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Chin Human Rights Organization

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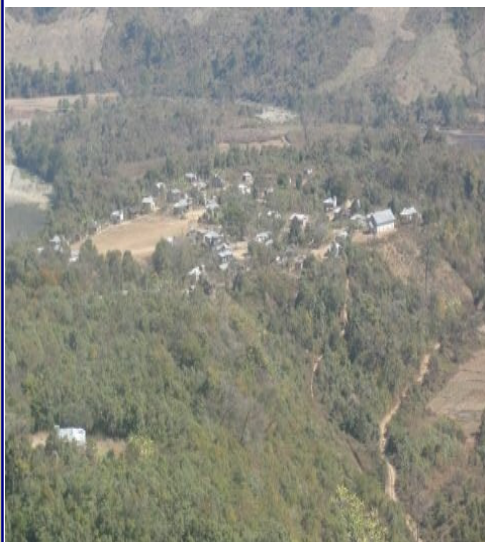
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Saikhumphai, left, and houses on fire in the village (Photo: Khonumthung & lawrkhawm.com)

News

120 Chin families from Burma driven out of Mizoram

17 May 2013:

About 120 families staying as illegal migrants in Rangvamual and Phuncawng villages were driven out by the Central Young Mizo Association (CYMA), the largest non-governmental organization in Mizoram, India.

The *Aizawl Post* newspaper reported yesterday that the migrant workers from Burma were warned to leave on 15 May 2013 by the CYMA authorities after negotiations with local people in the last week of April. The letter of warning mentioned that the foreigners of Rangvamual and Phuncawng village have to leave those villages.

"The latest information is that 90 families from Phuncawng village and 30 families from Rangvamual have already left," according to the newspaper.

The CYMA had also notified in its letter that all the migrant workers of Phuncawng and Rangvamual villages will be monitored as to whether they are leaving and that the migrant workers will be driven out if they continue to stay in those areas.

The people who could not leave for Burma immediately moved to other places in Mizoram. While some approached their relatives, some families went back to Burma, said a local.

"Some families did not dare to go to Burma directly for financial and security reasons and are in trouble as such," said a local from Mizoram.

Most of the Chin migrant workers have been staying illegally in Phuncawng and Rangvamual villages around 20 miles from Aizawl, the capital of Mizoram. Some migrant workers are employed in local wine factories. But the total numbers of migrant workers are not known. # - *Khonumthung news*

"Some families did not dare to go to Burma directly for financial and security reasons and are in trouble as such," said a local from Mizoram.

Appeals to regain property confiscated by army soldiers ignored

24 June 2013: Local villagers in Mindat Township, Chin State said applications sent to regain their plots of land confiscated by Burma's military authorities have been ignored.

One of the victims reported to the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) that property of 27 families were confiscated on 14 May 1996 under the leadership of Mindat Township Peace and Welfare Association by Burma Army Light Infantry Battalion No. 274.

"The authorities told the families that they would be given other plots of land as a form of compensation for their confiscated property. But, they haven't received any kind of compensation until today," added the local villager, who asks not to be named.

He said: "My property, which consists of a two-storey wood house and 4.25 acres of land with 106 orange trees of ten years, was confiscated. Similarly, there are others whose houses and lands were confiscated."

"Because of the confiscation, their children's education has been ef-

fected. The children had to discontinue their education," added the villager.

Those affected students include, according to the villager, a college student, two matriculation students, Grade eight and Grade seven school students and also one primary school student of Grade four.

Despite several requests from the land-owners to return their confiscated lands and properties, no action has been taken against the issues until today.

The requests by the local villagers are still ignored. #

Army forcibly collects money from timber traders

27 May 2013: A major from Burma Army battalion based in Matupi town collected money from local timber traders while he and his soldiers were discharging duty to Darkhai village, Tonzang Township, Chin State.

A local resident, who wishes to remain anonymous, reported to the Chin Human Rights Organization that he collected 10,000 Kyats per vehicle from timber traders and in return, he allowed them to sell their timber in Mizoram, India.

Pu Thangcina, a timber trader, said pine and other hardwood from Zimpi, Zimte and Thingle villages and its surrounding areas in Tedim Township had been cut

and sold to Champhai, Mizoram State since this summer, adding: "Tax has been paid to the Ministry of Forest for the said purpose. But Burma Army soldiers collect 10,000 Kyats from each trader. Timber traders are allowed to sell on a regular basis only after making a payment, as demanded, to the soldiers."

"If traders pay 10,000 Kyats for each vehicle, the army would allow them to pass through without any problem. But if they refuse to pay, they would be threatened and arrested on charges of illegally exporting timber. And the soldiers are also worried that they will be punished by their boss."

