



# Rhododendron News

Bimonthly Publication since 1998



Chin Human Rights Organization

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CHRO.CA

Volume XVI, Issue VI

November-December 2013



The Chin National Conference in Hakha, Chin State (above), Shwe Mann visiting in Chin State (below)  
(Photo: CLP & NLM )



Chin Human Rights  
Organization (CHRO)

2-Montavista Avenue,  
Nepean, K2J 2L3,  
Canada

Ph: 1-613-843-9484  
Email: [info@chro.ca](mailto:info@chro.ca)  
Web: [www.chro.ca](http://www.chro.ca)

## Table of Contents

November-December 2013

Volume XVI, Issue VI

### Freedom of Religion

Page 03-05

- Questions over State budget to build Buddhist infrastructure in Chin State
- Religious rights raised to Chin Affairs Minister
- Thura Shwe Mann to arrive in Chin State on Sunday
- Chin pastor slapped in face by govt officer in Arakan
- Persecution of Chin Christians stressed in British House of Commons

### Humanitarian & Development Situation

Page 05-07

- Electric supply reduced in Chin State amidst govt's promises
- Shwe Mann promises to ensure development in Chin State
- Assistance provided to Chin villages hit by food shortages
- Landslides force village in Falam Township to relocate
- Govt fails to keep promises on drug eradication in Chin State

### Event & Protest

Page 08-10

- CNF concludes public consultations
- Over 500 attended Chin National Conference
- Public rally to protest against KTVs in Kalaymyo
- World disability day observed in Hakha
- Paletwa campaign against plan to construct police station

### Situation of Refugees

Page 10-11

- Chin refugee stabbed by Indians in Delhi
- Delhi Chin refugees worried as court deals with attempted sexual assault case
- 21-yr-old Chin killed in car accident in Malaysia

### Other Human Rights Violations

Page 12-14

- Disappointment over Shwe Mann's meeting schedules in Chin State
- Chin USDP members forced to wear uniform
- Chin athletes disappointed over selection process for SEA Games
- Another Chin athlete excluded for SEA Games
- Chin bodybuilder deselected for SEA Games

### Statement

Page 14-18

- Statement of the Chin National Conference
- CHRO at UN forum on Minority Issues

## Freedom of Religion

### Questions over State budget to build Buddhist infrastructure in Chin State

11 November 2013:

**C**hin MPs enquired about budget sanctioned separately by the government of Chin State for construction of Buddhist buildings in three townships.

They said that they wanted to know the reason why a fund was earmarked only for Buddhists, but not for other religious groups in Burma's western State, with the majority being Christian.

The new 2014-15 budget planned by the government of Chin State includes financial allocation to construct Buddhist monasteries, schools and community halls in

Paletwa, Mindat and Tedim townships.

Pu Lal Mawng Cung MP said that he raised a question during the recent parliamentary sessions asking if a Christian group would be allowed to receive budget allocations.

He said that Chief Minister Hung Ngai responded saying a budget could be assigned if the proposal met the requirements, adding: "There is no discrimination against any religious groups."

In the contrary, Tomás Ojea Quintana, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Burma, said in his report to the United Nations General Assembly late last month that Christians in Chin State were being discriminated against.

The seventh regular session of the first Chin State Parliament was held in Hakha on 4-6 November 2013.#

Chin MPs said that they wanted to know the reason why a fund was earmarked only for Buddhists, but not for other religious groups in Burma's western State, with the majority being Christian.

### Religious rights raised to Chin Affairs Minister

27 November 2013: Chin Christians in Magway Region expressed their concerns about issues related to religious purposes during a meeting in Pakkoku town with Salai Hla Tun, Chin Affairs Minister of Magway Region.

They said that they still face difficulties in obtaining permission to renovate and construct religious buildings and seek assistance from the Chin Affairs Minister.

According to the *Chin World Media*, a pastor from the Pakkoku Chin Baptist Church said during the meeting: "We would like to request our minister to raise the issues in his power to relevant government authorities so that we are allowed to freely look after our premises."

In response, Salai Hla Tun said that he would try

his best to put the matter forward as he addressed the meeting attended by leaders and representatives of the Chin community, government employees, churches and university students as well as tutors.

Until recently, Chin Christian ministers working in Magway Region were reported to have faced repressive and discriminatory measures from the local authorities as well as from Buddhist monks.

Returning from the Chin National Conference (CNC) held in Hakha, Chin State, the Chin Affairs Minister was holding meetings with Chin communities based in Gangaw, Yesagyo and Pakkoku.

Salai Hla Tun, an Asho Chin from Allanmyo, now known as Aunglan or Myede town, in Thayet District of Magway Region, was nominated from the National Unity Party as a minister for the 'National Race Affairs' in 2010.#



## Thura Shwe Mann to arrive in Chin State on Sunday

14 November 2013: Thura Shwe Mann, Speaker of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, will travel to Chin State on Sunday, 17 November after spending one day in Kalaymyo of Sagaing Region.

The 66-year-old ex-Chief of Staff of the Burma Armed Forces is scheduled to make a short stop in Tedim in the morning and to arrive in Hakha in the afternoon.

