

The Mon Forum

Issue No. 1/2006

January 31, 2006

The Publication of Human Rights Foundation of Monland (BURMA)

Contents

News:

- (1) Local authority bans Mon National Day signboards

Presentation:

Environment and National Resources Issues in Mon areas

Report:

- (1) Exploitation of Natural Resources and the suffering of civilians in the southern Burma

Some Acronyms in This Issue

SPDC-	State Peace and Development Council,
CRC-	Convention of the Rights of the Child,
ILO-	International Labour Organization
IB -	Infantry Battalion (of Burmese Army),
PTA-	Parent and Teacher Association,
MOMC-	Military Operational Management Command
PDC-	Peace and Development Council,
DKBA-	Democratic Karen Buddhist Army
KNU-	Karen National Union
NMSP-	New Mon State Party
MND-	Mon National Day

News

Local authority bans Mon National Day signboards

(January 2006)

While the Mon people in the whole Mon State are planning to hold the Mon National Day's Ceremony on February 23, 2006, the Burmese military junta has directed members of the Mon National Day Celebrating Committees to pull down the Mon National Day signboards and not to put up anymore of them.

The Committee had started putting up Mon National Day signboards in big Mon villages along the road to Mudon Township, Mon State as of December 23.

"The local authorities ordered us to pull down the Mon National Day signboard and claimed that the order had come from the Township Peace and Development Council (TPDC) and the military's southeast regional commander, Major General Soe Naing," said a committee member.

"But we refused to bring down the signboard. The local authorities did not pull it down either but ordered us not to put up more signboards in other villages. We cannot put up any more signboards



Mon National Day's Signboard put by Cerebrating Committees

Commentary

SPDC Restriction against Mon National Day

Since the beginning of January 2006, when the Mon National Day celebrating committees are holding the meeting for the important day and putting signboards around cities, towns and villages, the local SPDC authorities have also restricted the activities of these committees.

First, the SPDC authorities in the area ordered the village headmen in the villages to not allow the Mon National Day Committees to put up signboards in their villages. But the MND Committees took urgent putting up signboards in many villages without noticing the local authorities and village headmen.

Then the SPDC authorities ordered the headmen to take out all signboards in the villages and town wards. When the headmen informed to MND Committees to take out signboards accordingly to the orders, they totally refused to do so.

Later the authorities said that they will not allow any MND ceremonies in public areas and they could hold in some narrow areas. MND Ceremonies outside of Mon State, like Pegu and Rangoon are not allowed.

This is the restriction to the rights of Mon people to hold their cultural and national identified National Day.

following the order from TPDC and Major general Soe Naing" the member said.

The military regime has elamped down on ancient Mon properties. It seized many of Mon's ancient art and recently barred visitors and tourists from taking photographs of the Suvannabhumi, Thaton the ancient city wall.

The Burmese regime wants to ban the symbol because they do not want new generations of Mon's to learn about the ancient history of the Mon kingdom. The junta is also afraid that Mon history would spread, according to the Central Celebrating Committee of Mon National Day based in Moulmein , (CCMND) Mon State.

The ancient city wall is located in Zote Thote (Kwarn-weangka by Mon) about three miles west of Belin. Most people visit the pagoda and try to trace the history of the place.

The ancient wall dates back to BC 1000-AD 1057, but there is no mention of the kingdom that ruled then. The last Mon king to rule was Manuhar who lost the war with the Burmese king, Anawyathar.

Almost every year, the military regime orders villages not to put up the signboard for the Mon National Dav.



A Mon National Day Cerebration

Environment and National Resource Issues In Mon Areas

By Human Rights Foundation of Monland &

**To Environment Seminar in Burma
(12-15 January 2006)**

Background of Mon people, Natural Resources and Environment

For thousands years, the Mon people have lived in lower part of Burma along the rivers and streams and along the sea coasts of Andaman Sea as 'paddy cultivated farmers.' They have lived with environment in harmony and use their natural resources - lands, marines, forests, rivers and streams and others - in systematic way in order to supports their livelihood in long-term period.

As the main livelihood of the Mon people is growing paddy in low-land areas, they migrated to the plain areas of southern Burma along Mekong and Salween river (accordingly to history) where it have many rivers and streams. By using the environment cleverly in their supports for their cultivation and national resources the Mon people can produce sufficient rice supplies not only for Mon people but also for other ethnic people in the areas nearby.

The Mon people created lowland areas in west sides of most Mon areas along the coasts of Andaman Sea as 'farmlands' to produce rice, salt, fish paste, fishes and other foods and preserved forests in the eastern part in order to use them to supports farming such as to get woods and other materials from there. They structured their villages mostly in the middle of their farms and forests and live along the rivers and streams that passes near or in the villages. For thousands years, the Mon people have not destroyed any of their national resources and environment in order to use them perfectly generation by generation.

Even during the British time, although the British and ethnic Mon companies were involving in logging concessions in forests belonged to the Mon people, but the Forestry Department of Colony government defined the forest spaces for logging and they also preserved large forests. The Mon people also got some profits from these logging concessions and forest preservation.

The Mon people who live near the Sea have a main livelihood of fishing⁵, and they fish in the sea only with their small boats. They support sufficient sea foods for the Mon people in the whole area with various types of drought fishes and shrimps.

But the problem starts during the previous one party rule socialist government - Burmese Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) - ruled Burma from 1962 to 1988 under the military strongman Gen. Ne Win. In BSPP national planning and militarization policies, the government confiscated nearly all reserved forests belonged to the Mon community people and transformed them to rubber plantations in order to produce million tons of compound rubber from Burma in order to export to neighboring countries those were moving for industrized countries. Burma was likely fulfilling 'raw materials' for these countries during BSPP time.

