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Chin Human Rights Organization

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July-August 2013

Gullu Mual in Chin State (from Google Earth)



Washington DC, USA



Canberra, Australia



Delhi, India

Demonstrations against China-Burma joint project of Gullu Mual nickel extractions in Tedim Township, Chin State (Photo: Zomi innkuan India, USA and Australia)

A delegation of the Chin Human Rights Organization briefing UN Special Rapporteur Mr. Quintana in Rangoon, Burma ahead of his first visit to Chin State (Photo: CHRO)



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Arbitrary Taxation & Extortion

Admin officer forcibly collected money from village admin heads

17 July 2013 –

The administrative officer of Rihkhuadar Sub-Township in Chin State forcibly collected money from heads of the village administrative council in the township.

The money was to be spent for the expenses used during President Thein Sein's visit to Chin State in February this year.

The administrative officer collected 50,000 kyats by force from each of 8 village administrative council heads on 14 March 2013, according to the local. The money was deducted from the budget given to assist in developing the villages.

On 16 March, the officer also tried to forcibly put aside a total of 300,000 kyats from 500,000 kyats, the amount given for Thingcang village electricity

under Chin State Poverty Alleviation Plan.

Despite a request by Thingcang village administrative council head to allow him to discuss about the matter with fellow villagers, 100,000 kyats from the electricity project budget was taken by force.

“The current administrative officer is very authoritative. His work has no transparency. He forcibly collected money from us without a proper discussion with the villagers,” says a Thingcang villager.

On another occasion on 20 March 2013, the same officer called for a meeting with land-owners who have received budget for managing waterways for their lands under Chin State Poverty Reduction Plan.

But in the meeting, a person named Ramsuma was granted 500,000 kyats by the officer though he was not entitled to receive any benefit under the plan. The officer then went on to collect 30,000 kyats from each land-owner, saying the money would be used for money spent during the President visit. #

Govt officials collect extra money from travellers in Indo-Burma border

16 August 2013 - Officers from the immigration department, who are on duty on the Indo-Burma trade road No. 2 in Chin State, have been collecting extra money of 1,000 kyats from the travellers for passing the friendship bridge.

The Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) was informed that the money are collected in addition to the usual gate fee of 1,000 kyats on the Indo-Burma border in northern parts of Chin State.

Immigration officials on duty at the border town of Tio on the Indo-Burma road are posted under two categories: State Immigration and Township Immigration. State Immigration officials collect 1,000

kyats as friendship bridge passing fees in the border area whereas Township Immigration officials collect an extra 1,000 kyats per head from travellers between Tedim and Kalaymyo.

“...The officials should only collect tax from the friendship bridge passersby in the border area but it may not be right to collect tax from travellers within the country as that is not their mandate...”

“It seems like the Immigration Department is displaying a magic show to us. The officials from the same department are functioning differently. The officials should only collect tax from the friendship bridge passersby in the border area but it may not be right to collect tax from travellers within the country as that is not their mandate. Mizoram immigration officials collect only 50 Rupees and nothing more, unlike our officials,” said the local.

In Tio, there are a total of five car stations that operate bus services for Tio-Kalaymyo route, namely Pyi Chit Thar, Pan Cherry, Zalat May, Pyi Arr Man and Za Lat Phyu. The five centres run five buses everyday on a regular basis and each bus carries 15 to 20 passengers. #

Travellers and locals affected by collection of excessive toll fees

29 August 2013, Kalaymyo - A local driver, who asks not to be named, told the Chin Human Rights Organization that poor civilians and travellers have been suffering losses from rampant toll fee collection from vehicles plying between Kalaymyo and Tio River on Indo-Burma border trade road No. 2.

Under the normal circumstances, vehicles plying between Kalaymyo, Sagaing Dividsion and Rih of Falam Township in Chin State pay 2,000 kyats for round trip at each checkpoint as toll fees.

A new custom check gate in Haimual village of Tedim Township, however, collects an extra 8,000 kyats besides the toll fee by claiming it as labour charge, said the driver.

He said: “One ended up paying 40,000 kyats in total as toll fees for round trip from Kalaymyo – to Tio River and when we ask for leniency at some checkpoints,

they would threaten us of impounding our vehicles over non-payment.”

“Since one has to pay 40,000 kyats normally for toll fees, nothing much is left for vehicle owners and drivers. In order to have some benefit, we have to increase the car fares and cargo charges which in turn affect the general public, most of who are poor and main travellers.”

There are a total of 17 checkpoints along Kalaymyo – Rih route in the Indo-Burma border areas operated by different government departments including the Immigration Department, Road transport administration department, Myanmar Customs department as well as Burma Army, Burma police force, and Municipal Board and Special Anti-drug squad.

Vehicles plying by this route have to pay toll fees at these check gates on a daily basis.#

"A new custom check gate in Haimual village of Tedim Township, however, collects an extra 8,000 kyats besides the toll fee by claiming it as labour charge, - a local driver



One of the gates where fees are demanded to cross a bridge on the way to Chin State (Photo: CHRO)



Freedom of Religion



(Photo: CHRO)

This 30-foot tall concrete structure near Matupi was defaced and pulled down on orders of the Burmese authorities in January 2005

Matupi churches ask permission to erect Christian cross

24 August 2013:

The Matupi Township Council of Churches (MTCC) said it has asked permission from the government of Chin State to plant a new Christian cross on the mountain of Cangtak in Matupi township next year.

Rev. Victor Lai Lian, MTCC's General Secretary, said a letter requesting permission to construct the cross has been sent to Pu Hung Ngai, Chief Minister of the Chin State government.

"We are waiting for the result from the State govern-

ment," Rev. Victor Lai Lian was quoted as saying by the Hakha Post.

The attempts by churches in Matupi township aim to plant a new Christian cross as a substitute for Boltlang's 30-ft high cross, which was destroyed by Burma's authorities in 2005.

After demolition of the Boltlang cross, which was erected in 1987 under the leadership of MTCC, the authorities confiscated the area and built a military camp in 2005 for Burma Army Light Infantry Battalion No. 304.

Erection of the Boltang cross cost 4,000,000 kyats, collectively contributed by local Chin Christians after permission was obtained from the local authorities in Matupi.

Similarly, an organization of Christian pastors from different churches in Hakha has decided to erect a cross in the capital city in 2014 as a symbol indicating Chin State as a Christian State.

