

Updates on coercive measures etc. in Burma -- 2007-12-30

These mixed pieces from various parts of Burma, including Mon areas, show that coercive measures and other problems which may lead to displacement are ongoing. Reporting by the Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB) and the Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM)

Kalay authorities seize land for airport extension

June 01, 2007 (DVB)—Officials from Kalay township in Burma's Sagaing division have seized land from seven farmers this week as preparations start for the expansion of the local airport.

Kalay residents told *DVB* that more than 150 houses will be demolished to make way for the enlarged airport. Land from the seven farms that were seized is reportedly being given to home owners who have agreed to relocate as compensation.

"The authorities called us to a meeting on May 12 and told us to stop farming because our land was being taken for a new housing area," one of the seven displaced farmers told *DVB*.

"They said it wasn't a seizure but that it was just a donation of our land to the nation. They told us not to use the term seizure . . . this land has been with us since the time of our ancestors," he said.

A resident who is being relocated onto the seized farm land said he considered himself lucky.

"But it is a pain that we have to move during a time when our business is not good. Our work is in the town but we will have to move to these farms that are far away," the resident said.

Reporting by Naw Say Phaw

Storms hit Irrawaddy, Magwe and Tenasserim

Aug 07, 2007 (DVB)—Strong storms have hit Burma's Irrawaddy, Magwe and Tenasserim divisions, causing a number of deaths and widespread damage to property.

A small cyclone reportedly destroyed 60 buildings, including a school, in Irrawaddy division's Laputta township on Saturday, killing two children and leaving hundreds of people homeless.

"It hit ward 10, which is home to about 40 families . . . The Amat village across the Yway River from Laputta was also hit by a small twister at the same time," a resident of the area said yesterday.

In Magwe division's Yaynanchaung township, storms and heavy monsoonal rains have caused serious flooding along the Irrawaddy River. An estimated 5000 people living on

the river front in the area have lost their homes, according to a local National League for Democracy branch.

Further south, a small hurricane reportedly rocked Sin Htoe Gyi village near the Tenasserim town of Pu-law on August 4, destroying 17 homes and causing widespread damage in throughout the area.

Residents in areas affected by storms and flooding across Burma have complained that local military officials have failed to provide them with emergency care or supplies. An NLD member from Yaynanchaung told *DVB* on condition of anonymity that while officials had visited the area to assess the damage caused by the storms, no aid had been given to displaced families.

“The government aid program officials have used residents’ boats and fuel to get themselves to the flood site but they have not given out any aid. They have just been going around in their boats and telling people to stay away from the water,” the NLD member said.

Reporting by Aye Aye Mon

Burma named worst violator of housing rights

Dec 6, 2007 (DVB)—The Burmese ruling State Peace and Development Council has been named one of the worst violators of housing rights by an international human rights organisation.

Since 2002, the Geneva-based Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions has nominated three governments or public institutions for its annual Housing Rights Violator Awards who have been responsible for particularly severe violations of housing rights.

COHRE deputy director Jean du Plessis said that the Burmese regime had shown an “abysmal disregard” for the basic right to housing.

“More than one million people have been dispossessed and are internally displaced in Burma – not because of a natural disaster, but due to their own government’s calculated and brutal actions,” he said in a press release.

He went on to described the severe violations of land rights in Burma, particularly those of ethnic minority groups.

“The military regime in Burma has displaced more than one million people from their lands and homes since 1962, disproportionately affecting ethnic nationality communities – which has included confiscating their lands,” he said in the statement.

“The SPDC’s brutal campaign against ethnic nationality communities – confiscating their lands, attacking and burning villages, killing thousands of civilians, raping women and looting property – is in clear breach of international law,” he said.

“The military regime’s ‘Burmanisation’ policy of ethnic cleansing and social engineering through forced relocation and land confiscation, which has led to the mass displacement of more than one million people from their lands and homes in Burma, is clear evidence of its complete disregard for human rights including the right to adequate housing.”

Du Plessis said that fundamental changes needed to be made by the regime to enable people to access their rights.

“These problems can only be resolved through substantial and sustained change in Burma. Political transition should include improved access to a range of fundamental

rights, as enshrined in international law and conventions — including respect for [housing, land and property] rights,” he said.

COHRE has published a report, *Displacement and Dispossession: Forced Migration and Land Rights in Burma*, which details the Burmese government’s abuses of housing, land and property rights through land confiscation.

Along with the SPDC, Slovakia and the Beijing Municipality and Beijing Olympics organising committee were also chosen for this year’s Housing Rights Violator Awards.

Reporting by DVB

From illegal timber to tiger skins, Myanmar is destroying its environment for a quick buck

Oct 14, 2007 (AP) - Truckloads of illegal timber cross the Myanmar border to sawmills in China, while markets along the Thai border openly sell bear paws, tiger skins and elephant tusks.

Further inland, the repressive military regime plans to dam one of Asia's purest rivers, and allows gold and gem mines to tear up hillsides and pollute groundwater for quick cash.

Myanmar has become notorious in the region for ignoring international and its own environmental laws in a single-minded effort to make the money that environmentalists say helps keep the regime in power.

"They may have laws on the books but they mean extremely little," said Sean Turnell, an expert on the Myanmar economy with Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia. "I would say environmental considerations mean zero to them. It wouldn't even enter their heads."

After decades of self-imposed isolation, the junta in the late 1980s began courting foreign investors with offers of stakes in gem mines, forest tracts and hydroelectric projects.

Foreign investment allowed the regime to double its military to 400,000 soldiers while offering neighbors like China and Thailand access to cheap raw materials and energy to feed their growing economies.

A Myanmar government spokesman did not respond to a request for comment on its environmental record. Chinese government officials could not be reached for comment and Thailand denied its investment in Myanmar contributes to the country's environmental destruction.

Hardest hit in the rush to develop the country formerly named Burma have been its rivers and forests, environmentalists say.

Over the past decade, they say, two dozen dams have either been built or are scheduled to be built mostly with the help of Chinese and Thai firms. They accuse the government of uprooting tens of thousands of villagers to make way for the dams to provide electricity mostly to Thailand and China.

Among the planned dams are at least five on the Salween, which rises in Tibet and is considered one of Southeast Asia's last untamed rivers. A first dam is also planned on the Irrawaddy, which activists fear will result in the forced relocation of 10,000 villagers and the decimation of its shoreside fishing communities.

"This region is one of the world's biodiversity hot spots," said Naw La of the Kachin Development Networking Group, a coalition of environmental groups watching Myanmar. "If this dam is built on the Irrawaddy, the fish populations will decrease. A lot of people will be suffering because their livelihoods will disappear."

Along Myanmar's border with China, illegally felled timber is transported to China, according the Britain-based group Global Witness. From there, it becomes flooring and furniture for European and American homes.

Global Witness said most of the logging takes place in an area described as "very possibly the most biodiverse, rich, temperate area on earth," home to red pandas, leopards and tigers.

About 95 percent of Myanmar's total timber exports to China are illegal, Global Witness said, costing its treasury \$250 million a year. Much of the profits go to Chinese firms as well as regional military commanders and ethnic guerrilla groups, it said.

The borders along China and Thailand also are host to massive, unregulated markets that sell everything from illicit gems to animal parts. At the Tachileik market on the Thai border and Mong La market on the Chinese border, vendors openly sell tiger and leopard skins, bear paws, ivory and live turtles.

The markets are filled with Western tourists looking for souvenirs and Asia businessmen supplying traditional medicine and food markets in China and other Asian countries, activists said.

"Given the high demand and extent of the trade in Myanmar, many species will be lost," said Chris Shepherd, a senior program officer for conservation group Traffic. "Rhinos in Myanmar are probably already extinct due to trade. Tigers are on a huge decline. Elephants are in huge decline. The list goes on and on."

Even the few environmental success stories in Myanmar seem to have a dark side.

The junta in 2001 created the world's largest tiger reserve in Hukaung Valley with help and funding from the U.S.-based Wildlife Conservation Society. It contains as many as 150 tigers - about a third of the total in Myanmar.

But the Kachin group says the junta has allowed widespread gold mining in the reserve. Three gold mines are polluting the rivers through the valley with mercury, cyanide and other chemicals, the group said in a report released this year. DVB

Forced military recruitment in Bago and Shan state

Dec 24, 2007 (DVB)—Government troops have been forcing villagers in Bago division and northern Shan state to sign up new recruits to the army or pay money to the military to hire mercenaries.

Local troops from government brigade (66) in Nattalin, Zeegone, and Kyopin Kout townships are demanding that local villagers contribute one recruit from each village group or 1500 kyat per household to hire mercenaries.

"Our village group, which consists of four villages, had to pay 900,000 kyat to the military to hire a mercenary. We do not dare to complain about it," said a villager from Chaung Gwa village in Nattalin township.

Meanwhile, locals in Sibaw and Kyauk Mae townships in northern Shan state have also made complaints about local military troops forcing locals to join the army.

“They are demanding a recruit from each household that has a male family member. If we don’t want to join, we have to pay 100,000 kyat to the military,” said a local from Kyauk Mae.

“It is not a problem if you can afford to pay that money. But those who can’t afford it are now very worried for their sons.”

Reporting by Aye Nai and Nan Kham Kaew

Military raids on gold mining village

Dec 20, 2007 (DVB)—A gold mining village in Mandalay division's Thar Si township was raided last week by government troops who seized valuable items and cash, according to locals.

Leh Pyin village, located on a railway line half way between Thar Si and Kalaw township in Shan state, is well known among people in the gold business for its mines and is populated by informal gold diggers.

There are about 150 households in the village.

Village residents said that around 70 soldiers from the government's Defence Services Command and General Staff College in Kalaw township, led by major Myat Htun, raided the village on 14 December and seized items from several gold shops.

"Several gold and cash stashes and about four television sets from Ye Nyi Naung gold shop were seized, as well as gold-purifying equipment and other property from Lwan Moe Aung gold shop, and about 1.4 million kyat and 294 grams of gold from Shwe Thazin gold shop," one local resident said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"They seized satellite dishes and other personal belongings from the villagers as well."

The resident said that gold diggers who pay 100,000 kyat a month to local authorities to work in the gold mine were not targeted in the raids.

Thar Si township authority was unavailable for comment.

Reporting by Nan Kham Kaew

Farmers suffer losses after forced crop growing

Dec 3, 2007 (DVB)—Farmers in Mandalay and Magwe divisions have been faced with rising debts and failed harvests after local authorities forced them to grow particular crops.

In Ma Hlaing township in Mandalay division, township chairman U Myo Thand ordered farmers in his territory to grow rice paddy on fields that are only suitable for growing cotton, corn and beans.

He said those who disobeyed the orders would be arrested and imprisoned.

The farmers did grow paddy rice as he ordered, but the crop failed because the land was unsuitable.

This has left the farmers with no income from their crop this year forcing some to sell up farmland and cattle to repay their debts.

The chairman has continued tell farmers to clear other land to make paddy fields and those who have refused or failed to clear their lands within the deadline he gave them have been arrested.

One farmer from Habyebin village, U Chit Yan, was among those detained for not complying with the chairman's orders.

"On 29 July, the township chairman ordered me to clear the banana plantations my family has owned for generations, and he gave me five days to clear it," the farmer said. "But I couldn't do it on time as there was some heavy rain, and then he held me in detention for 24 hours."

A few days later Chit Yan was arrested again for not growing what the township chairman had asked, and that time he spent seven days in detention.

The township chairman was repeatedly unavailable for comment.

Farmers in villages around Taung Twin Gyi township, Magwe division, were forced by authorities to grow sugar cane to sell to the government.

Local officials told them that those who did not grow the crop would face punishment.

But now that the time has come to harvest the crops, the authorities have said that they will no longer be buying the sugar cane due to the shortage of fuel at the number 9 sugar factory at Aung Lan township in Magwe division.

After hearing that they would not be able to sell their sugar cane to the government, the villagers requested permission to set up home factories to make Burmese traditional sweets instead, but permission was denied by the authorities.

Township farmers have also suffered under a government scheme to buy fertilizer.

The farmers were offered the fertilizer at the start of the season at 6,000 kyat, which they could use then but would not have to pay for until after the harvest.

But now officials have said they must pay 15,000 kyat for the fertilizer, despite the lack of income the farmers have received from their sugar cane crops.

Authorities have blamed the increase in price on the cost of transporting the fertilizer.

Reporting by Aye Nai and Khin Maung So Min

Small farmers hurt by bird flu measures

Nov 30, 2007 (DVB)—Village farmers from Kengtung township have complained that government measures to combat bird flu in the community have unfairly targeted smaller chicken farms.

Following "unusual deaths" of local species of chickens and ducks in Naungngin village in Kengtung township, Shan State, investigations were carried out and the H5N1 virus was found to be present, according to state media.

The Livestock Breeding and Veterinary Department of the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries issued a public warning in the state-run New Light of Myanmar giving details of the outbreak and advising the public how to help prevent its spread.

The LBVD claimed that 14,889 chickens, ducks and geese had been culled, and said that this had been supplemented with bio-security measures and educational talks in the affected area and surrounding villages.

However, farmers from the villages have criticised the measures taken by the government to prevent the disease from spreading, claiming that only chickens on small farms in the village areas were killed, while the nine big chicken firms in the town were not affected by the cull.

