

Displacement and causes of displacement in Pegu Division (West)

Documents

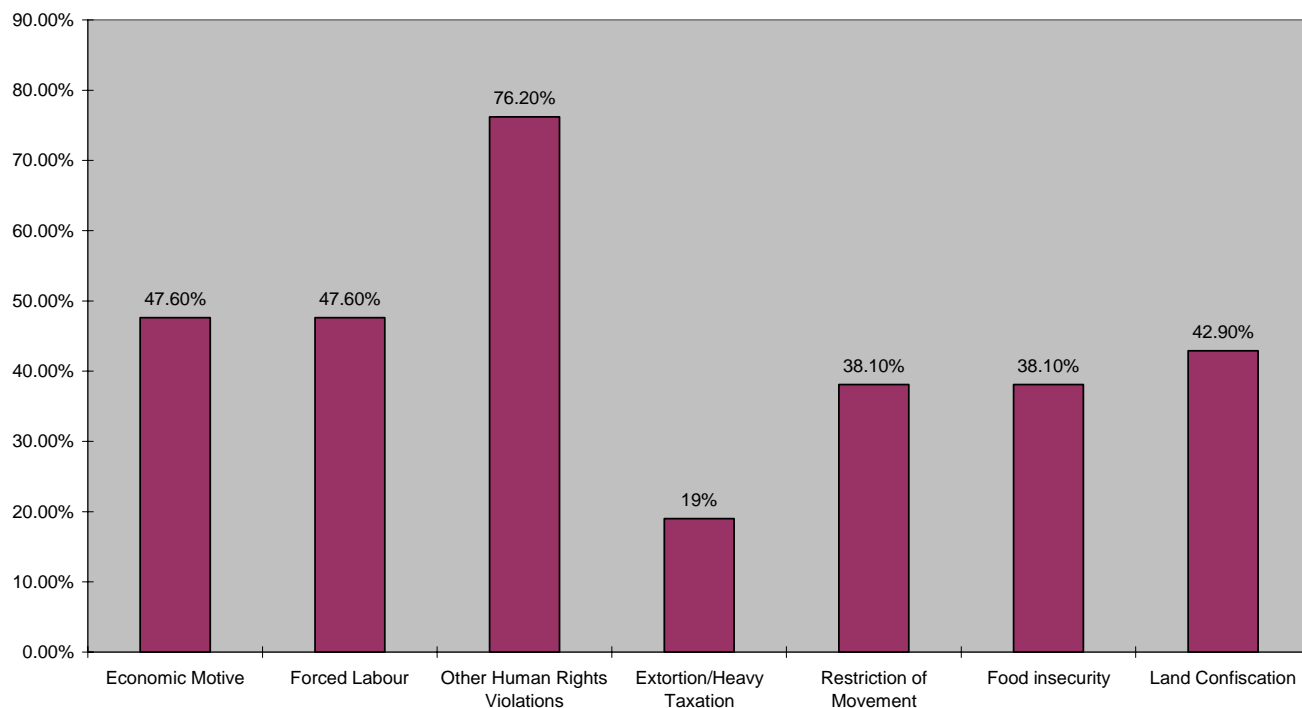
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Survey Results (20 respondents)

8) Pegu Division-West (percentage)



Forced relocation/eviction (rural)

[Land grab in Pegu division](#)

-- *The Irrawaddy*, 27 March 2007

Legal representatives for villagers of Kawa Township in Burma's Pegu Division say residents are being exploited by local authorities through the mismanagement of land rights.

Since 1970, villagers near the Sittang River estuary have lost tracts of cultivable land to soil erosion and have been forced to seek land in other villages in the region, while local authorities have made no provision for resettling affected villagers.

Instead, the legal representatives say, new alluvial land created on the western bank of the Sittang River in the last several decades—totaling some 6,000 acres—that could have been used to relocate villagers has instead been divided up between high-ranking members of the local State Peace and Development Council, the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation and the military.

These are the conclusions of Pegu-based social and legal advocacy group Guiding Star, which monitors and documents human rights abuses in Burma.

“So far, villagers are allowed to have nothing to do with this new rich soil,” said Aye Myint, head of the legal group.

Coastal erosion is common enough at the mouth of the Sittang River, which rises on the edge of the Shan Plateau and flows south for 260 miles to empty into the Gulf of Martaban in the Andaman Sea. But such changes have a dramatic impact on the administration of land rights, from the distribution of small or communal plots to conflicts between traditional and legal land use rights.

