



Rhododendron News

Bimonthly Publication since 1998



Chin Human Rights Organization

ချင်းလူ့အခွင့်အရေးအဖွဲ့

CHRO.CA

Highlights:

- UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Burma Tomas Quintana made unannounced visit to Malaysia meeting with Chin refugees ...
- CHRO held series of meeting with PHR CEO, diplomats, officials from ILO and OHCHR in Geneva ...
- Chins forced to celebrate 'Chin State Day' on their national day ...



Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO)

2-Montavista Avenue,
Nepean, K2J 2L3,
Canada

Ph: 1-613-843-9484
Email: info@chro.ca
Web: www.chro.ca

Volume XIV, Issue I

January-February 2011

Table of Contents

Arbitrary Taxation & Extortion

Page 2-3

- ✦ Students Ordered to Buy Calendar and Pay General Fees
- ✦ Money Extorted as Taxes for Cattle from Local Traders
- ✦ Police Extorted Money from Local Cattle Traders
- ✦ Money Forcibly Demanded for Fire Precaution and Electric Meter Box
- ✦ Authorities Extorted Money from Local Traders

Forced Labor

Page 4-6

- ✦ Chin People Subjected to "Crimes against Humanity" by Burma Army
- ✦ Locals Forced to Search for Two Soldier Deserters
- ✦ Villagers Forced to Pay Staggering Amount to Avoid Relocation
- ✦ Villagers Forced to Contribute Thatch and Bamboo for Military Camp Renovation

Freedom of Religion

Page 6-7

- ✦ Church Ordered to Stop Construction, Worship Service and School by Authorities
- ✦ Christian Religious Building Ordered to Stop Construction

Other Human Rights Violations

Page 7-8

- ✦ Children Conscripted by Burma Army
- ✦ Govt. Employees in Trouble Following Order by Chin State Chief Minister
- ✦ USDP Forced Members to Give Names

Food Crisis and Humanitarian Situation in Chinland

Page 9-11

- ✦ Food Crisis Tops Chin Party's Immediate Agenda
- ✦ NLD's Contributions to Chin Food Crisis Welcomed Amid Blockade by Authorities
- ✦ Government Ignored Food Crisis in Thantlang Township

Event and Protests

Page 11-13

- ✦ University Students Protest Against Rising Bus Fares in Kalay
- ✦ Chin Photo Exhibition on Display at Thai University
- ✦ Celebration of 'Chin National Day' Banned in Chin State

Situation of Refugees

Page 13-15

- ✦ Chin Refugees in Nu Po Camp Fear Attacks from Burma Army
- ✦ Refugees Face Daylight Extortions by Police in Malaysia
- ✦ Chin Refugees Get Surprise Visit from UN Rights Expert

Chin National Day

Page 16-19

- ✦ Leaders of Chin National Day Celebration Detained in Tedim
- ✦ Frustration against Forced Celebration of 'Chin State Day'
- ✦ Democracy and Equality: the True Spirit of Chin National Day

Poem & Cartoon

Page 20

- ✦ The Day That Makes Chin Proud
- ✦ Cartoons by Vapual and Kocik

Arbitrary Taxation and Extortion

Students Ordered to Buy Calendar and Pay General Fees

11 January 2011: Primary and middle school students in Zawngte village tract of Falam Township were forced to buy calendars published by Township Education Department and to pay general fees last month, according to the families.

The order issued by U Dar Pum, Head of Falam Township Education Department, required each student of middle school from Zawngte village, and of primary school from Hnathial and Haimual to buy one calendar and to contribute between 600 and 1,000 Kyats as collected by school teachers on 15-16 December 2010.

One of the headmasters was quoted as saying that the money was collected not on their initiative but in accordance with the order given by the higher authorities. #

Money Extorted as Taxes for Cattle from Local Traders

13 January 2011: Captain Thein Soe of Burma Army Light Infantry Battalion No. 50 stationed in Sopum village of Thantlang Township stopped and forcibly demanded five Lakhs from local traders on 3 December 2010, saying it was a tax collection for their cattle.

One of the cattle owners said they were stopped near the gate about eight miles away from Sopum village and forced to give money as taxes for 59 cattle bought from Gangaw Township in Magwe Division.

"We asked for a letter describing taxes for the cattle had been paid but Captain Thein Soe gave us a sheet of paper with no official stamp saying that some money was already collected from these traders with no specific details about it," added the cattle owner.

Normally, the local traders on their way to Mizoram State of India come across unofficial checkpoints at

least two or three times, where Burma army soldiers on patrol forcibly demand some amount of money.

"We were lucky," the cattle owner continued, "that we got away with 5 Lakhs up to the border because if we were stopped by another group of soldiers on the way then the letter with no details and official stamp given by Captain Thein Soe would not prevent us from another extortion." #

Police Extorted Money from Local Cattle Traders

23 January 2011: Police Officer U Ting Kual from Falam Police Station keeping guard of Tlangzar Electric Power Station and his three colleagues forcibly demanded money from local traders during his trip for selling cattle to Mizoram State, India on 28 December 2010.

"The policemen, without uniforms, were patrolling around the Tlangzar Electric Power Station carrying a rifle. They extorted money from local traders for cattle and pigs to be traded into India but never provide a receipt or a voucher"

One of the local traders identified as Pu Vung Bawi Thawng from Hmandaw village in Sagaing Division said they were stopped near Tlangzar village of Falam Township and demanded 7 Lakhs for their 12 cattle by a group of four policemen led by U Ting Kual from Tiphul village in Hakha Township.

"The policemen, without uniforms, were patrolling around the Tlangzar Electric Power Station carrying a rifle. They extorted money from local traders for cattle and pigs to be traded into India but never provide a receipt or a voucher," complained one of the cattle owners.

On 29 December 2010, there was another incident where U Ting Kual forcibly demanded 2 Lakhs from other local traders for their 32 cattle. He was quoted as saying that he had got nothing to do with the money exacted if the local traders experienced another extortion from Burma Army during their trip to India. #



Local traders using jeep on their way to Mizoram, India (Photo: CHRO 2010)

Money Forcibly Demanded for Fire Precaution and Electric Meter Box

09 February 2011: Families in four blocks of Falam Town were forced to pay 1,500 Kyats for fire precaution schemes and 1,000 Kyats for electric meter boxes in January by the local military authorities.

Each family had no choice but to pay the amount under the order of Chairman of Falam Peace and Development Council U Khin Maung Win, according to a local resident in Falam Town of Chin State.

"We have never come across this kind of forcible demanding before. I have never heard of the government helping or providing assistance to the locals, neighbors and relatives whose houses were burnt down in our town. Even if we pay 1,500 Kyats for the so-called fire precaution schemes, I don't believe the government will help."

In January 2011, each family that used electricity was ordered to make a monthly payment of 1,000 Kyats by the local authorities.