Under the BSPP's policies, thousands areas of forests were transformed to rubber plantations and most of them are nationalized. Hence, the Mon people remained less spaces of forests to get supplies for their farming and daily uses at their homes. Government departments and troops of Burmese Army moved into the area and replaced the forest management in stead of local Mon communities. Since then, the Mon people started to face problems in their main livelihood.

Additionally, under the national planning, BSPP government also instructed the local farmers how to manage their lands, what sorts of paddy crops they needed to grow, how much amounts of paddy crops they must to produce, etc. Because of the government's interference in paddy cultivation, many farmers were confused and the rice production also dropped down in Mon State.

Extraction of National Resources during SLORC Era

After seizing the political power in 1988, the new military ruler that replaced Socialist government, the so-called 'State Law and Order Restoration Council' - SLORC - faced bankruptcy to operate their administrations and need serious hard foreign currency from its neighboring countries. The neighboring

countries were approaching the regime with 'Constructive Engagement' policy in order to exploit rich national resources from Burma. Therefore, SLORC had contracted with the neighboring countries, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and China to sell almost natural resources like forests, marine and sea foods, natural gas and mining precious stones.

SLORC mostly sold fishes in Andaman Sea in western part of Mon areas and forests in eastern part Mon areas to over one dozen of Thai (logging and fishing) companies. Thai logging companies had taken thousands tons of logs and fishes from the Sea by cutting trees with chain saws and fishing with different types of nets with big fishing trawlers.

Within 3-4 years, the national resources of Mon people in forests and sea were extracted in a unsystematic way and the SLORC have not cared too much except to receive foreign currency from Thai companies.

The regime allowed to Thai companies to catch fishes from the Andaman Sea until 1996 and logging until 1998. Small fishing boats were allowed to fish only in the limited places in the Sea. Mon people who had preserved the forests since their ancestral time could not get any profit from the companies.

After Thai companies withdrew, the Mon fishermen found much difficulty in fishing as they could not catch fishes as before and have to go very far into sea to have fishing. Additionally, the gas pipeline security force in the sea also restricted the fishing.

The Mon people who live near the forest area especially in Ye and Thanbyuzayat Townships have founded the problems related to 'deforestation' after the Thai logging companies. Less water in the streams and drought has been problems since then.

Current Situation Related to National Resources and Environment

I. Land confiscation by Burmese Army:

Like other ethnic areas, the Burmese Army confiscated thousands acres of lands from Mon areas from the Mon farmers. During the Burmese Army is deploying troops in Mon areas and the SPDC (State Peace and Development Council) planned development projects such as gas pipeline construction, dam construction and creation of satellite town, they have confiscated rubber plantations and many fruit plantations from the Mon farmers in Mudon, Thanbyuzayat and Ye Townships have suffered from this land confiscation.

Land confiscation started seriously in 1999 after the Burmese Army was planning to deploy over 10 artillery battalions and 10 regular battalions in Mon areas. The farmers in Ye Township have suffered more if compared to other areas.

Note: more details information on land confiscation is in the HURFOM's No Land To Farm report.

II. Kanbawk-Myaingkalay Gas Pipeline:

This gas pipeline has about 120 miles and it crosses about 5 townships: Ye, Thanbyuzayat, Mudon, Moulmein and Kyaikmayaw, in Mon State. When the regime constructed Kanbawk-Myaingkalay gas pipeline in 2000 from Yatana gas pipeline in Kanbawk area via Mon State to Karen State, the lands along the gas pipeline were totally confiscated and the authorities did not give any compensation costs. Gas pipeline supplies gas as main source of energy for a cement factory in Myaingkalay village, Pa-an Township in Karen State.

This gas pipeline has had some negative impacts to the local farmers as the pipeline passes through mostly into rice fields, rubber plantations and village communities. Some villages were also forced to relocate.

First, the local authorities and Burmese Army's battalions in the area have been forcing the local Mon villagers along gas pipeline to guard for the security of pipeline on a 24 hours basis. The villagers were forced to build huts along the pipeline which were far 500 meters from one to another. At least 2 villagers have to guard in each hut and can replaced with another group of villagers on the next day. Villagers are also forced to fence the pipelines which parts are on the ground in order to protect from the attacks by rebels. Some women who performed for security duties were also raped.

Note: about rape cases during guarding gas pipeline are described in a 'Catwalk to the Barrack' report produced by HURFOM and Woman and Child Rights Project (Southern Burma).

Mon farmers whose farms are in western part of pipeline have faced many difficulties in traveling to their farms. They have to cross the pipeline when they traveled by carts or by boats. The authorities also set the time when they farmers can cross the pipeline and set the location where they can cross. During rainy season when the water raised in the rivers and streams, and reached to pipeline, it makes problems for farmers who use boat and travel on the rivers or streams.

Because of lack of engineering skills in building and connecting pipelines, this gas pipeline exploded regularly. Gas explosion seriously impacted to the environments as it burnt rubber plantation, separates to the village communities, flows into rivers and streams and other negative impacts.

III. Displaced communities and slash and burnt cultivation method:

Because of the continuous civil war and human rights violations, thousands of Mon people have still displaced. Many of them moved into the New Mon State Party's controlled area in eastern part of border in order to take safe haven. These displaced required foods and some families involve in 'slash and burnt' cultivation in growing paddy in the mountainous areas.

This 'slash and burnt'⁵ rice cultivation created 'deforestation' in the area and it again impacts to the displaced communities. They also face water drought at rivers and streams, hotter whether than before and soil erosion.

As long as the fighting and human rights violations continued, the population displacement will continue. Population displacement also has some impacts to environment.

Actions:

Mon rights groups, relief and development organizations and youth and women organizations have involved in the following activities in order to raise the issues about natural resources and environment in Mon areas and involve in action for the rights to preserve national resources and property rights.