The owner of a small chicken farm in a nearby village said that the LBVD had taken all his chickens despite his village being so far unaffected.

"They came and took all my chickens, but I didn't get any compensation or anything for it. I heard that chickens in other villages have died from the bird flu disease but our village hasn't been affected yet," he said.

One chicken farm owner from the town said that there were some limited measures affecting the nine big companies.

"They only call upon the 9 big companies to go to disease controlling workshops, but didn't do much else except spraying insecticide on their big farms," he said.

"They told those chicken farm owners to stop selling chickens, eggs and ducks and told them to keep their birds healthy."

Reporting by Naw Say Phaw

Forced payments for Myawaddy farmers

Nov 7, 2007 (DVB)—Corn farmers in the border town of Myawaddy have been angered by an increase in the toll money demanded by local administration officials and Democratic Karen Buddhist Association members.

Farmers from Maedaw Kalay, Ingyin Myaing, Min Lat Pan, Phaluu and Thit Taw Po villages in the Myawaddy area of Karen state, along the Thai-Burmese border, have grown increasingly frustrated by the rise in the forced payments.

Local village peace and development council chairmen and officers from battalion 907 of the Burmese military-backed DKBA told the farmers before this year's harvest season that they would have to pay a two baht toll on each bucket of corn seed.

This has now been increased to a charge of 10 baht per bucket harvested, followed by another 10 baht tax after sale of the crops.

"So it's 20 baht per bucket of corn seed. It is impossible for us to pay that as we make only 10 baht profit from each bucket," said a farmer.

"We come to the border area to make living from farming as it is too hard to make living inside the county. Now this is going to leave us with nothing left to eat."

The farmers said the toll system was imposed this year by Maedaw Kalay VPDC U Soe Naing, Min Lat Pan VPDC U Yan Naung Soe and major Maung Soe of DKBA battalion 907.

The DKBA was unavailable for comment on the case.

Reporting by Htet Yazar

Military steps up restrictions on Muslims

Sep 17, 2007 (DVB)—The Burmese military has reportedly stepped up its restrictions on Muslims, with several Rangoon and Mandalay residents claiming they have been banned from praying in large groups.

Muslims in both cities also said that their local mosques had been banned from airing the daily call to prayer on loudspeakers during the holy Muslim month of Ramadan as part of the military's latest moves to intensify security across the country.

“Mosques in some wards are not allowed to use loudspeakers and since the start of Ramadan the authorities have also been asking us to apply for permission to worship in private houses,” one Muslim from Rangoon told *DVB* on condition of anonymity.

“The permits are only valid for one month and we have heard it will be hard to get them renewed,” he said.

A Muslim woman from Mandalay said that the ban on the broadcast of the call to prayer was making it difficult for many Muslims to make it to their local mosque on time.

“Without the loud speakers it is very difficult for people to coordinate their religious activities,” the woman said.

The activities of Muslims are already heavily restricted in Burma with many prevented from holding identification cards and some barred from marrying.

Reporting by Yee May Aung

Thousands of Irrawaddy farms ruined as rains continue

Aug 21, 2007 (DVB)—Thousands of people from the Irrawaddy townships of Bassein, Henzada, Ma-Ubin, Panataw were left homeless last week after a dam near the swollen Irrawaddy River broke.

Residents told *DVB* yesterday that flooding caused by the dam break had submerged thousands of acres of farm land and had forced most families off their property.

People were also reportedly forced to flee villages in Pathwe, Ma-mwepin, Daw Wartawsal and Nat Swe last week after the local authorities opened a section of the Inn Chaung irrigation channel and flooded the area.

“Between 5000 and 10,000 acres of farm land has been destroyed so far . . . I had about 60 acres of crops planted and about 40 of those acres are still underwater,” one farmer from the area said.

“We invested a lot of money into those crops. I think it will take us about three years to recoup the costs,” the farmer said.

A number of serious landslides caused by heavy rains have also hit townships in Irrawaddy division with residents of Panataw township's South Paypin, North Paypin and Khanwepho villagers forced to evacuate the area yesterday.

“Villagers from those places where landslides occurred are now dismantling their houses. There were about 500 to 600 families living in each village,” one resident of Panataw said.

But the Irrawaddy Divisional Peace and Development Council office in Bassein told *DVB* yesterday that reports of widespread damage had been exaggerated.

“We have no plans to evacuate residents for the moment,” officials said.

Reporting by Aye Aye Mon

Magwe authorities accused of land grab

Aug 13, 2007 (DVB)—Residents from villages west of Magwe division's Pakhukku township have accused local officials of seizing large amounts of farm land for a new rail link between Pakkhukku and Kyan Khin.

Farmers told *DVB* that their land was seized soon after work on the project started early this month. They claim they have not been compensated for the land and that the authorities have failed to provide them with new homes.

"We once lost our farm near the Irrawaddy River when the government built an irrigation system in the area. Now they are building a railway line and they have taken our land again," an elderly farmer said.

"About four acres was taken from us. Farming has been our life since we were born. Now everything is gone," the farmer said.

Many farmers affected by the project claim that they authorities refused to wait until their current crops could be harvested before bulldozing their land. They say their requests were ignored and that the land was cleared just days after the seizure.

"The land seized from me had a value of about 400,000 kyat. All the crops we just planted were crushed," another farmer said.

Reporting by Aye Naing

Flooding destroys more homes in Magwe

Aug 09, 2007 (DVB)—High flood waters have claimed the homes of hundreds of families in Pakkoku and Min Bu in Magwe division, forcing many residents to seek shelter in local monasteries.

One Min Bu resident told *DVB* that more than half the town remained submerged despite drops in water levels in the past two days.

"The authorities have been making a list of the flood victims but so far nothing else has been done. They have asked some of the richer people affected to donate money to help everyone else," the resident said on condition of anonymity.

In Pakkoku, residents said that while it was likely many people would be able to return to their homes in the next 10 days, many houses had been irreparably damaged. One man, whose house has been destroyed, said that the local authorities needed to do more to help people affected by the flooding.

"A government minister gave the victims in our area three vials of rice each but the local authorities and the [Union Solidarity and Development Association] have done nothing," the man said.

"Some people affected have set up a camp on the side of the highway. The authorities have ordered them to move because some VIPs would be travelling through and they didn't want the flooding victims to be seen," he said.

Reporting by Naw Say Phaw

Storms hit Irrawaddy, Magwe and Tenasserim

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"It hit ward 10, which is home to about 40 families . . . The Amat village across the Yway River from Laputta was also hit by a small twister at the same time," a resident of the area said yesterday.

In Magwe division's Yaynanchaung township, storms and heavy monsoonal rains have caused serious flooding along the Irrawaddy River. An estimated 5000 people living on the river front in the area have lost their homes, according to a local National League for Democracy branch.

Further south, a small hurricane reportedly rocked Sin Htoe Gyi village near the Tenasserim town of Pu-law on August 4, destroying 17 homes and causing widespread damage in throughout the area.

Residents in areas affected by storms and flooding across Burma have complained that local military officials have failed to provide them with emergency care or supplies. An NLD member from Yaynanchaung told *DVB* on condition of anonymity that while officials had visited the area to assess the damage caused by the storms, no aid had been given to displaced families.

"The government aid program officials have used residents' boats and fuel to get themselves to the flood site but they have not given out any aid. They have just been going around in their boats and telling people to stay away from the water," the NLD member said.

Reporting by Aye Aye Mon

Magwe residents file complaint with ILO

July 27, 2007 (DVB)—A group of 20 villagers from Pwint Phyu township in Magwe division told *DVB* yesterday that they filed a forced labour complaint with the International Labour Organization.

Ko Kyaw Khine Shwe, one of the signatories to the complaint, said that the local authorities had forced them to work on a five-acre castor crop owned by the Burmese military.

"There were about 100 men and 75 women who had to dig 800 cubic-foot holes in the ground from 7am in the morning until about noon. They didn't even let us have a break for water. They told us we would have to come back the next day also," Ko Kyaw Khine Shwe said.

The authorities then forced the group to work for four more days on the site or pay 1200 kyat as a fee, the villagers told *DVB*.

"We only earn about 800 kyat a day and can't afford to pay the 1200 kyat so we had to agree to work," Ko Kyaw Khine Shwe said.

The group of villagers reportedly sent the letter of complaint to the ILO on June 31, also sending copies to the township peace and development council and the Magwe Division

Peace and Development Council.

Since sending the letters, Ko Kyaw Khine said that he and other villages had been questioned five times by local officials.

Another village who also signed the letter said that the government's interrogations were starting to take a toll on some of the forced labour complainants.

"We are getting scare because they have been calling on us and pressuring us. We can't even mind our daily duties anymore," Ko Aye Lwin Oo said.

But officials with the Pwint Phyu Township Peace and Development Council denied the claims yesterday, saying that they were not guilty of forcing the villagers to work because tending the castor plants was the peoples' legal responsibility.

Ko Kyaw Khine Shwe rebutted the government's statements saying that each household in the village had fulfilled their duty of growing seven castor oil plants long before they were forced to work in the field.

"That is a different issue. It has nothing to do with what we have said in our complaint," he said.

Reporting by Aye Naing

Shan residents fear forced removal from dam site

July 16, 2007 (DVB)—The residents of 18 villages in southern Shan State said today that they feared being forcibly relocated from their homes as the Burmese military prepares to launch a new dam on the Paung-Laung creek.

Located south of Shan State's Aung Pan township, the villages are likely to be flooded as a result of the project, and locals forced to find new places to live, according to residents in the area.

"The authorities told us through our chairman, that once the dam is built, our villages will be under water and we will have to move," one local man said on condition of anonymity.

"Surveying started in April this year but we wanted to expand our villages and build more permanent structures," the resident said.

State Peace and Development Council surveyors have reportedly been visiting the area regularly. It is not clear what size or capacity the dam will be since the government has not yet officially announced the commencement of the project.

"It is almost sure that we will have to leave with place but [the authorities] still haven't talked to us about where we will have to go to. We don't know what to do," the resident told *DVB*.

Reporting by Aye Naing

Rice trading stalls in Rangoon

July 13, 2007 (DVB)—Trading at the Bayintnaung rice market in Rangoon ground to a halt earlier this month after the Burmese authorities imposed restrictions on the sale price of the staple food, locals told *DVB*.

As rice prices had increased dramatically in the past eight weeks, the State Peace and Development Council reportedly ordered that the sale prices of the vital commodity be frozen, leaving many sellers struggling to stay in business.

“The old crop of special variety of monsoon rice costs 19,500 kyats per sack while the price of the special summer variety is 18,500 kyats,” one trader said.

“Rice that comes in from the districts is bought by the [Myanmar Rice Traders Association] and they pay only 18,00 kyats . . . Because of that, no one wants to bring rice to Rangoon and none of the brokerage houses are trading. You can say that the business has come to a standstill,” the trader said on condition of anonymity.

“They say that they are doing so that they can sell the rice on to the public and keep prices low, but it is too late to try to control the prices.”

Reporting by DVB

Flooding claims homes in Arakan and Bago

July 06, 2007 (DVB)—Floods caused by heavy monsoon rains have devastated homes in several areas of Arakan State’s Sandoway township and Bago division’s Tharawaddy township in the past two days, according to residents.

“The floods started about two days ago. Ward one and two are now under water. We are worried that the water level is going to rise again. About 300 or 400 houses have been submerged,” a Sandoway resident told *DVB*.

“The high water levels are stopping everyone from going to work,” he said.

Residents of Sandoway also said that government rescue teams who have been placed on standby have so far done little to help affected families cope with the disaster. As most of the roads in the township are completely flooded, access for groups such as the Red Cross has proved problematic.

“We have to worry about the floods all the time. Because most of the creeks in the area have stopped running and the government’s marine administration departments has not bother to re-channel them by using heavy machinery like they have in the past,” one local man said.

“The water can’t flow though the creeks since they are blocked by dirt and mud. So it flows towards the town whenever there is rain,” he said.

Farmers in Tharawaddy told *DVB* that flooding had caused the closure of several schools in the past few days and that more than 20 houses had been destroyed by strong winds.

Reporting by Naw Say Phaw

Farmers complain of forced paddy cultivation

June 27, 2007 (DVB)—Farmers from Mandalay division’s Myinchan township said yesterday that the Burmese government’s decision to force them to grow rice paddy on unsuitable ground had left them struggling to make ends meet.

“All the farmers from villages along the Myinchan-Nyaung Oo highway have been forced to grow paddy on dry ground. Officials are collecting the names of farmers who

refuse and say that their farms will be confiscated,” one farmer from the area told *DVB* on condition of anonymity.

“They said that they were acting under the orders of senior general Than Shwe,” he said. Farmers in the area have complained that because their land is too dry for paddy the crops are failing, leaving them with no livelihood since they were forced to stop cultivating their chosen produce.

“We raised this issue with agricultural officials who said that they knew it was impossible but that we should try anyway because they were under orders from higher authorities,” another farmer said.

But local Agriculture Department staff told *DVB* that they thought the farmers’ land was suitable for rice paddy cultivation and that it was the duty of the farmers to produce enough rice to meet the country’s needs.

“Myinchan district doesn’t produce enough rice for food. That’s why we were ordered to grow paddy here,” an official said.