Irrigation projects managed by the MAI do not favor those residents displaced by flooding in the area, Aye Myint said.

“Instead, authorities share the land themselves,” he told *The Irrawaddy* by phone on Tuesday. “To avoid legal restrictions imposed by the government, they sell the land to businessmen.”

Burma’s military government last updated its rights and procedures relating to land management in September 1998. According to those regulations, land cannot be mortgaged, sold or otherwise transferred or divided without approval by the MAI’s Central Committee for the Management of Culturable Land, Fallow Land and Waste Land.

The per acre market value of land sold by government officials is around 600,000 kyat (US \$480), and they have been allowed to profit from the sale of land without interference from the state, while villagers affected by land loss or flooding have received no compensation for their losses, according to Guiding Star.

In recent weeks, Burmese government bodies such as the ministries of Home Affairs and Energy have invited public complaints about abuse by personnel in a drive to “ensure clean administrative machinery,” as state-run *The New Light of Myanmar* put it.

Last month, Prime Minister Gen Soe Win, in a meeting with judges and legal professionals, stressed the need for the judicial sector to adapt to reforms in order to conform to the regulations of the forthcoming new state constitution.

Actions by authorities in Pegu Division, however, run counter to the government's anti-corruption drive, Aye Myint said.

Villagers, he claims, have lost their homes or have effectively become internally displaced, while the government reaps the financial benefits of illegal land sales.

Burma: Country Report on Human Rights Practices - 2006

-- US State Dept., 6 March 2007 (extract)

The government in Bago forced residents to move off their land so that authorities could build an urban development project. The land was later deemed unsuitable, but the residents were not allowed to return.

Forced relocation/eviction (urban)

Human Settlements Sector Review, Union of Myanmar

-- UN Habitat, 1991 (section on Bago)

Using the intercensal growth rate, the 1990 population is around 122,000. The town is made up of 22 urban wards within the township of the same name which contains 86 village tracts in addition to the wards. Out of the 1983 population of the Division, 3.8 million, the urban sector accounted for 19.46 per cent or 740,000. The next largest urban centres in the Division are Peji with 83,332 in 1983 and Toungoo with 65,860. Bago is located on a road, rail and river junction, on the main northern route connecting Yangon with Mandalay.

The public works programme is composed of a resettlement scheme, a major new market, a bypass road, and various drain and water-body rehabilitation works. Town revenues for 1989/90 totalled K371.000. The road works within the resettlement scheme are being financed with a K3.5 million grant.

The structure plan prepared by HD has been used as the guideline for the resettlement zoning, but the plan's location of the bypass road has been switched to the western side of the town to serve the resettlement areas. The gross land development area is 2700 acres, providing 6000 plots with sizes varying from 40' x 60' to 80' x 100'. The work commenced in November 1988 and is being implemented by the Public Works

Department (previously the Construction Corporation). Management is the responsibility of the Divisional LORC, not the municipality. Completion is scheduled for late-1991. Of the 4789 plots allocated, 2,000 were occupied by mid-1990. The layout generally follows that prepared on request by HD. Water-supply works at the time of the field visit were not complete. A tanker is used to supply water on a daily basis at no charge. Two deep tubewells are being installed, to be supplemented by 50 hand pumps.

Apart from the road works within the scheme, all land-development costs are covered by advance payments. Relocated squatters in this case are allowed to pay in two installments. The minimum charge is only K500 for a divided plot of 20' x 60' which can be occupied with an advance payment of K250. Public servants have been allocated the larger plots, which are priced at K.6000 for 60' x 80', and K9000 for 80' x 100'. As for the other towns with similar programmes, public servants have a deferred repayment system and access to credit for construction materials. On all plots, whether for relocated squatters or for public servants, households are required to construct their own dwellings. The low-cost plots are located on the perimeter of the scheme with poor access conditions on hilly terrain. The cost of constructing a bamboo house with thatch roofing is around K10,000, while timber construction with metal roof sheeting is K100,000. (pp 89, 91, 92)

Punishment for non-compliance with orders

Burmese farmers oppressed by local authorities as ever

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 24 April 2005

Some local authorities in Burma are continuing to extort money and labour from poor farmers, landing them on many kinds of difficulty and troubles.

Villagers at Kawa Township, Pegu Division in central Burma have been told by the local authorities to contribute to the construction of a sea water barrier. Those who own paddy fields have to pay 100 kyat per acre and landless households are forced to pay 600 kyat each.

