

**Rhododendron News**  
Vol. XIII. No. V September-October 2010  
**Chin Human Rights Organization**

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## **Elections 2010**

### **Locals Forced To Join USDP**

13 September 2010

At least 60 locals from each block of Matupi Town were recruited as USDP (Union Solidarity and Development Party) members without their consent ahead of Burma's 2010 Elections.

In July 2010, Secretary of Block Peace and Development Council (BPDC) summoned 20 locals from Lungpan Block to the 'so-called' meeting held at BPDC Office where they were told without any discussions that their USDP membership cards would be issued soon after their passport photos were taken.

A total of at least 240 locals from four Blocks of Matupi Town were forced in July to join the SPDC-backed party, USDP.

Meanwhile, it has been reportedly claimed that any female Burmese teacher who could get married to a Chin man would be promoted according to the government sources.

It is estimated that there are between 100 and 150 female Burmese teachers working in Matupi Township.

As of today, at least four Burmese teachers have got married to Chin nationals in Paletwa Town where Matupi hasn't seen any inter-marriage weddings yet.

It is also reported that an increasing amount of contributions has been asked from High School students by teachers besides normal school fees.

### **Bridge Tolls Collected To Fund USDP**

15 September 2010

Members of government-backed USDP have charged a toll for using a 100-feet long bridge between Chaungkhuah village to Gangaw Town of Sagaing Division in attempts to raise funds for the party, a local told Chin Human Rights Organisation (CHRO).

Since May 2010, the USDP (Union Solidarity and Development Party) has collected the tolls ranging from 4,000 Kyats for trucks, 2,000 Kyats for medium-sized cars to 200 Kyats for motorbikes.

"The bridge toll was normally charged by Department of Construction before and now the USDP party has been collecting. The problem at the moment is if the bridge is in need of repair or renovation, who will take responsibilities – the USDP or the government or the locals?" said another local leader, who asked not to be named.

“The local people are not happy about the fact that they will have to contribute if the bridge is actually in need of restoration.”

All the charges collected at the bridge are to be used for the government-back party, the local leader added.

### **Locals Forced to Sign for USDP**

20 September 2010

Chairman of Township Peace and Development Council (TPDC) made an order in Falam Town of Chin State, requiring at least one family member of each household to sign for the government-backed party.

The move came after the local people of Falam Township showed no interests in voting for USDP (Union Solidarity and Development Party) at a gathering organised by the party's candidates early in April and May 2010.

One Falam local, who asked not to be named, said a TPDC official, two USDP candidates, and Block Chairman came to Cinnual Block and said at least one family member over 18 years of age from each household had to join USDP.

“My father denied and they threatened us by saying if we didn't sign then we would be punished. So my father finally had no choice but to sign.”

It is claimed that local people in Hakha might face the same situation soon as they are not interested in USDP despite a series of campaigns sponsored by the government, according to a local from Hakha Town.

### **USDP in Attempt to Win More Votes by Making Deals with CPP**

23 September 2010

SPDC-backed Union Solidarity and Development Council (USDP) approached Chin Progressive Party (CPP) in a bid to secure more votes from the Chin locals in their contesting areas, sources claimed.

Major General Hung Ngai, Chairman of Chin State Peace and Development Council and an election candidate for USDP in Mindat Township, wooed Chin Progressive Party candidates not to contest in Mindat areas in order for him to secure all votes, adding the Chin party would be supported financially if agreed.

One member of the CPP Committee said: “We decided not to contest in Mindate areas as we are concerned that someone else rather than a Chin national would take the position of Chief Minister of Chin State if Major General Hung Ngai does not win.”

Chairman of Chin Progressive Party, Mr. No Than Kap, was quoted as saying that only 41 out of 53 CPP candidates could get registered to contest in the elections due to financial

difficulties, which also made the party to pull out from contesting in some areas in Arakan State, Tamu Township of Sagaing Division and Magwe Division along Chin State border.

Chin political parties faced difficulties in getting all their candidates registered to contest in the elections due to and high registration fees and a short period notice by Burma's Election Commission.

### **Burma's 2010 Elections Unlikely to be Free and Fair**

27 September 2010

The upcoming Burma's General Elections, which will be held on 7 November 2010, cannot be 'free and fair' following the 'exorbitant' amount of candidate registration fees demanded and the payment time frame given by the Election Commission, Secretary of Chin National Party (CNP) said.

"If they [government] want each and every party to contest in the 2010 Elections, they should reduce the amount. Even if they can't reduce the amount, then they should extend the payment date. Now that they intentionally plan this to give problems to the parties, we cannot get all our selected candidates registered," said CNP Secretary Salai Ceu Bik Thawng.

