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Arbitrary Taxation and Extortion

Headmaster Forcibly Collected Money for Free School Supplies

10 July 2012:

The Township Education Department allocated free school supplies to schools in Zawngte Village Tract in Falam township of Chin State but the headmaster of the school forcibly collected money from the locals for conveyance cost of the supplies, a member of

Zawngte Village Council reported to Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO).

The Chin local said the headmaster of Zawngte Middle School forcibly demanded 500 kyats from each household in the village for the cost of conveyance from Falam to Zawngte.

Forcible collection of money from the local people continued even though U Lun, Head of the Township Education Department, provided school supplies free of charge to the Primary students in five villages in Zawngte Village Tract. #

“The total cost is 336 lakh kyats and the government will pay for half of the amount and the locals are responsible for another half.”



Money Collected from Locals for Tared Road Construction

15 July 2012: Local authority in Satawm Block, Kalay Township of Sagaing Division, is forcibly collecting money from the locals for the cost of ‘tared road’ construction in the blocks, a member of the authority, who requested not to be named, reported to Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO).

He said the street construction has begun since 20 January 2012 and about half has been completed so far, adding: “The total cost is 336 lakh kyats and the government

will pay for half of the amount and the locals are responsible for another half.”

“The road has been constructed using 100 lakh kyats borrowed from local churches and rich individuals with no interest by the Block Road Construction Committee,” he added.

The construction cost will later be collected from the locals and the amount to be collected from each household is yet to be confirmed. Currently, the construction has been temporarily suspended during the rainy season and it will resume in October 2012, according to sources. #

Authority Continues Forcible Collection of Money from Chins

26 July 2012: The local authorities of Burma's new government still conduct a forcible collection of money from the Chin locals including students and Christian churches, sources revealed.

Primary students of the Basic Education High School (BEHS) No. 1 in Thantlang town, Chin State, have been ordered to make a financial contribution of 300 Kyats for making school badges each in June and July 2012 under the instructions of a new Burmese headmaster, U Theh Aung.

A community leader from Thantlang, who asked not to be named, told Chinland Guardian that some Chin teachers made a complaint against the collection to the headmaster, adding: "U Theh Aung said it will be stopped next year."

It is estimated that there are about 240 primary school students at Thantlang BEHS No. 1.

Pastors and leaders of Christian churches in Khampat sub-township of Sagaing Division have been ordered to contribute money to pay off the outstanding expenses for construction of an Examinations Board Department fire-proof building, according to the Chin World Media.

In a meeting held in June 2012, the sub-township General Administration Office said the churches had to make contributions to meet the costs of the fireproof building construction, which was already completed in April this year.

A Christian pastor from the area, with the majority being Chins, complained that the total expense of the construction was not revealed and that Burmese residents in Ward No. 5 were not included in the money collection.

Eight out of nine wards in Khampat sub-township where about 80 percent of the population are Christian Chins have been forced to make a total of one and half lakh Kyats each, according to the Chin World Media.

Recently, the headmaster of a middle school in Zawngte village of Falam Township forcibly collected 500 Kyats from each household for the transportation cost of school supplies from Falam town, according to the Chin Human Rights Organization.

A staff member of the local authority in Kalaymyo, Sagaing Division said money will be collected from local residents in Satawm Ward for the cost of the ongoing road construction, which is temporarily suspended during the rainy season but will resume in October this year. #



Other Human Rights Violation

Govt. Department Prohibits House Construction in Town Area

05 July 2012:

The Settlement and Land Records Department in Matupi of Chin State, prohibits house construction in urban areas without making revenue payments, a Chin local reported to Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO).

“During military rules, house construction in town required a payment of 2,000 to 10,000 kyats depending on the type and size of the house to the Settlement and Land Records De-

partment since 2002,” added the local.

“The amount charges vary from the types and locations of the houses within the five blocks in the town. Revenue for construction of good houses by the main road is more and that for the suburban parts of the town is less. It also depends on the size of the houses. This payment is nothing to do with land revenue, which is charged separately,” the local added.

“Each Township Settlement and Land Records Department has been imposed to contribute funds to State Settlement and Land Records Department. The department has been charging for house construction revenue on purpose because it has insufficient fund.” #



Chin Shopkeeper Beaten up by Soldier in Tedim

09 July 2012: A Chin local in charge of a restaurant in Tedim town was strangled and beaten up by Corporal Ko Zin Htwe, of the Military Affairs Security (MAS), in Tedim Township of Chin State, Burma on 29 June 2012.

Corporal Ko Zin Htwe squeezed the neck of Ma Mang and punched him after the restaurant worker refused several times to sell alcoholic drinks on credit, according to the Chin World Media.

The Chin victim said Ko Zin Htwe started getting angry and throttling as well as beating him up despite making a proper explanation that it was not possible to buy the item and pay later.

It is claimed that a report on the incident would be made to the higher authority so a legal action would be taken against the perpetrator.

Corporal Ko Zin Htwe is known to have only been in Tedim Township, Chin State for just over a month.