The group said they are working hard on finding the location and how to deal with the cross construction in accordance with official procedures under the new government.

London-based Pastor Shwekey Hoipang, of the Evangelical Free Church of Myanmar (EFCM), said: "Thein Sein's government claims there is religious freedom in the 'democratic' country of Burma. This is a test for reality."

"If permission is neither granted nor responded, it is clear to say that the ideology of the old military regime on religious discrimination and persecution is still in practice," added the Chin Christian pastor, originally from Mindat township of Chin State.

A 2012 report covering incidents between March 2004 and April 2012 across Chin State by the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) documented destruction of 13 Christian crosses, of which four were demolished under Thein Sein's government.#

Religious freedom still restricted in Burma: USCIRF

26 August 2013: The US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) said people from religious and ethnic minorities still express fears and face restrictions in Burma.

In its report of August 2013 following the recent visit to Burma, USCIRF noted religious freedom conditions remain problematic.

In addition, legal restrictions that were used in the past to curtail independent religious activities remain in place, the report said.

Scott Flipse, USCIRF Deputy Director for Policy and Research, made a trip to Burma visiting various parts of the country including Chin State to assess conditions of religious freedom on the ground under the new government.

Dr. Flipse met with religious leaders, elected government officials, representatives of civil society, international humanitarian organizations, political party leaders, and U.S. government officials.

Religious communities continue to have difficulties getting permissions to build, renovate, and conduct activities, particularly in Chin and Rakhine (Arakan) States, according to the report.

While welcoming a decrease of military involvement in daily governance in Chin State, USCIRF stressed some serious religious freedom violations including discrimination continue.

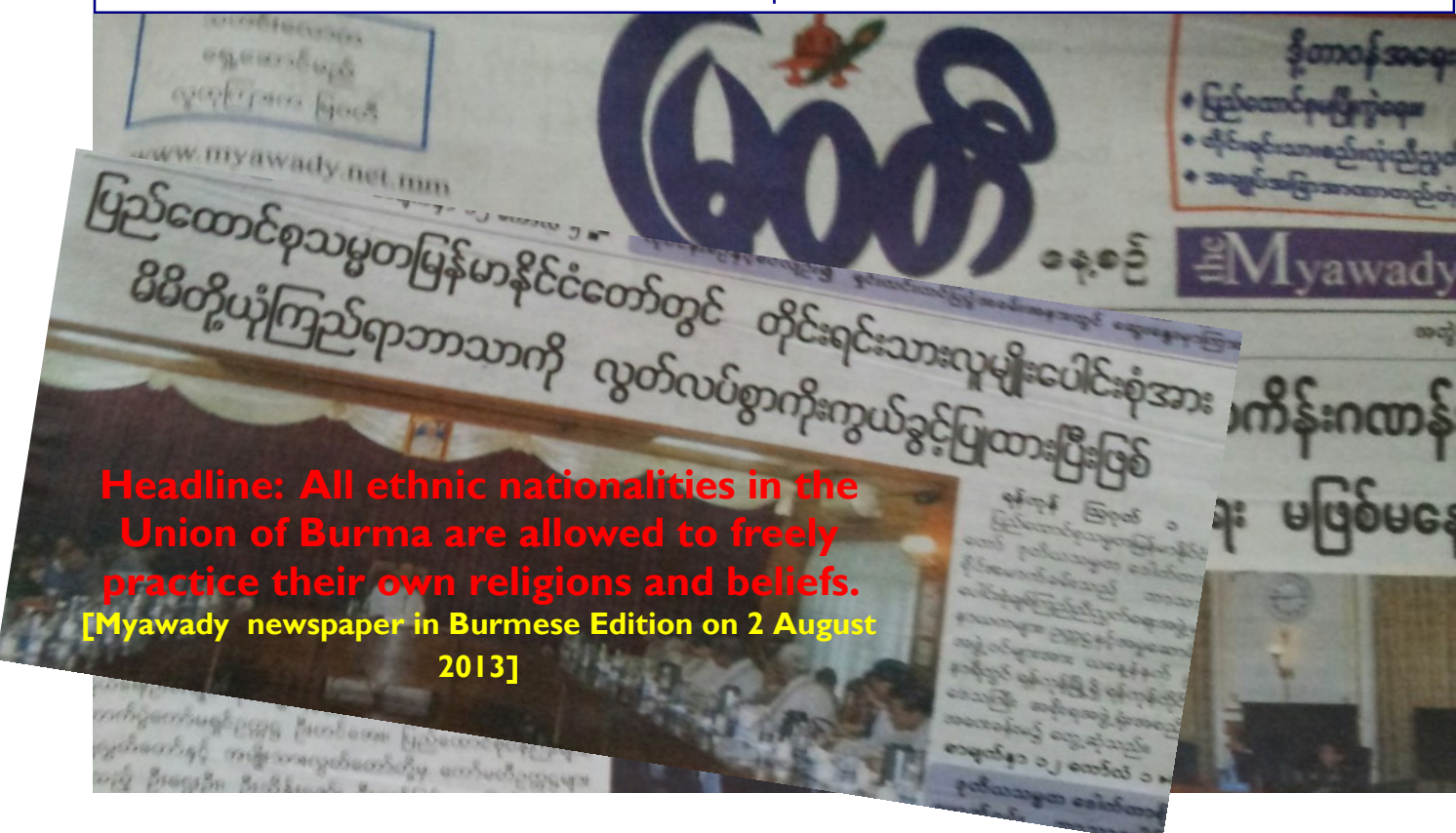
USCIRF said the issues of religion, ethnicity, and the protection of religious freedom are critical factors that will shape Burma's democratic trajectory, its movement toward political reform, and its economic development.

Burmese government reforms remain fragile and reversible, and their long-term success will depend on building capacity for democratic governance, the rule of law, and protecting the rights of ethnic and religious minorities, according to the report.

The US government, UN and other donor nations are called to press the government of Burma to repeal and/or amend remaining laws that restrict the freedom of religion and belief.

