

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

STATEMENT 96 (7/99) (translation)

1. Residents of the villages of Gwe-gon, Tha-byei-kan, Taung-byone, Kangyi, Zegan, Ye-ga-moe, Pyu-gan, Hta-nhaung-gaing, Moe-hnan-choun, Phaung-galay, Auk-taw, Tha-man, Kyauntaing, Htan-pauk-kone, Sin-tai, Koo-do-seik, Gaung-kwae, Lin-ban, Thu-nge-daw and other neighboring villages are forced to dig for rocks from wherever and each household is required to supply rock piles measuring 10'x10' and 1' high. These rocks have then to be broken into pieces measuring 6 x 3 inches. This is for the construction of a 20-mile road connecting Ta-da-u and Myo-tha. Work commenced in June of this year.

2. The Chairman of the township PDC specifically instructed the lesser authorities that said road must be tarred and completed within the year and until then everyone will be forced to give their labour. The phrase "Loke-ah" (meaning forced labour) was to be substituted by the phrase "Ko htuu, ko hta" (meaning self help). The village authorities are complying with the instructions and continue in the demand for forced labour. In addition, residents of distant villages, residents of Number 1, 2, and 3 township territories, and the villages of Saga-in, Pan-ya, Nga-zin-yaing, Zee-chaung, Ngaya-pya, Sin-kyone, Mee-thwe-thaik, Kyone-haik, Hanthawaddy, Zegyo, Ba-le-ka, Oke-kyut-pho and others were summoned on the 3 July 1999 and forced to send one person from each household (9 and 10 year old children included) to work providing their daily sustenance themselves.

3. Sections of the Myo-tha Ta-da-u road are allotted to separate villages who have to be responsible for completion of the allotted section. Elderly people who cannot work and households where no one is available for the task are required to pay Kyats 200/- per day.

4. Currently, about 1000 villagers are required to scoop out the earth where the road is to be constructed (each household digging an area of 12' x 3' to a depth of 9"). This rough road is to be completed in 6 days. Those who cannot join the work gang have to pay Kyats 1200/- at the rate of Kyats 600/- per day.

5. Though the authorities have announced to the world that "forced labour" has been stopped, the grim truth is that the villagers and farmers and workers are still being made to work notwithstanding foul weather and tough conditions. Inability to do tasks assigned results in exorbitant penalties, which has people truly confused.

6. The actions of the authorities are diametrically opposed to their words and the top doesn't match the bottom. Walking like a blind man, ignoring the plight of the people, having the sole desire to accomplish according to one's imagination and creating heavier burdens for the people -- this is denounced in the strongest terms.

Central Executive Committee
National League for Democracy

Rangoon
15 July 1999.