Most of the Election Commission Committee Members are government employees and all their activities in regards to the upcoming elections are planned in line with the SPDC's strategies, according to one Chin leader, who asked not to be named for security reasons.

Salai Ceu Bik Thawng said the party's candidate registration fees - 500,000 Kyats - set by the Election Commission, which is about ten times a Chin government employee can earn in a month, is too much and we are given only two weeks to get the registration done.

It is known that only 23 out of 53 CNP candidates got registered to contest in the 2010 Elections due to financial difficulties facing the Chin party.

Another Chin party called CPP (Chin Progressive Party) also managed to get only 41 out of 53 CPP candidates registered due to financial difficulties, which made the party to pull out from contesting in some areas in Arakan State, Tamu Township of Sagaing Division and Magwe Division along Chin State border.

However, government-backed USDP (Union Solidarity and Development Party) and NUP (National Union Party) known as a military proxy, could get all their candidates registered without any financial problems as such, according to Secretary 2 of USDP in Hakha Town.

"Our party managed to make a full payment for the candidate registrations and so did the NUP. So, the party that we will have to compete with has to be NUP," claimed U Cung Bik, the USDP Secretary 2.

As of today, it is not known how many candidates the USDP got registered to contest in the SPDC-planned General Elections to be held on 7 November 2010.

## **USDP Campaigned With Apparent Privileges**

14 October 2010

Government-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) has started campaigning for the party in the village group of Lungler Army Station since late September 2010.

USDP Candidate from Thantlang Town, Pu Sui Thio and two members travelled from Ralpel to Dawn villages on 28 September 2010, speaking at the rally organised by Chairman of Dawn Village Peace and Development Council after staying at the Chairman's house.

Pu Sui Thio was quoted as saying to the villagers: "I hope everyone knows that USDP is a winning party in this election. Therefore, if we vote for USDP, we as the Chin people would be able to make our voices both in the National and State levels."

"I hope all of you know that USDP is the most powerful and important party. We can have our freedom and rights if we vote for the party. We know that we have Chin National Party (CNP) but it will never win. Therefore, we should vote for the winning party."

The Thantlang USDP Candidate told the audience: "It is sure that Dr. Hmuh Thang will become a minister. But we are not sure which department minister he will be selected for. Therefore, all of us should vote for the party that can secure more seats in the parliament."

Retired from the Cooperative Department, Pu Sui Thio and his members continued their journey to Tlangkhua village in early evening on 29 October 2010.

## **Polling Station Staffs Forced to Attend Meeting for Second Time**

16 October 2010

Four appointed polling station staff members of Dawn village in Thantlang Township were forced to attend the meeting to be held on 29 September 2010 ahead of Burma's 2010 Elections.

Two school teachers, one village group accountant and another member of Village Peace and Development Council from Dawn village attended the meeting where three or four people from other villagers were also ordered to participate.

One of the Dawn villagers who attended the meeting said: "We, four of us, went to attend the meeting, brought our own rations and stayed at our relatives' house after we were asked to make a report of our arrivals to the local authorities."

"After a short briefing on how to control and monitor the election processes with a set of restrictions and limitations in place, we were told that we would have to come back to another meeting on 12 October 2010."

Another member said they didn't get anything from the authorities for attending the meeting and they had to arrange all their accommodation, transport and foods during the meeting, adding: "I didn't receive anything good and useful from this meeting. I wish the election was finished as soon as possible."

### **Salary Unpaid to School Teachers Not Attending Election Meeting**

18 October 2010

Government school teachers, who were appointed to be in charge of Polling Stations in their villages, faced their monthly salaries unpaid due to being unable to turn up to a village election commission meeting.

Headmistress Daw Tial Sung said school teachers in Thantlang Township who would be responsible for the Polling Stations in their respective villages had to attend a monthly meeting where rules and regulations related to the Elections were taught by Chin State Election Commission Committee members in association with Chin State Peace and Development Council.

All school teachers in Tlangpi village did not get their salaries for September 2010 as Pu Lian Hei, Headmaster of Tlangpi Middle School, was absent from the September meeting, according to one of the school teachers.

Families of the school teachers admitted having problems in their daily consumption after the teachers were punished by cutting off the whole monthly salaries by Chairman of Township Peace and Development Council and Head of Township Education Department.

### **ZNC Boycotts 2010 Election**

**05 September 2010**

The Zomi National Congress (ZNC) last Wednesday announced it will refuse to participate in Burma's upcoming 2010 election, saying it is 'very undemocratic' and against the whole structure of democracy.

In a statement released on 1 September 2010, ZNC said: "We have no confidence in the regime and its election committee. They do whatever they like regardless of the laws they made."

