

# The Mon Forum

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## Some Acronyms in This Issue

LPN-	Labour Rights Promotion Network
ILO-	International Labour Organization,
IB-	Infantry Battalion,
MRP-	Monland Restoration Party,
VPDC-	Village Peace and Development Council,
LIB-	Light Infantry Battalion,
NMSP-	New Mon State Party,
MNLA-	Mon National Liberation Army,

## News

### University students forced to grow physic nuts in Moulmein

July 5, 2007

It was reported that on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, in Mon States's capital city of Moulmein, professors from Moulmein University forced their students to plant physic nut plants. According to a reliable source close to a Moulmein University professor, the order was given by Major General Thet Naing Win, Chairman of the Mon State Peace and Development Council and the head of Southeast Command.

“The professors hung the order sheet signed by Mon State PDC Chairman Major General Thet Naing Win on the announcement board on June 28, 2007. The orders stated that every student currently studying at Moulmein University must participate in the Physic Nuts Growing Ceremony on July 2, 2007,” said Maung Win (not real name), a 20 year old science student currently studying at Moulmein University.

“Only about 200 students went to the celebration due to heavy rains. Also many students didn't attend because they couldn't understand the meaning of the celebration,” he added. Most of the senior students said that the Mon State PDC was trying to show the media that even university students are interested in participating in the government's plan to solve Burma's fuel problems.



A Government's physic nuts plantation near Moulmein City, Mon State

## ASEAN Charter and Human Rights Promotion in the Region

Recently, HURFOM had an opportunity for the meeting with the regional Human Rights NGOs and consulted for the input in ASEAN Charter, which the ASEAN countries are in drawing process.

Although ASEAN has been formed for many years and allowed non-democratic countries into group, it is the first time they try to set a common agreement for human and regional security, economic development and cooperation. We also welcome this development in our region.

However there have been different level of respecting human rights in ASEAN countries, which some have good records, while some like Burma has a very bad records. The ASEAN still does not have a criteria or standard for all member countries to respect, protect and promote human rights in the region.

HURFOM also expects that there will be a need of a human rights monitoring body in ASEAN in order to monitor and evaluate 'human rights' standard of all members. Additionally, the member countries also have to respect 'standard' of human rights that they agree in the ASEAN Charter.

A tutor and 40 students from each of Moulmein's 14 majors were instructed to participate in the Ceremony, taking place at Thaug-Wine quarter, near the university campus.

The students had to sign in to prove they attended the celebration. Those students who were absent were punished by their professors. Before the Physic Nuts Growing Ceremony began, the teachers/tutors announced that students participating had been counted as attending class for the day.

"Who thinks the government projects will meet the aimed goals? The government should consider what they have been doing to the civilians. Many people think that this is just one of the government's many false projects and is only aimed at earning extra income for them (the government's servants)," Nai Thin (not real name), a 65 year old political observer from Moulmein, said when asked about his opinion regarding the government's Physic Nuts project.

Since the beginning of the rainy season the Mon State PDC has been persuading the residents of townships, sub townships and village tracts all over Mon State and Karen State to participate in the Physic Nuts Growing Ceremonies.

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### Twenty one Thai phone owners arrested in Karen State

July 16, 2007

Over the past two weeks, local Burmese military authorities in Karen State have arrested 21 owners of Thai-wireless telephones in Zarthapyin village, Hpa-

an Township, near Moulmein (Mawlamyine).

"We don't know why they arrested these 21 people," said a Zarthapyin villager.

"On July 1<sup>st</sup>, they asked local telephone owners whether they wanted to pay a fine or to be jailed," said a source who attended the meeting between the local authorities and the phone owners.

"They identified themselves as local, government groups and arrested them," he continued.

The arrested people have been sent to Hpa-an jail, but there has been no word as to what has happened to them since.

Seizures of arrested people's telephone have been going on since the beginning of this year. Around Mon State's Mudon Township, more than 30 Thai-wireless phones have been confiscated by the local authorities over the last two months.

Hundreds of people are still using Thai-wireless phones in Mon State, some with the permission of cease-fire groups. Telephone owners pay thousands of Kyat in tax to local military authorities and ethnic cease-fire groups in order to be allowed to use the phones.

Dealing in wireless phones has become a big business in southern Burma, the area where a large number of migrant workers in Thailand hail from. Migrant workers tend to use these phones because they provide cheaper service.