The timber traders who pay money to Burma Army soldiers can sell about ten truck loads of timber on a daily basis. The selling takes place in Champhai town of Mizoram State.#



Local traders travelling between Chin State, Burma and Mizoram, India (Photo: Mang Hre Lian)

Soldiers forcibly collect tax for exported timber from Chin State to Mizoram

20 May 2013: Soldiers from Burma Army Light Infantry battalion No. 304 have forcibly been collecting money for timber exported from Chin State to Mizoram State of India since February this year.

A Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) source said that Captain Ne Win Tun, Company Commander of LIB No. 304, ordered forcible collection of tax from local traders for exported tim-

ber in Tedim Township, Chin State.

On 13 May 2013, a sergeant of the same battalion collected a total sum of 100,000 Kyats from a woman, from Thinglei village, who was exporting timber in five trucks. For each truck load, she was ordered to pay an amount of 20,000 Kyats as tax.

Sergeant Win Kyaw and three privates, based in Fartlang village, Tedim Township, have also forcibly collected tax not only from timber traders but also those selling other stocks and food items from Chin State to Mizoram.#



CNF public consultation in Matupi (Photo: Khonumthung)

CNF holds public consultation in southern Chin state

1 May 2013: The Chin National Front (CNF) conducted a public consultation meeting in Kanpetlet town of Chin state between April 25 and 26.

The consultation meeting was chaired by Pu Thangmana, with Daw Nan Cherry attended as master of the ceremony. Around 300 local people attended the meeting, said a participant.

The welcome speech was delivered by Pu Thangmana where local people were warmly welcomed by CNF members participating in the meeting. Pu Thangmana said that Kanpetlet Township was the most undeveloped in the state. Internet and newspapers are not available in the area and road communication was bad, leading to people's suffering and lack of awareness in Kanpetlet areas.

He added that the CNF was requested to support the area on developmental issues.

Pu Thang Yen, CNF's supreme council member and in-charge of Matupi CNF's liaison office will lead its public consultation meetings in Kanpetlet, Mindat, Matupi, Paletwa towns, Rezua and Sami sub-townships of Chin state.

Dr. Salai Lian Hmung Sakhong, Pu Thang Ling Kee, Pu Paul Sitha, Secretary General- II of CNF and other CNF members attended the Kanpetlet consultation meeting.

The CNF team will proceed from Kanpetlet to Mindat and Matupi, where their liaison office is located. The public consultation meetings will be conducted in each of these towns. # *Khonumthung news*



CNF public consultation in Kanpetlet (Photo: Khonumthung)

Development workshop held with communities in Tedim

A community development dialogue programme was conducted by the Network for Chin Community Development (NCCD) in Tedim Township, Chin State in the last week of this month.

The community development dialogue programme was organized between 21 and 22 June 2013 in Nginte village of Tedim Township and 22 local people from 8 villages attended.

Issues discussed at the development programme held between local people and the NCCD included the right to own land and its management, peace and reconciliation process in Burma, according to Salai Sitmon, an in-charge of NCCD's programme.

"The discussion on the program focused mainly on the strong and weak points of the development program being carried out between the local people and the NCCD," said Salai Sitmon.

The Network for Chin Community Development (NCCD) was founded in 2002 to empower the disenfranchised and exploited people of Chin State. The organization works in conjunction with other Chin civil society organizations to promote improvement of the lives of local people through development.

"We are mainly focussing on carrying out development programmes which are accepted by the local people in the projects and then the projects are carried out from the bottom up system," said Sitmon. # - *Khonumthung news*

Local authorities exploit fund for construction of reservoir in Matupi

26 June 2013: U Hlai Oo, Matupi Town Development Committee President, held a fake ceremony on 17 May 2013 to show that construction of the water reservoir had been completed, according to a Chin Human Rights Organization source.

A Matupi local told CHRO that U Hlai Oo had invited personnel from different government offices, elders of the town, representatives of different churches and pastors, and taken them to the reservoir in Tinglongceng, two miles away from the town.

He conducted a fake event to make the completion of the project, and as part of the ceremony, the water outlet was opened but there was no water flow.

Seeing this, the township chief administrative officer and all the personnel from different departments got upset and left the ceremony. Matupi Town Deputy Inspector too could not control his anger and

scolded U Hlai Oo, according to the local.

"This project has been jointly implemented by TDC President and engineer U Ne Aung. This is not the first time that they deceive the public. They had made false reports to the former chief administrative officer that they had completed the project. Town elders complained about their fake report to the new chief administrative officer U Kyaw Min Oo. Upon the complaint, he set up a commission in May 2013 to investigate the work," said the local.

The reservoir project was built to increase water supply in Matupi town. A local resident of Matupi Town, Chin State has informed CHRO that

Another local said: "The commission submitted a report which states that Matupi TDC has not completed the project for increasing water supply for the town. After the commission's report, TDC President deliberately conducted a fake ceremony of the completion of the work to counter the report. Now, the people of Matupi town are devastated as no action has

been taken against him although officers from different departments including chief administrative officer have seen and known about the fake ceremony being held to mislead the public."

