

**News, Personal Accounts, Report & Analysis on Human Rights Situation
in Mon Territory and Other Areas Southern Part of Burma**



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Some Acronyms in This Issue

- SPDC-** State Peace and Development Council,
SLORC- State Law and Order Restoration Council,
IB - Infantry Battalion (*of Burmese Army*),
LIB- Light Infantry Battalion (*of Burmese Army*),
MOMC- Military Operational Management Command
KNU- Karen National Union
NMSP- New Mon State Party
MNLA- Mon National Liberation Army
MI- Military Intelligence

News

Mon National School is not permitted for repairs

November 2004, Southern Part of Ye Township

After the firm control in southern part of Ye Township area by the Burmese Army, the commander from Tactical Command No. 3 does not allow the local Mon villagers to repair the existing Mon national schools in the area, which provided education for the Mon children for years.

Tactical Commander, Lt. Col. Nyi Nyi ordered the village headmen from Khaw-za Sub-Town to not repair a Mon National Middle School in the Sub-Town that provides education to 300 Mon children with age range of 5-14 years old by 8 Mon teachers.

Commander's instruction is normally related to the establishment of SPDC or government school in the Sub-Town to compete against the Mon schools in the area.

The whole Ye Township which includes northern and southern part of Township areas was under the control of New Mon State Party (NMSP) before its ceasefire with the regime in mid-1995, and the NMSP's Education Department established many Mon national schools in various Mon villages that have 50 households to 1000 households. Under the protection of the NMSP, the Mon teachers were recruited and they provided education to Mon children in the villages.



A Mon middle school which is not permitted to repair by SPDC Tactical Commander in southern part of Ye Township.

Commentary

Current regime's Focus: Non-Engagement to International Community

After the seizure of the internal political power by the new group of Burmese Army, which prioritizes just for extension of the army, have clear responded to the international community, 'they don't care'.

Even the international community especially western governments and UN Human Rights Agencies have condemned the human rights records in Burma (Myanmar) and pressured to improve them, but the current regime, which is fully led by Senior Gen. Than Shwe does not listen at all.

Even there was some expectations of the release of political prisoners in the recent release of thousands of prisoners, only a few number of political prisoners were released. Still many hundreds of them detained in prisons.

Delay of the release of the pro-democracy leader, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, is also an evidence that the regime will not respect the demands of the UN and other governments' requests.

Non-engagement policy to the international community by the regime will continue allowing the SPDC authorities and members of Burmese Army to oppress the people in Burma.

After ceasefire, although the NMSP withdrew its **troops** from various parts of Ye Township, the NMSP's Education Department still continued operating the Mon schools in the area without a serious problem.

However, when the Burmese Army conducted a military offensive in southern part of Ye Township against the Mon splinter group and controlled the whole area, the commanders of Burmese Army also started making problems against the Mon schools in the area.

Under the plan of SPDC's Border Area Development Programme, Lt. Gen. Maung Bo from Ministry of Defense also instructed the local Burmese Army's commanders to establish the government schools in the area and deploy more troops in order to have full control.

Due to the defiance made by the leaders of NMSP, the Burmese Army commanders were not dare to de-establish the Mon schools and but moved forward to establish the government schools which teach in Burmese language in all subjects and planned for competition against the Mon schools which teach in Mon language in some subjects and teach Burmese as a subject.

In order to win in the competition, the Burmese Army's commanders ordered the local village headmen and villagers in southern part of Ye Township to not give any supports to Mon schools including providing foods for teachers, community fund for schools, costs for repairs and others. Sometimes, the local commanders also threatened the Mon teachers to leave from the area.

There are about 80 Mon national schools established in both northern and southern part of Ye Township and around 10000 students get education from these schools.

Burmese Army's way of recruitment: 4000 Kyat salary per month plus bonus

October 2004, Mudon and Thanbyuzayat Townships

With a signboard of 'to defense the country, please join the army', the commanders of Burmese Army went around into many Mon villages in Mudon and Thanbyuzayat Townships in south Mon State, and organized the new recruits for army.

The low-rank commanders have traveled around villages, talked with people in public places and informed them that if they joined the army, they would receive 4000 **Kyat** salary per month. Beside that if they have opportunity in dealing in business of the battalion concerned, which is not clearly mentioned, they would receive another 5000 Kyat bonus each month.

The commanders also informed that they recruit the men who have at least 18 years old and if they perform their duties in army for 8 years, they would have opportunity to attend 'officers' training schools' and then they would get promotions.

