

The Mon Forum

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Some Acronyms in This Issue

DTA-	Double Taxation Agreement,
ILO-	International Labour Organization,
IB-	Infantry Battalion,
TPDC-	Township Peace and Development Council,
VPDC-	Village Peace and Development Council,

News

Authorities force Buddhist teachings in Burmese instead of Mon

May 7, 2007

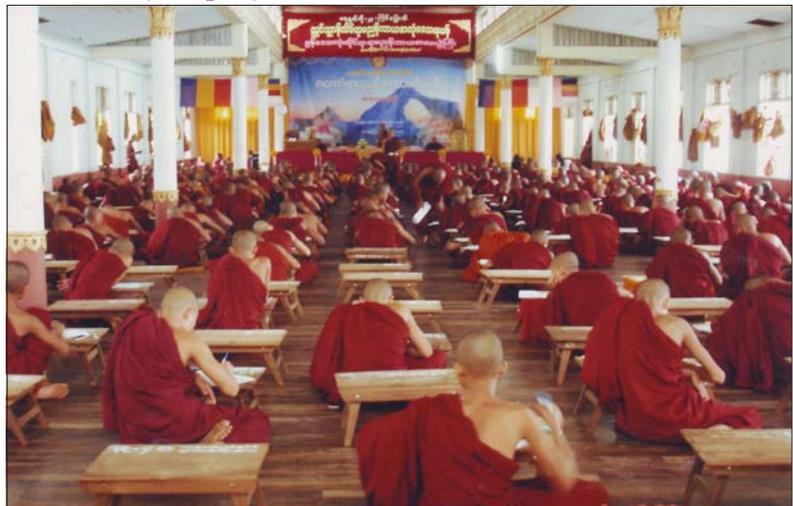
A reading session of Buddhist teachings (Damma Jark) in Mon language was forcibly changed into Burmese by military authorities in Khaw-Zar town, Southern Mon state recently.

“Almost everything was changed including the title. We were ordered to change it into Burmese. We have been reading Buddhist teachings (Damma Jark) for a couple of years, but this is the first time we were forced to change the signboard title,” a monk explained.

The Township Peace and Development Council chairman U Kyaw Moe ordered taking Buddhist precept in Burmese. He also ordered the local abbot to wait for a day before the closing the ceremony even after the monks had finished the reading.

Khaw-Zar town is a Mon village and the military government upgraded it and set up its administration in recent years to take control of the area.

Before the strongest Mon armed group, the New Mon State Party (NMSP) reached a ceasefire agreement, Khaw-Zar town area was controlled by the party.



Mon Monks Taking Exam in Ye Township

Ensure SPDC's Political Will in Prohibiting Forced Labour

In the years since International Labour Organization (ILO) set up its Liaison Office in Rangoon (Yangon), there has been no good collaboration offered by ruling regime, the SPDC, in order to eradicate all forms of forced labour happening in both urban and rural areas.

The SPDC has thus far refused to show its 'political will' in the eradication of forced labour. In order to save face in the international community, the SPDC issued orders in 1999 and in 2000 in the village communities and cities informing local authorities not to use 'forced labour'. But the SPDC really did not have any enforcement policy to take actions against those committing conscription of forced labour.

Since 2000, the conscription of forced labour has not totally stopped, as the local authorities still use the villagers in some self-help development projects and troops of Burmese Army widely use porters in the frontline.

In this 2006/7 Ye township, the use of forced labour by local military battalions continues. The troops and commanders have changed in Ye Township, but the use of villagers in military operations and development projects has not.

Currently, the SPDC is promising to collaborate with ILO Liaison Office in Rangoon. The promise was prompted by the international pressure on the SPDC to cooperate with the ILO. Therefore, we need to ensure whether that the SPDC has a strong desire to cooperate with ILO and perform their responsibilities in punishing their men who are involved in the conscription of forced labour.

The ILO needs to make sure that the SPDC is not just paying lip service and making cosmetic changes and promises.

After the cease-fire the Burmese military regime took over the area. Then it started to forcibly close down Mon National Schools that were run by the NMSP. The junta's administration set up Burmese schools in the area.

