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**A Christian cross ordered to be removed from its location in Hakha by Chief Minister of the Chin State government** (Photo: The Chinland Post)

## Table of Contents

### **Arbitrary Taxation & Extortion**

- Police demands money, frees drug users in Paletwa
- Soldiers extort money from Christian evangelists

### **Forced Labour**

- Govt employees forced to work overtime without pay

### **Freedom of Religion**

- Govt order removal of Christian cross in Hakha
- Complaint against govt job interviews on Sundays
- Over 600 Christians pray for Hakha cross protection
- State cabinet decide to let Hakha cross remain
- Falam Prayer for religious freedom in Chin State
- Monk teaches Buddhism to school students in Falam
- President Thein Sein meets with Hakha Christian leaders

### **Other Human Rights Violations**

- Kalay Chin forced to admit to drug dealing, imprisoned
- Govt refuses permission for CNF training

### **Humanitarian & Development Situation**

- Over 800 villages in Chin State inaccessible by car
- Police destroy 566 acres of poppy fields in Chin State
- Thein Sein likely to inaugurate Hakha power station, operation theatre
- Japan to build high schools, health centre in Chin State
- Residents struggle as road works destroy water pipes
- Hakha road works hastened to complete before Thein Sein's visit
- Chin station hospitals in severe shortage of medical doctors
- Japan to build seven schools in southern Chin State
- Colleges, training school to be built in Hakha
- Power outages still occur despite official inauguration

### **Event and Protest**

- New political party opens office in Hakha
- Govt minister joins ILO-CHRO training
- Peaceful protest against order to remove Hakha cross planned
- Protest against order to move Christian cross postponed
- 'Hakha cross' protest postponed until meeting with CM
- CND celebration officially allowed at Kalay Univ
- President Thein Sein attends CND celebration

### **Situation of Refugees**

- Chin refugee family evicted from tent outside UNHCR Office in New Delhi
- Over 100 Burmese refugees protest against murder of Kachin teachers

### **Other News**

- Kalay-Kabaw Chin to teach dialects during summer holidays
- Two women arrested in connection with illegal drugs
- Gambling, alcohol banned at CND celebration
- Union minister promises to solve problems facing Chin people
- Hosts required to report tourist info to immigration
- Chin leaders meet to forge stronger cooperation
- CNF pay tribute to soldier killed by Burma army

### **Government**

- Chin majority doubt over govt-led peace process
- Govt blamed for three-day blackouts in Hakha
- CNC urge govt to initiate agreement implementation
- CM denies discrimination against Christians

### **Statement**

- Burma: Stop Christian cross removal; drop trumped-up charges

## Arbitrary Taxation & Extortion

### Police demands money, frees drug users in Paletwa

**PALETWA, 03 February 2015** -- U Myo Aung, superintendent of the Shinletwa Police Force, Paletwa Township, Chin State demanded money from two locals who were arrested in connection with taking drugs, and freed them from police custody.

A resident in Paungmowa village told the Chin Human Rights Organization on condition of anonymity that the superintendent exacted a total of 2,200,000 kyats from the locals identified as Ko Lung, from Paungmowa village and Ko Pa, from War-yon village, and released the two from the Shinletwa Police jail.

The locals, who were also believed to be drug peddlers, were arrested on 11 November 2014 in War-yon village while the police were travelling in the area, and were taken to the Shinletwa Police Station.

They were taken into police custody at the Shinletwa Police Station for two nights. "U Myo Aung demanded 1,100,000 kyats each from the two locals. Ko Lung and Ko Pa gave him the money and they were released," said the Paungmowa resident.

Residents in six villages near Paungmowa have started engaging in drug dealing and taking for about three years. Most of the products, opium, come from Mizoram State of India, according to the local.

"The opium products are traded in from Khingkhawng, Mizoram State. The number of opium-users in villages near Paungmowa has increased. When people don't have money, they would work for the dealers in exchange for drugs," said the local.

Apart from the two locals being arrested for two nights, the authorities have not taken action in order to stop these activities.#

### Soldiers extort money from Christian evangelists

**28 February 2015** -- Burma army soldiers from Light Infantry Battalion 289 extorted 180,000 kyats from a group of ten Baptist evangelists in Paletwa township, Chin State last week.

The company commander demanded the money after accusing the group of travelling and preaching without obtaining an official letter from the head of the Paletwa Township General Administration Department, according to the Chin Human Rights Organization.

A member of the Christian group told the CHRO on condition of anonymity: "We told the commander that we had never had the letter before and that we didn't know we needed the letter. But he didn't accept what we said. So, we eventually gave him the amount that he demanded."

The incident took place in a village of Pyee-chaung areas on 17 February when the Christian group happened to meet while on their journey with the army on patrol, based in Paletwa town.

He also said that they [Christian group] had been

based in Paletwa township for more than 10 years and that they had never heard of the need to obtain permission from the township admin head.

The next day while the group were travelling toward Paletwa town to get the letter, the general administrator of Khawei village returned 20,000 kyats out of the total extortion to them.

After having obtained the letter from the township general administration head, the Christian group continued their journey.#

"We told the commander that we had never had the letter before and that we didn't know we needed the letter. But he didn't accept what we said. So, we eventually gave him the amount that he demanded."

## Forced Labour

### Govt employees forced to work over-time without pay

**07 January 2015** - Government employees in Chin State complain of being forced to work overtime outside their office hours without getting paid.

Three nurses and two assistants said that they were ordered to do extra hours on Tuesday during a monthly training held in Falam from 29 December 2014 to 7 January 2015.

One of the nurses told *The Chinland Post* on condition of anonymity: "We were ordered to work four hours until 12:30 at night after normal office hours."

She said that they had not been asked first if they would be able to work, adding: "We were shouted at

and not even given time for eating."

She also said that it had happened several times in the past and that they had never got paid for the hours.

Similarly, staff members of other government departments in Hakha indicate their 'unhappy' experience at work.

A Hakha government employee told the *Chinland Guardian*: "It is normal that we are told to carry out a task in a way that gives you no choice but to do the job. Mostly, we are not even aware of the fact that we are being forced."

"Sometimes, we have to work over the weekend. That means we miss our church services. It is true that we are not paid for overtime hours," she said.#

## Freedom of Religion

### Govt order removal of Christian cross in Hakha

**18 January 2015** - The government of Chin State has ordered a Chin Christian to remove before the end of this month a cross erected on a Caarcaang hilltop in Hakha.

The official letter issued by the township administration office said that Pu J.P Biak Tin Sang had to take the 54-foot tall cross from its current location by 30 January 2015.

Sang has been accused of planting the Christian cross without obtaining official permission from the authority.

Pu Tial Cem, 70, Sang's spokesperson and in charge of the Caarcaang prayer site, said: "We have been dealing with this issue for four years and will not stop it. We will keep on facing whatever it takes until we get this safe for the people."

The letter also said that the chief minister of the State government rejected Sang's previous request for the cancellation of the official order to remove

the cross.

It warned the Chin owner that action would be taken against him if he didn't follow the instructions.

Cem said: "Yes, they [the authority] can do what they want. But we will not remove the cross."

More than 500 Christians from Hakha and Thantlang fast and prayed on the hill for three days in October 2014 for the preservation of the site and peace.

In November last year, the Hakha Christian Minister's Fellowship wrote a letter to the chief minister, asking the government to provide technical assistance in obtaining official permission.

The concrete cross was planted on the top of Caarcaang Hill early last year.