Reporting and advocacy: Some rights groups are still collecting and documenting information on the natural resources and environment in Mon areas. They plan to report on these issues by making reports, newsletters and other participations with other ethnic people. They will continuously involve in raising awareness how natural resources issue is so important for the ethnic communities in the struggle for the democratization and establishment of Federal Union in Burma.

Impact assessment on Salween Dam: Mon youths are involving in finding more information on the potential impacts that can happen to the Mon communities who live along Salween river and Gyaing river if many dams along Salween River are constructed.

Environmental education: Mon environment activists are involving in providing environmental education to the returned Mon refugees and IDPs who live in New Mon State Party's ceasefire zones to realize how they can use environment perfectly and stay with environment in harmony.

Property rights' campaign: After thousands acres of lands were confiscated by the Burmese Army in recent year, the Mon rights groups, political parties and Mon civil society organizations seriously considered on the issue of property rights. They have planned to have gathering and to re-claim what are their rights to belong their properties.

Report

Exploitation of Natural Resources and the suffering of civilians in the Southern Burma

I. The Exploitation of Natural Resource

Burma, which is famous for its rich natural resources, such as natural gas in western sea, forestry in eastern border with Thailand and China, mining in northern areas of Kachin State and fishes in western sea of Mor State and Tenasserim Division, has attracted foreign companies from neighbouring countries and western countries.

In 1988, after the current regime, SPDC seized bloody political power from the pro-demonstrators, the new regime opened up the country, selling various types of natural resources: gas; logs; fishes; jades and other in order to get foreign money. Hundreds of Thai fishing trawlers entered into the seas of Mon State and Tenasserim Division and caught thousands ton of fishes. Over 20 Thai logging entered into eastern part of Burma's border and cut thousands ton of logs.

Exploitation of the natural gas fields in the Andaman Sea and the construction of a pipeline across southeastern Burma to Thailand is a major threat to Burma's environment. The construction is led by America's UNOCAL and France's TOTAL oil companies, in partnership with the Burmese regime, the \$1.2 billion pipeline project was pushed through without the consultation or approval of local residents or an independent environmental impact assessment. The pipeline area is now thoroughly militarized by the Burmese Army armed faction of the regime. Local residents have suffered serious human rights abuses, and thousands have been conscripted as forced laborers on infrastructure projects. The pipeline's route has destroyed or damaged forest habitats home to a number of rare animals.

UNOCAL and TOTAL, the biggest corporate investors in Burma, are today the target of consumer boycotts



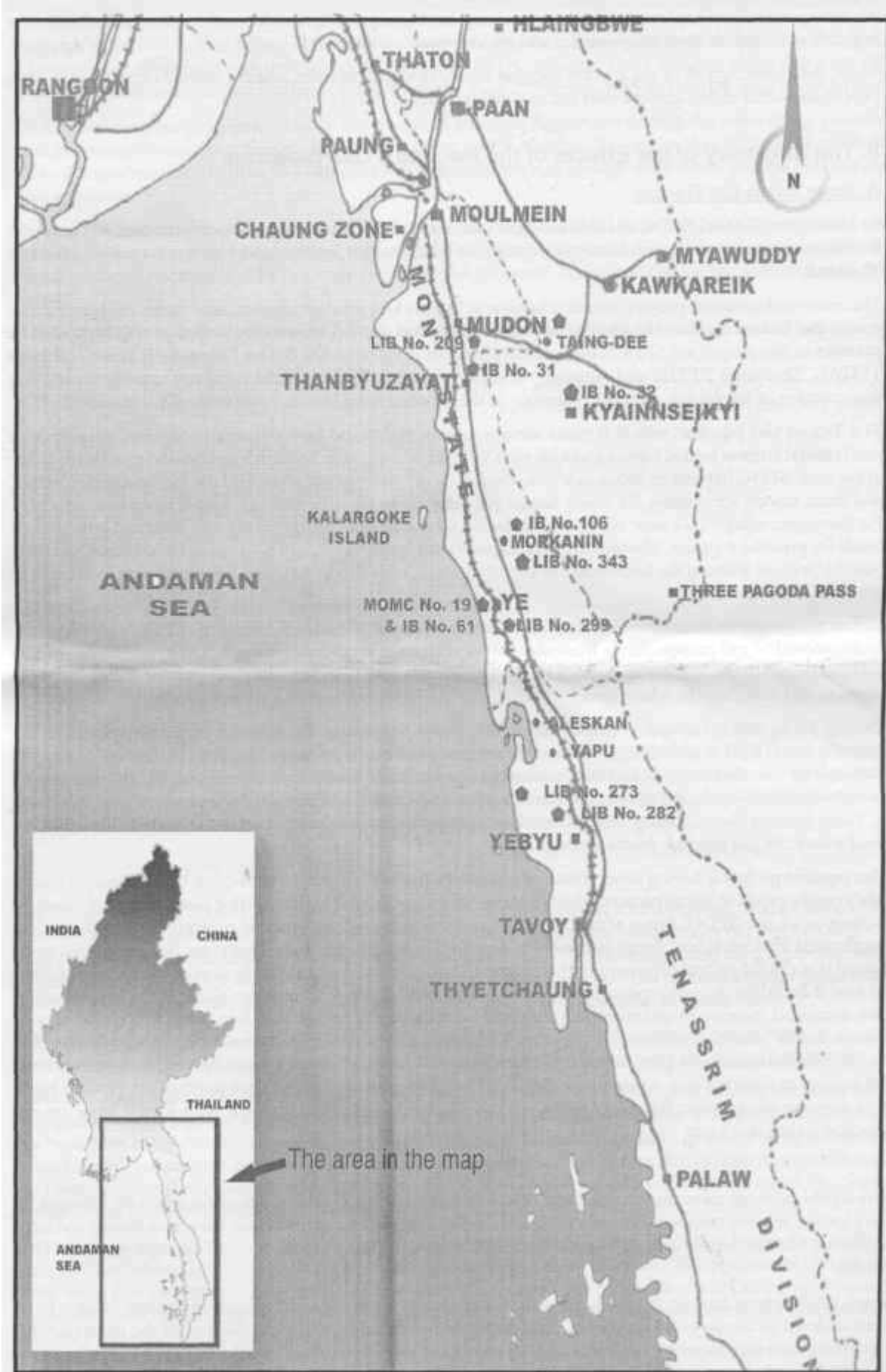
Logging in Thailand-Burma border in Three Pagoda Pass