Reporting by Naw Say Phaw

Deadly fever hits high numbers of children in Bassein

June 21, 2007 (*DVB*)—There has been a sharp increase in the number of children dying from hemorrhagic dengue fever in Bassein, Irrawaddy division, according to sources close to the local hospital.

In the past five days more than 10 children have died from the disease in Bassein, with local residents complaining the government had failed to address the problem.

“Three children died on the 18th of this month and five more died in the afternoon on the next day. At least 10 have died in total. The local health authorities have done nothing to take precautions,” *DVB*’s source close to the hospital said.

Residents also said that while a number of people from the community had offered to donate blood to help save the children, the hospital had attempted to sell the freely donated blood to patients and make a profit.

“The hospital chief is charging 9500 kyat for what he calls donation money for a pack of blood. Some poor families haven’t been able to pay,” another source told *DVB*.

Reporting by Naw Say Phaw

Analysis – Burma’s children still struggling with beri-beri

June 04, 2007 (*DVB*)—HIV/AIDS, bird flu and polio may have grabbed most of the recent health headlines, but there is one disease that perhaps underlines the failings of Burma’s healthcare response more than any other—beri-beri.

Caused by a lack of thiamine, or vitamin B1, in the diet—previously a common problem in countries in which polished rice is the staple—beri-beri has largely been eradicated from the developing world as it is non-contagious and straightforward to treat.

But in April, an internal UN update on the humanitarian situation said Burma remained the only nation in which beri-beri was still a reported cause of child mortality.

“Though in part a result of poor nutritional habits, the fact that [beri-beri] is the fifth

leading cause of infant deaths in [Burma] is attributable to the inability of families to diversify their food intake,” the document said.

More than one in ten Burmese children die before their fifth birthday. A UN report examining child and mother health from 2005—which provides the most up-to-date figures on the disease—says that beri-beri accounted for 5.5 percent of all deaths among children under five years old in Burma, compared to 5.7 percent in the case of malaria, the leading cause of mortality among the whole population.

The Burmese have long favoured a diet of tea, fish paste and betel nut, all of which inhibit thiamine use in the body. They also rely on a staple of polished rice, which is low in thiamine. In addition, the country’s stunted socio-economic status and lack of spending on healthcare means efforts to combat the disease have been too little, too late.

The United Nation’s Children’s Fund (UNICEF) says that the standard treatment for an acute case of infant beri-beri is a 50mg injection of thiamine and a two-to-three week course of thiamine tablets with a total cost of just 500 kyat. However, the Ministry of Health planned to spend only 427.8 kyat per capita during the 2006 financial year, its own data shows. This represents a rise in health expenditure of just 5.2 kyat per person, or 1.23 percent, compared to the previous year.

In real terms this should be considered a decrease in health spending. At the beginning of the 2006 financial year, Burma’s currency hit an all-time low of 1,450 kyat to the US dollar, says the London-based Economist Intelligence Unit, which estimated 16-percent inflation in Burma during the same period.

The Ministry of Health Website says that there are still just 348 Maternal and Child Health Centres in Burma, the same number as in 1988. *DVB* was unable to find any evidence that the Ministry of Health has attributed money to tackling beri-beri. The Department of Health Planning was unavailable for comment.

“To our knowledge, UNICEF is the only agency working on infantile beriberi [in Burma] at this time,” said Susan Aitken, the agency’s spokesperson.

In June 2006, the Australian Agency for International Development donated US \$832,000 to UNICEF for a two-year nation-wide project “which aims to quickly and dramatically reduce infant deaths from beri-beri.” A 2005-2006 survey in 16 townships recorded a beri-beri mortality rate of nearly six percent.

The UNICEF project aims to provide thiamine supplements to pregnant and lactating mothers, increase awareness of infantile beri-beri through increased information with a longer-term strategy aimed at increasing levels of thiamine in the Burmese diet. Results from the campaign are not yet available.

The challenge will be reaching rural areas in which 87 percent of all under-five deaths are recorded and diversifying the average Burmese diet, a difficult prospect given the deteriorating socio-economic conditions in the country, as noted by the UN in its internal appraisal of Burma’s humanitarian situation in April.

A recent household survey conducted by the Central Statistics Office in collaboration with international humanitarian agencies showed that more than 30 percent of the Burmese population lives “well below” the poverty line. In ethnic minority areas the situation is worse than the average.

In Chin State, more than 70 percent of the population lives below the poverty line, while in East Shan State it is more than half. In Arakan State, 60 percent of children under five were found to be “moderately underweight,” the highest levels in the country, where

Muslim Rohingyas living mostly in the north still suffer severe restrictions on food supplies.

As the UN Food and Agriculture Association has said previously, "Over the years beri-beri has tended to disappear as economic conditions have improved and diet has become more varied."

Given that neither of these two critical factors are moving in the right direction and funding to tackle the disease is still miniscule, Burma appears to have a long way to go before it can join the rest of the world in eradicating beri-beri.

Reporting by Clive Parker—a freelance journalist based in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

Hakha residents report forced labour in Chin state

May 22, 2007 (DVB)—Residents from Chin State's Hakha and Mantaw townships said today that local officials were continuing to force them to work for free on a road being built between the areas.

Several residents said they had been ordered to contribute large amounts of money to the fund for the construction, which has already taken three years.

"They are collecting 10,000 kyats from every household. Those who cannot contribute cash have to go and work at the construction site as their contribution," one man told *DVB* on condition of anonymity.

"It's difficult for us. We were already struggling hard for our daily food. We are only contributing the money because we do not dare disobey the order," he said.

Large numbers of villagers from the surrounding area have reportedly been forced to work for free on the project since it started. But the Hakha chairman today denied the allegations of forced labour.

"We didn't ask anyone for the money," he said.

Reporting by Naw Say Phaw

Burmese labourers to file forced labour claim

May 10, 2007 (DVB)—More than 100 Naypyidaw construction workers are planning to file a complaint with the International Labour Organization, claiming the In Arr Htet company failed to pay them more than 3.6 million kyats-worth of wages.

A lawyer with the Guiding Star group, which provides legal aid to farmers and labourers, U Aye Myint, told *DVB* the In Arr Htet company hired engineer Ko Moe Kyaw Latt two months ago to head the construction of three buildings in Burma's new capital.

After hiring more than 100 workers and starting construction, the company called off the project and refused to pay any wages to Ko Moe Kyaw Latt or the hired construction workers.

Ko Moe Kyaw Latt reportedly filed a complaint over the incident with the Ministry for Labour on April 25 but no action was taken. U Aye Myint said the workers responded by occupying the former construction site in protest.

"If grassroots people in Burma, such as the workers and farmers are insulted, they shouldn't just feel dejected. They should report it . . . We won't just stand by," U Aye Myint said.

As the ILO does not comment on individual claims of labour rights violations it is unclear if the group will accept the case.

Dams on Burma's Salween will destroy lives, warn Mon youths

May 08, 2007 (DVB)—If the proposed dam projects along Burma's Salween River are to go ahead, over half a million people living at the mouth of the river stand to lose their major source of drinking water, agricultural productivity and fish stocks, according to the Mon Youth Progressive Organisation.

In a report, *In the Balance*, released today, MYPO highlighted how people living in the mouth of the Salween, around Mon State capital Moulmein, rely on its natural flows for their existence and how their lives are linked with the river.

"If the water flow in the Salween changes even slightly and the water becomes too salty, it will disrupt a delicate natural ecosystem of water, plants, and fish that Mon people have depended on for generations," says the report.

The report also says that crop yields will decrease as annual sediment is trapped upstream and fertile farm fields laid to waste, that the flow of the water will become unpredictable causing accidents as the dams lie on active earthquake fault lines.

Despite this report, and others produced by Shan, Karen and Karenni groups, Burma's military government is not likely to heed their advice and pleas, but move ahead with Thai and Chinese investors to sell electricity generated by the dams to neighboring countries, without informing or asking the consent of the people whose ways of life are to be affected forever.

Meiktila residents join campaign against tax rises

April 23, 2007 (DVB)—Residents of Meiktila township in Mandalay Division have reportedly joined a signature campaign against recent increases in sales and income tax.

Similar campaigns were also launched this month in Magwe Division's Yenangyaung, Pakokku and Yesagyo townships and Arakan State's Taungup township.

The organiser of the campaign in Meiktila, U Kyaw Moe, told *DVB* that once enough signatures had been collected, they would be sent to head of the State Peace and Development Council, senior general Than Shwe.

"The municipal authorities have approved 20 percent increases on taxes and licensing fees. Shop permits, taxes on food . . . and municipal taxation fees were raised four to five times," U Kyaw Moe said.

"We have no choice but to launch this signature campaign as it is physically impossible for us to afford to pay this tax. We have collected up to 1260 signatures so far and are still going."

Township authorities across Burma announced significant tax increases—in some cases of between 100 to 600 percent—early this month. Reports from a variety of Burmese

townships suggest that the new tax rules are being enforced arbitrarily with some areas of the country asked to pay more.

It remains unclear whether the new charges have resulted from a government decision to finally implement existing tax laws or from the passing of new laws.

Rangoon economist U Maw Than said the government's motivation for increasing tax rates was also unclear.

"We don't know yet whether the government has decided to raise tax according to [inflation] or because of their own exceeding expenses," U Maw Than said.

". . . I don't see how this will be a successful method. This will only make [civilians] despair."

Anti-tax campaigns spread in Magwe, Arakan

April 16, 2007 (DVB)—The signature campaign against increased tax rates in Magwe Division's Chauk township has reportedly spread to several other areas in Magwe and Arakan State.

Early this month, traders from Chauk township launched a petition against recent income and sales tax increases of between 100 and 500 percent across Burma. The petition has reportedly already been filed with the Chauk township municipal office.

Similar signature-based petitions have now also been launched in the Magwe townships of Yenangyaung, Pakokku and Yesagyo and in the Arakan township of Taungup.

It is unclear whether the new tax charges have resulted from new, unpublicised legislation or the enforcement of 1990 tax laws that had previously been unimplemented. Residents in Yenangyaung told *DVB* late last week that traders were outraged by the tax rises.

"The latest situation is that even the sidewalk vendors, who are used to paying 50 kyats in tax, are now being asked to pay 100 kyats. Do they want to pay 100 kyats willingly?" one resident said on condition of anonymity.

"Trishaw drivers and horse-cart operators are angry and definitely joining the campaign." In Pakokku, a signature campaign was launched after the local authorities announced that the tax on retailers would triple and that businesses would be charged 500 kyat a day for late payment, according to residents. Between 70 and 80 store owners are reported to have signed the petition.

Burmese government statistics say that tax revenue has risen sharply in the past five years as tax collection systems have been strengthened and more heavily enforced.

But reports from across Burma this month suggest that the tax laws continue to be implemented arbitrarily with residents and business owners in some states asked to pay more than others.

Small business owners and retailers in Taungup said last week that local officials had demanded 600 percent sales tax increases from March 15 and that many people in the area were unable to pay.

"Our trouble is, we are faced with high commodity prices . . . Our monthly income is not enough to cover the increases. Besides, people can barely spend these days and business is bad. Some vendors are so discouraged that they said they will give up their business," one Taungup salesman said.

Every store owner in Taungup's eight-building Myoma market has reportedly signed a petition protesting the tax increases.

Business owners in Pegu Divison's Daik-u and Pyuntaza townships told *DVB* last week that despite being officially asked to pay tax increases of 500 percent, they were able to negotiate individual tax agreements with township officials.

"... when the tax was actually paid, the township revenue authorities negotiated individual compromises. So the amount did not increase as expected and people ended up paying a maximum of about two or three times the amount only," a Daik-u resident said. There has been no organised opposition to the tax increases in the area.

Analysis — Economy in recovery, but not for the masses

Clive Parker March 30, 2007 (DVB)—Deciphering Burma's highly unrealistic economic data is problematic but beneath all the phony numbers, after years of almost non-existent growth, the economy is finally picking up.

When the current financial year ends tomorrow, Burma will almost certainly have recorded its most profitable year in terms of foreign exchange earnings and taxation revenue since the beginning of military rule 45 years ago. There is just one problem—almost none of these gains seem to be reaching the average Burmese citizen.

An interim report by the Asian Development Bank released this week said that during the previous 2005 fiscal year, Burma saw gains in agriculture, energy and mining.

Predictions from the Economist Intelligence Unit suggest that Burma's GDP growth would be expected to increase steadily from about 3.5 percent in 2006 to four percent in 2008. This is slow by booming East Asian standards, but compared to 2003 when the banking crisis prompted negative growth of more than two percent, the economy has certainly rebounded.

The driving force behind the turnaround is not difficult to ascertain. In March alone, *The New Light of Myanmar* reported that Burma's Ministry of Energy held at least eight meetings with foreign officials from Thailand, Singapore, India, Malaysia, Russia and South Korea. Three of these meetings concluded in new oil and gas deals.

As ADB said this week "High gas prices will continue to buffer [Burma's] ... external accounts and exploration for more gas and oil is under way."

In the 2005 fiscal year, EIU says that energy sales accounted for 37 percent of Burma's export revenue, a percentage that is understood to be climbing every year; the main reason the junta surpassed US \$1 billion in foreign exchange reserves around September 2006 for the first time ever.

