

The Mon Forum

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Some Acronyms in This Issue

SPDC-	State Peace and Development Council,
USDA-	Union Solidarity and development association,
NUP-	National Unity Party,
CEC-	Central Executive Committee
NLD-	National League for Democracy,
NMSP-	New Mon State Party,
HRP-	Hongsawatoi Restoration Party,
SLORC-	State Law and Order Restoration Council,

News

Closing Ceremony of Mon Literacy Training Holds in Mudon Township

(April 2005, Mon State)

A closing ceremony of 13th Anniversary of dry season Mon literacy training led by a senior Mon monk, Rev. Palita, was held in the evening of April 10 in Mudon town and about 10, 000 students from various Mon villages attended the ceremony.

The ceremony was started at 7:00 p.m., and facilitators conducted the offering of certificate to outstanding students from different villages in Mudon Township. Then, the audience also had the chance to enjoy Mon traditional dancing and live song singing from the entertainers.

In the speech given by the Chairperson of Organizing Committee, Rev. Palita, he explained the historic background of Mon language which was used in stone scripture for 800 years and then it was used in Mon kingdom's administration during 15-16th Century A.D. He also added that after the Burman king annexed the Mon kingdom in 1757 in Hongsawatoi Mon Kingdom, the use of Mon language was totally banned in lower part of Burma. He asked the audience that



A closing ceremony of 13th anniversary of dry season Mon literacy training, in Mudon township of Mon State

Dangerous Political Pressure to Ethnic Nationalities

Currently, the regime SPDC and Burmese Army has pressured some ceasefire groups in northern Shan State to completely surrender to the regime. The regime also plans to apply this intensive pressure against another ceasefire groups to surrender to them.

Although the ethnic nationalities leaders from ceasefire groups attended the SPDC's arranged National Convention (NC) in order to solve the political problems by means of negotiation or dialogue, it is now clear that the SPDC totally rejected any political attempt made by the ceasefire groups.

SPDC has tried to take off arms from ceasefire groups without offering any political guarantee. Due to this pressure, some Shan armed groups decided to break ceasefire, and the remaining Mon, Kachin and other ceasefire groups declared that they will resume fighting if the regime forces them to surrender.

If the civil war breaks out again countrywide, especially in eastern part of Thailand-Burma border, we seriously concern about the serious human rights violations by the Burmese Army against the civilians belonged to ethnic communities. As a result of this fighting, more people will displace and run across into Thailand to seek haven.

It is needed to stop SPDC's pressure to ceasefire groups in order to increase of human rights violations in rural areas of Burma.

therefore, the Mon people needs to maintain their literature and language, which had been well-known and civilized in the past.

After celebration of closing ceremony in Township level, the respective village tract Organizing Committees also hold the similar ceremony at their village tract. Nyung-gone village tract, which is about 5 miles far southern of Mudon town, holds the ceremony today.

Last year ceremony was held in Kamawet, the biggest village in Township, and the students from all 11-village tracts in Township attended the ceremony. About 10,000 students in age range of 5 years to 18 years old completed the training especially learning for reading and writing of Mon language.

“The objective of Mon literacy training is to have children to be able reading and writing of Mon language. If they know how to read and write and then they could understand Mon history, respect the value of Mon literate and culture. Now, some Mon children do not know Mon history well”, said a student parent, Mr. Nai Moe.

“Dry season Mon literacy training was arranged only in a specific time. We do not offer all the time. So the students are so willing to learn”, added Mr. Moe.

A Chairman of Mon Literature and Culture Committee, Mr. Nai Htun, from Three-Pagoda-Pass border town said that the general objectives of training: to protect Mon literature and language from disappearance, to let the Mon people how to read and write the Mon language.



Mon Literacy students who attended the dry season Mon literacy training in Mudon Township, Mon State

Mr. Htun also added now the organizing committee in Three Pagoda Pass Township is announcing to Mon children and their parents for the similar literacy training. He said that for children who lived in rubber plantations and farms far from training locations, they would go and provide them with textbooks, stationary and teachers.

Field reporter reported that there is about 63, 000 students have involved in this dry season Literacy Training in the whole Mon areas – 16 Townships in Mon State, Karen State, Pegu Division and Tenasserim Division – and about 1000 teachers including many Buddhist monks are appointed as ‘trainers’.

Widespread Water Shortage Problems in Lower Burma

(April 2005, Mon State and Karen State)

In every dry season in Burma, although the people in the country face a bit water shortage problem, but the people in Mon State face a more serious water shortage problem in this year’s dry season, the residents in Mon State said.

In Thanbyuzayat Township of Mon State, the people remained less water in their wells and many of them have to buy water brought by traders. A town resident Mr. Nai Ong Chai said that only 20% of the Town residents bought water last year, but nearly 75% of the people this year have to rely on the water brought by traders.



In this year, many civilians have to buy water for their household use and drinking water

This is the big movement of Mon civil society organizations which are totally independent from the military government. Sometimes, the authorities of military regimes also tried to disturb these activities. However, this campaign of dry season Mon literacy training obtain a very little supports from international funding agencies.

The Mon migrant workers who are working in Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Japan also support this program by their channels.