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## Personal Accounts

*Ko San Win, a poor, 37 year old, daily wage earner from Three Pagoda Pass, a town on the Thai-Burma border, was seriously beaten by a sergeant while working as a hired porter for Infantry Battalion No.18. He was beaten up because, due to exhaustion, he was finding it difficult to carry his load of supplies. The following are details about how, from July 9 to 18, he had been tortured from while working on the frontline of the LIB No. 18's military offensive in Karen Area.*



**He was beaten on the head, face and body with the butt of a gun and bamboo sticks. He suffered extensive bruises and cuts on his leg and body.**

“On July 9, 2007, a friend of mine asked me to work as a porter for Light Infantry Battalion No. 18, which is based in the Three Pagoda Pass area. I was to be paid 200 baht per day. At first, I refused because I had heard a lot of awful stories about the way porters were treated

on the frontlines. Unfortunately, due to the closure of the Thai-Burma border and the lack of work in this border town, I decided to go along with the LIB No.18. The agent, who took me, along with 14 other porters, was Ma Saw Khin, a business lady from Three Pagoda Town. On July 9, before we left Three Pagoda Pass, she gave me 1,000 Baht for five days pay and said that after five days, the commander on the frontline would pay me the rest.”

“I was to march with Light Infantry Battalion No. 18, a group of about 200 soldiers led by Commander-Colonel Hla Min, to Mae-Zali village, which is about 30 kilometers from Three Pagoda Pass Town. I had to carry about 35 kilograms of food supplies. On the first day, we had to climb about five hills without having a rest. Even though I am a hard worker, I felt too tired to walk along with the troops. They kicked and verbally abused me several times. Later, I asked a soldier who was walking behind me for some water. Instead of giving me water, he insulted me and kicked me in the waist. The kick was so strong that I fell to the ground. Since that first day, I suffered from a severe backache and couldn't walk as fast as the other porters. “

“The next day, my back was in such serious pain that I had to inform the sergeant (I could not get his name but I am convinced that he was a sergeant from Light Infantry Battalion No. 18 because I looked at the rank on his shoulder). After I told him about the pain, he became angry and started to scream “No Way!” while slapping my face. I tried to carry my load, but the pain was incredible. There was something seriously wrong with me but when I tried to explain my situation to the troops, they refused to listen and instead beat me over and over again. At the same time, I was dehydrated and had not eaten because the army did not give me enough food and water. The soldiers treated all of the porters in this manner. Some of the soldiers kicked us with their boots while others beat us with the butts of their guns. On the morning of the third day, four porters escaped. The commander of LIB No. 18, Colonel Hla Min, got angry and ordered his troops to shoot the escaped porters dead

if they found them in the forest. He also warned the rest of us about what would happen if we tried to escape.”

“After we climbed another hill, it started to rain. It was quite a long rain and the road became very slippery. Due to the weather and road conditions, my strength began to fade. The pain in my back was growing worse. A porter from the group who understood my situation asked me to share some of my load with him. While I was giving him some of my load the sergeant stopped us and then, beat us both. He started beating me on my head, legs and body with the butt of his gun. Eventually I lost consciousness. When I woke up, I tried to move but I couldn't. I tried to call to the other people but I realized that they had left me. I was alone in the forest. Later on, I began to remember exactly what had happened to me. They beat my head bloody. They also beat my legs with bamboo sticks and with the butts of their guns before they left. After waiting about three or four hours, I tried to get up but I felt intense pain in my legs and I fell down several times. It began to rain again. I got wet and began to feel dizzy. Again I lost consciousness.”

“When I woke up again, I was in a hut. I saw an old man and a boy. The old man spoke Karen and I tried to communicate with him in Burmese. Fortunately, he could speak some broken Burmese and he explained that he found me in the forest while he was looking for bamboo shoots and carried me to his hut. He said that the hut was very close to Mae-Zar-Li village and that he had no medicine to cure me. The next morning he went to Mae-za-li village and informed the village

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## Report

# Factors Contributing to the Rise of Labour Migration from Southern Burma

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*“We wanted to spend the rest of our lives in our native villages, but that is impossible. We had no money to feed our kids; we weren’t allowed to go where we wanted and we could not refuse to do things we didn’t want to do. That is why we decided to flee”.*

*A victim from Ma-Gyi village, Ye township, Mon State*

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## I. ANALYSIS ON THE RISE OF LABOUR MIGRATION

