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Chin Human Rights Organization

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Volume XVI, Issue I

January-February 2013



A delegation of the Chin Human Rights Organization & Chin MP Pi Za Tlem meeting with Thura Shwe Mann in Naypyitaw (above), and a peaceful public protest in Hakha to demand supply of electricity (Photo: CHRO & Chinland Post)



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Arbitrary Taxation & Extortion

Exam fees forcibly collected from middle school students

28 January 2013:

A middle school headmaster forcibly collected exam fees from students of the middle school at Zawngte village, Falam Township, Chin State, a

villager reported to the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO).

Headmaster U Thura demanded 500 kyats from each student for the 2012-2013 final year exams on 24 January 2013, telling the money would be used to buy exam papers.

Parents got so worried for their children that they had to pay 500 kyats, according to the villager, who asked not to be named. #

"We are much discouraged that the new authority is still preparing to put up a banner against the will of the people. We celebrate the 20th February for the Chin National Day, not for Chin State Day..."

Families unfairly charged for remittance fees of govt loan

30 January 2013: Sixty families from Zawngte Village Tracts in Falam Township, Chin State was forcibly asked to pay 1,879 kyat each for remittance fees of loan provided for animal husbandry by government.

The Chin families were informed on 3 December 2012 to make a payment to Head of the Falam Township Administration Office starting from 19 January 2013, according to a local, who asked not to be named.

Sixty out of 120 households from five villages borrowed the amount of 250,000 kyats each for pig farming with an agreement that said the money

would be lent to from December 2012 and paid back by April 2014.

The Chin local said the authorities cut one year off the contract without making any prior announcement, saying the money would be returned in full amount by March 2013.

"About 40 families are now much worried as they are in the middle of implementing the project. About 20 families have already been able to buy some pigs," said one of the Chin locals, who borrowed the money.

"Majority of the families keep the money unused as they know that they would not be able to return the loan in accordance with the new deadline if they buy pigs," said the Chin local. #

Govt employees extorted money from civilians in Chin State

09 February 2013: Chin victims, who are forcibly demanded money, said the culture of corruption is still being practiced by government employees in Chin State.

Two staff members from the Department of Fire Services in Mindat exacted money from local grocery stores on a number of occasions, according to reports.

Salai Hung Tun Gei said in the *Chin World Media* that Pu Law Ling and Pu Hung Thang together with Pu Thang Naing had collected more than 110,000 kyats from different stores.

The shop-owners said they were told that the money would be used for transportation cost of a new fire engine provided for Mindat town by the central government of Burma.

It is claimed that the shop-owners complained about the situation but no proper action has been taken against the perpetrators till this date.

Late last month, a Thantlang police officer U Win Than demanded a total amount of

200,000 kyats from two teenage boys who were caught riding an 'unregistered' motorcycle.

"He [policeman] ordered two other locals to make a photocopy of their valid licences. He made a fake licence and released the two teenagers after taking money," said a witness from Thantlang.

In another incident taking place on 31 January, U Aung Min, commander of Thantlang Police Station, forcibly demanded 17,000 kyats from Pu Za Kio, an uncle of one of the teenagers.

During a meeting held at the Hakha Town Hall last Tuesday, Chief Minister of Chin State government Pu Hung Ngai warned government employees and newly elected village administrators against corruption.

Pu Hung Ngai was quoted by the Chinland Post as saying: "The new government is different from the previous ones. Necessary punishment will be taken if any-one of you is found corrupt in your handling of work." #

"He [policeman] ordered two other locals to make a photocopy of their valid licences. He made a fake licence and released the two teenagers after taking money,"

- an eyewitness

Govt dept forcibly collected money from land-owners

10 February 2013: The Settlement and Land Records Department in Matupi Township, State has forcibly collected 500 kyats as registration fees from every land-owner, a local land-owner reported to the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO).

Three staff members from the department visited the farming areas on 26 January 2013 and issued an order to make a payment of the land registration fees, say-

ing: "The payment is not related to any land revenue and each land-owner has to make additional payment of 1,000 per acre a year as land tax,"

The local said the action was a reversal of what U Yam Law, the supervisor of Boira Farming areas, told the farmers on 29 January 2013 that the department would provide loans depending on the requirements.

The Matupi Settlement and Land Records Department made a warning notice at the village administration offices that actions would be taken against any 'uninformed' land registration. #

Govt Admin Officer exploited loans from villagers

20 February 2013: Villagers of Lalui in Matupi Township, Chin State were forcibly demanded 15,000 kyats as registration fees for agricultural loans in the end of 2012 on the direct instructions of Township Administration Officer.

However, the money has not been made available until February 2013 and the registration fees have not been returned, according to Pu Lung Mun.

“Township administration officer directed us that any household could apply for agricultural loans with the required registration fees of 15, 000. More than 40

households in my village paid the fees in October 2012. But we have not got the loan although we have already paid the fees,” added the villager.

In January 2013, the villagers approached the administration officer to return the registration fees. “They were just told that it was impossible for them to get back their money,” added Pu Lung Mun.

“In order to be granted the loans, a villager has got to put a plot of land or a house as a pledge. Since the villagers don’t have any of these, they don’t really know what to do.”

The agricultural bank loan is applied by villagers not only from Lalui but also from other Village Tracts. Up to date, no one has received the registration fees. #

Home Affairs Ministry issues statement on anti-corruption

1. Public participation is essential in eliminating bribery and corruption in ensuring good governance and clean government.
2. It is learnt that the culture of demanding of bribes in the form of cash or gifts as grease money still persists in government departments and private enterprises as well as in interaction between government staff and departments.
3. As corruption is an unacceptable and unpardonable misconduct in building the disciplined democratic nation and affects the dignity of the nation and national people and thus must be fought effectively.
4. The government is rewriting a new bill to replace the existing Suppression of Corruption Act 1948 at the parliament to meet the demands of present time and international norms.
5. It is hereby announced that citizens may openly complain about bribery cases to departments mentioned under information.

(Photo: The New Light of Myanmar, 30 November 2012 & 9 January 2013)

Republic of the Union of Myanmar President Office

Notification No. 9/2013

11th Waning of Nadaw, 1374 ME
(8 January, 2013)

Organizing action committee against corruption

As part of efforts for the emergence of a good governance and clean government after the new government took office, an action committee against corruption is formed to fight the corruption and bribery in governmental organizations.

(1) Dr Sai Mauk Kham

Chairman

Army Captain extorted money from local trader

28 February 2013: A captain in charge of Burma Army Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) No. 268 based in Tibual village, Falam Township, Chin State, arrested a local trader named Pu Lal Tlan Thang in connection with possessing 60 visses (1 viss = 1.633 kg) of flowers on 29 January 2013.

A villager from Haimual told the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) that the captain forcibly demanded money and that the case was settled afterwards.

“Pu Lal Tlan Thang was threatened by the captain that he could pay 50,000 kyats or face legal actions as he checked a private jeep with flowers known as

Shwechaung,” added the villager.

Pu Lal Tlan Thang was freed after he had given 20,000 kyats to the captain, whose name was not known.

“This is the first time I know that such flower is prohibited from trading. It was allowed even when being transported to Mizoram State of India. If such forest flowers are prohibited, then the perpetrators should not be freed easily with bribery,” said Pu S. Ling, owner of the jeep.

“If this practice continues, not only flowers but also other forest resources would be soon on the way to eradication,” added Pu S. Ling.

A viss of Shwechaung flowers fetches 6,000 kyats in Falam, according to the local market rate. #

Forced Labour

Soldiers forced Chin villager to carry military ration

25 January 2013:

Burma Army soldiers from Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) No. 304 based in Darkhai village, Tonzang Township, Chin State forced Pu Pa Thang to carry their military ration, the victim told the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO).