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Burma Army Major goes on the rampage with gun in Ye Township

24 April, 2007

An inebriated and trigger happy Maj Aung Naing Win, sub battalion commander of No.586 battalion of the Burmese Army, fired from his gun creating panic among the people at the funeral of a monk in Ye Township.

According to a source the Major not only fired but also flayed his fists at the village headman without any reason. He also scared two women by following them in a drunken state.

The village called A-Baroy, about 10 miles from Ye, was arranging for the funeral of a monk on April 21. The army battalion No. 586 is based around the area.

Maj Aung Naing Win was invited by the former village headman, Nai Kjar and had come with four soldiers and drank beer at a food shop called Aung Than.

The Major asked a waitress, Mi Yin age (30), what meat was available to go with the beer. She said pork and chicken. However the Major said that he wanted to eat human flesh and Mi Yin said he could strip meat from his body if he wanted to eat it so badly.

Mi Yin ran away from the shop because the Major pointed his gun at her because of her cheeky reply, the source added.

The soldiers spent Kyat 108,000 which including the price of the beer. The Major broke a table in the food shop.

The drunk Major started shooting. He went to the monastery at noon to have lunch. There he frightened a young girl of 20, Mi Moe Wah and followed her till her house.

Major Aung Naing Win returned to the shop and fired the gun twice in the air and kicked at tables, chairs, glasses and beer bottles.

As a military officer, Maj Aung Naing Win's behaviour is unacceptable, said a monk. As an army man he should take care and handle problems if the soldiers create such a situation.

The village headman Nai Myint Oo came to the food shop where the ceremony was being held and was

being hospitable to the soldiers from the battalion. However, the Major asked about the village headman's academic background and he did not allow Nai Myint Oo to sit on a chair because he had not passed the tenth grade, the sources said.

Moreover, the Major shook his fist many times at Nai Myint Oo face when he tried to stop him and Nai Nyo was injured in his leg from shards of glass from the broken beer bottles.

The monks from the monastery came to the food shop and persuaded the Major to go back to the

battalion and put a stop to the unseemly behaviour and stop frightening the people. It took half an hour to make him leave because he kept refusing, said a monk.

Later the villagers found out that the former village headman Nai Kjar invited the soldiers and the Major in order to create an ugly situation at the ceremony. Nai Kjar who lost his post of A-Baroy village headman a few months ago admitted that he had invited the Major to A-Baroy village with such intent.



Gas pipeline blast burns rubber plantation

Fri 23 Mar 2007

The bane of people in Mon State, the Burmese military junta's unsafe gas pipeline, from Kanbawk-Myaingkalay (Yadana Gas Pipeline) has exploded yet again, destroying 150 plants in an acre of rubber plantation seven miles from Ye Town.

An eye witness said, about 150 plants which have already produced rubber sap were incinerated and the plants surrounding these turned brown due to the fire when the pipe broke at a joint of two sections and exploded.

SPDC usually accuses armed groups of being involved in the blasts in the past. There was no clear evidence that suggests which arm groups were involved in the latest blast. Most explosions occur where two pipe sections break up. Usually this is caused by pipeline engineers not providing good enough connections between sections of the pipe.

The explosion occurred on March 18, at 4 p.m. and the fire was put out at midnight after firemen arrived from Ye town.

After the joint was repaired the next day, villagers from 9 miles Village (close to Ye township) were forced to cover the pipe, the eye witness said. There

was no compensation paid to the rubber plant owner following the blast, he added.

The gas project is based in Kanbawk (Yebyu Township) and the State Peace and Development Council's target is to sell gas to Thailand. But some of the gas is transported to Myaingkalay cement factory, in Karen State from Kanbawk Yebyu Township.

Even though the gas pipeline which flows to Thailand is covered, the section through Kanbawk to Myaingkalay under SPDC management often breaks and explodes. It has happened many times in the past year.

The blasts affect the lives of local villagers. They also have to guard stretches of the pipeline day and night depending on the situation and the rules set by the authorities from time to time.