"The amount they demanded was not that much even though we sometimes had electricity for only ten days in a month. It was really unfair but we had to pay as we were worried that our meter box would be taken away if we didn't. It's a big problem for us," the local resident told Chin Human Rights Organization.

The order was imposed on over 2,000 families of about 1,500 households in four blocks of Falam Town including Cinmual, Farhawk, Balai and Tlanglo.#



Chin family in Tonzang Township (Photo: CHRO)

Authorities Extorted Money from Local Traders

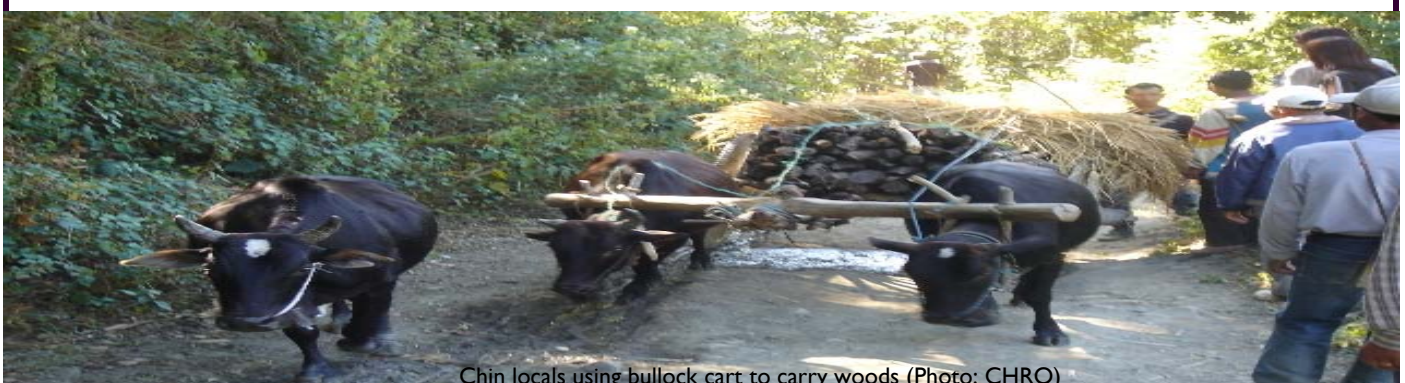
21 February 2011: Burma Army soldiers from Light Infantry Battalion No. 50 stationed in Lungler village of Thantlang Township and Light Infantry Battalion No. 268 stationed in Tibual village of Falam Township forcibly extorted a total of 5 Lakhs for 30 cows belonging to the local traders in the first week of this month.

The local traders were stopped twice and demanded 10,000 Kyats each for their cattle during their journey towards Mizoram State of India.

"The soldiers demanded money by force twice. The first time happened near Lungler village and we paid them 3 Lakhs after a long negotiation as they asked for more than we could afford. And we were stopped near Tibual village another time and we paid them 2 Lakhs," said one of the traders.

Local traders from Chin State, Burma bought cows with prices ranging from 1.5 to 3 Lakhs and sold them to Mizoram State in Indian currency between 15000 and 20000 Rupees.#

"The authorities said that we were allowed to use 'Chin National Day' before. We were shocked to hear when we were informed in the morning of 20 February that only a banner of 'Chin State Day' was allowed to put up. There was no



Chin locals using bullock cart to carry woods (Photo: CHRO)

Forced Labor

UPR (Universal Periodic Review) session on
Burma in Geneva, Switzerland (Photo: CHRO)



Chin People Subjected to "Crimes against Humanity" by Burma Army

19 January 2011: A new report by US-based Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) reveals new evidence of crimes against humanity inflicted on the Chin by the Burma army and local authorities.

The report titled *Life Under the Junta: Evidence of Crimes Against Humanity in Burma's Chin State* documented findings from the first population-based survey on human rights violations in all nine townships of Chin State. Crimes against humanity are the most serious forms of human rights violations directed against civilian populations, as defined by the 2002 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

Frank Donaghue, CEO of Physicians for Human Rights, said: "It is well known around the world that the people of Burma, especially ethnic nationalities like the people of Chin State, suffer under the junta, but until now the international community has not had any quantitative data from Western Burma to support this claim."

The report by PHR - in collaboration with the Center for Public Health and Human Rights at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health - revealed widespread accounts of human rights violations and abuses including forced labour, religious persecution, beatings, killing, disappearances, torture, rape and pillaging. Almost 92% of households surveyed had reported at least one episode of forced labour - such as portering of military supplies or building roads - in the 12 month period prior to the interviews in early 2010.

Salai Za Uk Ling, Program Director at the Chin Human Rights Organisation (CHRO) said: "These new findings corroborate CHRO's own documentation of human rights violations over the past fifteen years in Chin State. They shed further light on the widespread

and systematic nature of the abuses inflicted on the Chin people by the authorities in Burma, with complete impunity."

PHR's report is based on a survey conducted in 2010 among 621 randomly selected households across Chin State. More than 98 percent of the abuses have been committed by government authorities, primarily soldiers, with at least eight of the violations surveyed falling within the purview of the International Criminal Court (ICC), according to the 65-page report.

Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) is an independent, non-profit organization that uses medical and scientific expertise to investigate human rights violations and advocate for justice, accountability, and the health and dignity of all people.

Chin advocacy at the United Nations

Together with the CEO of PHR and two of the report authors, CHRO has held a series of high level meetings with diplomats from more than a dozen countries, the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to call for international action on the human rights situation in Chin State.

CHRO representatives are also part of a delegation of Burmese exiles currently in Geneva to call on the international community to ask tough questions of Burma's ruling regime on its human rights record during the first Universal Periodic Review of Burma under the United Nations Human Rights Council.

"A UN-led impartial, independent and thorough investigation into these crimes is essential to end the culture of impunity in Burma. It will also deter further human rights violations. Ultimately, such an investigation is not just about accountability, it's about improving the lives of people across Burma," continued CHRO's Program Director.#



Salai Za Uk Ling (second from left) as a member of Burma Forum-UPR representatives at UN session in Geneva (Photo: CHRO)

Locals Forced to Search for Two Soldier Deserters

21 January 2011: Sergeant Aung Ngwe of Burma Army Light Infantry Battalion No. 266 stationed in Fartlang village of Tedim Township issued an order, forcing locals to search for two young soldiers who left the military training camp mid this month.

Locals from Fartlang village were ordered to keep guard of all the surrounding roads leading to Ngur village of Mizoram State, with 10 people on the Fartlang-Ngur route, 4 on the Ngente-Ngur route, and another 4 on the Fartlang-Zote route the whole night on 15 and the whole day on 16 January 2011.

Maung Pyi Sung Oo, 18, of ID No. Tah: 436979 and Maung Khup Hlei Mang, 19, both from Burma Army Light Infantry Battalion No. 266, ran away from the military camp around 7pm on 15 January 2011.