Other farmers have been forced to grow summer paddy for the authorities at the most unproductive time of the dry season and take part in other "voluntary" activities, in the name of the nation. **Some farmers have been fined, their lands confiscated or imprisoned when they failed to obey the orders.**

Other threats to human security

Land confiscation

Land grab in Pegu Division

-- *The Irrawaddy*, 27 March 2007

Legal representatives for villagers of Kawa Township in Burma's Pegu Division say residents are being exploited by local authorities through the mismanagement of land rights.

Since 1970, villagers near the Sittang River estuary have lost tracts of cultivable land to soil erosion and have been forced to seek land in other villages in the region, while local authorities have made no provision for resettling affected villagers.

Instead, the legal representatives say, new alluvial land created on the western bank of the Sittang River in the last several decades—totaling some 6,000 acres—that could have been used to relocate villagers has instead been divided up between high-ranking members of the local State Peace and Development Council, the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation and the military.

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Last month, Prime Minister Gen Soe Win, in a meeting with judges and legal professionals, stressed the need for the judicial sector to adapt to reforms in order to conform to the regulations of the forthcoming new state constitution.

Actions by authorities in Pegu Division, however, run counter to the government’s anti-corruption drive, Aye Myint said.

Villagers, he claims, have lost their homes or have effectively become internally displaced, while the government reaps the financial benefits of illegal land sales.

Farmer sued for working on his confiscated paddy fields

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 14 July 2006

Although the Burmese military authorities recently released lawyer Aye Myint from Pegu, who was jailed for reporting forced labour and land confiscations to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the authorities are not only not returning the 400 acres of paddy fields to their rightful owners but also suing a farmer for failing to pay ‘tax’ to them.

Farmer Khin Win from Phaungdawthi Village, Daik-U Township Pegu Division, was sued and taken to court because he worked on the paddy fields which were confiscated from him by army veteran association, without paying tax. Aye Myint told DVB that the veteran association has been trying to settle the case outside the court after his release. “Now, Daik-U court is running amok as they are afraid that the truth might come out and trying to erase (traces of evidence). The judge is negotiating for them. The other side (veteran association?) said they will withdraw/drop (the charge against Khin Win?). Whether they withdraw it or not, we will have to keep the record in accordance with the law.”

The veteran association and pro-junta Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) confiscated 420 acres of pasturelands belonging to Phaungdawthi farmers and rented out the lands to the farmers again.

Although the authorities have been intimidating farmers not report the matter to anyone, Aye Myint said farmers enthusiastically have been coming to see him for consultation and he had received more nearly 10 reports from them

Hundreds of acres of farmlands confiscated in lower Burma for a new road

-- Democratic Voice of Burma, 4 April 2006

Hundreds of paddy-fields and farmlands have been confiscated from farmers within Daik-U Township at lower Burma's Pegu Division in the construction of the Sittang (Sittang) – Myitkyoe – Daik-U dual motorway-railway which is to link southern Burma's Mon State and Pegu Division.

A rough earth tract has been built since 2005 by the ruling military government, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), and it is to be expanded and accompanied by a railway track.

Bulldozers have been clearing farmlands on both sides of the dual way and homes have been forced to be dismantled by the authorities, a local resident told DVB.

“What they call here is a strategic road. It comes from Mawlamyaing (Moulmein) to Myitkyoe, Nyaungkharshay, to Daik_U, crossing the paddy fields,” the resident said. “Khinmon earth road is finished now and they are now building a railway along it.” He added that many farmlands were confiscated and destroyed in the building of the road and some Buddhist monasteries are also in the path the road but no compensations have been given to the people for the destructions caused.

The state-controlled newspaper, Myanmar Ahlin (The New Light of Myanmar), reported on 1 that SPDC Transport minister Maj-Gen Aung Min inspected the construction of the road but did not mention the subject of compensations for the local people affected by it.

Burmese farmer Phoe Aye sent to Paungde Jail for attack on soldier

-- Democratic Voice of Burma, 23 March, 2006

A Burmese villager from Paungde Township, Pegu Division in lower Burma, who attacked a drunken army officer with a machete was sent to the local jail recently.

Phoe Aye, a farmer by profession who was feeling aggrieved by various persecutions and bullying behaviours of the Burmese soldiers, attacked alcohol-laced Sgt. Win Cho from Light Infantry Battalion – 66 based in nearby Pauktaw, after the latter came to Kanyutkwin Village and taunted its inhabitants on 16 March.