"The government should punish public servants who have misused the government funds for their own personal benefits. If they are left unpunished, we have to be worried that this will become a trend among public servants. It would also amount to encouraging bribery," said another local man.

The State government provided 460,000 Kyats in 2012 for the project to increase water supply for Matupi town, and set the completion deadline to the end of May 2013. Although the fund had been received, the local authorities collected 5,000 Kyats from each family of the town.

It is claimed that a total of 500,000 Kyats had been collected for the implementation of the project. On top of collecting money from the public, they also forced Matupi locals to construct 6-mile long waterways. #



Saikhumphai, left, and houses on fire in the village (Photo: Khonumthung & lawrkhawm.com)

Mizoram authorities burn down 40 houses of Chin people

1 May 2013: Forty houses of Chin people were burnt down by Mizoram authorities of Vaphai village, Champhai district of Mizoram state, northeast India on 29 April.

The houses in Saikhumphai village were set on fire by a hundred Vaphai villagers in the morning, said a Chin national from Saikhumphai.

“The people between the ages of 15 and 60 came to Saikhumphai in the morning and participated in the arson. Some villagers came to our village from the Tio river and set fire to our houses,” said a local.

The locals said the arsonists used kerosene in bottles to set fire to the houses. The bottles were thrown at the houses in Saikhumphai. All the houses were reduced to ashes, said a local.

Some villagers could salvage only some pots and pans, clothing and some household utensils from their homes. They are wandering in the surrounding areas of Saikhumphai and are staying in temporary tents.

“The villagers are crying and are staying on the road side in Saikhumphai,” said a local from Saikhumphai.

The local people of Saikhumphai told Khonumthung that some of the villagers had Indian citizenship identity cards, but Pu Lalrohlu, the Block Development officer of Khuabung village of Champhai district

found during his verification on Saikhumphai that there are 11 families with 73 members staying illegally in the village since 25 October 2012.

That is why the district magistrate of Champhai issued an order directing the remaining foreigners to leave and wanted full relocation of the village on 31 October 2012.

The report by Pu Lalrohlu found that Pu Funghanga, Vanlalkunga, Rozama, Rinmuani, Tialmenpari, Manglianhea, Rohungliana, Lalnunthanga, Paktinthanga, Tawkrauaia and Thawngliankapa families with the 73 members were staying in the village.

Local people alleged that 40 houses were burnt down by the Vaphai village authority.

It learnt that Saikhumphai village was established in 1963 with some refugees from Chin state, Burma and then the Vaphai village authority had recognized it as part of Vaphai block. # - *Khonumthung news*

Some villagers could salvage only some pots and pans, clothing and some household utensils from their homes. They are wandering in the surrounding areas of Saikhumphai and are staying in temporary tents.

Mizoram to repatriate more Chin refugees

26 June 2013: Chin refugees from Burma accused of settling illegally in Mizoram State, India are facing repatriation after an order has been issued by some non-governmental organizations in Mizoram.

An order was issued to repatriate Burmese citizens living in places such as Kolasib Township and Mualkhang village of Mizoram by Young Mizo Association (YMA), Mizo Upa Pawl (MUP) and village council of Mual Khang by 30 June.

A joint action committee (JAC) was formed for the repatriation campaign for Chin nationals from Burma by Mualkhang village's YMA, MUP and Village council and the JAC will continue the campaign.

The Zonet TV Special report mentioned that Burmese nationals were resettled in those areas over the last three years and they worked in local wine factories in

the region. It also said that the repatriation campaign was launched before the local people were affected in their employment in the future.

16 households out of 50 in Mualkhang village were of Chin people, illegal migrants from Burma, said a report.

"I have no idea what to do. I have been staying here since childhood. So, I have no Burmese National ID card. We could not get Mizoram voter IDs for a long time," said a woman.

It is learnt that some Chin migrant workers had resettled more than 10 years ago in Mualkhang village and Kolasib Township. The migrant workers are dependent on jhum cultivation.

Hundreds of Chin migrant workers staying in Rangva-mual and Phunchawng village near Aizawl, the capital of Mizoram were driven out last month by the Central Young Mizo Association, the strongest NGO in Mizoram state. # - *Khonumthung news*



Salai Tin Maung Oo (Photo by courtesy of his family & Matupi students)



Tribute to Salai Tin Maung Oo
The first student leader to be hanged by the military dictators in Burma. 26 June 1976



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Salai Tin Maung Oo's memorial service held in Delhi

26 June 2013: A memorial service for Salai Tin Maung Oo, who was hanged in Insein prison, Rangoon in 1976 by the Burmese military dictatorship led by U Ne Win, was observed in Delhi, India today.

