

# The Mon Forum

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## Contents

### News:

- (1) Forced Relocation of 300 houses in northern part of Ye Township
- (2) Forced labour along Kanbauk-Myaingkalay Gas Pipeline

### Report:

- (1) Constant threat against Mon National Education and Schools by SPDC in Southern Burma

## Some Acronyms in This Issue

BSPP-	Burmese Socialist Programme Party,
SPDC-	State Peace and Development Council,
MCWA-	Maternal and Child Welfare Association,
GONGO	-Government Organized Non-Government Organization ,
LIB-	Light Infantry Battalion (of Burmese Army),
NMSP-	New Mon State Party,
CRC-	Convention on the Rights of the Child,
MNEC-	Mon National Education Committee,
CEDAW-	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

## News

### Forced Relocation of 300 houses in northern part of Ye Township

(Ye Township, Mon State, July 2004)

In order to build a police station and a public hospital, the Mon State's Ye Township Peace and Development Council forcibly moved 300 families in a Mon village called Duya, which situates in southern part of Ye Township.

The time frame for the completion of the relocation to the villagers is at the end of rainy season or at the end of September, said a local villager. The village has totally about 1, 500 households and about 300 households will be suffered from this forced relocation. As the village situates in the middle of paddy-field, the houses are built in crowd.

Accordingly to the villagers, "the Ye Township authorities are not only forced the families to move to anyplace they like, they also confiscated lands nearby, to have sufficient space for the police station and hospital."

Besides force relocation and land confiscation in this village, SPDC's Township authorities also instructed the local headmen to collect money



A Mon family who forced to move from their village by SPDC's Township authorities, are building a new hut to live in Thai-Burma border area.

## SPDC's War Against Ethnic Children's Right to Education

After the Burmese Army, armed faction of the Rangoon regime, SPDC, could occupy the whole area of southern part of Ye Township, the SPDC leaders planned to fight against the Mon national education, to which about 7000 Mon children has education access.

The SPDC leaders, led by Maj. Gen. Maung Bo from Defense Ministry, ordered to open the government schools and abolish the Mon education that has existed in the areas by the assistance of New Mon State Party (NMSP) for 30 years.

Abolishment of the Mon national schools and Mon education is also a new war by SPDC against the ethnic Mon children to have the rights to education, which is provided in their own language.

SPDC is clearly showing the sign that it does not recognize any identity of ethnic nationality exist in Burma and the regime has planned to centralize the education or abolish the teaching of other ethnic language in order to implement its protracted 'Burmanization' policy.

This notorious policy created over five-decades long civil war in Burma and the ethnic children in the whole of Burma have lost the right to education in their mother tongue.

The implementation of this policy in the current situation is also breaking the international community's proposed 'national reconciliation' and delay of peaceful democratization in Burma.

from the villagers for almost expenses that need to spend in building the police station and hospital.

"Ye Township authorities ordered and set time to move even in this raining season and the Village Maternal and Child Welfare Association (MCWA) is collecting money instead the village PDC 1000 Kyat per household for the fund of these police station and hospital," explained by a villager.

MCWA is a hand-picked Government Organized Non-Government Organization (GONGO) of the regime, SPDC. It was formed after the regime ratified (Convention on Elimination of all Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), in order to protect the rights of women and children.

For the construction of even a hospital, the SPDC Township authorities provided only 2 Million Kyat (~ 2000 US Dollar), which will be not enough accordingly to the villagers. The headmen confirmed that they might need about 10 Million Kyat (~ 10000 US Dollar) for the completion of the project.

However, the Township authorities have not said anything for the money collection of another construction project – building of a police station. Even though these two projects are government project, however, the villagers have been seriously suffered not only losing their properties, but also to providing payment.

Since 2000, after the Burmese Army confiscated many thousands acre of land in the area, the regime SPDC has deployed more soldiers and police in the Township area in order to keep control the whole area.

Ye Township was in conflict zone in the pre-ceasefire situation between New Mon State Party and the Burmese Army, the armed faction of this regime. Most parts of this township are under the dual administration of the NMSP and the regime after 1995 ceasefire. Currently, the SPDC Township authorities have planned to move forward into many Mon villages in order to put them under their control.

These projects are also related to the Burmese military government's militarization and development policy. The government confiscated land in Mon areas long time ago since after NMSP ceasefire and they are extending their troop deployment. Some lands are confiscated for the Burmese army businesses and self-reliance program, while some are used in their development projects.

In Mon areas, even the NMSP agreed for ceasefire to the regime since 1995, but the human rights violations against the Mon civilians outside of NMSP's ceasefire zones are not ceased. The military regime authorities and its armed force still commit forced relocation of Mon civilians and confiscated thousands acres of land from the Mon farmers without compensation. ■ ■ ■

## Forced labour along Kanbauk-Myaingkalay Gas Pipeline

(Mon State, July 2004)

As every in the beginning of rainy season, the Mon State's local SPDC authorities have forced hundreds of civilians who live along Kanbauk-Myaingkalay Gas Pipeline to fence the pipeline and to cover the pipe with earth in order to prevent the attack from the rebel armed force and protect water flood during rainy season. Additionally, the villagers are also forced to clear grasses and bushes along the pipeline.

Accordingly to a villager from Thanbyuzayat Township the local military battalion based in the town ordered the villagers from villages near gas pipeline route to fence the pipeline route which across rivers or streams and cover the disclosed parts of the route with earth.

Because of the rain at the early monsoon weather of Burma in June, water flood threw away earth and soil covering some of the pipe route and some parts of pipeline were disclosed on earth. The local authorities are so concerning about the possible sabotage of the pipeline by the rebel armed force and then ordered the villagers to cover them with earth.

When the pipeline crosses on the rivers or streams, it is totally exposed to the scene, and so the local military battalions ordered the villagers to fence the parts of pipeline across streams and river. The villagers themselves have to find building materials and bring them to the closest river or streams. And, they have to manage to fence the pipeline with their own materials.