The Military Affairs Security (MAS), currently headed by Major General Kyaw Swe since 2010, was established after the Defense Service Intelligence (DDSI), Burma's main military intelligence service, was disbanded in 2004 following the arrest of General Khin Nyunt.

In another recent incident taking place in Tedim Township on 10 June 2012, soldiers from Burma Army Light Infantry Battalion No. 268 severely beat up Pu Zam Shin Thang, head of Fartang village and Kap Za Cin, youth leader.

Being accused of banning sales of wood and timber from the village-owned preserved forests to Mizoram State of India, the two victims were physically punished by the army soldiers, who were believed to have taken bribes from the traders.#



Chin Man Found Dead in CYMA's Office in Aizawl

15 July 2012: A Chin man was found dead inside the office of CYMA (Central Young Mizo Association) in Aizawl, Mizoram State of India.

The lifeless body of Than Aung, aka Bawia, from Taungphila of Kalayomyo in Sagaing Division, Burma, was discovered around midnight on Thursday.

The 45-year-old son of Pu Lian Thang died after being arrested and detained on suspicion of drug possessions around 2pm on 12 July and taken to CYMA's office by members of CADS (Central Anti-Drug Squad), according to the victim's family.

One of the victim's relatives said: "Bawia was taken into custody because Lalmuankima from Tuirial village near Aizawl said he bought 16 grams of heroin from Bawia when he was caught earlier this week."

"But when CADS member didn't find any drug with Bawia, they detained him in their office in order to find out where the drugs are kept. We are not sure how he died," explained the relative living in Aizawl.

CADS, a civilian vigilante group tasked to combat and prevent drugs, immediately informed the Aizawl Police of the incident but no action has been taken regarding the matter to date.

Saturday edition of a local newspaper quoted CYMA officials as saying that the victim died of pre-existing health conditions and that the organization has no hands in the mysterious death.

However, a post-mortem examination to establish the cause of death was not conducted since an official first information report (FIR) was not made regarding the incident.

The body of Than Aung has reportedly been taken back to Burma by relatives who claimed it from the Aizawl Civil Hospital.#

Soldiers Attack Left one Dead in Chin State

18 July 2012: Pa Thang Sian Mung, from Sozang village in Tedim Township, died at a hospital in Tedim town last Friday after being gang-beaten by two Burma Army soldiers and one policeman on 11 July.

The 41-year-old villager was mobbed by Burma Army Corporal Kyaw Hlaing Win, Private U Aung Zaw Myint, believed to be belonging to Light Infantry Battalion 269, and Policeman Saw Myat Htun while attempting to intervene in a fight where the security personnel were assaulting local villagers.

An eyewitness said Aung Zaw Myint and Kyaw Hlaing Win started hitting the victim with bars from behind while Saw Myat Htun struck on his head with a big stone.

"He [Thang Sian Mung] fell to the ground but they [soldiers and policeman] kept on beating him many times," added the local eyewitness.

Other villagers made several attempts to mediate the fight in the early evening around sunset in the village bordering Sagaing Division in Burma.

One local said the villagers were too frightened to intervene in the attacks as the assailants were wearing uniforms.

Eventually, an increasing number of the villagers came out and managed to stop the fight, which left other five locals with minor injuries, according to the Chin World Media.

Thang Sian Mung succumbed to his injuries around 7am in the morning on 13 July despite having been admitted to hospital in Tedim on 12 July.

How the Incident Started

Recently, a jeep owned by a Chin local collided with a scooter ridden by Private Aung Zaw Myint and U Thar, from Special Road Construction Unit No. 11, between Tedim town and Vangteh village in Tedim Township.

U Thar got injured and was taken to hospital in Tedim, while the jeep owner was arrested and charged. He was later released on bail on 11 July and went back to his village, Sozang. The vehicle owner also paid money to U Thar as a token of apology for the accident.

Upon arrival at his village, the vehicle owner was demanded a compensation money of 200,000 Kyats by Private Aung Zaw Myint and his two friends : "You gave U Thar some money for his injuries but not me [Aung Zaw Myint]."

Informed of the incident by one of the village leaders named Pu E Khai, a police station in Tedim town told Aung Zaw Myint not to give trouble to the jeep's owner as his case had just been cleared by the court.

Under the influence of alcoholic drinks, Aung Zaw Myint and his friends threw some abusive words at a local woman named Pi Hung Lian Cing, who dropped by at the liquor shop.

The woman's brother, who went to the liquor shop and asked why his sister was abused verbally, was beaten up by the soldiers and the

policeman.

Well acquainted with the three security personnel, Pa Thang Sian Mung arrived at the scene in a bid to mediate the fight.

"He [Thang Sian Mung] talked to them respectfully but was brutally beaten up," said the local eyewitness.

Whereabouts of the Assailants

The villagers made civilian arrest of the three assailants and informed the police who then took Saw Myat Htun away with them, leaving the two soldiers.