In addition, Chairman of Fartlang Village Peace and Development Council and motorbike owner Pu Liana went to Champhai and Ngur villages in Mizoram State on 16 January 2011 as ordered by Sergeant Aung Ngwe in search of the two deserters.

"We were ordered to keep guard of the roads and to travel to Mizoram State but we didn't get anything from the authorities, even for the motorbike petrol used for a trip to Mizoram State. Everything was carried out on our own expenses," revealed one of the locals.#



Locals including women and children forced to work on road constructions between Matupi and Paletwa Townships (Photo: CHRO 2011)

Villagers Forced to Pay Staggering Amount to Avoid Relocation

14 February 2011: Captain Aung Win Htaik of Light Infantry Battalion No. 266 stationed in Darkhai village of Tonzang Township issued an order on 20 January 2011, forcing Bulfek villagers to relocate to Fartlang village following an incident where two soldiers based in Fartlang left the battalion for Mizoram, India on 15 January 2011.

However, the authorities called off the relocation order after the locals of the new Fartlang village, Bulfek, managed to collectively pay a whopping amount of 250,000 Kyats, according to a local member of Village Peace and Development Council (VPDC).

The two deserters were among a group of five soldiers from Burma Army Light Infantry Battalion No. 266 based in Fartlang village under the command of Sergeant Aung Ngwe.

"Sergeant Aung Ngwe and his eight men immediately arrived in Fartlang village and forced us to go twice to Ngur and Champhai villages of Mizoram State to look for the two soldiers. On the day that the two soldiers ran away, we were ordered to keep guard of the village access in search of them," said the local VPDC member.

"We reported," he continued, "to Captain Aung Win Htaik that we didn't see the two soldiers and he told us straight away to move back to Fartlang village after accusing us of not obtaining an official permission of settling in Bulfek village."

"Captain Aung Win Htaik and his men left the village on 22 January 2011 after we gave them a total amount of 250,000 Kyats contributed by each family in the village."#

Villagers Forced to Contribute Thatch and Bamboo for Military Camp Renovation

21 February 2011: Column Commander Major Min Naing of Light Infantry Battalion No. 50 stationed in Gangaw Town of Magwe Division ordered the locals of Lungler village in Thantlang Township to make contributions for the renovation of the military camp based in the village.

The Section Commander based in Lungler village issued an order demanding a total of 16 villages to provide 7 bundles of thatch and 15 pieces of bamboo each for the military camp renovation by 23 February 2011, and said those villages that were unable to meet the demands would be fined 50,000 Kyats each.

Villages facing the demand included Tlangpi, Tlanglo,

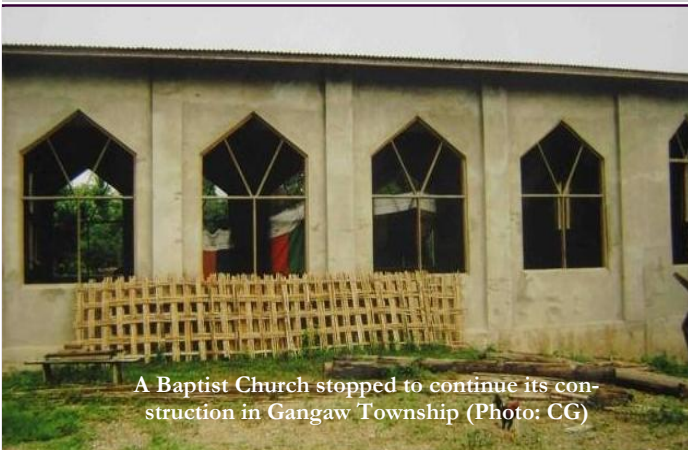


Chin women forced to work on road construction (Photo: CHRO)

02 03 2010 11:50

Farawn, Vanzang, Sopum, Lungding, Sihhmuh, Zangtlang, Thangzang, Fungkah, Dawn, Ralpel, Bungkhua, Lungler, Saikah and Ruabuk in Thantlang Township of northern Chin State.#

Freedom of Religion



A Baptist Church stopped to continue its construction in Gangaw Township (Photo: CG)

Church Ordered to Stop Construction, Worship Service and School by Authorities

21 January 2011: The local authorities ordered a Chin Baptist Church in a village of Gangaw Township to stop continuing its construction, holding worship services and running nursery school on 12 November 2010.

The Office of Gangaw Religious Affairs, accusing the church leaders of obtaining no permissions from relevant government departments, forced them to sign a document promising that the construction, worship services and nursery school would be ended immediately.

It was reported that the shocking move came just two days after Officer of Gangaw Township Religious Affairs, U Hla Tun and top officials from Forest and

Telecommunication Departments visited the church and took some photos on 9 November 2010.

"Before the November 7 Election, the village headman U Tan Chaung and his assistant Aung Zaw Myint told the church pastor to vote for the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP). But the result showed that the National Unity Party (NUP) won and the local authorities were not happy," one of the church committee members told Chinland Guardian.

U Tan Chaung reported to the Gangaw authorities about the election result of the village, according to the church committee member.

It was also reported that the Baptist Church had previously faced religious restrictions in the village including being ordered to take the church signboard down and to pull out the Christian tombstones in the cemetery.

There are 40 children from both Christian and Buddhist backgrounds in the nursery school run by the church, whose building foundation was laid on 13 November 2008.

Only 23 out of 400 households are Christians in the village, with an estimated total population of 1,400. With the majority being Buddhist, the village has only 105 Christians although it was founded and first settled by the Zokhua people of Chin State.#



Christian memorial hall stands unfinished after its construction was ordered to stop (Photo: CHRO)



Protest in India against religious persecution in Chin State, Burma (Photo: CHRO)

Christian Religious Building Ordered to Stop Construction

13 February 2011: Local authorities in southern Chin State's Matupi Town have ordered to stop the construction of a memorial hall being built in honor of a local Christian leader, the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) has reported.

The Christian Reformed Church (CRC) obtained permission to construct a two-storied memorial hall in honor of the wife of Rev. Chan Hleng, the Church's founder, on April 6, 1999.

However, local authorities have now ordered the construction to discontinue on the basis that the hall might be used as a place of worship. According to one senior member of the Church, the order was issued by

Matupi Township Administrative Chief U Chan Nyein Aung.

Non-Buddhist religious groups, including Christians have not been given permission to construct new churches or renovate existing churches in Burma since the 1990s.

Last month, the delegation representing Burma's military junta at the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva claimed that religious minority groups enjoy freedoms, including the right to freely construct and renovate church and other religious buildings.

On 24 July 2010, the regime ordered the destruction of a 23-foot tall Christian cross in Mindat, saying that its construction was illegal, although local Christians said they obtained official permission. #

Other Human Rights Violation

Burma Army Conscripted Local from Lamtuk Village

26 January 2011: Maung Khup Hlei Mang, 19, was stopped and taken away while strolling in his village, Lamtuk, by Lance Corporal Win Zaw and his three men from Burma Army Light Infantry Battalion No. 266 stationed in Hakha Town of Chin State in the last week of December 2010.