In the conscription of forced labour, the Burmese Army's local commanders ordered the village

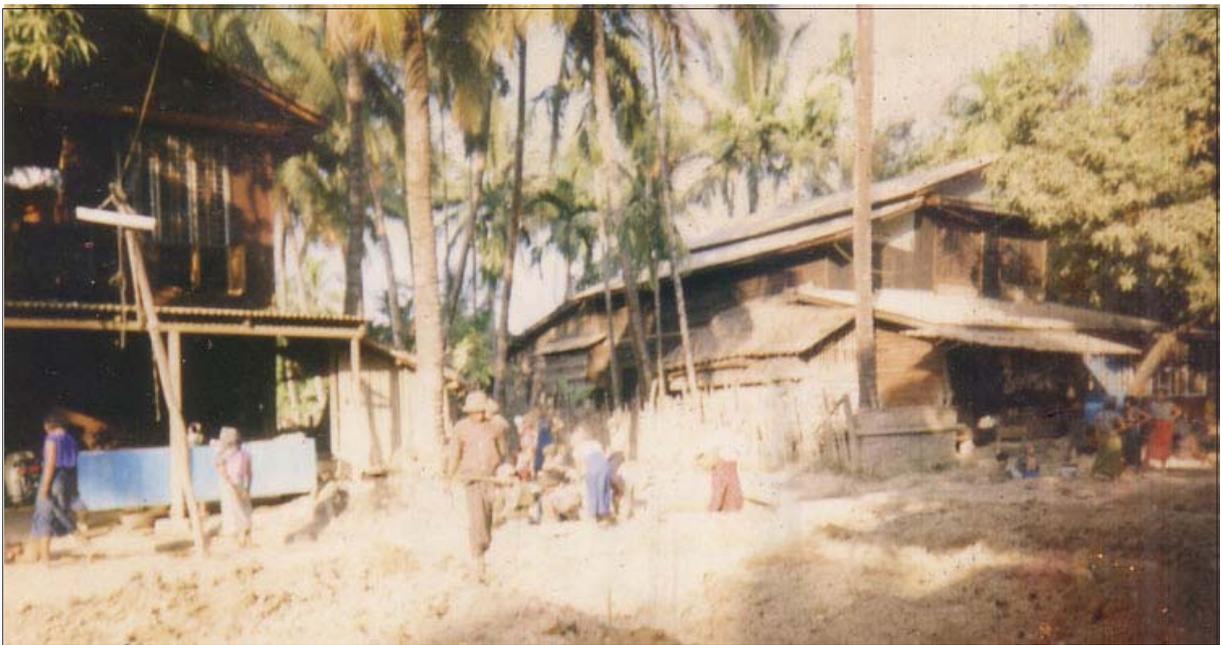
headmen directly, the headmen concerned had to inform every household to send one of their family whether to find building materials or fence the pipeline or cover the pipeline with earth.

Accordingly to the villagers in the area, the Burmese Army in the area have monthly collected money from the villagers as 'security fee' of the pipeline. The fee was just use for the food expenses of the soldiers who took the patrol in the area, but the local authorities and Burmese Army never provide the villagers with labour cost and the cost for their building materials.

Additionally, the local authorities and Burmese Army also ordered the villagers to clear grasses and bushes alongside of the gas pipeline route. They ordered them to clear about 30 meter in width in each side of the route in order to prevent if the rebel soldiers approach the pipeline.

Even though the local battalions of Burmese Army has collected 'security fee' from many villages along the pipeline route on a monthly basis, some villagers have been still forced to guard the pipeline. The villagers have to set up small huts along the route. 3 huts in one-mile distance and they have to guard the pipeline for 24 hours each on a rotation basis.

This gas pipeline was many times sabotaged by the rebel groups since the construction in 2001. The pipeline is starting from Kanbauk village, carrying gas from Yatana gas field and bring to Myaingkalay, where a cement factory is operating in order to provide energy for the factory.



**The local villagers who live along Kanbauk-Myaingkalay Gas Pipeline are forced to fence the pipeline and to cover the pipe with earth in Thanbyuzayat Township, Mon State.**

## Report

# Constant threat against Mon National Education and Schools by SPDC in Southern Burma

### I. Civilization of Mon people and the maintenance of the Mon language and literature

Lower Burma was once a Mon Kingdom under the name of Hongsawatoi and it was also known as Ramannadesa (*literally as 'the region of Mon people'*). Ramannadesa was ethnically, culturally and linguistically well developed since the 9th century A.D, as the Mon people brought Buddhism from Sri Lanka and India<sup>1</sup>. Mon literature was established in Buddhist monasteries since the ruling era of Mon Kings and monastic education kept the main role of Mon education. Although sovereign independence of the Mon was annexed and lost to the Burmese kings, the Mon monasteries served as the only centre of Mon language and literature teaching.

In the ancient days, thousands of palm-leaf are written in Mon language and mainly it had written about Buddhism. But in some palm-leaf, the old scholars also wrote about politics, businesses, herbal medicines and medical treatment, military strategies, history of the kings and warriors, foreign relation, law and legal systems. As the Mon literature in the past was so rich, the Mon monks and patriots has been keen to maintain the literature. In order to maintain the Mon literature, the Mon politicians, Mon monks and the community Mon people wanted to teach Mon language to their children.

Under the British colony (1885-1948), the education system changed from a Buddhist monastery education to various vernacular schools. However even the colony governments, the teaching of Mon language was allowed to be taught in schools in the Mon areas under the British administration<sup>2</sup>. Burma, which has many ethnic nationalities in various parts of border area retained its Independence from British on January 4, 1948, after the Burman leaders and ethnic leaders agreed to establish 'Federal Union of Burma'.

After Independence, the democratically elected governments appointed skillful Mon teachers to teach Mon literature in the Mon territory in lower part of Burma<sup>3</sup>. The curriculums of Mon language especially for primary and secondary levels were officially developed by the governments and Ministry of Education officially allowed the Mon teachers to teach in Mon schools. Salaries of the Mon teachers were also paid by the governments. The general Mon people were happy with the policy and the program of the successive democratically elected governments.

However, the Burma's armed force or Burmese Army led by Gen. Ne Win, which seized the State political power in 1962, ordered to cease all teaching of Mon language in the government schools. Many teachers had to resign and some of them, who refused the orders were also arrested and detained. As a consequence, the Mon language was no longer taught during the era of Gen. Ne Win's 'Revolutionary Council' (1962-1974) and 'Burmese Socialist Programme Party – BSPP' (1974-1988).

But the Mon villagers in the rural areas where were far from the military regime's control who wanted to maintain Mon language and literature adopted their own arrangement by finding their own teachers and paid them to teach their children with Mon language. But, it was difficult for the Mon language and literature to survive without official recognition by the government.

The New Mon State Party (NMSP), amongst other ethnic groups, which has joined the armed insurgency since the Independence of Burma in 1948, initiated for Mon national education<sup>4</sup>. The NMSP formed an Education Department in 1972 and opened Mon National Schools in areas under the party's control – Thaton District (*which covers about 3 Townships*), Moulmein District (*which covers about 5 Townships*) and Tavoy District (*which covers about 2 Townships*). There are two committees in the Education Department: the Mon National Education Committee (MNEC) and the Curriculum Committee – that mainly have taken responsibility

<sup>1</sup> As the Mon people were traditionally living near the sea of southern Burma, they had good communication with Sri Lanka and India especially in trading.

<sup>2</sup> During the British between the WWI and WWII, while the Burman leaders were struggling for the Independent of Burma, the Mon people had enjoyed in maintaining and developing the literature.

<sup>3</sup> After Independence, even the Mon State was not officially formed in the Federal Union of Burma, but the democratically elected and Burman dominated governments allowed the teaching of Mon language in the government schools.

