tun Kan (17 Years old) and Ko Tin Thein (25 Years old). All of them are Tavoyan ethnic villagers.

After the soldiers brought the villagers outside of the village, one village, Ko Thin Thein could escape from the group and hid. But later, the soldiers could arrest him and then killed all of them.

An witness who saw the killing said, that 'at that time, I was near them but nobody saw me. The group leader Captain Thet Naing asked the four men about Ko Thin Thein who escaped. After a few hours, some group of soldiers found Ko Thin Thein and tortured them inhumanly, then accused them of the rebel supporters and killed them all'. The eyewitness was also from the same village.

Because of their husbands were disappeared, the remaining wives gathered and went to the commander of LIB No. 409, asked about their disappeared husbands. But the commander answered that the disappeared persons were members of rebel group and they were facing punishment. The commander also wanted to meet and asked about the witness (young man who saw the killing) because they knew that someone saw the killing incident. He was afraid of being killed by the soldiers and escaped to other areas.

### III. Looting, and the related abuses in villages

In the rural communities, where the majority of the ethnic people live in southern part of Burma, those are recognized as 'black area' or 'free fire zone' and the soldiers of Burmese Army could treat them as they liked. Therefore, killing, arrest and looting from villagers are the common abuses in those rural areas.

When the troops of Burmese Army launched the military patrol or offensives in the rural areas, they do not bring any food along with them but just looted foods in villages. Whenever they arrived into a village, they took rice, meat, vegetables and other food supplies from villagers by asking the village headmen, or mostly they climbed onto most houses in village and looted foods.

As looting the villagers' foods is becoming as a normal behaviour among the Burmese (or SPDC) soldiers who are in front-lines and later, the soldiers have not only looted foods, but also looted other valuable belongings in villages, such as gold wares, silver wares, clothes and others.

**As an instance,**

On July 25, 2003 at night time, when about 20 troops of LIB No. 433 led by Captain San Myint Oo went into Kwe-tha-lin village, Yebyu township, they looted the civilians' belongings, of worth 700,000 Kyat. The commander ordered the village headmen to gather all villagers in village ground and ordered his soldiers to loot in every house as they liked. Not only the valuable belongings, they also took chicken and pigs. While the villagers are gathering, the commander also threatened them to not support the rebel groups. Villagers were put under hot sunshine for hours.

In the morning, although the headmen complained about the looting to the commander, however, the commander did not punish any of his men who involved in looting. Accordingly to a village, he said, 'the situation is worse than before because the commander did not make any punishments to his soldiers. Now, even in day times, the soldiers dared to take our belongings'.

The similar looting by LIB No. 433 also happened on July 4 of 2003 in another village. About 9:00 p.m. in the night, when the same troops from LIB No. 433 led by Captain San Myint Oo launched a military operation they also went into The-Chaung village, Yebyu township, they also looted villagers' belonging.

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The source from that village said that the soldiers took pig, chicken and house materials, which were owned by the villagers. They also made verbal abuses to women and young girls in the villages. As most women in the village were afraid of being beaten and raped, they had to stay in quiet.

In early morning, although the village headmen complained about looting in villages and abuses to women, however, the commander refused. And he also said to the headmen that he did not want to hear anymore complain. Then the headmen kept quiet and they knew there would be no justice with Burmese Army.

In most cases of looting, the commanders blinded their eyes and let the soldiers did looting. Therefore, when the Burmese Army launches the military offensives in the rural areas, the soldiers also got profit from looting and they could provide their wives with gold wares, silver wares and other materials after operations.

In black area, there has been 'no rule of law', and the villagers who lost the properties could not complain to anyone about their loss. Because of this looting and abuses to the women, some families in rural villages always sent the valuable materials and young daughters to their relatives in towns, where those materials are not looted and women are safe.

#### IV. Forced Labor

Like many other areas in Mon State and Karen State, the civilians in Tenasserim Division has been greatly suffered from the constant conscription of forced labour. Normally, the army commanders (of Burmese Army) have more authority than the local SPDC authorities in the area and so that the local villagers are suffered from the conscription of labour for local battalions 'self-reliance' program of individual battalion and use as civilian porters during the military offensives.

Started in 2002-2003, in order to support themselves with food supplies and other battalion expenses, the local battalions LIB No. 408 from Hnan-kye village, Yebyu Township ordered to the local villagers to work in their 200 acres paddy growing farmland, which they confiscated from the local farmers without payments last 5-6 years ago.