For instance, the gas pipeline exploded in Kwan-hlar village on February 2, last year and the residents living along the pipeline including Kwan-hlar, Young-doung, Hnee-padaw, Doe-mar, Kalawthut, and other villages in Mudon Township have had to guard the pipe line both in the day and at night time for one year now. They also have to make monthly payments to the village peace and development council for local security guards.



Villagers Paid Taxes to work in Thailand

14 May, 2007

In Pangone Village, Paung township, the civilians were taxed 10,000 kyats for each person who worked in Thailand by the police.

A villager from Pangone, said the villagers couldn't refuse to pay to the district police officer as they taxed coming to home.

The police officer Aung Min Lwin asked money those who go to work or come back for work from Thailand. He (the police) didn't consider for the workers who don't bring back money and arrested by Thai police, he added.

The demand taxes by police in the village have been occurred for a long time. But no one dares to speak

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Report

SPDC Development Bridges Project and Civilian Labor Conditions

I. Introduction

Forced Labor Convention and Government Development Projects in Burma.

The Burmese military regime (State Peace and Development Council- SPDC), agreed in 1999 to a Forced Labour Convention with the International Labour Organisation (ILO). The Convention, known as Supplementary Order 1/99, set out the manner in which all uses of forced labour were to be eliminated throughout Burma. Today, eight years after the agreement, the SPDC continues to renege on its commitment to eradicate forced labour practices throughout the country. The issue of forced labour has effected much of the civilian population, especially in the region of southern Burma, in particular the residents of Mon state. The government's attempts to curtail the rebel Mon groups in southern Burma, in conjunction with the implementation of government development projects, have given rise to the conditions whereby the military has had occasion to use forced labour.

Although 1995 saw the conclusion of a ceasefire agreement between the New Mon State Party (NMSP) and the SPDC, fighting has continued in the south. A break away group of rebels, dissatisfied with the terms of the ceasefire, have continued hostilities against the government's forces. The SPDC has sought to bring this group under control with increased military sorties into the ceasefire areas. The greater military presence in such areas has occasioned well documented, ongoing human rights abuses brought about by the use of forced labour.

Following the ceasefire, the SPDC has implemented administrative changes in Southern Burma. Khaw Zar village for example was upgraded to "sub township" level. At the time, Khaw-Zar was home to around 800 households. The upgrade meant an improvement in infrastructure requiring roads, bridges and improvements in security. This meant in essence, increasing the amount of military battalions in the area.

The move from village to sub township level obliged the SPDC to form the USDA to take care of administration and welfare concerns and to keep an eye on local uprisings, demonstrations and the activities of Mon rebel groups. These administrative groups required offices and building and the SPDC has used civilians in the construction of buildings for the USDA, the Welfare Association and the Local Administration as well as roads and bridges for the town.

There are two outcomes for Mon State stemming from the military's attempts to control rebel groups. Firstly, there are the increased troop numbers needed for outright confrontation with the rebels. Secondly there are increased troops numbers that are needed to contribute to the construction, and protection of, infrastructure projects. These projects serve dual purposes for the regime. The improvements in transportation through better highways and railways facilitate greater ease of troop movements thereby reducing reaction time for responding to threats from rebel groups. In the second instance, the projects can be used for propaganda purposes, demonstrating the manner in which the regime serves the people's interests through public works. The element of the projects that are not related to the general public are the ways in which these projects allow the military to coerce civilians into bonded labour.

The SPDC's development projects have given rise to uses of forced labour in various guises. The building of bridges, railways, highways and gas pipelines are the main projects which have made use of forced labourers. These projects require large amounts of manpower, which the military usually draws from those villagers who live in the vicinity of the projects. Those that cannot work or can afford not to go, must send a person to replace them on the work sites. The cost of a replacement labourer is between 1500 and 5000 Kyat, depending upon the location. The conditions for these labourers are highly unfavourable and they are often beaten. Some workers report having been shot at for lateness and then

charged by the army for the bullets. Children as young as ten have been recruited into forced labour to work on government projects. The military is also responsible for hiring porters to carry supplies and ammunition, often having the porters act as human mine sweepers by making them walk ahead of platoons in case rebels have planted mines along the roads.