Sources said that Corporal U Kyaw Hlaing Win and Private U Aung Zaw Myint have fled to Kalaymyo of Sagaing Division.

A police inspector from Hakha, the capital and the official seat of Chin State government, is believed to be making a visit to Sozang village for an investigation, according to the Khonumthung news.

Ongoing Impunity

The assailants have not been criminally charged, and may never be charged. According to Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO), arbitrary killings by Burmese security forces, especially the Burma Army soldiers in Chin State almost never get prosecuted.

"Sadly, impunity still reigns in Chin State and elsewhere in Burma, especially for the Burma Army despite the ongoing talks of reforms in Naypyidaw. This is why the withdrawal of Burma Army from the ethnic States is essential in ending serious human rights violations," says a spokesperson of CHRO.#

Chin Pastor Detained after Police Seized Illegal Drugs from House Guests

29 July 2012: A Christian pastor has been detained by Burmese authorities since 16 July 2012 after police seized illegal drugs from guests staying at his house.

Rev. He Ling, from the Hmunthar Lai Baptist Church (HLBC) in Kalaymyo of Sagaing Division, is being placed in custody on suspicion of having possible links with the drug bust.

Sources said that police busted and seized 100.56 kg of heroin from Ms Siang Tin aka San Sai Par, 37, from Falam, Lal Than Thang, 32, and Lawma, 22, both from Tahan, on 13 July 2012 as the three were attempting to leave the pastor's house on scooters.

The 56-year-old Chin writer and preacher was arrested at his house three days later, at around 2am in the morning of 16 July.

"Since the guest was staying and leaving her bags at the house of Rev. He Ling, the pastor was arrested by the police on the basis that he must have known about the heroin," another Chin pastor close to Rev. He Ling told *Chinland Guardian*.

According to the Hakha Post, Rev. He Ling and his family received the guests after their landlady, who owns the house, asked if Siang Tin could stay with them for a few days.

A Chin local from Tahan told *Chinland Guardian*: "The three traders must have been somehow suspected by the police before the incident happened. I strongly believed that they intentionally used the pastor's house as a safe place to keep their stuff."

The three Chin traders and Rev. He Ling are being held in judicial custody after reportedly making their first court appearance last Thursday.

Rev. He Ling is scheduled to make his court appearance again on 10 August 2012. The trial continues.#

Suspect in Killing of Chin Woman Identified but Still at Large in Burma

05 August 2012: The killer of a Chin woman Ting Iang, whose lifeless body was found dumped in the jungle near Monya of Sagaing Division in June, has been identified as that of a Meitei insurgent soldier from Manipur State of India.

However, the killer, known in his Burmese name as Moe Tu, is still at large, according to the victim's family.

"The fact that Mr. Moe Tu is not arrested until today remains a mystery to us. We were only told that his whereabouts is not known and that he must be hiding somewhere," said the Chin family.

The identity of the killer was confirmed after Moe Tu's girlfriend Ms Mi Nge from Kalaymyo, told the police about the killing when she surrendered herself to the local authorities.

The girlfriend was quoted as saying that Moe Tu stopped the car, tied Ting Iang up and dragged her



Ms Ting Iang

away to the nearby jungle, where he killed her and dumped her body.

"Moe Tu and Mi Nge stayed in Taungzalat Hotel in Kalaymyo for a few days before his girlfriend eventually managed to run away from him fearing for her life," said a friend of the victim's family.

A source from Kalaymyo said Moe Tu was seen in and out of town visiting his Chin girlfriend who lives in Pinlung Ward of Kalaymyo.—*continued*

"Ting Iang (the murder victim) and Mi Nge are close friends and they used to travel together," a Chin local close to the family told Chinland Guardian.

The murder incident was believed to have taken place near Monywa during their trip back to Kalaymyo from Mandalay on Moe Tu's Pajero car in April this year.

The motive for the killing remains unknown.

However, another source suggests that Ms Ting Iang was killed in connection with a financial dispute in which Moe Tu was believed to have owed her money.

Originally from Tlangkhua village of Thantlang Township, Chin State, Ms Ting Iang moved to Tahan after having lived in Hakhalay of Sagaing Division. She was 39 years old at the time of her murder and is survived by five children.

The Meitei rebels, a group that is known to have been allowed by the Burmese soldiers to move freely in and out of the northwestern parts of Burma, including Tonzang township of northern Chin State, have been implicated in a range of human rights abuses against the local population, as well as being involved in illegal drug trade. #



...three soldiers grabbed her but only one soldier committed the sexual abuse in the early afternoon.

The soldier gave a total amount of 500,000 Kyats in compensation to the Chin victim and the case was settled...

Soldier Raped Chin Woman in Kyauktaw

11 August 2012: A 23-year-old Chin woman was raped by Burma Army soldier in Kyauktaw, Rakhine State on 28 July 2012.

Three soldiers were said to have stopped the Chin woman while she was looking for her husband who was thought to be recently recruited by Burma Army battalion based in the Rakhine town.