<sup>4</sup> In early day of Mon armd revolutionary, the New Mon State Party was not formed. A political party, Mon People's Front (MPF), was taking up arms and fought against the central government in Rangoon. MPF laid their arms in 1958 and changed their movement as legal political party on ground.

in the operation of Mon education in Mon areas over 30 years. MNEC has opened many primary and secondary levels of Mon National Schools in the above-mentioned Districts under the NMSP control.

However after the seizure of the political power in 1988 by cracking down the pro-democracy uprising and killing of thousands of demonstrators, the Burmese Army re-named itself as 'SLORC – *State Law and Order Restoration Council*' and then as 'SPDC – *State Peace and Development Council*' and has ruled the country against the people's will. Under the new military regimes since 1988, they have geared up in oppressing against the Mon National Schools.

Currently, there are about 150 pure Mon National Schools in the above-mentioned three District areas. The main curriculums in the Primary Schools is the Mon language and they also include Burmese and English as subjects. In Junior Secondary Schools (Middle Schools), Mon History is taught in the Mon language and the other subjects are in Mon and Burmese. In the Senior Secondary Schools (High Schools), the subjects are in Mon, Burmese and English. Burmese is taught as a subject in all schools.

Besides in the Mon National Schools, the MNEC also approached the local communities and village leaders in Mon villagers to have teaching of Mon language in the government-established schools, in some 190 schools. MNEC organizes the evening classes in these schools. Additionally, in some villages, MNEC and the Mon teachers also organize the evening and weekend classes at monasteries to teach the Mon language to the students who are attending government schools in weekly school days.

## II. The initiative of Mon Education System

Under the management of New Mon State Party's Education Department and strong community participation, there are many Mon national schools were established in the rural area and the Mon education system, that was modeled from the government education system but translated into Mon language, were initiated about 30 years ago. NMSP's Education Department and MNEC also yearly organize the TOT (*Training of Trainers*) in its control area hand produced more required qualified teachers for the schools and students. While MNEC is providing stationeries, curriculum textbooks and others to the students, and salaries to the teachers, at the same time, the Mon communities also provide food supplies, clothing, sheltering, and others to the teachers, too.

Currently, there are over 1000 schools in the whole Mon State, in NMSP control area and in some villages under dual administration of NMSP and the ruling regime in southern part of Burma. Therefore, the types of schools are varied and MNEC could also has opportunity even to teach Mon language in schools in the area of dual administration besides Mon National Schools.

Therefore, the types of the schools where the MNEC has chance to operate their education competing to the regime's education as are as below:

- 1) Mon national vernacular schools (*or Pure Mon Schools*),
- 2) Joint Mon and Burmese schools, and
- 3) Mixed schools teaching unrecognized languages as well as Mon and Burmese

In **Mon vernacular schools**, NMSP's Education Department adopted its own curriculum and text books and the teachers are also appointed by concerned education department in district and village levels. In these schools, the teachers teach students especially with Mon language in all subjects except Burmese. Mon language and literature is the main subject of the Mon schools and other subjects such as geography, history, science, mathematics and etc., are taught by Mon language. Under the management of NMSP, the teachers in Mon National schools are hired mostly from various parts of Mon State and the salaries are lower than the teachers from government schools. Most of the teachers in Mon National schools are also educated from the universities and colleges established in Mon State or the capital Rangoon. Even the young and energetic Mon educated people have strong commitment to maintain Mon language and literature and therefore, they work as teachers in Mon National Schools, even the salaries are low<sup>5</sup>. Unlikely to the government teachers have fully involved and taught the students in schools without opening tuition classes for extra income.

In the **joint Mon and Burmese teaching schools**, the students are taught with two languages, mainly Mon and Burmese, and the school times are also divided into two sections: morning and evening. When the government's teachers take morning section, the Mon teachers must take in the evening time. Also these types of schools were built by Mon community as Mon National Schools before, later the government also sent their teachers and its troops and forced the local community leaders to allow the government education system in these community's schools. Now, in some places, the NMSP could protect such these communities'

<sup>5</sup> The salary of a Mon tacher is about 3, 000 Kyat (~ 3 US Dollar) per month and they get support for foods from the community.

established Mon National Schools after more and more military deployment by the Burmese Army. When the Burmese troops came into the area and there was less protection for the Mon teachers, the soldiers put their teachers and forced the Mon teachers to share teaching time for them. This practice is still used as a main 'tactics' of the Burmese Army or SPDC to convert the Mon community schools as 'government schools'.

On the other hand, in order to extend the government or Burmese education system, the government have used a very smart idea as appointing the Mon nationalities teachers and sent them to the villages where the Mon National schools were operated. The Mon community also empathized to those Mon government teachers and let them carry their duties as teaching some subjects especially Burmese, Math and English in the Mon Schools. In another way, the Township and State authorities wrote a threat letter to community leaders forced to allow government teachers in order to teach one or two subjects in Mon national schools. Similarly, in very few villages, NMSP also organized the local community, to allow the teaching of Mon literature and Mon history as main subjects in government schools. The village headmen were ethnic Mons and they also allowed the Mon teachers in the villages' schools. Thus, the joint Mon and Burmese teaching schools have occurred in many villages under loose control of both NMSP and the regimes or dual administration areas.

In the type of mixed schools system, the government or NMSP Education Department tried to put only one teacher in their unrecognized schools to teach only one subject Mon or Burmese. The NMSP also tried to organize in all government teachers or the community leaders in Mon area to allow the teaching of Mon language as a minor subject in government schools. The NMSP wanted the Mon students to learn Mon language.

The system has competed for several years on. As both sides tried to have more influence on their own education and establishment of their own institutions, sometime, the conflict became intensified and unsolvable. But for the government, they aims to implement their protracted assimilation policy by pushing the non-Burmese ethnic students to learn and speak Burmese language and abandon the own mother speaking language. Therefore, to against the adopted assimilation policy, the Mon community and the nationalists themselves encourages the Mon education system, because it has been remained only one choice for the survival of Mon literature and language. This education system have been supported by the community with morally, financially, and materially for many years. Although the education system and the running of Mon national schools are always under the threat of SPDC's officials and their troops, the Mon people had ever made various defiance against the authorities and the Burmese Army. Then, they continue their struggle for the survival of Mon language and literature.

### **III. General Situation of Mon National Schools**

#### **A. Curriculum in Mon National Schools**

Mon, Burmese, English and Basic Mathematics (*or Math*) are taught in the Junior Primary level (Year 0, Year 1 and Year 2). Mon, Burmese, English, Math, Geography and Mon History are taught in the Senior Primary level (Year 3 and 4). Mon, Burmese, English, Math, Geography, Mon History and Science are taught in the Junior Secondary level (Year 5, 6, 7 and 8). The language use in the teaching of all subjects is in 'Mon'.

