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Burmese 'Thingyang' Water Festival held in Hakha, Chin State (Photo: CHRO)

Destruction of Clock Tower with Christian cross on top in Mualbem, Tedim Township (below)

See page 10 for details



(Photo: ZT)

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Arbitrary Taxation & Extortion

Soldiers Confiscated Land Owned by Chin Locals

12 March 2012:

Burma Army soldiers based in Paletwa Township of Chin State have confiscated plots of land owned by the local people since 1999, a local reported to the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO).

Soldiers from Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) No. 232 seized 24 acres of farmland in Singin Village, about 6 miles away from Paletwa Town in early this month, according to the local, who asked not to be named.

The local land owners held a meeting on 14 March 2012 and agreed to report the matter to the town-

ship authority if the soldiers continued land-confiscating in the future. However, there is no specific body to be accountable for the reporting yet, added the local.

“Up to this date, the total acre of land confiscated has reached 139 and another 15 acres have been claimed to be seized again for construction of an airport. About 24 acres of the latest confiscated land might also be used for the airport construction,” added the local.

Due to these practices of land confiscation, the owners face difficulties in their daily livelihoods and some of the last victims from Singin Village have no other choices but to move to other places.

The soldiers are, instead, using the confiscated farmland for breeding 60 goats and 30 cows, according to sources. #

“... the total acre of land confiscated has reached 139 and another 15 acres have been claimed to be seized again for construction of an airport. About 24 acres of the latest confiscated land might also be used for the airport construction.”

Money Forcibly Collected from School Students

16 March 2012: An ‘unnamed’ school headmistress has been accused of forcibly collecting money from students of Zawngte Village Tract in Falam Township in Chin State, a local reported to the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO).

On 11 December 2011, the headmistress collected 1,000 kyats from each student in Zawngte Village Tract, saying the money would be used for various expenses needed for the school.

Schools in Leilet, Selawn, Singai, Tlangkawi, Zawngte, Thip-cang, Ngailan, Hnahthial-A, Hnahthial-B and Haimual villages have been forced to contribute for the ‘unknown’ fund.

“Those parents who send two or three of their children to school are facing great difficulty. They are much disappointed as it was compulsory and they had no choice. Parents would ask the headmistress the reasons for the collection but she would bluntly say that it is an order from a higher authority,” added the local.

Similarly, school learning materials were forcibly sold to local students in February 2012 in the same schools, according to sources. #

Chins forced to Contribute Money for Road Construction

01 April 2012: Chin residents in Kalaymyo of Sagaing Division were ordered to make financial contribution for paving the road with tar under the new government.

Each household in Tahan, Sanmyo, Taungzalat and Taungphila blocks where the majority are of Chin ethnicity gave 100,000 Kyats to the municipal department for fund to make a tar surface on the road in front of their houses, ac-

ording to the Chin Human Rights Organization's source.

"The local authorities verbally threatened those families who were not able to finish the roads. Of course, some didn't have enough money but there hasn't been any further actions taken against them," said a Chin local from Tahan, who asks not to be named.

Last week, Sagaing Division (Region) Chief Minister U Tha Aye, of the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), opened the newly tarred road to the public with a ribbon-cutting

ceremony held in Taungphila block.

Meanwhile, about 25 Chin locals from Thanphu village, Kale Township in Sagaing Division were forced by the administrative officer to contribute labour for construction of the government middle school in the last week of February 2012.

The population of Kalaymyo is estimated to be 400,000, comprising 55% Burmese, 35% Chin and 10% other nationalities and foreigners, according to unconfirmed sources.#

Money Forcibly Collected from Villagers for Library Construction

10 April 2012: Tlangzar villagers of Falam Township, Chin State, have been forced to make financial contribution for construction of a library under a direct order of Falam Township Administration Officer, according to a Chin Human Rights Organization's source.

Village headman Thang Hi began the forcible collection starting from 5 January under an instruc-

tion of U Khin Maung Win, Falam Township Administration Officer, the Chin local said.

The collection of financial contributions was carried out under three different categories with 15,000 kyats from Group A, 8,000 from Group B and 5,000 from Group C, according to the local who asked not to be named.

"An NGO called Shalom has donated 1,000,000 kyats for the library construction and the villagers have contributed another 1,000,000. And now another 5,000,000 is being forcibly collected," added the local.

A total of 25,000,000 kyats was estimated for the construction cost of the village library, with 18 feet in length and 12 feet in width.

The library, constructed with money forcibly collected from the locals, was officially opened in a ribbon-cutting ceremony by U Kap Tel, Chief Justice of Chin State, on 29 March 2012.

"The library construction has cost 5,000,000 kyats deficit and the amount is to be collected again from the villagers starting from April this year," the villager continue.#

Local Travellers Charged 200 Kyats for Guest Registration

12 April 2012: Chin locals are forced to pay 200 kyats per head to get them registered as guests by the local authorities when travelling from one village to another, an 'unnamed' local reported to the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO).

The headman of Tlangzar village in Falam Township forcibly asked travellers from Thantlang Township making a trip to and from Falam and spending

nights at the village to contribute 200 kyats per head for guest registration fees, the local said.

"The village head U Thang Hi said that the government gives no funding for village administration and they have been using guest registration fees for emergency and regular meeting costs," he said.

Guest registration fees have been collected in Tlangzar village for years and those failing to report to the local authorities are fined 1,000 kyats, according to the Chin local.#



Chins Forced to Contribute Money for Hakha Water Festival

14 April 2012: Local people and government employees in Hakha, Chin State have been forced to make financial contributions for holding Thingyan, the Burmese New Year Water Festival.

Each household in six wards of Hakha are forcibly asked to give the amount ranging from 1,500 to 2,000 kyats under the leadership of the Township Administration Office in association with wards committee members.

A Hakha local, whose name is kept anonymous, told *Chinland Guardian*: "In Pyidawta ward, families are collected between 1,500 and 2,000 kyats. Some families can afford only 1,000 but we don't know what will happen to them."

The Township Administration Office and committee members of wards in Hakha took responsibilities for organizing the Burmese event under the direct instructions of the government of Chin State, according to a source from the government.

Some government employees complained about the financial contributions demanded by the authorities, adding: "They cut the amount off our salaries in addition to a separate contribution made by our families."

"We have got to make contributions in fear of the possible consequences. Some employees are not informed yet but they said they expected a salary cut at the end of this month," said a government staff from the Township Admin Office.

A group of teenagers mostly under the age of 20 have been forced to participate in throwing water from the stage built on the main street during the water festival starting on 12 April.

"The money collected from the locals is also used for hiring vehicles to take a troupe of Thingyan dancers and family members of army soldiers residing on Mount Rungtlang to the town," one of the youth leaders told *Chinland Guardian*.

The event has been taking place since last Thursday amid acute water shortages reported facing the local people in the capital of Chin State.

"Some of the water used for the Buddhist Thingyan is bought from a local company that provides washing services for bikes and cars in the Old Hakha ward. But I am not sure about the cost," added the youth leader.

In the past, celebrations of the water festival in Hakha involved a forcible collection of money from the Chin locals, who are mostly Christians.

A water-throwing festival, better known in Burmese as 'Thingyan', takes place over a period of four to five days normally starting from 12 to 16 April.

Comprised of six main wards such as Old Hakha, Dawrthar, Pyidawta, Dawrhulun, New Hakha and Cawbuk, Hakha has got an estimated population of over 20,000 with more than 2,480 houses, according to the 2008 Township Profiles by the Ministry of Home Affairs. #

Army Soldiers Confiscated over 960 Acres of Farmland

17 April 2012: Burma Army soldiers have confiscated over 960 acres of farmland belonging to the Chin locals in Phaneng village in Matupi Township, a Chin Human Rights Organization's source disclosed.