Report

Land Confiscation by SPDC and Burmese Army in Mon Areas in 2004

I. Militarization Policy and Continuous Land Confiscation

As a local human rights organization that monitor the human rights situation in southern part of Burma including Mon areas, Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM) - Burma, documented about the Burma military regime, SLORC/SPDC's land confiscation in Mon areas in its report: "NO LAND TO FARM: A comprehensive report on Land, Real Estates and Properties Confiscations in Mon's Area, Burma". The report covers the land confiscation in the period between 1998 and 2002, and it mentions that about 8000 acres of Mon people's land were confiscated by the regime.

There have been many serious complaints by the New Mon State Party (NMSP), the main political party that agreed for ceasefire with the regime and the land-loss Mon farmers against the regime in order to give back their lands or pay the costs for the lands. However, the regime has constantly denied and increasingly has confiscated more lands in Mon State in 2003 and 2004.

As described in the NO LAND TO FARM report, the regime's land confiscation is always related to its militarization policy and expansion of its armed force. In 1988, when the regime took the political power from pro-democracy demonstrators, it had only 180,000 troops totally and now it plans to extend its force up to a half million (500, 000 troops), to be a strongest armed force in southeast Asia.

By mentioning a reason of 'a possible foreign invasion' to Burma via Thailand's border, SPDC and the Burmese Army (BA) extends more troops in southern part of Burma and tried to take many positional places in Mon State and Tenasserim Division¹. Thus, there has been more land confiscation for troop deployment happened in Mon State, and the regime and BA clearly responded to the Mon people that they must take any land that is suitable for their troops and troops' families business.

In August 2003, when the leaders of NMSP met with newly appointed Prime Minister of Burma, Lt. Gen. Khin Nyunt, the Mon leaders also pointed out there were out-number acres of land confiscation in Mon areas and requested to give them back to the farmers. The Mon leaders pointed out accordingly to the existing laws, the land confiscation for one battalion is just 50 acres of land and currently the Burmese Army's battalions concerned confiscated 200-300 acres of lands for each battalion. Most lands are also belonged to Mon people and they grew a lot of orchid trees in these lands. While the Mon leaders said the Burmese Army should give back the extra lands or paid money for the costs of the lands, the Burma's PM, who was the Military Intelligence faction, replied that he would inform to Lt. Gen. Shwe Murn, the Deputy-In-Chief of Armed Force, who was a powerful figure among the armed faction of SPDC².

But recently, the former PM, Lt. Gen. Khin **Nyunt** was kicked out by the group of Lt. Gen. Shwe Murn after years long 'power struggle' in the regime³. Currently, the armed force faction led by Lt. Gen. Shwe Mum has more power in Burma and it plans to confiscate more lands in order to deploy more of its armed force.

The land confiscation will continue in Mon areas and other areas without doubts. Currently the armed faction of the regime has absolute power and they are the main actors in confiscation of civilians' lands.

Even after the request of the Mon leaders in mid-2003 and after no official reply on this issue, more land confiscations were happened in Mon State. Human Rights Foundation of Monland has documented some land confiscation happened in 2004 by the help of the civil society organizations which are keen to provide information and other media sources like Independent Mon News Agency (IMNA).

HURFOM categorizes the land confiscation cases and its purposes. It also finds that the land confiscations are not always related troop deployment in the rural areas, but also related to development projects, such as road construction, dam construction, etc. Accounts of these confiscations are also described as below:

¹ After Depeyin Massacre of NLD members and supporters, the regime SPDC propagandized that there would be a possible foreign invasion to Burma. In order for the preparation to protect the country, the local military battalion recruited the civilians to attend a short-term military training and justified for their land confiscation to deploy troops.

² NMSP delegation was led by NMSP Chairman Nai Htin.

³ Lt. Gen. Khin Nyunt, the former Prime Minister, was dismissed from his post on 19th October 2004, was replaced with another SPDC's strongman, Lt. Gen. Soe Win.

II. Detail Cases of Land Confiscation

In 2004, since the early of the year, the Burmese Army (Southeast Command's Tactical Command No. 3) launched a military offensives against a Mon splinter group in southern part of Mon State and attempted to control the whole area. In order to have full military influence, the Ye Township PDC adopted some administration departments in village and upgrade a Mon village, Khaw-za, as a Sub-Town⁴. In addition, the Burmese Army also deployed a new battalion in the area. In relations to the creation of Sub-Town, land confiscation for military deployment, road construction and lands for government offices were confiscated in the area.

Many other land confiscation in Mudon and Thanbyuzayat Townships are mostly related SPDC/Burmese Army's Self-reliance Programme with a purpose to implement development projects or collect crops from these lands, which were grown by the civilians.