Pu Pa Thang was ordered to carry two tins of rice on 24 January 2013 as Captain Ne Win Htun and his

seven soldiers travelled to a border checking gate, about five miles from Darkhai village.

The soldiers were known to have collected tax from local traders for selling domestic animals such as pigs, cows and buffaloes, according to the villagers.

“The soldiers issued an order that report should be submitted to the military camp about any animals being traded to India from Burma. Animals will be forfeited if any one fails to do so,” he said.

Pa Thang said he did not know how much tax was collected for buffaloes, cows, pigs and other domestic animals since he has never got involved in the business. #

(Photo: The New Light of Myanmar, 17 March 2012)

Ngwechi-6 cotton and maize plantations on integrated

ergy U Than Htaik, Region Hluttaw representative U Tint

et Aye Yeiktha self-reliant asphalt road in Nandawun Ward and Minkyaung asphalt road in Natlu Hteikpan Ward.

MNA

Myanmar, ILO sign MoU to eradicate forced labour

NAY PYI TAW, 16 March — The Union Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and International Labour Organization (ILO) signed MoU on eradication of forced labour at the Ministry of Labour

here today.

On behalf of the Union Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, Deputy Minister for Labour U Myint Thein, and on behalf of the ILO, a liaison officer of the ILO in

Yangon signed the MoU.

Myanmar has signed MoUs with ILO and has been cooperating with ILO in combating the forced labour and is committed to eradicate it from the country by 2015.—MNA

On behalf of the Union Government, Deputy Minister for Labour U Myint Thein and on behalf of the ILO, a liaison officer of the ILO in Yangon sign MoU on eradication of force labour in Myanmar.—MNA



Army soldiers forced two villagers to buy bikes from India

25 February 2013: Soldiers from Burma Army Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) No. 304 based at Darkhai village, Tonzang Township, Chin State, ordered two villagers to buy a motorbike in India on 6 February 2013.

A local told the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) that Sergeant Win Kyaw and his three soldiers came to Fartlang village in Tedim Township and forced Pu Za Ko, from Fartlang village, and Pu Sanga, from Bulfak village, to get a motorbike in India's Mizoram State.

Pu Za Ko and Pu Sanga are village administrators of ten households in Fartlang and Bulfak villages in Tedim Township.

Upon receiving 60,000 rupees from Sergeant Kyaw

Win, the two administrators went to Champhai of Mizoram State, India, bought a second-hand bike, and came back at night.

“At night on 5 February 2013, Sergeant Kyaw Win talked with a trader coming from India. The sergeant summoned the head of ten households from Bukfak village the following morning. And that's when they went to India to get the bike,” added the local eyewitness.

Based in Darkhai Village, Tonzang Township, soldiers from Burma Army LIB No. 304 has come to Fartlang village on patrol since January 2013 as the village is a passage of traders travelling from Chin State and Sangaing Division to India.

The Chin local said the soldiers would arrest the traders and collect taxes from them, adding: “Now, they [soldiers] are buying a motorbike from the money they collected.”#

Freedom of Religion



Current reforms have not extended to freedom of religion in Burma: MEPs

02 February 2013: Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) said the changes in Burma have not reached out to people of different religious and ethnic backgrounds in the country.

In a letter sent to Baroness Catherine Ashton, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, MEPs said: "Current reforms have not yet extended to freedom of religion or belief, which will be key to long-term peace and stability in the country."

The letter, signed by 14 MEPs, also highlighted problems with the current State policy of segregation of Buddhist and Muslim communities in Rakhine State, and the destruction of large Christian crosses in Chin State.

The Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) and Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) expressed deep concerns over the ongoing human rights violations and conflicts against ethnic nationalities in Burma as they welcomed the statement by MEPs.

Salai Za Uk Ling, CHRO's Program

Director, said: "We strongly condemn the Burma Army's continued indiscriminate shelling in Kachin State, which has resulted in the deaths of Kachin civilians, including children. We are very concerned for the safety of tens of thousands of Kachin, internally displaced within their own homeland."

The ongoing Kachin conflict has resulted in the destruction of over 200 villages, with 66 churches reportedly damaged and over 100,000 people internally displaced, according to a recent statement by the Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC).

A local church where over 100 Chin were taking shelter was damaged during the Burma Army military onslaught in the Hpakant area of Kachin State, according to reports.

Andrew Johnston, CSW's Advocacy Director, said: "Burma is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious society and it is vital that non-Burman ethnic nationalities and non-Buddhist religious minorities are treated with equal rights, and that freedom of religion or belief, as well as ethnic and cultural rights, are fully respected at all levels if Burma is to

make a genuine transition to democracy, freedom and true peace."

In their letter, the MEPs stated that the European Union must call for the immediate cessation of human rights violations against ethnic and religious minorities.

They also called on Baroness Ashton to press the government of Burma to 'urgently prioritise political dialogue that will result in a political solution to the root causes of the conflict in Kachin State.'

Last year, Baroness Catherine Ashton visited Burma meeting with President Thein Sein and other government officials as well as Aung San Suu Kyi.

A CHRO delegation in partnership with CSW met with MEPs in Brussels, Belgium in September last year, highlighting continued discrimination and violations of religious freedom against Chin Christians in Burma.

The European Union announced it will shortly open and operate an official Delegation to Burma, according to a statement released on 17 January 2013.#



President Thein Sein arrived in Hakha, Chin State in the evening of Saturday (left); Thein Sein visited and made donation to Buddhist monastery in Hakha after having held meetings in the morning, which coincided with the Chin Christian worship service on Sunday (Photo: The Chinland Post & President Office)

Thein Sein met Chin officials, leaders on Sunday

18 February 2013: During his first visit to Chin State as the President of the country, U Thein Sein held a meeting with Chin State government, officials and town-elders in Hakha in the morning on Sunday.

President Thein Sein said at the meeting that his trip was 'aimed at fulfilling the needs of the local people in Chin State', Burma's poorest state with the largest percentage of Christian population in the country.

"The meeting took place from 10am to 2pm. Normally, church services in Hakha start at 10am till 12 noon. So, Chin Christians who had to attend the meeting could not go to church," a community leader from Hakha told *Chinland Guardian*.

Accompanied by Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Vice-Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, the President visited Thantayar Aye Pagoda at Zetawun Meditation Centre in Hakha yesterday, making donations to the Members of the Sangha led by Sayadaw Dr Bhaddanta Tejosara.

An official statement from the President Office said the President also paid homage to Sayadaw Maha Ganthavaçaka Pandita Dr Bhaddanta Tejosara, Member of the State Central Working Committee of the Sangha and missionary Sayadaw of hilly regions and Chairman Sayadaw of Myoma Monastery and Zetawun Monastery.

Late last year, a report "*Threats to Our Existence*": Persecution of Ethnic Chin Christians in Burma by the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) said Christians in Chin State face systematic religious discrimination and violation under both the previous and new governments of Burma.

CHRO's research reveals that the Ministries for Border Affairs and Religious Affairs work in close cooperation in the implementation of the Na Ta La residential school programme where Chin students face coercion to convert to Buddhism.

The President presented 10 million kyats and 200 bags of rice provided by the Ministry for Border Affairs for Chin State, according to the President Office.

Flying from Kalay of Sagaing Region on Saturday, U Thein Sein made a short stop at Tedim and Falam, also meeting with local authorities at the military battalion based in the northern parts of Chin State, according to the New Light of Myanmar yesterday.

After spending a night at Hakha, Thein Sein, then Lieutenant General and Prime Minister of Burma, left for Mindat town in the southern part of Chin State in the evening.