Besides Mon areas, this Mon Literacy Training is also arranged in Mon communities in Rangoon, Mandalay and Pegu (Pago) cities in Burma.

(Based on News from Independent Mon News Agency)

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He added, “in my city quarter, we have about 50 households and 38 of them have to buy water this year”.

Similarly to the civilians in Thanbyuzayat Town, more people in the border town of Three-Pagoda-Pass, also have to buy water for their household use and drinking water. For those who have no money to buy water have to wake up in early morning about 4:00 a.m. and carry water from wells or streams nearby, said a local resident, Ms. Mi Aye Myint.

Since the beginning of April, the Town residents in Thanbyuzayat have to buy water from water carriers from nearby and they pay 4500 Kyat (~ 5 US Dollar) for one water truck, which carry four water tanks (~ 800 liters), said Ms. Myint. About 25% of the poor families in the town also collected dirty water in drought streams and brooks nearby and used it, said

Mr. Chai.

For those who buy water could not use sufficient amount of water in their showering and washing their clothes, added by him.

Not only the people in Thanbyuzayat and Three-Pagoda-Pass towns, but the villages in other townships in Mon State – Ye, Moulmein and Mudon, internally displaced persons and refugees along the Thailand-Burma border and other areas of Burma also face water shortage problems.

There is no international humanitarian NGOs based in Rangoon get access into Mon State in order to help them providing sufficient water and other sanitation programs.

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This a Presentation by Director of Human Rights Foundation of Monland, to
**A National Seminar on
Problems of Restoration of Democracy and Human Rights in Burma
(Myanmar)**

Organized jointly by the Centre for Research in Indo-Bangladesh Relations (CRIBR), Kolkata and the Mizzima News, New Delhi on 14th February 2005 held in Kolkata, India

The objective of this presentation is to let the India people have understanding how the military regime in Burma have involved in gross human rights violations against ethnic people during the construction of Yatana gas-pipeline in southern part of Burma, and to involve in campaign against 'SHWE' gas pipeline, from which Indian government planned to buy gas from western part of Burma.

**Multi-national investments, human rights violations and delay of democratic transition in Burma
(Human Rights Foundation of Monland)**

Foreign Investment and Injection to the Military Regime

As Burma is rich with its natural resources – natural gas, forests, fishes, mines, etc – the foreign companies from United States, Europe, Japan, South-East Asia and its neighbouring countries have interested to exploit these resources without noticing or paying attention to the political nature of Burma.

Since before 1990s, TotalFinaElf Company of France was the concessionaire of the over 26, 000 Kilometer surface area in Burma's Martaban Gulf, including the Yatana and Yetagun gas fields. These two gas fields have recoverable reserves of gas for 9. 7 trillion cubic feet, and currently Thailand is the main buyer of the gas through two routes of pipeline: Yatana and Yetagun.

The Yatana consortium is operated by TotalFinaElf (31.24% of shares), United States' UNOCAL (28.26% of shares), Thailand's PTTEP (25.50% of shares) and Burma's MOGE (15.00% of shares) and the construction of gas-pipeline started in 1996 and TotalFinaElf and UNOCAL could transmit gas to Thailand in 1998.

The Yetagun consortium is operated by Malaysia's Petronas (40.91% of shares), Japan's Nippon Oil (19.32% of shares), Thailand's PTTEP (19.32% of shares) and Burma's MOGE (19.32% of shares) and the construction of gas-pipeline started in 1998 and the consortium could transmit gas to Thailand in 2000.

From these two gas-pipelines and selling gas to Thailand, the multinational corporations may have provided 3 BILLION US Dollars in hard currency to the most brutal regime in the world that terrorizes its own people in Burma.

Unprecedented Human Rights Violations

Both gas-pipelines passes through southern part of Burma for 63 kilometers into the home lands of different ethnic Mon, Karen and Tavoyan local inhabitants, and where the insurgency has taken place for 5 decades against the central government in Rangoon for equal racial rights and great autonomy in a Federal Union of Burma.

Multinational corporations also hired the troops of Burmese Army (the armed force of the government) in order to protect their companies' personnel, building materials, gas shifting stations and gas pipelines. About 2,400 men of four military battalions were fully paid by the consortium partners to guard 63 Kilometers long pipeline which passes through the conflict zones.

Since there are thousands of troops for the security of these gas-pipelines, the ethnic civilians in the area have greatly suffered from gross human rights violations – summary killing, arbitrary arrest and detention, conscription of forced labour and use of porters, land and properties confiscation, sexual violations against women, etc. These gross human rights violations against non-combat civilians are systematically committed by the members of Burmese Army in order to halt the supports from the civilians to the armed rebel groups concerned.

Brief accounts of human rights violations occur in the areas where the gas-pipelines passes through are as below:

Summary Killing: While the troops of Burmese Army (government's troops) was taking security the pipeline before, during and after the construction, the soldiers had arrested ethnic villagers who were suspected as sympathizers or supporters to the rebel-armed force. In most cases, the government soldiers have inhumanely treated those suspects and they are summarily executed. The summary killing of the suspects of rebel-sympathizers still continuously committed by the soldiers of the Burmese Army in the areas where the army takes inner and outer security for the pipelines.