Tactical Commander of Burma Army Infantry Light Battalion (LIB) No. 2 based in Matupi seized plots of land from the villagers for military uses, a Chin farmer who also lost his land and asked to remain anonymous for security reasons said.

"The land plays a vital role for Phaneng villagers and their livelihoods. After inspecting the land on 28 November 2011 to farm in 2012, Office of the Tactical Command issued a prohibition order to village administration officer that the villagers are not allowed to use it for farming as it is of the military," he con-

tinued.

The Tactical Command Office summoned Phaneng village elders the following day. They were informed that U Sang Uk, head of Land Registry Department with his members and along with a captain and his soldiers, surveyed the land and that the land has been confiscated for military use, he added.

Some proximities of the land has been confiscated by Burmese Army Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) No. 140 since it started basing in the area in 2004 and there has been no information on the issuance of official confiscation till date that the villagers of Phaneng still think the land as their own and plan to farm the land this year, he continued.

Tactical Command No. 2 based in Matupi confiscated 12 acres of farming land for electrical production in 2005, according to sources.#

Over 260 Households Forced to Contribute for Indo-Burma Rih Road Construction

25 April 2012: At least 267 households from 10 villages in Falam Township, Chin State have been ordered to make financial contributions for reconstruction of Falam Rih road, according to a Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) source.

The forcible collection began when the government of Chin State asked for assistance in February this year from village chairmen and the local road construction committee for completion of Falam Rih road, constructed on a self-help basis by local communities.

At least 1,000 kyats has been forcibly collected from each household of 70 from Leilet, 50 from Singai, 25 from Tlangkawi, 7 from Selawn, 12 from Ngailan, 18 each from Haimual and Thipcang, 30 from Hnahthial-A and 12 from Hnahthial-B, according to a Haimual villager.

Reconstruction of the 80-mile long Falam Rih road connecting Chin State of Burma and Mizoram State of India began early this year with funds contributed by Falam communities based in foreign countries.

The government of Chin State has been severely criticized for providing no or little assistance towards construction of the Indo-Burma road and for claim-

ing the credit for development works done by the local communities.

"The government officials come and go only for the opening ceremony of the road. They make a lot of promises and never keep them. Therefore, we, the local people, have got to rely on ourselves and work together," said one of the community leaders.

On 18 January 2012, Chief Minister U Hung Ngai attended the inauguration for upgrading Falam Rih road, promising to provide unstinting necessary support for the construction, according to the *Khonumthung* News.

The Falam Rih road was re-opened in late 2009 after a closure of nearly 10 years by the military authorities.

Mid this month, Chief Minister U Hung Ngai inaugurated a new 'Saisihchuak' road in Thantlang township near the Indo-Burma border, funded and constructed by the local villagers in collaboration with Chin communities abroad.

Earlier this month, Chief Minister Pu Hung Ngai held an official opening ceremony for the Mindat-Aukcheng Jeep road, also funded and constructed by local villagers, in Mindat Township, Chin State. #

Locals Faced Difficulty due to 'Forced' Cemetery Relocation

25 April 2012: Locals have been facing difficulty as authorities of Tahan Township, Kalaymyo in Sagaing Division, shifted the cemetery of Tahan to a far location, reported a local to Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO).

In June 2012, the government issued an order to move the cemetery of Tahan, Kalaymyo in Sagaing Division. After collecting money from the locals, they were forcibly demanded to move to the new cemetery between Varpui and Tlangzawl villages.

The plot for the new cemetery was purchased with Kyats 72 lakhs and it has been used since January 2012.

"The place is very far and it is impossible to reach there on foot. The government has no transportation arrangement that the Young Mizo Association (YMA) and a Christian denomination bought a car and a bus. And a single burial service costs Kyats 30,000 for renting vehicles. Besides, a plot for one grave costs Kyats 1 lakh. The locals are very disappointed since the majority of them are poor," he added.

According to the government order, all the graves and the headstones must face eastwards in a manner.

"The locals complained to the cemetery workers but they were told that it was the government order and they could not help in the matter. The locals have no choice but to remain quiet," he added.#

Forced Labour

Locals Forced to Contribute Labour for School Construction

24 March 2012:

About 25 local villagers were forced to work in the construction of Government Middle School in Thanphu village of Kalaymyo in Sagaing Division, a local reported to the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO).

The government administration officer ordered the villagers to freely contribute labour for one whole day in the second week of February 2012.

The local said the carpenters working at the school construction were incompetent, according to the administration officer.

"The villagers have to contribute labour in a clockwise rotation basis in the village and this is Area No. 4's turn. One member from each household has to provide one-day labour without any compensation," added the local.

There are 980 households in Thanphu Village, which is divided into four Wards such as Area 1, 2, 3, and 4. The school has been constructed under the supervision of four carpenters since 2011, according to sources. #

Villagers Forced to Plant Jatropha in Matupi Township

28 March 2012: The government Administration Officer issued an order to local villagers of Valangte in Matupi Township, Chin State to plant jatropha, threatening to take action against those failing to do, according to a Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO)'s source.

A Chin local, who remains anonymous, said the villagers were forced to grow 200 plants in the compound of the Valangte Baptist Church and 50 in each individual's compound, with the implementation stipulated during summer 2012.

"The government forced us to grow but we are not provided any plants. We have to find them on our own. We have no such seeds or plants in our village and some travel to other villages to buy the seedlings and use horses for conveyance," added the local.

Many villagers are now facing difficulties in looking for the plants as even some families who have the seedlings refuse to sell in fear that they would also have problems if and when the government issues an order to do the plantation in the future.#

Freedom of Religion

Questions over Govt's Plan to Construct New Buddhist Pagoda in Chin State

19 March 2012:

Chin Christians living outside Burma have expressed their displeasure with a recent decision of the State level ministerial meeting to build a new Buddhist pagoda near Hakha Town, the capital of Chin State.

The issue has sparked heated discussions on several Chin internet discussion groups. Many Chins across the globe say they are surprised at how a meeting attended by 11 State cabinet members, which include six Christians, four Buddhists and one subscribing to indigenous religion Laipian, was able to arrive at a decision to sanction the construction of a Buddhist pagoda in a town whose habitual residents are nearly 100 percent Christians.

"Local people were surprised by the news. So far the government of Chin State has not disclosed anything about the meeting and no one seems to know about the details. This clearly is an indication of the lack of transparency in their administration," a local Chin leader told Chinland Guardian.

The lack of transparency in the conduct of both legislative affairs and government branch is not new in Chin State. In June 2011, when ministry appointment was debated by a special sitting of the Chin State Parliament, all non-USDP MPs objected the government's proposal to have only 8 ministries. But the official paper The Mirrors reported the next day that the appointment was 'unanimously' approved by the Chin State Parliament.

Sources claim that Hung Ngai, Chief Minister of Chin State, and Colonel Zaw Min Oo, Minister of Security and Border Areas, both Buddhists, put forward the proposal during the four-day meeting held in Hakha, Chin

State from 24-27 February 2012.

The meeting decision stipulates that the new government-sanctioned Buddhist pagoda will be built on a scenic viewpoint overlooking Hakha Town. The designated place is located at the entrance to Hakha on the way towards nearby Thantlang Town.

Questions are being raised about who will pay for the construction, which was not discussed at the meeting.

"Why the need for construction of another Buddhist pagoda in Hakha when the only Buddhist residents are temporary residents who are either working here as civil servants or Burma Army soldiers?" asked one Christian leader and a resident of Hakha.

According to the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO), which monitors human rights situation in Chin State, official restrictions on the construction or renovation of Christian religious infrastructures such as churches remain in place.