The 19-year-old only son of Pu Tin Cung and Pi Kai Mang said he was beaten up and forced to get on the motorbike after refusing their invitation to visit Hakha

by the three soldiers. With his hands tied up with nylon strings, he was kept for three days in the military camp in Hakha.

"My mother came while I was snatched by the soldiers. They didn't listen to her although she made several requests to release his son. Then, I was taken to Farlang village after passing by villages including Zimpi, Darkhai, and Bukphir in Tedim Township" said Khup Hlei Mang who managed to escape from the military training camp.

After running away from the military camp, Khup Hlei Mang is now in Mizoram State, India. #

Govt. Employees in Trouble Following Order by Chin State Chief Minister

17 February 2011: One government employee from the Fire Brigade died and two were injured, with a driver sentenced to one-year imprisonment with hard labour, following a car accident while attempting to carry out tasks as ordered by Chief Minister U Hung Ngai.

The Chief Minister was said to have ordered three government employees from the local Fire Brigade to fix the water problems in the guesthouse where Northwestern Regional Commander and other officials were set to stay during their visit to Chin State to "transfer power" on 4 February 2011.

"They [employees] informed U Hung Ngai of the car problems. But he insisted that they went to the guesthouse and fix the problems. On their way, the car brake failed and that was the reason why the accident occurred," a local witness told Chin Human Rights Organization.

Families of the employees were said to have accused Chief Minister U Hung Ngai of turning his back and abandoning his people instead of providing assistance although they worked for the governmental departments.

"As long as we are the government employees, we just have to follow the orders. But when problems come, our bosses are nowhere around but disappear. Now our husbands are in trouble and we don't have any help from the government," said one of the wives of

the victims.

The families also expressed that there have been negative impacts on the children and on their daily lives for survival.

Retired as a Tactical commander and Chairman of Chin State Peace and Development Council, Major General Hung Ngai was appointed Chief Minister of Chin State after being elected from Mindat Township constituency in Burma's November 7 elections last year. #

USDP Forced Members to Give Names

25 February 2011: Existing members of USDP (Union Solidarity and Development Party) in Falam Township were forced to get enlisted to be the hard-core members of the military-backed political party.

A delegation of USDP party was known to have instructed members of Village Peace and Development Council to select five people each from six villages of Zawngte village tract, according to a local whose name is kept anonymous for security reasons.

The delegation travelled from one village to another, arriving in Haimual village on 5 February 2011 and got a list of names with the help of the Village Peace and Development Council, the local witness said.

It was claimed that the authorities handpicked and forcibly enlisted those 'to-be-backbone' members in villages including Hnathial, Thipchang and Zawngte in Falam Township. #



Burmese soldiers commandeering private vehicle in village (Photo: CHRO)



Chin locals including women and children forced to work on road construction (Photo: CHRO)

02.03.2010 11:39

Food Crisis and Humanitarian Situation in Chinland

Food Crisis Tops Chin Party's Immediate Agenda

07 January 2011: Tackling the issue of the ongoing food crisis in Chin State will be the top priority for the Chin National Party (CNP) when a new State Parliament sits in Hakha, top official of the CNP told Chinland Guardian.

The CNP, which won five State legislative seats out of 18 contestable seats in Chin State, is holding a three-day gathering, the first top-level meeting of its kind since the November 7 elections, in the Chin State capital which kicked off on Thursday.

Salai Ceu Bik Thawng, General Secretary of the CNP told Chinland Guardian, "Given the urgency of the situation, tackling the food crisis caused by rat infestation is the immediate and pressing priority for the party."

In October 2010, the World Food Program (WFP) issued a new report saying that the food security situation in Chin State remained critical.

According to the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO), the food crisis caused by rat infestation is still continuing, particularly in southern Chin State where access is extremely difficult due to the lack of road infrastructure and official restrictions, as well as, heavy militarization of the area in recent years. CHRO says that over 100 villages in Kanpetlet Township alone are on the brink of hunger and are in dire need of food relief.

A severe food crisis is being reported in parts of Kanpetlet, Mindat and Paletwa Townships.



Crops destroyed by rats (Photo: CHRO)

Meanwhile, the CNP leader said that despite the urgency posed by the ongoing food crisis, his party remains committed to working towards infrastructural developments in Chin State, as highlighted in its recent campaign platform, in light of a series of recent tragedies in which many lives were lost in road accidents that could otherwise have been prevented with having proper infrastructure in place.

On November 26, 17 people were killed when a passenger bus overturned in Northern Chin State in a single vehicle accident. Another deadly road accident near the border with Sagaing Division killed at least one person this week.

"People are unnecessarily killed every year due to road accidents. At least 10 road accidents are reported every year in Chin State. Our party remains committed to addressing this issue," he said.#



Bamboo fruits that attract and make rat reproduction multiply after being eaten (Photo: CHRO)



Crops destroyed by rats and a pile of rats killed by local villagers to prevent damage in their farms (Photo: CHRO)

NLD's Contributions to Chin Food Crisis Welcomed Amid Blockade by Authorities

25 January 2011: An 'altruistic' contribution made by Aung San Suu Kyi-led NLD (National League for Democracy) towards helping victims of the food crisis in Burma's Chin State has been welcomed despite distribution hindrances imposed by the local authorities.

A total of 750 rice bags bought from Magwe Division of Central Burma were said to have arrived in Kanpetlet Town of southern Chin State, and another 500 would be on the way in a week time, according to the BBC Burmese news.

It is reported that aid distributions to mautam-affected victims have gradually started in the area although it was delayed until yesterday after the local authorities insisted permission be obtained from relevant governmental department.

"We are thankful to NLD for taking this action, which the government has just been not only ignoring the situation but also hampering the flows of aid assistance since the start of food crisis in Chin State. I believe this will also prompt other NGOs and communities to help our people who are suffering so much already," one of Kanpetlet Community Leaders in Malaysia told Chinland Guardian.

As of last month, an estimated 114 villages have been affected by the food crisis in Kanpetlet Township alone.

Nearly 80,000 people of 407 villages in Mindat, Kanpetlet and Paletwa Townships of Chin State were suffering from food shortages, with a total of 25,631



Villagers carrying rice received from distributions by local relief aid committee (Photo: CHRO)

acres of cultivated land having been destroyed by a plague of rats, according to a report released in August 2010 by local aid relief volunteers.

Members of NLD, Zomi National Congress (ZNC) and other democratic parties are reported travelling to the northern part of Chin State to distribute rice and drinking water.

Late last year, World Food Programme (WFP) reported the food security situation in Chin State caused by the bamboo-and-rat-related phenomenon remained critical, calling for providing food assistance until the next harvest, and urgent relief aid in the areas affected by the rat infestation.