Arbitrary arrests and detention: With a suspicion of the sympathizers to the rebels, the local civilians including women are often arrested by the Burmese Army's soldiers and they are kept in the detention without time limitation. Most of them also suffered from inhumane and cruel treatment or torture by the soldiers during questioning them about the activities of the rebels. Many of them are also imprisoned in jails or army's detentions without strong evidence.

Forced labour: The conscription of forced labour against the local civilians in order to construct the roads, clear the gas-pipeline route, building the military barracks, working in the army's farms, etc, has taken place in this area since 1993. In late 1993, the military government (State Law and Restoration Council – SLORC at that time) and the Burmese Army constructed a 110 miles railway road that connects Mon State and Tenasserim Division (in southern Burma) in order to facilitate security for the pipeline. The construction of this railway lasted for over 4 years and approximately 150, 000 local ethnic Mon, Karen, and Tavoy civilians were forced to work in the construction without payment. Besides the railway construction, the Burmese Army also had to fix old motor roads in the area for better transport in order to send their infantry soldiers in time and take the security of the pipeline. In this road repairs, the soldiers of Burmese Army also used the local villagers to contribute their labour without payment. Additionally, during the Burmese Army's military offensives against the rebels in the area, the soldiers also arrested the local villagers and used them as 'porters' in front-line without fee. Labour contribution in the 'porter service' is the worst type of forced labour and the civilian porters are also used as 'mine-sweepers' or 'human-shields' in the front-lines. Sometimes, women are also used as porters and are raped at night.

Note: International Labour Organization (ILO) condemned the Burma's military government use of forced labour in countrywide after its Inquiry of Commission founded there was real 'use of forced labour' in Burma.

Land and Properties Conscription: In order to have control in the whole area where the multinational corporations' investments are locating, the Burmese Army has also extent its armed from 180, 000 troops in 1988 to 400, 000 troops in 2000. Since the Burmese Army extent their armed force, the military commands in southern part of Burma also confiscated many thousands areas of lands belonged to civilians. Most lands are with rich soil and grown with orchid and rubber plantation. The confiscation of these valuable lands is not only for troop deployment, but also for income generating of the military battalions concerned.

Note: In **NO LAND TO FARM** report, the Burmese Army confiscated near 8000 acres of land from ethnic Mon people in southern Burma during 1998-2002 in order to deploy over 10 new military battalions in the area.

Sexual violations against women: The soldiers of Burmese Army use 'rape as weapon' to win war against the ethnic armed resistance groups by punishing the ethnic women in the area concerned. In the course of civil war in Burma, how the soldiers of Burmese Army have involved in violations against women by 'rape' have been documented by some of ethnic women previously. While the security force of the foreign investments are active in the rural areas to protect gas pipeline, the soldiers also committed 'rape' or 'gang rape' against women. In 2004, when (Burmese Army) South-East Command launched military offensives against a Mon armed group which has less 100 troops near the gas pipeline route, over 10 Mon women were raped or gang-raped by the soldiers and low-rank commanders. The main purpose of rape is to punish the women in the communities to not support the members in the rebel groups. Some women were gang-raped and killed, as the soldiers believed the women were the wives or relatives of rebel soldiers.

SPDC: Strengthening Power with Dollars

After receiving millions of US Dollars for selling gas and other natural resources, the current military regime in Burma, State Peace and Development Council – SPDC, has strengthened its power and bought a lot of arms, aircraft, ammunitions, and other military equipment from other countries.

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Report

USDA: The Organization Strengthening the Military Rule in Burma (Myanmar)

I. Introduction:

Since the current military regime in Rangoon, under the name of Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) seized the political power in 1988, it has systematically planned to grip in power. In 1990, after the National League for Democracy (NLD) led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi won landslide seats in the parliament over the regime supported political party – National Unity Party (NUP)¹ – the regime have understood that the people in the country do not really support the military or even the organizations supported by the regime.

However, as it is afraid of punishment or trials by the people of Burma for their abuses especially killing in the cities' streets against the demonstrators during 1988 pro-democracy uprising, the regime or Burmese Army or *tatmadaw* decided to stay on in power after 1990 elections².

Since then it has formed many of its supporting organizations in order to get information from the opposition groups or to close watch and response the activities of the publics.

USDA which stands for Union Solidarity and Development Association was formed by SLORC in 1992 under the patronage of the Chairman of SLORC (later it changed to SPDC – State Peace and Development Council), Senior Gen. Than Shwe, and it has been receiving full supports – financial supports, technical supports and leadership supports – by the regime.

The regime also formed this USDA Executive Committees in every State/Division, Township/ Town Ward, Village Tract/ Village level. Their structure is Top-Down organizing system, and the decision making process is always Top-Down. Therefore, the USDA Central Executive Committee (CEC) which made up of the generals and veteran military commanders, instructed to State/Division USDA CEC and then instructions flow to Township/ Town Ward USDA and then Village Tract/ Village levels.

Since the formation of USDA, it has openly supported the regime political agenda and especially in opposing the NLD and other oppositions' political agenda and activities. The people can also identify that USDA is equal to military regime.