A source close to the government of Chin State said that his arrival date had been confirmed but detailed information about his programme remained unavailable.

Like some of Burma's other senior leaders including President Thein Sein who visited the country's least developed state earlier this year, he is expected to meet with authorities at a military base in Tedim.

A community leader from Hakha said: "We are glad

that our country's leaders visit us but why does it have to be on Sunday? They must be aware that we are Christian."

"As he will enter Chin State on Sunday, it will disrupt church services and local leaders would not be able to go to church as preparations will have to be made," complained the leader.

During his stay in Kalaymyo bordering Chin State, according to the Voice news, Mr. Speaker would meet with government officials, town-elders, and leaders of political parties and civil society groups.

It said that he would also make a visit to Buddhist pagodas and monasteries in Kalaymyo.

The former military General is scheduled to leave Chin State on Monday.

Sources said that he is the right-hand man of Senior General Than Shwe and that he was implicated in human rights violations during the operations against KNU (Karen National Union) in 1989. #

## Chin pastor slapped in face by ward admin in Arakan

03 December 2013: Chin pastor Cing Pian Langh was hit in his face for no obvious reason by U Hla Kyaw, a ward administrator of Myebon town in Arakan State.

The incident took place around 9:30pm on 9 November 2013 while the 30-year-old missionary was having a telephone conversation, according to the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO).

Pastor Langh, originally from Tedim Township of Chin State, told CHRO: "As the phone line was not very clear, I was standing near the fence. While I was over the phone, U Hla Kyaw turned his handheld torchlight on in my face and hit me without saying a word."

He said that he had been to the office of the General Administration Department in Myebon to report the case but was told the head was travelling.

He added that he had informed the Department of Religious Affairs about the incident and that the head of the department had responded saying: "This is nothing to do with my job."

The victim said that the authorities had taken no action regarding the incident.

Pastor Cing Pian Langh has been working Myepon town, Myebon Township, Sittwe District of Arakan State as a Christian missionary from the Evangelical Free Church of Myanmar since October 2013.

About half of the population in Myebon, a town devastated in October 2010 by Cyclone Giri, is estimated to be Chin. #

"As the phone line was not very clear, I was standing near the fence. While I was over the phone, U Hla Kyaw turned his handheld torchlight on in my face and hit me without saying a word."

- Pastor Langh

## Persecution of Chin Christians stressed in British House of Commons

12 December 2013: A December 3 debate in the House of Commons of the British Parliament highlighted the persecution of Chin Christians in Burma.

Kerry McCarthy, MP of the Labour Party, said in the debate/motion that the Chin Christians had been targeted for their ethnicity and their faith.

She added that the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) documented cases of forced labour, more than 40 separate incidents of torture, and 24 official complaints from Chin Christians of human rights violations, including rape and extra-judicial killing, where no action was taken against the perpetrators.

In September last year, CHRO members had met with Kerry McCarthy during their advocacy trip to Europe following their report on persecution against ethnic Chin Christians in Burma.

Meanwhile, a press conference held in Rangoon last week

by the Chin National Conference (CNC) put stress on the ongoing discrimination against Chin Christians on the basis of religion and ethnicity.

Salai Bawi Lian Mang, CHRO Executive Director, said at the event that at least 20 Christian crosses in Chin State had been demolished over a period of 20 years by successive Burma authorities.

More than 100,000 Chins have fled the country as refugees into neighbouring countries including India, Malaysia and Thailand mainly due to human rights violations and discrimination.

Salai Lian Bawi Thang, from CHRO, spoke at the Rangoon press conference emphasizing on the fact that over 50 Burma Army battalions were deployed for security in Chin State and questioning why such numbers were needed.

Until recently, Chin Christian pastors had been attacked but no action had been taken by the authorities.

In Chin State, Christian churches and organizations still face difficulties in obtaining permission to renovate and construct Christian infrastructure despite positive changes claimed by the central government of Burma.#

## Humanitarian & Development Situation

### Electric supply reduced in Chin State amidst Govt's promises

16 November 2013:

**T**he government of Chin State has made an enormous reduction in electric supply as U Khin Maung Soe, Union Minister of Electric Power, makes a promise of full power in Burma's least developed region.

U Khin Maung Soe last week said in a meeting at the Rangoon City Electricity Supply Board Office that the two States of Chin and Rakhine would receive full electricity by the end of next year.

A government employee from Hakha said that

hours of power supply to ministers' houses and government departments had been decreased since last Tuesday.

"High-ranking government officials were provided a 24-hour power supply. So far, they now have electricity from 6pm to 11pm at night, and sometimes 11am to 3pm during the day," said a Hakha resident.

Other residents, especially those running private businesses, complained about the irregularity of electricity, let alone reduction.

"On Thursdays, we normally had electricity but we didn't have it the whole

day this Thursday. And we were not informed of the new schedules and had to run an electricity generator," said a Hakha shop-owner.

The government of Chin State claimed that it was a necessary step taken to meet the need of the people in the future as the decrease in rainfalls had affected hydropower plants being used in Chin State.