The ongoing food crisis caused by the bamboo-and-rat-related natural process, locally known as mautam started in late 2006 mainly along the Indian-Burma border, hitting the bamboo-covered areas of Chin State, currently affecting the southern parts of Chin State including Kanpetlet, Paletwa, Mindat and Matupi Townships.#



Bags of rice stored at location before distribution (Photo: CHRO)



Villagers receiving relief aid (Photo: CHRO)

Government Ignored Food Crisis in Thantlang Township

28 February 2011: The local authorities have been accused of ignoring acute food scarcity facing Dawn and Ralpel villagers following their unsuccessful harvest due to swarms of insects destroying the crops early this year.

In January 2011 in Dawn village, 180 households had been reported having run out of rice while about 120 were said to have got enough only for until March, and there were only 7 families with enough ration to last until September this year.

Many of the 130 households in Ralpel village have also been facing food shortages after their crops were destroyed by insects.

One local said the authorities, although informed, didn't take any action in response to the situation troubling the villagers, but ignored providing no assistance to those suffering in Chin State.

On 14 February 2011, 220 buckets of rice contributed from the nearby village, Zangtlang, were distributed among the most vulnerable 60 families of Dawn village.

**A Chin woman farmer in Chinland
(Photo: CHRO)**



It was claimed that Ralpel villagers received rice bought from Hakha on 20 February 2011 with contributions made by Malaysia-based Pu Deng Lian and Mizoram-based Pi Mah Cin.

Some villagers were said to have travelled on foot towards Mizoram State of India in search of food.

The villagers who depend on subsistence farming faced food shortages this year due to bad weather that brought unexpected rains and wind that caused damage to crops in addition to an influx of crop-eating insects. #

Event and Protest

University Students Protest Against Rising Bus Fares in Kalay

12 January 2011: About 500 university students take to the street in Kalay Myo of Sagaing Division today, protesting against a sharp rise in bus fare introduced in the new year by the military authorities.

The students of three universities including Kalay University, Kalay Computer University and Technological University (Kalay) walk on foot from Kalay Train Station towards downtown around 7:30am, demonstrating against an increase of bus fares from 100 to 200 Kyats.

"They [the students] have been walking on foot towards their universities since early morning. They are protesting against the bus fares being increased from 100 to 200 Kyats for a single journey to the university," a local resident of Kalay Myo told Chinland Guardian.

"The students have faced difficulties in waiting for and getting on the buses as the service is so limited. So, they are demanding more bus services from the authorities," said a local witness.

In 2007, a sharp increase in fuel price led to popular protests later known as "Saffron Revolution" led by Buddhist monks, which was brutally put down by the military regime.

There are about 4,000 students studying at Kalay University, 1,000 at Government Technological University and 400 at Computer University in Kalay Myo. #



Students marching in Kalay Myo (Photo: CG)

Chin Photo Exhibition on Display at Thai University

24 January 2011: Mae Fah Luang University in Chiang Rai, Thailand is hosting an exhibition featuring an array of a prolific British photojournalist's works on the sufferings and struggles of the Chin people in Burma.

The exhibition entitled Path of Perseverance: Chin People from Burma showcasing a total of 49 different photos, was inaugurated at 11:30 am today with an opening speech by Dr. Phanintra Teeranon, Associate Dean of School of Arts of the University, followed by a brief presentation on the Chin people and Burma.

Dr. Phanintra Teeranon said: "Through this photo exhibition, we could not only get to know about the 'unknown' indigenous people from the other side of our own little world but also share their sufferings. I strongly believe that these photos will tell the Thai people about the Chins to some extent and will be of help to achieving the goals."

One of the organisers told Chinland Guardian that more people seem to get interested in the exhibit as it coincided with the widespread coverage on the Chin people by various news agencies including Time Magazine and Bangkok Post following the recent release of PHR (Physicians for Human Rights)'s report on human rights violations in Chin State, Burma.

One of the law students commented: "The fact that we don't know much about what has been happening in our neighboring country makes it crystal clear how Burma is kept isolated from the outside world. I really think the ways ASEAN and UNO handle Burma's issues is so soft that it gives better chances to grip on power for the regime that does not respect the rule of laws."

"I wish the sufferings of the people ended soon in one way or another. The people are so brave but the problem is that guns do not have mercy in their country."

The photographs, taken over the course of 16 months between 2008 and 2009



Chin photo exhibition at Mae Fah Luang University in Chiang Rai, Thailand (Photo: CHRO)

portraying the story of the struggle of ethnic Chin group who spread across three countries in Burma, India and Malaysia, will be on display at the university until 24 February 2011.

Mae Fah Luang University, established on 25 September 1998 as an autonomous higher-education institution in the north of Thailand, is the only public university that uses English as a medium of instruction, with a total population of 7,111 students, 257 teachers and 498 operating staff.#

Celebration of 'Chin National Day' Banned in Chin State

18 February 2011: The military-turned-civilian authorities have banned using a banner that reads 'Chin National Day' for its official celebration on 20 February in Chin State, Burma, Chinland Guardian's sources revealed.

Instead, the Chin communities organizing their National Day event this year are forced to put up a poster of 'Chin State Day' for celebrating the historic day in most cities and towns including Hakha, the capital of Chin State.



A Hakha local who participates in preparing the celebration said: "We have no choice but to follow the orders as we are told if we would like to have the celebration. As far as I could remember, it's happened like this at least for the past three consecutive years."

When asked the differences between the two days, veteran Chin Politician Pu Lian Uk told Chinland Guardian that Chin State Day is to derive from January 3rd or 4th on which the Chin territory was designated and proclaimed as Chin State in 1974 due to the constant demand of the Chin people to have a self-governing territory as a constituent State of the Union of Burma (UB).

The US-based elected MP of the 1990 General Election in Burma also remarked: "It is an insult to the Chin people and contempt of Panglong Agreement and the principles of democracy."

In other places including Tahan and Kalay Myo of Sagaing Division in Burma, Chin communities were claimed to have used 'Chin Cultural Festival' in attempts to avoid flagging 'Chin State Day' during their celebrations.

February 20, 2011 marks the 63rd anniversary of Chin National Day, which Chin communities outside Burma are to celebrate freely with a variety of Chin traditional rituals and performances in their respective residing cities and towns.

Chin political activist Salai Kipp Kho Lian said: "We abolished the ancient autocratic system of Chinland on the 20th February 1948 at a mass conference in Falam right after the Union of Burma gained Independence. In that sense, 20th February is marked as the day the political power in Chinland was handed over from autocratic rulers to the Chin people - the day the Chin people first enjoyed true freedom and democracy."

The first Chin National Day was held on 20 February 1951 in Mindat Town of Chin State where U Nu, the then Prime Minister of Burma and other ethnic ministers attended the official ceremony.

The question still remains unclear how the newly appointed civilian government of Chin State will address this issue which has been going on against the will of the Chin people under the previous military rules in Burma.#

Situation of Refugees

Chin Refugees in Nu Po Camp Fear Attacks from Burma Army

02 February 2011: In the wake of fighting between Burma Army and DKBA (Democratic Karen Buddhist Army) on the Thai-Burma border, Chin refugees based in Nu Po Refugee Camp, Thailand say they lead their daily lives in fear of attacks from Burma Army.