and shareholder actions in the United States and Europe. UNOCAL faces lawsuits in California that charge the company with abetting human rights violations associated with the pipeline project. The linkage between the denial of human rights and environmental destruction is seen as clearly in Burma as anywhere in the world today. However, these companies have 'no will' to withdraw their investment and support the military regime with many hundreds of million Dollar every year to grip in power.

In term of forest, southern Burma's forest holds one third of mainland forests resources, where the home of ethnic Mon, Karen, Tavoyan and other nationalities. Deforestation is increasing, and an analysis of current information shows that Southern Burma's remote border's forests are now threatened. Although agricultural conversion, fuel wood-cutting, and charcoal production are the main causes of deforestation in the lowland areas of southern Burma, logging appears to be an important factor in the fragmentation of the remaining intact forests that cover the mountainous border areas.

Most of the forests are located in the mountains that locate along the border. The area of Karen State, Tenasserim Division and other mountain part of Mon state have been largely deforested since the turn of the century as a result of agricultural conversion, firewood cutting, and charcoal production.

Heavy logging, by both the regime and their contracted companies and by ethnic minorities armed groups and their contracted companies, is a major cause of deforestation in Burma's border areas. Two factors have



Map of lower Burma and troop deployment of Burmese Army

played a particularly important role in maintaining both a supply of, and demand for, Burma's timber: the regime's economic and security policies and the regional timber trade.

Some detail description of the current logging businesses, gas-pipeline, and the related impact to the Mon people and other ethnic groups who live in southern part of Burma.

II. The Summary of the Effects of the Regime's Gas pipelines

A. From Yatana Gas Pipeline

In 1990s, the SLORC/SPDC decided to select southern part of Mon State and northern part of Tenasserim Division as an area to put on-land gas pipeline to send the gas by overland pipeline to power plants in Thailand.

The multi-billion dollar project, which is known as Yadana Gas pipeline project, aims to tap offshore natural gas in the Yadana Field at the Gulf of Martaban and send the gas by overland pipeline to Thailand. The partners in the project are SPDC's oil company MOGE (Myanmar Oil & Gas Enterprise), French oil giant TOTAL, Thailand's PTTEP and American company Unocal. TOTAL is the company actively supervising construction of the 60-km. overland segment of the pipeline from the sea coast to the Thai border.

The Yadana Gas pipeline, which is raises serious human rights and environmental concerns, pass through rural coastal areas as well as forests and hills with villages. Karen, Mon and other opposition groups are active in the area. SPDC has sent in thousands of troops to secure the pipeline route and the foreigners themselves, and these troops are making life much harder for villagers in the area through forced labor and extortion. Furthermore, villagers are now being used as forced labour to clear the pipeline route itself and build supply roads for pipeline supplies. Though the oil companies are hiring labor, SPDC is using forced labor wherever possible with or without the knowledge of the companies, who simply have too few employees in the area to see what is going on.

Before the people in Tenasserim Division and Southern part of Ye Township knew the SPDC's plan with the multinational oil and gas companies from western countries and neighboring countries, they had been seriously affected in the military operations by the Burmese Army to clean up the gas pipeline route to build gas pipeline and to secure the whole area.

During 1990, nearly the whole area of Yebyu Township, Tenasserim division are under the control of the guerrilla force, KNLA and MNL, and so that the troops of Burmese Army adopted a plan of up-rooting all activities of the rebel troops. In 1992, under the command of South-East Command, the Burmese Army launched military operation against the Karen and Mon guerrillas and deployed about 10 military battalions in Tavoy District that including Yebyu Township and they deployed about 6 battalions along Ye-Tavoy motor road where the gas pipeline passes through.

The pipeline project is having other direct effects on the lives of villagers in the region beyond simply forced labor on the pipeline infrastructure. Most of these effects are related to the pipeline security troops - over 10 Battalions of the SPDC Army, sent into the regions because of the pipeline project. Farmland is being confiscated for several new Army camps on or near the pipeline route, and villagers are being required to do forced labor building and maintaining these camps, then going on rotating shifts as servants for the soldiers. At least 8 Battalions have troops stationed in the western half of the pipeline route alone. Every new Battalion also means an increase in extortion fees imposed on all villagers within that Battalion's reach. Families in Kanbauk area who used to have to pay porter fees, development fees, railway fees, and other additional fees to the local Battalion now have to pay those same fees to 3 or 5 Battalions at once, forcing many to sell their belongings or leave the area. Kywe-thone-nyima, Taung-kon and other villages just north of the pipeline route now have to pay pipeline fees to LIB No. 404 in Kanbauk, and are threatened with forced labor on the pipeline if they don't pay.

The combination of constant forced labour on the railway and the additional labor and extortion imposed by the pipeline security troops has proven too much for many families and has driven them into fleeing the area. However, SLORC is now actively blocking people who live close to the pipeline from fleeing toward the Thai border.