By taking opportunity upon the silence of the people due to fear, the regime SPDC has intensively extent the number of USDA. The expected target number of USDA for the regime is up to 10 millions among the 46 millions of people in the country³. It aggressively extend the number of USDA members since 1988 after the NLD and ethnic nationalities political parties that won 1990 general elections declared to convene the People's Parliament with Members of Parliament from elections.

SPDC instructed all levels of USDA organizations to against the plan of NLD and the ethnic political parties, and they also arranged the people's rally against the Convening of People's Parliament by forcing the civilians to gather in grounds of villages, towns, State/Division and accused the 1990 elections' MPs as betrayers to the State. Many NLD and ethnic nationalities' MPs were also arrested in this incident and imprisoned by the regime.

¹ NUP is formed with former members of Burmese Socialist Programme Party (BSPP), which was led by coup leader Gen. Ne Win and ruled Burma for 26 years under the dictatorship until 1988.

² Even the regime promised to transfer power after elections, it failed to transfer and continued its own process of National Convention, which is not completed yet.

³ The population is just estimation. Burma does not conduct consensus for many years. In this population, some number of ethnic nationalities population in the frontier areas will never be calculated.

In May 2003, during the Depeyin Massacre – killing and torturing of NLD members near a city in upper Burma – the USDA members actively involve in abuses against unarmed NLD members and supporters including NLD leaders: Chairman U Tin Oo and General Secretary Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. This killing incident was also well-known to the international community, the SPDC has not conducted any investigation on this case.

After that incident, SPDC trained USDA members how to use arms to against foreign aggressors and demonstrators on the streets. Later, they also formed USDA members as military unit and let them perform the duties of paramilitary and informers in the community.

For the people in Burma, although they do not like USDA members and their activities just favouring to the regime, but they are afraid to complain as they can be arrested and imprisoned. Sometimes, SPDC also give political and economic favour to the USDA members and their life is better than other ordinary people in the community. But this way, they have tried to organize more members to participate in USDA.

Similarly to the whole country, the Mon State USDA has also extent its members in village, village tract, town ward and township. Sometimes, it also forced the local villagers to be their members.

Accordingly the information HURFOM from the local people and internal sources of USDA, it also plan to upgrade itself as a 'political party' in order to participate in the coming elections arranged by SPDC in order to implement one point of its road-map. By taking the lesson from the 1990 elections, the SPDC will not allow any opposition party to win, and it could be USDA will win a landslide victory in the future sham elections.

II. USDA, an Elite in the Community

In Burma, there are various types of human rights violations committed by the authorities and members of Burmese Army. As it is very well-known that the authorities and troops of Burmese Army have used thousands of local villagers or citizens in the cities to contribute their labour in the constructions of road, dam, railway, and military barracks. Whenever there is a conscription of forced labour happened in Burma, the members of USDA are free to contribute their unpaid labour when sometimes they have to order the villagers and village headmen to involve in contributing of forced labour⁴.



A township level office of Union Solidarity and Development Association in Hlae-Gu Township, Rangoon division.

In a village or in a town, the villagers are always asked by the authorities or Burmese Army to pay various types of fees such as porters fee, village security fee, development fee, fee to be free from labour contribution, religious fee and many others which are not described as official tax in laws by the government. However, the families of each household has to pay these types of fees and they have to levy from 1000-5000 Kyat each month, while a man could seek only 800-1000 Kyat per day from day-labour works⁵. USDA members or the families that have many USDA members are free to pay these types of tax or fee.

⁴ International Labour Organization (ILO) is still trying and coordinating with the regime in order to eradicate the use of forced labour in Burma. But the regime has very little political will in the implementation of eradication of forced labour.

⁵ The daily income of the Burmese people is less than 1 US Dollar and so that Burma became a poorest country in the country, even it has rich natural resources.

A very similar situation, while Burmese Army is forcing thousands of villagers in the rural to be porters to carry ammunitions and food supplies for them during the military offensives against the rebel groups in eastern part of Thailand-Burma border area, USDA members in towns, villages in Mon State, Karen State and Tenasserim Division are free to be involved in forced porters⁶. Even they never have to pay for porter fee for the troops of Burmese Army.

Additionally, USDA CEC members also have a good opportunity to register for a passport to go foreign countries like – Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea and Japan – with visa of work-permit⁷. They are allowed to directly contact to Minister of Foreign Affairs in order to apply for issue of passport and visa in a foreign countries, while many ordinary citizens could not have this opportunity. Thus, they also became agents for those who plan to foreign countries to seek works and take fees from them. This is a very good business for top leaders of SPDC in villages and Towns.

By taking this opportunity, the local village/ Township USDA CEC also organized the young people in villages/ towns to join USDA to be members. It is so useful when the USDA tried to extend the members of it's organization.

Accordingly to a community leader from Thanbyuzayat Township,

“They (Village USDA CEC members) openly told the villagers that if they joined to USDA, they can be free from the conscription of forced labour, free from many types of taxes. Many of our villagers do not support them, but as you know there are some opportunists in every community and those opportunists joined their organization. Yes, they are free from every thing, and sometimes, show the power to the villagers. Sometimes, the village headmen also have to afraid them. As you know, they can directly send the letter to Sr. Gen. Than Shwe. If they don't like someone, they can directly report to Township or State authorities.