"Our most difficult time is when we hear that the SPDC (State Peace and Development Council) army are going to attack our camp. We always prepare ourselves not to fight back, but to run into the deep jungle. Until today, we haven't come across such attacks

yet but we hear the terrible sounds of mortars falling in our surrounding and see some villagers fleeing here and there," one of the Chin refugees told Chinland Guardian.

"In addition, we hear almost every day that the Thai government will send us all back to Burma. We are really downhearted and depressed by hearing this kind of news again and again," added the Chin refugee.

It is reported that the Chin refugees have arrived in the Nu Po Camp on the Thai-Burma border since 2005.



**Chin National Association (CNA) in
Nu Po Refugee Camp on Thai-Burma
Border (Photo: CNA)**

Thailand has currently around 150,000 refugees, mainly from eastern Burma, in nine camps along the Thai-Burma border, according to recent reports.

"The longer we stay in the camp, the weaker we become psychologically, mentally and physically. There is so much to say about what a refugee life is all about. As for us, a refugee life is a life that is full of fear and uncertainty," continued the Chin refugee.

About 251 out of an estimated 15,000 refugees from nine different ethnic groups currently stranded in Nu Po Camp are Chin, with the majority being Karen. There are 105 females and 57 children, mostly under age 13, of Chin ethnicity.

The Nu Po Chin refugees also express their grave concern for the future of their children.

Burma's ruling military junta has long waged war with the country's ethnic minorities, who for decades have sought autonomy. In the late 1990s the junta stepped up attacks, razing thousands of villages, displacing half a million people and laying land-mines to prevent communities from returning to their land, according to the UK Guardian News.

Thousands of people from Burma have fled the ongoing fighting between Burma army and the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) into hiding in the jungle or across the Thai border as refugees since last November.#

Refugees Face Daylight Extortions by Police in Malaysia

13 February 2011: Malaysian police have been reported of conducting daylight 'stop-and-search' operations on the streets which involved unlawful obtaining of personal belongings from refugees and asylum seekers from Burma.

The police patrolling on the roads or waylaying in the street corners of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia targeted refugees working in the mornings and evenings, with scores of Chin refugees reporting extortions including money, hand phones and UNHCR cards in recent weeks, according to the VOICER (Voice of Chin Refugees) news.

Last Thursday, Ha Hung Thang, a Chin interpreter from Kanpetlet Township of Burma's Chin State working for International Rescue Committee (IRC), was stopped on his way home from work by a group of Malaysian police and forced to give money despite presenting his UNHCR card and making attempts to explain his situations.

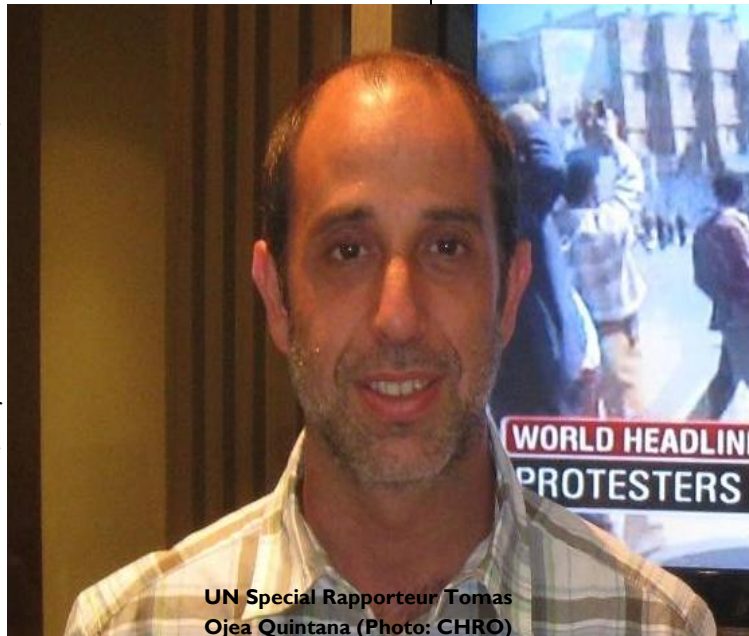
"The police in Malaysia stop us on the streets and take all our belongings we have with us. Sometimes, we don't have money left to go home. Even going to church on Sundays is not safe for us at all. The UNHCR Card protects us from arrests and detentions in Malaysia but not from extortions from the police," one of the Chin refugees in Malaysia told Chinland Guardian.

Meanwhile, dozens of refugee families living in one of the apartment buildings on Jalan Imbi, Kuala Lumpur are facing problems finding 'affordable' places after they have been told to move out following a new project that requires a demolition of the building.#

Chin Refugees Get Surprise Visit from UN Rights Expert

26 February 2011: The UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Burma Tomas Quintana made an unannounced trip to Malaysia last week, meeting with Chin community-based organizations and hearing personal stories of human rights abuses from individual refugees.

The visit to Malaysia came ahead of Quintana's upcoming report to the Human Rights Council in March,



UN Special Rapporteur Tomas Quintana (Photo: CHRO)



Chin refugee children at community-run informal school (Photo: CHRO)



Chin refugees being briefed by community leaders (Photo: ACR)

where the UN rights expert is likely to raise human rights issues specific to the Chins. The visit coincided with the celebration of the 63rd anniversary of Chin National Day that saw the largest festive gathering of ethnic Chins outside of Chin State.

The Argentinean lawyer spent four days in the Malaysian capital, including a two-day meeting with refugees and community-based organizations. He also met with the Malaysian Foreign Ministry as part of his ongoing mandate to address the human rights situation in Burma.

"During my visit I talked to many people who had recently left Myanmar [Burma] fleeing forced labour, land and property confiscation, arbitrary taxation, religious and ethnic discrimination, arbitrary detention, as well as sexual and gender-based violence," Quintana said.

The rights expert interviewed a dozen individual Chin refugees whose testimonies added further evidence to the long list of ongoing persecution and widespread human rights abuses against ethnic Chins in western Burma. Among the testimonies was the case of a young man who fled the country after 15 years of portering and forced labour for the military. Another prominent Chin woman religious leader testified about the systematic denial of religious freedom for Chin Christians, including one particular incident in which she was forced to read a statement at a televised event denying allegations of restrictions on freedom of religion, against her will.

"We are very pleased that the Special Rapporteur took notice of the situation of the Chins, and made a special effort to visit the Chin community in Malaysia. We hope that the Chin will be the focus of his next report to the UN Human Rights Council," said Salai Bawi Lian Mang, Executive Director of the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO), who also met with the

Special Rapporteur during his visit to Malaysia last week.

In January the CHRO participated in a lobby mission to Geneva during the Universal Periodic Review, where Burma's rights record for the past four years was examined by the UN Human Rights Council. During the visit to Geneva, CHRO also met with officials at the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as the various Special Procedures mandate holders, including staff working with Tomas Quintana.