Since 1995, several farmers from Damin-seik, Hpaungdaw, Kaw-thu and Thingan-nyi-naung villages have been ordered to cut down all or part of their orchards because they will be in the way of the construction, reportedly with no compensation paid. Other farmers have also had land destroyed along the various "pipeline roads". According to the oil companies, the compensation offered is supposed to equal 5 years' projected

income from the land - for subsistence farmers who only have a few acres, whose land has been passed down through generations, this is criminal. It amounts to robbing their families of both their past and future. However, the farmers cannot dare object in the face of SPDC soldiers. Some villagers claim that even the compensation money offered is often given through the local authorities, who do not pass it on to the farmer.

Before building this gas pipeline, while the troops of Burmese Army were finding the route of gas pipeline and providing 'security' for the oil and gas firms in the jungle of Yebyu Township, they had used 'hundreds' of civilian porters to carry their food supplies and ammunitions in the jungle ways. Some porters died during this operation.

During the Burmese military regime and the multinational gas and oil firms are planning exploited the natural gas from Burma's Andaman Sea, thousands of ethnic villagers were suffered from more gross human rights violations committed by not only the troops of Burmese Army, but also by the authorities of the regime.

The following are the lists of Burmese Army's Battalions/Headquarters and its locations for the SPDC's gas pipeline projects' security.

LIB/IB No. Locations

LIB 401	Tha-pyay-chaung village, Tavoy Township
LIB 402	Zalun village, Tavoy Township and Thayet-chaung Township
LIB 403	Tha-yet-chaung Township
LIB 404	Tha-yet-chaung Township
LIB 405	Tha-yet-chaung Township
LIB 406	Dauk-lauk village, Yebyu Township
LIB 407	Pa-dauk-gone village, Yebyu Township
LIB 408	No. 1 Rubber Plantation, Yebyu Township
LIB 409	No. 1 Rubber Plantation, Yebyu Township
LIB 410	Zinba road intersection, Yebyu Township
IB 267	Tha-pyay-chaung village, Tavoy Township
IB 269	Ze-lone village, Tavoy Township

SPDC has sent over 10 Infantry Battalions, 6,000 to 7,500 troops, into the region because of the pipeline project. During 1995, offensives were mounted in the eastern part of the pipeline route near Nat-ein-taung, at the Thai border, to secure the remainder of the route. Hundreds of civilians were taken as forced porters for these offensives, some of whom died. Now there is so much Burmese military in the entire pipeline route region, even travel in the area is getting much more difficult for villagers.

B. From Kanbauk-Myaingkalav Gas Pipeline

This gas pipeline has about 120 miles and it crosses about 5 townships: Ye, Thanbyuzayat, Mudon, Moulmein and Kyaikmayaw, in Mon State. When the regime constructed Kanbauk-Myaingkalav gas pipeline in 2000 from Yatana gas pipeline in Kanbauk area via Mon State to Karen State, the lands along the gas pipeline were totally confiscated and the authorities did not give any compensation costs. Gas pipeline supplies gas as main source of energy for a cement factory in Myaingkalav village, Pa-an Township in Karen State.

This gas pipeline has had some negative impacts to the local farmers as the pipeline passes through mostly into rice fields, rubber plantations and village communities. Some villages were also forced to relocate.

First, the local authorities and Burmese Army's battalions in the area have been forcing the local Mon villagers along gas pipeline to guard for the security of pipeline on a 24 hours basis. The villagers were forced to build huts along the pipeline which were far 500 meters from one to another. At least 2 villagers have to guard in each hut and can be replaced with another group of villagers on the next day. Villagers are also forced to fence the pipelines which parts are on the ground in order to protect from the attacks by rebels. Some women who performed for security duties were also raped.

Mon farmers whose farms are in western part of pipeline have faced many difficulties in traveling to their farms. They have to cross the pipeline when they traveled by carts or by boats. The authorities also set the time when they farmers can cross the pipeline and set the location where they can cross. During rainy season when the water raised in the rivers and streams, and reached to pipeline, it makes problems for farmers who use boat and travel on the rivers or streams.

Because of lack of engineering skills in building and connecting pipelines, this gas pipeline exploded regularly. Gas explosion seriously impacted to the environments as it burnt rubber plantation, separates to the village communities, flows into rivers and streams and other negative impacts.

III. Providing forced security, unpaid labor and taxation in gas pipeline areas

Case I:

On December 6, 2005, Burmese Army's South-East Command in southern part of Burma warned to its battalion in Mon State to take security of Kanbawk-Myaingkalay gas pipeline in it's area as they believed there were anonymous groups were planning to explode the pipeline.

"Today our villagers were ordered to build some huts for No. 318 Artillery battalion in order to deploy their troops near the pipeline for their patrolling," a Hnee-Pa-Daw villager reported.

The commander, Col. Tin Tun Aung from No.4 Military Training School based in Waekali villages Thanpyuzayat Township, issued its order on November 30 after Total Company agreed to pay compensation to victims of forced labour in during the company was involving in building of Yatana gas pipeline. The commander ordered to all of its battalions in Mudon Township and Thanpyuzayat Township to get close to gas pipeline area for security. There were six battalions under his command.

"We were also ordered to check people come in and out of our village. We have to inform the army if there were some strangers entered to our village," a village headman in Thanpyuzayat said.

According to village headmen, villagers in Southern Mudon Township also were ordered to take patrolling along with soldiers. Accordingly to the order, at least two men per day are recruited from a village to take security patrolling on a rotation basic.

As the pipeline is long more than 200 Kilometers, there is a rumour that the Chief Commander in Southeast Command plans to deploy more troops. Kanbawk-Myaingkalay gas pipeline started transmitting gas from Yatana gas field in Kanbawk area, Yebyu Township, in 2002, in order to provide gas from Myaingkalay cement factory in Karen State under the management of Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE).

Case II:

During Oct and November, 2005, Villagers in southern Mon State are forced to fence bridges and guard a small motor road that follows the Yadana gas pipeline.