As results of self-reliance programs of the SPDC, hundreds of the local villagers from Hnan-kye village were forced in the cultivation of paddy. Every adult from every house has to work in the battalions' farm and even old people and under aged children were forced to work.

##### **According to a villager, who was forced in the farms said:**

"Since we were ordered to work here, the soldiers told us to cultivate the farmlands to grow paddy crops for food supplies for them in next year. The soldiers also explained that one-third of the crop products would be for local villager. But I don't think they will give us. They just lie and let us work instead of them. In our village, every household was forced to work including the elder persons, women and children. They did not provide us any food supplies, medicines and other travel expenses. We had to bring everything from our homes".

The villagers were not only forced to work in the battalion's farms, they are also forced to guard the main roads, gas-pipeline and for security in the area, without any payment instead of soldiers. The villagers from villages in Yebyu Township area have been constantly conscripted to guard Ye-Tavoy motor road, Ye-Tavoy railway road, and Kanbauk-Myaingkalay motor road.

Accompanying with the conscription of forced labour, the local military battalions also collected various types of tax (illegal) from the local villagers. In many occasions, the local military battalions also asked for foods and other supplies for their battalions often and they village headmen have to manage to bring every thing to the local military commanders.

##### **As an instance,**

Started on year 2000 to until today, in order to take security in the area, the Burmese Army's LIB No. 273 ordered the villagers from Natkyisin village to guard roads and pipeline. Every household in Nat-kyi-sin village tract had to guard for the security of these infrastructures and to fight against the rebel troops when they came into their village tract. This village tract has about 8 villages totally.

"We have no land to live, no money to give them and no food to eat", said by a local young villager who escaped from Nat-kyi-sin village. His family fled from their native villages to escape from their native villages to avoid from forced labour and tax extortion.

Sometimes, the villagers are also forced to work in the battalion (LIB No. 273) works when the army repaired their barracks or other works in the battalions. Accordingly to a villager, he said, "after we arrived their battalion, first, we have to cut down all big trees and clean the grounds where the army needed to build the military barracks. After finished cleaning, the soldiers forced us to dig long trenches and bankers, and build fences. For our village, we had to group 3 groups totally and each group contained at least 10 villagers. If one village cannot go and work, they have to find one substitute, who can go and work with cost of 400 Kyat per day. For the household, who have no husband or adult, they have to spend 25,000 Kyat per month for hiring the substitutes".

The combination of abuses: land confiscation, forced labour and tax extortion make the local villagers to face various difficulties. They do not have lands to cultivate, do not have enough time to work in their farms or plantations and cannot afford to pay illegal tax to the authorities or army. When the difficulties came to a high degree, the villagers abandoned their native villages and fled to other areas, and this was also a cause root of population displacement problems.

## V. Farmers' Suffering

Many Townships in Tenasserim Division are good fertile soil and the lands can produce good quality and plenty of paddy. Most Mon and Tavoyan farmers are growing paddy in low-land areas that close to sea while the Karen farmers grow paddy in mountainous areas. Recently the government authorities had less influence to these areas and can adopt only a little policy of 'paddy-buying' at low price.

Unlikely the previous years, the local authorities including the manager of Tha-yet-chaung Township (a Townshiop in Tenasserim Division) agricultural Products Trading Department set more amount of duty selling paddy to farmers in 2002's harvest. Paddy harvest season is in December and the authorities planned to buy rice from December 2002 to March 2003.

Since the early rainy season of 2002, the local authorities including the managers, the local village headmen and the militia groups met every local farmer and forced them to promise to sell their paddy to the buying center 20 baskets of paddy per acre according to the new set amount.

They also paid some advance payment to farmers to ensure that the farmers must sell the paddy to them with the new set amount of 20 baskets per acre with the price of 1000 Kyat per basket which is two times lower than the market price. In the contract, the authorities asked to sell full amount of paddy and if someone failed to perform their duty or could not sell the set amount of paddy, they would be detained by the local polices or Township authorities, until they their families completed the duty.

Most of the paddy lands in Tha-yet-chaung Township were under flood in 2003 rainy season (rainy season is from June to September of the year), because most lands were very close to sea. So that some farmers could not complete their duties of selling paddy to the government set paddy-buying centers. The local authorities also has never provided any assistance for agriculture land development to prevent natural flood and to have good crop production, but they just have demanded to get more paddy crops from farmers to sell them at low price.