It is also founded that some land confiscation also happened when the SPDC/Burmese Army planned to build dams to keep water in there and distribute to their confiscated farms. This is also under the Self-reliance program. All ranks of Burmese Army members' families took the lands and crop trees from the civilians, receive water from dams and continue producing crops for their own income.

Cases of land confiscation in different Townships with different purposes are mentioned as below:

Case 1: Confiscation of 800 Acres of Land in Mudon Township (June 2004)

On 4* June, 2004, die Burmese Army's IB No. 31 ordered Village Peace and Development Council from two Mon villages in southern part of Mudon Township (near Thanbyuzayat Town) to confiscate 800 acres of farmland after they called a meeting with land-owners.

The Village PDC members from Hnee-padaw and Kwan-hlar who were called upon to meet in Thanbyuzayat said,

*"The Infantry Battalion No.31's Army Officer plans to take over farmlands for four battalions near Thanbyuzayat Town. Soon, the army will survey **these farmlands** in southern Mudon and Thanbyuzayat Townships which are under their control. But they have not told anyone which places will be confiscated".*

However, the order said the Burmese Army would confiscate the farmlands in which owners do not cultivate the lands and which are un-registered. Thanbyuzayat based Infantry⁷ Battalion No. 31 gathered the township PDC chairpersons at its headquarters on 2nd June and discussed about the farms for army.

The officers mentioned that the army does not have to fight the ethnic rebels anymore because the Karen National Union was about to reach a cease-fire. When the fighting stops, there will be no work for the soldiers and they will need the lands to exploit for their purposes.

In this case, whenever the SPDC or the local Burmese Army confiscated lands from the local villagers, they always mentioned the cease-fire groups also wanted these lands for the development activities or income generating projects. In this case, the Burmese Army also mentioned about KNU's involvement for the lands. But actually, the Burmese Army is intending to confiscate the lands for their own purposes and their own businesses.

Four battalions: No. 4 Southeast Command's Central Military Training, Infantry Battalion No.62, Artillery Regiment No.315 and Infantry Battalion No.31 are based in Thanbyuzayat, Mon State. Although these battalions based in Thanbyuzayat Town, they have overdue influence on the village headmen in southern part of Mudon Township and involved in land confiscation in Mudon Township. (Look the map on Page)

Case 2: Land confiscation for infrastructure projects in northern part of Ye Township (August 2004)

On August 20, 2004, the Ye Township Peace and Development Council authorities surveyed more lands for a government projects in northern part of Ye Township, southern Mon State according to local witnesses.

The Ye Township PDC authorities also confiscated some lands in Duya village, northern part of Ye Township in order to build hospital. For the building of the hospital in village as it is beneficial to the villagers, the SPDC authorities claimed they would not have to pay compensation cost for the land-loss villagers.

⁴ According to the reliable source, the SPDC planned extend Mon State from 10 Townships to 26 Townships. The current Sub-Town will be created a full Town and the regime will install Township administration for those new Townships separate in Mon State. In the installation of Township administration, the SPDC will have a Township administration office, a police station, Township hospital, a high school, a military battalion, a fire brigade and it will also form Township USDA, Township Maternal and Child Welfare Association and others.

'Duya' Village Peace and Development Council announced that the government would offer 2 million Kyat to build a local hospital in Du-Yar. But accordingly to a villager, Nai Za:

"Villagers were very happy to bear the news, but they were very upset when they confiscated 8 acres of land in village from the villagers. Then, we are forced to pay out huge sums of money, about 10 million Kyat for the hospital project".

8 acres of lands in a crowded Mon villages occupied about 50 households, those families were ordered to move from their lands. The authorities also did not provide the space of lands for them where they could resettle their houses. Additionally, the authorities did not provide them without any compensation cost⁵.

Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association is in charge of the project and the local authorities levied tax money from every household in the village. Orders come from the Township Maternal and Child Welfare Association, which is responsible to organize village headmen and their wives to get things happen. The members of this organization also collected from the villagers from 10000 Kyat to 30000 Kyat per family depending on a household's business.

However, accordingly to the villagers, the household of village headmen and their close friends, and members of Village Maternal and Child Welfare Association avoided paying tax like other villagers, as they acted as 'elite' in the village community.

Additionally, about 300 acres of land in Kaw-ga-taw village in Duya village tract (Durae) of western Ye Township were surveyed by Ye TPDC authorities for the government and planned to confiscate the lands, but the local villagers did not clear what the authorities use for these lands. But the villagers believed that the Burmese Army will plan to deploy their troops outside of their villages.