In July 2011, two Christian crosses erected by local Christians in southern Chin State's Kanpetlet Township were destroyed by local Buddhist youths acting on instruction from the Chin State government.

Nine Chin Members of Parliament sent a letter of complaint to Burma's president Thein Sein asking for an investigation into the incident. More than one thousand local Christians also sent a separate petition to Thein Sein. But no known action has been taken to date.

According to US-based Physicians for Human Rights, which conducted a study on human rights in Chin State, 14 percent of Chin households reported that they were persecuted on the basis of their Christian religious identity.

It is estimated that more than 90 percent of Chins are Christians.#

“...So far the government of Chin State has not disclosed anything about the meeting and no one seems to know about the details. This clearly is an indication of the lack of transparency in their administration.”

Soldiers Interrupted Christian Conference, Threatened MP in Chin State

20 March 2012: In a fresh public incident that contradicts the new image of Chin State government as a peace-loving authority, Burma Army soldiers interrupted a Chin Christian conference and threatened an MP at gunpoint in Chin State, Burma.

In its statement released today, the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) said several soldiers from Matupi-based Light Infantry Battalion No. 140 disrupted a Christian gathering of more than 1,000 delegates held at Sabawngte village in Matupi Township on 10 March 2012.

And Captain Aung Zaw Hteik and Captain Myo Min Hteik severely blamed the village headman for not informing them of the event although a prior permission had been officially obtained from the Matupi Township General Administrative Office, according to CHRO.

Pu Van Cin, Chin MP elected last year from the Ethnic National Development Party, was threatened with a gun by Captain Myo Min Hteik in civilian clothes

when he came to the scene introducing himself to the army officers.

The Captain was quoted by CHRO as saying: "I don't give a [expletive] about you being a Member of Parliament. We are not under the control of the Chin State authorities. We take orders from the North Western Regional Command."

CHRO's Program Director Salai Za Uk Ling said: "It is very difficult for Chin Christians to hold large gatherings without harassment and disruption."

The soldiers remained in the village overnight, disrupting the worship service by carrying guns and patrolling around the church, according to the statement.

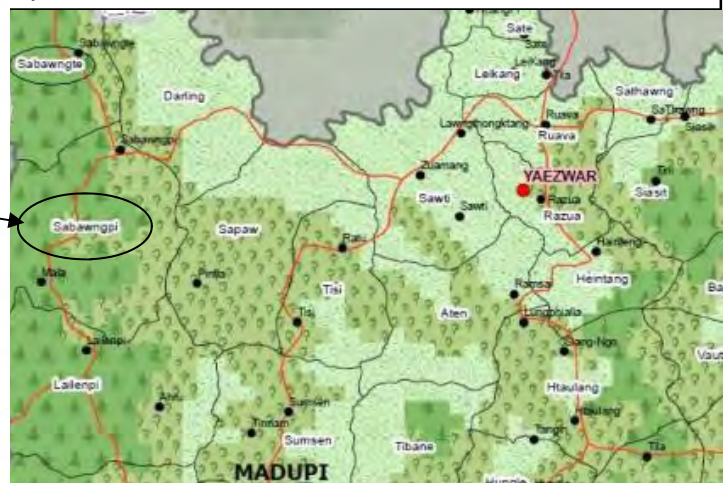
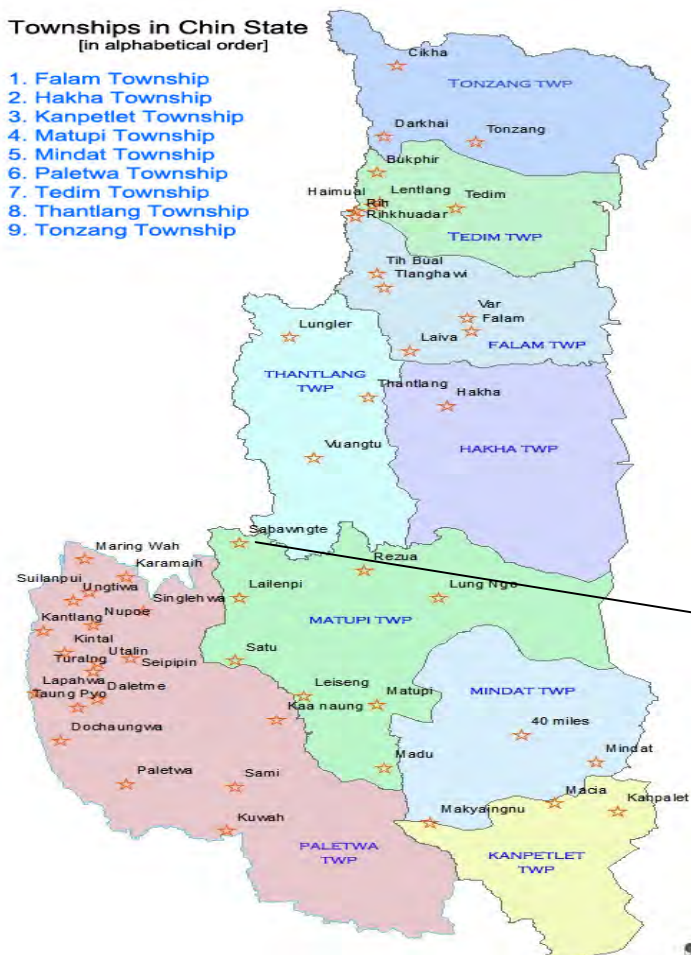
"As far as we know, no legal or disciplinary action has been taken against these soldiers from LIB140. They violated the right to freedom of religious assembly and threatened a Chin MP in front of dozens of witnesses, and clearly believe they are above the law. This incident highlights the problem of impunity in Burma, especially for members of the armed forces," continued Salai Za Uk Ling of CHRO, an organization that has monitored human rights situation in Chin State since 1995.

The Christian conference attended by delegates from 80 local branches of the Mara (Chin) Evangelical Church at Sabawngte village in a remote part of Matupi Township took place from 8-13 March 2012.

Although armed resistance group the Chin National Front signed a preliminary ceasefire agreement with the Chin State government in January this year, Chin State remains heavily militarized, with 54 Burma Army camps stationed in all nine main township areas of the state.#

Townships in Chin State (in alphabetical order)

1. Falam Township
2. Hakha Township
3. Kanpetlet Township
4. Matupi Township
5. Mindat Township
6. Paletwa Township
7. Tedim Township
8. Thantlang Township
9. Tonzang Township





Clock Tower with cross on top in Mualbem (left) & after being bulldozed (right) (Photo: ZT)

Christian Cross Destroyed by USDP Members in Tedim Township

19 April 2012: Members of the governing Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) destroyed a clock tower with a Christian cross erected on its top in Mualbem village of Tedim Township, Chin State last Wednesday.

The cross-donned clock tower was planted in 2009 to mark the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Assembly of God church in the village.

In a BBC Burmese interview on Tuesday, Pa Thang Do Khen, of Mualbem village, said the local authorities are responsible for the destruction.

When asked about the reason, Thang Do Khen said he did not know details, adding: "We have heard that it was destroyed on the direct order of the village chairman for road expansion."

It is still unclear whether the order to destroy the cross originated with the village chairman or it came from higher up.

Local members of government-backed USDP did not consult or inform the villagers of their plans to pull

down the cross, according to one community leader.

"We are not really sure the real reason why the cross was destroyed. These local USDP members are all Christians," the leader told Chinland Guardian.

Collectively constructed with financial contributions by the local villagers, the cross-donned clock tower was razed to the ground by a bulldozer on 11 April 2012.