As in government schools, Burmese, English, Maths, Science (Physics, Chemistry and Biology) and Social Studies (History, Geography and Economics) are taught in the Senior Secondary level (Year 9 and 10) in Mon National High Schools. Those schools also use textbooks prescribed by the Burmese Government as the students have to enter 10<sup>th</sup> or High School Exam in SPDC Education Ministry's issued examination papers.

All Primary Schools subjects and Mon History textbooks for the Junior Secondary level are written in Mon language as prescribed by the Curriculum Committee of the Mon Education Department. The study found, regarding especially in Mon History, that the children were taught about the background of the Mon people: how the Mon-Khamar race entering Burma and Southeast Asia, about the several the Mon Kingdoms: Hongsawatoi (*or Pegu*), Suwannabunmi (*or Tha-ton*), etc. However, the textbooks omit the history of the race of ethnic Burman and the Burmese kingdoms<sup>6</sup>.

According to a teacher, children were happy in the classroom because they could learn in their mother tongue - but they are weak in Burmese. The Mon students mostly from the border areas, who study at the Mon schools, could not speak the Burmese language well and it also made them difficult if communicate in Burmese language.

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<sup>6</sup> There is a big opposite in the Mon and Burmese histories because in the past, the Mon and Burman kings often waging war each other and tried to influence their kingdoms' power.

## **B. Teacher Recruitment and Upgrading Training**

There are about 1000 Mon teachers currently recruited and employed by MNEC with salary payment. In the past, the teachers were recruited by the NMSP on a voluntary basis, but NMSP or MNEC provided each teacher with 50 baskets of rice per year and other stuff such as soap, toothpaste, candles, etc. They have no initial teacher training. Many unqualified teachers involved in providing education to the students and the children could not get sufficient education. But later after 1988, when many Mon ethnic students together many other students countrywide joined hand with the revolutionary ethnic armed forces and arrived to the border area with Thailand, some Mon students joined as teachers in Mon National Schools and therefore, they also improved the Mon National Education. Some of them became 'decision makers' in MNEC and could improve the Education System.

The NMSP's Education Department and the facilitating committee, MNEC, could also manage for wide range teachers' trainings after 1990 in order to improve the qualities of Mon teachers. The NMSP have organized in-service teachers' training at its General Headquarters or refugee camps since 1992.<sup>a</sup> From 1992 to 1994, there was a six-week training once a year and the number of teachers from 50 to 100 attended the training. In 1995, there was no training because of NMSP was quite busy with the cease-fire agreement with the military regime and preparation of refugees' repatriation after intensive pressure from the Thai government. From 1996 to 1999, there was also a six-week training each time and four times a year in the different places, after the NMSP has stable condition in its ceasefire zones.

According to the data provided by the MNEC, about 700 teachers were trained during the described years and all of them returned back to their schools and continued providing education service to the grown number of Mon children in rural Mon areas<sup>7</sup>.

Later after ceasefire, MNEC also has capacity to seek foreign fund assistance to provide salary payment to the teachers with Burmese currency in order to reduce the burden of the NMSP and the Mon people in the rural areas. After the teachers received salaries from MNEC, the local Mon villagers only needed to provide them with some small basic foods. Normally, MNEC could have sought fund from the foreign international NGOs, which are interesting in education. MNEC also provides various assistance to the Mon Education such as in terms of paying teachers' salaries; construction of new schools and extension of former schools; teachers' training; Post-Ten schools; holding of Education Seminars and meeting and others.

These assistances are direct assistance to MNEC and NMSP's Education and are not passing through the military regime. The funds are also useful in strengthening the weak Mon communities and the civil society as a whole.

## **IV. Root cause of threat to Mon schools by the regime: Competition and weakness of government schools**

### **A. The entrance fee in government schools**

In Burma, as the military regime, SPDC, spends about 7% of national budget for education and health, while it spends nearly 50% of the budget in defense, all expenditures of educational purposes have become as a burden for the people in the whole country including Mon State, Karen State and Tenasserim Division that covers southern Burma.

While the Mon National Schools allow the students without any type of entrance in every year's school opening seasons, however, the students and their parents have to pay a lot of fee to the teachers and educational officials at school opening season. It is 'heart beat' time for many poor families who have many children to attend schools to get education. The school opening season is in June every year.

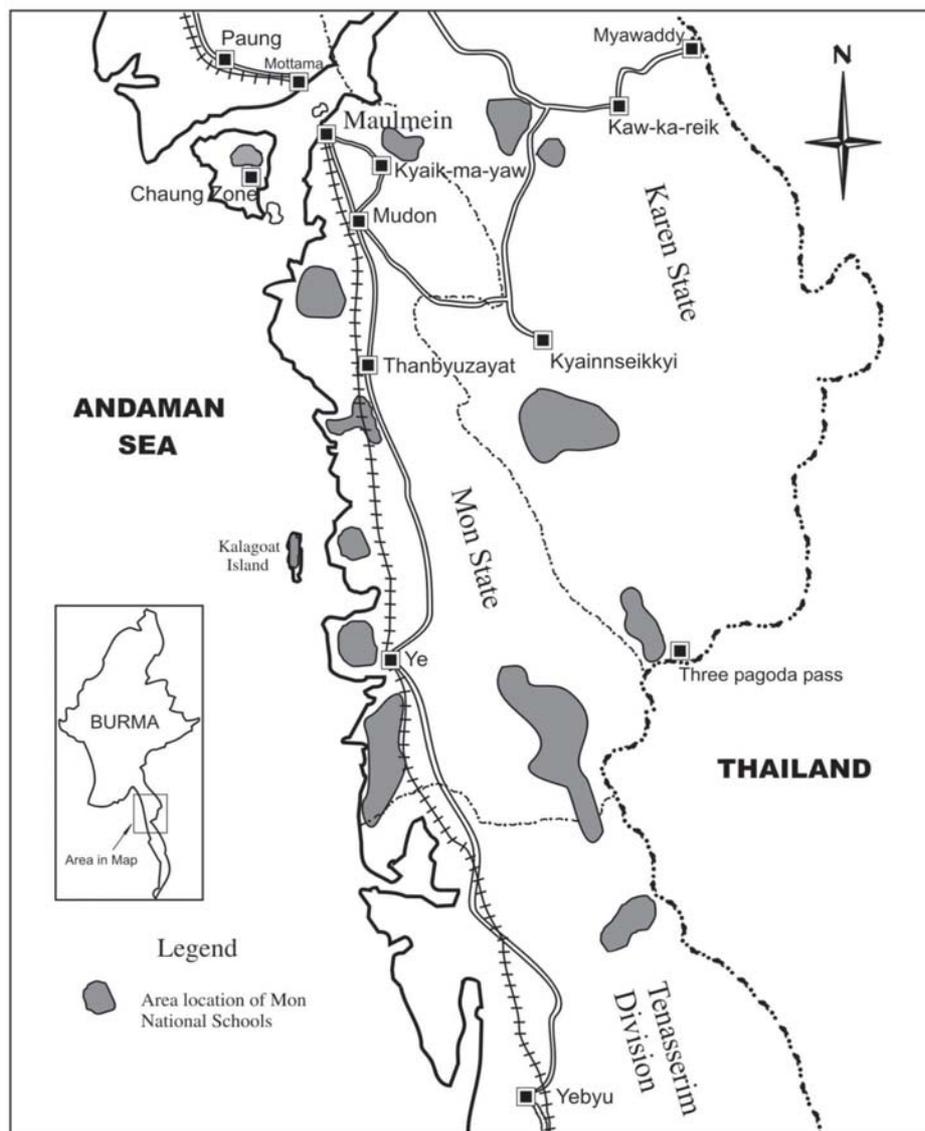
Accordingly to a parent from Mudon Town in Mon State, she expressed as:

"The entrance fee is 4,000 Kyat for one student and that is for school materials and maintenance cost. If the parents could not pay in cash but they have to donate building materials needed to repair the school, such as cement, logs, and galvanized iron sheets. If they could not donate, the children will lose the chance to attend the schools."