Burma is currently designated by the State Department as a 'country of particular concern' for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

Earlier this year, the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) met with officials from USCIRF during an advocacy trip to the US following its report on religious persecution against ethnic Chin Christian in Burma.#



Headline: All ethnic nationalities in the Union of Burma are allowed to freely practice their own religions and beliefs. [Myawady newspaper in Burmese Edition on 2 August 2013]

Other Human Rights Violations

Plots of land grabbed by authorities despite local objection

17 July 2013:

General Administrative Chief Officer of Rihkhuadar Sub-Township in Chin State has forcibly grabbed and reserved plots of land for construction of residential buildings for government employees.

Pu Dawla, President of the National League for Democracy (NLD) reported to the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) several plots of land have been confiscated although the local communities strongly voiced their objection against the plans.

On 14 July 2013, the Sub-Township officer called for a meeting with representatives from different government departments, local elderly group and political parties, informing them that he had received an order from State Chief Minister's office.

The order is to clean up the forest area near Rih Lake, within an area of 150 yards from the lake near Rih-Falam road and to transform the designated space into residential plots.

The meeting participants were also informed and explained with maps that 30 plots of land near the Rih-Falam road have been applied for State Chief Minis-

ter's office bearers and their children, adding: "The government is planning to construct two new roads near the lake and give plots of lands along the roads to the locals, too."

Pu Dawla said the locals get very disappointed as the plan is posing a danger to the forest area near Rih Lake and is sure to destroy the beauty of the lake.

The government is accused of putting more importance on their greed than maintaining the beauty of the lake and protecting its environment whose destruction could bring negative impacts to the area and to the people.

A villager said the government has not consulted the local people to execute the plan which shows that the government has no respect and concern for its people and that this new government is no different from the former military government who confiscated lands from the locals.

Another local said: "Rih lake is a natural beauty with the shape of a heart and it is a special lake for the Chin. It has also attracted the attention of many tourists all over and the entire Chin community has a birthright duty to protect this lake and maintain its beauty".

Pu Dawla said the NLD office in Rihkhuadar Sub-Township has written to the NLD head office of Chin State to strongly oppose the entire plan and pressurize the concerning authorities.

Rih lake (Photo: CHRO/S. Par)



The letter, according to Pu Dawla, also urged NLD office in Hakha to push the Falam District Administration Office not to follow the orders issued by the government but to return the plots to local communities.

He said the NLD in the Sub-Township would stage a demonstration with the locals, if necessary, to oppose the plan.

Rih is a legendary lake for the Chin.#

Demand to protect orchids ignored by authorities

20 July 2013: Chin State Ministry of Forestry and Mines have been accused of turning a blind eye on applications submitted by the locals to protect orchids in Kanpetlet Township.

A report received by the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) said State Ministry have been informed of the need to protect orchid plants in the area, requesting them to introduce some initiatives.

But the ministry has not taken any action regarding the application, which concerns the locals over the situation of orchids in their region.

A local villager, who asks not to be named, said an appeal had been sent to ban any form of orchid trading in their region in the years 2012-2013. However, the authorities are collecting 50,000 kyats from each orchid trader to allow them to collect orchids and sell them freely.

In spite of these repeated requests sent to Township, District and State Forestry offices, the responsible officials have not taken any actions against orchid traders including Daw Ni Ni Aye.

Two kg of white orchids were found in her house on 16 December 2012 but she was let off after she paid some money, according to the local villager.

“Daw Ni Ni Aye gave 50,000 kyats to the officials as a bribe for 2kg of white orchids. She was freed, with all her orchids. The officials also collected 50,000 kyats each from other traders,” said the villager.

Types of the orchids that the local people request for protection and preservation are:

1. Rhododendron (red, white and yellow)
2. White Orchid
3. Yuu Shi (Long stemmed Orchid)
4. Yuu Kyian (Short stemmed Orchid) and
5. Yuu Sing (Green stemmed Orchid)

Authorities allow forest destruction, ignore local communities

22 July 2013: Authorities in Kanpetlet Township, Chin State have been allowing timber trading companies to import timbers while ignoring the voices and needs of local communities.

Local residents reported to the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) that the authorities reportedly said the locals have received enough under Chin State poverty alleviation plan, hence not using benefits gained from timber for the region.

A native villager said that teaks planted in the nearby areas of Yechawng village of Lepung tract of Kanpetlet Township were cut down and sold by Manawphyushin A.K Company with the permission of the authorities.

The local people conveyed their wish of using the teaks for the welfare of Kanpetlet Township but the company officials

replied them that the government had allotted them large amounts of money for reducing poverty and that they are trading teaks because the government orders them to do so.

“When villagers conveyed the message of their displeasure over the company cutting down their teaks without bringing any benefits to the locals of Kanpetlet Township, the company just replied them that they have been already given money by the government for poverty alleviation and continued to cut down teaks,” added the villager.

Though the local people have sent complaints to the State level forest ministry officials on the issue but no action has been taken and the State government might be unable to take action as Manawphyushin AK Company have close ties with Thura Aung Ko.

It is reported that teaks planted in the said area will be able to produce 30,000 to 40,000 tons of timber and Manawphyushin AK Company is working on this business on a long-term plan.#

“.. State government might be unable to take action as Manawphyushin AK Company have close ties with Thura Aung Ko.”

Govt officers suspected of 'pocketing' school budgets

20 August 2013: The budget allocated to schools in Kanpetlet Township is much lower than other townships in Chin State, and elsewhere in the country, according to sources from the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO).

A resident in Kanpetlet Township told CHRO that the Kanpetlet Township education officer is suspected of playing foul on the allocated budget.

The amounts allocated for schools in other townships, States and Divisions stand at 10 to 11 million kyats for High Schools, 5 to 6 hundred thousand kyats for Middle Schools and 2.5 to 3 hundred thousand kyats for Primary Schools respectively.

However, the budgets for schools in Kanpetlet Township of the least developed Chin State are much lower,

standing at 4 hundred thousand kyats for High Schools, 3 hundred thousand kyats for Middle Schools and 1 hundred thousand kyats for Primary School respectively.

The residents of Kanpetlet Township have posed several questions on the subject, asking: "What is the reason for having a much lower budget than other townships, States and Divisions? Have Kanpetlet township education officer U Pau Za Ning and senior clerk Daw Thein Shin exploited the budget and pocketed some part of the budget for themselves? Why does Department of Education of Kanpetlet Township not dare to publish the financial documents and reports to the public?"