The victim, from Mindat Township, Chin State, was quoted as saying that three soldiers grabbed her but only one soldier committed the sexual abuse in

the early afternoon.

A Chin Christian pastor from Rakhine State said the victim was rescued last Sunday and taken to Mindat town via Mrauk-U in Rakhine State.

The soldier gave a total amount of 500,000 Kyats in compensation to the Chin victim and the case was settled, according to the pastor.

Detailed information about the perpetrator remains unknown up to date.

There are 10 Infantry Battalions of the 9th Military Operations Command (MOC-9) based in Kyauktaw alone. #

Humanitarian Situation

The Ripple Effects of Arakan Violence: Chin State's Paletwa Villagers Face Food Shortages

23 July 2012:

Local residents in Chin State's Paletwa Township, bordering Arakan State, are facing food shortages following recent communal violence in the southern State, which have affected markets in the area.

Sales of local products such as mangoes, pineapples, oranges, bananas, bamboos and other vegetables have sharply fallen as customers from Arakan State have stopped coming to the southern Chin township since the riots.

Trade with Arakan State is the only access for business for residents of Paletwa areas as the Township has no transportation access to the rest of Chin State, largely due to long neglect of the areas by successive central Burmese governments.

"We have very few buyers. Knowing the situation, they offer us bad prices. Our products have gone rotten and we are now facing such difficulties. Some of our villagers even stopped farming in despair," added a Chin farmer.

The situation has also been worsened by the rising price of rice in Paletwa Township, a region earmarked in WFP's March report as a concern due to crop losses and lower yields from cultivation.

A Christian pastor from Cheing Seaung village said he managed to buy one bag of rice which lasted only three days as it was shared among his neighbours, adding: "The people are in a very difficult situation and they are struggling for a day-to-day survival."

Villages along the Arakan-Chin border in Paletwa Township, still recovering from the effects of mau-tam food crisis, are hard hit by the 'aggravating' situation of food scarcity.

Recently, staff members of IRC (International Rescue Committee), an international non-government organization, made a visit to the village, only providing medical assistance according to the Chin pastor as quoted by the Khumi Media Group.

There are only three international humanitarian agencies, namely UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), IRC and Action Contre La Faim (Action Against Hunger) working in the sectors of agriculture, livelihood, health and food, according to OCHA (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs).

During its food security assessment conducted in August 2010 across Chin State, the UN agency, WFP (World Food Programme) admitted Paletwa Township was not assessed due to 'inaccessibility'.

The population of Paletwa Township is estimated to be more than 85,000, with over 400 villages. #

Chin State Hit by Earthquake, No Casualties Reported

29 July 2012: A moderate earthquake hits Burma near the Indian border this morning, reaching as far as Falam and Hakha towns of Chin State.

The earthquake measuring 5.7 on the Richer scale jolted parts of Chin State around 8am today but no casualties or damages have been reported so far.

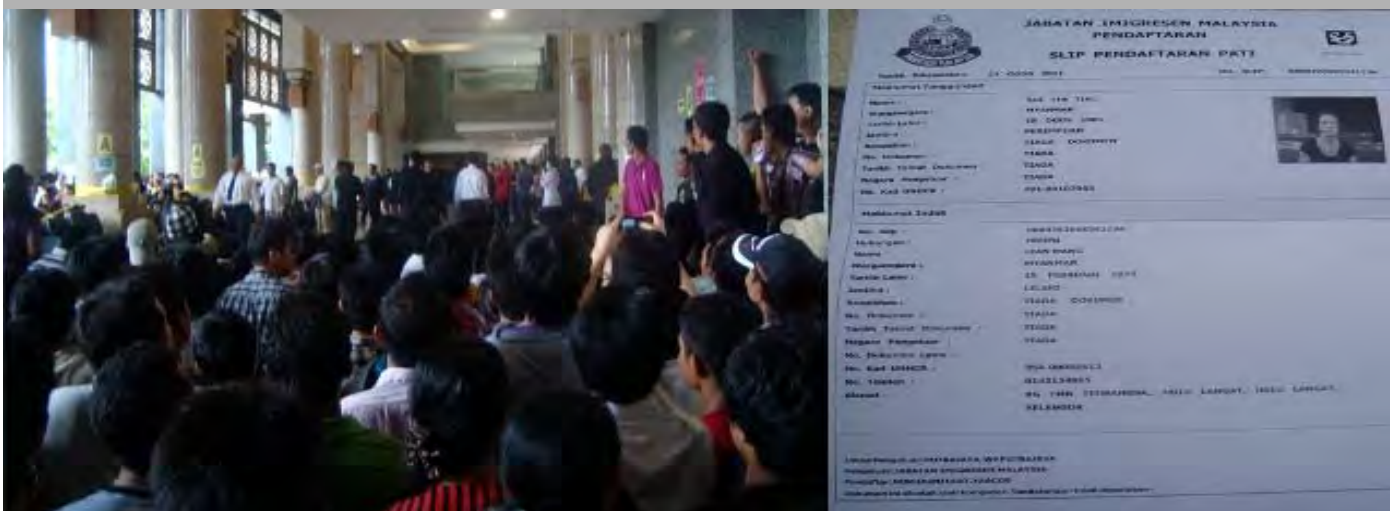
A local resident in Hakha told Chinland Guardian:

"Our house was shaken and some bottles fell onto the floor. We started getting dizzy but fortunately it stopped after a while."