Similarly, taxation revenue has risen even more sharply as the government has begun to enforce its own tax legislation. The authorities claimed nearly nine times more tax in the 2005 fiscal year compared to 2001, netting 450 billion kyat in the previous fiscal year, if we are to believe Burmese government statistics.

From the beginning of the 2007 fiscal year on April 1, Burma expects to reach 2.38 trillion kyat in GDP and is kicking things off by permitting all 1500 private firms in Rangoon's industrial zones to run 24 hours a day, *The Myanmar Times* reported in its latest issue.

As ever in Burma though, this only tells half the story.

If the junta's aim of reaching above ten percent growth year-on-year from 2006-2010 is unrealistic, as economic institutions like ADB have suggested, then any tangible benefits for the general populace seem even less likely.

Banks haven't been able to lend money since the crisis in February 2003 and the kyat has reached successive all-time lows since then as the junta has tried to print its way out of the ensuing monetary mess.

Meanwhile, the junta's increases in taxation revenue have partly come from foreign organisations and their employees, but also from small Burmese businesses that are finding their profits increasingly squeezed. All of these factors are detrimental to the economic wellbeing of small businesses and the average Burmese.

Add to that double-digit inflation and the subsequent threats by the military that businesses increasing prices may be punished in some cases and you have a general population feeling the economic strain, says a Rangoon-based business editor, requesting anonymity "The trickling down effect [of increased GDP], if there is any, is totally invisible on the ground level."

The prices of the main commodities—rice, gold and oil—are at, or approaching, all time highs, the editor said, adding that most townships Rangoon are "still in the dark for most of the day and the night." Indeed, Burma's nearly 55 million people—including recent demonstrators in Rangoon—are surely asking themselves where the profits from energy, gas, agriculture and tax are going.

A large slice has clearly gone to the building of the capital Naypyidaw, which has also been funded, it is thought, by soft loans from foreign countries including China and Thailand.

The junta may have convinced itself it is building a "modern and developed nation" but invariably the figures lie, or at least do not tell the whole truth. As ever, the government has failed the true gauge of progress in Burma in that the average person remains as impoverished as ever, with few opportunities for economic relief.

Authorities collect physic nut from people

Tue 30 Oct 2007

IMNA, Yebyu

The Yeyu Township Peace and Development Council (TPDC) in Tenasserim division, southern Burma is forcibly collecting physic nuts from people, said residents.

Yeyu TPDC ordered the Village Peace and Development Council to make the collection from the villagers and send it to TPDC office.

According to the TPDC order, each VPDC has to collect two Tin (Burmese basket) of nuts from their villagers and if they cannot send it, they would have to pay 120,000 Kyat.

"No village has nuts to give. Because villagers do not bother about the nut plant and are not interested in growing it," a VPDC member said

Most VPDCs paid the money instead of giving two Tins of physic nuts because they could not find it. According to a VPDC member villagers in the township were forcibly ordered to grow the physic nut last year. The TPDC also extorted money from the local

people for the Township project that planned by the Burmese military junta.

The TPDC ordered each family to grow 10 to 20 plants and took at least 2,000 Kyat from each family as cost for the seed.

Local People in Moulmein Struggle to Earn Living due to the Castor Oil Planning Project

Wed 19 Sep 2007

HURFOM, Moulmein

Burmese authorities have been forcing local people to buy and grow castor oil plans in Moulmein District, Mon State. The order from Moulmein District secretary U Than Sein stated that every house in Moulmein had to buy 4-5 castor oil seedlings and grow them in front of their house. They had to pay 500 kyat per plant.

“This is not the first time we have faced this problem. In the past they forced us to buy and grow castor oil seeds. We have had to do this 7 or 8 times already this year. Each time a different authority group issued the order” stated a shop owner, U Chit (not his real name) who lives on Upper Road in Moulmein. Many different groups benefit from this project, including the Department of Forestry, the Township Peace and Development Council (TPDC), and the Village Peace and Development Council (VPDC).

“Using this project they are able to obtain our money by many different methods; it costs us a lot to buy and grow the seedlings. Then, after they are grown, we are made to pay taxes to preserve the plants,” added U Chit.

If the castor oil plants do not grow successfully, authorities re-sell the plants and have them re-grown. Some local people said that this project was just a money-making venture for authorities, and would never be successful for residents. Once they receive their money, authorities are indifferent about the success of the crop.

On top of the costs of taxes and buying growing seedlings, residents also have to pay for the security of their ward, for transportation of Very Important Persons (VIPs), Mon State Municipality and other monthly taxes.

“Our shop is not very busy these days, we don’t sell much at all. It is hard to earn a living when the rate of taxation is so high” continued U Chit.

Local people were complaining that they were forced to pay more taxes than they could afford, as the plants did not grow well and they subsequently had to pay for new plants. Sometimes the plants die because animals eat them, or vehicles drive over them; often though the reason for high plant death is due to authorities ignoring their duty, despite collecting preservation taxes. Therefore, it seems there will be no relief for the local people, as authorities force a variety of taxes upon them, including the repeated extortion related to castor oil plants. >> [To Previous news page](#)

Burmese Soldiers commandeer villagers' motorbikes in Mon State

Wed 12 Sep 2007

Han-Gan, Ye Township

It was reported on 12 September, 2007, that since 27 August, soldiers from the Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) No. 299, have been commandeering villagers' motorbikes in Han-Gan village. Sergeant Aung Myint and his followers have been taking 3 motorbikes from the villagers everyday.

Han-Gan village is located in Ye Township, Mon State and LIB No. 299 is based in Koe-Mile. They also asked the village head to pay for gasoline. Because of this, the village head has had to collect money from villagers. They've been asking for 3 gallons of gasoline each day because they want 1 gallon per motorbike. The soldiers also threatened to simply take bikes if no one would offer up their own.

According to Nai Myint from Han-Gan village, they stopped commandeering motorbikes last April, and briefly did it in July. They've since begun commandeering again.

"Sergeant Aung Myint and his followers said that they would take my motorbike for a day but they kept it for 5 days. When they gave it back to me, it was almost destroyed because they crashed into something and generally used it carelessly. I had to repair it myself. This is the third or fourth time they've done something like this," said Nai Myint.

"They have been using my motorbike for several days and are keeping it in an outpost beside the railway in Han-Gan. Whenever I ask them to give it back, they just say that their work is not finished," Nai Myint added.

Villagers in Yin-Yae village are facing the same problem. A few months ago, a Yin-Yae villager's motorbike was lost after the soldiers commandeered it. The bike was being used by many soldiers and when they were asked about its disappearance, they pointed to each other and brushed the question off. The villager never did get his motorbike back. Villagers have since been worried about their motorbikes meeting a similar fate.

These villagers rely on their motorbikes. Without them, they cannot get to their jobs on the plantations, which is particularly damaging considering that on top of struggling to pay for gasoline, they now have to pay for repairs to motorbikes broken by the soldiers.

Six hundred villagers forced to work for a week to welcome Lt. Gen Maung Bo

Mon 04 Jun 2007

HURFOM

Over 600 villagers were forced by Burma Army's Battalion No. 31 stationed in Khaw-zar Town to repair a road and work in other areas for a week to welcome Lt. Gen Maung Bo, sources in the town said.

Yesterday, Col. Than Toe of Military Operation Management Command from Ye Township, came to check the security aspects and the preparation to welcome Lt. Gen Maung Bo, who will arrive in Khaw-zar town today, said a Khaw zar resident.

The army has stopped not only people in town from going to work in their farms and yard gardens but also villagers from two villages near by were also forced to repair the road. And the carpenters have to work on unfinished buildings in town like the USDA office, the TPDC office and other government buildings.

The people were made to work for the army from May 23 to 25 and from May 30 to till June 2.

People in Khaw-zar suffered a big loss because they could not go to the fruit gardens and this is the season when durian fruits fall from trees. The fruits will rot and smell if the people do not collect it on time.

Garden owners lost Kyat 10,000 in a day because they were prohibited by the army to go outside the town and villages.

Approximately, one thousand durians need to be collected at this time of the year in the Khaw-zar township area, a resident said.

This is the best time for the yield because so much fruit cannot be collected every day later. One durian costs around Kyat 500 to 700, he added.

Garden owners said that it is only once a year that they generate big income from the gardens. But they could not go to the garden for the past week.

Most people in Khaw-zar Township eke out a living from fruit gardens and farming.

About 20 carts were used to carry bricks from the brick kiln to the battalion for a week. All the farmers had to clean and dismantle their carts to keep under the building roof.

They are grumbling and said that they will have trouble growing crops during heavy rains because the army is forcing them to work for Lt Gen Maung Bo's visit.

Khaw-zar was raised to township level from village level by the military in 2003 and the LieutenantGeneral comes to check on how the town is developing.

Not only people from Khaw-zar but from villages along the road such as Kaloh, Hangan were forced to repair the road.

Following Lt. Gen Maung Bo's last visit in the second week of May to Khaw-zar in the southern part of Ye township, people in Mudon Township were forced to nurse physic nut plants along the highway. [>> To Previous news page](#)

Burmese Army strengthens militia by forcibly training locals

Thu 31 May 2007

HURFOM

Training is being forcibly imparted to local people to strengthen the militia at the Burmese military base in Hpa-an township, the capital of Karen state. The idea is to have a strong militia to defend the country.

The Light Infantry Battalion No. 310 of the Burmese Army is conducting the training for the first time in all villages in the capital of Karen State in keeping with the Burmese military government's decision. The battalion has directed the Village Peace and Development Council (VPDC) to arrange the training for them.

Each village has sent 20 to 30 trainees to be included in the militia in the village, according to sources close to VPDC.

The VPDC's in the township do not have enough members in the militia so villagers are being trained.

But most villagers in the township denied this because VPDC are hiring people for the training, a source revealed. To pay the hire charges VPDC's are collecting money from the people.

Ma Ma Hlaing from a family which paid up, said, "I paid Kyat 3,000 to the VPDC of Kyone Pe village. Every family in my village paid Kyat 3,000 for 30 trainees."

The training has been on for the last 16 days and the VPDC had to pay for all those sent for the training.

The VPDC's had to buy shirts and shoes for the militia members. And they had to pay Kyat 2,000 per day for the trainees as ordered by the battalion. "We paid Kyat 6,000 to the army for a uniform for the militia members, a VPDC member said.

Most VPDC's don't want to do the training because they have shell out a lot of money. However they have no option but to accept because they cannot defy the order, a VPDC source said.

The training has already been held in neighbouring Mon state. The military regime started the training as of 2003 after the assassination attempt on Daw Aung Sun Su Kyi in Depayin, upper Burma. [>> To Previous news page](#)

People forced to grow physic nuts

Tue 29 May 2007

HURFOM

The Burmese military regime is pushing people in southern Burma to grow physic nuts after forcing them to buy seeds at high prices.

After the onset of the rainy season as of May, the military regime has ordered people to grow physic nuts and forced people to buy the seedlings of the nuts at a higher price and then plant it.

The Township Peace and Development Council in Kyaikmaraw directed each family to grow 300 physic nut plants and pay Kyat 90,000 (US \$ 72).

“The government officer sent 30 physic nuts seedlings to our village,” a villager said.

Depending on the status of residents in Thanpyuzayat Township, TPDC officers are selling physic nut seeds. A family is told to plant three kilograms of physic nut seeds and has to pay Kyat 3,000 (2.5 US \$) per kilogram.

State owned television channel, MRTV is advocating the cause almost everyday by broadcasting how to grow the nut plant for the people’s benefit.

However local people in southern Burma do not seem to accept the government project. They are just growing what the government assigns and no one looks at it as a business project.

Many physic nut plants which were forced to be grown last year, died. Last year each family was asked to grow one to 10 physic nut plants in their home land. Most of the plants died.

But in Mudon Township the TPDC only ordered plantation owners along the highway.

Recently a Kyone Paik villager, near Mudon town was forced to clean the grass and make way for planting nuts along the main road so that it looks good during Lt.Gen Maung Bo’s visit.

The regime started the project two years ago to produce bio diesel to reduce importing diesel. [>> To Previous news page](#)

Women and elders forced to guard gas pipeline
Mon 28 May 2007
HURFOM

Women and people over 50 years of age are being forced to guard the gas pipeline running past villages in Mon State, despite the commitment given by the Burmese military junta to the International Labour Organization (ILO).

One person from each household in Kalawthut, Kawn-ka-bue, Doe-mar, and Set-thawe villages has to undertake patrol duty every month from evening to midnight.

Women and elders are pressed into guard duty more than able bodied men to safeguard the gas pipeline.

“Women do guard duty because villagers are worried about threats to male members of the villages by Burmese troops,” said a Kalawthut villager.

Burmese soldiers stopped guarding the pipeline about two months ago in these villages.

But some villages like Hnee-padaw, Young-doung, and Kwan-hlar do not have to do patrol duty but have to pay the salary for the guards every month.

One household pays Kyat 2,500 per month, a youth from Young-doung village said.

“Villagers in three villages have to pay Burmese soldiers about Kyat eight million (about US \$ 6,557) per month.”

Following the agreement with the ILO, Burma now has complaint centres regarding forced labour in Kyat-pyi Pyinmana. The military regime invites complaints relating to forced labour in the court office. But nobody has dared to complain from Mon State.