The Chin Human Rights Organization documented destruction of at least 4 crosses under President Thein Sein's administration since March 2011.#





(Photos: CHRO)

## Complaint against govt job interviews on Sundays

**24 January 2015** -- Chin Christians applying for government jobs complain that employment interviews and examinations should not be held on Sundays.

A Hakha government employee said on condition of anonymity that most of job assessment took place on Sundays and that Christian applicants were not able to attend church services.

The State Co-operative Department is conducting a written exam for new applicants from 9 to 12 noon tomorrow.

A female applicant, who asks not to be named, said that she would not be able to go to church as the exam time coincided with the church service.

"We have no choice but to sit the exam on Sunday. It is just one-day and the time is fixed. I feel like it is timed with the church service," she added.

She said that an oral interview would take place after 1pm on Monday.#

## Over 600 Christians pray for Hakha cross protection

**26 January 2015** - More than 600 people gathered on Calvary Mountain in Hakha yesterday, praying for a Christian cross to be allowed to remain on its current site.

Christians of different denominations from Hakha and Thantlang came together to the afternoon service following the order given by Chief Minister Hung Ngai to move the cross by 30 January 2015.

The letter said that the 54-ft high cross had to be removed from its location on the hilltop and that action would be taken if instructions were not followed.

Pu Tial Cem, a local in charge of Calvary Mountain, said: "People are deeply concerned about the issue and pray in earnest for the cross preservation. They clearly understand that it is a serious matter related to our religion - Christianity."

He said that Chin Christians living abroad also held special prayer services in their respective countries on the same day.

A group of women said that they would fast and pray on the mountain until 29 January.#

## State cabinet decide to let Hakha cross remain

**30 January 2015** -- A cabinet meeting of the Chin State government today came to a conclusion that the Christian cross would not be removed.

However, the meeting agreed on the need to apply for official permission for the cross and three acres of its surrounding area on Calvary Mountain in Hakha.

Van Thawng, State minister of Agriculture and Livestock Breeding, was quoted by the Hakha Post as saying that the application had to be submitted in the name of the Hakha Christian Ministers' Fellowship.

J.P Biak Tin Sang made a donation of his properties

involving the 54-foot cross to the HCMF on Wednesday, handing over the land-ownership.

But the cabinet's decision suggested that the new application to be made by the HCMF would be handled separately.

Ram Mang, State minister of Planning and Economics, said that what the HCMF would apply for was not accepted as a donation by J.P Biak Tin Sang, adding: "Three acres of land including the location of the cross will be granted to the Christian group."

The meeting also decided that three acres of land would be granted for construction of a Buddhist pagoda on the same mountain range where the Christian cross is planted.#

## Falam Prayer for religious freedom in Chin State

**06 February 2015** -- The Falam Mino Pawlkawm (Falam Youth Fellowship) organized a prayer service for freedom of religion and protection of the land in Falam on Monday.

More than 50 Christians from different churches, including women and pastors, gathered on Moriah Prayer Mountain and prayed for two hours between 7am to 9am.

A youth leader in Falam said in the *Chinland Post* that it was the first time they had organized an ac-

tivity regarding religious freedom following their meeting on 30 January.

He also said that they would continue their programmes in the future.

"It is now vital that we stand united in an effort to end religious repression and discrimination in Chin State," a Falam community leader, who asked not to be named, said.

The leader also indicated that they would like to know information about how the Buddhist pagodas were built, clearly without consultation with the public, at the exit and entrance of the town by the military authorities.#



(Photo: Hvt Bawihrin/Facebook)





## Monk teaches Buddhism to school students in Falam

**18 February 2015** -- A Buddhist monk gave a two-day lecture on Buddhism to children at the No. 1 Basic Education High School in Falam last weekend.

The monk, of the 'Arr-sing-nar-yar-ma' Foundation in Monywa, talked to school children, mostly primary students, on 14 and 15 February in the training entitled 'Ceremony of Uniform Donation by Arr-sing-nar-yar-ma Foundation and Civility Training'.

It is not known as to how the training was organized at a Falam high school and how permission was obtained.

Comments on Facebook argued that teaching religious lessons to children at school is not legal.

The training was organized as part of a programme called 'Chin Hill Mission' by Monya-based Buddhist organization.

According to the Chin Human Rights Organization, Buddhist monks were sent by Burma's military junta to various parts of Chin State in the name of 'Hill Regions Buddhist Mission' and have been in the Christian State for years.#



(Photo: Ministry of Information)

## President Thein Sein meets with Hakha Christian leaders

**23 February 2015** -- President Thein Sein held a meeting with leaders of the Hakha Christian Ministers' Fellowship at the Union Guest House in Hakha in the evening on Friday.

HCMF Chairman Rev. Joel Nawl Cung Lian told the Hakha Post that the meeting had been organized at the request of the president and that he and seven other Christian pastors had attended.

In his address to the meeting, the president requested the pastors to 'pray for peace, development, and an end to religious discrimination and conflict in the country'.

The Chin leaders raised questions including continued incidents of Christians in Chin State being ordered to work on Sundays without getting paid and to contribute donations to Buddhist monasteries.

In response, Thein Sein said that those activities had to be stopped as Sunday is a day for worship and rest, adding: "We shouldn't let it happen."

Chief Minister Hung Ngai defended the State authorities against the issues, explaining that they had happened only on occasions when there were special guests or urgent matters.

During the president's first visit to Chin State in 2013, Chin Christian leader were disappointed over the meeting held on Sunday in Hakha.#

## Other Human Rights Violations

### Kalay Chin forced to admit to drug dealing, imprisoned

**KALAYMYO, 26 January 2015** --- Lalhman-gaihchhunga, a Chin resident in Kalay of Sagaing Region, is serving his long-term imprisonment after being forced to admit to drug dealing by a deputy police inspector.

He has been put into the In-taing-lay prison since the Kalay Township court charged him and sentenced him to a 12-year-and-7-month imprisonment on 5 July 2014.

Explaining how it had started, Wife D Thluai told the Chin Human Rights Organization that Deputy Police Inspector Kyaw Thiha, from the Anti-narcotics Task Force No. 5 in Kalay Township, and his group arrived by surprise at their house on 11 April last year.

"Three men in plain clothes came and said to my husband: 'Are you Lalmangaihchhunga?'. They immediately arrested and handcuffed him. They made him kneel down in our sitting room."

"They told us threateningly not to talk and said: 'Don't speak in any languages, not even in Chin!' At that time, Pi Tial Dawr, an aunt from the neighbourhood, came to our house and she was also told not to speak. They made her sit together with us," said Thluai.

According to the wife, Pu N C Thang must have mentioned her husband's name as one of his friends to the police during their raid on his house in search of methamphetamine (Ecstasy).

She said that Kyaw Thiha had look around the house and taken out a piece of clear plastic roll from his pocket while standing near the kitchen, saying: "This is your stuff, right?"

Her husband said it was not his. "They took a piece of paper out and tried to force him to sign although we didn't know what was written on it. We thought it was actually a blank paper."

"My husband asked what kind of paper it was and denied to sign on it. Then, Thiha said he didn't want to torture him in front of his wife. At that time, I had a new baby and as he was worried that I would be men-

tally stressed. Eventually, he was forced to sign the document. Once it was signed, they took him to the police station."

The husband later told his wife that he had been beaten up with the rod three times and tortured during the interrogation at the police station.

On 5 July 2014, Lalmangaihchhunga and Pu N C Thang appeared in the Kalay Township Court together. Lalmangaihchhunga told the court that he hadn't done any business with Pu N C Thang and that the plastic roll with 20 tablets of methamphetamine was not his but it was the one taken out from his pocket by Kyaw Thiha.