“The government also allows them for fund-raising and they can raise fund as they liked. Recently, they made passport for young men in the village and applied for visa in foreign countries for works. They got a lot of money from this. But we don't know how they share money.”

As a main supporting organization to the regime, the Township/ State authorities are aware of the survival and development of USDA. Therefore, the regime authorities have supported USDA with fund, technical assistance and money.

III. USDA's Political Agendas – A Future Winner in Elections

From the recent reports by HURFOM sources and meeting decisions in USDA, it is preparing to transform itself into a political party in order to participate in the upcoming general election, which is lying as a point of road-map.

Some of USDA CEC meeting and their decisions, which HURFOM sources received from one township (we do not want to mention the name of that Township for the safety of a USDA CEC who provide information to HURFOM), they have tirelessly tried to organize to stand on their sides and to vote them in the upcoming elections.

Some of decisions from their meeting in 2004 are:

- As the Association has long-term plan for national interest, we need to increase stronger membership to build our effective network within our membership in the whole township level.
- All members must follow the working guidelines of the USDA Annual General Meeting in 2004 and according the guidelines, we have to launch more effective work plans for development of both urban and rural civilians in the township.

⁶ Conscription of unpaid porters is one-type of the most worst and serious 'forced labour' described by ILO and international human rights organizations.

⁷ Hundreds of thousands of Burmese people have left to foreign to seek income as Burma has no proper economic development and massive unemployment under the rule of the regime.

- As the development work plans for the civilians is including in the main function of 5 objectives of USDA, we, USDA members, need to concentrate more effective work plans especially for the rural development.
- We urgent need to record 1+10 & 22 points (the assessment of the population, which families are belonged to which organization, how many members of USDA members in each village/town ward and the number of their families) and when it's completed, send back to the main office. If any members who are not clear about the 1+10 & 22 points, openly can ask within the VIP's trips in township. (Note: USDA was responsible to conduct an assessment to report SPDC leaders. Normally, like many other dictatorship country, the USDA reported many good points to the SPDC leaders, because the leaders do not want to listen bad news. The Assessment also aims that the family members of a USDA member is also supporter to USDA, and they still have less number, they need to organize more members.)
- That record and data is very important for the coming election of the country and we can exactly calculate the population of the vote.

Speech given by a SPDC Township authority in USDA monthly meeting:

- During the summer holidays, the Township association will organize the township level management and it follow up training for all members.
- All completed recording of 1+10 & 22 points document and data must be met the deadline, December 20, 2004.
- During this dry season, all members from all levels must launch the community development programs and report to the higher level how they are success, as soon as possible.
- The township level (USDA) must list the effective activity of villages or town wards in township and must report during the VIPs' trips.
- All villages and town wards levels need to ordinate its specific work plans and for the advantage of stronger membership for the civilians in the whole township.
- Every USDA officer, including villages, town wards and townships level need to manage in their field works. In order to manage to their filed works, all officers are provided one motorbike and seven bicycles, as transportation supports .
- All development work plans for the civilians both urban and rural need to report monthly to the higher level.
- Organize to increase more membership in village women affairs, blood bank and youth affairs.
- The Nation Convention will hold very soon and hopefully, for



A quarter level office of Union Solidarity and Development Association in Paung Township, Mon State

the next election, USDA will need to choose the right candidates to represent in the election campaigns. Thus, All USDA members in all levels must complete the record of 1+10 in order to list the right numbers of population in each village, in township.

From the above-mentioned meeting records, even SPDC high-rank authorities have been coordinating with USDA CEC members and adopted agendas to transform it as a political party to participate in the elections. The SPDC leaders also sometimes praised the USDA for the activities and history for help strengthening the life of the regime.

SPDC also formed the USDA in the structure of a political party after 3 years of 1990 General Elections. SPDC also expects there will be an election in the future since they did not recognize 1990 election results. Once there is elections in Burma, SPDC will bring the USDA in the elections and can win the elections as they have some millions members in the whole country.

USDA also poses as the oppositions to NLD and currently when most of NLD and ethnic political parties' key leaders are in prisons, the USDA has also conducted many campaigns in the rural areas to work for the development to the community. General Maung Bo from Ministry of Defense also clearly praises to USDA in his speech as "When the government has faced enormous crisis in the country, we have solved it with the strength of USDA. Therefore, you must work hard for winning to other parties in the political march."

Before the participating in the elections, the SPDC and USDA leaders planned to ensure they must win in the elections. Therefore, they have provided an assessment form and tried to collect the number of the people who would be the potential supporters to them.

Probably, in this upcoming elections, the USDA will become as a main political party and will allow some small political party in the elections in order to show to the international community that it is multi-party democratically elections. SPDC authorities must arrange the elections or SPDC must appoint their puppet election commissions. After elections, the USDA will win and then SPDC will transfer power to it.

However, it is not sure that how many military commanders will participate in USDA as the political figures in order to protect the armed force or *tatmadaw*. And, it is still not sure whether the genuine democratic political parties like NLD and ethnic nationalities' parties are allowed to compete against USDA in the elections.