The memorial service, organized by the Chin Student's Union (CSU), marking the 37th anniversary of his death, was conducted in Burmese Christian Association (BCA)'s hall in Budella, Vikaspuri from 11am.

Before he was executed, the Chin student leader left his last word, saying: "I will never kneel down to your military boots!"

Salai Sang Hnin Lian, a CSU leader, said that the service was to pay tribute to Salai Tin Maung Oo for his bravery and fight for freedom against the military junta, adding: "That is why the anniversary is being observed by Chin students in Delhi."

He led the U Thant uprising on 5 December 1974 and Burmese workers' strike on 6 June 1975. He was arrested on 22 March 1976 and hanged to death on 26 June 1976 by the junta. #

YMA issue order to evict Chin refugees from villages

The Central Young Mizo Association (YMA) issued an order to evict Burmese nationals, mostly Chin refugees, living in Phunchawng and Rangvamual villages of Mizoram. They have been accused of selling alcohol. The deadline of the eviction was 15 May 2013.

More than 90 households from Phunchawng and 36 households from Rangvamual began to leave their places beginning from 12th May following the eviction

order issuance.

“YMA has accused all the Burmese living in this area of getting involved in selling alcohol. But that is not true. Local Indian people and some Burmese who have acquired Indian identities or whose children were born in India are the ones selling alcohol,” said a Chin man from Phunchawng village.

YMA members went around these neighborhoods on 15 May 2013 to assess the situation. Families including school children had to leave their belongings.#

Interview



Hlawn Kip Thluai, left, in Rangoon in 1958, and at the time of interview in USA, right (Photo: Hlawn Kip Thluai)

Hlawn Kip Thluai Speaks: “Chin women need to take their destiny into their own hands”

Note: On the occasion of Mother’s Day, the Chinland Guardian is pleased to present a conversation with Pi Hlawn Kip Thluai, daughter of Zahau Chief Thang Tin Lian and his chief wife (nutak) Pi Hniar Cuai. Pi Hlawn Kip Thluai is the first Chin woman graduate from high school in Chin Hills and from Rangoon University. In this interview, she talks about family, the role of women in Chin society, the education system in Burma and her view on politics. She now lives in California, USA.—continue to next page

Chinland Guardian: *First, tell me about yourself. Let's start with your family.*

Hlawn Kip Thluai: My father was Thang Tin Lian, chief of the Zahau and Hualngo people comprising 83 villages in total. The British who came to Chin Hills later reported, "The position of Thang Tin Lian is unique. He is the only chief in the Falam Subdivision whose tribesmen acknowledge him to be the owner of his tract." He died in 1947.

My mother, Hniar Cuai, was my father's cousin. In 1949, she was elected the village headperson of Tlahmun village in the election under the auspices of the Burmese national government. She was the only female headperson ever elected in Chin Hills from June 1949 to June 1954.

I have eleven brothers and thirteen sisters. My father had four wives.

Chinland Guardian: *Your father had 4 wives (at the same time?), and 25 children. You all get along very well together. A lot of people wonder how such a big group could remain so close – what's your secret?*

Hlawn Kip Thluai: Our father taught us to love and care for each other since we were very young. Every time he had the chance we would gather round him and he would sing songs and tell us fables, with the youngest group of children all sitting on his lap. I remember my brothers Ral Dun, Lal Bik, and Sum Mang would race each other in the backyard, and my father would make Ral Dun start in front because he was the smallest and the shortest. Sum Mang was the tallest and would usually win.

We generally gathered ourselves into groups based on our age, and when the older siblings had grown up our father would play with the youngest group. Our group consisted of Sai Ling, Mang Bur, Thla Khar, Hlawn Kip Thluai, Tlem Cin, and Cer Cin. Our group would go fishing at the Tlirawn river near our village, and when Mang Bur and Thla Khar went hunting for birds with slingshots we would go along with them, rushing to collect any birds they killed. We would play hopscotch, hide-and-seek, and at night we would dance Chin cultural dance (mock dance). Activities such as these helped tie us together.

After my father divorced his first wife, Run Sung, he married Sen Kip, Men Zing, and Hniar Cuai (his official wife "Nutak") in succession. Traditionally when a Chin man marries more than one wife only his official wife stays with him, while the rest stay in another house. This was also the case with some of Thang Tin Lian's ancestors. The unusual thing about Thang Tin Lian was that not only did he let all his wives stay in his house, they each occupied a bed in a corner of the same room as his own. Kitchen duties, household chores, and farm work were rotated between the wives on a monthly basis. This clever management of his wives' time and duties meant they all got along very well, and they always had immense respect and love for him.