During his two-day visit, President Thein Sein briefed on issues related to reform processes and developments as well as the need for government officials to have 'good character and integrity' at work.#



A delegation of the Chin Human Rights Organization with Chin MP Pi Za Tlem met with Thura Shwe Mann, the Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw in Nay Pyi Taw, Burma (Photo: The Chinland Post)

Chin delegation raised issue of religious freedom with Speaker of Burmese Parliament

26 February 2013 - Nay Pyi Taw: A delegation of the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) yesterday met with Thura Shwe Mann, the Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw, the Burmese Lower House of Parliament, to convey their concerns regarding the ongoing violations of human rights in Chin State.

Meeting in Nay Pyi Taw, the CHRO delegation told the Speaker that despite the ongoing reforms, the Chin people are still concerned about the lack of religious freedom in Burma's poorest State.

CHRO Executive Director Salai Bawi Lian told the Speaker, "We continue to be concerned about the ongoing human rights abuses, especially violations of religious freedom in Chin State. As Burma makes transition to democracy, we hope that the new Parliament will provide better protection for the human rights of Chin people."

The three-member delegation presented the Speaker a copy of CHRO's recent report 'Threats to Our Existence': Persecution of Ethnic Chin Christians in

Burma, which details cases of violations of religious freedom against Chin Christians by State actors over the past many years.

Responding to the Chin concerns, Thura Shwe Mann said that he is aware of 'past wrongs' against the Chin.

"We should learn from past lessons to rectify the mistakes," the Speaker told CHRO delegation.

According to CHRO, serious violations of religious freedom continue in Chin State even as the new government of President Thein Sein is undertaking reforms in many areas.

CHRO's report shows that at least four large Christian crosses were destroyed in Chin State since the new government assumed power in March 2011, while all discriminatory restrictions on Christians under the previous regime remain a State policy, including restrictions against the construction of Christian churches.

CHRO delegation, composed of Salai Bawi Lian, Executive Director, Advocacy Director Rachel Fleming and Program Director Salai Za Uk Ling, is currently in Burma to conduct advocacy around freedom of religion or belief with a range of international, national and local stakeholders inside the country. #

Other Human Rights Violations

Ferryboat banned, shop blinds removed in Paletwa by soldiers

13 January 2013:

Security personnel from Burma Army and Police Forces used forcible measures against residents in Paletwa Township of Chin State as Brigadier General Ko Ko Naing, Commander of Western Command, arrived in the region.

An 'unnamed' sergeant from Light Infantry Battalion No. 378 ordered a local ferryboat carrying passengers bound for Paletwa from Shinletwa to stop travelling and shop owners to remove their blinds ahead of the arrival of the military commander.

"The security officer ordered the ferryboat, full of passengers waiting to go to Paletwa, to halt just to show off his authority over the local people," said a Chin witness,

who asked not to be named.

The villagers also said they were still ill-treated by the soldiers as well as security forces in much the same way they had previously, according to the Khumi Media Group.

A local eye-witness said some shops were ordered to get rid of their blinds or shop covers in Paletwa town, adding: "They were told that they could get their blinds or covers back on after the commander left."

Brigadier General Ko Ko Naing arrived at Paletwa-based Light Infantry Battalion No. 289 around 4pm on 9 January before heading to Tarun-aing village the next day to meet with soldiers on duty.

Arriving at the Paletwa port last Friday, the commander held discussions with officials from government departments in Paletwa town and left for Ann town, Rakhine State on 12 January.

Brigadier

General Ko Ko Naing has made trips to Chin State in recent months to discuss about regional security and development issues although details of his official journeys remain unknown.

In November last year, Brig-Gen Ko Ko Naing together with Lt-Gen Hla Min of the Office of Commander-in-Chief (Army) visited Paletwa Township.

In a multimillion dollar Kaladan deal signed in 2008 with the Indian government, Burma agreed to provide security during the course of the project, which includes construction of 129km highway between Paletwa of Chin State and Mizoram State of India.

Sources confirmed around mid last year that two new military battalions, despite ceasefire with the Chin National Front (CNF), have been added into Chin State where there are a total of twelve battalions already based since the 1990s. # - Reporting by Peter Lamulu

Arabic Chinese English

Myanmar: Independent Human Rights Monitoring Still Needed

As Myanmar President Thein Sein concludes his visit to Europe, the United Nations Human Rights Council is scheduled to discuss the situation of human rights in Myanmar and for continued international human rights monitoring in the country. Considering human rights concerns in the country, it is critical that international human rights mechanisms are maintained in Myanmar [...]

14 Jan 2013 | Tags: Amnesty International, Human Rights Abuses, Special Rapporteur, United Nations Human Rights Council

Report on the Human Rights Situation (January - December 2012)

The annual report of Network for Human Rights Documentation - Burma (ND-Burma) documented the human rights situation in Burma from 2011-January 2013. The report provides information on human rights violations (HRVs) over this period and highlights pressing issues and taking place in Burma. The annual report covers human rights violations in all 14 states. Unsurprisingly, the highest incidences occurred in ethnic nationality areas that remain in open conflict with the Army, the Tatmadaw, or are the grounds for controversial development projects [...]

Armed Conflict, Chin State, development project, Human Rights Abuses, Karen State, Network for Human Rights Documentation, Shan State | Read more >>>

Myanmar: Serious Human Rights Challenges Require the Continued Attention of the Human Rights Council

Civil society organizations from Burma/Myanmar urge the United Nations Human Rights Council to remain seized of the serious and ongoing human rights abuses occurring

55 million people

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Burma: Rights Abuses Endanger Reform

Government's Commitments to Change Falling Short

FEBRUARY 1, 2013

Soldiers attempted rape, threatened villagers in Chin State

22 January 2013: Soldiers from Burma Army Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) No. 544 attempted to rape an underage teenage girl and threatened villagers with gunshots in Paletwa Township of Chin State.

A 13-year-old Chin girl, who was travelling to Upe village to help her grandfather, was sexually assaulted at about 5pm on 27 December 2012 by one of the soldiers from LIB No. 544 under commander Than Htun.

"Villagers saw what had happened and the news spread quickly among our community. The soldier offered the girl hush money of 90,000 kyats," said an eyewitness to the Khumi Media Group.

The soldier also invited village elders and leaders to enjoy ten bottles of alcohol and a case of beers in order to forcibly make peace on the case, which could affect his reputation, according to the invitees.

"We just had to follow in fear the orders given by soldiers who held guns in their hands. But their seniors must take proper actions so that this kind of incident would not happen again," said the village elders.

Commander U Than Htun who was under the influence of alcoholic drinks ordered his soldiers to get him young girls from the village of Upe around 2am on 21 December 2012.

The soldiers struck houses with sticks and threatened that the whole village would be burnt down to ashes

as the Chin parents would not let their daughters go out at night to serve the commander.

Upe villagers said the soldiers mockingly chanted: "Who are you going to report us to, Tactical Operations Commander or President Thein Sein? We obviously know that you don't know how to do so."

'Drunken' Commander U Than Htun shot his gun at midnight for no reasons but to threaten the villagers on 8 December 2012.

The village elders complained the Burma Army soldiers in their area were there not to protect but to oppress civilians with their guns, adding: "Their behaviours toward the villagers are still the same. We haven't felt even a bit of democratic changes."

Burma Army LIB No. 544, which has recently reportedly transferred to Taungup in Rakhine State following the communal violence, is also active in Paletwa Township, Chin State with their military camp based in Upe.