Presently, HURFOM is very concerned about the growing numbers of people migrating to Burma’s neighboring countries, Thailand and Malaysia. The migration is due to persistent human rights violations committed in southern Burma by the current ruling regime, SPDC (State Peace and Development Council) and its armed force, the Burmese Army. In the past four months alone about 5,000 residents<sup>1</sup>, mostly villagers from rural communities in the southern part of Ye Township and the northern part of Tenasserim division, fled from their homes as a result of serious human rights abuses committed by the SPDC’s local battalions and administration troops. The international and regional communities, including ASEAN membership countries, are not familiar with the real troubles of Burmese people, and continue to accept the belief that the increasing flow of illegal migrant labourers is the result of poverty, economic mismanagement by the regime (SLORC/SPDC) and unemployment. In reality, there are factors behind the rise of illegal migration closely related to the regime’s numerous human rights violations and its militarization policy in the non-Burman ethnic areas.

In Thailand, there are currently about 2 million migrant workers, from the neighboring countries of Burma, Laos and Cambodia, working both legally and illegally (that is, without a passport and work permit). Due to Thailand’s relative economic prosperity, its close proximity to Burma and its demand for cheap labour, nearly one million (unofficial figure) of these workers are Burmese. Recently, the government has expressed concern over the dropping number of migrant workers registering with the Labor Ministry. About 500,000 migrant workers have registered so far this year; in 2006, the number was about 700,000.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> About 3,500 migrant workers have entered Thailand through Three Pagoda Pass and the Halokhanee – Sangkhlaburi route during April and May, 2007. Currently about 1,500 residents from Southern Burma left their villages and are waiting to enter as migrant workers. Most of them have already paid the cease-fire groups, police, the immigration office, the Burmese Army, and touts, according to a survey held by local authorities.

<sup>2</sup> Sai Silp, Irrawaddy online Magazine, July 10, 2007

Among Burmese migrants workers, over 70% of them are either Mon, Karen, Shan, Tavoyan or another ethnic minority. They do construction in cities like Bangkok and Chiang Mai and work in the fishing districts of Samut Sakhon (it is interesting to note that Mon migrant workers make up 70% of Samut Sakhon's migrant worker population<sup>3</sup>), Samut Prakan and Ranong. Along the Thailand-Burma border, Burmese migrant workers typically work in agriculture. Some female migrant workers are pushed to work in Thailand's sex industry.

Years	Increase in numbers of people in Maharchai (both legal or illegal migrant worker)	Population of Mon people in Maharchai (70%)
2004	100,000	70,000
2007	230,000	161,000

Why do so many illegal migrant workers migrate into Thailand? One reason is Thailand's demand for cheap labor, but the ongoing conflicts in Burma play a huge role as well. Because of the SPDC's militarization policy and the human rights abuses that come with it, it is inaccurate to refer to all Burmese migrant workers as "economic migrants." The effects of the policy are described in detail below.

## II. SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

The cases in this report were collected from interviews with suffering inside Burma and on the Thai-Burma border. Some interviews were gathered by HURFOM field reporters working in conflict areas between Ye and Northern Yebyu Township. Other interviews were done in Samut Sakhon district<sup>4</sup>, near Bangkok, by a colleague from Woman and Child Rights Project (WCRP). The interviews include stories about how the workers lost their land and how the army and local SPDC abused them. Some interviews were conducted by telephone. The cases collected here are not exhaustive due security concerns. In order to protect the identities of those involved some names are not included.

## III. THE FACTORS BEHIND THE RISE OF LABOUR MIGRATION

### A. CONSCRIPTION OF FORCED LABOUR

Though technically illegal under SPDC law No.1/99, forced labour is a main contributor to the problems of increased migration flow. From January 2007 to the present, the conscription of forced labour by the local authorities and commanders of the Burmese Army continues in southern Mon State and Tenasserim Division. This increase is due to the increased number of military troops in the areas.

<sup>3</sup> According to Labor Rights Promotion Network (LPN), a Thai Non-Government Organization based in Maharchai, there are 132,000 Mon people who migrated to Maharchai from 2004-2007. 75% of them are in the fishing industry and factory workers, 17% are fishermen and 8% are construction workers.