Case 3: Land Confiscation in Southern Part of Ye Township (September 2004)

Since early 2004, the Burmese Army has operated a serious military offensive in southern part of Ye Township against a Mon splinter group⁶. After six-months military offensives, the Burmese Army can absolute control the whole areas of southern part of Ye Township and planned to deploy their armed force⁷.



A confiscated land by the local Burmese Army in Ye Township

In September 2004, the Burmese Army under the command of MOMC No. 19 based in Ye Town and the local based Tactical Command No. 3 seized an additional 350 acres of land near Khaw-za village in southern Mon State including family run plantations. After land confiscation, the former land-loss farmers have been forced into providing unpaid forced labour on a daily rotation basis.

According to a Mon politician who recently arrived to Thai Burma border and who would not like to identify his name, confirmed to HURFOM that the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) is building up army bases along southern Mon state to crackdown the splinter group who broke off from the New Mon State Party in November, 2001 and to control the whole area.

He also gave his opinion as:

"Land confiscation has intensified over the last 3 years forcing villagers to flee to the border area and other-places to escape forced labour and destitution. Some having no means to support themselves may decide to migrate to Thailand. Two villages must provide force labor on a daily basis or on a rotating system to clear bushes, cut small tires, and construct the military camp.

⁵ Since the population has grown in a narrow Mon State, the Mon villages have more and more families. The relatives or parents and their children stay together in small spaces of lands or gardens in the village, they belonged a very small space of gardens. Traditionally the Mon families are living in wooden houses and most of their house buildings are valuable.

⁶ There is less than 100 troops in the Mon splinter group and the leaders are the former commanders from the New Mon State Party's armed faction - Mon National Liberation Army (MNLA).

⁷ The Burmese Army started the military offensives against the Mon splinter group in December 2003.

"One village has approximately 200 households and must provide the labor for the rotating system. Other villages must pay for construction equipment and other materials such as bamboo and small trees."

After the land confiscation, the Burmese **Army's** new battalion in there (probably an outpost of IB No. 31) just cut out some plantation trees in spaces for the building and they have remained all trees in order to collect crops for their battalions.

Because of serious land confiscation and constant use of forced labour against the local people, hundreds of villagers fled to NMSP controlled areas in order to take safe haven. For those who decide not to go to the camp also migrated to Malaysia or Thailand to look for work. Many of them do not stay in the Mon refugee resettlement camps created by the NMSP and a local Mon refugee relief committee, because they could not get enough humanitarian assistance⁸. However, they faced many difficulties in order to reach into Thailand or Malaysia where they can get available works.

They say they have no hope for the future after their lands or plantations were confiscated by the Burmese Army, the new battalion that moved to the area is No. 31 based in Thanbyuzayat town. Some Mon political analysts believe that the move is not to crackdown on the Mon splinter group but to establish control in the area first then build up Burmese Army's military influence within the surrounding Mon community

There are many evidence that the SPDC or the Burmese Army tried to control the whole area and installed their administration. According to the Mon politician,

"The military commanders of the SPDC started founding organizations such as the Mya-nmar National Woman Affair Committees, the USDA, and other hand-picked organizations. The most important things they have wanted to do was first build a government school, not a Mon National school?"

Accompanying with land confiscation for the troops deployment, the Burmese Army also established the government schools, hospitals, police station, road construction, etc., in order to have full control over the Mon people in the area. For every⁷ these infrastructure projects, the Burmese Army have used the villagers as 'forced labourers'.

Beside the land confiscation for the military base, the local Burmese Army, Tactical Command No. 3 of Southeast Command also constructed a 30 miles long motor road from Ye town to Magyi village, the southernmost part of Township. In order to get straight route, the Burmese Army also confiscated farmlands between Ye and Khawza village (look in the map) and built the road with use of forced labour. The number of acres confiscated for this road is not estimated.

In southern part of Ye township, the military government measured more than 700 acres land in east part of Ka-lort village near a water fall in 2002 where the government planned to build a dam for hydroelectric power and water for cultivation.

Case 4: Confiscation of 490 acres land for Burmese Army's business (September 2004)

In September, 2004, Commanders of No. 4 Military Training School under the command of Burmese Army's South-East Command, in Thanbyuzayat Township were measuring 490 acres of rubber and orchid plantations belonged to the civilians in Wae-ka-li village in order to confiscate for their own business.

Accordingly to the news source from IMNA:

"On August 28, the battalion commander, Colonel' Khin Maung Htay'gathered theplantation owners with an intensive order and told the land owners about their land confiscation," the villages told IMNA today. The lands are situating in the south of Thanbyuzayat town in Mon State.