Upe, a small Chin village close to an international border between Bangladesh and Rakhine State of Burma, is about 20 miles away from Paletwa town, the biggest in Paletwa Township.# - *Reporting by Peter Lamilu*

"Who are you going to report us to, Tactical Operations Commander or President Thein Sein? We obviously know that you don't know how to do so," the soldiers mockingly chanted.

'Unfair' appointment of new village administrators

25 January 2013: Local people in Fartlang Village Tracts of Tedim Township said recent election and appointment of village administrators were 'unfair and undemocratic'.

A villager from Bukphir village told the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) that the new administrators were rather handpicked instead of holding the election democratically.

A team of village administrators, Pu Za Co, Pu Cin Khup, Pu Pau Khan Thawng and Pu Vung Za Khai, visited door to door in the village of Fartlang, asking each household to immediately put the names of nominees for village administrators.

"No matter what names you put, the authorities would re-appoint the existing village administrators. The positions have been reserved for

them by the authorities," the team was quoted by the villager as saying.

The villager said the four administrators were officially appointed and an announcement was made although the local people were not happy.

"They can't do anything against it," added the villager, who asked not to be named.#

Disappointment as exams fall on Chin National Day

07 February 2013: Examination dates recently announced for high school students have sparked disappointment among Chin communities as they coincide with the Chin National Day that falls on 20 February.

Students from Standard 1 to 2 will sit for their exams on 19-20 February, Standard 3 to 7 on 21-25, and Standard 8 to 9 on 26-28 while the dates for Standard 10 are set to 13-22 March this year.

A community leader from Hakha said the exams dates would make parents, teachers and children unable to participate in the much-awaited celebrations of the Chin auspicious day.

One of the Chin teachers told the *Chinland Post*: "Most of the teachers at our school are not happy as we would have exams on the Chin National Day. Why don't they [government] pick up any other dates rather than the day which is very important for us?"

In Thantlang, community leaders and local government officials are reportedly discussing over the possibility of making the 20th of the month freely available to commemorate the Chin National Day.

An agreement between the Chin National Front (CNF) and Union Peace Working Committee of Burma's government said of the 20th of February to

be set as a public holiday in Chin State.

However, the government of Chin State has not shown any sign of willingness to deal with the issue regarding the dates of examinations but to go ahead with the notifications given by the Ministry of Education.

One of the CNF-Govt provisions reads: "It is agreed that the Government of Chin State shall take forward actions to re-recognize the 20th of February as Chin National Day as a public holiday in Chin State in recognition of the occasion as a day cherished by the Chin people."

Chin MPs and authorities have also been urged to take necessary actions in an effort to ensure that the Chin National Day be freely and openly celebrated under the new government.

Celebrations of the Chin National Day have been banned or disrupted in Chin State and other parts of Burma by the military authorities for decades.

Instead, the Chin are forced to name their special event 'Chin State Day', which is now designated to take place on the 3rd of January in recognition of the day the Chin Special Division was turned into Chin State, as stated in the CNF-Govt agreement.

Chin communities outside of Burma have made preparations in their respective residing places to mark the 65th anniversary of their national day.#

the hotel to the meeting and exhibiting venues, networking lunch and cocktail on the IBM day, arrangements of all meetings and visit to MATRADE Permanent

Chin State Day changed into Chin National Day

NAY PYI TAW, 15 Feb— According to the agreement between the Union Peace-making Group and the Chin National Front

(CNF), Chin State Day in Nay Pyi Taw", said a member of the committee for holding the 65th Anniversary Chin National Day. "Chin National Day

The 65th Anniversary will be observed in Than Tlang from 12 to 20 February on a grand scale", said a townselder Dr Hmu Than. Every 20 February Chin National Day was held after regaining the independence. Chin State

"Hluttaw representatives have been invited to attend Chin National Day celebration to be held in National Landmark Garden State Day.—NLM 001



Chins being forced to celebrate 'Chin State Day' on their national day in 2010 in Hakha, Chin State (Photo: CHRO)



(Photo: The New Light of Myanmar)

Humanitarian & Development Situation

Low water levels of Kaladan affect Paletwa in Chin State

04 January 2013:

Transport for people in Paletwa Township of Chin State has been affected as water levels of the Kaladan river fall to a record low in years.

Local traders and travellers who are mostly dependent on Kaladan in southern parts of Burma's northwestern state said their ferryboats were not able to make a journey as far as it used to before.

Last Sunday, people travelling on a ferryboat got stranded midway near Ngasha village before its final destination due to huge reduction in water levels, according to the Khumi Media.

"People have got to get off, wait and sometimes change for other ferryboats that have better engines. The whole thing really makes it more difficult, inconvenient and time-consuming," said Peter Lawilu, a

Khumi from Paletwa Township.

Deforestation caused by Chin traditional 'swidden' farming has been ascribed as one of the main factors affecting water conditions in the areas.

An NGO staff member from the local community said the problem was because of lack of sustainable forest preservation policies and management in place, adding: "It gets hotter year by year and if we keep on destroying our forest, it will only get worse and worse."

Another local subsistence farmer told the Khumi Media that the current 'slash-and-burn' system of cultivation still remains the only choice they get to make a living.

The Kaladan River, known in different names local to the areas it passes, arises in central parts of Chin State, flowing across Paletwa Township into the Bay of Bengal through Rakhine State. #

'Stranded' Chins in Kachin conflict in need of urgent help

30 January 2013: More than 100 'conflict-affected' Chin Christian members being looked after by churches are in urgent need of relief assistance as the fighting continues in Kachin State, Burma.

Rev. Pa Hrang Hmung, General Secretary of the Upper Myanmar Chin Baptist Association (UMCBA) said the Chins estimated to be about 100 have been taking refuge in the church compound for months as they had fled their houses due to the ongoing conflicts.

"Another 200 Chins have just arrived in Waikha, where Rev. Joseph works as a pastor. There are many more refugees from different ethnic groups taking shelter, too," added the Chin pastor based in Mandalay.

Last Wednesday, a building of the Emmanuel Chin Baptist Church in Waikha was destroyed after being hit by artillery shells reportedly launched from Burma Army soldiers.

Rev. Joseph, originally from Surngen of Chin State, said there were no casualties among his members as all of them had managed to move to the Kachin church

nearby, according to Pastor Thawng from Mandalay.

Pastor Thawng said 'unidentified' three people were killed on the streets following the shelling last Tuesday.

"Our churches in Phakanh, Saingtaung and Mawshan have been taking care of members who are caught up in the fighting since September last year. And we are running out of supplies," said Rev. Pa Hrang Hmung.

UMCBA and ZBC (Zomi Baptist Convention) made financial donations of 73 lakh kyats in November 2012, according to the Chin pastor.

Another contribution of 200,000 kyats was made from a Chin individual from Australia last Saturday.

"There were 500 members taking refuge in our churches. As the situation was getting better, about 400 returned to their places. But the remaining 100 are still stuck as the fighting is still going on in their areas," added Rev. Pa Hrang Hmung.

The Chin pastor expressed his deep concerns saying: "Among the victims are mothers, children and youths, too, who are supposed to go to schools and study in peace." #

Concerns over India's aid for development in Chin State

24 February 2013: Concern has been raised over financial aid provided by Indian government for development in Chin State as it will be channelled through the Ministry for Border Affairs.

Lt. Gen. Thet Naing Win, new Union Minister for Border Affairs, a ministry that has been accused of coercing Chin Christian students to convert to Buddhism, said the money would be spent for construction of eleven primary schools, nine health centres and five bridges in Burma's poorest state.

Announcement on plans of the projects was made following a meeting last Friday with Dr. Villur Sundararajan Seshadri, Indian Ambassador to Burma.

"It is good that India is willing to help develop Chin State. What is more important is that their assistance does not end up in the hands that make no benefits to the people," a Chin community leader and Christian pastor told *Chinland Guardian*.