Pi Tial Dawi also appeared in court as a witness. "What Pi Tial Dawi told the court as she had witnessed the situation was not interpreted right. That's the main reason why the Kalay Township Court sentenced her husband to 12 years and 7 months in prison," said wife D Thluai.#

"They took a piece of paper out and tried to force him to sign although we didn't know what was written on it....

My husband asked what kind of paper it was and denied to sign on it. Then, Thiha said he didn't want to torture him in front of his wife....

Eventually, he was forced to sign the document. Once it was signed, they took him to the police station."



## Govt refuses permission for CNF training

**07 February 2015** -- The government of Chin State did not grant permission applied for holding training in democracy and federalism in Hakha.

Liaison offices of the Chin National Front submitted the application on 22 January to Chief Minister Hung Ngai and responsible departments.

The next day, the CNF received a refusal letter saying it was turned down on the ground that training related to politics and political parties was not allowed, according to the Chinland Post.

A training coordinator was quoted as saying that

the government still refused although they made their second attempt.

He indicated that the chief minister did not allow foreigners to participate in the training as the requested speaker was from abroad.

"The chief minister told us not to hold any training before the 2015 general elections," he added.

Last Thursday, Hung Ngai said that permission had to be obtained from the central government for a foreigner to speak at a public event.

The coordinator said that the CNF had organized such training in nine towns across Chin State between 8 October and 10 December 2014.#

## Humanitarian & Development Situation

### Over 800 villages in Chin State inaccessible by car

**09 January 2015** - More than half of the total of villages in Chin State still remains inaccessible by car, according to a source from the state government.

State Minister for Transport Ngun San Aung said that 810 out of 1,400 villages could not be reached owing to lack of road infrastructure in the areas.

He was quoted as saying that the total comprised 360 villages in Paletwa township, 166 in Mindat, 86 in

Matupi, 80 in Falam, 46 in Tedim, 29 in Tonzang, 24 in Kanpetlet, 14 in Hakha and 5 in Thantlang.

Despite claims by the state government that more effort has been put into improving road conditions in areas close to bigger towns, people still have difficulties in travelling during the rainy season.

A resident in Hakha said: "Construction on roads take place almost every year and they get easily eroded and destroyed after the rainy season. Why don't the government built a road that actually lasts for years?"

The majority of villagers in remote areas travel from one place to another on foot or/and by motor-bike along tracks constructed on their own by local communities.#



A footpath in Chin State  
(Photo: Anna Biak)



The most poppy-cultivated areas belonging to at least 13 villages in the township, bordering Manipur State of India, have been found, according to The Chinland Post.

However, the police said that they could not yet confirm who owned the fields and that no arrests had been made.

The inspector also said that no legal action would be taken against villagers who were known to be involved in the plantation.

"We will only provide them with awareness training in order to help them stop their involvement in the plantation. The State government and NGOs are responsible for providing an alternative for their livelihood," he added.

Police officers from the State Police Force, and Hakha and Falam District Police Forces launched the operations between 10 December 2014 and 7 January 2015.

In January last year, the State government claimed that more than 600 acres of poppy fields were destroyed in the same township. #

## Police destroy 566 acres of poppy fields in Chin State

**10 January 2015** - Police forces in Chin State carried out three operations against poppy plantations in the northern township of Tonzang, destroying a total of 566.81 acres.

Inspector Thet Naing Soe, of the State Police Force, said that they had launched the operations after making necessary investigations in locations identified as poppy fields.

## Thein Sein likely to inaugurate Hakha power station, operation theatre

**25 January 2015** -- President Thein Sein is expected to officially open a new power station and an operation theatre of the Hakha General Hospital on Chin National Day in Hakha.

The president and Union ministers are likely to make a trip to the capital of Chin State in February this year, according to government sources.

Myint Shwe, of the Hakha Township Electric Department, said in *The Chinland Post* that the power station had to be completed before the 20th of February, adding: "Ongoing work will affect electricity, causing power cut for a few hours in the afternoon."

Pu Siang Mang, from Hakha, indicated that Thein Sein and Union ministers were to be invited to attend the 67th Chin National Day celebration and that they would open the new construction at their convenience.

Electricity in Hakha is provided from the national grid through Kyaw power station via Gangaw. #



## Japan to build high schools, health centre in Chin State

**02 February 2015** - Japan is providing financial assistance for construction of two high schools and one health centre in Chin State.

Japan's Grant Assistance for Grass-roots Human Security Projects (GGP) scheme will provide US\$ 734,800 for the construction in the country's least developed region.

One Basic Education High School will be built to accommodate over 1,200 students in Tonzang Township and another for 760 students in Falam, according to the Global New Light of Myanmar.

The Japanese aid will also be used to construct a rural health centre to provide healthcare services in Aibur village, Thantlang Township.

The grant was given as part of the six projects in Burma agreed on Tuesday by Japanese Ambassador Mr Tateshi Higuchi and responsible committee members.#



Road construction in Hakha (Photo: CHRO)

## Residents struggle as road works destroy water pipes

**03 February 2015** -- The ongoing road development in Hakha, Chin State have damaged water pipes, leaving dozens of households in trouble.

Salai Tluang, from Keisih Ward, said: "We are happy that the roads are expanded and renovated. But bulldozers destroy our water pipes and we are left without water."

Tluang said that he had to repair the pipes on his own as he didn't get any help or compensation for the damage from the authority.

"We, residents in the Ward, did everything from purchasing the pipes, drilling the ground to bury them, to connecting to houses," added Tluang, a father of three young kids.

Families complained that they were not even informed about the works and that they didn't know when they had to make preparations in advance.

They said that they had to be faced with a difficult

situation as the Town Development Department did nothing to provide any assistance, let alone water.

Instead, the responsible department often imposes a threat to families that take the initiative to solve the water problems.

Tluang said that while he was recently re-connecting his water pipes, officials from the Rural Development, Town Development and Construction Departments tried to accuse him of working on the road without obtaining permission.

"I told them that the pipes were destroyed by bulldozers and they had no water. Now, you come not to help but to punish me. If you really want to do so, you can do whatever you like. But I have to solve this problem to provide water for my family," Tluang said.

The majority of the Hakha population rely on community-based water supply.

Meanwhile, the State Development Department announced that a budget of 170 million kyats has been allocated for construction of water storage and supply to Hakha, which is scheduled for August 2015.#



## Hakha road works hastened to complete before Thein Sein's visit

**04 January 2015** -- Construction of the main road in Hakha, Chin State has been sped up in an effort to get it ready for use ahead of Thein Sein's planned visit this month.

The ongoing road development, which involves widening and covering the road with gravel and tar, was initially scheduled to finish in March this year.

But the State authority want it to be completed before the February 20 celebration of Chin National Day in

which the president is expected to attend.

A source from the Hakha construction department said that the construction had to be done before 20 February as the authority would like Thein Sein to see a new development in the capital.

During his visit, the former prime minister is also to open a new operation theatre of the Hakha General Hospital and an electric power station distributed through the national grid from Kyaw, Magwe Region.

Meanwhile, power outages have hit Hakha for five consecutive days owing to maintenance engineering works, according to the electric department.#



Aims and objectives of the Ministry of Health in Burma  
(Photo: CHRO)

## Chin station hospitals in severe shortage of medical doctors

**14 February 2015** -- Only one out of the total 16 station hospitals across Chin State has one medical doctor, with the rest being run by nurses.