"The soldiers started measuring the lands belonged to 20 villagers since the beginning of this month (September) and till today," the villagers said. According to villager closed to the soldiers, after the land confiscation, the Burmese Army planed to resell those pieces of lands to villagers and outsiders again.

'About 290 acres of lands are confiscated for the battalion commander alone and the remaining 200 acres of lands are to distribute to the low-ranks commanders or training officers," the villagers added.

"The lands that the commanders selected are growing with best quality and young rubber and orchid plantations," the villagers added.

⁸ After 1995 ceasefire between the NMSP and the regime SPDC in Rangoon, about 10000 of Mon refugees remained in Thailand were spontaneously repatriated to Burma territory or into NMSP controlled area without international monitoring and well re-integration program.

⁹ Normally, southern part of Ye Township is under the control of NMSP before ceasefire and it established many Mon national schools and provide education in Mon language to the rural Mon children.

"Because of no payment during the confiscation and confiscation in order to re-sell them, the villagers are very angry and some villagers trying to ask New Mon State Party to resume fighting against the Burmese Army," the villagers continued. New Mon State Party' currently agrees for ceasefire with the regime and it could not prevent various cases of land confiscation in the-past especially in Te Township.

In the beginning of 2004, Burmese Army also confiscated more than 800 acres of farmland for army business and more than 600 acres of land for army base in this area.

Currently the Thanpyuzayat Township based a military battalion also planned to construct a new road from No. 4 **Military** Training School to a Mon village called Abit in Mudon Township, which is situating in the north of Thanbyuzayat Town. Accordingly to the plan, about 12 miles long motor-road will be constructed in eastern part of villages along Mudon-Thanbyuzayat motor road.

Besides the lands confiscated by No. 4 Military Training School, the Burmese Army also confiscated some lands in the proposed motor road and collect money from the land-owners those who lose the lands for road construction. The Burmese Army collected 30, 000 kyat per one acre of land.

In 2004, the land confiscation by the Burmese Army in Thanbyuzayat Township without payment has grown. The lands in this Township has rich soil and it is so suitable to grow rubber and other orchid plantations. The Burmese Army's process of land confiscation gradually moved up from the southern part of Mon State to the north.

Case 5: More land confiscation in Thanbyuzayat Township (September 2004)

In eastern of Thanbyuzayat Township near the Wae-khami village, some Burmese Army's soldier and land surveyors measured about 1000 acres of land, according to a source close to the land surveyor said.

According to source, the military government is planning to build a new dam in the area, where it has a river called Win-yaw and a valley area. Win-yaw river flows from Karen State, which is in eastern part of Mon State. Accordingly to a community leader,

"This Wae-khami dam is an implementation of Gen. Khin Nyunt when he came to Thanpyuzayart Town to get the support from the people for his post as Prime Minister in March 2004," said Mr. S—C—, a Mon community leader in Thanbyuzayat Town.

"I am not sure what is the government going to do in this land. But I heard fivm the government authorities that they will create plantation and farms in lower part of the proposed dam and take water fivm there," a government officer said.

In both areas where the military government measured the lands and planned to build dams have rubber plantations and orchid plantation, which are belonged to the Mon civilians in Thanbyuzayat Township and Ye Township, Mon State. Because of it, the local people are worrying about the loss of their lands, according to the community leader.

These lands converted from the forestry lands to plantation lands since over 20 years ago, and the **civilians** could have opportunity' to grow rubber trees and various orchid plantation and **they** have main income from these plantations.

Case 6: Burmese Army gathered villagers for Land Confiscation in Three Pagoda Pass Township (October 2004)

On 7th October 2004, the Burmese Army based in Three Pagoda Pass, a border town with Thailand in southern part of Burma (look map on Page) and village headmen gathered all of the residents of a village of Three Pagoda Pass Township and told them about the orders regarding seizure of their lands.

Burmese Army IB No. 63, which took temporary base in the border town gathered the villagers from Kyaw-haplu village in the primary school and the army officers told them they are going to confiscate the land in

¹⁰ Three Pagoda Pass border town is the former strong base of NMSP and it was overrun in 1990. After that thousands of Mon and Karen civilians in the area displaced. In 1995, after the NMSP agreed for cease-fire, those displaced families returned to Three Pagoda Pass area by the assistance of NMSP and resettled in different villages.

order to build a new military base. After the explanation, they also measured the spaces of lands that they required.

Accordingly to a villager:

"Army officers told us they are going to seize the land in a space of about 3 kilometer in width by 4 kilometers in length between Kyaw-haplu and Chaung-zone villages, and ordered 40 house owners to move from the land. The anny officer told us they seized it for building an army base."