"The order came out since August 5 and until the end of November 2005, each household in villages situated along the motor road, where the Total Company operate a gas pipeline in Tenessarim Division, were forced to build fences around bridges with two edge bamboo and clear away bushes from the area to increase security along the pipeline. Two people from each village guard the bridges now," said a villager.

"There are over 20 bridges along the motor road; the biggest is Kalein-aung, where a portion of the Total gas pipeline is located. The SPDC Battalion No 282 takes special responsibility over its security, while some military columns from Battalion No. 473, 558 and 410 have been temporarily active around the area to prevent the Mon guerilla group, led by Nai Chan Done, to enter into the area," said by the villager.

Karen villagers of Mi-chaung-laung village near the Sub-town of Klein-aung, where the center of the pipeline station is located, were restricted from their plantations and farms at nighttime for security reasons. Human rights abuses are being committed by Burmese soldiers in areas close to the pipeline, mostly under the control of Battalion No. 282. Soldiers temporarily stationed next to villages and rob villagers at night. Mon villages in the area of the pipeline are Alesakharn, Yapu, Kyauk-ka-din and Kywe-ta-lin, theft is the most common type, incidents of rape have occurred at nights accordingly to the villagers.

"The villagers were banned to use lights at night. The military orders the villagers not to go out at nighttime, so soldiers can steal possessions such as livestock and food. This is directly the result of Burma Army 282," the villager added.

He added that the soldiers frequently extort 1500 Kyat from each of household to put into their pockets. Sometimes the people must give their livestock, such as pigs, chickens, and ducks when the military column comes by their village.

The Burmese military has forced widows and children to do the labour on most of the projects. Ms. Mi Chin, 38 years old and Mr. Nai Adain, 16 years old, from a different Mon village, were forced to work on the motor road bridges. They were forced to fence the bridge and clear away bush. "I was forced to fence the bridge and guard it. The bridge is situated near my village," he quoted Adain as saying. "Two people must guard the bridge under a rotating system."

"Two months ago, there were many local people being forced to porter, and four villagers from each village were forced to go," the villager said.

Case III:

During September and October 2005, Burma Army while guarding Total's gas pipeline in southern Burma consistently violates human rights by forcefully collecting taxes from poor villagers. The Second Commander of LIB No. 273, demanded Kyat 220,000 from two villages, after granting them permission to hold a Buddhist traditional festival last month, villagers from the area reported.

Ohn-pin-gwin and Paung-daw villages are in the area of the Total gas station in Yebyu Township, Tenasserim Division where the LIB No.273 is in charge of providing security to the Total gas pipeline.

According to a headman who spoke under condition of anonymity, the villagers were not allowed to celebrate annual festival and theater performance without first paying money to the BA Commander. The commander told them that he is responsible for the security of the gas pipeline and it shouldn't be interrupted because of the crowd in the festival.

13 buffalos belonged to villagers were seized by the Burmese Battalion and the owners were brutally tortured being accused of trying to transport them across the border to sell in Thailand.

Civilians are prevented from traveling outside the area. "We cannot travel or go back to our own village even though we show recommendation letter from the New Mon State Party," said an elderly Mon woman who recently arrived to the border.

The Mon splinter group HRP and KNU have operated guerilla warfare in the area. The ethnic nationalities in this area, Mon and Karen set up bases in jungle hideouts to fight the central government. The local people have usually supported the armed resistance groups since 1948 after Burma gained its independence from Britain. Before reaching a cease-fire agreement with the SPDC, the area was under the control of the NMSP and KNU.

The local Mon and Tavoyan have fled their villages due to hardship, poor income opportunities, and human rights violations by the Burmese security forces guarding the pipeline.

Case IV:

On September 2005, In order to secure about 200 Kilometers long Kanbauk-Myaingkalay gas pipeline that provides energy for a cement factory, a local military battalion, IB No. 61 that bases in Thanbyuzayat Town collects a half million Kyat every month from 7 Mon villages near the town.

7 villages, which are in southern part of Thanbyuzayat Township have to provide payment for the battalion as they have demanded for several months. The soldiers said that they have needed to spend money for foods and other facilities including hiring the labour in taking security for the pipeline.

7 villages that have to pay for the pipeline security fee are: Wae-ka-dar, Sa-kan, Chaw-plai, Wae-ka-made, Wae-to, Kalaing-padaw and Ywa-thar-aye.

Each household at least has to pay 2000 Kyat to the battalion through the village headmen in their villages. Then the headmen have to bring these payments to the battalion commander in town.

Similarly to these villages, the Mon villages situated in the north of Thanbyuzayat Township also have to pay the same type of security fee.

Additionally, the troops of Burmese Army also put a serious restriction against the local farmers who needed to cross along the pipeline. They allowed the farmers to cross the pipeline at day-time. Some farmers were also inhumanely treated by the soldiers if they crossed the pipeline at late evening time if the dark falls.

Since 2002, after sabotage of gas pipeline by a rebel group, the Burmese Army allowed the local farmers in area to cross the pipeline or to stay at their farms only between 6:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.

The local villagers from the villages in both northern and southern part of Thanbyuzayat Town were also forced to fence the gas pipeline after every the end of rainy season. Hundreds of villagers were forced to cut bamboo and other building materials, send to the locations where the pipeline discovered on group, and fence along with route.

This Kanbawk-Myaingkalay gas pipeline was built in 2000 by taking gas from Yatana gas field and then have provided energy to a cement factory. During the construction of this gas pipeline, many houses along the route were destroyed and the villagers were forcibly relocated.

After the construction of this pipeline, the local villagers have continuously paid for various types of fee demanded by troops and commanders of Burmese Army.

Case V: Security for Yatana Gas Pipeline:

On June 4, 2005, the villagers in the area said they have been forced to guard the road close to the Yadana gas pipeline in Tenessarim Division, Mon state, since the third week of April 2005.