Rihkhuadar in Falam Township is currently the only 16-bedded hospital that has a doctor assigned as a station medical officer, according to the State Health Department.

An officer from the State Health Department in Hakha said that these posts had been vacant because they didn't have enough doctors although

they tried to recruit more officers.

She also said that four new medical doctors would be posted to four different station hospitals in Tedim Township in the near future.

According to the 2013 statistics of the department, there was only one doctor per 6,494 people in Burma's western state.

The reason has been ascribed to lack of applicants from other parts of the country for vacancies in Chin State and very low number of matriculation students qualifying to train to be a doctor.#

## Japan to build seven schools in southern Chin State

**17 February 2015** -- The Japanese government has provided financial assistance for building two high schools and five schools in the townships of Kanpetlet, Mindat and Matupi in Chin State.

The assistance given through the Grant Assistance for Grassroots Projects (GGP) Scheme is for construction of high schools in Kanpetlet and Matupi townships, and five other 'unspecified' schools in Mindat townships.

It also includes an upgradation of medical facilities in Matupi township.

The *Global New Light of Myanmar* yesterday said that the handover and opening ceremonies of the projects were held from 3 to 5 February in each township respectively.

The ceremonies were attended by Dr. Ba Maung, State minister of social affairs; and Mr. Kei Maeda, second secretary of the Embassy of Japan.

The Japanese aid for the projects totals US\$ 507,094.

It also provides assistance for construction of two high schools and one health centre in northern parts of Chin State.#

## Colleges, training school to be built in Hakha

**24 February 2015** -- President Thein Sein has allowed construction of two new colleges and one midwife training school in the capital of Chin State.

Pu Siang Mang, chairman of the Hakha Elders, said in the Hakha Post that they had been informed of the good news in a meeting held at the State government building on 21 February.

Union Minister Soe Thein, of the President's Office, broke the news on behalf of the president, saying that they had made positive responses to the proposals

submitted by the elders during Thein Sein's visit in 2012.

The Hakha elders together with Chief Minister Hung Ngai and State ministers are soon to find locations for construction of an arts and science college, a college for training teachers and a midwife training school.

A State minister said that construction of the arts and science college would start in the near future as a necessary budget had been allocated.

But works on plan for the other two were still in the initial state and would take time to actually start the project, according to the Chin minister.#



(Photo: The Chinland Post)



A billboard posted in Hakha saying that electricity from the National Grid has been provided across Chin State (Photo: CHRO)



## Power outages still occur despite official inauguration

**25 February 2015** -- The supply of electricity in Hakha and its surrounding towns of Chin State is not regular even after a recent official inauguration of a new power station.

Khin Maung Soe, Union minister of Electric Power, opened the ceremony of the Hakha power station on 20 February during his visit, together with President Thein Sein, to the capital.

However, power outages are still occurring during the day for hours after the president and his entourage had left Burma's western State.

Pu Sui, a Hakha elder, said: "We hear that the electric department is changing the cables. But they should inform the public so we can prepare in advance."

Meanwhile, the *Global New Light of Myanmar* on 22 February said that the two townships of Hakha and Thangtlang had received a 24-hour electricity from the national grid.

Khin Maung Soe also said that power lines, small scale hydro-power stations and sub-power stations had been constructed in Falam, Mindat, Matupi, Kanpetlet, Tedim and Tonzang townships as well as Rih sub-township.

Pi Tin Tin said: "It is great that we have electricity. But its irregularity is a big problem. Sometimes, it goes off in the morning while we are cooking rice. It will be cut off at night when our children are studying. This has got to be sorted out properly."

Despite having several energy sources for generating electricity, Burma stands at the lowest in the table of electrification rate in Southeast Asia, according to the *Global New Light of Myanmar*.#

"It is great that we have electricity.  
But its irregularity is a big problem. Sometimes,  
it goes off in the morning while we are cooking rice.  
It will be cut off at night  
when our children are studying...."



## Event & Protest

### New political party opens office in Hakha

**12 January 2015** - A new political party, the Chin League for Democracy (CLD), opens its branch office in Hakha, Chin State today, ahead of the 2015 general election.

Pu Ngai Sak, chairman of the CLD central committee, said at the event that his party was not formed just to win seats in the government but to bring positive changes and work for the development of the people.

Headquartered in Rangoon, the party has three branch offices in Arakan State, two in Sagaing Region and four in Chin State, according to the Chinland Post.

The CLD plans to set up another branch office in Thantlang, a town about 20 miles away from Hakha, and Kalay of Sagaing region.

As of today, at least ten political parties are expected to participate in the general election in Chin State. #

### Govt minister joins ILO-CHRO training

**22 January 2015** -- State Minister of Forestry and Mines Kyaw Ngein attended on behalf of the State chief minister the last day of a three-day training in 'forced labour' in Hakha, Chin State.

The Chin minister indicated that Chief Minister Hung Ngai had sent him to observe the training jointly organized from 20 to 22 January by the Chin Human Rights Organization and the ILO (International Labour Organization) with the Ministry of Labour.

During the training, he urged the participants to work hard for the development of Chin State, adding: "It's great to have training like this. You can discuss any issues openly and freely."

When asked about cases related to land confiscation in Chin State, he beat about the bush saying he had given money to villagers as a form of compensation if he had come across the situation.

The training covered various issues related to forced labour including 'contract farming', an agricultural deal between the government and companies.

Piyamal Pichaiwongse, deputy liaison officer of the ILO Liaison Office in Burma, said that the central government should revisit their policies on 'contract farming' which mainly focuses on benefits to companies and does not work well for public purposes.

U Kyaw Ngein discussing issues with trainers from ILO and Ministry of Labour (Photo: CHRO)



Ling Kee, a Kanpetlet participant, said: "This training opens our eyes and helps us to understand what we didn't think of as a form of forced labour. Now that we will go back to our places and share with the people, I really hope it will be very helpful."

Two participants each from eight out of nine townships in Chin State and Kalay of Sagaing region as well as Hung Kee, deputy director of the State Labour Department, attended the training.

Salai Lian Bawi Thang, of the Chin Human Rights Organization, said: "We are pleased to have members of the ILO and the Ministry of Labour providing such training for the Chin. We hope that it will make a valuable contribution toward ending forced labour not only in Chin State but in the whole country."

In 2012, Burma signed an agreement with the ILO to eradicate forced labour from the country by 2015. #

## Peaceful protest against order to remove Hakha cross planned

**23 January 2015** -- Christians in Hakha, Chin State plan to stage a peaceful demonstration against government's order to remove a Christian cross from its current location of Caarcaang Hill.

They will march along the main road in the capital on 29 and 30 January and call on the State government to cancel the order.

Salai Van Chan Ceu, one of the event organizers, said: "We applied to the Hakha Township Police Force for permission to hold the rally today. We hope that it will be granted in time."

"We want to request the chief minister [Hung Ngai] to call off his instruction to take the Christian cross away from the hilltop," he added.

According to the official letter last Tuesday, Chief Minister Hung Ngai ordered Pu J.P Biak Tin Sang,

owner of the cross and its location, to move it by 30 January 2015 and apply for permission to plant it on another site.

The letter also said that necessary action would be taken against him if instructions were not followed.

Ceu said: "It is not about an individual and his or her work. It is about the Christian monument shared by the people."

A meeting held on Thursday by representatives from churches, civil society groups including youth and women and political parties in Hakha agreed to make a concerted effort to make their voices heard.

The event leaders are waiting for an official response to their application.