Originated from the Indian-Burma border and located about 70km underneath the earth's crust in Burma, the quake was also felt in parts of India and Bangladesh.

The epic center location is about 68km from Falam, and about 215 kilometers (135 miles) northwest of Mandalay, Burma, according to sources. #

Situation of Refugees



UNHCR to Discontinue Refugee 'Bio-Data Collection' in Malaysia

10 July 2012:

Malaysia-based UNHCR said it will stop the name-recording process of Chin refugees staying in Kuala Lumpur following allegations of fraud among some community-based organizations.

Alan Vernon, the UNHCR's representative in Malaysia, told refugee community leaders during a meeting last Thursday that the name-listing program would not be conducted for Chin refugees because some Chin communities demanded money for what was supposed to be 'free of charge'.

The announcement came as a shock to the Chin refugees and asylum seekers staying in Kuala Lumpur weeks after an investigation was carried out over bribery allegations against some Chin refugee communities.

UNHCR's new program called 'Bio-Data Collecting Exercise' conducted in collaboration with community-based organizations in an effort to record details of 'undocumented' Chin refugees ahead of a major crackdown planned by the Malaysian authorities had been suspended since 25 May 2012.

One of the Chin refugees in Kuala Lumpur told Chinland Guardian: "The majority of us will now suffer because of one or two dishonest leaders. We

don't exactly know the details of the issue but this kind of behavior must be stopped."

Most Chin Community-based organizations in Malaysia largely operate on annual membership fees donated by individual members, which is used to provide various services to members of their communities, including protection in times of arrest and detention. But the membership fees have often been mistaken as a 'charge to access UNHCR' in the past.

In his speech, Alan Vernon also highlighted the fact that some Chin community-based organisations took advantage of their collaboration with the UNHCR and acted authoritatively in communicating with other refugees and asylum seekers in Malaysia.

Details of the communities implicated in the fraud remain unknown to the public.

But a spokesperson for the Chin Refugee Committee (CRC), the largest Chin community-based organization in Malaysia, said that the UNHCR investigation has cleared his organization of any wrongdoings.

As of May this year, there are 98,644 refugees in Malaysia as registered by the UNHCR, with an estimated number of 10,000 being undocumented. Over 90 percent of the total refugee population are from Burma.

It is estimated that there are more than 45,000 Chin refugees currently staying in Malaysia. #

Refugee Teens from Burma Arrested for Theft in India

15 July 2012: Indian police have detained seven teenagers under the age of 16 from Chin State, Burma for breaking into a house in Janakpuri of New Delhi and stealing gold ornaments on Monday.

The refugee children stranded in India broke into the house of a local Indian around noon on 9 July and took articles including bangles and necklaces worth of an estimated 3lakh Indian rupees while the house owner went out.

Arrested on 12 July, the children appeared in court accompanied by their parents on 13 July, according to sources from the families and SLIC (Socio and Legal Information Centre) one of the UNHCR's implementing partners.

The detained children are scheduled to make their sec-

ond court appearance on 27 July in New Delhi, India.

One of the Chin community leaders based in New Delhi told Chinland Guardian it is not sure whether the stolen materials have been sold or taken hold of by other people.

The theft highlights the desperate situation of refugees from Burma living in the Indian capital.

"We strongly believe that the abject living conditions of refugees in Delhi have prompted these children to commit such a kind of crime. Their parents could not afford to send them to school. We need to identify the reasons for their motivation before we take actions against them," added the Chin community leader.

The refugee children live in rented rooms with their parents in Sitapuri of New Delhi after having fled military-ruled Burma as refugees to India. #

Kidnapped Chin Refugee Safely Home after Three Days

04 August 2012: Mr. Kung Bawih, a Chin refugee from Burma, safely got back to his rented apartment in Kuala Lumpur after being kidnapped for three days by 'uniformed' police in Malaysia.

The 37-year-old refugee was stopped and threatened near the Immanuel Charity Home in Jalan Imbi around 7am while on his way to give money to his relatives on 28 July 2012.

"Two persons wearing a police uniform on their bike passed by and asked me an ID card in the early morning. When I presented my UNHCR refugee card, they said they didn't accept it. They started groping my whole body in search of any valuable items," said the Chin victim.

"Once they knew that I had money, they said they arrested me because I couldn't prove any identity card that they accepted. They let me sit on their bike and stopped by the bridge between Pudu and Imbi. They talked on the phone for a while and another person in a casual dress took me on his bike," added Kung Bawih.

When asked about the direction after quite a distance, the bike driver, who was later joined by another two 'non-uniformed' Malaysians, said they were on their way back to his place.