In Kanpetlet Township, Chin State, there are 2 High Schools, 1 sub-High School, 1 Middle School, 3 sub-Middle Schools, 10 Higher Primary Schools, 67 Primary Schools, 3 sub-Primary Schools, 6 associate Primary Schools, 2 Monastery Schools and 1 Na Ta La School.#



(Photo: CHRO)

For the said purpose, a list of interested candidates has been collected from villages around the area, reported the villager.

But the core aim of the project, which is to benefit the poor and the needy, has been thwarted when loans are provided to the relatives and friends of General Administrative Officer. Loans of 2,000,000 kyats to 3,000,000 kyats have been provided to many of these relatives. But the beneficiaries have been using the loans for other private businesses rather than rearing.

Govt official accused of 'milking' anti-poverty project budget

20 August 2013: Budget for Chin State poverty alleviation project, sanctioned by the government, has not been benefitting ordinary civilians, a source from the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) disclosed.

A Siatlai villager said the plan has been drawn for local people but relatives of the authorities implementing the project have reaped the benefits.

The government has sanctioned 520 lakh kyats (Ks. 52,000,000) for Rezua village as the budget for the poverty alleviation project. General Administrative Officer of Rezua Sub-Township has decided to use the budget in the form of providing loans for mithan rearing.

The villager added: "If the government has allocated budget to be given to the poor in the form of loans, the authorities should ensure that the loans reach the poor and the people who really want to rear mithan instead of giving it to the relatives of the authorities who have some say on the implementation of the government plan. If this continues, Chin State will never be able to reduce poverty."

According to a report by U Win Tun, Union Minister of Environmental Conservation and Forestry, the government has used 84,678 million kyats for poverty alleviation project in Chin State but the current reality does not reflect the report. There has been no positive result achieved out of the project. #

High school students forced to go to class at weekends

31 August 2013: Parents and teachers from Christian families in Chin State complain about their children having to go to school on Saturdays and sometimes, Sundays.

High school students go to school mostly on Saturdays in substitution of Uposatha, a Buddhist day of observance which falls during the weekdays.

A Chin community leader, who asks not to be named, said: "It is not a public holiday but it is an order we have to follow. The day keeps changing during the week."

Uposatha, known in Burmese as ubot nei, is observed in accordance with the four phases of the moon: waxing moon, full moon, waning moon and new moon, according to sources.

In Hakha, parents said schools were closed on Wednesday the previous week and last Thursday, adding: "Our children go to school almost every Saturday including today."

Chin reporter Salai Thang said, "This has been going on for years and now people even seem to have got used to Saturday's school."



High school in Hakha, Chin State (Photo: CHRO)

In Chin State, where over 90 percent of the population are Christian, parents get worried as children are affected in their religious education and contacts.

A parent in Hakha, from the Seventh-day Adventist Church, said: "We feel really concerned that our children have missed several church services as we worship on Saturday."

Children sometimes had to go to school on Sundays, meaning they would not be able to worship at church as Christians, according to a father in Thantlang.

Pastor Shwekey Hoipang, originally from Mindat in Chin State, said: "This is a long-planned implementation of indoctrinating Christian children with Buddhism. This can in the long run lead to loss of ethnic identity through an unwritten policy of Burmanization."



Children in school uniforms in Hakha, Chin State (Photo: Wikipedia/Khaipt)

A Chin Christian mother of four in Kalay town of Sagaing Region said she would have to arrange someone else to look after her children while she was working.

Rangoon-based Chin community leader also told Chinland Guardian that his children had to go to school on Saturday, adding: "This is not fair."

It is believed that Uposatha substitution will happen until the end of October this year.#

Humanitarian Situation

Heavy rains destroyed water storage, road in Matupi

20 August 2013:

Flash floods caused by heavy rains brought a water storage to destruction in Matupi town, Chin State at night last Thursday.

The concrete storage which provides drinking water to the Chin town is completely damaged, according to the locals.

"This storage was built collectively by the people here as we have water issues every year. It is a big problem for us now," said one of the Matupi community leaders.

Residents in Matupi blamed lack of proper drainage system in the town and an undisciplined dumping of waste into roadside ditches.

It is claimed that members of the local authorities visited the site the following day and said necessary actions would be taken after holding a meeting at the town administration office.

One of the main roads leading toward Mindat is also damaged by heavy landslides, according to the Hakha Post.

Situated over 3,560 ft above sea level in southern Chin State, Matupi is the biggest town in Matupi township, with an estimated population of over 10,000.#

Heavy rains, landslides hamper travelers in Hakha

21 August 2013: 'Continuous' heavy rains over the past few days have triggered landslides on the Hakha-Gangaw-Mandalay road, causing serious delay in transportation.

Landslides occurred around Mile Post 19/7 and 12/4 in Chin State last Friday and Saturday, according to reports.

A resident in Hakha told Chinland Guardian: "It has been pouring down for several consecutive days. We are afraid of travelling because we know about the road situation during rainy season."

Passengers wishing to travel to Chin State via the Hakha-Gangaw-Mandalay road are reported to have been waiting for clearance of the blockage, the New Light of Myanmar said.

A government employee in Hakha said: "The situation on the Hakha-

Falam-Kalay road is also terrible. In summer, it takes us only about a couple of hours. But now people get there at night even with no landslides on the way."

Speaking to Chinland Guardian, one of the Hakha community leaders said rains, whether heavy or not, can easily make the roads muddy and slippery because they are not properly constructed and maintained.

"Therefore, we have problems like this every single rainy season. This is not new at all but we still face travel chaos until today. We even get fed up with blaming the same thing on the same reason," added the leader.

Engineers and workers are assigned duties on main roads of Chin State to maintain the roads and clear the landslides with the use of heavy machinery, according to the government-run newspaper.

Another heavy landslide is reported to have completely destroyed the road between Tedim and Tonzang towns in Chin State.

Meanwhile, Kalay of Sagaing region and its surrounding areas, mainly populated by Chins, have been flooded due to rise of water level caused by heavy rains in recent days.

"...rains, whether heavy or not, can easily make the roads muddy and slippery because they are not properly constructed and maintained."

- Community leader

Sources said that the situation has got even worse since yesterday, making transportation and traveling very difficult even with a motorbike.#



(Photos: CHRO)

Chin volunteer doctors treated mothers and children

22 August 2013: A group of four Chin medical doctors provided free medical check-ups, treatment and medicines to mothers and children in Cawbuk of Hakha township, Chin State.