On 4 November last year, Chief Minister Hung Ngai and other State ministers inaugurated a new 'Peace for the whole world' pagoda constructed on the hillside above Hakha.#

"We want to request the chief minister [Hung Ngai] to call off his instruction to take the Christian cross away from the hilltop ...

It is not about an individual and his or her work.  
It is about the Christian monument  
shared by the people."

## Protest against order to remove Hakha cross postponed

**28 January 2015** -- Schedules for peaceful protests against the government's order to remove the Christian cross in Hakha have been postponed to Monday and Tuesday next week.

The Hakha Township Police Force said that the dates requested - 29 and 30 January - were not granted as they coincided with an important government meeting.

A government source said that Union minister of Co-operatives, Kyaw San, retired Brigadier General

and former minister of Information and Culture, is arriving in Hakha this week.

Instead, permission was granted to hold protests on Sunday and Monday.

Sui Sung, an event organising committee member, said: "We re-applied for permission to march on Monday and Tuesday as we have to go to church on Sunday. So, it was granted."

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Hung Ngai is planning to speak about the situation concerning the Christian cross at a public gathering to be held at the Town Hall tomorrow at 9:30am.#

## 'Hakha cross' protest postponed until meeting with CM

**01 February 2015** -- The planned protests against the order to remove the Hakha Christian cross have been put off again as the Hakha Christian Ministers' Fellowship is meeting with Chief Minister Hung Ngai.

The event organising leaders said that they had not cancelled their demonstration programmes and that they would have to act depending on the outcomes of the meeting.

Organiser Salai Van Chan Ceu said in the *Hakha Post*: "In an official document given to the HCMF following the cabinet meeting, the chief minister didn't reverse his order to remove the cross. So, our protest plans are still on the cards."

He also said that HCMF leaders had asked them [organisers] to wait until they met with the chief minister.

Upon receiving the official letter from the State government, the HCMF called an urgent meeting yesterday.

Their decisions include meeting with the chief minister and organising a public meeting to discuss making a concerted effort to raise concerns about the religious issue should their demands are not

met.

During a public gathering last Thursday, Hung Ngai did not answer a question raised by Ceu pertaining to issuing an official letter overturning his order.

Last Thursday, a group of 40 Chin youths staged a peaceful demonstration in front of the Rangoon City Hall, demanding the Chin State government to allow the cross to remain on its current location.#

"In an official document given to the HCMF following the cabinet meeting, the chief minister didn't reverse his order to remove the cross. So, our protest plans are still on the cards."

- Organiser Salai Van Chan Ceu

## CND celebration officially allowed at Kalay Univ

16 February 2015 -- The authorities in Kalay, Sagaing Region, has officially allowed a celebration of Chin National Day within the compound of the Kalay University.

Chin student leaders expressed feelings of great joy as they would be able to hold the historic event that had been banned for years.

Singsian Zun Lian, secretary of the Chin Literature and Cultural Committee (Universities-Kalay), told *The Chinland Post*: "In the past, we didn't get permission to hold the event on campus. Now that we are granted permission, we plan to organize it on a grand scale."

Salai Ngun Lian Sang, a university student leader, said that they all were pleased to hear about permission being granted after nine years.

The celebration marking the 67th anniversary of Chin National Day will be jointly held by Chin students from different universities in Kalay.#





*Photo: The Chinland Post*

## President Thein Sein attends CND celebration

**20 February 2015** -- Burma's President Thein Sein arrived in Hakha, Chin State today, attending a celebration of Chin National Day at the Vumtu Mawng Football Ground.

He had the honour of planting 'Bawitung', a traditional wooden post erected as a mark of victory, and joined in dancing with Chin tribal groups.

The former prime minister looked inside the Chin traditional house on exhibition and sat on the porch drinking a cup of Chin traditional rice beer as he watched the 'khuangcawi' ritual performance.

Standing on the front large terrace called 'Thinthang', he addressed the public saying that it was one of the peace-talk outcomes that had made it possible for Chin National Day to be celebrated.

In his message, he said: "Despite difficult accessibility and geographical challenges, the government will make relentless efforts to undertake development measures, which is why the local people should join with the government and the local government."

The 69-year-old leader of the ruling Union Solidarity and Development Party also took part in the

opening ceremony of a new operation theatre at the Hakha General Hospital.

Later at night, the State government organized a bonfire party with a variety of traditional dances in the compound of the government building for the president.

After making visits to pagodas and monasteries in Hakha and spending a night at the Union Guest House, Thein Sein left by helicopter for Kalay Township, Sagaing Region on 21 February.

It was the first time President Thein Sein had attended the Chin National Day celebration in Hakha since his presidency.

The country's leader was accompanied during his trip by top officials including Win Htun, minister of Environmental Conservation and Forestry; Dr. Than Aung, minister of Health; and Khin Maung Soe, minister of Electric Power.

Meanwhile, Shwe Mann, Speaker of the Assembly of the Union and the House of Representatives; and Khin Aung Myint, Speaker of the House of Nationalities, attended a Chin National Day celebration.

Asho Chin in Irrawaddy Region held an official celebration in Yayta village, Myanaung township of Irrawaddy Region today.#

## Situation of Refugees



(Photo: CHRO)

### Chin refugee family evicted from tent outside UNHCR Office in New Delhi

**08 January 2015** --- A Chin refugee family from Burma, including four children aged between 2 and 11, their mentally challenged father and 'weakened' mother were today forced to leave their makeshift tent put up outside the SLIC-UNHCR office (Socio Legal Information Centre) in New Delhi, India.

Local Indian residents in the area came to Block C of Vikaspuri around 9:30am and destroyed their shelter and belongings in it in a violent manner, according to the Chin Human Rights Organization.

They threw away their few possessions before their eyes, including an old TV given by their Chin friend who had already been resettled abroad, a mobile phone and other stuff. The family also lost their subsistence allowance (SA) and savings of 5,000 rupees.

The mother said to the CHRO: "In the evening of 7 January 2015, an Arakanese refugee woman who is believed to be mentally challenged, came to the SLIC-UNHCR office, shouting and screaming in

front of the office in an attempt to demonstrate her hardships."

"The office security guards forced her to leave the office but she didn't want to leave. Later, she was told by the security guards to spend the night with us. The guards told us, too. And she was with us. A group of local Indian residents came to the office in the morning today and complained against us to the SLIC-UNHCR office saying that the refugee family should not stay here because they have been making noises."

"They also said: 'It was not good to see them in our residential areas and in front of the office like this. If you, SLIC-UNHCR, do not make them move to another place, we, local residents, will do so. Or you let this family stay inside the office's compound.'"

"The local people started destroying our tent, and shifted our belongings into the SLIC office, but Sunil, a staff member from the SLIC-UNHCR office, ordered the security guards to throw our entire belongings into outside of the gate. The local people and security guards together threw our belongings carelessly before us."

- continued on next page



"They left our TV broken and lost our savings. I immediately informed our Chin community leader of the situation. More than eight refugee leaders came to help us but they were not allowed to enter the office by the security guards."

A Chin refugee leader, who asked not to be named, said: "We are saddened and horrified to see SLIC-UNHCR staff members and security guards actively helping the residents to brutally evict this helpless refugee family, instead of helping them."

He also said that some SLIC-UNHCR Indian staff members and security guards were seen laughing and mocking at the refugee family. When a representative from an Indian NGO, the Other Media, went to help the refugee family and make enquiries, she was made to wait outside the gate for over an hour and then rudely told from inside the closed gate by Ms Deborah, of the Women Protection Officer, to make an appointment and come back.