<sup>4</sup> Samut Sakhon has one of the biggest migrant-worker populations in the Central region. According to the Labour Rights Promotion Network (LPN), it has about 120,000 registered migrants from Burma, Laos and Cambodia. That number includes about 2,800 migrant children. However, the organization estimates the province also has more than 100,000 illegal and unregistered migrants.

Every household in the entire village of Ma-Gyi, in the southern part of Ye Township was forced to provide people for rotating sentry duty as instructed by the local Burmese Battalion No. 31, which is based in Khaw-Zar Sub Township, Southern Ye Township.

“In our village, they (the village headmen and village administration group) setup a rotational patrolling duty. I just finished my obligatory patrol. In my team, there were 12 people. We were ordered to patrol outside of the village for one day and one night. We had to divide our team into 4 groups. Each group was ordered to carefully watch and inform about the activities of the armed Mon rebel group operating in the area,” reported Nai Win, a victim from Ma-gyi village, Southern Ye Township, Mon State.

Nai Win and his family arrived at Thai-Burma border on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2007. Currently, they are living in a border camp and are waiting to enter to Thailand as migrant workers.

Another victim, Nai Ba (not real name), a 43 year old man who recently fled from Ma-gyi village because of Infantry Battalion No. 31’s use of forced labour had this to say about the situation:

“We have a weekly forced labour rotation organized by the Burmese battalion, IB No.31. Each week, the village headmen have to send a group of 60 villagers with their own food and materials to the battalion’s compound. We have to carry stone, sand and bricks to repair the main road. Some women have to collect rubbish, leaves and branches. Life is very difficult in our village. I didn’t have a chance to earn money for my family. Most of my time was spent as unpaid labour for the Burmese Army. Hence, I decided to flee to Thai-Burma border.”

Since the last week of January 2007, villagers who live in Khaw-zar Sub-Township, Mon State, have been forced by Infantry Battalion No. 31 to work on government infrastructure projects. These projects include bridge construction, road maintenance and gas pipeline fencing along the Ye-Tavoy motor road. Consequently, villagers could not do their own work and started to flee from their village. According to a HURFOM’s reporter survey, the past six months have seen somewhere between 1,000 to 1,500 people fleeing from Khaw-zar Sub-Township to Thailand.

A 45 year old victim who does not want his name revealed explained how he had been forced into bridge construction work in January, 2007. He was acting under the orders of Lieutenant Colonel Kyaw Myint and his troops from the Southeast Command. The villagers did not receive any money and because of the economic hardships arising from this, many started to leave their homes.

According to Nai Nyein, a 37 year old who works as a carpenter in Yin-ye village, the local army officer from IB No. 31 and Khaw Zar Sub Township’s Peace and Development Committee chairman U Kyaw Moe demanded that he and some of his fellow carpenters work on bridge building and road maintaining projects for no pay.

“It is very hard to survive as a carpenter in this village. The local authorities needed me to work on their local development projects. I have to earn some income for my family to survive but I can’t refuse their orders. I decided to hire another man to take my place at a cost of kyat 5,000 per day. I had to pay for a total of 15 days,” he explained.

## B. ARBITRARY ARREST, TORTURE AND KILLING

### INHUMANE TORTURE AND ARREST

Torture, arrest and ill-treatment are common in Southern Ye Township. The local ethnic villagers accused of being rebel supporters are subjected to brutal treatment by both the army and local authorities. Unknown numbers of people have died as a result of torture at their hands. In areas where armed groups opposing the government operate, dead bodies have been found showing obvious signs of torture. This serious human rights abuse contributes to the local population fleeing from their villages to becoming migrant labourers.

Arbitrary detention and torture were reported to have occurred after clashes between SPDC troops and a Mon splinter group led by Nai Bin of the Monland Restoration Party (MRP). On June 26, 2007, in Bayoun-ngae village, Ye township, Mon State more than 50 villagers were arrested after being accused of supporting the rebels. One of these people was Nai Maw, a 35 year old farmer. During interrogation the soldiers beat him severely for selling pork to the Mon splinter group. Afterwards the troops launched an operation outside the village and had a gun fight with the Mon rebels. It was reported that three soldiers were killed or wounded.

“Following the clash, the troops accused Bayoun-ngae villagers of sustaining Mon rebels and arrested more than 50 villagers. They were sent to Han-gan village where the Tactical Commander was temporarily based,” reported by a field worker.

