Contents of letter dated 8 March 1999 from the Chairman, National League for Democracy to the Chairman of the Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council is reproduced and published for the information of all.

START
"Subject-- Forced labour and demands for money in Baw-lae-kyun village tract, Htantabin township.

1. Our information is that since 1990, in the twenty six village tract (Kyun-ngu to Hlei-hseik in Htantabin township) every household was required to dig ten pits and orders issued by the military to villagers in the vicinity for cutting grass, reconstruction of embankments had to be obeyed.

2. Village and Ward administrators from these twenty six village tracts demanded sums of money from one thousand five hundred to four thousand kyats from every household allegedly for re-enforcing the embankments with laterite. The money on this account was deducted from the bank loans of some cultivators during the rainy season of 1998. Other cultivators and labourers were told that commencing from February of this year, if payment on this account was not met, action (similar to that for failure to supply the required paddy produce) would be taken against them. Reports reaching us from those involved is that the least of these threats was that they would be made to dig out rocks from the ocean. One very poor family in the Tha-baw-chaung village tract had to sell their children's clothing to meet this demand of one thousand five hundred.

3. Our information is that when one is unable to carry the laterite due to illness or being out of the locality, penalties are imposed. This penalty in Thabawchaung was 300 kyats, in A-lein-lei, 150 kyats and in
Yay-dwin–gone it was 400 kyats. On 26 February, 1999, each person had to give the authorities an impost of 40 kyats in addition to this forced labour with their own provisions.

4. It has been reported to us that collections from all these twenty six village tracts on various pretexts have been made and that the last date for contribution was fixed for the 27 February 1999. The pretext given by the authorities in Yebyu village tract was for the census and another pretext was that the collection was for the Myawaddy Television Station and at another village it was alleged that the contribution was for the United Nations.

5. Without informing the people, Kyee–gan–thaik field which is a part of Yay-nek–kwin in Baw-lei-kyun was sprayed with weed killer to kill the grass for the purpose of cultivation by a company. This is grazing ground for cows and buffaloes and consequently about fifty died. The owners are distraught.

6. The embankment between Hlei-hseik and Kyun-ngu was built in the BSPP period which caused a lot of flooding in the fields in Bawleikyun and the cultivators suffered great losses. Therefore a breach was created between Ta–mar–ta–kaw and Pantaw villages. This year the gap has been filled by a company and the cultivators have grave fears of the consequences.

7. It has been said that since 1989, some prosperous cultivators from Ah-lein-lae and Kyaung-su villages conspired with the authorities in Yebyu village tract and have been cultivating about 150 acres of land that lies between that three village tracts of Yebyu, Tha–baw–chaung, and Ah-lein-le without the knowledge of the higher authorities. This year because discontented cultivators want more land the authorities surveyed and demarcated the land which has been auctioned off at two thousand kyats per acre. Yebyu villagers were not capable of paying the high price and are now experiencing great hardship.
8. This kind of self-serving activities by lower authorities in the village tracts is causing hardship and as the saying goes "ugly living, ugly dying" is being experienced which is deplorable- do unto others what you would have them do to you."

Central Executive Committee
National League for Democracy

Rangoon
9 March 1999