According to the Mon community, instances of the regime forcing villagers to work and collecting money is decreasing slowly due to pressure from the international community to put an end to forced labour in Burma. >> [To Previous news page](#)

80 Unlicensed Trucks Seized by the police chief

Sat 26 May 2007

HURFOM

In the latest news to come from Mawlamyine, 80 illegal trucks in Mawlamyine were taken by the police according to a source close to NMSP (New Mon State Party) liaison office in Mawlamyine.

The police explained that unlicensed vehicles are illegal in the country when they stopped the cars at check points, on the main road in Mawlamyine. The cars were then seized according to the MNSP officer. Police even went to private home to look for unregistered vehicles, he added. The order to seize unlicensed cars came from the army chief police officer, Tin Yie, said an NMSP officer. Thousand of trucks have been taken by the police and army over the last few years. Some of the trucks were used by the police and army departments and some were used for government services.

Some critics questioned why the police don't take the cars when traders smuggle them in across the Thai-Burma border. Most unlicensed trucks have to cross the Burmese army and police check points from Myakwathity township and Three Pagoda Pass township on the Thai-Burma border. The truck traders bribe the army officers and sneak the cars into Mon State.

The order to confiscate the cars came from the police chief, a KPF (Karen Peace Force) member said. This car confiscation could be a case of the police having fun according his second source from the Burmese army in Three Pagoda Pass >> [To Previous news page](#)

Junta collects money and confiscates farms for development project

Thu 24 May 2007

HURFOM

The Burmese military junta has been forcibly collecting money and confiscating land from villagers of Kawkareik Township, Karen State for a township development project meant for the Karen splinter group led by Brigadier General Htain Maung (Htay Maung) which signed a peace deal with the regime.

About a hundred houses are envisaged in the township development project which is located in Naungbo village, Kawkareik Township west of Gyaing River.

“Five villages paid Kyat 5 million (over US \$ 3974) to the Village Peace and Development Council (VPDC) for the project,” a villager who paid the money said. Kaw-been, Kaw-poke, and Kaw-paline village were included in the fund collection drive.

The villager said the order to collect the money came from the higher authorities. That money is meant for the expenditure incurred for construction of the houses.

Not only has the Burmese Army been collecting money for the construction, they have also seized farmland from farmers. The farmers are unhappy with the confiscation of their land but are unable to do anything about it. It is uncertain how many acres have been confiscated for the development project.

Villagers said about 10 houses have already been built on the site and the project requires a lot of timber to build houses for Brigadier General Htain Maung’ group.

Brigadier General Htain Maung’ group reached a peace agreement with the SPDC in February and the junta supported his group with over 100 tons of lumber, 100 acres of rubber trees, five tractors, and other equipment. [>> To Previous news page](#)

Authorities force Buddhist teachings in Burmese instead of Mon

Sat 19 May 2007

HURFOM

A reading session of Buddhist teachings (Damma Jark) in Mon language was forcibly changed into Burmese by military authorities in Khaw-Zar town, Southern Mon state recently.

“Almost everything was changed including the title. We were ordered to change it into Burmese. We have been reading Buddhist teachings (Damma Jark) for a couple of years, but this is the first time we were forced to change the signboard title,” a monk explained.

The Township Peace and Development Council chairman U Kyaw Moe ordered taking Buddhist precept in Burmese. He also ordered the local abbot to wait for a day before the closing the ceremony even after the monks had finished the reading.

Khaw-Zar town is a Mon village and the military government upgraded it and set up its

administration in recent years to take control of the area.

Before the strongest Mon armed group, the New Mon State Party (NMSP) reached a ceasefire agreement, Khaw-Zar town area was controlled by the party.

After the cease-fire the Burmese military regime took over the area. Then it started to forcibly close down Mon National Schools that were run by the NMSP. The junta's administration set up Burmese schools in the area.

Gas pipeline blast burns rubber plantation

Sat 19 May 2007

Fri 23 Mar 2007, HURFOM

The bane of people in Mon State, the Burmese military junta's unsafe gas pipeline, from Kanbawk- Myaingkalay (Yadana Gas Pipeline) has exploded yet again, destroying 150 plants in an acre of rubber plantation seven miles from Ye Town.

An eye witness said, about 150 plants which have already produced rubber sap were incinerated and the plants surrounding these turned brown due to the fire when the pipe broke at a joint of two sections and exploded.

SPDC usually accuses armed groups of being involved in the blasts in the past. There was no clear evidence that suggests which arm groups were involved in the latest blast. Most explosions occur where two pipe sections break up. Usually this is caused by pipeline engineers not providing good enough connections between sections of the pipe.

The explosion occurred on March 18, at 4 p.m. and the fire was put out at midnight after firemen arrived from Ye town.

After the joint was repaired the next day, villagers from 9 miles Village (close to Ye township) were forced to cover the pipe, the eye witness said. There was no compensation paid to the rubber plant owner following the blast, he added.

The gas project is based in Kanbawk (Yebyu Township) and the State Peace and Development Council's target is to sell gas to Thailand. But some of the gas is transported to Myaingkalay cement factory, in Karen State from Kanbawk Yebyu Township.

Even though the gas pipeline which flows to Thailand is covered, the section through Kanbawk to Myaingkaly under SPDC management often breaks and explodes. It has happened many times in the past year.

The blasts affect the lives of local villagers. They also have to guard stretches of the pipeline day and night depending on the situation and the rules set by the authorities from time to time.

For instance, the gas pipeline exploded in Kwan-hlar village on February 2, last year and the residents living along the pipeline including Kwan-hlar, Young-doung, Hnee-padaw, Doe-mar, Kalawthut, and other villages in Mudon Township have had to guard the pipe line both in the day and at night time for one year now. They also have to make monthly payments to the village peace and development council for local security guards. >> [To Previous news page](#)

Villagers Paid Taxes to work in Thailand

Sat 19 May 2007

14 May, 2007, HURFOM

In Pangone Village, Paung township, the civilians were taxed 10, 000 kyats for each person who worked in Thailand by the police.

A villager from Pangone, said the villagers couldn't refuse to pay to the district police officer as they taxed coming to home.

The police officer Aung Min Lwin asked money those who go to work or come back for work from Thailand. He (the police) didn't consider for the workers who don't bring back money and arrested by Thai police, he added.

The demand taxes by police in the village have been occurred for a long time. But no one dares to speak out to the media groups outside the country according to the villager.

There were a village called Kyaik Paw village, in Pegu township and the villagers spoke to the media groups about the police corrupted to the civilians worked in Thailand, after the news released, the villagers were more restricted working in Thailand according to the boy.

Burma restricted Burmese people working in Thailand and announced a statement to sentence people who are agent migrants.

However, as the corruption among the military officers, the law doesn't effect to the country and as inflation and unemployed the civilians, million of people searched for job in Thailand. >> [To Previous news page](#)

Mon people face hard labor in military development projects.

Fri 04 May 2007

Human Rights News Report

More than one hundred Mon civilians in southern Mon State have been forced to work for multiple development projects for three weeks of each month. Most of the civilians have been conscripted to work on bridge constructions. The civilians are forced to do labour on 46 bridges, which includes large and small bridges all along the way along the main road from Ye township to Kaw Zar sub town.

Alongside reports of forced labour there have also been reports of the military increasing

the transportation of military equipment to their battalion in Kaw Zar. The development of bridges makes access possible for the transportation of army stuff to their artillery battalion in Kaw Zar sub-town

The local Burmese army base IB No.31 commander ordered headmen village that for each house one person has to provide forced labor for the construction, reported a local civilian who was also a victim of forced labour. A Mon Human rights worker interviewed a villager from Kaw Zar sub-town who had been forced more than three times in the last month to go to the bridge construction in Ye township. The amount of forced labor is more serious than in January, 2007, said the villager.

There are many civilians who would like to refuse to work as they are too poor. Forced labour means that they can't work in their gardens thus they can't provide for their families. However, SPDC still calls forced labour Ko Htoo Ko Htta, which means that the civilians are working as volunteers.

SPDC didn't cooperate with ILO to allow the investigation of ongoing forced labor in southern Mon State. They insisted that security was bad due to a Mon rebel group operating in the area. There was some international media that criticized the SPDC regarding its prohibition of the ILO traveling to these areas.

According to IMNA (Independent Mon News Agency), the forced labor order came from the military officers based in those areas. The news report mentioned that the order came to the headman village and the headman organized the civilians. Some civilians stated that the headman village claimed that the army would pay them 2,500 kyat per day. The civilians had to bring their own food and equipment, however they received no payment.

Many civilians including women and children were forced to labour in the construction of the bridges. Women and children were forced to pile sand and collect stones from the stream. Some constructions sites are far from where the civilians live. "We don't want to go to the bridge between Han-Gan and Sin Kuu. It is about 15 miles from our village. But, the leader of Kaw-Zar Township asks us to work for half a day?" said a 40-year-old mason from Kaw-Zar Township. Actually, the bridge was not finished even though they worked the whole day. They had to sleep there because it was so far; they then finished it the next day.

SPDC often provides propaganda on Myanmar TV, the state run TV station. The bridge projects are good, they said, to provide transportation for local Mon people. However, NMSP said in their statement on Mon National Day that they were not happy that the SPDC used forced labor.

NMSP had peace talks with SPDC in 1995. Before the peace agreement southern Ye belonged to NMSP. Afterwards the SPDC deployed many battalions to within the cease-fire areas. SPDC didn't want NMSP to have influence on those areas again if the cease-fire failed. [>> To Previous news page](#)

Ye township authority extorted Money from local Mon villager

Wed 14 Mar 2007

HURFOM

On January 28th, 2007 U Kyaw Thu Hlaing, an officer from the Public Levy Collection department of Ye Township's Municipal Authorities extorted house levies from Ayu-Taung village residents, Northern Ye Township, Mon State.

It was reported that on the morning of January 28, 2007, that Ye Township's municipal officer U Kyaw Thu Hlaing and his troops took photograph of the villager's houses and afterwards demanded money as home levies from the local residents of 70 households.

They took photographs of 70 houses in the western part of Ayu-Taung village. The troops forcibly collected the house levies of Kyat 80,000 up to maximum rate of Kyat 400,000 from each of the 70 families, according to an anonymous eyewitness from Ayu-Taung village. He explained to the field reporter that the Township's Municipal troops only collected money from the western part of the village and many villagers were confused with the strategy of the Township Authorities.

I think this order was not instructed by the upper level. When he (U Kyaw Thu Hlaing) collected money, he should given an invoice back with the signature of tax receiver to the villagers. The second thing is they did not collect from every household in the village. They only collected from the house owners who live in the western part of the village. It seems to me that this is not fair at all. Nai Nge (not real name), a resident of Ayu-Taung village explained to a HURFOM reporter.

Some house owners who had to pay house levies to the Ye Township's municipal troops are Nai Nyunt Maung, Nai Maung and Ma Aye Nu. Nai Nyunt Maung has to pay Kyat 400,000 and Ma Aye Nu's family had to pay Kyat 90,000 for their house levies. According to one victim, Nai Nyunt Maung, there are a lot of households who cannot afford to pay the set amount of house levies to the municipal troops.

February 2nd, 2007 is the deadline for those households who were not able to pay at this time. Those households must approach the Ye Town's municipal office and fulfill their duty, Nai Nyunt Maung recalled of the demand made by U Kyaw Thu Hlaing, the officer of Public tax and levy department from Ye township municipal office, Mon State.

According to the local residents, this kind of large amount of house levy collection is the first of its kind in Ayu-Taung village and local villagers were facing economic hardships due to the house levy policy imposed by the Ye Township's Municipal troops. [>> To Previous news page](#)

Ongoing forced labor usage on SPDC's development projects in Southern Mon State

Wed 14 Mar 2007

HURFOM

Khaw-Zar Sub Township, Southern Ye Township

Since the end of January, 2007, the local residents from Khaw-Zar Sub Township, Mon State have been forced to work as unpaid laborers on bridge constructions along the Ye-Tavoy motor road by SPDC's Infantry Battalion No. 31 based near Khaw-Zar Sub Town. With the cooperation of the local Township's administration groups, the commander of the local Infantry Battalion coordinated two groups of unpaid laborers and demanded each group be made up of 15 people that must include some local carpenters from the villages under the Khaw-Zar Sub Township.

Nai Dot (not real name), a 45 year old Yin-ye villager who has already been forced into the bridge construction work three times previously, reported that in the third week of January, 2007, Lieutenant Colonel Kyaw Myint and his troops from the Southeast Command based in Moulmein, the capital of Mon State called a meeting with villagers from Yin-Yae and Toe Tat Ywa Thit at Yin-Yae village hall to participate in the government development projects. Later on, the local army officer from IB 31 and Khaw Zar Sub Township's peace and development committee's chairman U Kyaw Moe demanded the villagers work on building bridges and roads and that they support themselves while they did so.

It is very difficult situation for me to survive as a carpenter in this village. They (the local authorities) need me to work in their bridge construction project. But I have my private work to do for my family to survive. How can I refuse their order? So I decided to hire another man who go and work instead of me at a cost of kyat 5,000 per day. I have to pay for 15 days to complete my obligation. If people don't participate in the bridge construction work, they have to contribute cement for the bridge. So people are afraid of such punishment, claimed an unnamed carpenter from Yin-Yae village, Southern Ye Township, Mon State.