"When we sell our paddy in the paddy-buying center, they steal ours! Let say, if I have to sell 20 baskets per acre, I do need to bring at least 24 or 25 baskets of paddy per acre. If not, it will never get full set amount paddy. For a farmer, in every year, after we paid for labor cost, fertilizer cost, hired oxen cost and other expenses, we left nothing. So how can we continue to grow our plantation for next year" explained by a local farmer from Tha-yet-chaung Township.

For 2003 Paddy-Buying Year, which will start in December, although SPDC leaders said that they would no longer buy the paddy from the farmers, but many farmers believed they would use another method to get paddy from farmers.

## VI. Land Confiscation

Land confiscation also relates to military expansion of the Burmese Army. Since 1994/ 1995, the Burmese Army increased its deployed troops in northern part of Tenasserim Division especially to provide inner and outer security of 'Yatana' gas pipeline, and to supervise in building 110 miles along Ye-Tavoy railway construction.

In the mid-August of 2002, when the local military battalions in Yebyu township, Tavoy District, Tenasserim Division were ordered to build a new Artillery Regiment No. 413, about 200 acres of land belonged to the local villagers were confiscated without any compensation. The land is situated between Kyauk-Hnya village and Ga-nge village of Yebyu Township. The land was grown with paddy, rubber trees and other fruit trees.

After confiscating the land, the local Burmese Army's battalions used the land for new cultivation, but they did not force the local villagers to do works on that land. They did not allow any villagers to come close to that confiscated lands and the landowners are totally barred from harvesting their crops in the lands.

A villager from Ga-nge village said that the commander from the new Artillery Regiment No. 413 said that they had to confiscate the lands because they needed available food supplies, battalion's concurrent expenses and other expenses for military operations.

The value for the lands were expensive, because the farmlands and fruit plantations already produced a lot of paddy and other various types of crops. However, the farmers did not receive any compensation for the land. Most of the confiscated farmland has paddy farmlands, rubber tree plantation, betel-nuts tree plantation and cashew-nut tree plantation. The estimated value for one acre of lands in the area was about Kyat 150,000 to Kyat 200,000.

Accordingly to the local source, the commander from that Artillery Regiment said that the confiscation order was from the higher authorities and they have to complete the building of new battalion in mid-year of 2003. In the construction of barracks, clearing the grounds, and digging the bunker, the soldiers also forced the local villagers.

## VII. Militarization in Tenasserim Division

First the local battalions of Burmese Army in Tenasserim Division recruited the supporters first, especially the members of USDA (Union Solidarity and Development Association), village militiamen, firemen from Township fire brigades, to attend the short-term (2 weeks to one month). After attending the training, the regime planned to form 'People Defense Force', 'Anti-Strike Group', 'People Vigorous Association', and 'Anti-foreign Invasion Force'.

The regime, SPDC, formed USDA for many years since the regime supported political party, Nationalities Unity Party (NUP) failed the 1990 elections. After 1990s elections, the regime denied to transfer the political power to the winner party, National League for Democracy (NLD) and then formed USDA to compete against NLD.

In organizing the USDA, the regime has given them power favor, economic favor and many other special opportunities. Therefore, many opportunists have joined this organization. According to a local villager, USDA members have more influence than the local administration SPDC authorities and if they wish to dismiss an authority, they could send letters to higher SPDC leaders and the dismissal to that authority would be decided.

After May 30 incident, when the SPDC planned to recruit all members of USDA as their main force to be soldiers to defend the country, many USDA opportunists escaped the constitutive recruitment. Many of them fled to Thailand and Malaysia to work as migrant workers in order to escape from the training school and join into defense force.

During the training, the local authorities and military commanders trained how to defend the country from the foreign invasion and also explain how to build the unity among the people.

One of the local young man from Tavoy Town said that even though the authorities and military commanders explained about the foreign invasion, he did not believe and all the government's activities were for only to prevent any pro-democracy struggle in the future.

Many villagers would not like to join the defense force or attend the basic military training schools also fled to Thailand to escape forced recruitment. However, the regime have formed various new groups to support their activities especially to against the democratic force.