India will give US\$ 25million to the Ministry for Border Affairs for development in education, health and transport sectors in both Chin State and Naga Self-Administered Zone for the next five years, according to the New Light of Myanmar.

The Minister for Border Affairs, together with the Ministry of Religious Affairs, has been responsible for running Na Ta La schools, government's separate residential school system known as Border Areas National Races Youth Development

Training School.

"These Indian funds must not be used to construct Na Ta La schools, as our research shows that the right to freedom of religion or belief is not upheld at those Ministry for Border Affairs schools, run by the military," said Ms. Rachel Fleming, Advocacy Director of the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO).

"Actually, funds are needed to construct basic education primary and high schools in the poorest, most remote parts of Chin State. With better access to mainstream education, poor Chin families will be less vulnerable to having their children recruited to the Na Ta La schools," added Ms. Fleming.

The Indian government is urged to ensure that the funds are not channeled into the Na Ta La school system and to ensure transparency in how these funds are spent.

In a recent reshuffle in government ministries at the order of President Thein Sein, the Union Minister for Border Affairs Lt. Gen. Thein Htay has been replaced by Lt. Gen. Thet Naing Win.

In October last year, Lt. Gen. Thein Htay announced plans to establish a new Na Ta La school in Paletwa Township of Chin State in the years 2013 and 2014.

A report by CHRO said the Ministry for Border Affairs targeted poverty-stricken Chin youths for recruitment into the Na Ta La schools and coerced Christian students to convert to Buddhism.

The Chin Human Rights Organization first documented coerced conversion of children at the Na Ta La schools in 1994.#

"It is good that India is willing to help develop Chin State.

What is more important is that their assistance does not end up in the hands that make no benefits to the people,"

- a Chin community leader and Christian pastor.

Event & Protest



Kachin protest in USA (Photo: Van Thawng Cung & PaShiang/Laiforum)

Chins to join Kachin protests against Burma Army attacks

06 January 2013:

Chin communities say they stand united with the Kachin in protesting against the ongoing military offensive launched by Burma Army soldiers in Kachin State, Burma.

Leaders of the Chin diaspora have urged to support a series of Kachin demonstrations planned to take place in front of the Burmese embassies and elsewhere in several countries next week.

A rally to call on Thein Sein's government and Burma Army to immediately end military attacks and initiate genuine political dialogue is organized in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, London, UK and Washington DC, USA on 7, 10 and 12 January 2013 respectively.

Salai Mang Bik, from Malaysia, said two buses have been arranged to pick up Chin refugees joining the protest in Kuala Lumpur, adding: "One bus will be waiting in front of ACR (Alliance of Chin Refugees) office and another near CRC (Chin Refugee Committee)."

In Washington DC, dozens of Chins are to join the Kachin Alliance to call on the US government to put more pressure on Thein Sein's administration to 'stop crimes against ethnic nationalities' in Burma.

Messages of sympathy, prayer and concern for the Ka-

chin as well as victims of armed conflicts have been circulated by Chin people from both inside and outside of Burma.

The Chin National Front (CNF) strongly rejected military attacks by Burma Army soldiers in Kachin and Shan States as it called for a nationwide political dialogue with all ethnic nationalities.

In its statement released yesterday, CNF, a Chin armed group that has engaged in the peace-talk process since January last year, expressed deep disappointment with the Tatmadaw over recent deployment of heavy weapons, which imposes threat to building reconciliation and peace in the country.

The Kachin National Organization in the UK accused Thein Sein's government of practising 'zero-tolerance' policy toward those who hold different opinions despite claiming the fact that it has changed in a democratic direction.

Burma's government said in its official statement published in the New Light of Myanmar yesterday that the Tatmadaw had to take military action as self defense and in order to protect the safety of lives and properties of the people.

It also stated that the majority of the displaced persons fled their home because of the threat and disturbance made by KIA (Kachin Independence Army), a military arm of the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO).#



Public protest to demand electricity in Hakha (Photo: CP)

Public protest to demand electricity supply in Hakha

10 January 2013: A peaceful demonstration is planned next Monday to demand an increase of electricity supply in Hakha, Chin State.

More than 2,000 people are believed to march in a public protest in the Chin capital from Vomthumawng football ground up to Bogyoke Park.

The first public Hakha rally in years aims to urge the government of Chin State to improve the current supply of electricity, which is provided once in a four-day time from 6pm to 11pm.

Pu Huat Chum, one of the protest organizers, said people in Hakha received electricity for only about 35 out of 720 hours a month.

"This really is the main factor negatively affecting our environment, businesses, education, health, works and eventually ways of life," added Pu Huat Chum.

Pa 'Thang, a community leader from Hakha, told Chinland Guardian that the irregularity of electricity supply had left families no choice but to find out other

ways to get light in their houses at night.

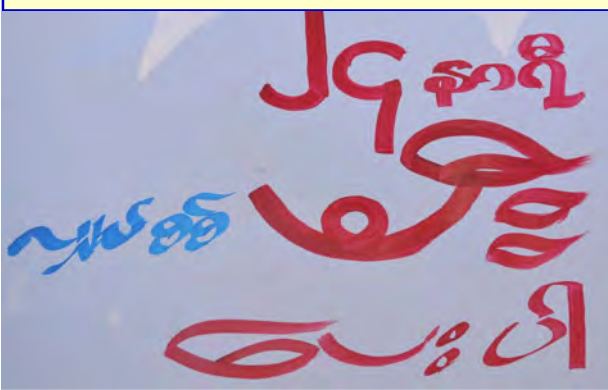
"Electricity supplied by the government is so unreliable that people now tend to ignore even its existence. Families still have to use firewood for cooking," added Pa 'Thang.

The government said it would construct power lines that would generate enough electricity for the whole town in three years, according to the organizers.

However, an alternative way to providing electricity for the three-year period must be sought, the organizers added.

A government employee at Hakha General Hospital said: "A 24/7 supply of electricity is essential to effectively improving our service. Not only staff members but also patients are affected unnecessarily as a result of lack of power."

Recently, a local ward administrator in Hakha openly challenged government ministers including Chief Minister Hung Ngai at a public meeting over 'unfair' supply of electricity, saying a special line has been set up to provide electricity to certain 'selected' areas including military camps on Mount Rung.#



CND exhibition opened despite anti-alcohol appeal

19 February 2013: Pu Hung Ngai, Chief Minister of Chin State government, opened a ribbon-cutting ceremony of an exhibition prepared in honour of the Chin National Day in Hakha today.

The exhibition presents an array of cultural items, traditional weavings and consumers' awareness with an emphasis on environmental issues.

It also showcases a range of advertisements featuring various alcoholic drinks including Myanmar Beer, Hero Whisky and Double Strong, sparking disappointment among local communities.

Chin communities and civil organizations including the Chin Women Organization (CWO) expressed deep concerns over the preparation swamped with alcohol advertising.

Pi Van Thla Cer Hniang, Chairperson of CWO, told Chinland Guardian that the Chin National Day was not a drinking event but a significant historic day for the Chin.

Some of the 'alcohol' posters flooding the celebration

venue at the Vom Thu Mawng football ground have been taken off following an official letter written to the authorities in the government of Chin State.

"Once we saw the adverts, we talked to the people nicely and asked them to remove them all. But they didn't. So, we took action by writing letters to relevant authorities," added Pi Van Thla Cer Hniang.

A Chin elder from Hakha said a lot of people got discouraged to turn up at the celebration following the alcohol promotion and commercial advertisements all over the place.

The town municipal department is mainly responsible for issuing permission to companies willing to advertise their products at the event, according to sources from Hakha.