More than 10 of the arrested villagers were severely tortured during interrogation. Afterwards all of the arrested villagers had to pay more than 20,000 Kyat each to be released. Nai Nyan Tin, a 50 year old Mon man was the most badly beaten. After their release, soldiers returned to the village and arrested other suspected villagers. This time they took 300,000 Kyat from each person.

“Many villagers started fleeing on June 30. By July 2<sup>nd</sup>, the abbot of Bayoun-ngae<sup>5</sup> and most of the other villagers escaped to Han-gan village,” an unnamed Han-gan eyewitness said.

Seven men, who remained in the villages, went to a temple to sleep. Burmese troops were stationed there. They beat the villagers and destroyed many of the temple's pots and shelves.

Another two villagers from Toe-Tat-Ywa-Thit village, Khaw-Zar Sub-town, were also badly beaten by LIB No.31. According to Mi T++ A++, two Mon rebels visited her house. The rebels entered through a hole in the fence, unseen by anyone. Out of fear of punishment, she informed the military commanders. The two villagers who were standing guard were severely punished for not reporting the rebels.

“When they asked us whether the rebels came to the village, we told them we didn't see them (the rebels). But they accused us of not telling the truth and then they beat us. They beat me with a bamboo stick. After one stick broke, they

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<sup>5</sup> Bayoun-ngae village is situated about one mile southeast of Han-gan village. The troops from the Light Infantry Battalions No. 591 and 583 under the command of No. 19 Military Operation Management Command (MOMC-19) based in Ye, moved in to eliminate the rebel outfit led by Nai Bin, explained a Han-gan villager.

used another. I didn't know what I had done wrong. I didn't dare look at their faces when they beat me. When I looked, they slapped and kicked me," said Nai Yaung, one of the victims.

Nai Yaung's back bone was broken; he also suffered minor injuries to his ribs and hands. He and the other villager were brought to the village clinic. Due to this incident he is unable to continue working. He has to hire people to work on his farm while he receives long-term treatment.

On March 20, 2007, a 19 year old boy from Ma-Gyi village named Mg C++ M++ was cruelly beaten by a Sergeant from IB No. 31 for trying to escape village patrol duty. According to an unidentified witness from Ma-Gyi village, 4 people, including Mg C++ M++, were forced to guard the village. 3 men from his team decided to desert. As a young boy, Mg C++ M++ didn't dare to stay alone and so, he decided to run away too. 15 minutes later, soldiers capture him and beat him until he began to bleed from his mouth. The injuries wound up being very serious and he was sent to Ye Town Hospital, where he is still receiving treatment.

From June to July 20th, 2007, as a result of Light Infantry Battalion No.'s 591 and 583 inhumane treatment against the civilians in the southern part of Ye township, many families fled to the border. Mi A++ M+++, a 37 year old lady presently working in a seafood factory in Samut Sakhon explained the reasons why she left her village:

"Burmese soldiers from LIB No. 586 tried to arrest me. They accused me of sending food to Mon rebel troops. In reality, I didn't send them anything; I simply traveled a lot because I was a merchant. I left the village and came to Thailand as soon as I heard that Burmese soldiers were coming to arrest me. They couldn't catch me so they arrested one of my daughters who happened to be living with my aunt. To get information about me, they beat my aunt until she bled. Eventually they released my daughter. Now, I cannot go back. My fellow villagers told me that the Burmese soldiers have circulated my photo around their battalion and stuck it in their office as well as in the check-point."

Another victim, Nai Paul, a 26 year old man from Pauk-Pin-gwin village who fled six months ago and is currently an illegal worker in Samut Sakhon district explained his situation:

"I was beaten by a Burmese soldier with a bamboo stick because I was a few minutes late to their meeting. They beat everyone who showed up late. They asked us to queue and beat us one by one. Then they ordered us to loot and burn houses. Any valuables we found were to be sent to the railway station. Most of these houses were owned by people who had already fled the village."

## **KILLING OR SUMMARY EXECUTION**

As a result of clashes between Mon rebels and the SPDC's LIB No. 583 and 591, a villager was killed after being seriously tortured. On July 3, 2007 Nai Maw, a 35 year old Mon farmer, was arrested and killed by SPDC troops for selling food to a Mon splinter group. During the interrogation the soldiers beat him severely. The actual killing occurred between Singu and Toe Thet Ywa Thit village. An unnamed Bayoun-ngae villager, who currently lives in Han-gan village, confirmed the case:

"We found his body at Dike-Krok which is located between Singu and Toe-thet Ywa-thit village. We had heard that he was seriously beaten by the soldiers after

being caught selling some pork to the Nai Bin rebel group. He was beaten to death while they interrogated him.”