"People are saying the army is going to give us compensation for the half amount of the actual price of our house. But the anny said nothing at the meeting,"

"They said they will give us space for a house, but practically, we do not know what they will do. In my experience it is difficult to get compensation,"

"If they do not pay it we will have have nothing. I am very poor. For me, I will have to start my life at zero and not only me but all of the villagers. Most villagers in Kyaw -haplu are very poor."

Most of the land the army is going to seize is owned by local villagers in the area and some of it has orchid plantations. Since the NMSP-SPDC ceasefire agreement reached in mid-1995, the displaced Mon villagers returned to villages near Three Pagoda Pass and established the village community and planned to grow trees and paddy in order to survive. A few villages were established by the displaced villagers and stayed in the southern part of border town.

Three Pagoda Pass is a well-known border town connecting to Thailand's Kanchanaburi Province during WWII for the Japanese army's building of 'death railway'⁵ from Burma to Thailand with forced labour of POWs.

In Mon State, the Burmese army seized thousand acres of land without compensation and they regularly seize land for their army base and for army business.

III. Analysis of Land Confiscation

Although land confiscation occurred in Mon State and other parts of Burma for many years during the BSPP era and early SLORC (State Law and Order Restoration Council) period, it had not been known. In those days, a few plots of land were confiscated, but no massive force of the Burmese Army was deployed; and no accurate records were kept; therefore, the real loss of the Mon people is not known.

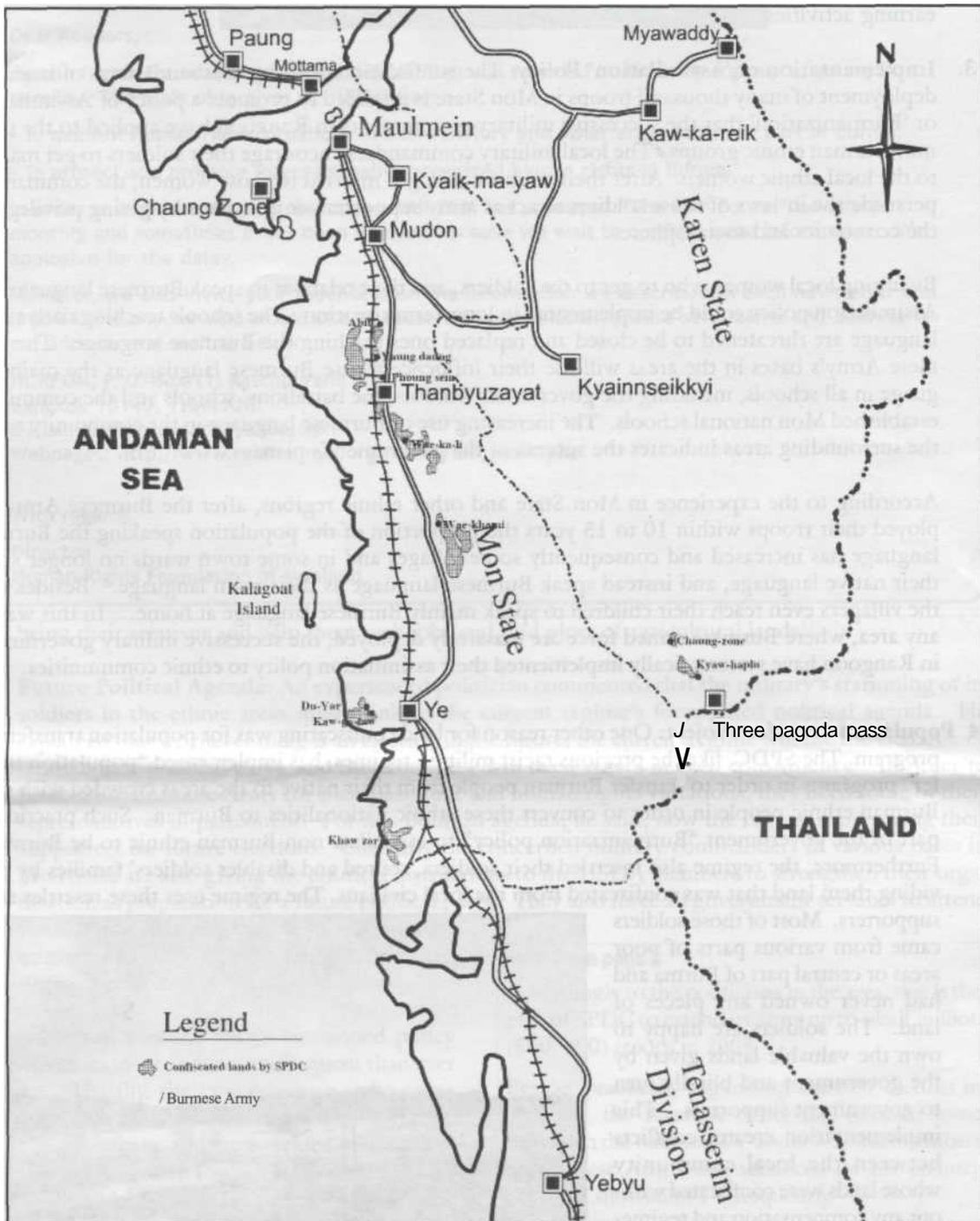
Moreover, the rate of population increase at that time was not so much yet, and there still remained a lot of vacant and uncultivated land in Mon State. During the BSPP era, the Burmese Army and the government authorities confiscated virgin soil and vacant plots of land for military deployment so that there were not so much loss for the people.