### **A. Long-lone Township:**

Similarly to other Townships, the civilians live in Town wards and villages of Long-lone Township were also recruited to attend the basic military training school. With a plan to break the potential demonstrations,

while the local battalion of Burmese Army was providing military training to the USDA, SPDC authorities in the towns, the local battalion in that Township also registered the civilians for the new recruits in villages and town.

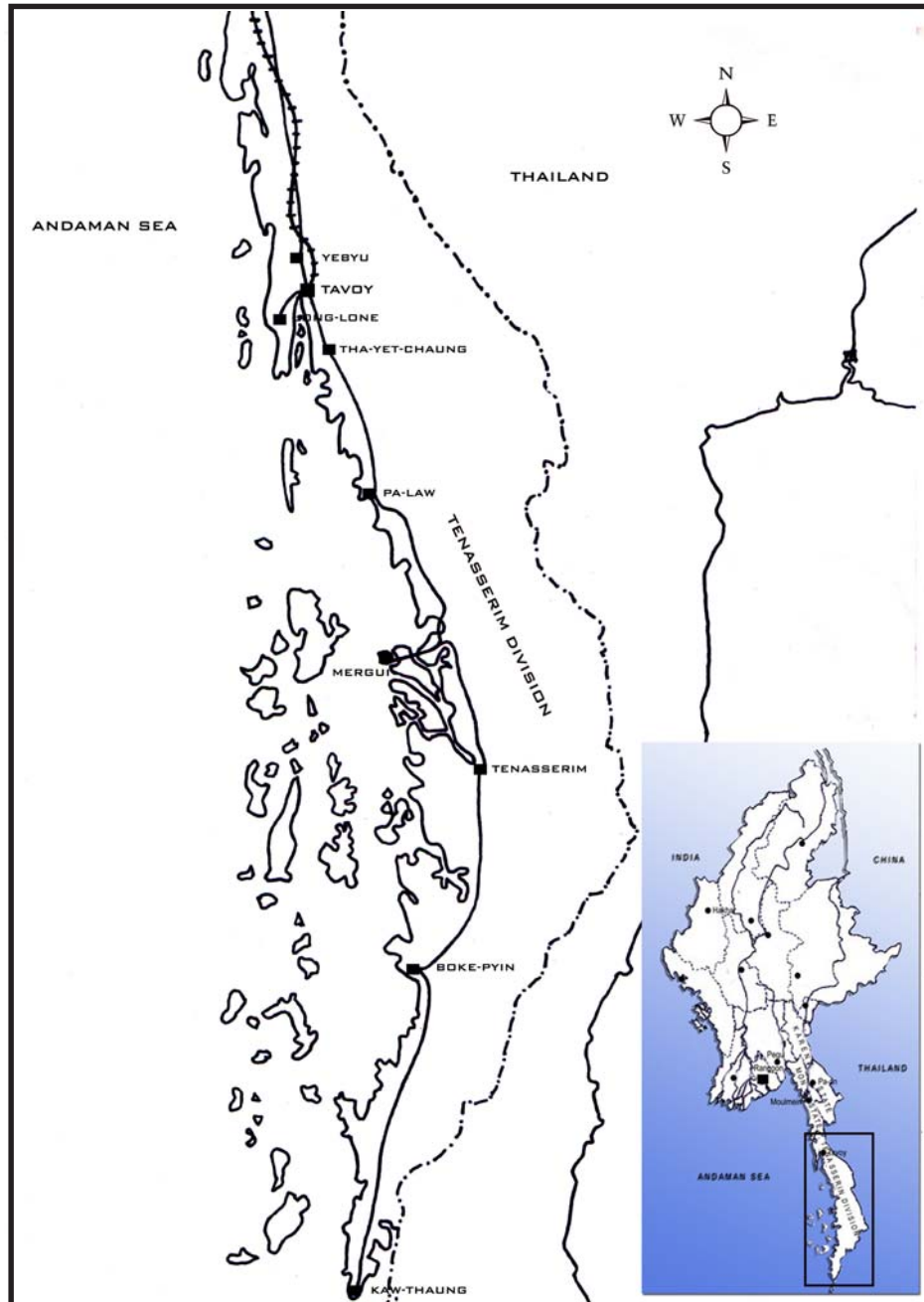
Started in the first week of July 2003, the local SPDC's Burmese Army LIB No. 104 went to many villages in Long-lone Township of Tenasserim Division and called the meetings and registered the villagers as new recruits. They registered all men under 50 years old in the villages and the youngest age for trainee was 18 years.