Hla Maung, a 35 year old Yin-Yae villager said They (local military unit) gave us only 20 cement bags per bridge. They ordered us to repair two bridges in southern and northern Toe Tat Ywa Thit village. The length of each bridge is about 20 yards. Both wooden bridges are very old and about to collapse. He said the local administration collected money to the tune of about Kyat 15,000 from each house in Toe Thet Ywar Thit, and also collected between Kyat 2,000- 8,000 per house in Yin-Yae village. Toe Tat Ywa Thit has over 200 households and Yin-ye about 400.

According to the Yin-Yae villager, about 140 villagers including 80 from Yin-Yae and 60 from Toe Tat Ywa Thit village, have being forced to build a bridge in northern and southern Toe Tat Ywa Thit village since the first week of February, 2007. The local authorities also collected sand, stones, rock, and concrete for the bridge construction along Ye-Tavoy motor road.

My village has four quarters. Three quarters had to procure three huge poles for the bridge and the fourth quarter had to collect construction material such as sand, stones, cements and wood for the bridges construction, reported one forced labor victim, Hla

Maung from Yin-Yae village.

According to a source closed to the Township's administration group, the bridge construction projects were ordered by the State's Military Operational Management Command, based in Moulmein in order to upgrade the Ye-Tavoy military transportation routes. The bridges and roads are SPDC projects that are alleged to bring about equitable development nationwide and ensure national unity. [>> To Previous news page](#)

Local residents were forced to provide timber to army brick factory

Wed 07 Mar 2007

HURFOM

Since the first week of January 2007, Local inhabitants from Khaw-za Sub Township, Mon state, southern Burma are being forced by the Burmese Army to provide timber/woods for a local military's brick factory.

The commander, Major Kyaw Zay Ya who was locally known as Bo Ba Lay of Infantry Battalion No. 31 directed township people to arrange for timber for the brick factory at the end of last year.

Now local people are collecting wood for the factory which makes bricks as part of the many business ventures that the army runs.

?We know that this brick factory is owned by Bo Ba Lay, the commander of IB 31. He and his troops ordered all villagers to collect woods to use as fuel in his brick factory. We have no chance to work our own works. All villagers have to go to the forest nearby and cut the small trees to complete their duty. He warned that if someone failed to do their duty, he or she would punish in the battalion? reported by Nai Yaung, 38 years old farmer, who have to collect woods from Khaw-Zar Sub town, Southern Part of Ye township.

According to Mi San Yin from Yin-Yae village, the former village headmen U Sein Yin was involved in making business with the Army and he ordered to the villagers of Yin-Yae village that each four households must provide four feet square length of wood in the whole village. The timber or woods has to be placed beside the main road of the area for easy transportation, said a source.

?Army officers are now carrying the wood to the factory in Khaw Zar town. The factory has already produced 10,000 bricks,? said an anonymous village administrative staff.

The deputy commander, Major Kyaw Zay Ya has ordered four villages in the area to collect the same amount of wood for his personal brick factory in Yin-Yae village. The villages are, Yin-Yae, Singu, Toe Thet Ywa Thit and Tae Khun (Sai Khun). The villages have a total of 1,000 households.

Major Kyaw Zay Ya seized a 1.5 acre farmland from Nai Tun Gyi and Mi Mae to operate his factory and is forcing 15 villagers to work in his factory every day, said a Yin-Yae

villager.

There are more battalions in Ye township Mon State who operate brick factories as part of the army's business. The current price of a brick is Kyat 50 Kyat. [>> To Previous news page](#)

Women were forced to patrol the village in Southern Ye Township

Mon 05 Mar 2007

HURFOM

Yin-Ye, Toe-That-Ywa-Thit village, Southern Ye Township, Mon State

Recently, Major Kyaw Zay Ya, the commander of the Burmese Infantry battalion No. 31 which based near Khaw Zar Sub Town ordered all villager including women to patrol the villages in Yin-Yae, Singu and Toe-Tat-Ywa-Thit villages, Khaw Zar Sub Township, Southern Ye township, Mon State.

According to Nai Aung Tun, 33 years old paddy farmer from Singu village, 'The order reached this village since two week ago. Our village administration group said this emergency village sentry ordered was instructed by Bo Ba Lay (known as IB No. 31 commander Major Kyaw Zay Ya). Each family need to take care village at lease one night per week s. If there are no men in the household, women have to complete the duty.'

It was reported that this is not the first time to patrol the village in this areas. Whenever the Burmese Army received the strange news about the rebel armed group entry to the villages, the Army troops ordered the local resident to take care their village.

'Women are not suitable for patrol the village. If something happened, they could not effort to do as men can do. On the other hand, there are many bad events regarding women patrol the village in the past. I want to bring up that there are a lot of rape cases which were committed in the past by Burmese soldiers during the women guarded the village at night time in this village. We really don't want to hear that kind of cruel news again' a fifty years old local farmer who does not want to mention his name from Yin-Yae village uttered his opinion to HURFOM Reporter.

'They (the SPDC soldiers) did not point out men, women or children. They said they want everybody to take responsibility in guiding the village,' said Nai Tin Tun Aung (not real name) from Singu village, Khaw Zar Sub Township, Mon State. The villagers in Toe-Tat-Ywa-Thit village, Yin-Yae village and Kabya villages in southern Ye Township are being forced to send three to five villagers from each quarters of the villages for day or night patrol on rotation, the source added.

'I have to patrol the village and the activities of rebel the whole night (from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m). Because my husband and my son are too busy with their betel nut plantation,' said Mi Aye Nyein, 48 years old woman from Toe-Tat-Ywa Thit village, Khaw Zar Sub Township, Southern Ye Township , Mon State. Similarly, many women patrol the village

because their husbands are busy with betel nut plantations outside the village.

In Yin Dein village, it was reported that every day, one person from each household has to guard their own village, providing security to protect the army from the approach of the rebel armed groups. Depending on the number of households in villages and how many entrances there are to the village, 10-20 villagers are forced to perform guard duty.

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Development Project Employed 140 villagers in Forced Labor

Tue 13 Feb 2007

HURFOM

140 local Mon Villagers from Ye township were ordered by local army officers to build two bridges for the development project in the area.

The army officers of LIB (31) forced civilians from two villages, Yin-ye and Toe Thet Ywar Thit, Khaw-zar sub-Township to construct two bridges in southern and northern Toe Thet Ywar Thit village. The construction started on February 2, 2007.

The Lieutenant Colonel Kyaw Myint, Southeast Command, based in Mawlamyine, called a meeting for the two villages, Yin-ye and Toe Thet Ywar Thit to discuss the building of the bridges in the last week of January.

?The local military unit gave us only 20 cement bags per bridge. They ordered us to construct two bridges in southern and northern Toe Thet Ywar Thit village,? said a Yin-ye villager who has been forced into bridge construction work for the third time.

The local military administration demanded money from villagers working on the bridge constructions. Each house was forced to pay 15,000 kyat in Yin-ye village. In Thet Ywar Thit, villagers were forced to pay between 2000 and 8000 kyat. Toe Thet Ywar Thit has over 200 households and Yin-ye about 400.

People have to bring their own food and any tools they need for building the bridges. Furthermore, the workers contribute labour without getting pay from the military?s Southeast Command, the villager added.

There are four quarters in Ye-yin village. Three villages were forced to build three pillars of the bridges and another was forced to collect materials to mix with cement, such as sand, stones, rock, and concrete.

People who refuse to contribute their labour to the bridge construction, were forced to pay for the cement to be used on the bridge as punishment.

The military government implemented their project in local villages in Southern Ye, using forced labor. People were forced to work for three weeks in a month. Some people don?t have enough food to support their family because they have to go the government

development project, depriving them of the time that they would normally work their own farms and orchards. Many people from the areas escaped to Thai-Burma border areas, living in IDP (Internal Displaced Persons) camps. [>> To Previous news page](#)

Battalions plant summer paddy using farmer's equipment

Wed 24 Jan 2007

HURFOM

Farmers in Mon State, Southern Burma are being forced to part with their farming equipment like ploughs for the Burmese Army battalions to cultivate fields that they own. In addition they have to provide forced labour.

According to a Khaw-zar villager, the Burmese Infantry Battalion No.31, under the command of Military Operation Management Command No.19 ordered farmers to bring cows and carts to plough the fields.

?IB No 31 plans to cultivate about 20 acres near Khaw-zar Town and the farmers were ordered to plough the fields from January 20. One village must provide two carts and four cows. The battalion arranged for four carts a day,? he said.

The battalion used a number of water buffaloes for ploughing. All the labourers were being forced to work in the fields for the battalion from 7 a.m. to 11 a.m. and from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

The Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) No.209 which is based in Kamawet village in Mudon Township, Mon State is also into ploughing for summer paddy in Taung-pa village near Ab-bit Dam with machines procured from farmers.

According to an owner of a farm in Taung-pa village, ?The LIB No.209 cultivated summer paddy on about 100 acres this year, but last year they just cultivated about 20 acres.?

The surface of the paddy fields in these areas is not the same. Some fields are deep and some are shallow. The irrigation water from the dam is also a little hot for watering paddy, said the owner. The LIB No.209 did not get a good yield.

On the other hand, the State Peace and Development Council is being buying paddy as ration for the army since the beginning of this month by paying a lower price than that prevailing in the market. [>> To Previous news page](#)

Artillery battalion collects tax on rubber plant

Thu 18 Jan 2007

HURFOM

Residents of Mon State in Burma who are close to the army battalions are also not free from trouble created by the military authorities. For instance, even though rubber plantation owners have paid money to the battalion as rubber plant tax they are not treated differently.

According to a plantation owner, the Burmese Artillery Regiment No.318 based near Ab-bit village in Mudon Township, Mon State collected money from owners among Ab-bit village at the rate of about Kyat 500 per plant. The area has about 200 acres of plantations.

Now about four owners have paid the tax. Most owners are watching the situation and wondering whether they should pay. This tax is taken twice a year, the owner said.

However, the battalions have not started collecting taxes from land owners who are close to the town yet. According to land tax laws for rubber plantations, the plantation owner must ask for annual interest at the end of the year, after they get the land for 30 years.

A plantation owner in Mudon Town said, "We must shut down scraping liquid rubber if we have to pay rubber plant tax again to the battalions."

Now rubber plantation owners have hired workers for about Kyat 1,400 per acre a day. Some owners hired workers by paying half the income they make from their products.

Wages for hiring people have also increased by about Kyat 400 compared to last year. The price of good rubber flat is about Kyat 1,000 per pound. The middle grade is about Kyat 750 and the low grade is about Kyat 500. Good rubber flat was priced at about Kyat 1,300 last year. "Trading and selling rubber flat is no longer so profitable."

In addition, some rubber plantations near Ab-bit village where the artillery battalion collected the money in Mudon, were confiscated. About 100 acres were seized by the artillery battalion and about 50 acres of pasture in the west of Kamawet village was taken away by the township authorities in 1998. [>> To Previous news page](#)

Burmese battalion continues to torture southern Mon people

Mon 08 Jan 2007

Southern Ye, Mon State

Torture of villagers, use of forced labor, and applications of illegal taxes by Burmese battalions are growing in Southern Ye, Mon State.

The international community and the UN (United Nations) condemned the Burmese regime's use of forced labor and human rights abuses, and placed the Burmese issue onto the UN agenda in the Security Council to put pressure on the military government stop using such tactics.

However, the Burmese army still continues to employ forced labor for road construction, the building of army barracks, arbitrary detention, and torture of the people by accusing them of supporting the Mon rebels. Recently, torture and forced labor have been carried out in various ways in Southern Ye.

Villagers were forced to guard their own villages to provide security for the army and

also to inform the army of who came to the village. Villagers were also forced to give any information that they possessed concerning news of rebel groups. Every day ten people were forced to perform guard duty. Two people have to guard each entrance of the village,. People were forced to bring 500 kyat to feed the Burmese army when they go on guarding duties.

?We guard them and we have to feed them. If the rebel comes, we don?t see, then they beat us. But they (army) sleep in the barrack. They don?t guard with us. We have to guard the whole night,? said a villager, Zar Yar Mon, who escaped to the Thai-Burma border.

Plantation owners, growing areca nut and farmers were forced to give 1,500 betel nuts to army officers to allow access to the plantation. If people don?t give the betel nuts, they were not allowed into the garden. The cost of a betel nut is about 12 kyat.

The army arrested two followers of astrology. The first was an astrologer who predicted the future of the rebels. The army also arrested a second man, a plantation owner, because the prediction took place in his garden. A Mon Human Rights field worker reports that four people, the astrologer, the garden owner and two other follower of astrology have been detained for two months, under suspicion of supporting rebels. This is despite having already paid a bribe of 6 million Kyat to the military officers.

On January 6, the Burmese Army arrested about 50 plantation owners and cultivators from Kwan-tamoi-tae-tat village and Pauk-pin-kwin village because they had food supplies with them during checking.

About five villagers among them were severely tortured after being flung into the water and then beaten up. The Burmese Army does not allow people to bring food to the gardens.