The Ministry of Electric Power of the central government said that it has provided electricity across Chin State using nine hydropower plants and 33 generators.

A community leader from Thantlang said that the majority of villages in Hakha and Thantlang Townships had built their own mini-hydropower plants or bought electric generators with financial contributions from the Chin diaspora.

Recently, residents in the two towns of Hakha and Thantlang had faced power outages owing to problems with the Laiva hydropower station.

Earlier this year, more than 2,000 Hakha residents staged a peaceful demonstration demanding an increase in electricity supply.#

## Shwe Mann promises to ensure development in Chin State

25 November 2013: Thura Shwe Mann, Speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, said during his recent visit to Chin State that he would undertake the task of development for the people in Burma's western state.

While addressing the meetings in Tedim, Hakha and Mindat towns, he said that he had come to Chin State to find ways to improve development and that he wanted to hear the voices and needs of the local people.

The 66-year-old ex-General said that the Union Assembly and the Union Government would 'implement the tasks that cannot be realized by the state government'.

He was quoted by the New Light of Myanmar as saying: "Pragmatic approaches are to be taken to translate the failed tasks to a success."

One of the Chin community leaders said: "They [country's leaders] come, give promises, and go. We haven't seen much of actions taken as promised. For instance, electricity in our area is now reduced rather than improved."

"In the past, we had had enough promises from the same people of government. Now, they have just started again and we just have to wait and see the outcomes."

Mr. Speaker also indicated that he welcomed the locals expressing their needs as the parliament was to pass laws that serve the interest of the people.#



Food storage in southern Chin State (Photo: CHRO)

"People in Mara area face food scarcity because their harvest this year didn't produce much yield," added the staff member.

Funded and initiated as a 'Food Bank' programme by Hakha-based UNDP in collaboration with the local NGOs, the project provides US\$4,000 each to the villages.

Six NGOs based in the towns of Hakha, Matupi, Paletwa and Mindat team up with local committee members of the villages in implementing the project, according to the Hakha Post.

## Assistance provided to Chin villages hit by food shortages

26 November 2013: A group of local NGOs provides technical and financial assistance to build food storage for each of 30 villages in Chin State.

The programme will help Mara villages affected by food shortages in Thantlang, Matupi and Paletwa township to put up buildings for storing crops.

One of the NGO staff members said in the *Hakha Post* that the construction would be completed between November 2013 and March 2014, and that it would be used for keeping not only rice but also other produce.

Meanwhile, Leikang villagers from Lautu area in Thantlang township have contributed bags of rice and corn towards helping locals in Ruava-B village of Matupi township facing severe food shortages.

Local media reports said that the emergency aid had been carried on their backs by villagers and also transported to the village using horses and motor-bikes.

Although it has been nearly a year since the government of Chin State was informed of the situation, it has not taken any action so far.#





(Photo: GFYO)

He also said that the relocation had to be finished before the next rainy season, adding: "The villagers face difficulty moving their property and sections of their houses."

Media reports indicated that only a Chin Christian church in USA and some Falam town residents have so far made contributions toward helping the villagers move to a new place.

It is claimed that the local authorities have inspected the area and

## Landslides force village in Falam Township to relocate

05 December 2013: Continuous landslides caused by heavy rains have prompted residents in Lianrih village of Falam Township, Chin State to relocate near Congkua, another village about 3 miles away.

Christian Pastor Van Bawi Lian said in the *Chinland Today* that the village had to be abandoned as the landslides were continuing and that leaders from the two villages had met regarding the relocation last Monday.

informed relevant government departments and high-ranking officials.

Lianrih, a village of 28 houses, is home to 159 people.

In September this year, two villages in Falam Township, Laizo and Zalai had to be deserted owing to heavy landslides that had put them in danger.

More than 700 incidents of landslides have been recorded in Chin State between the months of August and September 2013 alone.#

## Govt fails to keep promises on drug eradication in Chin State

11 December 2013: The government of Chin State has reiterated that it would take action to destroy poppy fields in the northern parts of the country's western state.

Dr. Ba Maung, Minister of Social Affairs of the Chin State government, said that the government meeting last Tuesday had made a decision to destroy the ongoing poppy cultivation.

He said in the *Myanmar Freedom Daily*: "Destroying poppy fields is our national duty. We will begin in Tonzang Township because it is known to cultivate the largest amount of opium in the state."

A community leader from Hakha said that the government made promises each year to uproot the poppy fields but has not taken proper action to this day.

In late 2011, the government of Chin State had organized an event where poppy seeds were surrendered in an effort to eradicate the cultivation.

It had indicated that it would bring an end to the opium poppy plantation and provide necessary assistance to local farmers to start income-generating agriculture.

However, the State government has taken no further action although Chin political parties, university students, youth groups and communities have voiced their concerns several times.

Sources confirmed that the Burma Army battalions stationed in Chin State and Sagaing Region have been collaborating with the Meitei rebel armed group from Manipuri State of India in controlling the plantation areas.