Forced labour is also used to build housing for the military units who are involved in the construction or guarding of the projects, in particular the gas pipelines which are so lucrative to the regime. Villagers have also been forced to perform maintenance of the pipelines as well as provide guard patrols to protect from rebels who at times seek to sabotage the pipelines.

In all these instances of forced labour, the villagers are not compensated for their labour, nor for the time that they are taken away from their individual enterprises, resulting in a loss of income for people who are already poor. Further, forced labourers are expected to bring their own food and water.

II. Background of Ye Town- ship and Impact of Forced Labor on Civilians

SPDC has used civilians for its development projects in the belief that this will help them get the projects finished. The name for the use of civilians on development projects in this manner is Ku Htoo Ku Htta.

Most of the suffering of civilians used in these projects is hidden from the international community. Civilians are forced to provide their labor for free and this has the effect of preventing them from working on their private enterprises which are not even very lucrative in the first place. Many workers wish to refuse to go and labour on these projects but are unable to pay replacement workers.

The SPDC use civilian labourers for roughly half to a third of the labour force necessary to complete these infrastructure projects. By using civilians and not compensating them, the military is able to expropriate the left over funds that have been granted to pay wages to normal labourers, thus contributing to the rampant corruption in the military in Burma.

The SPDC has in the past refused to cooperate with the ILO in investigating ongoing forced labour issues in southern Mon State. Faced with ILO requests for access to the areas concerned, the SPDC has used the excuse of security concerns, raised by the operations of Mon rebels operating in the area, as a legitimate reason for refusing the ILO access to the areas where forced labour is used.

Even though the ILO has been refused access to southern Mon State, the SPDC still fears that news of the use of forced labour may still leak out. In this regard the SPDC has restricted civilian travel and the use of international phone calls. Information about human rights abuse in Southern Ye still reaches the outside world however through human rights field reporters and journalists. According IMNA (Independent Mon News Agency), Southern Ye faces the most egregious human rights abuses in Mon State.

According to an IMNA report, the order to use forced labour comes from locally based military officers. The report details that military orders go to village headmen, who then set about organizing civilians. Civilians say that headmen assert that the military would pay around Kyat 2,500 per day for their labour, although they would have to provide their own food and equipment for use in constructions.

According to NMSP, the bridge projects are part of the military planning in the case of breaches in the cease fire. Before the ceasefire was agreed in 1995, the army did not have sufficient infrastructure in place in order to be able to fight the MNLA (Mon National Liberation Army) effectively in Southern Ye. The present cease fire allows the SPDC forces to beef up infrastructure that would facilitate greater troop and materiel movements more easily, through the implementation of bridge, highway and rail projects. The protection of projects whilst they are in the construction phase also provides the excuse for a greater troop presence in Southern Ye, despite the ceasefire.

III. Army's Use of Forced Labor on Bridge Constructions

Khaw-Zar Sub Town has seen the construction of sixteen bridges between the heights of 10-30 feet. There are also thirty bridges of under 10 feet. The bridges were originally built in 2002 and are being repaired or rebuilt. Many civilians have been used in the reconstructions and many who could not afford to contribute their labour fled the area.

A particular site of many human rights violations was the construction of the 400 foot long bridge



The Civilian forced to Labor in Bridge Development Project

built in 2002 in the village of Kabya-Wa. The bridge was built in by the Burmese Army when it launched a large military operation in the area in response to Mon rebel activity. Human rights violations against forced labourers lasted through several months of the bridge's construction.

The second longest bridge at 150 feet, was built between Hangkan and Singu villages. The bridge is called Paya Taung's Bridge. The bridge, formerly wooden, has been rebuilt with cement and stone. The reconstruction of the bridge begun in 2005, and is still under construction. The bridge will be finished next year, according to a

civilian who has been forced working in the construction.

In the building of that bridge, many groups of carpenters and masons were used in rotating shifts. A worker forced to labour on the site of the bridge related the following account; "if we build a bridge, the villagers have to collect the stones from the valley. They have to collect the sand from the stream. The group of masons had to start the work first. After that, we have to start the part of carpenters. They have to do again when we finished our part. We take turns one after another. We work when they stopped and they work when we stopped".