"We have decided to boycott unanimously. In every free and fair election, every free voter has the right to cast his/her vote or not to cast his/her vote. It is his/her birthright."

The main objective of the election is to confirm the so-called constitution that will enable the Defense Services to participate in the national political leadership role of the state, the statement added.

Meanwhile, two new major Chin political parties that were recently formed have decided to contest the elections. The Chin National Party (CNP) and the Chin Progressive Party (CPP) are set to contest in all the constituencies in Chin State.

According to Article 441, the so-called constitution shall come into operation throughout the Union from the first session of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (Union Assembly).

ZNC argued there is no ratified constitution as the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw is not yet convened, and the election committee, against the Article, called for representative application forms for the respective constituencies, adding: "This is a grave violation of the so-called constitution that they made even before its ratification."

Earlier this year, the United Nationalities Alliance (UNA), which is a coalition of 12 ethnic political parties including ZNC, announced they would not contest in the military-planned 2010 election.

The Election Committee of Burma has announced the election is to be held on 7 November 2010.

The Zomi National Congress, founded in 1988, is a political party committed to restoring and establishing democratic government and federal union of Burma with Pu Chin Sian Thang, an elected MP during the 1990 General Election, as its chairman.

### **Families Forced To Move Out In Election Preparations**

29 September 2010

At least 57 families of government staffs living in state-owned houses in Chin Oo Si block of Hakha, Chin State have been ordered to move out without being provided new places for relocation.

The order issued on 13 September 2010 by Township Peace and Development Council (TPDC) came as a source of distress for the Chin families as they were given only a week to find new houses in the capital of Chin State.

"The letter ordering us to start moving out from 15th of this month came directly from TPDC. It also said that any families who could not move out would have to pay 10,000 Kyats per day after the deadline given," one of the family members told Chinland Guardian.

It is claimed that the deadline has been extended to 30 September 2010 after a series of demands from some families that could not afford or manage to find new places within the given date.

All of the families are actually government employees but the houses are to be emptied for a total of 40 newly recruited staffs, who will be working for the 2010 elections, according to one of the local TPDC staffs.

"All other government employees living in the houses, apart from those working in the TPDC office, are forced to move out," one local told Chinland Guardian.

In the meantime, house prices are said to have been rising enormously in Hakha.

The Township military authority is said to have turned a deaf ear to the 'unsettling' situation, providing no support and compensation to the families.

Only 48 out of 57 families have managed to get new houses to move into in the capital city while 9 are still in 'hot water' due to the hiking prices of renting and difficulties in finding places.

On 13 August 2010, Burma's long-standing military regime announced the date of the election, 7 November 2010, which will be held in accordance with the new constitution approved in a 'rigged' referendum held in May 2008.

### **Security Beefed up ahead of Nov 7 Polls**

26 October 2010

Security presence has been increased in rural areas of northern Chin State in what appears to be a final phase of preparation for the November 7 elections in Burma.

An official map obtained by the Chinland Guardian (See picture) details security deployment in Tonzang Township and Cikkha Sub-Township of northern Chin State, along with designated polling stations in the area.

According to the map, security personnel have been dispatched to 26 strategic locations in areas close to more than 60 polling stations across Tonzang Township, which also includes the Sub-Township of Cikha.

With a total population of about 30,000 inhabitants, Tonzang Township has two electoral constituencies. Constituency (1) includes the Town of Tonzang and peripheral villages, while Constituency (2) encompasses Cikha Sub-Town and surrounding villages numbering about 40 villages towards the Indian border.

The following table shows the number of polling stations/centers vis-à-vis security presence in the two electoral constituencies.

<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Polling Stations</b>	<b>Polling Centers</b>	<b>Security Locations</b>
<b>Constituency (1)</b>	36	4	15
<b>Constituency (2)</b>	31	2	11
<b>Total</b>	67	6	26
<b>Population Total: 30172</b>			



## **Arbitrary Measures**

### **Money Collected to Pay Debts to Government**

05 September 2010

Local people from 72 villages including Hakha Town in Hakha Township were ordered to contribute towards making a repayment for debts given by the government for local road construction.

The Burmese military government supported a total amount of 423 Lakhs for Hakha-Hmandaw road construction, asking the local people to make contributions for the rest of the fund needs.

Since the start of the road project in 2006, the local authorities had already collected money from the local people for three times.

Chairman of Road Construction Committee, Dr. That Mang said: “The government suggested that the road construction should be done on our own efforts. Failing to do so since 2004, we received a total amount of 423 Lakhs from the government in 2006.”

“The government told us to find the rest of the estimated expenses. That’s the reason why we collected contributions from local people for the fourth time.”

In the fourth round of collection, each household having their family member working abroad gave 30,000 Kyats while local businessmen and traders in the township paid one percent of their monthly income.