Recently, grave concerns have been raised over the increasing number of Chin youths who use illegal drugs and opium products.#

## Event & Protest

### CNF concludes public consultations

08 November 2013:

**T**he Chin National Front (CNF) has wrapped up its public consultation programme held across Chin State and beyond since mid last year following the ceasefire agreement with the government of Burma.

With the last events organized among the Chin based in Rangoon, Mandalay and Sagaing Regions, the programme came to a close ahead of the upcoming Chin National Conference scheduled to kick off next Tuesday.

Pa Bawi, Editor of the *Chin Times*, told Chinland Guardian that the events took place with over 3,000

people in Khampat, Tamu, Letpanchaung, Kyar-inn, Tanbu, Tahan and Taungphila of Sagaing Region in the first week of this month.

They were organized in collaboration with a committee comprising leaders and representatives of Chin community, civil society, political and religious organizations.

Pu Zing Cung, CNF Secretary General, said that the purpose was to allow the public to get involved in the reforms, to share with them the ongoing peace process, and to give them an opportunity to raise their concerns.

One of the provisions agreed in the peace deal with the government in January last year said that CNF would freely hold public consultations in order to bring forward the

desire of the Chin people as a basis of their discussion at the Union-Level talks.

Meanwhile, members of the Supreme Council and Central Executive Committee of CNF are meeting in Thantlang in preparation for next week's conference in Hakha.

Pu Ral Hnin, CNF Liaison Officer, told the Hakha Post that they discussed the issues to be presented at the conference as well as strategies pertaining to the ongoing ceasefire process with Burma's ethnic armed groups.

The Chin National Front, an ethnic armed group formed in 1988 fighting against Burma's successive military regimes, had signed ceasefire agreements with the government's peace delegation in 2012. #



(Photo: CHRO)

### Over 500 attended Chin National Conference

12 November 2013: The first day of the four-day Chin National Conference (CNC) came to an end today with 575 participants in Hakha, Chin State.

It was attended by ministers and officials of the Chin State government, MPs, and representatives from Chin political parties, civil society organizations, NGOs, CNF, tribal groups, and nine townships as well as Rangoon, Mandalay, Kalay, Tamu, and Rakhine.

Media reports said that foreign diplomats, scholars, indi-

viduals from Chin diaspora and religious leaders including Buddhist monks and Christian pastors also participated in the historic event.

Chief Minister of the Chin State government Hung Ngai gave the opening remark, followed by a speech from Salai Ko Ko Naing, Chin Affairs Minister of Rakhine State.

One of the representatives from Thantlang said: "We are very much impressed by the first day's activities and it is great to see our brothers and sisters from various Chin tribes."

Another Chin participant said: "We live in a small land of Chin State but we have never had a chance to meet each other like this before."

A representative of the Dai Chin group expressed his excitement about the second day while a Khumi Chin participant indicated that he felt at home, saying: "I was born in Paletwa but you can call me Chin Paletwa pa."

The Chin Progressive Party (CPP), the Zomi Congress for Democracy, and the K'Cho Development Association were not able to send members on behalf of their organizations to attend the conference. #



## Public rally to protest against KTVs in Kalaymyo

25 November 2013: Residents from at least two wards of Sanmyo and Tet-oo-thida in Kalaymyo, Sagaing Region, are to stage a public protest against the establishment of karaoke bars in their areas.

Organizers said that they planned to hold a rally against those lounges, better known in Burma as KTV (karaoke television), in the near future as they had negative effects on their local communities.

According to the vcth news, leaders of the Sanmyo and Tet-oo-thida communities had submitted a letter to the authorities, complaining of loud noises from the KTVs at night and 'dirty' nightlife situations in their neighbourhoods.

The leaders said that the main reason behind the upcoming protest

was because no action had been taken by the authorities although they had been informed of the situation before.

According to local media reports, at least three KTV lounges have been opened in Kalaymyo in the names of a deputy battalion commander of Burma Army military based in Tedim, a retired deputy station commander of Kalay Police Forces, and a high-ranking official from the Military Affairs Security Unit in Kalewa.

Workers in Rangoon and Mandalay said that the use of alcohol and methamphetamine, an addictive stimulant that strongly activates certain systems in the brain, were common at KTV lounges and nightclubs.

Ma Sandi, 27, said in the Myanmar Times that she began working at a KTV lounge before she ended up as a prostitute.

"At first I worked to entertain guests but I have changed because of the money and I think environment also pushed me towards it," she said.

Angel Lay, a staff member of an international NGO working to help 'sex workers', said that they were regularly threatened with violence or even attacked, and sometimes cheated by clients.

She indicated it was poverty that drove women to take such risks and work in dangerous and unsafe environments.

"It's not easy to make money. Some barely make enough to buy food and so they have to keep selling their bodies" added Angel Lay, according to the *Myanmar Times*.

Police in Rangoon said that crimes, in most cases at night, were committed by revelers coming out from KTV bars and nightclubs, according to the *Eleven news*.#

## World disability day observed in Hakha

03 December 2013: An event marking the International Day of People with Disability was held at the town hall of Hakha in Chin State today.

The first observance organized in the capital attracted dozens of attendees including disabled people from Thantlang, Hakha and Kalaymyo of Sagaing Region.