Kung Bawih said he didn't remember what happened afterwards, recalling: "When I woke up in the morning on 30 July, my head and throat were very painful."

The Chin refugee said he found himself left alone in the jungle outside the Malaysian capital city and all his money was lost by the time he became conscious.

Kung Bawih eventually made his way back to Jalan Imbi of Kuala Lumpur around midnight after taking a long walk, adding: "I asked for help from a male Malaysian who gave me 3 Ringgits and I took a Metro bus up to the Kuala Lumpur City Center."

He has been arrested at least 50 times during his arrival in Malaysia over the past five years, according to the Seihnam newsletter, a weekly journal published in Hakha-Chin in Kuala Lumpur.

Due to the incident, Kung Bawih, from Thantlang town of Burma's Chin State, was unable to attend an interview at the UNHCR Office for his resettlement to Australia 30 July 2012.#

Detained Chin Refugees Face Immigration Charges

10 August 2012: Three undocumented Chin asylum seekers are facing immigration charges after being arrested by Malaysian police in Kuala Perlis last Wednesday.

Ai Mung Phyu Hla, Ai Aung Lin Tun and Ai San Aung in their mid twenties have been held in custody at an immigration detention center in the Malaysian port town near Thailand.

It is believed that none of them have recognition from the United Nations agency.

The three Chins, originally from Kyaukphya village in Paletwa Township of Chin State, Burma, were pinched while waiting for a ferry to go to Langkawi, an island some 30 km off the mainland coast of northwestern Malaysia.

Ko Lwin Lwin, Coordinator of the Paletwa Khumi Community based in Kuala Lumpur, was quoted by

the Khumi Media Group as saying that there was communication with the three detainees and that attempts have been made to release them as soon as possible.

It is claimed that the three Chins would be put on trial at court after 14 days of detention and could face punishment if a legal intervention is not made on time.

Ai Aung Lin Tun and Ai San Aung are members of the Alliance of Chin Refugees (ACR), a community-based voluntary organization providing social services to Chin refugees, while Ai Mung Phyu Hla only arrived in Malaysia on Tuesday.

Aung Lin Tun and San Aung arrived in Malaysia in 2011, according to the Khumi Media Group.

An estimated 800 Khumi Chins are currently stranded in Malaysia after fleeing their native places as refugees from Paletwa Township, Chin State of Burma. #

Chin State Government

Skepticism over Govt's Promise to Boost Electric Supply in Chin State

09 August 2012:

The government of Chin State said in a meeting held in Hakha last Tuesday that plans are underway to increase supply of electricity generated by hydropower to Chin villagers.

Pu Cin Lian Pau, Chin Minister of Electric Power and Industry, said work will begin soon in Kanpetlet and Tonzang townships as well as Rihkuadar and Cikha sub-townships.

In response to a question regarding supply of electricity from the National Power Grid in Magwe Division, the Union Minister said it will only be possible in the next two years as it is a 2012-13 project.

However, Chin community leaders complained that the government officials did not present a clear picture of the project implementation, adding: "How can we trust them without any specific set of deliverables?"

The meeting was attended by about 300 people including community leaders, church pastors, representatives of NGOs (non-governmental organizations) and INGOs (international non-governmental organizations) and government officials.—*continued onto next page*

Answering a question raised by Chin MP Pu Zung Hlei Thang on supply of electricity at Amyotha Hluttaw session on 21 March 2011, Minister for Electric Power No. 2 U Khin Maung Myint said: "Nine diesel engines with installation capacity of 423 kilowatts benefit Kanpetlet, Rezua, Rihkhuadar and Cikha. As engines run on diesel allotted by the government, those towns can enjoy electricity two hours a day."

On 18 July this year, Paletwa locals sent a letter to President Thein Sein, demanding a three-hour supply of electricity to the biggest town in Paletwa Township.

A Khumi-Chin leader from Paletwa Township told Chinland Guardian: "The government keeps saying they provided electricity without knowing what is actually going on with the local people. We haven't received what we demanded in reality."

Minister for Electric Power No. 2 U Khin Maung Myint also said some towns and villages in Chin State would receive a 24-hour supply of electricity by January 2012 through eight small-scale hydropower stations.

But sources confirm there are no Chin towns or villages that get electricity 24 hours a day up to now.

During his presentation at the meeting, Minister of Security and Border Affairs Colonel Zaw Min Oo said 326 out of 1370 towns/villages are supplied electricity through hydropower stations. #

Christian Churches in Matupi had purchased the licenses from the government and they did not sell alcohol to the public.

Chin state government issues license to sell alcohol

10 August 2012: Chin state, Myanmar authorities have permitted selling of alcohol in its townships. Licenses are being issued to the public from this month.

The first phase of the license to sell alcohol is valid for six months in Matupi town, the second capital of Chin state. The license costs 17 lakh Kyats. A license buyer has to pay Kyat 2.5 lakhs to the state government, said a local in Matupi.