Although the payment of entrance fee, 4000 Kyat *or about 4 US Dollar* is not so expensive, but in Burma, many people are unemployed and if employed, they could earn only less than 1 US Dollar per day<sup>8</sup>. For a family, which has 2-4 children at schools, it is a great burden for the parents.

<sup>7</sup> New Mon State Party's Education Department recruits the teachers not only in its full or semi-control areas but also in the regime's controlled area even before in 1995.

<sup>8</sup> Man can earn only 800-1000 Kyat per day and a woman can earn only 500-700 Kyat per day.



The demanding fee for the school fee or others are varied from one school to another because it is not set according to the laws. The teachers and education officials could demand any amount of money as their desires, but the students' parents could not refuse it.

As an instance, The school entrance fee varied in different areas in Mon State. Some schools in Mudon and Thanbyuzayat Townships of Mon State charge 2,500 Kyat for a primary school level student (from 1 Grade to 4 Grade), 2,980 Kyat for a middle school level student (from 5 Grade to 8 Grade) and 3,600 to 41,000 Kyat for a high school level student. But in the same Mudon Township, every student in Hnee-padool village's school, the students had to pay about 6,700 Kyat

per head including for all costs that need to spend in school including repairs and maintenance.

In Pa-An Township of Karen State, the entrance fee is much higher than in Mon State. Accordingly to a Mon woman from Pa-an Township of Karen State, she said, that "the entrance fee for a middle level school student fee is 5,250 Kyat per head and I can't afford it to pay for my four children. So I've had to pull my children out of school". There are many sad stories of the parents who could not afford to pay for the entrance fee in Karen State and Tenasserim Division where there are less employment and income if compared with Mon State.

Students at the Thai-Burma border Towns also pay a higher fee for their basic education, but they have to pay with Thai currency, Baht. As the Burmese currency, Kyat, is not so reliable because of inflation and demonetization in the past, the civilians, traders and business people in the border area prefer to use 'Baht' rather than Kyat. Thus, they also have to pay school fee in 'Baht'. For example, at Three Pagodas Pass border Town, opposite Kanchanaburi, the entrance fee for primary school student is 180 Baht (~ 4000 Kyat); in middle school 250 Baht (~ 5500 Kyat); and high school 300 Baht (~ 6750 Kyat). Apart from these entrance fees, parents must buy textbooks and other materials for the schools. Normally, a student at primary school spends 315 Baht (~ 7000 Kyat) for textbooks and for middle school student spends 600 Baht and for a high school student spends 1,000 Baht respectively. (Note: the exchange rate of Thai currency is: 1 US Dollar = ~ 40 Baht)

If compared with the students in rural villages, the students in the cities or towns have to pay more and various fee to the teachers and educational officials. In Moulmein, the capital city of Mon State, fees for school enrollment, text books and sports cost over 1,000 Kyat; fees for school repairs and new buildings cost

from 7,000 to 20,000 Kyat; and these are besides entrance fees. The parents also have to pay for computer maintenance at schools in both the urban and rural areas. In response, the State school teachers say to the parents that they have not received enough budget from the government for school repairs and new buildings. Instead of the government's budget, the people need to pay.

### **B. Extra time fee and salary in government's schools**

In Burma, the salary of a teacher is too low and the amount of money received could not cover for all accommodation cost of a teacher and could not even for the family. Somehow, the teachers in the school always tried to find extra income from the students by various reasons and methods. Even it is a serious 'corruption' which also against the tradition and existing laws, but there is no choice for the teachers in the government schools.

Students also pay extra fee besides the enrollment fee for entrance in the school opening season. They paid for extra times teaching fee and extra salaries for teachers and educational administration officials. Students from Mu-doon village, Chaung-zon Township in Mon State, paid Kyat 50.00 each month for extra school fee after a new head master arrived to the school, a local villager said. There are similar forcible orders in another schools round in Mon State and other parts of Burma where extra fee is imposed by the headmasters or headmistresses.

The teachers in Burma's schools just earn Kyat 4000-6000 per month (equal to 4-6 US Dollar) and the salaries are not sufficient to buy basic food stuff, rice, fish-paste, salt, bean, vegetables, meats and others. The rocketed price of commodities: ordinary food stuff make serious effects of insufficient food supplies for the teachers' families.

According to a teacher from Mudon Township,

"I received only 4, 600 Kyat per month salary as a Middle Level School teacher. My salary has not been increased for 2 years, but all prices of rice, vegetables have been increased every year in a high rate. From 4, 600 Kyat I received, Township education department also cut about 500 Kyat for education fund, retirement supports and other costs. With this my salary I could not buy a basket of rice (about 46 pounds of rice in Burmese weight measurement). The current rice price is about 6000 Kyat".

Insufficient salary received by the teachers is the main reason why the headmasters/ headmistress and teachers collected extra salary fee from every student in the schools. In some high schools, the teachers collected 100-200 Kyat every month. Although the collecting amount of money is not a big one, but the teachers received a lot of money in the schools which have 1000 students and over. From this money collection, each teacher could earn Kyat 2000-5000 per month as an extra salary.

### **V. Increase of Competition between Mon and Government Schools**

As the students and parents have to pay a lot of money to the government schools, teachers and educational officials, many poor families who have less than 1000 Kyat (~ 1 US Dollar) per day face much difficulties in providing education to their children. If a family has about 2 children and over, they faced serious difficulties for the schooling cost and thus, they have to pull out their elder children from schools.

Most of the Mon National Schools are operated in the rural areas and the Mon children in the rural villages have more opportunity to attend these schools without paying any type of extra fee to the school teachers and educational officials in the school opening season and during the whole years.

In some Mon villages, where both Mon Schools and Government Schools exist, there is always competition between these schools. As in the Mon villages, the parents are always encouraging their children to attend the Mon schools. However, the families of village headmen and members of village militia force, who are appointed by the SPDC authorities, put their children in the government schools.