The local BPDC (Block Peace and Development Council) were said to make a detailed report of collections to Office of TPDC (Township Peace and Development Council) and Committee of Hakha-Hmandaw Road Construction.

In the past during the first three rounds of collection, each family contributed 15,000 Kyats each time. It was claimed that only locals with their family member working in foreign countries were targeted in the fourth time.

The Hakha-Hmandaw road construction cost a total sum of 205,710,740 Kyats.

### **Money Demanded from Locals for Hospital Equipment**

18 September 2010

Local families of Natchaung Group were asked by force to donate 2,000 Kyats per household in a bid to purchase an ultrasound machine for the hospital.

The demand conducted under the leadership of Natchaung Group Chairman started in May 2010, with over 2,500 households in six villages of the Group.

“A local from Chaungkhuah village started collecting from May this year, saying we could give as wished but with a minimum of 2,000 Kyats,” said an unnamed local.

“Practically, we were asked by force to buy a lottery ticket which cost 1000 Kyats in addition to our contributions for the medical equipment. So in total, each family had to give 3,000 Kyats.”

Mr. Sui Ling said some of the villagers could not afford to give the full amount in one go and they were told to make it by the end of June 2010, adding: “We heard that the lottery would be open at the end of June and we were not sure about the prizes. People didn’t seem to be interested and some didn’t actually even keep the ticket.”

When asked how the villagers thought of the new medical equipment, Mr. Sui Ling said people didn’t have any interest at all mainly because they knew that the hospital would charge them a fortune for using the machine, and they thought it would just be meaningless and useless.

The locals said the villagers had to go to private clinics and Kalay Myo Hospital due to lack of available doctors and medicines in Natchaung village.

Natchaung village, which is about 15 miles away from Kalay Myo of Sagaing Division, has its group, comprised of six villages with more than 2,500 households. 75 percent of the population in Natchaung Group is of Chin ethnicity.

### **Teachers Faced Salary Cut for Unsubscribed Newspapers**

12 October 2010

School teachers in Thantlang Township had their salaries cut every month by 500 Kyats for the government-run newspapers ‘The Mirror’ that they did not subscribe to.

Local teacher Daw Tial Sung said: “500 Kyats is deducted from our salary on a monthly basis since January until September 2010 by Thantlang Township Education Department for the 20-paged newspaper.”

Families of local teachers in Tlanglo Village of Thantlang Township are said to have faced difficulties after their salaries were cut every month. “There are four local teachers in our village and a total of 2,000 Kyats is cut every month,” said one of the teachers’ families.

When asked why the salaries were cut for unsubscribed newspapers, Head of Township Education Department U Myint Swe said: “The elementary school in Tlanglo is not the only school that faces salary cut. This happens everywhere in the whole township and is carried out under the direct order of Head of Chin State Education Department. This will be implemented throughout Chin State.”

## **Local Car Commandeered by Departmental Authorities**

20 October 2010

Heads of three governmental Departments in Thantlang Township appropriated a local vehicle for their transport during a trip to Tlangpi village in order to inspect the highland cultivation projects and 2010 Elections preparations.

U Myint Swe, Head of Thantlang Township Education Department; Head of Land Registry Office; and Chairman of Thantlang Township Peace and Development Council along with five others made a trip from Thantlang Town to Tlangpi village on 26 September 2010 after commandeering the car owned by Kalay Myo-based U Pa Luai.

The group brought poll boxes and election-related documents for Tlangpi and Tlanglo villages as they gave training on election-related guidelines to six people each from the nearby villages including Tlangpi, Tlanglo and Lungding.

Head of Land Registry Office was said of continuing his journey to observe the land near Zilpchi River on 27 September 201 after Tlanglo Village Peace and Development Council (VPDC) members arranged four motorcycles.

A Tlanglo local said the vehicle owner did not get anything from the authorities for using his car throughout the trip apart from the petrol fare given by VPDC, adding: "We have heard that all the expenses including reception, rental fees for motorcycles, alcohols and foods would have to be contributed by the villagers."

## **Police in Tedim Demanded Large Sum of Money for Exacted Cattle**

26 October 2010

Deputy Chief of Police Station in Tedim Township demanded a large sum of money for 14 cattle extorted from a local trader on 24 October 2010.

Deputy Chief Hla Lun, with four Police Officers, arrested the local trader, U Neih Tluang, and detained his 14 cattle at one of the villages in Tonzang Township while on his journey towards Mizoram State of India, demanding 105,000 Kyats in exchange of detained cattle.

"I was threatened that if I couldn't pay what they demanded, I would be taken to court on the ground of an attempt to illegally sell cattle abroad," said the cattle owner, U Neih Tluang.

