

National League for Democracy
No: (97/B), West Shwegonedine Road
Bahan Township, Rangoon

Statement 38(3/00) (translation)

1. From information received we learn that 6 paddy purchasing centers have been set up in Koonchan township, Rangoon division for the purchase of the 1999-2000 paddy crop by the Department of Trade and Agriculture. Voluntary labour for performing tasks at the centers was demanded from 11 villages. At the Moke kyun (northern) Taike kone paddy purchase center, villagers from five villages viz. Kan shah, Karin chaung, Let khome kone, Kanyin kone, Kya sa kone lay were required to give voluntary service. At the Moke kyun (southern) Pho haung center, villagers from the six villages of The gone tan, Da ye loo, Kauk doon, Tan tha, Nhet kyi taung, Kya sat kone gyi had to give voluntary labour. In the month of January alone, a total sum of nearly ten lakhs was collected at the rate of Kyats 200 to Kyats 500 per household for failure or inability to give such voluntary labour.
2. The said money was collected by the village authorities under orders of U Hla Thein, the chairman of the township PDC but has not been utilized for the said paddy centers to this date. Instead it is being used for the personal benefit of those in authority. On 20 January 2000, this was reported to U Maung Myint Kyaw, the newly appointed Koon chan gone township PDC chairman. However, nothing has been done about it. In fact he said " There is no need to bother about the NLD. So many of their members are being removed. Stop further collection and what has already been collected must be distributed among those holding authority in the TPDC." He and his deputy asked the village authority chairman to hand over the money to them.
3. Because of pests invasion, storms and floods much damage to the crops has resulted and we hear that the cultivators in the Koon chan gone township have not been able to meet the full quota demanded by the Trade and Agriculture Department.
4. Despite this the authorities are insisting that the full quantity stipulated in the written contracts be supplied. Township authority chairman U Maung Myint Kyaw and his deputy U Soe Myint Hlaing have been abusive to the cultivators who default, threatening them with revocation of cultivation permits, criminal prosecution under Section 406 of the Penal Code, confiscation of their properties by auction and sale. Defaulting cultivators have been held in custody in the police station superintendent's office and prayer room. Also in the meeting room of the township authorities for 10 to 12 days we are told.
5. The old, the sick, women and children are among those who have been kept in custody. To bring food daily to those in custody some cultivators have to walk 10 miles experiencing great hardship. Among those held at the police station were cultivators U Aye Kyi, Ko Puak (a) U Than U, U Aung Win, U Aung Moe (all NLD members and cultivators from East Taung koo village in Koon gyan gone township). Tin Aye, the police constable, was very intoxicated on the night of the 22 February, 2000 when he arrived at 12 midnight and woke U Aye Than who was asleep so he kicked and bashed him up. As a result U Aye Than had a black eye, a cut lip and a broken tooth. He was given no medical treatment. Our information is that township authorities chairman U Maung Myint Kyaw and his deputy U Soe Myint Hlaing supplied this police constable with 4 bottles of expensive liquor to intoxicate him and perform the dirty job.

6. We ask that those responsible for the reprehensible acts of taking money from the cultivators on false pretexts, unjustly demanding fulfillment of contracts, assaulting and illegally holding in custody innocent cultivators, be dealt with according to law. We condemn such despicable and browbeating activities.

Central Executive Committee
National League for Democracy

Rangoon
29 March 2000