Thang Do Khen also confirmed in the interview that Pa Hau Khan Nang, organizer of Tedim Township USDP party, who is also the village chairman, is a younger brother of Pa Suan Do Cin, an MP elected in 2010 on USDP ticket.

The Christian cross was originally erected by the Assembly of God church in association with the Mualbem Christian Family under the leadership of the previous village headman Pa Kai Sian Mung on 26 March 2009.

Mualbem village has only Christians and Laipian, a local indigenous religion, residents.

In July 2011, two Christian crosses were demolished in Kyindwe village, Kanpetlet Township on orders of the Chin State government.#

Chin Family Evicted from Village for Conversion to Christianity

27 April 2012: Seven members of a Chin Christian family including an elderly and children have been evicted from Rawnglaung village in Mindat Township, Chin State for their conversion to Christianity around mid of this month.

Rawnglaung Village Tract Chairman U Ha Ling, of the Union Solidarity Development Party (USDP), went to a rented house of the Cho Chin family on 15 April 2012 and ordered them to immediately leave the village.

U Ngai Kee and his family members including three children between 3 and 7 years of age, wife, younger sister and elderly mother have since stayed in a small makeshift tent built outside of the village after the forcible eviction.

U Ha Ling filed a case against the Christian family reportedly to U Hung Ngai, Chief Minister of Chin State on 15 April 2012, according to the victim, who managed to get a copy of the letter.

The 26-year-old Chin father said parts of the letter read Rawnglaung is a Buddhist village and Christians are not allowed to visit or live in.

In the letter, U Ha Ling accused U Ngai Kee of causing division among the villagers because of his Christian faith, demanding Chief Minister to issue an order of expulsion from Rawnglaung to the Chin family.

Since their conversion from a traditional Animisim to Christianity in 2003, U Ngai Kee and his family have faced various forms of discrimination and persecution in the village for their new religious faith.

"Since our conversion, my family and I have suffered from persecution, discrimination and harassment. But we forgive and always pray for them. However, we still want justice, free-

dom, and the right to believe, worship and live," said U Ngai Kee, a Baptist member.

U Ngai Kee said his family had worship services and prayer meetings at their house, with a Baptist pastor who visited them at times as they had no pastor or church building in the village.

Local Buddhist villagers shouted abusive remarks and threw stones at the house of U Ngai Kee while conducting worship services and prayer meetings.

It is said that U Ngai Kee's family have been targeted with a series of discriminatory actions as a Buddhist monk Ashin Pyinnyar Zawta and a local Buddhist missionary U Gei Law, who have influence on the village chairman and other villagers, are worried about the growth of Christianity in the village.

Staying away at the house of a Christian family in a nearby village of Awlaungpang for a while in an attempt to avoid constant harassment, the Ngai Kee's family were welcome back to Rawnglaung village in 2011 after several negotiations had been made with the village chairman.

"We were actually welcome at that time on the ground that we are native to the village. We have our family registration Form 10 in this village," explained the Chin Christian.

In January 2012, U Ha Ling accused Rev. Tam Thang, a Baptist pastor from Mindat, and U Mnai Khaing of making a regular visit to U Ngai Kee and his family in the village, sending a letter to U Win Htay, Mindat Township General Administrative Officer, to handle the situation.

Despite conducting an interrogation with Rev. Tam Thang and U Mnai Khaing, U Thang Law, Officer of

Township Religious Affairs, together with U Win Htay, have not taken any action against unfair treatment against the Christians up to date.

U Ngai Kee was recently banned from repairing his house by the Mindat township authorities and the village chairman with no obvious reasons on 27 March 2012.

The Office of Mindat Township Religious Affairs is claimed to have issued an order to discontinue reconstruction of the house and to drive U Ngai Kee and his family out of the village after a complaint letter was filed to the authority by U Ha Ling, the village Chairman.

U Ngai Kee said he is not leaving his native village as it has been his forefathers' inhabited land for many generations, adding: "We do not commit any crime. But my family and I have been persecuted because of our faith in Christianity."

"My mother is very old now and she wants to be buried next to my father's grave in the village when she dies. These days, she gets worried so much because of the expulsion," said U Ngai Kee.

A government employee from Mindat Town said: "I have heard from some Rawnglaung villagers that the Buddhist monk and the village chairman do not like to hear Christian songs, prayers and worship services from the Chin Christian family's house. Especially, they don't like any Christian visitors coming to the village."

Located near the border between Matupi and Mindat townships, Rawnglaung village is estimated to have 36 households with a total population of 193 Cho Chins, of which 35 families are Buddhists.#

Reporting by Jeremy Hoipang
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Other Human Rights Violations

40 Houses Demolished for Indo-Burma Road Construction

20 March 2012:

40 houses were knocked down under the instructions of the local authorities in Laitui village, Tedim Township in Chin State for Indo-Burma No. 2 road construction, a Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO)'s source revealed.

"The construction department of Chin State government ordered the destruction of 40 in November 2011 and January 2012 as part of the Indo-Burma border trade project. According to the construction workers, it was a direct order from the office of the Construction Department in Naypitaw," added the local.

The government said it would compensate 100,000 kyats to each household.

"The houses were already destroyed but there hasn't been any kind of payment as compensation yet. Some villagers who own some plots of land have constructed new houses while others still have no idea since they have no land," continued the Chin local, who asked not to be named.

Owners of the houses were said to have been deeply disappointed, according to the local who added, saying: "They just remained silent as they didn't know where and who to approach to for solving the problems."

It is claimed that the cost of the Indo-Burma road construction would be paid by the Indian Government while Burma's government is to be financially responsible for the border trade project management. #

Corrupt HA Abuses Chin Villagers in Paletwa Township

13 April 2012: Local villagers in Tanthawng of Paletwa Township, Chin State have suffered from corruption and abuses perpetrated by a Burmese HA (health assistant), U Myint Oo.

U Myint Oo, who has been in charge of the village health centre, takes unfair amount of money from the villagers for minor medical check-ups and tells them to buy medicines only from his private shop, according to the locals.

The government health assistant is also accused of showing adult movies containing explicit scenes including porn movies to young local teenagers and under-age children at his video theatre.

One of the local Dai-Chin leaders said: "U Myint Oo is an unscrupulous Health Assistant. He uses abusive words and is corrupt in his work. He is interested only in making money. He would do anything to get money out of us even though he is well aware that we are still suffering from the effects of food crisis."

U Myint Oo is known to have sold mosquito nets, which are freely distributed by UNICEF, to the local Chins.

"He is helpless to poor patients. He ruins our community morally, economically, physically and financially," added the village leader.

The local villagers claimed that at least 9 patients have died and 7 patients injured unnecessarily because of U Myint Oo's lack of proper treatments.

"He does not treat patients carefully without money. Therefore, poor villagers are always suffering. He pays attention and offers good services only to those who have money," said the villager.

The village leaders complained about U Myint Oo to Dr. Aye Kyaw, head of Paletwa Township Health Department but no action has yet been taken against him up to date.

It is claimed that U Myint Oo reportedly bribed Dr. Aye Kyaw to get the case disposed of.

Transferred from Rangoon in 2004, U Myint Oo and his second wife, who is a nurse, arrived in Tanthawng Village, Paletwa Township of Chin State to be in charge of the village health centre.

Tanthawng, mostly populated by Dai Chins, serves as the only health center for an estimated number of 10,000 villagers from about 45 villages in Paletwa Township.

There are only 24 hospitals for an estimated population of about 550,000 people in a total of 1,355 villages in Chin State, the poorest of Burma's 14 states and divisions, according to the Annual Hospital Statistics Report published in March 2010 by the Ministry of Health. #

Reporting by Jeremy Hoipang
jeremyhoipang@rocketmail.com

Army Soldiers Accused of Bootlegging in Matupi

23 April 2012: Army soldiers based in Matupi town have been engaged in selling alcoholic drinks to the locals near Phanai village in Matupi Township, Chin State amid prohibition attempts by the local community.

