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Human Rights

### **Paddy fields inundated without notice**

More than a hundred acres of paddy fields in Lashio, Shan State's northern capital, went underwater without warning after outflowing water from a dam was diverted for the exploration of a coal mine along its previous channel, reported sources from the border this morning.

Approximately 150 acres of paddy, newly harvested, were affected by the man-made flood that took place on 5 November, near the AT Bridge, north of Lashio.

"Before, we were forced to sell most of produce to the Army," wept a woman from Hsonloi village. "Now we don't even have any rice to eat."

The locals blamed the authorities for not notifying them in advance "so we could move our piles of reaped paddy plants to safety."

Maj Gen Myint Hlaing, Commander of Lashio-based Northeastern Region Command, on whose orders the dam water had been reportedly rerouted, had on 14 November tried to make amends by repaying the victims 18,000 kyat per acre. "That was less than half of what we could get at the market price," said a farmer from the nearby village of Khurhkham . "But the underprivileged like us can't really complain."

Most of the affected farmers are from the three villages in the area: Hsonloi, Khurhkham and Kawngkha. "What happened there questions the authorities's self-proclaimed regard for the people's welfare," commented a ceasefire group officer.

The incident was the outcome of a plan implemented by Rangoon's official firm, Myanmar Economic Holdings Company, better known as 'Oo Paing', to prospect and extract coal deposits in the area, they said.

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