Event organizing members of the Chin National Front (CNF) raised during the meeting with the government of Chin State the issue to ban import and sales of alcoholic drinks at the celebration.

Tomorrow will mark the 65th anniversary of the Chin National Day with commemoration of the Falam conference in 1948 where the Chin decided to establish a democratic governing system.#



Photo: Hakha Post



Chin National Day celebration in Hakha (Photo: The Chinland Post)

'Chin National Day has returned to Chinland'

20 February 2013: Celebrations of the 65th Chin National Day in Chin State brought a renewed ray of hope for the Chin people who had faced restrictions to hold their historic day in Burma for decades.

In Hakha, Chin State where the Chin National Front (CNF) and the government of Chin State jointly organized the event, Chin historian Dr. Lian Hmung Sakhong said the Chin National Day had come back to Chin State after a long journey of struggle.

Speaking on behalf of CNF as one of the Supreme Council members, Dr. Sakhong remarked: "The Chin National Day commemorated at this place at this moment this day re-establishes its 65-year-long strenuous history as a national movement of the Chin."

Dr. Sakhong, winner of the 2007 Sweden's Martin Luther King Jr. Prize, also stressed that the day is inseparably connected with democratic system when looking at the events of its emergence.

"Therefore, whenever an alliance of forces that opposed democracy got authority, celebration of the Chin National Day was not permitted. Just as democratic system was suppressed, so was permission to observe the day banned," added the Chin scholar.

The Chin National Day has its origin mostly dating back to a two-day conference held in Falam from 18-20 February 1948, where the Chin opted of their own accord for democratic governing system against traditional aristocratic feudalism.

Historical records said only 17 out of about 5,000 representatives from across what was then known as Chin Special Division voted for their traditional ruling system of chieftainship.

Chairman of the Ethnic Nationalities Council (ENC) and Director of the exile-based think tank Burma Center for Ethnic Studies, Dr. Lian Hmung Sakhong said the Chin practiced their right to self-determination in voting at the Falam conference.

The Hakha celebration was attended by Union Ministers U Soe Thein and U Win Tun, Chief Minister of Chin State government Pu Hung Ngai and ministers, Chin MPs and members of the Chin National Front.

Last year, CNF, a Chin armed group fighting for self-determination, democracy and federalism in Burma since 1988, and Burma's government reached a cease-fire agreement at meetings in Chin State and Rangoon.

It is the first time in years the Chin are officially allowed to celebrate their national day inside of Burma, making it another historical event in modern Chin history.

A series of celebrations are held in other parts of the country including Rangoon and Naypyitaw where Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and Thura Shwe Man, Speaker of the Pyithu Hluttaw, the lower house of the Burmese parliament, also attended.

Today marks the 65th anniversary of the Chin National Day.#

Situation of Refugees

Chin Refugees Robbed, Attacked in Malaysia

03 January 2013:

Salai Mang Bik, a Chin refugee in Malaysia, said his rented room of a building in Pudu of Kuala Lumpur was robbed last Monday while he and his wife were working.

The 'unidentified' thief broke in by cutting off the lock and stole 3,500 Ringgits kept inside the family's padlocked wardrobe in a daylight robbery between 2pm and 4pm on New Year's eve.

"Out of the total 3,500 Ringgits, 2,600 belongs to the Chin nursery school and another 400 to the One Star news agency," said Salai Mang Bik.

"Our rented room is next to the Zophei Children Learning Centre (ZCLC) and we have a lot of people coming in and out every day. It won't be easy for a stranger to know in details where we kept the money."

The One Star Journal, a weekly newsletter published in Hakha Chin by a refugee community, said losses of a guitar belonging to the Chin youth group, a private laptop and mobile phones have been reported in recent weeks.

As of today, details of the robber are not yet known.

Meanwhile, Chin refugee Pu Hre Kung, 25, died following an 'unprovoked' attack by a group of thugs near Hung Tuah train station in central Kuala Lumpur in the morning of New Year's Day.

His friends, who were also attacked and ran away from the scene, said his body was found kept at a hospital when they looked for him later the day.

The body of Hre Kung, originally from Khuathar ward of Hakha, Chin State, remains at the Chawkit hospital as the Malaysian police are conducting an investigation.#

10-year-old Chin refugee missing in Malaysia

07 January 2013: Parents and community leaders are still searching for a missing Chin refugee boy named Thang Tung Mang in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The 10-year-old son of Kham Suan

Mang and Cing Ngaih Nuam, originally from Tedim Township in Chin State, Burma has not been seen since around 10pm at his home in Pandan Indah on 5 October last year.

Pa Kung, who contacted the family, said they still hoped to find their 'lost' son despite making as much effort as possible with the help of

Chin refugee community over the past three months.

Thang Tung Mang, who is a UNHCR registered refugee, has got difficulty in hearing, according to an alert issued in a weekly newsletter published on 30 December 2012 by the Alliance of Chin Refugees (ACR).#

'Enslaved' Chin refugee girls rescued, one still missing in Delhi

31 January 2013: Nine out of ten Chin refugee girls and one woman aged between 11 and 23, who were secretly sold as housemaids to Indian landlords, have been saved from their 'unpaid' work in New Delhi, India.

The victims, who were coaxed into working as a live-in housemaid through a woman agent from Manipur State, were last week rescued by the police in collaboration with NGOs and Chin communities.

However, the police were, as of yesterday, still searching for a 13-year-old girl who is believed to be in the north-west area of Punjab, according to a source from the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO).

The 'rescued' Chin victims, with one aged 23, two 16, one 15, two 14, and three 13, are now held in a safe condition in police custody as the investigation still goes on.

Mrs Cing Lam Vung, mother of the two victims, said she would be allowed to see her daughters every Wednesday and Sunday.

How it happened

According to an interview with Mrs Cing Lam Vung by CHRO, a Manipuri woman named Kim aka Margaret approached Chin refugee girls and a woman, saying she could find jobs for them. — *next page*

Knowing their difficult situation of life in Delhi, Kim promised Mrs Cing Lam Vung that she could offer her daughters a job for 6,000 Indian rupees a month.

"Therefore, I think I will send two of my daughters aged 11 and 13 for a month during their school holidays. It was on 17 December last year that I took my daughters to her office," said Mrs Vung, originally from Tedim Township of Chin State, Burma.

She said she started getting worried about her daughters when she called Kim on 15 January and her phone was switched off.

"I went to her office with my two fellow refugees and it was closed. I rang a telephone number posted on the door and was told to come back on Monday. Again, it was closed," added Mrs Vung.

On their way back home from the office, she met a Chin refugee girl who was running away from an Indian landlord after jumping off the verandah of the house where she got a job through the same agent.

Mrs Vung said the girl one day asked her Indian landlord to let her go home on leave but the landlord told her that he had given the woman [Kim] 26,000 rupees, and that she had to return the amount first if she would like to go home.

Later, Kim contacted the girl over the phone and asked her to return to her work.

Mrs Vung, who got much worried about her own daughters, said: "I asked her to tell Kim that her landlord was not good and that she needed a new job. Kim asked her to find more girls after she had assured she would find a new land-

lord for her."

At night, Kim turned up at the girl's rented room where Mrs Vung and other five Chin girls, who pretended to be interested in getting a job, also slept.

Kim, accompanied by Mrs Vung with other girls, went to see one of her clients' houses the following day.

"We stood at the verandah and another Chin girl suddenly came out to me from inside the house. She cried and embraced me asking not to leave her alone," added Mrs Vung.

After a while, Kim had an argument with the landlord, who informed the police of the situation and let the girl go.