"However, there is no official date set in the state, it could be September. The license is being issued from the Township General Administration office. We don't know how much the cost in the second phase of the license to sell alcohol for Matupi Township will be" he added.

The license will be given to seven persons in Matupi town directly from the office. Of these, all persons are in Cangbawng and Khuaboi blocks in Matupi.

The license holders can open wine shops from 10 am to 6 pm, in accordance with government rules and coinciding with office hours. They are prohibited from selling to people less than 18 years of age.

However, no one can sell alcohol in the state except license holders, but if illegal selling continues, the authorities will take action.

The state government is issuing limited license fare (revenue) for each township in a year – accounting for 35 lakh Kyat for Matupi Township, 50 lakh Kyat for Mindat and 100 lakh Kyat for Hakha town.

Selling of alcohol was prohibited in Matupi Township during the period 2004-2007 under the military junta as many youths died due to alcohol abuse and irresponsible behaviour.

So, all members of Christian Churches in Matupi had purchased the licenses from the government and they did not sell alcohol to the public.

They paid 25 lakh Kyats as revenue to the government every year from 2009 to 2011, but now the revenue targeted has been increased and the churches cannot afford it anymore.

In the meantime, many parents in Matupi Township are concerned about their young ones because the license to sell alcohol is being given from this year. # - *Khonumthung*

Timeline of Christian Cross Destruction in Kanpetlet Township



Timeline of Christian Cross Destruction in Kyindwe, Kanpetlet Township

26 July 2012: *Chin Christians, like other ethnic nationalities in Burma, have been targeted by a succession of military regimes because of their ethnicity and religion for decades. The following is a record of dates and events related to demolition of Christian crosses in Kanpetlet in the southern parts of Chin State.*

16 June 2011: Two Christian crosses were erected on both ends of the newly completed suspension bridge on Mung (Hmolong) River in Kyindwe village, Kanpetlet Township, Chin State.

24 July 2011: General Administrative Officer of Kyindwe Village Tract wrote an official letter to U Thang Khanh Htun, leader of Bridge Construction Committee; two pastors from Kyindwe village Chan Hmung and Mnai Saw to demolish the crosses by 10am 25 July, noting that the Chin State government had also already informed them through the telegraph message.

24 July 2011: Head of Kyindwe Police Station, U Win Tin, wrote the same letter as General Administrative Officer of Kyindwe Village Tract to U Thang Khanh Htun, Chan Hmung and Mnai Saw.

28 July 2011: 15 local Chin Buddhist youths were ordered to destroy the crosses on 28 July 2011. Six members of authorities who gave the instruction for the demolition were a Buddhist monk from Kyindwe village; U Win Tin, Police Officer in charge of Kyindwe Police Force; two village headmen U Mya Pyu and U Aung Kyaw; U Chit Sein aka Thang Bu, a school teacher graduated from the University of the Development of National Races; and a local villager, Mg Mg aka Kyin Htwe.

8 November 2011: The Chin National Party initiated a petition complaining the destruction of the crosses, which was signed by a total of 9 MPs at the State level and submitted it to the President.

9 November 2011: Christians in Kanpetlet and Mindat townships sent a separate letter of complaint and a signature petition signed by more than 1,000 Chin Christians to President Thein Sein, demanding action to be taken in accordance with the law.

20 April 2012: Dr. Ba Maung, Minister of Social Affairs from Chin State government, had a discussion with Pu Ling Tun on behalf of Christians regarding a plan to hold a peaceful demonstration by the Christian public on 22 and 23 May 2012. Dr. Ba Maung offered him an informal apology during their private meeting.

21 April 2012: Christian groups held an emergency meeting in Shinpaung (Hmukhimding) village under the leadership of U Ling Htun and Salai Myo Chit, Secretary-II of the Chin National Party (CNP).—*continued on next page*

25 April 2012: A document containing three points agreed at the emergency meeting was faxed to Dr. Ba Maung:

Permission to re-erect two Christian crosses of the same size and design as the previous ones
Permission to construct church buildings in Kyindwe village and other places for Christian believers and
Equal supports from the Ministry of Religious Affairs for all religions in Chin State.

15 May 2012: A reconciliation meeting between Christians and Buddhists was held at State High School Hall in Kyindwe village at 4pm. The meeting was attended by Dr. Ba Maung together with some Buddhist members and about 100 Christians from different denominations, with 10 elders representing Kyindwe village.

Dr. Ba Maung made a verbal apology to the Christians, saying he was genuinely sorry for what had happened but refused to accept the three-point proposals made by the Christians, saying he was not authorized to grant such permission.

Nephew of Dr. Ba Maung, U Nyan Maung, an influential person in Kyindwe village who is thought to have masterminded the destruction of Christian crosses, also offered an apology to Christians by saying such words as 'sorry' and 'forgiveness' from the podium.

22-23 May 2012: A plan to stage a 2-day peaceful demonstration in Kanpetlet town by Chin Christians was called off after the reconciliation meeting.

