

NLD Statement 53/2000:

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

Statement 53 (4/00) (translation)

1. It has been reported that the villagers of Pyun-pauk, Htaung-hmin, Kyaik-pa-laing, Tawa, Sint-oh-pho, West Tagoon-daing, Kyaik-me, Moe-khaing-lay, Hla-sin-taung, Zee-bin have been forced to dig up earth to make a connecting waterway (chaung) between Kama-se and Htat-kha-naing villages in Thanat-pin township in Pegu division.
2. Every landholding cultivator is expected to dig 35 pits and those not holding any land 22 pits. Those who cannot supply labour have to pay at the rate of Kyats 200 per pit which amounts to Kyats 7000 for 35 pits and Kyats 4500 for 22 pits.
3. These villagers are so impoverished and cannot make enough for a living. To have to give forced labour digging earth or make these exorbitant payments is killing them.
4. To protect the damn at Tapoon chaung and Kee-mun-chone chaung in Khayan township, Rangoon Division from the flow-in of tide waters, neighboring villages have to reinforce the embankments every year.
5. This year approximately 1200 pits will have to be dug from the vicinity of Pyin-din-nekan village for the Tapun damn and about 700 pits from the vicinity of Kee-mun-chone village for the other damn. Every household that cannot give this forced labour has to pay Kyats 500.
6. This embankment reinforcing and earth digging works have to be performed yearly and at the same time these cultivators need to get on with the cultivation of winter crops and harvest the summer paddy crop. To perform the forced labour demanded by the authorities at the expense of neglecting their own agricultural duties is very punishing and distressing we have been told.
7. This disregard and reckless insensitivity to the circumstances of the rural population in demanding forced labour at inappropriate times is strongly condemned and disapproved.

Central Executive Committee
National League for Democracy

Rangoon
19 April 2000