IV. USDA Current Activities Restricting the Civil Society

USDA against Mon Literature Protection

Under the rule of the military governments since 1962, the successive governments have not allowed for the teaching of Mon language in government schools, and they have assimilated the ethnic Mon children by forcing them to learn Burmese language only. However, the Mon community in the rural areas have tried to learn Mon language in monasteries and founded Mon Literature and Buddhist Culture Associations in various Mon villages and conducted a campaign of Mon literacy training⁸. SPDC and USDA have not really like this movement and think this is against the government policy.

In February 2005, Mon State USDA said that the teaching of Mon language will not support national development and reconciliation.

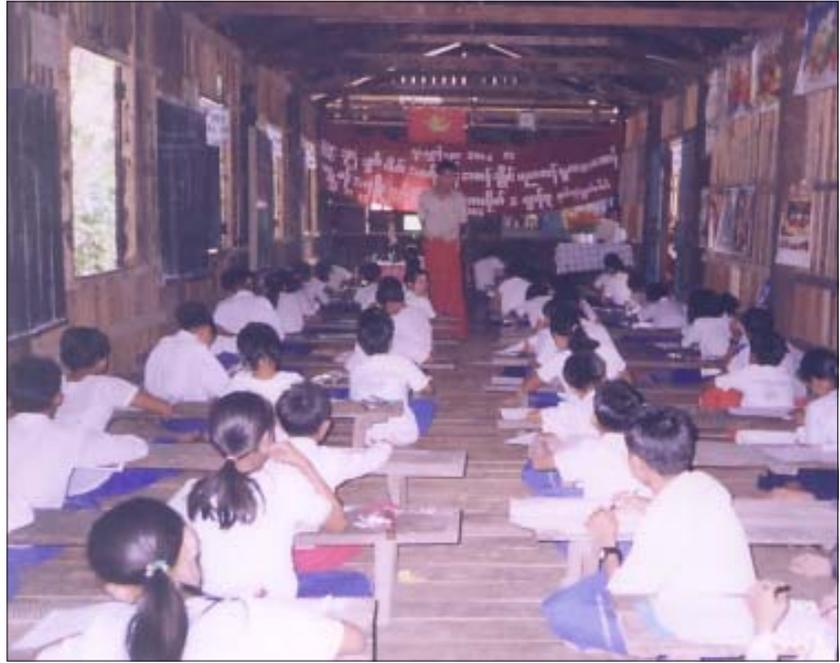
"Teaching the Mon language is a barrier to national development and solidarity. The SPDC will not achieve its objective of rural development in the area because of the Mon language-teaching," a USDA senior official of Kyaikmayaw Township said at the meeting February 2005. At that time, the Mon communities in Kyaikmayaw Township also began to register the Mon children who want to learn Mon language after the government schools' close for 'summer holiday'.

SPDC's schools closed in March for long holiday. As soon as school close, the Mon Buddhist monks and the community people arranged for Mon literacy training. Even it is not affecting the government school times, but the SPDC authorities and USDA still do not like the activities of Mon communities.

⁸ Over 60, 000 students learned Mon language in this 2005 Dry Season Mon Literacy Training.

The source from the Mon community in the township said the USDA (Union Solidarity and Development Association) responded negatively after the BBC News (Burmese language program) broadcasted that the government banned the Mon national school in Ye township.

It is a concern in the community; with most wondering why the government's USDA quoted that teaching the Mon language acts as a barrier for rural development. Meanwhile the USDA members in Thanbyuzayat are taking a survey of Mon State's economic situation to persuade people with business opportunities.



Mon literacy examination in Panga village of Thanbyuzayat Township, Mon State

In July 2004, SPDC's CEC

Gen. Maung Bo went to Mon State and instructed to the local authorities to close down all Mon National Schools in Ye Township and built up the government. In the implementation, the SPDC leaders also used USDA members from Ye Township to disturb the Mon teachers and existing of Mon schools.

Accordingly to a Mon teacher in southern part of Ye Township, he said:

“We heard a news that if the Mon teachers went to Ye Town for any purpose, we have to be careful to USDA members. They are in the coffee shops, in the bus stations, in railway stations, in the entrance of towns. If they know you are a Mon teacher, they will inform to the police or military officers in town immediately and they must arrest you. We have to be careful during they are trying to close our schools.”

In the basic idea of USDA, they thought that any existing organizations in the communities are their competing organizations and tried to abolish those organizations.

Therefore, as the followers of SPDC, the USDA actively acts as opposition to the civil society organizations and do not allow them to exist.

USDA is formed as Intelligence Team

After the former Chief of Military Intelligence (MI), Lt. Gen. Khin Nyunt and all of his officers were dismissed in October 2004, the SPDC has seriously tried to replace Intelligence apparatus in the community.

Normally, the SPDC top leaders also used USDA to watch and give information to Rangoon even about their men. In order to implement this work, SPDC high-rank authorities have met some USDA CEC members and recruited their trusted members and trained them to be Intelligence officers. Then, they also formed Intelligence Team in each Township and gave duties to them.