According to the report from a source, the trainees were forced to form as "People Vigorous Association (PVA)" after training with objectives to defend the country from foreign invasion. The training lasted only 2 weeks and it was also called as 'short-term' military training. A trainee said:

"The authorities did not explain us (the villagers) why we would have to attend in short day training. They only said we could not refuse. They said that that military training is for villagers to defense our own village and if needed, we have to be defense foreign invasions."

Because of the military forced almost all farmers in Long-lone Township to attend training, could not cultivate their paddy farms. They had to go and attend the basic short-term military arranged by local Burmese LIB No. 104. According to an order from LIB No. 104, it said that all households in villages must attend the training and if there was no any man in a family, that family must find substitute by payment to replace their family member, during the course of training.

Since the training have been started in many villages in Long-lone Township, many remaining villagers from 10 villages were forced and used as the security guard while many villagers were training. If the villagers failed to guard around the villages, they have to pay to the local authorities as fine.



Map of Tenasserim Division, Southern Burma



The men from Tha-jet-taw village of Long-lone Township said that they have no desire to attend the training and so that many villagers escaped from their native villages. Similarly, the civilians in many Townships in Tenasserim Division were forced to attend the short-term military training. If they failed to attend, they had to pay 10000-20000 Kyat to the authorities as fines.

### **B. Tavoy Township:**

In Tenasserim Division, Tavoy Town is the capital city and it is a well known district town and it has many Mon, Karen and Tavoyan villages under its administration. Many Burmese Army's battalions take base in this Township to take security for 'Yatana' gas pipeline and foreign petroleum company personnel. Those battalions of Burmese Army also involved in recruiting the local civilians to attend training.

The local Burmese battalions IB No. 25, LIB No. 401, LIB No. 402 registered many local villagers between 16 to 60 years old in June and forced them to attend training school in latter months, July and August 2003. While many villagers were attending the training schools and the local battalions were busy with training, they also forced the remaining villagers to guard for the security of their own areas.

#### **As an instance,**

Bay-chaung village is located about 5 furlongs in northern Tavoy and started in June 2003, the authorities listed all villagers from Bay-Chaung and chose by vote to attend the training. The villagers were divided into groups. The first group, who were firstly selected by votes had to attend training while the remaining group had to guard their own villages and surrounding areas.

According to a witness from that village said that even the old people who are not able to attend the training, were ordered to cook, carry the water and doing other small pieces of works during training.

Because of this basic military training arranged by the local Burmese Army, many civilians from all Townships faced a couple of hardships especially difficult to find time to work in their farms and to find substitutes to attend training schools in stead of them. As a result, many villagers escaped to Ra-nong, a Thailand's border town, and opposite of southernmost part of Burma's border. (See in the map.) In Thailand, those escaped villagers had to find illegal works provided by Thai employers especially in fishing industries.

### **C. Yebyu Township**

There are many military battalions in Yebyu Township involved in providing the military training to the civilians, the detail information about the training are as below:

**Training by LIB No. 271:** Started on August 2003, the local Burmese Army LIB No. 271 bases in Kalain-Aung village tract, Yebyu Township, Tenasserim Division, forcibly recruited the local villagers who are between 15 to 50 years old, to form "People Vigorous Association" and to attend the basic Military schools. Even women were included in the recruitment to attend the military training.

Accordingly to the order, every family with 5 family members must send one member of their family for training. LIB No. 271 recruited the villagers from 6 villages via the village headmen. The villages, which are under the LIB No. 271 order to attend the basic military training are: Ywa-thit, Yar-ywa, Kwe-the-lin, Kyauk-katin, Ale-sakan and Loh-taing villages. Not only the local civilians are forced to attend these military training schools, but also all families from these villages had to pay for all expenses in the training schools.

#### **Accordingly to a villager, he said:**

"In our village, we have to give them (the local LIB No. 271 commanders) about 10, 000 Kyat money per family to cover the cost of food and other fees during the training. But I still can't guess how many villagers from our village were in training school and why they have to pay a lot of money"

In some households, there are no adult and when the family was ordered to find a person to attend training school, that family has to find a substitute. Therefore, that family had to pay for the substitute person. Many men who avoided not to be as trainees by LIB No. 271, who were in the list of trainees, fled to the border areas and some also fled to the monasteries and robed as monks. However, as most young men are in the neighboring country, Thailand, as migrant workers, so that the Burmese Army could not recruit them all.