"Over 50 Mon, Tavoyan and Karen villages situated along the motor road are ordered to keep watch while buses are traveling during the day," a Mon humanitarian worker told HURFOM.

One person per household from 10 Mon and Karen villages attended one-month training provided by Burma Army Light Battalions No. 282, No. 409 and No. 410. During the training the villagers had to provide their own food and drinking water," he said. LIB No. 282 has been responsible for the pipeline since it was first built in 1998.

"The Burmese Army ordered one unarmed villager per post to protect against any attack by the



Forced labour in fencing pipeline

KNU (Karen Nation Union). They watch out for any troublemakers," a local villager said. "Some women are also required to keep watch on the pipeline and other infrastructure projects. They have to walk to remote areas along the motor road to get to their post," he explained.

The Burmese Army battalions are also extorting and forcing the villagers to work and using them to

porter their supplies. Those with the money to bribe military authorities pay up to 10,000 Kyat if they want to avoid the training. The road is 100 miles long, 50 miles of which is in northern Tenessarim Division close to the KNU area where local buses were attacked last April.

Accordingly to the villagers, after the military government planned to lay a gas pipeline in the area, the villagers have faced a lot of trouble from the troops of Burmese Army. They said that even the company personnel are not involving in the abuses, but they founded that the troops those guarded the pipeline have seriously involved in violations against villagers.

While the troops of the Burma Army are guarding gas pipelines, motor road and railway road in southern Burma especially in Yebyu Township, they consistently violates human rights by forcefully collecting taxes from poor villagers.

Case VI: Porter Service by Gas Pipeline Security Troops

During January and March 2005, the troops of Burma's military regime, who are taking responsibility for the security of well-known Yadana gas pipeline to Thailand border, have constantly used villagers as unpaid porters during they lunch military offensives against the Mon Splinter group, which is a faction of Hongsawatoi Restoration Party (HRP) in Yebyu Township in the northern of Tenasserim Division, southern Burma.

"Until 4 th week of March, the Light Infantry Battalion No. 408 soldiers under the command of Major Aung Naing Myint used some villagers around Yeyyu Township as porters for carrying foods and ammunition during their operations against the Mon splinter group moving there," a villager reported.

"During the operations, they also took a 60 years old man as porter and he was later brought to the hospital for treatment. The Burmese soldiers recruited the villagers as porters twice a month Lort-thaing, Kyauk-kadin, Alae-sakan, and Kwe-talin village during they lunch operation,' he added.

"Tarkalaw, a Karen ethnic porter of 60 years old age told me that the soldiers used them for 5 days between Feb 12 and 16. They took them from Lort-thaing to Wae-peer village (in local names of the villages) in the jungle way. Before that, the porters told me that soldier also took them for two days. They have to carry army's food and ammunition supplies for about 30 miles in the jungle way," the village said.

In the first time recruitment of porters in early February, the soldiers from LIB No. 408 took two villagers from Kwe-talin village: Nai Pyay (25) and Mehm Arholl (17) and two villagers from Kyauk-din village, and one villager from Alae-sakan village. In the second time of porter recruitment, they took many villagers from Lort-thaing village, which is a Karen ethnic village.

LIB No.408 was a battalion that taking responsibility for security of Yadana Gas Pipeline that transferring gas from Kanpauk area, Tavoy district to Thailand , together with another 9 battalions of Burmese Army in the area. Those battalions are also under the command of Coastal Region Command based in Mergui, another city of Tenasserim Division . The regime SPDC also receives 400 Million US Dollar annually income from this gas pipeline, and its armed force, the Burmese Army also takes responsibility of inner and outer security for pipeline.

As the Burmese Army does not belong modernized logistics for the security of the pipeline, its troops mainly use civilian porters without payment to carry food and ammunition supplies along with them. It also becomes a normal human rights violation against the civilians during five-decades long civil war in Burma.

IV. Impact to Environment: Gas Leaks in Mon Area

In late September 2004, for the second time in a month gas leaked from the Kanbauk-Myaingkalay gas-pipeline in Mudon Township. The last time gas leakage was detected was in the end of August Last night, gas leaked in Tadar-nee, near Kwanhlar village, south of Mudon. The leakage was from near the small river beside the railway station.

The military authorities are repairing the damaged location of the pipeline after a gas-pipeline patroller informed to the local military commander in Thanpyuzayar Township of a leakage," a Kwanhlar villager said.

The Kanbauk-Myaingkalay gas pipeline transports gas from Yatana Gas Station in Tenasserim and supplies gas to a cement factory in Karen State. On August 29, there was a leakage in the same place due to the Burmese engineers' inability to connect the pieces of the pipelines. In Mon State, the gas pipeline leaks regularly and there has been explosions a couple of times last year.

If the gas explodes or leaks regularly, it will cause damage to the environment around the area. But so far we have not been affected. No one knows what will happen in the future," said a female environment worker in Mon State.

"You will notice that some plants growing near the gas pipeline are not healthy. The soil has been damaged," she added.

According to environmental workers, the leakage will cause a lot of damage to people living along the gas pipeline due to the poisonous gas emanating and mixing with water, the soil and plants. The people will face problems in their agricultural activity by and by.

Due to gas exploding or leaking, local military authorities have to release all the gas in the pipe-line while they are connecting the pipes. This creates huge fires in the area. Plants die as a result, said Wae-rak a villager in Thanpyuzayat Township.

The Kanbauk-Myaingkalay gas pipeline passes through villages, part of towns, plantations and paddy fields, where local people live. Some land was confiscated when the pipeline was being laid in 2000.