The Intelligence Team from Chaung-zone Township of Mon State adopted their duties in the meeting together with secret service of SPDC leaders. The following are the responsibilities of Intelligence Team members:

- To watch on the activities of the local Burmese Army's troops and their commanders, township departments' administrative authorities, police station and other offices, which are under the control of Township Peace and Development Council.
- To watch on the activities of NLD, the Mon cease-fire group, the former Mon political party, Mon National Democratic Front and other oppositions.

- To collect information on the activities of armed rebel organizations in the area and collaborated with the local military battalions for counter-insurgency operations.
- Other issues that they have to watch are corruption among the authorities, human trafficking inner Burma to the border area, direct or indirect involvement in some political parties (as internal agent), involve as an activist in anti-government and drug trafficking organizations as spies, etc.,
- To watch closely on the unknown person (strangers) entry to the villages/quarters and report or inform directly to the nearest information centers.
- Then they have to send all details reports USDA GHQs directly.

This spy program is launched in the whole country level and is led by Brigadier-Gen Myint Swe, who replaced Lt. Gen. Khin Nyunt for spy operations. As the SPDC's most trusted organization, it has recruited some key members of USDA in order to use them as members of new Intelligence Team in order to get information to strengthen its rule.

V. USDA: As Paramilitary Force

After the Depeyin Massacre, the SPDC has alerted to all USDA members in Township, villages to be ready to face the countrywide demonstration or foreign invasion. Then the SPDC has recruited the USDA members to attend the military training schools in order to know how to use rifle guns and other equipments. Later SPDC also extent its military recruitment and formed USDA members in paramilitary force.

An instance what is happening in Mon State is as below:

The Mon State PDC ordered Chaungzone Township's Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) to form a USDA battalion in the township, according to a USDA meeting's a main decision.

Mon State PDC General Secretary Lt. Col. Soe Myint Aung ordered it was needed to form quickly during the USDA meeting for September that was held on October 3, 2004. He also give the instruction how to form paramilitary armed force. According to his instruction, the USDA battalion is to be formed with:

1. One commander (from the USDA)
2. Leader (1) (from Village PDC chairman)
3. Leader (2) (USDA Public Relations Officer)
4. 10 Squad Commanders
5. Each Squad has 10 USDA soldiers.
6. Every USDA soldier and the commander has to fill out a form including 22 points about the USDA soldier's biography.

The Mon State PDC's General Secretary also ordered Chaungzone Township USDA to organize more than 140,000 USDA members in Chanugzone Township alone.

From the information above, the SPDC tried to organize nearly the people in the whole country as USDA members in order to support them. In Chaung-zone township of Mon State, USDA and Burmese authorities has coordinated very well in the oppressing of the opposition party, NLD. At the end, nearly all members of NLD were pressured to leave the organization, and the NLD became with empty of members.

Because of the international pressure, although SPDC leaders allowed NLD leaders including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to operate their party's activities, but SPDC authorities and military commanders do not like the activities of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. In the speech of Maj. Gen. Ohn Myint gave a speech in the regular meeting of USDA in July 2002 in Kyaikmayaw Township in Mon State, he said "on July 21, 2002, Daw Suu came to Kyaikmayaw (town). She traveled with 10 vehicles and 10 motorcycles, and they acted as traffic

police. Actually, it cannot come like this. She held a public gathering in front of the pagoda with over (400) people. The law only allowed less than (50) people for gathering”.

SPDC totally opposes the activities of NLD and they have a concern that more and more people would support NLD. Because of the past experience and the speech delivered by the Burmese Army’s commanders, the May 30 incident of “Depayin Massacre” was anyhow related to USDA activities to block the NLD activities.

Moreover, as a preparation for the crackdown of the possible political unrest, the regime also provides basic military or arm-equipping training to the members of USDA, town and village administration authorities countrywide. They also explain them how to oppress the possible demonstration and strike.

As an instance,

Starting on June 4, 2003, Township authorities in Moulmein, the capital of Mon State, provided basic military training including small arm-equipping technique to their supporters including USDA members, town ward SPDC authorities, firemen from fire brigades and village leaders. The duration of the training is for two weeks and the trainers from southeast command (bases near Moulmein) provided training to them.

20 to 50 members from each town ward were instructed to attend the training. There are about 20 town wards in Moulmein city and a few hundreds of people attended training. According to a trainee, he said that the aim of training was to break up the protestors if there was a protest or demonstration in the city. He added, accordingly to the instruction by commanders from Southeast Command, if there is a demonstration, those trainees and police force in city needed to break the protesters first and if they could not, then the army will come and break the people up.

In the first and second week of June, the authorities from every Township of Mon State provided this type of training to all USDA members, Township and Village PDC authorities and firemen.

After training, the authorities formed various groups such as ‘Anti-foreign Invasion Force’, ‘State Defense Force’, ‘People Vigorous Association’, and others. The SPDC authorities also blamed to NLD and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi for creating instability in the country to get the international attention. Accordingly to the propaganda among the authorities, American and other foreign force could occupy Burma and therefore, they said that the people have main duty to protect these invasions.



The campaign signboard to persuade the civilians to be members of the Union Solidarity and Development Association, in the capital of Mon State, Moulmein.