In competition between these two schools in one village, the Mon schools always have more student number than the government schools as the majority of parents are ethnic Mon families. On the other hand, SPDC higher authorities and Township or State Education Department always encouraged their teachers in the government schools to organize more students to have more number than the Mon schools.

Sometimes, the local MI (*Military Intelligence*) Unit also made threat against the Mon teachers to close down all schools and stopped teaching. Additionally, they also forced the parents in the villages to not allow their children to attend the Mon schools and to convert attending the government schools<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>9</sup>No. 5 Military Intelligence Battalion bases in Moulmein and its has a branch or unit in every town in Mon State and even in some big Mon villages.

Because of the pressure by the MI Unit and the local authorities, some of Mon schools were closed down. But many of these schools still remained and in some villages the new building of Mon Schools also existed.

At the same time, the student number in the Mon schools have gradually increased and the NMSP's Education Department and MNEC also have to employ more teachers for these schools. Hence, the local authorities and SPDC's Education Department are not happy with the development of the Mon schools.

On the other hand, the Buddhist Mon monks also operate Mon language training in many villages and towns in Mon State, which are under firm control of the regime, every year's dry season (in April and May) and the Mon young children later for these areas later enjoyed to attend Mon schools. This is also a main reason why many Mon children converted attending the Mon schools.

Anyhow, the SPDC authorities and members of Burmese Army has planned in many ways to oppress the operation of Mon national education and to uproot the activities of Mon teachers, NMSP Educational authorities, and children's parents. In reality, they planned to oppress the Mon nationalism grown among the Mon people.



**A Mon National school in southern Ye Township, Mon State.**

In early 2004, the Burmese Army from the Southeast Command, based in Moulmein, the capital of Mon State, intensified their military offensives against a Mon splinter group in southern part of Ye Township. The area is also southernmost of Mon State. After 7-8 months offensives with over 1000 troops against the 100 troops strong Mon splinter group, the Burmese Army could control the whole areas and most rebels have to hide another areas.

With a specific plan in order to implement 'Burmanization' policy against the local ethnic Mon people in the area, the SPDC leaders: Lt. Gen. Maung Bo, a SPDC Executives and from Defense Ministry; Maj. Gen. Thura Myint Aung, Commander of South-East Command; and other local Burmese Army's commander paid a visit to southern part of Ye Township on July 30 and ordered to open the government schools in many Mon villages in the area, in order to compete with the Mon national schools that existed in the area over 30 years.

In 2004, the oppression against the Mon national schools and the teachers, Mon educational officials, and the village community leaders has been more serious as the SPDC plans to establish the government schools and apply its education in the area.

## **VI. Oppression against Mon National Schools and activists in southern part of Ye Township**

During the Burmese Army was operating the military offensives against the Mon splinter group and before the visit of SPDC leaders to southern part of Ye Township, there has been a lot of pressure against the Mon teachers, Mon students, NMSP and MNEC education officials, students' parents, and community leaders in the area to close down all Mon national schools and allow the operation of government schools.

In southern Ye township, about 100 Mon teachers are teaching to over 7,000 children at 30 schools. The Mon national schools in the rural areas were self-supported and administered by the NMSP's Education Department for several years. *(See the map of Ye Township on Page and the location of Mon National Schools in the Township)*

The facts of the oppression are also mentioned on the situation development since March 2004, as case by case as below:

**Case 1:  
Forced to stop teaching the Mon national schools  
January - April 2004**

In the end of April 2004, SPDC local commanders who involved in military offensives against the Mon splinter group ordered Mon National Schools to stop teaching the Mon language so that schools can be maintained under strict government control.

The Burmese Army commander Col. Myo Winn warned Mon teachers at Khawza village that they must immediately change all curriculums from Mon language to Burmese language and stop teaching Mon, otherwise the schools will be closed down. He gathered the Mon teachers in a meeting and gave warning to them to immediately follow his order.

“The Mon National schools must be under government control. You must teach the Burmese language and hoist the State national flag; if you don’t follow my instruction, the schools must be closed down indefinitely,” said Colonel Myo Winn in the meeting.



**A Mon literacy class in Moulmein Township, Mon State.**

At that time, Col. Myo Winn was a tactical commander of No. 3 Tactical Command that operated offensives against the Mon splinter group. Under his command, it had about 5 battalions and they have operated offensives against the Mon splinter group since December 2003. No. 3 Tactical Command is also under the command of South-East Command based in Moulmein, the capital of Mon State.

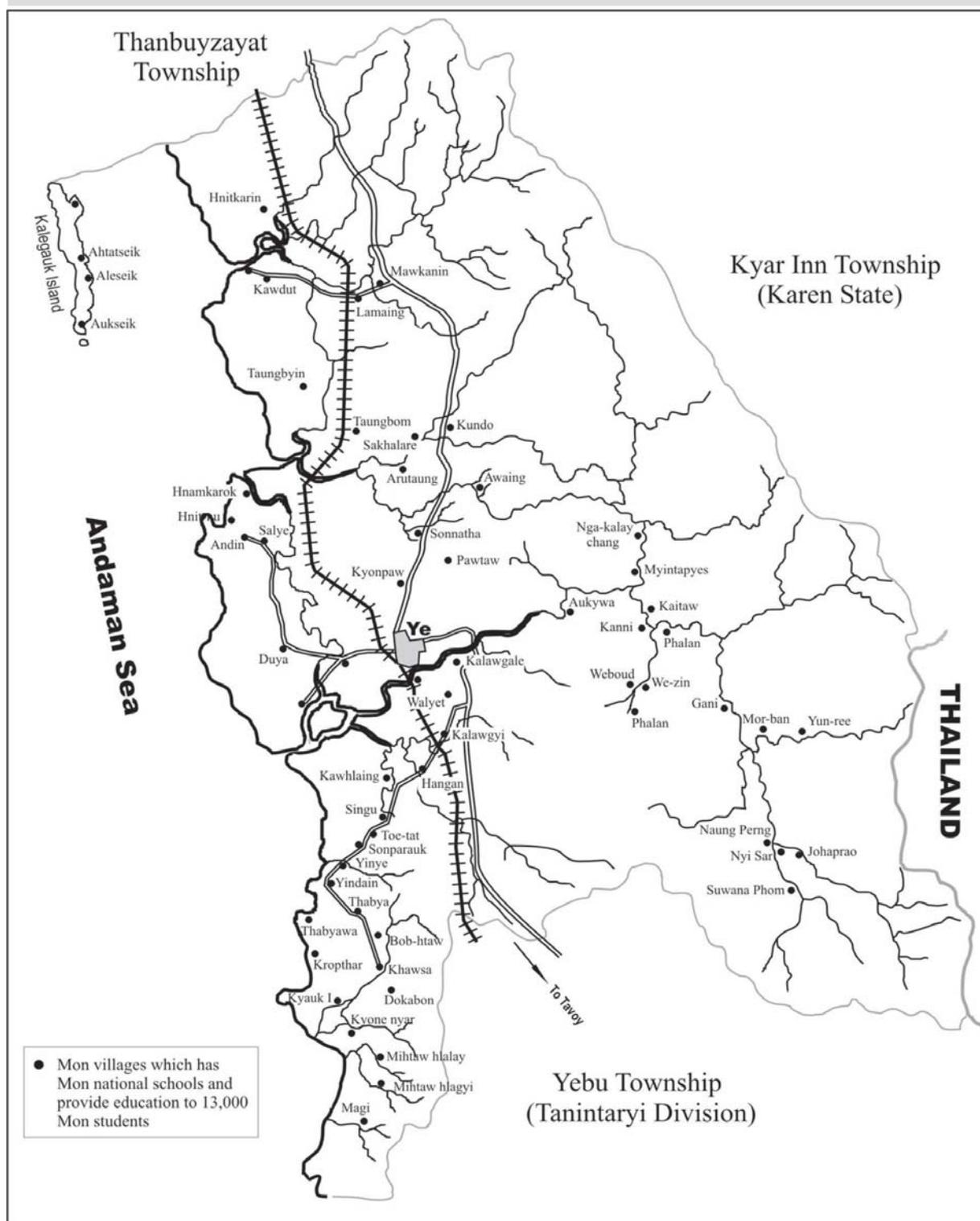
This order was also followed from the previous meeting. On March 19, the Commander of South-East Command sat a meeting with the local commanders who involved in the offensives and the matter of Mon education was rising in the meeting. Thus, the meeting decided on the converting of the Mon national schools to be government schools. Then, the real threats to the Mon teachers and village headmen came up in late April.