I stayed, he continued, one day in Tonzang Town because one of my cattle died. After being informed, the Police Officer sent the local authorities to get me around 7pm on 24 October 2010, adding: "Finally, I managed to borrow money from local friends. Of course, I have to pay for the interests."

## **Forced Labor, Portering and Contribution**

### **Locals Suffered from Forced Labour, Portering and Contribution**

10 September 2010

Local people from five villages in Matupi Township were forced to carry rations and military equipment as Burma's army soldiers from Leisen village travelled in the areas.

Between 20 and 25 people from each village including Matupi, Valangte, Valangpi, Kula and Leisen took turns from January to May 2010.

Under the direct order of TPDC (Township Peace and Development Council) Secretary U Wa Hel, the local villagers also had to give foods such as chicken, pumpkins, sorrel leaves, and charcoal for cooking as well as other necessary rations whenever the soldiers were on patrol in the region.

“After Col San Aung, Tactical Operations Command No. 2 Commander came, TPDC authorities forced local people almost every day to do portering, forced labour, military camp construction, and digging trenches,” said a Matupi local.

The local people were ordered to work on road construction between Matupi Town and military camp in Leisen village during summer from 2003 till 2009, according to the local, who added: “We never get anything from the authorities. Yet, we have to bring our own foods and tools.”

Meanwhile, one family member from Lungpan block of Matupi Town worked in Lemru tea plantation under the direct order of TPDC Secretary U Wa Hel.

Another local said the local people suffered much more before but now it had been only the fourth time we were forced to work since Col San Aung left.

### **Locals Faced Forced-Portering as Voters' List Collected**

10 October 2010

Villagers in Thantlang Township were ordered to carry personal stuffs and belongings by Chief of Thantlang Police Station and his men during their trip in the areas to collect voters' lists.

The Chief and four policemen were said to have demanded by force at least two locals from one of five villages including Ralpel, Dawn, Lungding, Fungkah and Zangtlang to take turns in carrying their travel stuffs since 7 October 2010.

“In some villages, the police officers ordered Chairman of Village Peace and Development Council to arrange one horse for the Chief to ride on during the trip and to get rations for them during their stays in the village,” said one of the locals.

## **Students Forced to Contribute for General Fees**

24 October 2010

All students from Primary to High Schools in Thantlang Township were ordered to make a contribution for what is called 'miscellaneous fees' under the direct instruction of Head of Township Education Department, one of the school headmistresses said.

U Myint Swe, Head of Township Education Department, said according to the Meeting No. 7/2010 of Education Department officials that each Primary School student of Tlanglo village would contribute 250 Kyats, Middle School student 350 Kyats, and High School student 400 Kyats from the beginning of August 2010.

All the contributions should, U Myint Swe added, be made available to Thantlang Township Education Office by 15 September 2010.

## **Freedom of Religion**

### **Protest Against Cross Destruction In Chin State**

08 September 2010

Chin people in New Delhi, India held a public rally yesterday, protesting against the recent destruction of Christian Cross by Burma's military authorities in Mindat Township of Southern Chin State, Burma.

The demonstration, organised by New Delhi-based Chin Churches and Christian Fellowship, began with an opening prayer by Pastor W. Phong of Burmese Christian Assembly, and short speeches by Rev. Vungh Hau Thang and Rev. Thawng Khan Lian.

Rev. Vungh Hau Thang told the rally: "Although the state's law has given religious freedom to all citizens in Burma, the military junta is still persecuting the Chin Christians through various forms of repressive measures. They have destroyed our Christian crosses, a symbol of our faith. This destruction in Chin State clearly shows the military's ruthless attempts in dismantling our Christian faith, and eliminating the Christian Chins by means of systematic persecution."

The rally, attended by about 120 people including women and children, marched towards downtown New Delhi at Janta Manta, held placards and posters with some reading "The cross is the most sacred symbol of Christianity on which the Saviour Jesus Christ sacrificed His life for the sinners' as they shouted slogans.

Rev. Thawng Khan Lian also encouraged the mass by saying that: "We are persecuted, oppressed, and have faced a series of problems from the SPDC. But we will never waive our faith in Christianity. Instead, these challenges make us stronger and more united in our faith."

The Chin Human Rights Organisation (CHRO) also strongly condemned the destruction of the 23-foot high concrete Christian cross in Mindat, saying: "The SPDC claims to respect religious freedom for all faiths in Burma and yet they are actively pursuing a policy to persecute religious minorities in contravention of their own constitution and other international human rights standards, which they claim to observe."

In a statement released on 24 August 2010, CHRO said at least nine crosses have been destroyed or dismantled on the orders of the local authorities in all of Chin State's nine major Townships since 1994.