According to local residents, the authorities are planning to charge Phoe Aye with obstructing government officials on duty. Although he was to be tried on 23 March initially, the trial was postponed to 30 March. The residents stressed that Sgt. Win Cho was not seriously hurt and he even didn't have to go to the hospital.

Phoe Aye is still not allowed to see his family members causing serious concerns among his loved ones. The local farmers are said to be very angry by the soldiers who confiscate

their farms, force them to grow unprofitable summer paddy and physic nuts, steal their irrigated water and subject them to forced labour.

Meanwhile, the authorities still haven't taken any action on the police and fire brigade members at Rangoon Kyimyintaing (Kemmdine) Township, who beat a former political prisoner Thet Naing Oo to death on 17 March.

Farmland confiscation at Pegu Division in lower Burma

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 27 January, 2006

The local authorities at Waw Township, Pegu Division in lower central Burma, have been destroying peanut farms and confiscating them from the local farmers.

The authorities had confiscated farmlands belonging to 30 farmers from Taphya Nget Kyeewin village group, in order to expand Nyaungkharyay –Daik - U highway into a dual motor-rail way, according to local residents.

The farmers reported the matter to higher authorities on 4 December, but the authorities continued to bulldoze and destroy their cold season crops including peanuts, incurring heavy losses and untold miseries on the farmers.

Lawyer Aye Myint charged by Burmese court

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 25 October, 2005

Detained Burmese lawyer Aye Myint from Pegu in central Burma, who has been detained for giving 'false' information to the Rangoon branch of International Labour Organisation (ILO), was charged with Emergency Provision Act – 5E by nearby Daik-U Township court.

On 24 October, the court suspended cross-examinations of the remaining 16 witnesses and charged Aye Myint with the act.

"The case is quite good," the defending lawyer San Maung told DVB. "The Interior Affairs Ministry must issue the permission to sue (Aye Myint?), but that was not included...the other point is, the farmers themselves testified at the court that they themselves willingly signed the letter and sent it to Mr. Horsey of the ILO. They said that U Aye Myint is innocent. There is nothing better than this. Although the case is that good, cross-examinations of the remaining witnesses were suspended and U Aye Myint was charged yesterday with Emergency Provision Act – 5E and he pleaded not guilty."

Aye Myint was arrested and taken to court by the local police chief for allegedly giving false information to the ILO about the confiscation of pasturelands belonging to farmers of Phaungdawthi Village in Daik-U by military organisations.

Nyo Lin Maung, son of Aye Myint told DVB that his father has not been fed properly by the authorities at Daik-U police station where he is currently detained, causing him to lose weight and become weaker.

At the same time, the appeal lodged on behalf of the private tuition teacher, Aung Pe, who was imprisoned recently for saluting Burma's national hero, General Aung San, was rejected by Rangoon Twante District court on 25 October.

Burmese authorities grabbing lands from farmers

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 28 March, 2005

The Burmese authorities from land survey department in Pegu Township are planning to grab 50 more acres of lands from Kamanet Village, Pegu Township in central Burma with the excuse of expanding an electricity supply compound, causing anxieties and stress to the owners of the farms.

Although there are plenty of unused spaces within the existing electricity grid compound, the authorities are trying to grab more lands from the villagers thus, according to a local resident.

"The lands are to be taken from 13 farmers and among them 7 farmers will lose all their farms and the rest will lose some of theirs," she said.

The lands are said to be very fertile and the lives and livelihoods of many farmers were destroyed when their farms were confiscated for the existing electricity grid compound. A farmer, speaking on condition of anonymity, told DVB that the authorities are deliberating ruining the lives of farmers.

Forced labour

Slavery: Burmese student forced to guard railway tracks and beaten up

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 10 August, 2006

Burmese soldiers in charge of the security of railway tracks at Daik-U, Pegu Division in lower Burma have not only been forcing local people to guard the tracks but also beating up and fining those who refuse to clean brambles and bushes grown along the ancient railway.

Recently, a university student who was forced to guard the tracks was beaten up by the soldiers because he didn't do the cleaning duties, a local resident told DVB.

"A student was on guard duty as there was no one from home to do it. There, the army told him you are not here to do the guard duty only, you must collect rubbishes, clear the grass and do the cleaning duties within both sides of 30 sleepers. The student said he

could not do it. I came here to do the guard duties, not collect rubbishes and clear the grass, he said. The child was beaten up 'a little bit', I heard. Then the child said that I am a second year student and they apologised to him 'a little bit' and returned him to his parents."