Warrant Officer Maung Soe and three soldiers from Burma Army Light Infantry Battalion No. 140 are accused of 'disrespecting' community-initiated anti-alcohol campaigns and of bootlegging, according to a Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) source.

A local leader said the soldiers are camping near Phanai village for months and being allowed to sell alcohol by orders of Battalion Commander Major Saw Myint.

"We have managed to ban local people from selling alcohols in our area and for that, the youth group in association with community leaders make a yearly tax payment of 25 lakh kyats for the alcohol license to Naypyidaw," said the community leader.

In many parts of Chin State, local communities bought the license from the government to pre-empt anyone from selling alcohol.

The soldiers have also been criticized for taking advantage of the anti-alcohol campaign organized by the local youth group and community leaders.

"It is very sad and shocking that the soldiers started selling alcoholic drinks rather than helping our programme to combat social problems facing our community. And they even sell them at higher prices. They are not supposed to destroy but protect the people," added the Chin local.

The price for one bottle has increased from 1,000 to 2,500 kyats.

In recent weeks, alcohol-related problems have emerged in the local community with some being involved in stealing, while others are working as the soldier's agents for trading liquor.

"Our campaign has not been successful because we cannot ban soldiers and police as well as Burmese government employees from this destructive business. And it is a clear indication of ignoring the voices of the people," continued the leader.

In Matupi town, the youth group and community leaders in partnership with an alliance of Christian denominations started the movement of anti-alcohol campaign programme in 2010.

Earlier this year, a Buddhist monk abbot in Lungler village of Thantlang Township, Chin State was accused of covertly getting engaged in trading and selling alcoholic drinks to the locals. #

Humanitarian Situation

Fire Destroyed 18,000 Tins of Rice in Matupi Township

02 April 2012: Wild fire, believed to have spread from the slash-and-burn fields, destroyed 18,000 tins of rice (1 tin = 10.5 kg) stored in the granaries in Thangping village, Matupi Township in southern parts of Chin State last Friday.

The blaze worsened by strong winds and the high temperature of the dry season burnt down to ashes a total of four rice storage, built about two miles away from the village, according to a Chin local.

"The flames were so strong that the areas cleared along the edge of the

fields to prevent fire from spreading became useless. Once we learned about the fire, all the villagers fetched water as much as they could get but their efforts were in vain," said the Chin villager.

Other rice storage and three nearby houses were saved from the blaze after the villagers took the thatched roofs away.

Up to this date, the local government has not taken any actions in an effort to address the situation and provide necessary assistance to the Chin victims.

In January this year, a report by UN-OCHA (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) said the food security condition in parts of Chin State, especially in Kanpetlet,

Matupi, Mindat and Paletwa townships, is of great concern due to crop failures and an extreme reduction of yield in 2011.

In the aftermath of the devastating bamboo-and-rat-related food crisis that has ravaged much of Chin State over the past few years, a renewed food shortage is on the cards to hit Chin villagers in remote areas of southern Chin State.

"We don't know what to do really even though we want to help the villagers who have just lost all their stored rice," said the local villager.

A similar incident took place on 15 March 2010 in Pakheng village in Matupi Township, completely damaging 11 houses. #

Lemro Dam Project Not to Benefit Chin Locals in Paletwa Township

07 April 2012: A China-Burma dam project being constructed on the Lemro (locally called Phunglong) river in Paletwa Township, Chin State will not benefit the Chin locals in the region upon completion, according to the local community.

A source close to the Lemro Dam construction, a joint investment project between China and Burma starting in 2009, said that 90 percent of its generated electricity will be sold to Bangladesh and 10 percent profits will be siphoned off to Thein Sein's government.

"The local villagers along the Lemro river are not aware of any possible impacts from the dam project. To the worse, the government of Chin State haven't informed them of the situation even though Chief Minister Pu Hung Ngai visited the site on 27 January 2012," one of the Dai-Chins, who monitors the project, told Chinland Guardian.

He said the construction has been in progress under the supervision of ten Chinese and one Burmese engineers from Shwetaung Hydro-power Co. Ltd, Junc-

tion Model and High Tech Company (Burma), China Datang Overseas Investment Co. Ltd (CDOIC) and Hydro China Xibei Engineering Company (China).

The construction sited around Thangthawng village, mostly populated by Dai Chins, has been carried out without conducting any environmental and social impact assessments, according to the Chin Human Rights Organization's (CHRO) sources.

It is believed that the project will bring negative impacts to the local community, affecting their livelihood as the people much depends on the Lemro river for transportation throughout the year.

"The people from that area do not agree with the construction of dam along the river because it is the only river they rely on and they use this river to commute for all seasons. They would like to know both the advantages and disadvantages of the project when it's completed," said one of the Chin leaders in Paletwa Township

"This project must be done in a way that will benefit not only the government but also the local people. Otherwise, this will not bring development but destruction to our ways of life in the long run," said the Chin leader, who asks not to be named. #

Over 140 Houses Destroyed by Tropical Storms in Chin State

11 April 2012: At least more than 140 houses in Chin villages have been destroyed by a tropical storm in Thantlang and Tedim townships, Chin State but no casualties have been reported.

Yesterday, the storm hit six villages of Thantlang Township, damaging about 33 houses in Khuahrang, 20 in Thangaw, 33 in Fanthen, 6 including a Roman Catholic building in Hriangpi-A, 3 including a Baptist church under construction in Hriangpi-B and 8 including a Baptist church in Tisen.

Last Friday, over six villages in Tedim Township of Chin State were hit by another tropical storm, destroying 8 houses in Tuicinlui, 2 in Lailui, 2 schools in Ngennung, 1 school in Buan, 3 schools in Cingpikot and around 25 houses in Tuithang Village Tracts, according to the Chin World Media.

A Lautu local in Hakha town said it was the information received about the destruction as of yesterday, adding: "We are not sure about the exact numbers due to difficulties in communication."

Sources claimed that the World Food Program (WFP) and some local NGOs are preparing to make a visit to the affected villages in an attempt to conduct damage assessments on the situation after the natural disaster in Thantlang Township.

On 30 April 2012, about 1,800 tins (1 tin = 10.5 kg) of rice stored on the farm about 2 miles away from the village were completely burnt down by a wildfire in Thangping village, Matupi Township in southern parts of Chin State.

Up to date, no reports have been made about necessary measures taken to address the 'devastating' humanitarian situation by the government of Chin State.#

"The local villagers along the Lemro river are not aware of any possible impacts from the dam project..."

Situation of Refugees

Delhi Chin Refugee Couple Gang-Assaulted by Landlord

21 March 2012:

Chin refugee tenants, Pum Ngaih Khual and his wife Go Sawn Cing, were severely assaulted by their landlord and family members in Hustal block, Vikaspuri in Delhi, India last Sunday.

The Chin couple were violently attacked for noting paying a full monthly rent for the extra four days they were staying while preparing to move into a new place. They paid to the landlord 375 Rupees for the extra four days.

"The Chin family normally made their rental payment on the 15th of each month. When they moved out to a new place, the landlord asked for one month's room rent although they stayed only for extra four days," said one of the Chin community leaders in Delhi.

Instantly, the Indian family members started beating them up around 9:30 in the morning on 18 March 2012, according to the Chin Human Rights Organization's sources.

"Mrs. Go Sawn Cing was strangled by the landlord, fainted and fell down unconscious on the floor. She had convulsions for several hours after the attack," a Chin leader in Delhi informed Chinland Guardian.