In comparison with BSPP era, more and more confiscation of lands have been seen in the latter military rules by the SLORC and SPDC since 1988. Mon State, and other areas where the majority Mon people live, are situated close to 'Andaman Sea' and the soil is fertile for seasonal crops and fruit trees and there are not much mountainous areas. Because they are easily accessible, the military government can confiscate more lands in Mon State because they can easily control most areas.

The scale of land confiscation in Mon State has increased greatly since 1998. Since then, more lands have been confiscated, including many rubber and other orchard plantations. The Mon people have suffered great loss and the value of lost lands is enormous.

In discussion about the confiscation of thousands of acres of land, with Mon political leaders, the reverend Mon monks, local Mon civilians, village headmen and Mon nationalists, the following comments emerged:

- 1. Armed Force Deployment:** The present land confiscation is intended by the SPDC and Burmese Army to ensure that the armed force are deployed in the best places of land due to the increased army battalions and divisions. Simultaneously, they proposed to distribute the confiscated land among the families of the army personnel deployed in the area in order for these families to earn a livelihood.
- 2. Armed Force Stabilization:** The present land confiscation program is connected to the stabilization and expansion of the SPDC's armed force, the Burmese Army. In the Burmese Army, because of the



Map of land confiscations by SPDC in Mudon, Thanbyuzayat, Ye and Three Pagoda Pass Townships in 2004

hardship of day-to-day living and terribly low salary, many married soldiers abandon their armed units to earn enough money for their families. Hence, the desertion rates among the battalions and divisions in the Burmese Army is increasing and more and more married soldiers have abandoned their armed units. In order to solve this problem, the Burmese Army commands provide lands for married soldiers' families so that the soldiers' concerns for their families diminish, and they would be able to serve longer in the army. On the other hand, when they go to the frontline, they no longer need to worry about the survival of their families left in the battalion bases.

Solving the main problem of soldiers would probably lessen the desertion rate, so that the numbers of soldiers in the armed force could be maintained consistently. Moreover, the soldiers' families can

be settled around the military bases so that when the soldiers come back from front-line, they do not need to go away from the bases in order to take part in agriculture and poultry and other money-earning activities.

- 3. Implementation of 'Assimilation' Policy:** The confiscation of many thousands acres of lands and deployment of many thousand troops in Mon State is intended to promote a policy of 'Assimilation' or 'Burmanization' that the successive military governments in Rangoon have applied to the other non-Burman ethnic groups. The local military commanders encourage their soldiers to get married to the local ethnic women. After their soldiers have got married to those women, the commanders persuade the in-laws of those soldiers to act as army supporters or informers by giving privileges in the economics and social spheres.

By urging local women who to get to the soldiers, and their relatives to speak Burmese language, the Assimilation policy could be implemented in long-term situation. The schools teaching native Mon language are threatened to be closed and replaced ones teaching the Burmese language. The Burmese Army's bases in the areas will use their influence to use Burmese language as the main language in all schools, including the government schools, the battalions' schools and the community established Mon national schools. The increasing use of Burmese language in the community and in the surrounding areas indicates the success of the government's plan.

According to the experience in Mon State and other ethnic regions, after the Burmese Army deployed their troops within 10 to 15 years the proportion of the population speaking the Burmese language has increased and consequently some villages and in some town wards no longer speak their native language, and instead speak Burmese language as their main language. Besides this, the villagers even teach their children to speak mainly Burmese language at home. In this way, in any area, where Burmese armed force are massively deployed, the successive military governments in Rangoon have systematically implemented their assimilation polity to ethnic communities.