It was also attended by Dr. Ba Maung, Minister of Social Affairs of the Chin State government; Pu Tha Uk, Managing Director of the Eden Centre for Disabled Children; Nun Tha Hlei Sung, from the Disabled Children Development Programme in Kalaymyo, leaders of the Bethzatha Disabled Development Centre in Hakha.

According to the *Hakha Post*, the morning pro-

gramme started from 9am till 10:30am, and the evening session focused on disability awareness training between 1 and 4pm.

December 3, International Day of Persons with Disabilities, with the 2013 theme 'Break Barriers, Open Doors: for an inclusive society and development for all', is an international observance promoted by the United Nations since 1992.

In his message, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said more than 1 billion people live with disabilities today, adding: "We must remove all barriers that affect the inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities in society, including through changing attitudes that fuel stigma and institutionalize discrimination."

According to ECDC, it is estimated that more than one million people with physical disabilities live in Burma.#

## Paletwa campaign against plan to construct police station

04 December 2013: Residents in Paletwa, Paletwa Township are making a concerted effort to stop government's plan to construct a police station in the town centre.

They say that the building will include office rooms and prisons, and that it will disturb the neighborhood.

Salai Khwe Yang MP told the *Khumi Media* Group that the locals didn't agree to the construction plan and that more than 1,000 would sign a campaign letter to be sent to the Chin State government.

"One of the reasons they [locals] oppose the plan is

because the building will stand in a small space in the town centre between the General Hospital and the downtown market," added the Chin MP, from the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP).

A Paletwa resident said that the initial preparations of the construction had forced at least 16 houses to relocate and that the responsible authorities had not consulted the local communities about the project.

The *Khumi Media Group* said that parents from 47 households had written a letter to the Paletwa Police Station, demanding to construct a new road as the building would block their main road leading to the port and to the market.

However, no action has been taken by the authorities regarding the letter.#

## Situation of Refugees



(Photo: CHRO)

## Chin refugee stabbed by Indians in Delhi

10 November 2013: Tin Za Naw, 18, was stabbed with a knife in his neck in an unprovoked attack by Indian men in West Delhi yesterday.

The incident took place around 2pm while he and his friend Tin Aung Shwe were on their way to collect clothes from a tailoring shop in Chanakya Place in Utam Nagar.

Tin Aung Shwe told the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHR) that he believed the three Indian men who attacked them were drunk, and that one of them

talked to him while the other two were attacking Tin Za Naw.

"He [Tin Za Naw] was tightly grabbed by one man. The other took his knife and stabbed in the left side of his neck. He was bleeding and I started shouting to tell him to run as fast as he could," added Tin Aung Shwe, who escaped the attack.

"As I shouted very loudly, the men didn't dare to continue stabbing and ran away," said his witness Chin friend.

With the help of one of the Chin refugee community leaders, the victim was taken to Mata Chanan Devi Hospital where he had his injury stitched and was given medicine.

The case was reported to Dabri Police Station and the police said that they would take legal action regarding the incident.

"The doctor said that he [Tin Za Naw] could have lost his life if he had not been rushed quickly enough to the hospital. Now the victim is able to speak only a few words as he still has breathing difficulties," said his friend.#

## Delhi Chin refugees worried as court deals with attempted sexual assault case

13 November 2013: Chin refugee leaders have warned their members to be on the lookout following an accusation that an Indian man had attempted to sexually assault an 8-year-old Chin girl in Delhi.

They said that there could be retaliatory action taken against Chin refugees as the local Indian community had indicated if the case was officially filed.

One of the Chin community leaders said that the local elders had verbally threatened that all the refugees from Burma would be thrown out from the neighborhood should the case be filed against the Indian.

He added: "A group of about 15 elders from the neighborhood asked not to take the case to police. But now that it is taken, everyone is requested to be vigilant when moving around, especially at night."

According to the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO), the police had been informed of the incident

and the man, accompanied by the elders, taken to Dabri Police Station for investigation.

"They [elders] persuaded the victim's family and Chin leaders to withdraw the case saying that the girl was not raped. They also talked to a female police officer to try to make an appeasement," said the Chin leader.

The officer told the girl's parents that if the case was withdrawn, the child would be taken away from them and put under the care of relevant services until it was sorted.

The same evening, an official investigation and a medical test were conducted, according to a CHRO staff member.

The man, who owns an electrical shop in the neighborhood and has known the victim's family for more than two years, was detained in a lock-up for one week and released on bail.

He was accused of making an attempt to 'rape' an 8-year-old Chin girl on 21 October and has since appeared in court twice following the allegation.#



Mai Hniang Za Hnem (Photo: Chinland Today)

According to the *Chinland Today*, the accident happened around midnight while Hnem and her three friends were on their way to join other colleagues at a dinner party after work.

Friend and co-worker Sonera Tinpar said that their colleague had invited them to dinner at a restaurant close to their workplace and that she had kept calling her as they had taken quite long.

"Later, the police picked up her phone and told me to come to a hospital. That's when we learned that they had had an accident," she said.