Note: *As of today, the government of Chin State has not taken any action against the demolition of Christian crosses in Kyindwe village, apart from signing a letter of complaint allegedly sent to President Thein Sein. No official response has been received from the office of President Thein Sein. The three-point proposal submitted to Dr. Ba Maung at the reconciliation meeting by the Chin Christians remains unanswered. The so-called 'reconciliation meeting' was titled and organized by Dr. Ba Maung on his own initiative, not as a representative of the government of Chin State, ahead of the planned demonstration.*

Compiled by Jeremy Hoipang (jeremyhoipang@rocketmail.com)

Edited by Salai Sui Ca

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Opinion

Ensuring Govt. Transparency through Institutional Checks and Balances

The two Houses of Hluttaw have so far established about 20 parliamentary committees and subcommittees. However, there still needs to be more such committees formed, given the need of the country. The American Congress, by comparison, has a total of 38 permanent committees and 242 subcommittees.

Parliamentary committees' roles may be relatively unimportant in countries that practice Westminster model of parliamentary democracy. But for a country like Burma, which practices a Presidential-Parliamentary hybrid system, the need for a strong role for legislative committees is crucially significant. In other words, in a presidential system, without a strong role of the committees there can be no accountability mechanism (a part from the Judiciary) that can ensure checks and balances against the executive branch of government. As the former US President Woodrow Wilson put it, "Committees are like little Legislatures."

It will be interesting to see the upcoming new legislation that will define or clarify the interrelationship between the legislative and executive branch of government: the extent of legislative power vis-à-vis the executive power. Whether the legislative committees will have the power to examine secret documents, monitor government activities and legally examine budget accounts, as in the case in the American system? Whether the committee will have the authority to freely summon officials from the executive branch to provide answers? Or whether they will have the power to appoint a panel of experts? (Note: The Constitution only prohibits the appointment of people outside of the parliament to the legislative committees). Or whether the committees will have only symbolic powers as is the case in the United Kingdom? These are the questions that need to be examined.

Given that the 2008 constitution provides for a Presidential-Parliamentary hybrid system, we can expect much oddity when it comes to drafting a legislation that will define the relative powers of the legislative committees. (The constitution doesn't define the specific roles of the legislative committees). Whereas the legislative and executive branch are fused in a parliamentary system, the purpose of legislative committees, on the other end of the spectrum, is to provide a system of checks and balances against the executive branch.

The reason why there is no need for legislative checks against the executive branch in parliamentary system is because of the fact that the executive is elected out of the legislative branch and therefore, the executive is already directly accountable to the legislative branch.

It is in the interest of the ruling party as well to not allow for only nominal powers accorded to the legislative committees, as this can allow for the opposition parties to corner them in the event of serious disagreements. The reason is that there is a constitutional limitation on the term of the president (whereas parliamentary system doesn't place a fixed term for the executive or Prime Minister). The parliamentary committees serve as an important means by which the ruling party can control legislative agendas in the parliament. Frankly speaking, no ruling parties will be content or feel secure enough only with the power solely to appoint the President.

Giving adequate powers to the various parliamentary committees can provide the last defense against executive encroachment, as in the case of the American system, since under the 2008 constitution the Parliament only has the power to appoint the President but not to dissolve the government. Ensuring powers for the parliamentary committees is in the interest of the ruling party especially.

For countries that practice only partial or semi presidential system, having powerful authority for as many committees is especially important for the opposition parties as well, since there is

very little prospect for them to participate in the conduct of governance. Therefore, having weak parliamentary committees will amount to denying any meaningful political participation for the opposition parties.

Under the current situation, it is extremely difficult for the opposition parties to even develop short term and long term policies, or to draft proposals due to lack of access to government budget accounts, and closely monitor government policies, let alone being able to keep their actions in check.

If this situation persists or we fail to adequately empower the parliamentary committees in a timely fashion, there is a risk the government will be detached from Parliament and by extension, entirely disconnected from the people. Quite frankly, the people would have no way of knowing if and when the government decides to do things in secret. We can't rely only on the media to ensure transparency. In this context, there is a concern that democracy in Burma may become "the election of dictatorship every five years," as political scientist Francis Fukuyama points out.

By Salai Ceu Bik Thawng

The author is General Secretary of the Chin National Party (CNP), which won 9 parliamentary seats in the 2010 elections in Burma.

Editor's note: *Parliamentary committees and legislative committees are interchangeably used in this article.*

Poem**Voice of A Barren Land (Chinland)**

17 July 2012 | Salai Zovailang Awi

The land was fragrant and fertile
 But now it is forlorn and futile
 The land was full of fame and flame
 But now it is full of famine and blame

The land groans in fear and despair
 And mourns in tears for its lost care
 The land seeks a heart, strong and active
 In desperate need of a hand, thus liberative

The land summons a patriotic leader
 And yet challenges to confront the viper
 The voice roars in the sky like a thunder
 It still awaits the lights of a youngster

The land was full of calmness and happiness
 But now it is full of helplessness and hopelessness
 The land was known as a golden land
 But now it is known as a barren land

Cartoon