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MON NATIONAL RELIEF COMMITTEE

MONTHLY REPORT

SEPTEMBER

1995

THE FIVE POINTS OF THE AIM OF THE MON NATIONAL RELIEF COMMITTEE

1. Resettlement of the refugees who become homeless due to the oppression of Rangoon military regime.
2. To help for the welfare of the refugees who become jobless due to the oppression of Rangoon military regime.
3. To take care and look after the health of the refugees.
4. To fight against illiteracy for the children in the refugee camps.
5. To struggle for human rights.

The Organization of The Mon National Relief Committee

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Phra Wongsala Pala | - Chairman |
| 2. Nai Shwe Thein | - Vice-Chairman |
| 3. Nai Banya Leir | - Secretary |
| 4. Nai Kasauh Mon | - Joint-Secretary |
| 5. Nai Chit Nyunt | - Member |
| 6. Nai Pho Sein | - Member |
| 7. Phra Nonda Pala | - Member |

MONTHLY REPORT OF MON NATIONAL RELIEF COMMITTEE

(September, 1995)

Preparing for Repatriation

At the time being, the monsoon rainy season nearly end and the MNRC has to prepare for the repatriation of Mon refugees to the considerably safe area in Mon territory as ceasefire agreement between New Mon State Party and SLORC. For the possible repatriation, the MNRC must request international aids agencies and the Royal Thai Government to help.

In the repatriation process, the most important for convenient transportation of the refugees is to build the suitable road of repatriation before hand. According to camp leaders we have to build some roads from Halockhani, Payaw camps to resettlement areas respectively. As soon as the rainy season stopped, MNRC would like to build those roads like Halockhani-Pongkatar, Baleh Donephai-Chedeit and Payaw-Neh Gui. It must need to spend some prices in building those roads for using machines like bulldozers. Therefore, the MNRC would like to request international NGOs to provide for the roads constructing charges. And, it also need the permission of Thai and SLORC authorities to allow bulldozers to work in repatriation zones.

On the other hand, the MNRC will resettle those refugees in the areas where they chose. For the refugees, they have their own choice to build their houses in any resettlement area. For the refugees who already in Burma side like Halockhani, Bee Ree and Prachuab camps can continuously stay in their former places if they had wishes. It will offer the suitable surrounding to the every refugee family which is possible to grow vegetables and raise animals. The Development Committee of New Mon State Party will share the possible farming lands for every refugee family for their future survival.

In every resettlement village, the MNRC has to build hospitals and schools and also need the assistance from aids NGOs to provide for building schools and hospitals. Not like crowded refugee camps, the planned villages in resettlement areas will have possible families and populations. Therefore, the villages need to build more schools and hospitals than refugee camps.

At presence, the MNRC, BBC and MSF are still surveying and collecting informations of respective resettlement areas. In this survey, it will provide informations of each resettlement areas on geography and physical location, infrastructure, demography, agriculture and livelihood, health and sanitation, education, security, social structure and administration.

To protect the isolation on Mon refugee community, the MNRC is still asking for a proper independent monitoring body of international community or NGOs which are interesting in repatriation of Mon refugees. It is still impossible for MNRC to ask Rangoon based UNHCR for monitoring as the Mon refugees are still reluctant to meet the SLORC authorities who may involve with monitoring body of Rangoon. As the MNRC has often stated, the ceasefire agreement does not mean absolutely that peace is returned to Burma.

Misunderstandings on NMSP President's Letter

With dated August 1, the NMSP President Nai Shwe Kyin wrote a letter to Thai National Security Council's Secretary General, Gen. Charan Kullavanijaya requesting some help in the repatriation

process of Mon refugees. In his letter, he mentioned repatriation of Mon refugees of border areas and economic immigrants in Thailand. But in his letter of attached pages below his signature, only six month assistance for the Mon refugees for the repatriation was asked by him and the amounts of all supplies were included. Many NGOs and other international organizations dissatisfied on that letter concerning the assistance to refugees.

According to the delegates who participated in the meeting with Thai National Security Council, before the letter was written they were agreed for one year assistance each other to help Mon refugees from Thai Government for the repatriation and community reconstruction as well. But when the letter is actually written down, its attached only six months requested assistance and considerably impossible to provide for the survival of returned Mon refugees. And they must not reconstruct their life to get small income in the latter six months.

When the MNRC complained on that letter to NMSP President, he explained he understood that requested assistance must provide from Thai government, not from Thailand based NGOs. According to him, he explained that the MNRC must take responsibility to ask for the assistance for international aids agencies for one year assistance. Therefore, total assistance for Mon refugees is one and half years supplies, as he told.