## 21-yr-old Chin killed in car accident in Malaysia

18 December 2013: Chin refugee Mai Hniang Za Hnem died in an accident in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia after the sports car driven by her friend crashed yesterday.

Hnem and her friends were reported dead on the scene as their car was ablaze when it crashed into a bank building.

Originally from Zathlir village of Falam Township, Chin State, Mai Hniang Za Hnem, aka Hniang Kuk, was set to fly to the US next week after having been in Malaysia for four years.#



## Other Human Rights Violations

### Disappointment over Shwe Mann's meeting schedules in Chin State

19 November 2013:

**C**hristian and community leaders as well as officials of some government departments expressed their disappointment over the last-minute cancellation of meetings with Thura Shwe Mann.

The Speaker of *Pyidaungsu Hluttaw* called off his 'arranged' schedules to meet with Chin Christian leaders, and to visit government departments and Buddhist monasteries in Hakha minutes before he had left reportedly for Mindat.

Sources from Hakha said that dozens of Chin pastors and community leaders had prepared and were ready around 7am in the morning on Monday as they were informed that Thura Shwe Mann would like to meet them.

"We are glad that he visited us in Chin State. As a leader, he ought to have kept his promises to the people. We would like him to demonstrate more actions than words," complained one of the Hakha community leaders.

Employees of some government departments and Buddhist monks were also claimed to have been displeased with the sudden change by Thura Shwe Mann, Chairman of the ruling Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP).

During his two-day trip to Kalaymyo of Sagaing Region, Tedim and Hakha towns of Chin State, he held meetings with government ministers, officials, parliamentarians, and leaders of civil society organizations and town-elders last Saturday and Sunday respectively.

A Hakha resident said: "He held a meeting in Tedim in the morning on Sunday and arrived in Hakha in the afternoon. Although it was in the afternoon, some Christians were not able to attend their church services because preparations had to be done in advance."

According to the New Light of Myanmar, Mr. Speaker

addressed the meetings saying that he had heard the voices of the local people and had vowed to take care of all their reports made to him.

One of the participants from Thantlang was quoted as saying that he had no trust or hope that their requests would be fulfilled although the Speaker made promises.

Accompanying Thura Shwe Mann and wife Daw Khin Lay Thet, Dr. Khin Shwe, Chairman for the National Development Group of Companies, donated 10,000,000 Kyats for school charities, and another 13,300,000 Kyats for victims of landslide-hit villages in Falam township.

Related to Mr. Speaker through the marriage of his daughter to his son, business tycoon Dr. Khin Shwe is Chairman of the Myanmar Construction Entrepreneurs Association, and Head of Sasana Nogghaha, a religious organization supported by Burma's government.

The Burmese edition of the New Light of Myanmar said that the Ministry of Border Affairs also made a total donation of 50,000,000 Kyats for rural development in Chin State during Shwe Mann's visit.

However, detailed information as to who received the donations and how they would be used remains unavailable, prompting concerns that they might be spent for funding the Na Ta La schools where Christian students are coerced to convert to Buddhism.

Thura Shwe Mann, 66, made his first visit as the Speaker of *Pyidaungsu Hluttaw* to Chin State, arriving in Tedim and Hakha on Sunday, and reportedly continued on to Mindat in the southern part on Monday. #

"He held a meeting in Tedim in the morning on Sunday and arrived in Hakha in the afternoon. Although it was in the afternoon, some Christians were not able to attend their church services because preparations had to be done in advance."

- A Hakha resident

(Photo: S. Par & <http://vctn.net> )

## Chin USDP members forced to wear uniform

22 November 2013: Chin members of the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) said that they were forced to wear their party uniform during a recent official visit to Chin State by Chairman Thura Shwe Mann.

They complained that the authorities of the Chin State government ordered them to put on a 'white shirt' and a 'green longyi' to greet Thura Shwe Mann when he arrived in Hakha.

A USDP member from Thantlang said: "We were told to be dressed in our party's attire. But I didn't wear it

because it was very cold and I am not healthy. So I came out in our Chin costume."

Some members including ministers and government officials had to change their dress near a red-carpet area minutes before the arrival of their party's leader as they were not informed in advance.

A government employee from Hakha said that he was told to take off his Chin clothes, and to put on taik-pon, a collarless Manchu Chinese jacket, and longyi, a sarong worn by men.

Thura Shwe Mann, Speaker of Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, made his first visit to the country's least developed state last week, stopping at Tedim, Hakha and Mindat towns. #

## Chin athletes disappointed over selection process for SEA Games

10 December 2013: Boxer Mai Nelly Bawi Nei Sin and wrestler Salai Van Ni said that they were not satisfied with the selection process of their teams for the 27th SEA Games held in Burma.

They complained they were informed that they were not on the 'selected' name lists only one day before the games commenced.

Gold medalist Mai Nelly said in the Chin World Media that the reason she was told that she was excluded from the list was because her chance of winning in her weight titles stood too slim as contestants from all the

Southeast Asian countries would participate.

In September this year, Nelly, who was among the six selected female boxers trained in China ahead of the SEA Games, won the first prize in the women's national boxing championship held in Nay Pyi Taw.

