National League for Democracy  
(97/b), West Shwegondine  
Bahan, Rangoon  

Statement 122 (12/98)  

1. A project to transform virgin land of about four thousands acres known as Hanthawaddy land in Kalaymyo Township, Sagaing Division and Gangaw township of Magwe Division has been being done by the authorities who assumed state power in 1988.  
2. Illegal and forced labour employed in the project are very transparent. They are”-  
   (a) Eight townships in Monywa District, Sagaing Division have been allotted 500 acres each.  
   (b) The authorities have demanded that 2 villagers provide labour from one village tract of each township.  
   (c) In addition, the sum of one thousand Kyats is demanded by the authorities as remuneration and for purchase of rice, oil, and salt and provisions for each labourer.  
   (d) To meet this demand, each household has to subscribe Kyats 200.  
3. (a) Presently, in order to provide this forced labour once for fifteen days, a total of fifty villagers are required from each township. This totals to 100 villagers every month. The money that has had to be given totals one lakh. The burden is too heavy for these poor and destitute villages. This is highly unjust and merciless persecution imposed on the people.  
   (b) Kyats 7000/- is deducted for the living expenses of one labourer. On days when the person is sick and can not work, an additional penalty is imposed. The family is left impoverished and with nothing. This is a very pitiful state of affairs.  
4. People who are undernourished and without the physical strength to earn a living have been forced to supply this labour. They suffer from malaria and are returned. Then when a request is made for medical expenses, the sum of Kyat 250/- which is their allotment is confiscated by the authorities. The person is left with nothing. Our information is that about 10 individuals have died in Yinmarbin township because of such circumstances. Many others must have died. There are no records.  
5. (a) In Yinmarbin township, Monywa District, there is a project where land is being developed for the welfare of the public servants. Forced labour is being employed for this. The people from the village tracts known as Labine, Theegone, Kyat, Thaminhat, Nyaunggine, Ta-wa, Khinesha, Wa-yone, Lattapya, Mauk-loke have been threatened and forced to supply the labour and they are not given the appropriate remuneration for their labour.  
   (b) Some of the land that is being transformed is also being acquired forcefully.  
6. It is obvious that the people living in the villages and townships above are suffering untold hardships because of the illegal and abuse of power by the authorities. We have reports that the people are murmuring
that the hardships suffered in this Hanthawaddy land project are worse than that suffered under the Japanese who conscripted a labour force known as the "Sweat Brigade".

7. This use of force on the people by the authorities is not only illegal but reflects a lack of human compassion on their fellow beings. This is highly deplored. We urge those in high positions to investigate the matter and listen to the grievances of the people. The authorities who proclaim that forced labour does not happen in this country are deliberately stating falsehoods.

Central Executive Committee
National League for Democracy
14 December 1998