After two weeks of training to their supporters, then the authorities organized the civilians and villagers in towns and villages to attend the similar training for another two weeks. As mentioned-above, accordingly to the propaganda of SPDC, all people especially men in the country need to know how to defend the country.

VI. USDA's Involvement in Human Rights Violations



The signboard mean "The USDA's village" in Kroke-Pi village of Thanbyuzayat Township, Mon State

In some villages and Townships, the Chairman of the community is appointed by USDA and therefore, those village chairman, town ward chairman are also Chairman of that community. Therefore, the Chairman of USDA also have two duties and they are more powerful than the ordinary village chairman, and no one can report about his activities. In this case, the USDA village/ town ward chairman involve more abuses against the local villagers.

As an instance,

The Chairman of USDA Kroke-pi (Kroke-poi in Mon) village,

Thanphyuzayat Township demands 10, 000 Kyat per villager who return back from Thailand as migrant workers, according to the people who have to pay.

"The Chairman, Nai Catoon is collecting 10, 000 Kyat per person. He claims that the police will locked-up them if they refuse to pay the demanded money. That's why every villager who return back from Thailand has to pay the money .He will get 100, 000 if ten people arrived the village within one day," a villager told.

Many villagers returned back and visited to their parents to Kroke-pi Village, because it is in easy travel in summer season, said a villager who had to pay 10, 000 Kyat on 19th February. This village was recognized as 'Union of Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) Village' by SPDC in January 2005 after the village chairman can bribe more to the high authorities and he is good to listen the order from the top.

The SPDC authorities also instructed the USDA organizations to compete each other and praise one organization which they like in order other organizations to follow the same suits. Normally, village USDA that the most village like, it is the most the villagers hate.

In most villages, the village headmen and CEC members of village USDA always collected money from the villagers for expenses when the senior SPDC officials came into village or for the development fund. In most cases, both USDA and the village headmen do not have any accountability for any expenses of their villagers' money.

In many cases, the USDA members also involved pressuring the villagers or farmers in order to cooperate with SPDC administrative officials.

As an instance,

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: [hurformcontact@yahoo.com](mailto:hurfomcontact@yahoo.com)
Webpages: <http://www.rehmonnya.org>

With regards,

Director
Human Rights Foundation of Monland

SPDC also instructed to USDA members in Kyaikmayaw Township (in Mon State) in February 2003 meeting to force the local farmers in Township to sell the set amount of paddy at low price to complete the regime's yearly crop tax.

Kyaikmayaw Township's farmers lost a lot of their paddy in 2002 rainy season flood. As a result, most farmers did not complete their duty of selling the set amount of paddy, 10-12 baskets per acre. However the authorities in Township demanded the full amount of paddy from and at the end they pressured the farmers to find paddy and sell to them. The SPDC authorities also used the SPDC in town wards and village levels to pressure the farmers in their own communities to sell their remaining set paddy as quick as possible.

Therefore, the people in Mon State believes that the USDA is equal to SPDC and they are the supporting organizations for strengthening the power of the military rule. In other word, when the regime adopted a plan of 'divide and rule' among the people, USDA sides on the brutal regime. Like the people hate the SPDC authorities, they also hate the USDA. But the USDA members are in their own communities and so that the communities are clearly divided between USDA and non-USDA.

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SPDC's major arms deal is with China. It has bought artillery arms, tanks, military trucks from China and but SPDC also made arms deals with many other countries including India. Eighty 75-mm howitzers from India; radar systems, tanks and 500 armored personnel carriers from Ukraine; G-4 jets from Serbia; MiG-29 fighters from Russia, and others.

Whenever the Burmese Army is strong with arms and various equipments, it has more committed human rights violations against the innocent civilians during its military offensives against the rebels who could pose dangers to the gas pipelines.

On the other hand, even the international community has called Burma for a political dialogue with the oppositions: pro-democracy groups and ethnic nationalities, for the peaceful political settlement of Burma, only the regime has constantly refused this call.

Currently, hundreds of political activists are in jail and the democratic leader, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, from National League for Democracy, is under still house arrest. The SPDC also did not arrange for the meaningful and peaceful political dialogue with NLD and ethnic nationalities, because the Generals believes they still hold the State power.



A signboard of the annual meeting of the Union Solidarity and Development Association in Rangoon Capital.

Conclusions/ Recommendations

1. Some international organizations and UN agencies in Burma are also thinking about working with USDA in the field of community development and other projects. USDA is clearly standing as ‘SPDC-Organized Non Governmental Organization and it is not an independent civil society organizations, like Mon literature and culture committees, Christian religious organizations, and others. It is not so appropriate for international organizations or UN Agency to work with USDA. It will destroy the credit of international organizations.
2. Secondly, the international human rights organizations, labour organizations and women and children protection organizations must need not only to focus on human rights violations committed by SPDC authorities but also the members of USDA in various parts of Burma.
3. During ‘Depeyin Massacre’, hundreds of USDA members involved in beating and killing of NLD members. Therefore, the international judicial body must consider USDA as criminals. However, the SPDC has just hid that the USDA was involving in the massacre.

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