

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

Statement 71 (5/00) (translation)

1. The section of the Myingyan/Nyaung-U road that lies in the township of Taung-tha (Mandalay Division) is 14 miles in length and requires over 16000 'kyins' of gravel. (Kyin = a unit of measurement for 100 cubic ft. of gravel). Taung -tha authorities were responsible for the job. They summoned all owners of trucks to a meeting and gave notice that their vehicles would have to transport the gravel to the construction sites for which they would be supplied with 1 gallon of diesel for every 6 mile of distance covered. The owners were dissatisfied and made representation because they would be out -of- pocket for other expenses like driver and assistant wages. The authorities responded with criminal intimidation and threats to withdraw transportation and residential permits.
2. In the township of Taung-tha there are altogether 136 trucks and ploughing machines and each vehicle would have to transport over 100 'kyins' of gravel. It is impossible to drive a motor vehicle in the said region. No rough tracks even. The job will take about a month. If other vehicles have to be hired, the cost is estimated at over Kyats 1000/- per 'kyin' and the total cost for over one hundred kyins would be well above one lakh. So this is prohibitive for the vehicle owners.
3. For a previous project which was the construction of the Myingyan to Pagan/Nyaun-U railway line, the requirements were 1 'kyin' gravel, deisel at 1 gallon per 6 mile, and Kyats 400/- towards the wages for one driver and one assistant. This "voluntary labour" was limited to 2 occasions (five days for each occasion).
4. We have heard that the truck owners appealed to the Secretary 2 of the SPDC by letter dated 1-9-99 explaining their difficulties and asking that a rough road be first constructed to enable their vehicles to drive on them, for an increase in the allowance for the drivers and assistants and to reduced the amount of days for "voluntary labour".
5. When Major-General Ye Myint, (Mandalay Division Commander) heard that about 80 vehicle owners had written to the Secretary 2 he was furious. They were summoned to Mandalay and roundly abused. " On whom have you placed your hopes? I'll show you. I'll have you all arrested."
6. Having suffered the ire of the Division commander, the vehicle owners were scared stiff not knowing what to say or do. They were feeling the pressure. And then on the night of the 25 April, 2000 motor vehicle owners U Aung Gyaw, U Maung Nyo, U Nyo Hla, U Htay Gyi were illegally arrested under Section 5(f) and held in the Police Lock Up at Taung-tha. These individuals are respectable town elders who have been involved in humanitarian works and the people of the town are grief stricken.
7. U Aung Gyaw, one of the above who was illegally arrested had been suffering from High Blood Pressure and fell seriously ill while under arrest. Early on the 30 April, 2000 he asked for medical attention but was refused by the Police in charge of the station. He suddenly felt giddy at about 1:30 p.m. and collapsed, then died.

8. This is clear evidence of the fact that regional masters who make decisions according to their own whims and fancies are governing the country. The highest authorities do just as they like to the country. The middle authorities do what they like in the states and the divisions. The lowest in the hierarchy do what they like in their departments and little circles. The citizens have to suffer whatever is done to them until their lives are extinguished. The people are like water in the palms of the authorities at every level and with bowed heads suffer in silence. Our condemnation of this state of affairs is mighty strong. We ask that this be rectified.

Central Executive Committee
National League for Democracy

Rangoon
18 May 2000