The Chin Christians from different denominations and fellowships based in New Delhi accused the SPDC of ignoring its own laws guaranteeing religious freedom, and called for an end to destroying the crosses and persecuting Christians in Chin State, Burma.

The cross was forcibly destroyed by direct order of the authorities, including the District and Township level Peace and Development Council, the District Religious Affairs Department, and a Mindat abbot from the Hill Region Buddhist Mission, according to CHRO's report.

Originally built with wood in a 20-acre 'Prayer Garden', the Christian cross, which was later replaced with a concrete structure in 2008 with official permission from the local authorities, was destroyed on 24 July 2010.

### **Christian Pastor Beaten Up In Arakan's Minpya Township**

05 October 2010

Chin Christian Pastor Tun Hlaing was beaten up by a team of local authority in Chaungtaw village of Arakan State while he was conducting a worship service at Ho-Chin Baptist Church on 19 September 2010.

The local authority led by U Maung Kyaw Aung with three other members came directly to the church while the Chin pastor, 37, was leading a Sunday worship service.

"U Maung Kyaw Aung called Pastor Tun Hlaing out of the church building and insulted while the church members were also being threatened and shouted at aggressively by the local authorities," said one local witness.

"The Chin pastor was punched on his chest and face, kicked on his legs and sides, and beaten with bamboo sticks on his head and back."

Pastor Tun Hlaing got bruises on his face and suffered from injuries on his body after the Ho-Chin church members came out from the church building to rescue him from the hands of the authority.

One church member said: "The children were crying and women were screaming. They were so scared of what had happened to them."

"The Sunday Worship Service was forced to break up as the pastor was badly injured and no longer able to continue his preaching. The believers felt very sorry for the persecution, harassment and disturbance made by U Maung Kyaw Aung and his three followers," said another local witness.

Until today, the church as well as the villagers hasn't known the reasons why the incident took place. It is believed that the incident was well-planned by the local authority.

Pastor Tun Hlaing, originally from Southern Chin State and working as a Baptist missionary in Arakan State, is said to have no history of personal misunderstanding with the local authority before.

The Chin pastor is known to have filed the case to Religious Affairs District Court in Sittway, the capital city of Rakhine State. After having appeared on court, Pastor Tun Hlaing is waiting for the decisions from the judge.

Established in 2008, the Ho-Chin Baptist Church has now got about 30 household believers in Chaungtaw village, about 23 miles away from Minpya town of Arakan State in Burma.

By Jeremy Hoipang

## **Child Soldier Conscription**

### **Children Conscripted by Burma Army**

08 September 2010

Chin 'under-aged' children were forcibly recruited to join the military training by Burma Army Infantry Battalion No. 304 stationed in Belkhong village of Matupi Township, one of the children conscripts disclosed.

In late February 2007, Ram Sang Thang, 16; Aung Thang, 17, and Pa Sawm of Bangkai village were arrested on their journey to Leisen village, and forcibly taken to the military camp in Leisen village.

After being asked whether to join the army or to get imprisoned and being left with no other choices, the innocent children were taken by force to the military training camp in Monywa.

"After a while, Pa Sawm managed to escape from the training camp and later, one of my friends and I did too. Since then, I dared not go back to my village, instead fled to Mizoram," said one of the children, now living in Mizoram State of India.

Likewise in the meantime, Hai Tun from Lungpan block of Matupi Town and La Luh from Valangte village were arrested and faced forcible conscriptions by the military authorities.

“Six of us were from Leisen village in the training camp. I didn’t know which training camp La Luh and the other two from Valangte village were taken to. But later on, I heard that La Luh also got to Mizoram but we haven’t met yet until today.”

Ram Sang Thang was known to have died in Monywa military camp and there was no one to pick up his dead body for funeral service as his mother was then working in Mizoram, India and his grandmother, who he was living with before being taken away, was too old to travel, according to one of the children.

## **Humanitarian and Food Crisis in Chinland**

### **Food Crisis Escalates In Southern Chin State**

02 September 2010

Mautam-related food crisis has been escalating in three townships of Southern Chin State, seriously affecting the villagers, with some being dependent only on jungle foods such as yams and eddoes now, according to a local committee newly set up by concerned volunteers.

In a report released on 25 August 2010, the committee said 14,384 households of 407 villages, with 79,830 people in Mindat, Kanpetlet and Paletwa Townships of Southern Chin State have been affected, with a total of 25,631 acres of cultivated land having been destroyed, and 688,057 tins of rice, corn and millets lost.

"People have lost their economic dependency on the land. In many cases, they are entirely dependent on the jungle for food, digging for yam or eating leaves and roots. They are unable to access medical treatment. Due to malnutrition, many people have been suffering from malaria, pneumonia, dysentery and famine related diseases," the report said.