Vung's two daughters and other girls

Mrs Cing Lam Vung's two teenage daughters, who were later found working at different locations by the police on 20 January, are taken to Children Welfare Centre for medical check-ups.

"The police brought my two daughters. But their landlords said they were not aware of the situation," said Mrs Vung.

Ms Kim sold the Chin girls with 10,000 rupees as servants to local Indians, according to the Chin Refugee Committee (CRC) in New Delhi, a community-based organization providing services to refugees from Chin State.

Nine of the Chin girls, who are from the Zomi Community, have been recognized as refugees from Burma by Delhi-based UNHCR.

Some of them worked for one to three months without knowing that their salaries had been taken from their landlords by the dishonest Manipuri agent.

"I know that two of my daughters work to get 3,000 rupees a month each. But I later know that 23,000 rupees has been taken in advance from the landlord by Kim for my daughters," said Mrs Vung.

It was later confirmed that Kim lied to her landlord clients about the ethnic backgrounds and ages of the girls, saying they were over 18 years old and from Manipur State of India.

"One girl worked from early morning till 11pm at night. The gate was locked until the landlord came back home late at night," said Sanlek, a staff member of Don Bosco Ashalayam.

No one got their wages, according to confirmed sources.

The 'dishonest' agent and her tricks

Ms Kim aka Margaret is believed to have well known the 'desperate' situation facing Chin refugees living in India's New Delhi.

"It is interesting that Ms Margaret would come to Hastal. She met the girls four to five times and later she would give them some sweets," said Sanlek, of Don Bosco Ashalayam, an Indian NGO working for the protection of children on the streets.

"And she told the children that she knew rich people who do not have children and that they will be treated like their biological daughters and get more money."

- next page

Mrs Cing Lam Vung said Kim told her that her daughters would make 6,000 rupees per month and could work either for one month only or as long as a year.

At the police station in Uttam Nagar on 19 January 2013, Kim, who was also then detained by the police, threatened Mrs Cing Lam Vung, saying: "You, refugees, will never beat me. I have many relatives."

"I can even destroy your relations with UNHCR. Now I have phoned my relatives," added Mrs Vung, who was at that time trying to get information about her two daughters.

It is also known that one Kuki organization lodged a report against Ms Kim at the Uttam Nagar Police Station.

On 21 January 2013, staff members from Socio-Legal Information Centre (SLIC), an implementing partner of the UNHCR, lodged an FIR (First Information Report) against Ms Kim to the police.

"She is now in police custody but

we don't know where she is now," said Salai Bonai, President of the Chin Refugee Committee (CRC) in Delhi.

What's next?

Ms Kim accused Mrs Cing Lam Vung of committing child labour and of getting involved in the business with her.

"She told the police that she had given me 4,000 rupees for finding the girls. But she never gave me the money. I even paid for a local transportation cost when I went to her office at first," said Mrs Vung.

It is scheduled that Mrs Vung, who is released on bail, will appear in court on 5 February 2013.

UNHCR has been informed of the situation and it is believed that its direct involvement in assisting the search for the missing girl will be significantly effective.

It is not yet known whether the Indian landlords, who kept the Chin housemaids under slave-like conditions, will also be held responsible for any violations.

The investigation continues.

Situation of Chin refugees in Delhi

Chin refugees stranded in New Delhi have long suffered from a series of serious assaults ranging from rapes, physical attacks to abuses against children, committed by local Indians.

Between the months of June and September last year, more than 120 incidents where Chin refugees, from a child under the age of five up to an elderly over 60, had faced harassment, discrimination, violent attacks and assaults in various ways were documented by CHRO in New Delhi.

No actions have been properly taken against the local perpetrators by Indian authorities.

It is estimated that there are currently over ten thousand refugees and asylum seekers stranded in New Delhi after having fled from Chin State, Burma.. #



Display of photos showing Chin refugee victims in New Delhi in 2011 (Photo: CHRO)

Chin refugees face 'unfair' rent rises, couple locked out in Delhi

08 February 2013: An 'uninformed' increase in the cost of renting a room privately managed by local Indian owners has put Chin refugees' lives at serious risks in New Delhi, India.

Dozens of Chin refugees including children and women face difficult situations where their rented rooms are locked out by the Indian landlords while they are outside working or visiting in the city.

Last Tuesday, Mr. Kham Bawi Thawng and wife Rachael, a refugee couple originally from Hakha, Chin State, were left outside the house at night after the Indian landlady had locked their rented room.

"We came home at around 10:00 p.m. and we found that our room was locked. We tried to find the landlady but she was not at home. It was raining heavily outside and we didn't really know what to do," said Mrs Thawng.

The couple, who have rented their room since September 2011, said they eventually contacted another Chin refugee family and managed to spend the night with them.

Mrs Kham Bawi Thawng said the Indian landlady demanded an extra 500 rupees in addition to their agreed rent of 1,500 rupees once they started moving into the room.

"It is a small room with no kitchen. She [landlady] increased 500 rupees two times between September 2011 and February 2013. Now, we have to pay 3,000 per month."

"I learned from my refugee neighbor that the landlady would like to increase the rent again. But I don't understand why she did so without informing us," she added.

The Chin couple also expressed difficulties in communicating with their landlady due to language barriers but said they didn't have any argument over a thing in the past.

"We have no place to eat and sleep. We are human beings, not animals. It really hurts when we are treated like this," continued Rachael.

The following morning, the Chin couple contacted an Indian NGO, Don Bosco Ashalayam, hoping that their assistance in communicating with the house owner would at least create a better understanding between them.

It is reported that the Chin refugee couple are still in discussion with their Indian landlady over the issue although they have been temporarily permitted into the room.

Kham Bawi Thawng and Rachael came to New Delhi to seek protection from the UNHCR in January 2011.

The Chin Refugee Committee (CRC) said there have been times Chin refugees got evicted from their rented houses or rooms without any good reasons by their landlords.

Other incidents reported by Chin refugees involve a range of cases including rape, sexual violence, physical assaults, discrimination, and atrocities committed by landlords and local Indians, according to a documentation by CRC.

Ninety-five percent of women feel unsafe outdoors in New Delhi, according to the Times of India's report based on the survey by the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW).#



Mrs Thawng at her rented room in New Delhi (Photo: CHRO)

Chin State Government

Govt claimed Hakha received electricity at full capacity

15 January 2013:

The *New Light of Myanmar*, the government's mouthpiece, today said residents in Hakha, Chin State received sufficient supply of electricity.

Contrary to claims by the government, Chin community in Hakha are to march across the Chin capital in a public rally to demand better power supply tomorrow.

A newly constructed sub-power station in Khuathar Ward of Hakha has provided electricity since its completion on 6 December last year, according to government's newspaper.

"The local people now enjoy supply of electricity at full capacity thanks to the establishment of sub-power station," said the *New Light of Myanmar* (NLM).

With an extension of 11/0.4 KV, 100 KVA, the sub-power station is equipped with 1,230 feet long 11 KV line and 5280 feet long 400 volt power lines, according to NLM.

Speaking to *Chinland Guardian* today, Salai Lian from Hakha said: "We don't even have power tonight. We are using a private electric generator right now. A lot of families are in the dark."

A Chin pastor from Khuathar told *Chinland Guardian* he didn't see any improvement of electricity in his area.

"Some people who do not know but read about Chin State in the newspaper would just think electricity supply in Hakha is working. Why would a government that embraces positive and democratic changes give such information?," remarked a Chin community leader, who asked not to be named.

At a meeting held between community leaders and government officials in Hakha today, Pu Cin Lian Pau, Chin Minister for Electric and Industry, told protest organizers to re-schedule the event until a new machine for electricity generation arrives in a few days.