Burma's Problems Transcend National Borders

At the end of his eight-day visit to Malaysia the UN rights expert concluded: "There is clearly an extra-territorial dimension to the human rights problem in Myanmar [Burma]. Despite the promise of the transition in Myanmar [Burma], the human rights situation remains grave." He said that countries in the region have a particular interest in addressing the human rights problems in Burma, as hundreds of thousands of refugees and migrant workers continue to spill into neighbouring countries.

Country Visit Denied

The fourth rights expert to be appointed by the United Nations to report on the situation of human rights in Burma since the mandate was instituted in 1992, Tomas Ojea Quintana has made three country visits to Burma. In his last report to the UN Human Rights Council in March 2010, Quintana infuriated the ruling Burmese generals by calling for the establishment of a UN-led Commission of Inquiry that would investigate allegations of crime against humanity and war crimes being committed in Burma. Official requests for a fourth visit to Burma have not yet been given a positive response by Burma's ruling military regime.#

Chin National Day

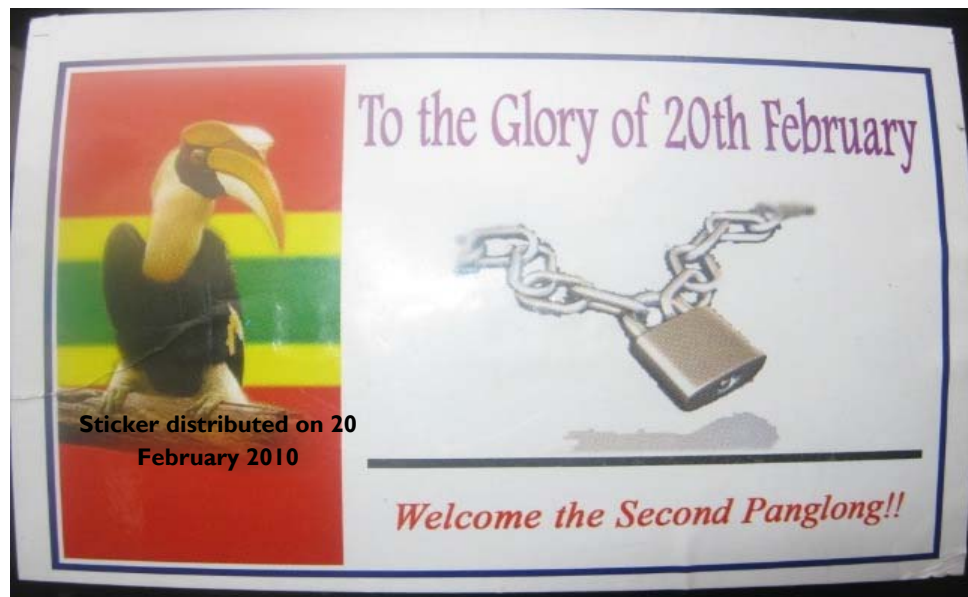


Military authorities in control (top inset) to open Chin National Day celebration ceremony

Visit us on
www.chro.ca



"The authorities said that we were allowed to use 'Chin National Day' before. We were shocked to hear when we were informed in the morning of 20 February that only a banner of 'Chin State Day' was allowed to put up. There was no choice"



Leaders of Chin National Day Celebration Detained in Tedim

21 February 2011: Five local youth leaders of Chin National Day celebration held at Kam Hau Stadium were arrested and interrogated for hours by the authorities, in connection with stickers campaign in Tedim Town on 20 February 2011.

However, the leaders accused of being responsible for distributing stickers reading 'To the Glory of 20 February' and 'Welcome Second Panglong' were freed in the evening after about 300 local youths went to the police station demanding their immediate release.

A local from Tedim Town said: "They (the leaders) were arrested because of the stickers. The stickers were posted on walls and vehicles like motorbikes. The authorities saw these and were not happy. That's the main reason why they were detained."

Minutes after the incident took place, scores of local youths went to the

police station, saying 'Free our leaders immediately', according to the local witness.

The detained youth leaders were eventually released after newly appointed Chief Minister of Chin State U Hung Ngai reportedly gave an order from Hakha.

Chin communities in Chin State were yesterday ordered to celebrate their national day with a banner reading 'Chin State Day' in towns including Tedim, Thantlang, Hakha, and Mindat.

"The authorities said that we were allowed to use 'Chin National Day' before. We were shocked to hear when we were informed in the morning of 20 February that only a banner of 'Chin State Day' was allowed to put up. There was no choice," said one of the leaders from Tedim Town.

The 63rd anniversary of Chin National Day was yesterday commemorated by Chin people in their residing towns and cities across Europe, North America, and Asia-Pacific Region.#

Frustration against Forced Celebration of 'Chin State Day'

26 February 2011: Chin people expressed their deep disappointment that the military authorities inside Chin State had ordered the local organizing committee to put up a banner of 'Chin State Day' in their recent national day celebrations.

This year's historical commemoration that marked its 63rd anniversary on 20 February was held in cities and towns across Chin State, with ceremonial banners reading in Burmese 'Chin State Day' against the will and wishes of the people.

In Seoul, Republic of Korea, a group of activists of Chin and other ethnic nationalities from Burma protested in front of the Burmese Embassy on 20 February 2011, calling for an end to forcibly changing 'Chin National Day' to 'Chin State Day'.

In their statement, Chin Democracy and Human Rights Network stressed the significance of Chin National Day to the Chin people as an ethnic nationality that has unique culture, custom and identity.

Some local organizing committee members of Chin National Day celebration inside Chin State said they had no choice but to follow the orders as and if they wanted to have an official celebration in towns.

Salai Ceu Bik Thawng, General Secretary of Chin National Party (CNP), said: "We clearly state in our manifesto that the new Parliament and Government should have a proper consideration and discussion over this issue. We will keep on working hard in the interest of our people."

"This event was performed under the supervision of



Protest in front of Burmese Embassy in Seoul, South Korea (Photo: Chumto)

02.20.2011 10:36

the government, not the will of the people who live in Hakha," one of the web users identified as 'TN' said in reply to some outrageous disappointments expressed by individuals when seeing the photos of celebration in Hakha Town.

Meanwhile, celebrations with banners reading 'Chin National Day' were organized by Chin Literature and Culture Committee from Chin Universities Students in Kalay Myo, Mandalay and Rangoon.

"We knew that an official permission, if submitted before the celebration, would not be issued to us. So, we tried to find our own ways of organizing it even though we were aware of risks and possible consequences. But we managed to hold our national day celebrations successfully and peacefully," one of the organization committee members in Rangoon told Chinland Guardian.

Outside the military-ruled Burma, Chin communities worldwide freely celebrated the Chin National Day in their residing cities and towns across Europe, North America and Asia-Pacific regions, with a variety of cultural performances, foods and other activities including football and Chin traditional wrestling.