In the short Biography of Zahau Chief Thang Tin Lian, page 19, the last five lines, Lal Bik said "Asinan khua rai thawi tik le a dang tulnak a um tikah, rai thian tu ah nu-ngai ti in Thang Tin Lian in a nui naunu ih fanu (first cousin) a si mi a nu pi Hniar Cuai lawng a hman. Cuvekin a thih tik khalah Hniar Cuai ih fapa Tial Dum khi a aiawh Zahau Mi-Uk tuan ding ah a tuak cia a si."

While Thang Tin Lian endeavored to treat each of his three wives equally, Chin and Zahau tradition dictated that only his official wife, Hniar Cuai, participated in some ceremonies and activities. These included the worship of god- khuavang (Raithawi) animism by the whole village, and also (Khuangcawi) the highest form of ritual feast, (Pawpi-aih) the celebration for killing a tiger. In accordance with the beliefs and the customs of the Chin, only Hniar Cuai had the traditional right to perform her part in the cultural events or entertainments. Her son Tial Dum was also earmarked as Thang Tin Lian's heir, despite being neither his eldest nor youngest son. Run Sung's son, Van Hnuai Lal, would have been a heir but he didn't survive. – next page

Our father taught us to love and care for each other since we were very young. Every time he had the chance we would gather round him and he would sing songs and tell us fables, with the youngest group of children all sitting on his lap.

Chinland Guardian: Tell me about the 4 wives and their children? Who were the children of the official wife (Nutak Nupi – Roco tu) and who were the children of his other wives?

Hlawn Kip Thluai: The four wives, and their children, were as follows:

Thang Tin Lian & Run Sung

Kai Sin.

Thang Tin Lian & Sen Kip

Lal Bik, Thang Cem, Khuang Thluai, Sai Bil Tial, Tin Par, Mang Bur, Tlem Cin, and Kei Luai.

Thang Tin Lian & Men Zing

Ral Dun, Sum Mang, Za Hre, Tha Hlei Sung, Thang Tin Tlem, Kei Man, Ral Lian Sum, Sai Ling Thang, Thla Khar, and Ngun Kip.

Thang Tin Lian & Hniar Cuai

Tial Dum, Fung Thluai, Mang Tin Zing, Hlawn Kip Thluai, Cer Cin, and Ni Dong.

Chinland Guardian: Your brothers and sisters were among the first Chin people to receive an education and hold high positions in the government. Was this because of your father's encouragement or their own ambitions?

Hlawn Kip Thluai: My father strongly wished all of his sons to be well educated, and when Burmese schools were closed due to World War 2 he sent them to India to get an education despite the difficulties. Lal Bik, Za Hre, Thang Cem, Ral Lian Sum and Sai Ling went to India to get an education. They went there in different years and studied in different cities. Ral Lian Sum, in 4th grade, Sai Ling in 3th grade, at Aizawl School, were the youngest among the sons sent there. His sons tried to achieve their best as well.

He told his son and heir Tial Dum, "the Shan Saw Bua don't have a higher education than 10th grade English yet are effectively ruling their territories, and you are to take over my position, so you don't need higher education." Tial Dum therefore went no further than Intermediate part B, in Burma. Our father didn't want his daughters to be educated. It wasn't until after he passed away in May 1947, that the other younger daughters Tlem Cin, Cer Cin and I went to school, with the encouragement and support of our brothers.

Chinland Guardian: Which year did you start attending school? Give us an idea of how it felt to be in school at that time, your teachers etc.

Hlawn Kip Thluai: In June 1947 Tlem Cin, Cer Cin and I started attending Tlahmun Primary School. After 4th grade I went to Falam High School. My headmaster was U Sum Mang, later replaced by Mr. Iyre. Mr Iyre and Daw Tin Yi and Ms Wallace were my matriculation class teachers. Ms Wallace was an English teacher from America. My junior assistant teachers were U Khin Thein, Zung Luai, Bawi Lian, Sui Ha and Mah Ohn.

Chinland Guardian: I assume that when you started school there were not many girls there. Was there anything in particular that was more difficult because you were female?

Hlawn Kip Thluai: There were very few girls in Falam State High School, with only 3 or 4 girls in one class. The most difficult thing that I experienced when I was a student was not having enough money to buy books. I only had one set of clothes for school and another for home. I didn't have a lot of time to study as I was staying with my brother's family, and as a girl I had to help out with household chores, so I would study while cooking. Despite all this I was thrilled to go to school, very happily. Of course I went through period of hardships and had to find my own way to work as hard as I knew how. I set myself the goal to continue my education, and prayed for strength. Every school exam I would be among the top 3 achievers. I was awarded "The Best Student" award by Hill Chin Students Union, Rangoon.

Chinland Guardian: When you were attending Falam High school, how many students do you think were there?