Similarly, the Kabya village headman, 47 year old Nai Min Tin Aung and a Khaw-zar villager were also arrested on the accusation of supporting Mon rebels. The villagers face the difficult choice of either supporting the Burmese troops, which could lead to being killed by the rebels or supporting the rebels, which could lead to being killed or tortured by the Burmese troops.

Due to the human rights violations like the ones above, hundreds of people from the southern part of Mon State have fled into Thailand. Some of the displaced people try to enter Thailand's refugee camps, but because of the Thai government's strict policy of only accepting new refugees from areas where there is serious fighting or offensives, many are denied legal entry. This of course, does not stop them from entering.

### C. FORCED RELOCATION AND MOVEMENT RESTRICTION

From June to July 2007, after Military Operation Management Command (MOMC) No. 19 set up a base in Ye Township, over 300 family members were forced to relocate.

Bayoun-Ngae, was an isolated village located about 15 miles southeast of Han-gan village. During the first week of July 2007, about 500 villagers were forcibly relocated by the Light Infantry Battalion No. 591. They said the relocation was punishment for supposedly supporting Nai Bin's rebels.

Presently, the villagers have not been able to find a new home and some have begun entering Thailand illegally. A HURFOM field reporter working in the conflict areas provided these interviews:

“We were ordered to move quickly. We begged the battalions not to move us from here. We have our gardens, farms and crops here. The main reason we were forced to move to Khaw Zar Sub Town was that we had been blamed of being rebel supporters. Some of our friends were even beaten by the Burmese soldiers during interrogation,” said Nai Gai Khae, a 55 year old Mon villager who had been ordered by Commander Col. Zaw Win's troops (LIB No. 591) to relocate to Khaw-Zar Sub Township

“I have been living here as a rubber planter for ten years. Now, I have to leave my plantations and my land without any compensation. I don't think I can start a new life in a new place. I don't know how my family can build a future from nothing,” said Nai Maung Sein, a 46 year old rubber plantation owner who lived outside of Bayoun-Ngae village.

“They also burnt some houses in the village” said an eyewitness from Bayoun-Ngae village.

According to the HURFOM's data records from 2004 to 2005, during the Southeast Command's tactical command and the Military Operation Management Command No. 19's military operation, the SPDC's battalions relocated two small villages in the same area. The total population of the villages was between 300 and 400.

“At present, almost all families from Bayoun-nage village have gone to Han-gan village. Local military authorities have done nothing to help them resettle,” Nai Ngae, 35, a Han-gan villager said.

“Some Bayoun-ngae villagers who have relatives in Han-gan are staying with them,” another villager said. “Some pleaded with Han-gan villagers to allow them to stay temporarily,” he added.

On July 9, 2007, in Bayoung-ngae village, a travel ban came from Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) No-583 following its destruction of over a hundred houses and its torture and relocation of their residents. After the travel ban was imposed the battalion was replaced by LIB No. 343, which is based in Aru-taung village. The travel ban entails that villagers, including those who live on plantations, have to inform the battalion immediately if they have news about Mon insurgents. If they fail to provide information, they will be punished and can be expelled from the township.

“I invested a lot of money in my plantations. Now, the Burmese soldiers are telling me I cannot work outside of the village. This will be a big crisis for me if I can’t go to work,” said Nai Ong Myo whose plantation is located about three miles from Ka-lort village, Ye Township.

The travel ban has been imposed not only in Khaw-zar Sub Township, but also in Han-gan and Ka-lort villages in Ye Township. As long as the travel ban is on, the villagers are prohibited from going to the plantations.

### D. LAND CONFISCATION

Over 160 acres rubber plantations in Mon state were seized by the Burmese military regime on May 28, 2007. The plantations in Thanpyuzayat, Wakali village, were seized on the orders of Lieutenant Colonel Myint who took charge of Lieutenant Colonel Thit Naing’s Artillery Regiment No. 315.

The seized rubber plantations, each boasting at least 50,000 rubber plants, belonged to 26 owners. During Lieutenant Colonel Thit Naing’s tenure, the Burmese Army collected 450 Kyat per rubber plant from plantation owners. Lieutenant Colonel Myint Shein has been collecting 750 Kyat per plant.