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However, because of the training school, which arranged by LIB 271, the remaining family members faced a couple of difficulties and some of them could not find the way to continue their life unless their sons and husbands, who mainly seek income for the families.

**Training by LIB No. 282:** In July and August 2002, LIB No. 282 forced the villagers from Aleskan village tract in Yebyu Township to attend the basic military training for one week in order to use all villagers in their militia force. The militia force normally has to help the Burmese Army's local military battalions and the members are instructed to fight against the rebel soldiers if those rebels came close to their areas.

According to the villagers, LIB No. 282 registered men between 18 years and 50 years old in village and the women between 18 years and 40 years old and provided them with basic arm equipment and military training in early July. The training lasted only about 7 days and the local battalion provided many rounds of training to those local villagers.

Besides they village wasted their time for training, additionally, they also had to pay to trainers for expenditures in the whole course of training. One household, which had no paddy farms or fruit plantations, needed to provide 2000 Kyat to trainer or battalion for the expenditure during 7 days training. Farmer households, which have paddy farms or plantations, had to provide 4000 Kyat as special payment to trainers. When those villagers went for training school, they also had to pay to trainer or LIB No. 282.

After training, the villagers will be forced to be militiamen or militia-women on a rotation basis in their villages. They have been conscripted to be in militia at least 7 days each time and militia leaders would manage the conscription of militiamen or militia-women on a rotation basis. If one household failed to provide when rotation is due to them, that family must have to pay 4500 Kyat as a fine per week or per one round of the conscription.

With objectives to prevent the villagers to not cooperate with rebel forces and to protect their control in the area, LIB No. 273 and No, 282 formed the militia forces since 2000 in all village tracts in Yebyu Township. In the beginning of formation of militia force, they also appointed some villagers to be militiamen with salary. The villagers had to pay salary for those militiamen.

As the battalions ordered those militiamen to fight against the rebel force, later many of them were afraid of being died and resigned for the force. The headmen also could not organize another men in the village to work as militiamen. When they failed to organize the men in village to be militiamen, they found a new method. Therefore, later the LIB No. 273 and No. 283 ordered the leaders of militiamen to use all villagers to be militia on a rotation basis.

Continuously similarly to the other areas, LIB No. 282 took the responsibility to provide training to the local villagers. During this training from July to August 2003, the local military battalion of Burmese Army also received a lot of money from the villagers by demanding expenditures during training schools.

**Training by LIB No. 408 and LIB No. 109:** Similarly to LIB No. 282, with a propaganda to protect the country from foreign invasion and occupation, the two local Burmese Army LIB No. 408 and 409 forced the local civilians to attend the basic military training for the State Defense Force in Yebyu township, Tenasserim Division, said by a local villager who himself participate in the training.

Many villagers who were in the registration especially men were forced to attend the training in closed camps and the authorities said the training aims to defense the possible invasion by foreign countries and other destructive forces. The selection of the people was differed from the recruitment of militia force and they tried to select those, who possibly their supporters including former headmen, former militia leaders and retired Burmese soldiers in the area and town ward/ village section leaders.

The household with 4 family members had to send at least one family member to training schools and trainees were put in those schools in the camp. They were not allowed to visit their homes during training period.

During training, the trainers instructed that the villagers needed to use any types of arms, including man-made weapons or wooden and bamboo sticks to fight back foreign invaders and destructive elements, if necessary.

**Accordingly to a trainee,**

### 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:

HURFOM, P. O. Box 11, Ratchburana P. O.  
Bangkok 10140, THAILAND  
E-mail: mforum@np.anet.net.th <or> monforum2003@yahoo.com  
Webpages: www.geocities.com/monforum2003

With regards,

Director  
Human Rights Foundation of Monland

"In the training the commander said that after the training, we have to guard our village tract one mile distance in surrounding. Villager groups have to guard our own area with our own food. We have to use the wooden sticks, bamboo sticks and knife as arms to defense foreign invasion and the destructive forces".

Because of the military training arranged by LIB No. 408 and 409, many young men fled to other villages and some fled to Thailand to work as migrant workers. Most young men would not like to join training school and militia force and so that they escaped from their villages. When the two battalions really recruited the men in the registered list, they could not find most young men, as most of them escaped to not be in training school.