In the first week of December, 2006, Burmese soldiers arrested about 100 villagers after a firefight with a Mon rebel group and punished them with electric shocks. Part of the punishment was also to block further access to plantations. Twenty five people, suspected supporters of the rebels who were close to the garden fire fight, were punished with fines of 3,000,000 kyat per person. [>> To Previous news page](#)

Two Crops Causes Debt Cycle For Farmers

Sun 31 Dec 2006

Mon State.

The military government has ordered growing of two crops in Mon State. Many farmers have become poor because the two crop order has made it more difficult for them to grow crops in deep water. This flooding is a consequence of the canals that form part of the Win-pha-non dam construction project, which began in 2000.

The canal system has destroyed the farm crops and even the rainy season crops have not been successful. The canal banks are trapping water, causing paddies to remain flooded.

“We got five baskets of paddy from one acre this year. The dam destroyed our lives,” said Tun Sein, a farmer Kalawthut village, Mudon Township.

The product of paddy has been reduced every year along Win Pa Non Dam near Kalawthut village. People have to grow anything from two to three paddies after initial attempts are destroyed by flooding. Farmers will often abandon their attempts after three failures.

The people are forced to grow summer crops every year. The military government officials, from the Ministry of Agriculture call people to village meetings, in order to enforce this ruling.

At one particular meeting a farmer proposed that the dam project is a failure. This assertion was met with anger by the government officials, Tun Sein added.

Due to failed crops, people have to borrow other people's paddy and become indebted so that they may keep growing on their farm. People don't want to grow, but they are worried that the lands will be taken by the military government.

The summer presents different problems for the farmers. The dam project does not provide enough water for the three month season necessary to grow a crop of rice. The government has attempted to avoid this problem by ordering the farmers to grow soy bean instead. However, the farmers know that rice paddy soil is inappropriate for this type of crop, and choose to eat the beans instead.

Paddy Prices Soar

The paddy price is going up in Burma this harvesting season compared to last year due to reduced production.

“Each year the price of paddy comes down when farmers harvest paddy. But it is strange that this year the price of paddy has gone up compared to last year,” a farmer trading in paddy in Pegu town, Pegu Division, said.

The price of best quality paddy (Koutkyi) is more than Kyat 500,000 for 100 baskets (Burmese measurement) in Southern Burma. The price of this variety of paddy was around Kyat 350,000 for 100 baskets last year.

Normally the price of paddy comes down during the harvesting season even in the areas where the highest prices region as in the Southern Burma. Then, the price of paddy goes up again in the rainy season.

“The price of paddy has gone up because paddy cultivation was cut to half after paddy was destroyed by floods,” Nai Way a farmer from Mon State said.

Some lowland farmers got no yield after floods destroyed their paddy fields. Even highland farmers claimed their yield had come down.

“Last year we got about 450 baskets from 10 acres of farmland. But this year, we have got only 200 baskets from the same land” Nai Mon Sron a highland farmer from Mudon Township, Mon State said.

Some farmers claimed that paddy production had come down because of the unstable and changing weather. [>> To Previous news page](#)

Burmese Army confiscates land, farmers pay to work it

Mon 25 Dec 2006

Ye, Township, Mon State

The Burmese Army demands money from farmers who want to work on confiscated land once belonging to them.

According to a local farmer from Sonnathar (Jomsai) of Ye Township, the Burmese Army's Light Infantry Battalion No. 586 demands money from farmers who want to harvest rubber plants that once belonged to them.

Farmers are normally ordered to provide up to 25% of their harvest to the BA. For 2007, they are required to pay 650 Kyats per plant and the price will go up in the coming year.

The LIB No. 586 confiscated over 300 acres of lands belonging to Thu-myaing and Sonnathar villagers of Ye to build military battalions and for the expansion of troop deployments in 2002. According to the Burmese Army they have the right to confiscate land for national security purposes under the national security act and the farmers as a result are not compensated. “This land is for troop deployment now,” said one military commander after he confiscated hundreds of acres in 2001 according to said purpose. However, the reasons for the confiscation not only include the building of battalions, but also for settlement expansion of the Burman population, to push back rebels to the border, and to keep the NMSP to at bay if they wish to resume fighting again.

According to Human Rights Foundation of Monland based in Sangkhalaburi , Thailand Burma border, land confiscation in Mon State began in 1997 under the direction of township authorities and military battalions. Since the beginning of 1998, the Burmese army has confiscated up to 8,000 acres of prime agriculture land, which also includes orchards, rubber plantations, salt production fields, and pasture lands. The army, police, and township authorities also confiscate land from farmers who cannot afford to pay heavy taxes imposed by the Burmese government.

Land confiscation has a devastating impact on the lives of Mon farmers, who suffer from economic deprivation and human rights abuses with the presence of soldiers. Farmers must apply for permission to work on their own land in the form of recommendation letters acquired through bribery from the village headman. Once land is confiscated the BA removes all fruits and vegetables for themselves and their families. At the present

time, rubber latex is being tapped en masse by the army which is fetching a good price on the market. Now thousands of farmers and their hired labourers are without land and will face devastating consequences, mainly their ability to survive through the dry season, when they have little or no other income.

Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) No. 586 led by Colonel Ngwe Soe were infamous in the southern Ye area for their brutality. In 2004, Soe executed over ten villagers suspected of being connected to Mon rebel-supporters, with many being tortured or either restricted in their daily movements or forcibly displaced during Burmese military operations against Mon guerrillas led by the Hongsawatoi Restoration Party.

Sron a highland farmer from Mudon Township , Mon State said,

?Some farmers claimed that paddy production had come down because of the unstable and changing weather.?

Land confiscation continues in Sothern Ye Township

Tue 31 Oct 2006

Ye Township, November 2006

Land confiscations have continued in the southern part of Mon State. On November 20, 2006, it was reported that Ye town based Infantry Battalion No. 61 had confiscated more than forty five acres of orchards and rubber plantations belonging to the local villagers in Ye township.

According to the sources from the local villagers from Abaw village, Ye Township, there are no explanations for seizing the lands. Most of land is productive growing land and approximately thirty five acres of it were covered with orchards plantations and ten acres are rubber plantations.

U Aung Soe (not real name), a land confiscation victim who currently lives in Ye Town said that he is still paying the taxes for scraping and getting rubber sap even though the military battalions having confiscated his land.

My land was confiscated at the beginning of this year. They seized it with no compensation. But they let me work in my plantations by paying land taxes. I already paid Kyat 2.8 millions for rubber processing taxes to the local military for this year. Some owners are trying to pay about the same as me Nai Aung Soe added. The battalions have allowed the owners to scrape rubber sap even after confiscation. If the villagers who lost their plantations or lands stop paying the scrape taxes to the Burmese battalions, they cannot process rubber in their own lands.

However, they (local military authorities) take from the orchard owners fruits like Areca nut, Durian, Leinmo and lime as rental fee for cultivating a piece of land, the source said.

Recently, the villager in Kaloh-Gyi village was ordered to ask the permit to work in their own farms. According to the local source, the permitting fee is about Kyat 300 per day

for a person. If you go to your plantation again, you must buy the ticket once again a villager added.

On the last August, 2006, SPDC Light Infantry Battalion No. 591 led by Commander Ba Lay and LIB No.583 confiscated many good lands from the civilians who live near Ye town, Mon State in order to build new Army barracks and a play ground according to HURFOM reporter. [>> To Previous news page](#)

Villagers forced to train as militia for the protection of the country

Sun 15 Oct 2006

Mon State, October 2006

To maintain long term control over the country, the Burmese military has ordered every village headman in Mon State to send approximately 35 villagers for militia or Pyithusit training.

The military trains the people how to fight armed insurgencies, how to break up the people if there are protests or if the country were to have another uprising or if overseas countries were to invade Burma. To protect the country, the military trains the people in how to use guns. The people are trained by the local military based in their areas.

People in Southern Ye were forced to participate in the training. To avoid joining the people's militia in Southern Ye Township, residents had to bribe the Infantry Battalion (IB) No.31 Kyat 400,000 (US\$ 304).

The residents are being chosen to join the people's militia through a voting system. Each village has to send 35 villagers to join the people's militia but larger villages like Khaw-Zar sub-town have to send 40 people, residents said.

"They (the troops) told us that people have to be responsible for doing their duty for the country and they named the San Shae Mon Army Group as a rebel group. I don't want to kill our own people so I fled to Thailand", said a villager who did not want to be named.

The IB No.31 has made three rounds of selections of villagers to join the people's militia to fight insurgent groups but most people are running away from the village when they are assigned to join the Pyithusit.

Southern Ye Township area often witnesses fighting between the regime's troops and the armed rebel groups. There are many insurgent groups who have been active in the jungle since the New Mon State Party made a ceasefire agreement with the military regime in 1995.

The troops persuade villagers to join the people's militia saying it is a chance to avoid forced labour, but they do not give us a gun for security. We are just allowed a knife, said a source.

Most telephone owners who can call to Thailand are afraid to describe the real situation

in Khaw-Zar sub-town, southern Ye Township because they are afraid troops will find out that they are sending information outside the country.

Land confiscation continues in Mudon Township

Sat 30 Sep 2006

Mudon Township, October 2006

Land confiscations against local rubber plantations owners have continued. It was reported that at the end of September, 2006 branch No. 22 of Light Infantry Battalion No. 209 based near Kama-Wet seized more rubber plantations near Win-pha-none Dam from the villagers of Hnee-pa-daw (new village), Abit, Kwan-Kha-Bwe and Set-twe ywa thit villages, Mudon Township, Mon State.

According to a land confiscation victim from Hnee-pa-daw village, the main purpose of the land confiscation was to expand the Army's rubber plantations, to raise the battalion's funds. According to the battalion they confiscated the land to provide security for the dam.

"My seven acres of plantations was seized in the middle of September by troops from LIB 209 led by Captain Shwe-Lett. They said I could still work in my plantation if I paid Kyat 65,000 per year as tax." Nai Linn, a land loss villager from Hnee-pa-daw reported.

According to HURFOM's reporter, the confiscation of the rubber plantations in these areas is ongoing. In many cases after many acres of rubber plantations were confiscated, the troops of LIB 209 rent these confiscated rubber plantations back to their ex-owners. They charge Kyat 60, 000 to 65,000 per acre per year. Originally, these confiscated rubber plantations were owned by the local farmers for many generations.

Many victims of land confiscation have no ideas how to do other jobs or find new lands. Growing rubbers plants has been their job for most of their lives.

"It is a very hard situation for them to have to change jobs immediately"reported HURFOM field reporter in Mudon Township.

LIB No. 209 is known as the security battalion for the Win-pha-none government dam which is close to Abit village, Mudon Township. In the past three years this battalion has confiscated about 300 acres of lands from the inhabitants of Kamawet, Kalort-tort, Yaung-daung and Hnee-pa-daw villages.

New Land confiscation in Wae-Ka-Lee village, Thanbyuzayat

Sat 30 Sep 2006

Wae-Ka-Lee village, September 2006

During September 2006 responding to an order from the Commander of No.4 Military Training Center, troops led by Captain Htay-Hlaing seized nearly 200 acres of land including rubber plantations from the local inhabitants. According to one victim of land confiscation, Nai Apein a resident of Wae-Ka-Lee village, most of the confiscated lands are paddy fields and rubber plantations owned by villagers from the same village.

Burmese troops are then selling these confiscated lands back to the original owners.

After the battalion seized the lands, they made an announcement to the villagers that each land owner could get their lands back by giving 500,000 Kyat to the battalion. Only a few villagers who have money could pay this amount of money to battalions,? Nai Apein explained.

Some villages that had their land taken had registered land ownership documents. However when they took the dispute to the Township Land Record office, the Land Record Officer said the land was registered as wild lands.

When we argued for our lands with the Land Record Officer in Thanbyuzayat Town, he said that these lands are on the list of ownerless lands and that they are actually wild lands. So the Army wants these lands for themselves to farm for their family. But in actuality, we have had land documents for our lands for many years. Now we have no lands to plant on. What are we going to do? said Nai Sein-Chee who lost four acres of land from Wae-Ka-Lee village, Thanbyuzayat Township.

The following is a list of farmers who have had their lands confiscated. Their lands were confiscated by No. 4 Military Training Center of Wae-Ka-Lee village, Thanbyuzayat Township in the last months of this year. [>> To Previous news page](#)

Beggars increase in Mon State due to economic crisis

Fri 15 Sep 2006

Taung Pyin, Ye Township, September, 2006

Even though the State Peace and Development Council declares in its state run media that the country is developing and that the living standard for all civilians is getting higher, the number of beggars are also increasing day by day in the southern part of Mon State.

According to human rights field workers in Burma, whenever there are seasonal traditional events (such as the ceremony of the donation of rice and cooking oil to the Monks in the villages or towns) many beggars follow the Monks and ask for rice and other donations to survive.

"This scene makes me unhappy, especially when I see many undernourished kids with no clothes and old people as beggars. They look very hungry, looking for someone who can afford to give them food",said Nai Ngae from Ye Town.

An the end of September, the Mon traditional ceremony, held to celebrate the full moon, was held in Taung-Pyin village, Lamine Sub-Town. During the rice donation ceremony, there were approximately 450 families begging for food and money in the central monastery.

"The Senior Monks and our villagers donated about 45 to 50 baskets of rice and other stuffs to them. We donated one plastic bag of rice to each family member", reported a 25 year old man from Taung- Pyin village.