"The bricks are taken from the farm which is in the north of the Khaw-Zar. These are the bricks of the battalion. As for the cement, they took one sac from one person after another. For example, they may find a villager who went outside the village or go to his/her garden without any permission and they would then arrest the villager by accusing him/her of giving illegal taxes to the rebels. At that time, the villager has to be punished or arrested. At minimum, he/she has to give one sac of cement."

When the military found privately owned timber which fits the dimensions they need, or when they found the ironwood, they simply confiscate it and take it away in trucks. Villagers are also forced to work by taking turns at carrying cement. They do not need to buy anything. The only one thing that they give is just the iron nail and the nail which is used for the railway" said a 45-years-old carpenter. He continued explaining how to get the necessary materials for building the bridge, he added.

"The time left to do our own work is less than two weeks in a month. If we compare their work to our work, their work will be more than ours. We have to build the bridges. For now, we have finished building three bridges. There are two bridges between Khaw-Zar and **Tar-Bound**. There is one bridge between Han-Gan village and Singu village. We don't want to go to the bridge between Han-Gan and Singu. It is about 15 miles away from our village. But, the leader of Khaw-Zar Township asks us gently to work for half a day. We go to work because we feel consideration toward him. Actually, the bridge is not finished in a working day. So, we have to sleep there. It is finished the next day. I remember that it is the first time that they treat us to meals over there. Normally we have to provide our own meal here" said a 40-years-old mason from Khaw-Zar Township.

Moreover, there were two more bridges. One bridge is between Toe That Ywa Thit village and Singu village. It is over 40 feet long. Another bridge is between Toe Tat Ywa Thit village and Yin-Yae village. It is over 35 feet long. Villagers in both locations were tasked with building the bridges. "It takes a month to build them with the labor of the villagers. It cost over 3 millions kyat for each bridge without the cost of the villager's labor" said two villagers from villages who had to lead the construction. "In building these two bridges, each household from Toe That Ywa Thit village has had to give 1500 Kyat. In Yin-Ye village, we had to give between 2000-8000 Kyat", continued the villagers. If the cost of the villager's labor is included, the estimated cost for each bridge will be about 4 million Kyat.

Excluding the bridges in Kyong Ka Nyar and Mi Htar Lar villages in Khaw-Zar Township, the cost of all the rest of the bridges would be over 300 million Kyat.

A. Sand and Stone

In order to construct bridges, the Army requires one person per household to work on construction sites daily. The Army shows no discrimination, taking men, women and children as labourers. Women and children are used to stockpile materials for building, such as sand and stone, from the river outside the village.

Nai Dot (not real name), a 45 year old Yin-ye villager who has already been forced into bridge construction work three times previously, reported that in the third week of January, 2007, Lieutenant Colonel Kyaw Myint and his troops from the Southeast Command based in Moulmein, the capital of Mon State, called a meeting with villagers from Yin-Yae and Toe Tat Ywa Thit at Yin-Yae village hall to get villagers to participate in the government development projects.

He has previously been forced to work as an unpaid laborer on bridge constructions along the Ye-Tavoy motor road by SPDC's Infantry Battalion No. 31 based near Khaw-Zar Sub Town.

With the cooperation of the local Township's administration groups, the commander of the local Infantry Battalion coordinated two groups of unpaid laborers and demanded each group be made up of 15 people that must include some local carpenters from the villages under the Khaw-Zar Sub Township.

Later on, the local army officer from IB 31 and Khaw-Zar Sub Township's peace and development committee's chairman U Kyaw Moe demanded the villagers work on building bridges and roads and that they support themselves while they did so.

"It is very difficult situation for me to survive as a carpenter in this village. They (the local authorities) need me to work in their bridge construction project. But I have my private work to do for my family to survive. How can I refuse their order? I decided to hire another man who can go and work instead of me at a cost of kyat 5,000 per day. I have to pay for 15 days to complete my obligation. If people don't participate in the bridge construction work, they have to contribute cement for the bridge. People are afraid of such punishment," claimed an unnamed carpenter from Yin-Yae village, Southern Ye Township, Mon State.