The Chin minister said the central government was also concerned about the electricity situation facing local people as he ascribed the current problems to budget issues, adding: "An attempt has been made to provide diesel enough for two-hour supply of electricity in Hakha."

Despite persuasion by government officials and ministers to postpone the 'planned' demonstration, Hakha public decide to protest against erratic and insufficient power supplies tomorrow.

Since early 2011, Chin MPs including Pu Zung Hlei Thang has raised questions about supply of electricity to towns across Chin State in Hluttaw sessions held in Naypyitaw.#

Govt attempt to respond to food shortages in Chin State

17 January 2013: The government of Chin State together with Chin MPs have started conducting surveys on the situation of food scarcity facing villagers.

Pu Lal Maung Cung, an MP for the Chin National Party, said a resolution was passed at the fourth regular session of Chin State Hluttaw assembly to respond to the food shortages caused by low yield of harvest.

The session also agreed to make a proposal for relief assistance to the central government of Burma, non-governmental organizations

(NGO), and international non-governmental organizations (INGO), according to the Chin MP from Thantlang.

MPs and ministers are to take a responsibility to provide the results of surveys from their constituencies.

Chin MP Pu Robin was quoted as saying that the regular Hluttaw session didn't discuss as to when the survey report would be submitted and how action would be taken in direct response to the plight of Chin victims.

Last week, a meeting was held in Thantlang with leaders from various villages in Thantlang Township in an attempt to work out how a survey could be carried out.

Some criticized that Chin MPs and government officials should visit 'affected' villages rather than asking them to travel to attend a meeting in towns as they have been struggling for their survivals.

Recently, a local NGO in Thantlang Township reportedly sent out to village leaders a letter of meeting invitation to discuss the food scarcity situation, asking them to be responsible for their own expenses and to bring copies of 'required' documents.

It is estimated that at least more than 100 villages across Chin State have been affected by food shortages due to low yields from their recent harvest in the slash-and-burn cultivation.#

Soldiers accused of trading 'illegal' hardwoods from Paletwa

24 January 2013: Soldiers from Burma Army Light Infantry Battalion No. 289 get involved in illegal business of trading hardwoods from Paletwa Township, Chin State to Rakhine State.

A ferryboat carrying hardwoods known in Burmese as Pyinkado, accompanied by Sergeant Aye Lwin and his soldiers, left for Kyaukdaw of Rakhine State from Thayawa port of Paletwa Town at 4:30am today.

The soldiers team up with Daw Ohnmar, a Rakhine resident in Paletwa, to smuggle 'illegal' timber from Paletchaung to the adjacent state of Rakhine on occasions, according to local sources.

U Kyaw Nyein, Chin State Minister of Forestry and Mines, was quoted as saying by the Khumi Media Group that no official licenses have been issued for trading other hardwoods apart from teak in Chin State.

Paletwa Township in the southern part of Chin State has got a vast swath of 'unspoiled' forests enriched with various kinds of hardwood and softwood timber and also home to the native fauna and flora.

U Win Tun, Union Minister for Environmental Conservation and Forestry said the government had already taken measures in establishing the forest in Paletwa including Kimo mountain as a reserve in response to a question raised over protection of forests by a Chin MP from Paletwa Township constituency at Hluttaw sessions in Naypitaw in September 2011.

The Paletwa Chins said that similar incidents of smuggling out hardwoods into Rakhine State by using ferryboats were seen on a number of times in the past.

"Plenty of timber was sneaked out into Kyaukdaw in a ferryboat of U Aung Nyunt Hlaing, which was normally used for carrying bricks in October last year," an eyewitness told the Khumi Media Group.

The 'smuggled' hardwoods from Paletwa Township are eventually taken to a businessman named U Hla Maung Thein in Kyaukdaw, according to a ferryboat worker, whose name is not revealed.

No proper action has been taken against the matter although the relevant authorities including the local forestry department are already informed of the 'illegal' situation, the Paletwa elders said.

Dozens of employees from Department of Forestry Office in Sagaing Divisions were detained in Tamu, an Indo-Burma border town in 2011 after being charged with getting involved in smuggling illegal timber and forest products.

Most of the timber and hardwood was from parts of Chin State and upper Sagaing Division, according to a report by the Irrawaddy.

The authorities have been accused of engaging in 'illegal' logging and trading of timber from Burma into neighbouring countries including India through secret activities with the smugglers, according to sources from local communities.

Burma Army LIB No. 289 established its military base in Myothit ward of Paletwa town since early 2000s after having forced local residents to a new location.

"They [soldiers] came, ordered us to move out and took our fields and land. They confiscated the whole ward including a Christian church, without any kind of compensation," recalled a Khumi Chin from Rangoon.

It is estimated that there are over 400,000 acres of forest reserve; 600,000 acres of reserve and 1.3 million acres of protected reserves in Chin State.#

- Reporting by Peter Lawilu with Thawng Zel Thang

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Press Release

CSW AND CHRO WELCOME MEPS' LETTER TO EU FOREIGN POLICY CHIEF ON HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN BURMA

1 February 2013: Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) and the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) today warmly welcomed a letter sent by Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) to the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Baroness Catherine Ashton, highlighting ongoing human rights violations in Burma.

The letter, dated 16 January and signed by 14 MEPs from across the political spectrum, including a Vice-President of the European Parliament, highlights “the plight of ethnic and religious minorities in the country.” It focuses on the escalation of the conflict in Kachin State, and calls on the Burma Army to immediately desist and withdraw.

In their letter, the MEPs stated that the European Union must call for the immediate cessation of human rights violations against ethnic and religious minorities. They also called on Baroness Ashton to press the Government of Burma to “urgently prioritise political dialogue that will result in a political solution to the root causes of the conflict in Kachin State.”

CHRO's Program Director Salai Za Uk Ling said, “We strongly condemn the Burma Army's continued indiscriminate shelling in Kachin State, which has resulted in the deaths of Kachin civilians, including children. We are very concerned for the safety of tens of thousands of Kachin, internally displaced within their own homeland. We have also received worrying reports that hundreds of Chin migrant workers are caught in the crossfire in Kachin State. A local church where over 100 Chin were taking shelter was damaged during the Burma Army military onslaught in the Hpakant area. Given the gravity of the situation, we hope that Baroness Ashton will urgently take forward the recommendations proposed by the European Parliamentarians.”

The MEPs also state that, “Current reforms have not yet extended to freedom of religion or belief, which will be key to long-term peace and stability in the country, given the intersection between ethnicity and religion for several of Burma's minority groups”. They urge the EU High Representative to follow President Obama's lead in calling for freedom of religion or belief to be respected.

The letter, spearheaded by László Tőkés MEP, Member of the European Parliament Subcommittee on Human Rights, also highlights problems with the current State policy of segregation of Buddhist and Muslim communities in Rakhine State, and the destruction of large Christian crosses in Chin State.

In a statement released on 30 January, the Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC), stated that despite President Thein Sein's announcement of a unilateral ceasefire in Kachin State, effective from 19 January, the Burma Army offensive in Kachin State has continued. According to the KBC, the ongoing war in Kachin State has resulted in the destruction of over 200 villages, with 66 churches reportedly damaged and over 100,000 people internally displaced.

Andrew Johnston, CSW's Advocacy Director, said, “Burma is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious society and it is vital that non-Burman ethnic nationalities and non-Buddhist religious minorities are treated with equal rights, and that freedom of religion or belief, as well as ethnic and cultural rights, are fully respected at all levels if Burma is to make a genuine transition to democracy, freedom and true peace.”

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) is a Christian organisation working for religious freedom through advocacy and human rights, in the pursuit of justice.

Cartoon