The one-day event organized last Sunday by the Chin Women Organization (CWO) served about 50 people at Cawbuk Ward about two miles from the central town of Hakha.

With the help of ten CWO members, the team not only treated patients and gave free medicines but also

made short talks on various health issues to the locals.

Another event held at a Christian church in Hakha Khuathar on 30 August this year had about 80 people including mothers and children treated by two volunteer doctors with assistance from six CWO members.

Community-based Chin Women Organization plans to provide free medical treatment services in Khualhluon Ward of Hakha town in October 2013.

Since its formation in Hakha in October last year, CWO has been actively involved in making voluntary contribution for community-based activities and toward building a peaceful society.#



(Photos: CWO)



CHRO staff members meeting with Mr. Quintana in Rangoon (Photo: CHRO)



UN rights envoy awestruck by levels of poverty in Chin State

22 August 2013: The level of poverty in Chin State has alarmed Tomás Ojea Quintana, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Burma who made his first ever trip to one of the most isolated regions in Burma.

Mr. Quintana said in his statement yesterday that the Chin communities have suffered from neglect from the central government over the years.

"With the country opening up, development will come, but it is important that this process occurs in a participatory, transparent, accountable and equal manner," he said.

"The process of development and the exploitation natural resources there should benefit the Chin communities," added the UN expert who had just returned from his first trip to Chin State.

Over 70 percent of the population in Chin State live under the poverty line, making it the poorest state in the whole of Burma.

During his 8th trip to Burma, Mr. Quintana travelled to Mindat and Kanpetlet towns in southern Chin State, also visiting Christian churches and government-controlled Na Ta La schools.

He stressed the situation on 'bureaucratic obstacles' towards opening spaces for Christian worship.

The Na Ta La residential schools, run under military-dominated Ministry for Border Affairs, has been accused of taking coercive measures to convert Chin Christian students to Buddhism.

Salai Za Uk Ling, Program Director of the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO), said: "Graduates of the Na Ta La schools have guaranteed government positions, but only if they are Buddhists. This is a clear reflection that discrimination on the ground of religious identity is entrenched within the Na Ta La school system."

"This is why we have been calling for the abolition of these schools and to instead properly finance the state education system where everyone can enjoy equal access to good education."

A CHRO delegation provided a briefing to Mr. Quintana last week in Rangoon, on the eve of his visit to Chin State.

Some local leaders complained of not getting the chance to present to Mr. Quintana about their ongoing experiences of human rights abuses.

The UN Special Rapporteur made a two-day trip to Chin State. He also visited other ethnic States of Rakhine, Shan and Kachin as well as Meikhtila in Mandalay region.

During his ten-day visit, Mr. Quintana was denied permission to visit Kachin State's Laiza, the headquarters of the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO).#



Building swept away by landslides in Laibung, Tedim Township, Chin State (Photo: Tongsan news)

Flash floods destroyed 3 bridges, 1 building in Tedim township

23 August 2013: Flash floods triggered by heavy rains have destroyed three bridges and one building in Laibung village, Tedim Township of Chin State on 20 August 2013.

The Laibung bridge constructed on the main motor road, and two other smaller bridges are completely damaged while a building used for keeping an electric power engine collapsed.

Destruction of the electric power building has caused

power cut-off up to Tedim town as the TV Transmitter stationed on Thumamual was run by electricity from Laibung, according to the Tongsan news.

Last week, a local woman named Sayama Dim Man Cing was killed while crossing the bridge between Laibung and Pimpih villages. Her dead body was found near 9 Miles of Kalay Myo in Sagaing Region the following day.

Laibung is home to about 110 households in the northern township of Tedim in Chin State.

Other parts of Chin State are reported to have been affected by heavy rains in recent weeks.#

Two killed by mudslide in Hakha township

24 August 2013: Pu Ngun Khar and his wife lost their lives while attempting to rescue a local woman who got stuck in mud caused by landslides in Hakha Township, Chin State.

The incident took place last Tuesday near Nganva river between Lungkhing and Lungraang villages while they were their way home from their farms, according to the Hakha Post.

Pu Ngun Khar got stuck as he helped the woman out and was carried away by mud flow down the hill.

"His wife jumped straight away to get hold of her husband and was swept away too," the rescued woman was quoted as saying.

The villagers later found the bodies of Mr and Mrs Ngun Khar in the mud after the woman informed them of the incident.

A continuous downpour of heavy rains over the past weeks in most parts of Chin State has caused landslides, destroying roads and bridges as well as buildings.#



Over 80 families asked to evacuate in Falam township after landslides

26 August 2013: Over 80 families from a hillside village of Zalai in Falam township, Chin State, have been forced to evacuate their homes due to heavy landslides.

Chief Minister of the Chin State government, Pu Hung Ngai, who visited the site yesterday, made an evacuation announcement as the village stands on the hills affected by the landslides, a source close to the government said.

Five houses were swept away but no casualties have been reported.

(All photos: Falam Thuthang & Salai CB Thang)

The VCTH news said the landslides have gradually started since last Friday between Zalai and Laizo villages.

Some villagers go to K. Hmunpi, Lungpi and Lungraang villages for temporary shelters while others flee to Falam, the biggest town in the township, according to VCTH.

A government employee in Hakha told Chinland Guardian that an area of land in Falam town is reportedly reserved for constructing new buildings for the victims.

Contributions including cash and goods have been made toward helping the landslide-hit victims by government offices and departments as well as individuals



Development Situation

New tourist sites to be developed in Chin State

15 August 2013:

Burma's poorest and a more open Chin State is likely to see a new phase of development in eco-tourism as three new places are to be transformed into visitor attractions.

U Win Tun, Minister of Environmental Conservation and Forestry, said plans to establish tourist sites at Rih Lake, Bawipa and Zinghmuh mountains in Chin State, according to recent media reports.

In March this year, U Htay Aung, Minister for Hotels and Tourism, said Chin State would be promoted as a tourist site as it saw an increase in the number of foreign visitors last year.

However, concerns have been raised by local communities and businesses over laws and regulations related to the tourism industry.

Chin MP Pu Zozam, of the Chin National Party (CNP), was quoted as saying that the government should have the required laws in place before allowing the service.