Hla Maung, a 35 year old Yin-Yae villager said "They (local military unit) gave us only 20 cement bags per bridge. They ordered us to repair two bridges in southern and northern Toe Tat Ywa Thit village. The length of each bridge is about 20 yards. Both wooden bridges are very old and about to collapse".

He said the local administration collected money to the tune of about Kyat 15,000 from each house in Toe Thet Ywar Thit, and also collected between Kyat 2,000- 8,000 per house in Yin-Yae village. Toe Tat Ywa Thit has over 200 households and Yin-ye about 400.

According to the Yin-Yae villager, about 140 villagers including 80 from Yin-Yae and 60 from Toe Tat Ywa Thit village, have being forced to build a bridge in northern and southern Toe Tat Ywa

This village since the first week of February, 2007. The local authorities also collected sand, stones, rock, and concrete for the bridge construction along Ye-Tavoy motor road.

“My village has four quarters. Three quarters had to procure three huge poles for the bridge and the fourth quarter had to collect construction material such as sand, stones, cements and wood for the bridge construction,” reported one forced labor victim, Hla Maung from Yin-Yae village.

According to a source closed to the Township’s administration group, the bridge construction projects were ordered by the State’s Military Operational Management Command, based in Moulmein in order to upgrade the Ye-Tavoy military transportation routes. The bridges and roads are SPDC projects that are alleged to bring about equitable development nationwide and ensure national unity

B. Timber Collection and Making Bricks

The Army cut down privately owned timber from villagers’ plantations, using two machines in Khaw Zar sub-Township. Although they paid for the fuel for the operation they used the villagers as labour to cut down their own trees. Following the felling of the trees, the Army used the villagers’ trucks to transport the timber to bridge building sites.

The Army has also been responsible for ordering villagers to cut down and collect a specific type of



Army brick kiln development project in Khaw-Zar Sub Town

timber that is used for firing bricks by the Commander of the Burmese Army based in Khaw-Zar sub township, southern Burma. Khaw-Zar Township Mon State has three brick kilns, including two owned by No.31 Infantry Battalion and one belonging to the Deputy Commander. Two are located in Khaw-Zar Town and one in Yin-ye village.

To continue the production of bricks everyday, the kiln needs wood. While transporting wood, most villages in Khaw-Zar do not get money from the army. Only Toe Thet Ywa This villagers were paid by the army

authorities, a Toe Thet Ywa This villager said.

A monk in Toe That Ywa This village had said that if the battalion wants to get wood, they must give money to villagers. If they don’t pay, the villagers will not send it.

A villager said that the army was afraid of the monk because the monk is brave. They (army) gave about Kyat 250,000 to Toe Thet Ywa This village to hire vehicles for ferrying the wood.

“That’s why the army took less wood from that village. But the other villagers were ordered to send a lot of timber because the army did not need to pay the money and received wood free of cost,” he added.

The cost of sending wood to the factory is about Kyat 5,000 per vehicle. “We were forcibly made to work for the army battalions,” a daily worker in Khaw-Zar said. The army sells machine made and hand made bricks for Kyat 35 a piece, in and around Ye area. If customers buy army bricks, they send it to the customers’ house in requisitioned vehicles.

Four families are having to collect a four feet square pile of wood, which they have to pile beside the main road for easy carriage to the factories. This has been going on since the first week of last month April 2007. Moreover, about 15 villagers are being forced to work every alternate day in the brick kilns.

C. Cement

When building bridges, the SPDC provides a mere ten percent of the cement necessary for the construction leaving it up to the villagers to provide the remaining ninety percent from their own pockets.

According to a Yin-ye villager who has been forced into bridge construction work for the third time, Lieutenant Colonel Kyaw Myint from the Southeast Command based in Moulmein, the capital of Mon State called a meeting of some villagers from Yin-ye and Toe Thet Ywar Thit at Yin-ye village in the end of January to issue orders..

The Yin-ye villager said “They (local military unit) gave us only 20 cement bags per bridge. They ordered us to construct two bridges in southern and northern Toe Thet Ywar Thit village. The length of the bridges is about 20 metres.” Both bridges are very old and built from timber.