Hlawn Kip Thluai: I don't remember the exact numbers of students in the whole school. In Matriculation class (9th & 10th Standards combined) there were 27 males and 3 females. Girls were very rare indeed in the whole school. Moreover, once we got to grade 7 or 8, a number of the girls left for government jobs or marriage. According to the 1953 census the Chin Special Division was comprised of 133,796 people in the Northern Chin Hills District and 51,273 in the Southern. Only 13.7% of

the population attended school fulltime, and of those 80% were male.

In 1956, from Matriculation exam center, Falam, out of 35 students that sat the exam a mere 7 of us passed. I wasn't expecting to achieve that result, but the Lord had me in mind and I got through the exam. I was ecstatic about it.

Chinland Guardian: *When you went to University what were your thoughts on the differences between Chin students and the students from other cultural backgrounds?*

Hlawn Kip Thluai: When I started to continue education at Rangoon University, I saw female students from other ethnic minorities such as Kachin, Karen, and Shan, and I felt envious when I saw them obtaining Bachelor's or Master's Degrees. Seeing their achievements sparked my desire to continue my education, even after graduating from University.

I think it is such a tragedy that Chin women are smart and intelligent enough to mirror other peoples' successes yet very few of us went to school.

Chinland Guardian: *What sort of activities were you involved in at university?*

Hlawn Kip Thluai: Every month we had a get-together fellowship involving all the Christian students attending the University. I participated in Chin National Day celebrations, Hill Chin Students Union annual picnics, and my playing partner and I won first prize in badminton tournament at the Hill Chin Students Union's sports and games day. I also took part in Chin traditional gatherings at a bereaved family's home to give them condolence.

There was a Rangoon University Students Union encompassing all students attending the University. The 2 major parties running for union elections were the "Tat Oo" and "Ye Khawng" parties. I was active among the Chin students in supporting the Ye Khawng party. Being able to take part in every level of the Chin Students Union activities was a highlight of my time at the University.

Chinland Guardian: *Your brothers were involved in politics, with some becoming MPs. Were you actively*

involved in politics?

Hlawn Kip Thluai: Two of my brothers were very much involved in politics. In 1949 there were Parliament elections in Chin Hills, Tial Dum was elected a Member of Parliament uncontested. In 1952 he was challenged by Za Hre (his half-brother) and lost the seat. He would later receive a parliament member pension after reaching age 60. Having been elected as a member of Parliament, Za Hre subsequently became Chin Affairs Minister.

I personally didn't have an interest in politics. I was more focused on my studies.

Chinland Guardian: *We would be very happy if you could tell us in detail about your postgraduate studies in a foreign country.*

Hlawn Kip Thluai: In 1963, when I was a teacher at Falam High School, our Headmaster made an announcement inviting any interested teachers to apply for a postgraduate course. A few months after my application and interview the Director of Education, Rangoon, informed me I had been selected as a State Scholar. I was very glad when I learned I had been accepted, and felt it was a blessing from God.

In 1964 I studied for a Diploma in Education (Dip.Ed) at Sydney University, Australia. It was a one-year course sponsored by Colombo Plan Organization. I also studied the Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) course. Each course was one year course, and it was truly a blessing that I was able to study them both within the same year. I studied alongside Australian students in the Dip.Ed course, while in the TEFL course I studied with students from Burma, India, Pakistan, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Africa.

Chinland Guardian: *What are the similarities and differences between Chin women and foreign women?*

Hlawn Kip Thluai: In accordance with Chin traditional and social customs, sons and daughters are expected to look after their parents even after they themselves have reached adulthood. Chin women especially bear the brunt of this responsibility. A woman doesn't have the right to inherit

her parents' property under Chin customary law, and is not able to marry anyone without her parents' approval. Only a son has the right to inherit the property of his parents and is given favourable treatment.

Many foreign women, in comparison, gain full independence when they reach 18 years of age. They are free to make their own decisions without interference from their parents, and are not expected to keep living with parents. Having received an education they are able to look after themselves, and they share equal rights to inheritance with their brothers.

Chinland Guardian: *What are your views on Burmese education in comparison to foreign education, given that you have experienced both systems? (as student, and a teacher)*

Hlawn Kip Thluai: In Burma, the education system focuses on learning the content of textbooks and values the memorizing of information. Exams do not test the understanding of subject matter, but the amount of information committed to memory. In addition, the classroom environment is very authoritative, where ideas and creativity are not sought.

The subjects taught in all schools throughout the country are foundational courses. Liberal art courses are not greatly valued, and are only taught at certain schools outside of normal school periods. Students cannot pass any grade without passing the final exams for all classes in that year, so it's possible to be stuck at a certain grade for a long time. There are many in their 20s, 30s, or even 40s who have not passed 8th or 10th grade because of a failure in one subject from that particular grade.

In other countries, like the U.S., the learning process is much more flexible in that ideas, insight, and creativity are greatly valued. Students are taught to think outside the core content in textbooks and instead of just memorizing information they are encouraged to understand and explore at their own pace. The subjects also contain more variety, and one can pursue one's interests relatively early. The teaching-learning environment is very open and cultivates students' ability to think, understand, and grow.