Travel agencies and hoteliers in southern Chin State also complained about a lack of clear policies to follow when dealing with local authorities.

U Win Tun said the government will draft necessary procedures, and rules and regulations, according to the Eleven news.

Further information on how and when the project will be implemented still remained undisclosed.

In a recent incident last month, local communities objected to government's plans to establish a new village near Rih Lake, saying they were not informed or consulted regarding the decision.

In addition, they said deforestation would bring negative impacts on the lake of Rih.

Well-known for its heart shape, Rih Lake is situated in Falam Township bordering Mizoram State of India. Mount Zinghmuh, which stands at the height of 8414 ft above sea level, is the highest in Falam Township.

With an average elevation of over 7,000 feet above sea level, Bawipa Tlang is a mountain range in Thantlang Township.

The number of tourists making a trip to Chin State, especially in Kanpetlet and Mindat, is estimated to be over 700 this year. #

University students demand respect for human rights in development projects

19 August 2013: Chin students from universities and colleges in Kalay urge Burma's authorities to respect human rights in its development activities in Chin State.

In a statement released yesterday, the Chin students said priority must be put on the rights of local communities when dealing with extractions of natural resources in Burma's northwestern state.

Eight townships out of nine in Chin State have been found to possess

minerals and other natural resources, according to U Kyaw Nyein, Chin Minister for Forestry and Mining.

The students have also called on the government of Burma to engage in businesses that would directly benefit the local communities in Chin State, the poorest in the country.

A joint venture between Burma's government and Chinese mining companies in exploration of nickel in Tedim Township of Chin State has

seen protests as the local communities were not included in the decision-making processes of the project.

The need for transparency and accountability in extracting natural resources and making investment in Chin State is stressed in their statement by the Chin students.

About 4,000 Chin students are currently studying at universities and colleges in Kalay of Sagaing Division. #

Chin parties to visit Gullu nickel project in Tedim township

25 August 2013: Representatives of four Chin political parties are early next month to make a trip to sites of Gullu nickel mining project in an effort to assess the current situation.

Salai Ceu Bik Thawng, General Secretary of the Chin National Party (CNP), said the purpose of the trip is to listen to the voices of local communities who raise concerns regarding the project.

"Based on the results of our assessment and consultation with experts, we would put forward the issues to relevant bodies including the government of Chin State," added Salai Ceu Bik Thawng.

He said preparatory meetings with expert and professional organizations who had experiences on various mega-projects were held in Rangoon.

It is vital that there is transparency and accountability

if and when the project starts, according to the Chin parties including Chin Progressive Party (CPP), CNP, Ethnic National Development Party (ENDP), and Asho Chin National Party (ACNP).

"The project must be carried out in line with international standards and norms. The rights of indigenous people in the areas must be respected in accordance with the UNDRIP [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples]," said Salai Ceu Bik Thawng.

Sources claim that ZCD (Zomi Congress for Democracy) will not be able to participate in the trip to Gullu Mual, aka Mwetaung Hill, in Tedim Township of Chin State.

Protests against the nickel extraction project were organized in recent weeks.

The nickel mining project in Chin State is a joint venture between the government of Burma and Chinese mining companies reportedly led by North Mining Investment Co Ltd of China.#

Major events of Gullu Mual (Mwetaung) Nickel Exploration Projects

- Initial studies were conducted by the Mineral Exploration Corporation of the Ministry of Mines in 1965-66, followed by the Geological Survey and Mineral Exploration Department in 1973, 1982, and 1999.
- The Kingbao (Jinbao) Mining Ltd of China signed an agreement on nickel mineral exploration and feasibility study with No. 3 Mining Enterprise of the Ministry of Mines of Burma in August 2005. The work could not be operated and the contract was cancelled.
- New Top Hong Group Ltd of China held a meeting at the Ministry of Mines in March 2011. A preliminary observation field trip was made in July 2011.
- Two field groups of Geological Survey and Mineral Exploration Department launched the exploration and test of chromites at another location, west of Mwe Hill beginning on 30 July 2011.
- North Mining Investment Co Ltd of China, China Nonferrous Metal Industry's Foreign Engineering & Construction Co Ltd and Guiling Research Institute of Geology for Mineral Resources held discussions on exploration and production of the deposit.
- Chin MP Pu Zung Hlei Thang raised a question at the second regular session of the first Amyotha Hluttaw at Nay Pyi Taw in September 2011.
- North Mining Investment Co. Ltd is incorporated under the Burma Companies Act by the Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development in May 2012.
- North Mining Investment Co. Ltd submitted its feasibility study reports on 'Mwetaung Nickel Smelting Project' to the Ministries of Mines, and Environmental Conservation and Forest in February and March 2013.
- U Kyaw Nyein, Chin State Minister of Forestry and Mines said a proposal for mining work permits has been submitted to the Union Government early 2013.
- For more information about campaigns against nickel projects, see page 18.

Event and Protest

Human Rights Rapporteur to visit Chin State for the first time

9 August 2013:

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Burma, Tomás Quintana, will be making his first ever visit to Chin State next week.

Quintana's Chin State stop is part of an 11-day itinerary including visits to Rakhine State, Kachin State, Shan State, Meikhtila in Mandalay Region, Naypyitaw and Rangoon.

The trip to Chin State shows the priority that the Special Rapporteur has given to the situation of religious and ethnic minorities. Quintana said that in addition to Rakhine State and Meikhtila, "Visiting Chin State, Kachin State and Shan State will give me an opportunity to assess the human rights situation of other religious and ethnic minorities in Myanmar [Burma], and provide me with an insight into how peace negotiations are progressing."

Specifically on the peace process, Quintana said: "He will be encouraging the inclusion of clauses on the

promotion and protection of human rights in future political agreements with ethnic armed groups."

The Chin National Front and Union-level Peace Working Committee agreement signed 9 December 2012 calls for the creation of an independent Chin Human Rights Committee, although the mandate of the body has yet to be finalized.

Quintana has highlighted the human rights impacts of growth in Burma's industrial and extractive sectors, and political prisoners – including people arrested for involvement in land disputes and protests against large-scale development projects – as nation-wide issues which he will raise with the government.

During his visit, the Special Rapporteur is scheduled to meet with government officials, members of Parliament and the judiciary, the National Human Rights Commission, and civil society in Naypyitaw and Rangoon.