He added: "We are registering our protest against this insensitive and unprofessional behaviour of SLIC-UNHCR staff members and also charging

them with violating the human rights and dignity of this poor refugee family. This is not the first time that SLIC UNHCR staff have behaved in this rude, high-handed manner towards refugees that they are tasked with protecting and serving them."

With the help of the Chin refugee community and contribution by Chin refugees, the Chin refugee family managed to rent a room in Chanakya.

The four children of Maung Hta and Lina Ing are Shwe Zin Oo, aged 11, Shwe Zin Aye, 8, Aung San Oo, 6, and Joseph Van Tha Cung Liana, 3. The family had stayed in their makeshift tent outside the SLIC-UNHCR office since 5 August 2014. Both parents were not able to work because of their health problems.

The Don Bosco Ashayalam granted a substantial allowance (SA) of 8,000 rupees for three months to them till July 2014, and it was reduced to 3,800 rupees. Since the allowance was not enough to cover the rental, the family eventually had no choice but to move out of their rented room.#

## Over 100 Burmese refugees protest against murder of Kachin teachers

31 January 2015 -- Refugees from Burma stranded in New Delhi took to the street, calling on international leaders to bring justice for two Kachin schoolteachers who were brutally raped and killed by Burma army soldiers.

More than 100 refugees participated in the peaceful protest in Jantar Mantar on 30 January, also urging the government of Burma to conduct an official investigation into the killing of Maran Lu Ra and Tang Bau Hkawn Nan Tsin.

Pu Ngun Kio, a representative of the Chin Refugee Committee said: "This is one of the reasons why we, ethnic nationalities, do not trust the Burmese government anymore. Raping and killing is one of their 'genocidal action' missions against ethnic peoples."



(Photo: CHRO)

He added: "The loss of two Kachin schoolteachers is a loss not just for the Kachin but for all ethnic peoples as well as the country. The Burmese government must reveal the truth about this case as soon as possible."

Leaders of the Kachin, Chin and Burmese refugee communities spoke on the occasion, blaming Thein Sein's government and Burma army for hiding the truth about the incident and for taking too long to



carry out an investigation.

A Kachin refugee leader said: "The government has been attacking Kachin State and trying to eliminate our generation by using many weapons. Using rape and sexual violence against ethnic women is also one of their weapons to attack us. Therefore, we urge all the international leaders to get involved in this case and bring justice for the loss of our be-

loved sisters."

The rally was jointly organized from 11am to 1pm by Kachin refugee Committee, Burmese refugee Community and Chin refugee's community.

The two schoolteachers were raped and murdered in northern Shan State on 20 January this year.#

## Other News

### Kalay-Kabaw Chin to teach dialects during summer holidays

**05 January 2015** - Leaders of the Chin cultural and social group in Sagaing Region said that they would put more effort into providing training on dialects to children this year.

More than 70 representatives from Kalay-Kabaw areas agreed during the meeting today that teaching Chin dialects to school children during summer holidays would be expanded.

The decision was part of the plans to promote and protect Chin culture and ethnic identity in a Burman-dominated region bordering Chin State.

A Chin leader based in Kalay town said: "Our children cannot learn their own language at school and it is the only chance we can get for them to learn Chin dialects. We hope this programme is essential and helpful to children."

The meeting also decided to make a concerted effort to hold important events including Chin National Day and Chin New Year.

Locally known as *Chin Funtomnak Bu*, the community-based organization was established in 2012.

It is estimated that there are more than 200,000 Chins living across over 28 townships of Sagaing Region.#

### Two women arrested in connection with illegal drugs

**08 January 2015** - Two Chin women are kept in police custody in Hakha after police found packages of illegal drugs in their respective houses last week.

Police from both State and Hakha Township Police Forces seized a total of 390,000 pseudo-ephedrine tablets in Hakha, and some stimulants as well as explosive devices in Thantlang.

Superintendent Khen Hrang, of the Hakha Township Police Force, told The Chinland Post that they had got information about the drugs and raided the houses.

He said: "A thorough investigation has been conducted in regards to the cases. The final results can be officially announced only after the court's decision."

Another person has also been taken into police custody on suspicion of getting involved in transporting the goods. The cases continue.#

### Gambling, alcohol banned at CND celebration

**06 February 2015** -- Any activities of playing games for money and sale of alcoholic drinks will not be allowed at the venue during the celebrations of Chin National Day, the 20th of February.

Chief Minister Hung Ngai gave instructions that people would be prohibited from selling alcohol and gambling at the event, which is taking place at the Vumtu Mawng football ground in Hakha.

Food stalls selling a variety of Burmese and Chin traditional foods, and an array of exhibitions displaying different talents and works would only be set up, according to a high-ranking government official.

Pi Par, a Hakha resident, said: "It is good that alcohol is banned on such an important historic day for us. But how would they handle people who come to the event after having drunk from outside of the venue?"

Last year, posters promoting alcoholic beverages were removed from the venue after a concerted action taken by community-based organizations including the Chin Women Organization.

An official opening ceremony of this year's celebrations is scheduled for 19 February.#

## Union minister promises to solve problems facing Chin people

**09 February 2015** -- Kyaw Hsan, Union minister of Co-operatives, said that he was visiting Chin State to listen to the people and to solve their problems.

In a meeting held at the Hakha Town Hall today, he said: "As they are the government elected by the people, our top priority is placed on the people."

He also said it was the truth from their hearts that the government wanted to sort out difficult situations facing the public.

The retired Brigadier General made promises that Co-operatives-related assistance including loans would be given by May this year.

A government employee in Hakha said on condition of anonymity that the minister was good at speaking but she wondered if he would be able to keep his promises.

"Other high-ranking officials and ministers like him had come and failed to deliver what they had promised. We just have to wait and see," added the Chin employee who attended the morning meeting.

He made his trip to Chin State as part of the programme to improve farming and to promote the livelihood of farmers.

After the meeting, he visited a Buddhist pagoda situated on Mount Rung of Hakha before his departure.

The retired Brigadier General arrived in Hakha in the evening on Sunday, and was greeted by Chief Minister Hung Ngai, together with other State ministers, and heads of government departments at the Pyidaungsu Guest House where he stayed.#

## Hosts required to report tourist info to Immigration

**10 February 2015** -- The State Immigration Department said that any information about tourists visiting Chin State must be reported to them.

Local hosts including hotels and families are responsible for informing the authority of details regarding their guests, according to the announcement.

The head of the State Immigration Department was quoted as saying by the Chinland Post: "If they stay at a hotel, the hotel must report their details including whereabouts and what they do to us."

He also said that many Chins were coming back as foreign citizens to their native places, adding: "If they stay at a family's house, the family is responsible."

According to official statistics from the State Immigration Department, a total of 2,013 tourists visited Chin State between April 2011 and March 2014.

Salai Cin, a Chin Canadian citizen, said that he didn't feel comfortable during his short stay as the authority kept disturbing him all the time by asking what he did.

A hotel owner in Hakha said on condition of anonymity that they got a lot of work to do if they had a foreign guest.

"We are happy to receive foreigners staying at our hotel. But the police as well as the immigration gave us too much trouble. They keep ringing or coming to get information about them," added the Chin owner.

Salai Thang, a Thantlang reporter, said that two immigration officers had stopped him and his foreign friend while walking around the town centre of Thantlang.

"They said they needed a photocopy of my friend's passport. I told them to get it from the guest house. They said they were just carrying out instructions from above."