### Personal Accounts from page 3



Another cut on his head. (Beaten by gun’s butt)

couldn’t move my body. My wife and some of my friends sent me to the private clinic. The doctor told me that my wounds were too bad to cure in his clinic and that I should go to the hospital

headmen of my situation. The headmen then contacted my family in Three Pagoda Pass Town. It cost my wife 2,000 baht to get me home. By the time I got to Three Pagodas Pass Town, I

immediately. Unfortunately we had no more money. We were also afraid of some security problems. Finally I got here with the help of a member of the New Mon State Party."

*The battalion had hired Ko San Win along with 14 other porters for 200 Baht a day. They left Three Pagoda Pass on July 9. According to the hired porters and Maesali villagers, the battalion has forcibly taken about 20 porters from the Maesali area. Ko San Win is being treated in the New Mon State Party’s (NMSP) Palaing Japan (Japanese’ Well Hospital.)*

### 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

According to some owners, 750 Kyat is too much for them. They are not able to pay yet they do not wish to lose their plantations. One of the plantation's owners said, "If the military want money, they can tap the plants themselves. I can't afford to pay 750 Kyat and I no longer feel regret about losing my plants".

In some areas, land is seized for projects such as gas pipeline construction, road and railway construction, and bridge construction. Mehn Lawi Rot an 18 year old from Ka-lort village, is currently working in Mahachai, Samut Sakhon district. He explained why he left his home:

"My family lost our land to the Burmese Army. They confiscated our rubber plantation for government projects. We only received 30,000 Kyat as compensation. Due to the loss of land, I had to leave school and work as a day labourer to support my family. I was forced to work on construction projects in the army barracks many times. My Dad (also a day labourer) and I earned 2,000 Kyat per day. This wasn't enough to cover our family's daily expenses. On top of the necessities, we also have to pay a security fee, a porter fee, a labour fee and supply food for the soldiers and militiamen. We owe a lot of money to our neighbors and the loans are increasing every day. Eventually I decided to go and work here."

## IV. CONCLUSION

**The Impact of Labour Migrations :** In Mon State and Tenasserim Division, there has been a sharp decrease in the number of young people working on farms. This is because many of them migrated to Thailand. This creates a 'labour shortage' problem so severe that even elderly people have begun working on the farms. Farmland owners have to pay high labour costs which cut deeply into their revenues. After paying the labour cost, the farmers only a small amount of money goes to the farmers. All types of people from Burma are leaving the country because they simply cannot sustain themselves there.

"Most of our Mon youths go abroad. The remaining people don't want to work on farms or plantations because they are low paying jobs. It is very difficult to find workers here. If we hire people from upper Burma, the cost will be cheap but we have to be responsible for their accommodation as well as food. The number of Karen from Kyik-

Ma-Yaw and Burmese from Pegu who come to Mudon Township looking for work grows every year,” said a farm owner from Doe-mar village.



Border police apprehend illegal immigrants in jungle, on the Thai side of the border

**Population Movement:** Due to the human rights violations described above, thousands of Mon people from southern part of Mon State have fled into Thailand in order to both seek safety and find work. Even though the working conditions in Thailand’s industries are hard and labourers are sometimes treated poorly, the people from the conflict areas of Burma are happy to work.

**The Plight of Migrant Workers in Host Countries:** Illegal migrant workers have to work with traffickers to reach many of Thailand’s cities. They pay these traffickers between 6000 to 10000 Baht (140 to 250 US Dollar) per person. The migrant workers must travel in secret. They often spend many days traveling on forest, jungle or river roads where there are no police check-points.

Most illegal migrants live in fear of arrest by Thai police. The Thai government has adopted a policy of deporting all illegal migrant workers so that after being arrested, the labourers spend three months in the Immigration Detention Center (IDC) and are then sent back to their native countries. Negotiations have been on-going between the Thai and Burmese governments regarding these deportations. The Burmese government has agreed to build deportation centers in some border cities to receive the deported migrant workers.

Migrant workers are not allowed to form labour organizations or trade unions. Since the migrant workers cannot form unions, they can expect low wages, dangerous work environments and almost no labour rights. It is not uncommon for employers to force migrants from their workplaces without any payment. In such cases, the workers cannot complain to the authorities.

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