Many of the subjects in the school curriculum are focused on science, technology, engineering, and math, targeting skilled jobs in the high-tech factories and laboratories of the future. The evolution of technology in the classroom is changing the way students learn and teachers teach, in some cases replacing traditional textbooks and notepads with electronic devices used for accessing educational apps, reference material, and for the taking of notes.

In a country like the U.S. child education, which begins at age five and ends at age fourteen to eighteen, is compulsory and free. Schooling is divided into three levels: elementary school, middle school, and high school. After completing high school students may attend a college or university.

People in the USA and other developed countries all receive an education, helping the progression of overall achievement, especially in the areas of technology and computer science where there has been a rapid advancement. In Burma parents who can not afford are allowed not to send their children to school, making it very difficult for the country as a whole to develop with such low levels of education. Burma has been left behind, even by its neighbouring countries.

Chinland Guardian: *Have you ever experienced discrimination as a government servant because you were part of a minority as both a Chin, and Christian, woman?*

Hlawn Kip Thluai: I have never experienced any difficulties as a government servant. I wasn't aware of any discrimination against me because of my ethnicity or my Christian religion, or any campaign against ethnic minorities generally. Through God's mercy things went smoothly and I never had to apply for senior assistant teacher job or attend an interview.

The situation was not the same as it is now; at that time jobs were easy to find, even with little education. We received sufficient income among the lower government ranks to support our families and still have some left over to save. A man or woman with a 6th or 7th grade education was able to make a solid living for their family, with a monthly

income of 150 or 200 kyats enough to get by. This was part of the reason Chin women didn't feel a need to continue onto higher education.

Chinland Guardian: *We heard that you voted during the Nov 2010 election. Who did you vote for, and what are your thoughts on the new government?*

Hlawn Kip Thluai: I voted for the party with "khamoh" symbol. With this new government I think their policies are very good. There are some new reforms emerging as well. Let's pray to God that their policy comes to fruition.

Chinland Guardian: *Finally, what I would like to ask you most importantly is your view on modern Chin woman's role in society. Do you have anything to say to them? I believe that you may also have some advice to Chin men in regards to Chin women's role in society to improve?*

Hlawn Kip Thluai: Modern Chin woman has more rights and opportunities than in previous generations. Chin women used to be regarded as the weaker sex, and were looked down upon and mocked. But today the professional Chin woman has come to be almost universally accepted, with some Chin women even taking part in political life. They are better educated, they work, earn money, and are involved in taking care of the family just like their male counterparts.

The topic of gender-balance has become more relevant than ever. What is good for men is good for women, and vice-versa. The world will no longer allow Chin women to sit idly by - they have to set themselves the goal of getting an education. Education acts as an access point to our Chin community dreams, and has three purposes: personal development, employment, and participation in society. Chin women need to expect big things of themselves.

As technology and online education keep evolving, access to the 21st century tools and learning environments should be provided, especially for our under-privileged Chin women. The continued growth of online learning has become a force that is forever changing how education is delivered. A highly-educated Chin woman will be able to provide a secure life for her family, and give significant help

to our Chin people in the struggle to increase our global wealth and standing. An important contribution our women can make to Chin societies is to foster a cultural shift through information, insights, and ideas, embracing changes to improve life and build a strong Chin community.

We are seeing Chin women gaining more rights and opportunities, not just in Burma but around the world. The days of male-domination when Chin women were unwelcome in the field of education are long gone. The new order will be led by the best and the brightest, irrespective of gender.

In order to help lift up the social status and position of women I believe Chin men have a responsibility to encourage and nurture them in their progression towards a more proactive role in society. It is imperative for Chin males to realise that education is the key to a successful life for women, and that they should help create opportunities for women instead of keeping them tied to their traditional household roles. They need to assist in overcoming the social and political barriers, making sure that their rights are enshrined in the future constitution calling for gender equality. This will bring to Chin women hope, daring, and the courage to go forward.

Chin women also need to take their destiny into their own hands, and serve the needs of the Chin community as a whole. By doing so, and with the help of Chin man's moral and educational guidance and support, Chin women will improve their global understanding of social, economic, and political issues, and reach their goals.

Chinland Guardian: *What are your observations on the current political environment within the Chin community?*

Hlawn Kip Thluai: In 1947 the British Govern-

In order to help lift up the social status and position of women I believe Chin men have a responsibility to encourage and nurture them in their progression towards a more proactive role in society.

Government asked the Chins: “Do you want independence ,a state of your own? Or do you want to remain as part of Burma Or do you want to be under the British rule?”In March, 1947 the Chin Hills District Council held a meeting at the Falam Town Hall. The Chins had little knowledge about politics. Representatives from townships (including Kanpelet) thought that they would lose access to salt if separated from Burma. And also they might have had some other reasons too. So they decided to remain as part of Burma.