"The night that we arrived in Thantlang, the police superintendent called the guest house inquiring about the purpose of my friend's visit. In a few minutes, the superintendent asked me to meet him at the police station," he added.

The police superintendent said that he wanted to make sure tourists visiting Chin places were safe and that his team wanted to help them during their trip.

He said his friend was disappointed and didn't feel comfortable staying at the town.

"My friend told me, 'I feel my visit has caused trouble to you too much. I haven't come across this kind of situation during my previous visits to Mandalay, Nay Pyi Taw and Rangoon. What happens here?'" he said.

The Immigration Department warned that action could be taken in according with the immigration law against those failing to report to the authority.

Meanwhile, President Thein Sein said in his address during the opening of the ASEAN Tourism Forum 2015: "Tourism is a driving engine for economic growth."

He continued: "If we can promote more peace, stability, and relaxation for travel restrictions for both international and regional tourists, the arrivals in 2015 can increase up to 5 million."

Burma aims to receive 4.5 million visitors in 2015, an attempt to increase the number of 3.08 million last year.#

## Rev. Dr. A. Roy Medley to visit Chin State

**11 February 2015** -- Rev. Dr. A. Roy Medley, general secretary of the American Baptist Churches USA is to make his second visit to Chin State this week.

Dr. Medley will travel to southern parts of Burma's western state, including Kanpetlet, Mindat, Matupi and Rezua towns, starting from 13 February.

Rev. Dennis Ngun Thawng Mang, general Secretary of the Chin Baptist Convention (formerly Zomi Baptist Convention) said: "We are delighted to have Rev. Dr. A. Roy Medley who really loves and helps our people."

"The second visit to Chin State by him and his colleagues would be meaningful. Let us all uphold our prayer. Roy has a deep concern for our people," added Mang.

With his two colleagues, Dr. Paul Dennis and Mrs. Gail Mugford Paul, he will also be accompanied by Rev. Dr. C. Duh Kam, executive director of the Chin Baptist Churches USA; and Rev. Dr. E. Za Bik, adjunct professor of the Myanmar Institute of Theology.

Medley will be back to Rangoon on 20 February after meeting with members of the Gangaw Baptist Association, according to the CBC,

a Chin Christian organization that will host his tour. Dr. Medley made his first trip to Chin State in late 2013. #

## Chin leaders meet to forge stronger cooperation

**15 February 2015** -- Leaders from Chin religious, civil society and the Chin National Front gathered in Kalay of Sagaing Region, discussing ways to improve understanding and unity among the Chin.

The meeting held at the Bethel Theological Seminary, Tahan on Monday and Tuesday took place as the first of its kind in an attempt to find solutions to challenges facing the Chin as a whole, according to the *Chin Times*.

Pu Lian Uk, a rotating CNF chairman, indicated in the Hakha Post that they had had a discussion about strengthening relationship and cooperation between churches, especially based in Kalay region.

Organized by Rev. Dr. Stephen Hre Kio and Archbishop Nicholas Mang Thang, the meeting was attended by more than 30 leaders from different denominations and organizations including Rev. Dennis Ngun Thawng Mang, general secretary of the Chin Baptist Convention; Dr. Lal Uk, general secretary of the Chin Association for

Christian Communication; and Bishop Felix Lian Khen Thang, of the Kalay diocese.

They also discussed about how to put aside differences and work together towards a shared aim, also forming an organizing committee for holding a follow-up meeting in six months' time. #

## CNF pay tribute to soldiers killed by Burma army

**27 February 2015** -- The Chin National Front last week paid their respects to soldiers who were shot dead in Laiza, Kachin State last year by Burma army soldiers.

CNF leaders and Chin National Army members, together with Christian pastors, held services at the monuments to Corporal John Biak Tin Lian and Private Bawi Ram Hngak on 21 and 23 February in Hakha and the CNF camp respectively.

Pu Khua Uk Lian, a CNF executive committee member, said that tribute was paid in accordance with the decision made by the CNF central committee.

The Chin soldiers in their twenties were among 22 cadets killed in a surprise attack during their training at the Kachin Independence Army military academy on 19 November last year. #



(Photos: The Chinland Post)



## Government

### Chin majority doubt over govt-led peace process

**13 January 2015** -- The vast majority of people in Chin State raise doubts about the current peace process led by Burma's government, according to a report by the Shalom Foundation.

It said that about 90 percent of the people surveyed in the towns of Tedim, Matupi, Mindat and Hakha didn't have confidence in the peace process.

They said that the peace negotiation would not be successful as long as the government didn't give a chance and create a platform in which the public could get involved by making their voices.

96 percent indicated the importance of public involvement in the ongoing peace process, the organization's

survey revealed.

The survey was carried out between August and November 2014.

One of the interviewees said in the report: "We still have fighting inside the country. The government have not completed the ceasefire agreement. Therefore, I don't have trust in it."

Until recently, intermittent clashes still broke out between the Burma armed forces and ethnic armed groups in Kachin and Shan States.

Two soldiers of the Chin National Front, John Biak Tin Lian and Bawi Ram Hngak, were shot dead during their training in Kachin State in November last year by Burma army soldiers.#

### Govt blamed for three-day blackouts in Hakha

**14 January 2015** -- People in Hakha said that the government should arrange an alternative supply of electricity following recent power outages.

The blackouts hit the capital of Chin State for three consecutive days from 10 to 12 January, leaving residents in the dark.

They said that the electric department should have a backup power supply in the event of such occurrences.

A Hakha resident, who asks not to be named, said: "It was a nightmare. Our children found it difficult to study. And it was not actually safe to light candles for the children in the house."

Many private businesses and organizations also said that

they had been affected by the power failure and feared that it would happen again in the future.

Salai Thang, from a Hakha newspaper, said: "We rely heavily on computer to organize our work. The electric department were not able to tell us when it would be fixed. So, we had to rent electric generators."

Hakha has received its current electric power from the national grid through Kyaw power station via Gangaw since mid last year.

However, intermittent power outages often happen in the capital, causing problems to families using refrigerators, washing machines and other electrical appliances.

"In addition to this usual power cut, the electricity is sometimes too low that we can't even cook rice. This is affecting us a lot and has to be fixed as soon as possible by the authority in charge," said female Hakha resident, who wishes to remain anonymous. #

### Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO)

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## Govt urged to initiate agreement implementation

**17 January 2015** -- The coordination committee of the Chin National Conference said that Burma's government should initiate translating provisions in the ceasefire agreement into action.

In a statement released yesterday following their second meeting, the committee urged the Union government to immediately take a leading role in implementing the ceasefire agreement with the Chin National Front.

Salai Isaac Khen, coordinator for the implementation of CNC's resolution, said the meeting had seen the government weak in the implementation process.

"We expect to see further improvement beyond the ceasefire. But, for instance, human rights violations still continue in Chin State. The government must take the initiative in the implementation of what has been agreed," Khen added.

The second round of peace talks between the CNF and the Union Peace Working Committee took place in Rangoon in December

2012, in which one of the provisions is to form an independent Chin human rights committee.

The second meeting of the coordination committee for the CNC's resolutions implementation reviewed their work and prioritized issues for this year in a discussion held in Hakha from 14 to 15 December.

In November 2013, the Chin National Conference was organized in Hakha with more than 5000 delegates from the Chin State government, political parties, CNF, religious organizations, and women, youth and civil society groups.#

## CM denies discrimination against Christians

**29 January 2015** -- Chief Minister Hung Ngai said today that the Chin State government did not take any discriminatory measures against Christians.