V. Logging in Mon State and Tenasserim Division

A. Logging on the rise in Mon area

Since Year of 2000-2001, many Burmese Army's battalions have deployed in southern part of Mon State. Thousands of land belonged to the Mon people in the areas concerned are confiscated. Additionally, for the construction of the battalions and daily use of wood, civilians from Mon State were ordered to collect lumber for many new battalion in Mon State.

During the end of 2004 and the beginning of 2005, the local battalions from Thanbyuzayat Township forced the civilians to cut down nearly 300 tons of lumber to construct their news bases which were under the command of Southeast Command.

A local villager said Anin and Htin-Yuu villages were busy cutting logs after receiving an order from the authorities. He added that the order they received from the village headmen was to cut down trees from our areas and saw it into lumbers. If they could not provide this amount of lumber, then they have to buy the set amount of tons in total required by the army. Because of that order, the villagers who could arrange to buy lumber from other places, they have to cut all of our rubber plantation trees.

According to the source, started to January of 2006, tree felling has increased in eastern Ye township, Mon state after the military government permitted a new company to go for logging this season.

"If the company continues logging as it does now, in the future this area will be deforested." Nai Pha, a trader told.

Last year, the military regime permitted only two companies; Htow Company and Alin-Yung-Chee Company and allowed these companies to log in Saw-Kae and Late-Poat area taking 1,000 tons of logging tax per year. But the military regime also permitted a new company called, Myuu to log in the area. The regime also gave special permission to log in northern Say Town area.

Only this company can log in the area. The company also has to pay to KNU (Karen National Liberation Army) for free logging each year. The company also has to pay the New Mon State Party per ton according to sources close to the company. The others companies paid in tons of timber to these armed groups. Myuu Company bought the area and cut even small trees. They had the permission to do so. The other two companies felled only hardwood. The top Burmese company only cut "Zee Pin" a kind of hardwood in the area. While these companies cut trees accounting for 3,000 tons per year but most of them have cut around 4,000 to 5,000 tons per year.

According to local logging businessmen, logging has not only increased in Ye area, Three Pagoda Pass in the Thai-Burma border area but also in Tenasserim division. Three Pagoda Pass areas produce more than 100 tons of logs per day and it is highest log production in southern Burma.

Burma has been listed number in the world as far as deforestation is concerned. Environment workers in Burma are worried about this and held a four-days seminar on the subject Environment workers at the seminar requested the international community and Burmese people to pressurize the Burmese military government to enact legislation to stop deforestation in the country.

**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: mforumcontact@yahoo.com
Webpages: <http://www.rehmonnya.org>

With regards,
Director
Human Rights Foundation of Monland

B. Troops earn money by making charcoal

In November 2005, in Ye Township, soldiers from the local Burmese military base have started to fell trees from plantations belonging to villagers to make charcoal and sell it, claimed the local people.

Light Infantry Battalion LIB No.299 soldiers travel by car to villager's plantations near their base and cut any tree they want. They take the timber to their base to make charcoal. They then transfer the charcoal into bags in order to sell it outside the battalion base on the main road from Ye to Tavoy. The largest bag of charcoal is priced at 750 Kyat and a small one is for 500 Kyat. Besides bags of charcoal, the army also sells wood. They also transport the charcoal and wood to Ye to get a better price, according to a sergeant in the battalion.

"We suffer from a shortage of wood due to wanton felling of trees by soldiers," said Saw-ka-paw. According to villagers, they do not dare complain when they see soldiers cutting their trees. Usually about 10 soldiers in a car go to plantations nearby to cut trees. Some of their families do the same thing. Fruits grown in the plantations are also taken away, claimed local people.

Fruits such as areca nut, lemon, and coconut were taken from the villager's plantations and sent to Ye town, a villager from Ko-mile said. With soldiers stealing fruits and other farm produce local people have to pay extra attention to save their crop.

C. Logging by a pro-SPDC armed group in the Mon area

A pro-SPDC outfit armed group, the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKB A), has cut thousands tons of logs in southern Burma including in areas occupied by the local population. This armed group surrendered



Kanbauk-Myaingkalay gas pipeline in Mon State

to the Burmese Army or SPDC since 1993 and it gets a special business opportunity to do any type of business and they are allowed by the regime.

Recently, the DKBA soldiers even invaded into Mon villagers' plantations and farms in Ye Township and cut trees for their own business. A trader from northern Ye, Mon State said, "They even go and cut down trees in the villagers gardens. The villagers are afraid to stop them because they hold guns and the Burmese soldiers have to turn a blind eye". Even the villagers did not satisfy much but they had no place to complain.

"The DKBA enters the pristine forested area in the northeastern part of Ye Township and cuts thousands of tons of trees for logging business", confirmed a New Mon State Party official from Ye.

The Karen armed group who surrendered to the Burmese Army receives logging concessions from the regime's forestry department. It was reported that the DKBA aggressively cuts the trees close to the NMSP controlled area and even sometimes enters into the NMSP area.

According to the source, thousands of tons of logs in Pa-an Township and Battalion No. 999 of the DKBA areas are being cut down; the "Pago Yoma" range in Pegu Division is also under the logging concessions provided by SPDC's forestry department.

DKBA again contacted businessmen to transport logs and lumber to Mon and Karen States for construction of houses and other building and use in many other purposes. To promote their logging concession, the DKBA sells lumber to Buddhist monks at a low price to build monasteries in Mon and Karen States. The DKBA is exempt from paying an illegal tax to the Burmese Army along the way while ordinary traders have to pay when passing their checkpoints.

VI. Conclusion

Under the rule of the military regime in Burma - SPDC, it has sold out almost the natural resources from Burma which belonged to the ethnic nationalities to the neighboring countries and multi-national companies in order to obtain hard currency, US Dollar.

After over 15 years of its rule, the local people have founded there are many negative environmental impacts to the Mon people and wanted to protect their environment. But the regime has oppressed them and kept them silence to not talk loud on the environmental issues.