The majority of the Chin people see this as short-sighted and consider the Chin representatives to be lacking political nous. Even nowadays we have a lot to learn about politics, and struggle to find a way to improve our Chinland. Instead of uniting behind a common cause we continue to focus on our separate roots. Each people, whether Falam, Haka, Tedim, Matupi, etc., concentrate too much on our own tribe instead of thinking about each other. Whenever the Burmese government makes a contribution to benefit Chinland we are quick to claim it for our own tribe. This fragmentation contributes to the continued chaotic Chin political environment.

This is how I see the current Chin political situation.

Chinland Guardian: *Thank you very much.*

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PRESS RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Kaladan Project in India and Burma: Transparency and local benefits essential, say activists

[Bangkok, Thailand] A new report by the Kaladan Movement raises community concerns about the lack of government transparency surrounding the implementation of the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project. The \$214 million Kaladan Project – estimated to be fully operational in 2015 – will see the construction of a combined inland waterway and highway transportation system connecting Mizoram State in Northeast India with a Bay of Bengal deepsea port at Site-tway, Arakan State in western Burma. The deepsea port will transfer cargo from large container ships to smaller 300 tonne barges (from 50 to 200 metres in length) that will ply the 160 km inland waterway north to a currently under construction port complex at Paletwa Town in Chin State. At the Paletwa port, cargo will be transferred to trucks, and

driven on a yet to be built 130 km highway connecting to a new Land Customs Station at Zorinpui on the southern-most tip of the 1,634 km India-Burma border. The Project, classified as Indian development aid to Burma, is a cornerstone of India’s “Look East Policy” aimed at expanding Indian economic and political influence in Southeast Asia.

The report, titled ***One cannot step into the same river twice: making the Kaladan Project people-centred, provides an overview*** of the current on-the-ground impacts arising from the lack of transparency, and focuses on the concerns and hopes of the local people. The report also aims to highlight the potential benefits of the project, particularly for Arakan and Chin States, the two most impoverished regions of Burma. The report acknowledges the need for improved infrastructure and the potential benefits of increased trade opportunities for local farmers and producers, but raises tough questions about the prospect of further land confiscation and forced eviction, disruption and loss of existing livelihoods, and increased militarization in connection with the project.

“Local people must have full participation in major development decisions in Burma,” said Twan Zaw,

Executive Director of Arakan Rivers Network, a core member of the Kaladan Movement. Twan Zaw added, “Comprehensive environmental, social, and health impact assessments should be conducted and made public before the Kaladan Project proceeds any further. Unless the Kaladan Project is implemented with a people-centred approach, it may lead to increased tension between India and Burma rather than improving ties.”

Zo Indigenous Forum Director C. Lalremruata said, “People living in the project area in Mizoram State want the Kaladan Project to be a sustainable development which brings local economic benefits and does not destroy the environment. Indigenous peoples in both India and Burma must be involved in all decision-making regarding their ancestral lands, and the principle of free, prior and informed consent must be the foundation of this kind of infrastructure development project. There must be fair compensation for land acquisition for the Kaladan Project.”

The report – based on the findings from field research conducted by the Arakan Rivers Network in Arakan State, the Chin Human Rights Organization in Chin State, and the Zo Indigenous Forum in Mizoram State – points out that negative impacts have already been experienced by people living along the Kaladan Project route, including land confiscation and forced relocation without adequate compensation in Mizoram State, and labour discrimination and destruction of local cultural heritage in Arakan State.

The report calls for full transparency and local public consultation and participation in the project. Salai Za Uk Ling, Program Director at the Chin Human Rights Organization, said, “Local people in the Paletwa area of Chin State haven’t even been informed about the route of the highway in their area. How can they benefit from the project if they know next to nothing about it, or how it might affect them?”

The Kaladan Movement’s report says that the 1.2 million people living along the route of the Kaladan Project should be the main beneficiaries of this large-scale infrastructure development. The report cautions that under no circumstances is it acceptable for human rights violations to be perpetrated during the implementation of the Project, and calls for accountability for all stakeholders involved in the project.

Salai Za Uk Ling added, “The benefits of this project should go to the least advantaged communities. Unless and until the essential elements of full transparency, public consultation and participation, and accountability are met, the Kaladan Project should be suspended.”

ENDS

Notes to editors:

The full report and photos for media use can be downloaded at www.kaladanmovement.org

About the Kaladan Movement

The Kaladan Movement is an alliance of civil-society organizations concerned about the human rights, social, economic, and environmental impacts of the Kaladan Multi-modal Transit Transport Project for local residents. The core members of the Kaladan Movement are the Arakan Rivers Network (ARN), the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) and the Zo Indigenous Forum (ZIF).

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