Because of such misunderstanding of NMSP President, many international organizations which will participate in the repatriation process have complicated for the supplies of Mon refugees. Anyhow, the MNRC consistently asks for at least one year assistance for the survival of those refugees and community reconstruction assistance from international aids agencies. On the other hand, according to the agreement, the Thai Government itself should provide 6 months assistance to Mon refugees as promised to NMSP delegation.

STATEMENT OF THE MON NATIONAL RELIEF COMMITTEE REGARDING THE REPATRIATION PROGRAM OF MON REFUGEES

As a recent political development in Burma, the New Mon State Party (NMSP) and the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) celebrated a ceasefire agreement on June 29, 1995.

The Mon National Relief Committee (MNRC) welcomes this good tidings. After many years of miserable life, Mon refugees now have an opportunity to return back home in peace.

Mons never wanted to become refugees. They had to flee from their native places in their homeland (Mon State, Burma) because there was fighting between the NMSP armed forces and the SLORC troops for several years during which systematic persecution on Mon people, such as, forced relocation, forced labour, press-ganged for portage to be used also as mine-detectors and abuse of women porters.

Mon people who fled persecution are entitled to be accepted as refugees in accordance with the international norm.

This means that these refugees are entitled to be repatriated under secure conditions and it should be voluntary according to the established international principles.

As ceasefire agreement had been effected there will be no more fighting. The SLORC has promised to discontinue its systematic persecution, except using voluntarily given labour.

Even though the long-awaited ceasefire came into effect, Mon refugees are still reluctant to return because of their past miserable experiences. Therefore, Mon refugees need assurance for their safety and voluntary return.

The MNRC believes these refugees need protection and assistance as provided to other returning refugees worldwide.

Firstly, the MNRC calls for the establishment or identification of a proper independent monitoring body which can ensure the safety of the refugees before, during and after repatriation.

Secondly, the MNRC calls for the provision for cross-border resettlement relief assistance for the Mon refugees for a period of at least one year (or until they can subsist on their own).

We request the international community to provide us with development aid to help us rebuild the Mon State which had been shattered by protracted civil war.

The Mon refugees now are looking forward to returning home and are hoping to go back as early as possible. However, to attempt to return them prematurely without necessary protection and assistance would cause uncertainty among the Mon refugees as to their future existence in Burma and this could lead them to flee back to Thailand once again in the near future.

The MNRC calls upon the international community working for Mon refugees; the Royal Thai Government and the SLORC to ensure a safe, secure and confident return of the Mon refugees.

Date: August 31, 1995.

Mon National Relief Committee
Thai-Burma Border

To

Mr. Ruprecht von Arnim
Representative
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
Bangkok

Date: September 5, 1995

SUBJECT: Invitation for monitoring of the repatriation of Mon refugees.

Dear Sir,

The New Mon State Party (NMSP) has signed a ceasefire agreement with SLORC, the military regime in Burma, at the end of June.

Because of the prolonged civil war between the successive central governments and the ethnic nationalities armed forces, the local inhabitants have suffered from the persecution of Burmese troops such as forced relocation, forced labour, press-ganged for portage to be used as mine-defectors and abuse of women porters. Even though those local inhabitants have escaped systematic persecution to the Thai-Burma border, they have received lack of protection from Thailand, and its governments also barred the international community from offering possible protection and assistances under the recognition of *refugee status*.

In view point of our relief committee, the NMSP had to sign ceasefire agreement because of the outside Thailand pressure and inside SLORC inhumane treatments to Mon community. The example of resumed fighting in Karenni areas and other ethnic areas show the ceasefire agreement does not mean absolutely that peace is returned to Burma. And, it also means there is not enough safety for the refugees to return back to their native villages where are deeply situated inside Burma, in the current situations. However, because of the ceasefire, the refugees must be repatriated to Burma side of the border in coming dry season and we would like those refugees who fled persecution to be repatriated under secure conditions and it should be voluntary according to the established international principles.

Therefore, the MNRC has plan to repatriate Mon refugees to the areas close to the border and if the situation becomes unsafe because of fighting, they could flee back into Thailand again in easily. We hope that in the future, if the ceasefire holds, that the refugees can return to their native areas *at a later date*. To ensure for the safety of the refugees before, during and after repatriation, it must need a proper independent monitoring body. As we hope, the most suitable international organization to establish a proper independent monitoring body is your Bangkok branch UNHCR. We would like you to consider this. We think, only the UNHCR monitoring can provide enough safety for the future of Mon refugees, provision for adequate cross-border resettlement relief assistance and other community reconstruction assistance as well. Thank you very much.