Similarly, gold medalist Salai Van Ni said that he had worked hard to represent his country in the games but he learned that he was not on the selected list only one day in advance.

He added that the selection process was unfair and discriminatory as friends he knew who got less points during their training sessions were selected.

"I am so disappointed because the selecting board members are show-

ing favouritism and are treating one better than another. I am not really satisfied with the selection process," he said.

"This is not about ability in sports and I would like the authorities to know about it. This should never happen again," complained Salai Van Ni, son of Pu Cung Uk and Pi Cia Sung from Falam, Chin State.

Salai Van Ni, aka Van Ni Lian Uk, had won one gold and one silver medals in the national judo championship before his wrestling career.

Having represented Burma in wrestling in Japan, he had also trained as one of the selected wrestlers for the ongoing SEA Games since last year.

Burma is hosting the 27th SEA Games. #





(Photos: Chin World Media)



## Another Chin athlete excluded for SEA Games

12 December 2013: Siam Za Khai, who had been selected to compete in Taekwondo, was excluded from contesting in the 27th SEA Games in Burma.

Although he had been nominated and already listed for the games, he was deselected for no obvious reason last month.

Mr. Mung, an uncle of Siam Za Khai, told the Chinland Guardian

that his nephew had been trained extensively and sent to the Republic of Korea and to Thailand in preparation for this SEA Games.

He added: "He [nephew] was already listed and was ready and eager to contest in the Taekwondo matches in the games. But he was sent home, is still disappointed and downhearted, even now."

He also said that his nephew had not been informed of the reason he was put off the list all of a sudden, complaining: "There are a lot of unfair and undue discrimination

issues still in our so-called democratic country."

Siam Za Khai, aka Khaiboih, had won three silver medals in Taekwondo competitions held in Indonesia, the Republic of Korea and Thailand in September this year.

Also, as just reported, two Chin athletes have said that they were not satisfied with the selection process of their teams in women's boxing and men's wrestling just days ahead of the SEA Games hosted by Burma.#

## Chin bodybuilder deselected for SEA Games

14 December 2013: Salai Kyaw Min, a gold medalist Chin bodybuilder, has emerged as another victim of the 'unfair' selection process for the 27th SEA Games

He said in the Chin World Media that he was deselected for no obvious reason from the list on 23 November for the bodybuilding competition scheduled to take place on 13 and 14 December.

He added: "I have a body weight of 80kg and am the only one to represent our country in that class. As one of the selected contestants, I had trained over the past year in preparation for this event."

"At first, Min Zaw Oo, who weighs 76kg, was advised to reduce 4kg so that he could compete in the 70kg weight class. And two selected contestants of weight 70kg were straight away removed the list."

"When a central committee from Singapore came for inspection, he hadn't managed to reduce his weight and was told to compete in the 80kg. So, I was removed from the list and Min Zaw Oo, over aged 40, was put forward. Now that I am off the list, one of the two deselected from the 70kg list is re-selected."

Salai Kyaw Min complained that he was not satisfied with the way in which contestants were selected, adding: "The one [Min Zaw Oo] who is competing in my place always loses to me in our competitions."

Originally from Matupi Township, Chin State, the Chin bodybuilder, who had won a gold medal in the national bodybuilding contest, runs his private gym.

Meanwhile, Pau Sian Sang, aka Phyo Ko Ko Thein, a footballer from the Chin United Football Club, had been excluded from the final 23 selected for the SEA Games.#



## Statement

### Statement of the Chin National Conference Hakha, Chin State 15 November 2013

The Chin National Conference (CNC) was held in Hakha, Chin State from 12 to 15 November 2013 with 571 delegates from the Chin State government, political parties, Chin National Front (CNF), civil society organizations, women, youth, university students, and religious leaders, MPs from the Chin National Party (CNP), Chin Progressive Party (CPP) and Ethnic National Development Party (ENDP), Chin Affairs Ministers, representatives of tribal groups and townships, and scholars. The following is a set of common resolutions reached from discussions from the conference.

01. The CNC welcomes President U Thein Sein's initiatives and vows to solve the root causes of armed conflict through political means in order to achieve sustainable peace. It calls for immediately holding a national-level political dialogue following a nationwide ceasefire agreement.
02. The CNC agrees to use the word 'Chin' as the national name and for ethnicity on the National Registration Card when the nationwide census takes place in 2014. Chin people have the right to make their own decisions concerning designation of the Chin tribal groups.
03. The CNC agrees that Chin tribal customary laws be collected, documented, published, and amended as needed in accordance with current contexts and practices.
04. The CNC agrees to request Burma's government to develop economic and social infrastructure for Chin State and the people in a systematic and equitable way.
05. The CNC agrees that each constituent State draft a State constitution and the 2008 Constitution be amended toward achieving a federal Union of Burma following the necessary framework laid for building a genuine federal Union.
06. The CNC welcomes the National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women 2013-2022 (NSPAW) and urges for its implementation in Chin State. It agrees that men and women work shoulder to shoulder to eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women in accordance with the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and that up to 30 percent participation by women be reserved across sectors including politics, peace and security, and social development processes.
07. The CNC urges that the State government be allowed to play a more important role when it comes to rights and issues related to land and natural resources; that priority be given to the consent and involvement of the indigenous people; that a clear system be defined through which the incomes obtained from the natural resources projects will be shared equally between the Union and the States; and that transparency and accountability be ensured when dealing with issues related to land and natural resources.
08. The CNC urges the making of laws that guarantee the rights to freely think, worship and believe in order to end ongoing discrimination and persecution against religious minorities including the Chin, and to replace the Ministry of Religious Affairs with an independent and impartial commission on religious affairs in order to ensure equal rights for all religions in the country.
09. The CNC agrees that security for Chin refugees to return home can be assured/guaranteed only after the root causes including the government's political mismanagement, discrimination and human rights violations against indigenous ethnic nationalities are transformed into positive conditions that ensure peace, freedom and conflict resolution.