But according to the source from the New Mon State Party, the commander, Col. Myo Winn also gave similar threats to the Mon teachers in Toe-tat Ywa-thit (*Kwan-tamoit Taotak in Mon*) village, on January 29 2004 in a meeting. At the time, he surprisingly found a few number Mon teachers were teaching the children in Mon language and he felt much dissatisfaction against the Mon teachers. Then, he suddenly called a meeting with those teachers and instructed just to teach ‘Burmese’. But the teachers just said they might need to ask the NMSP and MNEC in order to change curriculum or teaching Burmese language in Mon schools.

According to a Mon teacher from the area, the Burmese Army is not only waging war against a Mon armed group, but also waging war against the Mon education system. He also added that actually the Burmese Army is waging war against the ethnic nationalities is not only to win war but also to implement ‘Burmanization’ policy as well.

Besides threats against the Mon teachers, the commander also issued an order that he would not allow any Mon education authorities or NMSP members to go into the area and facilitate educational activities. On March 8, he officially warned and ordered that if someone arrived into the area, he/she must be arrest. He also added if they would like to come into the area, they must need a permission document from the high-rank military commanders.

Because of this order, it made serious to the NMSP leaders as they have full responsibility to maintain the operation of the Mon national schools. “We must talk about this issue seriously in our next Central Committee meeting in early May” said NMSP’s General Secretary, Nai Hongsar in an interview to a local Mon news group.



But there was no arrest against the Mon teachers during these months. As the commanders of Burmese Army knew as all of these teachers were working under the administration of the NMSP's Education Department. It was a difference from the pre-ceasefire time between NMSP and the regime.

In the past before 1995 ceasefire, the military regime's authorities and Burmese Army's commanders regularly arrested the Mon teachers, inhumanely tortured, forced them to resign or leave from a specific area, and physically or sexually harassed, accused of being involved in politics or supporting the anti-government activities. Some Mon teachers were also killed and some were imprisoned in jails.

In March 2004, the Burmese military commanders in the area who involved lurching offensive against the Mon splinter armed group forced some Mon monks and teachers teaching Mon language in Summer Mon

Literacy Training to sign a promise of stopping their training. This forcible stopping of the literacy training was due to the order of Col. Myo Winn.

**Case 2 :  
New Burmese Army's commander still tried to convert Mon schools under the regime control  
May 2004**

There was a tension in April, after the NMSP officially complained about Col. Myo Winn's disturbance against the Mon teachers and Mon national schools. NMSP also sent the letters up to the Commander of South-East Command, to respect the operation of Mon national schools. The Commander replied that the disturbance is just the acts of the commander concerned which was not acknowledged by the South-East Command.

Later Col. Myo Winn was also replaced by another commander. In stead of a new commander, Captain Htay Aung, the battalion commander of IB No. 61, which based on Ye Town has involved in threats against Mon teachers. However, the new commander was still forcing the Mon teachers to abandon their positions as Mon teachers and converted as government teachers.

A source from southern part of Ye Township reported that Captain Htay Aung of Infantry Battalion No. 61 called a meeting with Mon teachers on May 16 in Yinye (*Yang-rae in Mon*) village and warned them that they must immediately stop providing education to the children in Mon language and operation of Mon national schools.

Captain Htay Aung, at the meeting, also added that the Mon national schools must be under the government control starting from the next school year in June 2004 and all teachers needed to use all curriculums or textbook produced by SPDC's Education Ministry and follow the teaching instructions provided by 'Ye' Township Education Department.

Although the NMSP officially complained to the commander in South-East Command to stop the disturbance by the Burmese Army's commanders, but the Mon village leaders and civilians in the area found that there is no direct order from South-East Command to Captain Htay Aung to keep quiet on the matter.

In the meeting, the Mon teachers also raised the matters in defiance and protest that they must need only to listen the orders came from NMSP's Education Department, and if there was an order to stop teaching Mon language and operating Mon schools, they would stop. If not, they would continue as normal, said by the Mon teachers.

A spokesperson from the NMSP said that the Mon leaders and civilians are very upset with the junta's suppression policy and it could damage relationship between the NMSP and the SPDC in the future.

The tension has been intensified. In last week of May 2004, the local Burmese Army's commanders together with Captain Htay Aung and MOMC No. 19 under the command of Col. Ye Win, tried to close down Mon National Schools in both northern and southern part of Ye Township. More than 13, 000 Mon student joined the Mon schools in both sides of Township area and but NMSP suddenly replied from a media that it will not allow any plan to close down these schools.

According to Chairperson of Mon Teachers' Association, Nai Kyin, in northern Ye township, "the SPDC authorities is forcing and frightened us to close down the school. They forced us to change Mon National School to the government school."

He also confirmed that was the Burmese government policy. He added that after the visit of SPDC leaders and commanders of Burmese Army to Ye Town in March, they have been constantly under pressure to close down the Mon schools. "It is depending on the NMSP. But we won't close our Mon National School. It is

**Universal Declaration of Human Rights  
(Article 26)**

1. Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.
2. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.
3. Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

ours' school," he said. Generally, the local Mon teachers openly defiance against the plan of closing the Mon schools.