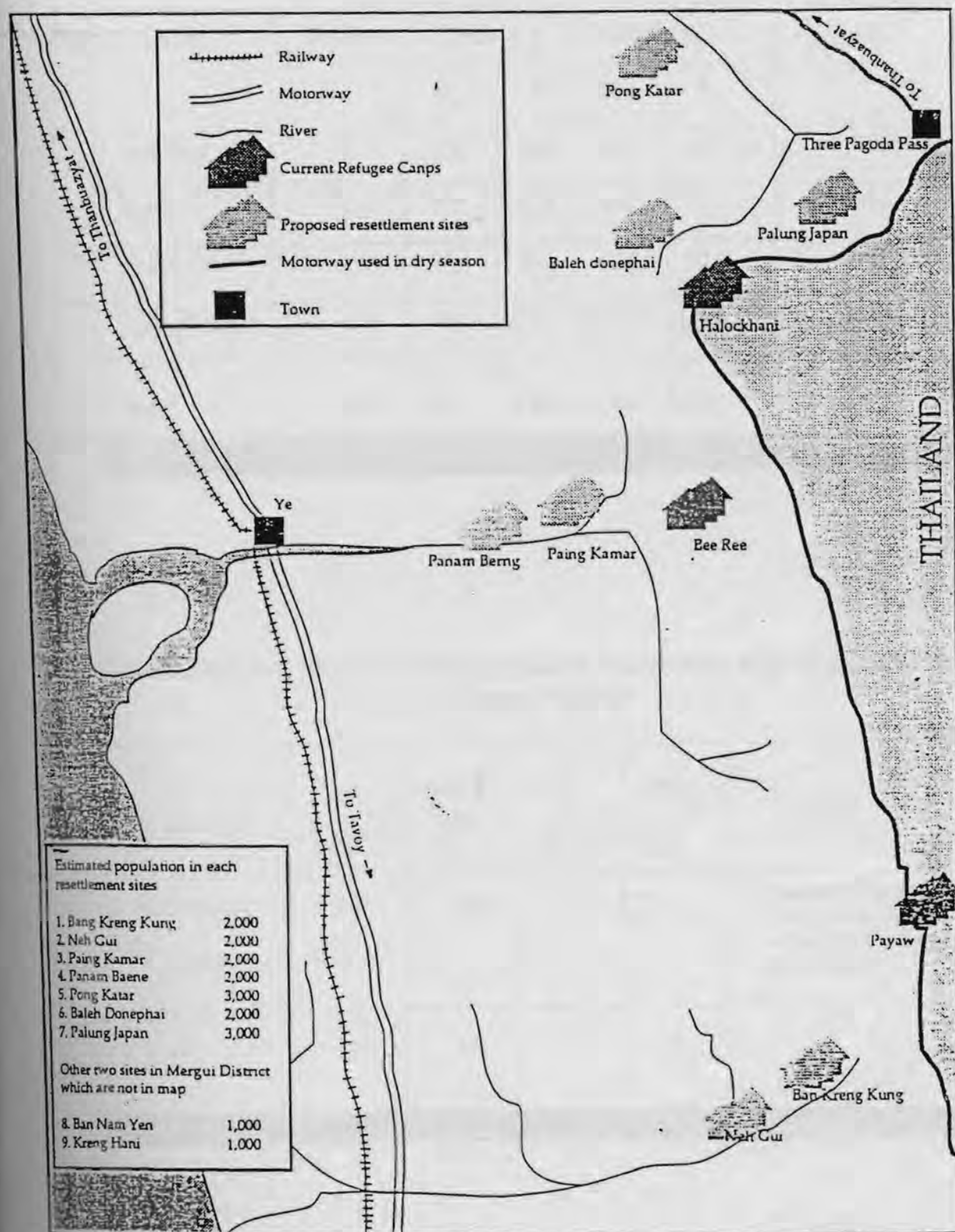
Yours sincerely,

Sd/- Wongsala Pala

(Ven. Wongsala Pala)
Chairman, Mon National Relief Committee

Map of resettlement sites of Mon refugees and immigrants

(The resettlement program will start in December and complete in April, 1996. In the program, it will resettle not only refugees but also immigrants who have been resided mostly in Kanchanaburi Province of Thailand. Estimatedly, the MNRC and the Development Committee of New Mon State Party have to resettle about 18,000 populations as following sites.)



**THE REFUGEE POPULATION OF THE FOUR CAMP ARE AS FOLLOW
(September,1995)**

No	Camp	Families	Adult		Children		Total
			M	F	M	F	
1	Bee Ree	261	302	347	468	480	1597
2	Payaw	657	807	1026	944	1123	3900
3	Prachuab	317	381	374	443	527	1725
4	Halockhani	852	968	1037	1325	1889	5219
	Total	2087	2458	2784	3180	4019	12441

**THE MATERIALS RECEIVED BY THE MON NATIONAL RELIEF COMMITTEE
(September, 1995)**

No	Organization	Rice (sack)	Fish Paste (kg)	Salt (kg)	Chilly (kg)	Remark
1	COERR	100	550	-	-	Consotium already provided for rainy season stock-piling for all camps
2	Consortium	-	-	-	-	
	Total	100	550	-	-	