According to the villagers, most of the beggars are people from other regions and they also could not speak the Mon language. Before, the village found that there were only few families of beggars in the village. However when there was special traditional events or Buddha day festivals held in the village, many beggars appeared. "People are very poor due to lack of job opportunities and the current high prices of all essential food stuffs in the country. These are all factors. So, the government should take responsibility to find jobs and arrange a resettlement program for them. However I don't think the government will do it", said a former Mon politician in Ye township.

Beggars are increasing in number not only in Mon State but also all around Burma. Even though the military government is developing infrastructure, this is also causing problems as well, said Dr. Kyaw Nyunt, an economist and general secretary for the Democratic Alliance of Burma.

"For example if they build a dam in a local area, they confiscate the land so that makes people jobless in their own country", said Dr. Kyaw Nyunt. According to a survey, most people in Burma said they worked in traditional jobs such as farmers. Having lost their land they become jobless and often flee to neighboring countries, Dr. Kyaw Nyunt, said.

"People in Burma are very creative, because even though they face a hard economic situation in the country they still try to create small businesses for their survival", said Debbie Stothaid from the Alternative Asean Network on Burma.

Burmese battalion using civilians' farm lands for army's business

Thu 31 Aug 2006

HURFOM, Taung Pyin village, La-mine sub-town,

The military has confiscated farm land to use for the army's brick production near Toung-Pyin village, La-mine sub-town, Mon State.

The Light Infantry Battalion military LIB No. 587 led by Colonel Hla Myint made a brick production site for military business near Toung-Pyin village water reserve on June 6, 2006. The battalions brought laborers for the military's brick factory from the middle parts of Burma and allowed them to live in and build small huts on, the villagers land without asking permission from farm owner. According to a local source there are five Burmese Brick Makers huts, which are close to the Toung-Pyin village water reserve in La Mine Sub-Township.

"The military officer took four acres of paddy fields to use to produce bricks, so we can't grow rice in those fields", said Nai Won Kyit, the owner of the land from Taung-Pyin village.

There are bricks still there from last year, which they couldn't sell. The brick factory is managed by military Officer Hla Myint from LIB No. 587 who started manufacturing the bricks for the military on the land last year. The military officer and the village headmen told us the lands that they took are just for temporary use, for brick production. But the

battalions have allowed the brick makers to stay, they continue to produce and sell the bricks for the whole year,a source added.

According to the land owner, the brick makers usually return to their home during the rainy season every year. But this year they have not left. The land owner is afraid of the military officer so he does not dare to ask the brick makers to leave the land.

The land owner told the military officer to tell the brick makers to leave when the rainy season comes. The officer said that they will stay here for the whole year to keep selling the bricks. It is OK that they live here and sell the bricks for the whole year and then leave. But we are worried that they will take our property", said the land owner. The land owner can't grow the rice on the land. However, the military officer told the land owner that he will pay the amount the land owner would earn from the rice. >> [To Previous news page](#)

Forced cultivation of castor-oil plants in Mon State

Fri 18 Aug 2006

HURFOM,Mudon Township, August 2006

Since May 2006 the Township authorities of Mudon Township and the local battalion LIB No. 61 forced the civilians to buy branches of castor-oil plants and demanded that they grow them around the villages, the houses and along the roads and the farms close to the roads.

It was reported that people from each household from villages along the Mudon-Moulmein motor road were required to buy at the rate of 350 kyat per branch, castor-oil plants from the local authorities. They were required to grow them especially along the motor road, in front of their houses including inside their gardens, fields and farms. The villages which were required to cultivate the castor-oil plants are: Mudon (200 households), Ba-Yan (300 households), Kwan-Tar (250 households), Kaw-Ka-Pone (350 households), Hmaine-Ka-Naine (200 households), Myaing-gone (180 households), Kway-Wan (350 households), Naing-Pa-Raing (320 households) and Tha-Yar-Gone (180 households).

According to an anonymous source from Ba-Yan village, those households who could not go to grow the castor-oil plants had to hire others to fulfill their responsibility and buy 70 plants at the rate of 350 kyat per each from the village SPDC. "It is too much for us, we already work for them. I need to work for my family on a daily basis to earn enough for us to survive. Now, I can't do my own job for my family income", a local source explained.

The reporter said that residents from southern part of Mudon Township such as Kyone-Phite, Kan-Ka-Lay, Wet-tae, Nyoun-Gone, Naing-Hlone, Set-twae, Taw-Guu, Thagon-Taing and Kamar-Wet villages were also required to buy branches of castor-oil plants at the rate of 350 kyat per branches and forced to grow in front of their houses and along the road. >> [To Previous news page](#)

Land Confiscation in Ye township, Mon State

Fri 18 Aug 2006

HURFOM, Khaw-Za, Ye Township, Mon State, August 2006

Land confiscation has been occurring in southern part of Mon State. On June 18, 2006, it was reported that Khaw-Za sub-town based Infantry Battalion No. 31 (known as Missile based in Khaw-Za) confiscated many acres of farms and plantations belonging to the local people.

According to the local residents, the reason for seizing the lands was to enlarge the Magyi - Khawza motor road. Approximately eighty acres of land were seized by IB No. 31.

"The Burmese officers said they will widen the road from thirty to fifty feet. So they needed more space to enlarge the road. From our village, the name of land and plantations owners who had suffered from confiscation by IB 31 are Daw Khu (four acres of paddy field and betel nuts plantation), Nai Kun Ba, Mi Khin San (betel nuts plantation), Mi Shin, Nai Moe Kyi (betel nuts plantation), reported Nai Aye Win (not real name), a betel nut owner from Ma-Gyi village.

"They seized my farm with no compensation. Since my husband has passed away, I have been depending on this farm. In my farm there are about one thousand betel nuts plants and other plants. It is about four acres. Now, I am facing difficulty to survive. I spent a lot to pay for this farm. I owed about three hundred thousand kyat to my relative with eight kyat in interest. I couldn't find a way to repay? it", said Daw Khu who lost her land to IB No. 31 in Ma-Gyi village, Khaw-Za sub-town.

Since the beginning of the rainy season, under the instruction of the Infantry Battalion No. 31, the residents of Ma-Gyi village were told to provide stones and wood to reconstruct the broken bridge and to fix the holes along the Magyi-Khawza road.

On August 13, 2006, SPDC local Burmese Light Infantry Battalion No. 591 and No. 583 confiscated many farm lands from the civilians who live near Ye town, Mon State. The purpose of the land confiscation was to build new Army barracks and a playground, according to a source.

It was reported that a troop led by Commander Ba Lay from Light Infantry Battalion No. 591 confiscated 10 acres of rubber plantations owned by Daw Khin, 10 acres of belal nut plantations owned by U Thein Phay and 3 acres of belal nut plantations owned by U Aung Mae.

"For five years, they (troops from Light Infantry Battalion No. 591) have planned to seize my lands. At that time my wife warned me not to grow more betel nuts because we would lose everything if the Burmese army seized the lands. But I did not think the Army would seize my land. Now, they suddenly seized my lands which were full of betel nut plants. My family has relied on this plantation. We would face a lot of difficulties without these

lands. Commander Ba Lay said they will pay compensation for my lands. But I don't think they will pay the full value of my lands if they pay", explained U Thein Phae, who lost 10 acres of betel nut plantation near Kyoung-Ywa village, Ye township, Mon State.

According to Daw Khin, who was a victim of land confiscation, the LIB No.591 asked her to sign the contract which says that the Army will pay compensation within two years. She wanted the payment in cash and so she refused to sign the contract. She still has not received any compensation from the battalion. According to Daw Khin at the current rate, she should receive about 250,000 kyat from the LIB No. 591.

The reporter said that good land from the residents who live near Ye town was also seized by Light infantry battalion No. 583 which was based around Ye town. According to Nai Tin Htay, 41 years old, who lives in Yan-Myo-Aung quarter, Ye town, the Commander from LIB No. 583 seized 10 acres of his farm lands to construct new army barracks, including a playground for the battalion. After Nai Tin Htay's land was confiscated, the Commander asked him to sign the payment invoice. But he claimed that he has not received any compensation and has no idea how much he will receive from the battalion. [>> To Previous news page](#)

Local inhabitants including women and children were forced to guard Gas Pipeline

Tue 01 Aug 2006

HURFOM, Mudon Township, August 1st 2006

The Burmese battalions based near Kwan Hlar village continue to force local inhabitants including women and young children to patrol the Kanbauk-Myaingkalay gas pipeline in Mudon Township, Mon State, according to a local source.

They (the SPDC soldiers) do not discriminate, using men, women and children. "They said they want everybody to take responsibility in guarding the Gas pipeline", said Nai Zaw Tun (not real name) from Hnee-Pa-daw village, Mudon Township, Mon State. "The villagers in Kwan-Hlar village, Hnee-pa-daw village, Kalort-tort village, Yaung-daung village and the villages along the gas pipeline in Mudon Township are being forced to send five villagers from each quarter of the villages for a day or night patrol on a rotating basis", the source added.

"I have to patrol the Gas Pipeline and the railway route the whole night (from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m), because my parents are too busy with their paddy farms", said Maung Min Aung (not real name), a 13 year old boy from Yaung-Daung village, Mudon Township, Mon State. Similarly, many children patrol the gas pipeline because their parents are too busy with paddy farms and some parents have migrated to neighboring countries, he explained.

"If I failed to do patrol duty, I have to pay 2000 Kyat", he added. After the last gas pipeline explosion in February near Kwan-hlar village, Mudon Township, the authorities collected Kyat 4,000 from each household and said that they would not ask villagers to patrol the gas pipeline anymore. But three months later the battalion has begun forcing the villagers to patrol the pipeline again, said Nai Zaw Tun.

Since the gas pipeline was laid in 2000, villagers along its route have been suffering various human rights abuses, such as restrictions on movement and forced labor: they are also forced to pay taxes for security expenditure.

Burmese Army threatened the Mon teachers and forced the students to work as laborers

Tue 28 Feb 2006

Khaw-Zar sub-town, Ye township, Mon State

Accordingly to a female Mon teacher in Khaw-zar sub-township, Ye Township, Mon State, the commanders of Burmese Army which launched the offensives in the area threatened to stop her classes and also forced her students to work as laborers on the building of the SPDC's high school.

"The Burmese commander and his troops came and threatened me to stop teaching Mon language and instead they forced me to teach at their school and offered me three times the salary I earn now", said Mi xxx, a female teacher in Khaw-zar Mon National school, who just arrived at the Thai-Burma border after she fled from that area.

She explained that some of her students were forced to work as unpaid laborers on the building of the SPDC high school, carrying food and water for the military camp, feeding the camp pigs, and doing other odd jobs such as cleaning the toilets and picking up garbage around the camp. The local State Peace and Development Council commander scolded her after she complained that she would have to stop the classes.

"He said bluntly to answer his question on whether I will teach at Mon National school or at the SPDC government school. I couldn't make such a decision and suggested to him (SPDC commander) to discuss the matter with the higher officials of the education department, not with me", said the teacher who wasn't afraid to speak her mind.

According to Mi xxx, currently, the students from Khaw-Zar are very afraid to attend the Mon National school. Students near the village such as Krone-Ka-nyar have to spend 90 minutes to get to the school in the Khaw Zar sub-township and were sometimes stopped by the SPDC's troops who take care of the village. Sometimes, students were not allowed to enter their village because of the 5 p.m. curfew for villagers to be back from working on their farms. If they break the curfew they risk being shot or tortured, so students have to sleep outside the village.

"I have a total of 70 students, but only 50 attend the class because they are afraid of the Burmese authorities and their restrictions. The continual threats on us to report on our activities including staff meetings have forced me to leave the area," she added.

The Burmese government represses the teaching of the ethnic languages in all of Burma's

States, including the Shan, Mon, Chin, and Karen. The crackdown on the Mon National Schools began in earnest in 2003, at that time the SPDC launched an offensive in the area against a Mon guerilla armed group who has been active in the jungle since 1997, two years after the New Mon State Party reached a ceasefire agreement with SPDC, the Burmese government. [>> To Previous news page](#)

Farmers forced to cultivate summer paddy

Mon 06 Feb 2006

Mudon Township, Mon State

Farmers in Mudon Township , Mon State have been threatened that their farms would be seized if they do not grow summer paddy.

"Mudon police official, U Myo Myint, in charge of summer paddy, said that they would seize our farms if we don't grow paddy this summer", said a farmer. Farmers do not want to grow summer paddy because the cost of cultivation is high and the returns are low.

"Officials from the township come very often to lecture us on the need to grow summer paddy. They waste our time calling us to meetings delaying our work", a farmer added.

Since 2001 when the Win PaNon dam was built in Abit village, Mudon Township , the nearby villages such as Kalawthut village, Taungpa village Kwankabue and Htone Mun were forced to cultivate paddy in summer. Not only villagers but also farmers in the Mudon town were ordered to cultivate paddy in summer. The farmers near the town had to grow paddy at least on three acres per family. They had to pay 30,000 Kyat per acre if they did not.

The authorities forced the farmers to cultivate the summer paddy because water from the dam was not available any more.

The farmers are unwilling to cultivate paddy in summer because they do not have enough human resources and water because supply from the dam is cut every year in April and May. So they had to use machines to bring the water into the farm, which cost a lot of money. [>> To Previous news page](#)