On 21 August, at the end of his mission, Mr. Quintana will present preliminary observations at a press conference at Rangoon International Airport at 18:15. His full report on the visit will be presented to the General Assembly on 24 October 2013.#

Demonstrations against Burma-China nickel project in Chin State

12 August 2013: Hundreds of demonstrators, mainly from the Zomi groups in exile, have protested against the Gullu Mual nickel project in Tedim Township of Chin State, Burma.

The events call for an immediate stop to the nickel mining project, a joint venture between Burma's government and mining companies from China.

A statement released by the World Zomi Congress (WZC) said the groups condemned the partnership that would only exploit the natural resources of the indigenous people in Chin State.

Khaibawi, President of the Zomi Innkuan, was quoted as saying the local people became aware of the project only through recent media reports in Burma.

It is estimated that at least 30 villages in the surrounding of Gullu Mual, known in Burmese as Mwetaung or Mwe

Hill would be affected.

Four nickel deposit areas in Mwe Hill, Webula Hill, Hakhalay and Nat Hill and four chromites areas in Mwe Hill, Webula Hill, Hakhalay, Nat Hill, Bopibun, Muwelut, Maungtaw-Hnamataw and Falam were found, according to the New Light of Myanmar on 27 September 2011.

The government-run newspaper said the record states that there would be 110.57 million tons of nickel ore and 38,100 tons of chromites ore in Chin State.

An activist group of the Gullu Mwetaung Nickel Movement called for a total suspension of the mining project, saying: "If the mining has to be continued, the mining company must follow international laws and standards."

Kalay-based Chinland Natural Resources Watch Group said people in the affected areas must participate in the decision-making process about the use of their local resources and related infrastructure development without fearing persecution.

- continued onto next page

It also demanded transparency and sustainable business practices through communication that would engage the government, the companies involved, and local communities affected by the project.

Several other Chin civil society groups including the Chin Student Union in Kalay and the Kuki Women's Human Rights Organization (KWHRO) also raised their concerns over development projects in Chin State, the least developed state in the country.

"Residents in mining areas are put at health risks such as respiratory and skin diseases due to water and air pollution. The destruction of Gullu Mual, a major supplier of agricultural products, and many parts in Chin State also poses an impact to food security to its peoples in the long run," said KWHRO.

The *New Light of Myanmar* in 2011 said North Mining Investment Co Ltd of China, China Nonferrous Metal Industry's Foreign Engineering & Construction Co Ltd and Guiling Research Institute of Geology for Mineral Resources held discussions on exploration and production of the deposit.

A 2008 report by the Earthrights International said Kingbao (Jinbao) Mining Co. signed agreements with the Ministry of Mining No. 3 in Burma to conduct exploration and feasibility studies at the Mwetaung nickel deposit in Chin State that contains proven

nickel reserves in excess of 10 million tons.

Kingbao (Jinbao) Mining Co. is a joint subsidiary of Gold Mountain (Hong Kong) International Mining Co. and Wanbao Mining Co., both of which control 50% of the company. Gold Mountain (Hong Kong) International Mining Co. is itself a wholly-owned subsidiary of Zijing Mining Co., while Wanbao Mining Co. is a wholly-owned subsidiary of China North Industries (NORINCO).

"The entry of large, foreign-dominated mining companies goes beyond environmental issues. It is primarily a glaring face of land grabbing," added the Kuki Women's Human Rights Organization (KWHRO).

In recent months, the anti-Gullu nickel project demonstrations took place in front of Burmese embassies in India, Australia and USA, with more protests being organized in other foreign countries.

In response to a question raised in Amyotha Hluttaw sessions by a Chin MP on 26 September 2011, Union Minister for Mines U Thein Htaik said the Mineral Exploration Corporation of the Ministry of Mines conducted tests for chromites at Mwe Hill region of Tiddim [Tedim] Township in Chin State in 1965-66 and the Geological Survey and Mineral Exploration Department in 1973, 1982 and 1999.—By Khaipi #

Gullu Mual in Chin State (from Google Earth)



Washington DC, USA



(Photos: Zomi innkuan India, USA and Australia)

Canberra, Australia



Delhi, India

Public event to condemn OP alcohol in Hakha

28 August 2013: Leaders of community, civil society and churches are to empty over 2,000 bottles of over-proof alcohol at a public gathering in Hakha, Chin State tomorrow.

The event organized in an effort to tackle alcohol-related problems in society is scheduled to take place at Pu Kio Mang football ground.

The OP bottles are seized from private shops and houses that had been informed of plans to crack

down in the Chin capital since around mid August 2013.

One of the organizing leaders was quoted by the Hakha Post as saying that anyone opposing the sale and use of alcohol are welcomed to the event.

Hakha Chin leaders said OP alcohol, which has got much higher percentage of alcohol content, are legally banned by the government laws.

It is not confirmed whether officials from the government of Chin State and government departments will join tomorrow's anti-alcohol campaign. #

Situation of Refugees

UNHCR to register asylum seekers from Burma in Malaysia

19 August 2013:

UNHCR announced last week that it would make an individual registration of asylum seekers from Burma in Malaysia starting from 2 September 2013.

The program will include registration of 16,000 asylum seekers in areas such as Perak, Cameron Highland, Kuantan, Johor Baru, Saramban and Kuala Lumpur until December this year.

Mr. Ca Thawng, Coordinator of the

Chin Refugee Committee (CRC), told Chinland Guardian that the new move by UNHCR was much welcomed.

"We were told the registration would be different from before. It will be just a recording of individual's details, which is not about getting an opportunity to resettle into other countries."

Mr. Ca Thawng said: "Those registered this time will have to go through a set of processes including interviews until their cases are successful."

UNHCR made the announcement on 15 August 2013 by during a meeting at the Chinese Assembly Hall with

leaders of refugee communities from Burma based in Malaysia.

Sources from Chin refugee communities estimate there are over 20,000 Chins who remain unregistered in Malaysia.

Out of some 104,070 refugees and asylum-seekers registered with UNHCR in Malaysia as of May this year, 94,760 are from Burma, with some 32,540 Chins, according to UNHCR's official website.