Since last year, the three townships in bamboo-covered jungle of Southern Chin State have been facing rat infestation, which have caused vast damage to their crops, food storages, and cultivations.

Due to the devastating conditions caused by a plague of rats, children have to drop out of schools to help parents find foods in the jungle, and some villagers are forced to leave their own places while others are suffering from malnutrition and mautam-related diseases, according to the report.

### **Hundreds of Chin Families among Cyclone Giri-hit Victims**

28 October 2010

At least 2,000 Chin families are among those seriously affected victims in worst-hit areas of Burma's Arakan State including Kyaukphyu, Myebon, Sittway, Pauktaw, Myanaung, Ann and Ponnagyun towns after Cyclone Giri hit the western coast last Friday on 22 October 2010.



One Christian pastor from Mro-Khami Chin tribe based in Myebon Town said: "The town as well as the nearby villages are in the dark, chaotic and ruined. Almost all the houses are destroyed either completely or partially, with no electricity, no running water, no food and no communication."

At least 5 church buildings from Kyaukphyu, Myebon and Sittway towns are completely wrecked, according to a Mizo Christian pastor who has been serving as an EFCM (Evangelical Free Church of Myanmar) missionary in Rakhine State for more than ten years.

It is estimated that about 300,000 Chin people live scattering across Arakan State.

Most of the Cyclone-hit areas of Kyaukphyu, Myebon and Sittway towns are mainly populated by Chin people of different sub-tribes including Asho, Sungtu, Laitu, Kawngtu, Hmyo and Mro-Khami.

Relief workers said that the death toll, which has topped 100, is still likely to be increasing with many more missing. More than 80 bodies have been found in Myebon Town alone where hundreds of buildings were flattened.

To date, a total of 71 villages are reported to have been affected, to various degrees, with an estimated 177,000 people affected, of which an estimated 10,000 are considered severely affected, according to the humanitarian community in Burma.

The Christian pastors based in the Cyclone-affected areas of Arakan State ask Chin churches and Christian friends around the world to pray for the Cyclone-hit victims who are in dire need of emergency help, foods and shelters.

The United States Government on Tuesday pledged a 100,000 dollar aid package toward assisting victims of Cyclone Giri in Arakan State.

### **Villages Severely Affected by Floods in Chin State**

20 October 2010

A sharp rise in rainfalls across Chin State in recent days has brought damages to paddy fields, flooding houses in Southern part and causing landslides that affect communication and transport.

In Aibur village of Thangtlang Township, more than 45 percent of paddy fields belonging to about 70 families has been flooded and all crops completely destroyed, with an estimated total acre of 44.20.

The amount of paddy rice destroyed by the flood in Aibur village alone is estimated to be 7145 tins (1 tin is equivalent to 16kg of cleaned rice).

Earlier this month in Paletwa, at least 300 people of about 90 households were left homeless after their houses were inundated or destroyed after a flood from the Kaladan River in Southern Chin State following an unusual downpour.

One villager was reportedly drowned in Paletwa Township, according to Khonumthung News. Pu Huat Kam, of Congthia village, died as he was suddenly swept away by flash floods while on his way home from his farm.

Last Saturday, Pu Tial Awi, of Congthia village, lost his life during an attempt to swim across the Bawinu river while returning home from a trip to Mizoram, India with his two friends. His body has not been recovered until today.

"Because of heavy rains for several days, roads have been severely affected and transport communication becomes very difficult for people, especially villagers, to travel. At the same, rice price has been going up recently and the situation here is getting worse," a community leader in Thantlang told Chinland Guardian.

Chin people from townships including Paletwa, Kanpetlet, Mindat and Matupi are currently facing bamboo-and-rat-related food crisis while others in the Northern parts of Chin State have just recovered from the devastating phenomenon, locally called Mautam.

There has been growing concern among Chin subsistence farmers whose crops have been destroyed by the floods and bad weather this year just before the harvest.

### **One Dies, Hundreds Homeless as Heavy Rains Hit Chin State**

11 October 2010

A week-long heavy downpour across Chin State has triggered flash floods and landslides, causing major road blockades, crop destructions, and property damage, with at least one man reported killed.

Last week, Pu Huat Kam from Congthia village of Thantlang Township was killed by a flash flood while he was coming home from his farm.

In Paletwa, at least 300 people of about 90 households are left 'homeless' after their houses were mud-flooded or destroyed by a landslide near the Kaladan River in Southern Chin State.

"Due to heavy rains that has started on 8 October, the water level is rising so high that we cannot travel. It has been more than four days that the ferry boat between Kyautdaw and Paletwa has been stalled. Many people, especially living along the Kaladan River, have been in so much trouble," said one local Christian pastor from Paletwa town.