Chin National Day celebration with banner reading 'Chin State Day' in Chin State

In his message on Chin National Day celebration, Dr. Za Hlei Thang (MP) once said a conference attended by representatives from all over the region was held in Falam and then on the 20th February 1948 in accordance with the people's wishes, they decided to choose a democratic administrative system rather than primitive feudal administrative system, adding: "Hence the 20th of February became the National day for the chin people. From that time, we became united, understood each other and recognized the importance of the chin nation."#



Democracy and Equality: the True Spirit of Chin National Day

20 February 2011:

[CG Note: Chin communities in Malaysia today celebrate their national day in Kuala Lumpur, marking its 63rd anniversary of the historic 1948 mass conference held in Falam Town of Chin State in Burma, where people from across Chin State voted for the democratic system of government.

A decennial commemoration ceremony that marks the year in which a community-based organisation to provide social services for Chin refugees in Malaysia was first initiated with the formation of Chin Refugee Committee (CRC) in 2001 is also held.

The following is a speech given on this special day in Kuala Lumpur celebration today by Salai Bawi Lian Mang, Director of Chin Human Rights Organisation that has been actively involved in dealing with issues facing Chin refugees in Malaysia.]

63 years ago today, our forefathers from all over Chinland gathered at Falam town for the purpose of laying the foundation of the future free Chinland administration system. At that gathering on February 20, 1948, our forefathers chose democracy over the feudal system.

Our people treasured democracy and freedom so much that two years later, February 20 was designated by our elected representatives as our national day, the day that our people abolished the old system and adopted a new system that guarantees freedom and equality. After 63 long years, we still treasure the day on which we chose democracy over feudal system.

Our forefathers were looking forward to developing a democratic Chin society with optimism and full of determination. However, their dream was unfortunately short-lived. The very reason why we are here in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia today reminded us that we are not free and we have not achieved a democratic society which our forefathers had envisioned.

We need to remind ourselves today that while you and I are now celebrating our national day in a foreign land freely, our sisters and brothers in our own homeland are not allowed to celebrate Chin National Day as it is. Instead, they are forced to put up banner saying 'Chin State Day'.

Let us take a moment to look at ourselves and examine why we are here today.

Before the British invasion into our homeland, we were always a free and independent nation, and people. During the independent movement from the British rule, we joined hands with other nationalities such as Kachin, Shan and Burman to build a union together with equal status at a historic Panglong agreement.

However, soon after independence from the British rule, our people have been put under great pressure on our language, religion, and our culture. In every level of our lives, successive Burmese regimes have systematically applied manipulations to our social, political and economic environment in order to wipe out our distinct national identity.

Our homeland is not free. Our people are not free. We are oppressed and the pressure imposed on our people by the successive Burmese regimes is unbearable.

We are not even allowed to learn our own language in our own homeland in school.

We are targeted and persecuted because of our religion as Christians. We are not even allowed to print the Bible in our own country. The Crosses we put up on our mountains to express our faith have been destroyed one by one and replaced with Buddhist pagodas and statues. Many of qualified government employees including the soldiers are pressured to abandon their faith in order to get promotion to a higher rank. We can't even worship our God freely in our own homeland.

Our people have been forced to construct more than 50 army camps by the present regime since they came into power by killing thousands of peaceful demonstrators. Our people have been used as porters and forced to work in so many military projects. The recently published report by the Physicians for Human Rights say over 90% of Chins have been subject to forced labour.

When the military regime promised to hold election and transfer power to the winning political party in 1990, our people started forming parties and contested in the election. As you all know the election result was never honoured. Instead, elected MPs were arrested, and the parties abolished.

When our people are facing famine-like food crisis starting from 2008, the Burmese regime does not provide any help. Instead, they prohibit the flows and deliveries of any food aids from outside to the people.

These are the situations that make us to leave our homeland in search of refuge. The paths we take in search of refuge are not easy. We crossed the sea, and mountains risking our lives. Many of us have died in the sea, on the highways, in the jungles of no man's land. How dangerous and risky our path is! Some fall prey to crooked agents and human traffickers; many young girls and women are humiliated and sold in the seas to the fishing boat and in brothels.

Because of that situation back home, we came to knock the door of UNHCR in Kuala Lumpur in 2001. How grateful we are to those who open their doors to provide us refuge and safety in these situations! We are so grateful to the UN and many other countries

for your sympathy. We are comforted by your humility.

Today, we are also commemorating the 10th anniversary of Chin Refugee Day in Malaysia. Since its founding in 2001, CRC (Chin Refugee Committee) along with other community base organizations such as students, women and churches has done a wonderful job in support of thousands of refugees in a very difficult environment and situation. We are so proud of what you have achieved as a self-supported community organization. Congratulations to all the leaders and staff members from the very beginning to present. What you have done to our people are gratefully recorded in the hearts and minds of our people. You have set a good example of what the Chins could do and achieve even in a very difficult situation.

The experiences we have encountered here in Malaysia will remain as unforgettable events in the history of our people.

Sometimes, it is disheartening when we look at our situation at present. However, we still have hope that one day there will be peace, democracy and justice in our homeland if we continue to work hard. It is encouraging that the spirit of Chin National Day is still very much alive in the hearts and minds of our people.

Today, we remember our brothers and sisters who are working hard to materialize the spirit of Chin National Day risking their lives back home in a very difficult situation.

As we celebrate Chin National Day and enjoy the festivity with pride, this is the time for all Chins to renew our unity. This is the time to come together and work hard for our common desire and goal to restore democracy and freedom in our homeland. Because the true spirit of Chin National Day is to stand up for democracy and equality. The true spirit of Chin National Day is to stand up among the world community as a distinct people and nation, and to be able to contribute to the betterment of our people, our homeland and to the world community.

Congratulations and long live Chin National Day!
Thank you.#

63rd Chin National Day celebration in Rangoon



Poem

The Day That Makes Chin Proud

12 February 2011: *The Chin National Day falls on the 20th of February. On this day in 1948, the Chin people abolished traditional system of governance at a Conference held at Fa-lam and chose to practice democracy. In advance of this year's celebration, the Rhododendron News is pleased to present a poem by Salai Z T Lian in dedication of the historic milestone.*



Chin traditional wrestling performed during Chin National Day celebration in Chin State

The Day That Makes Chin Proud

Chins from all walk of life look forward to this day
As it expresses a renewal of our identity
It's the Chin National Day.

Seeing brothers and sisters in their traditional dresses
And celebrating the day together in happiness
It's an exciting moment.

Patriotic speeches given so dignified and momentous
That reflects our history and its importance
It's a moving event.

Listening to the traditional music and chants

And watching the cultural dances and talents
It's a pleasing scene.

Every Chin values the 20th of February
As it strengthens our brotherhood and harmony
It's the core essence of the day that makes us proud.

Salai Z T Lian
12 February 2011

Cartoon