She was taken to a private clinic and was referred to the emergency ward at a government hospital where she underwent an X-ray computed tomography scan. "She was discharged around 1am without receiving adequate treatment," added the Chin resident in Delhi.

The family is known to have moved to another place for the sake of security.

An Indian policeman was seen immediately arriving at the scene but leaving in a few minutes after speaking to the landlord in Hindi.

One of the Zomi Community Committee members, Mr. Kappi, was also threatened to be attacked when he tried to intervene during the incident.

In another incident happening on 9 February 2012, Mrs Go Sawn Cing was intentionally denied to get water provided for all the tenants by the landlord after others had filled up their containers.

"She [Mrs Go Sawn Cing] went back to her room so unhappy. And after a few minutes, the landlord's wife and her son came to the room and threatened her of eviction," the Chin victim was quoted as saying.

"After that, the family started looking for a new room to move in," said the Chin leader.



**Mrs Go Sawn Cing in Delhi
(Photo: CHRO)**

Mr. Pum Ngaih Khual and wife Go Sawn Cing with their three children came to Delhi in January 2010 after fleeing abuses from military-controlled Chin State in Burma in search of protection and refuge.

Violent assaults by local Indians, including sexual violence against women and children, have become daily experience for Chin refugees in Delhi in the last few years, while the United Nations High Commissioner, the primary agency concerned with the refugees, continues to promote local integration as the primary means towards durable solution for Burmese refugees in India.#

Chin Refugee Community Members Attacked in Malaysia

26 March 2012: Two members of the Chin Disciplinary Action Committee (CDAC) members were physically assaulted by South Asian thugs in Cheras Alam Jaya block of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on 18 March 2012.

One of the two victims has been hospitalized in Malaysia's capital due to his serious injuries in an 'unprovoked' attack taking place when the Chin refugee community leaders made an attempt to intervene the arrest of a Chin refugee by a group of South Asian thugs.

Chairman of CDAC, a community-based body tasked with tackling domestic issues that cause problems to the Chin community in Malaysia, said he was hit with a motorbike helmet, adding: "It was really hurting but luckily, I was not bleeding."

It was reported that the Malaysian policemen later settled the case between the two parties after fining them 500 Ringgits each, according to the weekly newsletters published by Chin refugee communities.

"We agreed to stop fighting and shook hands in front of the police. After having a friendly chat over a cup of tea,

we went home around 3:30am in the morning," said CDAC Chairman.

In another incident, a Chin refugee man who was held to be robbed by a group of three South Asian thugs managed to escape after a timely intervention by his Chin friends.

Last Tuesday, a Chin refugee woman named Tum Zi, from Tlangkhua village of Thantlang Township, Chin State, Burma was abducted by a South Asian motor-biker while she was looking for a job in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

"I was actually getting lost and he was offering a ride. He suddenly grabbed and pulled me onto the bike. I looked around, but there was no one. I was so frightened as he drove faster. I felt it was not a positive sign and jumped off the bike," confessed Ms Tum Zi, who has only been in Malaysia for days.

Tum Zi has got bruises on her face and injuries on other parts of her body, according to the newsletters.

There are about 86,000 refugees coming from Burma out of an estimated total of 95,000 in Malaysia, of which over 45,000 are of Chin ethnicity. #

55 Chin Refugees in Custody, 1 Missing in Malaysia

03 April 2012: About 55 Chin refugees including children and women arrested in two different locations after crossing the Thai-Malaysian border are still being held in detention centres in Malaysia.

The Malaysian police took into custody around 15 refugees fleeing from Chin State, Burma in Jitra town of Malaysia's Kedah State bordering with Thailand on 24 March while another group of 37 Chin refugees were arrested separately in Alor Star, the capital of Kedah on 24 February 2012.

Ten children with three mothers are kept in a local childcare centre and the rest are put in jail in Alor Star, according to the Chin Refugee Committee (CRC), a community-based body that provides social services and works to

protect Chin refugees and asylum seekers in Malaysia.

CRC member Patrick Sang Bawi Hnin told Chinland Guardian: "As of today, we have only got information about 20 out of 37 arrestees. Out of 20, four children are in childcare centre and sixteen are in Alor Star's jail. We are really working hard on this issue."

"CRC members just got back from a trip to Alor Star yesterday and we learned that it is beyond what we can do. So, we try to keep in touch with the UNHCR for help to get them released."

Meanwhile, a UN-registered Chin refugee Pu Sui Peng, 43, has been missing since 8 March 2012 while going home at night from visiting friends at his previous flat in Pudu block of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

"CRC tries to make awareness about Mr. Sui Peng as widely as possible and

spread messages around among the Chin communities. But we haven't got any information and responses," Patrick Sang Bawi Hnin told Chinland Guardian.

Family members and relatives have made an appeal to the different Chin refugee communities for help in finding the Chin father. He is originally from Vomkua village in Thantlang Township, Chin State, who arrived in Malaysia in 2006.

Despite the political reforms in the heartland of Burma under the new government, Chin people, like Burma's other ethnic nationalities, still face various forms of human rights abuse, compelling them to flee their native homeland.

It is estimated that there are about 100,000 Chin refugees stranded in India and more than 45,000 in Malaysia. #

Chin Refugee Beaten to Death in Malaysia

06 April 2012: Chin refugee Pu Sang Hre succumbed to his serious injuries at Chowkit Hospital in Malaysia after being violently attacked on Wednesday in Jalan Imbi, a neighborhood populated by many Chin refugees.

The 31-year-old father of three children was found lying 'unconscious' in front of Imbi Yangon Restaurant around 6pm on 4 April and was taken to hospital by the Malaysian police, according to sources from Chin refugees.

"We still haven't got any details as to what actually happened and who got involved in this fatal incident. We heard that he was coming to Imbi to pick up a parcel, from Puchong Puteri block where he lived with his wife and 6-year-old daughter," a member of the Chin refugee community told Chinland Guardian.

Other sources claimed that Pu Sang Hre was seen sitting and drinking with his Chin friends in the Yangon Restaurant in the evening.

"His friends, who went home around 5pm, asked him too but Pu Sang Hre stayed on in the restaurant. And Burmese staff working in the restaurant attacked him," a close friend of the Chin victim was quoted as saying.

Pu Sang Hre had serious injuries in his liver, which was internally damaged, and the back of his neck was badly wounded, according to the doctors from the hospital in Kuala Lumpur.

Another source close to the restaurant said that Pu Sang Hre was attacked by two people from Burma.

"The Malaysian police visited the scene around 8pm yesterday to conduct an investigation but we don't know what will happen next," said the Chin resident from Imbi.

The Chin Christian Fellowship (CCF) in Puchong held a funeral service for Pu Sang Hre at Sg. Buloh cemetery today.

Arriving in Malaysia in 2009, Pu Sang Hre, originally of Zaangtlang village, Thantlang Township of Chin State, was registered as a refugee by the UNHCR in Malaysia.#

Refugees Seek Support for Children's Education in Camp

11 April 2012: Refugees from Burma stranded in Nupo Refugee Camp along the Thai-Burma border say they are in urgent need of fund for establishing an English-medium primary school for children from the kindergarten to Grade-1 classes.

Camp leaders say they need about 4000 US dollars for the first academic year, which is scheduled to start enrolment as soon as the first week of May and open in June 2012. The school will teach four subjects, including English, Mathematics, Social Studies and Hygiene.

Mangpu, a Chin leader from the Nupo Refugee Camp, said there is no school using English yet even though there are about 16 basic education schools that use Burmese and Karen languages for text books and teaching.