- 4. Population Transfer Project:** One other reason for land confiscating was for population transferring program. The SPDC, like the previous racist military regimes, has implemented "population transfer" programs in order to transfer Burman people from their native to the areas crowded with non-Burman ethnic people in order to convert these ethnic nationalities to Burman. Such practices is part of the government "Burmanization policy" to assimilate non-Burman ethnic to be Burmans. Furthermore, the regime also resettled their soldiers, retired and disables soldiers' families by providing them land that was confiscated from the local civilians. The regime uses these resettles as its supporters. Most of those soldiers came from various parts of poor areas or central part of Burma and had never owned any pieces of land. The soldiers are happy to own the valuable lands given by the government and blindly turn to government supporters. This implementation creates conflicts between the local community whose lands were confiscated without any compensation and regime-supporters, who received valuable lands for free. The confiscation of many thousand acres of land and systematically bringing in the soldiers' families are directly connected with the 'population transfer' scheme implemented by the military government.



SPDC confiscated a lot of farm lands from the local farmers to construct "Win-pha-none dam in Abit village of Mudon Township, Mon State

There are few opportunities for the officers and other members of the Burmese Army to go homes and make their livelihoods in their native Upper Burma or other parts of Burma after their retirement, because the population density there and the agricultural lands are scarce. If they are given possession of a considerable amount of land in the ethnic areas while they are in the army service, they would settle down there and decide to not return to their native homes. Then, Burman ethnic soldiers who settle in ethnic areas could also

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: hurfomcontact@yahoo.com
Webpages: http://www.rehmonnya.org/monforum_main.php

With regards,

Director
Human Rights Foundation of Monland

bring their relatives and help them seek jobs and find plots of agricultural lands.

5. Future Political Agenda: An experienced politician commented that the military's stationing of its soldiers in the ethnic areas might link to the current regime's foresighted political agenda. He explained that whenever there is an election in the future, the current regime will use the USDA³¹ or create a new political party, and therefore they will need voters in each constituency. In order to protect the Burmese Army for their past guilt and human rights violations, they need some of their representatives in parliament. For this political agenda, he said, now the regime is preparing their supporters for future elections. Currently the concerned military commanders in various bases in Mon State are also giving the political instructions to the USDA members to strengthen their organization as preparation for a future political party. They also force all government servants to attend the training that provides lecture about 'the important role of the Burmese Army in Burma's politics'.

It is observed that the above-mentioned policy implementations are now more frequent than ever before. Usually, the ex-servicemen, who came from other parts of Burma, have been settled down more in Mon State, and are provided with important positions in every Township, Town Ward, Village Tract and Village level administrative body. Those ex-servicemen also receive special opportunities in economic activities, land management and income-generating projects provided by the SPDC.

In the long-term, these ex-servicemen of Burmese Army would stand for the regime's sponsored political party and support full implementation of the assimilation and population transfer project. Obviously, the military regime, in turn, provided their families and the relatives with land and economics privileges with an expectation that they would get support for the long-term. Similarly to

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Accordingly to the politicians in the area, this is the plan of SPDC to extend its army up to a half million (500, 000) troops in 2005.

Besides practically organizing the new recruits in the field, the Burmese Army also released some movies in the national TV about how the members of Burmese Army have sacrificed for the country and have showed in TV frequently.

However, accordingly to a displaced villager, 'they never showed about how the soldiers (of Burmese Army) are treating the villagers in the rural villages and even their new soldiers. As I know, the young soldiers are always are always mis-treated in the battle-fields.'¹

Burmese Army or *tatmadaw* is also well-know in the world for the recruitment of thousands of child soldiers even the regime, SPDC, ratified 'Convention of the Rights of the Child', in 1992. Human Rights Watch also reported that there are about 70000 child soldiers in 400, 000 strong Burmese Army.



Many acres of paddy farms in Mon State were seized by SPDC authorities during the construction of Kanbauk-Myaing-kalay gas pipe line.

soldier families and the ex-servicemen's families, the in-laws of ex-servicemen and USDA families are also provided with many privileges during the SLORC and SPDC era.

IV. Conclusion

In many cases, after the land confiscation and deployment of battalion by the Burmese Army, the soldiers and commanders of the army have involved in various human rights violations against the civilians. Human rights violations such as looting of belongings, killing and torture, conscription of forced labour and porters, sexual violations against women, and other violations against the civilians have increased.

After they lost their lands and properties and faced a serious human rights violations, thousands of villagers in the rural areas fled from their homes in order to escape the abuses. After fleeing from homes, those families frequently face seeking a difficult livelihood, lack of sheltering and foods, lack of protection and lack of health care and education assistance during their displacement.



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