He said the local administration collected money to the tune of about Kyat 15,000 from each house in Toe Thet Ywar Thit, and also collected between Kyat 2,000-8,000 per house in Yin-ye village. Toe Thet Ywar Thit has over 200 households and Yin-ye about 400.

According to the Yin-ye villager, about 140 villagers including 80 from Yin-ye and 60 from Toe Thet Ywar Thit village are being forced to build a bridge in northern and southern Toe Thet Ywar Thit village with construction beginning on February 2. They also collected sand, stones or rock, and concrete for the bridge.

Yin-ye village has four quarters. Three quarters had to procure huge poles for the bridge, and the fourth quarter collected material needed for mixing cement. Civilians unable or unwilling to go to work have to contribute funds for cement costs

D. Commandeering Trucks

Private vehicle owners in Khaw -Zar Sub Town have been forced to provide two trucks for the Army to transport workers to building sites. The trucks used in the transportation of forced labourers are to be ready at 9 a.m every morning. There has been no compensation to the owners of the vehicles.

Two passengers trucks in Khaw-Zar Sub town have been forced to provided to the army LIB No.31 each day to bring the civilian to go to the forced labor. The trucks are to be ready every morning at 9 a.m. Failure to comply with these orders means facing a fine of Kyat 15,000

According to a HURFOM field reporter, each family had to pay a set amount of money, except the families of the government employees, members of the village administration group and members of the Union Solidarity and Development Association. Each house was forced to pay for Kyat 2,000 for the truck's fuel and in the village, the local authority demanded a total of Kyat 600,000, according to a villager in Yin Tang village.

“This has been happening since the first week of February of this year in our village. The order was given by commander Bo Ba Lay (Major Kyaw Zay Ya) from Infantry Battalion No. 31 based in Khaw-Zar Sub Town. He demanded all private truck owners in each village in Khaw-Zar Township to supply two trucks per day for his battalions to use and one for Township PDC office use,” according to an anonymous truck owner who lives in Yin-Dein village, Khaw-Zar Sub Township, Mon State.

According to Nai Win Aung (not real name), a 45 year old truck owner from Khaw-Zar Sub Town, his truck has been used without compensation several times. He heard that the order to



Commanderating Truck Bringing Stone

commandeer vehicles was conceived by U Kyaw Moe, Township PDC Chairman of Khaw-Zar Sub Town and Bo Ba Lay from IB No. 31. The local authorities also passed this order on to each village public transportation association in Khaw-Zar Sub Township and demanded that they required sixty trucks per month from them to use in the battalion and township administration groups.

“We have to arrive at the battalion and township PDC’s office compound at 9:00 AM. They normally

use the trucks for taking villagers to their work site, carrying wood or fuel for the battalion owned brick mills, carrying bricks back to the battalion and transporting military troops to Ye Town or wherever they would like to go. If the truck owners failed to carry out their duty, they must pay Kyat 20,000 as a fine to the battalion” said a truck owner from Khaw-Zar Sub Town.

“They use our trucks as their private trucks. My truck had been used for transporting the spouse of the Township PDC Chairman for her shopping trips to Ye township. Very often I had to pick up their children from school with no compensation. Also along the trip, I have to buy my own food and water but I don’t dare to refuse the command,” claimed by a truck owner from Yin-Yae village, Khaw-Zar Township.

In Mon State, the State authorities’ commandeering of private motor vehicles for VIP transport or for military uses, without compensating the owners, is a very common form of rights violation. The practice is particularly widespread in Southern Burma.

IV. Advantage and Disadvantage

There are some advantages in terms of trade and ease of traveling flowing from the military run development projects for the local population. The area has a high production rate of agricultural products that need access to markets, the best of which are located in Ye. Although the best prices were offered in Ye, previously this was a difficult market to reach due to the difficulty of travel caused in part by broken bridges. New infrastructure makes the old voyage time of twelve hours between Khaw-Zar and Ye much shorter.

However this benefit to the general populace is also a boon to the regime’s ability to more easily facilitate troop movement. Further, it allows easier transportation of military material. This improvement in infrastructure translates into greater ability of the Army to bring rebellious regions back under control.

