1. The following information has been received by us from concerned and interested parties in Twante township, Rangoon Division. The ancient Da-noke Pagoda in Ya-khine-gyaung, Twante township has been under reparation and restoration since for about 8 years under the auspices of the relevant authorities. Around the pagoda the model village of Da-noke was then built.

2. Commencing from that time, on the pretext of safeguarding the pagoda, the Infantry Battalion No: 71 stationed at the Twante placed a section led by a captain in the vicinity of pagoda. Presently, one Sergeant Tin Win is in charge of that section. Also, a police outpost is placed there.

3. Since five years ago, (claiming "security of the pagoda" as the reason) conscription of villagers from the neighbouring villages such as (1) Yakhine-gyaung (south), (2) Yakhine-gyaung(north), (3) Tone-tin-kan (south), (4) Tone-tin-kan (north), (5) Shan-kan, (6) Taung-gyaung, (7) Thet-kae-gwin, (8) A-noe-gyaung, (9) Koe-daung, (10) Sut-chaung, (11) Po-phyu-gyaung, (12) Lade-gon and others had been made to perform sentry duties. Four villagers from each of four villages a day, making a total of sixteen are rostered. Even where a household consists of females only there is no exemption.

4. These rostered people are made to collect firewood and carry water for the soldiers in the day without rest periods and if they happen to doze off while on sentry duty at night they are beaten and maltreated. In the month of January 1998, one U Aye Kyine who was on sentry duty at this place died as a result of being crushed under a branch from the old tree in this place. The army took no responsibility.

5. Consequently, the villagers became afraid to perform sentry duties and were then exempted on payment of Kyats two hundred per person.

6. This provided a good opportunity for army unit stationed in this area to claim Kyats three thousand two hundred daily (16 persons x 200 = 3200) from the rostered individuals.

7. In these villages, according to the system, each household is rostered for sentry duties twice monthly which requires them to pay Kyats four hundred per month. The villagers are experiencing great hardship to pay this levy because of the very high cost of living that is being experienced today.
8. The meritorious deed of restoration of the Danoke Pagoda has become an object of great demerit within a period of five years. The National League for Democracy strongly denounces the use of a religious precinct to satisfy the greed of military personnel who by unfair practices exploit the poor villagers. We urge the authorities in charge to immediately take appropriate action.

Central Executive Committee
National League for Democracy

Rangoon
15 February 1999