Average annual rainfall in Chin State is 80-100 inches. The southern part of Chin State gets more rain due to the storms that come from the Bay of Bengal.

"The amount of rainfall is so much higher than the average. It is impossible for us to travel as the roads are badly damaged, and a lot of villagers have faced problems tending their farms and harvesting their crops. The weather situation has been getting worse each year," one of the community leaders in Thantlang told Chinland Guardian.

Several villages in Thantlang Township have reported having been unable to harvest their crops due to heavy rains that have brought big damage to their crops and fruits.

Meanwhile, other areas across Burma have been hit by heavy rains and floods that reportedly claim about a dozen lives with thousands more left homeless and about 2,000 being hospitalized in the hardest hit part of Mandalay Division.

## **Situations of Refugees**

### **Refugee Boy Reunites With Family After Two-Year Detention**

03 September 2010

Chin refugee boy, Kap Cung Lian, on Wednesday was reunited with his family in the US after having spent nearly two years in a Thai detention camp.

His father, Pu Zai Awi, told Chinland Guardian: "God has answered our prayers and we don't know how to express our thanks and happiness. He [Kap Cung Lian] arrived here with us safely and soundly. He has grown up much bigger and taller over the past two years. We shed happy tears when we met him at the airport."

"Frankly speaking, we, the family, could not do anything in this matter. Therefore, we would like to say our heartfelt thanks to Chin churches, communities and individuals alike, as well as other organisations including the Raks Thai Foundation for their generous help and support in dealing with our son's cases over the past two years," added the 49-year-old father.

In late 2008, Kap Cung Lian, then merely 9 years old, was arrested with five other Chin children under 10 in Thailand by the Thai Police while they were on their way to Malaysia to join their parents after being smuggled across the Thai-Burma border by the agents.

Four siblings, Thiang Bik, 5, Philip, 7, Ngun Za Thin, 9, and Roland, 11 had a family reunion with their parents in Stavanger, Norway on 10 June 2010 after being detained with Kap Cung Lian and San Duh Sang, 15, who still remains in Thai detention.

Kenneth Biak Cin, Chairman of Chin Community in Bangkok, told Chinland Guardian: "We are grateful to learn that our children, apart from San Duh Sang, are now safely reunited with their families and our gratitude goes to all of those who lent a helping hand in handling the situation in Thailand and especially to the Raks Thai Foundation for their selfless commitment and services provided until today."

"This tragic experience should serve as a good lesson for all of us not to put ourselves at risk by taking the easy routes, but to find a safer way even if that process takes a longer time. We hope that San Duh Sang will also be released and reunited with his family soon."

The Chin refugee family arrived in the US under the UNHCR Resettlement Programme from Malaysia on 25 February 2010 while their youngest son, Kap Cung Lian, then 9, was still detained in a police lock-up in Thailand.

### **Gangs Attacked Refugees in Foiled Robbery Attempts in Malaysia**

06 October 2010

A Chin refugee family was last Thursday threatened with knife in attempted robbery in their apartment by one of the Indian-Malaysian gang members around 10pm at night in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The Chin family were saved from being robbed of their properties and possible attacks after some youths of Hriphi Fellowship on their way to visit the family caught the gangster red-handed in Jalan Ipoh, Kualam Ari of Kuala Lumpur.

"Soon after, many believed to be members of the gang appeared from nowhere to the scene by cars and motorbikes, immediately starting to beat the youths to save their friend. We [the Hriphi youths] backed off and ran into the fellowship centre. The gang members couldn't hurt us as we locked our door. They destroyed all our window glasses and disappeared," said Mr. Tha Peng, one of the Hriphi youths.

It is claimed that a suspected Chinese friend made a call and informed other gang members of the incident.

Our attempts to stop the gang members failed as many more were coming out, continued Mr. Tha Peng, adding: "Later, the CID police arrived and took myself and Van Uk Nawl, who was badly injured, to Kuala Lumpur General Hospital where he was x-rayed twice."

CRC (Chin Refugee Committee) made an immediate report on the incident to the UNHCR Protection Unit in Malaysia.

In the meantime, another incident was reported where a Chinese man known to be a drug-addict is roaming around in the area with knife, threatening refugee children not to go out but to stay at school.

In Malaysia, a series of robbery and extortions has been reported among Chin refugees, including children who were demanded any valuable belongings such as money and mobile phones.

"This is not the first time some incidents like this happened. Many individuals have been attacked by the motorbike-riding gang members with knife while many others have suffered from various forms of threats, intimidations and extortions while on their way home from work. Some have been slapped, punched and also badly hit with wooden sticks for no reasons," said one of the Chin community leaders in Malaysia.