"We will not close our school. We would not let the government teacher to teach Mon National School. If the government wants to teach, they build their own school and they can teach there. We do not allow teaching at Mon National school. It is our policy", confirmed by the NMSP spoke-person.

**Case 3:  
Another attempt to close down Mon schools in northern part of Ye Township  
May 2004**

A Mon school was ordered to close down in Lamine village in northern part of Ye Township while the SPDC higher authorities from Ye Township confiscated a piece of land in village to build a SPDC office, according to a source from Ye, Mon State in mid-May, 2004. The higher authorities from Township visited to this 4000 households and found the small primary school and they accused that was illegal.

Col. Myint Aung, the commander who led the delegation accused that the Mon national school was competing against the government school, said a woman leader from village community. He also added that the school must stop teaching and competitive education will not be allowed.

About 425 Mon children from the Mon primary school would lose the chance to education in June when the schools opens. However, the NMSP officials in the area and community leaders will attempt to open the school in low-profile conditions.

The villagers built the Mon school with 200 feet in length by 130 feet in width after the NMSP reached a cease-fire agreement with the military regime in June 1995. The school has been operated about 8 years and the student numbers has gradually grown. The village also has a government's high school. However, some villagers still encourage the operating of Mon schools. In order to cover up with the increasing number of the students, the villages also found some Mon teachers and has supported them with foods.

Currently, Mon State PDC adopted a plan of creating this village, Lamine, to create it as a Sub-Town, then the SPDC authorities had found spaces to building necessary government offices. During their trips to find the lands, they noticed the operation of Mon national education.

In reality, less than 500 households among 4000 households in the village encourage the Mon national schools and less than 500 children who are mostly poor attend the Mon schools. The remaining students in the whole village attend the government schools. The authorities should ignore it but they have a concern of growth of student number in Mon school.

**Case 4:  
Establishment of government schools and creation of competition  
July 2004**

On July 30, the high-rank SPDC leaders: Lt. Gen. Maung Bo from Defense Ministry and Maj. Gen. Thura Mying Aung from South-East, paid a visit to many Mon villages in southern part of Ye Township and established some government schools in order to compete against the Mon schools, which are majority in the area and provide education in Mon language.

In the plan of SPDC leaders during their trip, they planned to build a government's Middle School in Khawza village, which has about 600 households; government's primary schools in four Mon villages: Kabya-gyi, with 200 households; Yin-ye, with 300 households; Yin-dein, with 200 households; Kabya-wa, with 300 households respectively. In most of these villages, the Mon National Schools were already established over 20 years.

The SPDC donated only small amount of money and ordered the local village headmen and commanders to complete the building anyhow. For example, they donated 1.5 Million Kyat (~ 1500 UD Dollar) to Kabya-gyi village and money could not cover for the completion of the whole construction. In other village, some village received about 1 Million Kyat while some received 0.5 Million Kyat. The commanders ordered the headmen to complete the construction anyhow. Therefore, they may need to collect a lot of money from the villagers.

According to a villager from the area, a school building will need at least about 2 to 2.5 Million Kyat in order to buy limbers, cements, iron nails and other building materials. And, they also need to make desks and chairs.

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### 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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Bangkok 10140, THAILAND  
E-mail: [hurfomcontact@yahoo.com](mailto:hurfomcontact@yahoo.com)  
Webpages: <http://www.rehmonnya.org>

With regards,

Director  
Human Rights Foundation of Monland

The local villagers found very disappointed on the program of SPDC leaders. As they already had the Mon schools and have maintained them for many years, they would not like to build a new school.

The SPDC's plan for establishing the government schools is aiming for the competition against the Mon National Schools existing in the area. They tried to describe that they would not recognize any occurrence of the ethnic schools and all ethnic children must study the curriculums or textbooks produced by the government.

When the senior leader, Lt. Gen. Maung Bo, visited Khawza village, he openly described for the competition plan against the Mon schools. He instructed the headmaster of Khawza village's Middle School to make sure to have more students in his schools than the students in Mon National Middle Schools. The SPDC authorities is still constructing the government's Middle Schools in this village this year, while there is a Mon school with provide middle level education for over 10 years. In the end, the SPDC planned to win over the Mon schools.

As a result, the SPDC could divide the community people. Some people who are appointed as village headmen or militiamen shifted their opinion of supporting the government programs; the remaining majority villagers continued supporting the Mon schools and Mon education. There would be conflicts along with the competitions.

#### **Case 5: Forced changing of Mon schools' signboard to government's schools July 2004**

After the SPDC's senior leaders' official declaration for the competition against the Mon schools, the regime's supporters: the local military commanders, village headmen, members of USDA, government's education officials, have had more encouragement to destroy Mon schools or created another disturbance.

Soon after the return of the SPDC leaders, on the next day, the local commanders of Burmese Army adopted a plan to destroy Mon schools' signboard and replaced with government schools' signboard in front of some of Mon schools.

A monk, who came from the area said the school signboards in Mon schools in Mon villages such as Khawzar, Yin-ye, Shwe-hinda, Mi-htaw-hlar-kalay and Kyonekanya were replaced with government's school signboard as 'State Basic Education Primary School' and 'State Basic Education Middle School' in Khawza village.

The order of changing schools' signboard came from the new commander Col. Nyi Nyi, who was recently positioned before the visit of Lt. Gen. Maung Bo. Although many commanders changed one by one since January 2004, but the commanders have hold the same policy with a plan of establishing of government



One of Mon National middle school in MNSP's control area.

schools and to abolish the Mon education. A Mon teacher said "during the SPDC's National Convention, Col. Myo Win, a tactical military commander, planned to turn Mon schools to government schools and forced some Mon teachers to close the school. It was their origin policy. I think the policy has constantly remained".

First, the local people believed that this is just the SPDC applied for competition. However, later they found the regime has secret plan to destroy Mon education.

Until this year government have only eight schools in southern Ye township. But there are about 30 Mon schools in the area and over 7,000 students are attending the schools.

## VII. Conclusion

SPDC's policy to de-establishment of the ethnic nationalities' schools that teaching and maintaining the ethnic language is not only implemented in Mon State, the regime also applied it in Karen State and Shan State. This policy is totally connecting to protracted 'Burmanization policy' since the Burmese Army's seizure of the political power in 1962.

The civil war between the Burmese Army and over a dozen of ethnic armed groups also occurred because of the successive military governments' 'Burminization' policy in order to form Burma, as a centralized and majority Burmanized country. This principle is totally against by the ethnic people.

On the other hand, abolishment of the Mon national schools is also meaning that SPDC is breaking the agreement with the NMSP. During the ceasefire in 1995, the NMSP already informed to SLORC or SPDC top leaders about the operation of Mon education system and health care in the territories where the majority Mon people are living. As it is supporting the border area development program, the SLORC/SPDC has allowed the operation.

However, currently, by taking ceasefire as an opportunity, SPDC and the Burmese Army has adopted its 'Burmanization' policy seriously.

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