"Currently, the classrooms are overcrowded with more than 35 students in each class. This leads to poor academic achievement and discipline problems among the students," added the Chin teacher.

About 251 Chin refugees, with 105 females and 57 children mostly under the age of 13, out of an estimated total of 15,000 refugees are currently stranded in the Nupo Refugee Camp with the majority being Karen.

The school aims to accommodate about 80 students and 5 teachers, and is programmed to accept refugee children in the camp regardless of religion, ethnicity and social background.

"It is highly expected that students will be able to hear, read, speak and understand English properly and be different from other school products. This English school will bring a great change to refugee children as well as parents and communities," continued Mangpu.

Nupo is home to three high schools, two middle schools, five primary schools and six nursery schools with a total number of 5,537 students and 214 teachers.

Last year, Chin individuals and communities including US-based Chin Youth Organization (CYO) donated funds to support the celebration of Chin National Day in Nupo camp.#

Refugee Parents Died of Car Accident, Son in Critical Condition in Malaysia

18 April 2012: Pa Dal Za Khup and his wife Nu Cingpi, originally from Ngalbual village of Tedim Township, Chin State died at hospital last week after being hit by a car on Taman Chileong (Klang) road in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The fatal incident took place around 7:30pm on 10 April 2012 when the refugee couple with their 2-year-old twin sons were hit from behind by a car while walking across the road, according to the Zomi Association of Malaysia (ZAM).

Taken to hospital in Klang of Kuala Lumpur, Pa Dal Za Khup, aka Joseph Dal Khup, and wife Nu Cingpi succumbed to their serious injuries on 12 and 13 April 2012, leaving their two sons in Malaysia.

The elder son, whose brain is seriously affected in the accident, is now known to be in a critical condition despite an operation at a hospital in Kuala Lumpur.

Members of the Zomi refugee community is said to have taken care of the younger son who has got minor injuries on his knees and arms.

The Tedim family are scheduled to fly today to the US as refugees under the UNHCR Resettlement Programmes.#

Chin State Government

State Govt Stopped Civic Education Training in Hakha

22 March 2012:

A training on 'Civic Education for Civil Society' provided in Hakha by NGO Myanmar Egress has been ordered to discontinue by the government of Chin State.

Secretary of the Chin State government verbally told the organizers to stop the training after accusing them of 'not obtaining an official permission to hold the event, according to a Chin MP. The program was scheduled for 19-23 March.

One of the training participants told Chinland Guardian: "We are very much disappointed as the training suddenly came to an end, which was otherwise very informative and eye-opening."

The training, which is held at the Zion Baptist Hall from 19 March 2012, covers various topics on civil society capacity development, including leadership and negotiation, communication and advocacy, political economy of the state, civil society and civic engagement and 2008 constitution.

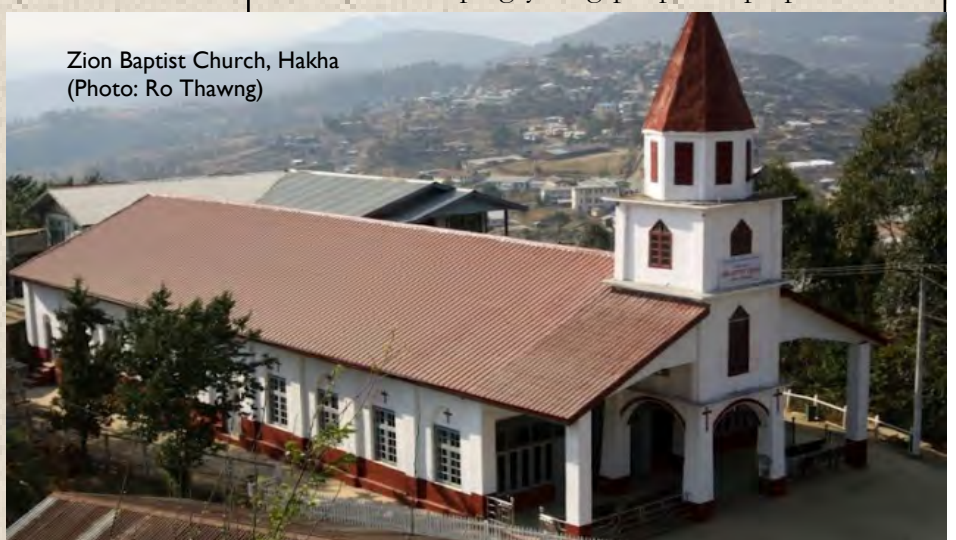
Attended by more than 40 partici-

pants from members of various political parties including USDP, NUP, NLD, ENDP, CNP, as well as, local religious and social organizations, the training was facilitated by six trainers from the Myanmar Egress.

The Chin participant, whose name is kept anonymous, told Chinland Guardian: "People see this as yet another indication that things have not really changed."

An appeal letter was sent to Chin State Chief Minister seeking to continue the training, but it was rejected on the basis that the Chin State government did not receive any instructions from the central government of Burma regarding the training.

The Myanmar Egress, founded in 2006 by Burmese scholars and social workers, is a non-profit organization "committed to promoting civil society organizations and to helping young people to prepare to face



Zion Baptist Church, Hakha
(Photo: Ro Thawng)

Govt to Hold 'Thingyan' amid Water Shortages in Hakha

04 April 2012: The new government of Chin State is claimed to celebrate the Burmese New Year Water Festival in Hakha amid acute water shortages facing the local people in the capital of Burma's northwestern state.

The Buddhist festival, better known in Burmese as 'Thingyan', a water-throwing event taking place over a period of four to five days is likely to be held from 13 to 16 April, the hottest month at 36 degrees Celsius (96.8 degrees Fahrenheit)

in the hilly Christian state.

According to the Hakha Post last week, the water supply, badly maintained and exploited by the local municipal department, has been very limited and people in each block of the town haven't got enough water even for cooking.

The previous celebrations of water festival involved a forcible collection of money from the Chin locals, who are mostly Christians, according to the community leaders in Chin State.

"It was normally held by collecting money from Christian members but they try not to participate in the festival. We believe that the celebration will con-

tinue as before," the Chin leaders, whose names are kept anonymous, told *Chinland Guardian*.

It is claimed that the water crisis has been caused by problems relating to the high temperatures of the dry season and the non-functional water supply systems still in use, worsened by exploitation of the local municipal department.

In its report last year, the OCHA said the increase in urban population, and the depletion of water sources as well as aging water supply systems in rural Chin areas are affecting water availability, adding: "This problem could be further exacerbated during the dry season."#

Govt Unveiled Roads Constructed by Locals on Sunday in Chin State

16 April 2012: The government of Chin State yesterday inaugurated a new 'Saisihchuak' road, mostly funded and constructed by local villagers, in an official ceremony held at Thau of Thantlang Township.

Chief Minister Pu Hung Ngai cut the ribbon in a Sunday ceremony to officially open the road, estimated to be about 68 miles long from Hakha town, connecting Chin State of Burma and Mizoram State of India.

A community leader from Thantlang told *Chinland Guardian*: "The people are so happy that the 'Saisichuak' road is finally completed. But why did the opening ceremony have to be held on Sunday? Obviously, this is not something accidental but intentional."

On 8 April this year which was Easter Sunday, Chief Minister Pu Hung Ngai held an official opening ceremony for the Mindat-Aukcheng Jeep road, also funded and constructed by local villagers, in Mindat Township, Chin State.

The newly completed 'Saisihchuak' road will pass by seven Vailamtlang villages from Thantlang town up to Bawinu River, an international border with Mizoram State of India.

Sources revealed that the road construction, financially supported by

members of 'Vailamtlang' Development group from outside of Burma, was initiated and carried out on their own by local villagers of Vailamtlang, a group of villages located along Vailam mountain range.