10. The CNC urges that the government collaborate with community-based organizations, scholars and experts in relevant fields to make policies and laws that guarantee the construction of road communications, support of long-term loans with lower interest rates, rights of land ownership, development of sustainable agriculture, and establishment of agricultural and livestock breeding education centres in order to create and implement a system that will ensure food security in villages across Chin State.

11. The CNC urges that the constitution make a provision for the State government to be granted up to 80% of authority to manage its educational issues.

12. The CNC agrees that a 45-member committee comprising delegates from regions, women, youth, political parties, Chin National Front (CNF), CNC resource persons, Joint Organizing Committee of CNC, and experts and scholars be formed to implement the above-mentioned points of agreement.

13. It is declared that the Chin National Conference is a successful unity-building event in which Chin people from both inside and outside of Chin State, and from abroad participated and reached common positions for the Chin as a whole.#



(Photos: CHRO)



## CHRO at UN forum on Minority Issues

### United Nations Human Rights Council Forum on Minority Issues Sixth Session 26-27 November 2013

*At its sixth session, the Forum on Minority Issues in Geneva gave targeted attention to religious minorities. While the Forum addressed respect for the right to freedom of religion or belief, it also went further, addressing the full range of minority rights. The following is the text of an intervention made at the Forum by Rosalinn Zahau of the Chin Human Rights Organization.*

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#### INTERVENTION

**Rosalinn Zahau, Myanmar**

#### **AGENDA ITEM # 4:** Promotion and protection of the identity of religious minorities

Thank you Madame Chair.

My name is Rosalinn Zahau. I am with the Chin Human Rights Organization, an NGO working for the protection and promotion of human rights for the Chin people in Myanmar.

As noted in recommendations 18, 19 and 22, it is the responsibility of States to fully comply with Article 18 of the UDHR and the Declaration on Religious Freedom, to take special measures for religious minorities, and to adopt legislation that prohibits discrimination against persons belonging to religious minorities.

Myanmar is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious country. Almost 90 percent of people in my homeland of Chin State are Chin Christians. Myanmar's 2008 Constitution notes the 'special position' of Buddhism as the faith practiced by the majority, while Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Animism merely 'exist'.

In practice, Buddhism is treated as the de facto State religion. Myanmar's Ministry of Religious Affairs uses State resources to promote and propagate Buddhism. Actors from non-Buddhist religious backgrounds must seek permission to build, to renovate or own land for religious infrastructure.

Over the past two decades, the State's policies and practices have given rise to a wide range of violations of freedom of religion or belief for the Chin, such as the destruction of large-scale Christian crosses by State actors, using the forced labor of Chin Christians to build Buddhist infrastructure, and forced relocation to give way for Buddhist infrastructure. Today Chin churches are seeking permission from the Government to replace several of those fallen crosses.

Chin people continue to face intersecting forms of discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, religion, and language. One impact of such discrimination is extreme poverty. 73 percent of Chin live below the poverty line, compared with the national average of 25 percent as per the United Nations Development Program 'Poverty Profile'. Another impact is on the right to effective participation in public and economic life, with very few Chin Christians holding senior positions in Chin State. Chin Christian women are effectively excluded from all decision-making levels of government in Chin State.

**We therefore urge this Forum to include a recommendation which urges all States to form independent and impartial commissions on religious freedom to ensure people of all religious backgrounds have full enjoyment of the right to freedom.**



We also urge this Forum to call on the Government of Myanmar to take concrete measures to fully comply with Article 18 of the UDHR and the Declaration on Religious Freedom, and to adopt legislation that prohibits direct or indirect discrimination against persons from religious minority backgrounds. This should include lifting the restrictions on land ownership for non-Buddhist organizations for religious purposes and requirements to seek prior permission for building or renovating religious infrastructure at all levels of government. The Ministry of Religious Affairs should be replaced with an independent and impartial commission on religious freedom. Its mandate should include measures to address deep-rooted discrimination on the basis of religious identity.#

**Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO)**[www.chro.ca](http://www.chro.ca)

2-Montavista Avenue, Nepean, K2J 2L3, Canada

Ph: 1-613-843-9484; Email: [info@chro.ca](mailto:info@chro.ca)