As part of UNHCR's ongoing data-gathering and analysis, UNHCR believes that there are some 49,000 unregistered asylum-seekers, who UNHCR is progressively working to register. #

Chin refugee mother traumatized after attempted rape in Delhi

30 August 2013: A Chin refugee mother has suffered after a local Indian man attempted to rape her in her rented apartment in New Delhi, India, according to the Chin Human Rights Organization's sources.

The Chin victim, who asks not to be named, said she is affected mentally, adding: "I feel people in our building look at me differently."

"This has made me ashamed and I am afraid to go out or to church due to the news," added the mother of one-year-old baby boy.

The incident took place around mid-day on 11 August 2013 while her husband was working at a church-run informal school.

She said the local man came to their apartment pretending that he was looking for a room for rent.

After speaking to her for a while, the man seemed to know that she was alone.—*continued on next page*

"The man entered our room directly without asking permission. He sat down on our bed while my baby was sleeping," said the Chin victim.

"I told him to leave immediately but he refused. He started touching my shoulders tightly and trying to take off my clothes."

The victim picked up one wooden stool and beat him while she was secretly dialing her husband's phone.

"I shouted for help and the man was frightened," she said.

Her husband hurriedly came home after hearing over the phone his wife shouting at the man.

The Chin husband said he met a local Indian man in his late twenties on the stairs but didn't realize that he was the perpetrator.

The case was reported to an NGO called SLIC (Socio-Legal Information Centre) and to Women Protection Centre of the UNHCR in Delhi.

"I was told to report the incident to Indian police," said the victim.

"We can identify the man if we see him," said the Chin victim and her husband.

The police were informed of the case but they said they would try to investigate, according to one of the Delhi Chin community leaders.

As of today, no action has been taken regarding the incident.

Another similar incident has been reported on 17 August 2013 where a Chin mother was attempted to rape by a local man around 8pm in New Delhi.

At a public hearing at the European Parliament in Brussels in July this year, Rosalinn Zahau, a staff member of the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO), spoke about the significant challenges facing the estimated 100,000 Chin refugees in India, including more than 100 violent sexual assaults in Delhi over the past two years.#

Chin State Government



(Photo: CHRO)

Govt to open tax-free markets in Chin State

29 August 2013:

Tax-free border markets are to be established in five places of Chin State following an agreement between India and Chin State government.

Five places along the Indo-Burma border include Leilet in Falam, Darkhai in Tonzang, Thau in Thantlang, Fartang in Tedim townships and Tuimang in

Cikha sub-township, according to the New Light of Myanmar.

The government of Chin State was quoted as saying that a preliminary agreement has reached with plans to open tax-free markets in nine places at border areas in Chin State and Sagaing Region.

It is aimed at increasing a yearly trade volume of 1 billion US dollars to 2 billion between India and Burma, according to the Border Trade Department.

The government-run newspaper said the markets would allow 40 items of commodities for trading in the border areas although no details are disclosed.

Last year, the two countries signed an MoU in an attempt to alleviate poverty in the region, the New Light of Myanmar said.

It is not yet known as to when the tax-free markets will be opened.

Chin State, the least developed in Burma, shares an international border with India and Bangladesh.#

Press Release

PRESS RELEASE: for immediate release

Burma: Ethnic Chin in historic hearing at the European Parliament

Tuesday 9 July, Chiang Mai, Thailand: A public hearing on the situation of the ethnic Chin in Burma took place at the European Parliament in Brussels for the first time ever today. The event, “The struggle of ethnic Chins in a changing Burma/Myanmar” - hosted by a member of the European Parliament Working Group on Freedom of Religion or Belief, László Tőkés MEP – examined some of the key challenges facing the predominantly Christian Chin people, including ongoing human rights abuses.

Salai Za Uk Ling, Program Director at the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) who testified at the hearing said, “We welcome the reforms that President Thein Sein’s government has introduced, but there is still a long way to go. In a sense, what is happening in Chin State is a barometer for the rest of the country. There is a ceasefire agreement in place, and it is holding. Despite this positive development, serious human rights abuses by the Burma Army continue with impunity, including sexual violence. We want to shine a light on the root causes, such as ethnic and religious discrimination, and the urgent need to deepen the reforms.”

The Chin National Front (CNF) first signed a ceasefire deal with the government in January last year, and the 27-point agreement dating from December 2012 is one of the more detailed to come out of the peace process so far. Dr. Sui Khar of the CNF said, “Over 60 years of armed conflict in Burma intensified mistrust, doubt and suspicion between the government and ethnic nationalities, and now it is deeply rooted. We have to start with confidence building, by implementing the provisions in the current ceasefire agreements as a matter of urgent priority. Both sides should also work towards negotiating a national comprehensive peace and ceasefire accord, in order to kick off political dialogue. The international community including the European Union should focus not only on economic development and investment, but on enhancing the peace building process as well.”

The hearing also addressed the challenges facing Chin political parties in Burma. There are three main Chin political parties, including the Zomi Congress for Democracy (renamed from the Zomi National Congress, which contested the 1990 elections), and two parties which formed in advance of the 2010 elections, the Chin Progressive Party and the Chin National Party (CNP). Salai Ceu Bik Thawng, General Secretary of the CNP and panelist at the hearing said, “The challenges faced by most political parties, especially those of the ethnic-based parties in Burma, are enormous. The European Union should focus attention on strengthening the institutional capacities of the ethnic parties so that there is a more level playing field in the 2015 elections. Those elections can potentially determine whether the changes in Burma are truly irreversible or not.”

CHRO’s Rosalinn Zahau also spoke about the significant challenges facing the estimated 100,000 Chin refugees in India, including more than 100 violent sexual assaults in Delhi over the past two years. Dozens of Chin refugee families in Mizoram, the northeastern state bordering Chin State, have faced “push-backs” to Burma in recent months.

The event was held with financial support from the Chin community in the United States.

Panel of Speakers:

1. Salai Za Uk Ling (CHRO) – Freedom of religion or belief and general human rights situation for the Chin
2. Rosalinn Zahau (CHRO) – The situation of Chin refugees, focusing on their situation in India
3. Salai Ceu Bik Thawng (General Secretary – Chin National Party) - The challenges and opportunities for political parties inside Burma
4. Dr. Sui Khar (Chin National Front) - Updates on the ethnic peace process in Burma with a focus on the Chin process
5. Human Rights Without Frontiers – Lobbying the EU Institutions
6. European External Action Service – EU policy on Burma