Residents of Daik-U have been forced to guard the railway tracks since early this year when bomb blasts occurred in nearby Taungoo. To make the matter worse, they are forced to guard the tracks far away from home causing them many unnecessary difficulties.

Meanwhile, the soldiers who are supposed to be on guard duty for the tracks, reportedly have been drunk regularly and bullying the local population.

Forced labour is alive and well in central Burma

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 15 October, 2005

The local authorities at Zeekone (Zigon) Township, western Pegu Division in central Burma have been subjecting local residents to forced labour practices.

Those who could not afford to participate in the 'volunteering' are forced to pay 200 kyat per household making them almost impossible to survive as the commodity prices are soaring endlessly, especially affecting those who live in urban areas.

The order for forced labour was said to be issued by local authority chairman Khin Aung. A local resident told DVB that people have been forced to clear brambles and bushes along Rangoon-Prome (Pyay) Highway without pay. She added that some people are even unable to pay 200 kyat as they are finding it harder and harder to survive the economic hardships and the bullying actions of the military authorities.

Asked if the local residents are not reporting the practices to the authorities concerned, she replied despairingly that people don't even know who to approach as those who are in power are only interested in protecting each other and imprisoning those who report them to higher authorities.

Robbery, extortion, arbitrary taxation

Burmese farmers oppressed by local authorities as ever

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 24 April, 2005

Some local authorities in Burma are continuing to extort money and labour from poor farmers, landing them on many kinds of difficulty and troubles.

Villagers at Kawa Township, Pegu Division in central Burma have been told by the local authorities to contribute to the construction of a sea water barrier. Those who own paddy fields have to pay 100 kyat per acre and landless households are forced to pay 600 kyat each.

At Warka Village, Malaing Township in Meikhtila District, the authority chairman U Aung Thein has been making money for himself by taxing toddy palm trees for the first time in the village history. He collects 20 kyat for each tree and each farmer grows more than 1000 trees, according a local resident.

Other farmers have been forced to grow summer paddy for the authorities at the most unproductive time of the dry season and take part in other “voluntary” activities, in the name of the nation. Some farmers have been fined, their lands confiscated or imprisoned when they failed to obey the orders.

Compulsory (and frequently ruinous) cropping and marketing policies

Nuts: Government agriculture projects ruin lives of Burmese farmers

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 10 April, 2006

Burma's military government, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) authorities again have been forcing farmers to grow unprofitable summer paddy and physic nut/castor oil seed plants, causing untold miseries and difficulties to them.

Burmese farmers who live on the western side of **Pegu** Division have been ordered to grow the paddy but the authorities are not selling them enough subsidised fertilisers at the official rate, 4,000 Kyats per 110lb bag. The local officials have been siphoning off the fertilisers and selling them on to black market traders who sell them back to the farmers at the 'outside' rate, around 20,000 Kyats per bag.

At the same time, the authorities at Magwe Division, Kachin State and northern Shan State have been forcing local people to grow physic nuts and extorting money from them at every turn, residents complained.

“By the order of the ma-ya-ka (township authority), each household (in the towns) must grow 300 physic nut in their compounds. Moreover, the villages must have nurseries for the seedlings/saplings of physic nut, by the order of ma-ya-ka. There they have to erect two signboards. They collect (extort) 20000 Kayt from each village, by the order of the ma-ya-ka,” a local resident told DVB. Moreover, the people also have to take the responsibility of watering the plants in turn.

Oil extracted from the nuts are reportedly used as the main ingredient of a type of bio-fuel in attempts to solve acute fuel shortages in Burma while the SPDC is selling off the majority of the vast offshore natural gas reserves to foreign countries.

The people insisted that these government projects are economically unviable and that if the junta wants to help the people and itself, it should stop its authorities from meddling in the affairs which they neither understand nor try to understand.

Burmese farmer Phoe Aye sent to Paungde Jail for attack on soldier

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 23 March, 2006

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Other farmers have been forced to grow summer paddy for the authorities at the most unproductive time of the dry season and take part in other “voluntary” activities, in the name of the nation. Some farmers have been fined, their lands confiscated or imprisoned when they failed to obey the orders.

Farmers in trouble

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 10 February, 2004

Burmese farmers from Pegu Division in central Burma wrote a letter to the country's Prime Minister General Khin Nyunt urging the military junta to solve problems and difficulties faced by the farmers.

Farmers from Phyu, Kayauk Gyi and Oke-twin townships sent a letter to the general urging him to stop the plunging paddy/rice price and a copy of the letter was also sent to U Myat Hla, the elected representative of Pegu Township.