During a public event organized at his request in the town hall of Hakha, he said: "There is no repression the government impose on anything in contrast to the law."

He indicated that they had to take necessary action if and when someone violated the law but it was not an act of discrimination.

Sui Thio, a Hakha community leader, said in his question to the chief minister: "We, Christians, still face restrictions on construction of religious infrastructure and land-ownership."

"Besides, while Christian crosses are demolished, an increasing number of Buddhist pagodas and monasteries are seen on our land, for instance, on Mount Rung."

On 4 November last year, a new

Buddhist pagoda called 'Peace for the whole world' was inaugurated on Lailengbo hill of Mount Rung by Chief Minister Hung Ngai, with other State ministers.

Hung Ngai said: "We don't have disregard for the Christian cross. We approve any application from Christians for permission to hold events. We treat each and everyone in accordance with the law."

The Chin Human Rights Organization documented in 2012 destruction of at least four crosses in Chin State under the new government and more than 40 separate incidents of torture or ill-treatment, targeted at Chin on the dual basis of their ethnicity and religion.

In his address to the public, the chief minister repeatedly put stress on the need to act according to legal requirements.

Salai Van Chan Ceu pointed out the fact that the way in which Hung Ngai-led government cabinet included the secretary of the Government Administration Department in voting for a 'controversial' motion regarding construction of a Buddhist pagoda in Hakha was not le-

gal.

The chief minister admitted that the government had weakness in understanding the law, adding: "In fact, it happens across the country."

Dr. Ba Maung, State minister of Social Affairs, said that the government practiced no religious discrimination between Christians and Buddhists, adding: "We, Buddhists, are minority in the cabinet."

A government employee in Hakha said on condition of anonymity that they [authorities] were the one who violated the law.

"If they don't like an employee, they would use the law to get rid of him or her. If they want to do something illegally, they would just ignore the law. Although they claim to be a democratic government, they still have the full authority," she added.

The public event was organized under instructions of Hung Ngai in order for him to explain the situation in connection with the Hakha cross being ordered to be removed from Calvary Mountain.#

## Statement

Wednesday 28 January 2015

PRESS RELEASE: for immediate release

### **Burma: Stop Christian cross removal; drop trumped-up charges**

**[Chiang Mai, Thailand]** The Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) today urged the authorities in Burma to overturn an order to dismantle and remove a large Christian cross in the State capital Hakha, and to drop trumped-up charges against Tial Cem, a Chin elder involved in planting the cross.

The Chin State government issued an order to dismantle the 54 foot high cross and remove it from its current location on Caarcaang hill in Hakha by 30 January, on the basis that it was constructed without permission. The order states that failure to dismantle and remove the cross would result in action being taken against J.P. Biak Tin Sang, one of those involved in planting the cross. It is unclear if the Chin State government is acting independently, or under instruction from the central government in Naypyitaw.

Tial Cem, a Chin elder involved in planting the cross in April last year, reported to CHRO that they did not seek official permission for the cross as they did not believe it would be granted. CHRO's 2012 report, *"Threats to Our Existence": Persecution of Ethnic Chin Christians in Burma*, documented in detail the discriminatory restrictions faced by Chin Christian organizations, which make it virtually impossible to secure such official permission for religious monuments and buildings. The report also documented the destruction of thirteen Christian crosses in Chin State, four of which were destroyed under the current government.

### **Trumped up charges**

Tial Cem has been accused of cutting down pine trees without official permission, in breach of article 42 (b) of the 1992 Forest Law. To date, he has reportedly been summoned to Hakha Township Court six times, and is due to appear in court again today. According to Tial Cem, the area cleared is land owned by J.P. Biak Tin Sang. It is adjacent to the cross location. If found guilty, Tial Cem could be sentenced to a maximum of two years in prison. CHRO considers this to be a trumped-up charge, connected with the planting of the cross.

Tial Cem told CHRO, "We will not remove the cross. We will have to face whatever it takes. If the authorities say I have to go to jail, I am not afraid; I am ready to go to jail for this case."

Salai Bawi Lian Mang, CHRO's Executive Director, said, "This order to dismantle and remove the cross continues a decades-long pattern of religious discrimination against Chin Christians. The authorities have a choice to make now. They could overturn the order, issue official documentation to allow the cross to remain where it is, and drop the charges against Tial Cem. This would be an important first step in stopping this pattern. Or, they could press ahead with the order and the charges, and show the world that absolutely nothing has changed."

CHRO reiterated its call for the government to implement key recommendations on freedom of religion or belief made by the historic November 2013 Chin National Conference, including: grant land ownership rights for religious purposes; guarantee freedom of religious worship, assembly and proselytizing; and restore all Chin Christian crosses that were destroyed under various pretexts.

### **Planned demonstrations**

In response to the Chin State government order to dismantle and remove the cross, on 23 January local people in Hakha town applied to Hakha police station for official permission to demonstrate against the



order on Thursday 29 and Friday 30 January, in accordance with the Peaceful Assembly Law.

After submitting their request, Chin State Chief Minister Hung Ngai, formerly a Brigadier-General in the Burma Army, summoned the demonstration organizers to a meeting at the Chin State government cabinet office. Hung Ngai reportedly told them that the cross was planted without seeking official permission from the government, and was therefore illegal. However, he also told them the matter would be discussed further at a meeting of the Chin State cabinet. According to information received by CHRO, the cabinet meeting will likely take place the week beginning 2 February, as some Chin State government ministers are currently travelling.

A letter granting permission to demonstrate was issued by the Hakha Township police force, but for Sunday 1 and Monday 2 February, not the dates requested by the organizers. The official reason given was that 29 and 30 January coincide with rural development planning days. After community consultations, the organizers decided to re-submit their request to demonstrate on 2 and 3 February, as 1 February is a Sunday and a day of worship in the Chin Christian tradition. They have reportedly received official written permission from the Hakha Township police force, and demonstrations will take place between 10am and 12pm on Monday 2 and Tuesday 3 February.

It remains to be seen if the order will be enforced on Friday 30 January.

-ENDS-

#### Media interviews:

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#### Notes to Editors:

1. Chin languages use Roman script. When Chin names are transliterated from Burmese into English, the spelling is changed significantly and this sometimes renders Chin names unrecognizable. Please refer to the English language version of the press release for the correct spelling of the names in English.
2. The right to freedom of religion or belief is enshrined in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and is widely recognized as having customary international law status. The 1981 UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief sets out the basic tenets of freedom of religion or belief in more detail, including the right to worship or assembly in connection with a religion or belief, and to establish and maintain places for these purposes.
3. Caarcaang hill, also known as Calvary Tlaang or Calvary Mountain, is a sacred prayer site in the Chin tradition. The cross was formally planted on 29 April 2014.
4. J.P. Biak Tin Sang and Tial Cem applied for and received permission from Hakha township and district authorities to build an orphanage called the Miracle Calvary Youth Development Centre on the same site. However, this was overturned in October 2014.
5. CHRO's 2012 report, *"Threats to Our Existence": Persecution of Ethnic Chin Christians in Burma*, documents how official permission is notoriously hard to obtain for Chin Christian organizations, due to complex bureaucratic procedures and lengthy delays, resulting in requests being denied or simply ignored. Many Chin Christians have sought to circumvent these restrictions by applying for permissions in the name of an individual, rather than a Christian organization. However, if such buildings are suspected of being used for religious assembly, permission is often later withdrawn. Even when official permission is secured – more often than not, verbally – it can be revoked at any time.#