Increased troop presence in southern Burma means that civilians now face traveling restrictions. The military have established curfews that civilians must adhere to. Any travel must now be registered with the locally based battalions.

Another consequence of the increased military presence is that civilians are now faced with various form of illegal taxation and forced labour. Forced labour takes many forms included compulsory guarding of villagers in regions which are theatres for Mon splinter groups operations. Civilians are forced to post guards 24 hours a day in these places.

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 2237, General Post Office
Bangkok 10501, THAILAND
E-mail: [hurformcontact@yahoo.com](mailto:hurfomcontact@yahoo.com)
Website: <http://www.rehmonnya.org>

With regards,

Director
Human Rights Foundation of Monland

V. Conclusion

Despite the agreement with the ILO, the Burmese regime has thus far failed to fully comply with its obligations. Further, the regime has been less than cooperative. The ILO for its part has been very dissatisfied with the military government, going so far as to threaten the imposition of sanctions at the UN, which would in effect block exports of Burmese goods to foreign countries. Due to these threats of sanction, pro military factions within the country have suggested the expulsion of the ILO from the country. Many within pro government factions are disgruntled with the fact that Burmese military officers who have utilised forced labour previously are being brought to justice through the court system.

Members of the National League for democracy (NLD) had proposed the cases against the military officers. In retaliation for this agitation, Su Su Nwe was imprisoned, then later released due to pressuring of the regime from the ILO.

Two weeks ago, two Burmese military officers were sentenced to six months jail, and since that time the SPDC has agreed to talk again with the ILO again.

The ILO has given Burma's military government until June to make a serious effort toward curtailing the use of forced labour in Burma. In 2001 after the ILO applied pressure, the military junta agreed to work with the ILO on reforms or face possible economic sanctions by member states. Subsequently, the government introduced laws banning the use of forced labour. However widespread labour rights violations have continued. The ILO has found little evidence to suggest that the government has made much effort to prevent forced labour. In March 2006 the ILO again gave the Burmese government until June to make real progress or face sanctions by ILO member

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out to the media groups outside the country according to the villager.

There were a village called Kyaik Paw village, in Pegu township and the villagers spoke to the media groups about the police corrupted to the civilians worked in Thailand, after the news released, the villagers were more restricted working in Thailand according to the boy.

Burma restricted Burmese people working in Thailand and announced a statement to sentence people who are agent migrants.

However, as the corruption among the military officers, the law doesn't effect to the country and as inflation and unemployed the civilians, million of people searched for job in Thailand.

states.

In its propaganda the SPDC maintains to the national and international community that they have undertaken development projects, such as bridges, in order to improve transportation, to develop the local areas and for the sake of civilians. But, there are now millions of people who have left their home towns since 2002. Some of those people left their towns because they could not bear the mistreatment of SPDC. Some of them left their towns to seek work in foreign countries. On the other hand, there are numerous people inside the country who, unable to flee, still bear the mistreatment of the SPDC.



Civilian Piling cement for building the bridge in Development project in Khaw-Zar

In positive news, the Irrawaddy magazine reported in late February that a new agreement has been reached between the ILO and the SPDC. The agreement labeled an “*Understanding with the Government of Myanmar*” which allows those who accuse the government of using them as forced labour an avenue for seeking justice. The agreement means that those with complaints can freely present their cases to the ILO Office in Rangoon (Yangon) for an assessment. These cases will be open to investigation by the authorities. Unlike the case above that lead to the jailing of Su Su Nwe, the new agreement guards against retaliatory action. A further provision grants the ILO Liason Officer the ability to travel within the country in order to meet with those with complaints.

As stated earlier this appears to be a progressive step from the regime in the direction of transparency. Optimism must be tempered however, by the fact that the agreement has a lifespan of a mere twelve months, even if it re-negotiable after the deadline has passed. The previous behaviour of the regime must also be taken into account. Following the Forced Labour Convention of 1999, the regime showed very little willingness to help the ILO in the implementation of the agreement, and just as it has with the operation of NGO’s, has severely restricted the space in which the ILO can conduct its affairs in Burma.

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