Farmers in Myaung Mya Township (Irrawaddy division) and Woon-twin Township in Mandalay are also facing similar difficulties, according the local elected representatives, U Aung Kyin and Dr. Hla Aung.

The farmers are also in danger of losing their operating costs. Their survivals and livelihood are in grave danger due to the ban on rice exports imposed by the junta, State Peace and Development council (SPDC) in early January for fear of political unrest due to rice shortage.

Previous to the ban, the junta 'liberalised' the rice market by not forcing farmers to sell rice quotas to the government.

Rice mill owners and traders are reluctant to buy paddy from farmers because they are afraid that the junta might force them to sell the milled paddy (rice) at the lowest price later on.

As a result, the price of paddy/rice has been plunging and farmers are unable to sell their produces which are in danger of rotting in piles. The children of farmers are unable to resume their studies in schools and university.

Meanwhile, farmers in lower Burma are being forced to grow dry season paddy by local authorities in delta region on the pain of arrest and confiscations of farmlands.

Burmese farmers in trouble again

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 13 December, 2003

Despite the promise of the military junta of Burma's promise not to force rice farmers to sell rice to the government, both Burmese rice merchants and farmers are facing difficulties due to the junta's tampering with rice price.

The junta, the SPDC (State Peace and Development Council) has ordered local rice farmers and merchants in Irrawaddy Division, the rice bowl of Burma to halve the price of rice.

As rice merchants are unwilling to sell rice to the junta, they are stopping their business by not buying rice from farmers. The farmers are likely to face losses with the designated price as the yield of rice is only 50 'tins' (bags) per acre on average each year.

In Pegu Division, farmers are still resisting to sell rice to the regime and the government is still unable to force the price on them. Rice farmers in Mon State are also unwilling to sell their produce to rice merchants because of the lowered price and the merchants are making no effort to buy rice from farmers.

Rice merchants are saying that the farmers are likely to face losses because the yield of rice is reduced to 50% this year at 20-25 'tins' per acre.

Rice merchants told not to sell rice

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 26 October, 2002

The authorities in Waw Township, Pegu Division have withdrawn the rights of rice merchants to store and sell rice. The military intelligence (MI) summoned a rice-mill owner and eight rice merchants, and forced them to sign an agreement not to store and sell rice. They were also threatened with imprisonments if they didn't co-operate.

The merchants make their living by selling rice to some 17 villages situated along the Sittaung River. The villagers are mostly fishermen and they have to buy rice from the merchants for their staple diet as they do not grow their own.

Political harassment

Farmer banned from working on farm for being a NLD member

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 24 December, 2003

A farmer from Shwe Hinthta Kone village, Moe Nyo Township, Pegu Division in central Burma was banned from working on annually emerged silt farms on the bank of

Irrawaddy River because he is a local organiser of the NLD (National League for Democracy).

Ko Kyaw Zan has been working on the farms every year to grow vegetables such as beans and chillies on the silts left behind by the receding level of River Irrawaddy during the cold and dry seasons.

But he was told by the local authority chairman, U Kyaw Win on 15 December that he is not allowed to work on the farm anymore because he was not following 'rules and regulations'.

When he asked the local authority what they meant by 'rules and regulations', they eventually told him that he was banned from working because he is a member of the NLD.

Ko Kyaw Zan said he observed all the rules and regulations relating to agricultural laws including paying tax but the latest effort of the authority is an example of the attempt to uproot and destroy the grass root support for NLD by the military authority.

Natural disasters, fires

Burma affected by Tsunami: Several died and tens missing

-- *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 27 December 2004

The coastal regions of lower and western Burma which are connected to the India Ocean have been affected by the recent earthquake and subsequent tsunamis.

According to information DVB could gather so far from the local people of the affected regions of Tenisseriam (Taninthayi), **Pegu Division** and Irrawaddy Divisions, at least 60 people have died and many more are still missing and unaccounted for.

Most of the damages have been inflicted in the delta region of Irrawaddy Division and Tenisseriam Division in southern Burma close to Thailand. At least 40 have died in Laputta Township of Irrawaddy Division alone. In the town of Kawhaung in Tenisseriam Division, opposite of Thai city Ranong, DVB has recorded the death of at least 20.

Local people confirm tens of people including children are still missing. Bridges and tens of houses had been destroyed in Kaung Thaung.

DVB has not been successful in contacting some affected areas. There are also rumours that the Total Gas Pipeline which supplies natural gas to Thailand from the Andaman Sea is also affected.