## VIII. Population displacement

In southern part of Burma, the population displacement occurred not only because of fighting, also because of various human rights violations, such as forced labour, illegal tax extortion, land confiscation and movement restriction. When the local villages, who have been seriously suffered from the above-mentioned planned to escape from their villages to avoid mistreatment, as a result, there has been population displacement occurred.

When analyzed the main causes of displacement, many displaced persons explained that they were constantly forced to work for army and additionally, their movement was restricted that meant they were not allowed to go to their farms and plantations or not allowed to stay at night time.

**As an instance,**

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The house-hold in which the family member was absence to attend training, because their sons or husbands are in Thailand, have to hire substitute with payment. They have to pay 15, 000 Kyat to a substituted trainee to attend 2 weeks training school.

The migrated labourers also flow to Mon State with more number because the labour demands in lower part of Burma, while many Mon and ethnic people

in Mon State migrated into Thailand to seek better works and income in Thailand.

Although the regime is encouraging to form various SPDC-supporting groups such as: "Anti-Strike Group", "People Defense Force", "Anti-Foreign Invasion" and "People Vigorous Association", the local people have less and less interest on it and too tired for the training schools. Especially the government servants are too disappointed for these training schools, because they think that was not their duties.

During January and February, many families have fled from 12 villages in Yebyu Township, Tenasserim Division, to the Thailand-Burma border in order to escape from the conscription of forced labour. On the other hand, they could not survive if they stay in their villages because of movement restriction.

Because the rebel movement in the area, the local Burmese LIB No. 273 led by the commander Col. Htin Kyaw ordered the local civilians from villages: Phaya-tone-su, Ye-ngan-gyi, Si-phone, Natgyi-sin, Pauk-pin-kwin, Chaung-pya, Dani-kya, Mae-than-taung, Kyawk-htayan, Me-taw, Cha-pone and Mayan: were not allowed to go and work in farms or plantations, which were outside of their villages.

On the other hands, because of a self-reliance program to find their own food supplies and income for any battalion, the Burmese Army LIB No. 273 also ordered the local villagers to work in their works without paying any labour cost for them. All family members under 60 years old have to work in the battalion's paddy farmlands and plantations in December and January for weeks continuously. The villagers have to work for every day on a rotation basis. Even for a widow, they needed to work for one week.

The villagers from 12 villages are too busy with the army's works and so that they did not have to work in their farms or plantation. Therefore, many poor families who faced food-shortage problems planned to escape from their villages. Many of them arrived to Thailand-Burma border and displaced in area under the control of New Mon State Party, which agreed ceasefire to the current regime.

When the villagers fled to the border area, they did not dare to travel along the main motor road. They came across into forests and jungles until they could reach to NMSP area. When they arrived into NMSP controlled area it was safe for them. There are over 10 villages in the NMSP ceasefire area, which resettled the displaced persons, who escaped from conflict area.

## IX. Conclusion

In Tenasserim Division, there are more and large village communities in the rural area and so that the rebel armed force had more opportunities for hiding and getting supports from the communities, as most ethnic people Karen, Mon and Tavoyan, who are constantly mis-treated by the Burmese Army.

After the regime planned to sell the natural gas to foreign and built the companies' bases in on-shore area, the Burmese Army has increased the number of its troops and intensified the military activities in the area in their provision of internal and external guards to the pipeline and companies. The more troop deployment in the area, the more people have suffered, because they are forced to contribute unpaid labour for army and to pay various types of expenses by army. The (rebel-supporters) suspects were killed and tortured, and women in the rural communities are always vulnerable for sexual harassment.

Additional recruitment of trainees to attend the military training arranged by the Burmese Army have forced hundreds of civilians in rural communities of Tenasserim Division to flee from their homes in order to escape the militarization plan by the army. Population displacement, food-shortage problem, poor health conditions during displacement and (for children) loss of education opportunities are the results of this militarization in southern part of Burma.

**HURFOM**  
**P. O. Box 11**  
**Ratchburana P. O.**  
**Bangkok 10140, THAILAND**  
**E-mail: [mforum@np.anet.net.th](mailto:mforum@np.anet.net.th)**  
**[www.geocities.com/monforum2003](http://www.geocities.com/monforum2003)**

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