In an announcement made in April last year, one of the village headmen said: "The government had signed an agreement for construction of the Saisihchuak road long time ago but they haven't started yet until today and we don't know when it will start."

"Vailamtlang members living in foreign countries sent us money and we, local villagers, therefore began the construction on our own from 18 March 2010, with two bulldozers rented from Mizoram State."

On the Indian side in Mizoram State, an official opening ceremony was already held for the Sangau-Tipi road in May last year.

US-based Chin pastor and leader, Rev. C. Duh Kam, of Thau village, said early this year the road between Bawinu River and Thau village, which is about 12 miles, had already been constructed and the road between Hriangkhan and Thau widened, with financial support from Vailamtlang villagers residing in foreign countries.

Meanwhile, the 80-mile long Falam-Rih border road, which was re-opened in late 2009 after a closure of nearly 10 years by the military authorities, has been reconstructed on a self-help basis with support from individuals and Falam communities abroad under the leadership of the Falam Social Development Association (FSDA) early this year.

The government of Chin State is slammed for window-dressing rather than actually helping the local communities in their development work across Chin State, named the poorest among 14 states and divisions in Burma.

"They [government officials] just come, cut the ceremony ribbon and give instructions to us. They claim all the credits for the work though they provide no help. If something went wrong, they put blames on us. Their nature is still the same as the previous authorities," complained the Chin community leader.

The government officials from Naypyidaw reportedly made a trip to Chin State to inspect the Saisihchuak road on a Christmas day last year.

The Thantlang-Saisihchuak road was first built in 1914 as a rough-hewn trail wide enough only for one mule to go during the British colonial periods.#



Hakha, Chin State (Photo: Ro Thawng)



Govt's Decision to Build Pagoda in Hakha 'Invalid': CNP

17 April 2012: The Chin National Party (CNP) has urged the government of Chin State to call off plans to construct a Buddhist pagoda in Hakha, saying the decision was not in conformity with the constitution.

In a letter sent to Hung Ngai, Chief Minister of Chin State government, CNP said the recent decision of the State-level ministerial meeting must be reviewed and annulled on the ground that the involvement of State Secretary in the voting is 'illegal and unconstitutional'.

The letter said the inclusion of the 'appointed' State Secretary as a voting member in State cabinet meeting is against provisions of the 2008 constitution. A copy of the letter dated 2 April 2012 was also sent to the President's Office.

CNP points out Article 248 of the constitution, which defines the State government as including only the Chief Minister, Ministers and the Advocate General.

"We have learned that a vote by U Myo Aung Htay, Secretary of Chin State government, was counted during the meeting," added the CNP's letter signed by its Chairman Pu Zozam, who is also a member of the State Parliament.

Last month, the government of Chin State reached a decision to sanction the construction of a Buddhist pagoda in Hakha at a meeting attended by 11 State cabinet members, which include six Christians, four Buddhists and one adherent of local indigenous relig-

ion Laipian.

The proposal was put forward during the four-day meeting held at the Parliament Building from 24-27 February by Hung Ngai, Chief Minister of Chin State, and Colonel Zaw Min Oo, Minister of Security and Border Areas Development, both Buddhists, according to sources from Hakha.

The move has sparked fierce reactions from Chin communities across Burma and outside, who view it as inflammatory and unfair.

"This is unfair, unjust and undemocratic because they [government] make a decision easily to build a Buddhist pagoda while we, Christians, are still prohibited to obtain an official permission for construction of any religious buildings on our native land," complained one of the Chin community leaders.

According to the decision, a government-sanctioned Buddhist pagoda is to be built on a scenic viewpoint overlooking Hakha town. But further details about the meeting or what the decision will entail remain unknown to the public.

Over 90 percent of the population of Chin State is estimated to be Christians. In the capital Hakha, Buddhist population is estimated at less than one percent, and are largely temporary residents posting as government servants or as Burma Army soldiers.#

Opinion

Suu Kyi Should Visit Displaced Persons as Part of Her First Foreign Trip

19 April 2012: (Editorial)

Newly elected Burmese parliamentarian Aung San Suu Kyi is set to make her first foreign trip in more than two decades, in June, after having reportedly accepted official invitations from the British and Norwegian governments.

Among ostensibly many standing invitations from other countries, Suu Kyi's choice of Britain and Norway as her first foreign destinations signifies deep personal attachment to the two European countries. Britain is a particularly important place for the Nobel Laureate as she still has a family there and it is where her husband Dr. Michael Aris was laid to rest. An Oxford graduate, Suu Kyi raised a family there until her unexpected return to Burma in 1988 amid the nationwide uprising against the socialist dictatorship. Suu Kyi has not left Burma ever since.

Norway, on the other hand, is home to the Nobel Committee, which awarded her the world's most prestigious Noble Peace Prize in 1991. Prevented from leaving her home, the honor was received on Suu Kyi's behalf by her husband and two sons. Norway is also one of the strongest supporters of Burma's pro-democracy movement and is home to the exile broadcast outlet Democratic Voice of Burma.

So it makes sense that Aung San Suu Kyi would choose these two countries as her first foreign destinations.

But it would be politically unwise for the iconic leader to make her first foreign visit without also visiting displaced populations in the neighboring countries. Hundreds of thousands of refugees, mostly from the ethnic groups, are still living in Burma's neighboring countries such as Thailand, Malaysia, China, India and Bangladesh. They are the direct victims of six decades of military dictatorship and policies that have ravaged Burma to its current state.

Since re-entering the Burmese political arena, Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy has made the issues of the rule of law, constitutional amendment and peace as its central focus. But so far neither Aung Sang Suu Kyi nor the NLD as a party has made any notable efforts to reach out to the victims of civil war or to try and understand 'peace' from the perspectives of those suffering from the direct consequences of Burma's long-standing civil conflicts.

The upcoming trip to Europe provides an opportunity for Aung San Suu Kyi to visit and meet with the displaced populations in the neighboring countries. Not only will this help the Nobel Peace Laureate better understand the issues facing the ethnic peoples, it can give her a better sense of the suffering of ethnic populations, which can also boost her image as a national leader sympathetic to the most marginalized communities in Burma.

While the UK and Norway trips are important for Aung San Suu Kyi personally, the Nobel Laureate can take advantage of her first foreign visit by trying to witness the situation of the displaced populations in the neighboring countries firsthand. With world attention firmly fixed on her, Suu Kyi's visit can not only help to refocus much-needed world attention on the displaced situation, but also provide a degree of moral support to the refugees.#

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Poem

Chin Peace Deal: A Trap or A Clap

29 March 2012 | C. Van Lian Tu

Windy, chilly and noisy on Hakha's Bogyoke Street
Yet Chin locals, young and old, stood in line to greet
Some clapped in delight while others screamed in awe
As their 'heroes' strolled between the parallel rows

Clad in traditional dresses as a sign of respect and rejoice
Not being ordered nor forced but by their own choice
Men and women sang *vawr hla**, and pastors in prayers
As children and youths flew their proud 'peace' banners

Twenty-three-odd years of stagnant tears flow
As a mother, now wrinkled and fragile, dimly saw
Her long-lost son among well-wishers come and walk
They hugged tight and sobbed but could not talk

For decades has Chin State been under the regime
Enough have the people suffered from an evil scheme
In a land ungoverned and free before the colony
The Chin people embrace peace and tranquillity

Government and CNF reached a January ceasefire
Welcomed with cultural dances over the bonfire
As yet the moon counts the nights and the sun days
So do the Chins in their own native place...

**Vawr hla = An age-old Chin traditional song sung in the time of victory, triumph and celebration.*

Cartoon

